

Differently-Abled Digest

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A Clear Purpose

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Differently-Abled digest. This is a newsletter that is committed to covering the issues that are important to persons with disabilities. I hope the articles contained in this newsletter will provide useful information to the entire community of people with disabilities. I strongly encourage all readers to stand up and ensure that your constitutional right of equal opportunity is given to you. As a fellow citizen with a disability, I am happy to keep an open dialogue with all of you.

My Crusade

DEERFIELD- On March 2, 2001, I began by meeting with U.S. Rep. Mark S. Kirk to discuss my various concerns with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a landmark law that serves over fifty million people.



Have you ever gone into one of those new stadium seating movie theatres and realized that a person in a wheelchair can only sit in the front rows, causing them to have a neck ache by the end of the movie? I suggest placing a ramp on one side of the theatre and then placing steps on the other; this would allow all persons to have an enjoyable experience. Next, think about the average public bathroom. It has an accessible stall, but contains a push-open door at the main entrance. Why not have the ADA mandate that all public bathrooms must be built in an L-shape, making it accessible for all. How many of you would like to see your child have a job? I am sure that is a common goal that you'd like to achieve. The problem with most businesses today is that they do not want to pay the heavy costs of making their facilities accessible. I

suggest that the federal government provide tax breaks, as well as place more money into the budget for this cause. By doing so, they can help to integrate people with disabilities into the work force. Now that you know what I am pushing for, let's shift gears.

How to Advocate

I have learned that even though I have a one-on-one aide at school, along with my mother and father assisting me at home, the technique of self advocacy is a far more effective strategy. Here are some tips that will help students and parents:

1. Accept the fact that you have a disability.
2. Be vocal. Stand up for what you need! You won't get anything without telling someone.
3. Develop personal relationships with the people around you. Allow them to see the real you
4. Be reasonable. Work with people to obtain the modifications that you need.
5. Go through proper channels. This will give you a good reputation. And of course, you do not step on any toes.

Featured Website

<http://www.disabilityresources.org>

This is a very well designed site that has a built in search engine. It allows you to pull up information from all fifty states. After looking up Illinois, I found numerous organizations that have already been proven advocates of disability rights, along with their contact information.

Your Concerns

I am looking forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to send me an email if there is anything that I have not covered. I would like to close by asking for your help. I will continually update you on what I have accomplished, but I know that one person can not fight the battle alone. Let's work together and begin to implement the changes that are required to enable us to be independent, functional and productive members of our society

Digest This!

Q: Why was the lawyer skimming the Bible right before he died?

A: He was looking for loopholes!