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Message from the President & CEO

It has been three months since we announced our rebranding to Ability360. As you can imagine, we’ve been quite busy rolling out all of the changes. If you’ve been to the Ability360 Center or the Sports & Fitness Center recently, you’ve no doubt noticed the changes.

For instance, you’ll have seen the new Ability360 Center monument signs in front of our property with the large blue circular arrow. You’ll also have noticed the circular arrow logo embossed in a frosted fashion on all of the glass doors of the Center. In the courtyard, you’ll have seen the large gray circular logo with its tagline—advocacy, independence, equality. The reception desks of the Ability360 Center and the Sports & Fitness Center are both adorned with the beautiful and modern Ability360 name and logo. Above the gymnasium floor and attached on both sides of the running track, you’ll have seen the large Ability360 name and circular logo. All of these changes beaming in our new and glorious color scheme of charcoal gray and bright blue.

As you can tell, we’ve made great progress in rolling out the new name and rebranding, but we are well aware that more is yet to be done. We’re still working on the signage for our other office locations and our marketing materials and website are a work in progress. So if you notice anything that’s not quite yet complete, be assured we’re getting to it.

That said, what do you think? Pretty cool, huh? We certainly think so, and the feedback we’ve received thus far has been overwhelmingly positive. I’ve had so many people comment about how much they like the new name, colors and logo and express their understanding of why this change was so important for us as an organization.

Also of significance, 2016 marks the 35th anniversary of the organization. I think it’s fitting that the new name, Ability360, will figure prominently during our organization’s celebratory 35th year.

Ability360 will be a point of pride as we celebrate 35 years of fulfilling our mission to empower people of all abilities in our community to be more independent and self-sufficient.

The emphasis upon “ability” reflected in our new name will lead to greater distinction in promoting our long-held values of full integration, community participation, self-determination, consumer control, consumer choice and grassroots advocacy.

Importantly, the change to Ability360 is a step toward redefining our organization and visibility in the community. We believe Ability360 will better project our mission and values to the larger community, especially as it relates to the concept of disability.

We think Ability360 will project a more positive image, attitude and perception about what people with disabilities are capable of contributing and achieving.

It changes the paradigm to focus on abilities. It is our hope that Ability360 will lead to greater community awareness, but also greater dignity and respect. We believe Ability360 will move us in that direction.

I hope you share our excitement about this change to Ability360! I look forward to seeing you some time at the Ability360 Center and the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.
It’s here! The third edition of LivAbility magazine!

We work to tell compelling stories of advocacy, independence and equality through interesting people, places and things in each issue. This quarter, we feature Josette Ulibarri and Shawn “Dallas” Hall, very different individuals who each demonstrate daily what it means to be a 360Human.

Josette is a mom, an aspiring model and fierce advocate for herself and the community. Shawn leads our new feature: “Cool Careers” as an MMA judge, radio host and owner of a home health agency. It doesn’t get cooler than that. Shawn, like our future profiles has not let an able perspective define his career choice. That’s cool.

Both Josette and Shawn live with joie de vivre and have powerful stories of self-advocacy to achieve their goals as well as cool jobs and independent adventures that demonstrate their robust integration into their communities.

In our regular columns... Employment expert, the inimitable Susan Webb, covers the dilemma of the earnings cliff. Don Price embarks on a new recreation adventure in the nationally-recognized Arizona Urban Fishing Program. Last, Loren Worthington’s regular column “Road to Rio” covers amazing Paralympians on their quest for Gold.

In each issue, we try to bring you information about important issues that impact you. This time, we cover caregiving, voting, Ability360’s shared vision with ASU to enhance employment training through a peer mentoring component and how the healthcare system fails people with disabilities. We also feature the National Center on Disability Journalism as they rewrite the way disability is portrayed in media.

Ed Roberts said: “We have three top priorities: advocacy, advocacy, advocacy.”

We can never tell enough stories of successful advocates; meet effective self-advocate Kara Kahnke, and Ability360 advocacy specialist, David Carey.

We hope you share your tips and ideas on great stories, so please share them at editor@ability360.org.

We hope you enjoy this edition of LivAbility. We’re already hard at work on next quarter. See you then!
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FEATURING

12 Shawn Hall: Won’t Tap Out  
Disability is no barrier to his MMA career

16 Peer Mentoring: Relationships that transform  
Stronger together

30 Josette Ulibarri: We’re all so beautiful  
This advocate works, plays, loves and challenges stereotypes

52 Medical Accessibility  
Is Arizona failing PWDs in addressing this vital community need?

45 Writing Disability Right  
National Center on Disability Journalism spells it out

41 Bragging Rights  
National Champs: Phoenix Coyotes sled hockey team

36 Adventures with Don  
Explore urban fishing in Arizona

Cover photo of Josette by Jerry O’Connor
3 Phil's Message
Ability360 President & CEO talks rebranding

4 A Note from the Creative Team
Always Insightful...

9 Letters to the Editor
You sound off

10 Coyote Helps Kid Conquer Fear
Phoenix meets Howler

15 Meet Ability360
Advocacy Specialist David Carey

20 Inside Ability360 Center
Our partners at your fingertips

22 Living Well with a Disability
One participant’s perspective

24 Ability360 Reaches Gold
US Paralympic Sports Club designation

25 Meet Aidan Ringo
Youth helps kids through tattoo art

26 The Earnings Cliff
Does it make cents to return to work?

28 Peer Career Advancement Academy
Ability360 / ASU partnership

35 Everyday Advocacy
Kara Kahnke takes on Starbucks, wins

38 Family Commitment
One of America’s 44 million family caregivers

40 Sun Devil Basketball
ASU introduces wheelchair basketball team

42 Road to Rio 2016
Our Paralympians’ quest for victory

43 MaxInMotion
Another successful season for kids’ sports

44 The Intern Experience
Fitness Center provides diverse opportunities

48 Investigative Journalist Honored
Casts light on restraint & seclusion of students

50 Eye on Advocacy
Upcoming legislation and advocacy tips

51 Advocacy in Action
Self-advocacy skills training

54 Event Highlights
Winter quarter event highlights

58 Independent Living
Valentina Tarango lives a Human360 life
Contributors

**WRITER JENNIFER LONGDON**

Jennifer Longdon is known to drink too much coffee, ask too many questions and then write about it. She has served on numerous Boards and Commissions focused on disability advocacy including the Phoenix Mayor’s Commission on Disability Issues, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation Public Impact Panel. Jen has a T-4 spinal cord injury and uses a wheelchair full time. She’s a regular contributor to LivAbility.

**WRITER JESSICA SWARNER**

Jessica Swarner is a junior at Barrett the Honors College at Arizona State University. She is studying political science and journalism. She is a DJ for KASC Blaze Radio 1330AM and a research assistant in a lab that studies cyberpsychology.

**WRITER KARA KAHNKE**

Kara Kahnke has cerebral palsy. She is a community advocate and holds a bachelor's in journalism and master's in counseling from Arizona State University. She has volunteered at Ability360 since 2012, and received Ability360's Mentor Match of the Year award because her mentor partnership accomplished her goal of learning to cook independently. She plans to become a Peer Mentor at Ability360 to inspire others to self-advocate and live as independently as possible.

**WRITER KACI DEMAREST**

Kaci is a sophomore at Arizona State University, majoring in Sports Journalism. She co-hosts Double X Sports, a talk show about women’s sports on the college radio station, Blaze Radio. After college she aims to work as an on field sports broadcaster. Native to Arizona, she enjoys hiking, watching sports, and going to concerts.

**PHOTOGRAPHER JERRY O’CONNOR**

Jerry is a freelance photographer helping small and midsize businesses with social and traditional marketing images. For the past three years Jerry has been graciously contributing images to Ability360.

**WRITER LARRY WANGER**

Larry Wanger has been the Executive Director of the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council since October 2013 and has worked in the Independent Living field for over 18 years. He served as the manager of Employment Services at Ability360 from 2004 to 2013. Outside of work Larry enjoys running, travel and reading.

*LivAbility* is a quarterly publication of Ability360. 
President & CEO: Phil Pangrazio

**The LivAbility Team:**
Loren Worthington  
John Beaubien  
Carolyn Quenneville  
Anja Benjamin  
Reggie Mitzel  
Jennifer Longdon  
Clint McDaniel  
Rebecca Cavazos

**Contact the Editor:**
editor@ability360.org

**Advertising:**
advertising@ability360.org

**Contributing Writers:**
Gus LaZear  
April Reed  
Frank Fuchs  
Brielle Carter  
Nicholas Love  
Vicki Staples  
Michele Crane  
Loren Worthington  
Emily Heard  
Lynn Black  
Leonard Smith  
Reggie Mitzel  
Sarah Marmolejo

**Columnists:**
Don Price  
Amina Kruck  
Susan Webb  
Gwen Dean

**Ability360**
5025 E. Washington St.  
Suite 200  
Phoenix, AZ 85034  
(602) 256-2245  
www.Ability360.org

This magazine is printed with vegetable-based inks.
Dear Editor,

The (sic) have found the magazine to be almost entirely focused on individuals with physical disabilities. Neurological or mental disabilities are completely neglected. I suffer from severe Narcolepsy which has left me unable to work, limited my access to driving, and resulted in me suffering from co-morbid conditions including severe depression, social anxiety disorders, panic disorders, and a sense of despair and hopelessness. I receive SSDI benefits which barely covers the high medical costs associated with the treatment of my Narcolepsy. There is limited support for individuals suffering from Narcolepsy other than a narcolepsy support that meets once every two months. I don’t know where else to turn to for support or assistance living with my condition. I ask that you consider expanding the content to include those who suffer from neurological and mental disabilities and not just physical disabilities.

Thanks,

Scott S.

Dear Scott,

Thank you for your letter and for sharing your desire to see content in LivAbility that addresses disabilities outside of physical ones, such as neurological and mental disabilities.

It is our goal to share stories and information about and representative of people with all types of disabilities, and as we strive to be more inclusive, we welcome story ideas from the community, including readers like you. We are dedicated to expanding our content, including future articles about PTSD and other topics that are encompassing of all types of disabilities. We encourage anyone with expertise on disability issues or with leads on stories and content to contact us at editor@ability360.org.

How Are We Doing?

LivAbility Magazine is interested in your thoughts, comments, gripes, concerns, suggestions and ideas for future stories. Send us an email and we will do our best to keep improving with each edition.

Published "letters to the editor" will include first name, last initial and city, if known.

editor@ability360.org
Coyote Helps Kid Conquer Fear

By Gus LaZear, VP & General Manager, Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center

Over the last two years, the Arizona Coyotes Foundation has been very generous in supporting the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, youth programs in particular. In March 2015, the Foundation partnered with Ability360 to host Family Hockey Night. The Coyotes committed to having their mascot, Howler, attend the event. When the announcement was made that Howler was coming to Family Hockey Night, Robyn Broyles, mom to Phoenix, a youth participant at Ability360, sent an email to the Sports & Fitness Center. She explained that Phoenix had a fear of mascots, and asked the Sports & Fitness Center if Phoenix might have some extra time with Howler at the event to help overcome his fear. She and Phoenix had been watching “Behind the Mask” on Hulu, a documentary on sports mascots, in an attempt to help him conquer his fear. Emails were exchanged between all three parties - Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, the Coyotes and the Broyles – with unanimous agreement that Phoenix and Howler would meet at the event and spend some extra time together.

When the day came in March, Howler arrived early, as did Phoenix and his family. They all met in a private area, with Center staff on hand to help if needed. As it turned out, no assistance was necessary. Howler went right to work and first introduced himself as the person behind the mask. He then proceeded to show Phoenix all the gear that it took to become Howler. Howler was extremely patient in his explanations and eagerly answered all questions. In no time, Phoenix was wearing pieces of the costume himself! Now that’s a transformation! Phoenix led Howler hand in hand onto the court where Family Hockey Night was underway!

