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Behind the Scenes

ADA 25 Year Anniversary Fest in Los Angeles

Executive Report

The 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games, the largest sports and humanitarian event taking place throughout the world, will be staged in Los Angeles from July 25th to August 2nd. With 7,000 athletes from over 170 countries, 30,000 volunteers, and an anticipated 500,000 spectators, the Special Olympic Games will be the single biggest event to take place in Los Angeles over the past decade.

The Special Olympics will consist of 25 Olympic-style sports in twelve venues throughout the Los Angeles region. These venues have been thoroughly evaluated by Access staff to determine safe and accessible pick-up and drop-off locations for our customers.

To learn more about the 2015 Special Olympics and details of the events, please visit the Special Olympics website:
<http://www.la2015.org/sports>

*Shelly Verrinder
Executive Director*



Photos: 2015 ADA 25th Anniversary Event Fest in Los Angeles

On Saturday, July 11, CALIF (Communities Actively Living Independent and Free) and the Los Angeles City Commission on Disability sponsored the ADA 25 Disability Fest. This historic event celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Better known to all as the ADA, this landmark civil rights legislation was signed into law on July 26th 1990, America's most comprehensive civil rights legislation for persons with disabilities. The ADA prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life, to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in state and local government programs and services.

Lilibeth Navarro, Executive Director for CALIF, Stephen David Simon, Executive Director for the City of Los Angeles Department on Disability and Adriana Miranda of the Los Angeles Department on Disability were the key individuals who made this event happen with a great deal of help from staff, outside agencies and the general public.

There were many activities to commemorate this very important anniversary in U.S. history. There was a spirited ceremonial march to the steps of Los Angeles City Hall. Lilibeth Navarro, Executive Director of CALIF, rallied the crowd with a heartfelt reflection "I was there before ADA" reminding attendees how life was for peoples with disabilities, before ADA became the law. Lilibeth then introduced Access Deputy Executive Director of Operations, Steve Chang, who expressed a sincere thank you to Access customers and community members at large, for their support of Access over the last 20 years.

Steve also stated on behalf of Access, the Board of Directors, and member agencies, that it's an honor to operate ADA Paratransit service for Access customers in Los Angeles County, and provide them with the independence to go places every day. On July 26, 2015, California and the other 49 states will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the ADA to celebrate this landmark civil rights legislation.

Representing Access at this event were: *Steve Chang, Hector Rodriguez, London Lee, Stephen Wrenn, Randy Johnson, Colin Obeso, AlfredoTorales, and Louis Burns*

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ADA 25!

Making sure that we That we all thrive!

The ADA, 25 Years Worth Celebrating!



Theresa de Vera's Story

Since the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 by then President George H. W. Bush, people with disabilities have broadened their life experiences and found joy in being totally independent. This is Theresa de Vera's story, in her own words, of how the ADA has enhanced her quality of life.

It was April 20, 1996, and just like any other college student, I thought I was invincible. Suddenly I found myself in a hospital room clinging to life. After a 9-month hospital stay, I found myself dependent on a wheelchair, something that I honestly never envisioned. What was I going to do? All my hopes and dreams were now shattered. Then again, maybe not. When I had finally adjusted to my "new life", I realized that life never ends, it just changes.

In 1998, I learned about Access Paratransit Services, a curb-to-curb, shared ride agency. I was able to travel on my own from my home to Marina del Rey to attend a Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group. These strong individuals taught me that "life is to be lived, not wasted regardless of your circumstances." Ghandi said, "Be the change you want to be in this world," and I decided that life in a wheelchair may be weird for some people, but it was a "blessing" to me.

In 2002, I decided that I wanted to finish my Bachelor's degree. Thanks to the ADA, paratransit services, and Access, I was able to complete my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science in 2004 and in 2008 my Master's Degree in Pastoral Theology with an emphasis in Bioethics. Great things were happening! In September of 2005, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa appointed me to serve on the Los Angeles City Commission on Disabilities. Having a disability made me more passionate about fighting for disability rights.

I owe who I am today in a large part to Access Services. I was able to complete more things with a disability than I probably would have in 50 years as an "able" bodied person. Access takes me to all my various meetings from Downtown Los Angeles to Long Beach to Northridge; Access gave me the independence that I thought I had lost to be the advocate for many like myself who need help transitioning to life on wheels.

This past Saturday, I joined the City of Los Angeles in celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I was humbled to see the dedication of the Access/California Transit Road Supervisors, Folsom Grace and Aurora Delgado, braving the heat to ensure that every Access rider was taken home, even accommodating earlier trips since many, like myself, were dying from the heat.

Theresa de Vera is a member of the Access Services Board of Directors.

