

LiveAbility

Celebrating 40 Years

ABILITY360

40

Years

10

Years

SPORTS & FITNESS CENTER

Special Edition

Phil Pangrazio

Retiring after 20 years at the helm

Cool Careers: Quinn Brett

Accessibility, advocacy and preservation
in National Parks

Soup for Every Season

Chef Steve's French Onion soup recipe

Park Smarter

Technology to solve parking headaches

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CREATIVE NOTE

A reflection from LivAbility publisher Loren Worthington

There are not many CILs around the country where someone from the marketing department could make their way upstairs to pitch the 'great' idea of publishing a magazine to their boss.

But 21 editions ago I had that conversation with our President & CEO, Phil Pangrazio. He listened to my pitch, gave our marketing department the support we needed, and here we are signing off on Edition 22.

That pitch was that we needed to be telling stories. Stories of people living their lives, and personifying the Independent Living philosophy. It's of the utmost importance to myself and to all of us who create this magazine that we've done our very best to get this story—Phil's story—out to our readers.

There's no question that the bricks and mortar that make up the Ability360 campus will serve as Phil's legacy. It's a physical testament to his ability to grow a small and obscure nonprofit into a community leader. Not just an organization that was at the forefront of the disability community, but one of the largest and most-respected nonprofit organizations in Arizona.

I've spent the past 10 years working for Phil at Ability360. And that comes after a pretty long and successful career working for myself. So working for somebody else doesn't come easy for someone like me, and yet in this past decade, it has been a pleasure to work for and with Phil.

Four times a year when we have our All Staff meetings, that's when everyone in the organization gets to see his personality. Each department gets the opportunity to show what I think he is most proud of: the effort that all of our staff put forth to do good work in our community.

That's it; it's the people.

And nothing drives that home more than each meeting when he gives a plaque to those who have spent five years



or 10 years working for Ability360. Each quarter, it seems as if there is almost always someone who has worked two decades for the organization. After presenting that plaque, it's followed up with a quick story about or a laugh with that person and that's what I believe his true legacy to be. He finds the best people to be part of the organization and gives them the support and encouragement to flourish.

Part of my job has always been to identify opportunities to communicate our message to the public. You see, Phil's office is no bigger and no grander than anyone else's here at Ability360. But that's the thing about Phil; he's never been about being the "face" of Ability360. He's always been more than willing to let others jump in front of a camera or provide a quote to a reporter. That's Phil.

As we met to shoot the cover of this edition—which is the only time we have had the same person on the cover—he and I made a quick observation that this could very well be the last time we take his photo for something related to Ability360.

It meant something.

I took this job because I want to tell stories. I wanted to take photos of interesting people. I think this story, the cover story of this edition, is truly why I took the job.

Phil—that's why I'm still here. 🍷

Photos by Estefanía Cavazos

Phil Pangrazio

Loren

A MESSAGE TO PHIL

Reflecting on your legacy

Back in the day, and we mean way back in the day, Phil Pangrazio wrote a column for the ABIL monthly newsletter. It's likely he approved a quarterly magazine simply to cut the writing down for himself.

And so as he departs, we thought it fitting to truly get him used to retirement by letting him off the hook. No doubt we'll be inviting him back to reflect on the occasional story but for this special edition we reached out to some of those in our community who know him best to add some final thoughts.

Good luck, Phil. Thanks for making Ability360 such a great place.

Andrew Reilly, Ability360 Board Chairman:

"I'm a lawyer, so [in my mind], the legacy that someone leaves is kind of what they leave behind for other people. That's probably the biggest part of Phil's legacy that I see, the tremendous growth that's occurred at Ability360. The fantastic people that he's hired to help lead, it's just such a great group of people, and I think that's a very big reflection on him as a person. The organization is in an incredible state. It's very secure financially. It continues to grow, and serve so many consumers. And it's just this wonderful organization with wonderful people.

"I've been around a lot of organizations, and very rarely, if ever, have I seen a group of people that are so great at what they do and so passionate about what they do. And that's not just the VPs we have now, but the VPs we had before. They're a reflection of Phil, otherwise, you wouldn't have seen that great continuity and growth we've had as an organization."

Mark Cundall, ABIL Board Member 1981-1991:

"I was on the selection committee when we selected Phil. Well, I think he was the right guy at the right time. He had the financial background, and experience through Maricopa County Hospital. We had been smaller [and] successful but we were ready to take that next big step and Phil had the right skillset to take it forward."

"Taking the organization to that next huge leap, that was really a very huge undertaking. It was back under Bob Michaels that he talked about developing a campus and doing the kinds of things that Phil was there to bring into reality. So it was a fulfillment of a vision I think, and the

dedication to stay there, be there long enough to see that success occur. That's a pretty big legacy, in my opinion."

Brad Wemhaner, Board Member:

"For the last nine years I've been on the Board of Directors for Ability360, and watching him as CEO he's kind of been a mentor. Just seeing his leadership style, his techniques, you know how he tries to anticipate things, how he communicates, his relationship with the board, his relationship with his VPs. I've learned from that in my professional role as a leader, as a director of my team.

"I think Phil's legacy is really the growth of what was ABIL to now Ability360 over the past 20 years. The number of consumers served, moving from Downtown Phoenix to the current location, being able to provide the office space for all the different disability organizations. That's definitely a huge accomplishment."

Scott Hogsett, 360Heat:

"He's the identity of Ability360, to be honest. And from the second he got here, he has done nothing but improve the lives [of people with disabilities] and take it to the next level. When I first met Phil, many, many years ago, he was one of the first guys I met, when I moved to town, he became one of my mentors, one of my good friends. And now he's like family. He and I had this vision of having this gym where we could play rugby, and be able to go there, whenever we want. He just had this dream of making a sports facility to help out the disabled and he brought that to life. Basically, the Sports & Fitness Center is a special place for people with disabilities to go train and make themselves better, not just athletes, anyone with a disability to go down there for recreation socially and physically and I think that's what Phil is known for; bringing that to life."

Kelly Buckland, Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living:

"Well, I think that is Ability360. He's built that organization into something incredible. It's probably the crown jewel of [CILs], there are a lot of good [CILs] but Ability360 is one of the crown jewels." 🍷



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*Phil Pangrazio,
President & CEO of
Ability360.*
*Photo by Estefanía
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Contributors



Kelly Beaubien

Kelly Beaubien has been a member of the Ability360 family for over five years as a caregiver. Kelly has a bachelor's in education from Arizona State University and teaches English to ESL students. She is the mother of two boys and wife to Ability360 graphic designer, John Beaubien. In her free time, she enjoys crafting and the occasional live 5k or virtual race.



Kasey Kaler

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Kasey Kaler is a graduate of Gonzaga University's Sport and Athletic Administration M.A. program and Arizona State's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication B.A. program. For the last six years, Kasey remained true to her passion for producing content for a multitude of platforms and sharing stories to help people view differences as an asset.



Sarah Farrell

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Sarah Farrell holds a master's degree in sports journalism from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, and a bachelor's degree in communication with a minor in sports management from Trinity University. She is a Texas native who has fallen in love with hiking the Arizona wilderness.



Aitana Yvette Mallari

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



Candy B. Harrington

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As a travel writer for 45 years, Candy has covered accessible travel exclusively for the past 25 years. She's the founding editor of Emerging Horizons, and the author of a library of accessible travel guidebooks, including her popular national park series. And when she's not on the road, she enjoys spending time with her travel photographer husband in their California Sierra home.



Steve Norton

A native of Santa Ana, CA, Steve Norton has been in the hospitality industry for the past 30 years. He attended New York's prestigious Culinary Institute of America and has worked as a private chef. Steve loves to share his knowledge and expertise in healthy eating, including menu planning, managing a food budget, and cooking with fresh ingredients.



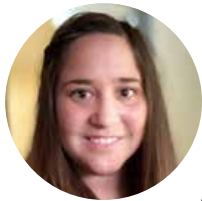
Tony Jackson

Tony Jackson is a graduate of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. He started playing power soccer in 2009 and has no plans to stop anytime soon. In addition to being an athlete, he puts his journalism skills to use as a broadcaster of power soccer tournaments around the world. He currently works at the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, and also coaches and plays for Ability360 FC.



Kaitlyn Stone

Kaitlyn Stone is a graduate of The Art Institute of Phoenix with a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic and Web Design with a minor in Illustration. Stone currently owns her own graphic Design business, INKHOUSE Design, where she creates graphic design projects, websites and social media for small businesses around the world. When she is not developing graphic design, she is an avid outdoorswoman and enjoying the nature Arizona has to offer.



Whitney Thompson

Whitney Thompson is the Senior Marketing Manager at the National Ability Center and has served on the marketing team for eight years. Growing up in Utah, outdoor recreation has played a major role in Whitney's life – from Telemark skiing and mountain biking to Nordic skiing and camping, she cherishes time spent outside with friends and family and works to welcome people of all backgrounds and abilities into their own outdoor journey. To learn more about National Ability Center's adaptive programs visit discovernac.org.

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LivAbility

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COOL CAREERS

QUINN BRETT

*Accessibility and
preservation in the
National Parks Service*

by Sarah Farrell

Towards the end of summer 2020, I was melting under the intense Phoenix heat and feeling like a caged animal after quarantining for months during the COVID-19 pandemic. I, like many others around the country, was looking for a socially distanced outdoor vacation.

The national parks in Southern Utah, Zion, to be specific, seemed like the perfect escape.

As a non-disabled person, it was easy enough to find camping arrangements and make plans to

hike around the park. But I couldn't help but think how impossible this same trip would be for my friends and family with disabilities.

For those in the disability community, accessibility remains an issue.

Historically, short, paved, highly-trafficked trails are the only accessible options at many national parks.

