

**Nothing More,
Nothing Less
For All People
With Disabilities**

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Winter 2011 NUMBER XXVII

Cortland Disability Advocates Rally In Albany

On February 15, a contingent of area disability advocates traveled to Albany, NY, to join more than 150 others from across the state to encourage action on key legislation that would improve the quality of life and safeguard the civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities.

“This year’s Legislative Day was critical given the recent release of the Governor’s Executive Budget and its proposed cut of nearly \$3 billion to Medicaid-funded programming,” said Chad W. Underwood, ATI Chief Operating Officer. “Community-based services and supports for people with disabilities are invaluable and actually save the state money.” (See article on page 2.)

Advocates began the day with a massive rally in the Well of the Legislative Office Building, where they listened to speeches from Assem. Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly

Health Committee, and Sen. Hanon, Chair of the Senate Health Committee, both of whom sit on the Medicaid Redesign Team, the group that is working to identify the specific cuts to Medicaid.

Following the rally, Cortland’s contingent of disability advocates met with staff of Sen. Jim Seward, Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton, Assem. Brian Kolb, and Assem. Gary Finch, all representatives of Cortland County residents.

In addition to advocating for the continued critical funding of community-based services and supports, the group urged the leaders to support specific legislative priorities that would eradicate barriers to community living and ensure that the civil rights of people with disabilities are protected.

Cortland’s contingent comprised: Chad Underwood (COO), Aaron Baier (Youth Transition / Work Readiness Coordinator), Audrey Jones (Architectural Barrier Programs Administrative Asst.), Dan Mullins (Board Member), Maria Mucaria (Advocate) Taylor Meddaugh (Youth Advocate) and Jarett Withers (Youth Consumer).

ATI was one of 15 independent living centers from across the state to participate in the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) sponsored Legislative Day activities that aimed to educate state leaders on pressing disability budget and policy priority issues heading into this year’s legislative session.

ATI Presents at TASH 2010

This past December, SUNY Cortland and Access to Independence joined forces to co-facilitate a workshop at the TASH 35th Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado, on their collaboration in developing a community needs assessment on the unmet needs of youth with disabilities who have IEPs.

Dr. Judy Bentley (SUNY Cortland Professor and ATI Board Member), Mary Ewing (Executive Director) and Chad Underwood (COO) presented their framework for collaboration and discussed the research they had completed to date.

TASH is an international association of people with disabilities, their family members, other advocates and professionals who are joined in effort to fight for a society in which the inclusion of all people in all aspects of society is the norm.



Above (left to right): Taylor Meddaugh, Audrey Jones, Maria Mucaria, Dan Mullins, Aaron Baier, Chad Underwood and Jarett Withers.

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Proposals to Reduce NYS Spending & Promote Independence of People with Disabilities

In the face of New York's "perfect storm" of economic, policy and legal issues that threaten our security, the disability community is prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with Governor Cuomo and his Administration to pursue aggressive efforts to balance the state budget, while advancing our established legal rights (as required by the ADA and the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision).

In early January, Access to Independence joined dozens of organizations from across the state to sign-on to an action plan for both immediate and long term savings to New York's Medicaid program. That action plan was developed by the Albany-based, Center for Disability Rights, Inc. and ATT's state association, the New York Association on Independent Living.

There are three major policy changes needed: (1) shift people from institutions to community-based settings; (2) take advantage of Federal health reform initiatives that support community-based programs; and (3) transition from a medical-model to a consumer directed model of care. These changes alone could save NY more than \$1 billion over the next five years!

A significant reason that New York's long term care system is so expensive is that it remains unnecessarily biased towards institutional care. In the 3rd quarter of 2010, there were 22,248 New Yorkers living in nursing facilities that had indicated that they wish to return to the community. That amounts to \$406 million the state could be saving annually by de-institutionalizing this population. But the Department of Health and its staff continue to over-regulate already bureaucratic processes that promote institutional placement. In fact, over the last

three years alone, New York has surpassed the last two remaining states to become the nation's highest per capita spender on nursing facilities - \$390 for every NYS resident!

