ERNESTO CASILLAS MATTHEW KILLIAN LONG HAUL PAUL HUMOR – SQUEAKY WHEEL CROSSWORD EVENTS/CONF

ABILITY

jamie REP. RASKIN
Congress & Mental Health

Bérénice Magistretti & Charlie Kramer
Invisible to Visible Disability

Amber Galloway-Gallego
MUSIC SIGN LANGUAGE

Looking for Hope in Haiti

MOTO DEMPTION
ADAPTIVE MOTOCROSS

CATERINA SCORSONE
Grey's Anatomy & Quincy Jones Global Down Syndrome Foundation Awardee



amara

A Revolution in Captioning & Subtitling Web Video

- Join Ted Talks, PBS NewsHour, Udacity, Mozilla, and many other organizations
- Drastically reduce your cost of captioning
- Engage your community *or* tap into Amara's
- Access the easiest way to caption web video

Get in touch - Enterprise@Amara.org

FCC Winner
AAA Chairman's Award for Accessibility

People with disabilities are at least twice as likely to be victims of violent crimes and are sexually assaulted at rates up to 7 times greater than the general population.

BUT WE ARE NOT ALONE

Victim Services Programs are Here to Help

Victim services advocates work with individuals to reduce the effects of trauma. They help by guiding individuals through the legal system and directing them to organizations that provide important services like:

- counseling
- help getting property back
- support when going into court
- filing compensation claims
- and many other important services

Victim services are FREE of charge. Your well-being matters and victim services are there to help you.

For information about victim services in your area visit:

www.thearcca.org/victimservices

Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

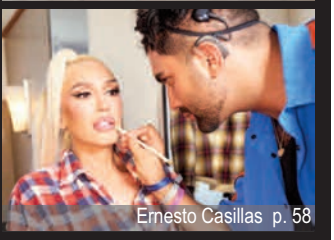
This publication was financially assisted by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)

The Arc
California


Congressman Jamie Raskin p. 34


Hope for Haiti p. 28


MotoDemption p. 14


Ernesto Casillas p. 58

CONTENTS

8 **HUMOR — The Squeaky Wheel: Smog Opinion**

10 **LONG HAUL PAUL — Let's Ride (for MS)**

14 **MOTODEMPTIOM — Aaron Hill and Adaptive Motocross**

20 **INVISIBLE TO VISIBLE — Bérénice Magistretti & Charlie Kramer**

28 **HOPE FOR HAITI — A Revisit**

34 **JAMIE RASKIN — Congress and Mental Health Awareness**

40 **CATERINA SCORSONE — Grey's Anatomy & Quincy Jones GDSF Award**

50 **AMBER GALLOWAY-GALLEGO — Music Sign Language**

58 **ERNESTO CASILLAS — A Makeup Artist's Journey**

66 **MATTHEW KILLIAN — Getting a Leg Up with Karate**

70 **CROSSWORD — *ABILITY*'s Puzzle**

74 **MARKETPLACE — Products & Services**

ADVERTISING

For advertising information e-mail advertising@abilitymagazine.com 949.854.8700

ABILITY Magazine is published bimonthly
8941 Atlanta Ave. HB, CA 92646 (ISSN 1062-5321) All Rights Reserved

Send address changes to *ABILITY Magazine*, Attention: Subscriptions Manager
PO Box 10878, Costa Mesa, CA 92627; Caterina Scorsine Issue Dec/Jan 2023-24

Published in USA

DISTRIBUTION

Faxon-RoweCom Library Services
Ebsco - Library Services
Swets Blackwell

MANAGING EDITOR
Gillian Friedman, MD

MANAGING HEALTH EDITOR
E. Thomas Chappell, MD

HUMOR WRITERS
Jeff Charlebois
George Covington, JD

EDITORS
Melissa Ancheta
Paula Fitzgerald
Pamela K. Johnson
Lia Martirosyan
Josh Pate, PhD
Maya Sabatello, PhD, JD
Karina Ulrike Sturm
Isabella Wisinger
Jennifer Woodall

HEALTH EDITOR
Larry Goldstein, MD

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Ashley Fiolek
Eileen Grubba
Geri Jewell
George Kaplan
Regina Hall
Myles Mellor (Crossword Puzzle)
Itto Outini
Paul Pelland (Long Haul Paul)

WEB EDITORS
Marge Plasmier
Karina Ulrike Strum
Bob Williams (Interactive Puzzle)

MULTI-MEDIA
Karina Ulrike Sturm

GRAPHIC ART / ILLUSTRATION
Scott Johnson
Melissa Murphy (Medical Illustration)

PHOTOGRAPHY
Jenny Anderson
Paul Pelland
Nancy Villere

TRANSCRIPTIONIST
Sandy Grabowski

TRANSLATOR
Jing Hu
Emily Deng

MARKETING/PROMOTIONS
SOCIAL MEDIA
Jennifer Goga
Lia Martirosyan
Tamay Shannon

ABILITYJOBS.COM
Lori Daly
Vicky Dupree
George Kaplan
Marge Plasmier
Casey Mims
Denise Miller

EDITORIAL
editorial@abilitymagazine.com

PUBLISHER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Chet Cooper

The views expressed in this issue may not be those of *ABILITY Magazine*

Library of Congress
Washington D.C. ISSN 1062-5321

© Copyright 1990-2023-24
ABILITY Magazine



LISTEN TO TEXT
ANYWHERE,
ANY TIME,
on
ANY DEVICE

Sign up
for a
FREE trial

RATHER LISTEN THAN READ?

Read aloud tools give those with reading difficulties **autonomy** and better **understanding**, whether it's a web page, a document, an image, or even text as it's written.

Try ReadSpeaker TextAid for yourself with our free 14-day trial.

ReadSpeaker
THE POWER OF SPEECH

HTTP://TEXTAID.READSPEAKER.COM
+1 (703) 657 7801



THE INNER JOURNEY *is pretty fantastic, too.*

Maybe it's the lack of traffic that lets you relax and ponder. Or the stunning panorama in every window. But an Amtrak® train inspires the kind of thinking you don't get to do every day. Which makes every Amtrak train a train of thought. Here's something else to think about: Amtrak provides a 15% discount to passengers with disabilities and their companion when traveling together. Talk to an agent 24 hours a day, seven days a week, about accessible travel or to make reservations.

Call **1-800-USA-RAIL** (VOICE) *or* **1-800-523-6590** (TTY)

AMTRAK
Enjoy the journey.℠

A supportive community is waiting for you

We hire people with disabilities.

We offer:

- Application and hiring support
- On-the-job accommodations
- Work Wellness Coaching
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- WorkingWell
- Amazon People with Disabilities Affinity Group

Visit **amazon.com/pwdhourlyjobs** or text **PWD** to **77088** to sign up for alerts from Amazon.*

* By participating, you agree to the terms and privacy policy at sms-terms.com/amazon for recurring autodialed marketing messages from Amazon, to the phone number you provide. No consent required to buy. Message and data rates may apply. Text HELP for help or STOP to end.

Amazon is proud to be an equal opportunity employer.



the SQUEAKY WHEEL



Opinion: Disabled People Need to Adjust to the New Normal of Inhaling Poisonous Fire Sky

With air pollution levels rising and the morale of disabled Northeasterners sinking, it's time they face some difficult truths. The coronavirus will continue to mutate, politicians will continue to ignore disability issues and if anyone gets sick, they'd better not expect the government to take care of them. Oh, and also, the world is on fire.

While it may seem disheartening to have to constantly navigate a burning society, it's important to stay open-minded, and open-lunged, to the hazy carbon drifting around you. It's tempting to say "that's not how it used to be," and you'd be right, but you need toughen up and accept this never-ending series of preventable global crises. That's just the new normal!

You might want to resist and try to protect yourself using proven, effective safety measures, but honestly we've already been through that whole thing and it's time to just give in. Masks are weird, and if you wear one outside this summer to shield yourself from the toxic pollution, you'll get a weird little tan line around your cheeks. That's not cute.

Instead, you need to step out into the beautiful amber waves of air, close your eyes and take a big, unmasked breath. Inhale the future, and let each microplastic settling inside you be a reminder of the challenges you've overcome. Let the flames of the forest fuel the fires of your heart.

And if you get some carcinogens in your bloodstream? Who cares! You'll have so much brain fog that you probably won't even notice. ■ ABILITY

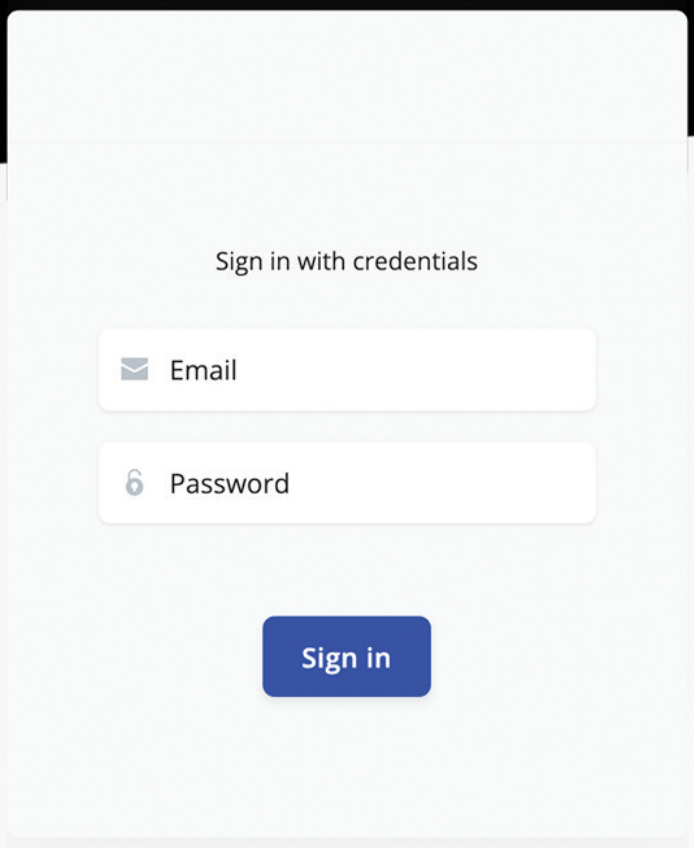


by Steven Verdile

the-squeaky-wheel.com

ABILITY Job Fair Portal

Welcome



abilityjobfair.org

Accessibility Features

Sign Language

Talk2Text

Screen Reader Ready

Voice and SMS



A Few More Miles of MOTOMEDICINE



After a busy summer of traveling weeks at a time, I was enjoying spending time at home with my wife Elin and our dog Kona. My event schedule for most of October through March was empty. With the exception of managing the 10th annual MS5000 motorcycle mileage contest, I was left with raking leaves, fixing things around the house and going for rides on our new Yamaha e-bikes.

Of course, being home for a bit slowed me enough to address some of the non-MS related aches and pains I had been experiencing including persistent sciatica and some stubborn swelling in one ankle, one knee and one middle finger. My corneal transplant from a few years ago was the real issue I was worried about facing because my left eye was becoming cloudy early in the day and by afternoon, I was looking through wax paper. I guessed the donor tissue was failing and I was not looking forward to a second operation, especially after my experiences the first time around. It took a full year after the transplant before I was fitted with a special scleral lens that I since have had to wear daily in addition to my glasses for distance and reading. Even with both prescriptions, I was still unable to see as well as I did the day before getting the operation. The lens has created its own set of issues with swelling and irritation; not ideal when riding in the wind for dozens of hours at a time. Without the specialty lens in my left eye however, my vision is 20/400.

