

# AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for  
Persons with Disabilities

## State: Disability Placard Abuse “Rampant”



Following a fieldwork investigation begun in the summer of 2006 in downtown Boston commercial and shopping districts, a state inspector general’s report issued last month revealed “rampant”

abuse of disability parking placards. Among the types of abuse listed in the state Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report were fraudulent use of disability placards registered to deceased individuals and illicit use of expired, altered and counterfeit placards.

Of the 965 placards observed during the investigation, 49 placards (6.5%) were found registered to deceased persons. Perhaps even more egregious was the OIG’s finding that nine of these 49 placards were revealed to have been renewed after the disabled person’s death.

Other widespread placard abuse practices documented in the OIG report involved the use of expired or counterfeit placards. During the investigation, 16% of the placards observed were either expired or had the expiration date and placard number obstructed.

(Placard Abuse continued on page 2)

## Largest ATM Chain to Improve Blind Access



People who are blind or visually impaired will soon enjoy a wider variety of locations to get cash from an ATM. In an ADA lawsuit settlement announced earlier this summer,

Houston-based Cardtronics, the nation’s largest operator of ATMs, entered into an agreement with the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office and the National Federation for the Blind (NFB), to provide audio “voice-guided” access to most of its machines.

Typically, Cardtronics ATMs are located in retail locations, train stations, convenience stores, and other non-bank locations, with a total of over 25,000 ATMs in all 50 states. Among the features that Cardtronics agreed to equip its voice-guided ATMs with include speech output with earphone jacks, tactile controls, audible user-interruptible operating instructions, audible transaction prompts, and user privacy.

The settlement agreement mandates that nearly all company-owned ATMs will all be equipped with these features by mid-2008. For merchant-owned ATMs, Cardtronics also pledged to not renew any merchant’s contract after mid-2010 unless that merchant’s ATM is voice-guided. Cardtronics further committed that by mid-2010, 90% of all of its transactions will be voice-enabled. In addition, Cardtronics will launch a marketing plan targeting high-volume merchants to assist in complying with the 90% transaction requirement and offer free voice upgrades or replacement ATMs at cost.

(ATM Access continued on page 2)

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Psychiatric Disabilities in the Workplace**

**Tuesday, October 16th, 2007**

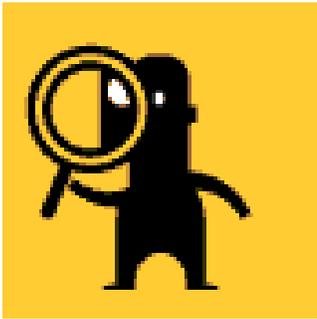
**Noon to 2:00 p.m.**

**Cambridge City Hall Annex  
344 Broadway - second floor**

**See events calendar for more details.**

## (Placard Abuse continued)

Disability rights advocates reacted to the OIG report with outrage and dismay. Stanley Eichner, Executive Director of Boston's Disability Law Center, said "It's incredibly unfortunate that people would abuse this important program. Disability parking spaces are more than a casual concern to folks with disabilities; in fact, they're essential to folks with disabilities in their ability to live independently in the community."



Following the issuance of the OIG report, the state Registry of Motor Vehicles announced it was making changes to tighten the placard application and renewal process, and was stepping up education and enforcement of the

placard program. Among the RMV initiatives:

- Placard applications have been revised and consequences of abuse by applicants and medical doctors made clear.
- Monthly cross-checks with the Social Security Administration are now made to prevent the renewal of placards of deceased people.
- License information of medical professionals is routinely checked to prevent fraudulent signatures on applications for placards.
- Disability placards have been reformatted to make it difficult to obscure expiration dates. Additional security features have been added, such as the Registrar's signature.
- A web-based reporting tool allows individuals to report suspected abuse of plates and parking spots:

[www.mass.gov/rmv/hp\\_complaint/index.htm](http://www.mass.gov/rmv/hp_complaint/index.htm)

Currently, anyone cited for abusing a disability placard is subject to a \$500 fine, revocation of the placard and a 30-day suspension of their driver's license for a first offense. Repeat offenders face a \$1,000 fine and up to a year's license suspension.

