

# STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES NEWSLETTER



University Photography

## IMPORTANT DATES

### August 21, 2009

Residence Halls Open  
SDS Orientation Program  
3:00—4:00pm RPCC 105

### August 27, 2009

Classes begin

### September 7, 2009

Using Technology to Take Notes  
Workshop 4:30-6:00pm 105  
Stimson

### September 14, 2009

Emergency Preparedness Work-  
shop 4:30-5:30pm 105 Stimson

### September 18, 2009

Assistive technology Workshop  
4:00-5:00pm, CIT Computer  
Lab, Mann Library

### September 17, 2009

Last day to add courses

### October 5, 2009

Life is What Happens When  
You're Busy Making Other Plans  
Ken Kunken 5:00-7:30pm, ILR  
Conference Center Rm. 225

### October 10-13, 2009

Fall Break

### October 14, 2009

Classes Resume  
Last day to drop courses

### November 25-29, 2009

Thanksgiving Break

### November 30, 2009

Classes Resume

### December 5, 2009

Last Day of Classes

### December 6-9, 2009

Study Period

### December 10-18, 2009

Finals Period

### December 19, 2009

January Graduation Recognition

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Cornellians,

The staff of Student Disability Services (SDS) extends a warm welcome to all new students and a happy homecoming to returning students.

This past year over 800 students with disabilities used the services of SDS. The level of access in the classroom and the physical campus that students experience is the result of the paths forged by many Cornell alums whose legacy includes educating the campus community about the importance of equitable access.

Ken Kunken '72 has had some experience with the Cornell campus pre-ADA. Ken was paralyzed in a Cornell football game in 1970 and returned to campus to earn two degrees. SDS and Cornell Union for Disabilities Awareness (CUDA) have invited Ken to speak on campus about this experience and how he has achieved success in his personal and professional life. I hope you can join us on October 5, 2009 at 5:00 in room 225 of the ILR Conference Center for this special event.

The on-going effort to assess the access needs of the campus and to develop a strategic access plan is currently being undertaken by six teams in our campus-wide Disability Access Management initiative. It is important for the community to reflect on the progress that has been achieved thus far in determining where to go from here. I will keep you updated on the progress of the Strategic Plan for Disability Access Management and appreciate the efforts of students who are participating on teams.

Wishing you a terrific fall semester.

Sincerely,

Kappy Fahey

## REQUESTING FACULTY NOTIFICATION LETTERS

Each semester students must give advance notice to instructors of accommodations needed for their courses. Upon request from you, SDS will prepare a faculty notification letter with your accommodations listed for you to give to instructors. Using the on-line request form is the most efficient method for requesting letters. If you add courses after your letter request is submitted, you will need to submit an additional request.

To ensure that accommodations will be in place throughout the semester, you should meet with your professor within the first two weeks of classes. The following steps outline the process for requesting classroom accommodations.

1. If you are new to Cornell and have not finalized the process to register with SDS, call 607-254-4545 to schedule an appointment to meet with your SDS counselor.
2. Complete a Request for Faculty Notification Letters Form. You can fill out a form in the SDS office or online at <http://sds.cornell.edu/sdsregistration.php>
3. Pick up your letters from the SDS office two business days after submitting request form.
4. Meet privately with instructors (or their designated representative), give them the Faculty Notification Letters and discuss the specific arrangements for your classroom accommodations. Instructors must have two weeks notice of accommodation needs. Notice for final exam accommodations must be provided at least two weeks before the last day of class.

**Please contact SDS immediately if you have concerns about the accommodation process or the administration of an exam.**

## KEN KUNKEN '72 TO SPEAK AT CORNELL



Ken Kunken  
Class of 1972

"We all also possess an inner strength that enables us to rise to the occasion and tackle almost insurmountable odds. How that inner strength is used will make the difference between someone who is good and someone who is great." Ken Kunken

As a Cornell student in 1970, Ken Kunken sustained an injury during a football game that left him paralyzed from the shoulders down. He went on to not only graduate from Cornell with a degree in engineering, he also earned two graduate degrees, including a Master of Arts from Cornell in education and a Master of Education from Columbia University in psychology. Not finished yet with his education, he earned a Juris Doctor degree from Hofstra University's School of Law. He has testified before a United States Senate Subcommittee on Health Care, chaired by Senator Edward Kennedy, and Ken's life was the subject of one of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale's nationally syndicated radio broadcasts, "The American Character." Ken currently serves as Deputy Bureau Chief of the Nassau County Court Trial Bureau supervising 27 other assistant district attorneys.

SDS and CUDA are incredibly excited to announce that Ken will speak at Cornell University on October 5, 2009 at 5:00 PM in the ILR Conference Center, Room 225.

