



SILC Update

The SILC is very pleased to share this Special Edition of our newsletter with all the winners of the 2014 Disability History Essay Contest and their essays. The contest began in the fall of 2014, corresponding to WV Disability History Week in October, and the awards were presented to each winner at their high school's Senior Awards Ceremony in May 2015. All high school seniors in West Virginia were eligible to submit an entry and this year we received the most entries since the contest began!

The theme for the contest this year was "Discuss the opportunities for people with disabilities that have evolved from the Disability Rights Movement" and this special edition of our newsletter includes all the winning essays, photos of the authors, information about their schools, and a bit of information to help you get to know these students. The authors of the winning essays received an engraved key chain and a check for the amount of their award as follows:

- State Winner – Mason Ryck – Clarksburg, WV - \$2,000
- District 1 First Place – Nicholas Paitsel – Danville, WV - \$1,000
- District 2 First Place – Meghan Dolly – Elkins, WV - \$1,000
- District 3 First Place – Alexandria Carder – Salem, WV - \$1,000
- District 4 First Place – Grace Skidmore – Exchange, WV - \$1,000
- District 4 Second Place – Christopher Mathis – Grassy Meadows, WV - \$500
- District 6 First Place – Jasmine Murillo – Ranson, WV - \$1,000

Congratulations to all the winners! I hope this contest continues to motivate high school seniors to not only submit an entry, but to learn more about disability history and how the disability rights movement has changed our world and our lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ann Watts McDaniel'.

Ann Watts McDaniel
Executive Director

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Mason Ryck was born July 17, 1997 in Augusta, GA. He is the youngest of two siblings, Travis (23), whom resides in Texas and Taylor (20) of Arizona. Mason loves to play lacrosse, picking up the game from his Native American heritage, the Iroquois Mohawks in Canada. He also enjoys boxing and MMA. Mason is a 2015 graduate of Robert C. Byrd High School. Mason plans to attend college in Arizona and will be working with his father in industrial construction this summer after graduation.

Robert C. Byrd High School

History

On September 28, 1991 the citizens of Harrison County passed a bond that included funds for the construction of the new Robert C. Byrd High School. Ground was broke for this state of the art facility on August 28, 1992.

The dedication ceremony was conducted in the R.C.B.H.S. gymnasium on November 19, 1995. The Honorable Senator Robert C. Byrd was the featured speaker and honored guest. On December 10, 1995 and open house was held for the public to view this beautiful facility. The first students passed through the doors to attend classes on January 4, 1996.

Leon Pilewski became the first principal and was assisted by Geary Rollins and William Fratto. Mr. Pilewski's chief goal was to continue the tradition of student academic excellence.

Robert C. Byrd High School earned the distinction of "A West Virginia School of Excellence" during the 2001-2002 school year.

Mission

"Our mission is to have a successful student population that learns in a nurturing and safe environment."

Mason Ryck

Robert C. Byrd High School

When I first heard about the 2014 disability history essay contest, I must admit that I had no interest or intent of submitting an entry. Fortunately, my grandfather saw the entry form on our dining room table and encouraged me to enter. He didn't share or elaborate his reasons on why I should enter, except to state the Disability Acts were some of the most important pieces of legislation ever enacted in United States history. Intrigued by his comment, I began to conduct my own research on the topic.

What I found was mind boggling and a real eye opener for a seventeen year old who had no understanding of what people with disabilities had overcome. For centuries, people with disabilities were labeled as helpless, deformed, abnormal, and non-productive. They were viewed as a burden on society which were better served in an asylum, institution, or a circus for entertainment. The disabled were ridiculed based on their physical or mental features rather than their potential value and benefit to society. The Trans Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in Weston, West Virginia was constructed and opened in 1864 to house such physical and mental afflictions.

It wasn't until the early 1900's that the disability movement began its fight for equal rights and protection for people with disabilities. The catalyst for the movement began shortly after World War I when disabled veterans were provided rehabilitation for their military service to this nation. However, the public mainstream continued to view the disabled as abnormal with the primary focus being on a medical fix or permanent cure. This public perception continued even though Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the first American president to have a disability, recognized the need for more rehabilitative care for all the disabled.

Following World War II, veterans once again became vocal about their physical and mental disabilities incurred as a result of war. Veterans were now demanding more employment opportunities so they could re-enter back into society as productive American citizens. This outcry resulted in disabled veterans being entitled to both rehabilitative care and vocational training. However, these veteran benefits did little to address the public access and transportation issues confronting the disabled. In addition, the veteran programs weren't available to the general public thus leaving millions without rights, care, or opportunities.