Many in the accessibility department of the National Parks Service (NPS) have been working to change this, including Quinn Brett. In July, Brett was hired for a three-tiered position

at the NPS, focusing on wilderness accessibility, rock climbing, advocacy, and preservation of public lands.

"She brings such passion and understanding to it, especially in the emerging technology applications," Bob Radcliffe, Division Chief of Conservation and Outdoor Recreation and one of Brett's three bosses, said. "She has such credibility with not only the outdoor community, and the outdoor industry, but also with the disabled community."





Photo by Dan Gambino

Before her injury, Brett was a speed climber and a technical rescuer at Rocky Mountain National Park. In 2017 she was climbing El Capitan at Yosemite National Park and fell over 100 feet suffering a T11 spinal cord injury.

GROWING PASSION

Brett grew up in Minnesota's frigid northern winters but was introduced to national parks from a young age.

"My dad's family tradition—him growing up—he would visit national parks," Brett said. "So he carried that through with my brother and I. We drove from Minneapolis to the Badlands [South Dakota]. And then, as we got older, we just got further and further west. By the time I graduated high school, I had visited all of the national parks west of the Mississippi."

It was on those trips out west that Brett first encountered rock climbers.

"You know as you get to be a teenager, you're pushing the limits a little bit," Brett said. "So you're hiking, and you're scrambling, and then I just saw rock climbers. And I was like, 'I wanna do that, Dad!'"

As an adult, Brett moved to Colorado. She became a speed climber, traveling the world to ascend various mountains.

She also competed as a triathlete and held a prestigious position as a professional technical rescuer at Rocky Mountain National Park, a position rarely occupied by a woman.

That all changed in 2017 when she was climbing the Boot Flake on The Nose on El Capitan with climbing partner Josie McKee. She fell over 100 feet and suffered a T11 spinal cord injury.

"It's wild to think I had this injury, and I was struggling with 'Where's my job going to be?'" she said. "Now, this lovely human [Radcliffe] created this job for me that includes my joys and passions."

A NEW JOB

Bob Radcliffe had been thinking about issues of wilderness accessibility long before he met Brett. In the 70s and 80s, he worked for Outward Bound and was part of adventure programming for people with disabilities.

"So early on, I really had an awareness and worked with people who had disabilities in the outdoors," Radcliffe said. "I really spent my whole life working in outdoor recreation, and always with an eye towards enhancing access for persons with disabilities."

Their first interaction was a chance meeting at an American Alpine Club dinner. Brett was the speaker that night at the club's annual dinner.

"I was really impressed with how she articulated herself," Radcliffe said, "about her life now after her accident and her personal struggles."

The two connected back then about Brett's future working with the NPS.

"She wasn't quite ready [at that time]," Radcliffe recalls, "but we kept in touch. And we talked back and forth. She was interested in continuing work in what she was passionate about, which was wilderness, wilderness management, and climbing management."

In 2020, Radcliffe collaborated with his colleagues in the Wilderness and Accessibility programs and cobbled together an entirely new position. As he describes it, the



Photo by Lisa Foster



Brett's position with the National Parks Service is remote. She lives in Colorado and telecommutes to Washington D.C. Part of her job entails working with park rangers, like Jesse Miller, around the country to improve the accessibility of the parks.

job is someone who explores opportunities for making the outdoors accessible for all, deals with emerging technologies, and helps with policy work.

“Quinn has kind of drove straight in on it,” he said. “She’s organizing webinars. She’s working with our climbing managers on climbing policy. She’s working on wilderness and accessibility projects. A lot of it is winning hearts and minds [within the parks service], training and helping people understand what the art of the possible is.”

Brett has also begun working with parks to figure out which trails have the highest potential for minor modifications to make them more accessible.

In his mind, Brett is genuinely the best person to fill these three roles. “I was looking for somebody like Quinn for years, really,” he said. “First and foremost, she was a parks service ranger, and that gives her credibility. And then she knows about our preservation mandates and our sustainability, management desires, and so she can walk that line.”

Brett came on board in July 2020, so the start has been a little bit slow with the pandemic, she said. She technically works in Washington D.C., but commutes virtually from her home in Estes Park, Colo., in the backyard of the Rocky Mountain National Park.

Even though she’s only been on board for a few short months at this point, Brett has a long list of dreams she hopes to accomplish to make national parks more accessible.

Brett’s Dreams Include:

- Filling a Sprinter van with mobility devices and traveling around to different national parks, and letting people know when she’d arrive so they could come and check them out. Thereby opening up access to these expensive devices.
- Installing interpretive rangers in mobility devices to lead interpretive ranger tours.
- Mapping out the trails at national parks, so visitors can make informed decisions when they arrive.

The final point is a plan she’s already begun executing.

“So what I’ve been doing is putting a GoPro on my [mobility] devices,” Brett said. “And when I can—one time a week in the summer—going out on the trails and national parks to [use a geographic information system] GIS [to map] them and take pictures of obstacles.”

The goal is to create an online database where people can find information about what trail might work best for them. Right now, what’s labeled accessible are the one-mile paved trails in the busiest parts of the parks, she said.

“I, as a person with a disability, now miss a wilderness experience, or

Brett uses a Bowhead, a motorized, off-road capable handcycle when she is trekking with friends and family or for work. The device, she said, has given her a renewed sense of independence to go beyond traditional, accessible areas of a park.



more recreational experience or solitude experience,” she said. “And I don’t get any of those as a person with a disability. You’re kind of funneled into this one little spot.”

But most trails are already wide and flat enough to accommodate modern mobility devices.

THE MOBILITY DEVICE DEBATE

It’s an age-old debate within the National Park System, whether or not to allow motorized devices. It’s a quandary that the NPS has had to address related to many different types of devices, Radcliffe said. To find a way to introduce these devices in a sustainable, fair, and equitable manner. Often this means designating specific trails and sections of the park where you can use devices.

As recently as December 2020, the NPS introduced a final regulation governing the use of e-bikes within the National Park System. This applies to both two-wheel and three-wheel cycles.

After her injury, Brett began using handcycles to continue to explore and express her love of nature—even if it wasn’t the same as before.

“It was a little bit demoralizing,” she said. “Trails I used to run up in 20 minutes, it would take me an hour or more just to use the handcycle to get up it. But once I got the battery, that was life-changing.”

Now Brett uses a Bowhead, which is a motorized, off-road-capable handcycle. The Bowhead can get tricky on rockier trails, like those in the Rocky Mountain National Park, but it does expand her mobility a great deal.

When she did get it out to the specifically built bike trails of Moab, Utah, she was able to experience its full power. “I was like, ‘Oh shit, this thing is fun!’” she remembers thinking.

There is a wilderness preservation element to accessibility as well, Brett acknowledges.

“I think that one of the big stigmas of people with disabilities is they think we want paved [trails], or that we need super wide [trails],” she said.

She remembers one trail in particular that counteracts this notion—Long’s Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park.

“That’s my favorite mountain,” she said. “I’ve summited it 50 times. I got on that trail for the first time with my mobility device, and I was like, ‘Holy

shit, this whole time, this trail has been perfectly wide enough. Like not really scary to treeline. I need one hiking buddy [to get up].”

Radcliffe echoed this sentiment. There is a fine line they must walk between making trails accessible and preserving the land’s natural elements.

Harry Kent understands the difficulty of walking that line all too well. A fellow resident of Estes Park, he knew Brett long before her accident. He runs a guide service in the city and has a son born with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA).

When he was very young, Kent used to carry his son Owen on his back—taking him to numerous parks, down various canyons in Utah, and even repelling over a cliff.

“I’m always thinking about him when I’m out,” Kent said. “Not so much climbing on a rock, but when I’m hiking on a trail. Going, ‘Hmm, this is a trail Owen can actually get to, or no, this is a trail Owen likely will never ever be able to get to.’”

When Kent does notice those small opportunities for change, he often points them out.

“If I see something that’s pretty obvious that they could do, and they should do in order to make it easier for someone with a disability, you know I just talk to a ranger and say, ‘Hey no biggie, but by the way, you see how narrow that little gate is? I know you’re trying to keep the horses out, but a person with a wheelchair they have to have 32 inches to go through any gate,” Kent said.

He said it’s such a small thing, but the gate’s size can completely exclude someone who uses a wheelchair from accessing an area.

There’s a name for the small suggestions Kent makes on his park visits—universal design. Radcliffe first heard the term from avid outdoorsman Peter Axelson who had a spinal cord injury. It’s a simple enough idea—take a look at something like a trail to see if there are just a few small changes you could make to make it more accessible and inclusive.

So with an entire country’s worth of national parks to conquer, what does Brett hope to accomplish in her position?

One thing is dreaming down barriers for those with disabilities to visit national parks and enjoy them to their fullest. Giving people access to information about trails, even a rating system with their accessibility, and access to the right mobility devices. 🌀





THE HEALING POWER OF DUDE



Review The importance of visibility in entertainment *by Kelly Beaubien*

Characters with disabilities are becoming more common in TV shows and movies. Most of the time, they play a small part, a friend, or background passerby. Lately, however, we've seen an influx of shows telling stories of people with disabilities. Netflix's latest release, "The Healing Power of Dude" is now included on this growing list.

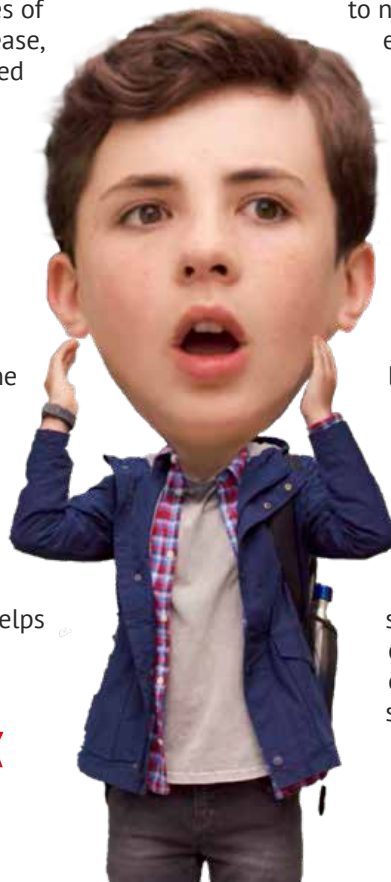
The Healing Power of Dude follows Noah Ferris, a sixth-grader with social anxiety disorder, returning to school after being homeschooled for several years. As Noah begins the school year, he struggles with completing simple activities because of his disorder. His anxiety prevents him from entering the building on the first day, and he runs right back to his parent's car.

