

MANAGING
FEAR

E-BOOKS CREATING
MANY HAPPY
ENDINGS

independence today

Volume 5

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Issue 6

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AND SENIORS:
NUTRITION,
DIET EXTREMELY
IMPORTANT

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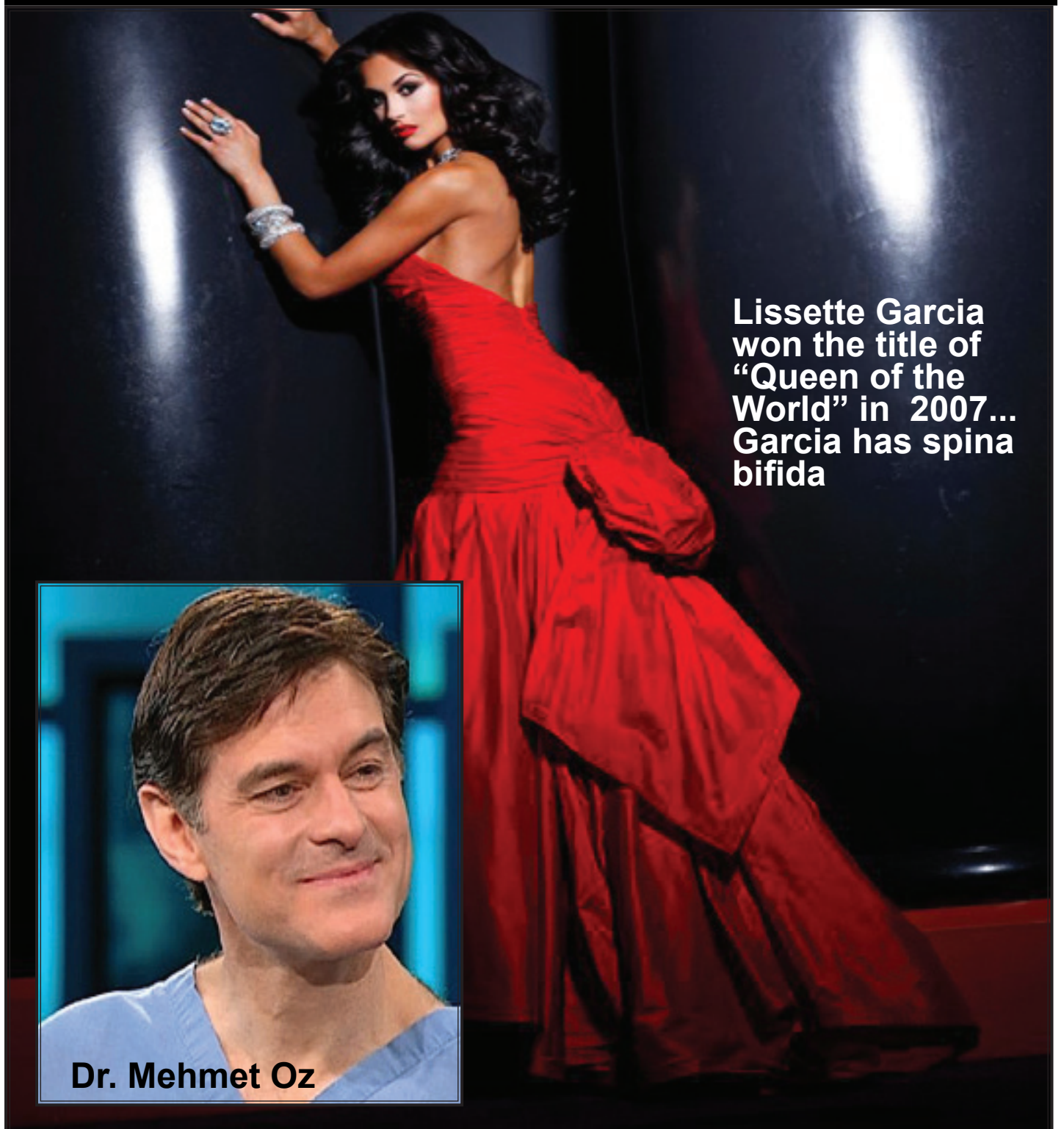
A judge ruled the city must come up with a comprehensive plan and, until then, it can only issue medallions for wheelchair-accessible cabs. Story on page 5.

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Lissette Garcia
won the title of
"Queen of the
World" in 2007...
Garcia has spina
bifida



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To Visually Impaired, E-Books Creating Many Happy Endings

By John M. Williams

Twenty-eight-year-old, legally blind Kevin J. Kinney is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland in College Park. He is working on his doctoral dissertation: Mark Twain's influence as the greatest American novelist.

Eight years ago, using a closed-circuit TV, he read Twain's literary masterpieces "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." In the past two years, he has reread both novels as well as John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath," Ernest Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises," F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," William Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury," Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" and Norman Mailer's "The Naked and the Dead."

"As I read these books, I asked myself, 'How do they stack up against Twain's masterpieces?'" Kinney said.

Kinney read the books electronically. He was aided by Sarah Brown, one of his two assistants. Brown, who is dyslexic, introduced Kinney to e-book publishing in 2008. She was introduced to e-books in 2005 and has been a strong proponent of electronic publishing since. In fact, she has not purchased a hardcover or paperback book since 2005. Brown used electronic publishing to help write her master's thesis.

An e-book is a book published in electronic form. It consists of text, images or both and is produced on, published through and readable on computers or

other electronic and telecommunications devices. The "Oxford Dictionary of English" defines an e-book as "an electronic version of a printed book," but e-books can exist without any printed equivalent. They are usually read on dedicated hardware devices known as e-readers.

E-books are designed to look and read just like a paper book, a page at a time.

"Using e-books, I can instantly share notes and data with Sarah and my other assistant, customize layouts, integrate references, easily navigate text, instantly search text, insert graphics and do many other actions that make researching easier and faster than I can do reading hardcover and paperbacks," Kinney said.

Kinney has been working on his dissertation for two years. He will publish it online, and he plans to publish a novel and a series of short stories digitally. He proudly tells his friends about the benefits of e-books, some of which include multichannel global distribution, reduced printing and delivery costs, portability, visual impact, the ability to link to any page in the publication, and email-sending capability.

"I can do so many things with e-book publishing that it makes my blindness appear obsolete," Kinney said.

Brown, too, is a believer. "With my dyslexia, I have difficulty understanding what I am reading. With

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INTO THE LIGHT

By Peter S. Kahrman

Managing Fear

There are people who know about my life and about my efforts on the advocacy front who think of me as fearless. I am anything but. In fact, I deal with fear on a daily basis, primarily on the advocacy front and in my personal life. I am not unique in this, not in the least.

When it comes to my advocacy work for people with disabilities I give my fear almost zero say. I know there are those I've called out publically, government agencies, specific officials, heads of organizations or groups who profess to care but whose caring lives in the world of lip service not action, who would love to and have taken runs at me. Does this scare me at times? Sure. Does this make me flinch in the face of their anger and threat to me? Not at all. Why am I able to stand up to this fear with success? Because there are lives at stake, because I know there are people who continue to be treated not just as if they are less than human but as if they are not human at all, and because I have role models, like you, and like Mandela, King, Malcolm, Elie Weisel, and many more.

I am not as successful in overpowering my fear in my personal life.

Fear management is a task many face. When it comes to managing it with any degree of success I do have my strategies, and perhaps, by bringing them into the light, some of them will benefit you. Some of the strategies are emotional strategies and some are action events.

Not surprisingly, these strategies, tactics if you will,

are easier to understand than they are to do, at for me anyway. The first strategy is simply to accept that I am afraid, accept the presence of the fear, much like one would accept the presence of another person in the room you're in. Many of us balk at this because many of us were raised in an environment that says admitting fear is an act of weakness. Rubbish. If admitting fear was an act of weakness than why is it so hard to do? Were it an act of weakness, it would be easy because it would require no strength at all.

Acts of strength are acts of strength because they aren't easy, not because they are. Little in the course of human events requires greater strength than giving birth to a child but I'd be willing to bet that any woman in the middle of labor does not feel like she is a paragon of strength, but she is.

After accepting the presence of the fear you then allow yourself to understand that you have a relationship with. Just like I have a living breathing relationship with my brain injury, I have a living breathing relationship with my fear. And just like a relationship with another person, these relationships can be healthy or unhealthy. And, when it comes to fear, we have more say in the relationship than we realize.

After you've worked on these two steps, accepting the presence of the fear and accepting you have

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CoverStory

Lisette Garcia: Pageant Champ Has Lovely Attitude

By Kathi Wolfe

It's not every day you get to speak to the "Queen of the World." But one November afternoon, Independence Today spoke with Lisette Garcia, who was crowned Miss Florida in 2010 and finished in the top 15 in the Miss USA pageant last summer. Garcia, 26, won the title of Queen of the World in a 2007 beauty pageant in Germany.

In a telephone interview, Garcia riffed on topics ranging from what it was like growing up as a first-generation American (her parents came to Miami from Cuba in 1980) to how she manages pain (she has spina bifida) to her current work in TV news reporting and production.

