Welcome From Evan Ryan
Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs

I am proud that the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs continues to be a leader in promoting, sponsoring, and endorsing opportunities for people with disabilities. International exchange programs change lives, and we firmly believe that the benefits of people-to-people exchange should be available to everyone. We are committed to leading by example as we demonstrate fairness, equity, and inclusion.

As an example, this year we launched the Lives Without Limits campaign to highlight the successes of our international exchange alumni with disabilities. I encourage you to view our Lives Without Limits videos at eca.state.gov/lives-without-limits to meet some of these remarkable people.

In thinking about the long-term importance and impact of international exchange, we’re focusing on youth - the leaders of tomorrow. As we work to engage emerging leaders around the world, we must ensure that we are reaching young people with disabilities.

I am pleased to present this issue of A World Awaits You (AWAY), focused on increasing and supporting the involvement of young people with disabilities in international exchanges. In this issue you will find stories about participants in State Department’s exchange programs among the other valuable resources being provided.

This publication is just one of the terrific resources produced by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE). The State Department established the NCDE in 1995 and funds it annually, working closely with Mobility International USA. The Clearinghouse is a key element in our efforts to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between Americans and the people of other countries regarding international exchange and disability.

Whether you are a person with a disability considering options for an international exchange experience, or you are working to include people with disabilities in your international exchange programs, I encourage you to connect with the NCDE to learn more about free resources.

We are pleased to work with you to spread the word that international exchange programs are open to everyone.