To help him with his anxiety attacks, his parents get him an emotional support dog, Dude. Dude is a cute (and sarcastic) mutt who has his own internal dialogue throughout the show. Dude guides Noah through his various anxiety episodes and helps him learn to calm himself down.

As Noah becomes more comfortable in school, he makes two new friends, Amara and Simon, also known as Turbo. With the help of Dude, Amara, and Simon, Noah starts to navigate the world of middle school a little easier. Unfortunately, the cat-loving Principal Meyers is not as fascinated with Dude as the rest of the school and tries to cause problems throughout the series.

During each episode, we get a glimpse into what goes through Noah's head when his attacks happen. His anxiety is depicted in various ways, such as sinking into the floor like quicksand, goblins picking on his friends or his head getting bigger and bigger. He often comments about what is happening to him, but those around him obviously do not see what he is experiencing. When Dude senses this happening, he jumps into action and helps Noah calm down.

One of the issues brought up with the show is that it does not give an accurate depiction of Emotional Service Animals or a properly trained service dog. Dude sometimes behaves unlike a properly





SAVE THE DATE

Fall 2021

The 360Breakfast is postponed. Please stay tuned for more ways you can help support Ability360.

Presented by



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trained service animal, leaving Noah and causing problems. Although he acts this way for comedic effect, this has made a few viewers unhappy.

Overall, the show is an entertaining comedy that helps break down barriers for more diverse casting and stories. The young actress who plays Amara has Ullrich Congenital Muscular Dystrophy and uses a power wheelchair. The show is great for kids and adults alike. In fact, my whole family enjoyed watching the show. I would give this show 3/4 stars.

The Healing Power of Dude is a very cute show that opens up the world to both visible and invisible disabilities. 🐾



GEAR UP FOR TOKYO

New sports debuting at the Paralympic Games

by
Sarah
Farrell

In 2015 the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) announced the final 22 sports contested at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games, now to be held in 2021. First-time sports include para-badminton and taekwondo.

Para-Badminton

History and Introduction to the Paralympics

Para-badminton is the adaptive version of the classic British lawn game. The sport had been contested internationally since 1990, with 10 world championships to date. It is played under the laws and regulations of the Badminton World Federation (BWF), with specific modifications that will limit the overall size of the court.

Classifications and rules

Athletes can compete in either singles or doubles. There are eight different impairment types eligible to compete in para-badminton, and they are further broken down into wheelchair, standing and short stature classifications. Para-badminton follows standard BWF scoring rules. All matches are played best two out of three sets, with a player winning a set once they reach 21 points.

American athletes to look out for in Tokyo:

Katherine Valli - SH6
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

She is ranked second in singles and first in doubles with her partner Carmen Giuliana Poveda Flores of Peru. She won two doubles titles at the 2019 World Championships in Basel.

Jayci Simon - SH6

She is ranked seventh in singles and third in doubles with her partner Colleen Gioffreda of the United States.

Many top-ranked players come from Japan, China, South Korea, India, and Indonesia.



Taekwondo

History and Introduction to the Paralympics

World Taekwondo (WT), the sport's governing body, began developing the adaptive kyorugi and Poomsae disciplines in 2005 and 2013, respectively. Kyorugi is sparring between two opponents in the same weight class and classification. Poomsae is a combination of movements without an opponent, showing off your martial arts forms. Since then, taekwondo was introduced as a full member of the International Paralympic Committee in 2015. The kyorugi (sparring) discipline will be part of the 2021 Paralympic Games in Tokyo for the first time.

Classifications and rules

According to the IPC, classifications in taekwondo are broken down by weight class and impairment. Only the male and female K43 (athletes with a bilateral amputation below the elbow or equivalent loss of function in both upper limbs) and K44 (athletes with unilateral arm amputation or equal loss of function, or loss of toes which impact the ability to lift the heel properly) will compete in Tokyo. In competition, only kicks to the trunk area are considered valid attacks. Three types of kicks are scored with various amounts of points (up to 4 points) associated with each. A spinning kick with a 360-degree turn is worth 4 points, for example.

Photos by Estefania Cavazos



American athletes to look out for in Tokyo:

Felix Sabates #9 M-75kg K44
Cooper City, Florida

He won three consecutive gold medals in the U.S. Open Para-Taekwondo Championships in sparring black belt 75kg K44 from 2015 to 2017.

Evan Medell #1 M+75kg K44
Grand Haven, Michigan

He has been one of the most consistent athletes atop a highly competitive weight class. He won gold medals in 2019 at the European and Parapan American Championships.

Corbin Stacey #9 M+75kg K44
Cleveland, Ohio

Stacey is an army veteran who took silver in the U.S. Open Para Taekwondo Championships + 75kg K44 in 2018.

Sophie Gimeno #8 W-49kg K44
Davie, Florida

Finished 5th at the 2019 World Para Taekwondo Championships in sparring black belt -49kg K44.

Brianna Salinaro #4 W-58kg K44
Massapequa, New York

She earned a bronze medal at the 2017 World Para Taekwondo Championships sparring -58kg K44. 🏅





by Steve Norton

At long last, the record-breaking high temperatures here in Arizona gave way to cooler weather! In the winter and spring months, I always look forward to making a big pot of healthy and delicious homemade soup, and one of my favorites to make is French onion. *I love the aroma as the flavors develop while simmering on the stove.*

French onion soup is one of the simplest soups to make. It consists of slow-cooked onions in a creamy broth, topped with a layer of melted cheese. It is often served with croutons or a slice of crusty French bread.

While the exact origin of French onion soup is still up for debate, the story itself is a fascinating one of ingenuity and resourcefulness in the kitchen, involving French King Louis XV.

After returning to his lodge from a long day of hunting, he found that the cupboards were practically bare. He and his great-aunt could only find butter, onions, and champagne, so they put all three into a pot and made it into a meal. Since onions have always been one of the easiest crops to grow and cheapest to purchase, everyone could enjoy them.

The soup later changed in Les Halles, Paris, in the 1970s. At that time, this whole section of the city was made up of wholesale markets. Several of the restaurants in this area adopted the soup and began adding cheese on top. It became popular amongst both the early-morning work crowd and the late-



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night party crowd. This adaptation of French onion soup is what is found in restaurants around the world today.

One of these restaurants, **Au Pied de Cochon**, opened in 1947 and is still around today. They sell about 200 bowls a day of their most popular dish, soup à l'union! While vacationing in Paris in the late 90s, I enjoyed a bowl of the best tasting French onion soup I have ever had!

To this day, onions are plentiful and inexpensive. On top of that, you can get many health benefits by incorporating them into your recipes. Onions are nutrient-dense, meaning they are high in vitamins and minerals but low in calories. They contain antioxidants that reduce inflammation, decrease triglycerides and reduce cholesterol levels. They are also a great source of fiber and prebiotics, which both aid in good gut health.

My recipe below explains how to cook this soup using either a stock/soup pot or a Dutch oven. However, this recipe can be adapted for a slow cooker or Instant Pot. Whichever method you choose, I hope you enjoy making your fresh batch of healthy **French onion soup**!



FRENCH ONION SOUP

Servings: 4 bowls **Prep:** 6 minutes **Cook:** 40 minutes

Ingredients

3 Tbsp unsalted whole milk butter (preferably organic)

4 onions (red, yellow, or white) thinly sliced

3 ½ cups low sodium beef or vegetable broth

1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar

1 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce

1 tsp dried thyme

1 bay leaf

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp sea salt (or more to taste)

½ tsp black pepper (or more to taste)

Optional: *1/8 tsp red pepper flakes to add a little heat*

1 Tbsp all-purpose flour (can substitute with chickpea flour to make it Gluten-free)

Crusty French bread or Gluten-free bread sliced into 1" slices (**2-3 slices per person**)

4 ounces shredded Gruyere or Swiss cheese (or a combo of both)



Directions

Melt butter in a deep stockpot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook, occasionally stirring, until tender and browned about 15-20 minutes. While onions are cooking, set the oven to broil. Add 3 cups of beef (or vegetable) broth, balsamic vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, thyme, bay leaf, garlic, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes (optional) and bring to a simmer. In a small bowl, combine ½ cup beef (or vegetable) broth with the flour and add to the onion mixture—Cook for an additional 10 minutes. Place bread slices on a rack in a broiler pan. Sprinkle bread with cheese(s) and broil 5-6" from heat for 2-3 minutes or until cheese is melted. Ladle the onion soup into bowls, starting with the onions and then with the liquid. Serve with cheesy French bread slice(s). 🍷

*Until our next cooking adventure,
keep eating to thrive!*

- Chef Steve

End of an Era

Looking back on the legacy of the Ability360 leader

by Aitana Yvette Mallari

The headline came first:

"ABILITY360 PRESIDENT & CEO PHIL PANGRAZIO STEPPING DOWN AT YEAR'S END"

It was another event fitting for 2020.

Phil didn't just lead the remarkable growth of Ability360—to many, he is Ability360.

He was the architect behind the organization's astronomical rise. He ushered in the rebranding of Arizona Bridge to Independent Living (ABIL) to Ability360 in 2015. Phil was the visionary behind an all-encompassing, truly inclusive campus for persons with disabilities in Arizona.

