WASHINGTON/AUGUSTA — Medicare beneficiaries began acquiring a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card on May 3. Use of the cards began on June 1.

This is a temporary plan until other Medicare drug benefits, which will provide broader drug coverage, start in 2006.

The federal government projects that 7.3 million of Medicare’s 41 million participants will sign up for this new, optional drug discount card. However, users of the MaineCare (Medicaid) drug benefits are not eligible for the Medicare card.

There are a number of discount cards from which to choose (25-plus in Maine). The Medicare-approved drug discount cards will provide discounts on prescription drugs between 10 and 15 percent off of the retail price of drugs covered by the card. The card must be presented at the pharmacy. The cost of the card will be no more than $30 per year.

Low income could mean credit
Low cost drug program members (DEL) should contact Maine’s Bureau of Elder and Adult Services for more information. Those with low income may receive a $600 credit on the card in 2004 and 2005 and may not have to pay $30 to get a card. Applications for the credit can only be made during the 2004-2005 year.

Go to www.medicare.gov for up-to-date information about the Medicare-approved drug discount cards. Medicare also has a new Prescription Drug and Other Assistance Programs (PDAP) page. This page has been created to help users make informed choices about the Medicare-approved drug discount card. By entering the names of the drugs taken, the tool will recommend a card.
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Congratulations to Alpha One and One in Five for paving the way.

Thomas C. Newman, Esq., and Murray Plumb & Murray applaud Alpha One’s efforts to open the doors of opportunity for all people with disabilities. We are proud to serve as Alpha One’s legal counsel since 1980.
A not so silly season

One pundit started calling the annual election process in our country “the silly season” because of the claims and counterclaims made by candidates and parties during this time of the year. The fall election is rapidly approaching — but it is far from a silly season — it is deadly serious.

Decisions impact lives

For many citizens with a disability, the decisions made by elected officials — in Augusta and in Washington — have a direct influence on lives and independence. Policy decisions, budget priorities and personnel appointments can and do have a direct impact on the lives of individuals with a disability. The discussions surrounding these decisions seem to be distant policy debates in the halls of the Maine Legislature or Congress — but they are life or death matters for people with a disability whose independence is threatened by changes in policy.

Two years ago, One in Five featured an article on Maine’s gubernatorial candidates — giving each an opportunity to respond to three questions about disability policy. When asked, “... what state legislation will you propose to strengthen and restore the rights of individuals with disabilities?” then candidate John Baldacci responded, “... I believe it is even more important for the state to focus on legislation that will help the disability community.”

Unfortunately, Governor Baldacci’s actions in the last legislative session did not square with his rhetoric during the campaign. Virgin of legislative session did not square with his rhetoric during the campaign. The Governor proposed a cut to consumer directed services of over $4 million. These services have been vital to some Maine citizens with a disability for decades.

For twenty-five years — through three different eight-year long administrations, one Democrat, one Republican, and one Independent — these consumer directed programs grew steadily and incrementally, until now. As a result, many Maine consumers of these programs will be facing difficult choices — some of which involve losing independence and the ability to live in the community.

While it is easy to point the finger at one person — Governor Baldacci — the issue really goes much deeper. These decisions, proposed by the Governor, were accepted by the legislature. Consumers worked tirelessly contacting legislators, trying to educate them about the impacts of the budget changes. Unfortunately, some of these voices were lost in the confusion that surrounds any legislative session. Competing budget priorities, a variety of tax reform proposals and a deepening budget crisis all contributed to these efforts falling short in their ability to restore budget cuts and program changes.

Term limits mean continual education

One less obvious contributing factor here is legislative term limits. For many years, Alpha One’s programs enjoyed strong support from a number of veteran legislators who worked with consumers in their districts to develop, refine and strengthen these programs. Now most of those legislators are gone — having been term-limited. Newly elected legislators are overwhelmed by prominent issues such as increasing aid for education, property tax relief, budget crises, and emerging initiatives like the Dirigo Health program. Programs like consumer directed personal assistance that impact fewer citizens and are somewhat more complicated are too easily lost in the shuffle.

Time to educate

People concerned about independent living must not allow these issues to be sidetracked. The time to educate policy makers is not in the middle of the legislative session when attention is pulled in many directions at once but during this campaign season. Now is the time to engage legislators — educate them on disability and independent living issues, develop support for vital initiatives, and support their election if they are on board with the agenda.

During this “not so silly season,” it is important for those of us committed to independent living and consumer direction to take the fight forward. We need to sharpen our message, attend candidate forums, inform candidates about independent living and disability issues, ask for support on legislative initiatives before the session begins, vote in the general election, and hold the candidates accountable once they are elected.

This is not a job for someone else. This is a job for each of us, as citizens. We must participate in the process to make this happen; we cannot expect someone else to do it for us. That is the essence of our independence.

The summer and fall will be a busy time for us as we move this agenda forward, together. Get involved. Make your voice heard — vote. Together, we will continue to promote independence.

On a personal note: We all know that living with disability means coping with health ups and downs. I have recently been on that ride. I want to thank family and friends, especially my mother, sister, and children for their support, as well as the encouragement of all my friends and colleagues at Alpha One. I look forward to returning to my active role at Alpha One after Labor Day.

— Steven Tremblay
News

Prescription card from page 1

pare monthly costs of different plans. Cost comparisons can be conducted for one to 25 drugs, with prices available for various dosages. Cards can also be compared by limiting the choice of participating pharmacies within a certain distance from one’s home.

The Maine State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) will help Maine residents sign up for a card. Call SHIP at Area Agency on Aging 877-353-3771, Legal Services for the Elderly 800-750-3353, or Bureau of Elder and Adult Services 800-262-2232.

CMS monitors prices

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) announced that it will conduct weekly updates on the covered drugs and drug prices provided by the card sponsors to ensure there is no “bait and switch.” CMS will monitor changes in overall drug prices and identify programs that stray from the expected changes in the prices the card sponsors themselves pay, which are based on the average wholesale prices. If drug prices do change, card sponsors are expected to notify CMS of these changes.

CMS announced that Medicare does not allow legitimate drug cards to be marketed through unsolicited calls or unsolicited visits to homes. Also, Medicare-approved companies are required to display a special logo that states “Medicare X Approved” on all materials. (See photo at right.)

