Ed Roberts Day

Celebrating the catalyst for disability rights, access, and equality

Every January 23rd we celebrate Ed Roberts Day to honor the man frequently called the Father of the Independent Living movement.

At the age of 14, Ed Roberts contracted polio, along with both of his parents and his siblings. They eventually recovered, but Ed was left with significant respiratory, muscle, and limb weakness and atrophy. As a result, he slept in an iron lung (a breathing machine used prior to the development of our modern ventilators) and had to teach himself different breathing techniques to function away from his iron lung during the day.

He encountered many obstacles in acquiring his education, most notably in 1962 when he was accepted to University of California, Berkeley. The University did not know he was a person with a disability and subsequently refused him access because his iron lung would not fit in the dorm. Ed challenged the college administration and ultimately was admitted.

While at UC Berkeley Ed and a few other students with disabilities lived in the Student Health Center, together they created an advocacy group called The Rolling Quads. The group pushed for better accessibility on campus and funding for supports so students with disabilities could attend class and live independently.

Ed Roberts is responsible for opening the nation’s first center for independent living which started with a staff of just two people. “We know even the most severely disabled folks can live in the community, and it’s up to us—those of us who are lucky enough to be out and who feel the power of the process,” Roberts said. “Because every time we reach out to help someone else, we empower them for ourselves.”

Today, Ed Robert’s legacy lives on in a variety of ways, including on college campuses across the country where students are pushing initiatives, discovering identity as students with a disability or disabilities, and working to create more inclusive and integrative environments.

Because of the work Roberts did, inclusion is prioritized, access is a requirement, and people with disabilities are developing stronger and louder voices every day.
A Message from the Board President:

Nurturing the Joys of Life in 2022

January 2022

Dear Friends,

The end of a year provides us with a moment to take stock of where we have been, and where we may be going - as individuals, communities, nations, and as a planet. We will have plenty of opportunity in the weeks and months ahead to delve into the details of our challenges. But let's focus on one lens through which to measure our times: health.

We often wish each other a healthy and happy new year. And for good reason.

Without health, so many aspects of life can quickly transform from joys to struggles, or even sorrows. Our ability to spend time with friends and family, to be independent, to work, move about, and take the future for granted is all undermined without health.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen health shattered at a level that is almost impossible to comprehend, let alone accept - over 800,000 dead in the United States and well over 5 million worldwide.

Both numbers are mind boggling. Both numbers are likely undercounts. Both numbers are guaranteed to spike further. And this doesn't measure all the other suffering that has come in the wake - those still struggling with long Covid, with lost loved ones, lost jobs, lost schooling, lost gatherings, lost hope. And a pandemic doesn't erase all the other health challenges people face, from heart disease, to cancer, to mental health, and the myriad other ways our bodies and minds succumb to the ravages of illness and trauma.

As we start 2022, please attend to what you need to do to preserve your own health as much as possible in the year ahead. There will be times that will likely challenge your faith in the future.

But to be human must also mean nurturing the joys of life. So, take time to talk with a friend, hold hands with a partner, read a great book, watch a funny movie, watch a sunset, take a hike, root for your favorite sports team, enjoy a smile from a grandchild, and so many more. Seek out these moments. Hold on to them, dearly. Embrace them - for your own health, and for the health of our world.

All of us here at RICV wish you a Happy New Year. May the year ahead be one of health for you and all who are close to you.

Sincerely,

Selina Escobar
President, RICV Board of Directors
Johnston joins RICV team

Scott Johnston is RICV’s new Community Outreach Specialist. He is working hard to spread the word about RICV’s services and programs, while also boosting fair housing and COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

Who were you close to growing up?
My mom, brother, and sister, and I still am.

Who are your greatest supporters?
My family. I wouldn’t be where I am today without them. My mom has been there every step of the way. I’m so thankful for her and love her very much.

What do you dream about?
I dream about having a platform to share my story and help others while traveling and seeing the world.

What moment shaped you most this far in your life?
I wouldn’t say it’s a moment, but the last 10 years of my life have been a time of self-discovery, growth, struggle, and the opportunity to figure out what I really want in life.

What was the happiest moment in your life?
Getting my first car and driver’s license. They were goals of mine for so long and I didn’t know if they’d ever happen due to the cost of accessible vans. It was awesome when I did.

