April Reed
Meet Ability360’s New
Vice President of Advocacy

Cool Careers
Brenna Bean’s Daring Adventure

Paralympic Hopefuls
Arizona’s Teens in Training

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“I’m just not ready to be a soccer mom”
~ Kacey
Now that 2017 is in the rearview mirror, we look forward to 2018. What lies ahead for people with disabilities is anyone’s guess. By the time you read this, several shoes may have already dropped.

Tax reform, if passed, will have the greatest impact. The fate of the Affordable Care Act is not far behind. As for tax reform, it may seem like a good thing for most Americans. Who doesn’t want to pay less in taxes? I do and I’m sure you do too!

Republicans argue that if we lower both corporate and individual tax rates, the economy will flourish and millions of jobs will be created. They argue that American companies will repatriate their overseas investments and bring businesses and tax dollars back to our shores. But is this likely? Haven’t we heard this sort of rhetoric before? Just screaming it loud and often doesn’t make it true. Think Reaganomics and trickle down. How well did that work? Most economists agree, not very well. In fact, most agree that income and wealth disparity and inequality in the U.S. has never been greater.

While lowering taxes may sound like a great idea for many Americans, it has major consequences for our country and economy. Taxes are what build our bridges, roads, water, sewer and transit systems. Taxes pay for our public hospitals and schools, teachers, police and firefighters. Taxes fund our military. And yes, taxes support our safety-net programs for low income people, the elderly and disabled. None of these programs are perfect and abuses do occur, but without them, the greatest nation on earth would not stand at 241 years old. These are public goods worth investing in!

As has been pointed out by many sources, the Republican tax reform plans have been designed to provide significant tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations at the expense of everyone else, particularly the poor and people with disabilities. According to the nonpartisan congressional budget office, the proposed reforms would increase the federal deficit by at least $1.5 trillion. Is this good for our economy?

Republicans may think so as deficits justify budget cuts. To them, deficits mean that government is inefficient and is spending too much. Therefore, we must starve the beast and cut programs that average Americans rely upon such as Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and more. I believe this will be devastating for our country and our people!

So where do we go from here? I think we must keep fighting and resisting. We must understand that progress often includes taking steps back before we can move forward again. We must learn from our mistakes and avoid the divisiveness of the daily noise that bombards us. We are all in this together. And yes, there are real people struggling, both disabled and non-disabled.

Americans are truly frustrated and fed-up. Many feel let down and abandoned. Others feel exploited, used and resentful. Much has contributed to these feelings such as the economy, globalism, technology, news media, fake news, political rhetoric and tweeting, just to name a few. What’s important is to never give in to the powers that are trying to divide us for personal gain. The 2018 midterm elections are right around the corner. This will be the first step in reclaiming our power!
As we enter into our 3rd year, we are reminded of the importance of creating stories that reflect the diversity of the disabled community. Sometimes that easy, sometime not so easy.

For this edition the stars aligned and we have some great stories about women in our community who are making things happen. Jo Crawford continues to make a difference for PwDs in and around Phoenix. Her work at the Barrow Connection (we got it right finally) gives us all a great sense of community. Brenna Bean personifies what Daring Adventures is all about. Bright and outgoing, she is constantly showing up out in the wild where few would expect a lady in a wheelchair to be found.

Advocacy is that often unsung frontier that too many in the disabled community fail to appreciate. Fail to participate. Yet in the heels (pun intended) of Amina Kruck’s retirement from the VP of Advocacy position at Ability360 comes April Reed. Our cover story is a simple Q&A with the former head of our volunteer program who now leads our quest for more acceptance and representation from our policy makers and the community at large.

Finally, we introduce Gina Shuh. Hang on because she doesn’t sit still for a moment. She’s none too shy about taking a position regarding the realities of life as a woman with a disability and she’ll always be one of the first to step up regarding when and how the government should work for the PwD community.

Not to be biased we have included the boys too. Check out Scott Daravanis’ story on the Paralympic hopes of 12 year-old Gabe Scanlan or Aitanna Yvette Mallari’s story on Phoenix Fire Chief, Ernie Lizarraga’s expression of art following a traumatic brain injury.

In this edition we up our game with two tech reviews. One from a young Floridian, Mason Ellis, who has an extraordinary YouTube channel about life as a quad. We are expanding our reach!

Speaking of expanding, so too is the marketing department. Once a forgotten storage room, we are adding a studio that will allow us to add more multimedia programs and stories to the mix. Stay tuned!

Happy New Year! We hope you enjoy this edition. We’re already cooking up our Spring edition.
Research has found adaptive sports provide a strong social support system, increased self-confidence and peer-education system, which helps athletes identify resources to gain employment and mentorship.

**Playing adaptive sports leads to higher employment and thus has an economic impact on the community.**

The mission of the JAAM Foundation is to provide adaptive sports equipment to junior athletes in the Phoenix area. The JAAM Foundation helps junior athletes navigate the national grant process as they apply for funds for equipment. JAAM also supports the existing adaptive programs in the Valley by providing program equipment for junior athletes. This enables new athletes to experience the different sports opportunities and see what is best for them. And, when an athlete commits to a specific sport(s), JAAM will assist in securing customized equipment for each athlete.

JAAM is proud to partner with the **Ability 360 Sports & Fitness Center** on a new TEEN Initiative to foster independence through sports and other life transitions.

### Comparative Costs

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To support the JAAM Foundation please visit the website at [jaamfoundation.org](http://jaamfoundation.org)
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On the Cover
April Reed, Ability360’s new Vice President of Advocacy.

Photo by Clinton McDaniel
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Look for this icon! It indicates additional video content online.
Contributors

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Alison Baionno earned her degree in recreational therapy and now practices at Ability360. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Alison came to Phoenix in 2016. With a love for leisure and recreation, Alison enjoys hiking, painting, drawing and making people smile any chance she can.

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Cassandra Brandt is a freelance writer with a BA in Sociology. A single mom from Arizona, she was a traveling ironworker as a result of an injury in 2015, she lives with quadriplegia.

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Brooke Brown loves to tell all types of stories that encourage others. She's the author of The Little Butterfly Girl, a writer for Autumn Magazine, an actor in Theatre360, a public speaker and runs Brooke's Butterfly Touch: Creative Storytelling Services, which strives to help others discover the power in sharing their own stories in order to cultivate hope, opportunities and understanding.

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Gillian Carr is a graduate from Arizona State University with a B.A. in English Literature. Her interests include medieval literature, storytelling, caffeine, and dogs. Her dislikes include talking about herself, high shelves, and being asked, “Where are your parents?” while getting a sample at Costco.

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

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Scott W.L. Daravanis is a graduate of Indiana University and has worked in television, radio and newspapers. Scott has been a reporter/photographer, Managing Editor, Associate Editor and City Editor for weekly, twice-weekly and daily newspapers. He plays sled hockey and enjoys photography. Scott and his wife, Amy, reside in Prescott Valley. He has one son, two step-daughters and four step-grandchildren.

MASON ELLIS  |  @MasonX54
Mason Ellis is a YouTube vlogger who shares how-to videos aimed at helping people living with spinal cord injury readjust. Mason lives with quadriplegia at C5 due to a car accident in 2015. Newly-injured and isolated from peers, Mason struggled to find information to help him with activities of daily living. Now he makes instructional videos hoping to help others with similar injuries.

CHRISTIAN GUERITHAULT
Christian Guerithault is a Senior at Barrett, The Honors College at ASU. He majors in Sports and Media Studies through ASU’s W.P. Carey School of Business. Christian is a native of Phoenix, Arizona and has two older brothers. He loves the NBA, NFL, soccer, and the UFC. Christian hopes to one day work in the front office of a professional sports team.

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AITANA YVETTE MALLARI | @AitanaMallari

Aitana Yvette Mallari is an online media journalist who runs on caffeine and WiFi. She’s lived in the Middle East, Asia, and both coasts of the US and writes about health, tech, and amazing people doing amazing things. She is studying at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communications and probably has a deadline to get to.

TYLER PECKHAM

Tyler Peckham studies journalism at Arizona State University and plans to focus on entertainment writing. She loves classic rock, travelling and trying new restaurants. Tyler hopes to join the Peace Corps after college, finally use the Spanish she has learned in school and cultivate the perfect Instagram feed.

COLTON STARLEY | @Art_by_Tuxedosquid

Colton Starley is an illustrator currently studying graphic design at Northern Arizona University. He is the Director of Illustration for the school newspaper, The Lumberjack. He’s been drawing since a very young age, and hopes to work designing logos and branding while continuing to make time for his is passion as a cartoonist and illustrator.

KEERTHI VEDANTAM | @KeerthiVedantam

Keerthi Vedantam is a Silicon Valley native studying journalism and graphic design at Arizona State University. She’s always on the lookout for good stories and innovative ways to tell them. Outside of Ability360, she produces podcasts and takes pictures. Keerthi lives on a steady diet of hot sauce and podcasts, and she wouldn’t want it any other way.
Letter to the Editor

Kavanagh is No Friend

Dear Editor:

I want to express my deep shock and concern about the article written about Senator [John] Kavanagh [R-Fountain Hills] and the non-enforceability of SB 1239. The article basically paints him as a friend of the disability community which cannot be further from the truth. Over the course of his legislative career, Senator Kavanagh has sponsored or co-sponsored legislation to limit our access to the courts, attempt to criminalize persons with disabilities using “fraudulent” service animals and give police the right to question our disability status. He is not friend of civil rights in general when he has sponsored legislation to criminalize political protests and limit the rights of other marginalized groups. Throughout Kavanagh’s legislative career, I’ve been fighting for maintaining and expanding the rights of persons with disabilities and as far as I’m aware, he has opposed those efforts at every turn. Last legislative session was a complete set back for the rights of the disabled. Your articles should discuss those setbacks in a serious and honest way to truly educate the disability community.

