Independent & Active in the Southwest

Todd Key
Team USA para-cyclist finds his freedom

The Autistic Barber
C.J. Hernandez finds his superpower

A Warrior’s Heart
From battlefield to playing field

Paralyzed Pets
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Welcome to 2020. It even sounds strange to say. The first thing I am reminded of is that the ADA will soon be 30 years old. I’m so thankful that I’ve been a part of these past 30 years, and I’ll be writing more about the upcoming anniversary and what it means to me as it draws closer.

As I was thinking about what to write about at the 11th hour—as I always do—one of my VPs came in to chat about approving an expense. But with him was a young man. He was in the eighth grade and was shadowing the director, learning what he does on a day-to-day basis.

After being introduced, he reached, shook my hand and said to me, “Someday I want to work here.”

I smiled and thought to myself, “dang I didn’t expect that,” but I knew he truly meant it.

He’s been coming to the Sports & Fitness Center for many years with his family, and we occasionally ask them to participate in some of our promotional campaigns.

What I saw in him was confidence. Sure, it was raw and almost humorous, but it was genuine. And he’s exactly the type of person I hope does want to work for 360 in the coming years. I’m reminded that we need to be cultivating and recruiting every day if we want the best on our team.

In the last few years, we’ve had many conversations about doing more at 360 to support our youth. What can we do to make sure there are even more improvements between the 30th anniversary of the ADA, and that of the 40th and 50th?

So with this opportunity to communicate to those who read LivAbility, I want to challenge each and every person out there who has a disability and who has talents, skills, accomplishments, or even hobbies, to share. Be on the lookout. Lookout for somebody younger, maybe somebody with a similar disability or any disability, and allow them to shadow you. Let them watch what you do, see how you work, and grasp how you have succeeded. Let them observe, absorb and learn.

I think it would be naïve to assume that someday all people with disabilities will be treated just like everybody else. People of minority status who have been fighting this fight as long as we would laugh at that notion. Without question, we need to be encouraging tomorrow’s leaders, advocates and changemakers.

So welcome to the next decade. It’s the decade that I want to double down on the next generation.
Welcome to the premiere edition of LivAbility in the roaring 2020s! Many of our stories this edition follow incredible characters consistently pushing the boundaries of what’s thought to be possible. The future is looking very bright as we enter this decade with their remarkable passion and determination in our minds.

2020 is a big year (Paralympics/Census/Election) so we thought LivAbility would start out with a bang, too!

In our story about Todd Key, we’re reminded that one can reach their athletic prime at any age as the 58-year-old para-cyclist rides into 2020 as one of the highest-ranking cyclists in the world. Kasey Kaler tells his story of pedaling away from addiction and riding off into total freedom. A sniper’s bullet could not stop retired Navy Holly Katke’s relentless work ethic as she enters this new decade training to compete in the 2020 Warrior Games while also working to help solve environmental issues. Read Sarah Farrell’s impressive story on how Katke balances being a veteran, an athlete, and a mother on a quest to improve our planet’s oceans.

Going by “The Autistic Barber,” C.J. Hernandez attributes his ability to deliver precise and detailed haircuts to his autism. Hernandez dons his disability like the cape of a superhero as he also uses social media as a platform to inspire those with autism, proving one can make a career out of their passion.

The incredible drive we see in these stories isn’t just limited to humans with disabilities, but pets as well. From New Mexico, Maxwell, a dog with degenerative myelopathy, is as energetic and active as any other dog thanks to the work of Rescued Rollers, a nonprofit that helps pets with disabilities receive the equipment they need, like wheelchairs as told by our own Laura Stack.

We also happily welcome a new partnership between Phoenix Rising and our power soccer program. The alliance becomes just the second of its kind in the U.S. and we cannot wait to see what comes of it.

At the beginning of 2019, our team identified a few goals, one of them being to introduce more illustrations to pair with our fantastic photos and stories. This magazine is a perfect blend of both, mixing the incredible work of people on our creative team (Estefania Cavazos, Loren Worthington, and Summer Sorg) with other talented artists, i.e. Alison Baionno and Marieke Davis. We hope you enjoy their work as much as we do.

We also introduce a new icon to our readers. At the end of some stories, you will notice an icon similar to our Ability360 arrow with a cursor in the bottom right corner. This icon indicates the story has an accompanying video.

*Editor’s Note: The online version of “Even Arizona has Adaptive Skiing” in Edition 18 corrects an inadvertent mischaracterization of who initially started the “Skiable” snow skiing program at the Arizona Snowbowl.
Welcome to the newest edition of LivAbility
LivAbility is a quarterly lifestyle magazine for people with disabilities. Each edition contains articles that promote an active, fulfilling lifestyle for every ability.

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Contributors

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Rescued Rollers

Providing equipment and education for paralyzed pets

by Laura Stack
Maxwell, a German Shepherd and blue heeler mix, is just like any other dog. He’s got infectious energy and a smile that would melt anyone’s heart.

Every day he ventures into the backyard of his Santa Fe home waiting to hear the coyotes howl from Arroyo Hondo Canyon, so he can howl right back.

He goes on walks with his owners Becky and Barry Menich, sporting rubber booties on his hind paws and a pair of off-road wheels to help him navigate almost any terrain.

“We don’t call it his wheelchair, we call it his hot rod,” Becky Menich said.

His “hot rod” is adorned with a license plate that says “Max” on it. It gives him the freedom to run around outside and get much-needed exercise.

Maxwell is named after a mathematician. His full name is Sir James Clerk Maxwell Menich Ph.D., and he has degenerative myelopathy (DM). It’s a common disease among his breed, and for Maxwell, it means weakness in his legs that may eventually lead to paralysis.

The Menichs spent thousands on medical bills, searching for any option to help improve Maxwell’s mobility. That’s when the couple, who lived in Arlington Heights, Ohio when they adopted him, found Rescued Rollers.

The Ohio-based nonprofit was founded a few years ago by John Lizotte. It began when he tried to donate his border collie’s old wheelchair through Facebook.

Lizotte immediately got a lot of feedback from others on Facebook asking if he could collect and reuse their dog’s wheelchair.

And that’s how Rescued Rollers was born.

Since then, Lizotte has donated hundreds of wheelchairs a year and has volunteered his time to educate local shelters. He educates dog rescuers in Ohio on how to accommodate dogs in need of mobility devices and to address options beyond euthanization.

He also works closely with local animal shelters.

Most of the shelters that Lizotte helps lack equipment. So, Lizotte sends the essentials: wheelchairs, lifting harnesses and boots to prevent their knuckles or the affected limbs from scraping the floor while being held up in a wheelchair or lifting harness.

Another important part of the organization is wheelchair recycling, refurbishment and reuse.

Whether his clients keep his donated wheels for three weeks or 10 years, they agree to send them back to Rescued Rollers for reuse. They have a lifetime-loaner program for anyone who receives donated wheels. They can recycle the wheels back through the organization so that he can continue to refurbish and re-donate.

“One wheelchair only helps one dog, and then it sits in somebody’s garage or basement or gets thrown away,” Lizotte said. “I now have wheelchairs in my program that they’re helping 46 dogs, because we recycled.”

In the future, Lizotte said he hopes to expand Rescued Rollers to offer more resources such as access to rehabilitative equipment to loan out to his clients, and teaching more shelters and rescues on how to accommodate animals with disabilities.
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Heart of a Warrior

Holly Katke’s journey from the battlefield to the playing field

We often try to put people in a box. Attach labels to them to try and define who they are.


