Medical Marijuana
Can cannabis help?

Cool Careers
Walking Dead’s Rus Wooton

MySpace Matchup
Domonic and Heather

Exploring Arizona
New Accessible Trails Program

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Message from Phil
Thank you Amina!

With the upcoming 28th anniversary of the ADA, it's fitting to recognize and thank long-time Ability360 employee and Vice President of Advocacy, Amina Kruck. She officially retired in December of 2017 after 27 years at Ability360. A tireless advocate, Amina always made sure we celebrated the ADA anniversary so that we'd never forget its importance and how hard we fought to get it. She constantly explored new ways to commemorate its history and celebrate its achievements.

With that said, let me share some history about Amina. I met her in 1991 when I became a board member at Ability360. I learned quickly how devoted she was to social justice and disability rights. Her advocacy was passionate, articulate and persuasive. She occasionally ruffled feathers, but it never diminished my support for her. Throughout the years, I've seen her advocate and testify before just about every political and governmental body possible... from the state legislature, city councils, village planning, transit and building code committees, to AHCCCS, DES, Rehab Services, Congress members, Senators, and the Governor's office. She had no fear and could always make it heartfelt, personal and relevant.

**Amina has always been passionate about providing economic empowerment opportunities for people with disabilities.**

One of the first things I was briefed on when I became CEO was our grant proposal to become a Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) grantee. Amina wrote the grant, which was part of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. Amina learned early in her social work career how disempowered and stuck people were who lived on Social Security Disability benefits. She knew it would take an unbiased, non-government advocate to educate consumers about work incentives and the opportunities to pull oneself out of poverty through working. She understood that advocacy was the only way to eliminate fear in returning to work after disability. Ability360 was awarded the WIPA grant in 2000 and Amina managed and directed it until her retirement last year.

During that time, Amina also led a coalition of community partners to advocate for the successful passage of the Arizona Medicaid Buy-In program, called AHCCCS Freedom to Work that for the past eighteen years has helped thousands of Arizonans with disabilities become self-sufficient through work, earning income, and being taxpayers while still being able to receive their Medicaid long term care coverage.

Amina also spearheaded or managed a plethora of programs and initiatives at Ability360 such as our nationally recognized Peer Mentor Volunteer Program, Living Well with a Disability, This Is My Life Self Determination for persons with developmental disabilities, Improbable Theatre360 Company, and the Volunteer Income Tax Credit site.

Finally, Amina created and facilitated many advocacy-related workshops, disability awareness trainings and support groups. When necessary, she developed community partnerships to address barriers and disability issues. Amina has lived with chronic health conditions since childhood but never let it stop her from living independently and encouraging others to do the same. Thanks for all your great work Amina! Cheers to your retirement!

Phil Pangrazio
President & CEO, Ability360
To say we’re all over the map on this thirteenth edition is an understatement. This edition of LivAbility is loaded with diverse stories that we think continue to point out how cool it is to be sporting a disability and hanging in AZ.

Let’s Talk Tech (and Golf)
With more and more of our readers subscribing outside of Arizona, we are constantly assessing the value of our stories so everyone finds something interesting. Are we too Arizona-focused? So, someone suggested we do some tech reviews and well, the light just went on, and on.

This edition includes our special golf section. Yep, our third annual golf tournament is this September. We found some really fun adaptive golf equipment to review. Even if golf ain’t your gig, these toys will make you consider a possible tee-time.

Don Price returns to help us with one of our tech reviews. And this one is for everyone who’s ever lost their keys. And when it comes to tech, our Community Partner, Jill Sclease has been pushing the limits since 2010, creating adaptive driving solutions.

Rails, Trails & Big Boy Rocks
If you haven’t noticed, LivAbility practically needs a full-time journalist to cover all the great outdoor places our 360 Sports & Recreation team (along with our great community partners) have been exploring. Check out the great cover story and superb photo essay (thanks Tara) of their rock climbing adventure to Joshua Tree, California. At about the same time, Nick Pryor was taking a bus load of folks up to check out what is called a Rails-to-Trails trail in Prescott. It was so accessible we decided we needed to add an all new series on Accessible Trails to our repertoire. So, we covered the Peavine Trail as the first of our series of accessible trails. We’ll share new ones in upcoming issues.

What Else?
We have a few more firsts. Our graphic designer, John Beaubien, has his first byline talking about Apple’s accessibility. And, for the first (and probably only) time, Cassie Brandt wrote about medical marijuana. It’s certainly controversial and whether you believe it has medical properties or not, there are ramifications and implications for MMJ patients who also receive federal services.

Cool Cali Careers
It’s certainly not because we’ve run out of locals with cool careers, but with the Comic Fest in town last month we struck up a conversation with Los Angeles’ Rus Wooton and we all were envious of what he gets to do for a career. He definitely wins our People’s Choice award.

Speaking of Comic Fest, our veteran go-to journalist (and former intern) Yvette spent two days exploring Comic Fest in Phoenix. Yvette introduces us to some true characters who return year after year to have some fun. This year, organizers made a special effort to address access and functional needs. Yvette tells us how they did.

Hey ADA, Happy 28th Birthday!
The Creative Team all know we have the truly coolest careers in Arizona. It’s our privilege to bring you this magazine each quarter. We hope you enjoy this one. We’re already working on the next.

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Breaking Barriers participant, Lily Yates with her mother, Jena Yates.

Photo by Tara Scoville

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Photo by Tara Scoville
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Look for this icon! It indicates additional video content online.
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Golden hour illuminated Scottsdale’s Chaparral Park in amber highlights, reflecting off Kelly McCall’s German-made, Schmicking Handbike. McCall rode up early in preparation for her weekly sunset bike ride with her biking group, the Lizards.

Wearing pink and orange striped socks underneath butterfly-covered leg braces paired with Converse high-tops and an orange and black biking outfit, McCall is known for her quirky character and colorful personality.

“I get a lot of flak about my fashion statements, but I’m doin’ the best I can,” she said. “That’s part of being a bicyclist, you dress pretty loud because you don’t want to get run over.”

McCall sustained a spinal cord injury when she fell out of a tree on a hiking trip at age 20. She now walks with the aid of a cane.

Soon after her injury, she discovered a passion for handbiking.

“There’s no such thing as a bad day on a bike,” she says. Biking has always been McCall’s solace.

“I was very unhappy at my job last year, so I was thinking if I can just make it 15 months to that ride, then I can quit my job and go, and then we’ll see what happens from there,” McCall said.

‘That ride’ was a cross-country fundraiser organized by Dan Zimmerman for Spokes Fighting Strokes, an organization dedicated to helping stroke survivors with therapeutic trike riding.

Luckily, McCall found a way to leave her job before then. Surfing Facebook, she saw Kay Ledson organizing a walk across the country called the Warrior Momz Walk, to increase awareness for activity-based spinal cord injury therapy. Ledson needed an RV driver.

“So I quit my job, rented out my house and joined her from September to March,” McCall said. She planned to join the Warrior Momz Walk 4 SCI Recovery, come home for two months, then leave with Zimmerman.

In February, Zimmerman announced he was postponing his trip until next summer.

McCall felt an urgency, she’d already quit her job. She decided to plan a cross-country excursion of her own.

She embarked in June and plans to bike selected trails within each state. Beginning in Phoenix, her route includes points in Colorado, Missouri, Kentucky and Pennsylvania, before she makes her way to Florida and ultimately returns to Arizona through Texas. Rather than going straight across the country, on unpredictable pathways that may not be accessible, McCall is choosing three trails in each city ahead of time, and she will be biking one each day.

“So a lot of my trip will be in my car. I’m not even going to keep track of how many miles I’m going. I’m just going to have a good time,” she said.
Part of her inspiration was a cross-country trip she did 11 years ago as a fundraiser for the American Lung Association of Washington.

“It was the best summer I ever had,” she said. “And I got this bike about two years ago, hoping that I had a couple, or at least one, cross-country trip left in me.”

This is McCall’s first solo trip, it’s also her first trip without a fundraising element.

To complete it as economically as possible, she is staying with Couch Surfers, an Airbnb-like social networking service where people share their space at no cost to travelers.

“But you know there’s good manners involved, like you should make them a dinner or take them out or buy them a gift,” McCall said. So she plans on cooking.

“If I make this ride about eating and riding then I can get the couch surfing people to host me. I get good food, they get good food, and it doesn’t cost that much.”

McCall created a Facebook page called ‘Riding and Eating’ where she is documenting her travels.

With lodging locked down, she turns her attention to concerns about the ride itself.

“I’m a little concerned about flat tires in the middle of nowhere,” she said. “The back tires are a piece of cake to change, but the front tire - you need like four arms to change that.”

“Kelly’s always ever-hopeful no matter the circumstance,” said Kate D’Aoust, her friend and leader of the Lizards bike group. “She has a ‘can-do’ mentality and, darn it, she does it.”

D’Aoust related a story about one time that McCall convinced her to go on a bike ride the night of a forecasted thunderstorm.

Halfway through, they got caught in a dust storm. Ever-prepared and smiling at the chaos, McCall pulled out two bandanas. Those bandanas didn’t protect them from the downpour that followed. The two rode back drenched.

“It was so funny! I loved it,” D’Aoust admitted.

A monsoon wasn’t going to stop McCall from biking. Not much will. What motivates her undying passion?

For McCall, the ride is healing.

“I just feel bolstered up by these experiences that make me realize there’s way more to be thankful for than there is to feel sad about,” she said.

With the Warrior Momz Walk in September, she felt called. “It was a gift offered to me. I was in the perfect place to do it, it was for spinal cord injury research and I have a spinal cord injury. I fit in and it felt like going with the flow.”

She feels that is happening with her solo trip. “It’s like, I’m not exactly sure why I’m doing it. Cause it just looks like it’s gonna be fun! But I’m sure there’s other reasons. Things will happen on this trip for a reason.”

Being immersed in nature, seeing new places and meeting new people is what makes it worthwhile for McCall.

“That to me is just pure happiness and peace. Everybody struggles with something and the things I struggle with don’t bring me down as much when I’m living like that.”

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Tucson Poet’s Studio

by Angeline Carbajal
Originally built as an artist’s studio in the 1940s, the Tucson Poet’s Studio Airbnb is a hidden gem located in Poets Square Neighborhood in midtown Tucson. The location offers a peaceful ambiance in close proximity to the University of Arizona and downtown Tucson. The neighborhood itself offers a unique charm, where not one house looks the same.

