

Disability Forum 2008

The 18th anniversary of the ADA brought many local events and activities.

For the Center's part, it seemed time to fill a fundamental void in the growing disability and offer vital information on issues from the ADA to emergency preparedness and handicapped parking. It was an honor and a privilege for the Center to coordinate a significant community event with federal, state and county leaders sharing the most current updates on disability laws and resources. The first of its kind, free, Disability Forum which was an all-day program held Wednesday, July 23. Voters were registered, participants enthused, lunch provided, resources and information distributed, questions answered, and issues addressed.

Great thanks to the expert presenters who took time out of their very, very busy schedules to share valuable and vital information to the disabled adults, veterans and seniors – nearly 150 total from throughout the region – who joined the first-ever and free Disability Forum at Republic Hall. Appreciation must also go to the CIL staff and supporters who helped spread the word about this event and its quality information.



ACA Ambassador of the Year 2008 Robin Jones, of the Great Lakes ADA Center, poses with a plaque presented by ACA Advisors Lois Goldman, Val Rand, Pam Heavens, Denise Winfrey, Beth May, Diane Seiler and Christine Book.

First presenter Robin Jones, Director of the Great Lakes ADA, received the Accessible Cities Alliance 2008 Ambassador of the Year Award on behalf of her work and that of her resourceful staff. Jones offered a wealth of details on current efforts toward ADA restoration, as well as a call to action to stay informed, involved and hopeful. Since that time, the ADA Amendment Act has, in fact, been passed in both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate, and it WAS signed by President Bush in early September

Will County Emergency Management Director, Harold Damron, with support from his Assistant Director Brenda Lutz, provided an important update on the County's newly-created Emergency Preparedness Program for Disabled Residents. He implored disabled residents to actively prepare for emergencies and keep in contact with his office to gain information



Will County's Emergency Management Agency Director, Harold Damron, shares vital information on disaster preparedness with Forum guests.

and knowledge to help his office and individuals in the event of a disaster or emergency. Resources include the federal government's ready.gov website and his own office site, which can be found by going online to the County's website at www.willcountyillinois.com.



After her presentation, Nancy Schultz Voots joined with her staff to assist Forum attendees with voting equipment options and information.

Will County Clerk Nancy Voots, always eager to go above and beyond the call for the Center and disabled voters, with help from her skilled staff, presented a demonstration of the accessible voting equipment and explained the many methods available to ensure all County voters exercise their right and responsibility.



Larry Walsh, Will County Executive and the 2007 ACA Ambassador of the Year congratulates this year's recipient and ADA expert, Robin Jones. Walsh delivered the keynote address at the Forum held at Republic Hall.

Keynote Luncheon Speaker and long-time disability advocate Larry Walsh, provided a thorough overview of the impressive range of initiatives and programs implemented throughout the County to increase access and remove barriers for disabled residents. Fittingly, Walsh paid tribute to Bang Long, who passed in February, for being a driving force in the creation of the County Executive's Disability Advisory Panel which continues to actively pursue projects and solutions to related issues

In closing, he praised the Center and its programs, disability advocates who take time to share their concerns in a positive way, and strongly

encouraged disabled residents of the County to stay informed and stay in touch with their elected officials which, he said, benefits everyone.

One of the Center's favorite disability advocates in the State, Bill Bogdan, blessed us with his presence and his effervescent speaking style to sum up his efforts as Disability Liaison for the Office of the Secretary of State, Jesse White. The title does not do you justice, Bill, as we all know how much you do



Always a crowd pleaser, Bill Bogdan, Disability Liaison for the Illinois Secretary of State, was eager to update guests on the handicapped parking program.

and how many you help! Bogdan urged guests in attendance who use handicapped placards to stay current with current regulations, and to play a responsible role when advocating for parking spaces.

Rounding out the fantastic presentations at the Disability Forum was an insightful look into the programs provided by the office of Illinois Treasurer Alexi Giannalouias, provided by Patrick Conlon, Program Director for Opportunity Illinois. Low interest loans to municipalities and individuals were detailed. Last but certainly not least, the Center's very own Mary Tisdale offered important information on the Center for Independent Living's goals, roles and resources to disabled persons, and was helped close the event with a literal cheerleading section to celebrate the anniversary of and the continued enforcement of the ADA.



Taking a break from talking shop, Pat Conlon and Will County Deputy Treasurer Michael Stewart stopped for a photo during the Forum.



More than 130 guests, including disabled consumers, municipalities and elected officials from throughout Will County came together for Disability Forum 2008.



CIL Staffers were on site to register voters. Thanks T'Aira and Kelly!



Patrick Conlon of the Illinois State Treasurer's Office/Opportunity Illinois Program Director, talks with ACA Advisor and local banking expert Diane Seiler of Lockport.



CIL Board member Ann Johnson and Audrey Delaire helped welcome and register guests.



Center consumers who are part of the area's Deaf Seniors group were pleased with the information and resources offered.



A member of the Deaf Seniors organization joins CIL Program Manager Festus Fabilola.



CIL Board members Carol Cawvey and Alan Trantina greet Sandy Simmons (center), liaison for Will County Executive's Disability Advisory Panel.



Accessible Cities Alliance co-chair and CIL Board Member Val Rand and Sandy Simmons of the Will County Executive's Office were pleased with the Forum.

NOTE: Resource materials which were provided at the Forum are available at the Center. Also, JCTV – Joliet's public access channel, taped the program for rebroadcast and that tape is available to community groups, social centers and municipalities who want to share the information with large audiences and those disabled adults, seniors and veterans who could benefit from this timeless but topical information. Call CIL today.