



Every Day is Independence Day

Summer 2010

Catskill Center for Independence

Visitability

Don Wyckoff, Architecture Barrier Consultant



Over the last six years we have talked about accessibility as it pertains to both residential and commercial settings.

The main focus of each of those articles was making existing homes or apartments accessible. I know from talking with many of you, along with my many years of experience, that when we talk of home modifications we're talking about a pretty substantial amount of money. We know now that building in accessibility from the start is *much* cheaper than modifying existing elements. Often the difference is thousands of dollars.

So this month I wanted to talk a little about new homes or homes yet to be built; homes still in the planning stages. Why, you may ask? Well, there is, as many of you know, a bit of a housing crisis out there, although I'm not speaking of the housing crisis we hear about every night on the news. No. This is a crisis that, while it continues to rage on day after day, year after year, only people that are in dire need of an accessible home and those driven by profit or by compassion actually even know it exists. I'm talking about the lack of affordable accessible homes.

Now the solution to the problem is a simple one: implementing Inclusive Home Design or "Visitability".

According to Eleanor Smith, founder of the Atlanta-based advocacy network "concretechange.org", "The goal of "visit-ability" is *to make ALL homes "visit-able", not just "special" homes — to be at the party, meeting, and family reunion . . . not isolated.*"

By narrowing the list of accessible features to those most essential: entering a home and fitting through the interior doors, "concretechange.org" and thousands of advocates all over the country believe we may have a quicker response from lawmakers, building contractors and architectural firms. This will help to put many more accessible or at least easily adaptable homes onto the market. After all if you're going to buy a home shouldn't you be able to stay in that home from purchase to um... checkout? Should your home only be accessible to those family and friends that are temporarily able bodied? Those of us who support "Universal Design" don't think so.

Universal design, visit-ability and even just those basic elements of access, go way beyond visiting the home. It's also about the home of someone who perhaps develops a disability. Whether it be a child or a senior, disability does not discriminate. Disabilities that arise after the purchase of a new *inaccessible* home can turn a home into a prison for many, leaving its disabled occupant a virtual prisoner. Can you imagine being unable to exit your home independently in the event of a fire or emergency? Or being unable to use your own bathroom? Finding new housing may not be possible either, especially if you need it fast. Unfortunately there aren't a lot of options and without family supports in place, many folks end up in nursing homes. Grief and depression are realities

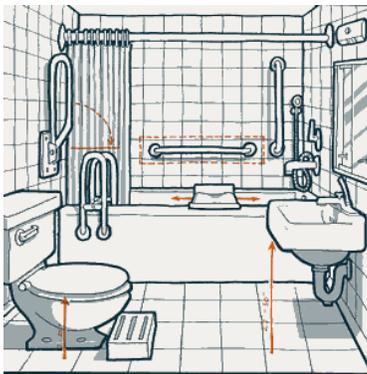
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that often follow these folks as many had no intention of spending their last years in such an environment. Having your wishes become invalid is a very disheartening reality. Yet it happens to thousands of people every year.

To change the reality of inaccessibility, three essentials should become routine when constructing new housing or living environments:

- A minimum of one zero-step entrance, at the front, back or side of the house
- All main floor doors, including bathrooms, provide at least 32" of clear passage space
- At least a half bath, preferably a full bath, on the main floor



So this is the knowledge and information we're asking you to share. Talk with a neighbor, a friend a family member, talk to builders and contractors that you may know. It may not be an easy topic

to discuss with others, but that discussion may encourage a change in the thinking of others. I once spoke with a local church's pastor, I explained the idea of Visit-ability and he speaks of it often to his parishioners. Just getting the idea discussed is a huge step in the right direction.

Please check out "concretechange.org" for information about new legislation and movements within the advocacy communities. There is much more to explore there. If you would like to know more about how you can support the advocacy movement please contact the Center. You also may want to consider becoming a member of the State Wide Systems Advocacy Network (SSAN). To learn more about the SSAN contact Charlie Reichardt at the Center. Remember we can not rest until every day is Independence Day.

