

ARCHITECT IS HELPING MAKE MORE LIVABLE HOMES

Peter Fischer of Access.Architectural, LLC, knows quite a lot about the importance of accessibility in homes. Peter earned his degree in Architecture from Arizona State University which provided him the opportunity to work in architectural firms in the Phoenix area. Peter's knowledge about accessibility also comes from first-hand experience in dealing with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, causing Peter to take a creative approach in developing, designing and using adaptive tools to accomplish daily life tasks. Striking out as a new entrepreneur a couple of years ago, Peter has made it his mission to assist when a person's disability requires an adaption of their home environment.



Peter has found that many disabled consumers require basic accessibility changes such as adding outside ramps for wheelchair or restricted ambulation purposes and emergency exits that allow egress in the event of a fire or other emergencies. Peter also works in more elaborate designs such as creating functional kitchens, using sinks and stoves adapted so that wheelchairs can slide under them and allow easy reach. Bathrooms are

modified with increased width in doorways, varied height sinks and toilet stools and showers that provide access to wheelchairs and walkers. Peter also enjoys low-tech modification of common household items to work as effective tools. For example, he describes the use of an ordinary chopping block that is transformed with the insertion of strategically placed nails serving as a sandwich maker or a mixing bowl holder for persons with limited use of upper extremities.

Living with a disability has taught Peter that outreach when a person is encountering new disabilities is important. He commonly visits persons in the hospital who due to changes in their physical capabilities requires modifications at home before they are discharged. He finds these experiences gratifying, not only from an architectural perspective but also on a personal level – "Helping a person with a disability live at home in a comfortable and livable environment independently means the world to me."

Learn more about Peter's company by visiting www.accessarchitectural.com.



NEW 2012-16 STATE PLAN ESTABLISHED

The Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) is expanding efforts to mobilize resources to be used by persons with developmental disabilities and their families.

In its new 2012-16 Five Year State Plan, the ADDPC has established three goals:

- **Employment:** The ADDPC seeks to ensure persons with developmental disabilities have access to employment opportunities that provide them with the type of jobs that match their capabilities and interests, and provides them with wages and benefits that . . .

continued on last page...

SPOTLIGHT ON STAFF

ADDPC's newest Intern is one of Arizona's Heroes



Crystal Nance, an intern currently working with the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC), has a unique perspective on disabilities. Having served 13 months of active duty in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, she witnessed the occurrence of traumatic injuries that altered the lives of civilians and military personnel alike. "I gained a realization of how disabilities can alter your life, and also discovered how personal attitude, support from others and commitment can help deal with life changes." This realization led Crystal to her internship with the ADDPC, which also matches her interest in psychology. Expecting to graduate in 2012, majoring in psychology has allowed *continued on next page...*

LIVING THE GOOD LIFE

Apartment living isn't perfect, but for Laurie Dettinger, her current living arrangements work out pretty well for a woman who is enthusiastic about her work, being involved with the community, and fulfilling her



loves for ice cream and lefse (a Scandinavian potato taste treat that is a cross between a tortilla and a thin pancake.) A Phoenix transplant of six years from the cold, snowy climate of Long Island, New York, Laurie moved with her parents in pursuit of a new job and a place to live. Born with a neurological disorder that affects her balance and cognitive functions, Laurie brought with her a Child Development Diploma that she earned in 2003. "I was qualified to work as

a pre-school teacher in New York," Laurie remembers. Armed with her training and background in working with pre-schoolers, Laurie began the job search circuit, looking for the right job. She found it at a pre-school in Phoenix, who upon interviewing Laurie, hired her as a teacher's assistant within three days of applying. As luck would have it, Laurie found an apartment building within walking distance of her new job, grocery shopping and public transportation, and was able to take important steps in shaping her new life in Phoenix.

