



March Guest Blogger: John C. Wyvill, J.D., Executive Director, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

“Faith, Focus, and Follow-through”

Faith, Focus, and Follow-through have been my guiding principles in my life and motivate me daily. I was adopted out of foster care as a toddler and at age four was diagnosed as Deaf. The medical team informed my parents that my educational and career opportunities would be limited because of my “disability”. My parents were told that I would be “lucky” to graduate from high school. At an early age, I was instilled a belief to have faith in my ability; that I could achieve anything I wanted and that I should follow through with that plan. After reading the book “To Kill a Mockingbird” I knew I wanted to become a lawyer and be an advocate to fight for justice and equality. I became the first in my family to graduate college, go to law school and become a lawyer. Now I am an advocate for and with others for equal access and communications.

For me, the passage of the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA) represents a very clear shift in our country that we should focus on one’s *ability* not disability. While Faith, Focus, and Follow-through were an important cornerstone for me, the law is now there to reduce the obstacles and afford the opportunity for those to recognize their fullest potential. Twenty five years after the ADA we still have to fight for equality, access and opportunity. However, the fight in the next 25 years should be easier; as our society is becoming more inclusive.

To paraphrase the civil rights song that was featured at the National Association for the Deaf Conference in Atlanta in the Martin Luther King Jr. home church last year:

“There is no turning back, we have come too far”.

Moving forward, Every Day, Every Person.

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