



PATHWAYS

Life without Limits for People with Disabilities

Baby Boomer Bash!



WVIC morning disc jockeys Brad Walker and Mary Turner with Fox 47 anchor Jason Colthorp and UCP Michigan Executive Director Linda Potter

The Lansing Baby Boomer Bash in February was a huge success thanks to sponsors **Comerica, Miller Canfield, Fox 47**, and **94.1 WVIC!**



MENTORS WANTED

The Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living is looking for adults with cerebral palsy who live in the Ann Arbor area to help teenagers with cerebral palsy transition from high school into "the real world."

Contact Jen Chapin Harris at 734-971-0277 ext. 23 or jchapin@aacil.org.

Thanks to supporters :

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ATMATCH.COM

A new website, www.atmatch.com, is a nationwide listing of and auction site for used equipment for sale and donation. A small listing fee is charged and one must use Paypal for purchases with a credit card. Merchandise categories include automotive, communication, computers, mobility, switches, toys, and more.

United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan



Mark your calendar for Friday, October 27, 2006 when the Baby Boomer Bash comes to Grand Rapids! 8pm - Midnight
Van Andel Public Museum of Grand Rapids
Live music with *Trilogy*
Hors d'oeuvres, cash bar, great door prizes!
For tickets contact Pam at 800-828-2714

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Book Corner: *The Light in Bradford Manor*

Available for \$7 plus postage by calling United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan

In book number six in *The Gun Lake Adventure Series*, Johnnie and his friends are treated to a special two-week adventure at Camp Riley in Indiana. There, Johnnie and his friends from Michigan and some of his newfound friends from Camp Riley find themselves on a hunt to solve a mystery - one that involves the legendary ghost of Bradford Manor.

Author and motivational speaker Johnnie Tuitel found when he was a child that there were no books that portrayed people with disabilities in a positive light. As an adult he's set out to change that with *The Gun Lake Adventure Series*, whose hero Johnnie has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair.

Youth Essay Contest

Sometimes people don't understand what it's like to have a disability, or that people with disabilities have plenty of *abilities*. UCP Michigan is sponsoring our sixth annual Essay Contest for 6th - 8th grade students on the theme *We're More Alike Than Different*. If you have a disability, or if your good friend or family member has a disability, please tell us:

For youth with disabilities:

- What things do you do differently than other people because you have a disability?
- What things do you do just like other people?

For friends and family members of someone with a disability:

- What things does your friend/family member do differently than other people because of his/her disability?
- What things does he or she do just like other people?

Winning essays will be printed in our newsletter *Pathways*. Winners will receive a plush *Ability Bear* and a gift certificate for a pizza, and their schools will receive *The Gun Lake Adventure Series* mystery books. Essays should be 500 words or less and contain the student's name, age, school, and address. The deadline is April 28, 2006. Mail or fax essays to: UCP Michigan, 3401 E. Saginaw, Suite 216, Lansing MI 48912, fax: 517-203-1203.

Information presented in this newsletter is intended to provide people with current, accurate information about developments in treatment, education, technology and equipment, rehabilitation and therapy. Reference in this newsletter to any particular practice does not constitute endorsement or promotion of that practice by UCP Michigan. Decisions to select any course of treatment should always be made by an individual after consultation with his or her professional provider.

Freedom to Work Medicaid

Since the *Freedom to Work for Individuals with Disabilities Act* of 2003, 649 people with disabilities in Michigan have been able to work and increase their income beyond the usual cut-off amount, **and keep Medicaid coverage.**

The eligibility criteria for Freedom to Work Medicaid (FTW) are:

- The individual is determined to be disabled under the Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs, **or would be found to be disabled if not for excess earnings above Federal guidelines**
- The individual is between the ages of 16 and 64
- The individual's unearned income (such as stock dividends or trust fund income) is not more than the Federal poverty guideline (\$9,800 annually for 2006)
- The individual already gets Medicaid, or is eligible for it, but not through a "spend down"
- The individual is employed

The applicant's spouse's income and assets will not be considered in determining the applicant's eligibility for FTW. Once an individual is determined eligible for this program by a Department of Human Services (DHS) Medicaid worker, he or she gets Medicaid coverage free until his or her earned income exceeds 250% of poverty for one person, which is \$24,500 per year for 2006. Once earnings are more than that amount, a recipient may stay on Medicaid by paying a monthly premium to the state toward the cost of Medicaid coverage.

