



ADA Live! EPSIODE 17: ADA LEGACY TOUR -- COMING SOON TO A CITY NEAR YOU

Event Date: February 4, 2015

Presenter: Mark Johnson, Shepherd Center and ADA Legacy Project

Host: Pamela Williamson, Southeast ADA Center

VOICE OVER ANNOUNCER: Blog Talk Radio. (Music) Welcome to WADA ADA Live! Talk Radio, brought to you by Southeast ADA Center, your leader for information, training and guidance on the Americans with Disabilities Act. And here's your host.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Good afternoon, and welcome to WADA ADA Live. On behalf of the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, and the ADA National Network, we welcome you to the 17th episode of ADA Live. My name is PAMELA Williamson, and I am the Project Director for the Southeast ADA Center. Our guest today is Mark Johnson, chair of the ADA Legacy Project and Director of Advocacy at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Our topic today is the ADA Legacy Project.

ADA Live listening audience, you may submit your questions about the ADA Legacy Project at any time on ADALive.org. Mark, welcome to our show!

MARK JOHNSON: Well, Pam, I want to thank you for this opportunity to share with your listeners where we are and what the opportunities are.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Fantastic. The ADA National Network, in particular the Southeast ADA Center, is very pleased to be a partner of the ADA Legacy Project, but we would like you to tell our listeners more about the project and the Disability Rights Center.

MARK JOHNSON: Well, you know, some of your listeners may have remembered a documentary called "Lives Worth Living." It was a documentary of the Disability Rights Movement from 1968 to the signing of ADA in 1990. And, ultimately, that documentary

wound up on public broadcasting, but before then we screened the documentary here in Atlanta at the Shepherd Center. And I was talking to the producer and the director and talking – where did you get your content? Was it hard to find? And, you know, just what is your experience? They said, well, you know, the Disability Rights Movement is a story that still hasn't been heard by many people. And it was a little difficult to find some content. And so I made a pledge at that time to kind of bring people together to talk about how could the movement collectively do a better job of preserving our history. I mean, you can't tell the story if you don't preserve the content. And so in August of 2012 we had some people from around the country, some were activists, some were organizational reps, some government reps, some librarians, some people that make documentaries, some curators of museums and we began to talk about, you know, how who is already doing good stuff and how might we collectively do a better job, once again, of preserving the content related to the Disability Rights Movement so more and more people in the future could learn about the movement.

Especially, you know, new folks, folks that are born with disabilities or acquire disabilities -- but they can learn something about their roots. And so, we had this great conversation and that turned into a concept that ultimately turned into the ADA Legacy Project. And so in 2013, we hit the ground running. Not just talking about, you know, how do we do a better job and how do we do it who do we do that with, preserving history? But, hey, we have this significant anniversary, meaning this year, July 26th being the 25th anniversary of ADA, and how might we use that date as a call to action and sense of urgency. So quickly, the project turned into three major components, you know, preservation activity, celebration activities and education activities. As you mentioned, one of the first networks to step up and say, hey, we want to support that and we believe in that, we want to help do that -- was the National ADA Network. So that's kind of a little bit kind of it was from a screening of a documentary to a gathering, a conversation that became a concept, that became a project. And now, we have not just the ADA Network as a partner, but now we have 21 other partners that are all working on one or more of those items I mentioned and actual anniversary activities.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Mark, that's so exciting to hear about the concept being born into this project that and with the word legacy we always know that that's something we want to carry forward. It's so exciting to hear about.

Now, I understand that one of the key parts at this point of the Legacy Project is the Legacy Tour that is occurring. Can you tell us more about that, and where the tour has been so far?

MARK JOHNSON: Sure. You know, probably some of your listeners may remember, but back when before the ADA Amendments Act became a law, a guy named Jim Ward

and his family in one RV [i.e., recreational vehicle] and Tom Olin in another RV did the Road to Freedom tour and went around the country for a year educating people about the ADA and the need to pass the ADA Amendments Act. And when that finished, the vehicle was stored in Sacramento, California, and people kind of lost track of it. And so one of our partners became the Disability Rights Center, which is right now based in Oregon.

And they wanted to purchase the vehicle, you know, get it back on the road and help build momentum toward the actual ADA anniversary. So last July, we kicked off the ADA Legacy Tour in Houston, one is a lot of reasons, George Bush is from there. Lex Freeden, who was, at that time, from the National Council on the Handicapped and was instrumental in getting toward independence written and recommend that we need a comprehensive civil rights act and also instrumental in getting the original draft of ADA done. So we kicked it off in Houston. And last year we traveled 12,000 miles and we went through 18 states.

