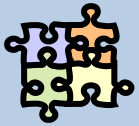
Lighting the Way:

Heroes with Disabilities



Illinois Voices: Putting together the pieces of the self-advocacy puzzles.

BUZZ ALDRIN: Astronaut

BUZZ ALDRIN was the second astronaut to set foot on the moon in July of 1969. He is hailed as an international hero, has written several books, has been on *Dancing with the Stars*, and has his own star on the *Hollywood Walk of Fame*. He is still very involved with the space program today. Buzz is currently living with **depression.**

CHRIS BURKE: Actor

CHRIS BURKE is an actor with **Down syndrome** who is most famous for being “Corky” in the TV show *Life Goes On.* He also appeared on *Touched by an Angel* as an angel with Down syndrome. Currently, Chris tours the U.S. with his 4-piece folk music band. The band has released several albums, and has even appeared on television performing their signature song, "Celebrate."

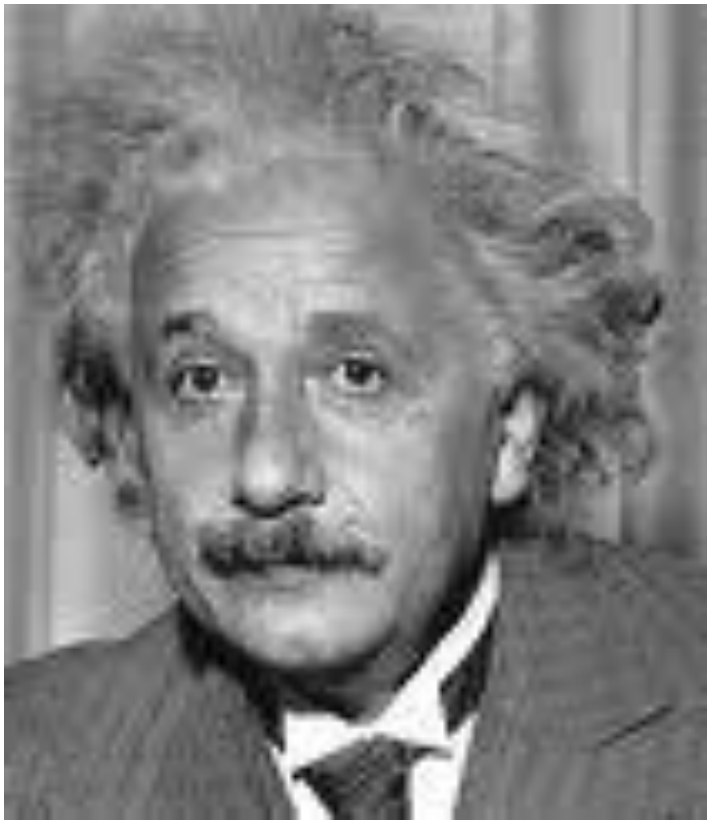
AGATHA CHRISTIE: Writer

AGATHA CHRISTIE is known as the "Queen of Crime" for her many excellent mystery novels, including *And Then There Were None* and *Murder on the Orient Express.* Her experiences with having **epilepsy** led her to describe the condition—specifically post-traumatic epilepsy—in *The ABC Murders.* She is known in the Guinness Book of World Records as the best-selling writer of any kind, along with William Shakespeare!

JUSTIN DART: Activist

JUSTIN DART is considered the father of the ADA, or the Americans with Disabilities Act. He was influential in getting that law passed in the United States, and was honored by President Clinton with the National Medal of Freedom in 1998. He lived with **polio and its complications,** along with congestive heart failure. Justin is celebrated as one of the "founding fathers" of the disability rights movement in America!

ALBERT EINSTEIN: Scientist



ALBERT EINSTEIN was considered "slow" by his teachers at school, and math was once his worst subject! Nevertheless, this genius with **dyslexia** went on to become one of the most famous scientists of all time. Who cared if he could tie his shoelaces right (he never could!) when he was the one who discovered that "$E = mc^2$?" He is the father of modern physics and received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921.