For Laurie, reaching the point of independent living was a staged event beginning in New York. "I lived in two different apartments with roommates and had additional help if I needed it," Laurie noted. While adapting to apartment living and being away from the support of her parental home, Laurie took on the additional responsibility of working to earn her way toward independence, sometimes holding two jobs. With the freedom of not working multiple jobs in Phoenix, Laurie has been able to focus on another interest. Following the lead of her mother, who is the CEO of a major animal care and rights organization in Arizona, Laurie dedicates her free time to working in a no-kill animal shelter, caring for and nurturing animals that have been abandoned or given up by their owners. A cat owner herself, Laurie expressed her belief that volunteer work is a way to giving back to not only needy animals, but also the community.

When asked to reflect on past accomplishments leading to her current successes, Laurie presents a small scrapbook filled with photos. She is prominently centered in the pictures in various Tae Kwon Do positions, all demonstrated to earn a 3rd Degree Brown Belt. "I got involved in Tae Kwon Do because I liked the varied positions that could be learned

continued on next page...

continued from previous page...

and because I felt that the program improved my balance." When asked if she is going to build on her Tai Kwon Do accomplishments, Laurie indicated her ongoing interest, but also found that staying focused on her personal religious beliefs, the importance of her family and another passion, reading (she recently acquired a new e-reader), leaves her little time. "I'm pretty busy and like my life," she states proudly.

MEET ED MYERS, ADDPC MEMBER

As the picture attests, Ed Myers has a special place in his life for his pet and companion, "Xena the Warrior Princess." "She's very well-behaved and really gets along well with people and draws plenty of folks to the Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL) table at outreach events," noted Ed when Xena accompanied him to a Council meeting in September.



Not that Ed needs help in supporting his passion of working for persons with developmental disabilities. "I consider advocacy and supporting persons with disabilities my calling", he says. As a lawyer, Ed has practiced his craft in a variety of settings, including the Montana Advocacy Program and

more recently as an attorney for Assistive Technology with the ACDL. Now serving as the Deputy Executive Director of ACDL, Ed has many opportunities on a daily basis to become personally involved in issues that shape the lives of persons with disabilities.

In his roles as both a Council member and Chairperson of the Administrative/Planning Standing Committee, Ed has had an opportunity to apply lessons learned from his career in law and advocacy to the very real issues faced by persons with developmental disabilities. "I think our Committee's involvement this year with the development of the Council's 2012-16 Five Year State Plan has been a turning point. We've initiated a Plan that as it is applied will make a positive difference in the lives of persons as they continue to grow and continue to expand their involvement in the community." Sharing his enthusiasm with other Council members, Ed sums up his feelings about membership on the Council: "I can hardly wait to see us move forward and add more opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities."

SPOTLIGHT ON STAFF (CONT'D)

Crystal to lay plans for her future in working as a clinical or child psychologist. "When I was growing up, we lived near a caregiver who provided services to children and adults with developmental disabilities. I've always felt an urge to work closely with persons with developmental disabilities to both contribute to and learn from their lives." The mother of two children ages 10 and 2, Crystal balances a busy family, academic and intern schedule. In spite of the challenges of fitting everything in to very busy days, Crystal has been an effective contributor to ADDPC activities, and is currently working on an arts project that will be shared with consumers in Arizona in 2012.



HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS



Glendale Enterprise Lofts – Low income housing built with ‘Universal Design’ principles for maximum accessibility.

We all have heard the sayings, “Home is where the heart is”

and “A man’s home is his castle.” A home can mean many things to many people. For instance, for many of the 54 million Americans with disabilities, accessibility is an essential aspect of one’s castle. Yet many in the general public do not realize that accessible features increase safety and convenience for the entire population. Accessible housing is not just for a niche population of persons with disabilities - it benefits all of society.

Currently, if a person with a disability required accessible AND affordable housing they would find the following:

1. None of the 12 Housing Authorities around the Valley are accepting new applications for Section 8 or rental assistance housing.
2. There is no word when any will open up to accepting new applications.
3. All of the Housing Authorities have waiting lists ranging from 1-4 YEARS long, meaning it will be sometime in 2012 – 2015 before your name would come to the top of their waiting lists.

