

# Disability Issues

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## Leadership Development at Partners for Youth with Disabilities

By Regina Snowden

No doubt every pioneering generation of a marginalized population eventually faces the question: does the next generation know what we accomplished on their behalf? Are they aware of the struggles we endured, the sacrifices we made? Are African-American youth fully aware of the civil rights movement? Do they take for granted the rights and inclusion they now enjoy? Do young women today have any idea of the educational and career opportunities that were denied to their mothers not so many years ago? Similarly, do youth with disabilities today realize that the curb cuts, the access to buildings, the educational and housing rights that are now available to them came about through the extraordinary, courageous work of the disability rights pioneers?

Yes, there is still a long way to go for people with disabilities, but the path to inclusion and rights has been firmly paved. The independent living movement and the vocational rehabilitation system are firmly established. There is no going back. But are we going forward? Is the torch being passed?

As the Executive Director of Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD), a non profit organization that was formed twenty two years ago, I have had the

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## BCIL and Easter Seals Team up to Train Young Leaders

by Stacy Rogers

The disability landscape has changed dramatically since the 1970s, thanks to the efforts of a generation of people with disabilities active in politics and their local communities. But today, as past leaders age, the disability movement needs an infusion of young people with fresh energy, ideas, enthusiasm, and leadership ability.

Realizing that there is a lack of young leaders with disabilities involved in shaping the world around them, the Boston Center for Independent Living, in collaboration with Easter Seals, facilitates a youth group called “**Act Today Influence Tomorrow**” that is focused on developing both life skills and leadership skills. We meet monthly to discuss topics chosen by members. We’ve discussed everything from how SSI benefits are affected when someone gets a job, to role playing and strategizing responses to situations that occur at school, to preparing for interviews and public speaking.

We recently started a series on the media, asking questions, such as how are people with disabilities portrayed in the media, how does that portrayal affect us, and how can we shape and use media? The youth group, as part of a service learning project headed by Easter Seals, decided to create an advocacy video focused on MBTA accessibility. During this project, participants spoke about the problems and successes they have experienced in using the MBTA, practiced interviewing each other and wrote their legislators, inviting them to a viewing of the video. Also, a group of participants shot footage of the T and edited the video to document barriers.

The viewing of this MBTA advocacy video entitled “*Accessible Boston Now in Popular Demand*” took place in Boston at the Transportation Building on April 5. The young filmmakers as well as Gary Talbot, Assistant General Manager for Systemwide Access for the MBTA, discussed the video as well as the changes in store for the T. Gary, who has a disability, is a strong advocate of more youth involvement in the disability rights movement.

If you know any youth with disabilities aged 14-25 who would like to be part of **Act Today Influence Tomorrow**, please contact Stacy Rogers of BCIL at 617-338-6665 x232, [srogers@bostoncil.org](mailto:srogers@bostoncil.org) or Colleen Flanagan of Easter Seals at 508-751-6410, [cflanagan@eastersealsma.org](mailto:cflanagan@eastersealsma.org).

*Stacy Rogers is the Youth Transition Specialist at the Boston Center for Independent Living.*



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privilege of an inside view of the disability rights movement in the early 1980s and beyond. PYD was a strong advocate for passing on to youth with disabilities what leaders of the movement were doing. Sometimes I felt that it was a struggle to get these pioneers to include mentoring in their agenda. Their struggle for basic civil rights was all consuming. I also noted how sometimes it seemed too painful to them to be mentors. It meant confronting themselves at the crucial developmental years of childhood and adolescence when they were so hurt by being excluded and bullied.

I understood their reluctance, but so wanted to encourage them. I knew that these adults were just the resource that youth with disabilities needed to continue the movement. Partly due to the difficulty recruiting adult mentors, PYD had a long start up era. Another reason was the long and continuing fight for inclusion of youth with disabilities in the many philanthropic and programming resources that are generally targeted for other populations of "at risk" youth. But over the past decade I have seen a significant swing in the concerns of the disability rights movement: a stronger focus has been placed on developing a new generation of leaders.

PYD helped to lead this change through the development of our **Peer Leaders Program**. This program was created in the mid 1990s by Maureen Gallagher, Deputy Director of PYD from 1987 to 2007, and was initially funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance. Maureen's goal was to engage adolescents and young adults with disabilities in community service. PYD noted that youth were being engaged in wonderful programs like **City Year** and knew that our population of youth also had important contributions to give back in volunteerism.

The Peer Leaders Program begins with a Training Institute that features team building activities, skills training sessions and panel discussions on topics such as leadership development, conflict resolution, advocacy, disability awareness and independent living. During the Institute the youth learn the value of community service and the impact they can have.