Over the following months, Phoenix met up with Howler at a Coyotes game and at a special presentation during Duel in the Desert where Howler presented Phoenix with a Coyotes jersey. In addition, Phoenix was a big part of the check presentation from the Coyotes to the Sports & Fitness Center for a 2015-2016 grant. Phoenix has truly become Howler’s number one fan.

Where else would this be possible than at Ability360? We want to thank the Arizona Coyotes Foundation for their support; Howler for his patience, kindness and willingness to go the extra mile; and Phoenix for his continued bravery. Recently, while participating at the Sports & Fitness Center, Phoenix said, "This place feels like home." Well, that says it all. We couldn’t ask for a bigger compliment.

Learn More about the Sports & Sports Center at www.Ability360.org
Welcome to the third edition of *LivAbility*

*LivAbility* is a magazine for people with disabilities in Arizona. The free quarterly publication of Ability360 contains articles that promote an active, fulfilling lifestyle for every ability.

*LivAbility* currently mails to 2,600 individuals and an additional 2,500 copies are distributed at various locations, predominately in Maricopa County.

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Shawn Hall Won’t Tap Out
By Jennifer Longdon. Contributions by Sara Marmolejo

Shawn “Dallas” Hall carefully winds bright blue hand wraps while he talks. His expressions are elastic as he moves from deep, furrowed-brow concentration to a sly, electric smile that can charm a girl right out of her ...socks. His ear buds feed a playlist from Nipsey Hussle to The Diplomats to the Geto Boys. When the growl of Charles Bradley’s “The World (is Going Up in Flames)” bluesy-jazzy rhythms envelops him, he pounds the heavy bag round after round.

Hall’s warm, laid-back, easy going demeanor belies his animated passion for mixed martial arts. He has managed a roster of seven fighters, co-hosts a weekly two-hour call-in radio program that discusses the sport, and as the result of a five-year effort, is now certified to judge fights. Hall also lives with a C5-6 spinal cord injury sustained at 18 when he was in a roll-over car accident.

It’s his radio program that truly demonstrates his deep knowledge of the sport. Along with co-hosts Jay Pagliaro and MMA fighters Nicole Upshaw and Dan Charles, Hall breaks down mixed martial arts in and out of the cage. Each Thursday from 6 to 8 PM, Hall is part of a lively two-hour, free form, no holds barred on-air discussion that dissect fights and fighters. In a single segment, he sounds off about who he’d mash up for the most entertaining fight to discussing the scoring tactics of a “Sprawl and Brawl” or a “Ground and Pound” strategy, to the training regimens and fight strategies of upcoming bouts. His quick wit and laid-back delivery meshes well with his co-hosts. Co-host Dan Charles was the “Rage in the Cage” Heavyweight champion when they met; Hall was then managing fighters. “He’s a good guy. A great student of the game,” says Charles. “He’s opinionated and edgy and an all-around good guy.” These days, Dan “The Man” Charles fights for Bellator MMA.

On a recent program, Hall was asked for his opinion of fighter Ronda Rousey’s road back to the cage from her recent injuries incurred in her Australian defeat by Holly Holm.

“What you need to do right now Rhonda is you go in there and you do nothing but footwork and entrances and exits. That’s all you do. You go in there and you learn; you enter and exit. You stay at your range and you learn to sidestep the boxing range and get into your clinch range, cuz you’re going to need it.”

Hall exhibits the authoritative knowledge of the most arcane rules and martial arts techniques on his radio program that is required when he judges ringside. Judges start with a solid background in the holds, strikes, throws and submission techniques of combat sports and martial arts like boxing, wrestling, muay thai, jui jitsu, judo and karate. Qualifying to judge can take as little as six months; for Hall it was a journey of five years, in part due to perceptions of his ability based upon his use of a power wheelchair.

“You know people see me, and they see that I’m in a chair and they think, ‘What can that guy know about MMA?’ You have to gain acceptance, you have to prove you have some form of knowledge. People are a little skeptical of you. You can’t just go up to someone and tell them they’re wrong. You have to show them they’re wrong and why. But yeah, it was tough at first, and it’s still tough, but I deal with it. I just try to stay positive.”

Staying positive is a theme for Hall. When the Arizona Boxing and MMA Commission denied his original application for a Judge’s license, he developed a roster of seven fighters that he managed, to prove his understanding and expertise in the sport. He booked fights, obtained sponsorships and managed their training. “I love it. I was a little hesitant to give up managing; I didn’t really want to move away from the five years of work with clients I had put in, but then I remembered this [judging] is what I wanted to do in the first place. It pays less, that’s for sure,” Hall laughed. “But I mean, I like it better, managing is more in front of the camera, but I like the behind-the-camera job.”

Las Vegas and California are the pinnacles of MMA judging, and Hall hopes to one day judge the prestigious title fights that are held in those places. His barrier is
experience. He gains more and more of this precious currency with every “card” (the list of fighters for a night) he judges. “I’ll get there. I have plenty of time. You know the way I look at it is by the time I’m 50, I’ll have about 15 years of experience,” Hall assures us. To ensure fairness, the three judges for each card are chosen by the Commission 48 hours in advance of the fights. On his night, Hall, dapper in his requisite black suit, takes his place in one of the judging vantage points tight against the cage. The normally gregarious Hall focuses all his attention to the ring for each five-minute round. He trains as hard as the fighters by immersing himself in the sport. “Sometimes I’ll just watch fights on YouTube, and then before you know it, I’m hours into watching some obscure form of jiu jitsu.”

Hall shares his four-bedroom Tempe home with his cat Mr. Beanz, III – there were near-identical predecessors, Mr. Beanz I and II - and his Maltese Pomeranian, Inspector Theodore Roosevelt. His independent living is source of pride. He became frustrated with the quality of his home care help so he started his own home health agency, Roll On Rehab, Inc. He personally trains each nurse and aide before he pairs them with clients. “I teach them first and foremost how to talk to and interact appropriately with a person with a disability. Then we work on whatever the client is going to need - transfers, bowel care - whatever it is. It’s all about developing long-term relationships between the client and the caregiver and setting someone up to achieve what they want out of life.” His agency accepts private insurance and private pay.

You can hear Hall’s radio program, MMA Fight Radio, every Thursday from 6-8PM on NBC Sports Radio, 1060AM and on the web at www.MMAFightRadio.com. Follow him on Twitter, @ShawnDallasHall.

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Advocacy Specialist David Carey grew up with a strong passion for athletics. Prior to his spinal cord injury, he wanted to become a coach and eventually manage a baseball team. A four-sport athlete in high school, David moved from Texas in 1988 to attend Scottsdale Community College. Because the school was a practice facility for the Oakland A's and favorable weather permitted year-round baseball, it was the first step toward playing at Arizona State University. But David's life changed suddenly on March 7, 1989, when his roommate discharged a gun he didn't know was loaded. The bullet hit David in the neck while he was sleeping, ending his baseball aspirations.

Although he now lives with quadriplegia, David still uses his athletic drive to fuel his passion for advocacy. His work has garnered him both national and local awards, most recently, the local Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Award from the Diversity Leadership Alliance. The award recognizes him for helping to develop the African-American Symposium on Disabilities in collaboration with the Arizona Center for Disability Law. Now in its fifth year, it is the first of its kind in the country. "It's rewarding to see that the symposium allows people to know about the services available to them, and to use those services to improve their quality of life," David said.

"David inspires others because he has never let his disability stop him from working and serving others. His knowledge of the safety net systems that support people with disabilities in their most critical time of need is what makes his work so valuable," said Phil Pangrazio, President & CEO of Ability360.

David's 17 years at Ability360 have given him many different roles. He advocates for individuals, works the political system, and helps coordinate Ability360 events and presentations to educate the public.

When he first began his position, David didn't anticipate enjoying politics. However, he noted the parallels between politics and athletics. "It's a continuous grind," he said, adding that it's important not to stop advocating for political change. "The job's not done until it's done."

He is most proud of his work to help pass the Freedom to Work legislation in Arizona, which allows people with disabilities from 16 to 65 to work without losing their AHCCCS health benefits. David and other Ability360 advocates testified to Arizona legislators about the vital importance of the program. "It not only allows people a better quality of life, it has a state-wide impact because it allows people to become taxpayers," he said.

Dolores Nolan, Community Relations Coordinator at Valley Metro, praised David's advocacy skills. "He's just brilliant at putting things together and enlisting the right people to help," she said. David has helped Valley Metro improve the transit system for riders with disabilities, and is currently spearheading the coordination for an upcoming conference.

Even with years of experience, David said there is always room for improvement on his job by continuing to learn about other agencies and systems. "You never stop learning about disabilities. You never know it all," he said.

To learn more about Ability360 call (602) 256-2245 or go online www.Ability360.org.
By Jessica Swarner

The peer mentoring program at Ability360 has been building relationships among people with disabilities for 25 years. Through this program, peer mentor volunteers work with individuals to help them achieve their independent living goals. April Reed, who has coordinated the program for 10 years, works with mentors representing a wide range of ages, from college students to participants in their late 80s. The mentors are also very diverse in professional backgrounds and life experiences. Mentors work with individuals, "mentees", age 18 and older with any type of disability. Mentees may include those who were born with a disability, developed a disability over time or became disabled suddenly by injury.

In addition to the one-on-one mentoring element, Ability360 also offers a group-mentoring session and a women's group meeting, both of which operate in support-group-like settings and meet once per month. Mentors also provide educational presentations to business, schools, or community groups on topics such as disability awareness and self-advocacy. Around 40 peer mentors help with the many components of the peer mentoring program.

Anyone with a disability who has reached or is on their way to achieving independent living can apply online to become a mentor. Applicants also provide references as part of the initial vetting process. Qualities that Reed and Ability360 look for in mentors are the ability to take responsibility, the habit of making proactive choices, effective communication, organizational and listening skills and sociability.

Peer mentor applicants are asked to explain what knowledge or resources they could share or what skills they can teach comfortably to others. If the applicant is selected as a mentor after the in-person interview, then fingerprinting and a background check will be completed. The newly-selected mentor completes the peer mentor training class, learning about the Ability360 Center and its myriad of programs, as well as how to handle certain situations within the mentoring partnership, such as dealing with loss or assisting someone with setting realistic but beneficial goals. Once all training is completed, the mentor is matched with a mentee who is newly disabled or is seeking support with his or her disability.

Mentors may be matched with someone who has the same disability as they do, or with someone who has a very different disability if they have similar interests and goals in mind. There are currently 20 to 25 mentor/mentee matches in the program. Pairs are free to decide how often they want to meet and what their goals are, although they are encouraged to touch base at least twice per month.

"The peer mentor program is definitely a service that is needed," Reed said. "It's a service that can be situation-changing for someone...you just see people connect in a way, share information in a way, that they haven't before."
Some mentoring pairs simply share stories and emotional support, while others also have more concrete ideas in mind. For example, a mentor who is working or volunteering himself helping a mentee practice interview skills, or a knowledgeable mentor assisting a mentee learning to navigate public transportation. A mentor who is active in the community could help a mentee get involved in positive social activities and support groups in order to meet new people and expand the mentee’s social network.

Reed said she hopes to reach out to more people with disabilities and let them know they don’t have to live in isolation, especially since one of the program’s greatest benefits is allowing people with disabilities to be around others who may better understand them and their goals. “That’s something we’re always working on, letting people know about the program and what we offer,” she said.

Ability360’s program is a nationally-recognized peer mentor model, and April and her colleagues provide training and consultation to other Centers for Independent Living as they develop their own peer mentoring programs.

Kelly Buckland, Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living in Washington, DC, says Ability360 is “one of the premier Independent Living Centers across the country,” and he fully supports peer mentoring programs such as this one. He explained that these programs provide people with disabilities access to information most useful to them. “I think there is a level of conversation that goes on among peers that you can’t get with anyone else,” said Buckland.