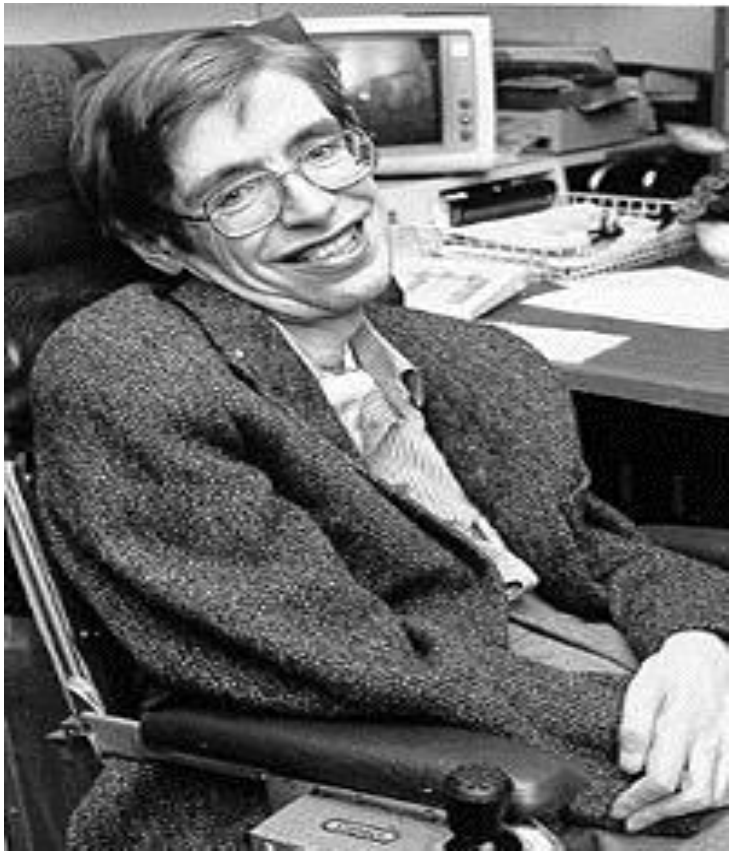
CARRIE FISHER: Actress

CARRIE FISHER became a movie icon when she starred in Episodes IV-VI of *Star Wars.* The daughter of actress Debbie Reynolds and singer Eddie Fisher, she was catapulted into fame as Princess Leia and has been known and loved by millions ever since! She has undergone ECT, or electroconvulsive electroshock therapy, for **bipolar disorder.**

