**ADVANCING EQUAL ACCESS!**

**Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the**

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

**U.S. Department of Education**

**Lyndon Banes Johnson Building**

**400 Maryland Avenue, SW**

**Washington, DC 20202**

On **Friday, July 24, 2015**, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the landmark *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights will bring together policy and program leaders, community organizations, and youths to examine current implications of the *ADA*’s implementation and cross-cutting issues with other federal civil rights laws. This event will also plant the seeds for achieving new civil rights milestones during the next 25 years for people with all types of disabilities. To unite thought leaders with the up-and-coming generation of youths and young adults with disabilities, the event (with Olegario “Ollie” D. Cantos VII, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, serving as Master of Ceremonies), will consist of three parts.

1. **Indoor Policy Panels:** From **9:00am** to **10:20am** in the Department of Education’s Barnard Auditorium, two panel discussions will focus on the *ADA*’s impact on our nation’s education system. The first panel will comprise Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Michael Yudin, Association for University Centers on Disabilities Executive Director Andrew J. Imparato, and Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Catherine E. Lhamon. The second panel will be composed of youth leaders and moderated by Janet LaBreck, Commissioner of the department’s Rehabilitation Services Administration. Panelists will be accomplished athlete and six-time national champion in wheelchair racing and archery, Casey Followay of Ohio; National Council on Independent Living activist, Jaggar DeMarco of New Jersey; Founder of Social Justice Media Services and Disability Rights Blogger, Emily Ladau of New York; National Association of the Deaf (NAD) activist, Nia Lazarus of California; and Autistic Self Advocacy Network Leadership Programs Coordinator, Natalia M. Rivera Morales of Maryland.

Following the panels, audience members will be invited to participate in two activities held on the **outside** plaza on the Maryland Avenue side of the LBJ building.

1. **Outside Ceremony:** At 10:30am, following an introduction by Assistant Secretary Lhamon, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is to provide keynote remarks for those assembled. This program will also feature a flag ceremony by Boy Scouts with disabilities as selected by the National Capital Area Council of Boy Scouts of America and remarks by Active Policy Solutions Chief Executive Officer Terri Lakowski as introduced by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Seth Galanter.
2. **Outside Activities:** Both from **10:00am** to **10:25am** and from approximately **11:00am** to **12pm**, students with and without disabilities from around the region will participate in activities to highlight how students with disabilities can take part in various aspects of educational life. Activities will include basketball, boccia, and track and field, led by Athletics for All task force organizations such as Disabled Sports USA, Wheelchair & Ambulatory Sports USA, American Association of Adapted Sports Programs, Inc.  (AAASP), and Bridge II Sports.

Exhibit tables will also be set up for event attendees to gain access to information, resources, and new networking opportunities.

And finally, as a way to help memorialize participation in this special *ADA* celebration, attendees will be invited to share their thoughts on video for possible inclusion in a “Know It 2 Own It” blog or series of blogs that spotlight individual stories and help chronicle how far we have collectively come in building a society that is free from the physical, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers to full societal participation by people with all types of disabilities.

By incorporating immediate opportunities for youth and adults with and without disabilities to participate in different ways together, we symbolically unite to continue to build the ADA legacy for many years to come!