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**MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO DESIGNATES JULY “DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH” IN
HONOR OF TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF ADA**

The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities Commissioner Victor Calise joins Mayor de Blasio in announcing a series of events celebrating the Americans with Disabilities Act’s 25th Anniversary, including the designation of July as Disability Pride Month

Other highlights include the Inaugural NYC Disability Pride Parade, the annual Sapolin Awards and the opening of the first ever museum exhibit on the city’s Disability Rights Movement

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio has issued a proclamation declaring July as “Disability Pride Month” in honor of the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA, passed by Congress in 1990, prevents discrimination based on disability, requires that employers provide reasonable accommodations, and ensures that public accommodations meet certain accessibility requirements. The Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities Victor Calise joined the Mayor in announcing a series of events and programming to commemorate the ADA and celebrate the work of disability rights advocates. Major events include the inaugural NYC Disability Pride Parade and the debut of the first ever museum exhibit on the city’s Disability Rights Movement, which opened last night at the Brooklyn Historical Society to kick off this month’s events.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act is one of the most important civil rights laws in history,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “By designating July as Disability Pride Month, we are celebrating and commending the fierce advocacy of those who have fought for equal rights for decades and reaffirming our strong commitment to making New York City the most accessible city in the world.”

“This is the mission of New York City’s Disability Rights Movement: to change the city’s human environment so that everyone has access, and to open people’s minds so that everyone has an opportunity to seek achievement, prosperity and fulfillment,” said **Victor Calise, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities**. “This mission informed the national coalition that brought the Americans with Disabilities Act into being 25 years ago, and it will continue to inform our advocacy not just in July, but every month of the year. I am grateful

to Mayor de Blasio for making New Yorkers with disabilities a priority, and taking unprecedented strides toward supporting and celebrating the community.”

“We are proud to support the rights of those with disabilities in our city,” said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “Throughout our history, New York City has been a leader on disability issues, and the designation of July as Disability Pride month on this anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act honors all those who have fought for equality. I thank the de Blasio administration for their commitment to fairness and equality for New Yorkers with disabilities.”

The Disability Rights Movement has a long history in New York City, beginning in the late 19th Century when New York was home to the first organization focused on serving the needs of people with disabilities living in mainstream society. Though people with disabilities were making significant efforts toward self-advocacy as early as the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the modern Disability Rights Movement arose in the early 1960s through the work of a small cadre of determined, disabled New Yorkers. Their accomplishments included the first legal protections against discrimination and the creation of groups like the NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, the first permanent governmental body in the nation devoted to people living with disabilities. The tenacity of disability rights advocates ultimately led to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, the nation’s signature civil rights legislation for people living with disabilities.

Throughout the inaugural Pride month, the City will host a series of events, including the first ever NYC Disability Pride Parade to be held on Sunday, July 12. The parade and rally, hosted by the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, will feature speakers, musicians and entertainers, and is designed to celebrate and honor the diverse disability community and the accomplishments of those within it. Senator Tom Harkin, the architect of the ADA, will be the Grand Marshall of the parade.

Kicking off the month-long celebration is the first ever museum exhibit on NYC’s Disability Rights Movement titled, “Gaining Access: The New York City Disability Rights Movement,” which opened last night at the Brooklyn Historical Society. “Gaining Access” charts the history of the movement and its champions through original artifacts, footage and photographs. Curating the exhibit is historian Warren Shaw, who also serves as New York City Law Department Senior Counsel. Shaw’s parents, Mollie and Julius Shaw, were well-known physically disabled political activists who pioneered the Disability Rights Movement and engineered the establishment of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities.

“Our goals for the exhibit are twofold – to illustrate the rise of disability as a demographic and social issue, and to document the emergence of the modern Disability Rights Movement,” said **Warren Shaw, curator, author, historian and Senior Counsel in the NYC Law Department**. “My family’s efforts to bring about important legal and cultural changes introduced me to the city as an evolving historical entity, in particular in the area of disabled rights. I am proud to work with the City on this important anniversary to celebrate the movement and clamor for greater accessibility and inclusion across the five boroughs.”

Other events throughout the month include:

- **Month-long CUNY Educational Lecture Series:** The City University of New York will host a series of lectures, discussions and events focused on key issues related to disability – including employment, women’s health, technology, dance, film, and community engagement – during which hosts and guests will discuss the issues, develop resolutions and plan for future improvement. CUNY will collaborate with other local institutions on the events, which will run throughout the month of July at various locations around the city.
- **Month-long Adaptive Sports and Recreation Activities:** In collaboration with the Parks Department, the City will host adaptive activities throughout the month at City Parks in all five boroughs.
- **The ADA Legacy Tour:** On July 13 and 14, the ADA Legacy Tour – which has been making stops across the country since it kicked off its national, year-long tour to raise awareness and celebrate the 25th anniversary – will be visiting Borough Halls in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. The Tour features a rolling piece of history – the “Road to Freedom” ADA Bus, which traveled to 48 states in 2007 to raise support for the ADA Amendments Act. The bus is driven by veteran disability rights photographer Tom Olin and brings with it displays on the preservation of disability history, celebrations of disability history milestones, and efforts to educate future generations of disability advocates.
- **The ADA Sapolin Awards:** Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Calise will host the Annual ADA Sapolin Awards, a yearly celebration of the ADA during which the Mayor gives awards honoring individuals and organizations that have made extraordinary contributions to the advancement of accessibility and inclusion.

