June 2022 Newsletter

“Remembering The Capital Crawl”

 In March of 1990, Prior to the passing of the American’s With Disabilities Act, approximately 1,000 Civil rights activists, ranging from wheelchair users, to people with sensory disabilities, peacefully protested their frustration towards the inaccessibility of public buildings and other environmental barriers of all kinds.

 This demonstration, organized by ADAPT, was known as the “Capital Crawl.” The demonstration started at the White House and went down Pennsylvania Avenue, ending at the United States Capital Building. Many lifted themselves out of their wheelchairs and lowered themselves to the ground and started to crawl up the steps of the Capital.

One very young person by the name of Jennifer Keelan, who at the time was only 8 years old, joined the adult activists. Her youth and her might attracted the attention of not only the press, but the attention of the legislators as well.

Their mission was to get the American’s with Disabilities Act passed. And passed it did, signed into law by President George H. W. Bush, July 26, 1990.

Jennifer Keelan Chaffins best known for the high spirited civil rights demonstration in front of the United States Capital March of 1990. Born with Cerebral Palsy, at the age of 8 years old was inspired not only by her own life situation, but by a young friend who had died just two months before. “I needed to do the crawl, not only for me, but for others born during my generation.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act has now been a law for 32 years. Jennifer Keelan Chaffins is now 40 years old. She is still a very strong advocate for the disabled. An author, and an inspirational, motivational speaker, engaging groups of people from Kindergarten to students on the college level. She lives in Colorado with her mom, Cynthia. She also represents the brand: “Mobility of Denver,” a company that specializes in adapting vehicles for people with disabilities.

The name of the book written by Jennifer is: “All the Way to the Top,” a children’s book co-written with Annette Bay Pimentel and illustrator Nabi H. Ali.

Based on Jennifer’s true life experience as an eight year civil rights activist with cerebral palsy. Source Books rates it as the “best children’s ADA Book.”

The following interview was conducted with SILO’s own, Justin Ainsworth, a graduate from Stony Brook University with a Masters in Social work. Joining the SILO team as a student intern, after graduation he volunteered and founded: Barrier Busters. In 2015, he was offered a paid position.

Upon graduation from High School, Justin had not planned to go to college, instead was gearing himself to work in the field of construction. Life, however, had a different plan in mind. An accident sometime after high school, resulting in a spinal cord injury, guided his path in a different direction.

Q: Are you a person with a disability, and if so, do you use any specialized equipment to do your work?

A: Yes. I’m a quadriplegic. With no use of legs or hands and only limited use of my arms. I use a hand splint with a stylus to type and use touch screen devices. I use a trackball mouse with my work computer. I’ve used dragon naturally speaking. I also have an earpiece with a handset lifter for my office phone because I can’t pick up the phone independently.

Q:   Please tell me about some of your advocacy efforts.

A: It’s funny. When I got into social work, it wasn’t my plan to be advocating in such a macro way. I envisioned myself doing more one on one work. However, the way it worked out I feel like, as a whole, it can benefit more people, so I’m glad it worked out this way.

Q: Please tell me about Barrier Busters

A: Volunteer advocacy group focused on removing barriers in the Suffolk County community. We look to remove barriers that are physical and attitudinal. If it’s a ramp on a business or refusal of services to a person with a service animal.

Q:   Please tell me about the 5th Annual Self Advocacy Conference being held in October.

A: We will have well known speakers who have been advocating for people with disabilities for a long time. We’ll also be having disability related workshops during the event as well as vendors.

Q:  What are some people/ events who have inspired you?

A: Christopher Reeves, FDR, Glenn Campbell, my former employer at SILO. He was a great role model, a lawyer and one of the first professionals I met with a disability. Brooke Ellison, known best as the first quadriplegic who graduated from Harvard. There was a movie about her directed by Christopher Reeves. I met her at Stony Brook, but knew about her years before when her life story was made a movie. Another great advocate. Colleague.

Q:   What are some things you like to do in your spare time?

