An Open Letter from ADAPT to the Disability Community in response to questions and concerns on targeting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi because of her lack of support for the Community Choice Act

Sisters and Brothers in the Disability Community:

As the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act draws near, we approach the milestone with mixed emotions. Securing national civil rights legislation, protecting the rights of people with disabilities, was truly historic. It is important that we recognize the incredible nature of this accomplishment and the hard work of those that made this happen, but 20 years after President George H. W. Bush signed this civil rights legislation into law and as our community is preparing for the celebrations, we pause in disappointment that the promise of freedom has still not reached our sisters and brothers in nursing facilities and other institutions.

Our sisters and brothers remain locked away, unseen and unheard. For them, the act is just words on paper. They are not given the opportunity to exercise their civil rights under this law because they still do not have the basic freedoms that other Americans enjoy.

As the Anniversary date draws closer, they may hear about the progress our community has made over the past 20 years, but knowing that you are protected against discrimination in employment means nothing when the hub of your life is a bedroom you share with a stranger. Knowing that buildings and public accommodations are accessible means nothing when the facility staff won’t let you leave; and even having access to lifts on buses - as dear to our hearts as that is - means nothing when you cannot afford to go anywhere on the allowance that is left over after the institution has taken its share of your money.
When we gather together as a community, we must remember that our sisters and brothers in institutions will not be toasting those that authored or advocated for the Act. They will not be celebrating independent living, either as a movement or personal achievement, and they certainly won’t share in the power or pride of the disability community. For them, July 26th will be the same as every other day in the institution.

Recently, ADAPT has been criticized by some of the provider-based advocates in our community because we are publicly demanding that Speaker Pelosi sign onto the Community Choice Act and agree to eliminate the institutional bias once and for all. They tell us that publicly questioning "our friends" is inappropriate. We are told we should be grateful for the efforts that have been made so far, and that we must be patient because change takes time.

We will not apologize for our impatience. We do this because our brothers and sisters have waited long enough for their freedom. We cannot sit by, patiently and quietly waiting for our government to give our people the freedom which should be our birthright.

We had great hopes for President Obama and this Congress. Many of us believed that his promise for change included the promise of freedom. When President Obama was taking the oath of office with his hand on Lincoln’s bible, it seemed like fate was telling us that he would free our people. When the President and Congress took up health care reform, we were sure that they would finally eliminate the institutional bias, and we hoped that this historic anniversary in the disability community would be celebrated with historic change. Unfortunately, the President and Congress did not have the political will to make this happen. While we recognize that some gains were made, unlike any other class of Americans, our freedom remains a state option.

It is, indeed, true that one of the tools we are using to help people leave institutions and move into the community is the Supreme Court’s Olmstead decision, which is based on the requirements of the ADA, and it is true that President Obama’s administration has demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to enforcing the Olmstead decision. But such efforts are transitory. We have seen, during the last 20 years, that new administrations have their own priorities, and although there may now be a com-
commitment to enforce the Olmstead decision, the pendulum will ultimately swing back in the other direction. We also know that the gains we may make in the courts are hard-fought, slow, and constantly subject to attack. Even right now, as many in the disability community commemorate the ADA’s anniversary, the Attorney General in Connecticut is coordinating legal efforts by the states to fight against some of the recent gains we have made in court which will allow more of our people to live in freedom. Ironically, the deadline for states to join the effort is just one day after the anniversary, July 27th.

In America, freedom shouldn’t ever be optional, but - in fact - for us it is. While federal Medicaid rules require states to pay for institutional placement, community-based alternatives are state options and continually subject to elimination in state budget cuts. It is ironic that as we celebrate a civil rights victory that is 20 years old, our freedom is becoming even more precarious and the situation becoming more dire. States, facing record budget shortfalls, are cutting the services that support community living options for seniors and persons with disabilities. These budget cuts force people into unwanted placement, stealing from them much of what is most precious: their homes, their families and their freedom.

Some people have moved across the country to a different state to get supports and services to live outside of the institution. There, they have been able to share in the promise of the ADA, but many people don’t know about the services available in other states or simply might not be able to make the journey on this modern underground railroad.

But as long as community services are only an option, those who have escaped to freedom cannot escape the fear. No place is safe because their freedom can easily disappear at the whim of state policy makers. They will be called upon to help solve their state’s budget crisis by sacrificing their freedom, home and lives.