When was the last time you were amazed?
When my mom surprised me with a trip to Disneyland for my 21st birthday.

If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be?
If I could change one thing in the world it would be to end inequality in all ways shapes and forms for everyone in the world. That way, everyone would have the same chance at opportunities, and it would only be someone’s talent or keeping them from succeeding.
GET INFORMED

Let Dr. Nelson give you the facts on children and the Covid-19 vaccine

The Covid-19 vaccine is recommended for children ages 5 and over. RICV is making sure you have the answers to all of your questions when it comes to having your child or children vaccinated. Join us via Zoom on Tuesday, February 1 at 6 p.m. to get the facts and have your questions answered.

Dr. Hailey Nelson, a pediatrician from Valley Children’s Hospital will provide the facts and answer your questions about the Covid-19 vaccine.

For more information, or to obtain the Zoom link, email Scott Johnston at: sjohnston@rvc.org.

Dr. Hailey Nelson
Pediatrician
Valley Children’s Hospital

FREE TESTING

Stay safe: Order your at-home Covid-19 tests online

The federal government is providing free at-home COVID-19 antigen tests through their website, www.covidtests.gov that will be shipped directly to each individual’s home.

What to Know:

- Order your test online at: www.covidtests.gov
- It takes less than a minutes to order the tests.
- All that is needed to order tests is first and last names and shipping address. No ID, credit card, or health insurance information is required.
- Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order four (4) free at-home Covid-19 tests
- Tests are free and will be shipped by the U.S. Postal Service
- Tests should arrive by USPS with 7-10 days from order

The Free At-Home Covid-19 Tests:

- Are rapid antigen at-home tests, not PCR
- Can be taken anywhere
- Give results within 30 minutes (no lab drop-off required)
- Work whether or not you have COVID-19 symptoms
- Work whether or not you are up-to-date on your Covid-19 vaccines
- Are also referred to self-tests or over-the-counter (OTC) tests

For more information about the at-home Covid-19 tests, visit https://www.covidtests.gov/faq/. If you need help ordering your tests, feel free to call RICV at 559.221.2330.
Speaking through art: Painter’s work goes on display

“My new school became my new home. Instead of shoving me into a box, it built one that fit me.” —John Bukshite

Excerpts of this story taken from an article appearing in the Visalia Times Delta

“I may not be able to speak, but I still think and feel just like the rest of you...being different doesn’t mean being incapable. It just means society needs to find the best way to allow skills like mine to flourish.”

These are the words of John Bukshite. John is a 21-year-old nonverbal autistic. He can’t talk or always control his body movements. His iPad speaks for him. And with assistance to coordinate his movements, he paints.

This past January 7th, he presented Non-Verbal: But a Lot to Say, his show of insightful poems and art in downtown Visalia at the Brandon-Mitchell Gallery.

John was 18 months old when he got sick, leaving him impaired. He was diagnosed as severely mentally disabled, but his mother, Inbal Hagai, knew better. She’s his staunchest advocate.

Teacher gave him voice

When John got to kindergarten in a special day class in Tulare, his teacher tried something new with him. When got to kindergarten in a special day class in Tulare, his teacher, Theresa Higdon Uphoff, tried something new with him. She had gone to a training where she learned children like John couldn’t sense where their body were in space, but physical touch gives them the sense. That was the beginning. Uphoff’s physical touch techniques worked. John was bright and had a photographic memory. His mom learned to assist him in typing through an iPad, leading to mother and son being able to communication for the first time.

Assume the best

In her training, Uphoff leaned a saying: “Assume complete competence; it is the least dangerous assumption.” She realized John knew everything that was going on. But because John doesn’t look you in the face and waves his arms, people assume he doesn’t understand.

In one of his poems, John says, “Some talk to me slow/Some talk to me loud/Some talk like a baby/I can feel/I just can’t talk.”

Flourishing

When he got to high school, John went to Crescent Valley Charter School, which provides individualized training. John flourished with the help of a tutor, Tom Nelson.

“It was quite a challenge. He’s very intuitive. I got so I knew what he was thinking,” Nelson said. “John wants to be an inspiration for everyone. He’s aware of everyone. He is so sensitive to their energy.”

John’s four years the school were so successful he was named a graduation speaker. Nelson read his speech. It said in part, “My new school became my new home. Instead of shoving me into a box, it built one that fit me. I think this is how schools should be, fitting themselves to students instead of the other way around.”

