



Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin

“Enhancing the effectiveness of disability activism by organizing and empowering individuals, families, groups and organizations”

Opportunity! Empowerment! Justice!

(July) August 2006

Need this newsletter in an alternative format?
Please let us know.

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or look on our website at CT-DAC.org

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This Bulletin is supported by a grant that the Disability Advocacy Collaborative has received from the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities. In addition, in-kind support is being provided by the UConn Center on Disabilities, and Communitas, Inc. serves as the project's fiscal agent. To all three we extend our appreciation.

Update on Disability Advocacy Collaborative Activities

Disability Convention 2006 Update

- If you haven't done so already, check out our new web site: www.ct-dac.org
- August 18 is the absolute final date for exhibitors and vendors to reserve a booth for their business or private non-profit organization. It is also the final date for those who want to purchase an ad in the Convention program book. Information about the options available and the forms that need to be filled out can be found on the Collaborative web site – www.ct-dac.org
- The high school students who participated in this year's Youth Leadership Forum at the University of Connecticut have come up with a number of projects that will focus on the Convention; one group will be working on a state legislative proposal to mandate a week devoted to disability history and culture in our public schools, and another group will be painting a disability-themed related mural during the Convention
- The organization People First has purchased "respectful language" bracelets for the Convention and will also have pins available for distribution (a big letter "R" with a line through it, representing their distaste for the word "retardation")
- Ada Suarez from P&A has translated Convention flyers into Spanish and will be helping distribute them to key contacts in various parts of the state; Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, has vowed his support to our efforts, and his Public Information Officer will help us connect with Latino newspapers and radio stations. Ada will help us translate PSAs and press releases into Spanish, and try to set up interviews with Latino radio stations
- we will have the services of another VISTA Volunteer to help us with coordinating transportation to the Convention, identifying a business or two that might donate shirts (for volunteers to wear at the Convention) and other goodies, and possibly assist Maggie Carr with public relations work
- Chris Gaynor has developed a process whereby people may volunteer to help out at the Convention; Lisa Abbey James will assist her – to sign up as a volunteer, go to the Collaborative's web site – www.ct-dac.org.
- John DeStefano has locked in the 1 pm speaking spot at the Convention (if he wins Tuesday's primary), and Joe Courtney is planning to attend (he is running against Rob Simmons in the 2nd Congressional District)

- Stan Kosloski was invited to participate in a Press Conference on Friday past by Susan Bysiewicz (Secretary of State) as she announced a new (accessible) voting method that will be implemented in Connecticut for state and federal elections; Stan used his comment time to alert media present to the Convention and handed out Save the Date flyers; Susan also accepted an invitation to attend and her staff volunteered to help us out (they would like to have the new voting equipment available for Convention attendees to try out)
- On the regional level, another very successful advocacy training workshop was held in Danbury on July 25 - 17 people attended; the newly formed Hartford regional advocacy network has met twice and is planning to offer a similar workshop in mid-October; the Southeastern regional network has decided to organize around issues, rather than offering more workshops (their focus now is on getting people up to the Convention); the Disability Resource Center in Stratford is holding a meeting this coming week and are considering offering an advocacy training workshop to recruit new members; the Waterbury and Norwalk/Greenwich groups are continuing their outstanding work
- a statewide meeting of the leaders from all the various regional networks has been set for Thursday, August 24 at 10 am, at a site to be determined

PATHS Project Begins a New Year of Exploring Transportation Options for People with Disabilities

Last year at PATHS forums people with disabilities who use public transportation had an opportunity to share perspectives about what's working and what isn't. This year, PATHS is offering workshops around the state to help people with disabilities get comfortable using public transportation and other services. On August 17th in Preston, August 21 in Bridgeport, and August 24th in Torrington there will be two-hour workshops about transportation options that make it easier to get to work, go shopping, visit a doctor, or just get out and have some fun.

Flyers with details about the three workshops are posted on the website of the UConn Center on Disabilities (www.uconnucedd.org). Please share the flyers with friends and colleagues, and post them wherever possible.

To learn more and to request sign language interpreters or accommodations, contact Angelo Fazio at angfazio@uchc.edu or 860-679-1589.

For those who do not use Adobe Reader, dates, times and locations for the workshops follow:

- August 17, 1:30 to 3:30 pm, SEAT Transit Offices, 21 Route 12, Preston
- August 21, 1:30 to 3:30 pm, The Burroughs Community Center, 2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport
- August 24, 10 am to 12 noon, Torrington City Hall, 140 Main Street, Torrington.

