



ReachOut e-Diversity News

An Electronic Publication Of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council

It is the policy of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council to use person-first language in items written by staff. Items reprinted or quoted exactly as they originally appear may not reflect this policy.

April 2011 Edition | Volume 5, Issue 2

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Read, Pass on to Friends, Family Members, Colleagues & Constituents



FEDERAL COURT FINDS CITY OF LOS ANGELES DISCRIMINATES AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN EMERGENCY PLANS

In a landmark decision, which has national implications, a federal court ruled that the City of Los Angeles violated federal law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, by failing to meet the needs of its residents with disabilities in planning for natural and other disasters. *The ruling is the first such decision in the country.*

Outreach Helps Tap New Council Members



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Ladies of the Court

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People don't think much about their disabilities

If you use a wheel chair for your daily mobility and you go to the grocery store, you are not thinking, as you go through the aisles, about the car accident or circumstance of birth that requires that you roll through the aisles rather than walk. You are thinking about whether or not, if you buy the package of four center-cut pork chops today, you'll have time to cook them before Wednesday.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The purpose of "Reach Out" e-Diversity newsletter is to promote interagency collaboration and coordination that result in agencies providing culturally competent services to the unserved/underserved populations in Ohio



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Federal Judge Consuelo B. Marshall held: "The Court finds that Plaintiffs are denied the benefits of the City's emergency preparedness program because the City's practice of failing to address the needs of individuals with disabilities discriminates against such individuals by denying them meaningful access to the City's emergency preparedness program." The Court further held that "Because of the City's failure to address their unique needs, individuals with

disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to harm in the event of an emergency or disaster." The Court ordered the City within 3 weeks to meet with the plaintiffs to prepare a proposal for remedying the violations.

The Plaintiffs are represented by two prominent non-profit law firms that specialize in civil rights cases for people with disabilities: Disability Rights Advocates ("DRA"), headquartered in Berkeley, California and Disability Rights Legal Center ("DRLC"), located in Los Angeles.

The federal class action lawsuit, brought on behalf of all people with disabilities in Los Angeles, was filed in January 2009 by Plaintiffs Audrey Harthorn and Communities Actively Living Independent and Free ("CALIF"), a nonprofit independent living center located in downtown Los Angeles.

Despite the fact that Los Angeles has experienced serious disasters, the City of Los Angeles lacks adequate disaster planning for people with disabilities, such as accessible emergency shelters, plans for providing services and medication at shelters, accessible transportation and evacuation assistance as well as communication services that are

available and accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities.

Los Angeles is particularly disaster-prone and susceptible to a variety of emergencies, including earthquakes, fires, landslides, and terrorist attacks. The City experienced and suffered from the massive Northridge earthquake in 1994, as well as wildfires in 2008 and 2009.

This landmark ruling on February 11, 2011 highlights a national problem evident during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, when people with disabilities, including many seniors who were seriously ill, were left behind to die because of a lack of disability planning. Those tragedies prompted this action on behalf of the residents of Los Angeles.

Karla Gilbride, a DRA Attorney representing the plaintiffs said, "We are pleased with the Judge's decision to ensure that L.A., which is home to more than half a million people with disabilities, plans for the safety of all of its residents."

Sid Wolinsky, DRA Litigation Director said, "We cannot tolerate another Katrina when disabled men, women and children were neglected. DRA and DRLC have worked with

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other cities such as Oakland and Richmond to develop emergency plans that include people with disabilities. There is no reason why every city in this country should not be well prepared to meet the needs of disabled people.”

“The Court’s decision is not just a victory for people with disabilities and seniors but for all Los Angeles residents who need to know that our city is prepared when disaster strikes. These will be life and death issues for thousands of people with disabilities in the event of a major disaster,” stated Shawna L. Parks, DRLC’s Legal Director also representing the Plaintiffs. “We are hopeful that other cities will examine their emergency preparations as a result of this lawsuit to avoid the needless loss of life during any future emergencies.”

Audrey Harthorn, Plaintiff and resident of Los Angeles said, “As a wheelchair user who lives alone, I am relieved that L.A. will now consider the needs of its citizens with disabilities and that I will have a better chance of getting the help I need when the next disaster strikes.”

Lilibeth Navarro, Executive Director of CALIF says “This is society’s moral duty to people with disabilities. The

Court’s decision confirms what we already knew, that the City has failed to address the needs of people with disabilities in emergency planning. The City must now take action to address this critical issue.”

