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**September 2007**

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## September 2007

**18 Monday** 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.  
Spin Dance - 'The Chryslers'  
Max Higbee Center  
315 Halleck St.  
Contact Amanda: 676-6985 ext. 302  
738-7366 TTY

**22 Saturday** 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Sibshop  
Bloedel Donovan Park  
Contact Jennifer: 255-2056 ext. 1

**24 Monday** 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  
Whatcom County DD Advisory Board  
3333 Squalicum Pkwy.  
Contact Jessica: 676-6724 ext. 32014

**28 Friday** 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
Mental Wellness Training  
1415 Freeway Dr.  
Mt. Vernon  
Contact Kristin: 425-339-4828

## October 2007

**1 Monday** 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.  
Arc Board of Directors  
2602 McLeod Rd.  
Contact Dana: 715-0170 ext. 305

**2 Tuesday** 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.  
Down syndrome Family Potluck  
320 Pacific Place, Mt. Vernon  
Contact: 360-416-7570 ext. 401

**6 Saturday** 11:00 a.m.  
4th annual Buddy Walk  
Meritime Heritage Park  
Contact Kristy: 715-0170 ext. 307

**15 Monday** 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Parent to Parent Support Meeting  
2001 H St.  
Contact Jennifer: 255-2056 ext. 1

**15 Monday** 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.  
Spin Dance - 'Gramophone Co.'  
Max Higbee Center  
315 Halleck St.  
Contact Amanda: 360-676-6985  
360-738-7366 TTY

**18 Thursday**  
17th Annual Region 3  
Supported Employment Conference  
Warm Springs Conference Center  
Contact Lynn: 425-774-3338  
or [lynn@wvs.org](mailto:lynn@wvs.org)  
*see page 4 for details*

*All Events are in Bellingham unless otherwise noted.*

## People with Disabilities Face Uncertain Path to 'Real' Jobs

By Maureen O'Hagan *Aug. 19th, 2007*

Aleta Hursh is 31 years old but has never held what most would consider a real job.

Born with cerebral palsy, the Kirkland woman can't talk. Her limbs jerk involuntarily, so she can't hold heavy or fragile objects. Two days a week, she sorts white paper from colored at a recycling center known as a sheltered workshop, where people with disabilities can get a taste of the working life in a supportive setting.

The job is well beneath Hursh's mental abilities. But like many people with serious disabilities, she hasn't had an opportunity to do much more.

Once viewed as progressive, sheltered workshops are now seen by some as outmoded, places where people with disabilities are segregated from society and relegated to lives of stagnation. The pay is low, averaging just \$1.82 an hour, and the challenges are few. Some question whether people are really working or just killing time, and whether the workshops are just another example of discrimination.

Washington is the first state to adopt a revolutionary policy aimed at changing that.

The Working Age Adult Policy, which took effect last year, aims to transform the lives of thousands of people with disabilities. It requires adults who receive services funded by the state Division of Developmental Disabilities to be on a 'pathway to employment,' or have a job out in the community that pays a living wage.

"This is the next great civil-rights movement in our country," said Chris Brandt, chief executive of Issaquah-based AtWork!, a nonprofit that serves people with disabilities.

Other states are looking to Washington for advice, said Ray Jensen, director of the King County Developmental Disabilities Division. "Other states have it as a goal or a value statement, but we're the only state that's actually put it into policy."

While good jobs and living wages can hardly be criticized, the policy hasn't been universally embraced. Because the policy has placed a priority on work, some popular programs have been cut back. These programs provided activities, but they also offered respite for families who care for loved ones with disabilities, which can be just as important. Then there's the looming question: What

**"I argued for it because I want people to be valued in their community,"**

about those who are simply too disabled to comply?

Hursh is wary herself. She pointed to a word on a board she uses to communicate.

"Scared."

### 'Real' jobs

On paper, the new policy seems simple. It requires organizations such as AtWork! to submit a written plan describing the steps each client will take to get a job — the individual's 'pathway to employment.' The organizations, which receive government funding, provide services to move clients along that path.

