

Media Release

For Immediate Release by Carrie Redman

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March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan declared March to be Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, inspired by years of advocacy. The deinstitutionalization movement of the 1970s and early 1980s had begun reshaping society, and the presidential proclamation encouraged Americans to provide the “encouragement and opportunities” necessary for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to reach their potential.

As more citizens with developmental disabilities began living in their communities, programs for career planning, job coaching, and supported employment emerged. The idea that people with I/DD could become productive members of the workforce was revolutionary, challenging long-held misconceptions.

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 further reinforced this progress, making workplace discrimination against people with disabilities illegal. Expectations shifted, and young people with I/DD and their families began to aim for productive, self-directed lives, and goals that are increasingly attainable.

Today, 39 years later, March highlights the contributions and needs of the estimated four million Americans living with developmental disabilities. People with autism, cerebral palsy, and other conditions continue to blaze new trails, living and working in their communities, pursuing higher education, developing their faith, falling in love and getting married, and making their voices heard in every aspect of life.

At The Arc Allegany-Steuben, we are committed to building more welcoming communities through education and outreach. We invite you to join us this month in celebrating the lives of people with I/DD, because awareness and inclusion start now.

Learn more about how The Arc Allegany-Steuben supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Allegany and Steuben counties at www.thearcas.org.

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