

THE LARGEST MINORITY

Chattanooga, TN

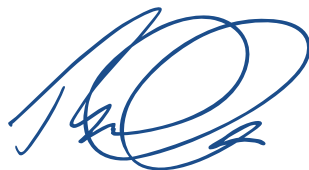
Summer, 1990

In 1990, to many people living and working with disabilities in Chattanooga, public transportation was anything but fair and equitable. In this southern Tennessee city, most with disabilities relied on Easter Seal's para-transit system to get to their destinations, including to and from work. At the time, the system was notoriously unreliable, with late, missed, or cancelled rides commonplace, resulting in many employed individuals being fired for repetitively being late to work. It also required booking rides two weeks ahead of one's need date!

On a warm summer day, activists with disabilities, their friends, families, and fellow advocates gathered outside the Easter Seals transportation building. The intent of the protest was to raise awareness of the problem and push Easter Seals in particular, and the city of Chattanooga to improve access and reliability to public transit for people with disabilities.

In this photo, Michael Gibson, then Director of the local Center for Independent Living in Chattanooga, hoists his fist in the air as everyone chants, "We will ride! We will ride! We will ride!"

As a result of this action, people with disabilities all but abandoned Easter Seals' ride service, moving to CARTA, Chattanooga's public transportation system, whose staff became very supportive, adapting buses quickly.



Tom Olin Collection