

# Roll Call

BOSTON CENTER FOR *INDEPENDENT LIVING*

June 2008

## Advocacy and Activism in Full Gear

BCIL continues to be a key leader in disability rights in Boston and throughout Massachusetts.

We are helping to spearhead the Employment Now Coalition, which is working to make Massachusetts a

model employer of people with disabilities. Over 100 people attended a forum in May featuring Christine Griffin, commissioner of the federal government's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, to promote getting people with disabilities jobs in state government. The state has signed on to the initiative.

BCIL has also continued its hard-hitting efforts to get increased compliance with the ADA in Boston. The city has moved over 20 polling sites in the past two years and is looking to invest at least \$15 million to fix curb cuts. Vital partners include the Neighborhood Access Group, the Disability Policy Consortium, and the Disability Law Center. More than 80 people attended BCIL's access forum in January, where lists of access barriers were given to city officials.

The ongoing campaign to support fair wages and benefits for personal care attendants (PCAs) hit full stride in May, when 50 activists conducted a solemn procession through the State House, mourning the loss of independence caused by the inability to find attendants because fewer people are attracted to the job because pay is low and there's no sick time, vacation, or health insurance. Eventually the group—dressed in black and walking to the beat of a methodical drum—jammed into the office of Governor Deval Patrick. After 30 minutes, Lt. Governor Tim Murray came out and discussed our concerns. As of this newsletter,



Activists meet with Lt. Governor Tim Murray

## Act Today *Influence Tomorrow*

Realizing that there is a lack of young leaders with disabilities involved in shaping the world around them at all levels, the Boston Center for Independent Living, in collaboration with Easter Seals, facilitates a youth leadership group called 'Act Today Influence Tomorrow.' This group focuses on developing both life skills and leadership skills in youth between the ages of 14 and 25. If you would like to participate in future events, please contact Stacy Rogers of BCIL at 617-338-6665 x232, [srogers@boston-cil.org](mailto:srogers@boston-cil.org) or Colleen Flanagan of Easter Seals at 508-751-6410, [cflanagan@eastersealsma.org](mailto:cflanagan@eastersealsma.org).

The group meets monthly to discuss topics chosen by members and recently started a series on the media, asking questions such as how are people with disabilities portrayed in the media, how does that portrayal affect us, and how can we shape and use media. As part of this discussion, the youth decided to create an advocacy video focused on MBTA accessibility. In the video, participants spoke about the problems and successes they have experienced in using the MBTA and shot footage documenting some of the barriers they face when using the T.

The final product, produced by Alexander Freeman and called "Accessible Boston Now in Popular Demand" can be viewed on YouTube at the following link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOOKvORNxss>.

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negotiations for increased PCA pay and benefits between the state and the PCA union, 1199 SEIU, are productive, though calls to Governor Patrick (617-725-4005) in support of fair PCA compensation are needed.

Housing remains a major concern of consumers contacting BCIL, which is why the group advocated, with success, for a \$500,000 increase in the Alternative Housing Voucher Program for people with disabilities and strongly supported reauthorization of funding for the Home Modifications Program (\$50 million over 5 years) and the Community Based Housing Program (\$30 million over 5 years).

Efforts with Greater Boston Legal Services to support implementation of the settlement of our class-action lawsuit against the MBTA continue. Bus driver training is going well, but problems remain with fare gate access and gaps between subway cars and station platforms. One critical success to highlight is improvement in elevators. They now operate as close to 100% as possible— just a few years ago so many broke down that on some days the subway system was basically off limits to a person needing an elevator. Much must be done—but the T is focused on making the needed improvements.

If you want to get involved in BCIL's neighborhood action groups and intensive advocacy work, contact Evelyne Milorin or Karen Schneiderman at BCIL.



