

JR News

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Summer 2015

WORK, HOME AND PLAY

This edition of the JR News includes: Things of Interest, Healthcare, Work, Play and My New Book: *ADA Adventure*



Things of Interest

Life is full of interesting things, you just need to open your eyes and look! This section will highlight "model accessible parking", superheroes, an entrepreneur with a disabilities, universal accessibility and homes with a modern touch and a new innovation for persons with blindness or low vision.

The "model" parking space (to your left) comes from my Canadian friends who are spending time with friends in Mexico. I am glad that I don't run into too many of

these spaces like this in America. In fairness, I have encountered some interesting ramps, doorways and parking spaces years.

A mother, who happens to be a photographer, created a [cool business](#) capturing the *inner superhero* in all of us. I would highly recommend rummaging through a few of these pictures. I just simply love the realism. These are not actors or actresses, just kids having fun.

Owning a business is something that most of us aspire to do. It is the American Dream and Mr. Tim Harris, with the help and support of his family, created [Tim's Place](#). It focuses on great food and good hugs. This kind of innovation, this kind of creativity and this kind of community would go a long way in removing barriers for other persons with disabilities within

the workforce. Gainful employment is still the biggest barrier facing persons with disabilities, despite 25 years of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

One of my earlier newsletters highlighted my work with the Department of Elder Affairs and the not-for-profit community regarding Aging in Place and Universal Design for personal homes. This is a growing niche within the housing market to fulfill the needs of our baby boomers and better meet the needs of our existing disabled population. Therefore, I should not have been shocked to discover that all things new were once old. [This article](#) shows how acclaimed architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, assisted a World War II veteran in the late 1940s/early 1950s in designing/creating his very own aesthetically accessible home! Not only does this home look fantastic, but it serves as a model for some of the contemporary efforts within the universal/aging in place design efforts. An interesting side point, there is another personal home made by Frank Lloyd Wright right here in Tallahassee. This one also serves as a museum.

Occasionally the US Government does some useful things. In the fall of 2014, the US Treasury created and issued some [currency readers](#) for persons who are living with low-vision or blindness. Now these individuals have the freedom to manage their own money in public no longer have to trust strangers handle their money. Sometimes, it is the simple things in life that make a real difference.

[Healthcare](#)

A major focus of my Fall 2014 Newsletter was my healthcare. After recovering from two separate surgeries in 2014 (June and December), I was on the mend. But of course, I was not out of the woods just yet. Sadly, I had an old injury resurface. This one has to do with my left shin and a bacterial bone infection. Pseudomonas can be a nasty bug to fight. It was necessary to be placed on IV antibiotics for six weeks. Luckily at the end of April 2015, I was able to remove the PICC line and cease the three time daily treatment for the injury. The wound still has to be cared for twice per day and due to the lack of circulation from 33 years of paralysis, the healing process will be frustratingly slow.

On a brighter note, Wound care up in the state of Michigan has taken a major leap forward. Under the leadership of [Dr. Bruce Ruben](#), patients with

disabilities and diabetics are no longer forced to conform their needs into the barrier plagued infrastructure. Now boutique shops are popping up around the country that uniquely embrace persons with disabilities and speak to a warm and friendly environment. I hope that this idea catches on and becomes the future of our healthcare model. I would certainly be willing to pay a few dollars more for this kind of care and comfort.

The spring of 2015 created a unique challenge for my daily well-being. All 3 of my personal care assistants (PCA's) have moved on to other activities. This transition included, my 20 year long-term trusted employee Eric. Replacing him and the other 2 were simply monumental challenges. Going to the local home healthcare provider is not the right course of action for me. Those individuals work for the company not for me and the cost too much money. Therefore, I recruit mainly from the college student population. After a four-month process, I am pleased to tell you that the new team is in place. However, it will take some time before the trust, knowledge, and partnership between them and I are refined into a well-oiled machine.



A central Part of healthy living for persons with disabilities is having an accessible home with all of the amenities that facilitate independence and the highest level of self-sufficiency. Only recently have baby boomers and persons with disabilities

begun to demand accessible homes rather than "modifying existing" homes.

Have you ever imagined living in a universally accessible "green, and smart" home? A home that meets your needs for lifetime? Well, my friend, Michel Larochelle, is building a new universally accessible housing community in the Naples, Florida area. Above is a rendering of his vision which would be a barrier-free environment, able to adapt with your aging needs, accommodate a live-in personal care assistant and much more.

Naples is a great location for this project because of its big city amenities combined with a small town sensibilities. To learn more about this project, please contact my colleagues Yves Grenier at 239-400-5298. I wish homes like this were being designed and built when I was purchasing my home! Who knows, maybe I will retire to Naples... Should you need an opportunity

to explore the Naples community before committing to purchasing a home or simply enjoying a great vacation there, Michel has a fabulous accessible condo that is [available to rent](#). Just tell him JR sent you.