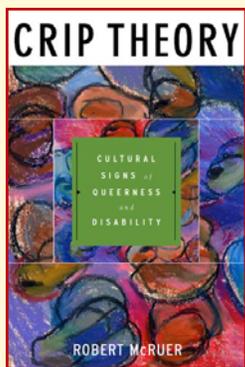
We hope that you can join us!

### SDS LENDING LIBRARY

CHECK OUT OUR LIST OF BOOKS AND MOVIES AVAILABLE FROM OUR LENDING LIBRARY ON OUR WEBSITE AT:

[HTTP://SDS.CORNELL.EDU/LIBRARY.HTML](http://SDS.CORNELL.EDU/LIBRARY.HTML)

## BOOK REVIEW: CRIP THEORY



*Crip Theory*  
By: Robert McRuer

Robert McRuer's recent book, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, is an effort to move beyond us-versus-them thinking in the burgeoning field of disability studies. Rather than approaching disability as an entirely new kind of difference requiring new techniques of analysis and interpretations, he draws analogies between disability issues and the developments that have been made in gay rights.

McRuer pushes for the use of "crip theory" – a theoretical framework that he defines through the course of his book – as a powerful way to think about ability and society. For him, crip theory is a way to apply the lessons that disability teaches about the fragility of identity and the need for social justice to other societal contexts, including film, history, politics, pedagogy. He calls into doubt the assumptions of what it means to be physically and cognitively normal, just as queer theory sets out to question accepted notions of gender roles and sexuality. Far from being pedantic, McRuer's prose is animated and enjoyable. In the

opening chapter, he lays out his agenda by introducing some of the issues that lie at the intersection of disability, sexuality, and community. Through the course of the book, he builds on these themes, citing everything from television and movies, such as the Jack Nicholson film *As Good As It Gets* and the Bravo series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, to the collision of sexuality and illness in the AIDS epidemic, to the political implications of rehabilitation.

If McRuer at times seems to be conflating disability with other kinds of identity categories, such as gender or sexuality, perhaps it is because, as he says, "at times disability studies... does purport to be about everything." What *Crip Theory* tries to drive home, like queer theory before it, is that the self-defining identities we construct – and the identities constructed for us – can be radically destabilized just by looking at the state of the world from a different angle. If disability theory isn't everything, it is at least relevant to everyone, since we will all potentially age into retirement and disability. As McRuer says, and indeed as the entire field of disability theory teaches, "if we live long enough, disability is the one identity we will all inhabit."

-Danya Glabau

## FINGER LAKES INDEPENDENCE CENTER

The Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) is a non-profit organization that strives to improve quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families. FLIC offers information and referrals for adaptive equipment, accessible housing, sign language interpreters, and a variety of other accommodations. FLIC is a resource center that can address questions concerning civil rights legislation, benefits eligibility requirements, and community outreach speakers. The FLIC Systems Advocacy Team consists of a network of local volunteers dedicated to making change through advocacy and action on behalf of people with disabilities. A Student Services Coordinator is available to work with students transitioning out of high school into the adult world.



FLIC offers many support group meetings for issues such as depression, stroke, acquired brain injury, arthritis, ostomy and visual impairment. Peer counseling is available, where an individual with a disability can meet and talk to a person with a similar disability.

“One of the things I would say as program director is we try to be flexible in meeting the needs of people with disabilities. And we are a good source of basic information and support for people with disabilities and the general public who have disability questions.” – Larry Roberts

The Finger Lakes Independence Center—[www.fliconline.org](http://www.fliconline.org)  
215 Fifth Street, Ithaca, NY 14850  
Voice/TTY (607) 272-2433 Fax (607) 272-0922



Cornell Union for Disabilities Awareness



An **alliance** of people, with and without disabilities, interested in disabilities issues both on and off campus.

A **forum** for raising awareness and educating others about local, national, and international **disabilities issues**.

A **club** actively working with administrators, faculty, and staff to **improve** all aspects of accessibility on campus.





### Join us every Monday @ 4:30pm in Stimson 105

For more information, contact Lisa Opdycke,  
[ino4@cornell.edu](mailto:ino4@cornell.edu)

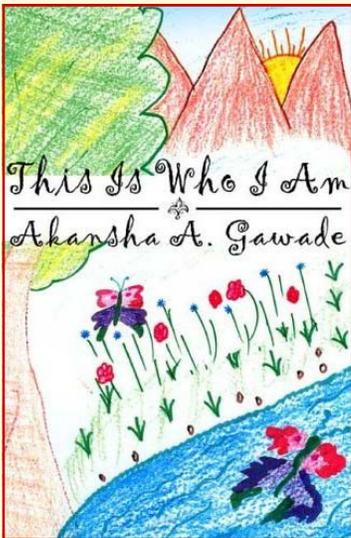
### **New Support Group Forming:** Wednesday, September 2, 4:00 pm, Big Red Barn

CUDA members hope to get a group of students with disabilities together a couple times a month to get to know each other, laugh, gripe, hang out, be social. The format and name can be determined by the students who participate, and therefore it will be a group created by and for students with disabilities. Both grads & undergrads are welcome. The first meeting will be a meet and greet. Check with CUDA for further information, exact location and times, or email Jamie Streeter Wilson at [jsw274@cornell.edu](mailto:jsw274@cornell.edu).