The state must also take advantage of federal incentives in the *Affordable Care Act* that provide additional Medicaid funding to implement these shifts. The Cuomo Administration should implement the *Community First Choice* (CFC) option, which allows states to create a community-based state plan service for people who are at an institutional level of care. Expenditures under this option receive an additional six percentage points of the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP). NY could realize significant savings by drawing down these additional federal dollars through seamlessly shifting nursing facility eligible people in the existing personal care program to the CFC option!

The Cuomo Administration must also take advantage of the State Balancing Incentive Payments Program to access additional Medicaid funds. This program would offer the state an additional two percentage points of FMAP for community-based expenditures such as personal care, the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP), and the various Medicaid Waiver programs.

Finally, the state must shift away from a traditional model of care that is over-reliant on medical professionals and treats people with disabilities as patients, toward a consumer directed model that empowers people to take control of their services. Medical model services were developed during a time when disability was seen as a medical condition requiring medical interven-

tion. In contrast, the consumer-directed model allows for consumers (or family members) to hire, direct, and dismiss their caregivers in accordance with their plan of care. This results in lower costs to the state through reduced reimbursements, because consumers take on the administrative roles (i.e. scheduling) that an agency nurse or case manager is typically responsible for. In addition, aides can perform skilled tasks that under a medical model would be performed by expensive medical personnel.

New York State must provide consumer choice through a range of community-based service options to people and support these alternatives to institutional placements. With the support of a new Administration, and clear direction to its county partners and providers, the above proposals will actually move people into appropriate and less costly settings, and save the state more than \$1 billion over the next five years! Please join me in educating Governor Cuomo and his Administration on these important, cost-saving policy proposals!

Disability Advocacy 2011 Training Series

Let your voices be heard!

02/24 - Advocacy 101

03/24 - Local Advocacy

04/28 - Statewide Advocacy

05/26 - National Advocacy

(4:00 - 5:00 pm each day)

**Save your spot!
Call 607-753-7363.**

Support the Disability History Initiative!

What is Disability History and why should anyone talk about it? Teaching about disability history allows for the recognition of past societal viewpoints and how those viewpoints negatively affected the treatment of people with disabilities throughout history.

In 1776, when our nation's leaders were enacting the Declaration of Independence, it started with this most powerful statement: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."*

At that time, people with disabilities were viewed as being genetically unfit and burdens to the newly independent colonies. They were not allowed to come to the new nation and if children were born in the new states with disabilities they became burdens to their families. Equality and freedom to those basic truths did not greet individuals with disabilities until the early 1970's!

It's important to teach about and remember the history of disability so that people understand that disability is not a "flaw" but a natural part of life. After all, disability can be acquired by an accident, an illness or simply by the aging process.

In 2006, a group of youth from West Virginia began *The Disability History Initiative*. The youth, some with disabilities, were concerned about bullying in their schools. The youth believed that if students received disability awareness instruc-

tion they would have a greater understanding and tolerance for people with disabilities. They thought that it would reduce the rampant bullying and stigma that continues to persist to this day.

That group of youth organized, advocated and succeeded in getting the West Virginia Legislature to pass a bill to amend the state education code to include disability history and awareness instruction in all schools.

While New York State does not currently require schools to instruct on the history of disability, there is new legislation pending that would change that.

On February 3, Senator Mark Grisanti and Assemblyman Mark Schroeder introduced legislation in their respective Chambers (S2353 & A4384) that would promote greater awareness and understanding of people with disabilities by amending current Education Law.

If enacted, the legislation would make available to all students, grades kindergarten through twelve, suitable curriculum materials to aid in the instruction, understanding and acceptance of students with disabilities. Furthermore, the legislation would require secondary schools to teach a disabilities curriculum in seventh through twelfth grades.

For more information on potential disability history curriculums for grades K-12, visit the Museum of disABILITY History's website: www.museumofdisability.org.

ADA Trainings Now Available!

Access to Independence (ATI) proudly announces the availability of customized trainings on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each of the nine, two-hour workshops listed below is interactive and may be specially structured to meet the needs of businesses, schools, or any other type of audience.

