LivAbility
Edition 12 | Spring 2018

Service Dogs
The Pups that Become Partners

Summer Camps
Accessible Options

Vet Tix
Free Tix for Veterans

tinder
Deaf & Dating

Out of Africa
A Walk on the Wild Side

Check out the oh so fun Terrain Hopper
How Are We Doing?
I Want to Hear From You!

In each edition of LivAbility Magazine we ask, “How are we doing?” I’d like to take that a step further. I’d like to ask, “How is Ability360 doing?” Yes, I’d like to know what you think of LivAbility, but I’d also like to know what you think of Ability360 overall. What are we doing right? What would you like to see us do more of? How can we improve what we are currently doing? What program(s) have you or a loved one used and what did you think? How did it help you or them? We are interested in anything you’d like to share with us...just don’t be hateful or crude! We’ll take good, bad, great or ugly! We can take it, so don’t hold back. In fact, I promise we’ll use the feedback to get better and do even more in the future if at all possible!

So if you’re using our programs, tell us what you think. We have really tried to evolve with the times and fulfill the needs of our disability community. Our venture into adaptive sports, fitness and recreation is one example of that, but certainly there are others such as the opening of Café Cultivate. Our Living Well with a Disability program and, more recently, our Community Leadership Academy are two other examples. Our Home Modification and Socialization Through Recreation programs have been going strong for more than 20 years. What do you think of them? We’ve been providing in-home personal assistance services since the late 1980’s. If you’ve benefited from them, we’d love to hear about your experience. Have you received social security benefits consulting from us? Did we help you find employment? Did we help you move out of a nursing home? Did we help you find community resources or housing? If we helped you with any of these, we want to hear from you!

So that brings me to LivAbility Magazine. As I said earlier, we’d love to hear your opinions of it too. What do you think of the publication? Is it accessible? Is it easy to read? Do you like our photography? Do you prefer the print or online version? Do you like our use of social media? Want more advertising? What kind of stories do you enjoy? What subjects are we not covering? What stories should we do more of? What stories should we do less of? Want more local news? Want more national news? Want more advocacy and legislative information? Want more product and assistive technology information? Want more personal stories, dating and sex appeal? Should we cover more disabilities? Which ones? Hidden disabilities, mental health or sensory disabilities? Do you have recommendations of who we should talk to and feature in a story? If so, we want to hear from you!

Ok, I think you get my point! We want your thoughts, comments, gripes, concerns, suggestions and ideas for the future of Ability360, our media publications, and our programs. So send us an email at editor@abilty360.org and we will do our best to use this information to keep improving Ability360 and everything we do!
Creative Interning

Twice a year Jennifer and Loren return to the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the downtown ASU campus. Their mission is to recruit future journalists to do a one-semester internship with the marketing department. These interns dive in and get their hands dirty. They help write press releases, design and execute marketing campaigns, shoot and edit video and contribute to LivAbility. About the only thing our interns don’t do is take our coffee order.

Some candidates are ill-prepared but obviously talented. Others have a short resume but spent considerable time learning what Ability360 is. The rarest of them all are the candidates that easily converse about disability related issues without stumbling over a word, sentence or description that doesn’t in some way mischaracterize disability or use a description no longer part of today’s (albeit somewhat sensitive) lexicon.

The good news is that within maybe a month, most of our interns get it. They not only pickup on the proper language that is acceptable to the disabled community, they come to understand why certain depictions are offensive and which angle is the proper frame for a story.

Some of them stay on as contributors and valuable members of the team after their internship ends. In this edition, we have former intern Keerthi Vedantam’s profile of one of our very first interns, Aitana Yvette Mallari. Yvette has contributed to every edition since her own internship. You’ve enjoyed her photos, videos and print stories. Prediction: Yvette is gonna go far someday soon.

Let’s just say that we rarely need to read more than a few paragraphs of any story reporting ‘about us’ to find the telltale signs of pity, inspiration porn, “Tiny Tim-esque” caricatures, wildly inaccurate information about the nature of our capabilities. We see seasoned journalists make these mistakes, and that’s why we train our interns to think critically about media characterization and be better. Soon we’ll be able to help you too.

We are really excited that hope is in sight. Together with National Center for Disability Journalism and the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, we will be getting some smarts in them writers. We are delighted to be conducting a series of workshops that will explore the representation of people with disability in the media.

The workshops are being designed to not only point what not to do, but more importantly provide positive and accurate examples of how to report on PWD with sensitivity, nuance and authenticity. Our goal is to give every reporter the understanding of disability culture and language that our interns gain over the course of their months with us, but in a one-day workshop.

So for our readers, know that each semester two or three new journalists survive their internship and go forth “woke” with the skills necessary to not only not offend us as PWD but to tell a story that speaks to people who are just being people – and happen to have a disability.

So, a big shout to all of our interns – past, present and future. We love you – especially when you get it write!
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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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Lara Cronkite is a journalist and content creator who has covered sports, news, and culture in Arizona for 10 years. She is a veteran of the Phoenix-based newsroom and a proud Hoosier where she grew up and graduated from Indiana University. She has called Phoenix home for more than 20 years.

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James Fawbush is a 3rd generation Arizona native. He is a retired from the Army after 20 years of service after in Iraq, Afghanistan, Cuba and Hurricane Katrina. James is married with seven children, two dogs and is active in the veteran community.

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Summer Sorg is a student at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication specializing in photography and digital journalism. Her heart lies in storytelling, nature and exploring. Summer plans to use her talents to highlight important issues and inspire people to care.

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Sean Storrs lives and works in Tempe, Arizona. He has traveled solo to Italy, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom and is looking forward to his next adventure.

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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.

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The sun felt like it was nearly touching the rocky soil—an unmistakable characteristic of the sub-Saharan desert this time of year—while the unfailing spring breeze reminded us of home: Arizona.

Nestled between Prescott and Flagstaff is Out of Africa, a wildlife park that has called Camp Verde home for the last 11 years. On any given day, it’s visited by families, couples and classes on field trips. I visited the park with Carolyn Curcuru and her daughter, Olivia.

The 12-year-old girl transferred out of the car and into her sturdy black wheelchair with thick tires to conquer the stubborn road ahead. Her long brown hair wrestled with the wind as she adjusted herself. Hanging off the back was a multi-colored JanSport backpack.

Olivia didn’t attend the field trip her 6th grade class took to Out of Africa this past year.

“I always call in advance to see if the field trip will be accessible,” Carolyn said. The 90-mile drive through Arizona hills didn’t seem worth it; in past field trips Olivia often felt left out, even with the promise of accessible spaces.

On one such trip to an airplane museum, students wandered through vintage planes while Olivia sat outside as her mom went in to take a video for her to see. On another, after lunch, students scrambled onto a jungle gym sitting on a bed of soft wood chips as Olivia sat a few feet away on the sturdy ground, chewing her food considerably slower.

“When my friends get to go off to a place that I can’t go on, it bugs me,” Olivia said, shrugging nonchalantly. “It doesn’t feel as fun.”

Our goal today was to make sure Olivia didn’t feel left out as we explored Out of Africa.

**THE FEEDING TOUR**

If you ever have the opportunity to have a giraffe’s tongue *this close* to your face, you take it.

It’s one of the most popular activities at Out of Africa and a great way to observe the animals in their natural habitats. Because the park is large and unpaved to allow animals to roam freely, the feeding tour took place on a bus. There was an even-footed slope toward the accessible entrance to the bus with a sturdy ramp and just enough space for Olivia to shift herself out of her wheelchair and onto a seat.
There was only one space where she could realistically transfer out of her wheelchair and not fall from her seat during the bumpy ride since the bus lacked seatbelts.

"Which side are the animals going to be on?" Carolyn asked a tour bus operator. Because the animals were free-roaming and aren’t forced to interact, the operator said, there would be no way to predict if Olivia—or anyone—could feed them.

During the tour, Olivia watched as others fed giraffes on the other side of the bus, too far away for her to reach.

"I don’t mind," she cheerfully told me as the entire bus began to reek of giraffe saliva, “Honestly, you guys smell.”

For the rest of the ride, she marveled at the other animals, including an ostrich who thought her egg-shaped toy was actually an egg.

**THE TRAM**

An excited Olivia didn’t want to wait for the tram to see the reptiles that were farther up the hill.

