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THE OPEN DOOR

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Community Living Edition

June is the Anniversary of the Olmstead Decision

June 22nd marks the 13th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision made in *LC and EW v Olmstead*. In 1999, two women with psychiatric disabilities living in a Georgia state institution brought suit against the state for not providing them services in the community. The case was brought by the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, and focused on the segregation faced by people who are forced to receive services in institutional settings. It was this decision that began paving the way for the enforcement of the ADA and community living as an equal choice. For people with disabilities this signaled a new hope, a mechanism to enforce their civil rights.

Similar to what *Brown v Board of Education* did, *Olmstead* reinforced that separate but equal is not truly equal and aimed to increase inclusion within the community. Over the next 8 years, hope would dwindle as the administration of George W. Bush allowed *Olmstead* enforcement at the federal level to fall by wayside. This allowed states a free pass to ignore the Supreme Court's mandate to implement *Olmstead* Plans. Since 2009, the Obama Administration has put a greater emphasis on enforcement by the Department of Justice and this has resulted in a number of new applications of the decision. One of such applications coming in the form of an injunction against the state of Florida stating that reducing community services is a violation because it may result in segregation. (Continued on page 6)

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What are Earned Income Disregards?

If you have subsidized housing such as Section 8 or Public Housing you may be eligible to receive Earned Income Disregards. Earned Income Disregards promote self-sufficiency by allowing tenants to go to work or increase their work earnings without having their rent increased right away. With subsidized housing, a tenant's rent is calculated using the total monthly income they receive. In

short, the more income a tenant has, the higher their rent will be. With Earned Income Disregards, a tenant's earnings from the month of beginning employment or their increased earnings are 100% disregarded for 12 months in calculating rent. The tenant then also gets 50% of their earnings disregarded for a second 12 month period. The purpose of Earned Income Disregards is to give people the moti-

vation and support needed to try employment or return to employment so they have the opportunity of economic self-sufficiency. The problem, however, is that tenants, landlords and even public housing authorities are not always aware of Earned Income Disregards. If you think you should be eligible or are having issues in receiving Earned Income Disregards, please contact Access to Independence today. ☎

The Open Door is published four times a year, . Submissions of articles are always welcome. They are subject to editing for clarity. Opinions expressed are the authors and do not represent Access to Independence or its Funders. *The Open Door* is available in other formats by request. It can also be viewed on our website at www.accesstoind.org If you are interested in advertising please contact ATI at the information provided above.

Your independent living center serving Columbia, Dane, Dodge and Green Counties.

Dirty Wheelchair?

Have you put off some much needed Maintenance? Come out to the first-ever Wheelchair Wash at Access to Independence on September 15th, 2012. This event is open to the community and is free of charge to people with disabilities who use wheelchairs and power chairs. This event will include:

- Multiple wash bays for manual wheelchairs. We'll provide you a seat while your chair gets cleaned
- Wash bays for power chairs that require a little extra attention – and you don't have to leave your chair!
- Classes/Workshops throughout the day on wheelchair repair and maintenance
- Food and beverages will be provided
- * We will not be cleaning seat cushions

This will be a great opportunity for people in the ATI region to get a service that is usually not readily available. To make this opportunity a reality, it will take a number of volunteers to help with washing chairs, coordinating schedules and other tasks. If you would like to sign up to volunteer, call Jason Beloungy at 608-242-8484 or toll free 800-362-9877. There will be specific time slots for each person seeking a chair wash. Participants MUST RSVP to get a coveted spot. To RSVP your spot on the list, please contact Janie at the numbers listed above or janieo@accesstoind.org.



Other Services Offered By ATI

Assisting, empowering, supporting, and advocating to live independently in the community is the reason Independent Living Centers exist. Many of our readers are familiar with the four core service we provide to people with disabilities, but the road to independence often requires much more than the big four. If it's services like these you seek to be independent, contact us today!



WisLoan and TeleWork Loan Programs

Funding Independence!

WisLoan and TeleWork are alternative loan programs that assist Wisconsin residents with disabilities to pay for assistive technology, or to purchase the necessary equipment and technology to enable people to work from home. These loan programs are different than traditional bank loans because a bank doesn't make the final decision. The WisLoan and Telework Board does. That allows flexibility for people who may have an item they need to maintain their independence, but have trouble coming up with the money all at once, or finding other ways to pay for what they need. Simply call Access to Independence for information.

WisLoan

What Can I Buy with a WisLoan? You can purchase technology such as wheelchairs, computers, ramps, vehicle modifications, or kitchen or bathroom remodeling projects or construction.

TeleWork

What Can I Buy with a TeleWork Loan? You can purchase items such as computers and software, scanners or fax machines, tools, office furniture, or modifications for an accessible office.

General Questions:

- How much can I borrow?** Loan amounts range from \$500 to \$50,000. The loan would be for the exact amount of the item.
- Can I apply if I have no job?** YES, Social Security Disability or Retirement benefits and other sources of income are considered.
- Can I apply if my credit is poor?** YES, the reason for the poor credit is considered, as is one's ability to repay the loan.
- How do I apply?** Contact ATI to complete the loan application materials in person. Application can be done at the ATI office or at a location of your preference.