Program 1: Understanding the ADA: Communicating Respectively and Effectively with People with Disabilities

Program 2: Getting Hired and Moving Ahead in a Job When Working with a Disability

Program 3: Tapping into Talent: Best Practices in Hiring, Accommodating and Retaining People with Disabilities

Program 4: Serving Customers with Disabilities: Reaching Out & Expanding Your Market

Program 5: Hidden Disabilities: Legal, Practical and Human Issues

Program 6: Reaching Individuals with Disabilities: Accessibility in Federal, State or Municipal Entities

Program 7: Reaching Individuals with Disabilities: Accessibility in Private or Commercial businesses

Program 8: Accessible Technology in the Workplace

Program 9: Accessible Web Sites: Everyone Benefits.

While there is no charge to educational institutions to facilitate any of these workshops, ATI does request a modest stipend from businesses and agencies (\$100 - 200 per session).

For more information on any of the above specialized ADA trainings or if you are interested in scheduling one of the above training sessions, please contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: fpizzola@aticortland.org.

Visit us online at:
www.aticortland.org!
Find us on Facebook!

“With Help From a Friend, You Can Reach the Stars!”

The Access to Independence (ATI) Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) aims to help people with disabilities obtain stronger life and work readiness skills. Through one-on-one peer mentoring, job shadowing, workshops, support groups, and collaboration with employment focused agencies, the PMP provides new opportunities to learn, mature, and get to work.

Jarett began his path to success in 2009 when he joined the Access to Independence team as a job-shadowing student from the OCM BOCES Office Technology Class. Jarett's goal was to get a job in an office. However, he was not sure what, exactly, he wanted to do. While continuing his classwork, Jarett joined the Peer Mentoring Program to help him build confidence in his decision-making, time-management, and self-determination skills.

Jarett's next step was a month-long internship at Access to Independence which provided him the motivation necessary to overcome comfort-related barriers. During his internship, Jarett learned new skills such as data-entry, customer service, how to manage multiple projects, and how to use multi-line phones. Not only did he help in the office and on outreaches, but Jarett continued to attend PMP workshops and support groups, and participated in job shadowing experiences at Cortland Area Child Care Council and Country Max.

“It was scary at first,” said Jarett during a recent interview. “My autism helps me to be thorough in my work, but it also means I do not handle change very well.” Jarett struggled with taking on new

projects and uncertainty in his abilities. Through work with a mentor, Jarett learned about tools that helped him to overcome these barriers, such as writing down instructions for more difficult tasks, incorporating positive self-talk for when he felt like giving up, and keeping track of tasks to help him work more independently. Before he knew it, Jarett was spending full days at the front desk, answering phones and multi-tasking.



After graduating from the Office Technology Class, Jarett continued to participate in the PMP. While there, he received positive support from his job-seeking peers and contributed new experiences to the group. He also sought additional employment assistance through Employment Connection and Adult Career & Continuing Education Services (ACCES - formerly VESID). Moreover, Jarett continues to volunteer at ATI one day a week to develop his work ethics, self-confidence, and overall productivity with work.

“Each day, it’s easier for me at work, and each day I find new opportunities.” Today, Jarett has expanded his interests and broadened his horizons by taking advantage of new opportunities. Jarett is looking forward to an upcoming job interview and hopes to soon become part of a new team. Jarett will continue to volunteer with ATI and participate in the PMP to keep-in-step on his fast-moving path to success. Way to go, Jarett!

For more information on the Peer Mentoring Program, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

Eyes on the Future

Vision Support Group

2nd Thursday monthly

5:00 - 6:00 pm

ATI Community Room

Get support from peers with similar vision barriers.

Learn about assistive tools and technology.

For more information, contact Aaron Baier by phone: 753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org

COMPUTER CLASSES

Mondays & Wednesdays

2:00 - 4:45 pm

Thursdays

1:00 - 3:00 pm

ATI Computer Lab

For more information, please call 607-753-7363.

Peer Mentoring Program

Every Thursday

3:00 - 4:00 pm

ATI Community Room

For more information, contact Aaron Baier

Phone: 607-753-7363

Email: abaier@aticortland.org



Above: Jarett Withers poses for a photo between volunteer work and the weekly Peer Mentoring Program workshop.

