Fred Riggers (1942-2016) was a well known advocate at the Idaho State Capitol. Now he travels the state to find out what’s important to people with disabilities! By using #FlatFred we can let our state legislators know what’s important. You can get your own #FlatFred to create videos and images and upload to @ADA30Idaho on Facebook every Friday until March 31st. Email dac@dacnw.org to get a printable version or we can mail you one as well. Let’s see where in Idaho Fred Riggers will go next!
LOCAL EVENTS - Please join us!

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, around the world festivals, sporting events, community workshops and celebrations are being cancelled or postponed. We support these decisions but also understand the important role these events play in community life. They serve as an emotional connection to share a common experience, and they build stronger, more resilient communities. We have moved to offering our event experiences online and in person with Social Distancing Precautions in place. Be an active part and join us in our virtual workshops, peer support groups, get togethers and gaming opportunities. If you are having trouble connecting, have difficulties with high speed internet or lack the devices that enable you to be an active part, please phone your local CIL - we can help! And be ready to return to our in person events in full force when it is safe to do so. We love our communities!

Feb 16 - Game Night! Spokane Youth
6:00pm - 7:00 pm PT
Virtual night of Jackbox games

Feb 18 - Experiences of Black Disabled People in Disasters
Virtual Panel Discussion 12:00pm - EST
GADRA

Feb 26 - Left Center Right Game Night
3:00pm PT - Lewiston Transition Council

heART and Mind Art Show
March 29 Time TBD
Washington State University

Call for Artists: a virtual art show highlighting the relationship between artistic expression and celebration of self. The goal of self-love and self-care through artistic means. Submission can be spoken word, poetry, film, visual art, dance and music.

https://wsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0oIcQSbQVNxefSP?
Aging & Disability

Adjusting to the ailments and disabilities that come with aging can be a difficult transition. It’s easy to obsess over what we have lost, and give in to the mindset of “Oh well, this is what it’s like getting older.” And although you can’t go back in time to a healthier you or wish away limitations, you can change how you think about it. We live in amazing times and assistive technology is growing by leaps and bounds to help seniors adapt and continue to live life in a rich and fulfilling way.

Find the resources you need to minimize the disability’s impact on your life. Contact your local Center for Independent Living and they can help. Knowledge is power and they have all sorts of services and information to help you take charge.

Perhaps you need to learn new skills. Like dealing with technology during COVID. We have the expertise to help with wifi, tablets, tele-health and social activities that can take place virtually and help you stay connected. I even spent time learning how to build a Wheel of Fortune game to be played virtually - that was my Mum’s favorite game.

Or maybe you need assistive technology to help with mobility. Refusing to seek out help can delay your progress or make you worse, either physically or emotionally. Having difficulty walking? Learn about the different styles of canes, or the proper use of walking sticks to help with balance, support and relieve pain. This can restore you feelings of personal freedom and independent living.

Low cost devices for helping with buttoning clothes, getting out of bed safely, using the bathroom, listening to the television, or even a reminder alarm clock that can be customized with the voice of the user to remind you of appointments or everyday tasks and medication.

There are sooo many options out there. And your Independent Living Advocate can let you try out different items and find what works for you.
DAC NW offers Fun & Games

Staying connected right now, meeting new friends, and interacting with your peers is difficult right now. DAC NW offers a number of opportunities each month for fun and games.

Spokane Youth hosts a Virtual Game Night every month. They play a variety of Jackbox games with young people with disabilities around the region. This month’s session is February 16 at 6pm. For ease of playing a computer and a smart phone or tablet are advised. These games are interactive and funny! And since it’s offered virtually, anyone, anywhere can play. To register visit SpokaneYouth Facebook page.

Or try meeting with the Lewiston Transition Council and play with other youth with disabilities ages 14-24. This month on February 26th at 3pm they are teaching a dice game called Left, Center, Right. By signing up, you will receive your dice in the mail and be able to connect virtually via any device to play. Parental supervision for participants under 18 is recommended. To register call 208-746-9033 or email molly@dacnw.org.

