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**NHU Outlook is published by New Horizons Un-Limited Inc. (NHU),** a 501(c)3 tax exempt non-profit disability advocacy organization that connect those impacted by disability to the information, tools and experiences that encourage lifelong learning and community, so that we may work together to create a more inclusive, accepting society.

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**“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”**

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## 2025: The Year of Disability Advocacy



An Employee of Inclusion Coffee Company in Hartford, WI

More than 50 years ago, Ed Roberts, a student at UC-Berkley, founded the first Center for Independent Living.

At first rejected by Berkley, Ed, who later recalled their rejection -“we tried cripples, and they don’t work,” sued and won. With nowhere to accommodate his wheelchair and iron lung, the college converted an unused wing of their hospital into a dorm. Soon, others with disabilities joined him in the new dorm.

Ed and his fellow “crips,” as they called themselves started an advocacy group called the Rolling Quads. They protested on campus and pushed the college to improve accessibility, campus-wide.

*Continued inside.*

# A spotlight on advocacy & inclusion in WI

## JAQUAWN Milwaukee Hip-hop Artist

"The people that I work with have been very kind and understanding of my situation.

I really think that's the most important thing to any success story, aside from putting your best foot forward. Nobody can reach success without having good people behind them."

- Jaquawn (Rap J)



## KITTY Chef and YouTube Personality

"I thought how few people with disabilities are represented on social media. It's showing other people with disabilities, hey, if she can do this, you can do this. And more importantly, it's showing people who don't know anybody with disabilities that people are capable."

- Kitty's Mom



## CALEB Painter & Volunteer

"I really had to fight for this. Those years were intense, but I just felt such empowerment to do it. It was worth it, fighting for Caleb. But, other people have other gifts that they need to be open to as well. I felt like I needed to pave the way for other parents." - Caleb's Mom



## Robbie Public School Student

"Our school administrators have seen the potential in Robbie from the beginning and have done everything in their power to help him achieve what he has. With the help of our principal, speech pathologist, special education teachers and paraprofessionals, Robbie is now reading, writing, and doing math in ways we could never have dreamed of before."

- Robbie's Mom

*Continued from page 1*

What started as a student-led, campus support center, blossomed into a nationwide Independent Living Movement. The Center that Ed founded served as a model for the more than 400 Centers for Independent Living currently supporting adults with disabilities nationwide.

Since then, other disability advocates across the country followed his example, championing and securing the laws that paved the way for greater equity and inclusion in our communities, schools and workplaces.

This year marked not only the 35th anniversary of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, but also 50 years of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Now, in 2025, the disability advocacy movement has never been stronger! It's happening in every community. Single voices are rising and joined in chorus with others. People with disabilities and their families have expectations of inclusion. They are directing their own lives in their own communities.

## A Story of Being Human: Because Stories Change the World

We are sharing what people with disabilities have been capable of, and accomplishing all along.

People like **Jaquawn**, who fulfilled his lifelong dream of performing at Summerfest.

**Caleb** who has a successful art studio in Grafton and accepts commissions for custom pet portraits.

**Kitty**, who collaborates with local, award winning chefs on her YouTube channel, Cooking with Kitty.

**Robbie**, who is crushing stereotypes and reaching goals with his public, special education team.

All of this is possible because of individual and collective perseverance as well as the supports made possible through years of advocacy.

We will continue to forge relationships within our communities and share the stories that will foster change for generations to come.

# A Future Worth Fighting For!

## A Conversation with the Director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

"Overall what we are hearing from across the state from many people is,

*"I am feeling for the first time, or even stronger than I ever have before, that my life doesn't matter, and that my health and safety aren't important, and that this government isn't going to do anything to protect my civil rights, my human rights, or even my safety."*

I think that is just a sad situation because as you know, the disability rights movement is 50 years old or more. We just celebrated 50 years of IDEA and 35 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

These were pinnacle years where we were saying, "Look how far we've come and look what people with disabilities are able to do now, when they were maybe stuck in an institution 50 years ago."

On the flipside of that, because we have so many people with disabilities, and families who have higher expectations and elevated experiences and have had life experiences with advocacy, this group of folks in Wisconsin is not taking [these federal cuts] quietly.

The grassroots folks are talking to their legislators. They are writing their letters to the editor. They are doing interviews with the media, and they are saying, "This is not acceptable." It is so critical, and I don't know if the people who have been implementing these policies really expected that.

I'm also seeing many people just having local conversations. They are talking to their friends; they are talking to their neighbors. They are correcting the myths. I think conversations change perspective a lot more than just getting online and being angry. They are engaging in dialogues.

*I have never been more impressed or proud of the disability community than I have been in the last few months.*

There are still a lot of barriers. I think the conversations that some have been having in the last year or so about people with disabilities and about many groups, is concerning and a step backward.

I'm sure you have seen that the "R-word" has been reintroduced and is being used more, by not just influencers, but within government.

We've heard government leaders use that word. I had not heard that used in normal vernacular for a decade. We had laws on the books eight years ago or more [striking that word] and people have, as a cultural norm, accepted that was not acceptable, and now it's back.

That's symbolic of how other changes are taking place, like the Department of Energy saying new buildings don't have to meet accessibility guidelines. Also, getting rid of departments and protections for students with disabilities. It's just a snowball of concern.

At the same time, we are seeing communities that are more welcoming. We are seeing people with disabilities participate in ways that they were not 20 years ago. We are seeing them in leadership roles.

*There is definitely that change in people understanding now that "my lived experience has value and it doesn't just have value for other people with disabilities, it has value in communities, to make communities better."*

I think people are stepping up and speaking out and I think it is exciting to see that.

# Ways you can support the dignity of people with disabilities

## See the person before the disability

ALWAYS ASK  
BEFORE YOU HELP

## Assume competence

SPEAK DIRECTLY TO  
THE PERSON, NOT THEIR  
CAREGIVER OR COMPANION

CALL OUT & DO NOT USE  
DISRESPECTFUL LANGUAGE

## Be respectful of a person's privacy and boundaries

ENGAGE IN ACTIVE LISTENING

## Support accessible & inclusive businesses

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