

# BROOKINGS COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISABILITIES

2015 Annual Report

**Department:** Brookings City Clerk

**Mission Statement.** “We advocate for the rights of people in our community who have disabilities. Throughout the year, specific events are held to bring awareness and information to our citizens. Technical assistance is provided to the business community, private individuals, governmental entities, and non-profit organizations.”

**Mandate/Purpose:** Education;  
Membership: 11  
Term: 3 years (1 year terms for one student position)  
Residency: 7 must be residents; non-residents may not exceed 25% of Committee  
Legal Reference: Resolution No. 32-88, Resolution No. 35-90, Ordinance No. 28-91

The Brookings Advisory Committee for People who have Disabilities was created to provide a framework for community-based advocacy in the removal of mobility and attitudinal barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. The Committee’s purpose directly corresponds to the City’s goal to provide a high quality of life for its citizens. This is a service not provided by any other entity in Brookings.

The goals of this Committee are to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities through enhancing the knowledge base of entities in the community; and to further serve as a community-based advocacy group enhancing the ability of local entities to comply with Federal Civil Rights legislation. Results are measured by the number of interactions with the public, questions for technical assistance, and positive outcomes in advocacy situations.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Jessie Kuechenmeister, Chair

Nadine Gjerde, Vice Chair

Lonnie Bayer

Alan Davis\*

Nancy Hartenhoff-Crooks

Dave Miller

Kathy Heylens

Les Rowland

Matt Simet

Sylvia Buboltz

Shawn Minor

*\*resigned*

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES SUMMARY**

**ABLE Award.** The A.B.L.E. Award (Ability, Belief, Leadership and Equality to Achieve Access for All) is an annual award program designed to recognize the outstanding commitment of a business or public entity in fulfilling the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Highlighting the efforts of an outstanding business or entity may motivate others to provide improved accessibility to goods and services.

Measurements:

- 76 nominees since program started in 1996.
- In 2015, the recipients (Trendz Consignment Studios and The Pheasant Restaurant & Lounge) were recognized at the “Mayor’s Awards Reception” held at the Performing Arts Center on October 29, 2015. The event recognized the ABLE Awards, the Historic Preservation Awards, the Human Rights Award and the Mayor’s Generational Leadership Award. Approximately 100 people attended the event, including the Mayor and city council members, the city manager, and local media.
- The winners received publicity in local media outlets as well as through City of Brookings website and social media.

**ADA Programs, Services and Facilities Reviews.** Title II of the ADA prohibits public entities from discriminating against or excluding people from programs, services, or activities on the basis of disability. The ADA requires Title II entities seek input from people with disabilities regarding its programs, services and activities to continually review and modify policies and practices to ensure compliance. Pursuant to this requirement, the City consults with the Brookings Committee for People who have Disabilities. The standard against which programs and services will be measured for the purpose of ADA compliance is one of overall program accessibility. All government programs, services, and activities, when viewed in its entirety, must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Therefore, the City of Brookings requires all city-owned and/or city funded new, remodeled, and retrofitted facilities comply with the requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines and all city ADA related policies.

The Committee, along with the City ADA Compliance Officer, reviews and approves final plans and bid packages for all new construction, remodels, and retrofits of City-owned and/or funded facilities. Additionally, the Committee reviews all Brookings School District projects. Programs and facilities reviewed in 2015 included the following:

- Brookings Summer Arts Festival
- Curb Ramps
- Municipal Downtown Parking Lot
- Neighborhoods at Brookview Parking Lot
- Parking Lots
- Playground Equipment & Surfaces
- Sidewalks
- 6<sup>th</sup> Street DOT redesign
- Swiftel Center
- Valley View Playground
- Dakota Prairie Elementary School
- Dakota Prairie Elementary Playground
- SDSU Football Stadium
- Avera Brookings Medical Clinic Parking Lot
- Gatzke building
- Street Shop Department Building
- Pioneer Park Restrooms
- Brookings Hospital Outreach Clinic Parking Lot
- Brookings Health Systems Expansion Project
- Indian Hills Playground
- R & T Center
- SDSU Performing Arts Center

**ADA Anniversary – July 26<sup>th</sup>**. First introduced in the 100th Congress, the ADA bans discrimination in the areas of employment, public accommodation, public services, transportation and telecommunications. President Bush signed the ADA into law on July 26, 1990. Final regulations for Title I, the employment provisions of ADA, were issued on July 26, 1991 by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Department of Justice, on the same day issued final regulations, for Titles II (public services) and III (public accommodations). The ADA was amended in 2008 to broaden coverage of individuals with disabilities that had been narrowed by several Supreme Court decisions. Its provisions became effective on January 1, 2009. Language in the preamble was changed to emphasize that Congress intended to cover a broad range of persons with disabilities.

