The Lifetime film ‘Christmas Ever After’ makes history as Tony winning actress Ali Stroker is the first wheelchair user to star in a holiday movie. This movie is also groundbreaking because the movie is about love and romance, which is something you don’t see much of when it comes to characters with disabilities. Disabled people are often viewed as asexual by our culture and represented as such in TV & Film. Plus her disability isn’t the central focus of the story. Instead she’s an independent women who is funny and confident.
LOCAL EVENTS - Please join us!

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, around the world festivals, sporting events, community workshops and celebrations are being cancelled or postponed. We support these decisions but also understand the important role these events play in community life. They serve as an emotional connection to share a common experience, and they build stronger, more resilient communities. We have moved to offering our event experiences online and in person with Social Distancing Precautions in place. Be an active part and join us in our virtual workshops, peer support groups, get togethers and gaming opportunities. If you are having trouble connecting, have difficulties with high speed internet or lack the devices that enable you to be an active part, please phone your local CIL - we can help! And be ready to return to our in person events in full force when it is safe to do so. We love our communities!

Jan 7
- The Role of Brain Injury in Tribal Health & Recovery
  Virtual Online Webinar 3:00pm -4:00 pm PT
  Washington Department of Veteran Affairs

Jan 14
- Thriving Thursdays YFP Symposium
  Virtual Online Webinar 10:30am -12:00 noon PT
  Washington State Support

Jan 19
- Game Night! Spokane Youth
  6:00pm -7:00 pm PT
  Virtual night of Jackbox games.

Autism in the Wild
February 27 1:00 – 5:00 Mountain Time
Our Savior Lutheran Church, McCall, ID

This FREE training opportunity is for first responders and teachers. It strives to help with effective interaction techniques with individuals with autism. This will improve the quality of care with first responders. Contact them if you need to attend via online access. jeffriechmann@cs.com
Most people are aware that service dogs must be permitted to accompany their disabled handlers into non-pet friendly businesses. Unfortunately, many business owners are not aware that they too have rights concerning service dogs, and whether or not those service dogs are legally allowed to be in their business. There is a lot of misinformation and fear surrounding the rights of people with disabilities and the business owners. The fear is based on an influx of pet owners dressing up their pets in vests and bringing them in public claiming they are a service dog.

The ADA describes a service animal as: “A dog that has been house broken and individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the dog must be directly related to the person’s disability.”

You cannot determine a service dog just by looking at their appearance. They can be any size or breed or combination of breeds. Basically any dog.

You cannot determine its a service dog by the gear they are wearing. It is up to the handler if they want any identifying gear, for instance a cape or harness that asks the public not to pet the dog, or a guide harness for vision impaired people. But a dog doesn’t require any visual gear for identification.

So what do you do if you think it’s not a service dog? You may ask the person if the animal is required because of a disability. And what task has the dog been trained to perform. That’s it.

The real tell is basic obedience. A service dog will not be sniffing merchandise, soliciting attention, barking at passersby, or leaving their handler to explore on their own. Although some handlers have small dogs in shopping carts or baskets, the common rule is 4 on the floor. And above all, service dogs must be under the control of the handler at all times. You have the right to ask an aggressive or poorly behaved animal to leave. If the handler removes the dog and wishes to obtain goods and services without the dog, that must be allowed.

If you have an idea for our newsletter please contact dac@dacnw.org.
Gardening for All!

Winter, during our biggest snow storm, is not the typical time to be thinking about a garden. But that is just what we are doing!

Disability Action Center NW (DAC) is proud to be partnering with Koppel Farm - Pullman Community Garden to bring the first fully accessible garden plot to the area. We have worked on similar fully accessible plots elsewhere in Idaho. Boise has a wonderful garden, and Community Garden of the Master in Coeur d’Alene has a perfect set up.

Not all “accessible” gardens are the same. To be truly accessible, you need van accessible parking, paved pathway to the plot, and specially designed raised beds with level paved or packed surface to get around. A foot high raised bed is not truly accessible. Good gardening beds provide space to roll under with arms reach access throughout. You have to plan for turning radius and room for the width of a motorized wheelchair as well. And in our hot, dry summers, it can’t be too shallow or everything will dry out too quickly.

Add to that resources for ergonomic gardening tools and accessible hoses and storage, and you have the perfect solution for accessible community gardening.

Currently, the community gardening program provided by the City of Pullman is not accessible. And since it’s on a hill, it would be prohibitive to even try to make it so.

But the location of Koppel Farm - Pullman Community Garden is level, has a restroom nearby, and would be a perfect solution. By partnering with Koppel Farm and the City of Pullman, finding funding, we hope to bring gardening to everyone!

