

**DISability to Ability:  
25 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act**

A Documentary by Sean Madden

TITLE:                                DISABILITY TO ABILITY: 25 YEARS OF THE  
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

MUSIC HITS...

FADE INTO VIDEO OF SPENCER BLOMQUIST IN DAILY MORNING ROUTINE:  
EATING, BRUSHING TEETH WITH ASSISTANCE OF NURSE

NARRATION BEGINS:

Spencer Blomquist is not your ordinary, average University of West Florida student. He goes to class, completes projects and takes exams like any other student. He plans to graduate next year with his degree in Comprehensive Marketing. But Spencer spends most of his day in a wheelchair, and needs almost constant physical assistance.

00:25

SOT: voice of: SPENCER BLOMQUIST – SENIOR AT UWF

“I am quadriplegic, which means I have limited use of all my extremities, including arms and legs. My day to day activities have to be performed by a nurse or someone like that. Just simple things like waking up in the morning and brushing your teeth requires assistance. Everything from brushing my teeth to eating breakfast to drinking something, requires someone’s help as I don’t have the use of my hands.”

NAT SND BREAK: VIDEO OF SPENCER IN WHEELCHAIR OUTSIDE HIS APARTMENT,  
ROLLING DOWN SIDEWALK, BEING LOADED INTO VEHICLE WITH USE OF  
WHEELCHAIR LIFT.

01:15

NARRATION:

Spencer’s remarkable accomplishments would not be possible without the Americans  
with Disabilities Act.

01:30

GRAPHIC 1 STILL PHOTO OF ADA SIGNING

The A-D-A was enacted in 1990 and signed into law by President George H.W. Bush. According to the A-D-A National Network's website, the purpose of the A-D-A is "to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else."

01:43

GRAPHIC 2 – STILL PHOTO OF CARL ODHNER

Carl Odhner, who was stricken with polio as a child and spent most of his life in a wheelchair, worked his whole life to fight for the civil rights of people with disabilities, and compared this struggle as "important to people with disabilities as the Civil Rights Act of the 1960s was to people with color."

02:02

B- ROLL VIDEO OF CARL ODHNER FROM WMFZ, WITH PHOTO MONTAGE OF ODHNER BEFORE/AFTER ADA SIGNING

Carl Odhner was sent to an institution and banned from attending public school because he was stuck in a wheelchair. Throughout their lives, Carl was unable to receive many rights and freedoms that most Americans had because of his disabilities. After many years, he and his wife were able to convince the US Congress to pass the ADA in 1990, and went on to help those with disabilities throughout the country.

2:39

B- ROLL VIDEO FROM WMFZ OF "ROLL ON THE MALL" FOOTAGE AND LEHIGH VALLEY CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

After the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, many disabled people across the country gained benefits and could live their lives among the public normally for the first time. Where there were once only mountainous staircases that were impossible for a person in a

wheelchair to traverse, there were now also ramps and elevators to help them reach new heights. Today, the impact of the A-D-A can be seen throughout American Society.

3:04

SOT: voice and video of: SPENCER BLOMQUIST- SENIOR AT UWF

“There are lots of things we take for granted here in the United States, such as the curbs. As an example, we were in the Bahamas this one time, and went about a mile down this sidewalk, and when we got to the end, there was no way for me to get off the sidewalk. There was about a foot drop off at the end, so we had to go back a mile and come all the way back around, for something as simple as there being no ramp on the curb. I wasn’t able to use the bathrooms in some of these other countries. Certain things you take for granted on a day-to-day basis; the ADA kind of sets the guidelines so I can be accommodated just like anyone else would.”

4:13

The ADA sets basic standards for government buildings, as well as for both public and private facilities with public access so they are all accessible to people with disabilities. It also protects those with disabilities from discrimination, so they will have access to the same job opportunities and benefits available to everyone else.

SOT: voice and video of MICHELLE HAYES- COORDINATOR FOR TESTING AND ACCOMMODATIONS, UWF STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

“We are commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and since then many barriers have been broken down, and many opportunities have been afforded to persons with disabilities, for example structural enhancements such as flat curves on sidewalks, we’ve come a long way to giving access to people in wheelchairs, or for those with blindness, now we have the flat-slope curves, or the bump-dots to alert those with disabilities know they are at a curb or about to cross a street.”