### Sami and Marion An Ideal Match

Mentor Sami McGinnis was matched with Marion Scalise about a year ago, and the pair said they have made a lot of progress during their time with Ability360’s peer mentoring program.

McGinnis has Coats’ disease and Retinitis Pigmentosa and Scalise has macular degeneration. While they are different diseases, both result in vision loss.

McGinnis said she has had vision problems since she was a teenager and has learned how to incorporate assistive technology for individuals with low vision into her daily life, but Scalise said she experienced a rapid drop in vision a few months ago and had difficulty coping.

“Sami’s got all this knowledge and to me it’s all brand new,” Scalise said. “She’s been very, very patient. It’s been wonderful.”

After they were paired, McGinnis said she began helping Scalise with learning assistive technology and performing tasks such as using the new oven in her house and operating her new voice recorder.

One morning Scalise said she went out to use the pool, got locked in by the pool fence, and quickly realized she could not see the keyhole to unlock the door. Later she called McGinnis to describe what had happened, and she expressed feeling helpless. Fortunately, McGinnis has a strategy she often uses to locate things like keyholes or outlets without relying on vision, and she shared that technique with Scalise who now swears by it.

After Scalise expressed disappointment that she struggled with knitting, one of her favorite hobbies, the pair found out about a crocheting technique that is possible using only fingers and no needles. Scalise said she now continues to make scarves this way.

The pair said they also volunteer at Ability360 about twice a month and enjoy doing “girly-girl” things together, including shopping.

“We have a lot of fun, actually—maybe too much,” McGinnis said.
“Every time we get together, we do one stupid thing,” added Scalise.

The pair shared that one time they were meeting each other at a mall, and although they were speaking to each other on the phone and were only a few feet away, they had trouble finding each other.

“I have never laughed so much in my life,” Scalise said.

The women also participate in Ability360’s group-mentoring programs, which they both said they greatly enjoy.

They especially like meetings in which the participants are encouraged to discuss and share ideas on a certain topic relevant to their lives. Past topics have included the power of words, things they are grateful for, the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and what they call other “empowering” subjects.

Recently, Scalise herself was a guest presenter at the mentoring group. She shared on the importance of family and friends as a support network for people with disabilities. Scalise expressed that she had never imagined she could be a public speaker and now finds that she enjoys it. She said she looks forward to more opportunities to mentor others.

The pair attribute much of their learning and growth in the program, both through peer and group mentoring, to the efforts of volunteer program manager Reed, who Scalise said is “to die for.”

Over the past few months, McGinnis and Scalise have become very close through the peer mentoring program and say they are thankful that Reed brought them together.

Scalise said that McGinnis’s aid helped her emotionally and allowed her to think, “Maybe with this disability I can have a good life.”

Scalise also praised her mentor’s patience and her mentor’s ability to take her time.

“She’s better at staying patient than me,” she said.

“Marion doesn’t know a stranger,” McGinnis said, describing her partner. “Marion likes to go 100 miles per hour, and we’re trying to get her to go 90.”

Become a Peer Mentor
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Request a Peer Mentor
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Peer Mentoring & Other Resources

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(602) 406-6280  |  www.thebarrow.org

DIRECT - All disabilities - Southern AZ
(520) 624-6452  |  www.directilc.org

RI International (mental illness support)
(602) 650-1212  |  www.recoveryinnovations.org

Colleges
ASA Peer Mentoring - U of A
(520) 626-3789  |  www.asa.arizona.edu/content/asa-peer-mentoring

Estrella Mountain Community College
(623) 935-8380  |  www.estrellamountain.edu/students/peer-mentoring

Project FOCUS
(520) 621-5165  |  www.projectfocus.arizona.edu/content/peer-mentors

Shades - ASU
(480) 965-5990  |  www.graduate.asu.edu/shades

Peer Jacks - NAU
(928) 523-6641  |  www.nau.edu/peer-jacks/

Other Programs Providing Support
Best Buddies of Arizona
(602) 954-3877  |  www.bestbuddiesarizona.org

Epilepsy Foundation of AZ
(602) 406-3581  |  www.epilepsy.com/arizona

( Peer Mentoring offered through telephone only)

LGBTQ - GLBT
(888) 843-4564  |  www.glnh.org

Native Connections
602-254-3247  |  www.nativeconnections.org

Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC)
(602) 340-8717  |  www.autismcenter.org
FREE TAX PREPARATION

Ability360 VITA Site
Open Saturdays    Feb 6th – April 9th
9 am – 1 pm

Customers will be seen on a first-come, first-serve basis. For reasonable accommodations and sign language interpreters, contact Emily at advocacy@ability360 or call 602-443-0738.

Find a VITA site near you:
http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep
(800) 906-9887

What To Bring With You!
• Social Security card or IRS ITIN card or ITIN letter for all household members
• Picture ID for taxpayer and spouse
• Proof of all income, including W-2 and 1099 forms
• Name, address, and tax ID# of child care provider
• Amount of money paid to child care provider last year
• Account and routing numbers for direct deposit
• Copy of last year’s tax return (if available)

-Form 1095-A Insurance Verification
If married filing jointly, both adults must be present to sign the required forms

Volunteer to prepare tax returns for low-to-moderate income individuals and families for free.

CITY OF PHOENIX
Earned Income Tax Campaign
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

FREE TRAINING
• Locations throughout the city
• Various dates and times of operation
• Variety of volunteer opportunities
• Satisfaction of helping others

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

Volunteers will be hosting a VITA site for the 6th year and needs volunteers!

For more information, call 602-534-0543 or visit www.phoenix.gov/eitc and let them know you want to volunteer at the Ability360 site.
Inside Ability360 Center

Ability360 Center is home to twelve disability services organizations, including eleven non-profit organizations and a durable medical equipment company. Ability360 partners serve people with a wide range of disabilities and provide advocacy, information, resources and programs that support independence, integration, self-sufficiency, health, well being and quality of life. This unique co-location encourages and advances collaborative partnerships and ease of access for thousands of people with disabilities and their families.

Arizona Autism United
Suite 212  |  602/773.5773  | azaunited.org

Arizona Autism United, Inc. is a not-for-profit human service co-op providing services to children with autism spectrum disorders in Arizona.

Ability360 / Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
Suite 200  |  602/256.2245  | ability360.org

Ability360 is a not-for-profit Center for Independent Living that offers and promotes programs designed to empower people with disabilities to achieve or continue independent lifestyles within the community. Ability360 owns and operates the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, also located on the Ability360 Center campus.

Arizona Center for Disability Law
Suite 202  |  602/274.6287  | acdl.com

Arizona Center for Disability Law is a non-for-profit public interest law firm, dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with a wide range of physical, mental, psychiatric, sensory and cognitive disabilities.

Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona
Suite 108  |  602/508.8024  | biaaz.org

Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona (BIAAZ) is the only statewide organization in Arizona dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people with brain injuries and their families and working to prevent brain injuries.

Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona
Suite 108  |  602/508.8024  | biaaz.org

Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona (BIAAZ) is the only statewide organization in Arizona dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people with brain injuries and their families and working to prevent brain injuries.
NAMI Arizona
Suite 112 | 602/244.8166 | namiaz.com
NAMI Arizona is a grassroots organization of individuals and families whose lives are affected by mental illness. Through education, advocacy, and support, NAMI increases awareness of mental health, creates community participation, and provides services that enable individuals to be successful.

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Suite 102 | 480/968.2488
aza.nationalmssssociety.org
The National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Arizona Chapter, is a not-for-profit health agency serving more than 8,000 Arizonans living with MS and their families. The Chapter provides disease education, information and referral, assistance with employment and financial concerns and more.

Symbius Medical
Suite 104 | 602/507.4212 | symbiusmedical.com
Symbius Medical offers an extensive selection of products for most in-home treatment or rehabilitation programs prescribed, with products to match your needs and your budget.

Raising Special Kids
Suite 204 | 602/242.4366 | raisingspecialkids.org
Raising Special Kids is a not-for-profit organization of families helping families of children with disabilities and special health needs in Arizona. All programs and services are provided to families free of charge.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
Suite 214 | 602/262.2900 | azsilc.org
SILC promotes equality, inclusion and choice for people with disabilities through collaboration and public policy change.

Joni & Friends
Suite 106 | 602/275.2568 | joniandfriends.org/arizona
Joni & Friends provides ministry outreach to people with disabilities and their families across the US and around the world.

Valley Center of the Deaf
Suite 114 | 602/267.1921 | vcdaz.org
Valley Center of the Deaf empowers individuals of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing communities.
LIVING WELL WITH A DISABILITY

A PARTICIPANT’S PERSPECTIVE

By Frank Fuchs, Living Well Graduate

“I put into practice each golden nugget that I learned, and my life became more manageable and enjoyable.”

The class is called Living Well with a Disability. I took this class and made a commitment to complete the course. What an eye opener. Yes, the commitment for the entire course is a challenge. Seems that life gets in the way as things come up each week, but you will never regret taking this course.

My classmates had very diverse backgrounds and physical challenges. There were six students and two in leadership. I was the oldest and most physically-able, and yet every one of us felt comfortable in our own skin. We had a range of people taking the course, from one student who was 33 years old starting medical school to people who had difficulty simply speaking. Yes, most of the participants used chairs or walkers, but that represented their outside bodies; inside their bodies, they were smart and eager to learn better ways of dealing with their disabilities.

The process of setting goals was very helpful. Most people wake up and just go through their day, not knowing how much more they can get out of their lives just by following the steps outlined in the course. I needed the chapter on Beating the Blues, as well as all of the chapters, but this chapter was extremely helpful for me.
I could give a short review of all the information from Living Well, but that would take the fun out of learning from your own perspective. Each one of us related to each chapter in a different way, and yet, in the same way. We had open discussions in each class, which created a healthy, strong communication with each other that allowed our opinions to be voiced. We had our opinions questioned by the leaders as well as classmates, enriching our understanding of ourselves. I was very fortunate to have a strong mentor who attended this class as well as a leader that actually led.

I put into practice each golden nugget that I learned, and my life became more manageable and enjoyable. Example: I thought that because I can still walk that my job was to help others who were not as able, whether they wanted assistance or not. WRONG! I learned to ask for their permission, to ask them first. Sounds simple, and yet it is not. My life at home became less stressful. My wife has a disease that is progressive and very disabling, and I had been over-protective and did things for her without being asked or giving her a chance to determine what she could do for herself. Now, I ask permission from her and guess what? She does most of the things I did for her by herself! Her confidence level has soared and the stress level in our home is considerably diminished. Just that alone was more enlightening and calming.

Each day, I continue to incorporate more and more that the Living Well with a Disability classes have taught me about life and about myself. Since taking this course, I have a much more positive outlook and can’t wait to add more and more of what I learned to my daily life. As the slogan says, JUST DO IT! 😊

What is Living Well with a Disability?

Living Well with a Disability is a 10-week health promotion and wellness course that teaches self-advocacy, problem solving and goal setting through weekly two-hour classes. Living Well is designed for adults with physical disabilities and chronic medical conditions, and supports the participants’ achievement of personal goals. The Ability360 course is supported through a grant provided by Desert Schools Federal Credit Union.

Frank Fuchs visits with classmate Sarah Weller during Living Well class.
ABILITY360 REACHES GOLD
Sports & Fitness Center Achieves Paralympic Sport Club Gold Level

Brielle Carter, Program Coordinator, Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center

Those are words everyone wants to hear - GOLD, excellence, commitment - and the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has done it! In 2013, we were pleased to announce we received a Bronze medal by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). In 2014, we were designated as a Silver Level Paralympic Sport Club (PSC) by U.S. Paralympics. Now our benchmarks have been reviewed, processed, and approved, and Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has achieved the Gold Level in the Paralympic Sport Club Excellence Program.

