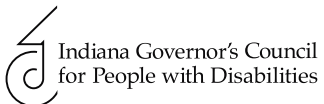


ignite thoughts into action

spark



Summer 2015
volume 5 number 2

ADA'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY



Disability
advocates



Civic
leaders



Special
memories

ADA'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

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spark is a publication of the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, an independent state agency that facilitates change. Our mission is to promote the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. This mission is accomplished through planning, evaluation, collaboration, education, research and advocacy.

Christine Dahlberg
Interim Executive Director

It's been 25 years since President George H.W. Bush said, "Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down," as he signed the groundbreaking Americans with Disabilities Act that would forever change our nation's views toward people with disabilities.

Crafting legislation strong enough to tear down this wall of exclusion was not a singular effort. Many of the advocates I had the pleasure of working closely with during the enactment of this historic bill were from Indiana – a state that continues to be a pioneer and inspiration in the disability rights movement. The collaboration and camaraderie are memories I'll never forget.

The Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, under Suellen Jackson-Boner's leadership, has built a forceful, knowledgeable community of advocates that continues to grow and dismantle the wall that separates people with disabilities from fulfilling their dreams and making a difference in their lives and in the community. The Council's contributions and advocacy work throughout the years has been critical to the change being made in so many facets of daily life for Hoosiers with disabilities. Without the ADA and the Council's unwavering dedication to education and advocacy, these advances would not have been possible.

I challenge you to keep breaking down the walls of exclusion by speaking out in your local communities, advocating for yourself or those in your life with disabilities, and continuing to strengthen the ADA's influence for the next 25 years and beyond.

Sincerely,



Bobby Silverstein
*Former Staff Director and Chief Counsel to Senator Tom Harkin
and the Senate Subcommittee on Disability Policy
Principal, Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville, P.C.*



The ADA: A life- and career-changing experience

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was inevitable – it was just a matter of time. Like all civil rights movements that have come before, there was a tipping point. People who had experienced years of discrimination in all its ugly forms forged a common bond and united front to forever change the course of history.

Working to advance civil rights is part of my DNA. I grew up in the inner city of Indianapolis, where people struggled to get an education, earn a living and raise a family. In the 1950s my brother attended the James E. Roberts School, a segregated school for children with disabilities. As a teenager, I volunteered at the Cerebral Palsy Clinic and spent weekends volunteering at Muscatatuck State School. Much of my youth and young adulthood was spent volunteering in the inner city of Indianapolis with

youth and young children. As a young adult, I was able to make an even larger impact through public policy work.

The ADA embodied everything living in a free society is and should be. Although I had been previously involved in social movements, this one was monumental – a life-changing experience. The atmosphere leading up to the passage of the ADA was electrifying. There was so much energy and excitement because we knew we were on the brink of writing a new chapter of American history.

However, working through the maze of the federal legislative system to pass a bill and then adopt regulations is not without struggle. There were as many questions as there were answers. The business community questioned the economics of the ADA – who would pay for making

accommodations? How many people would be affected?

The disability community questioned how much or how little they should compromise to get the legislation passed.

“As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA, I am – and always will be – an optimist. I believe the livable communities movement is a gateway to full inclusion.”

The Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities (the Council) was in a unique position to assist with the ADA’s passage

because Costa Miller, who chaired the Council and served on the President's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities, had worked closely with nationally respected advocate and "father" of the ADA Justin Dart. Dart made a commitment to visit every state in the nation to rally disability advocates and garner support for the ADA. The Council played a significant role in organizing those events and disseminating information statewide, and Christine Dahlberg spearheaded this initiative on behalf of the organization.

The passage of the ADA was just the beginning. Once it passed, we knew we had our work cut out for us, because we now had to educate advocates about the law; counter negative attitudes and backlash; and ensure the letter, intent and spirit of the ADA would be met.

"My 35 years as executive director of the (Governor's) Council has been exciting, fun, rewarding, challenging and gratifying. It has been a joy to come to work each morning."

The Council funded a number of statewide training initiatives to support the implementation of the ADA, including hosting large conferences. These conferences trained people with disabilities and



advocates to bring the ADA to life in their communities and featured notable ADA leaders such as Dart, Bobby Silverstein, Bob Kafka, Jim Dickson and Liz Savage. Being in the presence of these amazing leaders was not only humbling, but inspirational. They were indeed statesmen who transcended the world of politics.