Built with southwest roots in mind, the sun-dried adobe studio features a beehive fireplace, a beamed ceiling and a dark red polished concrete floor. The windows provide a ton of natural light and frame a private view of the Santa Catalina Mountains.

The studio shares an enclosed hardscaped, brick courtyard with the owner’s main house and a working studio. There is a pool located almost center of the courtyard with a red brick ledge around the entire pool, making it easier for wheelchair-users to transfer into the approximate four-foot deep pool. The patio also offers a firepit, BBQ and several places to sit.

The studio has a southwest charm and is fairly accessible overall. There is a private, mostly flat pathway to the studio, but there are three two-inch steps to go over along the way. The steps were slightly difficult for a wheelchair user to get over on their own, but with a companion available to provide a little push, it is doable.

The roll-in shower is the biggest seller from an accessibility standpoint. The spa-like shower is made of beautiful blue tiles and is a fully ADA compliant roll-in shower. There is, however, a narrow passage-way between the edge of the toilet and the wall, approximately 26 inches. With a roll-in shower chair you could pass through the narrow space to the shower.

The bed is about standard hotel height at 32-inches high, but could be lowered by removing the box spring. The shelving in the kitchenette is high and not easily accessible, but appliances and dishes can be moved around to accommodate guests’ needs.

Other amenities include: air conditioning and heating, high speed Wi-Fi and Direct-TV.

Overall, this peaceful studio offers the perfect retreat for reflection and exploration in Tucson.

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

Editor@ability360.org
Remembering Edward L. Myers III, Esq.

Ability360 mourns the loss of Board member and advocate Edward Leo Myers III, Esq. He practiced disability law for 25 years. Ed died on Saturday, June 9, 2018 from Stage IV pancreatic cancer. He was 56 years old. Ed was born with osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bones disease). Ed never let his disability prevent him from doing the things he loved: studying history, traveling, advocating for disability rights and living independently. A proud Irishmen, he also enjoyed an occasional pint of Guinness with his many friends.

Ed graduated with degrees in history and law from the University of Montana in Missoula. After law school, Ed clerked for the Montana Supreme Court in Helena and worked for Disability Rights Montana as a mental health and assistive technology attorney. After moving to Arizona, Ed worked as a policy and funding specialist for the Arizona Technology Access Program. He also was an adjunct professor for Northern Arizona University, teaching disability law in education and advanced disability law. Ed worked as both a staff attorney and later served eight years as the Deputy Executive Director for the Arizona Center for Disability Law. Ed was a published author in several journals and the Montana Law Review on disability and technology issues.

Ed was the youngest of nine children and is survived by his two sisters and six brothers. Ability360 honors Ed for his many years of advocacy. We are grieved by his loss. May you rest in peace Ed! 😞

We will miss you!

Congratulations to the new Community Leadership Academy Class!

Ramona Gutierrez  Marilu Rix
Clover Johnson  Marc Strohmaier
Jordan Moon  Damir Tursanovic
Jean Moriki
Andy Rix
Arizona Center for Disability Law Honored for Their Work in Bringing Services to Arizona

Tucson, AZ-- The Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL) was honored by the National Disability Rights Network, in Baltimore, Maryland for their work on implementing Text-to-911 services in the State of Arizona. In 2016, ACDL filed a lawsuit against various public entities, alleging they violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), by not providing Text-to-911 services to deaf or hard of hearing citizens. After months of collaboration, Text-to-911 launched this past April due to ACDL’s efforts between the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), Maricopa Region 911 and other public agencies working with members of the disability community, and the National Association of the Deaf.

Text-to-911 will allow people who are deaf, hard of hearing or who have a speech impairment to summon emergency services, report crimes and summon aid for others. This service can also be used by those who are in a situation where it may be too dangerous to call 911.

“Our staff worked tirelessly on this necessary lifesaving access issue, especially Legal Director, Rose Daly-Rooney, and Staff Attorneys Chris Carlsen and Asim Dietrich,” said J.J. Rico, Executive Director for ACDL.

Staff Attorney Asim Dietrich stated, “ACDL thanks NDRN for this award as recognition for the importance of Text-to-911 to provide people with disabilities direct and meaningful access to emergency services.”

Currently, only Lake Havasu City and Maricopa County have the Text-to-911 service.

Prescott Wheelchair Basketball Team Forms

New Horizons Disability Empowerment Center (NHDEC) introduced their wheelchair basketball team in June. Fitness Coordinator, Andrew Bogdonav, collaborated with Ability360 and NHDEC’s Executive Team to get the adaptive sports program off the ground. In 2016, New Horizons started the Disability Empowerment Campus with the donation of a 9,000 square foot building. At this time, the team practices at NHDEC and joins league play on Thursdays at Ability360. The team currently consists of 6 members. They are recruiting for next summer. For more information, contact Andrew Bogdonav at 928-772-1266.

Congratulations CI Unit

An award-winning collaborative project between Ability360 and Valley Leadership alumni is providing real estate agents and individuals with disabilities looking to buy a home with significantly more information about properties with accessible features and is generating wider conversations about how to incorporate more accessible features into new-home and apartment construction.

The collaboration resulted in educational PowerPoint presentation and a Cox Communications-produced informational video that brings awareness to the challenge people with disabilities face in finding homes designed with accessible features and the lack of those homes in the marketplace.

Congratulations to Darrel Christenson and the Community Integration team.
Building Health Literacy
It Could Save Your Life

by Tina Brown

It was a family dinner in Detroit when I realized my family didn't talk about health. My uncle was babbling out loud but no one seemed to pay attention. When I asked why, my aunt nonchalantly mentioned, “He's sick, he has breast cancer.”

I’m a breast cancer advocate. Why didn’t my family reach out to me for advice and support? Dinner went on, we passed around the potato salad. A month later my uncle was dead.

In 2010, my dad died from a heart attack. Again, I didn’t know he had heart disease until it was too late. I woke up a few weeks after walking my mother through grief to a beautiful sunny day.

Later that morning we got a call that my sister passed away from asthma, just two days before her 42nd birthday. I truly believe that she would still be alive today if we had just talked about her illness more often. Even though she had asthma all her life, we just didn’t understand the seriousness to be more supportive.

At the same time, my own health crisis was brewing. I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). I shut down and isolated myself, and for the next three years I struggled, alone in my pain, hopeless and unable to communicate how I was feeling. I developed severe panic attacks and depression. Fear and stigma kept me from seeking mental help. I stopped doing things I enjoyed, like traveling. I even picked up drinking alcohol to cope.

Things were rough until Marion Kelly, an MS Society board member and community leader, connected me to a doctor at Mayo Clinic who specialized in MS. I joined an MS support group for women. While sharing our experiences, I confessed I was sad all the time, crying and always down. I thought I was losing my mind. Another member pointed out that all of my symptoms were side effects of a specific medication.

That’s when I discovered that isolating myself and not talking about my illness has led me to have a very low level of health literacy. Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

I just took that medication and never thought to ask questions. Once I worked with my doctor to substitute another medication, I began to feel much better. It is so important to know and understand your health and the recommendations your health providers give you, especially the possible side effects and what you can do to manage your symptoms.

This is why I share my story. My journey has been a process and I know that God brought me out of darkness. Sharing brought me peace and gave me strength. I have courage to share my story and struggle because of the hope I have of helping someone else.

Today, I am living well with and managing my MS. When someone tells me that they do not want to talk about their illness, I say that understanding your illness better and connecting to resources and support is essential. Education allows us to better understand our symptoms and provides us with opportunities for better decision-making.
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It's 9:30 in the morning and the sun is blazing. The heat doesn't deter the birds, butterflies and bees from searching for the perfect flower or tree to land on at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix. Nor does the heat discourage Ability360 consumers from enjoying a day at the Desert Botanical Garden.

The group is part of the Socialization through Recreation program at Ability360. Leanne Murrillo has been the program coordinator for 18 years. The program is designed to help people who live with varying types of disabilities get out of the house and take part in events. Having fun away from home is only part of the program. Socialization through Recreation also helps consumers learn, or relearn, different socialization skills.

"A few examples of social skills can be self-advocacy, it can be learning to work as a group, it can be making friends." Murrillo explained, "Part of building social skills with some consumers is, first and foremost, getting them out of the house to talk with other people, to be around other people, to socialize when they may not have the chance to socialize."

That is what brings the group to the Desert Botanical Garden today. Nearly 20 people in two Ability360 buses.
Everyone was excited to be away from home, happy to be in the company of friends, surprised to learn about all the different types of desert plants that call Arizona home, and quick to smile as the heat beats down on them.

Nearly half of today's participants use a wheelchair. The Desert Botanical Garden is accessible to chairs. Garden workers lend standard wheelchairs at the front desk. Most of the paths are paved and make for a smooth ride. However, a few of the trails have a steep grade and may not be accessible to someone in a standard chair without the help of a friend to give a good push.

Gabrielle Jauregui has been a member of the program for four months. Murrillo happened to overhear Jauregui talking to her father about becoming more involved and active and invited Jauregui to try out the program. She’s been attending ever since.

Jauregui loves the different activities she can do with the group and has made quite a few friends. Jauregui uses a standard wheelchair, but found no problem using the trails at the garden. "There are easy walkways and a fellow, disabled friend of mine has been very helpful in pushing me through, so it's been very nice," said Jauregui.
As the group made its way through the winding trails, they stopped often to take pictures and read fun facts about the various plants posted throughout the garden. The group passed between two towering saguaro cacti that cast a much-welcomed shadow. Here, they stopped for a shade break.

An art wall, made of circular stained glass, reflecting the nearby desert palette caught the summer sunlight creating a mesmerizing backdrop next to the skyscraper-tall saguaros. Mandy Sharpe took a break, drank some water and caught her breath.

Sharpe works at a local elementary school in a preschool classroom that specializes in teaching children who live with autism. She has been a member of the Socialization through Recreation program for years and loves coming to activities like these just as much as she did in the beginning. For her, these outings have given her more confidence.

“You should have seen me in the beginning. I was really shy, barely talked to anybody. I came to my first cooking group and Leanne paired me with Cara, one of the girls who’s in a wheelchair and we just talked, and I bloomed, flourished,” said Sharpe.

Eventually the group succumbed to the heat and made their way back to the buses, but not before taking a group picture.

