January 2021

mélange

Accessibility for All

Magazine

EASTERSEALS

UNITED STATES

Making a profound difference in the lives of people with disabilities, every day.

IZZY WHEELS

IRELAND

DECORATIVE WHEELCHAIR COVERS

EQUALWEB

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

READ ABOUT ANGELA F. WILLIAMS, EASTERSEALS' PRESIDENT & CEO, WHOSE LIFE HAS BEEN ONE OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO OTHERS.

ISSN 2563-5697

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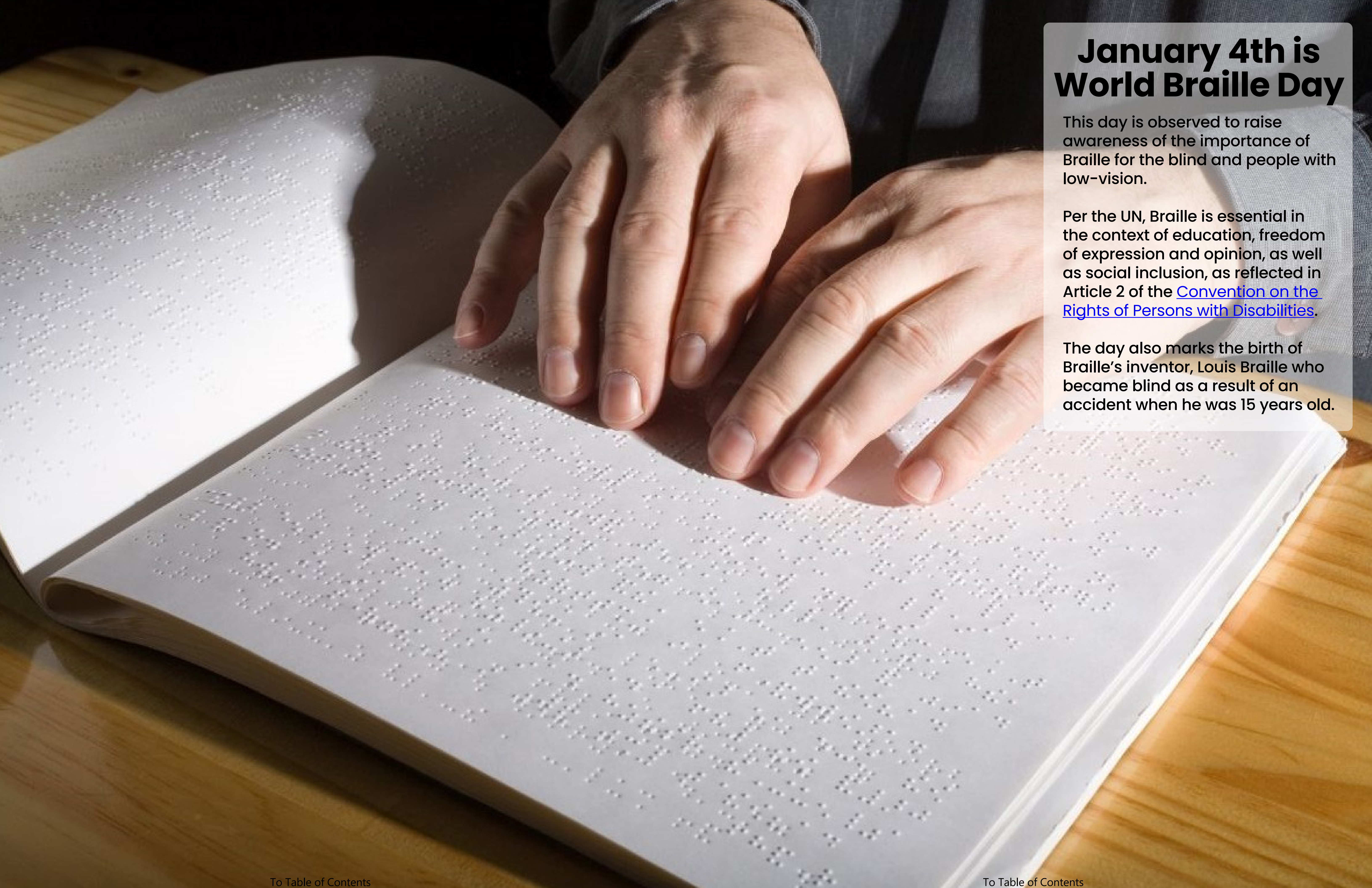
January 4th is World Braille Day

This day is observed to raise awareness of the importance of Braille for the blind and people with low-vision.

Per the UN, Braille is essential in the context of education, freedom of expression and opinion, as well as social inclusion, as reflected in Article 2 of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

The day also marks the birth of Braille's inventor, Louis Braille who became blind as a result of an accident when he was 15 years old.



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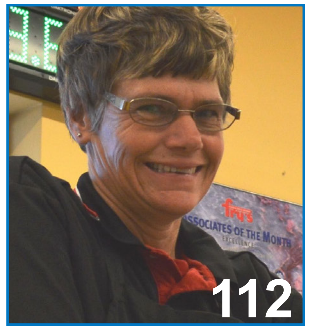

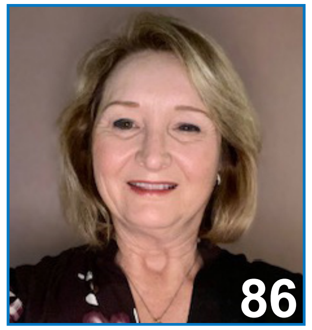

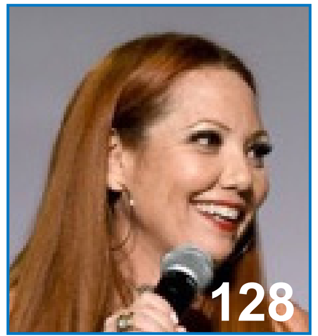


Fred Maahs, Jr.

Editor's Note

Greetings and Happy New Year!

Welcome to our first issue of Melange Accessibility for All magazine for 2021!

This past year has impacted all of us in one way or another. For some, it meant being inflicted with the Coronavirus, for others it may have been the loss of a loved one due to the virus, or perhaps losing a job. We understand that it's been difficult. It certainly has impacted the way we tell and share stories, especially with the travel and tourism industry essentially being closed for business. As we look ahead to the New Year, we are filled with optimism. A vaccine will help rid our cities of the Coronavirus. Businesses will bounce back after a long struggle. Travel will see a huge spike as people recover from imposed quarantines. And, the employment of people with disabilities will be looked at much differently because just about every community has shown it is possible to work from home, for those who require it, and still maintain a high level of productivity and accountability. We are hopeful that unemployment rates for people with disabilities drop sharply and this all-too-often overlooked viable workforce is finally seen as a force to be reckoned with!

We hope that you will continue to enjoy Accessibility for All magazine. Every three months, we'll bring you stories of people who are making a difference in the world, and some may even have a disability. We'll have articles about organizations and programs that serve people with disabilities and how you can get involved. And, yes, we'll also feature destinations from all over the world that are accessible, or at least claim to be, and give you real-life feedback from the travelers to those places.

We want to make it all real, all relevant, and we certainly appreciate your thoughts. If you have an idea for an article, or you want to invite us to visit your city, country, resort, or place of interest so that we can write about it and share it with our audience, please let us know at fmaahs@readmelange.com.

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We try to present information that is current and accurate, but errors can occur. If you've found an error in the magazine, please **email:** Fred Maahs, Jr.
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Kelly MacDonald

of Kelly and Company

Kelly MacDonald loves to laugh. He loves sports and is a good listener. He was born with the genetic disease, Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) and since childhood, was told his vision would not improve. He learned Braille and gets around with a cane.

Kelly's effervescent persona can be experienced on Canada's Accessible Media, Inc. With his co-host, Ramya Amuthan, he thrills his audience for two hours on weekdays, from 2:00 pm EST with bouts of humour, educational episodes, health, lifestyle and entertainment pieces during his daily audio show, Kelly and Company broadcasted on AMI-audio.

MÉLANGE: Tell us a bit about yourself
KELLY: I'm Kelly MacDonald, host of Kelly and Company. I have been a producer for two decades at Accessible Media Inc. I went into radio because I wanted to be the kind of person that could get a job at a mainstream radio station, proving that disabled people *do* get those kinds of jobs.

MÉLANGE: What is the show "Blind Sighted" that you are/were a part of?
KELLY: It's a TV show that followed me going to amazing places and meeting amazing people. One week I'll be drinking Ice Wine in Niagara and the next week I'll be at the Canadian International Auto Show looking at super cars. I'm willing to try most things and it feels like it is my duty to take as many opportunities as I can in life and to try to do what people watching would say *geez, I'd like to do that*. I've had the ability to have those opportunities and I hold that very dear, because I know so many people in my world aren't able to do that, whether they can see you or not. Blind Sighted went on for a fun-filled 3 Seasons. A lot of the things I did were very challenging. For a sighted person, it would be fine but for a blind person it would be hard. But I didn't think that. Instead, I thought oh my goodness, I need to spend more time in the gymnasium, or I need to figure certain things out more, rather than thinking being blind is the issue.

That is what we wanted to make people who could see, understand, and what I felt was, I didn't have to be good at everything. Now, there are times I certainly don't want to embarrass myself constantly on TV or make it a farce either, because there are blind people who certainly can navigate this, or can climb that and can do all sorts of great, amazing things that they are really good at that they work hard to do, extreme sports kinds of things, or mountain climbing, for instance. There are blind people surfing out there. There are so many different things. So, Blind Sighted was Kelly's experiences.

MÉLANGE: What is Kelly and Company?
KELLY: Kelly and Company on AMI Audio is awesome. The goal is to discuss topics directly affecting the blind community but also arts, entertainment and lifestyle, in a conversational, relaxed atmosphere. We appreciate that people are taking two hours out of their day to listen to us, so we try to inject some entertainment into their lives where we can, and as of October 31st, 2020, we celebrated four years on the air which is humbling.

Kelly and Company is a conversation in which you're included. We sit back and try to try to make it as easy going as possible. We love to laugh on the show and we want to educate. But do we expect you to sit there for the full two hours? Not necessarily. But we hope you'll come back 15 minutes later and see what else we're talking about.

MÉLANGE: What are your thoughts on social media?
KELLY: We're all working on being more aware. I love what social media does, because I think people get to learn about things they may not have otherwise heard about.

You have a chance to see more stuff presented, more people are talking to you from marginalized communities, and I like the interest shown in our Canadian culture, especially in the Aboriginal community. People have started to hear more, read more and see more of their beautiful art that's out there and I find the same is happening with the disability community. The well-spoken, very well-educated ones that get out there and aren't the hard hammer, complaining, but instead, they're using that softer hammer of wonderful word choice, articulation and writing great articles so now I don't feel that someone is smashing down doors to say, *don't treat us like that*.

MÉLANGE: What assistive technology do you use?
KELLY: I use a screen reader called Jaws, and I have a cane to help me get around. I use my iPhone for pretty much everything. I'm not a whiz, but I frequently use Zoom and social media. I enjoy listening to other radio stations, podcasts and audiobooks also.

MÉLANGE: Do you see yourself as an inspiration to others?
KELLY: I would like to say that I'm here to let blind people know that I'm speaking for them. When I think about my career and what I've done for the inclusivity of blind people on TV it fills me with pride.

MÉLANGE: You have a theatre production company, isn't that right?
KELLY: Yes. *Out of Sight Productions*. I have written plays, rented marvelous theatre spaces for both sighted and low/no sighted people to get involved with performances – and I was surprised every time with how well the performances turned out.

MÉLANGE: What was the inclusive message of this theatre company?
KELLY: Our message or goal was to run a theater troupe that gave priority to low vision and blind people. We wanted to make sure we were inclusive all around, and that we didn't just put blind people on stage for them to play blind characters. Not only did we have to convince sighted people that blind people can do theater, we also had to convince blind people that, sure, you could do it!

We worked endlessly to find a balance between being inclusive, respecting people's comfort zones and supporting those who wanted to develop their confidence. And I feel we did just that.

Safety at home for someone with
Vision Loss

Things around the house that we take for granted can be very dangerous to someone with vision loss and especially to someone who has recently lost their sight.

Here are a few things to bear in mind:

Arrange furniture in the home to make it easier for them to move around safely

Remove area rugs to prevent tripping and injury

Do not leave things lying around on the floor and stairs

Keep items that are used often by everyone in a safe, agreed-upon spot and remember to return it to that very spot after use

Do not leave cupboard doors open

When pouring them a beverage in a glass or mug, do not fill it to the brim

Be descriptive in conversations with them

If you are having a conversation and are about to leave the room, let them know that. Do not walk away.They may not know that you have left.

Install grab-bars in the shower and railing on the stairs

Doors inside the home should be kept either shut or fully open

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Peter Slatin

His life and work.

Peter is the Founder and President of Slatin Group LLC in the United States, which provides education and training to the hospitality and tourism industry on service to consumers with disabilities.

Peter grew up in Buffalo, NY, attended college at SUNY New Paltz and in his senior year moved to New York City for an independent study arts program through Empire State College, graduating in 1976 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting. He obtained a similar Masters degree from Hunter College in 1980.

He had a series of terrible part-time jobs after grad school but found a path as a proofreader at a printing house in Brooklyn. As a blind person, he could not drive a cab or wait tables and needed another way to earn a living while painting. He was still able to see enough to read, though, and loved to write. He found a job proofreading at Time magazine and then Forbes, which is where he wrote and published his first article after ten years as a proofreader and copy editor.

What is the nature of your disability?

I have two eye diseases that combine to make my vision unusable most of the time. Although I was born legally blind with retinitis pigmentosa (RP), I did not know that until I was 18, even though my childhood eye doctor diagnosed me; he never informed me or my parents. RP destroys night vision and peripheral vision and can completely take away all sight. As a result of not understanding what was happening to me as my sight diminished during my childhood and teens, I could not explain my poor performance at sports, my clumsiness or slow reading speed. Once I learned that there was an organic cause for this, though, I began working to adjust my thinking so I wouldn't blame myself for these lower-than-average behaviors.

I was told there was neither a cure for my condition or a way to predict how much sight I would lose. The arrival of a second condition in my early 40s, macular degeneration, which destroys central vision, made the very small field of vision I had left, unusable. I now see only light and shadow. It turned out that my older brother had RP as well and he adjusted more quickly than I did to blindness – he had more sight than me well into his early 30s but then lost it all much more quickly and was blind by his ealy 40s. I first considered myself to be blind rather than low vision when I reached 48 and could no longer read books to my then 10-year-old daughter.

When did you become interested in helping people with disabilities?

The summer I turned 20, years after I learned I had RP, I worked at an agency for the blind in Buffalo and met a range of blind people. Some were clients there and were very talented and capable; others were barely able to speak. Some worked there and helped other blind people, and one woman in particular, who also had RP, impressed me because she was so kind and patient with everyone.

I did not choose to go into social service. In 1997, I was invited on a trip that changed my life: I went cross-country skiing in Wisconsin for one week with a group of 200 people, half of whom were blind or low vision. We were paired with sighted guides who taught us how to ski or guided those of us who already knew how. I didn't know and it was hard and painful for me to learn, but I loved meeting so many other blind people - and about a dozen wheelchair users - who were brave, confident, smart, accomplished – or just folks. I saw I didn't have to be ashamed of being blind and could continue to grow as a blind person and also just as a person.

Because my guide was patient and nonjudgmental despite my poor sking form and knowledge, and helped me to become much better in just one week, I saw that accepting help was really important and necessary; I also saw the pride she and other guides felt in giving help without expectation of reward other than enjoying our company and the pleasure of doing something they loved, skiing. I later became a board member of this organization and have missed only 5 of the annual trips since 1997. Even then, I continued my work as a journalist, which I became in 1988 when I published my first article.

I saw a need over the years as I traveled for non-disabled people to learn how not to fear disabled people, and how to help them without being condescending, insulting or afraid. They needed to learn acceptance of us just as we needed to learn acceptance of our own limitations but also that these are only physical limitations and not social limitations. Poor behavior by others can limit our ability to participate in society. In 2012 I had to leave my job as an editorial director at a research firm. I decided right then to create the kind of training program that would address this lack of understanding and awareness and thus help people with disabilities participate fully in society.

Tell me more about your work and the program you developed to market to hotels. Why hotels?

First, because I had traveled extensively and that is where I experienced much of this uncomfortable and demeaning behavior. Second, in my work as a reporter, I had come to know some hotel owners. A couple of these men were open to the idea of providing this training to their employees. I did that and then used those contacts and word of mouth to find other hotel owners to hire me. This has not been easy because the expense of paying for this training will not immediately give the hotel owners a rise in revenue and I have to convince them of the long-term value of the training. I set this up as a business rather than a non-profit charity because hotels and other businesses need to see people with disabilities as consumers like everybody else, not as charity cases. This may not have been the soundest business decision for me but I feel it was the right one. I have trained thousands of hotel employees across the United States, both in person and through distance learning courses I developed with a business partner who is an expert in instructional learning. During the pandemic, as hotels have closed, I have begun looking to conduct my training in corporate settings so that companies can both feel more comfortable hiring people with disabilities and also providing customer service.

> **"Advocate for yourself at every step of the way. NO one else will do it for you, even those who love you the most. They can certainly help you, but you must take the lead."** Peter Slatin

You've managed to take your disability and show others that you can still live your life, go to college, and have a successful career. What advice would you give a young person who is blind and may not realize the future can have a lot to hold for them.

The most practical advice I have may surprise you: it is to **learn Braille.** I learned it when I turned 60 and I love it, but I am a very slow reader. However, the most successful younger blind people I know are those who are

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What can our government do to help people with disabilities have more access to technology so they can live more independently?

There are so many things. The first is to actually put more enforcement and education behind the Americans with Disabilites Act so that companies, education systems, banks, etc. all understand how valuable people with disabilities are and that anyone can find themselves in a situation they might not have imagined an instant earlier. A law without sufficient enforcement is, well, just insufficient. Government needs to provide more incentives for hiring people with disabilities and more resources for educating us. There is no excuse for someone being denied an education today for any reason. Without that, employment is impossible. These incentives should be in place for purchasing assistive technologies and retrofitting inaccessible spaces, whether for wheelchair use or for assistive hearing infrastructure. For the blind, as I said above, I firmly believe that Braille is key too. This includes electronic Braille, which is a huge advancement. This is how blind people can learn and work on par with or more proficiently than their sighted peers. Text to speech technologies are wonderful, but they are not an adequate replacement for learning to read on your own. That's the best thing we can all do for ourselves, and Government must recognize, encourage and support it wholeheartedly.

Share a bit more about your thoughts on disability

I love doing what I do and am always refining it. I am always surprised by how little people really know about disability – and then I will meet someone with a profound understanding of it because it is present in their family. Still, disability remains a mystery to many people and even for the disabled, there can be a huge learning curve because they have spent their lives in a culture that does not value – and that even devalues – their disability.

Almost two years ago, I turned my practice as a writer into writing *about* disability for Forbes.com, and that has helped me to examine, explore and clarify my understanding of it. I now spend so much of my time with other blind and disabled people that it is sometimes surprising to find myself with only non-disabled people, such as a group of my wife's friends or my work colleagues from my 30s and 40s or friends from college.

I have had a hard time learning to be patient and fight with my own impulses to move more quickly than I should, both physically and in conversation or action. I do believe the world around me is more accepting and less fearful of disability than it was a decade ago because more disabled people are speaking out and being present. Younger generations born here after the passage of the Americans with Disabilites Act in 1990 also see disability differently, just as they see race and gender differently. This is a positive trend, but waiting for generational change just isn't enough.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love to read books on Bookshare, which uses an electronic computer voice rather than a recorded actor's voice or a professional person. Electronic voices are so impersonal that I feel that I am actually reading on my own, not hearing anyone interpret any words for me. I also like to practice Braille; walk with my guide dog; and keep in contact with friends all over the country and now even in Africa. I spend a lot of time writing as well. And I love to eat. I am also excited about the possibility of traveling again. The pandemic period is the only time in many, many years that I have spent more than a month at home without getting on an airplane. I am also on a few nonprofit boards of organizations that work with blind people, which lets me feel in touch with the day-to-day challenges that people with disabilities face all over.

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COVER STORY

Angela F. Williams

President and CEO
Easterseals USA

> **“Here’s what I learned about Easterseals, that is so important not only to me, but to the rest of our nation:**
>
> **It is driven by vision . . . . To create a world in which every one of us is 100% included and 100% empowered to reach our full potential.”**

Angela F. Williams is president and CEO of Easterseals in the United States of America. They are the nation’s leading nonprofit provider of life-changing services and powerful advocacy for people with disabilities of all ages, including veterans and seniors. She is the first Black woman to hold this post and was hired in 2018 as a change agent in anticipation of Easterseals’ 100th anniversary in 2020.

As Easterseals moves into its second century, Williams’ goals are to increase its growth, bolster its impact, expand its services, and advance disability equity in health care, education and employment for people with disabilities in society. This vision is being driven by Williams’ network-wide strategic plan to broaden inclusion, empowerment and access for the 1.5 million people Easterseals serves annually—and for the one in four Americans living with disability today. The plan includes strengthening Easterseals’ National Network of 68 affiliates to serve more individuals and families living with disability through expansion of services and heightened support from corporate, foundation and individual donors.

Additionally, Williams’ strategic plan includes a stronger focus on advocacy at the federal and state levels, designed to ensure that people with disabilities have greater access to health care, education and employment opportunities. As part of that effort, through work with public and private entities technology has been elevated as a priority since the virtual world is increasingly the most essential point of access to services and inclusion for people with disabilities.

… I grew up with an ethic of service.

~ Angela F. Williams

College: In college I was an advocate for equality and inclusivity

I was born in Anderson, South Carolina, the child of a Baptist Pastor, who later joined the United States Navy when I was 5 years old. My dad served as pastor of Royal Baptist Church in Anderson, South Carolina when he and my mother agreed that he would join the U.S. Navy as the 5th Black chaplain in the history of the United States Navy. That led to uprooting their young family and moving from South Carolina to Southern California. From there, our family moved 13 times.

I earned a bachelor’s degree in American government from the University of Virginia, a Juris Doctor from the University of Texas School of Law and a Master’s of Divinity cum laude from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University.

In college I worked to increase the number of Black students admitted to the University of Virginia and the hiring more Black professors. I took on this same advocacy role at the University of Texas School of Law. Throughout my life, I’ve had the opportunity to advocate for equal treatment. Certainly, equal treatment of people with disabilities is very much a civil rights issue.

