Nothing More,
Nothing Less
For All People
With Disabilities

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.

ACCESS NEWS

Summer 2009 NUMBER XXI

ATI Medicaid Waiver Programs

Imagine being told where you must live, when you must get up and go to bed, and when you must bathe, eat or visit with friends and family. How would that make you feel? Many people who are elderly, or who have experienced strokes, dementia, traumatic brain injury or any other type of illness or injury that requires a nursing facility level of care, experience this daily.

Access to Independence (ATI) believes that all people have the right to control their own lives, make their own decisions and to participate fully in society. Towards that end, ATI now provides a variety of services through the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Medicaid Waiver Programs. These programs aim to assist people with disabilities who currently reside in a nursing facility (or who face living in a nursing facility), to return to (or remain in) their home in the community.

ATI provides Service Coordination, Environmental Modifications, Independent Living Skills Training, and Community Transitional Services under both Waivers. ATI is also approved to provide Moving Assistance and Peer Mentoring services through the NHTD program.

For more information on ATI's NHTD and TBI Medicaid Waiver programs, contact Sharon Radley by phone at: 753-7363, or by email at: sradley@aticortland.org.

Area Disability Advocates Secure Support of Congressman Arcuri

On Tuesday, July 21, a dozen disability advocates from the Central New York area blitzed Congressman Michael Arcuri's Cortland office to meet with Field Representative Bob Messinger about the Community Choice Act - CCA. (*See article on page 3.)*

Consumers and staff persons from Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc. (ATI), the Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC), and the Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC) aimed to educate Messinger about the importance of the CCA and to urge Congressman Arcuri to sign-on as co-sponsor of the legislation.

On July 31, Congressman Arcuri announced his support by signing on as a co-sponsor of the CCA.

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ATI Builds Capacity to Promote Increased Youth Independence

Over the last several months, Access to Independence has continued to make inroads in increasing its ability to offer youth transition programming.

In early July, ATI received word that it had secured a $5,000 Legislative Initiative from State Representative Gary Finch towards staffing expenses relating to the agency's Youth Transition Program. ATI has raised $40,000 towards this initiative since October 2008.

In June, ATI facilitated five workshops for 150 youth participants in the Cortland County Summer Youth Employment Program. ATI held the workshops during the Program's orientation, during which youth geared up for their summer-long work experience. The workshops focused on increasing youth independent living skills and promoted disability awareness.

On August 4th, ATI facilitated a one-hour workshop for interested youth on self-advocacy and self-determination. The interactive workshop promoted the application of independent living skills and encouraged youth to make choices that result in positive consequences.

ATI has also scheduled day-long disability awareness workshops at three local schools for this Fall, including Barry Elementary, Appleby Elementary (Marathon), and Homer Intermediate Schools.

Making Cortland's Public Transportation More Accessible

Access to Independence (ATI) is collaborating with First Transit of Cortland and other local agencies to improve the accessibility of bus service throughout Cortland County. Currently, First Transit only provides fixed-route and dial-a-ride services on weekdays from 6:00 am - 6:00 pm. These limited hours restrict the independence of people with disabilities, senior citizens and others who rely on public transportation.

The Cortland County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is comprised of key stakeholders in local transportation, including First Transit, SUNY Cortland, JM Murray Center, Office of the Aging, and Department of Social Services, among others. Over the past six months, the TAC has applied for $150,000 in grant money to expand the limited transportation system and to explore ways the community can collaborate to fill the gaps in transportation without increasing the cost to consumers.

The next TAC meeting is set for September 21, from 10:00 - 11:00 am at 37 Church St. For more information, contact Aaron Baier by phone at: 607-753-7363 or by email at: abaier@aticortland.org.

Your Ride is Waiting! A Glossary of Helpful Terms

Fixed-route: Transit services where vehicles run on regular, predetermined, pre-scheduled routes, with no variation. Fixed-route services typically use large vehicles like buses and have designated bus stops where passengers board and get off the vehicle.

Demand-Response Service: Transit service that allows individual passengers to request transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Vehicles providing demand-response service do not follow a fixed-route, but travel throughout the community transporting passengers according to their specific requests. Also called "dial-a-ride," these services usually require advance reservations.

