

**Nothing More,
Nothing Less
For All People
With Disabilities**

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Spring 2012

NUMBER XXXII

ATI Launches Effort to Raise Funds for Systems Advocacy

Although it has been 22 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), people with disabilities continue to fight every day to remove barriers to full participation in our community.

ATI routinely receives complaints about the lack of accessibility in public and private entities in Cortland County (such as the placement of the ramp and lack of automatic doors at the Post Office, steps at the entrance of four local businesses, the lack of an accessible entrance at local churches and food pantries, etc.).

While ATI routinely works to promote increased accessibility at all private and public entities, change is often slow and costly to implement. One way to expedite the change process is to dedicate additional manpower to these efforts.

Over the past three months, Access to Independence (ATI) has submitted funding requests to the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation and the John Ben Snow Foundation to fund increased systems change efforts (*see article on page 2*).

If successful, ATI will use the grant funds to support additional dedicated personnel to train and educate a new group of community change agents, primarily consumers with disabilities, friends and family members, civic-minded youth in high schools and college students.

ATI Awarded Mini Grants

Access to Independence (ATI) is proud to announce that it has received two grants from area foundations in support of its 2012 7th Annual Employment Conference, set for this October.

ATI received \$1,000 from the Ithaca-based Triad Foundation, Inc., and a \$2,000 grant from the Syracuse-based Central New York Community Foundation, Inc. The Community Foundation's grant came from the Allen Speiser Memorial Vocational Rehabilitation Fund.

ATI will use the grant funds to underwrite the costs associated with facilitating its annual three-day conference. ATI will hold this year's conference at an off-site location in order to accommodate increased participation. Special guests will be announced in the coming months.

Civic Engagement Awards

For the second consecutive year, SUNY Cortland recognized an Access to Independence staff person for outstanding contributions to the community.

On April 19, Aaron T. Baier, ATI Youth Transition / Work Readiness Coordinator, received a 2012 SUNY Cortland Leader in Civic Engagement award for his collaboration in the development of a Cortland Community Mentors program.

More than 100 people from the greater Cortland community celebrated the dedication and hard work of Baier and nearly 40 other individuals who were recognized for their contributions to the quality of life in Cortland County.

Institute for Civic Engagement Director Richard Kendrick, City of Cortland Mayor Brian Tobin, and SUNY Cortland President Erik Bitterbaum each shared special remarks and praised recipients for their dedication to the Cortland community.

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Above: SUNY Cortland President Eric Bitterbaum awards ATI's Aaron Baier a 2012 SUNY Civic Engagement Award.

Leading our Community to an All-Inclusive Future One System Change at a Time

The vision of Access to Independence (ATI) is to “lead the community towards an all-inclusive future where discrimination and physical barriers no longer exist”. This can mean making a building more accessible, or helping to change public policy, or affecting opinions or attitudes. The primary way that ATI pursues this vision is our work towards making “systems changes” in the community.

A “systems change” is defined for our purpose as: *a policy, practice or decision, in the public or private sector, which controls resources necessary to enhance the integration, inclusion and independence of people with disabilities.* ATI has been involved with many systems changes over the years, each which has made our community more accessible to all. A critical part of our mandate as an Independent Living Center is to facilitate these changes on an ongoing basis.

Systems change can mean advocating for increased **physical accessibility** at local businesses, agencies and public entities. Some of the changes that ATI has been involved with include: installation of automatic doors at the Department of Motor Vehicles, Cortlandville

Town Hall, and the JM McDonald Sports Complex; addition of ramps at the SUNY Cortland Alumni House, and numerous physicians’ offices and churches; a lift at the Cortland Free Library; accessible seating and entrances at several local restaurants; an elevator at Cortland Reparatory Theatre; accessible recreational facilities at several area locations; and a dental office built using universal design principles.

Systems change also results from making **public services** more accessible to everyone. ATI has helped to facilitate the installation of curb-cuts and crosswalks, audible crossing signals, and accessible parking spots (including appropriate signage and access aisles). Our influence has been responsible for making several voting sites accessible (or for moving them when that was not possible), for additional stops on the public bus routes, and for the inclusion of three accessible units in the renovations of South Main St. apartments.

Systems change involves **representation** by people with disabilities on Committees and Boards of Directors that make key decisions for our community and its members.