Sure enough, the eye doctor said the donor graph was failing and I would need a second


YAMAHA
CHASING THE CURE
LONGMAUI PAUL
BRIDGESTONE



transplant to solve the cloudiness issue. A second transplant was no guarantee however that my vision would get any better, so there's that to look forward to.

As I was leaving my eye appointment, I received a message from Yamaha's Service Director asking if I would be willing to speak at their National Service Meeting in Marietta Georgia the second week in December. It was just what I needed at just the right moment. A few days away, a coupe thousand miles on the bike to finish out the year and a way to get my mind off the impending eye operation. I would just have to plan around riding in the dark!

A day or two later, a completely different Yamaha department invited me to take part in a press launch they were having for a new motorcycle. The event was in southern California the first full week in December. It was going to be close, but my mapping program said I could make both events. My last ride of the season was now almost 7,000 miles and would entail riding coast to coast twice with a stop in Atlanta!

A few days after accepting both events, while getting the bike and my winter gear ready for the long cold trip, I realized my aches and pains had disappeared! Just the act of planning and getting ready to do what I love was helping me heal! The trip will add more miles towards my million mile goal for Multiple Sclerosis and more of what I call Motomedicine!

I wonder how far I need to ride my motorcycle to get my vision back?

■ ABILITY





MOTO DEMPTION

MISSION TO RIDE

Since Aaron Hill's injury in 2008, he was determined to overcome the difficulties of his spinal cord injury. But even more so, to ride again. With the founding of MotoDemption and help of friends, the first prototype was born. Today MotoDemption continues to bring joy to riders and always looking to make the experience better. MotoDemption not only makes motocross a reality for those with physical disabilities by providing adaptative bikes, but also provides instructors, and resources necessary for safe and fun riding.

As a non-profit organization MotoDemption found sponsors that have just the right focus; Fox with it's family-oriented biking gear, Spy+ eyewear technology, Leatt safety gear, Bell helmet, Rekluse clutch performance technology, Applied Technology for suspension and High Fives a non-profit that supports injured athletes.

ABILITY Magazine's Chet Cooper spoke with Hill at The Kurt Caselli Foundation 'Day Ride' event



Weston Irwin



Aaron Hill adjusting a MotoDemption adaptive motocross bike at Kurt Caselli Ride Day at Fox Raceway in Pala, CA

at Fox raceway in Pala CA.

Chet Cooper: Tell me about MotoDemption.

Aaron Hill: We're a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that specializes in getting athletes that have had life altering injuries out on dirt bikes. Whether that be paralysis or amputation or everything and anything in between, we make sure that they get out and enjoy life and have fun again.

Cooper: Typically, people with a motocross background?

Hill: People that we work with have ridden motorcycles before at some level. Definitely lots of past racers that have gotten injured, but we've also had five athletes that had never ridden a motorcycle before come out and learn to ride with us. It's pretty cool.

Cooper: What's happening today?

Hill: So today we're holding the camp with the Kurt Caselli Foundation. We have nine adaptive athletes out here riding. We have four adaptive bikes with us and they're out riding. Some of them for the very first time since their injury and just seeing what it's all about and getting to live the dream again and enjoy that feeling of riding.

Cooper: Tell me what an adaptive bike is like.

Hill: An adaptive bike is modified to be able to function with someone who suffered paralysis or an amputation. We put a Rekluse clutch in there so you don't have to worry about using the clutch. We have an electric shifter operated by a push button on the handlebars and then a safety cage as well so that it protects the rider in case they're injured. We also modify the seat to make sure that keeps the rider safe and holds them on the bike a little better. And then we have a strap system that we use that runs across the rider's lap to hold them on the motorcycle.

We also add a rear handbrake–for the rear brake – up on the handlebars as well.

Cooper: Is each bike custom to the person?

Hill: For us, we work with a ton of different athletes. We try and make our bikes as general as possible so that it can fit a wide variety of riders with different skill levels and different disabilities. We have different parts that we can put on the bike depending on your injury to make it work better for what your needs are, but we have the capability of building specific bikes for an individual rider as well.

Cooper: Nice. I see one out there that used to be called a sissy bar. Is that his bike?

Hill: No, that's our fifth-generation bike that we just produced this last year. We're on our fifth edition of motorcycle right now with a different safety cage. It's just a little added protection for the rider in case they were to go over the bars or have a big crash to help keep the bike off them and keep the rider safe.

Cooper: I mentioned to you earlier, Doug...

Hill: Doug Henry.

Cooper: Right. He had a full cage around the bike. Do you do anything like that?

Hill: We haven't yet. We could. It adds a lot of extra weight. I know he's since then gotten rid of that just because of that reason–the extra weight–and it made it tough for him to see a little bit, he said. He's running more of a standard setup now, but yeah.

Cooper: If somebody goes down, if they slide out, do you have people ready to put them back up?

Hill: Yes. Each rider has three instructors with them and they wear bright safety vests.

Cooper: Okay, I get it. That's who they are, great!

Hill: They're there to guide the rider around the track, especially when it's the rider's first time getting on the track, so they know any places to avoid–maybe a big



mud hole or deep mud or something like that–but they're also there for when other riders are on the track. The two instructors in the back block for them to let people know that there's an adaptive rider up in front of them and make sure that people aren't going to run into them or anything like that. And then, yeah, they're there in case of a fall. So, tip over in a corner or whatever it might be, they're right there. They drop their bikes and pick them up and get them.

Cooper: I went riding with Ricky James once. When he fell his father had to run across the track to lift him up.

Hill: Yeah, for me when I'm out with my buddies just on a practice day or something, they keep a close eye on me, so it's not too bad. There's usually someone there willing to lend a hand.

Cooper: That's a great idea to have the support riding with them. Is this track modified?

Hill: It's different. Yeah, so we're on the vet track today. It's a little tamed down compared to the pro track, so it's just a little easier for us and we don't have to worry about it, but it's a regular motocross track.

Cooper: Where are you from?

Hill: We're based out of Colorado. Snow is flying there, so this is the perfect time to get down here to Southern California and ride the dirt.

Cooper: Did you drive or fly down?

Hill: We drove down, pulled our trailer with the four adaptive bikes. Then we also, like I said, we provide the instructors for the riders. We provide them with all the safety gear, helmets, boots, gear, knee pads, all that, goggles, everything they need to go ride. And then, of course, with the safety pages and all that stuff.

Cooper: Do they typically come with their own helmets?

Hill: Some riders come with their own gear and are fully prepared, but a lot of riders don't have the gear any-



MotoDemption adaptive motocross bike at Kurt Caselli Ride Day at Fox Raceway in Pala, CA

more, so we make sure to provide that for them so they can stay safe out on the track.

Cooper: How long have you been associated with the Kurt Caselli Foundation?

Hill: This is our second year being out at Kurt Caselli ride day. We have been around for four years now since 2020, we're just super honored to be partnered up with an organization like the Kurt Caselli Foundation and to be able to partake in this awesome event that they put on.

Cooper: It looks like it's a great event. A couple of weeks ago Fox Pala raceway hosted the Ryan Dungey Foundation.

Hill: Yes, he has a Foundation. I believe they work with St. Jude Hospital.

Cooper: Right. I think you guys should meet. I talked to him about connecting with other organizations. He said it's in his plan.

A Quick Chat with Jimmy Soliz

Cooper: Have you been to this event before?

Soliz: No, this is my first time out here.

Cooper: Have you ridden motocross prior?

Soliz: Yes. I've been racing since I've been on a bike–since I was three years old. I got injured about 15 years ago racing motocross up north in a racetrack in Palmdale, California.

Cooper: Have you been on an adaptive bike before?

Soliz: This is actually my third time. I met MotoDemption in early June and got a chance to ride with them up in Colorado and I rode for the first time in 15 years. It just felt like hopping on a bike again. They invited me out here since this is a little closer to home, which is an awesome of them for them to put on.

Cooper: Did you come out with them or did you come out separate?

Soliz: We just came out separate. We live about two hours north of here.

Cooper: I thought you were in Colorado.

Soliz: We met them in Colorado.

Cooper: What do you think about riding again, adapting a bike and riding more regularly?

Soliz: As soon as I got back on the bike, we looked into the purchasing and what we can do to make it adaptive. Aaron and Davey, they do all the customization fabric work for the bike. So, they know what we're going to do to a bike once I get one. It's nice to have those guys and they already know what to do and how to customize it for my riding needs.

Cooper: What's your closest track? Where would you go riding?

Soliz: Let's see…actually, out here would probably be the closest. We're used to riding out here. Even when we were riding before and racing, we would go to Glenn Helen, and Pala, Lake Elsinore, and Perris, and all the local tracks out here. These are pretty much our local tracks.



Jimmy Soliz riding an adaptive motocross bike at Kurt Caselli Ride Day at Fox Raceway

Cooper: Probably Milestone back in the day.

Soliz: Oh, yeah, Milestone, too. All those tracks, some of the tracks have closed down. We love coming out here and spending time out here.

Cooper: What do you think of the track today?

Soliz: Oh, it's awesome. They did an awesome job grooming the track, getting it ready and watering it. The way they build the track, too, it's real mellow and nice and easy, and there's something for everybody to ride. It's easy to get comfortable on.

Cooper: There's only one double, right?

Soliz: Yeah, I believe there's only one double. They shaved down the landings to make sure it's easy for everyone.

Cooper: Why do you think they created doubles? Why didn't they leave it as a table-top?

Soliz: Actually, back in the old days, when they used to just use natural terrain, a lot of them started as creek crossings or river crossings, and some of the guys just started jumping over them. They started building lips on each side, and they would jump the little lakes or little rivers and they just started incorporating them man-made into tracks later on in the '70s and '80s. It all started from a natural perspective, just creek crossings and stuff like that. Then they eventually just started to build one lip on each side.

Cooper: You're anchored on the bike, what do you do about ruts?

Soliz: Actually, that's something I'm learning right now with this driving process and learning to ride again. You really have to trust the bike and the wheels and make sure it's in a straight line. You get in a rut before you start to accelerate, so once you do that and you make sure you're in a straight line, you break in a straight line, the bike will do the work for you.

Cooper: I still make the mistake of looking down. And then I cross rut.

Soliz: (laughs) You always got to look ahead and keep your head up.





Navigating the Transition from Invisible to VISIBLE Disability

In the wide world of human experience, the range of disabilities we encounter is as diverse as the colors in a painter's palette. Some are readily apparent, commanding our attention with visible cues, while others remain unseen.

Invisible disabilities encompass a variety of conditions that are imperceptible at times. Among these are chronic pain, anxiety disorders, autism, dyslexia, deaf/hard of hearing, blindness, and many others. Often, these disabilities progress over time taking those affected on a journey toward visibility and prompt an increasing need for self-acceptance.

Bérénice Magistretti and Charlie Kramer know all about the journey from invisible to visible disability and the ups and downs along the route. Though they live on different continents and have never met, Magistretti and Kramer share different forms of the same genetic retinal disease: Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP).

Symptoms of RP often start with night blindness, progressing to tunnel vision and for many the loss of central vision. RP results from photoreceptor cell degeneration in the retina, affecting light signal processing. While there is no cure, ongoing research may slow down RP progression and lead to potential treatments.

The impact of RP varies widely, with some individuals experiencing vision loss early in life, while



Berenice Magistretti

others retain usable sight well into old age. Despite these differences, most individuals diagnosed with RP move from having an invisible disability to a visible one at some point in their lifetime.

Bérénice Magistretti and Charlie Kramer share their individual experiences adapting to a world that perceives you differently and they express their hope for a more inclusive future as society better understands the wide spectrum of blindness and all disabilities.

