On July 26, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities. At that signing President Bush stated:

“Three weeks ago we celebrated our nation’s Independence Day. Today we're here to rejoice in and celebrate another ‘Independence Day’, one that is long overdue. With today’s signing of the landmark Americans for Disabilities Act, every man, woman, and child with a disability can now pass through once-closed doors into a bright new era of equality, independence, and freedom.”

The ADA was the world’s first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities. It was a collaborative effort of Democrats, Republicans, the legislative and the executive branches, federal and state agencies, and people with an without disabilities. It signified the adoption of a public policy committed to the removal of a broad range of barriers to the integration of people with disabilities into society.

But the ADA was preceded by a number of significant societal and legal changes that paved the way for better treatment of people with disabilities. Influenced by the goals, rhetoric and tactics of the civil rights movement, the modern disability rights movement has been marked by the increasing prominence of people with disabilities themselves as its leaders and spokespersons. Beginning in 1968, Congress passed a series of laws focused on the goal of integration through the provision of meaningful equal opportunity.

- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, in addition to providing for the establishment of comprehensive programs of vocational rehabilitation and independent living, also created a federal board to coordinate and monitor access to public buildings and transportation, prohibited discrimination in employment by the federal government’s Executive Branch, and required affirmative action in the hiring of people with disabilities by federal agencies and contractors. It also included the key national mandate prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities by recipients of federal financial assistance.

- The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1974 mandated an end to separate and unequal educational opportunities by requiring that all children with disabilities be entitled to a free appropriate public education. Legislation was passed that contained a bill of rights for people with developmental disabilities aimed at promoting the integration of such individuals into the community.
The Fair Housing Act of 1968 was amended in 1988 to add protection for people with disabilities in this critical area.

In 1986 the National Council on Disability (NCD), an independent federal agency, issued a report, Towards Independence, in which the Council examined incentives and disincentives in federal laws towards increasing the independence and full integration of people with disabilities into our society. Among the disincentives to independence the Council identified was the existence of large remaining gaps in our nation’s civil rights coverage for people with disabilities. A principal conclusion of the report was to recommend the adoption of comprehensive civil rights legislation, which became the ADA.

Anyone connected with the disability field knows that we have come a long way from when people with disabilities were ostracized and locked away in institutions for their entire lives.

This pattern of institutionalization fell out of favor for two principal reasons. First, individuals living in these institutions were subjected to abuse and neglect on a massive scale. Second, and even more fundamental, it was not the purpose of these institutions to promote the productivity or independence of those residing in them because the prevailing concept of disability at the time assumed that to attempt to do so was futile. The protective isolation model operated on the assumption that people with disabilities needed protection from the hardships of society. The loss to these individuals and to society of their freedom and contributions cannot be calculated. As a result many individuals who could have contributed to society and lived productively have been isolated and segregated.

In contrast to earlier conceptions of disability, the new paradigm rejects the “medical model” that disability is a deficiency or abnormality. It maintains that people with disabilities are competent and have the rights to govern their lives, and holds that the proper goal of public policy is the creation of meaningful equal opportunity. Core to the movement is the elimination of attitudinal, communication, transportation, policy and physical barriers.

Enactment of the ADA reflects deeply held American ideals that treasure the contributions that individuals can make when free from arbitrary, unjust, or outmoded societal attitudes and practices that prevent the realization of their potential. The ADA reflects a recognition that the surest path to America’s continued vitality, strength and vibrancy is through the full realization of the contributions of all of its citizens.

President Bush’s emphatic directive on that day twenty-five years ago—“let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down” - neatly encapsulated the simple yet long overdue message of the ADA: that millions of Americans with disabilities are full-fledged citizens and as such are entitled to legal protections that ensure them equal opportunity and access to the mainstream of American life. That is all any of us want and it is our duty to ensure that the protections afforded by the ADA continue to help and support everyone with a disability, today and far into the future.

Source: ADAAnniversary.org  
By Jake Jacobs
No matter who you are, or what level of abilities you have, I will bet that every one of us has had someone in our life that made a profound difference to us. Someone who inspired us to work hard; someone who cared deeply about our problems; someone who helped us overcome obstacles and made it possible for us to have a better life.

In this article I want to give special recognition to someone who has been making a difference in countless lives for over 39 years.

Kathy Marlatt, the Deputy of Director at eitas, retired June 30th. She has been my strong right arm for over 5 years here—helping us grow and providing immeasurable support to not only eitas staff, but to the hundreds of individuals we support each day.

Prior to eitas, Kathy worked for 14 years at the Kansas City Regional Office as the Quality Enhancement Supervisor; at Special Neighbors for 10 years as the Executive Director; and as Program Director at Truman Neurological Center for 11 years. The legacy she leaves the developmental disability community is one of care, compassion, and unflagging support to those who need it most. She will be missed, but her contributions will not be forgotten. We wish Kathy the best of luck in her well-deserved retirement!

Jake Jacobs
Executive Director

Jake Jacobs, Executive Director announced that the search committee selected someone to fill the vacancy that Kathy Marlatt leaves. There were several good candidates and a couple outstanding ones, so the decision was difficult. But in looking at the best fit for that position with its new responsibilities, one candidate stood out.

