

Youth Leadership Today

April, 2008

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This year the Connecticut Youth Leadership Project celebrates its tenth anniversary of running a leadership program for high school students with disabilities.

Ten years is a blink of the eye from a historical standpoint. Decades are lumped together as though they all are born from the same ideas, cultures and behaviors. In reality, the pendulum takes much longer to swing. Progress is a slow and steady movement, with one event paving the way for the next.

And so it was for disability rights. It was common practice to have people with disabilities, especially severe disabilities, live in institutionalized settings through the 1970's.

It wasn't until 1974 that **the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Pub. Law 94-142)** (Later renamed **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**) was adopted by U. S. Congress. This law established the right of children with disabilities to receive public school education in settings as integrated as possible .

Another full decade would pass before **the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act** would pass, requiring that federal election polling stations be physically accessible to elderly and physically disabled voters, as well as requiring provision of large-print instructions and telecommunications devices for the Deaf. In 1983, protests were held all over the country to gain access to

public transportation for people with disabilities.

Fast forward again, it is 1990 before **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, the most comprehensive federal civil rights legislation protecting the rights of people with disabilities, is passed. The ADA addresses the barriers and discrimination that people with disabilities have traditionally faced.

The ADA covers access to employment, state and local government programs and services, access to places of public accommodations, transportation, non-profit service providers as well as telecommunications.

Just because these laws were passed, does not mean they have traditionally been well enforced. And so, we continue to advocate for the future of people with disabilities.

In the words of Justin Dart, considered by many the "father" of the ADA "We [PWDs] have unique knowledge and experience to offer. We have the responsibility to lead."

I say, lead on.

www.ctyyp.org

Kathleen Kabara
CTYLP President

Youth Leadership Today

Community ACTION Updates



By Karen Halliday

The 2007 YLF delegates have been busy working on their team leadership plans since we saw them last summer. Here's a quick update on what their teams have doing:

Team 1

Team Project - American Sign Language recognized in high school as a foreign language requirement

The goal of Team 1 was to try and get legislation passed to have American Sign Language taught in the CT schools as a foreign language. There many children in the CT school system who cannot and do understand formal languages as taught to them in our schools. 10% or over 250,000 citizens in CT have a learning disability which may require them to learn ASL. The team has attended conferences in Groton, New Haven (2), Storrs, and have held many meetings (5) at Manchester College. Many signatures were collected in support of this goal. The signatures will be given to a state representative who we hope will advance it in the State Legislature next year.

Team 2

Team Project - Big Brother Big Sister Project

Since Team 2 completed the forum, they took the skills and knowledge that they developed in order to become leaders in their communities by creating a Big Brother Big Sister Project. Team 2 wanted to be role models for young children with special needs. They decided to work 1:1 with special needs children from Mill Hill Elementary School in Fairfield. Over a month and half period of time, the students worked with young children with special needs and not only had a chance to bond and establish a relationship with these children on a consistent 1:1 basis, but performed team building

activities and one on one arts and crafts activities. As young adults with disabilities, Team 2 made lasting impressions on these young children's lives and not only built strong relationships with them through their activities and bonding, but clearly demonstrated what it means to be a leader.

Team 3

Team Project - Transition Planning

Team 3's project was to educate other students, parents, and school staff on transition and adult services available for students after high school. The team met several times to plan, discuss services, and how to best educate their schools, students, and staff about the various services available.

Several students from the New Haven area put together a transition night, while others spoke to their principals, teachers, and guidance counselors about the services.

For transition night in New Haven, the Kennedy Center, DMHAS, BRS, BESB and the Department of Social Services were present to share info with students, staff, and parents.

Team 4

Team Project - Youth Blog on State Department of Social Services/Bureau of Rehabilitation Services – Connect-Ability website

Team 4 members worked with the DSS web site designers to create blogs on the Connect-Ability website. The team helped with the design, chose avatars, contributed their stories, provided feedback on the entire web site, and agreed to respond to questions on the blog for six months. This site has just gone live. To see their blogs, go to the www.connect-ability.com website, click on "for Youth", and then "Youth Journal" or simply type the following into your web browser: www.connect-ability.com/for_youth/youth_journal.php

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Travel Websites

by Khampasong Khantivong



Places to go and ways to get there:

Riding the “T” in Massachusetts

http://www.mbta.com/riding_the_t/accessible_services/

Getting around in New York.