“We have people come through very quiet, who don’t say anything, but they now volunteer, they have jobs, they go through voc rehab, they’ve gone through other programs at Ability360,” Murrillo said. “We miss people when they transition into the community, into work, but knowing that the Socialization through Recreation program helped build some of the skills they are using now is very rewarding.”
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ABILITY 360
SPORTS & FITNESS CENTER
by Summer Sorg

Sweat forms in beads on athletes and audience members alike as they gather in the relentless heat at the Sun Angel Stadium in Tempe to support their favorite para athletes. Dirt flies, grass is shredded and triumph reigns as a world record is broken— all a result of the 9th annual Desert Challenge World Para Athletics Grand Prix, a five-day track and field meet hosted by Arizona Disabled Sports (AzDS).

Sixteen countries were represented by athletes ranging from six to adulthood in the Challenge on June 14-17, 2018. Over 424 participants and guides competed; 46 of them vying for a spot on Team USA. According to AzDS, the 2018 World Para Athletics Grand Prix was the only international Paralympic qualifier in the United States this year.

History was made Saturday, June 16, when Brenna Clark, from Los Angeles, California, crossed the finish line at 55.99 seconds in the women’s T20 400-meter run, setting a new world record.

Clark previously took gold at the 2017 London World Para Athletics Championships in the 400-meter, setting the former world record of 56.33 seconds in the T20 class (a classification broadly covering athletes with intellectual disabilities).

For more details and results, visit the Desert Challenge website: arizonadisabledsports.com/dcgames/ 

See more photos in our online gallery.
challenge
On May 9, 2018, Phoenix Suns forward Josh Jackson surprised nine-year-old Jazmyne Weber of El Mirage with a personalized Phoenix Suns-themed basketball wheelchair at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.

We thank the Phoenix Suns for their ongoing enthusiastic support of the members and programs at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.
Every day in Arizona, a mother is told her new baby is blind.

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Created by the U.S. Department of State, the Global Sports Mentoring Program (GSMP) is an initiative to empower international leaders in their local disability communities through adaptive sports. Candidates are nominated by the U.S. Embassy in their home country and then paired with a U.S. mentoring organization. Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center and Program Manager Sarah Olson was chosen as Rola Allahaweh’s match. This is partly due to Olson’s expertise in veterans’ programs.

Major Rola Allahaweh is the fourth Global Sports Mentoring Program mentee Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has hosted. She returned to her home in Jordan this past April with her new action plan: “Sports for Kids: A New Future.”

“Children with disabilities are often hidden away. They don’t go to school,” Allahaweh said. “By creating an adaptive basketball program for the children of Jordan, we will make them visible and teach them what is possible. This will enable them to get an education, get a job and make a future of their own.”

Allahaweh, a nursing lecturer at Mutah University, conducts medical research on post spinal cord injury. She lives with quadriplegia as a result of a terrorist bombing in Amman in 2005. Her back, neck and brain were impaled by shrapnel. As part of her advocacy, she serves on the Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities and the Hashemite Commission for Disabled Soldiers. She helped organize a team of Jordanians to participate in the Invictus Games in 2016 and 2017.

“The GSMP provides us the opportunity to share our platform,” Olson said. “Teaching the Independent Living philosophy takes every discipline within our organization. Mentees come here to learn the skills to create their own sports program in their home country. They leave with a better understanding of employment, home modifications, driving programs and much more. They leave knowing we’re capable of so much.”

During her time in Phoenix, Allahaweh enjoyed shopping, learning about adaptive driving and visiting sports venues such as Talking Stick Arena and Chase Field to explore accessibility.

The five-week program is structured so mentees arrive in Washington, D.C. for a week of orientation and learning intensive. They then travel to their host city and spend three weeks with their host organization in cultural immersion and program development. The mentees end with a week in Knoxville, Tennessee where they unveil their newly-created programs at the site of program administrator, University of Tennessee Center for Sport, Peace, & Society.
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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NO NEED TO KNOCK
igloohome LOCK
by Kade Garner

Phone, keys, wallet; three essential items to never forget at home. But what if you didn’t have to fret about one of them anymore?

The igloohome deadbolt allows you to ditch your house keys. No more getting locked out, no more hiding a spare under the front mat, no more accidently setting keys down in the fridge.

For many in the disabled community, forgetting a key at home is often the least of their problems. Don Price uses a wheelchair and has limited finger dexterity. He started using the igloohome deadbolt four months ago. Living keyless has given him new-found peace of mind.

“I no longer have to try to use a key, which is always clumsy, or worry about carrying a key with me. Also, I don’t have to buy spares, or hide them around the house. So, it’s nice just to have the freedom to not worry anymore.” Price said.

There are two ways to gain access into a home that has the igloohome deadbolt installed: one, a virtual key on the smartphone app; the other, a PIN entered on the lock.

The app connects to the lock via Bluetooth. This allows Price to open the door with his phone when a visitor arrives. If Price isn’t home but needs to let someone in, he can program a PIN for his guest which can be deactivated after the visitor leaves.

“If I have a nurse coming, or a caregiver who needs to get in, they can have their own PIN programmed in. I can also delete their PIN if I change caregivers. So, I have the ability to allow whom I want access into my home.”

Price can use the app to view an entry log to see what PINs were used to enter the home and any failed attempts to unlock the door. He always knows who’s been to his house.

The igloohome lock has been a great addition to Price’s home and well-worth it’s $200 price tag. Nevertheless, there are a few things he would change.

Connecting to the lock via Bluetooth is great. However, Price cannot open the lock with his phone from everywhere in his house as he must be within Bluetooth range of the lock. “It would be nice if it were connected to WiFi, so I could unlock from anywhere.”

Not being able to connect to WiFi may be a letdown for some, but igloohome considers this a feature, not a bug. Their website says, “No internet connection is required for the lock, so there is no need to worry about WiFi hacking or connectivity.”

The app allows Price to do many things, but it doesn’t show him whether the door is locked or not. However, one feature helps compensate for this: an automatic locking system. Price can set a time (30 seconds for example) in which the igloohome will automatically lock after the door’s been opened.

Overall, Price is satisfied with his new lock. He said: “Bottom line, the igloohome electric lock is a great product. For someone with a disability like mine, it’s a great solution. I would recommend it to anyone in a similar position.”

Igloohome has a range of different products. To learn about the other products, or to discover even more features of the deadbolt, visit igloohome.co.
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!

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

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“It is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness,” a great person once said.

These “heights of greatness” were recently explored by families sponsored by Ability360 to rock climb at various locations in Joshua Tree National Park. Using the “ARC” - adaptive climbing gear that resembles a webbed cage with pulleys, they experienced the joy and adventure that the tan rocks, vast vistas, innumerable Joshua trees, enormous-blue sky and desert creatures the park has to offer.

This day marked the culmination of months of preparation by Ability360 and the families involved. It started when we decided to incorporate rock climbing into our Breaking Barriers Youth Program. We discovered adaptive climbing gear created by Paralympian Mark Wellman, who created and tested new adaptive climbing gear on his own adventures in the French Alps.

The months leading up to our adventure included Breaking Barriers weekly indoor rock climbing classes at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center. The families learned how to use the equipment at the fitness center then ventured out to Tom’s Thumb, a popular hiking trail and rock climbing spot in Scottsdale. They used the gear on a Breaking Barriers adventure in February and again in March. Breaking Barriers is possible because of the enthusiastic support the Thunderbird Charities has provided since the program began in 2016.

April 14 arrived, and it was show time. The day the families had been waiting for: the opportunity to climb the breath-
Lily Yates in the ARC climbing rig. Mom, Jena Yates, and Caleb Lichtenburger of Stoneman Climbing look on.
taking rock features that seem to spring up out of the earth like giant canine teeth at Joshua Tree National Park. Waking before dawn, the families made their way to the first of three locations offering different climbs for varying degrees of abilities.

Lily Yates, a 13-year-old with Spina Bifida, conquered three climbs that were specifically chosen to match her abilities. On those climbs, she didn’t need any adaptive climbing gear. However, on one more difficult traverse, the adaptive gear came into play.

Aidan Ringo, a 14-year-old with Cerebral Palsy, joined in the fun. Ringo has been an Ability360 climber since indoor rock climbing classes started in November. Those five months of hard work and training were put into practice at Joshua Tree National Park.

Ringo was able to climb the height of a three-story building using the adaptive climbing equipment. The gear resembled a pulley-system. Ringo pumped a handle up the ropes, each pump would click into place securing Ringo in position, allowing him to climb higher without expending all his energy. Remarkably, he pulled a third of his body weight.

One piece of equipment that helped move the young climbers across the rugged space was the Safari Chair, a sturdy wheelchair with wide, durable tires and long leverage poles that resembles a rickshaw. The Safari Chair allows a person to pull another person in the chair through the rocky terrain that made some of the hiking trails less accessible at the park.

Everyone - climbing guides, Ability360 staff, interns and the families - came together to support one another, regardless of ability level. All those involved were able to set new personal records using different methods and adaptive equipment.

After weeks of preparing and practicing, the Ability360 climbers conquered various trails and climbs that day. Everyone achieved a sense of accomplishment and experienced the glorious sights, sounds and much more in Joshua Tree National Park.

Yates smiled from ear-to-ear as she used the adaptive “ARC” climbing rig for this ascent. With the use of the equipment and the skills she honed on previous adventures, Yates mastered yet another successful climb.

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See all of the photos in our online gallery.

Thank you Thunderbird Charities and all of our volunteers for your support!

Kelsey Bocken, CTRS
Program Manager
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For veterans, the experiences and skills they gained while serving in the military stay with them for life. Some of these skills become passions. When veterans are injured in the line of duty, they sometimes wonder if they have to give up these passions. One group in Arizona aims to help veterans continue to practice the skills they love.

Arizona Disabled Sports (AzDS) air rifle and pistol shooting program was created three years ago with the help of a $10,000 grant provided by Adaptive Sports USA. AzDS was one of the first organizations in the country to start and build an adaptive shooting program.

The program meets weekly on Monday nights for 90 minutes. In that time, athletes sight in their guns and compete against each other while receiving coaching from staff and volunteers. The program runs for 14 weeks. Athletes have the option to compete in the Desert Challenge Games at the end of the season.

In 2015 the program started with 10 athletes. Today, there are 16 athletes registered for the season. Two of the athletes currently enrolled in the program are female veterans.

Desiree served in the navy for 20 months as a Torpedo-man. She lives with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and spinal injuries. While on active duty, Desiree slipped and fell, requiring surgery to fuse her left hip.

After returning to Arizona, Desiree became an active member of AzDS. She heard about the shooting program through her participation in the archery program. She decided to give the air rifle a try and has loved coming ever since.

