



Access New England

A publication of the New England ADA Center

May 2011

In This Issue

Newly Available: ADA Title II and III Revised Regulations Fact Sheet Series

IHCD to Convene Conference on Universal Design and Assistive Technology in Massachusetts

ADA Coordinator Profile - Michael Muehe: Executive Director of the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and ADA Coordinator for Cambridge, Massachusetts

Vermont Middle School Gets New Accessible Elevator

New Service Animal Pocket Guide Now Available

7th Annual...Emergency Preparedness Conference June 16, 2011 Manchester, New Hampshire

Newly Available: Americans with Disabilities Act Title II and III Revised Regulations Fact Sheet Series



The National Network of ADA Centers is pleased to provide a series of Fact Sheets to help you understand the new changes in the ADA Title II and Title III Regulations. Fact Sheets in this series are available on each of the following topics: effective communication, exams and courses, lodging, service animals, ticketing, wheelchairs and other power-driven-mobility devices, and detention and correctional facilities. Click [here](#) for more information.

Products & Technologies that Change People's Lives

September 23, 2011 Hynes Convention Center, Boston, MA

Universal Design & Assistive Technology in Massachusetts

The Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) will convene a day-long conference on Universal Design and Assistive Technology in

[New Hampshire Hospital to Provide Effective Communication](#)

[Now Available - ADA Update: A Primer for Small Business](#)

[Swansea, Massachusetts and Department of Justice Sign ADA Settlement Agreement](#)

Quick Links

[Disability Rights Web Course](#)

[ADA Employment Web Course](#)

[ADA Audio Conferences](#)

[Find us on Facebook](#)

Massachusetts. Co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and UMMS Work Without Limits, the conference's goals will be to:

- Convene a state-wide group of leaders from government, academia and business for a Summit to generate a strategy for advancing Inclusive and Assistive Technology as a cross-sector collaborative that will position Massachusetts as a national model.
- Showcase state-of-the-art and evolving technologies and products for people with disabilities and older people, for consumers, employers, educators, and others to demonstrate how emerging and cutting edge technology can improve the ability to work, live, learn and play across the spectrum of ability and age.
- Generate a sense of urgency about the demographic impetus to innovation in Universal Design and Assistive Technology (AT) in products and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- Explore the potential of adding Universally Designed products, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Assistive Technology (AT) to the Commonwealth's Technology and Innovation initiative.

The agenda for all events will have four thematic areas: Home, Work, Life-Long Learning, and Fitness/Recreation/Sport.

Additional information will be made available as the conference approaches. If you have questions about the conference or suggestions about content, please contact IHCD's Executive Director, Valerie Fletcher, at vfletcher@humancentereddesign.org.

ADA Coordinator Profile



Michael
Muehe

Michael Muehe is the Executive Director of the Commission for Persons with Disabilities in Cambridge, Massachusetts since 1994 and the ADA Coordinator for Cambridge. He has been an effective advocate for the disability community over the past twenty five years and his work has been the recipient of numerous awards and national recognition. He spoke with *Access New England* about the kinds of issues he regularly confronts and the successful, award-winning strategies he follows to advance the work of the Commission and implement the ADA.

Implementing the ADA - be proactive:

The Commission tries always to be proactive, focusing on outreach and community involvement. This means going to countless meetings and engaging residents and business owners whenever possible. For example, the Commission provides free accessibility training and technical assistance to Cambridge businesses and collaborates with an accessibility analyst in the building department who is available to review architectural plans.

Seek local participation:

Perhaps the most important single resource is the active participation of 12 Cambridge residents who sit on the Board of the Commission and meet monthly to highlight issues of concern.

Early involvement with projects is key:

With a high profile and an outstanding reputation for working collaboratively, many city entities seek the Commission's involvement at the earliest planning stages for both new construction and renovation projects. This allows for the most effective and cost efficient input regarding accessibility and ADA compliance.

Unfortunately, in other cases the Commission is only made aware of a project when it is well under way or near completion. A recent Cambridge bridge rebuild by a state agency provides a good example. The project required the complete demolition and reconstruction of an automobile bridge with a pedestrian walkway. The Commission was not notified about the project and only discovered after the fact that the sidewalk that was installed has slopes that are noncompliant because they are too steep. Ironically, a temporary walkway that was erected during construction was compliant, but the final product is now the subject of a Section 504 complaint filed with the Federal Department of Transportation.

Incentives encourage ADA implementation:

The city's Façade Improvement Program is a particularly successful example of the Commission's efforts to incentivize improved access at places of commerce. Local business can apply for up to \$15,000 in city matching funds to upgrade the façade of an existing storefront, and all approved projects must deliver an entryway that is ADA compliant. The result is that businesses get a facelift that attracts customers and all Cambridge residents experience better access at the places where they want to shop and conduct business. Importantly, the Façade Improvement Program also has what Michael calls a multiplier effect. Often as neighboring businesses see how easy it can be to make an establishment more welcoming to all, additional ADA compliant improvements are voluntarily initiated.

