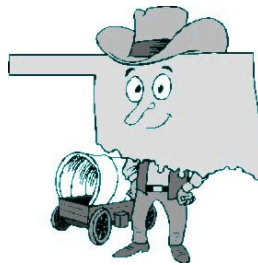


WILL'S CORNER, OKLAHOMA



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(Serving the Disability Community of Oklahoma)

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

July 2002 the Office of Handicapped Concerns will be starting its twenty third year serving individuals with disabilities. The Agency has developed a Strategic Plan that focuses on improving the information flow in areas to better inform and educate the public on issues relating to people with disabilities, and to serve its citizens with the most effective use of the resources available. The Office of Handicapped Concerns has developed the following action plan to meet its mandated mission. It is as follows:

(Continued on page 8)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ADA

July 26, 1990 was a memorable day for all American citizens. On this day in 2002 we will celebrate the twelfth anniversary of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) signed by President George Bush Senior. The ADA holds a similar meaning for persons

with disability as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has for persons of color. Both are federal legislation granting civil rights to minority groups in the United States. Both acknowledge that major minority groups in this county have equal rights under our federal Constitution—equal rights with the American majority. We are all to be treated equally and fairly.



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) signed by President George Bush July 26, 1990

Let's look into the ADA a little to get a better idea of what we're talking about here. The ADA is divided into Title I, Title II, and Title III, Title IV, and Title V. Title I deals with employment. Title II deals with State and local government, and Title

III deals with accessibility of places open to the public. All employers who have at least 15 employees must not discriminate against hiring and retention of employees who have a mental or physical disability which "substantially limits" one or more major life activities. Major life activities are such things as walking, talking, seeing, hearing, performing manual tasks, caring for oneself, and

(Continued on page 4)

Oklahoma 36th state to have Business Leadership Network

A Business Leadership Network is an employer-led endeavor of the U.S. Dept of Labor supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

A Business Leadership Network (BLN) engages employers in a fo-

cused effort to market the benefits of hiring qualified individuals with disabilities to other employers. It represents a forum for employers to communicate their human resource needs to ensure that provider agencies serv-

(Continued on page 3)

Oklahoma One-Call System, Inc.

WHEN YOU "CALL OKIE", WHO ANSWERS THE PHONE?

One Call can save lives, property, costly delays, call 1-800-522-6543 before you dig.

Oklahoma City, "CALL OKIE" is a highly technical communications center in Oklahoma City that links home owners, residents, ranchers, farmers, excavators, and anyone who digs to owners of underground facilities.

Oklahoma One-Call system, Inc. (CALL OKIE) is a non profit corporation funded by underground facility owners and created in response to the Oklahoma Underground Damage Prevention Act of 1982. The mission of "CALL OKIE" is to provide quality underground damage prevention and communication services for the excavators, operators and owners in the state of Oklahoma. Members of Oklahoma One-Call include over 750 businesses, corporations and companies that own communications, gas distributions, gas transmission and gathering, electric power, product pipelines and water/sewage lines underground where you cannot see them.

"CALL OKIE" in a year handles over 550,000 inbound calls resulting in over 3,000,000 outbound messages to Oklahoma One-Call member companies notifying dig site locations so that they may be marked so you can dig safe.

After a toll free call requesting that a property be marked for underground facilities, members of Oklahoma One-Call will mark their lines or inform that no facilities are in the area scheduled for digging. There is no cost to this service.

Everyone benefits from this one call: operators, excavators and the public. This one call starts a proc-

ess that can prevent deaths, injuries, damage and expensive repair bills.

Needless to say, the person receiving these calls has a very responsible job to get complete and accurate information and make the correct responses which send out those outbound messages to member companies.

Recently, Doug MacMillan, Executive Director, Barbara Hunt, Mgr. of Operations, Debbie Ramsey, Asst. Mgr. of Operations, Nicole Martin, Technical Services met with Patricia Garrett, Dept of Rehabilitations and Marilyn Burr, Office of Handicapped Concerns in an effort to find responsible, dependable and qualified applicants for present and future openings in "CALL OKIE" call center.

The "CALL OKIE" staff took Garrett and Burr through their facility, explaining the essential functions of the job, showed them the technical equipment used and let them watch employees in the call center at their duties.

