

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Protecting the rights of Coloradans of all ages since 1976

Disability Law Colorado's Executive Director Mary Anne Harvey Announces Her Retirement at End of 2021

DENVER, CO | September 23, 2021 — After 41 years of leading Disability Law Colorado, Executive Director Mary Anne Harvey has announced that she will retire at the end of 2021.

“Mary Anne has led Disability Law Colorado with unquestioned dedication to its mission,” said Board Chair Mary Kay Kisseberth. “She has promoted and sustained victories for people who desperately needed a champion. Because of Mary Anne’s leadership, Colorado school children with disabilities have received educational services, individuals in institutions and nursing homes have been protected from abuse and neglect, and many people with disabilities have had equal access to housing, employment, and public accommodations. No one could possibly deserve retirement more than Mary Anne.”



Mary Anne’s early nonprofit experience included being director of a preschool program in Wyoming that served children with disabilities. One of her reasons for applying to Disability Law Colorado was to be involved in implementing the newly enacted Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Mary Anne brought the fund raising and nonprofit management acumen the fledgling civil rights and social change organization needed; she embraced the life of a disability rights advocate.

During Mary Anne’s tenure, the organization has experienced tremendous growth and has transformed into the crucial disability rights and elder rights nonprofit it is today. When Mary Anne was hired in 1980, the organization had a staff of six and an annual budget of \$150,000. Today there are 27 staff, an annual budget of \$3.2 million, and Disability Law Colorado operates nine federally mandated protection & advocacy programs reaching people throughout the state with every kind of disability. Mary Anne was instrumental in extending that reach to elders, when in 1988, the organization was selected by the Colorado Department of Human Services to administer two Older Americans Act programs: the Colorado Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Legal Assistance Developer Program.

Beyond her impact in Colorado, Mary Anne’s leadership skills contributed significantly to the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), the association for Protection & Advocacy (P&A) systems in every state and territory. Within four years of joining Disability Law Colorado, Mary Anne was elected President of NDRN. She helped guide the development of national standards for the P&A system.

In addition to driving the systemic work that has brought about changes in the daily lives of people with disabilities, one of Mary Anne’s legacies is the creation of Mighty Rights Press, which operates with the dual goal of generating unrestricted income for Disability Law Colorado’s work and providing people with disabilities the tools they need to advocate for themselves. Mary Anne has always been committed to taking stands in pursuit of justice – especially when those stands are not popular. Most of the groundbreaking litigation and legislative

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advocacy work pioneered by Disability Law Colorado is not typically supported by public or private funders, and Mary Anne recognized that to remain true to its mission, the organization needed to develop other income streams. Mighty Right's flagship publication is the well-known *Everyday Guide to Special Education Law* written by Randy Chapman. The *Everyday Guide* is marketed and sold nationally, along with the Spanish-language edition, *Guía de la Ley de Educación Especial*. Another successful resource has been *Residents' Rights BINGO*, a training tool for residents and staff of nursing homes and assisted living residences.

"Over the course of four decades, Mary Anne has created a dynamic team and has been a visionary, leading with compassion, grace and integrity. She has earned the respect of community leaders, partner agencies and residents, engaging them and bringing them together to actively advocate for Coloradans with disabilities and older adults," said past Board President John C. Hanley. "She will be greatly missed!"

Under Mary Anne's guidance, Disability Law Colorado has been recognized with community and national awards for organizational excellence. Mary Anne has been the recipient of many individual awards and honors recognizing her tremendous nonprofit executive leadership. Recognition includes the 2012 Colorado Nonprofit Association's prestigious William Funk Award for Building Stronger Communities.

"What a joy and privilege it has been to serve. I am deeply grateful to the many current and former employees who brought their dedication and commitment to advancing the rights of people with disabilities and older adults. I have been fortunate to meet so many amazing community leaders, supporters, volunteers and nonprofit agency directors and teams who truly care about giving back and serving our community," said Mary Anne. "I am looking forward to retiring with my husband and making new memories in this next chapter of life."

Plans are underway for a Spring 2022 "Mary Anne Harvey Retirement Celebration" event that will recognize and celebrate Mary Anne's legacy and accomplishments. Once a date, time and location are determined a "Save the Date" announcement will be made. Today's retirement announcement coincides with the start of a national search for Disability Law Colorado's next executive director.

About Disability Law Colorado: Disability Law Colorado is a nonprofit organization that protects and promotes the rights of people with disabilities and older people in Colorado through direct legal representation, advocacy, education and legislative analysis. We work to protect the human, civil and legal rights of people with disabilities and older people. As Colorado's Protection and Advocacy System, we have authority under federal law to gain access to facilities and records to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect.

Since 1988 Disability Law Colorado has been the host agency for two Older Americans Act programs: The Colorado Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and Legal Assistance Developer for Elders Program. These programs are administered by Disability Law Colorado under a contract with the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Aging and Adult Services. They operate in conjunction with the 16 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to coordinate services statewide, promoting and protecting the rights of Colorado's older adults and improving their quality of life.

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