LOU GEHRIG: Athlete

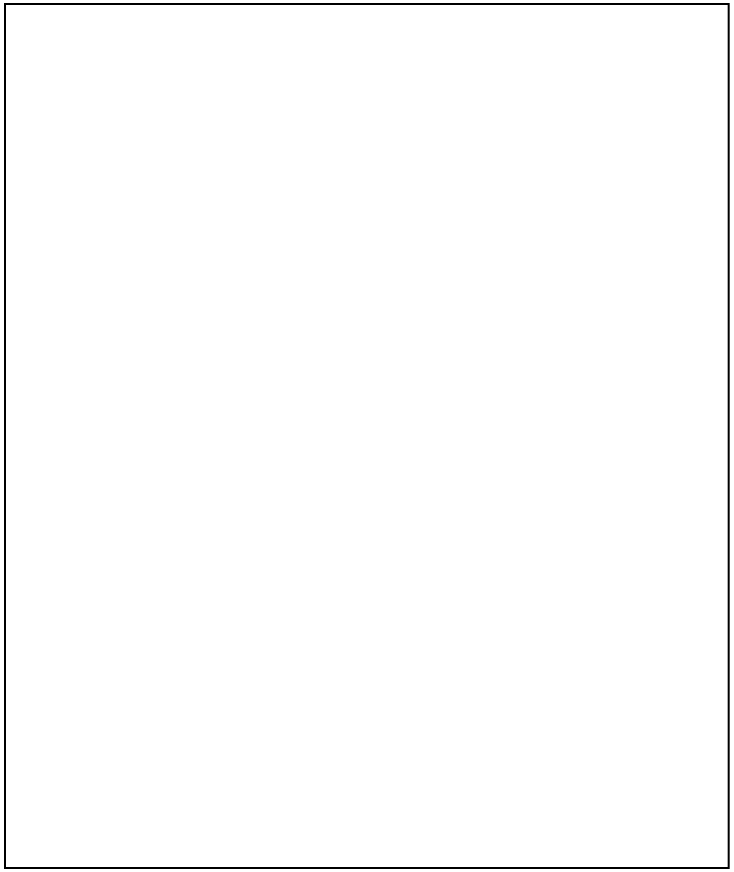
LOU GEHRIG, first baseman for the New York Yankees from 1923 to 1939, is considered by many to be the best first baseman of all time, including the Baseball Writers' Association! He holds a record of most career grand slams (23), and until Cal Ripken, Jr. broke it, Gehrig also held the record for most games played in a row (2,130). His life was claimed by **Lou Gehrig's disease,** now known as **ALS.**

STEPHEN HAWKING: Scientist



STEPHEN HAWKING, following in the footsteps of Albert Einstein, is a world-famous physicist with **neuromuscular dystrophy.** He has done an incredible amount of research, especially about gravity, radiation, and black holes. His book *A Brief History of Time* was a runaway bestseller and stayed on the charts of the British *Sunday Times* for a record-breaking 237 weeks (that's almost five years straight through)!

“I AM A HERO”: You!



Imagine a picture of yourself and/or your name in this square. **YOU** are a HERO, because YOU ARE HERE, YOU MATTER, and YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE in other people’s lives! ☺ You are **a human being with equal rights and equal opportunities** to live your dreams and be happy in life. Don’t let anyone tell you you’re not a hero, because YOU ARE, and you have the human right to live the kind of life YOU want to live. Go for it!

GERI JEWELL: Comedian

GERI JEWELL is a comedian with **cerebral palsy** who has appeared on the '80's TV show *The Facts of Life* and the HBO series *Deadwood.* Geri says that in her life, her behavior and actions have often been misunderstood because she has a disability. She is considered a pioneer for comedians with disabilities. On her blog, Geri says, "In this remarkable age of technology and cyberspace, we can connect in ways that was never [were never] possible before!" http://gerijewell.blogspot.com/2006_10_01_archive.html

HELEN KELLER: Writer/Speaker

HELEN KELLER is possibly the most famous, well-known hero with a disability of all time! Being **deaf, blind** and **unable to speak,** Helen found it extremely hard to communicate. Her teacher, Anne Sullivan, taught Helen the meanings of words by finger-spelling words like “d-o-l-l” and “w-a-t-e-r” into her palm. Eventually, Helen grew up to be a writer and speaker recognized around the world. She proves that *disability does not mean inability!*

TRACY LATIMER: Self-Advocate

TRACY LATIMER was a healthy, happy young girl who smiled, laughed, and enjoyed watching horses at the circus. She had **several disabilities,** and in 1993, her father killed her by putting her in the cab of his truck and turning on the engine while the garage door was closed. He was sentenced to life in prison, but is currently out on parole. Rest in peace, Tracy. Your life *mattered, and WE WILL REMEMBER YOU!*

JASON McELWAIN: Student/Athlete

JASON McELWAIN, an athlete with **autism,** was the manager of his basketball team at Greece Athena High School in New York. He made national news in 2006 when he made 6 3-point shots and one two-pointer in a game against Spencerport High School for the championship of his division! The crowd dashed out onto the court after the final buzzer rang, celebrating Jason and the team's win. Jason's story is now being made into a film by Columbia Pictures!