The "CALL OKIE" staff led by Doug MacMillan, is united in their enthusiasm for filling their present and future vacant positions in their call centers with people with disabilities.

In a report to their Board of Directors, MacMillan states:

"Oklahoma One-Call has been working with the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Governor's Committee of Employment of People with Disabilities through the Office of Handicapped Concerns in an effort to place candidates

through these agencies systems. This is an exciting opportunity providing opportunities to a job segment with advantages to Oklahoma One-Call. These include:

- Long standing, outstanding track record for employee retention—the agencies boast an 85%

(Continued on page 7)

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Question—If a butcher is five feet eight inches tall, what does he weigh?

Answer—He weighs meat, of course!

Oklahoma 36th state to have Business Leadership Network (continued)

ing individuals with disabilities are able to meet those needs, for instance, training for specific shortages in the labor market. It is a national endeavor of the Department of Labor supported the United States Chamber of Commerce.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Developmental Disabilities Council and the Office of Handicapped Concerns through the Governor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities have pooled efforts during this last year to gather together a group of employers interested in promoting employment for people with disabilities and encouraging other employers to do the same.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services has sponsored and initiated a website, www.okbln.jobfit.com to provide a very sophisticated job bank to match job openings listed by employers giving preference to skilled and trained applicants who happen to have disabilities. These applicants have entered their education and experience along with completing a very complete assessment of their "soft skills"; work attitudes, preferences, numerical reasoning and other abilities not detectable from a resume or interview. The employers will provide an assessment of the abilities of their successful employees performing their jobs and their work environment and business culture. From the information listed by both, a perfect "job match" is brought about in which both employer and employee is pleased with the result. A real job match keeps the employee on the job solving turnover and morale problems for the employer.

The Developmental Disabilities Council has joined the Department of Rehabilitation Services by sharing in the cost of the maintenance of the website.

The Governor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities, which is an advisory board for the Office of Handicapped Concerns (OHC), has lent its support in directing OHC's efforts to join Department of Rehabilitation Services in contacting employers to become the steering

Steve Hanamura who gave the keynote address to the June 18-19 Transition Conference in Oklahoma City talks about empowerment, "Believe in the individual with disabilities, even when they don't believe in themselves—sometimes because they don't believe in themselves."

Steve also says there are now 54,000,000 Americans with disabilities. (This compares with 43,000,000 at the time of the signing of the ADA on July 26, 1990.)

group for the BLN in Oklahoma. Through these combined efforts a "Lead Employer" has been found which has volunteered to be the major sponsor of the BLN to form business steering groups, serve as spokesperson for the BLN, attend the annual BLN national summit meeting, and encourage prospective employers to get involved. Stepping up to take this key position is Oklahoma One Call system, Inc. known as "Call Okie". (Story to follow.)

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) sponsored a luncheon in February of this year where employers and interested agencies came together as a kick off event to interest employers in becoming part of the BLN movement. DRS also sponsored a Job Fair in April for people with disabilities to acquaint employers with qualified applicants for their jobs. Thirty five employers and 400 plus applicants came together at that job fair. Both groups were pleased with the opportunity to meet each other.

Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Governor's committee on Employment of People

(Continued on page 8)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ADA (continued)

learning.

An employer may not ask or require a job applicant to take a medical examination before making a job offer. It cannot make any pre-employment inquiry about a disability or nature or severity of a disability. An employer may, however, ask questions about the ability to perform specific job functions and how an employee is going to be able to perform these functions. The good interview centers around the essential functions of the job.

Employing individuals with disabilities also means that employers and employees with disabilities are to dialog about reasonable accommodations which employees may need to perform the essential functions of their jobs. Requests for accommodations generally originate with the employee with a disability and are made after the employer has been officially notified of the existence of a disability. An employer is not required to make an accommodation if it would impose an “undue hardship” on the operation of the employer’s business. If the employer feels this would be the case when the employee suggests a certain accommodation, then the employer has the responsibility to come up with another accommodation which would satisfy the need. Active negotiation between both parties is appropriate. The ADA recognizes the need to balance the interests of people with disabilities against the legitimate interests of employers in maintaining a safe workplace.

