

AccessLetter

August — September 2013

E-mail edition

News & Information for the Access-Minded

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

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### **Feds Find Discrimination Against Parents with Disabilities and Their Children**

The National Council on Disability (NCD), an independent federal agency making recommendations to the President and Congress to enhance the quality of life for all Americans with disabilities and their families, published an extensive report last fall documenting pervasive discrimination against parents with disabilities and their children in the United States, oftentimes resulting in the needless and hugely tragic removal of children from their families.

Shockingly, the report, titled “Rocking the Cradle: Ensuring the Rights of Parents with Disabilities and Their Children” found that two-thirds of states in the country, including Massachusetts, have dependency statutes (i.e., child welfare laws) allowing courts to determine that a parent is unfit solely on the basis of the parent’s disability.

The report notes that a child should be removed from a custodial parent on this basis “only when the parent’s disability is creating a detriment that cannot be alleviated.” It goes on to emphasize that this is rarely the case, presenting real-life cases and offering multiple recommendations for actions to ensure the rights of both parents with disabilities and their children.

This writer interviewed Robyn Powell, Attorney Advisor for the NCD and chief author of the report. Ms. Powell said that the study culminating in the 445 page report found discrimination on multiple fronts against persons with disabilities (PWD) who are or wish to become parents. For example, parents with disabilities are far more likely to lose custody of their children after divorce, encounter attitudinal barriers within the medical community in accessing reproductive healthcare, including assisted reproductive options, and face significant barriers in adopting children.

Indeed, even being known as the primary author of this report, Ms. Powell, who uses a power wheelchair, continues to be repeatedly asked by medical providers if she would like to consider getting a hysterectomy. It is not often that women in their early thirties are offered this major surgery absent a medical need for such. Ms. Powell stated that there is a common tendency to perceive PWD as being unable to care for themselves, and thus unable to care for children. However, this is largely untrue.

All parents, regardless of whether or not they have a disability, use formal and informal supports in raising a child, such as daycares, carpools, babysitters, play dates, camps, schools, etc. Yet all too often, when parents with disabilities require support to assist with certain tasks due to their disability, whether it be transportation, respite care, meal preparation, or lifting a baby, it is perceived as an inability to be fit for parenting.

Furthermore, these parents often have more difficulty in securing the supports they need. For example, some people with disabilities receive a certain number of personal care attendant (PCA) hours each week, paid for by Medicaid (MassHealth), to assist with a range of activities of daily living (ADLs), from medication management, bathing and grocery shopping to cuing, laundry or transportation. However, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which sets

the parameters for government-funded PCA services, prohibits PCAs who are assisting parents with disabilities from providing care for their nondisabled children.

The NCD implores CMS to expand its definition of ADLs to include parenting activities, noting that this is a crucial support for many PWD. In her research, Ms. Powell spoke with a mother who has a PCA stop by midday to fix her lunch. As soon as the PCA leaves, the mother slides her full plate over to her child and forgoes the meal for herself.

Another mother's children were taken by child welfare and placed into a foster home when she had to be hospitalized, resulting in difficult family reintegration. If Medicaid covered tasks like meal preparation and respite care for dependent nondisabled children of PWD, a significant barrier to parenting would be removed, and children would be far less likely to be torn from their families.

Unfortunately, most states, while providing large amounts of funding for foster care, provide very little funding to support family preservation, which is known to both be in the best interest of the vast majority of children, and to cost far less than foster care. Ms. Powell also noted that most supports needed by parents with disabilities are temporary or intermittent in nature.

Ms. Powell made the seemingly obvious point that parenting is very personal and cannot be generalized, as blanket statutes allowing for termination of parental rights based simply upon the presence and type of disability in a parent encourage. She said that in addition to legal protection, the solution to the pervasive removal of children from their loving parents who happen to have a disability will require a change in current presumptions; rather than assume PWD are unfit for parenting, society needs to assume that PWD are capable of parenting and providing good homes for children.

Furthermore, if a situation comes up in which a parent needs support, social services must look at how to provide the support rather than automatically conclude that children should be separated from their families, which is rarely in the best interest of the child.

The report references a blind couple with a newborn baby; when the new mother had some trouble breastfeeding for the very first time, a nurse first assured her that many new mothers experience some difficulty when first learning how to breastfeed. Then, the nurse left the room and called social services, who determined that a blind couple couldn't possibly care for a child and placed the newborn baby into foster care.

