
NEWS ON TAP

The NEWS ON TAP Newsletter is part of OHCD's Housing and Disability Technical Assistance Program (TAP) concerning issues related to housing for persons with disabilities in the City of Philadelphia.

August 2006

Commission Works for Equal Access to Opportunity

By Peggy Robertson

The Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities and the Accessibility Compliance Office (ACO) work together to ensure that Philadelphia's citizens with disabilities are afforded the same rights as all citizens, in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Commission members are appointed by the Mayor. Together with other volunteers, they serve on committees that address issues of concern for people with disabilities such as housing, employment, barrier-free design, education, recreation, behavioral health, health and human services, arts and culture, and voter access. MCPD is always seeking new partners with energy and resources to improve the quality of life of citizens with disabilities and their families.

Roger Margulies, Assistant Deputy Mayor for the MCPD, explained, "One of my responsibilities is to make sure

Inside this edition...

<i>Committee Chair Shares Vision.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Adaptive Modification Program.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Home Finder FAQ.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>WCD Conference.....</i>	<i>10</i>



Roger Margulies, Assistant Deputy Mayor for the MCPD

people with disabilities are represented and their concerns are not forgotten. The prime function of MCPD is to provide information and referral and by far, the most inquiries the Office receives pertain to housing. The Accessibility and Compliance Office was transferred over to the MCPD so I also serve as Title II ADA Coordinator, which insures that city

(Continued on page 2)

(MCPD continued from page 1)

programs and facilities are accessible. Each city department has an ADA coordinator and we work cooperatively.”

The MCPD housing committee was established by the mayor to address housing issues people with disabilities face in the City of Philadelphia. Its mission is to increase availability and the supply of accessible, affordable, integrated, permanent housing for people with disabilities in neighborhoods throughout the city. Mr. Margulies noted, “Some of the calls we get have to do with people who are discharged from a rehabilitation hospital and are returning to totally inaccessible homes. They may need a ramp or stair glide installed and are looking for resources to help pay for these modifications. Many people are looking for accessible and affordable housing. Most people we hear from have limited incomes and cannot afford the housing that might be available. In response to these calls, we refer people to Liberty Resources, Inc., Inglis Housing Corporation or other housing

agencies, We also tell them about the News On Tap website www.newsontap.org or we mail them a copy of **The Philly Primer**, a housing resource guide for people with disabilities in Philadelphia.”

Mr. Margulies added, “The Housing Committee has helped advocate for people with disabilities in a number of ways. The committee developed a position paper which evolved over a number of years and reflects many hours of work. It was presented to the mayor and provided input into the strategic plan of all of the activities of the MCPD. The committee also went before City Council to get an increase in funding for the adaptive modification program and was successful. The committee has raised awareness about the need for Visitability in new construction in the city (defined on page 5 of this newsletter), and efforts are ongoing to pass a Visitability Ordinance. The housing committee is pretty active and a lot of significant city agencies participate. Bruce McElrath, the Chairman for the Housing Committee and I often talk on the phone, but as

committee chairman, he develops the agendas and has brought in key city officials to hear our concerns.”

The city has made progress in trying to meet the housing needs of persons with disabilities. The Housing Trust Fund and the increased minimum for Visitability features in new construction are two examples of strategies to make housing more accessible.

Unfortunately, however, the lack of accessible housing continues to be a huge problem. The Mayor’s Commission on People with Disabilities is supportive of the needs of persons with disabilities, and the Housing Committee is keeping the dialogue open with key people on ways to increase housing resources. For more information on the Housing Committee, call 215-477-4956, and for information about the Commission, call 215-686-2798.

Housing Committee Chair Shares Vision

By Peggy Robertson

Bruce McElrath has a good understanding of the needs of people with disabilities. Mr. McElrath served in the military and is a disabled veteran. After he was discharged from the military and living in Washington D.C., he was mugged and shot four times, resulting in his becoming a paraplegic. He described his disability as being enlightening in a totally different way. He has an awareness of the issues people with disabilities face from different perspectives and has used that awareness to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

Mr. McElrath plays a significant role within the disability community in Philadelphia. He is CEO and Board Chairman of D.R.A.G., Disabilities Rights Advocacy Group, a non-profit organization, which was founded in 1989. D.R.A.G. has been responsible for changes in legislation that protect the civil rights of people with disabilities including advocating for the installation of curb cuts and accessible and user-friendly ATM machines, which has since become



Bruce McElrath, CEO and Board Chairman of D.R.A.G. and Chairman of the MCPD Housing Committee

a national trend. Mr. McElrath explained that D.R.A.G. has recently become more involved with housing issues.