This is exactly the issue ruled upon by a June 10, 2002 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Chevron v. Echazabal*. Some people with disabilities view several recent court interpretations of the ADA as eroding the original intention of the law. In this case, *Echazabal* argued that he had a right to choose for himself whether his job working in an oil refinery where chemicals might aggravate his liver ailment

placed his health at undue risk. *Chevron* successfully argued that the job would pose a health risk to the employee and denied the individual the job.

The *Garrett* Decision of 2001 is another U.S. Supreme Court interpretation of the Americans with Disabilities Act which some people with disabilities view as a narrowing of the scope of the original law. In *Garrett*, the court ruled that state employees with disabilities may not seek monetary damages from the state of Alabama (or any state) for violations of the ADA in employment. When the employer is one of the fifty states, the employee with a disability may not seek monetary damages even if a violation clearly exists. However, an employee may receive injunctive relief i.e. they may get their job back with back pay and benefits or receive a needed accommodation.

The Americans with Disabilities Act offers people with disabilities freedom from discrimination.

Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in all programs and facilities of State and local government. State and local government must avoid discrimination against individuals with disabilities, and this includes services, programs, and activities of government. Under Title II you have the right to ask that, for example, your local state office have an accessible entrance or that interpreter services be available to explain program eligibility requirements to you if you are an individual who is hearing impaired. The ADA requires that all new buildings constructed by State and local government be accessible. In addition, when a State or local government undertakes alterations to an existing building, it must make the altered portions accessible.

Title III of the ADA covers public accommodations—private entities such as restaurants, businesses, doctors’ offices, or parks which service the

(Continued on page 7)

THE BARTLETT HOUSE

Oklahomans who use a wheelchair as their primary means of mobility are often painfully aware of the difficulties they experience in maneuvering through their own homes. Heavy pile carpets, narrow doorways, high cabinets, and inaccessible bathrooms are only some of the many barriers faced by the person who uses a wheelchair. And these barriers are in their own home before they even begin to get into the public domain. For those of you who have longed for a home which is more accessible to you, you may want to visit the Bartlett House in Stillwater, Oklahoma to get some ideas for your wish book.

When we think about an accessible home, we frequently think of a ramp to get us up to floor level of our homes. After this, we sometimes think of a widened doorway to facilitate our comfortable entry. Beyond these simple architectural modifications, most of us rarely even dare to dream. But someone did dare to dream, and they went even further than this. They built a fully accessible home—the Bartlett House in Stillwater. Let's go inside for a visit.

“Hi, Sherry.”

“Will, I'd like to introduce you to my husband, Scott Henderson.”

“Welcome to the Bartlett Independent Living Laboratory.”

“I like this entryway with the main door which looks like you may have opened it from a switch. Is that what you did?”

“People are generally surprised how the door suddenly swings open, and here I am. Did you notice the 36"-wide doorway? The wide doorways are throughout the house. And there are a number of other common features. All floor surfaces are non-skid tile except where there is a ¼" tight weave, low-pile carpet without padding. And look at this outlet. All electrical outlets are a uniform 20"

above the floor for convenience of a person in a chair.”

“I never even thought of that.”

“Most people don't think of all the barriers in their homes until they or a family member begin to use a wheelchair and it suddenly becomes very real. This is a small bathroom off the entryway with access to the east bedroom. It has a standard tub with a transfer bench and scald guard temperature control on the showerhead and faucets in the sink over there. Oh, and the grab bars by the commode and in the tub are reinforced to hold 250 lb.”



“Yea, I wouldn't want to bet my life on that bar and have it fail.”

“This is the east bedroom, but we use it for an office now. All of our work surfaces, file cabinets, and overhead shelving are on adjustable brackets to permit lowering for use of a person in

a chair. And the pullout computer keyboard tray allows a 30" knee clearance. Notice that there is an outside entrance from this room. There are actually four outside doors in the home with a fire alarm pull-switch at each exit and a package shelf located outside to hold the groceries for you as you open the door.”

“...the grab bars by the commode and in the tub are reinforced to hold 250 lb.”

“I've got to admit I never thought of that little convenience. Now is this the living room?”

“Yes, and look at these window treatments which I can open and close with a flip of the switch over

(Continued on page 6)

THE BARTLETT HOUSE (continued)

there.”

