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New business guidelines will increase accessibility

By Catherine Blalock
Staff Reporter

July 26, marked the fifth anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Along with the anniversary came more changes for some businesses.

Better Business Bureau (BBB) president, Scott Mecham, said, "The ADA has changed the way America does business. As businesses come into compliance with the public accommodations provisions, it means new business opportunities."

"Smart businesses set aside some parking spaces, or build a ramp, or widen an aisle and train sales staff to welcome customers with disabilities. A positive attitude, common sense and common courtesy are the keys to dealing with the ADA successfully."

SCOTT MECHAM

President of the Better Business Bureau

President George Bush signed the ADA into law, and five different types of areas were named under the law. Title 1 is Employment, Title 2 is State and Local Government, Title 3 is Private and Public Accommodations, Title 4 is Telecommunications and Title 5 is National Parks.

Title 1 deals with accommodating employees with facilities, such as installing an elevator which they need to get from the ground floor to another, Josalyn Richie, Public Policy Specialist for the National Advocacy Service said.

Title 1 also includes making restrooms accessible and giving them extra time if the accommodations are on another floor, she said.

Title 2 makes it necessary that there are state and local government offices accessible to people with disabilities. If one office in a city is made accessible and others are not, it's alright, Richie said.

Under Title 3, the Council of Better Business Bureaus' Foundation have released three new industry-specific ADA Compliance Guides for travel and tour agencies, small shops and services and professional offices, Mecham said. These guidelines are general guidelines which affect every business no matter what size, Mecham said.

The ADA act defines "public accommodations," "disability," and suggests readily achievable ways of removing barriers for customers with disabilities, he said.

"'Readily achievable' is defined as easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense," Mecham said. "The law says no burden and no financial hardship for the owner."

If a business offers a public restroom for public use, then one must be made accessible for those with disabilities, Richie said.

Some businesses find other ways to deal with the guidelines rather than remodeling their business.

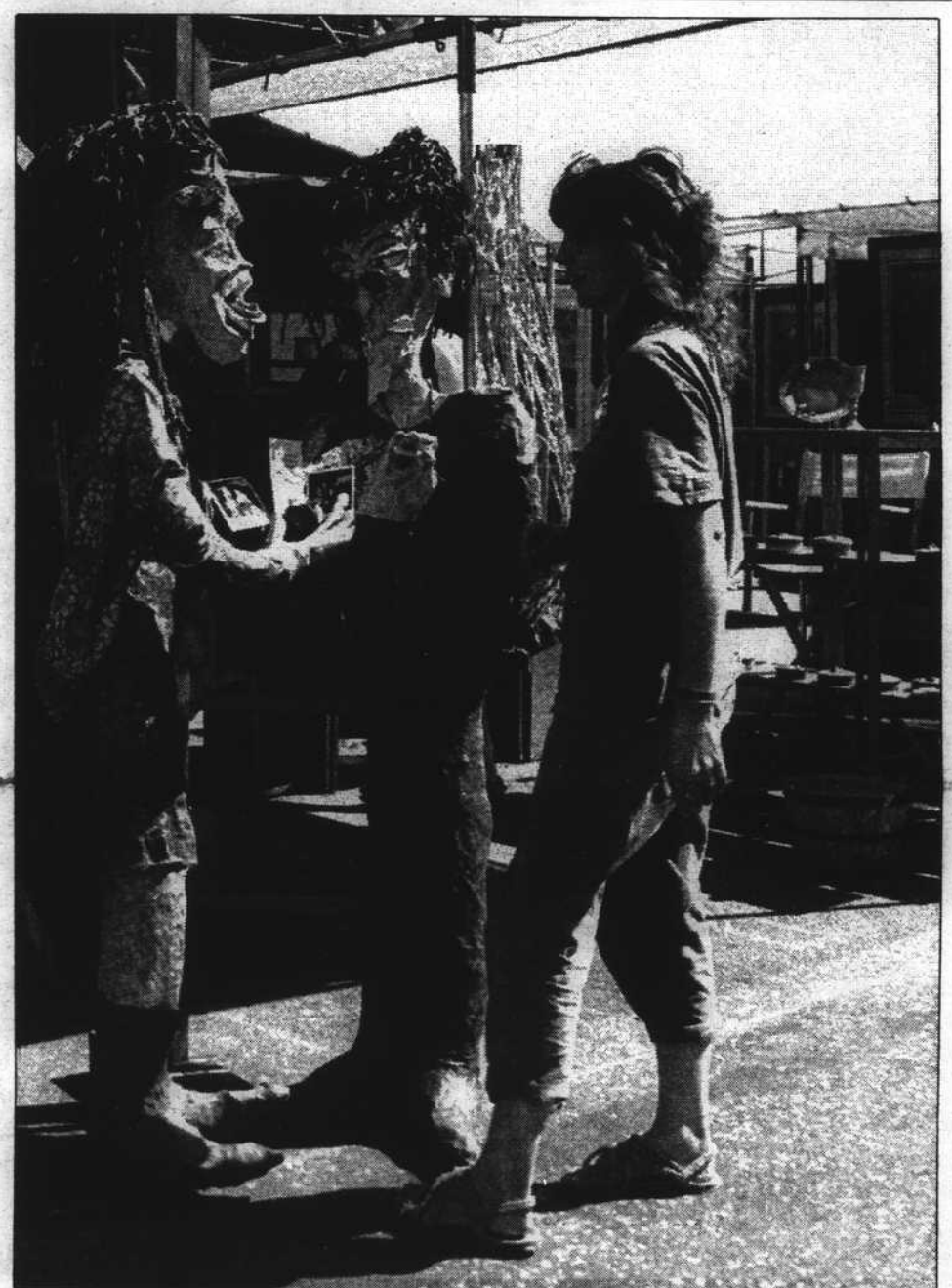
One local business that is part of a national chain chose to take a different route when complying with the ADA guidelines.

