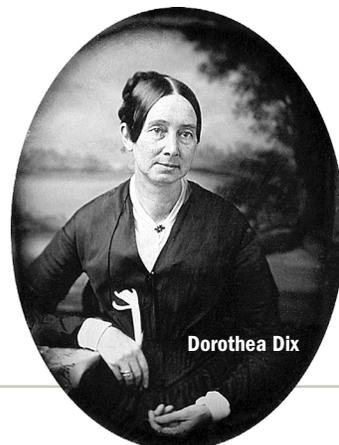


Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan

National Disability Employment Awareness Month each October recognizes the societal and workforce contributions of people with disabilities. In 1945, Congress designated the first National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week; the word “physically” was removed in 1962. In 1988, the observation was extended to a month and its name changed to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

- 1753** Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia is first hospital with ward for mental illness
- 1773** Virginia establishes first hospital solely for treatment of “idiots, lunatics and other people of unsound mind,” the Public Hospital for Persons of Insane and Disordered Minds, now Eastern State Hospital
- 1776** Stephen Hopkins, who has cerebral palsy, signs the Declaration of Independence, saying, “My hands tremble, but my heart does not”
- 1805** Dr. Benjamin Rush, considered the father of American psychiatry, publishes *Medical Inquiries and Observations Upon the Diseases of the Mind*
- 1817** American School for the Deaf opens in Connecticut. American Sign Language originates here
- 1829** Louis Braille publishes his eponymous raised-dot alphabet
- 1832** Perkins School for the Blind opens in Massachusetts
- 1841** Activist Dorothea Dix begins her crusade on behalf of mentally ill people, leading to the first state-run mental hospitals

- 1848** Massachusetts School for Idiotic Children (now Walter E. Fernald Developmental Center) opens
- 1860** British physician William Little first identifies cerebral palsy
- 1866** British physician John Langdon Down publishes first description of Down syndrome
- 1869** First wheelchair patent is issued in United States
- 1880** National Association for the Deaf is founded
- 1907** Indiana becomes the first state to pass a eugenics law, to sterilize “confirmed idiots, imbeciles and rapists” in state institutions. Similar laws are adopted by 31 other states
- 1918** Soldiers Rehabilitation Act provides job training for returning World War I veterans with disabilities
- 1921** American Foundation for the Blind is founded
- 1924** Helen Keller graduates from Radcliffe College, becoming the first deaf-blind person to earn a bachelor’s degree
- 1927** In *Buck v. Bell*, Supreme Court rules that forced sterilization of people with disabilities is not a violation of 14th Amendment
- 1933** Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who is paralyzed from the waist down by polio, becomes President. Accounts differ as to how far he went to hide his disability
- 1935** Social Security Act provides funds to each state to assist, among others, the blind and “crippled” children
- 1943** Dr. Leo Kanner becomes first person to clearly define autism
- 1949** United Cerebral Palsy is founded
- 1956** Disability Insurance program is added to Social Security



Dorothea Dix



Disability Pride Parade

- 1960** The first Paralympic Games are held in Rome
- 1961** *Making Buildings Accessible to and Usable by the Physically Handicapped* is published. Forty-nine states adopt accessibility legislation by 1973
- 1962** Eunice Kennedy Shriver starts a day camp that will become Special Olympics
- 1962** Ed Roberts, who has polio, enrolls at University of California, Berkeley. He is considered the father of the Independent Living movement
- 1964** Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or national origin, but does not include disability
- 1965** Medicaid program is established to cover healthcare costs for people with disabilities
- 1965** Autism Society of America is founded
- 1970** Judy Heumann successfully sues New York City Board of Education when her application for a teaching license is denied because her wheelchair is deemed a fire hazard
- 1973** Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits public institutions receiving any federal funds to discriminate on the basis of disability
- 1975** Education for All Handicapped Children Act requires public schools that accept federal funding to provide equal access to education for children with disabilities
- 1976** Amendment to Higher Education Act of 1972 mandates services for college students with physical disabilities
- 1978** National Council on Disability is founded in Department of Education
- 1981** United Nations declares 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons
- 1984** Voting Accessibility for Elderly and Handicapped Act requires polling places to be physically accessible to people with disabilities for federal elections
- 1990** President Bush signs the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), which guarantees access to and prohibits discrimination against individuals with “physical or mental disabilities”
- 1992** United Nations establishes Dec. 3 as International Day of Disabled Persons. In 2007 the name would be changed to International Day of Persons With Disabilities
- 2000** President Clinton signs Executive Order 13163 calling for the federal government to hire 100,000 people with disabilities over the next five years. Few steps are taken, though, forcing President Obama to sign another executive order in 2010 requiring compliance
- 2001** Office of Disability Employment Policy is founded in Department of Labor
- 2004** Chicago hosts first Disability Pride Parade
- 2006** West Virginia passes bill requiring disability history to be taught in public schools during state’s annual Disability History Week
- 2008** ADA Amendments Act grants broader protections to workers with disabilities
- 2009** Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act prohibits employers from using genetic information to discriminate against employees or job applicants
- 2011** Revised ADA regulations adopt 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and address other accessibility issues, including accommodating service animals, wheelchairs and other mobility devices