



Our Mission: Empowering persons with disabilities to live independently and participate actively in their community.

Summer

2006

Americans with Disabilities ACT 1990-2006 Has 16 Years Made a Difference?

The answer is YES, this landmark legislation has made a difference. Barriers have come down in the areas of employment, public services, public accommodations and telecommunications. People with disabilities can participate more fully in all aspects of our country. So we celebrate those successes this month on the 16th anniversary of the signing of the ADA.

Is our job complete? The answer is NO. Barriers still exist, physical as well as attitudinal. One of the more challenging areas to address is accommodations for people with "hidden disabilities", people living with disabilities that are often not seen by those around them such as learning disabilities, mental illness, epilepsy, cancer, arthritis, mental retardation, traumatic brain injury, AIDS and asthma.

Many people do not believe that hidden disabilities are bona fide disabilities needing accommodation. Hidden disabilities can result in functional limitations, which substantially limit one or more of the major life activities, just like those which are visible. Accommodating hidden disabilities can keep valued employees on the job and open doors for new employees.

The ADA requires that reasonable accommodation be provided, if necessary, for all impairments that meet the definition of "disability," whether hidden or visible. Reasonable accommodations must be determined on a case-by-case basis to ensure

(Continued on page 2)

Quote

"Passion is the great slayer of adversity. Focus on strengths and what you enjoy."

Editors Corner:

When you find out what you are excited about doing then you can focus on doing the daily tasks set in front of you. **What do you** really enjoy doing?

In This Issue

Americans with Disabilities ACT 1990 to 2006, Has 16 Years Made a Difference? - 1

Chamber of Commerce Leads 3 Group Sponsors Picnic - 2

Law Enforcement CD...is Hot off the Press - 2

Leon High School/High Tech has Internship Placement with SEVA Technologies - 3

Tallahassee Police Officer Teams up with Lift Company - 3

Ability1st Board of Director Recognized for Writing Book - 4

Ability1st & Big Bend Homeless Coalition Begin Joint Project - 4

Disaster Preparedness 101 - 5

Americans with Disabilities ACT 1990-2006 (Continued from page 1)

effective accommodations, which will meet the needs of the employee and the employer. Accommodations can range from making existing facilities accessible for wheelchair users to job restructuring, acquiring or modifying equipment, developing flexible work schedules or modifying task protocols.

Situation: *An office manager who had been treated for stress and depression was experiencing difficulty maintaining her concentration when trying to complete assignments and meet critical deadlines.*

Solution: She discussed her performance problems with her supervisor. The employer implemented accommodations that allowed her to organize her time by scheduling “off” times during the week where she could work without interruptions. She was also placed on a flexible schedule that gave her more time for counseling and exercise. The supervisor trained the employee’s co-workers on stress management and provided the office manager information about the company’s employee assistance program. Cost: \$0.

Chamber of Commerce Leads 3 Group Sponsors Picnic

A picnic for our consumers celebrating the 16th anniversary of the ADA was a great success. The weather was wonderful, the food appetizing, games enjoyable and the camaraderie was pleasurable. Both the Leads 3 Group Members, and the staff of Ability 1st were out in record numbers. Approximately 100 people joined us.



Water balloons provide lots of fun.

The Law Enforcement CD... is Hot off the Press

The training Compact Disc “*Does Equal Treatment Mean the Same Treatment?*” is now available for individual and classroom training of law enforcement officers. Staff member Susan Henry had the responsibility of designing the web-based training for law enforcement officers working with crime victims with disabilities. This interactive CD gives short detailed lessons with quizzes that help reinforce the necessity of sensitivity when working with persons with disabilities. Susan collaborated with the Leon County Sheriff Department, Tallahassee Police Department, and the technical engineers at SEVA Technologies to develop this cost effective way for other law enforcement agencies to learn this information in a timely manner.

Leon High School/High Tech has Internship Placement with SEVA Technologies

James Tillman, CEO of SEVA Technologies was searching for ways to reach out to youth to provide mentorship, and found a website from a HSHT program. Ability1st Leon HSHT staff person Tracy Towle met with Mr. Tillman to discuss the mutual benefits of the program. After meeting with personnel from SEVA to solicit their involvement in our HSHT summer internship program, an interview was set up that proved to be favorable for Mr. Tillman. Zack, a first year HSHT student, was selected to be SEVA's summer intern.

Zack just completed the 9th grade at Lincoln High School, and has expressed an interest in Computer Science and/or Engineering. Zack's earnings are being compensated through the Big Bend Workforce Center's Year Round Youth Program

through the month of June. Zack has been involved in building computers from old components and has been learning different aspects of computer related services during his internship.

Thank you to our business partners at SEVA!!!