We all need to recognize that through personal circumstance or state policy change any of us can lose our freedom. No one in our community is exempt. No one is safe. No one in our community can afford to be comfortable, but it is also our hope that - from this discomfort - the disability community will be mobilized to take action and, together, we will build on a 20-year legacy to address this injustice. Our movement isn’t about the civil rights for some of us; it is about the freedom of all of us.

We cannot wait any longer. ADAPT asks you, during this ADA 20th anniversary celebration, to recommit your energy to ending the institutional bias during the next Congress. The time is now to end the institutional bias and FREE OUR PEOPLE!

Sincerely,

The ADAPT Community
ADAPT returns to DC to FREE OUR PEOPLE!

Fourth Annual FUN*RUN kicks-off a week of Disability Rights Advocacy in DC

For the fourth year in a row, ADAPT’s Spring Action in Washington DC began with the FUN*RUN for Disability Rights on April 25, 2010. The FUN*RUN is the major national fundraising event for ADAPT. This year’s FUN*RUN held special significance because it commemorated the 20th Anniversary of the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA) which was signed into law on July 26, 1990.

This year’s National “Celebrity” FUN*RUNNER was Chicago writer and disability rights activist Mike Ervin. Mike set a goal of having a “zillion” FUN*RUN sponsors and he evidently came near his goal being the biggest celebrity fundraiser ever.

Master-of-ceremonies Bob Liston spurred the FUN*RUNNERS on as the enjoyed the mild Spring weather, perfect for walking and rolling around the plaza in Upper Senate Park. This was a great way to prepare for the next few days of marching/rolling through the streets of our nation’s capital and the halls of Congress.

DOJ and NGA agree to work with ADAPT

The rainy morning of Monday, April 26, 2010 saw ADAPT headed to the offices of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to demand a meeting with the head of the Civil Rights Division, Deputy Attorney General Samuel Bagenstos, to discuss DOJ’s duty to enforce the Supreme Court’s 1999 Olmstead Decision. Olmstead said that the unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities is a violation of their civil rights under the ADA. Mr. Bagenstos had been quoted as saying, “ending the unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities is crucial to disability civil rights” and “to be denied the right to choose where one lives one’s life is to be denied equal respect as a human being.” ADAPT was intent on insuring that these encouraging words from a top civil rights enforcer at DOJ were put into practice.

500 ADAPT activists lined the sidewalk in front of the DOJ building and kept their vigil in the rain as negotiations on a meeting with Deputy AG Bagenstos proceeded inside.

Waiting in the rain outside the Department of Justice, veteran Utah ADAPT organizer Barb Toomer mused, “DOJ has screwed people with disabilities in their inability or unwilling-
ness to back our civil rights. They certainly had no problem going into the South to defend the rights of black Americans, who certainly faces terrible discrimination, but [even though] blacks might have not been able to get into white restaurants and bathrooms, at least that had a restaurant or bathroom to get into! Maybe they were forced to ride in the back of the bus, but at least the had a bus to ride!”

Toomer’s mood brightened when ADAPT negotiators Cassie James and Bruce Darling emerged with good news for the waiting throng. They reported that not only had Bagenstos agreed to work with ADAPT on Olmstead compliance, but he had agreed to come and meet with the entire group on Wednesday afternoon. James said she thought “this guy [Bagenstos] really gets it!” Known as one who is usually skeptical of bureaucratic promises, James said she felt that Bagenstos was sincere in his desire to work with ADAPT and she looked forward to the opportunity for us all to meet and speak with him later in the week.

Buoyed by the positive outcome at DOJ, ADAPT marched off to Hall of the States Building to pay a visit to the National Governors Association (NGA). Over a decade since the Supreme Court handed down the landmark Olmstead decision many states have still not fulfilled the mandate to provided long term services and supports for people with disabilities in the “most integrated setting”. In fact, because of the current budget crunch, many states are cutting back on already underfunded home and community based waiver programs that provide people with disabilities on Medicaid the help they need in their own homes. Thousands of people are being forced to go without needed care or to enter institutions. This heart-wrenching example of our nation’s upside down Medicaid long term care system, where costly institutional services are the entitlement and home and community based services are optional, creates a downward spiral where states have less money to serve fewer people and more and more people are denied their Olmstead rights!

Despite the efforts of the local authorities to “head us off at the pass” hundreds of demonstrators were able to fill the courtyard in front of the Hall of the States, which amplified their chants of, “Our Homes, Not Nursing Homes,” like a giant echo chamber. As a cordon of police and security personnel block entry to the building, ADAPT negotiators Dawn Russell, Barb Toomer and Mike Oxford met inside with NGA Executive Director Ray Scheppach and Health and Human Services Committee Director, Matt Salo.

