



ACOD NEWS Andover Commission On Disability

In Memoriam: Mike Warshawsky



It is with great sorrow that the Commission on Disability, and the Town of Andover, marks the passing of one of our founders and driving force behind the disability movement in Andover. Mike Warshawsky began the Andover Commission on Disability

in 1995 with the idea, and the passion, that Andover should be a model community for those with disabilities and for all whom live and work in our community. His tireless work on the local and state level has left a lasting impact on the quality of life for all of our citizens. His tireless efforts have affected us all, and his passion and drive for a better life for himself and all he loved will be sorely missed. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Mike's family, friends and many colleagues throughout the state who looked to Mike as a role model in the fight for equal rights for person with disabilities. He will be greatly missed.

Physical Access for the Disabled in Andover



The Commission sponsored and attended the Community Access Monitor (CAM) training this spring, which provided training on the federal Disability Laws and are now in a better position to help increase access for the disabled in the town. The Commission on Disability has completed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Review of Municipal buildings including schools and is now focusing on the private sector. Starting with the downtown area, we have sent out letters of our intent to the Main St. merchants. We have completed an "ACCESS" Survey and noted access deficiencies in these site reviews. We will provide recommendations for ADA improvements to the merchants. We have recently developed a CAM Tool kit, which provides us with some measuring devices to help with this process. We also need your help. If there are any troublesome areas as far as ACCESS for your family in any part of town, please contact us. Providing proper access for everyone is the joint responsibility of the landowner and the tenant merchant. Those properties and businesses found to be in compliance with disability standards will be awarded a special disability access decal for their entrances.

The Andover Commission on Disability meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the town library. Please check our Holiday schedule in the newspaper. We invite all people interested in the work of the commission to attend our open meetings and hear what we are doing in Andover.

Exploring Assistive Technology

Being able to do a job, stay on a job or participate in academic activities for many individuals with disabilities means having the tools and technology they need to perform certain tasks. Assistive technology (AT) helps people communicate and control their environments to greatly increase independence and assists in making going back to work or school a possibility after illness or disability.

People who are unable to use a standard keyboard or mouse due to physical, visual or cognitive limitations may be able to use technologies such as voice recognition, adaptive keyboards, specialized mice or assistive software to operate their computer. Wheelchair users may gain further independence through advanced wheelchair technologies. Augmentative/alternative communication is a set of strategies and methods to assist people who are unable to meet their communication needs through speech or writing. This may be as simple as

text messaging cell phone, letter boards or high technology devices that produce speech. These devices can all be customized to meet an individual's particular need. Additional AT may include other electronic aids to daily living and use of ergonomics.

There are many resources to get more information or an assistive technology evaluation. Easter Seals phone number is (508) 757-2756 and their website is www.easterseals.com. Spaulding Rehab is another excellent resource, phone at (617) 573-2928, website is www.spauldingrehab.org/atec. Abledata is an online site for assistive technology information at <http://www.abledata.com/>. The Andover Commission on Disability (ACOD) encourages the disability community to utilize all the tools, resources and services available. Assistive technology fairs are an annual event in the Lowell area. ACOD will post on our website when the next AT fair is held.

The ACOD has improved its website, which now includes several new links

These new links include access to other Commission on Disabilities in the State and several ADA resources. Also the "Frequently Asked Questions" section has been increased to provide links to state agencies for the disabled. The site also includes links to important names and phone numbers as well as past issues of this newsletter.

This website can be reached at:

<http://andoverma.gov/boards/disability>



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