



2015 Disability Essay Contest

The SILC is very pleased to share this Special Edition of our newsletter showcasing the winners of the 2015 Disability History Essay Contest. The contest began in the fall of 2015, corresponding to WV Disability History Week in October, and the awards were presented at high school Senior Awards Ceremonies in May 2016.

The theme for the contest this year was, "How Have the First 25 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act Changed America?". 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:

Blake Huffman, Winfield High School - \$3,000

District 1:

First Place – Annalee Raines, Winfield High School - \$1,500

District 2:

First Place – Sydney Hosfeld, Buckhannon-Upshur HS - \$1,500
Second Place – Laura Dean, Buckhannon-Upshur HS - \$750

District 3:

First Place – Mitchell Newbanks, Parkersburg South HS - \$1,500
Second Place – Mattison Johnson, Ritchie County HS - \$750

District 4:

First Place – Linsey Fain, Greenbrier West HS - \$1,500

District 5:

No winner

District 6:

First Place – Sabrina Shroades, Musselman High School - \$1,500

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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Blake Huffman a graduate of Winfield High School with a 3.9 GPA. During his high school years, he has been involved with the General Admission Show Choir, the Marching Generals, the Boys Soccer team, Fuel Bible Club, FCA, National Honor Society, Link Crew, and the Spanish Honorary Society. He is an active member of youth group at Teays Valley Baptist Church and works with the Highways & Hedges Bus Ministry and sings in both the adult and youth choirs. Blake is also an Eagle Scout and was selected as a delegate for Mountaineer Boys State. Blake has logged over 300 community service hours since beginning high school. Blake was diagnosed with Dyslexia his junior year and has worked with the Teays Valley office of WV Division of Rehabilitation. He is extremely excited to be chosen as the 2015 Disability History Essay Contest winner and is very thankful for the opportunity.

Winfield High School

Mission

Winfield High School is dedicated to developing educated, productive citizens who make ethical decisions and accept responsibility for their actions in a diverse and changing world.

At Winfield High School our focus is results:

- High student achievement
- No significant gaps in sub-groups
- High expectations
- Strong leadership
- Learning for all
- Collaboration
- Differentiation
- Learning for all

Visit Winfield High School's website at:
<http://whs.putnamschools.com/>

Blake Huffman

Winfield High School

Imagine standing atop the stairs and overlooking the grounds of the US Capitol Building on a cool March day. The year is 1990, and 1,000 protestors have made their way to Washington to demand that the House of Representative pass the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Imagine watching as more than 60 activists laid down their wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches and began the ascent to the top of the 83 marble steps. The passing of this legislation would require equal rights for the disabled. The Capitol Crawl, as it is now known, is now seen as one of the most important events leading up to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act passed into law on July 26, 1990. Now imagine walking down the streets of small town America earlier that same year. How different things would things have looked then as compared to the world today.

Let's look at the changes in the world today due to The Americans with Disabilities Act. The Act was broken into 5 different titles with each title having a unique effect on the lives of the disabled. Let's look into each of those titles separately.

Title I- Employment

Prior to the ADA many employers would find ways to discriminate against those with disabilities. Accommodations in the workplace were not commonplace. This section of the law brought about positive changes.. Special equipment, scheduling alternatives, and a change in work assignments helped allow those with disabilities to enter the workforce. Special communication devices including blinking fire alarms and braille markings were incorporated into structures to alert deaf and blind employees of an emergency. Entrances and bathrooms were also equipped with wheelchair access. The workplace is a different place.

Title II-Public Entities

With the ADA, every school district, city, county and state had to make all of their services available to the disabled. Whether special testing opportunities in schools for those with reading or developmental deficiencies, equipping school and public buses with wheelchair ramps, making public housing available to everyone, or modifying their streets and sidewalks, the ADA has made significant changes in the world of the disabled. Today, crosswalks are equipped with not only blinking lights, but beeping traffic indicators and voice street directions. Changes have also come to city and state parks. Trails and special parking access has been added to allow those with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors as never before. Our communities are a different place.

Title III-Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities

The ADA has required that all new construction and renovations make commercial buildings handicap accessible. Special parking, ramps, automatic doors, wider entry ways, braille and audio instructions in elevators, and handicap accessible bathrooms were all enhancements to buildings made due to the provisions of the act. Today, you can walk into most restaurants and request a menu in braille and be able to maneuver a wheelchair without assistance into most commercial establishments. The difference continues.

Title IV- Telecommunications

Prior to the ADA, those who were blind, deaf or dumb had major challenges with communication. Today services like text telephone (TTY/TDD) have opened up the world to the hearing impaired. The hard of hearing or speech impaired

(See Huffman on p10)

Annalee Raines Winfield High School

For all Americans - Republican, Democrat, or otherwise - July 26th, 1990 was a monumental date that made a great leap toward the social and political advancement of Americans with disabilities. For years, decades before, people with mental or physical illnesses were looked down upon crudely. Even today, sadly, that is still sometimes the case. However, due to the establishment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we can move farther out of ableism's gruesome grasp than ever before.