After a short period of negotiations Scheppach and Salo agreed to meet with ADAPT and work on the demands that had been presented to them. ADAPT wants the NGA to:
• Endorse the Community Choice Act (S683/HR1670) and commit to working with ADAPT to end the federal Medicaid institutional bias that mandates that states pay for placement in nursing facilities and other institutions while leaving community-based services as options;

• Issue a letter from the NGA to the Governors urging them to begin working with consumer groups, including ADAPT, to apply for the Community First Choice Option and offering technical assistance through the Center for Best Practices on how states can select and implement this alternative to institutional placement;

• Commit to dedicating a plenary session at the 2010 NGA Annual Meeting that includes representatives from ADAPT and the Department of Justice discussing the state’s responsibility for complying with the Olmstead decision;

• Instruct the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices to work with ADAPT to develop an issue briefing that describes best practices states can use to contain Medicaid costs while promoting the independence and civil rights of people with disabilities, including the de-medicalization of services, increased use of consumer-directed models of providing assistance, and expanding the use of community-based alternatives to institutionalization; and

• Instruct the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices to work with ADAPT to develop and implement model projects in five states based on this issue brief.

Since the Action ADAPT had a meeting with NGA Executive Director Ray Scheppach and his staff in August, NGA agreed to ongoing meetings to develop an Olmstead policy paper and to continue discussions on ending the nursing facility entitlement to give states more flexibility to design more community-based programs.

ADAPT’s wake-up call for Nancy Pelosi

The next morning, April, 27, 2010, found ADAPT up before dawn preparing to march across town to the Washington Hilton Hotel. U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was scheduled to speak at the Annual Meeting of the American Hospital Association there that morning and ADAPT had bone to pick with her.

Speaker Pelosi, who currently is probably the most powerful women in Washington, prides
herself on being a leading advocate on women’s issues and claims to support “full and equal access to all aspects of American society” for people with disabilities. Yet, even though most people who are long-term caregivers, nursing facility residents and people with disabilities in general are women and the community integration mandate of Olmstead and the ADA remains unfulfilled, she still refuses to work with ADAPT to pass the Community Choice Act (CCA). ADAPT had come to put her on notice that mere lip service wouldn’t get the job done and we expected real leadership from her to get CCA passed during this Congress.

Jennifer McPhail of Texas ADAPT said that ADAPT has been trying to get Speaker Pelosi’s to support CCA “for years … but, she refuses to sign on.” McPhail remarked, “She bragged that she was the most powerful Speaker in history when health care reform passed, so let’s see that power spread out to some people that could actually us some assistance.” McPhail said ADAPT was here to today to tell Pelosi “you should and you must” help ADAPT pass CCA!

The circuitous 3 mile march to the Hilton made it impossible to conceal our destination from law enforcement authorities, so the police were there waiting to greet ADAPT as we arrived. Nevertheless, the ADAPT activists soon surrounded the hotel and even though police repelled those who tried to enter, there was no ignoring ADAPT’s presence.

When Pelosi showed up at the Hilton she quickly dashed past the demonstrators into the hotel. Not long after her arrival ADAPT demonstrators at the rear of the hotel recognized the familiar face of television newsman Sam Donaldson as he approached the hotel. A group of demonstrators near the entrance spoke with Donaldson, who had come to interview Speaker Pelosi, and explained why we were there. Since we had been barred from entering the hotel, they asked him if he would be willing to deliver our demands to the Speaker to:

- Work with ADAPT to end the institutional bias, co-sponsor the Community Choice Act and work to pass CCA during the current session of Congress, and

- Participate in an ADAPT-sponsored press conference an April 28th at the Capitol in DC.

After talking to the activists about CCA and our goal of getting the Speaker to help us pass the bill, Donaldson said he was surprised that Pelosi wasn’t already a co-sponsor of CCA and working to get it passed. He agreed to deliver our demands to Speaker Pelosi when he
got a chance to talk to her.

Once she had finished speaking Pelosi again ignored the ADAPT demonstrators as she dashed to her limo and sped away. Pelosi can run, but she can’t hide from ADAPT. The activists left the Washington Hilton determined to bird-dog Pelosi until she agrees to work with ADAPT to pass CCA.

Donaldson not only kept his word to deliver ADAPT’s demands to Pelosi, but later that evening he contacted ADAPT to let us know that after he had given Pelosi our demands he asked her why she wasn’t onboard with CCA already. Pelosi told him she supported the right of people with disabilities to live in their own homes, but was concerned about how to pay for the CCA. ADAPT vowed to make sure that Speaker Pelosi was well educated on the real cost of CCA and to persistently pursue her and win her support to pass the bill.

ADAPT stopped at DuPont Circle for some lunch and then it was on to the headquarters of the American Health Care Association (ACHA). ACHA is the nation’s largest lobbying organization for nursing facilities and similar institutions.

The demonstrators packed the sidewalks and overflowed into the streets surrounding the corner where ACHA headquarters is located. In short order, ACHA staff emerged with ADAPT negotiator Mike Oxford. They agreed to meet with ADAPT to work with us on our demands to:

• Work with ADAPT to end the institutional bias, co-sponsor the Community Choice Act and work to pass CCA during the current session of Congress,

• Work with ADAPT to develop standards for implementing the new Minimum Data Set (MDS), including a process for contracting with peers to inform nursing facility residents of their right to live in the most integrated setting. (MDS is part of the federally mandated clinical assessment process for all residents in Medicare or Medicaid certified nursing facilities and includes information on residents who want to move back into the community),

• Support the definition of community living as a living arrangement of four or less people in one residence, with each person having the ability to lock his/her own door, and

• Establish training for assisted living facilities on their obligations under the Fair Housing Act.
The meeting with ACHA took place in early August. At the meeting they said they supported Olmstead and community choice, but would not commit to Supporting CCA. They also agreed to work with ADAPT on making better use of the MDS data to facilitate community reintegration. No agreement was reached on privacy and fair housing issues in assisted living facilities, but ACHA agreed to a follow-up meeting to continue discussions on these unresolved issues.

**Americans are willing to pay two cents a day for CCA, says Harris Poll**

On Wednesday, April 28, 2010 ADAPT marched up to Capitol hill to began a morning of Congressional visits with a press conference in the Longworth House Office Building. ADAPT held the press conference along with the Coalition for Community Integration, the American Association for People with Disabilities, the National Council on Independent Living, TASH and other disability rights groups from the Justice for All Action Network to announce the release of a new Harris Poll that shows American’s preference for and the affordability of community-based long-term care.

The Harris Poll showing 89% of all Americans support legislation like the Community Choice Act (CCA) that give people the ability to choose home and community-based supports and services instead of being forced by the current Medicaid law into nursing facilities and other institutions.

That support jumped to 94% amongst the baby-boomer/retiree age group.

The poll also found that, contrary to the assertions of CCA naysayers and ill-informed policymakers (like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi) the cost of such legislation for the average working class American would be a mere $6/year in taxes – less than two cents a day!

Following the press conference ADAPT activists paid a visit to every member of Congress to share the information from the Harris Poll. This information help strengthen the position of CCA supporters in their argument for passage of the bill and should help persuade policymakers that they need to support CCA because it makes economic sense and more importantly it is what the American people want!

**Bagenstos pledges to partner with ADAPT**

Early Wednesday evening, during the big group meeting at the hotel, Deputy Attorney General Samuel Bagenstos met with ADAPT to talk to us about
what DOJ is doing and how advocates can work with DOJ to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

Bagenstos began by saying that, while DOJ wants to vigorously enforce all disability rights laws, “Our biggest priority in disability civil rights enforcement it to making sure that, finally, after more than ten years, states respect the Olmstead decision of the Supreme Court.” He explained that DOJ was doing a systematic analysis of all the states to see which are doing a good job of Olmstead compliance and which are not. Bagenstos said, “When comes to the good states, not a lot of fingers are needed to count them.”

Bagenstos told ADAPT that DOJ has active cases in 13 states and is working hard to target a broad range of people with disabilities and situations where there are instances of “unnecessary institutionalization.” He told the group, “One of the most significant ways we find out about where we can make the most difference is from people like you in this room, from people who are activists in their communities, who know what’s going on in their communities and who can tell us the warning signs. Here’s how the budget cuts are affecting us. Here’s how the budget cuts are going to make it impossible for people to continue to live outside of nursing homes. Here is a place you can come in and if you come in you will get support from the disability rights community, from the consumer community, in your state.”

As an example, he spoke about what happened in Georgia where the previous administration had entered into an Olmstead settlement with the state that lacked any effective compliance provisions. The advocates in Georgia came to DOJ and said they opposed the settlement because it wasn’t working. Bagenstos said they realized that if DOJ would work with the local advocacy community, those advocates would still be there long after the Obama Administration is gone to make sure that compliance continues. “What I hope that says to you is, ‘What we need to know from you is where are the places that we need to go. Where are that places that there will be a core group of activists that will work to make sure our work continues over the months and years after we’re gone.’”

After he finished speaking Deputy AG Bagenstos stuck around for another 20 or 30 minutes to answer questions from the audience before he had to leave for another appointment.

After the successful Actions of the past few days and a meeting that presaged a potential partnership with DOJ. ADAPT was ready to party. The tradition end-of-the-Action party was a chance for folks to celebrate and get energized to continue the struggle to FREE OUR PEOPLE when they got back home.
ADAPT rocks Pelosi’s world at Progressive conference

A contingent of several dozen activists, led by ADAPT organizers Cassie James, Dawn Russell and Anita Cameron, showed U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, “you can run, but you can’t hide” from ADAPT when they confronted her at the America’s Future Now! Conference in Washington D.C. on June 8, 2010. Pelosi was a scheduled speaker at the prestigious conference sponsored by the national Progressive political organization Campaign for America’s Future.

Members of ADAPT had to use a platform lift operated by the hotel staff to access the auditorium floor, so they were well ensconced near the stage prior to Pelosi’s speech. When Pelosi began her speech she was startled to hear Cassie James of Philly ADAPT shout, “I’m not going to a nursing home!” as the ADAPT demonstrators in their orange CCA tee-shirts unfurling a large banner sporting the ADAPT logo and demanding “Community Choice Act Now!” As the demonstrators chanted, “Our Homes, Not Nursing Homes”, Pelosi called for security to “get them out of here.” Dawn Russell of Atlantis ADAPT recalled how the inaccessibility on the venue made it impossible for security to remove them. According to Russell, “She wanted us out of there. She wanted us arrested and they told her ‘we can’t get them out of here’. Do you know what we went through to get them in here? We can’t get them out!”

Once she realized there was no way to get rid of the ADAPT protesters Pelosi decided to continue with her speech. Through the entirety of the half hour speech ADAPT continued their demonstration. Some people tried to shout them down, but James said that only made ADAPT shout even louder.

Progressive pundits tried to convince ADAPT that their demonstration was a political miscalculation. They said it was a mistake to protest someone who is “friendly” to our cause. But, how much of a friend can Pelosi be when she continues to refuse to co-sponsor CCA or help ADAPT get the legislation passed in this Congress.

Conference organizer Robert Borosage was quoted in the Washington Post as saying, “The bizarre thing is the speaker is their ally. She just needs a coalition.” To which ADAPT replies, “With nearly a third of the House as current co-sponsors of CCA, including the Chairs of the House Black, Hispanic and Progressive Caucuses, several Blue Dog Democrats and even a number of Republicans, how much more of a coalition does she need?!”

ADAPT is confident we are making progress. Because of the extensive national news coverage many more Americans know about CCA. Progressive leaders who have up until now ignored ADAPT’s issues were forced to sit up and take notice. And while ADAPT continues to fight for Pelosi’s support, they did find a sympathetic ear at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) as was evident at the meeting they had with the DNC following the protest. ADAPT even dropped by Pelosi’s office on the Hill that afternoon to yet one more offer to meet with her next time ADAPT is in town.
Voting is about Seizing the Power!, By Cheri Mitchell

I joined ADAPT because I was mad and I was not going to take it anymore and I saw the injustice all around me in the way People with Disabilities are treated. I feel that because of ADAPT, people with disabilities are taking their rightful place in society. We refuse to be hidden or locked away anymore! As members of ADAPT, we have joined together in advocacy and activism to change the world. In our activism the first and one of the most important things we can do is VOTE! Justin Dart said it best, “Vote as if your life depends on it, because it does!”

Here in Georgia, Atlanta ADAPT members get together and make a party of voting. You know ADAPT members know how to party! We organize the trip to vote and make sure everyone who needs assistance has that assistance from the person they want to help them. After we vote, we go out and eat and had a few drinks. We always go somewhere with a TV. We watch the Election coverage together. One year, a new ADAPT member told us, that this year was the first year; she got to vote for who she wanted to vote for. In the past, her family had always told her who to vote for instead of letting her vote for who she wanted to vote for. Voting for who she wanted to- now that is POWER! Elections are coming up. Please get out and vote and seize the power!

Is it important to vote?

- Do people with disabilities make a difference when they vote? YES!!!!!!!
- People with disabilities have been called the sleeping giant in the voting population
- It is time we woke up to be heard
- If you believe in self determination you should vote.

How do I know who to vote for?