In 2014, Vice President & General Manager Gus LaZear said, “We’ve got our eyes on the Gold because that’s where we want to be.” “Earning U.S. Paralympics designations reflects our team’s hard work and commitment to achieving the highest levels of excellence in every phase of our programming, events and operations.”

U.S. Paralympics has partnered with community organizations in 48 states and the District of Columbia to form a nationwide Paralympic Sport Club network.

The medals, corresponding to the Bronze, Silver and Gold Levels, are given to Paralympic Sports Clubs in recognition of their efforts to advance the growth and development of the Paralympic Movement. The USOC provides a list of guidelines for Paralympic Sports Clubs to follow in order to advance from bronze to silver and ultimately receive the gold medal. Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has its staff, members, volunteers and community supporters to thank for the award.

Paralympic Sport Clubs are community-based programs that engage youth and adults with physical and visual disabilities in sports and physical activity regardless of skill level.

There are established benchmarks for each level, including multiple benchmarks within each level for every year. We obtained such benchmarks by participating in a Paralympic Talent Identification Day two years in a row and obtaining Paralympic Sport Coaching certifications, among other requirements.

We will continue to operate our Paralympic Sport Club program according to the benchmarks of the Gold level and uphold to review them each year. We must recertify our current Gold level programming every four years, and will begin the process of eligibility in 2017.

For more information about Paralympic Sport Clubs, visit www.teamusa.org. For more information about Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center programs and opportunities, visit www.ability360.org/sports.
Meet Aidan Ringo
the 11-Year-Old Behind a Foundation
That Uses Tattoo Art to Help Kids

By Josh Chesler

Reprinted with permission from Phoenix New Times.

Aidan Ringo is an 11-year-old fan of Star Wars, tattoos, and hockey. He also happens to be the founder of CPForce. Starting a nonprofit organization might seem like too big of a task for someone Ringo’s age, but he was inspired to help others, particularly given his own constant battles with cerebral palsy and epilepsy.

Ringo didn’t start CPForce on his own. He’s had plenty of help from his parents, Tyler and Tessa, and the inspiration behind the whole thing came from one of his favorite tattoo artists, Mikey Sarratt of Phoenix’s High Noon Tattoo. Tattoos and charity foundations don’t always go hand-in-hand, but the Ringo family is changing that.

The CPForce Foundation looks to improve the lives of kids with life-threatening and long-term disabilities through art, and it’s hosting its first art show on Friday, November 20, at the Revival Art Collective. But there are a couple things that set CPForce apart from similar foundations, one of which is obviously its founder.

“It’s therapeutic for the kids, because they can get lost in it,” Sarratt says. “Also, as [CPForce] grows, it’s giving Aidan amazing people skills. I’m watching him grow as a person every time he comes in here.”

While it wouldn’t be out of place for an art gallery to host an event for a nonprofit such as CPForce, it’s not exactly expected of tattooers to play such a key role with a charitable organization, especially one involving kids. It’s not just Sarratt, either. At this year’s Hell City Tattoo Festival, Ringo was given celebrity treatment, being brought up on stage and having several tattooers donate to his cause.

“Most people don’t think of tattooers as giving people,” Sarratt says. “I think this shows people that we’re not all criminals and drug addicts.”

Of course, the focus of CPForce isn’t out to make tattoo artists look better. The goal is to help children. So far, Ringo’s parents say they’ve seen positive changes in the 11-year-old’s schoolwork, motivation, confidence, overall demeanor, and much more. Which is only part of the reason they’re looking to spread the foundation’s message as far as they possibly can.

“When I pick up a pencil, it doesn’t even matter where I am,” Ringo says. “I’m in the zone. I’m coloring.”

“The sky is the limit on this,” Tessa says. “We want to bring awareness about cerebral palsy and help as many kids as we can. No matter what you can donate, it helps. It doesn’t matter even if it’s just colored pencils or paper, it doesn’t have to be $500.”

As for the man of the hour, Aidan certainly wants to help others, but he’s also adamant about the artistic side of what he does.

Editor’s Note: In addition to helping other kids through his foundation, Aidan enjoys participating in sports and fitness programs at Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center. Aidan and his family were introduced to the Center in the summer of 2013, where they attend Family Game Nights and Aidan particularly enjoys Youth Adaptive Sports Clinics, summer Kids Camp, Children’s Aquatic Therapy (C.A.T) and evening Youth Programs.
The Earnings Cliff
Working and Receiving SSDI Benefits

Many people receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) recover enough to return to work. If they do, they can work 12 months above a certain amount of earned wages without affecting their SSDI benefits. After 12 months, however, SSDI cash benefits stop. This is called the “earnings cliff”. But what happens if you reach the 13th month and it takes longer than that to earn enough to make working more feasible?

Meet Andrew. He is 42 years old and receives SSDI benefits of $1,158 per month or $13,896 per year. Andrew has a learning disability, such that he is limited in the kind of work he can do. However, he worked as a courtesy clerk in a supermarket for 14 years and worked himself up to a wage rate of $13.20 an hour or $27,465 per year, twice the amount he currently receives in benefits. But Andrew developed a secondary disability that took him out of the workforce for three years. Now he is ready to go back to the same job, but has to start over at $8.20 an hour or $13,193 after taxes. Andrew is capable of full-time work, but if he works full time, his income will actually be less than not working at all!

Meet Robert. He is 49 years old and has a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science but has not worked since 2002. His SSDI benefit is $1,930 per month. With his education being so out of date, Robert will start a 6-month course in January, 2016, in web development to make himself marketable in today's workforce. Starting salary in Arizona for a newly-trained web developer is $31,540 or $2,033 per month after taxes, barely more than his current benefits. It will take Robert years to increase his salary enough to make work pay rather than not working at all.

These are current stories, and these are real people. At ability360 Employment Services, we hear these stories every day. These are not isolated occurrences. Some people do manage to go back to work at a
high enough level that their income is substantially more than benefits, and their quality of life improves dramatically. Some people work at not much more than benefits because they just want to work and believe it is their obligation to do so. Others limit the hours they work or the salaries they make so they can keep benefits and work too, albeit at a much lower rate than they are capable of achieving – we call this ‘parking’ on benefits.

This rule has been in place for decades although the workplace has changed dramatically from an agrarian/manufacturing economy to a knowledge worker/service economy. In decades past, a family could live quite well on a salary from a job, even without a high school diploma. But times have changed, and the SSDI rules have not kept up. One year is simply not enough to make work more attractive than not working, especially starting over at an entry-level job.

The Social Security Trust Fund that we all pay into and that pays SSDI benefits is due to go broke in 2016, prompting Congress to explore major changes and updates to the system. On November 2, 2015, President Obama signed the “Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015.” SSDI reforms were tacked onto the “Act” that moved money from the retirement fund into the disability fund to keep it solvent until 2022 while more reforms are explored. One provision of the “Act” mandates the Social Security Administration (SSA) to test a benefits offset that reduces benefits $1 for every $2 earned. Will such an offset encourage more people like Andrew and Robert to work? Such a policy would allow beneficiaries to work as much or as little as they can and still always be better off working. The project to test the offset needs to be designed and rolled out quickly. The “Act” makes it voluntary for any beneficiary to participate. We will keep you posted in LivAbility as things unfold.

If you have questions or comments, please e-mail Susan Webb at susanw@ability360.org

By Susan Webb
VP of Employment Services
Ability360

The Maricopa Community Colleges Disability Resource Centers (DRC) offer:
- Testing Accommodations
- Note-Taking Assistance
- Alternate Textbook Formats (audio, digital, Braille)
- American Sign Language Interpreters
- Auxiliary Services (CCTV, FM System)
- Hardware and Software

only $84 per Credit *

*Maricopa County Residents

Chandler-Gilbert | Estrella Mountain
GateWay | Glendale | Maricopa Corporate
College | Mesa | Paradise Valley | Phoenix
Rio Salado | Scottsdale | South Mountain

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) is an EEO/AA institution and an equal opportunity employer of protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin.
The Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health awarded a two-year contract to the Arizona State University Center for Applied Behavioral Health Policy (ASU CABHP) to coordinate a Peer Career Advancement Academy.

The purpose of this academy is to provide advanced training opportunities to certified Peer Specialists, those individuals in recovery from mental illness and/or addiction who are employed by behavioral health care providers.

PCAA offers four training tracks for Peer Specialists on specific career paths within the behavioral health field – Supported Housing, Advocating, Health and Wellness, and Supported Employment. Each course consists of a minimum of 24 hours of classroom training, homework, job shadowing opportunities and follow-up learning circles with the graduates.

Peer support services have been shown to facilitate recovery and reduce health care costs. Findings on the use of peer support have documented reductions in hospitalizations, improved social functioning, reduced substance use, and improved quality of life.

ASU CABHP and Ability360 have a shared vision to help people realize their potential. Traditionally people who receive services from a behavioral health care provider are unemployed or underemployed. They typically are trying to survive on Social Security benefits, which are below federal poverty levels. Supported Employment is an evidence-based practice to assist people who have disabilities find a job and/or remain employed.

“Many people who have disabilities and receive Social Security benefits don’t work at their full potential due to the fear and confusion related to Social Security,” says Nicholas Love, who manages Ability360’s Benefits 2 Work program, which educates on the complexity of Social Security rules and promotes employment. “This makes a partnership between ASU CABHP and Ability360 a natural fit.”

Love helped create the Supported Employment curriculum for the Peer Career Advancement Academy, serving as the Academy’s subject expert on disability benefits. On November 5, 2015, Ability360 and ASU CABHP partnered to conduct its first Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) training of 14 students from across Arizona during the Introduction to Supported Employment course. Nicholas delivered the curriculum with passion for his work in helping others who have disabilities find
and keep competitive employment by understanding Social Security benefits. He shared his knowledge on health coverage, benefits, and employment, as well as conducting a Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) train-the-trainer session. All 14 of the students plus 2 instructors passed the DB101 competency and are now qualified as trainers of DB101.

“This is a great collaboration between state agencies, community service providers and advocates to build a program from the ground up with community input,” says Vicki Staples, Associate Director for Clinical Initiatives for the CABHP, which is part of the School of Social Work in the College of Public Service and Community Solutions.

“We are expanding opportunities for people in the community and know that we’ll need to provide additional peer-delivered services in these areas,” Staples continues. “Ongoing community support is critical to its future.”

Ability360 is excited about its new partnership with ASU to help disseminate information on how individuals who have disabilities can plan ahead and learn how work and benefits go together.

“What is DB101? Arizona Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) is a user-friendly online tool that helps work through the myths and confusion of Social Security benefits, healthcare, employment and other life situations.

**Learn...**

1. How work, health care and cash benefits interact with one another
2. How to maximize your earnings by using work and health care incentives
3. About the options you have today to increase financial well being and become more self-sufficient
4. About local resources that can support you to get a job or stay employed

*Not receiving Social Security Benefits? DB101 is still useful!*

**DB101 covers:**

1. Key benefit programs and eligibilities
2. Articles related to significant life changes for youth and adults
3. Programs that support employment
4. References to local, state and, national resources, organizations and programs

**DB 101: Make informed decisions...Lead a more financially productive life.**

www.az.db101.org

“This is a great collaboration between state agencies, community service providers and advocates to build a program from the ground up with community input.”

For more information about the ASU Peer Career Advancement Academy, contact Vicki Staples at vicki.staples@asu.edu. See below for more information on DB101.
It was an article in the Huffington Post that jumpstarted Josette Ulibarri’s modeling career. In February 2015, she spotted a piece detailing an art project underway by New York photographer Victoria Janashvili. The art photography book, “Curves,” is an exploration of the unconventional standards of beauty and one’s acceptance of their own body image. Ulibarri noticed that none of the women reflected her self-image as a woman with a disability. She contacted Janashvili and two weeks later she was in the photographer’s New York studio being photographed for the book. She wrote: “We’re all so beautiful.” Ulibarri speaks with an inner confidence rare in any woman regardless of ability; so her pursuit of modeling opportunities is completely unremarkable.

