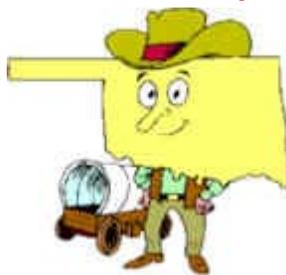


WILL'S CORNER, OKLAHOMA



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(Serving the Disability Community of Oklahoma)

A Car the Blind Can Drive

Jeannie Massay is the President of the Central Oklahoma chapter of the National Federation of the Blind. She says that at their national convention in Dallas July 3-8 a model of a car which people who are blind can operate will be on demonstration.

ODC web site:
www.odc.ok.gov

My first reaction to hearing something like that was to wonder how something like this could happen. Will this mean that other groups who traditionally cannot drive will also be able to do so? It sounds preposter-

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Handicapped Parking Enforcement

Enforcement of handicapped parking in Oklahoma took a real boost with Governor Brad Henry's signing of House Bill 2567 into state law May 28, 2010. All the potential for enforcement of this bill without cost to the taxpayers of Oklahoma is a real stroke of genius.

Where did we stand before House Bill 2567? Here's a quick look. State statute said municipalities "may enforce" handicapped parking rather than "shall enforce."

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) said that people with disabilities should have access to private property/business open to the public. However, some local police were reluctant to write tickets in parking lots which were on private property. Enforcement of handicapped parking was uneven across the state.

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Handicapped Parking Enforcement (continued)

What good is a handicapped parking placard if violations are not cited? That is half a promise, and people with disabilities want what was originally intended—a parking space which honors their disability. Real enforcement restores the promise.

Here's how the new law opens the door to enforcement. It says municipalities "shall enforce," but it offers an incentive by allowing them to keep eighty percent of the \$500 fine. Twenty percent of the fine would go to the Department of Public Safety to maintain a database available 24/7 of all people with valid parking placards.

Police can easily check a current placard and if that placard belongs to either the driver or a passenger in the vehicle. Modification of a handicapped parking placard is considered falsification of a state document and will be assessed an additional \$500 fine.

Oklahoma is now the only state with a statute where handicapped parking enforcement is totally funded by the fees generated. The new law will bring uniform enforcement across the state as municipalities see that enforcement brings an advantage to them.

How did all this happen? The Office of Disability Concerns received several calls on handicapped parking from one area, and we referred those constituents to their elected representative, Paul Wesselhoft. Representative Wesselhoft then approached this office to research state statute and make suggestions to improve the law.

This office asked the Department of Public Safety which issues handicapped parking placards and local law enforcers what they needed to make handicapped parking work. With the help of Representative Wesselhoft's staffers, they wrote a bill which he sponsored in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Debbe Leftwich agreed to sponsor the bill in the Oklahoma Senate. Governor Brad Henry signed this bill into law May 28, 2010. Citizens worked with their elected officials to address a problem.

People with disabilities benefit by using good advocacy techniques and staying with their issue with all the work that takes. You can make a difference. Never accept half a promise.

**OK State
web site:
www.ok.gov**

State Parks and Accessibility

Did you know that 2.2 million people visited Lake Murray State Park in fiscal year 2009 (the latest figures available)? Would you believe that a million people visited Robbers Cave State Park and another million Beavers Bend?

But you or another member of your family has a disability and can't enjoy the great outdoors. Hold on a second. Maybe you can.

About five years ago we did an article on the accessible cabin at Greenleaf S.P. in eastern Oklahoma. That cabin is totally accessible to people with disabilities and is booked 80% of the year with a waiting list for in-season times.

Now the Pioneer Cabin is available at Roman Nose State Park in western Oklahoma. 2010 is the first full season this cabin is online.

The Pioneer Cabin comes equipped with a full kitchen with pots, pans and eating utensils. Cabinets are lower within reach of a person in a wheelchair. There's a roll-in shower in a bathroom with ample space. In the bedroom there is one double bed and a hospital bed to accommodate one person.

The cabin is equipped with central heat and air to permit year round usage. People with disabilities are given preference in renting the cabin, and they're given a \$32 discount over the normal \$110 per night fee.

A group of retirees from Lucent Technologies in Oklahoma City called the Telecom Pioneers donated 95% of the cost of building the cabin. The Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department only had to buy furnishings to complete this wonderful addition to an Oklahoma state park.

