

# AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for  
Persons with Disabilities

## Mental Health Commissioner Visits Area Employment Program

As part of a statewide effort to become familiar with the spectrum of state-funded mental health programs and to evaluate “what works and what doesn’t,” the new Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, met with consumers and staff at

Community Career Links on Tuesday, November 25.



Dr. Elizabeth Childs, a psychiatrist, assumed the post of DMH Commissioner on June 30. She described her top priorities as

Commissioner: to provide “dignity” and greater work opportunities to consumers; to advocate for better housing, to improve services for children, adolescents, and dually-diagnosed (mental illness and substance abuse) consumers.

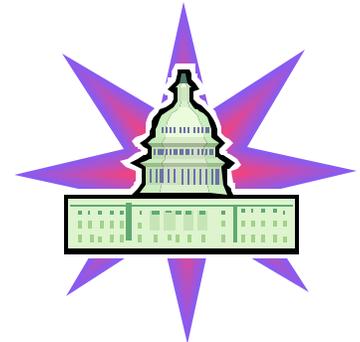
Community Career Links (CCL) provides vocational rehabilitation services to DMH-eligible mental health consumers in Cambridge and Somerville. Located at 260 Beacon Street in Somerville, CCL is operated by North Charles, Inc., which also offers an array of services (day treatment, groups, detox, etc.) for persons with mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

CCL started in the mid-nineties as a program for homeless consumers. In 1997, CCL began offering education and employment services to a wider spectrum of consumers, in collaboration with Center House, a local clubhouse program.

**(Mental Health continued page 2)**

## Advocates Criticize Medicare Reform Bill

As this issue of *AccessLetter* went to press, Congress had just passed a sweeping Medicare reform package estimated to cost \$400 Billion over the next ten years. Prescription drug coverage for people with disabilities and seniors is the centerpiece of the legislation, but Medicare beneficiaries will have to wait until 2006 to see any drug coverage kick in. Until then, they will have to content themselves with a “drug discount card” purported to give a 10-15% discount on prescriptions.



The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), a Washington-based coalition of dozens of national disability organizations, criticized Congress as having “missed an historic opportunity to finally provide prescription drug coverage to millions of senior citizens and people with disabilities who receive their health care through either the Medicare program alone or in coordination with the Medicaid program.”

CCD aimed its sharpest criticism at provisions in the bill which would disproportionately impact the so-called “dual-eligibles” -- Medicare beneficiaries who also receive Medicaid. Millions of “dual-eligibles” with disabilities and chronic health conditions now depend on Medicaid to pay for the prescription drugs they need to maintain their basic health. Under the Medicare reform bill, Medicare “formularies” will be developed that, CCD argues, will restrict access to

**(Medicare continued page 2)**

## (Mental Health continued)

Recognizing that consumers truly want competitive work and a return to independence, CCL currently has 50-55 people in competitive jobs (most part-time, some full-time), in their own communities as much as possible. An equal number are enrolled in post-secondary education. CCL also provides peer support and supported education opportunities at local colleges. Voter registration is a priority as well. “[North Charles] is a portal to the community [for consumers]”, said Jill Furumoto, an Employment Specialist at the program.

During the meeting with CCL consumers and staff, Childs acknowledged the current and continuing budget crisis in the Commonwealth. She pointed out that while hard choices must be made, the crisis does provide the opportunity to look critically at existing programs.

Clients of CCL spoke of their successes in the program: positive work experiences, improved self-esteem, and opportunities to become financially stable and obtain housing. When Childs asked for more specifics as to how the program helped them, clients cited easy access to appointments, staff dedication, and staff willingness to do on-site visits. Consumers also praised the measured pace of the program: career exploration groups lead to job-seeking groups, with the aid of individual counselors. Research and interviewing skills are taught, and physical disabilities are also addressed. Educational opportunities are in abundance, including access to online courses.

When questioned about budget cuts that could undermine the wellness consumers need to participate in CCL, Childs explained that Governor Mitt Romney “will not entertain new revenues,” and acknowledged that there is “not enough money to go around” in Fiscal Year 2005. However, Childs stressed, she will “not walk away from serving people...we will figure out some way to navigate the budget struggle.”

