



2012 Disability History Essay Contest

The SILC was very pleased and proud to co-sponsor, with the WV State Rehabilitation Council, West Virginia's first Disability History Essay Contest in 2012. The contest was open to all high school seniors in the state and cash prizes were awarded thanks to a generous grant from the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services.

The contest was an important way to increase knowledge and understanding of the disability rights movement while providing high school seniors with a chance to earn cash prizes. The entries received demonstrated that we achieved those goals, at least with some students. It was particularly nice to present the awards at the Senior Awards Ceremonies at the high schools, given status to and increasing awareness of the contest.

The 2012 Disability History Essay Contest was conceived as a way to reinforce and highlight Disability History Week in West Virginia. Disability History Week was the result of the efforts of the 16-21 old delegates to the 2005 Youth Disability Caucus. These youth were amazed by the history of the Disability Rights Movement-things they wished they had learned in school- and were determined to do something to ensure all West Virginia students had the opportunity to learn.

Their efforts resulted in the passage of legislation establishing the third week of October as Disability History Week in West Virginia and requiring that instruction be provided in all public schools-L through 12- about disabilities, disability history, and the disability rights movement during that week. This was the first such recognition in the US and many other states have followed suit establishing a disability history week or disability history month of their own. Students entering the contest competed for a chance at the State Winner Prize, and 6 District level Second Prizes.



Ann McDaniel
Executive Director

Whats New

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**2012 WV Disability
History Essay Contest**

Required Theme:

***“The significance of the
disability rights movement in
today’s world”***



State Winner, \$2,000:

Heidi Dennison

Nicholas County High School

If one flips through the pages of any American History book, one would find chapters dedicated to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s for the African Americans. The stories of how African Americans suffered for their rights are almost common knowledge because leaders like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. are historic heroes. However, this is not so for the disability rights movement. One would find few pages dedicated to this movement. Names like Ed Roberts and Judy Heumann are not so common, but these two individuals played just as important of a role in changing history as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. The movement led by Mr. Roberts, Ms. Heumann, and others like them changed the course of American history. Thanks to the efforts of many citizens, acts have been passed by Congress that has changed the lives of people with disabilities significantly, including that of my Aunt Linda.

Before the Rehabilitation Act was passed in 1973, people with disabilities lived rough lives. Often times, individuals with disabilities were not only viewed as incompetent or feeble-minded but as less than human. Very few accommodations were made to meet the needs of these people. For example, buildings did not have passable doorways or restrooms for those who used wheelchairs. Children with special needs did not receive the opportunity to get an education like other students. In fact, many were placed in institutions where they would stay away from those who were viewed as normal. Sadly, the common philosophy was to keep them out of sight and out of mind. There were a few prominent people who set out on the daunting task to change the ideals of citizens and of Congress. A man by the name of Ed Roberts, who had overcome serious obstacles of having polio and becoming a quadriplegic, was among one of the most influential people in the movement. He was among the first people with disabilities to attend college. “Roberts and fellow disability rights leaders would challenge widely held myths that people with disabilities were incapable of being educated, working, caring for themselves, or becoming contributing members of society”. Judy Heumann also made significant strides in fighting for rights of those with disabilities. Ms. Heumann formed a group called Disabled in Action which held protests to gain support against employment discrimination.

Change didn’t come quickly. A few acts were passed in Congress such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This act, gave partial rights to people with disabilities, but it was not the complete freedom so many wished for.

(cont. on 3)

District 1: First Place, \$1,000

Patience Kascic

Capitol High School



“Meow.”

The only thing my niece Allie could say at the age of two was “meow”. We know now that she has cerebral palsy. At the time, no one could tell us why Allie wasn’t responding like she should. My brother and his wife had spent hours with doctors trying to figure out the problem. Allie had a really hard birth that took many hours. At first the doctors said everything was okay, but they were wrong. In the beginning Allie had “wobblely” legs. When other babies were babbling and cooing, Allie wasn’t making any sound at all. She never mimicked her mother or father like parents expect their children to. More and more they noticed that she wasn’t developing skills that children did at her age. Even though her pediatrician didn’t show much concern, Allie’s parents knew something was wrong.