Coming March 26th is the first Let’s Talk Bingo! game. Guest speakers will talk about resources available for people with disabilities. And of course, BINGO! Prizes will be awarded to winners. By registering ahead of time you can receive your Bingo cards and markers in the mail. We even have Braille Bingo cards! Call 208-746-9033 to register or email Molly@dacnw.org.

DAC NW strives to make game nights as accessible as possible. If you have accommodations you need, contact us at least 2 weeks ahead of time. And if you don’t have connectivity, tablets and hotspots are available. Because these are virtual events, anyone can participate - so sign up for some fun today!
Universal Access Trails and Shared Use Paths

We enjoy a diversity of landscapes in Idaho. A trip around the state reveals a dizzying choice of recreation opportunities among forested mountains, urban parks and suburban greenways. Given these opportunities, it is not surprising that Idahoans want to get outdoors. Walking, biking and hiking are popular outdoor activities, and as time goes on we can anticipate that the use of public trails will rise. As our population ages and health issues and disabilities increase, a growing number of people will face limits to their outdoor activities. The limits are not the disabilities, but the barriers to the trails in nature.

An outdoor sport does for people with disabilities exactly what it does for able bodied people - a connection to nature that is vital to our health and wellness. When it comes to shared use paths, every user brings his or her own unique set of needs and preferences.

A universally designed, sustainable pedestrian trail - one that stands up to years of use and serves a wide range of hikes - works with the environment and blends into the setting with the curves and reasonable slopes that make for an interesting hike. The surface needs to withstand the types of weather that occur in the area, minimize maintenance, and have a tread width wide enough for the anticipated volume of expected hikers. Use of trail accessibility guidelines and standards result in trails that meet these goals, while not requiring paving.

The American Trails manual on universal access trails provides lots of information to help develop a trail system that serves all people while fitting appropriately into the setting and being sustainable with low maintenance. Shared use paths service bicyclists and pedestrians. Guidance on their construction is included in the manual. And the question of power driven mobility devices and how they are applied to the outdoor recreation environment is also laid out.

By reviewing Best Management Practices (BMP’s) to utilize when planning, designing, constructing and maintaining shared used trails for universal accessibility provides trails usable by ALL people, without separate or segregated access for people with disabilities. These BMPs, which derive from federal regulations, are mandatory for federal entities, but are also applicable to state and local trails.

Find the manual here


For more information about the ADA contact

NWADACENTER.ORG/IDAHO

Dana Gover, MPA, and ACTCP Certification

ADA Training & Technical Assistance
Email: dananwadacenteridaho@gmail.com
Phone: Voice & TTD 208-841-9422
New Rules for Service Animals on Airplanes

On December 10, 2020, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a final rule to amend the Department’s Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) regulation on the transport of service animals by air carriers. The effective date for this run is January 11th, 2021.

The new rule means only specially trained dogs qualify as service animals, which must be allowed in the cabin at no charge. Airlines could ban emotional support animals which include untrained dogs, cats and more exotic companions such as pigs, pheasants, rabbits and snakes.

Airlines say the number of support animals has grown dramatically and lobbied to crack down on what they consider a scam - passengers who call their pets emotional-support animals to avoid pet fees that generally run more than $100 each way.

For some people with disabilities, this is a step in the right direction, as they are dependent on and reliant on legitimate service animals. A boom in untrained animals threatens the ability to fly with properly trained service dogs. A dog trained to help with psychiatric needs will qualify as a service animal.

On the other side are people who say that an emotional support animal helps them with anxiety or other issues that would prevent them from traveling or make it more stressful. And the argument that a mental illness is just as debilitating as another disability and should require the same kind of accommodation.

But there are incidents of passengers being bitten by support animals, and complaints that the animals relieve themselves on planes and in airports. It’s also hard to remove an out of control animal once the plane is in the air.

The proposed rules would allow many different breeds of service dogs, including pit bulls, after the passenger has filled out a federal form on which they swear the dog is trained to help them. The rules would also ban the current practice of requiring animal owners to fill out paperwork 48 hours in advance. This practice is unfair to disabled people by preventing them from bringing their service dog on last minute trips.