For example, ATI staff currently serves on the Community Services Board, Cortland Area Communities that Care Coalition, the Cortland County Transportation Advisory Committee, and many others. Many changes to policy (local and on a larger scale) have been influenced through the work of ATI and its network of advocates.

Systems changes also impacts the lives of people with disabilities, their friends, family, and the general public, through the **transition or diversion** of individuals from nursing homes. Since 2004, ATI has helped 44 individuals remain at home in the community (or return home from an institution) by providing resources, service coordination, installing ramps, lifts, stair-glides, bathroom alterations, and other accessibility modifications. Not only has this saved taxpayers nearly \$2 million, but just think about the tremendous impact being at home has on a person’s quality of life!

If you are interested in helping ATI to make our community more user-friendly for everyone, call us at 607-753-7363, or contact us by e-mail at: info@aticortland.org.



Above: ATI’s booth at the 2012 Chamber of Commerce Business Showcase, held on March 31, at the McDonald Sports Complex.



We are now accepting referrals to our NHTD & TBI Medicaid Waiver programs for the following services:

- **ILST (Independent Living Skills Training)**
- **AT (Assistive Technology)**
- **CTS (Community Transitional Services)**
- **Emods (Environmental Modifications)**

For more information, please contact Mary E. Ewing, by phone: 607-753-7363; or by email: mewing@aticortland.org

SAVE THE DATE: ATI to Celebrate 22nd Anniversary of the ADA!

On July 26th, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities. The ADA established a set of mandates that aimed to eradicate the discrimination of people with disabilities.

Since that time, the ADA has expanded opportunities for people with disabilities in America; however the full promise of the ADA will only be achieved if public entities remain committed to their efforts to fully implement the ADA.

Therefore, in honor of the 22nd anniversary of the American's with Disabilities Act, Access to Independence (ATI) is planning to host several events and educational opportunities during the month of July to celebrate the many achievements and abilities of individuals with disabilities.

This year, ATI's ADA Celebration will kick-off on Saturday, July 28th. At 10:00 am people with disabilities, their family and friends are invited to participate in a Stroll & Roll. Participants will gather at ATI then walk, stroll and roll throughout downtown Cortland, ending up at the Courthouse Park where the ADA celebration picnic will take place. The stroll & roll is an inclusive 'march' that aims to recognize the many downtown businesses that have made changes to become more accessible. It also recognizes those that still need work.

At 11:00, ATI will host the community at its annual ADA picnic. Mayor Brian Tobin is set to read the city's proclamation to recognize the ADA's 22nd Anniversary and there will be a keynote address by Ms. Sally Johnston (*see bio below*).

There will be live music, additional entertainment by WXHC Hometown Radio, food catered by Kory's Place, and much, much more! A vendor fair featuring local and regional vendors who serve the needs of individuals with disabilities will also be part of the day's happenings.

For more information on any of ATI's planned events in celebration of the 22nd Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact Fran Pizzola, Community Education Coordinator, by phone at: 607-753-7363; or by email at: fpizzola@aticortland.org.

We hope that you will take some time to celebrate with us the civil rights achievements of the past 22 years!

Sally Johnston: Coalition Builder, Civil Rights Leader & Advocate

Sally Johnston's career in disability advocacy began in 1975, when she became the founding member of Disabled in Action of Greater Syracuse. Under her guidance the organization quickly became the voice of disability rights throughout the Central New York region.

Through the next 36 years, Sally led her group in attacking inaccessibility and promoting the civil rights of people with disabilities. Sally's ability to present issues and develop coalitions have been key as she worked with business leaders and elected officials to resolve problems.

Sally was tireless in the effort to make bus routes in Syracuse accessible to all, a campaign which came to a successful conclusion a year ahead of the ADA. Through the NYS Coalition of People with Disabilities, Sally has worked with advocates around the state to bring independent living centers to New York.

In the late 80's, Sally formed a coalition of people interested in improving the delivery of home care services. They worked more than two years until the first consumer directed personal assistance services program in CNY was developed.



Above: Sally Johnston will keynote ATI's 2012 ADA Picnic Celebration at the Courthouse Park on July 28.

With the blessing and cooperation of local government Self Directed Personal Services was launched in 1992. As other communities from across the state emulated the program, Sally realized that consumer directed programs needed the protection of a statewide association. Sally worked with other leaders throughout the state until Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State, (CDPAANYS) was born!