During this crucial training period, the Council also had the wisdom to work with businesses, other organizations and stakeholders, offering additional training and education.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA, I am – and always will be – an optimist. I believe the livable communities movement is a gateway to full inclusion, and it is a vehicle to advance the spirit of the ADA. By adopting livability to frame the conversation about inclusion, we can create not only access, but also a common goal and language that will resonate with a broad population, including

business leaders, policy makers, public officials, the faith-based community, law enforcement and educators.

As my time with the Council comes to a close, there are a lot of thoughts racing through my head. My 35 years as executive director of the Council has been exciting, fun, rewarding, challenging and gratifying. It has been a joy to come to work each morning to anticipate what lies ahead – I could not have asked for more. I wish to thank the Council boards of directors I have served, the seven Indiana governors, the dedicated Council staff and my colleagues – both in the field of disabilities and others serving the broader population. Most of all, I would like to thank people with disabilities for believing in me. *

Suellen Jackson-Boner
Suellen Jackson-Boner

Q&A: Mayor Freeman-Wilson

Before taking office in 2011, Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson had already actively played a role in Indiana public service and leadership. As the former executive director of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, she played a critical role in advocating for the passage of the ADA in Indiana.

Q: Why did you decide to become involved in supporting the ADA legislation?

A: My passion developed as a child when I saw people with disabilities being treated differently. Whether it was a developmental, visual or hearing disability, or someone in a wheelchair – they were always treated differently. So, this became one of my personal quests – to see people treated the same as everyone else.

Q: As the head of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission during the passage of the ADA, what is your favorite memory?

A: This was a piece of legislation that was really larger than life. It was probably one of the most significant pieces of legislation since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and it represented people with disabilities. It was a sense of triumph because it was the acknowledgment that there had been discrimination, that there were barriers – both physical and literal – to be removed, and we now had a tool we could use on behalf of people with disabilities that would have an impact.




Q: After all the civil trials, amendments and updates throughout the past 25 years, do you believe the ADA is stronger than it was 25 years ago?

A: Absolutely it's stronger. I think people understand there is always consideration for making sure that folks are keeping in the spirit of the ADA, and that's significant.

Q: What suggestions do you have for advocates and people with disabilities who are looking to take action?

A: Organize or get involved in a local advocacy organization. You need a group whose sole purpose, mission and objective is to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities. Never underestimate the power of one voice. *



Bringing Indiana voices together

It was 1985, and Christine Dahlberg was a new employee at the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities (the Council). Little did she know that her new job would become a life-changing opportunity forever shaping her career and advocacy efforts on behalf of people with disabilities.

Costa Miller, the Council chair at the time, had become friends with the "father" of the ADA, Justin Dart. When the ADA legislation was introduced, Dart asked Miller if he and the Council would help organize hearings and serve as Indiana's point of contact for advocacy on behalf of the ADA legislation. Christine Dahlberg was asked to represent the Council in this leadership position.

"It was the first time I had been involved in advocacy at this level, and it was an exciting time in the disability rights movement,"

said Dahlberg, interim executive director of the Council. "I was thrilled to be the Council's primary point of contact for this effort."

Dart visited Indiana several times throughout the development of the ADA legislation, leading hearings to ensure people with disabilities' voices were heard and their needs incorporated into the legislation. Dahlberg scheduled and organized every aspect of the hearings, and encouraged people with disabilities from around Indiana to attend.

"The Council was one of the primary agencies in getting information out about the ADA to all Indiana advocates."

"The public hearings were exciting because you got to hear people with disabilities share their issues and concerns, knowing they were being heard at the federal level for the ADA. And, Justin Dart was a great speaker and motivator," Dahlberg said.

At the hearings, people with disabilities provided details about their life experiences and the challenges they faced living with a disability in an inaccessible society.

"One of my fondest memories (about the hearings) is that Justin (Dart) would want a list of every person involved in advocating for the ADA in Indiana before he visited. In his signature cowboy hat, he would roll his wheelchair up to the front of the room and start every meeting thanking that entire list of people – dozens of them – making sure he gave the credit to our state advocates," Dahlberg remembers. "That really

connected people and made them eager to help because their efforts were being recognized and appreciated.”

In addition to organizing the hearings, Dahlberg tracked the status of the ADA legislation and met regularly with Indiana advocacy leaders. Working together with other leaders, such as John-Jay Steinhardt from Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services (IPAS), Dahlberg would analyze research, review information from the hearings and write updates to disseminate to advocates around the state. The updates would provide important information and encourage advocates to contact their senators and representatives to express their personal opinions about the legislation.

“There will always be a need to educate people about the ADA to ensure future generations never forget everything it stands for.”