"We can just go ourselves," she told her mother.

"But if you get tired then I have to push you," Carolyn responded.

Olivia thought about it for a minute. Then she smiled sweetly: “You can get your steps in!”

The tram ended up being the crucial part of the trip as we trekked through the rocky hills to visit the lions and tigers and potentially human-eating snakes (oh my!).
THE CATCH?

"If the bus lurches forward I usually have to 'mom-seatbelt' her," Carolyn said. Throughout the entire ride, if we rolled over a particularly large bump, Carolyn protectively laid her arm across her daughter so she wouldn’t lurch forward.

It’s clear Carolyn and Olivia have done this before. They casually talked strategy before transferring from a seat to Olivia’s chair, and the transfer itself was a dance of sorts—Olivia and her mother knew how to move together in the easiest way to transfer Olivia.

“It wasn’t too bad,” Olivia said, “But it would have been nice if there were seatbelts, maybe.”

Considering the hilly, unpaved location of Out of Africa, we relied on the trams to move around the different locations of the park. They were mostly on-time and the drivers made good conversation as we all talked our favorite movies.

THE TIGER SPLASH

Featured on the Today Show, Animal Planet and Good Morning America, it’s never the same show twice. The Tiger Splash features some of Out of Africa’s tigers as they leap into water and catch balloons midair.

The animals aren’t trained; the keepers play with them using pool toys, balloons and water. Watching a tiger do what it naturally does is always beautiful, but it came second to the animal trainers who were equally as entertaining.

Olivia slowly pushed herself down the steep, rocky path to a front-row seat close to the action, where we watched the trainers play with a beautiful Bengal tiger.

The way up was a different story.

“Do you need help?” Carolyn asked her daughter, sensing her struggle.

“No,” Olivia panted. After bumping into a particularly large rock: “Okay, yes.”

THE FUTURE

“Outside of paving [the walkways], there’s still more expansion going on,” said Ashton Powell, an Out of Africa representative. “We’re in the process of doing some modifications right now.”

Out of Africa is growing slowly, partly because it is not publicly-funded and uses money made from ticket sales. Though the wildlife park requires large, unpaved areas for animals to roam freely, they are working towards a walkable park area that is tram-accessible.

“At the end of the day, we want to educate people about the animals,” Powell said. “The animals here are the ambassadors for those in the wild. They’re here to teach us about their cousins so we don’t go out there and dominate and kill them.”

For Olivia, the park did just that.

“It was cool to see the animals in their natural positions and act how they normally do,” she said. “And I learned a lot today about preservation.”

She wants places to be more considerate of people with disabilities so they may access all the sights and wonders of their trips.

“Go with the mindset of, ‘Well if I was in a wheelchair can I do this and can I do that?’ and take that perspective and plan everything based on it.”

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Hidden on an easy-to-miss private street in Phoenix's Loma Linda neighborhood near Sky Harbor International Airport are two side-by-side units conveniently close to the bus lines at 24th St. and Thomas.

The tranquil quietness of the neighborhood is striking, even more so inside these spacious units thanks to thoughtful, energy efficient construction. They feature concrete floors, well-decorated open layouts, multiple bedrooms, luxurious Tuft & Needle mattresses, two baths and a screened courtyard. In keeping with LivAbility's "know before you go" philosophy, these units are doable by wheelchair users with some forethought.

These units are stylish and "accessible-ish." If my AC went out in July, I would consider them as options. There are some access challenges—all negotiable if you know what to expect. I've faced more barriers in "ADA certified" hotel rooms.

 Built for environmental efficiency with air and water filtration systems, they're friendly options for people with allergies. Both units have a short four-to-six-inch step inside. If I were traveling alone, this would be a deal breaker but doable as a companion-assisted wheelie or with a small suitcase ramp. None of the bathrooms have a built-in shower bench; you'll need to bring your own. There are no grab bars near the toilets and no shower wands in any of the bathrooms but there is plenty of room for a shower chair to roll over each toilet. Each closet had storage options at wheelchair height. While all the environmental controls are reachable and the doorways wide enough for my wheelchair to pass, many of the cabinets were out of reach. The sinks and appliances are standard; wheelers will need to approach them from the side.

Each has differing accessible pluses and minuses. I could see myself enjoying both units with a trusted companion, but maybe not on our first overnight trip.
The L-shaped kitchen layout is roomy with lots of storage.

The bathroom is large and open enough to host a small private reception and includes a roomy laundry/storage area and full-size stackable washer and dryer. The shower is generous enough for a shower chair and couple of friends.

No grab bars in the bathroom and no shower wand. There is also a slight lip down into the shower. I could negotiate getting in alone in a shower chair but I don’t know that I could get back out alone.

The bed surface is high and hit at about my armrest — at approximately 28”.

Deep gravel outdoors makes it difficult to navigate on wheels or high heels.

Bed heights are close to an even transfer for most wheelchair users but slightly low - approximately 20”.

Outside areas paved with easy to negotiate, hard-packed 1/4 minus granite.

Kitchen island make access tricky on one side of the kitchen.

No grab bars in the bathroom and no shower wand. Glass shower enclosure was narrow and the opening very tight. A shower chair will not fit.

Do you have a favorite accessible property in Arizona? Let us know. It could be our next profile.

Editor@ability360.org
Meet Arizona’s Paralympic Hopefuls

At 14, Lera Doederlein is the youngest member of the Phoenix Coyotes sled hockey team. Will her teamwork take her to Beijing in 2022?

Lera Doederlein
(Phoenix, AZ)

Sled Hockey

Photo by Karla A Worthington
Sled hockey—it’s a sport characterized by sharp turns on the ice, slamming into the boards, and the occasional bodycheck that can spin a player out of control...before they find their center and get back in the play.

This doesn’t phase Lera Doederlein. She’s one of the smallest players and by far the youngest—14 years old. Some of the athletes she’s up against have been playing longer than she’s been alive.

“Even after just a few months of playing this sport, I’m in love with it,” Doederlein said.

She was born with arthrogryposis, a condition that affects roughly one in 3,000 babies. It weakened Doederlein’s hip and leg joints and rendered her unable to walk, but, according to her father, she never stopped moving.

“We couldn’t take our eyes off her,” Dave Doederlein said.

Doederlein grew up wearing heavy braces to stabilize her legs and used crutches to support herself. She loved watching sports and played the few that required only upper-body strength, like swimming. She was active on her feet, and crutches and braces would break often. Then, the inevitable future:

“You know Lera, if you keep going like this eventually you’ll end up in a wheelchair,” her doctor said. Doederlein was growing, and her body was becoming too heavy for her legs to support. The doctor brought up a word that would change the course of Doederlein’s life for the next two years: Amputation.

“I was like, ‘Hey, this might not be that bad of an idea,” Doederlein said.

Her family was worried, but Doederlein decided to take the plunge and undergo a double amputation.

The next two years were a whirlwind; After several physical therapy appointments, consultations and consoling worried parents (“Lera’s a risk-taker and I’m not,” Dave Doederlein said), Doederlein had a double amputation in July 2017. That same month, her prosthetics were fitted.

“I’m glad they trusted me,” Doederlein said about her family. “It opened up a lot more opportunities for me like sports.”

Throughout the physical therapy process, Doederlein’s prosthetist convinced her to join the Arizona Coyotes post-surgery. She did just that in October.

“I never even saw myself doing hockey until I got into it,” Doederlein said. “I loved it as soon as I got on the ice.”

As the youngest person on the team, Doederlein had an advantage: Using crutches all those years to keep herself up, her upper body strength was good enough to propel her quickly on the ice. As for keeping her body balanced on the blade under her seat, Doederlein’s teammates are helping her find tricks and techniques that work for her.

“It’s all about teamwork,” Doederlein said. “Like if one person gets backed up the other steps in and takes care of the job for you.”

And now, her eyes are on a bigger prize: the Paralympics. She wants to be one of the rare Arizona natives to compete in the winter games.

“Sled hockey really shows you what teamwork is. And it’s really nice to know that you can do this sport when you’re different.”

For Doederlein, the Paralympics isn’t about the glory of the gold medal. It’s about pushing herself.

“It’s about knowing that I didn’t give up in the process,” Doederlein said. “Just like in a math test, or school or anything in life, it’s good to know that you did this on your own.”