We start up again unofficially at the end of this month and officially the first week in March to, once again, go to over 40 cities and many more states building toward the actual anniversary. Right now the tour is scheduled to arrive in D.C. around 11:00 on July 26th, which is the anniversary at the American History Museum and then to the Kennedy Center that evening for a ADA 25 celebration event. So, you know, it's been on the road, it's getting back on the road, there's you can follow it on Twitter or Facebook or even check out the website and see it. But that's kind of how the whole thing's come together. It wasn't an idea at the first gathering, it was a group came to us and said, hey, we know where this old vehicle is, we would like to be part of the anniversary. Why don't we hit the road a year out and build toward the actual anniversary? We said, let's partner up and make it happen.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Well, it sounds like it's been quite an adventure so far. Can you give people the website so that they can look up your Twitter and Facebook accounts?

MARK JOHNSON: Yeah. It's ADAlegacy.com. You can do dot org, net, whatever, but ADAlegacy.com. And that will take you to the home page and then there's a section on the top right over there where you click where it says ADA 25 and tour. And it lists the cities it's been to, some of the images and some of the stories about past stops and then it lists out all the next stops, you know, once again, with one actually at ATIA in Orlando at the end of this month and officially starting in Austin, Texas, the first week in March. But all the cities are there, I know that the networks ADA Network's involved in the National ADA Symposium, you know, in May, and that's one of the stops. So there

are, like I say, 40 plus stops right now that we're working with different host committees and planning different activities.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: And you're right, the ADA National Network is a part of one of the stops. It will be in Atlanta the week of May 10th for the ADA Symposium, so we are very excited about that.

Mark, can you describe the ADA bus? Tell us more about it. What does it look like? What can people expect when they get there? Give us that visual.

MARK JOHNSON: The visual is it's a 37-foot RV, also has a trailer on the back, so total length it's about 50 feet. There are images, pictures wrapped around the RV. You know, both of pre-ADA and the signing of the ADA. The actual website on the vehicle is from that tour we talked about eight years ago, Road to Freedom. You know, there's obviously part of the design is like almost like American flag. So it's pictures of pre ADA and passage of ADA. On the trailer, which is kind of interesting, on back of the trailer it's a chalkboard. And so literally when, for example, like when it went through Louisville, Kentucky, for a gas stop, the Center for Accessible Living in Louisville, Kentucky, filled it up, so we were able to put "thank you" you know, a thank you note on the back. When it was in Albuquerque there was a young person with a disability out there who was quite artistic, and she drew an image of Justin Dart onto the chalkboard. So the message on the chalkboard, which is on the back of the trailer, changes, you know, stop to stop.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: So you have a rolling billboard on the back of the trailer.

MARK JOHNSON: Right. Big old chalkboard like everybody used to seeing in school and we carry around the materials for it and say, hey, you want to write something on it? Do you want to draw something on it and that's what people are doing.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: That is great. That's an awesome way to get people involved too, I love it!

Well, you mentioned Tom Olin earlier. What is his connection to the project? We know he's driving the bus, but tell us a little bit more about Tom and his involvement.

MARK JOHNSON: Tom, you know, has been taking pictures of the movement for probably 40 years. In fact, his entire collection of photos just got transferred from Marquette University to the University of Toledo in Ohio. And only a handful of the photos right now are digitized or even accessible to our community for its usage. So Tom is first and foremost, he's a nice person, good person, has some good activist progressive roots, but he's a photographer. And so when he did this original Road to Freedom tour about eight years ago, he was wondering if there would ever be an

opportunity for him to hit the road. And some of this whole the Road to Freedom tour and this tour are all inspired by - as many of your listeners may remember - when Justin and Yoshiko Dart traveled around the country a couple times back and forth to gather stories about discrimination and present those journals that people took the time to create as part of the testimony of why an ADA was needed.

So the original Road to Freedom and this tour are inspired some by the Darts. Tom has been taking pictures of the movement, like I say, for 40-plus years, and some of those images are on the website. Some of those images are on the commemorative publication. And you're beginning to see more and more of those images. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights -- which opened up here in Atlanta back in June -- has some of those images.