Beware of fraud

CMS cautions: never share personal information such as bank account numbers, social security number, health insurance card number (or Medicare number) with any individual who calls or comes to the door claiming to sell any Medicare related product. Those suspecting they are victims of fraud should call 800-MEDICARE, the Fraud Hotline of the HHS Office of the Inspector General at 800-447-8477, or their local police department.

More information on the Medicare drug discount card can be found by calling 800-MEDICARE. Information is also available by visiting www.medicare.gov or www.maine.gov/dhs/beas.

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DHS-BDS Merger from page 1

the Mentally Ill (NAMI) in Maine, said, “I’m not sure how they intend to involve consumers but any system change will need a lot of consumer involvement. If not provided for, then it will be very short sighted.”

The budgeting process will be another flashpoint that citizens should keep an eye out for, Sweet added. Finances are one of the reasons for the merger. Although a rational payment and budgeting system would be great, it will come at a time of budget cuts and this will make the process more difficult, she said.

Both Sweet and Carothers expect the leadership behind the process to be key. “Who Nicholas hires around him and who the people are who offer input and are willing to step up and serve will be important,” Sweet said. Carothers concurs, much will depend on the leadership, “It’s not how the department is structured but how leadership leads and with what vision,” she concluded.
Beach lovers will find new access at OOB

OLD ORCHARD BEACH — New ramp access to a stretch of seashore at Old Orchard Beach (OOB) may be a boon to summer tourists and visitors there.

Completed in June, two ramps connecting paved pedestrian ways, across the dune grasses, to the open sand are currently available for use. Additionally, the two ramps are connected to each other and to the wet sand via a non-permanent decking material. Correct Building Products of Biddeford donated the materials.

Recognizing the need for ramp access to its beaches, OOB set out about two years ago to identify a location where it would be relatively simple to build low-cost access with nearby accessible parking. The town center fit the bill.

New ramps to Old Orchard beach

OOB Town Councillor Joe Kline hopes that those in wheelchairs will take advantage of the town's center streets and the beach by utilizing the ramps and the adjacent newly designated accessible parking along the Staple Street Extension.

Eventually, Kline said, there will be five ramps — each with decking to the wet sand and/or to the side, where one can sit and enjoy the surroundings. The other three ramps, said Kline, will take more time due to grading requirements and will be located at other points in town.

Decking to wet sand

The ramp project’s goal, Kline explained, is that someone with developed upper body strength and wide wheels on their chair can leave the decking surface, rolling onto the wet sand then move about freely, enjoying more of the town’s seven miles of beaches.

An early June experience indicates that using an Invacare A4 Titanium frame chair in the wet sand is not advisable. In this limited case, the wet sand did not provide a firm enough surface to support the wheels.

Can’t fight Mother Nature

Kline said the decking extends from the ramps all the way to the wet, hard sand. Unfortunately, Mother Nature and man sometimes thwart the best of intentions. The decking must be temporarily removed for beach cleaning and it’s possible for one’s visit to coincide with this — as was the case during One in Five’s visit.

More difficult to accommodate is the fact that the ocean itself is constantly changing the contours of the beach. Some days the beach slopes sharply to the water’s edge and on others it’s as flat as a Midwestern prairie, Kline said.

For those who are comfortable transferring from chair to the ground and back, there is an expanse of decking immediately on the waterside of the dune grass. Roll to a spot, spread a blanket on the sand, drop down and enjoy.

Parking limited

The parking along Staple Street Extension immediately next to the two ramps is dedicated to accessible parking — there are about half a dozen spots. However, be prepared to look elsewhere. The spots are not metered so there’s no forced turnover. On a quiet Tuesday afternoon in early June, all of the spots were occupied.

Directly across West Grand Street from there (about a block from the ramps) is Tom’s Garage, which charged $5 per day in June. If there’s room, they’ll direct you to a spot that ensures easy lift operation.

About five away, at the Veterans’ Memorial Park parking lot, there are a few accessible spots. Kline said the lot is being rehabbed, which will result in more added.

There are also four accessible spots at the Downeaster train stop across the street from Memorial Park (see the Summer 2003 issue of OIF for accessibility of the Downeaster). Although these two locations are about five blocks from the ramps, the route, through town center, is paved (often with bricks) and there are curb cuts.

Old Orchard Beach’s Staple Street Extension, just off the town center, is dedicated to accessible parking with about six spaces.

At the end of Staple St. Ext. is a boardwalk-type ramp connecting the pavement to a decking surface that extends across the dry sand.

The decking is intended to extend across the dry sand to the wet sand; however, when One in Five visited, some of the decking had been removed for beach cleaning.

The ocean constantly changes the contour of the beach — some days there is a steep decline to the water’s edge.

Although some wheelchairs may be able to manage the wet sand, this Invacare A4 with small front wheels could not make it.
Struggling in that exotic place “just north of the neck”

By Karen Farber


Blindsided is a surprisingly affecting book. Brief but engrossing, it is a memoir of Richard M. Cohen, a former television producer, who is the husband of “The View’s” Meredith Vieira. This story of career, multiple sclerosis (MS), colon cancer, family and life is, in Cohen’s words, a chronicling of “struggles in that exotic place just north of the neck.”

The memoir follows Cohen to places that are neither heroic nor horrific. The pedestrian nature of Cohen’s tale is its allure. This is not a book about conquering; rather, it is about ignoring, avoiding, and sometimes coping.

Close calls in Beirut

Ignoring his worsening vision impairment (a common symptom of MS), Cohen spent much of 1982 in Beirut. While there, surviving until the next day was of greater import than contemplating his next MS symptom. Cohen’s numerous close calls culminated when a weakened right leg forced his fall at a United Nations checkpoint. The result — “automatic weapons of various manufacture and in various hands pointed my way. The incident prompted the first thought that the time had come for me to quit while I was ahead.”

Taking the reins

For Cohen, coping is a constant goal that he achieves some days and on others, well, he fails. One aspect of coping is taking control. “I got weary of wishing so desperately for something else...I am beginning to shed passivity and taking a more active role in my health. I even chose a new doctor who I knew would force me into a more active role.”