After their initial training, peer leaders can volunteer to serve in one of PYD's many programs, including Mentor Match, Making Healthy Connections, Access to Theatre, Young Entrepreneurs and the Youth Leadership Forum. They can also choose to volunteer at other agencies in their community, such as schools, hospitals, museums and city government. PYD staff work with the peer leaders to find or create the right volunteer opportunities.

The peer leaders meet monthly with program staff to share ideas and enjoy social and recreation activities together. They participate in collaborative projects with other youth

groups during the year and work on special projects. Certificates of recognition and service awards are given, based on the number of hours the peer leaders volunteer in the program. Community service hours can then be applied to meet high school and college requirements. In 1999 PYD's Peer Leaders Program and four individual peer leaders were honored by United Way of Massachusetts Bay with its Champions of Change award.

I am very pleased to see that many organizations across the nation are now focusing on leadership development in youth with disabilities. For instance, the **Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)** was created by the California Governor's Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons in 1992 and is now being replicated around the nation. YLF is designed to assist youth with making college and/or career decisions, developing skills for personal growth, connecting with and contributing to their communities, and learning self advocacy skills. In 1998 I had the honor of being asked by the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on the Employment of People with Disabilities to bring YLF to Massachusetts. We will have our eighth Massachusetts YLF at Harvard Business School on March 29.

The list of important national, state and local organizations providing mentoring and leadership development to youth with disabilities that have sprung up over the past decade is truly extensive. PYD brought many of these leaders from federal, state and local entities together for the First Conference on Mentoring Youth with Disabilities in September 2006. The conference was an opportunity to celebrate our power in numbers and share our best practices.

Locally PYD is teaming with the Boston Center for Independent Living and Easter Seals on program designs that focus on leadership development skills. PYD also helped to write a grant with City Year, which provided funding from the HSC Foundation ([www.hscfoundation.org](http://www.hscfoundation.org)) for the inclusion of youth with disabilities in its award winning community service program.

It is probably not possible for current and future generations of young people with disabilities to be fully aware of the sacrifices and brave determination of their predecessors. However, it is up to those early pioneers and leaders to pass the torch, to teach the history of disability culture and to build leadership skills and inclusion models. I am highly encouraged by how actively we are now sharing knowledge, resources and lessons learned to accomplish that goal.

*Reginas Snowden is the founder and Executive Director of Partners for Youth with Disabilities. To get involved with Partners contact them at 617-556-4075/voice, 617-314-2989/TTY, or [www.pyd.org](http://www.pyd.org).*

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**Contributors:**

Stacy Rogers  
Regina Snowden



## From the Editor

In this issue we turn our attention to the subject of leadership development among youth and young adults with disabilities. We were inspired to do this by the comment that Charles Carr made in his interview with us. He said, "... none of us is doing a very good job building young leaders as we grow older. I think there's a huge vacuum between people in our age group and the twenty-somethings. That's troubling."

I certainly don't dispute the fact that we could be doing better. But when we started to look into the matter we were pleased to find quite a lot of activity. We bring you a sampling of it in these pages.

There surely are a lot more opportunities for young people with disabilities to learn from and be inspired by their elders than when I was growing up. In those dark old days the only adults with disabilities that I knew of were guys selling pencils on the sidewalk — practically beggars. There were no independent living centers or PCA programs to enable my independence. There was no disability rights movement to get in involved in. As a result, when I was an adolescent I viewed my future with confusion and apprehension. I couldn't see how I was ever going to have a decent life. And I never imagined the astounding changes that would take place in my lifetime — the transformation of the built environment, the availability of self-directed, community-based care, and the access to education and employment.

The struggle to achieve these advances was difficult and is ongoing. But the process created a movement, a community and a heritage. We older people with disabilities have a responsibility to ensure that the younger generation inherits this richness and benefits from what we have learned — to have hope, pride and toughness, to understand disability as a social construct, and to demand our equal rights.

My own experiences as a mentor with **Partners for Youth with Disabilities** and the Massachusetts Hospital School have been very fulfilling. I urge all my peers to think about getting involved with young people. You have a lot to give and a lot to get back.

Incidentally, watch in our next issue, as we continue our theme, for our interview with Elizabeth Kolbe, who gained experience in Senator John Kerry's office as a Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation-AAPD Congressional Intern.

Paul Kahn

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*Disability Issues* is available without charge to anyone who finds it useful and interesting. To request a print or Email subscription, please write to: Center for Health Policy and Research, University of Massachusetts Medical School 222 Maple Avenue, Higgins Building, Shrewsbury, MA 01545; call 508-856-7857/voice, or go to [www.masschec.org](http://www.masschec.org).