Mr. McElrath's credentials made him an excellent choice to become the Chairman for the Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities (MCPD) Housing Committee. He became co-chair of the Housing Committee in September 2005 and has since moved into the role of Chairman. He is pleased to be involved with a group that seeks to ensure that individuals with disabilities are afforded the same rights

as all other citizens, especially with regard to housing.

The specific goal of the committee is to advocate for affordable accessible housing and education. Committee members include representatives from various city housing and disability agencies who meet approximately eight times a year in order to make information more accessible and to articulate the housing problems people with disabilities are experiencing. Mr. McElrath said, "Meeting the housing needs of

(Continued on page 4)

(Vision continued from page 3)

people with disabilities starts with bridging the communication gap between the different disability agencies, city housing agencies and legislators. I think our role is to provide outreach and resources and serve as a problem solver. We are fortunate because Roger Margulies, the Assistant Deputy Mayor for the MCPD, is actively involved in the Housing Committee and really understands all of the issues. We want to open up the avenue of communication to give people the opportunity to be a part of the broad discussion. That is why it is important to bring as many people to the table as possible.”

Mr. McElrath added, “The committee is concerned about the lack of resources allocated for people with disabilities and would like to see more money put into the city budget. Philadelphia has done a good job of increasing the stock of affordable, accessible housing for people with disabilities but there is difficulty in getting people with disabilities into housing that is accessible. That

is why we were supportive of the passage of the Housing Trust Fund and we will continue to stay updated on its activities. We also support the city’s efforts to pass a Visitability Ordinance. (Visitability is defined on page 5 of this newsletter.) In fact, we invited Councilwoman Blackwell, who proposed the Ordinance, to come to one of our meetings.”

Councilwoman Blackwell was invited to the committee’s May meeting to give an update on the Housing Trust Fund. Although the Visitability Ordinance has not yet been passed, Ms. Blackwell was pleased that Visitability was a major component of the Housing Trust Fund. The Councilwoman stated that she wants to stay informed about the committee’s activities so that she can continue to advocate for people with disabilities.

Anthony McIntosh, Executive Vice President of the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation (PHDC), also attended the May meeting. He described the services PHDC offers to people with disabilities, including the Adaptive Modification Program (which is described on page 5 of this

newsletter.) Mr. McElrath noted, “It is important for us to hear from other city agencies such as PHDC. We plan on inviting a representative from the Philadelphia Housing Authority to attend a future meeting so that we are updated on any new policies or programs being offered. The committee has also discussed putting together a workshop or town meeting. The target audience would be people with disabilities in need of housing who could come and talk with representatives from OHCD, PHA, etc. to learn about the different resources that are available and to be able to articulate the obstacles that they have encountered.”

Mr. McElrath is providing leadership, expertise and creativity to his role as Chairman of the MCPD Housing Committee. He understands the needs of people with disabilities and knows how to be an effective advocate. He also brings compassion to his mission. He stated the philosophy that affects how he lives his life. “If I can help somebody along the way, my living will not be in vain.”

Adaptive Modification Program

By Peggy Robertson

Philadelphia, like many other major cities, has a shortage of affordable accessible housing. The City of Philadelphia recognizes this shortage, and has made a commitment to expanding housing resources for individuals with physical disabilities in a variety of ways.

One agency that has taken the lead in making more housing resources available is the Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD). In 1996 OHCD established TAP, a Housing and Disability Technical Assistance Program, specifically to provide training and up-to-date information about issues related to housing for people with disabilities in the City of Philadelphia. One service TAP offers is an interactive website (www.newsontap.org) which posts a list of vacant accessible housing units in Philadelphia that were either newly constructed or rehabilitated by developers and managers using OHCD funding.

OHCD is also a strong advocate for visitability. Elements of visitability include a one zero-step entrance, doorways with at least a 32 inch clear space, and a first floor powder room large enough to accommodate a person in a wheelchair. Visitability is addressed in the section titled "Threshold Criteria" and in the appendix of the 2005 Consolidated Plan published by OHCD. It states:

For new construction projects, a minimum of ten percent of the units, or at least one unit, must be disabled accessible for persons with mobility impairments and four percent for people with hearing or vision impairments (both exceed the federal regulations). For rehabilitation projects, the developer must make reasonable accommodations for buyers with special needs. The City of Philadelphia supports the concept of visitability for accessible housing design and encourages all housing developers to include visitability design features. To the extent

feasible, all new construction housing development projects must include visitability design features. This includes at least one no-step entrance at either the front, side, back or through the garage entrance. All doors (including powder/bathroom entrances) should be 32 inches wide and hallways and other room entrances, at least 36 inches wide.