Janice Ward and other BCIL activists at the State House

## BCIL Marie Feltin Award Ceremony *The Largest Ever*



On March 20, 2008, 275 people attended the 12th Annual BCIL Marie Feltin Award Ceremony honoring individuals and institutions that embody the pioneering spirit of the late Dr. Marie Feltin, who was a powerful advocate for patients with disabilities. This year's honorees were the Institute for Community Inclusion, headed by Bill Kiernan, for outstanding service, advocacy, and leadership to advance the rights of people with disabilities; State Senator Jim Marzilli for dedicated advocacy and legislative leadership in the cause of equal rights for people with disabilities; and Karen Schneiderman for her passionate advocacy and inspired service to advance the independence and integration of people with disabilities.

The ceremony would not have been possible without the efforts of BCIL's great friend, Dr. Robert Master, and our co-chairs for the evening, Mala Rafik of Rosenfeld & Rafik and Mike Fadel of 1199 SEIU. BCIL also gratefully acknowledges our Sponsors whose support helped make it a successful event.

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## BCIL Advocates Summit 2008

BCIL held its annual Advocate Summit this past March. Over 80 activists heard reports on the past year, discussed an action agenda for the coming year, and celebrated victories.



Rep. Byron Rushing

Our Keynote Speaker was Representative Byron Rushing, the 2nd Assistant Majority Leader (D-Boston). A long-time friend of the disability community and a civil rights activist, Representative Rushing spoke passionately about the quest of people with disabilities to attain rights enjoyed by all people. Following are highlights from his remarks .

*What you demand is so reasonable and it makes so much sense. What you are doing is absolutely necessary. You defend the rights of everybody in this city and in this state, when you defend the rights of people with disabilities.*

*You deserve to be treated with the dignity that we all deserve—because we all deserve to be treated with dignity. You have been effective in saying how the majority of people have to change.*

*When I was involved in the civil rights movement in the 60s, white people used to ask us "what do you people want?" And a friend came up with a reply, after hearing this so much: "What do you want for your family? You want a good home, a good job, good healthcare, to be treated with respect and dignity. Is that what you want? OK. Write it all down and sign my name! That's what we want."*

*We must continue to denounce barriers to opportunity put before any people by others. People with disabilities should be treated as everyone should be treated. You are in the forefront of the movement for justice in this country. Never, ever, let anyone say what you are doing is self serving. It is serving the community. It is serving the whole Commonwealth. It is serving all of us.*

## Construction Industry Night at the Boston POPS

BCIL's 29th Annual Construction Industry Night at the Pops was one of our most successful ever. Over 400 attendees were treated to a grand reception at Symphony Hall highlighted by a performance by Amanda Palmer of the Dresden Dolls, with Keith Lockhart conducting a unique theatrical rock offering called EdgeFest. BCIL is indebted to our Host Sponsors, the Perini Corporation, especially President & COO Bob Band and Doug Mure; and O'Connor Constructors, especially President Tom O'Connor and Chris Mayo, for their leadership and backing, along with our additional Sponsors and attendees who came together to demonstrate their support for our work in the disability community.



BCIL Executive Director Bill Henning with Bob Band and Tom O'Connor.

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## BCIL Annual Meeting

November 18, 2008  
6:00pm

Transportation Building  
10 Park Plaza, 2nd floor  
Boston



### Agenda

- Celebrate the past year's achievements
- BCIL Board of Trustees presentation
- Business Reports
- Conferring of awards
- Guest speaker

## BCIL's PCA and Direct Services Departments Can Help You

Do you need someone to assist you getting out of bed, or with eating or bathing or dressing or other basic activities of daily living? If so, you may benefit from BCIL's Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program. It annually serves over a thousand people of any age who meet eligibility standards set by Medicaid.

Are you looking for an accessible and affordable apartment? BCIL can assist you in your search. Such housing is scarce, but we can give you information and advocacy tips to increase your chances of finding the type of unit you want.

Are you newly disabled and looking for advice and support on how to navigate the maze of benefits and services? Or do you simply wish to speak with someone who gets what it's like to have a disability? BCIL has people on staff who can provide expert peer mentoring and benefits information.

Contact BCIL at  
617-338-6665 or  
617-338-6662 TTY  
when you have key  
independent living  
concerns—our PCA and  
Direct Services departments  
can assist in numerous  
ways. More information  
on BCIL can also be  
found at our website:  
[www.bostoncil.org](http://www.bostoncil.org).

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