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I often get asked, “Why are sports and fitness important?”

Others ask, “What was it that drove you to build the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center in Phoenix?” There’s no short answer, but I do have a few thoughts on the subject.

Message from the President & CEO

You see, I always loved sports. From the time I could lift a ball, I was throwing it around my parents’ home. From then on, there was no stopping me. I just loved to play. If there was a ball involved, I did it. Put it through a hoop, hit it, threw it and ran it across a goal line. I loved all sports and played football, basketball and baseball as a teenager.

Now truthfully, for children and young adults, sports can be a bit of an illusion, too. We worship our sports heroes. We want to be like Michael Jordan or LeBron James. We may even aspire to be professional athletes like them. I know I did. But in reality, very few ever achieve this dream. Often sports end for young adults after high school. But it doesn’t have to stop there. We can still enjoy them, and their health and fitness benefits, long into our middle ages and beyond. I know I did!

When I was injured at age 19, I thought my sporting life had ended forever. However, once I discovered quad rugby, that all changed. Unfortunately, I was nearly 31 years old when I started playing rugby. The sport didn’t become popular until the late 1980s. I missed out on my most youthful years of playing rugby. More importantly, it was a time when I most needed the emotional and peer support as I adjusted to life with a disability.

Fortunately, today there are more opportunities than ever before to get involved in adaptive sports and recreation, no matter what your passion. Whether it is basketball, rowing, yoga, swimming or dance, the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has something for you.

Now you know why I wanted the Center built. In fact, it was built for you. So don’t wait any longer to get involved. Take advantage of it. If you are anything like me, you’ll find that adaptive sports can be life changing and rewarding for years into the future; I played quad rugby until I was nearly 48 years old.

If you haven’t already, visit us at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center. Get involved in adaptive sports, fitness or recreation. Find your passion and never lose your connection to play. It will greatly contribute to your personal growth and development as well as your physical health. It’s a great way to meet new friends and gain experiences that will last a lifetime. Staying young at heart no matter how old you are really does matter. Finally, participating in adaptive sports teaches us many valuable lessons. What better way to learn about teamwork, camaraderie and sportsmanship? We also learn to handle success and disappointment - lessons important to all aspects of life. What could be better than that?

Phil Pangrazio
President & CEO, Ability360

Photo by Loren Worthington
July 26th marks the 26th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA provides protection from discrimination based on disability, requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, and enacts accessibility requirements on public accommodations. As we celebrate this historic anniversary, the Creative Team is keenly aware that many of this edition’s stories reflect the positive changes and opportunities made possible by this landmark civil rights legislation.

Look no further than Susan Webb’s regular employment column, explaining the steps involved to request a reasonable work accommodation, or check out Amina Kruck’s legislative update, illustrating important advocacy efforts to defend and maintain the integrity of the ADA. The ADA became a foundation for future legislation benefiting persons with disabilities, such as the ABLE Act, also outlined in this issue.

We also celebrate our 2016 Paralympic hopefuls, brought to life on our front cover and in “Road to Rio” by photographers Jerry O’Connor (cover) and Loren Worthington. As we read about the numerous and exciting adaptive sports and recreation opportunities available to people with all types of disabilities, we again give thanks for the historical legislation that helped break down physical barriers for our athletes – creating opportunities for them to participate in adaptive sports and eventually travel to accessible venues as competitors – and also served as a catalyst in breaking down attitudinal barriers for all people with disabilities.

Many “Adventures” in this issue would not be possible without accessible public places, one of the most recognizable hallmarks of the ADA. Fitness, recreation and travel options are endless: get movin’ through integrated dance with Brooke Brown; explore Canyon Lake’s Dolly Steamboat with Don Price; experience the best accessible seating in Chase Field with Corey Hahn; register and exercise your right to vote at accessible polling sites; and embark on a wine-tasting adventure along Verde Valley Wine Trail.

And what would accommodations look like without technology? Learn about the latest mobile apps for students with Gene Heppard; meet a local nonprofit, Valley Center of the Deaf, a provider of deaf-blind assistive technology, among many other services. Finally, check out “Cool Careers”, where we find Gabe Trujillo typing 65 words per minute with an on-screen keyboard.

Don’t worry! You will still find your favorite musings on love and relationships with “Lopex on Love”, where Emily gives readers a raw glimpse into the hardships and realizations that dating inevitably brings. LivAbility is excited to introduce “360 Perspectives”, where YOU have the opportunity to share your own perspectives on... well, almost anything!

Happy Birthday, ADA, and happy reading to you! ☺
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WRITER GARY KARP
Gary Karp has been writing, speaking and conducting trainings on disability since the release of the first of his four books, “Life On Wheels: For the Active Wheelchair User” in 1999. Gary is a full-time wheelchair user since his SCI at T12 in 1973 at the age of 18. Learn more at ModernDisability.com.

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.

WRITER MATT LONGDON
Matt Longdon is a recovering journalist who is much better at writing about other people than writing his own biography (especially if it’s in the third person). He spends his free time cooking, playing board games and binge watching TV shows.

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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
Let's Dance

by Brooke Brown

Dance is an expression of freedom. One finds that life with a disability can be all about boundaries and limitations. In response, we push any boundaries and compensate for limitations with the best solutions that come to mind.

Some activities remain elusive, but dance does not have to be one of them. The Integrated Dance Movement helps people communicate, build relationships and find common ground with others on all mobility and ability levels.

AXIS Dance Company is a frontrunner of that movement. When viewing their performance videos, I saw dancers with various disabilities and typically-abled dancers moving together in seamless masterpieces. I applied for and joined AXIS’ 2011 Summer Intensive. Those ten days taught me that my body is capable of more than I ever imagined. Movement is a language that holds no prejudices and has made a profound impact on my life ever since.

Today, I help the Integrated Dance Movement thrive in Arizona as cofounder of Dance Mixability. Modeled after AXIS Dance Company, we build community across spectrums of age and ability through the shared language of dance. We are the first independent group of this kind in the state. Our mission is to break down the barriers that prevent us from moving and encourage inclusive dance through education, performance and outreach. By incorporating dancers on foot and in wheelchairs, integrated dance adds even more variety to an art based on creative movement.

“As we experiment and explore together we find ways of moving that we didn’t know were possible,” says Allyson Yoder, a Dance Mixability Instructor.

Dance is an expression of freedom. One finds that life with a disability can be all about boundaries and limitations. In response, we push any boundaries and compensate for limitations with the best solutions that come to mind.

CONGRATULATIONS to Katie Griffith, crowned Ms. Wheelchair Arizona 2016.

Katie is an active Ability360 consumer, peer mentor and member of the Theater360 troupe. Her platform this year of her reign centers on creating more leadership opportunities for young adults through education and advocacy. Katie’s own advocacy platform includes her role as a “This is MY Life” peer mentor and Peer Advocate trainer assisting with Division of Developmental Disabilities day programs.

She competes for the title of Ms. Wheelchair America in August. Good luck, Katie!
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When Robert Reed’s teammate broke his wheelchair during basketball practice, the timing couldn’t have been worse. “We had to go to the tournament the next day,” said Reed, a membership and outreach specialist for Ability360.

The next morning, they headed to Leeden Wheelchair Lift and Sport, a hidden, simple, stucco building in Tempe. Although general manager Jeff Ramsdell was swamped with customers, he fixed the player’s chair and the team boarded its flight immediately. “He probably had a lot of things he could have been doing at that moment, but he understood that if we didn’t have that chair, we wouldn’t have that player for the weekend,” Reed said.

A wheelchair is an extension of a person. It’s a long-term investment akin to buying a car as unique as you are. This makes finding the right shop critical. Years ago, Lee, Ed, and Dennis fused their names and created Leeden, a business that not only repairs wheelchairs, but features a plethora of adaptive equipment for sports like cycling, waterskiing, basketball and rugby.

Dennis hired Ramsdell in 1993. Since then, Ramsdell dedicated himself to making sure every customer left Leeden with the right fit. “I try to put myself in their place,” he said. “If I wasn’t comfortable, I wouldn’t be happy with it.” To him, the attention to detail and making sure the job’s done right is what makes Leeden stand out from other businesses—especially with athletes, who are “a lot more particular about their equipment.”

While Leeden doesn’t accept insurance, the quality of service makes it worth the cash-only policy. “He’s not there to sell you something,” Reed said. “He wants to find what’s best for you.”

“Ramsdell helps everyone from competitive athletes to the grandma who just wants to ride her bike with the grandkids,” said Jo Crawford, program coordinator for the Barrow Connection at St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center.

In the Barrow Connection Peer Mentorship program, those with new injuries are paired with mentors who have already adapted to life with a neurological disability. According to Crawford, Leeden was and still is the go-to place for newcomers, comparing the vibe of the store to the coffee shop on ‘Friends.’ Customers see the rugby or basketball players, get to talking and find out about their lives; some are married, some are enrolled in college, many stay active. “They start talking and it’s an automatic, great feeling. It sparks life—that’s what Leeden does,” says Crawford.

Leeden looks less like a sterile medical store and more like an auto body shop.
That's because Leeden looks less like a sterile medical store and more like an auto body shop. Tires adorn the walls of the showroom. In the garage, a dusty truck cradles a mountain of tangled scrap metal. Classic rock plays from old-school analog radio speakers nestled in the shelves above. It's a mechanical mess that any tinkering dad would approve of, overflowing with energy that makes it such a positive experience for first-time wheelchair users.

Along with the Barrow Connection, Ramsdell works with multiple adaptive sports teams, and is a longtime sponsor of "Day on the Lake", an event that brings the whole community together via adaptive watersports. "Jeff, to me, is the true definition of a good man," said Crawford. "If you ever hear of a man of the year award, I would nominate Jeff in a heartbeat." She started to tear up. "I can't tell you how blessed we are to have him."

Ramsdell's 23 years of experience has turned him into a winning combination of tailor and mechanic. Give him five minutes to change a tire and he'll have it done in four. Give him a heads up that a chair needs to be adjusted and he'll show up on the sidelines. But if given the choice between fame and sliding under the radar, he would choose the latter every time. "That's just me, that's just my personality," Ramsdell said. "[The attention is] not why I do it. If I can make a difference and I don't have to draw attention to myself making a difference, then the world's a better place."
I hold a fairly unique distinction.

