

## Stay in touch with the Abilities Community

### Don't Miss the Buzz!

News

#### Abilities Expo Gets Rave Reviews in Atlanta

The Atlanta community turned out in force at Abilities Expo on November 6-8, 2009 at the Cobb Galleria Convention Center. More than 2,000 people with disabilities, family members, caregivers and healthcare professionals were on hand to learn, network and be empowered.



"After more than a decade, we are thrilled to bring Abilities Expo back to the people of Atlanta," said David Korse, the president and CEO of Abilities Expo. "The positive feedback has been so overwhelming that we are committed to bringing an even better Expo back to Atlanta in 2010."

Attendees were treated to thousands of life-enhancing products and services including conversion vehicles, home modification products, exercise equipment, travel services, medical devices, mobility apparatus, daily living aids and much more.

"It was fantastic!" commented Paula Krone, Expo attendee. "My husband and I came away with information about products and services that would have taken us ten times the amount of hours we spent at the Expo to gather. And even if we spent the time on the Internet, we wouldn't have been able to try out the products with my son. The Expo was invaluable."

Crowds found the sneak peek into the future of AT at the [Assistive Technology Pavilion](#) especially enticing. Thanks to the inspiring work of Co-sponsors Georgia Tech and the Shepherd Center, onlookers were impressed by such experimental technologies as the Tongue Drive System for controlling power wheelchairs, and by the Roomba-based robot with a remote control arm for picking up and delivering small objects.

The pavilion also showcased important technological breakthroughs that are already commercially available. The magnetic switch for controlling a Bluetooth cellular phone headset and a raft of Nokia phones with various accessibility features were among the many products that received considerable interest from visitors.

"All of our exhibitors had a really positive experience. They enjoyed talking with end-users and others in the community about technological solutions for helping people live fuller, more independent lives," said John Morris, research scientist with the Shepherd Center and co-organizer of the Assistive Technology Pavilion. "That sort of communication and exchange is critical. It gives engineers and designers direct feedback on how to make their technologies even better and can be a really energizing experience for them."

When attendees were not contemplating their next product purchase, they were engaged in a series of dynamic workshops and fun-for-the-whole-family events including adaptive sports competitions, dance performances, fashion shows, canine assistance demos and more.

For a bit of culture, attendees could experience an eclectic mix of artistic creations at the Artist Market where the works of Georgia's most touted artists with disabilities were on display and demonstrated live.

"Not only did Abilities Expo feature outstanding talent in the Artist Market, it attracted experienced artists that came together in an atmosphere of community to see art and converse about art," said Marquetta Bell Johnson, Abilities Expo Ambassador. "I was enriched by the

**ATLANTA**  
Atlanta, GA, October 15-17, 2010

**LOS ANGELES**  
Los Angeles, CA, April 9-11, 2010

**NEW YORK METRO**  
Edison, NJ, May 21-23, 2010

**CHICAGOLAND**  
Schaumburg, IL, July 9-11, 2010

**HOUSTON**  
Houston, TX, Aug. 27-29, 2010

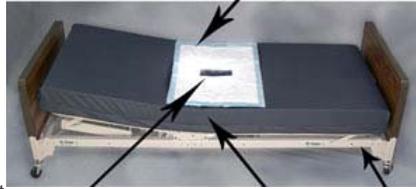
support and appreciation I received as an artist exhibiting my artwork.”

Abilities Expo will return to the Cobb Galleria in Atlanta on October 15-17, 2010.

#### Feature

### Product Spotlight: Incontinence Relief System

Capstone Medical Products Group, Inc., manufacturer of the Incontinence Relief System, is an Abilities Expo exhibitor.



Incontinence, common among people with disabilities, is a major contributor to a multitude of medical conditions and problems. People who live with incontinence rely on adult diapers, absorbent pads and Foley catheters to aid them in eliminating waste. However, these standard methods of treating incontinence tend to create a snowball effect of debilitating wellness issues including:

- Pressure ulcers from the prolonged contact of fecal matter and urine to the patient’s skin
- Urinary tract infections from the use of catheters
- Significantly increased patient care burden
- Injuries resulting from falling in the attempt to access a bedside commode

In an effort to combat these health-comprising problems, the Capstone Medical Products Group, Inc. has spearheaded the development of the **Incontinence Relief System**, a medical product which testing has shown is highly effective at both containing human waste and separating this waste from the incontinent patient’s skin. Additionally, the use of Capstone’s product greatly reduces the need for Foley Catheters, thereby significantly diminishing the occurrence of urinary tract infections.