JACK NICKLAUS: Athlete

JACK NICKLAUS, known as the "Golden Bear", is thought by many to be the greatest golfer ever! He overcame a case of **polio** as a child and took up golf at the age of 10. In his career, he has earned 115 professional wins and holds a record for the most victories in major championships (18). He is truly a master of the sport, and not only because he managed to win the Masters a grand total of six times!

GINNY OWENS: Singer

GINNY OWENS is a Gospel singer who has been completely **blind** since the age of 2. When she graduated from Belmont University with a degree in Music Education, she found that most people were very uncomfortable with the idea of hiring a blind music teacher. Thus, she concentrated on songwriting and making CD's. She has won three Dove Awards (the Christian equivalent of the Grammys), and her music has been featured on TV shows like *Roswell and Felicity!*

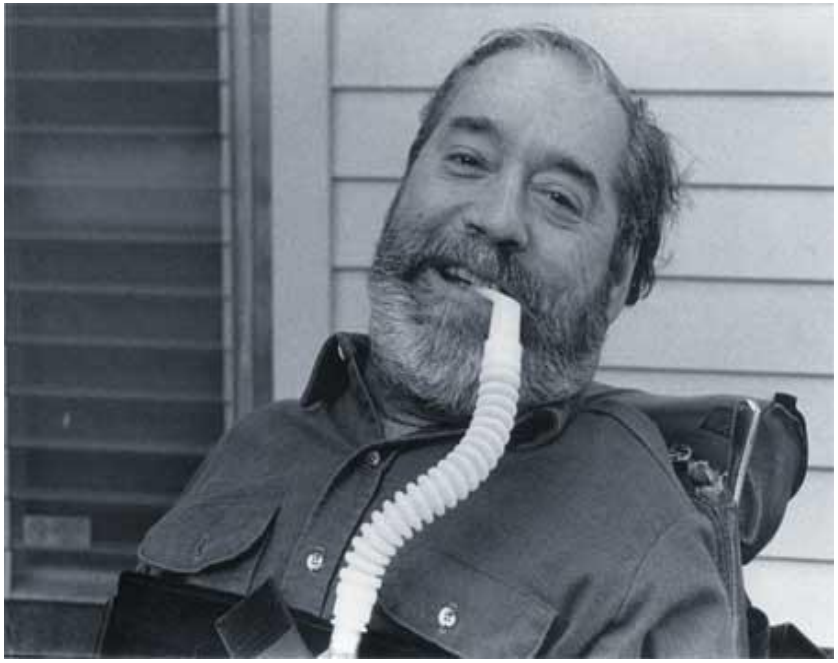
LESTER PRITCHARD: Activist

LESTER PRITCHARD was an Illinois hero with **cerebral palsy.** Lester received many awards for his activism alongside others with disabilities. In 2004, the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities honored him with the Illinois Justin Dart Distinguished Citizen Award. In August ‘08, Lester went to New York to receive what he considered his highest honor, the Paul G. Hearne Award from the American Bar Association Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law!

ANTHONY QUINN: Actor

ANTHONY QUINN, even though he **stuttered,** still achieved his dream of becoming a famous actor! He starred in many successful and well-known films, including *Zorba the Greek, Lawrence of Arabia,* and *The Guns of Navarone.* He won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor twice, in the movies *Viva Zapata!* and *Lust for Life.* In addition to his acting, Anthony Quinn also wrote and painted. He studied briefly under Frank Lloyd Wright as a reward for winning first prize in an architectural design contest! He is the author of two memoirs.

ED ROBERTS: Activist



ED ROBERTS is hailed as a hero for being the "father of the independent-living movement"! He contracted **polio** at the age of 14 and was the first student with significant disabilities to attend the University of California at Berkeley. Originally, a high-school administrator had threatened to deny him a diploma because he hadn't completed P.E. and Driver's Education! Ed co-founded the World Institute on Disability.