I’m one of a handful of wheelchair users who are accomplished jugglers — one of very few who are capable of “passing clubs”. (They’re not called “pins” by the way, and certainly not “bowling pins”)

After several failed attempts to learn the basic three-ball pattern, I was convinced it was never to be. Then, in my early thirties, a new friend showed me an orderly, progressive sequence of steps that did the trick. I had it in a day.

He was part of what I learned was a broad, national community of jugglers. There was a weekly local gathering, and suddenly I was part of it all.

What really made the difference was my deciding to turn off the doubts my brain kept, uh, throwing at me. Yet my doubts persisted. Sure, I can do this basic pattern, but the fancy stuff I was witnessing from other jugglers? No way!

My paralysis — at T12 since 1973 when I was 18 — really didn’t have anything to do with those doubts. It was somehow just ingrained in me — and, I believe, in our western culture — to set my limits shorter than they really are.

Yet I repeatedly broke through what I persisted in telling myself I couldn’t do. Soon enough, I realized that there was no way to know my true limits until I went out to the edge to see for myself. Again and again, that edge proved further out than I thought. In due time, I was participating in complex group club passing patterns which had seemed inconceivable to me when I first witnessed them. I wasn’t yet involved with the disability community as this all unfolded. It wasn’t until 1999 with the publication of my first book, Life On Wheels, that I began building relationships throughout the national disability scene.

My experience as a juggler and the insights I was gaining from the disability communities came together into a profound revelation — these two worlds have a lot in common. Jugglers and people with disabilities — who have found a path forward — look at themselves and the world around them in terms of possibilities. We don’t let anyone tell us we can’t do what we sense we can. We at least have the right to find out for ourselves.

I never believed I could be an accomplished juggler. Nor would I have believed I would live for 43 years as a wheelchair user and achieve what I have.

This, I think, is the essence of the disability experience, so much akin to juggling. Not as an effort to “keep balls in the air”, but to get aligned with the natural patterns of our lives, and allow the possibilities to unfold. Anything I’ve done was simply there to do. The rest was up to me.
Welcome to the newest 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 3,400 copies are distributed at various locations, predominately in Maricopa County.

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“It’s a little obvious,” he said. “You don’t have to work in the disability community just because you have a disability.”

My heart sank. I had just told him I interviewed for a position at a Center for Independent Living. I was always his biggest cheerleader, but he was so rarely mine.

His discomfort and pity towards my disability was oppressive. The more I revealed about my disability, the more I apologized. Like the disability was somehow my fault.

I got the job. It didn’t take long for me to see that I am an advocate in every sense of the word, but I struggled to reconcile my disability pride with my love for him. He was an ableist, rejoicing in the “disability superhero” fanfare while making off-handed comments that whittled our worth down to what he perceived we were actually capable of. While I challenged ableism in others, he had a space in my heart no one had ever had access to. I kept hoping for the day he would practice acceptance, but that day never came.

Keep in mind that the person born with an unshakeable sense of self-confidence is a rarity. For many of us, learning to love ourselves and the cards we’ve been dealt is a life-long process, and not without stumbling.

In June 2014 we had our last conversation, a recounting of everything that had happened between us.

“I think your disability is a flaw about you that you need to get over.”

Those words echoed in my head long after he said them. I grieved them long after he was out of my life. Within six months, I quit my job and decided to pursue a childhood dream of being a zookeeper. While he wasn’t the main reason I made that choice, I won’t lie and say he wasn’t a factor. He represented every slur, taunt and oppressive thought I had ever experienced.

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A Reader Responds

I have arthrogryposis in my arms and I knew I looked a lot different than other boys. I always talked to girls in my classes as I grew up, but I was always too shy. When a girl actually liked me, I never really truly believed it. In my head I was like “Why me? It’s a trick.” I probably blew a lot of great friendships and possible relationships because I never thought of myself as boyfriend material. I guess in my mind I never tried to be equal to everybody. I always strived to be the best. I never thought girls would really like me because of my handicap but now as a 40-something, I realize I was wrong the whole time. In my late 20’s, I went all in with a woman and now we are 13 years into an awesome marriage. I always had the focus of success. I have every college degree besides a doctorate, but now I realize my young beautiful family is my greatest achievement. —David S.

Emily Lopex has a reputation for being overly assertive and an almost irrational love of the chocolate-frosted donut. Her legislative advocacy journey started at 15, under the guidance of teachers who wanted to curb her enthusiasm for debate (read: arguing openly in class) into something more productive. Currently, Emily is an active participant in the disability community as the Advocacy Support Specialist for Ability360.

If I finally lived up to his expectations, somehow I’d finally let go of all the hurt I carried. So I denied my purpose and pushed towards this new dream.

I was staring at myself in the bathroom mirror in the Herpetology Department, my body drenched in sweat from climbing in and out of reptile enclosures, when the repression shattered within me. I wore no makeup and my hair clung to my face in oily patches, but all I saw was my radiant soul as I realized I couldn’t give in to the negativity and summoned the woman within me who’s never given up, who never let go of the reality that she is worthy.

My disability is not my fault. It wasn’t, and never will be, something I have to apologize for or justify to another person.

I began to press into joy, to let go of what ableism had done to my soul. Ableism is a war worth fighting against. Never again can I stand idly by while society determines our steps and tells our stories.

Not long after that day, I was driving down the freeway to Phoenix, everything I owned loaded in the trunk of my car. Going back to my former CIL position wasn’t an option, but I could, by grace, start anew. Ability360 was the first place I applied.

Something in me has changed, been made new. There is a love out there that I will not have to earn. Although I once never believed that, I do now. And I will not have to qualify my disability in order to experience that love.

If I finally lived up to his expectations, somehow I’d finally let go of all the hurt I carried. So I denied my purpose and pushed towards this new dream.

All I saw was my radiant soul as I realized I couldn’t give in to the negativity and summoned the woman within me who’s never given up, who never let go of the reality that she is worthy.

Reach Emily at AskEmily@ability360.org with your stories of love and life.
After growing up watching the X-Files, Gabe Trujillo thought he would work for the FBI. Today, he may not be at odd crime scenes hunting the same truths as Mulder and Scully, but he’s still looking for the truth as a journalist for 12 News.

Trujillo, 32, became the social media producer for 12 News in December. He spends the day creating and sharing content for 12 News’ social media pages like Facebook, talking to followers and preparing content for the 12 News website.

“It’s really neat to see a story you wrote and posted online, see people react to and say how cool it is,” Trujillo said. “It’s rewarding when you put effort and energy into stories and people share positive comments that you’ve done a good job.”

Trujillo has severe asthma and one night in September of 1997, he was rushed to the hospital during an intense asthma attack. While in the emergency room, he slipped into a coma and when he woke up four days later, he couldn’t move his arms or legs. After a few different diagnoses, doctors in 2001 diagnosed him with Hopkins Syndrome, a rare form of polio that can be found in people with asthma and cause paralysis after severe attacks. There are fewer than 30 reported cases, and he is the only documented person with all four limbs affected.

While he can still move his hands, he’s not able to move his arms, so typing with a standard keyboard is possible, but a slow process. Instead, he uses the on-screen keyboard built into most computers, which allows him to type with the mouse. He can type about 65 words a minute using the on-screen keyboard; the average typing speed is around 40 words per minute.

“I don’t know if I would be able to be as effective or even be able to do the job if it weren’t for the new technology that’s come out. Definitely, the on-screen keyboard has been a lifesaver. Without that, I’d be hunting and pecking forever. Before that, I just used a normal physical keyboard and drove my wheelchair back and forth and maneuvered my arm just so it went over the keys to type.”

The on-screen keyboard is the only adaptive technology he’s ever asked for at his jobs. Voice recognition software is another tool he’s used, but Trujillo said he hasn’t had the best experience with it and he needs to be in a silent room for it to work optimally. Newsrooms are rarely quiet.

His love for social media came when he began using Facebook while attending Arizona State University to connect with friends, and then he realized it was also a platform to share messages with the world. His first job out of college was teaching English for an online high school, but he soon moved to the marketing department
to help grow their presence online. He worked for another marketing company after that, helping car dealers share their messaging on social media.

Trujillo graduated from ASU with a journalism degree, so a position announcement at 12 News presented a perfect fit. As a social media producer for a large media company, he's in a position to share messages with people he may not have reached before.

“One thing I've noticed is the way people with disabilities are portrayed in the media. A lot of times they're portrayed as the victim or as someone who isn't on the same level as able-bodied people. I think my position gives me a unique ability to showcase that people with disabilities have more depth and have very different perspectives and stories that need to be told.”

#NewChallenges
While he only needed the on-screen keyboard for day-to-day work, the new job has come with its own challenges.

The biggest challenge, he says, is the elevator. He works on the seventh floor of the 12 News building located in downtown Phoenix. His dad drives him to work in the morning for his 4:00am start time and helps him get to his desk. Leaving, however, is where the challenge rises, because he's not able to hit the buttons well. He said he can sometimes hit the call button with his head, but once he's in the elevator, he can't press the floor button.

"More often than not, I've gotten inside, I haven't been able to touch a button so I'm essentially stuck in the elevator. Luckily, it's a busy building so I don't have to wait too long until someone comes in and I ask them to hit the button for me, and I just have to wait a little longer to get to the ground floor."

That 4:00am start time can also be a challenge--besides meaning he has to wake up around 2:00am--because when he gets off at 1:00pm, the friends and family who can pick him up in his van are working. He uses Uber WAV (Uber's wheelchair accessible vehicles) several days a week to get home, but he needs to schedule the ride a few hours in advance. If he needs to work late, he has to cancel the ride and schedule another way to get home. While taxis are an option, he says they're usually more expensive than Uber WAV.

One of the other challenges he faces is lunch. Because he can't move his arms, he needs help eating. He tries to plan for a friend or family member to join him for lunch, but if it doesn't work out, he doesn't eat until he gets home.

Trujillo faces the challenges with a positive attitude and open mind. Now, he can share stories from his unique perspective to bring to light a community that is often overlooked.

"We're as much a part of the community as anyone else and these issues need to be given the same emphasis and respect like any mainstream news story would."

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PRIMARY ELECTION: AUGUST 8 - AUGUST 26, 2016
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As temperatures in Phoenix climbed to triple digits, participants in the Ability360 Wounded Warrior Project enjoyed a challenging weekend of hiking, kayaking and paddle boarding in the pleasantly cooler San Bernardino Mountains.

The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has served as a Physical Health and Wellness Provider for the Wounded Warrior Project since 2013. Wounded Warrior Alumni-sponsored memberships cover full access to the Center, personal training sessions and access to the outdoor adventure programs offered regionally.