Round T-Able-SUMMER 2010

Pamela Levy, Project Coordinator

The Round T-Able program was presented to several schools in the tri-county area to provide students the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge that would assist with transition from school to careers and/or post secondary education. The curriculum contained six modules that included employment, a social/emotional component, transportation, independent living, self-advocacy/empowerment and the ADA.

As the 2009-2010 school year drew to a close, many of us began to realize that students attending summer program could continue to reap the benefits of the Round T-Able provided, but with a shift in focus. New modules were developed under the umbrella "Healthy Lifestyles". Students have been learning the importance of making healthy eating choices, maintaining adequate physical activity levels and how emotional well-being impacts the quality of their everyday lives. By summers' end, they will also have information on choices for leisure activities, looking forward to employment and financial health.

Academic growth is built into lessons by incorporating language arts, writing, math, and computer skills. Reading recipes, measuring ingredients and determining serving size leads to tasty, healthy snacks at the end of each lesson and will become a cookbook to be shared with families at the end of summer.

As a grand finale, students will prepare and serve a healthy lunch to invited guests showcasing many of the activities they have practiced throughout the summer. They are quite excited to demonstrate their newly found knowledge of the food pyramid, show off their "compliment chain" and share their original artwork in the form of "Say NO to Drugs" posters.

Each of the students attending the summer program has worked hard and their accomplishments, both as individuals and as a group, are to be commended!

NYS HAVA Update:
New York is on the MOVE!

*Helen Benlisa, Project Director
Project HAVA & Project SHARE*



Election officials around the country are now charged with incorporating yet another layer of federal election administration law that, hopefully in the long run, will make this particular area of election administration more effective and efficient. The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act 2009, amends the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) passed in 1986 and is meant to make the process of applying for and obtaining voter registration forms and absentee ballots easier and more streamlined for overseas voters, our deployed military especially.

In a nutshell, overseas New York voters will soon be able to make a request for and receive voter registration forms and ballots electronically through a secure online system. The voter can print off the forms or ballots, fill them out, and mail them back their local election board. This is not on-line voting; it is simply a quicker means of materials retrieval and exchange. This is especially important for our overseas military stationed in areas where snail mail arrives and departs irregularly. In the past, military voters' ballots have been delayed or lost in transit, both coming and going, and often cast ballots have not arrived in time to be counted.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) has gathered and reviewed a list of several vendors capable of providing the secure electronic interface program states need in order to satisfy the requirements of the MOVE Act. At the recent Election Commissioner's Summer Conference, Scytl USA, a leading electoral technology company, presented our state's election officials with an overview of how the process would work. Overseas New York voters will be able to log-on to a central

website, create an account and update it as needed, choose their preference for materials retrieval (fax, email), and download and print off forms. On the other end, election officials in each county will be able to retrieve voter information and preferences and provide materials to their voters accordingly. The website would also list county by county election information, such as application deadline dates, giving voters a clear timeline to work with.

State election officials are using existing funds to pay for this year's roll out of MOVE Act requirements and will be pursuing federal funding for the years ahead in an effort to minimize the cost to local election boards.

For a brief overview of the MOVE Act visit:
<https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/node/282>
For a more in-depth breakdown of MOVE Act provisions visit:
http://nass.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=133&Itemid=159
Click on: [NASS MOVE Act Summary](#)



The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) Waiver programs continue to grow, with more participants selecting the Catskill Center for Independence as their Service Coordination Provider. The Center is still accepting referrals for the Waiver Programs. For questions or to request more information please contact Pete Miller at (607) 432-8000 or petemiller@ccfi.us.

Unemployment a Key Issue for Disabled Individuals

Denise Burroughs, Vocational Services Specialist

Unemployment is a key concern for many individuals with a disability. According to statistics, individuals with disabilities make up the largest minority group in the United States. There is a staggeringly high rate of unemployment among members of this minority, 65%, according to statistics compiled in 2007. Given today's economic climate that number has likely risen to an even higher level of unemployment among members of this group. Many people with a disability would like to work, possibly as a means to better support themselves and their families, possibly for a greater feeling of self-worth.