Civil rights – as defined by Merriam-Webster, they are “the nonpolitical rights of a citizen; especially: the rights of personal liberty guaranteed to United States citizens by the 13th and 14th amendments to the Constitution and by acts of Congress.” Before 1990, Americans with ailments were left helpless in the eyes of the government. Even though the bill was passed the year before, it didn't really go into effect until two years later, when Title I made it become effective for businesses with over 25 members.

While the Act was being taken under consideration, perhaps the most inspiring event to come out of the rallies was the “Capitol Crawl” in March of 1990. It was an event at the National Capitol in which dozens of people with physical disabilities crawled up the stairs of the Capitol, a demonstration of the struggle they faced daily. A young girl with cerebral palsy was perhaps the most resonant member of the event; as she climbed the steps against her frail body's protests, she muttered the phrase, “I'm gonna take all night if I have to,” in between short water breaks.

Only a few short months later came the phrase President George H.W. Bush uttered as he signed the ADA into law; “let the shameful wall of exclusion come tumbling down.” After years upon years of advocacy, Americans with disabilities were finally getting the political attention they so needed.

The Act made it impossible to discriminate based upon disability. A twenty five year-old woman from Windsor, Colorado (who was born with Cri du Chat syndrome) was called a “Mongloid infant” and was referred to with “it” pronouns by her obstetrician when she was born. With the application of the ADA, her prospects looked far less bleak. Dehumanization using such terms as “Mongloid” are becoming unacceptable, or at the very least, taboo. She didn't risk institutionalization or segregation from the “normal” population via alternative education. She even won a lawsuit to make an opera house wheelchair accessible.



Annalee Raines accepting her Essay Contest Award from WVSILC Member Emily Robinson.

The effects of the ADA were near immediate. Internationally, governments began issuing and enacting their own laws dedicated to citizens with disabilities. Organizations began addressing the disability rights movement. Even small changes like blue handicap parking spaces have become a staple in our society. Ramps, elevators, automatic door openers, accommodating bathroom stalls; each have increased those with disabilities' lives tremendously.

Personally, without the ADA, I believe I would be far less accepted for who I am. With ADHD, dyscalculia

(See Raines next column)



Annalee Raines is a graduate of Winfield High School. She played the timpani in the Marching Generals for all her four years at Winfield, and looks forward to being in the Marching Thunder at Marshall University, where she will be a Theatre major starting this fall. When not at school, she enjoys blogging, singing and playing with her two dogs and two cats. Annalee strongly believes the stigma against those with disabilities should be erased, and acceptance and understanding should be commonplace instead.

(Raines continued from previous column)

and an anxiety disorder, my “eccentricities” would most likely make me an outcast. Asylums aren't too far in our nation's past, and I fear ill sentiments still linger. However, I feel comfortable with telling people about my mental illnesses. I feel safe because I know groups such as the Department of Rehabilitation Services will help me succeed despite my differences. I know I am much more privileged than those with physical disabilities – but I honestly think the Act has helped those affected greatly as well.

In closing, the Americans with Disabilities Act has done incredible work for citizens of America who struggle daily with their disabilities. The stigma we undergo is very much still there; it lingers, just as racism still lingers even after the laws passed against it several years ago. We have a long battle ahead of us, but the ADA was certainly a prime place to start. ■



Sydney Hosfeld

Buckhannon-Upsher High School

A set of grandparents, a dad, and a brother and sister are on a beach vacation. One morning they all wake up early and decide to go out for breakfast. Grandmother finds a lovely restaurant on the Internet, and the family agrees to give it a try. They load all five people, plus Grandmother's wheelchair, into the car. Everyone is starving and eagerly anticipating pancakes. But, none of them anticipated the insurmountable obstacle that lay in wait outside the restaurant: stairs. The eatery had no accessibility ramp, and Grandmother simply can't climb stairs. "I can't believe they don't have a ramp," says the father, "they're lucky they don't get sued!"

Accommodations for the disabled are a natural part of American life. Twenty-five years ago, the vacationing family would have been hard-pressed to find one restaurant in the whole city that Grandmother could enter without issue. What changed? On July 26, 1990, Congress signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which offers the disabled equal opportunity in "employment; state and local government programs and services; access to places of public accommodation such as businesses, transportation, and non-profit service providers; and telecommunications". Although it was met at first with strong opposition and still struggles to meet some of its goals, the ADA has changed millions of lives across America.

The Americans with Disabilities Act was first drafted in 1988, and wasn't signed until 1990. Disabled Americans, who had been fighting a civil rights battle since the early 1970s, lobbied hard for the passage of a comprehensive piece of protective legislation. They testified to congress regarding their day-to-day struggles, and refused to make any concessions that would exclude certain groups. Congress, on the other hand, dragged their feet. Many legislators feared excessive renovation costs for businesses. Some assumed that an endless barrage of lawsuits was to follow. Contrary to Congressional nightmares, the ADA came into effect with none of the envisioned repercussions.

