

## **Disability Awareness**

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In order to bring more awareness to disability related issues I would like to discuss ways that everyone and especially businesses can make themselves more accessible for people with disabilities. It's hard for the average person to really know the struggles that someone with a disability faces nearly every day.

For example, a business may truly believe that their business is wheelchair accessible but may not realize that a 2-3 inch “bump” into a building can be a huge burden. As a wheelchair user, things like small steps can prevent me from visiting a business or establishment. They are not only a burden to wheelchair users but also people with other types of disabilities.

There are also many other things that we need to be aware of such as parking, ramps, isle widths etc... As a wheelchair user I can't even count how many times I've been in businesses where it is nearly impossible to navigate through. Even isles and pathways with a few more added inches can make a huge difference. I might also add that these things even prevent challenges for those not in wheelchairs but might be using crutches, or a walker etc... Parking and ramps should also be accessible. Often times they become blocked or unusable for many different users. Ensuring they are open and easily accessible will make your business more inviting. This issue becomes even more troublesome during the winter months when snow and ice need to be removed. I've noticed snow and ice will be removed from one area but piled in an area that limits the access for people with disabilities. I understand this can create more work but it really is necessary in order to give everyone the same opportunities.

I encourage everyone to take a look around and try to imagine if there is anything that can be done to make it easier for those with disabilities. I even encourage home owners to check sidewalks in their areas and make sure that curbs and other ramps are clean and free of debris. As for businesses, I hope that you'll take a few moments to look around and see what improvements can be made. If you're unsure what could be done, contact the Uinta County Business Leadership Network at 783-6302 or invite someone with a disability to visit your business and together changes can be made that will benefit everyone.