Asim Dietrich became a lawyer, what’s your ambition?

ADA Lawsuits: Gone Too Far?
Accessible Playgrounds
Racing Drones
Detour Theater
Rio Recap

LivAbility is a publication of ABILITY360
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Message from the President & CEO

In 2002, President George W. Bush proclaimed October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The President called on all government leaders, labor leaders and employers to collaborate to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the 21st century workforce. Mr. Bush said, “All of our citizens should have the opportunity to live and work with dignity and freedom.”

Disability Awareness Month has become a national campaign to raise awareness about disability employment issues. Like most Americans, people with disabilities want an opportunity to get a job, earn a living and support themselves. In addition to financial independence, work can give our lives meaning and purpose. Work often defines who we are and is a critical source of our social relationships.

While we all agree on this, millions of our youth with disabilities are still waiting for the doors to the workforce to open to them. Too many barriers still exist. That’s why we must reform Social Security's current definition of disability. Under current SSI (Supplemental Security Income) rules, an individual with a disability 18 and over must prove they cannot work to qualify for disability benefits, including their health care and independent living supports such as personal assistance services. We need to change this policy and way of thinking that essentially says, “having a disability means I cannot work.” This policy leads many youth and families to think, and rightfully so, that work will result in the loss of these vital support services and the reliability of their monthly SSI check. We can and should do better for our youth!

Ability360 is committed to improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Since 2002, Ability360 Employment Services has been providing assistance and support to people with disabilities who seek employment through the Ticket to Work program. All of our employment services are geared toward community-based, integrated employment. Also, Ability360’s Social Security Work Incentives Consulting and Benefits2Work Arizona program serves people receiving Social Security disability benefits who are working or have a desire to work. For more information on either of these programs, go to www.ability360.org.

Our nation’s greatest asset is our people and we need to take advantage of everyone’s abilities. Making employment for people with disabilities a national priority will not only allow more U.S. citizens to reach their potential, but also help our country compete and win on the global stage!
October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. We are pleased to bring you expanded coverage of employment issues from profiles of internationally renowned Tucsonian, Jessica Cox and valley entrepreneur, Stormy Love along with contributions by Amina Kruck, Gary Karp and Susan Webb to bring you a 360 view.

The General Election is November 8th. Ability360 hosts an Early Voting Site beginning October 17th until November 4th. Whether you vote by mail, vote at an early voting site like Ability360, or vote in person at your precinct on Election Day, make sure to exercise your right to vote.

In this issue, some of our favorite contributors return with great stories: Yvette Mallari on accessible playgrounds, Andres Rosales, complimented by the breathtaking photography of Jerry O’Connor, on the freedom of flight with racing drones. And first time contributors, Brenna Bean on the River Rampage expedition, Max McQueen on the Detour Theater Company and Brian Fore who wrote and photographed our concluding venture with Wounded Warrior Project, a 3-day cooking class.

This issue also brings changes for the Creative Team. Reggie Mitzel, VP and Chief Administrative Officer of Ability360 has moved on. Reggie was a vital member of the creative team from the earliest planning stages. Her hand at editing, writing and creative direction has been our guide post along the way. Road trips and editing meetings just aren’t the same. We’ll leave a typo in every edition just for you, Reg.

As we prepared to say goodbye to Reggie, we realized, we’ve never actually said hello to you. We produce each edition with a host of contributors and a handful of interns led by a core team of four.

Our visionary, Loren Worthington leads our team. You’ll see Loren’s photo credit on some of our most arresting images. He ensures we always have great visuals whether as photographer or as Art Director. We have to brag just a bit, Loren spent most of September in Rio with our Paralympic athletes as an official photographer for TeamUSA.

Our creative genius, John Beaubien. In the earliest days, it was just John and Loren who produced all of the branding and visuals. John’s skills as a graphic artist make LivAbility sing. John is the detail guy, he ensures readability and produces all of our alternative formats.

Our mad scientist of design, Rebeca Cavazos. Rebeca brings stories to life visually. Her vibrant designs grace every issue and she produces our Spanish edition.

Our curmudgeon in residence, Jennifer Longdon. Jen is our staff writer and the most recent addition to the core team. Jennifer works with our contributors and harangues interns to produce the content you see on our pages.

We produce LivAbility to showcase the most interesting stories in Arizona’s disability community each quarter. Ours is a community continually “damned by faint expectations.“ Our goal is to remind us all that we can reach for the stars while we are also living typical, everyday lives. We hope to hear from you. Tell us YOUR stories, share your thoughts, tell where we get it right and where we miss the mark. Together let’s show Arizona the breadth of living well with a disability in Arizona. 🌟
Politically and economically empowering those with disabilities.
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WRITER
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Brian Fore is a student at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University studying digital journalism and Spanish for the professions. He is a United States Army veteran, where he found a passion for covering military stories for the Fort Bliss Bugle. He continues to cover veterans' issues.

WRITER
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Andres Rosales is a small-town kid who never learned how to write his biography. Instead, he spent his time watching music videos on YouTube. He’s a self-taught guitar player; participating in the occasional open mic; so he’s clearly come a long way. Andres is a sucker for breakfast burritos at midnight and intriguing discussions. Andres is a junior in ASU’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

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Max McQueen was a theater critic for the East Valley Tribune from 1981 to 2003. He served on the Ability360 board of directors from 2004-2014 and is currently the Executive Director of the Lura Turner Homes for Adults with Developmental Disabilities.

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WRITER
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Brenna is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist and Program Coordinator for Daring Adventures as well as an on-call recreation therapist at St. Joseph’s Hospital & Medical Center. After sustaining an SCI in 2010, Brenna became very passionate about using recreation to foster healthy and happy lives for people with disabilities. Brenna herself is very active with adaptive sports, fitness and outdoor recreation!

PHOTOGRAPHER
JOHANNA HUCKEBA
Johanna Huckeba is a journalism major at Arizona State University focusing on photography and documentary studies. She lives off of iced coffee, enjoys looking at notebooks at Barnes & Noble that she can’t afford, and spending time outside in places where it doesn’t feel like you’re on the surface of the sun. When she’s not at work taking photos, she’s probably out taking photos.

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

PHOTOGRAPHER
RANDY BINGHAM
Local photographer Randy Bingham, owner of Randy’s Vision Photography, started his photographic journey at age 9, after receiving his first Brownie Camera. His numerous photoshoots include multiple magazines, advertising campaigns, websites, and family celebrations; creating lasting, authentic memories. He loves the expression on people’s faces when they see their finished photos.

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LivAbility is available as an accessible PDF online at Ability360.org/LivAbility. Large print versions are available upon request.

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This magazine is printed with vegetable-based inks.
How Are We Doing?

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

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

editor@ability360.org

Clarifications:

~ Issue 06 Summer 2016 ~
Our profile of Paralympian Allysa Seely in (Road to Rio) erroneously mischaracterized Seely's medical history and her competition record.

Our profile of photographer Aurora Berger, (Aurora Berger – In Focus) misidentified her home state, which is Vermont, not Connecticut.

~ Issue 03 Winter 2016 ~
Misstated the role of Jake Geller in the development of the NCDJ style guide originally created by Suzanne Levine (Writing Disability Right).

*The online versions of these stories reflect the corrections. LivAbility apologizes for this error.

LivAbility

Ahora en español

PDF disponible para descarga en Línea gratis.

Encuentranos en ability360.org/livability
A Better Way to Play
It's one of those crisp Sunday mornings. The Beaubiens arrive at a park, the nearby lake winking at them with sunlight. John Beaubien, a graphic design and marketing specialist at Ability360, nurses an iced coffee as he looks back at his wife, Kelly, and two sons, Nicholas, 6, and Scott, 4.

“Ready?” he asks. The kids take off.

The park is one of three the Beaubiens plan on visiting. Although they're miles apart, ADA deemed them accessible. Accessibility is important to the family, since John was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy; he's now a full-time power wheelchair user.

In 2000, the US Access Board and the Americans with Disabilities Act released standards that every playground should have in order to be inclusive. Requirements include ground-level equipment, ramps and smooth surfacing for wheelchair users like Beaubien.

The trip ended with 100 miles on the odometer and mixed feelings. There was the good: such as supported swings and musical instruments. One park even had braille and sign language panels paired with translation games. On the other hand, there were ramps that led to nowhere, surfacing in seas of mulch that felt like a bad game of ‘the floor is lava’, and a lack of fencing and safe spaces for overstimulated children.

Good or bad, finding any of these playgrounds would have been close to impossible without the help of accessibleplayground.net, an online directory for playgrounds in the US and around the world. It was created by Mara Kaplan, principal of Let Kids Play, a consulting service for accessible playgrounds in Pennsylvania.

After Kaplan’s son Samuel was diagnosed with microcephaly, she became a stay-at-home mom and volunteered with a group working on an indoor play space. Knowing that running the whole operation as a volunteer effort would fail, Kaplan acquired a grant and ran the Center for Creative Play for seven years until the 2008 recession.

That didn’t stop her from her work. She started accessibleplayground.net to index accessible playgrounds. She would visit playgrounds during her vacations, and use Google Maps and news articles online to add ones she hadn’t seen personally. She only included the best, most inclusive playgrounds at first until she realized the importance of even the tiniest amount of accessibility.

“When Samuel was little, if there was a park near me and all it had was swing seat, I wanted to know that,” Kaplan said.
According to Kaplan, the top five inclusive elements of a playground are fencing, surfacing, swings that everybody can play on, ground level play and water elements like splash pads. Fencing is crucial for children with spectrum disabilities like autism, who often run and could possibly endanger themselves.

“What I like telling people is that you can make every playground more inclusive, even a small pocket playground in the neighborhood,” Kaplan said. “If you think about it in the beginning, there are things to make it better. It’s so important to sit and stop at the beginning before cracking open the catalogs.”

She stressed that if inclusion and accessibility aren’t considered pre-development, they’re nearly impossible to make up later. And when playgrounds do become accessible, the press they receive is just as bewildering as inaccessible playgrounds.

“I see all these newspaper articles that say, ‘Great new playground opens! It’s ADA compliant! Isn’t that awesome?’ and part of me wants to write back and say ‘That’s great, did you follow all the other laws too?’” Kaplan said. “ADA is the law. Why are you touting that you followed the law? Tell me that you’ve gone beyond the law. Because the law really doesn’t get us to where we need to be. It gets us to the playground, it doesn’t really allow us to play on the playground.”