After an exhausting legal battle, the baby was returned to her parents 57 days after being torn away. This separation prevented the baby from being breastfed at all. Ms. Powell reported that the child is now two and is doing very well with her parents, who have all sorts of adaptive parenting equipment, including a talking thermometer and puzzles with Braille so they can tell their daughter what type of animal is on each piece.

The NCD has concluded that child welfare and family law statutes that allow for the removal of children from their parents based on their parents' disability status violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), even a full 23 years after the passage of this sweeping civil rights legislation. It will take a multi-pronged effort says Ms. Powell – changing policy and laws; educating social workers, medical providers, lawyers and society in general; training; funding for supports – to switch the focus of social services from taking children away from their parents with disabilities to instead supporting family unification and preservation.

This groundbreaking report has prompted legislative change in several states, including Massachusetts, where Representative Paul Heroux of Attleboro is the lead sponsor of House Bill 1379: An Act prohibiting discrimination against adults with disabilities in family and juvenile court proceedings, which is based on the model legislation provided by NCD in the report. There are currently an additional 17 co-sponsors of the bill, which is also supported by the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee and the Disability Law Center. A copy of the bill may be found online at <<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/House/H1379>>.

In the next issue of the AccessLetter, we will look more closely at other parts of the report, including discrimination against parents with disabilities in custody cases and adoption, as well as barriers these parents experience in the legal system, and other NCD suggestions for policy change.

For a full copy of the “Rocking the Cradle” report, see [www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/](http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/) or call the NCD at 202.272.2004 (Voice) or 202.272.2074 (TTY).

--Kate Thurman

## **CCPD Works with City to Address Bicycle-Pedestrian Conflicts**

Cambridge is regarded by many as a bicycle-friendly city, and for good reason. The City encourages bicycling in many ways – by installing bike racks, painting bike lanes on streets, and promoting bike sharing through HubWay, just to name a few. City environmental and transportation planners reason that, since bicycling reduces traffic congestion, lowers tailpipe emissions, and encourages exercise, it is the green way to travel.

But while many cyclists conscientiously observe traffic rules and regulations, some do not. People with disabilities and seniors, who often walk more slowly across an intersection, have expressed safety concerns to CCPD over some cyclists’ neglect and disregard for traffic signs and signals.

Unfortunately, some cyclists do not understand that they must follow the same rules and regulations as motor vehicles when traversing city streets.

One resident described the challenges she faces, saying, “I am blind and need to cross Massachusetts Ave. at Rindge Ave., which is a ‘T’-shaped intersection, at least twice daily. Particularly when crossing from the top of the ‘T’, cyclists will sometimes blow through the red light, even when the pedestrian walk sign is lit.”

“Generally I can't hear or see them coming fast enough to do anything about it, and I've had numerous close calls.”

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may not realize when cyclists are coming up behind them on sidewalks or streets. They may be startled by the cyclists and can lose balance or even be knocked down. Individuals using wheelchairs, walkers, canes

or service animals are also at high risk of being injured by cyclists who ignore basic traffic rules.

Over the past year, CCPD has been working with the Cambridge Police and other City departments to address these issues in an effective manner. At a CCPD meeting in June, Superintendent Christopher Burke reported on a number of new strategies the Cambridge Police have implemented in recent months to improve cyclist compliance with traffic rules. Burke reported that the Police Department had conducted 25 enforcement patrols at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Rindge Avenue in recent months, to address bicycle/pedestrian safety conflicts.

Large electronic signboards have also been deployed at the intersection, reminding cyclists of their duty to obey the same traffic laws as motorists. Also, 22 more police officers are being trained to become certified bicycle officers, in addition to a number of bicycle officers already deployed. Those bicycle officers will be dedicated to the bicycle enforcement effort, with a heavy concentration during rush hours in problem areas like North Cambridge, Central Square, and Harvard Square.

Another effective strategy has been to modify the citation (ticket) pads carried by police officers, to include bicycle citations on the same ticket as motor vehicle citations. Previously, officers had to carry two books – one for motor vehicle violations, and one for bicycle violations.

CCPD looks forward to continuing its work with the Cambridge Police Department and other City agencies to help address this important safety issue.

