

Kent's Korner
CEO Kent J. Blumenthal, Ph.D., CAE
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Sesame Street

**"Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows."
-- Helen Keller**

Kent's Korner is back, and of course, chock full of special thoughts and ideas to share. 😊

To loyal followers of Kent's Korner (whoever and how many of you there are!), I offer a humble apology for a delay in getting never ending thoughts and perspectives about GVR to you.

The motorcycle accident that my wife and I were in on November 18 (I cannot believe that it happened almost one month ago) dictates a rather slow and steady recovery for both of us. Before I go on, I wish to extend our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the outpouring of well-wishes for a speedy recovery from so many GVR members and Green Valley residents and business leaders. We are touched by your concern and support and determined to maintain a positive attitude; with your help we are healing and mending each day.

My most pressing infirmities include injuries to my left foot, left knee and right hand. I hobble around on crutches most every day; in my home, I use a wheelchair when possible.

Interestingly, the not-so-pleasant experience of the motorcycle accident has offered an opportunity to view my environment and the world around me from a new perspective. In grad school while studying for a Master's Degree in therapeutic recreation at the University of Maryland-College Park, I worked with special populations, including physically and emotionally-challenged adults and children. Faculty and students would often refer to themselves as 'TABs'... 'Temporarily Able Bodied' persons. Now I get it.

No matter how sensitized I believed I was to the special needs of these individuals, there is no amount of empathy I may have that could supplant walking a mile in their shoes. At this moment in my life I cannot drive and I look for handicapped entrances before entering any building. Sidewalk grades and slopes matter. Bathrooms with doors that close quickly behind you or are difficult to open make for awkward shuffling and hopping-around to avoid getting pinched by the door or knocked over.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H. W. Bush. In brief, the ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, and imposes accessibility requirements on public accommodations. I always felt that signing the ADA into law would be our 41st president's most notable accomplishment. Upon his passing just two weeks ago on November 30, 2018, I still feel the same way.

In reality, the ADA was a tough pill to swallow for some public agencies, including local and county park and recreation departments. New construction would need to be reconfigured to make buildings more accessible to physically disabled persons, often at higher costs.

In the '90s, I directed the National Executive Development School for parks and recreation professionals in Albuquerque, New Mexico, presented by the National Recreation and Park Association. I taught at the School, too. I remember the year when ADA compliance obligations began, and the complaints and worry of parks and recreation department personnel about their ability to pay for the new ADA-related costs. Likely, GVR was not immune from implementation and funding concerns regarding ADA either.

At GVR, we are aware of our obligation to ADA rules when remodeling older facilities and contemplating new construction, and I am pleased to report that GVR is fully compliant with existing ADA laws.

Even so, my first-hand experience over the past couple of weeks with more than a few ambulatory struggles has enlightened me that more can be done.

I have confidence that over time my wife and I will heal just fine. But it is a sure thing that GVR has hundreds of members with long-term physical challenges who could benefit from elementary modifications to some of our facilities that will help them better enjoy recreation experiences and optimize their quality of life.

A GVR Board ad hoc subcommittee is focused on doing just that: taking a hands-on look all across our GVR campus to see what might be done to make it just a little bit easier for people who are physically challenged to get around. I explained yesterday to committee chairperson Sandra Thornton that I would like to join her committee as they make looksee rounds on GVR's campus.

It is the right time of year to be thinking about helping others, even as we help ourselves.

Thank you and stay well.

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