Her son turns 22 this year. Kaplan still visits playgrounds across the country, and is excited for her next trip. The destination? A magical place on the west coast.

Changing the Playing Ground

“Everybody feels welcome. That’s how playgrounds should be,” said Olenka Villarreal, founder of Magical Bridge, the nation’s most inclusive and innovative playground. The park, located in Palo Alto, California, features patent-pending slide landings, a laser harp, a tree house, swings and a play stage—accessible for every ability and age.

It started when Villarreal realized that out of 34 parks in one of the most expensive cities in the nation, there was nowhere she could take her daughter Ava to swing. She took matters into her own hands, using her 20 years of experience with startups and Silicon Valley businesses to create the perfect park. But big dreams come with big challenges.

“I assumed that it would be easy to raise money,” she said. “It was very interesting because many don’t understand what you’re trying to do.”

She also couldn’t find a single example of the playground she had in mind. Sure, there were already accessible playgrounds in existence, but she found the equipment clunky, boring and uninspiring.

While she didn’t know exactly how it would end up, she was certain of one thing: she would not tout it as an accessible playground.

As soon as a playground is labeled inclusive, it ironically becomes exclusive. According to Villarreal, inclusive playgrounds, simply by being named inclusive, unfortunately develop a stigma that only those who benefit from accessibility should play there. “No parent should go to one playground with one kid and another with another kid,” Villarreal said. “We went beyond ADA.”

Villarreal said it took a “tremendous amount of research” and work to finally achieve the innovation and aesthetic she wanted Magical Bridge to have, like importing equipment from Germany and including
‘Kindness Ambassadors’ that go around the park promoting friendship.

To those who wonder why she put so much effort into Magical Bridge, Villarreal points out that a child’s first classroom is the playground. It is where they first learn about the community around them and timeless lessons about interacting with others.

The Magical Bridge Foundation is trying to fill the vacuum left by playground manufacturers’ lack of inspiration and incentive, and the future may have Magical Bridge playgrounds in more schools and towns.

There are cost effective ways to make parks innovative and inclusive, even without the California budget, Villarreal said. Parks and Recreation departments shell out thousands for playgrounds that harbor more tumbleweeds than toddlers. With the right planning and materials, less could really mean more.

“I don’t think we have a thing specifically holding us back from making things accessible for everybody,” said Gregg Bach, public information officer for the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department.

In terms of pricing, Bach said that the biggest challenge would have to be maintenance. The city of Phoenix alone has 180 parks, 29 pools and 31 recreation centers.

“When you roll all that ongoing maintenance, that’s what makes it a challenge for our staff,” Bach said.

While there are a variety of different projects going on, there are currently no plans for a big playground any time soon. However, he does encourage the public to voice their opinion during monthly meetings.

“Our staff does a really good job of following the next best thing and the latest trends, but if we hear from the community, that helps guide us as well,” he said.

A new all-inclusive layout is underway in Mesa’s Dobson Ranch Playground. Concept designs feature fencing, ramps, and wheelchair swings.

“This will be the only park in Mesa with this type of equipment,” said Lane Gram, recreation supervisor. The park will open November 2016.

The Beaubiens climbed back into the van. The rearview mirror framed the two boys, their feathery blonde hair matted with sweat and arms limp with fatigue. They will live to play another day.

Every child should be able to do so.

---

A few parks to check out

- **Rotary Community Park**
  1400 S. Smoketree Avenue, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403

- **Stewart Vincent Wolfe Creative Playground aka Castle Park**
  282 N 12th Ave., Yuma, AZ 85364

- **Pioneer Community Park**
  8755 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria, AZ 85345

- **Surprise Community Park**
  15930 N. Bullard Ave., Surprise, AZ 85374

- **Telephone Pioneers of America Park**
  1946 W. Morningside Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85023

- **John Teets Park**
  4380 E. Ramuda Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85050

- **Dobson Ranch Park** *(Grand opening Dec. 3rd, 9am to 9:30am)*
  2359 S. Dobson Rd., Mesa, AZ 85202
Are we AIDed by ‘Drive-by’ Advocacy?

Non-Compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) is no Trivial Matter

by Phil Pangrazio, President & CEO of Ability360

If you’ve been following the news lately, you’ve no doubt heard about the flood of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) lawsuits that have drawn the ire of small businesses across Phoenix and the Valley. An organization calling itself Advocates for Individuals with Disabilities has filed about 1,500 lawsuits just this year and sent another 42,000 warning notices to local businesses about non-compliance to the ADA. The majority of these notices concern parking lot violations such as the lack of a van accessible space or inaccurate sign height for accessible parking.

AID typically gives businesses 30 days to respond to the warning after which time it may file suit. Businesses that respond to AID are offered the opportunity to settle if they agree to fix the problem, usually for about $3,500 to $7,500, thus avoiding litigation and attorney fees. Many businesses claim to not even understand what the violations are for. Those who have settled claim that AID never returned to verify that the issue was resolved, thus leaving them open to future litigation.

Businesses feel they are being extorted by a disingenuous plaintiff and his attorney, who never actually intended to patronize the business, but rather just drove by and took pictures of the parking lot. It appears that AID is systematically going from one zip code to another, photographing parking lots of shopping centers, strip malls, small property owners, and other “mom & pop” types looking for ADA violations.
This has become a real dilemma for the disability community. On the one hand, we want more access to business, so ADA enforcement is a good thing, especially for those businesses that have ignored compliance for 26 years. On the other hand, the high volume of lawsuits is giving the ADA a black eye and businesses are fighting back.

Last year’s legislative session saw the introduction of SB1284 that would have imposed a 60-90 day waiting period before a plaintiff could sue, giving businesses time to address the problem. Of course, the disability community opposed SB1284 and thankfully, it was defeated.

Businesses have had 26 years to comply with the ADA. Why should they get one more day? Ignorance of the law is no excuse! Additionally, a waiting period or "time to cure," just sends a message to business owners that they don’t have to worry about complying with the ADA until they receive a letter notifying them that they are discriminating against people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the recent wave of lawsuits has made the ADA a target of attack, but the law is not the problem. Non-compliance is the problem. If there were not such blatant non-compliance, AID would not exist. AID has discovered what we’ve known for a long time; many businesses just ignore the law. Their parking lot suits are just “easy pickin’s.” Personally, I don’t condone what AID is doing. Their business model is gaming a lawful process, and it’s likely disingenuous and exploitative.

The Arizona Attorney General’s Office recently stated, “The plaintiff is circumventing the statutorily proscribed State enforcement process by claiming to “investigate” supposed violations of the federal ADA and the AZDA, while in reality apparently engaging in “trolling” litigation tactics designed to induce defendants into quick pre-suit or post-complaint settlement that merely enriches the plaintiff.” AID and its founder, Peter Strojnik, Esq., however, claim to be champions of disability rights. I can’t get inside someone’s head, nor his heart, so I won’t attempt to judge his motives. Maybe he is out to make a quick buck, but if the AG’s office successfully steps in and prevents these suits from going forward, thousands of businesses will be off the hook for their violations.
Most importantly, the attention that AID has drawn to the issue of ADA compliance is a wake-up call to all owners of places of public accommodation as covered by Title III of the ADA.

Businesses need to become educated about what their obligations are under the law. AID has focused on parking lots, but what about getting in and around once inside a business? Those are equally important matters businesses need to learn about. There is free technical assistance available to the public on compliance with Title III’s requirements. There are a large number of publications on Title III’s requirements. Telephone information lines and web sites exist with numerous technical assistance materials.

Proponents of weakening the ADA with a notification or “time to cure” period often argue that the plaintiff’s charges are often trivial and minor. If the accessibility violations in question are truly minor, it would not be difficult for businesses to remedy the problem and resolve the issue quickly, with minimal attorneys’ fees. Sign height is a typical example. “Signage may sound minor to some, but people with disabilities live their lives looking for signage that indicates a facility can accommodate them,” said J.J. Rico, Executive Director of the Arizona Center for Disability Law. “If accessibility isn’t readily apparent, they’re moving on,” he said. “If it's properly marked and in a uniform place, it makes it that much easier for them to participate in things we all want to participate in, like going to the store or the movies.” Van-accessible spaces are similarly key for people who use wheelchairs. “Again, I think some folks think it’s not a big deal,” Rico said, “but if there’s not ample space for a wheelchair ramp to come down, the person can’t actually get out of his vehicle.” The result of modifying the ADA with a “time to cure” period would result in much less voluntary compliance with the law and the overwhelming advantage will go to those who choose to ignore the law.

Finally, the ADA has several provisions that protect businesses from unreasonable requirements. For instance, the ADA does not require any action that would cause an “undue burden” or that is “not readily achievable,” which is defined as “easily accomplished and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense.”

In addition, the federal government encourages voluntary compliance by providing financial assistance to small businesses that make required changes to older facilities. Small businesses that generate one million dollars or less in annual gross receipts or having less than 30 or fewer full-time (30 hours per week) employees are allowed a tax credit for 50% of eligible expenses in excess of $250.00 up to a maximum of $10,000 that are incurred to comply with the ADA.

On a personal level, I’ve been disabled and have used a wheelchair for 38 years. I’ve experienced life before the ADA and after it. I would never want to return to pre-ADA days. In light of the recent ADA lawsuit phenomenon, I think everyone needs to understand that for a person with a disability trying to access the community, non-compliance to the ADA should not be perceived as frivolous, minor or trivial, as some would suggest. Rather, it is what it is...discrimination! ☺

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The Arizona Center for Disability Law

by J.J. Rico, Executive Director

The Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public interest law firm dedicated to providing legal services to children and adults with a wide range of physical, mental, psychiatric, sensory and cognitive disabilities. The ACDL is part of a federally-mandated system present in every state and territory.

Our disability rights network was established by Congress in 1975, and collectively is the largest provider of free legal services to people with disabilities in the United States.

Every day, the ACDL upholds its mission to advocate for the legal rights of persons with disabilities to be free from abuse, neglect and discrimination and to gain access to services, maximize independence and achieve equality.

Who does the ACDL help?

Individuals with disabilities: The ACDL receives specific federal protection and advocacy funding to assist individuals with certain types of disabilities such as developmental disabilities or serious mental illness.

