

# Self Advocacy News



**Providing Services for  
Persons with Disabilities**

This newsletter can be provided in an alternate format upon request.

Other formats may include other languages, large print or computer disk.

Call us and let us know if there is any other way that we can accommodate you .

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## Understanding Advocacy

By E. Dennis Burgess

The Joy A. Shabazz Center for Independent Living would like to invite you to become a member of an exciting program called CAN-DO which stands for Consumers Advocacy Network, Disabled Organized and it is a grassroots based movement primarily made up of persons with disabilities. CAN-DO will address such issues as housing, transportation, education, employment and recreation via E-mail. The purpose of CAN-DO is to ensure that persons with disabilities have a collective politically active voice at the local level to combat discrimination and to promote total accessibility within the community. MiCASSA is an excellent example of the kind of issues that CAN-DO will focus on. This is a very powerful piece of legislation and we must ensure that it will become law. CAN-DO



**Consumers Lobby Congress for ADA**

will help spread the word about MiCASSA. So many persons with disabilities who could truly benefit from MiCASSA probably have never heard of it.

CAN-DO would act like an information center for MiCASSA and make sure that it becomes common knowledge within the disability community. Sometimes we may have a tendency to become so frustrated with the situations we find ourselves in, we just want

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## Cristal Mirach 3 Time DECA Award Winner

Interview: 8/21/03  
By Marlene Mesot

It was my privilege recently to interview a successful student who has received a national award for 3 consecutive years from a business or-

ganization called DECA.

Cristal Mirach is planning to attend NC Agricultural & Technical University in Greensboro this spring. Her major field of study will be in fashion, with a mi-

nor in business. She chose A&T because it is close to home, family and friends.

During high school, Cristal went to a business club competition for DECA. She was taking business classes.

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# Cristal Interview **Understanding Advocacy**

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Encouraged by her marketing teacher, Dee Kuhn, she entered. Plus, Cristal believed she could do it!

She was the only one from her school, Western Guilford High, to win Proficiency for three consecutive years! For two out of the three years, she was the only student from her school to win. The first award ceremony was in Anaheim, CA, the second in Salt Lake City, UT and the third was held in Orlando, FL.

Next, I asked: How do you feel about your career path as a person with a disability?

I love my choice, Cristal replied, and my friends love my designs. I plan to start my own business which eliminates a lot of stumbling blocks. The only stumbling block I can think of is if the college campus did not have accessibility.

She has been invited to apply to the Art Institute of Philadelphia. A speaker from the Art Institute in Greensboro interested her in that subject. Then Cristal did some research and found the Art Institute in Philadelphia, PA. Her family moved here from her native Philadelphia.

Christal's comments: I was afraid I wouldn't have any friends when I first moved here from Philadelphia, and I didn't want to be looked at as just a person in a wheelchair. I feel that I have had to work harder than most people, but it is worth it, because I have gained many friends. I am not one of those disabled people who

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to throw up our hands and call it quits. But if we can share our experiences with each other and with our elected officials and try to find solutions to whatever obstacles we may encounter, then we would have really made progress

In another example, I remember when I was going to UNC-G, I had two Sociology classes in the same building one semester. The building was beside a little convenience store. I didn't have much time between classes and it was during lunchtime, so I would go over to the store to get a coke. I had been doing this for about two weeks and didn't have any problems; the store clerk even put the coke in my cup holder and would give me a straw. Then one day I went to the store to get my coke and someone had moved the ice machine and it was blocking the wheelchair ramp. I set there for a minute, wondering why they were so careless because I just assumed it was a mistake. I went back inside the building where my classes were and asked my friend if she would go to the store and tell the manager about the ice machine. When my friend came back, she had a grim look on her face and said the manager told her the ice machine was where he wanted it and it would stay there. Of course, this made me angry and I decided to talk to my academic advisor about the situation. He in turn talked to the president of the college and was informed that because UNC-G didn't own the property where the store was located there was not anything that could be done. I knew I could have gotten a coke at the school cafeteria but that was clear across campus and I was afraid that I wouldn't have time to go that far and get back in time for my next class. Besides, it was the principal of the situation.

So, every day when I returned from the cafeteria and if time permitted, I would go to the store and sit at the blocked wheelchair ramp and let people see the situation I was in. Several people offered to help me in the store but I would always decline. After two weeks of my one person protest, the ice machine was moved back to its original position. I started getting my cokes there again and the clerks were as nice as before. This shows how, if we are persistent, we can overcome many obstacles we face. If we can do this in a group, it will be even more affective.

