



MONTHLY BULLETIN

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AUGUST 2008

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

MARYLAND'S OWN MICHELLE LAPIDES CROWNED MISS DEAF AMERICA

Frederick resident Michelle Lapidés was crowned Miss Deaf America for 2008-2010 at a pageant held on Thursday, July 10, 2008 at the National Association of the Deaf's (NAD) Biennial conference in New Orleans. Lapidés, who was crowned Miss Deaf Maryland at the Maryland Association of the Deaf's (MDAD) Conference in November of last year, competed with 22 women from around the country to achieve the honor.



her reign when she wins the pageant and continues until the next NAD conference.

Lapidés, a graduate of Maryland School for the Deaf and a student at Gallaudet University, referred to the experience as "surreal" during an interview on the NAD website. Over the next two years, she will work to increase youth involvement in the NAD by utilizing media, video web logs, and Facebook to increase the visibility of the NAD.

Miss Deaf America is an ambassador for the NAD and a spokeswoman for approximately 28 million deaf and hard of hearing Americans. NAD Miss Deaf America begins

The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing congratulates Michelle on her achievement and wishes her much success with her reign as Miss Deaf America.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

It has been a busy summer! Here at ODHH we have been actively involved in meeting many of the stakeholders in Maryland's government to raise awareness about and sensitivity to the accessibility needs of our constituents. A number of state agencies have agreed to work with our office to prioritize the training of managers and staff on the accessibility needs of the deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. We look forward to providing these training sessions and to the improved access that will result from the knowledge shared.

The community has been busy as well. We joined the Department of Disabilities and Department of Education in recognizing the Fitness Equity Act, where Ryan Boheyono, a senior at MSD, was recognized for his extraordinary skills as a football player (page 2). There was a fantastic celebration of the 18th anniversary of the signing of the ADA at which a

sizable representation of the deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing community was present. Michelle Lapidés was crowned Miss Deaf America (page 1) during the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) conference in New Orleans. A.G. Bell held their annual conference in Milwaukee. AT:LAST, Maryland's adaptive technology co-op, held an open house to celebrate their new location (page 3).

It is clear to me that along with increased awareness and sensitivity comes increased visibility – and I am proud to be part of a community of Marylanders who actively pursues their goals and continues to excel in all that they choose to do. Have a great summer!



Lisa

ODHH

PROGRAMS

- *Awareness Training and Technical Assistance*
- *Constituent Services*
- *Community Outreach and Education*

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REV. PEGGY JOHNSON ELECTED BISHOP FOR UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Rev. Peggy Johnson, pastor of Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf in Baltimore, was elected July 17 to be a bishop in The United Methodist Church.

Johnson, who has been the pastor of the Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf in Baltimore for 20 years, will begin her term as bishop in September. When she first came to the church of the Deaf, only six people were attending service. Through her leadership the church has grown to about 170 people, almost all of whom are Deaf, to worship each Sunday. The church is active in providing many needed services to the deaf community and deaf residents of Baltimore.

Johnson was elected from a pool of 13 candidates on the 10th ballot by the 249 delegates to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

She was presented to the conference by Bishop John Schol of the Washington Area, who explained to the audience that in American Sign Language one says bishop by mimicking a pointy hat, or miter, on one's head.



Reverend Peggy Johnson of Baltimore will start her term as bishop in September.

In Kenyan sign language, one slaps oneself in two quick motions on the forehead and back of head - in a spirit of bemused wonderment.

"It's true," said Johnson, who promises to bring "a sense of wonder, creativity, compassion and grace" to her ministry as bishop.

Bishops bring the totality of who they are with them into the Episcopal leadership, Johnson said. The pastors, congregations and communities she will lead can expect her to be humble, listen, learn and be a servant leader. She intends to be relational and bring a spirit-centeredness to her first year. "You can't do anything unless you have the heart of Christ deeply embedded in your heart," she said.

Johnson's heart has been shaped over the years by her ministry to people in the margins. Her work in the Deaf community draws people from every socio-economic group, including the very poor, who bring with them a vast array of social, human and spiritual needs.

