

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

Bridging the digital divide in Cambridge and beyond



“High Fidelity” was a musical trend in the 1970s. “Wireless Fidelity” or WiFi is a computer trend for the new millennium. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see

related article elsewhere in this issue), disabled people are at a considerable disadvantage by not being able to access information technologies. For instance, as education becomes increasingly dependent on information technologies, not being able to access the World Wide Web limits the learning potential of people with disabilities. Making information technology available to people with disabilities is not only a matter of human rights, it also makes good business sense.

The City of Cambridge is currently undertaking a long term project that will enable residents, businesses and visitors to take advantage of no-cost “basic” wireless access to the Internet via WiFi technology. This project, called Cambridge Public Internet, will allow Cambridge users to access the Internet anywhere using the wireless connection on their computers.

Through this project, Cambridge officials expect to be able to provide a basic level of wireless service sufficient for World Wide Web access, checking E-mail, and similar activities at speeds higher than those available via dial-up services, but without the expectation of the speed and reliability of a commercial broadband connection. It is the City’s goal to provide a WiFi connection that will supplement, not compete with, the products and services of commercial interests, such as existing Internet Service Providers, coffee shops and hotels that provide Internet access for a fee. This project is well underway and more

(Digital Divide continued on page 2)

New UN Treaty on Rights of Persons with Disabilities



On August 25, 2006 delegates meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York City agreed on a new United Nations convention to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. This new

instrument marks a shift in the way governments are to think about disability. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the agreement “a historic achievement for the 650 million people with disabilities around the world” that have lacked adequate protection until now and urged all Member States to ratify the convention and implement it quickly.

While the convention does not create new rights, it does set out a code for governments to implement the rights that people with disabilities are already entitled to but are not receiving. Five years ago when negotiations on the draft began there was resistance to a new Convention, because many believed that the rights of persons with disabilities were already guaranteed by other human rights agreements. But they were often not respected in practice. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, said “The existing human rights standards and mechanisms have not been sufficiently effective.”

(UN Treaty continued on page 2)

SAVE THE DATE!

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Workshop on

Emergency Preparedness for

People with Disabilities

344 Broadway, Cambridge

(Digital Divide continued)

information on its progress will be reported in the coming months.

More and more cities across the country are taking similar innovative steps to bridge the digital divide. If this trend continues nationwide, it has the potential to make Internet access economically feasible for millions of people with disabilities who could not otherwise afford broadband or even dial-up access fees.

Nonprofit organizations across the country are also bridging the digital divide in other ways. One

Economy Corporation <www.one-economy.com> is a national nonprofit that recently announced a partnership with AT&T Foundation to provide affordable technology solutions to 50,000 low and moderate income, single-family and multifamily homes.

Dubbed AT&T *AccessAll*, this \$100 M project will work with community partners including state housing finance agencies, developers of multifamily housing, local governments, and community-based organizations in communities that fall within the AT&T Corp. footprint, to provide 35,000 households with Internet access and discounted technology packages, which includes a computer, printer, desktop software, and Internet access. One Economy Corp. and AT&T *AccessAll* will also work with local Habitat for Humanity affiliates to equip up to 15,000 households with an AT&T Foundation subsidized technology package. Families in all 589 Habitat for Humanity affiliates in the AT&T service territory will be eligible for the program.

Do you have any ideas of your own on how to bridge the digital divide for people with disabilities? Please let us know!

By Lorraine Lavoie



(UN Treaty continued)

The new convention specifically prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life, including civil rights, access to justice and the right to education, health services and access to transportation. It would obligate countries to gradually include disability-friendly features into the construction of new facilities; promote and improve access to education and information; and introduce measures that eliminate discriminatory practices against persons with disabilities.

New Zealand's Ambassador Don MacKay, who chaired the talks through their final two-week session, said the draft Convention recognizes that countries would need some time to fully implement its provisions. It also recognizes that a change of attitude is vital, if disabled people are to achieve equal status. Countries that ratify the Convention will be obliged to combat negative stereotypes and prejudices, and to promote awareness of people's abilities and contributions to society.

The convention will be formally sent to the General Assembly for adoption at its next session that begins in September 2006. It will then be open for signing and ratification by Member States. More information about the treaty can be found at <www.un.org/disabilities/convention/>.