In fact, the transition turned out to be fairly simple. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, "57% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only \$500". The court system was never jeopardized, either. Most disputes are easily settled without a trial; only a small number of employment cases pertain to the ADA. Businesses may have been largely unaffected, but life for disabled Americans certainly improved. Accessibility has become a common addition to any product, business, or public area. Closed-captioning is a regular feature on any television set, braille is present on all public signs, and movie theaters provide spaces for wheelchairs. Some changes are even beneficial to the general public: "Curb cuts designed for wheelchair users are also used by people with baby carriages, delivery people, and people on skateboards and roller blades".

However, many goals of the ADA have not been met, specifically in the area of employment. America's current unemployment rate is about six percent; however, around seventy percent of disabled people are without jobs. Employers skip over disabled applicants for a variety of reasons. Some are concerned that a person's disability will limit their productivity, others are unsure of the proper interview etiquette, and many simply don't believe a disabled person will survive in the workplace. The ADA clearly lacks enforceability in the workplace.

Sydney Hosfeld graduated in 2016 second in her class from Buckhannon-Upshur High School. She is the daughter of Lisa Hollen and Alan Hosfeld, and the step daughter of Bruce Hollen. Sydney is an active member of The Dance Factory's Augusta Youth Ballet Company, the drum major and first chair flute of the Buckhannon-Upshur High School Band which she joined after teaching herself to play flute. In February 2016, Sydney was named a National Merit Scholar Finalist. She plans to attend West Virginia University to study Computer Science, and will be a member of their marching band in the fall. Her essay was inspired in part by her grandmother, Elaine Hosfeld, who displays independence and determination despite severe mobility issues and heart problems.

Buckhannon-Upsher High School

History & Mission

Buckhannon High School began in 1881 in Upshur County. The school colors are blue and white and the mascot is the Buccaneer. The mission of Buckhannon-Upshur High School is to provide a positive, respectful, safe, and orderly climate that prepares all students to be successful, healthy, and productive 21st Century citizens.

"We must work together to make B-UHS a better place for all by caring for each other and taking pride in and responsibility for our individual and mutual growth as human beings. We will work toward fostering mutual respect and appreciation of our differences. In so doing, we will develop better citizens and productive members of our world community." ~Robert Wilmoth, Principal

Laura Dean

Buckhannon-Upsher High School

This year we recognize the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Act prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, communications, transportation, and public accommodation. Covering these issues through various titles, the Act ensures that people with disabilities receive the same opportunities as those who do not have a disability.

Title 1 prohibits discrimination in the workplace. Employers desire their future employee to, first, have knowledge, and then to be fit to complete the job. Unfortunately, some people are not able to accomplish the latter part as easily as others because of their disability, even though he or she has the same education. An office might not be well-accommodated for a wheelchair. Therefore, the employer looks upon this as a weakness of the disabled. This type of discrimination has begun to decrease in the past few years; whether that is due to the ADA is yet to be seen. Before the ADA, though, the disabled had nowhere to turn. Now they can turn to the Act as support.

Title 2 ensures access to programs, services, and attractions provided by the state and local governments. One of the finest examples of this is the wheelchair lifts on buses. Although buses were accommodated with the lifts before the ADA, the Act helped to strengthen the rules and regulations for the safety of the disabled on buses. For example, in 1991, the year after the Americans with Disabilities Act became law, a handful of new rules were made, such as all wheelchairs should be forward-facing, and the tie downs should have a five-point system.

Title 3 requires accommodations for anyone with a disability. Everywhere one goes there are usually two entryways: steps or a ramp. Before the Act, people in a wheelchair either had to avoid the places where there were no ramps or have assistance to lift the wheelchair up the steps. Why should someone be prevented from entering a museum, a bank, or even just a coffee shop because no access was given for those not fortunate enough to be able to be supported by two legs? No excuse can be given for this type of discrimination. The ADA gave people with disabilities equal opportunities as everyone else all across the United States.

Title 4 provides for a disability that one might not think about as often as having to be in a wheelchair: the hearing and speech impaired. These disabilities do not appear to be as common because they are not noticed just by looking at the person. In fact, approximately eight percent of America's population is deaf or hearing impaired and roughly five percent of children in America have noticeable speech disorders. The ADA requires that employers provide reasonable accommodations to employees with hearing impairments. A sign language interpreter may be needed, or assistive technology, such as a headset or a TTY may be more beneficial. A TTY allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired, communicate by typing messages.

These are the four main titles (the fifth is comprised of miscellaneous provisions that form the Americans with Disabilities Act. As everyday Americans, we do not notice the profound impact this Act has had on our lives. From school buses, to entry ways and the safety of the disabled, the ADA has left its mark and continues to do so. Let us, for this twenty-fifth anniversary of the American. ■



Laura Dean, is a 2016 graduate of Buckhannon-Upsher High School. She plans on attending Davis and Elkins College where she will pursue a degree in environmental science. Laura is a member of National Honor Society, FFA, and Math League. She has also been a member of the Math Team. Laura was a member of cross country for three years and qualified for the state meet two years. Her interests include hiking, reading, and farming.