After kayak orientation in the Ability360 pools, the Warriors enjoyed weekly trips to Bartlett Lake and Lake Pleasant to improve their overall health and wellness and sharpen their skills and endurance with an eye toward a trip to Big Bear Lake, CA, in May.

Angel Flight West flew the Warriors from local airports to Big Bear Lake, CA. (See sidebar to learn more about this remarkable program.)

This trip was a great collaboration between the Wounded Warrior Project Physical Health and Wellness program, Ability360, United States Adaptive Recreation Center (providing the Big Bear Lake activities) and the volunteer pilots of Angel Flight West. Big thanks to Arizona Disabled Sports for stepping up to provide the kayak facilitation in Arizona to prep the Warriors for this awesome adventure! Great teamwork!

Post-911 veterans registered as WWP alumni are eligible for our Wounded Warrior Project. The WWP program includes fitness, nutrition, wellness, hiking, kayaking, camaraderie and peer contact. We also offer our Military Access Pass to all current and past military members for a $25 annual fee. The MAP program offers unlimited facility access and discounts on personal training sessions.

Angel Flight West is a volunteer pilot organization based in Santa Monica, CA, linking private aircraft and commercial airline partners with people in need. The costs of all flights are donated. Angel Flight West arranges free air transportation for people who need to access medical care and other humanitarian purposes.

Call (602) 386-4566 and ask for Sarah Olson, Military Program Coordinator at Ability360 for more information.
Book Review

My Heart Can’t Even Believe It:
A Story of Science, Love and Down Syndrome

Book Author: Amy Silverman
Review by: Maureen A. Mills,
Communications Coordinator
Raising Special Kids

Let me start with this disclaimer: I’ve always been a sucker for the smart + funny combo. When you add in a smattering of profanity, I’m a goner. For those traits and more, author Amy Silverman is the most recent object of my affection for her newly-published memoir, My Heart Can’t Even Believe It: A Story of Science, Love and Down Syndrome (Woodbine House).

The book is Silverman’s first and explores her relationship with her younger daughter Sophie, who has Down syndrome. I’ve been the mother of a son with Down syndrome for eighteen years, and I have read my fair share of books surrounding the subject, both fiction and nonfiction.

As the managing editor of the Phoenix New Times, Silverman has decades of reporting experience. This book showcases the author’s ability to look at her circumstances from two perspectives: the curious, cool-headed journalist looking for answers and the determined, loving mother who celebrates her spirited daughter.

Silverman is willing to expose her own vulnerabilities and insecurities without resorting to the platitudes heard so often by families who have children with unexpected diagnoses. Silverman wants facts and explanations, and tenaciously digs for answers in places many of us, without her considerable skills as a journalist, would overlook.

Silverman’s book is educational, funny, surprising and sweet; an honest and open exploration of her relationship with Sophie and with Down syndrome. And, as she makes perfectly clear, although these two facts may be inextricably entwined, the latter does not define the former. The book is less about Down syndrome and more about how the author, as she so eloquently wrote in the book’s first chapter, “morphed from a spoiled, self-centered brat… into [a] mother;” the type of transformation which, I daresay, many parents will recognize.

Reach Amy Silverman at www.myheartcantevenbelieveit.com
With flexible seating, ample headroom, and enough floor space to execute a full 360° turn, VMI vans offer enough room for the entire family, and allow even the largest power wheelchairs to maneuver with comfort and ease.
I Quit My Job

Could I have asked for a reasonable accommodation instead?

**Q.** I recently quit my job because I need an extra 15-minute break each day to attend to a medical condition I have. I've been told I could have asked for a "reasonable accommodation" instead. Since I will need this additional break on any job I work, is this accommodation thing real? Or should I expect that this barrier will keep me from ever working again? I really liked that job.

**A.** Unfortunately, this happens all too often. We look at job descriptions to apply for jobs and see the wording on the bottom: "Reasonable accommodation for a disability will be provided." But we do not know what that means. So yes, reasonable accommodation is a real thing.

In most cases, an employee will not know until they are actually doing the job that they need an accommodation. Or they may not have had a disability when they started the job, but acquired it later. Believe it or not, the need for extra breaks is a common request.

**Q.** So tell me about this. Is it some sort of employment right?

**A.** You have a legal right to a "reasonable" accommodation if you have the knowledge, skills, ability, education and experience to perform the major tasks of the job you seek. An employer cannot deny you the job or deny helping you keep it just because of your disability. You are not entitled to the job, but you must be evaluated and considered like all other applicants who do not have a disability.

If you discover the need for an accommodation after you are hired, the law requires that your employer make the accommodation then too.

**Q.** What about the extra break I need? Is that considered "reasonable"?

**A.** That sounds like a reasonable accommodation for almost any employer. But any accommodation's reasonableness depends on the size of the business, its financial capacity, and whether there are other workers available to do the tasks you would not do during that extra 15 minutes each day.

**Q.** What are the steps involved in my example?

**A.** The process is similar for most accommodations. Any accommodation request, discussions about what might be needed, and the final decision must be done with you involved at each step. Most employers are familiar with these processes, but you need to know them more than anyone.

Here is what you should do to make the request and maintain control of the process. After all, it is your job and your disability. Who knows more about the way those two factors intersect than you?

1. **To qualify for an accommodation, you must first prove you have a disability.** Start by visiting the Ability360 website at www.ability360.org. Under "Employment" in the drop-down menu, click on the webinar entitled "Disability Disclosure in Employment." This webinar covers when disclosing your disability (or not) makes sense. For example, you should disclose your disability when requesting a reasonable accommodation.

2. **Evaluate the job you do and what the accommodation request specifically requires.** You are the one who knows the nuances of the job and how your disability impacts that. Be specific and include a clear solution that is based on your knowledge of the job and your disability. Your request should focus on the job tasks and the accommodation needed to do the job task – not on your disability.

Consider these two requests for the same accommodation:

- I am requesting a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I have diabetes and need additional breaks to test my blood sugar and administer an insulin injection.

- I am requesting a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I need one extra 15-minute break during each workday at 3 pm. I need to leave my workstation to travel to the nearest restroom in the northwest section of our building that affords the availability and privacy I need. I would be willing to stay 15 minutes later at the end of the day to make up the time.
The first example requires the employer to make judgments about your disability based on his or her knowledge of your diabetes (medical diagnosis). It does not tell the employer the specifics of what you need for the break such as the time and the environment needed.

The second example is specific about the need for a break without mentioning the disability itself. It takes all the judgement about the disability out of the conversation and focuses instead on how to change your work environment so you can perform your job.

3. Make your request to whoever handles personnel matters within the company, not your immediate supervisor.

4. Write your initial request in the format illustrated. A simple paragraph in an e-mail will suffice. Your HR contact at the company will likely have a form for you to complete and will delineate and start the more formal process.

5. Your employer may ask for a doctor’s statement to validate your disability. When requesting this from your doctor, you should take the following documents with you to the appointment:
   a) the written request for the accommodation you submitted;
   b) a detailed copy of your job description; and
   c) any photographs or descriptions of the workplace. Unless you provide enough information with the documents specified here, the doctor cannot be of much help to you or the employer.

6. Once you get the doctor’s note (make sure you keep a copy) and fill out any other forms given to you by your employer and you have clearly expressed what you need, the process should be pretty simple. Most accommodation requests are not expensive or difficult. Your approach should be one where you:
   a) have thoroughly thought out what you need;
   b) expect to get cooperation from your HR representative and that it will not be adversarial;
   c) expect it will not take a long time and have clearly asked how long the request will take to get approval;
   d) stay on top of the request yourself and do not wait for others to communicate with you first; and
   e) always remember to focus on the job, not your disability.

Q. What resources are available to help me request a reasonable accommodation?

A. Start with the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) at www.askjan.org. You might also check with associations that represent your disability. Rarely does something like this become contentious if you approach it with a positive attitude and are well-versed on exactly what you need.

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

Susan Webb
VP of Employment
Ability360
For some people with disabilities, caregivers can make living independently possible. The harsh reality of limited independence can really hit home when you have a bad experience with a caregiver. Conversely, a caregiver can sure question his or her career choices when dealing with a difficult consumer. One thing is sure: we all thank our lucky stars when we find someone who clicks.

We asked consumers and caregivers what makes their relationships work. It all comes down to communication, trust and respect. This important relationship, like any other, takes time to build and shouldn’t be broken casually.

**Write a Care Plan**

This forms the basic understanding of the relationship. It’s your chief communication tool listing the duties and expectations including working hours, dress code, house rules and emergency plan. A solid care plan is your best tool for constructive feedback – on both sides.

**Consumer:** “You show up three hours late wearing an outfit more appropriate for Mardi Gras and reeking of cigars? Ummm, no.”

**Caregiver:** “Look, I’m a team player, but mowing the lawn is a bit too far.”

**Spell out the House Rules**

Is it ok for the caregiver to use a personal cell phone during work hours? If he or she answers the door, whom should be allowed to come in? Is ice cream alright for lunch?

**Consumer:** “I rely on you for my survival; it’s not ok for you to gab on the phone with your sister during your shift.”

**Caregiver:** “When I know where to put my bag, where I can put my lunch and who I should listen to in the household when I get conflicting direction, I can concentrate on giving great care instead of dealing with inconsistency.”
Establish Boundaries

Is it ok to discuss politics? Is it ok for after-hours calls? How do you answer,"May I borrow...?"

Consumer: "Wow! New World Order ... I get this is important to you, but it's time for my meds."

Caregiver: "I know you're lonely; no one comes to visit. But, please don't call me at home on my off-hours to chat."

Punctuality

The predictability of a regular schedule (start, duration and ending time) makes life smoother for both parties. A healthy respect for the other's time is one of the first clues as to how relations will evolve (or dissolve).

Consumer: "I understand that your ride didn't show up on time, but could you please call or text me so I know what is going on?"

Caregiver: "I never want to leave you in the lurch, but I cannot stay late every day. Others depend on me too."

Theft

Yep, it happens. The best way to reduce the potential for valuables to get misplaced or taken is to lock up medications, cash, jewelry, credit cards and banking information.

Consumer: "I HATE having strangers in my house! That necklace you took isn't worth much – to anyone but me. My mother gave it to me."

Caregiver: "Whenever anything goes missing, I'm the first person blamed. Usually it turns out that you forgot where you put it or your own family member took it."