The monthly premium starts at \$50 (\$600 per year) and increases on an

income-based sliding scale. The premium will be adjusted annually based on changes in the federal poverty level and the average cost per person to the state for Medicaid. There is no limit on earned income for people in the program.

Monthly premiums are sent to the Department of Community Health. Premiums not received by the due date each month will initiate a grace period during which the beneficiary is notified of case closure. There will be a "lock out" period of ineligibility if closure results from failure to pay premiums.

An individual in the program may also:

- Save up to \$75,000 (a house and vehicle don't count toward the \$75,000)
- Accumulate savings in retirement and individual retirement accounts without limits
- Have breaks in employment up to 24 months due to medical necessity or involuntary layoff.

Once a person is on Medicaid (without a spend down) Freedom to Work is triggered either by earning more than the applicable Medicaid income limit or by saving more than \$2,000. This should happen automatically without the need to "sign up".

Once you earn above a certain amount, your SSI check will stop. Earning more than the SSI amount has led to problems for some FTW enrollees who have mistakenly been cut off of Medicaid. Because they now make too much money, their DHS worker assumed they no longer have a disability despite the fact that there has been no change in their medical condition. **This is NOT the**

intent of the law. The MiJob Coalition, which helped write and obtain passage of the law, is working to remedy this error. If you have mistakenly been put on spend down Medicaid when you should be enrolled in FTW, or if you have been receiving Medicaid coverage through FTW and have been cut off, contact Michigan Protection and Advocacy at (800) 288-5923.

If you think you qualify for the Freedom to Work program, speak with a staff person at your county Department of Human Services. When speaking with or writing to a DHS worker, be sure to refer to PEM 174, a category in the Program Eligibility Manual. If you are denied FTW, you have the right to appeal the decision to an Administrative Law Judge.

Family Interviews Needed

Judith Greenbaum of Ann Arbor, the parent of an adult with a developmental disability, is writing a book titled, "Life Planning for Adults with Developmental Disabilities: A Guide for Parents and Families."

She is interested in talking with parents and families of adults with cerebral palsy or other physical and cognitive disabilities, and with their adult family members with disabilities. She is interested in personal stories and any comments and suggestions for the book that would be useful in making plans for the future. For instance, it includes chapters on "A Good Place to Live," "A Busy and Productive Life," and a chapter on finding and retaining excellent direct care workers.

She can be contacted at judgreenb@aol.com.

The Many Faces of Medicaid

Medicaid: Just the word conjures up a dark hole down which the taxpayer throws more and more and more money. But few people know much about what Medicaid really is. Ask the person on the street, and the typical answer will be that it's medical care for low-income single mothers and their children. Some people may also know that Medicaid pays for nursing home care for people who have used up all of their own money.

Beyond that, most people don't really know much about Medicaid. The members of the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council know a lot about Medicaid, however, and want to share their knowledge with taxpayers and policymakers by letting them in to the lives of some citizens who rely on Medicaid for, yes, health care, and, yes, nursing homes, but for much else as well.

The DD Council has chosen to spread its message through a project it calls, "Faces of Medicaid." In collaboration with United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan and Message Makers, a media company in Lansing, the Council is shooting a DVD of Michigan citizens who get Medicaid services of a variety of types.

One person who gets medical care from Medicaid has agreed to be filmed. Another, a child, has a disability; Medicaid pays for her basic health care, and Children's Special Health Care Services (also a Medicaid program) pays for special equipment and supplies she needs, specialty medical services, and some of her parents' travel costs to take her to medical appointments. Medicaid is also available to pay a trained respite worker to stay with her so her parents can occasionally

take a break. Her brother, who doesn't have a disability, gets Healthy Kids health insurance, another program of Medicaid. Neither her mom nor dad has health insurance of any kind.

Yet another person who is willing to be filmed was in a nursing home for several years. His care there was paid by Medicaid. Now he lives in his own apartment and gets in-home supports from aides to help him with the activities he can't do himself. Those supports are also paid by Medicaid, and the annual cost paid by Medicaid now is less than it was for the nursing home.

Not everyone who uses Medicaid is on it forever. Sometimes a person uses it to get through during a period of low income, but doesn't need it any more after he or she returns to work and gets employer-based insurance. Some people with disabilities who have been on Medicaid who return to work can continue to be covered by Freedom to Work Medicaid described in the article on p. 3.

