



**AHRC**  
new york city

# CHRONICLE

Fall 2014



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## In Memory of Michael Goldfarb

The AHRC New York City Board of Directors, staff, membership, people supported and their families mourn the passing of AHRC New York City's former Executive Director, Michael Goldfarb, and extend heartfelt sympathy to his beloved and bereaved family. Michael served as the Executive Director of AHRC for 36 years. His tireless efforts to improve the lives of people we serve transformed the organization and indeed the entire field of supporting those with developmental disabilities. When he assumed leadership of AHRC in 1975, the organization had 200 employees; now 40 years later, AHRC employs over 4,000. This remarkable growth is due in large part to the vision and dedication of a man who helmed the agency for almost four decades--Michael Goldfarb.

AHRC's growth and accomplishments over the past forty years could not have happened without him. His intelligence

and vision were unsurpassed as were his deep caring and compassion for the people supported by AHRC and their families. His political savvy and ability to create change was always impressive, as was his ability to relate to the people supported by AHRC. People supported felt comfortable approaching to him to ask questions and make requests and he never failed to respond to them with respect and with humor.

Michael will be remembered for years to come. He has left an amazing legacy at AHRC New York City and was a driving force in New York State, greatly admired by his colleagues. Michael is survived by his wife Priscilla, who resides in Garrison, New York; his sons Will, Abe and Ben, their wives, and his grandchildren. Our sincerest condolences to all of them.

**Laura J. Kennedy**, *President*  
**Gary Lind**, *Executive Director*



# I. EDITORIAL

## A Message from Laura J. Kennedy, President



**Laura J. Kennedy**  
*President, AHRC NYC Board of Directors*

AHRC New York City is an amazing organization when one stops to think about the thousands of individuals, family members and staff who are making a difference for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities here in the Big Apple. Over the last 65 years, programs serving toddlers through senior citizens, have evolved and expanded in ways never imagined when this organization began with a handful of parents who met to form a playgroup for their children. Many of these programs were developed under the direction of Michael Goldfarb, our former Executive Director, whose passing we mourn.

Within each borough of New York City, our communities and neighborhoods include people with disabilities who are living in a variety of supported residential homes, receive day habilitation and educational programs including college, are volunteering, or are employed and enjoying the work they do in the public and private sector as active members of their communities. As President of the Board, each and every day I hear of wonderful and interesting special events such as art and photography shows, concerts, film productions, fundraisers, or technology presentations and more, involving people with disabilities as they fulfill their personal aspirations through the dedicated and talented staff at AHRC. AHRC New York City continually strives for the highest quality of programs and personal supports for the people we serve. Our recent CQL Certification is a recent demonstration of that commitment to quality.

As an organization started by families and governed by families, helping to support and guide family members of people with IDD is a strong priority. We recognize that families should never feel alone in getting reliable information, access to appropriate programs and other helpful resources for their family member with a disability. Our organizational roots and commitment to families has been the same for over 65 years and always will be. Our strong family advocates have paved the way to the services we have today and that same strong advocacy will continue as we face the challenges before us. It is important for our families to recognize the importance and value of becoming a member of AHRC NYC and letting your voice be heard as we continue to implement the programs and services that people need and deserve. I encourage all of our members to participate on committees or school parent associations, attend our Family Education Sessions, support our Annual Dinner and take an active role in this vibrant family based organization of which we are all so very proud.

- **Laura J. Kennedy**, *President*, [AHRC New York City](#); *President*, [NYSARC, Inc.](#)

## A Message from Executive Director, Gary Lind



Gary Lind, Executive Director, AHRC NYC

I often hear from people who want more and better ways to get information about the issues and organizations that matter most to them. If you are reading this, then chances are that AHRC NYC is among the organizations that matter to you and your family. It is my hope that our newly launched electronic Chronicle fulfills in part your need for information in a way that is timely, convenient, and interesting. While the Chronicle will publish three times a year, there are other opportunities to hear from us and keep up to date. If you haven't already, I invite you to join more than 2300 others who have "liked" us on [Facebook](#). In addition, I hope you consider [becoming a member of AHRC NYC](#). As a membership organization, we depend on the strength of our membership network to be heard on important policy and legislative matters.