In the early 1960's the disability movement aligned itself with the Civil Rights movement, demanding equal rights and treatment of all people regardless of race, gender, or disability. During this period, the disability movement was primarily spearheaded by the parents of disabled children. They demanded their children be provided the same educational opportunities as other children, without having to be institutionalized. Legislation was eventually enacted in the mid 1960's protecting the civil rights of people regardless of race and gender; however, it wasn't until the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that the civil rights of people with disabilities were protected. For the first time in US history, people with disabilities were now protected by law for equal employment opportunities. This milestone legislation eventually led to the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, entitling disabled children equal access to the same public education as other children. In 1996, the act was renamed the

Nicholas Paitsel

Scott High School

The disability rights movement has been a long, often frustrating, yet extremely successful and empowering process for individuals with disabilities in the United States. The movement stemmed from the fact that, historically, individuals with disabilities were treated poorly and unfairly regardless of the circumstances of their disability. People with severe mental disabilities as well as people with slight physical disabilities faced outrageous obstacles in addition to their disabilities every day before the disability rights movement began. The challenges they faced included harassment, judgment, civil inequalities, and social interaction and perception problems. Before the disability rights movement, the average person did not know as much about mental and physical disabilities as they do now. Therefore, the general public viewed anyone with a disability extremely negatively. This resulted in prejudice that led to harassment in some cases. Individuals with disabilities were not wanted in public and were almost always sent to institutions to live where they would often endure very poor treatment, resulting in mental and emotional scarring. The disability rights movement opened many doors for individuals with disabilities. They were integrated into society, given equal rights as citizens, and given the chance to live more independently.

The disability rights movement went into motion in the 1960's using the African-American civil rights and the ongoing women's rights movements as leverage. The early success of the movement was probably due to the unity and determination the movement's leaders and advocates. For the first time, all disabled people, whether their handicaps were physical, mental, or visual and hearing impairments, came together to raise awareness for the same cause. Advocates of the movement made the public aware of physical barriers which prohibited individuals with disabilities from equal opportunities. These barriers included buildings with no access besides stairs, lack of maintenance of sidewalks, locations not connected with public transportation systems, hallways too narrow to navigate wheelchairs and other necessary equipment, and the list could go on. The proof of existence of these physical barriers was what kick started the disability rights movement.

The movement began under the leadership of Edward Roberts, a wheelchair user, as the independent living movement. The independent living movement suggested that people with disabilities know themselves and their needs better than their non-disabled peers know them. Therefore, they must take the responsibility to gain support and publicity in the political arena in order to ensure that their needs are addressed. This small movement that started in California by Mr. Roberts and other wheelchair users initiated the work of setting more broad goals for individuals with disabilities throughout the 1960's, and eventually blossomed into the disability rights movement. Roberts' original ideals of self-evaluation and self-representation led to the de-institutionalization of many people. Individuals with disabilities began living more typical lives. The problems that remained were the physical and social barriers in the community such as the lack of ramp entrances to buildings and discrimination in the workplace against people with hearing and visual disabilities. Issues like these were the first and most basic problems to resolve. Breaking down the many existing physical and social barriers in the surroundings that individuals with disabilities live in every day was the primary goal of the disability rights movement during the 1960's.



Nicholas Paitsel graduated in 2015 from Scott High School in Boone County with "Highest Honors." He plans to attend West Virginia University next fall majoring in Secondary Education with a concentration in Social Studies. He is a member of National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, and served as captain of the Scott High Soccer team for the past two years. He is an All-State soccer player, All-State Chorus recipient and is active in his community as a member of the Madison Baptist Church, a referee for the Boone County Youth Soccer League, and a volunteer for Boone County Special Olympics.

Scott High School

Vision

One school, one purpose, one day at a time!

Mission

Our staff will commit...our students will learn...our world will benefit.

Strategic Plan

Goal 1: All students will develop the personal skills of wellness, responsibility, cultural awareness, self-direction, and good citizenship in an environment that is caring and safe.

Goal 2: All students will graduate from high school prepared for post-secondary education and/or to enter the workforce through career pathways and guidance that focus students on productive and satisfying lives.

Goal 3: All students will show improvement in meeting or exceeding state and national curriculum standards while acquiring 21st Century Skills through engaging opportunities in the core subjects of reading, English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, as well as the arts, world language, health and physical education, and technical education.

Goal 4: Scott High School will increase the use of technology by students, parents, and teachers to increase student learning.



Meghan Dolly is a 2015 graduate of Elkins High School. She has been accepted to Davis and Elkins College where she will begin her studies of Exercise Science in the fall. She has played basketball since middle school and has been offered a partial scholarship to play at the College level while attending Davis and Elkins. She enjoys hiking, running, and spending time with her family and friends. She is active in her church as well as helping in her family businesses; The Delmonte Market and Back Porch BBQ.

Elkins High School

History

The first school which housed Elkins High School according to historian Donald Rice was built in 1894 at the corner of Second Street and Henry Avenue where the old Central School still stands and is now apartments. The first commencement of Elkins High School occurred in May 1899. The curriculum consisted of the three R's supplemented by a bit of history and advanced mathematics.

In 1909, while the new Central Building was being built, classes were moved to the new First Ward School Building, which is still standing today. By 1914, the new Central Building had been completed to replace the old 1894 ten-room structure and the First Ward School..

The population of the town continued to increase, and housing of these students had become a serious problem, so plans began to erect a new high school building. From 1916 to 1925 high school classes were held in the Central School. This building continued as the high school until 1925-26, when the high school students moved at mid-year to the site located in south Elkins.

Many classes have since graduated from Elkins High School. In 1993 the new Elkins High School was built at a cost of 12.7 million dollars. It opened its doors under the new name Forest Hills High School. In 1995, the name was changed back to Elkins High School.

Activities & Athletics

Elkins High School offers a variety of both curricular and extracurricular activities for our students. We feel it is important to promote the development of both mind and body to help students reach their full potential.

