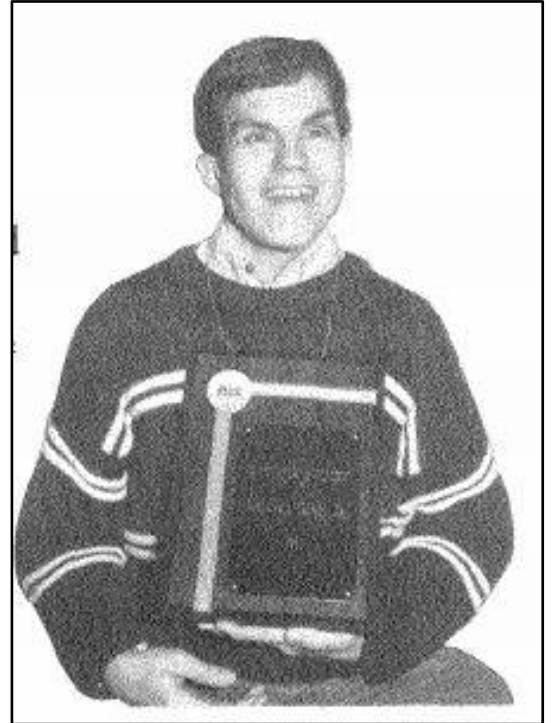


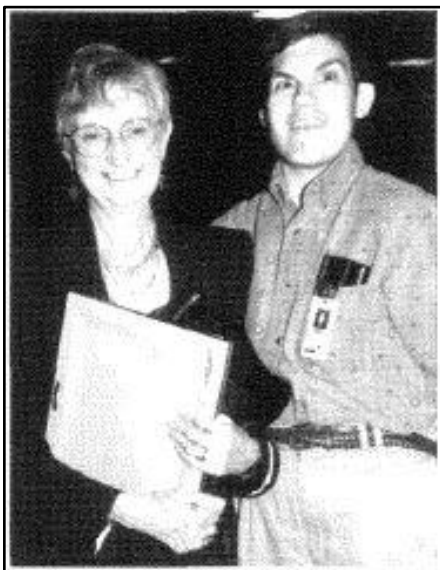
William Edward Ohge, Jr.

Career U.S. Census Bureau Employee and Disability Activist

The U.S. Census Bureau is proud of its history of employing people with handicaps and disabilities. Prior to the establishment of a permanent Census Bureau in 1902, many disabled war veterans received appointments as assistant marshals, census superintendents, supervisors, and enumerators. As the census became more complex in the late 19th century, a larger office force became necessary to compute and compile census reports. This led to more openings for people with disabilities that did not inhibit office work. Eventually, the Census Bureau fell under several mandates, such as the 1947 Executive Order 9644, which facilitated the hiring of disabled veterans, well before the national implementation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.



Counterparts, December 1992/January 1993.



Bill with friend Lorraine Sheehan, 1996.
Counterparts, January/February 1996.

William Edward Ohge, Jr., known to his many friends as Bill, was born on June 12, 1958, in Washington, DC, with mild developmental disabilities. Bill's mother, Mabel, cared for Bill and his two sisters while his father, William Sr., worked at the IBM Card Plant in Washington, DC. The DC IBM Card Plant, located on New York Avenue, had its origins in the Census Bureau as one of the founders of IBM, Herman Hollerith, invented punch cards and their associated machines for the 1890 Census. Hollerith's company, the Tabulating Machine Company, merged with several other companies in 1911, and in 1924, that new company became known as International Business Machines (IBM).

In 1978, Bill began working for the Census Bureau in a career that would last over 30 years. Bill first worked for Administrative and Customer Services Division in the Publications Service Branch as a mail messenger, where he ensured timely service in the days before wide-spread electronic communications. After 16 years, Bill transferred to the Forms and Mail Management Branch, where he worked as a mail clerk and used his communication skills and friendly attitude to help facilitate the flow of information at the Census Bureau. After 2 years as a mail clerk, Bill, following office trends towards personal computing and his own interest in the machines, transitioned to the Space Management Branch in 1996.

"It's important to show ... (legislators) that we can make decisions and do things for ourselves and we would like to have things done," said Bill Oghe, a disabilities services user and a self-advocate with People on the Go of Maryland since 1992.

The Star Democrat (Easton, MD), March 10, 2010.

Throughout his Census Bureau career, and most of his life, Bill consistently advocated for those with disabilities. In 1988, he became active with his local chapter of the Association of Retarded Citizens—today simply known as the Arc—which is one of the largest community-based groups comprised of and supporting people with mental and intellectual challenges. Bill held several positions within the Arc, including as a board member at both the local and state level, as vice president of his local chapter—and on almost every committee at the local level including finance, fundraising, membership, and residential quality assurance support.



Bill at a rally and vigil in 1996.
Courier Journal (Louisville, KY), November 15, 1996.

Bill also worked extensively with People on the Go, an Arc-affiliated group. Bill first joined the group in 1992, when he served as treasurer of the local chapter, and he went on to serve in many roles at the local level, including vice president and president, as well as chairman at the state level with People on the Go. The organization differentiates itself from others by promoting self-advocacy of the mentally and intellectually challenged, and works towards establishing independence and self-care within those groups.



Bill at work at the Census Bureau, 1993.
Counterparts, October 1993.

Bill's voluminous work took a variety of forms. He visited and encouraged people with developmental disabilities, participated in fundraising activities, and served on local and state boards committed to improving the lives of the disabled. Bill consistently lent his voice to the movement. His activities included testifying at hearings at the Maryland state capitol, speaking with reporters, serving on several committees, and attending rallies and demonstrations.

In addition to providing an example of how valuable people with disabilities could be in the workplace, Bill also worked to improve life for those with disabilities at the Census Bureau. In 2006, when the Census Bureau headquarters moved into a new building in Suitland, Maryland, Bill saw many overlooked issues for people with disabilities such as heavy office doors, elevator doors that closed too quickly, and card readers placed too high for people in wheelchairs. Thanks in part to Bill, the Census Bureau addressed these shortcomings, and today, continues to improve access and ease of use for people with disabilities as problems are identified.

For his many contributions to the Arc, People on the Go, and people with disabilities, Bill received several awards. In both 1992 and 2009, the Arc recognized Bill with the Outstanding Citizenship Award, and today, the award bears his name. In addition to his advocacy, Bill also served with his church as an altar boy, usher, and greeter. Bill's final position at the Census Bureau was as a copy center assistant and technician. Bill passed away on July 24, 2012. The Census Bureau is thankful for Bill's contributions, and of the contributions of all the members of our diverse workforce throughout the years.



Bill Ohge receives the Outstanding Citizen Award from Cristine Marchand (left), Arc of Maryland executive director, and Martin Lampe, Arc of Prince George's County president.
Counterparts, January 2009.