## THIS IS WHO I AM

**Akansha Gawade**

It was a typical late afternoon on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002 as I was preparing for my math exam. It was 5:00 PM when I took a break to stretch and look out of the window. Suddenly, the room became fuzzy and cloudy, at least to my eyes. I saw two numbers, 3 and 4, in vivid red color floating in the air. Without warning, everything was pitch black. I had, unwillingly, entered a world where the five senses did not exist. The very next second, I could see everything again. It was, however, not the next second! What seemed like a second to me was really four whole minutes! Where had those four minutes gone? I saw my family running around in front of me, examining me, and trying



*This Is Who I Am*  
By: Akansha Gawade

to do something I did not understand, even if it had to do with me. My sister was trying to bring my mouth to its original position, which was, for some reason, twisted. My body felt as if it had just received twelve hours of deep sleep. After gradually regaining the senses of my muscles, I vomited. With all this, embarrassment flowed down my cheeks taking the place of tears. I could not believe it, but I had just suffered my first epileptic seizure!

My life, as I knew it, changed. My neurologist put me on

medication, but told me that its course is not definite. He would decide on its duration as he monitored my seizures. This left me in complete uncertainty and my life just turned to a question mark. Taking three tablets per day, which is about 1,095 tablets a year, initially affected me severely. Side effects of this medication included loss of concentration and sleepiness, as well as limitations on my performance academically, socially, and physically. I had to give double the effort of “normal” students to achieve anything. My loss of confidence and hope discouraged me. I kept recalling how, in India, I had shopped by myself from the age of nine and learned bargaining skills at the same time to help my mom. Fatigue spread in my body like the venom of a snake and thwarted my love for sports. My first seizure, without doubt, brought fear. I feared my peers’ misunderstanding of my disorder. I feared suffering from a seizure while I crossed a road. Most of all, I feared losing myself... again and again to a world that was pitch black.

Was I going to be jealous of people who had fewer restrictions than I did? Was I going to stay in constant dread? No, I was not going to let a disorder rule me. I was going to determine how much it will affect my life. I gradually came to realize that epilepsy is nothing but a change that a few get to experience. Everything goes through change, whether it is a metal fence that rusts, or a tree that grows, or a caterpillar that becomes a butterfly. So, I was not different. Surprisingly, epilepsy gave me my motivation and helped me to adapt.

My epilepsy encouraged me to put my emotions and ideas on paper. As my pen worked against the friction of the paper, a book began to develop. I kept changing it and perfecting it so that everyone could relate to it. During this process, through the themes and issues expressed in my book, I regained my confidence, comfort, and security.

I began to exercise daily and I joined the Varsity Swimming Team in my school. The sports keep me energetic physically and less prone to sleep. They continue to increase my concentration level. I now accept that perhaps I may have to spend a little extra time in my endeavors, but through my hard work, I will keep pace with others. I also stayed very active in and out of school. This bolstered my confidence. The seizures occurred less frequently. To date, I have not had one for more than a year. The severity of the side effects diminished greatly. I also found the strength to share my situation with my friends. My book told me to believe that there is a “way out” of the traps of the disorder.

When I entered high school, I sent the manuscript of my book to a number of publishers. After much anticipation, Dorrance Publishing Co. Inc. happily accepted it. I began the editing process with a professional and decided on the front and the back cover, the format, the synopsis, and the illustrations. During junior year, the first copy of the book arrived. I had spent almost three years in the process of publishing my book, but now, as the book lay in my hands, I finally experienced the joy of accomplishment: “I had published a book!” As the torch in a relay race is passed from one runner to another, I wish to pass on my message to many people through this book. Now, I confidently believe that life is filled with changes, some more significant than others. It is how we perceive and react to the changes that determine the positive mark in our lives.

**AKANSHA GAWADE '11  
OR & IE  
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING**

## ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

Asperger's Syndrome is a form of high-functioning autism, characterized primarily by difficulty in social interaction and an inability to "read" non-verbal cues. Individuals with Asperger's typically have average to above-average intelligence, but are unable to understand "typical" social interaction without explicit training. For a person with Asperger's, learning social behavior is like learning a second language, and every social nuance and non-verbal cue has to be specifically taught.

