

Resources for disabilities awareness

By Michael Harkovitch and Heidi Andress

An Introduction

The purpose:

- This is a resource package for public librarians (children's librarians, specifically) that can be used as a model or framework for programming that features persons with physical disabilities in children's literature.
- Children's literature is often used to teach children about sensitive issues, such as death, moving, bullying, sibling rivalry, etc. In the same vein, children's materials can be used to educate children and adults about persons with physical disabilities, and serve as an icebreaker for parents and their children to talk openly about this subject matter and related issues.
- This package focuses on physical and sensory disabilities because they are the most noticeable to children.

Who this program is targeting:

- Children and their parents are the main target population for this program.
- Children who are curious about people with physical disabilities, and to a lesser extent, those coming to terms with their own new disabilities.
- A child with disabilities often doesn't want to read about other children with disabilities, so this program does not target, for the most part, persons with disabilities themselves.
- Teachers and students to facilitate classroom discussion about disability awareness.

Why this is important:

- Public attitudes toward disability are often the greatest barrier for people with disabilities. The emphasis in the literature on disability has been shifting from a focus on differences and limitation to a focus on abilities and potential. People with disabilities are now participating more fully in the mainstream of society and are advocating for full acceptance.
- Children are often curious about people with disabilities and tend to ask bewildered or embarrassed parents questions about people they see in wheelchairs, on crutches, with deformities, etc.
- Disability awareness through library programming is surprisingly rare, according to Beth Eisenhood, a children's librarian at the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL), and also as evidenced by the lack of literature available through literature review.
- Opportunities for some wonderful collaborations, such as with the Special Olympics and Youth Awareness Disability Assemblies (YADA), which promotes understanding about and awareness of people with disabilities through grade-

school experiences and assemblies (sponsored by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society).

- People with disabilities are people first – they have the same needs and wants as any people.
- Children’s literature shows people whose needs and goals are the same as everyone else’s, even if the means of the needs and goals have to be adjusted.

Recommended programming activities:

- Book talks.
- Booklists.
- Guest speakers/forums.
- Displays and activities.

Suggested programming activities:

- A blind teenager presenting a book talk with a slate and stylus (common tools for ‘writing’ Braille for one’s self), and not only showing how to use it, but letting each participant write their names in Braille.
- Youths in wheelchairs who are good at doing tricks, such as popping wheelies, etc., to come in to talk about their chair and show audiences the extent of his/her capabilities.
- Kids from a local 4-H club that raises guide-dog puppies to come with puppies they’re training to talk about the process and why the dogs need to learn certain things, as well as bring in some physically disabled people with their service animals to show what a mature dog-human team looks like in action.
- A visit/fieldtrip to the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library.

Components found in this resource package :

- Annotated lists for children’s fiction, nonfiction, and video resources dealing with physical and sensory disabilities.
- Website resources for disability awareness.
- Reader’s advisory tools for disability awareness.
- Guidelines for talking with children about disabilities.

Fiction Resources for Disability Awareness

JL Booth

Booth, Barbara D. and Jim Lamarche. **Mandy**.

A rare insight into the world of a special deaf child, Mandy is so determined to find a sentimental object lost in the woods, she overcomes her fear of the dark and sets out to find it. (Ages 4-8)

J Fic Burnett (or J VHS Secret)

Burnett, Frances Hodgson and Graham Rust. **The Secret Garden**

A ten-year-old orphan girl sent to live with her uncle in Yorkshire teams up with her invalid cousin to unlock the secrets of the estate’s mysterious garden. (Ages 9-12)

JL Carlson

Carlson, Nancy. **Arnie and the New Kid.**

Arnie's relentless teasing of wheelchair-bound Philip leads to an accident that keeps Arnie off his feet and leads him to discover that you can be different and still be a lot alike. (Ages 4-8)

J/E Carrick

Carrick, Carol and Alisher Dianov. **Melanie.**

Melanie's father journeys into the Dark Forest to find a healer that can restore the blind girl's sight. But after an evil troll abducts her father, Melanie bravely sets out to rescue him. (Ages 4-8)

J FIC Eyerly

Eyerly, Jeannette and Emily Arnold McCully. **The Seeing Summer.**

When Jenny, the blind girl next door, is kidnapped and held for ransom, 10-year-old Carey tracks down the kidnappers and becomes a second hostage in this story of capture, escape, friendship and loyalty. (Ages 9-11)

JL Fassler

Fassler, Joan and Joe Lasker. **Howie Helps Himself.**

Young Howie loves to play, but the one thing he wants more than anything else is to be able to move his wheelchair around by himself. Can his teacher enable Howie to achieve his goal? (Ages 4-8)

JL Foreman

Foreman, Michael. **Seal Surfer.**

A young boy and a newborn seal grow and surf the waves together, but when danger looms, the boy must rely on his ocean friend not only for companionship, but for his very survival. (Ages 6-10)

J FIC Friis

Friis, Babbis and Charles Geer. **Kristy's Courage.**

A young girl, returning to school after a disfiguring car accident, endures the thoughtless curiosity and teasing of her classmates in this sensitively told story of fortitude and self-love. (Ages 9-11)

JL Girmis

Girmis, Meg and Shirley Leamon Green. **ABC for You and Me & 123 for You and Me.**

Engaging alphabet and counting books, respectively, that include children with Downs Syndrome, but places their emphases on teaching children their ABCs and 1,2,3s. (Ages 4-8)

J/E Harshma

Harshman, Marc and Mark Mohr. **The Storm.**

Wheelchair-bound Jonathan hates feeling different, but after a near miss with a tornado, the young boy dazzles his classmates with his heroic story. (Ages 4-8)

J FIC Hartlin

Hartling, Peter (translated by Elizabeth D. Crawford). **Crutches.**

A shabbily dressed man on crutches befriends and develops a remarkable friendship with an orphaned boy in post WWII Europe in this resonant story of the triumph of humanity in the most difficult of times. (Ages 9-12)

JL Heelan

Heelan, Jamee and Nicola Simmonds. **Rolling Along: the Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair**

A glimpse into the life of Taylor, a young boy with cerebral palsy, after he gets a new wheelchair that enables him to play sports and keep up with his twin brother, Tyler. (Ages 6-10)

JL Hines

Hines, Anna Grossnickle. **Gramma's Walk.**

Gramma sits in her wheelchair in the sun parlor. When Donnie visits, they have a ritual. "Where shall we walk today?" Gramma asks, and off they go on their imaginary adventure! (Ages 4-8)

JL Lakin

Lakin, Patricia and Robert G. Steele. **Dad and Me in the Morning.**

A deaf boy and his father share a special time as they watch a sunrise together at the beach. (Ages 6-8)

J/E Lee (or J VHS Silent)

Lee, Jeanne M. **Silent Lotus.**

A young deaf mute girl longs to tell beautiful, intricate stories through dance, but will the king allow her to become a dancer? Inspired by decorations on a 12th-century Angkor Wat temple. (Ages 4-8)

J/E Moran

Moran, George and Nadine Bernard Westcott. **Imagine Me on a Sit-Ski!**

A young boy with cerebral palsy learns to ski with the help of a sit-ski and a number of ski instructors who teach skiing to kids with disabilities in this inspirational story of personal accomplishment. (Ages 4-8)

JL Okimoto 1993

Okimoto, Jean Davies and Doug Keith. **A Place for Grace.**

Grace is a little dog with big dreams. But when she finds out that she's too small to be a seeing eye dog, she finds solace in assisting the hearing impaired. (Ages 4-8)

J Rosen

Rosen, Lillian. **Just Like Everybody Else.**

A freak accident suddenly thrusts fifteen-year-old Jenny into a soundless and lonely world until she meets Joe Benton, a boy who gives her the courage to go on. (Ages 10-16)

J FIC Springer

Springer, Nancy. **Colt.**

Colt Vittorio finally feels like a normal kid when he learns to ride Liverwurst, his big homely horse. But an accident threatens to undo all of Colt's progress and change his world forever. (Ages 9-12)

J Fic Wallace

Wallace, Bill. **True Friends.**

After her friends turn their backs on her, Courtney is befriended by an outsider who walks on a cane whose courage and support give Courtney the confidence to stand up for herself. (Ages 9-12)

