Judy Heumann, unyielding advocate for disability rights, dies at 75

She helped spearhead national legislation, arguing for the inherent dignity of people with disabilities

Judy Heumann, a renowned activist who helped secure legislation protecting the rights of disabled people, died in March 2023 at age 75. Heumann, who lost her ability to walk at age two after contracting polio, has been called the "mother of the disability rights movement" for her longtime advocacy on behalf of disabled people through protests and legal action.

She lobbied for legislation that eventually led to the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Rehabilitation Act. She served as the assistant secretary of the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, beginning in 1993 in the Clinton administration, until 2001.

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RICV’s puts focus on traumatic brain injury

RICV’s Heads UP! program provides services and support to individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) with specific screening services, and specialized peer support groups for individuals with TBI, their family members and caregivers.

Learn more on Page 03

RICV springs into action during recent storms

You may have never thought of RICV when it comes to disasters, but the organization’s Emergency Preparedness program has been kept busy these past few months.

Discover why being prepared is important. See Page 02

RICV’s Virtual Advocacy Conference set for May

The Summit is RICV’s annual conference focused on advocacy. Open to all ages, this virtual event can help to improve the lives of attendees and empower their independence. The first 100 individuals to register receive a care package.

Details on Page 04
RICV provides crucial emergency response during recent storms

Historic winter storms and flooding have hit the Central Valley area during the past few months with many communities affected by the extreme snowpack and flooding which enveloped roads, vehicles, and houses and resulted in downed trees, power outages, unstable road conditions, and many other weather-related issues.

Throughout these storms, Hai Normen, RICV’s Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, was busy supporting individuals who live in the foothill and mountain areas Fresno and Madera counties.

“In one instance, two individuals turned down the offer to stay at a hotel,” said Normen. When RICV received their initial call, the snowpack was at one foot, but quickly grew to over six feet deep. “Later two people had to call for an emergency rescue as their generator ran out of fuel. The rescue took three hours, with one of the individuals rushed to the hospital,” Normen added.

According to Normen, these recent storms should serve as a warning to be prepared for any emergency, and to have an emergency plan in place to prevent difficulties and hardships.

“‘For some individuals, having an emergency plan in place, keeping up with the news regarding upcoming weather events, and enacting these plans before, during, and after emergencies can save lives,’ stated Normen.

RICV assists with emergency planning, provides equipment to help during emergencies, and other emergency services. “It is important for us to advocate for our own emergency preparedness,” explained Normen.

“Emergency preparedness is beneficial for everyone!”

For more emergency preparedness information or to obtain help with an emergency plan, e-mail Hai Normen at: hnormen@ricv.org.

Normen explained there were many people who were not as prepared and needed emergency rescue as their generator ran out of fuel.

“‘I worked many hours helping people get out of their homes and into hotels in a safe location where they would be safe and warm,’ Normen said. ‘Some individuals decided not to evacuate as they were prepared with firewood for heat, extra food and water, backup batteries for their medical devices, and an emergency plan which I helped them develop before the storms.’

Make a plan
Build a kit
Stay informed

Be Prepared...
New RICV program adds vital traumatic brain injury services

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Resources for Independence Central Valley (RICV) is excited to announce the addition of the Heads UP! Program which provides services and support to individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI) including specific screening services, and specialized peer support groups for individuals with TBI, their family members and caregivers.

According to RICV’s TBI Program Coordinator, Nicole Turpin, the program is designed to assist all individuals who have experienced a traumatic brain injury, including those who may not be aware of the injury by utilizing OBISSS, an online brain injury screening and support system.

“RICV’s Heads UP! TBI program can assist anyone who has experienced traumatic brain injury—no matter how significant the injury or the resulting symptoms,” said Turpin. “It identifies any associated problems and exposure.”

Services provided include OBISSS, community reintegration, supported living services, assistive technology assistance, transportation, referrals, and peer support groups.

Turpin explained she is excited for the TBI team’s ability to help individuals experiencing traumatic brain injury especially in these uncertain economic and emotional times.

