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UNH'S INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE

DURHAM – History is remembered as the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire celebrates its 15th anniversary.

It has been little more than 20 years since New Hampshire's last state institution in Laconia was court-ordered to close because of a lawsuit won by parents who were unhappy with the institution's treatment and conditions of individuals with disabilities.

But great strides can be made in a short amount of time, and the Institute on Disability is proud to be part of the movement toward inclusion, community supports and consumer-directed services.

The Laconia State School closed its doors in 1981, ending the era of state-run institutions in New Hampshire. As states across the nation in the early 1980s made the transition from impersonal, institutional supports toward community-driven services, New Hampshire fell behind – but not for long.

After a challenge by state officials, including Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Donald Shumway, to create an innovative center devoted to best practices and advocacy in the disability field, the University of New Hampshire founded the Institute on Disability.

Dr. Jan Nisbet has served as the Institute's director since it was founded in 1987, and has been a tireless leader dedicated to improving knowledge, policies and practices related to the economic and social participation of persons with disabilities in New Hampshire.

Dr. Nisbet has led the Institute from a three-person staff to a dynamic non-profit organization that operates more than 30 programs and partners and works effectively with numerous state, federal and public agencies. Outcomes since 1987 include:

- The Home of Your Own project, which has supported more than 500 individuals since 1994 to purchase their own homes in 23 states across the nation.
- More than 350 family members and individuals with disabilities have graduated from the Leadership Series and effect change at local and state levels.
- Since 1996, the Institute has supported individuals with disabilities to attend colleges and universities through the Post-secondary Education: A Choice for Everyone project.
- More than 2,000 people attended workshops and seminars on topics related to inclusive education during the 2000-2001 school year.

The Institute on Disability's mission is to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities. The Institute offers workshops and training sessions, participates in grant-funded model demonstration projects, conducts research and engages in collaborative partnerships with other statewide organizations that are committed to improving the cultural and economic environment for persons with disabilities.

For more information, visit the Institute on Disability's Web site at www.iod.unh.edu.

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The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, is a University Center for Excellence, established in 1987 with a mission to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities.