

SENIA Brasil

January 2025



Empowering Voices: Celebrating Leadership on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Observed annually on December 3rd, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD) is a global initiative established by the United Nations in 1992 to celebrate the rights, dignity, and well-being of people with disabilities. It serves as a platform to raise awareness about disability rights, advocate for more inclusive societies, and highlight the contributions of persons with disabilities to all areas of life.

Did you know that 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the global population, live with significant disabilities? That's 1 in 6 of us. Despite their numbers, people with disabilities often face systemic barriers, from limited accessibility to unequal healthcare outcomes. According to the World Health Organization, some individuals with disabilities may even die up to 20 years earlier than their non-disabled counterparts. These sobering statistics remind us of the need for continued advocacy, equity, and change.

The theme for IDPWD 2024, "Amplifying the Leadership of Persons with Disabilities for an Inclusive and Sustainable Future," emphasizes the vital role of persons with disabilities as leaders in driving change. Guided by the principle "Nothing About Us Without Us," this theme encourages active participation, representation, and inclusion in decision-making processes at all levels.

Milestones in Disability Advocacy

The global disability rights movement has achieved remarkable progress over the years. Key milestones include the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which provides a comprehensive framework for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and UN Security Council Resolution 2475, which addresses the rights of persons with disabilities in conflict and humanitarian contexts.

Looking ahead, the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025 offers a unique opportunity to further amplify the leadership of persons with disabilities. By ensuring that their voices remain at the forefront, we can drive meaningful progress toward a world that is not only inclusive but also sustainable.

How Can You Contribute to Change?

Creating a more inclusive world starts with collective effort. Here are some practical ways to participate:

- **Host Inclusive Events:** Partner with disability justice advocates to organize workshops, panels, or community forums. These events can foster dialogue about the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and identify strategies to remove barriers.
- **Encourage Workplace Accessibility:** Seek employee feedback on making workplaces more accommodating. Consider flexible schedules, sensory-friendly spaces, or technology to support neurodivergent and disabled staff.
- **Improve Digital Access:** Ensure that websites and online materials meet accessibility standards. This includes adding alt text to images, providing subtitles for videos, and using assistive-technology-friendly fonts and contrast settings.
- **Support Advocacy Initiatives:** Collaborate with local organizations or disability-focused nonprofits to amplify their work. Advocacy campaigns, fundraising, and awareness drives can have a significant impact on advancing disability rights.

The Importance of Inclusion in Leadership

The principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us” underscores that persons with disabilities must have a seat at the table when decisions are made about policies, programs, or services that affect their lives. Over the years, disabled leaders and organizations have driven change through grassroots efforts, education, and advocacy. From influencing legislation to shifting societal perspectives, their contributions have paved the way for a more equitable world.

However, the work doesn’t stop here. Inclusion is not a one-time goal but an ongoing process. By centering the voices of persons with disabilities in leadership, we can ensure that progress is sustainable, innovative, and reflective of everyone’s needs.

Celebrate by Taking Action

Let’s go beyond celebration and focus on action. Reflect on how your community, workplace, or organization can foster inclusion. How can you amplify the leadership of persons with disabilities to build a truly sustainable future?

Let’s join together to celebrate IDPWD by committing to practices that value, uplift, and empower persons with disabilities. Share your ideas, engage in dialogue, and take meaningful steps toward creating an inclusive environment for all.

For more information, visit the United Nations website: [UN Website on Disability Leadership](#).

Date: Thursday March 13th at 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

-Presenter: Isabela Cota

-Role: Upper School Learning Support Teacher at EABH (American School of Belo Horizonte)

-Studies/Qualifications:

-Graduação em pedagogia

-Graduação (licenciatura) em letras

-Pós graduação em educação bilíngue

-Pós graduação em neurociência

-Pós graduação em neuropsicopedagogia

-Presentation in English (20-25 min.): This workshop aims to equip educators with strategies and tools to bridge the gaps between various aspects of education, with a focus on the teacher's role in identifying and addressing learning disabilities and neurodiversity in the classroom.



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Everyone has a talent and a dream, regardless of physical or mental abilities. Young children dream about being so many things, and below are examples of a few children who dreamed about acting. These young actors overcame personal struggles and stereotyping to achieve their dreams. Visibility and role models are very important if we want everyone to know they can achieve anything if they put their mind to it, there are no limits.



Lauren Elizabeth Potter is an actor who has starred in many big TV shows like Glee and Leader of the Pack. She knew at age four she wanted to act after receiving a standing ovation on stage when taking dance classes. Lauren is an advocate for people with disabilities and often fights against bullying, and believes it important to be a good role model for other inspiring actors with Down Syndrome.



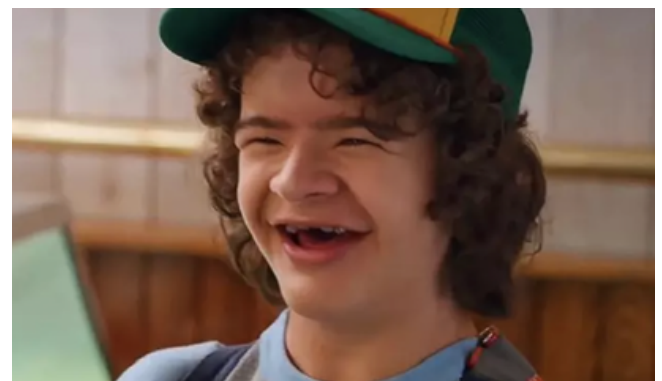
Gavin McHugh is an active teenager who loves surfing, swimming, playing at inclusive playgrounds, and reading. He has never let Cerebral Palsy hold him back. When he read in a script that his character needed to skateboard, he skateboarded (in a specially designed support apparatus). Gavin has been on many magazine covers and TV ads as well as a regular on ABC 9-1-1 since 2018.



Ali Stroker also starred in Glee, amongst many other TV shows and movies. She was the first actor ever to be nominated and win a Tony and is a celebrated singer and dancer. Ali always wanted to be on stage but never saw anyone like her, so she decided to be the one others could look too.



Millicent Simmonds lost her hearing at the age of one and started acting at twelve. Acting was not something she ever thought possible; however, she found so much support from her fellow actors, who all learned ASL to communicate with her on set. She is quoted as saying, "I want kids out there to see themselves represented on screen. They can be the ones to save people, they don't have to be saved."



Gaten John Matarazzo III is from the hit show Stranger Things. Gaten uses his fame to raise awareness about cleidocranial dysostosis and to raise funds for CCD Smiles, an organization that helps cover the cost of surgeries for those who also suffer from cleidocranial dysostosis.