You might think that competing in and winning beauty pageants only involves being gorgeous, smiling and walking down runways. But you'd be wrong. Garcia said it takes discipline, hard work and determination to fulfill your dreams.

Garcia, who grew up in Miami, had dreams even as

a young girl. She began dancing as a child. "Growing up, I always wanted to act and model," she said. "I always wanted to compete in Miss Florida and Miss USA (pageants)."

Some parents, thinking that it wouldn't be a viable career option or realistic goal, might discourage their children from entering the fray of pageant competition. Fortunately for Garcia, her family supported her ambitions. "They were ecstatic with it!" she said. "My parents and siblings were all a part of (my competing) in pageants. In a Latin household, beauty pageants are as big as the Super Bowl! We take it seriously!"

But even though her family loved and believed in her, Garcia faced challenges during her youth. "I spoke Spanish until I was 10 years old," she said. "I didn't speak English."

Garcia learned English at school. "I remember having difficulties in communicating," she recalled. "It's hard to learn English when you don't speak it at home."

By middle school, Garcia was speaking English. But her feelings about attending high school echo those of millions of Americans. "I went to Southwest Miami High," she said. "I didn't like it! It wasn't my favorite thing. It's high school! You just want to get in and get out of it!"

From a young age, Garcia has had pain. At age 12, she learned that she had been born with spina bifida. "They found it because I started getting really bad acne," she said. "It's basically the vertebrae. My lumbar didn't form completely. They thought it was scoliosis. They took a full-body X-ray of my back, and that's when it (spina bifida) showed. You can't tell at all that I have it." (Garcia doesn't use a wheelchair, crutches or any other mobility aid.)

The doctors who discovered her spina bifida didn't try to stop Garcia from following her dreams. They gave her pain medication, she said, and "they told me to keep dancing. It was keeping my back active. I would do simple things like staying on the ground with my feet up when I would get pain. Sometimes lying flat on the ground would help."

Because her disability isn't visible, Garcia hasn't encountered disability-based discrimination, she said. But "I get a lot of pain," she said. "Exercise helps a lot!"

When she exercises, Garcia is cautious. "I'm careful about which exercises I do so it doesn't irritate my back. I'm real careful if I do squats."

Exercise – a major source of pain relief for Garcia – dovetails with the need for a beauty pageant competitor to be fit. "I work out five days a week. I do Pilates," she said, which "involves more muscles than yoga."

To keep fit, Garcia said she eats as healthfully as possible, including lots of veggies. "But now that I'm not in pageants, I can eat more sweets!" she said.

Garcia didn't win when she first competed in the Miss Florida pageant at age 19. But she didn't let that derail her plans. "I competed in Miami in a pageant and became 'Miss Cuban American.' Then I represented Cuba in international pageants – in Austria and South America. In Germany in 2007, I competed against 60 girls to win the title of Queen of the World."

After that experience, Garcia competed again in the Miss Florida pageant. "I wanted to give it a real shot. I got a pageant coach. They specialize

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Dr. Oz to PWDs and Seniors: Nutrition, Diet Extremely Important

By Amy Halloran

Dr. Mehmet Oz, the heart surgeon host of "The Dr. Oz Show," remains active in the field of cardiac surgery and plays an important public role discussing health issues through a variety of media. In addition to his own television show, he hosts a daily talk radio show and writes widely on the topics of cardiac and other health concerns. He has written seven best-selling health publications.

He recently addressed questions about diet and nutrition for people with disabilities (PWDs).

Q: What kind of a role can nutrition play for people who face the challenges of limited mobility, whether they're confined to a wheelchair, or walk with difficulty?

A: If you are limited in your ability to move your muscles, it is especially important to avoid refined carbohydrates and sugary foods. During exercise, muscles take up a significant amount of sugar in the blood as fuel, reducing circulating blood sugar levels. Plus, exercise actually helps your body make more sugar transporters on the muscles to get sugar in – it is one of the best ways to avoid insulin resistance and diabetes. However, if you are unable to exercise, you have to be extra careful with your blood sugar levels because too much sugar can lead to diabetes. I recommend a balanced diet, incorporating complex carbohydrates with dietary fiber into your breakfast, (which) can help keep your blood sugar levels stable and constant throughout the day.

Other factors to keep in mind (are) that walking and physical activity help maintain muscle and bone

health as we age. Thus, living with limited mobility puts you at even higher risk for conditions such as osteoporosis. That is why I recommend eating foods that are high in calcium and vitamin D to help build bone strength.

Q: Are there specific diets you might recommend for these people?

A: I recommend that you eat a widely varying diet that includes lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, eggs, low- or non-fat dairy foods and non-saturated fats. For example, breakfast might be cooked quinoa with blueberries and a small amount of low-fat, plain yogurt.

Likewise, calcium is known for its ability to make the bones stronger and denser. Eat calcium-rich foods, like milk, cheese, yogurt, broccoli and any foods or beverages that are calcium-fortified. To help with the absorption of the calcium, include some vitamin D in your diet as well. This can be found in eggs, fish oil, fortified foods and beverages, and you can also get it from the sun.

Also, inflammation of the blood vessels can become a problem if you eat unhealthy foods and are unable to exercise. Omega-3s are a great "Inflammation fighter." All fish have some omega-3s, but salmon, herring, sardines, and anchovies are chock full of them. Go lightly with the heat; overcooking can destroy more than half of the omega-3s. Bake or grill fish instead of frying it to preserve healthful fat. If you don't like fish, try to incorporate more walnuts, canola oil and soybeans into your diet.

Q: Many people living with disabilities also live with limited incomes. As people face tough economic choices, what can they do to get the most health out of their food dollars?

A: Rising food prices are a concern for many Americans, but with preparation and knowledge, you can save dollars and eat in a healthful way. First, before heading to the grocery store, develop a meal plan and/or shopping list. Planning meals allows you to shop more efficiently and helps you to avoid impulse purchases. Second, don't shop hungry. Eat a small, healthy snack before heading to the store. This will help curb temptations to buy food you don't need. Third, shop for fruits and vegetables in season. Melons, tomatoes, corn, summer squash, green beans and zucchini are cheaper for purchasing in summer. Fall produce include winter squash, broccoli, carrots, pumpkin, apples and cranberries. Finally, don't be afraid to buy canned and frozen foods. They are often cheaper and are just as nutritious as fresh foods – some are even better because they flash-freeze them, which locks in the nutrients that the fruits and vegetables had right when they were picked. Just make sure to buy the "low-sodium" varieties. In addition, stock up when there is a sale or buy in bulk, and shop store brands – dried beans, nuts and more can be a steal without all the packaging.

Q: What general dietary recommendations do you make to people who are aging? How can people maximize nutrition as our bodies mature and, ultimately, begin to decline?

A: First off, getting adequate amounts of protein is crucial for the elderly and disabled. As people get older, we become concerned about weight loss, and we tend to see decreased protein

intake. When you don't eat enough protein, you don't just lose fat, you lose lean body mass (muscle) because your body needs essential amino acids. If you are not getting these amino acids from your diet, your body has no choice but to break down its own proteins making up muscle in order to supply the body with stored amino acids.

Also, as people age, fluid intake can become a big problem, largely because we're at an increased risk of dehydration as we get older. Some people who have decreased mobility are reluctant to drink adequate amounts because it can be painful to go to the bathroom, but it's important to be conscious of drinking fluid, even if it's problematic to go to bathroom. Dehydration causes low energy when you are already having energy problems, and chronic dehydration can damage your kidneys. Aim for as close to eight, 8-ounce glasses of water a day as you can get.

Q: Changing dietary habits is tough, even if the way people eat is not physically working for them anymore, in terms of causing pre-diabetes, intestinal discomfort or coronary disease. How would you recommend people work to accept tough changes?

A: The most important factor in motivating you to make and maintain big changes in your diet and lifestyle is understanding the power of the benefits. To build motivation consciously, envision the change. Once you truly believe you need to change, determine what you must do to make that change. Realize you can take it a step at a time, and keep reminding yourself of how great you will feel once the hard work has paid off. Some people jump into change, and others

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Judge Mandates Accessible Taxis in NYC

By Terry Moakley

The year 2011 ended with two wins in the same week for wheelchair-accessible taxi advocates in the Big Apple.

On Dec. 20th, New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced that an agreement had been reached to provide taxi service to all five New York City boroughs and improve access to taxi and livery cabs for people with disabilities (PWDs). Three days later, a federal judge ruled that the city can only issue new medallions for wheelchair-accessible cabs.

The agreement and the ruling capped a long journey for advocates of accessible NYC taxis. Way back in January 2011, plaintiffs Christopher Noel, Simi Linton, United Spinal Association, the Taxis For All Campaign, the 504 Democratic Club and Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York filed suit in U.S. District Court in Manhattan alleging that the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) was violating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by allowing inaccessible vans to be placed into service as yellow taxis.

Previously, under local laws enacted in 2003 and 2006, a total of 231 wheelchair accessible vehicles, mostly Toyota Sienna or Dodge Caravan minivans, were placed into service as yellow taxis in the city. Despite 13,237 yellow taxis in operation in New York City, less than 2% of the vehicles were accessible to wheelchair users. The lawsuit included the fact that the TLC had allowed more than 1,000 inaccessible Toyota Sienna minivans to be used in recent years as yellow taxis.

