

# EVANSTON ROUNDTABLE

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Tuesday, August 03, 2010

## Evanston and Skokie Celebrate 20th Anniversary of ADA

By Anna Sanders

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To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the cities of Evanston and Skokie hosted a joint conference last Thursday, which featured roundtable discussions on various topics regarding living with disabilities. The conference, held at the Levy Senior Center, also included a panel discussion with members of the business community, who discussed the benefits of employing people with disabilities.

Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl and Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen opened the conference by discussing the positive impact the ADA has had on the cities' communities.

"The ADA has transformed America in a most positive way. ... It deserves celebration," Mayor Van Dusen said. "[It] educates the rest of us on problems that people with disabilities have." Mayor Tisdahl cited several examples of the positive impact the ADA has had in Evanston. One such instance, she said, was when King Lab School students, while designing their playground, wanted wider sidewalks. "They wanted space to walk alongside their friend in a wheelchair," she said.

The roundtable discussions included transition from high school to adulthood, held by Jane Doyle, Social Security and work incentives, held by Karl Gillespie, life planning, held by Eric Parker and Nancy Flowers, and transportation issues, held by Michael VanDekreke of the RTA and Rocky Donahue of Pace.

In accordance with the ADA, the RTA of Chicago and Pace offer accessible transit, established an ADA Paratransit, have travel training for those eligible for ADA Paratransit and has an ADA Advisory Committee.

In a statement about the anniversary, Rep. Jan Schakowsky said, "Since ADA's passage, we have taken many steps to build on its foundation – and we've accomplished many of our goals in recent years."



Jane Doyle, executive director of Center for Independent Futures, chats with CIF client Jennifer McCarron at a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Dr. Doyle led a roundtable discussion on helping young adults transition to life after high school.

To conclude her opening statement at the conference, Mayor Tisdahl said, “I worry about the state of our economy... but I know that with our citizens, the spirit of the ADA is alive and well.

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