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Attorney makes Indy a good fit for disabled

Conseco Fieldhouse set new standards for accessibility for disabled people. Lucas Oil Stadium will, too, when it opens, and so will the new midfield terminal at Indianapolis International Airport.

Attorney **Greg Fehribach** is the common link. Disabled since birth with osteogenesis imperfecta, or brittle-bone disease, he combined his personal experience and training as a lawyer into a nifty consulting business.

Nearly every new public building here in the last decade has Fehribach's imprint as a result.

"The kind of thing we've been able to do with Greg is make accessibility part of the design as opposed to an afterthought," said **Bill Browne**, president of Ratio Architects.

You won't find grand staircases in the new projects. And no narrow ramps. Architects, engineers and building owners want to do more than just comply with federal regulations.

They've come to appreciate Fehribach's desire for people with disabilities to be on par with everyone else. That's especially true of an aging population that demands equal access, too. "The goal is to have everyone come in through the same front door," Fehribach said.

How does an attorney become the go-to man for making buildings accessible?

"My father, brother and sister are engineers," Fehribach said. Another brother is in construction. "It's in the blood, but I always wanted to be a lawyer."

In the mid-1990s Fehribach noticed the spate of lawsuits filed under the Americans with Disabilities Act against the architects of several new arenas. So did officials laying the groundwork for Conseco Fieldhouse.

As a result, Fehribach got a consulting business and the fieldhouse has five times more seats for the disabled, wider concourses, easy to use elevators and in-house listening devices for the vision- and hearing-impaired.

John Klipsch, who led the fieldhouse project, was glad to work with Fehribach again on Lucas Oil Stadium. "There is a whole different mindset when the designers start making things accessible as a course of business, not just something special," Klipsch said. "When you bring him in real early, he can coach the architects and engineers how to look at things from an accessibility point of view."

Fehribach's consulting fees augment his law practice, but it's money well spent, building owners said. "If you plan from the beginning, it's not expensive at all," said **John Kish**, executive director of the Indianapolis Airport Authority.

The new airport terminal "is going to be unbelievably accessible," Fehribach said. "There probably will be no more accessible airport in the world. John Kish really drove that home."

That's Fehribach's real payoff.