In this edition of the Chronicle, you will note an article about our recent accreditation by the [Council on Quality Leadership](#) (CQL). Since I joined AHRC NYC two years ago, I have been privileged to be on a journey with the staff here to improve the ways that we provide supports and services. We have trained staff on how to interview people to identify the personal outcomes that matter most in their lives. We have conducted self-audits of our policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that they meet the highest possible standards. We have surveyed the people we support and their families about their satisfaction with our supports and

to identify how we can do better. CQL accreditation is a remarkable achievement for an organization as large and complex as ours. But its real value is that it marks AHRC NYC as an organization that is committed to continual improvement. We aspire to person centered excellence. Each and every day brings new challenges and exciting opportunities to make that aspiration a reality for the men and women we support. In the pages that follow, you will see just a few examples of valued outcomes and personal successes being supported by our creative staff and community partners.

- Gary Lind, Executive Director, [AHRC New York City](#)

## II. FEATURE

### AHRC New York City and Other NYSARC, Inc. Chapters Thank New York Congressmen and Introduce a New Managed Care Initiative

On August 6, 2014, AHRC New York City, with the other organizations in NYSARC, Inc.'s Southeast Region, hosted an event to formally recognize the Congresspeople representing the region and their work on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and the organizations that support them.

The legislators were presented with the 2014 Partnership Award in recognition of their efforts in support of people with I/DD. **Tricia Shimamura**, Deputy Chief of Staff for [Carolyn Maloney](#) (D-NY) of the 12th congressional district, attended the event. Other representatives were scheduled to attend but were called back to Washington by the President at the last minute.

In addition to recognizing the legislators, the event also featured presentations by NYSARC leadership identifying the future challenges in providing the best possible services to the I/DD population in New York State. This included the changing



landscape of healthcare as a result of the passing of the Affordable Care Act; the establishment of a managed care organization by five NYSARC chapters; and the importance of effective government oversight and support. Additionally, a graduate of one of AHRC

New York City's college programs, Nina Giacobbe, spoke on the importance of self-advocacy and independence.

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**Laura J. Kennedy**, *President of AHRC New York City*, (who has since been elected as *President of NYSARC, Inc.*), welcomed the other NYSARC organizations in attendance, which included [AHRC Nassau](#), [AHRC Suffolk](#), [Arc of Westchester](#), [Arc of Rockland](#), [Putnam ARC](#), [ARC of Orange County](#), [Sullivan Arc](#), and [Ulster-Greene ARC](#). Collectively these organizations employ 12,000 people who provide supports to over 22,000 individuals with I/DD and their families.

*"It's an honor and a pleasure welcoming all of you to this event recognizing the partnership we have with NYSARC chapters in our region and our representatives in Congress,"* Laura said. *"[Our] accomplishments are due to the support we receive in Washington."*

Mrs. Kennedy then introduced **Gary Lind**, AHRC New York City's *Executive Director*, who stated that it is *"an exciting but also a scary time for people with developmental disabilities and their families and those of us that are service providers."* His presentation focused on the development of [PHP](#), a managed care organization (MCO) that was established by the five MetroArc NYSARC affiliates in the southeast region-- AHRC New York City, AHRC Nassau, AHRC Suffolk, Arc of Westchester, and Arc of Rockland. This new MCO is in keeping with the new direction and service delivery model currently being introduced by New York State's [OPWDD](#), the governmental body that has been responsible for oversight and the delivery of services to all people with I/DD in New York State for the last 30 years.

*"What makes this [MCO] so different and what no one else in the country has figured out is managed care doesn't lend*



*itself well to a population that is going to present themselves for services and support each and every day,"* Mr. Lind said. He explained that the MetroArcs are well-positioned to assume this responsibility because they are family-governed and have created long-term life plans and care coordination for all the people to whom they have provided services for decades.

Mr. Lind explained the changes in healthcare law as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which was signed by [President Obama](#) in 2010. When the ACA was passed, a provision was included that allowed managed care experiments designed to coordinate all services for people covered by both Medicaid and Medicare. The lack of coordination can leave gaps in care for some, but also often leads to the less costly and more appropriate use of clinics and other outpatient services. By managing the care for the person

while synchronizing both payers for that person under one system of coordinated care, it is assumed that the care will be better, and the costs will be lower. This demonstration is called a FIDA, for Fully Integrated Duals Advantage, with Duals meaning people who are dually eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid services. A large proportion of those with I/DD are dually eligible for both of these benefits. "We scored much higher on our proposal [to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services] than most of the managed care companies that have been in this business forever," Mr. Lind said, "by understanding what the model of care is that you need to support people." He also stated that this is the only FIDA in country exclusively serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. AHRC New York City and the other four MetroArc's are beginning an enhanced care coordination pilot sanctioned by OPWDD on November 1, 2014 and will begin their FIDA later in 2015.