In the United States Air Force: I had the opportunity to serve as an advisor to various military departments

Upon graduation from college, I was sworn in as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, however, the Air Force allowed me to attend law school. After I passed the Virginia bar exam and was sworn in as a lawyer, I came on active duty and was assigned to my first duty station at McConnell Air Force Base as an Assistant Staff Judge Advocate (JAG), the military job title for lawyer. As a JAG, I had the opportunity to serve as an advisor to various military departments, prosecute cases (court-martials) and counsel military members and their families (serving as their personal lawyer). I was honored to serve my country. It gave me an opportunity to be trained and excel in leadership. I appreciated the discipline, camaraderie and relationships that were fostered in the military.

In Washington: I served as a Military Social Aide at the White House under the Clinton Administration.

My last duty station was at the Air Force District of Washington, Bolling Air Force Base where I served as a

Circuit Trial Counsel. In this role, I had the responsibility of prosecuting high profile cases at Air Force bases in 13 states and the Republic of Panama. While in the position, I also served as a Military Social Aide at the White House under the Clinton Administration and provided support to the President and First Lady events held at the White House, from treaty signings, to receptions and state dinners for world leaders to holiday gatherings. After having served on active duty for over 6 years, I joined the U.S. Department of Justice as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Middle District of Florida. From there, I was assigned to a special task force within the Civil Rights Division of DOJ. I was then placed as special council on criminal law for Senator Edward M. Kennedy as part of the Senate Judiciary Committee staff, often interacting with Congressional and White House senior staff.

With all of these opportunities to serve came the responsibility of learning how to interact with leaders and to support them, bringing to bear all of my professional skills. I really had the opportunity to use my legal skills, knowledge of nonprofit law and governance and ministry background, to serve as the Interfaith Liaison for the Bush-Clinton Katrina fund, a fund created shortly after Hurricane Katrina to support the rebuilding of communities affected by the hurricane. This was an important and unique opportunity that was very public and impactful. Both former presidents were given a set number of staff to select to be hired. I was the only person whose name was put forth by both Presidents Bush and Clinton.

YWCA, USA: I worked with the 1000s of YMCAs across the country on key initiatives

At YMCA of the USA, I was the General Counsel and Chief Administration Officer. One of the unique aspects of this job was to oversee a $130M mixed-use construction project in the heart of Jerusalem, Israel. I traveled back and forth for 11 years – spending 3 months out of each year in Israel.

Domestically, I worked with the YMCAs across the country on key initiatives such as implementation of the YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program, articulating their community benefit and shaping the future of an organization focused on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. This job really prepared me for assuming the leadership role at Easterseals. All of the components of my job and the strategies used at the Y were useful for Easterseals and where it found itself as a 100-year-old legacy organization.

Advocacy: influences early in my life informed every step in my journey to live a life in service to others both personally and professionally

As the daughter of a Baptist pastor, I witnessed my parents' leadership in the Civil Rights movement and learned at an early age the value of service to affect change in the lives of people who are disenfranchised and in need.

An active member of the military for more than six years, I was an Air Force Judge Advocate General who served in Desert Storm. From there, I worked in the federal government as an Assistant United States Attorney and in the Department of Justice, leveraging these experiences to work on Capitol Hill in the United States Senate on the Senate Judiciary Committee staff.

People are often curious to learn that I am both an attorney and an ordained minister. I have always seen these as different aspects of my life's purpose – advocacy and bringing hope. As a child of the Civil Rights Movement, I saw religious leaders like my parents leading the charge for equal treatment under the law for Blacks. The notion of "separate but equal" was the law until passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Thirty-eight years later, we find ourselves still wrestling with systems that do not recognize all men and women as having been created equal; no matter what you measure, whether it is educational, financial, health and wellbeing, etc., there is still significant inequality.

The same is true for people with disabilities. It is time for a revival – for us to wake up from the slumber of status quo. I am an advocate for reviving the soul of a nation and its citizens such that righteousness and justice are equally accessed and applied to all!

"At Easterseals, our purpose is to change the way the world defines and views disability, by making profound, positive differences in people's lives every day."

Easterseals I was attracted to Easterseals' vision, mission and purpose – all of which aligned with who I am as a person, working to advocate for others, equity and inclusion.

Here's what I learned about Easterseals, that is so important not only to me, but to the rest of our nation:

It is driven by vision …. To create a world in which every one of us is 100% included and 100% empowered to reach our full potential.

It is driven by mission …To expand possibilities for people of all ages and abilities through innovative services and powerful advocacy so they can live, learn, work and play in their communities.

It is driven by purpose …To change the way the world defines and views disability by making profound, positive differences in people's lives every day.

Easterseals' Services

Serving children with disabilities was the focus of our founding more than 100 years ago. But when WWII veterans began returning home with injuries that our medical rehabilitation services could respond to, we expanded our services to help adults.

Easterseals children's services include early intervention, inclusive childcare, medical rehabilitation services and much more.

A boy and his therapist plays with a toy

At Easterseals, our purpose is to change the way the world defines and views disability, by making profound, positive differences in people's lives every day. We do that through our Network of 67 Affiliates in communities nationwide. 61 million people in America are living with a disability today, with more than 1 in 4 households in America having a family member that identifies with a disability.

A boy paints with his therapist

We help young children of all abilities achieve their goals in cognitive, social/emotional, communicative, adaptive and physical development. Our Child Development Center Network is the largest nonprofit provider of inclusive childcare in the United States.

Kids playing on mat being read to by teacher

We provide services for young adults transitioning into adulthood including employment training, coaching and placement; transportation; in-home care; and camping and recreation. Additionally, Easterseals' adult day services, in-home supports and services, community mobility options, wellness programs and support for family caregivers help people live as independently as possible for as long as possible.

Finally, Easterseals specializes in identifying the needs of veterans and military families, particularly with employment, job training, mental health services and other support like family respite.

It is through strong corporate partnerships and generous philanthropic donations that we are able to serve more than 1.5 million people annually across the country.

A girl walking between two therapists

Easterseals workforce development programs nationwide provide skills assessments, training, job coaching and placement for people with disabilities

A woman on a computer at work

A woman pushing a cart at work

A woman working on a computer with a smile

Easterseals assistive technology programs ensure that people with disabilities can live, learn, work, and play in their communities.

Innovation and technology: The pandemic brought a spotlight to the health care inequities in our society. People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by those disparities so our Network pivoted quickly – through innovation and technology – to use telehealth to be sure we were able to respond to the needs of our clients and their caregivers who depend on us for health care services.

This use of telehealth allowed us to continue to deliver many of our services – Applied Behavior Analysis for young children on the autism spectrum; early identification of developmental delays and delivery of early intervention services; physical, occupational and speech therapies; and behavioral health services.

Easterseals Adult Day Programs provide a safe alternative to nursing home care for seniors and people with disabilities who need care during the day so their loved ones can go to work or benefit from respite.

Smiling seniors

Clients continually remark on preferring to access services through telehealth – allowing them to participate in therapies with their children or aging parent in the home.

It is for these reasons that we are advocating at the federal and state levels to have telehealth waivers become permanent.

We believe telehealth represents a sustainable solution which will continue to help us reach more people and decrease health disparities among vulnerable populations like the people with disabilities we serve.

The next 100 years: As Easterseals moves into its second century, I am excited to grow our Network’s capacity to serve more individuals and families living with disability – heightening our impact and expanding our services – to advance disability equity in health care, education, and employment.

This vision is driven by our Network-wide strategic plan to broaden inclusion, empowerment, and access for the 1.5 million people Easterseals serves annually - and for the 1 in 4 Americans living with disability today. The plan strengthens our National Network of 67 Affiliates across the country so they can continue to respond to the increasing and evolving needs of people with disabilities so they can fully participate in their communities.

I am also excited to build awareness of and heighten engagement with Easterseals among individuals, corporations and foundations who want to support change and assure equity in the lives of people with disabilities, veterans, and seniors through high-quality services and advocacy at the federal and state levels.

Advocacy, as you might imagine, is another critical focus for Easterseals to ensure that people with disabilities have greater access to health care, education, and employment. Technology policy is central to our engagement with public and private entities given that the virtual world is increasingly the essential point of access to services and inclusion for people with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act: We just marked the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in July. It signed into law the equality of opportunity and full participation in society for disabled individuals and went a long way in furthering the rights of this marginalized group, including access to buildings, education, employment, and government services. The law changed disability rights immensely, as now there was legal backing for so many who faced discrimination.

But the ADA did not cover everything, and the law did not eradicate microaggressions, prejudice, and violence against people with disabilities. There is still discrimination in hiring and receiving accommodations at work, and only 19% of disabled people are employed, compared to 66% of nondisabled people. People with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence. Establishments often look for loopholes in the ADA to exclude disabled people from their business. And it wasn't until the Affordable Care Act that insurers could not deny a person with a disability from signing up for healthcare.

There is hope that these injustices will become a memory as disabled people advocate for their rights and come together to enact change, as they always do. It was because of this activism that we have the Americans with Disabilities Act to begin with, and why we have the Affordable Care Act. It's why we have the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, which broadened the definition of disability in the context of the law to make sure more folks were protected under it.

As leaders, both disabled and not, I passionately believe it is our duty to stand with those who stand for justice, and to lend our voice and platform for the betterment of all disabled people. We continue to see human rights groups come together in the fight for social justice – looking ahead and ensuring we pursue equality for people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations together.

People with disabilities represent 25% of the population: This large group must be included in society so that they can fully participate in their communities. Diversity, equity and inclusion of all people makes us a better society.

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Easterseals is a network of over 35,000 staff who, on a daily basis, serve people with disabilities, their caregivers and families in a very personal and impactful way. Easterseals is 101 years old and has been in existence this long because of the great care we provide to the youngest child to the oldest senior.

Angela's inspiration?

"My parents are my inspiration. They took a gigantic leap of faith to join the U.S. Navy at the height of the Civil Rights movement, move their family across the country from South Carolina to Southern California and launch us into a global trajectory – experiencing the world, different people and cultures."

Angela F. Williams,
President & CEO, Easterseals

You can support Easterseals' work by making a donation. Visit their national website at www.easterseals.com

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EQUALWEB
DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY


Amos Lavi, VP, Sales and Strategy

EqualWeb's Amos Lavi speaks with Mélange about

MAKING WEBSITES ACCESSIBLE

"We integrate our widget solutions into client websites to create a digitally inclusive channel for media consumption."

Why is it important for every website to be accessible?
In the physical world, it goes without saying that access for people with disabilities must be ensured, such as entrance ramps, accessible restrooms, and so on. The same goes for the digital world - morally, legally, and economically.

People with disabilities must be allowed the same access to information, and the ability to perform actions on stores and websites as anyone else can. The idea is to make it an Equal Web - and this is very easy to do with EqualWeb.

What services does EqualWeb offer?
EqualWeb has created a proprietary technology that automatically remediates issues of web accessibility, issues determined by the W3C - World Wide Web Consortium, and guided by the WCAG – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

What specific accessibility features does EqualWeb offer to its clients?
In our accessibility menu, we offer features such as *screen reader adjustment, keyboard navigation, numeric navigation, blink block, text reader, voice commands, color adjustments, customer color, font sizing, readable fonts, and others*. These features are presented once clicking on the widget's icon on every web page to provide the ultimate accessibility for any user's needs.

How does the "Installation" process work? Is it lengthy? The installation process is incredibly simple, for the automatic remediation (Auto plan) our clients can choose to download the widget's code directly from our site.The process of embedding the code won't

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take more than 10 minutes. For the fully managed manual remediation plans (managed plan) that combines custom manual adjustments to the site, we guarantee full remediation in less than 30 days.

Tell us why potential clients should chose EqualWeb

When a company chooses an accessibility provider, it is important to check for experience. Do not hesitate to ask for the company's portfolio of clients. You need to feel secure with the process and to have confidence with the company you choose.

A typical client onboarding process at EqualWeb begins with evaluating the customer's website before proceeding with any remediation widgets. EqualWeb then issues a report to highlight the changes required to make the website/mobile app accessible. After ensuring that the site meets WCAG standards, EqualWeb issues an accessibility certificate to be placed at the site.

A good case study example is EqualWeb's collaboration with Fiverr, the biggest online global trading platform. The client's website was very complex, with hundreds of components changing every month. To facilitate a more seamless operation, Fiverr installed the EqualWeb remediation widget. EqualWeb technicians analyzed the site behind the scenes using their smart AI engine from the ground up, introducing accessibility rules that fit the code, content, and style. This automated process was not only designed to fix common issues, but also to ensure the highest levels of compliance. In Fiverr's case, this automated process fixed 70% of the accessibility issues in less than a day. Following this, EqualWeb accessibility experts initiated the manual process of auditing and remedying all Fiverr components and templates - and in a number of weeks, the site was 99% accessible. Rather than hiring an expensive in-house professional, Fiverr chose to go with EqualWeb, spending only a fraction of the amount they'd have spent otherwise.

Where is Equalweb located?

We are located in the U.S and Israel, where digital accessibility laws have been in effect for over 6 years. We were one of the first companies to offer full WCAG compliance and we are now happy to say that the percentage of accessible websites in Israel is one of the highest in the world.

Our mission is to help and adjudicate website owners around the world about the importance of digital accessibility and to offer a very convenient and easy way to achieve web accessibility for their users.

What sets EqualWeb apart from the other companies offering a similar service?

There are a few accessibility tools today, some are even offered free, however most of them usually do more harm than good by interfering and blocking blind users text reader software due to poor development. In worst cases, they also collect users data for malicious purposes.

EqualWeb has been performing digital accessibility for over 6 years. Our technology allows users to select from 27 accessibility functions to create the optimal browsing experience, regardless of disability or personal limitation. No user's data is being collected in the process. We are trusted by banks, government sites and well- known brands worldwide. Without interfering with a website's architecture that's already running, or modifying its existing codes, we integrate our widget solutions into client websites to create a digitally inclusive channel for media consumption. Our team of IT experts, designers and programmers then meticulously scan customers' site domains to unearth issues that may hinder web accessibility. The company's machine learning algorithms identify and analyze inconsistencies in data patterns. By either using an automatic remediation process or applying its fully managed manual remediation plans, we then introduce accessibility rules that fit customers' code, content, and style.

With a single line of code at the back end, EqualWeb fulfills the entirety of their accessibility needs.

> **25% of the world's population have difficulties accessing and engaging websites. when the elderly is added to that percentage, it goes even higher.**
>
> **It's important to remember that no diversity group is excluded from disability and this is the only minority group anyone can join!**
>
> ~ Amos Lavi

Flying Fox Camps

for people with disabilities, Australia

Flying Fox Camps, Australia

by Howard Blas

Dean Cohen has fond memories of growing up in the Jewish youth movement of Melbourne, Australia. While Cohen and his peers participated in B'nai Akiva or Habonim youth groups and camps, he remembers that "people with disabilities were excluded. They didn't have the same social and camp experiences that we had!" In 2014, Cohen started Flying Fox, a camp program for people with disabilities, ages 8-16.

The Melbourne-based Flying Fox organization has grown tremendously in six short years. Flying Fox offers "fun, positive social experiences" to young adults with disabilities. The first camp hosted 19 participants. To date, Fly Fox has provided weekend camp experiences to 250 participants. While the program has "strong Jewish roots," it is open to participants of all backgrounds.

Cohen, who currently serves as CEO, notes that there are many camping organizations in Australia, and several which serve youth and young adults with disabilities including two Jewish organizations--Camp Sababa (a sister organization in Sydney) and Friendship Circle, affiliated with Chabad. "What makes Flying Fox unique is that it is mainly youth led," reports Cohen. He is proud of the responsible young people who undergo extensive training and volunteer regularly with Flying Fox. "These are young people who can offer complex support needs for our participants."

Ricki Sher, Head of Programs, feels the "youthful energy" they offer is "unique and contagious." The young, enthusiastic volunteers serve as peer mentors for the participants and therefore create an inclusive experience. Sher envisions a day when "500 or 1000 or 10,000 alumni go out to the world and use their experience to shape a more inclusive world!" Sher, who at 26 years old, playfully considers herself to be "the grandmother of the group," imagines a day when a former volunteer, positively impacted by the experience of working with Flying Fox, goes on to open a coffee shop—and makes it physically accessible, and employs people with disabilities."

Sher describes Flying Fox weekend camp programs as "fun, with laughs, smiles, lots of energy, music, roller blading, sports, an epic talent show, silent disco and a slip and slide—it is a bubble of fun and happiness!" Camp Wings and camp Sababa provide 4 to 5-night sleepaway camping programs to 30 participants—supported by 80 volunteers--in a rural setting outside of Melbourne. Junior and senior camps both take place during winter and summer school holidays.

The SHOTZ program offers weekend getaways for 6 or 7 campers and their buddies. They take place at Tova House, a home recently purchased by Flying Fox in Lancefield, an hour from Melbourne in Lancefield.

Flying Fox also offers SOCS (Siblings of Camp Sababa), a sibling support program for siblings of people with disabilities. They host camps and weekends where participants connect and share life experiences with other siblings of people with disabilities. A recent camp included 50 siblings of people with disabilities.

Additional programs accommodate participants with more complex support needs. They typically include 25 campers, 50 buddies, medical personnel, a psychologist and additional adult support.

Cohen and Sher are pleased with their program, participants, their families and their amazing volunteers. And they continue to dream. Sher smiles, "My dream is to go national around Australia, and to create Flying Fox hubs around the world!"

Nick Booth, CEO

True Patriot Love Foundation, Canada.

"My first 18 years were spent in a very small rural community about 10 miles from Cambridge, England. My father had served in WW2 in the British Army and afterwards was part of a Government scheme to allocate small parcels of land to Veterans to farm. It was tough to make a living but a great childhood in that my parents were at home all day and I got to grow up in the countryside. I was then the first person in my family to go to University when I went to Loughborough University of Technology and did a BA in Business Administration with Modern Language (German).

My first job was as Graduate Trainee at the UK's largest child protection organization – the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). It was interesting to come from business school and use this training in the voluntary sector but also unique because no UK NGO's had previously offered graduate programs and I was to my knowledge the first in the UK, potentially globally, to have this opportunity.

After spending 21 years working to raise funds and combat child abuse at the NSPCC (my first organization which is pretty rare these days!), I left the UK for the USA, where I served as Senior Vice President at Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. This was where I had the privilege to work with Fred and Comcast. BBBS is an amazing organization and a mission I love (in fact I recently established BBBS in the UK for the first time and am now Chairman!).

After three years in Philadelphia I was asked to return to the UK to be founding CEO of The Royal Foundation – the new philanthropic vehicle for The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry. This was an extraordinary opportunity as there had never before been a grant making foundation in the Royal Family so to be asked to set it up for the future King and his family was a personal privilege and honor. I oversaw Their Royal Highnesses' charitable activities for seven years including, for example, establishing the Invictus Games, a global conservation campaign called United for Wildlife, and the recent mental health campaign Heads Together which has had a very wide impact in tackling the stigma around mental illness. In 2019 I returned to North America to become CEO of True Patriot Love Foundation, Canada's main charitable organization supporting its military and veteran community."
~ Nick Booth

"I first met Nick Booth in April, 2008 when he was new the Vice President of Philanthropy for Big Brothers Big Sisters of America leading their national fundraising efforts. He moved from the UK to take on this role after serving more than ten years as the campaign director for The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), the largest social service organization in the UK. While there, he led its Full Stop Appeal, a campaign aimed at putting an end to child cruelty, raising over $540 million. The Full Stop campaign is the most successful in British history. Our meeting happened when I worked for Comcast Corporation, headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, serving as the Senior Director of Community Investment, leading the company's national strategic partnerships in their philanthropic efforts. Nick and I worked on creating what would become the nation's largest workplace mentoring program. His years of leadership, combined with a gentle and focused approach, helped to establish a national partnership between Comcast and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America which continues today.

Both of us have moved on to other opportunities since then, and Nick has even worked for Royalty! It was great to reconnect with an old friend for this interview. Thank you, Nick, for your exemplary career of making life better for others! "
~ Fred Maahs, Jr.

A Conversation with
Nick Booth, CEO
True Patriot Love Foundation, Canada.

by Fred Maahs, Jr.

Why did you have an interest to work with an organization that helps Veterans and their families?

I first became involved with the military community whilst at Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS) when we built 'Operation Big' with the US Department of Defense. This provided children of deployed military with a mentor during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. At The Royal Foundation, working with Prince William and Prince Harry (who both served in the British military) I saw first-hand the transformational effect that sport and other programs can have in supporting Veterans' recovery from injury and illness so am thrilled to have the opportunity now to do similar work in Canada – a country that has fought bravely alongside the USA and UK in many conflicts from WW1, through WW2 and Korea and more recently in Afghanistan.

What do you consider is the biggest challenge facing Veterans today?

(a). Apathy of the general population – as the Iraq and Afghan wars get further into the past the public is losing sight of the sacrifices made by those who served and their ongoing struggles with post military life.

(b). Wellbeing/mental health – many of the scars of combat, both physical and mental, will last years into the future and need long term support.

(c). Building resiliency of military and Veteran families – it is often said that 'families serve too' and the rates of mental health challenges in our military spouses and children are much higher than the general population. They face significant geographic and social isolation and often financial and health challenges as a result of their spouse's service in the military.

What does the Canadian government do to support returning Veterans? What could be better or different?

(a). The Canadians have established the Canadian Armed Forces Transition Group which is doing great work to close the gap between the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada (i.e. bridging serving military and Veterans). This is a model which could be replicated in other nations.

(b). There are 32 Military Family Resource Centres on bases and wings across the country, and

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these also now offer a Veteran Family Program in an effort to support eligible Veterans in their transition alongside those still in uniform.

(c). As Canada's national foundation for the military, True Patriot Love remains committed to working with our government partners to build and improve collaboration between the state, private and charitable sectors and to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of the military community within the general population.

What other organizations do you partner with to help make True Patriot Love successful?

True Patriot Love is exploring a number of national strategic collaborations including with the Canadian Armed Forces Transition Group, its dedicated Soldier On program for ill and injured Veterans and the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Service. Our community-based partnerships across the country allow us to understand and develop positive impact in all regions of the country. We are also proud of our partnership with the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research which does leading edge research with Universities across Canada. Recently we have begun to explore international collaborations with like-minded organizations in the USA, UK and other countries.

Share with me some examples of events that are conducted to help support Veterans and their families.