True, Holly Katke is all of these things, but none define her. She doesn’t fit in any one box. She transcends them.

The one common thread throughout her life though has been her passion to serve those around her. To give all she can to the people and places that matter most.
Katke joined the Navy after high school and had a decorated 14-year career as a chief petty officer. The combat medical corpsman was fluent in multiple languages, including Arabic. Being a woman and medic who spoke the language made Katke an invaluable asset, and she was recruited by special operations command for a joint operation with the Navy SEALs.

While on that mission in Iraq, she was shot in the head by an enemy sniper. It was just days before she was scheduled to fly home; it was also the day before her 30th birthday. The shot resulted in a traumatic brain injury.

The injury has left Katke with partial blindness, aphasia and paralysis on the right side of her body. Aphasia usually occurs after a stroke or brain injury. “In my mind I know what I want to say, but the words aren’t exactly coming out of my mouth,” Katke explained. “Because the bullet, it stopped between my temporal and parietal lobe.”

While it may have slowed her down, it never stopped Katke.

Katke moved to Arizona in 2018, where she discovered the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center and the Warrior Games. Igniting a desire to train and compete.

“*When I was introduced to Ability360, that was my first time outside of the VA looking around and seeing people like me of all injuries and disabilities,*” she said. “*It just motivated me.*”

Even though she wanted to, Katke was unable to return to the military after her injury. So she took that energy and channeled it into her education, raising her daughter and her athletic training.

She now spends about three hours training twice a week. She goes from the bike to powerlifting to the rowing machine all within the course of one training session. Every once in a while, she’ll jump in general exercise classes as well.

Even on her “days off,” Katke spends time working out in her home gym.

“I have my own bike and dumbbells, and everything else so that I can work out at home,” Katke said. “So I work out every single day except Sundays.”

As an athlete, Katke is extremely dedicated to her training.
A LONG ROAD BACK

Shortly after she was injured, Katke was flown back to the U.S. to a military hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. The bullet remained in her brain for three months before the swelling went down and doctors were able to remove it.

Shortly after that, Katke moved to the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital Polytrauma Center in Tampa, Florida to rehab from the injury. Little did she know, the people she met there would remain supportive figures in her life even to this day.

“I was the only female on the floor [in Tampa],” Katke said. “And Cory [Remsburg] and I were the only ones with that sort of head injury where we had a traumatic brain injury.”

Remsburg was a member of the Army Rangers when he was injured by an improvised explosive device during his 10th tour of duty. While Remsburg was recovering, his stepmother Annie Remsburg was in Florida to take care of him.

“[Cory] was going through his rehab at the same time that Holly was there, and they became friends,” Annie Remsburg said. “In doing so, I got to know Holly, and my heart went out to her because Holly didn’t seem to have a lot of family support. She had family that was coming and going, but no one really seemed to stay there.”

Katke’s sister was one of the most constant familial figures during her recovery, but she was still active duty in the Army. She stayed for four months, but then the Army wanted her to go back, Katke remembered.

“So I didn’t have anyone, and Annie was there for me,” Katke said. “She would bring me food, and she would talk to me. She would get me out of the VA. She would take Cory. She would make lunch or breakfast.”

And she would say, ‘Why don’t you come and join us?’

The journey was long and arduous, but Katke applied the same level of dedication to her recovery as she had in her years of military service. When she was well enough to be released, she went home to live with her uncle in Washington.

The transition back to the Pacific Northwest was not easy for her though. She lived in Sequim, Washington, a small town of a few thousand people surrounded on one side by the towering Olympic Mountains and the Puget Sound on the other. The secluded town on the Olympic Peninsula is about a three-hour drive from the closest VA hospital in Seattle.

“Holly didn’t really have a circle of friends [in Washington],” Annie Remsburg said. “She didn’t have a lot of exposure to other veterans. To people that she could relate to.”

There weren’t any Ubers or even taxi cabs in the town, Katke recalled.

The seclusion and dismal weather in Washington added to the depression that Katke said she struggled with.

Annie Remsburg remembers one particular call with Katke while she was still in Washington. “She said, ‘I’m just so depressed. I hate it here. It’s cold. It’s rainy. I just don’t like my life here at all.’”

Even though it would mean leaving her family and her home in Washington, Katke knew that she needed to make a change in her life. She wanted something better for her and her daughter. So Katke summoned all of her strength and courage and made the move to Gilbert, Arizona.
THE MOVE TO ARIZONA

The move to Arizona was by no means an easy one. There were moments of panic when they first moved, Katke recalled. “What am I doing here?” she remembered thinking. “I can’t live here by myself.”

But with the support from her friends, the Remsburgs, and her immense personal strength, Katke and her daughter settled into their new life in Arizona.

Katke is now connected with veterans groups. She volunteers regularly with her daughter. She has her own house, which was donated and renovated to be ADA compliant by the Carrington Charitable Foundation.

When she moved to Arizona in 2018, Katke also became very active training at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.

Training has become an extremely important part of her life.

For Katke, working out is a private moment of escape; a way to help conquer the depression she said she still lives with. “When I work out, it’s about me,” she said. “Whether I’m in a good mood, a bad mood or a terrible mood, it gives me time to think and process.”

When she started working out, the whole idea was to be able to compete in the Warrior Games, Annie Remsburg said.

The Warrior Games is an annual athletic competition organized by the Department of Defense for wounded, ill and injured service members from every branch of the military. In 2019, the games were to be held in Tampa, Florida.

Katke had been making plans for a summer trip to Florida for months, training nearly every day on her own and with the staff at Ability360. As the Warrior Games approached, she got a request for help from her friends and co-workers at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium that she could not ignore.

“I got a phone call in January,” Katke said, “They said that they were short-handed, and a lot of their staff was moving out. And I’m just the type of person that if someone asked for my help, of course, I’m going to be there.”

Without a second thought, Katke decided she wasn’t going to compete in the Warrior Games this year. She went to Key West instead.
LIFE BEYOND SPORT

While she was getting her B.S. in Health Sciences and Environmental Science from Trident University, Katke worked at Mote as part of the Combat Wounded Veteran Challenge for coral restoration efforts in 2015. She stayed on after graduating and completed an internship with Mote.

Since then, Katke has completed her Master of Science Degree in Health Sciences and Public Health, also from Trident, and she has continued to volunteer with Mote.

This year, Katke worked alongside Alex Fine, a staff chemist in the ocean acidification program. Katke was part of a study that examined how sea urchins’ behavior changes with ocean acidification.

“A lot of people with the combat veterans program come down to Mote every year to go diving with our field team,” Fine said. “And since Holly is unable to dive with them, she’s just so enthusiastic about helping out in any way she can. And she’s found a great spot in the laboratory.”

Katke’s work ethic is one of the things that stands out most to Fine.

“She’s very vocal about contributing, and always has ideas and something to add to the conversation,” Fine said. “She was definitely a team player in getting everyone on the same page and keeping everyone positive. She was just overall a really great person to work with.”

It’s a work ethic that is evident in every part of Katke’s life.

Next year, Katke won’t have to choose between volunteering at Mote and competing in the Warrior Games. She’ll continue her research with ocean acidification over the summer and travel to San Antonio, Texas to compete in the 2020 Warrior Games in September.