The public will have 60 days to comment on the proposed changes. Officials highlighted a few areas where they are most eager to get comments, including whether miniature horses should continue to qualify as service animals.
COVID is 10 Times more Deadly for People with Down Syndrome

While Covid-19 fills most people with dread, for those with Down syndrome (DS), it can make you especially vulnerable to respiratory viruses. They are dealing with a stacked deck against them in terms of dealing with the virus.

Among groups at higher risk of dying from COVID-19, such as people with diabetes, people with DS stand out: if infected, they are five times more likely to be hospitalized and 10 times more likely to die than the general population, according to a study in the U.K. from October. And percent studies back this up.

Researchers suspect background immune abnormalities, combined with extra copies of key genes in people with DS make them more vulnerable to severe COVID-19. They really need the protective policies put in place.

The U.K. recommended prioritizing people with DS for speedy vaccination. But the more than 200,000 Americans with DS so far are not slated for early vaccination. Nor has the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention included DS in its list of conditions it says boost the risk for severe COVID-19.

The extraordinary risk is still there even after factoring in things like obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and living in a group home. And people with DS who are 40 and older bear the most risk - a mortality rate of 51% versus 7% for those under 40. This is comparable to those over 80 in the general population. They are thinking the 3 extra copies of a gene on chromosome 21 enables the virus to hijack it and enter human cells. T-cells don’t develop properly in people with DS, and levels of circulating B cells are low. So are levels of key proteins that prevent immune cells from attacking the body’s own tissues.

An international Trisomy 21 Research Society is calling for people with DS, especially those over 40, to be prioritized for early vaccination. The CDC list of those at risk for severe COVID-19 is not exhaustive and may not include every condition. But they can update its list as science evolves.
I was born and raised in Spokane and come from a family of 9 kids. I have an amazing husband of 36 years, two kids, and two grandkids. But the biggest thing I want you to know about me is I am a 59 year old who has struggled with dyslexia all my life. Dyslexia is a wilderness that has surrounded me as long as I can remember. It has been a source of pain, anxiety, depression, and doubt, but it’s also the reason I am here right now. I know it played a part in shaping and moulding me into what I am today, a person I am slowly but surely learning to love and embrace.

I want to share my story with the millions of people who are also in the same wilderness that is dyslexia. It has had a big impact on my life and the journey has not been an easy one. The advocates I have had over the years have been few and far between. Whether it is a lack of understanding, funds, resources, or sometimes lack of compassion, more often I forge on without direction or support. Through that I see the importance of being your own advocate.

School was dismal at best. Classes for me involved card games, wood working, home economics and PE. Teachers would give me the text books and tell me to copy the answers from the back. I was isolated from grades 3-12, segregated from the rest of my peers. For instance, I had no idea who Harriet Tubman was when having a conversation with my daughter. When other students were learning this, I was being encouraged to cheat my way through the curriculum.

Despite the disabilities, it was decided I would skip 9th grade. According to the school district, I was socially ready for high school, so they sent me off to prepare me for the working world.

At age 15 I held a babysitting job from 12-3 then went to a nursing home where I volunteered a couple hours a day. It was here I discovered my love of working with the elderly. At 16 I was working a full-time job at the nursing home. I no longer attended classes at school, but I did graduate and receive a diploma. On one hand I felt so undeserving of that piece of paper, but I also knew I was lucky because I had a job.

Throughout my career I have taken low paying positions. I call it my comfort zone. I felt comfortable being in the background. I could hide my dyslexia to avoid embarrassment. Deep down I longed to come out of the background, but never know how to conquer that moun-

tain.

Today, the working world continues to be a struggle. It’s time to bring attention and awareness to this disability. Time to advocate for those who might struggle. I want to help them win the war that I have called my own for years.

The dyslexia struggle holds too many people hostage. More needs to be done. We should be concerned for our children’s education - the future depends on it.

Children with disabilities should be able to attend mainstream schools, and get their educational needs met. Parents should not have to pay for outside resources, college becomes that much more unobtainable when the resources get eaten up in high school.

Just a few years ago I worked in a resource class at a local school. Things have not changed much. The system continues to isolate students, overwhelm teachers and allow students to slip through the cracks. I want to bring dyslexia to the surface, to better understand what it is - not just in schools but in communities too.