Sally currently works part time as the Advocacy Coordinator at Enable, Inc. in Syracuse. She also participates in many community and statewide organizations, such as the NYS Office of People with Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council, Onondaga County Aging and Youth Advisory Council, and the NYS Education Commissioner's Advisory Council on Independent Living Services.



Youth Transition Services

26 North Main Street
 Cortland, New York 13045
 Phone: (607) 753-7363
 Email: info@aticortland.org

Who We Serve:

Youth of any age with disabilities or who face other limitations or barriers (and their families). Services are flexible and based on goals and needs of each individual.

Types of Services:

- ◊ One-on-One Peer Mentoring
- ◊ Cortland Youth in Power - Peer Support
 - ◊ Personal / Educational Advocacy
 - ◊ Independent Living Skills Training
- ◊ Community Involvement Opportunities
- ◊ Job Shadowing / Career Exploration
 - ◊ Work Readiness Skills Training
 - ◊ Family Support / Resources



Visit our Website:



www.aticortland.org

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Visit our facebook page!

ATI Welcomes Colleen Dietrich!

On April 4th, the Access to Independence Youth In Power group hosted Colleen Dietrich, Central Regional Youth Partner for YOUTH POWER!, at its biweekly meeting held at the Cortland Youth Bureau Teen Center.

“Colleen facilitated a conversation with the group of youth about their experiences within the various systems that serve them,” said Aaron Baier, ATI Youth Transition / Work Readiness Coordinator.

Youth spoke about their experiences in school (with teachers and other students), mental health treatment, the juvenile justice and foster care systems, and their community as a whole. One predominant theme that came up again and again was the fact that so many adults didn’t listen to them, but rather just told them what to do.

Colleen shared her insights on how youth can make their voices heard. She encouraged youth to become more active in the community. Colleen encouraged the youth to consider participating in a Central Regional Team to plan events and take action to change New York State systems. “This Team is currently working on a Regional Forum set for early July and we need local youth to tell us how to run it,” Dietrich said. The Team will meet regularly by teleconference.

YOUTH POWER! is a statewide network of young people who have been “labeled” (involved in various systems) and who are seeking change. For more information, visit their website: www.ftnys.org/youthpower.cfm.

For more information on how to get involved with Youth In Power, or with the YOUTH POWER! Central Regional Team, contact Aaron Baier by phone: 607-753-7363; or by email: abaier@aticortland.org.

2012 Masquerade Gala

Saturday, October 27, 2012

6:00 - 9:00 pm

SUNY Cortland Alumni House

Individuals (1): \$50.00

Couples (2): \$100.00

Corporate (10): \$500.00

To purchase your tickets, call 607-753-7363, or visit us at 26 N. Main Street, Cortland, NY.

- Cash bar and exquisite hors d'oeuvres
- Costume or Cocktail attire
- Masks provided (or bring your own)
- Silent auction
- Live pianist
- Special Guests

All proceeds benefit Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.



Youth Travel from Albany to Washington, D.C. to Advocate

Looking back to February, I (*Aaron Baier, ATI Youth Transition / Work Readiness Coordinator*) remember the faces of five area youth as they passed through a security checkpoint and made their way to the “Well” of the New York State Legislative Office Building. For many, it was their first visit to the State Capitol!

I remember them chatting casually until we arrived at our destination where more than 300 disability advocates milled about, readying to rally and meet with their state leaders. Our contingent of young advocates, who joined board members and staff from Access to Independence (ATI), made their way from meetings with Assembly-members Finch, Lifton and Kolb, to a meeting with Senator James Seward. At each meeting they listened, learned, and expressed their own thoughts and opinions with our leaders.

ATI’s Youth In Power program puts young people with disabilities in the driver’s seat. Young people have the right to make choices, determine their future, and advocate for their voice to be heard within the systems that serve them. Locally, Youth In Power aims to provide youth with peer support and opportunities to Lead, Empower, Advocate, Recreate, and Network (LEARN). Youth In Power is more than a group meeting twice-a-month. Rather, it’s also a forum for

youth to get together and to get more involved in our community.

“I really appreciate it when young people take the time to tell me what is going on,” said Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton during the February 14, Legislative Day.