(a). True Patriot Love led the 2017 Invictus Games in Canada and our support of Team Canada continues for all future Invictus and Warrior games events.

(b). True Patriot Love expeditions – we take teams of ill and injured Veterans on life changing journeys to challenging locations to build resiliency, mentorship and awareness.

(c). We launched the Captain Nichola Goddard Leadership Series and For Her Country podcast highlighting the role of women in the military. (Named after Captain Goddard who was the first woman Canadian military member ever killed in combat, in Afghanistan).

(d). A new text-based support service, run by Toronto's Kids Help Phone, to support children in military families across Canada.

(e). We are exploring ways to leverage technology to support military families in rural environments and now, in social isolation as a result of COVDI-19. For example, we recently funded a program providing virtual mental health programming for families in Eastern Quebec.

Speaking to our readers, what is the most important way to support True Patriot Love Foundation?

There are many ways to support those who serve – raise awareness of the ongoing needs of our military, show your gratitude directly when you meet those in uniform, educate your children on the sacrifice made by those who serve on their behalf and, if your resources allow, to donate to help make these programs possible by visiting www.truepatriotlove.com

Approximately how many Veterans do you help each year?

On average, 3000 families. In 2019, we supported over 3200. And, I would assume many of these Veterans return from service with some type of disability. What are the most predominant disabilities these Veterans are faced with? Yes, unfortunately that is true. Injuries/disabilities can be invisible (traumatic brain injuries; plus operational stress injuries which encompass more than just PTSD and also includes depression and anxiety, for example) and visible physical injuries/disabilities from blasts, combat wounds or even accidents. It is important to continue our work to remove any stigma surrounding disability in the military community and this is also part of our mission; and I believe this can have very positive impacts on the wider disability movement such has been seen through the success of the Paralympics and the Invictus Games.

Veterans who return from service with some type of disability are especially in need of support services. Do you partner with other organizations to help Veterans with disabilities?

Yes, as a grant maker we identify and fund many community programs across the country. The strength of the military charitable sector in Canada is rooted in a deep understanding of the impact of injury due to service – the organizations we partner with are actively engaged in providing support to disabled and ill and injured Veterans – for example Soldier On, the Adaptive Sports Foundation in Quebec, Veterans Transition Network all provide support to those with physical or mental challenges (to name a few).

Where do you want to take True Patriot Love? Any new things on the horizon?

We continue to explore new ways of supporting those who have served and who may need help with the recovery and transition to civilian life. An interesting new area is the creative arts which shows a lot of promise in engaging and inspiring injured Veterans through acting, music, art, craft etc. We hope to pilot some new programs in the months ahead. We also think there is more to be done to mobilise support in the corporate sector for hiring Veterans and military spouses – not because they need charity but because they are talented and resilient members of our community with great skills that businesses require.

Is there anything else you would like people to know about your work on behalf of Veterans and their families?

As we go through the pandemic many military and veteran families face particular challenges through pre-existing physical and mental health conditions, poor access to healthcare and social or geographic isolation. This is a priority for us right now.

On a personal note, what do you like to do in your spare time? Any interesting hobbies or sports?

As I navigate my own mid-life crisis (!) I try and pretend I am still young and fit. In 2017 I ran the Boston and London Marathons in the same week (six days apart with a transatlantic flight in the middle) but did it with two injured Veterans from the USA and UK, Ivan Castro and Karl Hinett. It was one of the most inspiring experiences of my whole life, sharing the pain and pleasure of running two times 26 miles with Ivan who is blind from an explosion in Iraq, and Karl who experienced severe life threatening burns also in Iraq. Our goal was to show what is possible post injury as well as raise awareness and funds for mental health support for Veterans. We met some of those impacted by the Boston marathon bombing and even got to throw the first pitch at the Red Sox! Truly a wonderful week.

Camp Horizon – Bragg Creek, Alberta. Opened in 1965.

Easter Seals Canada

Inspired by the formation of the National Society for Crippled Children (later Easterseals) in the US three years earlier, Easter Seals in Canada had its beginnings in the province of Ontario on November 28, 1922, when 10 representatives from seven Rotary Clubs throughout the province came together to form the Ontario Society for Crippled Children (later Easter Seals Ontario). As was the case with their US counterpart, this organization's concern was the lack of services and resources available to children with physical disabilities, and its goals were to ensure adequate treatment and raise public awareness about the needs of these children.

Over the next 34 years, similar organizations that would eventually become part of the Easter Seals family were established across Canada. In 1937, the Ontario Government turned to Easter Seals for expert assistance following a devastating poliomyelitis (polio) outbreak. That same year, Easter Seals in both Ontario and Nova Scotia opened the first Canadian adaptive camps for children with physical disabilities.

Today, Easter Seals and its ten independently governed provincial affiliate organizations have offices and provide programs and services to people living with disabilities in provinces and territories all across Canada, and plans are well underway to celebrate Easter Seals' 100th anniversary in 2022.

Spotlight on some of the programs of Easter Seals Canada

Easter Seals Canada, the national office of Easter Seals, supports its provincial partners through national fundraising campaigns and awareness initiatives. In addition, it offers the **Disability Travel Card** for people with permanent disabilities who require the assistance of a support person when travelling by certain Canadian rail and coach carriers.

Another national program is the **Access 2 Card**, which allows people with permanent disabilities to receive either free or significantly discounted admission for their support person at member movie theatres, cultural attractions, and recreation facilities across Canada. Since its inception in 2004, the Access 2 program has grown to approximately 50,000 cardholders nationwide.

Also offered by Easter Seals Canada are the **21st Century Leadership Skills Program** for young adults aged 15-29, and the **AccessABILITY Program**, providing financial assistance to the families of children under 14 years of age who may not have the means to purchase the specialized mobility and technology equipment their children need to be able to participate fully in their communities.

At the provincial level, Easter Seals provides many programs and services, which vary from province to province to meet the needs of local communities. The following are just

Easter Seals TM
Timbres de Pâques MD

some examples of the types of programs and services available through Easter Seals' provincial partners.

- **Assistive and Adaptive Technology** – equipment loans and financial assistance to individuals and families
- **Education and Training,** as well as scholarships and bursaries
- **Sport, Recreation, and Leisure** – sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball, boccia, and more
- **Rehabilitation and Occupational Therapy**
- **Residential and Respite**
- **Summer Camp**

The programs most sought after and accessed are the Access 2 card (nationally), assistive and adaptive technology, and summer camps (provincially).

While Easter Seals in Canada does not provide programs and services specifically for veterans, those programs and services that are available for adults with disabilities are equally available to veterans, who are welcome to contact us for information and assistance at any time.

The effect of COVID-19 on Easter Seals' programs

As has been the case for many organizations across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the interruption and cancellation of many Easter Seals in-person programs in 2020. While virtual alternatives were a solution for some of these programs, such as summer camps, other programs simply could not be offered at all. The pandemic has had an impact not only on client-directed programs, but also on the fundraising efforts of Easter Seals and its supporters all across Canada. Traditional fundraising events, such as golf tournaments and galas, could not be held and, like summer camp, prompted a number of creative and safe alternatives, such as virtual galas, online silent auctions, socially-distanced marathon/walkathon events, and even a butter tart driving tour of southern Ontario.

Despite these creative solutions, and despite the continued generosity of Easter Seals' corporate and individual donors, 2020 has been financially difficult for the majority of people and businesses, often leading to a domino effect. Many of the Access 2 Card partner venues have had to close or modify their operations for health and safety reasons, which has led to a decrease in the sales and renewals of the card. A number of corporate donors have seen their own revenues decline sharply as a result of the pandemic and have not been able to offer the same level of financial support as in the past. Several provincial Easter Seals programs, as well, have had to be put on hold or be cancelled outright. Even if the pandemic were to magically disappear overnight, it will take time for all involved to return to where they were before COVID-19 hit.

Camp Bumbleberry – Kids Camp Salmonier Line, NL.

Camp Papillon - Saint-Alphonse-Rodriguez, QC. Opened in 1938.

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To many people in Canada, the name Easter Seals is synonymous with summer camps.

Camp Winfield – Okanagan Valley, BC. Opened in 1968.

Camp Easter Seal - Watrous, SK. Opened in 1954

Camp Grandpré – Otterburn Park, QC. Opened in 2003.

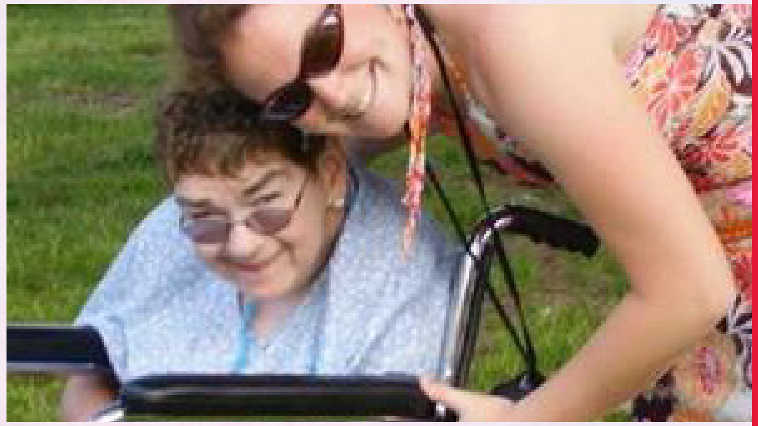
Every summer, more than 6,000 kids living with disabilities attend one of 14 specialized, fully-accessible Easter Seals camps across Canada.

At camp, every child - matter their disability - receives the encouragement and support they need to challenge themselves, build confidence and make the most of their abilities.

Camp is a special place where kids can just be themselves and focus on their abilities… not their disabilities. Camp is a place where everything is accessible and there are no boundaries, no barriers, no limits to what they can achieve. Camp provides a sense of freedomand independence in an environment where anything is possible and there is no such thing as disability.

Camp is a place of "yes I can!"

Camp Tidnish – located in Baie Verte, NB. Opened in 1937.



Camp Rotary – Sunnyside Beach, NB. Opened in 1952.

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Miss Wheelchair Canada

“Disability need not be a limitation”

The Miss Wheelchair Canada pageant showcases women’s beauty and inner strength forcing people to look beyond their disability. It challenges current perceptions of women who are wheelchair users and attempts to break barriers. The pageant is devoted to the motto "disability need not be a limitation."

Wheelchair Dance Sport Association Canada, a non-profit created in 2014 is the pageant’s host. They promote, develop and run Para Dance Sport and also host workshops and one-on-one lessons.

At Wheelchair Dance Sport Association Canada, able-bodied dancers (at different levels of experience) dance with people in wheelchairs to create Para Dance Sport couples. Able-bodied dancers can and should have both an able-bodied dance partner and a wheelchair dance partner because it gives everyone the opportunity to develop dance skills. The Association has two main messages. The the first is for able-bodied dancers: if you are getting the benefits of dancesport, share it with people in wheelchairs. The second is for wheelchair users: you too can be the best dancers possible.

Olesia Kornienko is the president of Wheelchair Dance Sport and she has been involved with professional wheelchair dancing for many years. “I started dancing in Poland and won my first medal in 1999. Later I won 10 more medals in other countries. My dancing experience in Canada began in September 2012. With my former dance partner Arnold Ip, we won a gold medal at Vancouver Challenge Cup 2015,” Olesia said.

She treats dancing professionally, as a serious sport and believes that ballroom and Latin dancing breaks down the boundaries between worlds of people with and without disabilities. “For me, the Para Dance Sport is a great way of rehabilitation, because it involves movements of almost the entire body,” Olesia explained. “Collaboration with a partner without a disability is not only achievable but also very rewarding. It promotes identity self-awareness and helps improve memory and has many other additional benefits.”

Olesia’s dream is to gather a group of wheelchair dancers for participation in the Opening and Closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games and her vision: “I really want to promote Wheelchair Ballroom Dance Sport in Canada.”

The first Miss Wheelchair Canada was held in 2017. One is planned for the Summer 2021.

Bean Gill from Alberta holds the current title of Miss Wheelchair Canada.

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Massiraa

Fashion Show

featuring adapted clothing
for people with disabilities

Photo Credit: Rasanga Fernando Photography.

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Massiraa

Nawal Benzaouia

Founder and CEO, Massiraa, Dubai

When you first meet Nawal Benzaouia, you will be captivated by her smile, her commitment to people with disabilities, and her keen business sense. She is a force in the accessibility community. Respected by her peers and clients, she has expanded her company, Massiraa, from France into Dubai, and continues to look for opportunities to help create a more universally accessible world for people with disabilities.

Photo Credit: K ram photography

Nawal grew up in Saint-Louis Alsace, France. She attended college in Strasbourg, majoring in Social Science. She was always passionate about challenging conventional ways to make the environment more "accessible" for people with specific needs, so she started her career as a social worker in France, Belgium, and Cameroun. Nawal then realized that she needed to change the perception of disability and show the world that behind each disability there is an ability.

She decided to pursue a Master's degree in Paris and it was during that time, graduating as an accessibility expert from one of the few schools providing training in this field, I.N.S.H.E.A PARIS, (the National Institute of training and research for the education accessibility of people with special needs and disability), that she launched her own company, Massiraa.

Her company offers its services to companies and public organizations. These services include Accessibility audits (following the ADA, Design for all, European, or UAE standards - based on the request), innovative projects and awareness/ training sessions, inclusive Fashion Shows.

First Event

Her first successful event was a Massiraa Inclusive Fashion Show in Colombo, Sri Lanka during the Asian European Fashion Week. Organizing a fashion show in a country she barely knew, plus having to deal with significant accessibility issues for her models proved challenging. But it went off without a glitch. Models from all over the world: Africa, Greece, France, India, Belarussia, Finland participated. Designers from from the United States, Singapore, India, and France were also in attendance. The first lady of Sri Lanka and some ambassadors attended the event and were happy to be there to witness this fashion revolution.

Challenges

One of the main challenges with an event of this nature is that of accessibility, especially the bathroom. During her trip to Sri Lanka for her fashion show, Nawal realized that accessibility not only meant building compliance but also education. "I can make a building fully universally accessible and respect the design for all, but if the staff is not knowledgeable about disabilities then this building is not accessible anymore," Nawal said.

Nothing was accessible in Sri Lanka but her models were aware of the limitations and were prepared. Nawal's assistants were available to carry the models when necessary. The locals were also understanding.

Another challenge was the designers who never had the experience of working a fashion show and having to spend so much time with people with specifics needs (mentally and physically challenged). For them, it was a huge experience , but bring designers and people with disabilities together opened up new possibilities. Nawal enjoys conducting these events because regardless of the many challenges, it raises awareness of people with disabilities. She said, "I don't do fashion events *for* people with disabilities. Because I don't discriminate, I create inclusive events. I would love to do a fashion show

in New York's Fashion Week, Paris Fashion Week, and Seoul Fashion Week with Hyein Seo, Leesle Hwang, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Alexander Wang, Nicole Miller, Ibraina, and more . . . .. But my ultimate goal is to give my models the opportunity to be brand ambassadors."

Massiraa, Dubai

Massiraa is an International Universal Accessibility Expert company in the UAE with an objective to deliver innovative, inclusive solutions through economic and sustainable models to clients.

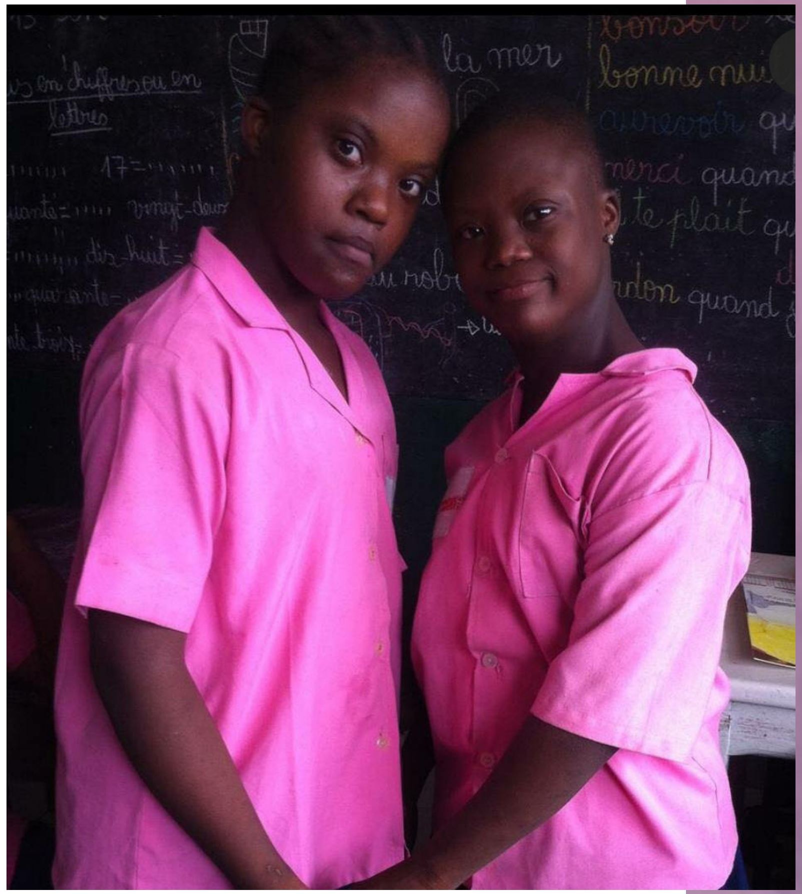
Massiraa is the first and only company in all of the UAE and GCC countries holding a license dedicated specifically towards universal accessibility, with the approval of the Ministry of Community Development in UAE.

The people of determination are an integral part of the UAE population. Around 30% of the total population is dependent on others. To meet these diverse needs, adopting a social model approach is an effective strategy to help various institutions all over UAE.

Massiraa is specialized in universal accessibility and is active in six major sectors consisting of auditing of facilities and services, consultation, training, innovation, awareness, and events.

Adapted Communities for All

Nawal believes that communities should not be adapted only for people with disabilities but for everyone. "When we think about accessibility, we need to understand that's not only for people with disability. It's also for all the people with special needs, it's for children, pregnant women, elderly population. We are talking about design for all and thinking about an environment more inclusive for all," she explained. "I also want sign language to be recognized as a real language, so when we learn English we also learn ASL to communicate with people. We talk a lot about inclusion because now it's "in" to talk about it, but what is the real meaning? How do we apply it? We need to focus on that."



The Massiraa brand is now being strengthened. Nawal wants to create an inclusive line of clothing, a good quality product for people with disabilities, easy to wear but very fashionable.

She thinks people with disabilities need to share more publicly about their everyday life because many people do not really understand the difficulties they face.

Instagram: @massiraa / @massiraauae
Facebook: @massiraa
LinkedIn: @massiraa
Email: nawal@massiraa.com

Nawal realized that she needed to change the perception of disability and show the world that behind each disability there is an ability.

Taking a look at

Ableism

Many people with disabilities view themselves as not having a disability. Instead their view is that the world just isn't built for them and that what is truly needed is universal design to allow them to live their lives as easily and as independently as possible.

On July 26, 1990, The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into Law. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government programs and services.

While the ADA removed many of the physical barriers, there are still forms of discrimination against people with disabilities. Today, we refer to it as "ableism."

There are multiple ways to define Ableism, here are two examples:

- discrimination and oppression of disabled people; societal belief that being abled is "normal" and is preferred.
- A system of oppression that favors being ablebodied/ableminded at any cost, frequently at the expense of people with disabilities.

Many understand examples of oppression to only be an individual being unjust, oppressive or harmful toward another individual, such as: rhetorically and through language like slurs and through individual discrimination or cases of inaccessibility.

Structural Ableism

Physical barriers: such as a lack of ramps, elevators, no sidewalks, no push-buttons for doors etc.

Design barriers: such as poorly designed rooms that are difficult for people with mobility aids to navigate, furniture that is bolted down or too heavy to move, door knobs that are hard to open, doors that are too heavy to push open, elevators that are hidden and difficult to find etc.

Cultural Ableism

Representation of disabled people in media: is either lacking or largely negative, as abled people often play disabled characters. Story lines often write disabled characters to be angry, difficult, a predator, a "super crip" aka someone who is disabled that is highly accomplished, or that they only want to be "cured".

Invisibility of disability culture and community: disability rights history is not taught to many students, and there is little visibility of disability culture or disability pride movements.

Forced segregation of disabled people in society: disabled people historically, and currently, have been segregated from abled people. Through lack of access to public transit, through special education programs, and through forced institutionalization.

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Fostering Inclusion Universally

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Sailability Antigua

"If I can teach you to sail as a fit person, then I must give that other person who is differently challenged the same opportunity, making sailing inclusive."
~ Bob Bailey, Director, Sailability Antigua

Antiguans with disabilities are given the opportunity to sail, thanks to the efforts of Sailability Antigua. Activities geared towards incorporating the differently abled into society through this exercise continues to be well-received.

Sailability has a fleet of eight boats, ranging from small fun Hansa to a 40ft catamaran. From their location at the National Sailing Academy in English Harbour, Antigua, every week an average of 85 people with disabilities, aided by tranied local instructors, take to the seas. With the weather being good all year round, they sail in Falmouth Harbour which is approximately 1.5 miles across.

This social interaction and recreational activity of sailing is offered free of charge to people with disabilities in Antigua. The same service is offered for a fee to visitors, many of whom would come off cruise ships berthed in the harbour.

Bob Bailey, Director of Sailability Antigua said, "All people that are called disabled are seen to fit into just one category - disabled. This could not be further from the fact. Every one of us is differently abled. We look at each person that comes sailing and with their carer or family, assess their capabilities. We then tailor a sailing program to bring out that capability and to hopefully go a little further and beyond."

Sailing has proven to be very beneficial to people with disabilties, and in terms of empowerment and the feeling of inclusiveness, Bob says the smiles on their faces tells a happy story. Sailability Antigua has just taken delivery of a brand new mini bus which has been adapted to accommodate two wheelchairs so Bob hopes to reach further into the island communities to deliver the benefits of sailing to many more people with disabilities.

All of the work of Sailability Antigua is funded by charitable donations. One of the major fundraisers is *Sailability Super Sunday Charity Walk Sailability Antigua is the only programme of its kind running in the Caribbean Region.*, an event held in March which sees over 350-500 people walking to raise funds to enable this organization to contine providing these services to the disabled. The island's Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams participates and so do most of the senior government ministers, including the Prime Minister, Gaston Brown. This event raises about 65% of Sailability Antigua's annual costs. The administration is run by volunteers and the paid sailing instructors are Antiguan, therefore, the money raised is injected back into the community.

