



**The Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership**

ED TURNER

**Counselor, Educator, Trainer, Writer,
and Advocate for People with Disabilities
Winner of the 2005 JACKIE CREWS
EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARD**



A native of Accomack County on Virginia's Eastern Shore, Ed Turner was educated in the era before changes in the law guaranteed children with disabilities access to a free appropriate public education (Public Law 94-142 in 1975 and subsequent Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts). Born in 1944 with cerebral palsy, Ed attended Chesapeake city public schools in segregated classrooms with other students with disabilities. Under those circumstances, secondary and post-secondary education was extremely challenging, but Ed persevered, and his experiences inspired him to live his life fully and independently and to become an example and mentor for others.

After completing his education and while still living with his parents, Ed joined the staff of the Norfolk Center for Independent Living (now the Endependence Center, Inc.), one of Virginia's first centers for independent living, as a peer counselor. Determined to live on his own and lead the way for others, and despite the limited availability of affordable and accessible housing, Ed moved into his own apartment in 1982. News reports at the time quoted him as saying, "Now I consider myself a role model for the people I serve. I did not feel right talking the talk without walking the walk with them." Those first steps launched Ed's career as an out-spoken advocate and community leader for people with disabilities.

In 1989, with an interest in developing his professional abilities and in expanding the reach of his advocacy for individuals with disabilities to live and work independently in the community, Ed became Assistant Administrator of the Board for the Rights of People with Disabilities (now the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities) in Richmond. Then, in 1992, in collaboration with a colleague who also has a significant disability, he demonstrated his entrepreneurial skills by co-founding Connections Plus Consulting, a disability rights consultation business.

Virginia Board for People with Disabilities
Ninth Street Office Building
202 North 9th Street, 9th Floor
Richmond, VA 23219
1-800-846-4464 TTY or VOICE



Elected as president of a statewide cross-disability coalition in the 1980s, Ed also began to work as a trainer and writer on disability rights and as a public policy advisor, particularly in the area of employment. His publications have included a guide on the Americans with Disabilities Act for consumers and employers, an academic monograph on how to strengthen consumer organizations published by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and a wide variety of fact sheets, policy briefs, journal articles, and contributions to numerous books and training curricula on self-advocacy for employment and workplace accommodations.

As a member of Virginia's Statewide Independent Living Council and Community Integration Oversight Advisory Committee charged with overseeing Virginia's implementation of the U. S. Supreme Court's landmark 1999 Olmstead decision, Ed has played a key role in helping individuals with disabilities exercise choice in where they live and in expanding opportunities for their employment. In 2004, on behalf of the Olmstead Committee, Ed met with Governor Mark Warner and obtained assurances that vital vocational rehabilitation services targeted to people with disabilities would be maintained in Virginia, regardless of changes being considered at the national level. In 2005, as an advisor to the state's Disability Commission chaired by Lieutenant Governor Tim Kaine, Ed's efforts led directly to inclusion of workplace personal assistance services (WPAS) as a part of the state's pilot Medicaid buy-in program submitted to the General Assembly by the Governor.

In his current position as a training associate with VCU's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention, Ed continues to expand opportunities and supports for the employment of people with disabilities. Working with colleagues at VCU and in the community, he develops, delivers, and promotes training in self-advocacy and leadership for consumers and on workplace accommodations for rehabilitation professionals and the business community. His most recent undertaking is development of a web-based curriculum leading to WPAS certification of current and potential workplace personal assistants. This pioneering program, unique in the nation, will result in increased awareness of WPAS, in higher professional standards and career opportunities for workplace personal assistants, and greater success for employees with disabilities and the companies which recruit and employ them.

Building on his experiences in disability advocacy and aware of the importance of participation and visibility of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life, Ed has also been active in the political arena. As a fundraiser and spokesman for the Virginia Democratic Party and current Chairman of its Third Congressional District Committee, Ed ensures that the views of people with disabilities are heard at all levels of public policy.

In 2005, a panel of his peers—graduates of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities' Partners in Policymaking advocacy and leadership training program for individuals with disabilities and their families—selected Ed Turner to be the first recipient of the Jackie Crews Excellence in Leadership Award. The late Jackie Crews, herself a graduate of the Partners in Policymaking program, demonstrated through her life and advocacy four values of leadership—*independence, productivity, inclusion* and *self-determination*. In bestowing the award named for her on Ed Turner, the Virginia Board established a high standard for future recipients. As was repeatedly stated by colleagues, friends, and community leaders endorsing his nomination, Ed Turner's life and work have embodied those same values and share a common legacy with Jackie Crews and other leaders who strive for those goals on behalf of all people with disabilities.