Ability360 Home Care Services has an exceptional reputation in the community for its commitment to providing consumers with peace of mind and individualized care with well-trained staff who are caring, honest and reliable. Ability360 caregivers undergo 40 hours of training – far beyond CPR and basic first aid; these individuals learn a consumer-centered approach to caregiving that includes meal prep, equipment, transfers and alternatives to make grooming and hygiene safer and easier for consumer and caregiver. HCS works to match the needs of the consumer and the skills of the caregiver.

Intimacy, badly behaving pets or family members, caregivers bringing their kids to work in an emergency, giving out keys, handling shopping and errands – it's impossible to address every situation that might occur before it happens, which is why a clear care plan, a healthy appreciation and respect for this relationship and clear, honest communications are a must.

Reliance on a caregiving agency like Ability360 Home Care Services (HCS) can make some of these situations easier to navigate. An agency brings long-term professional experience and an unbiased point of view to the consumer/caregiver relationship. An agency can act as a mediator and help with difficult situations or conversations while protecting both the consumer and the caregiver. Consumers can rest assured that the caregiver has been screened, vetted and trained, while caregivers have protections like worker's compensation and Social Security benefits.

What's your experience? What advice would you give to both consumers and caregivers? We'd like to hear from you. Write to us at Editor@ability360.org.
Athletes Soar at Desert Challenge Games

by Tiffany Wilkinson, Arizona Disabled Sports Executive Director and DCG Event Director

What started as an event hosting a few local Arizona athletes has grown into a premiere multi-sport event showcasing hundreds of athletes from around the world. The 2016 Desert Challenge Games took place May 11th-15th in the Phoenix Valley and included 320 athletes as well as over 100 coaches and guide runners. Athletes ages 7 through adulthood with a physical, visual, or newly-added cognitive/intellectual disability were invited to compete in air gun, archery, field, swimming and track, with the opportunity to qualify for national and international competitions coming up this summer.

The 2016 event was one of six events called the IPC Athletics Grand Prix (International Paralympic Committee) and was the only Athletics Grand Prix event taking place in the United States. This year’s Games were an especially big deal for IPC athletes trying to qualify their national teams for the Summer Paralympics to in Rio de Janeiro. The Desert Challenge Games also offer a unique opportunity for all levels of athletes - whether new to the sport or elite athletes competing on the international circuit – to compete next to each other.

The host organization, Arizona Disabled Sports, proudly sponsored 48 local athletes who practice with the weekly training program at Mesa High School. Fourteen of the local athletes qualified to compete in the National Junior Disability Championships in Wisconsin this July, and an additional five athletes qualified to attend the US Paralympic Trials in North Carolina. The Desert Challenge Games also welcomed 35 veterans from across the nation with physical or visual disabilities to compete in the track and field events.

Arizona State University's Joe Selleh Track offered a mondo track surface and field pits for several records to be set at the event, including 30 IPC World records and/or IPC Americas records and 50 Adaptive Sports USA (ASUSA) Junior and Adult records for track and field. Additional venues included Papago Park Archery Range in Phoenix, Kino Aquatic Center in Mesa and Broadway Recreation Center in Mesa.

"I have been a part of Desert Challenge Games for several years and am impressed with how it continues to grow year after year," says Brandon Dale, Vice President of Hanger, Inc. "It is an amazing event to be a part of."

Arizona Disabled Sports offers a weekly training program for track, field, archery and swimming during the spring season starting in January and ending with the Desert Challenge Games. Not an athlete? You can still join this event! The competition also requires nearly 200 volunteers from the community to support the event over five days.

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!
LATINO DISABILITY SUMMIT & RESOURCE FAIR

Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

A day of inspiration, information, and resources for the entire family
Un día de inspiración, información, y recursos para toda la familia

Saturday
September 17
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for more information visit
Latinodisabilitysummit.com

David Carey 602-443-0723 or
E. Mari Herrera-Daniels 602-515-2451
Team USA brought home 97 medals from London in 2012 and settled for a disappointing 6th place overall. Our Paralympic committee set out to improve our standing and earn more medals in Brazil through an aggressive recruiting and training campaign.

This year, Arizona has some of the best athletes with the most potential preparing for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Arizona’s promising roster is represented by a mix of experienced Paralympians and novices competing in their first Paralympic contest.

As of this writing, most of the athletes featured on the following pages don’t yet know if they will get the call for Rio. The competition remains fierce for the coveted spots on Team USA.

Meet Arizona’s contenders...
Allysa Seely (Phoenix, AZ) is in the hunt for the FIRST gold medal ever in the paratriathlon as it debuts in Rio. Athletes swim 750m, bike 20k and run 5k. There are no differences in rules between an able-bodied triathlon and paratriathlon.

“We are able to compete with our able-bodied counterparts, so it’s really inclusive,” Seely said.

Seely first competed in the triathlon as an able athlete in 2008. Due to complications from brain and spine surgery in 2009, Seely wears a brace on her weakened right lower leg; a prosthesis replaces her left leg below the knee.

“One leg does all the work; the other gets all the attention,” Seely quipped.

Upon her return to ASU, Seely learned about parasports. She attended nationals for the first time in 2012.

“It was incredible,” Seely said. “When I realized that it was my race and that I was going to win, I was just overcome with emotion.”

She’s looking forward to her event, but she’s also excited by the opportunity to represent the US on the biggest athletic stage in the world.

“The journey has been filled with ups and downs. I don’t think anybody can ever imagine being on a journey like this.”

“The online versions of this story reflect corrections to an inadvertent mischaracterization of Seely’s medical history. LivAbility apologizes for this error.”
Joe Delagrave (Chandler, AZ) played college football for Winona State University. Following a 2004 boating accident where he broke his neck, Delagrave sought new avenues to pursue his active lifestyle.

In 2006, he did some research on the internet and found a wheelchair rugby team in Minneapolis.

Delagrave said the most challenging part about playing is factoring in the time commitment and the daily grind. A self-described family man, Delagrave manages to balance workouts, studying opponents’ previous matches, and two jobs with his wife and three children by his side. Delagrave recently finished his master’s degree and works in private counseling as well as Dick’s Sporting Goods as part of the company’s partnership with Olympic athletes.

“It’s tough,” Delagrave said. “The commitment level is really big, so it makes it worth it in the end.”

The Olympic qualifiers for wheelchair rugby were once automatic, but this year teams qualify through tournament-style play.

The USA team lost to Canada in 2015 at the Parapan American Games in their first chance to qualify for the games. Their second chance came in April when they won the IWRF Rio Qualification tournament.

Delagrave was a Team USA member when they won the bronze medal at the 2012 London games.

“If I make it, I’m most looking forward to being able to appreciate the whole Paralympics,” Delagrave said. “Rio is going to be a whole different experience in a different city four years later.”
ERIK HIGHTOWER
Track & Field

Erik Hightower’s (Glendale, AZ) parents had to bribe him with promises of money, treats, and even a dog to continue wheelchair racing as a kid.

Hightower came into racing as an 8-year-old whose parents heard about the sport through the Spina Bifida Foundation.

“They took me out to try it one day, and I absolutely hated it,” Hightower said. “I think it was because I was young and it was challenging.”

Once he started to win competitions a few years later, Hightower realized he could make a run and become good.

Hightower competes in the 100-, 400-, and 800-meter sprints under track and field.

“You have to have a strong mind,” Hightower said. “You can’t start thinking negatively. Some days practice is going to be hard, but you just have to stay positive.”

Hightower participated in the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, but missed the 2012 London Paralympics by one spot. He’s driven to make sure he captures a spot on the roster for this year’s Paralympics to go for a medal.

“I was so close back in Beijing to winning a medal,” Hightower said. “It was a big learning lesson because it was my first big competition.”

In the weeks leading up to qualifying and the Paralympics, Hightower said he’s most concentrated on his times and staying mentally focused.

Photo by Loren Worthington
Eric Bennett (Surprise, AZ) grew up bow hunting with his family and shooting archery for recreation. When he was 15, he experienced a traumatic amputation of his right arm in a car accident. Years later, his dad guided him to relearn the sport by shooting with his feet. Bennett then adapted to shooting with an adaptive bow that he triggers with his mouth. He is now on his way to his third Paralympics.

Bennett won the world championship last year that qualified him for the Paralympics. He clenched his spot on Team USA in June by winning gold at the Czech Target 2016 – Para Archery Tournament.

In the final weeks leading up to the Paralympics, Bennett’s training as often as he can. He trains in the parking lot of a church near his home in Surprise, shooting 75-100 arrows a day. He feels confident in the way he’s shooting. He’s working on mental training and keeping a training journal. Bennett and his coach are perfecting his equipment.

“There’s nothing uniquely challenging about para-archery, but it’s finding the time to train and do everything I need to do,” Bennett said. “I’m a father, I teach full time, and I coach archery as well.”

The 2016 Paralympics will mark Bennett’s third trip to the games, as he previously participated in the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London games.

Bennett recently returned from the Pan American games with the silver medal.

“Para-archery is an awesome sport because it allows a lot of different athletes with a lot of different disabilities the opportunity to compete,” Bennett said.
Along with our four featured athletes, Arizona potentially adds to the Team USA roster in Wheelchair Rugby, Tennis, Women’s Goalball and Track & Field. Each of these sports will determine its final roster for Rio after our print deadline.

**Tennis:** Arizona is well represented in wheelchair tennis with UofA grad Dana Mathewson and Kaitlyn Verfuerth (Flagstaff, Ariz.) on the women’s team and Bryan Barten (Tucson, Ariz.) making the men’s team for the 2nd time.

**Women’s Goalball:** The team has a secure berth to the Rio 2016 Paralympics. Lisa Banta-Czechowski (Tucson, AZ) continues to train for a qualifying spot.

**Track & Field:** Many athletes head to Charlotte, NC June 30 through July 3rd for Track and Field Nationals looking to qualify for a spot on Team USA. Nick Prior (Phoenix, AZ) javelin, Shirley Reilly (Tucson, AZ) wheelchair racing, amputee long jumpers Trenten Merrill (Phoenix, AZ), Lacey J. Henderson (Phoenix, AZ).

Good luck to all of our athletes. It’s been a thrill watching your Road to Rio. We wish you much success.
The philosophy and know-how developed at Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center now has global impact, as 360 was chosen by the US State Department and the University of Tennessee to host two international emerging leaders in the area of sports integration for people with disabilities. This diplomatic program builds on the success of the US Department of State and espnW Global Sports Mentoring Program to empower women; Sport for Community is a counterpart mentorship exchange designed to promote disability rights and inclusion.