“I enjoy having the opportunity to work with a great group of people,” added Turpin. “The TBI team consists of a handful of wonderful, caring people who are eager to make a difference in the lives of those experiencing traumatic brain injury.”

Turpin said the program also offers information on traumatic brain injury symptoms (both mild and severe), and measures to prevent traumatic brain injury.

Turpin also emphasized for a person who receives a blow to the head or other injury should seek medical attention. “Even if no apparent symptoms exist following a traumatic brain injury, she said. “Sometimes symptoms do not appear until well after the injury.”

Learn more by emailing: headsup@ricv.org.

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Traumatic brain injury is a broad term describing a vast array of injuries that happen to the brain. The damage can be focal (confined to one area of the brain) or diffused (meaning it happens in more than one area of the brain).

“A traumatic brain injury can occur when a sudden, external, physical assault damages the brain, Turpin said. “It is one of the most common causes of disability and death in adults.”

Turpin explained it is usually caused by a blow or other traumatic injury to the head or body. The degree of damage can depend on several factors, including the nature of the injury and the force of impact.

The severity of a brain injury can range from a mild concussion to a severe injury resulting in a coma or even death.

Traumatic brain injury can last for years depending on the severity of the damage to the brain. Symptoms may not appear for weeks after the injury.

Some brain injuries are mild, with symptoms disappearing over time with proper attention. Others are more severe and may result in permanent disability. The long-term or permanent results of brain injury may need post-injury and possibly lifelong rehabilitation.

Each year, about 1.7 million people obtain a TBI, and approximately 5.3 million Americans are living with a TBI.
Meet the newest faces joining the RICV Team

From Visalia to Merced, RICV’s team keep growing. Serving Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced and Tulare Counties, a strong team is key to providing consistent and capable programs and services. Meet our newest team members and learn what they are all about.

What did you do as a teenager that makes you cringe now? Lots of things! But if I had to pick just one, I’d say it was when I decided to try and give myself dreadlocks one summer. I didn’t know how to do that exactly, so I just stopped washing and combing my hair the entire summer. The massive knots that resulted were unbelievable! It should be no surprise that I wound up starting the new school year off with a very short pixie cut.

What is the last TV show you binged watched? There is nothing more satisfying than binge-watching a great TV program. The last program I binge-watched was “Harlem” on Amazon Prime. It’s great.

What movie could you quote by heart? Disney’s “Sleeping Beauty”. That was my favorite cartoon growing up.

What skill would you most like to learn? I would love to learn how to be at peace in silence, like Buddhist Monks. I admire those who can be at peace in a room full of people where no one is speaking.

What’s the most ridiculous thing you believed as a child? When I was a child there was a period of time when I believed I was Michael Jackson. I dressed like Michael Jackson and required that everyone call me Michael Jackson. (See photographic evidence attached LOL!)

What is the strangest food combination you enjoy? I’m not very adventurous when it comes to food. I don’t experiment often. The strangest food combination I enjoy is fried chicken and waffles topped with a mixture of maple syrup and Louisiana hot sauce.

If your pet could talk, what do you think they would say about you? Esme: She takes me to Starbucks for PupCups almost every day, so yeah, I guess she’s a pretty good human.

What book changed your life? The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern because her writing style/use of imagery inspired how I wrote my own novel.

What kind of elderly person do you want to be? A very active one who has enough energy to have fun and do things and go places. Pretty much like the kind of old lady I am right now.

What movie could you quote by heart? Though I have seen The Princess Bride many times, I have enjoyed Young Frankenstein countless times and pretty much know it by heart. I love it! “Wait! Come back! I was going to make espressooooo” HAHA!

What is your favorite website? Shein. I like Shein because they have some really cute things: clothes, accessories, other whatnots, furniture, whatever you’re looking for, and they’re pretty cheap. The quality can be iffy at times, so it’s sort of a gamble when ordering from them. However, I’ve had mostly good luck.