Phil's vision and commitment to the Independent Living philosophy also drove the construction of the accompanying Sports & Fitness Center which was the first-of-its-kind in the nation for a Center for Independent Living.

Under his leadership, the organization grew to become the state's largest Center for Independent Living (CIL). Of the nearly 400 CILs around the nation, most employ just a dozen or so people. Today, Ability360 employs nearly 2,000 people and operates with a budget of approximately \$50 million.

Perhaps Phil's proudest accomplishment, though, is that Ability360 is the embodiment of inclusivity, creating and sustaining long-standing careers for some of its employees (with and without disabilities). Some staff members have been with the organization for decades.

After 20 years of hard work building a legacy, it was the end of an era.

Phil's story was always floating around in bits and pieces, an anecdote peppered in a speech, a factoid hidden in an interview.

Other than those details (and his public achievements), his past remained pretty elusive. But Phil didn't appear from thin air, and neither did Ability360.

It's hard to reach out when everyone's locked in; Arizona was under shelter-in-place, and Phil's home state of New York was still reeling from being the US epicenter of the pandemic.

"We can't exactly send you anywhere," my editors said. "But we can set up video calls."

So we start at the farm.



ABILITY360

DAVID
REESE FAMILY
GYMNASIUM

SISU
PRESIDENT

CHILDHOOD

Le Roy was—and still is—a small town in western New York. And as of 2010, it holds a population of less than eight thousand, the same as it was in the 60s.

Phil Pangrazio lived on a hill on the outskirts of town, past a sea of alfalfa fields. He was the youngest of eight siblings—six brothers and one sister, to be exact—and loved sports, especially football, which he would be known for, and basketball, which he didn't have the height for. Their grandparents lived 50 yards away; Phil could hit a rock over their house with a baseball bat.

Every summer included hay baling, fixing fences, milking cows and camping outdoors, and every spring, their father planted a garden with the boys—the bigger the yield, the better. They'd let the zucchini grow until it was enormous, and the asparagus would scrape the sky. His mom chided the boys to pick the harvest before it was overgrown. Thankfully, for the most part, they did. Mom and Ma (Phil's maternal grandmother) canned much of it for the winter food supply.

The whole family went to church, attended Le Roy's Holy Family Catholic School, and every Pangrazio boy was an altar boy, which was very important to their mother, but not so much to Phil (he would steal the communion wine from the priests and would occasionally try to make mom and Ma laugh while receiving communion). Something that came with some risks, as Ma had been an army sergeant and tried to keep the boys in line.

When Ma came to live with them in the early 1960's, Phil spent the most time with her because he was the youngest. But as he grew older and gained more friends, he spent more time at his friends' houses than his own.

"He seemed to get adopted into many families of his friends," says Ann Pangrazio-Stuhler, Phil's only sister. "Wherever he goes, he makes a home."

TEEN YEARS

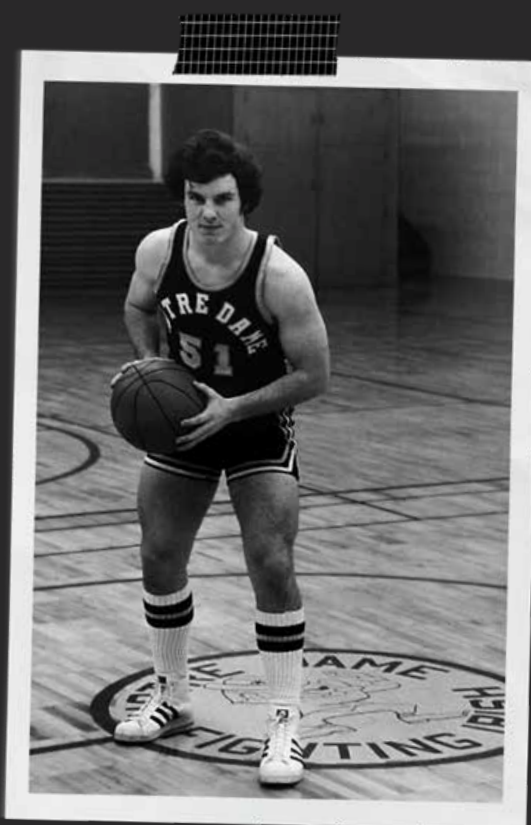
Tom Rapone had been best friends with Phil since first grade at Le Roy's Holy Family School. By the time they finished 8th grade, Phil had chosen to attend Notre Dame

High School, the private Catholic high school in Batavia 10 miles away, instead of Le Roy Jr./Sr. High School nearby.

He was the only one in his family to do so. The schools had a rivalry, and Phil's older brothers were impressive Le Roy athletes, but Phil made his mark at Notre Dame.

"I'm currently the business manager," Rapone says. "So I'm working at our alma mater, and I can tell you with certainty that Phil is a legend at the school."

Basketball. Football. Wrestling. Track and field. If Phil did them, he did them well, and his athletic and academic prowess earned him the distinguished title of Man of the Year, the 1978 New York State Section V Class C championship, and an induction into the Athletic Hall of Fame.



"When you walk in our school, there's a huge window with the six state championships that our school has won, and the background photo is Phil holding the first trophy ever, and it's pretty dramatic," Rapone says.

Theresa Palmer-Sisson doesn't remember exactly how she and Phil met, but she does remember how he dressed: badly.

**"Wherever
he goes,
he makes a
home."**

"He's got like, really awful plaid pants on," Palmer-Sisson says. "Terrible, but that's what it was back in the 70s. He's got big, bushy hair. It doesn't look it now, but back then, he had a ton of hair. And he's got a huge grin."

She was a year older than him and part of his friend group, an inseparable cast of characters that included her future husband, John.

Le Roy was the kind of town where everyone had a nickname, and Phil was no exception. He visited Theresa's house late one night after attending the Christmas dance. Spying a little ledge that connected the kitchen

From left to right: Doug Jones, Dave Ruzzi, Phil Pangrazio, Tim Sullivan. Bottom: Jude Ruzzi



to the living room, he wrote 'Pinhead was here' underneath it. It's still there to this day.

He was known as a good kid, which earned him another title: the bail-out guy. If Rapone ever needed to go out for the night, he'd tell his father he was with Phil (sometimes even when Phil wasn't really there, he admits).

"Most of my buddies' parents thought that I was an angel and there was a halo around my head," Phil says. "It's kind of comical."

But that wasn't exactly true. While school was still in session, Phil decided to throw a party in an abandoned stone quarry on his grandfather's land. Word got around, and kids from four different towns showed up. Phil had carried two kegs of beer and set up a generator, along with stereo records and a

speaker blasting Lynyrd Skynyrd, Bruce Springsteen, Marshall Tucker band, The Doors, Rolling Stones, and Bob Seger among others.

"I think all the school faculty found out about that party," Phil says.

According to Rapone, only Phil was capable of pulling that off without much consequence. That was just the kind of guy he was.

ACCIDENT

After the Notre Dame class of 1979 had thrown their caps, it was time for everyone to go their separate ways.

August was coming to a close. Johnny, one of Phil's close friends, had already left for college a couple of days earlier. He was at Alfred University, about a three-hour drive from Le Roy. Phil had a car--his mother's car, which she had bought for his brother

but handed down. It was a 1973 Super Beetle with an FM radio, which was big back then, and it had a sunroof.

"That car was sweet," Phil says.

His friend Drew told him, "Hey, let's go down and visit Johnny, and we'll have one last hurrah."

Drew was going to the University of Buffalo, Phil was going to LeMoyne, and they were both scheduled to leave the next morning.

Neither of his parents knew about it. He vaguely remembers saying something along the lines of: "Hey, I'm gonna go hang out with Drew tonight, I'll see you later," before leaving. They drove down to Alfred, had a good time with Johnny, and drove home.

It was dark. Drew was driving, and Phil had fallen

asleep in the passenger seat. They had already made it back to Le Roy when the crash happened.

Phil remembers being conscious, although he doesn't remember seeing Drew.

The accident was horrific. Phil was later told the car might have flipped over, but he doesn't know for sure.

"I woke up in the car," Phil says. The Le Roy fire department was already at the scene.

A responder spoke to him. He was probably only a few years older. "Hey Philly," he said. "Take it easy...don't move. We're going to get out of there, just hang on, hang on. We're gonna get you out of there. You'll be okay."

Phil looked up, disoriented, but saw a friendly face trying to pull him from the mangled car.

"Hey, Snorky...how you doing? What's going on? Hey, I don't need any help. I can get out here. I'll do it myself. I can get out of here."

He tried to move. Nothing moved.

He blacked out.

"I went into shock, obviously," Phil says. "And then I woke up in the hospital. I don't remember anything after 'Hey, Snorky!'"

At some point, Phil was told that Drew had passed away in the accident



HOSPITAL

Phil sustained a C6-C7 spinal injury.

"I didn't want to make a big deal out of it," he says. "I knew I was screwed. I knew this wasn't going to be temporary. They told me my spinal cord injury was a complete severance of the cord. It wasn't like it was incomplete."

They told him that he had no chance of walking again.

"I suppose I could've not believed the doctors and tried to say, 'well darn it, I'm gonna beat this!' but I didn't," he says. "I never felt like that was likely. I knew—I knew—that this was it, this is what was going to be my life the rest of my days, and I just accepted it for what it was."

Rapone visited Phil for the first time in October. It was fall break, and the trees around the University of Rochester Strong Memorial Hospital were changing.

"I wasn't prepared for what I saw," Rapone says. "I lost it."

He wanted to talk to him about a million things at once. What's the prospect of recovery? What's going to happen? But Phil had other questions.

"Doing good in baseball?"

"He was so concerned for me," Rapone says. "I mean...I mean, I feel like crying

**"It changed my life
in so many ways
because it gave me
a certain level of
confidence that I
probably hadn't had
up until that point,"**

now talking about it because he was... that's just Phil."

