

JR News

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Summer 2015

WORK, HOME AND PLAY

This edition of the JR News includes: 50th Anniversary, 25th Anniversary of the ADA, Work and more!

50th Anniversary

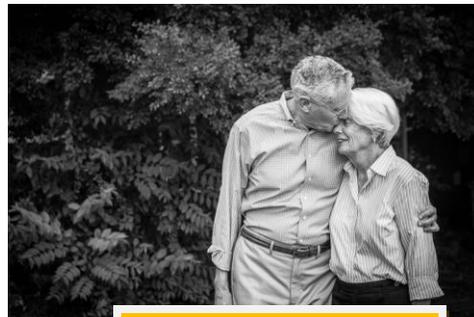
This past summer started with a bash to celebrate my parents 50th Anniversary at the Harding compound in Mill Creek, Virginia. For this exciting event, our small family came from places like; Washington State, Indiana, New York, and Florida, to celebrate 50 years of Marriage. In today's society, so few families achieve such milestones.



The Harding
Clan

Some of the events included: wedding vows at the local Colonial Church over 250 years old, family dinner (in which I tried to say some appropriate things as the eldest male and cried my eyes out) and a small party of 100 of their closest friends and the evening ended with a firework show! Fun was had by all.

My favorite picture (to the right) from the July 4th, 2015 Anniversary weekend captures Mom and Dad's unwavering love. They have been the perfect match and have raised their boys, grandchildren, and extended family with both virtues and values. I am lucky to have such incredible parents who never gave up on me and the many challenges I have faced.



Mom and Dad 50

that



On July 26, 1990 President George H. Bush signed the Landmark Legislation, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This historic Civil Rights Legislation made a significant and lasting impact on the American Landscape and in my personal/professional life. No longer would persons with disabilities be discriminated against in employment, housing, transportation, recreation and in life as a whole.

Many communities across the country celebrated this momentous anniversary in different ways. One of the most significant activities was led by a team of 25 leaders with disabilities from across the country. The group assembled the ADA 25 Summit in Atlanta,



for
GA.

In turn, they created the [ADA Legacy](#) with 3 primary goals: *to educate, to celebrate, and to preserve* the achievements of persons with disabilities within the culture of the American fabric.

Pres. Bush signing the
ADA

[Project](#)

The Legacy Tour traveled around the Country and culminated in Washington D.C. on July 26, 2015. The tour created millions of Social Media images highlighting our freedoms and contributions to the American way of life. Locally, Tallahassee and its many Disability Leader, hosted the State of [Florida's 25th Anniversary Celebration](#). Hundreds of individuals with disabilities came out to celebrate, educate, and preserve our history in the Capital City. The weather was beautiful, enthusiasm high, and everyone from young to old had fun celebrating the anniversary.

A lasting and unique contribution was made by the USBLN and its many corporate sponsors. Together they created the [Mobile Disability Rights Museum](#) which is still traveling the Country.

Work

Living an active and integrated life never gets boring. I never get fatigued with making a difference for persons with disabilities. It is simply my passion. I always try my hardest to lead by example and to learn from every experience. While I am still challenged with some minor health issues, I wake up every day driven by the knowledge that MORE can be done to CREATE opportunities for persons with disabilities to thrive within our communities. Integrated and competitive work for persons with disabilities is still the unfulfilled primary goal of the ADA.



Thanks to my good friend, Judge Lorie Rowe, I had the pleasure of kicking off the Annual Cub Scout Summer Camp at the Maclay State Gardens in Tallahassee, FL. As an Eagle Scout, I tried to impress upon these future leaders the importance of Scouting Values and how they must lead by

example.

JR with Cub Scouts

There were about five hundred 10 year olds running around and many volunteer parents facilitated the many different Cub Scout training exercises. It was great fun to put my uniform back on, play hooky from work, and share tales with the kids about my scouting adventures. Some of my best memories growing up involved Scouting and I am certain a number of these young men will be our future leaders. You could see it in their eyes! Many thanks to all the moms and dads who make it happen.

As many of you know, I am very involved in politics. Love it or hate it; politics affect our daily lives. With the campaign season in full bloom, my good friend, Presidential Candidate of 2016, and former Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush returned to town. Of course, I made the most of it and was able to give him a good shout out on the evening news: [WCTV Evening News](#) (click to view). I do pray that he makes it through the gauntlet of the republican primary. He was an exceptional Governor for Florida, kept us

safe through 5 hurricanes, and was able to champion Disability Issues while remaining very pro-business.

Due to my health challenges, private consulting has been less active than in years past. Nevertheless, I have continued in my role as a grant reviewer for the Christopher Reeves Foundation and have increased my involvement with Florida State University. Thanks to some likeminded professors, I have been fortunate to serve as a guest lecturer within both the College of Business and the College of Education. Some faculty members and I are hoping to develop a class for the undergraduate curriculum that emphasizes workforce diversity and persons with disabilities. With luck, the elective course will be offered in the fall of 2016. I hope to share more positive news on this issue in the next JR Newsletter.

As a part of the 25th Anniversary of the ADA, lawyers and advocates have increased their civil suits with private businesses. The primary target has been the Hospitality Industry and their lack of swimming pool access. Here in Florida, one firm has filed over 1,400 suits. I get the need for physical access on a very personal level. Discrimination is discrimination, and should be eliminated. But, 1,400 law suits by one firm with serial plaintiffs gives the rest of persons with disabilities a bad reputation while the ones profiting from the discrimination are the lawyers.