Vickie served in the army for four years as a Radio Technician Operator. While stationed in Germany, she was driving a military vehicle when someone ran a red light and hit her vehicle, resulting in a spinal cord injury in the C5/C6 vertebrae.

Vickie heard about our program through a flyer at the Veterans Affairs. She decided to try out the program and is now an active participant. She has made many new friends and was excited to fire an air rifle after not shooting a gun for over 30 years.

While there are currently no other organizations in Arizona that offer the programs and instruction that we offer at AzDS, there are other options for individuals who would like to get involved in air rifle and pistol. People can practice their air gun shooting skills at locations such as Ben Avery Shooting Facility or Rio Salado Sportman’s Club; membership fees apply. It is an alternative for individuals who live too far to attend the weekly programs at Arizona Disabled Sports.
Employee Spotlight
Tim Surry: Adaptive Golf Coordinator

Why Golf Matters
360 members are the real winners

The EZee Golf Power Club
Ballistic power for those who can’t swing

The GolfBoard
Who needs a cart when you can skate?
Employee Spotlight

TIM SURRY
Sports & Fitness Center Receptionist and Registration Specialist
Adaptive Golf Coordinator

How long have you been with Ability360?
I volunteered here for a little over a year. I started as an employee in 2014.

What brought you to Ability360?
I came to a Health and Wellness Fair at Ability360 and heard there would be an adaptive gym. I fell in love with the place. I got invited to a Tango class and I said: “Tango! I don’t want to do Tango.” But I did. I fell in love with dancing and everything this place had to offer.

Outside of Ability360, what are your hobbies and favorite things to do?
I love ATV riding. I do a lot of target practice and shooting. I attend concerts and sporting events. My goal is to see the Seattle Seahawks in every NFL Stadium. I have 14 stadiums down, only 17 to go. I expect to do a couple this season.

How’d you get involved in the adaptive golf program at Ability360?
A former employee here told me about these machines that help you stand up and play golf. They looked pretty cool, but I had played fewer than 10 times in high school. I got on the cart and hit it [the ball] far and straight, and I thought, “This is cool.” I knew this machine would give me time to hang out with my buddies on the golf course.

How can an Ability360 member get involved in the golf program?
We play three times a month. Everyone is welcome on the second, third and fourth Wednesdays of each month and we’ll start back up in September. We also rent out the carts to people who are playing on their own time. They just call the Sports & Fitness Center and we will meet them on the course.

What do you get out of working with this program?
I love that we get to use these carts (See Stand Up and Play profile in edition 4). They literally lift you up and you can see eye-to-eye with people. Everyone is together, you’re high-fiving each other and you’re looking your buddies right in the eyes.

What is your favorite part about playing golf?
I love the challenge of the game. Just being able to beat the hole if you will, conquer it. But hey, the next one is coming up and it is coming real strong on you and you might not beat that one.
Jake Gort works out twice a day at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center. That’s right, twice a day, Monday through Friday.

“I get there at 6:00 a.m. every morning for weight lifting and regular gym stuff. I usually stay until 7:30 or 8:00," Gort said. “I come back in the evening for my workout with my Touchstone therapist. Monday, Wednesday and Friday we’re in the pool. Tuesdays and Thursdays, I work out upstairs.”

Gort credits his intense workout regime with his progress recovering from a brain injury two years ago. He started his workouts as a wheelchair user, progressed to using a walker, then two canes and as of two weeks ago, he now walks with a single cane. The 26-year-old Gort describes himself as a jokester who likes helping people.

“I love this place! It means the world to me,” Gort said. “Whenever I’m having a bad day, I could just sit in the lobby and it would put me in a good mood.”

This will be his second year playing in the Ability360 Charity Golf Tournament. When asked what he would want the rest of his foursome to know he said: “I want them to see me as a pretty average guy who uses a cane.”

This will also be the second year that 41-year-old David Banks plays in the tournament. When asked what he would want the rest of his foursome to know he said: “I want them to see me as a pretty average guy who uses a cane.”

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Gord laments that he does not get to the Sports & Fitness Center as often as he’d like because he lives too far away. He’s looking forward to playing in this year’s golf tournament. He hopes he’ll get a chance to tell people less familiar with the facility about its magic.

“When you’re new to disability, you feel alone and lost and not part of anything," Banks explains. “People have tons of questions and don’t seem to know a lot of people who can relate to them now. At the Sports Center you meet others who share your disability and experience a lot of what you do. You don’t feel so alone anymore.”

Photos by Loren Worthington

Sponsorship opportunities are still available. Please visit 360GolfTournament.org for details or contact: Meghan Fable, Director of Development, meghanf@ability360.org
Picture this: you’re playing golf and hitting 20, 30, maybe even 40 foot putts. But you can’t get any power behind your drive and you’re struggling to reach the green. What can you do?

Fear not, the EZeeGolf Power Club may be the solution. Designed by former NASA aerospace engineer Roy Taylor, the EZeeGolf Power Club is the first piston powered, swing-less golf club. The secret is the small ballistic charge coupled with the range control lever (RCL).

The club is a bit tricky to use at first but after a few tries it becomes muscle memory. Manipulating the club takes some manual dexterity. Turn the RCL to the right, pull open the strip latch and load in a power cartridge of 5 ballistic charges. Close the latch and set the RCL to the distance you want from seventy-five to two hundred yards.

Pull the top of the grip back to “cock” the club. Now it’s ready to go. Disengage the safety switch and simultaneously push the trigger button and watch your ball fly!

People with disabilities, especially those with core strength and stability issues, can easily use this club to supplement their golf game.

Tim Surry, Ability360 Adaptive Golf Coordinator and full-time wheelchair user, tested the EZeeGolf Power Club. He was a skeptic in the beginning.

“At first, I thought it was absurd,” Surry said. “After a few shots, I really started to dial it in and began to see the use of this club.”

Surry used his standard driver and the EZeeGolf Power Club. The EZeeGolf Power Club improved his drive from a range of 160 yards to a range closer to 250. “With our adaptive golf program, it definitely could help,” Surry said. “For example, someone coming out of rehab that might not have all of their strength back could use this club. Maybe they played before their injury and, with the help of this club; they can get back out on the golf course.”

“This club isn’t just for people with disabilities,” said Surry. “We were using the club and a few of the golf pros were curious and asked about the club. They tried it out and were very impressed.”

The EZeeGolf Power Club does more than straight shots. You can angle the face of the striking plate, just as you would a standard driver, to perform a draw or fade.

The club’s critics might argue that it is not fair to other golfers and it’s untraditional. Local golf clerk Jeff Nicholson responded to these claims.

“This club could really help people of all skill levels get on the course,” Nicholson said. “Obviously you can’t use it at a tournament or for competitive play but when you’re out there with your buddies trying to have a good time, this club is perfect. That’s what it’s all about, getting new people into the game and having fun.”

EZeeGolf offers a membership program that includes an annual maintenance service. The club instructions suggest using Ballistol to clean and lubricate the club. We found it difficult to open the cartridge latch after roughly fifteen to twenty shots.

You can buy the EZeeGolf Power Club for $995. The price is steep but considering that you won’t need a driver, fairway woods or hybrid clubs, the EZeeGolf Power Club may be worth it.

To learn more, go to ezee golf.com.
Amputees have a new way of getting around the course

By Jack Lechich

The GolfBoard, a combination skateboard-golf cart, is the newest way to cruise down the course in comfort and style. Invented by Don Wildman, its popularity is growing on the golf scene and catching the attention of adaptive golfers.

With the ability to reach a speed of 10 mph, the GolfBoard has sped up the game and attracted new users to the age-old sport.

The basics for operating the device are simple.

There are two switches located on the left side of the board’s handle; one for speed and the other for direction. The speed switch enables the user to choose between high, medium and low. The direction switch has three options: forward, reverse and park.

To start the board, hold down the throttle tab located at the center of the handle. Release the tab and the board stops immediately.

Steering the GolfBoard is similar to using a skateboard or snowboard, you shift your weight in the direction you want to turn. Once you hop on and use it for a few holes, you’ll have it down.

“They really nailed it,” said David Banks, an avid golfer with an above-the-knee amputation. “It’s easy to drive, easy to maneuver. It has three different speed levels...it’s really easy to switch back and forth from high, medium and low.”

People with disabilities, especially amputees, are able to use the board without struggling to push off while getting in and out of a golf cart.

“Being an amputee, it’s really hard for me to get in and out of a golf cart or even drive a golf cart,” said Nick Pryor, Ability360 Sports & Fitness Specialist. “With this, I can hop off, hop right back on and keep on playing.”

The GolfBoard is powered by a lithium battery which makes it light and capable of lasting far longer than the lead-acid batteries in standard golf carts. A single charge lasts through a round of thirty-six holes and it has a fast recharge time.

The GolfBoard’s tires are only four by eleven inches, significantly smaller than standard golf cart tires. There is less damage to the course itself and reportedly 30 percent less impact on turf than a golf cart.

The GolfBoard carries a starting price of $6,500. The average golf cart ranges from $2,000-$5,000. Luckily, more than 275 golf courses rent the GolfBoard alongside standard carts and do not charge a premium.

The GolfBoard is used at five courses in Maricopa County alone: Western Skies Golf Club in Gilbert; Longbow Golf Club in Mesa; Eagle Mountain Golf Club in Fountain Hills; and in Scottsdale: Troon North Golf Club, and Westin Kierland Resort & Spa.

Before using the GolfBoard, most courses require watching a short training video and signing a waiver. This process takes about 15 minutes.

The GolfBoard is growing in popularity and is here to stay. Whether speeding up the game, improving the course’s maintenance or helping people of all abilities get around the course at ease, the GolfBoard is a hole-in-one product. Learn more at GolfBoard.com.

“I would absolutely recommend trying this out.” Pryor said. “It’s a lot more fun playing the game. Golf is already fun, might as well spice it up a little bit by getting on the GolfBoard.”
While there are few certainties in life, baseball in the summer is an absolute guarantee.

The inevitable rise in temperature in the valley year-in and year-out signifies that the Arizona Diamondbacks are back.

The Diamondbacks pride themselves on being one of the most accessible teams in Major League Baseball. They are one of two teams with an ADA manager or position similar to that title; the New York Mets have an accessibility manager.

“The D-backs try their hardest to not just be compliant but also inclusive in every way. They try to go above and beyond,” D-backs Nanette Odell said.

While this commitment is year-round, they hold an annual “Inclusion Day” that brings in 30 to 40 disability and human service related organizations, then offer an opportunity for recognition on the field, games in the Legends Suites and an inclusive place for kids to play.

