

## **In Memoriam/Obituary**

### **MARGARET ANN NOSEK**

Dr. MARGARET ANN NOSEK (Peg) (January 25, 1952 - November 21, 2020), a world-renowned social activist, advocate for people (especially for women) with disabilities, and a staunch defender of human rights, passed away in Houston, Texas on November 21, 2020.

As a person with a severe congenital physical disability due to spinal muscular atrophy, Dr. Nosek was a pioneer and activist in the disability rights and independent living movements. She worked closely with Justin W. Dart, Jr., in the 1980's to lay the foundation for and vigorously support passage of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) of 1990. For her work on the ADA, Dr. Nosek was the recipient of The Americans with Disabilities Act Award and honored as a "Disability Patriot" by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (1991). She served as President of Health Care for all Texas for three years.

Born in Schenectady, NY to Stanley M. and Regina A. Nosek, she moved with her family that included her brother Thomas M. Nosek, to Fairfield, Ohio where she attended grammar school. From there the family moved to Berea, Ohio where she graduated co-valedictorian of the Midpark High School Class of 1970. She received the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Baldwin Wallace College, Berea, Ohio in 1974 with a concentration in oboe and the Masters of Arts Degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, in Music History in 1976. During her master's studies, she was a Lecturer in the Department

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where she worked for 36 years until the time of her death. In 1993, Dr. Nosek founded and served as executive director of the Center for Research on Women with Disabilities (CROWD), <https://www.bcm.edu/research/labs-and-centers/research-centers/center->

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These interventions were designed for delivery using interactive websites and online virtual immersive environments, specifically Second Life (SL). She worked to promote the use of SL, serving on the Board of Directors of Virtual Abilities, Inc., a non-profit organization devoted to enabling people with a wide range of disabilities to thrive in online virtual worlds both through educational and social opportunities that may not be available to them in the “real” world.

Dr. Nosek was an expert in using of all forms of technology in order to enable her to interact with her professional and private communities. She used voice recognition when she found it difficult to type on her computer. When her ability to travel was curtailed, she continued to give professional presentations and take part in meetings with collaborators over the Internet, going so far as to use a robot (the one popularized on “Big Bang Theory”) that she could control from a distance to attend, present, and answer questions at an American Public Health Association national meeting.

In the local community and across the country, Dr. Nosek was a strong advocate for the rights of disabled women, helping them achieve equal access to inclusive, competent, and medically appropriate health services and information. Besides her professionally-related activities, Dr. Nosek was a founding member of the Vedanta Society of Houston, serving as their first president and helping them establish a strong presence in the community. She was also active with the Live Oaks Friends Meeting of Houston. On a lighter note, she was an advocate for the “total dark chocolate” diet!

Dr. Nosek’s honors are legion. From her alma maters, she received the Academic Hall of Fame Award from Midpark High School (2000), the Alumni Merit Award from Baldwin Wallace College (1974), the Outstanding Young Texas Ex Award from the University of Texas, Austin (1993), and

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Dr. Nosek is survived by her brother, scientific collaborator, and co-author Dr. Thomas M. Nosek and his wife Claudia of Berea, OH and Hilton Head Island, SC, nephew Thomas A. Nosek and his wife Kaycee of Sparta, NJ, and nephew Christopher M. Nosek, his wife Amy, and sons Quinton and Maxwell of Marietta, GA. She is also survived by her caregiver of 25 years, Perla Pedraza and her husband Gereasmo and their children Oscar, Aldo, Gina, and Edwin.

Those who would like to honor Dr. Nosek and help to continue her work in disability research and disability rights advocacy can donate to the Texas Exes Margaret A. Nosek Scholarship at the University of Texas, Austin (512-840-6195, [www.texasexes.org/give/](http://www.texasexes.org/give/)). This scholarship is awarded annually to students who are at the senior, master, or doctoral level - they must certify that they have a disability that causes a significant functional limitation in one or more major life activities and provide evidence that they have an ambition to pursue a career in research in any academic area. Preference is given to traditionally underrepresented groups. Donations can also be made to the Houston Center for Independent Living (713-974-4621, [www.hcil.cc](http://www.hcil.cc)).

**We will hold a celebration of Dr. Nosek's life over Zoom on Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 2:00 PM EST (i.e.1:00 PM CST, 12:00 noon MST, and 11:00 AM PST). If you would like to attend the celebration, please email Dr. Nosek's brother Tom at**