You should vote for the person you feel will be the best candidate. You want to vote for someone who believes the way you do. As an ADAPT member, I would only vote for Congressional or Presidential candidates who support the Community Choice Act and other programs that help people with disabilities stay in their own homes. Likewise, I would support state level candidates who support programs like Money Follows the Person and the Community First Choice State Plan Option.

To find out if candidates support your right to live in your own home and other issues that are important to you:
• Write to candidates and ask where they stand on the issues,

• Go to public events where you can ask candidates their positions on issues that affect you,

• Listen to political debates, and

• Ask the opinions of people you respect who are involved in the political process.

Does the polling place have to be accessible?

Yes! It has to be accessible for everyone, including people with mobility, sensory or cognitive impairments. Examples of the aids and services that may be available to make voting and elections accessible:

• Touch screen electronic voting machines

• Paper ballots in alternative formats

• Audio recordings

• Braille

• Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDD)

• The assistance of another individual of the voter’s choosing

How can I recognize if my rights were violated because of my disability?

The rights of voters with disabilities may be denied in a number of ways. For example:

• Poll workers may falsely assume voters with disabilities are incompetent to vote;

• They may deny voters with disabilities the accommodations they require and are entitled to in the voting booth;

• Voting locations and equipment may be inaccessible;

• Election officials may be unwilling to provide assistance to make the voting place accessible to a particular person with a disability; Example lower the voting machine.

• Poll workers may even try to deny you a ballot because of your disability!

What do I do if I have trouble voting?

No one can legally deny you your right to vote! Even if you don’t have the proper voter
ID, or you are not on the list of registered voters, poll workers must offer you the opportunity to vote by provisional ballot. A provisional ballot is used whenever there is a question about your eligibility to vote. If a provisional ballot is not offered, you have the right to request and receive one from election officials.

If you vote by provisional ballot be sure to follow-up by contacting your local election office immediately after the election to be sure your vote is counted.

If you are denied a provisional ballot or have problems with inaccessibility at your polling place call your state’s Protection and Advocacy Agency, the local election office and your Secretary of State’s office.

Seize the Power!

At nearly 20% of the population people with disabilities represent a potentially powerful voting bloc. Politicians court the vote of other minority groups, like seniors and union members. Why? Because they vote! Older Americans only make up 14% of the population, but 85% of them vote in a presidential election. Only 8% of the population belongs to a labor union, but 90% of them vote!

Just a little over half of eligible voters with disabilities actually vote. Think about the political power that older Americans and labor unions have and then think about the power people with disabilities could have if we all exercised our right to vote.

The power is in your hands. It is up to you to seize it and use it to FREE OUR PEOPLE!!

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Around the Nation

ADAPT of Tennessee says, “Don’t Be a Fool-Lifts Don’t Work”, by Randy Alexander
Members from ADAPT of Tennessee held signs reading “Don’t be a fool MATA-lifts don’t work,” and “Access is a civil right” as they blocked trolleys on Main Street in Downtown Memphis on April 1, 2010.

Since the beginning, access to the Main Street trolleys has been an issue for people with disabilities. Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) and the city of Memphis installed lifts at trolley stops along Main Street in order to provide access to the trolleys, despite objections from the disability community.

So ADAPT of Tennessee blocked the trolley from running, directly in front of the Center City Commission (CCC), a public/private commission that has a lot of pull on everything downtown.

With the trolley stopped on the tracks, it didn’t take long for the President of the CCC, Jeff Sanford, to come out and negotiate with ADAPT. “Basically, Mr. Sanford agreed there were problems with the lifts, and that he would help convene a meeting with the Mayors office, MATA, ADAPT and others to address the problem,” said Deborah.

How do you spell power? A-D-A-P-T!

ADAPT of TN Trolley action update: Since April 1st, we have met with MATA officials to discuss adding two raised platforms with ramps on Main street. MATA officials agreed to work with us seeking buy in from the downtown organizations and to begin looking into designs and costs for raised platforms in the two locations requested by ADAPT of Tennessee. Both groups will work towards a meeting with the Center City commission, the Downtown CDC and the Mayor Wharton seeking their support.

ADAPT of Texas holds Press Conference on Harris Poll supporting Home and Community-based Services, by David Wittie
ADAPT of Texas held a press conference on Monday, May 10th at 10:30 am at the north plaza (near San Jacinto entrance) of the Federal Building at 300 E 8th Street to announce the results of a recent nationwide Harris Poll. The poll shows 89% of all Americans are willing to pay for legislation like the Community Choice Act which would provide home and community-based supports and services instead of older and disabled Americans being forced by the current Medicaid law into nursing homes and other institutional settings.

