

# NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center

Fall 2010

## Happenings and Highlights

Hello and Season's Greetings from the NYS IRRC! The wonderful thing about reporting to funders is that at year's end, you have the opportunity to take stock of your accomplishments in black and white. So, as the fourth year of this wonderful work draws to a close, we would like to provide you with a few highlights of our activities since the Center began in 2007.

- The NYS IRRC website has been visited over 10,000 times from people all over the world.
- 121 people with disabilities have directly benefited from services delivered through our Recreation Referral Service.
- 2, 288 people have attended NYS IRRC training presentations.
- Nearly 550 Inclusivity Assessments have been conducted by dedicated students and volunteers. Thank you!!
- To date, 978 people have passed their Inclusion U Final Exam to become Certified Inclusivity Assessors, or CIAs! With several trainings lined up for 2011, we will soon be celebrating the 1,000<sup>th</sup> CIA with a special gift from the IRRC. Will you be number 1,000?? If you have not attended Inclusion U, register today for one of our upcoming trainings! For more information, call or email: (607) 753-4833 or [Inclusiverec@cortland.edu](mailto:Inclusiverec@cortland.edu).



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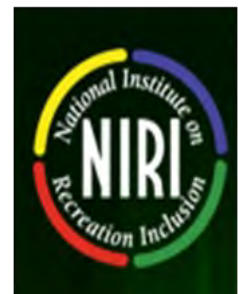
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On Saturday, November 6th, an extraordinary group of people came together to participate in our first Advanced Inclusion U training. As professionals and/or educators, all of those in attendance are instrumental figures in fostering Inclusion U in their regions. The day provided an opportunity to practice an Inclusivity Assessment and discuss resources for mentoring other trained assessors throughout NY and beyond. Many thanks to Tammy Sciera, Executive Director of the JM McDonald Center for providing the group access to the facility and participating in the assessment process! And, we offer our special thanks to all those who attended the training. We are grateful for your time and dedication!

Pictured left to right: Karen Boldis, Leiko Benson, Brandi Boden, Gail Lamberta, Janet Duncan, Carole Fraser, Janet Connolly, Mary Jo Archambault, Kerry Wiley, and Kirsten Impicciatore. Not pictured: Kathy Ambrosini

For the third year in a row, the New York State Inclusive Recreation Resource Center was selected to present at the National Institute on Recreation Inclusion's (NIRI) annual conference. Over the course of the three-hour session, attendees were provided with an overview of the work of the NYS IRRC, an introduction to the Inclusivity Assessment Tool, and information about how to provide Inclusion U trainings for their organizations. Marketing packets were distributed to several individuals who are interested in implementing the Inclusivity Assessment Tool in their states. Thank you NIRI for the opportunity to highlight the work of the NYS IRRC on a national level!



## Introducing the New York State Inclusive Recreation Resource Center's Newest Team Members!



Meet Amanda Lengauer! Amanda is the NYS IRRC's new 2010-2011 Graduate Assistant. Amanda is currently working on her master's degree in Outdoor Environmental Education at SUNY Cortland. She completed her undergraduate work in Physical Education with minor in Business Administration at St. Bonaventure. Amanda is originally from Syracuse, NY. She became interested in the recreation field after working at a summer camp for seven years, and now hopes to one day own her own summer camp. Amanda does a lot of volunteer work, such as her recent work with Charity Water, and says it has changed her perspective on the world. Her favorite hobbies include gardening and traveling.

*-contributed by Rachel Cohen*

Christina Rossettie is in her first year of the Therapeutic Recreation Graduate Studies Program at SUNY Cortland. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Communications from Edinboro University. Christina became interested in the field of recreation when her grandmother was placed in a long-term care facility. She would visit her grandmother often and notice the different therapeutic recreation opportunities patients would receive. Christina, who is originally from Corning, NY, fully enjoys being at Cortland and is excited to be the Student Worker for the NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center. When not studying or working, Christina enjoys walking her dog and traveling, but above all she loves spending time with her family, especially her nieces and nephews. The NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center is happy to have Christina as part of our staff!



*-contributed by Amanda Lengauer*



The NYS IRRC also welcomes Rachel Cohen as our newest student volunteer. Rachel is a junior at SUNY Cortland in the Therapeutic Recreation Program. She became involved with the center when she heard that they were looking for volunteers. Rachel really likes volunteering at the NYS IRRC because it is laid back and she does the work on her own time table. When Rachel is not volunteering or doing work for her classes, she enjoys barbequing and hanging out with her friends. Since deciding to major in Therapeutic Recreation, she has started joining other recreation students in activities such as hiking at Raquette Lake.