Individuals with disability-related problems: ACDL serves individuals whose disability is the reason for discrimination, abuse or neglect or failure to provide needed services. The ACDL does not handle general legal problems encountered by individuals, whether or not they have disabilities. Legal issues NOT handled by ACDL include drafting a will, obtaining a divorce or filing for bankruptcy.
What types of problems does the ACDL address?

Investigates abuse and neglect of individuals in mental health facilities, nursing homes, community provider residences and schools.

• Enforces the right to a free public education for children with developmental disabilities.

• Advocates for the right to appropriate health care, assistive technology and other services for individuals with disabilities.

• Assists individuals with disabilities through the Client Assistance Program to obtain the services they need from Vocational Rehabilitation and other Rehabilitation Act-funded programs.

• Investigates housing discrimination against individuals with disabilities under the Fair Housing Act.

• Addresses discrimination by enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act including: advocating for greater accessibility to public places, businesses and governmental offices and services; promoting integration and equality in public services and programs; and enforcing employment rights for individuals with disabilities.

What services does the ACDL provide?

• Provides information on legal rights.

• Represents individuals in negotiations or in administrative proceedings and court.

• Investigates abuse and neglect.

• Provides outreach and training on legal rights and self-advocacy.

• Brings impact litigation to remedy systemic problems.

• Provides technical assistance to groups and individuals on disability-related legal issues.

ACDL will continue to represent and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities until we live in a society that focuses on people's abilities rather than disabilities.

For more information, visit www.azdisabilitylaw.org or (602) 274-6287. Like ACDL on Facebook and follow @AZDisabilityLaw on Twitter.
Until 1974, civil rights recognition for people with disabilities was so insubstantial that a person with a disability could be arrested for having the audacity to be out and about. The so-called “ugly laws” made it illegal for a person deemed “unsightly” or “unseemly” to appear in public. Even more recently, it was acceptable to demand a person with a disability to leave a gathering place because they made others uncomfortable or “sad” by their mere presence.

Thankfully, this changed with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Until this historically affirming event 26 years ago, our civil rights to public access, public transportation, education and communication did not exist. We were politely referred to as “shut-ins” because we had been shut out of public life, our voices unheard and the expectation that we would “go quietly.”

Think again!

We now have our civil rights. And we now benefit from a world with greater access and protections of these rights. The ADA, IDEA, the ABLE Act, Vocational Rehabilitation and more exist because elected officials felt the weight of the will of voters.

However, there are continuous challenges to restrict our hard-won rights and protections. Last year, the Arizona Legislature considered bills that would limit the use of service animals and another that would add additional roadblocks to ADA compliance by businesses. They were narrowly beaten back by advocates – voters who convinced legislators these bills would displease the voting public.

Elected officials who control the federal budget decide issues of funding for public transportation, access to healthcare, funding of SSI and SSDI and annual COLA (cost of living adjustments). It is our responsibility to hold elected officials accountable and make sure they act in our best interest. We can only accomplish this through the voting process.

“Voting is part of the ritual of being American,” says Amina Kruck, VP of Advocacy at Ability360. “The very programs that people with disabilities rely on are created and funded by the people we elect.”

Every election, from President of the United States, to Congress, to state legislatures, to your local school board member, impacts the quality of life for people with disabilities. In order to effect change in your community, you have to vote.
Voter access for people with disabilities continues to improve thanks to the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA). Along with options such as voting by mail (known as PEVL or the Permanent Early Voter List) or using curbside voting at your designated polling place, you can also go to an Early Voting Site such as the Ability360 Center. Beginning on Oct. 17 through Nov. 4th, any voter in Maricopa County can vote at Ability360.

Remember that as a person with a disability, there are accommodations available to you at the polling location. Some common accommodations include:

- You can move to the front of the line if your disability is aggravated by waiting in line or if you depend on Dial-A-Ride so that you don’t miss your return trip.
- You are entitled to use the voting assistance of your choice in the voting booth, you can bring a person (not a candidate on the ballot or your employer) or device to help your read or mark your ballot or assist with way-finding.
- If you are unable to leave your vehicle or enter the polling station due to access issues, you may curbside vote. The Marshall will begin a process where your ballot will be brought to you in your vehicle.

Justin Dart, the father of the ADA famously said, 

"Vote as if your life depends on it, because it does."

Your vote safeguards our hard-won civil rights protections. Don’t let that go! ☑

On Election Day, ACDL staffs a hotline to address election concerns for individuals with disabilities related to the right to vote independently, accessibility, and voting machines.

Senior Staff Advocate Renaldo Fowler offers the following for all voters before going to the polls:

- Confirm your voting status at ServiceArizona.com now to ensure your voter record is current and accurate.
- Know your voting location and hours of voting. Polling stations can move from election to election, so you may have to go to a different place than you went in the past.
- Know what identification you need to vote.
- Understand what accommodations are available to you and how to access them.
- Review the sample ballot in advance.
- If there is any question about your eligibility to vote, do not be turned away without casting a provisional ballot.

The Arizona Center for Disability Law staffs a hotline to assist with access issues for voters at (602) 274-6287 or 1-800-927-2260.
Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center kicked off its fifth anniversary celebration with the 360 Charity Golf Tournament on Friday, Sept. 23 at Longbow Golf Club. The event was sold out with a full field of 144 golfers. Each foursome included a member of the Ability360 community—both members and staff—with and without disabilities, to show our mission in action.

“The Area Agency on Aging has a longstanding partnership with Ability360 and we were so pleased to be part of the golf tournament to support an organization that does such important work in our community,” said Mary Lynn Kasunic, President and CEO of Area Agency on Aging, an event Gold sponsor.

The event raised over $45,000, which will help to further the mission of the Sports & Fitness Center to promote the independence, health, and overall well-being of people with disabilities.

The team of Andrew Welty, Mike Welty, Ted Welty, and Joe Lloyd captured first place and the team of Court Fable, Alfred Hackbarth, Larry Klassen, and Daniel Hernandez came in a close second by only one shot.

“My father and I had a great time at the outing, the enthusiasm and positive energy of the people involved is contagious! With the help of all the great people at Ability360, my dad got to get out and play golf for the first time in almost 5 years and the first time since losing part of his right leg,” said winning team member Andrew Welty.

“I had a great time getting out of my bubble and interacting with the public in this welcoming space. I can’t wait to do more golfing with Ability360 and Longbow. Thanks for the invite!”

The day culminated in a helicopter ball drop fundraiser featuring the Coyotes own mascot, Howler. A record 1,450 balls were dropped by Howler from the helicopter hovering above the green. As the balls rolled into the hole, Coyotes Foundation Board Member Ken Bonham assisted Ability360 in retrieving the winning balls. The first place winner Edward Antos, received a 12-person luxury suite to a Coyotes home game donated by the Coyotes Foundation. The second place winner Lori McLeod received a VIP package to the 2017 Waste Management Phoenix Open presented by the Ak-Chin Indian Community compliments of The Thunderbirds. The third place winner Nancy Bates received a beautiful pair of 18k white gold earrings and charms generously donated by Oliver Smith Jeweler.

This successful event could not have been made possible without the generosity from all of our sponsors including host course, Longbow Golf Club.

"Longbow Golf Club began over ten years ago to actively support adaptive golf and the disability communities it serves. As one of the first public access courses in Arizona to test, purchase and offer specialized adaptive golf cars, to hosting clinics and events for youth and adults to learn to play the game of golf, Longbow Golf Club was proud to be selected as the host facility for the Inaugural Ability360 Charity Golf event honoring the Fifth Anniversary of the Sports & Fitness Center. As a leader in youth, collegiate and professional golfer in Arizona, Longbow Golf Club will continue to support Ability360 and its efforts to promote adaptive golf in any way possible,” said Bob McNichols, Developer and General Manager of Longbow Golf Club.

“Our sincere thanks to all the event donors – from sponsorships to tee signs to the ball drop – every dollar will enhance the programming we offer at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center,” said Phil Pangrazio, President and CEO of Ability360. ”With the great success of this year’s event, we hope to continue the tradition next year!”
The winning foursome from left to right: Mike Welty, Ted Welty, Andy Welty and Joe Lloyd.

Ability360 member Stephen Binning gets some practice shots in before the tournament begins.

Cigna is proud to support Ability360. Together, we’re helping people with disabilities and making our community a stronger, healthier place to live.
Special thanks to our generous donors!

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- Longbow Golf Club
- Relentless, Inc.

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- Area Agency on Aging
- Arizona Coyotes Foundation
- Arizona Fairways Magazine
- Arizona Golf Association
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Photos by Randy Bingham
Olivia Campos, Director of Community Relations for the Arizona Coyotes, sets up for her chip shot to the green as Jason Graber with Ability360 looks on.

Seth O’Brien with Artificial Limb Specialists crushing one on the fairway

We’re Honored To Support Ability360.

Proud Sponsor of the 360 Charity Golf Tournament.
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Suspense filled the air of Fredrickson Hall of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in east Phoenix as Detour Company Theatre, the 16-year-old theater troupe, anxiously awaited the announcement of this year’s production.

More than 60 men and women with various disabilities were waiting with bated breath for Sam (one name only please - “like Cher”) to announce the “really big show” of the upcoming season. When the theater’s hyper-energetic founder and director shouted “Disney’s Beauty and the Beast, Jr.,” cheers erupted from Detour’s long-time players as well as those new to the company.

Sam’s casting selection is unique. Throughout the summer, men and women of all ages work on their acting chops in hopes of being in a Detour musical. They show up the first week of September every year with no idea what production Sam has in mind, or what role they might play in a show at the Scottsdale Center for Arts that always seems to have a cast of thousands.

“When we started, we were serving only those with cognitive disabilities,” says Sam, in a rare moment of stillness, “But we soon let go of that. Now we have people from the community who are blind or deaf or who have any number of physical disabilities.”

Being blind and “a not so hot singer” by her own assessment, Jenna Jenkins, 42, wondered how she would get around stage in the previous production, “Mary Poppins.” No problem. Jenna did the vocals, another “Mary” carried the props such as the umbrella and yet another said lines. In essence, three people played different aspects of the same character. All three were coached around the stage by a “invisible” actor who guides them safely across the
stage to their positions, called "shadowing" in theater vernacular. As for learning lines - the Foundation for the Blind generates Braille scripts for Detour.

When I asked Sam about Jenna’s singing ability, Sam said Jenna has "an absolutely fabulous" voice. So Jenna was obviously being WAY too modest about her vocal abilities.

