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PITTSBURGH & ALLEGHENY COUNTY CELEBRATE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADA

From May through August 2015, the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with a series of community-wide events recognizing the landmark law that has transformed lives by removing barriers to civic participation, housing, transportation, employment, arts and recreation, education and more.

The Pittsburgh/Allegheny County ADA 25th Anniversary Celebration is one of several scheduled throughout the nation this year, including a major celebration in Washington D.C. on the July 26 anniversary with attendance expected to be in the thousands.

The Pittsburgh/Allegheny County ADA 25th Anniversary celebration will highlight local accomplishments and champions, as well as next steps for our community. Like most of the nation, as many as 18 to 20 percent of City and County residents of all ages have some type of disability.

The key messages of the anniversary celebration are:

- The ADA is the most important civil rights legislation of the past 25 years. It has transformed the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families, and the community.
- Accessibility and inclusion benefit everyone in the community.
- A disability-friendly community addresses the *spirit* of the ADA, not just the *letter* of the law.
- An inclusive community champions diversity of all kinds, including differing abilities.
- Universal design concepts and advanced technology hold promise for increasing access and inclusion for everyone.
- The ADA encompasses more than just physical access (e.g. wheelchair ramps) – it promotes accommodation for a wide range of disabilities in a variety of settings.
- Although the ADA has created a more inclusive American society, significant inequities remain, especially in employment. People with disabilities who can and want to work continue to face barriers.

Calendar of Events Highlighting the 25th Anniversary of the ADA

Additional events may be added. Visit www.ADA25Pgh.org for additional information.)

All Summer

Port Authority of Allegheny County buses “wrapped” in the ADA 25th anniversary logo will circulate throughout the city and county through the end of 2015. These buses are a visible reminder that accessible public transportation is one of the major accomplishments of the ADA, and that the Port Authority of Allegheny County is recognized as a national leader. The ACCESS paratransit system for people with disabilities is considered one of the most successful in the nation



June 15, July 20, August 17

1-3 pm

First Floor Conference Room

Civic Building

200 Ross St.

The City of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County Task Force on Disability (CCTFD) will hold an update and discussion of Disability Agenda 2000. The CCTFD is a 13-member panel that advises the City and County on issues that affect people with disabilities. For more information, go to the Department of City Planning calendar at <http://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/adacelebration>.



July 17

7-9 pm

7th Floor, Rangos Research Center

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC

The Children's Hospital Advisory Network for

Guidance and Empowerment (CHANGE) will hold a public event for youth and young adults to learn about the ADA and the “evolution of inclusion.” CHANGE is a youth-led initiative focused on ensuring successful transition to adult lives, especially regarding healthcare. For information, email chpchange@gmail.com or call 412-692-6949.

July 26

PNC Park

1:35 pm Pirates vs. Nationals

On this, the actual date of the signing of the ADA, the Pittsburgh Pirates will highlight the landmark law in a variety of ways. PNC Park, completed in 2001, is widely recognized as the most accessible Major League facility in the nation.

August 5

PNC Park

5- 6:45 pm Resource Fair

7:05 pm Pirates vs. Chicago Cubs

The 2015 PNC Park Disability Awareness Celebration Series continues with a resource fair focusing on adaptive sports. For game tickets (includes a complimentary "Disability Awareness" T-Shirt) or more information, visit <http://www.pirates.com/disability> or contact lauren.farrell@Pirates.com.

October 22-29

Pittsburgh 3rd annual ReelAbilities Film Festival features films from around the world portraying the experiences of people with disabilities.

October 27

Dick Thornburgh Forum for Law and Public Policy

1:00 pm

University Club (Ballroom A)

Mark Johnson, Chair of the Legacy Project and Director of Disability Advocacy at Shepherd Center in Atlanta has accepted Governor and Mrs. Thornburgh's invitation to serve as a guest lecturer. This will be the second lecture in this series this calendar year in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Logistics and public relations will be handled by Kim Carson at the Dick Thornburgh Forum for Law and Public Policy: Kimberly Carson (kac15@pitt.edu). More information to follow at this link <https://www.thornburghforum.pitt.edu/node/455>.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Ads

“Because of the ADA,
 I’m developing my musical talent
 at CAPA.”

