

History Note: Life in, after institutionalization is documentary focus

by [Access Press Staff](#) // April 10th, 2017

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month was in March. But it's never too late to see videos prepared by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (MnCDD), to learn about historical efforts and accomplishments to advance the cause of integration and inclusion for people with disabilities. *Faces of Inclusion and Integration* tells powerful stories of lives changed.

The [videos](#) are taken from archival footage from *Parallels in Time: A History of Developmental Disabilities* and *With an Eye to the Past: Minnesota History from the 1800s to Present*. The MnCDD archival footage highlights the stories of people who were once institutionalized but moved to an integrated, community setting.

Persons interviewed are from around the United States. John Johnson was institutionalized as a child at the Faribault State School and Hospital in Faribault, Minnesota. In the interview he talked about what life was like in an institution.

Other documentaries were drawn on as some sources. The 1992 short documentary, *Shifting Patterns*, shows how shifting patterns, beliefs, and attitudes among individuals, families, and communities led to the creation of programs like Career Vision, which supports people with developmental disabilities to identify career skills and goals and find employment opportunities in an integrated, community setting. Also featured is *Possibilities*, a six-part video series from the Developmental Disabilities Institute in Michigan.

Our Voices Count: Self-Advocacy Now is a short documentary, narrated by Geraldo Rivera, from 1989. Rivera interviewed Bernard Carabello, the founder of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS), Inc. Once institutionalized at Willowbrook State School on Staten Island, Carabello went on to become a nationally known self-advocate and activist. This documentary contains footage from inside Willowbrook State School, circa 1972. Rivera was one of the first journalists to document horrible conditions at Willowbrook.

"It's here that I met and befriended Bernard Carabello, who had been living in Willowbrook for 18 years," said Rivera. "Bernard and I have remained in touch throughout the years and in him I see a man who has gone from being a victim of the system to being a first-class activist in the field of self-advocacy for the developmentally disabled."

"I started because I was involved in self-advocacy since 1972," said Carabello. "I believe people with disabilities have a right to speak out, have a right to have a voice in our society. They have a right to say what's on their mind even though you and I do not agree with what they have to say but they have that right to say it. We do not have the right to tell people what to say and what not to say. So-called professionals have been advocating for us for centuries and now people with

developmental disabilities have begun to advocate for themselves, begun to say this is what I want, this is right for me.”

Access Press is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota’s disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of disability topics, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Contact us at access@accesspress.org or 651-644-2133 if you have questions. The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, www.mnddc.org or www.mncdd.org and www.partnersinpolicymaking.com