By the time Allie was two and half the difference between her and other children were obvious. Her doctor recommended Birth-to-3, an in-home early intervention program for at-need children. While Allie progressed well with physical therapy, she continued to lack communication through spoken language. Our family devised a series of basic signs that Allie could use in order to communicate better with us. Cup, more, please, thank you, drink, and cat were some of the first words that she quickly understood and began to use every day. Providing her with education let her develop more and more.

(cont. on 4)

(cont. from State Winner 3)

Almost twenty years later, in 1990, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into effect. According to the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Americans with Disabilities Act was, “the nation’s first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications” This act enhanced life for more than forty-nine million Americans

Since Americans Disability Act was signed, changes have been made to meet the needs of people with disabilities. For instance, many public buildings are mandated to have entrance ramps for those in wheelchairs. Also, handicap parking spaces are provided in front of almost all business. Employers with fifteen or more employees are not allowed to discriminate eligible applicants based on disability (Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago). There are numerous accommodations made for those with disabilities.

If the disability rights movement had not begun, my Aunt Linda, who was born in 1966, with a genetic deficiency called phenylketonuria (PKU), would not have had the opportunity to reach her full potential. When she was born, doctors tried to convince my grandparents that it was in their best interest to place her in an institution, but being the strong-willed parents they were, they went against the doctors’ suggestions.

(cont. on 8)

(cont. from p. 3, Dist. 1 First Place)

Even though the intervention that Allie is receiving was positive, we all felt that more needed to be done as soon as possible in order for her to gain the time lost in her development. Lack of pediatric neurologists, very little speech and physical therapy, and the short supply of true early intervention, had left Allie tremendously behind. Realizing this, her parents took matters in their own hands.

Allie is now four and attends a special program through the county public school system that allows her to begin school early and also provides her with additional speech and physical therapy. This wouldn't have ever happened if it wasn't for the Disability Rights Movement. Just like African- Americans were segregated, so were the disabled. Opportunities weren't just given away to anybody.

Allie is being taught sign language to communicate better and express her needs and emotions with others. It's so hard to know that she wants to talk to you but can't form the words - it makes her extremely happy when you can recognize something she is telling you by using sign language. Physical therapy twice a week has given Allie the ability to expand her muscles more and hold a good balance. Her education in a classroom has let her understand rules and become friendly with other children. The future is becoming brighter and brighter because Allie has the same possibility as any other kid.

(cont. on page 8)

District 1: Second Place, \$500

Jamie Lynn Vermillion
Capitol High School



Imagine a world where everyone was treated equally no matter their circumstances. What a dream it would be to live in a place like that ... one can only imagine.

One of the biggest problems in society today stems from inconsiderate individuals showing total disrespect to others because they do not fit the mold of being "normal." Millions of Americans each year are born with physical and/or mental disabilities, some cases more severe than others. These individuals just want to be accepted in society and treated with respect. Having a disability or having a family member with a disability can be a daily challenge. Small tasks can become enormous for some as they just try to blend in. Could you imagine what it would be like to be blind, never seeing the beauty of the land or the loved ones around you? How would you get from place to place? You could never have the enjoyment of just picking up a book or magazine while waiting in a doctor's office. Have you ever seen Braille material available in a waiting room? Could you imagine what it would be like to be deaf, never hearing the sweet sound of music or a mother's soft voice? But yet, these individuals have to be strong and go forth in the world.

How hurtful it must be to have others always stare at you (not in a good way) when entering a room. Or to have others laugh at you because of the way you walk or because of a speech impediment. These individuals really just want to be treated like everyone else. They want to receive "smiles" from others as they pass by. They want to hear the words like "great job" when reaching a goal they have set forth. They just want to be treated the same.

