



**April Guest Blogger: Kathy Hoell, Executive Director Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council**

July 26<sup>th</sup> the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a very important day for me! I became disabled prior to the ADA being passed, so the passage totally changed my life profoundly. In 1984 I felt life was hopeless because I thought I could not go anywhere due to the fact that I use a wheelchair for mobility. But then I became aware of legislation that any organization that receives Federal money has to be accessible to the Disability Community. With this legislation just about all colleges and universities fall into this category.. So I went to the office for the University of New Hampshire and filed all the needed paperwork in late 1985 to enroll into classes for my Bachelor's degree. I got accepted, then life became interesting! They only had one building that was accessible, so my first day on campus every class I had was automatically moved to that building! The next four years I just took classes that interested me. Eventually I ended up with a Bachelor's of Science. So I thought maybe I should try working!

Things did not go as I had planned for me. I would apply for a job and then get called to schedule an interview and I had the audacity to ask if they were wheelchair accessible. Most conversations would end abruptly after I disclosed that I need wheelchair accessibility. But one time the man said yes, I was totally shocked but made an appointment. I arrived at the address very early just in case there were problems. I got out of my van, started up the sidewalk and came to one stair with no way around it. Got in my van and went home! When I got home I called the individual I had the appointment with and explained why I was not coming. His response; "But it's only one stair".

After a number of years of everything being inaccessible the ADA was going to change that. Then reality set in! Making things physically accessible was easy but to make them accessible to everyone with a disability was more difficult.

So after 25 years have passed and many changes have occurred, as a person that uses a wheelchair I can go just about anywhere. But issues remain! Websites are not accessible, employment for people with disabilities still is impossible and communication remains problematic just to name a few of the issues. So while it is imperative that we celebrate the **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA** we need to remember we still have a long way to go. Celebrating the victories for our own disability group is important but we have to remember our brothers and sisters in disability, the vision of level playing field from the ADA is something we need to keep working towards.

As Justin Dart (father of the ADA) was fond of saying: **LEAD ON, LEAD ON!**

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Kathy Hoell's Bachelor of Science degree is in Behavioral Analysis. She went on to get her Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Nebraska-Omaha. She has been the Executive Director for the Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council for over ten years.