Katke has certainly been through a lot in life, but she doesn’t let just one thing define who she is. She’s guided by her dedication to serving others.
Not Broken (Movie) Review
A Documentary that Destigmatizes: A Review of AZPM’s “Not Broken”

In October, Arizona Public Media mental health reporter, Gisela Telis, hosted a free screening of AZPM’s documentary, “Not Broken,” at The University of Arizona’s Gallagher Theater. The no-cost viewing, which was shown in collaboration with UArizona Campus Health’s Counseling and Psych Services granted audience members access to free popcorn and a beverage. Following the documentary, Telis moderated a panel with four cast members from the documentary.

Directed by Bob Lindbergh and supported by the David and Lura Lovell Foundation, “Not Broken” is an hour-long documentary that discusses mental health through the lens of seven young adults.

Viewers are introduced to Brynn, Andrea, Gabriel, Michael, Brenda, Angel and Rickey, a cast with varied racial backgrounds, sexual orientations and mental illness diagnoses. Of the seven, Brynn, Brenda and Angel took part in the panel.

The documentary gives us insight into the cast member’s day-to-day experiences, as well as intimate moments with their family and friends. The documentary educates viewers by shining a light on the mental illnesses the stars of the documentary say they each have. It also featured therapists and counselors who shared their knowledge about mental health.

While the documentary does an exceptional job of addressing mental illness and destigmatizing it by showing the seven featured people living life and getting the necessary help and support they need, there are some transitional flaws in the storytelling. Certain cast member’s backgrounds were lacking.

Some of the storylines were even neglected, such as Andrea and Rickey’s. After audiences are introduced to them, that’s all we hear. By not telling their stories as in-depth as the others, it creates a sense of confusion. We’re led through a structural arc with the other cast members, where at first we see them at a low point and then see them progress and receive help, coinciding with the documentary’s message that those who have mental illnesses are capable of living fulfilling lives.

Andrea and Ricky’s storyline did not receive the same attention.

There were also abrupt transitions, such as Brynn’s. First, viewers are introduced to Brynn and learn that she self-harms. After venturing through other storylines, we’re suddenly brought back to Brynn, and she’s packing to go to college. Oddly enough, Brynn’s pursuit of higher education was never mentioned. A prior mention of Brynn’s interests and plans would’ve been nice and possibly had a bigger impact on audiences with its relatability.

Don’t let the productional flaws deter you from watching this documentary, for it truly is an insightful body of work. Sure, filling in storyline gaps would strengthen the execution of the message, but nonetheless, “Not Broken” still succeeds at helping end the stigma surrounding mental health, educating viewers on mental illness and highlighting the perseverance and resilience that those with mental illnesses possess.

~ Ambur Wilkerson
“My Dad Matthew,” a multi-award winning film, is a story told from Elijah Wangeman’s perspective about his dad, Matthew Wangeman.

It’s a six-minute documentary that packs several mighty anecdotes, including one admission from the movie’s namesake’s son.

“When I was seven, I asked when I was going to get my chair,” Elijah Wangeman said. “Cause I thought that everyone, when they became an adult, got to get [sic] a wheelchair, and I wanted a wheelchair.”

Matthew Wangeman is a father, a professor at Northern Arizona University (NAU), holds several degrees from the University of California, Berkeley, has been a disability advocate for over three decades, and has cerebral palsy.

The film takes aim at the word “normal” and what Matthew and Elijah’s relationship and day-to-day life entail.

The day-to-day that includes Matthew Wangeman instructing a course about disability studies at NAU, an honorary coach of NAU’s football team, and a passionate advocate of affecting change in the disability community.

“My Dad Matthew” was directed by John Schaffer, a colleague of Matthew’s at NAU. Schaffer’s received a grant that would fund films about people with disabilities, with a stipulation that the film had to shift the perception of disability.

The natural fit for that? Matthew Wangeman and his life.

Although Matthew Wangeman has a disability, “he lives a very normal life,” Schaffer said.

“I [am] not affected mentally … some of my friends would disagree,” Matthew Wangeman jokes to his class in one scene in the documentary.

Schaffer and the production company he co-founded, Wild Asperagus Productions, didn’t initially plan on the film confronting disability stigmas through Elijah Wangeman’s perspective, however.

Once filming started, it was clear that the tone of the documentary would be heavily impacted by the relationship dynamic between Matthew and Elijah Wangeman.

“Technically, the movie was not supposed to be called ‘My Dad Matthew,’” Matthew Wangeman said. “Elijah happened to be there on the first day of filming and completely changed the perspective of the [filmmakers].”

“Elijah gives Matthew that feeling of being a role model and that sense of normality in that family unit, even though it’s different than other family units,” Schaffer said.

As Elijah depicts in the opening minute of the short film, “I’m supposed to tell you about my dad. His name is Matthew, and he’s a pretty normal dad. He’s really into technology and sports and that kind of thing, so we argue about the Yankees and the Steelers.”

In short, the film is articulate and emotional in a way that only a son can deliver.

Not just any son, though, a son whose father is often judged by his physical appearance more so than his character and passion for affecting change.

You can find “My Dad Matthew” on Wild Asperagus’s YouTube channel.

~ Kasey Kaler

If you’re looking for some movies relating to disability this winter, we hope you take the time to check these out. Let us know if there are others we should review for our next edition. Editor@ability360.org
Winter

Walnut

Wonder

by Steve Norton
During this festive time of year, there’s one binding element that brings people together: food.

Whether it’s a family recipe passed down through the generations or a new recipe you are trying out for the very first time, family, friends and new acquaintances can bond over a shared meal.

Renowned poet Maya Angelou once wrote, “There are very few times we can be more intimate as to share food together.”

Food, especially around the holidays, can be comforting for many. A slice of turkey dripping with gravy at Thanksgiving, or a warm bowl of hearty pasta on a cold winter night. The meals we eat can help renourish our soul and change our outlook on life.

However brief the moment is, getting together with friends and family to share a meal can bring you closer together. Whether you are meeting a friend for a cup of coffee to catch up, enjoying a home-cooked dinner with your family, or out on a first date, this time spent together allows you to cultivate and sustain relationships. Spending a few hours with someone over a shared meal can provide a safe environment in which you can share your ups and downs, fears, joys and successes.

After my stroke, I did not let my disability overshadow my love for food or cooking up a great meal with friends and family. I learned new methods of cooking, discovered adaptive cooking tools and ways to use the cooking tools I was already familiar with. I enjoy sharing my love of food and cooking with others, especially during the holidays.

While whipping up new creations in the kitchen by yourself can be enjoyable, sharing a recipe with a friend, or trying a new recipe together can be a great experience. It’s an opportunity to learn about new foods and enjoy time cooking and growing with those you love.

Try something new this winter season, and make this delicious pasta dish. Cook it for someone special in your life, or share at your next get-together with friends or family. For a lower-carb option, you can substitute the pasta with any of the fresh, dried or frozen vegetable pasta or choose whole wheat or gluten-free pasta.