“In those days, the only way to get the information out quickly was broadcast faxes to advocates,” said Dahlberg. “We would send the faxes out in groups of 50 at a time. It was time-consuming to prepare the documents and send the faxes, but it worked.”

While Dahlberg wasn’t able to attend the president’s signing of the ADA into law in Washington, D.C., she did receive a ticket to the



ceremony and a signed copy of the law. It’s one of her most prized possessions, framed and hanging on the wall of her office.

ADA signing was just the beginning

Following the ADA signing, Dahlberg and Indiana advocates continued to provide information to statewide groups about the regulations developed to implement the ADA. The regulations were fast-tracked by President Bush in a move that was unprecedented for a newly signed federal law. The Council added additional training dollars to the federal government grants and funded a six-year grant for statewide ADA training, so Indiana organizations could help educate people with disabilities and advocates about the ADA.

“The Council was one of the primary agencies in getting information out about the ADA

to all Indiana advocates, informing them about their rights and responsibilities under the new ADA law and making sure they had the opportunity to attend the trainings,” said Dahlberg.

To this day, the Council continues to educate people with disabilities and advocates on their rights under the ADA through funding for ADA Indiana.

Dahlberg said, “After 25 years we have a new generation of advocates who don’t really understand the ADA. There will always be a need to educate people about the ADA to ensure future generations never forget everything it stands for.” *

ADA THROUGH THE YEARS



Indiana State Government employees attend an ADA training conducted by the Great Lakes ADA Center at the Indiana Government Center in 2005.



ADA Indiana member Frank Epperson and his dance partner perform at the Indiana Conference for People with Disabilities.



Ric Edwards catches up with Nancy Young from FSSA at the Deaf Awareness Celebration at the Government Center in 2009.



Former First Lady Judy O'Bannon at an ADA event in Indiana.



Nancy Griffin speaks before the House Ways and Means Committee to advocate for expanded home and community-based services.



ADA Indiana member Vicki Pappas sets the stage for a workshop on the ADA and hospitality industry in 2009.



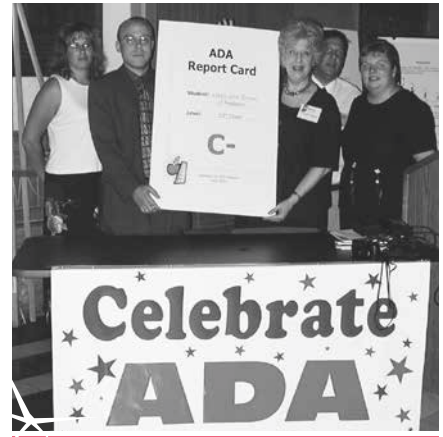
Paul Jones of Purdue's Breaking New Ground, Gina Kerr of Purdue Affirmative Action and staff pose with some of the winners from ADA Indiana's 2004 Calendar Contest. School-age children were asked to submit art portraying how the Americans with Disabilities Act helps people in their communities.



The staff from the National Center on Accessibility at Indiana University honored for 20 years of service at the 2012 National ADA Symposium in Indianapolis.



Ric Edwards shares some remarks at the 20th Anniversary State ADA Celebration.



Staff from the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at the release of the first Indiana ADA Report Card.



Darin Yoder and his son enjoying the 15th Anniversary ADA State Celebration at the Artsgarden in Indianapolis.



L to R: Suellen Jackson-Boner, David Mank from the Indiana Institute, and Vicki Pappas at the 15th Anniversary ADA State Celebration.



New avenues to accessibility through the ADA

Shortly after graduating from college, Ric Edwards began to hear discussion about a national task force for the proposed ADA. The legislation was already being introduced to Congress, but many felt there wasn't a need for the bill. This troubled Edwards as he remembered having to be carried up and down multiple flights of stairs each day just to attend high school and college classes.

To support the urgent need for ADA legislation, Edwards, along with other disability leaders and Hoosiers with disabilities, organized and testified during congressional hearings in Indianapolis, wrote letters and talked to legislators and other active advocacy efforts.

"The ADA bill was not only a good thing, it was the right thing to do, and it needed to happen," said Edwards.

After the ADA passed in 1990, there were many celebrations and recognitions. "I don't think any of us really realized how significant it was going to be at the time," recalls Edwards. "It gave people an opportunity to see the kinds of supports and accommodations necessary for people with disabilities and the things we should and should not be doing."

Edwards remembers being a teenager purchasing his first car but not wanting a van with a wheelchair lift. He wanted something any other teenager would drive. When he discovered he could have any two-door car as long as it had a long side door, he bought a 1971 Ford Mustang convertible.

