



Dear Friend of DFC,

Although a killer virus has turned the world upside down, and COVID-19 now dominates the news and social media, many people had originally anticipated 2020 as a year of great celebration as our community came together to observe the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The pandemic alters the festivities many of us planned, but it should not rob us of coalescing in spirit around the ADA and the hope and progress that the 1990 law represents. With that in mind, the Disability Friendly Community of the Lehigh Valley presents to you three opportunities.

The landmark federal legislation gave people with disabilities access to opportunities and physical space long denied or out of reach. Attitudes take longer to change. While the ADA established standards for employment, housing, transportation and how our physical environment is constructed, the legislation

cannot so easily change minds.

The ADA may have banished the exclusion and segregation of people with disabilities, and since the ADA, people with disabilities may be more integrated and included in society. But are they always welcomed?

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ADA and push the bar higher, the Disability Friendly Community of the Lehigh Valley is promoting the idea that **people with disabilities BELONG!**

Belonging means you are welcomed. It means you are known and accepted, valued and appreciated, befriended and loved — a member not by special consideration but in equal standing, a participant by right.

To speak with a louder voice, the Disability Friendly Community encourages your agency to integrate the theme “People With Disabilities Belong” in whatever commemorations you plan this year to observe the ADA anniversary. Please feel free to use the graphic materials and content which accompany this letter to shape your message and engage your constituents during this anniversary year and in the years to come. DFC encourages you to communicate ways we can work together to promote this theme.

[Download Graphic Materials](#)

The Disability Friendly Community also encourages you to sign on to DFC’s Affirmation of Belonging found on our website, www.DFCLV.org and initiate your own call to action among your circle of consumers, caregivers, advocates and associates. DFC will be promoting the idea that People With Disabilities Belong in letters to the editor and in our own marketing campaign.

Sign DFC's Affirmation of Belonging

Finally, you can share stories about how the ADA has impacted you or people you know. You will find a growing list of personal accounts at DFCLV.org. Consider adding your own testimony and help make the ADA anniversary a community celebration.

The Americans with Disabilities Act opened a pathway to a more accessible world. It is our responsibility to make sure that people with disabilities find a welcoming place when they get there.

dfclv.org/people-disabilities-belong/

Sincerely,

Andrew Block, Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, DFC Convener

Robert H. Wittman, Jr., Housing Association & Development Corporation, Former DFC Convener

Nelvin Vos, Founding Convener, Disability Friendly Community

Amy Beck, Center for Independent Living

Randall Forte, Lehigh Valley Arts Council

Jan Haley-Schwoyer, Advocate, Former DFC Convener

Kim Melusky, *PA Link to Aging & Disability Resources*

Sr. Janice Johnson, *Advocate*

Kerri DiDario, *Eastern PA Down Syndrome Center*

Tim Boyer, *Retired MH/ID/D&A/EI Administrator*

Sue Firman, *Advocate*

Senator Bob Mensch, *Senate of Pennsylvania, 24th District*

Doug Yingling, *Center for Vision Loss*

Dennis Zehner, *Center for Vision Loss*