Deviated Fixed-Route: A mix of fixed-route and demand-response services. While a bus or van passes along fixed stops and keeps to a timetable, the bus or van can leave its course between two stops to go to a specific location on demand. Deviated fixed-route typically serves passengers with disabilities who cannot access the fixed-route stop.

Para transit: Short for "parallel transit," this type of passenger transportation provides service that is more flexible than fixed-route, but more structured than the use of private vehicles. Para transit most often refers to wheelchair-accessible, demand-response service.

Complementary Para transit: Para transit service that is required as part of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to complement, or serve in addition to, already available fixed-route transit service. ADA Complementary para transit services are only required in communities that offer fixed-route service and must meet a series of standards to ensure they are indeed comparable to fixed-route services.

Curb-to-Curb Service: Para transit service in which the transit vehicle picks-up and lets-off passengers at the curb or driveway in front of their home or destination. In curb-to-curb service the driver does not assist the passenger along walks or steps to the door of the home or other destination.

Door-to-Door-Service: Para transit service which includes passenger assistance between the vehicle and the door of the passenger's home or other destination.

State Acts on Disability Legislation

In the middle of July, New York State's Senate got its act back together and took action on more than 200 bills, including two that are on the statewide disability priority agenda.

S5396 – Incorporate Title II of ADA into NYS Human Rights Law: Title II provides protections against discrimination on the basis of disability in services provided by public entities, including state and local governments. This bill clarifies the scope of protections against discrimination on the basis of disability by these entities, including in the provision of services, programs and activities.

S1058 – Poll Site Access Bill: This bill requires all poll sites to comply with the accessibility guidelines of the ADA. It also eliminates the practice of granting waivers for inaccessible sites.

Also of importance, Governor Paterson has signed into law legislation to make Timothy's Law permanent. The law mandates private insurance parity for mental health services.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer disability advocate, contact Chad W. Underwood by phone at: 607-753-7363, or by email at: cwunderwood@aticortland.org.

Access to Independence Staff Rally at U.S. Capitol

On Monday June 8, 2009, Access to Independence (ATI) staff joined more than 750 disability advocates from across the nation to march down Pennsylvania Avenue and rally for disability rights at the U.S. Capitol. Advocates aimed to bring attention to their ongoing struggles to lead independent lives by calling out how Government has marginalized independent living by reinterpreting disability rights law, diminishing funding for important programming, and failing to properly measure and report the accomplishments of people with disabilities.

Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa surprised advocates with a fiery visit on the U.S. Capitol lawn. Senator Harkin joined advocate cheers for freedom by stumping for action on the Community Choice Act, pending legislation that he is co-sponsoring. "That legislation sends a message to the rest of Congress and to America: We want real homes, not nursing homes," said Harkin**,** one of the authors of the original, 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. "Our current system effectively forces people into institutions and requires them to impoverish themselves in order to become eligible for the assistance they need. It is wrong – and this legislation changes it." *(See article on Community Choice Act.)*

"As a community, we will insist that decisions be made with us and by us. No longer will programs exclude people with disabilities from deciding how our lives ought to be lived. We will design, implement, and monitor programs that will be focused on the principles of Independent Living: civil rights, consumer control, and social, economic and political equality." - Kelly Buckland, Executive Director, National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

Cornell University
ILR School
Employment and Disability Institute

Access To Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

The American's with Disabilities Act "ADA"

Interactive Training Series:

Program 1: Disability Awareness and ADA

Program 2: Getting Hired and Moving Ahead in a Job

Program 3: Tapping into Talent

Program 4: Serving Customers with Disabilities

Program 5: About Hidden Disabilities

Program 6: Accessibility in Federal, State and Municipal Entities

Program 7: Accessibility in Private or Commercial Business

Program 8: Accessible Technology In The Workplace

Program 9: Accessible Web Sites: Everyone Benefits

To request a training session, please contact Fran Pizzola, ATI Community Education Coordinator, by phone at: 607-753-7363, or by email at: fpizzola@aticortland.org.

Support Community Choice!

The Community Choice Act (CCA) is a proposed federal bill that would amend Title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide individuals with disabilities and older Americans with equal access to community-based attendant services and supports.

The legislation is needed to truly bring people with disabilities into the mainstream of society and to provide them with equal opportunity for employment and community activities.