What actor would you choose to play you in your biopic? Helena Bonham Carter: she’s gorgeous and brilliant, except she’s British and I’m not, so maybe that wouldn’t be a good match. Kathy Bates: I love her acting and the attitude she gives the characters she portrays, however, she’s a full 10 years older than I, so maybe she wouldn’t work out, either. I suppose Jennifer Aniston and Julia Roberts will have to duke it out with Gal Gadot to play me. (My money is on Gal because she’s younger and an absolute Wonder Woman! pun intended).
What is the most outrageous lie you told as a child? I told my sister to kick me, that it wouldn’t hurt. So she did, and I tried to blame her when my parents came running to the crying. They believed her and told me it was my own fault.

If you could choose one superpower, what would it be? To talk to animals. I love most creatures and I think it’d be really cool to talk to them!

Whose opinion do you care about most? My mothers, she’s my best friend, and I still go to her for everything.

What is the most import decision you have made so far in life? Moving out of my parents house at 21, it made me grow up a lot and it really gave my relationship a chance to blossom.

What is something that always makes you smile? My husband with my daughter, he does the silliest things with her and it makes me smile every time.

What is your best childhood memory? Being the flower girl at my moms wedding to my stepdad, it was a beautiful wedding. Being able to do the father daughter dance was something I will always remember and I love having that special moment to remember my stepdad by.

What is your most prized possession? My most priceless possession is my children. They both make me instantly happy with just their smiles. Their smile can light up any room.

What would your warning label say? My warning label will have to be my silence. I tend to walk away without saying a word to avoid an argument or response.

If you won the lottery, what would you do first? If I win the lottery I would first pay off a property house and put the rest in a trust fund for both my kids.

What’s the best Halloween costume you ever wore? My favorite Halloween costume will have to be the time I was a circus ringleader and won best costume.

What is the best meal you have ever eaten? I love all food. I don’t have a favorite meal, but if I had to choose, I would have to say Cuban food. But not just any Cuban dish—my grandpa’s famous Ropa Vieja.
Are you ready to climb strong and reach the peak? If the answer is yes, then register for RICV’s virtual advocacy conference—The Summit. Set for the week of May 15-19 from 1:00-3:30 p.m. each day, topics include a live panel on Disability Challenges, Tech Safety, Boundary Setting, Connecting to Community Resources, and Black or White Thinking.

All ages are invited to attend The Summit, which includes a virtual resource fair. The first 100 individuals to register will receive a special gift.

The Summit will help attendees develop identity, boost confidence, promote understanding, and strengthen independence. It will also contribute to peer interaction, fostering community growth, and expand individual circles.

There is no charge to attend the conference. To register, use the following link: https://tinyurl.com/RICV2023. For more information, contact Jordan Noble at jnoble@ricv.org, or Aubrey Alfano at aalfano@ricv.org.

Voice Options offers speech-generating technology

Through a partnership with the California Public Utilities Commission’s Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program, the California Department of Rehabilitation’s VOICE OPTIONS program offers eligible Californians who are unable to speak, or who have difficulty speaking, with a free speech-generating device. RICV is a VOICE OPTIONS provider for the program with the goals to ensure full and equal telephone communications access for all Californians with disabilities.

Through this program, any eligible Californian referred to a Voice Options provider will have the opportunity to test five different speech-generating applications for up to 14 days. The six applications provided are: GoTalk NOW Plus, LAMP Words for Life, Predictable, Proloque4Text, TouchChat HD with Word Power, and Proloquo 2 Go. When it comes to choosing a speech-generating application, it is important to select one which highlights your strengths, skills, and fully meets your needs without leaving you feeling restricted.

**STEP ONE:** Contact RICV at 559-221-2330 or voiceoptions@ricv.org to schedule an orientation and demonstration.

**STEP TWO:** Participate in a Voice Options orientation and receive a speech-generating device demonstration. **STEP THREE:** Take a short-term loaner iPad for a 2-14 day trial period. Practice using the preloaded speech-generating applications to help you determine which application works best for you. **STEP FOUR:** Receive a new iPad with one speech-generating application of your choice downloaded on the iPad.