The self-satisfaction Cohen feels upon taking control of a medical situation during the second round of colon cancer is palpable. “Frustration finally drove me to a plan. I would take matters into my own hands. I persuaded the gastroenterologist, the colonoscopy king, to sedate me, dilate my rectum, and I would take it from there. I obtained the proper instruments from a medical supply house and learned to do the deed myself. The rectum would be fully dilated. Every day, for many months, I would arise at 4:45 a.m. and do what had to be done...and control of my body was mine once more. A powerful lesson had not been lost in the predawn darkness. The plan had been mine. I had pushed the guys in green out of the driver's seat and seized control of the car.”

Ring of truth

There are less victorious moments and Cohen is not above showing his warts. His wife and children wear the scars of the “epic battles” Cohen fights with fear, self-doubt, and anger.

The episodes of family life ring true. Describing his collapse on a hometown street, Cohen writes: “When I fall in a public place in their (his children) presence, with the added embarrassment of strangers present and eager to assist, my sickness is no longer the private issue of the family attempting to cope. The hurt in the faces of the children is clear and cannot be ignored or repainted by wishful thinking that life is fine.”

Like all parents, Cohen is sometimes wounded by his children: “Humiliation is sitting with a child who calls out to Mom in the next room for the answer to a question I could have provided easily.”

Blindsided is an immensely personal tale, not a self-help book or inspirational literature. Are there universal lessons to be learned here? Probably not, but there is something comforting knowing that there’s a guy out there trying to cope.

Cohen produces a monthly Webcast with the New York City Chapter of the National Society of MS featuring MS specialists and researchers discussing the latest topics in the field of MS.

My MS Dream

By Lennart Rost

In my dream I am still back there, I can ski in the woods, across the lakes, Race down the steepest slope without care
In my dream the winter is fun, it always was
I can see it now, there are no slush or ice to fear
In my dream, I’m back in Norway and things are still the same. Suddenly, I have no dragging feet and no cane. In the summer I wear shorts, I can go swimming, I wear no embarrassing brace, I run, always winning, I can get dressed in a hurry, tie my shoes, even do my tie.
I feel so light and fit. In my dream I bet I could fly.
In my dream I can run in from the rain, Do it fast, no staggering and without a cane.
In my dream I am always running everywhere
Because only in my dream can I forget about a chair.
In my dream both legs are working, Only in my dream, can I accept that life isn’t fair.

North country peer support group gets started

By Karen Crouser

North Country Challenge (NCC) is a new Aroostook County-based peer-support group meeting in the Presque Isle area.

Different than other peer support groups, NCC members decide the group’s direction and activities. In May, Steve Clark from Acadia Medical spoke to the group and in June, a representative from the state’s Long Term Care Ombudsman Program spoke.

While the idea of a “peer support group” can produce the negative connotation of a place where people gather to complain, NCC members want to do just the opposite. This is a group for people with disabilities who can learn from each other, share common experiences, and give each other insight and support based on their own experiences.

To facilitate ongoing meetings and events, the group is hoping to identify donors for items such as paper products and drinks, fishing supplies for an August outing, a location for athletic activities such as wheelchair basketball, and someone who can assist in setting up a Web site. As the group grows, it hopes to give back to the surrounding community.

North Country Challenge has a summer picnic scheduled for noon on Thursday, July 22, at Mantle Lake in Presque Isle. For more information, contact Karen Crouser at 800-300-6016 (message/TTY) or oranges428@yahoo.com.

Those interested in starting a group in their area can contact Alpha One’s Bangor office at 800-300-6016 (V/TTY) or Alpha One’s Portland office at 800-640-7200 (V/TTY); in Aroostook County, call 800-974-6466 (V/TTY).
There is no excuse not to vote

AUGUSTA — November seems far away but Tuesday, Nov. 2, will come quickly. That day, Maine voters will find state legislative, U.S. congressional, and presidential candidates on the ballot, as well as a property tax related referendum.

Maine’s four electoral votes could sway a presidential election. Unfortunately, many individuals of voting age neglect to vote — particularly those with disabilities.

According to the American Association of Persons with Disabilities (AAPD), based on the 1997 census, there were 217,650 voting age people with disabilities in Maine, which is 22.3 percent of Maine’s entire voting age population. Yet, only about 53 percent, 117,07, of those individuals actually voted in 2000. That means, 100,534 Mainers with disabilities who were eligible to vote did not.

Nowadays, there are few excuses for not voting.

No transportation?
Absentee ballots can be used and it’s all done by mail. Contact your local town clerk or www.alphaoonenow.com for information.

Difficulty voting?
Voters may bring along help. In Maine, the individual helping you vote need not be a voter nor do they need to be old enough to vote.

No access?
According to state law, all polling places, whether located in public or private buildings, are to be accessible. If a voter finds that their polling place is not accessible, Tom Fields of the Disability Rights Center said the first step is to contact the local municipal election official who is often the town clerk. Explain the problem. Fields said, the resolution could be as simple as relocating something out of a door’s way.

If the town is not helpful, Fields suggests contacting the Secretary of State’s office, the Disability Rights Center, or the municipality’s board of selectman or town manager.

Deputy Secretary of State Julie Flynn said, “If individuals are aware of problems (at their polling place), they can let us (the Bureau of Corporations, Elections, and Commissions) know but I encourage them to let their town know as well.”

State looks at access
According to Flynn, this summer, student interns armed with Department of Justice polling place access surveys, cameras, and wheelchairs, will be visiting all of Maine’s polling places to “at least identify where the problems are.” The students’ efforts are funded through a $100,000 Election Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Program grant. Unfortunately, the money will probably not be enough to fix all the problems but Flynn hopes to get as much corrected by November as possible. Next year, the state plans to apply for another grant to help fund access improvements.

Driving to Success

Alpha One’s driver evaluation program

Transportation is key to independence. Alpha One’s driver evaluation service, the only program of its kind in Maine, is for consumers who have driven before becoming disabled or who may have never driven. Alpha One’s Driving Specialists are licensed instructors assisting consumers with mobility impairments, developmental disabilities, brain injury, hearing impairments, age-related functional changes, and other disabilities.

