

Connections

NEWSLETTER OF THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY

January - March 2011

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the new edition of DRCFC's quarterly newsletter, Connections. Our goals with this newsletter are: 1. to make "connections" between individuals with disabilities and opportunities, and 2. to serve as a vehicle for people with disabilities to share their needs. We are going online with Connections, given cost considerations, and mailing hard copies to the persons we know don't have email.

BREAKING NEWS

1. Governor Malloy appointed Roderick Bremby from Kansas to Commissioner of the Department of Social Services.
2. Budget News
 - State – the Governor's budget asks for a 15% cut (\$19,000) in each Center's budget. The final budget will be decided in May/June after various legislative committees hold hearings.
 - Federal – my colleague at Independence Unlimited, Candace Low, has written a thorough and brief analysis of the Obama budget which calls for the indirect/state agency funding of Centers; her analysis can be found at the end of this newsletter.
3. Stan Kosloski, long-time CT advocate for people with disabilities, is relocating to California. More information to follow.
4. An accessible Taxi Hearing was held on Feb. 23 and 24. The hearing was on applications for additional accessible taxis. Center staff and disability collaborative volunteers spoke at the Dept. of Transportation.

VISIT DRCFC ONLINE!

Visit DRCFC online at: www.drcfc.org to access our Message Board, online newsletter, the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Monitor, the CT Disability Advocacy Collaborative *Calendar of Events*, and more!

DRCFC is on Facebook! Please visit: Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County (DRCFC) at www.facebook.com

CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

Center staff were busy during the first quarter (October through December 2010) of the 2010-11 fiscal year:

- 441 Information & Referral calls.
- Staff attended various workshops and trainings, such as a training on health-care reform, and attended informational meetings with the Women's and Family Agency, and WeCAHR in Danbury.
- Staff has networked with the statewide Disability Advocacy Collaborative, the SW CT Agency on Aging, the CT Community Providers Association, the CT Association for Centers for Independent Living (CACIL), and the Coalition for Abuse Prevention for the Elderly (CAPE).
- Eight consumers were referred to the Pre-Apprenticeship program.
- A **LOW VISION OPEN HOUSE** has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 5, 2011, from 11am until 1pm, at DRCFC, 80 Ferry Blvd, suite 210, Stratford, CT 06615. Please contact Fran Sinish at fsinish@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 111 for more information or to register. Seating is limited.

GREATER BRIDGEPORT DISABILITY ADVOCATES

The Greater Bridgeport Disability Advocacy Collaborative is developing a strategic plan for the implementation of a volunteer handicapped parking program.

The Advocacy Group meets monthly from 12pm until 2pm, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport. For more information on participating in the Greater Bridgeport Disability Advocacy Collaborative, please contact Larry Robinson at lrobinson@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 115.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES: March 17, April 21, May 19

2011 Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Contribution: \$_____ (optional)

PLEASE RETURN TO: DRCFC, 80 Ferry Blvd, Suite 210, Stratford, CT
06615

NEAT: NEW ENGLAND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

**** ADLs, wheelchairs, scooters, shower benches, walkers, canes,
and much more! ****

If your agency (senior center, support group, service club, etc.) would like a hands-on demonstration and presentation of available technologies, please contact Fran Sinish at fsinish@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 111.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- *Outreaches* are being planned in the Norwalk area. Please contact Yohanna Williams at ywilliams@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 110 if you are in the Norwalk area and would like more information about the Center.
- A *Low Vision Open House* is scheduled for April 5, 2011, 11am-1pm, at DRCFC. Please contact Fran Sinish at fsinish@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 111 for more information or to register. Seating is limited!
- DRCFC will be working with The WorkPlace, Inc. on a Pre-Apprentice program as well as a LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) employment planning committee.

DONATIONS

Making donations to the Center has never been easier!

- **Mail** donations to: DRCFC, 80 Ferry Blvd, suite 210, Stratford, CT 06615
- **Online:** Visit our *Donations* page to make your secure online donation via PayPal. <http://www.drcfc.org/donations.htm>

TICKET TO WORK PROGRAM AT DRCFC

DRCFC is now an Employment Network (EN) for Ticket-to-Work, an employment program for people with disabilities who are interested in going back to work. The Ticket to Work program is part of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 – legislation designed to remove many of the barriers that previously influenced people’s decisions about going to work because of the concerns over losing health care coverage.

The goal of the Ticket Program is to increase opportunities and choices for Social Security disability beneficiaries to obtain employment, vocational rehabilitation (VR), and other support services from public and private providers, employers, and other organizations.

EMPLOYERS: Are some of your most valued employees going to retire soon? Do you worry about finding the right employees in the future? There is a pool of people who want to work...you can give them the opportunity! The Disability Resource Center Employment Network can help you find the *right person* and *support your decision*. Please contact Sean Harris at sharris@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 113.

TICKET HOLDERS: For more information, or to assign your ticket to the DRC Employment Network, please contact Sean Harris at sharris@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 113.

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Looking for volunteers to assist with: phones, mailings, updating information library, and general office work. **Days & hours flexible!!!** If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Nettie Jenkins, Volunteer Coordinator, at njenkins@drcfc.org or 203.378.6977 ext. 114.

CONTACT DRCFC

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80 Ferry Blvd, suite 210

Stratford, CT 06615

THE IMPACT OF PRESIDENT OBAMA'S BUDGET ON CENTERS for INDEPENDENT LIVING

The 2012 budget proposal has significant impact on the funding for the Centers for Independent Living. The President proposes to **eliminate the current funding mechanisms** for Part B and Part C Centers, and replace them with the new Grants for Independent Living Program. The proposal claims that the consolidated program would provide formula grants **to the states** to support the provision of independent living services through CILs and hold the states accountable. This could have a **negative impact for Connecticut Centers**. Direct funding is currently required under the Rehabilitation Act. Part B and C dollars are considered core funding that supports the CILs and provides infrastructure for other programs such as Money Follows the Person.

- CT CILs currently receive Part C funding direct from the Federal government. Part B funding is funneled through the state. Since CILs are mandated to be consumer controlled, the direct funding allows for consumer control in designating the expenditure of funds. If all monies are funneled through the state, the CILs will no longer be in the position to make decisions on how the money is to be spent.
- CT CILs are also mandated to be community-based. The services beyond the mandated core services are to be consumer and community responsive. Direct funding for the Part C monies provides a mechanism for this to happen. If all funding is funneled through the state, the CILs could lose their ability to be community responsive because the state may impose directives on how the money can be spent and require all CILs to follow a state initiative rather than respond to the needs of their individual communities.
- Direct funding of Part C dollars ensures that the CILs can remain operating while waiting for the state contracts to be implemented or payment made. Funneling all monies through the state could put some CT CILs in danger of temporarily closing while waiting for contracts and/or funding.
- The consolidation of Part B and C funds may result in decreased funding for the CILs. The state will be entitled to a portion of the dollars for administration. There is no requirement that a specific portion of the funding go to the Centers.

- Formula grant funding may result in decreased statewide funding for the Centers.
- Funding the CILs through the state has proven in the past to be inefficient and lacking in consumer control.
- CILs have a significant role in the rebalancing from institutions to home and community based services. Funding cuts or delays will negatively impact the capacity of the CILs to fulfill their role.

*- by Candace Low
Independence Unlimited, Inc.*