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The United States International Council on Disabilities mourns the death of its Board member, long-time Past President, and co-founder, Marca Bristo

The United States International Council on Disabilities mourns the death of its Board member, long-time past president, and co-founder, Marca Bristo. Her passing is a substantial loss for all those she touched with her advocacy, kindness, and powerful sense of what is right. USICD will honor her posthumously with its highest honor, the Dole-Harkin Award, at its annual gala in Washington, DC in December.

Marca Bristo's accomplishments are wide-ranging and extraordinary. She helped establish the American independent living movement; she was the co-founder and served as President of the National Council on Independent Living; she was the co-founder and served as CEO of Access Living, the premier and hugely successful independent living center in Chicago.

As Patricia Morrissey, President of USICD and long-time friend and colleague of Marca, stated: "She built things. She took risks. She inspired others. She was a compassionate visionary, practical, and a consensus builder."

Marca Bristo was also instrumental in passing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and was recognized for her efforts by President Obama with the Distinguished Service Award. As Chair of the National Council on Disability, she helped ensure the vigorous enforcement and implementation of the ADA.

As a world leader, she took her expertise and passion for disability rights from the US to the international stage. As Vice President for North America for Rehabilitation International, she participated in the negotiation of the UN treaty on disability rights, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. She established USICD to create a vehicle for connecting the US disability community with people with disabilities worldwide. She was the key strategist for USICD's campaign to have the US ratify the CRPD.

She shared her commitment and expertise as a mentor to persons with disabilities here in the US and worldwide, nurturing a new generation and giving them a pathway to an independent, successful life. Her leadership and accomplishments constitute a legacy that will benefit future generations. We are thankful for her life and remain in her debt.

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