

# DISABILITY RIGHTS IN ACTION

A Newsletter of the Center for Disability Rights, Inc. / Winter 2018

## Thanks to CDR, DNC Supports DIA

Throughout the entire year, the Center for Disability Rights has been advocating for the Disability Integration Act (DIA), which would ensure the right of disabled people to live in the community instead of being forced to live in costly and isolating nursing facilities and institutions. We have met with legislators, gained support from organizations across the nation, and we have even engaged in direct action to advocate for our right to live in the community!

In November we continued these efforts to finish the year strong. CDR staff and consumers traveled to Washington D.C. once again, to visit Congressional offices and talk to legislators about cosponsoring the Disability Integration Act. Advocates shared with staff the importance and the impact of DIA, particularly what it would mean for them if it were passed by Congress. As a result of those office meetings, DIA has gained 10 new cosponsors!



Four of our fearless advocates in the Longworth House Office Building in Washington DC: Pam Taggart, Pat Taggart, Ericka Jones, and Stephanie Woodward.

Also, while we were in Washington D.C., we joined ADAPT to confront the Democratic National Committee (DNC) about their lack of support for the DIA. ADAPT had asked the DNC to support the DIA for over a year, but the DNC still had not published an official position on the bill. ADAPT informed the DNC that we planned to be in town, and that we would protest at one of their events to inform DNC supporters that the DNC was ignoring the Disability Community. When they learned of our plans, the DNC chair, Tom Perez, agreed to meet with us about our issues.

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**Roberta Wallach**  
*Board Chair*

**Bruce E. Darling**  
*President/CEO*

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**Corning**  
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**(315) 789-1800**

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*Center for Disability Rights works to ensure the full integration, independence and civil rights of people with disabilities and seniors in the community.*

## Dear Friends,

For the last two years, we have been tirelessly working to gain support for the Disability Integration Act (DIA). As summarized on [www.disabilityintegrationact.org](http://www.disabilityintegrationact.org), “the DIA is bipartisan, bicameral legislation that ensures that disabled Americans have a right to live and receive services in their own homes.” It is my pleasure to share the Democratic National Committee (DNC) has officially endorsed the DIA, as a result of our recent action in Washington D.C.

Many other things have also been going on here at CDR. I invite you to catch up on many of our programs and services on pages 4-6, and to check out our featured staff member in the article below.

Please contact us to learn more about CDR and how you can get more involved with us. Stay tuned for more fun events and exciting news for next year!

*Bruce E. Darling*

## CDR's Staff Highlight: Gregg Beratan


Gregg is a disabled activist and writer who began working at CDR in 2016. He has worked in Disability Rights and higher education in the United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, and India. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from University College London. He is co-editor of the book *The Next Bold Move: The Third Wave of Disability Studies and Education* (coming in 2018 from Reclamation Press).

In 2016, Gregg co-founded #CripTheVote, a social media campaign to center disability issues and the Disability Community within the U.S. political and electoral system. Gregg is also a proud member of ADAPT who has participated in national, statewide, and local actions to save Medicaid, shut down institutions, and improve accessibility.

Gregg was hired as our Policy Analyst, and recently was promoted to the Manager of Government Affairs. We would like to publicly congratulate him, and know that his expertise will be invaluable for the challenges ahead.



*Gregg Beratan, taking a moment to pose for the camera.*



CDR would like to  
thank everyone for their  
*ongoing support in 2017.*

We trust you had a Happy Holiday season,  
and are eager to welcome the  
**New Year!**

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR!**

**We anticipate announcing dates  
for major events in January.**

**Stay tuned for more information  
on our ADAPT Fun Runs and  
our Annual Gala.**



## Updates From Advocacy Team

The last few months the Advocacy Team has been making great progress!

In October, the Advocacy Team held a Candidate Forum on Disability Issues where constituents had the opportunity to speak with candidates for local office about important disability issues and learn about the platforms of the candidates. We had a great turnout and everyone had a great time!

In November, the Advocacy Team, along with consumers and advocates, created and presented the Turkey Award to Governor Cuomo this year! We gave Governor Cuomo a 4 foot cardboard cutout of a turkey and 100 hand turkeys created by staff and consumers. Governor Cuomo was chosen for this award because of his consistent denial of programs and services that would lead to added independence and freedom for New Yorkers with disabilities!

