



AAPD's 30th Anniversary Gala

**Powered by
community**

November 6, 2025
Washington, DC. | Waldorf Astoria



The AAPD Team Celebrating 35 Years of the ADA, July 2025



Use this QR code to find accessible alternatives to this document in large-print, Plain Language, and to hear this book audio-described and read aloud.

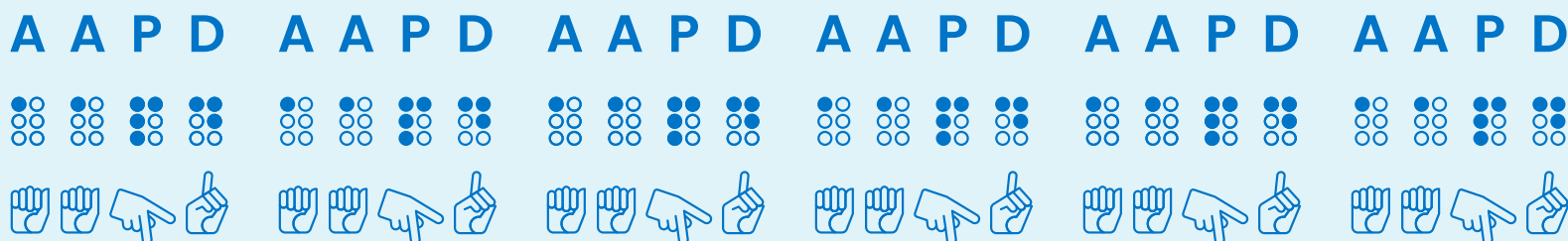
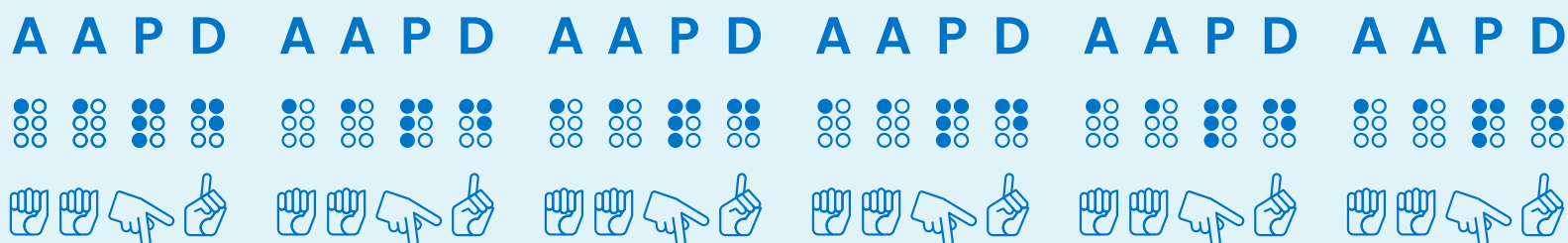


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Welcome to AAPD's 30th Anniversary Gala

More than 30 years ago, over drinks at McCormick & Schmick's on K Street in DC, Paul G. Hearne and John D. Kemp met to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the growing movement for disability rights. Sketching notes on the back of a bar napkin, they dreamed of a grassroots membership organization that could represent all people with disabilities.

That night, Paul and John toasted to their new idea, which ultimately became AAPD, the American Association of People with Disabilities.

AAPD's cross-disability focus means that our organization and the disability community are inextricably intertwined.

Every single one of AAPD's successes over the last 30 years was made possible by the leadership,



persistence, power, and wisdom of disabled people.

Every time AAPD has risen to meet a challenge, our community has been the wind at our back, fortifying us, teaching us, and fighting alongside us.

Every achievement to come during AAPD's next 30 years will only be made possible because we have the privilege of being part of this beloved community.

That's why our selected theme for this evening's celebration is "Powered By Community."

Just as John and Paul did down the street more than 30 years ago, tonight we invite you to toast AAPD.

**Welcome to AAPD's
30th Anniversary Gala...
and cheers!**

Dear Community,

The disability community is in a critical moment, fighting threats to **inclusive education, accessible employment, affordable housing, and more**. Amidst these challenges, it's vital to celebrate our victories — and one significant win is the **30th anniversary of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)!**

Powered by community support, AAPD is stronger than ever. In just the past month, we mobilized **over 120 disability advocates** from 33 states for **126 Capitol Hill meetings** on crucial issues: **pay equity, fully funding IDEA, and eliminating SSI savings penalties**.

We also coordinated **Disability Voting Rights Week**, featuring hundreds of events nationwide. Recently, we've created resources on the impacts of the **government shutdown and mass layoffs**

and helped organize a massive statement of support for the **Department of Education**, signed by **over 800 organizations**. All this was accomplished while running our highly impactful **Fall Internship and Disability Mentoring Day** programs to foster young disabled leaders.

Though significant work remains to increase people with disabilities' **political and economic power**, the dedication of our staff, board, and supporters makes me excited for the future we'll build together. Tonight, we celebrate more than AAPD's 30 years; we celebrate **you** — the advocates, allies, and leaders who shape the past, present, and future of the disability rights and justice movements.



Maria Town, President and CEO





Maria Town is the President and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities. In this role, she works to increase the political and economic power of people with disabilities. Prior to this, she served as the Director of the City of Houston Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, where she advocated for the rights and needs of citizens with disabilities, served as a liaison between the city government and other public and private entities on topics related to people with disabilities and established local and national partnerships to advance inclusion.

Town is the former senior associate director in the Obama White House Office of Public Engagement, where

she managed the White House's engagement with the disability community and older Americans. She also managed the place-based portfolio and coordinated engagement across Federal agencies. Town also worked as policy advisor at the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. Town led and coordinated numerous efforts to improve employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.

Town is a member of the board of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. She hails from Louisiana, where her family still resides.

Dear Friends,

It is a profound honor to serve as Chair of the American Association of People with Disabilities, and I am deeply grateful you've joined us to celebrate AAPD's thirty incredibly impactful years. My personal journey with chronic endometriosis and migraines has shown me firsthand the struggles many face for dignity and proper care. This experience, coupled with a deep belief that no one's potential should be diminished by prejudice, drove my career in civil rights.

My connection to AAPD began at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, where I was proud to help spearhead the hiring of over 100,000 people with disabilities into the federal government. This work feels deeply personal, as does my current role at Highmark Health, optimizing access to care and building a community-focused workforce.

Four years ago, I was honored to join the AAPD Board.

Having now engaged deeply with the organization for several years, I come into the role of Chair with a few clear priorities. AAPD must continue to advance disability rights. Despite advances in workplace inclusion, disability employment remains critically low. Therefore, AAPD's commitment to increasing employment and economic security for disabled people is non-negotiable.

I am deeply grateful for the unwavering dedication of AAPD's incredible board and staff. And I am equally grateful to all of you, our partners and supporters, for making our essential work possible. I genuinely look forward to continuing this vital partnership with you for many, many more years to come.



