

ADVOCACY

People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter

Disabled Figures: Judy Heumann

By Quinn Thomas

Judy Heumann was known as "the Mother of the Disability Rights Movement." She was an accomplished self-advocate. She served in the Clinton and Obama Administrations, as an advisor to the World Bank, and on five different nonprofit boards. The documentaries *Crip Camp* and *Lives Worth Living* featured her. She delivered a TED Talk in 2018 called "Our Fight For Disability Rights-- And Why We're Not Done Yet." Judy also wrote several very popular nonfiction books, a game-changing scholarly research article, and ran a podcast.

Judy caught polio when she was five and ended up using a wheelchair for mobility. Growing up in the 1950s, she faced a lot of discrimination. She was told she couldn't go to school because she was a "fire hazard." She was not able to enroll until she was nine, and even then had to learn in the basement in a segregated class. Despite having a Master's degree and passing her oral and written exams, Judy was denied a teaching license when she failed her physical. She sued the Board of Education, and became the first teacher to



UPCOMING EVENTS

REC JAM

March 29, 7:00-9:00, at the Venues. A free dance for ages 18+.

SOCIAL EVENT

April 1, 5:00-7:00, at Solace Health and Wellness. For neurodiverse individuals.

CRIP CAMP SCREENING

April 6, 6:00, at the University of Toledo's Rocket Hall. Honoring Judy Heumann.

WELLNESS

WEDNESDAYS BEGIN

April 12, 6:00, at Sidecut.

COMMUNITY HONORS AWARDS BANQUET

April 21, 6:00-9:00, Nazareth Hall.

use a wheelchair in New York.

Judy Heumann was one of the co-founders of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living--the first of its kind in the world. She also co-founded the World Institute on Disability, one of the first ever global disability rights organizations.

Judy was instrumental in passing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which banned discrimination against disabled people in any institution receiving federal money. There was one man, Joseph Califano Jr., in President Carter's Administration who wanted to overhaul all of the regulations rather than authorize 504. Advocates told him there would be national protests if he didn't sign the law by April 4th. He didn't sign, and there were national protests.

Judy Heumann organized the San Francisco branch of the protests. She had more than 100 people occupy the regional office reporting to Califano. The San Francisco sit-in went on for almost a month. It was the longest nonviolent occupation of a US federal building in history. Many of the protesters were unprepared for this. The government

cut water and phone lines to the building to try to end it. But there were enough Deaf protesters at the event that they were able to maintain communication in and out of the building by using sign language. Additionally, the San Francisco Mayor brought in mattresses, and the Black Panther Party brought in food. Eventually, Section 504 was signed into law.

Judy Heumann also worked on the Rehabilitation Act itself, IDEA, the ADA, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In fact, her efforts with Section 504 helped pave the way for the ADA.

Judy Heumann was given two lifetime achievement awards and a large number of honorary doctorates. She will be missed.

OUR NEXT MEETING

Alaina Bowers from the Ohio Treasurer's Office will be a guest lecturer speaking about ABLE and STABLE disability savings accounts. 6:00-7:30 on Thursday, April 20th, at the Ability Center Openlander Room.