A new initiative will be undertaken to offer residential sailing week courses for veterans from Canada, USA and the UK.

Contact:
Bob Bailey
www.sailabilityantigua.org
bob6191@hotmail.com
1-268-783-8553

To make a donation, visit:
www.nationalsailingacademy.org

Inclusive Sailing

Antigua & Barbuda
Sailability Antigua
www.sailabilityantigua.org

Australia
Sailing for Everyone Foundation
www.s4e.org

Manitoba, Canada
Able Sail
www.ilrc.mb.ca

Portugal
Inclusive Sailing
www.inclusivesailing.com

Florida, United Sates
Team Paradise
www.teamparadise.org

BROAD STREET MEDIA

Media by the deaf, for the deaf.

A group of young, deaf people in Barbados have capitalized on a sponsored media training program that was offered in 2017. Their media skills are now used to communicate news to the deaf community and support the activities of deaf organizations in Barbados, including conducting interviews where life experiences from within their communities are shared.

They aim to eventually have a studio with crew and equipment, receive American Sign Language (ASL) / Bajan Sign Language (BSL) Media training and have the ability to produce a range of short clips.

For more information about their work, contact:

Sandra White-Belgrave, Director.
broadstreetmedia17@gmail.com

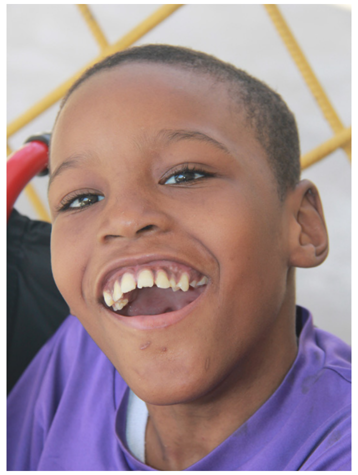
Raising Nathan is the heartfelt story of the struggle faced by Jamaican parents on discovering that their son would be born with a major disability - and a prognosis that he will not survive childhood. Written by Nathan's mom in a conversational, down-to-earth style, it recounts the enormous challenge of coming to terms with his special needs, and details the journey that has bound his family together - growing their faith and inspiring courage.

Available on Amazon

Parent Advocate

Christine E. Staple Ebanks

The first in a series of articles about parent advocacy and the Nathan Ebanks Foundation



Introducing

Nathan Ebanks

"My son Nathan is the last of my four children. He was born on May 4, 2004 in Kingston, Jamaica. If I were to think of one word or phrase to describe him, it would be 'impish'. That is because he has a zest for life and living. He embodies a beautiful spirit and energy that is edgy, playful, and mischievous. An endearing little scamp at heart, he takes full advantage of the 'last-child' privileges, whether it is bossing around his older siblings, monopolizing the television, getting that extra piece of cake or just annoying his brother and sisters. His charm and special negotiation skills get him his own way almost every time. I would often respond to a call from one of his siblings complaining that Nathan did so and so, and would go to them to find Nathan straight-face, watching TV or engaged in some other activity, not paying them mind. The telltale grin tugging at the corners of his month would be the dead give-way that he was guilty as charged.

Nathan has the most beautiful eyes, his paternal grandmother often refers to them as 'ackee-seed' eyes, describing the contrast of the brown of his iris against the white of his cornea, surrounded by enviable long lush black eyelashes . . . His eyes flash with life and energy and when he adds his signature smile, he gets away with almost anything, whether at home or at school. While Nathan is typical in many ways to his peers and age cohort, he is different in one unique way. Unlike other children, and through no fault of his, he cannot walk; he cannot sit independently, dress himself or brush his teeth himself. He cannot run, kick a ball, or feed

himself a cookie or communicate using words. This is because Nathan has cerebral palsy.

While not a single condition in and of itself, cerebral palsy is a group of problems that affect a person's body movement and posture. Cerebral palsy is the most common childhood disability and is responsible for a high percentage of lasting disability in children. Recent research poses that 1 in 278 children globally has this condition.

The disorder is related to brain injury in utero, at birth or in the early stages of life (between zero and three years of age). While the exact cause of cerebral palsy can't always be pinpointed, some possible causes include premature birth, problems after birth, lack of proper in utero nutrition, a serious head injury or infection that could harm the brain or a genetic condition that affect's brain growth and formation. In Nathan’s case, his infraction was caused after birth. He was diagnosed with congenital diaphragmatic hernia which required major surgery to correct the breach. He underwent surgery at just 2 days old. Ten days post-surgery he suddenly developed severe jaundice with hyperbilirubinemia (abnormally high amounts of bile pigment (bilirubin) in the blood) of 408. Though this was corrected within twenty-four hours by phototherapy, it is believed that the damage was done to his young brain cells in the motor cortex area of his brain, which controls movement.


Nathan's Early Years Family Photo

Nathan spent 24 days in the hospital in Kingston, Jamaica, before he was discharged and sent home. I still remember the feelings of jubilation when he came home. We were so happy to receive our baby who we had been waiting for from the moment I found out and made peace with the fact that I was pregnant. He was discharged from the hospital and we were never given any information or prepared for what was to come. When we left the hospital with him that day, we thought the worst was over. None of the medical or healthcare personnel prepared or even alerted us that something might go wrong with his development because of what he had gone through.

Nathan came home and we noticed very soon that he was not developing typically like his siblings. For instance, at four months, he still behaved and responded like a newborn. He could not hold up his head, could not sit even when supported, had problems eating, could not track or focus on any objects and seemed unaware of the world around him. I brought this to his doctor’s attention during his post-surgery clinic visits, but the doctors didn’t respond satisfactorily. So, I stopped going to the Hospital’s pediatrician and took him to a private pediatrician. It was there that my concerns were taken seriously, and we started a process of tracking his development or lack thereof more closely.

At nine months he was still significantly delayed in almost all his milestones. He was referred to a pediatric neurologist, who diagnosed him with Cerebral palsy. Though we suspected that something was wrong with his development since he was months old, we never suspected anything this serious, let alone this debilitating. The diagnosis of Cerebral palsy came as a shock. I didn’t even know what this all meant, because outside of the name of the disability and what my son will never ever be able to do, no other information was given to us by the neurologist.

I went through a period of utter despair. I thought the diagnosis was a death sentence, and that my son would have died as an infant. I became very afraid of leaving him alone, let alone going to sleep. Fear was my constant companion for a long time.

From the time of the diagnosis until Nathan was 2 ½ years old, were the most difficult, as we struggled to find information to figure out what services he needed, where to find these services and what we… *I* could do as a mother to help him.

After two years, I was no closer to understanding this condition and the effect it would have on my child. I felt helpless, as I did not know how to help my child. I was shrouded with a deep sense of grief and loss, as all I was told by the local professionals who saw him was what he would 'never' be able to do. No one was able to tell me what he could do… no one gave me even a ray of hope.

This led me to go on a search for answers. The search led me to a pediatric rehabilitation hospital in Florida, where I received my first ray of hope. It was there that I learned to see my child, not for what he can and cannot do, but for *who he is*.

I learned what to expect from his condition, how to support his development and how to advocate for him.

I learned that my little Nathan represents a growing population of children in Jamaica and around the world with this disability and that 1 in 4 children has a serious visible or invisible disability.

I learned that every day parents receive the diagnosis of disability and that like me, they too struggle to find answers.

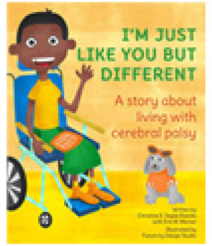
I learned that the information I gather can be useful to parents and teachers to help them understand and support children with disabilities.

I remember when we were finally taking Nathan home from the hospital an experienced matron told me the best gift I could have given my baby was the gift of siblings. She told me that he may be sick for a long time (though she didn't explain what that meant, and I didn't have the presence of mind then to ask). So, from the first day home, his siblings, though they were 8, 6 and 4 at the time, were taught how to hold him and how to help. This was the best advice I could have gotten, because it helped to create a remarkably close knitted family. We have become such a well-oiled machinery when it comes to supporting and caring for him. This has been instrumental in helping to normalize Nathan's childhood and upbringing, even although very few rehabilitation services were available to him in Jamaica.

After the trip to Florida in 2007, I became fully aware of the huge gaps in information and services that existed in Jamaica. I now understood his disability and the possible ways it may impact his growth and development. I learned that he was not broken and learned what to expect from his condition, how to support his development, how advocate for him.

I became very frustrated upon my return when I realized that the services, laws, and mindset needed to help Nathan and other children like him was not present. So, in 2007, I formed the Nathan Ebanks Foundation to bring support to these children and their families in Jamaica. Through advocacy, training for parents and teachers and public education, the Nathan Ebanks Foundation works for participation, inclusion, and empowerment for children with disabilities and special needs.

> **I went through a period of utter despair. I thought the diagnosis was a death sentence, and that my son would would have died as an infant. I became very afraid of leaving him alone, let alone going to sleep. Fear was my constant companion for a long time.**



nef Nathan Ebanks FOUNDATION

Since 2007, the Nathan Ebanks Foundation has:

1. Provided direct intervention services – in speech, occupational and physical therapy and screening services to 2000+ children
2. Held over 8 annual disability and special needs conferences impacting 3,000+ teachers, policymakers, parents
3. Created and delivered key Train-the-Trainer Inclusive Education Training Institute to the Ministry of Education. Impacted more than 2000 teachers.
4. Hosted 4 Special Needs Resource Fairs connecting more than 8,000 persons to services
5. Published 2 Children with Special Needs Guide to Resources Handbooks distributed free to 3000 in Print, Digital and Audio formats
6. Contributed to policy changes by serving on 7+ high-level national boards and committees including the National Disability Advisory Board and the education and disability sector groups
7. Hosted the inaugural Special Child, Special Needs Virtual Parenting Summit: 1200 + attended/viewed the recording from 23 Countries

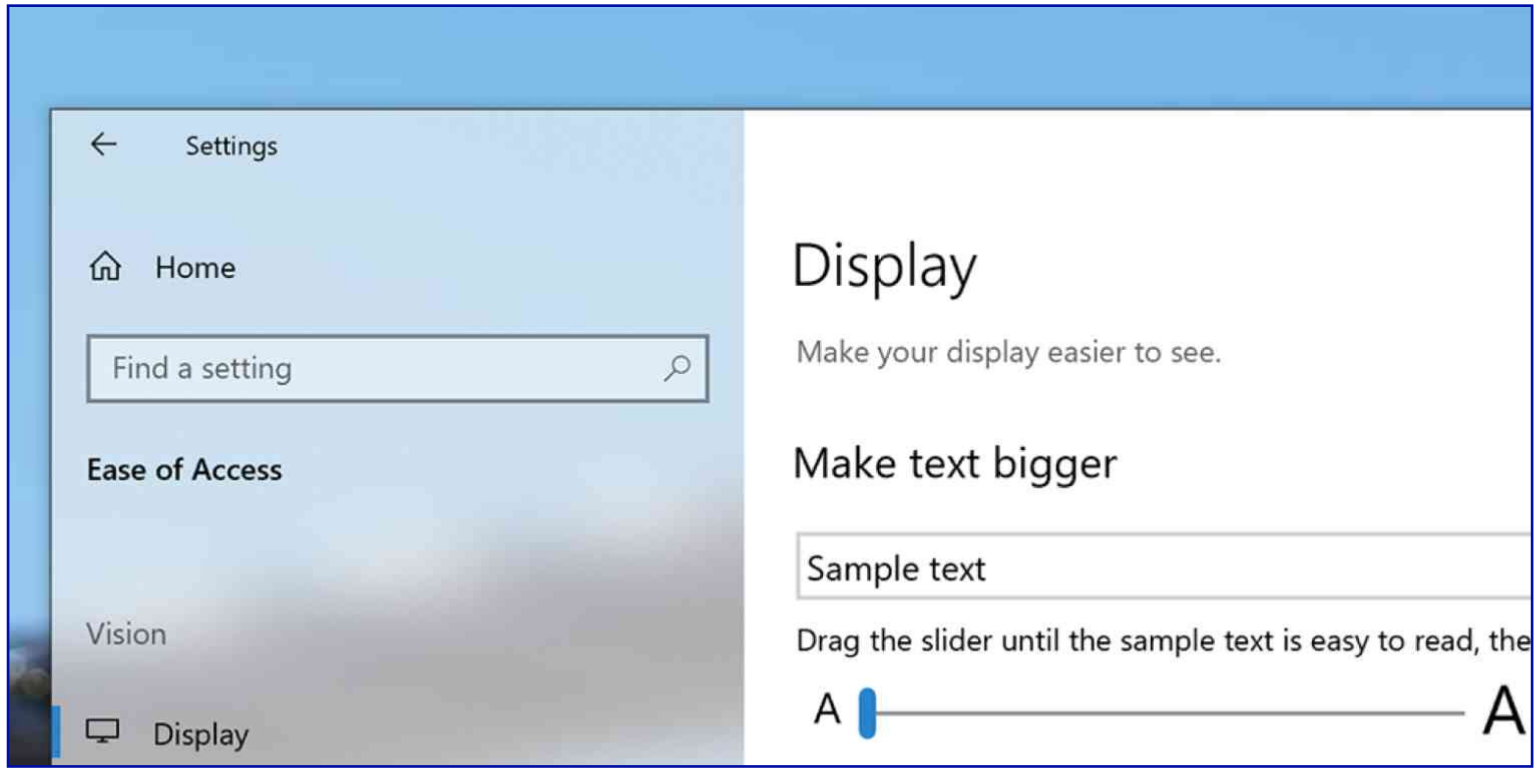
Professional Work
www.christinestapleebanks.com

Advocacy
www.nefjamaica.org

Social Media
@raisingspecialneeds

How to use the
Accessiblity Features on your Computer

by Justin Pot, staff writer at Zapier, based in Hillsboro, Oregon.
Zapier is an automation tool for small businesses



Display

Make your display easier to see.

Make text bigger

Sample text

Drag the slider until the sample text is easy to read, the

. Zoom in on anything
. Speed up your computer
. Talk instead of type

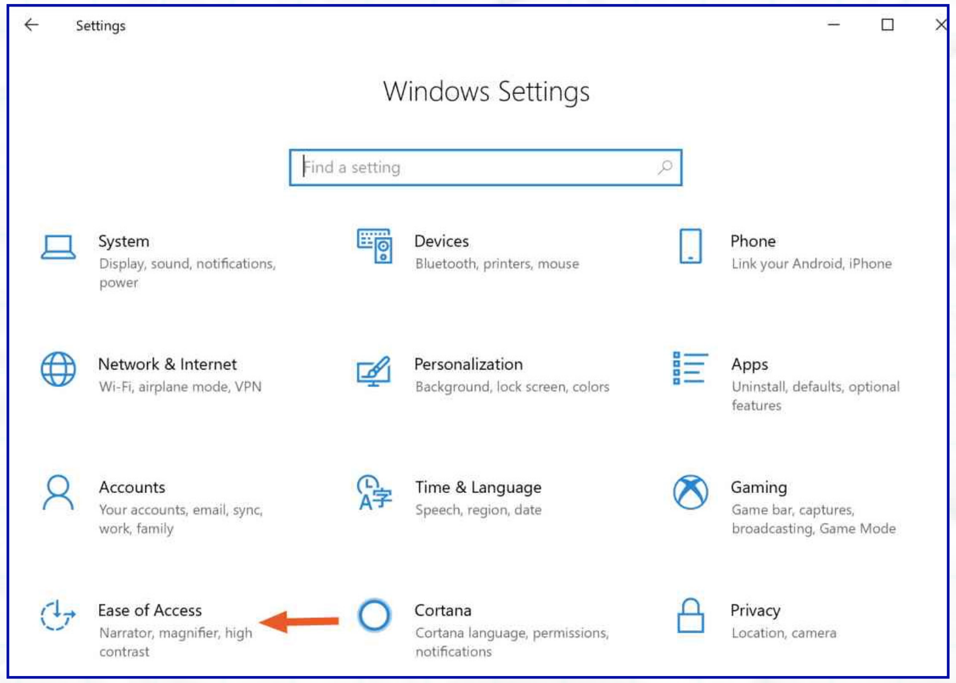
You know those dips in curbs at crosswalks? Those exist because of decades of advocacy by accessibility advocates, but today they benefit anyone who pushes a stroller or just enjoys not tripping. This universal benefit is called the curb cut effect, and it's not only for sidewalks.

Maybe, if you're American, you've turned on closed captions on your TV to understand British accents—those captions are also the direct result of disability advocacy. Texting, arguably, evolved from telecommunications devices for the deaf. Features initially designed for accessibility end up improving life for everyone, which in turn makes those features stick. It's a virtuous cycle that, at its best, helps everyone.

The accessibility features on your computer are similar: they were designed with particular needs in mind, but they benefit everyone. And they're worth exploring. I've written about how you can catch typos by making your computer read to you. There are so many more similar tricks, if you're willing to dig.

How to access accessibility features on Windows and Mac

On Windows, you can find the accessibility features by opening **Windows Settings** and clicking **Ease of Access.**



Mac users should open **System Preferences** and head to **Accessibility.**

It's a good idea to explore —you'll find something useful if you just click all of the buttons. But here are a few features I think everyone should enable.

Zoom in on anything, including photos and videos

Your computer can zoom in on any region of the screen, a feature that's there to help people with vision problems. But everyone can benefit from this.

Videos are better in full screen, and sometimes you want to see a photo in more detail. Not every website lets you do that, however, which is why the magnifier feature on your computer is so useful. This allows you to quickly zoom in on anything that shows up on your screen, whether the app or website you're looking at allows for a fullscreen mode or not.

On Windows, this is called **Magnifier**, and you can find it in **Settings > Ease of Use > Magnifier**

You can trigger it anytime by hitting the Windows key and plus (+) on your keyboard, then stop by hitting the Windows key and Escape.

Magnifier

Use Magnifier to zoom in on parts of your display. Magnifier can run in full screen, in a separate window, or as a lens that follows your mouse pointer around the screen.

Use Magnifier

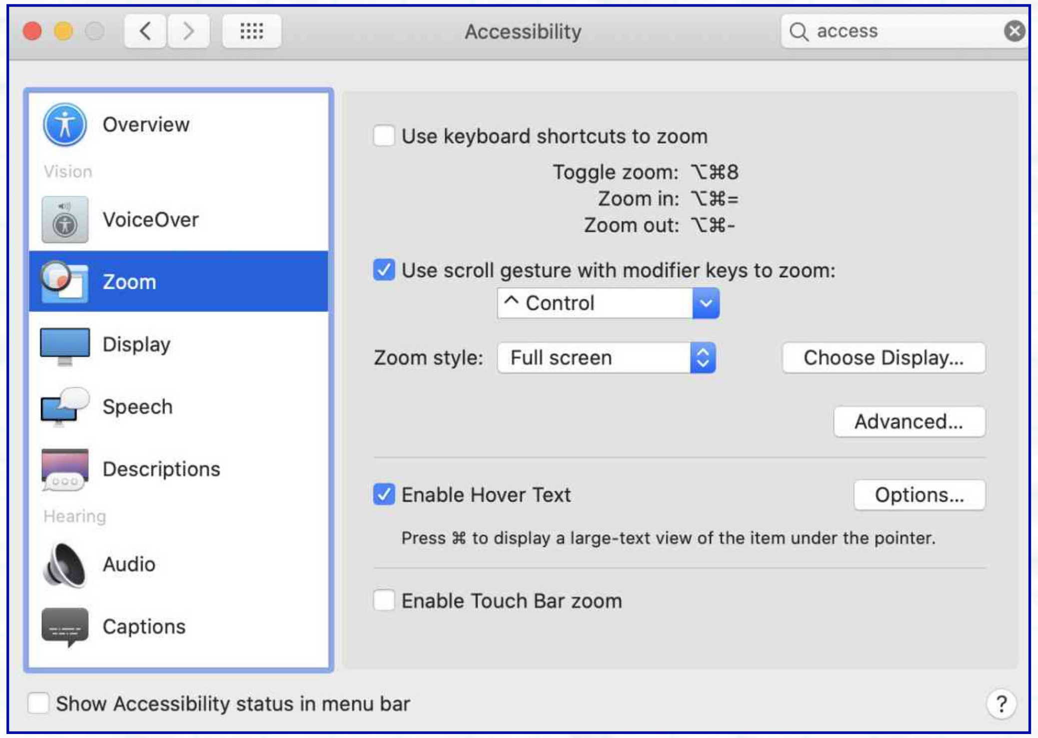
Turn on Magnifier: Off

Press the Windows logo key + Plus (+) to turn on Magnifier.
Press the Windows logo key + Esc to turn off Magnifier.

Make everything on my computer bigger

On macOS, this feature is called **Zoom**, and you can find it in **System Preferences > Accessibility > Zoom.**

You can enable a keyboard shortcut or even a scroll gesture for zooming, then use it whenever you want. Move your mouse to see different regions of the screen, then zoom back out when you're done. I don't use this feature every day, but it comes in handy when I do. Keep it in mind.



☐ Use keyboard shortcuts to zoom

Toggle zoom: ⌥⌘8
Zoom in: ⌥⌘=
Zoom out: ⌥⌘-

☑ Use scroll gesture with modifier keys to zoom: ^ Control

Zoom style: Full screen

☑ Enable Hover Text

Press ⌘ to display a large-text view of the item under the pointer.

☐ Enable Touch Bar zoom

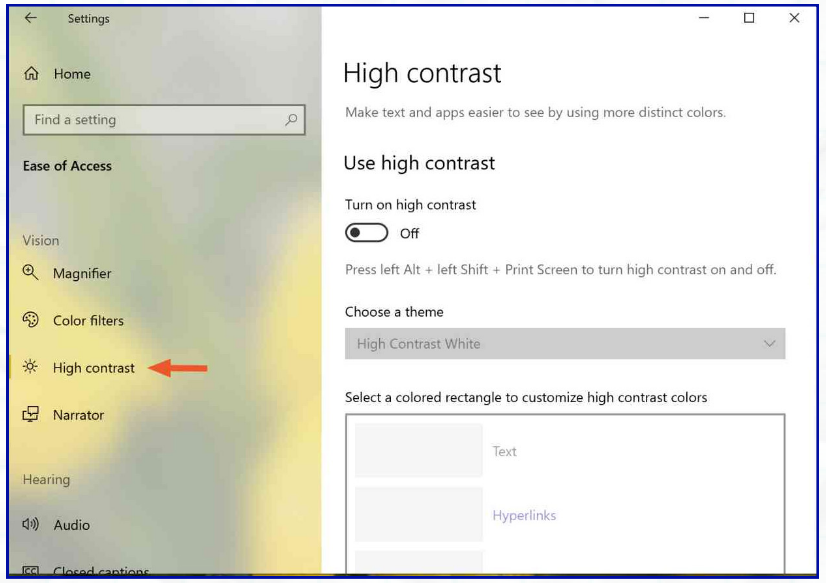
☐ Show Accessibility status in menu bar

Reduce contrast and transparency for a vintage look and increased performance

Modern desktop operating systems don't define edges with thick black lines. Instead, they use more aesthetically focused differentiators like drop shadows. It looks nice, but makes it hard for some people to tell where one window begins and another ends. All of that transparency also uses up system resources, which can be a drag on slower computers.