*-contributed by Christina Rossettie*

### Attention Certified Inclusivity Assessors!! Get the Tools You Need to Assess!!

Throughout 2010, Certified Inclusivity Assessors have increasingly contributed assessments of recreation sites and facilities for their regions to the on-line database. While the Inclusivity Assessment Tools are only available to those who have completed the Inclusion U training, all of the tools that Certified Inclusivity Assessors need are available on-line and can be accessed with a CIA password. If you are interested in completing an assessment, be sure that you have the most up-to-date versions of all of the tools by contacting the NYS IRRC at [Inclusiv-erec@cortland.edu](mailto:Inclusiv-erec@cortland.edu). The tools are available in Microsoft Word, allowing you to simply type in all of the assessment data you collect. We look forward to hearing from all of you as plan your next Inclusivity Assessment. Help us make a difference, one recreation site at a time!

## Finding A Way Back

After 34 years of teaching I was more than ready to retire. I looked forward to pursuing the outdoor activities that I loved and which provided me with quality of life. I was excited about the future, but little did I know that fate had other plans for me. In February 1999, while on vacation in the Caribbean, I was struck by a wave which drove me to the hard-packed bottom breaking four vertebrae in my neck and leaving me with quadriplegia. The accident took from me not only many normal functions, but also most of the skills I had developed which depended on them. One of the biggest concerns I had adjusting to my new life was the belief that with these limitations I would not be able to return to my outdoor pursuits. I resolved to approach this new life with Christopher Reeve's philosophy; he said "I refuse to allow a disability to determine how I will live my life."



My most enjoyable outdoor experience was hunting. I enjoyed using my skills to pursue wild game, primarily deer and turkeys. The woods were beautiful in the early spring and fall. Being able to rapidly cover large areas of land to get to where the turkeys were was enjoyable. To be able to conceal myself to avoid detection by these highly intelligent animals was a challenge. To pursue game this way after my accident was no longer possible. The challenges seemed almost insurmountable.

Refusing to give in to my disability, I was determined to hunt. But it quickly became evident that my old skills were not going to work, and that I would have to develop new ones if I had any chance at all of succeeding. Two things I had working for me were my attitude and determination. Using the Internet I found an apparatus which would allow me to fasten a gun to my wheelchair. However, I soon realized my fingers would be unable to pull the trigger. After a lot of trial and error I created an inexpensive trigger adapter that would allow me to fire my shotgun using my mouth. My arm movement was also limited, so using my mouth freed both hands to help steady the shotgun. A friend suggested covering snow fence with camouflage to create a blind that would cover my wheelchair. Finally, I had to find a place where the turkeys would be. Almost every day turkeys will visit a spot where they can "dust" themselves to remove mites and tiny pests from under their feathers. Friends constructed a blind in an area leading to a nearby dusting site. My efforts finally bore fruit this past May when I harvested my first post-accident gobbler. I love hunting because the game does not care that I am in a wheelchair, or that I fire the gun with my teeth and they do not feel sorry for me. To them I am just another predator. This seems like such a poignant story: man becomes disabled, man refuses to let his disability stop him from doing what he loves and after some effort man harvests a wild turkey. What the reader needs to understand is that the time from man becomes disabled to man harvests wild turkey was 11 years.

Instead of allowing limitations to dictate what you can and cannot do and looking at obstacles as problems to be dealt with consider them challenges to be solved. Look at failure not as a reason to give up, but rather as an opportunity for growth. I was determined that nothing was going to keep me from returning to the activities I loved so much and in the end my real joy is just spending time outdoors.

*-contributed by Rich Fabend*

## The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Wants to Hear from You!



New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is calling for writers to share inspirational stories of experiences in New York's great outdoors. From the simplest walk through the woods to meeting a challenge through an outdoor activity, we want to hear how you appreciate nature. The "Great Stories from the Great Outdoors" contest is open to all and runs through February 2011.

Each month, DEC will post three of the stories on our public website, and a prize will be awarded for the top story each month. Complete rules are posted at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html>

The Great Outdoor Stories Contest presents a wonderful opportunity for people to share the activities they enjoy, the special places they have visited, and how they are inspired to explore our magnificent state through the seasons. Participants may send a few sentences or up to a full page (maximum 650 words) describing how they enjoy New York's great outdoors,

DEC is committed to providing meaningful opportunities for people to connect to nature in New York. By participating in the Great Outdoor Stories contest, students, sportsmen and women, outdoor enthusiasts, campers and hikers can reflect and share the importance of the natural environment in their lives.