Veronica E. Villalobos, Board Chair





Veronica E. Villalobos

Veronica E. Villalobos serves as Board Chair of the American Association of People with Disabilities. As Vice President for the Institute for Strategic Social & Workforce Programs (S2W) at Highmark Health and Allegheny Health Network, she spearheads initiatives that optimize access to care, cultivate a community-focused workforce, and enhance the experience for members, patients, and the broader community.

Before joining Highmark Health, Veronica was a member of the Senior Executive Service at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for over 10 years. In this role, she led government-wide human capital efforts for a workforce of 2.1 million, developing and implementing innovative strategies and policies to support federal agencies. Notably, she spearheaded efforts that

significantly increased federal employment for people with disabilities, resulting in over 118,000 individuals being placed in mission-critical occupations within five Years.

From 2000 to 2010, Veronica contributed to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as one of the agency's inaugural Honor Program Attorneys. Veronica earned her undergraduate degree from Saint Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana, and her law degree from American University's Washington College of Law. She is a member of the Maryland Bar and actively serves on the Boards of the Bender Leadership Academy, the Center for Disability Inclusion, Disability LEAD Pittsburgh, the Epilepsy Association of Western Central Pennsylvania, and Pittsburgh's Latino Community Center.

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and contributions of countless AAPD staff members over the years.

Thank you to our current AAPD team:

April, Events and Logistics Coordinator

Jasmin Bailey, Operations Director

Kristen Cox, Executive Assistant

Jess Davidson, Senior Director of Communications

Dewayne Johnson II, Director of Economic and Social Impact

Katie Johnson, Program Manager

Alexia Kemerling, Director of Accessible Democracy

Kyle Khachadurian, Content Producer

Michael Lewis, Vice President of Policy

Christine Liao, Vice President of Programs

Gaby Madriz, Chief Operating Officer

Angeth Mayen, Policy Intern

Johileny Merán, Programs and Operations Assistant

Neil Purohit, Program Manager, Internship Programs

Joshua Olukanni, Economic and Social Impact Intern

Gabi Reyes-Acosta, Program Manager

Soraya Schwartz, Administrative Assistant

Maitreya Shah, Technology Policy Director

Sarah Shaw, Programs Director

Rachita Singh, Policy Manager

Dom Swain, Digital Director

Maria Town, President and CEO

Vera, Information and Referral Specialist

Aubrianna Wilson, State Voting Coalitions Coordinator

• • •

Tonight was made possible by many people, with special thanks to:

Our development team at Mida Associates: Jason Mida, Christine Chew, Virginia Koh, and Alex Nasta.

Our event production team at Edgefactory: Kenny Samsel, Brian Cole, Chad Lewis, Catherine Goodison, and Abbie Bohlin.

Thank you to the AAPD Board of Directors:

Veronica Villalobos, Chair

Joyce Bender, Vice Chair

John Walsh III, Finance
Chair and Treasurer

Laura Randa, Secretary

Michael Zullo, Governance
Committee Chair

Susan Diegelman,
Immediate Past Chair,
At-Large

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Dorothy Garcia

Michael Goodman

Laurie Henneborn

Ted Kennedy, Jr.

KR Liu

Fred Maahs

Kathleen Martinez

Jennifer Mathis

Ari Ne'eman

Jeff Ramella

Jalyn Radziminski

John Register

Ricardo Thornton

Justin Tsang

Eric Vaughn

Rupa Valdez

• • •
Our design team at Fabrika:
Juan Carlos Morales, Lili
Morris, and Morgan Relyea.

**Our Hearne 25th and AAPD
30th videography and
storytelling team:** Ashley
Kalena, Rory Sheridan, Emily
Voorde of INTO Strategies,
Shruti Rajkumar, Jonathan
Thorpe, Carolyn Fong, Brian
Schilling, and Paul Trantow.

AAPD also thanks the many
consultants who contribute
their expertise and skills
to the advancement of
our mission: Maria Areco,
George Blevins, Eileen
Brewer, Thomas Camisa,
Henry Claypool, Kristen Diaz,
Ryan Dougherty, Qualik
Ford, Naomi Hess, Alan Heji,
Eve Hill, Kim Knackstedt,

Sarah Meek, Doug Palmer,
Rachel Patterson, Jasmine
Pete, Sarak Meek, Vinita
Vaskov, and Ralph Walter.

Finally, AAPD expresses our
deepest gratitude to the
access professionals who
ensure that our work is
accessible and inclusive.

Program Overview

5:30 PM – 6:45 PM: **Opening Reception**

7:00 PM: **Dinner and Remarks By:**

Maria Town, AAPD President and CEO

Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL)

John Kemp, AAPD Founder

Veronica Villalobos, AAPD Board Chair

Congresswoman Lateefah Simon (CA-12)

Performance by Warren Snipe

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-7)

8:30 PM – 9:30 PM: **Dessert Reception
and After Party**



Senator Duckworth fights to Protect Medicaid with Maria Town

Senator Tammy Duckworth was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2016 after representing Illinois's Eighth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for two terms. She is an Iraq War Veteran, Purple Heart recipient, and one of the first Army women to fly combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As a member of the Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee, Duckworth is a leader in helping make air travel safer and improving transportation accessibility. She is also a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

In 2004, Duckworth was deployed to Iraq as a Blackhawk helicopter pilot for the Illinois Army National Guard. On November 12, 2004, her helicopter was hit by an RPG and she lost her legs and partial use of her right arm. After she recovered, she became Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs.

In 2009, President Obama appointed Duckworth as an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, where she worked to help end Veteran homelessness. As a member of the U.S. House from 2012–2017, Duckworth advocated for working families and job creation.

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07) is an activist, a legislator, a survivor, and the first woman of color to be elected to Congress from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Throughout her time in Congress, Congresswoman Pressley has been a champion for justice and healing: disability justice, reproductive justice, justice for immigrants, consumer justice, justice for seniors, justice for workers, justice for survivors of sexual

violence, justice for the formerly and currently incarcerated individuals, and healing for those who have experienced trauma.

In 2020, Congresswoman Pressley bravely revealed her experience living with alopecia. She has turned her lived experience into action, becoming a leading voice fighting to raise awareness and support for the Alopecian community across the nation.

Congresswoman Pressley speaks at the Disability Reproductive Equity Day Press Conference with AAPD staff





Congresswoman Simon meets with AAPD Fall Interns

Congresswoman Lateefah

Simon is a nationally recognized civil rights leader with more than three decades of experience at the intersection of movement building, government reform, public-private partnerships, and visionary institutional leadership.

In 2016, Congresswoman Simon ran and was elected to the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Board of Directors and later President of the BART Board of Directors, becoming one of the only Black women in the nation to lead a major metropolitan transit agency. As BART Board

President, she secured more than \$3 billion in emergency funding to sustain transit operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also expanding accessibility, equity, and public safety programs across the region.

