
Real Choices in New Haven

Promoting Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Our Community • Spring 2004 Publication



Applications Available for Disability Mentoring Day

National Disability Mentoring Day: Career Development for the 21st Century, or NDMD, began in 1999 in order to increase the acknowledgement of Disability Employment Awareness Month (which takes place each year in October). NDMD is a joint program of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

The goal of National Disability Mentoring Day is to increase employment and internship opportunities for young adults with disabilities. On NDMD, young adults with disabilities pair with employers from the educational, non-profit, private, and public sectors for a day of job shadowing, one-on-one time with mentors, and career-related activities. These activities allow each mentee to explore one of his or her career interests and give all mentees the opportunity to form potentially lasting connections with employers; participation in NDMD may result in internship opportunities or serve as "interviews" to full- or part-time employment. NDMD will undoubtedly encourage mentees to be confident in their abilities to achieve their dreams in whichever career paths that they decide to pursue. In addition, NDMD will hopefully serve to increase employers' understanding of persons with disabilities and dispel myths/alleviate fears that may cause employers to hesitate when hiring individuals with disabilities.

This year, National Disability Mentoring Day will take place on Wednesday, October 20, 2004. The Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities will be planning this year's NDMD activities as it did in 2003. Young adults with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 24 who are interested in becoming NDMD mentees may contact Kristin Barber at the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities at (203) 946-7833 or TTD (203) 946-8582. The deadline for application is June 30th, 2004.



Community Cousins Volunteers Provide Friendship and Support to Individuals with Disabilities

By Radha Shenoy

Founded in 1998 by Ronnie Bergman, Community Cousins is a volunteer program organized by members of the Center for Disability Rights (CDR). The goal of both Community Cousins and CDR is to promote independent living within the community for persons with disabilities. Community Cousins is especially interested in providing friendship and support to persons with disabilities who have recently left nursing homes in order to live in their communities.



Community Cousins volunteers socialize with and pay visits to persons with disabilities who cannot often leave their homes. Volunteers may choose tasks such as driving persons with disabilities to the store, sharing hobbies with them, shopping with or for them, reading to them, and cooking or cleaning with or for them.

Volunteers may also act as penpals to individuals with disabilities or accompany persons with disabilities to doctors' appointments or other events (including CDR events).

If they so desire, volunteers may choose to assist individuals with disabilities who live in the same town, area, or along the same bus line as they do. If you are interested in becoming a Community Cousins volunteer, please call the Center for Disability Rights at (203) 934-7077, TTY/TTD (203) 934-7079 to request an application and commence screening process.



Commission on Disabilities Looking for New Commissioners

The goal of the Commission on Disabilities for the City of New Haven is to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society by assisting them in enriching, enjoying, and contributing to the life of the New Haven community. The Commission seeks to diminish the barriers that individuals with disabilities face, both in the physical world as well as in others' perceptions and attitudes toward them and their disabilities.

The Commission monitors and periodically assesses several city-funded programs for their impact on persons with disabilities. Cooperating with public, private, business, industrial, religious, and labor agencies throughout New Haven, the Commission investigates both individual and community issues that affect persons with disabilities – issues such as housing, recreation, education, employment, health, transportation, and economic status. Through its publications, the Commission reports its findings, increases public awareness of the various problems and needs of persons with disabilities, and seeks to garner resources from both public and private agencies for individuals with disabilities.

Also working closely with federal and state agencies, the Commission strives to develop programs that improve quality of life and assist individuals with disabilities in living within the community as independently as possible. The Commission's public forums allow persons with disabilities to have their voices heard directly and offer suggestions on how to develop programs, raise public awareness and understanding, and better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. The Commission on Disabilities also assists and advises the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities.

The Mayor and Board of Aldermen select 15 members, or "Commissioners," to serve on the Commission of Disabilities. Each October, Commissioners then elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary from within their group. The Commission is then subdivided into committees to handle different disability-related issues.

