

GOOD MORNING EVERYONE.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US.

MY NAME IS MANDI SHERIDAN.

I AM THE MOBILE BENEFITS
COUNSELLOR AT TACONIC RESOURCES
FOR INDEPENDENCE.

TODAY, BEFORE WE GET STARTED, I
AM GOING TO GO OVER SOME QUICK
ZOOM CONTROLS FOR YOU ATTENDEES.
THIS WEBINAR IS BEING RECORDED.
AND IT WILL BE AVAILABLE ON OUR
WEBSITE HOPEFULLY BY NEXT WEEK.
AS AN ATTENDEE YOUR VIDEOS AND
MICROPHONES ARE ALL OFF.

SO NO WORRIES, YOU'RE NOT BEING
RECORDED.

IF YOU ARE JOINING US BY
COMPUTER OR AN I-PHONE, YOU
SHOULD SEE ON THE BOTTOM SCREEN
A Q&A BUTTON, A CHAT BUTTON,
CLOSED CAPTIONING WHERE YOU CAN
TURN IT ON AND OFF.

AND THERE'S ALSO THREE LITTLE
DOTS THAT SAY MORE.

YOU CAN IGNORE THAT BUTTON.

THE CHAT BUTTON IS DEACTIVATED.

SO WHILE WE ARE DOING OUR

QUESTIONING AND ANSWERING TIME,
THAT'S WHEN YOU CAN START
ENTERING IN YOUR QUESTIONS.

IF YOU'RE JOINING US BY AN I-PAD
THESE CONTROLS ARE ON THE TOP OF
THE SCREEN. SO I'M GOING TO TURN
IT OVER TO LISA

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE. I AM
LISA TARRICONE, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF TACONIC RESOURCES
FOR INDEPENDENCE OR TRI.
FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO DON'T KNOW
US, WE ARE A DISABILITY RIGHTS
ADVOCACY AND INDEPENDENT
RESOURCE LIVING CENTER PROVIDING
SERVICES AND INFORMATION TO
PEOPLE WITH ALL TYPES OF
DISABILITIES
AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGHOUT
DUTCHESS COUNTY. AND WE WILL
TELL YOU A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT
OUR SERVICES LATER IN THE
PROGRAM.

I WANT TO THANK YOU AND WELCOME
YOU FOR ATTENDING OUR
CELEBRATION TODAY FOR THE 30
YEAR ANNIVERSARY

OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY
ACT, THE ADA, WHICH WAS
SIGNED INTO LAW ON JULY 26,
1990. WHEN WE CELEBRATE THE ADA
WITH INTENT, WE BECOME MORE
CONSCIOUS OF HOW WE VIEW PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES.

IT'S ABOUT CHALLENGING DEEPLY
ENTRENCHED MYTHS, STEREOTYPES
AND STIGMA.

IT'S ABOUT COMMITTING TO THINK
DIFFERENTLY.

WHEN WE LOOK AT SOMEBODY WITH A
DISABILITY AND
THINK PITY AND DEPENDENCY, WHEN
YOU FOCUS ON THEIR LIMITATIONS
INSTEAD OF THEIR CAPABILITIES.

IN ESSENCE IT'S ABOUT LOOKING AT
PEOPLE AS THE OTHER, AS SPECIAL
AND NOT AS YOUR EQUAL.

SO OUR PROGRAM TODAY IS ALL
ABOUT SHATTERING THESE MYTHS AND
CHALLENGING ATTITUDINAL
PERCEPTIONS THAT CREATE BARRIERS
TO FULL CITIZENSHIP FOR PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES.

I'M GOING TO BRIEFLY GO OVER

TODAY'S AGENDA, WHICH WE'LL BE
PUTTING UP ON THE SCREEN FOR YOU
TO SEE. FIRST WE'LL BE STARTING
OFF WITH OUR 20-MINUTE VIDEO.
THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A
SPECIAL STATEMENT FROM OUR
COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARC MOLINARO.
WE HAVE TWO SPEAKERS THAT WILL
SHARE THEIR PERSONAL STORIES AND
PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES AS
DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATES.
WE'LL HAVE A BRIEF Q&A FOLLOWING
EACH OF THE SPEAKERS.
I ENCOURAGE YOU, AS THEY ARE
SPEAKING TO TRY TO
GET YOUR QUESTIONS IN THE Q&A
BOX, AS MANDI HAD MENTIONED AT
THE OUTSET.
BECAUSE WE ONLY HAVE A LIMITED
AMOUNT OF TIME. WE CAN'T ANSWER
ALL YOUR QUESTIONS.
SO THE FIRST ONE ON THE QUEUE IS
YOU'LL BE SURE TO HAVE YOUR
QUESTION ANSWERED.
NEXT WE WILL HAVE CLOSING
REMARKS BY PATRICK MULLER, WHO
IS OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR HERE AT

TRI.

AND THEN WE ARE GOING TO RUN
PROCLAMATIONS FROM OUR STATE AND
LOCAL OFFICIALS IN SUPPORT OF
THE ADA AND TRI.

AND I'LL GO OVER-- I'LL COME
BACK AT THE END TO TALK ABOUT
OUR CERTIFICATE OF
PARTICIPATION.

SO THE FILM YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE
WAS PRODUCED FIVE YEARS AGO.
INTERVIEWEES ARE WESTCHESTER
COUNTY RESIDENTS.

THE STORIES ARE UNIVERSAL
STORIES AND ARE AS RELEVANT
TODAY HERE IN DUTCHESS COUNTY,
AS THEY ARE GLOBALLY, AS THEY
WERE FIVE YEARS AGO.

THE INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE
INTERVIEWED IN THE FOLLOWING
FILM YOU ABOUT TO SEE AND HEAR
WILL OFFER THEIR DEEPLY PERSONAL
STORIES ABOUT LIVING THEIR LIVES
WITH VARIOUS TYPES OF
DISABILITIES.

SOME WILL TELL YOU ABOUT HOW
THEY COPE WITH THEIR

FRUSTRATIONS. AND SOME WILL TELL
YOU ABOUT THEIR SUCCESSES. AND
OTHERS HOW THEY BECAME SELF
ADVOCATES TO PROMOTE GREATER
INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES.

BUT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EACH
INTERVIEW THE SINGLE SENTIMENT
THEY ALL SHARE AS INDIVIDUALS
WITH DISABILITIES IS THAT THEIR
PERSONHOOD IS SHADOWED BY THE
SOCIETAL PERCEPTION OF
DISABILITY.

AS ONE INTERVIEWEE, ANN,
EXPRESSED:

"MY BLINDNESS IS A PART OF WHO I
AM BUT IT DOES NOT DEFINE ME AS
A PERSON."

SO HERE IN THEIR OWN WORDS,
YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW,
25 YEARS AFTER THE ADA.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

THE ADA HAS BEEN A WATERSHED IN
AMERICAN DISABILITY POLICY.
WITH FAR-REACHING EFFECTS ON THE
STATUS OF AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES.

BUT HAS FALLEN FAR SHORT FROM
THE EXPECTATIONS FOR SOCIAL
TRANSFORMATION WITH WHICH IT WAS
ENACTED IN 1990.

THE INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE
INTERVIEWED IN THE FOLLOWING
FILM YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE AND
HEAR WILL OFFER
THEIR DEEPLY PERSONAL STORIES
ABOUT LIVING THEIR LIVES WITH
VARIOUS TYPES OF DISABILITIES.
SOME WILL TELL YOU HOW THEY COPE
WITH THEIR FRUSTRATIONS AND
CELEBRATE THEIR SUCCESSES.
AND OTHERS HOW THEY HAVE BECOME
SELF ADVOCATES TO PROMOTE
GREATER INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES.

BUT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EACH
INTERVIEW THE SINGLE SENTIMENT
THAT ALL SHARE AS PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES

IS THAT THEIR PERSONHOOD IS
SHADOWED BY THE SOCIAL
PERCEPTION OF DISABILITIES.

AS ONE INTERVIEWEE, ANN,
EXPRESSED, "MY BLINDNESS IS A

PART OF WHO I AM BUT DOES NOT
DEFINE ME AS A PERSON."

HERE IN THEIR OWN WORDS
YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW.

25 YEARS AFTER THE ADA.
OSTEOGENESIS IMPERFECTA.

I HEAR VOICES.

I'M A MANIC DEPRESSIVE. I'M VERY
DEPRESSED SOME DAYS.

I WAS BORN WITH UVEAL COLOBOMAS
IN BOTH EYES.

I HAVE CEREBRAL PALSY.

WHEN I WAS 18 I HAD A TRUCK TIRE
BLOW UP IN MY FACE.

I WAS WITH MY MOTORCYCLE CLUB,
FORSAKEN MC AND EVERYONE WAS
HANGING OUT ONE NIGHT AND WE
WERE ON OUR WAY FROM AN EVENT.
AND SOMEHOW IT STARTED RAINING.
AND AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER,
THAT'S IT.

MY DISABILITY? THAT'S KIND OF A
STRANGE QUESTION, BECAUSE REALLY
I'M NOT DISABLED. BUT FOR THE
PURPOSES OF THIS I UNDERSTAND
YOUR QUESTION. SO YOU KNOW, I'M
CONSIDERED DEAF.

WELL, I LOST MY SIGHT AS THE
RESULT OF A CAR ACCIDENT BACK IN
JULY 16, 1993.

MY CONDITION IS CONGENITAL. IT'S
A GENETIC CONDITION DISORDER.

IT'S CALLED DIASTROPHIC
DYSPLASIA. OR WHEN I WAS GROWING
UP IT WAS COMMONLY REFERRED TO
AS DIASTROPHIC DWARFISM.

BACK IN 1982 I WAS IN A CAR
ACCIDENT.

I WAS VISUALLY IMPAIRED FROM THE
TIME I WAS BORN. I JUST NEVER
KNEW IT.

I HAD SUFFERED FROM A TRAUMATIC
BRAIN INJURY. I GOT MY RIGHT ARM
AMPUTATED ABOVE THE ELBOW. MY
RIGHT LEG ABOVE THE KNEE. HUGE
CHANGE IN MY LIFE. YOU KNOW, I
WAS VERY INDEPENDENT. I LIVED ON
MY OWN WITH MY FAMILY. AND WOKE
UP ONE DAY AND THAT WAS ALL
GONE.

WENT TO SCHOOL AT TEMPLE
UNIVERSITY IN PHILADELPHIA. AT A
TIME WHEN IT WAS VERY HARD TO DO
COLLEGE BECAUSE THERE WERE SO

MANY INACCESSIBLE CAMPUSES. I
GRADUATED WITH A DEGREE IN
ENGLISH. I WOULD HAVE GRADUATED
WITH A DEGREE IN EDUCATION,
WHICH IS WHAT I REALLY WANTED.
EXCEPT THAT I WAS TOLD BY MY
COUNSELOR THERE AT TEMPLE THAT
SHE HAD CALLED EVERY SCHOOL IN A
PRETTY WIDE RADIUS AROUND
PHILADELPHIA, AND THERE WASN'T
ANYBODY WHO WOULD ACCEPT ME AS A
STUDENT TEACHER. WHEN I WAS A
KID I REMEMBER IF YOU WENT INTO
A RESTAURANT YOU WOULD SOMETIMES
BE SEATED APART FROM EVERYONE
ELSE, IF YOU COULD GET INTO THE
RESTAURANT.

I WAS SENT TO A NURSING HOME,
AND THAT PLACE HELD ME THERE AND
JUST HAD ME LAYING AROUND
BASICALLY FOR A LONG PERIOD OF
TIME. AND THEN WHEN I FINALLY
DID GET UP AND STARTED TO GET
BACK TOGETHER MENTALLY TO TELL
THEM "HEY, I WANT TO WALK, I
WANT TO FEED MYSELF, I WANT TO
CLEAN MYSELF, I WANT TO DO THIS,

I WANT TO DO THAT..." THEY
BASICALLY WASHED ME AWAY. THEY
DIDN'T TRY TO HELP ME MUCH WITH
THAT.

THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN SO MUCH
ANYMORE. CURB CUTS ARE PRETTY
MUCH UNIVERSAL. PARTICULARLY IN
A PLACE LIKE WHITE PLAINS. WE
HAVE PARATRANSIT, ACCESSIBLE
TAXI CABS, NOT ONLY IN OUR
COMMUNITY BUT THROUGHOUT THE
COUNTRY.

I THINK IT WAS A LANDMARK
LEGISLATION. I THINK IT HAS
HELPED BREAK DOWN A LOT OF
BARRIERS.

THE ADA, DUE TO THE WORDING,
"REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS"
OPENED A LOT FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME.
THEN ADA WAS PASSED, AND IT DID
CHANGE THINGS DRAMATICALLY. AND
I COULD SEE THAT IT WAS MUCH
EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE AFTER
THE ADA WAS PASSED.

ESPECIALLY I AM VERY PLEASED AT
THE PROGRESS THAT APPLE HAS
DONE, AS WELL AS MICROSOFT. THE

APPLE PRODUCTS WITH THE I-PHONE,
THE I-PAD WITH THE ACCESSIBILITY
OPTIONS. THE ZOOM IN FUNCTION,
WHERE THEY JUST ADDED A
MAGNIFICATION PROGRAM ON WINDOWS
WHERE YOU CAN MAKE THE SCREEN AS
BIG AS YOU WANT. ALSO IN OFFICE,
WORD, EXCEL, POWERPOINT COMES
WITH A FEATURE ON THE LOWER
RIGHT-HAND CORNER WHERE YOU CAN
ZOOM IN ON THE SCREEN. AND IT'S
JUST GREAT WHERE I CAN JUST SIT
BACK. NOT LIKE THE OLD DAYS,
WHERE I HAD TO PRETTY MUCH KISS
THE SCREEN.

VIDEO PHONE, WE CALL IT VP,
VIDEO PHONE THAT THE ADA FROM
TITLE IV WAS ACCESS TO
COMMUNICATION. AND THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT REQUIRED THAT WE HAVE
ACCESS TO WHAT WAS CALLED A
VIDEO RELAY SERVICE. SO I COULD
CALL HEARING PEOPLE THROUGH THIS
VIDEO RELAY SERVICE. AND WHAT
WOULD HAPPEN IS I MAKE A PHONE
CALL TO A DOCTOR'S OFFICE. BUT I
DON'T CALL DIRECTLY TO THE PHONE

NUMBER. I CALL AND SEE ON THE
SCREEN A VIDEO INTERPRETER WITH
HEADPHONES AND A MICROPHONE. AND
I SIGN TO THEM THAT I WANT TO
MAKE AN APPOINTMENT PLEASE. AND
THEY CALL AND SPEAK TO THE
DOCTOR'S OFFICE. AND THEN THEY
ANSWER AND THEY SIGN THE ANSWER
BACK TO ME. AND IT GOES THROUGH
THAT THIRD PERSON. AND THAT'S
AMAZING BECAUSE I CAN MAKE PHONE
CALLS MYSELF. I CAN HAVE THAT.
BEFORE THE ADA, THAT WASN'T A
MANDATE.

RIGHT NOW I'M WORKING THREE DAYS
A WEEK AT WALMART. I GOT THAT
THROUGH A DISABILITY AGENCY. AND
BASICALLY I END UP HAVING TO
FOLD CLOTHES AND THAT KIND OF
THING. AND I WAS MADE TO DO A
WHOLE LOT MORE THAN FOLD
CLOTHES.

I WENT TO ITALY ON MY OWN IN
2007. COMPLETELY WITHOUT A TOUR
GROUP, WITHOUT A TRAVELING
COMPANION. THIS WAS MY 3-PART
ADVENTURE FOR A 3-PART

CELEBRATION FOR GETTING MY
MASTER'S DEGREE, TURNING 40 AND
MY HONEYMOON FOR ONE, BECAUSE I
CAN'T WAIT FOREVER.

IN MY 20S THEY HAD A TYPING
COURSE, WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT.
AND WE NEED TO PUT MONEY TOWARDS
THAT.

SO I CAN TELL YOU IN THE
BEGINNING AT THAT TIME WHAT THEY
WOULD DO IS THEY WOULD GET YOU
INTO A TRAINING PROGRAM. THEY
TRAIN YOU FOR A JOB AND THEN YOU
GET A JOB THROUGH THEM. AND THAT
PROGRAM WOULD BE YOUR RESUME AND
THEY WOULD LOOK FOR JOBS FOR
YOU. THAT'S HOW SHE AND I MET.

LIFE IN GENERAL IS HARD. AND
THEN I HAVE THE DISABILITY TO
STRUGGLE WITH TOO. IT'S A LOT. I
HEAR VOICES. I HAVE
HALLUCINATIONS SOMETIMES. BUT I
DON'T KNOW IF I WANT ANOTHER
LIFE. I DON'T KNOW THAT I COULD
LIVE BEING ANOTHER PERSON. I
GUESS YOU'D HAVE TO BE ANOTHER
TO FIND OUT. BUT I'VE ALWAYS HAD

THEM WITH ME, AND I'VE ALWAYS
FUNCTIONED WITH THEM. I'M
ACTUALLY GRATEFUL TO A LOT OF
THEM BECAUSE THEY DO SO MUCH
THAT I CAN'T DO. WESTCHESTER IS
HAVING A HEARING VOICES GROUP.
AND I'M GOING TO BE RUNNING A
GROUP CALLED HEARING VOICES. SO
THAT WE ALL SIT AROUND AND WE
TALK ABOUT OUR VOICES AND WHAT
WE'RE GOING TO DO TO FEEL BETTER
ABOUT OURSELVES. AND HOW IN
ENGLAND IT'S ACCEPTED THAT
PEOPLE TALK TO THEMSELVES, BUT
IN THE UNITED STATES IT'S VERY
UNCOMMON. AND WE'RE STIGMATIZED
AND LOOKED AT AS CRAZY. AND
WE'RE ACTUALLY JUST NOT CRAZY.
AND SO I'M VERY EXCITED ABOUT
THAT BECAUSE NOW I GET TO MAYBE
LET'S JUST SAY CROSS ANOTHER
PLATEAU OF NOT BEING ASHAMED TO
HAVE A DISABILITY.
AFTER MY TIME IN THE HOSPITAL,
WHICH WAS VERY BENEFICIAL
BECAUSE IT GAVE ME THE TIME I
NEEDED TO RECOVER, THE STRENGTH

I NEEDED TO GET BACK ON MY FEET.
AFTER GOING HOME I GOT INTO THE
PROGRAM WITH LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE
BLIND IN MIAMI. BECAUSE I GREW
UP IN NORTH MIAMI BEACH,
FLORIDA. AND LIGHTHOUSE TAUGHT
ME HOW TO DO EVERYTHING. THEY
TAUGHT ME HOW TO USE THE LONG
WHITE CANE. THEY TAUGHT ME HOW
TO TYPE USING TOUCH TYPING
VERSUS HUNTING AND PECKING,
WHICH IS WHAT I DID BEFORE I
LOST MY SIGHT. THEY TAUGHT ME
HOW TO READ BRAILLE. THEY TAUGHT
ME HOW TO WRITE BRAILLE. THEY
TAUGHT ME HOW TO COOK, HOW TO
CLEAN. HOW TO PRETTY MUCH DO
EVERYTHING. LIVE MY LIFE. HOW
IT'S POSSIBLE FOR ME TO LIVE MY
LIFE INDEPENDENTLY. WHEN I GOT
MY FIRST GUIDE DOG, WHAT I
DIDN'T EXPECT AFTER I GOT MY
FIRST GUIDE DOG WAS THE FIGHT
THAT WOULD COME AFTER THAT. I
KNEW BECAUSE OF THE BENEFIT OF
THE ADA AND THE LEGALITY OF
GUIDE DOGS AND SERVICE DOGS TO

BE ALLOWED EVERYWHERE THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM. I SHOULD NEVER REALLY HAVE TO FIGHT FOR ANYTHING. BUT I LEARNED WHEN I GOT MY FIRST DOG THAT THERE WOULD BE FIGHTS. AND I'M SORRY TO SAY THE FIRST FIGHT I EVER HAD WAS WITH MY SCHOOL SYSTEM. THEY DIDN'T WANT ME TO GO BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL. NOT BACK TO MY HIGH SCHOOL AT LEAST. THEY SAID "YOU'RE VISION IMPAIRED. WE HAVE A SPECIAL PROGRAM IN A DIFFERENT SCHOOL, AND YOU WILL GO THERE." AND MY REACTION WAS, "NO, WHY AM I GOING TO GO TO A DIFFERENT SCHOOL?" I'VE BEEN THERE FOR TWO YEARS PREVIOUSLY. I LITERALLY HAVE A MAP IN MY MIND. I HAVEN'T DONE IT WITHOUT SIGHT, BUT I REMEMBER IT VISUALLY. WHY ARE YOU GOING TO THROW ME INTO A SETTING THAT WOULD MAKE ME TRULY BLIND?

I HAD SEVERAL FRIENDS IN WICHITA THAT WERE WOOD CARVERS. AND THEY WERE STUPID ENOUGH TO GIVE ME A

SHARP KNIFE. AND WE TOOK OVER
FROM THERE AND STARTED OUT WITH
SMALL STUFF. YOU KNOW, JUST A
CHEAP SET OF TOOLS FROM HOBBY
LOBBY AND GRADUATED INTO THE
MENAGERIE OF KNIVES THAT I HAVE
NOW. IT'S STILL A WORK IN
PROGRESS AND ALWAYS WILL BE. THE
THING WITH LIFE IN GENERAL IS
YOU GET OUT OF IT WHAT YOU PUT
INTO IT. ADA HAS COME A LONG WAY
AND IT'S GOT A LONG WAYS TO GO.
IT'S ALWAYS GOING TO BE AN
UPHILL BATTLE, NO MATTER WHAT WE
DO. BECAUSE EVERYTHING CHANGES.
BUT I THINK THE FRAMERS OF THE
LEGISLATION AND CONGRESS DIDN'T
GO FAR ENOUGH IN TERMS OF
SPELLING OUT REMEDIES AND MAKING
THINGS EASY FOR PEOPLE TO FOLLOW
IN TERMS OF GUIDELINES FOR
BUILDINGS WITH ACCESS CODES.
WE'RE CELEBRATING THE 25TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADA. DO YOU
THINK THE AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITY ACT HAS AFFECTED YOU?
I THINK IT'S DONE VERY LITTLE TO

HELP. AND CEREBRAL PALSY COMES
IN VARIOUS DEGREES. AND A LOT OF
PEOPLE WHO VIEW CEREBRAL PALSY,
THEY FEEL SOMETHING IS WRONG
HERE. AND THAT'S BECAUSE THERE'S
A SERIOUS LACK OF EDUCATION ON
WHAT CEREBRAL PALSY IS.

AND THAT'S WHAT WE NEED TO DO
FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE THAT'S JUST
STARTING OUT.

AND IT'S NOT JUST THAT. LIKE I
SAID, GOING BACK TO THESE
TRAINING PROGRAMS. YOU NEED TO
BE ABLE TO DO THAT. BECAUSE SOME
OF THESE JOBS THAT THEY GET
PEOPLE - ALL RIGHT, WE'RE AT A
POINT WHERE WE'RE GOING TO
RETIRE IN A FEW YEARS, SO IT'S
NOT GOING TO MATTER. WHEN YOU
GET THESE YOUNG KIDS IN THEIR
20S HOW ARE YOU GOING TO BE ABLE
TO LIVE DOING A JOB DOING
BAGGING, DOING CARTS, STUFF LIKE
THAT. YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO
GET THEM INTO SOME KIND OF AN
ENTRY LEVEL JOB. THAT'S WHERE
THEY NEED TO BE ABLE TO GET. SO

THEY ARE GOING TO NEED TO HAVE
THESE SKILLS. BECAUSE EVERYTHING
IS GETTING MORE AND MORE
COMPUTERIZED AND ALL THIS KIND
OF STUFF. AND FOR SOMEBODY THAT
IS REALLY DISABLED THEY GIVE UP
AFTER AWHILE.

LIKE I SAID TO YOU BEFORE, THERE
ARE SO MANY PEOPLE OUT THERE
WITH DISABILITY THAT CAN'T FIND
A JOB AND THEY FEEL LIKE THEY'RE
NOT AN IMPORTANT PART OF
SOCIETY.

NOW YOU GO INTO AN ELEVATOR
ANYWHERE AND YOU CAN HAVE
BRAILLE. AND YOU HAVE LARGE
PRINT NUMBERS. AND I REMEMBER
THERE ARE STILL ELEVATORS THAT I
GO INTO SOMETIMES AND THERE'S NO
BRAILLE. FOR INSTANCE IF I
WANTED TO GO TO AUSTIN, TEXAS,
AND I WANTED TO TAKE A WALK DOWN
FROM THE HOTEL AND THERE AREN'T
ANY ACCESSIBLE SIGNALS FOR ME TO
KNOW WHAT THOSE STREETS ARE SO I
CAN CROSS THEM. THAT PREVENTS ME
FROM DOING WHAT EVERYBODY ELSE

DOES, WHICH IS TAKE A STROLL
DOWN THE STREET AND SEE WHAT'S
GOING ON. THAT'S A BARRIER.
WHEN I FIRST MOVED HERE 21 YEARS
AGO, I'VE NEVER LIVED ENTIRELY
ON MY OWN. SO I HAD TO ADJUST TO
AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WAS NOT
DESIGNED FOR ME AT ALL. YES, THE
BUILDING HAS AN ELEVATOR. YES,
THERE'S A RAMP THAT GOES DOWN
FROM THE PARKING LOT, BUT INSIDE
HERE I HAD TO DEAL WITH DAUNTING
TASKS. LIKE COOKING. FOR A LONG
TIME I HARDLY EVERY USED THE
STOVE TOP BECAUSE IT WAS -- AS
YOU CAN SEE, OVER MY HEAD. SO
NEVER MADE ANYTHING LIKE EGGS OR
PASTA. AND THEN ONE DAY I
REMEMBERED THAT MY MOTHER USED
TO HAVE SOME POTS AND PANS MADE
BY PYREX. AND THEY WERE CLEAR.
THIS ONE IS ACTUALLY AMBER
COLOR. AND THEY DON'T MAKE THEM
ANYMORE. SO I HAD TO GO ONTO THE
INTERNET, GO TO EBAY, AND FIND
AN OLD PYREX SAUCE PAN. YOU'D BE
SURPRISED HOW HARD IT WAS.

PEOPLE LOVED THEM. AND I DON'T
THINK IT'S JUST LITTLE PEOPLE IN
WHEELCHAIRS. PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE
WHAT THEY'RE COOKING. AND SO I
BOUGHT ONE AT GREAT EXPENSE AND
NOW I CAN MAKE MY EGGS AND I CAN
MAKE MY PASTA. THE SINK IS ALSO
ON THE OTHER SIDE OVER MY HEAD.
AND SO I HAVE A STICK THAT I USE
TO TURN ON THE FAUCET, TURN OFF
THE FAUCET. I USE THE STICK FOR
A LOT OF THINGS. IT WOULD NOT BE
AN EXAGGERATION TO SAY THAT I
COULDN'T LIVE HERE INDEPENDENTLY
IF DIDN'T HAVE THAT STICK.

