

A quarterly letter to friends of the Breaking New Ground Outreach Program

BNG completes county assessments; plans seminars

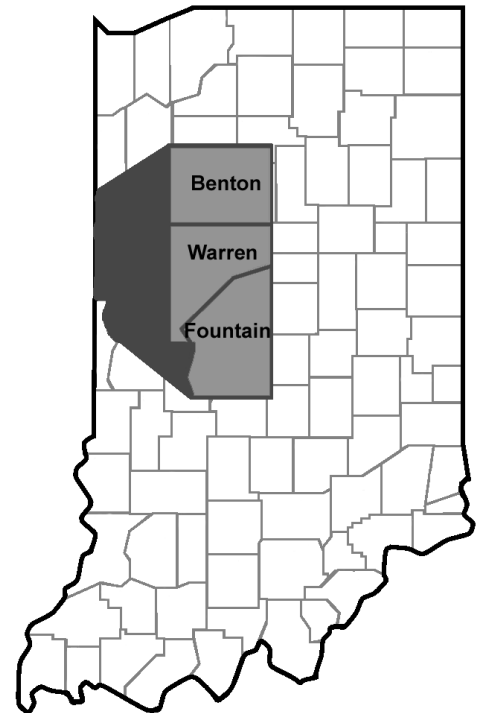
BNG has extensive experience in conducting accessibility assessments of farms, homes, churches, and fairgrounds. But last fall, a team of BNG staff and consultants faced a new assessment challenge: an entire county – actually, three entire counties – as the Step Ahead Councils of Benton, Fountain, and Warren counties commissioned BNG to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each county in regard to access to persons with disabilities.

BNG staff developed a new assessment protocol specifically for county-wide assessments. The assessment team then made several trips to each county to evaluate such facets of the communities as government offices, key services and buildings, and recreational facilities.

The evaluations indicated that, in general, each county has made some significant strides toward accessibility, but, as with most situations, there is still room for progress.

Now, BNG is making plans to take the next step in improving accessibility in these communities. With help from a grant from *ADA—Indiana*, BNG is planning community awareness luncheon seminars in each county to share assessment results with community leaders and give positive suggestions for improving businesses and community life through greater accessibility.

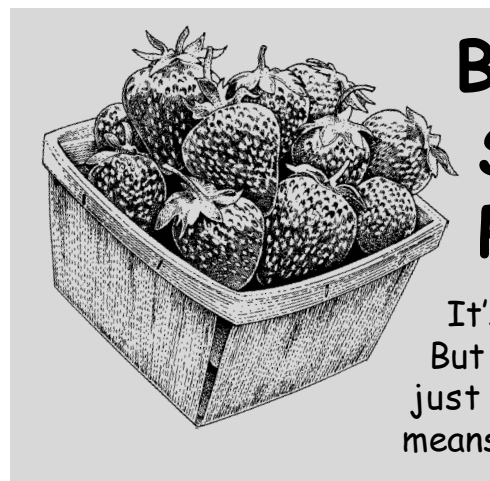
If you are interested in attending one of the luncheon seminars or if you're interested in an accessibility assessment in your county, contact BNG.



Caregiving workshops touch many

BNG continued its support of rural caregivers this spring with the *Caregiving in the Heartland* workshop series. More than 150 consumers and professionals benefited from the three one-day conferences that were held around the state. The workshops were cosponsored by the Indiana State Department of Health with assistance from The Arthritis Foundation – Indiana Chapter.

As with previous caregiving workshops, BNG focused on providing a



BNG Summer Strawberry Picnic June 2

It's been a long, cold winter. But believe it or not, summer's just around the corner. That means warm weather, the annual

BNG summer picnic, and Ed Bell's strawberries - an unbeatable combination. This year, the BNG gang will be joining with the Independent Living Center of Eastern Indiana for a community picnic on June 2 at Bell's Strawberries in Hagerstown. We'll be grilling burgers and brats, playing a few games, and sharing some fellowship. If you're interested in coming, contact BNG at 800-825-4264 for more details.

user-friendly, interactive atmosphere where participants could learn from experts, network with others, and interact with vendors. Session subjects included home modifications, transportation, and coping with caregiving.

Judging from participant evaluations, the project was an overwhelming success. "The focus on caring for the caregiver is great," stated one participant. Another indicated, "I got a lot of valuable resources from the vendors and speakers, and met a lot of neat people."

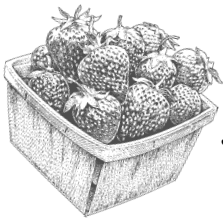


Caregiver Helen Thomas speaks in Indianapolis

news Note

Breaking New Ground Outreach Program
Purdue University
1146 ABE Bldg.
W. Lafayette, IN 47907-1146
(800)825-4264 (Voice/TDD)
www.agrability.org

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
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Purdue University



**Don't Miss
the BNG Summer
Strawberry Picnic
June 2 !!!**

BNG Program Manager: Paul Jones Rural Rehab Specialist: Steve Swain

SICIL leads transportation initiative

BNG's nonprofit partner, the Southern Indiana Center for Independent Living (SICIL), is coordinating the Community Transportation Initiative. Funded by the Governor's Planning Council for People with Disabilities, the vision of this project is to expand the availability of accessible, affordable public and private transportation options throughout the state, especially in rural areas.

The Transportation Initiative planning team has already conducted several activities, including the *Mobility for All!* conference and the Community Transportation Initiative Academy. The latter event brought together several teams from around the

state for an intensive three-day training session. Each team learned specific ways to bring accessible transportation to their respective areas.

The Transportation Initiative is planning another Academy for 2002. If you're interested in learning ways to bring ac-



cessible transportation to your area of Indiana, contact Al Tolbert, Executive Director of SICIL, at 800-845-6914.



Partners in Policymaking seeks Academy applicants

Individuals with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities are invited to apply for the Partners in Policymaking Academy, sponsored by the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. The Partners Academy equips its graduates with the necessary skills and information to play a leadership role in policy development and advocacy within their communities and at the state level. The Partners program includes eight weekends of intensive training, and applicants must be willing to commit to attendance and homework requirements.

The application deadline is August 17 for the Partners Academy Class of 2002. For more information about applying, contact Gail Rubisch-Hawkey at the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Indiana (the administrative organization for

Partners). Ms. Rubisch-Hawkey can be reached at 800-723-7620.

Ventrac mobility vehicle for sale

BNG has a Ventrac 300 outdoor mobility vehicle, loaned to us by the Venture Company, which the program has used for display at public awareness events. Now Venture is allowing BNG to sell the vehicle for a reduced price. The Ventrac is designed to allow the operator to stay in his or her wheelchair by rolling onto the operating platform. No chair transfer is necessary. After the chair is in the proper position, the hinged ramp is raised, becoming the tailgate. The retail price for the Ventrac is around \$4000; however, since it a "demonstrator", Venture Products is selling it for \$2400. If you're interested in this unique product, contact BNG at 800-825-4264.



Internet support group assists farmers with disabilities

BNG recently discovered an Internet resource for farmers with disabilities. Founded by a southern Ohio farmer, the "Paralyzed Farmers Group" is a Web site designed to create a network of farmers who are paralyzed and to encourage others through the sharing of personal experiences or other helpful information. To date, the group has 61 active members, and there are many others who visit the site on a daily or weekly basis. The group addresses such areas as disability-related issues, health, safety, technology, and general farm issues (yields, weather, prices, etc.). Their Web site contains pages for messages, photos, news, chat, links, calendars, and more. Feel free to stop by and check it out at <http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/paralyzedfarmersgroup>.



The Ventrac 300 is a versatile all-terrain vehicle