Measurements:

- Leading up to the anniversary date the Committee sponsored a public education campaign with myths and facts in the newspaper and on the radio during the month of July.
- The Committee recognized the ADA Anniversary on July 26<sup>th</sup> at a Brookings Summer Band Concert in Pioneer Park.
- The Mayor attended and shared information about the Committee and the Durable Medical Equipment Drive. Durable medical equipment was also collected at this event.
- The Mayor and Committee also hosted an ice cream social for concert attendees serving approximately 500 people.

**Advocacy**. The Committee responds to accessibility-related citizen needs on a case-by-case response basis. In 2015, the Committee worked on solutions to citizen problems involving

- parking;
- business access;
- delivery of services;
- service animals;
- placement of mailboxes/path of travel for accessibility;
- renter's rights; and
- snow removal.

**Board Development and Training**. Board development and training provide board members with annual training opportunities through the use of local and regional individuals knowledgeable in accessibility issues. To assist the Committee in doing the best job possible, members attend local and regional training opportunities. The Committee maintains membership in local and national disability-related organizations. The Committee invites local, state and regional guest speakers to provide in-house training. Local stakeholders will be identified and invited to all meetings. All trainings will be open to the public.

Measurements:

- Through the ADA Leadership Network, members have access to webinars on various topics and may participate at no cost.
- Three members attended the Great Plains Regional ADA Conference in Omaha.

- The Committee and the Human Rights Commission cosponsored a four-hour “Diversity/Bias/Respect” training presented by Maria Flores, Program Manager, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The class was filled at the maximum number allowed of 45.

**Communication with City Officials.** The Committee works diligently to maintain positive relationships, as well as open communication with city officials.

Measurements:

- Committee members attended the city council meeting to invite council members and the general public to the ABLE Award event.
- Committee leadership attended a Leadership Coffee with the Mayor.
- Committee leadership met with city leadership as well as council members regarding current projects and policies.

**Durable Medical Equipment Drive.** The Committee continued its efforts with the ongoing durable medical equipment drive. The Committee collected equipment at the band concert/ice cream social to commemorate and publicize the anniversary of the signing of the ADA. Committee members picked up equipment at donor’s homes as requested. In addition to collecting equipment, the Committee has begun to focus on distributing equipment locally as requested. Public relations materials (posters and business cards) were developed and distribution in the community began.

Measurements:

- The Committee completed a durable medical equipment drive in July 2015 at the ADA Celebration. All of the items are located in one storage garage and are available for redistribution as requested.
- Posters and business cards were rebranded and reprinted. Committee members continued to distribute and inform the community.
- 100 fliers were distributed to Meals on Wheels and 60+ Dining recipients.
- Ads promoting the recruitment and distribution of durable medical equipment ran in the Town and Country Shopper for 3 months.
- A sticker was created and placed on equipment that is distributed to encourage it be returned when no longer needed.
- Approximately 75 pieces were collected and distributed in 2015.

**Emergency Management and Preparedness Subcommittee.** Regional ice storms and power outages raised a question about how prepared Brookings is to evacuate people with disabilities if necessary.

Measurement:

- Four Committee members participated in the March 12<sup>th</sup> Brookings Emergency Management Table Top Exercise. It was very well attended with numbers ranging from 50-70 throughout

the day. Members offered suggestions regarding medical and dietary needs in the event of lost of power. Members also suggested additional considerations regarding the needs of people with disabilities in the various disasters.

**Governor's Awards.** The Committee actively seeks nominations for the Governor's Awards, an annual program that recognizes individuals, employers and agencies for their contributions to the rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities in South Dakota. Since 1989, 110 Brookings individuals, businesses and organizations have been nominated for this award and eight have won statewide recognition.

Measurement:

- The Committee received one nomination from the community and will submit the required forms.

**October Awareness Month Activities.** The Committee actively celebrates October as National Disability Employment Awareness month with numerous activities to promote employment opportunities and bring awareness to the needs and challenges faced by people who have disabilities. Activities include hosting/organizing conferences, speakers/programs in the schools, and public awareness events in collaboration with SDSU, press releases, public service announcements, feature articles, and radio show participation.

