



## PRESS RELEASE

### A Focus on Abilities: National Disabilities Awareness Month

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National Disabilities Awareness Month helps us bring awareness of persons with disabilities to the communities in which we live, but we don't want to segregate those with disabilities either. We want to encourage the inclusion of everyone in all community activities, without pointing a finger and saying, "Here, this person looks like he needs help. Let's find a way to include him in our activities."

We don't want to focus on disabilities, but abilities. We don't want to focus on the hurdles that have to be crossed, but the ones that have already been crossed. We don't want to focus on the differences of individuals, but on the ways in which we are all the same.

If we aren't careful to put the person in front of the disability, we talk about the disabled man, the blind child, the deaf teenager, or the crippled woman. We don't think first about the man moving up in his career, the child swinging, the teenager hanging out with his friends, or the woman taking her turn with the neighborhood carpool for kids. We hear the first word, and that clouds the rest of our thinking.

Each and every one of us is blessed with something special to give to the world. Some talents or skills are easy to see. Other skills are disguised. It's difficult to look at a group of people and know which one is the poet. The point is that no matter what, we all have something to give.

At the same time, each and every one of us has a disability to hold us back. Some disabilities are easy to see. One person may use a wheelchair, or have vision impairment. Other disabilities are disguised. It's difficult to look at a group of teenagers and pick out the one that has ADHD or dyslexia.

Each and every one of us comes complete with a visible "shell" that includes the color of our skin, the shape and size of our body, our facial structure. Some of us can find the beauty in others easily, but others - regardless of the "deficiencies" of their own shells - cannot find it within themselves to look deeper than the outside appearance of a person.

We all have loves, hates, fears, joys, doubts, confidences.

No matter what our abilities, no matter what our shell, we are all, in the end, very much the same. So let that be the message this month.