Ed Myers, Ability360 Board Member

Corrections

Edition 10

In our last issue we incorrectly credited Chris DiVirgilio with the Invictus Games photo of Marine Sgt Gabby Wake. The photo was taken by Courtney Verrill.
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Jo Crawford took a leap of faith after talking to other adapted watersports programs around the country to ensure this was doable. Two years ago the Day on the Lake program started offering tubing for those individuals with tracheostomies and certain implanted tubes so they could participate and actually be on the water with the wind in their faces.

"There's a lot at stake with a decision like that, Crawford explains, "We are prudent but everyone should have a chance to have fun."

The decision meant that this year for the first time ever, 15-year-old Danielle Spurbeck participated. She was carefully nestled between two trained volunteers on a giant tube pulled by a speed boat and they took off. She whooped as the tube caught air on a bright September afternoon in 2017.

"Oh yeah!" Spurbeck said. "Someday I do want to come back in the future."

"Everyone has a right to risk," Crawford said. "I don't like to hear or say 'no.' People living with disabilities hear 'no' a lot."

Jo Crawford summed up her personal mission and her hallmark event in a single Facebook post later that day.

Thank you to everyone who made Day on the Lake possible and to every participant who came out!

My favorite quote..."This is the farthest I have been from my wheelchair in 14 years!"

Tell us your favorite quote.

God is good!

Day on the Lake provides adaptive water sports for people with physical and neurological disabilities at Bartlett Lake, north of Phoenix. Participants ride jet skis, take a turn at adapted waterskiing, tubing, wakeboarding and surfing or enjoy riding in speed boats or the party boat. DOTL completed its 21st year with 233 participants and 156 volunteers for the summer series of 6 days of fun in the sun.

"There's amazing energy every year. It's so great to see the smiles on everyone's faces. Their reactions make us want to come back year-after-year," said Jeff Ramsdell, general manager of Leeden Wheelchair Lift and Sport, and one of the longest-serving DOTL volunteers. "Jo's been the driving force behind this event. She put the program together and recruits the volunteers. She's a ball of energy that makes it all happen."

It sometimes seems that everyone living with neurologic disability in Phoenix Valley knows Jo Crawford. Her work to ensure play is pervasive.

"Everyone has a right to play," Crawford says, "It's good for the soul."

Another of Crawford's star events, Driving to Excel, teams up with Bondurant School of High Performance Driving to allow people with disabilities to drive race cars or ride with a driver completed its seventh year in December.

Robert Reed, Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center Membership Outreach Specialist and a full-time wheelchair user, attended Driving to Excel for the first time in December 2017.

"It was pretty cool," Reed said. "It's not often that people with disabilities are given the opportunity to experience something like driving a race car with hand controls." Participants receive a safety orientation and driving tips before driving laps on a skills course. "You're driving around traffic cones and taking corners at 60 miles per hour. That's awesome."
She says a focus on relearning how to play is crucial to recovery after disability.

“Families are broken and exhausted when they get to us,” Crawford said. “People with disabilities have limited access to play. Relearning that is transformational and creates a new level of healing.”

An Arizona native, Crawford grew up riding horses and team roping. She lives in Dewey, Ariz., a small town north of the Valley, with her husband, Keith, and sons Shane (11) and Michael David (9). Her Facebook feed is full of photos of her boys participating in sports and roping hay bales in the back yard before dinner. She enjoys hot yoga and mountain biking. Crawford commutes 90 minutes each way from Dewey to her office at Barrow two to three days a week.

“It’s not so bad. I listen to audiobooks and get to watch the sunrise,” she said. “It’s the calmness before my workday starts.”

Calmness, steadfastness and warmth all describe Crawford. She’s known for greeting people with a hug. She attributes her success to her deep Christian faith and the healing ministry that is part of the culture at St. Joseph’s Hospital and Barrow Neurological Institute, part of the Dignity Health System. In 2017, she was awarded Dignity Health’s prestigious Act of Human Kindness Steward award in recognition of her 25 years ensuring that patients succeed outside of the hospital setting.

“Jo sees possibilities where others see problems. She is a joyful spirit and lives in the space of happiness. When you meet her, be prepared to be energized and empowered,” said Marisue Garganta, Director of Community Health Integration and Community Benefit for Dignity Health. “Jo is certainly an expert in her field. She loves her work but she loves the people she serves even more.”

“Jo is instrumental to making play a possibility for people in our community. She’s so passionate and energetic. She’s great at interacting with everyone at these events and making sure people know these programs exist,” said Reed who often works with the same people at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center that Crawford serves. “Jo doesn’t tell you what you should do or what she thinks you need. She makes sure you have what you need if you want it. That’s unique.”

by Jennifer Longdon
Ernie Lizarraga holds up his latest project: a motorcycle helmet, painted to look like a blasted skull, the brain exposed at the back. An anatomy book lies on the ground next to his airbrush.

His attention to detail is impressive—and grotesque—but Lizarraga is not satisfied. “Looks too much like intestines.”

Back to the workbench it goes. Once completed, it will join the other helmets, a family of silver and granite which look down from a higher shelf, lined like birds on a telephone wire observing newer works.

Exposed brain on a motorcycle helmet. It’s one of the last things one would expect Lizarraga to paint, given his history.

Vivid, Yet Fleeting

He stops at the threshold of a small white bedroom filled with pencil sketches. In one scene, a paratrooper looks out from the open door of a plane; he is ready to fall. In another, he’s hurtling toward the ground, caught in the
harrowing milliseconds after deploying his parachute. In a third, he clutches his rifle in one hand and stands in the middle of nowhere.

Although the drawings are up to 25 years old, they still kick start nostalgia.

“They’re my experiences,” he said, waving his hand over them.

They’re not far from what snapshots of memories would look like. Fun, yet dangerous. Stressful, yet euphoric.

Vivid, yet fleeting.

In another room is a paint-splattered desk, the walls layered with posters and photos of firefighting and family. Every piece of memorabilia seemed to have an adrenaline-soaked anecdote attached and Lizarraga spoke of shooting guns, infernos and motorcycles with wistful admiration.

He owed his risk-taking mindset to an incident his fire department responded to 20 years ago. An Ahwatukee woman was struck by a bullet while barbequing and killed. The sheer randomness of it was enough to change his perspective on life. You could take every precaution but still be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Hiding from fate, he realized, was futile.

It’s why he still rode motorcycles.

“I knew,” he said. “It’s dangerous, it is.”

I glance at a couple school pictures on the wall.

“What about your daughters?” I ask. “Do they ride?”

Lizarraga purses his lips and answers with a firm no.

“They’re smart,” he said, reaching for a stack of photos.

As he shuffles them, I catch glimpses.


Fate.

“It Felt Like a Bad Nightmare”

In 2010, Lizarraga and seven other members of Phoenix recreational motorcycle club, MC Kruzers, were en route to Bartlett Lake. They were waiting at a stoplight when a sanitation dump truck plowed through without warning.

Lizarraga was thrown off his motorcycle and into darkness.

Paramedics swarmed the area, initially pronouncing the then-52-year-old Lizarraga dead at the scene due to the gravity of his injuries. He was in such good shape that they described him as a 40-year-old male. It was a compliment, sort of.

He would live to laugh at that.

He awoke six weeks later tangled in wires. He had 26 fractured bones, one collapsed lung and no sight in his right eye.

Four motorcyclists from the club lost their lives to the incident.

He would later learn the driver, Michael Jakscht (pronounced ‘snatched’, although Lizarraga pronounces it phonetically), was high on meth and failed to stop his 12-ton truck at the intersection when he ploughed into Lizarraga’s group.

“It felt like a bad nightmare,” Lizarraga says.

He sets the photos down and walks away.

“They Got Him Back”

It is October 31, 2017.

Lizarraga’s wife, Lorri Lizarraga, stands over the stove in the kitchen. She is making chili for her daughter’s Halloween party. Their daughter and son-in-law plan to dress up as characters from Ghostbusters. She’s especially excited about her grandchild.

“The baby is gonna be the marshmallow monster,” Lorri said, ushering us to the dinner table.

She tilts her head toward the rest of the kitchen and living room, which looks like a cover of Martha Stewart Living magazine. A Halloween movie plays on the TV to an audience of pumpkins, black cats and friendly ghosts.

“I used to go all out,” she said, referring to the decor. “But now I just keep it to the kitchen.”

As the chili warms on the stove, Lorri Lizarraga taps her chin.

“How would I describe Ernie?” she asks herself, taking a moment to collect her thoughts. “He’s stubborn, a very, very good artist, physically fit, great dad, great grandad, a hard worker...lots of great verbs.”
Lizarraga is next. “She cooks good, cleans the house real good...” he looks at his wife. She raises her eyebrows. “...and she states her opinion.” His short response earns a smirk.

Lorri didn’t learn a lot from the quick and panicked phone call following her husband’s collision. Although there would later be over 300 pages of police reports for that, she made a chilling realization: her husband wasn’t wearing a helmet.

“He wore one when he rode alone,” she said, “But in a group—he doesn’t.”

Lizarraga shrugs his shoulders. He doesn’t have a reason he wasn’t wearing a helmet.

“Stupid,” he grunts.

After the incident, Lorri faced medical bills that arrived at her doorstep in banker boxes and the herculean challenge of helping her husband re-learn how to breathe, eat, walk and talk again.

Thankfully, she wasn’t alone. With the support of his colleagues at the Phoenix Fire Department, Lizarraga regained his mobility and speech.

And he’s slowly regaining something more: his art.

**Renaissance**

When he isn’t working as a firefighter at the training academy, Lizarraga usually spends his days creating. You can often find him drawing for department yearbooks, or drawing a portrait of a fellow firefighter who fell in the line of duty.