Artwork

Recently, John has taken up painting with the help of Jessica Smith, who uses the same touch on the elbow technique to activate his arm.

“John had a hard time holding a brush at first, but now he loves to use brushes. And he will rub and do dots with his fingers,” Smith said. “Now, he’ll use different brushes. He started mixing his own colors. He intuitively has that child-like expression. I just try to give him a little structure.”

She added, “It’s a different level of communication with him. He’s showing—more than saying—the way he feels.”

What’s Next

“John has been riding horses since he was 5. His balance is so incredible he can stand on trotting horses. He’s taking classes at College of the Sequoias and does Pilates and yoga.

His former kindergarten teacher Theresa Uphoff says technology has improved incredibly since she first worked with John. Now, eye gaze technology allows people to operate laptops, computers, or speech-generating devices.

“Think what it would mean for him. Now someone has to be there to touch his elbow and write down everything he types on the iPad. With this system, he could do it on his own.”
March 16th Virtual Workshop to Focus on Mindfulness

RICV is presenting a free, virtual Winter Mindfulness Workshop on Wednesday, March 16th, from 4:00-5:30 p.m. No matter how established your personal mindfulness practice is, sometimes you can use a little extra inspiration. We will be discussing mindfulness and grounding techniques.

What is the practice of mindfulness? It is a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you are sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment.

Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress. Mindfulness may help lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, and improve sleep.

“Mindfulness is a way of befriending ourselves and our experiences.”
—Jon Kabat-Zinn

For more information or to register, please email Jordan Noble at: jnoble@ricv.org.

Fair Housing: It’s not an option. It’s the law.

Learn more at the upcoming RICV webinars

Become empowered when it comes to finding a place to live. Join us on Zoom each month for an in-depth discussion of the rights and responsibilities you have when it comes to the Fair Housing Act.

Learn what to do if you are looking to rent a place to live and need accommodations, what requirements the landlord must follow, and what they don’t have to. Also discover how the Act protects you from discrimination when you’re looking to buy a home. Email Scott Johnston at sjohnston@ricv.org for details.

The Fair Housing Act protects renters and homebuyers from discrimination.

- Equal terms and conditions.
- Equal housing location options.
- Preference-free advertising.
- Reasonable accommodations for persons with a disability.
Vaccinations, Testing and Isolation Guidelines

RICV is dedicated to keep everyone informed with the most up-to-date, quickly changing COVID-19 information and requirements.

As 2022 begins, we’re once again faced with rising COVID-19 infections and want to share important information with you to help keep you and your family safe. The Omicron variant and work, school, and travel requirements are causing high demand for testing and boosters. We know it may be challenging to find tests and get appointments quickly right now, but health organizations are working hard to increase capacity where to ensure you get the care you need.

COVID-19 Vaccination

If you haven’t been vaccinated or received your booster against COVID-19, now is the time to do so. Vaccines are critically important to preventing infection and decreasing the severity of illness from the highly contagious Omicron variant. While there are reports of Omicron infection being milder than other variants, it can still cause severe illness in people who are unvaccinated, un-boosted, or immunocompromised.

You can find a nearby vaccination site and schedule your vaccine or booster appointment by visiting myturn.ca.gov.

COVID-19 Testing

We know testing appointments and at-home test supplies are difficult to find right now. For your health and the health of others, it is recommended to stay at home in isolation.

COVID-19 Isolation Guidelines

If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or have symptoms of possible COVID-19 (regardless of vaccine status or prior infection) and are either waiting for a test result or are unable to test, stay home and isolate from others. Stay in isolation until you get test results and instructions, or 10 days have passed since symptoms started and they are now resolving.

For the most up-to-date information, visit the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) website at cdph.ca.gov.
Learn about Communication Disorders and how Assistive Technology can help

RICV will be presenting webinars in February and March to explore communication disorders, and explain how assistive technology available at RICV, can help.

Participants can choose from four webinar dates and times: February 22 at 10:30 a.m., February 24 at 1:00 p.m., March 8 at 10:30 a.m., and March 10 at 1:00 p.m.

The webinars will explain several commonly known communication disorders and what assistive technologies are out there to aid someone with a communication disorder.

Many disorders can affect our ability to speak and communicate. They range from saying sounds incorrectly to being completely unable to speak or understand speech. Some speech and communication problems may be genetic. Often, no one knows the causes. By first grade, about 5% of children have noticeable speech disorders.