Capstone’s Incontinence Relief System consists of three components—a semi-electric bed, a comfortable, specially designed Tempur-Pedic Medical pressure-reducing mattress and a waste collection receptacle. The mattress cavity and waste collection receptacle allow the person’s waste products to be collected approximately 20 inches below the mattress surface.

**Several independent studies** show that this simple yet groundbreaking technique which separates the skin from the patient’s own natural byproducts decreases the incidence of pressure ulcers by up to 80%. Likewise, because the waste collection plastic bag can be changed in less than one minute, the Incontinence Relief System greatly reduces the cleanup time and burden relative to incontinent care. The result is independence, increased safety and improved health for people with disabilities.

#### News

### Abilities Expo Los Angeles to Host the 2010 Ms. Wheelchair California Pageant

On April 10, 2010, before an audience of thousands at Abilities Expo Los Angeles, a number of extraordinary, accomplished women will vie for the title of Ms. Wheelchair California.

The candidate whose accomplishments, speaking skills and personality radiate inner beauty, demonstrate poise and outshine the competition will be crowned. The new Ms. Wheelchair California will be expected to communicate the needs and undertakings of her constituency to the general public, the business community and the legislature during her reign.



The competition is open to any woman between the ages of 21 and 60, married or single, who uses a wheelchair or motorized scooter 100% of the time when outside the home. Prospective contestants should contact Ruthee Goldkorn, Ms. Wheelchair California Pageant Executive Director at [knowbarriers@yahoo.com](mailto:knowbarriers@yahoo.com) or (951) 247-8150 beginning in November 2009.

“Ms. Wheelchair California’s duties are numerous: each year she has the opportunity to travel, make public appearances and conduct radio, print and television interviews in the fulfillment of her responsibilities. These include promoting awareness of the need to eliminate architectural and attitudinal barriers, educating Californians on disability issues and informing the public of

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the achievements of people with disabilities across our great state,” says Goldkorn, former Ms. Wheelchair 2001 winner.

The newly coronated will have large shoes to fill. Alyson Roth, the current Ms. Wheelchair California and runner-up for Ms. Wheelchair USA, has contributed to making Yosemite National Park more wheelchair friendly and ADA compliant. She has worked with Habitat for Humanity to help build a house for an Atlanta inner-city resident with a disability. Likewise, she has recognized others who have been instrumental in their own communities in spite of their disability with the Ability Through Mobility Award.

Her efforts have even taken her to foreign soil, working at an orphanage for children with disabilities and teaching music at a school for the blind in Nicaragua. She also traveled to Mexico to deliver wheelchairs to the country’s impoverished people with disabilities. She collaborated with former Mexican leader President Vicente Fox about the importance of providing wheelchairs, aide and healthcare to the citizens of Mexico.

The winner of Ms. Wheelchair California will also go on to compete for the national title in November 2010.

Feature

## Poverty and Disability Greatly Correlated, New Study Shows

By Mike Ervin

*Mike is an Abilities Expo Ambassador, a Chicago-based writer and a disability rights activist. This piece was originally written for the Progressive Media Project.*

Hard economic times are even harder when you have a disability. But poverty and disability don’t have to be synonymous—if we design our policies well.

A new report from the Center for Economic and Policy Research (a Washington, D.C.-based think tank) entitled “Half in Ten” states that almost 50 percent of working-age adults who experience poverty for at least a 12-month period have one or more disabilities.



People with disabilities, the report says, account for a larger share of those experiencing poverty than people in all other minority, ethnic and racial groups combined and are even a larger group than single parents.

The extra costs associated with living with a disability—such as purchasing expensive equipment like wheelchairs and catheters or obtaining specialized medical attention—keep many disabled people and their families in poverty, the report notes.

The report also astutely observes that direct care workers who assist people with disabilities in their homes and communities are often themselves in poverty. The median income for the 3 million direct care workers in the United States is only \$17,000 a year, the report says.

Fortunately, there are several steps we can take to ensure that disability doesn’t spell poverty.

The first step is universal health care. The report stresses “the fundamental importance of health care reform, especially the provision of universal coverage, to anti-poverty efforts.” The lack of good health insurance, the report says, “is one of the most significant drivers of income poverty and severe disadvantage.”

Another important step is for the United States to adopt “the kinds of paid-sick-day and paid-sick-leave policies that are already in place in all other similarly wealthy nations.” At least 40 percent of private sector workers in the United States have no paid sick days or leave, the report says.

Third, we should ease the ridiculously harsh restrictions on assets and earnings imposed on those receiving Social Security Disability Income. The current Social Security policy basically requires you to impoverish yourself before you can get disability aid from the government.

And, fourth, we should pay a decent wage to the health care providers who do such a superb job in tending to the needs of the disabled.

