

This Day in History... April 22, 1919

Founding of Easterseals

On April 22, 1919, the Ohio Society for Crippled Children was founded. This later grew to become Easterseals, the nation's largest nonprofit healthcare organization, which serves more than 1.5 million people every year.

The organization was born out of tragedy. In 1907, its founder, Ohio-businessman Edgar Allen lost his son in a streetcar accident. Allen was disappointed in the lack of proper medical care to save his son. So, he sold his business and began raising funds to build a hospital in his town of Elyria, Ohio. After the hospital opened, he discovered that children with disabilities were usually kept out of public view. He was bothered by this and wanted to help them. So on April 22, 1919, he founded the Ohio Society for Crippled Children. It was the first organization of its kind.



This stamp was issued in 1969 for the group's 50th anniversary.



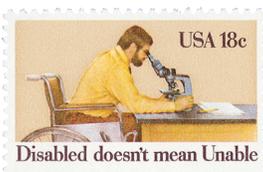
Ohio Rotary clubs were some of the organization's first supporters.

To make up for this, the society began producing Easter seals in the spring of 1934. These were colorful stamps that donors could get to place on their mail to show their support of the organization.

The first seal was designed by *Cleveland Plain Dealer* cartoonist J.H. Donahey. Donahey selected a simple illustration for the seal because those people benefiting from the charity asked, "simply for the right to live a normal life." That first Easter seal campaign raised \$47,000, which was more than twice their annual budget. From then on, these Easter seals would be one of the organization's major fundraising sources.

By the 1940s, there was a significant increase in hospital admissions for people with disabilities. This coupled with the influx of returning troops from World War II, led the organization to expand its services to adults and change its name to the Society for Crippled Children and Adults.

The society adopted the lily as its official symbol in 1952. They selected the lily because it symbolized the spring season and resurrection. From this time on, lilies became a common figure on Easter seals. By the 1960s, the Easter seals were so strongly associated with the society, they changed their name to the National Easter Society for Crippled Children and Adults. It was later changed to the National Easter Seal Society and eventually Easterseals.



The society expanded its mission to include adults in 1944.

They sought to help people find employment, healthcare and education. Some of their successful legislation included the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1986, the Air Carrier Access Act of 1988, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. They also got federal funding for Easter Seals programs.

Today, Easter Seals provides support to the disabled, veterans, military families, seniors, and caregivers through more than 160 local societies and over 450 service sites.



The society supported the Social Security Act of 1935, which included funding for facilities that supported children with disabilities.



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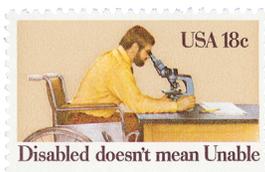
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