After learning that New York City's 2009-2010 "Taxi of Tomorrow" design competition resulted in the selection of a Nissan vehicle that cannot be made wheelchair accessible, U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, weighed in on the issue. Harkin, sometimes referred to as the "father of the ADA," communicated his displeasure with that outcome to his friend, Andrew Cuomo. In February, Harkin issued a statement publicly urging New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to select a wheelchair-accessible taxi.

Soon after, a meeting was held at the governor's NYC office with many representatives of the taxi and livery industries and disability advocates to redesign a state bill that would both raise money for the city of New York and increase wheelchair accessibility in the taxi and livery systems.

On May 24, Judge George Daniels refused to dismiss the lawsuit against the TLC to make all taxis accessible. Disability advocates viewed that as a pretty good indication that the judge thought there was merit to the allegation of violations of certain ADA accessible transportation provisions.

In late June, a taxi bill passed both houses of the New York State Legislature. It called for the 2012 auction of 1,500 new yellow taxi medallions, but it stated that only 569 of them would need to be "accessible only." In New York City, yellow taxi medallions are a valuable commodity, and when new medallions are sold at auction, the

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Many Disability Rights Activists Occupying a Place in Movement

By Janine Bertram Kemp

Nadina LaSpina was arrested at the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protest on November 17th in New York City.

LaSpina, who has post-polio syndrome and uses a motorized wheelchair, is a former professor and a leader in the NYC and national ADAPT chapters. During the protest, she intentionally positioned herself on the front lines.

"They are getting beat up and pepper-sprayed," LaSpina said of protesters around the country. "I was nervous at the action and hoped my presence would make cops restrain from violence."

It was reported that the police did exhibit restraint. Eventually, LaSpina was cited and released because an accessible paddy wagon was not available.

LaSpina, a veteran of civil disobedience, is representative of hundreds of disability rights activists throughout the United States who are taking part in the OWS movement. It started on Wall Street (Zuccotti Park in New York City) on September 17th and soon went viral, spreading to many major, and some smaller, cities. The mainstream movement claims to represent the 99% of the people who do not control the nation's wealth; it focuses on the 1% who do.

The "Occupy" movement grew out of the bailout by taxpayers of banks and Wall Street firms that occurred at the end of the George W. Bush administration and continued into the Barack Obama presidency. The bailouts involved the largest transfer of funds from the poor to the rich in several decades.

According to journalist Bill Moyers, the fund transfer from the poor to rich was the culmination of a plan initiated by former Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell when he was still a corporate lawyer and board member of tobacco giant Phillip Morris. In the 1970s, Powell issued a strategic memo urging Conservatives to initiate a political movement to stop funding services to those without wealth and deregulate corporations, thus giving them free rein to damage the environment.

In a November 2nd article in *The Nation*, "How Wall Street Occupied America," Moyers wrote that Powell's campaign imagined chambers of commerce as a "council of war" and suggested tactics for dismantling social services and environmental regulations. His conservative coalition got a "powerful jolt of adrenaline in the late '70s from the wealthy right winger ... William Simon."

In a *Business Week* article on October 12th, 1974, Simon called on "men of action from the capitalist world" to uproot the "heretical strategy" of the New Deal. "It will be a bitter pill for many Americans to swallow the idea of doing with less so that big business can have more." Many believe the Tea Party movement, founded in part by Virginia Thomas, was created to help Americans accept having less so the wealthy can eat an even greater piece of the pie.

LaSpina noted that the NYC chapter of ADAPT and Disabled in Action have been involved in OWS since the beginning. "If we want our voices heard, we

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Commentary**'Get the Black Guy Out of the White House'**

By Peter S. Kahrman

Historians will someday confirm that the title of this essay accurately represents the largely unspoken and perhaps primary reason for the fanatical efforts on the part of the Republican Party to get President Obama out of the White House.

I had thought to reference the Republican Party leadership only in the preceding sentence, but the silence of so many Republicans and Democrats (with some exceptions on both fronts) in the face of the not-so-subtle simmering racism fueling the Republican Party's efforts to take back the White House and get rid of the black guy is sickening.

No one gets a pass on this one.

If you are a public official, you should be calling out any and all candidates spewing racism, which is exactly what the likes of Ron Paul, Rick Santorum, and Newt Gingrich have done. Abraham Lincoln, a man whom presidential candidates from both parties like to hold up as the stellar example of a great president, would not just be disgusted with the statements that dripped like venom from the mouths of these three, he'd be disgusted with the ensuing silence on the part of both parties and, not at all incidentally, the media -- again, with some exceptions.

We have Republican presidential candidate Paul, who fools some fools with his avuncular, folksy countenance. Paul's newsletters in the 1980s and 1990s published such racist gems as: "Given the inefficiencies of what D.C. laughingly calls the criminal

justice system, I think we can safely assume that 95 percent of the black males in that city are semi-criminal or entirely criminal," and "We are constantly told that it is evil to be afraid of black men; it is hardly irrational," and "Order was only restored in L.A. when it came time for the blacks to pick up their welfare checks."

Paul claims he didn't write these things and says he doesn't agree. Are you kidding me? Are we as a people really so stupid that we believe him? Sadly, in more cases than we'd like to admit, the answer, it seems, is yes.

And then we have Santorum who, in talking about Medicaid, SSI and food stamps in Iowa, said: "I don't want to make black people's lives better by giving them somebody else's money. I want to give them the opportunity to go out and earn the money and provide for themselves and their families." Then, of course, he later said he is not racist and, in an interview, denied that he used the word "black" even though his use of the word is recorded, pristinely so, for everyone to see and hear.

And I suppose there are still fools who believe Santorum and racists who believe in him because they know his I'm not a racist claim is merely his attempt to cover his lily-white a**. A lily-white a**, I might add, that fell only nine vote shorts of winning the Iowa caucuses!

And then, of course, there is Gingrich. Gingrich recently said at a New Hampshire town hall meeting that if he were invited to this year's NAACP conference, he'd tell those present "why

the African-American community should demand paychecks and not be satisfied with food stamps."

All three of the men identified here clearly possess an ineradicable strain of racism. Given their ages -- Gingrich is 68, Paul is 76 and Santorum is 53 -- I don't expect the deeply ingrained bigotry coursing through their veins will ever relinquish its claim on their persons. The fact that all three, in one way or another, believe the color of a person's skin has, in and of itself, decision-making power ought to be repellent to all beings with a heartbeat. The tragedy -- and I do mean tragedy -- is that it isn't.

The fact that there are racists among us should surprise no one. The fact that they are running for president with support should surprise and sicken everyone.

Which brings me to this: The nearly dead silence

on the part of leaders in both parties and on the part of the media is, in a word, nauseating. It is also inexcusable.

If there is anything that feeds racism, homophobia, sexism, anti-Semitism, anti-disabled, etc., it's silence. Believe me, in my own efforts as an advocate for people with disabilities, I see the damage caused by silence on many fronts -- particularly silence from those who, like the three racists named in this missive, want you to believe they really, really care.

There is no excuse for silence when confronted by the poison that is bigotry. To remain silent is to take part in pushing the plunger on the syringe that pumps bigotry into society's bloodstream.

Peter Kahrman is an advocate for people with disabilities and writes a blog on disability issues. He resides in New York state.

For 5 Disillusioned Voters, Obama is No 'Man of Steel'

By John M. Williams

Jason Carson, Mary Baker, Caroline Andrews, Will Dougherty and Mark Franks share many traits. Each one has a disability. All are college graduates. All are unemployed. All are married. They are advocates on disability issues. They are Democrats. In 2008, they enthusiastically voted for Barack Obama for president. And, in 2012 they are considering not voting for anyone for president.

"I was proud to vote for Mr. Obama in the last presidential election," said Carson, who is blind. "I thought he was not only super smart but super tough."

The quintet applauded the president for saving the

auto industry, for enforcing disability legislation, for convincing Congress to pass health care reform, for getting "don't ask, don't tell" repealed, for killing Osama Bin Laden and other terrorist leaders, for aiding Wall Street, for ending the Iraq war, and for trying to get Congress to pass a jobs bill.

"Unfortunately, the public, the media, the Republican Party, and even Democrats don't give the president the credit for all of his domestic and foreign accomplishments," said Baker, who has a learning disability and is proud of her recent marriage to her longtime live-in companion

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Group: Get All PWDs Aboard Accessible Technology Train

By Mike Ervin

A lot has changed since the day Jenifer Simpson and her 5-year-old son, Joshua Chartienitz, sat on the south lawn of the White House and watched President George H.W. Bush sign the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

Joshua is now 26 years old. And most consider it mind-boggling how communication technology has evolved over the last two-plus decades into the enormous role it is playing in improving the lives of people with disabilities (PWDs). But there has been regression. In 2000, for example, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules requiring television programs to have video description for the blind. But in 2002, a federal court ruled that the FCC did not have the authority to issue those rules and threw them out.