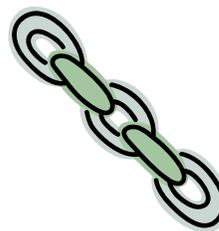
## (ATM Access continued)

Advocates praised the settlement agreement. Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "To be full participants in modern society, blind people must have access to these [ATM] devices. This agreement represents a monumental step forward for all blind Americans. We look forward to working with Cardtronics to make sure that blind people everywhere can experience the same fast, convenient service that sighted people enjoy."

Dan Goldstein, the attorney representing NFB, remarked on the importance of the settlement, "This is a first settlement involving non-bank ATMs, which is now more than 50% of the ATMs nationwide. By the end of this year, all ATMs owned by Cardtronics, which number approximately 17,000, will be accessible. This will get us to the point where, the expectation on the part of a blind ATM user will be any ATM they approach will likely be accessible, rather than not."

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## New Registry Links Missing Family Members



For decades, parents of children with disabilities were advised by professionals to put them in an institution and "forget you ever had them." The documentary, "Where's Molly?" tells the story of

one boy who's younger sister was sent away when he was six and how his parents would never answer his question about where she was. See [www.wheresmolly.net](http://www.wheresmolly.net) for the whole story.

Many of the disabled children placed in the old institutions never had any further regular contact with their families... no one to call on their birthday, no one to help them make decisions, no family with who to share holidays. But states are gradually replacing their institutions with smaller, community-based residential settings that support

family connections, but until now there has been no good way to help reconnect families separated years ago.

Now, there is an opportunity for family members to reunite. The Arc has recently announced sponsorship of a new online database and service that will match families with a missing member with a disability. The registry can be found at <[www.FindFamilyRegistry.org](http://www.FindFamilyRegistry.org)>. “In the Registry, people can give basic information on themselves and the people they’re looking for. We will contact them if we find a match,” said Elbert Johns from TheArcLink.

“We will make sure that the person with a disability either has the ability to give consent to release personal information, or is properly represented by a person who can. We’ll also make sure that the family member who is seeking contact has a legitimate reason for doing so.” Online searching of the Registry will not be offered. For more information, contact Elbert Johns <[ejohns@thearclink.org](mailto:ejohns@thearclink.org)> or Laura Hart <[hart@thearc.org](mailto:hart@thearc.org)>.

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## Pro Arte’s Mission of Accessible Music

There were ambulances in the driveway, wheelchairs in the aisles and gurneys in the hall...the concert hall that is. It was 1978, and Larry Hill was determined that every member of the community regardless of their circumstances would have the opportunity to enjoy the fine music at Harvard’s Sanders Theatre. As Chaplain for the Boston-Cambridge Ministry in Higher Education at Harvard, Larry Hill did a lot of work around religion and the arts. He had a passion for classical music, and it was under his guidance that the founders of the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra made it their mission to involve all area residents in their community-based orchestra

This orchestra is “accessible” in many ways. It is New England’s only cooperatively governed orchestra where its musicians sit on the board of directors, have creative input into the programming, and help select the guest artists.

Their *Access to the Best Music* program provides accommodations for people with physical and mental disabilities, translators for people who do not speak English, and reduced price tickets to make the performances accessible to people on very limited incomes.



**PRO ARTE**  
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA OF BOSTON

Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra is currently offering subscriptions to its exciting 2007-08 Season. To request an application for the “*Access to the Best Music*” discounted tickets (tickets to all six concerts for a total of \$36) contact the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra office before September 15 at <[info@proarte.org](mailto:info@proarte.org)> or 617-779-0900. As part of this season’s festivities, Pro Arte will be asking audience members to participate in its own version of “American Idol” as the orchestra showcases six great conductors during its search for a new music director.

By Kathleen Kearns

### Cambridge Disabilities Commission REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

We are looking for projects that:

- promote inclusion,
- help eliminate discrimination, or
- teach universal design



The Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities is offering small grants up to \$5,000 each to support projects that promote inclusion and integration of people with disabilities, advance universal design, and help eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities. Virtually any proposal will be considered if it promotes the full participation of people with disabilities and benefits the community of Cambridge at large.