Meghan Dolly

Elkins High School

It's a much different world we live in today than 100 years ago. This statement is true in many different aspects, but none more than when discussing the treatment of those with disabilities. When one recalls how a person born without an arm or missing both legs was viewed even in the years following World War II, it's astounding. Imagine being labeled as having no worth, no social relevance, and certainly no viable skills to join the workforce, simply because of the way you were born or due to circumstances beyond your control.

Thanks in part to the ADA (The Americans with Disabilities Act) [1] which was signed in 1990, there are fewer barriers for those living with disabilities. In comparison to 75 years ago, life for the 54 million disabled Americans is substantially easier, more acceptable and far less difficult [2]. However, have we done enough? This remains to be questioned by the very same individuals that would agree we have come very far since the days of institutions, asylums and mandatory sterilizations in the late 1800s. If you or someone you know is living with a disability, you come to understand the challenges they face. I personally know several people with disabilities ranging from Downs syndrome, Kabuki syndrome and paralysis. One of these is a family member, the other a close family friend and the third a fellow church member. I cannot help but to think of the years I have watched these three people live their daily lives. Each one of these people are at different stages in their lives one is a student in public school, the second a college student and the third a married father of two grown children. Life for my friends is very difficult it goes well beyond their daily health struggles and pain and deals directly with HOW they live. How their homes must be altered to accommodate changes in their mobility, as well as how they are transported to and from school, college and even the grocery store and church. Society takes for granted being able to open doors for oneself, enter buildings, shop in any store we choose and be able to move through any neighborhood we choose. When you ask ourselves if the ADA has made enough of a difference, you can think of many, many ways in which the answer is most certainly yes. However, I can also think, there is more to be done. For my family member who is in public school, who would have loved nothing more than to be a cheerleader or mascot, would this even be possible? I wonder if she knew when try-outs were. Does the special education students get the same handouts about school functions? Yes, They do.

While it is a huge step from 50-75 years ago that she is even allowed public education, are we doing everything we can to prepare her for the future? For my college friend, who does extremely well in classes yet isn't very accepted by his fellow classmates, due in part to the way he looks. Some would say, he is allowed an opportunity to attend college, as any other normal 22 year old man. I would celebrate that fact as an advancement in the treatment of those with disfiguring disabilities, but ask if they would we start teaching acceptance to our younger school aged children and allowing more integration of special education classes with regular classes. As for my adult friend who suffered a work related accident in his mid-50s and is paralyzed from the waist down and bound to a wheel chair, I ask how easy it to get around our small community in a wheel chair is. He cannot go many places because they simply are not accessible, like the church he goes to,

(See Dolly on p9)

Alexandria Carder

Doddridge County High School

The Disability Rights Movement dates back to the mid-1900's, when disabled World War II veterans wanted the government to provide them with security of their long term wellness. It was a movement driven by the disabled, their family members, and most notably, parents of disabled children to receive equal opportunities and rights. They demanded access to public transportation and facilities, education on par with that of the abled, and less discrimination overall. This movement imitated strategies such as sit ins, marches, and protests that were made famous by previous civil rights movements. Some prominent figures, like Justin Dart, helped the movement tremendously. We've come a long way since the beginning; opportunities for the disabled have evolved immensely from the movement.

In 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was passed. It was based upon other laws which banned discrimination on the terms of race or sex, except this was specifically tailored to the non-discrimination of individuals with disabilities. It gave disabled equal employment opportunities and equal opportunities to public services. This proved that the American people recognized the fact that "inferior social and economic status of people with disabilities was not a consequence of the disability, but a result of societal barriers and prejudices". (Arlene Mayerson, A Movement Perspective) People were always taught to stray away from anything (or anyone) different or strange because of an irrational fear of the handicapped; the passage of this legislature by the Nixon administration showed that we need to overcome our fears.

There have been various changes to the way all disabled are treated and the opportunities they are given. Parents of disabled children, deaf or blind or otherwise, banded together to protest to gain quality education for their children. Public institutions are now required to provide equal primary, secondary, and tertiary education to children throughout all spectrums, disabled or not, beginning in 1975. The IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) was passed, highlighting the notion of free education in a non-restrictive setting. Schools are mandated to provide students with easily accessible facilities and any sort of support services they need. For example, they must have braille books available for a blind student. Also, the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind in Romney, WV offers education specifically for those students. Because of the act, states had to change education policies, as seen here in WV. This act was revolutionary, and forever changed the lives of the disabled and their families.

Another amazing opportunity gained was the idea of equal employment. Laws protect individuals with disabilities, and restrict companies from discriminating in their hiring process. Companies are required to provide adequate training and ongoing support to keep them on par with other employees. States also have to provide social security benefits for the disabled and income (disability) if, for some reason the individual is temporarily unable to work.

Justin Dart was an incredibly prominent man who helped gain opportunities for others through the Disability Rights Movement. He was stricken with polio in 1948, leaving him in a wheelchair for the remainder of his life. Dart built up several extremely successful companies that provide

(See Carder on p9)



Alexandria Carder, a 2015 graduate from Doddridge County High School, is the 17 year old daughter of Michael and Beverly Carder. She is very active in her school and community as the cheerleading captain, the National Honor Society Secretary, the 4-H President, and is active in many other clubs and organizations. Alexandria was named Valedictorian of the Class of 2015, and plans to attend West Virginia University in the fall as a Geography major.

Doddridge County High School

Mission

The mission of DCHS is to achieve the highest expectations for all and to create a collaborative community of independent life-long learners and leaders of the 21st century.