“The voices of youth matter.” Brandon, Brooklin, Hunter, Jaret, and Travis spoke with experience about unequal treatment of students with disabilities in school, future careers and job availability, and even the local initiative against hydrofracking. Youth, as future voters and consumers of services, need to have an understanding of how the systems that serve them work; and they must be empowered to stand up for what they believe is right.

Next month, ATI plans to send a contingent of area youth to Washington, D.C., to participate in the annual legislative activities of the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL). In addition to marching with hundreds of other advocates, the youth will participate in a rally at the Capitol and meet with our area’s federal leaders, including Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and Congressman Hanna.

For more information on the June Washington, D.C. trip, or on any of ATI’s youth transition services, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

COMPUTER TUTORING

Mondays: 2:00 - 3:00 pm
Wednesdays: 3:00 - 4:45 pm
Thursdays: 1:00 - 4:45 pm

ATI Computer Lab

**For more information,
please call 607-753-7363.**

Youth In Power!

**Get empowered...
Use your abilities...
Advocate for what you want!**

**4th Wednesday, Monthly
4:00 - 5:00 pm
CYB - Teen Center
35 Port Watson Street**

**For more information,
contact Aaron Baier at:
607-753-7363**



The Center for New Careers
Adult Job Training & Continuing Education
1710 NYS Rt. 13
Cortland, New York
607-758-5111
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Office Technology, Pharmacy Technician, Medical Assistant, HVAC/R,
Electrical Maintenance Technician, Automotive Technician, and more...



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Join NY's Disability Advocacy Network!

- Keep current on pressing disability issues!
- Receive email alerts on policy and budget matters!
- Fight for the civil rights of people with disabilities!
- Join 1,000+ statewide advocates to fight for change!

**For more information, or to join our advocacy
network, email: cwunderwood@aticortland.org**

Wishing Wellness Center
37 Central Avenue
Cortland, New York 13045



Wellness Center Hours
Monday—Friday 9am to 6pm
Drop In Center Hours
Friday—2pm to 8pm
Saturday—2pm to 8pm
Sunday—12 noon to 6pm

Phone: (607) 423-7472 Email cortlandrecoverycenter@gmail.com

“With Help From a Friend, You Can Reach the Stars!”

The Access to Independence (ATI) Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) helps individuals with disabilities to stay motivated through down-times (searching for a new job), to develop new skillsets, and ultimately, to gain and retain employment. Through job shadowing, peer support, interactive workshops, and insight from employers, job seekers have opportunities to reach their employment goals and to live full and independent lives.

One PMP participant, Richard, learned about the PMP through ATI's Annual Employment Conference. While Richard worked hard to find a job that suited his talents and personality, he struggled with his motivation and reliability, both on and off the job. While he is very charismatic, one of Richard's weaknesses was that he was too often “overly-friendly” or too talkative about personal matters during work hours.

“I am a people person, even when it gets me in trouble,” Richard chuckled during a recent interview. “I am learning to better recognize appropriate times for socializing, he added.”

During Richard's first Employment Conference, he had an opportunity to meet local employers and to learn about their expectations of applicants and employees.

Richard engaged in interactive career workshops on communication. He learned that certain types of conversation were best left for after work hours. He especially appreciated hearing about peer success stories from other individuals.

ATI's Employment Conference helped Richard to think more clearly about what were his personal strengths, such as mechanical knowledge, being computer savvy, and his desire to help others.



Following the Employment Conference, Richard participated in job shadowing opportunities at Odyssey Networks, Cortland Regional Medical Center (CRMC) and Intertek Corporation. He volunteered at the CRMC, secured and lost a job, and struggled with other areas of his life. However, Richard always knew that he had a support system of peers who he could rely on.

Today, Richard is working in the maintenance department for a local hotel and is one of their most reliable workers. He is part of a team where he feels at home, and where he is afforded the opportunity to be himself. Richard has learned his own boundaries and monitors his interaction with coworkers and his work productivity.

Keep up the good work Rick!



Above: Richard Brown has used his support system and active participation in the Peer Mentoring Program to secure and maintain community employment!

Peer Mentoring Updates

Beginning in May, the PMP weekly workshops and monthly support groups will be held each Monday from 4:00 - 5:00 pm at ATI. During the workshops, ATI will feature guest speakers, and valuable interactive activities to help participants learn about independent living, transferable skills, and even new job search techniques, to name a few topics. The Peer Support group will now be held on the last Monday of each month and serve as an open forum for participants to talk about topics relevant to their current life situation.

