



# ***NYS AIRS NOTES***

**AUGUST 2008**

---

*New York State Alliance of Information and Referral Systems  
"Bringing People and Services Together"*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Summer time is here, and many of us are taking vacations, or at least enjoying the weekends outdoors. We hope all our members are having a good summer thus far. Even though it's still summer, it's never too early to begin to plan our fall activities, and the NYS AIRS Annual Conference should be on your calendar! This is a wonderful educational event with plenty of networking opportunities. The AIRS Certification exams will be offered, and it's a perfect opportunity to brush up your knowledge before taking them. (Please note: you must register with AIRS – [www.AIRS.org](http://www.AIRS.org) – no later than September 17 to sit for the exam.) We are adding new workshops this year in response to our membership survey results. In addition to the workshops, Wednesday night's gala dinner and silent auction is included in the price of the conference. Please join us in celebrating our "Sweet Sixteen" conference! I look forward to seeing old friends and meeting new. See you in Albany, John Plonksi, NYS AIRS President

## **NYS AIRS ANNUAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

***MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW  
16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NYS AIRS CONFERENCE***

***THE VOICE OF I & R***



The Desmond Hotel & Conference Center  
Albany, NY  
October 16 – 17, 2008  
Welcome Reception October 15, 5-7 pm

Join NYS AIRS for two days of outstanding learning opportunities and presentations focusing on areas of interest to referral professionals.

On Wednesday October 15, the Conference will kick off with a Welcome Reception - join your fellow I&R practitioners in the lovely courtyard at the Desmond Hotel.

On October 16 and 17, the general Conference will occur, offering more workshops of interest to the information and referral community, including such diverse topics as capacity-building, public relations, difficult callers, cultural diversity, web technology, motivating staff and more. The Conference Committee has posted a "**Call for Presentations**," so if you have an idea for a

workshop and/or would like to present, check [www.nysairs.org](http://www.nysairs.org) or contact John Plonski at [JPlonski@covenanthouse.org](mailto:JPlonski@covenanthouse.org) .

The Desmond Hotel and Conference Center is conveniently located at 660 Albany-Shaker Road in Albany, NY, accessible by train, plane, and automobile (bus, too!). This unique and beautiful facility has agreed to block off a group of rooms at a discounted rate (\$129/night). Please use code group ID# 11G1CG to secure that rate. Note: room block discount reservation deadline is **September 24**. For more information, directions, and reservations, call 518-869-8100 or visit <http://www.desmondhotelsalbany.com/>.

The Conference will also include an AIRS Certification Test for CRS, CIRS, CIRS-A (see below for details and translation).

**Conference Scholarship.** Once again, NYS AIRS is proud to offer two **Friends of NYS AIRS Conference Scholarships** to deserving I&R professionals in NY State. One scholarship will cover the two-day conference fee for the winner, which includes admission to all conference workshops, included meals and special events **and** a hotel room for 2 nights (October 15 and 16, 2008.) The second scholarship will cover the cost of the two-day conference fee for the winner, which includes admission to all conference workshops, included meals and any special events. The application is available at [www.nysairs.org](http://www.nysairs.org) and is due by September 15, 2008. Winners will be notified by October 1, 2008. If you have any questions, please call Norma Bergmann, (607) 723-8313 x829, or email [nbergmann@familyenrichment.cc](mailto:nbergmann@familyenrichment.cc).

Conference brochures will be mailed out in early Fall, and will be available at [www.NYSAIRS.org](http://www.NYSAIRS.org) as well.

### **AIRS NATIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT**

More than 700 I&R colleagues attended the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual AIRS Conference in Houston, Texas this past May. NYSAIRS members were well represented both as presenters -- Shye Louis (211/Lifeline) co-presenting a Pre-Conference Intensive Training and Doug Frank (211 Western NY/Central Referral Service) co-presenting "Assisting Military Families in Your Community" -- and 18 members attending.

The Conference offered more than 80 speakers on nine tracks presenting the latest information on Aging & Disability, I&R Service Delivery, Disaster Response, Management, Military, Resource Database, Technology, 2-1-1 and an assortment of Special Topics. There was also time for R&R at the "Evening at the George Ranch," a working ranch since 1824 and now an historical park where attendees enjoyed Texas barbecue, cattle roping, line dancing and, yes, armadillo racing.



A special highlight was a visit to the 211 Texas/United Way Helpline's new facility which includes both the largest 211 in the State and United Way of Greater Houston's headquarters with a NonProfit Resource Library and Community Resource Center where local groups may utilize conference space. It was in this impressive building that the 211 rode out Hurricane Rita.

Mark your calendars now for the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual AIRS Conference in Reno, Nevada, at the Silver Legacy Resort & Casino Hotel, May 31- June 3, 2009.

## **AGENCY SPOTLIGHT**

**LawHelp** is collaborative project of ten legal assistance agencies designed to help low and moderate income New Yorkers solve their legal problems. An on-line legal information clearinghouse, **LawHelp.org** provides quick and accurate referrals to free civil legal services programs, public interest law offices, basic information about legal rights, self-help information, court information, links to social service agencies, and more throughout New York State.

