

On Target

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Movie theater accessible for people with visual and hearing disabilities

Moviegoers with visual and hearing impairments can enjoy the latest flicks at Bones Theatre in Columbia City, which is now equipped with MoPix® technology that provides both movie captions and audio descriptive services.

The MoPix system was funded by the Lakota Chapter of the American Council of the Blind of Indiana, and Bones is the first Indiana movie theater to offer the service. The Lakota Chapter raised about \$15,000 to purchase MoPix, available to the estimated 2,600 people with hearing or visual impairments in Whitley County.

"The [MoPix] system creates an inclusive experience," said Sue L'esperance of the Lakota Chapter. "People with hearing and visual impairments enjoy the same film in the same theater as visitors without disabilities."

MoPix provides unique, movie-dictation headsets for customers with visual impairments. Headset users can still hear the normal movie sounds and dialogue taking place on the screen, but also enjoy a detailed description of the film's visual elements, including set design and scenery.

Patrons with hearing impairments are given a reflector that's positioned on the seat in a way that still allows them to see the screen. An LED display board on the back wall of the room provides movie captions, which are displayed backward on the board so that they show up correctly in the reflectors.

The Lakota Chapter applied for various grants and conducted several fundraisers to make MoPix possible. When they came up short just six months before the deadline to reach their goal in March, the Tri Lakes Lions Club offered help. They hosted a fish and tenderloin fry to support the Lakota Chapter's efforts, at which visitors were presented with information about the MoPix system and Whitley County's growing need for such a service. The event garnered an extra \$2,250, making MoPix possible after a year of hard work.

Not only did the Lakota Chapter meet its donation goal at the fish and tenderloin fry held in early March, members turned it into a Disability Awareness Month activity. The March 2007 Disability Awareness theme, "Make Room for Everyone," was incorporated into the fundraising event. Themed posters were displayed at the site, and visitors were given the Power of Words brochure, Braille alphabet cards, blind awareness coloring books and other materials. The Churubusco Lions Club, Espich Printing, League for the Blind and Disabled, Indiana Deaf Association and Northeast Indiana Advocacy Council also helped with the event.

According to L'esperance, a Fort Wayne theater recently approved the installation of MoPix. The system can only be found in a few other locations, including theaters in Chicago, Toledo,

Ohio; and Flint, Mich. The system was designed by Boston public television station WGBH, historically a pioneer of captioning and video description services.

Road to Freedom ADA bus tour coming to Indianapolis

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is on wheels with the Road to Freedom bus tour, launched in November 2006 by ADA Watch and the National Coalition for Disability Rights. The year-long awareness campaign will roll into Indianapolis Oct. 23 and 24. The bus tour will engage Hoosiers in the story of the ADA — reinforcing its purpose and mobilizing support. Travelers share the tale of struggle that came to be the disability rights movement and seek to uphold the promise of the ADA — “freedom, inclusion and opportunity for children and adults with physical, mental, cognitive and developmental disabilities.”

Road to Freedom was inspired by Justin and Yoshiko Dart’s historic, cross-country journey to rally support for passage of the ADA, which was signed into law July 26, 1990. Along the way, the bus is stopping at more than 80 locations, including state capitals and community events. The tour includes news conferences, radio shows and TV interviews to highlight obstacles and victories of Americans with disabilities, and visits to schools and colleges to design curriculum in partnership with the National Youth Leadership Network. Also featured is a photography exhibit by Tom Olin that depicts the historical struggle for disability rights, originally displayed at the Smithsonian Institute.

Specific locations and times for the stops in Indianapolis have yet to be determined. Please visit www.roadtofreedom.org for details and more information about the tour.

Renters face rising costs

A national report reveals that the 4 million people with disabilities who rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are unable to afford rented housing in every city, town and rural area of the country. The report, “Priced Out in 2006: Housing Crisis for People with Disabilities,” was released by the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Housing Task Force and the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC). It compares monthly SSI income to market rents for modestly priced one-bedroom and studio/efficiency rental units (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Fair Market Rent).