Important Reminder!

Hopefully by now you have heard about Public Act 06-92 (HB 5478), An Act Concerning the Department of Mental Retardation, that passed the Connecticut State General Assembly this session. The legislation requires DMR to solicit input regarding a name change for the Department from clients and families receiving services provided by the department, advocates of person with intellectual disabilities and other interested parties. DMR is required to submit a report of findings and recommendations, including the cost of any recommended name change, to the Governor, the Office of Policy and Management and the Public Health Committee not later than January 1, 2007.

There is a new link on the DMR website with the most up to date information about this issue. <http://www.dmr.state.ct.us/NameChange.htm>

As mentioned on the website, there are several opportunities for public input.

- The Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities has offered to host a Weblog regarding the potential name change for the Department of Mental Retardation. To read the comments already posted, or to add your own, please visit their website at:
www.ctcdd.org/2006/03/rename_the_department_of_menta.php#comments
- DMR has designed a questionnaire to gather input, allowing them to make an educated and informed recommendation on this very important issue. The questionnaire is available on the DMR website and may be submitted via post mail to:

Department of Mental Retardation (name change)
Attn: Christine Pollio, Legislative Liaison
460 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Or email to: DMR.NameChange@po.state.ct.us
Subject line: name change questionnaire

- There will also be a statewide public forum on **Thursday, September 7, 2006 at 9:30 AM** in Room 1D at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. This forum will provide an additional opportunity for statewide public input. Details for the forum are available on the DMR Name Change web page. The format will be similar to a Legislative Committee Public Hearing.

Executive Director Position Open

The State Independent Living Council (SILC) Executive Director will lead a not-for-profit planning council to work with Centers for Independent Living, government agencies, disability organizations, and people with disabilities to devise plans and strategies to enhance the provision of independent living services. Opportunities for growth exist in the areas of increasing membership; creating new revenue streams; and expanding the network of Centers.

The SILC is seeking a committed, dynamic professional who possesses the leadership characteristics to help chart the course of independent living as well as foster continued growth and development for the SILC directors and staff. The prospective Executive Director must have excellent communication and writing skills as well as administrative and organizational skills and experience in helping an organization grow. The new Executive Director will use members as experience and support to strengthen the SILC plan for coordination and promotion of Independent Living.

Contact the SILC Office for full application package:

Susan Binkowski

Connecticut State Independent Living Council

Suites 132-134 - 151 New Park Avenue

Hartford, CT 06106

Phone/Fax: (860) 523-0126

E-mail: susan.binkowski@yahoo.com

KASA Seeking a Youth Organizer

KASA (Kids As Self Advocates) is an organization created **by** youth with disabilities **for** youth to educate society about issues **concerning** youth with a wide spectrum of disabilities. KASA believes in supporting self-determination, creating support networks and proactive advocacy for **all** youth with disabilities in our society.

KASA is searching for one youth from Connecticut between 16-22 years of age to:

- Recruit new members to CT-KASA
- Assist in coordination of member attendance to monthly meetings (by phone and email)
- Be a member of KASA
- Give at least 4 CT-KASA presentations a year

A stipend of \$12 per hour will be given in exchange for up to 5 hours per month of work. This job requires a one year commitment to work for CT-KASA. Youth with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply. Preference *may* be given to an applicant from Hartford or New London counties, but anyone from Connecticut may apply.

If interested contact KASA for an application or download it from the KASA web site at www.ckasa.org. All applications are due by August 11, 2006.

For more general information contact CT-KASA at 60-B Weston Street - Hartford, CT 06120-1551 - (860) 297-4316 phone; (860) 297-4380 TTY; (860) 566-8714 FAX . Heather Northrop coordinator@ckasa.org or Jessica Frey jessicaf@ckasa.org .

A Champion Advocate Retires!

Peg Dignoti, who has been with the Arc of Connecticut for nearly 47 years, 25 as Executive Director, announced her retirement this week, effective the end of the year. Assistant Executive Director, Lynn Warner, has been named to the top position effective January 1, 2007. Peg will remain with Arc/CT on a part-time basis.

Peg said that while she looks forward to turning over some of the responsibility and workload to her successor, she will miss the day-by-day activities of the Association. However, she is pleased that Lynn and the Board would like her to stay on as a part-time consultant.

