

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

In 1945, Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.” In 1962, the word “physically” was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to “National Disability Employment Awareness Month.”

2015 Theme: My disability is one part of who I am

Profile: Judy Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights, Dept. of State (Term of Appointment: 06/07/2010 to present)



Judy Heumann is an internationally recognized leader in the disability community and a lifelong civil rights advocate for disadvantaged people. Her work with governments and non governmental organizations (NGOs) has produced significant contributions since the 1970s to the development of human rights legislation and policies benefiting children and adults with disabilities, and to the international development of the independent living movement.

Heumann’s commitment to disability rights stems from her personal experiences. She had polio at the age of 18 months, and has used a wheelchair most of her life. Heumann had to fight repeatedly to be included in the educational system. The local public school refused to allow her to attend, calling her a fire hazard. Heumann’s mother, a community activist in her own right, challenged the decision, and Judy was allowed to go to school in the fourth grade. Judy Heumann began taking major steps toward rights for people with disabilities in college, organizing rallies and protests with other

students with disabilities. When she got out of school and was denied her New York teaching license because the board did not believe she could get herself or her students out of the building in case of a fire, she took the case to court. After the judge recommended that New York City’s Board of Education rethink its decision, Heumann became the first person in a wheelchair to teach in New York City and taught elementary school there for three years.

Read More - http://disabilityhistorywiki.org/wiki/index.php?title=Judith_Heumann
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/144458.htm>