The University of Tennessee matched Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center with two emerging leaders, Oleksandra (Sacha) Nasadiuk of the Ukraine and Priyantha Peiris from Sri Lanka, based on their ambitious action plans and our vast knowledge and resources to ensure their success. While in Arizona, Sacha and Priyantha learned the history of the American disability rights movement and US sports culture. They visited the Grand Canyon, ASU and attended Diamondbacks and Mercury games, and many local attractions and restaurants that reflect Americana.

In the lead up to the 2016 Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games, these emerging leaders worked side-by-side with their mentors to develop their strategic action plans, designed to create opportunities for people with disabilities in their home countries through the benefits of sports: expanded professional networks, increased independence, and enhanced health. Participants returned to Washington DC to share their perspectives as professionals in disability sports overseas and the business plans they developed with their mentors.

While Sacha and Priyantha developed an appreciation for our universal accessibility and openness to every ability, we became more aware of our own good fortune that adaptive sports are available in the US without the impediments to sports and recreation experienced abroad.

Oleksandra Nasadiuk “Sasha”
Ukraine
Deputy Head of International Relations of Ukraine Paralympic Committee (known in Ukraine as National Sports Committee for the Disabled)

Conflict currently affects her home region, Sasha looks to support and reintegrate Ukrainian soldiers returning from war with physical and psychological disabilities.

Priyantha Peiris
Sri Lanka
Freelance Disability Equality Trainer and Treasurer of Sri Lanka Paralympic Committee

Sri Lanka’s 30 year war has deprived many of social and sport opportunities, Priyantha wants to learn U.S. laws and disability acts that may be key components to social integration and sports in his country.
Meet the Staff

Rosalie Elaine Perry

In each issue of LivAbility, we introduce an Ability360 employee, providing insight into 360 programs and services and the exceptional people who make them possible! Rosalie Perry represents a single thread, that when woven into the fabric of Ability360, enhances the agency’s strength, vibrancy and effectiveness. Rosalie graciously answered LivAbility’s list of Getting-to-Know-You questions, allowing us to introduce her to you from a very personal perspective.

How long have you been with Ability360?

Almost 15 years, I started as a student intern with the Community Integration Unit.

For people outside of the organization, what do you do?

I work directly with people with disabilities, supporting their efforts to adapt/maintain an independent lifestyle and achieve their independent living goals. I assist with scheduling and facilitating monthly independent living classes and present on Ability360 programs, particularly in and around Pinal County.

I co-chair the American Indian Disability Summit committee, which organizes an annual conference that celebrates its 13th year in 2017; an outgrowth of the recognition that Native communities need to network and share information about disability issues. It started with a Talking Circle of which I am one of the original members. April Reed, Volunteer Manager at Ability360, and I started a Women’s Self-Confidence Group. We have successfully facilitated two 7-week support groups for women with disabilities to become empowered and improve their self image in a supportive, caring environment.

Is there a work achievement you’re especially proud of?

I enjoy working with a diverse population. I was humbled to be the first recipient of the Marcus Harrison Jr. Leadership Award in 2008. This award, established to recognize the former Chief Executive Officer of Native Health in Phoenix AZ, is awarded annually to an individual who demonstrates exceptional advocacy for Native Americans with disabilities.

What brought you here?

As a person with a disability (spinal cord injury), I felt it important to understand not only my goals and achievements, but to assist others with theirs.

Will you share a little something about yourself/ your family?

I am American Indian and very proud of my heritage. I am the oldest of five siblings. My husband Richard and I have five grown children ages 38 to 19 years and nine grandchildren. I enjoy reading autobiographies of famous people. I love classic rock; Journey and the Beatles are my favorite groups. Someday I hope to visit Liverpool.

Will you tell us about your best day ever?

Graduation Day, May 10th, 2002, the day I received my bachelor’s degree in social work. The months leading up to this day were full of many hours of lectures and discussions, studying into the night with very little sleep, tears of frustration that turned into tears of joy once I realized that all that hard work was worth it, graduating magna cum laude. I credit my husband/ tutor for helping me see the light at the end of the tunnel.

What are people most surprised to know about you?

Maybe the soft exterior they first see, when in reality, I can be as tough as nails when it comes to those I love and serve.

Is there a movie or TV show you drop everything to watch?

The television series “Frasier”. I record the syndicated series every night and dare anyone to change the station when I am watching it.

If a mega-fortune fell into your lap, what would you do?

I hope that never happens! It would only complicate my world.
These words and more describe the life journeys – or possibly adventures - we experience as people with disabilities. What is YOUR perspective? Do the well-meaning descriptors “courageous” or “inspiring” cause you to roll your eyes? Have you played the role of “educator” during a teachable moment? At the risk of sounding dramatic, has an interaction or experience left a profound impact on your life? Perhaps you left the imprint on someone else...

Welcome to the inaugural reader commentary, 360 Perspectives, where YOU have the opportunity to share your experience or perspective related to disability. Events, encounters, experiences...the moments that make us go, “Hmmm” or “what the...heck?”

We are grateful to James Foley, our first 360 Perspectives contributor.

by James Foley

It’s 9:15 pm on a cool March evening at the casino. Time to let off a little steam. I trot around looking for a blackjack table to join.

The elegant 30-something man in black ambles up very close to my right ear to ask me how I’m doing tonight.

“I’m fine,” I reply. The dapper man in black says he’s going to have to ask me to leave.

“Why is that?” I ask, more surprised than annoyed.

“You look intoxicated,” he says.

“Nope,” I reply, “two beers doesn’t do it for me.”

“You’re gonna have to leave.” Less friendly and more insistent now. The man in black moves his arm as if to restrain this unruly drunkard. He’s dealt with this scene 1,000 times before...

But he has not.

I am a 48-year-old man trying to enjoy himself while giving the world a close look at spastic cerebral palsy.

I explain that I have cerebral palsy and that the disability slows my speech and motor skills. My voice lowering a bit, I tell the man in black that I’d be happy to leave the building provided that I could speak to the general manager first.

His tone changed. He said he would be right back, shot off toward the back of the building and was gone. I should have called the management of the casino to let them know of my disappointment at the way I’d been misjudged. But I did nothing.

That night I was haunted by my sisters and brothers with disabilities who are prejudged each day. People like Andrew Farrell, a 19-year-old man with autism in Ohio, verbally eviscerated by rapper 50 Cent in May for appearing to be on drugs when he was simply pushing a luggage cart as he does every day at his airport job.

I think things can get better faster if we with disabilities and our allies commit to responding firmly and publicaly to incidents where we see ignorance, whether authentic or chosen, clouding how persons with disabilities are seen and addressed.

We want to hear from YOU!
Perspectives, opinions, observations, viewpoints...bring them on!
Submit your perspective in 10 - 350 words. Reach us at editor@ability360.org.
The culprit is Marfan Syndrome, an inherited disorder impacting 1 in 5,000 people, that affects connective tissue – the fibers holding all the body’s cells, organs and tissues together.

The most severe form of Marfan is aortic enlargement, a life-threatening expansion of the main blood vessel carrying blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Marfan also can create problems in blood vessels, bones and joints.

For Berger, it’s her eyes. Her camera was an extension of those eyes.

“Cameras made sense because they opened the world to me,”

“I watched fireworks displays through my camera because it magnified it. I loved photography and photographs back then because it told me what the world was supposed to look like even if I couldn’t physically see it.”

Pretty impressive for a young woman whose eyes don’t focus.

And that’s a post-implant surgery difference from her childhood when “I was severely nearsighted, and pretty much could only see a foot in front of my face. Corrective lenses didn’t do anything because the problem was about focus and not about regular vision issues,” she said. “I don’t think I ever realized there was anything wrong with my vision. I grew up seeing like that.”
Her perspective – and her vision – changed three years ago after a Boston specialist inserted silicon implants into each eye.

“All of a sudden I could see things that were far away,” she recalled. “I could see things I had never seen before, like leaves on the trees driving home that day. It was a weird revelation. Here I was 18 and my whole world changed. I had to relearn to see.”

She still sees differently than most people, because one eye focuses on distance and the other close up.

“Before the surgery, what I saw in the viewfinder, I could get into a picture,” she said. “Now, because my eyes don’t focus properly, I really don’t know what is in or out of focus. One eye is better than another, but using autofocus helps make decisions for me, and that’s good for portraits and landscapes. I can see the composition and the color, but don’t necessarily know what I’m looking at in the viewfinder.”

Still, as it was when she was younger, photography remains her artistic and personal passion, and soon, her profession. She’ll graduate from Prescott College next year with a bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts with plans to pursue a master’s in Fine Arts.

“I want to teach photography at the college level or at a school for the disabled, particularly a school for the visually disabled,”

Her ultimate goal: “I want to be a photographer making art about people who are visually impaired.”

That will certainly help bring the world into focus for the rest of us.
ACCESSIBLE SEATING

We ask a pro, “Where are the best seats in the house?”

by Cory Hahn and Angel Almendares

PHOENIX— Chase Field, home to the Arizona Diamondbacks, has seating options for all fans throughout the ballpark. Cory Hahn takes us around the park to some of the very best accessible seats in the house.

Hahn assists scouting and baseball operations in various facets. In his second season with the D-backs, Hahn knows baseball and Chase Field inside and out.

In 2010, Hahn sustained a spinal cord injury at C-7 while playing for ASU. He graduated with a degree in business communications in 2014.

As a fan and wheelchair user we asked for his perspective on the best seats in the house.

Section 315-316: These are upper-level seats behind home plate. This is a place where you can take the entire game in and realize just how big Chase Field really is. When you sit down below you don’t notice the size of the stadium or how many different sections there are. It’s a surreal scene up here.

Section 128: Here, we’re down the third baseline, a lot closer to the infield, and you’re on the D-backs’ Dugout side, which is the most important part. You have a direct point of view from the mound to home plate. It’s a great place to watch pitchers work. You can see the kind of angle they throw from, how fast the ball gets from their hands to home plate. If you are a scout or want to critique the players, this is the perfect spot.

The Arizona Diamondbacks offer accessible seating at all levels through the ASK (Accessible Seating Klub). More information at PHXsportsADA.com
Sections 139-144/101-105: The entire center field wall has some of the best spots to watch a game. It's great for a person using a wheelchair because you have the tray in front of you; you have somewhere to put your food and belongings other than your lap. You're in an elevated position and you get to see the field as a whole from here while having the accessible space and trays. This spot is really special.