2016 Disability History Essay Contest

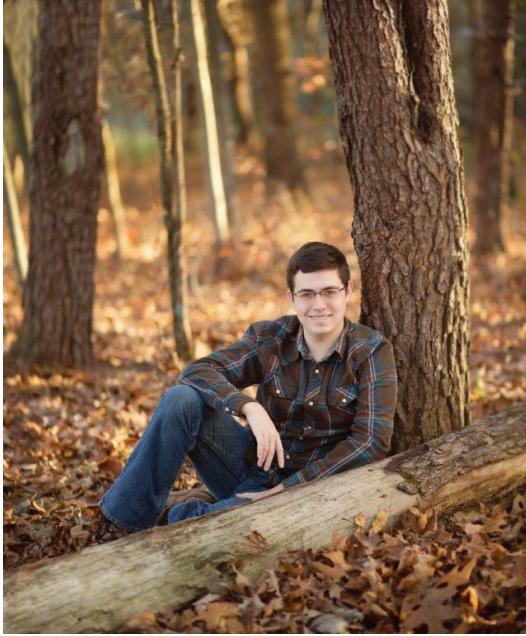
The 2016 Disability History Essay Contest will be held this fall to compliment Disability History Week October, 17 - 21, 2016.

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 a collaborative effort of the Statewide Independent Living Council and the State Rehabilitation Council, supported by a generous grant from the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services, with cooperation from the Department of Education and the Department of Education and the Arts. 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.

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





Mitchell Newbanks a 2016 graduate at Parkersburg South High School. Mitchell participated in the schools co-op program where he attend school in the morning and worked half a day for the Wood County School's Bus Garage. He plans to go to college and obtain an accounting degree. In his spare time, Mitchell enjoys riding his 4 wheeler, playing electric guitar, deer hunting, fishing, arrowhead hunting and coin collecting.

Mitchell Newbanks Parkersburg South High School

When I decided to do this essay, I needed to research what The Americans with Disabilities Act was really all about. Being that I was born deaf and am about to enter into the workforce, I really should become more familiar with this law. In researching the ADA, I found that it protects people with disabilities from discrimination in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. The ADA also establishes requirements for telecommunications relay services. Thanks to the ADA, people with disabilities are able to lead more normal lives and are able to experience things they would not have been able to 25 years ago.

Some of the changes include inclusion in the school system. When I started school at age 2, there was only one elementary school that had accommodations for deaf students. Then, those students went to one middle school and one high school but all were not in the schools I would have gone to based on my residence. After attending the elementary school, I was able to switch to my correct middle school and now attend the high school I should. One thing that I realized when I started the middle school was that none of the friends that had gotten to know me and my cochlear implant were there. It was like starting over, having to explain what the thing on my head was. Who knows what my experience would have been 25 years ago.

Another change that I have experienced is more access for people with disabilities in state parks and amusement parks. There are several state parks in West Virginia that have paved trails to allow wheelchair access. North Bend offers a handicap accessible fishing pier which might not have been created if not for the ADA. Disney World does a great job at accommodating people with disabilities and even allows them to go to the front of the line. Dixie Stampede in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee also has made accommodations by installing elevators and having higher counters for wheelchairs.

Just this year, I realized that our movie theater offered glasses for deaf and hard of hearing people that show closed captioning. I used to not really care for movies at the theater because they didn't have closed captioning and I have trouble hearing what is being said. After seeing the sign that said they offered this accommodation, I actually enjoyed a movie for the first time. Television shows are also now broadcast in closed captioning allowing more people to enjoy them. Our church offers assistive listening devices as well as preferred parking for elderly and disabled. Another church in our area has a sign language interpreter for their services and special music.

We have handicapped accessible public transit and school buses allowing transportation to be more accessible. Airports allow handicapped people to board the airplanes first and have eliminated steps and use ramps instead. Most stores offer handicapped parking spots to allow for easier access. Sidewalks are wider and have places with curb cuts to allow for wheelchairs. This accommodation is also helpful to grocery carts and baby strollers. Hotels offer handicapped accessible rooms with wider doorways and wheelchair accessible bathrooms.

I have a smoke detector in my room that shakes my bed to wake me up since when I am sleeping I can't hear the audible alarm. They offer strobe light alarms for door bells, telephones and fire alarms as well. Another option now available

Parkersburg South High School

Vision

The vision for Parkersburg South High School is to offer a comprehensive curriculum that will successfully prepare all students to assume career, community, and personal responsibilities.

The school's colors are navy blue and white (with a touch of scarlet), and the mascot is a Patriot.

(Hosfeld continued from p4)

The Americans with Disabilities Act has made accessibility a standard; however, it still has some work to do. In the twenty-five years since the act was signed, American society has made enormous efforts to include the disabled in everyday life. Americans with disabilities now have mobility and technology working in their favor. So far, the ADA has made millions of lives easier; hopefully its influence will continue to grow for the next twenty-five years and beyond. ■

Mattison Johnson

Ritchie County High School

Having very close friends who are disabled, I have often contemplated the arrangements provided for the handicapped and the opportunities available to such ones. While in school, teachers and administrators have worked hard to ensure that all of my dear classmates have been given equal opportunity to participate in school-sanctioned events, clubs, and class activities. Yet, as seniors, my classmates with disabilities are confronted with a new set of challenges. Like every young adult, they undoubtedly worry about their success in college, ability to establish successful careers, and happiness in the future. Thankfully, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a source of comfort and hope for disabled individuals and their families and friends, for its enactment empowers handicapped individuals to live long, fulfilling lives and promotes appreciation for their contribution to society.