The Diamondbacks have done their best in regard to accessible seating, allowing for some of the finest views of the ballpark. The Diamondbacks have innovated plenty of other features to make ballgames enjoyable for any fan. Wheelchair escort assistance is offered for those who need help getting to their seating area then back out when they are ready to leave.

Closed Captioning is available on the DBTV, the large centerfield video screen, for all public address announcements. Radios are also available to listen to play-by-play for a fan with hearing loss.

For fans with vision loss, the team offers a bone conduction headphone. It goes in front of the ear so you can listen to play-by-play of the action while still enjoying the sounds of the game.

The ambience of the crowd and the atmosphere is still present while a fan can know exactly what is happening on the field.

Parents with kids on the autism spectrum can take their kids up to the Suite Level to sit quietly on the couches for a break from the crowd, while still watching the game from the nearby TVs. For those unsure about what to expect when coming to a game, Pal Experiences has put together a helpful video, booklet and app to give guidance on what to expect at the ballpark found at palexperiences.org.

Odell couldn’t think of a single experience inside the ballpark that hasn’t been reviewed and made available to every fan. Whether it’s running the bases at the end of Sunday games or strolling through the concourse, no one is left out.

When the D-backs created their ADA Manager position, they became a proactive team rather than a reactive team. They began doing more work in the offseason to prepare the stadium and their staff members.

Game-day staff receive training before each season, including disability-related training. While the players go to spring training, the staff go to accessibility training conducted by Odell and many other aspects of training, from other experts.

Maybe the toughest obstacle when it comes to baseball accessibility is deciding where to sit as there are so many great options from the upper concourse all the way down to behind home plate.

If you happen to have tickets for standard seating but need accessible seating or aren’t able to see the captioning on the DBTV, visit Guest Relations, near Sections 128 on the main concourse and 322 in the upper concourse. The ticket windows next to each have access to options that may be available, depending on inventory and your needs.

The D-backs have made it easy for all baseball fans to enjoy the game, and that’s a guarantee.
Cactus Classic 2018

JUL 28 - 29
9AM - 4PM

StandUp Amputee 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament

Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
Overcoming Financial Hurdles: Your guide to adaptive equipment grants

A new pair of shoes or shorts and maybe a new headband—it doesn’t cost much to become an athlete unless you’re an adaptive athlete.

Add a new prosthetic device, the cost to get that prosthetic fitted, and the travel costs of getting to an adaptive sports competition to the list and suddenly becoming an athlete isn’t so easy, or cheap.

People with disabilities want to participate in adaptive sports, yet there are only a few competitions a year where we can compete with others in the community. Many times, we travel far to where these competitions take place. We wonder how to afford the costs of becoming an adaptive athlete.

Many of us ask ourselves three questions: Who am I? Can I do this? How can I do it?

Spending time with our peers and competing with them can help us find the answers to all three questions. The hurdle is finding the funding to becoming an adaptive athlete. And for many, searching for what resources are out there and available to us is a daunting task.

In sports there are always costs: hotel expenses, flights, meals, coaching, etc. In adaptive sports it’s more than the price of shoes, but the highly-priced assistive technology that allows athletes to perform. The price of running blades, sports chairs, extra wheels, registrations, etc., shouldn’t disqualify human potential.

There are ways to alleviate some of the costs and frustrations of becoming an adaptive athlete. Different organizations and groups offer grants and financial aid to adaptive athletes who want to compete. You just need to know where to find help.

For example, the biggest organization distributing grants is the Challenged Athlete’s Foundation (CAF). This past year, CAF awarded 2,806 individuals grants totaling $4.3 million.

Here are a few tips on how you can alleviate those stresses and start focusing on your athletic career: one, know what kind of grants you qualify for; two, know what you need to do to get the grants; three, apply for the grants.

Know what kind of grant you need

There are different kinds of grants you can get as an adaptive athlete. Some grants will help cover competition and travel expenses. Other grants help with the costs of coaching and training. And, there are grants that will help pay for equipment.

Know your “To-do” list

To apply for these grants, you need to start getting a few things together. First, create a bio. The people who award these grants want to get to know you. They want to know your story, your likes and what goals you have as an athlete.

Next, you’re going to need to include proof of income and two reference letters in the grant application. For the reference letters, make sure one is from a medical professional and the other can be from a fellow athlete, peer, family member or even a coach.
Apply for the grant

After you have learned about the different types of grants that exist and have finished your to-do list, you can finally apply for the grant you need. When you apply, make sure it is the type of grant you need and include an estimation of all your costs.

- ✔ Type
- ✔ Competition/Travel Expenses
- ✔ Coaching/Training Expenses
- ✔ Equipment Expenses

To Do’s

- ✔ Create a bio
- ✔ Retrieve paperwork
- ✔ Proof of income
- ✔ 2 reference letters (1 from medical professional, 1 from a fellow athlete, peer, family member or coach)
- ✔ Know what grant you want and estimate the cost

Apply

As a kid, I never knew that adaptive sports existed. Today, I play sports and have so many opportunities presented to me. It is now my life goal to help every person, who may be struggling, who may be different or who may want to better him or herself, know that they can do whatever they want.

If you want it, go get it. It is that simple. Live your dream. 😊
ADA 28
American with Disabilities Act

Happy Birthday ADA!

ADA Anniversary Celebration
JUL 26TH/11:00 am - 2:00 pm

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Phoenix, Arizona 85035

R.S.V.P. at ability360.org

ABILITY360
Setback:

SB 1040: Service Animals; Misrepresentation

May impose a civil penalty of $250 to a person misrepresenting an animal as a service animal.

Advocates argued that the public is frustrated about pets, not service animals, and businesses already have the right to exclude pets. This law disproportionately and negatively affects people with disabilities and could lead to people being questioned on their use of a service animal or defending their use in court.

Victories:

SB 1296: Government Communications; Emergency Response Interpreting

Auxiliary aides and services must now be provided in emergency communications to ensure people with communication disabilities have equal access to real-time emergency response.

SB 1162: Silver Alert Notification; Developmental Disability

The pre-existing, statewide Silver Alert system may now be issued by police for a missing person with a developmental disability if they have disappeared under suspicious circumstances and may be in danger.

SB 1198: Blind Persons’ Rights; Adoption; Custody

Prohibits the court and the Department of Child Safety (DCS) to discriminate against a parent with blindness on the sole basis of their blindness in cases regarding custody, adoption, guardianship, and fostering a child.

What’s on My Summer To-Do List?

I hope you’ll spend the summer enjoying a vacation with family or sitting by the pool with friends. But just because the AZ legislative session is over doesn’t mean we don’t have work to do.

My Summer To-Do List for Advocates:

- Register to vote—Vote as if your life depended on it, because it does—Justin Dart, Advocate and father of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Represent the disability perspective and say what programs and services matter to you. Remind family and friends to register, too.
- Register to Vote at Service Arizona EZ Voter Registration ServiceArizona.com
- Register by July 30th, 2018 for the Primary Elections August 28th, 2018
- Register by October 9th, 2018 for the General Election November 6th, 2018

Have questions about mail-in-ballots, voting rights restoration, or finding your polling place? Learn more at azsos.gov/elections

Celebrate- Join us on Thursday, July 26th from 11am-2pm to celebrate the 28th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): “This Day Belongs to Us!” Presentations include what is the ADA, how to use it, and importantly, how do we protect the ADA right now.

Register at 2018adacelebration.eventbrite.com or call David Carey at 602-443-0723.

Contact your Legislators

The Disability Integration Act (S 910 / HR 2472) would ensure that seniors and people with disabilities are able to receive home and community-based services opposed to institutionalization. Contact your Representatives, ask them to Cosponsor DIA

Find your Congressional Representatives:

ContactingCongress.org

April Reed
Vice President of Advocacy
Ability360
Arizona legalized medical marijuana (MMJ) in 2010. Now, more than 100,000 Arizona residents hold registry identification cards, also known as “green cards.” The cards allow the purchase of marijuana in various forms at state-regulated dispensaries or, grow their own medicine if they live at least 25 miles from a dispensary. An individual must be diagnosed with one of the statutory qualifying illness or disability symptoms by a qualified physician to obtain a referral for their card.

Marijuana is classified as a Schedule One controlled substance, meaning that, according to the FDA, it lacks medicinal value. However, some physicians believe that MMJ demonstrates medicinal value in treating pain and nausea associated with glaucoma, cancer and HIV. They point to studies that indicate it eases neuropathic pain and muscle spasticity in patients with paralysis and multiple sclerosis. Patients report using MMJ for anxiety and depression, insomnia, to increase appetite or soothe the side effects of chemotherapy drugs.

Pain management doctors will not prescribe narcotics to a patient if marijuana use is detected. Proponents believe it is a safe alternative to the harsh side effects of currently prescribed narcotics.

“There are many cannabinoids in the marijuana plant in addition to THC, including CBD, which offers the therapeutic benefits of marijuana without the psychoactive effects,” said Doug Paysee, chief operating officer of Encanto Green Cross, a Phoenix dispensary.

“CBD combats pain and anxiety; it is most notably an effective anti-epileptic.”

For some MMJ users, avoiding a high-like sensation is important. Patients can find strains with a heavy CBD to THC ratio, thus minimizing the psychotropic sensation.

Pure CBD, legal without MMJ card, is sold in the form of liquid inhaled from a vape pen, tinctures (drops placed under the tongue) and lotions which can be applied directly to problematic areas of pain. Though CBD is reported to be effective, some researchers argue that THC is the most effective compound for dealing with pain. Some patients find CBD alone effective to treat painful symptoms, others don’t respond to it.

“It’s a matter of finding out what works for you because everyone is different,” Paysee emphasizes.

Marijuana remains illegal at a federal level. Thus, there are considerations when deciding whether to use MMJ. Some social support programs such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development, require participants to be marijuana-free. Marijuana is prohibited on HUD rental properties regardless of card-holder status.

Unless determined to be a contributing factor to the disability, MMJ use does not affect eligibility for social security/disability. Employers can’t discriminate against employees who use MMJ as long as they hold cards according to the Arizona Medical Marijuana Act. An exception (House Bill 2541) allows employers to refuse to place any employee who uses MMJ in a safety-sensitive position, such as commercial drivers and construction workers.