### **Disability Reframed: A Community Film Series presents a free screening of Music Within**

Join us on Saturday, July 27, 2013, 2 PM to 5 PM, in celebration of the 23rd anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for a FREE screening of this 2007 drama, which tells the true story of Richard Pimental, a brilliant public speaker whose hearing disability attained in the Vietnam War drove him to become an activist for the ADA. The screening will be at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave., Central Square, and will be

followed by a lively audience discussion, will be held from 2-5pm at the Citywide Senior Center, 805 Massachusetts Ave in Central Square, Cambridge. Free refreshments – bring your friends & family! Contact CCPD with any questions at <ccpd@cambridgema.gov> or by phone at 617.349.4692 (voice) or 617.492.0235 (tty). Sponsored by CCPD, Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs and the City of Boston Mayor’s Commission for Persons with Disabilities. Join Disability Reframed: A Community Film Series on Facebook, and follow @CambCPD on Twitter for updates!

## **Public Works: Construction Corner**

This has been quite an active construction season so far for the Cambridge Department of Public Works (DPW), and it’s only the summer. Dealing with traffic congestion, noise and general inconvenience, however, means improved roadways and sidewalks once all is complete. We’d like to spotlight a few large projects and provide information on accessibility during construction.

### Longfellow Bridge Rehabilitation Project Now Underway

The long-awaited Longfellow Bridge Rehabilitation Project is finally here! The three and half year project will address the bridge’s current structural deficiencies, while improving multi-modal access and bridge-to-city-street connections to meet accessibility guidelines. Project crews have already begun enabling work to prepare for the July 20 bridge closure of Cambridge-bound vehicular traffic.

During construction, the contractor will maintain MBTA Red Line service, and pedestrian and cyclist access on the bridge. There will be 25 weekends over the next three and a half years where crews will shutdown the Red Line train service, with buses replacing the trains from Park Street Station to Kendall Square.

For more information or to receive updates from MassDOT, email <longfellowbridge@state.ma.us>. You can also call project hotline to report issues at 617.519.9892 or visit the project website at <www.massdot.state.ma.us/charlesriverbridges/LongfellowBridge.aspx>.

## Alewife Sewer Separation Project Update

The City of Cambridge is close to completing a new stormwater wetland in the Alewife Reservation, set to open this fall. This project is a key element of the Alewife Sewer Separation Project that will separate the combined sanitary wastewater and stormwater infrastructure in the Huron Ave and Concord Ave neighborhoods east of Fresh Pond. In addition to improving water quality, the project will provide the public with a space to enjoy passive recreation and environmental education, and includes an amphitheater, interpretive signage, overlooks and boardwalks. The project will also link the MassDOT bicycle and pedestrian path between Brighton Street in Belmont and the Alewife MBTA Station.

The project includes the reconstruction of the streets and sidewalks throughout the project area. Crews are currently constructing new storm and sewer drains and will soon begin sidewalk reconstruction.

## Contractor Requirements During Construction Projects

The City requires contractors to maintain accessibility for all users during construction. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), published by the US DOT / Federal Highway Administration, includes specific requirements for pedestrian access in work zones.

Where pedestrian routes are closed, alternate pedestrian routes shall be provided. Whenever possible, work should be done in a manner that does not create a need to detour pedestrians from existing routes or crossings. The City also requires proper signage with appropriate detours and temporary ramps that are compliant.

DPW encourages those living and doing business in Cambridge to report issues in construction zones. To report a concern or for general questions, please call Public Works at 617.349.4800 or email <[theworks@cambridgema.gov](mailto:theworks@cambridgema.gov)>.

For more information on City construction projects, please visit <[www.cambridgema.gov/theworks](http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks)>.

**Welcome New CCPD Board Members!**

In June, then-City Manager Robert W. Healy appointed two Cambridge residents to serve on the CCPD Board, Holly Aldrich and Avner Fink.

Holly Aldrich is excited to serve on the CCPD Board. Holly received a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2009, and she holds the designation of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). Currently, Holly is a Disability Access Specialist at Lesley University. She enjoys working interactively with others in enhancing self-efficacy and quality of life. As a person with a disability and a rehabilitation counselor, Holly also knows how important it is to come together as a group of informed citizens in order to capitalize on community resources and advocate for comprehensive change. Her special interests include media representations of disability, youth with disabilities, and intersectionality in disability identity and culture. She sees the CCPD as a great way to become a collaborative agent in increasing access, visibility, and opportunity in the wider community.

Avner Fink is currently a Client Services Advocate at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) where part of his portfolio includes representing clients with disabilities. Avner graduated with a Juris Doctorate from the University of Connecticut School of Law and a Bachelors of Arts degree from Brandeis University. Avner says he achieved success in spite of his disability because of people who had helped him along the way. He therefore has always felt that it is important to remove barriers for people with disabilities and to help them succeed to their fullest potential. Avner was born and raised in Connecticut, but after attending Brandeis, fell in love with Boston, became a Red Sox fan and decided to make Cambridge his home.

