



Spinal Connection

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Spinal Connection is an official publication of the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission. The Commission was established by Act 311 of 1975. On July 1, 2019, the Commission became a public health program under the Arkansas Department of Health as initiated by the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019 (Act 910).

From the Director ~ Terra Patrom

Figuring out a “New Normal” during a pandemic experience that hasn’t been seen in over a century (since the Spanish Flu) is a new way of life. The question I recently experienced: How will the COVID-19 pandemic create the necessary changes that were elicited and expected to come out of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? It took me a minute to think about such a question - loaded with thoughts, visions, and what ifs.

It is hard to believe it has been 30 years since the signing (July 26, 1990) of the Americans with Disabilities Act. With the signing of the ADA, President George H. W. Bush remarked, “Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.” Yet today, there is more and more exposure (thanks to COVID-19) of the fact that segregation and congregation of people with disabilities has not made as much headway as anticipated.

Let us also not let fall by the wayside that this pandemic has brought to the forefront that people with disabilities still encounter countless acts of discrimination in every facet of life. People with disabilities face numerous social disparities and discrimination in employment, education, societal views, access to healthcare, and lack of public access, to name a few.

Back to the loaded question... When I think about this question, I also think about how much of what we lack in creating change (for what is law) is focused on what I mentioned above - Societal Views. Changing societal views to see the ADA as a civil right (or a matter of social justice) versus an act of charity. This is where we need to

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elicit and expect change. Creating change in societal views is like a storm of emotions. This also requires us to change our own societal views as to how, as people with disabilities, we do or do not encourage the views to be such, as they are. Example: I never had a second thought to having a gentleman ask if he could open a door for me when I was about to walk through it. Now, my mindset is fixed on "No... I got it," in a matter of fact tone.

Problem is - did I just crush this southern gentleman's well-mannered upbringing to open a door for a lady or did my mind just go into overdrive? The thought that "he may think I 'cannot' actually open it on my own" along with my "I'll show you" attitude came across. No, the show of chivalry is not dead. What did show was the disappointment in this gentleman's face (very evident) because of this one stubborn thought. In my head, it felt like I'd hit the autopilot button.

So, back to the loaded question... again. Changing societal views takes more than what the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light. There are two facets: (1) The view of our society to understand there are walls - MANY SHAMEFUL WALLS - that still exist 30 YEARS LATER that need to "come tumbling down." I am not a charity case - I want equal opportunity with barriers that I create myself. I do so with the understanding that 'I' handicap myself and no one else. Isn't that what everyone wants? Isn't that what anyone wants - whether they have a disability or not? A full challenge to see how far each one of us can rise or fall based on what everyone creates as their own handicap. (2) It takes a full understanding of 'societal privilege' from both worlds (those with a disability and those without a disability) to elicit and expect true change to take place. This is when, and only when, we can truly say "what a difference our world makes" and CELEBRATE what the ADA was intended to accomplish!



Credit: ADA National Network (adata.org)

Absentee Voting - 2020 General Election

Don't let COVID-19 keep you from making your voice heard this November! Per guidance from the Governor & Secretary of State, all Arkansans can vote by absentee ballot due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. To receive an absentee ballot, you need to request to have an absentee ballot application sent to you by contacting your County Clerk in the county where you are registered to vote. More info:

<https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/voter-information/absentee-voting>

New Commissioner Appointment

Dr. Patricia Knott was appointed to the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission by Governor Asa Hutchinson on October 23, 2019.

Dr. Knott is a graduate of Xavier University in New Orleans, LA; obtained her MD at Louisiana State Medical Center in New Orleans; and completed her residency at LSU Medical Center in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.

She has practiced medicine for 29 years and has served as the Medical Director for two freestanding Rehabilitation hospitals.

Presently, Dr. Knott practices part-time in active patient care. She now serves on the the Arkansas Tobacco Control Board and the Spinal Cord Commission. She also works full time as a Medical Director for a major insurance company.

Her appointment to the Commission will expire on January 14, 2029.



2020 U.S. Census

The United States Census of 2020 will be the 24th U.S. Census since it began in 1790. The 2020 Census will count every person living in the U.S. and U.S. territories. Participating in the census is required by law. A complete and accurate count is critical for you and your community, because the results of the 2020 Census will affect community funding, congressional representation, and more. You should receive an invitation by mail to complete the 2020 Census. This will be the first year it can be completed online using a unique Census ID (found in your invitation letter).