Vision

Our vision is to provide a safe, clean and well equipped school environment that is conducive to learning. Our school system will offer a flexible and challenging curriculum that emphasizes mastery of the basic skills, core subject rigor and strong parental involvement with student success. The role of our parents and community in continued school improvement is critical.

Leadership

Leadership will be transformational to allow for the growth of all employees through team work, open communication and collaboration. Educational studies continue to directly link strong parental involvement with student success. The role of our parents and community in continued school improvement is critical.

Service

The school serves the entire county and was created in 1933 when the newly instituted county school system consolidated Carr High School and West Union High School. All of the Doddridge County School employees and the Board of Education are committed to the successful education of each of our students. The people of Doddridge County are the chief asset of our schools. Throughout the history of our county, there has always been strong evidence that education is a priority.



Grace Skidmore graduated Salutorian from Braxton County High School IN 2015. Her extracurricular activities included being an officer in FBLA & National Honor Society, school yearbook editor, Governor's Honors Academy, Rhododendron Girls State, Math Field Day, HOBY and the tennis team captain. She plans to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs in June to become an officer in the Air Force. She also has plans to major in Astronautical Engineering.

Braxton County High School

Mission

The Braxton County School System will engage, promote and partner with parents, staff and the community to ensure that ALL students meet or exceed state academic learning standards.

BCHS has undergone many changes in its long history. The school replaced three smaller high schools in the county, Sutton High School, Gassaway High School, and Burnsville High School, thereby consolidating both Braxton County's students and its educational resources. Back then, the school consisted of three 'wings' known as A, B, and C. 'C' Wing was the academic wing, two stories tall, which hosted classrooms for academic classes such as Chemistry, Math, and English. 'B' Wing was the vocational wing, also two stories, which hosted various vocational classes, such as typing, cooking, building construction, electrical and welding. 'A' wing consisted of an administrative offices, a cafeteria and a gymnasium, also two stories tall to contain a higher level of bleachers, including a training area behind that second level.

In the summer of 2006, the entire front area of the school was expanded to accommodate Fairmont State University, filling in the previously open walkway to the school entrance and closing the gap between the B wing, and the gymnasium. A ribbon cutting ceremony for these changes was held on August 15, 2006.

Grace Skidmore

Braxton County High School

Helen Keller. Wade Blank. Judy Heumann. With the help of their fellow activists, prominent historical figures such as these have striven to ensure that Americans living with disabilities find as much right to a fulfilling life as their fellow human beings take for granted. The Disability Rights Movement parallels the African Americans' Civil Rights Movement in both fervor and injustices, but the former does not receive nearly the amount of exposure or even coverage in many high school history class settings. Despite the implications of this oversight, the movement has succeeded monumentally in uprooting generations of unfair bias, and restored many rights stolen from disabled people.

As slavery spread like a cancer over the Western Hemisphere, triggers behind the persecution of those with disabilities brewed in Europe like a storm, their sources reaching back to centuries of misunderstanding and subsequent cruel mistreatment. In the year 1883, Sir Francis Galton documented his own invention of the pseudo-science of eugenics, a Hitler-esque principle which called for obliterating humans with disabilities to create an "improved stock of humanity" by sterilizing and institutionalizing them (Galton). From my personal experience, I was born gasping for air and accompanied by a great deal of blood loss. One of my good friends was born with a hole in her heart, which doctors had to scramble to repair. For these reasons and many more, the thought of killing infants because of possible disabilities nauseates me. In Galton's time, this institutionalization of disabled people combined with marginalization had already proved to be a potent form of oppression; his postulations provided the battleground upon which those behind the Disability Rights Movement would fight American society's ableism.

As a result of these circumstances, proponents of the grassroots movement achieved relatively small victories at first—for example, in 1909, the New York Public School System adopted the use of Braille for blind children, which enabled them to better access their education; in the same year, folding wheelchairs were introduced to create for better mobility for paralytics (Pelka). Over twenty years later, Franklin D. Roosevelt emerged as the first seriously disabled president of the United States, and under his administration, Congress passed the Social Security Act. Notably, this legislation provided government assistance to disabled individuals, including blind children. This allowed thousands of individuals to live without so much fear of unemployment or neglect.

More than thirty-eight years later, the movement reached a landmark of triumph. Lauded as the disability advocates' greatest achievement, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 served to provide more opportunities in the workforce by directly challenging discrimination. The law decreed that no employer could lawfully show such prejudice against disabled employees; this resulted in more disabled individuals discovering not just jobs, but careers to support themselves and their families. Now, they could apply for jobs without fear of meeting with the age-old bigotry and intolerance.

As a result of the Rehabilitation Act's nature as a revolutionary catalyst, the Americans with Disabilities Act further cemented disabled people's equal footing in society that they had deserved since the very beginning. It gave

(See Skidmore on p10)

Christopher Mathis

Greenbrier West High School

Where I am now, a senior about to graduate from high school, is not where I would have been without the accommodations I have today. This is due to the progress the Americans Disabilities Rights Movement has made to improve life not only for myself but also for others with either or both visible or invisible disabilities. It's difficult for me to talk about disability rights without talking about my own life. I am an individual with a disability, so I have benefitted directly from the movement.