He’s in the process of making a comic book on firefighting, complete with vignettes from his personal experiences on the job. It’s a project 25 years in the process. Lizarraga’s arm doesn’t work the way it used to and his artwork from the last few years look a little different from the previous. His standards, however, remain unchanged.

“His pre-accident art was absolutely perfect,” Lorri said. “He was—gosh, that could’ve been his other job.”

She’s seen his frustration firsthand. What used to be hours of work now took weeks.

“I’ll walk by and see him crumple his work and throw it away. He compares himself to how he used to be.”

As she leaves to finalize the chili, Lizarraga opens the sliding glass door to the backyard.

“I still have it, you know,” he said.

“Excuse me?”

“The bike. I still have it.”

Outside, the world is blanketed in the afternoon sun. The scent of nectar lingers underneath a canopy of fruit trees and flower bushes. It was Lorri’s personal Eden, where life came in every shade of green.

On the concrete near a side wall, hidden behind a parked boat, was the motorcycle. Lizarraga had attempted to repair it, but decided against it. Sunlight bounces off the broken windshield still burnished with skid marks the size of dollars, rust claimed the parts that paint abandoned. We stare in silence for a while.

“Does it bring back memories?” I ask.

“Of course.”

We stop through the garage. There was the helmet again, along with the airbrush and anatomy book. Looking at the brain for a second time, it does look a little too much like intestines.

Lizarraga pats the helmet softly.

“I’ve always done stuff a little different,” he said. “I always have to be doing something.”

To Lizarraga, nothing was going to stop him from doing the things he did before.

Not even fate.
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“This enables me to concentrate more on the push rather than the pull,” said Travis Oldhouser, an Ability360 Sports & Fitness member and avid outdoor recreationalist, after taking the Versa paddle for a trial run at Tempe Town Lake.

Oldhouser, who has a C6 spinal cord injury, faces a few obstacles, when dealing with the traditional kayaking paddle due to some functional limitations in his hand grip, core and upper body ranges of motion.

The Versa paddle design uses a mount that supports the weight of the angled paddle that has a wide V shape. The mount and the angled paddle allow the user to effectively and effortlessly paddle through calm water. Since the mount holds the paddle, one-handed paddling is possible. The paddle itself can be adjusted by push button from 180° to approximately 130°, to fit the angle desired by the user and adjusted for length from 6 ¾ feet to nearly 8 feet long.

Oldhouser benefitted from the paddle being at a smaller angle allowing his paddle to make contact with the water with minimal effort from his upper body. “Effortless,” “natural,” and “absolutely awesome” were just some of the words he and his wife, Tina Oldhouser, used to describe the mechanism.

For an individual like Travis, having a device that allows him to paddle the kayak, as well eliminate worry for over-fatiguing, is innovative.

“I know what our next purchase is going to be,” Tina said. She observed that Travis looked “natural” on the water with the Versa paddle. “I’m excited! Now this is something else we can do together.”

Designed for recreational use on flat water, the Versa paddle is the brainchild of mechanical engineer Jim Van Gompel who created the oar so that he could kayak without triggering his asthma.

The Versa paddle is made by Angle Oar and retails for $315. The device weighs four pounds and fits many but not all kayaks. More information can be found at AngleOar.com.
Adaptive Canoeing debuted as a Paralympic sport at the Rio Paralympics in 2016. There’s plenty of time to train for your Paralympic gold medal in Tokyo in 2020. Learn more: paralympic.org/canoe

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Arizona Disabled Sports
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ArizonaDisabledSports.com

Southern Arizona Adaptive Sports
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SoAzAdaptiveSports.org

If leisurely paddling along on tranquil waters isn’t your thing...

Adaptive Canoeing debuted as a Paralympic sport at the Rio Paralympics in 2016. There’s plenty of time to train for your Paralympic gold medal in Tokyo in 2020. Learn more: paralympic.org/canoe

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Another Deedalus Development. Professionally managed by OB Sports.
Being in a wheelchair normally limits one’s lifestyle, but the WHILL Power Wheelchair combines the mobility of a manual chair and the ease of use of a power chair, allowing for a great experience.

I was surprised by the smoothness when I took the WHILL across gravel and other rough terrains that are normally difficult for wheelchairs to travel across.

The WHILL has a low-profile, sleek-looking, modern design that gives the user control of the wheelchair. Its composition lets people see more of the person and less of the wheelchair. People would notice its unique design and ask me about the WHILL everywhere that I went. The user becomes a part of the chair versus the chair becoming a part of the person.

When I am in the WHILL, I feel like people are interested and it sparks a conversation. The WHILL is similar to the size of a manual wheelchair, promoting mobility and has the controls of a power wheelchair, making for easy usability.

The power and joystick controls are on opposite sides of the chair and can be swapped if preferred. The WHILL has three speeds—low, medium and high—with the top speed being 5.5 mph to give you better control and adjustment for different environments. The battery has a range of up to 15 hours of use on a full charge.

The solid rear tires, Omni-wheel front tires and 4WD enable the user to access rough terrains like sand or other rough landscapes. None of the wheels swivel, which helps immensely when maneuvering in tight places.

Both swing-away armrests pivot backward so that nothing is in the way when transferring. The electric seat slides forward to help you better position yourself to use a table.

Unlike most wheelchair seat cushions, the WHILL does not require the use of an air pump to adjust the firmness of the cushion or backrest. This is a great feature for quadriplegics with bad hand dexterity.

Another great feature is the easily-visible red tail lights so others can see you at night. These lights also improve the user’s visibility when it is hard to see.

The WHILL has different degrees of adjustability that can be configured to fit the user. Many options are available to enhance the user’s comfort and safety for all day use. These include different controllers, back supports and tie-downs.

I especially like using the WHILL when going down my gravel driveway to get the mail because the ride is smooth. The WHILL makes going to a restaurant to eat easy due to its maneuverability and seat slide feature. The WHILL’s size makes transporting it in my accessible van more convenient.

Despite WHILL’s compact size, it has sufficient power to maneuver across the grass, over rough terrain and up hills. Most of the load is taken off of shoulders compared to a manual chair. Its compact size, tight turning radius, and precision controller let the WHILL perform well around tight spaces indoors. The innovative Omni-wheels, two-motor 4WD, top speed of 5.5 mph and range of 15 miles let the WHILL conquer any terrain that is between you and your destination.
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If you have spent even a little time at the Sports & Fitness Center, chances are you have encountered Tracy Heuermann, an Ability360 volunteer.

When asked what she has done for the last two and a half years, Heuermann said, “Whatever I can,” while therapeutic recreation specialist, Sara Bright, chimed, “Everything” nodding emphatically. As it turns out, “everything” is hardly exaggeration.

Heuermann fills in wherever there is a need, whether it be cleaning and moving equipment for special events, answering phones, cutting flyers—“Tracy Scissorhands,” as Bright called her—or being the guinea pig for new belayers on the rock wall.

As someone who has worked for the National Charity League, Habitat for Humanity, St. Mary’s Food Bank and Meals on Wheels, Heuermann claims volunteering with Ability360 has been the best.

Heuermann doesn’t just do the work, according to Bright. She truly cares about people, a statement that can be backed up by the deeply-rooted rapport she’s built within the community, smiling and waving at nearly everyone passing through the complex. Everyone seems to love her, and it would be hard not to, with her warm smile, expressive gestures, and speech so quick and passionate that one must focus to keep pace.

Aside from her volunteer work, Heuermann has a passion for traveling to new places and trying “oddball sports” like pickleball, and curling. She’s spontaneous, as shown by her move from Kansas to Arizona with her husband for the golf and tennis or her spur-of-the-moment early-season trip to Snowbowl with Bright, whom she barely knew at the time.

Sometimes, trying something new leads to an entirely new passion, as was the case with curling. On a whim, Heuermann attended to a learn-to-curl event with her friends. Six months later, she went back with her youngest daughter. The game swept her off her feet. Ten years later, Heuermann is now on the board of directors with the Coyotes Curling Club.

She actively tries to recruit everyone she meets. For those who maybe recognize the obscure sport from the Olympics or those presently thinking, “Curling your hair is a sport?” can participate in the newly-formed Ability360 Curling league. See sidebar for details.
WHAT IS CURLING?

Curling is a bit like shuffleboard on ice. The primary objective is to deliver the “rock” (a standard 42 lbs. of granite with bolted plastic handles) as close to the “button” (a 1-foot in diameter “bullseye”) as possible. The game is highly adaptive to a wide range of abilities.

HERE’S HOW IT WORKS:

The Lead: delivers the stone
The Second: second stone deliverer
The Third/Vice Skip: third stone deliverer and second in command for strategizing
The Skip: Fourth to deliver the stone and central team strategist Stands in the “house”: a 12-foot wide bullseye in the middle of the field

READY TO CURL?

Ability360 League starts Wednesday, Jan. 3, continuing every Wednesday from 5-7 p.m. through Feb. 21.
• Must be 16 or older to participate
• Coyotes Curling provides all the equipment necessary
• Dress in warm layers and closed toed shoes
• Tournament February 25-26.
• Located at 2202 W Medtronic Way, Tempe

More information at:
CoyotesCurling.com
Ability360.org/calendar
or SaraB@ability360.org

360 Cartoons by Colton Starley

“Sure we’ve made some cuts. But our newest feature should cover those.”
After months of anticipation, Café Cultivate opened in January bringing coffee and catering to the Ability360 community. The option to grab a healthy breakfast or lunch after workouts and meetings has been eagerly awaited by the people who visit or work at the Ability360 Center.