Ulibarri, 30, was born in New Mexico. Delivered at home by a midwife, it was at that moment her parents learned she was born with tetraphocomelia (also known as Roberts syndrome). She was born with partial hands and feet attached to shortened limbs. “The doctors told my parents they saw my arms and legs moving in the ultrasound a few weeks before I was born. This was a complete surprise.” Her grandmother, a nurse at the local small-town hospital, bundled the infant Josette up and took her for a full examination. “They learned I was healthy, I just had short limbs.” Ulibarri had the childhood that one might have in any small town in the mid-80s. “People asked my mother why do you keep her?” But she’d say, “She’s normal, there’s nothing wrong with her.” This was just my life; my mother never allowed me to be treated differently. She grew up in a rough-and-tumble environment with two older brothers who never saw her as fragile. “My mom used to say, ‘If I don’t see you trying, I’m not going to help you.’ I learned to speak up for myself.”

Ulibarri steers her power wheelchair with the two well-manicured toes of her left foot. She uses her right arm to manipulate objects like a spoon or her phone. Her gaze is steady and she emanates warmth and confidence as she tells her story and makes it clear that nothing is off the record.

When Ulibarri was five years old, her father died. His absence still casts a shadow. At 14, her family moved to Arizona. Since that time, she’s gone to school and is currently employed in a job that she cannot discuss, as her anonymity is crucial to her work. This undercover operative makes her living ensuring the dignity and safety of other people with disabilities. “I keep doing this job because I have a voice and I can speak up and I’m not afraid.”
My Advocacy Voice

It's easy to mistake Ulibarri's quietness for shyness, but she's no shrinking violet. Voicing her needs and advocating for herself and others is a recurring theme in her life. She engages in her advocacy with a quietly measured and steady tone devoid of rancor, which makes it all the more surprising when she heatedly discusses her frustrations about becoming a licensed driver.

Ulibarri was 18 when she first went to an adaptive driving specialist. "He didn't paint a rosy picture," Ulibarri reflects. "The process and cost seemed insurmountable." As a woman of deep faith, Ulibarri prayed and believed those prayers would be answered. She continued onward, relying on her mother and paratransit to get where she needed to go until finally, she worked up the courage to discuss driving as a goal with her Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. She went for a driving evaluation and started in a trainer. "It was super scary. It was just a joystick that did everything-- gas, brake, steering... it took some time to learn."

The sole flash of anger was as Ulibarri recounted her experience with adaptive driver's training and vehicle modifications. "My voice wasn't heard. People made decisions for me." She had her heart set on a truck that fit her price range and lifestyle, but her driving specialist nixed the idea, telling her that no one had ever adapted that vehicle for someone with complex needs. Ulibarri recalls telling him "Ok, let's make history." She felt she was pushed into an adapted mini-van. "I've come to love it. But I wanted to be listened to, not stuck in what they wanted me to drive. Why didn't I get a say in my choice?" She drives her van by controlling steering, gas and brakes with a joystick she operates with the two toes of her left foot. All the secondary controls - lights, temperature, turn signals, wipers - are controlled from an iPad that she operates with her right arm.

It took five trips to the DMV to get her license. Every trip seemingly involved another person asking for another medical review or more driver's training records. On her last trip, they issued a permit instead of a driver's license, so she called the office of medical review to sort out the requirements once and for all. When the conversation was over, her office worker failed to properly hang up the phone. Josette listened as the office staff ridiculed her without realizing she was still on the phone. "The lady said 'she thinks we're going to go above and beyond for her.' The whole office laughed. I hung up and called right back; when she answered I said 'I heard everything you said.' The office worker hung up, Ulibarri believes out of embarrassment. The next day the unit supervisor contacted Ulibarri to apologize and urged her to come to the office for her paperwork. "It was still a permit." Ulibarri continued to advocate for herself and ultimately received her unrestricted driver's license.

She celebrated by driving her mother and daughter to Rocky Point, Mexico, where they spent a week at a friend's condo, horseback riding and enjoying the beach before driving home. She has put more than 4,000 miles on her van so far. Josette never stays still for long.

"Tell me I can’t; then I want to do it more."
Life on the Go

During this time, photographer Janashvili’s book was released in July 2015; a mere four months after Ulibarri read that HuffPost article. Josette’s images were featured in the international press tour; everywhere from the New York Post to the national broadcast “Entertainment Tonight” to the largest newspaper in Italy. Janashvili says the reaction to the book and especially Josette’s participation has been “enormous.”

“When Josette first contacted me, I was stunned. I had not even thought about disability as a face of unconventional beauty. But, I immediately embraced the idea. Josette flew to New York. We had so much fun together. I think I’m Josette’s biggest fan.” Janashvili found that her time with Josette had so altered her personal definition of beauty that she sought out model Jillian Mercado (well known for her Diesel ads) for inclusion. Perhaps the most revealing experience for Janashvili was after the photo shoot. She recounts, “We decided to do Thanksgiving with my family so she could meet them and she had never been to New York City.” Says Perez, a New Jersey Realtor, “The day of the parade we were supposed to have reserved seats in a handicap accessible area that I had called for months ahead of time. With the confusing blockades and closures, we ended up in a spot that was almost impossible to get to where we needed to be before the parade started. An awesome NYPD officer let us through into a prime location front and center. It was an amazing experience to be right in the middle of it all. We headed home and she met my family and the rest is history.” The couple’s relationship continues to deepen.

“Our attraction was immediate” Says Perez, “A lot of people judge and assume just from looking at her she must be helpless and can’t do anything for herself. Little do they know she can drive and I’ve seen her handle a knife to make homemade salsa with a chef’s precision.”

Ulibarri loves to travel and she’s always planning her next trip. She’s truly limitless although a person’s first reaction is to think the exact opposite.”

Ulibarri counts reading and swimming as favorite pastimes while noting her next advocacy goal is solving an access issue at her pool. She continues to model for painting and art photography and plans to sit for award-winning muralist Francisco Garcia when they both find time.

Still, with all she’s doing, there’s time for more. When she’s not playing mommy taxi and getting Jaira, her 9-year old daughter, from gifted classes to her dance lessons, she’s studying theology through her church and considering training as a life coach. “We couldn’t keep this schedule if we relied on Dial-A-Ride.” And that’s true, many days there is just a slim half hour between classes for her or Jaira.

One winds up both exhausted and excited after time with Josette. Her fierce energy and her fearless plans for her next adventure are breathtaking. She’s never believed in limits, never believed she couldn’t. “I can’t; then I want to do it more.”

Josette Ulibarri truly embodies advocacy in action, exercising her voice and refusing to take “no” for an answer.
WORK TOWARD YOUR DREAMS

DON’T LET FEAR OUTSHINE YOUR ABILITY!

ABILITY360

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Need answers now?
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Arizona Disability Benefits 101 - www.az.db101.org

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Small Acts of Advocacy Can Make a BIG DIFFERENCE

by Kara Kahnke, Community Advocate

I believe self-advocacy is crucial to living with a disability. It is important that we are able to educate the community about disability issues to ensure that our needs are being met. Recently, I was delighted to learn that my local Starbucks was being remodeled. However, after the remodel, the majority of the new tables were high-top tables that made the store less accessible to wheelchair users. After I contacted the Starbucks customer service line, the district manager for that store called to discuss the issue. She said that she understood my concern about the remodel alienating wheelchair users. I told her I was particularly concerned because the location is right across the street from a light rail stop, and near a gym built for people with disabilities. The district manager took action. Now that site has an ADA-accessible table and three additional smaller accessible tables to accommodate the needs of customers with disabilities.

In another instance, I also helped ensure that a pothole obstructing a curb cut near my home was repaired to make the street accessible. After receiving a delayed response from the City of Tempe, I reminded them that failing to provide accessible curb cuts is a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. They repaired the pothole the next day! I get special satisfaction each time my wheelchair drives over the repaired spot in the street. I enjoy advocating to improve my life and the lives of others. I hope to continue to improve my community, even if it’s a few tables or one pothole at a time! ❄️

Learn more about Ability360’s Advocacy programs and presentations: (602) 443-0738
The bald eagle soared high above the lake and banked sharply toward me so that his snow white feathers sparkled in the early morning sunlight. For the past fifteen minutes, I had been so preoccupied with identifying the circling bird above me that I hadn’t paid any attention to the fishing pole I was holding. Now that I was sure I was watching an eagle on the hunt, nothing else would have my attention for quite a while.

Now the impressive bird caught a thermal and rose high into the cloudless sky, almost out of sight, but his screech could be heard for miles. I craned my neck to find the soaring raptor just in time to witness him tuck suddenly into a dive, streaking at full speed toward the water below. Before I could catch my breath, the eagle swooped above the glass-smooth surface, dropped his talons into the water and plucked an unsuspecting trout from the current. It was, truly, awesome.

Where was I fishing when I witnessed this amazing moment? Alaska? Montana? Minnesota? No, I was fishing in the middle of the urban sprawl we call the Valley of the Sun, at Tempe Town Lake, to be specific. Very few people know that Arizona supports a population of bald eagles, and even fewer realize they can often be seen along the Salt River, especially east of Tempe Town Lake.

I grew up fishing with my dad in the north woods of Wisconsin, so when I moved to Arizona many years ago I didn’t expect to find any lakes that could compare with the sport fishing I had known as a kid; I was wrong. While Arizona doesn’t have the sheer numbers of lakes one would find in the Midwest, the desert reservoirs and canals of Arizona hold an abundance of fishing opportunities, as well as a few lunker fish. Additionally, the Arizona Game & Fish Department stocks numerous urban or “community” lakes around the Valley - one or two surely within a few miles of your home.
Arizona’s Urban Fishing Program is recognized nationally as one of the best in the country. There are 36 urban fishing locations across 15 cities.

I’ve fished quite a few of the community lakes in Maricopa County, but three of my favorites are: Rio Vista Park, in Peoria; Tempe Town Lake; and Water Ranch Lake at the Riparian Preserve in Gilbert. All three parks offer unique fishing experiences in urban settings.

Rio Vista Park, located just west of the Loop 101 and Thunderbird, is a thriving park with ball fields, a skate park and a recreation center. Rio Vista Pond, while only 2.7 acres, holds a nice population of stocked bass, catfish and sunfish, easily accessed by paved trails. This is a busy park, so don’t expect to be fishing alone. If you like doing some “people watching” while fishing, this is a good park for you. You’ll need an urban fishing license here, and you can’t go wrong with a simple set up of night crawlers fished along the bottom or with a bobber.

Tempe Town Lake, adjacent to the busy Mill Avenue district in Tempe, is also a very well-used park, but it is large enough - a whopping 227 acres -- that you can often find a secluded spot for yourself, especially on the far-east end where I witnessed the eagle capture its breakfast. The lake is a fantastic producer of largemouth bass, as well as carp, catfish and yellow bass. Additionally, trout are stocked and plentiful during the colder months of the year, November through January. For bass, try plastic worms or spinners as you walk along the paved shoreline, and for trout, try corn or Powerbait on small hooks fished under the Mill Avenue bridge. You’ll need an urban license here and a trout stamp if you’re fishing trout.

For those of you in the East Valley, Water Ranch Lake, located at the Riparian Preserve near Guadalupe and Greenfield Roads in Gilbert, is a fantastic place to spend a day fishing, hiking or nature watching. This 5-acre lake has a decent amount of bass and bluegill, but is heavily fished. However, the adjacent Riparian Preserve holds a plethora of local and migratory waterfowl, so you’re likely to see quite a show of nature while you’re trying to coax that fish to bite. I’ve done well with night crawlers and pieces of hot dog (for catfish) at this lake.

Be sure to know the regulations at whichever urban lake you decide to explore. I generally catch and release, but if you’re taking your catch home for dinner, you’ll want to be sure not to go over the bag limit. Fishing licenses can be purchased at local sporting goods stores or online at the AZ Game and Fish website. An urban license costs $24 for one year, or there is a combination license for $37 per year that includes a trout stamp and allows you to fish in other waterways throughout Arizona. Licenses are good for one year from date of purchase.