Look for new ways to address common problems:

Another important ADA issue in Cambridge is the need to address the presence of readily removable barriers at places of public accommodation. In an effort to bring about rapid and meaningful change, on the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act the Access Cambridge project sent out 20 letters to 20 establishments in a single Cambridge neighborhood. All of the businesses had readily removable barriers such as a step at the main entry or narrow entry doors. Once the letters were mailed the Commission sought to work in a cooperative fashion and found that the businesses in that district were receptive to their efforts.

NOD's Accessible America Award:

Michael's work and the work of the Commission on Persons with Disabilities has not gone unnoticed. In 2006, Cambridge won the National Organization on Disability's Accessible America contest. The city was presented with a \$25,000 award for going above and beyond the basic requirements of the ADA to help make Cambridge a model city of accessibility. More details about the specifics of the award are available here:

http://www.humancentereddesign.org/pedestrian/files/report_casesudies_2.html

Never content to rest on their laurels, Cambridge used the award to give mini grants to local teachers to develop an elementary school disability awareness curriculum and to support the documentary, "Labeled Disabled" (<http://www.labeleddisabledfilm.com/>).

Award funds were also given to a service provider who works with Cambridge residents who have intellectual disabilities, providing expanded access to gym memberships, museum passes and other resources designed to increase integration in the community.

Personal history:

In 1976 Michael became a person with a disability when he sustained a spinal cord injury. As an undergraduate at Boston University he regularly confronted obstacles to navigating the campus and the city of Boston. For example, when cold temperatures and falling snow sent his classmates running to the Green line trolley, Michael found that most public transportation was not accessible to him.

One day while attending to business at Boston University's Student Union he happened to notice a group of other students with disabilities gathered in a meeting room. When he went to investigate he discovered an access advisory meeting where recommendations were being developed for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). This group provided an early opportunity to begin pushing for access and fairness and set Michael on a successful career path that continues today.

After completing his undergraduate studies at Boston University, Michael worked for the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) as an independent living specialist. From there he moved to the Massachusetts Office on Disability where he served as a client assistance program advocate. In that capacity he helped people navigate the often challenging vocational rehabilitation system and, when necessary, file appeals and represent clients at their fair hearings.

In 1991 Michael took a position as Director of Chapter Services at the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (NSCIA). This allowed him the opportunity to travel throughout the country while providing training on the ADA to local NSCIA chapters.

Michael has been with the Cambridge, Massachusetts Commission for Persons with Disabilities since 1994. If you would like to contact Michael, he can be reached by email at: mmuehe@cambridgema.gov

Send your story suggestions to *Access New England*:

Access New England encourages you to share your stories about individuals and organizations that make an important difference in implementing the ADA in your area. If you know of a story that we should consider sharing with our readers, please send an email with Access New England Story Suggestion in the subject line to ADAinfo@NewEnglandADA.org.

Column by Kim Brittenham - Vermont Center for

Independent Living



Photo by Michael Wood-Lewis of Ben Wood-Lewis cutting elevator ribbon with fellow students

Edmunds Middle School GOT ACCESS!

For the first time in its 110-year history, Burlington's downtown middle school has wheelchair access thanks to a parent-led campaign for an elevator!

The community celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on January 19, 2011. Ben Wood Lewis and his 5th grade peers were there with scissors in hand. Ben will attend Edmunds next year with these same classmates. Previous to the installation of the elevator, Ben would have been separated from his friends and bussed up to the Old North End Hunts School. This has been Burlington's long-running answer to providing program access, although arguably not equal access, to students who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

This access victory was not won alone. People have talked about, and argued for, equal access to Edmunds for well over 30 years. Throughout the past two years, a small group of passionate community members sharpened their focus, showed up at City Council and School Board meetings, and sought assistance from Vermont Legal Aid and VCIL. The long-awaited success now looks like a five-stop elevator and accessible bathrooms in the multi-storied four-building school complex.

Media played a large role in this success story. News stories aired on WCAX Channel 3, WPTZ Channel 5, Fox 44, CCTV, and Radiator Radio. Stories surfaced repeatedly in SevenDays and the Burlington Free Press. ACCESS* Burlington blog spot chronicled the entire process with community organizer, and parent, Michael Wood Lewis at the keys.

Wood Lewis began thinking about access at Edmunds when his son Ben was 4 years old and enrolled in EEE. Looking ahead and realizing Ben would need wheelchair access from his schools, Wood Lewis started asking questions about Edmunds. He got vague assurances that this would not be an issue by the time Ben reached middle school. At 3-years out from middle school, Wood Lewis began to advocate, advocate strongly, for change.