The urge to break any preconceptions toward a person with a disability, even with something like a car, continues to grow within the disability

community. "The mindset has changed," said Edwards. "People are now looking for ways to allow people with disabilities to go out with their family and friends."

"The ADA bill was not only a good thing, it was the right thing to do, and it needed to happen."

Edwards encourages the disability community to not be content. "I realize it's hard, but we can't create our own barriers," said Edwards. "Let's make sure we destroy the barriers altogether. Never give up, don't settle and don't compromise." *

Q&A: Al Tolbert

In 1990, Al Tolbert was serving as a national director with the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and working with the local Paralyzed Hoosier Veterans group to address the needs and issues of Indiana veterans. He was advocating for these groups and experiencing the challenges of the job without support from national legislation.

In a recent interview, Tolbert, who now serves as executive director of the Southern Indiana Center for Independent Living (SICIL), took us back 25 years and reminisced about the passage of the ADA and how it affected his role as a voice for people with disabilities who seek to live independently in their own communities.

Q: What were your first thoughts after the ADA passed in 1990?

A: Having been in a wheelchair for 19 years before the ADA became law, I was excluded from many things – employment, housing, public places and the ability to vote. As a veteran, not being able to vote hurt the most. So while I felt the ADA was long overdue, I was also cautious. I knew the law wouldn't change things unless people with disabilities became active in the ongoing advocacy movement.

Q: How have you seen the ADA impact your advocacy work over the past 25 years?

A: Its passage made our advocacy work much easier. Those in government and business take



disability-related requests more seriously now. Thanks to the ADA, we've been able to get housing, jobs, transportation, voting and public access for many of our SICIL consumers.

Q: How have you seen the ADA impact accessibility for people with disabilities in Indiana specific to independent living?

A: The ADA allowed people with disabilities to become inclusive in the community, which is crucial for transformation to occur. I like to say, "You can't change life without being a part of it!"

Tolbert's advice for those with disabilities and disability advocates across the state is simple and to the point: "Stand up and be counted. Be counted by voicing your needs in as many places as possible – voting polls, public meetings and to your elected officials. Help pave the way for the next generation of people with disabilities." *



Vivid memories of change

Betty Williams is one of Indiana's most active and well-known disability advocates. For more than 25 years, she has made a positive difference in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Williams was recently recognized for her accomplishments and advocacy efforts by being appointed to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

As a Hoosier with a disability, Williams vividly remembers the positive changes in Indiana's disability community that were a direct result of the ADA.

"The ADA has really improved lives and protected people with disabilities for the last 25 years," said Williams.

Williams believes the greatest impact the ADA has made is on accessibility for people with disabilities. She's amazed at how buses and other forms of public transit now offer accessibility options. "Now, people with disabilities can go where they want and move around just like everyone else," said Williams. "It wasn't like that 25 years ago; you saw very few people out in their communities."

Increased access to polling places and voting equipment for people with disabilities has been another one of Williams' favorite advancements since the ADA bill was signed. "People with disabilities can now voice their opinion and fight for their rights at the polls," she said.

"The ADA has really improved lives and protected people with disabilities for the past 25 years."

Above all, the biggest impact Williams has felt in her personal life is the ability to be highly involved in her community. "The ADA is all about being able to have access to a community, move around in a community and have access to transportation and mobility we didn't have before," said Williams.

On the anniversary of the signing of the ADA, Williams has plans to celebrate. "Twenty-five years of the ADA and the differences it's made in peoples' lives is a big celebration for the whole nation," said Williams. "I'll be thinking about the ADA, how important it is, and where we'd be now if we didn't have it." She will also be thinking of everyone who helped make the ADA possible and strengthen her resolve to continue to fight to keep the ADA relevant for the disability community throughout the nation. *



Putting the ADA into practice in Indiana

As a Hoosier with a disability and longstanding champion within Indiana’s disability community, Nancy Griffin led countless advocacy efforts and testified before legislators at both the state and federal levels in her efforts to advocate for the passage of the ADA. However, her greatest challenge didn’t occur until after the ADA had become law – and the education and training began.

In 1975, Griffin, with help from friends, Indiana advocates, the Governor’s Council and the disability community, began advocating on behalf of the ADA. She made trips to Washington, D.C., where she’d spend days and nights on Capitol Hill talking to members of Congress about the need for rights for people with disabilities – why it mattered and the difference it would make. After years of volunteering, raising awareness and advocating, Griffin’s – and thousands of other

advocates’ – work finally paid off with the passage of the ADA.