In a survey conducted in Atlanta, accommodation concerns, specifically the cost of providing workers who have disabilities with necessary accommodations as well as lack of knowledge on the part of the employer as to how to provide necessary accommodations, was listed as one primary barrier to hiring individuals with disabilities. Independent Living Centers such as Catskill Center for Independence can help to dispel some of the uncertainty surrounding accommodations by providing employers as well as potential workers with information regarding possible accommodations and how to make these accommodations cost effective. Lack of knowledge and potential cost should not be an excuse in our community to not hire qualified applicants with a disability.

Another reason respondents in this same survey gave as to why applicants with disabilities are not routinely hired for positions for which they are qualified is due to employer concerns as to the individuals' job performance and capabilities. Employers wonder if the individual is capable of doing the job. Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), the New

York State vocational rehabilitation agency, sponsors two programs that can allow employers to test potential qualified applicants who have disabilities' work performance and capabilities and provide the employer with an additional benefit as well. As part of the Work Try Out (WTO) program, VESID pays the individual's salary for the first 160 hours of employment, after which time the employer agrees to start paying the individual's salary assuming he/she has proven him/herself capable in the job.

Another VESID-sponsored program is the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program that allows a qualified individual with a disability the opportunity to prove his/her capabilities on the job, while at the same time benefiting the employer. In this program, the employer receives a tax credit from the federal government after the individual with a disability has earned his/her first \$6,000. Once again, the individual gets the chance to prove him/herself on the job, and the employer gets an incentive for providing the individual with this opportunity. On the other side of this equation, if an individual with a disability feels that he/she does require skills to make himself/herself more employable, the individual can apply to VESID for assistance with training. Not every employee with a disability will qualify for these VESID programs but the first and foremost eligibility criteria when applying for VESID assistance is that the individual must have a **permanent** mental or physical disability and an employment goal.

Given the programs sponsored by state rehabilitation agencies and the services provided by an Independent Living Center such as the Catskill Center for Independence, there should be fewer barriers to individuals who have disabilities becoming employed, should they so desire.

Information for this article taken from <http://codi.buffalo.edu> and <http://diversityjobs.com>



***Don't forget to check us out on the web:
www.ccfi.us***

New Faces at the Center



Hello, my name is Cathy Barnes and I am proud to have joined the staff at Catskill Center for Independence in June 2010. I was born and raised in upstate New York. Currently I reside in Otsego County along with my husband, children and grandchild.

I am an avid reader and enjoy scrapbooking as well as cooking. I participate in many outdoor activities with my family such as camping, boating and swimming.

I believe in the independent living philosophy and feel my previous experience will be an addition to the staff as we all work toward common goals. I look forward to the new challenges and the pursuit of our mission: to make everyday Independence Day.

Lending Closets

The *Catskill Center for Independence* is one of several area agencies to maintain a "lending closet." Among the items we lend are wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, etc. A short list of other participating agencies with a point of contact is as follows:

*Delaware County Public Health Nursing –
Marcia Bagley
607-746-8282*

*Delaware Regional Center
607-865-6551*

*Hamilton's Farm – Penny Hamilton
607-746-2057*

One Step Away

Ilene Arlet, Independent Living Specialist

A college student wakes up in the emergency room to discover he is unable to feel anything from the waist down. A 40 year old lawyer has a massive heart attack. A 35 year old farmer is told his leg must be amputated following a tractor accident. A

young couple is informed their two year child has a severe hearing impairment. We are all only one step away from experiencing a change in our lives as a result of a disability. One out of every five individuals will eventually deal with a form of a disabling condition in a lifetime.

"The reaction that a person has upon becoming aware they (or a member of the family) has a disability is centered on the realization that a loss has occurred (Zastrow, C., 1986). Life changing events and the ability to adjust is a process that does not end in a set amount of time, such as six months, a year, or longer. When a loss of any type occurs we experience a grieving period. When we first become aware of an extreme loss we often cry, become depressed or are in a state of shock. As time passes the grieving becomes less, however there are always times that we may be reminded of the loss (i.e. the anniversary of when the disability occurred).

