

The Daily Times

Ottawa, Illinois

Friday, December 27, 1991 147th Year—304th Day

35 Cents

Ottawa is 'a plus' for disabled

By JoANN MUSTIS
Staff Writer

Ottawa's Robb Young says the city's small town environment is a plus for the handicapped.

"This is probably as good a town as any for disabled people," he said. "The curbs are easy to negotiate with a wheelchair. And if you have a problem, people offer to help. This is truly a friendly city."

Young uses crutches after a crippling accident and bone fusion several years ago. He said many disabled people will appreciate the effect of the Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law by President Bush last year.

The law requires accessibility to public buildings and transportation facilities and ends job

■ WHAT ARE THE RAMIFICATIONS of the Americans with Disabilities Act? Page 7.

discrimination on grounds of disability. Illinois has had similar, but not as comprehensive, legislation in place since 1984.

Young has found most local public buildings accessible, with the exception of City Hall and the 3rd District Appellate Court because of their long flights of stairs.

"I don't know how a disabled person would enter them," he said. "I've never tried. But it's easy to get in the downtown courthouse, which has an elevator and special access walkway. And the grocery stores have automatic doors.

"Many times people offer to help

do your shopping. One grocer will deliver necessities to your home if you are handicapped."

Compliance with ADA could be costly for some building owners, Young said.

"I get upset about a flight of stairs, for instance, but with the current economic situation, I can see where businesses would be reluctant about complying. I wouldn't insist on their remodeling to accommodate me," he said.

"It would be costly if everyone were to follow the law to a T. The state isn't even able to meet some of its payrolls now. To revamp all public buildings to provide access would be expensive. It may have to be phased in over a 10-year period."

Snow piled along curbs can pre-

sent hardships to the disabled, Young said.

"Climbing over it to get into a car can be hard. But where else can you put the snow? I hitchhike around town a lot because my spending money is limited.

"You'd be surprised at the people who stop. A guy in a Lincoln Continental gave me a ride last week. I was standing next to a mud puddle and my shoes were dirty. He said, 'Get in. It's only a car.'" Young said.

"Once a businessman from Chicago picked me up. He said teenagers are murdered hitchhiking in his city. He took me to the foot doctor's office, then came back for me. He said he didn't want to read about me being murdered."