

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

Getting the Help You Need: Hiring and Managing a PCA

How do you go about finding and hiring a PCA (Personal Care Attendant) once you have been evaluated and qualified for these services? (See

“PCA Services: An Introduction” in the July-August 2009 issue of *AccessLetter*.)



You may hire anybody you choose, as long as they are not a family member, are over the age of 18, and are legal to work in this country.

A common place to post a PCA ad is on Craigslist <www.craigslist.org>, but you can also put ads in the paper. You can post signs at local colleges, libraries, places of worship or the like; ask friends and family for recommendations; or, for a child, ask around at the child’s school if any aids or teachers would be available for afternoon or evening hours. Another great source is called Rewarding Work at 866-211-9675 or <www.rewardingwork.org>.

College students make great PCAs, especially someone going into the field of nursing, physical or occupational therapy, special education, or disability work, if you can deal with their changing schedules once in a while. Many PCAs are immigrants for whom English is a second language. Communication with a PCA is extremely important so you should be very clear about how fluent in your language the person needs to be.

(More on PCA Hiring, page 2)

Massachusetts to be a Model Employer for Disabled People

In June, Gov. Deval Patrick unveiled a new initiative which seeks to make the Commonwealth of Massachusetts a model employer of people with disabilities. At a press conference, Patrick administration officials presented a new Strategic Plan which describes this initiative in greater detail. Central to the Strategic Plan is the goal of increasing the overall number of people with disabilities hired by agencies in the executive branch of state government. Another goal is to ensure the successful retention and promotion of state workers with disabilities and older workers who age into disability.



In order to accomplish this, the state plans to enhance its ongoing targeted outreach to and recruitment of applicants with disabilities. Hiring managers and ADA coordinators within state government will convene a focus group to develop robust recruitment efforts, and explore how best to apportion recruitment and outreach efforts between centralized and state agency-based functions.

Jobs for People with Disabilities State as Model Employer

-- a panel presentation --

Thursday, October 1st, 2009

12 noon - 1:30 pm

City Hall Annex – 2nd floor conference room
344 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139

(See listing on page 7 for more details.)

(More on Model Employer, page 4)

PCA Hiring (cont'd)

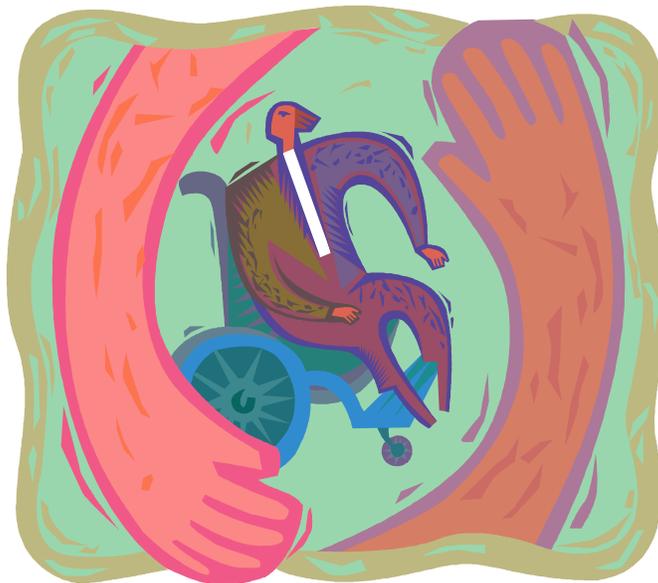
After you hear from a number of people and have some job candidates, the next step is to set up some interviews. For most people, an interview at home is best so that you can show the person around your house and your daily routine. However, I would *strongly recommend* having another person present if you are meeting a stranger at your home for the first time. During the interview talk about the specifics of the job as well as asking the usual questions about the person's experience, references, education. How many times a week do you need assistance showering? What do you like to eat? Is the person comfortable with cooking that? Probe at least a little into the person's background and lifestyle; there is nothing wrong with different beliefs, but finding out that someone is a vegan who won't touch animal products could be problematic if you want them to fix eggs and hamburgers.

Also talk about the pay rate and the paperwork involved. If they can afford it, some people supplement the PCA salary or provide a mileage reimbursement. Either before or after the interview, call at least three references, and speak to them about the person's reliability, timeliness, and character. Currently, PCAs in Massachusetts are not required to submit to a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) background check, but you can request it. Remember that a PCA will have potential access to everything in your house, finances, jewelry, etc, as well as your most precious commodity – yourself.

Since PCA work varies so much, I do not think it matters that much if a person has PCA experience or not, unless the consumer has complex medical needs. What really matters is if they will show up on time, respect you and your home, and work hard.