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.
We All Have an Advocacy Journey

As I have stepped into my new role as the Vice President of Advocacy, many people ask me, “What led you to this work?” and “How did you end up in Advocacy?” Thus, I have reflected on my own journey as an advocate.

One of my first advocacy lessons came from my dad. As a child, I remember being in my kindergarten class when another student asked him what was in his ears. I watched my dad kneel down to the floor, take off his hearing aids and patiently explain to the kids why he wore them.

Over the course of my life I would have to educate, share and advocate for myself with physical disability. I have always remembered my dad’s patient example.

I became a social worker because I found the philosophy of self-determination, social justice and inclusion were in alignment with the core values that, as a person with a disability, I had come to hold sacred. Discovering centers for independent living such as Ability360, with the mission of “Advocacy. Independence. Equality.” fit too.

On my first day at Ability360, I attended a meeting with about 100 advocates who were planning efforts to support the passage of Proposition 400, a half-cent sales tax to fund transportation improvements. Community education was an important piece and I along with many others went out to senior centers, nursing homes and community forums to educate voters. When I see the light rail go by our offices today, I sometimes think of those advocates and the countless hours they worked to see that dream fulfilled.

I have had the privilege of hearing many people share their own advocacy journeys. I’ve learned that sometimes advocacy is gentle and soft, like my dad kneeling down at my school. Other times advocacy is loud and emotional, like advocates being carried from our nation’s capital last summer in protest of the proposed cuts to Medicaid.

Most importantly, I have learned that we all must have our own advocacy voices. In order to thrive, and not just survive with our disabilities, we must become teachers and advocates. We must learn to speak up and say what we need and why we need it. We must be willing to fight for our community when legislation or budget cuts threaten our ability to live well with our disabilities.

Not sure you have an advocacy story yet? We have staff and programs at Ability360 to help you develop your advocacy skills. You can sign up on our website ability360.org for the Empower ListServ which will keep you apprised of national and state legislation that could impact our community. We’ll give you the tools to email, call or tweet our federal and state representatives on issues you care about. Get involved and start your own advocacy journey today!

April Reed
Vice President of Advocacy
Ability360
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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...

As Americans watched the 2018 Winter Olympics, it was hard not to get excited over the women’s ice hockey win over Canada in a shootout, or the curlers who dominated a sport unfamiliar to most.

It’s easy to cheer when your team wins on the highest stage in the world. It’s tougher when you’re the one trying to reach it.

Ernie Chun, 36, and Joe Jackson, 28, know how hard it is to reach that stage. The pair of 360Heat wheelchair rugby players are on a mission to make Team USA for the 2020 Paralympic Summer Games in Tokyo. Both made the 2018 USA Training squad, allowing them to train and compete with Team USA throughout the year.

Chun, a Hawaii native, was paralyzed in a surfing accident at age 14. He bounced around from marathon racing to tennis before finding his true sports passion nearly 10 years later.

“When I was in college, I actually saw a trailer for Murderball,” he said. “After the movie, I said, ‘I have to try that sport.’”

During a tennis tournament, fellow players convinced him to give wheelchair rugby a try. After a month more of tennis competition, Chun returned home, packed his bags and moved to Tennessee to play for a Division 2 wheelchair rugby team. A cross-country move he feared to tell his mom about.

“I told my mom through an email because I was afraid to call her at a tournament,” he said.

Joe Jackson broke his C-6 vertebrae on a botched tackle during a scrimmage at Hamilton High School. He came to Ability360 to rebuild himself.

He gained a peer mentor in Scott Hogsett, the coach of the 360Heat and star of the documentary Murderball. Hogsett showed him the movie during a mentoring session and Jackson was hooked.

“I thought, ‘I gotta do this,’” Jackson said. “This is fast, this is contact. It’s pretty similar to football, I still get to hit.”

Jackson joined the 360Heat and continued to improve over the next eight years. He tried out for Team USA 2016, but hurt his shoulder on the second day of tryouts, ending his chances.

“When I didn’t get the spot, I was like ‘oh well,’” he said. “Next year,” and next year, I made it.”

Chun trained for the 2016 USA team, but was ultimately cut. After the rejection, he said something clicked; it made him stronger and allowed him to develop his own style for the game.

“It was tough. That whole summer I did not get in my rugby chair, I was a little down,” Chun said after learning he missed the team. “Like anyone trying to go for an Olympic sport or a Paralympic sport, it’s four years of your life dedicated, and then not making it is pretty tough.”

The two have a close bond. Off the court, they battle in video games; Jackson usually wins. On the court, the two are synced together on a conquest for Japan.

They have a shared goal and a shared dream: Win gold on the highest stage in the world.
Employee Spotlight

Carolyn Drake
Yoga Instructor & Cranial Sacral Coach

When it comes to teaching classes at the Sports & Fitness Center, Carolyn is our “go to” yoga instructor. She knows every member that takes her classes. Her class has grown since first opening and now appears on our schedules twice a week. Members enjoy Carolyn’s kind soul and love for life. Anyone that takes her classes or has a one-on-one cranial sacral coaching session with her won’t be disappointed. We are grateful for the services Carolyn provides to our members. ~Brielle Carter

How long have you been with Ability360? Since we first opened as the Virginia G. Piper Sports & Fitness Center in 2011.

What’s your current job title? Yoga Instructor & Cranial Sacral Coach

For people outside of the organization, what do you do? I use yoga postures to teach students how to find a centered balance between effort and ease. Within that they find a place of peace.

Is there a work achievement you’re especially proud of? I am privileged to help people find peace within their turmoil by helping them explore the pain and vulnerability within themselves and come to resolution.

What brought you here? Ability360’s Employment Network. Because of that, I was contacted with the opportunity to teach yoga to people with disabilities. I leaped at the opportunity to work with the amazing people at the Sports & Fitness Center.

What do you like most about your work? I love the people I get to work with. I enjoy the opportunity to fellowship with them and watch them grow in spirit and wellness.

Will you tell us about your best day ever? Wow! That’s a tough one to choose because every day of my life just gets better than the last. However, if I had to pick the happiest day of my life, it would be the day that I gave birth to my daughter, Melissa and saw her big beautifully alert eyes looking back at me.

What are people most surprised to know about you? My age...I’m 51.

Is there a movie or TV show you drop everything to watch? I rarely watch regular TV, but I do love watching a movie with a good storyline.

If a mega-fortune fell into your lap, what would you do? I would pay off both my mom’s house & our house, and pray about how to invest into the growth & development of our ministry.
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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ABILITY360
Callahan and Me

In 1999 I met John Callahan, the brilliant, wonderfully sick-minded cartoonist who also happened to be quadriplegic. He liked to tell people he had been bitten in the neck by a shark (or some other such outrageous invention), rather than the true story of the drunk driving accident which put him head first through a windshield in July of 1972—just short of a year before I broke my back when I fell out of a tree.

I was asked to profile him for New Mobility Magazine and went to his house in Portland, Oregon, where we circled around each other in our wheelchairs in his living room as my mini-cassette recorder took it all in. He was plainly outspoken and I enjoyed and admired the clarity and originality of his world view, despite the occasional misogyny and rightist comments. I was there as a journalist, not to debate him. I saw him as an artist who could only do what he did by being on the edge. And I liked him.

Contrary to my normal practice, I agreed to let him read the draft, for which I had removed a considerable number of f-words from the transcript. When he called to tell me he liked the piece, he asked, "...but can you take out some of the ‘f**ks’?" I took some delight in telling him that I already had (but, yes, I took out some more).

I’ll leave it to you to explore the truly perverted stuff he drew (he demonstrated his two-fisted style of holding a pencil for me, the source of his shaky-lined drawing style), but I believe that his disability-themed cartoons hit the mark better than anyone ever had or will. Two detached heads on blocks of wood with casters, begging on a city street, one of them wearing an eye patch. The other says to him, "People like you are an inspiration to me!" Bam!