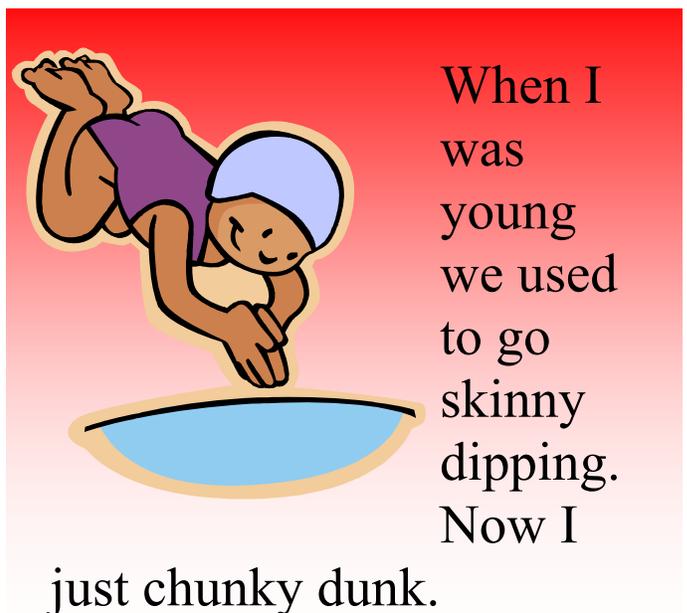
The Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation has a senior fee waiver on entrance fees at the two state parks which charge entrance fees—Lake Murray and Natural Falls. There is also a 50% discount for people with disabilities off the base camping rate of \$12 at all state parks with camping. That's nice to know, so bring documentation to certify that you are a person with disabilities.

Besides the two cabins and discounts, there is some other good news for people with disabilities and their families. Some of the lodges at Oklahoma parks have accessible rooms. Roman Nose is in the process of completely renovating their 1950's lodge and is putting in two accessible rooms for people with disabilities.

And don't forget the accessible fishing docks at Great Plains, McGee Creek, Foss and Ft. Cobb. Those accessible docks are completely covered and have lower rails to permit easy fishing access. Ah, so many fish and so little time.

There is a paved nature trail at Natural Falls and

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When I
was
young
we used
to go
skinny
dipping.
Now I

just chunky dunk.

Happy Birthday ADA



Happy Birthday ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into federal law by George Bush (the father) on July 26, 1990. The ADA is turning twenty. We've come a long ways since 1990, but we have a lot further to go in allowing full access to people with disabilities in our society.

Because of the importance of the ADA in guaranteeing civil rights to people with disabilities in the United States, we are reprinting here the preface of the actual law written twenty years ago. This preface describes quite well the circumstances of people with disabilities and gives a rationale for the law.

Preface of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990:

"The Congress finds that some 43 million Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities, and this number is increasing as the population as a whole is growing older. Historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities, and despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem.

Discrimination against individuals with disabilities persists in such critical areas as employment, housing, public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services.

Unlike individuals who have experienced discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, or age, individuals who have experienced discrimination on the basis of disability have often had no legal recourse to redress such discrimination. Individuals with disabilities continually encounter various forms of discrimination, including outright intentional exclusion, the discriminatory effects of architectural, transportation, and

communication barriers, overprotective rules and policies, failure to make modifications to existing facilities and practices, exclusionary qualification standards and criteria, segregation, and relegation to lesser services, programs, activities, benefits, jobs, or other opportunities.

Census data, national polls, and other studies have documented that people with disabilities, as a group, occupy an inferior status in our society, and are severely disadvantaged socially, vocationally, economically, and educationally. Individuals with disabilities are a discrete and insular minority who have been faced with restrictions and limitations, subjected to a history of purposeful unequal treatment, and relegated to a position of political powerlessness in our society, based on characteristics that are beyond the control of such individuals and resulting from stereotypic assumptions not truly indicative of the individual ability of such individuals to participate in, and contribute to, society.

The Nation's proper goals regarding individuals with disabilities are to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for such individuals; and the continuing existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination and prejudice denies people with disabilities the opportunity to compete on an equal basis and to pursue those opportunities for which our free society is justifiably famous, and costs the United States billions of dollars in unnecessary expenses resulting from dependency and nonproductivity.

It is the purpose of this Act to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities; to provide clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities; to ensure that

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A Car the Blind Can Drive (continued)

ous. But is it really?

It is preposterous if we think old technology, but maybe not so preposterous today and particularly in the future. As our population continues to expand perhaps most driving will become technology-based for everyone.