David Mayes has been in each of Detour's many shows, starting with "The Wizard of Oz." Over the years, it's been a lot of rehearsals and classes, as Sam demands a lot for the cast. "I just plain like acting and singing and dancing," Mayes said. "It's fun, too."

Whereas Mayes says he's not at all nervous on stage, Christopher Forrest admits to getting a little jittery. Those nerves actually helped when he too was in Detour's first show, playing the Cowardly Lion. Acting also helped him with his shyness off stage.

Forrest, who has autism, is Sam's son. It was his desire to become an actor that led to the formation of Detour. In the late 1990s, Sam couldn't find any theaters that would be a good fit for her son; she started the non-profit troupe for Forrest and his friends.

"Every year we have a theme. This year it's 'kindness,' as seen in 'Beauty and the Beast,'" Sam says. "But overall the company has just three rules. Number one is to have fun. Number two is to have fun. And number three – you'll notice a trend here – is to have fun."
Team USA brought home 115 medals from the 2016 Rio Paralympics; 40 gold, 44 silver and 31 bronze medals adorn the necks of USA’s Paralympians.

Arizonan athletes who helped bring back the overall 4th place-win include:

- **Elizabeth (Ellie) Marks**
  - 100m Breaststroke
  - Prescott Valley, Arizona

- **Allysa Seely**
  - Triathlon
  - Phoenix, Arizona

- **Lora Webster**
  - Women’s Sitting Volleyball
  - Phoenix, Arizona

- **Chad Cohn and Josh Wheeler**
  - Wheelchair Rugby
  - Tucson, Arizona

- **Elizabeth (Ellie) Marks**
  - Women’s 4x100 Medley Relay
  - Prescott Valley, Arizona

- **Lisa Czechowski**
  - Women’s Goalball
  - Tucson, Arizona

- **Shirley Reilly**
  - Women’s Wheelchair 800m
  - Tucson, Arizona
IN REVIEW

by Loren Worthington

The 2016 Rio Paralympics were nothing short of amazing. The media focused on what could go wrong in Brazil and in the end; everything went right – really right.

Especially for me. I’ve been taking photos for 8 years as a way to stay involved in sports. At 360 I have gotten to know many athletes with aspirations to achieve, to set personal records, to be successful - to win. As we prepare this edition of LivAbility with a focus on employment, I’m reminded of why sports matter, why hard work matters and why having goals is the key to success.

Allysa Seely graced our cover last edition and it was great to see her take home the gold medal for Paratriathlon. When I first met and photographed Allysa, she wasn’t the fastest runner, swimmer or cyclist. Nor was I, by any means, a polished photographer. Far far from it. But we both had goals and speaking for myself, I sure didn’t listen to people who said a person in a wheelchair couldn’t be a sports photographer.

I was invited to Rio by the US Paralympic Committee to photograph the 2016 Paralympics. I spent 11 days photographing some amazing competitions. I met many athletes who gave it their all.
I’m not special. I followed the same formula for success that most people do. I’m stubborn and just don’t listen to anyone that doubts what I can do. I failed (and fell) a few times. I just keep working my butt off.

Back to Rio, many Arizonans on TeamUSA were also successful. Elizabeth Marks from Prescott Valley took home 2 medals in swimming. Lora Webster, whom I photographed for a calendar way back in 2011 took gold in Sitting Volleyball. Chad Cohn and Josh Wheeler from Tucson fought hard for gold in Wheelchair Rugby but at the end of double overtime, ended up one point shy and settled for silver.

Moving forward, I’m certain many of these athletes and some new ones I’m following in Arizona have their sights set on Tokyo in 2020. I plan to be there myself.

Finding something you love and making a career out of it is why LivAbility proudly features Cool Careers. I hope it convinces anyone reading these stories to get busy. Whether an athlete, artist or anything you want to be, we live in a country where opportunities are out there. We can’t all be swimmers or long jumpers with gold medal aspirations. But we can all aim to make our mark – to do our personal best. I can assure you that even if you come up short - the ride will be well worth it.

Loren Worthington is the Communications & Marketing Manager and part of the Livability Creative Team at Ability360
GET TO WORK! • THINK OUTSIDE THE SHOE • EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT • MOVING TOWARD SUCCESS • RAISING THE BAR • TAKING FASHION BY STORM • TAX INCENTIVES: ANOTHER REASON TO HIRE PWDS • OPPORTUNITY & INNOVATION IMPROVED THROUGH INCLUSION
You are part of history. Really. In a big way.

As a person with a disability, you belong to a big chunk of the human family who are emerging into society on a revolutionary scale. It’s a whole new game.

As a person with a disability, you live in a world that is more accessible, empowered by technologies, providing people with greater mobility and health — with civil rights protections on the books to support you.

More work to do on all this? Sure. But you’ve got some major progress to build on. You’ve got access to a fuller life than someone who fits your description probably would have had in the not so recent past. It’s really fantastically amazing.

I can report on this personally, having become paralyzed forty-three years ago. I speak from what I’ve witnessed. For example, in the ’70s, I had to assume I wouldn’t find a usable bathroom when I left the house.

So what does it all mean? It means that how we all think about disability has to change, too. In our homes, our communities and especially in the workplace. That’s the call to order for every October, which is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

This new world gets you access to education — from childhood through to higher degrees. It gets you into the office buildings and many locations we couldn’t physically access, or communicate in. It means that more people can be qualified for a wider array of jobs that are about information and relationships instead of physical labor. It gets you options to volunteer, to participate in organized activities that fit your interests. It gets you opportunities to start your own business.
There are so many things to gain from working. A paycheck, obviously. But working also gets you a sense of being valued in a special way, of learning and developing and getting good at something, of becoming part of the culture of a workplace and all of the relationships that come with it. The payoffs are huge.

If you’ve considered working but are a little afraid to make the leap, take a closer look. Your disability might not be the barrier you fear it is — for yourself, or for a potential employer you imagine won’t give you a chance.

Here’s the trick: don’t focus so much on your disability. It’s not really what matters. Focus on what interests you, the way you want to make a difference in the world, the kind of an organization you want to be a part of, the way you can create or share in success.

For an employer, that’s all they care about. If they can see you as someone who can help them succeed, more and more employers will do whatever it takes to have you aboard, seeing disability as something to which we adapt, rather than something that limits.

More employers understand that disability does not innately preclude success. Get out there with that attitude, take advantage of the radical changes in our society, and show the world what you — and people with disabilities in general — have to contribute.


Think Outside the Shoe
On her first day of flight school, Jessica Cox put on her headset and buckled her harness – with her feet. Cox, a native of Sierra Vista, AZ, now living in Tucson, was born without arms. She managed flight school as she did every challenge, “I dissected it to one thing at a time and built on that until I was successful.” Now a woman of many achievements, Jessica earns her living as a motivational speaker.

She often shares the lessons she’s learned from overcoming childhood bullying, earning a psychology degree and becoming the only armless person to receive a pilot’s license, garnering her a listing in the Guinness Book of World Records. She devoted two years to earning her license, while the typical person takes roughly 6 months.

Her plane, a 1946 Ercoupe, was designed to accommodate WWII pilots who had been wounded in the war so that it could be flown with two functional limbs instead of the standard setup that requires both arms and feet. Her plane has no modifications to accommodate her disability. Cox expected more resistance from the aviation community when she began her training. Instead, she found a welcoming and supportive community. On the day of her final checkout flight, the FAA official told her “if you can fly an airplane safely with your nose, you can fly an airplane. If you can fly safely with your feet, I see no reason not to give you your certificate.”
Cox has built her career over a 10-year span, speaking in more than 20 countries around the globe. It’s become the family business. Demand for Cox’s appearances has grown so much that her husband, Patrick, works full-time to manage her bookings, media requests and travel demands.

She now counsels her audiences to “think outside the shoe” based upon her experience learning that in order to wear shoes, she needed to tie them first and then put them on. She hopes that others can see solutions to their own obstacles from her experiences of creating unique solutions to her own personal challenges. “I went from being very self-conscious to now where I embrace every opportunity. I’ve learned to work hard and with each achievement I earn, it makes me want to strive for more.”

When it comes to achievements, Cox has no shortage. She’s earned two Black belts and currently holds the rank of Third Degree and title as 2014 State Champion in Forms in taekwondo. She’s gone SCUBA diving in Bonaire and visited 6 continents. Cox wrote a book titled Disarm Your Limits, published in 2015. She describes it as “a wonderful story of resilience.” A documentary chronicling her life story, Right Footed, premiered at the Vatican in June 2015.

In the last few months, Cox has made her foray into stand-up comedy which she says “goes foot-in-foot” with her career as a motivational speaker. She’s learning to be more improvisational and “think on her feet.” She’s performed a three-minute routine at Laughs in Tucson. Perhaps you’ll soon find her at a comedy club near you.

As to her future, Cox says she plans to “absorb the opportunities” that come her way. Even the sky is no limit for Jessica Cox.
Employee Spotlight

While many are greeted by her smiling face, hundreds more know her only by her professional, calm voice. She is none other than Maribel Sanchez, who has skillfully managed the Ability360 “nervous system” as its full-time receptionist for 15 years. She has touched thousands of callers and visitors, deftly guiding, directing, assisting and reassuring them on a daily basis. Perhaps no other employee knows the ins and outs of Ability360 programs like Maribel does, allowing her to quickly and efficiently direct callers and visitors alike to our programs and personnel. Sometimes affectionately referred to as Ability360’s “Director of First Impressions”, Maribel often performs the duties of translator for any callers in need of a Spanish-speaking team member. Maribel’s grace and poise under pressure conceal how busy and hectic the front desk can be.

Q: For people outside of the organization, what do you do?
A: I answer lots of phone calls, greet every visitor, handle incoming and outgoing mail and jabber away with a lot of people that come by. I’ve made lots of friends with people in all of our offices.

Q: What brought you here?
A: I wanted to work again after taking time off to care for my children and answered an ad in the paper.

Q: Will you share a little something about your family?
A: I am the eighth of nine kids. I have two children: a 16-year-old son and 18-year-old daughter who will be attending Grand Canyon University in August. My large extended family means that Easter is like a reunion every year, with over 80 people in attendance.

Q: Will you tell us about your dream vacation?
A: I do not like traveling much, but if I had dream vacation I would go to Spain. I love their accents and old, historic buildings.