OHCD also administers the Housing Trust Fund, which was established to help non-profit organizations build and repair housing for low- and moderate-income residents. A portion of these funds have been allocated to the Adaptive Modification Program that helps individuals with physical disabilities live independently in their own homes and avoid institutionalization. The Adaptive Modification Program (AMP) provides major accessibility adaptations to a home including, but not limited to, exterior wheelchair lifts, stairway lifts, elevators, first floor full-

(Continued on page 6)

(AMP continued from page 5)

and half-bathrooms, railings, increased lighting and kitchen modifications.

AMP had been administered by the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) since 1989 using funds allocated from OHCD. In September, 2005, OHCD awarded the administration of the program to the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation (PHDC). AMP clearly fits into PHDC's mission, which is to develop new and rehabilitate existing housing for low and moderate income families in the City of Philadelphia through joint ventures with community development corporations (CDC's). PHDC provides basic system repairs and weatherization services to current homeowners as well as direct rehabilitation of vacant homes. AMP provides services to low-income Philadelphia residents with permanent physical disabilities and is available to both homeowners and renters. It should be noted that general repairs are not included in this program.

The AMP is managed by George Russell, who was the administrator of the program at PCA and

brings with him 14 years of experience. Mr. Russell noted, "I'm very knowledgeable about the program because I've been involved with it for so many years. And although there was an initial transition period, since the program moved to PHDC, there have been no real gaps in its implementation."

Mr. Russell described the program. "In order to apply for the program, a person must: be a Philadelphia resident with a permanent physical disability, meet the low-income requirements, be current or under payment arrangement with real estate and water/sewer taxes, and have written permission from the homeowner if different from the applicant. All services are free to eligible Philadelphia residents."

Mr. Russell added, "Unfortunately, there is a waiting list of almost 1,100 people. Clients are served on a first-come, first-served basis and generally may only receive services one time through this program. Once an individual has applied and their name comes to the top of the waiting list, the individual,

or a family member is contacted to come in for an intake interview. If the individual is unable to come in, the interviews are conducted over the telephone and documents are gathered by mail. This process makes it easier and quicker to move through the waiting list rather than going out to every house. After the intake is completed, a licensed Occupational Therapist goes to the individual's home and makes recommendations. The inspector then works up estimates, PHDC makes sure that the job is within budget and the job is assigned."

Mr. Russell described the services that are needed in order to implement the program. "PHDC contracts for six different services. Requests for Proposals (RFP) are sent to Electric Contractors, Durable Medical Equipment Suppliers, Wrought Iron Railings Suppliers, Plumbing and General Contractors, Mechanical Equipment Installers (wheelchair lifts and stair glides) and Occupational Therapy Consultants. These RFPs, which go out once a year, went out in the Spring of 2006 and

(Continued on page 7)

(AMP continued from page 6)

contracts were awarded for July 1, 2006 through December 31, 2007.”

After receiving recommendations from the Occupational Therapist, a PHDC Inspector reviews contractor estimates and develops work specifications for all other modifications. The AMP Manager will review each case and authorize the award to the approved contractor(s). Orders are then sent to contractors with a due date. Because the equipment ordered is determined, in part, by an Occupational Therapist for maximum therapeutic value, no changes in the equipment can be made without the prior approval of PHDC. Contractors submit invoices and signed proof of delivery to PHDC immediately upon order completion. PHDC

will then inspect the completed modifications and issue payment to contractors and suppliers.

Mr. Russell further explained, “The average job costs about \$16,000 although this can vary depending on what is involved. The maximum amount is \$25,000 per home. A job might cost that much because sometimes the mechanical equipment is very expensive. But the focus of the program is to ensure that people can get out of their house and that they can use their bathroom. Some of the types of modifications that are completed include the installation of grab bars; hand held showers; handicap-height toilets, wheelchair lifts; stair glides and railings. The length of time it takes to complete a modification can vary. A custom made wheel-

chair lift usually takes three to four months to complete whereas other jobs don’t take as long.”

The AMP allows individuals to stay in their homes and avoid institutionalization. The long waiting list causes great frustration and according to Mr. Anthony McIntosh, Executive Vice President of PHDC, “the solution is to build homes that are visitable to begin with in order to avoid some of the problems.” Susan Klein, Director of Housing, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, concurs. “The more visitable units there are, the fewer dollars will be needed for modifications.”

For more information about the Adaptive Modification Program, call PHDC at 215-448-2160 or visit the PHDC website at <http://www.phdchousing.org/programs.htm>.

Save The Date

Friday, October 6th, 2006

OHCD-Sponsored Forum

Disability News: Strategies for Housing in Philadelphia

Hilton Garden Inn
1100 Arch Street, 10th Floor, Philadelphia, PA

Home Finder Frequently Asked Questions

TAP, the Housing and Disability Technical Assistance Program, is a resource sponsored by the Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD).