The court’s decision can be found at: www.disabilityrightslegalcenter.org and www.drlegal.org

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Founded in 1975, the DRLC is a nonprofit organization that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities through enforcement of laws, public awareness and education.



Did You Know?

No characteristic or feature of people with developmental disabilities requires our basic hopes and aspirations for them to be less than those we have for other people, or requires them to be served in settings or ways that set them apart from other citizens.

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Outreach Helps Tap New Council Members

by Ken Latham

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council's outreach effort has continued to make strides over the past several years, and that effort is defined by the outreach Mission Statement that includes this line: "Conduct outreach activities for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families who otherwise might not come to the attention of council."

That statement generally refers to the unserved/underserved groups or those individuals who are not a part of the mainstream advocacy efforts of councils. The Ohio DD Council wants to remain true to the philosophy of "Inclusion"—that all people have an opportunity to participate in council activities and advocacy.

Such is the responsibility of Council's Outreach Sub Committee who works with staff and grantees to address the Bill of Rights of the DD Act as it relates to outreach to the unserved/underserved population. That group includes individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, disadvantaged individuals, individuals with limited



Denise Gilmore

English proficiency, individuals from underserved geographic areas (rural or urban), and specific groups of individuals within the population of individuals with developmental disabilities, including individuals who require assistive technology in order to participate in and contribute to community life.

Two of the most recent new council members Denise Gilmore and Jacob King represent the unserved and underserved population.

Denise Gilmore is a former participant of the Ohio DD Council's Triple Jeopardy Project (African American Women with Disabilities). The Triple Jeopardy Project is an Outreach grant program that created a forum for women to discuss various issues and collect data on services



Jacob King

that are available in their community. This project also allowed the group to be able to share information concerning services and meet their county board personnel. Denise is a resident of Dayton, Ohio and is a person with a disability who is very involved in women's health issues. Denise

is also involved in many community civic organizations. We are glad to see one of our outreach participants receive a nomination and be awarded a membership of council.

Jacob King, a resident of Franklin County, is employed by the National Center for Urban Solutions. Jacob, also a person with a disability, has a Master's Degree in Network and Communications Management. Jacob had no previous contact with council and was not aware of its advocacy efforts until attending a meeting with outreach staff person Ken Latham, and Executive Director, Carolyn Knight. Jacob applied for the position and was appointed to council.

We would like to extend our congratulations to Denise and Jacob.

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Ladies of the Court

Reprinted from *PARADE* magazine (March, 2011)



When Kevin Cook landed in Washington, D.C., to coach Gallaudet University's Bison women's basketball team in October 2007, he braced for the challenge of his career. Even though he had an impressive résumé—he'd coached WNBA and NCAA Division I women's teams and, most recently, the Nigerian national women's team—he had never worked with athletes quite like these. The students at Gallaudet are deaf or hard of hearing, and Cook didn't know even a letter of sign language before he boarded the flight back to the U.S. "I went from a foreign country to another foreign country," he recalls.

The Bison were just as perplexed by their towering, impatient new coach. Cook's last few teams were championship winners, while

Gallaudet was struggling in every single game—the team had compiled an abysmal 3–22 record the season before he was hired. "We were trying to get on the same page as him, and he was frustrated," Gallaudet center Nukeitra Hayes says through an interpreter.

But this year, the Bison have staged a dramatic turnaround. Led by two talented seniors, Hayes and forward Easter Faafiti, they've finished the regular season with a 23–2 record. They were the top seed in the North Eastern Athletic Conference (NEAC) tournament—and its only nonhearing team. Their success has been nothing short of amazing, especially considering that the players must keep looking at one another to communicate, which means taking their eyes off the ball.

At the team's final regular-season game last month, cheerleaders waved their pom-poms in silence. The crowd encouraged the team not by shouting but by stomping their feet to send vibrations through the wooden floor. On court, Gallaudet's women looked like the other college players, with their tattoos and swinging ponytails, except they

communicated silently, relying on the tiniest and briefest of head nods, hand motions, and—since many of them can lip-read—mouth movements. Cook strode along the sidelines, gesturing in sign language. He was shadowed by an interpreter he uses for games. (Cook is at level four, out of eight, in the American Sign Language course.)

The Bison's success did not come easy. The team's first season with Cook was shaky. They went 3–21, their low point coming when they lost a game by 75 points. While the team's performance improved over the next two years, the real transformation began early last fall, as the season began. "At one practice, I was unhappy about their work habits," Cook recalls. "Easter told me some of the freshmen were saying, 'Coach doesn't understand deaf culture.' I got really upset." He told the team that the problem wasn't deaf culture—it was that the players had gotten too used to losing. They needed, Cook said, to build "a winning culture."