[JAMES BOND MUSIC PLAYING]

THEY CALL ME BOND. I THINK THAT
ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS NEED TO
BE MORE AWARE OF THE NEEDS OF
PEOPLE WHO HAVE PHYSICAL AND
OTHER CHALLENGES. YOU KNOW,
THERE ARE STANDARDS FOR
BUILDINGS. THERE ARE STANDARDS
FOR APPLIANCES. BUT THERE ARE NO
STANDARDS FOR PEOPLE. THESE
UNITS WERE SUPPOSED TO BUILT
KNOWING THAT SOME RESIDENTS

MIGHT HAVE DISABILITIES. AND MY
UNIT WAS CONSIDERED THIS UNIT
FOR SOMEBODY WHO WAS DISABLED
BECAUSE IT HAD WIDER BATHROOM
DOORS. BUT YET THEY PUT A
BATHTUB IN THE APARTMENT UNIT.
AND THE RAMP THAT WE CAME DOWN
THIS MORNING TO THE COMMON AREA,
THAT WE PAY COMMON CHARGES FOR,
ORIGINALLY HAD STEPS. AS YOU
HAVE JUST HEARD FROM THE
INDIVIDUALS IN THIS FILM, THE
ADA HAS POSITIVELY IMPACTED MANY
OF THEM IN SIGNIFICANT WAYS.
WHILE OTHERS HAVE SAID THAT IT
HASN'T DONE ENOUGH TO REMOVE THE
SOCIAL BARRIERS THAT PREVENT
THEIR FULL INCLUSION IN
COMMUNITY LIFE. ALTHOUGH THE
AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT
IS A CRUCIAL LANDMARK PIECE OF
CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION, IT CAN
DO A LOT MORE TO ADDRESS
ATTITUDES AND ACCEPTANCE WHICH
CONTRIBUTE TO STEREOTYPICAL
BIASES THAT KEEP PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES IN INSTITUTIONS

AGAINST THEIR WILL AND DENY THEM
OPPORTUNITIES FOR GAINFUL
EMPLOYMENT. TODAY AS WE
CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF EVOLVING
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES, LET US ALSO
BE ATTENTIVE TO THE WORK AHEAD
THAT STILL REMAINS TO BE DONE.

[FLUTE MUSIC]

THANKS EVERYONE. BUT WE STILL
HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO. SO
SUPPORT THE ADA SO THAT ONE DAY
WE CAN ACHIEVE EQUALITY.

OKAY, SO WE DIDN'T SEE THE REST
OF THE FILM, MILLIE, BUT THAT'S
OKAY.

THERE WERE SOME GREAT
PHOTOGRAPHS AT THE END.

NO PROBLEM.

I THINK THAT FILM SPOKE VOLUMES
ABOUT THE ATTITUDINAL ISSUES
THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
FACE, WHICH I THINK ARE THE
LARGEST BARRIERS IN OUR
COMMUNITY. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE
A VERY VIGOROUS DISCUSSION LATER
IN THE PROGRAM ABOUT THAT.

BUT BEFORE I INTRODUCE OUR FIRST
SPEAKER, WHO IS GERI MARIANO WHO
WAS IN THE FILM, WE ARE GOING TO
PLAY A TAPED RECORDING BY
DUTCHESS COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARC
MOLINARO, COMMEMORATING THE ADA
AND ALSO TELLING US THAT WE
STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO TO
ACHIEVE FULL COMMUNITY
INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES AND THE REMOVAL OF
ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS. SO WE'RE
GOING TO RUN THAT TAPE NOW.

30 YEARS AGO THE AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT WAS SIGNED INTO
LAW. AT THE TIME IT BROKE DOWN
BARRIERS AND REALLY UNLOCKED THE
DOOR FOR UNTAPPED HUMAN
POTENTIAL. ITS GOAL WAS TO
CONFRONT THAT LAST OBSTACLE AND
PREJUDICE THAT EXISTED, WHERE WE
VIEWED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE
DIFFERENTLY ABLED DIFFERENTLY.

WE HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT
PROGRESS. BECAUSE OF THE ADA WE
HAVE BROKEN DOWN MANY BARRIERS.
BUT IT IS ONLY A FOUNDATION.

IT IS SORT OF THE GROUND FLOOR
OF THE KIND OF CHANGE THAT IS
NECESSARY FOR EVERYONE OF EVERY
ABILITY. IT'S WHY IN THIS COUNTY
WE'VE WORKED WITH TACONIC
RESOURCES AND OTHERS TO THINK
DIFFERENTLY. TO LOOK AT THE ADA
NOT AS AN END BUT SIMPLY ONE
MORE STEP ALONG A JOURNEY OF
ENSURING EVERYONE OF EVERY
ABILITY HAS ACCESS REGARDLESS OF
WHO THEY ARE. THE ADA IN
CELEBRATING THE ADA IS
CRITICALLY IMPORTANT. BUT WE
ALSO NEED TO LOOK WITHIN
OURSELVES AND FIND NEW WAYS TO
BREAK DOWN BARRIERS. TO CREATE A
UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE SOCIETY.
TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERYONE HAS
ACCESS TO ALL OF THE
OPPORTUNITY. EQUALITY OF
OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE THE
SUCCESS THEY DESIRE FOR
THEMSELVES. SO CONGRATULATIONS
TO TRI, AND KEEP DOING WONDERFUL
WORK. AND WE CELEBRATE THE ADA
RECOGNIZING THAT WE HAVE SO MANY

MORE STEPS TO TAKE ALONG THIS
WAY. AND THIS GOAL OF ENSURING
THAT EVERYONE OF EVERY ABILITY
IS RESPECTED, EMBRACED AND
SUPPORTED. AND THAT WE
ULTIMATELY CREATE A UNIVERSALLY
ACCESSIBLE SOCIETY. LET'S KEEP
THINKING DIFFERENTLY AND
ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER TO MAKE
SURE THAT WE BREAK DOWN
BARRIERS, REMOVE OBSTACLES AND
ENSURE THAT EVERYONE OF EVERY
ABILITY CAN ACHIEVE THE SUCCESS
THEY DEFINE FOR THEMSELVES.
WELL, WE THANK THE COUNTY
EXECUTIVE FOR HIS EXEMPLARY
LEADERSHIP IN IMPLEMENTING THE
THINK DIFFERENTLY CAMPAIGN TO
RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE LIVES
OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.
TRI LOOKS FORWARD TO CONTINUING
OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH HIS
ADMINISTRATION. I WANT TO
INTRODUCE GERI MARIANO RIGHT
NOW. GERI MODELS EMPOWERMENT.
WHICH IS AGAIN WHAT THIS EVENT
IS ALL ABOUT. THE UNTAPPED

POTENTIAL WITHIN OUR POPULATION,
THE POWER WITHIN THE DISABILITY
COMMUNITY. AND GERI, I AM GOING
TO READ A QUOTE FROM YOU, AND I
HOPE I DON'T PREEMPT SOME OF
YOUR DISCUSSION HERE. IN A
STATEMENT THAT GERI MADE, AND I
QUOTE, "SOME 40 YEARS BEFORE ADA
WAS AN IDEA I IMAGINED A VERY
DIFFERENT LIFE STORY THAN THE
ONE THAT HAD A MASSIVE REWRITE.
I AM SO HOPEFUL TO WRITE
ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS. THIS EVENT
IS PART OF ONE ALREADY, MY
BECOMING A SPEAKER. I ALWAYS
WANTED TO BE KNOWN AS JUST GERI.
BUT IRONICALLY MY WORDS AND
VOICE CAN BE USED FOR MORE THAN
JUST MYSELF." SO GERI, IF YOU'RE
READY, I THINK WE ARE READY FOR
YOU. YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR
SCREEN. IT MIGHT TAKE A FEW
MINUTES HERE.

HI. CAN YOU SEE ME? CAN YOU HEAR
ME OKAY?

WE CAN HEAR YOU, GERI. WE CAN'T
SEE YOU. I CAN'T SEE YOU.

HOPEFULLY THE AUDIENCE CAN SEE
YOU.

SO HI, EVERYONE. MY NAME IS
GERI MARIANO. AND I HOPE YOU
DON'T MIND I AM GOING TO READ MY
REMARKS. SO I WILL PUT THE
PAPERS DOWN WHEN I'M DONE. I AM
ALSO GOING TO TAKE OFF MY
GLASSES, BECAUSE I CAN'T READ
AND SEE AT THE SAME TIME.

IT'S CRAZY, I KNOW. THAT'S WHAT
HAPPENS WITH AGE. THANK YOU,
LISA, AND TACONIC RESOURCES FOR
INVITING ME TO BE PART OF THIS
COMMEMORATION. YESTERDAY'S DREAM
IN 1990 HAPPENED A YEAR AFTER I
GRADUATED FROM SMITH COLLEGE
WITH A DEGREE IN AMERICAN
STUDIES. A LANDMARK LEGISLATION
WAS SIGNED BY PRESIDENT GEORGE
H.W. BUSH, A MAN I LONG ADMIRED
BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER. I HAD
WANTED NOTHING MORE THAN TO FIND
A JOB IN D.C., WHETHER AT THE
SMITHSONIAN OR ON CAPITOL HILL
OR ANYTHING. BUT BECAUSE OF THE
NATURE OF MY CONGENITAL

DISABILITIES, CRASHING IN A
FRIEND'S BASEMENT OR WALKUP
APARTMENT WAS NOT POSSIBLE
FOR MONTHS AT A TIME WHILE JOB
HUNTING. THE INTERNET DIDN'T
EXIST BACK THEN EITHER --HARD TO
BELIEVE. SO JOB HUNTING FROM A
DISTANCE WAS NOT AS IT IS TODAY.
MY PARENTS DIDN'T HAVE SPARE
MONEY TO SET ME UP WITH
ACCOMMODATIONS WHILE I JOB
HUNTED. WHICH LEADS TO A SIDE
POINT THAT MAY BE EXPLORED
FURTHER IF TIME ALLOWS. UNLESS
ONE HAS A FAMILY WITH AMPLE
RESOURCES TO BEGIN WITH, ONE
WITH DISABILITIES GENERALLY IS
FINANCIALLY VULNERABLE. AND WITH
LIMITED EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS,
ONE CANNOT EASILY BECOME SELF
SUFFICIENT. AND THEN
COLLECTIVELY PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES DON'T HAVE MUCH
INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC POLICY.
BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE THE FUNDS
TO DONATE AND TO BE HEARD. IT'S
ALSO NOT SEXY ENOUGH A CAUSE.

AND WE ARE NOT A POWERFUL VOTING
BLOCK. ALSO, IT'S EXPENSIVE TO
BE DISABLED, WHICH IS A CRUEL
IRONY WHEN ONE HAS LIMITED
RESOURCES OR OPPORTUNITIES. AS
THE STORY GOES, I WAS UNABLE TO
FULFILL MY PERSONAL DREAM BACK
THEN TO END UP IN D.C., WHICH IS
PROBABLY NOT FOR THE BEST. WHILE
THE ADA OPENED MANY DOORS TO
HELP AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES
BECOME MORE FULLY INTEGRATED IN
SOCIETY AND WORKPLACE, THERE
WERE STILL BARRIERS. AND THERE
ARE STILL TODAY. I REMEMBER
GOING BACK THEN TO EMPLOYMENT
AGENCIES HOME HERE IN
WESTCHESTER COUNTY, WHEN I WAS
STILL VERY PHYSICALLY
FUNCTIONAL, UPRIGHT AND WALKING
AND DRIVING. I WOULD BE
COMPLIMENTED ON MY FAST TYPING
AND MY EXEMPLARY TEST SCORES ON
WRITING AND GRAMMAR TESTS. BUT I
WAS NEVER SENT OUT ON NOT ONE
JOB INTERVIEW. I STILL THINK IT
WOULD MAKE FOR A GOOD EXPERIMENT

TO SENDING IN TWO APPLICANTS,
ONE "NORMAL" AND ONE WITH
DISABILITY TO SEE WITH THE
LATTER PERFORMING BETTER AND TO
SEE WHO WOULD BE SENT OUT ON
INTERVIEWS. NOW FAST FORWARD.
FOLLOWING THE SUCCESSFUL FIRST
HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY IN 2003
I DISCOVERED THE THERAPEUTIC
RECREATION PROFESSION WHILE IN
REHAB. I EARNED MASTER'S IN
LEHMAN COLLEGE WITH A 4.0 GPA IN
2007. THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM
HISTORY OF DISABILITY WAS
DISCUSSED, FROM EARLY ASYLUM
DAYS TO PROGRAMS FOLLOWING WORLD
WAR I AND PROGRAMS FOR INJURED
SOLDIERS RETURNING, ATTITUDES
AND LEGISLATION. MOST OF THE
T.R. STUDENTS WERE ABLE BODIED.
SO I HAD THE UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE
OF ONE THAT LIVED A LIFE OF
DISABILITY. ONE THAT THERAPEUTIC
RECREATION WOULD AIM TO ENHANCE.
I ALSO REALIZED THAT MY SCHOOL
DAYS FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH
COLLEGE WERE MISSING KEY

QUALITIES BECAUSE OF LACK OF
ACCESS AND NOT FOLLOWING
REGULATIONS LEADING UP TO THE
ADA PASSAGE BEFORE --
LEGISLATION BEFORE THE ADA
PASSAGE. IN FEBRUARY OF 2010 I
BECAME A CTRS AFTER COMPLETING
THE REQUIRED UNDERGRAD CLASSES
NEEDED FOR CERTIFICATION. I WAS
EXCITED ABOUT FINALLY BECOMING
EMPLOYED AND HOPEFULLY SELF
SUFFICIENT. SURGERIES GONE AWRY
FROM 2010 TO 2015 CRUSHED THAT
DREAM. INSTEAD OF WORKING, I
PIVOTED TOWARD GIVING MORE
PRESENTATIONS TO SCHOOL
STUDENTS. BELIEVING THAT WHEN
CHILDREN ARE INTRODUCED TO
DIFFERENCES EARLY ON,
PREJUDICES ARE LESS LIKELY TO
TAKE ROOT. I THINK OF THE SONG
FROM SOUTH PACIFIC, YOU HAVE TO
BE CAREFULLY TAUGHT. I ALSO
THINK OF THE QUOTE FROM NELSON
MANDELA BASICALLY SAYING THAT NO
BABY IS BORN WITH HATE IN THEIR
HEART. DURING THESE