In 2024, Congresswoman Simon was elected to Congress. Legally blind since birth, she leads with a clarity shaped by lived experience and an agenda forged in the pursuit of justice, equity, and transformative change.

Tonight's Performance



**Warren
"Wawa" Snipe**

Warren "Wawa" Snipe, an acclaimed Hip Hop Recording Artist hailing from the DC/MD/VA area, has been making music with an insatiable drive since he first picked up the mic in 2005. His charismatic and diligent persona and genre, "Dip Hop" (Hip Hop through deaf eyes), has garnered critical reception and positive acclaim over the past 15+ years.

This unique sound of audio and imagery has helped WAWA develop a growing fanbase and has landed him many opportunities on stage, in the studio, and within the music industry.

WAWA's rendering of Dip Hop explores Hip Hop in a way that educates people about deaf musicians in the hearing world, with the hope of putting deaf Recording Artists on the map in mainstream public interest. This admirable pursuit has showcased WAWA's interest in inspiring others to aspire, even those who face challenges.

WAWA's talent has not gone unnoticed. In 2021, he performed the National Anthem at Super Bowl LV and the Halftime Show at Super Bowl LVI (2022). He has also made appearances on popular TV shows such as Black Lightning (CW) and Fear the Walking Dead (AMC). WAWA continues to make waves in the music and acting industry.





AAPD's Incorporation, Launch, and 30 Years of History

Shortly after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Paul G. Hearne, then President of the Dole Foundation for Employment of People with Disabilities, and John D. Kemp, then President and CEO of United Cerebral Palsy, met for drinks to discuss an idea of forming a group that could advance disability priorities with a unified voice—a grassroots membership organization representing all people with disabilities.

Over the next few years, Paul and John's idea of a cross-disability advocacy organization brought together a group of disabled leaders, in what came to be known as the National Disabilities Study Group. While it was created for business purposes, the Study Group also had an intentional social aspect: by bringing disability leaders together socially and holding holiday parties for the wider disability community in DC, the founders developed a solid base of



AAPD's first board meeting. Pictured: Paul Hearne, Ron Hatley, Jim Weisman, Nancy Block, Pat Wright, Justin Dart Jr., Mike Auberger, Peter Thomas (recorder), I. King Jordan, Deborah Kaplan, Max Starkloff and John Kemp.

supporters, all of whom agreed that the concept of AAPD was sorely needed. The Study Group members' perspectives, ideas, and experiences shaped AAPD's cross-disability approach.

The incorporators' vision was to unify the diverse approaches represented by the multitude of different kinds of disability groups that constitute the national disability community. At the same time, they also focused on people with disabilities as consumers who spent a great deal of money on medical equipment and other necessities and consumer goods, even though the vast majority of them had little individual wealth. They envisioned a membership organization that could harness the consumer power of disabled people.



Paul Hearne, John Kemp, and Marca Bristo, speaking at AAPD's launch party at Old Ebbitt Grill on July 26, 1995



Justin Dart Jr., Bob Dole, and Tony Coelho, about to give remarks at AAPD's launch party at Old Ebbitt Grill on July 26, 1995

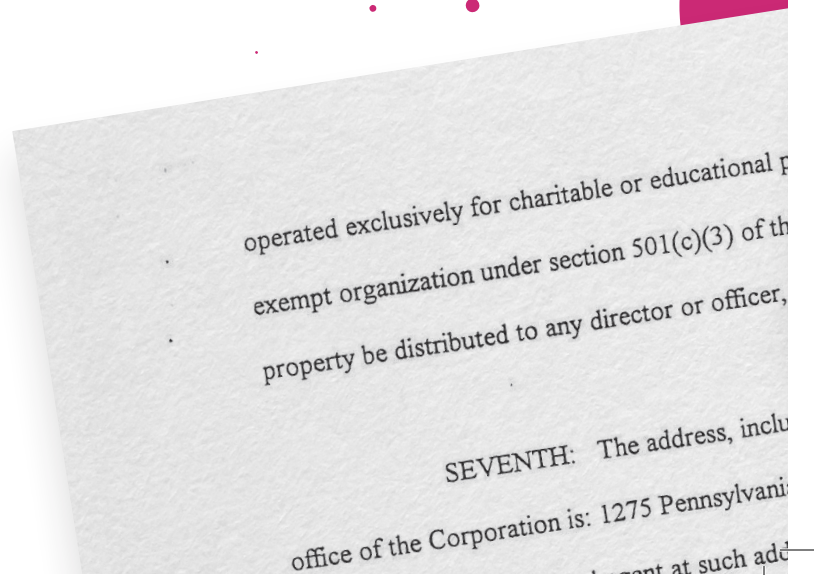
AAPD's founding leadership carefully selected founding incorporators who represented the diversity of disability, race, and cultures that make up our community: Paul Hearne,

John Kemp, Dr. Sylvia Walker, Justin Dart Jr., and Dr. I. King Jordan. On May 31, the Articles of Incorporation were approved by DC's Corporation Counsel.

The founders created AAPD to further the productivity, independence, full citizenship, and total integration of people with disabilities into all aspects of society. This included supporting the full implementation and enforcement of disability nondiscrimination laws, particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, supporting policy goals that improve the lives of people with disabilities, such as reducing poverty and unemployment, ensuring the right to independent living arrangements, providing access to and funding for

assistive technology, and educating the public and government policymakers on issues affecting people with disabilities.

Over the next 30 years, AAPD has continued to evolve. AAPD played a pivotal role in the passage of critical legislation that has advanced the goals of the ADA, such as the ADA Amendments Act and the 21st Century Communications & Video Accessibility Act. Similarly, AAPD also heavily contributed to the formulation and finalization of regulations that promote disability non-discrimination in healthcare settings, accessible websites, and dignity for air travelers with disabilities.



with disabilities
People with disabilities have
made great strides in the past
decade, highlighted in 1990 by the
passage of ADA. Need for contin-
ued leadership remains strong.
People have a

Weisman, Nancy Block,
Thomas (record
and John

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
BUSINESS REGULATION ADMINISTRATION

JUN - 1995



CERTIFICATE

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that all applicable provisions of the DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA NONPROFIT CORPORATION ACT have been complied with and
accordingly, this CERTIFICATE of INCORPORATION is hereby issued to
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

as of MAY 31ST, 1995.

Hampton Cross
Director

Katherine A. Williams
Acting Administrator
Business Regulation Administration

Acting
Patricia E. Grays
Superintendent of Corporations
Corporations Division

Marion Barry, Jr.
Mayor

including street and number, of the
vania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004 and the
address is: Peter W. Thomas, Esq.

