

## DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH

This month we are celebrating Disability Pride Month! By March 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) had made significant progress on its way to becoming law. It had already passed the Senate by a 76-8 vote months earlier, and it had powerful bipartisan sponsors and supporters in both the House and the Senate. However, it had stalled in the House, grinding its way through several committees. Given other abandonments of legal recognition of the civil rights of people with disabilities, people within the disability community were not entirely optimistic that things would work out well in the end.

The uncertain future of the ADA legislation explains why Capitol Hill became the setting for one of American history's most extraordinary public protests – why 60 people with disabilities cast aside their wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers to crawl or drag themselves, step by step, up the 78 marble stairs of the Capitol's West Front on **March 12, 1990**.

The Capitol Crawl, as the protest came to be known, was intended to bring to light the obstacles, physical and social, that people with disabilities faced daily in their efforts just to proceed with their lives.

By openly illustrating the struggles that people in the disabilities community faced, the protesters hoped to spur Congress to pass the ADA and protect the civil rights of people with disabilities. Their actions served as a harsh reminder of the pressing need for the ADA, which was later signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on **July 26, 1990**. July is now recognized as Disability Pride Month in celebration of this cornerstone moment in disability justice in the US.



**On May 1, 2024**, another historic moment occurred. Disability advocates from across the Commonwealth crawled up the front steps of the Capitol. The goal: to make a statement that if the front doors are open to the public then the entrance must be accessible. Advocates tossed their mobility devices and crawled the 67 steps to the front doors, taking their demands to senate and representatives offices inside the building.

They discussed three things: affordable accessible integrated housing, accessible transportation, and home and community-based services ([Disability Pride PA](#)).



*Disability Pride Month continued*

## Community Events

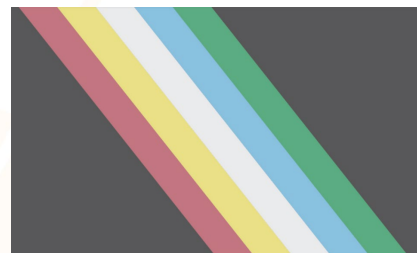
You can follow the Disability Pride PA Instagram account for updates and more information about events across the region: [DisabilityPridePA Instagram](#)

**Carnegie Public Library** has cultivated an excellent list of community resources and library services that celebrate and support individuals with disabilities this month and all year long. [Follow this link](#) to learn more about events at local libraries including: Braille Lessons for Children, Sensory Tools, 504/IEP Education for Caregivers, Paralympics Activities, and even an accessible movie showing.

## How can I be an Ally at work?

To be a better ally year-round, one needs to first be aware of a form of often [unconscious bias](#) called ableism. [Ableism](#) is valuing certain types of bodies, brains, forms of communication, and certain ways of being over others. As a society we are inherently ableist, as our systems and environment have been created for non-disabled bodies and [neurotypical](#) minds. Individually, many people are not even aware of the ableist biases they hold. Here are a few ways ableism manifests:

1. **Discrimination in hiring:** A company may avoid hiring people with visible disabilities due to unfounded assumptions about their abilities.
2. **Inappropriate language or jokes:** This takes the form of making insulting remarks about disability or using it as a negative metaphor. For example, phrases like "lame excuse," "retarded," or "insane" do this, as well as people complaining about accommodations in public spaces.
3. **Microaggressions:** This could look like speaking to a coworker in a patronizing tone or offering unnecessary help. Statements like "You're so brave and inspiring for doing your job despite your disability" presume that living and working with a disability is first and foremost a struggle or pitiable.





*Disability Pride Month continued*

Keryn Seal, a Paralympian and sales professional, recently shared what people can do to start being better allies to their disabled colleagues at work:

- **Recognize the difference between the medical and social model of disability.** “We still hear people talk about disability as something to overcome medically. The social model points to society being the barrier to the disabled becoming fully participating and contributing members of our society,” Seal says.
- **Mind your language.** “We hear language of somebody ‘suffering with’ or ‘battling against’ blindness or cerebral palsy, or ‘wheelchair bound.’ This language permeates what people underlyingly think about disabled people, as if our disability is something to overcome ourselves.”
- **Don’t be afraid to use the word “disabled.”** “Something that grinds my gears is when people are scared to use the word disabled. We need to take that word back, as it’s a part of a person’s identity. We often hear people say ‘differently abled’ or ‘superhuman.’ Disabled is fine. It’s a term we are comfortable with.”
- **Ask how you can help.** “I had a job interview recently where the interviewers asked me if there was anything they could do to make the interview experience easier or more accessible,” Seal says. “Something as simple as somebody asking a question like that is a huge step.”

**More resources:**

- [The 1990 Capital Crawl](#) (1m 32s video)
- [How the ADA Changed the Built World](#) (11m 55s video)
- [Disability Awareness: How do you want to be identified?](#) (1m 30s video) - Ways to address disabled folks.
- [Disability stories](#) (28m 49s video) - Living with a disability has its tough times... but lots of lighter moments too. From interviews with people all over New Zealand; this “best moments” compilation showcases frank and funny conversations and reveal the truth about disability.
- [Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution](#) (1hr 48 min film) - Looking for a more in-depth history? Try this Netflix documentary.
- [Included: The Disability Equity Podcast](#)
- [Invisible Disabilities](#) - Explore personal stories, resources, and education about disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as fibromyalgia, learning disorders, and Crohn’s disease.