Tallahassee Police Officer Teams up with Lift Company

Tallahassee Police Department Officer Michael Williams demonstrated his commitment to our community when he saw Mr. Allen pushing his wife Virginia up a plywood ramp to get into their van and then took action. Officer Williams went beyond his responsibility to contact Ability1st, Information and Referral Specialist Henry Flores. Henry was able to talk with the owner of Advance Driving, Scott Poor, who was instrumental in assisting with the Allen's

obtaining a power lift for the van. Today, Virginia Allen enjoys the safety and comfort her new lift provides.



Ability1st Board of Director Recognized for Writing Book

Board Member Carrie Sandahl, renowned theatrical actor/writer/director, was recently recognized by The Association for Theatre in Higher Education “Best Book of 2006” Award. The excel-

lent work she co-authored with Philip Auslander of Georgia Institute of Technology is entitled “Bodies In Motion”. This is the first collection to explore the lively intersection of performance studies and disability studies, pro-

voking new ways of looking at body, space, spectatorship, and identity. Sandahl is an Associate Professor at Florida



State University School of Theatre. Her research and creative activity focus on disability and gender identities in live performance, including theatre, dance, and performance art. She is currently a

co-Investigator with Carol Gill of the University of Illinois-Chicago on a three-year study of Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Carrie is very active in the Disability Theatre Initiative, which works with casting agents, play writ-

ers, directors, television and film writers and designers to promote inclusion in the entertainment industry.

Ability1st & Big Bend Homeless Coalition Begin a Joint Project

Home Plate, a joint project with Ability1st and Big Bend Homeless Coalition begins July 2006. Ability1st was awarded funding over a three year period by The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This program will assist chronically homeless persons with leasing assistance. Specifically, when a person has a significant disability and has been

homeless for over a year or four times within a three-year period they would qualify for services through the program. Ability1st staff person Dee Humose has assumed the position of Supportive Housing Coordinator and will provide consumers with rent subsidy, and support services during the transition toward permanent housing in our 6 county areas.

Disaster Preparedness 101

Being ready for a disaster, any type of disaster including high winds, rain, tornadoes, hurricanes, fire or even chemical spills, is part of maintaining your independence. Ability1st is asking people with disabilities in the Big Bend area to read over these recommended points of preparation and begin planning now. **Now** is the time because tomorrow may be too late.

- Set up a personal emergency fund to cover at least the first few days of your evacuation. Even if you have limited income, try to find a way to put even a few dollars aside each month.
- Prepare the best portable emergency kit you can. Select the things you'll need most. Try to put the kits in one or two small travel bags so you can grab them quickly. Include some water. Lists of emergency kit supplies are available from Ability1st.
- Prepare an emergency kit for your home in case you have no warning of the disaster and must stay. This kit can be more extensive than your portable kit. Be sure to include water and food for you, your family, service animals, and pets.
- Plan for where you can go to get away from the disaster.
- Plan for how you'll evacuate. Make sure you get a clear, firm commitment from someone you can trust.
- If you have warning of an impending disaster, get away as early as you possibly can. This is especially true if you require accessible transportation

(paratransit systems are quickly overloaded), or if you would have problems tolerating heat or long waits in traffic.

- If you don't think you'll be able to evacuate, find out ahead of time where you can go for shelter. Be specific about what needs you have and press for details about what shelters can and will meet them. Contact Erin Gardner at (850) 488-5921 Emergency Management to complete information to get in their database.

People with disabilities affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita have taught us that taking some fairly simple steps ahead of time can make a big difference in how we survive a major disruption in our lives. Contact Ability1st for more information and a copy of the local "Survival Guide".

Board of Directors

Alicia Crew, President; Alex Brown; Dr. Evelyn Dowery; Claire Evans; Marc Luna; Paul Martell; Carrie Sandahl; Carla Von Fossen; Chriss Walker; Elizabeth Winzig

Board meetings are regularly held on the 2nd Thursday of each month

Ability1st Staff

Steve Amnott; Judith Barrett; Valeria Bradley; Carol Cavallaro; Patricia Day; Henry Flores; Susan Henry; Dee Humose; Tonye Jack-Carlton; Verdell Lewis; Dan Moore; Bret Oglesby; Joan Reeves; Denyce Roberts; Ryan Solberger; Tracy Towle; SiTerra Wallace; Bruce Weaver

This newsletter is a quarterly publication produced by *Ability1st*. Articles or topics are welcome. The editor reserves the right to edit and place any entries. Articles must be less than 2,000 words. Authors are encouraged to forward text on disk.

This newsletter is available in alternative format upon request.

Ability1st is a United Way agency.



For more information,
Please contact us at:

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Services are available to all persons with disabilities and their families. *Ability 1st* serves Leon, Gadsden, Wakulla, Taylor, Madison and Jefferson Counties

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