

## **Email Interview with Museum of DisABILITY Director Douglas Farley**

May 12, 2015

**Mila:** What is the importance of visibility for people with disabilities for the overall progress of people with disabilities in society? How does the Museum of Disability History seek to raise awareness of the issues facing people with disabilities today?

**Mr. Farley:** For too many years, “out of sight-out of mind,” seemed to be the overarching dilemma facing people with disabilities (PWD.) Society knew a better response was needed, but didn’t know what to do, so to settle its conscience, PWD were sent off to institutions or cloistered at home. Improving visibility will help society realize that we aren’t talking about a small minority of the population. One statistic I read stated that worldwide, this overwhelming minority actually is composed of over a billion people, larger than the population of China. The Museum of disABILITY History has as a key tenant of its mission, to increase understanding (and acceptance) of PWD. We work to achieve visibility which will lead to greater understanding through regular programming including community events that highlight speakers on a broad range of topics related to disabilities.

**Mila:** When analyzing the entire history of disability rights in the United States, would you consider the Americans with Disabilities Act a turning point in disability rights history?

**Mr. Farley:** Turning point, yes, but still a long way to go to be within eyesight of the finish line. Millions of people are leading better lives today in this country because of changes that occurred on July 26, 1990.

**Mila:** The theme for this year's competition is "Leadership and Legacy in History." Do you believe the Americans with Disabilities Act exemplifies leadership and legacy? In what ways?

**Mr. Farley:** I feel the countless individuals who worked behind the scenes and in front of the cameras to bring about the passage of the ADA exhibited tremendous leadership and have created a legacy of accomplishment within the disability community. The task was herculean, and even today, many would call it an impossibility. Post 1990, another set of leaders has emerged to see that the ADA is universally accepted and applied across the country. We owe them all a huge amount of gratitude for their unbelievable efforts extended on our behalf to make America a more accepting and inclusive society.