Diagnosis

Bérénice Magistretti was born in Switzerland and knew early on that she had poor vision. Diagnosed with severe myopia or near-sightedness, she always wore glasses but otherwise managed to live a life with few limitations.

“I started experiencing symptoms in my early teens. I had a hard time kind of orientating myself, recognizing

people. I was tripping over things," Magistretti recalls.

After failing the vision test required for a driver's license three times, Magistretti realized there might be something more serious going on with her vision. So, she underwent additional testing at a hospital located in Switzerland, that specialized in diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases.

Magistretti said, "As it turned out, it was a very brutal diagnosis. The doctor was sort of standoffish and sterile. I was only 19 at the time, and he said, 'Well, basically you have this condition called RP. We don't know how it's going to evolve. There's no treatment and you could be blind by the time you're 30,' And that was it, he said goodbye and I left."

Recalling the swirl of emotions her RP diagnosis caused, Magistretti is grateful for the loving support of her family during those difficult early days. For years after learning about her RP, she chose to hide her disability.

"I think for the longest time, I was kind of embarrassed to say that I was visually impaired and that I didn't see well. I didn't really want to draw that much attention to myself. Magistretti explained.

Charlie Kramer and his family were living in Southern California when he was diagnosed with RP at the tender age of five-years-old. Unlike Berenice Magistretti, the RP diagnosis was not a surprise to anyone in the Kramer family. There was a well-known Kramer family history of a dominant form of RP, stretching back generations.

Kramer's mother and older sister also have RP, though they have retained more residual vision than Charlie Kramer. The family RP history provided him with an early understanding of what the path ahead might look like for Kramer, but that didn't equate to immediate acceptance. Kramer was declared legally blind when he was almost 16 years, he recalls having enough vision to pass as fully sighted and choosing to keep it a secret.

"I basically lived my life acting like I was a totally sighted person because I could. I played high school baseball legally blind, and my coaches didn't know, I didn't tell them. It wasn't until later that I really started to feel comfortable telling people that I had RP. It was almost like the best kept secret in a way," Kramer said.

Acceptance

While living and working in San Francisco as a journalist, Magistretti became increasingly worried and depressed about her vision loss. She wondered how her vision loss would affect her career and independence. She decided it was time to educate herself about the disease in hopes of finding a path forward.

"I went to UCSF (University of California-San Francisco), and they had a sort of collaboration with the Foundation Fighting Blindness that would pay for patients with RP to test for their specific genetic mutation. So, I found out that my parents each have the exact same mutation, both of them, and they have one healthy copy, one unhealthy copy, and I just got both unhealthy copies and that's why I now live with RP," Magistretti explained.

It was then Magistretti decided to move back to Europe to be closer to the support of her family. And in 2017, she started to open up about her RP and vision loss.

"It just became too hard to hide it anymore. It's taken a long time for me to process and accept what I have," Magistretti said. "But I finally figured out that having a disability was one thing, why make it harder by trying to hide it?" she said.

Magistretti describes her experience sharing her RP diagnosis as cathartic, and she is very grateful.

"Now I am just so comfortable to tell people that I have RP and explaining it to them and asking for help. Doing that often creates really nice moments where you really bond with people," Magistretti said. "I feel wonderful today, and I really like the person I am now, and who I'm becoming. And I think it's because I've really accepted this part of me rather than continuing to push it away as a negative thing."

Like so many with or without a disability, Charlie Kramer recalls the intense pressure to fit in during middle and high school. But, looking back he is confident he handled it the right way.

"I actually think the healthiest solution for me was to hide my RP, because at the time I didn't have the mental capabilities and mindset or boundaries in place to actually talk about it with people in a way that was going to be helpful to myself and other people," Kramer said.

Kramer firmly believes there is no one size fits all way of disclosing your disability to others.

"Some people think it's always best to be open about your disability, but I really think it depends on the situation, for me, it was a slow progression. It started with me telling the people who I felt safe with and in different scenarios where I needed specific help. I disclosed my RP and asked for help only in areas where I knew the answer would be yes, and that built my confidence," Kramer recalled.

One such example was when he was playing high school golf. Kramer could hit the ball, but he had no idea where it landed. He couldn't ask his opponents



Charlie Kramer

because it would be in their best interest if Kramer couldn't locate his ball because the rules dictated, he would be assessed a penalty stroke if that happened.

"Eventually, I had to ask for support when I played golf. One of my friends came out with me as my "certified ball watcher." So that was an area where it felt safe disclosing my disability and asking for help," Kramer said.

The Power of the Cane

For so many people with invisible disabilities, beginning to use an accessibility tool is a difficult step on the path toward visibility and acceptance. It comes at different times for every person, usually when their desire for independence outweighs their need to look like everyone else.

Accessibility tools come in many forms—hearing aids, a motorized scooter, walking cane, etc. For those facing blindness and low vision, the most common (& visible) tool is a long, white mobility cane with a red band.

The use of canes as aids for the visually impaired can be traced back to ancient times. But the idea for a specifically designed white cane as a symbol of blindness and a tool for navigation began in the early 20th century. In England, James Biggs became blind due to an accident. He painted his walking stick white to improve its visibility to others. In 1931, the first official white cane was adopted, and a red band was added to increase visibility and alert others to visual impairment.

Today, white mobility canes provide a way to identify someone with vision loss and provide tactile feedback allowing users to detect obstacles and confidently travel independently.

Earlier this year, when Magistretti was ready to buy her first cane she was disappointed with the available options. She searched to find a 'cool' cane.

"I thought to myself well, I don't want a white cane," Magistretti said. "I just don't understand why they all must look so 'medical.' I just think they could be funky and cool and fashionable. I think that would help smash so much of the stigma around using a cane."

Magistretti's views on alternative designs for mobility

canes are shared by a growing number of younger users.

"Why do accessibility tools have to oftentimes be just very bland and sterile? Why should we have to sort of settle for something?" Magistretti said.

Critics of alternative cane designs express concern that deviation from the standard white cane with the red band could cause confusion or reduced visibility for both the user and the public. But Magistretti sees the change as a worthy trade-off and hopes to convince others by starting a broader conversation around the topic.

For her first cane purchase, Magistretti settled on a marigold color offered by well-known mobility cane producer, Ambutech. She's happy with her choice but still found it to be a difficult step.

"Buying my first cane was a big deal, VERY big. I still get emotional when I talk about it," Magistretti said.

While she retains some central vision helping her navigate, Magistretti has found her cane is very helpful in signaling others that she has a visual impairment. Before, Magistretti recalls a lot more misunderstandings out in public.

"Often, I bumped into people, and they would say, 'Are you drunk?' or they would tell me to look where I'm going. It wasn't their fault. I think you also invite people to be kinder and more attentive if you signal that you have a disability by using the cane," she said.

For Charlie Kramer, the white mobility cane has not only become an essential tool but a big part of his identity. And he understands the power it has to break down stereotypes about what blindness looks like.

Kramer said, "The biggest thing for me using the cane was that you're constantly battling between two identities. On the one hand, you seem like everyone else, but as soon as you break out that cane, the automatic assumption by everyone around you is that you can't see anything at all."

And with that misunderstanding can come judgment. It's something that people with all kinds of disabilities face when they are making the decision to begin using a visible accessibility tool. They are often afraid to stand out and use the accessibility tool that can actually help them, because they're worried other people are going to think they're taking advantage of something or faking their disability.

"It takes a lot of mental resilience and strength to confidently use that tool knowing that some people are going to be confused by it," Kramer said. "It's tough because it's not just the act of showing up and using the cane and other mobility tools in public. You also need to be ready for when people challenge you. You need to understand how you're going to process through that in a way that's healthy and builds more strength and confidence rather than setting you back five years."

The cane is now a part of Charlie Kramer's identity and is happy to use it wherever he goes. One of his favorite things is when he and his mom are out in public.

"Every now and then, we'll be walking down the street to a coffee shop or something, and we're both swiping our canes next to each other. And I think how often do you see one blind person but two blind people right next to each other. And then if you add my sister in there, it's really something to see," Kramer said.

Kramer relishes the chance to dispel myths about blindness by using his cane and it's also why he chooses to identify himself as being blind, instead of as someone with a visual impairment or low vision.

"I don't want people to be confused, thinking blindness always means that you have total vision loss, because that's not true. 90% of blind people have some vision remaining. So, I purposely say I'm blind, and I advocate for that every single day of my life, because I want people to understand the spectrum of blindness," Kramer said.

Advocacy and the Future

Bérénice Magistretti's journey from invisible to visible disability has changed her feelings about what it means to have RP.

"I see now that it's actually offered me a lot of different things. I think it's given me a different perspective in life, the ability to get a very quick sense of people, having a very vibrant, visual, creative mind and so many other things," she said.

Magistretti no longer worries about what she will lose with RP, and instead looks forward to sharing what she has learned with others.

"I find myself on this path of being a disabilities advocate, activist, and really wanting to raise awareness, especially around invisible disabilities. I hope that I can kind of find different, creative, interesting, and original ways to invite people to better understand these different conditions that you just don't see from the outside," Magistretti said.

Charlie Kramer's RP journey has led to self-acceptance and a reassuring confidence about the unlimited potential for people with disabilities. He also recognizes that education plays a crucial role in dispelling stereotypes about disabilities and encouraging people with disabili-



ties to confidently utilize mobility aids and request other accommodations they need.

"That's why I do the work I do now as a life coach for people with disabilities, because so many of us are living our lives based on fear, rather than living our lives based on what we know to be our true, authentic selves,"

Even though situations may differ based on different disabilities, Kramer says they share a common fear. Kramer explains that for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, it can be openly wearing hearing aids and not hiding them behind hair or under a hat. For other people, it can mean using a cane or a wheelchair at times, even when people might say, 'Wait a second, I just saw you walking?' Kramer believes learning to deal with those often-difficult situations is critical to successfully moving past fear and toward self-acceptance.

"It's a conversation that is not talked about enough in the disabled community. And it's important. It's my greatest passion," Kramer said.

Charlie Kramer welcomes whatever the future brings him with a readiness to adapt and enjoy life in the present moment.

"I don't have a lot of vision right now, and I'm okay with that... I love where I am, I love who I am, and I love what I can see, and I love what I can't see," Kramer said. ■ ABILITY

Editor's Note:

Writer Jennifer Goga was diagnosed with RP more than 30 years ago. Her experiences on the journey from invisible to visible disability mirror those adeptly described by Berenice Magistretti and Charlie Kramer for this article.

Magistretti is a journalist currently living in Italy. She has covered topics including technology and more for *TechCrunch, WIRED UK, Vanity Fair* and *Forbes*. Magistretti is also a founding partner of an early-stage venture capital fund.