<http://www.mta.info/mta/ada/>

Thinking about going to Chicago? Check here!

<http://www.easyaccesschicago.org/>

Maybe you’re thinking about cashing your luck on vacationing in Las Vegas?

<http://www.vegas.com/lounge/handicapped.html>

So you want to travel by air? Here’s some helpful links.

<http://www.mobility-advisor.com/travelers-with-disabilities.html>

<http://www.flying-with-disability.org/>

<http://www.miusa.org/ncde/tipsheets/airlinetips>

Tips, Tricks, Reviews & Resources:

Filled with tips, resources, and reviews from travelers who need accommodations.

<http://www.gimponthego.com/index.htm>

Tips for first time train users!

<http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/DisabilityServices/pdfs/TipsforTrainUsers.pdf>

Disability Travel and Recreation Resources.

<http://www.makoa.org/travel.htm>

Here are a few more tips on what not to forget when planning your trip.

<http://www.sci-info-pages.com/travel-leisure.html>

Where Travelers share their stories and knowledge of how to get around and where to go.

<http://www.disaboom.com/Living/Lifestyle/Travel/Articles.aspx>

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Travel Websites

More Tips, Tricks, Reviews & Resources:

For those who are looking to travel around the world.

<http://www.disabledtravelersguide.com/>

For many, the most reliable information comes from those with disabilities themselves, and that's just what this website is.

<http://www.access-able.com/>

Just another great resource for all your traveling needs!

<http://disabledtravelers.com>

A place where travel experts share their tips and expertise to help make you a travel expert!

<http://www.johnnyjet.com/Disabled-Travelers.html>

Tips for smooth traveling.

<http://www.tripspot.com/features/disability.htm>

Still can't get enough travel resources? Here's one more!!!

<http://codi.buffalo.edu/travelin.htm>

Don't Forget! :

Documentation Please! Make sure you have these documents before you even think about getting on that plane, cruise boat, train, or any travel destination.

<http://www.disaboom.com/Living/travel/documentation-please.aspx>

A few things you might want to consider packing before you go on a trip.

http://seniorliving.about.com/od/travelsmart/a/disabilities_2.htm

Here's an interactive packing list. All you have to do is check the items you don't want to forget. There's even a space at the bottom to add your own things!

<http://www.independenttraveler.com/resources/packing.cfm>



Youth Leadership Today

Legislative Update



Though it is a short legislative session this year, there are still many bills being created that you may find of interest. To check on the status of any of these bills, visit www.cga.ct.gov and enter the bill number in the "Quick Search" box at the top. For information on how a bill becomes a law in Connecticut - please visit <http://www.cga.ct.gov/html/bill.pdf>



BILLS BEFORE THE SENATE

SB 414 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE-FUNDED HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED AND PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED. To increase the number of slots available under the Connecticut home care program for the disabled from fifty to seventy; to increase the asset limits to match the asset limits of the Connecticut home care program for the elderly; and to provide increased funds for the personal care assistance program for the disabled.

SB 499 AN ACT CONCERNING PARKING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. To revise and improve the process for the renewal of windshield placards which allow parking in spaces reserved for persons with disabilities, to require a recall of existing placards, and to develop methods for strengthened enforcement of statutory and regulatory provisions concerning parking in such spaces.

SB 558 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF OPTIONAL SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM AND INCREASING ACCESS TO THE MEDICAID PROGRAM FOR THE MEDICALLY NEEDY, ELDERLY AND DISABLED. To amend the Medicaid state plan to include hospice services as a covered service under the Medicaid program

SB 561 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON PROJECT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A LONG-TERM CARE TRUST FUND. To expand the Money Follows the Person demonstration project and establish a long-term care trust fund to provide funds to finance long-term care.

SB 575 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TASK FORCE TO STUDY DAY PROGRAM SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES. To establish a task force to study day program services provided by the Department of Developmental Services to persons with developmental disabilities.

SB 654 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF PRESCRIBED ANTIPILEPTIC DRUGS. To prohibit a pharmacy upon the initial filling or renewal of a prescription for the treatment of epilepsy from substituting an antiepileptic drug or formulation of an antiepileptic drug, brand name or manufacturer of a generic name using the National Drug Code system without first obtaining the consent of the patient's practitioner to do so.

Youth Leadership Today

Legislative Update



BILLS BEFORE THE SENATE, cont.