Text to speech technology was designed for those with vision loss but has resulted in technology used in everyday life for everyone such as Talking GPS. Is it really so hard to believe that new technology could permit a person with low or no vision to drive?

Students at the Robotics and Mechanisms Laboratory at Virginia Tech University's Mechanical Engineering Department are collaborating with the National Federation of the Blind to develop a road-ready vehicle that can be operated by a blind driver. Already they have developed an all-terrain buggy with technology.

This dune buggy uses a laser range finder, voice software and other sensory technology. The steering wheel is hooked up to a distance monitor that

gathers information from laser range finders, and it uses voice software to tell the driver how far to turn the wheel. A vibrating vest provides cues to follow when accelerating and decelerating. When the entire vest vibrates, it means "Slam on the brakes!"

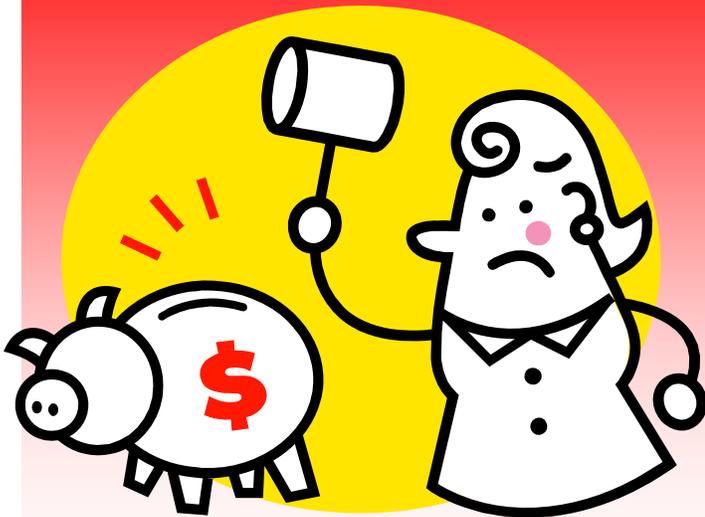
It is not a dune buggy that people who are blind are going to drive from Baltimore, Maryland to Orlando, Florida for the 2011 National Federation of the Blind convention. They will drive a real car. That's how close we are.

Jeannie Massay is hoping to be one of many people who are blind to actually drive a couple of miles even if sheer numbers of drivers limit her experience. There is little doubt the new car will be the talk of the convention both this year and next.

The central Oklahoma chapter of the National Federation of the Blind meets every second Friday of each month at O.U. Medical Center in Edmond. That address is 1 South Bryant, and the meeting is at 7 p.m.

Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.





I ordered a burger at McDonalds and the kid behind the counter asked, “Can you AFFORD fries with that?”

State Parks and Accessibility (continued)

Sequoyah State Park and Western Hills Lodge which allows people with mobility impairments to use this amenity also. Sequoyah State Park is putting in replacement bathrooms which will be accessible to people with disabilities. It also has an accessible RV campground at the Seminole Area with hard-surfaced areas around all picnic and grill facilities. Another new campground with accessible sites is the Turkey Pass campground at Lake Thunderbird.

Oklahoma has 42 state parks located on 50 properties. (Some properties are consolidated into one state park.) Think about a vacation close to home. Accessibility is making that great outdoor experience also available to people with disabilities and their families.

If you need further information on accessibility features of Oklahoma state parks and lodges, Kris Marek is the Director of Oklahoma State Parks. Email her at kmarek@oklahomaparks.com.

Happy Birthday ADA (continued)

the Federal Government plays a central role in enforcing the standards established in this act on behalf of individuals with disabilities; and to invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities.”

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 10-18, 2010

The University of Central Oklahoma will host the 2010 Sitting Volleyball world competition with 550 athletes from 25 countries. For more information email Erin Hirt at 2010worlds@uco.edu or ljoiner1@uco.edu.

July 26, 2010

Happy 20th Birthday Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The ADA is the civil rights act for people with disabilities.

August 4-5, 2010

The Department of Rehabilitation Services sponsors its 2010 Expo with information regarding services and issues affecting the disability community. This year's Expo will be at the School for the Blind in Muskogee. For more information call Andrea Hall at 405-522-7957 or ajhall@okdrs.gov.

August 27-29, 2010

Camp Benedictine in Shawnee, Oklahoma will hold a three-day camp for children and adults of all disabilities. For more information contact Virginia Reeves at 405-878-5289.

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

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