

Personal Emergency Preparedness Meetings

By Jeffrey Dougan

MOD has received federal funding through the state's Executive Office of Public Safety and Security for the past seven years to conduct community meetings throughout Massachusetts, bringing together people with disabilities, their local emergency planners, and first responders to discuss personal and community preparedness plans.

At these meetings, individuals learn about the critical importance of being personally prepared for an emergency. "Go-packs" filled with essential items that an individual may need during an emergency, such as a flashlight, a first aid kit, emergency blankets, ponchos, food, and water are distributed to attendees with disabilities. The go-packs also contain a personal preparedness booklet that each individual is encouraged to fill out to assist them in their preparation efforts. Emergency personnel receive "Tips for First Responders" to assist them in their interactions with people with disabilities.



Emergency Preparedness Go-Pack

These meetings also provide a unique opportunity for individuals with disabilities to discuss their plans, fears and needs with their local first responders. In turn, the first responders discuss their local strategies to address the needs of individuals requiring additional assistance in times of emergency.

Since 2007, MOD has conducted over 200 personal preparedness meetings throughout the state and has interacted with almost 7,000 people. MOD has handed out over 6,000 personal preparedness go-packs, 1100 "Tips for First Responders on How to Interact with People with Disabilities in Times of Emergency", and more than 7,000 personal preparedness planning guides. The success of the program has been demonstrated by the waiting list MOD keeps from local groups that are asking to hold these meetings and the overwhelmingly positive feedback provided by meeting participants.

If you are interested hosting or attending a meeting in your community, please contact Jeffrey Dougan, MOD's Assistant Director for Community Services, at 617-727-7440 or jeff.dougan@massmail.state.ma.us

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determine whether and how they can assist. Depending on the particulars of an issue and the potential recourse that is available, advocacy may be warranted. Additionally staff routinely provide technical assistance around reasonable accommodation issues in employment, housing, education, government programs, etc. including reviewing documentation and drafting requests.

The Client Assistance Program (CAP), which operates under a federal grant, is located within the Client Services unit. CAP's role is to provide information about vocational rehabilitation and independent living services and to provide assistance to applicants to and clients/consumers of these programs when services are not being provided according to regulation or policy. Individuals seeking information or assistance from CAP should contact the Client Services Unit directly.



Accessible Outdoor Recreation

By Rita DiNunzio

Summer is the time for people of all abilities to enjoy the outdoors. There are numerous programs and sites that offer a variety of accessible outdoor recreation activities throughout the Commonwealth.

Visitors to MA state parks are provided with equal access through the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Universal Access Program. The program provides adaptive equipment and accessible recreation programs and works to ensure accessibility in outdoor environments. Many state parks offer adaptive/inclusive programs for hiking, boating, cycling, birding, camping, and fishing as well as accessible interpretive programs. State Parks and Recreation has 20 free, lift-equipped outdoor swimming pools. Many Massachusetts beaches are accessible and offer beach wheelchairs that are able to travel over sand and or accessible beach mats.

Those who want to get out on the water can take advantage of adaptive sailing and boating programs that provide specialized boats and transfer equipment. The Steamship Authority's four traditional vessels to Woods Hole, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard are fully accessible. The Steamship Authority also offers discounted fares for passengers with disabilities and free travel for legally blind passengers.

There are plenty of opportunities for individuals with disabilities of all ages to engage in a wide variety of outdoor sports. Both children and adults can find adapted high-challenge sports and training. There are also free integrated sports programs for children. For an adapted version of our national pastime, the Association of Blind Citizens' Boston Renegades Beep Ball Team is always looking for new players and volunteers.

This article names just a few of the many inclusive outdoor programs and activities available in Massachusetts. If you are looking for programs in your area, The Massachusetts Office on Disability can point you to organizations that can provide a listing of specific programs.

A Big Thank You

By Michael Dumont

The Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) will lose one of its cornerstones this summer. Amy Ranji, or as we affectionately call her around these parts the "assistant director for the front desk" has been with MOD for the past twenty-nine years. She will retire this summer and hopefully pursue a second career of rest and relaxation.

During her career at MOD, Amy has been the first point of contact for our callers and visitors. Her unique ability to *listen* to the callers and navigate them to the right staff person has been crucial for the support our agency provides.