All story entries must be received by February 28, 2011. Submit stories to [GreatOutdoorStories@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:GreatOutdoorStories@gw.dec.state.ny.us) or Carole Fraser, NYS DEC Universal Access Program, 625 Broadway, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Albany, NY 12233-4255.

*-contributed by Carole Fraser, DEC Statewide Access Coordinator*

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## Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation Making a Difference in the Lives of ALL People

After attending the *Inclusion U Training* this summer, Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation hit the ground running! By securing local Senate Bill 40 dollars, assessments have been conducted in 10 community centers, 4 outdoor pools, 4 spraygrounds, 1 tennis facility, and 1 museum. In addition to the assessments, detailed reports have been written for each location. Staff trainings have taken place to provide a greater awareness of the importance of ADA accessibility.

The overall benefit of the assessments and reports was highly recognized by the city and has led to additional funding provided by the city of Kansas City, Missouri. A new round of assessments beginning in January 2011 will be conducted for 13 additional facilities and locations including district office buildings, a theatre, athletic fields, parks, and more.

As we look to the future, it is our vision to continue to build upon our current efforts by collaborating with our neighboring cities and counties to expand our efforts and touch the lives of many more people throughout the Greater Kansas City area.



**Southeast Community Center in Kansas City, Missouri**

*-contributed by Jennifer Omillian, Consultant Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation*

## The NYS IRRC at SUNY Cortland

NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center  
SUNY Cortland  
Professional Studies Room 2223  
P.O. Box 2000  
Cortland, NY 13045

FUNDED BY



Phone: (607) 753-4833  
Fax: (607) 753-5982



### Our Mission

To promote and sustain participation by people with disabilities in inclusive recreation activities and resources throughout the state of NY

## Inclusion U Training!

*We invite you to become part of the NYS IRRC!*

### Become a Certified Inclusivity Assessor!

Learn about best practices in inclusion and accessibility so that you can assess recreation sites and facilities for physical, administrative, and programmatic inclusion. Whether you are a person who has a disability, a family member, a recreation professional, Medicaid Service Coordinator, student or advocate, this training is for you!

### How do you register for training?

Pre-register for Inclusion U training by contacting Laurie Penney McGee at (607) 753-4833 or email [laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu](mailto:laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu). The cost of the training is \$95.00 and includes the bound Inclusion U Guide as well as the toolkit needed to complete assessments. Due to grant funding, Medicaid Service Coordinators may be eligible to attend Inclusion U at free or reduced rates. Please contact Laurie Penney McGee for more information.

- Inclusion U provides 7 full training hours. If you would like to purchase Continuing Education Credits, CEU's will be available on site for a payment of \$8.00. Please bring a separate check payable to "NYSRPS."
- We welcome people of all abilities to attend Inclusion U. If any accommodations are needed, please provide that information when you register for training.
- All Trained Assessors are asked to complete 2 Inclusivity Assessments at recreation sites or facilities of their choice within 6 months of training. The NYS IRRC will be happy to assist you in identifying a site.

## Upcoming 2010-2011 Inclusion U Training Dates

Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, St. Joseph's College, Patchogue, (Long Island Region)

Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Lehman College, Bronx (NYC Region)

Friday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Onondaga Community College, Syracuse (Finger Lakes Region) \*Limited Space

Friday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 12:30-9:00 PM, SUNY Cortland (Finger Lakes Region) \*Limited Space Available!!\*

Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Verona (Central New York Region) \*NYSRPS Conference Pre-Institute\*

## Bring Inclusion U to Your Agency!!

Significant cost savings!!!

Are you interested in holding an Inclusion U at your agency? The NYS IRRC offers several training options for agencies who would like to train their staff in the best practices of both physical and social inclusion. By bringing Inclusion U to your organization, you can provide training for up to 25 people at a significantly reduced rate. Save costly travel and accommodation expenses for staff by hosting Inclusion U at your facility. For more information, contact Laurie Penney McGee at [laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu](mailto:laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu) or call (607) 753-4833.

# NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center Summer 2010

Hello and Happy Summer from the NYS IRRC! This month, as we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we take this opportunity to introduce you to heroes, past and present, who have worked passionately to make the world a more inclusive and much better place. We have also included news about changes, on both state and federal levels, which aim to make policies and practices more respectful and inclusive of people of abilities. And, to keep you abreast of our recent activities, here are some highlights from the NYS IRRC:

- Two new college partners have collaborated with the Center to bring Inclusion U to their students. We thank Dr. Gail Levine at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn and Carol Reis at Erie Community College in West Seneca for hosting Inclusion U training at their schools for students and professionals.
- In May, the NYS IRRC was awarded an Affirmative Action Grant to provide free Inclusion U training to 19 SUNY Cortland faculty and staff in order to increase diversity awareness on the Cortland campus.
- The new "Recreation Tips and Tools" training developed for Medicaid Service Coordinators has been a huge success! Offered through the OPWDD training catalog, ([www.omr.state.ny.us](http://www.omr.state.ny.us)) the training will continue throughout NY over the next two years. There is still time to register for the Adirondack training in Tupper lake, scheduled for September 23rd. Inclusion U will be offered the following day at Paul Smith's College.
- The NYS IRRC is in demand! This spring, staff provided inclusion training across New York, as well as in New Jersey and Nebraska.
- In June, two staff from the Kansas City, Missouri Park and Recreation Department flew to Buffalo to attend Inclusion U. Jennifer Omillian and Mark Bowland have already implemented the Inclusivity Assessment Tool to assess their park facilities. Also, after demonstrating the value of the tool at one recreation site, they have received grant funding to support the assessment of the remaining city parks!

Summer is a wonderful time to recreate, and through our work at the NYS IRRC, it is our hope that everyone is able to play and enjoy the places they choose!

Many thanks to the members of the Metropolitan NY Recreation and Park Society for awarding Inclusion U a Special Recognition at their awards dinner in April. Project Coordinator Laurie Penney McGee attended the Manhattan affair to accept the award on behalf of the NYS IRRC. We are truly grateful for their support and acknowledgement of the work of the NYS IRRC!



METROPOLITAN NEW YORK RECREATION and PARK SOCIETY, INC



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Visit us on the web at  
[www.nysirrc.org](http://www.nysirrc.org)



Jim Huben of the DDPC (far left) and DDPC Council Member Susan O'Connor (third from left) join the IRRC team and NYS DEC staff in order to conduct an Inclusivity Assessment at Belleayre Mountain in March. Thank you Jim and Sue!

## Summer 2010 Inclusivity Hero

### Kathy Ambrosini



For the past three years, the NYS IRRC has been training recreation professionals, students and volunteers to gather accurate and descriptive information about recreation places and spaces using the Inclusivity Assessment Tool. This wealth of information is available in an online database located at [www.nysirrc.org](http://www.nysirrc.org) to help people of all abilities plan their recreation. In honor of her significant contribution to the fields of both outdoor education and inclusion, and for the number of Inclusivity Assessments she has completed for the NYS IRRC's on-line resource, Kathy Ambrosini has been chosen for recognition as an Inclusivity Hero.

Kathy is the Director of Education at the [Mohonk Preserve](http://www.mohonkpreserve.org), located near New Paltz. There, Kathy oversees all of the programming for people of all ages and abilities and serves as the agency's Inclusion Point of Contact. Kathy began her experience in environmental education while obtaining her undergraduate degree from Cornell in Natural Resources and her Master's in Outdoor Teacher Education from Northern Illinois University. Throughout her twenty-two years of experience, Kathy has met and overcome challenges in serving people of all abilities. She began her career working as the School Coordinator at the Mohonk Preserve. Her main task was to develop and implement programming for local school children in the Field Studies program. Her interest in inclusion began when she noticed that school children with disabilities only participated in a limited amount of the outdoor educational programming offered to their classmates at the preserve or, even worse, they were often left behind at school while their classmates visited the preserve. Kathy set out to develop inclusive outdoor educational programming, which focused on younger children, that allowed people of all abilities to work together to develop their strengths and abilities. This programming has become the Nature Access Program, which includes field studies, outreach programs, summer camps, public programs, environmental education training for teachers, and self guided group visits, as well as individual and family visits. With her growing experience and expertise in outdoor education and inclusion, other parks and environmental educational professionals looking to make their facilities and programs accessible called upon Kathy. Before long, Kathy was spending more and more time on the phone answering questions, prompting her to write her book *Making Outdoor Programs Accessible*. The book focuses on developing inclusive programming, inclusive teaching techniques and universal design. If you are interested in this amazing resource you can find information about the \$11.95 book on the Mohonk Preserve's website at [www.mohonkpreserve.org/index.php?education](http://www.mohonkpreserve.org/index.php?education)

During a New York State Outdoor Education Association conference a few years ago in Lake Placid, Kathy met the staff of the New York State Inclusive Recreation Resource Center and participated in Inclusion U training. Since then, Kathy has completed six inclusivity assessments and is working to reach her goal of assessing the 25 sites that participated in the Hudson Valley Accessible Parks and Nature Centers Workshop. Kathy has been motivated to complete inclusivity assessments because she knows that parks and nature centers are great places for learning, they just need assistance in opening their doors to people of all abilities.

