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Press Release

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Alaska ADA Program Uses Humor to Focus its Message

JUNEAU, Alaska—The state's Americans with Disabilities Act Program is using humor to focus on its message that disabilities are no longer called "handicaps" and that access is key to helping people with disabilities succeed.

The ADA Program was recently recognized with a Goldie Award from the Alaska Broadcaster's Association for its non-commercial ad about disability access. The spot shows a blind "pilot," played by comedian Alex Valdez, "driving" into an accessible parking space and pulling his gear from the trunk to "take off" in a float plane.

"It was the first time I'd seen a large audience view the ad – all the hard work paid off," said State ADA Coordinator Jason Burke, who created the spot and received the award in front of roughly 500 professionals at an awards banquet that paid tribute to broadcasters, stations, programs and talents.

"With technology, people who are visually impaired will one day be able to drive and perhaps even fly. Technology improvements affect everyone on every level, and designing for differences helps everyone participate," Burke said. "As Alaska's population gets older and veterans return, access improvements are even more critical."

The Office of the Governor's communications team helped produce the commercial two years ago. Joe Page contributed the music from his "Mando" CD. Nellie Moore narrated. People in the disability community provided input and played parts. Ric Nelson from the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education drove his power chair over a berm while David Barton from Access Alaska parked the car.

"It's a message that people need to hear and adds value to community programming," ABA's Executive Director Darlene Simono said. Sixty-seven Alaska radio and TV stations aired the accessibility ads in the spring under ABA's Community Voice program.

The spot and award information are online at <http://Labor.Alaska.Gov/ADA/bpga.htm>.

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Americans with Disabilities Act Program
<http://Labor.Alaska.Gov/ADA>