Although I am 59 years old, I’ eager to move forward, build my skills, learn new speaking techniques and share my passion for supporting the learning disabled community. If you find yourself in a similar struggle, consider joining our Facebook group just for people with dyslexia. Meet others dealing with the same thing and we can work together to help people become more confident, and find resources that can help everyone on their journey.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/392582224752031/

Educational Healing With Dyslexia
The Right of Idaho Representatives to Accommodations

By Todd DeVries

On July 26, 1990, President George Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. An iconic image from that time shows a group of demonstrators abandoning their wheelchairs and crawling up the steps of the US Capitol. Their actions graphically demonstrate the impact that a barrier creates for a person with a disability when barred from full and free access to the benefits of work, play and self-expression.

Representative Muffy Davis is from Blaine County, has paraplegia and reduced lung function. Sue Chew has diabetes and represents ADA County. These elected officials believe that what the legislature has done to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is insufficient to keep them safe in light of their disabilities. They claimed protection under the ADA. When they filed their request for accommodation to the way the legislature deals with the virus, the representatives activated a well-tried and tested process to determine whether their claim was reasonable.

The employer (Idaho) must consider the request and decide whether the accommodation substantially changes the job. The state determined that installing air filters and plexiglass shields and reducing the number of people allowed into the hearing rooms are sufficient.

The ADA allows an employee to challenge an employer’s decision. We call it the rule of law. Finding facts and being procedural is how conflicts find a resolution. When we abandon the rule of law, we have control of the government to the whim of the moment. This case is not about federal courts “infiltrating” into state affairs. It is about the right of citizens to advocate for access to full participation.

Too many Americans with disabilities face attitudinal, technological, and physical barriers every day. As a person who is blind and experiences these effects, access to an impartial third party is essential. Without another perspective, the ADA has no teeth. We applaud the efforts of representatives Davis and Chew for exercising their civil rights. We call upon Speaker Bedke and President Pro Tem Winder to accept the process and present evidence supporting their solution. Let the process play out. Let the ADA work as intended.
Recognize and Stop Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a big problem in the United States that has escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the National Council on Aging, as many as 5 million seniors are victims of abuse each year, but this crime is significantly under-reported with only 1 in 14 cases turned in to authorities.

Elder abuse is defined as intentional or negligent acts by a caregiver or trusted individual that can cause harm to a vulnerable senior - or a person with a disability. It can take many forms: emotional, physical, sexual, or psychological, and include neglect and self-neglect or even financial exploitation.

How to recognize abuse?

How can you tell if someone is being abused and what can you do to help? A change in general behavior is a universal warning sign. If you notice someone has become very depressed, withdrawn, or gets upset or agitated easily, you need to start asking questions.

Look for suspicious injuries or bruises that can't be explained, broken eyeglasses, weight loss, poor hygiene, unusual behavior, missing money or unexplained withdrawals or bank transfers, sudden credit card debt.

What to do -

The best ways to help is to be in touch and keep the lines of communication open. If you suspect any type of abuse or neglect, report it to your local protective services agency.

The agency will ask what you observed, who was involved, and who they can contact to learn more. You don’t need to prove abuse is occurring, that is up to the professional.

Call Adult Protective Services, the government agency responsible for investigating abuse cases and providing help and guidance. You can call the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 to get an agency contact number in your area. Or visit NCEA.acl.gov/resources/state.aspx.

If the person is in immediate danger, call 911 or the local police for immediate help.
Join us on February 9th as we celebrate National Pizza Day! It’s hard to imagine that before World War II, pizza was little known outside of Italy. This cheesy disc went from a niche cultural meal to the star of the show anywhere it turns up! Let's hear it for pizza!
https://nationaltoday.com/national-pizza-day/

Geeks and laypeople unite! It’s National Clean Out Your Computer Day on February 11th. Give your most used devices some TLC. It’s a perfect time to get some real organizing done if you’ve already given up on your New Years Resolution. Plus, don’t forget cleaning the outside of your devices!
https://nationaltoday.com/national-clean-out-your-computer-day/

National Cabbage Day on February 17th recognizes a delightful garden staple that provides some of the best recipes for the Celtic holidays coming up next month. It’s an excellent day to test your corned beef and cabbage skills alongside other delicious seasonal dishes. Select a head that is firm and dense.
https://nationaldaycalendar.com/national-cabbage-day-february-17/