The purpose of TAP is to provide up-to-date information on accessible housing, fair housing laws, financial and technical resources, model projects and other issues related to housing for people with disabilities in Philadelphia.

The Home Finder is an interactive feature on the TAP website, www.newsontap.org.

What is the purpose of the Home Finder?

The Home Finder allows individuals with disabilities, case workers, advocacy and service organizations and others to search for available accessible units. The Home Finder provides a list of vacant accessible housing units in Philadelphia either newly constructed or rehabilitated by developers and managers using OHCD funding.

Is the Home Finder easy to use?

Yes, the site has instructions on how to use the Home Finder and includes simple registration for both users and property managers.

How does a user register on the Home Finder?

Users do not need to register to use the Home Finder. However, users may register to be notified by email when new units are listed on the site. Registration for this service is available at www.newsontap.org/homefinder/signup.php.

How does a property manager register on the Home Finder?

Property managers must complete and submit a registration form which can be found on the website at www.newsontap.org/homefinder/register.php. Once property managers have registered with a user name and password, they can add new listings, delete listings, and/or manage current listings.

What information is included about the available units listed on the Home Finder?

Listings include the date rental units and homes for sale are posted, the address, date of availability for occupancy, monthly rent or sale price of home, accessibility features, number of bedrooms, target population, eligibility guidelines, utilities, and contact information for the property manager. There is also space for property managers to include other information about the units. Accessible features are designated by the following icons:



Off street parking available



Mobility accessible



Hearing accessible



Vision accessible

Once a property manager is registered, can they make changes to the site?

Property Managers and Developers can add new units, edit or delete listings on the Home Finder.

(Continued on page 9)

(Home Finder FAQ continued from page 8)

How are the listings categorized?

Individuals can search for housing by the following categories: new listing, neighborhood (includes a map of the city with zip codes), number of bedrooms or all available listings.

What are the most recent statistics on the Home Finder?

As of July 2006:

- There are 25 different property management companies registered on the Home Finder.
- There have been a total of 209 accessible units listed on the site. Of these, 182 accessible units were deleted because they were rented/sold and of these, 144 were rented/sold to individuals with a disability.
- There are currently 27 accessible units listed on the Home Finder as available.

What if a user does not find an accessible unit on the Home Finder?

The site has information about other available resources:

- Users can access a list of affordable accessible rental units in Philadelphia in Chapter 1 of *The Philly Primer*. While the units listed within *The Philly Primer* are not necessarily available for rent at this time, contact information is provided for each of the properties, which can be used to get on a waiting list to access future vacancies.
- The site also directs users to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's Apartment Locator at www.phfa.org/pal which has listings of accessible units throughout Pennsylvania.

The Home Finder

The Home Finder is an interactive feature of www.newsontap.org that allows developers/managers of OHCD-funded housing to directly post the availability of accessible units. Individuals with disabilities, case workers, advocacy and service organizations can access the Home Finder to look for available accessible units.

The Home Finder can help with the following:

- **Are you looking for accessible housing?**
[View a list of vacant accessible housing units in Philadelphia](#)
- **Are you a property manager or developer?**
[Add new units, edit a current listing, or delete a listing.](#)
- **Need Help Using the Home Finder?**
[Learn all about the Home Finder and how it works.](#)

Visit the NEWS ON TAP Website at www.newsontap.org



World Congress and Exposition on Disabilities Conference

On November 17-19, 2006, the World Congress and Exposition on Disabilities (WCD) will be held in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. WCD is an event for people with physical and developmental disabilities, their family members, caregivers, and allied healthcare professionals.

The Home Accessibility & Universal Design Pavilion will feature:

- Products and services including lifts, ramps, kitchen and bath solutions
- ADA and local code requirements
- Ask The Experts Desk
- And much more

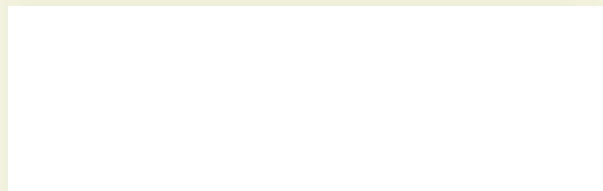
The Pavilion is sponsored by The Pennsylvania Human Relation Commission. For more information, please call 201-226-1446 or visit www.wcdexpo.com.

NEWS ON TAP is published by Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc. and is funded by the Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development

Project Director: Diana T. Myers • Newsletter Editor: Peggy Robertson

If you would like more information about a project described here, please contact us at the following address:

NEWS ON TAP, 6 South Easton Road, Glenside, PA 19038. 215-576-1558 Fax: 215-576-8650 Website: www.newsontap.org



FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GLENSEIDE, PA
PERMIT NO. 916

NEWS ON TAP
c/o Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc.
6 South Easton Road
Glenside, PA 19038