Every day, thousands of New Yorkers face a wide range of problems whose solution may require some legal intervention. Low-income persons, in particular, face difficult challenges when confronted with legal problems, and may be not be aware of the legal resources available to them. People need answers to questions like, "What do I do if I'm served with an eviction notice?" "Where do I go if I need protection from an abusing spouse? Or, "How can I get help to figure out the new Medicare drug rules?" By helping people find a lawyer, learn about their rights, and provide invaluable information about the court system, **LawHelp** provides important relief.

The **LawHelp** website collects the best materials and keeps current on eligibility and contact information for all the legal services organizations throughout New York. Individual users as well as social service providers can locate the most appropriate referrals and materials through a search capacity on a zip code, place of residence and type of legal problem. **LawHelp** is continually updated through the participation of volunteer attorneys throughout the state.

LawHelp.org search topics include Housing, Taxes, Consumer, Internet Fraud, Public Benefits, Immigration, Health, Education, Workers Rights, Disability, Seniors, Life Planning and Family & Juvenile issues. Once a general topic is selected, a list of sub-topics are presented such as

### **CONSUMER**

- **Debt Collection, Garnishment & Repossession**
- **Bankruptcy**
- **Consumer Fraud**
- **Credit & Identity Theft**
- **Public Utilities: Gas, Electricity & Telephone**
- **Student Loans**
- **Foreclosure, Predatory Lending & Home Loans**

Each sub-topic selection offers tabs with additional information, Q&A fact sheets and links that allow you to drill down to local resources:

- Find A Lawyer (*Free legal services programs for eligible clients*),
- Know Your Rights (*Fact sheets and booklets about your legal rights*),
- Going to Court (*Finding and using the courts of New York State*),
- Finding Other Help (*Social services agencies, community organizations, government agencies and other resources*)

There's also a News Alert section with information on new programs, workshops/seminars and timely topics (right now, tax preparation resources). In 2005, nearly 155,000 New Yorkers sought legal resources via the **LawHelp** website.

**LawHelp** is happy to train agency staff of New York State non-profit organizations on the most effective and efficient use of the **LawHelp** website. To arrange a training (either in-person or on-line) contact Wilneida Negron at [wnegron@lsny.org](mailto:wnegron@lsny.org) or for upstate New York, contact Keith McCafferty at [km@lafl.org](mailto:km@lafl.org).

## **UPCOMING CERTIFICATION TESTING DATES**

AIRS certification examinations will be held at the Annual NYS AIRS Education and Training Conference in October.

Certified Resource Specialist (CRS), Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS), Certified Information and Referral Specialist - Aging (CIRS-A) are professional credentials awarded internationally by AIRS to individuals who complete the certification program and pass the examination for Information & Referral Specialists. It is an acknowledgment of demonstrated competence in the field of Information & Referral.

Costs:

- The basic cost of a Certification application for AIRS members is \$75 at the basic level, \$72 for standard level members, \$68 for enhanced members and \$65 for premium members OR \$225 for non-members.
- An examination re-take is \$40 for AIRS members and \$75 for non-members.

The Certification Application Form is for all applicants whether they are new or retaking the exam and is available at [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org). Completed applications, supporting documentation and payment **must arrive at the AIRS office at least 30 days prior to the test date.**

## **OF INTEREST**

### **DIGITAL TV TRANSITION**

Beginning February 17, 2009, all television in the US will be required to stop broadcasting in analog format and transmit in digital format only. Consumers who use “over-the-air” television via an antenna will need to get a converter box unless their TV set has a built-in digital tuner (newer sets purchased since 2004). Converter boxes cost \$50-70 each and one is required for every TV set. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration is administering a program to provide up to two coupons worth \$40 each to use toward the cost of the converter boxes. Coupons will expire 90 days after the date they were issued. Coupons may be requested:

- Online at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov)
- Call the 24-hr. hotline at 1.888.DTV.2009 (1.888.388.2009)

**NY-ALERT** is the New York State All-Hazards Alert and Notification System.

This web-based portal offers one-stop access through which state agencies, county and local governments, emergency service agencies and institutions of higher learning can provide emergency alerting information and routine notifications to a defined audience (local, county, regional or statewide). Visit [www.nyalert.gov](http://www.nyalert.gov).

## **EVENTS**

***Your event here!*** Please email any information to Elizabeth Eberhardt, [eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org](mailto:eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org). Be sure to include the date, time, contact information, and details of your event.

### **NYS AIRS QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING**

October 17, 2008

1:00-3:00 p.m.

Following Annual Conference at the Desmond Hotel & Conference Center, Albany

All members welcome.

**NYS AIRS NOTES** is issued in April, August and December. To submit articles or events for consideration, contact [eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org](mailto:eeberhardt@unitedwayli.org). For current news and events between issues, please check the NYS AIRS website at [www.nysairs.org](http://www.nysairs.org).

NYS AIRS Notes is best viewed in "print layout" format. Please note: Only the primary contact person listed on the NYS AIRS membership application will receive this newsletter. If you are an agency member, please feel free to distribute copies to your coworkers

NYS AIRS Communications Committee:

Elizabeth Eberhardt, United Way of Long Island

Cathleen Kelly, CDK Consulting

Shye Louis, 2-1-1/Life Line

Karen Butler Easter, Reachout of St. Lawrence County

Michael Cush, VISIONS

Ted Miroulis, Paetec Communications



New York Alliance of Information and Referral Systems  
c/o United Way of Long Island  
819 Grand Blvd.  
Deer Park, NY 11729