Another group that gets Medicaid services is people with developmental disabilities who get services from their Community Mental Health Board (CMH). Medicaid pays for a wide variety of person-centered services from CMHs. Examples include community living supports (for example, an aide in their home); physical, occupational or speech therapy; assistive technology; and supported/integrated employment. There are many other Medicaid programs. It is an invaluable program for people with low income and people with disabilities.

If you are interested in participating in the Faces of Medicaid project, call UCP Michigan at (800) 828-2714.

Social Isolation Survey Results

UCP Michigan has been making an ongoing effort to examine social isolation and adults with disabilities. We sent a survey to about 2,600 people with disabilities and to date, we have received 232 responses. The results, while not scientific, are showing some trends.

82% of respondents feel their disability affects their daily functioning a lot.

66% are dissatisfied with their social lives.

60% do not work or volunteer outside the home.

70% do not have a significant other. Of those, 66% would like one.

65% feel making friends is different for them as a person with a disability than it is for people without disabilities.

71% feel meeting a romantic partner is different for them as a person with a disability than it is for people without disabilities.

69% do have access to reliable transportation.

60% have income less than \$10,000 per year, and 86% have income less than \$20,000 per year.

UCP Michigan will continue to examine this issue and use the information we gather to decide how we can best make a positive impact in people's lives regarding social isolation.

Please Support United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of \$_____.

Please make check payable to UCP Michigan

Or charge my Visa: card number:

Signature: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Donor Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please mail to:

UCP Michigan
3401 E. Saginaw
Suite 216
Lansing, MI 48912

Thank you!

My gift is made:

In memory of In honor of Occasion

Please send acknowledgement to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Gift amount will not be mentioned.

Internet Classes Available

The Minnesota Partners in Policymaking website offers free online classes nationwide for people with disabilities and anyone who wants to advocate for independence and productivity for people with disabilities. No registration is required; simply go to the website and study at your own pace. www.partnersinpolicymaking.com

Partners in Time

This eight-hour course was created to help people understand the history of society's treatment of people with disabilities from ancient times through the present. The course focuses on the way that people with disabilities lived, learned and worked throughout history and on the growth of the Disability Rights Movement. The course also introduces some of the individuals and groups whose efforts resulted in new

ways of thinking about people with disabilities and their rights.

Partners in Education

Partners in Education is the latest addition to Partners in Policymaking's e-learning offerings. The three-hour self-directed course was created to help parents of children with developmental disabilities understand and maximize the special education system. The course focuses on a child's right to a free appropriate public education and the laws that protect those rights, and offers practical ways parents can ensure that their children benefit from an inclusive education.

Making Your Case

This three-hour course is designed to help people with disabilities and

their families create positive change through advocacy. The course helps participants understand the legislative process and the essential elements of good advocacy, identify and research personal issues, then advocate for systems change as individuals and as part of larger community efforts. The course includes opportunities to put what has been learned into practice through a series of interactive exercises.

Partners in Employment

This six-hour course is designed to help people with developmental disabilities find meaningful jobs and plan a career. Participants will create a resume or portfolio of their strengths, skills, and interests, learn how to network and identify potential employers, prepare for an interview, and learn to understand the hiring process.



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A member agency of United Way

Volunteers Needed!

If you have extra time, United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan needs you! You don't need to be able to come to our office. You can do many of these helpful tasks from anywhere. Call (800) 828-2714.

How volunteers can help:

Office Volunteers

- Follow up by phone with consumers who have used services of UCP
- Answer phones, forward calls to appropriate staff, take messages as needed
- Contact donors to give an update on agency activities and encourage persons to donate again
- Shred papers, file, copy, data entry

Service Volunteers

- Meet with people with disabilities in their homes to talk, help around the house, develop friendships
- Facilitate after school service clubs
- Build ramps for people with disabilities in your community

Fundraisers

- Baby Boomer Bashes: work on mailing, make phone calls to let people know about the event, place posters around town, help at the event, or ask for donations for event
- Sell *Ability Bear* plush toys
- Get a group together for a challenge to raise dollars for and awareness of UCP
- Assist with thank you letters to donors

Policy Builders

- Develop a relationship with your legislator to influence disability issues
- Respond to UCP legislative alerts via e-mail or online
- Serve on UCP Michigan Board of Directors Committees (*Subject to appointment by board president.*)

Save the Date!

Saturday, July 29, 2006

Ben Franklin Memorial Poker Run

Call 800-828-2714 for details.

Ben passed away at age 4 from complications from cerebral palsy and his parents are generously organizing a fundraiser to benefit United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan in his memory.