JL Wells

Wells, Rosemary. **The Little Lame Prince.**

The crippled Prince Francisco seeks to claim his rightful regal throne after learning that his wicked uncle seized power and exiled Francisco as an infant in this fresh and enchanting interpretation of the childhood classic. (Ages 4-8)

JL Willis

Willis, Jeanne and Tony Ross. **Susan Laughs.**

Susan laughs, sings, rides, swings. She gets angry and sad. She's good and bad. In fact, Susan, whose physical challenges are never seen as handicaps, is no different from any other child. (Ages 4-6)

JL Zelonky

Zelonky, Joy and Barbara Bejna. **I Can't Always Hear You**

A hearing impaired youngster grapples with the unwanted attention that her hearing aid brings her in this astute exploration of grade-school kids and their differences. (Ages 4-8)

Nonfiction Resources for Disability Awareness

J617.712 Alexand

Alexander, Sally Hobart and George Ancona. **Mom Can't See Me.**

The author's own poignant story of how a rare condition caused her sight to diminish, then disappear, told from her nine-year-old daughter's point of view in pictures and text. (Ages 6-10)

J305.90816 Alexand 2000

Alexander, Sally Hobart. **Do You Remember the Color Blue?**

A blind woman candidly answers thirteen thought-provoking questions that children have asked over the years about being blind. (Ages 9-12)

J362.42088 Aseltin

Aseltine, Lorraine and Evelyn Mueller and Nancy Tait. **I'm Deaf and It's Okay.**
A young boy describes the frustrations caused by his deafness and the encouragement he receives from a deaf teenager that he can lead an active life. (Ages 4-8)

J362.4 Berry 1990

Berry, Joy. **About Physical Disabilities.**
An excellent and unabashed exploration, in comic book form, of the tough questions kids ask about disabilities, associated misconceptions, and the best way to address those concerns. (Ages 8-12)

J760.092 Bryant 1995

Bryant, Jennifer Fisher. **Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: Artist.**
Nineteenth century artist whose unconventional chronicles of Paris nightlife was scorned, then later admired, by the public suffered from two crippling falls as a teenager that caused his legs to stop growing. (Ages 10-18)

J306.8743 Burns

Burns, Kay and Rick Reil. **Our Mom.**
A photographic look into a day in the life of a wheelchair-bound wife and mother whose paralysis doesn't cramp her active lifestyle. (Ages 5-11)

J796.0196 Dinn 1996

Dinn, Sheila. **Hearts of Gold: A Celebration of Special Olympics and its Heroes.**
The excitement of the Special Olympics is captured in this comprehensive history of a unique sports movement and what it's meant in the lives of so many athletes and volunteers. (Ages 9-12)

Y362.4092 WHA

Exley, Helen (editor). **What It's Like to Be Me.**
Written and illustrated entirely by disabled children from around the world, this book offers children's candid thoughts about being disabled, feeling left out, personal triumphs, and dreams for the future. (Ages 9-16)

JB B731Fr

Freedman, Russell and Kate Kiesler. **Out of Darkness: The Story of Louis Braille.**
More than anything else Louis Braille wanted to read, so every night he punched tiny holes in paper, which became a system that "opened the doors of knowledge to all those who cannot see." (Ages 9-12)

J796.35709 Gutman 1992

Gutman, Bill. **Jim Abbott: Star Pitcher.**

Biography of one-handed California Angels star pitcher Jim Abbott, who in the early 90s took the American League by storm with his 94-mile-per-hour fastball, sharp-breaking curveball, and dipping and diving slider pitches. (Ages 9-12)

J371.9046 Kaufman

Kaufman, Curt and Gita Kaufman. **Rajesh.**

Rajesh was born missing both legs and one hand, but with the help of artificial limbs, he has as much to teach his kindergarten classmates as they have to teach him. (Ages 4-8)

J362.40922 Kent 1996

Kent, Deborah and Kathryn A. Quinlan. **Extraordinary People With Disabilities.**

Inventors, politicians, artists, scientists, actors, athletes, and other amazing people throughout history are featured in this collection of famous people with various disabilities. (Ages 9-12)