If it weren't for the work of people like Ed Roberts or Justin Dart, or laws such as the Rehab Act or the ADA, I could have been separated from my family and put in an institution. That was a common solution to deal with people with disabilities. At the very least, I would not be allowed to go to school like I do. The buildings would not be accessible. I would not have access to an elevator (even if it doesn't always work, I appreciate it.) Instead, I get to stay with my family. I get to go to school. I get to do all of the things I like to do. I get to vote in the upcoming election. Before, if it wasn't accessible, I would have to leave. It is my responsibility as an American citizen to vote, and I get to do that.

I haven't decided if I will go to college or not, but at least now I have a choice. I'm very glad that Ed Roberts and his friends paved the way for me in Berkeley with his Rolling Quads. I'm very glad Justin Dart campaigned so hard that we could have access to public buildings and services. I will have help getting a job, so that I can work by myself to support myself. That independence is invaluable. It would make me feel so worthless if I wasn't able to be a part of society and do my part.

I think something they've done that is important is get people thinking about issues people would not always think about. Life is still not perfect, but I have access to all kinds of new technology, and I have a right to accommodations. I still face discrimination and bullying, but I also have allies. The Disability Rights Movement in a lot of ways is still happening. The people who started it paved the way for people in the present and the future. These people need to continue the work for full inclusion and participation in their communities. In a few months when I graduate, I will be thinking about how far we've come. And I will be thankful. ■

Disability History Week

October 19 - 23, 2015

The third week of October annually is designated as Disability History Week for the State of West Virginia.

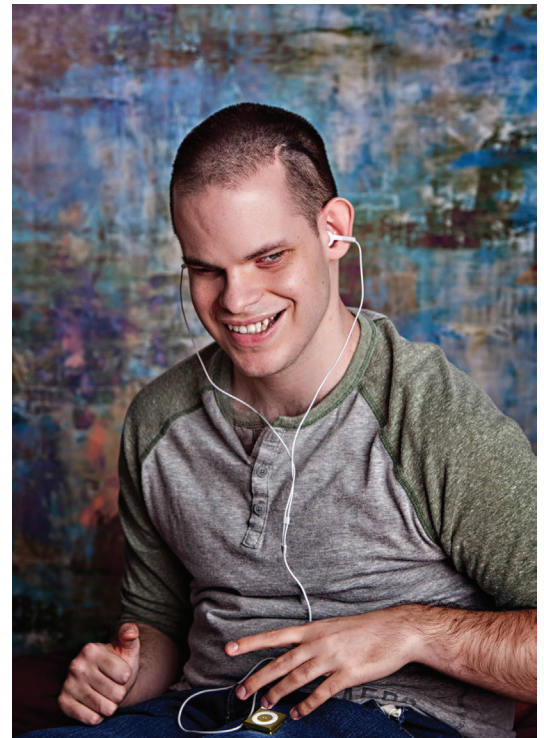
In recognition of and to further the purposes of Disability History Week, each public school shall provide instruction on disability history, people with disabilities and the disability rights movement. The instruction shall be integrated into the existing school curriculum in a manner such as, but not limited to, supplementing existing lesson plans, holding school assemblies or providing other school activities. The instruction may be delivered by school personnel or by guest speakers.

State institutions of higher education are encouraged to conduct and promote activities that provide education, awareness and understanding of disability history, people with disabilities and the disability rights movement.

The Legislature is encouraged to annually recognize Disability History Week...

State law creating Disability History Week available at:

<http://www.legis.state.wv.us/wvcode/Code.cfm?chap=18&art=100>.



Christopher Mathis recently graduated from Greenbrier West High School. Born in Huntington, he and his family moved to Greenbrier County the summer before he entered Kindergarten. He attributes his and his family's loyalty to the Thundering Herd to this time of his life. Christopher lives with his mom, dad, older sister, five dogs, cat, two rabbits, and a handful of chickens. He's not a big fan of the farm life, but he's self-described as a "good olé country boy." His favorite hobby is listening to country music on his satellite radio and can identify any song within seconds. Other hobbies of his include kicking his sister's butt on the Wii and driving his family around their farm in his golf cart. He's also very close with his grandparents.

Christopher has overcome a lot in life from the beginning. He was born three months prematurely and as a result, he is blind and has cerebral palsy. He's had double digit surgeries, but maintains an internal joy that can brighten any room and a loving heart that welcomes anyone and everyone (provided they let him talk...he's quite chatty.) He loved school and was excited to have the opportunity to write an essay for the WVSILC. He's not sure what his next step is after graduation, but he hopes to find employment and also grow as young advocate for disability rights.

Greenbrier West High School

Mission

Greenbrier County Schools is committed to providing a safe, engaging and dynamic educational environment that produces self-directed learners and empowers citizens of all ages to trust in, invest in, and benefit from public education.

Each month during the regular board of education meeting, student representatives from both Greenbrier East High School and Greenbrier West High School participate as non-voting members of our local board of education.



Jasmine Murillo
James Rumsey Technical Institute

As we head into the future with our technology, knowledge, and other similar aspects continuously advancing each year, one can only look back and become astounded as to how far we as a nation have improved in almost all fields. We have come far in many things, but one improvement that stands above most, has to be today's disability rights. With our generation being used to equality and having protection by all the laws we have, it's hard to imagine that it wasn't always this way. Especially during the 19th century, more specifically before and during the Disability Rights Movement, in which people would protest, file lawsuits, some were even arrested trying many things in an effort to change the way people with disabilities were treated and dealt with. In the past few years, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has been revised and modified further. Today, there are numerous opportunities for people who have disabilities to achieve economic and political empowerment.