PLEASE DONATE TODAY!

Donations can also be made online. Visit www.accesstoind.org and click the "Donate" tab.

ONE MILLION DOLLARS
ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE
DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

1,000,000 **1,000,000**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE /ZIP _____

EMAIL _____

DONATION _____

1,000,000 **1,000,000**

ONE MILLION DOLLARS

Please cut out and mail to ATI at the address listed on the back with your donation.

Olmstead Decision

(continued from page 1)
Olmstead enforcement, traditionally viewed in the context of nursing home diversion and transition, extends well beyond the scope of residential settings, something many people fail to recognize. One aspect often overlooked in the discussion of Olmstead is the fact that the case was brought by individuals with psychiatric disabilities and applies not just to nursing homes, but Intermediary Care Facilities and Psychiatric Hospitals as well. In actuality, because the Olmstead Decision relies on the Americans with Disabilities Act as the primary disability rights law, it applies to any and all aspects of inclusion in the community from education, to employment services, to community based mental health services.

One of the latest advancements as a result of Olmstead came from the Oregon Association of People with Developmental Disabilities, who successfully won a lawsuit stating that rehabilitative workshops were in violation of Olm-

stead by not providing integrated employment opportunities. This decision is extremely important because it opens up the door to a broader range of inclusion than before. While employment in and of itself falls under Title I of the ADA, it is exempt from Olmstead enforcement. However, "employment services" provided by a rehabilitative workshop are required to provide services in the most inclusive setting.

Although the Supreme Court mandated that states develop and implement Olmstead Plans, to date, 22 states do not have an Olmstead Plan. Of those 22 states, only 17 claim to have an alternative plan. That said, a plan does not always equate to action, and the past lack of enforcement has left many states in a stalemate resulting in a lack of action. An additional significant discrepancy exists between the High

Court's decision and Title XIX of the Social Security Act, which authorizes the Medicaid program. In the Medicaid program, funding for care facilities is mandatory, while community-based programs and services are only an option for meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

The Olmstead decision still serves as a powerful tool in enforcing the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. ♻️



Thank You to Our Donors!

Access to Independence greatly appreciates the generosity of all those who have made a financial contribution – big or small – to our organization. Through the generosity of our donors, ATI is able to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to access demonstrations and free loans of assistive technology equipment, skills training in peoples' homes and classes at our office in Madison, among the wide array of services we provide. We'd like to begin recognizing donors each quarter, thank each of you for your generosity! ♻️

2012 Donors

Chris Hendrickson
Barbara Thoni
George Potaracke
Robert & Nancy Carl
Eugene Vondra
Marion Farrkas
Susan Zitnak



ATI is Training Peer Mentors

As promised, Access to Independence has begun holding Peer Mentor trainings as a part of our Peer Support program. The trainings are based on the curriculum

developed by staff, interns and volunteers and is provided to each potential mentor. With the completion of two training sessions, ATI is slowly building up a group of trained and ready mentors who can assist people with disabilities who have active goals with ATI, and would like a mentor to assist them in completing their goals. Some of the topics covered in the sessions include: Independent living history and philosophy, communication, boundaries,

advocacy and building trust. If you are a person with a disability who is currently living independently, are integrated into your community, are eager to listen, and have a desire to assist others in reaching their goals, please contact ATI today and learn more or get signed up for upcoming trainings. The next training will take place in mid July or early August, so if interested, please contact Jason Beloungy, Assistant Director of ATI at 1-800-362-9877, ext. 229. Jason can also be reached by e-mail at jasonb@accesstoind.org. ♻️



Help ATI Get a Little Greener

Access to Independence is glad that you have taken the time to enjoy our newsletter, The Open Door. If you are reading this in our paper format, we'd like to take a moment to ask you to help us reduce waste and costs by signing up to receive our newsletter by e-mail. All of the same great articles will come directly to you, but instead of your mailbox, they

will come directly to your inbox. If you would like to get The Open Door in an electronic format, please contact ATI today! If you e-mail us at info@accesstoind.org, please write "Newsletter" in the subject line. Finally, you can also access our newsletter on our website, www.accesstoind.org. ♻️

UPcoming Events

For more information about these and other events, please call Access to Independence, or visit us on our website at www.accesstoind.org.

Neuropathy Support Group
Starting in July on every 2nd Tuesday of each month from 6-7pm, Access to Independence will be hosting a Neuropathy Support Group by the Neuropathy Association. If you have questions you may contact the local support group leader, David Woolf at:
Phone: 608-770-8574
Email: dwoolf@gmail.com.

Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialists Ignite Recovery!
If you are interested in becoming a Certified Peer Specialist and working with peers on their recovery contact Alice F. Pauser at 608-242-8484 ext. 224. Visit www.wicps.org for more information.

Wheelchair Wash
Come out to the first-ever Wheelchair Wash at Access to Independence on September 15th, 2012. Please RSVP by calling Janie or Claire at 608-242-8484 or 800-362-9877. See page 2 for more details.