CCPD looks forward to gaining from the expertise and perspectives Holly and Avner bring to the Board!

### **MBTA and Door2Door Inaugurate Travel Independence**

On July 16, the MBTA and Somerville-based non-profit Door2Door Transportation proudly announced a partnership destined to enhance the independence of Greater Boston transportation consumers, especially seniors and persons with disabilities.

Invoking the adage “Knowledge is Power,” the agencies are fortifying and expanding travel training opportunities for those interested in exploring and mastering fixed route transit (buses, subways, and the Commuter Rail) and other transportation resources. Travel training will be the first in a series of mobility management services organized under a consortium dubbed Ways2Go and funded by federal grant money.

“For many potential transit passengers, “says Dr. Beverly A. Scott, General Manager of the MBTA and MassDOT Rail & Transit Administrator, “all we need to do to encourage fixed route usage is demystify it a bit. A lot of people do not know that the T is so accessible and quite easy to use once you get the hang of it.”

In January of 2013, the MBTA’s Department of System Wide Accessibility introduced a System Orientation Training, an introductory seminar for persons with disabilities interested in making use of the T’s vast array of accessible fixed route buses and subway lines. Participants in System Orientation get an overview of trip planning and hands on practice using maps and schedules (available in alternate formats), as well as boarding buses. They are also given a tour of subway and bus facilities and learn about the safety features available in stations and on vehicles. By all accounts, the program has filled a much needed information gap.

At the same time, Door2Door’s Ways2Go program has been developing more detailed curricula to meet the needs of those who require more intensive assistance in order to master fixed route travel. With the new partnership, Ways2Go travel training will be available to anyone who would like additional instruction after completing System Orientation Training.

Travel training programs across the country are helping individuals with more complex physical and cognitive disabilities become independent travelers, able to plan their own trips on fixed route rather than depending solely on paratransit services. Door2Door Executive Director Reed Cochran notes, “We’re looking forward to opening doors. While Door2Door and the MBTA been providing paratransit for our neighbors for many years, many of our consumers long for more options and more autonomy in deciding where to go and when. For those who are willing and able to adopt fixed route options, the world will be more at their fingertips. Ways2Go training will make the process much less daunting.”

Anyone interested in System-Wide Orientation and travel training may call 617.222.5237 or e-mail <HowToTravel@mbta.com>.

## **Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community**

(See end of Calendar for all weekly/recurring events)

July 25 Boston ADA Celebration Day – Join Mayor Thomas M. Menino and the Mayor’s Commission for Persons with Disabilities at this FREE event for children, families and individuals of all abilities on Boston City Hall Plaza from noon-3pm. Food, music, information, T-shirts and plenty of fun will be provided! For more information and updates, see <[www.cityofboston.gov/disability](http://www.cityofboston.gov/disability)>.

Aug. 2 Annual ADA Celebration & Picnic in Gardner, MA– Join the Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council (MA SILC) in celebrating the 23rd Anniversary of the ADA at Dunn Pond State Park in Gardner, MA from 11am-3pm. With all of the demands of our daily lives, we rarely take the time to gather as a community, to celebrate the gains we’ve made and to remember those who made the journey with us. We’ll remember those who dreamed the dream and made the disability movement strong. But mostly, it’s a time to kick back, have some fun in the sun, connect with old friends and make some new ones. Food & Entertainment will be provided, but RSVP is required. For more information or to RSVP, email Jim Clark at <[jjclark@masilc.org](mailto:jjclark@masilc.org)> or call 508.620.7452.

Aug. 8 Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) Monthly Meeting – meets in the 2nd floor conference room at 51 Inman Street, Cambridge from 5:30pm-7pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month, with opportunity for public comment. Call 617.349.4692 (voice) or 617.492.0235 (TTY) or e-mail <[ccpd@cambridgema.gov](mailto:ccpd@cambridgema.gov)> for more information or to request accommodations.