For those of you wanting to explore the lakes outside of the city, there are accessible fishing piers at Canyon Lake, Saguaro Lake and Bartlett Lake. Lynx Lake, near Prescott, has a nice fish dock, and Payson has its beautiful 12-acre urban Green Valley Lake, which features an accessible fishing pier. Another spot that is on my “to do” list is Dead Horse Ranch State Park, along the Verde River in Cottonwood. There are so many places to try and never enough time!

I could sit for hours, fishing, if the weather is nice. I know not everybody shares my enthusiasm for the activity. Of course, there are always other activities one can engage in while fishing: bird watching; reading; meditating or snacking on a PB&J sandwich. There are no guarantees that you’ll catch fish at any of these locations. The only guarantee is that you’ll see more of nature, and have a richer experience, than sitting home in front of your TV.

Although most of the piers in Arizona are accessible, there are currently no adaptive fishing classes in Arizona. Fishing Has No Boundaries is an adaptive fishing program that is based in Wisconsin and has chapters mostly within Midwestern states. The closest chapter to us is in Colorado Springs, Colorado, but you can visit their website at www.fhnbinc.org or call them at 800-243-3462 to learn about adaptive fishing equipment.

Somewhere out there a largemouth bass lurks beneath a tangle of lily pads; an eagle circles high in the azure sky; a wild horse grazes majestically along a riverbank. All of these adventures await you - now get out there and find them!

Arizona Game & Fish Department
azgfdportal.az.gov

I grew up fishing with my dad in the north woods of Wisconsin, so when I moved to Arizona many years ago I didn’t expect to find any lakes that could compare with the sport fishing I had known as a kid; I was wrong.
The National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP report that there are 44 million American family caregivers who provide personal care and supports for a parent, grandparent, partner or child with a disability. This is not only a savings of $11 billion annually in unpaid services but it also strengthens the fabric of our families and our society. Family care giving does not come without cost to the caregiver. Providing care for a loved one has many psychological and physical consequences for the family caregiver. There are feelings of joy, love, the satisfaction of giving back, but at the same time, there are feelings of sadness, loneliness, anxiety, physical injury and economic loss. But the family caregiver remains committed to keeping a family member at home rather than placing him or her in a nursing home.

My last visit with a 99-year-old mother and her care giving daughter in her 60's was particularly moving for me. The daughter had provided care for her mother for over 20 years. They lived together, alone, in a modest home. In the earlier years, her mother lived in her own home and the daughter would go over every day to assist her with bathing, dressing, shopping for groceries, meal planning and accompanying her to medical appointments. In later years, her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, and it became more difficult and unsafe for her mother to live alone, so she moved her into her home.

Having visited them years before, I was excited to see them again, as I remembered their gentleness and kindness. When I entered their home, the mother was sitting in a living room chair looking very pretty. Her hair was fixed; her skin was beautiful and she wore a nice dress. I knew her daughter had taken very good care of her. As I approached her mother, she looked straight forward with no expression on her face. Her daughter then told me that she hadn’t spoken for a very long time. I sat on the ottoman in front of her mother’s chair, took her hand telling her how pretty she looked and asked her how she was doing. Her daughter shared with me how much more difficult and unsafe for her mother to live alone, so she moved her into her home.

ABILITY360 is hiring personal caregivers to work with our consumers. Apply if you have a strong work ethic and a desire to help people and make a difference in their lives.

Apply at www.ability360.org or call (602) 296-0502
Hablamos español!
she had enjoyed having her mother living with her all those years, but it had been very sad and difficult watching the progression of her mother’s Alzheimer’s.

A picture on the wall caught my eye. It was of a man standing in front of a Santa Fe railroad station, which was located in the town where I was born and raised. I asked if the man in the picture was related to them. Before the daughter could answer, her mother said, “My husband worked for the Santa Fe Railroad.” Her daughter and I sat quietly, tears filling her daughter’s eyes as she said this is a miracle from God. Struggling to hold back my tears, I took the picture off the wall and placed it on her mother’s lap. As her mother stroked the picture, she continued to talk about her husband and family, calling each of her children by name. Her daughter thanked God for bringing me into their home, for she had accepted that her mother would never speak again. This was one of the most rewarding experiences that I have ever had, knowing that I may have brought happiness into someone’s life. Several months later, I received a celebration card commemorating her mother’s 100th birthday.

Family caregivers are commended for the difficult, but rewarding jobs they do. They are applauded for their strengthening of the family unit by modeling their commitment to family values.

Watch for upcoming articles in LivAbility magazine featuring the resources and supports for family caregivers.

Earn $9.75 - $11.50 per hour
The ASU wheelchair basketball team has made its presence known in its inaugural season of play.

The community caught its first glimpse of the team at the 3rd Annual Duel in the Desert in October at Ability360. The team faced off against other wheelchair basketball teams from the University of Arizona, the Tucson Lobos and the Banner Mercury and Suns teams.

ASU’s roster consists of nine athletes who practice five days a week for two and a half hours in the mornings at the Sun Devil Fitness Complex in Downtown Phoenix.

Jennifer Ruddell and Loraine Gonzales coach the ASU Wheelchair basketball team, which was formed to allow students with disabilities to play as a collegiate student-athlete through a grant from the Craig H. Nielsen Foundation.

“A lot of times you don’t have the chance to go to college for both athletics and academics, so it’s really nice to be part of a team whose members are really dedicated and work hard on bettering themselves academically, individually and as a team,” graduate student Kelly Goodman said.

Currently, anyone can play on the ASU wheelchair basketball team as long as they are students at ASU.

The National Wheelchair Basketball Association, on the other hand, only permits athletes with a permanent lower limb disability to play; however, the NWBA passed a rule at the intercollegiate division to allow able-bodied individuals to participate.

Because the team is in its inaugural season, it was formed as a co-ed team in order to have enough players. Ruddell said that next season the team will be split into separate men’s and women’s teams. For the time being, ASU plays against men’s teams in tournaments.

“Our strengths are that we are in shape, fast, learn easily and are developing very quickly as a beginning team,” Ruddell said.

“Our weaknesses are that we lack experience and the practice at the small fundamentals that make you into a national championship contender, but we will get there.”

Their first run on the tournament scene was Nov. 6-7 in Arlington, Texas. The team won their first game 56-45 over Auburn. They dropped their games against University Texas Arlington, Alabama, and Dallas, who is the number one ranked team in the country.

The ASU wheelchair basketball team isn’t the only team playing in the state. The University of Arizona dominates the wheelchair basketball landscape in Tucson alongside the Tucson Lobos.

Around the Valley, the Banner Mercury and Suns wheelchair basketball teams play a regular November to March schedule, which includes around 20 to 35 games per season as they compete around the country.
Over the past year, the Phoenix Coyotes Sled Hockey team has made great strides in bringing attention to the disability community, including the ever-growing sport of Sled Hockey. Through hard work and perseverance, this team has been able to expand its roster, increase community awareness and achieve the long-awaited goal of bringing home the Tier III Championship title from the USA Hockey Sled Classic.

This year, the team increased their roster with 4 new players, most of whom attended a Wounded Warrior ice clinic hosted by the PVA and Phoenix Coyotes Sled Hockey team. The three new players - Richard Alcaraz, Lidia Lopez Johnson and Jeremy Wagner - all military veterans, played a role in securing the team's Championship title.

The team took on the Colorado Avalanche, Chicago Blackhawks and San Diego Ducks in the Sled Classic games, sweeping all, including the Championship win, with goalie Matt Giacobbe, winning by a shut out of 5-0 against the Colorado Avalanche. The top three players of the Tier III division were all Phoenix Coyotes Sled Hockey players; Paul Crane led the Tier III division with 13 total points, followed by Joe Hamilton with 9 points and Richard Alcaraz with 7 points.

“The Coyotes have shown that our disabilities will not define us. We lost in last year’s championship game, and through hard work and determination, we were able to make our abilities shine and achieve this accomplishment. Now we move the bar up and work for the next level,” said Coach and Executive Director Paul Crane.

With the assistance of the team sponsors, including Ability360, Phoenix Coyotes Alumni, USA Hockey, Arizona PVA, and Casino Del Sol, the team has been able to reinstate the Western Sled Hockey League and make this year the biggest year yet with a total of 8 tournaments for the 2015-16 season. The team is scheduled to host a mini tournament at the Altel Ice Den with the USA Women's team January 10-21. The team will also host its own tournament at the Altel Ice Den February 19-21. The Coyotes tournament will include the Western Sled Hockey League teams: Colorado Avalanche; Los Angeles Kings and the San Diego Ducks.

Along with all of the team’s on-ice success, there also came off-ice success. Most recently, the team met with City of Phoenix Mayor, Greg Stanton, and received a Proclamation: declaring December 3rd as International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Mayor Stanton presented the team with the Proclamation and congratulated them on their championship win. He also praised the team for being an inspiration to the community and for exemplifying comradery and teamwork.

For more information on the Phoenix Coyotes Sled Hockey team, please visit their Coyotes Sled Hockey Facebook page www.facebook.com/coyotessledhockey
Road to Rio 2016

Seeking to qualify Team USA for Rio, Joe Delagrave and the rugby squad head to France.

by Loren Worthington, Ability360

The Road to Rio is just about to round the corner into the final stretch. For athletes, September can’t come soon enough, and yet the system of selecting athletes for each sport is just as gut-wrenching as the competition itself. Before the athletes get the nod, in many cases, it’s the sport itself for which Team USA must qualify to compete. Not all countries get to send an athlete or team to Rio. You gotta qualify. And here’s where it gets tricky.

Eric Bennett (Surprise) qualified for the archery team with a win in the World Cup and is the only Arizonan currently qualified for Rio. The amputee archer has made great strides of late. He is preparing for the indoor archery season and seeking to gain experience as he prepares for his 3rd Paralympics.

In Track & Field, Erik Hightower (Glendale), Rachel Kroener (Phoenix), Shirley Reilly (Tucson), and Zack Abbott (Tucson) will all be gearing up to qualify in Charlotte, North Carolina, at the U.S. Paralympic Team Trials at the end of June.

The senior of the Arizona contingency, 55-year-old amputee Todd Key (Scottsdale) continues to pursue a spot on the cycling team. Kaitlyn Verfuerth (Flagstaff) is currently competing on the world tennis circuit.

Allysa Seely (Phoenix) is ranked #1 for her class in the new Paralympic sport of Paratriathlon. The once underdog, now top US competitor, is currently preparing for the Continental Championships in Sarasota, Florida, this March. A win would ensure her ticket into the show.

Arizona is loaded with current members of the Team USA Wheelchair Rugby squad. Because the team failed to qualify in the Parapan Games in September, they will head to France in April to seek one of the two remaining spots for Rio. Ranked #2 in the world, they will be heavily favored to win the competition.

Also in April, the 2016 Team USA Wheelchair Rugby members will be selected. Co-captain Joe Delagrave (Chandler) and Chad Cohn (Tucson) were in China four years ago when the team won the bronze. Ernie Chun (Phoenix) and Josh Wheeler (San Tan Valley) have been on the squad for the last three years and will seek to qualify for their first trip to the Paralympics.

Shirley Reilly of Tucson will be attempting to qualify for her 4th Paralympics in the coming months.
MaxInMotion

Youth Adaptive Sports clinics introduce youth with disabilities and their entire family to a variety of adaptive sports, including wheelchair basketball, power soccer and wheelchair tennis.