**Winter Walnut Pesto Pasta**

**Prep Time:** 25 min.  **Cook Time:** 20 min.  **Servings:** 4

**Ingredients**

**Pesto (can buy good quality pesto to save time)**

- 1/4 cup raw walnuts (plus more for garnish)
- 1/3 cup finely grated parmesan
- 1 cup firmly packed flat-leaf parsley leaves (about 1/2 a large bunch)
- 2 medium garlic cloves, peeled & roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice or red wine vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Pinch of ground black pepper
- 4-5 tablespoons good quality olive oil

**Pasta**

- 8 ounces rotini pasta or other
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts (16-18); dirty end of stem & outer leaves removed, quartered lengthwise
- 1 yellow bell pepper, seeds/stem/membranes removed, cut into bite-size strips
- Kalamata olives, sliced into rounds (optional, for serving)

Photos by Estefanía Cavazos
Toast walnuts in a 350-degree oven on a rimmed baking sheet 10-12 minutes until they begin to darken; stir once or rotate the pan halfway through. Cool slightly, then roughly chop walnuts. While walnuts toast, prepare other ingredients.

If making homemade pesto, do it ahead of time or first. Using a food processor, blend parmesan, parsley, toasted walnuts, garlic, lemon juice or vinegar, salt, and pepper until nearly smooth paste forms, scraping down the sides of the bowl several times; drizzle in olive oil while the processor is still running until fully combined. Taste the pesto and adjust seasoning. Use immediately or store a few days in the fridge.

Start boiling water for pasta and cook, al dente, according to package directions as you prepare and cook the vegetables. When draining pasta, reserve ¼ cup cooking water.

Heat a large skillet (preferably cast iron) over medium-high; when hot, add 1 tablespoon oil and heat until nearly smoking. Add peppers (they should sizzle) and spread in a single layer, cook 2 minutes undisturbed until browned; remove peppers to a bowl. Add another tablespoon of oil to the pan and allow to heat. Spread Brussels sprouts in an even layer in the pan, turning one of the cut sides down; cook for about 2 minutes undisturbed until brown on the first side; cook another 2 minutes, stirring occasionally until lightly softened when you test one. Turn off heat, add peppers back to the pan and allow the pan to cool 5 minutes, stirring the vegetables occasionally to avoid burning.

Add most of the pesto and 2 tablespoons cooking water to the vegetables. Stir until incorporated and pesto sauce covers the veggies. Add more water if the pesto is very thick. If too much water was added, heat to a low simmer to reduce the liquid. Add cooked pasta to the pan and stir to combine and coat with pesto. If noodles have cooled, heat the mixture over low to warm. Taste and add remaining pesto, salt, and pepper as needed. Serve warm topped with additional grated parmesan, chopped walnuts, and sliced olives.

Pairs well with the light watercress salad shown on the right page. A great dessert to serve with this meal is a chocolate torte.

Toast walnuts in a 350-degree oven on a rimmed baking sheet 10-12 minutes until they begin to darken; stir once or rotate the pan halfway through. Cool slightly, then roughly chop walnuts. While walnuts toast, prepare other ingredients.

If making homemade pesto, do it ahead of time or first. Using a food processor, blend parmesan, parsley, toasted walnuts, garlic, lemon juice or vinegar, salt, and pepper until nearly smooth paste forms, scraping down the sides of the bowl several times; drizzle in olive oil while the processor is still running until fully combined. Taste the pesto and adjust seasoning. Use immediately or store a few days in the fridge.

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Pairs well with the light watercress salad shown on the right page. A great dessert to serve with this meal is a chocolate torte.
Place watercress in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk the honey, vinegar and water together. Pour over salad and toss well to combine. Season with thyme, parsley, salt and pepper, then toss the salad again.

Until our next cooking adventure, keep eating to thrive!

**Watercress Salad**

**Ingredients**
- 1/2 cup watercress leaves
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 3 tablespoons cold water
- 3 tablespoons fresh thyme, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons fresh Italian parsley, finely chopped
- Salt & pepper to taste

**Chef Steve**
Ability360 Power Soccer on the Rise
Phoenix Rising FC and Ability360 announce new collaboration

by Kasey Kaler

Phoenix Rising Football Club and Ability360 announced an official partnership between the professional soccer club and the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center’s adaptive power soccer program.

Under the agreement, the Ability360 power soccer team will rebrand to the Ability360 Phoenix Rising Power Soccer Program. The team will don a similar crest to their counterparts and become the first local power soccer program to be affiliated with the professional soccer team.

The partnership becomes just the second of its kind in the U.S., as Louisville City FC forged a similar alliance with LouCity Power Soccer in April 2019.

Power soccer is played by people with disabilities using a custom power wheelchair specifically designed for the sport. Each team is made up of four players including a goalkeeper and played on a basketball court. Using a foot guard that extends past the front of the chair, players pass and shoot an oversized soccer ball.

“We are beyond excited,” Gus LaZear, vice president and general manager of Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, said in a press release. “Community partnerships such as this give our players and fans a sense of pride that can make all the difference.”

The team is coached by Tony Jackson and also includes a developmental team. Last season, Ability360 was crowned national conference champions.

“I came back to Phoenix with the goal of creating a winning program,” Jackson said. “It’s great to be aligning ourselves with a professional team that has become such a powerhouse.”

Phoenix Rising General Manager Bobby Dulle said the club is excited to welcome these athletes to the Rising brand.

“We look forward to providing another platform to expand the reach of adaptive power soccer,” he said in a prepared statement.

For 2020, both clubs plan to host activities for fans to become more involved in the Rising partnership.

From left to right: John Beaubien, Phoenix Rising Head Coach Rick Schantz and Ability360 Head Coach Tony Jackson.
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Moshing for Mental Health

Using the freeing nature of rock music and dance

by Ambur Wilkerson

Illustration by Estefania Cavazos
In early November, the second annual Mosh for Mental Health took place at Tucson’s The Rock. Promoted by Motor Mouth Productions, the event held space for people to know they’re not alone when it comes to mental health.

Attendees were encouraged to wear costumes in celebratory post-Halloween fashion and the lineup of local bands, ranging in genre from metal to reggae, played all night. There was even a silent auction and raffle.

Proceeds, including ticket sales and what was raised from the auction and raffle, went to Tu Nidito, a nonprofit in Tucson that provides emotional aide to children dealing with grief and hardships.

From the event’s concept down to the chosen charity to donate to, these details were a result of the collaborative planning efforts of Laura O’Meara and Rachelle Fernandez.

“It was kind of my idea to start the event. I’ve always been in and out of mental health clinics and kind of dealing with mental health,” O’Meara said. “And I was volunteering at a local mental health charity down here called Our Place Clubhouse, and it just kind of dawned on me that I know the metal scene and stuff like that and why couldn’t we throw a show that just kind of gets rid of the stigma of mental health.”

The idea to have the event centered around moshing to rock music stemmed from the freeing message the music and eclectic dancing emits.

“With moshing and with rock and metal and punk, they’re all kind of things that kind of make you see it. They [the bands] make you see their music because they are out there and they’re not afraid to show who they are. They’re not afraid to be anything but wild and crazy,” Fernandez said.

“I feel like we’re breaking the stigma [of mental health] because we’re trying to put it out there, like punk would and like metal [music] would.”

Another participating group was the Arizona Hardcore Community (AZHC), managed by Kristi Davis and Jeffrey Locke.

“The AZHC is a completely local, grassroots effort,” Locke said. “It came together a few years ago when a group of friends who all happened to play in local bands decided to come together as a way to support each other’s music. We also wanted to put on live shows as a way of giving back to the community and local charities.”

And giving back to the community is what they helped do, even offering a snare drum to be raffled off as well.

When asked what she’d like to have people take from this event, O’Meara elaborated on the importance of bringing mental health to light.