Shailen Abram
 of East Hills
 Piano/vocal major,
 Pittsburgh Creative
 and Performing Arts
 High School
 Teenager with
 blindness and
 autism



“Music is my life. I started playing piano and singing when I was 18 months old and have been performing ever since. The ADA makes it possible for me to spread the gift of music wherever I go.”

**Rights, Equality and Access for All—
 that’s the promise of the ADA.**

Join the community-wide celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the landmark civil rights law that opens doors for millions of people.



www.ADA25PGH.org

“Because of the ADA,
 I speak my mind and I’m heard.”



Rachel Campion of Peters Township
 Freshman, West Virginia Wesleyan College
 Person with profound hearing loss

“The ADA supports my academic achievement and desire to become a nurse practitioner. Without the ADA, I would not have American Sign Language interpreters, closed captioning or other support that helps me succeed.”

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“Because of the ADA,
 I help youth discover their
 power and unique voices.”

Dr. Josie Badger of Ross Township
 Statewide Campaign Manager,
 #IWantToWork project
 TEDx Speaker



“I travel the state, nation and world to mentor young people and educate decision-makers. The ADA ensures that I have the accommodations I need to carry out the work of changing minds.”

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www.ADA25PGH.org

“Because of the ADA,
 I find support, not stigma.”



Rachel Kallem Whitman of Morningside
 Doctoral Student, Duquesne University
 Youth Leadership Coordinator,
 Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC

“I believe that talking about mental illness helps everyone. My accommodations matter because they allow me to focus more on achieving my goals and less on struggling with my symptoms.”

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www.ADA25PGH.org

“Because of the ADA,
 people can access technology
 that improves their lives.”



Rory Cooper, Ph.D
 Director, Human Engineering
 Research Laboratories
 University of Pittsburgh

“The ADA promotes independence for people with spinal cord injuries — myself included — as well as people with other types of disabilities. Access to technology is part of the equation.”

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www.ADA25PGH.org

About the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990. This legislation made it a violation of federal law to discriminate against people with disabilities, just as similar civil rights laws protect people against discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, and religion. The ADA provides equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, state and local government, public accommodations and telecommunications. It protects anyone in the United States with mobility, visual, or hearing impairments as well as people with cognitive disabilities. The act is divided into four main sections, called "Titles."

Title One: Employment

Title One prevents discrimination in the workplace. Private employers who have more than 15 employees, state and local government, labor unions, and employment agencies cannot discriminate against qualified job applicants and employees on the basis of their disability. This means that it is illegal to ask a person about a disability during the employment interview. A person can choose to talk about a disability when asking for changes that will help in doing a job. This includes job restructuring and equipment modifications. If necessary, employers must make some changes to enable the qualified job applicant with a disability to perform the essential functions of the job.

Title Two: State & Local Governments/Transportation/Public Services

Title Two prevents government and other public agencies from denying service to persons with disabilities. This means that government facilities, services, and communications must be accessible and that no one can be prevented from using a program, service or activity because of their disability. The ADA developed rules for new transportation systems, specifying that all new bus and rail cars must be accessible and any new bus or train station must be designed to be accessible for persons who have disabilities. In places where public transportation is not accessible, other types of transportation must be provided. Modes of transportation that are covered include bus, commuter transit, subway and intercity rail systems.

Title Three: Public Accommodations

Public places (restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors' offices, grocery stores, retail stores, museums, libraries, parks, entertainment venues, social service establishments, schools, day care facilities) may not discriminate on the basis of disability and must be made accessible. New construction and modifications to existing public facilities must be accessible. Existing facilities must try to remove any barriers if possible. If current barriers are not fixable, other ways of providing the service must be found. People with disabilities must have an equal chance to take part in an organization's goods or services.

Title Four: Telecommunications

Telephone companies must provide systems for people who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) or similar devices. They cannot charge extra for these types of service. Organizations must have other ways of providing information that is easily usable and accessible to employees and consumers who are disabled.”

Timeline of Local Efforts to Increase Access and Inclusion

1963 Disability rights advocates establish Magic Carpet Transportation Service, Pittsburgh's first nonprofit paratransit service for people with disabilities.