Youth In Power!

Get empowered...

Use your abilities...

Advocate for what you want!

**Last Wednesday,
Monthly 4:00 - 5:00 pm
CYB - Teen Center
35 Port Watson Street**

**For more information,
contact Aaron Baier at:
607-753-7363**



Communities That Care
Partnering for Smart Choices & Healthy Behaviors
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Informed, Involved, Invested

CRAFT CLASS

Every Thursday

1:00 - 3:00 pm

ATI Community Room

**For more information,
call Karen Sanford:
607-753-7363, or email:
ksanford@aticortland.org.**

Join Our Disability Advocacy Network!

- Keep current on federal, state and local disability issues!
 - Receive email alerts on legislative and budget matters!
- Join more than 900 statewide advocates to fight for change!

**Email Chad W. Underwood at:
cwunderwood@aticortland.org**

YOUTH POWER! - A Look Back at 2010

*A Message from YP! Advisory Board
Chairperson - Aaron T. Baier.*

Through 2010, the YOUTH POWER! (YP!) Advisory Board worked hard to build opportunities for young people who have been labeled and are seeking change. We are excited to close out a successful year and look forward to much more growth in 2011.

Check this out - the YP! network more than doubled in 2010. This growth is crucial to our mission of being the voice of young people in New York State. The YP! Working Groups (Outreach, Special Events, and Action) played a major role in spreading the word for youth involvement. We gained new members through the FTNYS Annual Conference and the YP! statewide and regional Youth Leadership Forums.

The YP! Advisory Board met frequently during 2010 to develop a strategic plan that will guide the network into the future. We began development of Bylaws, which will govern the YP! Board of Directors once we incorporate as a not-for-profit organization within the next two years. Also with the help of YP! staff, we revised our mission statement and in December we created an official YP! vision statement.

YOUTH POWER! envisions a world that embraces diversity, encourages resiliency, is strength-based and has the ability to adapt...A community, in which young people are inspired, empowered and supported to make informed choices.

Leadership is a characteristic that many strive to achieve. YOUTH POWER! would not be where it is today if not for its incredibly strong leadership. In August, we elected new YP! Advisory Board Officers. Please welcome, Christina Felix, Vice-Chair; Joseph Munisteri, Secretary; and Kieran McGovern, Treasurer. Of course, I cannot forget the efforts of all Board members in 2010 - thanks go out to John Donnelly, Korie Tomisman and Vanessa Maldonado for outstanding service.

You too can take the lead in your life and in our movement. Never underestimate your ability to make progress. 2011 promises to be an exciting year. We hope all of our members will seize opportunities to have their voice heard. YOUTH POWER!

For more information, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

Cortland YIP Kicks Off 2011 with NYS YOUTH POWER!

On January 26, the Cortland Youth in Power (YIP) group held a kick-off event at the Cortland City Youth Bureau Teen Center to raise awareness for the growing Youth Movement in Cortland. Representatives of the NYS YOUTH POWER! group joined YIP for the event.

Cortland Youth in Power is a support group for young people who seek to L.E.A.R.N! That means, Lead, Empower, Advocate, Recreate, and Network. YIP welcomes youth with and without disabilities of any age. YIP meets on the last Wednesday of each month from 4:00 - 5:00 pm at the Cortland Youth Bureau Teen Center, 35 Port Watson St.

For more information or to sign-up for Cortland YIP, contact Aaron T. Baier by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

Medicaid Waiver Services: Promoting Independent Community Living

Do you have a friend or family member who is currently living in a nursing facility and who wants to return to their home or apartment in the community? Maybe they can't go home because they would not be able to get into their house, don't have furniture or other household necessities, or do not have the resources to cover a security deposit and first month's rent, or to have the utilities turned on.

Do you have a friend or family member who is currently living in the community but has ongoing health care needs or physical barriers at home that make them at risk to be placed in a nursing facility? Maybe they don't need nursing care, but just some help doing everyday things - like getting out of bed in the morning, making meals, or doing housework - in order to remain at home.

In either of these scenarios, as long as the person receives Medicaid, they may be eligible for a new NYS Department of Health program called the Nursing Facility Transition and Diversion (NFTD) Medicaid Waiver program. This program provides a number of services to help a person resume or maintain an independent lifestyle in the community.

For example, a Service Coordinator helps a person to locate and manage the programs and benefits needed to help them be more independent in the community setting. He/she will visit with the consumer at least monthly, and will assist with their needs on an ongoing basis.

Environmental modifications can make a person's home more accessible by adding ramps, roll-in showers, or other changes to make the home more functional.

Assistive Technology (AT) refers to the use of equipment that can make a person's life easier and may include an alarmed Lifeline unit to call for help, or a Medication Management Unit.

Independent Living Skills Training (ILST) and Peer Mentoring services can assess a person's ability to do various tasks independently and then provide the support needed to master those skills, such as self-advocacy, learning to cook, to use public transportation, budgeting, or managing benefits (such as Food Stamps or SSI). The NFTD program is always about consumer choice and control; you are in charge of the goals you set for yourself, the services you want, and who provides them.

There are specific criteria to be eligible for this program. If you're interested in the "Waiver" the first step is an intake meeting with the Regional Resource Development Center, in Binghamton. Call (607) 772-4011, and tell them you want to know more about the "Waiver"; if it appears that you may qualify they will come to you to conduct an intake interview. Once approved for the "Waiver", you will be given a list of service providers in Cortland County. You make the choice of who you want to provide services to you, and you may change the provider at any time.

In addition to the above-mentioned services for the NFTD Waiver, ATI provides many of the same services for another Medicaid Waiver program that serves individuals that have suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a result of a stroke, a fall, a wartime injury, a violent crime, or an accident. The goal remains the same: to help an individual be as independent as possible in their community.

For more information on ATI's NFTD or TBI Medicaid Waiver services, contact Mary E. Ewing by phone: 753-7363, or by e-mail: mewing@aticortland.org.

NYS Deinstitutionalization Cost Savings Report (October 2001 - September 2010)

FY	Institutional Preventions	Institutional Terminations	De-Institution Savings	NYS Funds to ILCs	Value Added *
2001-2003	1,216	281	\$119,222,981	\$8,714,698	\$110,508,283
2003-2004	1,331	288	\$115,525,533	\$4,099,991	\$111,425,542
2004-2005	1,605	222	\$131,116,411	\$3,452,100	\$127,664,311
2005-2006	1,361	204	\$110,148,680	\$3,615,789	\$106,532,891
2006-2007	1,462	231	\$117,719,426	\$3,967,122	\$113,752,304
2007-2008	1,598	304	\$118,632,477	\$9,036,056	\$109,596,421
2008-2009	2,191	294	\$124,095,825	\$9,104,974	\$114,990,851
2009-2010	2,083	219	\$128,793,175	\$9,591,682	\$119,201,493
TOTAL	12,847	2,043	\$965,254,508	\$51,582,412	\$913,672,096

* Deinstitutionalization Savings minus NYS Funds Distributed for Reporting ILCs equals Value Added.

Social Security Disability Benefits in 2011

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), you probably already know there was no Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for either program in 2011. But there were a number of other changes that you might not be aware of.

Did you know that the Medicare Part B premium did not increase for anyone who has been receiving SSDI and having their premium automatically deducted. If you were receiving Medicare Part B benefits before 2010 and had your Part B premium deducted from your check, you are still paying \$96.40 per month. If you started receiving Medicare benefits in 2010 and had your Part B premium deducted from your check, you will still pay \$110.50 per month. However, if you began receiving Medicare Part B benefits in 2011 and had your premium deducted from your check, your premium is \$115.40 per month.

Medicare cannot increase your premium unless your monthly check increases. This is the "hold harmless" rule which applies to most people receiving Social Security. Medicare cannot "shrink" your check by increasing your premium when your check amount did not increase.

Social Security does have several cost savings programs to help pay your Medicare Part B premiums. If you meet certain income and asset limits, these Medicare

Savings Programs (MSP's) can pay all or part of your Medicare Part B premium. For more information on MSP's and to find out if you might qualify, call Susan Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, at 607-753-7363 to set up an appointment to learn more.