Aug. 10 Fishing Derby in Hudson for Families with Kids with Disabilities – Join the Massachusetts Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired (MAPVI) for its 8th annual Fishing Derby on a private pond at Riverside Gun Club, 16 Wilkins Street in Hudson, MA from 10am-2pm (rain date of August 11). Rods and reels for the children are provided by Wildlife and Fishery. Baiting and casting (as needed)

provided by Hudson Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. This event includes lunch and is free for MAPVI members and \$10 per family for non-members and registration is limited. While open to any family who has a child with a disability, children with a visual impairment and their siblings/friends will be given priority until August 3rd, then it's first come/first served. RSVP by contacting Sue Rawley at <rawleys@hotmail.com> or 781.902.1413. For more information about the Fishing Derby, visit <<http://mapvi.org/fishing-derby-2013>>.

Sept. 12 Adaptive Cycling in Brighton – Join All Out Adventures (AOA) and explore the wide variety of adaptive bikes for adults and kids including hand cycles, trikes, tandems, and recumbent bikes. This event will be held at Artesani Park in Brighton from 11am-3pm. Cost is \$3 and pre-registration is required. Call AOA for more information or to register at 413.584.2052.

Sept. 19 Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) Monthly Meeting – meets in the 2nd floor conference room at 51 Inman Street, Cambridge from 5:30pm-7pm usually on the 2nd Thursday of each month, but has been moved to the 3rd Thursday for September, with opportunity for public comment. Call 617.349.4692 (voice) or 617.492.0235 (TTY) or e-mail <[ccpd@cambridgema.gov](mailto:ccpd@cambridgema.gov)> for more information or to request accommodations.

Sept. 20-22 FREE Abilities Expo Boston – The Abilities Expo is coming to Boston! This FREE event is open to all and is an opportunity to explore dozens of products, services and technologies for ALL disabilities at exhibitor booths (check out our CCPD booth at the Expo!), view and have a go at adaptive sports, learn new dance moves, see assistive animals in action, view a horse therapy demo, attend informative workshops, face painting for kids and more. The featured Assistive Technology Pavilion provides for the opportunity to test drive cutting-edge devices to determine what meets participants' individual needs. The Retail Pavilion will feature ingenious, low-cost inventions and adaptive products, and all workshops will have real-time captioning. The Expo hours are 11am-5pm on Friday and Saturday, and 11am-4pm on Sunday. It will be held at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, Hall C, 415 Summer Street in Boston (take the MBTA Silver Line SL1, SL2 or Silverline Way Shuttle to the World Trade Center stop). For more info or to pre-register (not required, but recommended to save you time in entering the expo), see <[www.abilitiesexpo.com/boston](http://www.abilitiesexpo.com/boston)>.

## Weekly & Recurring Events

### Ongoing

Injured Worker Support Meetings –Meetings are scheduled by appointment, often the 1st Wednesday of the month, 5:15 - 6:45 pm, but other times can be arranged. Meetings/appointments usually take place at 650 Beacon Street, Kenmore Square, Boston, 4th Floor Conference Room (close to the Kenmore Square MBTA station, a few doors to the right of Barnes & Noble). RSI Action volunteers answer questions and provide resources and support, including the opportunity to view their provider evaluation book, to people with RSIs (Repetitive Strain Injuries) or other workplace injuries. Discussion topics have included medical treatment, insurance/legal issues, and speech recognition software. For more information or to set up a meeting, call 617.247.6827, or go to <[www.rsiaction.org](http://www.rsiaction.org)>.

### Mondays

Low Vision Support Group – meets on the 2nd Monday of each month from 10-11:30am at the North Cambridge Senior Center, 2050 Mass Ave. While geared towards seniors, the group is open to all ages. For more information, contact Barbara Duford at <[marksgirl4951@gmail.com](mailto:marksgirl4951@gmail.com)>.

NAMI Connection – a support group for adults with mental illness sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), meets every Monday, 1-2:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Somerville Recovery Learning Center, 153 South St, 2nd Floor in Somerville. The group is free and open to all who self-identify as having a mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. For more information, contact Janel Tan at 617.863.5388 or <[tanj@vinfen.org](mailto:tanj@vinfen.org)>.

NAMI Support Group for Caregivers –Sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, this is a free support group for family members, friends and other caregivers of persons with mental illness that provides understanding, comfort, hope and help. This group meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month at 7:30pm at the Cambridge Hospital Learning Center A, 3rd Floor, 1493 Cambridge Street. For more

information, see <[www.namimass.org/programs](http://www.namimass.org/programs)>, e-mail <[helpline@namimass.org](mailto:helpline@namimass.org)>, or call Elizabeth at 781.646.0397.