If you would like to speak to someone about how AHRC New York City can help you or your loved one, please call our **Referral and Information Center** at **212-780-4491** or email your inquiries to [referrals@ahrcnyc.org](mailto:referrals@ahrcnyc.org)

# III. PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND SUPPORTS

## AHRC New York City Receives CQL Accreditation



It is with great pride and pleasure that AHRC New York City announces that on September 19th, 2014 we received official accreditation from the [Council on Quality and Leadership](#) (CQL)!

We are gratified that an outside organization of distinction has recognized our commitment to providing excellent services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. Founded over 40 years ago, CQL is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to the definition, promotion, measurement, and improvement of personal and communal quality of life for people with disabilities, people with mental illness, and older adults.

We now join an exclusive group of organizations in New York State. Out of approximately 600 service providers in the state, only 23 have been accredited by CQL, or just under four percent; out of these 23, 16 of the service providers are NYSARC chapters.

AHRC New York City spent over two

years preparing for an accreditation review. This culminated with a four-day visit from three CQL professionals. The CQL team met with self-advocates, administrative and front-line staff working in different capacities throughout the organization, board members, and other stakeholders. They visited several programs and conducted a thorough audit of who we are and what we do at AHRC NYC, and were very impressed by what they saw.

In a letter to [Gov. Andrew Cuomo](#) the president of CQL said *"When AHRC NYC partnered with CQL to pursue accreditation, they undertook a rigorous process to review and improve services and supports. Their efforts were focused on empowering the people who receive support from their organization to make choices in how they live their lives ... where they work, where they live, how they create a community."*

In receiving CQL Accreditation, AHRC New York City has demonstrated our commitment to person-centered

excellence, basic assurances, personal outcome measures (POMs), and other areas that have all led up to this wonderful day in our organization's history. It is not commonplace that an organization as large and complex as ours has attained this milestone.

We want to take this opportunity to thank all of the AHRC staff who ensure that people we support are not only happy and healthy, but also have input into what they do and where they do it; and, to thank AHRC NYC staff for working hard to ensure that each person's vision and dreams for how they want to live their lives are supported. We are an extremely diverse organization in so many ways, yet we have come together as a cohesive unit to achieve this goal.

**Sandra Moody**, *Corporate Director of Quality Improvement and Outcomes*, who spearheaded AHRC NYC towards this achievement, said in a message thanking staff, *"I noticed last week that the CQL staff referred to agencies that had successfully received the accreditation as 'mountain climbers,' the kind of agency that is not complacent with what they have already achieved but want to continue to deepen their connections to the community and become ever more person centered...I am very proud, as I am sure you are, to be part of a 'mountain climbing' agency."*

In the coming months we hope to continue to climb and as always will look for ways to strive to continuously improve our services and supports.



# Brooklyn Day Hab Features Artist Collective

A myriad of colors, canvasses, and crafts lines the walls and halls of AHRC New York City's [Brooklyn Day Habilitation Adult Day Center](#). From an origami-inspired tabletop piece to a large quilt depicting social justice figures and phrases, the artwork featured here showcases a wide variety of talent and personalities. A number of the works will be featured as part of the [Arte Moose Collective](#), which is launching a website dedicated to featuring the artists and their pieces in the near future. Each of the artists participating in the art collective will be featured prominently on the new site. Each artist brings a unique perspective to their shared experiences in the day program and in their surrounding community.



Chad DeRoche

**Chad** is a founding member of the Collective and his work is quite varied. Chad is visually impaired and has taken up sculpture and tactile works to combat this. Chad's most recent project is an amazing model of what appears to be a towering roller coaster surrounded by a red house and trees. He has had his work exhibited at [Kingsborough Community College](#) and the [Pratt Institute](#), both in Brooklyn.



Fernando Cruz

**Fernando** has been inspired to create his art both from his personal life and from



## ArteMoose Collective

artistic experiences out in the community. His most recent work, Mexico, made from a piece of board left over from Chad's sculpture, resembles a [Jackson Pollock](#) painting he saw at [MoMa](#) and celebrates his national heritage. Fernando recently visited Mexico and said "I liked it and I loved the food!" Fernando's other works include Bones I and Bones II, both of which were inspired by an exhibit he saw at Atlantic Center about bones.



