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National Down Syndrome Month, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

National Down Syndrome Month affords all Americans an opportunity to take note of the progress science has made over the past two decades in understanding developmental disabilities, especially Down Syndrome. An accumulation of new research, a body of knowledge represented by thousands of published scientific papers, has meant fresh help for mentally handicapped people and the establishment of a strong information base for future efforts. One of the most important benefits of this research is that people everywhere are becoming increasingly sensitive to the achievements, needs, and potential of the mentally handicapped.

Our society is stronger and healthier because a new situation now prevails for those in our midst who are developmentally disabled. Today, people with Down Syndrome often take part in special education classes within main-streamed programs in schools, vocational training, and living arrangements that promote as much independence as possible. In addition, parents of babies with Down Syndrome are receiving the education and support they need to understand this condition and to plan for the future of their children with new confidence and hope.

These strides have been possible thanks to the tireless work of concerned researchers, parents' groups, physicians, teachers, and service providers. Private organizations such as the National Down Syndrome Congress and the National Down Syndrome Society have worked in concert with the Public Health Service, the President's Committee on Mental Retardation, and other government agencies to increase public awareness of this condition and of the capabilities of those with Down Syndrome.

These developments are brightening the outlook for people born with Down Syndrome. That outlook will continue to brighten the more we acknowledge that all of us share the same God-given rights, dignity, and worth, and the more we realize that the sanctity of every human life is both a matter of principle and a call to action. As the late Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York said so eloquently:

The gift of life, God's special gift, is no less beautiful when it is accompanied by illness or weakness, hunger or poverty, mental or physical handicaps, loneliness or old age. Indeed, at these times, human life gains extra splendor as it requires our special care, concern, and reverence. It is in and through the weakest of human vessels that the Lord continues to reveal the power of His love.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 84, has designated the month of October 1987 as "National Down Syndrome Month" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this month.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of October 1987 as National Down Syndrome Month. I invite all concerned citizens, agencies, and organizations to unite during October with appropriate observances and activities directed toward assisting affected individuals and their families to enjoy to the fullest the blessings of life.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eight day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan