



Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission October 2010 Chronicle

Disability Awareness Day offers programs—and hope

What do Stevie Wonder, Daniel Inouye and Thomas Edison all have in common?

They refused to let disabilities get in the way of achieving their lifelong dreams.

It's this spirit of determination — and adaptability — that will be celebrated on **October 23 at the Cumberland County Disability**

Awareness Day at the Cumberland County College Luciano Center in Vineland from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event is sponsored by the Cultural and Heritage Commission, which works closely with the County Board of Freeholders and the Disabled Advisory Council to the County Office for the Disabled. The Commission's Americans for Disabilities act (ADA) Plan recently received an "excellent" rating from the N.J. State Council on the Arts, which called it a "model" plan.

Stevie Wonder, born in Saginaw, Mich., in 1950, became blind shortly after birth. In spite of his disability he learned to play the harmonica, piano and drums by age 9. At age 12 Motown Records gave him a recording contract. Some of his early hits were "For Once in My Life," "My Cherie Amour" and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours." He later studied classical piano and music theory and started writing more of his own material.

Recognition and awards have piled up over the years: 25 Grammy Awards, as well as the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1996; an Academy Award for the 1984



Three Americans who achieved much despite their disabilities: From left, Thomas Edison, inventor; Stevie Wonder, musician; and Daniel Inouye, U.S. senator.

hit "I Just Called to Say I Love You" from the film *The Woman in Red*; in 1989, induction into the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame; in 1999, the youngest honoree of the Kennedy Center Honors; in 2002,

induction into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame; in 2004, the Johnny Mercer Award in recognition of a lifetime of outstanding creative work; and in 2008, recipient of the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song.

Thomas Edison, famed inventor of the light bulb, lost almost all his hearing around the age of 12, possibly because of scarlet fever or, as he believed, from being grabbed by the ears and lifted onto a moving train. His disability did not discourage him, however, and he often treated it as an asset that allowed him to concentrate on his experiments and research.

In his 84 years, Edison acquired 1,093 patents, a record for his time. His laboratory in Menlo Park, N.J., was often called the "invention factory."

There he invented the phonograph, motivated in part by the machine's ability to play material useful to blind individuals, much like today's audio books.

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Sculpture embodies dreams

A unique new sculpture, "With Libraries You Can Achieve Your Dreams," will soon adorn the walls of the Cumberland County Library.

The commissioned piece, created by artist Molly Sanger Carpenter and made possible by a grant through the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission, will be dedicated at a public reception October 27 at the library from 5:30 to 7 p.m. The library is at 800 E. Commerce St., Bridgeton.

The brilliantly colored bas-relief wall hanging depicts a young girl seemingly reaching for the stars. Her long flowing hair is comprised of her many dreams — a path that leads to the open pages of a book below. "It's meant to represent all you can experience and learn from a book," said Library Acting Director Jean Edwards. The sculpture will be displayed on the brick wall of the staircase going to the upper level of the building.

Carpenter is a Salem resident with a distinguished artistic résumé. Her artwork has been widely exhibited throughout the Northeast United States, including shows in New York and Philadelphia.



Three role models for those with disabilities

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Daniel Inouye, the first congressman from the new state of Hawaii in 1959, was re-elected to a full term in 1960. He was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962, where he is serving his eighth consecutive term.

The son of Japanese immigrants, he was born in Honolulu in 1924. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, Inouye was only 17, but he used his medical aid training as a local volunteer. A year later, he interrupted his premedical studies at the University of Hawaii to join the U.S. war effort. He enlisted in the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat team, the famed "Go for Broke" regiment of soldiers of Japanese ancestry.

After losing his right arm in battle in 1945, he spent 20 months in an Army hospital in Michigan. He was honorably discharged in 1947 with the rank of captain, returning home with a Distinguished Service Cross, a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart with cluster

Program Highlights

9:30-Registration, continental breakfast

10:30 - Special Needs Registry information

11-Cumberland Area Transit System overview

11:15-Office on Aging and Disabled presentation

11:30- One -Stop Career Centers for the disabled overview

11:45-Cultural & Heritage Commission presentation on arts and culture in the region

Noon-Shirley Eves Developmental Center on programs for children

12:15 -Office for the Disabled programs and services

and 12 other medals and citations. His Distinguished Service Cross was upgraded to the Medal of Honor in 2000.

During his distinguished congressional career, he has served as a member of the Watergate Committee, chairman of the Iran-Contra Committee and chairman of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. He has also championed Hawaii's people in areas such as education, health care, employment and protection of the state's natural resources.

Disability Awareness Day will feature presentations by several local speakers (see box). In addition, information tables will dispense information on county and state services. Registration is required, but admission is free.

Funding for this newsletter has been made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/ Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Cumberland County Board of Chosen Freeholders.



Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided and door prizes awarded following the program. To register, call 856-459-3090.