Gifford Moy

**Gifford**, the youngest member of the collective, focuses mainly on sculpture. He recently made a colorful tabletop decoration based on origami techniques, fusing paper and different kinds of tape together; it is fittingly entitled One of a Kind. Gifford also crafted The Honeymooners, two movie stars made out of wood and clay who travel around in their Honeymoon Special Cars. The young artist created a stop-motion animation film starring his creations that premiered at the [FiveMyles Gallery](#).



Denisha Brown

**Denisha's** art features jumbled colors of varying hues coming together to form intricate patterns and grids. Her work is meticulous and takes hours to complete. Denisha's magnum opus thus far is Sopido Torpedo, a remarkable work in which various pastels and paint fuse to create a world of complex drawings and [M.C. Escher](#)-esque designs.



Alexander Torres

**Alex** focuses primarily on painting. His work features all types of imagery, including religious, social, personal, and athletic perspectives. The paintings alternate from bright, warming colors to dark, brooding ones. Perhaps the piece most indicative of Alex's style is The Boss, which is part tribute to [George Steinbrenner](#), part self-portrait, and entirely eclectic.

Supporting each of the artists as they create each new project, *Community Support Professional*, **Megan Landrum**, provides direction and opportunities for artistic exploration. She recognizes the importance of creativity as a means of self-expression. Each artist featured in the collective works closely with Megan to achieve their artistic vision. With a background in art education and having displayed some of her artwork as part of a special staff artwork exhibition in the lobby of [AHRC NYC headquarters](#), Megan is thrilled to share her gifts and knowledge with all of the people she supports.

*"I love working here because I get to actually see the power of art impacted," she says. "It helps give them the power to use their free time productively."*



# College Comic Con Fosters Creativity and Community

Students from all three of the AHRC New York City's [Melissa Riggio Higher Education Programs](#): [Kingsborough Community College](#), [College of Staten Island](#), and [HOSTOS Community College](#) in the Bronx -participated in the first annual AHRC NYC College Comic Con. The unique event took place at St. Margaret's House, a housing facility for elderly and disabled New Yorkers run by the historic [Trinity Church](#) on Fulton St. in Lower Manhattan. The day centered on the presentation of KCC and CSI's summer project, graphic novels that students from both schools created using their own life experiences combined with the endless possibilities found in the medium of comic books. This was the first time that the three AHRC NYC college programs were together at the same event.



## Introductions

The day began with an ice-breaking exercise to introduce the students and staff to one another. Each attendee was provided with a name tag and asked to select an alliterative adjective to accompany their name. The results were amusing, with humorous monikers such as "Exotic Esteban" and "Fantastic Fran". Each student received a laminated puzzle piece and matched the puzzle pieces together to discover which group members they would be working with. The puzzles came together to form covers of famous comic books and strips such as *Spider Man*, *Archie*, and *The Simpsons*.

## Creating a Skit

AHRC NYC staff members passed out two dialogue-free comic strips to each



group and instructed them to craft a short skit based solely on the actions and mannerisms presented in the panels. Mentors and students worked together to create scenes rife with pop culture allusions and hilarious caricatures. In the final performance a group made a spot-on impression of **Matthew Weiler**, Director of KCC and CSI's Melissa Riggio programs, attempting to make a phone call to his colleagues.

## Presenting Graphic Novels

The KCC and CSI groups presented their graphic novels. The initial idea for the project was sparked by **Ethan Jones**, a student at KCC:

*"On Friday, April 25th, I was presenting a photo graphic novel I had made with my friends at a self-advocacy conference,"* Ethan said. *"I was with Matt at the time and I think he was inspired by my graphic novel to make it a summer project for us."*

The first page of both books opened with the following introduction: *"This issue was inspired by the lives of distinction [as] part of the Melissa Riggio mission statement. It was decided by students and mentors alike to write a story where the heroes are captured and forced to live a life of*

*conformity where they are prohibited from being their own individual person and realize how being themselves is the most important thing and hero can be."*

## Campus Heroes

KCC's graphic novel was entitled *Campus Heroes* and used illustration techniques reminiscent of rotoscope animation, featured in films such as *A Scanner Darkly* and the famous *Take on Me* video by *A-ha*.

## Young AHRC Heroes Academy

CSI's creation was called *Young AHRC Heroes Academy: Origins*.