Q: What unique traits do you bring to your work here?
Personality! I like to be treated nicely wherever I go, so I try to treat other people with the same respect. I help a lot with home care services, calling consumers who need to speak to someone who speaks Spanish, and staff members likewise transfer phone calls to me. I handle a lot of information and referral, giving out numbers to community resources. I know about all departments. I’m so used to it and like it, but others who take over for me to get a break can be overwhelmed. One team member said, “Now I know what you do, Maribel!”

Q: What do you like most about your work?
A: What I like the most about my work is all the people, consumers, home care providers, volunteers, and Ability360 partners that I have met and become friends with. My coworkers are the best people to work with…I really mean that.

Q: Will you tell us about your best day ever?
A: I have the distinction of being the only daughter my dad danced with at her wedding. He was not the dancing type, so I didn’t even know he knew how to dance until he asked me.

Q: Any final comments?
A: I’ve always been happy here… I never have to drag myself here. I love my job and the people I work with.
Rita Malemed joined Ability360’s Ticket to Work Program in December of 2014. Although Rita did not have a formal employment history, she had a strong history of volunteer work, which resonated with employers. Her skills were tested to demonstrate to her and to employers that she possessed basic skills needed for employment. Rita struggled with shyness when interviewing for jobs, therefore, interviewing skills were a focus of our work. Because she had not interviewed for employment previously, we helped update her resume to highlight her distinct skill set.

Rita accepted a job with Optum as a customer service representative. She has excelled at her new position and continues to work closely with her Employment Coordinator to ensure job retention and benefits management. To ease her transportation challenges, Rita even moved closer to her employment location. Rita is an example of what many of us face when we are young and do not have work experience. Volunteer work makes a difference, but because Rita has a bachelor’s degree in sociology, she is assured a long and bright career future ahead. Rita recently celebrated her one-year anniversary with Optum, but this is only the beginning for her!
Asim Dietrich  
Raising the Bar

Featured on our cover is Ability360 Board member, Asim Dietrich. Dietrich is an attorney with the Arizona Center for Disability Law focusing on abuse and neglect investigations, administrative appeals regarding health care and mental health care services, and assisting individuals who have experienced discrimination because of their disability. He is part of the advocacy team demanding that Arizona enact a system that accepts text messaging on 911 services to ensure that the Deaf and hard of hearing can communicate in the case of an emergency. “My passion is to make sure everyone is fully protected under the law. That’s why I do this.”

Dietrich holds an undergraduate degree in political science and earned his law degree from the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University in 2009. He was motivated to become an attorney based upon his own experience. “There were services I needed and I needed an attorney to help me. She inspired me to want to help others in the way that she helped me.”

When asked about the obstacles that he saw preventing people with disabilities from achieving employment, he cited employers’ fear of the cost of reasonable accommodation. “This stigma can be cured with information. There are many incentives to employers to offset these costs.”

Dietrich lives with muscular dystrophy and requires a full-time caregiver. “If I’m able to get out, go to school and get my law degree living with a significant disability, I hope others dare to set big goals and try to achieve them.”

When he’s not fighting for justice, equity and inclusion, Dietrich enjoys an active social life of movies, good food and concerts from indie rock to Broadway shows with his friends.

LEARN MORE: maricopa.edu/drc

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*Maricopa County Residents
At the corner of Southern and Mill avenues in Tempe sits Rocket a Go-Go, a store known for unique, 50s-inspired clothing with a twist. The store is part Elvis, part Elvira; vintage rock 'n' roll with skulls and bats. It’s a cacophony that makes sense to those who enjoy loud fashion. Presiding over it all is Stormy Love, a blue-haired sprite with big plans. Rocket a Go-Go was opened in 2011 by Stormy's mother-in-law, Roseana. Stormy joined as co-owner nine months later. Together, they are in the middle of a remodel and expansion as they plan for their fifth anniversary.

The store, which started as a resale shop, now carries Love’s own line of purses and dresses, as well as an eclectic collection of new and “pre-loved” clothing, jewelry and home décor by local artists. Love works with local fashion houses to create designs that are manufactured in the U.S. Her Rockabilly swing dresses with sassy tulle petticoats have been worn as bridesmaid’s dresses. People have used the store as a location for photoshoots, and local bands find just the right vibe as they search for stage clothes. As we tour the store, Love pulls a black yoke-waist halter dress created by a local designer from the rack. She shows off the silver embellishments along the straps and demure silver skull at the décolletage that she added, one of the collaborative pieces in the store.

It hasn’t always been sunny for Stormy Love, who identifies as having both physical and psychiatric disabilities. Her mother shares a genetic disability that causes spasms, pain and increasing limits in function. Love accommodates her physical disability in the workplace with “perches” scattered about the store: A funky pedestal chair shaped like a hand, a sturdy bench that displays shoes and an open spot on the cash-wrap where she can lean or sit when her hip suddenly ceases to bear her weight while still serving her clients. "Even in very candid photos, I look posed.” She laughs, "I always stand with my hand on my hip to push back against the pain or with my knee popped out to support my back. I carry my purse in the crook of my bent elbow because my shoulder can’t take the weight of a bag.”

Finding fashion that fit her disability was a challenge. “I found that Crocs makes wedges that I can stand in all day and not hurt my back. My own fashion challenges with my disability have inspired us to be more conscious for our shoppers. Our staff is trained to be sensitive to disability. For example, they
consider which dresses you can wear best if you use a wheelchair and which shoes might work for a particular disability or body type.

Inside the store, all of the racks are on wheels so they can be moved as needed to ensure access. Rocket a Go~Go has wide dressing rooms that can fit a person using a wheelchair and is addressing the width of the fitting room doors during their remodeling.

Love describes her psychiatric disability as manic-depression and anxiety which she has learned to manage over the years. She no longer hides her disability and talks openly about the years that she self-harmed. “Self-harm was not about suicide, it was about controlling my body with a disability.” It has been more than 10 years since she last self-harmed. “Youth who self-harm are not acting out. They need help overcoming behaviors.”

Due to her own experience with disability and her passion for equality, she has partnered with Ability360 to become an employer/mentor for youth with disability. The program (see sidebar) will start with résumé coaching and mock interviews and culminate in job shadowing and a potential internship. Her mentees will learn much, as Love has an eye to the future with plans for store expansion and adding more of her own lines including jewelry and housewares. Disability is a part of Love’s lived experience; simply a part of who she is. She counsels her staff and the youth that she mentors on self-acceptance.

“Don’t try to hide what your body and your mind are doing. It’s an important part of who you are.”

Ability360 has partnered with AAPD and NCIL to implement the Youth Transitional Pipeline project. This pilot program seeks to support youth with disabilities (up to age 26) who are transitioning from high school to the workforce. Funded by Walmart, the program will provide information to 500 youth in 30 local high schools on Disability Mentoring Day.

Mentoring services, job shadowing and internships will be made available to selected youth. The program will include skill-building workshops and youth-led activities. The larger purpose of this pilot program is to create a toolbox of materials and services that can be duplicated in larger numbers throughout Arizona and the nation to empower youth with disabilities.

To learn more about the Youth Transitional Pipeline program contact Ability360 Benefits 2 Work 602-443-0720 or 866-304-9675 B2W@ability360.org
Employment

Today’s employers are more enlightened about hiring qualified people with disabilities than ever. If you have the qualifications and experience required for the job, there are a number of incentives for employers to hire a person with a disability over other applicants. As a qualified applicant, if you know these incentives, it gives you an advantage in negotiating for the job. In fact, many employers do not know about these incentives. You will sound really smart if you share this info.

Some of the following depends on the severity or significant limitation of your disability. If your disability is not a hindrance to your competing for a job like any other job seeker, the employer cannot discriminate since they should not even know you have a disability. Your discussion with an employer should always focus on the job tasks and whether you have the knowledge, skills, abilities, education and experience to do it.

See Ability360.org for a 32-minute webinar explains all about disclosure, when to do it, and when not to do that.

After viewing the webinar, you will learn that your disability may qualify you for different consideration of your application if you:

- Are on SSI/SSDI and are considering going back to work using AZ Rehab Services (AZRSA);
- On SSI/SSDI and are participating in the Ticket to Work Program and are registered with an Employment Network;
- Are looking for work through the US Department of Veteran’s Affairs.

If you are not registered with any of these, Ability360, as a courtesy, will evaluate you and write a letter of eligibility if appropriate. Contact susanw@ability360.org.

Twenty-six years since the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the unemployment rate among people with disabilities has not changed much.

Tax Incentives: ANOTHER Reason to Hire PWDs

by Susan Webb
The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) provides eligible employers with a tax credit up to 40 percent of the first $6,000 of first-year wages of a new employee if the employee qualifies above. The credit is available to the employer once the employee has worked for at least 120 hours or 90 days for a 25 percent credit and 400 hours worked for a 40 percent credit. The maximum credit is $2,400.

Federal Contractors who do business with the federal government have an affirmative action obligation that 7 percent of their workforce in all job categories must be filled by qualified workers with disabilities. These contractors represent 22 percent of the workforce.

Other tax credits and deductions are available for barrier removal or accommodations you might need to do the job. If you need technology such as text-to-speech software, these credits more than cover the cost of hiring you.

The Federal Government has a special process called Schedule A that allows qualified applicants with disabilities to circumvent certain processes to get hired into federal jobs.

Most large employers have an internal commitment to diversity, including applicants and employees with disabilities.

After being part of this world for many years, these are the reasons I see that people with disabilities are not working that have nothing to do with discrimination:

1. Lack of skills and qualifications to do the jobs employers need to fill.
2. Fear of losing benefits and health care coverage, see www.az.db101.org.
3. Family and other influencers discouraging work with same fears.
4. Fear of failure so do not even try.
5. Fear of losing other benefits like subsidized housing and SNAP.
6. Realities of community life: bus schedules and routes, having to get up early, giving up some things others are relying on you to do, volunteer work, etc.

Many find it discouraging to try hard to get a job with no results. This is particularly rough if you are not disabled enough to qualify for AZRSA but also cannot qualify for Ticket to Work, i.e. not on SSI or SSDI. Another very important resource, Arizona@Work is a place for you to learn all the latest and effective techniques to alleviate your frustration.

Good luck, prepare for your career, don’t expect too much in the beginning, expect to work your way up, not wait for the perfect job to land in your lap. See Rita Malemed’s story elsewhere in this issue.

