



## *Improving the Lives of People with Disabilities*

People with disabilities need health programs and services for the same reasons anyone does—to be well, active, and part of the community. Our work in disability and health focuses on sustaining lifelong health. We collaborate with national and state partners to ensure no one with disabilities is left behind; that every person counts.

Over 50 million people face greater health challenges and, compared to their peers without disabilities, are more likely to report poorer overall health, less access to adequate health care, and increased rates of smoking, physical inactivity, and chronic conditions. Disability—at birth or acquired through chronic disease, injury or aging—is part of the normal human experience. Yet people with disabilities are often overlooked in public health and health care practice.

It is vital that people with disabilities are included in health surveys, research, programs, policies and services that meet their needs as people, not just as people with disabilities. And when children and adults with disabilities receive needed programs and services across their lifespans they can reach their full potential, have an improved quality of life, and experience independence. We want to make every person count and are committed to equity in the health of people with disabilities at every stage of life.



## *Translating Science into Positive Change*

Our research points us to effective strategies that help people with disabilities live healthier lives. We work with national and state partners to ensure no one with disabilities is left behind in our prevention efforts. Our research will answer important questions about the health care needs and quality of life of children and adults. We serve a critical role in identifying and communicating the needs of these populations.

## *Jerry's Story*

I'm a 53-year-old father of four children. On December 3, 1976, I was hit by a drunk driver. The accident left me a partial paraplegic. But, my life is not defined by my disability. I live just like anyone else would. There is a lot I can do, and there are some things that I can't do.

I'm independent, have a house, raised a family, and my adult kids still look to me for support. I retired from computer programming in 2009, and compete in and coach several sports. I've even participated in the Boston Marathon.

As a person with a disability, however, I experience many barriers. Once, I was being prepared for surgery when a nurse proclaimed, "He doesn't need an epidural; he's a paraplegic." I had to inform the nurse that I was only a partial paraplegic and that I would, indeed, need an epidural.

I've seen a lot over 35 years of living with a disability. Many of the barriers and attitudes toward people with disabilities persist. But, there have also been many positive changes to get people with disabilities physically active through recreational opportunities, such as golf, fishing and even snow-skiing. There are now organizations such as Lakeshore Foundation—where I work part-time coaching youth basketball and track—that provide recreational opportunities.

I don't expect the world to revolve around me. I will adapt—just make it so I can adapt.