Gardening is a healthy form of exercise, is proven to help with your overall mental health, and can provide you and your family with healthy, fresh vegetables and fruit throughout the season. Maybe not during a snowstorm, but certainly for the better part of the year. You can show your support by filling out this simple survey.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YFLSKVP
CIL’s Adapt to Online Service Delivery

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused interruptions and barriers to service delivery for people with disabilities all around the state. When CILs offices closed, it affected their ability to offer their usual in-person services, including skills-based trainings and classes.

Thankfully, within a few weeks of discussions, collaboration, and problem solving the were able adapt their program’s delivery under the new conditions.

The first was switching our in-person workshops and classes to online. These need to be made accessible by using real-time closed captioning and ASL interpreters where needed. An alternative was recording the class, adding the accessibility features and then releasing it to YouTube or other social media platform.

Since most CILs were already venturing into video, it came naturally to add captioning and other features to the video. YouTube’s automated closed captioning is not always accurate but it does offer the ability to go back in and correct and modify them.

For meeting with consumers, Zoom or FaceTime have been invaluable. Third party ASL services like Purple can make these accessible for the deaf and hard of hearing. And the chat feature offers an opportunity for clarification in real time.

One of the problems that arose when CILs switched to online services is the availability of high speed internet in rural areas. And many consumers didn’t have devices to access these services. So CILs used Cares Act Funding to provide “hot spots” where possible and digital devices. This opened up a whole new world for most who were isolating. Social connections and access to the new tele-health were among them.

Another bonus, is the ability to attend a workshop or class of your choice without having to be near it. That affords connections across the state and beyond. And since many costs association with conferences being in person are gone, these can be free or affordable to many more people.


What an amazing time we live in to switch to these accessible alternatives in such a short amount of time. I believe some of these are here to stay.

For more information about the ADA contact

NWADACENTER.ORG/IDAHO
Dana Gover, MPA, and ACTCP Certification
ADA Training & Technical Assistance
Email: dananwadacenteridaho@gmail.com
Phone: Voice & TTD 208-841-9422
Idahoans with Disabilities raise legal concerns about plans for upcoming legislative session

More than thirty groups representing Idahoans with disabilities, including LINC, sent a letter to Idaho’s Governor and Legislative Leadership about legal and safety concerns for the upcoming January 11 legislative session.

People with disabilities want to participate in the legislative session, but can’t do so safely without proper COVID-19 protocols.

“We are deeply concerned about the potential spread of the coronavirus in the Statehouse in view of the fact that most legislators are failing to follow basic COVID-19 protocols set forth by the Central District Health Department, including wearing face masks, social distancing, and limiting group sizes to 10 or fewer,” said Jeremy Maxand, LINC’s Executive Director.

“People with developmental disabilities are twice as likely to contract COVID-19 and five times more likely to die from it than the overall population.” said Christine Pisani, Executive Director of the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities citing a Syracuse University study.

These concerns come as Idaho legislators talk about making deep cuts to state support for Medicaid programs and attempting to repeal Medicaid expansion. Another issue is the need to address the direct care workforce crisis across all service industries.

“As any decisions related to Medicaid significantly impact people with disabilities and seniors very directly,” Pisani said. “Not assuring their participation is imply anti-democratic.”

There are a number of legal issues related to the current situation. For example. Idaho state law requires compliance with state protocols in the Capitol building, according to a recent opinion of the Idaho Attorney General. Public areas of the Capitol are subject to the COVID-19 orders set forth by the Central District Health Department. The Idaho Legislature has authority over its own chambers, offices and meeting rooms.

Advocates are concerned that if there is a failure to comply with the state public health orders anyplace the public can go, then people with disabilities will be unable to get the information they need, unable to meet with legislators, and unable to testify without putting their lives in danger.

Signatories to the letter received a response on December 21st from House Speaker Scott Bedke. He sent a document outlining the safety precautions they have already implemented and those they continue to consider.

“As a whole, our organizations are looking through this carefully to ensure our ability to participate in the upcoming session, confidently and safely,” said Maxand. “This includes protocols so people with disabilities and their families will be able to provide testimony in person, free of fear of COVID-19. We know that the government works for the people that show up, and people with disabilities absolutely want to show up. That’s what we’re fighting for.”
Mental Health and Crisis Care

Each year, the fewer hours of sunlight, stormy weather, isolation and the holiday season brings stress to many in our state, the nation and the world. Add to that a global pandemic, and many people become overwhelmed, depressed, anxious, and sometimes suicidal during the winter.

The Regional Behavioral Health Board exists in each region of the state. They provide community outreach, events as well as specific services. Those with mental illness, substance use disorders or both which is called dual diagnosis or co-occurring disorders are covered.

The state legislature and Governor Otter initiated Crisis Centers (CC) throughout the state. These can be dispersed services throughout a community or a single stand alone center. Regardless of your location, you can call 877-897-9027 for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year. Put the phone number in a convenient, ready to use location for when it’s needed.

The CC is a voluntary service for adults experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The service is free, warm and welcoming, where participants are treated with dignity and respect. The CC’s are staffed with licensed professionals who assess the situation, ensure safety, provide treatment and offer relief and resolution.

Contact Joyce Lyons at jlyons@phd2.idaho.gov for more information.

Family and friends who see someone in distress with a mental illness and feel they would benefit from an intervention can call on their behalf to see how they can be served. Idaho’s Suicide Prevention Hotline for phone or text is 800-273-TALK. Keep this in an east to find location.

Medicaid Expansion, recently approved by the Idaho Legislature, now provides medical insurance to approximately 92,000 people. This coverage has a very positive impact for the many struggling in our state; they now have access to physical and behavioral health treatment. Let’s continue to be vigilant and protect these services to assist those less fortunate in our society.
When you want to change your community for the better, one of the best ways to do so is to hold a public office. Public officials have the influence and power to really affect policies and government services, which can be crucial for people who are living with disabilities. Before you can wield this influence and power for yourself and your community, however, you need to run a successful political campaign. Disability Action Center NW shows you how to do so.

1 - Look to the Past & Present for Inspiration
Need a little motivation to run for office? If you are anxious about running for office as an individual with a disability, you should know that you’re in pretty good company. Even though they may not have advertised it, several presidents and world leaders were also living with disabilities. Franklin Roosevelt may be the most famous of influential political figures with disabilities, but George W. Bush, John F. Kennedy, and even George Washington struggled with dyslexia both before and while in office. If you are looking for more modern inspiration, try reading about Eleonore Laloux, who is a woman with Down Syndrome who ran for office in France. So you see, disabilities don’t have to keep you from becoming a leader in your community.

2 - Assemble an Experience Campaign Team
Much like building an autism village can help children become thriving adults, building a campaign team can help your bid for office become a success. As Harvard Law School explains, most campaign teams consist of a campaign manager, fundraising consultants and volunteers, but it may be beneficial to bring in legal consultants and other professionals for your first campaign. As an example, if you want to connect with more constituents via social media, you can hire someone to manage Instagram as well as other social media platforms. If you’re wondering where to look for experienced Instagram specialists and other freelance professionals, try using a job board like LinkedIn. They make it effortless to connect with, interview and hire the freelancers you need for a successful campaign.

3 - Work on Refining your Skills
One thing that you won’t be able to hand off to your team is public speaking. If you want to win over voters, you have to be able to work through any public speaking anxieties so you can ensure success at events. If you’re simply nervous about speaking in public, reframe that energy as excitement, and it could very well do the trick. The US Chamber of Commerce has other tricks & tools you can use to improve your skills around public speaking, including preparation, practice and a slower pace. Consider using engaging visual aids, just try not to rely too heavily on visuals, so that people will be able to connect with you. It’s also a good idea to refine other skills to build credibility and help you advance in your career. If you have experience with information technology but haven’t received a degree, consider going back to school. Working towards an IT degree gives you a chance to earn certifications, which you can add to your resume. You can take online course and complete them in your own time. Having a well-rounded background can put you ahead of other candidates.

4 - Run a Fair & Engaging Political Campaign
Now that you have the tools and team members you need, get your campaign started! You and your manager should outline a few key strategies in order to get off to the right start. Research how many votes you need to win, create some contrast between you and your opponent, and get comfortable asking people for support along the way. Ensure your campaign is equitable and inclusive, especially if you want to connect with voters with disabilities. Start with hiring a diverse group of people, but make sure campaign materials and events are accessible. For example, any photos or videos posted to social media should include captions. Running for office may sound too complicated, but it doesn’t have to be! With the right strategy, you can forge meaningful connections to win over voters in your community. Finally, know that winning an election is possible, so don’t let fears of failure keep you from at least trying.
Improving Disability Representation for Brands

What can a brand do to improve disability representation? Hire disabled people.

Disability is disproportionately underrepresented in not only visible ways for branding, but also behind the scenes. Hire disabled designers, artists, writers, campaign managers, marketing managers, etc. Working with disabled people in branding is essential in creating an authentic disability representation.