“This is something that, even if you don’t have a mental condition, somebody that you know and love does,” O’Meara said. “This affects everybody, and it’s not something that we have to hide. It’s not something that we shouldn’t be able to talk about.”

The event raised $600 for Tu Nidito. The night was loud, but in the best way possible. Mosh for Mental Health’s loyalty to being bold and very “in your face” did not disappoint.

“Honestly, it’s amazing. I love watching all these people just coming together, all these different ... characters and all these different unique people coming out of the woodwork,” Fernandez said.
THE KEY TO FREEDOM

At age 58, Arizona cyclist Todd Key is striving to make Team USA and get on the road to Tokyo.

Ask any competitor what winning feels like; the answers might be wide-ranging.
Then ask para-cyclist Todd Key what winning feels like.

To Key, winning is a little different, surpassing the simple binary structure of victories and defeats. Winning knows no boundaries. Winning breaks through barriers, stigmas and is devoid of any prosthesis.

 Winning is freedom.

Since his international cycling career began just seven years ago, he’s amassed 17 national championships, a top-ten world-ranking in road cycling, and a top-15 world-ranking on the track.

His career, albeit brief, is one that any cyclist would be incredibly proud of, let alone a 58-year-old.

For Key, it’s always been about that little dose of freedom.

“Once you get on that bike, the freedom is complete,” Key said. “You have this whole other ability of speed that’s just not available with prosthetics, even [for] runners.”

Key speaks about the freedom cycling affords him with infectious energy. Grinning and candid, his eyes almost glazing over as he narrates his triumphs.

His grin widens a bit more as he recalls moments that he’s stunned two-legged cyclists, or the “normies” as he affectionately calls them, with his speed as a one-legged rider.

“When I’m riding, there’s no one—there’s no two-legged person on a bike—that can get away from me on a downhill. Not Lance Armstrong. No one.”

“Most people are blown away when I ride away from them. They never see me again,” Key said, a smirk on his face.

Born in Chicago, Key was just seven when he fell out of a tree, resulting in a compound fracture in his right hand. The tendons in his forearm and hand became infected shortly thereafter, and he lost the functionality of the hand.

When Key returned to school, he was teased. “I was the outlier. People with disabilities didn’t go to school [in the 1960s],” he said. “The crazy bullies picked on people with disabilities. So, I learned how to punch people in the face very quickly.”
TODD KEY
Para-cycling
Scottsdale, Arizona
Key described himself as "troubled," and began smoking marijuana. At 15, his parents decided to send him to a private school in Wisconsin with the settlement money they had been awarded from the hospital who mistreated his injury.

"I remember coming home, and my parents had decided it was a good idea if I were to help them run insulation in the attic," Key said. "They weren't even like 'you should get some knee pads' or something. It wasn't a finished attic either so I just had to crawl around on the beams all day [and lay insulation]."

Fiberglass insulation in the '70s and '80s was often made up of large shards of glass.

It was that first night after working that he put two and two together, pieces of fiberglass had gotten into his knee. But Key ignored the intense pain and swelling, instead opting to not tell anyone for nearly a month.

"It got to the point that I couldn't even bend it and the pain was all the time," Key said.

By the time he saw a doctor, he ended up being rushed to a hospital where he was told he had carcinoma in his right leg. Doctors amputated above the knee.

Key was just 17. He spent the next 18 months being treated with chemotherapy and was then fitted with a prosthetic leg.

Nearly 11 years later Key applied to an engineering program at Arizona State University (ASU), and moved to Tempe, Arizona.

It was in engineering school that Key met Bruce Braley, who was an avid bike rider.

"I never introduced him to cycling with the thought that this is what he would do forever," Braley said. "It was just something else to go do. We'd hang out or go for a ride."

Key had to make numerous modifications to his bike that would allow him to pedal with just his left leg and use the front and back brakes with his left hand, but it was his first taste of that freedom.

"I quickly discovered that every time I rode to class, anyone who was on a bike, I would just destroy myself to go past them as fast as I could."

But riding his bike for longer than 30 minutes would become painful. Key began tinkering with his set-up once more, working to shift his weight off the seat. He also added other functional adaptations, to the handlebars, brakes and pedals, but quickly became frustrated with the lack of solutions.

That's when Key's history of drug usage found him once again. His neighbor was dealing drugs and finally Key caved and tried "everything," but only one gave him that feeling of euphoria: meth.

"I fell in love," Key said. "I thought, 'I can do this stuff every couple of weeks, I'm fine. Then I thought only once a week. Then I thought I'd only do it on the weekends, I'll be fine. I'll just do it every three or four days, I'll be fine. Maybe I'll just do it every other day.'"

"But it's not really the kind of stuff that you can do every other day."

Although drug addiction consumed him, he still managed to excel academically.

At 32, he had finished his degree at ASU, switching majors from engineering to education, and graduated summa cum laude. However, teaching wasn't for him. So he found himself living off a disability check and credit cards, moving money around month-to-month to stay afloat. His drug use continued and he had all but given up on cycling, too frustrated and busy to continue.

Until one day he found himself broken down near Wickenburg, Arizona waiting for his girlfriend at the time to show up.

After two days of waiting in the broken down car, he had an
He was an addict and needed help.

He started walking back to Phoenix, stopping to call his sister in Birmingham, Alabama. She told him of a halfway house there in Alabama.

That was when Braley stepped in once more, offering Key a couch and a few weeks to figure things out. Ultimately, he bought a plane ticket to get Key to Alabama.

Key got sober and started working for various car dealerships in Alabama before coming back to Arizona, ending up at a Porsche dealership in North Scottsdale.

He was sober and making good money as a car salesman, but he had started gaining weight. He decided the best way to get back in shape was on a bike.

It brought him full-circle.

He bought a bike and started riding it to and from work every day. It seemed that a dose of freedom had found its way to Key once again. But the same frustrations with the seat and handlebars resurfaced.

Key and those around him began to experiment with different seating options, like an angled, custom-padded seat. He also had a bike stem custom-made by a metalworking shop that was attached to a bike store.

Key borrowed an idea from a future teammate, Paralympic Cycler Allison Jones, and manufactured a carbon fiber socket that attaches to the seat post and cradles his leg. The socket gave him balance and leverage when cycling.

That little dose of freedom had finally become full freedom.

Key started racing around the country when serendipity hit. A metalworker from the bike shop in Phoenix ran into Key at a race in California in 2008.
“Same exact person who tracked down Allison Jones had been talking to this guy and telling him about you [Key] and he said you should do this Paralympic thing.”

Key went home, and applied to a Team USA Paralympic cycling camp. An acceptance email came back to Key quickly, and he hopped on a flight with a track and road bike.

“They were testing me on that bike ride. Just pretending it’s natural and racing up hills,” Key said. “And I thought, ‘No, you’re not dropping me. You don’t understand what you’re dealing with.’”

“So that was the beginning. Next thing you know I was buying more bikes. Going to track nationals. Going to world championships. Winning.”

Winning and transcending his athletic peak.

Typically athletic performance decreases as people get older. Research has shown that a typical athlete’s peak years are from age 26-31.

Key’s international career began just over 10 years ago, at 49. Ever since, Key has continued to work and to improve.

“We somewhat jokingly refer to his effort level as ‘Zone T.’ Within endurance sports, there are different zones of energy output, like one through five,” Greta Neimanas, Key’s cycling coach said. “And then way beyond that is ‘Zone T,’ and Todd is the only person that I’ve ever met who has consistently been able to just go straight there.”