We have some additions to our team as well! We are thrilled to announce that we have added two new part time DC Field Organizers to our team. They are primarily working on adding cosponsors to the Disability Integration Act. They will also help us in our efforts to support Complex Rehab Technology legislation, as well as working against legislation that would undermine the ADA.

Want to join us on our Advocacy Trips? Call us at (585) 546-7510 or email us at [advocacy@cdrnys.org](mailto:advocacy@cdrnys.org) to join our Advocacy Group!

## DNC Supports DIA: Continued From Page 1

When meeting with Chairman Perez, ADAPT members demanded that the DNC publish a statement supporting the DIA. We made several other demands and the DNC agreed. The DNC also designated a point person to work with us on disability rights issues on an ongoing basis. Shortly after the meeting, the DNC issued a statement covering a number of issues important to the Disability Community. These included supporting the DIA, opposing bills that would undermine the Americans with Disabilities Act, and calling for the elimination of paying disabled employees sub-minimum wages.

We're thrilled that by supporting the DIA, the DNC is recognizing that Disabled Americans should be afforded the same right to life and liberty that non-disabled Americans already have. The Democratic National Committee is the first national party to support the DIA, and we are looking forward to advocating for the Republicans to support the DIA as well in the coming year!

As this year comes to an end, we are proud of the great work we accomplished this year, mostly thanks to the hard work of our consumers and volunteers who tirelessly advocate for Disability Rights. We are excited to start 2018 and hope even more people will get involved!

## What's New In Albany

Our Policy Team produced CDR's Budget Priorities and shared them with the Governor's office.

## Local & National Updates

We are looking for good candidates for our Systems Advocate position! If you think you would be a good fit for the Advocacy Team, send your resume and a sample of your writing to: [swoodward@cdrnys.org](mailto:swoodward@cdrnys.org).

We went to the Most Integrated Setting Coordinated Council (MISCC) meeting and gave testimony about how the State needs to focus more on integrating people into the community!

Our Systems Advocate attended the Statewide Systems Advocacy Network training in Rensselaer, NY. SSAN was developed to support the Independent Living movement in developing local partnerships and coalitions to engage in community education about issues impacting people with disabilities.

## Contact Advocacy



**(585) 546-7510**  
Ask for Advocacy!



**[advocacy@cdrnys.org](mailto:advocacy@cdrnys.org)**  
Email Our Team!

**Get Involved With Us Today!**

## Social Adult Day Services

While the winter months can be frightful, we have many celebrations to offer during the next three months of cold and snowy weather! Get ready for the upcoming holidays: New Years Day, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, Mardi Gras, St. Patrick's Day, and the first day of Spring. We also will observe Black History Month in February of 2018. Last but not least, there will be opportunities for making predictions for the Super Bowl and for March Madness.

## CDR Events in Geneva & Corning

CDR's offices and programs in Geneva and Corning are an important part of both our day-to-day successes and achieving our mission. To that end, we held a Harvest Festival in Geneva on November 17th, and on December 2nd we participated in Corning's SPARKLE event.

The Harvest Festival provided lots of networking opportunities with social service providers. Our Corning office was one of many businesses on Market Street that were open for the evening of the 43rd Annual SPARKLE event; this accompanied an assortment of activities for the winter holidays. Both of our events also provided free refreshments, such as cookies and hot chocolate.

These were great ways to commemorate the fall and winter seasons. More important, these were valuable opportunities to visit our Geneva and Corning offices, whether to learn about our programs or to "say hello" to our staff. We especially appreciate getting to meet and greet new people who may benefit from our services!

Stay tuned for events in Geneva and Corning in the year ahead!



*Ryan Chalmers, Development Manager, poses with Leah and Kelly, CDPAS staff.*



*The Corning office, decorated for the SPARKLE event.*



*Market Street on that evening.*

## A CDR Trifecta!

Given the wide array of programs offered at CDR, one person may benefit from our services through multiple means. One CDR consumer over the past several months was able to start a new chapter through a combination of CDR's Transition Services, CDPAS program, and the Supplemental Needs Pooled Trust.

She spent four years in a nursing home; however, one of our transition specialists was able to relocate her into a brand new apartment last summer. In order to live in the community, she did need an attendant, and hired one through CDPAS. Additionally, she was told that she had too much income to qualify for Medicaid; however, our "Pooled Trust" allowed her to receive Medicaid while utilizing the income to pay for the costs associated with living in the community.