Child Advocate Seeks Parent/Family Input

The Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate (OCA), which oversees the protection and care of all children and advocates for their well-being, has embarked on an initiative to provoke new ways of thinking about how to better support children with disabilities and their families.

As part of this effort, they would greatly appreciate the insights of parents and family members. What changes would you like to see in your community to provide your child with more opportunities? Specific topics of interest may include:

- Recreation (i.e. extracurricular programs, camps, sports, playgrounds, transportation)
- Family Supports (i.e. support groups, respite, child care)
- Medical (i.e. access to care and services, transportation)

All responses will be kept confidential pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §46a-13n. Please send comments to the OCA at elysa.gordon@po.state.ct.us.

Congratulations to the Autism Society of Connecticut

The Autism Society of Connecticut (ASCONN) and the Autism Society of North Carolina have been selected from among 200 Autism Society of America chapters as "2006 Co-Chapters of the Year." The "Chapter of the Year" award is given to the Autism Society chapter that has effectively worked together to use its resources and members to positively influence the lives of individuals, parents, and professionals coping with autism in their community.

ASCONN President Kim Newgass explained that ASCONN was honored as "Chapter of the Year" because "we made significant progress in all three of our major areas of focus: serving as a statewide autism resource, providing mini-grants to families who may need financial assistance, and raising awareness of autism."

Changes in Medicaid and HUSKY Programs!

As of July 1, 2006, U.S. citizens – children and adults – applying for or renewing Medicaid or HUSKY A will need to submit proof of citizenship AND identification to get and keep their benefits. **It is a federal law.** Persons on Medicare, SSI, SAGA and HUSKY B are exempt. This new rule applies ONLY to U.S. citizens. Medicaid/HUSKY A eligibility requirements and documentation for legal residents and non-citizens have NOT changed.

For more information, call 1-877-CT HUSKY (1-877-284-8759).

Need Help with your Health Insurance?

The Connecticut Family to Family (F2F) Health Information Project is a new resource for families who are raising children with physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, or behavioral health challenges. The F2F Network provides direct assistance from trained health information specialists on matters related to health insurance. The Specialists are regionally based and they are also raising a child with special health needs. They can assist on all forms of health insurance both public and private and benefits from Social Security, Title V as well as links to Birth to Three and family supports.

Assistance provided to a family could include applying for HUSKY or other Medicaid programs, reading a commercial policy, filing an appeal when coverage is denied, applying for Title V or Social Security benefits, and accessing the regional medical home. The F2F network can also provide resources to local support groups, health care providers, and community groups. F2F is currently piloting a Health Information Toolkit which should be available in the early fall. The toolkit will contain information on health care systems and family supports to be used by families, providers and community members.

Families who have health insurance questions should contact the F2F Coordinator Susan Zimmerman to be matched with a Health Insurance Specialist or to get technical assistance on the phone. To contact the coordinator, call toll free (866) 630-6055 or email szimmerman@favor-ct.org.

Connecticut Parent Power Presents a Candidate's Forum

When: Saturday, September 30th - 9:00-11:30am

Where: Middlesex Community College

100 Training Hill Road

Middletown, CT

All candidates for Governor & Congressional races invited to attend!!

Find out where candidates stand on:

- School Funding

- After-school Programming
- Early Childhood Care
- Access to Affordable Health Care
- And More!!!

Connecticut Parent Power is a network of parents impacting state policy to put children first. For more information go to: www.ctparentpower.org .

NSCIA Connecticut Chapter Hosts Annual Picnic

The Connecticut Chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (NSCIA) is teaming with the Hospital for Special Care (HSC) in New Britain in celebration of HSC's Fifth Annual Spinal Cord Injury Reunion and NSCIA's Annual Picnic. The event will take place:

Saturday, August 19, 2006
 Hospital for Special Care
 2150 Corbin Avenue, New Britain, CT 06053
 (by the Fish Pond)
 12:00 noon – 3:00 p.m.
 Lunch will be provided

Please RSVP by August 11, 2006 at (860) 832-6214 or (860) 827-4891, and include the number of people attending.

There will be Special Event prior to picnic at 10:30 am in the lower level Conference Center at HSC. Jeffery D. Kocsis, Ph.D. Professor of Neurology at Yale University School of Medicine (Neuroscience Research Center) will speak on "Stem Cell Transplant in Spinal Cord Injury". Please RSVP to 860-832-6214 if you wish to attend.

Boundless Playskool?