*Edited by: David Foster,
Project Administrator, Eligibility Services*



Photos: Theresa de Vera, Access Services Board of Director

ADA 25! Hope alive So we survive!

Terri Lantz-ADA Advocates Perspective



Photo: (standing) Terri Lantz, Client Rights Advocate for United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties; and Sylvia Drzewieck, UCP client

To Client Rights Advocate Terri Lantz, 2015 marks the 25th year of the ADA being signed into law... the groundbreaking, wide ranging civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability, the law that recognizes that individuals with disabilities have the same needs as other people and should have the same rights to equal access until the law; the law that empowers individuals with disabilities to participate fully in their community and in all facets of life.

Transportation has changed in 25 years. Before ADA many people who used wheelchairs for mobility had to be taken out of their wheelchairs and lifted into cars/taxis and were relegated to using manual wheelchairs requiring physical assistance from family members or friends or pay for a taxi on every trip.

People with other disabilities also required more assistance and most individuals with disabilities were very limited in where they could go, when they could go out into the community and what they could participate in.

Access allowed the agency I work for to focus on their services and to refer the individuals we serve to public transportation for their transit needs. Our staff and I no longer have to drive a van to assure that UCP participants arrive at our programs. The majority of individuals I work with use Access for almost all of their daily transit needs and report that Access works, has improved and for the most part does an excellent job in providing accessible transportation.

The future holds better technology with better outcomes! Perhaps a single reservation system for all areas increasing the efficiency for riders and Access providers, vehicles with better fuel or energy efficiency, and a way of making Access financially possible for all eligible riders for any trip they need to book so that they can have full access to the community and participate in every facet of human life.

Terry Lantz is the Client Rights Advocate for United Cerebral Palsy of Los Angeles. She is also a member of Access Community Advisory Committee.

*By Louis Burns,
Customer Service Administrator*

APTA's 2015 Risk Management Seminar

From June 23 - 25, I attended APTA's annual risk management seminar in Salt Lake City, Utah. Small scale by APTA standards, the conference had approximately 75 attendees from large and small transit agencies around the United States. Risk managers, insurance brokers, and a few financial types were in attendance over three days of workshops.

Among my favorite topics were Risk Management 101 led by OCTA's Risk Manager Al Gorski; Legal and Risk Management Issues Surrounding Use of Video, led by three presenters including a Southern California based forensic engineer; and Risk Management in the Contracted Work Environment, led by Capital Metro's Risk Manager (Austin, TX). The seminar confirmed that Access is following industry practices in all the key areas of risk management and risk control. But it also highlighted a number of areas that the agency can improve on and I came back to California with a to-do list of issues to follow up on.

*By Mike Greenwood,
Director of Safety & Risk Management*

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**We are the people
We have ADA!
ADA Civil Rights!
ADA Equal Rights!**

Rider Comments

Customer called stating she wants to thank Access for everything they do from the bottom of her heart. Customer is pleased with the transportation and communication Access provides to their customers regarding timing and how everything is done professionally in a timely manner.

*Sanderson M,
Rider since February 2014*

APTA Summit Youth 2015



Photo: (L) Cambria Jones with APTA President & CEO Michael Melaniphy**(R)**

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) hosted 50 high school juniors and seniors from 20 different states at the 2015 APTA Youth Summit to advance education and promote careers in public transportation from June 28 to July 2.

Miss Cambria Jones, friend of Access Training and Development Manager, Evie Palicz, was one of the 50 students chosen out of over 120 applicants. Cambria will be a senior at Troy High School in Fullerton this fall. Cambria got a peek at the vast array of careers available in the

transit industry. Students attended special sessions geared to their interest in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as well as business, public policy, planning, and marketing and communications.

Throughout the week students worked in groups to create innovative new components for the transit industry. Cambria's group designed a new "app" called TreVal, which is to be a revolutionary ride optimization app that utilizes user ratings and specific filters to find the transportation option that best suits a rider's needs. According to Cambria, "It made me feel empowered and really excited about the impact my generation really can have on the world. I'm so excited for what's to come!"

It wasn't all work and no play for these kids. They had time to tour the Washington Metropolitan Transportation Authority (WMATA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) facilities as well as the famous sites of our nation's capital. They also heard from industry leaders, lawmakers, and APTA President and CEO Michael Melaniphy.

*By Evie Palicz
Manager-Training & Development*

ADA 25 Anniversary Fest in Los Angeles-Continued



Photo: (L) Hector Rodriguez, **(Left Centered)** Stephen David Simon, **(Right Centered)** London Lee, and **(R)** Stephen Wrenn

By Louis Burns, Customer Service Administrator and Randy Johnson, Project Administrator