



# SDS Newsletter

## Student Disability Services

THE NEW SCHOOL

ISSUE 15 SPRING 2009

### Dear Students:

Welcome and welcome back!

We are certainly living in an exciting time. The inauguration of our new president will undoubtedly bring many changes to the future of the country. Closer to home, there have also been some changes in the SDS Newsletter, as many of you will notice the brand new look that we have adopted. We hope you find this fresh look and format pleasing and easy to read.

In addition to the changes in the newsletter, we will also be making some changes to the web page in the coming months—adding new content such as a resources page and a section devoted to information about assistive technology, such as Premier’s Key to Access and voice dictation software like Dragon® Naturally Speaking.

If you have suggestions, questions or concerns about anything that you have seen in the newsletter or on the SDS web page, or would like to see something added in the future, please let us know. We always welcome student suggestions to help us better provide appropriate services.

Finally, if you haven’t yet collected academic adjustment notices that you will need for accommodations, please do so as soon as possible.

Best of luck for a fun and productive semester!

Regards,

Jason Luchs  
Assistant Director of Student Disability Services

### Front Page Quotes

“Focusing your life solely on making a buck shows a certain poverty of ambition. It asks too little of yourself. Because it is only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself that you realize your true potential.”

—Barack Obama

“Character and personal force are the only investments that are worth anything.”

—Walt Whitman

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

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## News and Updates **Access-a-Raise**

Following fare increases by the MTA to occur later this year, **Access-a-Ride** will also be inflating costs to those who rely on its services.

While all transit riders can expect a fare hike this year—the Metropolitan Transportation Authority conducted public hearings last month on the proposal—the 123,000 users of New York City’s Access-a-Ride, the door-to-door paratransit service for the disabled and the elderly, may well face a much steeper increase.

According to Kevin Ortiz, an M.T.A. spokesman, under two of the four plans that the authority is considering to close its budget gap, the Access-a-Ride fare would more than double, from \$2 to \$4.50 or even \$5. Asked why Access-a-Ride customers would shoulder such a comparatively steep increase, Mr. Ortiz said the guidelines of the Americans With Disabilities Act allow paratransit fares to run up to twice the base fare. He added that the authority is one of the few mass transit agencies in the country that

doesn’t already charge double the base fare; the paratransit systems in Atlanta, Miami, Denver and Philadelphia do. All other aspects of the paratransit service, he added, will remain the same.

Jan Zimmerman, the program director at Rivington House, a Medicaid-financed health care program on the Lower East Side for adults with H.I.V. or AIDS, said that of the program’s 65 clients, 8 depend on Access-a-Ride for transportation. Rivington House reimburses them for the fare, she said, explaining, “The priority is to get the client here for service.” Rivington House will continue to reimburse clients even if the fare rises, she said, but this would require cuts in meal service, supplies or the occasional trips to a movie or a museum.



One 45-year-old client, who asked that his name be withheld because he was H.I.V. positive, said he used Access-a-Ride several times a week to travel to Rivington House from his home in Queens Village.

**“To get around from place to place,”** said the man, who has had the use of only one hand since suffering a stroke in 1994, **“I depend on it.”**



## Personal Success Stories **Sean Forbes, Founder of D-PAN**

Music has been said to bring people together. Yet for members of the deaf community, the musical connection has always remained elusive. Not everyone can have music in their lives, but one man is trying to change that.



Sean Forbes, 26, is the co-founder of the Deaf Performing Artists’ Network or D-PAN, a non-profit which exists to bridge the gaps between the deaf/hard-of-hearing community, the entertainment industry, and the public at large through American Sign Language-enhanced music videos. Forbes, a child of two musical parents, suffered

permanent hearing loss at one year of age, but nonetheless pursued a lifelong aspiration towards a career in the music business.

Founded while Forbes was still a student at the Rochester Institute of Technology, D-PAN has become an emergent community in its own right—a network of deaf and hard-of-hearing performers and professionals; their families and friends; and concerned citizens interested in creating cultural equality. Deaf performing artists, directors, and producers have been afforded the opportunity to showcase their skills, while recording artists and songwriters gain the opportunity to reach a new, untapped marketplace. The deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences worldwide

then discover the benefit of experiencing music and entertainment which speaks directly to them.

Forbes currently serves as D-PAN’s creative liaison to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. When asked about the innovative success of D-PAN, he remarked, “I’ve approached a few situations before where people didn’t only tell me that D-PAN wouldn’t be successful, but they told me that I would never be successful as a deaf musician. I always laughed it off because I knew deep inside of me this is what I wanted. And I wouldn’t let anyone tell me no. I wouldn’t take no for an answer.”

For more information, visit: [www.d-pan.com](http://www.d-pan.com)



## Spotlight on Multiple Sclerosis

SDS can provide services and support for students who have **Multiple Sclerosis (MS)**. The appropriate accommodation(s) will be determined by documentation and discussion with the student.

Multiple sclerosis (or MS) is a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system consisting of the brain, spinal cord and optic nerves. Symptoms may be mild, from numbness in the limbs, to severe, including paralysis or loss of vision. The progress and specific symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from person to person.

In the United States today, there are approximately 400,000 people with MS—with 200 more people diagnosed every week. Worldwide, MS is thought to affect more than 2.5 million people. Though the cause (etiology) of MS is still not known, scientists believe that a combination of several factors may be involved, including gender, genetics, age, geography, and ethnic background. While the disease is not contagious or directly inherited, epidemiologists—the scientists who study patterns of

disease—have identified factors in the distribution of MS around the world that may eventually help determine what causes the disease.

