

# ADA Legacy Project seeks to preserve, display history

<http://www.accesspress.org/2013/02/ada-legacy-project-seeks-to-preserve-display-history/>

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Anyone who is interested in the history of disability in Minnesota and the United States will enjoy the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Legacy Project. Recently a link to this project and to more Minnesota disability history was posted on the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities website, at [www.mncdd.org](http://www.mncdd.org)

There is a growing awareness of the need to preserve disability history. ADA Legacy Project idea was developed during the ADA25 Summit held in Atlanta, GA in August 2012. The purpose of the project is to focus on the ADA as it has unfolded—and continues to unfold—over time. It is a celebration of the efforts that led up to the signing of the ADA on July 26th, 1990, highlighting its implementation and the changes that have occurred since, and considering how the spirit of the law will improve the future. ADA Legacy Project Now Off and Running.

Many historic resources have already been lost, according to the online publication Independence Today.

“The late Evan Kemp—who introduced President George H.W. Bush at the signing of the ADA, succeeded Deborah Kaplan at the Disability Rights Center and was the first person with a disability to chair the EEOC—had his papers thrown into a trash bin on the street,” the article stated. Also, noted organizer and accessibility activist Roland Sykes’ March 2008 death was followed by the disposal of his papers and the sale of his home, an accessible bus known as “The Big White Cloud.”

Activists don't want other resources to be lost. The project's goal is to make sure that the tangible history of the disability rights movement is collected and remembered.

One key focus of the group in Atlanta centered on the planned National Center for Civil and Human Rights, scheduled to open in May 2014. Disability rights advocates want a permanent disability history exhibit. Center officials initially said no, but have since agreed to a permanent disability rights exhibit with changing content. A committee will work on the exhibit.

“I see the ADA Legacy Project as a way for many, many more people, both disabled and non-disabled, who don't even know that there is a disability rights movement, to realize there is a disability rights movement that is equal in importance to the other extremely impactful movements that started in the 1950s,” said Eleanor Smith of the group Concrete Change. “The black civil rights movement, the second wave of the women's movement, and also the very vivid gay and lesbian movement, were enormous, and they are well known. I see the ADA Legacy Project as a way to make people realize there is an unrecognized movement that is as deep as the other movements for social justice.”

Smith added, “Our historical content is delicate because, unlike other groups of oppressed people, pity is forced upon us. We tend not to tell humiliating personal experiences because we do not want pity. But we must find a way to tell our stories and tell them from a powerful place. And if we cannot tell them from a powerful place, tell them anyway because this movement has a powerful vanguard, and they have our backs.”

To join the ADA Legacy Project, go [www.facebook.com/ADALegacy](http://www.facebook.com/ADALegacy).

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## **Would you like to make history?**

Access Press is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles written by Luther Granquist and other contributors. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota's disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of physical and cognitive disabilities, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Past History Note articles can be found on [www.accesspress.org](http://www.accesspress.org). Contact us at [access@accesspress.org](mailto:access@accesspress.org) or 651-644-2133 if you have questions.

The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, [www.mncdd.org](http://www.mncdd.org) and [www.partnersinpolicymaking.com](http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com)