Alpha One provides an assessment of a consumer’s visual, cognitive, and functional skills. Consumers have the opportunity to drive a vehicle that has gas-brake hand controls, a spinner knob, or a left-footed gas pedal. Each evaluation takes about three hours; staff write a report for the consumer, including research into adaptive equipment. Alpha One also shares evaluation results with the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

For more information call 207-767-2189 or visit www.alphaoonenow.com
Math + science + engineering + disability

A potent equation

By Karen Farber

History offers numerous examples of inventors, mathematicians, engineers, and scientists with disabilities. Some of the more famous are Alexander Graham Bell, who had a learning disability; Thomas Edison, who had an audio impairment and had a learning disability; Albert Einstein, who had Asperger’s Syndrome, and Leonardo Da Vinci who is believed to have been dyslexic.

You need the correct image to display the illustrations.

There are many others whose contributions were and are significant, though their names may be unfamiliar:

- **Sir John Warcup Cornforth** received the Nobel Prize for work on the molecular structure of cholesterol — Deaf;
- **Gustaf Anders Ekeberg** discovered the element tantalum — audio and visual impairments;
- **Pierre Jules Janssen** discovered helium through spectroscopy — unable to walk;
- **James Joule** was a physicist (Joule’s Law) — spinal injury;
- **Johannes Kepler** was noted for three laws of planetary motion — unable to use hands, vision impairment;
- **Louis Pasteur** studied anthrax and vaccination for rabies — paralysis;
- **Joseph Priestley** discovered oxygen — speech impediment;
- **Pythagoras** is known for the Pythagorean theorem — epilepsy;
- **Charles Steinmetz** was an electrical engineer with 200 plus patents — scoliosis;
- **James Sumner** received the Nobel Prize for research in enzyme chemistry — amputee;
- **Tartaglia** was a 16th century mathematician — speech impediment;
- **August Weismann** was a biologist known for theories of evolution — blind; and
- **William Hyde Wollaston** discovered palladium and rhodium — partial blindness.

Although on the rise since 1989, the number of U.S. students with disabilities who receive science and engineering doctorates continues to be small. According to the National Science Foundation (NSF), in 2000, of the 25,462 doctoral candidates in science or engineering in the U.S., only 316 reported having a disability — just over one percent. The majority of these — 281 out of 20,132 — were in the science disciplines and only 35 of 5,330 were in the engineering disciplines.

Less than six percent have disabilities

In 1997, 5.5 percent of those employed in science and engineering positions (with at least a bachelor’s degree) had a disability. According to the NSF report, “Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 1998,” median salaries of scientists and engineers with disabilities do not differ substantially from the median salaries for those without disabilities. Among all scientists and engineers, the median salary, in 1998, for those with disabilities was $51,000 and for those without disabilities it was $50,000.

There are a number of programs designed to encourage students with disabilities to pursue interests in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Many are promoted and sponsored by the NSF (www.nsf.gov) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) (www.aaas.org).

One, known as EAST (Eastern Alliance in Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematics), based at University of Southern Maine, is a five-year grant funded by the NSF that includes the award of Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURFs) to support increased participation of students with disabilities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Students who do not have disabilities but whose research supports increased participation of students with disabilities in these fields, technology, engineering, and mathematics are eligible as well.

Recently, four New England college students received these SURF stipends to support their work this summer.

Making JAVA products accessible

Two students from University of Massachusetts, Boston, Alexander Fairley and Gustavo Lima, are working to develop an introductory computer science course that is accessible to the visually impaired.

Fairley explained: “Our project is essentially to design a series of programming assignments that teach how to make your Java product accessible to the visually impaired. We think that this sort of training should be done early in a programmer’s education because it forces the programmer to think about user interface in terms of multiple modes of access. This is good not only for accessibility but a variety of other needs like using a computer while you drive, cooking breakfast, or any other situation which requires that your visual attention be somewhere other than on a computer screen.”

The end result of the project, explained Lima, will be a set of homework assignments consisting of computer programs that will be accessible to blind students. ‘Using assistive technology such as a screen reader, the students will be able to ‘see’, what the program does. These programs usually display graphics, which for obvious reasons present a hurdle for those who are blind. Computer science professors who have blind students in their classrooms or who want to teach an introduction to accessible programming could freely use this collection of assignments.’

‘Accessible means that those with disabilities are able to operate certain objects and manipulate them in the same way, with the same level of difficulty, as others would,’” Lima added.

Environmentalism inspires

Drawn to environmentalism and math and science, University of New Hampshire sopho-
Vasiliou is testing. However, use of the microwave oven can gel drying, requiring six to eight weeks of baking. The sol-gel process, it is possible to fabricate ceramic or glass materials in a wide variety of forms. By nature, I am a very stubborn person and my hearing impairment has made me a very determined person, never taking ‘no’ for an answer. This type of perseverance helps in the field of engineering when answers are not always in special ed — in the resource room,“ she explained. The shift from a large, urban middle school to an all girls’ parochial high school helped Vasiliou make the shift from resource room to mainstream classroom. “The structure was good for me — it was rigid and I didn't get special attention, which I didn't want anymore.” Vasiliou began high school in the lowest level classes and had to do some catching up and, by just about any standards, she has.

Vasiliou’s learning disabilities mean she does not write well or easily and she is unable to perform long division but she’s learned how to adapt and make adjustments — she writes her lab reports multiple times and she repeatedly double-checks her work.

This summer, in addition to her SURF project, Vasiliou will be teaching chemistry to high school students in South Africa. Her work thus far on the sol-gel project has convinced her that graduate school is on the horizon.

Use disabilities
Vasiliou’s advice to others with learning disabilities: “Everyone has their niche. You need a support system and you need to find your area. My learning disabilities helped me be great at science — I see things from different angles, which is very powerful. Just because you can’t write doesn’t mean you don’t understand the literature. Find out what works for you. My learning disabilities made me meticulous — it’s a gift — use it and shape it.” — AnGayle Vasiliou

“I didn’t think I could be a scientist...from preschool through middle school I was always in special ed.” — AnGayle Vasiliou

Teachers surprised
AnGayle Vasiliou’s middle school teachers would probably be surprised to see her now. Having completed her sophomore year at Wheaton College, in Norton, Mass. Vasiliou is spending her summer testing the use of a microwave oven for speed drying in the sol-gel process.

The sol-gel process is a versatile solution process used in the making of ceramic and glass materials. In general, the sol-gel process involves the transition of a system from a liquid “sol” into a solid “gel” phase. Applying the sol-gel process, it is possible to fabricate ceramic or glass materials in a wide variety of forms.

Typically, a standard oven is used in the sol-gel drying, requiring six to eight weeks of baking. However, use of the microwave oven can reduce the time to 30 minutes. Vasiliou is testing varying techniques and factors in the use of microwave ovens.

Vasiliou always liked the biological sciences but “didn’t think she could be a scientist.” “From preschool through middle school, I was always in special ed — in the resource room,” she explained. The shift from a large, urban middle school to an all girls’ parochial high school helped Vasiliou make the shift from resource room to mainstream classroom. "The structure was good for me — it was rigid and I didn't get special attention, which I didn't want anymore." Vasiliou began high school in the lowest level classes and had to do some catching up and, by just about any standards, she has.

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EAST provides workshops on STEM instruction for educators, offers seed grants for innovative STEM activities at all educational levels, provides Web resources, makes available peer tutors, and is developing mentoring opportunities with working scientists throughout New England.

The alliance is expected to impact over 100,000 students with disabilities throughout northern New England and Massachusetts. EAST’s founding partners include: The University of Southern Maine, The Spurwink Institute, Springfield Technical Community College, Plymouth State University, The Vermont Institutes, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
Cultural Arts

Silver screen Deaf stories often ironic

By Matt Peterson

With over 40 international films from Deaf writers, directors, producers, and actors, May’s second annual Maine Deaf Film Festival presented a silver screen extravaganza touching upon thematic, and often comic, issues central to Deaf Culture. A major event for the Deaf community, this cross-cultural melding of sonic and non-sonic spheres of communication brought together, under one roof, both Deaf and hearing community members alike. While many of the films were oblique, and sometimes borderline impossible for a hearing person to access, others presented a unique, entertaining take on the world as assimilated through silence.

As festival co-founder Roxanne Baker explained: “Since our primary expressive medium is language, which for the Deaf is distinctly visual and temporal, the Deaf approach to visual media, film, art, or storytelling in general is immediate and natural. Also, the Deaf point of view tends to give ironic and thought-provoking twists to ordinary experiences.”

Responding to stereotypes

A festival organizer, David Crespo, commented that the festival has helped him address stereotypes associated with deafness, “I often get interesting questions when I tell people I am working on this project — Won’t this just be a bunch of silent films? How will we follow and understand? Will there be music? Will there be interpreters during the movies? Isn’t American Sign Language a universal language?” “Telling people about the festival gives me a chance to address questions like these. The worst misconception out there is that deafness is perceived as a handicap. These films are here to show that nothing could be further from the truth,” he added.

Abstract and artful in concepts, the focus of many of the films naturally originate from a Deaf person’s perspective. Humorous compositions such as Robert Hoskin’s One Way Street, a Japanese short, telling the story of a fun-loving Deaf man who meets a pretty girl after finding her telephone card, were juxtaposed with the festival’s featured film, Golden Rays, a story set in Nepal illustrating that humanity does not come from speech but from the heart.

The film festival is a project of the University of Southern Maine’s (USM) Linguistics Department and the American Sign Language Club of Maine. The integrated efforts of Deaf and hearing volunteers, drawn from the USM faculty and students and from among friends of the Deaf community, insure the continued success of the festival. For more information, visit http://deaffilmfest.tripod.com.

Summer Sports Challenge kicks off

NEWRY — This year’s sixth annual Summer Sports Challenge (formerly the Casco Bay Challenge) is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 14 at Range Pond’s State Park in Poland.

During the Challenge, teams of up to six people compete in a five-sport relay race — a one-mile swim, a 20-mile bike ride, four miles of canoeing, a five-mile run, and five miles of kayaking. Team categories are: all men, all women, mixed (at least one man and one woman on the team), masters with all team members 40 years or older, Iron Man, Iron Woman, team support, family, and team ability (at least one member on the team has a disability).

For more information, call 800-659-7770 or visit www.skimhs.org/SummerSports.shtml. The last day for registration is August 6.
WATERVILLE — Asked whether this past year’s battle to keep traumatic brain injury rehabilitation dollars in the supplemental budget was a surprise, Nancy Findland, executive director of Maine’s Brain Injury Association (MBIA) said, “Oh gosh, yes.”

Last March, Gov. Baldacci proposed to eliminate $16 million allocated to brain injury rehab under MaineCare. Findland mused that since the allocation was the largest single non-mandated item in MaineCare, it was targeted.

In the end, after a lot of grassroots lobbying and supporters overwhelming a legislative hearing, about 80 percent of the $16 million was reinstated and ultimately approved. “It proves the power of people,” Findland said.

15 percent increase

Findland estimated 700 Mainers received traumatic brain injury (TBI) related rehab services under MaineCare last year — she estimated that figure will grow to 800 next year. These figures are only a small percentage of the 2,500 to 4,000 individuals in the U.S. annually. The second reason is publicity — increased awareness of rehab services increases its usage, Findland said.

Coupled with the reduction in the MaineCare TBI rehab dollars, consumers can expect a revision of the service delivery model. The new program, which comes into effect this month, will include case management and a movement toward greater community integration. Previously, only those with dual diagnoses received case management.

“Our goal, along with the providers, will be to look to exiting people to the community where the natural supports require less money and are more normalized. But, it’s going to take time,” Findland said. She admitted that there have been complaints in the past that providers perpetuate dependency.

TBI education

Traditionally, the primary thrust of MBIA has been education — education of families and educational and medical professionals. “Too often, people compare traumatic brain injury to having a developmental disability...” — Nancy Findland, executive director of the Brain Injury Association of Maine

A blow or jolt to the head can result in a traumatic brain injury (TBI), which can disrupt the normal function of the brain. Doctors often call this type of brain injury a concussion or a closed head injury. The severity of the injury may range from mild, a brief change in mental status or consciousness, to severe, an extended period of unconsciousness (30 minutes or more), prolonged amnesia after the injury, or a penetrating skull injury. Any TBI can result in short-and long-term disabilities.

“This too often, people compare traumatic brain injury to having a developmental disability but it’s a very different treatment model. We advocate that the treatment be based on an individual’s needs and the category of injury.”

This does not mean the MBIA will be resting on its laurels following restoration of much of the Maine Care rehab dollars. “We’re now trying to capitalize on the momentum built this past year,” Findland said.

For more information contact the Brain Injury Association of Maine — in-state toll-free at 800-275-1253 or 207-861-9900. Or visit the Web site at www.biame.org.