My primary job with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) continues to go well. The legislature with the leadership of the Governor's office has chosen to fund the program well. However, successfully facilitating employment opportunities for the Developmentally Disabled community remains very challenging. Only 18% of those between the age of 16 and 64 with a Developmental Disability are working and most of them are working part-time due to the perverse disincentives within our Federal Public Policy that penalizes these individuals for contributing to our communities and earning money.

On a more positive note, I recently invested some money into my website. I now have a website that is modern, accessible, and viewable on multiple platforms (smartphone, i-pad, and PC). I hope you go check it out and like it on your Face Book. www.JRHarding.com.

With the Holidays upon us, allow me to shamelessly pitch my new book [ADA Adventure](#) as a great gift idea. The hotlink makes the shopping easy

and takes you straight to it on Amazon!! ☺ I would love to read your review!!

Personal

Last spring, I shared that team JR had a significant turnover with 4 out of 5 new employees. I am pleased to tell you that team JR is fully manned once again. I have some great young people looking after me. However, I will be forced to recruit again in late spring 2016. At least this time, I will not be recruiting a whole team, just a few recruits. It is indeed challenging to be constantly recruiting, training, and retaining well-rounded people to help me overcome my daily living challenges. Nevertheless, I am always impressed by the quality of young folks who answer the “call to duty.”

I have completely recovered from the two surgeries: June 2014 and December 2014. However, due to my weight loss pressure sores have become the primary culprit with regards to my continued health challenges. I currently have two of them: one on my lower left leg and on my tailbone. I am not able to go swimming or scuba diving. I must shower with my leg in a trash bag (to keep the bandages dry), and must be even more diligent with regards to prevention issues.

I am in the process of procuring a new wheelchair that will hopefully mitigate the pressure sores by shifting my weight throughout the day. This is supposed to improve my health by utilizing a tilt/recline feature that is currently not included in my existing wheelchair. But, I am running into problems with matching the new wheelchair designs with my multiple needs of driving, sitting, self-feeding, and other daily necessities. Sadly, it will probably take at least six months before I have a new power chair fitted and functioning to meet my active lifestyle.

During the Football season, Erika and I had the pleasure of treating my parents to a football game. The game was not only enjoyable because of the victory over Syracuse, but we were also invited as VIP guest to join FSU President, John Thrasher in his skybox. It was a great way to introduce Dad to the Seminole Nation and, Mom really enjoyed the Haagen-Dazs ice cream that was delivered at half half-time ☺ !

Also, during this year’s season, thanks to Erika, we were able to join Chief Osceola and



Renegade on the field during the Louisville game. Being on the field brought back many playing day memories!

While my Florida State Seminoles will not be competing for either an ACC or National Championship this year, we still had a very competitive year with a record of 10 wins and 2 losses for 2015. FSU fans are hopeful for the Chick Fila Bowl in 2016.

Erika and I are counting the days for our upcoming cruise! We will be taking the 10 day Caribbean Melody trip to celebrate 10 years of marriage on January 9, 2016. This will be our first 10 day excursion. We normally set sail for seven day cruises but this time, a few extra days is just what we need to celebrate her 50th birthday and our 10 years of marriage. Ports of call include: Aruba, Curacao, Grenada, Dominican, St. Thomas and Grand Turk. We also have other adventures planned for 2016 to include: our annual journey to Rish Park for the 4 of July, the U.S. Open, New Orleans, Naples and other not yet identified adventures.

Miscellaneous Things of Interest

In every edition of the JR news, I try and share things of interest. This time, we have three new items. The first item has its roots in Europe and has recently made its way across the pond. It's called "Changing Places." Changing Places is championing a new public bathroom design for persons with disabilities. It is predicated on the fact that millions of individuals with disabilities are unable to use the standard accessible bathrooms found throughout America. In fact, I am one of those individuals. When traveling, in order to do a catheterization, I frequently find myself having to lie down on the side of the road or on the floor of a family disability bathroom. Neither of these options are very dignified, but such is life when you have to go!

The Changing Places bathrooms not only have the appropriate square footage, grab bars and accessible sinks, but it also has an adjustable change bench and Hoyer Lift to facilitate transfers. It's really quite remarkable, but it will take significant advocacy to change the American code. I think a



compromise could be found by including this type of bathroom within significant public access areas like malls, movie theaters, sporting venues, and highway rest stops. For those interested in learning more, the web link is: www.changing-place.org.

The second area of interest, comes from a young entrepreneur named Ryan Eder. He is the Founder/CEO of “[INCLUDE FITNESS](#).” He has come up with a remarkably universal accessible weightlifting machine for all types of persons with mobility challenges. It is the first one to comply with the ASTM F3021: Standard Specification for Universal Design of Fitness Equipment for Inclusive use by Persons with Functional Limitations and Impairments. Right now it’s a little pricey, because it’s tailored for the corporate/rehab client, but in the future, I would thoroughly enjoy using this equipment in my home and/or a local gym.

Their marketing statement is perfect for the changing demographics:
"Include Fitness is rethinking the way fitness and rehabilitation is delivered through a next gen... It's been built from the ground up to eliminate many of the physical and cognitive barriers found in traditional equipment, while also making life easier with data recording and measurable outcomes that can be shared across facilities and networks. "



The third area of interest is access to the water for your coastal, lakefront and riverfront locations. Currently, physical access to the high water mark (only) applies to properties owned or controlled by the federal government. Here in Florida, we have a lot of federally owned beachfronts. This picture illustrates why it is so important to have accessible access route. Sometimes, getting to the water can be a very long hike through the sandy beaches.

I do hope that the Fall 2015 JR News Letter has found each of you to be well. Erika and I wish you all a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year!!!

JR

