



BHC-MSS 0084

## Guide to the Records of Equal Access Concerns for the Handicapped

By Meg Rinn

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### **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Equal Access Concerns for the Handicapped

**Title:** Records of Equal Access Concerns for the Handicapped

**Dates:** 1963-1980

**Quantity:** 3 manuscript boxes

**Abstract:** Founded in 1973 by Ruth Gregory and Hellen Wallat, the Equal Access Concerns for the Handicapped (EACH) focused on the needs of wheelchair users and others with mobility limitations in Fairfield County. The collection's comprehensive scrapbooks created by Gregory show the slow but steady progress the group made towards greater accessibility prior to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

### **Administrative History**

Founded in 1973 by Ruth Gregory and Hellen Wallat, the Equal Access Concerns for the Handicapped (EACH) focused on the needs of wheelchair users and others with mobility limitations in Fairfield County. The group began as a part of Gregory's work for the Easter Seals during the 1960s and into the 1970s which focused on the removal of architectural barriers for those in wheelchairs.

Prior to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, there was no legal requirement for public spaces to provide access for those with mobility devices. As such, the fight to remove architectural barriers was a focus of the disability activism movement.

EACH was incredibly active on a local level during the mid-1970s and into the 1980s. Gregory's earliest work to remove barriers was at the Polka Dot Playhouse in Stratford in the 1960s, which worked with her to provide ramps. As the scrapbooks conclude in 1980, around the year of donation, it's unclear how long EACH continued its work.

Ruth Gregory herself was born in 1915, and died in October of 2010. A wheelchair user herself due to polio, Gregory's fierce advocacy and careful work in documenting EACH's work is excellent for studying the disability rights movement prior to the passage of ADA.

Hellen Wallat was born in 1912 and died in 2004. In addition to her involvement with EACH, she worked as the executive director of the Evelyn Kennedy Center for the Mentally Retarded in Bridgeport, founded the first private home for autistic adults in the state, and acted as the project director for the Connecticut Association for Autistic Adults

**Scope and Content note:**

Ruth Gregory was an exemplary historian, and documented the group's activities through comprehensive newspaper clipping scrapbooks. Most of the articles highlight the ramps and doors that the group was able to install all over Fairfield County, as well as their work to provide local bus access. Also documented is the group's participation at a national level about accessibility.

The scrapbooks conclude in the year 1980, likely around the time of donation. The additional material including the flyers emphasizing the Polka Dot Playhouse's accessibility help to highlight how essential and important being aware of what places had architectural barriers removed was prior to the passage of ADA.

**Arrangement Note:**

Series 1 focuses on correspondence between Gregory, Wallat, EACH as a whole and other stake holders in the community including architectural firms, government officials, and individuals.

Series 2 features some early handbills relating to the Polka Dot Playhouse's accessibility and other means of promoting the need for barrier removal.

Series 3, the scrapbooks, is the largest section of the collection and the most important as it contains continuous documentation of EACH's work in barrier removal, local transit accessibility, and the participation of members at the state and national level.

**Administrative information:**

**Provenance:** Gift of Ruth Gregory.

**Preferred Citation:**

Records of Equal Access Concerns for the Handicapped (BHC-MSS 0084) Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

**Names and Subject Tracings***Personal names*

Gregory, Ruth  
Wallat, Helen

*Corporate names*

Equal Access Concerns for the Handicapped  
Polka Dot Playhouse (Stratford, Conn.)  
United States. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

*Subject tracings*

Barrier-free design  
Local transit accessibility  
People with disabilities

**Detailed box and folder listing**

Series 1 Correspondence  
Box 1

1. Correspondence, 1965-1972

2. Correspondence, 1973
3. Correspondence, 1974
4. Correspondence, 1975
5. Correspondence, 1976
6. Barrier removal correspondence, 1975-1976
7. Barrier removal correspondence, 1975-1976

Series 2, Documents

8. Handbills and documents related to barrier removal, 1963-1978
9. Handbills and documents related to barrier removal, 1963-1978
10. Awards, 1972-1973

Series 3, Scrapbooks

11. Scrapbook, 1963-1975
12. Scrapbook, 1965-1975

Box 2

1. Scrapbook, 1974-1975
2. Scrapbook, 1975-1976
3. Scrapbook, 1976-1977

Box 3

1. Scrapbook, 1977
2. Scrapbook, 1977-1978
3. Scrapbook, 1978-1980