Section 104-107: If you want to feel the electricity of the crowd, the right field bleachers are a good choice. Here, the crowd is energetic and they're always cheering and having a good time. You can see pitchers warming up in the bullpen or fans cooling off in the pool, but the best part about this section is that you're in homerun territory. I think fans enjoy that and thrive off of watching homeruns, and when the ball is coming your way, it's even better.

J - Batter’s Box Suite: These seats are directly behind home plate on field level. This is as close as you can get to the field without actually being on it. It's where I come to work. I watch the game from right here, I analyze from here and I take my notes from here. This is my favorite place because this is where I get to do what I love. From this spot you can hear the sounds of the game, like players talking to each other. This is the crown jewel for any baseball fan.

Section 123: When I’m watching as a fan, this is one of my favorite spots to sit. You don’t miss anything from here. These seats are definitely worth the price. There aren’t many stadiums that have accessible seating almost directly behind home plate. If you ever get a chance, as someone looking for accessible seating, to sit behind home plate, this is one opportunity you’ll want to take.
we found overall good (but not great) access. We were immediately struck by the changes from just a few years ago. Wine has brought a renaissance to Cottonwood. The streets are now lined with arty boutiques, quirky specialty shops and tasting rooms. The juxtaposition of old and new Cottonwood brilliantly revealed itself as we passed two traditional cowboys, their horses “parked” in a shady parking space while they enjoyed a coffee bar latte on the patio, a herding dog lazing at their feet.

Our first stop: Arizona Stronghold Vineyard tasting room. Located on Main Street, ASV comfortably blends past and present. The space is small; with 15-20 people in there, it’s packed. Eye candy fills the room, from the local art on the walls to polished hardwood floors, cozy leather couches and board games. There are sparkling rows and rows of wine bottles and portraits of Apache leaders hanging in a place of honor. The vineyard is in Wilcox, Arizona, thus the winery’s name honors Cochise’s Stronghold and the Apache heritage of the region. Many of the wines and label symbols reflect Apache history.

The staff was friendly and very knowledgeable without being snobby. You can choose wine by the glass or a tasting flight (a progression of five different wines). We also ordered a cheese plate and skewers. They were all quite good, but the duck
was outstanding. Do grab a bite while you’re there.

The restroom is roomy but not set up for a lateral transfer to the toilet. The patio is vibrant but covered in deep gravel, so a manual chair user would have great difficulty pushing to a table. Nonetheless, we found this tasting room well worth the visit and left with several bottles and a club membership in hand.

Before heading for ASV’s sister vineyard, Page Springs Cellars, we wandered Main Street for a while.

If wine is not your thing, try Desert Diamond Distillery Tasting & Cocktail Rum & Vodka Room or THAT Brewery for craft beer. Some of the shops that stood out to us included Christy Fisher Studio and Rainbow’s End – both boutiques featuring local clothing, jewelry and gifts; Little Moo’s Gourmet Market; and Verde Valley Olive Oil Traders. Outside of wine tasting, Verde Valley Olive Oil Traders was our favorite, with vat upon shiny stainless steel vat of infused olive oils and balsamic vinegars. We have to confess to splurging on their black truffle sea salt and shaking it on everything ever since.

Our one disappointment on Main Street came when we inquired about the jeep tours, train rides, kayaking and horseback rides. The shop itself was not accessible by wheelchair due to a high step, but a staff member did step out to talk with us. We inquired about accessible tours and she asked, “Are you always handicapped?” It was our single most disappointing moment of the trip.

Twenty minutes later, we pulled into Page Springs Cellars, an “estate vineyard” that grows, bottles and sells its own wines. The place feels like a family business. Everyone we met was warm and welcoming, clearly knowledgeable about wine without pretense. These people love the land, the sun and their grapes. The tasting room is spacious compared to ASV, with plenty of nooks to bask in a good glass of wine. We enjoyed an impressive tasting flight and sips of a few bottles that interested us. The flatbread pizzas were divine; the fungi topping was a homerun paired with our flight of deep reds. The balconies look out over the vineyards, but we found the members’ balcony a bit small for multiple wheelchairs; we could not maneuver to the rail for the best view. The bathrooms,

Red or white? Cork or screw cap? Stemmed glasses or stemless?

Wine doesn’t have to be complicated.

At each stop we asked, “What’s your best wine?” The reply was universal: “What do you like?” Bree Nation, Wine Club Manager for Arizona Stronghold Wines, gave these tips for getting to know wine.

Enjoy regular wine tastings – either organized events or at home with friends.

Look, smell, swirl, smell, taste.

Look at the wine in your glass before you taste it or smell it. In general, lighter colors have lighter, brighter flavors and darker wines become rich and full-bodied.

Put your nose deep in your glass and deeply inhale. Close your eyes to block distractions.

Swirl your wine in the glass for 5 to 10 seconds to aerate it and release more flavor. The swirl can be more a matter of fashion than function. Do what works best for you. Just don’t spill it.

Smell deeply from your glass again. As the wine “opens” do you learn more about it?

Now, taste it. Let the wine bathe all of your taste buds. Hold the wine in your mouth for a pause before swallowing to get the full flavor.

Observe the differences in the wines you taste. Do you taste smoke? Fruit? Pepper? Spice? Jam? Duskiness?

Track your observations in your own wine journal.

There are plenty of guides to suggest which wine to pair with what food. Generally, the lighter the flavor of your food, the lighter the wine you’ll want to serve. Relax. Enjoy. Drink what pleases you most.
however, were roomy enough to bring a caregiver inside or make a lateral transfer.

We toured the estate with Leslie as our guide. The terrain was challenging for those of us in wheelchairs, from deep gravel to black diamond-steep slopes to deep soft loamy ground where we couldn’t get traction. This place is not “first date with a wheelchair user” material but it was worth the risk and effort to reach the creek. There’s a newly-built deck overlooking the vines for live music and receptions. With effort and a lot of trust in our companions, we made it to the deck that overlooks Oak Creek. We lingered in the cool shade with the rush of water below us as we watched heron and squirrels. PSC offers picnic baskets for patrons to bring down for a romantic meal al fresco. We passed bocce ball courts, the estate spa, and a massage tent as we wandered the grounds. None of us were eager to leave.

All-in-all, the Verde Valley Wine Trail is worth the trip. We found access challenges in terms of the natural terrain and the age of some of the built environment. This is a place to go with creative and trustworthy companions.
willing to pitch in and push and pull to help move a chair along safely. None of the wineries or tasting rooms allows smoking. We did not find any braille menus available. Most places were quiet and tranquil, but offer live music on the weekends. When we head back, and we will return, we’ll go on a quiet weekday and avoid the crowds that make accessibility in tight spaces even more challenging.

While we spent a day in Cottonwood, Jerome and Sedona are each within a half hour’s ride. This area is rich with things to do from jeep tours and hot air balloon rides, to exploring the ancient ruins of Tuzigoot and Montezuma’s Castle. Cottonwood is an ideal base to visit Slide Rock, the Verde Canyon Railroad, Out of Africa and a host of museums, parks and casinos. Go for the wine, stay for the week.

Learn More www.azstronghold.com
www.pagespringscellars.com
www.vvwinetrail.com

Each of the Maricopa Community Colleges Disability Resource Centers (DRC) offer:

- Testing Accommodations
- Note-Taking Assistance
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- American Sign Language Interpreters
- Auxiliary Services (CCTV, FM System)
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Classes start at $86 per credit*

*Maricopa County Residents

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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.
Arizona Passes the ABLE Act
State invests in future of youth with disabilities
by Jennifer Longdon

The ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) Act (HB 2388) was passed by the State Legislature and signed into law by Arizona Governor Doug Ducey on May 12th. His announcement read in part: “Too often, parents of children with disabilities face unique challenges and tremendous anxieties when it comes to the health and well-being of their kids. Ensuring their long-term financial security should not be one of them.”

The Act will allow individuals who are born with or acquire a disability before the age of 26 an avenue to pay for disability-related expenses without losing federal benefits like SSI, Medicaid or SNAP (food stamps).

Amina Kruck, Vice President of Advocacy for Ability360, explained: “The ABLE accounts will be especially beneficial for families who want to help their young adult children transition towards independence. On their own, most of the youth will only have SSI as income, which is barely enough to live on initially until they develop a career that pays enough to be self-supporting. With an ABLE savings account, family and friends can contribute to the account and their money could help supplement rent or support services, even tutoring when the person with a disability goes to college or job coaching when the person pursues his or her employment experience.”

The bill originated with State Representative John Allen (R-LD15), Chair of the Children and Family Affairs Committee in the House, who said that he took up this issue after meeting with stakeholders. “I want this community to succeed. This bill had broad support and allows a safe, tax-exempt avenue to help young people with disabilities. This is a real opportunity to provide needed services without adding a burden to taxpayers.”

The bill overwhelmingly passed both chambers of the State Legislature with only three nays in the House and two in the Senate.

“I was happy to support the ABLE Act. It promotes self-sufficiency among all our residents. This bill had broad bi-partisan support. This is good for Arizona,” said Katie Hobbs, Senate Minority Leader.

Eligible individuals can shop state-by-state for a plan that best suits them. Arizona’s law is nationally attractive, as it mirrors the federal legislation in scope by allowing account holders to save up to $14,000 per year with a $100,000 cap before SSI/SSDI is impacted.

Robert Smith, President of Silvertree Special Needs Planning, served on both the Drafting and Stakeholder committees as the bill was introduced and made into law and worked to ensure that Arizona’s law was not more restrictive than federal guidelines. He says that fees and investment options will be important factors in choosing a plan to suit your family. We asked what one should consider when looking for guidance on the various upcoming plans: “Choose a firm that specializes in special needs planning full time, one that focuses exclusively on the disability community, displays an understanding of the key issues and not just markets their existing products to them.”

A limited number of financial institutions will create ABLE accounts, which become available in 2017. When the details of these plans become available, look for Ability360 to join with community partners to host informational sessions.
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Habitat offers an affordable mortgage loan for new home construction
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Habitat partners with families who earn between 30 and 60 percent of the area median income:

<table>
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<th>Maximum Annual Income</th>
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Habitat helps families who are:
- Currently living in substandard or overcrowded housing.
- Able to repay the affordable mortgage loan.
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Phoenix (602) 268-9022  Peoria (602) 583-2417  habitatcaz.org
Valley Center of the Deaf
by Joseph Ponte, Program Coordinator, Valley Center of the Deaf

Valley Center of the Deaf (VCD) is a community-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1978 by members of the Deaf community. VCD seeks empowerment of deaf and hard of hearing individuals to live independently and achieve their personal goals. VCD often “fill the gaps” in the community by providing services and advocacy not available elsewhere.

