

Web offers a wealth of disability information



Grace E. Reed

Grace E. Reed is a member of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, as well as a published author and writer for several online journals, a broadcaster on KBOO and KPSU radio and an elder activist in the Portland community.

The World Health Organization sanctioned the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps back in 2001 which helped define the concept of disability worldwide. The three factors when conceptualizing a disability are — impairment, activity, and participation.

The Americans with Disabilities Act celebrated its 23rd year on July 26. Portland City Hall held a celebration hosted by Portland Commission on Disability and the Connecting Communities Coalition. The event theme was 'ADA Moving Forward'. PCOD chair Joe VanderVeer opened the celebration. There was live music, cake and refreshments and audience participation.

As an elder with MS I am very grateful for any of these services and have found some to be useful, some useful after a wait and some not useful to me. But that would be true with any person needing ADA services. One size does not fit all. I know ADA law has helped me with fair housing issues and has implemented better sidewalk ramps, which are getting better as money comes in to upgrade access. ADA has enlightened many business people that are slowly but surely getting handicapped doors installed and has certainly helped while I was attending Portland State University and needed better access at times. While there is much that has changed there is still more to do but because of ADA laws we can move forward in our individual communities and there are many communities that need help with ramp access and other accommodations.

ADA was signed into law in 1990. Census data indicates that there are currently 58 million people with disabilities in the United States. Among those individuals it is

estimated that 38 million live with severe disability making the ADA more important than ever. Most of those 38 million have mental disabilities.

There have been changes and updates since 1990. Here are some of the sites and phone contacts to see what new policies are in place. For a national overview the 10 network centers fact sheet accesses regions and gives networking tools. The phone is 1-800-949-4232. Their site is www.adata.org.

Under the Projects and Affiliations Blue Path, an enterprise provided by the Northwest ADA center, you will find their mission statement, "People with disabilities are valued customers ..." and where you can have access to information about where to shop, dine, or go for fun. For the Northwest ADA Center-Oregon, located in Eugene, call toll free (866) 790-8686. Here is where you will find many links and information on fair housing, the access board, Oregon Civil Rights Division, and the Oregon Business Leadership Network. Oregon is in Region 10 with online information at www.dbtacnorthwest.org.

There are many resources available on world, national and local levels for any subject imaginable on these sites. There is no reason why a person with disabilities can't get information. There may be many reasons (mostly lack of funds) why we can't get actual help, but even that is changing slowly but surely. Mayor Charlie Hales has promised that there will be changes and I find him to be sincere. Much is up to the disabled community and its activism and involvement. Nothing happens if we are silent about our needs. Check out the sites, find what meets your need, connect and stay active.

NSA

By Jay Thiemeyer

long after the smoke cleared
and the sun
was reflected
again
off metal
and broken glass

there still was the smell
and the sounds of us running
like small dogs biting
at air
yapping and running

in circles going
nowhere
fast; but we knew
we HAD done something
we set out to do
early
before first light



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