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Disability Rights Iowa Completes Inclusive Disability Mural for New Offices

(February 19, 2021 – Des Moines, IA) Disability Rights Iowa recently moved to new offices in the central downtown area. As a result, DRI had the unique opportunity to create a welcoming, inclusive, and representative mural in our lobby. This mural will help usher in the next chapter for DRI as we continue to advocate for Iowans with disabilities and mental illness. The mural depicts important progress in the disability rights movement as we dedicate our work to ensure the disability community has equal access in all aspects of their lives.

The mural showcases disability rights activists such as Barbara Johnson, Judy Heumann, and other participants of the 504 Sit-in. The mural also highlights different aspects of advancements for accessibility ranging from Braille books to assistive technology. Additionally, the mural includes a parent communicating with their child through American Sign Language, a disabled veteran, and picket signs representative of numerous demonstrations for disability rights. These signs demonstrate progress for the disability community, while simultaneously symbolizing the advocacy that is still needed from groups, like DRI, to achieve full access, equality, and representation in society. A tactile representation of the artwork will also be installed to ensure everyone can experience the mural, regardless of sight level.

This mural was created by a local Iowa artist, Jill Wells. A graduate from Drake University, Jill focuses primarily on narrative paintings and murals. She was “most excited and honored to work on this project as the mural provides the opportunity to showcase a marginalized community and to elevate their voices and their rights.”

Jill started painting the mural on November 26, 2020 and will be completing her work on February 19, 2021. Throughout this time, Jill has been livestreaming the progress of the mural every day on DRI’s Facebook page to engage the disability community and our supporters. Followers have been encouraged to #WatchPaintDRI to learn more about disability history, painting tips, and current resources available for the disability community.

This social media platform has also been used to accept donations to fund the creation of this mural. DRI, through the support of our generous donors, has raised \$3,030. Donors who have contributed at least \$25 will be invited to a special opportunity to meet with Jill over Zoom and discuss the mural. If individuals wish to be included in this opportunity, they can still donate to DRI’s GoFundMe at: <https://gf.me/u/y9wwab>

With the completion of the mural on the 19th, DRI is inviting reporters to view the mural in-person and engage with Jill in order to ask questions about the mural and its process.

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About Disability Rights Iowa: Disability Rights Iowa is part of a nationwide network of protection and advocacy systems established in the 1970s by the U.S. Congress to respond to abuse and neglect of Iowans with disabilities and/or mental illnesses. DRI defends and promotes the human and legal rights of Iowans who have disabilities and mental illnesses. We promote safety, opportunity, access, and self-determination for all Iowans. For more information, please visit www.disabilityrightsowa.org.