(cont. on page 4)

2008 MARYLAND FITNESS AND ATHLETIC EQUITY ACT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

On July 21, surrounded by Maryland athletes playing wheelchair basketball, adaptive tennis, goal ball and other sports activities, Governor Martin O'Malley joined representatives from the Maryland Department of Disabilities, the Maryland State Department of Education, and members of the Maryland disabilities community, including the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to celebrate the passage of the 2008 Maryland Fitness and Athletic Equity Act for Students with Disabilities.

"In Maryland, we are deeply committed to the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act and ensuring that each individual has the opportunity to make a positive difference in this world," said the Governor. "The Maryland Fitness and Athletic Equity Act will ensure that all students have the same right to access athletic opportunities at our schools. I am grateful to the Maryland students participating in today's event and for giving all of us the courage to make our world a better place."

Honored at the event was Ryan Boheyno, a senior at

Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick (MSD) who has played football, basketball, baseball and track for the school. Last fall, Boheyno was selected as Player of the Year for football in Frederick County by the Frederick Gazette and has received numerous other honors. During Ryan's first three

seasons, his team won three national deaf prep championships with a total record of 31-1. Boheyno has been offered a full scholarship for Fall 2009 to play football at Towson University.



Governor O'Malley and MSD senior Ryan Boheyno at the Fitness and Athletic Equity Act signing.

The Maryland Fitness and Athletic Equity Act for Students with Disabilities, passed in the 2008 legislative session and signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley, ensures that students with disabilities are provided

equal opportunities to participate in physical education programs and athletic activities in Maryland schools. With the passage of the legislation, the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Maryland State Department of Education will work with local school jurisdictions to improve policies and implement the new statute and improvements to adaptive physical education and interscholastic athletic participation.

AT: LAST, INC. CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CENTER



On July 31st, the Assistive Technology: Loans, Acquisitions, Services, and Training, Inc. (AT:LAST, Inc.) held a grand opening for its expanded assistive technology center in Columbia, MD.

AT: LAST, Inc. is a small nonprofit, 501 (c) 3 organization endeavoring to eliminate barriers to the acquisition and effective use of assistive technology products and services.

The grand opening was dedicated to wounded servicemen and women fighting to regain independence. Assistive technology —aids for daily living tasks, for adapted computer access, for vision and hearing loss, for recreation, and more —help provide a means for overcoming the challenges which result

from the physical and emotional assaults of war.

Numerous assistive technology specialists and agency representatives were on hand to provide information on a wide variety of devices and services for veterans of all ages. Follow-up training events and in-depth product explorations are planned throughout August.

AT: LAST, Inc. provides discounted purchasing and training opportunities to schools, agencies, organizations, and families. The Co-op negotiates directly with and conducts semi-annual bids with over 90 manufacturers and vendors of assistive technology to get the best price for you. . For more information about how you can utilize the Co-op, and for a training schedule visit <http://www.matcoop.org/>.

18TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF ADA SIGNING A SUCCESS

On July 26, Governor Martin O'Malley and Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett joined hundreds of people celebrating the 18th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Governor O'Malley delivered the keynote address at the celebration in his third event during the week to promote and recognize the importance of the ADA, a major milestone in ensuring that more than 54 million Americans receive the same basic freedoms – independence, equal access, freedom of choice and inclusion – afforded to every citizen in our country.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act was a major milestone in ensuring that each individual has equal opportunity to make a positive difference in this world,” said Governor O'Malley. “This week, as we have joined students, parents and our young ones in celebrating the passage of the Maryland Fitness and Athletic Equity Act (see page 2), an increase in funding for the Infants and Toddlers program and now, the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we thank them for giving us all the courage to make our world a better place.”