After you have informed the PCA that you are going to hire him/her, have a meeting to work out hours and job duties. Making a list that you can give to your PCA is good, but you will also want to go over everything related to your care, such as how you like to bathe, what you like to eat, and all the details therein. It is a fine to have a family member, friend, or caseworker there to help you define exactly what you need done. If you expect your PCA to manage medications or perform any procedure, such as changing a colostomy bag, it is good to write down clear instructions about this that your PCA can refer to when needed.

Be sure to discuss more mundane matters. Can they eat your food or should they bring their own? (If a PCA is with you for four hours or more, it is polite to offer them a break and a chance to eat something.) Where should they put their coat? Do you want to give them a key to your house, or unlock the door for them every time? Also be sure to discuss emergencies. Show them where your medication list, fire extinguisher, important phone numbers and first aid supplies are located



Both PCAs and the consumers they serve are continually learning things about each other. Over time, a more solid relationship will develop, so be patient in the first few weeks, and be aware that you will both probably make mistakes. Remember, as with any relationship, the most important tool you have is your ability to communicate. You might be surprised, but basic courtesy like saying 'please' and 'thank you' can make a lot of difference. It is best if both parties can be flexible and accommodating and respectful of each other. If your PCA is terrified of reptiles and you have an iguana, arrange to put its tank in a room where she does not have to go. If your service dog really needs to be brushed every day, explain why and talk it over. Remember that you are in charge and can and should expect good care, but try not to be nit-picky

You want things to be compatible with your PCA, but spending a lot of time with another person can lead to friendship and that can be tricky. As the employer, you need to be careful to draw the line between PCAs and friends, or PCA-hours and friend-hours. Do not get into a situation where either one of you takes advantage of the other's time, possessions or person and then says, "...but I thought we were friends" to excuse the behavior.

Be very, very careful not to let your health, safety or finances be compromised. If someone does abuse you, physically or verbally, or commits a crime such as stealing money from you, report it to the police immediately, and get help from a disability organization to learn how to avoid such events in the future.

Sometimes, even after they are hired, a PCA does not work out. Perhaps the PCA is simply unable to do certain tasks. I discovered after taking on one job that I could not transfer the woman properly. Or the commute is longer than they had expected and they are usually late, or you just plain do not like them. Whatever the reason, it is okay to fire a PCA. If they have done a good job in most respects, offer to provide a reference for future work.

Despite the fact that they are often in the background, PCAs are a vital part of the disability community. PCAs do very hard work for not a lot of money. They have formed a union and received a small pay raise, but they need our support to gain benefits and make a sustainable living from this work.

--- by *Kate Ryan, a 2008 graduate of Lesley University with a master's in interdisciplinary studies and a focus on disability advocacy. She has worked as a PCA.*

Model Employer (cont'd)

Working relationships with private employers and with other state governments will be cultivated to help identify model recruitment and outreach efforts. State officials will also meet with knowledgeable marketers to devise effective strategies for marketing the Commonwealth as a model employer.

New outreach procedures will be established to ensure that high school, trade school, and college students with disabilities are represented in the state's student volunteer and job internship programs. A new internship program will be designed with the goal of placing students with disabilities across the full range of state agencies. To facilitate more equitable access to all student workers, including those with disabilities, a centralized listing of internship opportunities across state agencies will be established.

The Strategic Plan also seeks to ensure that the Commonwealth's hiring processes effectively identify qualified applicants with disabilities by training and supporting managers and others involved with the interview and hiring process.

In order to answer questions about the Commonwealth's new Strategic Plan, the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities will present a panel discussion. This event is scheduled to take place on Thursday, October 1, 2009, from 12 PM until 1:30 PM, in the second-floor conference room of the City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway in Cambridge (intersection of Broadway and Inman Street).



The primary purposes of the panel discussion are to provide basic information about the strategic plan, about its goals and objectives, and how it will be implemented over the coming months. This event is cosponsored by the Cambridge Employees' Committee on Diversity and the Department of Human Service Programs.

Health Care Accessibility -- Share Your Story

Even though hospitals and doctors' offices are required to provide equal access to health care under the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with disabilities often find many barriers when seeking health care.

Never being weighed at a doctor's appointment or exam rooms that are too small to accommodate someone using a wheelchair are just a few examples. On inpatient floors, people with disabilities can be frustrated by the lack of accessible bathrooms or not finding prompt assistance with eating and repositioning.

As a starting point for addressing these problems, several individuals with disabilities joined the Boston Center of Independent Living (BCIL) and Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) in sending a letter to Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, explaining the type of problems they encountered as patients and why improvements were necessary.