Work

My accessibility consulting business under the work, fun and play model is picking up once again. Now that my healthcare issues are mostly behind me, I have been able to get back into the game of life. I have been busy with local speaking opportunities ([Adult and Community Education](#), FSU, and [FAMU](#)). The two radio shows (one local and another national) provided another way for me to advocate and bring change to the community. For those interested, you can listen to the archived shows at [Voice America](#) and [Tallahassee Talks](#).



JR and Eric next to the Mardi Gras tree in LA.

On one of my business travels through Louisiana for Evergreen Life Services, I stopped and paused for a picture next to the Mardi Gras tree. The airport personnel keep this tree up for almost four months and it serves two different purposes: celebrating Christmas and Mardi Gras. I just thought it was clever to recycle decorations in a functional manner. I must tell you that it was quite cold in northern Louisiana late January.

My work with the hospitality industry, accessibility consulting and speaking continues to keep me on the road. I'm hopeful that my relationship with the Hyatt and long-standing relationship with the Peabody continue to prosper. The hospitality industry is a reflection of our everyday lives, just expressed differently! Weddings, banquets, conferences, Rotary meetings, vacations and simple getaways... Everything that we do in life seems to bring us through a hotel at one point or another. Maybe it is simply the traveling that I enjoy most, but it is not without its challenges. For example, when I was coming back from Naples over the Christmas break, I had to stop on the side of the road and "water the grass." Thanks to my long-term assistant, Eric, and of course Erika, we were able to stretch me out on the grass and take care of business without the benefit of a accessible private bathroom. I will

confess that it was nice to look at the clouds that day. It's not very often that I have that perspective. Most of the time when I am taking respite breaks, I'm looking at the ceiling of a bathroom rather than the beautiful, blue sky.

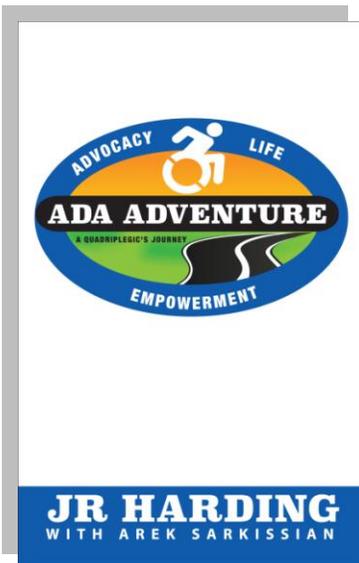


JR and Eric on the side of I-75 northbound handling a respite break.

During the summer season, work within the disability circuit gets quite busy. This year is especially exciting because it also marks the [25th anniversary of the American's with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA). There has been a number of community events across the country. Tallahassee will host an event on July 24th which will include a solidarity march, national and local guest speakers, food and fun. It is just a day to celebrate how far we have come and to imagine how far we can go as independent and contributing members of our communities. Do know that while we have come a long way with our physical, technological, and attitudinal accessibility, we still have a long way to go with regard to integrated and full-time employment for persons with disabilities. Most people with disabilities are either unemployed or underemployed according to the US Department of Labor monthly statistics.

The most exciting news in the work area is that I have now published my second book, "[ADA Adventures: A Quadriplegic's Journey.](#)" Go find it on

Amazon in paperback or on [your e-Reader!](#) As always, I would love for you to rate it, write some comments and feedback, and I truly hope that you enjoy reading it. It is my hope that others with and without disabilities may be inspired to create their own adventures in the world. Yes, it is hard work. Yes, one can never escape their disability. But, it is worth every minute to be independent, enjoy freedom and create memories. With help from folks like you, any barrier can be overcome.



Play

There are no guarantees in life. As a result, we must balance our personal responsibilities with a little fun. Without living life, we can all get into a rut. This past Christmas, we modified our traditional home event to enjoy it on the beach. Erika and I would highly recommend the Naples Beach and Golf Resort. It is an incredible, historic and family-owned business. The weather was simply perfect!



While we have not been bowling in support of our Seminoles through the Booster activities, we still try and go regularly. On this particular day, Erika simply crushed me at 179 to 139. Oh well! You have to know when you are beat.

On the flip-side, I was able to beat Erika and her mother at a nice game of miniature golf. While we do have one mini-golf course here in Tallahassee, I greatly enjoy the variety of course choices found in the tourist

Mecca of Orlando. In Orlando, I was able to go golfing with some college buddies I had not seen (together) since the 2nd injury over 16 years ago. It was cool just to hang out and enjoy one another's company.

This year we went to Rish Park for the Memorial Day weekend instead of Fourth of July. We plan to celebrate my parent's 50th wedding anniversary in the northern neck of Virginia this Fourth of July weekend. 50 years – Where does the time go? I hope that they have many more years of happiness. They should. Their health has been better than mine, at least recently.



On behalf of both Erika and I, we greatly appreciate all of your love and support. The past 12 months have been long and hard, but with your encouragement and support it was made much easier! We certainly hope that we do not experience a similar 12 months anytime soon. Good health is a blessing and remember it's important to make some memories!

Until we speak again,

JR and Erika Harding