

# *Pathways to Possibilities Fall 2008*



## The Disability Services Newsletter

Missouri Western State University

Michael Ritter  
Disability Services Coordinator



### *“Mike on the Mic...”*



Hello and welcome to the first ever issue of the Disability Services Newsletter. Here in the DS Office, I am always searching for new and innovative ways to keep in touch with the students that now use, or will use the services provided by the DS Office. I have been working steadily toward an updated and improved method of communicating with you and keeping you informed on services and programs offered here at Missouri Western for students with disabilities.

What I hope to accomplish with these newsletters is actually quite simple. I want to keep the campus informed, updated, and uplifted in terms of disabled students and disability awareness. It will be my goal with this newsletter to enlighten and inspire readers with subsequent issues.

Thanks for checking this out. ~Jay Claywell on behalf of Mike Ritter.

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### *Bring All of Your Tools to the Table...!*

- Jay Claywell

As a person with a disability, I find that I have to steer the focus of those that I work with. I end up having to remind folks of what I am able to do instead of where my difficulties lay. As human beings; able-bodied or not, we all have talents, skills and abilities that we carry inside of us. These ‘tools’ are part of what make us unique as individuals. I have always referred to my

gifts as my “Swiss Army Knife” I received my knife from God. It has all the tools that I need to make me into a successful person.

Everyone has a different set of tools in their knife. Again, it’s what makes each of us unique. So, having a disability means that some of your tools may not be as sharp as someone else’s. Some of your tools might even be missing. That’s okay. You’ll find that you have skills that more than make up for the ones you lack. That’s the way of things. What you have to do is to make the most of what you have. That’s the only way to make sure that your specific tools stay as sharp as possible! If you bury your Knife under the muck and mire of self-doubt, self-pity, or negativity then you’re ruining the gifts that God has given you. That’s the goal of this article as well as Disability Services and the Counseling Center at Missouri Western.

The best way to look at it is like this: These people are here to help you keep your Knife as sharp as possible because when you bring the right tools to the job, you can accomplish anything!

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## *Removing Barriers, Improving Access*

~Michael Ritter

Every semester I will provide updates regarding accessibility-related improvements on the properties owned by Missouri Western. While some of the ideas come directly from the members of the campus ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) committee, others come from students, staff, faculty and visitors. These improvements seem to occur in waves and, as a result, this feature will sometimes serve as the dominant focus of the newsletter. Other times it will barely warrant space in this newsletter. Regardless of the length, I hope you will find this feature to be both informative and inspirational. Every time we place a new resting bench near a side walk, every time we install an automatic door, every time we improve accessible parking...we make great strides toward becoming a *universally accessible university*. And I happen to think that is a pretty worthwhile endeavor!

**Restroom Doors** - Over the next few months, \*we will be installing automatic door openers on one pair of restrooms (one men’s, one women’s) on the ground floor of every building on campus. This will dramatically improve access to our restrooms as many of the existing doors are

very heavy and/or cumbersome to navigate. Special thanks to Rick Gilmore for presenting the ADA Committee with this recommendation.

**Parking Signs** – We will be trading out the old, faded, blue “handicap parking” signs with new signs that not only look better but also communicate using the appropriate language. The new signs will feature green lettering on a white, reflective background and will read “Reserved Parking”. The new signs will remain easily identifiable with the international symbol of disability (the white wheelchair on a blue background). We will also be installing “\$100 Fine” signs to educate potential violators. On a personal note...my goal is to eradicate the word “handicap” from our campus lexicon. The word *handicap* actually means *advantage* or *disadvantage*. With this in mind, the words *handicapped* or *handicap* are often used incorrectly and inappropriately. For example, a parking space itself is not handicapped (unless of course it is inaccessible and creates a disadvantage for a person with a disability). Nor is a person with a disability “handicapped” (unless of course he or she happens to live in an environment that is inaccessible). In many cases, it is the environment that creates a disadvantage or handicap. So when someone suggests that we do not have enough handicapped parking on campus, I disagree. I explain that we have plenty of handicapped parking and that we really need more reserved parking spaces that are accessible for people with disabilities. In addition, the legislation that governs accessibility is the Americans with Disabilities Act, not the Americans with Handicaps Act. (I will have **much more** to say about this in future articles.) Suffice it to say that new signs will reflect exactly what they represent... “Reserved Parking” for people with disabilities.

**Resting Benches** – We will be placing several new resting benches along the web of sidewalks that lead from building to building on our inner campus. Because our campus is so hilly and because there are great distances of pedestrian travel between our buildings, these resting benches will provide a resting point for persons with cardiovascular disease, cerebral palsy, diabetes, and many other conditions that impede mobility. Special thanks to Western graduates Roberta Starmer and Ed Harris for presenting this request to the ADA Committee.