After months of discussions, both hospitals signed agreements that require surveys of their facilities' architecture and equipment to determine compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and state accessibility regulations. To address barriers, the hospitals will renovate patient areas and modify or buy new equipment as necessary. The hospitals will also review and revise their policies and procedures to ensure equal access to care for people with disabilities.

The new accessibility improvements will be designed with the assistance of expert consultants, as well as BCIL and the individuals who signed the agreement. Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital will also provide training to their staff on accessible health care.



The problems encountered by individuals with disabilities at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital are all too common in most hospitals and doctor's offices. BCIL and GBLS are continuing to look into accessibility problems in other health care facilities.

If you are a person with a disability who is interested in being interviewed about barriers you have encountered at Boston-area hospitals and their outpatient locations, please contact Karen Schneiderman at BCIL: 617-338-6665; TTY: 617-338-6662 or <kschneiderman@bostoncil.org> or Laura Keohane at GBLS: 617-603-1564, TTY: 617-371-1228 or <lkeohane@gbls.org>. All interviews are confidential and no information will be shared without the interviewee's permission.

Cambridge Commission Looking for New Members

The Commission for Persons with Disabilities is looking for people to fill three vacancies on its citizen advisory board. Members must be current Cambridge residents. They will be expected to attend regular monthly meetings. The Commission meets at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at 51 Inman Street. Members serve 3-year terms in a volunteer capacity and should be willing to work on various short or long-term projects.

We need individuals who are interested in raising awareness about disability and access issues, eliminating discrimination, and promoting equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities.

We publish *AccessLetter* and have a web site where you can learn more about us:
<www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm>

The deadline for submitting letters of interest to City Manager, Robert W. Healy, is November 6, 2009. For more information, contact the Commission office, 617-349-4692 (voice) or 617-492-0235 (TTY) or <cthompson@cambridgema.gov>.

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- Sept. 1 & 3 **MDDA (Manic Depression & Depressive Association) Support Group** at Mass. General Hospital meets every Tuesday and Thursday, 7 - 9 p.m. 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. 2 **Injured Worker Support Meetings** – *(previously listed as RSI – repetitive strain injury)* Meetings are scheduled by appointment, often the first Wednesday of the month, 5:15 - 6:45 pm; call RSI Action at 617-247-6827 to set up a meeting. Meetings/appointments usually take place at 650 Beacon Street, Kenmore Square, Boston, 4th Floor Conference Room, near Kenmore Square. Volunteers provide resources and support. For more information, call 617-247-6827, or go to <www.rsiaction.org>.
- Sept. 2 **Weekly support group for adults with LD/ADHD** (learning disabilities & attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) meets in Cambridge near Harvard Square, 6 -7:30 p.m. every Wednesday. If you are interested, contact Angelica Sawyer at 617- 661-3117.
- Sept. 2 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 - 9 p.m. at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- Sept. 2 **NAMI Connection** – a support group for adults with mental illness, meets every Wednesday evening, 7 - 8:30 pm at Cambridge Hospital, 3rd Floor, Learning Center rooms C & D. The group is **free** and open to all who self-identify as having a mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. For more information, contact Carter at 617-776-7972 or <stbosal@arczip.com>.
- Sept. 8 **Boston Voice Users is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software.** They meet 7:30 – 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. 15 **Disclosing Asperger's & NLD in the Workplace: If, When & How to Do It** –presents information designed for job seekers and those who are currently employed. Topics include: questions employers can and cannot ask relative to a disability, risks & benefits of disclosing, reasonable accommodations and how to ask for them, how to develop an effective disclosure statement, and examples of successful disclosures. This workshop will be at Wellesley Community Center, 219 Washington Street in Wellesley, 7:00 - 9:30pm. Space is limited; register now! Fee of \$35 includes handouts. Download registration form at <www.ForwardMotion.info> or call 978-298-5186. Presented by Barbara Bissonnette of Forward Motion Coaching and Lee Rachel Jurman of Personal Disability Consulting, Inc. For more information contact Lee at 617-879-6039, <lee@personaldisability.com> or check her website at <www.personaldisability.com>.
- Sept. 16 **Senior Support Group for caregivers over 60** – meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Family Resource Center, 20 Gould Street in Reading. Share and learn with other seniors who have adult family members with developmental disabilities. For exact meeting time during summer months, contact Michelle Faugno at <fam2fam@themarc.org> or Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, 16 Warwick Road, Melrose, MA 02176.
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- Sept. 17 **Autism Support Group** – meets 3rd Thursday of each month, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Central Square Branch of Cambridge Public Library, 45 Pearl Street in Cambridge. For more information contact Lorraine Iacopucci at <liacopucci@nsarc.org> or 978-624-2304.
- Sept. 22 **Introduction to Employment Services** – This workshop provides an overview of community employment for individuals with disabilities and the variety of approaches that are taken to ensure success for the job seeker and the employer. This session is a prerequisite to nearly all of the other employment support workshops that are part of the *Work Without Limits* 2009 training series for Disability Service Providers in Massachusetts. The workshop is 9 am to 4 pm at the Wellesley Free Library, 530 Washington Street in Wellesley, MA. The workshop is presented by Institute for Community Inclusion and is FREE. For more information contact Melanie Jordan at 617-287-4327 or <melanie.jordan@umb.edu>. You can register online at <www.massworks.org/workwithoutlimits>. **Registration must be received 3 weeks prior to the event.** This workshop and other sessions in the training series are designed to provide staff with the information and skills needed to help clients meet their competitive employment goals.
- Sept. 23 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 – 3 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, 2nd floor Conference Room #2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or request interpreters. Security measures require proper ID for access to meetings.
- Sept. 10 **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.
- Sept. 23 & 24 **Community Access Monitor Training** – This two day workshop is presented by the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) at One Ashburton Place in Boston, 9 am to 4 pm each day. The training will include a brief History of Disability Rights and overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Regulations of the Mass. Architectural Access Board, how to survey a facility, and how to be a good advocate for accessibility. The registration fee is \$15 for consumers, \$85 for Professionals and covers all materials and lunch for both days. For more information or to request Accommodations (materials in Braille, large print, sign language interpreter) contact Jacqueline Higgins at MOD at 617-727-7440 or 1-800-322-2020 voice/TTY no later than Wednesday, Sept. 16. Registration should be mailed to Boston Center for Independent Living, 60 Temple Place, 5th floor, Boston, MA 02111, Attn: Evelyne Milorin by September 17. This is a scent free event; please, no perfume, after-shave, etc.



