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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

World Institute on Disability Announces Appointment of Organization's Founders to Board of Directors on Ed Roberts Day



Judy Heumann • Zona Roberts • Joan Leon

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Berkeley, CA. (January 23, 2020) – As the World Institute on Disability (WID) enters the next decade with an exciting transition underway, the organization has a renewed sense of purpose and pride in its exceptional history. Among the many changes underway, WID has established three honorary positions on our Board of Directors in recognition of the visionary leadership and transformational roles of WID's founders at the dawn of the global disability rights movement.

Lifetime Board Emeriti appointments have been made today for founders Judy Heumann, Joan Leon, and Zona Roberts, mother of Ed Roberts, and a key leader in her own right.

In announcing the appointments, Kevin Foster, President of the WID Board of Directors remarked, "On the 10th anniversary of Ed Roberts Day, and what would have been Ed's 81st birthday, we are thrilled to be honoring three exceptional leaders who have continued to drive the global disability rights movement forward ever since WID's inception in 1983."

Ed Roberts Day was established by the US House of Representatives in 2010 to acknowledge Ed's contributions in "helping to reduce barriers, increase access and improve lives of persons with disabilities"

For more on Ed Roberts Day: <http://bit.ly/37g3KVJ>

WID Executive Director and CEO Marcie Roth added "Judy Heumann, Joan Leon, and Zona Roberts are treasured for their visionary leadership and transformative contributions. We are thrilled to welcome them back to WID leadership roles, and anticipate that their insights will be of huge value to the organization, our movement and the lives of over one billion people with disabilities worldwide as we connect WID's past to our unfolding future."

Below are short bios for each of the new Board Emeriti:



Judy Heumann co-founded WID with Ed Roberts and Joan Leon in 1983, serving as co-director until 1993. Appointed by President Clinton, Judy served as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education until 2001. From 2002-2006, she was the World Bank Advisor on Disability and Development, leading the World Bank's work on disability. She worked to integrate disability into the bank's dialogues with client countries, its country-based analytical work, and its efforts to improve policies, programs, and projects that took people with disabilities fully into consideration in developing countries. The Director of the Department of Disability Services for the District of Columbia from 2007-2010, she was appointed by President Obama as Special Advisor on Disability Rights for the U.S. State Department, responsible for leading the Obama Administration's efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy to promote the rights of persons with disabilities internationally; coordinating an inter-agency process for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; ensuring that foreign assistance incorporates persons with disabilities; leading disability human rights issues; ensuring that the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in international situations; and conducting public diplomacy, including with civil society, on disability issues. After leaving that role in 2017, she spent two years as a Senior Fellow at the Ford Foundation.

Before WID, Heumann was Special Assistant to the California State Director of the Department of Rehabilitation. From 1975-1981, she served as Deputy Director of the Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, California, the first Independent Living Center in the United States.



Joan Leon co-founded WID with Judy Heumann and Ed Roberts in 1983. Her primary goal was to establish a research center that would be able to support the disability rights movement with data. As Co-Director from 1983-94, she had the primary responsibility for developing a strong and reliable base of support for WID's programs from government, corporations, and donors. In 1994, she became Executive Vice President in charge of programs as well as fundraising. A year later, she became CEO. In 1997, she assumed the role of President and guided the transition of WID to new leadership.

After the death of Ed Roberts in 1995, she was part of a group of community leaders who worked to develop a suitable memorial to Roberts's work and life. This effort resulted in a plan for the Ed Roberts Campus, a nonprofit corporation formed by 7 major disability organizations that shared a common history in the Independent Living Movement in California. First open in November 2010, Ed Roberts Campus now houses those 7 organizations and a handful more at one site in Berkeley, CA, sharing resources and expertise and to improve services to people with disabilities.



Zona Roberts, while most known for being the supportive mother of Ed Roberts, who would become known as the "father" of the disability rights movement, is a formidable advocate for disability healthcare, education, and assistive technology in her own right. Zona fiercely advocated for Ed's right to return to high school using a phone to participate in classes from home, and to graduate without fulfilling physical education requirements. She was also instrumental in Ed's battle with UC Berkeley to accommodate his iron lung in student housing. Zona began attending Berkeley herself at age 49 for a teaching certificate, graduating with her B.A. in 1969 and earning her certificate the following year. Zona worked for the Physically Disabled Students Program (PDSP) coordinating Personal Care Attendants for students, and was even offered the role of

Director of the organization, but turned it down, feeling that the program should be led by a disabled person. She went on to earn her Master's degree before going to work for the Center for Independent Living, establishing the organization's counseling department. When she left the CIL in 1982, she opened her own counseling practice, working with caretakers and family members of people with disabilities. Zona's embodied passion for independent living has been instrumental in securing rights and resources for people with disabilities around the world.

Based in Berkeley, California, the World Institute on Disability (WID) is a nonprofit that works to fully integrate people with disabilities into their communities via research, policy, and consulting efforts.