JB K282M

Markham, Lois. **Helen Keller.**

Excellent biography of the most famous deaf, mute, and blind girl, whose courageous struggle to become something more touched and changed the world. (Ages 9-11)

J362.41 McMahan

MacMahon, Patricia. **Listen for the Bus: David's Story**

Favorite activities of David, a young blind and hearing-impaired boy, are explored as he goes to kindergarten, grocery-shops with his mother, horseback rides, and takes afternoon walks with his father. (Ages 5-9)

J362.4183 Moore 1996

Moore, Eva and Don Bolognese. **Buddy: The First Seeing Eye Dog.**

True account, told in story form, of the pioneering seeing eye dog that, after months of training and evolution as a service animal, won the hearts of his master and the world. (Ages 7-9)

JB K8494M

Moss, Nathaniel. **Ron Kovic: Antiwar Activist.**

The life story of a former U.S. Sergeant turned antiwar activist, whose 1968 attack on a Vietnam village left him paralyzed. Subsequent events are explored in this disturbing cautionary tale about the horror of war and the danger of blind patriotism. (Ages 9-12)

J362.40483 Oliver 1999

Oliver, Claire. **Animals Helping with Special Needs.**

Horses, dogs, dolphins, and assistance pets lend a paw, eye, ear, and more to help out their disabled human friends in their daily lives. (Ages 4-8)

J362.7842 Peter

Peter, Diana. **Claire and Emma.**

Unsentimental photo essay of the lives of four-year-old Claire and two-year-old Emma, two deaf sisters who play, learn, love, and fight like all siblings. (Ages 5-9)

ENF J362.48867 Rosenbe

Rosenberg, Maxine B. and George Ancona. **Finding a Way: Living with Exceptional Brothers and Sisters.**

A warm, sensitive photographic exploration of three children from three different families, each a sibling to a disabled child, and the fear, frustration and anger each has dealt with. (Ages 6-9)

J362.4 Stein

Stein, Sara Bonnett and Dick Frank. **About Handicaps: An Open Family Book for Parent and Children Together.**

An exploration in novel form of the relationship between two children, one of whom is disabled, designed to create a shared experience for adults and children, and facilitate discussion of the subject matter.

J618.9271 R4489N 2001

Riggs, Stephanie and Bill Youmans. **Never Sell Yourself Short.**

At 3'11", Josh finds life challenging in a world designed for those between five and six feet tall. From finding clothes that fit to changing people's attitudes, Josh's spirit and determination are taller than most. (Ages 6-10)

J362.4083 Rogers 2000

Rogers, Fred. **Let's Talk About It: Extraordinary Friends**

This latest volume in Mr. Roger's 'Let's Talk About It' series candidly answers common questions children have about people with disabilities and also provides introductory etiquette. (Ages 4-8)

J362.4083 Sirof 1993

Sirof, Harriet. **The Road Back: Living with a Physical Disability.**

Every four seconds someone in the United States is injured in an accident. Meet four young people who have experienced the difficult road to recovery in this sensitive yet honest look at some daunting issues. (Ages 10-15)

JB T12A

Tada, Joni Eareckson and Joe Musser and Linda Lee Maifair. **Joni's Story.**

A catastrophic dive leaves Joni paralyzed from the neck down. She must dip deep into her faith to learn to live, love, and even write all over again. (Ages 8-14)

J362.42092 Walker

Walker, Lou Ann. **Amy: The Story of a Deaf Child.**

Amy loves to climb trees, swim, skateboard, read and watch movies. Amy's disability and the issues surrounding it are treated like any other aspect of her life in this delightful portrait of an engaging young girl. (Ages 9-11)

J362.40922 Wheeler 1996

Wheeler, Jill C. **Everyday Heroes Overcome Challenges.**

It's what you can do, not what you can't. This is the theme of this brief but engrossing look at five young people who – through bravery, activism, and community commitment – overcame their disabilities and improved the lives of others. (Ages 9-12)

J362.78 Wolf

Wolf, Bernard. **Don't Feel Sorry for Paul.**

An intimate look in photographs and text at the active life of a young boy with malformed hands and feet, who with the help of artificial limbs, lives, works, and plays alongside his peers. (Ages 9-11)

Video Resources for Disability Awareness

VHS 650.14 Access pt. 1-3

Access Unlimited.