1968 Mayor Richard Caligiuri forms the Committee on Architectural Barriers following the passage of the federal Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, which mandated that all buildings designed, constructed, altered or leased with federal funds be made accessible. Installing curb cuts in Downtown Pittsburgh was one of the committee's first projects.

1973 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 makes it illegal for federal agencies, public universities, and other public institutions receiving any federal funds to discriminate on the basis of disability.



1978 The Port Authority of Allegheny County establishes the Committee for Accessible Transportation to assist with the planning and implementing of a paratransit service for people with disabilities. The collaborative between the disability community, Port Authority, private transportation providers, Carnegie Mellon and others resulted in a unique system design, still considered a national model. Launched in 1979, ACCESS is one of the most successful shared ride services in the nation. In 2014, ACCESS provided 593,000 trips for people with disabilities out of total ACCESS ridership of 1.6 million.



Early 1980s Pittsburgh Committee for Accessible Housing formed

1984 The federal Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act passed. It mandates that polling places remove physical barriers to accessibility. Currently, all but three of Allegheny County's 1321 polling locations have accessible entries, compared with 248 inaccessible polling places in 2005.

1988 Amendments to the federal Fair Housing Amendments Act require that a certain number of accessible housing units be created in all new multi-family housing. The act covers all buildings, not only those in receipt of federal funding.



1991 Port Authority of Allegheny County obtains its first wheelchair accessible buses.

1994 Founding of the City of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County Task Force on Disabilities, a 13-member body that advises the City and County on issues that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.

1996 The federal Telecommunications Act requires that computers, telephones, closed captioning, and other telecommunication devices and equipment be made accessible.

1997 Three Rivers Center for Independent Living files a lawsuit against City for failure to comply with the ADA by not installing curb cuts on newly repaved streets. The lawsuit was settled in 1999, with the City agreeing to a three-year timeframe for installing curb cuts that should have been done since 1992.

1997 Local disability rights advocates join a nationwide demonstration protesting lack of wheelchair access on Greyhound buses.

1998 City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County launch Disability Agenda 2000 process to recommend policies that will bring about the highest quality of life, equal opportunity and effective participation in community life for people with disabilities.

2001 County establishes Mental Health Court, which addresses issues related to people with mental health disabilities by placement in mental health services rather than incarceration when faced with non-violent criminal charges.

2001 Opening of PNC Park, widely recognized as the most accessible Major League facility in the nation. The local disability community also provided guidance on accessibility planning for Heinz Field (2001) and Consol Energy Center (2010).

2002 Efforts begin to increase access at the Three Rivers Arts Festival, such as wheelchairs on loan, improved signage, maps of accessible parking lots, interpreters at performances and accessible portable toilets.

2002 State legislature passes the Visitability Tax Credit Program, which provides tax incentives for new residential construction or renovation projects that incorporate accessibility features.

2002 The federal Help America Vote Act requires that at least one voting machine at designated polling locations be accessible to people with disabilities.

2002 The Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania and its partners design and implement “Every Contact Counts,” the first local program to educate hospital employees about the support needs of people with disabilities. Trainings presented in 10 hospitals.

2003 Port Authority’s bus fleet becomes 100% wheelchair accessible.

2004 Urban League, Community College of Allegheny County, Three Rivers Center for Independent Living, and the City of Pittsburgh are the first to sign pledges to employ people with disabilities.

2005 Allegheny County establishes Disability Connection office to coordinate efforts to improve services to all people with disabilities and elevate issues of quality of life, equal opportunity and effective participation in the community.

2007 UPMC establishes the Disabilities Resource Center to ensure system-wide staff training and facility accessibility.

2008 In conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County Disability Connection office produces “Voices of Our Region,” a multimedia project documenting the history of local people with disabilities.

2008 University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine opens Center for Patients with Special Needs.

2010 The federal 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act includes protections that enable people with disabilities to access broadband, digital and mobile innovations.

2010 Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council began efforts to improve accessibility and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in Pittsburgh's arts and cultural community.

2010 County Executive Dan Onorato established the Allegheny 365 committee to ensure that all individuals, including those living with disabilities, can engage fully in the county services. Recommendations from the Committee were issued in 2012.

2012 Classy Cab introduces the first wheelchair-accessible taxis in Allegheny County, followed by VETaxi with 40 wheelchair-accessible taxis, Yellow Cab with 15 and Star Limousine with the area's first wheelchair-accessible stretch limo.

