

## That's what FRIENDS is for: Embracing employees with disabilities



**August 5, 2022**

More than thirty years ago, Eric Blumenfeld, who was born deaf, was on a quest for a working environment that could set him up for success. His previous employer had declined his request to hire an interpreter to help him perform better as an employee with a disability. Then Eric landed a job as a service assurance technician for [CenturyLink](#), a trusted brand of [Lumen Technologies](#). Eric has been with the company ever since!

“From day one, my Lumen management team and I worked together to develop the best solution for communicating with my co-workers and customers,” Eric says. “Lumen provided me with the tools I needed to break down the communication barrier, from a teletypewriter (TTY) and access to the relay service to a video phone with a live American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. Lumen also provides ASL interpreters for training sessions to make sure I get the full benefit of the training.”

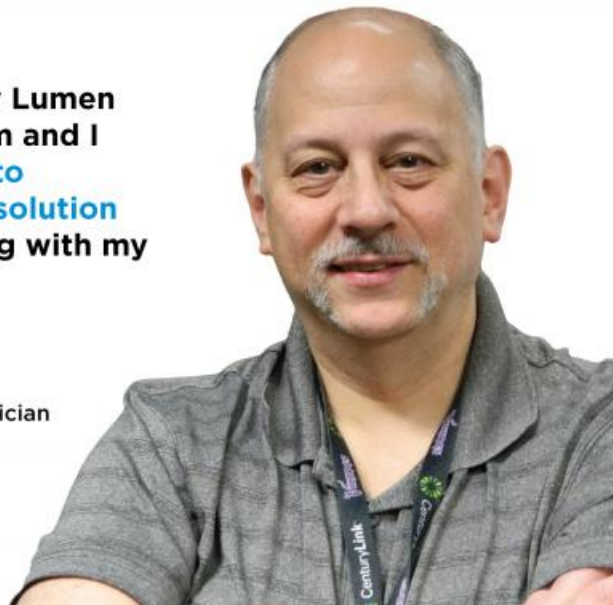
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**Eric Blumenfeld**  
Service Assurance Technician

**LUMEN**



Eric is one of more than 700 Lumen employees who are members of the Friends who Respect and Inspire Everyone in Need of Disability Support (FRIENDS) employee resource group. The mission of FRIENDS is to bring awareness to the different forms of disabilities, provide education and resources, and lend a helping hand to others who need a friend.

Lumen Chief Diversity Officer India Sylvester says, “At Lumen, we are committed to equity and inclusion. The grassroots efforts of our eleven employee resource groups are helping create an inclusive work culture where everyone can be their authentic selves. Our ERGs play a critical role by supporting employee career development and engagement. And equally important, these groups help connect us with our increasingly diverse customer base.”

In July, the FRIENDS ERG celebrated Disability Pride Month and the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act by widening the scope of its mission. FRIENDS ERG Global Chair Deb Andersson explains, “We’re not only honoring the uniqueness and diversity of our employees with disabilities but trying to support all of our employees through other life-changing events. One example of this is a recent webinar we hosted for our Lumen employees on mental health and collective grief. This was an attempt to make sense of the unprecedented times we live in, from the outbreak of COVID and its aftermath, to recent community shootings and the ongoing Ukraine war.”

Lumen’s active support of employees with disabilities has earned numerous industry accolades, from being recognized by Disability: IN for the third year in a row as one of the [\*\*2022 Best Employers for People Working with Disabilities\*\*](#), with a 100 score on the [\*\*Disability Equality Index\*\*](#) to being featured on [\*\*Forbes’ 2022 Best Employer for Diversity award\*\*](#) and ranking #12 in the Top 50 Employer for Persons with Disabilities list worldwide by [\*\*Careers & the disABLED\*\*](#).

Learn more about Lumen’s commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging [\*\*here\*\*](#).

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