ATI also offers group mentoring and peer support to youth and young adults through its Youth in Power group. Cortland Youth in Power meets at least once each month and now offers youth a place to voice their opinions, hang-out, and hear from guest speakers on topics that are relevant and interesting to them. The group mentoring environment is essential to helping young people with disabilities socialize and help each other through life's little challenges.

ATI continues to offer one-on-one peer counseling to all consumers and is seeking community members who want to share their unique experiences and become a peer mentor. ATI, together with Family Counseling Services and the YWCA (Cortland Community Mentors Initiative), now offers a common application and training process for all of their mentors. Mentoring is fun, rewarding, and offers real benefits to those you partner with!

For more information on the ATI Peer Mentoring Program or to become a mentor, please contact Aaron T. Baier by phone at 607-753-7363, or by email at abaier@aticortland.org.

Housing Consortium Updates

Since 2011, ATI has lead the charge for the Cortland County Housing Consortium. Formed as a result of the 2011 Cortland Counts Housing Track Public Forum, the Consortium is comprised of key stakeholders who work to improve the state of housing in Cortland County.

In March, the Cortland County Housing Consortium met to discuss its plans for the upcoming year. Among the identified priorities are: 1) Increase housing education efforts to increase awareness of housing programs, assistance, and needs in our local community; 2) Update City and County codes and work to improve enforcement of existing codes; and 3) Increase collaboration among housing / service providers.

The Housing Consortium is comprised of housing providers, advocates, government leaders, developers, code enforcers, consultants, financial advisors, realtors, faith-based groups, educators, health and medical professionals, emergency service providers, and members of the community. The common theme among all participants is that they are dedicated to improving the quality of life in Cortland through the preservation and development of quality accessible, safe, and affordable housing.

The Housing Consortium is dedicated to providing a strong network of information-sharing to educate members and the people they serve. While a collaborative effort of key stakeholders, the Consortium is coordinated by Aaron Baier (Chair) of Access to Independence, Tom Obuck (Vice Chair) of Elizabeth Brewster House, as well as support from Ashley Jones (Secretary), Joan Martin, and Jackie Carlton of Seven Valleys Health Coalition.



Work Readiness Services

26 North Main Street
Cortland, New York 13045
Phone: (607) 753-7363
Email: info@aticortland.org



Who We Serve:

- (1) Individuals with a disability or limitation who are seeking community employment.
- (2) Individuals who require extra support while working to maintain a job.

Types of Services:

- ◇ One-on-One Peer Mentoring
- ◇ Weekly Skill Building Workshops
 - ◇ Peer Support Group
 - ◇ Work Readiness Skills Training
 - ◇ Independent Living Skills Training
- ◇ Job Shadowing / Career Exploration
 - ◇ Computer Skills Training
 - ◇ Information / Referrals

Access to Independence offers services that aim to provide guidance, support, skill building, and job shadowing to job seekers with disabilities as they work to reach their goal of successful community employment. People with disabilities deserve to earn a living wage and have the right to advance their education and utilize their unique skills to contribute to our community.

With Help from a Friend,

You Can Reach the Stars!

Workshops / Support Groups:

Held every Monday
4:00 - 5:00 pm

Computer Tutor Available:

Mondays: 2:00 - 3:00 pm
Wednesdays: 3:00 - 4:45 pm
Thursdays: 1:00 - 4:45 pm

Wishing Wellness Center Arrives in Cortland

Would you, a friend, or a family member like someone to talk to about things going on in your life? Cortland's new Wishing Wellness Center may be the place to go.

The Wishing Wellness Center is now open Monday through Friday, from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. The Center offers a variety of peer support services, such as crisis intervention, peer mentoring, companionship while going to appointments, and more.

On the weekends, the Wishing Wellness Center serves as a drop-in place for socialization and recreational activities. Swing by on Fridays and Saturdays between 2:00 – 8:00 pm, or on Sundays between 12:00 – 6:00 pm. The Center offers art classes every Tuesday from 6:00 – 7:00 pm, and photography classes every Thursday from 5:30 – 7:00 pm.