District 2: First Place, \$1,000

Maggie Clements
Morgantown High School



I know a twelve year old girl named Grace who has multiple disabilities, or as I like to say “different abilities.” Grace has Apraxia, a neurological condition that involves difficulties in motor planning, as well as multiple other disabilities. She is not always able to perform the functions that she wants to, and although she understands what is said to her, it is hard for her to respond appropriately. Symptoms of Apraxia are similar to those of someone who had a stroke or brain injury. This struggle Grace has makes school tough for her. But thanks to her Individualized Education Plan (IEP), she is always placed in the right environment to nurture her and teach her what she needs to know, at a pace that helps lead to her success. Life hasn’t always been like it is now for people with special needs. The Disability Rights movement has greatly influenced how these special people are treated in our society, by always striving to give them equal rights and equal opportunities.

Let’s journey some two hundred years back and try to understand how life was for those with special needs. From the 1800’s to the 1950’s, people who were considered to have “mental retardation” were institutionalized, and many other people with developmental disabilities were as well. Unfortunately, this usually lasted for their whole life. The Eugenics Movement was also going on in this time period, which forced people with disabilities to be sterilized without their consent. People with disabilities were not allowed to move to the US, they couldn’t get married, and as a result of the Eugenics’ movement- they could not have kids. This sounds and is terrible, but it was much milder than what Hitler did to disabled people in order to create the “perfect race. In 1932, the idea of having “freaks” in circuses came about.

(cont. from p.5, Dist. 1 Second Place)

We really have no idea what others go through on a daily basis or the pain they may feel inside.

Many seem to wonder, can people with disabilities do everything that a normal person can do? After hours of research and gathering materials, my perception is yes, in most cases they can. It might just take them a bit longer to get to the end result.

Simple things we think and do can sometimes be a challenge for those with disabilities. Voting is a privilege and must be available to all Americans. There are laws in place to protect those with disabilities. An American citizen cannot be turned away from voting just because of a disability. Law states they must be provided access at a local poll, or transportation to another polling site that has handicapped accessibility.

A free public education must also be provided to all entitled. Documents such as the following, help assist in making certain those guidelines are met: 1) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; 2) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and 3) West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2419 - Regulations for the Education of Exceptional Students.

It is against the law for any school or education facility to discriminate against a student for simply having a disability. This may include, but is not limited to “direct discrimination” which means not allowing a student into that school because they have a disability. “Indirect discrimination” providing certain application forms that may not be accessible to those who have a disability.

(cont. on 6)

(cont. from p. 5, Dist. 2 First Place)

People with disabilities were laughed at for being different, but hey, how else were they going to get food on the table, right? WRONG. The fact that that was going on only 90 years ago is absolutely sickening. But the fight for jobs and equal rights continued.

In the late 1940's people began to advocate for those with special needs. This all proved to be effective! Federal grants were given to state governments for the construction of health facilities that would benefit people with disabilities, and rehabilitation medicine became a medical specialty. Things were looking up!

The 1950's, up until now, signify the real change in civil rights. Praise The Lord! Deinstitutionalization finally came about around 1963. And even earlier than that, in 1961, new architectural codes were published in order to make buildings accessible for everyone. It keeps getting better - in 1970 the Urban Mass Transit Act (UMTA) was passed; requiring all new mass transit vehicles to be armed with wheel chair lifts. I could spend quite some time talking about all the great laws that were passed around this time, but I'll just name some landmark ones. The Rehabilitation act and the Americans with Disabilities Act were huge in protecting these people's civil rights and advancing the Disability Rights Movement. Finally, people with disabilities came many steps closer to leading lives full of opportunities.

The Disability Right's movement is broken down into many areas to that lead to equality.