For more information contact the Commission at 617-349-4692 voice, 617-492-0235 TTY or <[cthompson@cambridgema.gov](mailto:cthompson@cambridgema.gov)>

## Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- Sept. 4 & 6    **MDDA (Manic Depression & Depressive Association) Support Group at Mass. General Hospital** meets every Tuesday and Thursday, 7-9 pm on the 4th floor in the Yawkey Building. Follow the signs. Meetings are free and open to public. For more information call 617-855-2795.
- Sept. 5        **MFA Gallery talk on Vincent Van Gogh for blind and low-vision visitors** – 5 to 6 pm will include verbal description and tactiles of both two pictures, “the Ravine” and the underlying painting, “Wild Vegetation.” A gallery talk, *Secret van Gogh: A Masterpiece Under the Surface*, follows from 6-7 pm and is open to all visitors. Reservations are required for the 5 o’clock session. Call 617-369-3302 or <access@mfa.org> for more information. The Museum of Fine Arts is located at 475 Huntington Ave. in Boston.
- Sept. 5        **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 near 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, or check website at <www.rsiaction.org>
- Sept. 5        **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 to 8 pm, on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- Sept. 6, 20, & 27    **WildWorks: Community Service Days** – Join Outdoor Explorations staff and people from all walks of life, with and without disabilities, to help reclaim a wheelchair accessible park built in the 1970’s. The Thompson Center in Hyde Park has accessible paths, a maze and a fishing pond but has suffered from lack of funding and neglect. These workdays from 9:30 am to 3 pm are a good way to meet other people from the community and make a positive impact on the neighborhood. Free breakfast and lunch will be provided by Blue Cross Blue shield. For more information contact Shantelle Carmichael at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <scarmichael@outdoorex.org>.
- Sept. 8        **Kayaking on regional lakes and rivers** – Learn new skills in a two-person kayak adapted to meet your needs. Fee of \$55 includes equipment, individualized instruction, snacks and transportation between departure and activity site. Sponsored by Outdoor Explorations (OE) whose innovative and cooperative approach to adventure helps make the outdoors a welcoming place for people with disabilities. For more information or to register, contact OE at 781-395-4999 or <info@outdoorex.org>.
- Sept. 11        **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. They meet 7:30 to 9:30 pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.135. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.org>.

- Sept. 12      **Weekly support group for adults with LD/ADHD** (learning disabilities & attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) meets in Cambridge near Harvard Square, 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.
- Sept. 12 & 13      **Rosh Hashanah services with ASL interpretation** will be offered at Temple Beth David in Canton at 8 pm on Wednesday and 10 on Thursday. One does not need to be a member to attend, but you must reserve tickets by Sept. 7 for seats close to sign language interpreter. For more information or to reserve a seat, contact Sandy Slavet at <sslavet@jfcsboston.org>.
- Sept. 15      **Family Autism Day at Franklin Park Zoo** – will include train rides, carousel, animal presentations by staff, food, crafts, and information tables from 11 am to 3 pm. Tickets are \$7 in advance for adults; \$6.50 for children 12 and under. For more information call Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts (AFAM) 781-891-6270, ext. 102 or go to <www.afamaction.org>.
- Sept. 18      **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1 to 3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.
- Sept. 20      **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. Please note change of date (to third Thursday) due to Rosh Hashanah religious holiday.
- Sept. 20      **Autism Support Group** – meets the third Thursday of each month at the Central Square Branch Library, 45 Pearl Street in Cambridge, 6:30-8:30 pm. For more information contact Lorraine Iacopucci at 978-624-2304 or <liacopucci@nsarc.org>.
- Sept. 21      **Welcoming and Supporting Children and Youth of All Abilities within Out-of-School Time Programs**, is theme of this year's Statewide Conference of the Build the Out-of-School Time Network. Presentations, workshops and discussions will take at Northeastern University; Curry Student Center in Boston from 8 am to 4 pm. \$30 registration fee covers breakfast, lunch and material. For more information and registration packet go to <www.bosnet.org> or call 617-720-1290, ext. 230.
- Sept. 21      **Paul G. Hearne \$10,000 Leadership Awards application DEADLINE** – This generous award administered by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and sponsored by the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation helps identify and support emerging leaders with disabilities who will carry on the disability rights movement. For more information and an application go to <www.aapd-dc.org/awards/awards08/hearne\_app08.html>.
- Sept. 21 & 22      **Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur services with ASL interpretation** will be offered at Temple Beth David in Canton at 8 pm on Friday and 10 am and 4 pm on Saturday. One does not need to be a member to attend, but you must reserve tickets by Sept. 7 for seats close to sign language interpreter. For more information or to reserve a seat, contact Sandy Slavet at <sslavet@jfcsboston.org>.
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- Sept. 22      **Sailing at Piers Park in the Boston Harbor** – See the Boston skyline like you never have before! Join Outdoor Explorations to learn about rigging, tying knots and steering a boat from a skilled skipper. Keel boats that combine stability with speed, flotation devices, customized instruction, snacks and transportation are provided. Fee is \$40 per person; some scholarships are available. Wheelchair accessible. Call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or email <info@outdoorex.org> for more information and exact time.
- Sept. 26      **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1–3:30 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. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings.
- Sept. 27      **Advances in Autism: Research and Psychopharmacology** – 6:30-8:30 pm at 6 Southside Road in Danvers. Jean Frazier, MD, Co-Director, Center for Child and Adolescent Development at Cambridge Health Alliance and associate professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School will discuss current trends in pediatric psychopharmacology and present information from current research studies. RSVP to Stephanie Gammons at 978-624-2311 or <sgammons@nsarc.org>.
- Sept. 28-29    **Success and Asperger's Syndrome; New Ideas and Strategies**, 2-day conference for parents and professionals at John Hancock Hall, 180 Berkeley Street in Boston. Sponsored by AANE (Asperger's Association of New England) Registration \$175 - \$210; DEADLINE is Sept. 14. Sponsored by Asperger's Association of New England (AANE). For more information contact Lisa at 617-393-3824 or check the website at <www.aane.org>.
- Sept. 29      **Picnic and Networking Day for families of children with Autism** at Endicott Park, 57 Forest Street in Danvers. Kids can enjoy a bouncy house, face painting, music and games. Drinks, hamburgers and hotdogs to be provided by Danvers Kiwanis Club. RSVP by Sept. 21 to Stephanie Gammons at <sgammons@nsarc.org>.
- October 2     **Work: What Do I Need to Know?**– Join a small interactive group of individuals with Asperger's to learn practical strategies for navigating the career decision-making process. The group is limited to 6 participants, post high school through age 26. It will meet for six sessions, every other Tuesday 3-4:30 pm at the Asperger's Association of New England (AANE) office, 182 Main Street in Watertown. The \$60 registration fee will be due once the final group members are determined. For application and more information contact Gail Kastorf at AANE, 978-393-3824, ext 207 or <gaail.dastorf@aane.org>.
- October 3     **RSI Monthly Drop-in Group** – 5:30 pm first Wednesday of month, see Sept. 5 for details
- October 3     **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 to 9 pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (See Sept. 5 for details.)
- Oct. 2, 9, 16, 24, 30 and Nov. 6, 13, 20 –**Parent Consultant Training Institutes** presented by Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) will focus on state and federal education laws and how to effectively manage their child's and/or client's special education program. The 8 one-day sessions meet from 9 am to 3:30 pm at FCSN offices, 1135 Tremont Street, #420 in Boston. The fees (\$325 for parents of children with special needs; \$425 for professionals) include materials. Some scholarships are available. For more information contact Phyllis Sneirson at 617-236-7210 or <Phyllis@fcsn.org>.
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October 9     **2008 Henry B. Betts \$50,000 Award nomination DEADLINE** – The Henry B. Betts Award was created in 1989 to annually honor an individual whose work and scope of influence has significantly improved the quality of life for people with disabilities in the past, and will be a force for change in the future. It is named for Dr. Henry Betts in recognition of his pioneering leadership in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation and decades of dedicated service to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and is funded by the Prince Charitable Trusts. Recipients are individuals at the pinnacle of their careers with professional accomplishments over their lifetimes that justify receipt of the award. For more information and an official nomination form, go to <[www.aapd-dc.org/awards/awards08/betts\\_app08.html](http://www.aapd-dc.org/awards/awards08/betts_app08.html)>.

October 9     **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 (Sept. 11 listing for details.)

October 11    **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.