American Association of People with Disabilities

bring about unity, leadership and impact to the disability
AAPD is the first nonprofit, cross disability, private sector
organization which will provide an effective means to help people
leveraging their numbers in the economy. The
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ave long

AAPD American Association of People with Disabilities

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Nancy Flinn
(202) 296-9128
(202) 973-7126

HISTORIC DAY FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES

New Organization - AAPD - Formed

(Washington DC, July 25, 1995) Over 500 participants, including Senator Robert Dole, Deputy Attorney General Deval Patrick, Tony Coelho, Chair of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, key administration officials, Congressmen and Senators, business and government leaders and disability community leaders, representing some 49 million Americans with disabilities, are gathering at the Old Ebbitt Grill Atrium from 5:30pm to 8pm to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the landmark civil rights law, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the launch of a new national initiative, the American Association of People with Disabilities, AAPD.

The AAPD was founded by five key disability rights activists and leaders: Justin Dart, former Chair of the President's Committee, Dr. Sylvia Walker of Howard University, Paul Hearne, President of The Dole Foundation, John D. Kemp, Executive Director of United Cerebral Palsy Associations and I. King Jordan, President of Gallaudet University, who recognized the need for a unified membership organization representing the 49 million American citizens with disabilities working together for their common goals. The new private association, AAPD, will serve as a vehicle allowing people with disabilities to unify, to organize, coordinate and govern their lives, not in the context of government programs or benefits, but in control of their own efforts in the private sector. When fully operational, AAPD will be the focal point for issues and concerns affecting all people with every disability - a membership association serving our nation's largest minority group.

"People with disabilities have made great strides in the past decade, highlighted in 1990 by the passage of ADA," said Paul Hearne, Acting Chair for AAPD. "The need for continued leadership remains strong. Forty-nine million people - one out of every five Americans - have a disability. Nearly half the people with disabilities are of an employable age, yet only one-third are

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One of the reasons AAPD has been successful in its advocacy efforts is its prioritization of lived experiences and visibility of disabled people through impactful mobilization campaigns, such as the Spirit of the ADA Torch Relay, March for Justice, and, most recently, the Protect Medicaid campaign.

AAPD prioritizes both career and leadership development for the next generation of disability champions. AAPD created the Betts and Hearne award programs, as well as the Summer and Fall Internship Programs, Disability Mentoring Day, NBCU Tony Coelho Media Scholarship, and Fannie Lou Hamer Leadership Program. These programs have recognized the significant contributions of the disability community's elders and fueled the ambitions of our community's emerging leaders.

AAPD has promoted accessible democracy and increased civic participation of disabled people since the very beginning. The Disability Vote Project helped mobilize disabled people across the country to exercise their right to vote, educate them about the positions of candidates on disability issues, and promote accessible voting. This continues today through AAPD's REV UP Campaign, which supports disability voting efforts in 48 states, and in AAPD's efforts to bring disability community voices into the halls of Congress to educate policymakers during our annual Disability Power on the Hill event.



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Deborah Kaplan, WID, Oakland,
CA; John D. Kemp, Executive
Director of United Cerebral Palsy
Associations; Paul Marchand, The
ARC, Washington, DC; Ralph Neas,
Esq., Washington, DC; Max
Starkloff, St. Louis Independent
Living Center, MI; Dr. Sylvia
Walker, Diversity Programs for
Howard Univ., Washington, DC;
Jim Weisman, Esq., EPVA, New
York, NY; Patrisha Wright, DREDD
Associations, DC



One of the keys to AAPD's success is the highly collaborative nature of our work. All of our work from 1995 to 2025 has been done in collaboration with other disability and civil rights organizations, corporate partners, and many others who have provided their knowledge and support.

As a convener, AAPD has led in the creation of strategic coalitions, such as the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition, National Coalition for Accessible Voting, Tech Forum, and We Will Ride Coalition.

From the Partnership with Digital Credit Union in 2002 to help people with disabilities access bank accounts, to today's Access Coalition, which focuses on creating more inclusive retail spaces, AAPD has developed meaningful corporate partnerships that increase the visibility and community integration of disabled people.

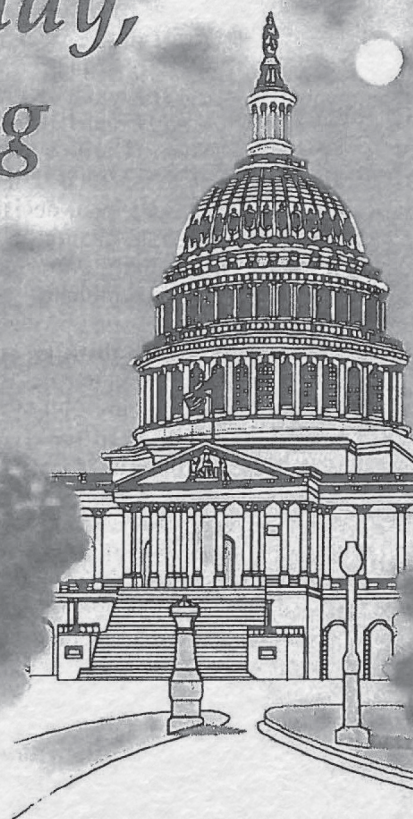
Our work for the next 30 years will only succeed through further collaboration and solidarity with a diverse group of partners who come together to create connections among people with disabilities and empower disabled people to thrive in their communities.

AAPD's first
membership application

"If FDR were alive today, he'd be proudly joining the AAPD - the American Association of People with Disabilities."

Join today the first organization to unify, provide leadership, and impact for 49 million Americans with disabilities, their families and friends.

AAPD's Mission: 1. To further the productivity, independence, full citizenship and total integration of people with disabilities. 2. To foster leadership 3. To support full implementation and enforcement of disability non-discrimination laws. 4. Provide information to and from the disability community. 5. Promote service availability, PAS, mobility aids, insurance and other benefits. 6. To educate the public and government policymakers on issues affecting people with disabilities.



Fill out the form below to become a part of our national AAPD initiative to create the first unified, powerful nonprofit organization to benefit all of us.

- ☐ Yes, I want to join. Enclosed is my \$5 individual membership dues.
- ☐ Send information on other categories of membership - association, business, group

AAPD Board of Directors

Mike Auburger
Nancy Bloch
Judi Chamberlin
Justin Dart, Jr.
William Demby
Dr. Fred Fay
Denise Figueroa

Lex Frieden
Ron Hatley
Paul Hearne
Neil Jacobson
I. King Jordan
Jim Weisman, Esq.