(cont. on 10)

District 3: First Place, \$1,000

Victoria Travis

Doddridge County High School



One of the most recognizable lines in the Star Spangled Banner describes America as the "land of the free," however, while many take the right of freedom for granted, it has not always been a guaranteed light for some individuals in America. Most Americans are well educated on the struggles of certain groups to gain civil rights. The women 's liberation movement and the civil rights movement for ethnic minorities mirror the struggles faced by a less well known group of individuals who have had to fight for the same basic freedoms and rights as these two groups. People with disabilities comprise one of the largest minority groups. It may be surprising to some to learn of the dark history that people with disabilities were forced to endure due to prejudices.

The road to equality for people with disabilities has been a long and difficult one beginning as far back as ancient times with documented stories of abuse and cruelty due to a lack of understanding of disabilities in general. Throughout history, people with disabilities have been misunderstood and mistreated. Many did not believe that people who were different should even be allowed to exist. It may be shocking to learn that the gas chambers used by Hitler during the Holocaust were built originally to eradicate people with disabilities. Fortunately, this was not the standard procedure in America; however, the common practice 'Was social exclusion in institutions'. Today, more people understand that people with disabilities have the same interests, talents, goals and dreams as people without disabilities. They deserve to live in world with the freedom to be who they are without prejudice.

(cont. on 7)

District 3: Second Place, \$500

Taylor Davisson
Doddridge County High School



Picture if you can, a world where people were treated with disrespect just because they were different; where individuals were forced to live a solitary life in an asylum or facility away from family and friends. What would it have been like to exist in a time where public places were inaccessible or one's right to a public education was denied? Living in a world that was not designed to meet one's individual needs would be a constant struggle. The tasks that most people accomplish without thought may be difficult or even impossible for some. However, we all deserve equal respect and opportunities.

Throughout history, people with disabilities have not only had to learn how to cope with a disability, but with the discrimination and often harsh reception of the society in which they live. For centuries, the disabled were a minority group, treated as outcasts as they struggled to overcome stereotypes and biased actions and attitudes toward them. This unjust treatment often crushed their already low self-esteem; it served to manifest their feelings of uselessness and the sense that they could not be functional members of society.

Back in the 1800s, many people with disabilities were victimized, and ridiculed when they were put on public display as side-show freaks so that someone could make a profit. In contrast to individuals who ostracized the disabled, there were also those who pitied them and felt that they were weak, meager and unable to play a productive role in the community.

(cont. from p.6, Dist. 3 First Place)

Through the work off the blue disabilities rights movement, Americans with disabilities have been able to overcome pre-judicial attitudes as well as social exclusion through a grassroots movement for equality in rights, access and treatment.

Perhaps, the most basic struggle faced by people with disabilities is simply the right to the same freedom's provided for every other person, Following the lessons learned from the civil rights for ethnic minorities and women's rights movements, people with disabilities began to organize and fight for their rights as well. The basic rights to live with their own families instead of in institutions as well as the right to go to school with students with and without disabilities, gain employment, live on their own and make their own decisions were some of the major issues facing people with disabilities before the disability rights movement in America. During the 1960s, a major gain was won with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act made it against the law to discriminate against people due to the race, religion and, later, gender. While this act was significant for other minority groups it failed to address the issues faced by people with disabilities. This prompted the disability rights movement in their own quest for equal rights. The movement began by talking to elected representative, waiting letters and articles and meeting with policy makers.

(cont. on 11)

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(cont. from p. 4, Dist. 1 First Place)

Aunt Linda was raised at home alongside her brothers. The PKU caused mild mental impairment which made learning a great challenge. Due to the strides made in the early 1970s for rights of those with disabilities, she obtained a high school diploma. The ADA has also given her the freedom to obtain a job at a local therapy business, which gives her a sense of purpose. Her story is just one of millions that have been changed thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Not only did the Americans with Disabilities Act provide protection under the law for those with disabilities, but it gave the individuals with disabilities a sense of identity. Gone are the days that those with special needs are forced to live in institutions. No longer are they seen as less than human or feeble-minded. American History books may not discuss the details behind the disability rights movement, but this does not alter the significance it made in the lives of those who live with disabilities. Many advances were made by those like Mr. Roberts and Mrs. Heumann, who did not give up until the results they desired were accomplished. Because of the Americans with Disabilities Act, many lives have been transformed including my Aunt Linda's. Judy Heumann once said, "Disability only becomes a tragedy for us when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives" (Shapiro). Through the collaborative efforts of many Americans, the lives of those who have disabilities no longer is considered tragic but significant.