In order to work or live in their own homes, Americans with disabilities and older Americans need access to community-based services and supports. Current Medicaid policy favors living in an institutional setting. Federal law requires that States cover nursing home care in their Medicaid programs, but there is no similar requirement for attendant services. The purpose of the CCA is to level the playing field and to give eligible individuals access to the community-based services and supports they require.

Although some States have already recognized the benefits of home and community-based services, they are unevenly distributed and only reach a percentage of eligible individuals. Some States are providing the personal care optional benefit through their Medicaid program, but others do not.

The CCA is designed to make the promise of the ADA a reality. It will help rebalance the current Medicaid long term care system, which spends a disproportionate amount on institutional services.

Today, almost two-thirds of Medicaid long term care dollars are spent on institutional services, with only one-third going to community-based care.

IEP Student Accommodations

It is the responsibility of the IEP team to ensure that a student's course of study is consistent with their post-secondary goals and that the student plays a meaningful role in the IEP process to avoid assumptions that could eliminate future opportunities. All instruction and testing accommodations allowed within the general education area should be explored before deciding that a student may not be capable of earning a standard high school diploma.

Accommodations may include changes in materials or procedures that allow students with disabilities to learn and be tested without their disabilities putting them at a disadvantage.

Accommodations enable students to show their knowledge and skills rather than the effects of their disabilities.

Examples of accommodations in instruction include: Alternative assignments; Substitute materials with lower reading levels; Fewer assignments; Decreased length of assignment; Copied pages so students can mark on them; Early syllabus; Tape-recorded versions of printed material; Information presented in multiple formats; Use of listening devices; or Use of student partners whenever reading or writing is required.

Examples of testing and assessment accommodations include: Special lighting, separate room; extended time, frequent breaks, unlimited time; repeated directions, sign language presentation, magnification device; word processing writing example, use of reference materials (e.g. , dictionary); special test preparation techniques; use of amplification equipment, a calculator, or manipulatives (objects used to explore mathematical ideas and to solve mathematical problems.

15 Parent Tips for More Effective IEP Meetings

Before the Meeting:

1. Collect all relevant information, including work samples, a copy of last year's IEP, and anything else you think might be helpful.
2. Create a list of what you feel are the most important issues to address.
3. Get materials from school ahead of time, especially past assessment reports and anything else that might come up during your meeting.
4. Build a positive relationship with the IEP team.
5. Know the purpose and format of the meeting. Find out who will be there, what's on the agenda, and how long the meeting will last.

During the Meeting:

6. Share your thoughts, knowledge, insights, and concerns. Remember, you are a very important part of the team and your input is valuable.
7. Make sure the team's designated note-taker is writing down key points that are discussed, and that notes are accurate.
8. Review current levels of performance before writing any new goals.
9. Focus on what you want for your child (your interests), and not the specifics on how to get there (your position). The rest of the team may have some great ideas you haven't thought of.
10. Do your part to keep focus on your child's educational needs and how they can be met in the most appropriate and least restrictive way.
11. Sign wisely. You do not have to sign at the meeting. You can take everything home and consider it further.

After the Meeting:

12. Review IEP papers at home. Seek help if you don't understand them.
13. Talk with your child about the meeting in terms he or she will understand. Your child's understanding of his or her disability may help your child better accept IEP services, as well as lead to self-advocacy.
14. Make sure the IEP is being implemented as written, including the frequency and duration of services.
15. If you are not satisfied with your child's progress, you may request a new IEP meeting at any time. Make your request in writing.

Arthritis Support Group

Chronic Disease Workshop Series

Facilitated by: Seven Valleys Health Coalition

Where: ATI Community Room

When: Tuesdays, 1:00 - 3:30 pm, beginning September 8

For more information, contact Fran Pizzola at 753-7363.

Visit the "Trail for All" at the Lime Hollow Center

An accessible trail right here in Cortland County!

338 McLean Road, Cortland, NY 13045

607-662-4632 www.limehollow.org

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

The Access to Independence (ATI) Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) aims to help individuals with disabilities reach for the stars through vocational training and education. The program offers individualized work readiness training, job shadowing opportunities, and an opportunity to be matched with a Mentor, or another person who has successfully overcome their own personal barriers to secure community employment.

Jaclyn joined the PMP in September 2008 with the goal of overcoming her emotional barriers in order to work in an office setting. Jaclyn sought assistance with improving her resume, her interviewing skills and her computer skills. She also sought guidance on how to manage her stress and anxiety as it related to her employment search.