FOOD AND NUTRITION CLASSES
In cooperation with the UW Extension, ATI will be offering food and nutrition classes this year. Our next class will be Tuesday, September 18, from 1:30 to 3:30. (There will be a small charge to take the class, to cover the cost of food.) For more information, or to RSVP, please call Tracy at 1-800-362-9877 ext. 227.

If you have upcoming events you would like listed in our newsletter or on our website, please contact us.

When It Comes To Neuropathy; Silence Is NOT Golden!



On the 2nd Tuesday of each month Access to Independence will be hosting a Neuropathy Support Group by the Neuropathy Association. The first meeting will be on July 10th, from 6:00pm-7:00pm.

If you have questions you may contact the local support group leader, David Woolf at:
Phone: 608-770-8574
Email: dwoolf@gmail.com.

Help make community living a reality for others. Share your story!

Every June, we take time to reflect on what the Olmstead Decision means, and reflect on opportunities that all Americans should have to live as they choose, in the setting they choose. Access to Independence not only takes time to reflect, but puts that reflection into action as we work on an individual level to assist people with disabilities to live as they choose, where they choose. ATI also works on a systems level to advocate to legislators and policy makers that all

people should have these rights. What we can't do is tell the stories of those who live the way they choose, and where they choose as a result of self advocacy and assistance from places like Access to Independence. We also cannot tell the stories of those who still don't live how they choose and where they choose. If you would like to share your story with us, so we can share it with those who need to know the importance of the right to community living, you can do so in three ways:

Call us to set up a time to chat by phone or write us a letter. Our contact information is in this newsletter. You can also send us your story through our website at www.accesstoind.org. Just click on the "About You" tab, and fill out the boxes in the Share My Story section of that page. Each story puts the human face on what is too often characterized in numbers or dollars – the right to community living. 

Reasons to Join:

If your life has been changed by peripheral neuropathy, you are not alone! We want people impacted by neuropathy to know that there are others sharing this challenge with them. If you or someone you care about has neuropathy, support groups can be a key component of an overall treatment plan. By bringing together members of the neuropathy community, these groups provide a critical resource for learning to live with neuropathy. The healing power of support groups comes when participants share with one another their strengths, challenges, and experiences. Joining a support group has proven to be an effective and empowering coping strategy. The Neuropathy Association has approximately 120 support groups across the U.S. and abroad that meet on an ongoing basis. Support groups serve as a resource and an opportunity to raise awareness of neuropathy and the need for improved medical care and research.

SAVE THE 2012 DATES!

SUPPORT GROUP for peripheral neuropathy
July 10th, August 14th, Sept 11th, October 9th,
November 13th and December 11th.

Community Living Initiative

This month we are celebrating the three year anniversary of the Community Living Initiative (CLI). It was created in June 2009 by the Department of Health and Human Services to promote Federal partnerships that advance the directive of the Olmstead decision. The Olmstead (1999) decision declared that the institutional isolation of the people with disabilities is a form of unlawful discrimination under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Initiative develops and implements innovative



strategies that increase opportunities for Americans with disabilities and older adults to enjoy meaningful community living.

A step toward promoting new partnerships (established by Secretary of Health and Hu-

man Services Kathleen Sebelius) is the implementation of the Coordinating Council which is led by the

Office on Disability, the Assistant to the Secretary on Aging (or AOA office). Many other agencies have been included across the Health and Human Services Department. These strategies have long been supported by Access to Independence as a fundamental aspect of what ATI strives to achieve with members of the community. Our goals coincide with the Initiative which is to promote independence for people who have disabilities so that they can enjoy meaningful lives in the community. 

The goal and objectives of the CLI are listed as:

- Long-Term Services are person driven and culturally competent
- Long-Term support services are inclusive
- Long-Term support services are sustainable and efficient
- Long-Term support services are transparent and coordinated.

ActionNet Update

Dodge County ActionNet held their integrated employment World Café on May 9th. This event brought together members of the communities that make up Dodge County. About 50 people from all over the area attended to discuss what makes a person disabled, what barriers exist, and what benefits there are to employing people with disabilities. The group identified that sometimes societal attitudes not the disability are the things that truly make people disabled. This important realization

will undoubtedly begin leading the change within those communities to create a more inclusive environment. The group identified a number of barriers and benefits that exist and will be publishing these results in a report.

If you would like more information on how you can increase inclusion in your community or want to get involved in making change contact Access to Independence. 

ATI Brat Sale!

Come enjoy a brat and good company at Access to Independence's Brat Sale on Friday, July 13 from 11 to 6! Proceeds from the sale will help fund our mission of supporting independent living among people with disabilities in the community. The fundraiser will be held at the Access to Independence Office, 3810 Milwaukee St. in Madison. Grilling and serving will be done by our staff. We hope to see our consumers and friends show up to support a good cause and, of course, to enjoy a good brat! For further updates and information, go to our website www.accesstoind.org or call us. 