In addition to giving the keynote address, Governor O'Malley presented a citation to Lawrence W. Roffee, Executive Director of the U.S. Access Board, for his leadership and guidance as the Board adopted standards of accessibility for the ADA. A Vietnam Veteran who acquired a disability during combat, Roffee lives in Montgomery County and is a strong advocate for accessible design that will enable persons with disabilities to live independent and productive lives.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, which was passed in 1990, was landmark legislation to protect the civil rights of those with disabilities. In Maryland, approximately 850,000 individuals or 18 percent of the total population are classified as disabled, according to the 2000 census.

“The ADA has had a tremendous impact on the lives of people with disabilities, giving this key segment of society the ability to demonstrate their tremendous potential and contributions



to today's society,” said Catherine A. Raggio, Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities. “We are committed to finding solutions to the challenges that still remain, working to promote employment and economic opportunities throughout Maryland.”

“The implementation of the ADA has created many new opportunities – an indication of how important a law it is. Many individuals who previously were isolated have been given increased opportunity to participate in all aspects of life – an accomplishment truly worthy of celebration,” said ODHHS Director Lisa H. Kornberg.

“However,” Kornberg continued, “there is always room for improvement.” The ADA continues to receive attention from advocates, Congress, and stakeholders. For some time, advocates have been working on the ADA Restoration Act and the Department of Justice recently proposed changes to the ADA Title II and III implementing regulations. For more information about the Department of Justice’s proposed changes, see this month’s FYI (page 4).

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

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ODHH ON THE MOVE

August 2008

Reverend Peggy Johnson's Farewell Service
Sunday, August 10, 12 PM
Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf
Baltimore, MD

Annual Freedom Day
Wednesday, August 13, 2 PM—5 PM
Frederick High School
Frederick, MD

DORS Open House
Wednesday, August 13, 10 AM—2 PM
DORS Baltimore City
Baltimore, MD

Governor's Day: Maryland State Fair
Sunday, August 24, 9 AM—11 PM
Maryland State Fair Grounds
Timonium, MD

Assistive Technology for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals: The Broad Continuum
Monday, August 25, 1:30 PM—3:30 PM
AT LAST Co-op (Cost: \$29)
Columbia, MD

September 2008

Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Meeting
Wednesday, September 17, 6 PM—9 PM
Hearing and Speech Agency
Baltimore, MD

Please note that ODHH will be closed on September 1, 2008 in observance of Labor Day



AADB Scam Alert: Recently, the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) received an email warning about a scammer or scammers who are using the organization's name, AADB, to get money illegally from people through Instant Messengers such as AIM, MSN or Yahoo. This particular scammer's screen name is AADB2. However, screen names can be easily changed to mislead the public about AADB. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact AADB at aadb-info@aadbb.org, 301-495-4403 (voice) or 301-495-4402 (TTY or VP).

Proposed Changes to the ADA:

The Department of Justice recently issued major proposed revisions to its regulations implementing Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For information about the proposed changes, visit <http://www.ada.gov/NPRM2008/ADAnprm08.htm>. The deadline for comments is August 18, 2008. Comments can be filed electronically online at www.regulations.gov.

JOHNSON ELECTED BISHOP (CONT.)

(cont. from page 2)

The church, she said, is at its best when it opens its doors to those who society looks down upon. "I am a strong believer in the love that draws people into our world," Johnson said. "We have to be out there doing love."

A graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, KY, she was ordained in 1980, following a career as a vocal music teacher.

While teaching music her voice failed. She was discouraged, but her hope was renewed when she attended a concert by a Deaf choir that performed the "Hallelujah Chorus." This visible music touched something in her soul and she began learning American Sign Language, she said.

Following ordination, she served a four-

point charge in Frederick before working as a chaplain at Gallaudet University, a college for the deaf in Washington, D.C., and then becoming pastor of Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf.

Her ministry there has taken her around the world, where she helped to start or enhance Deaf ministries in Zimbabwe, Cuba, and a myriad of other places in the United States and abroad.

Johnson received her doctorate from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington and is the author of the book "A Joyful Silence."

Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf invites you to join them for Bishop Johnson's Farewell Service on Sunday, August 10 at 12 noon at Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf located at 1040 S. Beechfield Avenue in Baltimore.