♦ VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2 ♦ MAY 2007

Wings of Change

271 EAST FIRST STREET CORNING, NY 14830

AIM INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER

AIM's red-orange Butterfly represents the Fire and Determination in each Human Spirit as he or she chooses Life and the Freedom of Independence.

FLAME TO PLAY AT AIM'S SUMMER EVENT

OUR MISSION:

To change the world through music

FLAME is a musical phenomenon that turns heads, touches hearts, and changes perceptions. In our quest to change the world, we are always looking for ways for FLAME to reach new audiences. If you would like to help us spread FLAME's music and message or know of anyone who could open new doors for FLAME please call Tim Fiori at 518-762-0024.

FLAME is an eleven member band formed in 2003 at Lexinton Center in upstate New York. They play over 100 popular songs and tour the Northeast with numerous sold-out performances each year. As individuals with developmental and physical disabilities their mission is to change the world through music. **FLAME** has been featured on television, radio and in the news-papers and this year earned the New York State Senate Achiever's Award. AIM is proud to have **FLAME** perform at the annual AIM Access Awards and Volunteer Recognition Summer Picnic on July 26th at the Big Flats American Legion, 45 Olcott Road South, Big Flats, New York.

AIM's Access Awards are given each year to those individuals and/or businesses who have increased accessibility for people with disabilities. Starting time is 3:00 PM with dinner at 4:00 PM and **FLAME** at 5:00 PM. If you would like to learn more about FLAME or to make reservations for this event, please call AIM at 962-8225 and ask to speak to Kimberly Walters. We look forward to seeing you there.

AIM'S KIMBERLY WALTERS WINS MS. WHEELCHAIR NEW YORK

Since winning Ms. Wheelchair New York, on March 10, 2007 in Guilderland, near Albany, Kimberly Walters is on a mission. She wants to instill in others the belief that anything is possible especially for people with disabilities. It has become her mantra as she goes about her daily activities. Kimberly, a systems advocate and executive assistant with AIM was interviewed during the competition by a panel of judges and each contestant was evaluated on their speaking abilities and personal/professional accomplishments.

"If you have PAD - (Pride, Ambition, Determination) - there are no challenges too big to overcome."
Kimberly A. Walters

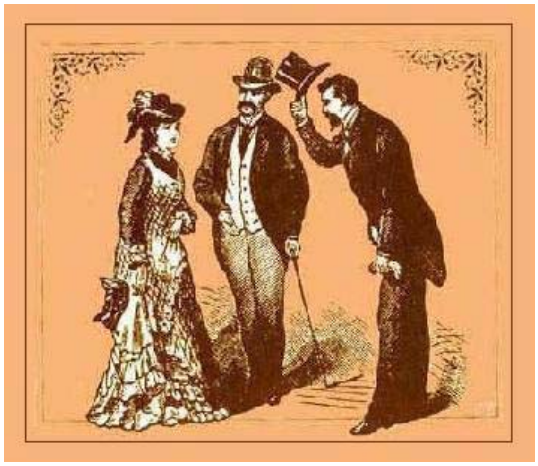
As Ms. Wheelchair New York, Kimberly will travel throughout the state making personal appearances and spreading her message that "people with disabilities are more than capable of living independent, self-sufficient, meaningful lives provided they are living in a barrier-free society." Kimberly knows first-hand what it means to be a person with a disability. She was left paralyzed from the chest down by a 1993 car accident. She went on to earn Bachelors of Arts degrees in sociology and psychology from the State University of New York at Geneseo and an Associate of Arts degree in accounting from Corning Community College.

In 1997 Kimberly earned a gold medal at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, and she was presented with the 2003 New York State Senate Achievers' Award for her accomplishments as an advocate. Besides her duties at AIM, Kimberly currently serves on several New York State organizations for people with disabilities including the New York State Rehabilitation Council (VESID) Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, New York State Health and Wellness Board for People with Disabilities, New York State Commission on Quality Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities Interagency Partnership Assistive Technology Advisory Board, and is the meeting facilitator of CANDID (Community Advocacy Network Developed for Individuals with Disabilities), a community based advocacy network providing support, general assistance, information and referrals for individuals with disabilities,. If that wasn't enough, Kimberly is a published author having written "*Spinal Cord Injury (SCI): Opportunity Awaits through Assistive Technology"* for the *American Association of Spinal Cord Injury Psychologists and Social Workers Psychosocial Process*, an online medical journal, and was a consultant for the article *"Community Competence and Violently-Acquired Spinal Cord Injury: Employment as a Peer Role Model"* for *Rehabilitation Psychology* medical journal. In addition, Kimberly travels throughout the country to fulfill motivational speaking engagements.

In July 2007 Kimberly will journey to Bethesda, Maryland to compete in the Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant. The winner's itinerary will include traveling throughout the United States representing people with disabilities. Travel expenses for the Bethesda, Maryland competition are high so Kimberly is seeking donations and sponsorships. If you would like to sponsor Kimberly, please call her at 607 962-8225,

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

When speaking of disabilities, it is sometimes hard to find the right words. However, you can't go wrong using "people first" language. It is the most important principle in communicating with and about people with disabilities, says Vicki Pappas, PhD, director of the Center for Planning and Policy Studies at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community.



This standard applies in a literal sense when describing people—"person with autism" is appropriate; "autistic person" is not—and in a figurative sense when interacting with someone who has a disability. "People with disabilities would prefer to be seen as people, not as objects of pity or as heroes who have overcome adversity," she says. "When you meet someone who has a disability, say hello, make eye contact, and give yourself time to get to know that person like you would with any new acquaintance." Below are more of Dr. Pappas's tips for effective communication.

- *DO use person-first language, especially in print*. Regardless of the particular disability, put the person before the condition in every description. For example: "man who has cerebral palsy," "girl who is deaf," "teacher with epilepsy."

- *DON'T mention a disability if it is not relevant*. "If you are writing an article about a professor's research, and that person happens to use a wheelchair, you don't need to mention it unless it relates somehow to the research process. This is just the same principle you would use in deciding whether to mention that someone is Jewish or Latino," Dr. Pappas says.

- *DO use specific terminology*. If it is important to describe a person's disability, be straightforward and avoid terminology like "handicapable," "differently abled" or "special." This type of verbiage comes across as condescending, she notes.

- *DON'T make someone a hero for an ordinary feat*. Avoid characterizing everyday activities as huge accomplishments for people with disabilities. "I'm all for including a bride with hearing loss in a wedding special, but when the headline is 'Deaf Woman Gets Married,' that's insulting," says Dr. Pappas.

- *DO greet people at their eye level*. When talking with a person who uses a wheelchair, it is appropriate to sit or crouch down in order to talk face-to-face. "Even if you are speaking through an interpreter, it's important to make that direct eye contact," she says. Similarly, it is best to approach a person who is blind by announcing your presence.

- *DON'T worry about common phrases*. "It is not a big deal if you say 'See you later' to someone who is blind. No one is going to be offended by these types of expressions. Relax and use your natural manner of speaking," she adds.

- *DO respect personal space*. "It's okay to offer assistance in a polite manner such as holding a door open. Beyond that it is best to ask first rather than to rush in and grab a person who appears to be struggling," points out Dr. Pappas. A final note on personal space: a wheelchair should be approached as though it were part of the body—don't sit or lean on someone's wheelchair unless you know them very well.

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AIM for independence…IT IS YOUR RIGHT…

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INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ***On-going: TBI Support Group Meetings*** - Every second Tuesday of each month at AIM's McNeil Center. Individuals who have experienced a traumatic brain injury are invited. Please call David Tokar at 962-8225, extension 52. Transportation is provided on a limited basis.

- ***June 6: Transitional Services Recognition Luncheon -*** at the Corning Radisson Hotel honoring employers supporting students with disabilities and students who have shown progress. The luncheon begins at 12:00 noon. For more information, please call AIM's Corning office and ask to speak to Jill Durkin.

- **June 7: Transitional Services' Lookin' Ahead Conference** - "Engaging Our Youth" sponsored by AIM at Corning Community College starting at 9:30 AM. Please call Jill Durkin for more details.

- ***July: AIM's Access Awards and Volunteer Recognition Day*** - July 26, 2007. To be held at the Big Flats American Legion, 45 Olcott Road South, Big Flats, New York. Public is invited. To make reservations now, please AIM's Corning office at 962-8225 and ask to speak to Kimberly Walters.

- ***October: AIM's 2007 Fall Festival and Pumpkin Chuckin' event -*** October 13, 2007 starting at 10:00 AM at the Chemung County Fairgrounds. Lots of games, activities and events for children and adults. Don't miss out on a terrific day. Donations and sponsorships are currently being sought. **Pumpkin Chuckers always welcome.** Email: fallfestival@aimcil.com or call AIM at 962-8225.