SB 663 AN ACT PROVIDING STATE-FUNDED MEDICAL COVERAGE TO CHILDREN IN THE CARE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES. To expand eligibility for state-funded medical assistance to include children under the care and supervision of the Department of Developmental Services who are ineligible for Medicaid and to remove the institutional status of a child from being a factor in determining a child's eligibility for medical assistance.

SB 678 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES STRATEGY BOARD. To establish a Community-Based Health and Human Service Strategy Board that will help to ensure continued funding of certain health and human services.

SB 687 AN ACT CONCERNING AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS. To establish requirements and immunity for the use of automated external defibrillators in health clubs and athletic facilities of institutions of higher education.

BILLS BEFORE THE HOUSE

HB 5495 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSITION OF YOUTH FROM THE CARE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES. To ensure that youth with mental illness in the care of the Department of Children and Families are adequately transitioned to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

HB 5514 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LOAN PROGRAM FOR THE PURCHASE OF PROSTHESES. To provide low-cost loans for the purchase of prostheses where insurance coverage is insufficient.

HB 5590 AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS CONCERNING AUTISM AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. To require the development and use of instructional methods for children with autism and other developmental disabilities.

HB 5667 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF INSULIN PUMPS IN SCHOOL. To facilitate the use of insulin pumps at school by permitting school personnel to enter data into a student's insulin pump or supervise the entry of such data by the student, provided the school has received written authorization to do so from the student's parents and additionally has been authorized to do so pursuant to the written order of a health care professional.

HB 5696 AN ACT REQUIRING INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER THERAPIES. To provide insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorder therapies.

HB 5708 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM. To expand the Care 4 Kids program operated by the Department of Social Services to include individuals who are attending an institution of higher education.

Youth Leadership Today

Legislative Update



BILLS BEFORE THE HOUSE, cont.

HB 5735 AN ACT CONCERNING INDIVIDUALS WHO TRANSPORT PATIENTS OR CLIENTS UNDER THE CARE, CONTROL OR CUSTODY OF A STATE AGENCY, AND THE VEHICLES USED BY SUCH INDIVIDUALS TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES. To protect the health and safety of any patient or client under the care, custody or control of a state agency while such patient or client is being transported.

HB 5746 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION. To implement the 2008 legislative proposals of the Department of Transportation. Section 6 of the bill requires accessible taxis.

HB 5791 AN ACT CONCERNING A SINGLE POINT OF ENTRY FOR LONG-TERM CARE. To develop a single point of entry system for persons seeking information on long-term care.

HB 5797 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED INTERPRETER SERVICES. To clarify the role of the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired in providing qualified interpreter services to persons who are deaf or hearing impaired in a variety of legal and administrative forums.

HB 5904 AN ACT CONCERNING RECOVERY EXCEPTIONS FOR PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION DISCRIMINATION SETTLEMENTS AND AWARDS. To exempt any money received as a settlement or award in a public accommodation discrimination case from claims by the state for repayment of aid.

To find your local legislator, visit www.votesmart.org

For more on Connecticut Legislation, visit www.cga.ct.gov

HOUSE CHAMBER



SENATE CHAMBER



Youth Leadership Today

Links We Like



Gone to the Dogs:

Fidelco (www.fidelco.org) Fidelco is New England's only guide dog school. We have clients across the United States and in Canada, and are dedicated to promoting increased independence to men and women who are blind by providing them with the highest quality German shepherd guide dogs.



The Psychiatric Service Dog Society (PSDS) (www.psychdog.org) The Psychiatric Service Dog Society (PSDS) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to responsible Psychiatric Service Dog (PSD) education, advocacy, research and training facilitation.

Loving Paws (www.lovingpaws.com) Founded in 1993, Loving Paws Assistance Dogs™ is a non-profit organization that trains dogs to assist children and young adults between the ages of 5 and 20 nationwide who are physically disabled. While the majority of Loving Paws placements are with children that have spinal cord injuries, Loving Paws also provides Service and Social Dogs to children with Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Autism, and other disabilities.

Federal Policies on Access for Service Animals (<http://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/newsletters/v7n2/7n2hende.htm>) Federal policy dictating access and training rights for disabled people who have service animals has, but for the past decade, been virtually nonexistent. In its absence, many individual States did address rights for service animals through laws providing disabled people access to public facilities and housing. To date, all States and the District of Columbia have to some extent legislated such access rights.



