

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

My disability
is **one part** of
who **I am**.

At work, it's what people **can do**
that matters.

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National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is a nationwide campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities—past and present.

The theme for this year—which marks 70 years since the first observance—is *“My Disability is One Part of Who I Am.”*

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NDEAM dates back to the return of service members with disabilities from World War II, sparking public interest in the contributions of people with disabilities in the workplace.



In 1945, President Harry S. Truman approved a Congressional resolution declaring the first week in October “*National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.*”

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The word “physically” was removed in 1962 to include 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.”*

Upon its establishment in 2001, the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy assumed responsibility for NDEAM and has worked to expand its reach and scope ever since.

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People with disabilities are a heterogeneous group that includes people with sensory, physical, and mental conditions.

People with disabilities cross lines of age, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

It is a group **anyone** can become a member of at any time. Almost all of us will encounter a disability at some point in our lives.

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By increasing awareness for all members of the workforce, we build a culture that embraces diversity and inclusivity.

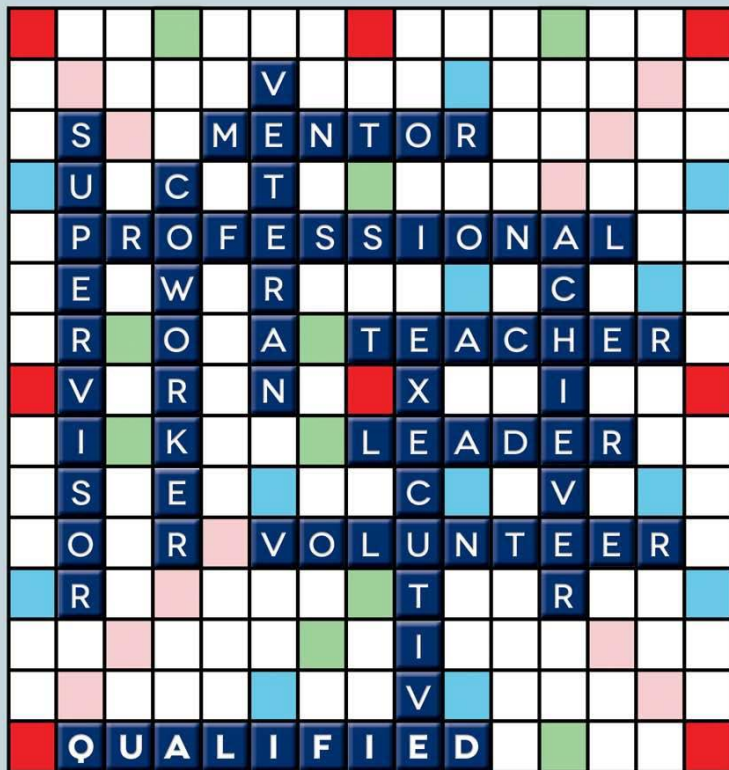
The Department of Defense (DoD) recognizes its vital role in advancing disability awareness in the workplace.



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MY DISABILITY IS ONE PART OF WHO I AM.

At work, it's what people can do that matters.



Design by Future Horizons for the Division of Equal Opportunity Management Services

Rather than be defined by disability, these individuals are the sum of their many life roles—which includes working in jobs they love.

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Hellen Keller

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Helen Keller overcame the adversity of a childhood illness that left her blind and deaf, to become one of the 20th century's leading humanitarians.

In 1915, she and George Kessler founded the Keller International organization, devoted to research in vision, health and nutrition. She was also a tireless advocate for women's suffrage.

In 1920, she helped to found the American Civil Liberties Union.

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During her lifetime, Keller received many honors in recognition of her accomplishments, including the Theodore Roosevelt Distinguished Service Medal in 1936, the highest civilian award in the United States—the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964, and election to the Women's Hall of Fame in 1965.



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Justin Dart Jr.

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For over three decades, Justin Dart Jr., known as “*the godfather of the disability rights movement,*” led the disability rights movement, and was a renowned human rights activist. He received five presidential appointments and numerous honors, including the Hubert Humphrey Award of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

Dart was at the lectern on the White House lawn when the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law on July 26, 1990.

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In 1998, Dart received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award.



After receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Dart sent out replicas of the award to hundreds of disability rights activists across the country, writing that, *“This award belongs to you.”*

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Alan Shepard

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Alan Shepard was the first American in space and the fifth person to walk on the moon. His hard-charging nature made him successful throughout his career.