Studies into the benefits of marijuana still face obstacles funding. Thus, many of the reports on its medicinal value remain anecdotal. As states explore the potential revenue from legalization of marijuana for both medicinal and recreational use, we can expect to see medical science cut through the taboo to find answers.
Medicating With Marijuana

by Cassandra Brandt

It’s just another day, but for me that means waking up in pain, anxious and with my limp body flopping around the bed like a fish out of water. I take my morning medications; for me, this includes a few puffs off a slim, silver vape pen. Inhaling, I let it calm me.

I blow the sweet tasting cloud into the air. My stiff arms and legs reluctantly respond, becoming still and pliable enough for my paralyzed body to be dressed. My mind calms and the body follows.

Even though I just medicated with marijuana, I’m not exactly high; this particular strain of medicinal marijuana is higher in CBD than in THC, the cannabinoid in marijuana responsible for the psychotropic sensation marijuana is known for. I am not experiencing any negative or unwanted side effects. My mind is simply soothed, muscle spasms subsided and pain dulled.

After I was paralyzed in a car accident three years ago, doctors prescribed strong muscle relaxers for spasms, narcotics for pain, and benzodiazepines for anxiety and depression. I slept constantly and had no drive to get back to my life. I eventually began to medicate with marijuana and found that it not only provided relief for my depression and anxiety attacks, but helped my pain and seemed to reduce the severity and frequency of my muscle spasms. I was able to reduce my dependence on pharmaceuticals and I no longer suffered all the dreadful side effects of the prescription drugs: constipation and itching from the narcotics, inability to focus, constant sleepiness and even some memory loss brought on by the antidepressants.

On a typical day, I smoke about a gram of MMJ to keep the pain and negativity at bay so I can participate in life. I typically do not prefer CBD alone and choose my medicine accordingly.

I am able to curb anxiety at night and sleep after dosing with a tasty brownie, purchased legally with an MMJ card.

Medicinal Marijuana isn’t for everyone. It isn’t legal on a federal level, so some ill and disabled individuals do not consider it an option. Some employers, government-funded programs, and medical treatment facilities still bar medical marijuana users as policy. For example, I was kicked off my pain management doctor’s list after starting my MMJ regimen, but I am doing fine without the narcotics. I choose to continue using medical marijuana as a more palatable alternative to the side-effects of my pharmaceutical drugs.

Editor’s Note:

Although legal in Arizona under narrow medical uses and with proper documentation, marijuana remains a prohibited substance per the Controlled Substances Act. Federally, cannabis is classed as a Schedule I substance and considered to have a high potential for dependency and no accepted medical use.

Even with a medical marijuana card issued by the state, federal enforcement is at the discretion of the Department of Justice. MMJ card holders can still face penalties including criminal prosecution and civil asset forfeiture. All programs that rely on federal funds will prohibit the use and sale of marijuana – even for a documented medical use.

Ability360 prohibits the use of marijuana on our campus in compliance with federal law.
Apple Today

Accessible features you didn’t know you have

by John Beaubien

Ability360’s Graphic Design and Marketing Specialist, John Beaubien, is LivAbility’s accessible design guru.

He visited the local Apple store on Global Accessibility Awareness Day.
Apple hosts daily learning sessions with a focus on helping people "do more of what they love with inspiring programs." Of the sessions found on their website I attended:

**Basics: iPhone and iPad Intermediate**

**Basics: Using iPad and iPhone with Hearing Loss**

They offered an impromptu session where I asked questions about the accessible capabilities of the MacBook Pro and iPhone.

At Scottsdale Quarter, I had no trouble finding open accessible parking on my visit despite the small number of accessible spots. The buildings are tall and modern, casting large shadows that kept me cool as I made my way to the Apple store, despite the midday heat in Phoenix.

There were no buttons to open the doors to the building; however, every time I made my way toward the door, Apple staff beat me there, opening it while greeting me with pleasant words and a smile. It was an amazing site! The room was very large, open and filled with people attending sessions and looking at products.

The first session covered the basics of using an iPhone. There was high demand for this knowledge and the table filled up quickly.

The next session answered accessibility questions. One of the participants, a 10-year-old boy who uses a powerchair, was considering purchasing a computer. He wanted to learn more about Apple's accessibility features. He has limited dexterity, so staff covered a variety of accessible features:

- **Switch Control** allows users to toggle through options on their Apple product using a joystick or other adaptive devices. You can interact with your device without even having to touch it.

- **AssistiveTouch** allows users to use the home button on the screen instead of the physical button. It’s also a shortcut to many of the phones features. You can create many custom gestures. For example, you can create a button that scrolls the page up or down.

- **Siri** allows users to tell the device to do many things like open an app, get directions or play music. You can even make your MacBook actively listen for you to call out "hey Siri" without pressing any keys.

The most eye-opening session of the day was on hearing loss. When I first arrived at the session table, I noticed the assistive listening device symbol near the speaker – which indicates how serious they are about accessibility.

Around the table there were a couple of ASL interpreters and several Deaf participants. The presentation covered several accessibility features:

- **Live listen** connects your Apple device to your hearing aids and works with your t-coil. You can adjust the volume in either ear. You can choose from presets like "restaurant" to decrease noise in the room while amplifying the conversation you are having with someone.

- **Siri** responds to your text messaging. For example, you could ask Siri about the weather via text message.

- **LED** flashes when notifications come in or when your phone rings.

- **Facetime** allows users to have video conversations which can be useful for people using sign language.

- **Voicemail** transcription allows users to read their voicemails instead of listening to them.

I was impressed by the level of accessibility in the technology and the passion behind the technology from the Apple staff. You could tell the staff really enjoy what they do and want to improve the lives of people who use Apple technologies.

I learned quite a bit and I'm looking forward to going back for cool photos, sketch, draw, paint, music and coding.
It is not uncommon to meet a couple whose relationship began online thanks to one of the many dating websites. What is not common, however, is to meet a couple whose relationship began online thanks to MySpace. Heather Byrne and Domonic Corradin have been a couple for just over a year, but they initially met one another on the website back in 2009.
Heather has bright blue eyes and a big, warm smile. When she speaks, her voice is soft and friendly. Talking to Heather is like talking to an old friend. The conversation is easy and comfortable.

Heather lives with Muscular Dystrophy. In 2009, Heather was new to the MD community, so she turned to MySpace as a way to connect with others who also live with MD and with people who live with other disabilities.

“I was getting into the disabled community and it was kind of a first for me, so I was kind of reaching out to a bunch of people just to get some experience,” Heather said.

There, she met Domonic. The two would become close friends. They stayed connected through social media, frequently speaking over the phone, and in March of 2017, Heather and Domonic would finally meet in person after nearly a decade of friendship.

Domonic has tattooed arms and a muscular build. He could almost appear to be intimidating, except he has a permanent smile and a laugh that is both fun and contagious. He has a great sense of humor and misses no opportunity to make a quick joke about himself. When Heather and Domonic are talking, they often look at one another as if anticipating the next opportunity to laugh.

Domonic has lived with paraplegia since he was 16 when he hit a tree in a car accident. He is passionate about sports, especially hand cycling. His drive for hand cycling led him to ride across China with a group he helped start, Cranking through China. The organization promotes awareness about disabilities (and equipment that is available to the disabled community) to Chinese towns and villages along the bike route.

Domonic made multiple trips to China as he biked the country in 500-mile segments. At the end of each segment, the group would mark where they stopped the ride as that would be the starting point for the next trip, eventually allowing the group to cross the entire country.

Back in the United States, Heather was still integrating into the disabled community, but at a leisurely pace.

“I stayed away for a long time,” said Heather.

She was reaching out to others who live with MD but dissociating herself from the community at the same time. Heather needed time to both accept her new lifestyle and learn new skills.

Heather uses her wheelchair part-time. At first, she refrained from fully integrating herself into the disabled community because of her negative interactions with people who are non-disabled. Nonetheless, Heather learned to be patient with herself and with those who stare, ask personal questions and act awkward around wheelchairs. In fact, now she even encourages non-disabled people to ask the questions they may have for her. While Heather was learning how to adjust to this new lifestyle, one person remained a constant source of advice and conversation: Domonic.

Over the eight years that Heather and Domonic talked online, they learned that they shared much in common. They both grew up in the Midwest, believed in many traditional values and both love to be active. In fact, part of the reason Heather kept some distance between herself and the rest of the MD community for so long was her drive to stay active.

Many doctors, and even other people who live with MD, told Heather that she should live a life that was as sedentary as possible to preserve her strength for as long as possible. However, Heather believed she needed to remain active in order to be happy and Domonic was someone who could relate. Heather does not suggest that others with MD try to live the same active lifestyle she has, but does want others with MD to know they can still lead an active life if they want.

“We’re told in the MD community to be sedentary and not use your muscles because it’s going to make them weaker quicker and again, to me, that’s just irresponsible to tell people.”

by Kade Garner

Photos by Karla Worthington
Heather said, "For me, I got so depressed because I'm like, 'I can't do anything, so am I just going to sit here?' To be able to go out and start doing things that everybody else was doing was important."

"And there's still such a giant stigma with MD that a lot of people who see me doing things... think I'm stupid for doing it," she continued. "Hopefully when people see me they'll think 'Okay, I can do that too. It's better than the alternative.'"

From Heather and Domonic's conversations, it is clear that leading an active lifestyle is something they talk about a lot. The two made it clear that for them, creating a life full of quality, excitement and fun is more important than living a lifestyle that may give Heather a life that is a little longer, but void the joy active bring.

Heather wasn't aware of all the adaptive sports and activities she would able to do. Her frequent conversations with Domonic began to take shape around these new activities.

The two began to speak frequently. They talked about their childhood, their values, but most of all, they discussed the different sports and activities that can be done in a wheelchair. Every time Heather and Domonic would talk on the phone, online or even in person, disability sports was the subject that drove the conversation.

Eight years is a long time to talk to someone online. Domonic was determined to finally meet Heather. In March of 2017, Domonic was working a booth for one of his sponsors at the Abilities Expo in Los Angeles. He invited Heather to come check out the show. After refusing his first offer, Heather finally decided to go after a friend convinced her.

Meeting in person was key, Heather didn't need any more convincing. She and Domonic started dating shortly after this first in-person encounter. Their relationship was founded on shared values and principles but enriched by their mutual love for sports. Heather's desire to remain active and Domonic's passion for hand cycling soon meshed. After Domonic introduced Heather to the sport, hand cycling has become away for the couple to spend time together while being active.

The end of April was the beginning of a new chapter. Domonic and Heather moved from California to Arizona in search of a new lifestyle. They fell in love with Arizona before the move. They had friends who lived in the Valley and enjoyed the small-city feel. They liked how affordable living costs were.