Which is why high contrast mode is worth checking out. On Windows, head to **Settings > Ease of Use > High Contrast.**

Enable this feature and you'll see the difference immediately.



High contrast

Make text and apps easier to see by using more distinct colors.

Use high contrast

Turn on high contrast: Off

Press left Alt + left Shift + Print Screen to turn high contrast on and off.

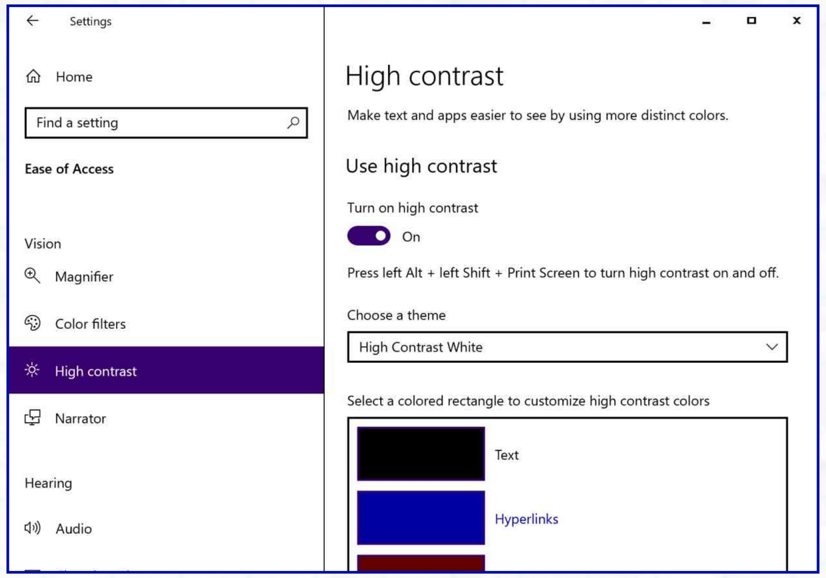
Choose a theme: High Contrast White

Select a colored rectangle to customize high contrast colors

Which is why high contrast mode is worth checking out. On Windows, head to **Settings > Ease of Use > High Contrast.**

Enable this feature and you'll see the difference immediately.

There are a few different themes available here—some dark, some light, all emphasizing clarity over aesthetics. Try some out and see how they feel.



High contrast

Make text and apps easier to see by using more distinct colors.

Use high contrast

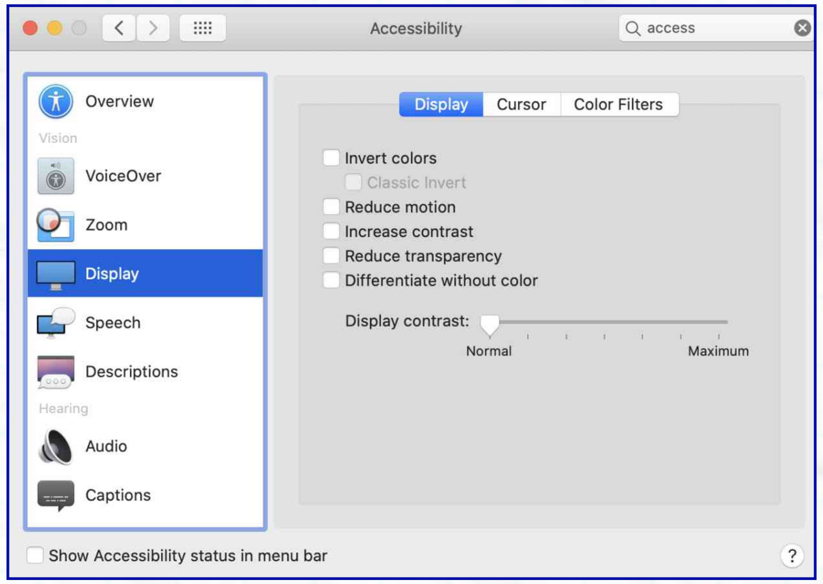
Turn on high contrast: On

Press left Alt + left Shift + Print Screen to turn high contrast on and off.

Choose a theme: High Contrast White

Select a colored rectangle to customize high contrast colors

Mac users can head to **System Preferences > Accessibility > Display**, then check the **Increase contrast** and/or **Reduce transparency** options.



☐ Invert colors
☐ Classic Invert
☐ Reduce motion
☐ Increase contrast
☐ Reduce transparency
☐ Differentiate without color

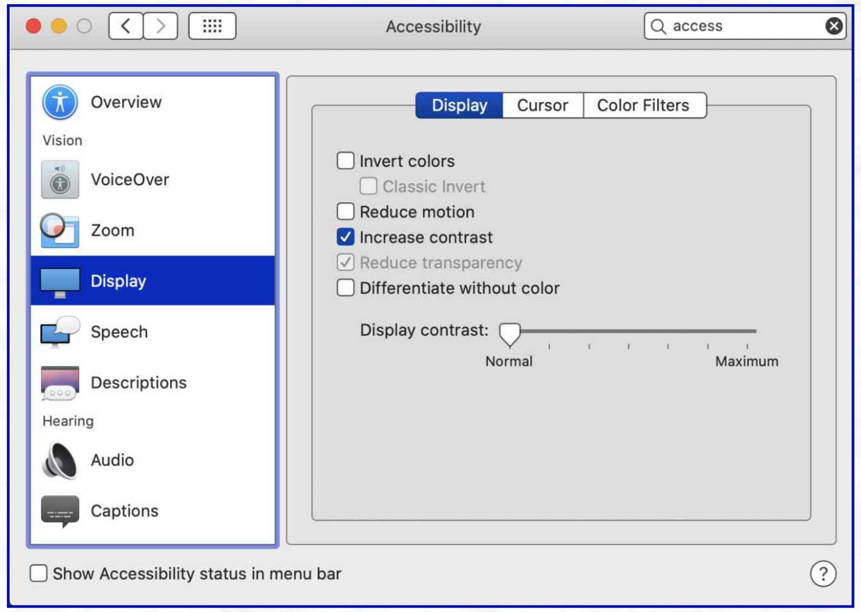
Display contrast: Normal — Maximum

☐ Show Accessibility status in menu bar

There are a few different themes available here - some dark, some light, all emphasizing clarity over aesthetics. Try some out and see how they feel.

Again, the results are immediate. There's now a thick black line around all interface elements, making it a lot easier to tell where one thing ends and another begins. The fancy transparency effects are also gone.

Some people need this in order to see things clearly; others might just prefer how it looks.



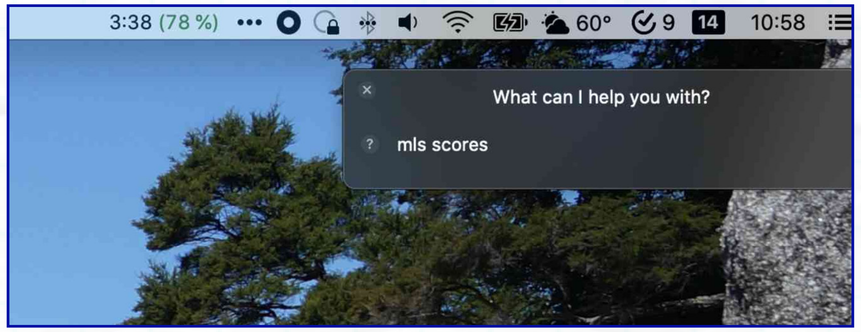
☐ Invert colors
☐ Classic Invert
☐ Reduce motion
☑ Increase contrast
☑ Reduce transparency
☐ Differentiate without color
☐ Show Accessibility status in menu bar

Type to your virtual assistant instead of talking to your computer

Siri has quick access to all kinds of information. This is why I recommend every Mac user enable the **Type to Siri** option found in **System Preferences > Accessibility > Siri.** Check this option and you won't have to talk to your computer - you can type instead.

Enable Type to Siri if you would like to type your Siri requests rather than speaking them. Siri will still beep and listen for voice input when activated from a headset, or when using "Hey Siri."

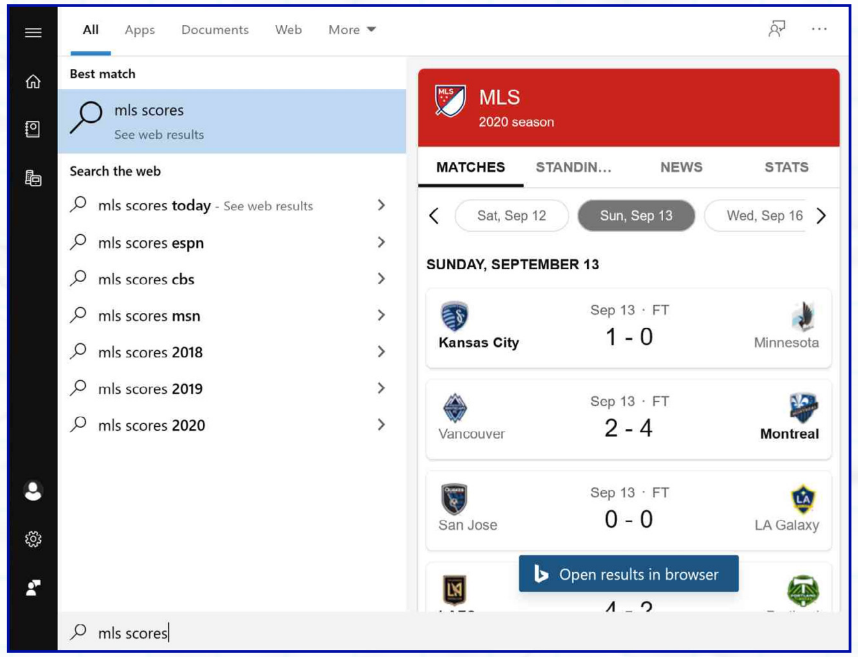
☑ Enable Type to Siri



What can I help you with?

mls scores

I'd point out how to do this on Windows, but Cortana works this way by default: open the Start menu and start typing.



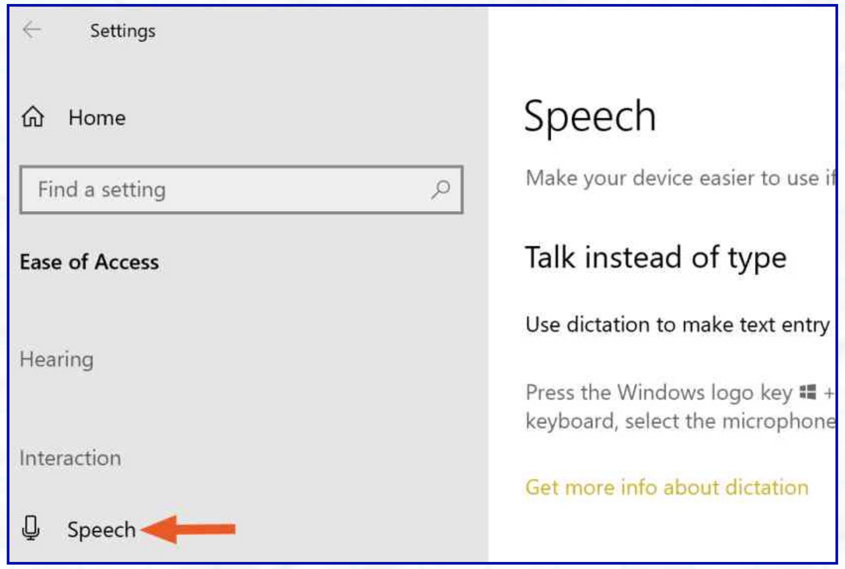
Good job on that one, Microsoft.

Talk instead of type

Prefer to go the other way, talking out loud to your computer instead of typing? You can do that too, thanks to the text-to-speech capability that comes with every computer. This allows you to write by using your voice.

On Windows, you can find this in **Windows Settings > Ease of Access > Speech**.

Enable the feature at any time by pressing the **Windows key and H.**



Make your device easier to use i

Use dictation to make text entry

Press the Windows logo key + keyboard, select the microphone

Mac users can enable a keyboard shortcut for dictation in **System Preferences > Keyboard > Dictation**.

Use Dictation wherever you can type text. To start dictating, use the shortcut or select Start Dictation from the Edit menu.

Dictation: ● On ○ Off

Language: English (United States)

Shortcut: Press Right Command Key Twice

Both the Windows and Mac versions are responsive to words, but learning to use punctuation takes a little experimentation.

I personally don't use this feature for my actual writing, but it is occasionally great for things like brainstorming - I can dump the contents of my brain into a document by rambling, then sort it out later.

Accessibility is for everyone!

Zapier is an automation tool for small businesses

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Travel spending in the disability sector has risen by 27% over the past 13 years and continues to rise with more destinations realizing the importance of having facilities that can accommodate everyone. Travellers with mental, cognitive or physical conditions desire and can share similar experiences as *every* traveller such as dining out, visiting the beach, sight-seeing, cultural explorations among other things. Be it cane users, slow walkers, hearing/sight impaired, wheelchair users etc., travel should be for all, and enjoyed by all.

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A Heart-to-Heart
with
Maureen Webber

Parent of a son with severe cognitive impairments

Maureen Webber is the parent of two children. Brian, who is 28 and has severe cognitive impairments and Anna-K, 26, a ceramist and graduate of Edna Manley College, Jamaica. After her divorce some 22 years ago, their father opted out of their lives so Maureen has solo-parented both of her children. She is a social/economic development and inclusion practitioner, managing, evaluating and designing projects which focuses on the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Maureen resides in Jamaica but for the past 2 years have been on an assignment in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. “I regret to say I really do not have hobbies,” Maureen shared. My mantra is, ‘Worship, Work, Workout’, but underpinning this all is being a parent and care provider for life. “Those three keep me buoyed up and content.”

As the parent of a child with a disability, have you felt socially isolated over the years? If so, how have you dealt with it?

I am socially isolated; it is not that I feel it. I live it. It started much earlier when Brian was young, there was first less time to ‘hang out’. People used to come to my home a lot to socialize, they came less as they felt uncomfortable, they felt sorry for me, did not know what to do. Thought and/or concluded I was unhappy.

The isolation I feel in the latter years is more around the fewer things you can do as he cannot be left alone, and it is much more difficult to find a care support person for a young adult male with severe disabilities, including being incontinent. But truth is, because of social media and the way I share our journey I do not feel as isolated.

Have I dealt with it? I think I defined it as my new normal. People spend a lot of time talking about what their children are doing at all stages of their life. When he was younger people could not understand my celebrating him feeding himself. When he is older and people realise the impact his impairments have on him doing things they appreciate the story more. So, I have come full circle. I am physically alone, with the exception of my daughter in the care and support, but more connected and less isolated than say 7 years ago.

What do you think the government in Jamaica can do to make sure parents of children with disabilities have the proper support systems they need? And specifically, what are some of the systems you can recommend?

A few of my ideas:
You cannot say every child can learn and not provide a space for everyone, despite their disabilities. There are people with disabilities who are never going to be able to work and will outlive their parents. This is a reality. Why then not do the following:

(1) Fund respite care services. Full time caring especially while working is draining. To end the potential for social isolation, a space to leave your child so that you can have time for you, now and then.

(2) Support for parents through grants, this can be guided by income levels, but understand that all need support

(3) An income tax reduction for parents who are caring for their child or young adult. If the government cannot provide what the person with a disability needs, give their parents space and more take-home pay to be able to provide for them

(4) No tax on savings or funds meant to support your child

(5) Provide real support workshops, coping skills, financial advice, networking etc.

How can communities be more supportive?

I guess in the times of old you would define communities as the geographic space and in that context, acceptance is the most important thing. For me, I am fortunate, I have lived in the same home with my son for the past 27 years. I also grew up in the house. My son is taken out on a walk pretty much every morning and my neighbours will WhatsApp and say how great it is or where they saw him. Recently, I am working on another island, and there is a group who communicate on WhatsApp and are on standby if my daughter needs any help with Brian. Today ‘community’ is larger, and I get the support that I need at this leg of the journey through my journaling our journey on Facebook. People would comment and lift me up. Some send inbox messages for advice and/or to just have a space to cry.

What will you say is one of the main public misconceptions about children with special needs?

First I do not understand and/or use the concept ‘special needs’ when I speak of Brian. Truth is, all children have special needs. The term is used if you are uncomfortable or seeking to be politically correct. Brian has impairments, in his case, cognitive and some physical. The public perception varies guided by the disability. So, for my son, because he is nonverbal and all the other challenges, they conclude he cannot understand you which is wrong. He cannot understand what you are saying, but he can understands you. Or, they conclude that since he cannot speak, and he cannot learn sign language that he does not communicate. Wrong. He does. You just have to listen with a different ear and heart.

How does having a child with special needs affect family dynamics, especially siblings?
We are not the same household as one without a child with a disability. Totally different dynamics. First, I was blessed with my son, then we both were with my daughter, his sister. I am not sure how it evolved but we became partners in parenting Brian, and she is younger than him by 2 years. For my part, I focused on ensuring that there was equal time for her, resources for her dreams. You must be careful about that, because if not you could become a dysfunctional household. She is devoted to her brother but also takes her own space and is firm with him.

Let's talk dynamics. When we go on trips, Brian goes with us. Despite our best efforts, his No. 2 cannot happen before we take off. So invariably it happens on the plane. We immediately spring into action as a team. We check to see if there is a line waiting for the rest room. If there is, one of us heads to join the line, we wait for the signal that it our time. I enter, she stays outside, take out the sheet of plastic for us to stand on, take everything off. Then two knocks from the insider tells the person holding the bag that it is a messy one or it is moderate. The wipe up begins from the inside. Then a knock say a fresh set of clothes are needed, no knock means you can stand down we got this covered.

What are some of the things Brian thoroughly enjoys? Tell us a bit about him.
I often remark that I have two totally different children and not for the obvious reason. Brian is a person who enjoys the journey, Anna-K enjoys the destination. You put them both in a car, he is wide awake and either looking around at everything we are passing or stimming in contentment. Anna-K gets in the car and is asleep in minutes. When we get to the destination, Brian cannot wait to move on and Anna-K is happy we have arrived. So, Brian enjoys outings. Getting in the car and just going somewhere.

Brian does not really play or anything like that, no kicking of the football nothing, so we have budgeted for someone who takes him on special outings in addition to the usual trips to the store etc. that he would go to with us. The challenge since COVID is that because of his sensory issues, he will not put a mask on, no tolerance, so outings are reduced. And he so enjoys his 40-minute morning walks! Just know that you are walking at his pace.

Brian enjoys travelling, we have been to Washington D.C., Florida, St. Kitts, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and all the way to Vanuatu and we are frequent visitors to the Bahamas. When his designated suitcase comes down, he knows a real adventure is about to happen.

Challenges and joys of being a parent of a child with a disability. Can you share a bit about that? What has having Brian taught you?
If I am honest sometimes, I am tired and I wonder how I will continue this journey because you do want to get off the train sometimes. But God has a way of showing up and showing me that what I thought was a 'challenge' was him presenting an opportunity for us all to grow.

Then there is indeed the matter of finances, it just cost more to give a child like Brian a quality life. I wish as I near 65 that I did not have to be working full time, but then I think about those who wish they still had to work to support someone who needed it, and I go back to my gratitude space.

As for the joys far too many. It is a joy that is in your soul, it does not mean that I have this happy face all the time, but I take comfort in what I feel in my soul. I know I have done well by him and by Anna-K, I know I have done what others thought was impossible. I am not filled with pride because of it, I am just pleased.

I have learnt to listen to the unspoken word, to celebrate the small things like the first time when he was just past year 4 and he lifted the spoon and fed himself that spoonful of rice. How could you not celebrate this? They said he would never feed himself. I do a happy dance whenever he takes himself to the toilet and sits there stimming quietly until he has his number 2 in the toilet. this does not happen all the time, but when it does, it is cause for celebration.

What is the one thing you hope other parents will take away from what you've shared about raising Brian?
Find the joy in it all. It makes the journey one of delight, learning and revelation.

. . . they conclude that since he cannot speak, and he cannot learn sign language that he does not communicate. Wrong. He does. You just have to listen with a different ear and heart. *~ Maureen Webber*

"On a day in December, I watched 2 boys and their parents next to me as they went through their meal here at Margaritaville and silently, tears flowed. By the time Anna-K rejoined Brian and I, it was clear I was sad. But then, the present interrupted. Brian had a No. 2, which explained why he was restless. No time for thoughts about what could be. This is here and now. Armed with Brian's backpack carefully packed for such moments, I got past, explaining why me and my 28 year old male were heading into the female restroom. 10 minutes later we emerged. There was a long line and I aplogised to the first person. She responded . . . "I have a cousin. I will tell her mother what I saw. Hopefully, it will inspire her to take her out," the lady said to me. I stepped away with more silent tears. They were now tears of joy . . ." ~ *Maureen Webber*

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"To develop collective resilience in order to find and implement sustainable and inclusive solutions that leave no one behind." This is one of Fondation Haitienne de Réhabilitation's (FONHARE) objectives as it seeks to create a better life for people with disabilities in Haiti.

The organization runs a Universal Accessibility Program to address exclusion, inequality, discrimination, institutional and physical barriers in the country. They provide training in accessibility standards to construction workers, while creating awareness of the need to build and rebuild inclusively. Awareness campaigns are conducted in schools, with local business, government and religious leaders for the elimination of all barriers and the provision of equal opportunity to everyone. To date, more than 20 institutions are now handicap-accessible including City Park, churches, public hospital, schools and courthouse in Ouanaminthe.

"We have seen much positive change in the northeast region of Haiti because of this program, but we are still far away from achieving our goals. We would like to extend this program to other regions of the country," said FONHARE's Dr. Louius. "We are looking for sponsors and partnerships to help us to do more because the need is huge.

