

Disability Pride Month Recognizes the Many Contributions of People Living with Disabilities Despite Challenges Others May Never See

By Kristin Schaub, CEO, Greenleaf Job Training Services

July is Disability Pride Month, which may sound slightly strange unless you or someone you love lives with a disability. The fact is, until you've experienced the daily stresses and challenges people with disabilities face – and *regularly* overcome – you may not be able to fully appreciate how truly fitting it is that we set aside time to recognize their accomplishments, celebrate their contributions, and support continued efforts to remove barriers to inclusion and progress.

Speaking of removing barriers, Disability Pride Month is also a time to celebrate the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990. This year marks the 36th anniversary of that landmark civil rights law, which moved our country closer to equal access and opportunity.

At Greenleaf Job Training Services, we recognize that while our participants may have disabilities, they are not their defining features. Instead, their main contributions come from their roles as neighbors, coworkers, students, volunteers, artists, advocates, entrepreneurs, family members, and friends. They bring creativity, persistence, problem-solving, humor, compassion, and perspective to their families, communities, and workplaces, and that deserves our appreciation.

Disability Pride Month, while recognizing advancements, also reminds us that barriers remain everywhere, often in ways people without disabilities may never have to notice. Just consider how a curb without a cutout, a staircase without a ramp, or an entrance without an automatic door can turn an ordinary errand into an obstacle course for a wheelchair user; or how missing Braille signage, audible crosswalk cues, or visual alerts can make public spaces harder to navigate for people who are blind, have low vision, are Deaf, or are hard of hearing.

While barriers are not always intentional, their impact is significant. They can limit access to employment, education, transportation, health care, civic participation, and everyday community life. They also reveal who was considered when spaces and systems were designed. Disability inclusion asks us to pay attention, listen, and make changes before someone has to ask to be included.

The ADA changed lives, but you simply can't legislate belonging. Belonging happens when employers examine hiring practices, communities invest in accessibility, coworkers offer patience and respect, and we challenge assumptions about what

disability means. It happens when we recognize accommodations for what they are – tools that allow everyone to participate fully and equitably.

At Greenleaf, we believe everyone deserves to feel truly seen for who they are and everything they are capable of becoming. We're excited to honor Disability Pride Month by celebrating the progress made since the signing of the ADA, while continuing to create workplaces and communities where every person can contribute, belong, and thrive.