“This is meant to be a safe, comfortable space centered around healthy, delicious food,” said Juli Bryan who, along with her husband Gregory Bryan own and operate Café Cultivate at the Ability360 Center. Every aspect of the cozy space from the apple green and plum walls, to the indoor/outdoor furniture clusters to the clean, organic menu is intentionally designed to foster a sense of wellbeing and comfort.

On most days, the large overhead doors are flung open to celebrate the beautiful Phoenix weather. Hydroponic tower gardens positioned at the corners of the courtyard supply much of Café Cultivate’s organic produce and create the relaxing burble of moving water.

Like many at Ability360, the Bryans have a personal disability story that is reflected in their work. Their 26-year-old son, Oliver, is a brain injury survivor. Injured in a motorcycle accident in October 2012, Oliver spent 18 months recovering at the Barrow Center for Transitional Neuro-Rehabilitation (CTN). While there, he and another recovering patient decided to open a Phoenix coffee shop, Oliver’s Sophisticated Bean, with his parents’ support. After helping their son successfully launch his operation, the Bryans turned their attention to their own passion project, opening Café Cultivate.

Juli Bryan, a pastry chef and certified nutrition coach, believes food can heal. Her menu marries the organic produce she grows on site with locally-sourced organic vendors for coffee beans, bread, raw honey, preserves and eggs.

“Currently we source most of our ingredients from six local vendors,” Juli Bryan said. “It takes a bit more time, but the end product is worth it in terms of taste, nutritional quality and environmental impact.”
Open Monday through Saturday, the kitchen offers fresh-made breakfast items, salads and sandwiches from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m.

The Chipotle Grilled Cheese with the satisfying crunch of toasted jalapeno-cheddar bread with just enough heat from the peppers and arugula bite to balance the cheddar is a crowd-pleaser.

The Red, White and Bleu gourmet salad combines spinach, fresh strawberries, toasted almonds and generous amounts of bleu cheese with a poppy seed dressing that is light yet filling.

On any given day, you might find employees and brain injury survivors like Daniel making bacon and eggs for breakfast sandwiches or talk to Mark who likes to tend the tower gardens in the courtyard.

In partnership with CTN, Oliver’s neuro-rehab facility, Café Cultivate will be a skills training center. Survivors recovering from brain injury interested in working in hospitality and food service will have opportunities to work on-site with a job coach to acquire or relearn marketable skills to take out into the real world.

“We cross-train everyone in our kitchen so they can do any job. Then, we look for the place they fit best,” Juli Bryan said. “We want people to love coming to work. There’s a lot of grace and patience in my kitchen.”

Gregory Bryan, who sold his real estate brokerage to focus on Oliver’s recovery, runs the front of the house. He welcomes guests, takes orders and makes the specialty coffee drinks and manages the paperwork needed to keep things running.

“We believe everyone has value, so we cultivate purpose,” Gregory Bryan said, quoting from the statement emblazoned on their wall. “We believe in our community, so we cultivate interaction.”

The grab-n-go counter remains open until 5 p.m. each day, a quick stop for parfaits, wraps and deserts.

While the food is delicious and the atmosphere warm, what sets Café Cultivate apart from other bistros is their philosophy. Half of their staff are individuals with brain injuries. “We know first-hand how hard it is to reintegrate following brain injury,” Juli Bryan said. “It’s hard to get a job because you can’t see a brain injury. Then, it’s hard to keep it because employers’ needs for speed, memory and such can conflict with the complications of brain injury. We get it. We live it too.”
Meet Ability360’s New Vice President of Advocacy

April Reed assumed her new position on December 1st. We talked with her as she unpacked her new office. Following is our edited conversation.

**Ability360:** As you’re moving into your new office, what’s on your mind?

**Reed:** I’m thinking a lot about the past and my time with Amina these last 13 years here at Ability360, all the work and all the amazing people we’ve met — her accomplishments. I feel like there’s a lot of amazing things that have been accomplished, but also a lot of amazing things to come. How do we take care of our community? The way we do that is advocacy.

**Ability360:** What’s your long-term vision for advocacy?

**Reed:** I think that we have a strong history of advocacy. We’ve done it, we know how to do the events, the legislative trainings, the protests. My vision is to see us grow and expand who we’re welcoming even more. We have people in rural communities eager to participate. We want to pull in parents and youth, we’ve seen that start to happen. I think that was always Amina’s vision as well, that we, that Phoenix, be known for having a good, solid advocacy group. So when people think of Phoenix, they think of these strong, well-informed advocates.

Transportation is an example of the challenges that have happened in the last couple of years. We’ve seen people show up and speak up effectively. I think people are more educated about that issue than I’ve ever seen. That’s exciting.

We as a community have to keep identifying what we care about, what matters to us, what is affecting our daily lives, and then turn that into a show up. It’s not about one or two voices, it’s about a bunch of people giving voice and being willing to be vulnerable and tell their story and put themselves out there. That’s what makes the difference.

*Continued next page*
Reflections by Phil Pangrazio

With the retirement of Amina Kruck after 27 years at Ability360, I am thrilled that our next generation of advocates will be led by April Reed, our new Vice President of Advocacy.

Advocacy is at the heart of everything we do at Ability360. Not only is advocacy a federally mandated activity at Ability360, it is unquestionably the most important thing we do.

In fact, as Ed Roberts once said, “If Centers for Independent Living only did one thing, surely it should be advocacy, advocacy and more advocacy!” Our advocacy includes both individual and systemic advocacy, but also, it aims at teaching self-advocacy skills too. Learning to fish will sustain you far longer than being given a fish.

The fight for disability rights has been centuries in the making. Many think that disability rights began with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, the historic fight for disability rights began long before 1990. Advocates from the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s were surely the catalyst. People like Ed Roberts, Judy Heumann, Max Starkloff, and Justin Dart get much of the credit. But a handful of others made the loudest impact, buffeted by the civil rights movement led by African Americans, but advocate voices were screaming out long before then. Many were disabled military veterans. Others were individuals who had family members with disabilities. Most will forever go unknown.

One thing is for sure. Disability rights advocacy became most effective when it became consumer-led.

When the independent living movement taught people with disabilities to self-advocate, to think of themselves as being powerful and in control of their own lives instead of being objects of charity, that’s when everything changed. We were no longer faceless and powerless. Our advocacy demanded “Nothing about us without us!” We must never forget this history. We must never give up the fight and let our voices be silenced. There is still much work to be done. Our advocacy is as important today as it was in 1970. It must remain vigilant and tireless.

April’s calm spirit and tenacity will be an asset as we navigate through the unknown attacks on our civil liberties.

Lead on April. No matter what!
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.

call@ability360.org

CALLING ALL CREATIVES! LivAbility has a space for you.

We’re on the lookout for talented contributors in every part of our great state to help keep our readers up to date on the people and events that impact our community. We’re always eager to meet writers, photographers, videographers and illustrators who tell the stories of people with disabilities. Contact us to discuss a submission.

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Encuentranos en ability360.org/livability
Meet Arizona’s Paralympic Hopefuls

Gabe Scanlan has been competing in adaptive sports for nearly 8 years. He’s got his eyes set on Paris in 2024.

by Scott Daravanis

Gabriel Benjaman Scanlan
(Gilbert, AZ)

Wheelchair Basketball
Track & Field
The 2018 Winter Paralympics begin in Pyeongchang, South Korea in March followed by the 2020 Summer games in Tokyo, Japan. In the lead up to the games, we’ll profile one of Arizona’s promising young hopeful Paralympians in each edition.

Although he’s only 12 years old, Gabe Scanlan of Gilbert has his eyes firmly planted on the prize—the Paralympics.

“I have a personal goal of shooting for 2024 or 2028,” he said. Gabe could qualify for the Paralympics in a multitude of sports. He plays wheelchair basketball, runs the 100, 200, and 800-meter dashes and throws shot put, javelin and discus.

“He’s pretty stubborn,” Gabe’s father, Ben, said. Of my four children, he’s the one who’s going to do it no matter what.”

His favorite sport, wheelchair basketball, he’s played since he was 5 years old. “He’s grown up quite a bit in the years that I’ve coached him,” Robert Reed, Ability360 Wheelchair Basketball Coach said. “In the division he is supposed to play in, he dominates and when he plays for the varsity [14 and 15 year olds], he keeps up with them just as much.”

“He is a great young man from a really great family. He’s a pleasure to have on the team,” Tim Binning, Arizona Disabled Sports Track and Field Coach said. “He does what I ask him to do and he incorporates different things on his technique that we work on. I enjoy Gabe quite a bit.”

Gabe was born with Spina Bifida, a condition where the bones of the vertebrae do not completely enclose the spinal cord before birth. Gabe’s disability did not prevent his parents, athletes themselves, from getting Gabe involved in sports. “I’ve seen the value [in sports],” Ben said. “We got Gabe involved with Arizona Disabled Sports. Our eyes were opened to the opportunities he has in sports and he can benefit with all of the things sports comes with: team unity and learning to get along with people; learning to win and lose and building his character.”

Gabe prefers wheelchair basketball because the action is fairly constant, his dad notes. Except for rest periods, timeouts and halftime, Gabe is wheeling himself up and down the court on offense or defense. Gabe plays point guard or shooting guard.

Gabe set new Adaptive Track & Field USA (ATFUSA) records at the Angel City Games at UCLA in seated javelin and seated shot put. He finished third in seated discus. Gabe also took firsts in the 100-meter boy’s wheelchair dash, the boy’s 200-meter dash the 800-meter boy’s seat run.

Gabe is following the precedent set by Glendale native and 2008 and 2016 Paralympian, Erik Hightower. “I could see he’s a natural talent who will go a long way in whatever sport he does,” Hightower said from the Paralympic Training Center in San Diego. “I’ve done (the Paralympics) twice. He can definitely do it.”