**Chris Feros Memorial Pavilion** – Just to the north of our softball fields we have a beautiful picnic area, The Ron Christopher “Chris” Feros Memorial Pavilion. The pavilion was constructed in 1984 as a memorial to Missouri Western alumnus Chris Feros. Chris was a student athlete who was tragically killed in a plane crash in 1983. The pavilion is used for all kinds of campus festivities but it is currently inaccessible for people using wheelchairs, scooters, crutches,

walkers, etc. The reason that it is inaccessible is the absence of a paved pathway connecting the pavilion to the parking lot. This creates a barrier to accessing the pavilion, especially if the ground happens to be wet or soft. As soon as this project receives approval, we will be creating a paved path from the parking lot to the pavilion. This will greatly improve the access and subsequent usability of the pavilion.

We have many other improvements on the horizon but I will keep those for subsequent issues.

\* In this article, the “we” that will be doing the actual work of creating these accessible features are the employees of Western’s Physical Plant. I sincerely appreciate their hard work and dedication to helping the A.D.A. Committee meet our mission of improving accessibility.

\*\* If you have any comments or questions regarding campus accessibility, please direct them to Ellen Kisker, A.D.A. Coordinator at 271-4280 or Mike Ritter, Disability Services Coordinator at 271-4330.

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## *Inside the Worlds of Work and Disability...*

- Jay Claywell

There is a magazine called CAREERS & the dis-ABLED. It is a seasonal magazine that comes into the Disability Services Office 4-5 times a year. In my opinion, any student with a disability would do themselves a world of good if they stopped by to take a look at a few of the articles contained inside one of these informative issues. The articles are inspired, inspirational, uplifting, informative, motivational, and must-reads.

To be candid, I have to tell you that as a senior here at MWSU, I am scared to death. Did you know that according to a 1997 survey, disabled employees made 35% less annually than their able-bodied counterparts? Friends, this information repulses me and yet, I really don’t find it to be horribly shocking. That’s why publications like CAREERS & the dis- ABLED are vital to our demographic. These articles offer insight on how to become gainfully employed in spite of a disability. The bulk of the information centers on self-awareness and the ability to overcome

obstacles through the use of adaptive equipment and human ingenuity. Please stop by and take a look at this informative and very necessary publication. Again, copies are available to look over at the DS office. Don't pass by this helpful tool.

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## *What's He Yelling About...?*



*- Jay Claywell*

Greetings from Office J! It is I, your loyal Public Relations intern...Jay Claywell.

Today, I wanted to rant and rave about something very important to the disabled populous on the campus of Missouri Western. My chosen topic for today is SELF-advocacy. What is it and why is it important? Well, quite simply it is sticking up for yourself when a problem arises. The fact of the matter is, when you're a college student, you are essentially on your own. The difference between success and failure on the college level could come down to self-advocacy. There is no IEP (Individualized Education Program) available. It's you, your voice, and the information that you've chosen to share with Disability Services and the faculty. So speak up, speak out, and succeed!

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## *Celebrating the Human Spirit 2008*

*~Michael Ritter*

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, the Office of Disability Services held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Disability Services Awards Ceremony. The mission of *Celebrating the Human Spirit* is to celebrate the

achievements of our students with disabilities and to acknowledge the faculty, staff, volunteers, and community partners who serve the disabled population.

Dr. Gary Homann provided the keynote presentation titled, *Follow-Through Matters*. Dr. Homann's keynote was then followed by an awards ceremony where the following people were recognized:

**Outstanding Staff Member for 2008**

Cori Criger, Instructional Media Center

**Outstanding Instructor for 2008**

Dr. Brian Cronk, Psychology Department

**Outstanding Community Partner for 2008**

Sylvia Jeffers, Independent Living Specialist, MERIL

**Outstanding Community Partner for 2008**

JC Dollar, CEO, MERIL

**Outstanding Student for 2008**

Jennifer Koebel, Graduating Senior, Social Work Major

**The following people were also recognized for their dedication to helping students with disabilities:**

Ellen Kisker, Director of Non-Traditional Students

Don Winkie, Adaptive Technology Specialist

Connie Brown, Adaptive Technology Student Employee

Shannon Still, Adaptive Technology Student Employee

Emily Eiberger, Disability Services Student Employee

Karla Smith, MERIL Executive Assistant

**The following students served as volunteer note takers for the spring semester:**

Breon Brown

Connie Brown

Cathy Danner

Michelle Ebersole

Alex Ezell

Loriann Fish

Alyse Gordon

Lindsey Hibler

Jessica Liess

Harold McClellan

Lindsey Moyer  
Dana Peters  
Sydney Phillips  
Jackie Rubin  
Emily Snyder  
Sarah Waters  
Angela Wells-Boydston  
Amanda Wilson

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## *The End of One Path is The Beginning of Others.*

*-Michael Ritter/Jay Claywell*

We hope you've enjoyed this newsletter. The Disability Services office plans to release subsequent issues each semester. The goal in presenting these newsletters is, of course, to keep students with disabilities abreast of the issues that affect them the most. With this in mind, we respectfully ask for feedback from you. We'd like to know what you thought of this issue. What did you like? What could be improved upon? We are grateful for any comments/suggestions that we get. Please email your comments to Mike at [mrutter@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mrutter@missouriwestern.edu).

Thanks for taking the time check this out. Keep studying, keep learning, and keep heading down your own pathway to possibility!