This three-part series presents practical, proven strategies for disabled people to find employment in a wide range of careers. Includes resumes, job search tactics, and interviewing skills.

VHS Follow

Garfield, James B. **Follow my Leader.**

When 16-year-old Jimmy is blinded by a firecracker, he's angry at the world, but learns love and affection once again from his beloved guide dog.

VHS 027.66 People

People First: Serving and Employing People with Disabilities.

While the physical barriers to library access have been removed, attitudinal barriers remain. Through interviews with disabled library users and employees, this video outlines the basics of putting people first when addressing library service.

VHS 796.93 Adaptiv pt. 1-2

A Practical Guide to Teaching Skiers with Disabilities.

Divided into two skill levels, this video highlights a joint project between Disabled Sports USA and Professional Ski Instructors of America that developed an adaptive ski instructor certification program for teaching the disabled to ski.

J VHS Secret

The Secret Garden

A ten-year-old orphan girl sent to live with her uncle in Yorkshire teams up with her invalid cousin to unlock the secrets of the estate's mysterious garden.

J VHS Silent

Silent Lotus.

A young deaf mute girl longs to tell beautiful, intricate stories through dance, but will the king allow her to become a dancer? Inspired by decorations on a 12th-century Angkor Wat temple.

VHS Underst

Understanding the Disabled: Dances with the Minotaur.

Fictional drama incorporating students with disabilities and their related issues, designed as a discussion starter to make the viewer consider all sides of the issues presented.

VHS 305.9 Without

Without Pity: A Film About Abilities.

Christopher Reeve narrates this documentary that celebrates the efforts of a cross-section of disabled Americans to live full, productive lives.

Also try:

Kidability. Program Development Associates.

Children learn that people are more alike than different while profiling adults & children who talk candidly about their disabilities

Disability Awareness. Learning Seed, Inc.

A film about inclusion demonstrating how the disabled can be accepted and included in regular classrooms and in social situations.

Website Resources for Disability Awareness

American Foundation for the Blind

<http://www.afb.org/braillebug/>

Designed to teach sighted kids about braille, AFB's Braille Bug site includes tools to read and write in braille code, biographies of Louis Braille and Helen Keller, book reviews, games and trivia.

Blindness

<http://pittsford.monroe.edu/Jefferson/CALFIERI/Blind/BlindKidsMain.html>

Written to inform kids about blindness, this site answers questions kids often have about what blindness is, how it is caused, how blind people engage in daily activities and how to help a blind person.

Indiana Institute on Disability and Community

<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir/kidsweb/>

This disability awareness site for youth offers book reviews, games, news stories and other forms of media portraying people with disabilities.

National Information Center for Children and Youth Disabilities

<http://www.nichcy.org/index.html>

This comprehensive site provides information on specific disabilities, national and state resources, education rights and resource lists on disability awareness, including curriculum, books, posters and videos.

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/kids/index.htm>

Specifically geared for teachers and kids, this page includes questions and answers, classroom activities, and online videos about hearing impairment.

Seeing Disabilities from a Different Perspective

<http://tqjunior.thinkquest.org/5852/homepg.htm>

A ThinkQuest Junior 1999 entry created entirely by kids, this site focuses on autism, blindness, cerebral palsy and deafness and includes book reviews, activities, interviews, and a quiz.

Smithsonian National Museum of American History

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/disabilityrights/welcome.html>

This interactive online exhibit from the Smithsonian focuses on the disability rights movement.

University of Virginia Children's Medical Center

<http://www.people.virginia.edu/~7Esmb4v/tutorials/cp/cp.htm>

This multimedia tutorial geared towards children and parents discusses the causes, types, problems, equipment, and therapy treatments associated with cerebral palsy.