Kramer is a life coach based in St. Louis, MO. Kramer is also an Ambassador for the Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB.org), a national non-profit funding research for a variety of retinal diseases that affect 10 million Americans.

berenicemagistretti.com
charliekramervision.com
fightingblindness.org

ABILITYJOBFAIR

Virtual Job Fairs for Employment of Talent with Disabilities



Online Career Fairs for Job Seekers with Disabilities

Sign Language

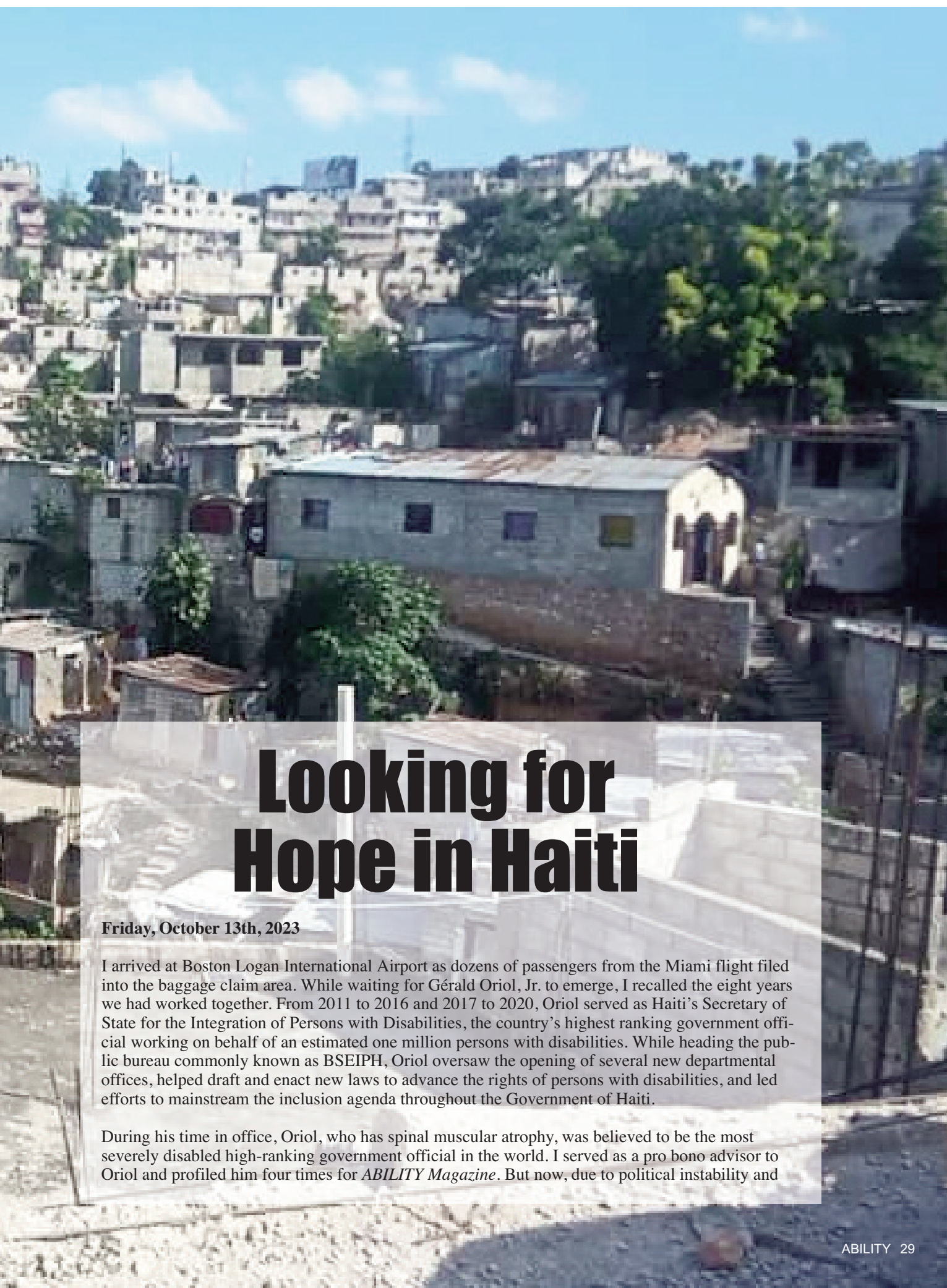
Talk2Text

Screen Reader Ready

Voice and SMS

https://abilityjobfair.org — partners of abilityJOBS.com





Looking for Hope in Haiti

Friday, October 13th, 2023

I arrived at Boston Logan International Airport as dozens of passengers from the Miami flight filed into the baggage claim area. While waiting for Gérald Oriol, Jr. to emerge, I recalled the eight years we had worked together. From 2011 to 2016 and 2017 to 2020, Oriol served as Haiti's Secretary of State for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, the country's highest ranking government official working on behalf of an estimated one million persons with disabilities. While heading the public bureau commonly known as BSEIPH, Oriol oversaw the opening of several new departmental offices, helped draft and enact new laws to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, and led efforts to mainstream the inclusion agenda throughout the Government of Haiti.

During his time in office, Oriol, who has spinal muscular atrophy, was believed to be the most severely disabled high-ranking government official in the world. I served as a pro bono advisor to Oriol and profiled him four times for *ABILITY Magazine*. But now, due to political instability and



escalating gang violence, it had been more than seven years since I traveled to Haiti and nearly six years since I had last seen Oriol in-person, when he received an honorary Doctorate of Public Service at Texas Christian University.

Oriol stepped away from public service in March 2020, just months before a group of mercenaries, mostly Colombians, stormed the residence of President Jovenel Moise and brutally murdered the head of state. Following the assassination, chaos ensued in the country as kidnappings and gang violence escalated in the capital. Three years later, the case is finally seeing some arrests, including a former Haitian Senator. Two other suspects—a Haitian-Chilean businessman and a retired Colombian Army officer—have been sentenced to life in prison by a Federal Court in Miami. Nine other suspects await trial in the US and dozens remain incarcerated in Haiti for alleged involvement in the plot. Despite progress in the case, the control of gangs in and around Port-au-Prince has increased. The World Food Programme, the UN's food agency, estimates over 200,000 people are displaced and "almost half of the country faces acute levels of food insecurity." After leaving office in 2020, Oriol initially served as a consultant for a US-based non-profit before resuming his work with Fondation J'Aime Haïti [I love Haiti Foundation], the Haitian non-profit he co-founded in 2006, to support disadvantaged youth and persons with disabilities. This was his first trip outside of Haiti in five years.

As the last few passengers filtered into baggage claim, my friend finally appeared, pushed by Degonza, his personal assistant in Haiti for nearly forty years. After exchanging hugs and pleasantries the three of us immediately headed north to Danvers, Massachusetts. In

2020, Oriol's wheelchair was stolen from the back of his pickup truck at a dangerous intersection. He reverted to a very basic model that was not adapted to his needs. It was wrecking his body. The chair was such a poor fit that he could only sit in it for an hour or two at a time without feeling pain, and sores had formed on his body. Since the physiotherapist Oriol normally consulted had left the country due to security concerns, Oriol reached out to Janet O'Flynn, a friend and Dean of FSRL, the rehabilitation facility at the Episcopal University of Haiti. O'Flynn helped arrange for Oriol to visit with two occupational therapists in Danvers, for an evaluation of his body and to receive recommendations for a new wheelchair that would allow him to sit more comfortably and for longer periods of time.

We were greeted warmly in Danvers by occupational therapists, Merry Kaulbach and Mary Jo Wagner, and wheelchair designer Phil Moran. Kaulbach and Wagner had traveled to Haiti five times since 2017, to establish a wheelchair clinic for Zanmi Beni and St. Vincent's Center for Children with Disabilities, two well-known institutions supporting persons with disabilities in Port-au-Prince. Moran offered technical expertise for their project, Wheelchair Works for Haiti, which provided the clinic in Haiti with tools, supplies and parts, to custom-fit chairs for children and adults served by the two institutions. Kaulbach and Wagner had also taught on a voluntary basis at FSRL, which is located in Leogane, the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake.

During our after-hours appointment in Danvers, Kaulbach and Wagner asked Oriol numerous questions about his home life, modes of transit, and work requirements, to better understand his needs. Oriol's scoliosis had advanced considerably since I last saw him, and the significant curvature in his spine was causing pressure in various parts of his body. Kaulbach and Wagner examined Oriol and showed him different positions for resting that could alleviate some of the tension in his body.

After spending nearly three hours with us, Kaulbach and Wagner identified and fitted for Oriol, a lightweight Quickie wheelchair with a Vicar cushion to reduce pelvic obliquity and pressure. Moran designed a padded platform for the chair, to support Oriol's crossed legs, a feature that would allow him to sit comfortably for hours at a time. The chair's padding would also help alleviate the body sores caused by his old chair.

Following the appointment, we continued north to my home city of Manchester, New Hampshire. On the drive, I asked Oriol about the food distribution work Fondation J'Aime Haïti (FJAH) was doing with Food for the Poor (FFTP), the south Florida based NGO. Oriol has served as a board member for Food for the Poor Haiti since 2021 and his foundation collaborates with FFTP to distribute food, including rice, beans, mackerel, and cornmeal, to disadvantaged communities in the Port-au-Prince area. FJAH periodically receives



bulk shipments from FFTP and separates the food into smaller rations that they distribute to several communities. The last distribution impacted an estimated 1,209 direct and indirect beneficiaries.

After a long day of travel, we finally arrived at the hotel and enjoyed a longstanding tradition from our years of work together—pizza, one of Oriol's favorite dishes.

Saturday, October 14th, 2023

We started the morning at my office on the campus of Southern New Hampshire University where I serve as Director of International Student Services. On my office wall, there's a large picture of Oriol sitting in his wheelchair, staring across the water off the southern coast of Haiti. I took the photo of him in 2014 when we visited Jacmel to see the new departmental office BSEIPH was about to open in the southern coastal city. Now, he was sitting across the desk from me in New Hampshire.

Oriol wanted to talk about basketball. Despite the ongoing violence in the capital, Oriol's foundation chose to restart its basketball program, Panye Lapè, which roughly translates into "peace hoops." Since April of 2023, FJAH was running a youth basketball training program at three different locations, two in Canape-Vert and one in Bourdon. The program serves 106 boys and girls who meet twice per week to practice skills and play games. Panye Lapè receives sponsorship from the Horwitz Family Memorial Foundation, which provides



funding, and the Caribbean Bottling Company, which supplies beverages for the participants. Foundation Sogebank, the social arm of one of the largest commercial banks in Haiti, is also a partner and recently provided funding to organize a local basketball tournament among participants in the program. One of the courts is located in an area so inaccessible that Oriol has to be carried on a stretcher in order to watch the children practice and play games.

Oriol hoped to grow the Panye Lapè program and wanted to discuss how we might reach out to current and former NBA, WNBA and NCAA players or coaches for technical support and promotion of the program on their social media sites. Basketball represents the second most popular sport in Haiti behind soccer. There have even been well-known players of Haitian heritage in the professional ranks, including Marie Ferdinand-Harris, Samuel Dalembert, and Mario Elie.

While the Panye Lapè program did not specifically serve youth with disabilities, Oriol felt the basketball program was an effective community-building initiative that offered young people in Port-au-Prince the opportunity to build their skills in a safe environment while fostering a sense of belonging. It also provided an alternative to the gangs that had destabilized the country.

I asked Oriol why he chose to restart the basketball program when gang violence was rampant in the capital. He replied, "I felt confident the game could contribute to the buildup of self-confidence and teamwork. That it would help the youth learn how to manage stress and develop a good attitude in the face of victory and defeat. All these skills and attitudes are important for the children, personally, but also collectively, as we work together for a better tomorrow."

Following our meeting, we toured the grounds of Southern New Hampshire University. It was homecoming weekend and hundreds of people were on campus for a variety of activities. For the remainder of the day, my friend Lisa and I accompanied Gérald and Degonza on a sight-seeing tour of Manchester and the New Hampshire seacoast before returning to the hotel for another pizza and more conversation.