“Looks like there is plenty of space around furniture to negotiate wheelchair movement into the dining room. What’s this?”

“That is the Power House control panel which gives me the ability to control multiple lights and appliances from one switch on the wall.”

“Cool.”

“The kitchen features cabinets with trays which slide out and permit you to view all the contents of the cabinet from a seated position. Oh, and notice that the stove top is lower for convenience of a person in a chair.”



“What’s that mirror-like gadget tilted over the stove?”

“That lets you watch your food while it’s cooking so you don’t burn anything.”

“...so you don’t burn anything.”

“Awesome.”

“This laundry room has a front-loading washer and dryer. Again notice the work surfaces on brackets which adjust to the height of the person using them. Convenience is everywhere in this house.”

“These look like the standard paddle-style sink faucet controls in this master bathroom. I am familiar with that feature.”

“Did you notice the door opens outward and has a handle in the middle of the door as well as the lever handle in the traditional place?”

“I don’t get it.”

“These handles in the middle of the door at conven-

ient height for a person in a wheelchair allow you to pull the door shut or push it open without having to reach way over to the regular handle. You may have noticed these bar-handles on other doors as well. It’s a low-tech feature which is really nice to have. And this bathroom is equipped with a five’



square roll-in shower. Come on over here, and let’s look at the master bedroom . . . That is actually an hydraulic lift. This sturdy, square-metal bar fits into that cavity in the floor, and it has this rod which fits straps which go around your body to transfer from your chair into bed. And speaking about the bed, it is connected to power that will actually shake the bed in event of a fire. Emergency notification and lots of outside doorways let you get out in a hurry if you need to. What do you think, Will?”

It’s a low-tech feature which is really nice to have.

“I think I would see the world from a very different perspective if I were in a chair, and I think I take a lot of things for granted.”

Sherry and Scott Henderson run a day-treatment mental health program for seniors in the Stillwater area using the Bartlett House as the location for their program. It offers a therapeutic, home setting during the day for older persons seeking relief from depression or other disorders. If you would like to tour the Bartlett House, call the Henderson’s at 405-744-0450. The house is actually owned by Oklahoma State University and is located at 618 North Monroe in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ADA (continued)

general public. Places of public accommodation which discriminate against persons with disability fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice. An example of this would be requiring the use of a driver's license as the sole acceptable source of identification to a person who is visually impaired and does not drive. The availability of handicapped parking spaces for persons with disability who are utilizing places open to the general public is also covered under Title III of the ADA.

If you are a person with a disability, you may want to become more familiar with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you suspect that you have suffered discrimination on the basis of your disability, you may call the Office of Handicapped Concerns and ask to speak with Kara Morrow at 800-522-8224. The U.S. Department of Justice has oversight over enforcement of the ADA. You may contact the Department of Justice at 800-514-0301 or 800-514-0383 (TTY) for information and questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding Title II and Title III. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) will accept complaints regarding discrimination in

employment at 800-669-4000.

Recognizing the civil rights of persons with disabilities has broad application to all Americans by ensuring our ability to pursue our lives and our dreams and contribute our talents and abilities to the general welfare. The Americans with Disabilities Act offers people with disabilities freedom from discrimination. Happy birthday, ADA. Happy birthday to all Americans. We respect you for who you are. We recognize you for your unique abilities. We welcome you to fully participate in the world to the best of your ability.

Post Script

Justin Dart, considered by many to be the father of the ADA, died at the age of 71 in his Washington, D.C. home in June of this year. Justin was a long-time leader in the disability rights movement on the national level. He sought to bring the "full power of science and free-enterprise democracy on the systematic empowerment of every person to live his or her God-given potential." Thank you, Justin Dart, for your efforts.

Oklahoma One-Call System, Inc. (continued)

success rate after 5 years! This means that people placed using their process have stayed on the job over 5 years 85% of the time.

- Increased labor pool with superior screening tools (newest and greatest)—The Department of Rehabilitation Services provides a screening tool that uses the base competencies of the Customer Service Representatives to review their pool of candidates. This service is provided at no cost, and an estimated value is over \$300 per candidate. The pool of candidates will have the basic skills already trained and tested.
- Cost assistance with training of DRS candidates
- Center energized with planning – the people from the state agencies have been very good to work with. They have brought teams into One-Call to view operations and gather information.