Heidi Dennison

(cont. from pgs. 3 & 4, Dist. 1 First Place)

Because Allie has no true formal communication skills, there are many things that she cannot do. She can't tell someone when she needs to go to the potty, when she's hungry, what she wants to eat, or even what's wrong when she's crying. The Disability Rights Movement has given her a chance to learn to be independent. Allie wouldn't have been able to hold a job or function well in society due to her impaired communication. Because of the Movement, Allie leads the necessary skills of communication; and has the chance to be assisted in her everyday life. Her life will be more than what we've ever wished for.

Our family is hopeful that technology and resources will brighten Allie's future. Assistive computer devices, talking calculators, and speech recognition programs are just a few of the newer technologies available to children who experience not only communication disorders but hearing impairments and physical limitations. Wheelchair ramps, elevators, physical environments, and automatic doors have all helped her with her walking disability. Allie has already begun to advance with the help of her school and its inclusion program that allows Allie to attend a pre-kindergarten class. In the 1960's disabled children were separated from others. Some felt they were a distraction and abnormal. Being disabled used to mean that you were an outcast and nobody wanted you.

The Disability Rights Movement in today's world is a huge significance. It allows all to be equal. Independence, opportunities, and hope give Allie a bright future. Knowing that assisted living arrangements, education, and therapy are given to Allie; my family is at ease. Without this Act most people with disabilities would be neglected and forgotten, but not now. Over the years, the Disability Rights Movement has become the most treasured thing in some families.

She can now say her name, words like mommy and daddy, and her education is building everyday. Allie's mother and father understand the importance of hope for the prospect of a future filled with interaction between Allie and the rest of the world. Because of this movement these actions are able to happen. Like any parent they want to see Allie continue in school and on to college. They want the same things for Allie as other parents want for their own - to live in her own house, to order a pizza, to get a job, or to just laugh and whisper secrets with her. Like any parent they want to see Allie connecting with her friends. Between me and Allie, I'm happy to hear her first simple little word she says all the time, "meow". I love seeing her with a smile on her face no matter what. I know that Allie will grow up with the chance of being normal. Due to the Disability Rights Movement people just like her have the same opening.

Patience Kascic

(cont. from p. 4 & 5, Dist. 1 Second Place)

Discrimination arising from a disability” where the disabled student is prohibited from going outside for lunch or break because it takes too long to bring them back in. “Harassment” such as a teacher yelling at a student for not staying focused in class when their disability prevents them from paying attention or holding focus for very long; and lastly, “victimization” or suspending a student with a disability for continuing to complain about harassment.

One of the most important things we do as a contributing member of society is becoming a member of the working force in America. Having a job is not only essential for income, but in some instances it helps keep the mind sharp and makes one feel they are worth something. However, having a disability may limit as to the type of job one may hold. The following information or something to this effect seems to be common on most job postings.

We do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color relation, disability, age and national origin in employment and in administration of any of their education programs and activities. Contact information for the Office of Civil Rights is usually listed as well as information for the U.S. Department of Education.

In my current part-time job at a local grocery store, I have the privilege of working with a terrific lady. She has a learning disability and moves at a slightly slower pace than others. She is often the center of jokes made by other co-workers. I can tell she is often hurt by the way she is treated by others. As I witness their actions, it just makes me feel sad for them. My thoughts are they must feel incompetent themselves to do something of this nature to such a sweet lady. They are adult and should know better.