Phil stayed in the hospital for 10 months.

By Christmas, he was allowed to go home. They carried him up the stairs, and he found himself lying on a hospital bed in his living room.

"I think my family knew that that wasn't a practical place for me to live the rest of my days," he says, and they decided to build an extra room for the house. But as soon as it was finished, he was already leaving for Arizona.

Before Phil was discharged from the hospital, his friend Pat Condidorio had stopped by with some advice. Apply to Arizona State (ASU), he had told him. Pat was already attending ASU. "You'll love it out there. Flat, no hills, it never rains, and the sun shines every day," Pat told him.

"When I got accepted, I was like: I'm going there," Phil says. "Mom, Dad—see you later! I'm out of here."

He arrived in Tempe in August 1981.

COLLEGE

At Arizona State University, Phil initially thought of majoring in psychology. He got a Bachelor's degree in Justice Studies but wasn't enthusiastic about becoming a



parole or probation officer. He then returned for a Master's degree, which ended up being in Health Services Administration and Policy.

"He had some friends drive out with him to help him get settled," Ann Pangrazio-Stuhler says. "When he first started school, it was tough because, of course, there sometimes were no elevators when he had classes on another floor. He had to pretty much instruct himself because he couldn't enter the class physically."

Still, Phil loved ASU. He spoke so positively about his experience that his friend Michael Wagner, who was going to school in New York, transferred to Arizona. Wagner met his future wife, Kristin, shortly after.

"Phil was also the best man at our wedding," Mike Wagner says. "The three of us spent an obscene amount of time together."

They had stories upon stories of Phil's college days, most of them involving his girlfriends, who were... interesting—like the blonde who wore short roll skirts and sweaters with pins.

"She was what they would call 'preppy,'" Kristin says.

"She was a mess," Mike says.

Kristin had gone over to Phil's dorm to help with his laundry. Before she left, he asked her for one more favor. Could she untie his shoelaces? The girl had tied them together in multiple knots.

"I was so horrified," Kristin says. "And then I helped Phil go Christmas shopping for her."

That Christmas Eve, Mike and Kristin sat down to dinner when Phil showed up at their door. The girl had disinvited him. The two offered Phil to join them.

"And this is like one of the biggest jokes," Kristin says. "We were having crab legs and artichokes. So, with those quad hands..."

"Yeah, we ended up feeding him," Mike says laughing.

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

Ed Alexander first met Phil while attending ASU. Specifically, they had met in the adaptive gym, which was in the middle of Tempe campus—a small, maybe 800-square-foot space that didn't have much but had staff on hand to help you use the equipment.

"Now as I think about it, that probably brought up a lot of the way Phil came up with his SpoFit [Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center] idea, because he saw that gym was utilized by a lot of disabled students," Alexander says.

Years later, Phil ran into Eddie by chance. They hadn't seen each other since college, and Alexander was trying to start the first wheelchair rugby team in the Phoenix area.

There was already a group of guys practicing together, Phil recalled Eddie telling him. You got the physical ability to play the sport—come out and give it a shot.

Phil thought it was the stupidest thing in the world.

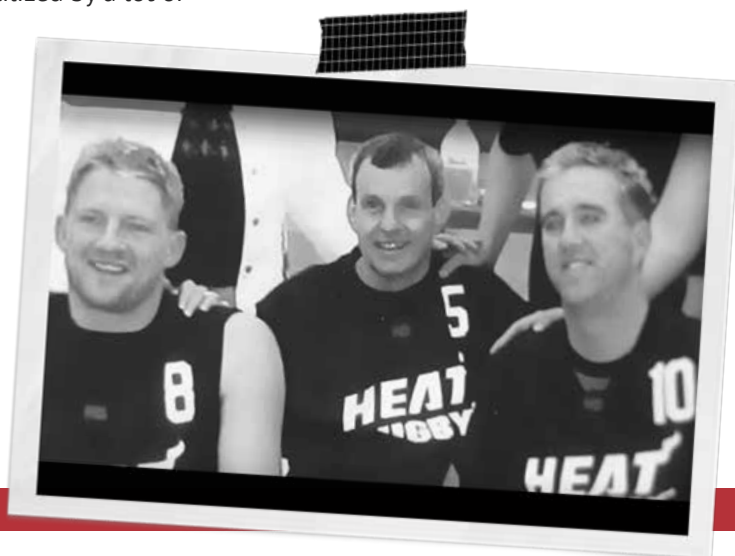
"Oh my god, he's kidding me," Phil had thought to himself. "I used to be a jock as a teenager. I played sports. There's no way that playing wheelchair anything with a bunch of quadriplegic guys could possibly be anything fun or exciting or make me feel like a jock again."

Eddie had told him where they were practicing. It was in places like tennis courts in the early days, with ditches that would swallow any stray ball (or wheelchair) if one wasn't careful enough. This time, it was a grade school cafeteria in Mesa, Ariz.

Phil showed up one night, for some reason.

"My brain was like, I guess you can just go check it out. You got nothing better going on in your life," Phil says. "I really didn't have anything better to do."

Pictured from left to right: Scott Hogsett, Phil Pangrazio and Brent Poppen



He was 30, trying to advance professionally. He had just finished his Master's degree and was transitioning to a full-time career.

"I must admit, I kind of had fun with it," Phil says. "When I left that night, I was like, I can see this could be kind of fun. I could see the potential of it, even though we were awful. Eddie was a very good player, and I like to think I became a very good player eventually."

Not only did wheelchair rugby help him physically, but mentally as well.

"It changed my life in so many ways because it gave me a certain level of confidence that I probably hadn't had up until that point," Phil says.

He felt better about himself and became friends with other people with disabilities, an experience he took with him when promoting ABIL and Ability360's peer support model. Through rugby, he gained a wealth of knowledge from older guys who had lived with the same injury, adjusted, adapted, and had good lives. It changed Phil's life, and in turn, it had the power to change others.

"That's why my role at Ability360 has been so supportive of sports and recreational fitness and all that stuff," Phil says. "Because I experienced the benefit of it, and it's importance."

Whatever vision Phil had of Ability360 in his mind, Alexander says, he never stopped trying to reach it until it became a reality.

The early years of the team were clumsy. They had never played against any other teams, save for one California team that flew in for a scrimmage ("They slaughtered us," Phil says). But in 1991, the team decided they were going to travel, either by driving or flying, to California and Oregon.

"All of us were scared shitless," Phil says. They had never left their houses before, let alone tackled hotel rooms or plane bathrooms. Could they function outside of the bubble they lived in?

"We all dove in there and did it," Phil says, learning from guys on other teams and establishing long-lasting mentorships and friendships. Over time they realized how independent they could be.

"You know, once we took a shot at this stuff, we realized we weren't afraid to do anything," Phil says.

During practice, the wives or girlfriends who typically accompanied the wheelchair rugby players had left.

"I'm sure they were all sick of us, so they went shopping or something. So we had nobody in there in case we fell out," Phil says. "Anyway, I fell out of my chair."

Phil remembers telling the guys, "we're going to get me back in the chair."

They used leverage, lifted, and pushed--successfully pulling off a floor to wheelchair transfer, which is next to impossible for a quadriplegic to do.

"I couldn't have done it by myself, but with them, they're helping me, and I was able to do it," says Phil. "It's a good example of how quads are really innovative. We can figure out anything if we put our minds to it."

Now known as the Phoenix Heat, the team got bigger, stronger, and better funded, playing around the nation and worldwide. They went from barely knowing how the game worked to bringing home gold medals for Team USA.

Phil's last season was in 2008, just shy of his 48th birthday.

"You know, once we took a shot at this stuff, we realized we weren't afraid to do anything,"

JAMI SNYDER

By the time he met Jami Snyder, Phil had been playing wheelchair rugby for almost 10 years.

"She came to a lot of rugby tournaments and was tortured by having to live through the whole rugby scene," he says.

After a residency at the Maricopa County Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System's (AHCCCS) eligibility office and a decade of working at the county hospital, called the Maricopa Integrated Health System, Phil came to ABIL in 2000.

Phil Pangrazio and others at the groundbreaking ceremony for Disability Empowerment Center

They had met through work. It was Phil's first year at ABIL, and Snyder had just become the executive director of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. They, along with Susan Webb, the former executive director of ABIL, were driving back from a meeting and had stopped to have lunch. And for some reason, Phil didn't have any money.

If you talk to any of his buddies from Le Roy, they'll tell you that this isn't new. Phil never seems to have money on him. ("My husband always says, and pardon my language: 'Oh Jesus Phil, you still have your communion money,'" says Kristin.)

"I'll buy you lunch the next time," Phil had said to Snyder, and that led to him asking her out on a date.

They had a March wedding. The service was in a Catholic church in Tempe, and the reception was at the Desert Botanical Gardens—a nice, low-key celebration.

"I mean, he's a really charming, funny guy, and so we get along really well," Snyder says. "He really helped me to realize the importance of fun, even in the workplace."

According to her, they had a great relationship, even though it didn't last.

"We were together for nearly 10 years. We had a lot of fun times together and share many great memories. We still talk, mostly work-related, but we're still friends," Phil says.

Snyder remarried in 2012. Both moved to higher positions in their careers, Phil as the President & CEO of Ability360 and Snyder as the Director of AHCCCS.

"Now that I'm leading this large organization, I am much more thoughtful and introspective, especially around major decisions, and I really credit Phil for influencing that shift for me," she says. "We've known each other for 20 years. Phil's a visionary. He had a broader, grander vision



for what the independent living center could be, not only on a state level but as a national model for independent living centers across the country."

ABILITY360

Phil was on the board of ABIL from 1991 to 2000 before he became the Executive Director (his title was later changed to President & CEO in 2014).