Jasmine Murillo's home school is Washington High, but as a junior she was accepted into James Rumsey Technical Institute (JRTI), where she is enrolled in the Law and Public Safety program. She is also an intern at the Ranson Police Department.

At JRTI she has gone to the Governor's Honors Academy and participated in HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) in the Forensic Medicine event. She became a National Technical Honor Society member and has received the AAA Award for achievement, attendance, and attitude. She plans to attend Fairmont State University, and after college pursue a career in law enforcement.

In order to speak in regards to the great opportunities that people with disabilities have, it is imperative to understand and inquire the considerable alterations that occurred in the past including the actions taken in order to ensure equality and favorable circumstances for all citizens from that time onward. In the 1800s, people with disabilities were considered insignificant individuals unable to contribute to society. Under the assumption of being abnormal and unintelligent, they were forced to undergo sterilization, as well as forced to live in asylums or institutions for the entirety of their lives and some were banished from their family. Franklin Roosevelt, the first president with a disability, who later on became a symbol, which began to change the way people viewed individuals who were disabled. In the 1940s and 1950s, WWII veterans who came back with disabilities added to the growing pressure on the government to provide for their rehabilitation. This brought the problem to light, for the reason that it became apparent to the citizens who were concerned for the welfare of the young men who sacrificed their lives for the safety and security of the U.S. Yet, even with all of these events, people with disabilities were still not allowed to access the public bathrooms, transportations, obtain a job, and etc. Years of this are what ignited a want for change, and thus this became known as the Disability Rights Movement.

Washington High School

By emphasizing individual strengths in a positive learning environment, Washington High School's staff members will help students to become proficient in 21st Century content, learning skills, and tools based on our core beliefs that enhance staff performance on behalf of all students.

James Rumsey Technical Institute

Mission

To enhance the quality of life through continual education for students of all ages throughout our community by setting standards of excellence in technical and academic education as determined by business, industry, and government.

Vision

The Institute is dedicated to the belief that each individual should be given a continual opportunity for the development and extension of his/her skill and knowledge to increase an awareness of his/her role and responsibility in society. The Institute is devoted to serving the educational needs of its community and assumes a responsibility to help provide the requirements for trained employees in its region through a cooperative effort from local industry, business, and government.

From the late 1900s on many acts, and programs were passed in the United States and other countries, which affected society greatly. During the 1960s, there were a few advancements in legislation. One of them being the call for deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities, which was President Kennedy's doing. The Social Security Disability Insurance program of 1956 was available for disabled workers ages 50-64, and in 1960, they removed the age restriction. A big thing in the 1960s was the Civil Rights Movement, which provided an opportunity for people with disabilities to join forces with other discriminated groups and fight against the inequality and discrimination that was directed at them. "The 1970s saw numerous grassroots movements and activism as people with disabilities became increasingly visible: They were closing down buildings, creating independent living centers, and protesting on college campuses." (Tomes) The Rehabilitation Act was passed in 1973 more specifically, "Section 504 ;no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that either receives

(Murillo continued from p8)

Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency or the United States Postal Service.” (Dept. of Justice) The 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act required free, appropriate education for children in a non-restrictive setting. In 1990, President Bush signed the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) into the law. In 2008, ADA expanded protection of individuals to the maximum when they made major changes to the definition ‘disability’. Obama, in 2010, signed Communications and Video Accessibility, which allows individuals with disabilities to access modern communications. There was also the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which helps individuals with disabilities and their family as well. For example, this act will help the family pay for the cost for the services needed if a loved one develops a disability. The United Nations General Assembly in 2008, passed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), one of the nine human rights treaties ensuring the states to respect and guarantee individuals with disabilities’ rights. These acts, and programs and technology are what have opened new doors for individuals with disabilities.

With recent advancements of technology, people with disabilities are able to use these devices to its fullest potential. Changes have been made to facilitate necessary areas like streets, buildings, and other areas. Developments such as automatic doors, ramps, and curb cuts were implemented for the purpose of giving individuals with disabilities especially those in wheelchairs, an opportunity to traverse from place to place. Another implemented object used to aid the individuals is computers. Blind individuals would be able to use a Braille keyboard along with the ability to listen to the computer read back whatever the user decides they want read back to them. Individuals who have hearing or speech impairments have technology available that has the ability to be used as a compensatory tool for them such as hearing aids or speech-generating devices. An example of how technology gives opportunities for individuals with disabilities would be Stephen Hawking. He is able to communicate through a speech-generating device, who 50 or more years ago would not have been able to communicate due to the fact that technology was not as advanced as it is now and that around that time he most likely would have never got the chance to. Other technology is being developed that allows individuals who have artificial limbs to operate machine equipment such as forklifts or cranes. Technology advancements have opened a new door for people with disabilities, so that they may join the workforce or travel to different places, to be able to talk through a device if they themselves aren’t able to, and so much more. To add to this, in 2011, Obama and the U.S. Labor Department proposed a rule that would require federal contractors to set goals that 7% of their workforce be individuals with disabilities. This allows individuals with disabilities to be able to get a job and have the technology and chance to use it to their advantage.