Brain injury group to capitalize on budget win

The reasons for the projected growth in the numbers MaineCare serves are two-fold. First, each year new people sustain a TBI, approximately 1.5 million individuals in the U.S. annually. The second reason is publicity — increased awareness of rehab services increases its usage, Findland said.

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Too often, people compare traumatic brain injury to having a developmental disability...

— Nancy Findland, executive director of the Brain Injury Association of Maine

Maine’s Brain Injury Association estimates the number is between 2,500 and 4,000. Brain injury incidence tops breast cancer

At 1.5 million a year, the annual incidence of traumatic brain injuries in the U.S. far surpasses that of:

- breast cancer (176,300)
- HIV/AIDS (45,681)
- spinal cord injuries (11,000), and
- multiple sclerosis (10,400).

According to the Brain Injury Association of America, 50,000 people will die annually of TBI and 80,000 people annually will experience the onset of a long-term disability following a TBI. With no registry tracking how many sustain TBIs in Maine, it’s difficult to estimate how many people are affected. Maine’s Brain Injury Association estimates the number is between 2,500 and 4,000.

Two percent of the U.S. population, or 5.3 million, live with disabilities stemming from a TBI. According to a 2000 Interagency Head Injury Task Force report from the National Institute of Neuro-Disorder and Stroke, 51 percent of TBIs stem from motor vehicle accidents, 21 percent from falls, 12 percent from assault and other violent acts, and 10 percent from sports and recreation. Roughly two-thirds of those who sustain TBIs are under the age of 20.

Twenty-five years ago, most of those individuals who sustained TBIs died. However, improvements in trauma services mean that today, two-thirds live a normal life span.

Source: Brain Injury Association of America. www.biausa.org
Bridge observatory aims to break new ground in accessibility

By Chip Getchell, PE

It began as a challenge — how to replace the aging Waldo-Hancock Bridge on Rte. 1 south of Bucksport in an unheard-of 18-month time period.

Last summer, corrosion in the bridge’s main cables was unexpectedly discovered during renovations. The corrosion proved too severe to repair. The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) immediately banned heavy truck traffic from the bridge and embarked on a fast-track rehabilitation effort designed to shift half the weight of the bridge onto new cables, providing a temporary fix.

This new strengthening process worked, putting an almost full load of trucks back on the bridge last fall. Meanwhile, the MDOT and the local community endorsed an innovative idea for a new bridge.

Modern bridges of this length are typically a cable-stay design, similar to the new Bunker Hill Bridge in Boston. The community initially felt this modern look to be inappropriate for the new Fort Knox. To make the look of the new bridge fit its surroundings, the pylons were designed as obelisks, similar to the Washington Monument. And, like the Washington Monument, MDOT reasoned, why not put a fully glassed-in observatory at the top, creating not only a simple, stunningly elegant bridge, but adding a new visitor attraction to the Fort Knox area?

Research has revealed that the only other bridge in the world that allows public access to the top of a pylon is in Bangkok, Thailand. While there was some skepticism in the community from people who didn’t see the benefit of a 420-foot view of the surrounding towns, hills and river, the majority became excited, believing it would be an economic boost for the area.

Since then, plans for the observatory have gone into high gear, taking into consideration critical needs such as accessibility, parking, staffing, even how to keep the outside of the windows clean at 420 feet. Providing a readily accessible and usable attraction is one of the critical goals listed in the MDOT plan for this bridge.

The observatory will be visited through the entrance to Fort Knox on Rte. 174 in Prospect. Cars can park in a new lot that will be adjacent to the pylon entrance. An accessible pathway will lead to a broad plaza offering spectacular views down the river. The observatory will be accessed via a granite gateway into the pylon, where an elevator will bring visitors up to the viewing atrium.

Critical to the attraction and function of the space will be the ability for everyone to experience a 360-degree panoramic view from the 26 by 14 foot observation deck at the new Waldo-Hancock Bridge observatory. The MDOT continues to examine a variety of access alternatives.

The observatory will also include a series of interpretive panels explaining the history of the Fort, the engineering of the bridge, and the topography of the surrounding countryside. Each panel will be accessible to those with visual impairments.

The bridge and observatory are scheduled to be open to the public in late 2006.

Chip Getchell is project manager for the Waldo-Hancock Bridge observatory and is with the Maine Department of Transportation.
T he new Waldo-Hancock Bridge, currently under construction, will carry U.S. Route 1 traffic across the Penobscot River between Prospect and Verona Island. This cable-stayed bridge will be impressive in appearance and will replace an equally beautiful suspension bridge built in 1932. During its efforts to sell the bridge project to Maine citizenry, the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) developed the notion of the observation deck as part of the bridge design. The new bridge is to include an observation deck atop its westerly tower. This will provide impressive views of the beautiful Maine coast, mountains and sea. Directly adjacent to the Fort Knox State Historic Site, this project has potential to be an impressive addition to the coastal Maine scenery and local tourism.

Visitors to the new bridge will reach the observation deck via an elevator — well, almost. The MDOT claims that if the elevator goes to the top, the 360-degree view from the deck will be obstructed. Therefore, the plans call for the elevator to stop two levels below the deck requiring visitors to climb stairs to the top. Or, if you are unable to climb the stairs, then you will get on a wheelchair lift to traverse the final 20 vertical feet. At face value, this may seem reasonable. After all, everyone gets there, don’t they? Some may wonder whether there is an observation area at the “almost to the top” level. There is, although the views are about half that of the full observation deck. If one believes that the view from the top is the premium view (MDOT has placed that value on it), then it would be discriminatory to relegate the “non stair climbers” to the lower, inferior view. However, the true problem here is that MDOT is seeking to circumvent a federal law to accommodate without discrimination because of race, color, sex, physical or mental handicap, religion, ancestry or national origin is recognized as and declared to be a civil right

In the case of the Waldo-Hancock Bridge, MDOT is arguing hardship to justify this unprecedented exemption. The supposed hardship arises because the rights of all observation deck visitors will be compromised by the rights of a few if an elevator goes to the top obliterating a full 360-degree view.

This level of thinking by a public agency is insulting and shameful. It is a “back door” approach not able to climb the stairs. Furthermore, the ADA does not allow for any such consideration. As outlined above, the only compliant solution for this very public project is one that provides an elevator to all the way to the top. In the end, we have a morally and ethically bankrupt attempt by our State to not comply with a Federal law — a law enacted in 1992 to protect the civil rights of those who face a multitude of challenges in everyday life and one that demands a design solution assigning the highest priority to full and equal access.

To grant the state an exemption would set a dangerous precedent that could have far-reaching impact on the ADA well into the future. If a view and tourism dollars are deemed more worthy than the right to equal access, then we have a very serious problem. Remember that the core issue here is equal access. The elevator can go all the way to the top. It is an elective choice by MDOT for it not to. So, let’s call upon the many federal, state and local politicians and bureaucrats “guiding” this project on our behalf to better understand equality and allow Maine to be a leader in accessibility. Maybe the fog is obscuring the view from atop the observation deck.

John Gordon, a Bucksport resident, is a partner in the Southwest Harbor firm of Gordon Stanley Architecture. His 23-year old daughter is a C6/7 quad.
Gardening advice for those with disabilities

CHICAGO — Written by Janeen Adil, Accessible Gardening for People with Physical Disabilities offers an educational guide on how a person with a disability can design, plant, and maintain a garden. This book provides practical and expert knowledge on how to design an accessible garden or one with raised beds, containers, and vertical gardens. With the help of easy-to-follow instructions, schematic line drawings, and photographs, the reader can build a suitable garden.

Topics include organic pest control, adapting “standard-issue” tools, gardening with children with disabilities. Many of the suggestions in this book come from horticultural therapists who consulted while writing on how to design with a disability.


Engineer designs new wheelchair to be more user-friendly

LEOMINSTER, England — The HR Smith Group has come up with a wheelchair that uses bold colors and lightweight composite materials resulting in something that has a similar appeal to a Swatch, a Smart Car or a Dyson vacuum cleaner, according to a BBC report. The chair is the result of Richard Smith’s frustration with the lack of suitable wheelchairs for his daughter.

According to BBC reports, the chair, known as Chunc, is designed to ‘grow’ with the user, and will require periodical adjustments as the child develops. It folds so that it can be carried in the trunk of a family hatchback. The Chunc has been crash-tested for people weighing up to 119 pounds and has just been put on Britain’s National Health Services list of approved wheelchairs.

Local speech therapist and illustrator create children’s book

THOMASTON — Publisher Limerock Books recently released Charlie Who Couldn’t Say His Name, by Davey Fahy, with watercolor illustrations by Carol Inouye.

Charlie is the story of a five-year-old boy whose inability to pronounce his name is a source of great frustration to him. When playground bullies tease him, he bursts into tears. But then, with help at school, he learns to speak clearly.

Local speech therapist Davey Fahy said she always hoped to find a picture book about the effects of speech problems so she could share it with her students. Not finding one after an extensive search, she decided to write one. Charlie is geared to children ages four to eight and is expected to be a useful tool for teachers and speech therapists to use in discussions about speech problems, accepting differences and in teaching tolerance.

To order send $12.95 for each book plus $2.00 postage and handling (Maine residents add 5.5%) to Limerock Books, 15 Mechanic Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861. Please include your name, mailing address and phone number. The book can also be ordered at www.amazon.com.

Rights book includes disability information


The booklet’s chapters include: Being a Citizen; Living in an Age of Terrorism; College; Military; Money Matters; Special Consumer Problems; Buying and Repairing a Car; Driving Safely and Lawfully; If You Are Arrested; The Courts in Maine; and Alternative Dispute Resolution.

Updated annually, the redesigned new edition has new sections on disability rights and accommodations. The booklet is an annual project of the MSBA Community and Public Relations Committee, which welcomes suggestions from MSBA members for its improvement. (Please send your comments to John Lovell at jlovell@mainebar.org.)

Microtel sponsors Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality

ATLANTA, Ga. — Microtel Inns and Suites is a sponsor of the Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality (SATH). Microtel Inns and Suites said in a statement that it is committed to addressing the needs of all its guests, and has made great strides in accommodating travelers with disabilities.

The brand offers three ADA-room designs (single queen, double queen, and suite) and a consistency of services that will fit guests’ needs throughout its chain. As of March 31, 2004, there were 269 properties open or under construction worldwide.

“Microtel Inns and Suites is the only budget hotel chain to implement the training program known as Opening Doors system-wide. Opening Doors, developed by W.C. Duke Associates of Woodford, Va., is a value-added training tool used to enhance the chain’s customer service initiatives, so that staff is better able to respond to the needs of travelers with disabilities by practicing “attitude accessibility.” Opening Doors emphasizes disability etiquette skills training that include interactive activities and role playing using wheelchairs, blindfolds, earplugs and taped hands so employees can practice how to service customers with disabilities.

“Microtel’s Web site — at www.microtelinn.com — features a special section dedicated to travelers with disabilities. There is a direct link from the SATH home page to Microtel’s Web site and a direct link to Opening Doors and other sites. There are also ‘frequently asked questions,’ travel tips, and a virtual tour where visitors can actually view a 360-degree view of typical Microtel ADA guest rooms and a lobby.

SATH is a nonprofit educational membership organization. Its mission is to raise awareness of the needs of all travelers with disabilities, remove physical and attitudinal barriers to free access, and expand travel opportunities in the U.S. and abroad. Members include travel professionals, consumers with disabilities and other individuals and corporations. For information, visit www.sath.org.

ALLTech offers Web access services to businesses

NEW GLOUCESTER — ‘The Internet has the potential to offer the one in five people in the United States who have a disability access to information that was never before possible,’ said Libby Cohen, director of ALLTech, a division of the Spurwink Institute.

Founded at the University of Southern Maine campus in the late 1980s, today ALLTech is a nationally recognized center that provides training, assessment, consultation, resources, and technical assistance in the areas of assistive technology, specialized software, Web accessibility, and universal design in education.

The advantages of employing accessible Web design go beyond the need to make information available to people with disabilities, according to ALLTech. Web accessibility techniques benefit those working under environmental or device constraints, like not having use of a mouse, working with a black and white screen or a text-only browser that does not support JavaScript, or even those with the need to work hands- and eyes-free, when driving.

“Web accessibility is essential to the users of emerging technologies, advanced voice recognition systems, and speech synthesis software, such as PDAs and cell phones,” said Cohen, “Web accessibility also benefits persons with limited English proficiency and those at low reading levels.