In 2004, Phil kept slinging around this idea of a nonprofit disability services campus that housed other disability-serving organizations, like the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association.

"It was something that we had been talking about with my predecessor Susan Webb, some of the other management team members, and some previous board members," Phil says. "We had talked about this whole concept of a multi-tenant, nonprofit disability services campus."

When he was on the board, they didn't have the financial wherewithal to pull it off. But then, when he took charge of Ability360 and the organization started growing and having more financial success, he held a meeting at a hotel down on Central Avenue. He brought the executive directors of nonprofits and organizations together, and explained his vision for the campus.

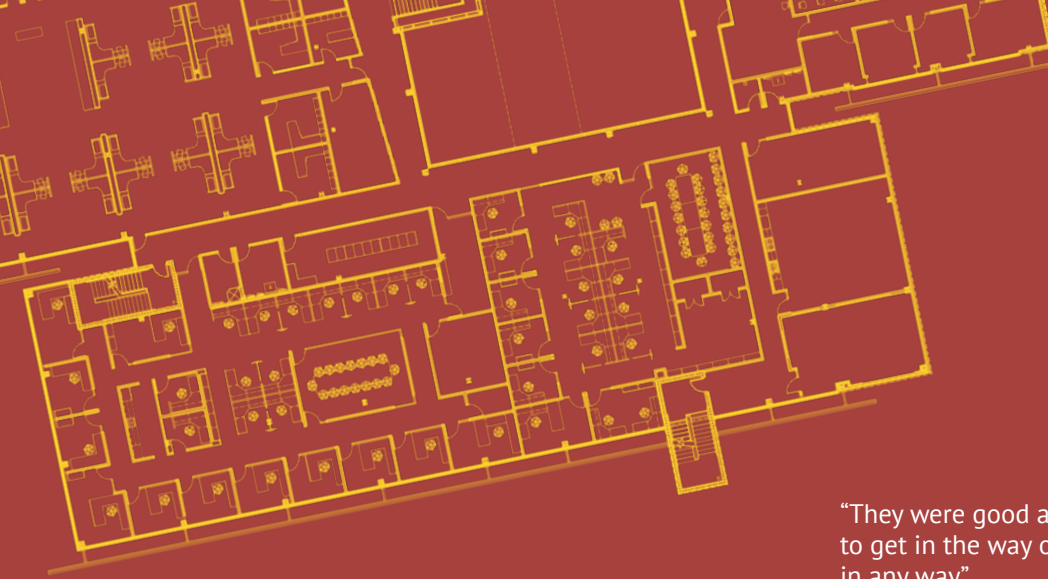
"They all thought it was kind of cool," says Phil. "Not all of them were thrilled by the idea."

Some of them didn't like the idea of having to pack up and move out of their current office space to some other facility, but mostly they just didn't think it was going to happen.

"But what I told them that day was: here's our timeline. Hope that by around October of 2008, we will have this center built, so don't renew your leases or keep your office leases to a bare minimum," says Phil.



Pictured: Phil Pangrazio and others at the groundbreaking ceremony for Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center



Pictured: Second floor of the Ability360 Center.

Verbally, they agreed to it. But Phil got the feeling they didn't take it too seriously.

"They probably just kind of laughed and thought, 'oh, that guy's crazy.'" But, eventually, when it got built, they were all on board. Most that came along are now still in the center. A few that didn't, wish they had.

Alongside those conversations, another opportunity presented itself to expand the services offered at the campus.

The city of Phoenix was taking proposals from nonprofit organizations to be included in a bond package for capital improvements. Phil talked to different city officials about building a Sports & Fitness Center for the disability community.

"Everyone kind of started getting excited about it," Phil says.

After the proposal was accepted, Phoenixians voted in favor of the bond package, and Ability360 received \$5.3 million dollars. They launched a campaign to build the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center afterward.

"It was clearly all the years that I was involved in wheelchair rugby that made me feel like having something like this in our community would change thousands of lives of folks with disabilities, because it changed my life, just doing what I did," Phil says. "And it started in the cafeteria, right? That's kind of why we ended up doing it, and why I worked so hard to make it happen because I knew it was going to be awesome for our community."

He says he's not smart enough to have had a grand vision, and if he said he did, he'd be lying. There was an impressive management team in place already, and many of them were there before he was.

"They were good at what they did," Phil says. "I never tried to get in the way of their programs or micromanage them in any way."

According to Phil, there were two main inspirations for Ability360. The Ed Roberts Center in Berkeley, California—which initially conceived and even planned the concept (though funds were limited)—and the Lakeshore Foundation in Birmingham, Alabama, which built a multigenerational sports and fitness center and served as a Paralympic training site.

"The thing that was unique about what we did is that we had the idea of having this disability services campus and the Sports & Fitness Center co-located together," Phil says. "And that to me was the icing on the cake."

The combination of varied disability organizations and the Sports & Fitness Center attracted a broad range of people. It made sense, says Phil. But there were many naysayers.

"What if I listened to those people?" Phil says. "This never would've happened." Thankfully, most of them weren't the main decision-makers, and Phil had learned how to gain the support of those who had the power to understand and help the cause, especially politically.

The Ability360 Center opened in 2008. The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center opened in 2011.

When asked about what he sees in Ability360's future, Phil says he doesn't know. Maybe there's more that could be done, or done better. He plans to be available for advice or help, but he says he thinks the next generation of leaders will be just fine.

"They'll take it to the next level."

So what are you going to do personally, now that you're stepping down?

Phil grins.

"I'm gonna go hang out in Le Roy."

NEXT

Every time he's been back to that small town in New York, Phil's never stayed more than ten days. So next time, he plans to stay a little longer—a month, perhaps—but probably not during the wintertime.

“Definitely not in the wintertime.”

In a video call, Phil sports his classic half-smile. He's in his office, and when his eyes drift while thinking, it's as if decades of memories are flashing in his mind at once.

“I think I've been very lucky in a way,” he says. “I'm fortunate to have had the opportunity to do this work. I really do believe I was very fortunate. Then the other side of it is I probably was the right person at the right time. There was probably some serendipitous alignment of the stars, I guess. I don't know. You can't explain that, right?”

I guess not.

“Something lined up because in some ways, I think that I was probably the right person at the right time that came along with the kind of skills and personality that was able to orchestrate this stuff and make it happen...I'm so lucky to have had this opportunity to do this work,” Phil says.

“It was like a labor of love in that regard.”

Kind of like growing tomatoes.

Back in Le Roy, the Pangrazios had a garden in their backyard, filled with tomatoes, squash and asparagus. Every Spring, he'd plant with his dad. It was a tradition he took with him to college, even making his own tomato sauce and lasagna for a girl.

Growing tomatoes takes patience, dedication and nurturing, just as growing one of the biggest CILs in the nation does.

You see, Ability360 wouldn't be what it is today without Phil Pangrazio.

His legacy is unparalleled. He was the visionary behind the campus, the Sports & Fitness Center and even the name change to Ability360, whether he's willing to admit that or not.

Now, Phil steps out of the limelight, leaving behind one legacy in Arizona, returning to another: his family farm in Le Roy, New York. 🍅



When in Death Valley

Shake off the winter chill in a wheelchair-accessible Death Valley Casita

by Candy Harrington





As Old Man Winter begins to blanket the country with snow, it's time to steal away to sunnier weather. Unfortunately, air travel may prove impractical this season due to COVID-19 restrictions; however, it's still possible to pack the car and hit the road for a getaway. And there's no better—or warmer—landing place than Death Valley, Calif. where you are a short drive from Death Valley National Park, Sequoia National Park and the Las Vegas Strip. Stay at the recently renovated Inn at Death Valley, which features two new wheelchair-accessible casitas.


This AAA Four Diamond property is nestled into the mountainside and offers a commanding view of the Mojave Desert, framed by the Panamint Mountains. The historic property was gutted in 2018 and received a top-to-bottom renovation. Today it exudes an aura of casual elegance and combines the best of both worlds—vestiges of the rugged old west mixed with the conveniences of the 21st century.

Although steps grace the front entrance of this 1927 property, elevator access on the side of the building also gives guests access to the third-floor lobby. The lobby features barrier-free access and excellent views of the surrounding desert can be found just about anywhere. Accessible restrooms are located near the registration desk, as well as good pathway access to the historic lobby library, which is filled with comfortable furniture.

The Inn at Death Valley has several accessible guest rooms, but the newly built accessible casitas offer an added level of privacy. Casita

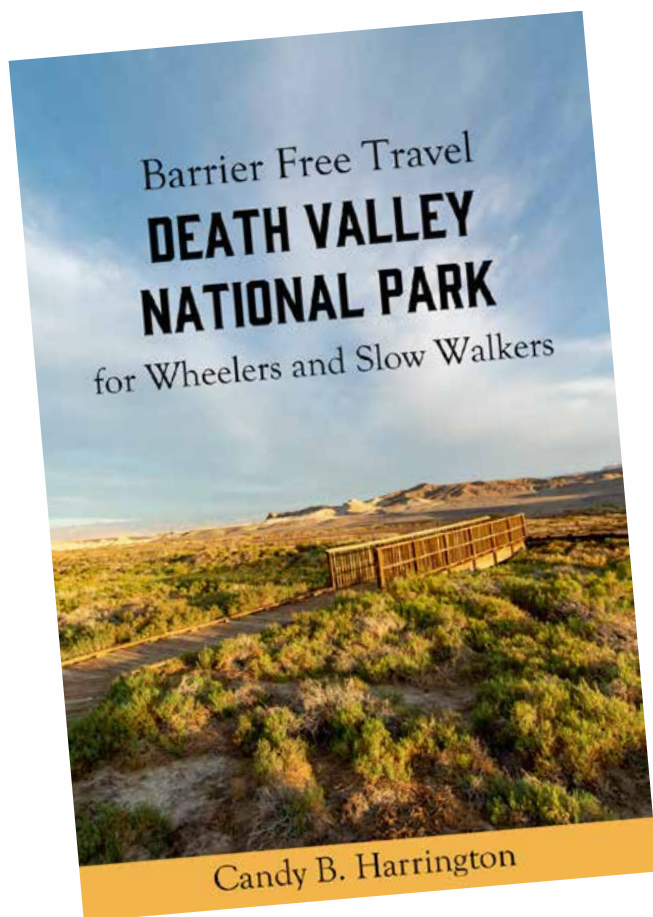
501 features wide doorways, lever handles, and excellent pathway access. The living area is furnished with a 13-inch high sleeper sofa, a desk with a chair, an easy chair and a chest of drawers. Around the corner, is a wet bar with a refrigerator and a microwave. The casita also features level access out to the spacious patio which borders an expansive lawn area. The patio includes a table with chairs and plenty of room for a large wheelchair or scooter.