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

Susan Webb
VP of Employment
Ability360
Opportunity, Innovation Improved Through Inclusion

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

by Amina Donna Kruck

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is designed to educate people about disability employment issues and celebrate the various contributions of America’s workers with disabilities. Workplaces welcome the talents of all people, including applicants and employees with disabilities, and recognize we are a critical part of everyone's efforts to build an inclusive community and strong economy.

Held annually, NDEAM is led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, but its true spirit lies in the grassroots observances across the nation every year. Employers of all sizes and in all industries are encouraged to participate in NDEAM.

“By fostering a culture that embraces individual differences, including disabilities, businesses profit by having a wider variety of tools to confront challenges,” said Jennifer Sheehy, deputy assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy. “Our nation’s most successful companies proudly make inclusion a core value. They know that inclusion works. It works for workers, it works for employers, it works for opportunity, and it works for innovation.”

For specific ideas about how organizations and employers can support NDEAM, visit www.dol.gov/ndeam. Suggestions range from displaying a poster to implementing a disability education program. Regardless, all play an important part in fostering a workforce where every person is recognized for his or her abilities — every day of every month.

To find one of the job fairs co-sponsored by several state agencies and cities during October and November visit our website at www.ability360.org/employment or www.dreamjobfair.org

NDEAM Job Fairs 2016

WHAT SHOULD YOU BRING?
Picture ID
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Dress for Interview

D.R.E.A.M.
Job Fair - Phoenix
Oct. 14th, 2016 - Friday
10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.
Gateway Community College
108 N. 40th St., Phoenix, AZ 85034

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Hospitality • Call Centers • Communications • Restaurants • Security • Banking Customer Service • Labor • Warehouse • Retail • Healthcare • Transportation

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9:15 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
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Tempe, AZ, 85282

Who: Everyone!
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)
People with disabilities
&All looking for work

9:15am-12:00 pm Workshops
11:00-12:00 DHH only Job Fair
12:00 -2:00 Open for all Job Fair
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.

Schedule an Advertisement
Advertising@ability360.org
Whenever my friends get started on ‘you just need to meet a guy with a disability’, I always share the story of Geoffrey.

Geoffrey was kind, a good listener and had great taste in music. He liked to argue, a trait I admired about him, and enjoyed my love of goofing off in class. We met our freshmen year of college. He and I continued to grow closer over the year.

There was just one problem.

He never liked to go anywhere.

My friends didn’t even know he existed because he would never join me anywhere. I didn’t tell them about him because I didn’t think they would believe me.

About four months into our off-label relationship, Geoffrey disclosed to me that he had severe social anxiety. While it explained the canceled dates and missed classes, I struggled to reconcile his positive and engaging demeanor with the anxiety he described.

I tried to be patient with him. He was always so patient with me and the nuances of my disability; I felt he deserved the same courtesy. But for all of his understanding, it did not change the fact that our social lives were not in sync. He was very much a homebody, spending most of our time together at our houses. When he met my stepfather, they bonded over their mutual love of funny hats. To this day, I am still slightly amused by the memory of my stepfather wearing a Vikings hat, wooden staff in hand, and Geoffrey wearing a fur-lined cap in the middle of summer during their first encounter.

Simply sharing a disability with Geoffrey didn’t guarantee that a relationship would work. Our disabilities didn’t make us more compatible. I wanted to go out, meet people, experience the freedom that came with being in college. Geoffrey wasn’t going to join me in these social pursuits, and my pushing him wasn’t going to change that.

Here’s the thing: When someone tells you that dating someone with a disability will make the relationship work, what that really communicates is that your disability should come first, then your identity. Lies. All lies. The person you end up with should embrace what you are and his or her identity should complement yours. Disability or not, that kind of love is possible for everyone.

I beat myself up for a long time after Geoffrey and I parted ways. I always felt like I should have been more patient. It wasn’t until a year later that I realized we just weren’t right for each other. Thankfully, Geoffrey ended up with a woman who is compatible with him. It’s what we all hope for one day.

As for me, at least I have plenty of adventures to entertain me while I wait.

Reach Emily at AskEmily@ability360.org with your stories of love and life.
Mandela Washington Fellows Visit Ability360

by AnnMargaret Haines

Holiniaina Rakotoarisoa

After experiencing difficulties growing up, Holiniaina Rakotoarisoa came to America to be part of the Mandela Washington Fellowship program.

"It cannot stay like this. The situation must change," Rakotoarisoa said.

Rakotoarisoa, a woman from Madagascar living with partial sight, struggled to receive education growing up because schools did not want to accept a visually-impaired student.

Although it took time and much effort, Rakotoarisoa was able to successfully complete her schooling through the university level. She then became active within the area of social entrepreneurship, and in 2003, became the Vice President of the National Federation of the Blind. She now holds the title of the Vice President of the National Federation of Women with Disabilities. Rakotoarisoa founded and became executive director of the organization Merci in 2010, a non-profit that promotes the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

During the first six weeks of the Mandela Washington Fellowship program, Rakotoarisoa studied at Cambridge College. Now she is making connections with many different organizations through Ability360.

"My specific goal is to learn from the Ability360 experience," Rakotoarisoa said.

When Rakotoarisoa returns to Madagascar, she hopes to share her experience at Ability360 through the media and make a plan to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Rakotoarisoa feels she has an "obligation" to her country because she was chosen to participate in this influential program.

Her vision for the future of all people, both typical and disabled, is simple.

“What I want is not only for people with disabilities, but that the community will be an inclusive community.”

by Ellanna Koontz

Nyasha Mharakurwa

Nyasha Mharakurwa is a 33-year-old Mandela Washington Fellow looking to make social change in Zimbabwe through sports.

Mharakurwa’s primary involvement in his community has always been through sport activities. Mharakurwa does not only give the people an opportunity to play sports, but uses that platform to empower people with disabilities.

Mharakurwa, a full-time wheelchair user, said when he played sports it gave him opportunities he would not have received otherwise. Not only did he travel, but he also learned to be more independent and confident.

When this program came onto his radar, Mharakurwa said he knew it would be another great opportunity to network and learn.

After experiencing disability resources in Arizona, Mharakurwa began contacting his peers to work on getting the “extra stuff he is getting now, back home.”

“I am very fortunate because I am able to get myself around without much assistance, but when you look at my peers that might not be in the same position, it is very difficult,” Mharakurwa said. “You come here and you see people with similar impairments being able to do things that other people don’t. You start realizing how limiting our environment is.”

Mharakurwa hopes to form an organization where "lawyers and non-lawyers advocate for the rights of the disabled."

"I am hoping... the people that I interact with [gain an] understanding of not only the world where I come from but also of how beyond our little spaces, our communities and countries, we can partner and collaborate in different aspects going forward," Mharakurwa said.
Expanding Youth Athletic Programs

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

Breaking Barriers is a new sports program at Ability360 specifically designed to give youth with disabilities greater access to competitive and noncompetitive sports and outdoor adventures. The program includes indoor and outdoor rock climbing, a swim team and paddling.

Climbing to the top

Rock climbing begins on Oct. 6 with instructor training under the guidance of Mark Wellman, a pioneer of outdoor adventures for people with disabilities. Wellman is a full-time wheelchair user, paralympian and motivational speaker, as well as an author and filmmaker best known for his climb up the monstrous El Capitan rock formation in Yosemite National Park.

Indoor climbing begins this fall and will prepare participants for outdoor climbing in late winter and into the spring. There will be three outdoor climbs under the guidance of the Stoneman Climbing Company, a rock climbing company based out of Phoenix. Stoneman has world class, internationally certified guides with years of experience and defines their vision as “climbing is not for the few and elite but is a fun activity that whoever wants to experience it can.”

Make a splash

Paddling, which includes kayaking and paddleboarding, will start in March and continue through the summer. The locations will include both local lakes as well as mountain lakes, weather dependent.

The recreational swim team will practice the four main swim strokes; freestyle, breaststroke, butterfly, and backstroke. Individual practice will begin April 2017, and full team practices will start in May and go through the summer. Swim team members will have the opportunity to compete in swim meets against other local teams. Swim team members will receive a swim suit, warm-ups, goggles, towel and swim cap.
Everyone who signs up for Breaking Barriers will receive a hat, t-shirt and water bottle in addition to other equipment they need.

Breaking Barriers would not have been possible without a donation from the Thunderbirds Charities, a nonprofit organization funded by money raised at the Phoenix Waste Management Open golf tournament. Thunderbirds Charities’ main mission is to improve life for the youth and families in the state of Arizona.

Thanks to the Thunderbirds’ generous donation and belief in our mission at Ability360, this unique program gives youth with disabilities access to sports and adventures that are not always available to them.

This one-of-a-kind opportunity offers benefits that extend beyond participation and address the holistic being of an individual. Participants will gain a greater sense of camaraderie, self-accomplishment and empowerment as well as opportunities for health and fitness gains – all while having fun in a safe environment.

To sign up for Breaking Barriers and experience a great new opportunity, call the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center front desk at 602-386-4566 or visit ability360sports.org.

Gus LaZear
VP & General Manager
Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
Matt Resnik, SMILE Biscotti's co-founder, recently received The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Leader in Adult Autism Award during the Autism Society of America's 47th annual national conference in New Orleans. Pictured (left to right), Denise D. Resnik (Matt's mom), Rob Resnik (Matt's dad), Matt Resnik, and Linda Walder, founder and president of the Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation. Photo Credit: Autism Society of America.

Phil Pangrazio, President and CEO of Ability360 was awarded the National Council on Independent Living’s (NCIL) prestigious “President’s Award” at their national conference held in Washington, DC. The award recognizes those who have contributed to the advancement of laws, and policies protecting and/or enhancing the rights of people with disabilities.

Pangrazio was honored for his commitment, leadership, vision and years of support for NCIL through his own service and for donating Ability360 staff time in-kind to support NCIL’s development activities.

“I was surprised and deeply honored.” Pangrazio said. “This is a benchmark of the great respect our peers in the Independent Living movement have for Ability360 and our work. It is humbling when our colleagues across the nation look to us for information and best practices. I am proud of the hard work each of our staff invests into developing the skills and expertise that make us strong national leaders.”

The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center was chosen by the Dick’s Sporting Goods Foundation as one of four recipients of their Every Medal initiative donating $1,000 to youth sports programs for every medal won by Team USA during the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio.

“As a sponsor of Team USA through our Contender program, we are proud to share in the culmination of their grit and hard work as they climb the medal stand in celebration. With each individual and team success, these programs will benefit, helping pave the way for future aspiring athletes to reach their highest potential.” The Foundation said in their press release.
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This September, Ability360 hosted the Latino Disability Summit and Resource Fair.