Noting that Massachusetts has a very strong and active consumer movement, Childs stated that she is excited to hear about voter registration initiatives.

She wants to preserve community-based programs such as CCL, and strongly encourages consumers to make their legislators and the Governor aware of the priorities that exist. Phone calls to legislators are very important and make the issues ‘real’ to them, Childs commented.

by Jonathon Dosick

## (Medicare continued)

needed drugs and prohibit Medicaid from serving as a secondary payer for medications not on the formulary. This could force people with disabilities (e.g. epilepsy or mental illness) to forego medications, leading to less effective or no treatment. In the long run, this could result in injury or debilitating side effects that require hospitalization or other costly medical interventions.



Moreover, the Medicare reform bill's prescription drug benefit does not provide adequate coverage for people with disabilities, argued CCD. The benefit, as a whole, is substantially less

generous than all other Medicare benefits and the vast majority of private and government-sponsored plans that cover prescription drugs. Additionally, the bill has a considerable “gap” in coverage starting at \$2,200 in annual drug costs until an individual has spent \$3,600 in out-of-pocket drug expenses.

Another feature of the bill is the establishment of Health Savings Accounts, also known as Medical Savings Accounts, under which individuals could save funds for future medical expenses. Such accounts, argued CCD “Would undermine the health care system and be especially harmful to people with disabilities and others who rely on insurance to finance a high level of services.” Health Savings Accounts provide an incentive to healthier and higher income people to leave the traditional insurance market. This could de-pool the current insurance system that seeks to spread the unpredictable risks for financing care for a relatively small number of people

with disabilities and chronic conditions across society. "Both people with disabilities and non-disabled people lose by weakening the insurance system," said CCD.

President Bush is expected to quickly sign the Medicare reform measure. Some advocates predicted a backlash similar to one that happened in 1988, when Congress last attempted a major Medicare overhaul. Responding to widespread pressure, Congress repealed that measure in 1989.

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## Kids' Council Seeks Disability Experience

Cambridge residents who have experience with children with disabilities are needed to serve on the Inclusion Policy Plan Subcommittee of the Cambridge Kids' Council. The Inclusion Policy Plan Subcommittee will develop and recommend to the City of Cambridge a policy plan for inclusion of children with disabilities and their families in City-operated and supported programs to ensure equal access and appropriate opportunities for their active participation are available. The subcommittee will meet monthly.

The Cambridge Kids' Council, chaired by the Mayor, is a City board whose goal is to improve the quality of life for Cambridge children and their families. The council provides leadership in promoting a comprehensive, local response to the needs of children and families through making policy recommendations and setting up programs and services.



For more information please contact Mary Wong, Executive Director, at (617) 349-6239, [mwong@cambridgema.gov](mailto:mwong@cambridgema.gov), or submit a letter of interest to the Cambridge Kids' Council, 51 Inman Street, Cambridge, MA 02139. **The deadline to receive responses is December 16.**

by Mary Wong

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## Washington Internships for Students with Disabilities

**Spring 2004 Applications are due Dec. 8**

The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars (TWC) has created a new internship program for qualified college students with disabilities to work with the executive, legislative, or judicial branches of the federal government. A total of fifty (50) students will be selected to participate in 2004. Monday, Dec. 8, 2003 is the DEADLINE for applications to the Spring 2004 program

Tuition scholarships are available, and students will receive academic credit while gaining valuable work experience in Washington, DC. This internship opportunity is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and has the support of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). Applications are available at the AAPD website: <[www.aapd-dc.org](http://www.aapd-dc.org)>

For additional information and applications, contact Jennifer Clinton (202-336-7569 or <[jennifercl@twc.edu](mailto:jennifercl@twc.edu)>) or Matt Medeiros (202-336-7571 or <[mattm@twc.edu](mailto:mattm@twc.edu)>) at The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars <[www.twc.edu](http://www.twc.edu)> or write to them at 2301 M Street, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.