So a lot of Tom's work is now finally finding its way to mainstream where people are seeing it. So he took literally a year off starting last July to be the primary driver of the vehicle. You know, he left his job in Milwaukee and has been in the vehicle since. And in some cases what I mean is literally in the vehicle. Because, you know, he's driving it, living in it, trailer parking it, jumping in hotels, but that's who Tom is, just a good person and a photographer whose work is finally finding its way in front of many more audiences.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Mark, it's so great to hear about Tom and his work and the fact that it's now getting out into the public, so I am really excited about that. ADA Live listening audience, if you have a question about the ADA Legacy Project, you can submit it at any time at our online forum at ADALive.org. And now, a word from our sponsors.

VOICE OVER ANNOUNCER: The mission of the ADA Legacy Project is to preserve the history of the Disability Rights Movement. Celebrate its milestones and educate the public and future generations of advocates. The project projects over 250 ADA 25 events will occur this year. Over 40 projects involve the ADA Legacy Tour. Disability Rights Center, a project partner, is providing support for the tour. To learn more about the ADA Legacy Project and its partners, visit www.ADAlegacy.com.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: ADA Live listening audience, welcome back.

Mark, we spoke earlier about the partners that are working with the project, and I believe you said there were currently 21 partners. I know that, again, that the ADA National Network is one of those partners. Who are some of the other project partners and where can we learn more about them?

MARK JOHNSON: First of all, they're all listed on the website. If you go to the bottom of the page, you know, where you see the preserve, celebrate, and educate headings, under each of those is an alphabetical listing of the partners under each of those categories. There's preservation partners, there's celebrate partners and there's educate partners. Early on, obviously, there was you guys in the ADA Network as a strategic partner. One of the other early on strategic partners was Abilities Expo. Some of you are aware of that show that goes to six or more cities around the country, and last year they hosted the tour in three of those cities, both Houston, Boston, and San Jose.

One of the other early on partners was a group some of you may actually had the calendar, may have given money to her kick starter campaign, but there's a lawyer out in Colorado who was an attorney for the Department of Justice when ADA passed, and she now works for the Department of Ed [i.e., Education] in the regional office in Colorado. And but she's a photographer as well. And she wanted to, you know, take pictures of images that show the progress. Tom - obviously the bulk of Tom's work is about the past. And she wanted to take pictures of the present to show what difference the ADA had made.

Well, the project itself has not got a lot of money and we're not a grant making entity, but we are happy to bring attention to the work that people are doing and try to promote them. So she created a kick starter campaign, and it was successful, and as one of her contributors, I don't know, I just got her calendar, but her ultimate goal is a coffee table book that would be available by July of this year.

Another strategic partner is Beacon Press. They hired Lennard Davis out of Illinois to write a 25th Anniversary of ADA book. It will be available this July. The Minnesota Council on Developmental Disabilities was an early partner. And their website is loaded with probably a million plus dollars-worth of disability rights content, but it was kind of lost in their website. So they repurposed it, repackaged it, and you can literally go into their website and you can starting 12 months out from, meaning last July, you can learn about what was happening that led to the passage of ADA every month. What hearing, what newspaper articles, you know, what activities, what actions. And it's a countdown. So it's 12, 11, 10, 9 so it's literally a countdown, literally to the anniversary.

So, like I said, counting y'all, there are 22 strategic partners, each are doing a piece. Whether it's helping support the tour directly, whether it's, you know, doing a book, whether it's doing a, for example, a journal, the Society on Disability Studies does an annual academic journal anyway, and so it was pretty much a no brainer for this year's journal, which will be out late spring, to focus on ADA. And not just the past, but the focus of that journal will be on the past, present, and the future. So all those partners

are listed there, you know, their logo is there, you can click on them and you can contact them directly to find out just what they're doing, and there are people already trying to schedule the ADA image photo exhibit, there are people out there already scheduling book signings of the book.

So all those partners out there, you know, are doing what they're doing and what we're trying to do at the Legacy Project, we're a little overwhelmed and not staffed up much, but just trying to keep that content up on the website so people understand just how much is going on.

I mean, it's as you mentioned earlier, the ADA Symposium here in Atlanta in May and there's also the Society on Disability Studies conference here in June. You know, so there are some also conference strategic partners, you know, so there's a lot going on. A lot going on and the best place to find the information is the website.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Excellent. Well, if there's still time for someone someone or an organization to become a partner, do they and what are the criteria?