This is just one example of how the work we do will often go beyond serving our consumers within one specific area. Our breadth of programs can keep making a positive difference toward achieving our mission.

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## Christopher Harper's Story: Part 3 "What's Next?"

### Shift in Understanding: Making a Different Normal in the World of TBI

Memoirs of "waking up" to the life changing event of traumatic brain injury.

The world is completely different. I am going through something much like a battlefield, trying as best I can to bridge my "disconnect" of a world now unfamiliar to me. It is like a microcosm of everything I needed to thrive, even survive. Leaving a life I once had an understanding is the focus of "What's Next."

Things have been left undone, with problems not solved, weighs heavily on me. I ask myself what is my purpose. Is there a purpose I cannot find, especially returning to "Abandon town?" Post-accident, I have an agenda which changed the trajectory of my old career path in healthcare. I am forced to contemplate and remind myself of "empowerment" to make my way again.

The heaviness with the attempt to move on comes with an array of problems such as "misunderstandings," "mood swings," and "negativity." This is the root of the battlefield. With TBI, my connection to a complex society forces me into a relationship with what is now real.

My memoirs will, hopefully, build a place for other voices with TBI bridging the gap and help us become successful parts of the whole. For me, my mental state takes me back to "Abandon town." I am attempting to find answers by returning to that place in my mind which tells me how "isolated" I am. And, how sadly, this state of mind can be. My inner positive energy is on the sidelines, often ready with optimism to counterattack the negative forces, so that I can rejuvenate and get out of bed each day.

The complexity of diagnosing TBI left me in limbo for four years living with impaired vision, hearing loss, anxiety, and PTSD.

*Editor's Note: This brief account introduces us to the TBI community, from an excerpt of a novel being written by Christopher Harper entitled "Abandon Town."*



*Photo Credit: Rachel Polter*

## Upcoming Board Meeting

February 15, 2018  
11:00am-1:00pm  
497 State Street  
Rochester, NY 14608

**For dates of upcoming board meetings, please contact Linda Taylor:**  
[Ltaylor@cdrnys.org](mailto:Ltaylor@cdrnys.org)

## Issues With Newsletter?

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497 State Street  
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# WAYS TO SUPPORT & JOIN US

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## DONATE TO CDR: SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

CDR is always in need of donated items from the community to support individuals with disabilities living independently in the community!

Please contact CDR's Development Department, at [Ltaylor@cdrnys.org](mailto:Ltaylor@cdrnys.org), to donate an item or gift to CDR, or inquire about specific items needed at this time.

**All donations are truly appreciated! CDR is a 501(c)(3) organization. All gifts are tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity and support!**

## LEARN HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH OUR COMMITTEES!

CDR has a variety of committees that support the organization. We are in need of enthusiastic and knowledgeable community members to join our various committees and support the overall mission of the organization.

**Interested?** Contact Linda Taylor at [Ltaylor@cdrnys.org](mailto:Ltaylor@cdrnys.org) for more information about all of the different opportunities we have for you!

Get Involved with CDR Today!

## START YOUR CAREER WITH CDR TODAY! JOIN OUR TEAM

### Interested in starting your career with Center for Disability Rights?

Visit our website at [www.cdrnys.org](http://www.cdrnys.org) for a complete list of our current job postings! Apply online, or stop into our State Street office in any of our four office locations and join the CDR family!

All About You Homecare, AAY, are looking for talented individuals to join the AAY team! They also provides PCA trainings! Contact us to learn more about both opportunities! Job postings for AAY can be found on CDR's website.

## INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING WITH CDR? LET US KNOW!

CDR has a variety of events and other volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Whether you are interested in a one time volunteer experience or an ongoing weekly/monthly opportunity; please contact us today and see what we have available!

**CDR collaborates with the Regional Center for Independent Living, so there is always a need for volunteers on a variety of projects!**





Center for Disability Rights, Inc.  
497 State Street  
Rochester, New York 14608

## PROTECT YOUR FREEDOM!

CDR works for the full integration, independence, and civil rights of people with disabilities.

### Become a Member of CDR today!

Membership year 9/1 - 8/31. Minimum contribution \$5 per year.

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Enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Make your check payable to Center for Disability Rights, Inc.  
Mail check, along with this completed membership form, to:

Center for Disability Rights, Inc.  
497 State Street  
Rochester, New York 14608



***\*All Donations are tax deductible.***

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