The transition to Arizona has been easy. Domonic was able to secure a job in the automotive industry and Heather takes care of her mother, who lives with them. They feel like everything has just fallen into place for them during this move.

Heather just got a hand cycle of her own and the couple now plans on biking three to four times a week. Like any couple, life can be full of bumpy roads. However, these two always find a way to steer through any challenges they may face together. "We always just find a way to make it work," Heather said.
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Phoenix Comic Fest

IS IT ACCESSIBLE?:

By Aitana Yvette Mallari

Along with a new name, Comic Fest also brought a fresh look at accessibility for this year’s event. Organizers reached out to Ability360 for advice. We were able to connect them with an accessibility specialist who helped create a plan to address the access and functional needs of Comic Fest guests. We visited the Fest to see how things turned out.

“We worked with an Accessibility Specialist who coordinated an effort with individuals with various types of disabilities to be on-site during the event and provide feedback for items that could be modified immediately,” organizer Jen Palmer said. “Guests also provided overall recommendations for continued efforts towards inclusion. It was a great collaboration.”

Then asked about accessibility at Phoenix Comic Fest, a majority of the people with disabilities interviewed expressed that this year’s event was more accommodating than previous years. Here’s what a day at Phoenix Comic Fest looked like:

Phoenix had no business being as hot as it was that morning. Cold water was distributed to those in line for the entry. Patrons who were VIP and ADA were led to the front in an express line.

“They helped us find the shorter lines to go through and it’s been very helpful,” said Nola Yergen, who came with her mom, Jean Palmer. The two have been going to science fiction conventions since Yergen was a child.

Once registered and inside, patrons are free to roam around. While some Phoenix Comic Fest vendors know how to accommodate, some may not have as much knowledge on disability. Ann Tobin experienced this when her daughter, Lucy Deselms, was barred from entering a 21 and up area.

“Developmentally, she’s five. But, Lucy is 30,” Tobin said. “I had to give this one vendor an ADA lecture…and I had her ID with me.”

The convention takes place on several floors. Lines for the escalators were long and the lines for the elevators were longer.

“It was the only long line that I’ve witnessed,” said Christian McIntee, who went all out to cosplay as Joker. He and five of his friends waited for the elevators for 10 to 15 minutes.

“They got impatient. I got impatient. Then we’re like, ‘you know what, screw it, we’ll just go up the stairs,’” McIntee said. He switched to crutches while his friend carried his wheelchair.

Once you reach the right floor, there may still be the challenge of navigating through the crowds.

Larissa Amis, says that people aren’t always aware of their surroundings, especially when there’s someone in a wheelchair passing by.

“They’re engrossed in whatever’s going on,” she said. “You kind of have to be rude to just get through a crowd. Just let people know ‘Hey, I’m right here.’”

As difficult as wheelchairs can be at a convention, it’s much better to move around than using a walker, said Caitlyn DeAmbra, an exhibitor from the Society for Creative Anachronism.

“It is big, so get around on wheels,” DeAmbra said. “They have them for rent outside—that was fantastic.”

According to DeAmbra, Phoenix Comic Fest was very accommodating and does its best to keep people with disabilities as immersed in the experience as possible.

“Everyone is one,” DeAmbra said. “Everyone’s complimenting each other. I haven’t had a single bad experience. I can’t say enough about how great it’s been.”

Along with a new name, Comic Fest also brought a fresh look at accessibility for this year’s event. Organizers reached out to Ability360 for advice. We were able to connect them with an accessibility specialist who helped create a plan to address the access and functional needs of Comic Fest guests. We visited the Fest to see how things turned out.
“I love your cane,” she said, the roar of the hand dryer overpowering the end of her sentence. She waited for it to settle before speaking again. “Is it real?”

The pirate chuckled. “Yeah it’s mine. I have trouble walking so it helps.”

Cyborg angel held the door open as pirate passed through. “Well it’s really cool,” she said, and they both were swallowed by the crowds of Phoenix Comic Fest.

Although Comic is in the name, fans of TV shows, movies, and video games are welcome. Many patrons also dress up as characters from pop culture.

“IT’S REAL,” she said, and they both were swallowed by the crowds of Phoenix Comic Fest.

The cyborg angel held the door open as pirate passed through. “Well it’s really cool,” she said, and they both were swallowed by the crowds of Phoenix Comic Fest.

Phoenix Comic Fest-formerly known as Phoenix Comic Con-is a four-day celebration of everything pop culture. Although “comic” is in the name, fans of TV shows, movies, and video games are welcome. Many patrons also dress up as characters from pop culture.

A cyborg angel and a Victorian-era pirate washed their hands next to each other in a Phoenix Convention Center restroom. Each woman stole a glance when she thought the other wasn’t looking. The cyborg angel cleared her throat.

A cyborg angel and a Victorian-era pirate washed their hands next to each other in a Phoenix Convention Center restroom. Each woman stole a glance when she thought the other wasn’t looking. The cyborg angel cleared her throat.
as their favorite characters, known as cosplay, like cyborg angel and Victorian-era pirate (not their actual character names, but only so much information can be gleaned by eavesdropping near the sink).

In comic books alone, it’s not uncommon to find superheroes with disabilities. Use a wheelchair? So does Professor X. Lost an arm? That’s just like Bucky Barnes! Blind? So was Daredevil.

**A Reality Check with Morgan Parker**

On any other day, visible markers of disability—a wheelchair, walker or cane—made you the odd one out in a crowd. At Comic Fest, they’re just another prop used to cosplay a character.

This can lead to confusion as to whether someone is actually disabled.

Morgan Parker, who has attended conventions since 2005 and describes cosplay as not a low-key addiction but a “high-key” addiction, remembers cosplaying as Oracle aka Barbara Gordon aka Batgirl. Barbara Gordon is a wheelchair user in the comics.

“*I was in the chair and someone asked me if it was legitimate or not and either way he thought it was cool,*” Parker said. “I feel like if you appreciate seeing representation in media, then why not cosplayers as well?”

Although she didn’t use a wheelchair in her early cosplaying days, Parker’s knees worsened, and she worried about using a wheelchair in crowds that were already difficult to walk through.

But with the right support, those worries subsided.

“*It’s great,*” Parker said. “*I got my handler, both for my chair and my personality.*”

She turned to her friend, a fellow cosplayer. “*It’s not too hard, right? I’m pretty easy to handle?*”

They broke out in laughter.

**Duo: A Star Wars Story**

On another floor of the convention center, 11-year-old twins were piloting ships from a galaxy far, far away.

Not only were they dressed up—their chairs were also incorporated into their Star Wars cosplays.

“I’m Rey, from *Star Wars: The Last Jedi,*” said Lauren, manning a cool grey Millennium Falcon. “*It’s hard to explain. Almost everything about her is awesome.*”

Her brother, Kyle, was in the cockpit of a sleek, midnight-colored TIE Silencer as Kylo Ren.

“I like being evil for fun because it’s fun,” he said. Although in reality, he’d rather be nice he admitted.

Between them was their dad and ship designer, Chris Byrd.

“You kind of get the motivation of these two and make it happen,” Byrd said. “It’s a bit of a teaching moment as well. I’ll say ‘Guess what I used a lot of? Math!’”

He stresses that he doesn’t come from any artistic background whatsoever and that it’s the vehicles’ linear design that makes them easy to create. Half the thought process goes into creating the ships from material that’s durable but doesn’t impede his children’s chairs in any way.

“*Next year and a half, who knows what they’ll be,*” he said.

Byrd looked at his craftsmanship. So did other Star Wars fans who stopped by and asked to take photos of the twins.

“The only problem that we have now is,” Byrd said, “I gotta make sure that their vehicles fit through the doors.”

**Looking Ahead**

Outside, away from the bustle of food trucks, a girl using a wheelchair petted a fluffy unicorn on her lap.

She had attended conventions for four years, usually cosplaying as characters from videogames and anime.

Yesterday, she was Chloe Price, a back-talking rebel teen with wild blue hair from the videogame “Life is Strange.”

Now, she was just Victoria, with a voice as sweet and mild as vanilla ice cream. At first glance, her grey t-shirt and pastel unicorn painted her as precious, almost cherubic, but her black wire choker and bold winged eyeliner hinted at a hidden moxie. It took a moment to notice that she had long black boots and teal leggings printed with dragon or mermaid scales.

Her future cosplays involve princesses like Snow White and Vanellope, a racer, from “Wreck It Ralph.” For the latter, she plans to deck out her wheelchair out as Vanellope’s car. According to Victoria, there’s no wrong way to cosplay in this community.

“It doesn’t really matter about who you dress up as,” Victoria said. “It just matters that you’re having fun.”

And for anyone who may be discouraged from cosplaying due to disability, Victoria says: “Don’t care what other people say if it’s rude and stuff. Because you can do whatever you want to if you really try.”
"My plan wasn’t to get into lettering. I enjoyed drawing comics as a kid and thought that’s what I wanted to do. I sort of fell into lettering."

He started his career as a web designer, yet always still drawing, when a friend who lettered for Marvel comics offered to teach him the ropes.

"He said, ‘I have more work than I can handle right now. I can teach you digital lettering and maybe you can supplement your income with some freelance work.’ It sounded fun," Wooton recalled.

Wooton has worked as a letterer for 15 years and has lettered thousands of stories for Marvel and independent publishers. He currently works with Image Comics, an organization that helps creators sell their original works. He now works directly with writers and artists to letter their work.

Even people who read comics aren’t quite sure what a letterer does," Wooton said. "Comics are a visual storytelling medium. Lettering is crucial to the storytelling. I get the script and the art. Then, I layout the dialog and narration on each page. I draw the word balloons and caption boxes and create the sound effects."

The sound effects—the BOOM, CRASH and RRRRRrrrrrring within the panels, along with the emotion conveyed through the size, shape and color choices of the lettering often carry readers through the story.

Wooton was introduced to comics as a boy when a cousin gave him his first copy of The Amazing Spiderman. "I was hooked," he recalled.

For his eighth birthday, his father gave him a subscription to Godzilla. He became a denizen of the Marvel universe.

Wooton was studying fine art in Florida in 1990 when he was paralyzed in a surfing accident. At the time of his injury, he could still move his hands and arms. Complications from his near-drowning postponed his decompression surgery. By the time it was done, Wooton was diagnosed with incomplete quadriplegia at C6 and spent months in rehab.

"As soon as my halo came off, I asked my dad to bring my sketchbook. I saw people drawing with a mouthstick in rehab and I really wanted to see what I could do," Wooton said. "I had to approach art differently. Instead of fine motor drawing with my hand and wrist, I started using my arm and began to draw more loosely."