Outside of sports, the Pioneer Elementary pupil likes science and social studies, and plays the trumpet in band class. He says someday he’d like to give sled hockey a try. Gabe doesn’t have specific career goals, yet, other than being involved in wheelchair sports.

Gabe is only a quarter of Scanlan athletic family. His older sister Kamee, 13, has participated in competitive dance and is now cheerleading; his brother Preston, 8, plays baseball and flag football; and his sister Paislee, 6, practices gymnastics.
It’s the time of day when the sun slowly retreats, kissing the Sedona red rock formations without lighting the sky on fire just yet. Brenna Bean eyes the uneven terrain ahead.

Nature isn’t always forgiving and not many paths on this hike are suitable for wheelchair users. The dirt trail is scattered with large rocks and patches of grass difficult to maneuver around. But Bean isn’t afraid to fall, so she pushes forward delicately, balancing her manual wheelchair on the stones ahead.
Bean isn’t one to turn away from a rocky road. Ever since she could walk through the fields of her father’s farm, Bean played every sport in the book. Her small high school in Whately, Mass. knew her as a star pole vaulter and hurdler. She was going to pole vault in college.

“It’s the kind of town here the football team makes the front page of the newspaper,” Bean said. “I was famous in a small town.”

Bean was just doing what small town kids did when her life came to a screeching halt. Two days before college, a midnight booze cruise coupled with reckless driving sent her careening out of her boyfriend’s rickety truck and into a cornfield when the car behind them clipped their bumper.

Bean and her boyfriend were heading home. Her house was within view.

The next chapter

Next on her Sedona excursion: A steep decline toward the pond, interrupted by knotted roots peeking from the ground. The group following her—some in manual wheelchairs, others in powerchairs—look apprehensive. It would be a tumultuous journey down, but she doesn’t want them to miss out on the reward below: sweet, earthy air; sunlight dancing on the freshwater’s surface.

“Okay guys,” she announced. “If you’re not sure about this, please ask our volunteers for help.” She waves at the group of volunteers armed with safari wheelchairs that resemble rickshaws equipped with tougher wheels for the terrain.

“It’s really beautiful down there,” she insisted.

This is her job at Daring Adventures, the outdoor recreation organization that provides adaptable recreation opportunities for people with disabilities. As the adaptive recreation program coordinator, she strives to make all trails, hills and parks accessible to people with disabilities.

Bean said. “Or allow people to do things that without support they wouldn’t be able to do.”

Some go flying down the slope (“Be careful!” Bean warns), while others, with the help of volunteers, move forward cautiously or transfer into safari wheelchairs.

Bean balances on her back wheels and steadily makes her way down. Nine years ago, she could have walked down the steep hill. Eight years ago, she was still trying to maneuver on smooth land with her wheels.

After her crash, the doctors spun a dizzying web of diagnoses that included a brain injury, a crushed ribcage and a T4 spinal cord injury. What should have been her first day in a college dorm bed was her third day in the intensive care unit.

As they chipped away at each injury, Bean saw a rotating cast of visitors, flowers and cards. Her parents rarely left her side. When her friend visited the hospital, Bean told her mother in a drug-induced haze, “Me and Haley are just going to go to the cafeteria.”

“No you’re not. Oh, you can’t do that,” her mom told her.

“No worries, I’m going to go,” Bean responded.

“You can’t,” her mom insisted.

Bean didn’t yet realize she could not walk, that her spinal cord injury paralyzed her chest-down.

In rehab, she showed her parents a new trick she learned with her wheelchair. They applauded and she blushed. It was like scoring her first soccer goal all over again.

“I wanted to prove that I could do everything,” Bean said. “Looking back—I’m kind of reflecting on it a little bit more deeply—probably was showing myself that I could do it.”

Soon enough, Bean was going on rock climbing adventures and attending college for exercise science. She wanted to be a physical therapist before her accident. Now, she wanted to work with people with disabilities.
“Hang out with my friends and go out and do things and just be like a normal person. That made my life so good despite my disability,” Bean said. “I realized I wanted to give that to other people. I wanted people to be able to do the things that they loved.”

**Her daring adventure**

“I’d love to, but I can’t do that.”

It’s a familiar sentiment Jerry Ketelhut hears as the executive director of Daring Adventures. This time, it came from a hesitant teenager before an 11-day whitewater rafting trip down the Grand Canyon.

“We empower them,” Ketelhut said. “With these activities, we like to work with each person individually to reach their own Everest.”

“Daring” and “adventurous” might as well be Bean’s middle names. The girl who once flew an adaptive plane never saw a boundary she couldn’t cross. Somewhere between classes and going home every weekend, she decided to embark on a new daring adventure.

“I was getting restless in my little town,” Bean confessed. “My biggest fear in life is that there’s not going to be enough time to do everything that I want to do.”
Welcome to the newest edition of LivAbility
LivAbility is an Arizona-based quarterly lifestyle magazine for people with disabilities. Each edition contains articles that promote an active, fulfilling lifestyle for every ability.

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Dead Horse Ranch State Park

can a park be too relaxing?

by Loren Worthington
When you think about places to visit in central Arizona, most people think of Sedona or Prescott. Both are great but there’s at least one more just off I-17, the main highway dividing Arizona in half.

Last year, we wrote about Cottonwood. It’s truly the center of Arizona and just outside of the town is Dead Horse Ranch State Park. It got its name from the Ireys family of Minnesota who were shopping for Arizona land in the 1940s. When Calvin Ireys asked his kids which parcel they liked, one replied, “The one with the dead horse.” Dead Horse Ranch became a state park in 1977. One of the conditions of the state’s acquisition was that the ranch retain its name.

The park is at an elevation of 3,300 feet so you won’t find saguaros or pine trees. It’s the high desert and the park lies along the fertile rich soils of the Verde River. The main feature of the park is three man-made lagoons (large ponds) with excellent accessible trails weaving about the waterfront, the picnic areas and the camping areas; massive shade trees provide cover everywhere.
If you reside in the urban world with all the noises of cars and smart phones, the first thing you’ll experience at the park is the calm pervasive sounds of tranquility. That may sound like a writer trying to be romantic, but it’s not even subtle. It’s almost too quiet at first.

Everywhere you look, it’s clear that “someone” has thought about accessibility.

That someone is Joan Gray. Gray was born during a polio outbreak in her Wisconsin neighborhood; she was four months old when she contracted the disease. Of the seven people infected in her area, one died. Gray recovered and grew into adulthood an avid hiker and kayaker. In her 50s she began to feel the effects of post-polio syndrome. As her muscles weakened she started using a manual wheelchair.

Gray has been a park volunteer since the 1980s and a constant presence in the park. As it became more difficult for her to put her kayak into the Verde River, the park manager at the time put in an accessible boat ramp. That was just the start.

“I would use this as my country club,” Gray said as we toured Dead Horse together. “It was a place to hide before work or after work. I did some camping in here too. I kayaked in both a hard-shell and inflatable kayak. Being able to put-in and take-out here with accessible river access made a big difference for me.”

Sean Hammond, Arizona State Parks and Trails ADA Coordinator works closely with Gray.

“Joan has been our eyes and ears up here on accessibility,” he said.

Together with park managers and Eagle Scout candidates in search of projects, the park was made to be more accessible, one trail, one cabin, one fishing ramada at a time.

The park is designed for fishing, the lagoons are stocked seasonally. The fishing docks are uniquely accessible for chair users. It’s for bird watchers and anyone wanting to roll through nature. There’s even an accessible trail created for those with sensitivity to
chemicals (no herbicides, insecticides or pesticides are used on this trail or in the nearby bathrooms) that is also doable by most people in manual wheelchairs. You can enjoy the accessible ramadas all over the park.

For those wanting to stay longer, the park offers camping spots with various levels of amenities. Staff have worked with volunteers including numerous Eagle Scout projects to improve the accessibility of the park. It’s impressive. One feature added is raised tent platforms for folks using wheelchairs. You no longer need to sleep (or transfer) on the ground.

For those of us less rugged, the park has eight dry cabins, seven are accessible. Basically simple sleeping quarters for up to four people each has one full bed frame and a set of bunks. You need to bring your sleeping bags or linens. Each has a small table inside, but not much else. They have electricity (and an a/c unit) and there are public bathrooms (with roll-in showers) nearby. Each site has its own grill, fire ring and picnic table and most of them have good access. I like the concept as it’s something between camping and staying at a hotel.

On our tour, park staff indicated where more cabins have been scheduled to be added with accessibility planned for most if not all of them (based on natural terrain). Definitely some primo spots.

Dead Horse Ranch is a two hour drive from the Phoenix area making it a great location for a day trip to escape to nature or your first adventure “into the wild” as a camper. Check out the annual birding festival held each April. 🦅
Alexander Ayon is Mexican. **Strike one.** He is raised by a single mother. **Strike two.** He has severe anxiety, depression and ADHD. **Strike three.** At least that's what his mother, Yvonne Ayon, believes.

Since he started Laveen's Heritage Academy in 2015, Alexander received 18 disciplinary referrals for offenses like laughing and forgetting supplies. In late March of 2016, he received his 19th for passing notes in history class. Ayon, a mother of five children with varying disabilities, was exasperated. She estimates each child has gone to 10 schools, none of which have adequately met her children's needs.

Parents of students with disabilities have increasingly filed reports of biased disciplinary action within Maricopa County schools. The American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona conducted a study on disciplinary disparities last summer (found at Demand2LearnAZ.org) that focused on minority and disabled students. For parents like Ayon, who suspected schools were discriminating against their children, the results confirmed their experiences.

ACLU’s Luis Avila said more than half of disciplinary referrals and citations go to students in special education, disproportionate to the number of students with disabilities.

"Children pushed out of the classroom by repetitive suspensions and citations are often pressed towards a deviant lifestyle in the streets, creating the school-to-prison pipeline," Avila said.