To drive home his point, he scheduled a scrimmage between his team, which plays in the NCAA's

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Division III, and the women of the University of Maryland, members of the elite Division I. Even though Gallaudet lost by 53 points, the players learned a lot from the experience. "We always remember how we played that day, and it's lifted our level of play in general," Hayes says.

On the court, she and Hayes have learned to work in sync effortlessly, and their teammates follow suit, constantly glancing at them for direction. The fact that the players must sign on court has been both a hindrance and a help. Cook speculates that the team loses up to six points per game because the players are looking at one another instead of looking at the ball. However, they do have an edge: Their opponents yell out their plays,

information Cook hears and passes on to his athletes—but other teams frequently can't understand the Gallaudet hand signals.

Cook credits their remarkable streak this year in part to the leadership of Hayes and Faafiti. But personal difficulties have also created strong bonds. In his first year, Cook learned he had Parkinson's disease. That same year, Hayes lost her brother Keith in a fire in Indiana. Grief-stricken, she nearly dropped out of school, returning only after she found an unmailed letter from Keith urging her to finish college.

In 2009, the coach's sister (and best friend), Kelly Preston, died in a fire in Ohio. "The team got me several cards, not just one," Cook says, his voice breaking. "Nukeitra

would check on me three times a day, dropping by to ask, 'Coach, you okay?' She's special people."

"The biggest lesson I've learned from this team is about being grateful," he adds. "I tell them, 'Look, none of us hears perfectly, but we're all here and going to university.' I've also gained patience. I've had to slow down my communication, and it's carried over into the rest of my life."

Faafiti's father (who is able to hear) flew in from California to watch his daughter play her final regular-season game. After the Bison won 73–54, he was beaming. "I am so happy to see her succeeding and being so strong and humble," he said. "This is one of the proudest moments of my life."

Did You Know?

For African-American women with disabilities, "the double jeopardy" of minority and disability status becomes "triple jeopardy: with the added element of gender. In an article about the challenges faced by this group, Alston and McCowan noted, "African American women with disabilities, unlike their White counterparts, must face intra group issues of sexism surrounding family and community interactions."

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People don't think much about their disabilities

Deborah Kendrick

"If you have a disability, you don't spend much time thinking about it."

When I blurted out that particular comment during a panel presentation on disability, I heard significant murmurs of assent around the table.

Two of us were blind. One woman was born without limbs. One guy broke his neck in a bike accident, and another woman has serious mobility issues because of arthritis and a joint replacement. All of us are professionals (except for one who recently retired), and none of us had ever spoken those exact words before- because to us the sentiment is just part of the common-sense framework of integrating disability into a life.

If you use a wheel chair for your daily mobility and you go to the grocery store, you are not thinking, as you go through the aisles, about the car accident or circumstance of birth that requires that you roll through the aisles rather than walk. You are thinking about whether or not, if you buy the package of four center-cut pork chops today, you'll have time to cook them before Wednesday. You're thinking that the blueberries look mighty tasty, even though they are expensive. Now, you might also be thinking that the particular type of pasta you want is annoyingly high on the shelf, and relived when someone

walks past and offers to fetch it down, but that is a circumstance of your disability, not the disability itself.

If you are deaf and having an animated conversation with your wife about why you didn't fill her tank with gas when you used her car, you are not thinking, "Gee, we're having this discussion in sign language," or "Gee, I'm glad I have my hearing aids in." You're thinking about how she is a multi-tasker while you maybe are not and are wishing you'd remembered to put gas in the car.

As a blind person, I use either a guide dog or long white cane for orientation and mobility. Yet, I once almost walked out of an airport women's room, leaving my beautiful golden retriever in the stall, and once

ran down my front steps with my child's lunch in my hand to run it to school before I remembered, "Wait! I'm blind! I need my white cane!" Those episodes are funny to me even years later. Of course, I went right back to release my dog, and naturally, I ran right back up those steps and unlocked the door to get my cane. My focus at those particular moments was catching a flight or delivering a forgotten lunch, not my disability.

When you see a person with a visible disability, you are probably seeing one dimension: a walker, a wheelchair, a white cane. Nine times out of 10, that person is thinking about far more interesting (or mundane) issues: a disagreement with a colleague, an exam tomorrow, a grandchild's recurring asthma, the movie she saw last night or the lousy job the house painter is doing.