It’s an experience that he explains is somewhat akin to flying. The feeling of riding his bike now that he’s figured it out. The feeling of freedom.

The love Key has for cycling is infectious and genuine.

“Cycling fills that void that he was trying to fill with drugs,” Braley said. “It’s healthier. His addiction to meth was replaced with an addiction to cycling.”

Key’s chase has never been about winning—although he’s won quite a bit—it’s always been about freedom.

He enters 2020 as a Paralympic hopeful in a packed C1 category, working his way back from a broken femur that he suffered during a race in April 2019.

But if his history proves one thing, as long as he’s cycling, he’s a force to be reckoned with. 😊
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As a child, visits to the barber would instill fear in Carlos Joseph (C.J.) Hernandez.

Hernandez would be driven to tears by the grating wail of an electric razor shredding through countless locks of hair—seemingly slicing scalps—as well as the signature set of barber shears that might poke a person’s eye out.

Eventually, Hernandez took matters into his own hands and began cutting his own hair. At age 15, Hernandez picked up his first razor, a moment he describes as life-changing.

Hernandez, now 28, works as a barber at Jhonny’s Barbershop in Avondale, Arizona. As he fashions a fade for a regular client, he is methodical, meticulous and locked in a razor-sharp focus.

Hernandez calls this detailed approach to haircuts a side effect of his “superpower.”

However, unlike your typical comic book hero, Hernandez’s superpower is not veiled under any sort of secret identity; rather, he displays it prominently and proudly.

It was during a presentation for his classmates at community college where Hernandez revealed this superpower to his peers. His presentation was on the topic of autism. Hernandez had asked the class if they personally knew anyone who had autism. After only a few hands went up, Hernandez let his superpower be known.

“Actually, you all know someone with autism,” Hernandez said to his class. “My name is Carlos Joseph Hernandez and I have high-functioning autism.”

According to Mary McEvilly-Hernandez, Hernandez’s superpower was not veiled under any sort of secret identity; rather, he displays it prominently and proudly.

It was during a presentation for his classmates at community college where Hernandez revealed this superpower to his peers. His presentation was on the topic of autism. Hernandez had asked the class if they personally knew anyone who had autism. After only a few hands went up, Hernandez let his superpower be known.

“Actually, you all know someone with autism,” Hernandez said to his class. “My name is Carlos Joseph Hernandez and I have high-functioning autism.”

According to Mary McEvilly-Hernandez, their doctors were at first hesitant to use the label of autism, whereas the Hernandez family embraced it; thus, they were able to find C.J. the proper resources and education specialists while he was growing up.

“Everywhere where we went, we found an angel that helped guide us,” McEvilly-Hernandez said.

It was his twin sister, Carly Hernandez, who would keep an eye on her brother and help him with socializing when they were growing up.

“We had a running joke that I was his interpreter,” said Carly Hernandez. “I would clarify details for him if he was telling a story about school or having difficulties with a conversation.”

Carly Hernandez said this role she played has influenced her current career path, as she currently is studying to be a speech therapist for people with autism.
"I think I could be a support for others like I was for my brother," said Carly Hernandez. "C.J. was a huge influence for me."

McEvilly-Hernandez said she was a little worried about Hernandez getting into barbering, as it would be a very social environment that might not always have the most patient of clientele, especially regarding interacting with someone with autism.

In addition to his autism, C.J. Hernandez was diagnosed with auditory-processing issues, which can make it difficult for him to communicate with others. According to him, while auditory processing disorder can overlap with autism, he personally views it as a separate issue entirely.

"It's like there's this wall," said C.J. Hernandez on his auditory processing disorder. "That's what has been holding me back for years."

However, C.J. Hernandez said working at the barbershop has only proved to be beneficial for his social skills. "I'm starting to get better at communicating," he said.

At first, he was reluctant to share his condition with others, but as he got older, he began to see his autism as something to be proud of.

"I'm not ashamed of it anymore," said C.J. Hernandez about his autism. "My goal is to inspire others in the autism community and those that support them."

In addition to barbering, C.J. Hernandez operates an Instagram account, @cjtheautisticbarber, where he posts almost daily. Currently, his account is sitting at over 1,400 followers. Many of the posts include photos of his latest haircuts or captions regarding autism awareness. One post reads: "Autism is a gift of life that can change the world."

Carly Hernandez said she believes her brother's social media account can make a positive impact on those with autism.

"Someone with autism can see that they can find something they like to do and get a career out of it," said Carly Hernandez. "It can be a big confidence boost."

According to C.J. Hernandez, his Instagram posts have received positive feedback from parents of kids with autism. He also has been asked to be a guest speaker at the same community college course where he first revealed his autism.

"That's what my purpose is," said C.J. Hernandez. "To show that anything is possible."
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After years of playing and coaching competitive wheelchair athletics, Peter Hughes, the director of athletics at the University of Arizona’s Disability Resource Center, decided he wanted to give back to the sport of wheelchair basketball.

He founded Wheelchair Athletes Worldwide, a nonprofit, which collects old sports wheelchairs and donates them to developing countries. They also travel to those countries and host a training camp.

Wheelchair Athletes Worldwide works throughout the year to collect equipment and has donated and facilitated training camps in India, Nepal, Peru, and as of September 2019, a community of people with disabilities in Bandung, Indonesia.

The wheelchair basketball clinic took place September 9 through 11 in a gymnasium in Bandung, according to Mia Hansen, an attendee of the trip and the executive director of Southern Arizona Adaptive Sports.

Donald Santoso, an Indonesian-American who lived and studied at Arizona State University, reached out to Hughes, inspiring the trip to Indonesia.

Santoso recruited over 30 participants, many of whom were part of Jakarta Swift, a community wheelchair team, and helped lead the clinic alongside Bandung community members.

Santoso said they loaded all the wheelchairs into a van and drove eight hours from Tucson,
Arizona to Los Angeles International Airport, where they met up with Dan Altan, a founding member of Wheelchair Athletes Worldwide and a coordinator of the trip.

Wheelchairs are a rare sight in Bandung. The sidewalks are often so bad that people walk on the streets. “It’s almost like you’re off-roading,” Hughes said. “You feel for the other people with disabilities because we’re very spoiled here in Tucson.”

Hughes and Altan coached and lead beginners in wheelchair basketball, many who had never sat in a wheelchair, much less a wheelchair built for sports. “I have never seen a more excited group of people than those newcomers who sat in sports chairs for the first time,” Hansen said. “They quickly picked up on the American style of coaching and eagerly absorbed every drill, every skill thrown at them. There were lots of sore muscles, but high spirits, full hearts and happy athletes at the end of the camp.

“There was a lot of people crying when we’re leaving, thanking us and hugging and taking photos,” Hughes said.

Since the trip, participants from the camp in Bandung began the planning stages of hosting a three-on-three wheelchair basketball tournament and made a team that plans to compete in the Asian Para Games.
KALEO KANAHELE MACLAY
Honolulu, Hawaii
Sitting Volleyball

Following his usual routine, David Furukawa, led by his guide dog, Simon, was walking his then four-year-old son to school. He had recently retired from Emory University and was settling in as a house dad. Their reverie was broken as they were crossing the street. A car ran a stop sign. Simon pushed Furukawa’s son out of danger, but the car still hit Furukawa and his guide dog. Furukawa sustained multiple fractures, and Simon did not survive.