A: Concerts

Music festival

Sports fan: Mets, Rangers, Jets, Knicks

Okay, it is Saturday morning, the day after payday, and Beth is on her way to Chase bank. Heading for her local branch, Beth boards her bus. The bank doesn’t open until 9, but she is equipped with her debit card, giving her access to the ATM in the front foyer.

What is so special about this story? Most people make this daunting task at least once or twice a week. What is the need to write about it here?

Our main character is blind. How will she be able to complete her mission?

Beth feels through her pocketbook for her wallet to the section of her wallet where she has her credit, and debit cards. They all feel alike., A letter “P” made with a Perkins braille Writer and A PIECE OF adhesive labeling tape, indicates this is her Penny’s card. Another card has the top right corner cut off. Holding the card with the embossed numbers facing the ceiling and the cut corner in the top right lets her know this is her Chase debit card. Holding it in this way also lets her know the card is in the correct position to insert the card into the scanner, to the right of the bank’s glass doors. Unlocking the door, she steps in. Since she visits the bank a few times a month, she is very familiar with the layout of the bank. The ATM is about 15 feet from the door against the left wall. Using her long white cane, she navigates her way.

Now standing in front of the automated Teller Machine, Beth goes inside her pocketbook again, to grab a pair of ear buds. Her hands quickly scan the machine for a headphone jack, labeled with some braille and a tiny, embossed picture of a headset. Beth plugs her ear buds in and hears an automated voice explaining how to adjust the system volume and rate of speech. Once the voice is adjusted, the machine begins to read the different options on the screen. The numb pad is now used to input her selections, since using the touch screen is difficult to use.

She makes a withdrawal, selecting the amount she wishes to withdraw from her account. The ATM dispenses twenty-dollar bills. Taking the bills from the machine, she now folds them in a certain way and places them into a zippered section of her wallet. If she had selected all fives, Beth would have folded her money in a different manner and placed them in a different section of the wallet. In this way, when she goes to make a purchase, she will know the denomination of the bill she is handing a cashier. She also indicates for the machine to send her a receipt, to her e-mail address. Later, at home, she will use screen reading software, installed on her home computer, to read her transaction.

She smiles to herself. This task would have required the assistance of a few people prior to the passing of the ADA and advances in technology. Many people with disabilities advocated for access to such programming equivalent to what their nondisabled peers have access. Our job, however, does not stop here. It is up to us to make good use of this access and to alert the proper authorities when devices i.e., “talking ATM” machines are not working properly, so generations to come may also try to live as independently and productively as possible, reaching for our greatest potential.

The following recipe was submitted by Kathryn Clark.
It sounds so yummy. I cannot wait to give it a try!

Pistachio Marble Cake

Ingredients

1. 1 box yellow cake mix
2. 1 box pistachio JELL-O instant pudding mix 3.4 oz. Box
3. 4 eggs
4. ¼ cup chocolate syrup
5. 1 cup water
6. ½ cup canola oil
7. 1 teaspoon Almond extract
8. Confectioners sugar

\*Bundt pan needed

Directions

1. Combine and mix all ingredients except for the chocolate syrup.
2. In a separate bowl measure one cup of batter and mix with the ¼ cup chocolate syrup. Put to the side.
3. Spray Bundt pan with a nonstick spray.
4. Add one Layer of batter to the pan.
5. Then add a second layer with the chocolate mix.
6. Then add the last layer with the remaining batter.
7. Now take a spatula and make a zig zag motion to create the marble look.
8. Bake at 350 degrees for 49 minutes.
9. Once cooled top with confectioners sugar.

“Two Thumbs Up” for net flicks production: “Rescued by Ruby”. A heartwarming and inspirational true story about an incorrigible pooch and a young police officer with a learning disability, who’s dream is to be part of the Canine Rescue Unit. If you do not believe in miracles the strength of the human spirit, and the special gifts our furry friends have at the start of this movie, you will certainly think differently by the movie’s end. Check out: “Rescued by Ruby” this summer.