

Nearly a quarter century ago, President Ronald Reagan officially proclaimed March as *National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month*.

Proclamation 5613 - National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month February 26, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

Nearly four million Americans have grown up with severe physical or mental impairments that have slowed their learning, limited their mobility, inhibited their expression, and rendered them dependent on others for care and assistance.

For many of these people with developmental disabilities there is now the prospect of a brighter future and greater opportunity. Americans are becoming increasingly aware that such disabilities need not keep individuals from realizing their full potential in school, at work or at home, as members of their families and of their communities.

New opportunities have been created through the efforts of those with developmental disabilities and their family members, along with professionals and officials at all levels of government. Working together, they have brought about significant changes in the public perception of young people and adults with developmental disabilities, opening new doors to independent and productive lives.

One important new milestone is the fruitful partnership between government and the private sector in finding productive employment for people with developmental disabilities, people who might otherwise have been destined to a lifetime of dependency. In the past 2 years, the Administration's Employment Initiative has resulted in finding job opportunities for more than 87,000 people with developmental disabilities.

The Congress, by Public Law 99 - 483, has designated the month of March 1987 as "National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

Now, Therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of March 1987 as National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. I invite all individuals, agencies, and organizations concerned with the problem of developmental disabilities to observe this month with appropriate observances and activities directed toward increasing public awareness of the needs and the potential of Americans with developmental disabilities. I urge all Americans to join me in according to our fellow citizens with such disabilities both encouragement and the opportunities they need to lead productive lives and to achieve their full potential.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:58 a.m., February 27, 1987]