

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

2010 Theme: Talent Has No Boundaries: Workforce Diversity INCLUDES Workers With Disabilities.

In 1945, Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of 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."



Photos of People with Disabilities: top to bottom, left to right: Temple Grandin, Richard Pimentel, Christine Griffin, Stevie Wonder, Bonnie St. John, Geri Jewell, Kathleen Martinez, Nader Elguindi

Misconceptions and Realities about Disabilities

Wheelchair users are paralyzed and they are confined to their chairs.

False: Some people can walk, but their strength may be limited so they use a wheelchair to enable them to travel long distances. Also, some people who use wheelchairs prefer to transfer to more comfortable chairs such as at their desks or in a restaurant.

Deaf people cannot speak.

False: Deafness does not affect the vocal cords, although it can affect a person's ability to hear and monitor the sounds they make. Some people who are deaf make a conscious choice not to use their voice while others choose to speak. The type and degree of hearing loss as well as the age of the person when they became deaf (i.e. before or after learning to speak) also influences their speech.

Certain jobs are more suited to persons with disabilities.

False: As with all people, certain jobs may be better suited to some than to others. While there are obvious bad job matches, such as someone who is blind and wants to be a bus driver or someone who is quadriplegic and wants to be a loader for a shipping company, be careful not to pigeon hole people in or out of certain occupations based on their disability. Just because you can only think of one way to do something does not mean that other ways do not exist that are equally effective.

Most people with cerebral palsy are less intelligent than the general population.

False: CP does not itself affect a person's intelligence. However, at times a person may have CP and another disability, such as a Developmental Disability that affects intellectual functioning.

People who are blind have improved hearing and heightened senses in other areas.

False: A person's vision or lack of vision does not affect hearing or heighten senses in other areas. However, someone who is blind may depend more on their hearing or other senses than a sighted counterpart.

From the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