The Commission on Disabilities is currently seeking new members. Commissioners meet on the second Monday of each month, with a few exceptions and reschedulings for religious or public holidays. There may occasionally also be special meetings. To be considered for the Commission, an applicant must be a registered voter and a New Haven resident who has a disability, is active within the disability community, or is related to a person with a disability. Representatives from disability service agencies who are New Haven residents may also qualify to apply. Commission applications are available at the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities at New Haven City Hall. For further information or to request an application, please call Kristin Barber from the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities, at (203) 946-7833 (voice) or (203) 946-7833 (TTY). We urge you to apply — make your voice heard and contribute to the Commission's efforts!

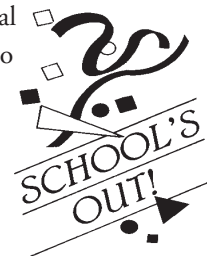
* All information from this article was taken from "By Laws: Commission on Disabilities, City of New Haven" and the Disability Commission Application Form.

The Mayor's 2004 Youth Guide to a Summer of Fun, Learning, and Adventure

By Carol L. Suber



For the past 7 years, the City of New Haven's Department of Children and Family Services Youth Services Bureau has compiled an annual youth guide to inform New Haven families about summer programs and activities offered throughout the city. These guides offer information on summer camps, creative arts workshops, nursery school and playgroup programs, career awareness, church and religious activities, environmental awareness, sports, educational programs, nutritional awareness, and personal development programs. The guide also provides information on the Summer Meals Program and the Board of Education's Mandatory Summer Programs for children who require assistance in reading. For each program listed, the guide provides a brief description as well as contact information. The guide also indicates, with the accessibility symbol (a wheelchair), facilities that have stated on their response form that they are accessible to persons with disabilities. However, these claims are self-made; the City takes no responsibility for any false reports.



As in the past, Wilbur Cross High School's print shop will print nearly 25,000 copies of the guide in English and another 3,000-5,000 in Spanish. This year's guide, entitled *The Mayor's 2004 Youth Guide to a Summer of Fun, Learning, and Adventure*, should be available in late April or early May and will be distributed to New Haven public and private schools as well as to New Haven agencies, organizations, and churches. Each school is responsible for the distribution of the guides to their children, and parents may also contact their children's school principals or guidance offices to obtain copies of the guide. In addition, copies will be available at various departments within City Hall, including the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities and Community Services Administration. Please contact the Youth Services Bureau at 946-8592, 946-6085, or 946-8583 for additional information. Information about the guide is also available online at <http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/govt/govt34.htm>.

Correct Terminology: Person-First Language – Part One

By Radha Shenoy

A recent caller to our office referred to herself and other individuals with disabilities as “us handicaps.” This term not only implies helplessness but also defines entire people by traits that are only a facet of these individuals. How can persons with disabilities ask people without disabilities to employ correct terms in addressing them and their disabilities if they themselves cannot recognize and properly use these terms? The term “handicap” or “handicapped,” for example, does not refer to a person or group of people but to laws, situations, or environmental factors such as a non-accessible stairways.¹

The most important thing to remember in addressing or talking about persons with disabilities is that they are people, not disabilities.² To refer to people who are blind as “the blind” or even as “blind people” is to negate everything else about those individuals, making their blindness the one overwhelming trait that defines them.³ Instead, one should always say or write the word “person” or “people” as the first word in a phrase describing disability; for example, “people with disabilities,” not “disabled people.”⁴ If a person’s disability is not even relevant to the context of a conversation, you should not mention it at all.⁵ In an important business meeting, would you mention that your toenails are painted purple if the comment were totally inappropriate and irrelevant to the situation at hand? Probably not. Why then would you draw attention to your own or another person’s disability if it is irrelevant to the situation?

This issue and the next two issues of *Real Choices in New Haven* will feature short charts of acceptable terms to use when talking about persons with disabilities as well as terms to avoid. The information appearing in all of the charts is from the sixth edition pamphlet of the University of Kansas’s Research and Training Center on Independent Living, entitled “Guidelines for Reporting and Writing about People with Disabilities.”⁶ Other sources used to create the tables include: The Easter Seals website page “Resources, Writing About Disability,” the Paraquad: Independence for People with Disabilities website page “Words With Dignity and Disability Etiquette,” and the Community Resources for Independence website page “Independent Living: Disability Etiquette - Using Words With Dignity.”⁷