MS is thought to be an autoimmune disease where the body's own defense system attacks myelin, the fatty substance that surrounds and protects the nerve fibers in the central nervous system. The nerve fibers themselves can also be damaged. The damaged myelin forms scar tissue (sclerosis), which gives the disease its name. When any part of the myelin sheath or nerve fiber is damaged or destroyed, nerve impulses traveling to and from the brain and spinal cord are distorted or interrupted, producing the variety of symptoms that can occur. Since no two people have exactly the same experience of MS, the disease course may look very different from one person to another. And, it may not always be clear to the physician—at

least right away—which course a person is experiencing.

The majority of people with MS do not become severely disabled, and there are now FDA-approved medications that have been shown to reduce the number of relapses and “modify” or slow down the underlying course of MS. Although there is still no cure for MS, effective strategies are available to modify the disease course, treat exacerbations (also called attacks, relapses, or flare-ups), manage symptoms, improve function and safety, and provide emotional support. Most people with MS have a normal or near-normal life expectancy, learn to cope with the disease and continue to lead satisfying, productive lives.



## New Technologies FiiWA

In November, 2008, Parsons Design and Technology alumna **Tracy Gromek** won the first annual Cologne Design Award, which recognizes outstanding thesis projects by graduating design students. Gromek won the award for FiiWA (Freedom in Interactive Wearable Art), a suite of sporting equipment for the visually impaired that she developed as a thesis project at Parsons.

FiiWA's flexibility allows for outdoor or indoor play. The products, which include a vest, ball, armbands, and goal pads, use sound, vibration, and light cues to orient and guide users unescorted to the play area and locations of their teammates. Users can shape and create individual games incorporating as little or as much of the equipment as they would like, retaining complete power to adapt the experience to the player's ability levels and interests. By ameliorating the distinction between sighted and non-sighted competition, broadening the pool of potential

playmates, and building confidence, FiiWA empowers those with visual impairments to overcome the barriers of sensorial deficiencies and to realize new levels of independence.

Parsons was one of six international design schools to submit projects for consideration, which were then judged by a panel of distinguished designers. FiiWA was then presented alongside the competition's other finalists in a three-week installation at the Cologne Museum of Applied Arts.





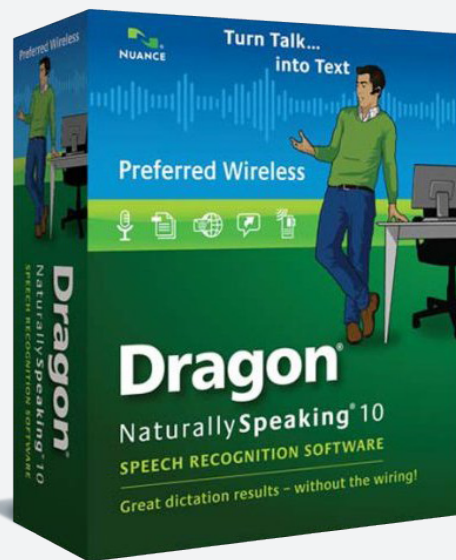
## Awards and Scholarships **LDRF and ELA Foundation**

The Learning Disabilities Resources Foundation (LDRF) is a non-profit organization based here in New York City whose mission is to increase access to assistive technology.

The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation, Inc. (ELA) is a scholarship provided to women pursuing graduate degrees.

The LDRF periodically presents awards to eligible students, and they have recently acquired **Dragon® Naturally Speaking** and **MacSpeech Dictate** software. Dragon® Naturally Speaking 10 gives small business and advanced PC users the power to create documents, reports and emails three times faster than most people type—with up to 99% accuracy. It allows the user to surf the Web by voice or dictate and edit in Microsoft Word and Excel, Corel WordPerfect, and most other Windows-based applications. Create voice commands to quickly insert blocks of texts or images—such as your name, title, and signature. Dictate into a handheld device when you're away from your PC, or use a Bluetooth microphone for the same great dictation results without the wires. MacSpeech Dictate works in a similar way (it is powered by Dragon® speech recognition engine by Nuance), but is specifically for Mac users.

If you feel you may be eligible for an LDRF award, or for more information, please contact us here at the SDS office, or visit the LDRF website at: [www.ldrfa.org](http://www.ldrfa.org).



The vision of the Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation, Inc. (ELA) is to change the face of disability on the planet.

In order to accomplish this vision, ELA's mission is to promote, through scholarships, the presence of women

with disabilities in higher education.

ELA Scholarships are available only to women graduate students with physical disabilities who are enrolled in a college or university in the United States.

These scholarships are awarded on an

objective and nondiscriminatory basis. Scholarships range between \$500 and \$2,000.

Deadline is June 1, 2009.

For more information, please visit: [www.ela.org](http://www.ela.org)



## Contribute to the Newsletter

Contact the Assistant Director, Jason Luchs, at [luchs@newschool.edu](mailto:luchs@newschool.edu) if you wish to be involved.

While much of the content in the newsletter is created by SDS staff, it doesn't mean that students or other faculty and staff from the university can't contribute if they'd like to. We welcome with open arms any stories, artwork, announcements, or other items you'd like to contribute to the newsletter.

Ideally, any contributions should be in some way related to individuals with disabilities. Perhaps you have a story about how someone you know overcame their condition to succeed, a tip or technique for studying or participating in classroom discussions, or maybe you have a personal story you'd like to share.



## Contact Information

For all general inquiries related to Student Disability Services, you can email: [studentdisability@newschool.edu](mailto:studentdisability@newschool.edu).

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SDS normal hours of operation are M–F, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Evening appointments can be made upon request.