The New York State Inclusive Recreation Resource Center would once again like to thank Kathy Ambrosini for her work to ensure that people of all abilities have access and opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation and we thank her for conducting assessment to increase the resources available in the Inclusive Recreation database! To learn more about work of the NYS IRRC or how you can become an assessor, visit [www.nysirrc.org](http://www.nysirrc.org). Inclusion U training is available throughout the year at various locations around the state. Congratulations Kathy!

-written by Mark Turnbull, SUNY Cortland Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Graduate Student

## It's the Person First in New York State

Anyone who has ever attended any training or presentation provided by the NYS IRRC has learned that Person First Language is an incredibly valuable tool in communicating dignity and respect for people of all abilities. It is with great pride then, that we share the following announcement from the agency formally known as the "Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities."

### Introducing the New York State Office For People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

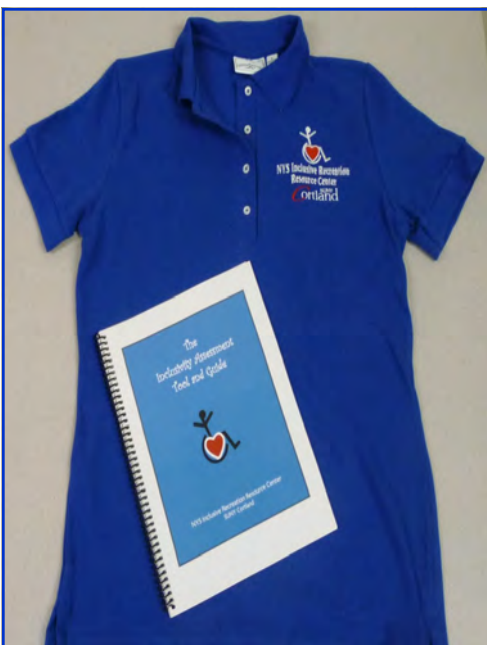
Governor Patterson officially signed the name change for the state agency responsible for services for people with developmental disabilities. The new name was chosen in March 2010 by consensus of representative stakeholders and eliminates the stigmatizing language which was part of the agency's name. The new name reflects the #1 guiding principle of the state agency of "Putting People First" and is consistent with the People First Language Law enacted in 2007, which mandates that in statutory language, the emphasis is on the person, not the disability.

### President Obama Announces Issue of Final Regulations Revising ADA

On July 26, during an Americans with Disabilities Act anniversary celebration, President Obama announced that the U.S. Department of Justice has issued final regulations revising Title II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including changes to the ADA standards for Accessible Design. The new regulations have broad implications, including new guidelines for recreation areas, the use of service animals, hotel accommodations, the use of mobility devices, and more. Some of the recreation areas that are identified in the new regulations include:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational Boating Facilities</li> <li>• Amusement Parks</li> <li>• Swimming Pools and Wading Areas</li> <li>• Miniature Golf Courses</li> <li>• Play Areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fishing Piers and Platforms</li> <li>• Exercise Facilities</li> <li>• Shooting Facilities</li> <li>• Saunas and Steam Rooms</li> <li>• Golf Facilities</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

The NYS IRRC will be reviewing all of its existing Specialty Area Tools to ensure that they align with the new standards. The regulations will be published in the Federal Register. For more information, visit [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).



### What's In Store???

Have you ever attended a NYSIRRC training and wondered where you might be able to get one of those fabulous blue shirts? The NYS IRRC is now selling its blue polo shirts at Inclusion U trainings, conferences, and other events. The shirts are available for \$20.00 and come in S-XXL in both men and women's sizes!

### For Certified Inclusivity Assessors Only!!

The Inclusivity Assessment Tool and Guide are now available in a newly published bound manual that includes the most up-to-date version of the tool, all of the Inclusion U handouts and much more. The cost of the manual is \$25.00 and is available only to those who have attended Inclusion U training and passed the Final Exam. Please contact Laurie Penney McGee at [laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu](mailto:laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu) for information on how to purchase this wonderful resource. (Shipping and handling additional.)





