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**Subject:** News from Independence Associates, Inc.  
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## Independence Associates, Update

### Greetings from Independence Associates

Earlier this summer on July 26, 2011 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebrated its 21st anniversary. Some would say this was a coming of age party while others would say we have a long way to go. I find myself in the second group.

Just on the basics, the team at Independence Associates has filed over two dozen complaints with the Architectural Access Board this year on items involving access. We believe access to our communities and services is a basic civil right. We regularly receive paperwork requesting variances to access which are not acceptable to which we respond we are not in favor. We are currently working on an additional two dozen other complaints which will be filed by the end of the year.

We continue to be active in advocating for supports and services to ensure we all can live independently in the communities which we choose. The biggest barriers to independence still remain access to Affordable, Available, Accessible Housing, Access to Transportation, Access to Healthcare and Jobs. We are involved both locally and nationally advocating against cuts to programs and services such as Medicaid, Medicare & Social Security that we rely on to maintain our independence.

As Independence Associates becomes more involved in the 31 communities in our service area we are identifying places where we can grow & participate. This fall we will be staffing a new position here at Independence Associates, an Outreach/Community Organizer. The goal of this position is to evaluate the needs of our entire service area and put an action plan into place to address them.

Several people have asked how you can get involved with Independence Associates? With our new Outreach/Community Organizer we are planning to get our Community Involvement Committee off the ground. The committee will be made up mostly of volunteers such as

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yourself. The Board of Directors is seeking individuals who can commit to its vision for the future and are willing to commit the time and resources necessary to build a healthy organization. Maybe you can't commit to the board but could be involved in a committee. Committees are a great place to start. I myself began with Independence Associates back in the 1990's as a volunteer committee member.

One of the many ways we hear of things in the community is through you. Are you participating on your local disability commission? Is the commission planning an event in the community? Would you like us to come to a commission meeting or other meeting in your community to tell others about Independence Associates?

As we get back to our roots we look forward to becoming a vital part of our communities and to meeting you. Independence Associates is your Independent Living Center. Where do you see us going? We would like to know drop me a note [shiggins@iacil.org](mailto:shiggins@iacil.org).

Have a great day,  
Steven Higgins, Interim Executive Director

## Sad News

Please join us in mourning the death and celebrating the life of Fred Fay. His impact on the lives of people with disabilities in Massachusetts & around the nation has been significant. Fred passed away at the age of 67 on August 20. He will be missed by everyone who knew him, and many more who were touched by his work.

Fred was a leader in the Independent Living movement going all the way back to the administration of President Johnson. Several of us here at IA had the opportunity to meet, work with, and be mentored by Fred throughout the years. He was one of the founding members of the Boston Center for Independent Living the first Independent Living Center here in Massachusetts.

Fred's life is featured in the PBS documentary "Lives Worth Living" which is scheduled to broadcast in late October.

## Around the office

Independence Associates welcomes Karen Bureau, Director of IL Service, to our staff. Karen has been working in the disability community for many years. She began in the youth program at the Northeast Independent Living Program in Lawrence and served in many roles up to and including Interim Executive Director while at NILP. Outside of NILP Karen has served on many boards and councils

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throughout the Commonwealth most recently serving as the Secretary of the Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council of which she was appointed by Governor Patrick. She brings over 17 years of experience in the field to our team.

We would also like to welcome Kathie Gale, Information & Referral/Intake Coordinator to our team. Some of you may recognize Kathie's name from the work she did here in Brockton at Career Works where she had been working on a grant for the past couple of years. Kathie has a background in computer training and work with volunteer groups in the community teaching employment skills and English as a second language.

### **Interim Executive Director receives national award.**

On July 16, 2011 the National Council on Independent Living presented Steven Higgins its Region 1 National Advocacy Award at its annual conference and awards banquet in Washington DC.

### **Excerpt from Program;**

The Region 1 NCIL Advocacy Award for 2011 goes to Steven Higgins, a man known well to the IL Network in MA and to many of you at NCIL. Steve was until recently the Coordinator for the MA Statewide Independent Living Council, and now is the Interim Executive Director of Independence Associates, a CIL in southeastern MA with a main office in Brockton, MA. He has supported the MA network of centers and the MA SILC to expand and improve the coalition of centers and IL services through consistent education, outreach and advocacy in line with the MA State Plan for Independent Living. A few examples include annual education days at our state house, annual statewide ADA celebrations, development of the MA SILC webpage, and consistent coordination and collaboration on increasing and safeguarding IL services in the Commonwealth. He has provided on-going advocacy for NCIL at each of its conferences, policy briefings and its agenda on CLASS Act and Community Choice. He began his career in IL as a volunteer board member at Independence Associates in 1991, became part of the DIMENET Crew using the internet as an advocacy tool, mentoring with Roland Sykes, Paul Spooner, Kathleen Kleinman, and Fred Fay, and you have probably seen Steve as one of the NCIL Marshalls along with Mark Derry during our walk to the Hill during the past few years. Steve has come back to his roots at Independence Associates as Interim Executive Director.



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