The ACLU aims to combat this growing issue through a newly-formed program Demand2Learn. Led by Avila and implemented in targeted secondary schools, the program will connect students, parents, school administrators and the community at large. Demand2Learn volunteers examine district data, train parents and students on their rights in the classroom and work with community groups to create lasting solutions and support.

Ayon became an advocate for the Demand2Learn program after her first son, Anthony, dropped out of school in seventh grade following repeated referrals and disciplinary actions. He is currently in prison for car theft. His ADHD was diagnosed four years into his prison term.

"If you don’t get your education, you go to the streets,” Ayon said.

"When students get pushed out of school by punitive disciplinary measures, they tend to have unstructured time on the streets and are likely to have run-ins or negative experiences with law enforcement," said Channel Powe, Balsz School Board member. "These encounters with law enforcement can lead to what we call the school-prison-pipeline.

The zero-tolerance policy feeding this pipeline is often attributed to aiming disciplinary action to prevent drug abuse and violence in schools. Laurel Bellow, President of the American Bar Association, said in a 2012 Senate hearing that the policy had a “disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities.”

Since the report was published in August, Demand2Learn has joined with multiple school districts including Phoenix Union High and Balsz to revise policies regarding disciplinary action.

"I look forward to collaborating with all stakeholders to continue that work," Phoenix Union High School District governing board member Stanford Prescott said.

Demand2Learn seeks to help revise biased disciplinary practices in schools. But until the governing board of each district approves the measure, no change will be made, Avila said. "It is really hard to reform in Arizona." The ACLU of Arizona is the only group with such a heavily hands-on program, as other states focus "mostly through litigation," Avila said. Demand2Learn hopes to revise programs on a larger scale after the trial schools are finished with the process.

Despite the ordeals her family experienced, Ayon is hopeful for the future. She works with Demand2Learn to create a solid support system in today's classrooms so Alexander and other children don't follow Anthony's path to prison.

"Educators never took the time to save him.” 🙁
Gina Schuh can still hear the sharp crack of her neck breaking as her head hit the bottom of the pool, the result of a dive gone awry. Suddenly living with quadriplegia at 18 years old, the aspiring chef had to change careers before even starting.

Schuh still expressed her love of food through her blog, the Culinary Quad, a mix of recipes and restaurant reviews that emphasized accessibility as much as cuisine. However, the colorful food scene was overshadowed by a bitter experience: ADA violations.

“I was shocked to see that my rights were being trampled every day,” Schuh said.

Vowing to fix misused parking and inaccessible buildings for herself and her community, she went to law school and studied the ADA from the inside out.

“We got played in the ‘90s,” Schuh said, referring to the time in which the ADA was written. “The way it reads puts the responsibility of initiating the issue of non-compliance on people with disabilities rather than the non-compliant business.”

Schuh received her law degree from Summit Law School at 28 and since has grown into a tenacious and vocal activist. Now 32, Schuh started Accessible Arizona last year, lobbied the state legislature on accessibility issues in the last session and created a formidable social media presence with her Facebook page, Gina is on a Roll.

Schuh’s ideas are creative and unconventional—and sometimes contrary to mainstream advocacy organizations. As a result, Schuh is starting bold conversations within the community. Her legislative priorities include creating ADA-compliance officers to monitor accessibility compliance and incentivizing developers to build barrier-free bathrooms in multi-family homes.

To kick off this agenda, Accessible Arizona is sponsoring “Roll on Arizona’s Capital” slated for Jan. 22.

“Accessible Arizona is offering you a platform and a microphone. Don’t pass up the opportunity,” Schuh said. “We hope the meeting results in positive changes for the disabled community and meets a few big goals of Accessible Arizona.” These goals include the compliance program and increasing barrier-free bathrooms in multi-family dwellings.

Creosote Partners, a lobbying firm, partnered with Schuh’s young organization to bring it to fruition.

“We are excited to support Gina’s efforts to bring the National Roll on the Capitol to Arizona,” Creosote partner Sam Richards said. “Her energy, passion and lived experience are sure to make an impact on lawmakers.”

Visit AccessibleAZ.org for more information.
Despite their age difference of 34 years, Jolene De Tiege, 34, and Daniel Overman, 69, are an infectious couple.

“The reality is I’m 69 years old. You realize that, sweetheart?” Overman said. “But you know, it’s like if you said, we’re gonna put together an old man and a young woman with a disability, you’d have thought, ‘Oh, that’s not gonna make a lot of sense.’ But it does.”

Lacing their fingers together, it is apparent that the love between them is real. Newly engaged, with a wedding date set for April, you can hear the excitement in their voices.

Tiege has muscular dystrophy and uses a power wheelchair while Overman has multiple disabilities, including learning disabilities, a traumatic brain injury and complications from a previous stroke.

The two met at a play in March 2014 and were instantly attracted to one another. Their age difference was a barrier in the beginning as they both felt that initiating a relationship would cross a line. Tiege said she made the first move, inviting Overman to plays and often talking for hours at a local Starbucks. Overman said it happened organically, spending time together and texting until one day, that time spent together meant more.

They talk candidly about life together. While their disabilities don’t get in the way of leading truly remarkable lives, they have often found themselves in situations that challenge them. They look at each other and laugh, saying they question what they are doing when the car breaks down or acknowledge the reality that their disabilities each come with their own unique quirks. Overman jokes that one day, they will each have their own aide as they grow old together.

Their plans for the future include traveling the country in an accessible RV and chronicling their life in a blog. Currently, they maintain a Facebook page that shares their love story and journey together through life. They have a zest for life and are excited for what’s next.

If you ask Tiege what advice she would give to others looking for relationships, she would say to be open to all possibilities. Having a type gets in the way of cultivating a real relationship with a quality person. Overman would say to not let reality stop you. Sometimes, throwing practicality out of the window can bless your life.

It looks like they both took their own advice.
Every day in Arizona, a mother is told her new baby is blind.

You can ensure that FBC will be there for every child and family who need us...

**FBCTXCREDIT.com**
Leonard Hosea Smith Sr.
Independent Living Skills Advocate

Leonard Smith is a gentle giant – he doesn’t speak much but when he does, you better listen and learn from this wise man! He’s been Ability360’s East Valley advocate for many years. His military and religious background gives him a keen insight into people’s behavior and what makes them tick. Don’t expect him to “give you fish” because he will do more than that – he will teach you to fish. Consumers benefit from Leonard’s knowledge of community resources and how to best point people in the right direction in order to meet the goals of greater independence and self-empowerment.

- Darrel Christenson, VP of Community Integration

How long have you been with Ability360? About 14 years.

What other job titles have you held, if any? I held the position of Reintegration Coordinator from 2000 to 2004.

For people outside of the organization, what do you do? I help people with disabilities become self-empowered so they can do the things they want to do. I benefited from independent living coaching when I was newly injured. When my peer mentor pulled up in my driveway and got out of his van and he used a wheelchair—like I did—I realized life wasn’t hopeless. Whatever I set my mind to do I could achieve. That’s what I want to give the people I work with. Whether that’s moving into their own place, learning to drive or use public transportation or getting their education or becoming employed, my job is help them make a plan to succeed.

Is there a work achievement you’re especially proud of? I’m proud of the work I’ve been able to do with many organizations like Paralyzed Veterans Of America (PVA). I’m currently president of our local chapter. I’m especially proud of being part of organizing our Independent Living Fair. Right now, working with individuals who sustained their spinal cord injury through gunshot wounds is a project I find gratifying.

What brought you here? After my injury and rehab I always knew that I wanted to give back to the disabled community. When I started classes at Glendale Community College, I felt like I had come far enough to help other individuals like me. So I became a peer mentor.

What do you like most about your work? I like watching people develop skills that help them become self-empowered. From learning to cook to learning a new piece of technology or learning the transportation system, or learning how to navigate the educational system.

Will you share a little something about your family? I am the oldest of six children. I have eight children and lots of nephews and nieces. I consider myself to be the patriarch of my family. With such a large family there’s never a boring Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas dinner, Easter dinner or a birthday party.

Will you tell us about your best day ever? I have several best days ever but one of them is when I got behind the wheel and was able to drive again after 20 years.

What are people most surprised to know about you? I have 8 children.

Is there a movie or TV show you drop everything to watch? I love watching action movies. I love the Transformers. The movie that I’d drop everything to watch is Avatar. I see you.

If a mega-fortune fell into your lap, what would you do? I would buy an accessible motorhome and travel to every state. My only agenda would be visiting all of the Capitals.
AFRICAN AMERICAN
CONFERENCE ON DISABILITIES

February 16, 2018  8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Desert Willow Conference Center
4340 E. Cotton Center Blvd., Phoenix 85040

Adrian Fontes, Maricopa County Recorder, is responsible for the administration and implementation of the election process for the fourth most populated county in the United States. Mr. Fontes is an Arizona native and has served in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he solidified his love of country and made him a strong advocate of the U.S. Constitution. He holds an undergraduate degree from Arizona State University and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Denver. Mr. Fontes has worked for the Denver DA’s Office, Maricopa County Attorney, The Arizona Attorney General, and in private practice before being duly elected as the Maricopa County Recorder in 2016.

Workshops

Culture and Disabilities
Civil Rights
Healthcare Rights
Mental Health Rights
Special Education & 504 Rights
Youth to Adult Transition
Child Welfare and Disabilities
Alzheimer’s and Dementia
ADA Employment Rights, HIV, Lupus, Autism and Sickle Cell
Voting Rights
Autism
Police Engagement & Outreach
Abuse & neglect
And more...