More Information: <https://2020census.gov/>

The last time a pandemic swept through the world and the United States it was 1918 with the Spanish flu pandemic. We are now living through a new pandemic combined with many complicating factors. I heard one commentator state that the stress we are experiencing is like going through the 1918 pandemic, the 1929 stock market crash, the Andrew Jackson political upheaval, and the 1968 rights movement all at the same time. Therefore, as you and your loved ones deal with this difficult time and with all the extra stress of COVID-19, it is important to take health measures to protect yourself and your loved ones.



When you have a spinal cord injury you are more susceptible to the complications of a COVID-19 infection due an impaired immune system, weakened muscles in the chest and abdomen and weakness of the diaphragm (if C5 and above injury). As a result, you have a less effective cough and so a decreased ability to remove lung secretions by coughing and an impaired ability to resist and fight off infection. Therefore, it is important to take extra precautions to protect yourself from this dangerous virus, while researchers and health professionals develop treatment strategies and, hopefully, a COVID-19 vaccine in the near future.

To protect yourself and others from the COVID-19 virus, everyone needs to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines:

- wash your hands
- practice social distancing (at 6 feet)
- avoid touching your face
- stay home when sick
- wear a mask and eye protection when out in public
- outdoor interaction is significantly safer than indoor interaction

Wheelchair users should be aware that when sitting in a wheelchair your head is lower than people who are standing, so you may be more vulnerable to respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks due to the effect of gravity on droplets.

When out in public keep at least 6 feet from others, when possible; wash your face, in addition to your hands after being in public and after having in-person conversations. Washing with soap and water is most effective but alcohol is convenient and can be carried with you.

Use an antibacterial solution to clean high-touch surfaces, such as wheels, brakes and push rims of a manual wheelchair chair, throughout the day. For a power wheelchair, use an antibacterial solution to

clean the joystick, and any other controls, armrests, tray or any parts your hands touch. If you use other assistive devices, like walkers or canes, wipe them down regularly with antibacterial products.

People with caregivers should consider these tips:

- 👤 ask caregivers to wear a mask when they enter and work with you in your home
- 👤 have caregivers wash their hands when they arrive and each time before touching you
- 👤 ask caregivers to be vigilant about not touching their face or yours
- 👤 have caregivers check their temperature before arrival
- 👤 ask caregivers not to come to your house if they are not well. Symptoms to particularly monitor for are a cough, sore throat, loss of smell/taste or a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

Caregivers and users of ventilators or other respiratory assistive devices should consider these tips:

- 👤 clean and disinfect medical equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions
- 👤 change filters, as suggested by the manufacturer's instructions
- 👤 wash hands before and after working with the ventilator or the person
- 👤 wear a mask or eye shield if they are suctioning secretions

This pandemic will eventually pass. Hopefully we will soon have a vaccine, and we will get back to a more normal routine, but how soon is still unknown. There are concerns about this fall with the combination of flu and a possible resurgence of the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, it will be important to get your flu vaccine as soon as it is available and continue to be as vigilant as possible in keeping your environment clean and healthy. It is in times like this that we learn, grow and become more resilient.

ASCC 2020 Conference Postponed - Save the Date for 2021!

The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission is pleased to announce that it will now hold its biennial spinal cord injury/disability conference on **Thursday, October 21, 2021**. The conference will be held at the Benton Event Center located at 17322 I-30, Benton, AR 72019. More information will follow in a future newsletter. In addition, you can always access the latest available information on our website as well as our Facebook Page.



Our sincere condolences to the friends and family of...

Cora M. Clendenin 01/25/18
Kevin M. Eades 08/26/18
Walter A. Passmore 08/19/19
Ronald D. Ray 09/25/19
Wanda L. Masters 12/31/19
Sally Rodgers 01/01/20
Melinda Borders 01/15/20
Maurice Caldwell 02/11/20
John D. Sides 02/24/20
Martha L. Devlin 02/24/20
Karen L. Hammonds 02/25/20
Sterling Fincher 02/29/20
Stacy Scolley 03/14/20
Rachel A. Lacy 04/11/20
Michael J. Waldorf 04/18/20
Charles W. Yancey 04/29/20
Donald Blake 05/11/20
Lonna C. Murray 05/20/20



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Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission
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We're Going Digital!

NOTICE: This is the last edition of the newsletter that will be automatically printed and mailed. Beginning with the Fall 2020 newsletter, we will publish the newsletter primarily online. However, we will print and mail a copy of the newsletter if you request that we do so! This will take some minor action on your part. If you wish to receive a printed copy of the newsletter, we ask that you call us at 1-800-459-1517 or email us at ascc@arkansas.gov. We will need your name and address by October 1, 2020 in order to have time to print and address all requests. We apologize for any inconvenience and thank you for your attention to this matter.