His first recognizable figure was a dinosaur.

"It took a couple of years until I felt my skill level was back to where it was before I was hurt."

Wooton letters digitally using Adobe Illustrator and fonts that have been created from handwriting to keep the original feel of the work.

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As a storytelling medium, comics are expanding beyond superheroes to include other genres like horror, romance and politics. As more women enter the industry, strong, nuanced female characters are on the rise. “There are more women and girls reading comics and working on them for sure. And, there are more opportunities for people looking for something other than superheroes,” Wooten said. “The audience is changing. In fact, the biggest selling comics right now are published by Scholastic and aimed at teens and young adults.”

To round out his career, Wooton would enjoy the opportunity to letter for DC Comics. “Lettering Superman would be incredible with the connections to the spinal cord injury community through Christopher Reeve.”

Currently, Wooton is working on his own autobiographical graphic novel. He hopes it’s ready to publish by the end of the year.

Outside his LA studio, Wooton is known to advocate for and mentor people with disabilities. While living in New York state, he changed parking policies to include clear signage for access aisles.

“You can adjust software to account for tremors and range of motion challenges in your line stroke.”

Always, there were comics. Wooton had wanted to draw comics as a kid and remained smitten with the medium. He began drawing comics for “Life in Action,” the monthly publication of the United Spinal Association. He’s drawn a number of wheelchair rugby promotional posters including one for Ability360.

“Representation matters,” Wooton said. “Storytelling is a great way to advocate for marginalized communities.”

Find Rus Wooton’s art at RusWooton.com or on Deviant Art at RusWooton.DeviantArt.com. Watch for his upcoming autobiography to publish and then, perhaps, you’ll find him at a Comic-Con near you.
Heat permeated the concrete and plastic bench on which I sat, signifying a typical Phoenix morning, as I waited for Jill Sclease in the Café Cultivate courtyard.

When she arrived, people greeted her warmly— a familiar face at Ability360. From these interactions and her thoughtful responses, it was apparent she had a patient and kind personality—motherly, really. She had a way of putting people at ease.

If you haven’t met her yet, chances are you will meet her at some community event in the future. If it’s within the realm of recreational therapy, Sclease is active, from volunteering with Day at the Lake to helping people get back on the road with Driving to Independence.

“I love being able to help people overcome their challenges and find different ways to do things,” Sclease said.

She began her career as a recreational therapist at Banner University Medical Center, when it was Banner Good Samaritan Hospital, working there for 15 years before moving to St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center for the next five.

As a recreational therapist, she got three questions from people who were newly injured:

Will I ever walk again, or do things I used to?
Will I be able to have a relationship or children?
Will I be able to drive?
Accepting she couldn’t give any guarantee to the first question, she directed her efforts to questions two and three.

Sclease facilitated presentations on sexuality with a disability.

“That’s a crucial part of rehab; I wanted to do that,” she said.

“She teaches people just because you have a disability doesn’t mean you can’t have relationships,” said Karen Halgren, community resource specialist at the Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association, where Sclease does some of her presentations.

Halgren has known Sclease for 16 years. They met at Banner in 2002 after Halgren sustained a spinal cord and brain injury in a motorcycle accident. They reconnected in 2005 when Sclease created a women’s support group for spinal cord injury at Banner.

“We’ve been friends ever since,” Halgren said. “I don’t think I’ve ever met a more caring, loving person. She’s an amazing woman and mother.”

Family has always been central in Sclease’s life. “My parents live behind me; my sister lives a mile away.” She has two stepsons in their twenties, and an 11-year-old daughter.

“My family is everything, supportive and involved in everything I do,” Sclease said.

Halgren noted Sclease tends to see everyone as “family.” Her motherly warmth is a hallmark of her career and volunteer work.

Sclease became a Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialist aiming to tackle the frequently-asked question: Will I be able to drive?

“As a recreational therapist, part of my job was to get people back into the community. At Good Sam, I had the luxury of driving the adaptive vehicles, helping teach people to transfer in and out, and showing them the hand controls.”

When Sclease began working at Driving to Independence, Halgren was one of her first clients.

She never expected to teach adaptive driving, but when the opportunity presented itself in 2010 at Driving to Independence, she leapt at it. “I love that final stage of independence,” she said. “It’s amazing how many doors open up when somebody’s able to return to driving.”

Marcos Castillo also met Sclease at Banner Good Samaritan Hospital. Castillo sustained a spinal cord injury from a car accident in 2001 and now uses a wheelchair. He said Sclease was pivotal in his rehabilitation. He is currently learning adaptive driving with her.

“She’s the first who emphasized independent living to me. Without her, I don’t know where I’d be today,” Castillo said. “She taught me it was okay to get out; to be in relationships; to be a normal part of the community. Because at that point, my little-town mind was telling me I was going to be locked away at home and wasn’t going to be able to do things in public and have a social life.”

Sclease taught Castillo to adapt to the situation and keep a positive outlook on it.

“She has an excellent way of knowing exactly how hard to push you. And she used to push me really hard,” he said.

He described her as a bulldog: “She can be snuggly and loving one minute, but if you tell her attack, she’s the one you want on your side.”

Castillo laughingly claims Sclease saved his life at a community re-integration outing.

They were at lunch with friends and family when Castillo started choking on some fries. He was still wearing a halo brace and a hard vest. Quadriplegia compromises the diaphragm, making it difficult to cough.

“I’m choking, about to pass out, and my mom is trying to help, but Jill tells her to sit back and give me a chance to recover on my own.”

When it became clear he was close to fainting, Sclease stuck her hand up the vest and pushed on his diaphragm, helping him cough it out.

“I was trying to catch my breath and she said, ‘you ready to go again?’ And we kept eating.”

When not working or volunteering, Sclease practices Watsu (water shiatsu), a form of aquatic therapy, involving floating a person, using the water’s resistance and doing shiatsu pressure points.

“It’s really good for relaxation, stretching and range of motion,” Sclease said.

One of the biggest challenges of her job is seeing people in pain, physical or emotional, and Watsu is “another form of helping people not be in pain; helping them get on with things they enjoy doing.”

In upcoming years, there’s no doubt Sclease will continue to make waves in the community.
Exploring Arizona
Community Partners Team
Up For Trails Program

Nick Pryor uses the mountain trike on the Peavine Trail near Presscot
In search of Arizona’s beautiful scenery and accessible trails, Exploring Arizona hit the road in May to hike Peavine Trail outside of Prescott.

This was the fourth hike in the Exploring Arizona adaptive hiking series, created by the partnership between Ability360, Daring Adventures, the Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Foundation and Barrow Neurological Institute.

The first hike was at the Mogollon Rim. Elizabeth Moreno, a volunteer and employee at Barrow Neurological Institute, said they chose autumn so the group could chase fall colors.

Daring Adventures employee, Sarah Lindvay, explains that the trips are designed to allow people with disabilities to expand their horizons through exploring different parts of Arizona.

"With these hikes, they get to go new places, meet new people, try new equipment and learn about different resources they could use in their community," she said.

Making these outings successful takes collaboration between the organizations, including background research on all locations to confirm accessibility.

A good location would be nature-immersive but also have a relatively smooth and wide trail, accessible restrooms, picnic areas and accessible parking. Equipment, such as the Mountain Trike, various off-road chairs and safari chairs are provided by Daring Adventures and Ability360. A sighted guide is provided for hikers who may have visual disabilities.

"It’s great that people with all different ability levels are able to come out here and participate and be as independent as they can be," Moreno said. "And it’s great to get such a diverse group together, hear their stories and enjoy nature."

Participant, Ralph Sweeden, said he became involved in the program after Moreno informed him of the hikes. The Peavine Trail was his second excursion with Exploring Arizona.

"Before, I was at home, and when my family asked me what I was doing, I was doing chores around the house," Sweeden said. "Now I’ve been hiking, bike riding, rock climbing, taking yoga classes and golfing."

Sweeden has Radiation Myelopathy that resulted when radiation treatment for cancer injured the nerves in his spine. He also lives with Muscular Dystrophy and uses a wheelchair.

"It’s amazing what’s out here and I didn’t know it," he said.

Numerous possibilities exist for people with disabilities to enjoy recreational activities. That is what the organizations are working together to show the community.

Kristen Klenk, a long-time hiker but first-time Exploring Arizona participant, heard of the hike through Daring Adventures.

Klenk lives with cerebral palsy and walks with the help of a rolling walker. She enjoyed having the opportunity to try out the safari chair, but preferred to walk along the trail.

"This is the farthest I’ve ever walked. I really pushed myself," Klenk said. "I’ll definitely come back in the fall."

The series pauses for summer and starts again in the fall. The new hiking location and start-up date is still to be determined. To learn more, contact the staff at Ability360 or Daring Adventures:

Nick Pryor, Program Coordinator at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center NickP@ability360.org

Sarah Lindvay, Program Coordinator at Daring Adventures Sarah@daring-adventures.org

Need a rugged outdoor wheelchair?

Ability360 has two chairs that can be reserved for personal use. One operates as a standard push chair with beefy tires made for tough terrain. We also offer a Mountain Trike; a three-wheeled chair that operates with push-pull levers and a steering mechanism.

Contact Nick Pryor, Ability360 program coordinator, to reserve a chair. Due to the Mountain Trike’s unique propulsion, there is a short training session and “test drive” before taking the chair on your own.
This 12-mile loop trail is a hard-compacted gravel path that winds along the east side of Watson Lake in northern Prescott. Known for its dells (large scenic rocks), the lakeside trail offers unique views. Occasional shade trees line the relaxing, easy-to-traverse pathway. Peavine is a Rails-to-Trails pathway. Created when tracks are removed from former rail lines, these trails are wide and relatively smooth for hikers which creates exceptional accessibility for wheelchair users. The trailhead has good parking and a picnic area with water fountains stationed at the start. There are no fountains along the path, so carrying a personal water bottle is essential. A few benches mark designated resting points, but there are long stretches between. Pets and bikes are allowed, and the pathway is wide enough to allow all to pass comfortably.
The best part of this trail lies about three miles in. There, you get close to the water and the rock formations jutting from the lake. A little lagoon appears between two slender canyons. It’s truly a special spot to watch kayakers and paddle boarders also coming to enjoy the amazing oasis.

Once you pass the lake, there’s not as much to see, but it’s definitely a great place to exercise while taking in some special country.

* Parking is $3. Free on Wednesdays.
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