## Happy Birthday ADA! A Historical Look at Inclusion and Accessibility in New York



By Dr. Lynn Anderson, CTRS, CPRP  
SUNY Cortland and the New York State Inclusive Recreation Resource Center

Twenty years ago in July, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law. This historic civil rights legislation guaranteed people with disabilities the same access to all aspects of life as people without disabilities, from work to play to community living. Though the passage of ADA was a huge milestone for inclusion and accessibility, it is not the beginning of the story of equal rights for people with disabilities in New York, especially in the area of parks and recreation. Let's take a look back and revisit some of the notable events that marked improved inclusion and accessibility in New York, meet parks and recreation professionals who worked tirelessly to create positive change, and celebrate where we are today.

### The Early Segregated Years

Since the 1600's, New York has provided some sort of services to people with disabilities. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, people with disabilities were viewed as needing to be cared for, protected, and excluded from society. The New York Museum of disAbility, administered by the self-advocacy group People, Inc. in Buffalo, provides an interesting timeline of the early years of treatment of people with disabilities. Often sheltered in county poor houses, people with disabilities were viewed as idiots, feeble-minded, lunatics, and un-trainable ([www.museumofdisability.org](http://www.museumofdisability.org)). In the late 1800's and early 1900's, large institutions were built around New York, where people with disabilities were sent to live in segregated, crowded, and often dismal conditions. For most of the 1900's, people with disabilities were largely absent from most New York communities, spending their entire lives in places like Willowbrook, Hutchings, or Rome. Even veterans with disabilities from the World Wars often lived in the isolation of veterans' hospitals or homes like Bath or Oxford.

### Community Integration and Mainstreaming

During the 1960's and 70's, the impetus to "deinstitutionalize" people with disabilities began in earnest, often fueled by lawsuits such as that brought by the Association for Retarded Children against the State of New York for the conditions and treatment received at Willowbrook. Throughout the 70's and 80's, more people with disabilities were being moved out of large institutions and living in communities, often in group homes, around the state of New York. During this time period, important legislation was passed that began to ensure equal rights and equal access for people.

#### **1968 Architectural Barriers Act (ABA)**

Declared that any building receiving federal funding from 1969 onward had to be accessible for people with disabilities.

#### **1973 Rehabilitation Act (including Section 504)**

A large victory for the disability rights movement - the discrimination of people with disabilities is addressed for the first time especially in Section 504.

#### **1975 The Education for All Handicapped Children Act**

Mandated that the states, with the assistance of the federal government, provide a free and appropriate education for all children regardless of the seriousness of their disability in the least restrictive environment.

#### **1990 The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

An extension of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, a right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment is again included in this legislation.

#### **1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Provides civil rights protection to Americans with disabilities. Equal opportunity was established for employment, transportation, telecommunications, public accommodations and the state and federal government's services. This act is considered the most wide-sweeping civil rights bill for individuals with disabilities.

#### **2008 Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA)**

Clarified issues related to the definition of disability, protected more people from discrimination and assured reasonable accommodations.

From: [www.museumofdisability.org/society\\_law.asp](http://www.museumofdisability.org/society_law.asp) and [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

One significant law was the Rehabilitation Act and its Section 504. In essence, Section 504 stated that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005).

Section 504, along with the large movement of people with disabilities from institutional settings to community living, had a significant impact on parks and recreation. From being absent and invisible to society, to being in the neighborhood and at the park, people with disabilities posed new challenges to recreation and parks agencies. How did we respond?

**Peggy Payne in 1977, then Assistant Commissioner of Recreation for OPRHP**



**The Pioneers of the 60's and 70's**

At both the state and municipal level, the parks and recreation profession in New York began to meet the needs of people with disabilities in earnest. Because people with disabilities had been absent for literally centuries, the existing built environments and developed programs were not designed to accommodate wide variations in human functioning. Parks, playgrounds, museums, recreation centers, sports programs, and the like had been designed for the "typical" person. Stairs, narrow doors, dim lighting, limited forms of communication, and limited teaching and coaching styles were the norm. Parks and recreation facilities and programs needed immediate and targeted action to become more accessible and to facilitate "mainstreaming."

"Many times, we place disabled children in separate play settings under the assumption that they will be overly frustrated if their performance level is lower than that of a normal child. In effect, what we are doing is creating strangers out of probable friends. By bringing about this separation, we are saying to disabled children, 'You're different, you're inferior, and you're not allowed to play with other youngsters. Therefore, the disabled child begins to believe that he is indeed strange and unwanted and tends to shy away from direct participation in the real world. At the same time, we indicate to the normal children and to their parents that there must be something almost contagious about the disabled since we remove them from playgrounds and a normal social environment. With this experience in our earliest backgrounds, why then should we be surprised when normal and disabled adults often view each other as strange beings and cannot comfortably accept each other?"