The ADA has been labeled the Declaration of Independence, Emancipation Proclamation, and Civil Rights Act for the disabled. Twenty-five years ago, on July 26, 1990, thousands of activists gathered near the White House, anticipating the enactment of legislation for which they and their forerunners had tirelessly worked. For decades, volunteers strove to alert politicians to the injustices faced by the disabled, and as President George H.W. Bush signed the landmark statute into law, such activists' message was destined to reach everyday Americans. From that time forward, disabled veterans who had fought courageously for their country were given the respect and opportunities they deserved from potential employers. The handicapped could no longer be denied the right to visit local establishments with friends, for inconvenience would never again be considered an adequate excuse for discrimination. Unquestionably, the ADA transformed the lives of disabled Americans.

Twenty-five years after the enactment of the ADA, polls of disabled individuals consistently testify to the effectiveness of the ADA, especially regarding access to public accommodations. Public facilities have often been inaccessible to the physically disabled, and as my young sister learned while using crutches, the ability to walk up steps and navigate through narrow spaces freely is often taken for granted by the able-bodied. Thankfully, the ADA has limited accessibility concerns in public areas. For instance, wheelchair users were previously restricted by steps and high street curbs in public places, but those in wheelchairs can now safely travel throughout neighborhoods since the ADA has compelled local governments to add curb cuts at pedestrian crossings and ramps at community buildings like libraries and courthouses. Such arrangements ensure that public services and benefits are truly available to everyone in a community.

Likewise, the ADA also prompts business owners to think about the disabled and requires that proprietors ensure their establishments are handicap accessible, if at all possible. Automatic doors and wide isles are simple accommodations business owners have employed to enable all to have an enjoyable shopping or dining experience. While such an arrangement has been criticized by business owners, costs initially expended for renovations are generally offset when the disabled can invest in the commercial interests of their communities, states, and nation. The ADA has established accommodation for the disabled as a basic civil right and thus prompted widespread change throughout the nation's infrastructure.



Mattison Johnson, the daughter of Richard and Candy Johnson, is a 2016 graduate of Ritchie County High School. Mattison is active in her school and community as the vice president of her county's FBLA and National Honor Society chapters, the secretary of the local LEO Club, and a member of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee. In addition, Mattison has participated in Quiz Bowl since her sophomore year and now serves as team captain. She has also enjoyed participating in theatrical productions and choir concerts. As a future teacher, Mattison is an active member of Educators Rising and was elected as a state officer of the organization in the fall. Mattison plans to continue her schooling at Fairmont State University and major in Secondary Math Education.

Ritchie County High School

Mission

Ritchie County Schools will foster high quality learning for all students by developing the academic and intellectual skills and character necessary to prepare students for life-long learning, productive and responsible citizenship, and healthy living in a diverse society.

The only public high school in the county, in Ellenboro, WV, Ritchie County High School "Where it's all about learning!" The Ritchie County Rebels were recognized by Governor Tomblin for a graduation rate 90.48% in 2015!



Linsey Fain Greenbrier West High School

Beginning July 26, 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted. This important legislation allowed people with disabilities to challenge societal barriers that separated them from their communities. Along with the disabled, parents, and community members stood up to fight the obstacles that their children had been facing for far too long. The goal was equality for all whether it was in the workplace, schools, transportation systems, or in public areas. We should expect nothing less from this great nation.

The challenges faced by an able bodied person cannot compare to the obstacles presented to a disabled person in every aspect of their daily life. Many people do not realize the stress and humiliation experienced by these individuals when they do not have the same access and opportunities as the rest of society.

Unlike many of my peers, I have had the opportunity to witness these struggles on a daily basis. My Aunt Mary was born with Cerebral Palsy, mental retardation and is completely deaf. As one could imagine, this was heartbreaking for my grandparents. My grandmother was told that her daughter would never be able to walk or talk. She was, in fact, told that my aunt should be institutionalized. Fortunately, the strength of Aunt Mary's family allowed for a very different outcome. Although my Aunt Mary was 40 years old when the ADA was enacted, the Act has provided her with life-changing benefits.

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act states that disabled individuals have the right to be employed. Although my aunt's disabilities would not allow her to work in a public place, others that are capable of doing so have greater opportunities. My grandparents and Aunt Mary go to Wendys for lunch almost every day. At this Wendys, they met a young woman who has Cerebral Palsy. Her job is to clean tables and do other small tasks. She is hardworking and competent at her job. She not only provides a service for Wendys, but does so with a smiling face and wonderful attitude. Without the ADA, she may not have had the opportunity for employment.

Title II is an important part of the ADA because it prohibits discrimination against disabled people in public programs administered by local and state government. In addition, Title II requires state and local governments to be accountable for establishing policies and ensuring that they are properly implemented and reviewed. All disabled people benefit from this because it provides access to publicly funded resources and programs that are vital to their daily lives.