Most people with disabilities- including those you see at church or the mall or yourself if you acquire one tomorrow- spend time initially acquiring techniques and work-arounds to accommodate that particular disability. Once those tools are acquired or skills mastered, the disability itself takes a back seat to life.

Deborah Kendrick is a Cincinnati writer and advocate for people with disabilities.



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SAVE THE DATE & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Overview of Criminal Procedures for Court Interpreters

22 hours of training = 2.2 CEUs

What: Carla Mathers, Esq, CSC, SC:L will conduct this two day in person training which will include pre-readings and quizzes

The Supreme Court of Ohio is proposing a requirement that all courts in Ohio only hire certified interpreters for legal proceedings, with a preference to interpreters who hold SC:L. In preparation for this transition, Hallenross and Associates in collaboration with Columbus State Community College is proud to present this training.

When: June 11-12, 2011

Where: Columbus, Ohio

More details coming soon

<http://www.hallenross.com/Site%20Documents/2010%20Events.pdf>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Karla M. Lortz Scholarship for Students with Disabilities

What: This \$1,000 scholarship will be given to a student with a disability, who will be a freshman or sophomore in college during the fall semester. The student receiving the award must be an Ohio resident, have a disability, and be enrolled in a non-traditional field of study. Non-traditional studies include: accounting, business, engineering, finance, mathematics, science, and/ or technology. To receive the scholarship, the winner must be available to accept the scholarship at the scheduled GCPD Annual Awards Ceremony, in Columbus.

Submission Requirements:

- *Completed application plus two copies.* (A total of three [3] copies, if mailed)
- *An essay of approximately 500 words.* This essay should include the following: student's area of study, employment goals, educational plans, how student became interested in this career choice, and

how student has overcome any barriers to this field (that resulted from the student's disability). This essay should be provided in a written format, accompanied by a disc copy.

- *A copy of the student's current transcript.*
- *Three (3) letters of recommendation.* One of the letters must be from a teacher/instructor of science or mathematics. A second letter must be from a supervisor, where you were either employed or did volunteer work. The third letter must be from an adult (such as: a guidance counselor, local religious leader, political representative, mentor, or director/program manager from a disability related service).
- *Copy of acceptance letter* from the College/University the student will be attending.

Maureen Fitzgerald Leadership Award

WHAT: This leadership award is to honor Maureen Fitzgerald (to those who knew her, she was the mother of the Ohio Youth Leadership Forum - YLF). She loved empowering youth with disabilities, to realize their potential. Maureen was a motivator (who worked

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behind the scene) to assure youth, with disabilities, were exposed to challenges and positive social interaction. *Her leadership led to transformational change to the youth whose lives she touched.*

NOMINATION:

- Submit an essay (150 to 250 words, maximum) on how their leadership changed the lives of individuals with disabilities, through their own leadership skills.
- Leaders who have changed the lives of youth will be given greater consideration.
- Please include some of the following transformational characteristics, achieved by the leader, you are nominating:
 - How are they identified as a change agent?
 - Provide some examples of how their leadership took courageous efforts.
 - How do they believe in people?
 - How have they dealt with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty?
 - What visionary results occurred through their efforts?

- How their efforts changed the lives of youth and young adults with disabilities?
- Application forms are available at www.gcpd.ohio.gov or by calling the Governor's Council on People with Disabilities at 1-614-438-1394. Applications must be received by May 31, 2011.

OHIO CIVIL RIGHTS HALL OF FAME

WHAT: The Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) along with co-sponsors Wright State University, The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and Honda of America Mfg., Inc. are seeking nominations to the Third Annual Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame. This program recognizes citizens who have made significant contributions to the progress of civil rights and equal justice in the State of Ohio.

The honor bestowed on the select group of individuals chosen for induction into the Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame will be recorded for all time in Ohio's history. A formal induction ceremony will be

held on Thursday October 13, 2011 and will memorialize the third class of honorees. A commemorative exhibit will showcase information about the distinguished careers and remarkable accomplishments of the Hall of Fame inductees. The exhibit will remain on permanent display in the OCRC offices located in the Rhodes State Office Tower in Columbus, Ohio. The OCRC will incorporate the important message of this program and the courageous work of the inductees as a part of its regular education and outreach program.

NOMINATION:

Nominations will be received through **June 3, 2011**. All nominations must be submitted in accordance with the stated nomination guidelines and include an official entry form. Nomination packets and information can be found by clicking here

<http://www.cooleremail.net/users/delgadot/library1.pdf>

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