John was very proud that his autobiography, "Don’t Worry, He Won’t Get Far on Foot" had been optioned by and was to star Robin Williams. Sadly, he never got to see that happen. Williams never got it done, and John died in 2010. Now, the just-released biopic starring Joaquin Phoenix has stirred up a lot of angry voices in the disability community because an actual actor with quadriplegia doesn’t play the lead role. Here’s my take:

I very much share the disappointment that more actors with disabilities are not working, and that more characters with disabilities are not written for film, television and theater. I share the disappointment that the ones we do see are in the likes of the truly horrible "Me Before You." Talented folks with disabilities can’t possibly evolve in their craft—much less get recognized as stars—if they don’t get to work with the best directors, casts, and production crews. At least we have Peter Dinklage as a case in point. It’s a start.

On the other hand, most film producers feel safer investing in films with a star that will draw a paying audience. So, we have the Catch-22 that they need actors with fans, but we’ll never have bankable stars with disabilities if they won’t cast them. But I’m happy to see that John’s movie has been made. He was thrilled by the prospect of being played by Robin Williams, an actor with quadriplegia who was apparently not what mattered to him.

For my book, “From There To Here: Stories of Adjustment to Spinal Cord Injury,” John did me the honor of writing this cover testimonial: “I emerged grateful for the bone crushing honesty of these stories. A far cry from Hollywood’s disability-of-the-week victim movies!”

He clearly cared about disability stories being told properly. Not having seen the movie yet as of this writing, I’m hoping it did a good job meeting his standard of honesty and that the Callahan I knew will be made reasonably visible to the world. For starters, they better have him using the f-word in proper proportion to reality.

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.
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In a grainy 2005 home video, a seven-year-old girl’s face peeks out from a loud orange life vest as she wobbles back and forth on a boat, staring quietly at the sea. Her lips barely move as the lofty trees and the tumultuous waters are woven into the story she writes in her mind. She ignores the commotion going on around her.

Then she snaps to the camera, her face lights up, and begins to narrate in English.

“Well--one--later that...earlier...” she stutters, smiling, “We...we knew--that the water was still. And now, it’s wavy!”

She continues pointing things out to the camera, teetering in and out of the frame and brushing rogue strands of her jet-black hair away from her face as the wind blows. Those close to her know she’s translating the story in her head from Arabic to English.

Yvette Mallari was born a storyteller. Born in the United Arab Emirates to Filipino immigrants, Mallari’s family then moved to New Hampshire when she was four years old. Her life in the classroom was a striking contrast to home life; At school, she would trip over her English trying to form a sentence. At home, she freely bounced between Tagalog and Arabic. After 9/11, her parents and teachers discouraged her from speaking anything but English.

“It was survival mode for my parents,” Mallari said. Both her mother and father grew up during the Moro Conflict, an insurgency in Mindanao, Philippines, which resulted in roughly six thousand deaths.

“Survival mode” meant assimilation and sacrificing two languages to master another. The adjustment didn’t stop her storytelling abilities; 13 diaries record Mallari’s life as she dramatically pines after boys and turned everyday occurrences into stories.

“Survival mode” would continue to influence her upbringing until the age of 18, when she decided to major in journalism despite her parents’ worry she wouldn’t have a stable income.

Her first internship at Ability360’s magazine, LivAbility, launched her into other writing opportunities. Three years later, she would develop a sizeable
writing portfolio writing for Modern Luxury Scottsdale, The Arizona Republic and Echo.

Though her byline has appeared in nearly every edition of LivAbility since her internship, the first introduction was rough.

How was your internship interview with Ability360? I ask.

Mallari dips her head back and chugs her coffee before slamming down the plastic cup: “Terrible.”

Mallari was the last of eight interviews the LivAbility team saw that day. She arrived late with a tender burn on her neck (hair-curling hazard) and clutching a small binder of articles she wrote. She sat down in front of Jennifer Longdon and Loren Worthington, who were managing the newly-formed marketing department at the time.

“I got their names wrong,” she admitted. “At one point I thought, ‘Maybe if I don’t talk, I’ll mess up less.’”

“She was a bit flustered, but I could see there was so much going on inside of her,” Longdon said. “There was a depth and a perceptiveness and an intellectual curiosity that I found intriguing.”

Her first article was about chemical sensitivity, a complicated subject with many skeptics. Her story read more like a clinical essay.

“I didn’t know how to write about disability,” said Mallari. Disability in conversation is a whisper, not a shout, because it’s considered a taboo. “I had to ask a lot of questions I was not comfortable asking.”

Wrestling with her own comfort helped Mallari grow as a writer. Slowly, her profiles painted more and more intimate and nuanced details of disability through her words.

“I think what makes her a good storyteller is that she has this ability to pull a story out of somebody,” Worthington said. “She has a genuine curiosity to explain why a person is who they are.”

Her coverage, from art therapy to refugee conflicts, appeared on the pages of several LivAbility editions.

“To be a good storyteller requires some vulnerability on your part,” Longdon said. “Yvette has that vulnerability, that willingness to say, ‘I don’t know’ and to sit back and learn.”

It was a skill Mallari developed as a young child, from when she was seven years old on a boat and exploring her surroundings before telling her story to observing her classmates quietly (“I was an outsider,” she admitted) before engaging with them.

“I never liked how the media portrayed the Philippines, and that kind of transferred to how I worked here,” Mallari said. “This person is offering you a very personal glimpse into their reality. How do you showcase it in a way they deserve?”

Long after her internship ended, she continues to write for LivAbility Magazine while she works for Modern Luxury Scottsdale. Her photo, a young woman with striking hair and a steady gaze, is printed in every issue of LivAbility along with her byline. She has told the stories of others, but had never let someone write hers.

“I want us to write this story because I feel like in ten years from now, other people will recognize her unique skills,” Worthington said, grinning. “And I’ll be glad we did it first.” 😊
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~ Kasey
Terrain
The Terrain Hopper was invented in the U.K. in 2010. The first US-built models will hit the trails this summer when production begins in Tempe, Arizona.

The terrain hopper is more like an off-road vehicle than a wheelchair. Designed for a wheelchair user, its tires, suspension, seating and steering are more akin to an off-road utility vehicle. When it comes to having fun, that’s a very good thing.

Dig a little deeper and you’ll find the design has many features that allow people with many types of disabilities to get out and enjoy nature.

Let’s get this out right now; it’s not cheap, not even close. Base price starts around $17,000. Moving on…

The Hopper is four-wheel drive. Each tire has its own electric motor and combined with the independent suspension you can really get out beyond just a gravel trail. It’s built for dirt, snow and sand and can crawl up some steep inclines with confidence. It feels solid when cornering and does a good job of not chewing up trails and land. That’s important when venturing into our natural parks. The ADA states that a motorized vehicles (battery-powered) can be used by PwDs in areas not ordinarily allowed if the individual is using it due to a disability. That doesn’t give a rider carte blanche to go hog wild. Land managers and park operators can take action if and when the usage is deemed unsafe for anyone at the park.
Steering is accomplished either with tradition handlebars or an optional joystick controller. Braking happens just like a power wheelchair; let go of the throttle and you slow to a stop.

If there is anything in the Terrain Hopper’s design that limits who can use it, it is the 30-inch seat height and wide body that makes for a fairly difficult transfer. Not all wheelchairs will be able to get near the seat for a simple jump or slide across to the seat. Once in, the ‘cockpit’ is really comfortable. The frame wraps around you to improve stability. The seat and controls are adjustable for individual fit.

Terrain Hopper will cruise at 6-12 mph. Depending on batteries and terrain she’ll cruise 15-30+ miles on a charge.

The Terrain Hopper is by no means an everyday chair. Nor is it compact enough to stow in a car. In most cases it will need to be hauled by trailer to your destination.

It’s a great platform for nature photographers, anglers, beach combers or those who just need some dirt road therapy and offers the opportunity to return to nature with friends and family.
Todd Lemay: Entrepreneur
by Loren Worthington

Would you believe the Terrain Hopper making its way to the U.S. all started as a love story?

Not too long after graduating from Arizona State University, Todd Lemay, who gets around in a scooter-type wheelchair due to osteogenesis imperfecta (“brittle bone syndrome”) began dating a woman who worked with him at the international accounting firm, Arthur Andersen. He learned she’d never seen the beach. Being the ever-suave Sun Devil, he took her to San Diego.

It was a great idea right up until she asked if they could stroll the beach.

“I remember going from feeling great to falling right back to the earth because my wheelchair couldn’t make it.”

She went alone.