One of several ADAPT members who spoke at the event, Cathy Cranston, a mother and a personal attendant in the community, stated “During this week, the week of Mother’s Day, it’s important to recognize we are also talking about mothers who have children with disabilities, who may have disabilities themselves or often become the primary caregivers for
other family members with disabilities. It just makes sense that, if it only costs about $6.00 a YEAR per middle class taxpayer to provide community services, that Congress should just go ahead and pass the CCA."

**Home Services Action in Chicago: 15 ADAPTers Arrested for Blocking Street**

On May 28, 2010, advocates converged on the plaza at the State of Illinois building in Chicago’s downtown Loop. Groups represented included Access Living, Progress Center, ADAPT, SEIU and others.

They wanted to send a message to current Governor, Pat Quinn, as well as his Republican opponent that they need to be outspoken about their commitment to home services and rebalancing the state’s long term care budget towards community choice. Green Party candidate, Rich Whitney, had signed a pledge to support home services, but neither Quinn nor Brady had signed the pledge.

With the passage of the state budget mid-week, advocates wanted to act fast in response. The three main points of the rally were a) to ensure funding for Medicaid home services, b) to increase the asset limit for home services eligibility and c) to not have caps on service hours. In addition many advocates spoke against the introduction of a managed care pilot program in Illinois, which is set to impact more than 35,000 people with disabilities in the counties surrounding Chicago.

The rally was emceed by Chicago ADAPT’s Mike Ervin, who announced at the rally’s conclusion, that Chicago ADAPT would lead a march in protest. The crowd followed Brian Angle and Larry Biondi, the march leaders, across the street towards City Hall. Just before riding up at the curb cut, they turned so that everyone was stopped in the middle of the street. Randolph Street was then effectively blocked by the entire group. The “march” into the street was the shortest “march” ever!

We wedged ourselves between the seats of state and city power in Chicago on one of Chicago’s busiest streets. Although surprised, non-ADAPT advocates took events in stride and either remained in the street with us to chant, or assisted with distributing flyers to passers-by.

When police let us know that they thought it was time for us to go home ADAPT broke out the handcuffs. Chanting resumed louder than ever and the police decided that it was time to start arrests. It took a while to go one by one down the line to issue citations and ADAPTers did a great job of being nonviolently disobedient.

It’s going to be a long, long summer and fall as state agencies battle out the allocations from the state budget, and Chicago ADAPT wanted to send a message that we will be right there every step of the way, and that we consider home services worth getting arrested for, any time. Our goal is to DEFEND OUR FREEDOM, now and forever, regardless of who sits in the office of the Governor, Democrat or Republican. FREE OUR PEOPLE!

**Disability and senior advocates rally to save independence, June 29, 2010**

“The 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act is right around
the corner, yet our legislative leaders in Springfield seem bent on setting people with disabilities back 40 years by cutting our most indispensible support services,” said Mike Ervin of Chicago ADAPT. On Tuesday morning, June 29, more than 100 advocates marched up Clark Street to the State of Illinois Building then blocked traffic at Randolph and Clark, demanding Illinois preserve services that enable people with disabilities and seniors to live in their own homes and save money.

The proposed 2011 Illinois State Budget includes cuts that will force people with disabilities and seniors into poverty, out of their homes, and into institutions. “It’s regressive, it’s brutal and it’s not even fiscally wise. We will not surrender ourselves to a life of inescapable poverty and institutionalization just because our leaders don’t have the courage to demand and pass a responsible budget,” said Ervin.

The rally was led by Chicago ADAPT and by home care workers represented by SEIU Healthcare Illinois, with support from Access Living, Jane Addams Senior Caucus and Progress Center for Independent Living.

For months, people with disabilities, seniors and the rest of Illinois have been waiting for leadership that will strengthen the state financially and will empower thousands of citizens in Illinois with independence. As long as the State leadership continues to make cuts that don’t make fiscal sense and are at the expense of the freedom of people with disabilities and seniors, the communities will continue to fight back.

ONGOING ACTION in California. Protest against Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s proposed budget cuts to homecare program, Blane Beckwith, N. California ADAPT

N. California ADAPT and other disabled/senior advocates have formed an organization, Californians United In Defense of Olmstead (CUIDO) to protest Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s proposed massive budget cuts.

Schwarzenegger wants to cut In Home Supportive Services (IHSS), the State funded attendant care program which over 400,000 disabled and seniors depend on to remain in their own homes, and out of nursing homes, by 50%.