**Quote from Orin Lehman, Commissioner of OPRHP in 1979**



At the state level, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) led the way in helping parks and recreation develop more physically accessible facilities. Peggy Payne, a graduate of SUNY Cortland and then the Assistant Commissioner for Recreation with OPRHP was one of the pioneers in this effort. In 1979, she worked with a team of university professors and students, architects, and parks professionals to develop a set of guidelines for physically accessible playgrounds. Called "Playground for All Children," the resource manual helped communities design and build play equipment for children of all abilities. The project had the full support of the Commissioner of OPRHP, Orin Lehman, as quoted above.

In 1984, Peggy worked with a New York State Senate Select Committee to develop the "Winter Activities Guide for the Disabled." The guide compiled all the accessibility information about winter recreation throughout the state for people with disabilities, a precursor to the now available online recreation resource database developed and maintained by the New York State Inclusive Recreation Resource Center. Throughout the 70's and 80's, New

York State, led by OPRHP and people like Peggy Payne, took accessibility very seriously, beginning programs like the Access Pass and the Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged.

(continued on page 6)

Around that same time, Peggy crisscrossed the state of New York, with colleague Brian McLane, doing what she called the “parking, curb cuts, and comfort station road show.” Teaching park managers how to make their park amenities more physically accessible, Peggy and OPRHP helped to shift our state’s parks and recreation infrastructure onto the path to inclusion for all.

In New York City, another pioneer was at work for the same cause at the same time. Dr. Gail Levine, a graduate of NYU and now a professor at Kingsborough Community College, was at the time a recreation director and the 504 coordinator for New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Gail coordinated a program that existed at the time called REACH (Recreation, Education, Arts, and Crafts for the Handicapped), delivered throughout New York City in all its boroughs in the 70’s. She also worked to implement Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to make New York City’s parks and recreation facilities more physically accessible. Gail worked with the self advocacy group, PRIDE, and the city to develop and implement the first ever “Parking Permit for the Physically Handicapped.” With Adrienne Bresnan, then an architect with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Gail provided trainings across the city on physical accessibility.



Displaying a sample of the new permit enabling the disabled to enter parks on weekends are: (l to r) Rose Senerchia, First Vice-president of PRIDE; Gail Levine, Director of REACH program; and Parks Department Commissioner Maurice Nixon. (Photo by Kurt D. Shamberg)

from *The Citizens Report*, 1979

The City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation		
<b>PARKING PERMIT</b> FOR <b>PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED</b>		
Permission is granted to: _____ The occupant of this vehicle is disabled and has permission to enter these parks at all times and to park in any of the ff. fields:		
<u>Manhattan:</u>	Central Park, Horseshoe Lot	
<u>Brooklyn:</u>	Prospect Park, Wollman Rink Marine Park - Parking Lot	
<u>Queens:</u>	Forest Park Lot	
<u>Bronx:</u>	Van Cortlandt Park Lot	
<u>Staten Island:</u>	Clove Lakes Park Lot	
No 002	Permit valid from _____ to _____ subject to the conditions on reverse side	Gordon J. Davis Commissioner

The First Park Permit for People with Disabilities in NYC

In her role as a coordinator with day camp programs with New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Gail hired the first ever person with a disability as a playground assistant, Edmee Rodriguez. Gail states, “I had to hire her in a ‘creative way’ as some would have challenged her ability to physically be able to perform her job duties.” Throughout her years of training, education, and advocacy in the 70’s with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Gail felt her biggest accomplishment was raising awareness of people with disabilities and their need for services. “For my entire life, I’ve been always trying to make sure those who were left out were ‘brought into the circle,’ to participate fully in all the experiences that make life rich and full and joyful. That’s been my mission.”

## Inclusion - Where We Are Today







Thanks to the pioneering work of agencies like OPRHP and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and to people like Peggy Payne and Gail Levine, the movement toward accessibility and inclusion was initiated. Today, we enjoy the benefits of the Americans with Disabilities Act, passed exactly 20 years ago. Our language has become more respectful, accurate, and sensitive. We know better how to support and accommodate people of varying abilities in parks and programs. We no longer segregate people into separate but not equal services, places, or programs. We assume competence and inclusion in “regular” programs and places. As summarized in the table on page 7, we have experienced major shifts as we have matured as a thriving, diverse society.