“It was one of those life-changing moments,” Furukawa said. While at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Furukawa was visited by longtime friend Chris Webb. Webb was determined to find a solution that would provide more safety and the information necessary for Furukawa to feel comfortable navigating the world again.

“We knew there was going to be some level of post-traumatic stress disorder with me getting back out on the street,” Furukawa said. “But what really sealed the deal for me was we go on this music cruise every year called the Rock Boat.”

The Rock Boat is a maritime music festival and a shared holiday tradition between Furukawa and Webb.

“For me, maneuvering a cruise ship by myself is difficult at best without having somebody guiding me along the entire time,” Furukawa said. “So, Chris came up with the idea of utilizing the Bluetooth beacons to provide points of interest on the ship.”

Bluetooth beacons are devices placed around the tangible world that can communicate with one’s smartphone and provide them with information tailored to the location. For instance, if a beacon is placed in a restaurant, it can display the menu, inform the user about specials and provide the restaurant’s hours of operation.

“We put something like 70 beacons around the ship for Dave just to see how it would work for 18 hours at one time,” Webb said.

From this experiment, the duo created Foresight Augmented Reality (FAR), a company that utilizes Bluetooth technology to provide accurate
information about the user’s environment focusing not only on navigation but context.

“There are a lot of different applications available and adaptive technology out there that provide navigation services to the visually-impaired, blind and disabled,” Furukawa said. These applications use point-to-point navigation or GPS navigation.

“They say turn left here, turn right here,” said Furukawa. “But it doesn’t give you [the] context of what’s actually around you.”

Webb says this context is important because people use landmarks to create mental maps of their environment.

“We’re using our technology to give that same information to a visually-impaired person through audio prompts,” Webb said. “So, they can build their own mental map in their head and use their own navigation skills and their mobility skills to get around.”

Webb and Furukawa have designed their business model around making this service an affordable solution. The app itself is free and beacons, along with a subscription to the FAR networks, are priced reasonably for businesses, universities and governments, according to Webb.

“What we’re finding is that really every business wants to help,” Webb said. “They all want to help the visually impaired, but they don’t see a lot of them. And we have to explain that a lot of them don’t get out because they don’t have technologies like this that will make an environment accommodating to them,” he says.

Ability360 has four beacons located at different points of interest throughout the campus. We asked our colleague Larry Wanger to test the beacons and give us some feedback.

Wanger is the Vice President of Employment Services at Ability360 and a writer at *LivAbility*. He has a visual impairment.

“It’s got a lot of potential uses,” Wanger said. “[It is] hard to compare this versus Google Maps or something. It has a very different purpose, but given good directions and that sort of thing, it could be really helpful.”

“One of the drawbacks is that it’s a very specific application,” Wanger said. “I wouldn’t know these were here if I didn’t have the application launched and it detected it,” he said.

“There are other technologies that have come out in the past, specifically directed at low vision people where you had to have really expensive equipment and devices,” Wanger said. “This is nice. It’s just there.”

Furukawa and Webb have been updating and improving the app based on user feedback and are now expanding to a larger user group including those with cognitive disabilities, Furukawa told *LivAbility*.

The FAR app is available for IOS and Android. Beacons have been installed in eight states and the UK.
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A high-five may seem like a simple gesture, but as anyone who has played a sport can tell you, it means so much more. It means anything from “great job,” “we did it,” “thanks for being my teammate” or “I support you.” With this in mind, we have started a way for our fans to give Ability360 a high-five every month with a recurring donation.

The High Five Monthly Giving Group is a recurring donation club that has no minimum or maximum giving amount. Each dollar pledged helps Ability360 continue to support over 2,700 members and their health and wellness goals.

“We give because we believe in what Ability360 does. I see it. I live it. I know the heartbeat of this place, and that’s why we give and love to be a monthly contributor here,” said Frank Sole, High Five Monthly Giving Group member and triathlon swim coach.

According to the 2018 Global Trends in Giving Report, 45% of worldwide donors are enrolled in a monthly giving program. This trend seems to be growing annually and appeals to many generations of donors. From the charity perspective, monthly donations enable an organization to have consistent, predictable income.

“The monthly funds generated by this group will help us maintain our 45,000-square-foot facility and keep it in tip-top shape for our members,” said Gus LaZear, vice president and general manager of the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.

High Five Monthly Giving Group members Stuart and Trista Burns say, “My wife and I are proud to join the High Five Monthly Giving Club because of our great experience with the Ability360 team over the years. For us, meeting many of the world-class athletes who call Ability360 home and how adaptive sports has been life-changing for them. In addition, the management team have been wonderful business partners as well and all of the events from national tournaments to local events are always phenomenal. The High Five club offered us the convenience of automated monthly giving, and we will also be able to partner with our employer at the end of the year for matching funds and double our impact to such a great organization.”

Supporting Ability360 is as easy as a high-five. To join the High Five Monthly Giving Group, please visit ability360.org/donate today.

Ability360 Donation Information

Ability360 is a 501(C)(3) organization. Through contributions to Qualifying Charitable Organizations (formerly known as the Working Poor Tax Credit), you can donate your Arizona Tax Credit to Ability360. If you would like to consider a planned estate gift to Ability360, such as a will or trust, life insurance policy or retirement account, please designate the gift to Ability360 in your estate/beneficiary documents and/or execute a gift agreement clearly indicating your legacy wishes. All donation information can be found on our website at www.ability360.org/donate. For more information, please contact Meghan Fable, director of development, at meghanf@ability360.org.
Sending a huge thank you to Devin Booker and the Phoenix Suns Charities for choosing Ability360 as a recipient of the Devin Booker Starting Five grant! Big things coming to the Sports & Fitness Center!

(From left to right): Ivan Carreno, Devin Booker, Nick Pryor, Gus LaZear, Liz Williams
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THE WOMAN BEHIND THE WORDS

A Look at Marin Sardy's Experience Writing "The Edge of Every Day: Sketches of Schizophrenia"
Every writer has their place. The place that they create, formulate, congregate, etc. For Marin Sardy, this place is a coffee shop, one she coins her "usual haunt." On a typically sunny Southwest afternoon, Sardy invited us to this haunt, where she was found in a corner alongside a window that draped her in the desert sunshine.

In true writer fashion, she was typing away. She politely asked for a moment to finish her last sentence. Once she typed the last few words she wanted to document from her memory, she set her work aside and shared with us what it was like working on her latest body of work, "The Edge of Every Day: Sketches of Schizophrenia."

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, schizophrenia's prevalence in American adults is 0.25% to 0.64%, totaling about 1.5 million people. While mental illness is becoming a topic people are more willing to talk about and destigmatize, there is one group we must include in the conversation: the group of people who live with loved ones who have a mental illness.

Sardy's memoir explores these themes, for she is the daughter and sister of two people who have lived with schizophrenia.

"The Edge of Every Day: Sketches of Schizophrenia," published May 21, 2019, is a personal narrative in which Sardy recounts memories and interests throughout her life, such as her knowledge of gymnast Svetlana Boginskaya and her bold fashion statements as a young adult.

Along with her personal reflections are details on moments with her mother, and brother, Tom, who she said were both diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Sardy candidly reveals her journey through learning more about her two relatives and their struggles and discovering how schizophrenia traveled throughout her family from generation to generation.

Another part of her journey she reveals is what it was like to hold onto familial bonds that she said were challenged by mental illness. Further in the book is where readers learn about the loss of her brother, Tom, who died by suicide.