To protest this deplorable act, CUIDO is staging an ongoing protest called “ArnieVille”, a camp out protest in a median strip on a major street in Berkeley. The name ArnieVille is derived from the infamous “HooverVilles” of the Great Depression, of the 1930s.

For more info, check out our Facebook page at: http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=118834031486532&v=wall

Washington ADAPT Celebrates ADA 20th Anniversary, by Don Locke

Over 150 people celebrated the 20th anniversary of the enactment of the “American’s with Disabilities Act”. ADAPT participated with Coalition of Responsible Disabled (CORD) of Spokane, the Disability Action Center (DAC) of Coeur d’Alene, Disability & Business Technical Assistance Center of the Northwest, and The Arc of Spokane at Mirabeau Park in the Spokane Valley.
The celebration themed “ADA - Gateway to Freedom’ was held on July 26, 2010. The many honored guests spoke of where we started and how far we have come since the enactment of the ADA; we did not ignore how far we have to go and pledged to continue the fight.

We all had a great time with a games arena for the kids, music, raffle prizes and a delicious lunch. Proclamations were presented from the Governor’s office, Spokane County and the City of Spokane Valley.

We continued our celebration in the afternoon, at the Thomas Foley Federal Courthouse in downtown Spokane where we conveyed our appreciation and information to the public as we marched around the courthouse plaza.

Still battling the Institutional Bias eleven years after Olmstead Decision at Woods School, by Cassie James
Bryan Nevins was a 20 year old man with Autism who died a needless and tragic death when he was left in a van on the hottest day in the summer for over five hours. He died in an inhumane way, yet somebody placed him at Wood School in the name of “care” and “Special Schooling”. Bryan, even in his death is a hero because his twin brother was freed the day after Bryan died. Eight other people are being relocated from the Woods Cottage that Bryan lived in.

The state pulled the license for the cottage that Bryan was in and made a statement that this was a tragic and needless death. There will be a huge investigation on Woods School and there will be no more admissions for quite awhile to Woods School.

Woods School is a huge institution with several different programs including Beechwood, a program for people with Brain Injuries. People are often sent there when they have an organic brain injury because the COMMCARE waiver only covers people with a Traumatic Brain Injury despite the fact that the person might need the exact same services to live in the community.

This is an example of the ridiculous barriers in our system that continues to foster the institutional bias. States from all over this country send people to Woods School and pay them $250,000 per person per year. Yet we are told there is not enough money to end the Institutional Bias and bring people into the community!

This action was coordinated by Alan Holdsworth an advocate for inclusive education. It was a partnership between the Alliance for Inclusive Education and Philly ADAPT and Kids Together. There were three people on the action that had Autism and were living in the community.

Joaquin Martinez
Desert ADAPT has lost one of their long time warriors. Joaquin Martinez, died on May 5th of kidney failure. He was 44. Joaquin had been fighting battles with bad health many times in the last few years. His attitude and perspective on life were always positive, and he was always ready to take up the battle to free our people. Celebrate his life of activism. He will be greatly missed.

Michael Champion
Michael Champion was a warrior in ADAPT early on, and his years spend in the DD state institution (so perversely called state schools here in TX) fueled his passion for liberty and justice for his brothers and sisters in the disability community. Michael fought for access, for liberty and the right to receive services at home. He was an advocate to the end and will leave a hole in the web of the movement.
Sandra Bookman, HCIL Director

Patty Winkle
Patty Winkle from Denver recently passed suddenly. She had just been into Atlantis, where she spent much time. Her friendly face was worn with the years she had been warehoused, yet Patty never-the-less remained quirky, optimistic and ready to see the good. Part of Atlantis from the very early days, she came to early bus actions - at the beginning. She found community and enjoyed it and supported it for many years. She will be missed.

Joel Grissom
Joel hadn’t been with ADAPT a long time, but he had a big impact on a couple of ADAPT groups. He came to the Memphis ADAPT group by being an intern with MCIL and on his way to his first national action discussed repeatedly how he was there to do whatever was needed but he just couldn’t let himself be arrested. As with so many warriors before him, the next thing we all know in the heat of an action he made the decision to stay with his brothers and sisters even if it meant arrest, and it did. Through ADAPT he friended many, especially someone special to him, Flo. Unfortunately, after Joel and Flo moved to New Mexico, Joel had some health problems and did not pull through, but he will always be with us. Randy Alexander, Memphis ADAPT
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Join ADAPT for the Fall National Action in Washington DC!

**September 18 - 23, 2010**

For more information contact: adapt@adapt.org