Six months out of the year, the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center hosts Youth Adaptive Sports Clinics. Youth Adaptive Sports clinics introduce youth with disabilities and their entire family to a variety of adaptive sports, including wheelchair basketball, power soccer and wheelchair tennis. These clinics are not only a great introduction to adaptive sports, but they also give participants a chance to improve their skills. Local teams and individuals provide coaching expertise for each key sport: Banner Wheelchair Suns players coach wheelchair basketball; Ability360 United team members coach power soccer; and Seth Haynie from Arizona Wheelchair Tennis coaches wheelchair tennis. Each participant is provided proper equipment for the clinic and receives expert coaching, lunch, a t-shirt and water bottle.

These youth clinics would not be possible without the generous support of the MaxInMotion Foundation. MaxInMotion began supporting the clinics in 2013, and as the program has evolved, many youth have not only been introduced to adaptive sports, but have gone on to compete in junior athletics in the community. Part of the 2015 program was to introduce youth to wheelchair tennis and prepare them for the first 2015 Desert Open. Their marked improvement through the months and the resulting competitive opportunity demonstrates a truly successful progression! We extend our gratitude to MaxInMotion for their partnership.

The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center intends to grow this program in 2016 by adding additional sports and reaching out to more youth! Along with MaxInMotion, we invite you to join us!

To register for MaxInMotion Youth Adaptive Sports clinics, call (602) 386-4566 or visit www.ability360.org

These youth clinics would not be possible without the generous support of the MaxInMotion Foundation.
The Intern Experience

Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center

We all know what being an intern usually entails: long hours; little (if any) pay; and getting everyone coffee. While that may be the case at other places, at Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, interns make the wheels go round! Fitness classes, aquatics classes, rock wall, and youth programs are all daily activities for an intern at the Center. Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center employs staff from all over the country, like Montana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, California, Arizona, Georgia and Iowa, and many employees were once interns themselves.

So what is the draw and appeal Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has towards potential interns? Kelsey Bocken, Recreation Therapy Coordinator, explains, “Our Internship Program at the Sports & Fitness Center impacts an intern’s career. It is our job to expose interns to a variety of experiences in order for them to be successful in any environment. Ultimately, we are molding them to be extraordinary professionals in the field of their choice. What separates us from other internship experiences is the amount of diversity offered. With this wide range, interns can get a feel for which area they are passionate about and build a solid foundation, rather than isolating one population.”

Interns are a necessary piece of the Fitness Center puzzle. Recruiting interns from across the country ensures the environment at Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center is constantly evolving and improving. A current Recreation Therapy Intern expressed, “This has been such an important experience in my life. As a young professional, I feel that I can now take on anything my future job may hold. The staff welcomed me into their facility and made sure I got the absolute most out of this experience; no coffee errands for me!”

At Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, interns have the opportunity to experience all aspects of what makes a facility operate. This is not a place to go for your “typical” internship.

According to Gus LaZear, Vice President and General Manager of Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, the Center guides, challenges and prepares interns for their future. “Our impact on interns varies according to each individual. The more open minded an intern is in any field, the more that person will absorb, learn and take to a future career.”

To learn more about internship opportunities, contact (602) 606-2757 KelseyB@ability360.org.

Recreation therapy intern Emily Heard teaching group fitness class.

By Emily Heard
The interviewer treats the person with a disability as though they are a child. Words like “tragic,” “hero,” “inspiring,” “confined to a wheelchair,” “deranged” or “deaf and dumb” are breathlessly thrown around. The journalist’s tone makes it clear that people with disabilities are special… different; either superheroes or tragic waifs. Media’s framing can powerfully influence how the public thinks about a story.

One organization in Arizona seeks to transform the conversation about disability issues by educating journalists on best practices and word usage. The National Center for Disability and Journalism (NCDJ) works to correct these negative and inaccurate portrayals by highlighting excellence in reporting on disability issues and the people impacted.

Founded in 1998 by photographer Suzanne Levine as the Disability Media Project, it was renamed The National Center on Disability Journalism in 2002 and found temporary homes first at San Francisco State University then Boston. In 2008, the Center finally came to Arizona State University. “It was little more than a box of documents and a URL when we acquired it. We were fortunate that Jake Geller was here working on his master’s thesis on the portrayal of disability in journalism. He was our first ‘real’ director and the Style Guide was his idea,” says Kristin Gilger, Dean of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication and Director of the NCDJ. The Style Guide

It was Geller, a working journalist returning to ASU for his master’s degree, who happens to live with a disability (Duchene muscular dystrophy), who created the first style guide for the NCDJ. Geller said, “The Guide was crucial because most working journalists want to stay in line with acceptable guidelines, when they’re in doubt, they can say ‘ok, this is what my peers use.’”

“The style guide is a great tool to shape the discussion of disability and journalism,” says Gilger. “Language around
disability can be contentious; even the organizations by and for people with disabilities don’t agree. We offer a short context paragraph to offer an explanation. The style guide distills current thinking and acknowledges differences within the community.

The most current revision of the style guide was two years in process and contains a notable change; every entry has a reference to the “bible for journalists,” the AP Style Guide. “In the original Guide, we made a point of noting where we disagreed with the AP guide and why. In this revision, we found the many places where the AP guide was silent. Eye opening.”

The Guide is a balance of what the general public understands and the most current language used in the community. The Guide offers reporters an authoritative source for conversations with their editors when they deviate from the AP. When there is conflict, Gilger advises writers to ask the person and follow the language and identifiers that person chooses to use for him/herself. “The Guide confers authority,” Gilger explains. Even Geller, who arguably wrote the book on disability language in journalism, refers back to the Guide. “I rely on it. It’s a good reminder and an education on what terms really mean and how people feel about the language that identifies them.”

Gilger advises people who take issue with a journalist’s depiction of disability to contact that reporter directly, explain the issue and point to the NCDJ Style Guide as a future reference.

**Katherine Schneider Journalism Award for Excellence in Reporting on Disability**

Now in its third year, the Katherine Schneider Journalism Award for Excellence in Reporting on Disability was created through a grant from Schneider, a now-retired psychologist who also created the Schneider Family Book Awards, which annually honors an author or illustrator for a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences. Schneider has been blind since birth. Gilger thinks of the contest as a “carrot instead of a stick.” Geller likes that it shows “this is what you can do well in disability reporting.”

Awareness of the award has grown steadily. This past year, more than 80 entries were received from international print, radio and broadcast stories. The entries are evaluated by a panel of distinguished journalists that, in full disclosure, includes me as a disability advocate and consumer of news. The review panels can themselves be passionate and thoughtful explorations of the professional process of journalism and the nuances of each story.

**Evaluation includes:**

- How well the stories explore key issues impacting PWD:
  - Legal or judicial issues
  - Governmental policies and practices
  - Private company and organizational practices
- Stories that “go beyond the ordinary” in exploring the challenges and strategies for living with disability
- Stories that offer balanced accounts of points of controversy
- Special consideration given for stories told in accessible formats

The first-place winner is awarded $5,000 and receives an invitation to speak at the Cronkite School. The second-place winner receives a $1,500 award, and additional honorable mention awards of $500 may be given at the discretion of the judges. All entries are posted on the NCDJ’s website.
First Place awardees include:

2013: California Watch, part of The Center for Investigative Reporting, for “Broken Shield,” written and reported by Ryan Gabrielson. Carrie Ching and Marina Luz produced an accompanying animated video, titled “In Jennifer’s Room.”


Also notable in 2015 was an honorable mention to The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Network, created by Peyton Gallovich and Melissa Yingst Huber of ASU, for creating the first newscast to employ sign language, voices and captions to relay the news, allowing families to watch the news together. The bi-weekly show is available online and on stations in the Phoenix area.

2015: ProPublica for “Violent and Legal: The Shocking Ways School Kids are Being Pinned Down, Isolated Against Their Will,” written and reported by Heather Vogell. (See side bar for Vogell’s interview.)

“Excerpts from the Awards segment of this story were sourced from NCDJ press releases.

Editor’s Note: The article’s author, Jennifer Longdon, served as a panel judge for the Journalism Awards contest and as a reviewer of The Guide.

“So much more to do.”

Gilger’s vision for the future includes plans for a symposium to explore best practices for journalists; support for journalists with disabilities; and outreach and collaboration with the many international requests to create a version of the NCDJ in various countries around the world.

The work of the Center is best summed up by this passage from NCDJ.org: “The center’s goal is to become the authoritative, objective resource for journalists covering people with disabilities and to be the place where such work is discussed and commented on.”
ProPublica Investigative Journalist
Heather Vogell Honored

ProPublica investigative journalist, Heather Vogell, winner of the Katherine Schneider Journalism Award for Excellence in Reporting on Disability, was in Phoenix to discuss her prize-winning work, “Violent and Legal: The Shocking Ways School Kids are Being Pinned Down, Isolated Against Their Will,” which examined the use of forced seclusion and restraints on students with disabilities.

LivAbility sat down with Vogell to discuss her work; following are excerpts edited here for space and clarity.

LivAbility: What brought this issue of classroom use of restraints to your attention?

Vogell: I got a phone call from an advocate, and she was in touch with the mother of a kindergarten boy who was being repeatedly restrained in his classroom and she’d been trying to get them to stop and had been unsuccessful so far. So, this advocate told me this whole story, and I had not been aware this was happening in schools. A few weeks later, I came across a report that was put out by a Senate committee about the issue Vogell’s data indicated that roughly ¾ of the 267,000 reported cases of combined restraint and seclusion were students with disabilities. One of Vogell’s challenges in her reporting was recognizing that these numbers represented a “huge undercount that was still a staggering number that had never been reported before.”

Vogell quickly learned that the use of seclusion and restraint was very loosely regulated. The rules varied from school-to-school, from district-to-district and from state-to-state. To more clearly represent the information, she worked with others to create a scorecard that used 6 criteria:

- Is the use of restraints limited to emergencies?
- Is the use of seclusions limited to emergencies?
- Is parental notification of either practice required?
- Is the use of seclusions prohibited?
- Are restraints that restrict breathing banned?
- Are mechanical restraints prohibited?

With 10 being the best score, Arizona scored a 4.
**LivAbility**: What surprised you most in your reporting on this story?

**Vogell**: The original tip ended up not being the lede in the story. What surprised me was how easy it was to find other people who had been through experiences that were – terrifying, frankly. This was not a very rare thing that I had come across. It shocked me that this was something that was out there everywhere.

Vogell relates Carson’s experience through his mother Heather’s words: “He said you can hear them do the locks, which is how I know there were three,” Luke says. “There were times when they would put him in there, and he would be screaming. They would say, ‘If you don’t shut up, we’re going to put the fan on.’ He hated the sound.”

Read Heather Vogell’s full story: “Violent and Legal: The Shocking Ways School Kids are Being Pinned Down, Isolated Against Their Will” at ProPublica.org. Our taped interview with Vogell is available on our website.
What is the ABLE Act?
Federal legislation which created a new type of savings account specifically for individuals with disabilities, similar to the Section 529 College Savings Plans.

What does the ABLE Act establish?
Tax-free savings accounts specifically for individuals disabled prior to age 26. It will allow individuals living with disabilities to have more assets than the current $2,000 limit, while maintaining eligibility for government benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Who will be eligible for ABLE Accounts?
1 – Individuals diagnosed with the disability before the age of 26.
2 – Individuals must receive federal benefits under SSI or SSDI programs, or receive a disability certification under the pending IRS rules.

Who can contribute to an ABLE Account?
Anyone can make a contribution to an ABLE Account. This includes the account owner, friends, and relatives; however, there is an annual contribution cap of $14,000.

What can an ABLE Account be used for?
Qualified expenses directly related to the individual’s disability, including health care, education, housing, transportation, assistive technology and other related expenses. Arizona will have the opportunity to expand the federal definition of qualified expenses in our state legislation.

Where does ABLE Act legislation stand in Arizona?
Establishment of ABLE accounts in Arizona awaits passage of enabling legislation in the State Legislature. A statewide working group, comprised of representatives from more than three dozen disability organizations, state agencies, and members of the Legislature, has been meeting to craft a bill that will be introduced in the 2016 session.