There were challenges. There were strong "No ways" at the onset. There were serious concerns and drastic over-estimates for construction costs. There were treasure hunts for funding from foundations and

through congressional delegates.

Wood Lewis and his group of community advocates kept the faith. All through the process, they counted on the good will of the people involved and the inherent justice of the situation. And over relatively short time, with constant advocating and puzzle-solving, the "no's" turned to "yes's", and the 15million dollar elevator turned into a 1.5million dollar construction project with only one third of cost being the actual access elements. In the end, the Burlington School District allocated the funds, went to bid, and completed construction within a calendar year.

VCIL applauds the work of students who came to the public meetings in support of their classmates with disabilities, parents with strong voices, school officials with creative solutions, media who loyally followed the story, and the Burlington community at large for providing access to everyone at Edmunds. You are the winners in this. Now you all have better access to people with disabilities -- be they educators, entertainers, political leaders, or students.

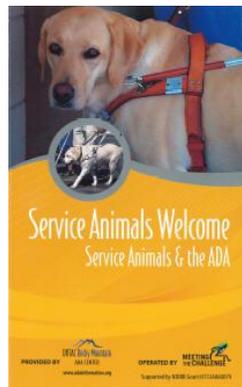
*ACCESS stands for "Associated Citizens Concerned with Entering School Structures"

Community Access Program works to improve access to buildings, services and programs in the state of Vermont - and is supported by the regional DBTAC ADA Technical Assistance provider: New England ADA Center from the National Institute of Rehabilitation and Research (NIDRR).

For more information, contact the Community Access Program: 1-800-639-1522 (Voice/TTY) or visit:

<http://www.vcil.org>

Service Animal Pocket Guide Available from DBTAC Rocky Mountain



The Service Animal Pocket Guide will guide you through the Department of Justice's new standards on service animals. This guide is perfect for individuals who use service animals, for public accommodations, such as restaurants, hotels, hospitals and retail stores, and state and local government agencies. Call DBTAC Rocky Mountain at (719) 444-0268 to learn more and order copies.

7th Annual Emergency Preparedness Conference Thursday, June 16, 2011

Radisson Hotel - Manchester, NH

(Pre-registration is required. Please register before June 9th.)



The 7th annual conference will focus on strategies to meet the needs of all New Hampshire residents, including our most vulnerable, in emergencies. It will also highlight how partners from a wide spectrum of disciplines and agencies achieve a coordinate response to complex emergencies using the Emergency Support Function framework. Join your emergency management, public health and health care colleagues at this vital conference featuring over 30 educational breakout sessions. Click [here](#) to see the conference flyer.

New Hampshire Hospital to Provide Effective Communication



HCA Health Services of New Hampshire, Inc., d/b/a Portsmouth Regional Hospital has signed a consent decree with the Department of Justice resolving claims alleging that the hospital failed to provide effective communication to deaf patients on multiple occasions and frequently relied upon unqualified friends or relatives to serve as interpreters both in emergency room and inpatient settings. Under the terms of the decree the hospital agreed to adopt a comprehensive effective communication program, including the appointment of a program administrator who will be responsible for coordinating the provision of effective communication services for patients who are deaf or hard of hearing. This is the fourth hospital in New Hampshire that has agreed to provide effective communication under a compliance initiative being conducted by the U.S. Attorney's office in New Hampshire. Click [here](#) to see the HCA Health Services of New Hampshire Consent Decree.

Now Available - ADA Update: A Primer
for Small Business



Get your copy of an illustrated guide from the Department of Justice to help small businesses understand the new and updated requirements of the revised ADA regulations. Click [here](#) to view the document.

Swansea, Massachusetts and Department of Justice Sign ADA Settlement Agreement



Under Project Civic Access the Department of Justice conducts ADA compliance reviews of cities, towns and counties. The project includes over 200 settlement agreements in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Swansea's settlement agreement focuses on physical modifications of facilities to improve accessibility, ongoing notice to the community of their ADA rights and the town's ADA obligations, establishment of an ADA grievance procedure, establishment of systems for providing auxiliary aids (qualified sign language interpreters and alternate formats such as Braille, large print, etc.), training in using the Massachusetts Relay Service to make and receive relay calls, ensuring the town's Emergency Operations Plan includes the various needs of people with disabilities and access to voter registration and voting. Click [here](#) to read the settlement agreement.

About Us

The New England ADA Center, one of the ten regional ADA Centers that comprise the ADA National Network, is the leader in providing information, guidance, and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), tailored to meet the needs of business, government, and individuals at local & regional levels.

The New England ADA Center is funded by the US Department of Education through the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research Grant # H133A060092

Contact Us

New England ADA Center
200 Portland Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

1-800-949-4232
(Voice/TTY - in New England Only)
ADAinfo@NewEnglandADA.org



You may also submit your question online. Visit our FAQ page.



DBTAC - New England ADA Center is a project of the
Institute for Human Centered Design
200 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114