Social Security has an Extra Help program to assist lower income beneficiaries in paying their Part D premiums. If you have a Medicare Part D Prescription Plan and hit the coverage gap (donut hole), there will be some relief this year. The donut hole begins when your prescription drug costs reach \$2,840 and ends when you spend a total of \$4,550. For qualifying beneficiaries, many brand name prescriptions drugs will be discounted 50% once you hit the donut hole and have to start paying out of pocket. Generic drugs may also be discounted. To learn more about the Extra Help program, call Susan Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, at 607-753-7363.

For people who are working part time and receiving SSDI benefits, the earned income limit has not changed for 2011. It is still \$1,000 per month. If you are receiving disability benefits and you are thinking about trying to return to work, there are a variety of work incentives that have been created to help you try and go back to work. For more information, call Susan Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, at 607-753-7363 to set up an appointment.

SSA Overpayments - Now What?

Have you received a letter from Social Security stating that they have overpaid you and that they want their money back? If so, you're not alone! ATI has received a number of calls over the past several months on this issue.

There are many different reasons why a person might receive an overpayment letter. One of the biggest reasons is from working and not reporting your earned income. If SSA determines you have received benefits to which you are not entitled they will request you refund the overpayment.


Don't panic. Even if you have to pay back money to Social Security, you can arrange to make monthly payments based on your income. The most important first step is to contact a certified benefits counselor to see what steps you need to take to work it out.

There are options available to you in the event you are unable to pay back the overpayment. Even if you agree you have been overpaid but cannot afford to refund it, you may file a formal waiver request by completing a form SSA-632-BK, Request for Waiver of Overpayment Recovery or Change in Repayment Rate.

In the event you feel the overpayment amount is incorrect, or that you are not really overpaid, you may file a form SSA-561-U2, Request for Reconsideration.

If you disagree with the overpayment decision and feel you should not have to pay it back even if you were overpaid, you may complete both the Request for Waiver and Request for Reconsideration forms.

For more information, please call Susan Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, at 607-753-7363.

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EC EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION **Kelly Garrett**
Intake Specialist

4059 Route 281 Cortland, N.Y. 13045
PH: (607) 756-8070 ext. 2841 • Fax: (607) 756-6380
e-mail: kellyg@jmmurray.com

Access to Home is Back! Now Accepting Applications for Home Accessibility Modifications

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI) is now accepting applications from qualified homeowners for the completion of home modifications to make them more accessible. Modifications may range from minor improvements, such as the installation of grab bars, new door handles, lighting fixtures or modified sink handles, to major renovations, such as the installation of accessible kitchen and bathroom amenities to the relocation of a bedroom to the first floor of a home. Other modifications may include wheelchair ramps and lifts, expanded doorways, and the installation of special devices for people with visual or hearing impairments. All adaptation work will be specifically tailored to meet the needs of those with physical disabilities and seniors with an age-related disability.

Qualification Criteria #1: Successful applicants must meet at least one of the four following criteria: (1) A household member must presently be in an institution and unable to return home because of physical barriers that exist. (2) A household member must have a disability or have substantial difficulty with activities of daily living, and be at risk of institutional placement. (3) A household member who has a disability or is aging receives medical home care services that cannot be effectively administered because of physical barriers. (4) A household member who has a disability or is aging has the capacity for self-care, or is being cared for by family members, but quality or safety of care is at risk because of physical barriers in the home.

Qualification Criteria #2: Successful applicants must also meet certain income guidelines: (1) One-person households must have annual income between \$11,950 – 31,800. (2) Two-person households must have annual income between \$13,650 – 36,350. (3) Three-person households must have income between \$15,350 – 40,900. (4) Four-person households must have income between \$17,050 – 45,450.

Qualification Criteria #3: Successful applicants must provide proof that the property to be modified is current on mortgages, property insurance and all property taxes, and that the property is the permanent residence of the applicant. For successful applicants that rent their home, tenancy must be verified with written permission from the owner for any modifications.