As senior director of technology and telecommunications policy for the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Simpson, who lives in Washington, D.C., was passionate about making sure that the breakneck pace of communication technology development did not leave PWDs behind. So in 2007, she helped found the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology. COAT's primary goal is to ensure that legislative and regulatory safeguards are in place so that PWDs have access to high-speed broadband, wireless and other Internet-based technologies.

Simpson's primary partner in organizing COAT was Karen Peltz

Strauss, who at the time was a legal consultant for Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD).

Said Simpson, "We both felt that the Telecommunications Act of 1996 needed updating and modernizing to reflect the reality that the accessibility mandates in that act had not kept up with new Internet-enabled and digital technologies."

Along with the AAPD and CSD, the National Association of the Deaf and the American Foundation for the Blind helped found COAT. Today COAT has more than 200 affiliates.

In the beginning, Simpson said, "Karen and I sent an invitational email to many communications-technology disability advocates. We also sent a proposed agenda of what changes we believed were needed in the Telecommunications Act. Within just a few weeks, we had over 30 national groups interested in the agenda, with representatives from the deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision, deaf-blind, physical disability and other communities wanting to be part of this new coalition. In order to make policy changes, it takes many people working together around a clearly stated, common agenda."

Reinstatement of the video description rules was at the top of that agenda. Other high priorities were ensuring accessibility of communications equipment for deaf-blind people and mandating captioning of video displayed on the Internet, Simpson said.

COAT members went right to work presenting their agenda to leaders not just on Capitol Hill but also in the telecommunications

industry.

"This is no small feat," Simpson said, "as several technology sectors are involved – television, telephone and, of course, information technology and content providers. We met with critical regulatory staff at AT&T and Verizon who were supportive of our overall agenda and who provided us valuable support in understanding some of the larger regulatory issues. We met multiple times with many company representatives from what are essentially Fortune 500 companies or their representatives via trade associations. We invited representatives who did not care to talk to us, but we forged ahead anyway."

The reward came on October 8th, 2010, when President Barack Obama signed the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act. As a result of this legislation, last August, the FCC issued new video description rules. Video description is the narrated description of a television program's key visual elements inserted into natural pauses in the dialogue.

The rules require ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC affiliates in the top 25 markets and cable and satellite television providers with more than 50,000 subscribers to provide video description.

ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, USA, the Disney Channel, TNT, Nickelodeon and TBS are each required to provide 50 hours of video-described prime-time or children's programming per calendar quarter. This all takes effect July 1st, 2012.

When announcing the rules, FCC commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn said: "I can imagine how left out a visually impaired child feels when his or her classmates are discussing what happened on a popular show the night before and

to not be a part of that conversation or be able to follow along. The same is true for blind adults, for whom the proverbial water cooler chats about TV shows hold little meaning or enjoyment. This item will assist those individuals in getting even closer to the mainstream when it comes to popular culture, and we are a better and more complete nation for it."

The new communications act is a comprehensive law that goes far beyond video narration. Among other things, it:

- Requires video programming owners, providers and distributors to make emergency information accessible to individuals who are blind or have low vision.
- Requires captioned television programs to be captioned when delivered over the Internet.
- Allocates up to \$10 million per year from the Interstate Relay Service Fund for equipment used by individuals who are deaf-blind.
- Requires telephones used with the Internet to be hearing-aid compatible.

Peltz Strauss wrote the initial draft of the law. That's nothing new for her. She co-authored Title IV of the ADA, which established nationwide telecommunications relay services. She also co-authored the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 and sections of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which mandated telecommunications access and television closed captioning.

In March 2010, Peltz Strauss was appointed deputy chief of the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, which develops and implements consumer policies, including

Group
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Garcia
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in (coaching pageant contestants on handling) runway, appearance and question-and-answer sessions.”

Pageant coaches advise contestants to enter pageants not because they want to win, but because they want to make a difference in their community and the world, Garcia said. “They tell you to always speak from your heart.”

Continued support from her family and her boyfriend at the time bolstered Garcia’s confidence. “I had a boyfriend that supported me 100 percent in the pageant world,” Garcia said. “His love for me got me to try (the Miss Florida pageant) one more time before it was too late.”

Competing in a high-level pageant like Miss USA can be nerve-wracking, but with training, a contestant can deal with it, Garcia said. The Miss USA pageant took place in Las Vegas. Fifty women competed in it. “For 20 days, we rehearsed, did interviews, did a few things with local charities,” she said. “You know it’s a competition. But you make the best of it. You get to know each other. You know that it’s a lot smoother if you make friends than if you make enemies.”

Contrary to the pervasive stereotypes, pageant contestants aren’t bimbos. “You have to be smart to be in a pageant,” Garcia said. “(The judges) want someone with a good foundation who has ambitions. They want someone with a career goal in mind, (someone) who’s a good role model.”

Garcia didn’t win a scholarship or much money from winning the Miss Florida pageant or competing in the Miss USA pageant. (She received \$300 for placing in the Top 15 in the latter event.) But



Lissette Garcia, Miss Florida

she didn’t go home empty-handed at the Miss Florida USA pageant because the sponsor gives the winner gifts.

“For instance, La Casa Hermosa dressed me in gowns and dresses my entire year,” Garcia wrote in an email. “Florida Hair Extensions did my hair for an entire year as well. Marcolin gave me Roberto Cavalli eyeglasses, and Fernando Wong also dressed me for the year.”

Dr. Oz
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prefer to start moderately. The most important part is simply to start your lifestyle change, not how quickly you make that start.

Q: Eating is often a social activity but, often, for elderly people, there are not too many opportunities to eat together, and cooking for one can be a burden. Consequently, elderly people are found to be malnourished. What kinds of things do you think people can do to help, say, a parent or a neighbor find more joy around food?

A: Yes, eating is often an important social occasion, and it’s always more enjoyable to eat if you can share a meal. As people age, their diets often become more

At the Miss USA pageant, “I received a lot of gifts from the sponsors as well.”

But more important than the perks was the confidence she gained from the pageants. Competing in them opens up your personality, Garcia said. Before competing in pageants, she was reserved and lacked self-esteem, she said. “Being in pageants made me believe in myself. I realized my potential in industry. I became business-minded and strong.

“I wouldn’t be having this full-blown conversation without (being in) the pageants,” she added.

Before becoming Miss Florida, Garcia was a student at Miami Dade College, studying to be a physician’s assistant. After acing the Florida contest, she decided to go for what she really wanted to do. Now, Garcia is a junior at Dade majoring in journalism and mass communications.

She’s doing more than just hitting the books. In addition to being a

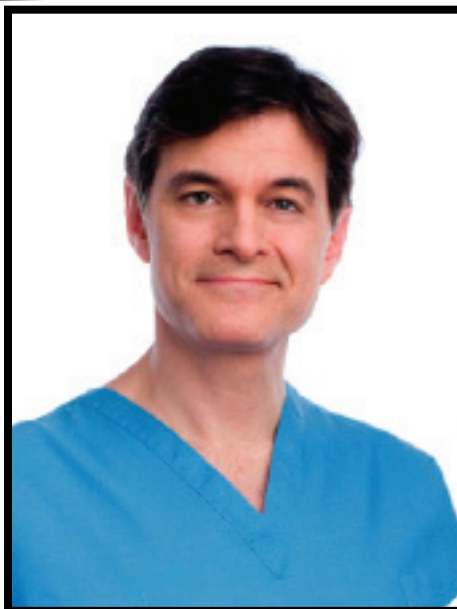
student, she is an associate producer and reporter trainee for WPIG TV (Local 10) in Miami. “I get to tell a story on TV,” she said. “I’ve always been a storyteller.”

Garcia hasn’t given up on her other dream either. “I’m still taking acting classes,” she said, adding that her experience competing in pageants will help her when she auditions for roles. “It will give me confidence.”

What advice does Garcia have for people with disabilities who want to compete in beauty pageants? “It’s all in if you believe in yourself,” she said. “If you believe it in your heart, go for it. What’s the worst that can happen? It’s better to try and know the end result than to live a life thinking ‘What if?’”

Kathi Wolfe is a writer and poet. She is a contributor to the anthology “Beauty Is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability,” a Publisher’s Weekly Top Ten Fall 2011 poetry book.

Photographs provided by Lissette Garcia



Dr. Oz

limited, and many seniors lose an interest in eating. Having meals can become a chore rather than an occasion. Researchers have found that seniors with more social contacts had healthier diets with more nutritious calories and fruits/vegetables compared with seniors with few social contacts. So whether you’re

able to eat with others or need to eat alone, just having a strong network of friends and acquaintances results in healthier eating habits in the elderly.

Q: Different diets are recommended for people who have various conditions. For example, parents with kids on the autism spectrum might consider using a gluten-free/casein-free (GFCF) diet, since many people have found developmental delays to change for the better when gluten and casein are eliminated. People diagnosed with MS and Lyme disease also might seek a gluten-free diet. Do you see any merit to avoiding gluten and other foods like casein that might cause various symptoms to flare up?

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We Remember...

Matthew P. Sapolin (March 12th, 1970 – Nov. 29th, 2011). Sapolin, the New York City disabilities commissioner, died of cancer at the age of 41.