2014 Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh undertakes system-wide assessment of accessibility.

2015 Allegheny County reports a total of 11 universal design playgrounds and two spray parks.

STORYLINES

How does Pittsburgh and Allegheny County measure up as a disability-friendly community?

In what areas do we excel or lag behind? What are the persistent barriers to access and inclusion in our community? How can our community increase its understanding of the concept of “Universal Design,” which ensures that products and services are usable by all people to the greatest degree possible, without need for adaptation or specialized design?

Local people say their lives have changed dramatically because of the ADA

Among many examples is Jeff Parker, who attended the University of Pittsburgh in the 1970s and recently retired as Chief Operating Officer from CLASS (Community Living and Support Services). As a college student before the advent of accessible public transportation, he was unable to leave the campus to travel to other areas of the city.

The “ADA Generation”

The “ADA Generation” -- a term coined by former Iowa Senator Tom Harkins, one of the sponsors of the ADA legislation – refers to youth and young adults who grew up with the ADA and have the expectation of access and inclusion. What does this generation see as its goals and challenges?



City of Pittsburgh is exploring the use of a new symbol of accessibility

The well-known “access” symbol, established in 1968 has recently had a make-over. A new symbol, embodying a more active stance, has been adopted in some cities. The City of Pittsburgh is considering whether to offer it as an option.



The local architecture community and the ADA

Local architecture firms have played a significant role in increasing the accessibility of our community. What are their most significant accomplishments? What are architects-in-training learning about accessibility and universal design?

“Oakland for All: Beyond Accessible” (a project of the Oakland Business Improvement District) is focused on ensuring that Oakland is fully accessible and welcoming to all who live, work and visit there. Projects include raising awareness among business owners about physical barriers at their entryways and creating apps and other technology for wayfinding support.

An increasing number of local employers are committed to hiring people with disabilities

Employment for people with disabilities lags far behind the general population. In Pennsylvania, about 34 percent of people with disabilities are employed, compared to about 76 percent of the general population (www.RespectabilityUSA.org). Locally, several large employers have made a commitment to hiring people with disabilities. Small business owners, such as Nathan Mallory of Cannon Coffee in Brookline, are doing the same.

Pittsburgh is a national leader in healthcare access for patients with disabilities

UPMC Disabilities Resource Center, UPMC Magee Center for Women with Disabilities and the University of Pittsburgh Dental School Center for Special Needs are examples of this leadership.

Pittsburgh is a national leader in access to the arts

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council is nationally recognized for its efforts in promoting access to the arts. Local accomplishments include sensory-friendly performances of family-oriented productions such as the Lion King and the Nutcracker. Several performing arts organizations offer verbal descriptions of performances for patrons who are blind and sign language interpretation, captioning and assistive listening devices for patrons with hearing disabilities.

Local Organizing Committee:

ACHIEVA

Allegheny County

Bender Consulting Services

City of Pittsburgh

City of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County Task Force on Disabilities

CLASS (Community Living and Support Services)

Consumer Health Coalition

FISA Foundation

Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

Pittsburgh Pirates

Port Authority of Allegheny County and ACCESS Transportation

Temple University Institute on Disabilities-Western Pennsylvania Office

Three Rivers Center for Independent Living

United Way of Allegheny County

University of Pittsburgh LEND Program

University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

UPMC Disabilities Resource Center

Vibrant Pittsburgh

ADA Knowledge Resources:

Joyce Bender, CEO, Bender Consulting Services, specializes in employment issues, 412-787-8567, jbender@benderconsult.com

Vanessa Braun, manager of Employee Engagement/Inclusion and Assistant Director, Accessibility, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, 412-471-6070, braun@trustarts.org

Karen Hoesch, executive director, ACCESS Transportation Systems, 412-562-5351, khoesch@accesstransys.com

Chuck Keenan, Administrator, Bureau of Homeless Services, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, 412-350-5606, charles.keenan@alleghenycounty.us

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President George H.W. Bush signs the ADA, July 26, 1990.

Courtesy of the George Bush Presidential Library

Courtesy of Tom Olin
Disability rights activists demonstrate for the ADA at the Capitol in Washington, DC, 1990.