By Carolyn Thompson

Independence through Employment



Independence through Employment is a program offered by Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) to help adults (age 18–64 and eligible to work in the US) who have been unemployed for six months or longer find meaningful, gainful employment. The program has several of the

usual components: assessments of the individual's basic clerical and computer skills, help in developing a resume and cover letter, and preparing the participant for successful job interviews. In addition to recording the person's work history, the staff put a focus on what the job seeker really wants to accomplish in his/her career and *life*.

An important part of the *Independence through Employment* program is a module called “Customer Service Training.” This part of the curriculum teaches a set of skills that includes verbal and non-verbal communication, conflict resolution, and recognition and appreciation of socio-economic and cultural differences. Improving these skills tends to increase job retention and satisfaction, regardless of the field the individual chooses to enter. The instruction for this “Customer Service Training” module is a self-paced computer-based program, but there are on-site instructors to assist with questions.

Individuals with disabilities who are interested in this *Independence through Employment* program may contact Anne Chace at JVS at 617-399-3201 or <achace@JVS-Boston.org>. Instruction takes place at JVS Center for Careers and Lifelong Learning, 29 Winter Street in Boston. The program is made available under a three-year Project with Industry grant.



Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- Sept. 6 **RSI (repetitive strain injury) Monthly Drop-in Support & Information Meeting** (no registration is necessary) on first Wednesday of each month, 5:30 to 7 pm at 650 Beacon Street in Boston, 4th floor Conference Room, steps from the Kenmore Square MBTA station, and a few doors to the right of the Barnes and Noble Bookstore. RSI Action volunteers will answer questions and provide resources and support, including the opportunity to view our provider evaluation book. For more information, call 617-247-6827, check web at <www.rsiaction.org> or email <info@rsiaction.org>.
- Sept. 6 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 to 9 pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture; 7-8 pm, on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- Sept. 6 **Weekly support group for adults with LD/ADHD** (learning disabilities & attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) will meet in Cambridge from 6 to 7:30 pm every Wednesday. Currently there are a few openings in this group, so if you are interested, contact Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117. The group meets in the Parish House of Christ (Episcopal) Church at 0 Garden St. close to Harvard Square.
- Sept. 12 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. They meet 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm. 142. Go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.com> to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- Sept. 13-15 **Aspire, Achieve, Empower: First National Conference on Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities** will take place Boston. Take advantage of this groundbreaking event to learn how Partners for Youth with Disabilities pioneered in the area of building mentoring relationships between youth (ages 6-24) with disabilities and adults with similar disabilities. Learn about different models of mentoring, how it can be used to provide bridges to education and employment, health and recreation, how to screen applicants, and where there is need for more research. The registration fee is \$375 for adults; \$175 for students. All events will be at the Hilton Boston Logan Airport. Register online at <www.regonline.com/pyd> or call 617-556-4075, x19 or email <administrator@pyd.org>.
- Sept. 14 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- Sept. 15 **DEADLINE for submitting applications for Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C.** – The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation is accepting applications from qualified mid-career professionals working in the field of inclusive services and supports for people with mental retardation, intellectual and developmental disabilities for its intensive 2007 Public Policy Fellowship in Washington, D.C. Contact Steven Eidelman at 302-831-2574 or <sme@udel.edu> with any questions about the process.