Measurement:

- The Committee promoted NDEAM in various media outlets.
- Four Committee members attended the NDEAM luncheon.
- NDEAM was promoted during the October Mayor's Awards event.

**Public Education/Material Dissemination.** To raise community awareness of disability-related issues, the Committee provides up-to-date information on technical assistance to help merchants, employers and the general public. The information is provided by Committee member distribution to merchants, direct mail to appropriate parties, the city website and committee-organized workshops and presentations. The technical assistance is intended as informal guidance only.

Measurements:

- Distributing education materials to 12 local daycares and childcare facilities in Brookings
- Committee information was added to the 211 database.
- Collaboration with the Brookings Street Department on a city-wide snow removal brochure, including information on the importance of snow removal for people with disabilities.
- The Committee posted several public service announcements on the City's Website and Facebook page regarding the promotion of rights of individuals with disabilities and information disability etiquette.
- Incorporation of information on service animals and companion animals in the Renter's Rights brochure distributed by the City of Brookings Human Rights Commission.

- The Committee created and submitted 5 questions for “My Sidewalk/Engage Brookings.”
- Two installments in the Brookings Chamber of Commerce e-Newsletter, regarding service animals and the Mayor’s ABLA Award Winners. The same installment on service animals was also in an issue of the Brookings School District newsletter to staff and faculty.
- Myths & Facts about Disability campaign in the month of July, in preparation for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA. Postings in the local newspaper, City of Brookings website & social media, and PSA’s on Brookings Radio.
- Regular posts on various educational items and public service announcements on the City of Brookings social media outlets and city website.

**Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act.** The Committee provides informal technical assistance to area organizations, private businesses and other governmental entities regarding implementation and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Committee technical assistance has been provided to:

- Private businesses in Brookings;
- South Dakota State University;
- Brookings School District;
- City of Brookings;
- SD Department of Transportation for US14; and
- Swiftel Center.

### **2016 COMMITTEE GOALS**

- Promote the Committee in general and the work it does;
- Host a local training on Emergency Preparedness with a speaker associated with the Great Plains ADA Center;
- Promote and distribute the durable medical equipment that has been received;
- Hold an Ice Cream Social and program at the July 2016 community band concert to promote the ADA and the Durable Medical Equipment Program;
- Increase efforts to promote compliance and accessibility at the Brookings Summer Arts Festival;
- Sponsor annual ABLA Awards;
- Send multiple representatives to a Regional or National ADA Symposium;
- Promote employment of people with disabilities;
- Promote improved facility and programming access to people with disabilities;
- Improve the quality of life for people who have disabilities through enhancing the knowledge base of entities in the community;
- Further serve as a community-based advocacy group enhancing the ability of local entities to comply with Federal Civil Rights legislation;
- Expand Committee’s presence on the cityofbrookings.org website by providing more resources for the public;
- Increase partnerships with other groups and organizations (i.e. Human Rights Commission, Street Department, Park and Recreation Department, and Sustainability Council);
- Maintain a high level of coordination with South Dakota State University;

- Increase use of local media in public education/promotional efforts;
- Continue with the Myths & Facts about Disability promotion leading up to the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA in July 2016;
- Quarterly (4 per year) installments in the Brookings Chamber of Commerce e-Newsletter;
- Develop a targeted educational effort towards accessibility for people with disabilities in hotels;
- Develop a promotion of accessible housing information for people with disabilities, local landlords, and rental management companies;
  - Incorporate information on service animals and companion animals into this educational promotion;
- Continue partnership with the Brookings Street Department on snow removal brochure and other snow removal educational efforts, where applicable;
- Present on the purposes of the Committee and the Durable Medical Equipment Drive at One Million Cups;
- Continue to work towards a public art installation project utilizing excess crutches and walkers to promote public awareness of disability through a creative medium; and
- Influence a positive attitude within our community.

#### **ONGOING NEEDS**

- Look for ways to continue to work with the various ADA Leadership Centers regarding training for Committee members and national training opportunities.
- Continue to educate the public on issues related to the ADA and equal access for all citizens.
- Bring nationally-recognized speakers and/or training personnel to Brookings to address the Committee and the general public.
- Coordinate with members of the ADA Leadership Network who are located in South Dakota for trainings and maximize resources available.