To help FONHARE build inclusive communities where everyone can enjoy the same opportunities, please

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Achievement Learning Centre Leads by Example

Achievement Learning Centre (ALC) Dominica

On the Caribbean island of Dominica, the Achievement Learning Centre (ALC), operating under ‘Circle of Friends’, was formed in 2011 as a private, non-profit school for children with disabilities. ALC fills the gap that existed on the island for access to special education services for children whose needs are not met in the mainstream education system. It is a legally registered education and training institution that specializes in Special Education Services and Vocational Training for children and youth with disabilities. Individualized education is provided to meet the needs of its students, ensuring that they reach their full potential.

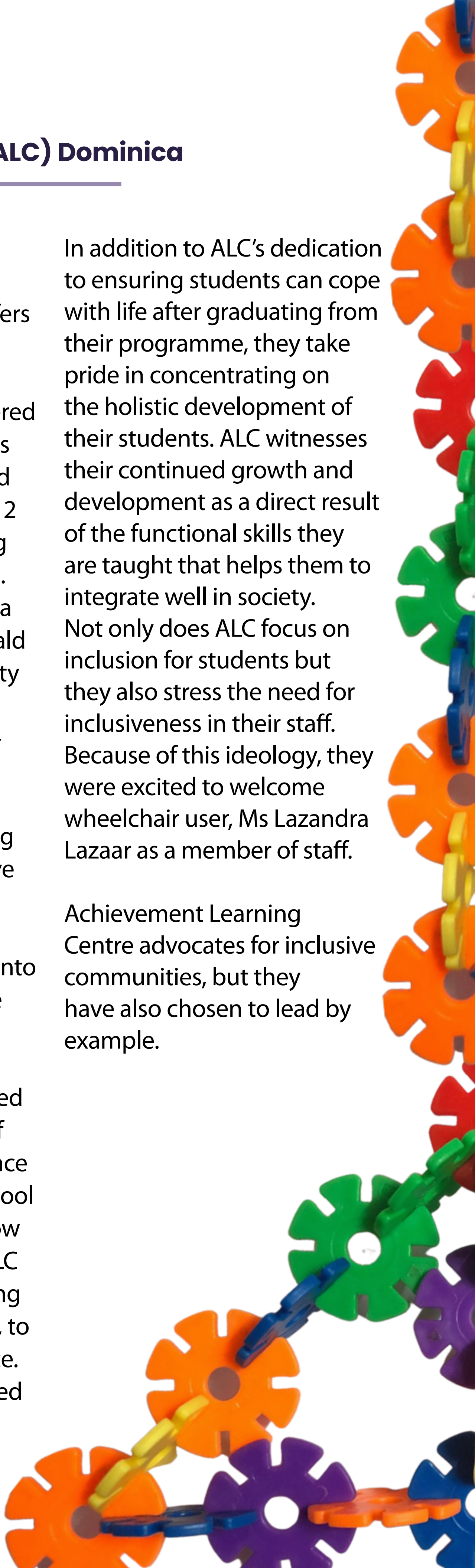
ALC is primarily focused on the provision of services that will help children master the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. The main aim is to create a learning environment suitable for catering to the needs of children who are struggling academically. In 2015, ALC piloted its pre-K program with three students, and the number quickly grew to six.

In collaboration with the Council Award Care & Education (CACHE), ALC offers Vocational Skills training to at-risk youth. So far, the school has successfully offered awards and certificate levels 1 & 2 in Early Years Care and Education, along with level 2 for caregivers in Supporting Individuals with Disabilities. The Centre has also signed a contract with Mott McDonald to offer Level 1 Employability skills training to 550 at-risk youths for the period 2020-2022.

Multiple successes are being experienced. Four boys have successfully transitioned from their Individualized Education Program at ALC into the Creative and Expressive Arts (CSEC) program at the Dominica State College. These young men completed the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC) program at the school and then moved on to follow their (CSEC) courses. The ALC helped Allistair Abel, a young man with Down Syndrome, to transition into the workforce. Alistair is presently employed at Jolly’s Pharmacy.

In addition to ALC’s dedication to ensuring students can cope with life after graduating from their programme, they take pride in concentrating on the holistic development of their students. ALC witnesses their continued growth and development as a direct result of the functional skills they are taught that helps them to integrate well in society.
Not only does ALC focus on inclusion for students but they also stress the need for inclusiveness in their staff. Because of this ideology, they were excited to welcome wheelchair user, Ms Lazandra Lazaar as a member of staff.

Achievement Learning Centre advocates for inclusive communities, but they have also chosen to lead by example.



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> **"Why not make a choice to understand, value and respect people as they are, instead of discriminating?"**
>
> Albert + Michael

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- Why not make a choice to understand, value and respect people, as they are, instead of discriminating?
- Why not build culture instead of tear it down?
- How can you create sustainability – support – cooperation?
- What is the difference between dominance and affiliation?

Good will in life and business, works!

Good will – the hope that good things happen to people – matters in life and business. There's a difference between respect and contempt. The choice to honor other people and things, different from yourself, as compared to the flip side – disrespect and lessening the meaning of another human being. It happens anywhere in the world – between couples – in families – at school – work – states – provinces – countries.

You don't need to get along with everyone, but make the choice to be civil. If you want to change a disagreement, do it with respect. And if not, be quiet. No need to bully and encourage others to join in. That's the narrow-mindedness and bigotry that created the holocaust and some of the worst racial discrimination in the US and other places in the world today.

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Kindness and understanding is a incredibly helpful choice and way to live.

Gardens4Hope

CULTIVATING HOPE THROUGH GARDENING

- UNITED STATES -

Lori Hope is passionate about two things: gardening and special education – so passionate, in fact, that she combines them in a unique opportunity to bring the benefits of gardening to the disabled and the homebound. Enter Gardens4Hope, a non-profit that sends volunteers to the homes of the disabled and homebound to co-create gardens of their choice and teach them how to maintain them, all with the aim of promoting emotional, mental, and physical well-being.

Gardens4Hope is born of the philosophy that the disabled and homebound (like every other member of society) are worthy and deserving of purpose and a sense of belonging. As a survivor of domestic violence in her youth, Lori learned first-hand how vitally important having a sense of purpose and fellowship are to physical and emotional healing, as well as rebuilding one's self-confidence and sense of community. Lori promotes a healthy respect for people to learn at their own pace and in their own way, and gathering


Lori Hope

is no exception. Some of our most interesting life lessons are learned through failure; not every seed or plant thrives. Gardening provides individuals with common ground for meaningful learning, development, and conversation….and the disabled and homebound are no exception.

How is it that Lori helps people to choose to shift their lives through the simple activity of gardening? By adopting the view that each one of the people she visits has the capacity to do something meaningful and that this can be achieved through patient and dedicated nurturing. With this in mind, volunteers guide clients on the journey of planting, tending, and harvesting. If a person is doing something that will potentially hinder the growth of the plant, the volunteers will provide thought-provoking prompts to challenge or provide alternative choices that will promote better results. In either case, cognitive functioning is improved because in addition to considering what plants, seeds, soils work well together and which don't, the learning process provides for interesting conversation as well as strengthens one's problem-solving skills.

There are also social and emotional components to these visits: rather than simply planting a garden and leaving, the volunteers engage the people in conversation and make follow-up visits as requested. The relationships fostered and social skills developed are significant factors in the lives of people for whom these are often limited. Lori will tell you from her days of as a teacher working with troubled youth that the impact of "…. choosing to take a chance to plant a seed and tending and nurturing it from seedling to maturity provides an incredible sense of purpose and is rewarding." The hope inspired becomes somewhat of a lifeline for people seeking fellowship; faces beaming with pride and their visibly positive outlook on life plainly tell the happy story. Lori looks for the potential growth of people and of seeds, and this is reflected in the lives of those she has touched and the flourishing of once seed, now plant, she has watered.

Lori conceived the idea of Gardens4Hope as a way for the homebound and disabled to experience the positive emotional and physical impacts of gardening beyond simply strengthening hand and arm muscles (although this is reason enough to do it!). Through this outreach program she seeks not only to uplift people often relegated to the fringes of society, but also to reinforce the fact that they, too, are deserving of respect, joy and fulfillment in ways that accommodate their differences. As with gardening, healing is a process. However, you can be assured that growth and change will occur at its own pace.

Lori says it best when recalling one of the many life lessons she learned from her grandfather as a child while gardening at his side: "…you have to respect the plant and the growing process, you cannot rush a plant to root or sprout faster without consequences. Growth occurs at its own pace, in its own time. People are the same way."

Gardens
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www.gardens4hope.org

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P·A·R·A·T·R·E·K

Omer Zur

Paratrek

Where there's a wheel, there's a way

www.paratrek.org

In Israel, the company, Paratrek, is synonymous with outdoor adventures and these adventures are not only reserved for the able-bodied. Specifically, the mobility challenged and people with disabilities are usually the guests of honour. The company was built with love of a son for his father, at its base.

Omer Zur, the founder of Paratrek, believes that everyone should be able to enjoy hiking and the outdoors regardless of their disabilities. This notion hit close to home for him because his parents always encouraged him to go outdoors, to hike, camp and travel. However, his father was never able to participate in those experiences as he was severely injured at 20 years old, and is paralyzed from the chest down. While hiking one day with friends, Omer realized that he needed to have his Dad enjoy the exhilarating experience of hiking with him. There on the mountain, with his friends, he made the decision to take his Dad to Turkey for one month to hike the Taurus mountain. Tents, sleeping bags, cooking on bonfires – an entire hiking and camping experience. His dad agreed to take the trip, but the looming question remained – how was this hike going to be accomplished? His dad is a wheelchair user!

Overcoming this major hurdle required elaborate thought and

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Omer obtained his Tour Guide license and Paratrek has been in existence for the past six years. Groups working together is his focus. Students in inclusive classrooms, youth groups and special needs students, office team-building excursions, tourists, local groups of friends and family are all beneficiaries of his Trekker and the lessons to be learned while hiking.

No matter how large or small a group, extreme care is taken to conduct a thorough overhaul of a trail in advance of a trek. If the hike will be taking place in another country, the Paratrek team collaborate with local guides who use a GoPro to film the terrain which Paratrek uses to familiarize themselves with the area prior to departure. Pre-Covid-19, groups were taken to Jordan, Turkey, France and also to Mount Kilimanjaro, a trip that was organized by *Jamie Lassner*, CEO of Friends of Access Israel. Jamie hoped to show people with and without disabilities throughout the world, that everything is possible. The successful Mount Kilimanjaro journey proved just that. Twenty-seven people with and without disabilities from different countries were part of that excursion. One participant was a paraplegic in Tanzania who lived at the foot of mountain but was never able make the journey before. Paratrek's Trekker and Friends of Access Israel helped him to achieve that dream. He made it to the summit. Paratrek believes anyone can enjoy the outdoors spending time with nature. Be it the visual or hearing impaired, someone who walks with a crutch or needs a walker to get around and even those who may not be able to walk for lengthy periods. The Trekker makes outdoor excursions possible for everyone.

Through an approved program with Israel's Ministry of Education, Omer lectures and conducts workshops for high school students. The same is done for corporate enterprises. Team building, leadership and communication skills, stepping outside of comfort zones and seeing realities through the eyes of others are some of the lessons taught, all within the parameters of hiking while using the Trekker. One of his most popular lectures is "Chasing your Dreams" which centers around the story of his father and his first trek, showing how one can overcome challenges and fulfill dreams.

Tour guides in any country can purchase the Trekker and, after a brief training, they too can help make hiking dreams a reality for people with disabilities in their individual countries. Tour companies organizing trips to Israel for people with disabilities, or trips to other countries where hiking is one of the activities, can also contact Paratrek as Omer and his team can be incorporated into your planning and be responsible for the hiking aspect of the excursion.

Omer will like the world to see people first, not their disability. "People with disabilities have dreams and abilities and when you try to understand them, this is when you will realize that you have much in common and can achieve more together. Focus on the person and not on the disability," he urges.

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Exploring CAMPS in Israel

for people with disabilities

by Howard Blas

The American Camping Association (ACA), which employs more than 320,000 camp staff and serves over 7.2 million children in its 2,400 ACA-accredited camps report in a 2017 study that 44% of camps offer specialized programs for individuals with disabilities. They proudly note,

"For 120 years, the organized camp experience has been serving individuals with special needs."

These camps began by serving campers with physical challenges and this “was the beginning of a pattern of the camp community’s response to societal issues affecting campers with a wide variety of diagnoses, including polio, intellectual and physical disabilities, childhood diabetes, cancer, and HIV/AIDS.”

In the Jewish camping world, Herb and Barbara Greenberg, two special education teachers, started the Tikvah Program at Camp Ramah in New England in 1970 for campers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. There has been tremendous growth in the area of inclusion of people with disabilities in Jewish summer camps since that time. According to Jeremy Fingerman, CEO of the Foundation for Jewish Camp, 3,744 campers with disabilities participated in FJC overnight camps in 2019 and 4,145 in day camps.

While many camps did not operate in person in the summer of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is the norm around the world for children with disabilities to participate in summer day and overnight camps and respite camps. These camps differ in affiliation and structure: they may be public or private, faith based or non-denominational (communal), and they may feature various models of camping including fully inclusive, camp within a camp, and separate camps for people with disabilities.

In the United States, overnight camps typically take place during the summer months, and last from several days to 8-weeks. Campers often travel many hours by plan, bus or car to arrive at camp. In Israel, a country roughly the size of New Jersey, overnight camps are a relatively new phenomena and tend to last from 5 days to 14 days. The recently established Summer Camps Israel organization aims to promote greater involvement in 30 summer camps throughout Israel. Several camps and organizations in Israel currently meet the needs of participants with disabilities and their families.

Programs Serving Special Populations

Shutaf, a year-round Jerusalem-based program, serves 300 participants, ages 6-30, with and without disabilities. They employ a reverse-inclusion model which brings together participants with diverse developmental, physical, and learning disabilities (75% of participants), alongside participants without disabilities (25% of participants).

Co-founder Beth Steinberg reports, “When we moved to Israel in 2006, the camp world here was underdeveloped. The ideas of an American style camp with values to grow and become was unheard of. We wanted summers to be the best time for our kids and we wanted to serve all kinds of needs.” Summers in Israel are usually very hot. Without camp programs, children often stay home alone or with siblings while parents work. Steinberg’s program offers a three-week day camp program each August, with arts and crafts, science, music and movement, sports, archery and a ropes course. Steinberg and her Shutaf team quickly responded to the Covid crisis by offering “Camp in a Box,” carefully planned “boxes” containing arts and crafts projects, sports equipment and gardening projects which were delivered and to over 150 participants. “It felt like a happy gift,” reports Steinberg proudly.

Similar boxes are provided to participants and families during the Jewish holidays of Passover (April) and Chanukah (December) when children are on break from school. Steinberg, a veteran of the camp scene in Israel, reports, “There has been some changes recently in camping, with more choices now and some programs offering short term sleepaway programs.”

www.shutafinclusionprograms.org/shutaf-about/

The Jordan River Village

camp, housed on 245 acres in the Lower Galilee of Northern Israel (near Givat Avni), was established in 2006 and is the 16th a network of 30 camps worldwide, part of the Paul Newman "The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp." They offer three unique types of camp programs which take place over approximately 40 sessions per year.

> “
>
> *We are the only camp in our organization which offers sessions for participants who or deaf or have hearing impairments, and for children who are blind or have visual impairments.*

One program serves children and adolescents ages of 9 and 18 who present with a wide range of medical conditions and genetic diseases, including cancer, seizure disorders, transplants, and neurological disorders. Director Yakir Sternin proudly reports, "We are the only camp in our organization which offers sessions for participants who or deaf or have hearing impairments, and for children who are blind or have visual impairments."

Sessions are generally 5-6 days and are for children who do not need parental assistance with self-care or medical care.

Three-day family sessions are offered for parents, siblings and children ages 5-18 who require self-care or medical support. Participants are often wheelchair users, present with seizure disorders which are not well-controlled, or are user of ventilators.

The camp has also established a relationship with the Ministry of Education where campers with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism attend 3-4 day sessions with their school staff.

Sternin is pleased and excited that the camp's sessions bring together participants from very diverse walks of life in Israel, including Jews who are secular, religious and Ultra-Orthodox, as well as Christians, Druze, Bedouins and Circassians. In addition, there are two sessions per year for children who come from the Palestinian Authority and Gaza. "We are on the way to fulfilling a dream," reports Sternin. "It is one of the most beautiful things when they meet and see eye to eye - when you are fighting for life, it doesn't matter who your father is and who you pray to! Disability and medical situations create bridges!" Sternin also sees equally strong relationships formed among the over 1000 volunteers who come each year, from very diverse backgrounds.

www.jordanrivervillage.org.il

My Piece of the Puzzle is a camp program which integrates children and teenagers at risk and with disabilities, in to five day overnight camping sessions. The two sessions per season take place on the grounds of the Jordan River Valley camp, but is not affiliated with that camp. My Piece of the Puzzle was inspired by the United States based program, Camp Ramapo, in Rhinebeck, New York.

According to director Jenna Albaz, half of the participants have such disabilities as autism, Down Syndrome and intellectual disabilities, and half come from "broken homes, dysfunctional families, have no friends, or have a police record." Elbaz is pleased with how the participants integrate and form friendships. "For the at risk children, it is their first time they have felt loved, unconditionally. For the participants with special needs, it may be the first time they have friends without special needs and they can just be themselves." Elbaz adds, "It is win/win—it brings out the best in both populations." Elbaz is in the process of expanding to also offer school year programs, and a mechina, a pre-army preparatory program.

www.mypieceofthepuzzle.wixsite.com/mpop

Other organizations in Israel offering camps for participants with disabilities include:

The Israel Scouts, include and integrate 3000 participants with disabilities including visual and hearing impairments and behavioral disorders. They often host overnight camping trips.

www.www.scout.org/node/520692

Yachad Sleepaway Camp at Camp Dror on the Golan Heights, a two-and-a-half-week Orthodox Jewish sleepaway camp which includes children with disabilities ages 9-16.

www.campdror.com/en/yachad-summer-camp

Beit HaGalgalim
("House of Wheels") strives to attain full social inclusion of people with physical disabilities. One way to achieve this is through weekend groups and summer camps. Each summer, hundreds of participants and volunteers attend 24 overnight summer camps throughout the country. Sessions last for 5 days and include such activities as kayaking in the north, abseiling (descending rock formations with ropes) in the south, hikes, and the performing of community service.

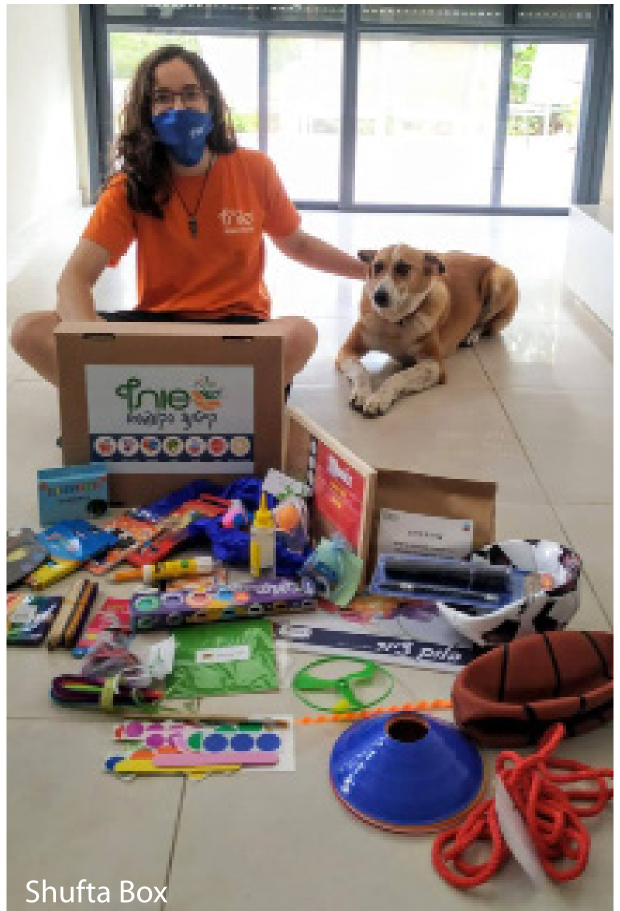
www.beitgalgalim.org.il/english

Krembo Wings is a youth movement for children and youth with and without disabilities. They also run a summer camp in the northern Israel coastal city of Nahariya. It is held over 3 sessions each August and is open to family members as well. Activities include swimming, sports, yoga, plays, magicians and more.

https://www.krembo.org.il/en/

My Piece of the Puzzle

My Piece of the Puzzle



Shufta Box

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Jordan River

Shufta Box

Shufta Box

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Maria with Houston Astors' mascot, Orbit

Maria beside Air Force One

Maria and colleagues at the White House with Barack Obama

Maria being confirmed as Director of Disability in Houston

Maria Town

President and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities

It's not a stretch to think that an Anthropology major who grew up in Louisiana, attended Emory University in Atlanta, served in the Obama Administration, and happens to have a disability, would one day be the President and CEO of The American Association of People with Disabilities, especially when you're Maria Town!

It is true. Once you get to know this 30-something, confident, bright, witty, thoughtful, advocate and self-advocate who was born with cerebral palsy, you just know she is going places. And she has already accomplished some impressive things.

Growing up in a mostly inaccessible home in a family that had an inaccessible vehicle and going to inaccessible schools presented many challenges for Maria. Climbing stairs and finding alternate ways to get to where she needed to be in buildings built before the Americans with Disabilities Act was in place was a daily ritual. But she was determined to get her education. The lack of equal access did not deter her.

But Maria's story while she went to school is a little different than those you may have heard before. Thanks to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), her experience in school was much easier than it was for many of her peers. She benefitted from an inclusive education where programs and policies were already in place to accommodate her needs. But that is not always the case for all students who are left behind and overlooked. Knowing and experiencing those differences in the education system helped Maria to develop her self-advocacy skills and learn her rights so that she could ask for the necessary accommodations when she entered college.

Maria attended school and participated in activities like every other student did, including speech and debate. It was here that Maria discovered her "ah ha" moment. She was given an assignment to write a speech about her disability and while writing it she realized that her disability provided her with a unique and valuable perspective in order to use her skills as a public speaker to advocate on disability issues. And, according to Maria, "What I didn't realize at the time was that I'd been advocating for inclusion most of my life. I didn't think of it that way, I was just trying to do the same things as my peers.” Little did she know it at the time, but she was also honing her skills to become a leader in the disability space.