For more information on the Wishing Wellness Center, call: 607-423-7472, email: cortlandrecoverycenter@gmail.com, or just stop in at 37 Central Avenue in downtown Cortland NY.

The Lowdown on Medicare Coverage - Everything You Need to Know

If you have received Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for at least 24 months, or if you are age 65 or older and receiving retirement benefits from Social Security, you are eligible for Medicare.

There are 4 parts to Medicare coverage:

- Part A is free to most people who qualify for Medicare. Medicare Part A covers a range of inpatient hospital care.
- Part B is optional and has a premium. The premium for 2012 is \$99.90 per month. Medicare Part B covers outpatient services that include physician visits.
- Part C is also optional and is offered by private companies approved by Medicare. The premiums vary by choice of coverage and company. Part C plans are like HMOs or PPOs that you can choose instead of regular Medicare.
- Part D is optional and the premium varies depending on the plan you choose. Part D covers prescription medications and is offered by private companies approved by Medicare.

While Medicare Parts B and D are optional coverages, there are penalties if you don't sign up for them immediately when you become eligible.

If you decide not to enroll in Part B and then enroll later, you could be subject to a 10% per year penalty for each 12-month period you could have had Part B coverage and didn't take it. This penalty is for life, and you will always have to pay more for Part B.

If you decide not to enroll in Part D coverage and then enroll later, you could be subject to a 1% per month cumulative penalty. This penalty is for life and you will always pay more for Part D.

As with most rules, there are exceptions to these penalties.

If you or your spouse are actively employed and are covered by an employer's group health plan, you may not need Part B until you or your spouse are no longer employed. If your employer had more than 100 employees and you sign up for Part B within eight months after the employer benefits end, you will not be penalized for late enrollment. But, retirement coverage and COBRA do not count as employer coverage.

For Part D, if you have a prescription plan that Medicare considers "comparable coverage" and you enroll in Part D shortly after that coverage ends, you will not be penalized.

If you did not enroll in Part B or Part D coverage when you were eligible and now have a low income, Medicare Savings Programs may be able to help. Medicare Savings Programs (MSP) are government-sponsored, low-income assistance programs that can help pay Medicare out-of-pocket costs that might include premiums and co-pays. Eligibility is based on a person's income and you can apply at your local Department of Social Services office.

If you are found to be eligible for any of the Medicare Savings Programs, you will automatically be enrolled in Medicare Part B with no waiting for the enrollment period. You will not have to pay any penalties for late enrollment. Eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program might also qualify you for extra help for the Part D prescription program.

For more information on any of the Medicare coverage options, please contact Sue Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, by phone: 753-7363, or by email: slewis@aticortland.org.



Questions about transportation?

Way2Go Cortland

SEVEN VALLEYS HEALTH COALITION

www.way2gocortland.org

Contact:
Jan Dempsey
Mobility Management Coordinator
607-756-4198

Bus Buddies can help too!

Walk Bike Ride Bus



Above: ATI hosted a lunch and learn series on independent living history and philosophy during the month of April.

What Can You Do Online at SSA.gov?

Now that Cortland no longer has a Social Security representative visiting the area once a week, more people are going to have to use the Social Security website to get information and answer questions. If you know what you are looking for, navigating the SSA.gov website is not as difficult as you might think. Here are some things you can do while surfing the website:

- Apply for benefits
 - Social Security retirement or spouse's benefits
 - Social Security disability benefits
 - Begin or continue the Adult Disability Report
 - Apply for extra help with your Medicare prescription drug costs
 - Apply for Medicare benefits
 - Check your application status if you have applied for SSDI or retirement benefits
 - File for an appeal if you were denied SSDI benefits
- Apply for or replace your Social Security card
 - Secure instructions and application form to request a new replacement card
- Use the Retirement Estimator to find out approximately what your retirement benefit will be based on your work record
- Change your address
- Sign-up for direct deposit or request payment by Direct Express debit card

SSA.gov is very easy to use, and there are no lines and no waiting for service. For more information about how to navigate the SSA.gov website, please contact Sue Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: slewis@aticortland.org.

Cortland Prevention Resources

Pointing you in the right direction!

29 Central Avenue, Cortland, NY
607-756-8970
www.cortlandprevention.org



Riehlman, Shafer & Shafer
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW

JANE G. KUPPERMANN

397 RT. 281, P.O. BOX 430
TULLY, NY 13159-0430
315-696-8918 • 315-671-1217 FAX
jane@riehlmanshafer.com

ATI Wants You!