Both comics featured their heroes, modeled on the students themselves, overcoming barriers to find happiness and comfort in self-expression. At the end of the presentations, students from HOSTOS judged the two graphic novels and picked which one they liked the most, ultimately deciding on *Young Heroes Academy*.

Following a brief award ceremony in which all participants were thanked and applauded for their hard work, KCC and CSI presented HOSTOS with an invitation to participate in next year's Comic Con Competition. Matt expressed that he was extremely satisfied with the event and proud of the students. *"They took what was just a simple idea for a graphic novel and grew it into something so much more,"* said Matt.



# IV. HAPPENINGS

## Laura J. Kennedy Sworn In as New NYSARC, Inc. President

Laura J. Kennedy, *President of AHRC New York City*, has added another prestigious title to her name. On October 17, Laura was sworn in as the new President of [NYSARC, Inc.](#) In her new position Laura will help lead the largest nonprofit in the country that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The news was announced at NYSARC's Annual Convention in Albany celebrating their 65th year of serving the people with disabilities. Laura will continue serving in her capacity as AHRC New York City's President until her term ends in June 2015. We congratulate Laura and hope that she will lead NYSARC to great success much like she has at AHRC New York City!



Laura J. Kennedy with husband, daughters, & newest grandchild at NYSARC's 65th Annual Convention

## It Works: AHRC NYC's Employment and Business Services Holds Employment Education Event at Brooklyn Borough Hall



On October 2, 2014, AHRC New York City's [Employment and Business Services](#) department held an event at the [New York Stock Exchange](#), celebrating [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#), (NDEAM). The event also recognized the many partnerships AHRC NYC has with businesses across the city that employ the people we support.

With a playful theme based on a popular board game, the event encouraged attendees to raise their chances of

obtaining raffle prizes by engaging with Account Executives from AHRC NYC's Employment and Business Services department, visiting invited business representatives, and other networking activities.

Speaking to an audience made up of representatives from various New York-area businesses, **Mike Decker**, *Chief Operating Officer*, noted the vast changes seen in the field of services for people with disabilities during its 66 years of existence. "Our founders

*had high aspirations," he said, "but never would have dreamed that from humble beginnings we would have people working at the New York Stock Exchange."*

**Steve Towler**, *Associate Executive Director*, explained how Employment and Business Services has grown from a single job placement in the Bronx 28 years ago, to in 2014 helping over 1,500 people with disabilities to secure employment.

*"When a person goes out to work for the first time it is a life-changing event," Steve said. "Having a job is one of the big parts of citizenship, and having that opportunity is something that is valued by Americans across the country."*

**Salvatore Moran**, *Associate Director* of Employment and Business Services, explained the great achievements of [Edwardo Lopez](#), a porter working through [Hudson River Services](#) who recently received NYSID's *William B. Joslin Outstanding Performance Award*.

A number of AHRC New York City's

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business partners were recognized for providing excellent employment opportunities to many of the people we support, including:

Alliance Bright Star Couriers  
American Maintenance  
Forest City Ratner  
Buffalo Wild Wings – Times Square  
College of Staten Island Recreation  
Department  
Jeffrey Greenberg  
Kmart – Bronx  
NetCost Market  
New York Hospital Queens  
Pintchik, Inc.  
Restaurant Associates at the New York  
Stock Exchange  
The Barclays Center Levy Restaurants  
Weeks Lerman Group LLC

Several of the honorees expressed their appreciation for the partnership they have with AHRC NYC. “We’re happy to be part of the village that it takes [to employ people with disabilities],” a representative from the [Barclays Center](#) said. “We think it’s a moral obligation to help people with disabilities lead productive lives.”

A representative from Weeks Lerman Group said “In this crazy business world we live in, this is the one feel-good part. I’m grateful that AHRC gives us the opportunity to get involved.”



In perhaps the most heartfelt moment of the evening, **Matt Pintchik**, owner of a hardware store in Parks Slope, explained how he was approached almost 20 years ago by **Howard Golden**, a former borough president of Brooklyn, and asked if he would hire a person with special needs. Matt readily agreed, and Kenny, his longtime employee, has “become a member of our extended family at Pintchik...”

Matt provided a testimonial to the challenges faced by parents of people with disabilities and the importance of

employment, as his young son Jack (*who was present*) has a disability. “What does a parent worry about?” asked Matt. “They worry if there will be place for their child to be involved, to be part of society, to be able to contribute. And it comes from the bottom of our hearts. We don’t have 100 employees, we have Kenny. And I can tell you how special he is and how much he looks forward every day to come to work.”