Have a variety of disabled people modeling your items on your website. Think about it, women with disabilities wear lingerie too. When was the last time you saw a Victoria’s Secret ad with a disabled model?

We see many brands partnering with disability groups, but it’s rare to see a disabled person actually pictured on a brand’s website or in the regular marketing materials. We need to normalize disabled bodies year-round, not just for special “diversity” campaigns. Put some emphasis on power wheelchair users, mobility aids, different genders, BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color), etc.

So what can you do to advocate for change?

Reach out to brands you’re in contact with about a need for disabled body representation.

Buy from brands who support disability representation. You can google a list of brands that do, these include Target, Tommy Hilfiger and more.

Amplify the work of disabled folks in branding by sharing the work of writers, stylists, models who have disabilities. Direct Message the brand! They read their messages more than you think.

By working together and supporting each other we can amplify each others voices.

For more information about advocating for disability representation and other disability causes you can follow Alex Dacy, the Wheelchair Rapunzel on Facebook, Instagram and her blog.
SCREENING YOUR CANDIDATES AT ARM’S LENGTH

Online interviewing for your personal assistants has become a necessary tool in recruiting good help. It can be convenient for scheduling, but it does hinder your ability to make interpersonal connections and pick up subtle cues about a candidate’s personality. It’s harder for the candidate to see the space where they will be working too. To make the most of your virtual interview, pay attention to these five aspects:

1. Don’t sell yourself short. You are an interesting person to work for, so be sure and talk about highlights of working for you in your home.

2. Observe subtle signs. It’s hard to observe another person’s body language in a virtual interview. But do place close attention to what you do notice: fidgeting, impatience, rudeness, friendliness, quick thinking, and communication styles.

3. Highlight your strengths. Talk about positive things your past employees have said about working with you. Tell a few personal stories about what would make the work rewarding.

4. Be ready to show & Tell. Have talking points ready before conducting the interview. Make a list of highlights of what the job entails. Show how you are willing to train them. You can even provide an outline of the interview process when you schedule.

5. Set the right tone. Ask your candidate some questions designed to explore their personalities and how they would fit. Some examples: Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a teacher, manager, or customer? What do you see as challenges to this job? Tell me about a time when you were challenged to improve?

Be ready to ask follow-up questionjs that might draw out motivations behind a candidates answers. These can ease you into real conversation with natural give and take.

These are keys to attracting good employees who are engaged and want to work with you.
Have fun in the kitchen and maybe you can win! This is a list of Cooking Contests for everything from BBQ to baked goods. Some require physical competition, others require submission of recipes, photos, or videos. Prizes include cash, cookware, kitchen gadgets, kitchen makeovers and more! https://thecheapgourmet.typepad.com/the_cheap_gourmet/cooking-contests.html

The ultimate global talent contest from the comfort of your own home! Anyone can enter. Show your skills, tell your friends to vote. Who will win the TopSpot of $1000? Utilize the app which is available from the Apple store or Google Play. https://www.topspot.me/contests

Join millions of creatives in daily competitions and photo contests. You can gain exposure, grow your photography career, and meet other photographers like you. See the winners of the Science Fiction Photo Contest and see how you stack up. https://www.viewbug.com/contests/science-fiction-photo-contest

You can win pet supplies, coupons and gift cards from Amazon, Chewy & Petco. It’s easy to enter on PetParade website. Take a cute photo of your pet, collect votes and virtual treats on the app and the pet with the most points wins! https://www.parade.pet/pet-photo-contest/

To learn about the best sweepstakes and contests to enter right now check out The Balance Everyday. Plus they have tips to increase your chances. They have also broken down the contests so you can enter the ones with prizes you would most like to win. https://www.thebalanceeveryday.com/the-10-best-sweepstakes-to-enter-right-now-887110
By Shiloh Blackburn

The other day I saw a commercial for a dating app, where Satan and 2020 made a love match. Hilarious, yes, and pretty much sums up the year we’ve all had, what with the Australian fires, murder hornets and the biggest drag of them all—the Coronavirus pandemic. With all this I’ve been afraid to ask the rhetorical question that Murphy’s Law would LOVE to answer: *What more can go wrong?* I’ve even been afraid to dare the Universe with these bold words: “BRING IT UNIVERSE! Hit me with your best shot!”

But the end is in sight. 2021 is here, and hopefully it will be kinder than its old predecessor was to all of us. Maybe it won’t be the baby of the love match from that commercial. I know, I know...you’re saying, “Shiloh, bite your tongue!” And I don’t want to - that hurts! Humor aside, I’m here today to share with you some tips for self-care and mental health upkeep.