Title III of the Disability Act states that businesses like hotels, restaurants, and doctors' offices would be required to make their facilities accessible to disabled people. They are required to make updates and remove barriers. Access improvements could include wheel chair ramps and handicapped accessible restrooms. These are things that we take for granted but have kept disabled people from enjoying a full and rich life. Although my aunt can walk well, it makes it easier for her to go places. When she can do things for herself it creates confidence, a sense of accomplishment and greater self-esteem. Isn't that something everyone deserves?

Title IV states that telephone and internet companies are obligated to create

Linsey Allison Fain is the daughter of Harold and Ginger Fain of Quinwood, West Virginia. Linsey is a 2016 graduate of Greenbrier West High School in Charmco. She served as the National Honor Society Chapter President at her school, along with the Student Body President. Linsey enjoys kayaking, hunting, and fishing in her spare time and is a member of the Quinwood First Baptist Church. She plans to continue her education at West Virginia University in the Fall of 2016 to study Dental Hygiene.

Greenbrier West High School

Mission

The Mission of Greenbrier West High School is to provide a safe, supportive environment that prepares young adults to be effective problem solvers, life-long learners, and productive members of society.

Located in Charmco, WV in Greenbrier County, Greenbrier West High School engages student knowledge and perspective as valuable resources in identifying and resolving educational issues. The school colors are blue and gold and the mascot is the Cavaliers.

Disability History Week

October 17 - 21, 2016

The third week of October is designated West Virginia Disability History Week.

Each public school shall provide instruction on disability history, people with disabilities and the disability rights movement integrated into the existing school curriculum. The instruction may be delivered by school personnel or by guest speakers.

State institutions of higher education are also encouraged to participate and 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>.

Sabrina Shroades

Musselman High School

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. This was a historic civil rights act with the intention of eliminating barriers faced by people with disabilities in the areas of employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. A disability is defined by the ADA (1990) as someone with: "(A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such an impairment" (para. 3). America has seen many changes with the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The ADA has resulted in mandating that an employer cannot discriminate against a qualified employee or job applicant because of their disability. Disability discrimination could occur when an employer treats an employee differently because they are receiving treatment for cancer or have a minor physical or mental condition. The ADA also protects against discrimination against an employee whose spouse or child may be disabled. The disabled are protected from harassment at work (whether from an employer, colleague, or client), under the ADA. While the ADA states that disabled job applicants should be considered on an equal basis with other applicants, it is difficult to prove an employer did not hire the disabled person because of their disability. Crary (2015) noted, "While there have been many successful lawsuits by disabled people saying they were fired or demoted unfairly, it's been far harder for them to win lawsuits asserting they should have been hired in the first place" (para. 23).

The ADA now requires an employer to provide reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities, unless it would cause great difficulty or expense for the employer. A reasonable accommodation is defined by the ADA (1990) as "any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions." Accommodations in the work place could include physical changes such as installing ramps, handicap accessible bathrooms, wider doors, stair lifts, or elevators. This can also include strategies such as restructuring a job, modifying a work schedule, making changes to equipment, or providing interpreters. An example of this would be an employee being treated with chemotherapy who tires easily. If the employee asks for a stool to sit on during work at a cash register, then the employer should allow this under the ADA.

While employment changes are harder to see, changes to transportation because of the Americans with Disabilities Act are more overt. There are more public buses and trains with automatic lifts and subway/metro stations with elevators. Public buildings now have more automatic doors and cities have curb cuts on the street corners, making it easier for those in wheelchairs to cross the street and use sidewalks. Public transit systems now have audible announcements identifying routes, major intersections, and transfer points making traveling easier for those with disabilities. They also offer features such as low-floor buses with ramps, larger destination signs, floor markings, additional grab bars, and monitors that show upcoming stops. Schools now have buses equipped to transport students with disabilities to and from school. Vehicles with features for the disabled including hand controls and accelerator adaptations are also now available. Ramps or lifts can be installed to easily transport those in wheelchairs. Such small changes have made a big impact

(See Shroades on p10)



Sabrina Shroades, an honor roll student and 2016 graduate of Musselman High School, has received multiple academic and athletic awards. She was recently student of the nine weeks and is currently ranked 1st in her class with a 4.54 GPA. She pushes herself academically, currently taking 4 AP classes and an online college class through WVU. Sabrina is a member of the National Honor Society and is serving as their Treasurer this year. She plays pitcher and shortstop for the Varsity Softball team, and has started since her freshman year while holding the Musselman school records for strikeouts, ERA, RBI, and doubles. She has made the WV All-State team two years in a row including being named the Captain of the AAA 1st Team this past season. She was also runner-up for the WV Sportswriters State Softball Player of the year voting and was a Gatorade Player of the Year Finalist. Sabrina attends Connections Community Church in Inwood and has volunteered for their Food Bank preparations. Sabrina recently had the honor of representing her school in the South Berkeley Annual Christmas parade after being nominated by the teachers and staff of Musselman. After graduation, Sabrina will be attending Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina where she plans to study Computer Science. When not active in school or sports, Sabrina enjoys spending time with friends and family. She also enjoys going to the beach and amusement parks.