CAN-DO will empower persons with disabilities and give us the tools to begin to fight discrimination and to become self-advocates. One of the most disturbing aspects about having a disability is the way that many people do not fully understand we are capable of becoming a part of the mainstream of society. There is a tendency on the part of society to believe that persons with disabilities can not really participate in what is considered to be normal activities of daily living, therefore why should they have to make everything accessible? Of course, this perception is inaccurate, many persons with disabilities are happy

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# Burgess's Corner

By E. Dennis Burgess

CAN-DO stands for **Consumers Advocacy Network-Disabled Organized** and it is designed to be a grassroots based network primarily composed of persons with disabilities. The goal of CAN-DO is to make positive changes in the community as a whole as well as in our own lives. One way to achieve this goal is to provide consumers with action alerts about current issues that affect the disabled community and knowledge of their rights under the law. CAN-DO will keep persons with disabilities up to date with the latest information and changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) via E-mail. We need to have a strong voice that says persons with disabilities are no longer

willing to be isolated from the rest of society. We will strive to build a closely-knit network of consumers that will potentially have a strong collective politically active voice to speak out against attempts to weaken ADA by government officials who legislate negative changes in policy. We will let our elected officials know that persons with disabilities can make a difference in their political future at the polls. We will advise consumers whom to contact to register a complaint about a particular situation. Members of CAN-DO will be able to share important information with each other via E-mail on a wide range of topics that affects the disabled community, such as employment, transportation, education and recreation.

CAN-DO members need to decide what other issues should be discussed and how to keep people interested in the network. I personally think the best way to keep people's interest is to discuss issues that directly affect them. For example, SCAT Transportation not serving the entire city of Greensboro is an extremely important issue to persons with disabilities. However, there is only a small percentage of the disabled population who has voiced opposition to this. CAN-DO should try to find people who would like to help to make improvements in the transportation system but for whatever reason, feel powerless to do so. But perhaps they are afraid that if they speak out, it may make matters worse or even cause them to lose services.

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## Cristal Interview

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stays at home. I like to go shopping a lot. I attended my Senior Prom with one of the best dates in the world and I enjoy life!

The Center is proud to have sponsored Cristal this year as the third time she has been a national DECA award recipient.

**We at the Joy A. Shabazz Center wish her the best for success and happiness in her life's endeavors. 😊**

**The Consumer Advocacy Network (CAN-DO) will empower persons with disabilities and give us the tools to begin to fight discrimination and to become self-advocates.**

## Understanding Advocacy

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productive members of society, but we still need more accessibility in the community before we can say we have equality. This is why it is so important that we make the public aware of architectural and attitudinal barriers that prevent us from going out into the community and using our abilities to enjoy life and become productive. Collectively, we have the power to make a real difference in our own lives as well as in the lives of others.

Here's another incidence. There was a visually impaired lady in Winston-Salem who went to the mall and she had her service animal with her. The security guard at the mall told the lady that dogs were not allowed inside the mall but she protested, telling the guard it was the law that service animals are permitted to accompany persons with disabilities in public places. The security guard still refused to

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# Eat, Meet & Greet 2003 **Understanding Advocacy**



July 24<sup>th</sup> at Hester Park in Greensboro, the Joy A. Shabazz Center for Independent Living held our eighth Eat, Meet & Greet social and recreational event for our five county service area. The theme for this year, freedom to enjoy recreation, was well exercised.

Approximately 250 consumers with disabilities participated in events, games, prize drawings and enjoyed a cook out on a beautifully sunny and pleasant July day. Our guest speaker from Governor Easley's Office was

Events included Freedom Relay Race, Volley Ball, Horse Shoes, Scavenger Hunt and Face Painting by Megan Broome.

Games included the ever popular Bingo, Pictionary, and Word Search. No cook out would be complete without a sing-along, so we did it with Karaoke thanks to Albert Mesot.

We want to thank and recognize all of our participating volunteers. Many thanks to our talented sign maker Rachel Crabtree.



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allow the service animal to accompany the lady inside the mall and told her he would call the police if she did not leave immediately. The lady wisely said, go ahead; call the police, so the guard proceeded to call. When the police came, guess what happened? Instead of arresting the lady, the police arrested the security guard for not obeying the law by refusing to allow the service animal into the mall.

This incident illustrates how knowing your rights under the law can prove extremely beneficial to us as persons with disabilities, while at the same time, educating the public. My official job title is Public Awareness Coordinator but in reality, everyone with a disability deserves to be called a Public Awareness Coordinator. Essentially this is what we do every time we go to the mall, out to work, out to eat or to a movie, we are slowly changing the perception the public has of us. We are making the public aware that we can participate in community activities and become integrated into society with relatively ease with modifications that will allow us access. CAN-DO will only help to enhance this educational process by giving persons with disabilities the opportunity to communicate with each other on the computer about issues that significantly impact our ability to fully access public entities. For example, if a restaurant does not have restrooms that will accommodate a wheelchair and you have written a letter to the manager about the problem but haven't gotten an appropriate response, you can share this information with other CAN-DO members and we will all write letters to the manger. If this does not get positive results, we will go to the restaurant and protest in person. Or perhaps you will run across a situation that you need clarification about what the law says or you may have an idea on how to improve accessibility in the community, CAN-DO can help in both of these areas. Sharing information and ideas with others can be a positive experience and bring about change. It will also help to understand different points of views and make better advocates. Together we will try to make our congressional leaders understand that we need total access within our communities before we can pursue our dreams.