Hearing loss is a low-incidence disability that is still often overlooked in a larger hearing community, and those with hearing loss face formidable communication barriers, which can prevent them from living and working independently. At VCD, we assist our clients in bridging the gap between the deaf and hearing worlds. To us, every person matters. That is why we work so hard to help our clients gain independence in their daily lives.

Through nearly four decades, our efforts have enabled us to discover how best we can fulfill our clients’ needs. We pride ourselves on returning to these communities for guidance in creating new programs and services such as case management and being the only provider of Sighted Support Provider (SSP) to the deaf-blind in Maricopa County. We are also a provider of deaf-blind assistive technology through ICANCONNECT - a National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) - a federal program mandated by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC). We are proud to provide case management services at Apache ASL Trails (AAT), a state-of-the-art residence designed for deaf and hard of hearing senior citizens. AAT is owned and operated by Cardinal Capital Management, Inc.

VCD is directed by an advisory board comprised of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the community and others who have experience and interest in deaf and hard of hearing needs and concerns. We strive to provide services that are effective and accessible to our deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing clients.

Our staff members are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), well-prepared to respond to the needs of our clients and well-informed about the resources available within the community. Our services are free to deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing individuals.

Learn more about VCD
Voice: (602) 267-1921
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interpreting@vcdaz.org
www.vcdaz.org
Oh my! This was the most active legislative session in the last 10 years for bills that affect the disability community. Advocates, be proud of your achievements!

Due to your actions, we made some real gains this year with the addition of dental for Long Term Care Medicaid members and podiatry services added back for AHCCCS members. Thanks to Governor Ducey, an additional $2 million in Vocational Rehabilitation services funding will draw down federal matching funds, with a total gain of almost $10 million to help Arizonans with disabilities get employment assistance. VR has been woefully underfunded most of the last 25 years, and this will benefit many more people.

Other disability wins include:

**HB 2388** establishes the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) savings account for qualified individuals disabled under age 26 to be used for disability-related expenses. See page 48 for further information. *(Sponsor: Allen, R-LD15)*

KidsCare health plan was reinstated, raising family income from 138% of federal poverty level to 200% ($32,000 to $48,000), allowing more children to benefit from healthcare at no cost to the State for the next two years. *(Original Sponsor: Cobb, R-LD5)*

- **SB 1382** *(Sponsor: Burgess, R-LD22)* was amended after stakeholder meetings to eliminate the penalty for falsely identifying a dog as a service animal and now simply relates to service animals in a public place. Adds that it is not discriminatory to exclude a service animal (or any animal) from a public place if:
  - The animal is out of control and the animal’s handler does not take effective action to control the animal; or
  - The animal is not housebroken.
HB 2461 extends the Lifespan Respite program until 2025. No funding was attached to pay for services so we will have to work on that next year. *(Sponsor: Brophy McGee, R-LD28)*

HB 2099A makes adjustments to the statutes for a person with a developmental disability and adds a special certification for a child developmental certified home. *(Sponsor: Allen, R-LD15)*

HB 2442 outlines procedures for a foster or adoptive parent to obtain urgent behavioral health services for a child. *(Sponsor: Farnsworth, R-LD12)*

HB 2355 allows a pharmacist to dispense naloxone hydrochloride (Naloxone) without a prescription to a person at risk of experiencing an opioid-related overdose, or a family member or community member in a position to assist that person. *(Sponsor: Carter, R-LD15)*

SB 1169 makes changes to the provisions related to a mental health care power of attorney. *(Sponsor: Barto, R-LD15)*

SB 1442 concerns release of information or records relating to a patient examination, evaluation or behavioral or mental health treatment. *(Sponsor: Barto, R-LD15)*

SCR 1005 urges the Arizona Legislature to recognize the rights of family members, caregivers and guardians of individuals with serious mental illness. *(Sponsor: Barto, R-LD15)*

**We successfully defeated:**

SB 1284 that would have delayed business compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines for accessibility; SB 1316, a predatory lending bill. *(Sponsor of both: Kavanagh, R-LD23)*

HB 2258 that would have made changes in conflict with the ADA and the Fair Housing Act related to live-in supportive care and assistive animals for mobile home tenants. *(Sponsor: Brophy McGee, R-LD28)*

We avoided more restrictions on SNAP (food stamps) and the elimination of the First Things First program for early childhood intervention.

**Voter suppression:**

We had a big loss when the Governor signed HB 2023. It prohibits anyone other than a voter's family member, household member, or caregiver of the voter to collect early ballots from another person. The new law prescribes a Class 6 felony (a presumptive one year of incarceration/ fine up to $150,000 plus surcharges) for knowingly collecting early ballots. *(Sponsor: Ugenti-Rita, R-LD23)* That means I can’t help my friend by taking her early ballot to the poll with me on Election Day if she forgot to mail it!

---

**Why register and vote?**

The entire Arizona Legislature is re-elected every two years. *Fifteen legislators are leaving the Legislature this year, and your votes will help replace them.*

This is a big election year for President, the U.S. Senate and your Congressional Representatives. *This is a chance to make a change.*

Consider candidates that are friendly to the bills and programs that benefit people with disabilities and their families when you vote in the Arizona Primary in August and in the General Election in November.

Sponsors for all the above bills were Republican. That is because very few bills by the minority party (Democrats) can get through the Legislature. The only bill shepherded through by a Democratic legislator (McGuire, D-LD8) that was signed by the Governor was SB 1283, the service animal bill.

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**Learn More**

www.ability360.org/election-voting-information

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*Amina Donna Kruck  
VP of Advocacy  
Ability360*
When we think about great adventures, we tend to think about long treks to distant places. But great adventures are all around us if we take a moment to look for them—like the Dolly Steamboat on Canyon Lake.

Canyon Lake, a shimmering turquoise reservoir that covers 950 acres, is located approximately 50 miles east of Phoenix. After several twisty-turny miles on the Apache Trail I rounded a sharp corner and caught my first glimpse of gorgeous Canyon Lake—stunning! I’ll never forget the thrill and amazement I felt at my first glimpse.

I wanted to share my love of this lake with a good friend, so for this adventure I asked Gina Schuh to join me. Gina, one of the most energetic and adventurous women I know, replied enthusiastically “let’s do it!” She had been to Canyon Lake, but never on the Dolly Steamboat, so that became our destination—river cruise, here we come!

The Dolly Steamboat operates sightseeing and dinner cruises out of Canyon Lake Marina. We made reservations for the “Scenic Nature Cruise,” which emphasizes the flora and fauna of the region.

Tickets for the nature cruise are $23 for adults (13-59), $21 seniors (60+), $12 children (5-12), and free for toddlers (under 5). Dinner cruises are $64.95 for adults, $36.95 for children (5-12).

Gina and I arrived at the lake well ahead of our noon cruise and waited on the outdoor patio. Although the patio is shaded be sure to pack some water and sunscreen.

Both Gina and I are wheelchair users (Gina a manual chair, me a powerchair), so we were curious about the accessibility of the Dolly cruise. We informed the cruise operators that we needed access and were assured that the Dolly was accessible. For the most part we found that to be true.

The Dolly allows those with functional needs to board first, so Gina and I navigated out to the boat where we were met by our very enthusiastic Captain, Jeff Grimh. He unfolded a ramp onto the boat’s rear deck and asked how he could best assist us in boarding. I asked Capt. Jeff to help push my wheelchair up the rather steep ramp—a request he happily and adeptly complied with (clearly he has done this before.) Gina followed suit and soon we were comfortably seated on the Dolly, rocking among the
Lizzie Ann Kauffman, a wheelchair user from Pennsylvania, agreed, “I really enjoyed it. Everyone was very well trained and it was a good experience.”

waves and scanning the surrounding cliffs for Bighorn Sheep and other wildlife.

The Dolly has an air-conditioned main cabin and open-air front, upper and rear decks that can accommodate a maximum of 142 passengers plus 3 crew members. The bathroom on the boat is not wheelchair accessible, nor is the upper deck. Various drinks and snacks are available for sale during the cruise.

Gina and I really enjoyed our time at the lake and both gave the cruise high marks.

Lizzie Ann Kauffman, a wheelchair user from Pennsylvania, agreed, “I really enjoyed it. Everyone was very well trained and it was a good experience.” Lizzie Ann frequently visits Arizona with her family and this is her second time on the Dolly.

Capt. Jeff graciously allowed us a few minutes of his time for an interview. He explained that this is a family-run business that prides itself on customer service.

We are so lucky in Arizona to have this kind of natural beauty all around us. Take my advice and give Canyon Lake and the Dolly Steamboat a try. Invite a friend or two to join you—the best adventures are shared. Much thanks to Gina Schuh for making this one trip to remember!

Don Price chats with Gina Schuh and Captain Jeff Grimh.

Dolly Steamboat
dollysteamboat.com or call (480) 827-9144

Don Price
Early Intervention Coordinator
Ability360
Thanks to the ever-changing and evolving world of technology, students can use a mobile device as their main tool to access information – online library databases, websites and videos.

As a seasoned administrator in postsecondary education, I have witnessed students with disabilities using technology in and out of the classroom. For many, technology has become another form of accommodation. Here are a few apps that may help to bridge that gap and allow for a more level playing field.

(Note: LivAbility has not tested these apps.)

**Stepping Stones**

Daily Routines

Stepping Stones is available on the Apple App Store for $1.49. Designed for anyone who works best with visuals, it lets people use photos they have taken to create guides or schedules, called “paths”. Users can make step-by-step guides for a specific task or full schedules. The visual elements help break down a task into its various parts, making it easier for users to tackle it one step at a time.

**Notability**

Notability is a $7.99 note-taking and PDF annotation app on the Apple App Store. This app allows students (and anyone else) to take notes, sketch ideas, annotate PDFs, mark-up photos, record lectures, provide audio feedback and more. It is uniquely designed for each device to provide the best note-taking experience at school, at home and at work. And with iCloud, your notes are always up to date.