Priority will be given to applicants needing accessibility modifications for nursing facility transition, or for diversion from institutionalization, so as to remain in their home. All other applications will be accepted on a first come basis. Each applicant must complete a detailed application process.

Just last month, ATI received word that the NYS Housing Trust Fund Corporation had authorized and approved a \$300,000 *Access to Home* grant effective through October 2012. ATI will use those funds, along with a \$15,000 award from Thoma Development to administer the program and to provide accessibility modifications for approximately 20 low-, very low-, and extremely low- income households.

Over the past five years, ATI has provided ramps, home modifications and assistive technology solutions to more than 100 individuals through a variety of funding sources. Since 2006, ATI has secured more than \$1,000,000 in funding from the State's Housing Trust Fund Corporation to run its *Access to Home* program and has completed more than 65 projects.

For more information on ATI's *Access to Home* grant or its various other architectural barrier programs, please contact Audrey Jones by phone at: 753-7363, or by email at: ajones@aticortland.org. You may also visit our website: www.aticortland.org. Accessibility is what we do!



2011 Housing Education Campaign Workshop Series

Throughout the month of January, Access to Independence held a series of housing education workshops which aimed to educate community stakeholders on a variety of housing issues, including: accessibility, poor living conditions, weatherization, etc.

On January 5, speakers talked about weatherization and home rehabilitation programs for home owners and renters.

- Max Sammons of the Cortland Community Action Program (CAPCO) discussed CAPCO's Weatherization program for low-income residents.
- Barb Henza of Cornell Cooperative Extension told participants about a free workshop to get them started on energy saving and weatherization.
- Carolyn King of National Grid also shared some great resources on weatherization and energy saving tools.
- Linda Armstrong of Thoma Development discussed grants and loans that are available to low-income people for home rehabilitation projects within the city of Cortland.
- Donna Rugino of USDA Rural Development discussed loan and grant programs for people

living in the more rural areas of Cortland County.

On January 12, speakers focused their discussion on family supports and financial assistance.

- Mary Beth Basha, a Consumer Advocate for National Grid, discussed the heating and energy assistance they provide to individuals and families.
- Joe King and Missy Park of CFCU discussed budgeting, managing credit, and mortgage programs.
- Barb Henza of CFCU joined us again to discuss the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.
- Shawna Grinnell of Cortland Housing Assistance Council (CHAC) discussed their First Time Homebuyer program.
- Marianne Odell of Franziska Racker Center and Kelly Mullally of the J.M. Murray Center each discussed their respective Family Support Services.

On January 19, speakers discussed fair housing rights and responsibilities.

- Gary Thomas of CHAC shared his perspective as a landlord and provider of affordable, accessible housing in Cortland.

- Maralee Witheroll of the CNY Fair Housing Council discussed fair housing laws which are meant to protect the rights of people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income tenants.

- Kim Nesser, Housing Education Coordinator for the New York Association on Independent Living, shared great resources on fair housing and tools to locate affordable, accessible housing.

On January 26, speakers discussed the concepts of universal design and visitability.

- Andrea Rankin of Tompkins / Cortland Habitat for Humanities discussed their current projects in the local area and how to apply to receive their assistance.
- Paul Yaman of Yaman Construction, Jeff Fredrickson of Crown Construction, and Paul Yezzi of GMY Associates, discussed their respective services and how they related to a more accessible and integrative environment.

For more information on ATI's Housing Education Campaign, please contact Aaron Baier by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

Got rent?

The Cortland Housing Authority has a rental assistance program that may be able to help you!!

The Section 8 Housing Program helps qualified people meet their monthly rent bills by paying a portion of their rent directly to their landlord.

Interested persons may pick up applications at the Housing Authority offices located at 42 Church Street or 51 Port Watson Street Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm or

Call 607-753-9364 or 607-753-1771 to request to have an application sent by mail



Barrier-Free + Accessible Design + Assistive Technology = Universal Design: Part VI

Universal design is a relatively new concept that emerged from "barrier-free," "accessible design" and "assistive technology." It relates to the idea that all products and environments should be usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation. It relates to people who are young or old, with excellent or limited abilities, and in ideal or difficult circumstances. In short, universal design accommodates limitations.