She verbally illustrates the pain of seeing her loved ones ill:

"That several years later, after doctors and medications and our help have achieved little, after Tom has denied his illness and turned us away and landed in the soup kitchens and homeless shelters of downtown Anchorage, I'll know this beach is where I lost him. And that years in the future, at a beach again while on vacation in Mexico, I'll find myself running frantically along the shore, alone, looking out past the breakers as they beat at my ankles, hollering, "Tom! Tom! Tom!" Looking for him, knowing full well that he's nowhere near Mexico. I'll be sobbing as I run, and for several minutes I'll refuse to stop calling his name."

Illustrations by Alison Baione
Sardy’s memoir is an honest, elaborate piece of literature that highlights mental illness, shows us what schizophrenia can look like through the perspective of an outsider not diagnosed with it, and navigates living through challenges.

When writing so transparently, it’s safe to assume it’s not easy.

“I felt all the emotions. I felt it was incredibly therapeutic, but it wasn’t therapy. Does that make sense? You know, I have gone to therapy to deal with much of the things that have happened in my life,” Sardy said. “And if I hadn’t done that, I don’t think I would have been able to do the writing.”

The therapeutic feeling for Sardy bloomed from being vocal.

“The way that the writing was therapeutic, I think, was in breaking the isolation that I felt and in doing something so that I could feel like now this will be known and understood in the way that I need it to be seen and understood,” Sardy said.

Her way of making it seen was putting a microscope over what those with schizophrenia deal with and the neglect they face. Through her family, she’s had the chance to see firsthand how people with schizophrenia are treated.

“My feeling with schizophrenia is that people with schizophrenia are largely invisible … They’re often thought of as kind of not really people anymore, not deserving of the same kind of human consideration that other people get,” Sardy said. “I have seen that directed at my loved ones my entire life. I’ve also seen people do wonderful things for them.”

Exposing wrongdoings evoked therapeutic emotion within Sardy.

“But for me to be able to say that I’ve seen that and to share with the world the ways that I have seen my loved ones be mistreated and misunderstood has given me something,” Sardy said. “Maybe a sense of peace that I don’t think I could’ve had if I hadn’t.”

Sardy intends to normalize topics often seen as taboo, such as mental illness, and homelessness, an experience that her brother faced. Adrienne Sardy, Marin’s sister, wants that to be a focal point.

“I would want people to take away … how deeply humanizing her work is toward homelessness and mental illness,” Adrienne said.

Sardy notes in her book how her mother refuses treatment and a clinical diagnosis. Sardy addresses her mother as someone with schizophrenia in her memoir and in everyday life, so it’s only natural to question her mother’s reception toward the book.

“She understands that most other people in her life identify her as a person who has schizophrenia, and she is remarkably very okay with that. I think this speaks to what kind of a person she is—she believes everyone has their own perspective and she believes that I have the right to share my perspective,” Sardy said. “Her response, I mean, was complementary mostly, which is so sweet, but also, was that ‘Okay. Now I’m going to tell you how I see it, and we’re good.’”

Sardy also expressed gratitude for her mother, sharing that despite her mother’s different perspective, had her mother not been so supportive of her sharing that very same perspective, the book would’ve been less possible to write the way she needed to.

Sardy’s book took years. Eight total, she calculated. Her proofreader was her husband, Will Palmer.

He touched on the duality of the book.

While it serves as a book about schizophrenia, Palmer highlights that it is a literary memoir, and he wants it to be seen by anyone who admires literary work. His aspiration for the memoir to be recommended in The New Yorker attests to this.

“It’s meant to be creative nonfiction,” Palmer said. “She had a lot of good response to it as beautiful writing.”

It is indeed beautiful writing. Sardy stays committed to detail, admirable unfiltered truth and vivid description throughout.

For Sardy, her writing is purposeful. She wants her words to uplift.

“There’s people who have been through the kinds of things that I write about in the book. What I want them to take away from it is a sense of hope and optimism,” Sardy said.

She also wants to bring major awareness.

“I think I want to put schizophrenia on people’s radars as a real issue in this country that hasn’t been effectively dealt with,” Sardy said.
When asked what society can do to better support those with mental illnesses, her answer was rooted in two essential things: mental health resources and a willingness to listen to those with varying mental health conditions.

"To better support people with mental illness ... we as a society need to properly fund mental health services," Sardy said.

"Underlying this need is, I think, an even deeper need to listen to people living with mental health conditions about their experiences, and to learn from them what services are most valuable and provide the greatest benefits to their quality of life."

So, what's next for the author? Well, she's working on her second book.

"I'm not ready to talk about it in much detail, but it continues my explorations of schizophrenia and of art as well," Sardy said.

She also plans to deconstruct society's view on disability.

"So much of what is considered disability is difference," Sardy said. "Much of the suffering of people who live with mental illness does not come from the illness itself, but to the way it's received in the world."

There's no doubt her work will continue to open up eyes and minds.

There's also no doubt she'll probably produce some of this work in a quaint coffee shop. ☕️
Over the past few years, Prescott, Arizona has grown tremendously, and with that growth has brought the city’s first adaptive fitness center. The new gym, known as the New Horizons Disability Empowerment Center, opened in October 2019.

It was born from one person’s passion for staying active and created for those who share that passion. It looks like a standard gym, but it is equipped for much more than a standard fitness center can provide.

Andrew Bogdanov, a fitness coordinator at New Horizons and a main driver behind the gym, is a handcycler, wheelchair-basketball player for the Ability360 Phoenix Wheelchair Suns and all-around sports fanatic. He lives in Prescott but commutes to Phoenix multiple times a week in order to use the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center and to practice with the basketball team. He hopes New Horizons will help those who are unable to make the commute regularly.

“Ability360’s got what they’re doing and it’s amazing, but I’m trying to take what they’re doing, kind of partner with them, and then expand out to Northern Arizona,” Bogdanov said. “We’d like to … branch out and have adaptive sports everywhere for people, because not everyone can make that drive down to Phoenix.”
Tommy Schroeder, an employee at New Horizons, added that he hopes the center gives people the resources they need to stay active and maintain a healthy lifestyle; that there is more to living with a disability than a lot of people expect.

“I just want to have people know that there’s an opportunity for people to do things and to be active,” Schroeder said.

Right now, the center is small, consisting of a one-room gym, and an outdoor basketball court, but the goal is to keep expanding. The first step of expansion is starting a New Horizons wheelchair basketball team.

“It’d be great to have another team to compete within Arizona,” Vice President and General Manager at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, Gus LaZear, said.

LaZear said Ability360 has sold and donated equipment to New Horizons and is in full support of its growth as the only Center for Independent Living in Prescott. New Horizons is close to being able to start a basketball team.

“We’re close,” he says. “We’ve got the court and we have a few chairs.” Now it’s all about raising money for the remaining chairs, which he hopes to do through a fundraiser in which he handbikes across the country.

“Getting into sports for me was a huge part of my therapy. It was my outlet,” Bogdanov said.

Bogdanov got into a snowboarding accident in 2014 that left him paralyzed from the waist down. He got through what doctors estimated would be six weeks of therapy in just two weeks and credits his “outlet” for helping him do so.

“I was really motivated to get out and live life still,” he said.

Continuing to be active helped him keep his independence.

“And because I fell in love with sports … because it helped change my life after my accident, I want to give that opportunity to other people. And so that’s why I’m doing this gym here,” Bogdanov said.
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