One of my goals is to make positive changes in the public transportation system for persons with disabilities. Although significant progress has been made in this area, there is still a lack of understanding as to why persons with disabilities need to have accessible transportation no matter where they live within the city. Now with CAN-DO, I have the opportunity to share my ideas and opinions with others and to learn from others.

CAN-DO will help persons with disabilities to learn about their rights under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to stay informed about any changes within the law.

It is essential for us to become familiar with the law in order to be

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# NC DAN Disability Action Network

By Karen Hamilton

Your participation shows just how much you care about your community. I'd like to encourage you to be involved in your community in another way- by becoming a part of one of the most exciting organizations ever created by and for people with disabilities- The North Carolina Disability Action Network (NC DAN).

### WHY DO WE NEED NC DAN?

According to the U.S. Census, North Carolina has over 1 million people with disabilities. However, North Carolina has never had a statewide organization (made up by and for people with all kinds of disabilities) whose primary purpose is to involve people with disabilities in the leadership of their communities.

Until now.

NC DAN will serve as that network. Most importantly, it will be YOUR network- made up entirely of local people concerned about disability issues. It will be a way for many different grassroots disability organizations- and some people with disabilities not involved in any organizations- to come together to learn about and work to involve the disability community in the life of our larger community. NC DAN will address issues such as voting participation, grassroots

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## Understanding Advocacy

self advocates and carry out our mission of protecting the rights that we have already achieved while foraging ahead with new strategies that will bring about increase awareness to those who are in control of the legislative process who can pass laws that will have significant impact on the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

If you are interested in making positive changes in your community for persons with disabilities, please join CAN-DO. I would like for each of you to email me with a concern about accessibility that you may have and together we will find a solution. Thank you! ☺

[can\\_do@bellsouth.net](mailto:can_do@bellsouth.net)

**Consumer Advocacy Network  
Meeting Notice  
Tuesday Nov. 4, 2003 2:00 P.M.  
Joy A. Shabazz Center  
235 N Greene St  
Greensboro NC 27401  
Contact Dennis Burgess by email  
Or call 336-272-0501**

## Eat, Meet & Greet Sponsors/Volunteers

### Participating Organizations

- \* Bell House
- \* Communication Services for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing
- \* Guilford Center
- \* Joy A. Shabazz Center
- \* Mental Health Association of Greensboro
- \* Partnership F.I.V.E.



### SPONSORS

- \* Bi-Lo
- \* Target
- \* Subway
- \* LeBleu
- \* Wal Mart
- \* Party City
- \* Libby Hill
- \* Chick-Fil-A
- \* Tek Systems
- \* Home Accents
- \* Pamper Palace
- \* Harris Teeter
- \* Golden Corral
- \* Carlton Wright
- \* Friendly Center
- \* Dick's Sporting Goods



# NC DAN

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organizing techniques, information sharing and public education. NC DAN will also be a "one-stop shop" for local organizations to learn about each other and the fine work other community-based disability groups are doing.

## PUBLIC FORUM UPDATES

In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities, we have to ask local people what those needs really are. Therefore, NC DAN has hosted public forums in local communities across North Carolina to hear your thoughts about the needs of the disability communities.

So far, over 700 people have attended 12 public forums throughout the state! This easily makes NC DAN public forums the largest series of meetings ever in North Carolina's disability communities.

NC DAN will be completing this year's forums by August. In early fall, NC DAN will publish "Declarations of Independence: The State of North Carolinians with Disabilities," a study based on the findings gathered at the public hearings. This study will help the organization determine the issues it will address in the coming year.

## WEB SITE UPDATE

Our website will soon be up and running! At <http://ncdan.com>, you will be able to learn that latest information about activities in your community, state and national issues, ways to bring about changes in your community, and additional information about NC DAN.

It will also include a way for you to sign up to join NC DAN. Joining is easy- just sign up! 😊

<http://ncdan.com>

## Burgess's Corner

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These are the people who I would like to see CAN-DO become involved with. I have devised a questionnaire for CAN-DO in an attempt to gain a better feel for what consumers in our five county service area think are the most pressing issues that we need to focus on. I rather try to stay away from personal matters as much as possible if they don't have a direct bearing on similar situations that people can share. If someone is having a personal conflict with an attendant but the conflict is not the result of the person having a disability, then it would not be an appropriate topic for CAN-DO. However, if a group of individuals are having similar types of problems with attendants, then members could share ideas and hopefully find a solution.