**Summer 2004 Applications are due Dec. 15**

Two other internship programs for the summer of 2004 have set Dec. 15 as their DEADLINE for applications. The Congressional Internship Program for College Students with Disabilities is administered by AAPD and sponsored by the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation. Second-semester sophomores through first-semester seniors interested in working on Capitol Hill are encouraged to apply. Accepted candidates will work in congressional offices in Washington, DC. Roundtrip air travel and housing will be provided to interns, and each student will receive a stipend of \$1,500.

The Information Technology Internship for College Students with Disabilities is also administered by

AAPD and sponsored by Microsoft corporation Undergraduate students interested in pursuing a career in information technology are encouraged to apply. Accepted candidates will work in various agencies in the executive branch of the federal government. Roundtrip air travel and housing will be provided to interns, and each student will receive a stipend of \$4,500.

For additional information about both these summer programs and to download an application, visit the AAPD website < [www.aapd-dc.org](http://www.aapd-dc.org)>. You can also contact either Ollie Cantos, General Counsel & Director of Programs <[generalcnsl@aol.com](mailto:generalcnsl@aol.com)> or Marie Campos, Policy & Program Associate <[aapd@aol.com](mailto:aapd@aol.com)> by email or phone: 202-457-0046 or 1-800-840-8844 (v/tty) and 202-457-0473 Fax. Good luck. Let's have some Massachusetts students in Washington, D.C. this next spring or summer.

## Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- Dec. 3        **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](mailto:woman@braintrust.org)> for more information.
- 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](http://www.rsiaction.org)>, email <[cnot@rsiaction.org](mailto:cnot@rsiaction.org)> or call 617-247-6827.
- Dec. 8        **Spring 2004 Washington Internship application DEADLINE**. Be one of 50 college students with disabilities to intern with the executive, legislative or judicial branches of the federal government. Tuition scholarships are available and students will receive academic credit. For details see article on page 3.
- Dec. 8        **RSI Action Organizational Meeting** in Kenmore Square at 5:30 p.m. with dinner afterwards at Bertucci's. RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury) Action is run by volunteers. If you would like to participate, contact the group at <[cnot@rsiaction.org](mailto:cnot@rsiaction.org)> or call 617-247-6827 to leave a voice message.
- Dec. 9        **Connecting the Commonwealth: Making IT in Massachusetts Accessible to All** is an all day conference (9:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.) for information technology (IT) professionals, state and municipal IT coordinators, students, faculty, ADA coordinators, disability advocates. The program will help raise awareness of the need for web accessibility and empower participants to make their own web sites and other information technology more accessible. This event, sponsored by the Mass. Office on Disability, the New England ADA and Accessible IT Center, and Northeastern University, will be at the Curry Student Center at Northeastern, 346 Huntington Ave. in Boston. Registration is \$50. For more information contact Rachel Tanenhaus at 800-949-4939 voice/tty or email <[rtanenhaus@adaptiveenvironments.org](mailto:rtanenhaus@adaptiveenvironments.org)>.
- Dec. 9        **Basic Rights**, 6:30-8:30 p.m. in Lowell, is a workshop for parents that covers information about state and federal special education laws to assist them in the planning, decision-making and monitoring of their child's IEP. (Individual Education Plan) Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN). To register or for more information call 617-236-7210, 800-331-0688 or email the Federation at <[fcsninfo@fcsn.org](mailto:fcsninfo@fcsn.org)>.
- Dec. 9        **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.