Americans with disabilities also have the right, just as other Americans to voice their opinion. Freedom of Speech is a right for ALL American citizens. Some people actually think individuals with disabilities should not be permitted to speak their mind. However, the International Human Rights Laws state everyone has the right to equality before law, the right to nondiscrimination, the right to an equal opportunity, the right to independent living, the right to full integration, and the right to security. It further states in the policy regarding disabilities it’s often overridden by the “equalization of opportunities” which is explaining how the society must employ its resources in such a way that includes even individual, including those with disabilities, have an equal opportunity to participate in society.

Americans with disabilities also have special right when it comes to being interviewed by the police. If they are being questioned at a police station by a detective or officer they may make special exceptions depending on their impairment. If they are deaf, or hearing impaired the police must arrange for an interpreter to be present with them. The police should only interview someone who has a learning disability when a responsible adult is present.

These are just a few of the things a person with disabilities may face. If we could all look at things through their eyes, feel the pain they have felt, hear the things they have heard or walk a mile in their shoes, I guarantee the world would be a better place.

Jamie Lynn Vermillion



(cont. next column)

(cont. from p.6, Dist. 2 First Place)

These include, but are not limited to, accessibility and safety in transportation, independent living, employment, education, and freedom from abuse. Although these areas were not lived up to in the previous decades, it seems that they are close to being more equal now. Thanks to the UMTA, transportation has been made both accessible and safe for people with special needs. Independent living is no longer a dream, but a reality in which people are getting better opportunities to find jobs. And as for the abuse section, Eugenics is no longer constitutional. People finally have the right to the care of their own bodies. People with disabilities still are not as accepted and equal as they should be, but the movement is continuing to grow and flourish.

Remember Grace that I talked about previously? Grace is my younger sister. She has taught me more about life than any school ever could and I am so lucky and thankful that God put her in my life. She is made perfectly and just how He wanted her to be. No human has the right to tell people like her that she isn't good enough. The Disability Rights movement is a blessing. I could not imagine what life would be like for her without it. She is accepted and loved in our community for who she is. And she is an amazing human being.

Maggie Clements

(cont. from p. 7, Dist. 3 First Place)

With increased focus on equal rights, another issue is equal access. Accessibility issues are a very important struggle faced by people with disabilities. While having an equal right to be somewhere is vitally important, however, if there is no accessibility then it is pointless. Many people do not even see the barriers faced by people with disabilities every day. While most people recognize the importance of wheelchair ramps, most fail to recognize simple things that create barriers for people with disabilities such as the width of hallways the height of drinking fountains, the size and position of grab bars in an accessible bathroom as well as the shape of a door handle. All these things have a major impact on the accessibility of a location. While most people take getting around in the physical world for granted, people with disabilities face obstacles daily in order to be productive in the world. While the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 has made tremendous stride in snaking the world more accessible, there are still many obstacles to overcome, Public awareness of these issues will increase pressure to continue to make strides in this area.

Above all, people with disabilities deserve to be treated the same as everyone else. Historically people with disabilities cities have been looked upon as less than human. While negative treatment of people with disabilities has been a worldwide problem throughout history, the United States has also compromised the rights of people with disabilities as well. In the 1800s, any person with a disability was considered tragic and pitiful. The only role they could serve in society was entertainment in a sideshow. At this time people with disabilities were forced to undergo sterilization. Many people with disabilities were forced to live in institutions and asylums. This segregation was considered merciful as it kept them isolated and hidden from a fearful society. The conditions of these institutions, however, were often worse than the conditions of prisons. After veterans began returning from war with a variety of disabilities caused by injury, things began to change as government programs for rehabilitation began to appear. This helped to change the attitude toward disabled people. As disability activists became more active in fighting for equal rights and access for people with disabilities, more people began to recognize that disabilities should not define who a person is. Today, people with disabilities are able to live independent, self-affirming lives. They can live their dreams, hopes and desires due to the changes made possible by the disability rights movement