On February 20, we celebrate National Love Your Pet Day. A day to embrace one special trait that makes us human; our love of our pets! There are many things that differentiate humans from the rest of the animal kingdom but one of the more unusual behaviors is our tendency to keep other animals as pets.
https://nationaltoday.com/national-love-pet-day/

What goes better with coffee than something a little sweet, nutty and possibly oozing with caramel? Yup, you know it! February 21 is National Sticky Bun Day! This delightful confection was originally known as a “Schnecken” and were thought to have been brought by German settler to America.
https://nationaltoday.com/national-sticky-bun-day/
Anyone who has a significant disability with a documented onset before turning 26 years of age is eligible to open an ABLE account.

This means…

> They have a disability with functional limitations documented by a physician with a letter of certification.

Or…

> They receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Or…

They are medically eligible for SSI or SSDI benefits, i.e. certain disabled children or working adults with disabilities who receive Medicaid benefits.

Idaho does not offer an ABLE program at this time. However, eligible Idahoans with disabilities may sign up for an out of state program, if that state offers out of state enrollment. The Idaho State Independent Living Council (SILC) provides information and referral about the ABLE Act; and technical assistance regarding setting up an ABLE savings account in another state.

For answers about ABLE accounts, please call Jami Davis at 208-332-1711 or email at jami.davis@silc.idaho.gov.

Let’s put YOU in control of your finances!
Big News!

Oscar winner Marlee Matlin has joined the team to Executive Produce “Feeling Through” - one of the first films to feature a deaf-blind actor in a leading role. The story of a teen in New York that develops a friendship with a deaf-blind man had first time actor Robert Tarango who is deaf-blind play the lead. The film is screened accompanied by “The Feeling Through Experience,” which includes as many as 50 interpreters and support staff to provide one-on-one accessibility for moviegoers of any level of vision and/or hearing loss.

Jack Jason, Marlee’s longtime interpreter and producing partner has also joined the team alongside Oscar winner Andrew Carlberg as Executive Producer. Matlin is, to date, the only deaf performer to have won an Academy Award. The film will screen online as part of Slamdance Film Festival in February.

TIDBITS!

Categorically left over but no less important

Quotes to make you think!

“Inclusion is not a program. Inclusion is a mindset. It is the way we treat others and the way they treat us. Inclusion is the opportunity to learn together and from one another.”

~ Lisa Friedman, reporter NYT

Durable Medical Goods Exchange

We are not accepting any durable medical goods at this time since it’s difficult to clean them. But we are distributing them. Explain your needs and our trained staff may know the perfect item that will help you!

James Pickard in Moscow 208-883-0523
Valerie Johnson in Idaho Falls 208-529-8610
Tarey Wilder in Boise 208-336-3335 x220
Earlier this month, researchers from University of Washington reported that they’d restored some hand function in six people using an electrical current delivered through patches on their necks. For many with paralysis, the difference between being able to pinch with your thumb and not being able to is hard to understand. That ability would unlock a whole new level of independence. By delivering an electric current to the spinal cord while doing rehab allows patients to accomplish activities they couldn’t achieve with training alone. This turns up the volume, boosting the brain’s signals to move the hand. By using high frequencies they can deliver the current without noticeable pain. There is still more work to do, as scientists don’t understand how these signals transfer information.

Scientists have developed a way to tattoo the skin with a fluid that changes color as certain properties in the blood spike or decline. The different dyes in the fluid react with elements in a person’s metabolic system. The tattoos change colors as the concentrations of pH, glucose, and albumin shifted. Then they developed an app that detected the color of the tattoo and give a reading on what the possible health concerns are. This could become a low cost way to offer a consistent system to track health. For diabetics, the glucose-detecting ink shifts from light green to dark green as concentrations of glucose increase. For Chron’s or celiac disease, it can monitor low albumin levels as a yellow dye shifts to green. A shift from yellow dye to blue a person would know the acidity in their blood is too high. Although still being tested, this could become an easy way for a person to monitor longstanding health concerns. Perhaps it will blur the line between medical offices and tattoo parlors one day!