Mark Riley joined the eitas staff on June 1st. Mark has over 20 years experience in the human services field in both mental health and developmental disabilities. He has worked for Comprehensive Mental Health, Triality, and most recently with Easter Seals Midwest. He has been involved in direct services management and development, grant writing, transportation services, and has led several successful CARF accreditations. He worked with many of us in person-centered planning and organizations.

In addition the committee felt he was a good fit for our culture and the ongoing growth and change we anticipate in the future. Mark has a calm, laid-back, and competent demeanor and he focuses on what is best for the people we support and the staff who support them. Mark’s primary responsibilities will be support coordination and transportation.
The Fourth Annual Ability 5K Run, Walk and Roll event was held at Swope Park on Saturday, March 28, 2015 with a record number of 350 people registered. The purpose of the event is twofold: to bring awareness of developmental disabilities during the National Awareness Month of March and to raise funds for the Michael Haseltine Scholarship fund.

This year, in addition to funds received for participating in the race, we also had several great corporate sponsors that worked with us to make the race a success. Those sponsors included Gallagher Metzler, Lathrop & Gage LLP, Heartland Homecare, UMB Bank, Mayer Hoffman McCann P.C., Set-Works, Sonic and Game Time Graphics, Inc.

This year there were great t-shirt designs submitted to the race committee. The first place t-shirt design winner was Johnny Crayton-Walters.

The Michael Haseltine Scholarship was created to honor the memory and work of eitas’ former Deputy Director. Scholarships are awarded each year to Jackson County residents who have a developmental disability and want to further their education beyond high school; or for individuals who want to have a career in working with people who have developmental disabilities.

This year eitas awarded one $1,000 scholarship to Loren Lomax. Loren is a senior at Raytown High School and will be going to the University of Tulsa this fall. She is majoring in Elementary Deaf Education and will work towards a Master’s degree in Special Education.

Not to be forgotten is our invaluable eitas 5K Ability team led by Shannon Maloney-Navarro. The team consists of eitas employees volunteering their time and talents to make this event a great success for all involved.
Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County—eitas

is proud to host the

2015 Gentle Teaching International Conference

“Sharing our Stories — Creating Connections”

September 9—11, 2015

at Westin Crown Center, Kansas City, Missouri

For more information and registration:

GTI2015.com

Gentle Teaching is many things. Gentleness toward others, in spite of what anyone does or does not do, is the critical factor. It is a paradox. Fists are met with hugs. Cursing is met with words of affection and nurturing. spiteful eyes are met with warmth.

Gentleness recognizes that all change is mutual and interwoven. It starts with caregivers and, hopefully, touches those who are most marginalized. Its central focus is to express unconditional love. It is the framework around a psychology of human interdependence. The main idea of gentleness is not to get rid of someone else’s behaviors, but to deepen our own inner feelings of gentleness in the face of violence or disregard.

Gentle Teaching is also a teaching approach. As such, it has four initial teaching purposes—to teach others to feel safe, love, loving and engaged. These do not just happen. They are taught through repeated acts of love. Gentle caregivers learn to use their presence, hands, words, and eyes as their primary teaching tools to uplift and honor others.

Presenters & Participants from Around the World

Fun Place to Be Connections to Make

Memories to Keep People to Remember

Exhibits Video Contest

Inspiring Speakers Stories of Gentleness

Summer 2015
MARK STRINGER
NAMED DIRECTOR FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Missouri Department of Mental Health announced the appointment of Mark Stringer as the new Director for the Department of Mental Health (DMH). Stringer was selected from a field of top mental health professionals in the country. Stringer began his new role and responsibilities with DMH on July 1, 2015 after having worked closely with retired DMH Director Keith Schafer since 2007 and will continue to provide a similar style of leadership.

“The Commission has the utmost confidence in the abilities and talents of Mark Stringer,” said Commissioner Steve Roling, Chair of the Search Committee. “We look forward to the Department’s continued growth and success with current initiatives and we know Mark will strengthen existing relationships and build new ones as well as carry on the innovative thinking of Keith Schafer and the DMH Senior Management Team.”

The Office of the Director, with the advice of the Mental Health Commission, is responsible for the overall operations of the Department of Mental Health, its three clinical divisions and seven support offices, 27 facilities, and central office. The director’s duties include planning, supervising, and evaluating the provision of mental services for Missourians with mental disorders, developmental disabilities and substance abuse.

The department makes services available through state-operated facilities and contract agreements. The state-operated facilities include three psychiatric hospitals, three children’s facilities, six long-term care habilitation centers, 11 regional centers for persons with developmental disabilities, and the central administrative offices.

Eitas Funding Application for 2016

If you are planning on submitting a 2016 Funding Application please adhere to the following dates and guidelines:

July 5, 2015
2016 Funding Applications and Funding Policies and Procedures were posted and became available on-line at the eitas website www.eitas.org

August 14, 2015
Pre-Application Conference Date—An Application Review meeting will be held for agencies/providers wishing to submit a funding request for 2016 and who may have questions and/or who need assistance in finalizing the application.

The meeting will be held on Friday, August 14 from 1:30—2:30 PM at the eitas Training Center located at 8508 Hillcrest, Kansas City, Missouri.

September 4, 2015
The closing date for all 2016 funding applications are due no later than 3:30PM on Friday, September 4, 2015.

All funding applications must be received at the address below on or before the above noted closing date and time.

Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County—eitas
8511 Hillcrest, Suite 300, Kansas City, MO 64138