OCD Support Group – A casual, peer-led, open discussion of the trials (and triumphs!) of living with OCD and anxiety. All are welcome, all are encouraged to come, although the group strives to keep private and secure, as confidentiality is and will remain of highest priority. The group meets from 7-8:30pm on the 1st & 3rd Monday of each month (excluding holidays) at the Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Park in Cambridge, with a suggested donation of \$5. For more information, email <[ocdgroupcambridge@gmail.com](mailto:ocdgroupcambridge@gmail.com)>.

## Tuesdays

Computer Help for Job Seekers – Every Tuesday from 3:30-5pm Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) offers individualized, flexible computer assistance from a friendly volunteer who can help with job searching, resume writing, online job applications, computer skills, and much more. Work alone or with a group to learn more about computers. This program is open to all job seekers, and there is no need to sign up, just stop by! Please call 617.661.6900 with questions or for more information.

Boston Voice Users – this group for people who use or are interested in using speech recognition or dictation software meets from approximately 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.135. Members explore the developments, available tools and products, and best use of personal computer-based speech-recognition, and invite both commercial and noncommercial entities to present at meetings. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to <[www.bostonvoiceusers.org](http://www.bostonvoiceusers.org)>.

## Wednesdays

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) meets 1 – 3 p.m. at the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, 2nd floor Conference Room #2 on the 4th Wednesday of each month. Call 617.973.7507 voice or 617.973.7089 TTY or e-mail <[aact@ctps.org](mailto:aact@ctps.org)> for more information or to request interpreters. Security measures require proper ID for access to meetings.

Access to Art: Explorations – Offered by the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston, this is an interactive, multidisciplinary evening workshop that meets at 6pm in the Huntington Avenue Entrance Lobby on the 1st Wednesday of the month for adults with disabilities, with a focus on cognitive disabilities and disabilities that may affect verbal communication. This program is always multi-sensory and does not require one to be verbal. This program was developed with the intention of having it be as inclusive as possible, thus friends and family members are welcome and encouraged to come and take part. This program is led by a facilitator with experience in both art and theatre and one or more musicians. This program is NOT for groups, and advance notice is appreciated. For more information, see <[www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org)> or contact Valarie Burrows at 617.369.3302 or Hannah Goodwin at 617.369.3189, or e-mail <[access@mfa.org](mailto:access@mfa.org)>.

Amputee Support Group – Offered by Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, all amputees, their family and friends are invited to socialize and discuss common areas of interest, including accessibility and resources, as well as to provide support and share coping strategies. Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month from 1-2pm at Spaulding Rehab Hospital, 300 First Avenue, Charlestown Navy Yard (accessible by MBTA bus routes 89 & 93). For more information, see <[www.spauldingrehab.org/events/supportgroupevents](http://www.spauldingrehab.org/events/supportgroupevents)> or contact Sally Johnson, LICSW at 617.573.2539 (voice), 1.800.439.2370 (TTY), or by e-mail at <[sejohnson@partners.org](mailto:sejohnson@partners.org)>.

Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) Open House – The ATRC, which helps people with disabilities in Eastern Massachusetts make informed decisions about assistive technology they can use to increase their independence at home, on the job or in school, holds an open house on the 1st Wednesday of each month from 8:30am-4:30pm. These FREE monthly open houses provide an opportunity to see what kinds of assistive technology products are available, and to try them out. The ATRC is located at the Boston Easter Seals office, 89 South Street (one block from MBTA South Station). Visit <[www.eastersealsma.org](http://www.eastersealsma.org)>, call 617.226.2634, or email <[ATRC@eastersealsma.org](mailto:ATRC@eastersealsma.org)> for more information.

Carroll Center for the Blind Information Day – In order to provide answers to many of the questions people frequently ask about Carroll Center programs and other

visual impairment services, they hold monthly information days on the 1st Wednesday of every month. See the campus, learn from rehabilitation instructors, and talk to graduates about their experience in Carroll Center adult and senior rehabilitation and technology programs. Special dates are offered for those seeking tours and information about summer offerings for youth. The staff loves this chance to help participants become informed, relaxed, and motivated! And the lunch is provided free of charge! The sessions start promptly at 10am and end at 2pm. To make a reservation (required), email <renee.hall@carroll.org> or call 1.800.852.3131 ext. 225 with the name of each guest attending (family and friends are welcome!). The Carroll Center is located at 770 Centre Street in Newton.