- Dec. 11        **CCPD Monthly Meeting and HOLIDAY GATHERING** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment. Bring some festive refreshments to share
- Dec. 11        **Healing and Art for Trauma Survivors** is a group for women that explores how to use art to heal past traumas. Meets 6:30-8:30 p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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.>
- 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>.
- Dec. 12        **K'sharim service at Temple Shalom**, 475 Winthrop Street in Medford, is for teens and adults with disabilities and their families. The service is at 6 p.m. followed by dinner. K'sharim (Hebrew for "connections") is an innovative undertaking by Boston's Jewish community designed to involve people with disabilities in all facets of Jewish life. Newcomers are always welcome. For more information contact Jan Golner, coordinator of "Friend 2 Friend" of Jewish Big Brother & Big Sister Association, 617-558-6548, <jan@gbbbs.org> or Judy Pearl, Director of Special Needs Services for the JCCs of Greater Boston at 617-558-6508, <jpearl@jccgb.org>.
- Dec. 15        **Summer 2004 Congressional and Information Technology Internships application DEADLINE.** If you are a college student with a disability, spend next summer gaining valuable work experience while earning a stipend. See article on page 3 of this Access Letter for details.
- Dec. 15        **Access to the General Curriculum**, 7-9 p.m. in Chelmsford, 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>.
- Dec. 16        **Current Trends in Autism**, 10 a.m.-12 noon (*in Spanish*) at the Shore Educational Collaborative, 99 Fourth Street, in Chelsea. Call Alexia Cribbs at 617-887-2930, ext. 250 to register. For additional information visit the web site for the Autism Support Center at <http://www2.primushost.com/~nsarc/> or call 978-777-9135 or 800-7-AUTISM.
- Dec. 16        **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.
- Dec. 16        **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 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 or to request interpreters. For problems with The RIDE service, call 617-222-5123 voice, or 617-222-5415 TTY.
- Dec. 17        **Women Maximizing Abilities Now** - see Dec. 3 listing for details.
- Dec. 18        **Arlington Area Autism Support and Discussion Group**, 9:30-11 am, held in conjunction with the May Center for Early Childhood Education, 10 Acton Street in Arlington, MA. For additional information visit the web site for the Autism Support Center at <<http://www2.primushost.com/~nsarc/>> or call 800-7-AUTISM.
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- Dec. 21      **Christmas Revels 2003 - ASL interpreted performance.** Revels, founded in 1971 by award-winning author and musician John Langstaff to promote the understanding and appreciation of traditional folk music, dance and rituals from around the world, has become a holiday tradition for many in the Boston area. This year's production, Dec. 12-30 at the Sanders Theatre on the Harvard campus in Cambridge, is set in Scotland. Tickets are \$20-\$40 (adults) \$12-\$32 (children under 12). For information and reservations check the web site at <[www.revels.org](http://www.revels.org)> or call 617-496-2222.
- Jan. 8      **Feeling for Form Tactile Museum Exhibit** is a tactile and verbally described tour of the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) exhibit called "The Maker's Hand: American Studio Furniture, 1940-1990." The MFA is at 465 Huntington Ave. in Boston. This tour for visitors who are visually impaired requires pre-registration. For more information, contact Ruth Kahn, Accessibility Assistant, at 617-369-3302 or email <[Rkahn@mfa.org](mailto:Rkahn@mfa.org)>.
- Jan. 8      **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- Jan. 8      **Healing and Art for Trauma Survivors**, 6:30-8:30 p.m. See listing on Dec. 11 for details.
- Jan. 10      **Workshop for Parents of Children Recently Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders**, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Autism Support Center, 6 Southside Road in Danvers, MA. For additional information visit the web site for the Autism Support Center at <http://www2.primushost.com/~nsarc/> or call 800-7-AUTISM.
- Jan. 13      **Basic Rights**, 7-9 p.m. in Waltham, MA is a workshop for parents that covers information about state and federal special education laws to assist them in the planning, decision-making and monitoring of their child's IEP. (Individual Education Plan) Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN). To register or for more information call 617-236-7210, 800-331-0688 or email the Federation at <[fcsninfo@fcsn.org](mailto:fcsninfo@fcsn.org)>.
- Jan. 14      **IEP (Individual Education Plan)** is a workshop that walks parents through the new IEP with emphasis on the latest federal and Massachusetts special education regulations, how to access to the general curriculum, and how to write curriculum-based annual goals for the student that are measurable. This workshop will be in Belmont from 7-9 p.m. with Jan. 21 as the snow date. To register or for more information call 617-236-7210, 800-331-0688 or email the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) at <[fcsninfo@fcsn.org](mailto:fcsninfo@fcsn.org)>.
- Jan. 15      **Access to the General Curriculum**, 7-9 p.m. in Melrose, 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](mailto:fcsninfo@fcsn.org)>.

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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. 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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**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/~CCPD](http://www.cambridgema.gov/~CCPD)**

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**Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities**

51 Inman Street, second floor  
Cambridge, MA 02139