The Kubler –Ross Model helps to explain the stages we experience:

Stage 1 Denial

(No, not me this cannot be happening!) Denial is the way we are able to cushion the impact of the awareness of the change in our life.

Stage 2 Rage and Anger

(Why me?) We feel as though it is unfair that others are ok and we can no longer do the things we could do before. Anger may be misdirected at family or friends.

Stage 3 Bargaining

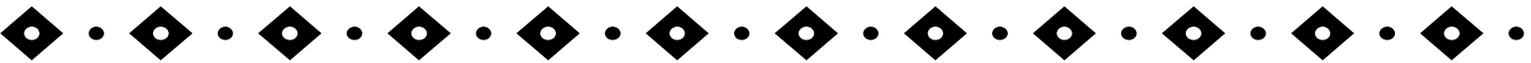
(Yes, me, but what if I promise to...) We try to make bargains (frequently with God). Kubler Ross indicates that even agnostics and atheists sometimes attempt to bargain with God during this stage.

Stage 4 Depression

(Yes, me.) at this stage we stop denying there is an existence of an impairment. We mourn the loss of what we will have to change in our lives.

Stage 5 Acceptance

(I am experiencing a change in my life, but I am all right I can do it!)



The CCFI is one of thirty-nine Independent Living Centers across NY. There are many services and programs available to assist individuals with disabilities to transition to the life they want for themselves and their families. Programs such as Round T-Able, WIPA, Traumatic Brain Injury and NHTD Waiver Programs and others are available. Take the first step towards finding out about many available options and call the center at (607) 432-8000 or visit our web site at www.ccfi.us.

The CLASS Act: A National Long-Term Care Insurance Program

Rina Riba, Community Transition Facilitator

Included in the new Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, better known as the health care reform law, is a new program scheduled to become effective on January 1, 2011. This is the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Program, or CLASS Act, which aims to help adults who become disabled with non-medical services in the community.

The funding for this assistance will come from voluntary premium contributions gathered as payroll deductions or paid directly by participants, as well as from the interest earned on the accumulated funds. Adults working for a participating employer will be automatically enrolled, unless they opt out of it. Participating employers may pay for all or part of the premiums but are not required to. For workers whose employer does not participate, or who are self-employed, other arrangements will be made to set aside contributions. Although the program will be administered by the federal government, taxpayer funds cannot be used for the program.

Monthly premium amounts will be set by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. They will be lower for younger participants than for older ones. Persons whose incomes are below federal poverty levels and full-time students who are employed will pay a very low premium, which may

be as low as \$5 per month. Pre-existing conditions will not be used to screen enrollees or influence the cost of the premiums.

In order to enroll, a person must be at least 18 years old and actively at work. In order to be eligible to receive benefits, a participant will have to have paid premiums for at least five years, and to have been employed for at least three of those five years. In addition, minimum levels of functional disability, and the need for assistance with at least two activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing, transferring, toileting, or dressing, will need to be met, with the need for assistance expected to last at least 90 days. Benefit payment amounts will be adjusted for inflation and there is no lifetime limit on them. They will continue until the person no longer meets the required level of disability and can be started if and when the person qualifies again.

Eligible adults will receive a cash benefit based on their degree of disability. The amount of cash received will vary, depending on the level of disability. The average benefit will be at least \$50 a day. Payments can be received on a daily or weekly basis, and will be directly deposited to an account. Money received can be used to help pay for services like home health care, adult day care, or home modifications, items not covered by private medical insurance. They can also be used for some aspects of institutional care.

Eligibility for the CLASS Act benefits will not have any effect on eligibility for other benefits, including Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security Retirement, Disability, or SSI (Supplemental Security Income). The program is not designed to cover all non-medical expenses, but to help limit the out-of-pocket costs for community based services. It also is not designed to replace private long-term care insurance. For individuals already receiving Medicaid, the CLASS program will usually be the primary payer for such services. Payouts of benefits are planned to begin in 2017.

Information for this article was obtained from:
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