With the rapid developments in assistive technology, people with communication disorders can communicate more meaningfully and participate more fully in their daily lives.

For more information the webinars or RICV’s assistive technology, email Eli Andres at eandres@ricv.org.

Resolve to be ready in 2022

The new year has started, and according to RICV’s Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Hai Normen, it is more important than ever to resolve to be ready in 2022.

For people with disabilities and their families, it is important to consider individual circumstances and needs to effective prepare for emergencies and disaster. In the event of a disaster could you make it on your own for several days? According to Normen, it’s crucial to plan for your daily needs and know what you would do.

“We want everyone to resolve to be prepared in 2022,” said Normen. “Whether it is the pandemic, a major earthquake, or a devastating fire, we all need to be prepared.”

To assist in the preparation, RICV has an Emergency Preparation packet to make it easier. The folder contains information on emergency alert systems, fire and earthquake safety, power outage and flood safety tips, and communication guidelines.

In addition, the packet gives guidelines on preparing both a “stay box,” and a “to-go bag. There is also a place for you to record emergency contacts, and your local disaster resources.

Each folder keeps your important information easily accessible, and also contains an emergency communication aid card, which helps if you are unable to communicate verbally.

“RICV’s Emergency Preparation packet makes it easy to keep all the information you need at your fingertips,” explained Normen.

To obtain your packet/folder, email Hai Normen at hnormen@ricv.org.
Get points and win prizes with the Spirit Club Fitness Challenge

“New year, new me?” You can make it a reality by starting 2022 with the Spirit Club Fitness Challenge. Get healthy and fit while having fun.

Each time you log into Spirit Club and complete a class, you earn 1 point. Each time you come to a Spirit Club event on a Wednesday, you earn 10 points.

For each Wednesday Spirit Club class you attend, you will be entered into a raffle for a $10 gift card. The more times you attend Spirit Club, the more chances to win. And, if five or more people earn 40 points or more, we’ll have a Zoom party.

Email Chloe Hagen at chagen@ricv.org for details and access information.

Outreach Opportunity

RICV has paid internship opportunities available

RICV is looking for several Outreach Interns responsible for providing Covid-19 vaccine education and awareness throughout communities in Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kings, and Tulare Counties.

These paid internships will focus outreach on people with disabilities, older adults, and Native American communities.

Those interested are encouraged to immediately email RICV’s Director of Programs, Sarah Harris at sharris@ricv.org.

Need PPE? RICV has you protected.

With the Omicron variant of Covid-19 spreading so rapidly, wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is more important than ever. If you need PPE, contact RICV at info@ricv.org. We have paper masks, face shields, masks which are worn over the head, hand sanitizer, and gloves.

EPU holds Covid-19 and flu vaccine clinics

You can get your Covid-19 and flu vaccinations at EPU in Fresno on January 21 and 28. The clinics are held each Friday in January from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. at their 4440 N. First Street location.

The first 25 people vaxxed will receive a $25 gift card. All ages 5+ can receive Pfizer, Moderna or the J&J vaccine. No appointment is necessary.

You can find a vaccination site near you and schedule your vaccine or booster appointment by visiting: myturn.ca.gov.
Learn What FAIR HOUSING Means to YOU!

The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and familial status.

FAIR HOUSING
It's not an option. It's the LAW.

People with disabilities may request a **reasonable accommodation**, an adjustment in policies or practices necessary to afford a person with a disability equal opportunity to use and enjoy the dwelling.

The **Fair Housing Act** identifies **SEVEN** protected classes:

- Race
- Color
- National origin
- Disability
- Religion
- Sex
- Familial

The **California Fair Employment and Housing Act** provides for each of the federal protections and further prohibits discrimination based on gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, marital status, ancestry, source of income, or genetic information.

The **Fair Housing Act** protects renters and homebuyers from discrimination.

- Equal terms and conditions
- Equal housing location options
- Preference-free advertising
- Reasonable accommodations for persons with a disability.

A landlord cannot refuse to let a disabled person make a **reasonable modifications** to the person's dwelling or common use areas at that person's own expense if necessary for that person to use the housing.

Examples: accessible cabinets, widening doorways

Need more info? Visit **Central CA FAIR HOUSING** at: fhc-cc.org or, call: 559.924.2950