An accessible Web site, ALLTech believes, is more efficient, delivering pages with greater speed that are more easily maintained, effectively indexed, and quickly found by search engines, saving both costs and design time. In addition, accessible Web sites meet corporate social responsibilities, increasing sales, customer loyalty, and employee retention.

A common accessibility technique is the use of text equivalents for images and other graphical content. When useful alternative text is incorporated into a site, people who are blind and use screen readers can access visual content. Alternative text is also indexed by search engines, making pages more searchable, is useful to those with handheld devices, is displayed when a user chooses not to download images, and can act as an additional visual cue when they are.

ALLTech works with a client’s existing Web development team to bring a site into compliance. Maintaining ongoing site compliance with accessibility standards is an equally important consideration, and ALLTech offers training and consultation services in accessibility techniques that give clients who wish to maintain their own sites the tools to do so successfully.

For more information, contact ALLTech’s Web accessibility specialist, Libby Cohen at 866-688-4573 Ext. 152; lsmith@alltech-ksi.org or visit www.alltech-ksi.org.
Local scholarships send students to school

SOUTH PORTLAND and SHAPLEIGH — Two Maine-based scholarship funds for students with disabilities — from Alpha One and Stepping Back into Life — recently announced their recipients for the academic year 2004-5. With its Powering Education scholarship, Alpha One selected three individuals to receive a $500 scholarship upon successful completion of one semester of college.

The first recipient is Zachary Beaulieu, a graduate of Cory High School in Augusta where he was the recipient of the 2004 Principal's Award. His other honors include junior MVP of New England for wheelchair basketball, 2005 Harvard Book Award, 2003 Peter Feeney Award, and Outstanding Citizen of the Year at Boy's State. Beaulieu will attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The second recipient, Stephanie Willis, will attend St. Joseph's College, Maine. A graduate of Greely High School in Cumberland, Willis was named "student of the quarter" and participated in National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Maine Walk 2003, March of Dimes Walkathon as well as being a "Many Faces" video participant for P.I.E.R. Program and a junior counselor at Camp Mechawana.

The third Powering Education recipient Larry Sawyer III, a member of the National Honor Society, will attend the University of Maine at Orono, majoring in General Engineering/Civil Engineering. Sawyer graduated from Bucksport High School where he was recognized in Who's Who Among American High School Students; American Legion Boy's State and US Achievement Academy All-American Scholarship Program.

The Shapleigh-based organization Stepping Back into Life offered two $1,000 scholarships for the first time this year. The first recipient, Shabnam Mohammadi, is a recent high school graduate from Fairfax, Va. who will attend Northern Virginia Community College to become an x-ray technician. Mohammadi escaped the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and came to the U.S. in 1999 with her mother and five siblings. Mohammadi, who has a 50 percent hearing loss, is a right leg amputee as is her mother. Her goal is to help poor people and those with disabilities.

The second recipient of the Stepping Back into Life scholarship is James Ahearn who is returning to college with the goal of earning a Bachelor's degree in business management. Ahearn is attending Seton Hill College in Greensburg, Pa.

As the result of meningitis at a young age, Ahearn has no sense of smell or hearing. He has worked as a certified payroll professional for a number of years but wishes to return to school to advance his career. His long-term goal is to start his own business and offer job opportunities to others with disabilities.

Food stamp delivery now entirely electronic

WASHINGTON — The USDA recently announced the end of the "paper era" in the Food Stamp Program since all 50 states and the U.S. territories now provide Food Stamp Program benefits with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) instead of the traditional paper coupon.

EBT is based on the same technology used in commercial debit card systems with recipients using a plastic card with a personal identification number (PIN) to purchase eligible foods at authorized stores.

Food Stamp coupons are no longer being produced or issued by states and inventories are being destroyed. However, coupons that have already been issued will continue to be honored.

Further information about the Food Stamp Program and information about providing comments on the renaming of the program can be found at www.fns.usda.gov.

Courthouse access committee established

WASHINGTON — The traditional design of courthouses and courtrooms poses access challenges for persons with disabilities. Most feature a elevated spaces such as witness stands, jury boxes, and judges' benches. The U.S. Access Board is undertaking an effort to develop information on courtroom design that addresses these and other aspects of accessibility.

The Board recently established an advisory committee tasked to advise the Board on issues related to the accessibility of courthouses and courtrooms, including best practices, design solutions, promotion of accessible features, educational opportunities, and the gathering of information on existing barriers.

The June 25 Federal Register contains the Board's request for application and related instructions. The Board seeks to include members representing designers and architects, disability groups, members of the judiciary, including judges and court administrators and organizations representing them, the codes community and standard-setting entities, government agencies, and others with an interest in the issues to be explored. The published notice provides instructions on submitting applications.

Arts exhibit on display throughout state

PORTLAND — "A Matter of Perception: Fifth Juried Exhibition by Artists With Disabilities" presented by VSA arts of Maine and Alpha One opened in May at Alpha One in South Portland. The exhibition is devoted entirely to the work of Maine artists with disabilities.

Alpha One's South Portland locale was the first of five locations where over 200 artists with disabilities work will be hung in 2004. Other locations are Alpha One in Bangor, the Center for Community Inclusion at University of Maine Orono, Maine College of Art, and the VSA arts gallery located in the Augusta office of the Center for Community Inclusion and the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council.

Exhibited artwork includes paintings, drawings, photos, sculptures, weavings, mixed-media pieces, and poemy. The rich variation of the works submitted reflects the diversity of the artists themselves. A Matter of Perception honors and celebrates these artists, their differences and their work, while challenging assumptions about disabilities. The exhibition promotes full accessibility for people with disabilities to the arts and cultural lives of their communities, while supporting cultural opportunities within the community.

VSA arts of Maine is a Portland-based statewide non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure that every person with a disability in Maine has the opportunity to use the arts to rise to his or her fullest potential, to explore the world, and to become an active participant in it.

For more information, contact VSA arts of Maine at (207) 761-3861 V/TTY or visit www.vsaartsmaine.org.
There's no other organization helping Maine people with disabilities quite like Alpha One. No other enterprise providing the community with Alpha One's variety and depth of information, services and products that create opportunities for independent living. That's why all of us at Systems Engineering are proud to support — and applaud — Alpha One's continuing success.