

2013 Henry Viscardi Achievement Award Recipient



Lex Frieden

Professor of Biomedical Informatics and Rehabilitation, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, and Director of the Independent Living Research Utilization program at TIRR Memorial Hermann.

Lex Frieden is an educator, researcher, and disability rights and policy expert. He is professor at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UT Health) School of Biomedical Informatics and he directs the Independent Living Research Utilization program at TIRR Memorial Hermann. He is regarded as a founder and leader of the independent living movement by people with disabilities. In 1977, he led an initiative to define and set forth a blueprint for the development of independent living programs nationwide. In 1984, President Reagan appointed him the first director of the National Council on Disability where he led the initial drafting of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Frieden sustained a spinal cord injury as a freshman in college in 1967.

“Dr. Henry Viscardi was a pioneer in the global disability movement and he remains an inspiration to so many people today. Across the world we have made great strides regarding access and opportunity, but there is more work to be done,” Frieden said. “In the U.S. and abroad demographic realities require a focus on independent living. For example, 10,000 American baby-boomers turn 65 each day. Through the natural aging process, these people will encounter a disability, such as the loss of hearing, sight, memory, and mobility. People don’t want to go to a nursing home. They want to remain in their own homes, and through the provision of community-based long-term services and supports that should be possible.”