What counts as a 'pathway' isn't defined. It could involve teaching the client a specific skill, training him to get to work on time, or teaching him how to ride the bus.

As for the jobs themselves, Linda Rolfe, director of the state Division of Developmental Disabilities, said there is one key requirement: that they be real.

"I don't want them shuffling bolts from one cabinet to another," she said.

Clients who refuse to at least try to get a job risk losing a lot of their government benefits. But there's no deadline to find a job, and officials recognize it might take years for some people.

When the client is successful, the employer, not the government, pays the worker's salary. Some say the policy could save money in the long run by getting people into the work force and off government programs. But the impetus was just as much philosophical.

*Continued on page 3*



## New Coverage Options for Uninsured Children

Washington state's public children's health coverage is in effect, opening rolls to some 45,000 uninsured children in families with incomes of two and half times the Federal Poverty Level, up to \$51,635.



Details about the health coverage:

- The new coverage, which will be consistent with Medicaid's traditional major medical coverage, includes medical, dental and vision benefits.
- The new eligibility rule applies to all children ages 18 and under, who live in Washington State and whose families meet the income criteria.

▪ Families with incomes more than two times the Federal Poverty Level will pay a modest monthly premium for the coverage. (The premiums are \$15 per child per month, with a maximum of \$45 a month per family.)

▪ Parents can get an application by visiting their local Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Services Office (CSO) or by contacting 1-877-543-7669 , a toll-free hot line that can advise them on enrollment questions. Bellingham CSO: 360-714-4000



Source: DSHS

## Potential Increase in Personal Care Hours

IF EITHER you or your family member receives Medicaid Personal Care and has high needs for assistance with activities of daily living or has behavior issues that impact ability to receive assistance with personal care tasks, there is good news.

The method of determining that need in the DDD Assessment has changed and you may be eligible for more hours starting September 1, 2007.

If you have any questions, please call your case resource manager at DDD for additional details.

Source: DSHS

See contact info below

## Family Support Programs

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is starting a new program for individuals and families, combining three Family Support programs into one.

The new program, Individual and Family Services (IFS), started transitioning current participants in July 2007. IFS uses the new DDD Assessment and allots funding (\$2,000 – \$6,000) based on need.

New people will be added to the the program over a period of time.

If you are currently receiving Family Support, you will be assessed and then transitioned to the new program. Your case manager will contact you to schedule an appointment.

Families and individuals who are known to have emergent and/or high needs situations, and families and individuals who have been waiting the longest will be assessed for participation in the program.

The IFS program covers many services, including:

- Respite Care
- Transportation
- Equipment and Supplies
- Training
- Counseling
- Behavior Management
- Recreational Opportunities
- Therapies
- Architectural and Vehicular Modifications
- Excess Medical Costs (not covered by another source)

Source: DSHS

### DDD Contact Information:

#### Everett headquarters

- 425-339-4833
- 800-788-2053

#### Mt. Vernon Outstation

- 360-416-7261
- 800-491-5266

#### Bellingham

- 360-714-5000
- 800-239-8285

#### Oak Harbor

- 360-240-4729
- 877-890-2631

## Assistance for Low Income Women:

WASHINGTON WOMEN In Need (WWIN) offers non-emergency assistance for education and health care to low income women\* who are 18 and Washington residents. Applications for each program are available two to four times a year and are limited, time sensitive, and cannot be guaranteed. Typically no applicant waits more than three

months to be evaluated for eligibility.

WWIN provides grants in four program areas:

- **Education** at accredited institutions in Washington
- **Mental Health Counseling** with licensed mental health professionals
- **Health Care Insurance Premiums** for current health coverage
- **Physical/Dental/Vision/Hearing** exams and treatment

Contact WWIN for application information at wawomeninneed.org or by telephone.

The next **application date** is: September 19, 2007 for **Physical/Dental/Vision/Hearing.**

Applications will only be available by phone at 425-451-8838 beginning at 8:00 AM. Call early as it is first come first serve.

\* low income is based on the Federal Poverty Guideline

Source: Washington Women in Need



Continued from page 1

"I argued for it because I want people to be valued in their community," Rolfe said.

For AtWork!, which serves more than 230 clients, the new policy came at a time of uncertainty. For the three decades that it has been involved in commercial enterprises, the nonprofit has survived on a combination of donations, government funds and contracts with private businesses that needed light assembly, packaging or envelope stuffing. But over the past few years, that work has dwindled, either because of the Internet or because businesses were sending the work overseas.

The slowdown, along with the new policy, led AtWork! to take a hard look at itself.

Brandt said the organization saw that people in the workshops weren't always progressing, that some workers were earning as little as \$5 a month, and that many people had stagnated at the same job for years, if not decades.

"When your goal is to help people be independent and productive, that isn't cutting it," she said. The agency decided it was time to change. In the past year, AtWork! has closed two of its three sheltered workshops. Now all workshop clients, including Hursh, are consolidated in the Issaquah recycling center, where their working hours have been reduced.

### A loss of options?

Not everyone is happy about the new state policy.

At a recent support-group meeting in Bellevue, parents of adults and teens with serious disabilities passed around a letter from AtWork! describing the changes. They also discussed cuts in other programs.

As a result of the new policy, for example, a program called Community Access — which used to take adults with disabilities on outings — is now limited to people 62 and older.

The Working Age Adult Policy hasn't given people with disabilities more options, these parents complained — it's given them fewer. Some parents fear they may have to quit their jobs so they can care for adult children

whose programs have been reduced.

Some have sons and daughters who can't talk and have no alternate means of communication. One has a daughter who is blind, autistic, developmentally disabled and has seizures. Others said their adult children couldn't understand what a paycheck was, much less appreciate a 'living wage.'



**Olivia, employed by The Arc of Whatcom County, gets publications ready for mailing.**

Parent Karen McNerney said her daughter is 22 but has the abilities of a 2-year-old. She's nonverbal and has to wear a protective helmet and arm restraints because she regularly hits herself. Recently, McNerney was instructed to connect her daughter with an agency to begin the job search.

"They told me this with a straight face," she said, explaining that her daughter would need one, if not two, job coaches with her at all times — if she could even focus on work instead of self-harm.

For most of these parents, a job seemed ridiculous. "If we can get her toilet-trained, we'll be doing good," one mother said.

Many of them believe their children are too disabled to work. Yet they feel pressured. The attitude, said parent Ron Ralph, is "if you aren't on board, you aren't recognizing the potential of your child. It's almost messianic."

Jensen, the King County official, said he understands the concerns. "I'm not there with them 24 hours a day and the emotional side of that," he said. "But the worst thing you can do by giving them a chance is it doesn't work out. If you don't give them a chance you'll never know. Nor will they."

### Searching for ideas

Hursh took her first step on the path to employment earlier this summer, when

a group of supporters, including her father, the manager of her group home and a job coach from AtWork!, met with employment consultants to talk about job possibilities.

They began with a discussion of her work history, loosely defined. She took out the trash years ago at school, her father said. She cleans her room, the group-home manager said. She did a little volunteer work delivering gifts at a hospital, the job coach said. And then there's the paper-sorting.

Hursh's strengths came next: She is observant, has a good memory, and is persistent and creative, the group agreed. She's also compassionate to the point of being an advocate for friends who need help.

Then came the hard part: the job ideas. How about working at the airport with the Transportation Security Administration, one person suggested. Or offering food samples at Costco? Or delivering interoffice mail?

The consultants have learned to be creative. They and others shared stories about the seriously disabled man who got a job at a petting zoo collecting eggs and watering the plants. And the man who got a job sweeping up at a factory — something other employees didn't like to do — that helped reduce injuries caused by slipping on messy floors. And the woman hired by a pretzel maker to hand out free samples from her wheelchair.

