



## Georgia Resident to be Honored in Washington, DC on March 7

Mark Johnson to Receive Prestigious Henry B. Betts Award

WASHINGTON, March 4 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is delighted to announce that Mark Johnson, Director of Advocacy at Atlanta's Shepherd Center, will be presented with the 2007 Henry B. Betts Award on March 7. He will be an honored guest at the sixth-annual AAPD Leadership Gala at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC.

Johnson is a nationally-recognized activist and community organizer who, since sustaining a spinal cord injury at the age of 20, has dedicated his life to creating an identifiable sense of community among people with disabilities.

After completing a Masters in Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, he became a counselor at the Charlotte Rehabilitation Hospital, and helped establish the Metrolina Chapter of the National Paraplegia Foundation and one of the first Title VII Independent Living Centers in the U.S. Then in Denver, he ran the Transitional Living Program at Holistic Approaches to Independent Living (HAIL), and was subsequently its Director of Advocacy. He was also Colorado's first Statewide Independence Living Coordinator.

In 1984, Johnson helped to create Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation (ADAPT), a grassroots-driven organization that has been an effective force for change in the national disability rights movement.

Johnson joined the Shepherd Center, recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top rehabilitation hospitals in the U.S., in 1987.

He is also a founding member of the board of the Healthcare Georgia Foundation, and helped to create the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund, which provides independent living services to thousands of people with brain or spinal cord injuries throughout Georgia.

Johnson created a website (<http://www.lgtinc.org>) that is dedicated to the pioneers of the disability rights movement and the people and groups that are making a difference today.

His vision resulted in the Spirit of the ADA Torch Relay, a tenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebration hosted in 24 locations around the country in 2000. It brought together people with disabilities, their friends and families, and disability rights advocates, thus also bringing much public national attention to the legislation.

The Henry B. Betts Award is named in honor of Henry B. Betts, M.D., a pioneer in the field of rehabilitation medicine who started his career with the Institute in 1964, making it the base for his career as an advocate for people with physical disabilities and leader in the field of rehabilitation medicine, and who has devoted himself to improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. The award program, which is administered by AAPD, was created in 1989 by the Prince Charitable Trusts and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago.

AAPD -- the largest cross-disability membership organization in the country -- organizes the disability community to be a powerful force for change ... economically, socially, and politically. It was founded in 1995 by a group of cross-disability leaders to help unite the diverse community of people with disabilities, including their family, friends and supporters, and to be a national voice for change in implementing the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act: equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

SOURCE The American Association of People with Disabilities

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