There are four common aspects to universal design that apply to your home: **Flexibility:** making your home adaptable to your needs as they change over your lifetime; **Simplicity:** ensuring things remain accessible with housekeeping, storage, entertaining, home maintenance and routine daily living; **Stylish:** keeping the home beautiful and comfortable while being accessible; and **Safety:** eliminating risk factors that may lead to accidents in the home.

This edition we are going to talk about universal design in the laundry room. It's essential that laundry areas be located on the main floor, preferable near the bathroom and bedrooms. If the laundry room is in the basement initially, make pro-

visions that would allow relocating it to the main floor—an easily adaptable space with electrical and plumbing connections.

When purchasing new laundry machines, consider buying a front-loading washer and dryer that are placed on raised platforms to reduce bending and kneeling. Make sure that the controls are easy to reach. You could also consider using a portable washer that can attach to a sink in the kitchen or bathroom.

Now that the laundry equipment is taken care of, it's essential that you consider other universal design concepts. Don't forget to have a folding table accessible, perhaps one that attaches to a wall and lies flat when not in use. Consider purchasing a fold-out ironing board, and installing nonslip flooring (even when wet), good task-lighting and accessible storage at various heights.

Don't forget that when it comes to storage, be certain the heights and layouts are easily accessible for all household members. It should be well-lit with a switch that is located outside of the storage area. Doors and handles should be easy to operate. Shelves and rods should be adjustable to different heights.

Please remember, accessibility in the home is not just for people with disabilities. If you think about it, home accessibility is important for all people from youth to seniors; remember the Universal Design concept!

For more information on ATT's various architectural barrier programs, including our accessibility construction and aging-in-place services, please contact Rob Ferri, Architectural Barrier Programs Coordinator, by phone at: 753-7363, or by email at: rferri@aticortland.org.

You may also contact our Architectural Barrier Programs Administrative Assistant, Audrey Jones, phone at: 753-7363, or by email at: ajones@aticortland.org.




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Can you identify all of the universal design concepts?



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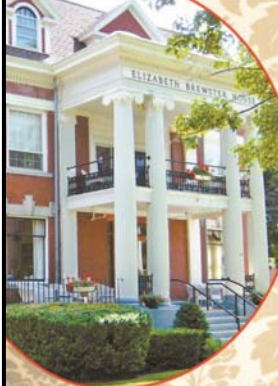
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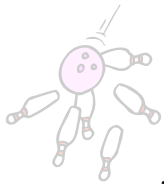
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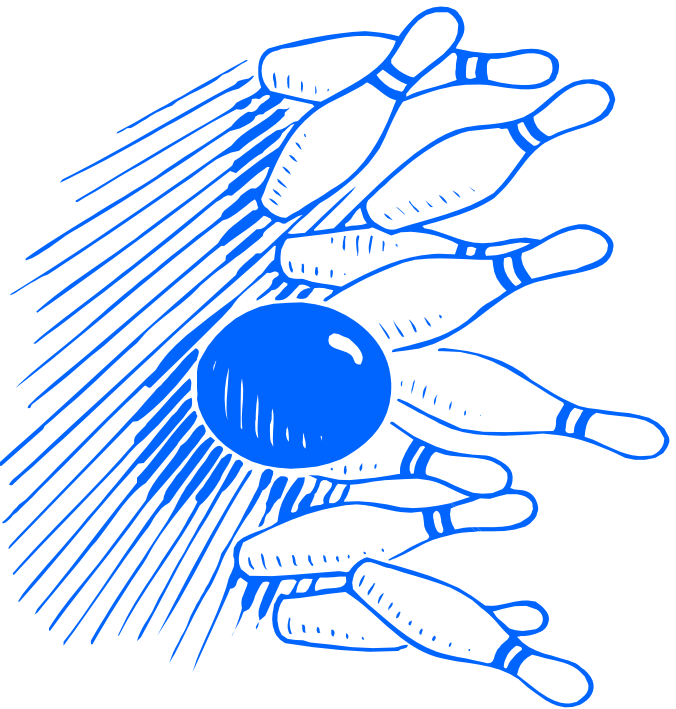


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