He never forgot that day and some twenty years later when he came across a web page describing the Terrain Hopper, an off-road wheelchair device, he set his sights on owning one. The beach was calling.

Here’s the love story that is sure to make readers of both genders giddy; he married Letitia, his former co-worker, and also imported the first Terrain Hopper to the U.S.

Along the way Lemay built a pair of successful businesses that provided communication services. He merged them, sold them and set his sights on spending more time with Letitia and exploring America with his Terrain Hopper.

“I just kept going places and hearing people admire my Terrain Hopper and ask if they could take a picture of the two of us together.”

Lemay started thinking more people in the U.S. would enjoy the Terrain Hopper. He contacted the British-based company about the future of the business in the States. It took more than a year to negotiate which finally closed in 2017.

Lemay joked, “I threatened them that I’d get on a plane if we didn’t get the deal closed.”

The Brits were sold on Lemay’s grit and ability to raise the capital needed for a U.S. manufacturing operation.

Thanks to his investors, Lemay is now tooling up for manufacturing and taking deposits with plans to deliver first U.S. built versions by summer.
My former college roommate, Jordan, 22, is one of the most fascinating people I’ve ever met. With thick curly brown hair, short little legs and brown, intense eyes that could cut through glass, Jewish and Deaf, Jordan is unwaveringly confident, logical to a fault, low maintenance and impressively ambitious. As roommates and good friends, we share a love for debate, politics and travel. Oftentimes, as I’d get settled in for the day, she would storm in. “Did you see the news today?”

While our friends and I scrambled to find our purpose in life, Jordan aced all her courses, held leadership positions in school clubs, worked multiple jobs and started a couple small businesses. She’s now an overscheduled graduate student, who still loves to go out and date. Her favorite social media platform is Tinder.

Jordan is straightforward and doesn’t hide or apologize for being Deaf. Her profile puts it right your face: “Swipe left if you’re not willing to learn ASL” (American Sign Language). Based on her stories and my observations from afar, here are some of the archetypes she’s met on Tinder:

**The Near Miss**

Jordan usually only meets with her matches a few times, but she dated Jesse for about two months. Jordan really liked Jesse. He was willing to learn ASL, kind-hearted, good looking and smart. She was so close to making him her official boyfriend; however, every time there was a silent or awkward pause, he tried to fill it by kissing her. Unfortunately, Jordan quickly found this a not-so-cute habit that only made things even more awkward.

**The Shoulda Worked Out**

Before her four-month solo trip to Australia, Jordan friended several Deaf Australians on Facebook. The Deaf world is small, if we see a Deaf person on social media we are more likely to “friend” or “follow” them. Two months into her trip, she matched with a Deaf Australian guy. He messaged her, joking that this was their second time meeting on social media – they were already friends on Facebook! Soon after matching, they met up and, even though it was easier for them to communicate together and seemed like a natural fit, she found him slimy. After 20 minutes together, she announced, “Uhm, I’m leaving, bye,” and unmatched him.
Watching Jordan’s journey has been a pleasure. Brave and bold, she has taken advantage of the endless opportunities available on social media. They may not have all been wonderful experiences, but she has definitely learned from them and entertains us with her best online dating stories.

Living vicariously through her adventures these past three years has shaped me into a braver, more confident person. Thanks to my time with Jordan, I’m excited to go my own three-month backpacking trip through Europe! Who knows? Maybe I’ll meet my unlikely one.

The Clueless One
Back home, one couple was looking for a “third.” After matching with them and chatting for a while, Jordan decided to join them. Despite the disclaimer on her profile: “Swipe left if you’re not willing to learn ASL (American Sign Language),” the man was shocked to learn that Jordan was Deaf. “You mean you’re deaf and dumb?” He immediately unmatched her on Tinder and deleted her on Snapchat. “It was so stupid,” she told me, clearly amused. “Some people are just stupid.”

The Unlikely One
During the summer in Seattle, she matched with a free-spirited redhead named Sydney. They immediately had a connection. Sydney was not only curious, open-minded and interesting, she was quick to pick up ASL.

In the darkness one night as they were becoming close, Jordan tried to sign goodnight to Sydney in her hands. Sydney, confused, made a fuss and insisted on turning on the lights to understand. When she finally realized that Jordan was only saying goodnight, Syd immediately learned this sign. It’s become their ritual that Sydney signs “good night” into Jordan’s hands every night.

Jordan has finally realized what her friends already knew. She’s hands down, 100 percent, completely in “like” with Sydney. Now, eight months later, she plans to introduce Sydney to her father.
AMP1 travels the country, showcasing their talents and speaking with groups ranging from elementary school students to civic groups. Their mission is to motivate, educate and inspire.

Stand-up amputee basketball was created for those who want and are able to play the game standing up. As the name implies, all players have an amputation of at least one limb. Wheelchair basketball is usually the first recommendation for an amputee, but this option excludes players with upper extremity amputations unless they have an additional lower body disability.

“We have done a lot of work with Ability360 over the past few years and it was a no-brainer when we had the opportunity to join forces,” AMP1 team member Richard Ramsay said. “With this partnership we really hope to grow the sport of stand-up amputee basketball and one day make it a Paralympic sport.”

The Paralympics, like the Olympics, consider which sports will be included every four years based on numerous criteria. Every Paralympics will feature new sports that are often played initially as exhibitions and then become competitive sports in the following years.

To be considered a Paralympic sport it must be played in numerous countries and have existing leagues with established teams and consistent rules and regulations.

Ability360 hosts the Cactus Classic, the only 3-on-3 basketball stand-up tournament in the country.

“By teaming up we hope to draw more attention to Phoenix and the tournaments,” Ramsay said.
How Are We Doing?

Livability Magazine was launched in 2015 to document the experiences we weren’t reading about elsewhere. As we continue to tell the stories of disability, we want to know how we can improve. Send us your thoughts, suggestions and story ideas and be part of our growth.

editor@ability360.org

CALLING ALL CREATIVES! LivAbility has a space for you.

We’re looking for diverse and creative voices from every corner of Arizona to write for us as we continue to document history through the lens of disability. If you’re a writer, videographer, photographer or artist, consider submitting your work to us.

360Perspectives publishes personal essays on YOUR disability experience. Tell us in less than 300 words. Make us laugh. Make us cry. Infuriate us. YOU are the expert on your own disability. Tell us what makes you, you!

EVERYONE IS SOMEONE.

I am Thao, a personal trainer, long-distance runner and husband, who just happened to lose a leg to injury.

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Inclusive summer recreation programs continue to grow in Arizona. Lane Gram, of the Mesa Parks and Recreation Department, and Sara Bright of the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center share their best advice for finding an adaptive recreation program for your child.

Is an inclusive recreation program is the right choice for your child? Consider the following questions:

- If school-aged, does your child’s current classroom activities or goals prepare him/her for an inclusive recreation experience?
- Has your child shown an interest in the program, activity or subject matter?
- Is he/she comfortable and able to function appropriately, with or without assistance, in inclusive environments (malls, restaurants, parks, etc)?

Examples of available accommodations include:

- Ongoing training for inclusion support staff
- ASL for the Deaf and hard of hearing
- Adaptive activity equipment and/or supplies
- Accessible transportation
- Assistance in the provision of health care

Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
360 Summer Camp
Specializes in all-inclusive adaptive sports for ages 6 through 14 in the Phoenix area. The camp is delivered by a professional and experienced staff and includes recreational games, inclusive sports, indoor climbing and aquatic activities.

azmagic.org/programs
Camps

Arizona Youth Soccer Association
TOPSoccer
The program is geared toward player development rather than competition and is available to anyone ages five and older who has a mental or physical disability.
azyouthsoccer.org/community/topsoccer

City of Scottsdale
Afterschool and Summer Programs
Population-specific afterschool and summer teen programs for teenagers with disabilities ages 12 through 22. There are inclusion services for children with disabilities in the city’s mainstream afterschool and summer programs. The programs offer activities including fitness, cooking, social skill development and community excursions.
scottsdaleaz.gov/social-services/adaptive-services

City of Tempe Adapted Recreation – Camp Challenge Summer Day Camp
A summer day camp for ages 5 through 21 with developmental disabilities. Camp participants enjoy arts & crafts, games, swimming, music, field trips, bowling and many other activities!
tempe.gov/city-hall/community-services/classes-leagues/adapted-recreation/camp-challenge

Civitan Foundation
Camp Civitan
15-acre wheelchair-accessible facility in Williams for children and adults with developmental disabilities offering week-long camp sessions throughout the summer and weekend adventures once a month during the rest of the year. Activities include a variety of enriching and fun experiences that promote positive self-esteem, teamwork, socialization and healthy activities.
civitanfoundationaz.com/camp-civitan

The H.E.A.R.T. Center
Enrichment Camps
Offers a variety of inclusive camp opportunities over winter and summer breaks. At its core, the camp is therapy-based. It provides a highly trained team while creating an individualized therapeutic plan for each camper.
theheart-center.com/about-our-programs

City of Mesa
Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities
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mesaparks.com
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Volunteering

Opportunities Await

by Summer Sorg

“The volunteer peer mentor program has been going on for over 20 years,” said Polly Queen, volunteer services coordinator at Ability360. “I’m glad to be a part of it and hope to watch it grow even more.”