Sapolin, who was blind, had served as commissioner for the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities since the post was created in 2006. In that role, he pushed to make New York City’s building code more accommodating to people with disabilities, created a mentoring program and led an effort to freeze rents for some disabled New Yorkers.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg appointed Sapolin executive director of the Office for People with Disabilities in 2002. Before that, Sapolin was co-executive director for the Queens Independent Living Center. Previously, he was coordinator of the Client Assistance Program for the Center for Independence of the Disabled of New York.

He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in public health administration at New York University and became an adjunct professor at the City University of New York.

At age 5, Sapolin lost his sight to bilateral retinoblastoma, a cancer that affects the optic nerve. He had battled cancer ever since, and it was that disease -- a rare form called leiomyosarcoma -- that killed him.

Sapolin was born in Islip, N.Y., and eventually became captain of his high school wrestling team. He went on to be co-captain of the wrestling team at New York University. In 1992, while competing against sighted wrestlers, he was profiled in Sports Illustrated when he had the Division III national championship within reach.

Sapolin played baseball, with the help of audio sensors in the bases and the ball, and helped create the first “beep baseball” tournament in NYC in 2010. He also played drums, guitar and bass and was “a fantastic chess player, in part because of his computerlike memory,” Bloomberg said.

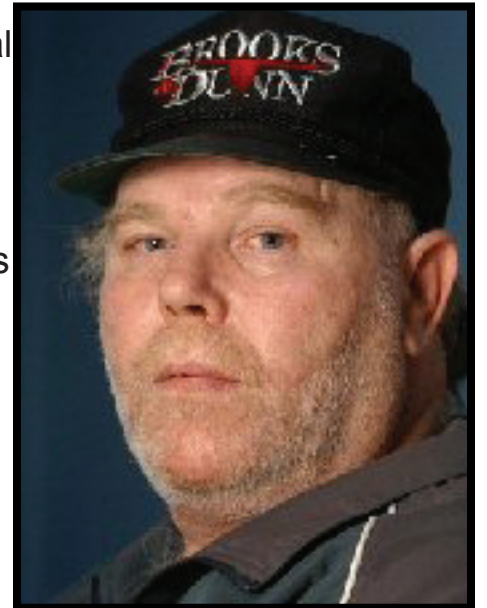
“I think what strikes me is what a fighter he was,” said Carol Robles-Román, NYC deputy mayor for legal affairs. “He was tenacious and he was an advocate to the nth degree, but he was always professional, collaborative and collegial. Those words don’t necessarily go together, but in Matt’s case, they really did.”

In remarks he delivered at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Bloomberg said that one of Sapolin’s “proudest accomplishments” was developing guidelines “to help architects design buildings and spaces that are accessible for all. Already, many other cities, states and even countries are using our guidelines as a blueprint for their own.”

Sapolin, he said, helped make Yankee Stadium and the National September 11 Memorial accessible to everyone.

Sapolin is survived by his wife, Candra, and their two children, Trevor and Toscani.

Ricky Wyatt (Jan. 23rd, 1954 -- Nov. 1st, 2011). Wyatt was the lead plaintiff in a landmark class-action federal lawsuit protesting conditions in an Alabama hospital. The suit led to a judgment in 1971 that gave the federal government control of Alabama’s mental institutions and set national guidelines for mental care that came to be called the Wyatt Standards.



Wyatt was 57. The cause of death was not known.

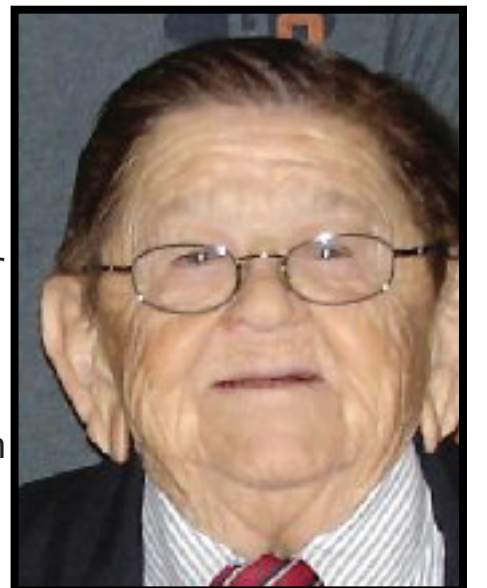
“The enormity of what this case accomplished cannot be overstated,” Judge Myron Thompson of Federal District Court in Montgomery, Ala., said when he returned Alabama’s mental health system to state control in 2003. “The principles of humane treatment of people with mental illness and mental retardation embodied in this litigation have become part of the fabric of law in this country and, indeed, international law.”

Wyatt was a rambunctious Alabama teenager who had broken windows, overturned a school desk or two, and been in and out of group homes. His probation officer decided he needed to be committed to a mental institution. His aunt, his legal guardian, agreed. At age 14, he was sent to crowded and understaffed Bryce State Hospital in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Among more than 5,000 patients, he was the youngest by a decade. Though he was never found to have any illness, he was given large doses of Thorazine and other psychoactive drugs regularly. He was placed in a rehabilitation program for drugs and alcohol, though he had used neither.

“The worst thing was that I knew there was nothing wrong with me,” Wyatt said in a 2009 interview in an Alabama Department of Mental Health newsletter.

Wyatt’s survivors include his mother; his sister, Kathy King; and his brother, Ronnie.

Karl Slover (Sept. 23rd, 1918 – Nov. 15th, 2011). Slover, one of the last surviving actors who played a Munchkin in the 1939 film “The Wizard of Oz,” died of cardiopulmonary arrest in a Georgia hospital at the age of 93.



Slover, who was best known for playing the lead trumpeter in the Munchkins’ band, also had roles as a townsman and soldier in the film, said John Fricke, author of “100 Years of Oz” and five other books on the movie and its star, Judy Garland. Slover, 4-foot-5, was one of the tiniest male Munchkins in the movie.

Slover was born Karl

NYC Taxis
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proceeds fill the city's coffers. In addition, the proposed bill authorized the sale of 30,000 street hail permits for "livery" cars, or nonyellow taxis. The latter provision, which some viewed as another revenue-raising tactic, required no accessibility in the livery car system. The bill was never signed into law by Cuomo.

New York City has a complex taxi and car services system. The 13,237 yellow taxis operate mostly in the borough of Manhattan and to and from area airports. Livery cars, black cars and limousines, operate throughout the five boroughs of the city, with livery cars often referred to as the "taxis" of the outer boroughs and upper Manhattan. Disability advocates have recognized the importance of accessibility to livery cars for many years because they would provide affordable transportation, just as yellow taxis do.

Then in October, a New York City-based attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice filed a statement of Interest with the presiding judge in the federal court case. The statement led to some remarks on his radio show and in the press by NYC Mayor Bloomberg that some considered outrageous. The mayor stated, for instance, that it's dangerous for disabled people to go "in the street to hail a cab," that it's "hard for drivers to have a dialogue" with people with disabilities, and that PWDs don't provide "good tips" to taxi drivers.

On Oct. 20th, the TLC approved the new wheelchair-accessible automobile, the MV-1, for use as a yellow taxi in New York City. The MV-1 is available with an optional clean natural gas power train that is environmentally friendly and a benefit to

individuals with respiratory conditions.

In November, Sen. Harkin said he would do everything he could to challenge the NYC taxi fleet's "blatant discrimination." That same month, Harkin held a hearing of the Senate Housing, Employment, Labor and Pensions Committee that included testimony from U.S. Access Board Executive Director David Capozzi and independent living leaders Marca Bristo and Billy Altom concerning their thoughts on wheelchair-accessible taxis.

And then, on Nov. 22nd, there was a lengthy session on the topic in a New York City federal court, concluding with the presiding judge announcing that he would render a decision before Christmas. Disability advocates in attendance reported that the judge was fairly unreceptive to the TLC defense.

Then came December. On the 20th, Cuomo hosted a meeting, referred to as a "summit," that included disability advocates, industry representatives and the TLC. An agreement was hammered out that requires the TLC to prepare a plan that will ensure accessibility of all taxicabs, liveries and a new class of hail-accessible interborough livery vehicles. This would require revising the bill passed by the State Legislature. The plan is to be implemented over a period of years through the gradual phase-in of accessible vehicles to the fleet.

The Disabled Accessibility Plan must be developed in consultation with disability rights groups and other stakeholders, made available for comment by the public and by the New York City Council, and approved by the New York State Department of Transportation. Eventually,

all New York City yellow taxis will be wheelchair accessible, and 20% of the new hail-accessible livery vehicles, or 3,600 such vehicles, will be wheelchair accessible.

On the 23rd, U.S. District Court Judge George B. Daniels issued his decision, writing in part: "Plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment on their Title II, subtitle A claim is granted. The TLC subjects disabled persons who must use wheelchairs and scooters to discrimination in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As a direct result of the TLC's policies and actions, those disabled persons are not provided meaningful access to the benefits of New York City taxicab service."

For disability advocates, the December decisions would seem to indicate total victory. But some are being cautious.