City of Tulare recognizes RICV

RICV Community Organizer, Rebecca Donabed, (seated left) with City of Tulare Mayor, Terry Sayre (standing right). Donabed accepted a proclamation on behalf of RICV from the Tulare City Council in recognition of Developmental Disability Month.
RICV Opportunities and Engagement

RICV offers a wide array of inclusive opportunities which support, and nurture empowered independence.

### Be About It - Youth Group
Every Friday @ 3:30 p.m.
Info: Jordan Noble at jnoble@ricv.org

### Cooking for Independence
2nd & 4th Tuesday/Month @ 2:30 p.m.
Info: Erika Brown at ebrown@ricv.org

### Disability Advocacy Meeting
2nd & 4th Thursday/Month @ 3:00 p.m.
Info: Rebecca Donabed at rdonabed@ricv.org

### Peer Support Group
Every Wednesday @ 2:00 p.m.
Info: Michael Esquibel at mesquibel@ricv.org

### RICV Book Club
2nd & 4th Tuesday/Month @ 4:00 p.m.
Info: Chloe Hagen at chagen@ricv.org

### Workout Wednesday
Every Wednesday at 10 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
Info: Chloe Hagen at chagen@ricv.org

### Take Care Tuesdays
1st & 3rd Tuesday/Month @ 4:00 p.m.
Info: Chloe Hagen at chagen@ricv.org

### TBI Support Group
First & Third Tuesday/Month @ 10:30 a.m.
Info: HeadsUp@ricv.org

### TBI Caregivers Support
Third Monday/Month 4:00 p.m.
Info: HeadsUp@ricv.org

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### RICV offers Fair Housing awareness and education

Did you know housing discrimination is illegal?

Housing discrimination remains a barrier to equal access to housing for too many individuals and families. Landlords may, for example, discriminate against rental applicants based on race or national origin. Tenants who experience a disability are often denied reasonable accommodation allowing them equal access to housing.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing-related transactions because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status. RICV maintains efforts to spread awareness regarding fair housing throughout the Central Valley.

Because of its broad scope, the Fair Housing Act applies to nearly all forms of housing, with a few limited exceptions. The Act also applies to a broad array of housing-related transactions, including the rental, sale, and financing of housing.

The Fair Housing Act covers both intentionally discriminatory conduct (like evicting a tenant because the individuals are Latino), and conduct which has an unjustified adverse impact on protected groups (such as a housing authority’s policies for opening the Section 8 waitlist disproportionately disadvantage applicants who experience disabilities).

RICV Outreach Specialist, Adrienne Louis, is available to conduct presentations and sessions regarding Fair Housing. Contact Adrienne at alouis@ricv.org.

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Get Fair Housing Facts and Information. Contact alouis@ricv.org for your Packet.
Heumann was involved in passage of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified in May 2008.

She helped found the Berkeley Center for Independent Living, the Independent Living Movement, and the World Institute on Disability. Heumann served on the boards of several related organizations including the American Association of People with Disabilities, the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and the United States International Council on Disability.

Heumann who was born in Philadelphia in 1947 and raised in New York City, was the co-author of her memoir, “Being Heumann,” and a version young adults version titled, “Rolling Warrior.”

Her books recount the struggle her parents experienced while trying to secure a place for their daughter in school. “Kids with disabilities were considered a hardship, economically and socially,” she wrote.

She went on to graduate from high school and earn a bachelor’s degree from Long Island University and a master’s degree in public health from the University of California, Berkeley.

She also was featured in the 2020 documentary film, “ ‘Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution,’” which highlighted a summer camp Heumann attended and which helped spark the disability rights movement. The film was nominated for an Academy Award.

During the 1970s she won a lawsuit against the New York Board of Education and became the first teacher in the state who was able to work while using a wheelchair, which the board had tried to claim was a fire hazard.

She also was a leader in a historic, nonviolent occupation of a San Francisco federal building in 1977 setting the stage for passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act, which became law in 1990.

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"Change never happens at the pace we think it should. It happens over years of people joining together, strategizing, sharing, and pulling all the levers they possibly can. Gradually, excruciatingly slowly, things start to happen, and then suddenly, seemingly out of the blue, something will tip."

Judy Heumann
1947-2023

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