Queen coordinates various events at Ability360 and staffs them with volunteers as needed. But her primary responsibility is working with the peer mentors and their mentees.

“I can’t say enough about our peer mentors,” Queen said. “I wake up every day and I’m excited to go to work. I get to serve. I get to work with individuals who are also willing to serve.”

Queen discovered the impact of peer mentoring in her own life when she found community with a group of people who shared her learning disability.

April is National Volunteer Month.

Ability360 welcomes new volunteers for both the peer mentor program and the Sports & Fitness Center.
“So there you realize the power of peer mentoring and what groups can do,” Queen said.

In addition to the peer mentor program, there are volunteer opportunities with the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.

Katie Ritter, the center’s volunteer manager and certified therapeutic recreational specialist (CTRS), coordinates two volunteer programs: a general program that takes on regular weekly shifts, and another program that works with special events such as the annual Rugby Rave.

Ritter is amazed by how many people give their time to volunteer when nothing requires them to do so.

“It just blows my mind,” Ritter said. “These people are giving their time. In college I never went out of my way to do unrequired service hours. It’s just kind of cool that people who don’t need those hours still give their time.”

Ritter also created a junior volunteer program for 16 to 18-year-olds.

“It’s a great opportunity for them to gain professional skills in a setting where they can be successful,” she said.

Ritter trains volunteers to recognize the independence of members.

“The biggest thing is just watching people watch other people,” she said. “I think people hear the word disability and they think that we are a rehabilitation something. And we kind of are, but we’re not a hospital setting. We’re community-based. I teach volunteers that people are just coming to work out—that’s all. They’re just doing it differently. I teach the volunteers to just help with basic assistance while not destroying that person’s autonomy or independence.”

Queen said the importance of peer mentoring is to allow someone the opportunity to stay within their communities and be independent. Independence means you have the right to make choices about where you want to live and what you want to eat and what color you want to wear for that day.”

When it comes to her vision for the volunteer program in the years to come, Queen said that it’s already started.

“My future for the program is taking what those before me have put into effect and continuing to get the message out there and recruit more mentees so that this program can continue being successful.”

Ritter has similar goals for the growth of the Sports & Fitness Center’s volunteer program.

“This may be my optimism, but I want it to be huge. I want to have volunteers in here all the time, every day of the week, every hour of the week,” Ritter said.

Katie Ritter, Sports & Fitness Center Volunteer Coordinator

VOLUNTEER
PEER MENTOR PROGRAM
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PollyQ@ability360.org

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Katie Ritter
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valleymetro.org/transit-education
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Program Connects Veterans Through Event Tickets

Working in the veteran community, you learn how hard it is to connect with post-9/11 vets.

I enlisted in 1996 and retired in 2016. I was raised in the Army by the last of the Vietnam vets still in service and soldiers that fought in Grenada, Panama, Somalia and Operation Desert Storm. These leaders cared for my welfare and helped me become a soldier and, ultimately, a leader.

Despite all the training, no one teaches you how to stay connected with the support group you develop over the years once you take your boots off for the final time.

Enter Jason Watzlawick. Jason is a large man. He is easily 6-foot-7 and 270 lbs with a deep bellowing voice and an equally large gait. He has a limp due to leg and back injuries from serving in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Guam in the United States Air Force.

We were scheduled to enjoy a Cubs game with his wife, who is also his caregiver with tickets provided by Veteran Tickets Foundation, or Vet Tix as most call it. As a former Chicagoan and Cubs fanatic, Jason was looking forward to the game.

He also wanted to learn about the resources available to him and his family at Ability360, so I coordinated a tour of the facility with Sarah Olson, the program coordinator and veteran liaison.

Jason toured the facility with Sarah, then we spoke about the benefits Ability360 offers, especially the adaptive scuba program Ability360 hosts regularly during the summer.

Hearing Jason say, "I would like to try adaptive scuba this summer," was music to my ears. I knew I had another future scuba diver and dive buddy in the making.

I learned there are 533 active military/veteran memberships and 277 family memberships at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.

At the Chicago Cubs spring training game, Jason really came alive. His face lit up as he recalled famous Cubs players and spoke of games he attended while living in Chicago.

Jason explained that being retired and living on a fixed income doesn't leave much for amenities like this event. If it weren't for foundations like Vet Tix working with generous organizations like the Chicago Cubs, he might never be able to attend.

I asked Jason what he liked best about the Vet Tix program. His reply was simple: "I get to sit in a section surrounded by other veterans just like me."

Those words, "veterans just like me," resonated profoundly. You want to connect and be close to those whom you identify with. This is especially important when talking about combat veterans and how they negotiate public events.

Veterans, especially combat vets, might have a difficult time letting their guard down in a setting like this and I think Vet Tix knocked it out of the park (no pun intended) by grouping vets together and offering tickets through their partners to sporting events, ballets, theatres, concert venues, family programs and more.

Organizations like Ability360 and Vet Tix have a direct and positive influence in our communities. Allowing today's service members, veterans and their families the opportunity to engage in events and live a healthy lifestyle is truly important to happiness. To measure the success of these programs, look at the smiles on the faces of the veterans that utilize them. Veterans like Jason.
The 18th Annual Spirit of Ability awards were held on March 27th on the Ability360 Center rooftop to honor those that embody the philosophy of independent living.

**Spirit of Ability Award**
Jo Crawford

**Lifetime Achievement Award**
Amina Donna Kruck

**Board Director 2009 to 2018**
Mary Slaughter
More Award Winners

Independent Living Leadership Award
Frank Meager

Peer Mentor of the Year Award
Scott Hogsett

20 Year Peer Mentor Acknowledgment
Salvador Nieto

Volunteer of the Year Award
Tracy Heuermann

Employment Achievement Award
Michael Patterson

2017 Home Care Service Employees of the Year
Amy Teske
Maricopa County

Karen Richardson
Pima County

Adela Villarreal
Pinal County

Photos by Tina Hedges
"If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted, write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet," actress Alyssa Milano tweeted in October 2017. Thus, the #MeToo movement was born.

Except not really.

Many people incorrectly give the credit for the movement that was created by black activist Tarana Burke 10 years before Milano's 2017 tweet.

In a nod to the staying power of the movement, Time Magazine named the #MeToo Silence Breakers as their 2017 Person of the Year.

The Time story sought to portray diversity by including a wide cast of voices of various racial and gender identities from the famous to the inconspicuous. But people were still left out: the disability community.

The Vera Institute of Social Justice has studied inequities in the criminal justice system since the 1960s and described the invisibility that defines disability and sexual violence:

*People with disabilities are much more vulnerable to harm. They’re three times more likely to be sexually abused as children and three times more likely to be victims of violent crimes ranging from robbery to rape as adolescents and adults. As troubling, survivors rarely get the help they need to heal. Organizations dedicated to serving people with disabilities and deaf people often have no experience working with victims of crime, while agencies focused on crime and victimization are typically ill-equipped to serve people with differing abilities.*

An exploration of sexual violence is front and center every April, which is designated as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Created by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center and now in its 17th year, this year’s theme “Embrace Your Voice” dovetails with #MeToo. Participants are encouraged to raise their voice to show their support for survivors and foster constructive communication around the issues of sexual violence.

