Media Coverage FYI . Voice: 208-388-3800 . Fax: 208-388-8898 . info@peyron.com . www.peyron.com

SCOTT PEYRON & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Editorial page editor Kevin Richert
Phone: 377-6437
E-mail: editorial@idahostatesman.com

EDITORIAL

READER'S VIEW

Buckland to receive human rights award for disability activism

LESLIE GODDARD

When tested by an enormous life challenge, there are several paths from which to choose. You can choose the route that avoids the obstacle and its difficulties; or you can choose to confront the challenge and gain strength in your defiance. Our world is a better place because Kelly Buckland chose the latter path.

Thirty-five years ago this summer, Kelly and his friends were enjoying an idyllic eastern Idaho afternoon — jumping from a bridge into a chilly creek. On Kelly's last jump he struck the bottom of the creek bed and suffered a spinal cord injury. He has used a wheelchair ever since. The accident may have compromised his body, but it definitely emboldened his spirit, transforming Kelly into one of the nation's leading advocates in the disability rights movement.

It seems Kelly was destined to be a state and national advocate for people with disabilities. In a cosmic turn of events, the American Disabilities Act was passed 20 years to the day of his accident. Kelly was involved in that landmark legislation and has played a role in numerous public policy decisions in the decades since that fateful summer afternoon.

I have known Kelly since I began working with the state of Idaho in the late '70s, and I can't remember a time when he wasn't making his voice heard as a strong advocate for disability rights. As the executive director for the Idaho State Independent Living Council and the vice president of the National Council on Independent Living, Kelly has been instrumental in influencing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Aging and Disabled Waiver services, FAMILY Committee legislation, Idaho Personal Care Services Act and most recently — the Idahoans with Disabilities Act. Idahoans and the nation have also benefited greatly from his increased efforts as a coalition-builder.

Kelly Buckland

It is one thing to have an idea and to put all your effort towards getting your voice heard. It is quite another to channel your energies into gathering a variety of voices and ideas — to pursue inclusion while promoting change. Kelly's work ethic and willingness to bring everyone into the conversation makes him a wonderful model for anyone seeking to affect public policy on human rights issues. His tenacity and perseverance in seeking compromise and getting to the goal is equally inspiring.

Kelly's co-workers at the Idaho State Independent Living Council bear witness to his ability to inspire others to action, relating stories of the calls that come in from people across the country seeking guidance and advice. It is good counsel that Kelly is more than willing to share in order to help further the message of diversity and inclusion.

It is for his work as a tireless advocate and coalition-builder that HP will honor Kelly Buckland with the 2005 Distinguished Leadership in Human Rights Award on May 24. It is a well-received recognition for a lifetime of advocacy. In accepting the award, Kelly joins an esteemed list of Idaho human rights leaders, including Dr. Said Ahmed-Zaid, 2004; Sam Byrd, 2003; Estella Zamora, 2002; former Idaho Gov. Philip E. Batt, 2001; Cherie Buckner-Webb, 2000; the Rev. Dr. Nancy S. Taylor, 1999; and Marilyn Shuler, 1998.

By acknowledging disability rights as a civil rights issue with this year's award, the employees of HP continue to pursue a path as ideological leaders of the nation, shining a light on all human rights issues.

Leslie Goddard is director of the Idaho Commission on Human Rights.