



## The Superhero Project Celebrates ADA 30

*By Nikki Montgomery, M.A., M.Ed., GPAC*

*On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law, giving more than 50 million Americans the chance to define themselves by their potential – not their limitations. The ADA is a civil rights law that guarantees individuals with disabilities the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. Discrimination against individuals with disabilities is prohibited by the ADA in all areas of civic life, including jobs, schools, transportation and all places that are open to the general public.*

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is more than a law; it's a promise to each generation of people with disabilities that their lives and experiences are part of the American fabric. From opening educational opportunities to expanding the capacity of people with disabilities to participate in all arenas of society, the ADA represents endless possibilities. While we have a long way to go in equally valuing all abilities, the ADA is a beacon toward that future.

As the parent of a disabled child and the sibling of an adult with disabilities, I have seen the world both before and after ADA. The Americans with Disabilities Act was a game changer in recognizing individuals with disabilities as true and equal citizens, and its pioneers paved the way for new generations of heroes who are empowered, bold and proud.

My son, Richie, who has a physical disability and is neurodiverse, lives in a world that is growing in understanding and acceptance. He can access public spaces and get the educational supports he needs to plan for a successful life, in whatever way he chooses to define it. Richie wants to be an astrophysicist when he grows up and that goal is not beyond his reach. To me, that is the real impact of ADA for our family.

The Superhero Project celebrates a new generation of heroes and a world that embraces differences, values diversity and charges forward to a bright future. That is the future the ADA has allowed them to dream of and to expect.



**Nikki Montgomery, M.A., M.Ed., GPAC**, is the executive director of Madvocator Educational & Healthcare Advocacy Training and the author of the *Super Safe Kids* patient safety book series. Nikki is a patient advocate, hospital board member, and the past president of the Patient and Family Partnership Council at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. She is also the project coordinator for The Beryl Institute's Patient Experience Policy Forum (PXPFF) and serves on the Global Patient and Family Advisory Board. As the parent of a child with complex medical needs, she has spent lots of time in healthcare settings and is interested in improving equity, engagement and communication with patients.