Central Square Resume Writing & Job Hunting, FREE Drop-in Assistance – Free help for adults needing assistance with making resumes or job hunting, offered on a first come, first served basis. Offered every Wednesday from 1-3pm at the Central Square Branch of the Cambridge Public Library (45 Pearl Street), this opportunity for assistance is open to all. For more information, contact Maria Balestrieri at <mbalestrieri@cambridgema.gov> or 617.349.4013.

DBSA-Boston (Depression Bipolar Support Alliance of Boston) Support Group meets every Wednesday evening, 7-9pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (de Marneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. Call 617.855.2795 or see <www.dbsaboston.org> for more information.

Feeling for Form Introductory Tour of MFA for blind & low vision visitors – The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston offers a series of introductory one-on-one guided tours to the Museum and its collections for blind and low vision individuals who want to build a deeper relationship with the Museum. Each monthly session focuses on a different collection and includes wayfinding and verbal description of spaces. These tours are given on the 1st Sunday of the month at 10:30 am and the 3rd Wednesday at 6:30 pm. Individuals can attend one or more sessions, whichever interests them. Guided tours can also be scheduled at other times. Pre-registration is not required unless a visitor needs a sighted guide or other access accommodation. Contact Valerie Burrows at 617.369.3302 or <vburrows@mfa.org> to register. Call 617.369.3189 or e-mail <access@mfa.org> or go to <www.mfa.org> for more information. The MFA is located at 465 Huntington Avenue in Boston, and

is accessible by the Green line “E” train to the “Museum of Fine Arts” stop, or the Orange line train to the “Ruggles” stop.

Free introductory tour of MFA in sign language & with assistive listening devices –A new monthly offering at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. These tours will be given at 6:30 pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. No pre-registration is required; meet at the Sharf Visitor Center in the MFA. For more information about accessible programs Valerie Burrows at 617.369.3302 voice, 617.267.9703 TTY or e-mail <access@mfa.org>.

Open Support Group for Adults on the Autism Spectrum – Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, 7-8:30 pm at the offices of the Asperger’s Association of New England (AANE), 85 Main St., Suite 101, Watertown, MA. A \$5 donation is suggested. RSVP to 617.393.3824, x310 or <Jamie.Freed@aane.org>.

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 meeting times or more information, contact Judy SantaMaria at 781.942.4888, x4022 or <familysupport@theemarc.org>.

Spaulding Stroke Support Group – This community-based support group offered by Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital (SRH) provides socialization and education for stroke survivors, meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 3-4pm at Spaulding Rehab Hospital, 300 First Avenue, Charlestown Navy Yard (accessible by MBTA bus routes 89 & 93). See <www.spauldingrehab.org/events/supportgroupevents> or contact Karen Halfon at 617.573.7143 (voice), 1.800.439.2370 (TTY), or by e-mail at <khalfon@partners.org>.

Thursdays

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) Monthly Meeting – generally meets on the 2nd Thursday, at 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment [NOTE: The September meeting will be held on the 3rd Thursday]. Call 617.349.4692 (voice), 617.492.0235

(TTY) or e-mail <kthurman@cambridgema.gov> for more information or to request accommodations.

AppShare – Offered by the Easter Seals Assistive Technology Regional Center (ARTC), AppShare is a new drop-in series for people to come to their Boston center with their “smart” devices (both Apple and Android) to share and learn about apps in an informal and relaxed setting. If you enjoy talking about apps or want to learn about new ones - this is the place to be! The ARTC will announce themes for each series prior to the meeting date. All AppShare days are on the 2nd Thursday of the month, and drop-in times are 11:00am-12:00pm and 1:00-2:00pm. For more information, or to request accommodations, see <www.eastersealsma.org> or contact the ARTC, 89 South Street in Boston (near MBTA South Station) at 617.226.2634 or by email at <atrc@eastersealsma.org>. The themes for the April 11 and May 9 series are TBD.

DBSA-Boston (Depression Bipolar Support Alliance of Boston) Support Group – meets at Mass. General Hospital every Thursday, 7 - 9 p.m. in the Schiff Conference Center Room, Suite 4A 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 or e-mail <mghgroup@dbsaboston.org>.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Support Group – Offered by Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital (SRH), this weekly support group, which meets every Thursday from 4-5pm, is for anyone affected by SCI, to help and inspire the newly injured through role models and peer mentors, and to support individuals and family members as they begin their post-injury journeys. This group is run by run by Dr. Chris Carter and is held in GBC Office at SRH, 300 First Avenue, Charlestown Navy Yard (accessible by MBTA bus routes 89 &93). For more information, see: <www.spauldingrehab.org/events/supportgroupevents> or 617.573.2081 (voice), 1.800.439.2370 (TTY), or by e-mail at <sciboston@aol.com>.