The bedroom includes two 22-inch high queen-sized beds with an access aisle between them, a chest of drawers, and a nightstand. The spacious bathroom is equipped with a roll-in shower with grab bars, a hand-held showerhead and a fold-down shower bench located close to the shower controls. The toilet grab bars are located on the back and left walls (as seated), and the bathroom also includes a roll-under sink.

This casita adjoins another accessible casita that has the same basic access features, except it's furnished with a king-sized bed. The accessible casitas are also located near the lift-equipped swimming pool. These units are truly the most accessible and luxurious accommodations in the park and an ideal choice for any break. 

If You Go

Inn at Death Valley
(800) 236-7916
www.oasisatdeathvalley.com



Part of Candy B. Harrington's popular national park series, this handy resource offers detailed access information on Death Valley National Park for wheelchair-users and slow walkers. This access guide contains:

- Access details on all trails, attractions, and scenic drives
- Detailed access reviews and photos of all in-park lodging options
- Updated information on Scotty's Castle restoration
- Accessible attractions in gateway cities
- Access upgrades at Furnace Creek Inn
- Access details of all restaurants in the park and on Timbisha Shoshone land
- Fly-drive resources, including the location of nearby airports, and the availability of accessible van rentals
- Barrier-free camping choices, and accessible picnic areas
- The inside scoop on the best wheelchair-accessible viewpoints
- Access information on public showers, gas station and laundry facilities
- Information on special access passes and permits

Available on Amazon or at
BarrierFreeDeathValley.com



A Great Death Valley Access Resource

ACCESSIBLE KITCHEN GADGETS

Making cooking work for any foodie

by Steve Norton

For some, cooking can be daunting. As people with physical disabilities can be met with challenges in standing, reaching, or using just one side of their body. *LivAbility* and Chef Steve have worked to identify a handful of kitchen gadgets that can make cooking in your own home less stressful and more manageable.

1 Dycem non-slip mat, jar opener, or reel of non-slip material

Products range from \$13.00 - \$30.00 on Amazon.

Dycem non-slip products are great kitchen aids for both independent living and caregivers. The company produces a range of products, from non-slip mats and coasters to specifically designed non-slip openers. A non-slip mat underneath your plate or cutting board will prevent it from sliding around during use. Dycem non-slip products are not heat-resistant, though. Do not leave a hot pan on it any longer than it takes to stir the ingredients and return it to the stove. They also do not work well if they get too wet or if oil gets spilled on them. They need to be thoroughly washed with warm, soapy water and air-dried when done using.


2 Kitchen Mama one-touch hands-free electric can opener

\$28.99 on Amazon

This can opener is powered by four (4) AA batteries. It rotates the can and can be stopped in one press. The Kitchen Mama cuts along the side and leaves a smooth edge on the lid and the can, so you don't have to worry about sharp edges. It also has a built-in magnet and automatically stops after making a complete turn around the can. This opener works best on small and medium-sized cans—like a can of beans, soup, or tomato paste. The opener can get caught up on cans with the pull-tabs. If the can has a thicker edge, run it twice around.

3 OXO POP storage containers

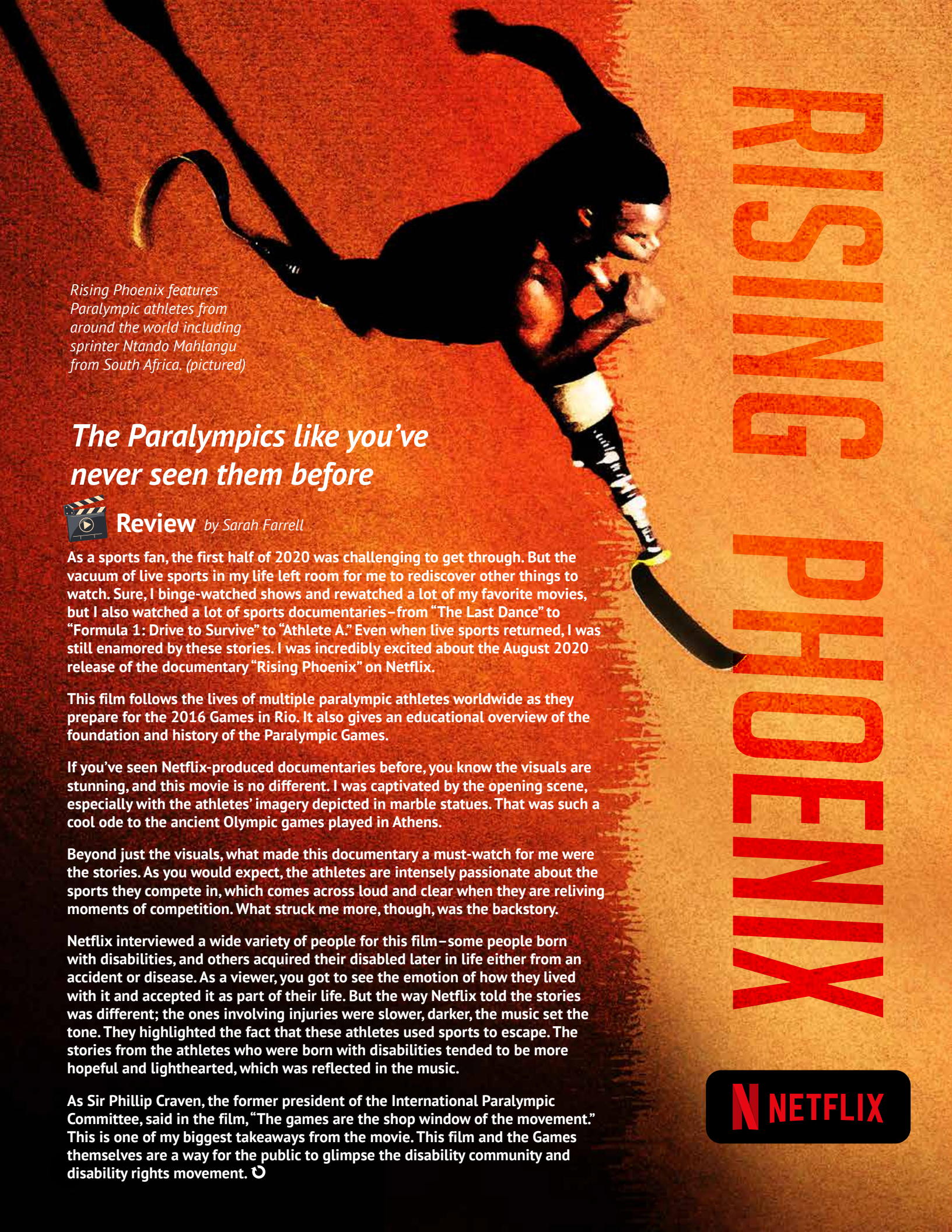
Products range from \$10.00 - \$22.00 for individual containers on Amazon.

OXO POP storage containers come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and are also stackable. They are great for storing things like cereal, rice, or beans on your counter or in your pantry. The lid forms an airtight seal with a push of a button on top of the lid, keeping your dry goods fresh. To release the seal, you simply push the button again. You can pull the lid off with just one hand. They can be purchased individually or in sets. 

3

2

1



Rising Phoenix features Paralympic athletes from around the world including sprinter Ntando Mahlangu from South Africa. (pictured)

The Paralympics like you've never seen them before



Review by Sarah Farrell

As a sports fan, the first half of 2020 was challenging to get through. But the vacuum of live sports in my life left room for me to rediscover other things to watch. Sure, I binge-watched shows and rewatched a lot of my favorite movies, but I also watched a lot of sports documentaries—from “The Last Dance” to “Formula 1: Drive to Survive” to “Athlete A.” Even when live sports returned, I was still enamored by these stories. I was incredibly excited about the August 2020 release of the documentary “Rising Phoenix” on Netflix.

This film follows the lives of multiple paralympic athletes worldwide as they prepare for the 2016 Games in Rio. It also gives an educational overview of the foundation and history of the Paralympic Games.

If you've seen Netflix-produced documentaries before, you know the visuals are stunning, and this movie is no different. I was captivated by the opening scene, especially with the athletes' imagery depicted in marble statues. That was such a cool ode to the ancient Olympic games played in Athens.

Beyond just the visuals, what made this documentary a must-watch for me were the stories. As you would expect, the athletes are intensely passionate about the sports they compete in, which comes across loud and clear when they are reliving moments of competition. What struck me more, though, was the backstory.

Netflix interviewed a wide variety of people for this film—some people born with disabilities, and others acquired their disabled later in life either from an accident or disease. As a viewer, you got to see the emotion of how they lived with it and accepted it as part of their life. But the way Netflix told the stories was different; the ones involving injuries were slower, darker, the music set the tone. They highlighted the fact that these athletes used sports to escape. The stories from the athletes who were born with disabilities tended to be more hopeful and lighthearted, which was reflected in the music.