- Sept. 26 **Museum of Fine Arts presents programs for the Deaf and hard of hearing community** all day long. – Celebrate Deaf Awareness Week with new and old friends at the MFA. Programs include: Free admission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community between 10 am and 2 pm, American Sign Language Exhibition Tours of the Viva Mexico! Edward Weston and His Contemporaries and Vida y Drama: Modern Mexican Prints. There will also be guided tours of the Museum collections with FM

assistive-listening systems. For more information, contact Valarie Burrows at 617-369-3302 or <access@mfa.org> or visit <www.mfa.org>.

Sept. 26 **Companionship Training** – teaches ways to accompany people who have mental illness or addiction, who are homeless or living in poverty. Rev. Craig Rennebaum, who has had a street ministry in Seattle for 20 years, presents ways to build a supportive, healing relationship with a person in the midst of struggle or suffering. 10 am -1 pm at First Parish UU, 50 Church Street in Waltham. Program will be presented again on Oct. 24 in Auburndale. Sponsored by Chaplains on the Way; for more information contact Rev. Joan Murray at 617-504-6877 or <info@chaplainsontheway.org>.

Sept 29 – Oct 1 **Companions on the Road to Recovery from Mental Illness** – National Faith-Based Summit sponsored by Pathways to Promise: Interfaith Ministries & Mental. **Registration DEADLINE is Sept. 15** for this conference in Belleville, IL (just outside St. Louis). Pathways to Promise has mobilized national faith groups and local congregations across the United States to reduce stigma and support people with mental illnesses and their families in the process of recovery. The last two decades have seen exemplary models of ministry emerging in congregations across the country. Come learn from their success and help establish new pathways for progress and collaboration. For more information, call 314-877-8489, write Pathways to Promise national office is at 54 Arsenal Street, St. Louis, MO 63139 or go to <www.Pathways2Promise.org>.

October 1 **Commonwealth as Model Employer for People with Disabilities** – Come to this brown bag lunch presentation, 12 – 1:30 pm to learn more about the state's new strategic plan to hire more individuals with disabilities. Panelists include Sandra Borders, Massachusetts Office of Diversity & Equal Opportunity, Myra Berloff, Massachusetts Office on Disability, and Stan Eichner, Executive Office of Health & Human Services. The program will be at 344 Broadway in Cambridge, 2nd floor conference room. Beverages and light refreshments will be served. For sign language interpreters or other accommodations, please contact the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities by September 18 at 617-349-4692 voice, 617-492-0235 TTY, or <cthompson@cambridgema.gov>. This is a scent-free event; out of consideration for people with environmental illness or multiple chemical sensitivity, please refrain from using perfume or other scented products. Sponsored by Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Cambridge Employees' Committee on Diversity, and Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs.



