

# Disabled group's worldly focus

■ Institute's supporters celebrate 10 years of service for independent living

By Mireya Anchondo  
STAFF WRITER

At the time, it may have seemed slightly presumptuous for three disabled rights activists to name their new organization the World Institute on Disability. Yet in just 10 years, that is what it has become.

To celebrate the institute's 10th anniversary, more than 300 of its employees, supporters and friends gathered Thursday at the Lakeside Club to participate in an event called "World of Creativity."

Guests listened to remarks by longtime institute supporters and enjoyed performances by Axis Dance Troupe and the Augustino Dance Company, whose dancers include disabled people.

Founded in Oakland by activists Judy Heumann, Joan Leon and Ed Roberts, the institute forms public policy affecting the disabled and combines it



MARY F. CALVERT — Staff

Ed Roberts and Judy Heumann are co-founders of the World Institute on Disability.

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**Ed Roberts**

co-founder of World Institute on Disability

with research and training for promoting independent living.

Heumann, a quadriplegic because of polio, was recently nominated by President Clinton to be assistant secretary of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

“What has made WID so successful is that the institute has legitimized public policy research from a disabled's perspective,” Heumann said.

That approach gives the disabled some say in legislation affecting them.

The institute also tries to help disabled people around the world, particularly in countries where they are viewed as second-class citizens. In April, for example, several institute employees flew to Russia to help develop a plan to be submitted to President Boris Yeltsin.

And Wednesday, 24 El Salva-

dor residents arrived in Oakland for a six-week institute seminar.

Roberts, who was among the travelers to Russia, also is a quadriplegic because of polio and must sleep every night in an 800-pound iron lung. Referring to the institute's programs, he said, “It's like making patchwork into a quilt. We are moving toward one common goal.”

The institute also is tackling the issue of AIDS and how people with it are becoming disabled.

“Our work has literally affected the lives of millions of people. How many people can say that?” Roberts asked.