Presented by Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc. on Sept. 17, the event aimed to provide valuable information and resources to individuals and families affected by a disability.

The event, the first of its kind in Arizona, was a day filled with culturally-relevant information, inspiration and resources to attendees.

In the morning workshop sessions, attendees learned about important topics that included living a healthy lifestyle, how to be an effective advocate, special needs planning, support systems for the caregiver and mental health and civil rights.

A particularly interesting workshop was run by Clayton Guffey, Assistive Technology Specialist for the Arizona Technology Assistance Program. He discussed the various programs and resources offered through AzTAP (Arizona Technology Access Program). If you’re interested in learning about how you can take advantage of the various programs they offer, including seed loans and assistive technology exchanges, visit their website at www.aztap.org.

After the workshops, the public was invited to attend the resource fair in the afternoon. There were more than 60 exhibitors at the fair, including Mercy Care Plan.

“This is a great event,” said Henry Blanco, Long Term Care Manager for Mercy Care Plan. “Having all these organizations together is a great way to help spread the word about the resources for those with disabilities.”

Many attendees made their way around to the various exhibitor booths to learn more about the numerous resources available to those people with disabilities who need assistance with anything from applying for a job to inquiring about Supplemental Security Income.

One of those who attended Saturday’s fair was Antonio Quintanilla. He said he heard of the event while doing therapy at Good Samaritan Hospital.

“Right now I’m looking to get a new job,” said Quintanilla. “There’s a lot of good information here to help me prepare for finding the right job for me.”

When asked if Ability360 should continue this event, Quintanilla said yes and urged others with disabilities to take advantage of this event.

“It’s awesome to see all these community members here to help empower those with disabilities,” said Quintanilla.

It looks like the event was a great success and many hope to see this inaugural event become a yearly mainstay for years to come.
Support when it matters most.
Mercy Care Plan and Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care are proud to partner with Ability 360 to provide information and resources to help Latino families achieve their full potential.

www.MercyCarePlan.com
www.mercymaricopa.org

AZ-16-08-56
I boarded the plane to Washington DC with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation. I had never been part of something that was truly national in scale. The knowledge that I was about to participate in such an event left me awestruck. Thankfully the rest of the Arizona delegation, whom I met at the airport, calmed my nerves before we settled in for the long flight.

Upon arriving, my fellow Arizona Youth Leadership Forum (AZYLF) Alum, Mateo, and I dropped off our luggage and set about exploring the hotel where the conference was taking place. The following morning, we attended a rousing opening speech followed by a series of workshops. I found the youth series of workshops extremely relevant and even took notes to share with AZYLF back home.

Though workshops continued throughout the week, the highlight of NCIL was, without a doubt, marching on Capitol Hill. Some six hundred men and women in the disability community from around the country gathered to march from the Grand Hyatt to the Capitol. It struck me as a magnificent example of solidarity among us, featuring individuals from every state, even my home state of Alaska! After reaching the Capitol, we split into small groups and met with congressional staffers to talk policy. This was where we got down to business. At each appointment, I spoke to the congressional staffer and explained our goal to them: ensuring that everyone can live life to its fullest regardless of any disability they may possess. Leaving the congressional offices, it truly hit me that I, a 17-year-old from Chandler, actually had a hand in influencing government policy.

NCIL was an event of solidarity and activism, and that mindset will stay with me.

Being a young person who has a disability is a hard journey. Yet, those who have come before me and have lived through the challenge of a society unwilling to make big changes have had more hardship. Through civil disobedience and overcoming obstacles that were deemed too difficult to be achieved by people with disabilities, they have helped create a future with fewer bumps. However, there is still much work to be done.
For this reason, I was honored to be one of two youth selected to attend the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference in Washington DC, on a scholarship from Ability360. While there, I learned about issues in other states and territories. I gained tools to help youth who have disabilities vote and implement peer-to-peer initiatives for other youths, in order to facilitate meaningful engagement in their communities.

While in Washington DC, I participated in an event that is synonymous with the NCIL Conference, the March to the Capitol. There was something so empowering about marching down the same street that many other leaders have marched down. People who have marched to change the way they had been treated. To see the Capitol growing closer in the distance was amazing and was the highlight of the conference.

Mateo TreeTop, is a 2015 Alumni of Arizona Youth Leadership Forum (AZYLF) for Students and Transitioning Young Adults Who Have Disabilities and Parliamentarian of the AZYLF Alumni Association. A Sophomore in College, Mateo embraces his Lakota heritage, admires the teachings of Sitting Bull, and aspires to become a Tribal Librarian.
DRONING AROUND
“The sky is the limit”

Every kid hears this growing up but, as life goes on we are shaped with many different experiences that threaten this idea of fulfilling our cloud-high passions. As for Jim Boomer, he took this advice perhaps too literal. He has been actively involved in flying drones and multirotors through the skies of the Valley. While dashing through the sunset-filled skies, banking stylish turns and daredevil-flips, Jim Boomer taught us a few things about his favorite hobby.

Drones are unmanned aircrafts that can navigate at impressive heights while being remote controlled or set to hover independently. Multirotors, like drones, are aircrafts that are typically designed for unmanned flight. They are a lot faster and require more remote control compared to a drone. Both controlled aircrafts can transmit their view of flight onto headgear. They allow the user to see through the eyes of these quadcopters, letting users experience the sensation of flight at new heights with a first-person-view (FPV).

Boomer, a T5 paraplegic, has grown fond of both the hobby of flying drones as well as to the sport of multirotor racing. “It’s a complete out-of-body experience,” Boomer says.

Both drone flying and multirotor racing are hobbies that have gained popularity in the last couple of years, especially in the Valley of the Sun. While it’s still not the most popular hobby in the area, Boomer says, “That doesn’t mean it couldn’t be.” With a growing community of several drone and multirotor flying groups such as Phoenix Area Drone User Group (PA DUG) (http://www.meetup.com/Phoenix-Area-Drone-User-Group-GPA-DUG/), the sport is clearly flying in the right direction.

Many parks are designated flight areas for these quadcopters and have frequent Fun Fly Days* for both organized races as well as casual flights. This, Boomer suggests, is perhaps the best way to join the quadcopter community.

The flying community in the Valley consists of both able-bodied and people with disabilities; given the fact that the sport is highly accessible. Boomer jokes his advantage in flying drones, as someone with a disability, is that “If [his quadcopter] crashes, someone will usually go get it for me.”
The greatest advantage, nonetheless, is the feeling of freedom, says Boomer. "When you are flying it’s like you do forget about everything else around you." Boomer recalls his first couple flights wearing the headgear and the adrenaline-filled rush of soaring from heights higher than Phoenix’s tallest buildings. “These drones... they can go anywhere; they don’t have limitations,” Boomer explains, “so it kind of gives the user the same feeling.”

Learning to maneuver drones and multirotors can take time and will vary depending on the quadcopter. Typically, multirotors have a much steeper learning curve than drones due to the full manual control that multirotors require. Boomer exclaims, “Multirotors tend to stimulate more and are never boring.”

“They’re complete recreation!” –Jim Boomer

Unless you are a half-bird, accustomed to flying at 60 mph with a first-person-view through the skies of Phoenix, dodging tall trees and buildings here and there, the beginning flyer can expect to have shaky hands.

With drones, users can set their copter to hover, leave, and return to find it in the same airspace. Drones use up a battery in about 10-15 minutes of flying so leaving it hovering autonomously for too long may result in your drone acquiring a few scars. Nonetheless, drones require less attention and are therefore easier to master than multirotors.

The upper-hand that drones have over multirotors is the ability to capture great footage. If you are looking to capture extraordinary Arizona sunrises and sunsets through a new perspective, then a drone should be your pick. “It’s a great tool," Boomer says, “You can’t beat ’em.”

New users to the quadcopter community are captivated by the exhilarating “out-of-body” experience obtained with these aircrafts. A Fun Fly Day is a great introduction to the aircrafts. You could also tune in to ESPN’s airing of the 2016 Drone Racing League (DRL) starting on October 23rd (http://www.digitaltrends.com/movies/espn-drone-racing-season-sports/). The first-person-view of ESPN’s lighted course will have you flying a 60-80 mph aircraft from your seat at home.

Are you ready to take the leap? Maybe you’ll find yourself catching air and flying off onto the next big thing.
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The barbecuing was the final day of a three-day cooking class, where local Arizona chef Michael “Chef Michael Z” Zachery, owner and executive chef of Jazzy Z’s Food Service, taught the veterans how to prepare seasonings and dry rubs and also how to cook andouille sausages, Jamaican jerked chicken and homemade hamburgers made from sirloin and chuck beef.

“My favorite part is just the enjoyment and the relaxation part of it, giving and offering ideas and structure and helping people to be a little bit more organized when cooking so that they can enjoy the actual aspect of cooking the food,” Zachery said.

The event came together through Ability360 Military Program Coordinator Sarah Olson, who has been working with both Wounded Warrior Project and Zachery.

Olson said the partnership between Ability360 and Wounded Warrior Project focused on physical health and wellness events, which prompted her to host the tailgate barbecue cooking class.

“Today I just wanted to do something fun,” she said. “A lot of people don’t know how to barbecue and I thought it was a fun way to end our contract with [Wounded Warrior Project]...by doing something together and bringing people together that would never have met otherwise.”

Olson met Zachery about a year ago when his assistant, who is also a personal trainer at Ability360, connected the two for an event that Olson was hosting for the Wounded Warrior Project.

Since then, Zachery has given cooking classes such as simple meals to make at home as well as Thai cooking.

“I’ve really challenged him to take his recipe and modify it to where it’s healthier but you don’t lose any flavor,” Olson said.

Olson, who found out about Ability360 through volunteering, has strong connections with the military and veteran communities.

Her grandfather served during World War II, her father in the Korean Conflict, her oldest brother in Desert Storm and...
she has several other friends and family members who are serving or who have served.

“To just be able to help them gain back some of their independence that they’ve lost through the war, it’s awesome,” she said.

Arizona Army National Guard veteran and Wounded Warrior Project member Felice Gomez, 46, said she finds strength in events such as the tailgate barbecue cooking class because she enjoys working as a team with other veterans.

“They’re trying to get you to do things to get you out of that comfort zone, to get you to take a little bit of a challenge,” Gomez said.