October 2 **Accessible Hiking Program at Halibut Point State Park in Rockport** – Take a hike with *Stavros Outdoor Access!* Learn about the nearby ocean and quarry. Explore accessible trails and rugged paths with a focus on fun and meeting new people. Assistive equipment and team-work unite people of all abilities using *Terra Trek* mountain wheelchairs, push joggers and lots of stops to rest. Bring a lunch and enjoy activities, such as scavenger hunts, nature talks and letterboxing. Collect DCR passport stamps at each park! Sighted guides available; limited transportation is available. \$2 per person, \$4 for families, \$10 for groups. For more information and to register, call 413-259-0009.

Oct. 2-3 **Asperger Syndrome Connections 2009** – Asperger's Association of New England (AANE) Annual Conference for Parents, Educators, Professionals, and Adults with Asperger Syndrome, 9 am – 5:30 pm each day. On Oct. 2 teacher-author Kari Dunn Buron will speak on Social Cognition and learning theories as they relate to AS. The next day psychologist Dr. Tony Attwood from Australia will

talk about creating and sustaining adult lives including employment, social relationships and developing a comfortable adult identity. The conference will be in the John Hancock Hall at the Back Bay Events Center located at 180 Berkeley Street in Boston. Registration fees range from \$95-\$160 for AANE members, \$130-\$195 for non-members depending on the number of days in attendance. Massachusetts residents can apply to the Mass. Developmental Disability Council for reimbursement of registration fees by calling 617-770-7676, ext. 115. For more information and registration materials call 617-393-3824, ext. 0 or go to <www.aane.org/upcoming_events/AS_Connections_2009.html>.

October 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

October 14 **Accessible Hiking Program at Webb State Park in Weymouth** – This day's event will focus on water creatures. See Oct. 2 listing for details.



October 17 **Accessible Hiking Program at Maudslay State Park in Newburyport** – This day's event will have a Halloween theme. See Oct 2 listing for details.

Oct. 20 -21 **Job Development and Business Engagement** – This two-day training focuses on understanding employer needs and developing quality job matches. Topics include informational interviewing, marketing, labor market analysis, responding to objections, and accommodations. Registrants should plan to attend both days. This session is part of the *Work Without Limits* 2009 training series for Disability Service Providers in Massachusetts. You must complete Introduction to Employment Services prior to attending this training. (see Sept. 22 listing) The workshop is 9 am – 4 pm both days at the Massasoit Community College Conference Center, 770 Crescent Street/ Rt. 27 in Brockton. (Brockton is accessible by Commuter Rail.) The workshop is presented by Institute for Community Inclusion and is FREE. For more information contact Melanie Jordan at 617-287-4327 or <melanie.jordan@umb.edu>. You can register online at <www.massworks.org/workwithoutlimits>. Registration must be received 3 weeks prior to the event.

October 24 **Companionship Training**– teaches ways to accompany people who live with mental illness or addiction, who are homeless or living in poverty, 10 am – 1 pm at the Walker Center, 171 Grove Street in Auburndale. (See Sept. 26 listing for details.)

October 28 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 to 3 p.m. See Sept. 23 listing for details.

Nov. 12 **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.

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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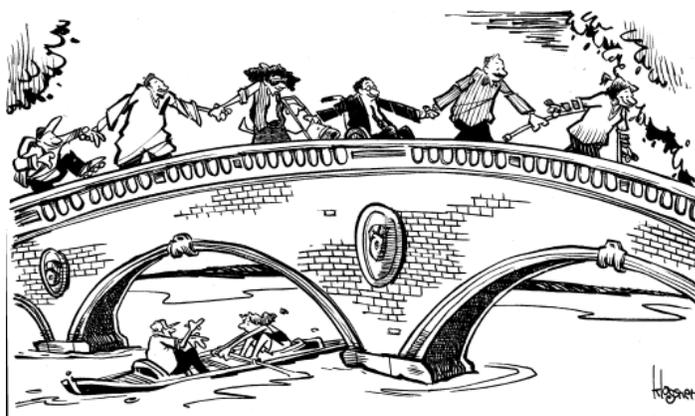
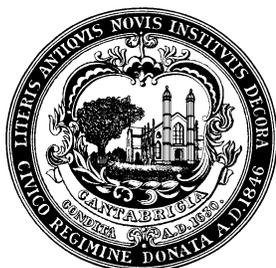
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AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,
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51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139

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

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

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Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

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