Reader's Advisory Tools for Disability Awareness

Ward, Marilyn. **Voices from the Margins: an Annotated Bibliography of Fiction on Disabilities and Differences for Young People** (2002)

Lima, Carolyn and John Lima. **A to Zoo: Subject Access to Children's Picture Books, 6th Ed.** (2001)

Gillespie, John T. **Best Books for Children: Preschool Through Grade 6, 7th Ed.** (2001)

Friedler., Anna Dunwell. **Guide to the 400 Best Children's and Adult's Multicultural Books about Disability, Illness and Death** (1997)

Blaska, Joan K. **Using Children's Literature to Learn About Disabilities and Illness.** (1996)

Robertson, Debra. **Portraying Persons with Disabilities-an Annotated Bibliography of Fiction for Children and Teenagers.** (1992)

Friedberg, Joan Brest, June B. Mullins, and Adelaide Sukiennik. **Portraying Persons with Disabilities-an Annotated Bibliography of Nonfiction for Children and Teenagers.**(1992)

Moore, Cory. **A Reader's Guide for Parents of Children with Mental, Physical, or Emotional Disabilities.** (1990)

More booklists promoting disability awareness are available online from:

West Georgia Regional Library

http://www.carroll.public.lib.ga.us/Book%20News/disabilities_booklist.htm

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Library

<http://www.pym.org/library/lists/lis.htm>

The Sibling Support Project

<http://www.thearc.org/siblingsupport/resourcespage.htm>

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities

<http://ws1.kidsource.com/NICHCY/literature.html>

Guidelines for Talking with Children About Disabilities

(Taken from Josephine County Mental Health Department at <http://www.co.josephine.or.us/jcmhd/toparent.htm#2>)

Teachers, parents, child care providers and others who work with young children have the opportunity to guide them in developing positive, respectful, empathic attitudes toward people with disabilities. An inclusive environment with a well planned curriculum is likely to draw out questions and conversation from children. Being prepared to answer questions and to help children develop empathy and understanding (NOT PITY) by relating their own personal experiences and feelings to those of their classmates (or others) with disabilities is an important skill to develop. You do not have to become an expert on disability, or even be able to answer all questions exactly. What is more important is that as an adult you model positive attitudes and acceptance. If you have any discomfort being around people with disabilities it is important that you don't inadvertently pass those feelings on to the children who are modeling you. Some things to keep in mind:

1. **Always be respectful** of the child with a disability. Ask permission to let other children see/touch her equipment. Ask him if he feels comfortable answering another child's question directly.

2. **Encourage child to child interaction** in response to questions as much as possible. Responses like "I'll explain it to you later" or "Don't stare" will encourage rather than discourage fear and apprehension.
3. **Consider the developmental level of the child.** Most preschoolers will be satisfied with simple concrete responses such as "his legs don't work" and aren't really interested in technical explanations or causes. Older children can handle more complex information.
4. **Gently reframe language** which could be hurtful or demeaning to the person with a disability. If a child says "Bobby says that Tommy is crippled and he can never run because his legs are all shriveled up" you might respond "Tommy's legs don't work like yours but he can get around real well in his wheelchair. He sometimes likes to have races with other kids."
5. **Use concrete examples** to help younger children understand. For example, in the video, my four year old doesn't understand when his eight year old sister is talking about disabilities. I relate it back to our dog who has arthritis in her hips and sometimes can't walk.
6. **Help children to develop empathy** by relating the experiences and feelings of people with disabilities to their own personal experiences. "Do you remember how proud you felt when you could get yourself dressed all by yourself - that's how Amy feels when she can get into the chair by herself." "It hurts your feelings when people call you 'shorty' - that's how Johnny feels when people tease him about talking slowly."
7. When kids ask questions, **interpret, confirm, and then respond.** Children's questions often reveal underlying anxieties that should be responded to. The confirming step helps to assure that your interpretation is correct before you respond, and may give you more information about what the child is thinking.
8. **Provide opportunities to discuss each child's unique qualities.** Focus on strengths and abilities no matter how small. When a child with a disability has to use an alternative or assisted mode, speak of it in terms of a different way to do the same thing. Using a wheelchair or a walker is a different way of getting around. Using sign language or a communication board is just a different way of talking.

Content in this resource package was compiled, written, and annotated by Michael Harkovitch and Heidi Andress, except for "Guidelines for talking with children about disabilities," which was taken from the Josephine County Mental Health Department at

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