October 12-13     **Christian Retreat with Praise, Worship and Fellowship for Deaf individuals and their families** at China Lake Conference Center in Maine. The retreat will be led by Rev. Carol Vetter who has worked in Deaf Cultural Ministries for over 35 years. The retreat be conducted in sign language, but there will be a voice interpreter available. \$100 /person for lodging and meals; \$40 for Saturday, \$25 for Sunday if not staying overnight; children under 5 are free. Register by Sept. 29. For more information contact Stephen Gagnon at 207-582-2332 (VP/TTY) or <[sgrchrist@roadrunner.com](mailto:sgrchrist@roadrunner.com)>.

**October 16    Psychiatric Disabilities in the Workplace** event sponsored by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the Cambridge Employees Committee on Diversity.

This noontime presentation will be at the City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway in the second floor conference room. Our panel discussion will help you learn more about these hidden disabilities that may affect you, your co-workers, friends or family. This event recognizes October as National Employment of Persons with Disabilities month. Lunch will be provided. For sign language interpreters or other accommodations please contact the Commission for Persons with Disabilities at 617-349-4692 (voice) or 617-492-0235 (TTY) or e-mail: <[cthompson@cambridgema.gov](mailto:cthompson@cambridgema.gov)>.



October 16    **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 18    **Autism Support Group** in Cambridge – See Sept. 20 listing for details

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- October 19 **Research Fellowships in Accessible Transportation** application DEADLINE – Easter Seals Project ACTION in cooperation with the Council of University Transportation Centers will award two fellowships with stipends of \$3000 to enable two graduate students to expand their studies related to accessible transportation and customers with disabilities. The products of research conducted under this project are used to contribute solutions to the transportation challenges people with disabilities encounter in their communities and will be shared nationally. Program description and applications materials are available in PDF and text formats. For more information contact Penny Everline at 800-659-6428 or <peverline@easterseals.com>.
- October 21 **Ropes Course: Challenge Yourself to Reach New Heights** – Ropes courses are designed to provide experiences for groups and individuals that promote problem solving, teamwork and leadership skills. Trained facilitators will guide you through activities and provide equipment (helmet and harness) and instruction customized to your needs. Wheelchair accessible. Course is in Boxford, MA and the activity runs generally from 10 am to 4 pm. Fee is \$75 per person with scholarships available. Contact Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorex.org> more information and exact time.
- October 24 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1–3:30 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. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings.
- October 27 **Ropes Course with Outdoor Explorations** – See Oct. 21 listing for details.
- November 8 **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.

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## 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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Henrietta Davis  
Marjorie C. Decker  
Anthony D. Galluccio  
Craig A. Kelley  
Brian Murphy  
E. Denise Simmons  
Michael A. Sullivan

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City Administration

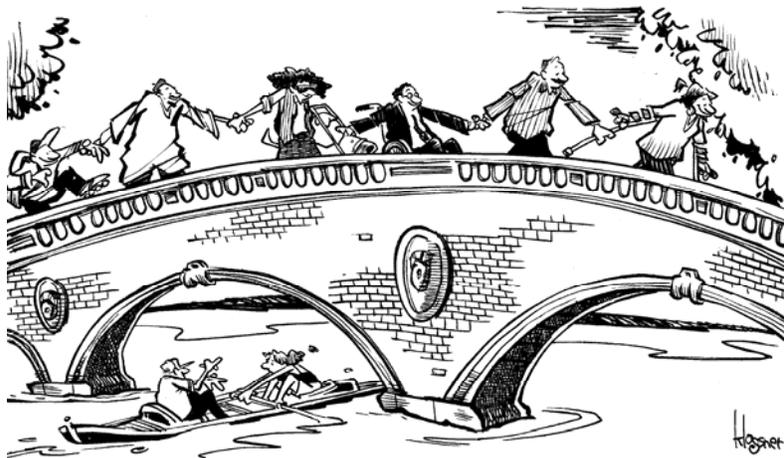
Robert W. Healy, *City Manager*  
Richard C. Rossi, *Deputy City Manager*  
Ellen Semonoff, *Assistant City Manager, Human Service Programs*

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Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Michael Muehe, *Executive Director/ADA Coordinator*  
Carolyn Thompson, *Disability Project Coordinator*

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*ACCESSLetter* is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,

part of the Department of Human Service Programs,

51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139

We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: [www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm](http://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

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**Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities**

51 Inman Street, second floor

Cambridge, MA 02139