It’s bizarre just trying to imagine that 200 years ago it was so much different from now. Individuals with disabilities would not have the opportunities they do now. The acts and programs that resulted because of the Disability Rights Movement that help the individuals are boundless, and make it so that they have a chance to further their education and/or join the workforce. The ever-advancing technology will allow them to accomplish their endeavors as well as allow a way for transportation, communication, etc. “There are far too many people whose commitment and hard work contributed to the passage of this historic piece of disability civil rights legislation to be able to give appropriate credit by name. Without the work of so many – without the disability rights movement – there would be no ADA.” (Mayerson) Thousands of men and women involved with the disability rights

(See Murillo on p11)

(Dolly continued from p4)

the restaurants he eats out, certain doorways are large enough for him to enter, and some restaurants don’t have handicap restrooms. He has a car that is specially equipped for him and he enjoys driving and going to the places that he can get into and out of, but it is difficult.

There is certainly reason to celebrate the ADA and its accomplishments, I cannot imagine where these people and so many others would be today if our government had not implemented this act. I personally applaud the universal designs associated with the ADA that enables those individuals with disabilities to enjoy and participate in life. I don’t know if everyone is as fortunate as myself in knowing one or more people with a disability, but I believe it has opened my eyes to all that the government has done and all that is yet to be done to provide equality to those whose daily lives are far more difficult than those of us without a disability can even fathom. It is my wish that the ADA continue to provide standards for education, workplace, and transportation and health care, to name a few, and that some day the lives of those affected by disabilities will become easier. ■

(Carder continued from p5)

work for the disabled when nobody else would give it to them. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan appointed him to the vice-chair of the National Council on Disability. He met with activists seeking the same justice as he did. He and other members of the council drafted the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which called for ending the impeding discrimination of people with disabilities.

Overall, the Disability Rights Movement has given many new opportunities to disabled across the country. They’re always given equal employment and education because of legislation passed. Public facilities are now required to give equal access to everybody. Public figures such as Justin Dart helped give the movement publicity and get even more legislation passed. The movement was completely revolutionary and changed the way the entire country, and world, viewed disabled people. ■

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(Skidmore continued from p6)

way to the multitude of accommodations we know today, such as ramps paved outside buildings and “handicapped” parking places and restroom stalls. In particular, this legislation ensured that disabled Americans would find just as many opportunities in public as those who would never know their challenges.

The Disability Rights Movement continues to echo through the lives of modern day Americans as more and more people with disabilities find opportunities that would never have been dreamed of a century ago. Such progress has allowed more diverse perspectives into our world, which is always, always good. I know that as a person, I have much to learn from all of these people.

Even today, however, the misconception surrounding disabled people remains that if they do not strive to overcome their challenges to function as a “normal” human being, then there is little hope for them to live a happy and fulfilling life. Because of the stigma behind the word “disability,” I feel that it is one that should fade from society’s vocabulary in this particular context, right along with the insult “retard.” People born different shouldn’t be pushed into compensating for their differences, but rather should embrace them as an inimitable characteristic that offers them a unique view of the world. The Disability Rights Movement emphasized for America the fact that all people have equal worth and dignity, regardless of circumstance. Learning so much about this fight gave me stronger feelings of empathy toward those who fought for the movement and those whom it was fought for, past, present, and future.

And as the incredible Helen Keller once said of those with challenges, “Never bend your head. Hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye.” ■

SPECIAL EDITION

(Ryck continued from p2)

individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA). In addition to a name change, the new law provided that the parents of disabled children be involved in any educational decisions affecting their children. To facilitate decision making, educators and parents were to complete an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each disabled child.

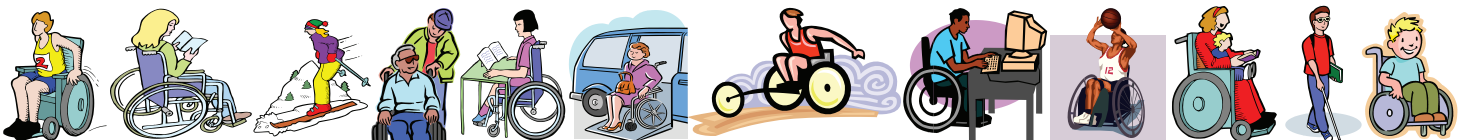
Although significant progress had been made in providing and protecting the rights of the disabled in government agencies and public schools, it wasn’t until the passage of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 that required all businesses to provide the disabled with equal employment opportunities, equal access rights, and reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation mandated that all businesses would support the disabled through job restructuring, work site modifications, and specially adaptive equipment and technology. Failure to meet these requirements could result in a discrimination complaint on the basis of disability.

Today more than 50 million individuals have benefitted from the disability movement and legislative acts of the 20th century. Disabled people from all walks of life are now fulfilling their lifelong dreams with protection from discrimination or concerns of being institutionalized. They are not only successful in life but have made significant contributions to society as artists, athletes, educators, actors, politicians, public servants, and in numerous other professions and occupations. Some famous people with disabilities who have made a positive impact on society include Stephen Hawking, Christopher Reeve, Peyton Manning, and Helen Keller.