The new Priced Out report shows the difficulties encountered by SSI recipients in today’s rental market. For the first time, national average rents for both one-bedroom and efficiency units were more than the entire monthly income of an individual supported solely by SSI payments. The average annual income of a single individual receiving SSI was \$7,584 in 2006 (\$632 monthly), which is equal to a mere 18.2 percent of the national median income for a one-person household and almost 25 percent below the federal poverty level.

Meanwhile, the national average rent for a modest one-bedroom unit increased to \$715, which is equal to 113.1 percent of SSI payments. This is a 55 percent increase from the average monthly rent of \$462 in 1998. Studio/efficiency rents climbed to \$633 per month, which is 100.1 percent of monthly SSI income.

Some suggest that the lack of employment opportunities for people with disabilities lies at the root of the current housing crisis. A household must make \$13.75 per hour (based on a 40-hour work week) to afford the national average cost of a one-bedroom rental unit, according to the

National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). With the minimum wage at \$5.85 per hour, the rental housing market appears to be out of reach for people who struggle to make ends meet.

For the full report, visit www.tacinc.org.

Affordable housing made possible with grants

Congress commits about \$2 billion annually to help low-income Americans obtain affordable housing, part of a nationwide grant program called HOME Investment Partnership. Since 1992, more than \$15.6 billion has been allocated to states and localities in HOME grants. Funding supports a wide range of activities for building, buying and/or rehabilitating affordable housing, both rented and owned.

In each state, 40 percent of this funding is administered by a statewide housing agency. The remaining 60 percent is distributed by local public housing authorities throughout the state. For a list of Indiana's public housing authorities, visit www.hud.gov. Click on "About HUD," then select the Public/Indian Housing link. From there, click "public housing," then "public agency housing contacts." Select Indiana on the map for the list of public housing authorities.

These housing agencies allocate to metropolitan areas, which are labeled Participating Jurisdictions. There are 56 Participating Jurisdictions in Indiana, including large cities like Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Gary, South Bend and Evansville, as well as smaller communities such as Angola, Bedford and Warsaw.

In Indiana, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) gives \$3 million in HOME funds to the state's 24 Community Action agencies (CAP agencies). These agencies then provide up to \$25,000 for home repairs to individuals whose income falls below 80 percent of the area's median income. Funds distributed by IHCDA are available statewide, excluding locations within Participating Jurisdictions.

In addition to meeting the income qualifications, recipients must have a disability, be elderly or have a child under the age of six. Rehabilitation is prioritized so that imminent threats to health and safety are addressed first, followed by other repairs, replacements or additions needed for the home to meet local building code.

Eligible applicants for HOME funding include cities, towns, counties, townships, public housing authorities, state-certified Community Housing Development Organizations, nonprofit organizations and corporations. Visit the IHCDA Web site at ihcda.in.gov for more information.

Annual conference set for Nov. 27–28

This year's conference for people with disabilities, "Disability Matters," will provide attendees with the opportunity to learn more about issues and developments, and network with their peers. This year's location is the Hyatt Regency in downtown Indianapolis.

The format will be similar to previous years, starting early Tuesday with registration and exhibit viewing, followed by keynote presentations, lunch and afternoon workshops.

The morning's two keynote speakers are Kathie Snow and David Gootee. Snow, a parent of a child with a disability and an advocate for disability rights, will present "Disability is Natural and

Other Revolutionary Common Sense.” Gootee, deputy director for the Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services, will present “Vision 2010: Back to the Future,” a vision for new directions in Indiana disability services and policy.

Wednesday will begin with two keynote sessions, the first of which features Marty Ford, director of legal advocacy for The Arc and UCP Disability Policy Collaboration. Ford will discuss federal legislation and policy issues that affect people with disabilities.

The second keynote session will feature a presentation by Jim Dickson, vice president, government affairs, American Association for People with Disabilities. Dickson’s presentation — “2008 Election: What’s at Stake?” — will highlight the critical importance of voting and political participation.

After the two keynote sessions, a panel of Indiana advocates and lobbyists will share their predictions about the upcoming General Assembly session, elections and the potential impact on the disability community.