“I finally felt like a full citizen of this country. I had been given equal rights as a citizen for the first time in my life. It was amazing.”

However, shortly after the ADA bill was signed, reality sunk in and the real work began. Most of the disability community knew about the bill, but there were still many individuals and businesses that were unaware of the rights and responsibilities of the new law. Griffin knew there was a significant need to educate and train others about the ADA.

With a grant from the Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, Griffin helped establish Indiana’s ADA Training Network and, over the next six years, she provided education and training on the ADA to people with disabilities, as well as local and state government officials, businesses, schools and many individuals in Indiana and across the U.S.

Now, 25 years after the ADA was passed, Griffin says there’s still work to be done. “Keep sharing your life, keep making new friends and keep holding people accountable,” she said. “Know your rights, express your rights and demand your rights.” *



On the front lines of the ADA in Indiana

The day Hoosiers learned the ADA would finally become law was another work day for advocate John-Jay Steinhardt. He and other members of a statewide consortium had been working tirelessly researching, writing and submitting information on Indiana's disability landscape to the national Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of Americans with Disabilities. This Task Force, based in Washington, D.C., and co-led by iconic disability rights advocate Justin Dart, provided information about Hoosiers with disabilities that helped U.S. legislators make an informed decision on the historic ADA legislation being considered by Congress.

Steinhardt's experience, combined with his passion for accessible transportation for people with disabilities, made him one of Indiana's leaders in transportation advocacy. As a result, he joined a

group of Indiana disability rights organizations in gathering research and making recommendations to the national Task Force on the needs of Indiana's disability community – specifically in the areas of fixed transportation, paratransit and employment.

“I was obsessed with transportation issues because I couldn't drive, due to my disability,” Steinhardt said. “I had worked with the U.S. Department of Transportation to ensure issues related to people with disabilities and transportation were addressed at the national level. Indiana was doing better than many states, but I wanted to ensure other U.S. cities were up to an acceptable standard.”

Steinhardt remembers meeting with the Governor's Council and other state disability leaders. Committee members reported on their findings, and the

information would be submitted to the national Task Force. Steinhardt would also write updates and calls-to-action to distribute to disability advocates throughout Indiana. These updates provided key information and instructions to help individuals advocate for the passage of the ADA.

“Everyone was very positive and encouraging,” said Steinhardt. “We did good work, and I loved the people I worked with. Everyone at the Governor's Council was fabulous to work with.”

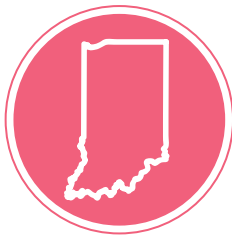
The signing of the ADA into law didn't end Steinhardt's advocacy work. After returning to his home state of New York, he became an advocate for the New York State Office of Child and Family Services. “I have family in Indiana, so I may move back someday and, if I do, I will continue to help the Governor's Council and Indiana's disability movement if I can.” *

Resources



The ADA Legacy Bus visited Indianapolis at Monument Circle as part of a national tour aimed at raising awareness and excitement about the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The bus, which traveled to 48 states in 2007 to raise support for the ADA Amendments Act, is driven by veteran disability rights photographer Tom Olin. It includes a four-panel display on the history of self-advocacy, displays the ADA Legacy Project celebrating disability history milestones and educating future generations of disability advocates, and showcases the history of the Road to Freedom Tour. Visit adalegacy.com for more information.

ADA Indiana



adaindiana.org | (812) 855-6508 | adainfo@indiana.edu

Founded in 1991 to provide technical assistance to businesses and government agencies around the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA Indiana continues to serve as a statewide resource. ADA Indiana provides resources and trainings to organizations that have responsibilities and obligations, and to individuals who have rights under the ADA.

Great Lakes ADA



adagreatlakes.org | (312) 413-1407

The Great Lakes ADA Center provides information, materials, technical assistance and customized training on the ADA. Topics include the non-discrimination requirements in employment as well as the obligations of state and local governments and business to ensure that programs, services and activities are readily accessible and usable by people with disabilities. In addition, the Center's Accessible Technology Initiative encourages incorporation of accessible information technology in K-12 and post-secondary school settings.



Indiana Governor's Council
for People with Disabilities

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For more information on how the Indiana disability community has changed since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, read the June/July 2013 issue of Spark titled *Taking a Look Back: Retrospective*. The publication reflects on progress through the years in housing, education, transportation and technology.

www.in.gov/GPCPD under "Spark Newsletter"
