



South Central Region
540 W. International Airport Rd.
Anchorage, AK 99518-1110
907.561.5335 | 1.800.478.0078
907.564.7429 fax
www.hopealaska.org

Helping Alaskans with Differing Abilities Experience Hope Since 1968

Dear Friends and Stakeholders,

If there is a silver lining to the pandemic, it has been the gift of time to reflect during a summer devoid of traditional group events and activities. Although the pandemic has dominated the news feeds, significant milestones have occurred this summer. I have relished the opportunity to explore more deeply the challenges and celebrations of current times, and the historical trailblazers fighting for justice and equality along the way. This year may feel “different” to many of us, but the historic parallels between 2020 and 1920 are strikingly similar.

In 1920, the world was still recovering from a devastating influenza pandemic; Warren G. Harding ran for president on an, “America First” ticket and “return to normalcy”; the Ku Klux Klan experienced a violent resurgence and terrorized American citizens in communities as far north as Duluth, Minnesota; women fought for, and won, the right to vote; the Volstead Act ushered in the Prohibition, and legislation passed creating vocational rehabilitation programs for disabled soldiers and civilians.

On July 26, 2020 people across the United States and beyond paused to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In Alaska, the Disability Pride committee put together a week-long celebration featuring interviews with giants in the field of disability advocacy. These interviews inspired me, humbled me, and challenged me to dig deeper to examine my own perceptions and contributions. The celebration of an Act still not fully realized, brought home to me how each of us must create bridges where there are barriers, and to connect with others in profoundly new ways with open hearts to diversity.

Over the course of the last century many of the barriers isolating and dehumanizing others have eroded, but our work is far from finished. Our national and local conversation is not driven from a heart full of compassion. The Biblical question “Who is my neighbor?” is more often answered with restriction rather than expansive love.

As we honor the life of John Lewis and the many others who have fought tirelessly for equal rights for all, we must recognize each of us possess the same power to eradicate systemic racism, sexism, ableism; any attitude or practice indicating another human being does not belong or have value. It’s a daily commitment, a marathon of moments, examining our own thinking and practice and taking action to stand up to injustice.

I would love to think in 100 years the reflections of those looking back remember 2020 as a year of transformation, a year where humanity recognized the immense potential of full inclusion for everyone and worked together for the good of all. We honor the trailblazers of justice by our individual commitment to bring their dreams to fulfillment. I’m in, are you?

Best,

Michele Girault
CEO
Hope Community Resources