PRESENTATIONS I WEAVE THEMES OF
COMPASSION, CREATIVE THINKING
AND COMMON SENSE INTO THE
STORIES OF MY LIFE, ONE FULL OF
CHALLENGES. MY CLASSMATES
GROWING UP EITHER KNEW ME FROM
KINDERGARTEN ON UP OR FROM FIFTH
GRADE ON. I WAS ALWAYS JUST GERI
TO THEM. SADLY, THE KIDS I SPEAK
WITH NOW GENERALLY THINK I WAS
TEASED AND BULLIED. BUT I TELL
THEM THAT I WAS ACCEPTED AND
LEFT TO BE JUST GERI, SAVE A FEW
INCIDENTS HERE AND THERE. AND
THAT HOW ACCEPTANCE OF
DIFFERENCES IS IMPORTANT. IT'S
FUN WHEN I SURPRISE THE KIDS
WHEN I TALK ABOUT SPORTS OR
BASEBALL OR DISCLOSE THAT I HAVE
A TATTOO. THEIR FACES ARE
PRICELESS WHEN I SMASH THEIR
MISCONCEPTION. I ALSO ENCOURAGE
HIGH FIVES, FIST BUMPS, HAND
SHAKES. OF COURSE THIS WAS ALL
BEFORE THE SHUT DOWN AND WHEN
THEY WERE ALLOWED. BECAUSE IT'S
IMPORTANT TO BREAK DOWN

INVISIBLE BARRIERS. TO SHOW IN A
WAY THAT MY PHYSICAL CONDITION
IS NOT CONTAGIOUS. WAY BEFORE
THE PANDEMIC EVEN, ADULTS COULD
BE HESITANT TO SHAKE HANDS. IN
2007, AS WAS SHOWN IN THE VIDEO,
WHILE STILL INDEPENDENTLY
MOBILE, I TRAVELED SOLO -- WHICH
WAS VERY CONCERNING TO MY FAMILY
AND FRIENDS -- TO ITALY AS PART
OF A THREE-PART CELEBRATION. A
MAJOR TOURIST DESTINATION FOR
ALL PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND
POSSIBILITIES, I SENSED THERE
WERE ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS.
AFTER ALL, MY BIOLOGICAL ITALIAN
PARENTS GAVE ME UP AT BIRTH. I
ALSO WONDERED IF IT MIGHT HAVE
BEEN A CULTURAL SHAME TO HAVE A
BABY WITH DEFORMITIES, OR
WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL THEM.
SO I WAS DETERMINED TO SHOW
MYSELF OUT IN THE THREE CITIES
AND SEE HOW ATTITUDES WERE THEN
JUST 13 YEARS AGO. I DID FIND
CERTAIN DISDAIN AND RELUCTANCE.
BUT I ALSO RECEIVED GREAT

KINDNESS FROM THOSE WITH LITTLE
TO NO EXPERIENCE INTERACTING
WITH ONE AS MYSELF. AND THAT IS
HOW I STILL EXPERIENCE LIFE
TODAY. ESPECIALLY AS I AM MUCH
MORE DEPENDENT. WHETHER YEARS
AGO OR THE RECENT PAST BEFORE
THE SHUT DOWN, I WAS AND AM
INFURIATED WHEN FOLKS IN
RESTAURANTS, STORES OR MEDICAL
APPOINTMENTS ADDRESS MY FRIENDS,
FAMILY OR AIDES INSTEAD OF ME.
THERE IS STILL MUCH TO BE DONE
TO TEACH PEOPLE. THIS HAS BEEN A
TUMULTUOUS TIME IN OUR COUNTRY,
BESIDES THE CRISIS OF THE
PANDEMIC. AMERICANS ARE BEING
ASKED TO REFLECT UPON OUR
COLLECTIVE HISTORY AND HOW
ESPECIALLY MINORITIES HAVE BEEN
TREATED THROUGHOUT. PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES ARE FOUND ACROSS
THE SPECTRUM OF RACE AND
CULTURE. I PERSONALLY DON'T LIKE
THE TERM BEING BANDIED ABOUT
PRIVILEGED. IN VARIOUS RESPECTS
ANY ONE PERSON COULD BE

CONSIDERED PRIVILEGED.

PERSONALLY I DON'T CONSIDER
THOSE WITHOUT DISABILITIES AS
PRIVILEGED. MY MOM, THE ONE WHO
CHOSE ME TO BE HER DAUGHTER,
INSTILLED IN ME FROM THE
EARLIEST AGE POSSIBLE THAT LIFE
ISN'T FAIR. YES, I HAD
DIFFICULTIES, AND I WAS DEALT A
BAD HAND. BUT NOTHING WAS OWED
TO ME. GROWING UP I DIDN'T SEE
MYSELF AS DIFFERENT AND CHAFED
AGAINST THOSE WHO DID. I DIDN'T
WANT SPECIAL FAVORS. I ALWAYS
WANTED TO PROVE MYSELF TO
OTHERS. WHICH IS WHY ALSO I WENT
TO ANTIGUA, A DUDE RANCH AND A
BUNCH OF OTHER STUFF. BUT
ESPECIALLY I WANTED TO BE
INCLUDED AND NOT TO BE LEFT OUT
OR LEFT BEHIND. I ALSO DON'T
WANT TO BE SEEN AS JUST SOMEONE
WITH DISABILITIES TO BE PITIED
OR HELD UP AS AN INSPIRATION.
WHICH IS IRONIC, BECAUSE NOW I
CALL MYSELF AN INSPIRATIONAL
SPEAKER. BUT AS ONE WHO IS

FUNNY, CARING AND IF I MAY,
INTELLIGENT. THROUGHOUT MY LIFE
I HAVE FELT AVOIDED BY MANY,
THOSE I KNOW AND STRANGERS
ALIKE. I THINK SOME OF THAT
AVOIDANCE IS PERHAPS BECAUSE
PEOPLE ARE AFRAID THEY COULD
BECOME DISABLED THEMSELVES BY
TRAUMA OR ILLNESS. IT SCARES
THEM SUBCONSCIOUSLY. PERHAPS
THIS IS WHY ANOTHER REASON WHY
ISSUES FACING PEOPLE
DISABILITIES ARE NOT ALWAYS
AT THE FOREFRONT OF PUBLIC
POLICY OR DISCUSSION. WE NEED TO
BE SHOWN AND NOT HIDDEN AWAY.
AND PERSONALLY, I DO NOT
CONSIDER MYSELF PRETTY BY
SOCIETY'S STANDARDS. AND WHILE I
MAY CRINGE OUTWARDLY WHEN SEEING
THEM, I MOSTLY HOPE PEOPLE STILL
WANT TO HAVE PICTURES TAKEN WITH
ME. I FERVENTLY HOPE TO BE ABLE
TO CONTINUE HAVING PRESENTATIONS
WITH STUDENTS TO SHARE MY THEMES
OF COMPASSION, ACCEPTANCE, WHILE
SHARING MY LIFE EXPERIENCES. AND

WITH OTHER AUDIENCES TO OFFER
INSIGHTS AND COMMON SENSE
APPROACHES. PERHAPS EVEN WRITE A
BOOK. PEOPLE KEEP TELLING ME I
SHOULD. TRUTHFULLY, I AM NOT
EVEN SURE WHY I AM STILL HERE.
WHY SURGERIES HAVE GONE BAD
OVER THE LAST FIVE TO TEN YEARS
HAVE LEFT ME FAR MORE LIMITED
THAN MY PREVIOUS 43 YEARS. YES,
LIFE ISN'T FAIR. BUT I WILL
CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR MY
PURPOSE. AND BY ALL GRACE TO BE
OF USE, USING THE WORDS OF JOHN
IRVING. THANK YOU.

THANK YOU, GERI. THAT WAS
POWERFUL. I HAVE A QUESTION HERE
FOR YOU. AND THEN I'VE GOT A
QUESTION AFTERWARDS. I ENCOURAGE
FOLKS, TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO
TYPE IN YOUR QUESTIONS. I AM
GOING TO ASK THIS ONE FIRST.

I AM GOING TO READ THIS: DID I
MISS WITH THE STORY OF YOUR
ADVOCACY BEGINNINGS AS A TODDLER
IN THE SENATE OR ASSEMBLY FLOOR?
CAN YOU SHARE THAT STORY? I

THINK YOU MENTIONED YOU WERE A
TODDLER, WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER,
RIGHT, AT THE AGE -- WHAT AGE
WAS THAT GERI?

WELL, I WAS AN UNWITTING
ADVOCATE. MY PARENTS, THE ONES
WHO SAW MY PICTURE IN THE PAPER
WHEN SOCIAL WORKERS DECIDED I
SHOULDN'T GROW UP IN AN
INSTITUTION, THEY WANTED TO
ADOPT ME. BUT THEY WERE
CONCERNED ABOUT THE FINANCIAL
TOLL IT WOULD TAKE ON THE
FAMILY. AND THEY TRIED TO GET
LEGISLATION PASSED BACK IN THE
EARLY 70S FROM NEW YORK STATE
SO FOSTER PARENTS COULD ADOPT
CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND
HAVE MEDICAL COVERAGE. SO MY
FATHER, WHO WORKED WITH THE
LAWMAKERS, AND MY MOM, THEY
BROUGHT ME UP TO ALBANY. I WAS
PRESENTED ON THE ASSEMBLY FLOOR.
I GUESS I WAS REALLY CUTE.
THAT'S WHAT MY MOM SAID. THIS
WAS BEFORE SHE DIED. I HEARD THE
STORIES. BUT UNFORTUNATELY THE

LEGISLATION DID NOT PASS. MY
PARENTS NEVER FORMALLY ADOPTED
ME.

OKAY. WE HAVE ANOTHER QUESTION
HERE. WHAT IMPROVEMENTS TO
BETTER ADHERE TO THE ADA ARE
NEEDED ON A LOCAL LEVEL IN
WESTCHESTER? I WOULD IMAGINE
ANYWHERE, RIGHT. AND WHAT
BARRIERS DO YOU STILL FIND?

I STILL FIND ATTITUDINAL
BARRIERS. I THINK I'VE ALLUDED
TO WHEN I'M OUT IN PUBLIC. AND
NOW I AM FULLY DEPENDENT ON
GETTING AROUND WITH MY AIDES.
BUT IT DRIVES ME CRAZY WHEN
PEOPLE TALK TO THEM INSTEAD OF
ADDRESSING ME. I'VE BEEN IN THE
BANKS A COUPLE OF TIMES, YOU
KNOW, THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS.
AND THE TELLERS WOULD ADDRESS MY
AIDES INSTEAD OF ME. I'M LIKE
HELLO, IT'S MY MONEY, IT'S MY
ACCOUNT. AS FOR OTHER -- I THINK
ALSO UNIVERSAL DESIGN NEEDS TO
BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY. THE
WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL IN

WASHINGTON, D.C. IS A WONDERFUL
EXAMPLE OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN. THE
RAMPS ARE INCLUDED IN THE
OVERALL DESIGN. THEY ARE NOT
SEPARATE AND SCREAM OUT
ACCESSIBILITY. AND EVEN WHEN
BUILDING NEW CONSTRUCTION OR
WHATEVER IN TOWN OR IN
WESTCHESTER INCORPORATING
UNIVERSAL DESIGN MAKES IT SO
MUCH NICER THAN HAVING AN
ACCESSIBLE RAMP OVER TO THE SIDE
WHERE YOU'RE SEPARATED FROM YOUR
FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO WOULD USE
THE STEPS. I HOPE THAT MAKES
SENSE.

YEAH, IT DOES. I THINK UNIVERSAL
DESIGN IS A GROWING, BURGEONING
MOVEMENT RIGHT NOW.

I KNOW IT'S INCORPORATED IN A
LOT OF CONSTRUCTION. IT'S
MANDATED OBVIOUSLY. I KNOW THAT
WE LOBBY FOR IT. WE EDUCATE
LEGISLATORS ABOUT UNIVERSAL
DESIGN AND VISIBILITY, WHICH
WOULD ENSURE THAT MOST
RESIDENTIAL HOUSING HAS A COMMON

AREA THAT'S ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES. GERI, I WANT
TO TALK ABOUT THE ASSET
ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS YOU
REFERENCED TODAY. I THINK THAT
IS A CONTINUING THEME THROUGHOUT
THIS WHOLE EVENT TODAY. AND
CERTAINLY THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
MENTIONED HIS THINK DIFFERENTLY
CAMPAIGN IS ALL ABOUT THAT.
LET'S THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, RIGHT.
WHEN "JUST CALL ME GERI," WHICH
IS A REALLY WONDERFUL PROGRAM
YOU IMPLEMENTED. YOU CREATED IT
MAYBE TEN YEARS AGO NOW. YOU GO
INTO PUBLIC SCHOOLS. AND IT'S A
WAY FOR YOU TO BREAK DOWN
BARRIERS EARLY ON WITH YOUNG
KIDS ABOUT THE PRECONCEIVED
NOTIONS THEY HAVE WITH FOLKS
WITH DISABILITIES. I KNOW YOU
WOULD TELL ME YOU WOULD GO IN,
AND LIKE MOST OF US WITH
DISABILITIES, WE GET STARED AT.
A LOT OF FEAR INVOLVED. PEOPLE
DON'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. AND

BY THE END OF YOUR PRESENTATIONS
THESE KIDS ARE DANCING WITH YOU.
AND YOU'VE REALLY SHATTERED AND
BROKEN DOWN THOSE BARRIERS.
MAYBE YOU CAN EXPAND A LITTLE
MORE THAN THAT.