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To view *Disability Issues* on-line go to [www.masschec.org](http://www.masschec.org) or [www.DisabilityExchange.org/newsletter](http://www.DisabilityExchange.org/newsletter).

## Public Policy Internships

*Editor's note: One excellent way for young people to gain leadership skills is through internships. Here is a sampling of opportunities for people with disabilities to gain experience in the realm of public policy.*



### The American Diabetes Association Novo Nordisk Legal Advocacy Fellowship

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) offers a two-year fellowship to a lawyer for the purpose of fighting discrimination against people with diabetes in the workplace, at school and child care centers, in correctional institutions and police conduct, and in places of public accommodation.

ADA's legal advocacy program works with a network of over 500 lawyers, the top diabetes health care professionals from around the country, other disability rights, civil rights, and health care professional organizations, and government agencies. Together they educate decision-makers, negotiate standards for fair treatment of people with diabetes, bring federal and state lawsuits and administrative actions, and change unfair state and federal laws. This combination of tactics gives the ADA the flexibility it needs to develop successful campaigns to combat discrimination and enables the ADA - Novo Nordisk Legal Advocacy Fellow to gain broad experience on methods of impacting social change through legal work, as well as the opportunity to work with lawyers who practice in a wide variety of legal settings. The fellowship is located at the Association's national office in Alexandria, Virginia.

The American Diabetes Association is

the nation's leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. Founded in 1940, ADA provides services to hundreds of communities across the country. Its mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. In addition to its legal advocacy efforts, ADA advocates for the increase of federal diabetes research and programs and for improving access to, and quality of healthcare for people with diabetes. Further information about legal advocacy at ADA can be found at [www.diabetes.org/discrimination](http://www.diabetes.org/discrimination).

The ideal intern candidate will possess a passion for combating discrimination, a desire to help improve the lives of people affected by diabetes, and the ability to understand complex legal and emotional issues and provide creative solutions. Candidates should have some experience with disability rights, discrimination law, or other civil rights law.

#### For application information contact:

Katie Hathaway  
American Diabetes Association  
1701 North Beauregard Street  
Alexandria, VA 22311  
E-Mail: [khathaway@diabetes.org](mailto:khathaway@diabetes.org)



### National Academy of Social Insurance Eileen Sweeney Graduate Internship in Disability Policy

The National Academy of Social Insurance (NASI), in partnership with the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) has established the Eileen Sweeney Graduate Internship in

honor and memory of Ms. Sweeney who devoted herself to improving the lives of people with disabilities, children, battered women, the poor, and the elderly. Graduate students aspiring to a career in social policy with a focus on disability can apply for this 12-week summer semester internship. The Intern will be based at NASI in Washington, DC and receive an honorarium of \$3000. The Sweeney Graduate Intern will have the opportunity to: work with leading disability policy experts; gain valuable work experience; and make professional contacts and attend relevant seminars and symposia.

NASI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization devoted to furthering knowledge and understanding of social insurance programs. The Academy's members are recognized experts in social insurance and health policy.

#### For additional information contact:

The Internship Coordinator  
Internship Programs  
National Academy of Social Insurance  
1776 Massachusetts Ave.  
NW, Suite 615  
Washington, DC 20036-1904  
Telephone: (202) 452-8097  
E-Mail: [internships@nasi.org](mailto:internships@nasi.org)



### American Civil Liberties Union Disability Rights Fellowship

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a nationwide, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the principles of liberty and equality embodied in the federal and state constitutions, and in federal and state civil rights laws. The ACLU has a long history of defending the rights of people with disabilities.

## Public Policy Internships

The Disability Rights Fellow works with national and affiliate staff to identify disability rights issues where ACLU participation could make a difference, collaborate with ACLU staff in advocating on behalf of those issues, provide expertise on disability rights, serve as an ACLU liaison with other disability rights organizations, and act as an ACLU spokesperson on disability rights issues. The Fellow will report to a Senior Staff Attorney in the ACLU's National Legal Department in New York City and work closely with the ACLU's Legal Director.

### Roles and Responsibilities:

- Assist in the coordination of existing disability rights work within the ACLU.
- Assist in development of a strategic plan for future ACLU work on disability rights.
- Provide expertise and support to ACLU staff working on disability rights issues.
- Prepare research memos and other advocacy tools, as needed.
- Participate in litigation as needed.
- Assist the ACLU in outreach to the disability rights community.
- Serve as a liaison with other disability rights organizations.
- Act as an ACLU spokesperson on disability rights issues.

