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The New England ADA Center Stays Home at the Institute for Human Centered Design for another Five Years

The Institute for Human Centered Design (www.HumanCenteredDesign.org), a Boston-based 33-year-old international, educational non-profit, is pleased to announce that it has received a five-year (2011-2016) federal grant award from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education to serve the six New England states under the New England ADA Center (www.NewEnglandADA.org). The ADA Center will provide outreach, training, information dissemination and technical assistance on the rights and responsibilities of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The profile of disability has changed over the years in terms of the types of conditions for children and adults, the cultural and socioeconomic patterns of disability, and the implications of an
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aging society. In addition to our existing target populations, we intend to broaden our reach to populations that include emergency management personnel in the public and private sectors; youth, especially youth within the spectrum of prevalent learning, developmental, mental health and chronic health conditions; veterans; older workers who are increasingly likely to remain in the workforce into their '70s; and people with disabilities from multi-cultural communities and low income communities.

The Institute for Human Centered Design has been home to the New England ADA Center since 1996. The New England ADA Center is one of ten regional ADA Centers (www.ADATA.org). These 10 Centers comprise a nationwide infrastructure to support voluntary compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and share a single 800 number (800-949-4232).

For additional information, please contact Project Director, Dr. Oce Harrison at 1-800-949-4232 or OHarrison@HumanCenteredDesign.org

Governor Deval Patrick speaking to presenters on the Home panel, Steve Saling and Barry Berman of the Leonard Florence Center in Chelsea. Photo by JK Event Photography.

Products & Technologies that Change People’s Lives: Universal Design and Assistive Technology in Massachusetts Conference and Expo Convened in Boston

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we extend sincere thanks to the exhibitors, presenters, design competition jury and competitors, members of the Planning Committee, Senior Advisors and all who attended the events of September 23rd at the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center in Boston! Over 1400 people visited more than 100 exhibitors at the
Expo, and an enthusiastic crowd in excess of 550 people attended the conference sessions. There were also five winners in the design competition.

We expect that the energy and excitement of the day will generate fresh ways of thinking about inclusive assistive technology solutions for the Home, Work, Learning and Fitness/Recreation/Sport. Please explore the conference website for images of the winning entries in the design competition and photos of presentations at the conference by clicking here: www.changepeopleslives.org

EEOC Charges Nashua Firm in Disability Case
Source: New Hampshire Business Review

The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has charged a Nashua company with firing a worker because she has a heart condition. It's one of the few, if not the only, such cases litigated by the EEOC in New Hampshire under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The EEOC claims in a suit filed in U.S. District Court in Concord that Windmill International Inc. fired Nancy Hajjar on April 12, a week after she said she needed to take off time for a procedure to clear clogged arteries and perhaps for heart surgery. Hajjar had already told the company in March 2010 that she had blocked carotid arteries, a potentially life-threatening impairment of her circulatory function, according to the EEOC.

View the full story by clicking here.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Issues New ADA Regulations

The US Department of Transportation has issued new ADA regulations that go into effect October 19, 2011. The regulations:

- Require accessible full-length entry boarding (not just mini-high platform) at new or altered commuter, intercity and high-speed station platforms where no track through station is shared with freight. Where the track through station is shared with freight and full-length level-entry boarding cannot be provided car-borne lifts, station-based lifts, or mini-high platforms (with multiple stops if needed)
must be provided.

- Remove the term "common wheelchair" because the term allowed transit operators to exclude wheelchairs that did not meet the common wheelchair weight and dimension specifications of 30 inches by 48 inches length maximum and no more than 600 pounds when occupied. Now transit providers must carry a wheelchair and occupant if the lift and vehicle can physically accommodate them, unless doing so is inconsistent with legitimate safety requirements.

For a copy of the regulations go to the Federal Transit Administration website by clicking here.

New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Disabilities Service Dog Awareness Day

On Aug. 10th, the Governor's Commission on Disability sponsored a service dog awareness event at the Steeplegate Mall in Concord. This was held in connection with International Assistance Dog Week (Aug. 7-13).

The week was created to recognize and honor all the devoted hard working service dogs who are helping individuals mitigate their disability related limitations. It is also to honor the puppy raisers and trainers who train these dogs.

The goal is to raise awareness and educate the public about these specifically task trained dogs who are aiding so many people and helping them to live more independent lives. Otis and Ginger, NEADS puppies in training, were the highlight of the day as many people stopped to visit with them and ask questions. Joan Marcoux of DHHS (hearing program specialist) represented hearing dogs and told of the many ways they help their hearing impaired partners. And, of course, veteran NEADS service dog CeCe was on hand with her partner, Sandy. Accessibility Specialist Michelle Bonsteel and GCD Director John Richards also participated in the event.