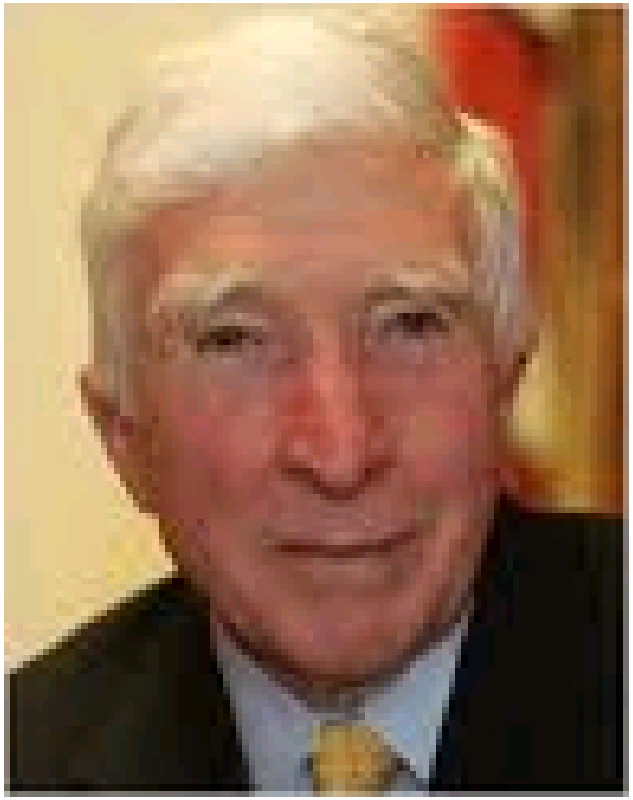
BONNIE ST. JOHN DEANE: Athlete

BONNIE ST. JOHN DEANE became an **amputee** (had her right leg cut off above the knee) at the age of 5 due to a condition called pre-femoral focal disorder. She is the first African-American woman to win medals in Winter Paralympic events as a ski racer. She won bronze medals in slalom skiing and giant slalom, and a silver medal for her overall performance in Austria in 1984.

HARRIET TUBMAN: Activist

HARRIET TUBMAN was a slave in her youth. Nevertheless, she went on to form the Underground Railroad, upon which thousands of other slaves found their way to freedom. Unbeknownst to many, she had a **brain injury** and **narcolepsy** (a condition where you fall asleep uncontrollably and at times that you can't predict). During the Civil War, she led an armed Union squadron on an expedition!

JOHN UPDIKE: Writer



JOHN UPDIKE is considered one of the best fiction writers of the 20th century. Like Anthony Quinn, he also **stuttered,** but he found he had a "way with words"! He is famous for his novels about Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize. About his stuttering, he said: "…My father thought that I had too many words to get out all at once. So, I didn't speak very pleasingly, but I never stopped speaking or trying to communicate..."

http://www.achievement.org

VINCENT VAN GOGH: Artist

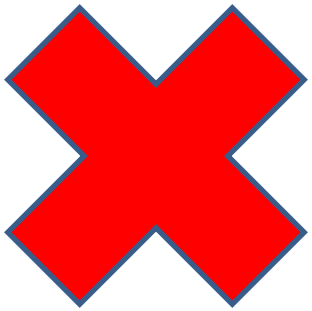
VINCENT VAN GOGH, with his "Starry Night" painting shown here, was a Dutch painter whose work had a profound influence on 20th-century artists. He lived with **depression** and **possible schizophrenia,** and after an argument with a fellow artist, he cut off the lower part of his left ear lobe! Even though he shot himself, his memory and his magnificent art will last forever.