Deborah Kaplan
John D. Kemp
Paul Marchand
Ralph Neas, Esq.
Max Starkloff
Dr. Sylvia Walker
Patrishia Wright

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Fax: _____

Please mail this form to: American Association of People with Disabilities - AAPD
4401 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 223, Washington DC, 20008, ph. 202-363-8970

5

**AAPD is Powered
By Community.
What powers you?**



I am powered by



**integrity
humanity
courage
empathy
resilience**

**strength
purpose
confidence
unity
respect**

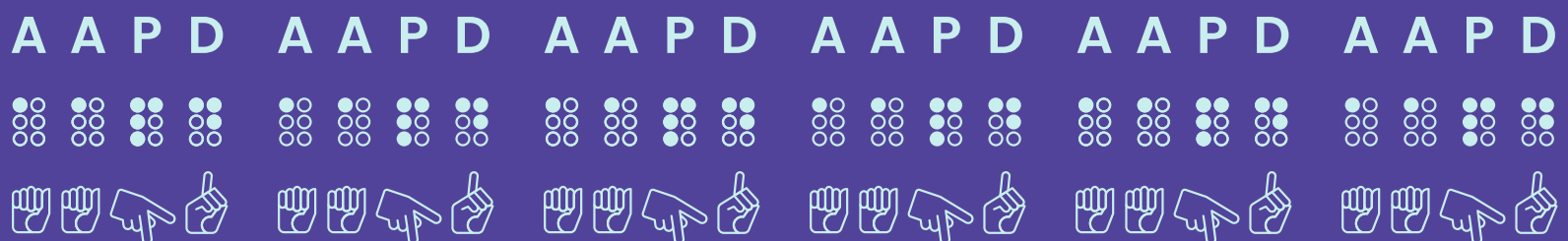
Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Awards

The AAPD Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award provides \$25,000 per recipient to outstanding emerging leaders with disabilities who exemplify leadership, advocacy, and dedication to the broader cross-disability community.

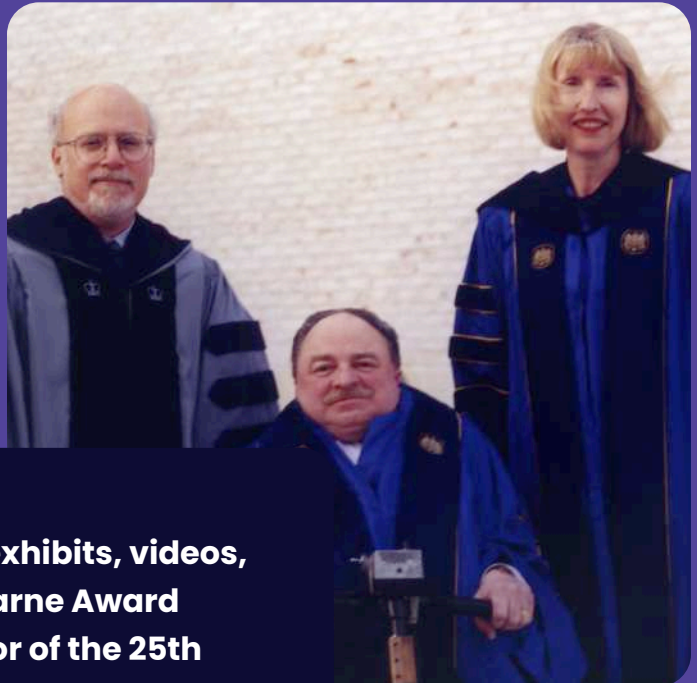
Paul G. Hearne was an advocate for disability employment and a founder of AAPD. The Hearne Awards were established in 2000, not only as a way to honor Paul’s lifetime of leadership and advocacy, but also to help realize Paul’s second goal by highlighting and supporting emerging leaders with disabilities.

Award recipients receive funding that recognizes their contributions to disability rights and supports a project or initiative they created that increases opportunities for people with disabilities.

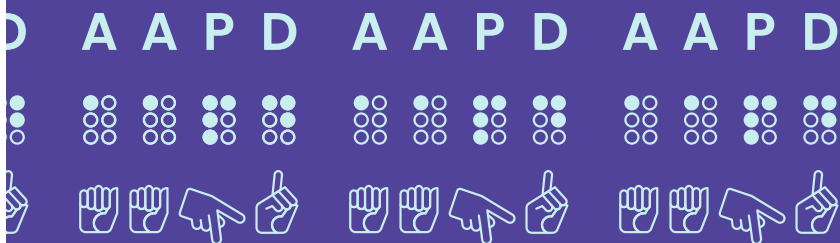
This year, AAPD increased the award amount from \$10,000 to \$25,000 to increase support for awardees and account for increased costs of living (and thus project implementation) between 2000 to 2025. AAPD wanted to ensure that the increased award enables recipients to make a bigger impact in their communities,



and also ensure that Hearne awardees receive meaningful compensation in recognition of their time, efforts, and outstanding leadership. AAPD is proud that over 75 award recipients in the last 25 years have dreamed up bold ideas, fostered community, and created lasting change.



Scan this QR code to see exhibits, videos, and written profiles of Hearne Award recipients created in honor of the 25th anniversary of the award.



Internship Programs & NBCU Scholarship

Internship Programs

In 2002, AAPD launched the Summer Internship Program to develop stronger disability identities for students and recent graduates to positively shape the future of our workplaces and communities. The internship program advances participants' career opportunities, deepens their leadership skills, and meaningfully connects them to the broader disability community. Students and recent graduates selected for the internship program get matched with paid full-time internships with Congressional offices, federal agencies, nonprofit

organizations, and for-profit organizations. All participants are paired with a professional mentor and attend community events. Interns who work hybrid in Washington, D.C. receive accessible dorm-style housing.

The internship program has experienced significant growth and transformation in recent years. After successful fully virtual internships in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19, beginning in 2022, interns choose between participating in a remote capacity or hybrid in DC. AAPD added a Fall Internship Program



in 2023, offering a fully virtual and part-time internship to allow for more flexibility. In the last several years, AAPD has also increased outreach to and participation from students in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, Minority Serving Institutions, and postsecondary programs specifically for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

AAPD recently hired a firm to do a retrospective assessment of the long-term impact the Summer

Internship Program has had over its 20 years. The report shows a significant positive impact on participants' career and personal development.



**Scan this QR Code
to preview the
report findings,
and stay tuned for
the full report on
December 1, 2025!**



NBCU Scholarship

The NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship provides eight (8) scholarships to high school seniors, undergraduate, and graduate students every fall. With generous support from NBCUniversal, the scholarship supports students with disabilities who are interested in increasing disability representation in their future careers in the communications, media, or entertainment industries.

The NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship was named for former United States Representative Tony Coelho, the primary author and House sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Coelho has been a partner to and supporter of AAPD since he spoke at AAPD's launch party on July 26, 1995. In the spirit of AAPD's bipartisan nature, Representative Coelho, a Democrat, spoke alongside his fellow ADA lead-sponsor, Senator Bob Dole, a Republican. Coelho went on to serve as the organization's Board Chair between 2009 and 2013.



Policy and Advocacy

For the past 30 years, the American Association of People with Disabilities has worked to expand opportunity, strengthen our democracy, and advance the rights of people with disabilities across the country. Rooted in the belief that disability rights are civil rights, AAPD's policy work addresses the issues that most directly shape disabled people's lives and futures. The list below represents highlights from AAPD's broad policy portfolio.