But by the end of the meeting, the group seemed no closer to finding Hursh a job — which shows why this is so hard.

She can't feed herself and must rely on public transportation, so practically speaking, she can work only before or after lunch, not both. Because of her involuntary movements, she can be slow and sometimes breaks things. She's also worried about working without the help she gets at the workshop.

At the end of the session, she pointed again to a word: 'Scared.'

Editors Note: Send us your feedback on this issue or story.

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# Get Involved

## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Buddy Walk

**Saturday October 6**

Registration 11:00 a.m., Walk at 12:00 p.m.



Activities for kids, guest speakers, and a 1.25 mile walk with friends

Registration and volunteer information available at The Arc.

Maritime Heritage Park

Sponsored by

Down syndrome Outreach of Whatcom County

Contact Kristy: 360-715-0170 ext. 307

## Adapted Aquatics Program

Aquatic program that pairs individuals with special needs with a pool partner for one on one instruction and support.



Bellingham Parks & Recreation

For more information or to register

Call: 360-647-7665

Or online at: [www.cob.org/ezreg](http://www.cob.org/ezreg)

## Evening Caregiver Support Group

Are you a parent or a relative of someone with a developmental disability?

Now meeting one evening a week

St Luke's Health Ed. Center

Contact Kelly: 360-676-2220 ext. 3362



## Parent to Parent Support Meetings

Monday, October 15

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Childcare Provided

2001 H Street, Bellingham

Contact Jennifer: 360-255-2056 ext. 1

## Parent to Parent Sibshop

Saturday, September 22

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Bloedel Donovan Beach Pavilion in Bellingham

RSVP before September 17

Contact Jennifer: 360 255-2056, ext. 1

## Skagit County Events

### Mental Wellness Training

Friday, September 28

9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Presenter Rick Pribbernow, MA CPE  
Introduction to Suicide Prevention and Supporting Individuals with Depression

1415 Freeway Dr.

Mt. Vernon

Contact Kristin Ihrig: 425-339-4828

[ihrigr@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:ihrigr@dshs.wa.gov)

## Youth Self-Advocacy Group

3rd Saturday of each month

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.



Have fun learning about Self-Advocacy. Make Friends and Work Together!

**Registration required - Ages 18 to 25 years.**

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center

2602 McLeod Rd, Bellingham

Contact Maureen: 360-715-0170 ext. 302

Sponsored by: Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program

## Autism Syndrome Family Potluck

Tuesday, October 2

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Bring a dish to share

320 Pacific Place, Mt. Vernon

## 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Region 3

### Supported Employment Conference

Thursday, October 18

9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

This Year's Theme: The right S.T.U.F.F.  
Support Technique, Understanding, Fun, Future

\$30 conference registration due September 30th  
Stipends Available

Warm Beach Conference Center, Stanwood

## Safety Awareness and Sexuality Support Group

Every Monday

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Learn all about personal safety and awareness.

Presented by John Davis and Jan Jung,  
Husband and Wife Team of Mental Health Counselors.

**Registration required - Ages 18 and older.**

**Next 5 week** session starts September 24

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center

2602 McLeod Rd, Bellingham

Contact Maureen: 360-715-0170 ext. 302

Sponsored by: Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program



Arc events are held in accessible locations. For sign language interpreter service, assistive listening devices or communication material in an alternative format, large print or audiotape, please call 10 days in advance.



## New Innovations - Assistive Technology

MORE THAN ever before, technology makes it possible for children and adults with disabilities to lead independent and fulfilling lives. This equipment is frequently called Assistive Technology (AT). AT helps a person with a disability do something s/he cannot otherwise do. AT can be anything from a simple device, such as a magnifying glass, to a complex device, such as a computerized communication system. AT includes both the devices and the services needed to use the devices effectively. AT services might include assessing a child's need for AT, training the child, their family, teacher, and aide to use the AT.

**How can assistive technology help my child?** Assistive technology

can help children be more self-sufficient at home and in school, communicate with friends and family, get out into the community and as they grow older, find employment.

**How do I find out if AT can help my child?** The best place to begin is talking with your child's teacher, Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, or Physical Therapist. There may be low tech devices and strategies that are already being used in the classroom or in therapy, which could expand to the home and community.

Discussion about AT can also occur at your child's Individual Family Service Plan (ISFP)/ Individual Education plan (IEP) meeting. The term 'assistive technology' may

not appear on the IEP forms used by your child's school. Instead, the form may use terms such as 'accommodations, supports, program modifications or supplementary aids and services.'

Regardless of the specific IEP terminology around AT, according to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004, the IEP team is required to consider the child's need for AT. And once the need for AT is identified in the child's IEP, the school is required to provide the devices and services.

For more information, visit: [www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info)

Adapted from the Family Center on Technology and Disabilities' Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology.

## Washington Assistive Technology Foundation

THE **WASHINGTON Assistive Technology Foundation** (WATF) provides low interest loans to help with purchase of assistive technology devices and services through the AT AccessFund and the Telework loan program. WATF also provides a low-cost rental program for closed circuit magnification systems (CCTVs). <http://watf.org/>

## Try Before You Buy Assistive Technology

THINKING ABOUT buying some new technology, but not sure it will work for you? Try before you buy! The Washington Assistive Technology Act Program's (WATAP) new Device Demonstration and Equipment Loan Programs are up and running- and to rave reviews! These programs allow you to have a hands-on demonstration of specific devices or software that may be borrowed for up to 6 weeks. The program is open to all assistive technology users and also to professionals and service providers including special educators. WATAP has many different types of devices to try out! For more information visit WATAP's website <http://www.watap.org> or contact Maria Kelley at 1-800-214-8731 or [uwat@u.washington.edu](mailto:uwat@u.washington.edu).

## AT Resources in Washington State

**Do-IT U of W**  
[www.washington.edu/doit](http://www.washington.edu/doit)  
Video presentations, publications, universal design for learning and access information.

**Special Education Tech Center**  
Central WA University  
[www.cwu.edu/~setc](http://www.cwu.edu/~setc)  
Leading library to schools, workshops, newsletter tips and strategies for using technology.

**Washington AT Act Program**  
<http://wapat.org>  
Quarterly bulletins, loan programs, funding information and discussion groups.

**Washington Assistive Technology Foundation**  
<http://watf.org>  
Provides financial and rental information.

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## Choice and Self Determination

*People with developmental disabilities and their families want services and supports delivered by a system that allows us choice and control over our own lives.*

The purpose of the Self Determination Movement is to empower individuals with developmental disabilities to create the quality of life they desire for themselves and, by discovering and sharing their natural gifts and talents, nourish and enrich both their own lives and that of their communities.

Excerpted from the Vermont Self Determination Project.



### YOUTH SELF ADVOCACY



Each month, young people 18 to 25 **years of age** meet at The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center to learn about self-advocacy. These gatherings, sponsored by the Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program, encourage participants to learn skills that will assist them to be the best advocate they can be for themselves and for other people who have disabilities.

The first step of self-advocacy is to identify their personal preferences. To that end, each self-advocate worked on a booklet that shared information about them such as the name they like to go by, their favorite things to do, and what makes them feel happy. The booklets also included a picture of the author. This helped everyone get to know more about each other.

One young woman described a self

advocate as "a person who makes their own choices, stands up for their rights and is totally independent." She encourages other youth to "...practice being your own advocate. Make your own choices, don't be afraid of being your own advocate..." and to join the monthly get-togethers, saying that everyone is welcome.

Two self-advocates, Terri Hansen and Katie Edson, were invited to join the July meeting. They led the group in a discussion of things the group didn't like, how that feels and solutions for dealing with these situations as they arise and ways that people communicate.

**Come and learn to be an advocate!**