It's clear that the current economic hardship is being made much worse for many people than it needs to be due to the disregard politicians and policymakers have for the well-being of Americans with disabilities and those who work in providing them with assistance.

It's time for that to change.

*The opinions expressed herein are those of the writer and not necessarily those of Abilities Expo.*

*Letter to the Editor*

## Universal Playgrounds: Extending the Playground Experience to All

**Q:** I have been trying to get information, plans, ideas, etc., for our town to turn our playground into an accessible one. I have written to several people for information but never received any information or answers. Can you please help me with a source or sources of such information?

**A:** You are to be commended! It is proactive people like you who have helped to make the public playground—one of the most important settings for childhood development—universally accessible for children of all abilities.



The [National Center on Accessibility](#) would be a great resource to aid you in your efforts to convert your town playground. One point that they stress is the difference between accessible design and universal design. While the former aims to satisfy the minimum requirements to achieve usability for people with functional limitations, the later aims higher. Universal design considers the wide spectrum of human abilities and strives to exceed the minimum standards to meet the needs of the greatest number of people.

You could also consult [AccessiblePlaygrounds.net](#) for great fundraising ideas and inspiring, real-life stories of how others successfully built their playgrounds.

For a list of manufacturers that offer accessible playground equipment, accessories, components and products, click [here](#). Many companies can also offer advice on raising money or have established fundraising programs.

Best of luck! Please keep us posted!

*Letter to the Editor*

## Abilities Expo = Latest Technologies It's How We Roll

**Q:** Our son has a brain injury which makes it challenging for him to use a power chair. But we would really like him to have one so he can increase his independence. Is there anything at Abilities Expo that might help us find him a power chair he can use?



**A:** Thanks so much for asking this question. Abilities Expo is one of the best places for you and your son to tackle this challenge and find a solution. New wheelchairs with new features are continually being introduced and we are always showcasing the latest equipment at Abilities Expo.

First, you can meet all the major wheelchair manufacturers and talk with them about the features your son requires. Not only will they have numerous samples available to try, they may also have an occupational therapist at their booth who can discuss which wheelchair will accommodate your son's needs. With the sheer volume of customizable features available, they will most likely be able to configure a chair that will work for him.

At Abilities Expo, we also offer a workshop on how to choose a wheelchair. Our speakers work with the manufacturers to stay up-to-speed on the new, innovative features as they become available. They then bring that information to you in a forum where you can ask questions of the experts and exchange ideas with other attendees! In addition, we recommend that you attend a session about wheelchair seating and positioning to learn the latest techniques for people who use power chairs.

Finally, there are hundreds of exhibitors at each Abilities Expo. Some may be statewide or national associations who are seeking to share resources with people just like you and your son. Meeting them as well as the other attendees at the event can be one of the best ways to find a solution that meets the unique needs of your child. We hope to see you at one of the shows in 2010 and please keep us posted on your progress in finding the perfect power chair!

News

## Obama Issues Proclamation in Support of Caregivers Nationwide

*A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America*

The true strength of the American family finds its roots in an unwavering commitment to care for one another. In difficult times, Americans come together to ensure our loved ones are comfortable and safe. Whether caring for a parent, relative, or child, our Nation's caregivers selflessly devote their time and energy to the well-being of those they look after. During National Family Caregivers Month, we honor the individuals providing essential services to family members who could not otherwise look after themselves.



Caregiver support is at the heart of my Administration's commitment to assisting our Nation's families. Currently, a variety of programs and services offer help and encouragement to family caregivers. The National Family Caregiver Support Program and the Lifespan Respite Care Act include important resources for caregivers of children and adults, with opportunities to receive much-needed assistance and take part in support programs with other families. These programs allow individuals to remain with their families for as long as possible while helping to ensure the wellness of participating care providers.

My Administration's dedication to caregivers is also embodied in our efforts to develop policies to support workers trying to manage their responsibilities on the job and at home. Families are best able to care for their loved ones when they can take time away from work without fear of losing their job or their income. We all have roles to play, including employers, by providing paid leave, flexible work arrangements, and other programs when feasible, to help ensure that caregivers are able to successfully meet their work and household responsibilities.

Every day, family caregivers assist loved ones with tasks ranging from personal care and homemaking, to transportation and financial assistance. As the foundation of America's long-term care system, these individuals give millions of Americans the peace of mind and security that only family can provide.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 2009 as National Family Caregivers Month. I encourage all Americans to pay tribute and support those who are caring for their family members, friends, and neighbors in need of assistance.

*National Family Caregivers Month is organized annually by the [National Family Caregivers Association](#) as a time each year to thank, support, educate and empower family caregivers.*

