

ADVOCACY

People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter



People First *of* Toledo

The Most Disability Friendly City in America?

By Quinn Thomas

For years now, there has been a push to transform Toledo and its surrounding area into "the most disability-friendly community in America." The Commission on Disabilities was created to do that back in 2016. And in 2021, Mayor Kapszukiewicz created the Mayor's Office on Disability, the first one in Ohio-- though other cities in other states had them first.

The Ability Center of Greater Toledo has been leading this charge. Their advocacy leaders are also leaders on the Commission on Disabilities. Major successes include the fully accessible, brand new Glass City Metropark, which includes a paved trail running down both sides of the Maumee River. Another success is that Toledo has been chosen to host the Kennedy Center's

UPCOMING EVENTS

WCBDD COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

June 9, 5:00-8:00, at 1921 E. Gypsy Lane, Bowling Green.

FAMILY AND ADVOCATE FORUM

June 13, 9:30-11:00, at 1154 Larc Lane, Toledo.

GAME NIGHT

June 14, 6:00-8:00, at the Ability Center at 5605, Monroe Street, Sylvania. Ages 18-24.

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY TOLEDO KICKOFF

June 15, 5:30-7:30, at the Glass City Pavilion at 1001 Front Street, Toledo. Organized by MemoryLane Care Services.

TOLEDO AIRPORT EXPERIENCE EVENT

June 19, 10:30, at Eugene F. Kranz Toledo Express Airport at 11013 Airport Highway, Swanton.

Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability Conference in 2024, making Toledo the smallest city to ever host it.

The City of Toledo's government also adopted a disability justice policy framework in 2021, at the urging of the Commission. It's called "the Five I's of Disability Justice." The five I's themselves are involvement, independence, inclusion, implementation, and intersectionality.

But how close are we to reaching that goal of being the most disability friendly community in the nation? Recently, other cities have realized that autistic tourists are an untapped market, and that they would make more money by becoming certified autism-friendly destinations.

Mesa, Arizona and High Point, North Carolina are the only two cities to receive this certification so far. It took dozens of business owners coming together and making changes to get it.

Toledo has not.

Another unaddressed accessibility issue is crosswalks. A local blind woman who chooses to be anonymous reports she was nearly run over 3 times in one day because the inaccessible crosswalks around Navarre Avenue.

Possible solutions that she suggested would be a 3-dimensional touch arrow, rather than one made of blinking lights. Another way to make crosswalks safer would be if they had auditory announcements. What if crosswalks could say a recording of "wait" or "go" so that blind people could access them the same way seeing people can? What if they responded to voice commands like a phone does? That would help people who don't have the motor control to press the button too.

Toledo is not the most disability friendly city in America, but there are things we could do to get there.

OUR NEXT MEETING

June 21st, 6:00-8:00, virtually on Zoom or in-person at the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland, 6705 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland. No dues will be collected.

This meeting is our LGBTQ + Disability Intersectionality Panel, in honor of Pride Month. Panelists with both identities will discuss their unique and shared experiences.