

ADvancing States Honors Three Leaders in the Aging and Disability Field



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ARLINGTON, VA - ADvancing States is pleased to announce that the 2021 Katie Beckett Award was presented to Judith (Judy) Heumann, the 2021 Arthur Flemming Award was given posthumously to Gary Sullivan, and the 2021 Jeanette Takamura Award was provided to Susan Reinhard this afternoon at the HCBS Conference. All three of these awardees made lasting changes to national programs and services that improved the lives of older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers.

2021 Katie Beckett Award

Judy is a lifelong advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and is an internationally recognized leader in the disability rights community. Judy has served in two Presidential Administrations. In the Clinton Administration, Judy was the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the Department of Education and Judy served as the first Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State under President Obama.

In 1949, Judy contracted polio as a child and began to use a wheelchair for her mobility. She was denied the right to attend school because she was considered a "fire hazard" at the age of five. Her parents played a strong role in fighting for her rights as a child, but Judy soon determined that she, working in collaboration with other individuals, had to play an advocacy role due to continuous discrimination. Her fight for the rights of people with disabilities has had significant impacts both in the United States and the entire world.

ADvancing States Board President, Kathleen Dougherty, commented, "There is no one better to receive this award. Much like Katie Beckett, Judy's tireless advocacy resulted in real changes that improved the lives of millions of people with disabilities."

Judy was a founding member of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living which was the first grassroots center in the United States and helped to launch the Independent Living Movement both nationally and globally. She was also instrumental in the development and implementation of legislation, such as Section 504, the Individuals with Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which have been advancing the inclusion of disabled people in the US and around the world and fighting to end discrimination against all those with disabilities.

2021 Arthur Flemming award

In 1975, Gary Sullivan was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy and required assistance with practically all daily activities, but he never let that slow him down. An attorney with a wicked sense of humor and a devilish grin, Gary described himself as “a constructive quadriplegic” who fought for the rights of consumers to be entitled to a program that would best suit their individual needs.

Gary loved sharing his personal story so that it could help shape the policies and priorities for the LTSS population. Gary was truly passionate about ensuring things were going well and also about fixing things that were difficult. Gary headlined one of the most outstanding HCBS conference plenary sessions when he joined other consumers on the panel to discuss their stories and perspectives.

Martha Roherty, ADvancing States’ Executive Director, talked about Gary’s impact and legacy, saying, “Whenever I would ask Gary to present at a conference or to consumer groups in other states, he was always willing. He was a fierce advocate not only for his own rights but the rights of the direct support workers like Katie. The HCBS family lost a true champion this year and I will miss him, both for his advocacy and for his wonderful personality.”

Gary’s outstanding advocacy on behalf of older Americans, Americans with disabilities, and their caregivers make him the perfect recipient of this year’s Arthur Flemming award.

2021 Dr. Jeanette Takamura Caregiving Award

The 2021 Jeanette Takamura award recipient is Dr. Susan Reinhard. Susan C. Reinhard is a senior vice president at AARP, directing its Public Policy Institute (PPI), the focal point for public policy research and analysis at the state, federal, and international levels. Susan is especially passionate about supporting caregivers and leads PPI’s family caregiving initiatives.

Susan is a nationally recognized expert in health and long-term care policy, with extensive experience in conducting, directing, and translating research into action to promote policy change. Susan oversees PPI teams working on health security, financial security, and family, home, and community issues, and from that vantage point serves as editor-in-chief of Policy Plus Action: The AARP Public Policy Institute Newsletter.

Prior to her work at AARP, Susan was a deputy commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services where she led the development of policies and nationally recognized programs for family caregiving, consumer choice, and community-based care options. She has served as professor and co-director of Rutgers Center for State Health Policy, where she directed several national initiatives with states to help people of all ages with disabilities live in their communities.

Nels Holmgren, Vice President of Advancing States' Board of Directors, lauded Susan's work, stating, "Susan is well known to all of us in the Aging and Long-term Services and Supports field. She has worked with so many of the states across the country to improve supports and enhance the quality of lives of both the participants and their caregivers. There is no one I know that is more passionate about caregiving, which makes her perfect for the Takamura Caregiving Award."

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About the Katie Beckett Award

Born with medical support needs, Katie Beckett spent the first years of her life in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Though her family and doctors wanted Katie to live at home, there was at that time, no Medicaid coverage for medical services provided in the community. Fighting to bring her daughter home, Julie Beckett challenged this policy, and was ultimately successful in carving out an exception in the Medicaid program that allows children with disabilities to receive services in their homes and communities. Thanks to her mother's tireless advocacy, on December 19, 1981, Katie moved home. Known as the "Katie Beckett Waiver" since its inception in 1982, this monumental policy shift has allowed more than 500,000 children to live at home and have access to the treatment they need.

Since 2011, NASUAD has chosen an individual whose work has promoted the ideals of independence, dignity, and self-determination for individuals with disabilities to receive the Katie Beckett award. Previous award winners include Lex Frieden, Nancy Thaler, Jim Firman, and Jamie Kendall.

About the Arthur S. Flemming Award

Since 1978, NASUAD has chosen one individual in the field of Aging to receive the annual Arthur S. Flemming Award. Dr. Flemming spent years in public service, culminating with his role as the U.S. Commissioner on Aging. He served as the Commissioner on Aging until 1978. The core of what is now commonly called the national Aging Network, consisting of state agencies on aging, sub-state area agencies on aging and thousands of service providers grew out of his leadership. Dr. Flemming's role in aging is well-known, but he was equally well known for his role in fighting for civil rights. Indeed, Dr. Flemming served as chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights from 1974 to 1981. As depicted by those who knew and worked with him both in public life and in his many private roles, Mr. Flemming possessed a rare and perhaps unequalled combination of bureaucratic competence, compassion for the needy, and ability to inspire those around him to action.

Some prior Flemming award winners include Dr. Bruce Chernoff, Josefina Carbonell, Dr. Bill Thomas, Fernando Torres-Gil, Senator Bernie Sanders, Kathy Greenlee, and Senator Barbara Mikulski.

About Advancing States

Advancing States was founded in 1964 under the name National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA). In 2019, the association changed its name to Advancing States. Today, Advancing States

represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities and long-term services and supports directors.

Jeanette Takamura Award

In 2019, the Advancing States board of directors voted to create an award that recognizes individuals who have shown exemplary leadership to support the caregivers of older adults and individuals with disabilities. Family and friends who serve as caregivers provide important societal and financial contributions toward maintaining the well-being of individuals, yet the work is often overwhelming and many of these unpaid caregivers have little support to help them with their task. The Takamura award recognizes those who work to improve the resources and supports available to help those caregivers as they assist their loved ones and help them remain in their home and communities.