



2011 Year End Report

The year 2011 was a very productive and exciting one for the Frederick County Commission on Disabilities. Considerable progress was made in several critical areas, including: the distribution of the very informative *Keys to Independence* booklet, advocating for County residents who felt they were the victims of disability discrimination, and providing valuable assistance to governments and private businesses when their construction projects involved access requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As in the past year the Commission on Disabilities continued to distribute copies of its *Keys to Independence* booklet. This is a high quality publication that provides nearly 40 pages of information about services, resources and other assistance available to persons with disabilities in our community. It covers housing, employment, medical and local service agencies, as well as state and national resources. The *Keys* booklet is also available on the Commission's website. It continues to be a great resource for people with disabilities and their caregivers.

Commission on Disabilities members attended and participated in the regional Elder Expo in October. This opportunity provided Commission members with a chance to discuss their work, distribute the *Keys* booklet and other information, and also hand out key rings, jar openers, magnets and other items that publicize the Commission and its efforts.

Once during the past year the Commission on Disabilities presented Distinguished Service Award to an individual and/or business in our community that have truly gone "above and beyond" in their service to people with disabilities. We are extremely grateful that the Board of County Commissioners once again allowed these presentations to be made during its public meetings, and took the time to personally congratulate the recipient. That truly makes this award special to each recipient. In April, Kate Kraemer was honored for her work as the Director of the FCC Services for Students with Disabilities Office, having worked to help young adults transition to College easier and make sure they get the support they need to be successful students.

During the past year the Commission on Disabilities was contacted by a host of Frederick County residents who complained about various forms of discrimination they had experienced in connection

with their disabilities. While the Commission does not have the authority to institute any kind of formal proceedings in these cases, we always make sure to inform people of the county, state and federal agencies that do, and how to get in touch with them. Instead, the Commission on Disabilities reaches out to explore each situation, to see if a mutually satisfactory resolution is possible.

The last major area of the Commission's work involves long-time member Gil House, who is truly a fountain of information about the architectural requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and a passionate community resource who willingly volunteers many hours of his time to critically review and analyze the complex building and remodeling plans that are submitted to the County, city and state. Gil also has been contacted by several businesses that have asked for his assistance with becoming ADA compliant before they start construction.

Despite all of these achievements, the Commission on Disabilities has an abundance of work that needs to be done in 2012.

The Commission on Disabilities meets on the second Monday of each month at the Senior Center on Taney Avenue at 6:00 p.m. Our meetings are always open to the public.