After college, she worked as a receptionist for a personal injury attorney who was very particular with the way he expected work to be done so it was here that she gained her confidence to ask very specific questions. This was an attribute that would serve her well later in life.

Maria also worked in government helped to pave the way for being recognized as a disability advocate and leader. She was a policy advisor for the US Department of Labor’s (DOL), Office of Disability Employment Policy. Her focus was on youth employment which enabled her to better understand issues facing the disability community. During her time with the DOL, she started a blog focused on the intersection of fashion, tech, and disability, called “CP Shoes.” It was through her work at the DOL and this blog that she expanded her network in the disability community and strengthened her expertise on a range of issues.

One could say her first “big” entrée into a highly visible leadership role in the disability community came when an opportunity opened in the Obama Administration. At the end of her detail to work on disability issues for the White House, colleague and friend, Taryn Williams, asked Maria if she would be interested in applying for the role. Maria remembers thinking that she could do very well in that role, but perhaps it was not her time. “Shocked” that Taryn felt she was qualified; Maria interviewed and was eventually selected!

Perhaps the best part of the job for Maria was that she was never bored - each day brought its own set of challenges and priorities and kept her busy and interested. Key to the role was keeping President Obama and his senior advisors informed on critical issues facing the disability community and that they understood what they could do to address them. She also had to make sure the disability community understood the President’s priorities as well as understand the community’s reaction and concerns to his priorities. It was important that the disability community not only be invited to events at the White House but also host disability-centered events.

After the 2016 election, she was told that the Mayor of Houston was looking for a new disability director and was asked if she was interested. She had doubts. She was not sure about moving to Texas after building her life in D.C., but she traveled to Houston and met with Sylvester Turner. She was so impressed with his ideas and plans for the role that she applied and was selected for the role. While in Houston, Maria was key in the response to Hurricane Harvey and built out a program that replaced thousands of pieces of durable medical equipment that had been lost to flood waters. Maria was also instrumental in mobilizing city resources to accelerate progress on sidewalk repairs and integrating the needs of pedestrians with disabilities into city planning efforts.

Three years later after moving to Texas, Maria was made aware of the leadership role at The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) – President and CEO. She was encouraged by disability leaders to consider applying for the role and admittedly would love the chance to get back to bustling D.C. But more than just getting back to D.C., she respected what AAPD stood for and that it is, in fact, a human rights organization.

After a lengthy and informative interview process Maria was selected in the summer of 2019 to fill the role of President and CEO of AAPD! She hit the ground running and has never looked back. She’s hired staff to fill key roles, led them to be key influencers in disability facing policy decisions on the Hill, guided the organization with the support of her Board of Directors to new partnerships and high levels of fundraising, and managed the organization to a surplus budget. Not bad for a little more than one year on the job!

AAPD is a leading disability rights organization in many ways, but perhaps one of the most notable is that it is not only led by someone with a disability, but it’s a cross-disability organization with representation from disability-serving organizations serving on its Board of Directors. Having such representation positions AAPD at the forefront of shaping the narrative for the rights of people with disabilities.

Maria was raised in a family called to service, maybe even destined to serve. Both of her grandmothers were involved in volunteer service, her mother is a nurse, and her dad is a criminal defense attorney.

She was never held to a different standard, despite her disability, and was expected to do all the typical things the rest of her family did. She was, however, expected to “do good in the world”. There is no argument here. Maria, you have made your parents and the disability community immensely proud!

For more information about
The American Association
of People with Disabilities
visit www.AAPD.com

Follow AAPD on

Want to reach out to Maria?
Email communications@aapd.com.

Save the Date
for
AAPD’s Virtual Gala!
April 28, 2021

Visit their website
www.AAPD.com
for updated information

A CONVERSATION

WITH AILBHE & IZZY KEANE OF IZZY WHEELS

Ireland

Who is Ailbhe and Izzy? Ailbhe is the founder and creative director of Izzy Wheels. She studied visual communications in art college and now works full time running Izzy Wheels. Izzy is Ailbhe's younger sister. She is Izzy Wheels brand ambassador, studying politics and French in the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG). We have always been very close because we are the two youngest. We have two other older siblings called Sinéad and Evin, who live in America.

When was Izzy Wheels born? We always loved decorating the wheels on Izzy's chair. Even when she got her first wheelchair when she was just four years old there are photos of us decorating her wheels! We continued creating fancy wheels for her chair throughout her childhood for special occasions. For my final year project in art college in 2016, I decided to make my final year project all about decorative wheel covers and the idea for our brand was born.

Your Izzy wheels are infused with colour. How important is it for you and your brand to use such vivid colours? I've always loved bright colours and loud prints. I'm always dressed in vibrant colours because it makes me feel happy, especially when I am out and about. Our Mum is an incredible gardener and has such in-depth knowledge and adoration for flowers and colours, so I think that's where my appreciation for colour came from.

How do you want people to feel when they use Izzy Wheels? Izzy Wheels are used as a way to express your individuality and personality. Fashion is a way of expressing who you are and Izzy Wheels work the same way. They also act as an icebreaker and conversation starter.

What material are the wheels made of and how is it attached to the wheelchair? The wheel covers are made from strong, waterproof, and scratch-proof plastic. They attach directly to the wheels of the wheelchair with velcro straps. They are easy to swap on and off so you can have different wheel covers for different outfits.

What is the Izzy Brand appeal? Our brand is very authentic and full of playfulness. We pour our hearts into everything we do and as a result, we have a very loyal community. Everything we do is with our end-users in mind and everything is created with lots of care and love.

Do your covers appeal more to the young or do you get interest from a wide cross section of ages? We have users of all ages and genders. Different designs are popular amongst various age groups.

Katerina Kerouli lemon wheel cover
Photo by Sarah Doyle

How does Izzy Wheels contribute towards the feeling of empowerment in wheelchair users? Izzy Wheels empower users to make a positive statement about their disability and their relationship with their mobility device.

Any expansion plans? We are planning to expand our offering to create lots of functional and fashionable accessories for wheelchairs.

What types of artists do you like to work with most? We have received thousands of applications from designers and brands who want to work with us. We are very selective about who we work with and we ensure that the designers' ethos and style aligns with ours. We love designers who aren't afraid to use lots of colour and playfulness in their work. We have an application page on our website where aritsts can send us their bio and portfolio.

Do you make personalized wheel chair covers? We do indeed create personalized wheel covers. People can send us their own designs and we can print them onto wheel covers for them.

At the end of each work day, what gives you the most joy? It is an absolute privilege being able to work with such amazing artists and brands that I've admired for so long. My favorite part of the job is definitely when people send us photos of themselves, modeling their wheel covers. It's a very special feeling as a designer seeing something that you've created being enjoyed in such a wonderful way.

What do you find most challenging? When you are your own boss you have to trust your own gut all of the time. It's up to you to make all of the big decisions for your company so that can feel like a lot of pressure at times.

Katerina Kerouli lemon wheel cover

Izzy - as Brand Ambassador, will you say this job has made it easier for you to have conversations about mobility and disability issues? Having decorated wheels encourages people to address my chair and ask me questions about it which I really like. I have a really positive relationship with my chair so I like being able to talk about that.

When Izzy and Ailbhe aren't working on their brand, what are your other pursuits? My other passion is definitely in fashion and vintage clothes. I recently set up a Depop shop *@ailbhekeane* where I collect and sell some of the amazing colourful pieces that I find. It's a little side hobby that I started over lockdown but I love photographing and styling outfits so it's been really fun and therapeutic.

The Arc of the United States

Kandi at Fry's

Employment of People with Disabilities

by Kristin Wright and Stephane Leblois

In February 2021, Kandi Clubine will celebrate her 12th anniversary as a proud employee of Fry's Food Stores in Glendale, Arizona. Kandi is looking forward to many more years at Fry's and her retirement one day as one of her customers' favorite employees.

"People want me to stay," Kandi told us with a smile.

Kandi's career at Fry's is much more than a job. It is a significant part of her life and independence in the community. It is an achievement that shines as an example to others. It is her sense of financial security. Kandi works part time five days a week.

When Kandi was born in 1964, her intellectual disability was called something else – an awful word starting with the letter R that with years of work, disability rights advocates are now finally so close to eliminating from the English lexicon once and for all. Over Kandi's 56 years, hard-fought progress has been made in advancing the civil and human rights of people with disabilities in this country. We recognize more and more that employment is a vitally important piece of the equation and the mission among disability rights advocates to normalize disability in the community, at home, and in the workplace.

"Very proud of her," Kandi's mother Ginger Pottenger, former president of The Arc of Arizona and The Arc of Kansas, shared with us. "We've always had high expectations that Kandi would work. I've always – whatever state we've lived in – I've always pressured the [disability] service system that we wanted Kandi in a real job in the community. This is the longest that she's ever worked anywhere. I'm exceedingly proud of her."

During an uncertain time of record unemployment and job loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kandi feels fortunate to still be employed with safety measures in place. Kandi bags groceries and collects shopping carts from the parking lot of the store. She engages with customers, many of them regulars. Fry's supplies protective masks to all associates. Kandi says she understands why keeping her mask on throughout her four-hour shifts helps protect her and others from the virus, but she considers it the hardest part of the job. The store also provided an hour of COVID-19 safety training and installed protective barriers in checkout lanes and enhanced cleaning procedures. Kandi takes her temperature each workday when she returns home and washes her hands diligently.

But Kandi's mother Ginger admits, as cases of the virus soared in Arizona and across the country, she was concerned about Kandi's safety. Customers at Fry's Food Stores were not required to wear masks until Maricopa County enacted a mask mandate a few months into the pandemic.

"It was one of those things I worried about," Ginger told us. "For Kandi, routine is very important. And the thought of not having her typical routine was just kind of crazy making for us. What would happen and what would she do?" she wondered. "It wouldn't be like Kandi could go to a typical day program because they weren't open. It made more sense to have her go to work."

From a mother who has been successfully fighting and winning battles at the front lines for and with her daughter for more than a half century, the decision they made together was clear. Employment is what Kandi wants.

But it is a dilemma faced by many families whose day programs and regular supports and services are suspended now: the very human need for contact with others vs a virus that has disproportionately infected and taken the lives of people with disabilities.

Kandi and Ginger

Old and New Challenges Facing Jobseekers with IDD

Kandi, like many other work-eligible individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), has beaten social isolation by going into work. At the same time, finding and retaining a job during the pandemic has become increasingly difficult, especially for individuals with IDD. Research conducted by Global Disability Inclusion in 2020 suggests that close to 40% of people with disabilities were laid off or furloughed as a result of the pandemic. This is a worrying trend for jobseekers with IDD especially, who are among the most underemployed subgroups in the labor force.

For jobseekers with IDD, the safety threat posed by the coronavirus, coupled with pre-existing barriers to employment and a now struggling national economy, create compounding barriers that now make finding a job in the community extremely difficult.

- **Risk of infection in the workplace:** Individuals like Kandi who are working in person in brick-and-mortar retail or services are at risk of exposure to the virus. People with IDD and their caregivers have suffered some of the highest infection and mortality rates in the country during the pandemic[1]. While employers are required to keep their employees as safe as possible, not all employers follow federal and local safety guidelines uniformly.
- **Availability of supports:** Many individuals with IDD receive support from paid caregivers and job coaches to live independently and be successful in their jobs. The pandemic has hit the disability services industry hard, where many agencies have either been forced to close or cut staff.
- **Increased competition:** Millions of work-eligible Americans are out of jobs and are competing for the same jobs as people with IDD, many of whom are first-time job seekers and risk being overlooked in favor of more experienced applicants. This means that the hourly jobs that were previously available to people with IDD have now become harder to obtain as the demand for jobs drastically outweighs the supply.

Ginger believes that the challenges people with IDD often face in securing and maintaining meaningful employment long before the pandemic weighed in the back of her mind, as she considered the pros and cons of Kandi's continued employment during a public health crisis.

In acknowledgment of her hard work as an essential worker, Kandi received "Hero pay" or a small pay increase during certain months last year and a few bonuses, in addition to extra cash on her store shopping card. Kandi's job coach Michelle continues to support her at the store one hour a week.

For Kandi's 5th anniversary at Fry's, the team gave her a Frye's watch with the store logo on the face. For her 10 year, the store gifted her with a camera. In a few years, pandemic or not, Kandi will celebrate her 15th anniversary as a Fry's team member.

While the future feels so hard to see for many people, Kandi is clear on the years ahead. After retirement, she plans to stay active and engaged in the community as a volunteer.

"She likes to be busy. Kandi is not one who likes to sit," Ginger told us smiling at her daughter.

Busy and fulfilled with a sense of purpose.

---

[1] National Public Radio. "COVID-19 Infections And Deaths Are Higher Among Those With Intellectual Disabilities". Retrieved on 9/30/20 at https://www.npr.org/2020/06/09/872401607/covid-19-infections-and-deaths-are-higher-among-those-with-intellectual-disabili

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The Arc®

The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

www.thearc.org

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DISCOVER

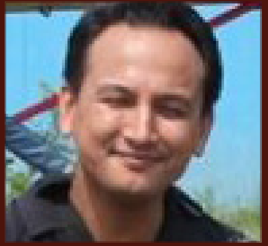
Nepal . Bhutan . Tibet . Myanmar

with

Four Season Travel & Tours

A Conversation with Director, Pankaj Pradhananga

and Fred Maahs, Jr.



> “Working with People with Disabilities is a wonderful learning experience for me.”
>
> Pankaj Pradhananga, Director,
> Four Season Travel & Tours, Nepal.

Pankaj grew up in the small town of Bhadrapur in Eastern Nepal that borders India. He attended a college in the same town, later moving to Kathmandu where he pursued his Masters degree majoring in Marketing. His first job was at a 4-star hotel in Kathmandu catering to international travellers. At his present job today, he also caters to international travellers but his focus is now on people with disabilities.

Pankaj with the late Scott Rains

What was your earliest exposure to a person with a disability and what got you interested in helping people with disabilities?

I had not met any people with disabilities prior to meeting my mentor, Dr. Scott Rains in California in 2013. In 2014, I travelled with him for 10 days in Nepal and I became more interested in learning and working with people with disabilities.

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Barkhor , Lhasa - Tibet

Accessible Tourism in Tibet

What does your job entail?

As an Incoming Tour operator, my typical schedule involves managing the daily operations, meeting with clients and planning for future business. The job also requires travel to source markets of Europe, the US and East Asia also to the areas of tour operations, The Himalayan region / Indian subcontinent.

What are some of the things Nepal has done to become more accessible?

As a destination, Nepal has been working relentlessly towards its accessible tourism goal despite the challenges of physical facilities in public places, hotels etc. The Government of Nepal, Nepal Tourism Board, tour operators and hotels are working in tandem with local Disabled People Organisations in order to build synergy and transfer knowledge. In the last 5 years, Nepal has seen significant progress as the hotels are coming up with a few accessible rooms that is mandatory as a part of building code, accessible vehicles and more trained personnel. Furthermore, the first accessible trail near Pokhara was launched in 2018 during an Accessible Tourism conference. Near Kathmandu, the Dhulikhel municipality will soon have an accessible Eco Trail that will attract domestic as well as International travelers. Many locally organized events are coming on stream to bridge the knowledge and expertise gap, in partnership with Independent Living center, Four Season Travel, International Development Institute and NFD-N.

You are known as The Himalayan Storyteller. How did you get that name? What types of stories do you tell and how do you share them with your audience?

I took this name myself which I use when I write articles and my podcasts called Beyond Limits. My trips in the Himalaya over the last two decades

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have significantly transformed my perspective about myself, the world and the world of business around us. I was fortunate to meet amazing local people in Tibet, Bhutan and the mountains of Nepal. Needless to say, that encouraged me to share those stories to many more people who I meet in person or virtually. I am also a Toastmaster where we practice public speaking and leadership so storytelling is a part of learning and growth and I simply love to connect with people and places.

How does your faith help you in your work?

Faith is important in life. I believe I need to have faith in myself before I look outward. My faith is beyond the religious belief, I have faith in humanity, ability and imagination. Believing in what is not visible has helped me strive to achieve the goals that appeared to be previously unattainable.

How do you feel about working with people with disabilities?

I am deeply grateful to my mentor, the late Scott Rains who taught me a great deal and encouraged me to work towards Accessible tourism. This has been more than just a business. Working with People with Disabilities has been a wonderful learning opportunity. I am grateful, helpful and hopeful. Organising trips in the Himalayan region for People with Disabilities gives me a great sense of achievement and fulfillment and also Team Four Season Travel.

We have been more aware of our behavior and activities and it affects others we go about our daily lives.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love to read and write. I strive to take time to read about philosophy and history as much as I can. I meditate regularly and practice stoicism. As a Toastmaster, I love to deliver public speeches. I am also an adjunct faculty in Business school and organize trainings on mental toughness and resilient leadership. I love to walk and cycle around in my spare time. I have two daughters and one wife - one is enough in this life :-) My wife is a school teacher.

Four Season Travel & Tours

www.go-nepal.com

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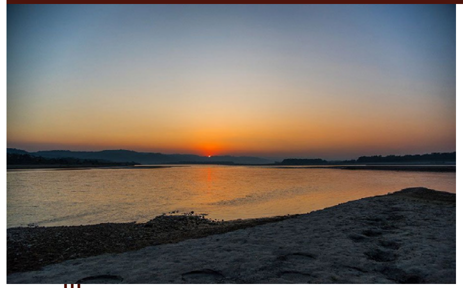

Tibet

Bhutan

Myanmar

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Palace in Royal Łazienki Park
Credit: City of Warsaw

WARSAW, POLAND.

Let it Surprise you

Warsaw won the 2020 Access City Award
It was voted the most accessible city in Europe.

Warsaw is the capital of Poland, the country in the Central Europe, famous for the Solidarity movement which contributed to the fall of communism on the continent. As most of its attractions is now closed because of Covid-19 pandemic you can take your time to get to know the city must-sees. To get a brief experience of what awaits you on spot discover Warsaw online.

As each city, Warsaw has a place that is its showcase and a top one on any trip. In the capital of Poland, it's the Old Town, entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the place where the city's heart has been beating for centuries. Make sure to find its market square to see the statue of the Warsaw Mermaid, the emblem and guardian of the city. This is a good place to start a stroll along the Royal Route that links the former residences of Polish rulers: Royal Castle in Warsaw, summer residence of the last king of Poland – Royal Łazienki and magnificent Palace at Wilanów.

If you really wish to understand the rich history of the city visit its interactive museums, The Warsaw Rising Museum is dedicated to the WW2 event that shaped the contemporary face of the capital. The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which received the prestigious title of European Museum of the Year 2016, shows the 1000-year-old Jewish presence in Poland and at the same time is an excellent example of contemporary architecture.

The most recognisable relic of Warsaw's turbulent history is however the Palace of Culture and Science. Still the highest building in the city was completed in 1955 and presented as a "gift of the Soviet people for the Poles".

Surprisingly, being a thriving urban centre, the city offers a lot for those who love nature.

Royal Castle
Credit: Tomasz Bidziński, Warsaw Tourist Office

Old Town Market Square
Credit: Dima Malihin, Warsaw Tourist Office

Palace in Royal Łazienki Park
Credit: City of Warsaw

Multimedia Fountain Park
Credit: City of Warsaw

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More than 90 parks, historical gardens, squares, nature reserves and botanical gardens covers almost a quarter of the area. Warsaw is also one of the few capitals in the world that boasts a primeval forest and woodland growing in the city. The long list is headed by Royal Łazienki Park known for famous Fryderyk Chopin Concerts held each summer in unique outdoor setting. It is worth knowing that the famous composer, born exactly 200 years ago, spent the first half of its life in Warsaw which is a home to the his museum and renowned Chopin Competition. To learn more about his links with the city you can also use the 'Chopin in Warsaw' mobile app.

During the summer season probably the best place to go to is the Vistula river with its modern boulevards on one side and a belt of natural woods and unique sandy beaches on the other.. When the temperature gets higher the riverside starts to buzz with life – the cafés and bars open up and dance parties and open-air concerts take place. The Multimedia Fountain Park and the Copernicus Science Center located nearby draw families with children.

Warsaw has also a rich calendar of musical, cultural and sports events. Festivals, star concerts and outdoor exhibitions take place throughout the year. In present circumstances they can be enjoyed only online but make sure to check What'on section as soon as the tough times are happily gone. To keep track of the situation or keep in touch with Warsaw staying at home follow Go2Warsaw.

Those who prefer walking off the beaten path are welcome to Praga district which for centuries has been diverse in terms of culture, ethnicity and religion. Contrary to most of Warsaw it was not destroyed during World War II and is considered to be the most authentic part of the city. You will enjoy strolling through the historic streets, admiring temples of various religions and discovering the shrines hidden in backyards. In Praga Koneser Centre, the renovated complex of the 19th-century vodka distillery, housing Polish Vodka Museum you will learn how the Polish drink is made.

Warsaw's food scene is just as interesting diverse as the city itself. Designer restaurants, elegant venues and variety of eateries located in historic interiors of Hala Koszyki and Elektrownia Powiśle offer flavours from both Poland and all over the world. In order to join the locals and taste traditional dishes pop into one of milk bars dating back to the communism era. Hungry vegetarians and vegans will be delighted - even Paris or Prague cannot claim to have so many vegan restaurants. And on summer weekends outdoor breakfast fairs attract lovers of healthy food, relax and socializing.

Warsaw will positively surprise you in many ways. Just give it a chance !

Palace of Culture & Science
Credit: Artur Bogacki

Vistula Boulevard
Credit: City of Warsaw

Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews
Credit: City of Warsaw

Praga Koneser Centre
Credit: City of Warsaw

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Royal Castle Gardens
Credit: City of Warsaw


Copernicus Science Center
Credit: City of Warsaw


Elektrownia Powiśle
Credit: City of Warsaw


Hala Koszyki
Credit: City of Warsaw


Palace in Wilanów
Credit: Fotolia Whitelook

Accessible places to visit in Warsaw. To ensure that your accessible visit takes place as efficiently as possible without having to wait for an employee to provide access to a driveway, elevator, etc., it is best to all ahead or e-mail. Some places may be additionally inaccessible to people on electric wheelchairs.

Zamek Królewski, The Royal Castle

The Old Town is paved and may be inconvenient for some people. Most restaurants here are not wheelchair accessible.

