

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

Life with Disability: Moving Ahead

- They need opportunities to create relationships, network and socialize.
- They need to have goals, to know what they want to achieve and how to get there.
- They need to be included in the planning process.
- They need to be encouraged to speak for themselves.

Suggestions for supervisors? Tips for raising competent children? Guidelines for new board members? While these good ideas might be appropriate to any of the above situations, they actually emerged from a recent panel presentation about helping high school students with disabilities succeed as they move out into the world of work. It's odd how people often think that life with disability is such an unusual circumstance it necessitates a totally separate environment and distinct set of rules for living and learning.

At this program sponsored by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities last month, the panelists shared their insights about the barriers these students encounter on their paths from dependency to self-reliance. The presenters – Mary DeCoursey from the Rindge School of Technical Arts, Carreen Reinhold who is a Counselor with Mass. Rehab. Commission, Kerlyn Pacombe from Partners for Youth with Disabilities, and Jim Wilbur who is Director of the Threshold Program at Lesley

University – have years of experience working with young adults who have disabilities.

Sheltered environments and low expectations are a big part of the problem. Students need to be involved in planning their own futures. Keeping a student out of the team meetings related to his/her IEP

(Individual Education Plan) constitutes a form of segregation. The planning needs to center on the particular interests and abilities of the individual student. It is unfair to assume that all students in Special Education can only do certain kinds of jobs. As an example of how people with disabilities are given only limited opportunities, one person with a college degree told about going to a Career Fair for people with

disabilities where there were no representatives from companies hiring at the professional level.

These teens need to have goals and they need to know that they are expected to follow through on what they have agreed to do. To this end, their parents, teachers, coaches and advisors need to give very clear instructions and make sure they are understood. It is also crucial that these young adults learn how to explain or describe their disabilities. Each should be able to talk about how the disability affects how he learns or does things and what specific accommodations or supports he needs.



Carreen Reinhold (right) and Kerlyn Pacombe share points at October 8th panel presentation, "Transitions from School to Work"

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Students need to understand what their “test scores” mean, and how to talk about their abilities as well as things that are difficult to do. Becoming familiar with the language of “access” and getting practice in advocating for themselves will make it easier for them to negotiate what they need later in an employment situation.

Assistive technology (reading machines, adapted keyboards, voice enhancers) can make

information much more accessible to some disabled students. A description of anything like this that the student relies on should be included in the student’s IEP. Much time is lost when a student moves on to college or a work environment if she is prohibited from taking her customized equipment with her. Having to requisition everything anew and get it approved by all the authorities makes for a lot of down time. Better communications between schools, particularly high schools and colleges, could help facilitate such transfers, and some mechanism for shifting the costs from one institution to another would help immensely.

Parents play a huge role in how well their children with disabilities succeed in life. First, they have a right to information about their child’s situation in a language they understand even if it means hiring interpreters for meetings with school staff. They also need to be kept in the communication loop with the school their son or daughter would most likely attend even if that student has been “outplaced” to another educational institution. Parents know their children best and can practice talking about their strengths as well as their deficits. Parents can learn the language of advocacy and model it for their sons and daughters. They need to encourage and allow their disabled sons and daughters to speak for themselves and not always speak over their heads or interpret for them.

While our speakers’ suggestions were pertinent to young adults with disabilities as they travel from high school out into the broader world, their wise advice may be just as

valuable to the rest of us as we move ahead on our own journeys with disability. We can be confident about the things we do well and still be aware of the areas where we need assistance, modification to procedures or some accommodations. We can learn to accept certain

limitations without letting them obscure all the possibilities for our lives. We need to know how to communicate this to others without apology or anger. And we all need relationships and community.



Mary DeCoursey (right) and Jim Wilbur share their experiences at “Transitions from School to Work” panel presentation

Our lives can become unmanageable when we try to do it all on our own.

by Carolyn Thompson

Free Flu Shots for Cambridge Residents

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that, in addition to seniors and young children, people with disabilities and chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma, chronic bronchitis, and HIV infection should get flu shots. The Cambridge Public Health Department is making these shots available for FREE to Cambridge residents at several locations.

Many believe that the flu is like a bad cold; however, it is a far more severe lung disease and can lead to pneumonia. Each winter about 144,000 people are hospitalized with the flu, and 36,000 people die from flu-related complications. Even if you get a flu shot and still get the flu, you will probably be far less ill than if you weren’t vaccinated.