Sunday, October 15th, 2023

On Sunday morning, we returned to campus to discuss two projects Oriol's foundation completed with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Both projects aimed to serve persons displaced by gang-related activity in the capital, particularly persons with disabilities who faced even greater vulnerability amidst the violence. In the first project, IOM tasked Fondation J'Aime Haïti with conducting censuses at four communities, including La Piste, a community that started as a





camp for persons displaced by the 2010 earthquake. I had discussed La Piste in a 2012 article for Ability because, at the time, the camp included a high percentage of persons with disabilities. Now, more than a decade later, IOM wanted Oriol's foundation to help identify persons with disabilities who were facing violence in their communities. The reality of the violence hit home when the census work at La Piste was interrupted one day due to heavy gunfire. Once FJAH identified community members with disabilities, they offered them business training, COVID-19 awareness sessions, and adaptive equipment such as wheelchairs, crutches, and white canes. In the second project with IOM, FJAH provided adaptive equipment and mental health support to about 200 persons with disabilities facing possible relocation due to natural and manmade disasters.

Following our meeting, we decided to spend our final afternoon together at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It had been twelve years since Oriol spent time on the campus, completing his Master of Liberal Arts degree at the prestigious university. His time at Harvard as a Haitian student with disabilities proved, once again, there was no place on the planet that my friend could not go once he set his mind to it. As we visited the various buildings Oriol spent time in as a student, we discussed the possibility of a Kenyan-led multinational security force deploying to Haiti. The move appeared imminent even though it was being delayed by the High Court of Kenya. Haiti has a long history of foreign interventions, and while most Haitians were in favor of an international force to help restore law and order in the capital, there was also a sense of trepidation.

Always the optimist, Oriol pointed to signs of hope in Haiti like the women's soccer team, which made its first World Cup appearance in Australia during the summer. Although the team lost to England, China and Denmark by close margins, the squad impressed in its debut on the game's largest stage and won many new fans. Oriol also mentioned the irrigation canal Haitians were attempting to construct on the Massacre River, along the shared border with the Dominican Republic. The DR's government condemned the project and even temporarily closed its border with Haiti, a move that rallied the country in support of its farmers who were fighting to save their drought-stricken fields.

After posing for a photograph beside the founder's statue in Harvard Yard, Oriol weighed in on the dispute. "Haiti's response to the canal shows that if people feel connected to a cause, they will take collective action for the benefit of the country. This is cause for hope." ■ ABILITY

by James English

James English works at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, NH. His novel, *First With Guns* was recently released by TCU Press.



Congress & Mental Health

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Maryland Congressman Jamie Raskin got an early introduction to politics–his father served as a staff aide to President John F. Kennedy on the National Security Council, was a progressive activist, and was co-founder of the progressive think tank Institute for Policy Studies. Nevertheless, Raskin initially eschewed a political career, instead becoming a constitutional law professor after graduating magna cum laude from Harvard Law School, where he was an editor of the *Harvard Law Review*.

All of this changed with the 2006 election for the Maryland Senate, when Raskin felt a moral duty to challenge an incumbent he did not believe represented the values of his community, one of the Maryland areas that is a close suburb to Washington, D.C. True to Raskin legacy, he not only focused his campaign on progressive causes (such as marriage equality, repeal of the death penalty, etc.), but also used the campaign to create the Democracy Summer fellowship (now undertaken across the country), a broader civic education opportunity for high school and college students to learn about, experience, and become personally invested in the political process–campaigning, voter registration, political organizing, understanding the history of political change in our country, and hands-on development of the tools for future leadership.

In the 2016 election, Raskin moved from the Maryland legislature to the U.S. House of Representatives, elected as the U.S. Representative for Maryland's 8th congressional district. Among other congressional duties, Raskin is currently the ranking member of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability, the main investigative committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, with the mission to ensure the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the federal government and all its agencies. Many Americans also know Raskin from his tenure as the lead impeachment manager (tapped by then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi in January 2021) for President Donald Trump's second impeachment trial related to the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Long a supporter of improving U.S. health care access–and especially improved access to mental health care–Congressman Raskin's political advocacy merged painfully with his family's personal tragedy when his vibrant, engaged, and beloved adult son Tommy lost his life to suicide on Dec 31, 2020–just 6 days prior the January 6th insurrection.

In his January 2022 memoir, *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy*, Raskin tells the story of the painful convergence of these two tragic events. The frank discussion of his son's full experience in the days, weeks, and months prior to his death provides a rare opportunity for readers to see the complexities of suicidality in mental health conditions; Raskin's willingness to talk openly about his son's death will hopefully help de-stigmatize such discussions.





Rep. Raskin with President Biden ahead of the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

In addition to writing candidly about his son's mental health illness in *Unthinkable*, Raskin has also been open in sharing his own health issues. He was diagnosed with stage III colon cancer in 2010, and has stated publicly that he felt his access at that time to rapid, excellent medical care saved his life–using his experience to make the case that too many Americans do not have similar access. Additionally, within the year after Unthinkable was published, Raskin was diagnosed with diffuse large B-cell (non-Hodgkin) lymphoma (a cancer in the infection-fighting cells of the body, generally having favorable prognosis with treatment).

Recently, Congressman Raskin sat down with *ABILITY Magazine*'s Chet Cooper and Gillian Friedman, M.D., to discuss health, mental health, and political life.

Chet Cooper: How did you decide to get into politics?

Rep. Jamie Raskin: Oh, man, that's a long, involved subject. Basically, I was a law professor for a long time teaching constitutional law. I basically have an academic temperament. I love reading and writing and researching and being with students in an academic environment. But my wife and I had three kids, and I was just starting to feel a little bit fraudulent not being involved in actually doing things, but instead just analyzing and criticizing and being on the sidelines. That was how I decided to do it, the short answer. I picked up the newspaper and saw that my state Senator had introduced legislation to expand the death penalty in our state and had been blockading marriage equality and a number of other things that I felt didn't represent the values and priorities of our community, and I decided to run back in 2006. The incumbent had been in office for 32 years and was president pro tempore of the Maryland Senate.

My favorite story about the race is that when I first announced, our local paper quoted a pundit who said, "Raskin's chances of victory are considered impossible," and 9 months later we got 67% of the vote, and The *Washington Post* had another article quoting a pundit who said, "Raskin's victory was inevitable." So, it went from impossible to inevitable in 9 months, because the pundits are never wrong. (all laugh). I like to tell the young people in my Democracy Summer project that nothing in politics is impossible and nothing is inevitable. It's only possible through the democratic arts of education and organizing and mobilizing people for change. So that's what we did.

Cooper: One more question before I have Gillian talk about some other things. I want to say your hair looks good. (smiles) Saying that, briefly can we go into a little bit how things are going with the cancer?

Raskin: Thank you for asking. I finished my chemother-

apy back in April, so it's been six months. I did my CAT scan, my PET scan, I'm sure I'll be doing my DOG scan pretty soon. (all laugh) All of them are showing me in remission. I'm knocking on wood and feeling very grateful to be out of it. The chemotherapy was a very tough process. I have no more nausea, no more neuropathy. My eyebrows and my eyelashes came back and my hair's coming back, such as it is.

Cooper: (laughs) Let me bring in Gillian. As you may know, Gillian's a psychiatrist.

Dr. Gillian Friedman: I wanted to first of all thank you for writing *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy*. It's such an important book in so many ways–and you so poignantly link the trauma of losing your son to his mental illness with the trauma just six days later of being in Congress–with others in your family–when security is breeched, gunshots are heard, and you have no way of knowing whether a mass shooting is about to occur. But I think one of the most important points you make–that we so rarely hear–is the importance of actually talking about suicide. I wanted to know what you would like to say in this forum about that.

Raskin: In the book I talk about how, when you lose a child to suicide, you spend a lot of time in self-cross-examination and careful reevaluation of everything that happened. One of the regrets I have is that I didn't use the word "suicide" specifically and I didn't talk about it much more insistently and adamantly. In the other part of the book, I say about January 6th and the attack on the election that we also don't use the word "fascism," and I regret that, too. I vowed that these are two words that I would use. I think a lot of parents don't use the word "suicide" because we're afraid that by using it we will somehow conjure it into being and plant a suggestion. But in fact, it's probably the reverse, that not talking about it endows it with much more majesty and power than you would otherwise have. That's one of my regrets.

Friedman: I think that's an important and very helpful message. The other thing that I found striking in your book is the picture of your son as such a whole person, which we also often don't get in stories of people who struggle with depression or other mental illness. It's not monolithic, it's not easy to determine when somebody will be okay and when someone won't be okay, because parts of them remain okay up through the end. I think it's rendered in a very helpful way.

Raskin: I appreciate that. The last thing Tommy would want is to be defined by how he died. He had passionate comments on earth about human rights and animal rights and animal welfare and about peace and democracy and justice. He was a great poet and playwright. He was a second-year student at Harvard Law School in Boston. He made and indelible impact on people while we had him. We don't want to lose any part of that.

Friedman: Thank you for being willing to talk about a difficult subject right off the bat in this time. Making a transition, another way I've been familiar with you–besides the January 6th hearings–is your longstanding work to improve emergency services for people with mental illness, which culminated in the past few years with the national 988 legislation–a separate emergency line (as opposed to 911) for patients having a mental health crisis. I know you had wanted the initial 988 legislation to be coupled with more federal resources to support it. As you have seen the rollout of 988, how it's doing in various parts of the country, and what you would have liked for it, what do you see for the future of 988?

Raskin: I'm eager for us to get adequate resources into the state and regional and local infrastructures so that we can have effective and coordinated response to people's calls and to empower the first responder teams. This is something that ultimately should not be a responsibility of law enforcement. We should be able to move in another direction. I'm encouraged by what's happened so far. I'm hopeful that people continue to embrace it and it becomes a catalyzing force in people to think about reducing and ending suicide.

Friedman: Are there other large healthcare/mental health priorities you're working on right now that you want to make sure that we know about?

Raskin: Generally, I want us to evaluate the problem in national discourse. In the authoritarian societies, the mental health of the population is basically irrelevant, or if anything it's a threat to the rule of the tyrants. But in democratic society, the mental health, like the physical health of the population, is essential for having a self-governing country. We have so many opportunities and so many needs for people to be involved in everything from the school boards to the town hall meetings to the legislatures to unions to co-ops, you name it. This is what Alexis de Tocqueville thought was amazing about America, that people engage in self-government. It's not like that in most countries. But that means we need people to be in a condition of mental and physical health sufficient to be able to participate.

Raskin: We're going to continue to legislate to try to make the promise of parity between mental health and physical health real in the medical insurance system and in hospitals and in treatment across the country. I mean, there's just irrational hangover myth that because you can't see mental health, it's not as serious as physical health problems. That's obviously wrong, and we have to be taking mental health every bit as seriously as we take people's physical health.

Friedman: I'm thinking about one of the statistics from several pieces of maternal mental health legislation cur-


Rep. Raskin attends Silver Creek Middle School graduation

rently introduced this session in the House and Senate, that as of 2022, the leading cause of maternal death (i.e., death in pregnancy and the first year postpartum) is suicide and overdose from substance use disorders. So, you're right, people don't see the parity sometimes, but in terms of the health and functionality of our society, it's absolutely there.

Raskin: Yes.

Friedman: I want to be respectful of your time and go back to Chet. Thank you so much.

Cooper: What do you think your time is right now?

Raskin: (laughs) I've got, like, six minutes.

Cooper: Ouch. I don't want to go into politics. Do you think there's also a mental health issue with the stress going on within Congress?

Raskin: I have a hunch that this is so, yes. It's an enormously stressful time for people all over the world right now. The world's on fire, and there are multiple crises striking people's psyches, from war and terrorism to climate change and cataclysmic environmental effects to the rise of polarization and political division and the return of racism, anti-Semitism and lots of other primitive impulses that we thought had been left behind in the last century. It's an enormously stressful and anxiety-provoking period for everybody. We've been through some tough times. It's hard to see Donald Trump as the picture of mental and emotional health, and yet he's been such a central and polarizing figure in our times. I think there are definitely some disturbing patterns in our politics.

Cooper: It seems as though when people in your position go to work to do what you signed up to do, it's just dysfunctional. And even if it is functional, it takes so long to get anything through the system that I would think managing that stress, that frustration, especially for people who truly want to make change, is a constant challenge. I guess on either side of the aisle people have commitments, they want to see change, but the change comes so slowly, if ever. How do you maintain a balance without major stress continually beating at your system?

Raskin: Politics is not a profession for people who can't roll with the punches. There's an ebb and flow of political success for all sides. We are still celebrating and implementing some major legislation that got done, the infrastructure act, which was a $1.2 trillion investment in the roads and the highways and bridges and ports and airports and broadband and so on. We made big gains in terms of reducing prescription drug costs within the Medicare program. My constituents were paying more than $1,000 a month for their insulin shots as diabetics, and they're now paying no more than $35 a month under the Medicare program because of what we did. There also was a huge investment in climate change.

So, when we lost the House in the 118th Congress this time, we stopped making progress along those fronts. But we are able to work with the executive branch to implement those changes and then keep fighting to make progress another day on things like gun safety and gun violence, women's reproductive freedom and so on. So, two steps forward, one step back. You have to take in a sense of the overall sweep of history. Things have moved in a positive direction over time, and there are lots of people who have struggled in the civil rights movements of our history who have been up against much harsher odds than we have, people fighting for voting rights in Mississippi in the early 1960s, women fighting for the right to vote, not having any formal political power, the labor movement, the LGBTQ community, the environmental movement, which started without any environmental laws at all, and so on. We've

made tremendous progress in this country, and we'll continue to make progress. But we've got to keep the whole sweep of history in mind.

Personally, I spend a lot of time with younger people, but my whole campaign has turned into this Democracy Summer project, which is an attempt to mobilize high school and college-age kids to learn about the history of political progress in America and then to learn the concrete skills of door-knocking, canvassing, digital organizing, voter registration, and so on. I drive a lot. My dad used to say, "Whenever it looks hopeless, you're the hope." I grew up with that intense sense of guilt (laughs) and I carry that with me.

Cooper: I'm glad you brought up the work you're doing with youth. I always look at people's view of that glass that's half-full or half-empty and how devastating it can be to continually think it's half-empty, where if you can continue to try to look at it as half-full, like you're doing, you can move forward so much more easily. They're both realities, but I think that with the reality you're focusing on–where you look at the history and home in on what you can do–then you become the hope. I think it's that's great philosophy for everyone.

Raskin: Yeah. A half-full glass is a pretty good glass. It's half-full, and you get to fill up the other half. If it were already all full, you wouldn't have anything to do.

Cooper: (laughs) We know you have a great sense of humor. I think it was Gillian who said that we were going to have a great time, because of your reputation as the wittiest Congressperson, and my history of publishing *National Lampoon* magazine.

Raskin: Really? That's great! That was your job, you were the publisher of that publication?

Cooper: It was in the early '90s. Time-Warner was also distributing *ABILITY Magazine*, so Time-Warner was really happy for me to take over *National Lampoon*. Anyway, there's a fun story during those years, but we're not involved any more. Coming out of Harvard, as you know—

Raskin: Did you go to Harvard?

Cooper: Yes. I think it was a Saturday.

(all laugh)

Cooper: I didn't go to Harvard in the way you're suggesting. But I had been to *Harvard Lampoon*, and the frustrating part was, I didn't get to talk to anyone there. I wanted to see if there were any students left, so I went to the building. But I didn't get in. I should have called you. (laughs)

Raskin: I actually went there [*Harvard Lampoon* office], I think my first of second week of being a freshman, when they had the open house. You had to write three things if you wanted to be part of it. I wrote three things, and they said I was way too political and they weren't interested! (all laugh) It's probably a good thing. I was always impressed with the people. It was cool that they ended up making movies and stuff.

Cooper: I was the publisher, but I had no control over the movies. It was a fun time. Do you think you'll write anything about this Congress?

Raskin: I don't know. People have asked me to, but I'm not somebody who writes a book just to write a book. I only write books if I've got something to say. For me, it's a tremendous investment in energy and time and feeling. I wouldn't do it unless I felt like I had something important to say. Anything that I would want to say about this Congress I already said in Unthinkable, probably. Basically, we're all the same. There is certainly a lot of funny stuff that goes on, and I'm happy to comment on it.

Cooper: Give me one funny thing you might be able to think of right now. I know I'm putting you on the spot.

Raskin: Funny things happen every single day. I remember right before we just left for our recess, Marjorie Taylor Greene [conservative Republican Congresswoman from Georgia] displayed in our Oversight Committee pornographic photographs that she said were from Hunter Biden's [son of President Biden] hard drive of his laptop. Of course, the Democrats have never been given [the hard drive], so we had no idea where they were from. In any event, there was a big hubbub in the hearing room. I didn't have my glasses on, so I didn't see the pictures, but I turned to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez [Democratic Congresswoman from New York], who was next to me, and said, "What's that?" She said, "I think those are pictures of live sex acts." Lauren Bobert [conservative Republican Congresswoman from Colorado] came up to me, and you know there's no love lost between Lauren Bobert and Marjorie Taylor Greene, and Lauren says, "This is outrageous." And I said, "Yeah, I know, Lauren, somebody should do something about all the extremism and fanaticism in your party." And she said to me, "You need to say something to her." I said to Marjorie Taylor Greene, "If those pictures had been a book, you would have banned the book. Instead, you just displayed them for the whole country on C-SPAN." (all laugh). Anyway, that kind of stuff goes on all the time.

Cooper: I know you have to go.

Raskin: Thanks for doing what you do at *ABILITY Magazine*. That's awesome. I appreciate the chance to get to meet you. Let me know when you guys come back to Washington. ■ ABILITY



CATERINA SCORSONE

Caterina Scorsone is a Canadian-American actress who has appeared in various films and television series, including her well known portrayal as Dr. Amelia Shepherd on ABC's Grey's Anatomy. In 2020, Scorsone won the Quincy Jones Exceptional Advocacy Award from the Global Down Syndrome Foundation, recognizing her outstanding commitment to championing the rights and well-being of individuals with Down syndrome. Focusing on raising awareness and understanding for individuals with cognitive diversities and disabilities, Scorsone has consistently used her platform to challenge stigmas surrounding Down syndrome and other disabilities, advocating for increased access and inclusion.

At a picturesque location in the hills of Glendale, California, Scorsone is joined in person by *ABILITY Magazine*'s Chet Cooper to speak on surviving a devastating house fire, advocating for equity within the Down syndrome community, and learning how to grow as a supportive parent and ally.

Cooper: You're in a TV show, aren't you? Something about a doctor, right?

Caterina Scorsone: (laughs)

Cooper: And there's also another doctor on the show. Did you see her article?

Scorsone: Yes, it's a wonderful article. And Chandra's incredible.





Cooper: We're thinking we'll just interview everybody on the show, the way we seem to be going.

Scorsone: I think that's a fantastic idea, I don't see why not.

Cooper: Tell me what happened with the fire. Are you settled in now with what happened?

Scorsone: Where I'm sitting right now does not belong to me. Luckily, we have insurance and they were really fantastic about finding us a place for all of us to live while we figure out what happens next. It was an electrical fire in a 1924 house. The whole house was engulfed incredibly quickly. We got out, I got all the babies out. But our pets didn't make it out.

Cooper: Now it makes sense. I read something about it and it sounded like it happened really quick.

Scorsone: And unprecedented. They ended up bringing firefighters to the site to study what had gone on because, generally, with newer construction, houses don't completely go up like that. It was an unusually fast, ferocious situation.

Cooper: And you're lucky that you smelled the smoke, saw the smoke in time?

Scorsone: Yeah. It was bath time and suddenly I saw smoke seeping and curling out of the grout around the bathtub. I couldn't understand what was happening at first. And then I came around the corner and there was a thick column of black smoke coming out of the heating vent. I understood immediately that this was a very bad, big fire. I just started gathering the babies. I didn't have my phone. It was pitch black. I had to run with the babies to a neighbor's house to get help. It was a pretty tense situation! My sisters flew out to help deal with the logistics so I could focus on the babies and making sure that they were all feeling safe and OK.

Cooper: What are the ages?

Scorsone: Eliza is almost eleven. Pippa is six and a half and Lucky is three and a half. There have been phases of processing.

Cooper: A new stage of your life.

Scorsone: When something changes, we have to say, "OK, now here's another chapter." We're getting pretty good at that. (laughs) There have been a lot of changes. But my kids are incredible. They're so curious and joyful and interesting. We've focused on that home is where we all are. And in the community that we create. That's what came out of this.

Cooper: I was just talking to the Surgeon General a few days ago with our psychiatrist, who's on our team, talking about all kinds of issues about mental health and daily life. His podcasts discuss how to create a life filled with happiness, how to deal with conflict, anxiety, and how to work together to achieve these things.

Scorsone: Right, to make sure that the kids were able to process it. One of the things I'm learning as a public person who's also a mom–

Cooper: And a doctor on TV–

Scorsone: And a doctor on TV, and also someone who has talked about disability in the context of one of my kids, I want to make sure that I'm always bringing positive information that will move the needle on people having information that will open their eyes and minds to disability and various things. But I also want to make sure that I'm always protecting their experience. For example, with Pippa, I want to make sure that she has an opportunity to tell her own story in the way that she decides about how she wants to be perceived and how she wants her personal story framed. There are aspects about Down syndrome that I can talk about with some level of authority as a parent who has been involved with some of it, but I always want to make sure that I'm protecting their childhood and their personhood in terms of narrative.

Cooper: Going into that, I read something where you were describing the difference between equity and equality.

Scorsone: The way I understand those terms is that we are all equal in terms of our dignity and our right to unfold and actualize in the fullest way possible. We're all equal there. But in terms of our structural reality, in order for us all to claim that equality, we need equity, and that means that, structurally, we provide resources based on the particularities of each person. For some people, that means they need this. For other people it means that in order to fully actualize. Those won't always be the same thing, or equal things in terms of resources, but they will result in access to equal actualization, human potential, or potential for self-actualizing and experiencing joy.

Cooper: When you say that, can you think of one good example of how that relates to an individual?

Scorsone: We can talk about all kinds of things in terms of accessibility where disability is concerned, but to bring it to an even more basic idea: If everybody had equal access to size 10 ½ shoes, there will only be some people who are running around with maximum freedom and comfort. I don't fit into size 10 ½.

Cooper: Really?

Scorsone: (laughs) So to give me those shoes will not give me equal access to my day, right? That's something that everybody can relate to. And when you bring that into cognitive diversity or other accessibility issues like wheelchair access, different kinds of– well, you know. (laughs)

Cooper: (laughs) I do! That was a great example. Sometimes it gets—some of the language we use sometimes—you'd have to sit and really digest what that meant. And that's a great example of people understanding different size shoes and they either fit or they don't fit, and to go through life trying to live in that shoes size, which is not a quality of life anybody would want if you have a size 15.

Scorsone: I think one of the nice things about that example is that there's no ableist-imposed idea that a particular size of shoe is better than any other size of shoe. You



don't have this proximity to some ideal that's been imposed by an unconscious bias.

Cooper: Nice. How did you connect with the Global Down Syndrome Foundation?