The Royal Gardens:
- paved alleys, toilet in the park adapted
- at the **Amphitheater** and at the **Old Orangery**
- **Palace on the Island** - ground floor available, not accessible floor, 4 low steps, fold-out driveway, toilet
- **Myślewicki Palace** - 6 low steps, assistance needed, ground floor available, floors unavailable
- **White House** - 2 low steps, ground floor accessible, floor unavailable
- **Old Orangery** and **Royal Theater** - unavailable

Palace of Culture and Science
The 30th floor

Wilanow Palace
garden and ground floor accessible

Muzeum Powstania Warsaw Rising Museum

National Museum
accessible, with the exception of certain rooms

CNK (Copernicus Science Center)

Muzeum Chopina
only part of it is accessible

Muzeum Warszawy (Warsaw museum)
some accessible levels

Elektrownia Powisle

Hala Koszyki

Ogród Botaniczny UW (Botanic Garden)
only main alley

Ogród na dachu BUW (garden on the roof of the library of the University of Warsaw)
elevator from the main hall (key to security), only wider alleys accessible, inaccessible vantage point from the side of the Vistula

Muzeum Polskiej Wódki Polish Vodka Museum

Muzeum Pragi (Praga museum)
only buildings A and C are accessible

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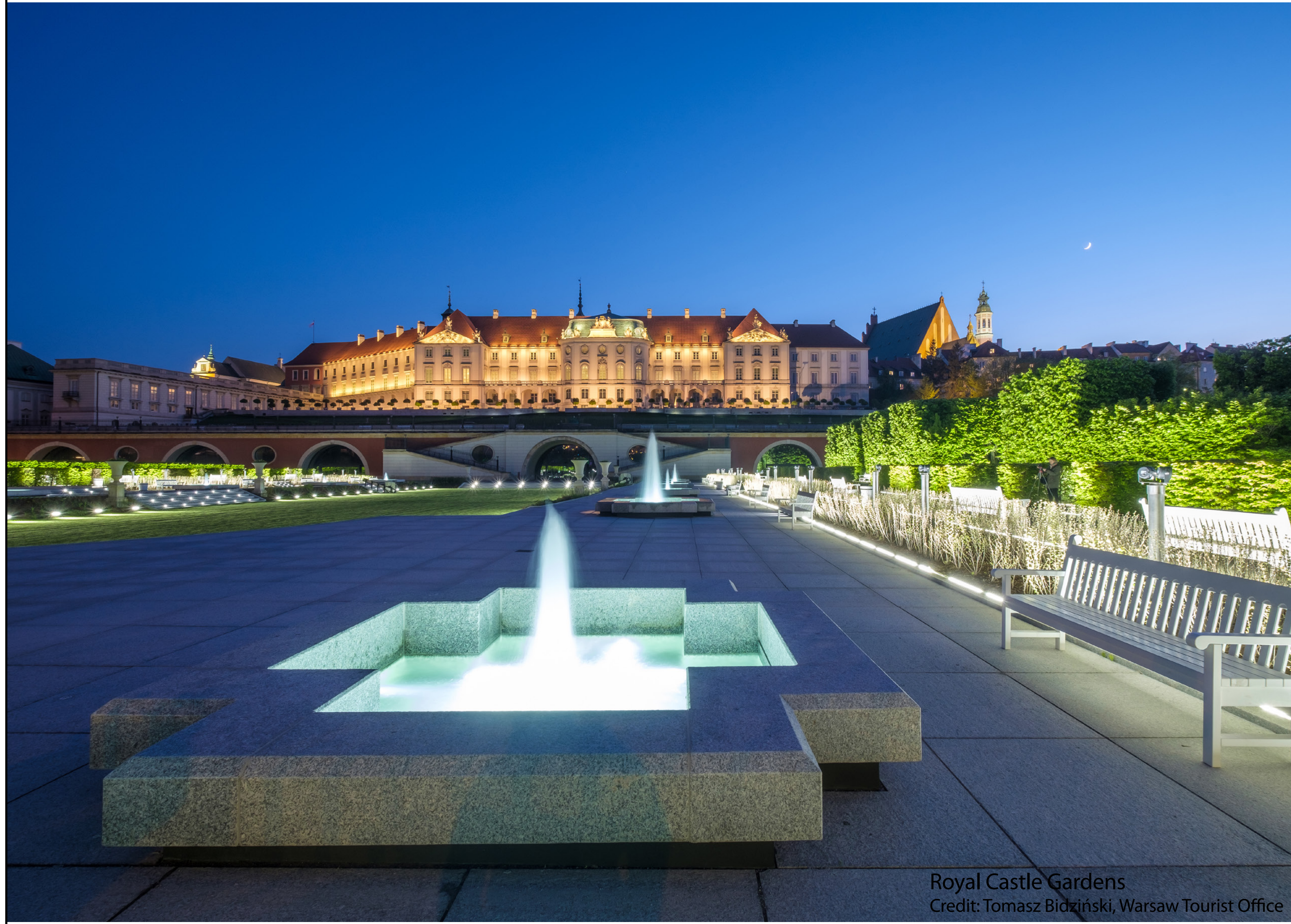
Royal Castle Gardens
Credit: Tomasz Bidziński, Warsaw Tourist Office


Polish Vodka Museum
Credit: City of Warsaw


Hala Koszyki
Credit: City of Warsaw

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RUNWAY OF DREAMS

United States of America

MINDY SCHEIER was a fashion designer and stylist for over 20 years working for brands like the INC collection and Sak's Fifth Avenue in New York City. But never did she imagine that a comment from her son, Oliver, would cause her career to take a left turn and perhaps lead her to what would be her legacy.

You see, Oliver was born with a rare form of Muscular Dystrophy. In spite of his disability, Mindy and her family treated Oliver just like any little boy growing up. Oliver, being a happy young boy struggled, though, with simple things like tying his shoes and buttoning a shirt. Then one day, while Oliver was in 1st grade, he came home after school and Mindy knew Oliver wasn't his normal upbeat self. When she asked him what was bothering him, Oliver replied, "I just want to wear jeans like the other kids". Mindy certainly understood. Up until that point, Oliver would wear sweatpants – they fit simply over his leg braces and Oliver could manage to put them on independently. But, Mindy was, after all, a fashion designer. Surely there was something she could do to help Oliver.

So, on that night in 2013 while Oliver slept, Mindy spent the night taking apart a pair of jeans and reassembled them with Velcro in such as a way to retain the fashion style of the jeans but also ensuring Oliver could manage to put them on and take them off on his own. Independence is something that most, if not all, people with disabilities want. And, Oliver was an 8 year old boy for Pete's sake. He wanted to do this! So, he did!

The simple measure of a mother helping her son got Mindy thinking. If Oliver needed adapted clothing, there must be other people with disabilities who also needed similar things. Fashion and being able to choose and wear the clothing and styles every individual desires is an extension of ourselves impacting how we feel about ourselves

> **"We need to get to a place where people with a disability are just people."**
> Mindy Scheier

Mindy with models from Gamut Management

Photo Credit: Abbey Drucker

and how we perceive others to see us. Through that simple measure of a mother helping her son, Runway of Dreams was born!

Runway of Dreams is dedicated to working with the fashion industry to bring adaptive clothing to the millions of people living with a disability. So, in 2014, Mindy set off on a journey to see where this idea would take her. She conducted focus groups with people with disabilities to better understand their unique situations and desires for adaptive clothing. She met with countless families, facilities, and caregivers of people with disabilities to observe their dressing habits and struggles to better understand their needs. She also met with fashion labels to see if they were interested in starting an adaptive clothing line and, in 2016, she announced a partnership with Tommy Hilfiger in the creation of their Tommy Adaptive clothing line. And, in June of 2016, the very first Runway of Dreams fashion show for people with disabilities was held and she continues to hold one each year. In 2018, Scheier was able to secure Runway of Dreams in New York Fashion Week. Runway of Dreams also works with Target, Kohl's Zappos.com, and Stride Rite to help bring visibility and authenticity to their Adaptive products.

So, what about Oliver? How did this impact him? Well, Oliver is doing just fine. After that day when Mindy handed him a pair of his jeans, jeans that were adapted to his needs, an amazing transformation came over Oliver. He felt less alone and since then he has met so many kids with disabilities. He knows he's a part of something bigger.

And, what is Mindy up to now? Well, Mindy said the most interesting thing happened while building Runway of Dreams. She started getting calls from all types of name brand industries – Proctor and Gamble, for instance, needed a person with a disability for a new product launch. She was also contacted by Delta Airlines who was also looking for a person with a disability for a new service. Mindy realized that there was a need for talent management for people with disabilities so she launched Gamut Management, a talent management company that represents people with disabilities to create a marketplace where businesses and industries can connect with PWDs. Gamut provides their members an opportunity to have a say in how brands market to them, create products for them, and represent them in pop culture.

She also started Gamut Network on YouTube. The Gamut Network is a daily digital talk show featuring people with disabilities who live in our communities.

I asked Mindy if she were able to produce the "ultimate" Runway of Dreams, what would it look like and what would it include? She responded, "We already have! This is the exclusive club to be in if you have a disability…the tables are turning! We need to get to a place where people with a disability are just people." I couldn't agree more. She added, "While the pandemic put a hold on production as a result of less people in stores buying adaptive clothing, it's important to support the manufacturers by buying this type of clothing. It keeps them in business and it keeps the people wearing it in style!" So readers, make sure that you support these manufacturers and retailers by continuing to buy adaptive clothing and designers will continue to provide the latest styles!

We're not sure what's next for people with disabilities, but you can count on Mindy. She probably already has something planned!

To find out more about

RUNWAY OF DREAMS
and its charitable programs,
www.runwayofdreams.org

GAMUT MANAGEMENT
gamutmanagement.com

MASK-WEARING & HANDLING TIPS

- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water before touching the mask
- Inspect the mask for any damages or dirt
- Adjust the mask without leaving gaps on the side
- Cover your mouth, nose, and chin
- Avoid touching the mask
- Clean your hands before removing the mask
- Use the straps to remove the mask and pull it away from your face
- Store the mask in the clean resealable plastic bag if it is not dirty or wet, and you plan to re-use it
- Remove the mask from the bag by the straps
- Wash the mask with soap or detergent, preferably with hot water, at least once a day
- Clean your hands after removing the mask

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

I had approached a few other organizations as part of my job search, but I could clearly sense hesitation in the minds of hiring managers when they were interacting with me. In India, there is usually a stigma associated with disability and very less awareness about how people with disabilities and also contribute in the workplace.

India

MRUNMAIY ABROAL

Amazon's Public Relations Lead for the Alexa and Echo Devices

In June 2011, Mrunmaiy was traveling from Nagpur to Mumbai with her parents. Since this was going to be a long 840km drive, they started their journey around 6:30 am. Mrunmaiy and her Dad both loved to drive, but because it was her car, she opted to drive first. They stopped off to have breakfast at a roadside joint about 10:30 am. Breakfast consisted of tea and Dal Wada which is quite famous in that part of the state. They phoned her sister in Gandhinagar to update her about their travel and just to chat for a bit. It was a weekday and Mrunmaiy was still actually 'on the job', coordinating a social media contest on one of her company pages with a team member. She needed to use her laptop so her Dad, a veteran long-distance driver took over the after-breakfast driving. The last memory she has of that day was checking her email on her laptop.

This is the day she sustained a spinal cord injury in her neck, resulting in complete paralysis below her shoulders, also known as Quadriplegia/ or Tetraplegia. The day that changed her life forever.

Her injury is at the C5 level, which means her brain and nerves cannot communicate with the rest of her body and organs beyond the level of her shoulders. She cannot use or move around her feet so she is unable to walk. She has no trunk balance or back support that will allow her to turn around in bed or sit up by herself. She cannot use her fingers to lift things like a pen or a toothbrush, because she cannot control their movement.

Mrunmaiy has no memory of the accident. She has recreated what happened based on what what her parents shared and the photographs of her crushed car. With her Dad at the wheel, she was in the passenger seat and her Mom sat behind her. A truck suddenly came out of nowhere and rammed into their car from her side. Everything stopped. At the time of impact, Mrunmaiy was wearing a seatbelt which restricted her body's movements, but her neck sustained severe injury from the collision. Her Mom was also injured, with multiple fractures in her shoulder.

Her Dad, when recounting the incident remembers Mrunmaiy saying, after she was removed from the car, that she was not able to feel her hands and legs. He rented a car and took them to a nearby hospital. After basic first aid, they were driven to the city of Nagpur for her operation. Her accident occured on 11 June, and surgery took place on 13th June. For two months after her injury, she still had no knowledge of what had actually happened to her body. The doctors in Nagpur repeatedly told her to continue exercising and she will improve. Family members knew about it, however, but no one told her the reality of her situation. A doctor at the Indian Injury Centre in Delhi eventually explained it all in a very scientific manner and she immediately came to the realization that her situation was permanent. With this shocking news came the immediate thoughts of "what will happen to all my existing plans," she said. "I had a team on site in Poland, I had visualized my life with the guy who I was with before my accident . . . My worries and concerns were immediate. I hated the fact that a hospital staff would give me a bath every morning. I didn't like somebody touching me all over. That was possibly the biggest thing I had to adjust to. Personal care done by somebody else. Thankfully, there were many people like me going through the rehabilitation therapy at the same time. So I did not feel alone."

> **"There is obviously nothing I can do about my disability, but there is a lot that I can do about how I feel about it, and how I do not let it become a barrier for living life the way I want it."** Mrunmaiy Abroal

Life prior to the accident

Before her accident she was extremely outgoing and independent, living by herself in Mumbai city, which is known for its active lifestyle, a city that never sleeps. She moved here after post-grad., and was extremely proud of herself for being able to sustain a life for herself in the city, build a career and be financially independent. She purchased a car and would go on long drives outside the city whenever she had the chance.

Mrunmaiy reminisced, "I loved swimming. I could spend hours in the pool. Loved being out and about with nature. Dancing was a big passion. I've trained in classical Indian dance forms as well as jive and salsa. Socialising and going out to meet friends for dancing is something we did regularly. I was also an active participant at family functions."

Post-injury determination to succeed

Getting a spinal cord injury is definitely life changing. In a matter of few moments Mrunmaiy's life transformed from being an independent person to someone who is dependent on a helper for basic daily living activities such as taking a bath and dressing up. Initially, it took a big toll on how she perceived herself. Confidence and self-esteem were extremely low because of comparisons between her previous able-bodied self and the current version. Her lack of confidence was also due to the fact that she had no knowledge about spinal cord injury before her accident, and was not aware that her life could still go on despite all these difficulties.

Acceptance

"Now, I have accepted my current situation as it is," she said. "I depend a lot on the people around me and the infrastructure, to go about my day, and life in general. There is no cure for a spinal cord injury. The paralysis, the disability, is permanent. This acceptance has helped to focus my thoughts on what's next…. instead of thinking 'why did this happen' or feeling sorry for myself."

Since her injury, she has worked with multiple counsellors and therapists who helped her to realize that she is best motivated and feels good about herself when she is in the action mode. There is obviously nothing she can do about her disability, but "there is a lot that I can do about how I feel about it, and how I do not let it become a barrier for living life the way I want it."

In India, you don't see people with disabilities in public spaces such as malls, movie theaters, restaurants and so on. The reason is a combination of inaccessibility and the various stigma related to disability. Whenever she goes out, people stare at her, and her wheelchair. Initially, she was very irritated by this. "Having all eyes on you when you are not feeling confident about yourself can be very unnerving. But when I look at it from the other side, people stare because it is something new, something that they do not usually see in their daily life. This was another thing which I learned to accept," she said. "If I keep thinking about what others think, I will not be able to live freely. So now I just don't bother if people are looking at me. I just do my own thing."

Doubts in the workplace

At Mrunmaiy's workplace, at that time, it was not common to see someone with a disability working at par with other people. Doubts exist in their minds ranging from capability, to how to interact with an individual who has a disability. "Initially I would feel bad about myself and my reduced body functions because I could not work the way I used to do before my accident. Additionally, I also built up a perception that my colleagues thought less of me because I now have a disability."

She felt hesitant to speak up or give her opinion. She also questioned whether she was doing enough to earn her salary. She would go the extra mile, worked late into the night, so that no one could question her efforts and output. But over time she realized that it was not a sustainable way of working. She once had to write a list of things she did at work in preparation for a review and was quite pleased with her achievements. But she still thought "from the employer perspective, why did they still continue to have me on their payroll? Why did they not ask me to leave? They were definitely seeing value in what I did . . ? And then I thought, who am I to question my capabilities. If I don't believe in myself-nobody else will." She wrote this on a sticky note and put it up in front of my desk. Having this positive thought in front of her each day helped to build her confidence when interacting with colleagues and business partners. Mrunmaiy also realized that your perception of yourself impacts how others view you. "For example, if you have accepted your situation and are committed to live life to the fullest, that is how others will also see you. I have the same conversation with my colleagues like any other, related to work or fun times."

Pursuit of dreams

Mrunmaiy acknowledges that self-acceptance and letting others know that you are happy with the way you are goes a long way. People will no longer talk to you about how sad they feel about your situation, instead they often offer to collaborate to help you succeed. "I used to love swimming and spending time in the water before my accident. On one of

> **"There is obviously nothing I can do about my disability, but there is a lot that I can do about how I feel about it, and how I do not let it become a barrier for living life the way I want it."** Mrunmaiy Abroal

my conversations with fellow person with a disability, I shared my desires of being able to do all these things again. One of them had taken up swimming even after becoming a quadriplegic and that inspired me to do the same.” She had a tough time finding a swimming pool and an instructor in her city who would work with her because every one declined to take up the responsibility of having a person with disability in their swimming pool. She had shared her interest with family and friends and a very close family member had a swimming pool in their apartment and their instructor was willing to take a chance on her. He had never worked with a person with disability, nor had he ever heard about para-sports, but still he was open to the thought of training her. “Had I kept my thought to myself, my search would have stopped there and I would have given up. For me this always stands out as an example of if you really want something, the universe will conspire to deliver it to you.”

Many similarly perceived roadblocks and questioning herself continued, but ultimately she has learned to overcome them. “I always look back at how far I have come and this motivates me to keep going on. That is why I never give up.”

> **“I always look back at how far I have come and this motivates me to keep going on.**
>
> **That is why I never give up.”** Mrunmaiy Abroal

As a person with spinal cord injury, she encounters many medical and psychological situations whch she believes an able-bodied person will not understand or relate to. “For example management of bowel and bladder,” she shared. “My injury is incomplete-so I get a lot of spasticity (tightness of muscles) in my legs and body. I feel uncomfortable in extreme cold and hot environment, for example meeting rooms and restaurants which have a very cold temperature. I do not discuss these things with my able-bodied friends or colleagues. But I can have a conversation lasting for an entire week on a WhatsApp group of fellow people with Spinal cord injuries. The reason I'm sharing this in detail is to give you a perspective that everybody has their own set of challenges that they cannot discuss with everyone. My situation has made me more conscious about a similar situation of others and understanding that they might be going through something about which I have no awareness/ knowledge.”

Helpful technology

Technology has been a great enabler for Mrunmaiy and it makes her feel more independent, allowing her to get things done by herself. “I'm really glad to live in a time when there is advanced technology such as voice recognition, which helps me to overcome the limitation that I cannot use my fingers for typing.”

On a daily basis, she uses the following technologies and gadgets:

Dragon Dictation software It transcribes whatever she says into a text document on her laptop.

A touchscreen smartphone Currently she uses an Apple iPhone which has great accessibility settings, including an assistive touch. She has also used the Samsung Galaxy range which is equally efficient. Smart phones also have a dictation option which makes it easy for her to type.

Amazon Echo smart speaker to set reminders for taking medicines. She uses it to set timers for her morning routine for getting ready. Also for listening to audiobooks, music, watching TV shows and movies, ask for information, and many other things. Some of the things she enjoys about this one specifically is that it can be used to control the light in her room, change channels on TV and adjust volume. It is difficult for her to use remote controls and press buttons.

A motorized wheelchair helps her to move around independently.

A hoist which she uses at home. It makes it easy for her helper to lift her from the wheelchair and place me on the bed and vice versa.

Working at Amazon

Mrunmaiy has been employed at Amazon for the past 3.5 years. When applying for the position, she was up-front with them about her disability. She went through the regular interviewing process as any other candidate and was offered the position to lead public relations for Amazon Alexa and Echo range of devices. Before applying to Amazon she had approached a few other organizations as part of her job search, but she would clearly sense the hesitation in the minds of hiring managers when they were interacting with her. In India, there is a stigma associated with disability and very less awareness about how people with disabilities can contribute to the workplace. "I consider myself lucky to have come across an inclusive organization such as Amazon and also all the people involved in my interview loop who evaluated me based on my abilities and not my disability."

Her work focuses primarily on building awareness for Amazon Alexa and Echo range of devices in India. "If you look at the history of consumer technology, whether it is using computers/ laptops with keyboards, or smart phones/tablets with a touchscreen interface - you have to touch the device to get things done," Mrunmaiy explained. "However with a cloud-based voice service such as Alexa, you can ask for music, information, control smart home appliances, set up alarms and reminders and do much more with simple voice commands. This is a new way of engaging with technology. I evangelise the usage of voice technology by educating users about how Alexa works and the world of possibilities it brings with it. I do this by educating/ engaging with media and influencers that help us to reach end-users."

Fun Activities

Mrunmaiy loves to travel. Most weekends, you will find her taking a long drive outside the city of Bangalore with her parents. In India, most of the 'touristy' destinations are not wheelchair accessible, so travelling with family, especially her cousins, is an extremely fun experience because they happily lift her wheelchair to get her to where she wants to be. "That is the only way I can explore new places."

Mrunmaiy maintains a blog where you can read her travel stories. www.mrunmaiy.com

Reminder to People with Disabilities

"I'd like to remind my fellow people with disabilities that our disabilities does not define us. It is just one aspect of who we are. Please dare to dream big and have the courage to pursue and work hard towards your goals. Living with a disability is not easy, and we cannot expect everybody to understand our challenges. Inaccessibility exists. Biases exist. Despite every limiting infrastructure, thought and barrier, have faith that you can create the life you want and live it to the fullest.

> **"If I keep thinking about what others think, I will not be able to live freely. So now I just don't bother if people are looking at me. I just do my own thing."**
>
> Mrunmaiy Abroal

Read more about Mrunmaiy:

How a spinal cord injury changed my life, part 1

How a spinal cord injury changed my life, part 2

Getting back to work

Disability does not define me completely

Gadgets I use

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