Lex M. Frieden, chairman of the United Spinal Association Board of

Directors, noted in a Dec. 24th email, "Another step forward, but it's not over until it's over!" Frieden included in bold typeface in his message a statement from one of the NYC attorneys who represented the TLC, stating that the commission is "considering the next steps to take in court in light of this ruling."

And disability advocates in New York will be watching to see if the Dec. 20th agreement is passed by the State Legislature. If the agreement, in the form of a bill, passes both the Assembly and the Senate, the governor's signature would then make it the law of the state.

Terry Moakley was employed by United Spinal Association for 36 years and is a past president of both United Spinal and the Association of Travel Instruction. He served as chairman of the New York City Taxis for All Campaign from 1996 through 2006. Currently, he is a member of the NCIL's Transportation Committee.

Voters
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Sheryl Dawn.

Andrews, Dougherty and Franks also have high praise for the president's many accomplishments.

Why then are these individuals thinking they will not vote in 2012 for the president?

For one thing, they say that the president is weak when dealing with Israel.

In addition, said Andrews, "he, the president, is a low-ranking amateur boxer when dealing with Congress on deficit and debt issues." Andrews believes Senator Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., the Senate minority leader, is like a heavyweight boxer with killer instincts and

skills, who uses them brilliantly against the president.

The quintet also believes that the president has bailed out Wall Street and ignored Main Street.

"Mark and I have lost our houses, our jobs, our futures," said Dougherty, who added that he believes the administration has paid no attention to Main Street's economic woes. Dougherty is legally blind. He has been unemployed for three and a half years. His wife, Karen, is a nurse and also works 20 hours a week as a cashier.

"Where are the jobs for me?" he asked.

Franks is a paraplegic and a veteran of Iraq

Voters
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Product Testing**'Sturdy' MV-1 Making Inroads Into Accessible Transportation***By Alan St. James*

"For the first time, people with disabilities have a personal transportation choice."

George Whalen was speaking about the 2011 First Mobility Vehicle (MV-1), designed from the ground up specifically to transport people who use wheelchairs or scooters.

"The MV-1 is the first, and currently only, vehicle that is delivered accessible direct from the factory with no aftermarket conversion necessary," said Whalen, co-owner of Whalen Chevrolet in Greenwich, N.Y., one of three dealerships in New York state initially franchised to sell the vehicle. "It was designed by the Vehicle Production Group (VPG), is sold nationwide and (is) engineered and built in America according to the principles of universal design so that it can be used by just about anyone."

Sounds great, but in the real world, how much competition does it truly offer to the traditional converted wheelchair-accessible minivan now used by many people with disabilities? After travelling to Whalen's dealership, checking out the MV-1 and taking a test drive, I'd say it's a viable choice for many people with disabilities who use wheelchairs. Although the MV-1 isn't for everyone just yet, Whalen and Matt Brown, the company's sales manager, said tweaks and improvements to correct that are already in development.

"Right now, the MV-1 does not include things you'll find in a converted van, like a driver's transfer seat, power doors, remote switches or power rear lift gate," said Brown, who was

hired by Whalen because of his extensive disability background. "VPG had to start somewhere, and they decided to initially create a vehicle that will serve the largest group of people with disabilities who use wheelchairs – the 75 percent who can't or don't choose to transfer from their wheelchair to the driver's seat and drive themselves."

"The MV-1 taps into a huge market for the majority of people with disabilities who can benefit right now," added Whalen, a power chair user himself. "Many enhancements are being worked on and are on the way so that soon the remaining 25 percent who do choose to drive will be able to transfer comfortably or drive from their wheelchair as well."

Brown said several individuals have already purchased the vehicle for their personal use, and he expects many more buyers as awareness about the MV-1 grows.

"The vehicle costs \$43,325 delivered and ready to roll out the door," Brown said. "That's \$8,000 to \$10,000 less expensive than the typical converted minivan. A lot of well-thought-out technology and usability is packed into the vehicle at that price."

In fact, the MV-1 took eight years to develop and was conceived and created by some of the foremost minds in the disability and transportation fields. "VPG and the people they worked with were determined to get it right," Whalen said. "They were and remain committed – passionate – about filling a void in disability transportation and building a vehicle that is carefully

thought-out, purpose-built, fully accessible, easy to work on and safe."

Depending on how you order, Brown said the MV-1 can be set up to run on different types of fuel. The standard Ford 4.6L V8 engine has an estimated 350-mile range, according to VPG figures. There is also a clean-burning compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling system available with an estimated range of about 290 miles. "Most people will probably order the gasoline engine, but the CNG option is great if the MV-1 is being used as a taxi," Brown said.

The fleet and taxi companies will probably be the largest market for the MV-1, at least initially, according to Whalen. "There is a huge market and demand for fleet and taxi use, especially in the larger cities where taxi companies are mostly owned by large businesses. They buy new cabs, then lease them to the cabbies."

Whalen said his dealership has already sold more than 140 of the vehicles to large transit companies in several states but added that New York City remains problematic because "Mayor (Michael) Bloomberg's administration doesn't really understand about the vehicle and the difference it can make in people's lives."

Recently, the MV-1 was officially approved for taxi use on the streets of New York, but it still faces numerous legal and other challenges before it can become the city's "taxi of tomorrow." Currently, only 231 (2 percent) of the 13,237 cabs in New York City are wheelchair accessible, while there are roughly 60,000 New Yorkers who use wheelchairs. The U.S. Department of Justice has said the likelihood of a non-disabled person hailing a cab in the city within 10

minutes is 87 percent, compared with just 3 percent for a person with a disability.

The United Spinal Association's Jim Weisman is a staunch advocate of the MV-1. He has publicly questioned some of Bloomberg's paratransit comments and joined with others to criticize his administration's assertion that "wheelchair-accessible cabs are inefficient because people in wheelchairs find it difficult to hail cabs (and generally may not tip as well), while able-bodied people find it uncomfortable to ride in vehicles with such poor suspension."



"Instead of transit operators purchasing, operating, maintaining and replacing trucks, buses or vans, they can employ private taxi companies to transport almost every paratransit customer at a much lower cost," said Weisman, when asked about the MV-1's fleet and taxi applications. "It is my opinion it will revolutionize paratransit."

That's not to suggest, however, that the MV-1 currently is only usable as a taxi, according to Whalen. "I've heard some people make that claim but, many times, they're the same people who have a vested interest in selling you a converted minivan. The truth is many of those people are scared to death of the MV-1 and the impact it's already making on the paratransit industry."

MV-1
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MV-1
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"In any case, a taxi is designed to be reliable and durable and to withstand around-the-clock, often extreme, abuse in all kinds of weather for hundreds of thousands of miles over its lifetime. What, exactly, is wrong with buying something that is built as strongly as that?"

Brown invited me to try out the MV-1 and take it for a short test drive. He also hopped into the driver's seat and took me on a longer drive so I could experience the vehicle as a passenger.

I saw a number of innovative features as I looked around the MV-1. The vehicle appears to have a more spacious entryway and interior than a minivan – large enough so that wheelchair and scooter users can enter and turn easily, and then park next to the driver. The low step-in height allows ambulatory passengers to walk inside the vehicle and sit in seats designed to accommodate all types of riders. Ten universal floor tracks can secure wheelchairs and scooters in a variety of positions, all of which are accessible from one of the seatbelt locations.

I use a power wheelchair and had no trouble navigating the ramp – which is non-slip and can be extended as necessary – and getting into the vehicle. I did have a bit of a struggle when I transferred into the driver's seat but, in fairness, the MV-1 wasn't fitted with a transfer seat, power base or many other power options that would have made my transfer much easier. There currently is no provision to drive while remaining in a wheelchair, although Brown assured me that option is in

MV-1
Continued on page 14

E-Books
Continued from page 2

e-book publishing being able to highlight passages, insert notes and listen to the content, I increase my comprehension and productivity. As a result, I am a better researcher."

With e-book publishing, Brown can insert direct links to products or websites. In addition, there are no required plug-ins, it works with Flash technology and HTML, all pages can be printed, e-books can be downloaded in PDF, and there is an interactive zoom on every page.

"E-book publishing is 100 percent eco-friendly: No trees are destroyed," said Brown, an environmentalist.

Kinney and Brown praise e-book publishing companies who add accessibility features to e-books. One such company is VitalSource™ Technologies Inc., which develops e-book solutions. Its products and services enable publishers and other partners to create and deliver textbooks and other content directly to users' computers in its Vital Book file format.

One of the company's hallmarks is providing clients with accessibility features for individuals with disabilities.

"VitalSource is committed to providing superior accessibility options for its desktop, online and mobile applications," said Kent Freeman, company president. "We believe accessibility is a fundamental part of our e-textbook solution and that each and every user should be fully supported for every title they use with any of our applications."

VitalSource works with the National Federation for the Blind, the American Foundation for the Blind,

and Tech For All to review, evaluate and make solutions available. It accomplishes those goals by taking advantage of the computer's built-in solutions (that is, accessibility features) or by supporting open-source alternatives (free applications). And it works with third-party vendors to provide user support.