During Jaclyn's first couple of months in the PMP, she worked one-on-one with staff and regularly attended workshops and support groups. Jaclyn also worked with the Cortland County Disability Program Navigator to seek additional support. Through these networks, Jaclyn began to feel emotionally prepared to move ahead with her employment goals.

"I was excited to learn new skills and to begin my job search again," said Jaclyn during a recent interview. "I tried to get involved in as many activities as was possible." Jaclyn attended the Fall 2008 Employment Conference and discovered several opportunities in a variety of office settings at local businesses. Jaclyn attended job shadowing opportunities at Pall Trinity, Cortland County SPCA, and Price Chopper, among others.

In February 2009, Jaclyn enrolled in the OCM BOCES Center for New Careers Office Technology class The class provided Jaclyn with direct training for work in an office, including use of basic office machines, computer software, filing, organization and time-management.

The class also offered Jaclyn job shadowing experiences and a one-month internship. "I am completing my internship at the Public Defender's Office," Jaclyn proudly told us, "and I am grateful to all my networks for this opportunity." Jaclyn will complete the Office Technology class this August and plans to pursue a career as a legal secretary.

Keep up the great work Jaclyn!

Left: *Jaclyn used her peer network to reach for the stars. She plans to pursue a career as a legal secretary.*

ATI Peer Mentoring Program
Every Thursday from 3:00 - 4:00 pm
ATI Community Room
For more information, contact Aaron Baier by phone at: 607-753-7363, or by email at: abaier@aticortland.org.

Gearing Up For 2009 NDEAM

Access to Independence (ATI) is gearing up for a host of events this October to recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). ATI is collaborating with the Cortland Works Career Center (CWCC), J M Murray Center (JMMC), Employment Connection, Workforce Investment Board (WIB), and Vocational & Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) to recognize and promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

ATI will kick-off this year's NDEAM with an Extravaganza Night on October 1st. This event will celebrate the successes of individuals with disabilities as they continue to build their skills, and achieve successful community employment.

On October 13th, ATI will collaborate with the Cortland Chamber of Commerce to host a Business Before Hours event at the Agency. This event is an opportunity for local businesses and agencies to see the ATI Facility and to learn more about our services.

ATI will host its 2009 Annual Employment Conference, themed "Employ Your Abilities", on October 16th, 23rd & 30th. Each year, ATI offers the conference to help individuals with disabilities "reach for the stars" to gain community employment.

ATI will also host two trainings on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The first training on October 6th will aim to teach job seekers about "getting hired and moving ahead in a job when working with a disability". The second training on October 20th will aim to teach employers about the benefits of "tapping into the talent" of individuals with disabilities.

A Few Tips From Your Accessibility Experts

Do you have difficulty getting around in your home? Are you worried that as you grow older, you might experience even more difficulty? As the area's foremost disability resource, Access to Independence has expert staff available to help you increase your independence at home through modifications to your existing floor plan, or through the installation of various accessibility products.

Check out the following list of ways you can make your home more accessible, and at the same time increase your independence.

1. Wider Doorways: Open your door frames to 36 inches for full accessibility. Standard doorways are 30 or 32 inches wide.

2. Zero Thresholds: Create a seamless transition between rooms and prevent stumbles by removing doorway thresholds. Consider installation of a roll-in shower with a zero threshold.

3. Turnaround Clearance: Make sure that open areas have extra room for easy mobility. A wheelchair requires a space of at least 60 inches in diameter to turn around. Start by getting rid of unused clutter.

4. Cabinet Height: Use varying cabinetry heights to accommodate tall family members, children, or those in wheelchairs.

5. Faucet Placement: Position faucets closer to the sink to make them easier to access.

6. Light Switch Location: Consider the height and placement of light switches and electrical outlets.

Check out the following list of accessibility products with features that work for your lifestyle.

1. Lever Handles: Long lever handles on faucets and doors are easier to grip than round knobs. The levers can be turned with an elbow or arm when hands are full.

2. Grab Bars: Grab bars provide for additional safety in tubs and showers and near toilets.

3. Cabinet Hardware: D-ring or C-ring pulls are easy to grip.

4. Multiple Water Sources: A wall-mounted showerhead targets the body, while a showerhead on a slide bar can adjust to any height and can even be removed for handheld use. Having more than one water source in the shower makes all tasks easier for everyone.