Equally important are the numerous advancements that have been made in medicine, science, and research as the result of the disability movement. Today, there are state of the art prosthetic devices that allow amputees to accomplish physical movements and activities that were once impossible to achieve. Advances in technology now allow those with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, and hearing and visual impairments to perform activities of daily living that many of us take for granted. Housing alterations and adaptive equipment are allowing the disabled to drive automobiles and live independently without assistance from family members, health workers, or local agencies.

I can personally attest to the positive impact the disability movement has had on my own family. A number of my family members have recognized disabilities that in the past would have resulted in institutional care and lack of opportunities. Those disabilities include military injuries, mental illness, visual and hearing impairments, speech impediments, and cleft palate malnormalities. Although I have never viewed these loved ones as disabled, less than fifty years ago society would have labeled and stigmatized them preventing these family members from equal employment opportunities. I now understand and appreciate my grandfather’s comment that the disability acts were some of the most important pieces of legislation to ever be passed in US history. ■

2014 DISABILITY HISTORY ESSAY CONTEST



SPECIAL EDITION

(Paitsel from p3)

The first pivotal moment of action in the history of the disability rights movement was the approval and passing of the Architectural Barriers Act in 1968. This issued a mandate that all federally constructed buildings must be accessible to all individuals with physical disabilities. This first act of legislation was a direct result of the movement started by the wheelchair community and finally there was success documented in the initial goal of breaking down physical barriers. This made a self-sufficient lifestyle a true possibility for individuals reliant on wheelchairs. The road was a bit more difficult, however, for people with communication hindering disabilities such as deafness, verbal communication limitations, and the blind. This group had a much more difficult time advocating for themselves, and although solutions to their accessibility concerns were eventually realized, it took much more time than it did for the wheelchair community to see results. In 1972, the first Center for Independent Living was created. This was a huge step in allowing individuals with disabilities to move from facilities and institutions to a more typical living situation. These centers were run by individuals with disabilities themselves and housed a community that previously probably would have spent their lives living in institutions. This assisted living setting allowed individuals with disabilities to slowly and safely integrate into society. The passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is considered the single most important occurrence in the history of the disability rights movement. The act states, "No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States, shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Using this legislation as a stepping stone, the movement exploded. Educational opportunities arose in both public schools and universities, workplace discrimination was disallowed, institutionalism against will of individuals was eliminated, and national agencies to monitor, fund, and enforce legislations regarding the disabled were created. Support for the movement continued and supplementary laws were passed throughout the 1980's and 1990's. Most notably, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990 and gave specific and detailed civil rights to all individuals with disabilities. This was the conclusion, at least for now, of the disability rights movement as it was the last national legislation passed affecting individuals with disabilities.

The initial goals of the disability rights movement have been achieved and surpassed. However, there is still much improvement to be made to better the lives of individuals with disabilities. One area that continues to hinder individuals with disabilities are limitations placed on the earning potential allowed, while still having access to community services and benefits necessary to allow independent living to take place. While many individuals with disabilities are employed and live full productive lives, there are still others who fear losing valuable resources and shy away from employment options as a result. More education and information regarding agencies and benefits available to individuals with disabilities is needed as students with disabilities learn to advocate for themselves to allow full productivity potential to be reached for those who have the skills and ability to maintain competitive employment. Often, the current system almost forces individuals with disabilities to be less productive than they could be. Benefits such as social security, health insurance and other public assistance are necessities for many people; however, individuals with disabilities cannot be expected to survive solely from public benefits. They should be allowed to increase their earning potential for commodities and be able to live a comfortable life, rather than just trying to survive. This is just one example of work that continues to need to be done. There are always new or unresolved issues for individuals

(See Paitsel next column)

2014 Disability Essay Contest

(Paitsel from previous column)

with disabilities; therefore, the disability rights movement continues on. The disability rights movement has not been concluded and is truly a process that should never end until every individual with disabilities has access to equal rights in all aspects of their lives and each person is able to set, work toward and reach their goals. ■

(Murillo continued from p9)

know that these rights were hard fought for, and that the individuals that were involved did whatever they could for a cause that they believed in. "The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just." (Abraham Lincoln) ■

2015 Disability History Essay Contest

The 2015 Disability History Essay Contest will be held this fall to compliment Disability History Week October, 19 - 23, 2015.

Each Fall since 2012, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the State Rehabilitation Council has held the Disability History Essay Contest to celebrate Disability History Week in West Virginia.

This contest gives WV High School Seniors an opportunity to showcase their writing skills, share their knowledge of the Disability Rights Movement and perhaps earn some money to help advance their future!

The contest is supported by a generous grant from the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services which allows us to award cash prizes to the winners. The winning essays and their authors are recognized and presented with a check each year at the Senior Awards Ceremony at their respective high schools.

This contest is a collaborative effort of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the State Rehabilitation Council, with cooperation from the West Virginia Department of Education and the West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts.

Watch for information at your school and keep checking www.wvsilc.org.



UPCOMING EVENTS

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to WVSILC. To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device and choose WV Statewide Independent Living Council as your charitable organization.



Visit our website: www.wvsilc.org

July 26, 2015
25th Anniversary of the signing of the ADA

ADA 25 1990-2015
AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT

Next Full Council Meetings:

August 5, 2015
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
WVDRS Program Services Office
10 McJunkin Road, Nitro, WV
October 7, 2015
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
WVDRS Program Services Office
10 McJunkin Road, Nitro, WV

August 21, 2015
Senior Citizens Day

August 29, 2015
Justin Dart, Jr Birthday