In conclusion, the work of dedicated activists has worked to improve the opportunities of people with disabilities in the areas of equal rights, access and treatment. People with disabilities today are able to lead productive lives enjoying the same rights and freedoms of all people. There have been major accomplishments over the past thirty years to protect the rights of people with disabilities and guarantee that they have the same opportunities as all other citizens. Fewer people now suffer the discrimination and isolation of the past. The gifts and talents of people with disabilities are more recognized today than ever before. However, there is still more to do. Acceptance and attitudes need to continue to change in order to achieve full equality for people with disabilities. People need to be sensitive to others and realize that every person has different strengths and weaknesses. Everyone needs to celebrate the differences of others and accept everyone for their individuality.

By: Victoria Travis



(cont. from p.7, Dist. 3 Second Place)

It was totally acceptable to institutionalize the disabled or place family members with disabilities in facilities where their treatment was cruel and inhumane. It was common practice to sterilize individuals with disabilities without their consent to prevent them from reproducing an offspring who might also be disabled,

Public awareness of people with disabilities increased when the United States elected the first president with a disability in 1933. Roosevelt was paralyzed due to a bout with polio in his early 20's. During President Roosevelt's tenure, people with disabilities were still viewed as substandard. The sense was that they needed to be "cured" or "fixed" to better fit into normal society. Roosevelt was an advocate for rehabilitation for people with disabilities. After World War II there was an increase in number of people with disabilities due to war injuries. This led to a push for the government to provide rehabilitation and vocational training for injured vets, in efforts to allow them to regain their independence. In the 1960s, when the civil rights movement began to gain support, advocates for individuals with disabilities saw the opportunity to join forces and fight for equal rights and opportunities for the disabled. In 1973, the Rehabilitation Act was passed, giving people with disabilities equal civil rights under the law. This would be first, of many legal steps in the process of bringing equality to the disabled.

(cont. p. 12)

(cont. from p. 11, Dist. 3 Second Place)

It's hard for me to imagine living in a time where people with disabilities were considered to be outcasts in society. The disability movement in the '60s and early '70s set the stage for acceptance of all individuals. The Disability Rights Movement has provided access to public places like stores and schools. The disabled now have the right to live in their own homes and pursue their own interests and careers. Without this movement, individuals might still suffer from discrimination due to their disabilities. Having a paralyzed uncle has helped me to understand the daily obstacles and difficulties dealt with by handicapped people. There are little things that he has said to me throughout my life that has made a profound impact on my views of the handicapped. The first example was when he told me (how he enjoyed talking to me, because we were eye level and when he spoke with others, he had to look up at them. A second powerful statement he made was when his handicapped van broke down and my grandfather had to go and pick him and his wife up in his car. As he was riding home, he stared out the window and made the comment that it was nice to sit in a regular car seat and how the people they passed on the road didn't know that he was paralyzed, he looked normal. The Disability Rights Movement in today's world needs to continuously progress with the times. Society is much more accepting and knowledgeable about different disabilities than it was several decades ago.

I am lucky to have an uncle who helped enlighten me on what it is like to be disabled. Unfortunately, there will always be individuals who stare and display disrespectful behaviors. Continuous public education will hopefully raise awareness and someday help eliminate such discrimination. The Disability Rights Movement has helped tremendously with many of the limitations that were placed upon people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities want to be treated equal, not special, our ultimate goal as a society should be to have a totally accepting society where everyone blends their abilities, and strengths find weaknesses together

By: Taylor Davisson



DISABLE
THE LABEL

FYI

• FOR YOUR INFORMATION •

The Disability History Essay Contest is a collaborative effort of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services, Statewide Independent Living Council, and State Rehabilitation Council, with cooperation from the West Virginia Department of Education and the West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts.



Congratulations to all the winners! Watch for news 2013.....



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