1. **Get out in Nature.** For me, this means crossing the street from my apartment and visiting the old white ash tree on the corner. I do this quite often in the warmer months whenever I need fresh air and a change to get out of my head. I talk with Ash, sharing recent events and feelings. Sometimes I run my hand through its lower hanging leaves to give it affection. (Yes, I’m a proud tree hugger!) A visit with Ash always leaves me feeling better with a calmer, clearer head.

2. **Guided Meditations.** I’ve only been meditating for two years now, but man, it sure has helped me gain a different, yet calmer outlook on myself and life. Some people think meditation is where you sit still quietly, with a blank mind and it’s only successful if you achieve that state. Wrong! Our brains are computers that are always processing stuff and producing thoughts faster than we can speak. Guided meditation takes that stress away, giving us something to focus on in a relaxed state. I’ve found all sorts of guided meditations on YouTube. My first one had to do with the energy of the Winter Solstice.

3. **Affirmations.** Now these are easy, fun and can become a healthy daily practice. Repeat after me: *I am beautiful/handsome. I am awesome. I speak my truth. I love myself.* These are simple, but powerful affirming statements. You can find them anywhere, most often on inspirational posters.

4. **Tea/Hot Cocoa/Coffee.** Now this tip is self-explanatory. Treat yourself. That’s right, you are awesome and deserve a reward every now and then. It doesn’t have to be a drink. It can be whatever makes you feel great. I happen to love peppermint tea and hot cocoa.

5. **A Cleansing Cry.** Sometimes we can’t avoid an emotional storm, so it’s better to get it all out and move past it into clear skies. It always feels better afterwards.

6. **Crystals.** I happen to be someone who loves crystals and swear by their healing properties. Rose quartz is an excellent stone for self-love. I have one as a pendant and wear it whenever I’ve been harsh on myself. These, along with a hefty amount of humor, are how I’ve survived Satan’s love match with 2020. I hope they help you with the coming year.

Promoting Independent Living for all Idahoans
K-Mart selling Down Syndrome Dolls

Kmart is now selling Down Syndrome dolls, which is absolutely HUGE for disability representation. The ‘Baby Charlie’ dolls are listed as coming soon on the Kmart website and will retail for $15 in Australia. This comes after Kmart announced a new line of inclusive dolls with disabilities or impairments. One of the dolls uses a wheelchair, while others are vision or hearing impaired.

“At Kmart we want to foster a culture that is inclusive, and a big part of that is reflecting the rich diversity in the community around us,” Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Kmart Group, Marcelle Harrison said. “We’ve had so much positive feedback from the community, we’ve even had therapy services let us know they are using our dolls in their waiting room.”

Let’s hope this makes it to America soon!

TIDBITS!
Categorically left over but no less important

Quotes to make you think!

“Pity is the way of the sighted world to not feel guilty for what disadvantage they think you have.”
~ Jose Feliciano, Musician

Durable Medical Goods Exchange

We are not accepting any durable medical goods at this time since it’s difficult to clean them. But we are distributing them. Explain your needs and our trained staff may know the perfect item that will help you!

James Pickard in Moscow 208-883-0523
Valerie Johnson in Idaho Falls 208-529-8610
Tarey Wilder in Boise 208-336-3335 x220
If you love watching TV shows, then the ABC app is for you. It lets you watch recent ABC shows on your devices for no charge at all. Full episodes of a wide variety of shows: Bachelorette, Modern Family and more. You can binge on throwback classics or find something new. Finding a favorite show is easy, they are listed alphabetically. Or browse by genre like Comedy, Reality, Drama, and News and find something you haven’t seen before. Includes daytime and late night TV shows. Plenty there to see and all completely free! You can get the ABC app in the Apple Store or Google Play.

The Tile Sticker technology prevents you from losing everyday items. It has an adhesive back and is small enough to be placed on TV or other remotes, wallets, keys, camera, or other easily misplaced household items. It's about the size of a quarter. When you need to find your items, use the company’s app on your phone or computer.

The Pro version is ideal for valuable items and has a BlueTooth range of 400 feet. That can cover losing something in your drive way or yard! It’s waterproof, has a 3 year battery life and comes with free shipping. It sticks better to some items than others, great on a passport or wallet, not so much on a gym bag that is likely to be banged around. It's black and blends right in. The sticker is not built for detaching and reattaching, so once you stick it on something, you have to leave it there. You get a 4 pack for around $50. Not bad for peace of mind.