WELL, THEY WOULD DANCE WITH ME
WHEN I WAS STILL UPRIGHT. THE
LAST SIX OR SO YEARS I HAVEN'T
BEEN UPRIGHT. BUT I SHIMMY IN
THE WHEELCHAIR AS BEST I CAN.
AS I SAID, I THINK THEIR
EXPRESSIONS, THEIR MOUTHS DROP
OPEN WHEN I TELL THEM CERTAIN
THINGS. THEY ARE SURPRISED WHEN
I TELL THEM I WAS NOT BULLIED OR
MADE FUN OF FOR THE MOST PART
GROWING UP. WHICH IS A REAL
CREDIT TO MY CLASSMATES FROM THE
BYRON HILL SCHOOL DISTRICT. AND
I WAS ACCEPTED TO GO TO
KINDERGARTEN IN 1972, WHICH WAS
A FULL YEAR BEFORE THE REHAB ACT
MADE IT MANDATORY. SO I GIVE A
LOT OF CREDIT TO THE BYRON HILLS
SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR ACCEPTING ME
WHEN OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS TOLD

MY PARENTS NO, HERE IN
WESTCHESTER. IT'S SO SAD THAT
PEOPLE ASSUME THAT PEOPLE ARE
BEING BULLIED. AND YES, SOME
PEOPLE ARE STILL MADE FUN OF AND
STARED AT. I REMEMBER BEING IN
KOHL'S MANY YEARS AGO BY MYSELF,
WALKING AROUND AND SHOPPING. I
LOVE KOHL'S. AND THESE GIRLS
WOULD FOLLOW ME AROUND. AND THEY
WERE SNICKERING -- AND I TELL
THIS STORY IN THE SCHOOL. AND I
FINALLY HAD ENOUGH. I WAS KIND
OF FOLLOWING THEM BACK. AND
THEN THEY WENT TO THEIR MOTHER
OR GUARDIAN OR WHOEVER WAS IN
CHARGE OF THEM. AND I SAID TO
THE MOTHER -- ALTHOUGH MY MOTHER
TAUGHT ME TO BE POLITE -- I
INTERRUPTED HER. SHE WAS TALKING
ON THE PHONE. I SAID: I'M SORRY,
YOUR GIRLS ARE BOTHERING ME AND
MAKING FUN OF ME. AND SHE TOOK
THE PHONE AWAY FROM HER EAR AND
SAID: WELL, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?
I WAS HORRIFIED. AND I TURNED
AWAY. I SAID I EXPECT, YOU KNOW,

MORE. I EXPECT BETTER.

ESPECIALLY FROM ADULTS WHO ARE
TEACHING THESE CHILDREN. BUT I
DO THINK GETTING TO KIDS AT AN
EARLY AGE IS REALLY IMPORTANT.
BECAUSE AS I SAID, MY CLASSMATES
KNEW ME FROM KINDERGARTEN ON
OR WHEN WE JOINED FIFTH GRADE IN
THE MIDDLE SCHOOL. AND THEY HAVE
TOLD ME THEY NEVER REALLY SAW ME
AS ANYTHING BUT GERI. AND THAT
WAS SUCH A GIFT. IF WE CAN GET
TO KIDS EARLY ON AND SHOW THEM
DIFFERENCES ARE OKAY, THAT'S IT.
I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH MORE I SAY
ABOUT THAT.

ABSOLUTELY. AND JUST CONTINUING
ON THAT THEME, ANOTHER QUESTION,
ARE WE GOING -- READING THE
QUESTION: IS THE "JUST CALL ME
GERI" PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL
CHILDREN VIA ZOOM? ARE YOU
DOING THIS IN THE UPCOMING
SCHOOL YEAR BY ZOOM?

I HOPE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO
THIS THAT AND I HOPE THAT
SCHOOLS STILL WANT ME. I'VE DONE

PUBLIC AND I'VE DONE PRIVATE
SCHOOLS. I'VE DONE
ORGANIZATIONS. I'VE TALKED TO
PARENTS. I THINK IT'S ALSO
IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO KNOW
THE KIND OF MESSAGES THEY ARE
SENDING TO THEIR KIDS WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS OR WITHOUT SPECIAL
NEEDS. I'VE TALKED TO CHURCHES
AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.
TEMPLES. AND I AM WILLING TO
TALK TO ANYBODY ABOUT ANYTHING.
BUT I DO HOPE TO FIGURE OUT HOW
TO DO ZOOM. I AM HOPING I CAN
FIND SOMEBODY TO HELP ME SET
THAT UP. AND I AM HOPING THAT
SCHOOLS WILL STILL LOVE ME.
I THINK SO. I THINK WE ARE
UTILIZING THIS TECHNOLOGY MORE
AND MORE DURING THIS CURRENT
PANDEMIC. WITH REMOTE LEARNING,
THE NEED FOR ACCESS TO
INFORMATION, I WOULD SAY THAT'S
A STRONG POSSIBILITY. YOU WOULD
GET I THINK A LOT OF -- YOUR
MESSAGE IS MUCH NEEDED. SO WE'VE
GOT A COUPLE MORE HERE. I THINK

THAT IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS,
TRY TO GET THEM IN NOW. BECAUSE
WE ARE JUST GOING TO TAKE TWO
MORE AFTER THIS. A QUESTION
ABOUT HOUSING. I THINK YOU
TOUCHED ON THIS A LITTLE DURING
YOUR PRESENTATION IN THE FILM.
BUT THIS QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH
NEW HOUSING. WHAT WE CAN DO TO
MAKE NEW HOUSING ACCESSIBLE.
ESPECIALLY APARTMENTS AND
CONDOS. WE DID TALK ABOUT
UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND INTEGRATIVE
DESIGN. WE HAVE A PROGRAM NOW IN
NEW YORK STATE CALLED ACCESS TO
HOME WHICH ALLOWS UP TO \$20,000
PER INDIVIDUAL TO -- I THINK IT
REQUIRES GETTING TWO OR THREE
BIDS FROM CONTRACTORS THAT ARE
APPROVED BY THE STATE. THAT
INDIVIDUALS CAN UTILIZE THAT
MONEY THEN TO INCORPORATE
MODIFICATION FEATURES INTO THEIR
HOMES TO MAKE THEM ACCESSIBLE.
BUT IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER
COMMENTS ABOUT THAT, GERI. I
KNOW YOU LIVE IN A CONDO

CURRENTLY.

I DO. WAY BACK IN COLLEGE --

AND THIS IS NOT A STORY I AM

PROUD YOU OF, BUT I WAS ABLE TO

LIVE ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF MY

DORM BECAUSE THERE WAS AN

ELEVATOR. AND BECAUSE OF

STUPIDITY ON MY PART -- AND I

WON'T GO INTO THE DETAILS WHY,

BUT I SPENT A NIGHT IN THE

ELEVATOR BECAUSE I DIDN'T HAVE

ANY PROSTHETICS ON AT THE TIME,

AND I COULDN'T REACH THE BUTTONS

TO GO UP TO THE NEXT FLOOR WHERE

THE DOOR WOULD OPEN UP. BUT I'VE

ALWAYS WANTED TO LIVE WHERE MY

FRONT DOOR OPENED INTO THE FRESH

AIR OUTSIDE. I NEVER WANT TO

LIVE IN A SITUATION WHERE I'M

DEPENDENT UPON AN ELEVATOR.

WITH NEW CONSTRUCTION IN

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, THERE ARE

NOW REQUIREMENTS FOR AFFORDABLE

AND I BELIEVE ACCESSIBLE

HOUSING. I GET FRUSTRATED AND I

MIGHT GET A COUPLE PEOPLE MAD AT

ME. I GET ANGRY WHEN ALL THE

ACCESSIBLE APARTMENTS ARE PUT ON
THE SECOND FLOOR INSTEAD OF ON
THE GROUND FLOOR. BECAUSE I
DON'T THINK PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES SHOULD HAVE TO BE
FORCED TO RELY ON ELEVATORS
WHEN THEY CAN BREAK DOWN. SO I
WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE
ACCESSIBLE HOUSING ON GROUND
FLOORS ESPECIALLY.

ABSOLUTELY. YEAH, I THINK THAT'S
THE ISSUE NOW. RICH MANLEY IN
THE FILM TALKED A LITTLE ABOUT
BUILDING STANDARDS, RIGHT, THAT
ACTUALLY AREN'T REALLY
STANDARDIZED. AND WE SEE ALL
VARIOUS FLAVORS OF ACCESSIBILITY
THAT AREN'T TRULY ACCESSIBLE.
BECAUSE THERE IS NO STANDARD.
AND THAT HAS TO DO WITH THE
IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT
OF THE ADA. WHICH YOU REFERENCED
DURING YOUR TALK DURING THE
VIDEO. AND WE HAVE ONE MORE
QUESTION HERE. AND THIS IS: HAVE
YOU HAD ANY DIRECT CONVERSATIONS
WITH GOVERNOR CUOMO REGARDING

YOUR CONCERN OF THE REMOVAL OF
ASSISTANCE TO FOLKS THAT ARE
HOMEBOUND INDIVIDUALS, IS HOW
THIS READS?

I HAVE NOT HAD ANY PERSONAL
CONTACT. SURPRISE SURPRISE NOT
WITH GOVERNOR CUOMO. A COUPLE OF
YEARS AGO THERE WAS A VERY
SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN, LETTERS FOR
GERI, TO HELP ME GET BACK MY
STATE INSURANCE. WHICH IS SORT
OF A BLESSING AND A CURSE, AND
ANOTHER TOPIC FOR ANOTHER TIME.

I THANK ALL MY FRIENDS,
ESPECIALLY FROM AROUND THE
COUNTRY, MY SMITH CLASSMATES, MY
BYRON HILLS CLASSMATES, FRIENDS
FOR LIFE. BUT I HAD ASKED TO
HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH HIM.
BUT OF COURSE THAT DIDN'T
HAPPEN. I'VE SPOKEN WITH STATE
LEGISLATORS ALSO ABOUT ENFORCING
BETTER BUILDING CODES AND
HAVING THE C/OS BE GRANTED WITH
A CHECKLIST THAT ALL THE REGS
ARE APPLIED. INSTEAD OF HAVING
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVING

TO COMPLAIN AFTERWARDS. BECAUSE
THEN WE ARE SEEN AS THE BAD
GUYS. I THINK MY TOWN HAS DONE
THAT NOW. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO
SEE IT MORE STATEWIDE WHERE
ARCHITECTS HAVE TO VERIFY THAT
BUILDING NEW CONSTRUCTION MEETS
THE ADA AND STATE CODES. WHICH
ARE ACTUALLY MORE STRINGENT THAN
THE ADA CODES. BUT I HAVEN'T
GOTTEN VERY FAR. AND SOME OF MY
REPRESENTATIVES IN ALBANY HAVE
NOT WANTED TO TAKE THAT FURTHER
THAN JUST ME TALKING. THEY
LISTEN, BUT THEY ARE LIKE YEAH
YEAH YEAH. BUT I WOULD STILL
LIKE TO MEET WITH GOVERNOR
CUOMO, HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH
HIM. BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S
GOING TO HAPPEN ANY TIME SOON.
OKAY. WE HAVE TWO MORE. I'M JUST
GOING TO TAKE THESE LAST TWO.
HERE'S ONE REGARDING BUSINESS
ESTABLISHMENTS. HAVE YOU EVER
HAD TO FILE FORMAL COMPLAINTS
WHICH RESULTED IN THIS
ESTABLISHMENT BECOMING MORE

ACCESSIBLE, REGARDING THE
COMPLAINT, IF YOU FILED ONE?
AND ALSO, DID YOU RECEIVE
ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS AFTER THAT?
I GUESS A REPERCUSSION OR SOME
TYPE OF RETALIATION PERHAPS IS
WHAT THIS MIGHT REFERENCE.
ONE OF MY FAVORITE RESTAURANTS
HERE IN ARMONK UNDERWENT A
MASSIVE RECONSTRUCTION. AND THEY
HAD A RAMP PUT UP, BUT THE
BOTTOM SLOPE DID NOT MEET CODES.
IT WAS VERY STEEP, THE VERY
BOTTOM OF THE RAMP. AND I DID
NOT MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT.
I JUST SAID TO THEM. I'M SORRY,
THIS IS A LITTLE DANGEROUS. AND
I WENT TO THE TOWN. AND THEY
REALIZED THE BOTTOM OF THE RAMP
DID NOT MATCH THE DRAWINGS. AND
UNFORTUNATELY, THE RESTAURANT
HAD TO HAVE IT RECONSTRUCTED.
BUT THEY DID NOT HOLD IT AGAINST
ME. BECAUSE THEY ARE A VERY NICE
FAMILY. BUT AGAIN, IT'S
WORRISOME BECAUSE IF THERE ARE
OTHER ISSUES, WE ARE CONSIDERED

THE BAD GUYS OR TROUBLE MAKERS.
THAT'S WHY I WOULD LIKE TO SEE
EVERYTHING BE CONSIDERED
BEFOREHAND, BEFORE CONSTRUCTION
IS COMPLETED. SO WE DON'T HAVE
TO MAKE THOSE COMPLAINTS.
ABSOLUTELY. AND HERE'S THE FINAL
QUESTION -- IT'S ACTUALLY A
COMMENT: GERI, I JUST WANTED TO
THANK YOU FOR REMINDING US
WE ARE HUMAN, MAKING US MORE
ALIKE. AND IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO
GET TO KNOW YOU. YOUR ABILITIES
ARE FAR MORE AMAZING. I AM MORE
POSITIVE AND LESS FRUSTRATED
FINDING A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE,
EFFECTIVE FOCUS LISTENING TO
YOUR REALITY. I WAS ANGRY WITH
THE ISSUES THAT FRUSTRATED YOU.
BUT WE CAN DO OTHER THINGS TO
GET PAST THE BARRIERS. THAT WAS
A COMMENT. THAT IS THE LAST
QUESTION I BELIEVE. I DON'T SEE
ANYMORE. AND -- OH, LOVE YOU,
GERI, SENDING HUGS FROM MAUI.
ALL RIGHT, DO YOU KNOW -- THIS
IS FROM A SUSAN. I GUESS I CAN

MENTION HER NAME HERE.