5:04

Recently, the A-D-A law has been expanded to include new regulations to assist those with disabilities.

SOT: voice and video of MICHELLE HAYES- COORDINATOR FOR TESTING AND ACCOMMODATIONS, UWF STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

“This ranges from new legislation that was not part of the original ADA act, to support those with disabilities in ensuring that information is accessible on screen readers, or requiring different assistive technology that was not part of the original act. We also now have requirements now for structures, for example, requirements for the width of doors or desks to make them accessible for people in wheelchairs.”

5:56

#### STILL SHOT OF UWF STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

At the University of West Florida, the Student Disability Resource Center not only ensures compliance with ADA standards in the school’s facilities, they provide service and support to UWF students, faculty and staff members with many types of disabilities.

6:16

#### SOT: voice and video of SYLVIA PATTERSON - COORDINATOR FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT INITIATIVES

“Students most of the time need an accommodation in the academic area, when they are in school. They might need a note-taker, or a sign-language interpreter. With faculty and staff, they might need an accommodation to help them in performing the essential functions of their job.”

6:39

#### SOT: voice and video of SPENCER BLOMQUIST- SENIOR AT UWF

“The Student Disability Resource Center, first and foremost, contact all my instructors, and kind of instruct the instructors on types of procedures that should be in place, like needing additional time for some activities. They are kind of the liaison for the extra requirements I might need as a student, whether it be additional time, or the technology I might need to take a test, or do homework, or anything like that. The main thing is informing the instructors, educating the instructors on the extent of my disability and what that entails, to enable me to accomplish the same things that everyone else would, such as projects, tests.”

7:15

Not all disabilities are as obvious as Spencer Blomquist’s. Many Americans with disabilities, including those at UWF, don’t look any different than anyone else. Many university students, such as Dillon Maddox, live their lives in school with a condition not noticeable at a first glance.

08:03

SOT: voice and video of DILLON MADDOX – JUNIOR AT UWF

“Technically, I have ADD and ADHD, which I guess plays into that, at least from all the analyses I’ve done, no one has given me a direct name, like I’m not dyslexic or that kind of stuff. I have Asperger’s, but that doesn’t necessarily pertain to learning disabilities as much as just a social kind of thing. My disability doesn’t necessarily have a name, but I’ve been in exceptional education since the third grade, so it’s been there for almost the entirety of my schooling career.”

8:26

Many students live in plain sight with disabilities, yet are not distinguishable in public.

This brings me to my own story, to see me around campus, no one would know that I’m disabled. That is, even if anyone would see me.

SOT: voice and video of SEAN MADDEN – JUNIOR AT UWF

“I basically have extreme social phobia, and dislike being around strangers, and oftentimes people I know, as well. I go out of my way to avoid interacting with people most of the time. In the situation where I do interact with someone, I’m often incredibly awkward and unpleasant to be around, often not knowing what to say or how to interact. I sometimes see myself as a bother to other people, so that may be one of the key factors behind it. I’m also clinically diagnosed with depression, which is quite a combo when stacked with Asperger’s. Occasionally, I will feel unmotivated, lethargic, or just utterly useless in the world around me, which was a big issue for me in the past, and still comes up every now and then today.”

9:11

Students with less visible disabilities like Dillon and myself also receive support and help from the S-D-R-C to help them be successful in the classroom.

SOT: voice and video of DILLON MADDOX – JUNIOR AT UWF

“Basically giving me the ability to have extra time on tests, so I can show and prove that I know this material, and that I’m smart, and if I didn’t have this extra time, it would just be an arbitrary cut off at that point. It’s like I know all this information, I just don’t have enough time to put it down on the paper. So my grades would be not as good without that. So it’s definitely allowed

me to show that I actually understand information, especially in an academic setting. It's given me that ability to help me be successful within academic circles."