5. Lighting: Remember to incorporate task lighting for workspaces (such as vanities and countertops) with general and ambient light to create a scheme that works.

6. Shower Bench: A bench provides convenient seating in the shower or bath tub, whether you are unable to stand for long periods of time or just need a spot for shaving.

7. Accessible Storage: Include a range of storage options that roll out, pull down, and that are easily accessible. Stored items should be at suitable heights for children and adults.

Access to Independence can help with all of your accessibility and remodeling needs. For more information, contact Rob Ferri by phone at: 607-753-7363, or by email at: rferri@aticortland.org.

Above: *Just one of more than two dozen ramps built through ATI's various architectural barrier programs. In addition to external modifications, ATI oversees the removal of barriers in the house, including bathrooms, bedrooms and other living areas.*

CORTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Cortland Housing Authority has 380 high quality apartments available in its senior/ disabled and family developments throughout Cortland County. A single person could earn up to $31,800, and a family of five up to $49,100 and still qualify to live in one of our apartments.

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Our large family apartments (**3, 4** and **5 bedrooms**) are located in the City of Cortland. We also have **two** and **three bedroom** family apartments scattered throughout the county in Homer, Truxton, McGraw, Cincinnatus and the City of Cortland.

There are short waiting lists for apartments in most of our developments.

Call 607-753-1771 today for an application.

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We construct permanent ramps and also install temporary ramps. All ramps comply with ADA / ANSI Codes, as well as all local building codes.

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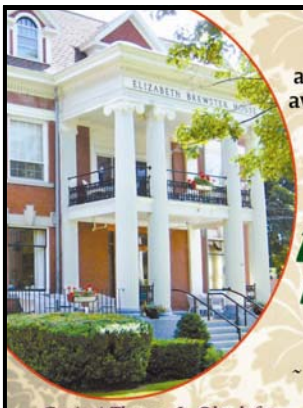
Brianna Goff
Intake Specialist
Email: briannag@jmmurray.com
4059 Route 281 Cortland, NY 13045
FAX 607-756-6380



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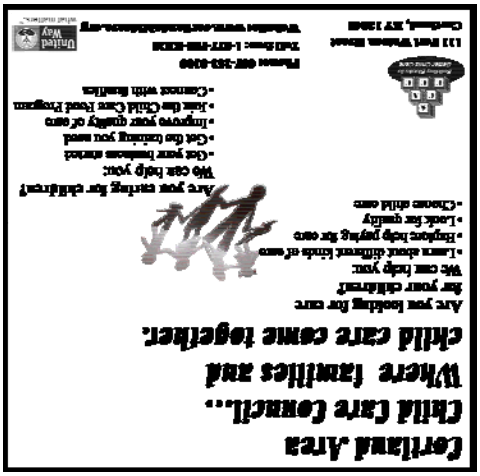

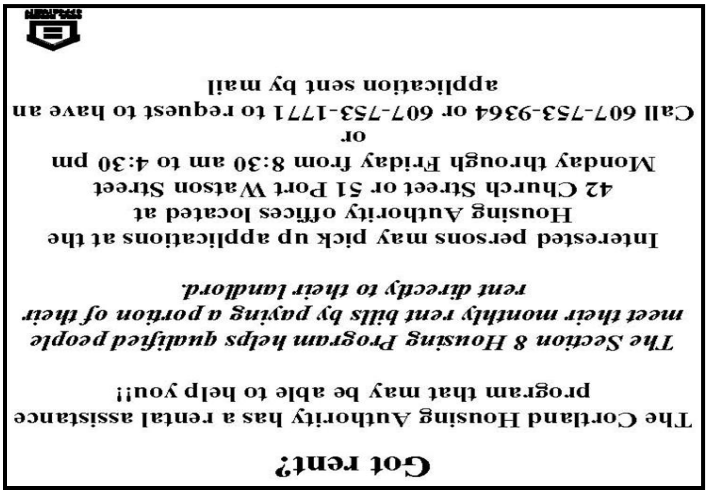

Access To Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

2009 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Celebration

July 17, 2009 - Suggett Park Rotary Pavilion

Please Support Our 2009 ADA Celebration Sponsors!

