



City of New Bern

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Three Centuries of North Carolina Heritage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Bern Becomes First City in North Carolina to Support Accessible Icon Project

Community invited to first parking lot repainting Tuesday at Noon

Handicap accessibility signs in New Bern are getting a new look, thanks to a Harvard graduate student and her North Carolina friend.

Sara Hendren, a graduate student at the Harvard School of Design, set out to modernize the International Symbol of Access into an image that reflects an active lifestyle. She thought the old access icon looked too “mechanical and static,” and knew many wheelchair users are anything but. She co-created a new image that depicts a life in motion, and the idea and icon took hold in a young man she met in Boston, Massachusetts.

Brendon Hildreth is 23 years-old and has cerebral palsy. He often uses a wheelchair. He and his family have relocated from Boston – where they met Sara - to New Bern, North Carolina. But a major move didn't stop Brendon from launching a grassroots campaign to change international perception and launch the Accessible Icon Project. Last month, Brendon, his family, and his Volunteer Assistant, Don Haines, presented and explained the Accessible Icon Project to the New Bern Board of Aldermen. Brendon used a special touch-screen, voice computer to share his idea with Mayor Bettis and the Board, and asked for support and a commitment to change over city parking lots and signs to reflect the new icon. After his presentation, Aldermen Sabrina Bengel encouraged the City to explore the idea further and consider getting involved.

Thanks to a community partnership between the New Bern Police Department, Public Works, Customer Service, and the Hildreths, the City of New Bern will become the first city in North Carolina to publicly show its support for Brendon's project. Mayor Pro Temp Sabrina Bengel and City staff, with help from Brendon and his family, will repaint the first handicap parking spots at the City's **Customer Service** building located at **606 Fort Totten Drive**. The ceremony and repainting will take place on **Tuesday, October 1st at noon**. The painting of the parking spaces coincides with a parking lot renovation that began last month.

According to www.accessibleicon.org, other cities around the country have already adopted the new accessible icon, including New York City, NY; Malden, MA; Burlington, MA; and El Paso and Austin, TX. The Accessible Icon Project was also featured on ABC's “Good Morning America” earlier this summer.

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