

CELEBRATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Guest Author **Yu-Chia Wu**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebrated its 24th anniversary on July 26 this year. The ADA was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1990 and provides a national sanction to end prejudice against people with disabilities and to allow them to access the economic and social mainstream of the country. As President Bush noted on the day the ADA was signed, "Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down," as equality became assured for those who had disabilities. The ADA's five titles cover employment, state and local government, public accommodations, telecommunications, and miscellaneous provisions.

http://adaanniversary.org/2014/ada_findings_history_2014_adatoolkit.php

On July 25, 2014, President Barak Obama issued a Proclamation celebrating the Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act for 2014. It described the serious need for this law to ensure equality for people with disabilities. It pointed out that nearly 20% of Americans live with a disability and noted, "The ADA promises equal access and equal opportunity -- regardless of ability. It secures each person's right to an independent life, and it enables our country and our economy to benefit from the talents and contributions of all Americans."

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/25/presidential-proclamation-anniversary-americans-disabilities-act>



According to U.S. Census Bureau, about 56.7 million people or about 19% of the civilian non-institutionalized population has a disability in the U.S. in 2010. People with special needs usually have either a physical or mental impairment that influences basic day-to-day lifestyle activities. These include walking, bathing, dressing, preparing meals, or leaving for work.

https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/pdf/cb14ff-15_ada.pdf



Davidson County, Tennessee, had an estimated 74,718 people with disabilities, according to the 2012 American Community Survey from the U. S. Census Bureau. It estimates that 10.8% of the male and 12.5% of the female population in Davidson County has a disability. As noted in the 2013 Community Needs Evaluation (pages 171-172), the likelihood of having a disability increases with age and 38.8% of Davidson County residents age 65 or over have a disability. Ambulatory difficulties are most common, followed by independent living, cognitive difficulty, self-care difficulty, vision difficulty and hearing difficulty.

<http://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/SocialServices/docs/cne/Community%20Needs2013final.pdf>

The implementation of the ADA has made a significant progress towards its mission: “assuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.” The ADA enables people with disabilities to be integrated in the society by removing barriers such as infrastructure.



Under the ADA provisions, physical infrastructure should be built for people with disabilities. Public transportation has become accessible to people with disabilities via added equipment such as ramps or wheelchair lifts. Public accommodations and commercial facilities such as restaurants, retailer stores, or hotel are accessible to people with disabilities via accessible elements such as elevators, automatic door openers, or assistive technology. With these modifications, people with disabilities are able to go outside their homes and participate in more of society’s opportunities.

People with disabilities are more likely to enter the workforce because of accessible public transportation and buildings. Moreover, employers are required to treat qualified individual with disabilities equally in all stages of employment.

Employers should also make accommodations based on special needs. The ADA not only benefits people with disabilities but also employers. People with disabilities can work with greater ease and independence, and this makes them more productive in the workforce.

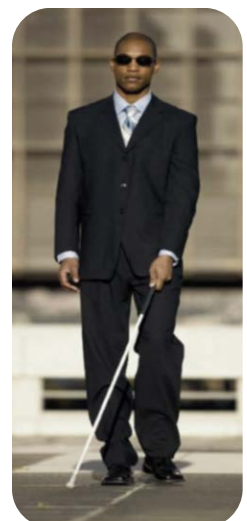
<https://www.disability.gov/disability-connection-newsletter-july-2014/>

Although the ADA has changed the lives of people with disabilities, there is room for improvement because disparity still exists between people with a disability and their counterparts in the workforce. According to the U.S. Census Bureau report, the median earning in 2012 was \$20,184 for people with a disability, compared to \$30,600 for their counterparts. Furthermore, people with a disability have a higher percentage of living in poverty: 23% for people with a disability, compared to 15% for those without a disability in 2012.

https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/pdf/cb14ff-15_ada.pdf

The South East ADA Center released an article “*ADA Impact on Everyday Lives*”, which surveys the ADA’s implementation in 14 major cities in the southeast region of the United States. In the article, it points out how ADA affects the lives of people with disabilities in communities, workforce, and campuses. The article mentions that places have become more accessible for people with disabilities, but some infrastructure adjustments are needed in order to achieve a barriers free environment.

http://adasoutheast.org/publications/ada_anniversary/2014/ada_impact_everyday_lives_southeast_2014_adatoolkit.php





Commit for **another 25 years...**and Beyond!
ADAAnniversary.org



Nationwide planning is already underway for the 25th Anniversary Celebration, with more information available online.

<http://adaanniversary.org/>

Guest Author **Yu-Chia Wu** is from Taiwan. She is currently pursuing her master’s degree in International Education Policy and Management at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. She received a BA in Foreign Language and Literature from National Chung Hsing University in 2012. From 2010-2011, she studied abroad as an exchange student at Virginia Tech. After obtaining her bachelor's degree, Yu-Chia worked as an administrative assistant in the international program at National Chung Hsing University for 1.5 years before joining Vanderbilt University. She is interested in education policy, educational equity, equity and poverty, economics of education and data analysis.

During the summer of 2014, Yu-Chia worked as an intern with Planning & Coordination/Social Data Analysis of Metropolitan Social Services. She provided outstanding assistance in data analysis and special projects, including this issue paper on the Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act. Many thanks to Yu-Chia.