The need is that high and the number of units is that low. Besides depending on rental assistance programs, a person should look at other options such as roommates, check with friends or family for assistance, or look for new job opportunities to increase one’s income.

The second consideration to address aside from affordability is accessibility of housing. We are not making housing the way we did 50 years ago (the lifespan of a home) in 1961. The materials used and safety codes have improved the quality, safety and convenience for not only the families who initially move in, but for all the other families who own the home in future years.

Accessible features no longer look “institutional” in their design as if they stole the blueprints from local hospitals or nursing homes. Today, grab bars for bathroom use come in mauve, taupe and peach colors. (As a guy I don’t know what color mauve or taupe is, and peach is not a color, but a fruit to eat.) Home modifications are more expensive than if the home were built accessible from the start. The cost difference between accessible homes versus one that is not accessible is ONE HALF OF ONE PERCENT (0.5%) when starting from blueprints to receiving the keys to move in!

Modifications that make a difference can include: removing throw rugs, clearing away electrical cords, rearranging furniture, removing stacks or piles of clutter, installing “off-set hinges” to widen the door openings, grab bars, high rise toilets or pedestal sinks.

If you ever watch the History Channel you will see that not every castle looks exactly the same as the others. So you need to make your castle work for you so you can hang your heart there comfortably each night.

By Darrel Christenson
VP/Director of Community Integration
Arizona Bridge to Independent Living

DESERT MISSION CARRIES ON LONG-TRADITION OF DENTAL SERVICES

Ask Kathy Fitzgerald about the spirit of volunteerism and she'll tell you that it's alive and well at the Desert Mission Children's Dental Clinic. With a roster of 65 dentists who volunteer their time, the clinic is known as a landmark program which started in 1927 to address the health and social needs of Phoenix families. As a part of John C. Lincoln Hospitals, Desert Mission and the Children's Dental Clinic now offers service to children and adolescents. "Good oral health is the gateway to overall well-being" says Fitzgerald, the clinic Manager of Volunteer Staffing, who notes that affordable dental services offered by the clinic results in many families coming for care that is important as children develop.



The clinic averages 20 children a day who receive services from a dental team which includes a dental hygienist and a dentist sharing their combined efforts and expertise in meeting diverse dental needs. The clinic also works with the 5% of their patients who have special needs. These consumers have disabilities requiring unique treatment approaches to accommodate both physical and intellectual needs. To support a larger number of community dental professionals in addressing special needs, Desert Mission sponsors ongoing continuing education seminars on specialized dental care, inviting dental hygienists and dentists to participate in two day educational sessions combining both classroom and clinical hands-on experience. The training focuses on specific medical conditions and medications to be considered during treatment and pays special attention to working with patients who have difficulties in cooperating with dental procedures.

Using a combination of funding tools, including AHCCCS for children, dental insurance, and a sliding fee scale based on income, the clinic works diligently to make itself an available resource to the community. If the smiles on the faces of young patients and their parents count as a measure of success, Desert Mission exceeds its efforts in maintaining healthy mouths.

Desert Mission Children's Dental Clinic
9201 North 5th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85020
602/331-5792

continued from cover...

... are appropriate to the duties they perform.

- **Self-Advocacy:** The ADDPC seeks to work collaboratively with persons with developmental disabilities to provide opportunities in developing and expanding skills in self-advocacy to increase capacity and to live with dignity, independence, choice, and full inclusion in the community.
- **Functioning as a Reliable Source of Information:** The ADDPC is working to become an authoritative information source for consumers by utilizing personal staff contact and electronic and printed media to obtain accurate answers to questions key to their needs.

Please visit the ADDPC website (www.azgovernor.gov/DDPC) to learn more about the new State Plan and view other consumer-oriented information.

