



JONI EARECKSON TADA
Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Joni and Friends

A diving accident in 1967 left 17-year-old Joni Eareckson a quadriplegic in a wheelchair, unable to use her hands. After two years of rehabilitation, Joni re-entered the community with new skills and a fresh determination to help others in similar situations. Joni wrote of her experiences in her international bestselling biography, *Joni*. Her name is now recognized in countries around the world following the distribution in many languages of her biography and the full-length feature film JONI. She has personally visited more than 45 countries.

Having been catapulted onto a national stage, Joni founded Joni and Friends (JAF) in 1979 to accelerate Christian ministry in the disability community throughout the world. In 2007 a permanent headquarters for the ministry was established with the Joni and Friends International Disability Center (IDC). The IDC serves as the administrative center for ministry programs which are affecting the lives of thousands of families affected by disability around the globe. The International Disability Center has five flagship programs:

- With over a million listeners a week, "*Joni and Friends*," a daily five minute radio program, is heard over 1000 broadcast outlets. In 2002 it received the "Radio Program of the Year" award from National Religious Broadcasters. The "Joni and Friends Television Series" airs weekly on television networks around the world.
- Joni and Friends serves hundreds of special needs families through over 20 *Family Retreats* across the nation. In 2009, Joni and Friends will hold five international *Family Retreats*.
- Through *Wheels for the World*, over 52,000 wheelchairs have been collected nationwide, refurbished by inmates in 20 correctional facilities, and then shipped and donated to 102 developing nations where, whenever possible, physical therapists fit each chair to a needy disabled child or adult.
- Through Joni and Friends' *Field Services*, staff and volunteers provide church training along with educational and inspirational resources to promote ministry to those affected by disability and those who can help.
- The Christian Institute on Disability (CID) serves as the educational and training center for Joni and Friends – through curriculum development, internships, and its policy center, the CID is helping to establish a firm Biblical worldview on disability-related issues around the world.

Joni's work has mainly focused on influencing the church on disability-related issues. However, her impact is felt beyond the Christian community. Mrs. Tada's role as a disability advocate led to a presidential appointment to the National Council on Disability for three and a half years, during which time the Americans with Disabilities Act became law. In 2005, Joni Eareckson Tada was appointed to the Disability Advisory Committee of the U.S. State Department to advise Dr. Condoleezza Rice on policy and programs which affect disabled persons in the State Department and around the world.

Mrs. Tada is a highly sought-after conference speaker both in the U.S. and overseas. She has written numerous articles which have been published in *Christianity Today*, *Today's Christian Woman*, *The War Cry* (Salvation Army), and newspapers around the world. Joni has appeared on *Larry King Live*, sharing not only her Christian testimony, but a biblical perspective on right-to-life issues which affect our nation's disabled population.

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

Mrs. Tada 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, Love and Action, and Christian Blind Mission International, as well as on the Board of Reference for the Christian Writers Guild, New Europe Communications and the Christian Medical and Dental Society. Joni Eareckson Tada has received 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; The Golden Word Award from the International Bible Society. She is inducted into the Christian Booksellers' Association's *Hall of Honor*. In 2002, Joni received the *William Ward Ayer Award* for excellence from the National Religious Broadcasters' Association. In 2003 she was given a *ECPA Gold Medallion Award* for her book *When God Weeps*. In 2004 she was awarded the *Gold Medallion Award* for co-authoring *Hymns for a Kid's Heart, Volume 1*. Mrs. Tada has also written several children's books, including *Tell Me The Promises*, which received an *ECPA Gold Medallion Award* and a Silver Medal in the 1997 *C.S. Lewis Awards*, and *Tell Me The Truth* which received the *EPCA Gold Medallion Award* in 1998.

Joni was given the *Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award* in 2003 by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. She was also named "Churchwoman of the Year" in 1993 by the Religious Heritage Foundation and was the first woman to be honored by the National Association of Evangelicals as their "Layperson of the Year." She also holds:

- An honorary Bachelor of Letters from Western Maryland College.
- An honorary Doctor of Humanities from Gordon College.
- An honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Columbia International University, the first bestowed in its 75-year history.
- An honorary Doctor of Divinity from Westminster Theological Seminary.
- An honorary Doctor of Divinity from Lancaster Bible College.
- An honorary Doctor of Humanitarian Services from California Baptist University.

Joni Eareckson Tada is the author of more than 35 books. Her best-selling and award-winning 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*, coauthored by Steve Estes. In 2003 Joni authored her memoirs, *The God I Love*, chronicling a lifetime walking with Jesus. Joni's latest book, ***A Lifetime of Wisdom: Embracing the Way God Heals You*** (Zondervan, March 2009), recounts the hard-won gems of wisdom she has garnered during more than four decades of life in a wheelchair.

Joni and her husband Ken Tada have been married since 1982. Mr. Tada retired from 32 years of teaching in 2004 and ministers alongside Joni as they travel across the country and around the world. Ken Tada, along with Joni, are permanent members of the International Board of Directors of Joni and Friends. In 2001, Mr. Tada received Family Life Ministries' *Robertson McQuilken Award* honoring "The Courageous Love of a Marriage Covenant Keeper."

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