- Sept. 18-19 **Empowering Employers to Build an Inclusive Workforce** – Take advantage of this national conference sponsored by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) that will be held in Boston this year at the Hilton at Logan Airport. Planned especially for Human Resource, Employee Relations or EEO Specialists/Managers, ADA Coordinators and Compliance Officers, Rehabilitation Professionals, and individuals with disabilities, the conference will have three concurrent tracks will address ADA/legal issues, accommodation issues, and innovative employment practices. Registration (limited to 300) can be done online. For details, go to <<http://conference.jan.wvu.edu/Symposium.htm>>. The fee is \$475 after August 1. For more information contact the Registration Coordinator for JAN at 800-526-7234 (Voice/TTY), 304-293-5407 Fax, <conference@jan.wvu.edu> or write to JAN, West Virginia University, P.O. Box 6080, Morgantown, WV 26506.
- Sept. 19 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston
- Sept. 20 **Providing and Accessing Reasonable Accommodations**, a training sponsored by Mass. Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), will be held at the Keystone Apartments, 151 Hallet Street in Dorchester, 8:45 am – 1pm. This updated introductory course will provide basic information about reasonable accommodations and fair housing for people with physical and mental disabilities. Registration fees range from \$25 – 65. For more information and registration call 617-854-1020 or contact Janeen Harris at <jharris@masshousing.com>.
- Sept. 23 **Full day Ropes Course in North Andover** for all ages is sponsored by Outdoor Explorations. Ropes courses are designed to provide experiences for groups and individuals that highlight problem solving, teamwork and leadership skills. Consisting of both high and low elements, trained facilitators will guide you and the group through all activities, on and off the ground. Trained facilitators will provide instruction and equipment customized to each individual's needs. The registration fee is \$75 per person. For more information or to register contact Shantelle Carmichael at Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorex.org>. (also offered on October 22)
- Sept. 27 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA**, meets 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room #2. Call 617-973-7507 voice, or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information, to request Interpreters, or confirm date and time of meeting. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings.
- Sept. 30 **Asperger Syndrome Connections 2006** – Annual Conference for families, teens, adults and professionals, 8:30 am – 4: 30 pm at Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough. Program features keynote speaker, Dr. Miles Tarter, Dept. of Psychiatry at McLean Hospital, 3 workshop sessions, and bookstore. Registration fee is \$100 for members of Asperger's Assn. of New England (AANE) and \$135 for others. Financial assistance is available to Mass. residents through the Developmental Disabilities Council. For more information go to <www.aane.org> or call 617-393-3824.
- Sept. 30 **Accessible Hiking in Pope John Paul / Neponsett River Park in Dorchester** will be lead by Brenda Kennedy as part of the Universal Access Program of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Assistive equipment such as Terra Trek manual wheelchairs, baby joggers, walkers, crutches and gait belts, along with teamwork will unite people of all abilities in accessing conventional hiking trails. The program includes some nature interpretation and other fun activities. The cost is \$2 per person, \$4 per family or \$10 for groups. To register, call 413-259-0009 or email <gigi.ranno@state.ma.us>. (See October 11 and 12 for other locations.)
- October 4 **RSI Monthly Drop-in Group** – first Wednesday of the month; see Sept. 6 listing for details.
- October 7 **Sailing in Boston Harbor** – Sponsored by Outdoor Explorations, this midday (10 am – 2 pm) adventure is for all ages. The registration fee is \$40. For more information or to register contact Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorex.org>.
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- October 7-9 **Intermediate Backpacking in the White Mountains of NH** – Enjoy incredible scenery and learn the fundamentals of campsite selection, tent pitching, and backcountry cooking. Make new friends and build teamwork skills. Equipment and instruction customized to your needs, use of backpacks, camping and hiking gear and all meals are provided. The registration fee for this weekend adventure is \$130. For more information or to register contact Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorex.org>.
- October 9 **FREE Open House at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA)** on Columbus Day in conjunction with the Fenway Alliance. The address is 465 Huntington Ave. in Boston. There will be tours for visitors who are blind or visually impaired, and Deaf artists will lead tours for Deaf visitors. Some activities will be ASL interpreted. For more information contact Ruth Celia Kahn, Accessibility Assistant at the MFA, Voice: (617) 369-3302, TTY: (617) 267-9703, Fax: (617) 267-9328 or <rkahn@mfa.org>.
- October 10 **Basic Rights, presented in Portuguese and English** – This workshop provides families with an introduction to their rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Massachusetts Special Education Law and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It is designed to help parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, to decide the child's eligibility for special education, to plan, make decisions and to monitor the educational progress of their child. Workshop materials are also available in Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered 7-9 pm in Framingham. Get specific location and register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- October 10 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. second Tuesday of the month (See Sept. 12th listing for details.)
- October 11 **Accessible Hiking on Blue Hills State Reservation in Milton** is part of the Universal Access Program of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. See Sept. 30 listing for details.
- October 12 **Pandemic Flu Public Engagement Project** – Join an important conversation with others to plan for the needs of people who are elderly, disabled, or homeless in the event of a flu pandemic in Cambridge. Get the facts, ask questions, share your concerns and find solutions that work for you. Sponsored by the Cambridge Public Health Department, this 8:30 am – 3 pm public forum will be held at the YWCA , 8 Temple Street near Central Square in Cambridge. To RSVP, contact Jennifer Fils at 617-665-3875 or <jfils@challiance.org>.