Policy Priorities

Community Integration: AAPD seeks to protect Medicaid, expand HCBS, and support other programs that make independent, self-directed living possible for millions of people with disabilities.

Inclusive Education: AAPD advocates for full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure all students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education and the supports necessary for them to succeed. AAPD promotes access to education from preschool through post-graduate work, working to eliminate barriers like the inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion in schools.

Opportunity and Economic Self-Sufficiency: AAPD works to end subminimum wages for disabled



workers, promote fair pay, and expand access to competitive, integrated employment. AAPD fights to ensure that disabled people can save for their futures, advance in their careers, and retire with dignity.

Equal Rights and Political Participation: AAPD strengthens voting access on a non-partisan basis through through national initiatives like REV UP and Disability Voting Rights Week, ensuring that every disabled voter can fully participate in our democracy. AAPD also advocates for upholding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related civil rights laws, working to secure their full implementation and prevent rollbacks.

Quality, Comprehensive, Affordable Health Care:

AAPD strives to ensure that people with disabilities have access to equitable health care, which includes person-centered planning, consumer self-direction, and accessible health care facilities and medical devices and equipment.

Technology Access: AAPD advances digital accessibility and ensures equal access to new technologies, including artificial intelligence, broadband, and telehealth.



Scan this QR code or visit AAPD.com/Action to take action as part of our policy campaigns.



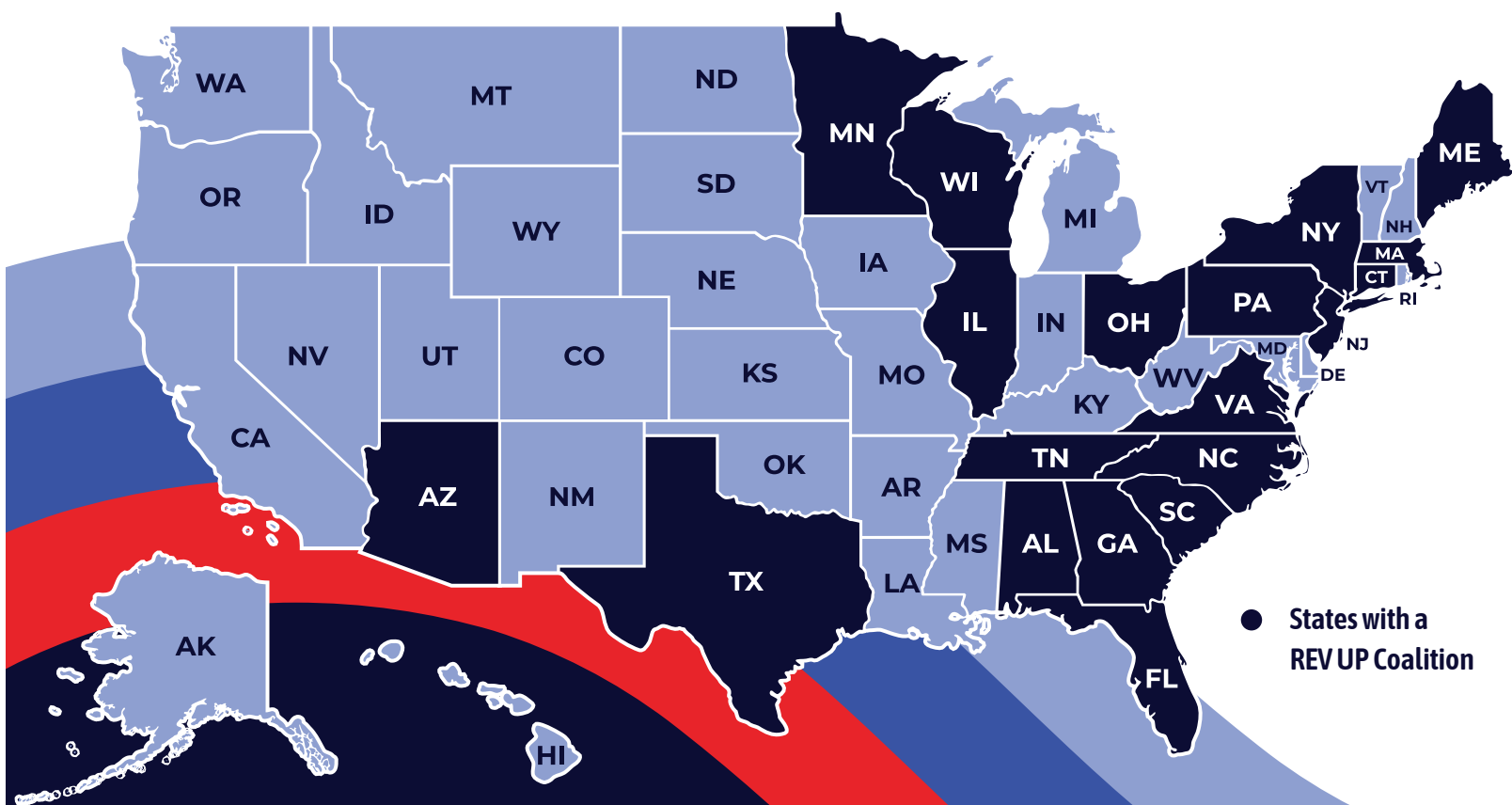
REV UP — which stands for Register, Educate, Vote, Use Your Power — is AAPD’s national, nonpartisan voting campaign, increasing civic engagement in the disability community and improving the accessibility of elections. Through a network of coalitions and disabled leaders, REV UP builds the power of the disability vote at the local, state, and national levels.

Highlights from the REV UP Network:

- **REV UP Virginia** hosted a statewide candidate forum on disability. It was the only event all six statewide candidates attended!
- **REV UP Minnesota** received the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Medallion Award in recognition of its “outstanding outreach to disabled Minnesotans.”
- **REV UP Texas** has registered and engaged nearly 700 voters, reaching disabled voters on college campuses, at community events, and in nursing homes.
- **REV UP Maine** created ASL and plain language explainers around an important ballot measure in their state.
- **South Carolina Disability Vote Coalition** collaborated with state election officials to create the state’s first Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) to improve election accessibility.



Scan the QR code or visit AAPD.com/RevUp to join your local coalition and use your power at the polls.



National Impact of REV UP Work

- **Powered** 20 coalitions at the state and local level!
- **Engaged** disabled leaders and organizations in 48 states, Washington D.C., and one U.S. territory.
- **Distributed** \$231,500 to disabled organizers across 24 states and one U.S. territory to support direct voter registration, engagement, and outreach in 2025.
- **Reached** over 254,000 voters in 2024 through direct voter engagements, direct mail outreach, rides to the polls, and more.
- **Provided** national civic engagement resources for the disability community in eight languages.