ATI is recruiting individuals with diverse backgrounds, with and without disabilities, to serve on its Board of Directors.

For more information, please contact:

Mary E. Ewing
Executive Director
607-753-7363; or
mewing@aticortland.org

Social Security Administration - Electronic Benefits Payments Looming - March 1, 2013

As of March 1, 2013, the Social Security Administration will no longer issue paper checks to anyone receiving federal benefits. If you are still receiving paper checks, you will need to switch to one of two options. You can either have your check direct deposited into a bank account, or you can use a debit card issued to you by Social Security.

If you choose direct deposit, your check will be deposited electronically into your bank account. You can go to www.godirect.org to sign up for direct deposit if you have internet access, or you can call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to sign up. You will need your bank account routing number and ac-

count number when you sign up. It may take as long as 60 days for Social Security to make the change.



If you don't have a bank account, you can sign up for a Direct Express debit card. The Direct Express card is a debit card you can use to access your benefits, and you don't need a bank account. With the Direct Express card program, Social Security will deposit your fed-

eral benefit payment directly into your card account. Your monthly benefits will be available on your usual payment day. You can use this debit card just like a bank debit card to pay bills, and make purchases anywhere a debit MasterCard is accepted. There may be ATM withdrawal fees if you don't use a network ATM machine. Visit www.usdirectexpress.com or call 1-800-333-1795 to get more information and to sign up for the Direct Express debit card.

For more information, contact Sue Lewis, Certified Benefits Counselor, by phone: 607-753-7363, or by email: slewis@aticortland.org.

Accessibility Construction Services - We are your Accessibility Experts!

Kathleen grew up in Homer, in a house built by her father. As an adult, she moved to Boston and spent 35 years there working with babies and children. She returned to her childhood home in her early 40's, when she began to have severe arthritis in her legs.

Kathleen got a job working at a hospital in Central NY, but she was hurt on the job. Her knee was nearly crushed. Her arthritis got much worse at that point, and she began to use a walker and a wheelchair to get around. This created a safety issue, since the only bathroom in her house was on the second floor. She could only get there by going up 18 steps, which she could no longer maneuver.

Eventually Kathleen ended up in a nursing facility. She was unable to return home because her house was not accessible.

Kathleen has always been a very outgoing and social person, used to being active and involved in her community. After several months at the nursing home, she was becoming discouraged and frustrated. Then Kathleen saw an article in the newspaper about ATI and its Access to Home program. [The goal of this program is to improve a person's quality of life, while at the

same time saving taxpayer dollars, by helping the individual to live in the community.] Kathleen called ATI, and found she qualified for help through Access to Home.

ATI's Architectural Barrier staff evaluated Kathleen's home and reviewed her needs for accessibility. Kathleen's primary need was for a downstairs bathroom, with an accessible shower. This was accomplished by using space from part of the kitchen. Simple changes made it possible for Kathleen to live on just the first floor of her home. A ramp was also added to the house so that she could get in and out independently. ATI did drawings of the project, put it out to bid, met with interested contractors and chose a builder to complete the project. ATI staff also managed the project to ensure quality work.

Finally, after 14 months at the nursing facility, Kathleen was able to come home! She told me that all of the time she dreamed about returning home, she kept thinking about the old Irish song, "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen". She said "I would not be here if it weren't for Access to Independence. The staff is wonderful – they have so much experience with different types of homes."

ATI has several different programs and sources of funding that may help individuals in circumstances similar to Kathleen. If you or someone you know is not able to return to their home due to a lack of accessibility, or if they are in danger of being placed in a nursing home, call Access to Independence at 607-753-7363 or contact us by e-mail at: info@aticortland.org.



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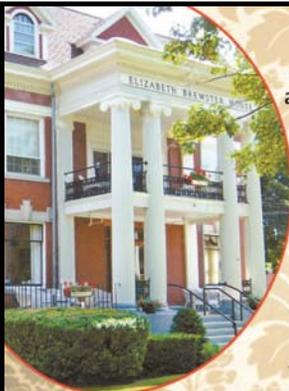
The Section 8 Housing Program helps qualified people meet their monthly rent bills by paying a portion of their rent directly to their landlord.

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