We proudly thank the staff of AHRC New York City’s Employment and Business Services for creating such a wonderful event to show their appreciation of these employers.

## AHRC New York City Greets Visitors from Japan



On September 10, 2014 a group from Japan visited New York City to observe the way AHRC New York City supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The visitors were part of an agency called the **Center of Social Welfare Promotion & National Examination**, which travels the world studying social welfare facilities and organizations.

Following their visit, a member of the group sent the following thank you letter to **Marcia Richman**, AHRC NYC’s *Director of Patient Services*:

*Dear Marcia,*

*Hi, my name is Aya, one of the members of the group that visited Brooklyn Day Habilitation Without Walls on September 10, Wednesday afternoon. First of all, thank you so much for giving us the great opportunity to see those great programs at Day Habilitation Without Walls and also to see the residence upstairs. We are so sorry to get there late because of stuck in the traffic. We wish we had more time to see and hear/learn there.*

*Best Regards,*

**Aya Sato-Willingham**



## ***Mediterranean Night and A Special Night for Children*** **Raise Money for AHRC New York City Foundation**



The [AHRC New York City Foundation](#), which makes grants for many AHRC New York City programs and services,

proudly held two events which resulted in the Foundation receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations!

On October 7, *Mediterranean Nights*, an event to benefit AHRC NYC's [Residential Services](#) department, raised more than \$100,000. The event was held at *ilili*, a restaurant specializing in Mediterranean cuisine located in the Flatiron district. [Nick Pascarella & Co.](#), a wealth management company, was the presenting sponsor of the event, which included dancing, a silent auction and a raffle. This was the second year the event was held by the AHRC New York City Foundation. Last year AHRC's Residential Services department used funds raised at *Mediterranean Nights* to purchase more than 30 iPads, laptops and exercise equipment for AHRC NYC residents, as well as to send many residents to [AHRC NYC's upstate summer camps](#) and on vacations and outings. The event was co-chaired by **Jeanne Sdroulas**, *Global Head of Marketing* for **Fred Alger Management** and an AHRC NYC Board Member, and **Theodora Vardis**, *Chief Operating Officer* at [Metropolitan Capital Advisors](#).

# V. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

## **Senator Seeks Changes to IDEA Law**

Sen. **Tom Harkin** (D-IA), who will be retiring at the end of this legislative session, has proposed a change to the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) to ensure that families involved in legal disputes with a school district can recoup costs for expert witnesses that are brought in to help with their case. Initially called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the IDEA act seeks to provide federal funding to states to finance special education programs and ensure students with developmental disabilities get an equal education. The current law allows families to recoup legal costs but not for the use of experts such as psychologists, medical doctors, and behavior specialists. It can be very expensive to bring in an expert, costing several hundred dollars per hour. Sen. Harkin's proposal, entitled the [IDEA Fairness Restoration Act](#), would allow families to collect on these costs if they win their case, just like attorneys' fees. Sen. Harkin also sponsored separate legislation to completely fund the IDEA Act by 2023, and seeks to pay for the increase in spending by raising taxes on those who earn more than \$1 million per year.

## **ABLE Act Deal Reached**

Members of the Senate have reached an agreement on how to provide the funding for the [Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\) Act](#). Specifics regarding the deal made between Republican and Democratic lawmakers were not immediately available.

The ABLE Act would establish tax-free savings accounts for people with and families with members that have intellectual and developmental disabilities. The accounts are modeled on the popular 529 college savings plan.

Under the current language of bill, current government benefits will not be cut, and people can deposit up \$14,000 annually; Medicaid benefits will not be cut or lowered under any circumstances.

The bill is expected to be signed by President Barack Obama during the lame duck session of Congress following Election Day.



## Vote on United Nations Disability Treaty Blocked

Senator **Tom Harkin** (D-IA) attempted to bring the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Treaty](#) to a two-hour, no-amendments-added debate session and vote on the Senate floor on September 17, but was blocked by Sen. [Mike Lee](#) (R-UT). Sen. Lee expressed concerns that Senate ratification of the treaty would cause the United States to lose some of its sovereignty. The U.S. signed the declaration in 2009 but it has yet to be ratified by the Senate. The treaty was previously brought on the Senate floor in 2012 but failed to be ratified on party-line votes.