In conclusion this is an excellent opportunity for One-Call to gain outstanding long term employees, offset some training costs, receive some goodwill press and improve staff skills and commitment."

MacMillan will begin his term as Lead Employer for the Business Leadership Network with hiring three people for the call center that have the skills he is requiring and who are found through the Job-fit process. Oklahoma One-Call Systems, Inc. will use this system exclusively for these openings. They will not be accepting phone calls or resumes from other sources. This is only the beginning of success on the job for people with disabilities through the Oklahoma Business Leadership Network from the website, www.okbln.jobfit.com.

Oklahoma 36th state to have Business Leadership Network (continued)

with Disabilities have continued to contact employers in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. At last, with a Lead Employer and 15 employers to make up a steering group, the BLN is holding their first organizational meeting on July 18 of this year. Profiles, Inc a participating employer, who provided the technology and profile expertise for the website, is sponsoring their first meeting with a luncheon. At this luncheon, Carol Dunlap, Manager, Business Leadership Network, Office of Disability Employment Policy, will attend from the USBLN in Washington D.C. to give the group tips on being an effective force in the state for the employment of people with disabilities. The Oklahoma BLN will encourage employers to hire people with disabilities through the website www.okbln.jobfit.com which is furnished by the Department of Rehabili-

tation Services.

People with disabilities can help with this effort by entering the website and completing their application process including the job survey profile. The application is not complete until the survey is completed. If you do not have access to the internet, check with your local library or your Department of Rehabilitation counselor.

The Oklahoma BLN will encourage employers to hire people with disabilities through the website www.okbln.jobfit.com which is furnished by the Department of Rehabilitation Services.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK (continued)

1. Provide agency services on informational booths at professional occupational meetings, educational trainings, technical assistance to agencies and businesses, press releases and other publications, website and telephone requests, and referrals from other entities that assist people with disabilities.
2. Sponsor brown bag lunches to disseminate disability information.
3. Teaching a HRDS course on disability awareness.
4. Promote employment of people with disabilities through support of the Business Leaders Network.

In addition the Agency has conducted a statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities and developed a report of those needs. This report is available on the OHC website www.ohc.state.ok.us. This report reflects the needs and concerns of the respondents. I invite you to review this report.

Finally we are looking forward to another productive year in spite of the limited fiscal resources and minor changes in our service delivery mode. Last year this Agency provided over 66,000 individuals with services, and we are anticipating helping many more this year.

Self discipline is Self care.

Anonymous

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- August 23, 2002 The State Office of Handicapped Concerns is sponsoring a brown bag lunch in the Community Room of Shepherd Mall in OKC from noon to 1 p.m. Sheryl Mapes of the State Health Department will be talking about "Sexuality and Disability". Bring your lunch and we'll provide coffee and tea. RSVP William 800-522-8224.
- September 12-14, 2002 "A Festival of Hope" at OSU Tech in OKC sponsored by the Parent Center and dealing with issues in Special Education. Contact Nancy Suhre for more information at 405-840-9396 ext. 16.
- September 20-21, 2002 Oklahoma Amputee Golf Tournament at Coffee Creek Golf Course in Edmond, Oklahoma. Contact Katrina Shaklee 405-722-8744.
- October 25-26, 2002 Family Perspective Conference at Integris Baptist Conference Center in OKC. For more info, contact Sally Selvidge 800-426-2747.

Arthritis Self Help Course

Information on the management of arthritis will be offered at the Creek County Health Department July 29 (918-225-5531). July 30 is the date of the self help course in the Craig County Department of Health (918-256-7531). Rogers County Health Department will offer the same course on July 30 (918-341-3166), and the Canadian County Health Department will host the information August 21 (405-262-0042). On August 23, the Beckham County Health Department will present the same information for interested persons (580-225-1173). The Mary Mahoney Memorial Health Center will offer the arthritis self help course in Oklahoma City on September 9. Call 405-679-3301 for more information.

People First is an organization for adults with cognitive impairments. There are 31 chapters statewide. Call Nancy Ward at 918-582-8272 for information about meeting dates and times.

If you have an event coming up relating to disability, let us know at 1-800-522-8224 and we'll help you publicize.