

Media Release

For Immediate Release by Carrie Redman

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March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Spurred by advocacy, President Ronald Reagan declared March to be Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in 1987. The deinstitutionalization movement of the seventies and early eighties had laid the foundation for significant social change, and the presidential proclamation called upon Americans to provide the “encouragement and opportunities” necessary for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to reach their potential.

As those citizens began living within the general community in larger numbers, programs to provide career planning, job coaching and supported employment began to emerge. The idea that people with developmental disabilities could become productive members of the workforce was new to many people, and entrenched preconceptions had to be overcome.

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, workplace discrimination against people with disabilities became sanctionable. The expectations of young people with developmental disabilities and their parents began to shift. Productive, self-directed lives within the community increasingly became the goal, and (increasingly) an obtainable goal.

Now 38 years later, the month of March highlights the contributions and needs of the estimated four million Americans living with a developmental disability. The power of ability over disability is all around us as people with autism, cerebral palsy and other disabilities blaze new trails. Today, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are living and working in the community; pursuing higher education; developing their faith; falling in love and getting married; and making their voices heard in all aspects of life.

As people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the nation become increasingly visible in our daily lives, The Arc Allegany-Steuben strives to build more welcoming communities through education and outreach. We hope you will join us this month as we celebrate the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Developmental disabilities awareness starts now.

Learn how The Arc Allegany-Steuben’s supports and services are advancing the concerns and interests of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout Allegany and Steuben counties by visiting www.thearcas.org.

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