Scorsone: I think after Pippa was born. It was kind of through the network of the Down syndrome community. There's such a beautiful and vibrant network of families that have members with Down syndrome. Early on, I made friends with a bunch of moms and parents and kids and heard about GLOBAL, and then I think Michelle Sie reached out. We had a wonderful conversation. Early on, I was still trying to understand what trisomy-21 really was. I was trying to understand–

Again, I didn't have a lot of exposure. I didn't have a lot of friends with Down syndrome at that time. I was trying to understand what the impact of the third chromosome was. As it turns out, there's a lot of different ways that it unfolds. Michelle sat with me and really unpacked what Down syndrome is and some of the gifts and some of the challenges and some of the ways that I can support Pippa. And she started telling me about GLOBAL. I don't know how much you know about GLOBAL, but basically, research into Down syndrome is very underfunded–

Cooper: Michelle has been in a couple of issues of *ABILITY Magazine*.

Scorsone: The mission that Michelle and GLOBAL have is so important because big pharma doesn't do tons of funding for the Down syndrome population and their families. So GLOBAL fundraises and invests in research across the board in terms of medical research. We just had a huge, massive discovery- I think five years ago- where they realized that one of the main things going on with the third chromosome being there is that there's an inflammatory effect. There's an autoimmune aspect to some of the symptoms that a lot of people with Down syndrome are experiencing. So, when we approach it from this dramatically different way, basically, you can improve the quality of life for a lot of people who are suffering from inflammation and different kinds of symptoms associated with autoimmune conditions. That was a huge discovery that GLOBAL funded. And now it will change the entire medical approach. And they also fund a lot of things in terms of educational profiles and how to support a full

and long and beautiful and healthy and socially connected life for people with Down syndrome and their families.

Cooper: Have you and your daughter experienced some of the fashion shows?

Scorsone: Yes! When I first started working with GLOBAL it was during COVID. We did a lot via Zoom the first couple of years I was involved with the fashion show. It was like me in the [Zoom] box. But last year we got to go to the fashion show for the first time, and Pippa came with me. We were not sure at first because it was kind of late at night. We got all dolled up and Pippa was ready to go. When it came down to it, she was like, "This is a lot of people!" and she wanted to go back upstairs.

I got to go [in 2022] and I brought with me as many cast members from "Grey's Anatomy" as possible. We had a really good group of the new interns on the show, and E.R. Fightmaster and Anthony Hill. Everyone came out to support the fashion show. We went again this year and brought Kevin McKidd and Danielle Savre, Laura Linney was there as well. It was so much fun!

Cooper: They're great. I don't know how many I've been to, at least one. (laughs)

Scorsone: (laughs)

Cooper: If you look back at some of the past issues of the magazine, you'll see interviews with Quincy Jones and Michele's father and some of the doctors at the institute. We covered the fashion show when it was in Denver. Have you met Quincy?

Scorsone: When I received the Quincy Jones Advocacy Award, it was during COVID. It was just by Zoom. Hopefully, though. Maybe next year.

Cooper: I wanted to ask you about Mattel put out a new doll. What are your thoughts about that?

Scorsone: I haven't given it too much thought. I'm thinking about it on the fly right now. I do think that representation is really, really important, that everybody wants to see themselves represented in whatever kind of media is available. In terms of the doll, when I was a kid, I didn't have Barbies.

My mom was kind of opposed to us having Barbies because she felt like it–

Cooper: I had several.

Scorsone: (laughs) You did? My mom felt it would promote negative body image. I think by the time my youngest sister came along, she was allowed to have Barbies as long as the Barbie had a profession. (laughs)

Cooper: (laughs)

Scorsone: I haven't been following that story too closely. What is the buzz on that?

Cooper: As you would imagine, there's a mix on that. As you said earlier, there's a spectrum when it comes to Down syndrome and not one size fits all. Within the movement, you can't say, "Oh, that person looks like they have Down syndrome." There is that controversy that goes on about how you represent someone. What did you do to carve out the facial structure of that doll to say that you're representing someone with Down syndrome? There's that back and forth.

Scorsone: That's interesting. I would love to read some of those dialogues so I can form a more educated opinion about it. I think that the nice part about it, if I'm to find the positive, is that the Down syndrome community is being considered and included in the conversation. Then it becomes a question of, is there harm? Is this the conversation that we need to be having? Is there more nuance that needs to be added by members of the community.

Cooper: Sometimes it takes certain steps, like you mentioned, to get the nuance right. But even then, you'll always have the naysayers.

Scorsone: I think one of the things that I try to be very aware of is that, for me, I'm still very much learning. Again, I am somebody who feels that not only is there a spectrum of opinion and experiences within the Down syndrome community, but as someone adjacent, like an ally and co-conspirator to the disability community right now, I constantly need to be learning from people who are having experiences, their own experiences, about what feels harmful and what feels helpful. And I won't always get it right, either.

Cooper: I don't think anyone can always get it right. There is always the subjective, and there will always be some people who have a different opinion, who look at life differently, with different life experiences. We can only do our best to try to move the positive awareness forward with best intentions and then not modify those intentions where it might be causing them harm.

Scorsone: There is always a risk that there might be harm that nobody anticipated. So we always need to be able to reconsider and modify and find new language.

Cooper: The number of people I've experienced over the years who slow the growth of awareness down because they're so angry, and they lash out at almost anything. And people then get fearful of doing anything positive because they might get attacked. I applaud Mattel for trying their best to step into this area. And they've done some other things with Barbie using a wheelchair and other types of diversity. I think their intent is the right thing.



Scorsone on the set of *Grey's Anatomy*

Scorsone: I imagine some of our job as communicators and medical communicators is to show capitalist America how inclusion can work for them.

Cooper: The magazine has to do that constantly. If we get advertisers, that's just not the right thing to do, but it's a good business decision. We have to use that language constantly in our sales team.

Scorsone: There are some people I've talked to who don't have a lot of exposure to disability. And when I say, "Disability is not something that only some people will experience. All of us, people who are typically abled or whatever—As we go through life, the life cycle, all of us will experience disability of one kind or another. All of us." It suddenly turns on the light bulb for people.

So, when we focus on making sure that everybody has equity and accessibility, yes, it's the right thing to do. But ultimately, it'll benefit every single human being who's having the experience of being a human being at some point.

Cooper: I've given talks, and say almost the same thing. Disability is part of the fabric of life. If you look at the bell-shaped curve of life, a baby needs a lot of help—as you go down hill on the other side, we fall apart. We age. Our sight, osteoporosis, cancer, hearing loss, etc., the majority of people experience those disabilities later in life. But of course at any moment we can have an accident, a health condition that comes your way…

Scorsone: On Grey's Anatomy, every single episode is about somebody who is living their life typically, and something happens. And within an instant they are now in a state of disability of one kind or another. Every single episode. And our show is on every single Thursday for 20 years. Everyone relates to it. (Laughs) It's a lot of episodes. The other thing is, I do think there is a lot of social conditioning around the way typically abled people engage with the "disability of infancy." It's all been marketed to us as this beautiful, gorgeous time of life where you get to care for this being who is in a state of absolute vulnerability, and you get to help them navigate the world and discover the world with all of their physical challenges at that point. And we are–it's marketed that we are to understand that this is a huge privilege for us to be engaged in this kind of witness.
So why, when that same opportunity presents itself at



the end of our parents' life cycle, our friends' life cycle, our own life cycle, why is it not marketed in a way that—Oh my God! You get to witness this human being in various states of vulnerability, potentially transitioning. You have been invited into this sacred space of offering the kind of human exchange on the other end of a very typical curve of ability. It's not marketed the same way.

Cooper: That's a really interesting point. We don't value our elderly. And we're all going to be there, unless you die instantly. It is interesting, and in the fact that there's such a correlation of what you're saying in the baby, where the baby can't speak, can't walk, can't go to the bathroom by themselves, everything that goes on with somebody with a severe condition of let's say high-level spinal cord injury, they need support. We're a strange being.

Scorsone: Parenthood is odd. It's not like helping your baby is easy. Everyone's tired. Everybody's running on fumes at some point. There are absolutely challenges associated with caring for a human being, yourself included. It's just that we have framed it differently. And we understand that as a parent, that it's a privilege to care for a person. It's not just you helping them because it's the right thing to do. It's you getting the opportunity to witness another human being.

Cooper: I want to talk on your personal side. How did you know you wanted to become an actor?

Scorsone: Oh! It just unfolded for me. I didn't have the typical story where people are like, "Ever since I was six years old, I wanted to be an actor!" I kind of thought I would probably be a doctor. (laughs)

Cooper: Me, too!

Scorsone: (laughs) That's what I thought I would do. I came from a family of academics, but also, my parents ran homeless shelters. We didn't have the kind of resources– and I was one of five kids–that were easily going to let me pay for college. When my sister and her friend were talking about having an agent and acting when I was younger, I was like, "Cool, that'll help me save up for college so I can become a doctor." So, I started acting as a young person, and it turned out it was working well. I kept working, and I developed quite a love for it, but I still hadn't caught up to the idea that I would do that as an adult profession until I was a late teenager. And then I thought, "Maybe I'll do this." Around 19 I was like, "I don't think I want to do this. I think I want to be a midwife." I changed directions and pulled out of that.

Cooper: Me too!

Scorsone: (laughs) And then I came back to it after undergrad. After I saw the first season of Grey's Anatomy.



Cooper: So you did go to college?

Scorsone: Yes, I did.

Cooper: Were you taking acting at that point?

Scorsone: No, I had quit acting at 19. I had seen enough, and I wanted to do something more meaningful because I hadn't quite connected with how meaningful narrative storytelling could be. I quit and I studied Literary Studies and philosophy and comparative religions at University of Toronto. And during finals of my last year, I watched the first season of Grey's Anatomy and I was like, "Oh, I want to be a doctor." So I went to the medical faculty and did a six-week course on arts and sciences for people who wanted to go into medicine. And I got to the end and I was like, "Actually, I think I just want to be on Grey's Anatomy." (laughs)

Cooper: (laughs) "I want to play a doctor."

Scorsone: And then I moved out to LA and I was still into the idea of doing midwifery. So I went and studied with a midwife in Tennessee. I studied on a farm in Tennessee and started apprenticing with a midwife in LA. But then, I started booking work as an actor again. I had developed enough of an understanding of the sacredness of story-telling that I had come into a passion about the power of narrative and how beautiful and healing it can be.

I had these two things I wanted to do, and eventually, acting was like, "We're going to take over here!" So I ended up on Grey's Anatomy.

Cooper: That's quite a gig! Do you also write?

Scorsone: I have. But with three kids and Grey's, writing has had to take a back seat. But yes, I really do enjoy writing. And maybe when the kids are a little bit bigger, maybe I'll–

Cooper: Write some screenplays, produce, do that kind of combination?

Scorsone: I'd love to work on that aspect of things, for sure.

Cooper: What did you think the perception of what you thought motherhood was prior to becoming a mother?

Scorsone: I think the big transition that happened was that before I was a mother, it was all projected ideas of what motherhood was. I think the unconscious idea I had was that you have this baby and then you help them to become an adult, become a person, you help mold their journey.

When I actually became a mother, I met babies who were already people who were unfolding. It wasn't for me to unfold, to make them into adults. It was for me to facilitate their unfolding. Instead of this very active parenting that I thought I would have to do, it was more a question of-with curiosity and respect-stepping back and allowing them to unfold and tell me who they were and tell me what kind of adult they wanted to be and what they needed to become that kind of adult. Giving them witness and giving them safety, a container to safely unfold. If you apply doctor terms to it, I think now, I understand that with parenting, it's all "First, do no harm."