YEAH. YEAH.

THAT'S IT. VERY GOOD. GERI,
THANK YOU SO MUCH. WE ARE GOING
TO RUN YOUR INFORMATION AT THE
LAST -- I MENTIONED AT THE
OUTSET THAT WE ARE GOING TO HAVE
SOME SLIDES AT THE CONCLUSION OF
THIS PROGRAM WITH RESOURCE
INFORMATION. WE WILL INCLUDE
YOUR "JUST CALL ME GERI" LINK.
IF YOU'D LIKE A PHONE NUMBER OR
ANYTHING, LET MANDI KNOW ABOUT
THAT AND WE CAN INCLUDE THAT ON
THE SLIDE AS WELL. WE'LL HAVE
THE LINK FOR "JUST CALL ME
GERI."

THANK YOU, LISA. THANK YOU,
EVERYONE.

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH, GERI.

THANK YOU SO MUCH. NEXT I AM
GOING TO INTRODUCE MEL TANZMAN.
I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF WORKING
WITH MEL TANZMAN FOR OVER 20
YEARS. MEL AND I HAVE STARTED
SOME GOOD TROUBLE, IN THE WORDS
OF JOHN LEWIS, IN OUR DISABILITY

ADVOCACY WORK. MAINLY AROUND
VOTING RIGHTS FOR FOLKS WITH
DISABILITIES IN WESTCHESTER AND
ACTUALLY ACROSS THE STATE. MEL
IS ALSO RECENTLY INDUCTED INTO
THE NEW YORK STATE DISABILITY
HALL OF FAME. A RECOGNITION WELL
DESERVED. SO MEL, I'M GOING TO
TURN THE SCREEN OVER TO YOU
RIGHT NOW, AND YOU CAN INTRODUCE
YOURSELF.

OKAY. GOOD MORNING. I THINK IT
IS STILL MORNING.

I BELIEVE IT IS.

I HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES FOR ALMOST 35
YEARS. I BEGAN WORKING IN 1980S
FOR THE EASTERN PARALYZED
VETERANS ASSOCIATION.

WHICH WAS A REALLY DYNAMIC
ORGANIZATION THAT ENCOURAGED ME
TO NOT JUST BE A SOCIAL WORKER
AND DEAL WITH PEOPLE'S ISSUES
BUT ALSO TO LOOK AT THE SYSTEMIC
ISSUES THAT PREVENTED CHANGE AND
PREVENTED FULL INCLUSION OF
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. SO

BECAUSE OF THAT, I WAS GIVEN THE
UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH
AND COLLABORATE WITH MANY EARLY
CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS IN THE
DISABILITY FIELD. AND THEY SENT
ME OFF AND I'M GOING. I JUST
RETIRED THIS YEAR AFTER 35 YEARS
OR MORE OF WORKING AS A SOCIAL
WORKER, AND AN ADVOCATE
AND EDUCATOR. SO I THINK WE ARE
SUPPOSED TO GO THROUGH --
YEAH, LET'S GO THROUGH SLIDES OF
SOME OF THESE LEADERS THAT
YOU'VE MET, THESE CIVIL RIGHTS
LEADERS, MEL. AND WE'LL HAVE YOU
KIND OF TALK ABOUT SOME OF THEM.
SO I THINK THE FIRST SLIDE, IF
WE WANT TO GO TO THAT FIRST
SLIDE RIGHT NOW, I BELIEVE IS
FROM ED ROBERTS. HERE IS ED
ROBERTS. HE'S THE FATHER OF IL
MODERN DISABILITY RIGHTS
MOVEMENT. TELL US A LITTLE BIT
ABOUT ED ROBERTS, MEL.
SURE. ED ROBERTS IS VERY
WELL-KNOWN AND IS SEEN AS THE
FATHER OF THE INDEPENDENT LIVING

MOMENT. ED FACED MANY BARRIERS
IN HIS LIFE. HE HAD POLIO AT THE
AGE OF 14. HIS FIRST BARRIER WAS
IN SCHOOLS. THEY ACTUALLY, WHEN
HE WAS READY TO GRADUATE HIGH
SCHOOL, TRIED TO WITHHOLD HIS
DIPLOMA BECAUSE HE HAD NOT
COMPLETED PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND
DRIVERS ED. ED WAS A GREAT
ADVOCATE AND I THINK HE GOT A
LOT FROM HIS MOTHER. WHO SAID
THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.
AND IT DIDN'T. TWO OTHER THINGS
ABOUT HIM. SIMILARLY HE WENT TO
VOC REHAB. THEY SAID YOU'RE
UNEMPLOYABLE. WHY SHOULD WE
WASTE OUR MONEY ON PEOPLE WHO
ARE UNEMPLOYABLE. THIRD THING HE
DID, HE WAS THE FIRST SEVERELY
DISABLED PERSON TO ENTER THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT
BERKELEY IN 1962. SO ACTUALLY,
WHEN YOU THINK OF IT, 1962 IS
ALSO THE YEAR THAT JAMES
MEREDITH BECAME THE FIRST BLACK
STUDENT ENTERING THE UNIVERSITY
OF MISSISSIPPI. SO THIS WAS A

TIME OF CHANGE. ED ACCOMPLISHED
A LOT IN HIS LIFE. HE PASSED
AWAY IN THE 90S. BUT THE MOST
IMPORTANT THING HE DID WAS HE
BECAME THE COMMISSIONER OF VOC
REHAB IN CALIFORNIA UNDER JERRY
BROWN. WHICH HE PUT SOME OF
THOSE PEOPLE WHO TRIED TO DENY
HIM HELP IN THEIR PLACE.

AND HE WAS ACTUALLY -- WHEN YOU
MENTION SEVERE DISABILITY, MEL,
PUT IT IN CONTEXT.

HE WAS ACTUALLY LIVING IN IRON
LONG, CORRECT?

YEAH. EARLY ON HE WOULD ONLY BE
ABLE TO FUNCTION IN AN IRON
LUNG. I BELIEVE HE WAS MOSTLY
HOME SCHOOLED. WITH THE
ADVANCEMENT OF VENTILATORS AND
PORTABLE VENTILATORS, HE WAS
ABLE TO GET OUT THERE AND FORMED
A GROUP CALLED THE ROLLING QUADS
WITH HIS STUDENTS.

RIGHT, EXACTLY.

AND WHEN HE LEFT COLLEGE HE
REALIZED THAT PEOPLE IN THE
COMMUNITY WITH DISABILITIES

NEEDED TO HAVE SOMETHING LIKE A
STUDENT UNION. SO HE CAME UP
WITH AN INDEPENDENT LIVING
CENTER. WHICH PRIMARY GOAL AND
MISSION WAS TO ADVOCATE FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. HE
BROUGHT ALONG OTHER PEOPLE
WHEN HE ESTABLISHED THE FIRST
INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER.

JUDY HEUMANN, WHO HAS GOTTEN A
LOT OF PRESS RECENTLY. SHE JUST
WROTE A BOOK.

RIGHT, AND THAT'S THE NEXT
SLIDE. WE CAN GO TO THE NEXT
SLIDE. JUDY. RIGHT.

AND JUST LOOKING AT SOME OF
THEIR QUOTES. YOU KNOW, JUDY IS
REALLY GOOD AT CONNECTING THE
CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES. SO THAT
IT'S POVERTY FOR PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES AND THEY HAVE
COMMONALITIES WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

SO JUDY WAS HOME SCHOOLED FOR
MANY, MANY YEARS, UNTIL HER
MOTHER INSISTED -- YOU NOTICE
HOW THE MOTHERS SEEM TO REALLY
BE THE GREATEST ADVOCATES HERE.

BUT HER MOTHER INSISTED THAT SHE
GO TO REGULAR SCHOOL, MAINSTREAM
SCHOOL. TO WHICH THE PRINCIPAL
SAID, I'M SORRY, BUT SHE WOULD
BE A FIRE HAZARD IN HER
WHEELCHAIR. SO THEY SUED THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION. WHEN SHE GOT
HER DEGREE IN EDUCATION FOR
THEIR FAILURE TO HIRE HER AS A
TEACHER, AND SHE WON THAT.
BEFORE SHE COULD TEACH SHE WENT
OUT TO CALIFORNIA TO WORK WITH
ED ROBERTS TO SET UP THE FIRST
INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER. AND
ONCE AGAIN, SHE DID SOME AMAZING
THINGS IN HER LIFE. INCLUDING
ORGANIZING A 28-DAY SIT-IN IN
1978 TO GET THE 504 REGULATIONS.
THOSE WERE THE REGULATIONS IN
THE UNITED STATES REHAB ACT THAT
BASICALLY SAID YOU CAN'T -- ANY
GOVERNMENT AGENCY CAN'T
DISCRIMINATE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES. SO SHE HAD A
28-DAY SIT-IN, WHICH RESULTED IN
THE SECRETARY OF WHAT WAS CALLED
THEN HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE

TO SIGN THE REGULATIONS AND
RELEASE THE REGULATIONS FOR
THAT. SHE'S A RECOGNIZED
INTERNATIONAL EXPERT ON
DISABILITY. AND SERVED BOTH IN
THE CLINTON AND OBAMA
ADMINISTRATIONS. SO ANOTHER SHE
IS GREAT LEADER. GO ONTO THE
NEXT SLIDE I THINK. MARILYN, WAS
A LOCAL ADVOCATE. SHE WAS
BASICALLY MY MENTOR, MARILYN
SAVIOLA, UNTIL SHE PASSED AWAY
LAST YEAR RIGHT BEFORE
THANKSGIVING. SHE, INTERESTINGLY
ENOUGH, CHOSE TO STAY IN AN
INSTITUTIONAL SETTING. SHE GOT
POLIO WHEN SHE WAS 10, AND SHE
WAS LIVING WITH HER PARENTS ON A
SECOND FLOOR WALKUP. THEY
COULDN'T AFFORD TO MOVE ANYWHERE
ELSE. SO MARILYN FELT INCREDIBLY
ISOLATED. SHE THOUGHT, WELL, IF
I GO TO GOLDWATER MEMORIAL
HOSPITAL IN NEW YORK CITY I CAN
AT LEAST HAVE PEERS TO WORK WITH
AND I CAN GET A BETTER
EDUCATION. AND SHE DID THAT.

YOU'LL SEE HERE, ONE OF HER
QUOTES WAS HER PARENTS NEVER
ACCEPTED HER DISABILITY AND
REALLY THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING
THAT SHE DID WRONG. OR THEY DID
WRONG. SO SHE WAS AN AMAZING
PERSON. SHE WAS THE -- I THINK
SHE WAS THE SECOND EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT
LIVING CENTER IN MANHATTAN.
AND INTERNATIONAL -- OR AT LEAST
QUITE WELL-KNOWN IN THE FIELD.
MARILYN, ACTUALLY, MEL, WAS IN
GOLDWATER MEMORIAL FOR -- SHE
WAS ABLE TO LEAVE AT WHAT AGE?
SHE WAS THERE FOR MOST OF HER
LIFE. ACTUALLY THE EARLIER PART
OF HER LIFE.

I THINK IT WAS HER 20S SHE GOT
OUT.

HER 20S.

YEAH.

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE A LITTLE
BIT ABOUT THAT STORY, HOW SHE
FINALLY GOT OUT? WELL, SHE
ORGANIZED --

SHE ORGANIZED, RIGHT.

YEAH. AMONG THE PATIENTS AT
GOLDWATER MEMORIAL THERE WERE
QUITE A NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE
LIKE HER. THIS BEING THE MIDDLE
TO LATE 60S AND EARLY 70S, THEY
GOT INTO A LOT OF GOOD TROUBLE.
LET'S USE THE TERM GOOD TROUBLE
AGAIN. IN THE 60S THEY HAD ALL
KINDS OF THINGS GOING ON, SEX,
DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL I THINK.
AND ULTIMATELY SHE GOT OUT AND
SHE BECAME A REHAB COUNSELLOR.
A MASTER'S DEGREE IN REHAB
COUNSELING. SHE WORKED AT
GOLDWATER AFTER SHE LIVED THERE
AND WORKED WITH A LOT OF YOUNG
PEOPLE UNTIL SHE WENT ONTO THE
INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER IN
MANHATTAN. SO MARILYN WAS AN
AMAZING WOMAN. SHE COULD SPEAK
TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE AND REALLY
BRING THEM OUT IN TERMS OF
GETTING THEM TO PARTICIPATE.
SO THAT'S MARILYN. I HAVE ONE
MORE PERSON I WANTED TO
HIGHLIGHT. JUSTIN DART.
JUSTIN IS A VERY INTERESTING

CHARACTER. HE ACTUALLY CAME FROM
A VERY CONSERVATIVE, VERY
WEALTHY FAMILY. I BELIEVE HIS
MOTHER'S FAMILY WERE IN THE
WALGREEN'S DRUG COMPANY. SO HE
WAS A REPUBLICAN. VERY POWERFUL.
BUT HE DID DEDICATE HIMSELF TO
THE IDEA OF A CIVIL RIGHTS BILL
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES,
WHICH BECAME THE AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT. IT TOOK HIM
OVER TEN YEARS OF ADVOCATING.
AND PROBABLY THROUGH TWO OR
THREE DIFFERENT PRESIDENTS.
BUT IN 1990 HE WAS THERE AT THE
SIGNING OF THE ADA. AND HE,
INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, BECAME A
BIG BILL CLINTON SUPPORTER. HIS
MESSAGE TO PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES IS TO GET IN
POLITICS AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS
ON IT. BECAUSE IT DOES. I THINK
WE ALL KNOW THAT. NO MATTER WHAT
OUR POLITICAL STRIPE IS, THAT IF
WE DON'T VOTE, IF PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES DON'T VOTE, WE GIVE
UP OUR POWER. AND WE HAVEN'T HAD

ENOUGH OF THAT. SO JUSTIN IS AN
AMAZING PERSON.