That session will be followed by the annual awards luncheon, which features presentation of the Governor’s Council’s Community Spirit Awards: Distinguished Leadership Awards and Disability Awareness Campaign Awards.

The closing speaker will be Richard Pimentel, a nationally renowned speaker and trainer on attitude change and disability management. His presentation, “Music Within,” highlights his life story and emphasizes how we all have the ability to make a difference by tapping into the qualities of leadership within.

Conference registration materials, which include a scholarship application, were mailed in mid-September. To download copies, visit www.in.gov/gpcpd.

Legislation aims to prepare children for the future

A new bill circulating in Congress seeks to help children with disabilities prepare for their futures. The Financial Security Accounts for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2007 (FSAID), introduced in the 109th Congress by representative Andrew Crenshaw (R-Fla.), amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish Financial Security Accounts (FSAs) for the care of family members with disabilities.

Currently, the federal government provides accounts with tax advantages and other assistance to help families prepare for a child’s post-secondary education. Without another option, parents of children with disabilities may establish a college fund not knowing if their child will be able to pursue higher education, in which case the family could be subject to a tax penalty.

FSAID would create tax exempt Financial Security Accounts for Individuals with Disabilities (FAIDs) that could fund expenses such as medical and dental care not covered by private health insurance, community-based support services, and housing and transportation (beyond 18 years of age), in addition to education. According to Crenshaw, these accounts will help families afford the extra care and support required by a child with a disability, and help prepare the child financially, vocationally and mentally to be independent in adulthood.

The bill, HR 2370, is co-sponsored by more than 40 other representatives, including Indiana's fifth district representative Dan Burton (R). Visit the Library of Congress at thomas.loc.gov for more information.

Assistive devices help students in the classroom

As children across Indiana settle into the back-to-school routine, many with disabilities will utilize assistive learning devices.

According to "Education World" writer Sherril Steele-Carlin, assistive learning devices aid understanding and participation in the classroom.

Some high-tech assistive learning devices include:

- Glare-reduction projection screens, screen magnifiers and Braille note-taking devices that enable students with visual disabilities to participate more fully;
- Voice-recognition software that transforms the spoken word into type on a computer screen so students unable to move their limbs can take part;
- Technologies that enable students with more severe mobility disabilities to control their computers by following letters and commands on the screen with their eyes.

Although these technological advances provide valuable education tools, the attention should focus not on the device, but on what the device can do for the individual. The fit must be right – the biggest or most expensive may not always be the best. The key to selecting the most appropriate tool involves seeking a team evaluation, finding the resources to obtain the technology, customizing the technology to make the best fit and providing the time as well as the patience for training.

For more information on these devices, visit www.teach-nology.com/teachers/special_ed/ and click on "Assistive Technology." For Indiana-specific information on assistive technology, visit www.attaininc.org or crossroads.easterseals.com.

Reminder: Vote in Nov. 6 election

Make your voice heard by voting in Indiana's municipal election on Tuesday, Nov. 6. For a list of polling sites, visit www.in.gov/ai/appfiles/electionday.

Of Note

Register for annual conference

Last month, registration materials were mailed for this year's Indiana Conference for People with Disabilities, which will be at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Indianapolis Nov. 27–28. This year's registration deadline is Nov. 16, and scholarship applications are due Oct. 22. For copies of this year's registration materials, visit the Council's Web site at www.in.gov/gpcpd or call (317) 232-7770 (voice).

Movie depicting life of conference speaker opens this month

“Music Within,” a movie depicting the life of ADA activist Richard Pimentel, will be released at the end of October. The movie follows the journey of Pimentel who, after losing his hearing in the Vietnam war, becomes a champion for disability rights. For more information about the movie, visit www.musicwithinmovie.com.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

This year’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month is themed “Workers with Disabilities: Talent for a Winning Team.” To download a copy of this year’s poster, shown here, visit www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ndeam07.htm.

On Target is a monthly publication of the Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities. We welcome your suggestions for newsletter content and ideas concerning the actions of the Council. on target is made available in accessible formats upon request.