9:58

SOT: voice and video of SEAN MADDEN – JUNIOR AT UWF

"I can have easier ways to accomplish tasks for class that I would normally be unable to do because of my shy nature. They've also helped me so I can get better accommodations for classes and housing, and have offered to help in other ways. I remember one time in freshman year that I felt so crappy that I wanted to drop out of school. I had weekly meetings with some of the staff, and that somewhat helped me. I'm feeling much better about everything else, though, so I don't need to talk to them as much. I'm sure if I ask, they'll certainly help me. I suppose it's just in my nature to try to be independent."

10:38

In 2015, the Americans with Disabilities Act Celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. At U-W-F, this milestone was marked with events to simulate life with a disability, motivational speakers, and several other occurrences in October, designated as Disability Awareness month.

GRAPHIC: Close-up of SDRC Brochure from the ADA Month Flier

SOT: voice and video of MICHELLE HAYES- COORDINATOR FOR TESTING AND ACCOMMODATIONS, UWF STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

"We're having campus organizations involved in Stomp out Stigma, which is an event to highlight mental illness, so they're doing that event over at the Commons, and will include henna tattoos in a semi-colon design, to indicate that "life continues on." That event will be open to students. We are also having a wheelchair basketball event open to the public, featuring the Mobile Bay professional wheelchair basketball players, playing in a wheelchair basketball game against University staff and faculty members on campus."

11:41

Aside from marking the ADA's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the organizers of the UWF events saw this as an opportunity to educate all UWF students about what it's like to live with a disability.

ROLL VIDEO OF EXPERIENTIAL DEMONSTRATIONS AT UWF COMMONS (STUDENTS TRYING DISABILITY SIMULATIONS) WITH VOICE OVER:

SOT: voice of: MICHELLE HAYES- COORDINATOR FOR TESTING AND ACCOMMODATIONS, UWF STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

We have Experiential Demonstrations set up in the Commons Auditorium, with different stations set up to simulate different disabilities, for example using blindfolds, earplugs, and wheelchairs, and a dyslexia simulation station, so students and staff who want to participate can go through and experience what it is like to have a disability, and kind of get an idea of what people with disabilities experience every day. Because sometimes we think that those with disabilities can do things with ease, and that there is no stress, but when you have to walk in their shoes, you can see that when you are trying to get through a door in a wheelchair and you're holding something, you may need some help.

12:29

Disability Awareness month at UWF wrapped up with a keynote speech delivered by Christopher Coleman, a public speaker who has lived with cerebral palsy for his entire life.

SOT: voice and video of: CHRISTOPHER COLEMAN, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER

“PEOPLE, PURPOSE, AND PASSION” KEYNOTE SPEECH

TEXT SCROLLS ON SCREEN

My name is Christopher Coleman, and when I was born, I was pronounced dead. No heartbeat, no vital signs, nothing. I was dead. I did not breathe for fifteen minutes. The thing about that, not breathing for fifteen minutes, was that when my best friend and I were talking, and he tells me: “Christopher, I can do anything you can do, and I can do it better.” I went: “Oh yeah? Don't breathe for fifteen minutes.”

13:37

MUSIC RETURNS, QUIETLY WITH VERY GRADUAL INCREASE IN VOLUME

Today, people with disabilities are given many more opportunities than they could have had before the Americans with Disabilities Act came to be. Without the ADA, many disabled and even some non-disabled people would not be who they are today. To this day, the ADA still impacts us all to give everyone equal opportunity, from people unable to stand to people afraid to socialize. But none of this would ever have come to be without the determination of the figures of the past who wanted to provide others with these freedoms. Indeed, it is the spirit and



determination of all people that gives us the ability to gain equal opportunity, and reach to the future.

SOT: voice and video of: CHRISTOPHER COLEMAN, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER

“PEOPLE, PURPOSE, AND PASSION” KEYNOTE SPEECH

TEXT SCROLLS ON SCREEN

It doesn't matter what the color or what size the balloon is: if you put the right stuff in it, it can rise to its full potential.

14:48

CLOSING CREDITS BEGIN

14:58