

Newsletter

Gail Hamilton: Changing Lives, Providing a New Prospective



Gail Hamilton was the Disability in Action keynote speaker July 23, 2026 at the Hilton Garden Inn Abilene, as we celebrated 36 years of the American's with Disabilities Act.

Gail is a highly acclaimed professional speaker, singer, musician, and author. She shares her message of bravery, empowerment, gratitude, and positivity to audiences nationwide.

Born ten weeks premature and weighing a mere 2.5 pounds, Gail Hamilton and her twin brother lived in separate incubators for six weeks with continual 100% pure oxygen. Though her twin was not affected, this high oxygen level damaged Gail's eyes and left her with partial vision. It was during elementary school that her eyes developed cataracts; decreasing sight to total blindness. Becoming totally blind is when Gail's imagination and inner vision took flight. During this time of transformation, classical music became the center of her world.

Despite personal challenges in her life, in High School Gail discovered her passion for singing and continued her mastery of piano. Gail has taught piano lessons for nearly 40 years! She graduated college with a degree in Voice, and then obtained her Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance and Master of Arts degree in Transpersonal Psychology.

Gail changed from being a victim of her own circumstances to becoming the creator of her destiny. She stopped blaming and started taking responsibility, aligned totally with faith, attitude, and action.

Gail has remained strong and unstoppable. She has contributed to the building of her own Habitat for Humanity house, written and published a memoir, *Soaring into Greatness*, a Blind Woman's Vision to Live her Dreams and Fly, and become Ms. Colorado Senior America (2013) and Fourth Runner-Up in the National, Ms. Senior America Pageant. Gail is co-author, along with Louise Hay, of *Speaking Your Truth*, a Woman's Anthology, Volume Three and *Modern Day Miracles*.

It was such a pleasure to get to know Gail while she was here for our event. Understanding blindness helps us all to better understand our neighbor. We are different, but we all have dreams for our lives. Gail's presentation was inspiring and encouraging.



Celebrating 36 Years of the ADA!

Hilton Garden Inn July 23, 2026



We all make choices every day.

What if you couldn't?

What if that power was never given to you?



People with disabilities face this challenge.

Make a difference in your life or the life of someone you love.

We need YOU!!!! All are welcome
Become an Officer or Board Member



Contact: leah.beltran@disabilityinaction.org

Or call Leah Beltran at (325) 672-5460

The American's with Disabilities Act and The Olmstead Act

Why are they important?

What is the American's with Disabilities Act?

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** is a U.S. federal civil rights law that was signed in **1990**. It prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and helps ensure they have the same opportunities and access as everyone else in areas such as employment, government services, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. [\[ada.gov\]](#), [\[ada.gov\]](#)

Who is protected?

The ADA generally protects individuals who:

- Have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- Have a history or record of such an impairment.

Are regarded as having such an impairment. [\[ada.gov\]](#), [\[justice.gov\]](#)

What does the ADA cover?

The ADA is divided into several sections, called **Titles**:

Title I – Employment: Employers with 15 or more employees cannot discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities and may need to provide reasonable accommodations. [\[adata.org\]](#)

Title II – State and Local Government Services: Government agencies must make their programs, services, and activities accessible. [\[adata.org\]](#), [\[ada.gov\]](#)

Title III – Public Accommodations: Businesses open to the public, such as restaurants, hotels, stores, and medical offices, must provide equal access. [\[adata.org\]](#), [\[ada.gov\]](#)

Title IV – Telecommunications: Requires telecommunications services for people with hearing or speech disabilities. [\[justice.gov\]](#)

Title V – Miscellaneous Provisions: Contains additional protections and enforcement provisions. [\[justice.gov\]](#)

Examples of reasonable accommodations

Depending on the situation, accommodations might include:

- Wheelchair-accessible entrances or restrooms.
- Sign language interpreters.
- Modified work schedules.
- Accessible websites or documents.

Specialized equipment or software. [\[ada.gov\]](#), [\[adata.org\]](#)

Why is the ADA important?

The **ADA** is often considered one of the most significant civil rights laws in the United States because it helps people with disabilities participate fully in everyday life, including working, attending school, accessing government services, and using public facilities. [\[ada.gov\]](#), [\[justice.gov\]](#)

The Olmstead Act

The **Olmstead Act** is a term many people use when referring to the **Olmstead v. L.C.** Supreme Court decision from **June 22, 1999**, rather than an actual federal law. The decision is one of the most important disability rights rulings in U.S. history. [archive.ada.gov](https://www.archive.ada.gov/), [hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/)

What did the Olmstead decision say?

The Supreme Court ruled that **unnecessarily keeping people with disabilities in institutions is a form of discrimination** under **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Public entities must provide services in the **most integrated setting appropriate** when:

1. Community-based services are appropriate,
 2. The person does not oppose receiving services in the community, and
- The services can be reasonably accommodated considering available resources. [archive.ada.gov](https://www.archive.ada.gov/), [hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/)

Why is it important?

The Olmstead decision supports the right of people with disabilities to:

- Live in their own homes or community settings rather than institutions when appropriate.
 - Receive community-based services and supports.
- Participate in everyday community life, including work, education, and social activities. [ada.gov](https://www.ada.gov/), [archive.ada.gov](https://www.archive.ada.gov/)

Who was involved?

The case involved **Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson**, two women with mental illness and developmental disabilities who remained in a Georgia state hospital even after professionals determined they could be served in community settings. They sued under the ADA and ultimately won in the Supreme Court. [archive.ada.gov](https://www.archive.ada.gov/)

Connection to the ADA

Americans with Disabilities Act, the Olmstead decision is often called the ADA's "integration mandate" because it reinforced the principle that people with disabilities should have opportunities to live and receive services in their communities rather than being unnecessarily segregated. [ada.gov](https://www.ada.gov/), [archive.ada.gov](https://www.archive.ada.gov/)

***The Department of Justice is scaling back it's enforcement of the Olmstead Act. Many disability rights advocates are concerned that this could mean less pressure to move people from nursing homes and state hospitals into the community.**

Early voting begins in October! Call the Center if you need help to register.

New Hours at the Center

For the safety of our staff and consumers,

We have new office hours as of

August 1, 2026

Monday-Thursday 8:00 am to 5:30 pm

Friday 8:00 am to 12:00

Computer Lab Coming soon!



Look for classes to begin in September

Lab will be open for use on Wednesdays 10-4

Come walk where it's cool!



Sign up for a time to walk on the treadmill

Monday-Thursday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Call us

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If you...

- **Are a resident of Texas**
- **Are living in the community**
- **Need assistance to improve your independence in your home and your community**



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Find us on Facebook!
Disability in Action, Inc.



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Hours of Operation: Monday—Thursday 8:00 am to 5:30 pm
Friday 8:00 am to 12:00 noon
Accessible entrances at the front and the back of the building