Assistance Dogs International (www.adionline.org) A coalition of not for profit organizations that train and place Assistance Dogs. The purpose of ADI is to improve the areas of training, placement, and utilization of Assistance Dogs as well as staff and volunteer education.

Service Dog Etiquette from Working Like Dogs - (http://www.workinglikeydogs.com/resource_etiquette.php) A resource for people around the world with working dogs and service dogs.

Youth Leadership Today

2008 Scholarships



2008 Connecticut Youth Leadership Scholarships Awarded

By John Bendoraitis

The Youth Leadership Forum, begun in Connecticut in 1999, is an intensive leadership training experience available to high school students with disabilities. With public and private funding, approximately 40 students per year are selected to attend the 4-day forum. Delegates are selected on the basis of their school, community, and work activities, as well as their leadership potential.

5th Annual Joe Bendoraitis Youth Leadership Scholarship

One such delegate, Joe Bendoraitis, attended in 1999 as an 11th grader from Lyman High School in Lebanon. He became completely committed to the program, encouraging others from his town to apply – several from Lebanon have attended. He spoke as part of a delegate panel in 2000 about his experiences at the forum and its impact on him. In 2001 he returned as a full-time staff member. In 2002, Joe died of cancer at the age of 21, spending one of his last weeks attending as much of the forum as his stamina would allow.

The Joe Bendoraitis Youth Leadership Scholarship was established and is an annual award available through a competitive application process to a past Youth Leadership Forum delegate who plans to further their education beyond high school. In this way, Karen Halliday, who serves as Executive Director for the program says, “we wished to honor his memory, his commitment to YLF, and help other young people with disabilities become leaders in their communities”.

This year’s recipient has a full school curriculum, including honors classes, more community activities and awards than most adults, and an active athletic schedule. **Travis Williams** also has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

A senior at East Lyme High School, Travis has already been accepted through Early Decision to Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. He plans to pursue a program of study in molecular biology and biochemistry. Latest in his long list of awards and achievement is the Joe Bendoraitis Youth Leadership Scholarship, with a \$2,000 award to assist in his goals to “contribute to society in the areas of biomedical research, as well to contribute to those in need” as he stated on his application.

Yet Williams maintains a 3.70 GPA, is a National Honor Society member, honor student for all four years, and has a deep love of learning, particularly in science and math. He is co-captain of the swim team where he has been a member for all four years of high school. His school counselor, Jason Adler, writes “If I didn’t know better, I’d say that Travis had gills and webbed feet!” Crew is his second sport where he has also participated throughout high school and has been co-captain for both his junior and senior years. If that weren’t enough, Travis competes in triathlon competitions – typically a 1 mile swim, 12 mile bike race and a 3.5 mile run! And he is gifted musically!

Despite his busy schedule, he has found time to become certified as a therapy dog handler, adopted a racing greyhound and regularly visits a local nursing home with his therapy dog.

Continued on next page....

Youth Leadership Today

2008 Scholarships



Continued from previous page

CTYLP - CT Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) Rehab Council Scholarship

For the first time (and hopefully not the last!), as part of its ongoing support of the Youth Leadership Forum, the BRS Rehab Council this year provided additional funding for a scholarship grant for a former delegate pursuing their education beyond high school.

The first ever recipient of the CTYLP - BRS Scholarship is **Jennifer Koschmieder**. A senior at Fitch Senior High School in Groton, Jennifer has been accepted at Johnson and Wales University where she plans to pursue a course of studies in culinary arts. Jennifer wrote in her application "The Youth Leadership Forum was a great motivation to me because it started me on the road to independence and gave me the tools to continue when I go to college next year." This \$1,000 award will provide another "tool" for college.

Jennifer is a member of the National Honor Society and has been an honor student for all four years of high school. She has been active in softball at both the JV and Varsity level. She is also active in the community where she volunteers in Elder Care and uses her culinary skills in volunteering for various local charity events.

When she's not busy with her academics, athletics and community activities, she finds time to work as cook & waitress. And Jennifer is hearing impaired.

CTYLP - John Sims Scholarship

John Sims is a long time staff member at the Youth Leadership Forum. John decided this year to forgo his stipend for the forum and instead donate it for the purpose of a scholarship grant for a former delegate pursuing their education beyond high school.

The first ever recipient of the CTYLP - John Sims Scholarship is a senior at Daniel Hand High School in Madison. **Ali Nassimos** also has Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). She has been accepted at Assumption College where she plans to pursue a degree in Education.

Ali, like the other recipients, has been an honor student throughout her high school career and has maintained a very active schedule in the classroom, on the sports field, in extracurricular activities and in the community.

She has competed on the soccer field at both the JV and Varsity level, in addition to indoor track. A member of the choir throughout high school, Ali also found time to be part of the production stage crew. In the community Ali has been active in Girl Scouts, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and food & gift drives for soldiers. She has also been a very active member of her church.

Travis, Jennifer, Ali and their parents, will be recognized at the annual YLF Sponsor Dinner on Wednesday, July 23, 2008 at the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs.

For more information on the Connecticut Youth Leadership Forum, go to www.ctyyp.org or contact Kathleen Kabara at (860) 424-5068.

Youth Leadership Today

Walgreen's Outreach



Walgreen's Executive With Autistic Son Made It His Mission to Create Employment Opportunities for People With Disabilities.

by Bruce Stovall

Walgreens, the nation's largest drugstore chain, has launched an innovative initiative, called Walgreens Outreach, to hire people with disabilities.

Outreach is an effort to enhance job opportunities for people with disabilities. They create these opportunities by connecting with local agencies and other disability groups.

Walgreens will open an 800,000 square foot distribution facility in Windsor, Connecticut, by winter of 2008. The company is committed to employing approximately 250 individuals with disabilities at the facility. These jobs are full-time positions and have starting pay above minimum wage.

The equipment used on the job is also more user-friendly for everyone, with touch screens replacing keyboards and pictures being used in place of written menus. The centers themselves are built to be extremely accessible - lockers are built at different heights, some bathroom stalls are large enough for a personal aide, and elevators and ramps make for easy access throughout the building.

Potential employees with disabilities will have the opportunity to participate in a pre-employment training program in order to prepare them for vocational placement. The training facility is being prepared adjacent to the distribution warehouse.

Walgreens eventually envisions a total of approximately 800 employees working on a full 24/7 schedule. United Way is one of the partners, currently in charge of finding an agency/vendor to oversee the training facility. The State Bureau of Rehabilitation Services will act as a partner to identify referrals to the training program.

The project is based on a model that has been operating in Anderson, South Carolina for the past several years with great success. More than 40 percent of the 700 employees in Anderson are people with disabilities. There are plans to increase the number of people with disabilities in the other distribution centers already in operation as well.



This concept is the result of Randy Lewis, senior vice-president of Walgreens, experiencing the reality of employment for his son with autism. Walgreens goal is to have at least one-third of the

workforce consist of employees with a variety of disabilities working in a fully-integrated team. This "real work for real pay" environment will be competitive employment in which performance standards must be maintained.

ABC World news did a piece on the South Carolina facility on February 11, 2008. You can view it by going on the ABC news website - <http://abcnews.go.com/> - and typing in Walgreens in the archive search section. For further information on the Walgreen's Outreach program, visit www.Walgreensoutreach.com

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2008 Event Sponsors

Board of Education and Services for the Blind
DSS – Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Department of Developmental Services
SDE - Bureau of Special Education

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Outback Steakhouse
Ronald McDonald House Charities
State Rehabilitation Council – BESB
State Rehabilitation Council – BRS
Vicevich Interactives

2008 Silver Sponsors

American Legion
American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Labor

2008 Bronze Sponsors

Hartford Sales Office
UConn Center for Students with Disabilities

2008 Friends of YLF

Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Barylski
The Bendoraitis Family
Mr. & Mrs. Frazier Brinley
Mr. & Mrs. Menachem Elimech
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Make a Difference – Donate Today!

The act of making a donation to the Connecticut Youth Leadership Project will help assure that High School Students with disabilities are given opportunities to increase their leadership potential. As a 501(c) 3 corporation, a donation to the Connecticut Youth Leadership Project is tax-deductible within the fullest extent of the law

Please accept my contribution to the Connecticut Youth Leadership Project.

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Increase your donation through matching funds. Many employers will match your personal donations. Check with your company for more information on matching gift programs.

Mail this form and your donation to:

**The Connecticut Youth Leadership Project
c/o John Bendoraitis
370 Levita Road
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