Connecticut's own Boundless Playgrounds has teamed up with Hasbro Inc.'s Playskool brand and GameTime, a playground equipment manufacturer, and they plan to award one community a Boundless™ playground worth up to \$300,000 in the "Playskool Win a Boundless Playground Essay Contest."

The goal of the contest, which runs through November 30, 2006, is to raise awareness that playgrounds should not exclude children with disabilities - instead, playgrounds can and should be places where everyone is included in the fun. Participants can enter the contest by submitting an original essay between 500 and 750 words nominating a specific site in their community to receive a Boundless playground. Official rules and details can be found at www.playskool.com.

Save the Date for WCD EXPO!

The World Congress & Expo on Disabilities (WCD), one of the largest disability events in the world, is scheduled for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, November 17th - 19th at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia. Dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities, their families and professionals who work with them, the WCD features over 200 exhibitors, a Sports & Recreation Activity Center, a hands-on Assistive Technology Pavilion, and a Home Accessibility & Universal Design Pavilion.

The WCD is an exciting opportunity to meet new people, network with others in the healthcare and disability community, discover new products and services, try out assistive technology, learn from educational programs and keynote speakers, or share your resume at the Disabilities Career Fair. To learn more about this special event, visit <http://www.wcdexpo.com>.

United Spinal Launches New Campaign

United Spinal Association has announced the launch of Taxis for All -North America. Via www.taxisforallna.org, USA will inform you about the benefits of wheelchair-accessible taxi service and will provide advocacy tools which can be used to begin such service in any community

The lack of accessible transportation services continues to be a significant daily problem facing millions of individuals with disabilities. While the Americans with Disabilities Act transportation provisions have resulted in tremendous gains in the number of accessible buses and trains in operation, the fact remains that accessible public transportation doesn't extend to all communities. Gaps in available accessible transportation service continue to keep persons with disabilities out of the labor force and isolated in their communities. But change is on the way.

Since early 2006, United Spinal Association has been in contact with a company that is designing a new purpose-built, affordable sedan taxi which will meet ADA specifications. It incorporates a manually-deployed ramp that extends to the curb at the side-rear passenger door, and a wheelchair-seating location in the front passenger seating area. This vehicle can also transport four other seated passengers. A prototype of it will be unveiled at a transportation regulators conference in September and manufacturing of the vehicle is planned to start in late 2007.

United Spinal Association believes that a widely-available affordable, accessible sedan taxi can open up this mode of transportation to wheelchair users in communities of all sizes, particularly in towns where little public transportation operates. If you would like to receive regular updates from Taxis for All - North America concerning various taxi advocacy strategies and the development of this vehicle, log on to www.taxisforallna.org.

\$25 Million for Wheelchair-Accessible Taxis in NYC

Last month one taxi fleet owner paid a record price for the lifetime license to operate 54 wheelchair-accessible New York City cabs. A Russian immigrant and former cabby who bought the first of his now 700 taxi medallions 10 years ago, Gene Friedman shelled out \$477,666.50 per license.

The \$25.8 million purchase disproved the naysayers who argued that bidders would be dissuaded by the regulation that these new cabs be wheelchair accessible. Individual medallions have privately sold for more, but this sale marked the highest price per license paid at auction to date, according to the *New York Post*.

NCD Calls for Sweeping Changes for People with Psychiatric Disabilities in Emergency Evacuations

The National Council on Disability (NCD) has released “The Needs of People with Psychiatric Disabilities During and After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Position Paper and Recommendations” (www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2006/peopleneeds.htm), calling on federal, state, and local governments to enact sweeping changes.

According to NCD chairperson Lex Frieden, the destructive forces of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in fall 2005 wreaked an emotional as well as a physical toll on residents of the Gulf Coast region. Millions of Americans from across the country reached out to hurricane survivors, opening their homes and their hearts. In the months since the hurricanes devastated the Gulf Coast, media coverage of the hurricane survivors has waned. However, for hurricane survivors with psychiatric disabilities, the hurricanes destruction resulted in trauma that didn't last 24 hours, then go away. ...it goes on and on. Some of these challenges were unavoidable. Nonetheless, many of the problems could have been avoided with proper planning.

As NCD predicted in its April 2005 report, “Saving Lives: Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Planning”, if planning does not embrace the value that everyone should survive, they will not. As a result of its research, NCD found that much pre-Katrina disaster planning did not contemplate the needs of people with psychiatric disabilities, and as a result, many people died or unnecessarily suffered severely traumatic experiences.

The paper includes the following major findings and recommendations, as well as various specific recommendations for emergency management officials and policymakers at the local, state and federal levels.

For more information, contact Mark S. Quigley at 202-272-2004 or 202-272-2074 TTY.

White House Does Not Comply with Rehab Act!

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (www.usdoj.gov/crt/508/report2/index.htm) requires federal agencies to ensure that electronic information technology (e.g., web sites) is accessible to people with disabilities. The White House website does not comply with Section 508. A review - located at <http://thinkprogress.org/wp-bXACT%20government.pdf> - found forty nine instances of Section 508 violations. Most notably, the White House pages do not provide alternative text for all images. A blind person surfing the Internet uses a program that searches for text that identifies images. Many images on the White House site have no associated text in the web code and leave a person with disabilities unable to tell what the image is.

Advocates should contact Linda Sites (linda.sites@oa.eop.gov) and Linda Tolkan (ltolkan@oa.eop.gov) in the Executive Office of the President and ask why the White House website isn't in compliance and what steps, if any, are being taken to fix the problem.

Shrinking Group of Government Workers with Disabilities

The number of federal employees with disabilities has notably decreased in the past decade, according to statistics from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported in the *Washington Post*. People with a disability make up less than one percent of the government work force, a 16 percent drop from 1996. The steady decline occurred as overall civilian federal employment rose by three percent, to 2.6 million workers.

The reason for the downward slide? Nobody knows. According to the *Washington Post*, some experts theorize that workers are finding better opportunities in the private sector thanks to changing attitudes and increased access to assistive technology. This is a very optimistic theory considering less than one-third of the disability community is employed, and a good chunk of this group is underemployed.

News from Disability Advocate Steve Gold

Steve Gold writes: "Disability advocates often are so busy with the daily struggles and obligations that we don't step back to see the bigger picture. Thanks to the Johnson/Medstat compilation of each State's Medicaid expenditures (all data can be found at www.hcbs.org), we can take a look at the data and see the results of your daily struggles to "Free Our People." As slow and tedious as it often feels, YES, SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS has been made.

In FY 1993, 84% of the total Medicaid national Long Term Care (LTC) expenditures (\$35.4b) went to institutions (i.e., nursing facilities and ICF-MRs) and only 16% went to community-based services (i.e., Medicaid waivers, home health care, and personal care options)(\$6.7b). Two years later, in FY 1995, there was virtually no percentage change:

84% of the total national LTC expenditures still went to institutions and 16% went to community-based services. However, in FY 1999, a small change occurred: 82% of the total national LTC expenditures (\$46b) went to institutions and 18% went to community-based services (\$17b). While not much, it still was a change! The Olmstead Supreme Court decision was in 1999 and took a few years to exert its impact. By FY 2004, change was very apparent: 74.9% of national LTC expenditures (\$57.9b) went to institutions but now 25.1% went to community-based services (\$33.16b).

In FY 2005, dramatic change is very clear: 68.5% of the total national LTC expenditures (\$59.34b) went to institutions but 31.5% went to community-based services (\$35.16b). The difference - between 16% in 1993 for community-based services and 31.5% in 2005 for community-based services - is an increase from \$6 billion to \$33.16 billion!!

Another way to look at the change is to look at the ratio of institutional versus community expenditures, that is, how many dollars were spent on institutional care versus community-based. In 1993, \$5.27 was spent in institutions for each \$1.00 spent in the community. By 1999, the ratio was reduced so that \$2.70 was spent in institutions for each \$1.00 in the community. By FY 2005, the ratios were reduced to \$1.69 expended in institutions for each \$1.00 in the community. It's getting a lot closer! Still not equal but closer.

We have NO DOUBT: these changes are the direct result of local advocates pressuring their Governors, Legislatures and Medicaid officials to "Free Our People." We have NO DOUBT that these changes would NOT have occurred but for your local actions and efforts. Now is not the time to sit back. This is a constant battle. Increase your efforts: "power concedes nothing without a struggle." Advocates should look at their own State's Medicaid data and determine how much progress your State has made. By following the money, you can see how well your State compares to the above national data."

Back issues of other Information Bulletins are available online at www.stevegoldada.com with a searchable Archive at this site divided into different subjects. To contact Steve Gold directly, write to stevegoldada@cs.com

U.S. Department of Ed Releases New Regulations

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has announced the promulgation of new regulations for Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. By aligning the regulations with the No Child Left Behind Act, there is a new focus on ensuring that students with disabilities are held to high expectations.

The final regulations conclude a process that began in January 2005 with a series of public meetings to receive input on the development of these new rules. The Department held seven meetings around the country to invite comments on the proposed regulations, which were published as a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on June 21, 2005. More than 5,500 students, parents, educators and stakeholders responded.

The Department has prepared a package to help guide the public through these changes. In addition to the actual text of the regulations, the package includes an analysis of the public's comments, a summary of the major changes since publication of the proposed regulations, and several appendices, including an index and additional guidance for implementing the regulations.

Once the final regulations are published in the Federal Register, the Department will also publish and widely disseminate through its web site a set of model forms for individualized education programs (IEPs), notices of procedural safeguards and prior written notices as required under IDEA.

To give the public as much time as possible to review the regulations before they take effect, the Department will post an unofficial copy on its website at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html>. The official copy of these regulations will be published in the Federal Register in mid-August. The final regulations will become effective 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

A fact sheet on the new regulations can be found at www.ed.gov/admins/lead/speced/ideafactsheet.html.

President Signs New Bill into Law

On July 27, President George W. Bush signed into law the Louis Braille Bicentennial--Braille Literacy Commemorative Coin Act, introduced by Representative Robert W. Ney (R-Ohio). H.R. 2872 commemorates the 200th anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille, who created the raised-dot system of reading and writing for people who are blind that bears his name. It calls for the Secretary of the Treasury to issue up to 400,000 silver-dollar coins commemorating this bicentennial anniversary. The bill is part of a larger campaign initiated by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) to encourage Braille literacy among blind youth.

Dr. Marc Maurer, president of the NFB, said: "Louis Braille recognized long ago that the fact that a person is blind does not mean he or she must be limited in life. He understood that providing people who are blind with practical, innovative solutions was key to their independence. This positive attitude towards blindness reflects the Federation's philosophy as well. The NFB applauds the signing of this bill, which will ultimately result in an increase in Braille literacy as a result of the programs funded by the surcharge proceeds."

The coins, which go on sale in 2009, will emphasize Braille literacy by featuring Louis Braille's image and raised dots that spell out Brl - the Braille contraction for the word Braille. This will be the first coin ever minted by the United States Treasury with a Braille symbol. To learn more about the Louis Braille commemorative coin, Braille literacy campaigns, or for general information, contact the NFB at (410) 659-9314, or visit <http://www.nfb.org>.

New EEOC Guide Available

Cari M. Dominguez, Chair of the U.S. Equal Employment opportunity Commission (EEOC), has announced the issuance of a new question-and-answer (Q&A) fact sheet on the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to job applicants and employees who are deaf or who have hearing impairments. The new publication, the sixth in a series of Q&A documents about specific disabilities in the workplace, is available online at www.eeoc.gov/facts/deafness.html.

Senator Harkins Introduces Legislation to Improve Medical Access

In July U.S. Senator Tom Harkins (D-IA) introduced legislation to establish accessibility standards for medical diagnostic equipment and create wellness grants to fund health programs that focus on the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities.

”We must recognize the unique situation of individuals with disabilities and work to make certain they are not limited in their access to quality medical care, or in their opportunities for health and wellness,” Harkin said. “We want to set standards, ensure proper funding, and make certain that medical professionals receive the appropriate training so that they can provide the best quality care for all.”

Harkins bill - Promoting Wellness for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2006 - also creates a National Advisory Committee on Wellness for Individuals with Disabilities. This board would set priorities, review grant proposals, make recommendations for funding, and evaluate the progress of the program.

In addition, the legislation requires medical and dental schools, along with their residency programs, to increase training to improve competency and clinical skills in providing care to patients with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities.

Please relay this Bulletin to your membership including those who do not have e-mail access. Suggest your membership without e-mail go to the library and go onto www.kleinmanconsulting.com to view or print a copy. If you would like to see previous issues of the Bulletin, read about the background of the Collaborative or if you would like to be added to the mailing list, you may also go to www.kleinmanconsulting.com.

If you want something to appear in the next edition please send it to us – jjk1009@hotmail.com or skoslosk03@comcast.net — or Jayne Kleinman, 55 Corrigan Ave., Meriden, CT 06451, 203-631-4800.

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For State Legislators, Committee Members and local government officials go to www.ct.gov and click on Government. If you need more assistance please contact jjk1009@hotmail.com or call 211 – Infoline.