In 2012, she deployed to Afghanistan for nine months, where she built roads and operated heavy construction equipment.

Often working six or seven days a week, she found it difficult to communicate with her family and especially with her daughter, who gave birth to a boy before Gomez deployed.

Gomez said she experienced anxiety and depression upon returning from overseas as well as physical problems with her legs and feet.

Her unit referred her to the Wounded Warrior Project for behavioral health counseling and she also began working with a personal trainer at Ability360.

“It was good having the personal trainer to help me with the areas that I did struggle in,” she said. “[As well as] different activities that I could do for cardio that weren’t so hard on my joints, my knees and my feet.”

Gomez said she lost her job due to complications with her anxiety and depression and had difficulty paying her rent.

A friend told her about an all-female veteran shelter, where she was accepted and has been living for the past three months.

She now works in a customer service call center for a bank and looks forward to Wounded Warrior Project movie nights with her three children, now 27, 25 and 23 years of age.

Contact Sarah Olson, Military Program Coordinator for more information on health and wellness programs exclusive to active military and veterans. 602-386-4566.

Have a question? Ask Robert Reed, membership specialist at front desk or call (602) 386.4566.
It is crazy to me that just a couple of days ago, none of us knew each other, not even in the slightest; but somehow we’ve all come together on this journey, working together to make this trip amazing.

-Jessica, River Rampage participant

River guides shouted “fire line!”, their calls echoing through the voices of the fifteen teens spanned from the big, blue river rafts to the sandy, picturesque camp on shore. The crew passed dry bags, camping gear and assorted goods to one another like eager carrier ants. From a distance, you could hear their laughter and sense their teamwork. These youth had been together less than a week, yet in no time at all they connected like family.

This campsite bond is one of many benefits that River Rampage has been generating for over 25 years. For six days this past June, 15 teenagers conquered 26 miles of the San Juan River in Southeast Utah. After rafting, camping, and sleeping under the stars, the teens returned home with meaningful life experiences and a new perspective.

River Rampage, an annual river rafting expedition for adolescents with disabilities and at-risk youth, is a program of Daring Adventures. It began as a program with the city of Phoenix in 1991, focusing on acceptance, healthy risk taking, teamwork and cooperation. When adaptive recreation was cut from the city’s budget, a group of passionate volunteers worked to continue the mission of Daring Adventures. It has since become a stand-alone nonprofit organization, but maintains the continued support and partnership of the city.

River rafting is an adventure that can yield excitement and benefits for any teen. Daring Adventures recognizes that recreation, not to mention outdoor adventure recreation, is an opportunity that is not always easily accessible for adolescents with disabilities and at-risk youth. River Rampage seeks to remedy that issue.

With limited outside influences and the tranquility of nature, teens have the opportunity to contemplate their lives, play, learn tolerance and gain self-acceptance. Through peer mentoring, ongoing evaluation and engagement in post-trip activities, River Rampage achieves long-term impacts on participants’ lives.

Daring Adventures seeks to provide long-term mentoring to youth participants to continue the relationships fostered on River Rampage. Like the river continues flowing, the learning and development does not cease when the expedition has ended.

Instead of grouping “like” individuals together, River Rampage engages youth with a variety of differences and strengths alongside each other with the purpose of facilitating both self-acceptance and the empowerment and acceptance of others.
The mission of Daring Adventures is to be inclusive to all, provide wonderful outdoor experiences and enrich lives through the influence of outdoor recreation. Noting that access to outdoor adventure, challenge, and enjoyment of nature can be a daunting task at times for persons with disabilities, Daring Adventures seeks to break barriers and use the power of the outdoors as a medium to improve the lives of all.

“[This trip has] taught me a lot of new things and I will continue to use these lessons in life. I love how we are all different but have come together and created our own little family.”

-Jasmine, River Rampage participant

In August 2017, Daring Adventures plans an exciting 11-day river trip, rafting through the Grand Canyon down the Colorado River. Similar to River Rampage in structure and outcome, this trip, known as Mainstream Expedition, is designed for adults with disabilities. Mainstream Expedition is open nationally, serving interested individuals from across the country.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunset Cycling: second Tuesday of each month beginning in October, 6-8 pm

Saturday Cycling: fourth Saturday of each month beginning in October, 9-11 am

Kayaking: third Saturday of each month beginning in October-December, all day

Phoenix Summit Challenge: November 12th, hikes October 15, 22, 29, November 5

Hiking: first Saturday of the month beginning in December

Winter getaway to Flagstaff: cross country skiing as weather permits - January 13th, 2017

River Rampage 2017: two trips, dates not yet being released, June/July 2017
Gotcha Moments
by Carolan Quenneville

It was about a year or so after we got married and moved to Arizona, when my now late husband, Bruce, told me about self-help classes sponsored by the Arthritis Foundation. The classes encouraged a family member to attend the classes alongside the person with arthritis and he wanted us to go. My attitude was, “I’ve had arthritis for twenty years. What can they tell me about it?”

I’d had arthritis since age eleven. Bruce had only dealt with it since we’d been married. Like any other disability, arthritis can have an impact on everyone around the person with the condition. So, we went to the classes and I did learn a few things. I learned that I enjoyed sharing my years of experience, the “tricks of the trade”, the adaptations necessary in order to get things done. At the end of the six weeks, I signed up to take the training to facilitate the classes.

I enjoyed leading the class, watching people gain confidence and hope. I also enjoyed seeing some of the surprised looks as I introduced myself at the beginning of the first session, “My name is …. I’m married …. I work … I’m an artist…”

I love blowing away stereotypes. Catching people in their misconceptions. The most memorable moments are what I like to call a “Gotcha” moment. I was walking toward the building where the class was to take place. I had my tote bag of materials hanging on my crutches. A woman walks up from behind, going in the same direction.

“Are you going to the arthritis class?” she asks.

“Yes, I am,” I reply.

Pause…

Then she follows with, “I see you need it more than I do.”

As she went on ahead, I chuckled to myself. “Heh-heh-heh, gotcha! Are you going to feel like a jerk, when I get up and say, ‘Hello, my name is Carolan, and I’m your class leader?’”

I don’t recall her reaction. It wasn’t necessary. I got a good laugh out of it. I still do.

Gina’s Tea Party
by Gina Schuh

As Beyoncé would say, “Who runs the world? Girls!” This is a call to arms for all of you ladies who use wheelchairs, and let’s be real, we’ve got some great arms. I’m asking YOU to host a get together for other women in wheelchairs.

When I was newly injured and still in the hospital, a woman who was a quadriplegic hosted a lunch which impacted me more than I can express. Here was this woman with my level of injury living in a nice home, with a family, and genuinely happy.

The lunch that woman hosted inspired me to host one of my own. I just wanted to talk about life with other chair users and work together to achieve common advocacy goals. I can’t lie, I’m a girl’s girl, so I thought I would offer something to the ladies in the area. Not to mention, our women’s support group is practically non-existent.


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.
In the 20 years that autism has been in my life (since my youngest brother was diagnosed), there has been no shortage of drama in the autism community. Rates of diagnosis have skyrocketed without any consensus explanation. Controversies and accusations have cast shadows over treatments claiming miraculous results. Conspiracy theories and class action lawsuits have been flung repeatedly at suspected causes. And all the while, we still don’t really know exactly what autism is.

Of all the autism books I’ve read, this one is my favorite. It should be required reading for all autism professionals. The authors are both award winning journalists, and one is a mother of an adult son with autism. Their writing style and storytelling abilities are incredible throughout all 552 pages. It is rare for me to read a book of that length that I can’t put down!

In a Different Key tells the history of autism with incredible detail and precision. The narrative is through the lens of a great storyteller who makes you, the reader, feel as if you are going through the journey together. The history of autism is truly fascinating and this book tells it like no other, from the life story of the very first person ever officially diagnosed to the autism community as we know it today. Many of us in this field have scattered knowledge about research studies, controversies, effective treatments, legal battles and famous names. This book ties them all together, and like all good history books, shows how each one arose as a product of what came before. As Carl Sagan famously said, “You have to know the past to understand the present.” For that reason, anyone who is committed to progress for the autism community should read this book.

Book Review

In a Different Key: The Story of Autism

Book Author: John Donvan & Caren Zucker.
Review by: Dr. Aaron Blocher-Rubin
CEO of Arizona Autism United
Saturday, October 15
Pedal N Paddle Fest
9:00am - 1:00pm
Tempe Town Lake, Tempe, AZ
Cycling, kayaking, and BBQ for individuals with physical disabilities
arizonadisablesports.com/Special-Events

Saturday, October 15
12th Annual NAMI Valley Walk
17th Avenue and Jefferson
Dogs can register as walkers!
http://www.namivalleywalk.org

Saturday, November 5
8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
Arizona Autism Coalition 2016 Annual Conference
Beyond Awareness to Collaboration
Ability360, 5025 E Washington Street, Phoenix AZ
www.azautism.org

November 12
6:00 PM - 10:00 PM
ROLLER DERBY
Sports & Fitness Center
Free entrance w/ membership
Contact Brielle Carter
briellec@ability360.org

December 3
Max in Motion
Power Soccer, WC Basketball, Wheelchair Tennis
Ability360 Sports & Fitness
FREE Youth sports. Sign up required.
(602) 386-9566 sarah@ability360.org
Saturday, October 22
Dolly Steamboat & Tortilla Flat Restaurant
Sponsored by We’re MOVING FORWARD!
Accessible Check in REQUIRED by 1:30PM
Steamboat leaves promptly at 2:00PM.
wmedforward.org/event/dolly steamboat cruise-
tortilla-flat-restaurant

Vote ! REV UP!
votesmart.org
Ability360 is an early vote site.
General election
Oct 17 thru Nov 4 2016

Vote Smart! Make the Disability Vote Count

November 12
Max in Motion
Power Soccer WC Lacrosse Adaptive Golf
Ability360 Sports & Fitness
FREE! Youth sports. Sign up required.
(602) 386-1566 sarah@ability360.org

Support groups

November
National Family Caregivers Month
Take Care to Give Care

Saturday, November 19
Tucson Medical Center El Tour de Tucson
America’s Largest Perimeter Bicycling event
is for cyclists of all ages and abilities
perimeterbicycling.com/ el-tour-de-tucson

December 3
International Day of Persons with Disability
November is National Family Caregivers Month

Thank you Caregivers!

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Hablamos español!