



JONI EARECKSON TADA
Founder, Chief Executive Officer

Joni Eareckson Tada, the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Joni and Friends International Disability Center, is an international advocate for people with disabilities.

A diving accident in 1967 left Joni Eareckson, then 17, a quadriplegic in a wheelchair, unable to use her hands. After two years of rehabilitation, she emerged with new skills and a fresh determination to help others in similar situations.

During her rehabilitation, Joni spent long months learning how to paint with a brush between her teeth. Her high-detail fine art paintings and prints are highly sought-after.

Her best-selling autobiography "Joni" and the feature film of the same name have been translated into many languages, introducing her to people around the world. She also has visited more than 45 countries.

Joni and Friends International Disability Center was founded in 1979 as she and her friends responded to the many questions and needs pouring in from families affected by disability who had read Joni's books or had seen the movie of her life.

She has served on the National Council on Disability and the Disability Advisory Committee to the U.S. State Department.

She is Senior Associate for Disability Concerns for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and serves in an advisory capacity to the American Leprosy Mission, the National Institute on Learning Disabilities, Christian Blind Mission International, as well as on the Board of Reference for the Christian Writers Guild and the Christian Medical and Dental Society.

After being the first woman honored by the National Association of Evangelicals as its "Layperson of the Year" in 1986, Joni was named "Churchwoman of the Year" in 1993 by the Religious Heritage Foundation.

She has received numerous other awards and honors, including the American Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award; The Courage Award from the Courage Rehabilitation Center; The Award of Excellence from the Patricia Neal Rehabilitation

Center; The Victory Award from the National Rehabilitation Hospital; and The Golden Word Award from the International Bible Society.

Joni has been awarded several honorary degrees, including: Bachelor of Letters from Western Maryland College; Doctor of Humanities from Gordon College; Doctor of Humane Letters from Columbia International University, the first bestowed in its 75-year history; Doctor of Divinity from Westminster Theological Seminary; Doctor of Divinity from Lancaster Bible College; a Doctor of Humanitarian Services from California Baptist University; and in 2009, a Doctor of Humane Letters by Indiana Wesleyan University. She was also inducted into Indiana Wesleyan University's "Society of World Changers."

Joni has written 46 books and numerous magazine articles. She was inducted into the Christian Booksellers' Association's Hall of Honor in 1995 and received the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003 from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

Joni's works cover topics ranging from disability outreach to reaching out to God and include: "A Christmas Longing," depicting her best-loved Christmas paintings, and "Life and Death Dilemma," addressing the tough issues of physician-assisted suicide.

The mystery of suffering is systematically examined in "When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty," a book written with Steve Estes in 1997 which won the Gold Medallion Award. In 2003, Joni wrote her memoirs, "The God I Love," chronicling a lifetime walking with Jesus. Her latest book, "A Place of Healing," recounts her recent journey through physical pain and unanswered prayer, coming to terms with the fact that God, who could definitely heal her, once again chose not to do so.

In 2004, she received a Gold Medallion for co-authoring "Hymns for a Kid's Heart, Volume 1." She has written several children's books, including "Tell Me The Promises," which received a Gold Medallion and a Silver Medal in the 1997 C.S. Lewis Awards, and "Tell Me The Truth," which received a Gold Medallion in 1998.

Beginning in 1982, she hosted "Joni and Friends," a daily five-minute radio program of information and inspiration. Now four minutes in length, the program airs on more than 1,000 outlets and reaches 1 million listeners a week. A new one-minute inspirational program, "Diamonds in the Dust," also airs daily on more than 800 stations nationwide.

The 30-minute television version of "Joni and Friends" looks at people who inspire Joni by enduring the most difficult trials while continuing to trust in God.

In 2002, Joni received the William Ward Ayer Award for excellence from the National Religious Broadcasters' Association.

She has been interviewed or featured on TV shows such as "Larry King Live" and "ABC World News Tonight," in print outlets such as Christianity Today, the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times and on radio shows such as "Focus on the Family."

Joni and her husband, Ken Tada, have been married since 1982.