TERMS TO AVOID	“WORDS WITH DIGNITY” ⁸
Hyperactive	Person with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)
Autistic	Person with autism
Blind Person, “The blind,” “Blind as a bat” ⁹	Person who is blind, Person who is visually impaired, Person with low vision, ¹⁰ Person who is legally blind ¹¹
Brain damaged	Person with a brain injury, Person who has sustained a brain injury, Person with an acquired brain injury
Birth defect, ¹² Deformed, ¹³ Deformity, Disfigured, ¹⁴ Maimed ¹⁵	Person with a congenital disability, Person born with ¹⁶
Deaf ¹⁷ or “The deaf”	Person who is deaf, Person who is hard of hearing, ¹⁸ Person with a hearing loss, ¹⁹ Person who is nonvocal ²⁰
Handicap, ²¹ Handicapped, ²² or Handicapped persons; Handi-capable, Differently abled, ²³ Special, Abnormal ²⁴	People with disabilities, Persons with disabilities, Individuals with disabilities
Burn victim	Person with burns
Mongol, Mongoloid, Downs child, Downs person	Person with Downs syndrome

The key similarity in the above, acceptable “words with dignity” is that the terms all begin with the word “person.”⁷⁸ Referring to people with disabilities using “person-first language” will serve as a constant reminder to everyone that people with disabilities are indeed “people first.”⁷⁹ If you remember to “put people first,” you can rest assured that your terminology will always be correct.

** Citations available upon request (Please call (203) 946-7833 or (203) 946-8122).

Accessibility Evaluations of New Haven Restaurants and Facilities

We will be publishing articles that discuss the accessible features of restaurants and cultural facilities throughout New Haven. This issue contains articles on both *Sahara Mediterranean Cuisine and Pizza* and *Union League Café*. We hope that you will find this information useful.



Access Evaluation of: Sahara Mediterranean Cuisine and Pizza

By Elanah Sherman

Located at 170 Temple Street, *Sahara Mediterranean Cuisine and Pizza* creates a welcoming atmosphere thanks in part to a helpful owner who is eager to improve conditions at his establishment. For example, when I suggested to the restaurant's owner that he both relocate the restaurant's accessibility sign to the door with the lowest threshold and clear a path of travel from this entrance into the restaurant, he immediately followed my suggestions, demonstrating his earnest desire to make his restaurant more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Though the restaurant is small in size, the main center aisle is wide enough to accommodate persons using wheelchairs. The restaurant has a few minor accessibility issues: the three front doors as well as the bathroom door are outfitted with knobs rather than levers, neither of the front doors has a beveled threshold, the bathroom door is a bit heavy and difficult to close, and the mirror in the bathroom is located slightly too high off the floor. Once these small improvements are implemented, *Sahara*, which is already quite accessible, will become even more fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

Access Evaluation of: Union League Café

By Elanah Sherman

Union League Café is an elegant restaurant that boasts reasonably good access, a large dining area, fairly compliant bathrooms, and a pleasant staff that is extremely sensitive to access issues. The restaurant is free of any major structural barriers, though some minor structural problems have resulted from the vintage nature of some architectural elements, the age of the building, and certain design features.

The restaurant's main entrance is located at the top of several stairs and lacks a sign to direct customers with disabilities to the restaurant's accessible, though unmarked and locked, side entrance. The restaurant's staff requires advance notice in order to open this accessible door, which may prove especially burdensome in adverse weather conditions. Installing a buzzer would create a much more convenient entry situation. After undoing the latch, patrons may encounter a clearance problem caused by the door's extending outward. The door opens onto a ramp with two handrails, only one of which has extensions.

A slightly small elevator then lifts passengers to the hallway outside the restaurant. The restaurant's double doors and bathroom doors are very heavy and close too rapidly, and the main doors are outfitted with vintage knobs instead of lever handles. However, staff members are happy to assist in opening the doors. The men's and women's bathrooms have several other small compliance issues: they lack signage, are quite small, and have narrow stalls with coat-hooks located too high off the ground as well as push-button locks. The toilets provide only limited room for transfer and lack swing-down bars. The sinks in both bathrooms also present a few small accessibility issues. Despite these minor points, *Union League Café*, located at 1032 Chapel Street, remains a reasonably accessible dining establishment.

The Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities

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