- October 12 **LD/ADHD Task Force for adults with Learning Disabilities / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder** is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC State headquarters, 27-48 Wormwood Street in Boston (south of Fort Point Channel) in the 6th floor large conference room. Business meeting from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information contact Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117 voice, 617-497-5257 fax.
- October 12 **Accessible Hiking Program at Great Brook Farm in Carlisle** will explore a cranberry bog and old trees. This is part of the Universal Access Program of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. See Sept. 30 listing for details.
- October 12 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 – 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- October 17 **Emergency preparedness for people with disabilities** will be the topic of this year's disability employment event sponsored by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD). Join us for a light lunch and informative panel discussion, 12:30-1:30 p.m. in the second floor conference room of City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway in Cambridge. Information will be relevant to businesses, city departments and non-profit organizations as well as individuals and families. For more information contact the Commission at 617-349-4692 voice, 617-492-0235 TTY, or <mmuehe@cambridgema.gov>.
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- October 17 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.
- October 21 **NAMI Massachusetts Annual Convention** – The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Massachusetts will feature Michael Hogan, MD, as keynote speaker for its annual meeting at Lombardo's in Randolph, MA. Dr. Hogan is Chair of the President's Freedom Commission on Mental Health and has been the Director of the Ohio Dept. of Mental Health since 1991. The program will also include workshops and a business meeting. Registration fees range from \$15 for low income to \$45 for non-members. For details contact the NAMI Massachusetts office at 781-938-4048, namimass@aol.com or check the website at www.namimass.org.
- October 22 **Full day Ropes Course in North Andover** for all ages is sponsored by Outdoor Explorations. (see Sept. 23 listing for detailed description) Registration fee is \$75 per person. For more information or to register contact Outdoor Explorations: 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, <info@outdoorex.org>.
- October 24 **An IEP for My Child** is a workshop that takes parents step-by-step through the development of the Individual Education Program (IEP) for their child who receives special education services because of his/her disability. Parents learn how to articulate a Vision for their child, how to use the results of evaluations to set goals and how to measure their child's progress. The workshop, presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), will be held at McCall Middle School, 458 Main Street, Winchester, 7-9 pm. Workshop materials are available in Spanish. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- October 25 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT)**, 1-3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 1. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings
- October 29 **Genetics in the Jewish Community: A Personal Matter Needing Professional Guidance** is a conference sponsored by the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston in partnership with Genzyme Corporation at the Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center, 333 Nahanton St. in Newton, 1-5:30 pm. The goals of the program, including keynote address by Susan Parker, MD, concurrent breakout sessions and a family panel with Q & A, is to raise awareness, educate and provide resources for individuals, families and professionals. Registration fees range from \$18 for individuals to \$45 for professionals. For more information contact Judy Pearl, Director, Special Needs Services at 617-558-6508 or <jpearl@jccgb.org>.
- November 3 **Climb and Dine at MetroRock Climbing Center in Everett** – Trained staff will help you improve your climbing skills in a fun and safe indoor environment. Use of the rock wall, equipment (helmet and harness) and instruction customized to your needs and snacks are provided. After learning the basics of climbing with new and old friends, participants will go to a nearby restaurant to recount the day's fun over dinner. Outdoor Exploration offers transportation to the site. The registration fee is \$40 per person. For more information or to register contact Shantelle Carmichael at Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorex.org>.
- November 8 **An IEP for My Child** – This workshop (see description in Oct. 24 listing) presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) will be held at Devotion School, 345 Harvard Street in Brookline, 7-9 pm. Workshop materials are available in Spanish. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- November 9 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30– 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- Nov. 18 **Pandemic Flu Preparedness Among Special Populations** – a forum sponsored by the Massachusetts Council of Churches (MCC) Disability Ministries Network, 10 am – 3 pm at Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, 207 Washington St. in Wellesley Hills will focus on how people with disabilities, families and advocates should plan

for emergencies. The annual Allen Gunn Disability Ministry Recognition Award will also be presented. Lunch will be provided. For more information and to register, call 617-523-2771 or email <flettmc@yahoo.com>.

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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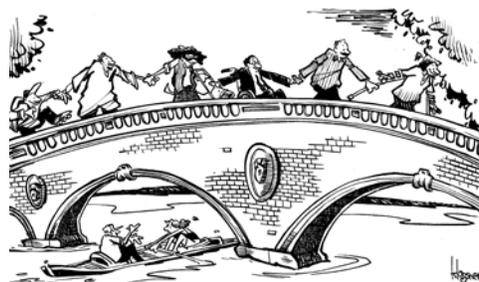
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AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,
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We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

If you would rather receive your copy of *ACCESSLetter* electronically, please provide us with your name and e-mail address. To request that your name be removed from our mailing list, contact us at 617-349-4692 Voice, 617-492-0235 TTY, 617-349-4766 Fax, or cthompson@cambridgema.gov

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

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