

CULTURAL
AWARENESS

OBSERVANCE

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH



Led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) recognizes the contributions America's workers with disabilities make each day across our Nation.

In recognizing NDEAM, the Department of Defense's reaffirms its commitment to recruit, retain, and advance these individuals throughout the workforce.

This important national observance dates to the end of World War II. In 1945, with the return of thousands of injured Service members, the U.S. government pushed to educate the public about issues relating to disabilities and employment and made specific efforts to assist these individuals in a variety of ways.

Congress enacted Public Law 176, declaring the first week of October each year as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.

In 1962, the word 'physically' was removed to include contributions of people with other disabilities.

The federal legislature expanded the week-long observance to a month and changed the name to NDEAM in 1988.

In 2012, Alaska Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Maddamma, a pararescueman, sustained an injury that shattered the bones in his lower left leg. He spent years in the hospital, undergoing multiple surgeries, and physical therapy to regain the full use of his leg. Eventually, he chose to have his leg surgically amputated, enabling his return to military service.

When asked how NDEAM unites the community, he spoke about how people can be an "iceberg" and what a person knows about their own coworkers they see every day is just the tip of their life experience.

"These awareness months bring people together, opens doors, and draw attention to things," said Maddamma.

Each person brings distinctive skills and capabilities to their employment. Ensuring equity, dignity, respect, and cooperation among all individuals are essential values in the DoD work environment. The Defense Department recognizes past achievements as it strives to build an inclusive future workforce to achieve total force readiness.