### Experience and Qualifications:

- J.D. Degree required.
- Demonstrated commitment to disability rights and experience working in the field.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Strong analytical skills.
- Ability to work independently as well as within a team.
- Ability to be creative and take initiative.

### Compensation:

The ACLU offers a generous and comprehensive compensation and benefits package, commensurate with experience and within the parameters of the ACLU compensation scale.

### For more information contact:

American Civil Liberties Union Foundation  
Human Resources  
Attn: [LGLF-48/WACLU]  
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10004  
E-Mail: [hrjobs@aclu.org](mailto:hrjobs@aclu.org) with the subject line [LGLF-48/WACLU]



### The 2008 Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation-AAPD Congressional Internship Program

The Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) offer a summer congressional internship program for undergraduate students with disabilities. The Program was created to provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to work on Capitol Hill for eight weeks and acquire valuable work experience that will enrich their academic studies. As congressional interns, participants gain insight into congressional office operations, public policy development, and constituents' roles in the legislative and political processes. The internship program, administered by AAPD, was created in 2002 through a major grant from Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation.

The Internship Program is designed to:

- Allow students with disabilities to obtain first-hand knowledge of the legislative and political processes by working in congressional offices.
- Enable students with disabilities to acquire valuable work experience

that will enhance their academic studies and career prospects.

- Demonstrate to Members of Congress, their staff, and fellow interns the talents that students with disabilities can bring to a professional work environment.
- Introduce students to members of the Washington disability policy community and to national disability leaders

### Eligibility:

- Current college students with any type of disability can apply. At the time of application, applicants must be enrolled as sophomores or juniors.
- Applicants must be U.S. citizens.

### How to Apply:

Applications can be obtained by visiting the AAPD web site at [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com) or calling AAPD at (800) 840-8844 (voice/TTY).



### U.S. Department of State Student Disability Program

In an effort to increase the hiring of people with disabilities the Department has partnered with the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment and Policy, and the U.S. Department of Defense, who administer the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP). The purpose of the program is to attract talented students with disabilities to federal and private sector organizations for temporary and permanent employment.

Students are interviewed on campuses across the country and names are

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# Information Briefs Information Briefs

## VSA arts Offers Cultural Access Grants

With support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, **VSA arts of Massachusetts** is offering ADA Cultural Access Grants to organizations proposing innovative ways to include artists with disabilities and to attract audiences, including people with disabilities.

The purpose of the ADA Cultural Access Grants is to create opportunities for cultural organizations to engage artists, humanists and interpretive scientists with disabilities in the creative work of the organizations. Programs are intended to be accessible and to reflect universal design principles. They may include staff development, audience development and access services like sign language interpretation, captioning, assistive listening and audio description. Only programs substantially involving people with disabilities are eligible. Organizations interested in applying for the 2008 grant cycle must fill out an intent to apply form and submit it via e-mail or mail by April 23 to:

Bonnie Kaplan, Director of Cultural Access

E-mail: [grants@vsamass.org](mailto:grants@vsamass.org)

Mail: VSA arts of Massachusetts,  
2 Boylston St, Boston, MA 02116

After the intent to apply is approved, the full ADA Cultural Access Grant proposal is due by 5pm on May 23. For more information contact Bonnie Kaplan at the above e-mail or by TTY (617)350-6836.

## National Job Site to Connect Employers with Disabled Workers

Recently a new national job board dedicated to including disabled employees in today's workforce was launched.

[AccessibleEmployment.org](http://AccessibleEmployment.org) was started by the New Jersey Business Leadership Network (NJ BLN), which was established with support from the Henry H. Kessler Foundation. The web site is designed to provide employers with one



central place to post employment positions and search resumes of qualified disabled candidates. In addition, [AccessibleEmployment.org](http://AccessibleEmployment.org) allows potential job candidates to post their resumes for review by prospective employers.

## Grants Offered to Women Entrepreneurs

**The Abilities Fund** is launching its third annual grant program focused on women entrepreneurs with disabilities. It will be awarding \$2,000 gifts to women who have already started business and could use the financial boost to help them move forward. Contact Elizabeth Lind in the Washington DC office of the Fund at 202-885-9438 for an application and program information. All awards need to be completed by May 15. As an added benefit, this year the Fund will be holding an online media event showcasing the power of women entrepreneurs with disabilities.

For more information about the Fund contact:

The Abilities Fund

410 North 18th Street

Centerville, IA 52544

Telephone: 1.888.222.8943 ext 224

Fax: 641-856-3101

Web site: [www.abilitiesfund.org](http://www.abilitiesfund.org)

## Ham Radio Licensing Course at Zola Center

The Irving K. Zola Center for Persons with Disabilities at 20 Hartford Street, Newton Highlands, in collaboration with Boston Amateur Radio Club (BARC) is offering a two-weekend Ham Radio Licensing Course for persons with disabilities.

Orientation: May 10 • 11:00AM-12:00PM

Course: Friday, June 6 • 6:30PM-9:30PM

Saturday, June 7 • 9:00AM-4:00PM

Sunday, June 8 • 9:00AM-3:00PM

Join the fun of worldwide communication and local public service. Immediately after the course, the BARC staff will administer the required exam. Follow-up support is available to get you on the air, too. The cost of \$ 40.00 for the course



includes textbook, class training, lunch Saturday and Sunday, and FCC license exam fee. Full scholarships are available for women with disabilities through a grant awarded to the Zola Center from *Avon Hello Tomorrow Fund*.

To register contact Donna Suskawicz at 617-277-5131 or [zolocenter@juno.com](mailto:zolocenter@juno.com) for more information.

Ms. Suskawicz is a winner of the *Avon Hello Tomorrow Fund* and recently attended the *Global Summit for a Better Tomorrow*. The Summit was designed to raise global awareness of International Women's Day and to address the most important issues facing women today.

## New State House ADA Coordinator Named

Carl Richardson has been appointed the new State House ADA Coordinator. Along with the Bureau of State Office Buildings (BSB), his role is to make the many programs, services, and activities at the State House accessible to all. One of his initial actions was to announce some new services for the deaf and hard of hearing community. These include interpreters, CART services, and assistive listening devices.

### To request any of these services contact him at:

Carl O. Richardson III  
State House ADA Coordinator  
The Commonwealth Of Massachusetts  
Bureau of State Office Buildings  
State House, Room 1  
Boston, MA 02133

Telephone: 617-727-1100 x35502

Fax: 617-727-7700

Email: [Carl.Richardson@state.ma.us](mailto:Carl.Richardson@state.ma.us)

## Cell Phone Reads Documents for the Blind

The Nokia cell phone can now come loaded with software that turns text into speech. It allows users to read anything that is photographed, whether it's a restaurant menu, a phone book or a fax, or to tell whether a bill is worth \$1, \$5, \$10 or \$20.

While the technology is not new, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the software's developer say the cell phone is the first to incorporate the text-to-speech ability.

Similar software is already available in a larger handheld reader housed in a personal digital assistant. Companies such as Code Factory SL, Dolphin Computer Access Ltd. and Nuance Communications Inc. also provide software that allows the blind to use cell phones and PDAs. Inexpensive hand-held scanners such as WizCom Technologies Ltd.'s SuperPen can scan limited amounts of text, read it aloud and even translate from other languages. However, the NFB device combines all of those functions in one smart phone, said James Gashel, vice president of business development for K-NFB Reading Technology Inc., which is marketing the phone as a joint venture between the Federation and software developer Ray Kurzweil.

"It is the next step, but this is a huge leap," Gashel, who is blind, said in a recent telephone interview. "I'm talking to you on the device I also use to read things. I can put it in my pocket and at the touch of a button, in 20 seconds, be reading something I need to read in print."

### For more information contact:

David Dzumba  
Senior Manager for Accessibility at Nokia  
Nokia  
6000 Connection Drive  
Irving, Texas 75039  
Tel 469-231-3125; or e-mail [david.dzumba@nokia.com](mailto:david.dzumba@nokia.com).



placed in a database available to participating federal agencies. Grade level is determined by the number of college credits and experience obtained at the time of employment, and hiring is



done for the summer only.

**Eligibility requirements:**

To be eligible for participation, a person must be U.S. citizen, have a substantial disability, and be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a degree seeking student at an accredited institution of higher learning on a substantially full-time basis (unless the severity of the disability precludes taking a substantially full-time load), or have graduated with a degree from such an institution within the past year.

**For more information contact:**

U.S. Department of State  
HR/REE/REC  
2401 E Street NW  
Suite 518 H  
Washington, DC 20522

E-mail: [Careers@state.gov](mailto:Careers@state.gov)



**Letters**

I've been in New Mexico for over 4 years and greatly appreciate receiving Disability Issues on-line, which I read thoroughly! It is a wonderfully upbeat, enriching, and useful publication, and I am gratified to know that my old friends are still fired up movers and shakers!

*Suzie Sattell*

(from the original MAP, Garden City Activity Center, and BCIL board)

# Disability Issues

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