**Judy Heumann at AAPD's 2019
Leadership Awards Gala**

In Memoriam

Large community gatherings like this evening are joyful and fun, but also starkly remind us of who is not here to celebrate.

Acute awareness of those who have died and are not here to join us in celebration is especially felt in the disability community; our leaders and community members often die younger due to health challenges, systemic ableism, inadequate health care, inaccessible emergency protocols, and more.

**Kevin Webb of the Mitsubishi Electric
America Foundation and Stacey Park Milbern
at her internship site, Summer 2002**



**Disability Independence
Day March**

We feel the absence of many AAPD founders, incorporators, board members, and community leaders this evening. While it would be impossible to name everyone we have lost, we certainly wish we were hearing directly from Paul G. Hearne and Dr. Sylvia Walker about what it felt like to sign AAPD's incorporation papers.

John D. Kemp, J.D.

I. King Jordan, Ph. D

Justin W. Dart, Jr.

Sylvia Walker, Ed.D.

1660 L Street, N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20036-5602

800 Florida Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

907 6th Street, S.W., #516C
Washington, D.C. 20024

2900 Van Ness Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20059

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned subscribe these Articles of
Incorporation on the dates listed below.

Paul G. Hearne, J.D.

Date

John D. Kemp, J.D.

Date

I. King Jordan, Ph.D.

Date

Justin W. Dart, Jr.

Date

Sylvia Walker, Ed.D.

Date

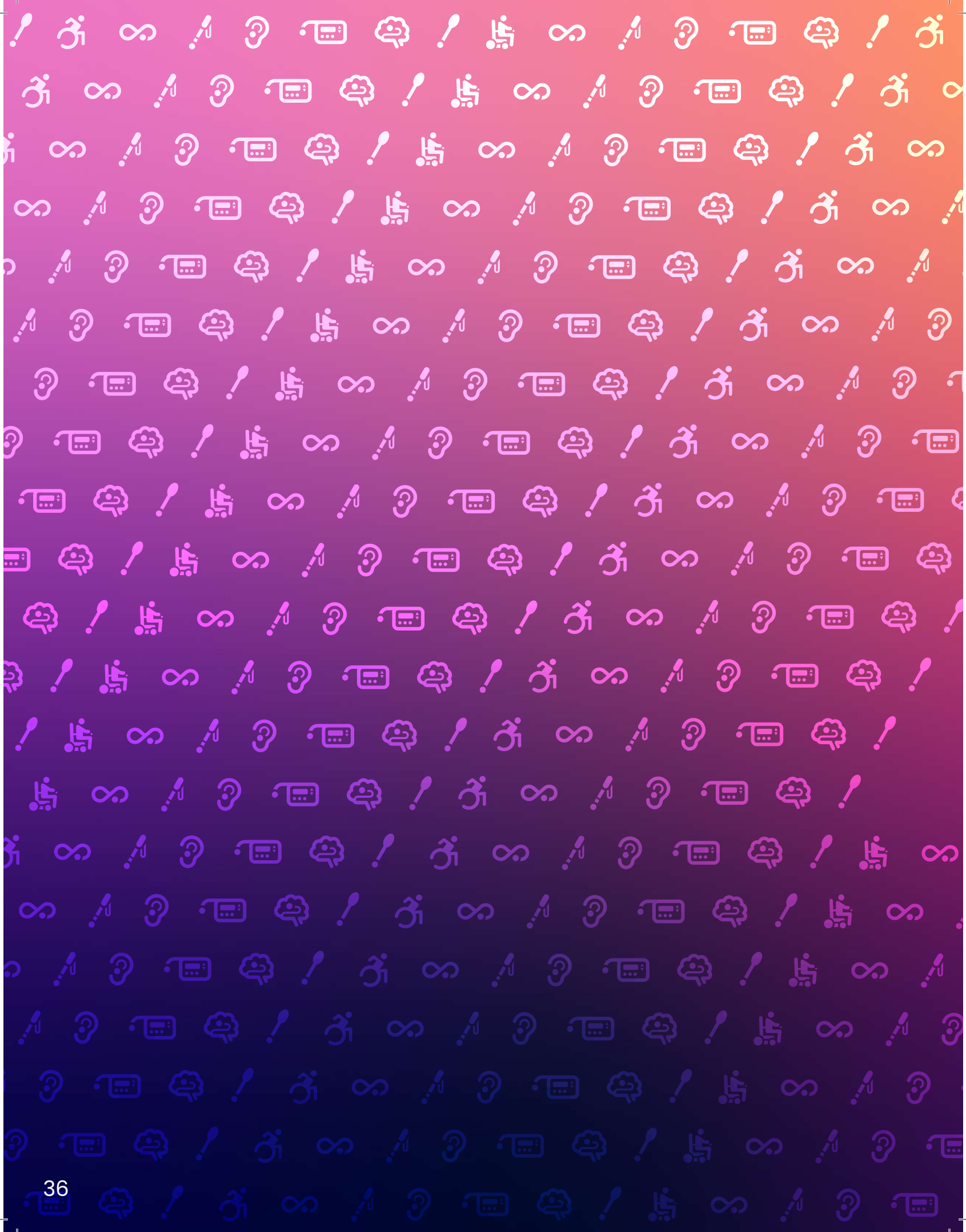
Paul Hearne, Justin Dart Jr., and
Dr. Sylvia Walkers' signatures on
AAPD's original incorporation
document, May 1995

We want to hear Justin Dart Jr. say
"I love you, LEAD ON!" We yearn for
Judy Heumann's guidance about
where to go next in this scary and
difficult time for disability rights.
We love seeing Stacey Park Milbern
on a U.S. quarter, but we'd prefer to
see her sitting at one of these tables,
reminding us to remain committed
to intersectionality, and not leave
inclusion efforts behind.

Tonight is a testament to the
lasting power of their work and lives.

Tonight is also a reminder that
our time together as a community
is precious.

Thank you for taking the time to
spend this evening with us, and for
being part of the AAPD community.
We are grateful you are here.



A series of decorative icons in the top left corner, arranged in a grid-like pattern. The icons include a person, an infinity symbol, a pencil, an ear, a video camera, a brain, and an exclamation mark. The color of these icons transitions from yellow at the top to pink and then purple towards the bottom.

Powered by
community

A series of decorative icons in the bottom section, arranged in a grid-like pattern. The icons include an infinity symbol, a pencil, an ear, a video camera, a brain, an exclamation mark, and the Gujarati character 'અં'. The color of these icons transitions from pink to purple.

AAPD 30



Thank You

To our Sponsors for your support in
making this evening possible.

