

# ADVOCACY

*People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter*

## Disabled Figures: President FDR

*By Quinn Thomas*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the first, last, and only person to ever serve four terms as an American president. Due to a Constitutional amendment put forth during the Reagan administration, presidents are now limited to serving only two terms. FDR was president before this law was made. He was widely beloved by the American people. He was also disabled.

In 1921, when he was 39, Roosevelt contracted polio. Back then, polio was also known as infantile paralysis. It was possible to get it as an adult, but very rare. He saw many doctors, who eventually settled on prescribing warm baths. FDR set a personal goal to one day be able to walk the quarter-mile distance down his driveway. He never achieved this goal, but he never gave up on his physical rehabilitation either.

Three years later, FDR was advised to visit the resort in Warm Springs, Georgia, where supposedly the pure mineral water would be able to treat his paralysis. Two years after that, he bought the resort himself and turned it into an aquatic rehabilitation



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of  
Toledo**

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **SENSORY FRIENDLY HOUR AT BUILD-A-BEAR**

January 7, 11:00-12:00, at Franklin Park Mall.

#### **COUNTERTOP RAFFLE**

Final day of ticket sales is February 16! Valued at up to \$25,000 and all proceeds benefit Courageous Community Services.

#### **NIGHT TO SHINE**

February 7, 6:00-9:00, at the Cornerstone Church. Registration is open now. Ages 14+ for individuals with developmental disabilities.

#### **AUTISTIC ADULT GAME GROUP**

Every Friday, 7:30, at the Toledo Game Room. 3001 West Sylvania Avenue, Toledo.

facility for people with polio.

Having taken a break from politics to focus on his recovery, FDR eventually returned to political life in 1928 and ran for governor of New York. He won. And then he ran again, was re-elected, and ran for president after that. FDR won that election as well.

A common idea spread around is that FDR was forced to hide his disability, and that Americans in that era would never have accepted a president they knew was disabled. This is a myth. It was widely known that FDR had polio. FDR was a symbol of hope for other disabled Americans at the time and he received hundreds of letters from them. Funds were also raised in his name for the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which later went on to become the March of Dimes. Many people mailed canes to the White House as gifts for the president. \$22,000 (\$533,911.23 in today's money) was raised via crowdfunding to build

an indoor pool at the White House, simply because it was known that swimming in warm water greatly helped with FDR's physical disability.

FDR also designed a custom wheelchair for himself. Wheelchairs in that time period were huge, clunky, one-size-fits-all models. He made his own smaller one out of a dining chair and bicycle wheels. He, at one point, gifted an identical copy of the chair to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, whose legs had been wounded previously, making walking harder for him every year. This chair became the king's most prized possession, even though he was a much larger man than the president and could not use it. A bigger version was later shipped to him by his request.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a trailblazer for disabled people around the world. He should be remembered with pride, as an advocate, the way he was during his life.

## OUR NEXT MEETING

January 16th, from 6:00-7:30, at the Holland Library in Community Room B. As of this year, we are no longer collecting meeting dues!

This month, we will be discussing the coming end of subminimum wage for individuals with disabilities, with the option of an advocacy action step at the end of the meeting.