MARK JOHNSON: The first of all, it's not too late. Second of all, is the criteria keeps evolving. Basically it's people who are doing something related to the ADA and to the anniversary. Just last week well, actually for a couple months, but just last week we pulled the trigger on a partnership between us and it's called Music to Life. And Music to Life, some of your listeners are as old as I am so they probably remember Peter, Paul, and Mary. Well, Peter and his daughter Liz started a nonprofit called Music to Life, and what Music to Life does is uses music to engage people in social change. And they wanted to be involved in the anniversary. So we talked to them for months until we can kind of figure out just what how could we support each other. And they recently got a seed grant to start their initiative related to the ADA 25.

So it's not too late. There is some criteria on the website. But what we do once we kind of talk to people and figure out what does it look like, then we then put your logo up and put a brief description.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: So there's obviously many ways that organizations or people can partner, maybe financially or services in various ways and they need to be able to talk to someone about what that would look like, right?

MARK JOHNSON: Right. You know, there's a couple links on there, either the Chris Vincent [who] is coordinating this or myself to talk it through. Sometimes it takes talking it through. Some people don't understand, you know, the history of the project, they don't understand what's already being done. You know, all of us have ideas greater than sliced bread, but guess what, bread has already been, you know, invented. And so

sometimes people are humbled by what's already going on and the synergy going on. So sometimes people who have an idea just join someone who's already implementing that idea. And so sometimes that initial conversation is already happening. Do you want to be involved?

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: That sounds great. And ADA Live listening audience, I do encourage any of you that want to partner with the ADA Legacy Project to visit the website at ADAlegacy.com. Mark, I understand that the project is also encouraging people to tell their stories. But what are you looking for and how can people share their stories?

MARK JOHNSON: There's actually a section on there that needs a lot more information, but when you go to the Legacy website, at the top again where also that ADA 25 and tour link are, there's a link there called "get involved." And when you click that on you're going to see four choices. You're going to see one choice that allows you to see what may be going on in your state. And right now we don't literally have the bandwidth to call around and find out, so what we're doing is people are beginning to contact us and saying hey, for example, I was on the phone more recently with some partners in North Carolina and before that in South Carolina, and right now if you click on North Carolina and South Carolina, you wouldn't think anything was going on. Well, there's a lot going on related to the anniversary. So the idea ultimately is to have more of that and we're doing that some with the ADA Network, to get some of the that content up there, meaning what we hope ultimately is that every ADA 25 group out there is listed. So that if you're not already part of it, you know how to become part of it.

And so you can click on the calendar and see some of the events coming up. Some of the tour dates. Some of the conference dates. Some of the release of information dates. There is also a section that says "stories." And so, you know there was a group out in California at the San Jose stop that, you know, it was like because of the ADA and people would tell their story.

There's I just got an article off the Disability.gov website, a blog post of where a gentleman was working with his public library and the Aging Disability Resource Center and some other disability groups in the community to identify 25, you know, things that make the world more accessible. And we're not just talking about ramps, as he says.

And so we're just running across some of this activity and trying to bring it into the website so people can say I don't need to reinvent the wheel, I can maybe have my own version of the wheel in my own community, but there are ways to engage by hitting that "get involved." I think also, as you're well aware, there's ways to just call your local ADA center and say, hey, what's you know if anything is going on in my town or my state?

Who should I call? You know, or we hope people call y'all and call us and just say, hey, that is what we're doing, please list us.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: And, Mark, that's a great segue because we are one of the ways that our Center, the Southeast ADA Center is partnering with the ADA Legacy Project is we are hosting ADA Anniversary.org, which is an ADA Anniversary Toolkit. And we're encouraging people to put all of their events online and also to use that toolkit in order to be able to promote their ADA 25 event. So this is a way, this is just one of the highlights yet another way we're partnering and giving people the opportunity to tell their stories and be involved in the community. Are there any other?

MARK JOHNSON: Well, that's the the beauty is even like the Kennedy Center event on the 26th and other events that will be in D.C. is you don't have to be in D.C. for the anniversary. If you want to, great. If you're not doing something in your community, you've already done something in your community, great. But a lot of stuff is going to be live streamed as well. So there are people already saying tell me what's going to be live streamed, I might host a little party at my house. You know? I'll invite my friends over and we'll enjoy that performance or listen to that speech or whatever.

So there's really there's no in my mind there's no reason why anybody should not be part of this can't be part of this anniversary. There's just no reason.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: I agree. There are multiple avenues and multiple ways to do it.

