

# ACOD Newsletter

## Kids on the Block Disability Awareness Program

## Commission on Disability Sponsors a Senior Center Community Garden



### The Kids on the Block



The Andover Commission on Disability is excited to announce a new chapter of Kids on the Block. This nationally acclaimed educational program using puppets has grown over the years and offers programs on various disabilities. The Kids on the Block, Inc. originated in 1977 in direct response to US Public Law 94 -142 which required that children with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment. For many children, this meant being included in a classroom with their non-disabled peers.

Mark Riley was the first puppet character and represented a child with cerebral palsy. Through Mark, children learned about CP and even more about understanding and accepting the student with CP. The Kids on the Block performances vividly and effectively model relationships between people, both with and without disabilities, by using frank and often humorous communication of facts and feelings between the puppet characters and the audience.

This new Andover chapter of Kids on the Block will specifically focus on Autism. We hope to be able to perform in the Spring of 2010 at Andover elementary schools.



Gardening is widely known as a healthful activity for the body, mind and spirit. With the encouragement of the Andover Community Garden Steering Committee, the Commission on Disability is the initial sponsor of an organic vegetable garden at the Senior Center. Often called "horticultural therapy", planning, planting, tending, and harvesting a garden is a healthful and creative activity. The garden has been designed to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in order to provide a safe and comfortable gardening experiences for everyone. This means that the planting beds are 31 inches high so that they can be tended by people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or other assistive devices. In general, everyone enjoys gardening without bending!

The crew of the Plant and Facilities Department leveled the assigned site and surfaced it with crushed stone which makes the garden wheelchair accessible. The beautiful and accessible planting beds were very professionally constructed by a hard-working crew of the Department of Youth Services. The garden consists of two raised 4'x10' planting beds with a height of 31 inches which can be worked by standing or sitting volunteer gardeners. Most importantly, there is accessible passage through the garden pathways for people using wheelchairs or walkers. There is also a 24'x2' bed for trellises to hold climbing vegetables such as string beans, cucumbers, squash, zucchini, peas, etc. Under the guidance of Pam Thornton, a credentialed Master Gardener with many years' experience, it has been planted for a late summer harvest and for perennial vegetables. The produce derived from the garden will go directly to the Senior Center for their daily luncheons and grill nights on the terrace. We are proud of this partnership with DPW, DYS, and volunteers and have committed to a grant in support of the garden over the next two years.

# Andover Commission on Disability

## MAIN STREET ACCESS PROJECT—ACCESS STUDY



The Commission has kept a watch on the progress of the Main Street Project. Last October, we invited representatives of those companies/committees involved to walk Main Street (Wheeler Street to Chestnut Street) with a member of the Massachusetts Office on Disability to make sure the construction of the new sidewalks complied with ADA. Again in June 2009, members of the Mass. Office on Disability walked Main Street (Park Street to Pearson Street) with the Planning Dept and Commission

on Disability. The Commission will have the Mass Office on Disability back again for a final review of the entire project. Also, the Mass. Commission for the Blind will be reviewing Elm Square to make sure it is safe for crossing by a visually impaired person. It is important that all citizens are able to navigate the renovated Main Street of our Town.

### Curb Cuts outside Main Street Project:

For a number of years, the Commission has submitted to the Department of Public Works a list identifying curb cut priorities based on the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). These curb cuts are not part of the Main Street Project. If you see a curb cut that needs work, please email the chairperson.

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## PROJECT LIFESAVER



Project Lifesaver relies on proven radio technology and a specially trained search and rescue team. Clients that are enrolled in the Project Lifesaver program wear a personalized wristband that emits a tracking signal. When caregivers notify 911 that the person is missing, a search and rescue team responds to the wanderer's area and starts searching with the mobile locator tracking system. Search times have been reduced from hours and days to minutes. Nationwide in over 1000 searches, there have been no reported serious injuries or deaths. Recovery times average less than 30 minutes.

## ENHANCED 9-1-1



"Enhanced 9-1-1" automatically identifies for 9-1-1 call-takers the telephone number and address of callers. The system provides emergency responders with the location of the emergency without the person calling for help having to provide it. This is often useful in times of fires, break-ins, kidnapping and other events where communicating your location is difficult or impossible. Andover's system also allows people to individually register with the Police Department by filling out a 911 "Disability Indicator Form" available at the 911 Dispatch office or on our Web.