



# winning people

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ASSIST

Interning at ASSIST:  
Low Rise Steps, Incredible People,  
And the Persistence of the Notorious Clipboard

That poor clipboard has been everywhere. The translucent purple plastic board has a tragic crack down the back, a memento from a tumble out the car; and the metal clip is scratched from sliding my mechanical pencil along its edge. The clip clings onto a dwindling pad of graph paper; notes about our last site visit lie scribbled along the edge of a floor plan sketch. This clipboard has been my faithful companion during my architectural internship at the little storefront organization known as ASSIST. Most people I talk to have never heard of ASSIST; it is Salt Lake City's community design center. Basically, most urban cities have community design centers and they are resources connecting average community members with individuals trained in aspects of design. Our design center looks at a range of issues from urban planning to transportation, but places a particular emphasis on design issues dealing with accessibility.

Essentially, I get to help people with different levels of ability modify their homes so that they can live at the best quality of life possible. It is an *amazing* job. The way we do this is by serving as the designers for modifications such as ramps for wheelchair entry, low rise steps for easier access, curb showers for safer movement in bathrooms, roll-in showers, and the list goes on. My first project was to design a set of low rise steps for an older woman who used a walker. She couldn't navigate the tall risers of the concrete steps outside her house, so we designed a set of stairs with a much lower step. She was so grateful for our work. I have countless similar experiences like this; we begin by drawing up a simple plan for someone, and it ends with a life changing product that improves the quality of living for that someone. In the end, I am the one whose life changes each time I meet these incredible people, hear their incredible stories, and work on a simple but wonderful project that will increase the strength of my community. I love my work!



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