People with Asperger's are usually very concrete, literal thinkers, and tend not to see or understand the subtext in a statement. This can cause additional social problems, because not only will they tend to misunderstand social nuances in conversations, they are often very blunt and "honest to a fault."

Because of these deficits in social skills, an individual with Asperger's may appear to be deliberately rude or uncaring. This is generally not the case, however; most people with Asperger's try not to offend others or violate social taboos, but are unable to understand what they're doing to offend. Other difficulties experienced by people with

Asperger's include:

- Extreme sensitivity to sensory stimuli; bright lights, strong smells, or loud or repetitive sounds may be extremely uncomfortable, or even painful for them
- Limited or unusual eye contact
- Inability to moderate or control their tone of voice (speaking too loudly or too softly)
- Clumsiness or other poor motor skills, such as illegible handwriting
- May have a limited range of interests or an intense focus on a specific interest. Sometimes this interest can be something very specific or unusual, such as ceiling fans or train schedules.



While living with Asperger's can be difficult, many of the traits that characterize Asperger's can also be beneficial. The lack of social nuance means that a person with Asperger's is unlikely to lie or play "social games," and can be counted on to tell the truth about a situation. They are also less likely to judge someone on superficial traits or commonly held biases, and tend to be free of prejudices.

Their intense focus on a particular area of interest means that the individual with Asperger's is the ideal researcher, willing and able to focus on the minutiae of a research project with single-minded dedication. Their attention to detail means that every aspect of a project will be covered thoroughly. This intense focus can also be useful for very detail-oriented jobs, such as data entry or computer programming. People with Asperger's are well-suited to jobs that take advantage of their unique strengths in these areas, as well as jobs in their specific area of interest.

-Andrea Dietrich

## UPDATE ON SPRING '09 INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITIES STUDIES COURSE

The first course in Disabilities Studies in the regular Cornell University curriculum was held during the spring '09 semester. Offered through the ILR School, the course had 52 attendees, most of who were from other colleges. The course content covered a wide-range of material, and was presented primarily by guest speakers.

Students in the course discussed many things that they learned during the semester, including a new understanding of the importance of subjects such as disability awareness, compassion for others, and comprehension that as we age we are all likely to be personally impacted by disability.

For a first effort at this course, it was certainly a success. The course will be offered again in Spring '10. It is possible that the format during that upcoming semester may be different than what was used this semester – stay tuned for details!

## WORKSHOPS



### USING TECHNOLOGY TO TAKE NOTES

Monday, September 7th, 4:30-6:00 PM, Stimson 105

Adequate notes are a necessary adjunct to efficient study and learning in college; nevertheless, taking notes can be a daunting task. The purpose of this mini workshop is to highlight a specific note taking technique using Windows office for Mac. In addition, the workshop will engage participants on thinking of other ways to use technology in the note taking process.

#### *About the Presenter:*

Curtis Ferguson II is the Assistant Director of Multicultural Programs at the School of Hotel Administration. He has a Masters in Science in Human Development and a Masters in Business Administration. His academic interest includes multi-cultural competency and civic engagement.

### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Monday, September 14th, 4:30-5:30 PM, Stimson 105

Cornell University recently implemented an emergency text message notification system in addition to an emergency siren and public address system to inform students of situations that may arise. While it is important to have university-wide plans, it is also important for individual students to be prepared for an emergency on campus or off.

To help in this process, this workshop will provide important information about the procedures the university has implemented and measures an individual can take to maximize his or her safety in case of an emergency.

#### *About the Presenters*

Peggy Matta, the Director of Emergency Response & Recovery, and Andrea Haenlin-Mott, the ADA Coordinator for Facilities, both serve as team leaders for the Strategic Disability Access Planning Initiative.

### ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

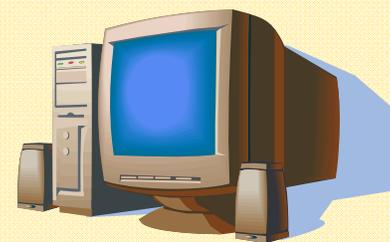
Friday, September 18th, 4:00-5:00 PM, CIT Computer Lab, Mann Library

This one-hour workshop will focus on the uses of computer-based assistive technology offered on campus, including demonstrations on how to use some of the more common assistive technology applications from Premier's Literacy Productivity Pack.

Because seating is limited, attendees are encouraged to RSVP to [alternatemediamedia@cornell.edu](mailto:alternatemediamedia@cornell.edu).

#### *About the Presenter:*

Cyrus Hamilton is a Document Conversion Specialist at Cornell and manages SDS's Alternate Format Resource Center. He was appointed by Governor Paterson as a member of the NYS Instructional Material Advisory Council.



## CORNELL UNIVERSITY

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