Dr. Tasha Menaker, director of sexual violence response initiatives for the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, said the coalition is working to address the intersection of sexual violence and its impact on the disability community.

“I think we would really be doing harm if we neglected to talk about sexual violence perpetrated within and against the disability community,” Menaker said. “That means doing outreach in a different way. For example, if flyers or websites are not screen reader-accessible, that’s not doing any good. We must think about doing this in an inclusive way.”

The coalition recently launched a healthy sexuality awareness campaign called Sex Turned Up with the hashtag #SexOutLoud. Its focus is having conversations that matter with the people in your life around healthy sexuality.

The Sex Turned Up campaign has a second component: awareness, education and fundraising for a rape crisis center in Arizona. Rape crisis centers provide services to survivors at any age who are coming forward at any point during their healing process.

Typically, rape crisis centers have several components including 24/7 service, a crisis hotline, in-house advocates,
trauma-informed therapists and, often, the capacity for medical forensic exams should a survivor choose to report.

Menaker said there are sexual assault services in Arizona, but there are gaps in terms of service response. She explained an important aspect of rape crisis centers is that law enforcement is not housed within the center. Thus, people who might not want to report to law enforcement, or have concerns about going to a government agency because of their immigration status or other identities can still receive needed services.

“We have been doing a lot of outreach with other coalitions nationally to talk about what worked in the centers and what they would do differently,” Menaker said. “All of our work is through an intersectional lens considering the diverse needs and diverse oppressions that people experience to ensure that whatever we do from training and technical assistance to working to develop a rape crisis center is inclusive.”

The momentum of #MeToo has not diminished and, if anything, seems to grow stronger and more resolute in its search for inclusion, diversity and intersectionality. Disability voices must find their way to the table.

“I think that to survivors with disabilities, it’s not just about being inclusive in terms of structure, but also making sure the people who are working at the center come from diverse backgrounds,” Menaker said. “Having people at the center who are fluent in American Sign Language, that there are accommodations for people who are blind, for example and doing the outreach within the community so people are aware that the center is available and is accessible and meeting diverse needs.”

Learn more at acesdv.org.
Accessibility Upgrades at Scottsdale’s Chaparral Park

The City of Scottsdale unveiled an upgraded, fully accessible playground at Chaparral Park on Jan. 17, 2018. The park, located off Hayden Road between McDonald Drive and Chaparral Road, previously met ADA accessibility guidelines. But the new facility has more equipment that children and parents of all ability levels can enjoy. According to the city’s parks and recreation manager Brett Jackson, the park features multisensory interactive experiences such as secure swings that are similar to car seats and enable children to experience the sensation of swinging.

“Just because something’s accessible doesn’t necessarily mean you’re included,” Jackson said. “Our goal was to be a little bit more inclusive in what we were doing, so that people of all abilities can play next to each other.”

In addition to the new equipment, there will be a separate, place away from noise and distractions for those who become overwhelmed with the stimulus of the park. Wheelchair accessible pathways are located throughout equipment and park structures and allow greater access for people with mobility-related disabilities.

“This sends a strong message that children and family members with disabilities should be included in any kind of programming design that’s considered,” said Erika McFadden, a mother living with cerebral palsy. “Doing this is a visual representation that they care.”

McFadden came to the unveiling ceremony of the playground with her daughter, Pepper. McFadden said she loved the idea that her child, who does not have a disability, will be able to play side-by-side and interact with people that might be a little different than her.

“The only thing is it does have mixed wood chips and, you know, wheelchairs can’t get in there,” McFadden said. “But there is more rubber,” she said, referring to the wheelchair accessible pathways.

Those pathways are what John Beaubien, a father of two, is looking forward to the most.

“I really dig that,” he said.

Beaubien has muscular dystrophy and uses a wheelchair. If there aren’t enough wheelchair pathways, he cannot be near his sons or get to them in case of emergency.

The park is partnering with the Me2 program based on an accessible playground design and will be the first playground in Arizona designated as a National Demonstration site for accessibility practices, Jackson said.
Text-to-911

Text-to-911 services will be made available in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area starting April 2, giving Maricopa County residents an additional way to contact emergency services.

“We understand that voice calling 911 is not always possible and adding text capability is important,” said Liz Graebner, 911 administrator for Maricopa Region. “However, whenever possible, voice calls to 911 are still preferable. Voice calls to 911 will still be faster.”

The service will function like any other text message by typing 911 in the “To” field of any messaging app and adding your message. At this time, the service is only available in the area within the boundaries of Maricopa County and includes Apache Junction, but not Gold Canyon.

If your emergency text is outside the coverage zone, the large cellular carriers will send a bounce back message stating you are outside the coverage area. Smaller carriers may not.

Graebner explained there are still technological differences between voice calling 911 and texting.

“If you text, be prepared to give your location,” she said. Cellular traffic does not include one’s location. “If you don’t know where you are, we can call you and get your mobile company to ping you, but that takes time.”

This leads to the second important difference. Text to 911 only works with a data plan, whereas any unattached cell phone with a charge can make a voice call to 911.

Additional information will be made available on April 2, beyond the publication date of this edition of LivAbility. Stay tuned for updates on our social media.

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Invite the Talking Book Library to Meet with Your Community

by Christine Tuttle

Interested in knowing more about the Arizona Talking Books Library? Invite the AZTBL to present to your community and health events or staff an information table. Contact Christine Tuttle at ctuttle@azlibrary.gov or 602-255-5578 for more information.

Interested in joining the Talking Book Library outreach team? The volunteers who participate in the outreach program have a vested interest in representing the library at health and community events throughout Arizona. Our volunteers are patrons, family members, and friends throughout Arizona. Contact volunteer coordinator, Kim French at 602-255-5578 or at kfrench@azsos.gov.

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This magazine is printed with vegetable-based inks.
Rugby Rave 2018 crowned a new champion for the first time in three years. The University of Arizona Wildcats wheelchair rugby team defeated the 360Heat Black team, as the Heat split into two squads for the tournament.

**Arizona was dominant in pool play, picking up wins against the Texas Stampede, Minnesota Steelheads and Portland Pounders.**

The Wildcats advanced to the Championship Game to face the 360Heat Black team led by Joe Jackson, Scott Hogsett, Kory Puderbaugh and Shin Shimakawa. This was the fifth straight year that an Ability360 team reached the finals at Rugby Rave.

Daisuke Ikezaki was a dominant force for UofA throughout the three-day tournament. His best game came against the 360Heat Black team when he scored 34 points.

“He’s one of the best players in the world,” head coach Brad McFadden said. “He always shows up and plays pretty well.”

Ikezaki was assisted by Josh Wheeler who came up big with another 16 points to take the match by a final score of 51-43. The Maple Leaves placed third overall in the tournament.

The Wildcats continued their winning ways at the USQRA Mountain Sectionals tournament nearly a month after Rugby Rave. They took home a Championship win in Tucson to set the stage for the USQRA Nationals.

The tournament will be held at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center on April 19-22. There is bound to be a rematch of the 2018 Rugby Rave Championship game at Nationals.
Oscar Mike Militia Debuts at Rugby Rave

Quad rugby is known for its quick pace, hard hits and rowdy atmosphere and this year’s Rugby Rave had all those elements. What was new this year was the Oscar Mike (OM) Militia, an all-military team.

“We’re constantly trying to find new team members,” says program director Nicole Verneuille. “We don’t always get to play together as a team, so OM hosts clinics for both beginner and elite quad rugby athletes which helps the players practice, learn the game and prepare for up to eight tournaments per year.”

Rugby Rave is the highest-level tournament that the Oscar Mike Militia has played — their typical games are at the D-2 level. But that didn’t keep them from putting together a roster of players, some of whom have played together in past games, and heading out to sunny Arizona.

From the start of the series, the Militia came on strong against the 360Heat. And while they fell to the Heat for that opening game (56-31), they continued to improve with each game throughout the weekend series, even beating a couple of the more seasoned teams.

They gave their all during their final game of the weekend and made the London Annihilators work for their 52-47 win, which bumped them out of the running for championship play.

Despite not being an official United States Quad Rugby Association (USQRA) team, the Oscar Mike Militia continues to work to change that status. USQRA rules state that team members cannot live outside a 150-mile radius from their home court.

Because many of the members of Oscar Mike are from all points across the country, they are not eligible for team status.

“Our population is so diverse,” says program manager Rick Kolberg. “We’re not special. We’re not owed anything. We’re just a unique talent and bring something to the sport that not every team does. We represent something bigger than ourselves every time we roll onto the court.”

Anthony McDaniel, a Marine Corps veteran and Oscar Mike wheelchair rugby player, bounces off a defense man during Rugby Rave 2018.
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PattyC@ability360.org
Handy Bag was founded to offer practical storage solutions for wheelchair users. The Dynamic Bag, the company's top-of-the-line model, is designed to provide easy access to your gear and a level of added security.

This second feature comes in the form of an outer shell that easily attaches to the back of a wheelchair to encase the bag and acts as an extra layer of protection for your personal belongings. With seven compartments, the bag itself has plenty of room for all of your important stuff and taking the bag out of the case was a breeze. Sliding the bag into the case takes a bit of practice though and largely depends on how tightly it is packed. If the bag is too rigid, there is not enough space for the bag to easily fit in the case.

When securing the bag in place, it is essential that the magnetic fasteners on the side flaps of the bag, attaching the straps on the case, are facing the right direction. After sliding the bag in the case the wrong way around, I tried to cut corners by twisting one of the side flaps so that the fastener would connect and I popped the fastener out of the flap. When the bag is secured the right way, it firmly stays in place. I should note, because the magnets are so strong, users who have less grip strength than I do might have trouble detaching the bag from the case.

I really liked that the bag and case took up a lot less space on the back of my wheelchair than my standard backpack and didn’t change my center of gravity. The way the case protruded made it harder to hang bags of groceries on my handlebars. The bag’s carry strap also got tangled on my armrest more than once. It came in handy when I was catching the bus and didn’t have enough time to stow the bag in the case.

All in all, the dynamic bag does the job it is designed to do. It’s durable, if it’s used correctly, but the case is too bulky to easily use on a day-to-day basis. Handy Bag’s Dynamic Minima, which is the same bag with a slimmed down carrier instead of the full case, might be more my style.

by Sean Storrs

I really liked that the bag and case took up a lot less space on the back of my wheelchair.
At 11 weeks old, Kai, a golden retriever puppy, ricochets from spot to spot enthralled with another new environment to explore. The animated bundle of caramel fluff is still too small to fill out his bright yellow service vest.

Bryant, a mature 21-month-old, settles under a bench quietly watching. His toffee-colored fringe ruffles in the slight breeze. Kai is beginning his first adventure; Bryant is heading off to his next one.

These pups have been specially bred as part of Canine Companions for Independence. Jennifer Heller, president of the Valley of the Sun Chapter of Canine Companions for Independence reports that 28 CCI pups are being raised in the Valley. The dogs get together twice a month at the Ability360 Center for socialization and group training.

"The program, founded in 1975, breeds Labradors and golden retrievers as assistance dogs," Heller said. "It costs about $50,000 per dog for our graduate program to raise a puppy to a service dog," Heller said. "The dogs are paired with their handler at no cost to the graduate." Heller is raising a Golden Retriever named Mina who will graduate in the next cycle.

At eight weeks old, CCI puppies live with puppy raisers and learn basic obedience and social behaviors. Kai will spend the next year and half learning valuable skills from 'sit' and 'stay' to how to act in a restaurant.

Two-year-old dogs like Bryant head off to 'college' at the CCI training facility in California where their trained and innate behaviors are evaluated for one of four programs:

- Performing daily tasks like picking up dropped items, pulling a wheelchair and opening doors
- Alerting their Deaf or hard of hearing partner to specific sounds like doorbells, alarms and verbal cues
- Skilled "companions" for children with cognitive and developmental disabilities
- Facility dogs work with a service provider to alleviate trauma and provide calm support in courtrooms and treatment spaces, and during interaction with law enforcement and service providers

Who will Kai and Bryant grow up to be?

Pat Lawson has been raising CCI pups since 2002. She's lovingly nurtured a dozen puppies into adulthood. She'll teach Kai about 20 commands along with social behaviors in their time together.

"I do this to watch a person with a disability have more ability when they get my dog," Lawson said.

When Kai was born, his future human began the process of meeting him. After completing an extensive application that includes medical and psychological screenings and a trip to California for an interview, this person will get a phone call to meet Kai.

Bryant is six months away from meeting his.

"Saying goodbye to Bryant is going to feel horrible," Kerry Saxby said. Bryant is her seventh dog since 2004.

"The rewards you see at the end when your dog meets the person they're going to spend the rest of their life with are worth the price of saying goodbye." After two weeks of learning to work together, they will leave the facility to begin their new life as best friends. He will be a companion and lifeline; devoted to and adored by his human.

Reaping the benefits

Ken Browne has been with his seven-year-old black Labrador, Kiley, for five years. Browne has a hearing loss and mobility issues.

"Before, I felt isolated and I didn't want to go out in public alone because I couldn't hear," Browne said.

Kiley picks up dropped items and alerts him to sounds with a gentle nudge of her nose.

"She gives me freedom."

78-year-old Bobbie Roth echos that. She's been with Darcy, her fifth service dog, for about eight years and raised goats in Gilbert since the 1980s. Living with Ehlers Danlos syndrome, Roth experiences balance issues and painful dislocations of her major joints.

"Darcy's so gentle. She grooms the babies and lets them lay on her," Roth said.

From Puppy to Partner

Service dogs in training

by Jennifer Longdon
Roth says her independent life would be impossible without Darcy's help. The dog helps her conserve energy by fetching items, and prevents dislocations by opening doors and livestock gates.

"Sometimes, she helps me just by being a diversion," she said. "I have to get out of bed and care for her. Just like she cares for me."

Darcy is Roth's second CCI-trained service dog, succeeding Glory.

Roth says her service dog is capable of evaluating a situation and acting. Once when Roth was walking her property alone, she had a dislocation and fell. Glory tried to help Roth rise and when they were unsuccessful, she independently fetched the phone and Roth called for help.

**A calming presence**

Sometimes, all these dogs need to be is a calm, supportive presence. The Phoenix Police Department uses two CCI-trained facility dogs in their family investigations bureau. The program began in 2011 with Calhoun and Detective Joy Lucero who saw the benefit of service dogs in interviews and created the Phoenix program.

Detective Rich Yackley and six-year-old Leona, a golden Labrador, have been partners for four years. They've done 35 to 40 interviews to date.

"In Child Crimes, we work any investigations where children are hurt or injured or any allegations that have been made about children by someone else," said Yackley. "We also assist other units as needed in interviewing children."

Phoenix Police Detective Jamie Gonzalez carries a large lint brush along with her badge and walkie-talkie when introducing her partner, Gibson, a lab/retriever mix. Gonzalez and Gibson are the newest team in FIB. He's been with her for about six months. They've done four interviews so far.

"These dogs change the interview, breaking the ice and getting the kids comfortable. Sometimes kids brush them or relax and chill," Gonzalez said. "These kids talk about horrible things that happen in their life. The dogs can provide comfort to the kids that we just can't give them. He just lays on their feet. They bond."

Gibson and Leona are not just for kids.

"For every child I've interviewed, I've had an officer who's had a horrible day and just wants to sit with the dog," Yackley said. "Sometimes parents find out that something has happened to their child that they didn't know about and they hang out with the dog."

**Working like a dog**

"When their vests are off, they're just dogs," Yackley said. "They love to play and wrestle. My oldest child and Leona are sleeping buddies. But when the vest goes on, she's all business."

"We milk goats every 12 hours and Darcy knows when it's time to go to work," Roth said. "She's very alert and happy when she's going to work. Her ears are full and her eyes are dancing as I put on her vest."

From puppy to partner, these beautiful creatures are born to bring joy and opportunity to the lives of their humans and, in Gonzalez's case, the people around her.

"The level of the dog's unspoken support cannot be measured."

Photo by Summer Sorg

Phoenix police detectives Rich Yackely with Leona (left) and Jamie Gonzalez with Gibson.
“Saying goodbye to Bryant is going to feel horrible,” Kerry Saxby said. Bryant is her seventh dog since 2004.

“The rewards you see at the end when your dog meets the person they’re going to spend the rest of their life with are worth the price of saying goodbye.”
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