

## **ADA Coalition of Connecticut holds State Conference**

On Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> the ADA Coalition of Connecticut's hosted its Annual State Conference. Bill DeMaio, ADACC's Chairman of the board welcomed the 80 attendees who represented more than 50 Connecticut towns, museums, state agencies and non-profits. The day featured timely and informative presentations by several ADA professionals, a delicious buffet lunch and networking opportunities with ADA coordinators from around the state.

To kick off the conference, Bill Kilroy, Northeast Sales Director from Vispero and Michelle Vincino, Customer Relations Manager from Sprint/RELAY CT demonstrated and explained how tools and technology can increase accessibility. From screen reading software to the latest in services that allow hearing impaired individuals to communicate with standard telephone users, Bill and Michelle described how these tools can allow people with disabilities to live more independently. In addition, they described how municipalities, organizations and businesses can use technology to more effectively communicate with residents and customers.

Untrained pets masquerading as service animals have become a growing problem in the last few years and confusion over service dogs and emotional support animals complicate the issue further. Evan Bjorklund, General Counsel, from the Massachusetts Office on Disabilities, helped sort it all out by explaining the difference and what is protected by the ADA. Then, Laura DeMaio Roy, a Certified Dog Trainer delighted the crowd with her presentation on what goes into training a service dog and what types of tasks service dogs can be trained to do.

Following up on the morning session, Kathy Gips, the Training Director from the New England ADA Center, honed in on Effective Communications by explaining ADA requirements that communication with people with disabilities must be "as effective" as communication with others. Wrapping up the training for the day, Ndidi Moses, Assistant US Attorney for the District of Connecticut educated the audience with the most asked questions -- and the answers -- about ADA compliance.

Sponsors and exhibitors included AdvancedWheels, To Design, Center for Disability Rights, Art of Touch, Savol Pools, CT Legal Rights and Disability Rights CT who added to the day with their support and by demonstrating products and services for the disabled. The conference concluded with a lively raffle drawing with many terrific prizes donated by local businesses.

Information regarding ADACC and the featured speakers from the conference can be found at [adacc.net](http://adacc.net).