INSPIRE TO MOVE - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
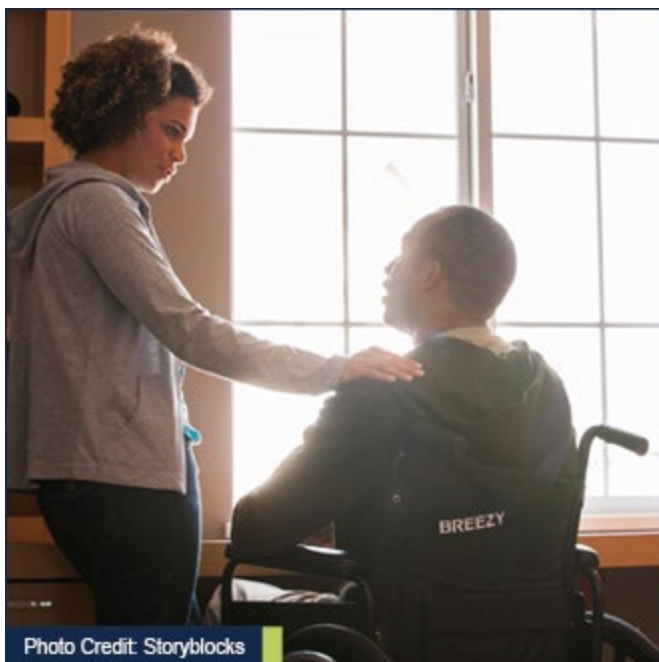

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By Colleen Crawford

The United Nations established December 3 as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. With more than 1 billion people worldwide living with a disability, we can celebrate this day as an opportunity to foster inclusion and awareness of barriers facing persons with disabilities, as well as learn what steps we can take to help reduce those barriers in the workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing disparities in access to healthcare, education, employment, and community participation, bringing more attention to the need to fully realize human rights for all people living with a disability.

There are steps we can take within our University of Illinois System community to further our personal contributions toward inclusion and equity for persons with disabilities. System Human Resource Services recently launched the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Certificate Program which provides a robust experience for employees to engage in meaningful discussions, activities, curriculum, and projects to promote and support DEI. Throughout the DEI Certificate

Program, participants cultivate viewpoints and action steps for sustaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

Digital accessibility is an emerging focus area where we can all make a difference. IT Accessibility 101 offered through Disability Resources and Education Services is a great first step toward ensuring equitable access to our digital presence. This free course develops an understanding of basic accessibility concepts that, when applied, can make a real impact in our campus community. Other helpful resources to ensure your digital documents are accessible can be found on the Electronic Information Technology Accessibility Policy webpage.

Another impactful way to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities is to devote some time to educating ourselves about disability inclusion. The United Nations webinar Disability Inclusion 101 addresses topics such as the human rights-based approach to disability and combining disability-targeted initiatives with disability inclusion in mainstream activities. With these small actions, together we can make big strides in improving accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities.