

## **Research Assignment: Learning More About Famous and Newsworthy People with Disabilities**

**Directions:** Select a person from the list below or identify another person or people with disabilities whose life or career interests you. You can get other ideas from disability websites or even by doing an Internet search using phrases like “athletes with disabilities,” “writers with disabilities” or “famous people with disabilities.”

Identify and record some basic facts about the person:

- Is the person living today or famous for things done in the past?
- What do we know about the person’s background and childhood?
- What is/was the person’s career or main interests?
- What did you learn about the person’s character or personality?
- What has the person accomplished? What makes/made this person important in his or her chosen work or interests?
- How did the person’s experience with disability influence his or her life and work?

Don’t limit your explorations to the following list. Consider people who share your background, experiences and interests, and consider including local people in your class list. We hope this activity inspires you get to know more about individuals with disabilities who used their own abilities and skills to achieve either personal success or desired social change.

### **A Starting List**

#### **Activists & Reformers**

Jane Addams — advocate for immigrant rights, peace activist

Clara Barton — founder of the American Red Cross

Mary Billinghamurst — British suffragette

Louis Braille — invented print language for people who are blind

Judi Chamberlin — leader in the mental health self-help movement

Lurent Clerc — early Deaf teacher of sign language

Pat Deegan — leader in the mental health self-help movement

Thomas Gallaudet — early advocate for American Sign Language  
Justin Dart — disability rights advocate  
Judith Heumann — cofounder, independent living movement  
Helen Keller — speaker, writer and reformer  
Ed Roberts — cofounder, independent living movement  
Thaddeus Stevens — abolitionist and politician  
Harriet Tubman — abolitionist

### **Athletes**

Jim Abbott — baseball player  
Katie Dallam — boxer  
William Ellsworth Hoy — baseball player  
Greg Louganis — diver  
Casey Martin — golfer  
Wilma Rudolph — field and track

### **Artists and Architects**

John Callahan — cartoonist  
Dale Chihuly — glassmaker  
Chuck Close — painter  
Francisco Goya- — painter and printmaker  
Michael Graves — architect  
Frida Kahlo — painter  
Dorothea Lange — photographer  
Vincent van Gogh — painter  
Donna Williams — painter and sculptor

### **Celebrities and Reporters**

Chris Burke — actor  
Michael J. Fox — actor  
Daryl Hannah — actor  
John Hockenberry — reporter  
James Earl Jones — actor  
Marlee Matlin— actor  
Henry Winkler— actor and director

## **Musicians**

Rachel Barton — violinist  
Ludwig van Beethoven — composer  
Ray Charles — singer  
Evelyn Glennie — percussionist  
Itzhak Perlman — violinist  
Art Tatum — jazz pianist  
Stevie Wonder — singer

## **Writers**

Christie Brown — autobiographer  
Jane Kenyon — poet  
Patricia Polacco — picture book author and illustrator  
Andy Potok — fiction and nonfiction writer  
Daniel Stefanski — young writer of book on understanding autism  
Rosemary Sutcliff — young adult fiction

## **Scientists**

Temple Grandin — expert on humane treatment of cattle  
Stephen Hawking — physicist  
Monty Roberts — horse trainer

## **Final Comments**

These are a few examples of individuals with disabilities who are famous or noteworthy. Who would you add?

We have listed each individual in just one category but they often are well-known for more than one skill or accomplishment. If you choose to research any of these individuals, consider his or her other accomplishments and the different ways that this person has influenced people and the world we live in.