## Gov. Cuomo Signs Executive Order

In an effort to assist the citizens of New York State with disabilities in getting meaningful jobs, on September 17, 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order to create the Employment First Initiative to Increase Employment of New Yorkers with Disabilities. This executive order will create a commission will review current policies to identify which ones work and which ones don't; ensure current state employment policies are beneficial to those with disabilities; provide students with disabilities the opportunity to transition directly from school to the working world; and gather effective data about the issue. The commission will submit its findings to the governor on March 1, 2015. A [press release](#) detailing the executive order quoted Gov. Cuomo as saying "Equality and inclusiveness play a central role in the history of New York State, and today we are continuing that legacy by standing up for the employment needs of people with disabilities."

# VI. ACCESSING INFORMATION AND SERVICES

## Information About Upcoming Camp Fair

[Include NYC](#), (formerly *Resources for Children with Special Needs*), a New York City nonprofit providing information and access to services for children and youth with disabilities and their families, will be holding their annual Summer Fun and More Camp Fair on Saturday, January 31, 2015 from 11 a.m.--3 p.m. Over 100 camps, recreational, and year-round programs will be participating in this exciting event, including [AHRC New York City's Camping Department](#), which will provide information about our very own [Camp Anne](#) and the [Katy Isaacson and Elaine Gordon Lodge](#). The fair is free and open to the public. This is a great chance for families to find out about camp opportunities as well as other summer activities. Summer Fun and More will be held at the [Hotel Pennsylvania](#) on 7th Avenue in Midtown, right next to Penn Station and Madison Square Garden.

## Information About Bronx Developmental Disabilities Conference

The 11th Annual [Bronx Developmental Disabilities Council](#) Health Services Committee Conference will be taking place on November 21 from 8:30 a.m.-- 4:00 p.m. at the [Jacobi Medical Center](#). This is a conference examining critical periods of transition during the life cycle of children and adults with developmental disabilities. There are important periods of change and transitions that occur during early childhood, school age, and adulthood. The impact of these transition periods will be addressed in order to help families, individuals and service providers plan more appropriately as individuals develop and their needs and care systems change. To view the program for this event, [CLICK HERE](#).

## AHRC New York City's Family Education Series

Valuable information is available to families, including FREE educational workshops, which are offered twice per month. Our Family Education Series includes workshops and informational sessions on topics of great interest to families of people with developmental disabilities.

Through these workshops, we provide education and information for families in obtaining services for their family member with a developmental disability, and help families to cope with challenges that may arise as they care for their loved one.

Upcoming workshops appear on our website:

<https://www.ahrcnyc.org/services/families/education/>



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## AHRC New York City Celebrates CQL Accreditation



On Tuesday October 28, self-advocates, family members, staff, and leadership who attended CQL accreditation week in September came together to celebrate AHRC New York City's recent accreditation by the [Council on Quality and Leadership](#) (CQL). The event took place at the Penthouse at [AHRC NYC headquarters](#) and was complete with

food, drinks, enlightening messages, and a sense of togetherness. The day was about much more than just a gathering to recognize our important achievements regarding CQL - it was about people from throughout the AHRC family coming together to celebrate a common goal achieved through hard work, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Speaking on behalf of **Laura J. Kennedy**, President, **Sherri VanReepinghen**, First Vice President, said to the gathered audience, "Congratulations on raising the bar. This chapter is quite amazing, and we thank the staff and especially the people we serve. You are an inspiration to others in implementing a more person centered program which brings enormous hopes and dreams. We thank you and we praise you."

**Gary Lind**, Executive Director, stated "What this means is that this is a just a milestone, a little sign on the road that says we're on the right path and we didn't make a wrong turn, because if we had we might not have gotten to this place... We're not at the end of the journey but we're on the road."

**Steve Towler**, Assistant Executive Director, presented a video called *Natural Supports*, which was filmed by **Stephen Morales**, Videographer, and profiled two people who took part in the CQL accreditation process.

Perhaps the day's sentiments and message were best summed up by **Frankie Chan**. Frankie, who receives services at [Betty Pender New York League](#), was one of many self-advocates whose dedication helped get AHRC NYC to this point. He was asked by Gary to make a short speech. Saying that he "had a blast" attending the CQL meetings, Frankie emphasized to all that their work was not done. "This just started. We've got to make sure we get a nice car to get us to the finish line. We've gotta get a Lamborghini to finish this! We're doing better than ever so let's keep it that way."