Please help the City recover some of the costs of this free program by bringing your Medicare health insurance card with you, if you have one. Clinics will be held on the following dates at the sites listed:

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- Nov. 3 **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) talk by Martin Cherniack, MD, MPH** will focus on “Soft Tissues and Soft Tissue Diagnosis: Why pain or dysfunction doesn’t always correspond with objective tests.” This free evening program at the Brookline Public Library, 361 Washington Street in Brookline is being sponsored by RSI Action. A light supper will be served at 6 p.m. and the presentation will begin at 6:30. Dr. Cherniack is from the Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University of Connecticut Health Center.
- Nov. 4 **Eating Disorders in the Jewish Community – focusing on adolescents, young adults and families,** 6-10 p.m. at Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center (JCC), 333 Nahanton Street, Newton, MA. Sponsored by JCC in partnership with the Klarman Eating Disorders Center at McLean Hospital, the program will feature keynote speaker, Catherine Steiner-Adair, Ed.D. and panel discussion, networking and resource table. Registration is \$18/person; \$36/family is due by Oct. 21. For more information contact Judy Pearl at <jpearl@jccgb.org> or 617-558-6508.
- Nov. 5 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, a peer support group for women with physical or emotional disabilities and/or chronic conditions meets at The Women’s Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 2-3:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Wheelchair accessible; contact Mary Quinn at 617-354-8807 or <woman@braintrust.org> for more information.
- Nov. 5—6 **Are They Being Served? Meeting the Needs of Job Seekers with Learning Disabilities** is a two-day training at Northeastern University in Boston presented by Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) for job developers. Topics to be covered include career planning & how learning style affects the job search, disclosure, identification of helpful job accommodations, and marketing to employers. Registration fee of \$125 includes breakfast, lunch and training materials. Accommodation request must be made 3 weeks prior to the training. For information and registration contact Drew Glazier at ICI by email <andrew.glazier@umb.edu> or 617-287-4337 voice, or 617-287-4350 TTY.
- Nov. 6 **Asperger Syndrome: Connections 2003** is an all day (8:30 am – 4 pm) conference at Bentley College in Waltham presented by the Asperger’s Association of New England (AANE). Key note address and workshops will cover sensory processing, new medications, learning styles and educational issues, Asperger Syndrome and the gifted, sexuality and social concerns of teens and young adults, and raising your child to be a self-advocate. For more information check the AANE website at <www.aane.org>, call 617-527-2894 or email <info@aane.org>. Continuing education credit is available.
- Nov. 6 **Financial Planning for Special Education Families** is a seminar for parents sponsored by the Arlington Special Education Parents Advisory Council (PAC). Speakers will present information on making college a reality, taking care of adult disabled children after the parents are gone, avoiding asset disqualification, long-term issues and avoiding delays in probate. The program will be at the Brackett Elementary School, 66 Eastern Ave, in Arlington, 7-9 p.m. Contact Tris at 781-641-0182 for more information.
- Nov. 7 **Forum on MCDHH services, EOHHS Reorganization and the budget outlook** will precede the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf convention that begins at 5:30 p.m. [see details below] Participation in this open discussion is important to the future of communication access in Massachusetts as the legislature begins work on the FY05 budget. For more information contact Heidi L. Reed at the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) at 617-740-1600 Voice, 617-740-1700 TTY, or <MCDHH.office@state.ma.us>.
- Nov. 7-8 **Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf (MSAD) biennial convention** begins on Friday evening with a demonstration of the Sprint Video Relay Service. It continues all day Saturday with workshops, elections and a keynote address by Heidi L. Reed, Commissioner for Mass. Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH). All events take place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Woburn and will be ASL interpreted. Attendees

must register ahead of time (\$50-60). For more information contact MSAD at 781-388-9115 TTY, 781-388-9114 voice, 780-388-9015 fax or email <MSADeaf@aol.com>.

