Reminders for Interacting with a Person who has a Disability

* When walking with a person who has crutches, a cane, walker, wheelchair, or slower gait, adjust your pace to theirs.
* Do not proceed to assist if your offer to assist is declined. If your offer is accepted, listen to and accept instructions.
* When addressing a person who uses a wheelchair never lean on or hang on the wheelchair as the chair is considered part of their personal space.
* Don’t be embarrassed when a person with a speech impairment addresses you. Give your attention to listening. Do not pretend to understand if you don’t. It’s okay to ask them to repeat.
* Let a blind person know when you will be moving from one place to another and don’t leave them on their own without saying so.
* Stifle your urge to finish the sentence of someone who speaks slowly or with difficulty.
* To get the attention of someone with a hearing impairment, tap them lightly on the shoulder or wave your hand.
* Make sure you face someone with a hearing loss so they can read your lips, if possible. Brief, concise written notes may be helpful when all else fails.
* Let a blind person know when you need to end the conversation.
* If you see someone struggling to lift, pour or reach something, offer to help but respect their wishes if they choose to do it by themselves.
* When talking with someone seated in a wheelchair, try to get on their level by either sitting in a nearby chair or kneeling down next to the chair to visit at eye level.
* When directing a blind customer to a specific area, offer your arm to them and give verbal cues such as, “We will turn left here to go down the aisle” or “there is a small step down ahead”.
* If it seems a customer is confused or unable to comprehend, explain things again simply but without condescension. Ask different questions, if needed.

Bear River Regional Access and Mobility Council 435-752-7242

www.bearrivermobility.org