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Goodman



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Arlene Mayerson
and Pat Wright



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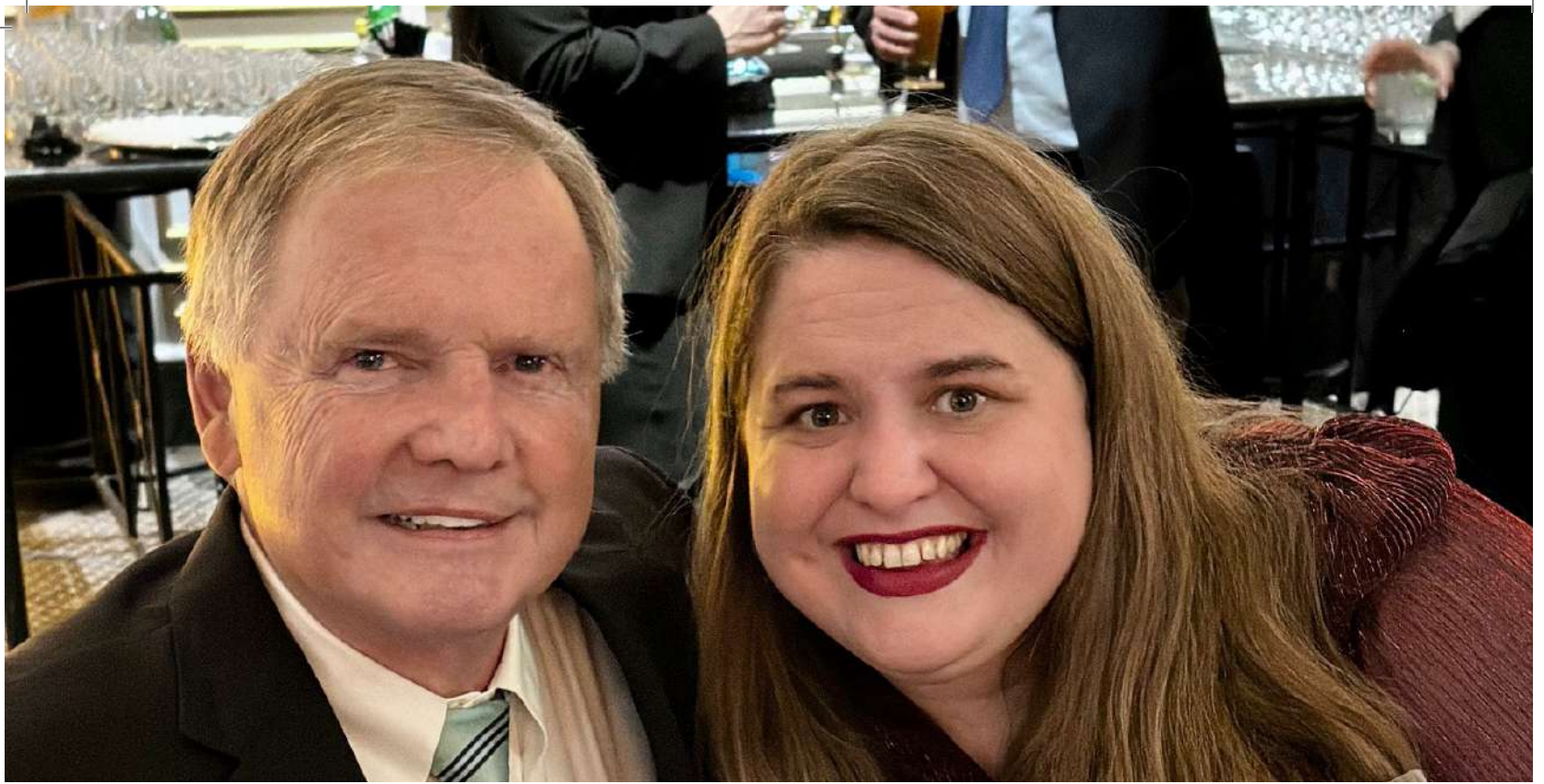
ShanShan Pa



Wells Fargo is
proud to sponsor
AAPD's 30th
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Celebrating 30 Years of Leadership, Dedication & Inclusion

For thirty years, the American Association of People with Disabilities has championed equality, independence, and opportunity for all. Through steadfast leadership and tireless advocacy, AAPD has strengthened our nation, reminding us that inclusion builds not only communities but character. NSSTA and our member companies proudly celebrate this shared mission.

Learn more at www.NSSTA.com

The National Structured Settlements Trade Association and our member companies honor AAPD's 30 years of impact and advocacy.





It's about Paychecks Not Pity®

Founded 30 years ago by international disability employment advocate and host of Disability Matters, Joyce Bender, Bender Consulting Services, Inc. supports customers with realizing the benefits of disability talent investment. Services include disability talent programming, candidate, employee, and customer engagement assessments, training, and digital accessibility.

BenderConsult.com



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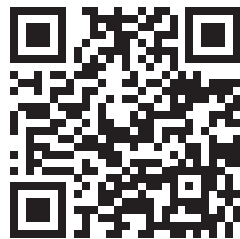
We're helping to build a stronger
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Learn more at [JPMorganChase.com/Impact](https://www.jpmorgan Chase.com/Impact)

Comcast NBCUniversal is proud
to support The American Association
of People with Disabilities and its
30th Anniversary Gala.



**When communities need a hand,
we go all in.**



HIGHMARK.
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community · health · resilience



Celebrating AAPD's 30 Years of Advocacy!

AAPD's dedication to fostering inclusive workplaces and advocating for disability rights has transformed countless lives and communities. Grateful for your leadership in creating a more inclusive world!

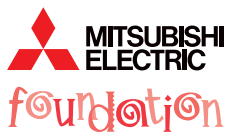
ElevanceHealth.com



Raising The Bar

Microsoft is committed to making technology accessible to everyone as a core part of our business and mission. As we advance in the AI era, our focus remains on creating trustworthy solutions, partnerships, and skilling programs to drive economic opportunities across all sectors and regions. When accessibility is a priority, everyone benefits.

Microsoft.com/Accessibility



Congratulations on AAPD's 30th anniversary of fighting for opportunity, access and empowerment of people with disabilities.

www.MEAF.org



RINGLER 

Extraordinary Milestones in Advocacy and Care

As AAPD celebrates 30 years and Ringler commemorates 50 years, together, these anniversaries reflect a shared legacy of ensuring that individuals navigating life after injury have the opportunities they deserve.

www.RinglerAssociates.com



We congratulate AAPD on their 30th anniversary of continued advocacy and empowerment of people with disabilities.

**Starbucks.com/
About-Us/Accessibility/**



WAYMO

Moving forward, together

Waymo is proud to celebrate AAPD's anniversary and the past 30 years of progress.

Learn more at [Waymo.com](https://waymo.com)



**We loved sharing 30 years
of AAPD memories with you.
Now we want you to share
your memories with us!**

Go to this link to share your photos, videos,
stories, or record an audio or video file
with your AAPD memories and disability
community stories. What you share can
help AAPD tell the story of our community
and movement in the future.



AAPD.com