Now

MARK JOHNSON: People have been doing stuff, that's the good thing about it, some of this is not new. Your ADAanniversary.org website has been around for several years, and, you know, just last – in 2014 I know I enjoyed going and seeing what some of the communities were planning. And so it's really this is a unique opportunity because it's 25th, but what we obviously hope is you go back to that word legacy and saying, hey, you know, it's not an end, you know, it's just making it more robust for the future.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Exactly. Exactly. Well, at this time we're going to pause for a word from our sponsors.

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the ADA National Network and serves eight states in the Southeast region. For answers to your ADA questions, contact the ADA National Network at 1-800-949-4232.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Mark, we've talked about many of the three parts of the ADA Legacy Project, and we are really interested in the mission to educate the public and future generations of advocates. Can you talk more about what some people are doing to educate our next generation?

MARK JOHNSON: Yeah, if we go back to, you know, the -- a couple things: One is obviously one of our partners is Allison Gilkey and Eric Neudel, they're the producer and director of "Lives Worth Living," through a grant they're out of Boston. And through a grant they were able to take that documentary and they were able to turn it into two 15-minute documentaries and develop a school-aged curriculum. So right now if a community wanted to get that documentary and that curriculum over to the schoolteacher this spring so they could begin to help the kids, and the teachers, and the parents, and the whole school understand the anniversary coming up. In fact, it's the 40th anniversary of IDEA; it's the 50th anniversary of Medicaid and Medicare. So there's a number of significant anniversaries occurring this year. So the opportunities, you know, to educate the public and young advocates is staring us right in the face.

One of our partners is called Six by Fifteen. That's if you if you spell it out, it's just sixbyfifteen.org. What that is, is a group of national organizations last July released a statement saying here are six goals that we would like to believe our country can accomplish by the end of 2015. So once again, you know, the conversation, gosh, back in, seems so long ago now, at the initial gathering was about the past. And we quickly got into the present and now people are talking about the future, meaning we all know that ADA hasn't done all it could do, nor is it done, you know, accomplishing what it's going to accomplish. So we still have a lot of work ahead of us. But we definitely have more tools. Some of those tools are available to the Legacy website and some of those tools are available to centers like yours. So, you know, the tour itself is educating some people, the Six by Fifteen campaign is educating some people. You know, shows like this are educating some people. There's another show called "Disability Matters" that some of your listeners may be aware of that Joyce Bender out of Pittsburgh does on a weekly basis. There's some webinars going on. There's a lot of opportunities, you know, where people don't have to spend a lot of money to access these materials or these opportunities, nor these people.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Well, Mark, as we get ready to wrap up for today, if you could sum it up in one short phrase, why is it so important to get the word out about the ADA Legacy Project and ADA 25?

MARK JOHNSON: Yeah, it's pretty basic to me. I mean, you know, if we can we can't let people, you know, do it for us. If we're going to wait around and have people do it for us, then we get what we deserve.

So when I think about, you know, what I you know, it's important to me, and so I'm going to make it important. So I can only encourage other listeners to say it's important to them and they want to make it important. And it would only be as big as we want to make it. Meaning the anniversary can just slide by and your community might not even, you know, know there was an anniversary. But, you know, I lived before moving to the suburbs of Atlanta, I lived in a small community, and I knew when I I could go over to their Monday city council and I could sign up for public comment. And if I was still living in that small community or whatever sized community, I'd go to city council and go by the way, my name is, and don't know if anybody knows the anniversary is coming up, but it is, and want to know what how this city wants to work with me to commemorate that anniversary. So I guess that's more than one word, but the bottom line is this anniversary we want to be as big as we want it, and we have to be the ones that make it big.

PAMELA WILLIAMSON: Well, Mark, I fully agree with you, and it's important to me, as well as the ADA the Southeast ADA Center and ADA National Network.

So and as we get ready to wrap up today, I want to emphasize again that we are the ADA Legacy Project is about preserving the past, celebrating and educating. And it's so very important that we remember this.

And, Mark, I want to thank you for your time today and in joining us for ADA Live, and I want to thank our ADA Live listening audience. The Southeast ADA Center is very grateful for your support and participation in our ADA Live broadcast.

Also, remember you may submit questions about any of our topics by going to ADALive.org. If you have any questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact your regional ADA center at 1 800 949 4232. Again, that's 1 800 949 4232. All calls are free and confidential.

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