Continuing Legal Education (CLE available for Attorneys)
Continuing Education Units (CEUs) available

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

Questions:
Renaldo Fowler, Arizona Center for Disability Law (602) 274-6287
David Carey, Ability360 (602) 443-0723.
Home Care Services provides first-rate care. Consumers enjoy knowledgeable, competent assistance. Caregivers receive health coverage, paid vacation and more.

Contact us to receive services or join our team.
ability360.org
Hablamos español!

Maricopa - (602) 296-0502
Pinal | Gila - (520) 316-4300
Pima - (520) 449-8375
Yavapai - (928) 278-2450
Calvin Cook isn't trying to become the next big name in Christian rap, but he does want his music to spread some hope to listeners. And, perhaps, bring in a little extra income.

“I have a knack with words,” Cook said. “They just come to me and I start piecing them together.”

Cook has been rapping since he was 16. When he was 18, he joined the rap group the Flamin’ Bird Souljahz that made videos and performed together for five years. His faith is very important to him and Cook admits the group was “far from Christian.” When the group disbanded, he took a two-year break to find his own message.

“I believe my lyrics are God-gifted and meant to be helpful to others,” Cook said.

Under the alias Cal M. D. aka Dyrti Redd, Cook recently released his first five-song gospel hip-hop mixtape project with the help of his friend and producer Gabriel Rico, aka “Tha Chemist.” You can listen to the mixtape on ReverbNation, SoundCloud and YouTube.

Like Cook, his producer Rico is a self-taught and recorded the mixtape himself by bringing his laptop, microphone and studio monitors to Cook’s home. The budding hip hop artist is working on obtaining his own recording equipment.

Although Cook sustained a spinal cord and traumatic brain injury at age 6, he feels his disability only affects his music physically. He uses a power wheelchair for all of his mobility.

“Sometimes I get discouraged because I can’t setup the microphone on my own and I can only record little sections at a time then stop due to my low breath support,” he admits. “But at the same time, my disability gives me motivation because I feel like it’s meant to be so I can inspire other people with and without disabilities to use their talents.”

With that purpose in mind, Calvin intends to release another mixtape project within the next few months to promote more “positive vibes” in society. However, the one drawback from putting out his first mixtapes is no profit can be made because the instrumentals are “borrowed” from other artists. He is working towards completing a seven-song original project with beats produced by Rico in 2018 for submittal on iTunes and Spotify.

The pair already has one original track finished entitled, “Murder and Me” and are currently developing its video scheme.

In the meantime, Calvin is also pursuing a degree in Social Work at Arizona State University and serves as president of the Youth Action Council of Arizona, a self-advocacy group for young adults both with and without disabilities. No matter where he rolls, those around him can’t help but catch his rhythm. ©
I have a pet peeve about waiting for elevators.

On the very strong chance that someone will be on it when the door opens, I stay well back to allow them plenty of room. So it’s always surprising to me when someone stands right at the door after they press the button.

But here’s what really gets me: when the door opens, and someone is there, upon seeing me (at a comfortable distance leaving them plenty of room), they say:

“I’m sorry!”

For what??!! They have plenty of room to get by, so I don’t have to move. They have the right of way to get off before I get on, so they aren’t inconveniencing me in any way. Nothing to apologize for here, folks.

It happens in restaurants, too, when someone has to get up so I can get past them to my table. They say, “I’m sorry,” and I say, “What are you apologizing for?! I’m the one who’s disturbing YOU!” At least this always gets a laugh.

In fact, people apologize to me a lot, in many different settings. What’s going on here?

They certainly aren’t making a conscious choice to apologize. It happens too fast for it to be something they considered before speaking. It just spills out. Plus, it happens so often that it can only be some kind of innate, reflexive, automatic response.

To the fact that I’m sitting in a wheelchair.

Hearing “I’m sorry” to the fact of using my chair feels like pity. And I’m very uncomfortable with anyone pitying me simply because I can’t walk.

For many years after my T12 spinal cord injury in 1973, I would react to anyone expressing sympathy for my paralysis by immediately trying to ward it off. “It’s fine,” I’d say. “I have a very full life. I work, I drive, I travel, I play guitar. I have sex!”

Thanks, but no pity. (This, by the way, is the title of a very important book by Joseph Shapiro that you should read).

Over time, though, I came to understand these apologetic impulses in a new light. We’re wired to sympathize, to care about other’s pain and suffering, to reach out in a way that’s meant to acknowledge and affirm. There’s a part of this that deserves to be noted as a beautiful thing.

But there’s another piece I think is more meaningful—and harmful. They believe that disability is a horrible prospect, the last thing they would want for themselves. They think that true acceptance and adjustment is the exception that only the heroic few can achieve. So the natural response (from not knowing better) is apologetic sympathy.

That translates into a deeply ingrained bias that is preventing society from subscribing to at a radically changed view of disability that is in step with modern reality. Disability is something to which we adapt, rather than something that compromises our life forever. That blind spot translates into a political orientation that fails to invest in independence and possibility for people with disabilities. It denies people their lives.

I have my moment of bemusement at the elevator, and I make my joke at the restaurant, but ultimately I dearly, dearly want people to lose the “I’m sorry” reflex and just smile and say hello as we carry on with our respective daily business. I’ll feel a lot better when we live in a world that accepts disability as a norm and would not be in the least surprised that I have no need for any expression of sympathy for the fact that I wheel rather than walk through my life.

Gary Karp has used a wheelchair since falling out of a tree and injuring his spinal cord at T12 in 1973. He was 18 years old. Learn more at ModernDisability.com.
CLUB 360
ANNUAL GIVING CLUB

Club 360 members are dedicated, long term supporters who believe in the Ability360 mission and pledge to help sustain it.

“When a good friend of mine took me to tour Ability360, I was blown away. I couldn’t believe the caliber of the facility and their extensive programming for people of all ages with disabilities.

I am honored to join Club 360 and support their efforts.”

~ Jerry Colangelo

Join Club360 Today!
For more information go to: Ability360.org/Donate
call (602) 363-5659

ABILITY360
SPORTS & FITNESS CENTER
Ability360’s Home Care Services employs more than 2,300 personal care assistants throughout the state. Despite being Arizona’s largest provider of in-home care, we maintain a “small town” approach while providing you individualized and personal service.

**TRAINING**
Ability360 caregivers undergo 40 hours of training – far beyond CPR and basic first aid; caregivers learn a consumer-centered approach to caregiving that includes meal prep, equipment, transfers and alternatives to make grooming and hygiene safer and easier for consumer and caregiver. We work to pair more than our caregivers’ skills with consumer needs. We look to create long-term matches in personalities and geography.

**DEDICATION**
Ability360 caregivers are chosen for their dedication and then carefully matched with consumers to create the best possible connection. As a result, lives change.

**GILA**
Life was rough for Domingo. Isolated in a skilled nursing facility, he was losing weight and losing interest. Now, he lives independently. With Diana (who he calls “Smiles”) as his caregiver, Domingo is gaining weight thanks to her healthy, delicious cooking. He looks forward to her coming every day.

**PINAL**
Due to end-stage COPD, Jose is in hospice. Maria, his caregiver of more than year, soothes his labored breathing with a gentle touch. She’s become a member of the family. He is calmed knowing Maria’s steady presence will bring comfort to his family in the future.

**PIMA**
Jessyka lost her speech and has quadriplegia due to a TBI. She communicates by iPad. Michel became her caregiver two years ago. Michel using songs and memory games throughout the day to support Jessyka’s therapy. Now, Jessyka can voice her own wishes and she’s gained hand function. Her mom thanks Michel for going above and beyond.

**MARICOPA**
Steve now lives independently following a stroke. With his caregiver Holly, he’s had a complete lifestyle change. He's lost over 100 pounds. He loves showing how Holly has organized his home and made it accessible and improved his quality of life. He considers her his “angel on earth.”

Lorenia travels 72 miles one-way for Judith (Pinal).
Cindy travels 55 miles one-way for David (Pima)
Our caregivers are our most important asset. Ability360 Home Care Services offers benefits like vacation pay, company-wide recognitions and we pay for renewals for TB and CPR and first aid training. If you’re ready to join Ability360 Home Care Services, call Ability360 at (602) 256-2245.
Accessible Travel

Accomable Merges with Airbnb: Improves Global Accessibility

Photo by Loren Worthington

Video Content Online
How often have you booked an accessible hotel room or only to arrive and find out their version of “accessible” isn’t going to cut it?

That “wheelchair accessible” option isn’t much of an option for some – it’s a requirement. Travelers with disabilities have criticized Airbnb because its only search criteria was simple: a wheelchair accessible checkbox that anyone can check. And too often, everybody did.

In the shadows of the wildly popular hospitality company was a UK startup called Accomable. Designed specifically for disabled travelers, it gave them options for all the different accommodations they might need and what every rental offered.

Last fall, Accomable announced on its website its merger with Airbnb. Accomable Founder and CEO, Srin Madipalli, a full-time wheelchair user himself wrote in part:

“As someone who built Accomable to address a need we all share in the Accomable community, I very much empathize with any nervousness you may have. To address this, the Accomable team and I have spent considerable time with Airbnb’s founding and senior management teams. During our time at Airbnb, we were left in no doubt that Airbnb shares our mission and we are convinced that joining Airbnb provides the best opportunity to take our dream and mission to a global level, using the current reach of Airbnb’s community of four million hosts and 100 million guests to work together and make the world more accessible. The details of what we as travelers will experience are yet to be disclosed, but this merger makes it clear that Airbnb recognizes the large disability market and wants to hold on to it.”

Cargo containers have become such a popular building option. They’re a true getaway from traditional home construction. They’re not exactly spacious so when we found an accessible one in Phoenix we knew we had to investigate. We found this listing, “Chic 1BR in Converted Shipping Container (#103)” starting at $81 per night in downtown Phoenix. Find it at Airbnb.com/search.

