

# A HOLIDAY WORTH OBSERVING—WITH ACTION—AND A HERO’S LIFE TO REMEMBER

Tomorrow, December 3, is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD). This annual observance was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992 with the aim of “promoting an understanding of disability issues and [to] mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.” This year’s global observance centers on the theme of innovation and transformative solutions for inclusion, a goal to which SDMNY has always been committed for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



IDPD is not only intended as a celebration of what people with disabilities have accomplished. It is also a call to action to continue the work necessary to providing people with disabilities with “dignity, rights and well-being” which, of course, always includes resources. For us here in the U.S., ensuring adequate government funding of the supports necessary for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is critical. Our friends at The Arc remind us to make our voices heard as Congress makes decisions about continuing and/or expanding current benefits programs. For more information on what you can do, click [here](#).

Another way to commemorate IDPD is to remember and celebrate the life and passing of one of the true heroes of disability rights Lois Curtis, who ASAN has called “a legendary advocate and matriarch of the community living movement”. Diagnosed with developmental disabilities

and mental illness, Lois spent more than half her life in state institutions. Her determination and self-advocacy brought her to an Atlanta Legal Aid lawyer who filed the lawsuit that resulted in the Supreme Court’s landmark 1999 *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision (Good News [9/25/2020]). That decision gave people with disabilities the right to receive services in the “least restrictive” setting possible—creating and enshrining a right to live and fully participate in one’s own community. *Olmstead* has been the centerpiece of what disability rights and inclusion are about, and has been transformative in state service systems, including New York.



Lois

Photo Credit: New York Times

Lois passed away on November 3rd at 55. In her memory, and in commemoration of IDPD, we commit to continuing SDMNY’s work to ensure that everyone has the rights that the *Olmstead* decision promises them, including the right to make their own decisions without regard to disability.