VitalSource ensures a highly functional application for navigation, display, and other operations, and it guarantees Section 508 (the amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that mandates accessibility) and WCAG (web content accessibility guidelines) 2.0 compliance. It leverages operating system-based utilities Voiceover, JAWS, NVDA and Window-Eyes. (Its voluntary product accessibility template is available at www.vitalsource.com/508.)

For Windows users with the NVDA (nonvisual desktop access) screen reader, the company's Bookshelf supports version 2011.1.1 or later. NVDA is a free and open-source screen reader for the Microsoft Windows operating system. It provides feedback through synthetic speech and Braille, and it enables blind and visually-impaired persons to access computers running Windows for no more cost than a sighted person.

For Windows users who have the Window-Eyes screen reader, Bookshelf supports version 7.5.1 or later. For Windows users with JAWS (of which Kinney is one), Bookshelf online supports version 11 or later.

Kinney knows the pitfalls associated with self-publishing e-books: no advances, lower sales, piracy and a lack of reviews.

Kinney and Brown have plenty of work ahead. Kinney believes he has

completed nearly 50 percent of his research and that he will finish in three years. He believes he would not be where he is without e-books. He believes e-book publishing is a boon to people with disabilities.

"E-books tear down information barriers for people with disabilities," he said. "By doing so, it expands educational and job opportunities for them." E-books can be purchased and downloaded from a website, CD (compact disk), floppy disk, or even a zip disk. Most e-books are purchased on the Internet. The process starts with the purchase of one or more books with a credit card or PayPal transfer.

"Once I purchase an e-book, the online store sends an email to my web address that only I can use to download the file," Kinney said.

If the downloading fails, Kinney is given additional time to complete the transaction. "Once the file is on my computer, I no longer need to be connected to the Internet." An exception is an e-book designed to be read only on the Internet using HTML code in a web browser.

E-books come in various formats. The most popular are Adobe (PDF), Microsoft's Reader (LIT), Mobipocket (PRC), and Amazon's Kindle.

Kinney uses e-book publishing for projects besides his dissertation; currently, he is writing a book on online accessibility. "I am richer aesthetically because of e-books."

John M. Williams can be reached at jwilliams@atechnews.com. His website can be found at www.atechnews.com.



Dr. Oz
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A: This is a very controversial subject, and much of the research is still ongoing. Most of the intriguing evidence is surrounding the use of GFCF diets for autism. The history behind all of the controversy is that earlier studies found that, in people with autism, there were abnormal levels of proteins from gluten and casein in bodily fluids (such as urine and cerebrospinal fluid). And some postulate that these peptides may alter brain opioid activity. However, there are very few strong studies that have been done. In fact, a large review found that only one quality study can really be considered, and that study only had 10 participants, meaning the findings are very hard to generalize to the entire public. Nevertheless, the results from the study are conflicting. Parts of the results suggest a minor benefit in some autistic traits, while things such as linguistic and cognitive skills and motor abilities had no benefit. In short, the results suggest that there may be some scientific merit to the reasoning behind a GFCF diet, but we really need better and larger studies to determine the full effect, if any, that GFCF diets have on autism. For this reason, I only recommend a GFCF diet for people (who) are specifically allergic to these proteins, such as those with celiac disease, because the allergy is quite severe. Plus, a gluten-free diet, if not necessary, is really not ideal and is a contributor to the obesity epidemic in this country.

It's a surprising statistic, but a study found that 81 percent of people suffering from celiac disease (gluten intolerance) who followed a gluten-free diet gained weight. That's because there is a common misconception that

anything labeled "gluten free" must be good for you. However, many of these gluten-free foods are higher in calories and carbs, so don't immediately think these foods are healthy. Furthermore, gluten-free diets have been shown to decrease healthy gut bacteria and increase the amount of dangerous pathogenic bacteria in the intestines. This increases your risk for infections and a depressed immune system, which can be a serious problem for any children.

The bottom line: Don't give in to the hype just yet, but if you have a gluten allergy, know that there are ways to go gluten-free naturally with a diet rich in whole and unprocessed foods, vegetables and lean cuts of protein. And if you are going to go on a gluten-free diet, be very careful that you read all nutrition labels and ingredient lists. (The fact that) there are hidden sources of gluten in some of the additives may surprise you.

Amy Halloran, a writer, lives in upstate New York with her sons and husband.



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Disability Rights
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can't sit this out or wait for an invitation. They will only address our issues if we are there and do the work. We made sure we tuned OWS leadership into disability issues by talking with them."

OWS, she said, serves as an umbrella and podium for all groups experiencing oppression. "Many of our people have been interviewed by major media about the issues we face."

Amber Smock of Chicago ADAPT agreed. "Chicago ADAPTs have been regularly attending Occupy Chicago general assemblies and arrest days."

The "Occupy" movement, Smock said, has served to radicalize many people with disabilities whom more established advocates might not have been able to reach. The movement offers such a broad platform that there is an issue that speaks to everyone, she said, adding that because it lacks a leader, there is room for everyone to view her or himself as a leader. "For oppressed communities, this is very affirming."

Smock believes Occupy Chicago protesters have been well-informed by participants with disabilities. "I think the non-disabled people pay attention to our folks and respect their opinions in part because many also know that the disability community in our town is a strong, radical, organizing force. Our people are heard and respected by the Occupy leaders, which is pretty much the most important act of integration."

Newer leaders in Chicago ADAPT have been the most active in supporting Occupy Chicago. "It is important to support their emergence as disability movement leaders," Smock said. "I

think Chicago ADAPT, as the pre-eminent, grassroots disability group in Chicago, is the most appropriate to take the lead on Occupy for our community. And everyone has to take responsibility for real inclusion. That's the tough part."

Not all disability activists in the Occupy movement reside in major cities. Reporter and well-known advocate Michael Reynolds was arrested at Occupy Maine. Reynolds, who was covering the protest for Ability Maine, a weekly online news magazine, handed off his camera and was later cited for criminal trespass and failure to disperse. He was to be sentenced in January 2012.

T.K. Small, an attorney and disability rights activist from NYC, is a longtime student of social movements who has been working with OWS. Small is encouraged by "Occupy," especially in the context of the history of social movements.

"Occupy is trying to completely change the terms of the debate," he said. "They are bringing something new to the table. Activists with disabilities need to be part of that."

Small noted that a number of people with disabilities have had positive experiences participating in the movement, while others have felt excluded. He does not think that "occupiers" are any better versed in disability rights than is mainstream society.

"Unless we participate, they won't know about disability issues or that things 'occupiers' with disabilities need are more complicated than that of non-disabled 'occupiers.' A big part of Occupy is comprised of the labor movement. Consumer direction is contrary to their labor outlook. I am willing to fight with them, and I

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cannot do that if I am not at the table.”

Small believes disability activists should be involved because “in the face of huge cuts in government programs, we need to be at every table.”

The movement, he said, is developing. There are work groups on a number of topics that, in turn, are creating demands. He noted that history, including disability rights history, shows that movements are not static; they evolve and grow.

“If you have a seat at the table in the beginning of a movement, you have some control over how the movement grows and the issues that are key,” Small said.

Participation in Occupy is not without controversy. Some disability rights leaders are concerned that it will drain activist energy from the crucial issues that affect Americans with disabilities, and they note that most social movements have leaders and clear demands. Occupy, as yet, has neither.

Bob Kafka, national ADAPT organizer and disability policy wonk, is concerned about activists with disabilities focusing all their organizing energy on the Occupy movement. Kafka, a disability leader since the late 1970s and an adept organizer trained in the Saul Alinsky style by Shel Trapp, is aware that issues focusing on disability programs, funding and policies are more likely to increase participation because they have a direct effect on people's everyday lives.

After experiencing Occupy Austin, Kafka said it was “like the 1970s: great energy, great music, creative people wanting

to change society. I'm supportive of Occupy but have some concerns. Since it is so difficult to organize people around our disability issues, we should not get too diverted. It's a matter of priorities and emphasis.”

Kafka detailed the effect of Medicaid cuts on consumer-directed community-based services and noted that centers for independent living (CILs) in Topeka, Kansas; Rochester, N.Y.; and Philadelphia, as well as thousands of people outside those centers, have faced funding cuts that threaten to do away with critical services. He fears the same happening to CILs across the nation.

He sees the problem with disability participation in Occupy as an issue of priorities and the use of organizing energy. There may be 56 million people with disabilities in the country, but not many get involved in systems advocacy, yet alone go out into the streets to protest. If hundreds of activists are working with Occupy, they are diverted from the concrete issues critical to independent living and the goal of creating an accessible, integrated society, he said.

Kafka, like many others, has stated that defined, articulated demands are key to a movement that seeks to effect social change. Though Occupy seems to be against big banks and big corporations, there are no stated demands.

“Right now, I don't see them addressing poverty or Medicaid in any meaningful way,” he said. “It's not either/or. I've been called a nattering nabob of negativism. But the Medicaid issue is not some generic, bumper-sticker slogan. We have a looming, specific attack on the basic support services that keep millions of disabled people in the community.

“The attack on Medicaid is a clear and present danger. Our Medicaid system is going to be transformed in next few years. The crisis of cutting Medicaid programs is not just coming from Republican whackos,” said Kafka, who noted that Democratic governors in Washington state and California are implementing severe cuts to disability services and supports.