Musselman High School

Mission

The mission of Musselman High School is to provide educational excellence for all students in an academically challenging, positive, and safe atmosphere.

Excellence is in the Air

We are **Accountable** for the learning and achievement of every student.

We can achieve with **Integrity**.

Respect for self, others, and school creates a safe environment for learning.

(Shroades continued from p9)

to those traveling with disabilities. Many hotels even offer lifts so the disabled can have access to the swimming pool, and scooters are available in many grocery stores. Having transportation is critical to the independence of people with disabilities and affects their ability to contribute economically, socially, and politically. Unfortunately, there are still many transportation challenges for people with disabilities who live in rural communities.

The ADA (1990) also ensures that people with disabilities have equal access to the services, programs, and activities offered by state and local government programs. State and local changes include requiring handicap access at government buildings and events. Government programs must ensure effective communication for those with disabilities so they can participate in town or city functions. This includes the use of an interpreter, audio recording, large print, or Braille materials. City governments must also provide emergency telephone services such as 911 to TeleTYpewriter (TTY) calls from the hearing impaired.

There have been many changes to telecommunication with the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA requires that state, local, and businesses communicate effectively with people who have a vision, hearing, or speech disability. Real-time captioning, telecommunications relay service (TRS), and video remote interpreting are all auxiliary aids and services for those with communication disabilities. Closed captioning is now readily available on televisions, and there are new closed-captioning glasses for the deaf to use in movie theaters. There has also been a push for closed-captioning to be available on all movie theater screens. TTY provides conversations that are typed rather than spoken for communication with those who have a similar device. TRS provides operator service allowing people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disorder to place calls. Video interpreter services have become popular at hospitals for communication with not only those who do not speak English, but also for the deaf utilizing a sign language interpreter.

As Americans can see, there have been many milestones in the first twenty-five years of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

(Huffman continued from p2)

can use these services to communicate by typing messages which are then relayed and received back in a way they can understand. Closed captioned TV has allowed those with hearing disabilities to keep up with current events or watch their favorite shows without lip reading. Computer generated relay services also allow communication through the internet and even your smart phone will allow hands-free communication through both visual and audio means. Communication is different, much different.



Blake Huffman accepting his Essay Contest Award from WVSILC Member Emily Robinson.

Title V

The final provision of the ADA provided protection from retaliation or coercion. Those exercising their rights under the American Disabilities Act could now do so without the fear of negative backlash. This is a difference, especially to those who have faced retaliation in the past.

Let's now go back to that street in small town America. Twenty five have passed since that July day in 1990. A walk down the street does look and sound different today. The beeping cross walk, the braille menu at Wendy's, a time extension to take standardized testing, or being able to gaze over the New River Gorge at Hawk's Nest, all of these are different as a result of this life changing act. The ADA has made a huge difference in the world and especially in the lives of the disabled. One has to wonder if those brave souls that climbed the Capitol steps that day had any glimpse into the changes seen in the world today. But, the job is not done. The changes are not over and improvements are happening daily. The disabled still face challenges in the world they navigate daily, but the ADA has had and will continue to have a dramatic effect on the lives of the disabled. ■

(Newbanks continued from p6)

is captioned telephones and relay services allowing deaf and hard of hearing to communicate via telephone. If it weren't for me being deaf, I wouldn't even know most of these accommodations exist. I have relied on my parents when we stay in a hotel to get me out in case of a fire. If I would happen to have to travel for work, vacation or for a doctor appointment and stay in a hotel, will it have a strobe light smoke detector? Will my college dorm room have a strobe light smoke detector? I hope the ADA continues to improve these things we take for granted so one day regardless of your disability or illness, we won't have to worry. ■



Mitchell Newbanks accepting his Essay Contest Award from WVSILC Member Kevin Smith.

(Johnson continued from p7)

The ADA has also been a champion of the disabled's right to work and is based on the fundamental principle that the disabled desire to earn a living and can be valuable members of the work force. Previously, high unemployment rates among the handicapped were considered an inevitable consequence of a person's disability. Thus, as a friend with Asperger's Syndrome attempted to enter the work force, I automatically worried about the possible discrimination present in the application process. Fortunately, the ADA strictly prohibits prejudice when hiring and requires employers to consider an applicant's abilities and qualifications rather than disabilities. Employers are also expected to provide reasonable accommodation for disabled employees. Hence, when my friend applied for a job, he was evaluated based on his skill and work ethic, and he now works in a dim, quiet room since bright lights and loud noises disturb him. Thankfully, the ADA furnishes qualified individuals a fair opportunity to acquire a job and perform their job duties comfortably.



Mattison Johnson and WVSILC Member Beverley Jones after the presentation of the Essay Contest Award.

Of course, fairness in the application process means little if the disabled are not able to travel to work. Before the ADA's enactment, public transportation included little accommodation for the handicapped, but disabled ones now celebrate their newfound freedom as they witness an increase in buses equipped with wheelchair lifts and subway systems with elevators. Once discomfited on public transportation, the blind are now accommodated by voice enunciators that announce the upcoming destination of a bus or subway. Disabled individuals are no longer confined to homes, institutions, or even their states, for widespread alterations have made regular travel a possibility for the handicapped. Certainly, on account of the ADA, disabled individuals have seen their world and opportunities grow within the last twenty-five years.