**ListNote**

Speech-to-Text Notes

This free Android app converts the user’s speech into text for easier note taking. The user can then edit those notes when convenient. People who have difficulty typing quickly and accurately on their keyboards can use ListNote to take notes and organize them on their own time.

**OCR Instantly Free**

OCR Instantly Free is a free Android app that converts images of text into easily legible words for people with dyslexia or impaired vision. The app does not work with handwriting, but can recognize printed text in over 60 languages. There is also a Pro version with more features for $7.99.

**aDyslexia**

aDyslexia is a free app available on the Apple App Store. It is designed to help people with dyslexia to read e-books in PDF format and browse the web by modifying text to make it more legible. You can set your own preferences via built-in settings to customize how an e-book or a web page is displayed. Additionally, the app has a built-in text-to-speech synthesis with many supported languages.

**Tecla Access**

Tecla Access is a free Android app that allows people with disabilities hands-free access to mobile devices. Users can wirelessly operate these devices with their power wheelchairs through buttons, sip-and-puff controllers, joysticks, etc. The app also allows voice commands. The Google Play Store has a link with detailed installation instructions: www.kmo.do/teclasupport

**RogerVoice**

RogerVoice requires an internet connection to work.

Gen Heppard, MA is the Director of Disability Resources & Services and TRIO Programs at Phoenix College. He previously worked at Arizona State University and Mesa Community College.

Gene firmly believes in the opportunities available for achieving a higher education degree.

Gene Heppard with Marguerite MacKrell
Have a question? Ask Robert Reed, membership specialist at front desk or call (602) 386.4566

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AUG 13TH
- Power Soccer
- Wheelchair Basketball
- Wheelchair Tennis

SEPT 10TH
- Power Soccer
- Adaptive Golf
- Wheelchair Lacrosse

FREE

JULY-SEP
SEE MORE DATES IN OUR NEXT ISSUE.
REGISTER AT ability360.org

9.45AM-4.00PM
Arizona Youth Leadership Forum (AZYLF) for Students and Transitioning Young Adults Who Have Disabilities was held June 12-17, 2016, at Arizona State University in Phoenix, opening doors for more than 20 new youth to gain perspective, skills and a plan for their future. In addition, they will receive the ongoing support of a personal mentor for the next year and the opportunity to join the thriving AZYLF Alumni Association, which helps youth stay connected to and engaged in the disability movement in Arizona and beyond.

Governed by an Executive Committee of eight, the AZYLF Alumni Association has been active in planning and implementing service projects and social activities, participating on committees and focus groups, attending and presenting at conferences, informing the State Plan for Independent Living, completing internships, and planning and staffing AZYLF 2016. More than half of the staff this year were AZYLF alumni, and three were returning staff. Anya Carrillo was the first alumna selected for the opportunity and responsibility of serving as a Team Leader at AZYLF.

Be assured, this is no small feat. Team leaders facilitate the AZYLF curriculum, which is a comprehensive set of self-discovery exercises designed to assist the youth, referred to as Delegates, in making Personal Leadership Plans that are significant and relevant to their lives.

Despite some initial reservations, Anya embraced the mission to confidently conduct all of the self-discovery efforts for the Yellow Team, one of 5 small-group teams. "I was so nervous and excited when asked to be a Team Leader. I didn’t know if I was even ready, but I knew that if Melissa had faith in me to be able to do such a huge task and to do it well, I would be able to do it," Carrillo said. "AZYLF and the Alumni Association have helped me to become more independent, and opportunities such as presenting at a Conference have come my way. I am definitely super excited about the future of AZYLF and our Alumni Association," she added.

Anya Carrillo works part time as a child care provider, performs a day of service each week at Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council, is Secretary of the AZYLF Alumni Association and is hoping to start college next semester. In addition, she was recently hired by Raising Special Kids to serve as a Youth/Young Adult Advisor.

All this, since graduating from AZYLF in 2014?! Priceless.

Learn More
602-262-2900
www.azylf.org

Melissa Ann Santora, Director of Administration Statewide Independent Living Council

Under the creative coordination of Ms. Santora, this year will mark the third Youth Leadership Forum in Arizona.
Happy Birthday!

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) acknowledges the civil rights of people with disabilities and creates a mechanism to address barriers to employment, transportation, public accommodations, public services, and telecommunications.

Ability360 provides programs that support the Independent Living core services: skills training for independent living, information and referral, advocacy, peer support and transition services.

“Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”
George H.W. Bush – 41st President of the United States and signer of the ADA
Independence
through empowerment

by Douglas West, Program Coordinator
Community Living Options Program, Ability360

I am very excited to coordinate a unique program for Ability360, Community Living Options. CLO works specifically with consumers who are high-functioning individuals with a developmental disability who are ineligible for federal and state support services. The program allows individuals the opportunity to increase social skills, meet new friends, learn to navigate the transportation system, attend vocational training, prepare to live on their own and identify and work towards their independent living goals.

An important part of the program is that it gives consumers the opportunity to become independent and to advocate for themselves, demonstrating an active approach in their journeys toward independence. Community Living Options provides consumers with tools, resources and supports to help them live independently.

Let me introduce Alberto Ruiz. Alberto’s goals in the CLO program include increasing his self-advocacy skills, confidence level and self-esteem, as well as connecting to social and employment activities. Alberto is 21 and living with epilepsy. He has dealt with a lot of adversity in his life, yet is hopeful and willing to work towards his goals.

by Alberto Ruiz, CLO Consumer

Throughout the course of my life, I feel I’ve overcome many obstacles (being bullied in school, struggling with anxiety), and due to that, I feel like a much stronger person now. I’m certainly glad to have found Ability360, because it has provided me with endless information and more resources than I could possibly hope for. It has taught me to think about things I had never considered in the past, such as money management and healthy eating habits. These were helpful lessons, especially in terms of living alone. One of my favorite parts of working with Ability360 is being able to meet people like my program coordinator Douglas West. He’s been so helpful to me in giving me all these resources to use and offering me advice on a variety of things. I’m very glad to have someone there I can talk to.

As a 21-year-old part-time college student, I’m glad to have as many resources and options as I do at a time in my life when I’m uncertain as to where the future will lead me. Growing up dealing with anxiety and bullying took their toll on me and left me feeling hopeless in terms of what I could do to help myself and to help change myself for the better. Working with Ability360 has opened my eyes. I now realize that if I try hard enough in pursuing my goals I can become a better me, one that sheds the burdens of the past.

I’m glad I’m working with Ability360 because I feel I have the ability to succeed in life and accomplish the things I need to in order to lead the kind of life I want.

Help is indeed reaching out to you; all you need to do is reach back.
Douglas West has been the CLO Program Coordinator at Ability360 since February 2016, after moving here from Pittsburgh, PA, where he also worked for a Center for Independent Living.

Alberto was recently matched with an Ability360 Peer Mentor, who will provide support and resources as Alberto works toward his self-advocacy, education and employment goals. Alberto’s interests lie in the automotive and technical fields, and he is currently exploring automotive programs for consideration.

I like seeing the tangible results with consumers, the moments of “I got this” or the look on their faces when they realize they can accomplish their goals, whether it be volunteering, advocating for themselves in a difficult situation, obtaining employment or attending their first social outing. I believe in the philosophy that empowerment yields independence.

Learn more about the Community Living Options program online at www.ability360.org

I believe in the philosophy that empowerment yields independence.

~ Douglas West
**Events I Don’t Want to Miss**

**Thursdays**

**JULY 7 - AUGUST 11**

**Wheelchair Basketball Summer League**

5:30PM - 7:30PM

Members $25, Non-Members $35

sarah@ability360.org

**Tuesdays**

**JULY 12 - AUGUST 16**

**Miracle League**

6:30PM - 7:30PM


(602) 386-4566

**Wednesdays**

**JULY 20**

**Women’s SCI Discussion Group**

5:30PM - 7PM (every 3rd Wed)

Ability360 Classroom B

Donna Powers (602) 577-0517

**Saturdays**

**JULY 9 - AUGUST 13 & SEPT 10**

**Max In Motion**

10AM - 4PM


sarah@ability360.org

(602) 386-4566

**Thursday, July 21**

**Men’s Disability Group**

5:30PM - 7PM (every 3rd Thurs)

Ability360 Classroom B

8 | Adult men only!

Don Price (602) 980-3232

**Saturdays**

**July 9 - August 13 & Sept 10**

**Max In Motion**

10AM - 4PM


sarah@ability360.org

(602) 386-4566

**Friday, July 22**

**ADA Anniversary Conference**

10AM - 2PM

Ability360 Conference Center

Registration required: 26adacelebration.eventbrite.com

advocacy@ability360.org

(602) 443-0738

**Sundays**

**July 3, 10, 24, 31 and August 7, 2016**

**Sled Ice Hockey at the Ice Den**

10:10AM - 11:10PM (please arrive by 9:30AM)

9375 E. Bell Rd.

Scottsdale, AZ 85260

$5 per event (free if mentioned Coyotes sled hockey team sent you)
**SEPTMBER**

**FRIDAY, JULY 22**

**ADA ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE**
10AM - 2PM
ABILITY360 CONFERENCE CENTER
REGISTRATION REQUIRED:
26ADACELEBRATION.EVENTBRITE.COM
ADVOCACY@ABILITY360.ORG
602-443-0738

**SUNDAYS**
JULY 3, 10, 24, 31
AND AUGUST 7, 2016
SLED ICE HOCKEY AT THE ICE DEN
10:10AM - 11:10PM
( PLEASE ARRIVE BY 9:30AM)
9375 E. BELL RD.
SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85260
$5 PER EVENT
(FREE IF MENTION COYOTES SLED HOCKEY TEAM SENT YOU)

**LATINO DISABILITY SUMMIT & RESOURCE FAIR**
Saturday September 17
8 am - 5 pm
for more information visit: LatinoAbilitySummit.com

**ABILITY360**

**360 Charity Golf Tournament**
Sep 23/2016

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 6**

**D-BACKS DISABILITY & HUMAN SERVICES EXPO**
3PM - 7PM
CHASE FIELD, 401 E JEFFERSON ST, PHOENIX
MMLB.COM/DBACKS/TICKETS/INFO/DISABILITY-DAY

**Family Talent Show Night**
Fri. Jul. 15 5.30 - 6.30 pm.

**ABILITY360**
SPORTS & FITNESS CENTER
Wheelchair Rugby / Wheelchair Basketball
Power Soccer / Amputee Basketball
Wheelchair Lacrosse
October 21 & 22