Kafka believes that disability advocates' energy and focus need to be on the My Medicaid Matters campaign.

“We are excited about the energy in Occupy,” he said. “That's understandable, but how does our coalition-building at OWS help us in the My Medicaid Matters campaign? The devil we know (Medicaid) is being attacked over and over again. Just because it is not a 'super committee' target, every proposal on the table is for a block grant or making massive cuts. Obama has offered 60 to 70 billion dollars in cuts. That is from an administration that is trying to protect Medicaid.”

Kafka noted that cuts in provider rates and program services are having a devastating effect.

“All politics is local. All organizing is local. We need to put as much of our time and energy into state-by-state organizing around the cuts coming forward in the next five to 10 years.”

ADAPT leader LaSpina said activists with disabilities can fight Medicaid cuts and participate in Occupy, which, she believes, can be the movement that gets politicians to remember that they answer to the people.

“Take responsibility for the change you want,” she said. “The potential for what could happen is immense.

MV-1
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development.

Once behind the wheel, I found that the MV-1 drove and handled much like any other car. During my short test drive, words such as “strong,” “durable” and “sturdy” came to mind several times. On a longer back roads drive with Brown at the wheel and with me riding shotgun, I felt comfortable and securely strapped into my wheelchair. I did require his assistance with the tie-downs.

“Though the MV-1 is built like a truck, it rides like a car because of its body-on-frame construction and independent rear suspension,” said Brown during the test drive. “It also has electronic stability control, traction control and a proven drive line that should last 150,000-200,000 miles. Vans are OK for some people, but any time you reweld a unibody, there are compromises with strength, safety and rust protection. I believe the MV-1 is more durable, safer and more dependable.”

In the event the MV-1 should break down, Whalen said VPG is serious about providing outstanding service.

“They offer roadside assistance, and a hotline is available 24 hours a day,” he said. “They are committed to do whatever it takes to keep their customers happy and the vehicle on the road. I have a networking agreement with five other dealers in the state to service the MV-1 if it breaks down in an area not near an MV-1 dealer. I also personally promise every customer that they will be taken care of when I sell them an MV-1.”

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Fear
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a relationship with it, you arrive at your next move; an awareness that you deserve to be the decision maker in your life, not the fear. And while there will be times when the fear makes the decision (they certainly are times like this for me) this does not mean you're weak nor does it mean you're a failure. It simply means that fear can be one tough opponent. How nice of me to tell you something you probably know already.

Once the initial acceptance steps are under your belt so to speak, the first step on the action strategies front arrives. And it arrives in the form of a phrase, an action phrase if you will. It's okay to be afraid, don't let it scare you. On the surface, I suppose, this may sound overly simplistic or downright foolish. It is anything but. Breaking through the fear wall requires a willingness to walk with the presence of fear – that other “person” in the room – at your side for awhile. The action phrase, It's okay to be afraid don't let it scare you, is a reminder that the fear alongside you is not a danger to you. Unpleasant? Yes. Mind bending at times? Yes. But dangerous? No. What does all this mean? It means the fear is survivable, even though I know damned well it doesn't feel that way at times.

I live with the daily presence of fear for several reason. An ample supply of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) as a result of being held up and shot in the head as well as being under gunpoint a few times, and a brain injury in which the brain damage makes the presence and management of fear a formidable task.

Yet, there is one thing that is never lost on me and I hope will never be lost on you. It is the person who

deserves to be in charge of their life, not the fear. Don't miss that, I beg of you. Don't miss that. You are the one who deserves to be running your life, not the fear. My fear stops me from getting out of my house as much as I would like to get out of my house. But in my war with fear – it is not a bad idea to declare war on it – there are times I do get out and go for walks and once I am out, the fear at my side begins to fade and soon I am smiling and enjoying the fresh air and the birds and the sun and, hell, the rain! It's all good.

So, give yourself permission to declare war on the fear that gets in the way of you living the life that you want. You may win some and lose some of the skirmishes with this formidable opponent, but, you stay in fight, you'll win the war. Remember, it's okay to be afraid, don't let it scare you.

Good luck.

Peter Kahrmann is an advocate for people with disabilities and writes a blog on disability issues. He resides in New York state.

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Whalen said he and the people behind VPG have “a strong belief” in the MV-1 and “a passion that it's the right product” for many people with disabilities.

“This is not about George Whalen making more money,” Whalen said. “This is a passion VPG and I share to better people's lives. When people ask me why now, I say why did it take so long? The MV-1 is here to stay – It's long overdue.”

Alan St. James is a professional editor and writer and a longtime disability advocate. He enjoys traveling, cruising with his classic muscle car and musical theater. He lives in Albany, N. Y.

Group
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disability access. This was resoundingly applauded by COAT members and affiliates because, Simpson said, the next front is implementation of the communications and video accessibility act.

“Affiliate member representatives are still very active in the implementation process,” she said. “They monitor FCC-proposed rules and comment into the record to ensure that intent and purposes are not narrowed or messed up. Likewise, as a result of the act, there are several FCC advisory committees. COAT members are instrumental in ensuring disability accessibility needs are properly addressed.”

Simpson no longer works for AAPD but continues her involvement with COAT as a volunteer co-chair because she said there's still a lot to be done.

“We need to stay on top of accessibility and usability of health-care information technology to make sure patients, family members and health-care industry workers with disabilities can use the systems as they become more and more IT-enabled,” she said. “There is a lot of work to be done in regard to accessible household appliances, whether or not they are Internet-enabled! There is also insufficient research to measure use of broadband technologies by people with disabilities, including seniors. Until we know more about how we use stuff now, how can we ensure all the benefits get to everyone? Wireless enablement is transforming commercial transactions (banking, shopping, utility monitoring, etc.). I'd like to see more exploration of the experiences of people with disabilities and their households included in social science studies of these transformative

occurrences.

“One of our fears that drove the formation of COAT was that people with disabilities and their households can get left behind, forgotten, or not considered important as technology advances. There is plenty of history to show that unless we take significant steps, this is the reality. The ideal is that technology out of the box, at the store, at the interface, works for anyone, no matter what their human condition. We're moving in that direction, but it will take the concerted acts of thousands of activists to ensure this.

“Every one of us should become the more sophisticated technology user that the future is demanding. No more settling. No more clumsy work-arounds. No more hand-me-downs. (We want) the good stuff -- accessible and usable – now!”

Mike Ervin is a writer based in Chicago. His blog, Smart Ass Cripple, appears at smartasscripple.blogspot.com.

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and Afghanistan. He has been unemployed for four years, and his wife and three children left him two years ago. He denounces the president for not doing enough to force the Republicans to pass jobs legislation.

“The Republicans have a job; I don't,” he said. “The president is a toothless and clawless wolf when dealing with Speaker of the House John Boehner, majority leader Eric Cantor and ... McConnell.”

He believes the president caved in last year when dealing with the Republicans on extending former President George W. Bush's tax cuts for the

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We Remember

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Kosiczky in what is now the Czech Republic, and he was the only child in his family to be dwarf sized.

“In those uninformed days, his father tried witch doctor treatments to make him grow,” Fricke said. “Knowing Karl and his triumph over his early life, you can’t help but celebrate the man at a time like this.”

He was buried in the back yard, immersed in heated oil until his skin blistered and then attached to a stretching machine at a hospital, all in the attempt to make him become taller. Eventually he was sold by his father at age 9 to a traveling show in Europe, Fricke said.

Slover continued to perform into his late 20s, when he moved to the United States, changed his name and appeared in circuses as part of a vaudeville group known as the Singer Midgets. The group’s 30 performers became the nucleus of the Munchkins.

--Compiled from various sources

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Nadina LaSpina being arrested during Occupy Wall Street action in NYC. Many people with disabilities have participated in occupations throughout the country.

We can’t imagine. It depends on how it grows. It is an awakening.”

Janine Bertram Kemp, a writer and activist, took refuge from Washington, D.C., by moving to the wilds of Zigzag, Ore. She is president of the local disability rights center and a proponent of the slogan “Nothing about us without us.”

Photograph by Paul Dagys

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wealthiest people in the country. He believes the president needs to tell the Republicans that extending the Bush tax cuts is non-negotiable -- and mean it.

Each of the five people interviewed believes the wealthiest people and corporations must pay their legal share of taxes. They oppose reducing the corporate income tax rate of 35 percent because “they don’t pay their legal rates now,” said Baker, a certified public accountant. “Reducing their rates to 25 percent won’t induce them to pay their taxes. Who are you kidding?”

In dealing with Israel, the five individuals believe the president is scared of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the issue of settlements.

“Where is the president’s spine when it comes to being an honest broker in the Middle East? He has none,” said Franks, who added, “I am a Jew.”

The five believe the president must show a lot of steel in dealing with Congress and the American public in 2012. They believe he must fight the Republicans, but on his turf. They believe the president must paint the Republicans as villains.

Carson echoed the sentiments of the others when he said, “If the president shows me he has the steel spine I think he has, he has my vote. Otherwise, I won’t vote.”

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