“It is our mission to ensure that all New Yorkers can enjoy our city’s 29,000 acres of parkland, regardless of their income or abilities,” said **Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, Commissioner of the Parks Department**. “This summer, NYC Parks will host accessible sports, fitness, arts, and education events throughout the five boroughs so that all New Yorkers can get the most out of the great outdoors.”

“As we mark the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we should celebrate the legacy of the New Yorkers who founded the modern disability rights movement and continue to pursue their goal of accessibility for all,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Twenty-five years later, we are still finding new ways to make our city accessible – from requiring more ADA-compliant cars in our taxi fleet, to increasing the number of accessible pedestrian signals on our streets.”

“I’m thrilled to be celebrating our first ever Disability Pride Month, and our 25th year of the Americans with Disabilities Act,” said **Council Member Brad Lander**. “It gives me great pride to be part of a city that recognizes the importance of accessibility and the need to create an environment that works for all New Yorkers. Thanks to Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner

Calise for recognizing the proud history of the Disabled Rights Movement today, and the tireless advocacy and efforts of all those who fought for accessibility and equality.”

“For 25 years, the Americans with Disabilities Act has made a tremendous difference in the lives of untold numbers New Yorkers,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson**. “Designating July as Disability Pride Month is an excellent way to show our commitment New Yorkers with disabilities and thank them for their contributions to our city. The Americans with Disabilities Act is a profound piece of legislation that we must uphold and even exceed when possible. I thank the Mayor and his administration for designating the month of July as Disability Pride Month.”

“Equal access is a civil right, and 25 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we continue to strive for more equal access for people with disabilities in our schools, on playgrounds, on public transportation, and in public and government spaces. I was proud to introduce the resolutions calling on the State to expand the yearly income threshold for DRIE to \$50,000 and to remove the sunset provision from the SCRIE and DRIE expansions, and I am working on legislation to broaden access to people with hearing disabilities. I thank Mayor Bill de Blasio for being a strong advocate for people with disabilities and for naming July ‘Disability Pride Month,’” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

“Our goal in establishing an annual Disability Pride Parade in New York City is to promote inclusion, awareness, and visibility of people with disabilities, and redefine public perception of disability. Disability Pride NYC seeks to support people with disabilities in whatever way we can,” said **Mike LeDonne, Founder, President and CEO of Disability Pride NYC**.

“New Yorkers with Disabilities have been fighting for equality much longer than 25 years. The struggle hasn’t been easy but recently we’ve had a number of decisions and settlements in the courts that have advanced our cause and raised awareness about the issues of Disability Rights,” said **Edith M Prentiss, Vice President of Legislative Affairs at Disabled In Action of Metropolitan NY**.

“No law other than the ADA has ever promised people with disabilities the right to live as equals in America. No law other than the ADA has given people with disabilities the potential to pull ourselves out of poverty and to reach our full potential and greatness,” said **John D. Kemp, President and CEO of The Viscardi Center**. “Thank you, Mayor de Blasio and the City of New York for designating July as Disability Pride Month and encouraging us to embrace our disability identity, as people who are LGBTQ have done so well and rightly.”

“People with disabilities still face discrimination and lack of access every day,” said **Joan Peters, Executive Director of the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled**. “BCID views the Mayor’s designation of July as Disability Pride Month as an important step in raising awareness of the rights of people with disabilities, and for celebrating the accomplishments of disability rights advocates past and present. We look forward to continuing to work with the City to realize the full inclusion of people with all types of disabilities.”

“We are proud and honored to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the ADA with fellow New

Yorkers. Since the end of World War II United Spinal Association has advocated for access, inclusion and community living. Much is left to be done but the world is definitely a better place because of the ADA and the work of advocates with disabilities. Thanks to all who acknowledge the needs and support the rights of the disability community,” said **James Weisman, Senior Vice President and General Counsel at the United Spinal Association.**

“Independence Care System is a proud sponsor of ADA25NYC,” said **ICS President Rick Surpin.** “As a managed long term care plan dedicated to helping people with disabilities lives active, independent lives in their communities, we celebrate the advocacy and hard work that led to the passage of the ADA. We also recognize the importance of continuing to honor and expand the ADA’s legacy by enforcing the law so that all New Yorkers with disabilities, including our members, are fully able to lead the life they choose.”

“For 25 years the Americans with Disabilities Act has expanded access and improved the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired, and those with other disabilities. Lighthouse Guild is proud to join the City of New York in celebrating the progress made so far as a result of the ADA while recognizing that there is yet more that can be done to make New York accessible to the people we serve,” said **Alan R. Morse, PhD, JD, President and CEO of Lighthouse Guild.**

“CUNY is very proud of the historic role it has played in creating access and opportunity for New Yorkers with disabilities in higher education. CUNY’s 9,000 students with disabilities represent 20 percent of all college students with disabilities in New York State degree programs and are among the University’s most outstanding scholars and leaders” said **Frank D. Sanchez, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the City University of New York.** “At CUNY, we’re particular proud that the experiences of people with disabilities are reflected richly in our academic programs and co-curricular life.”

“Congratulations to Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Calise, and MOPD for being at the forefront celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA,” said **Christina Curry, Executive Director of the Harlem Independent Living Center.**

“The ADA provided the legal basis to ensure that people who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to communication in all venues. There is still progress needed to be made to individualize the type of accessibility a given individual with hearing loss requires, but in NYC we are well on the way,” said **Laurie Hanin, Ph.D., CCC-A, Executive Director of the Center for Hearing and Communication.**

For more information and to see other events hosted in honor of the ADA and People with Disabilities Month – including an open-source calendar of community events and accessible programming – visit the Mayor’s Office for People with Disability’s ADA25NYC website [here](#).

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