Arizona has no shortage of homes listed on Airbnb. From the Grand Canyon down to Yuma, you can plan your stay. We at LivAbility are excited to bring you rentals we think sound fun and also have true accessibility. Let us know where you stay by emailing editor@Ability360.org.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph &amp; the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat</td>
<td>1PM &amp; 7PM</td>
<td>Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts</td>
<td>Performances are free, donations greatly appreciated. <a href="http://detourcompanytheatre.org/calendar-1">detourcompanytheatre.org/calendar-1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Annual Mental Health and Faith Conference</td>
<td>5PM &amp; 7PM</td>
<td>Glendale Community Center</td>
<td><a href="http://tinyurl.com/y88rz9o9">info:tinyurl.com/y88rz9o9</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>7th Annual African American Conference on Disabilities</td>
<td>8PM &amp; 5PM</td>
<td>Desert Willow Conference Center, 4340 E Cotton Center Blvd., Phoenix, AZ 85040</td>
<td><a href="mailto:daivdc@ability360.org">info:daivdc@ability360.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellness and MS: Phoenix</td>
<td>8PM - 4PM</td>
<td>A Complementary and Alternative Medicine Conference</td>
<td>The Heard Museum, 2301 N Central Ave, Phoenix</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018 Arizona Adapted Physical Education Conference</td>
<td>8PM &amp; 4PM</td>
<td><a href="http://members.azhpe.org/event-2640205/Registration">info:members.azhpe.org/event-2640205/Registration</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>14th American Indian Disability Summit</td>
<td>8PM &amp; 4PM</td>
<td>Black Canyon Conference Center, 9440 N, 25th Avenue Phoenix, AZ 85021</td>
<td><a href="http://americanindiandisabilitysummit.org">info:americanindiandisabilitysummit.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Push Forward Conference</td>
<td>8PM &amp; 4PM</td>
<td>Desert Willow Conference Center, 4340 E Cotton Center Blvd., Phoenix, AZ 85040</td>
<td><a href="http://azspinal.org">info:azspinal.org</a></td>
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# January

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<tr>
<td>Wheelchair Curling</td>
<td>January 3rd</td>
<td>5PM-7PM</td>
<td>Coyotes Curling Club</td>
<td>Our first ever Wheelchair Curling program. If you are ready for your new adventure on ice, enroll now!!</td>
<td>Info: ability360sports.org <a href="mailto:SaraB@ability360.org">SaraB@ability360.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>360 Invitational Goalball Tournament</td>
<td>January 12th</td>
<td>3PM-8PM</td>
<td>Coyotes Curling Club</td>
<td>*Goalball is a sport for individuals with visual impairments</td>
<td>Registration: ability360sports.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t Be a Victim! Self-Defence Class for Wheelchair Users</td>
<td>January 20th</td>
<td>1PM-3PM</td>
<td>Coyotes Curling Club</td>
<td></td>
<td>Registration: Phoenix.Gov/Defense</td>
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<td>Championship Division wheelchair basketball tournament</td>
<td>January 26th</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coyotes Curling Club</td>
<td>Hosted by the Phoenix Wheelchair Suns</td>
<td>Info: <a href="mailto:NickP@ability360.org">NickP@ability360.org</a></td>
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# February

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<tr>
<td>XII Paralympic Winter Games</td>
<td>March 15th</td>
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<td>To be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea</td>
<td>Info: paralympic.org/pyeongchang-2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>5k for Epilepsy</td>
<td>March 24th</td>
<td>8AM-10AM</td>
<td>Daring Adventures</td>
<td>Cycle with Daring Adventures along the beautiful Phoenix Canals on a 5-10+ mile ride for intermediate or experienced cyclist.</td>
<td>Info: Daring-adventures.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cycling - Long Ride</td>
<td>March 24th</td>
<td>8AM-10AM</td>
<td>Daring Adventures</td>
<td>Cycle with Daring Adventures along the beautiful Phoenix Canals on a 5-10+ mile ride for intermediate or experienced cyclist.</td>
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Swift Charities, the charitable arm of Phoenix-based Swift Transportation, raised $55,000 for Ability360 between its 2017 Rev’d up Poker Run Motorcycle Ride and Fantasy Fun Run 5k.

“To be sustainable in the community as a nonprofit organization is not easy and things fluctuate,” said Gus LaZear, Vice President and General Manager at Ability360. “As an organization, we feel very lucky for the relationships we have in the community and lucky that we’re one of the ones Jim [Stone] called back because we love what we do.”

Jim Stone, executive director of Swift Charities, said the Motorcycle Rally raised $25,000 and the 5k raised $30,000.

“This is the most monetarily that we’ve been involved with Ability360,” Stone said. “This year it was the Motorcycle Rally and the 5k. In years prior it’s just been through our community grants and as lead sponsors for the (Cactus Classic).”
Swift Charities has been the presenting sponsor for the Cactus Classic Stand Up Amputee 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament since the event began, three years ago.

Out of the $55,000 donation, $10,000 goes to the Cactus Classic, with $5,000 for 2017 and $5,000 going to 2018's tournament. The majority of the money, $37,500, is going to the equipment renovation project, which includes purchasing new equipment like cardio equipment, flooring, lighting and technology for the facility. The remaining $7,500 is distributed equally amongst Team360, the Ability360 Heat wheelchair rugby team, power soccer teams, the wheelchair basketball Suns and the wheelchair lacrosse Scorpions.

Stone discovered Ability360 four years ago through Meghan Fable, Ability360's director of development.

"I was unaware of Ability360 until I started getting emails from Meghan just saying how much she would like to get together and take me on a tour of the facility," Stone said. "We finally got together and I was amazed at what I saw. It wasn't just the physical structure that I was very impressed with but it was more the people that I saw there and the organizational structure, the personnel and the staff are just amazing people."

Stone and Jerry Moyes, Swift Transportation founder, worked together to start Swift Charities in 2004.

"The primary way we raise money is not through fundraisers," Stone said. "It's through our employees' payroll deductions. Whatever they contribute, Swift matches. So if you give $100 of your paycheck, (Swift) is going to match $100. It shows the company's support and it shows that we've got almost 40 percent of our 25,000 employees that are contributing at least $1 a week to Swift Charities."
The award was given at the city’s Disability Awareness Recognition Event honoring those with disabilities and employers, educators and others who have shown dedication to addressing the access and functional needs of the disability community. The ceremony also recognizes commitment to improving the quality of life of all residents and visitors of Phoenix.

“I am honored to represent the hard work that everyone at Ability360 has accomplished over the last 30 years. It’s a privilege to receive this recognition,” Pangrazio said. “I am also very thankful for the breadth of accessibility Phoenix has created which allows me and all people with disabilities who live, work and play in Phoenix to fully enjoy our great city.”

City Councilwoman Kate Gallego joined MCDI Vice Chair Dan French to present the awards.

“Phil was the conscience of the T2050 initiative,” Gallego said, noting Pangrazio’s involvement in the Phoenix transportation proposal. “It’s great to recognize him for what he’s done. His efforts will serve generations to come.”

The transportation proposal Gallego mentioned was a citizen-led committee of community advocates and transportation experts that addressed different concerns from Phoenix residents. The initiative is intended to triple the number of light rail miles in Phoenix, add a new light rail station at 50th Street and Washington Street, provide late night bus and Dial-a-Ride service citywide over the next 35 years. It was passed in 2015 and went into effect in January 2016.

Retired Phoenix Police Detective Walter Olsen for whom the Lifetime Achievement award is named said that he finds the recognition event humbling each year as he meets the honorees.

“This mission benefits the entire community and these individuals make life better—easier for all of us,” Olsen said.

“No one does this for the recognition but we all benefit from their efforts,” Gallego said. “I’m honored to be here to recognize these individuals and organizations on behalf of our city.”

Business awardee HBI International was recognized for innovative hiring practices that have led to 25 percent of their workforce identifying as people with disabilities.

“We just look for the best employees, HBI International founder Josh Kesselman said. “We don’t put limits or expectations on who they should be.”
Congratulations to Larry Wanger, the Executive Director of the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council. Wanger, a former Ability360 staffer, has accepted the position as Executive Director at Resources for Independence of the Central Valley in Fresno, California. You’ll be missed, Larry. Melissa Santora will serve as the interim Executive Director of the AZ SILC. Best of luck to you both.

AzSILC Changes

Congratulations to the first class of Community Leadership Academy graduates! We look forward to reporting on your success in the future.

Jantell Cansler
Jay Dashefsky
Markus Davis
Katie Griffith
Kennedy Kadosh

Kara Kahnke
Angelina Montgomery
Gregory Ohannessian
Eric Reister
Sheryl Susunkewa

Honorees:

Architectural: First Place Phoenix
Business Excellence Non Profit:
Sun Sounds of Arizona
Business Excellence For Profit: HBI International
Community Service: Gloria Chavez
Outstanding Educator: Luz Rodriguez
Detective Walter Olsen Lifetime Achievement: Phil Pangrazio

Attendees also enjoyed a performance by Voces Unidas, a Latino choral group of individuals living with Parkinson’s. Brooke Brown, author of The Little Butterfly Girl offered a keynote address on inclusion. Nohelani Graf, Emmy Award-winning journalist from ABC15 emceed the event.

Ability360 Home Care Services relocated their east valley office from Mesa to Gilbert and opened on Oct. 1. You’ll find the same great staff offering the same great services at our new address:

1580 N Fiesta Blvd., #101
Gilbert, AZ 85233
Breaking Barriers is a unique program designed to introduce children of all abilities to outdoor sports and recreation. Families are invited to participate in indoor/outdoor rock climbing, kayak & paddle boarding, and competitive swimming. The program would not be possible without the continued financial support from Thunderbird Charities.

For more information go to: Ability360sports.org