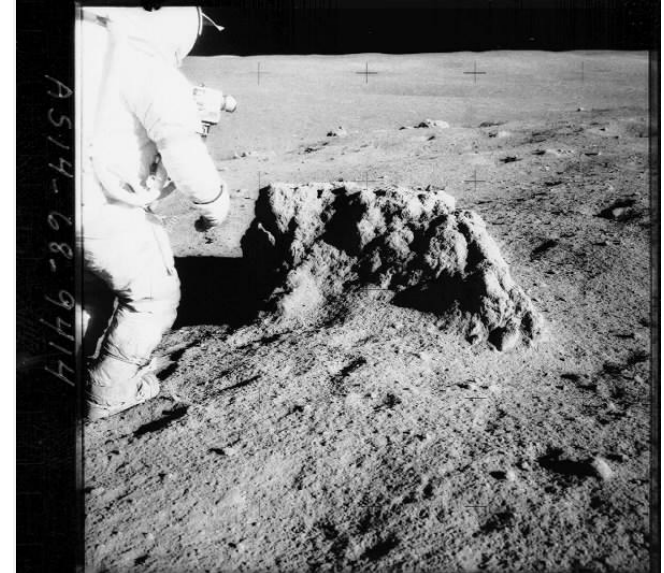
In early 1964, Shepard experienced recurring bouts of disorientation, dizziness, vomiting, and ringing in his ears. Shepard knew something was dangerously wrong. He was diagnosed with Ménière's disease, a disabling medical condition.

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A panel of NASA medics pulled Shepard from the flight rotation and grounded him. He chose to stay with NASA, and was reassigned to a desk job.

In 1969, Shepard was restored to full flight status. At the age of 47, he was the oldest astronaut in the program when he commanded Apollo 14.



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Carl Brashear

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Carl Brashear joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 17 in 1948. In 1953, despite repeated attempts by superiors to dissuade him from pursuing his dream of becoming a navy diver, he was assigned to the Diving and Salvage School in 1954.

In 1966, he supported the retrieval of an atomic bomb from a submerged U.S. Air Force bomber. During the recovery, Brashear's leg was crushed and later amputated. He began a grueling physical therapy course.

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In 1967, after recovering from his injuries, he reported to Harbor Clearance Unit Two Diving School for training. A year later, he became the first amputee in naval history to be restored to full active duty.

Four years after the accident, Brashear beat daunting odds and became the Navy's first Black Master Diver. He earned one of the nation's highest peacetime awards, the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, and the second highest civil service award, the Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

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Wilma Mankiller

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Wilma Mankiller was the first woman elected principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, principal chief, the highest-ranking position in a major tribal government.

In 1979, Mankiller nearly lost her life in a car accident. She underwent numerous surgeries as a part of a long recovery process. During her rehabilitation, she was diagnosed with a neuromuscular disease known as myasthenia gravis.

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Throughout her life, she worked to improve the lives of American Indians by helping them receive better education and health care, and she urged them to preserve and take pride in their traditions.

Mankiller was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in New York City in 1994 and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998.



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Tammy Duckworth

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Congresswoman Ladda Tammy Duckworth is an Iraq War Veteran.

In 2004, she was deployed to Iraq with the Illinois Army National Guard as a Blackhawk helicopter pilot. She was one of the first Army women to fly combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Her helicopter was hit by a rocket propelled grenade. She lost her legs and partial use of her right arm in the crash. She was awarded the Purple Heart for her combat injuries.

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Duckworth spent the next year recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center alongside Melissa Stockwell. She quickly became an advocate for her fellow Soldiers, and testified before Congress about caring for veterans and wounded warriors.

In 2013, she became the first Asian American woman elected to Congress in Illinois, and the first combat-disabled woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

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“This year's theme encapsulates the important message that people with disabilities are just that—people. And like all people, we are the sum of many parts, including our work experiences. Disability is an important perspective we bring to the table, but, of course, it's not the only one.”

—Jennifer Sheehy

Acting Assistant Secretary of
Labor for Disability Employment Policy

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Each person brings to a job unique skills and abilities. Equity, dignity, respect, and cooperation among all individuals are essential values in the DoD work environment.



The DoD has an ongoing commitment to an inclusive Total Force, where qualified men and women of all walks of life can pursue their full potential.

SOURCES

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