Amy for the past twenty-nine years has been a dedicated state employee and it is this dedication that has helped make her a cherished and valued part of MOD's history.

Best wishes Amy!



Amy Ranji (center) with MOD Staff members

Community Services Corner Community Access Monitor Program Trainings for 2015

By Jeffrey Dougan

MOD will be hosting two CAMP trainings in the coming months. CAM trainings teach people how to survey buildings for accessibility and how to advocate for voluntary compliance. The training also provides an overview of the many laws related to disability. Access in Massachusetts is mandated by complex and far-reaching state and federal laws. Enforcement depends upon the active involvement of the disability community. Through the CAM training and MOD's assistance, you will help bring about change. This training will benefit members of Commissions on Disability, ADA Coordinators, Municipal Officials, architects, building inspectors any citizens interested in advocating for change.

Upcoming CAM Trainings
August 18 and 19, 2015 –
Salem – Salem State Col-
lege, October 21 and 22,
2015 – Newton – City
Hall and War Memorial.

MOD hosted a CAM training in Barnstable (Hyannis) on June 23 and 24, 2015 and will host one more this summer. Please visit www.mass.gov/mod to see the most up-to-date information. If you are interested in attending, please email me at jeff.dougan@state.ma.us or call me at 617-727-7440.

Save the Date!

2015 Disability Summit

The ADA at 25

Presented by MOD

Friday September 18th
Boston Convention &
Exhibition Center

Details to follow in our
next issue!

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From the Director's Desk

By David D'Arcangelo



On behalf of the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) I would like to welcome you to our new quarterly newsletter. We hope to use this newsletter as a tool to keep the disability community up to date with some of the latest happenings in and around the Commonwealth as they relate to Persons with Disabilities.

Surely you are aware that 2015 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and MOD will be pleased to take part in the celebration on July 22nd on the Boston Common for ADA25. This landmark legislation was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush and remains a vitally important public policy accomplishment for both persons with disabilities and every American who values civil rights.

As one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation, the ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in the aspects of life that we all enjoy as Americans. The ADA is essentially a civil rights law, with its roots planted firmly in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These civil rights laws share the intent of prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or disability.

All persons with disabilities are protected under the ADA and anyone with a disability has certain civil rights that should not be infringed upon. It is important to recognize that you must "qualify" as being a person with a disability as defined by the ADA. The ADA definition states you are a person with a disability if you have; a *physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such impairment.* The ADA does not name specifically all of the impairments that are covered but rather focuses on functional limitations.

The elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities is a lofty goal and 25 years ago the ADA gave the disability community hope towards a more equitable society. MOD is grateful to play an important role in monitoring and advocating for people's rights under the ADA. We are striving for a future where persons with disabilities will have full equal access to participate in all aspects of life in a manner that encourages dignity and self-determination.

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July Calendar of Events 2015

4 Independence Day SATURDAY	11 Blind Citizens' Beep Ball Classic Tourney SATURDAY	19-25 Lead Poisoning Prevention Week SUN-SUN	22 Fragile X Awareness Day WEDNESDAY	22 ADA 25 Year Celebration Boston Common WEDNESDAY
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25 ADA 25 Year Celebration Worcester SATURDAY	26 25th Year Anniversary of the ADA SUNDAY	Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Awareness Month
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August

2-8 International Assistance Dog Week SUN-SUN	7 Purple Heart Day FRIDAY	14 Social Security Day FRIDAY	17 CAM Training Salem Day 1 MONDAY	18 CAM Training Salem Day 2 TUESDAY
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Focus On: Client Services

Consistent with MOD's mission, the Client Services Unit seeks to eliminate barriers through the provision of information and by providing technical assistance and advocacy on disability related denial of service and discrimination issues.

Client Services staff provide tailored responses to questions from the public. Individuals seeking information about benefits, services, and resources will receive thorough explanations of how various systems/programs work and how to locate those services. For individuals who report that they have encountered discrimination, faced a barrier to participating in a program, or for those requesting guidance on understanding a complex issue, staff will gather facts, evaluate the matter in the context of the applicable law/regulation, discuss potential recourse for resolving the issue, and

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