Legislative Advocacy 101
Excerpt adapted from “Make Your Voice Heard” presentation at Ability360 by Tim Schmaltz for Protecting Arizona’s Family Coalition (PAFCO) in 2014. Thank you to Tim and PAFCO.

Advocacy is about relationships – do you have one with your legislators? Advocacy is urging them to act in a particular way on a particular bill. They are more likely to listen to you if they know you. Provide them with information and stories about your interests, causes and values as a constituent. Know what their interests are.

Advocacy DOs and DON'Ts
Do
• Be polite and friendly
• Be concise
• Play on emotion
• Include personal relevance
• Mention that you are a voting constituent
• Thank them
• Follow up afterwards

Do Not
• Do Not Be Angry
• Do Not Be Hostile
• Do Not Be Threatening
• Do Not Have too much information
• Do Not Take up too much of their time.
• Do Not Lose Credibility
• Do Not Be Dishonest or Exaggerate

To receive alerts on the bill name, number and progress, go to Ability360’s Facebook page or sign up for Empower! email alerts at ability360.org/empower.
This is MY Life (TIML) is an Ability360 program that teaches people with intellectual disabilities how to advocate for themselves and make positive life choices. In July, Lynn Black, TIML Program Manager, and Teresa Moore, Peer Advocate trainer, presented to Division of Developmental Disabilities provider, the Tempe Center for Habilitation (TCH) Self Advocacy Council about the importance of voting and self-advocacy.

In August, Chris contacted Maricopa county elections, received training and worked as a paid poll worker for the August election. Chris contacted Lynn and Teresa to share his experience and excitement. Now Chris can work as a paid poll worker in future elections.

To apply for individual or group self-advocacy skills coaching, contact Lynn at LynnB@ability360.org.

2016 IS AN ELECTION YEAR ★★★★★★★
Your vote matters!
Elections begin in March 2016, when Arizonans will get a chance to vote on important education settlement legislation that will provide more funding for Arizona schools. Many cities will also hold Primary elections for Mayor and City Council members. November will be the general election, and 2016 is a Presidential election year in addition to run-offs in many cities and State Legislature elections.

In order to vote in any election, you need to register. If you have moved or changed your name since the last election, you need to re-register. You can check your voter status on the Secretary of State's website or with your county elections department. To vote by mail, register with the Permanent Early Voting List at your county elections department. If you are registered as an Independent, you can vote in any primary by contacting your county elections department an asking for a ballot in either the Republican or Democratic primary.

Register to vote now at www.servicearizona.com

Prepare for the 2016 Elections!

- Register to Vote
- Make sure your information is up to date
- Vote
- Make a difference
Addressing a Community Need
Medical Accessibility

By Larry Wanger, SILC Executive Director

Survey Paints Picture of Healthcare System
Failing people who have Disabilities in Arizona

The results of a recent survey of people who have disabilities living in Arizona and their experiences with medical providers reveals a healthcare system that often fails to provide accessibility and basic medical care.

60 percent of respondents described their level of accessibility at medical providers as challenging, difficult or unpleasant.

56 percent said they had chosen not to see a medical provider for general healthcare, preventative tests and exams or treatment for an urgent medical issue due to concerns related to accessibility.

38 percent of respondents with a physical disability said a medical provider has told them they must have a friend or relative come with them to an appointment to provide assistance.

23 percent of respondents who use a wheelchair or other mobility device, 19 percent of hearing impaired respondents and 61 percent who are blind or have low-vision said they have been injured or a condition has worsened because a medical office, exam, procedure, equipment and or treatment/discharge instructions were not accessible.

51 percent of respondents said healthcare providers skipped exams, treatments or testing because they could not access medical equipment.
When most people face a significant health-related issue, their thoughts turn to finding the most qualified and skilled doctor or specialist to provide care. However, for many people who have disabilities in Arizona, the most immediate concern is ensuring they can get in the door of the medical office and access equipment in the exam room.

Tempe resident Bill Stokes says that finding accessible healthcare providers is his priority when he is referred for a specific test or exam. Stokes, who uses a wheelchair, said, “I spend a significant amount of time calling around to find a medical office with an accessible exam table when I need a test or procedure done instead of researching the credentials and qualifications of the provider.”

Unfortunately, many people who require an accessible exam table or other accommodation may not have the persistence shown by Stokes, as 56 percent of survey respondents indicated they have chosen not to see a medical provider for an exam, general healthcare, or treatment of a serious medical issue due to concerns related to accessibility.

The survey results are alarming. While the results of this survey are not a surprise, they are very troubling and are yet another indicator of a healthcare system that is failing to meet the needs of thousands of Arizonans who have disabilities.

Cindy Rogers of Mesa says that while she continues to experience significant challenges, she has noted some improvement on the behalf of healthcare providers. “A few medical providers have begun to offer intake forms and other documents online and I am able to fill them out before my appointment,” Rogers, who has a visual impairment, said she does have concerns about the confidentiality of her information, as she is often forced to complete intake forms with the assistance of office staff in the reception area with no privacy.

Unfortunately, 25 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, there are still issues that make accessing medical facilities difficult.

Thirteen percent of those who identified as having a physical disability indicated they encountered barriers that prevented them from entering a medical office. Nearly 50 percent of respondents with a physical disability said they have difficulties with narrow entrances or heavy doors while 43 percent said exam rooms are too small to navigate when using a wheelchair or mobility device.

The survey was conducted by the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council and received approximately 230 responses from people who have a variety of disabilities. While the survey may not have received the desired number of responses, the results are very similar to those found elsewhere in the country and clearly indicate that the state’s healthcare system is not meeting the needs of the 1 in 4 Arizonans who live with a disability.

People with mobility disabilities should speak with their providers about the need for accessible medical equipment, and their right to equal access under the ADA.

www.medicalaccessibility.com

Due out in early spring, UpScale is a height-adjustable exam table with a built-in weight scale, designed by Medical Accessibility LLC.

With removable grab bars and a surface height that can lower to 17 inches, patients can transfer to the exam table without fear of injury. They can be weighed and measured right on the exam table, and even obtain a fully-accessible pelvic exam.

www.medicalaccessibility.com
DRITRI
Ability360

10:00 AM / 1:00 PM
Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
Rowing, body exercises and mile run
on the courts.
Different age groups.
$10 attendee, $20 family.

Sara Howser
(602) 386-4284
SaraH@ability360.org

SR/COOKING GROUP
10:30AM – 1:30PM
Also FEB. 11 and MAR 10 Ability360 Classroom C
Cost: Consumers bring ingredients
Leanne Murrillo, (602) 296-0535

LUPUS WARRIORS
11:30 AM / 1:00 PM
Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
Fitness Room
Toni Grimes, 601-299-0592
azlupuswarrior@gmail.com

WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT GROUP
1:00PM – 3:00PM
Ability360 Classroom A
Newcomers: RSVP before the group meets please.

Amina Kruck
(602) 443-0722
JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH

Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
Wheelchair Rugby

February 11-13

Disability Liberation Workshop
Eliminating attitudinal barriers
9:30 AM / 3:00 PM
Ability360 Center
First floor Conference Center
ability360.eventbrite.com
(602) 443-0738
bring lunch or $5 for pizza

February 2

Disability Expo & Awareness Night
SUNS VS GRIZZLIES
Info: Nannete Bowles-Odell,
nodell@sunsi.com

Friday, February 12

5th Annual African-American Conference on Disabilities
Desert Willow Conference Center
4340 E. Cotton Center Blvd., Phx
Info: David Carey, (602) 443-0723

Thursday – Sat.

Men’s Disability Group
5:30PM / 7PM
Ability360 Classroom B
Explore the impact disability has on your life.
For adult men only!
Don Price (602) 980-3232

February 27th
We all need someone by our side.

When you or someone you love needs extra care, you want someone you can trust. Someone who knows the health care system and can help you get the right services and support at the right time. With UnitedHealthcare Community Plan, you’ll have a case manager with you to help you get the care you need.

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan gives you more to feel good about:

- **Thousands of care providers.** Choose the doctors, specialists and hospitals you want from our large network.
- **Case managers.** Someone to help you get the care you need and answer questions about staying healthy and independent.
- **Focus on Member Empowerment.** Members are connected to the community through job opportunities, learning, volunteering and other activities that help make every day full.
- **Over 20 years of experience serving Arizonans.** We’ve served members in Arizona since 1989 with coverage in 10 of Arizona’s 15 counties.
AFRICAN AMERICAN
Conference on Disabilities
presented by UnitedHealthcare Community Plan

Feb 12, 2016 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Desert Willow Conference Center
4340 E. Cotton Center Blvd., Phoenix 85040

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
Talilla A. Lewis
Activist-Attorney whose advocacy primarily focuses on creating equal access to the legal system for people with disabilities & individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled & Hard of Hearing (DDBDDHH).

Workshops
Special education law  Alzheimer’s
Positive behavior supports  Healthy living
Employment law  Legal ethics
Mental health  Abuse & neglect
Assistive technology  And more...

Continuing Legal Education Credits for Attorneys
Continuing Education Units (CEUs) available.

Questions:
Renaldo Fowler, Arizona Center for Disability Law (602) 274-6287
David Carey, Ability360 (602) 443-0723

www.aacod.eventbrite.com
Tickets, Sponsorships, Vendor Opportunities

www.Ability360.org

Ability360
ACDL
Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan
Valentina Tarango has been an Ability360 consumer since 2011, and she has truly embraced the Independent Living philosophy. When she moved from Michigan to Tempe, Arizona in 2010, she was learning how to live with memory complications, a speech impediment, and partial paralysis as a result of a stroke. Living with family can be a good thing, but can sometimes be enabling and prevent a person from achieving his or her fullest potential.

When Valentina became an Ability360 consumer, her primary goals were to learn and utilize the public transportation system, (bus and light rail), participate in a volunteer capacity, and move into an apartment independent of family members. With a relentless and undaunting spirit that was probably cultivated from time served in the United States Army as a Paratrooper, Valentina has gone above and beyond her original set of goals. Today she lives in her own apartment. She completed Ability360 volunteer and a peer mentor orientation, graduated from the Independent Living Leadership Academy, and volunteers in many capacities to help ensure the success of numerous Ability360 events. She serves on the Independent Living Council as part of the Liaison Committee, and she also volunteers with the Brain Injury Alliance, helping wherever needed.

Recently, Valentina volunteered at the Arizona Youth Leadership Forum, where she spent a week with young adults with disabilities, assisting with classes and events they attended. She was a mentor through the learning process for these young adults, ranging from 18 to 25 years of age. Valentina enhanced the youths’ experiences as they attended workshops, classes and field trips focused on learning leadership and independent living skills.

Valentina will embark on the next step of her journey in the coming months as she moves to Georgia, where she will be closer to her daughter and two grandchildren. She recognizes that she will be able to incorporate all that she has learned about independent living to any challenges and opportunities she tackles in Georgia. Valentina expressed her desire to get involved at a Center for Independent Living, where she can continue developing leadership skills in herself and others. “I want to be involved in volunteering and peer mentoring. I would really like to serve as a peer mentor for someone else who is working to achieve independence,” says Valentina.

A regular at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, Valentina expressed how much she was going to miss the gym. “I hope to find something in Georgia like I found here.”

Valentina continues to seize all opportunities, and resources, available to her. In addition to researching Centers for Independent Living in the Georgia area, she recently registered with the Veterans Administration (VA) Vocational Habilitation Services, as she is determined to find employment. Valentina has truly demonstrated the meaning of “giving back” through dedicated volunteerism and leadership at Ability360 and in the community. Likewise, we know that she will continue in this role...in Georgia, or any other destination she graces along life’s journey. Wherever Valentina goes, she can be certain that she is always considered part of the Ability360 family.
Ability360 owns and operates the Ability360 Center and Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center

Thank you for not wearing or using scented products like cologne, perfume or lotions when you visit Ability360 locations.