As Sir Phillip Craven, the former president of the International Paralympic Committee, said in the film, “The games are the shop window of the movement.” This is one of my biggest takeaways from the movie. This film and the Games themselves are a way for the public to glimpse the disability community and disability rights movement. 🗣️

RIISING PHOENIX

N NETFLIX

Advertise with *LivAbility*



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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NATIONAL ABILITY CENTER UTAH

Building community through recreation

by Whitney Thompson, Senior Marketing Manager, National Ability Center

2020 was the year of unknowns.

For the National Ability Center, that's exactly how we felt about navigating the full impact of COVID-19 on our organization. After all, we thrive on providing in-person recreation and educational programs for people of all abilities with programs throughout Utah. Our mission is to offer year-round adaptive recreation, which includes inclusive activities like Nordic and Alpine skiing, climbing, cycling and rafting. We're all about connection, experiences, and increasing quality of life for individuals and families—making social distancing a massive challenge for us to work through. But what do you do when the very people you serve are considered “high-risk,” and in-person programs are no longer an option?

We had no choice but to pivot.

As we re-evaluated how we would move forward, we quickly realized that our mission was much broader than just recreation. It was about serving a community and building a support system, in-person or virtual.



Serving the health care community

In this spring's temporary absence of in-person training programs, the National Ability Center's 52-bed lodge facility remained open. It was a resource we had available to give, and an opportunity for us to support our community. So, we opened it to Park City's Intermountain Healthcare Hospital medical personnel. The lodge gave them a place of respite and peace as they battled the pandemic.

The lesson: Find ways to utilize the resources you already have to impact your local community, especially in times of crisis.

Building connection through virtual programming

The NAC originally started 35 years ago to serve veterans, and that focus remains today, as it is one of the highest populations we serve annually. We see many veterans and others who have PTSD. Through these experiences, we understand the threat isolation and inactivity can be to mental health. For us, fighting the loneliness of social distancing was critical.

We launched virtual programs designed to keep our participants connected with their instructors and the community they had built through the National Ability

Center. We also created groups for adaptive online workouts, crafted how-to's, and more so the community could stay motivated and active as a unified team.

The results were tremendous. We had a veteran who rode his recumbent cycle hundreds of miles in his living room, thanks to our virtual cycling group's motivation.

We also built connections outside of those we serve. We leveraged relationships with other adaptive programs and started a nationwide group of adaptive recreation leaders. To this day, we continue to discuss best practices for programs across the country with advocates in the industry.

Photos courtesy National Ability Center



The lesson: Utilize technology and other mediums to build community tethers when you can't meet in person. This will create not only alignment between individuals but also brand association.

Supporting socially-distant outdoor activity

Summer is typically one of our busiest times for adaptive cycling. Yet adaptive cycles can cost several thousand dollars, making the equipment and the activity inaccessible to many. To help encourage outdoor activity, we launched a touch-free, long-term bike rental program. Adaptive bikes and mountain bikes were delivered to those who needed them for weeks at a time at no charge.



As our county has begun to open up, we have implemented strict protocols for in-person programming. We are transparent in our approach, so each of our community members can decide between returning to in-person NAC activities as they feel comfortable. We will also continue to offer online programs for those who do not feel comfortable meeting in-person at this time.

The lesson: Offer a variety of options for participants to experience the work you do. Combine virtual with in-person (as you're able) learning experiences.

Beginning to look ahead

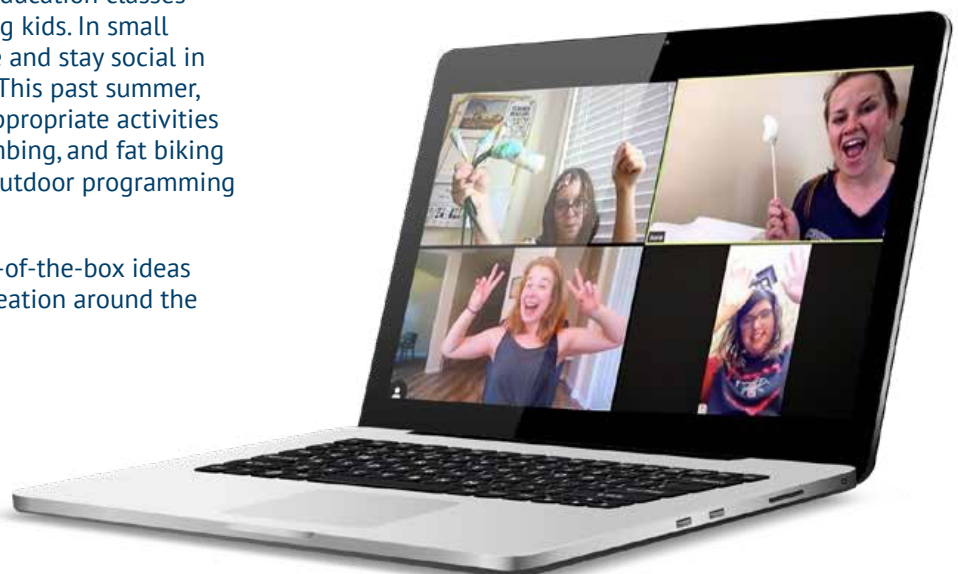
We have had to pivot significantly in the face of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown. As we move forward, we are looking to redefine our role for those we serve.

As schools began to reopen and another large population of our participants, children, faced challenges with finding appropriate recreation opportunities, we looked to provide a solution to the need for socialization and physical education. We created a program called "Fun + Fitness" as an alternative to physical education classes for homeschooling or distance-learning kids. In small group sessions, children can get active and stay social in limited enrollment, distanced classes. This past summer, we began to incorporate seasonally-appropriate activities like adaptive Nordic skiing, indoor climbing, and fat biking programs to reap the benefits of our outdoor programming while prioritizing safe recreation.

Further ahead, we aim to focus on out-of-the-box ideas that positively influence adaptive recreation around the

country. Utilizing technology, we will build out training and education programs designed to facilitate adaptive recreation programs and create new opportunities for persons with and without disabilities.

If there's one takeaway from all of this, it's that we must keep moving. It's vital for us to continue our work as a nonprofit -- to fulfill our mission and build connections during an uncertain time. not a matter of what we're doing as a nonprofit, but our work to CONTINUE doing it, fulfilling our mission, and building connections during an uncertain time. 🔄





Ability360's Loan Closet

Help that's there when you need it *by Tony Jackson*

Ability360 offers a myriad of services, including disability advocacy, home health care, and the state-of-the-art Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center. Did you know we also maintain a loan closet from which people can borrow durable medical equipment?

The loan closet is run by Ability360 Information and Referral Program Coordinator, Tricia Serlin. It consists of small items like manual wheelchairs, walkers and shower equipment that can be rented out to those who are eligible. There is no motorized equipment to rent out, and the equipment comes as is.

But for those in the community in need of vital equipment to improve their independence, the loan closet is a great resource to take advantage of.

Each piece can be borrowed for up to 90 days.

So what does the actual rental process look like? As Serlin explains, it's fairly easy.

"If your insurance won't cover the equipment you need," Serlin said, "call me at 602-296-0536 to see if we have the item."

While the loan closet doesn't have everything, there is a diverse assortment of items that have been donated. If they do have the item you need, all you have to do is call, schedule a time to come into the main office on Washington Street in Phoenix, fill out paperwork and then borrow the item. All equipment does have to be reserved before it can be borrowed.

Not only can you borrow from the closet, but you can donate as well.

"Just give me a call," Serlin said. "We can't take large items such as hospital

beds or Hoyer lifts, as we don't have room, but I might be able to guide you to other places that can."

So if you're looking for a short-term solution to help improve your independence with equipment, reach out to Serlin and the loan closet to see if they can help.

If you live in the Phoenix metro area and have a durable medical equipment need, call Tricia! She may have just what you need to help you live more independently. She also accepts donations, so you can drop off equipment you're no longer using. If she can take it, she will certainly find it a good home. 🔄

ParkSmarter

by Sarah Farrell & Kasey Kaler

It's a situation that most people who use wheelchairs and wheelchair accessible vehicles are all too familiar with: A shopping cart or another car is blocking the access aisle for accessible parking spaces.

The number of times that I've been unable to get into my vehicle is borderline ridiculous. While I've been lucky enough to sometimes be with others who can move my vehicle for me, this is hardly a safe solution.

The day for a solution has finally come.

Vantage Mobility International (VMI), together with input from customers around the country, engineered a solution to this problem.

"We strive to understand the challenges that our customers face whenever we embark on new product innovations," Mark Shaughnessy, CEO of VMI, said. "Our goal is to solve for the problems that create challenges for customers."

VMI has created a built-in sensor called ParkSmart (patented) available in VMI Honda Odyssey, Toyota Sienna, and Chrysler Pacifica wheelchair vans with Northstar in-floor ramp systems. This sensor is an industry first and not available through any other manufacturers.

New technology from VMI may solve parking headaches

So how does this new technology work?

The sensor, located just inside the car door near the wheelchair ramp, can be pushed and activated when you're exiting the car. The sensor will light up green and beep three times when it's ready. When it's switched on, it goes to work within 30 seconds after the doors shut. It scans for objects placed within eight feet of your parked vehicle.

While you're away from your car, the sensor will continue scanning the area for obstructions.

If an obstruction is detected, a friendly audible warning automatically sounds from your vehicle. It says, "Excuse me! You're blocking entry to this wheelchair accessible vehicle. Could you please move the vehicle or object so the owner can access their vehicle? Thank you so much!" This message will then play three times.

This feature will give wheelchair users an added sense of independence when they are out and about. You won't have to worry about going into a store and coming out to a cart or car blocking your wheelchair ramp from coming down.

This feature comes standard in all 2021 models, but if you are interested in adding it to your current vehicle, go to shop.vantagemobility.com/parksmartsensor to speak with a mobility specialist. 🗣️

Photo courtesy of VMI



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