ADA Sponsor:

First Niagara Bank
Mary Robillard, AVP, Area Sales Mngr/Branch Mngr
Cortland Downtown Office
1 North Main Street
Cortland, NY 13045 607-758-2200
Lisa Morgan, Branch Mngr, Homer Office
Walter Allen, AVP, Branch Mngr, Cortlandville Office

Business Sponsor:

Cortland Self-Storage
Nancy Richards, Manager
P.O. Box 227
Homer, NY 13077 607-756-4307

Advocate Sponsors: **Pyramid Ramps, Inc.** & **The Radley Family**

Honorary Sponsors: ACE of CNY, Inc., Cortland Community Re-Entry Program, Frank & Mary's Diner, George Bailey Insurance Company, Monroe Wheelchair and Tompkins Trust Company

Friend Sponsor: AccountAbility, Bay Ridge Group, Madison/Cortland ARC, Petrella Brother's Auto Body, Wall Street on Court Street and John & Deborah Nadolski

Also Thanks To: Autocrafting, Cornell University DBTAC, Grand Rental, Schwann's, Price Chopper, Dr. Polly Cator, Mary Ewing and Brandie Gilbert.

First Niagara

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and Chippe
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Access To Independence
OF CORTLAND COUNTY, INC.

Proudly Presents:

2009 Annual Employment Conference

"Employ Your Abilities!"

When: October 16th, 23rd & 30th
9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Where: Access to Independence
26 North Main St.
Cortland, NY 13045

Network with local employers!

Meet your local employment service providers!

Learn how to overcome barriers to employment!

Discover new ways to stand out during the job search!

Save Your Spot Today! RSVP by October 9th!

Call: 607-753-7363

Morning refreshments and lunch will be provided.

Accommodations may be provided upon request.

October 2009 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Community Events

October 1 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	**NDEAM Extravaganza** [Celebrating Access to Employment] @ Access to Independence
October 2 9:00 am—2:00 pm	**Benefits Planning for Social Security Beneficiaries.** Presented by Jeremiah Fish, Community Work Incentives Coordinator. @ Cortland Works Career Center Call Maria at (607) 756-7585 [x3255] for an appointment.
October 6 9:00 am— 11:00 am	ADA Workshop: **Getting Hired and Moving Ahead in a Job When Working with a Disability** @ Access to Independence
October 7 9:00 am – 12:00N	**Close Encounters with THOSE People: A Different Perspective on Diversity & Disability** *Join in the activities designed to provide an opportunity to learn how to better meet the needs of today 's diverse population* @ Cortland Works Career Center
October 7 5:00 p.m.— 8:00 p.m.	**Employment Connection Open House** Information on employment and pre-employment services as well as tax incentives and other benefits for employers. @ Employment Connection
October 8 9:30 a.m. -2:30	**Tricks of the TRAID** *Join the training staff from CQCAPD [Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities] and the TRAID Center of UCP in Utica for an interactive experience to learn about assistive technology.* @ Cortland Works Career Center
October 13 7:30 a.m.— 9:30 a.m.	**Chamber of Commerce Business Before Hours Event** @Access to Independence
October 16 9:00 a.m.— 2:00 p.m.	Employment Conference Session #1: **Overcoming Barriers to Employment** @ Access to Independence
October 19 9:00 a.m.— 11:00 a.m.	**Supporting Individuals With Asperger 's Disorder in an Employment Setting** Presented by Dr. Caroline I. Magyar, Assoc. Professor and Director—Rochester Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders @ J.M. Murray Center Rt. 13
October 20 9:00 am— 11:00 am	ADA Workshop: **Tapping into Talent** @ Access to Independence
October 23 9:00 a.m.— 2:00 p.m.	Employment Conference Session #2: - **Staying Motivated and Utilizing Community Resources** @ Access to Independence
October 30 9:00 a.m.— 2:00 p.m.	Employment Conference Session #3: **Standing Out During the Job Search and Interview** @ Access to Independence

All events are free of charge, but workshops and presentations have limited seating. Please contact the sponsoring agency for reservations.

Agency Contact Information/Location of Events

Access to Independence
26 N. Main St.
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 753-7363
info@aticortland.org

Cortland Career Works Center
99 Main St.
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 756-7585
employed@cortland-co.org

Employment Connection
4059 Rt. 282
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 756-0246 Ext. 2800
karend@jmmurray.com
[*Oct. 19th event to be held at 823 Rt. 13 address]*