Both the mentally and physically disabled have a history mixed with discrimination and segregation, but the ADA has thankfully limited such prejudice within the education system. Once institutionalized and considered feeble-minded, the deaf, blind, mentally handicapped, and physically disabled can now rightfully attend both the secondary and postsecondary schools of their choice. According to the ADA, college eligibility requirements cannot discriminate based on disability, and postsecondary schools should grant all students equal access to programs and extracurricular activities by adjusting policies and procedures, supplying interpreters and communication aids, and furnishing buildings with ramps and elevators. Thus, a talented fellow classmate can pursue her dream of becoming a renowned artist and attend a distinguished college rather than be hindered by her physical handicap. Schools' cooperation with the ADA gives exceptional young individuals equal opportunity to prosper in college and prepare for success in their preferred job field.

While the ADA has certainly improved the lives of disabled Americans, it has simultaneously prompted consideration of recurring issues and additional adjustments that should be made out of respect for the disabled. For instance, despite having equal opportunity in the hiring process, the disabled continue to constitute a large portion of the unemployed. Government officials and researchers have been able to identify causes other than discrimination that

(See Johnson next column)

(Johnson continued from previous column)

affect such statistics. For example, the availability of health care poses an issue. While unemployed, the disabled are offered health care benefits that pay for the costly treatment the disabled often require, but once such ones earn approximately \$700, they are stripped of health insurance and usually thus compelled to quit their jobs. Yes, the research performed following implementation of the ADA has exposed this and many other weaknesses regarding the situation of the disabled.

Rather than being defined by their disabilities, more than 50 million Americans now lead self-affirming, independent lives in which they pursue their passions and dreams. While the ADA champions civil rights, the landmark legislation also battles the stereotypes that have developed for thousands of years. The disabled are generally no longer viewed as objects of charity or people to be pitied; rather, Americans have begun to understand that experiencing life differently is not automatically worse. In truth, the ADA defends the rights of all, for while everyone has a chance of becoming handicapped, the ADA affirms that differences enrich the world and that everyone deserves respect and equal opportunities. ■

(Shroades continued from p10)

However, much remains to be done to fulfill the promise for those who are disabled. Recently a friend of my parents, who is a paraplegic, relayed an unfortunate experience he had on a flight. He was traveling with his wife and two small children to Florida. Once the plane was in flight, the pilot announced they needed to make an emergency landing as one of the engines had caught fire. When the plane landed, the crew was unprepared to accommodate the disabled in an emergency evacuation. To make a long story short, the crew left him as one of the last passengers to evacuate. They were unsure how to get him off the plane and ended up lifting him out of his wheelchair and making him slide down the inflatable ramp unassisted. He sustained some minor injuries that required overnight hospitalization. America has come a long way in the past twenty-five years, but we still have some areas where we can make improvements. Hopefully, we will never forget the challenges of the disabled, and the importance of equality for all Americans. ■

(Fain continued from p8)

a nationwide system that includes technology that is useable for hearing and speech impaired individuals. This is vitally important for a disabled person. It can provide help during emergencies, communication with loved ones or just the ability to call a friend. I gave my aunt my old iPhone but never thought she would be able to use it for anything other than the camera function. To my surprise, she has learned to use Facetime! This is a fun activity for her but actually serves a greater purpose. In the event of an emergency, she could utilize Facetime to actually show what was happening at that moment. Otherwise, she would not be able to communicate verbally.

Title V is the part of the Act that deals with miscellaneous issues. These include insurance relationships, illegal drug use, non-retaliation and issues not covered by the other Titles. These are all important components that provide additional protection for people with disabilities.

To me, the Americans with Disabilities Act is more than just a random act that helps disabled people. This has changed many people's lives and provides opportunities that would otherwise not exist. Although my Aunt Mary was forty years old when the ADA became a law, she has not had to live the past twenty-five years of her life being treated differently. My aunt loves to go shopping and get her nails done. With handicapped parking and the handicapped ramps, she has much greater access to the places she enjoys.

When my grandparents were given the news that Mary had Cerebral Palsy, they had to consider options that would have a great impact on their lives. My grandfather wanted his daughter to receive the best medical care and be treated just like a "normal" person. This is when he decided to enlist in the United States Air Force. Among the benefits my grandfather received, many opportunities were made available to Aunt Mary that would have not existed in rural West Virginia. Mary received the best care available having access to wonderful schools, excellent medical care and social activities. In addition my grandmother did physical therapy with her outside of school to strengthen her legs. Aunt Mary has never been aware of the disabilities she had because she was never treated as disabled. Even though she had a loving and supportive family, Mary would not have the happy and full life that she has today without the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA opens the world to disabled people who would otherwise live in a much smaller universe.

I truly believe that I would not be the person I am today without Aunt Mary. She has impacted my life more than I would ever think a single person could. I have watched her grow and learn new things every day. If everyone could see the world through her eyes, it would be a much better place. ■

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