## Fridays

Free Fun Fridays – Sponsored by the Highland Street Foundation, this program invites Massachusetts residents and tourists to attractions every Friday through August with FREE admission. No registration is required, just visit and enjoy! For

more information, see <[www.highlandstreet.org/freefunfridays.html](http://www.highlandstreet.org/freefunfridays.html)>, or call 617.969.8900. Schedule of free admission offerings is:

August 2: Boston Children's Museum, Franklin Park Zoo, Arnold Arboretum, Fuller Craft Museum, Wenham Museum, and the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center.

August 9: Boston Harbor Island Alliance, the Sports Museum, Battleship Cove, Ocean Explorium,  
The Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, and the Eric Carle Museum.

August 16: Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, USS Constitution Museum, Concord Museum, Edward Gorey House, Springfield Museums, and the Berkshire Museum.

August 23: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Museum Of African American History, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Fitchburg Art Museum, Fruitlands Museum, and Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

August 30: Plimoth Plantation, The Discovery Museums, New Repertory Theatre, Ecotarium,  
Norman Rockwell Museum, and The Mount: Edith Wharton's Home.

Second Fridays are FREE at the MIT Museum – Jump-start your weekend with the MIT Museum! Get up close and personal with Kismet the Robot, or see the world in 3-D through our one-of-a-kind holography exhibit. Enjoy performances, demonstrations, and lectures throughout our galleries. Mix and mingle; relax and unwind. Museum admission, including the galleries and additional activities, is free from 5-8pm on the 2nd Friday of every month. The Museum is located in Building N51 at 265 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge. See <[web.mit.edu/museum/programs/secondfridays.html](http://web.mit.edu/museum/programs/secondfridays.html)> or call 617.253.5927 for more information.

## Saturdays

Boston Acquired Brain Injury Support Group (BABIS) – The mission of this free support group is to provide a positive forum for peer socialization, hope and

education for people with acquired brain injury, their family and friends. This group is held on the 1st Saturday of the month, from 10am-12pm at Spaulding Rehab Hospital, 300 First Avenue, Charlestown Navy Yard (accessible by MBTA bus routes 89 & 93). No registration required, just show up! For more information, call Sally Johnson, LICSW at 617.573.2539 (voice), 1.800.439.2370 (TTY), e-mail <babisgroup@hotmail.com>, or see <www.babis.info>.

Beyond the Spectrum: Adventures in Art for Children with Autism – Offered by the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) Artful Adventures offers a specially designed program for children ages 8-12 on the Autism Spectrum, including Asperger’s Syndrome, accompanied by a parent or caregiver. Upon arrival children will be divided into groups by age and/or needs, and the program meets on the 1st Saturday of each month from 10:30 am - 12:00 pm. Each class lasts an hour and a half and combines gallery exploration with an art-making activity. Pre-registration is required by the prior Tuesday. The cost is \$8.00 per child (includes materials and museum admission), and one adult is admitted free with each child ticket, which also includes discounted parking. The program meets in the Education Center in Druker Family Pavilion, Room 159 at 10:20am before the start of each class. For more information, or to pre-register, go to <www.mfa.org/programs/community-programs/beyond-the-spectrum>, call 617.369.3303 or email <artfuladventures@mfa.org>.

## Sundays

Feeling for Form Introductory Tour of MFA for blind & low vision visitors –These tours are given on the 1st Sunday of the month at 10:30 am. Pre-registration is not required for the Sunday tours unless a sighted guide or other access accommodation is needed. See Wednesday listing for details.

“Quiet Day” at the Charles River Museum of Industry & Innovation: The Charles River Museum of Industry & Innovation in Waltham hosts "Quiet Day" for children with Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), which affects a variety of disabilities, on the last Sunday of the month from 10am to 5pm. During Quiet Day, the museum will disable any exhibit that produces uncomfortable noise levels, equipment such as sound block headphones, weighted blankets will be offered, and a separate space for reducing stimuli will be available. Admission is \$7.00 per adult and \$5.00 per child, student or senior. Free to children under 6, active and retired US Military, and

Museum members. For more information, email <[info@crmi.org](mailto:info@crmi.org)> or call 781.893.5410 or 617.823.5081.

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AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, part of the Department of Human Service Programs, 51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139. We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

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End of AccessLetter e-mail edition, August — September 2013