HE'S ALSO ACTUALLY REFERRED TO
AS THE FATHER OF THE ADA,
CORRECT?

HE'S REFERRED TO AS THE FATHER
OF THE ADA. BECAUSE HE WAS THE
INSIDER. HE WORKED IN THE
POLITICAL POSITIONS THAT WERE
APPOINTED BY PRESIDENT REGAN AND
LATER BY PRESIDENT BUSH. SO HE
WORKED FROM THE INSIDE. I DON'T
KNOW IF PEOPLE KNOW THIS, BUT
RIGHT BEFORE THE ADA WAS PASSED
THERE WAS SOMETHING CALLED THE
CAPITAL CRAWL, WHERE PEOPLE IN
WHEELCHAIRS TOOK THEMSELVES OUT
OF THEIR WHEELCHAIRS AND CRAWLED
UP THE STEPS TO THE CAPITAL.
IT MADE AN IMPACT. AND VERY SOON
AFTER THAT THE BILL WAS ACTUALLY
PASSED, THE ADA. SO JUSTIN WAS
AN AMAZING MAN. HE KIND OF
WAS -- DIDN'T CARE WHAT YOUR
POLITICS WERE AS LONG AS YOU
WERE DEDICATED TO THE CIVIL
RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH

DISABILITIES.

RIGHT. AND SO, MEL, WE TALK ABOUT THIS AS THE GREATEST GENERATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, AND YOU KNOW, IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO STUDY THEIR HISTORY. TO KNOW THEIR LEGACY HAS ACTUALLY PAVED THE WAY FOR WHERE WE ARE TODAY. BUT LET'S TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT. WHERE WE ARE TODAY AND WHERE WE CAN GO. WHEN WE TALK ABOUT JUDY HEUMANN WE LOOK AT THE 504 SIT-INS AND JUSTIN DART AND THE INCREDIBLE ADVOCACY HE DID TO GET THE ADA PASSED. LET'S TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT -- I DON'T REALLY SEE AS MUCH OF A FORCE CURRENTLY IN TERMS OF WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE LEADERSHIP ALONG THOSE LINES FOR CIVIL RIGHTS. BUT WHY DON'T YOU EXPANDED ON THAT A BIT. OKAY. YOU KNOW, ONCE AGAIN, ALL OF THESE LEADERS -- AND WE HAVE TO REALLY SPREAD THIS ATTITUDE. I THINK THAT PEOPLE HAVE TO

UNDERSTAND THAT THESE RIGHTS
THAT WE HAVE NOW WERE NOT GIVEN
TO US. WE HAD TO FIGHT FOR THEM,
OKAY. NOTHING IS EVER GIVEN
WITHOUT A STRUGGLE. AND RIGHT
NOW I THINK WE ARE BECOMING A
LITTLE BIT COMPLACENT.
ESPECIALLY NOW.

THE SITUATION NOW THAT WE'RE
FACING WITH COVID AND SUGGESTED
WEAKENING OF THE REGULATIONS
THAT GIVE US OUR CIVIL RIGHTS,
WE ARE AT A CRITICAL STAGE. WE
HAVE TO REALIZE WE CAN'T JUST
TAKE OUR RIGHTS FOR GRANTED.
THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO
KNOW THE HISTORY OF THESE FOLKS.
BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY
RIGHTS, SO THEY COULDN'T TAKE
THEM FOR GRANTED. WE ARE IN A
STAGE RIGHT NOW WHERE IT MIGHT
BE SEEN AS TOO EXPENSIVE TO MAKE
EVERYTHING ACCESSIBLE. OUR
PRESIDENT WANTS TO DO AWAY WITH
A LOT OF REGULATIONS, WHICH HE
FEELS ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO
BUSINESS. SO WE HAVE TO BE VERY

AWARE AND BECOME MORE INVOLVED
IN THIS.

YOU SAID INVOLVEMENT. IN JUSTIN
DART'S QUOTES, GETTING INVOLVED
IN POLITICS AS IF YOUR LIFE
DEPENDS ON IT BECAUSE IT DOES.

YES, THERE WERE NO RIGHTS THEN,
AND THE GREATEST GENERATION OF
CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS THAT WE
TALKED ABOUT EARLIER PAVING THE
WAY FOR WHERE WE ARE TODAY AND
THEN SEGUEING INTO A POSSIBLE
COMPLACENCY -- I'M NOT SURE IF
IT'S A FULL COMPLACENCY -- BUT
WE ARE FACING CUTS TO HEALTHCARE
SERVICES, MEDICAID AND MANY
OTHER THINGS. WHICH ARE, WHEN
YOU THINK ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT
LIVING, YOU KNOW, TRI'S
INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER
AND THE INDEPENDENT LIVING
MOVEMENT THAT ED ROBERTS STARTED
IN THE 60S AND I THINK ACROSS
THE COUNTRY THERE ARE 41
IN NEW YORK STATE INDEPENDENT
LIVING CENTERS AND OVER 500
ACROSS THE COUNTRY, NATIONWIDE.

WHICH PROMOTE THE INDEPENDENT
LIVING PHILOSOPHY, RIGHT. WHICH
IS ABOUT LIVING ON YOUR OWN
TERMS. MAKING YOUR OWN CHOICES.
LIVING FULLY AND EQUITABLY IN
YOUR COMMUNITIES. WHEN YOU THINK
ABOUT THE CUTS THAT ARE GOING ON
RIGHT NOW TO SOME OF THESE
PROGRAMS, MEDICAID IN
PARTICULAR, WHICH REALLY
THREATENS THE ABILITY FOR FOLKS
TO LIVE IN THEIR OWN HOMES ON
THEIR OWN TERMS AT THE RISK OF
INSTITUTIONALIZATION, THAT'S A
HUGE VIOLATION OF SOMEONE'S
CIVIL RIGHTS.
THAT IS. YOU'RE SO RIGHT. ONCE
AGAIN, IT COMES DOWN TO DOLLARS.
WITH NEW YORK STATE IN ITS
BUDGET CRISIS, AS IT IS, THEY
ARE CUTTING MEDICAID. THEY ARE
THREATENING TO REASSESS
WHETHER ANYBODY WHO GETS MORE
THAN 12 HOURS OF CARE -- MEANING
HOME CARE A DAY, A PANEL AT THE
STATE LEVEL THAT WOULD DECIDE
WHETHER IT WAS THE MOST

APPROPRIATE SETTING. YOU KNOW,
WE'RE NOT GOING BACK TO WHERE
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE
TOLD, NO, YOU CAN'T DO THIS
BECAUSE IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE. WE
ARE NOT GOING TO STAND FOR THAT.
WE HAVE TO HAVE THAT CHALLENGED.
PEOPLE NEED TO SPEAK OUT.
ESPECIALLY PEOPLE WHO NEED
ASSISTANCE TO DO THEIR PERSONAL
CARE AND TO BE INVOLVED IN THEIR
COMMUNITY AND IN THEIR
WORKPLACE.

SO WHAT GUIDANCE WOULD YOU GIVE
FOLKS? I MEAN FOR FOLKS WHO FEEL
MAYBE INTIMIDATED BY THE
POLITICAL PROCESS, REALLY DON'T
KNOW HOW TO REACH OUT TO A
LEGISLATOR, WHO FEEL THAT MAYBE
THEIR VOICES AREN'T GOING TO BE
HEARD, WHAT GUIDANCE CAN WE
PROVIDE THEM?

I THINK THAT DEFEATISM -- AND
THERE'S A GOOD REASON TO HAVE
THAT FEELING, BECAUSE SOMETIMES
WE DO GET BLOWN OFF BY OUR
LEGISLATORS. BUT I THINK WORKING

WITH YOUR INDEPENDENT LIVING
CENTER, VISITING POLITICIANS
LOCALLY, MAKING THEM AWARE OF
THIS IS A LIFE AND DEATH CHOICE
FOR THEM. IF THEY CUT MEDICAID
TO THE EXTENT THEY ARE TALKING
ABOUT IT -- AND THAT'S STILL
COMING UP FROM WASHINGTON, TOO.
IT'S NOT JUST ALBANY. AND IT HAS
A CONNECTION WITH WHAT WE ARE
GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW WITH
COVID. I THINK A LOT ABOUT WHAT
IS HAPPENING TO PEOPLE WHO RELY
ON AIDES COMING INTO THEIR HOME.
EVEN TO DO A SIMPLE THING LIKE
GETTING OUT OF BED OR TOILET.
HOW MANY PEOPLE IN OUR STATE
HAVE LOST THEIR AIDES AND HAVE
BEEN SENT TO A NURSING HOME,
BECAUSE AS ONE LEADER FELT, THEY
ARE SAFER IN AN INSTITUTION THAN
IN THE COMMUNITY.
YEAH, I THINK THERE ARE A LOT OF
MISCONCEPTIONS AROUND THAT.
THE SAFETY ISSUE REGARDING
INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF
PEOPLE -- I DON'T CALL THEM

HOMES. I CALL THEM FACILITIES.
IT'S NOT A HOME.
A NURSING FACILITY IS NOT REALLY
A HOME TO ANYONE. BUT AND YES,
RIGHT, PEOPLE ARE -- WE HAVE
SEEN OUR CONSUMERS
DISPROPORTIONALLY IMPACTED
DURING THIS PANDEMIC. WE HAVE AN
OPEN DOORS PROGRAM TO HELP
PEOPLE TO STAY IN THE COMMUNITY
AND TRANSITION OUT OF NURSING
HOMES. WE ARE SEEING A HUGE CUT
TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN APPROVED
FOR NURSING CARE OR PERSONAL
AIDE CARE THAT CAN'T FIND AIDES.
BECAUSE THERE IS A SHORTAGE FOR
THE -- THERE'S A WHOLE WAGE
PARITY ISSUE THERE. THESE
PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS,
PROFESSIONAL CARE ATTENDANTS ARE
NOT PAID ENOUGH. AND THEY ARE
PERFORMING, YOU KNOW, EXTREMELY
DIFFICULT -- THEIR TASKS ARE
INTIMATE CARE FOR FOLKS WITH
DISABILITIES AND WE ARE LOSING A
LOT OF THEM I THINK DURING THIS
PANDEMIC BECAUSE OF THE FEAR OF

INFECTION. AND JUST SOME OF
THESE AIDES BEING INFECTED
THEMSELVES PERHAPS. ABOUT 25
PERCENT RIGHT NOW OF OUR HOME
CARE WORKERS, OUR CONSUMERS
AREN'T ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES.
AND THE QUESTION IS HOW LONG CAN
THEY DO THAT WITHOUT THE HELP
THAT THEY NEED TO JUST FUNCTION?
AND THEY CAN'T DO THAT. IN AN
EMERGENCY THEY'LL GET SENT TO
THE HOSPITAL. AND FROM THE
HOSPITAL MOST LIKELY THEY'LL BE
SENT TO A NURSING HOME. WE'VE
SEEN IN THIS COVID CRISIS HOW
BAD IT IS FOR PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES TO BE IN NURSING
HOMES. A LOT OF PEOPLE IN A
SMALL AREA. YOU KNOW, INCLUDING
NURSES. IT REALLY BECAME A
PANDEMIC OF PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES. AND ARE WE
PREPARED? IS THE STATE PREPARED
TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO THESE
PEOPLE? OR ARE WE JUST GOING TO
BE SENT TO NURSING HOMES TO DIE.
SO AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, THE

LAST SLIDE WILL HAVE OUR CONTACT
INFORMATION HERE AT TACONIC
RESOURCES. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO
CONTACT US, AND I WILL PROVIDE
YOU GUIDANCE OR STAFF CAN
PROVIDE YOU GUIDANCE ON HOW TO
REACH OUT TO LEGISLATORS. HOW TO
ADVOCATE FOR YOUR RIGHTS. I MEAN
WE DO THAT ALREADY, BUT WE'LL BE
PUTTING OUT MORE NOTICES ABOUT
THAT AS WELL.

I HAVE A RESOURCE LIST OF
PEOPLE--

YES, WE ARE GOING TO RUN THAT
TOO.

