History of disability advocacy

Disability = 19th century?

► 1575: Lasso (a Spanish lawyer), concluded that those who learn to speak are no longer dumb and should have rights to procreate.
► 1616: G. Bonifacio published a treatise discussing sign language, "Of The Art of Signs."
► 1696: Pieter Andriannszoon Verduyn, a Dutch Surgeon, introduces the first non-locking, below knee prosthesis. Similar to today’s joint and corset prosthesis.
► 1755: First oral school for the deaf in the world in Germany and first free school for the deaf in Paris.
► 1790: In Paris, Pinel unshackles people with mental illnesses.
► 1829: Louis Braille invents the raised point alphabet that has come to be known as Braille.

Learning from History

► 1850-1880: Residential schooling
  ▪ Designed for a short-term stay
  ▪ Designed to be small (success = small numbers)
  ▪ Focus of the stay is to adapt to life in the community (a.k.a. rehabilitation)
► 1870-1890: Shelter from society
  ▪ Rapid growth in number of people served, system log jammed
  ▪ Object of pity: "a well-fed, well-cared for idiot is a happy creature. An idiot awakened to his condition is a miserable one."
  ▪ The economy of scale: the more people congregated in a single institution, the cheaper the per capita costs.
► 1880-1925: Period of indictment
  ▪ IQ and eugenics emerge
  ▪ Until 1963, persons committed to some state institutions could be released only if they were made sterile

The History of Disability Advocacy

► 1817: The American School for the Deaf, Hartford, CT
► 1890s: Advocates pushed for the creation of state workers’ compensation programs
► 1909: NY Public School System adopted American Braille
► 1909: The first folding wheelchair
► 1921: The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) is founded.
► 1932: Disabled American Veterans is chartered by Congress
► 1935: The League of the Physically Handicapped in NYC
► 1940: National Federation of the Blind in PA (white cane)
► 1940: The American Federation of the Physically Handicapped is founded (first cross disability national political organization)
► 1947: Paralyzed Veterans of America is founded at Birmingham Hospital in Van Nuys, CA
► 1949: The National Wheelchair Basketball Association is founded
► 1960: Paralympic Games held in Rome

The History of Disability Advocacy

► 1968: Architectural Barriers Act
► 1972: US District Courts in District of Columbia ruled that children with disabilities cannot be excluded
► 1973: Disabled Parking Stickers
► 1973: Federal Aid Highway Act → federal fund for curb cuts
► Rehabilitation Act of 1973
► 1974: The Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant established in Ohio
► 1977: Disability Rights Activists in 10 cities stage demonstrations in occupations at the offices of the federal HEW to force the Carter Administration to implement Section 504
► 1978: Disability rights activists in Denver stage a yearlong sit-in blocking the Denver Regional Transit Authority buses
► 1990: The Americans with Disabilities Act signed
► 1993: The American Indian Disability Legislation Project is established
Dark Days of People w. Disabilities

► 355 BC: Aristotle: “those born deaf become senseless and incapable of reason”.
► 218 BC: Marcus Sergius was denied the chance to be a priest because of his prosthetics.
► 1935: Nobel price winner Dr. Alexis Carrel suggests the removal of the mentally ill and the criminal by euthanasia.
► 1939: Hitler orders widespread “mercy killing” of the sick and disabled. (Aktion T4).
► 1981-1983: The Reagan Administration attempted to amend or revoke the implementing sections for 504 and the Education for All Handicap Act of 1975
► 1993: Sewering, an SS-member who had sent a 14-year old girl with TB to be gassed, becomes president of the World Physicians Association.
► 1996: Congress passed legislation eliminating more than 150,000 children with disabilities from Social Security

Ed Roberts

► Father of Disability Rights movement
  • Accessibility and safety reform
  • Access to education and employment
  • The right to have independent life – with paid carer if necessary
► Diagnosed with polio at age 14
► The first student with severe disabilities to attend UCB
► Opened the first Independent Living Center in 1972

Judi Chamberlin

► Discovered that patients in mental hospital had no legal rights and were treated like prisoners.
► Co-founded a group of psychiatric survivors called Mental Patients Liberations Front in the early 70s.
► Fight for self-determination for people diagnosed with mental illness
► She is now at Boston University

Nancy Ward

► Labeled Mentally Retarded as a child.
► Created a petition opposing a commercial soliciting money for the Special Olympics due to it asking these people to pity these children, the commercial was later cancelled.
► Joined other advocates and had the words “moron” and “idiot” eliminated from the Nebraska State Legislature.
► Her latest effort is to fight for people with intellectual disabilities to vote