Under the guidelines, the store was asked to install automatic doors. The business chose to put greeters at the front doors to open the doors for everyone, Richie said. Some of these stores do have automatic doors, some have greeters and some have both, she said.

The BBB of Lincoln has not received any complaints about local businesses not complying with the ADA laws, Mecham said.

"Every day thousands of potential customers with disabilities try to find stores in our area that are accessible and products that they like," he said.

"Smart businesses set aside some parking spaces, or build a ramp, or widen an aisle and train sales staff to welcome customers with disabilities. A positive attitude, common sense and common courtesy are the keys to dealing with the ADA successfully."



Tanna Kinnaman/DN

SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES!

At last weekends July Jamm, Lincoln artist, Marcia Anderson, displays her papiermache caricatures of people she used to know.

Native animals displayed at Nature Center

By Doug Kerns
Staff Reporter

Bison, turkey and deer, oh my? Don't be afraid, these are just some of the many native creatures now living at Pioneers Park Nature Center.

Becky Witulski, Assistant to the Coordinator of the Nature Center, said the Park offers a variety of native species to be viewed by the public.

"We have native animals: bison, elk, deer, turkey, foxes," she said. "We have wild raccoons running around loose, and probably a couple

of deer, too."

Upcoming Natural History Programs at the Nature Center include a "Bone Session" class on Aug. 3 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. explaining the variety, shape and sizes of bones; a basic local mineral and rock identification on Aug. 8 from 6 to 8 p.m.; free bird banding demonstrations held every Saturday morning throughout the summer from 9 to noon, and free guided hikes on weekends at 2 p.m.

Natural History Programs for children at the Center include an aquatic discovery program on Aug. 13 from

1:30 to 3:30 p.m., and "critter tales" storytelling time for preschoolers to be held on Aug. 9 and 23 at 10 a.m.

Also for kids is a "Snakes Alive" demonstration on Aug. 6 from 2 to 4 p.m., led by Witulski.

"We go to talk about where snakes live and what they do, and we're going to learn how to handle snakes and, if we're lucky, we may even get to feed one," she said.

According to Witulski, people from all walks of life visit the Nature Center.

"We have families, college students, older people. From the general public we see about 65-75,000 people per year. We do school tours during the school year, and we see about 15,000 children," Witulski said.

The Nature Center is open to anyone who wants stop by and enjoy the animals and trails.

"For the programs you need to call and register, but if you want to come out and walk the trails, you can come anytime between 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday and noon to 8:30

p.m. Sunday," Witulski said.

Some animals are housed inside the Nature Center.

"There are animals in the building you can look at, snakes and birds, turtles and fish. There's a naturalist on duty if there are any questions, and if you want to see an animal, they'd be happy to take one out and show it to you," Witulski explained.

For more information on pre-registration and pre-payment requirements contact Pioneers Park Nature Center, 441-7895.