

Accessibility
A BlazeSports Case Study

October 2011



It has been more than a year since BlazeSports relocated its headquarters to Decatur, Georgia, which is enough time to see what a difference a place makes. National Disability Employment Awareness Month seems as good an occasion as any to discuss what we've learned about workplace accessibility during the intervening months.

An accessible workplace is not just one that provides the ramps, elevators, and wide doorways that help persons with disabilities get in and out of the office. These things are important, of course, and contrary to popular misconceptions, can be implemented quite cheaply. But the most state-of-the-art ramp in the world doesn't do much good if people can't get to the office in the first place. Though many people with disabilities can and do drive cars, some have physical restrictions that prevent them from doing so. And since unemployment is troublingly high amongst people with disabilities, others don't have the financial resources with which to buy a car even if they could drive.

With this in mind, BlazeSports chose to locate its new office near the MARTA train system. We have watched as this location, in and of itself, has augmented our ability to serve Atlanta's disability community. Many who could not visit our offices in the past now can. This proximity to public transportation should be factored in by all organizations seeking to serve those with disabilities. Something as simple as being near a bus or a subway line can make the difference between empowering individuals to work with you and unintentionally excluding them. Also to this end, we have also introduced the BlazeSports accessible bus and trailer, our "mobile unit," so to speak. This has allowed us to transport people and equipment into the communities where people live, work, and play.

We are proud of what we have accomplished, and we challenge other community organizations to follow suit. We are developing resources to support initiatives to address these structural components of accessibility by encouraging public transportation and promoting best practice in the design of workplaces. And we applaud other efforts like Easter Seals Project Action who are working toward accessible public transit. By taking on the accessibility issues that persist in this country, we can help pave the way for a more equitable tomorrow. For more information on working for policy and system change, please check out the training tools portion of our website.