- Nov. 11 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Room 143. There is often a guest speaker. Go to their website at <<http://harvee.billerica.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/boston-voice-users>> and click on Boston-voice-users Archives to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- Nov. 12 **Overcoming the Attitude Barrier: Helping Our Churches Welcome People with Disabilities**, 7 to 9 pm at the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, 207 Washington Street, Wellesley, MA. Clergy, lay leaders, religious educators, individuals with disabilities and their families are invited to a panel discussion by four people involved in disability ministry followed dessert and conversation. Network and learn about resources for your church. Sponsored by the Rhode Island and Massachusetts Council of Churches (MCC). To RSVP contact the MCC at 14 Beacon St., Rm. 416, Boston, MA 02108 or e-mail <council@masscouncilofchurches.org>
- Nov. 13 **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- Nov. 13 **Public Hearing on The RIDE**, MBTA's paratransit program for people with disabilities, at Boston City Council Chambers, Boston City Hall, One City Hall Plaza, Fifth floor. Share your experiences with The RIDE. For more information, contact Pam Rogers at the RIDE Advocacy Project, 617-566-3530 or <progers@rcn.com>.
- Nov. 13 **Healing and Art for Trauma Survivors** is a group for women that explores how to use art to heal past traumas. Meets the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street in Cambridge. Free, no experience necessary. For more information call the Center at 617-354-8807 or email: <info@cambridgewomenscenter.org>
- Nov. 14 **Caring for Our Mental Health**, with keynote speaker Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins U. School of Medicine and author of *An Unquiet Mind, Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*, and *Night Falls Fast*. This 8th Annual Conference on Women's Health and the Environment (free) is at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is a project of the Teresa and H. John Heinz III Foundation.
- Nov. 18 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1:00 to 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 or to request interpreters. For problems with The RIDE service, call 617-222-5123 voice, or 617-222-5415 TTY.
- Nov. 18 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston. For more information contact Robert Sneirson, Chair, <rsneirson@aol.com> or Mary Lou Maloney at 617-216-5181.
- Nov. 18 **MassRelay Community Forum**, 6-8 p.m. will be hosted by Mass. Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH), and will meet at 150 Mount Vernon Street, Basement Conference Room, Dorchester. MassRelay is a service enabling hearing people or people who do not use a TTY text telephone to communicate, via regular telephone lines, with people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech disabled. Relay operators type voice calls into a TTY, and transmit verbally to those who can hear. For more information, call 800-439-0415 (Voice/TTY), or email <Outreach@massrelay.org>
- Nov. 18 **Access to the General Curriculum**, 7-9 p.m. in Winchester, MA is a workshop for parents that includes discussion and examples of modifications to content and delivery of instruction that will allow students with disabilities fuller participation in the general curriculum. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN). For more information or to register contact call 617-236-7210, 800-331-0688 or email the Federation at <fcsninfo@fcsn.org>.
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- Nov. 18-20 **Build Boston Tradeshow will feature workshops on Universal Design and the ADA.** This three-day convention for the architectural design and construction industry at the World Trade Center in Boston features exhibits of products and services, seminars and events. Adaptive Environments and other disability related organizations will present material on topics ranging from ADA guidelines for signs and accessible outdoor play areas to indoor air quality insurance and legal problems. For registration (\$90-\$240 or free if you volunteer time) and information contact the Boston Society of Architects at 800-544-1898 or <www.buildboston.com>.
- Nov. 19 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now** - see Nov. 5 listing for details.
- Nov. 20 **LD/ADHD Consumer Group** for persons with Learning Disabilities/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC Somerville Area Office. The NEW LOCATION is One Davis Square in Somerville. Business meeting 10 am to 12 noon; Support Group 12 to 1 pm. For more information and directions contact Angelica Sawyer, 617-661-3117 (voice).
- Dec. 3 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now** - see Nov. 5 listing for details.
- Dec. 3 **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in Group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6-8 p.m. New location is the 2nd floor library at the Brookline Public Health Center at 11 Pierce Street. For more information, visit web site <www.rsiaction.org>, email <cnot@rsiaction.org> or call 617-247-6827.
- Dec. 11 **CCPD Monthly Meeting and HOLIDAY GATHERING** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 8 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment. Bring some festive refreshments to share.
- Dec. 11 **Healing and Art for Trauma Survivors**, 6:30-8:30 p.m. See listing on Nov. 13 for details.
- Dec. 11 **Grieving, Spirituality and Parenting Kids with Special Needs** – a panel discussion for parents about adjusting to the experience of having a child with a disability. This evening program from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. will be at the Autism Support Center, 6 Southside Road in Danvers. Registration is required; a \$10 donation is suggested. For more information call Beth at 978-777-9135, ext. 211 or email <bmazzetta@nsarc.org>.

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. Examples of our ongoing work include:

- Work with various City departments to ensure **compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** (ADA) and related state and federal disability rights laws;
- Provide free **disability awareness training** upon request for any Cambridge business or nonprofit entity;
- Issue **temporary disability parking permits** to Cambridge residents;
- Cosponsor the **taxi discount coupon program** with the Cambridge Council on Aging; and
- Facilitate additional **accessible parking spaces** through the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department.

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.

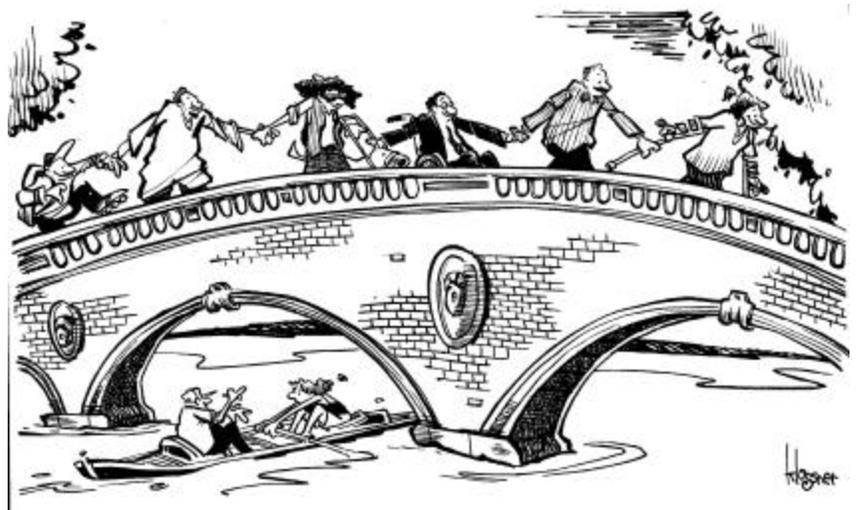
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We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/~CCPD

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