In New York, under the leadership of the Inclusive Recreation Resource Center, we continue to work tirelessly for inclusion and access. Headquartered at SUNY Cortland, and funded in part by the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, the mission of the Center is to promote, support, and sustain inclusive recreation for people with disabilities across the state of New York through a variety of services.

The Center provides training and education, such as Inclusion U, use of the Inclusivity Assessment Tool to describe accessibility and inclusion, technical assistance, the highly useful online recreation database, and more to continue to change and improve our parks and recreation amenities in the state so ALL citizens can be fully included. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, under the leadership of Carole Fraser, Statewide Access Coordinator, has made major strides in increasing accessibility in outdoor recreation on our state lands. In New York City, the NYC Parks and Recreation Department also continues to improve access and services for people with disabilities.

So much has changed, but what has stayed the same is the passion and commitment of parks and recreation professionals in New York to make sure ALL people can play wherever they choose. As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we can renew our commitment and passion for the next 20 years. Perhaps inclusion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be one of those societal norms where we look back in time and can't believe it was ever any other way! Happy Birthday ADA!

**How We Have Changed for the Positive - Major Shifts**

FROM	TO	NOW
		
<p>Segregated</p>	<p>Physically included</p>	<p>Socially and physically included</p>
		
<p>No programs or services</p>	<p>Segregated special programs</p>	<p>Inclusive</p>

**Useful websites for state resources for recreation inclusion in New York**

New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Access for All:  
[www.nycgovparks.org/sub\\_about/accessibility/index.php](http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_about/accessibility/index.php)

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Access Pass:  
[www.nysparks.com/admission/access-pass/default.aspx](http://www.nysparks.com/admission/access-pass/default.aspx)

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Accessible Recreation:  
[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html)

[www.nysirrc.org](http://www.nysirrc.org)



## The NYS IRRC at SUNY Cortland

NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center  
RPLS DDepartment  
P.O. Box 2000  
Cortland, NY 13045

Phone: (607) 753-4833  
Fax: (607) 753-5982  
E-mail: [InclusiveRec@cortland.edu](mailto:InclusiveRec@cortland.edu)  
Web: [www.nysirrc.org](http://www.nysirrc.org)

FUNDED BY



### Our Mission

To promote and sustain participation by people with disabilities in inclusive recreation activities and resources throughout the state of NY

## Inclusion U Training!

*We invite you to become part of the NYS IRRC*

### Become a Certified Inclusivity Assessor!

Learn about best practices in inclusion and accessibility so that you can assess recreation sites and facilities for physical, administrative, and programmatic inclusion. Whether you are a person who has a disability, a family member, a recreation professional, Medicaid Service Coordinator, student or advocate, this training is for you!

### How do you register for training?

Pre-register for Inclusion U training by contacting Laurie Penney McGee at (607) 753-4833 or email [laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu](mailto:laurie.penneymcgee@cortland.edu). The cost of the training is \$95.00 and includes the bound Inclusion U Guide as well as the toolkit needed to complete assessments. Due to grant funding, Medicaid Service Coordinators may be eligible to attend Inclusion U at free or reduced rates. Please contact Laurie Penney McGee for more information.

- Inclusion U provides 7 full training hours. If you would like to purchase Continuing Education Credits, CEU's will be available on site for a payment of \$8.00. Please bring a separate check payable to "NYSRPS."
- If any accommodations are needed, please provide that information when you register for training. We welcome people of all abilities to attend Inclusion U.
- All Trained Assessors are asked to complete 2 Inclusivity Assessments at recreation sites or facilities of their choice within 6 months of training. The NYS IRRC will be happy to assist you in identifying a site.

## Upcoming 2010-2011 Inclusion U Training Dates

Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Staatsburg (Hudson Valley Region)

Tuesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 12:30-9:00 PM, Ithaca (Finger Lakes Region) \*Limited Space Available!!\*

Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 9:00-5:30 PM, SUNY Cortland (Finger Lakes Region) \*Limited Space Available!!\*

Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Paul Smith's College (Adirondack Region)

Wednesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12:30-9:00 PM, Cortland (Finger Lakes Region) \*Cortland Rec Conference Pre-Institute\*

Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Lehman College, Bronx (NYC Region) \*Limited Space Available!!\*

Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Saratoga Springs (Capitol-Saratoga Region) \*NYSTRA Conference Pre-Institute\*

Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-4:30 PM, Verona (Central New York Region) \*NYSRPS Conference Pre-Institute\*