AND THE WHOLE PHILOSOPHY OF
INDEPENDENT LIVING. YOU SHOULD
BE GETTING THAT. JUST TO
HIGHLIGHT A COUPLE, THERE'S A
FULL-LENGTH MOTION PICTURE
CALLED CRIP CAMP. AND THERE'S
ALSO A LOT OF MATERIAL AROUND ED
ROBERTS AND JUDY HEUMANN. ONE
THING -- I KNOW WE ARE TIGHT ON
TIME, BUT WE ARE A CIVIL RIGHTS
MOVEMENT. WE HAVE TO WORK WITH
THE OTHER CIVIL RIGHTS

MOVEMENTS. WE NEED TO SUPPORT
THEM, AND THEY WILL SUPPORT US.
SO NO MATTER WHERE YOU STAND ON
SOME OF THE ISSUES OF THE DAY,
IT WILL AFFECT YOU. AND THE FACT
THAT MOST PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES ARE BLACK AND
BROWN, THE WHOLE ISSUE OF
POLICING IS SOMETHING THAT I
THINK WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF.
ESPECIALLY WHEN WE HEAR ABOUT
PEOPLE, BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T
COMMUNICATE THEIR PROBLEM,
HAVING SOME BAD OUTCOMES WHEN
THEY CONNECT WITH THE POLICE.
SO IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT THAT WE
CONNECT WITH THE GAY, LESBIAN,
TRANS AND QUEER COMMUNITY,
LGBTQ, THE FAIR HOUSING
ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUR AREA AND
ALSO THE RACIAL JUSTICE AND
ANTI-RACISM GROUPS. I THINK IT'S
REALLY IMPORTANT THAT WE WORK
TOGETHER WITH THEM.
ABSOLUTELY. YEAH, I THINK
COALITION BUILDING IS IMPORTANT.
I THINK ONE OF THE MOST

EMPOWERING MOMENTS I'VE HAD IN
MY LONG -- OVER 25 YEARS AS A
DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATE WAS
MARCHING ALONG CONSTITUTION
AVENUE IN WASHINGTON WITH THE
RAINBOW COALITION, PART OF
JESSIE JACKSON'S COALITION AND
OTHER THE HUMAN RIGHTS
ORGANIZATIONS. THAT WAS
EMPOWERING. I MEAN IT WAS --
DISABILITY RIGHTS ARE HUMAN
RIGHTS, YOU KNOW. AND THE MORE
WE CAN COALESCE AND PARTNER WITH
OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND
COLLABORATE AROUND OUR MESSAGE,
THIS UNIVERSAL MESSAGE, I THINK
THE MORE EMPOWERED WE ARE AS A
COMMUNITY. AND THE MORE
RECOGNIZED WE CAN BE IN OUR
COMMUNITIES AND BEFORE OUR
PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

LISA, ONE LAST WORD. ONE OF THE
SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO IS THE
VOTE THIS YEAR. WHETHER IT'S
FROM HOME, BY MAIL, WHATEVER.
BUT NOT ONLY VOTE YOURSELF, BUT
TRY TO CONVINCE TEN OR SO PEOPLE

WHO MAYBE THEY'RE NOT INTO
VOTING. MAYBE THEY ARE TOO
CYNICAL ABOUT GOVERNMENT, GET
THEM TO VOTE AS WELL. A SIMPLE
THING TO DO. GO OUT THERE.
OR AT HOME FILL OUT A BALLOT.
AND THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIVES.
YOUR HOME ATTENDANTS, YOUR
FRIENDS YOU WENT TO SCHOOL WITH,
CONVINCE THEM, YES, THIS IS
IMPORTANT. GET OUT AND VOTE, SO
WE CAN BE SEEN AS A POWERFUL
VOTING BLOCK. LIKE THE SENIOR
CITIZENS ARE. THAT'S MY KEY
MESSAGE FOR THE FUTURE, IS THAT
WE HAVE TO BE RECOGNIZED AND
ACCEPTED AS A FORCE IN THIS
COUNTRY.

WELL, YOU AND I DID WORK,
TALKING ABOUT GOOD TROUBLE, MEL,
WE WORKED A LOT ON VOTING
RIGHTS, RIGHT? WELL, ACTUALLY, A
COMMENT HERE -- SORRY.

YES, WE DID WORK A LOT ON VOTING
RIGHTS. BUT ALSO WE WORKED ON
EMERGENCIES. HOW PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES ARE TREATED BY

THEIR COUNTIES AND THE STATE IN
AN EMERGENCY.

ABSOLUTELY.

AND YOU KNOW -- I'M SORRY, THIS
WHOLE PANDEMIC IS AN EXAMPLE OF
THEY'RE REALLY NOT PREPARED TO
DEAL WITH OUR ISSUES. THEY
EXPECT US TO, YOU KNOW, BE
RESOURCEFUL AND DEAL WITH IT
OURSELVES. IT'S NOT ALWAYS
POSSIBLE.

NO. ABSOLUTELY. IT'S -- THERE IS
A COMMENT HERE. THE HEALTHCARE
AIDE SITUATION IS AN EXTREMELY
SERIOUS ISSUE.

UNDERPAID. NO BENEFITS. DEEMED
AS NONESSENTIAL WORKERS. HAND IN
HAND, THE CARING MAJORITY JUST
DID A PRESS CONFERENCE ABOUT
THIS PROBLEM. THE CARING
MAJORITY, WE'LL PUT THOSE
RESOURCES ON AT THE LAST SLIDE.
THEY ARE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS.
LOOKING FOR FOLKS TO
PARTICIPATE, TO RALLY AROUND
THIS ISSUE. SO WE'LL CERTAINLY
POST THAT INFORMATION AS WELL.

THERE'S ANOTHER QUESTION HERE
THAT WE'LL ANSWER OFFLINE. WELL,
I'LL MENTION IT. SO ARE THERE
ANY RIGHTS OR LEGAL RIGHTS FOR
INDIVIDUALS WITH INVISIBLE
DISABILITIES WITH REGARDS TO
BREAKING A LEASE. WE WILL ANSWER
THIS ONE OFFLINE THIS QUESTION
HERE. OKAY, I THINK THAT'S THE
LAST QUESTION. MEL, THANK YOU SO
MUCH FOR YOUR PRESENTATION AND
FOR PARTICIPATING.

THANK YOU, LISA.

WE'LL BE WORKING AGAIN.

ABSOLUTELY. SO WE'RE JUST ABOUT
COMING TO THE END OF THE EVENT
TODAY. WE'RE GOING TO RUN -- I
AM GOING TO INTRODUCE PATRICK
MULLER. HE IS GOING TO PROVIDE
THE CLOSING REMARKS. JUST
FOLLOWING PATRICK'S REMARKS WE
ARE GOING TO RUN A SLIDE SHOW OF
ALL THE PROCLAMATIONS WE HAVE
GOTTEN, STATE AND LOCAL
PROCLAMATIONS. THERE WILL BE A
CERTIFICATE AT THE END WHICH
I'LL GO OVER WITH YOU. SO

PATRICK MULLER JUST CELEBRATED
HIS 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY AT TRI.
LIKE ALL TIRELESS ADVOCATES,
HE'S WORN MANY HATS AT TRI,
INCLUDING HIS POSITION AS
PROGRAM DIRECTOR. PATRICK IS
GOING TO PROVIDE CLOSING REMARKS
AND TELL YOU A LITTLE BIT MORE
ABOUT OUR SERVICES. AND THEN
IT WILL FOLLOW WITH THE
PROCLAMATION SLIDE SHOW THAT I
MENTIONED. SO PATRICK THE SCREEN
IS YOURS.

GOOD AFTERNOON. I AM PATRICK
MULLER, TRI PROGRAM DIRECTOR.
I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL AGAIN
FOR JOINING US TODAY TO
ACKNOWLEDGE THE 30-YEAR
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADA. I
STARTED WORKING AT TRI A FEW
MONTHS BEFORE THE AMERICAN
DISABILITY ACT WAS ENACTED IN
1990. AND SINCE THAT TIME I HAVE
SEEN CHANGE TO THE WAY
BUILDINGS, BUSINESSES, LAWS
ACCOMMODATING PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES. HOWEVER, THERE IS

STILL A LOT OF WORK TO DO,
WHICH DEPENDS GREATLY ON THE
ADVOCACY WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT
LIVING CENTER AND PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES TO MAKE THEIR
VOICES HEARD. TRI'S FOCUS IS TO
PROMOTE INDEPENDENT LIVING
PHILOSOPHY BY PROVIDING
RESOURCES TO EMPOWER PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES TO BE SELF
ADVOCATES AND TO MAKE THEIR OWN
CHOICE ABOUT HOW THEY CHOOSE TO
LIVE THEIR OWN LIVES.

OUR PROGRAM ASSISTS OUR
CONSUMERS TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY
IN THE COMMUNITY AND INCLUDE
ADVOCACY, INCLUSION, EDUCATION,
OBTAIN ACCESSIBLE HOUSING AND
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE
INTERPRETATION SERVICE. WE WILL
RUN OUR WEBSITE INFORMATION AND
OTHER RESOURCES FOLLOWING THE
PROCLAMATIONS. THANK YOU AGAIN
FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

THANKS, PATRICK. SO WE ARE GOING
TO RUN THOSE PROCLAMATIONS.
WE'LL PUT THAT SLIDE UP NOW.

WE'LL SCROLL THROUGH THEM
SLOWLY. OKAY, THIS ONE IS A
CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION FROM
GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO.
WE HAVE A STATEMENT FROM
ASSEMBLY WOMAN DIDI BARRETT.
LET'S KEEP THIS FOR A FEW
MOMENTS. I WANT TO READ
SOMETHING HERE. OKAY THIS MONTH
MARKS THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
LANDMARK LEGISLATION THAT WOULD
NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT
YEARS OF DEDICATION AND
ADVOCACY. THIS LAW HELPED
PROVIDE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE AND
INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY IN THEIR
DAY-TO-DAY LIVES. BUT WE STILL
HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO IN POLICY
AND PRACTICE. I'LL CONTINUE
FIGHTING TO ENSURE ALL NEW
YORKERS OF ALL ABILITIES
HAVE THE PROTECTIONS AND SUPPORT
AND RESOURCES THEY NEED TO
SUCCEED. SO LET ME SAY THIS.
WHEN WE TALKED EARLIER ABOUT

GETTING INVOLVED, JUSTIN DART'S
SLIDE, GETTING INVOLVED IN
POLITICS AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS
ON IT, THIS IS OUR ASSEMBLY
WOMAN DIDI BARRETT. YOU'VE SEEN
HER STATEMENT. I ENCOURAGE YOU
TO WRITE TO HER. AND ALL OF
THESE PUBLIC OFFICIALS THAT
YOU'RE GOING TO SEE ON THE
SCREEN RIGHT NOW, TO MAKE YOUR
VOICES HEARD. THIS IS FROM THE
MAYOR OF POUGHKEEPSIE, ROBERT
ROLISON, PROCLAMATION IN HONOR
OF THE ADA AND TACONIC
RESOURCES. SENATOR SUE SERINO,
ANOTHER PROCLAMATION.
CONGRESSMAN SEAN PATRICK
MALONEY, A CONGRESSIONAL
PROCLAMATION. SENATOR CHARLES E.
SCHUMER, ANOTHER PROCLAMATION AS
WELL. SENATOR KIRSTEN
GILLIBRAND, OUR OTHER U.S.
SENATOR. CONGRESSMAN ANTONIO
DELGADO. AND THERE IS THE THINK
DIFFERENTLY CAMPAIGN. AGAIN, WE
ACKNOWLEDGE THE LEADERSHIP OF
DUTCHESS COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARC

MOLINARO FOR THE THINK
DIFFERENTLY CAMPAIGN, WHICH
REALLY HAS HAD A TREMENDOUS
IMPACT HERE IN DUTCHESS COUNTY
OF RAISING AWARENESS OF THE
LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES. AND WE AGAIN
ACKNOWLEDGE THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FOR THINK DIFFERENTLY. HERE ARE
THE DISABILITY HISTORY
REFERENCES THAT MEL REFERENCED
IN HIS TALK. AND HERE'S A
CERTIFICATE -- SO THIS IS A
PLEDGE YOU CAN DOWNLOAD.
OBVIOUSLY DURING THIS PANDEMIC
WE ARE NOT DOING THIS IN PERSON
OR I'D HAND THESE OUT TO
EVERYBODY. BUT WE CAN'T HAND
THESE OUT. BUT WE WOULD JUST
LIKE YOU TO HAVE THIS AS A
REMINDER OF TODAY'S EVENT AND A
CERTIFICATE FOR YOUR
PARTICIPATION. AND AS A PLEDGE
TO KEEP YOU -- TO REMIND US TO
THINK DIFFERENTLY GOING FORWARD.
AGAIN TO REACH OUT TO OUR COUNTY
OFFICIALS TO MAKE YOUR VOICES

HEARD. AND TO VOTE. WE CAN'T
STRESS THAT ENOUGH. WITHOUT YOUR
VOICES HEARD, CHANGE WILL NOT
HAPPEN. SO YOU CAN DOWNLOAD
THIS, SIGN YOUR NAME AND KEEP IT
FOR FUTURE REFERENCE AS A
REMINDER. AND THEN HERE IS OUR
RESOURCE INFORMATION AT
TACONIC RESOURCES, AT TRI.
PLEASE CALL US. THERE'S OUR
WEBSITE. ALL OF OUR INFORMATION
IS ON OUR WEBSITE. ALL OF OUR
PROGRAMS AND INFORMATION. WE ARE
RUNNING A FEW DIFFERENT
CAMPAIGNS RIGHT NOW. A CONSUMER
NEEDS SURVEY, YOU CAN ACCESS ON
OUR WEBSITE, IN ADDITION TO
OTHER THINGS THAT WE'RE DOING.
OUR MID-HUDSON INTERPRETER
SERVICES PROGRAM IS DISTRIBUTING
CLEAR MASKS TO INTERPRETERS AND
COMMUNITY PARTNERS. AND THESE
ARE CLEAR MASKS THAT HAVE A
CLEAR OPENING AROUND THE MOUTH
AREA. SO FOLKS WHO ARE DEAF OR
HARD OF HEARING CAN BETTER
COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE

SPEAKING TO THEM. AND WE ARE
DISTRIBUTING THESE TO THE
COMMUNITY. GO ON OUR WEBSITE AND
THERE'S ALL THE INFORMATION YOU
NEED THERE. AND WE HOPE TO HEAR
FROM YOU. WE'LL BE IN TOUCH WITH
YOU THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. THANK
YOU AGAIN FOR PARTICIPATING IN
OUR ADA30 EVENT. THANK YOU SO
MUCH.

[END]