STEVIE WONDER: Singer

STEVIE WONDER is one of the most famous musicians in the world who is also **blind.** At the remarkable age of 11, he signed his first contract with Motown Records! He campaigned in 1980 to make Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a holiday in the United States (and won)! Some of his most famous songs include “Superstition”, “I Wish”, and “I Just Called to Say I Love You”. In 2009, Stevie Wonder was named a United Nations Messenger of Peace!

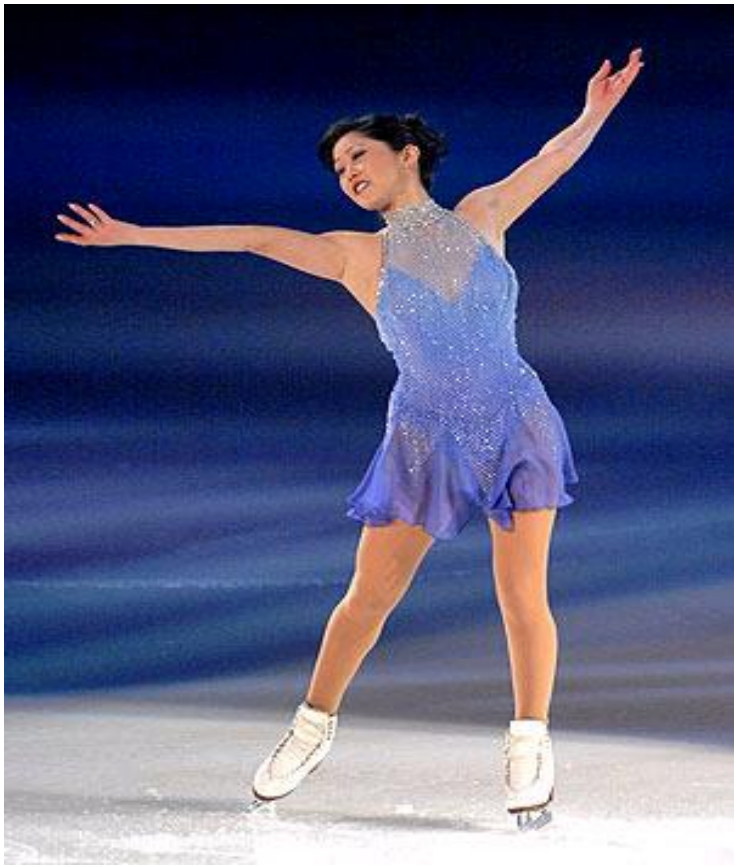
“X” OUT THESE WORDS AND IDEAS!

- **DISCRIMINATION**
- **“R” WORD**
- **NAME-CALLING**
- **PREJUDICE**
- **YOU NEED FIXING!**
- **ABUSE AND NEGLECT**



“X” OUT ALL OF THESE NASTY WORDS AND IDEAS!!! Be a hero and tell the rest of the world that you don’t like these ideas.
You are a **PERSON FIRST,** and a **HERO** first!

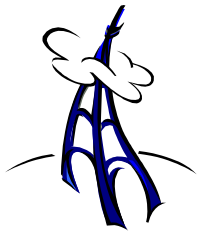
KRISTI YAMAGUCHI: Athlete



KRISTI YAMAGUCHI, one of the most famous and beloved female figure skaters in world history, was born with **club feet.** In fact, she started skating as physical therapy to help her with that condition! Kristi participated in the Olympic Winter Games in 1992, winning the gold medal in ladies' singles skating (women skate by themselves). She has toured with *Stars on Ice* and *Aladdin on Ice,* and has even written *Figure Skating for Dummies!*

WARREN ZEVON: Singer

WARREN ZEVON is an 80's rock-and-roll celebrity who has **OCD,** or **obsessive-compulsive disorder.** Notwithstanding, he has performed many unique and wacky songs, including "Werewolves of London", "Excitable Boy", "Roland the Headless Thompson Gunner" and "Lawyers, Guns and Money". He has also been a frequent guest on Letterman!



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