CAN-DO should share information with members about national as well as local issues, such as MiCASSA and to seek out individuals in our service area who would potentially benefit from the passage of this Bill. We also need to make a sincere effort to find persons with disabilities who have significant mobility limitations and cannot attend every CAN-DO meeting, but who can contribute through E-mail. I wonder if it would be possible to find out how many people who are in nursing homes could participate in CAN-DO? Even if they don't have access to a computer, perhaps they could

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## Current Events

- |            |                         |               |
|------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| * October  | Disability Employment   | Month         |
| * Nov. 4   | CAN-DO Meeting          | Greensboro NC |
| * Nov. 6-7 | NC Assistive Tech. Expo | Raleigh NC    |
| * Nov. 10  | Communication Forum     | Main Library  |



Computer Training Classes  
Coming in JANUARY 2004

# Toll Free Hotline for Air Travelers with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Transportation is calling on all disability organizations to promote public education about its Toll Free Hotline for air travelers with disabilities through their organization newsletters, list-serves and sponsored events.

The Toll Free Hotline for disabled air travelers has been in operation since August 2002 and is available for callers from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern Time, seven days a week. It is currently not being fully utilized. The Hotline serves two main purposes: (1) education and (2) assistance in resolving disability-related air travel problems.

Many disabled air travelers are not aware of their rights and the Hotline, in part, exists as an educational service to inform air travelers with disabilities about their rights under the Air Carrier Access Act and the Department's implementing regulations 14 CFR Part 382 (Part 382). Hotline operators are well versed in the ACAA and Part 382 and can provide callers with on the spot general information about the rights of air travelers with disabilities. The Hotline operators also respond to requests for printed consumer information about air travel rights of the disabled.

The Hotline can also assist air travelers with disabilities in resolving real time or upcoming issues with air carriers. The purpose of "real-time" assistance is to facilitate airline compliance with DOT's rules by suggesting to the passenger and the airline involved alternative customer-service solutions to the problem. The airline remains responsible for deciding what action will be taken to resolve the issue in accordance with the ACAA and Part 382. Generally, if a caller has a real time problem or an upcoming issue with an air carrier, a Hotline Duty Officer will contact that air carrier and attempt to resolve the issue. For example, there have been a number of incidents in which Hotline Duty Officers have contacted air carriers and convinced them to accept service animals and electric wheelchairs on board flights, to stow folding wheelchairs in the cabin, and to provide requested wheelchair assistance.

Air travelers who want information about the rights of persons with disabilities in air travel or who experience disability-related air travel service problems may call the Hotline to obtain assistance at:

**1-800-778-4838 (voice) or  
1-800-455-9880 (TTY).**

Air travelers who want DOT to investigate a complaint about a disability-related issue still must submit their complaint in writing via e-mail at [airconsumer@ost.dot.gov](mailto:airconsumer@ost.dot.gov) or postal mail to:

Aviation Consumer Protection Division  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 7th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Sue C. Lin M.S.  
National Service Inclusion Project  
(NSIP)  
Institute for Community Inclusion  
UMASS Boston  
Phone: 1-888-491-0326  
or 617-287-4303  
Website: <http://www.serviceandinclusion.org>  
Spread the word: Potential  
AmeriCorps members can apply  
online and AmeriCorps programs  
can post opportunities at  
<http://www.americorps.org> ☺

## Burgess's Corner

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write letters or ask a friend to send an E-mail. Membership to a large extent will consist of individuals who do not attend our in office meetings. Rather they will be out in the community and in nursing homes who receive information from us. Much of the responsibility will fall to me but I will need your help to point me in the right direction of interesting topics that I can distribute to the other members. I would like for us to think of ways to let people know about **CAN-DO** and get them involved. Here are some other ideas to publicize **CAN-DO**:

- \* Send flyers to disabled student services at area colleges.
- \* Write letters and make phone calls to organizations who work with persons with disabilities.
- \* We could also give presentations on **CAN-DO**.
- \* Tell a friend, word of mouth.
- \* Log onto our website.
- \* Get on local TV and radio. ☺

# Freedom Fest 2003 Photos



**Joy A. Shabazz Center Staff**



We provide information for all types of disabilities. The Center has a policy of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for all persons.

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**BINGO**



**George McCoy, with Associate & Marlene**



**Volunteer Chefs**



**Face Painting By Broome Girls**



**Benita, Laura & Friend**



Providing Services for Persons with Disabilities

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