They will unfold. They are these beautiful little souls and beings that, if you don't interfere with them, they will be beautiful in whatever way is right for them. It's about giving them enough safety and love and reflection that they can find out what kind of human being they want to be and then helping them do that. ■ ABILITY

caterinascorsone.com

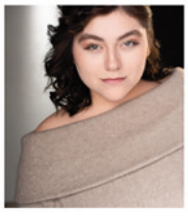
ability Entertainment

disABILITY Talent in Front and Behind the Camera

Actors, Musicians, Speakers & Comedians



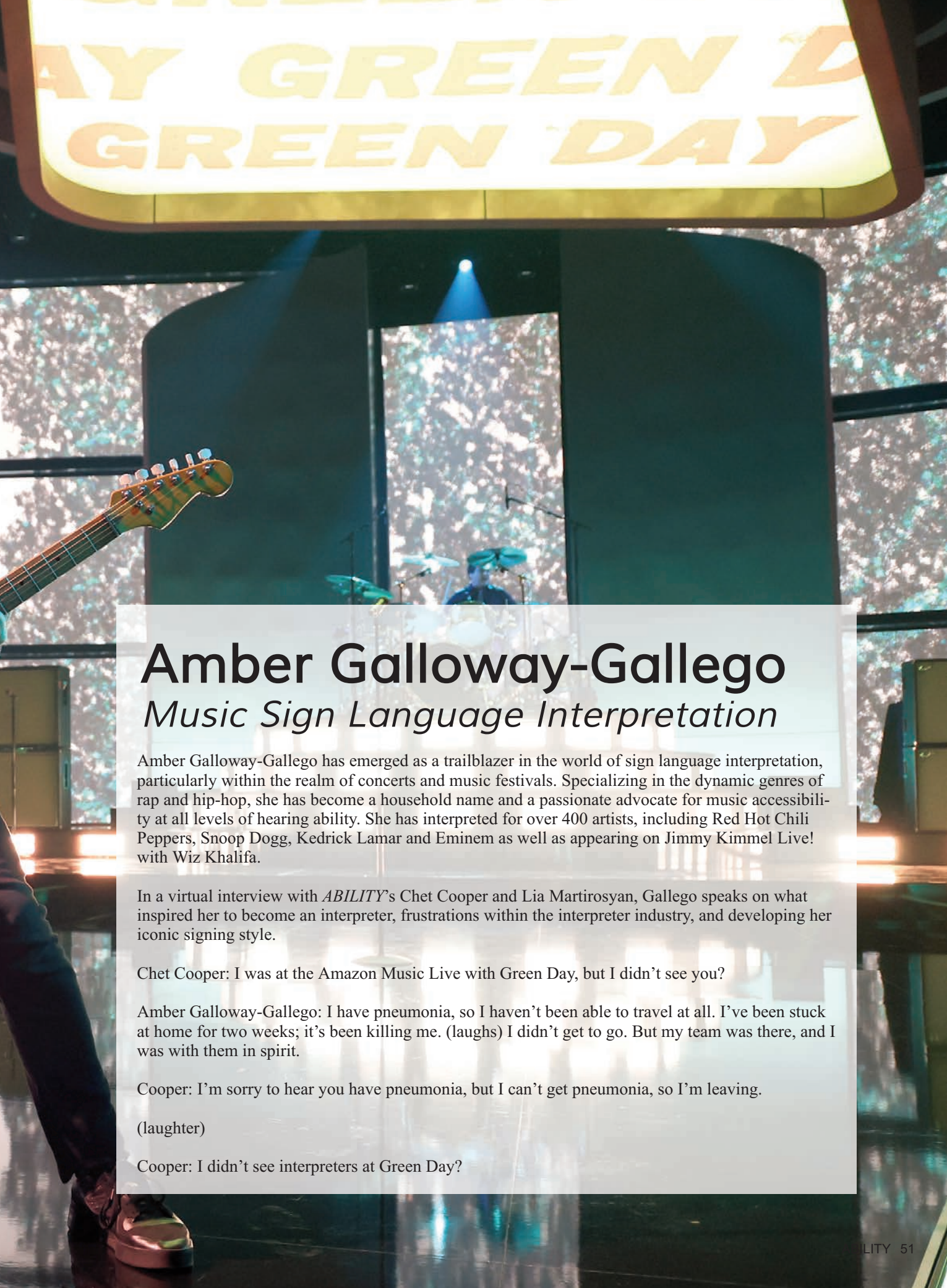


abilityE

disABILITY Talent Source for the ENTERTAINMENT Industry





Amber Galloway-Gallego

Music Sign Language Interpretation

Amber Galloway-Gallego has emerged as a trailblazer in the world of sign language interpretation, particularly within the realm of concerts and music festivals. Specializing in the dynamic genres of rap and hip-hop, she has become a household name and a passionate advocate for music accessibility at all levels of hearing ability. She has interpreted for over 400 artists, including Red Hot Chili Peppers, Snoop Dogg, Kedrick Lamar and Eminem as well as appearing on Jimmy Kimmel Live! with Wiz Khalifa.

In a virtual interview with *ABILITY*'s Chet Cooper and Lia Martirosyan, Gallego speaks on what inspired her to become an interpreter, frustrations within the interpreter industry, and developing her iconic signing style.

Chet Cooper: I was at the Amazon Music Live with Green Day, but I didn't see you?

Amber Galloway-Gallego: I have pneumonia, so I haven't been able to travel at all. I've been stuck at home for two weeks; it's been killing me. (laughs) I didn't get to go. But my team was there, and I was with them in spirit.

Cooper: I'm sorry to hear you have pneumonia, but I can't get pneumonia, so I'm leaving.

(laughter)

Cooper: I didn't see interpreters at Green Day?



Amber Galloway-Gallego

Gallego: We're on-site, but we're in the side room so that we can have—because of the visuals of what they need to be able to make sure the signs are clear, we're actually not in the concert's actual venue, but we're on-site in a separate area where we have all the cameras, the lighting, everything set up. We've been trying real hard to get into the venue, but there's a lot of logistics that come behind that. (laughs)

Lia Martirosyan: Hi.

Gallego: Hi!

Martirosyan: How'd you decide to create this company and get into music?

Gallego: It started many years ago in my dining room. On Friday nights I would have my Deaf Party jams, as we always called them. All my friends would come over and we would just hang out, play some Spades or dominos and have music on and we would all sign songs. This is all primarily Deaf people signing songs. At that time, I was still fully hearing, before I had gotten sick and lost my hearing later. I was training to become an interpreter, which, I didn't even know what a career in interpreting was. I was going to be a physical therapist. I had lived in a wheelchair. I had crushed my pelvis and I had to learn to walk. I had extensive physical therapy, so I said, "This is what my life goal is. This is what I'm supposed to do, be a physical therapist."

But life had different plans for me. (laughs) So while I was going to school to get my physical therapy degree, I saw some kids from my childhood. They were grown-up kids, and I was like, "Hey, I know you from when I was a child!" I started sitting with a Deaf group every day after class. They brought me into their loop. They taught me everything, like A to Z, literally, everything about deafness and Deaf culture and I became pretty fluent rather quickly. We would have parties at my house and we would all be signing music. They would tell me, "I wish interpreters would sign like you," "I wish interpreters would do this." I was like, "What do you mean? What do they do?" "They don't look like you."

I eventually married one of my friends, we were in high school together. We attended a rodeo; in San Antonio we have a rodeo. And I attended the rodeo and I was with my friends, there was a Deaf section and we were all sitting together. These two interpreters started interpreting, and I was just appalled, I was so upset because of the inability to show the equality to the experience was lacking significantly. So, I was talking to my friends, and I said, "What is this? This is not what music is." And she said, "This is the best we've got." I said,

"Well, that's not good enough." You deserve the best." – hold on one second. Sorry, I might have to cough in between.

Martirosyan: That's okay.

Gallego: I'm still healing – So I said, "That's not cool. This band is amazing, and what the interpreters are doing is not giving you a full experience. Nobody should decide that for another human. You should give them everything. You deserve the best." And they said, "This is all we have. Do you want to do something about it?" And I was like [grimaces], "I don't know!" (laughs) I'm still a brand-new interpreter. I don't even know where to begin. So, I started taking it back to the interpreter training program and talking about music. What's funny is, again, you would think that they are people who aren't going to be, I would say, oppressive, but it was. In the interpreter training program I was going to, some of the professors said, "Deaf people don't like music." I was like, "Wait a second! At home, all of my Deaf friends are signing music, but you're telling me that it's not true, and I'm living and breathing in the Deaf community, I see what Deaf people are wanting, and you're telling me it's fictional?" There was always a disconnect of what the program was trying to teach versus reality. I just kept on saying, "I'm not going to listen to that." (laughs) It was probably a nightmare for those teachers, because I was like, "No, we need to also listen to the community and what the community wants. There are community members who love music. Just like there are hearing people who love music, but there are also hearing people who hate music. There are also deaf people who don't like music. Let's not just make that blanket statement and decide for another human. Let's open it up and have those opportunities for everyone."

That's where I started doing it. My friends were like, "Just do it! Just try!" I started researching on how I could do it, what I could do, and I also started to research in that process of interpreting music how to show instruments. Most of the time, interpreters will just sign the sign for music. [signs it] It looks like this. My hand is straight out, my other hand is going back and forth over it, almost like petting in the air, like petting a dog in the air, if that makes sense, visually. (laughs) I was just trying to self-describe it.

Martirosyan: It worked!

Gallego: But that's not what music looks like. That doesn't make any sense. It doesn't translate. I started watching, of course going back to the Deaf community, watching Deaf storytellers and how they show sound. That's where I started picking apart this 200-, 300-, 400-year-old language and taking parts of it and applying it to the different sounds of instruments. Because I want to never be in the place of that power and privilege kind of thing where I'm going to take something away from another human, I'm going to give you everything, and you choose what you want to take. (laughs)

Martirosyan: Mm-hmm.

Gallego: That's what I do. So, I started developing this theory as well as this practice in how to incorporate all of the instruments. That is my style. That's what I'm known for. That's what a lot of people recognize the style in which I do the specific approach to interpreting music.

Martirosyan: For someone who's not aware of this, when a new instrument comes on, you give the sign for the instrument that's coming on? Is that what you mean?

Gallego: Correct. There are parameters within the language, ASL. There are non-manual markers that we can use. With the non-manual markers, we can show density. The way we show density is with our face [points all fingers to her face], as well as where we have the placement of our hands and arms [moves hands and arms up and down]. If there is a snare drum, my whole body will scrunch up [her whole body scrunches up] and then my face gets really tiny [her face gets tiny, she pinches her checks with both hands] and then I do this, like, "Ch! Ch! Ch!" [makes that sound, holds both hands close to her face, thumb and forefinger touching, other fingers held up spread apart] mouth to show that snare. Then also, if there's a piano, my hands will go up in the sky higher, and I'll show—and again, it scrunches up to make the high-density sound, and I'm going to show you with my face squished up to show you that it's higher-pitched [she does all those things]. If it's a bass, my body will open up bigger and I will use puffy checks to show thickness and the sound of deepness, because that's what those deep sounds are, and that's one of the parameters in the Mouth Morphemes used in sign language.

Martirosyan: Oh, that's beautiful, I love it! I love the nuance, the heart of it! If you don't mind, what caused the deafness?

Gallego: In 2002 I contracted spinal meningitis while I was working on a college campus and got really, really sick. I lost a significant amount of my sight as well as a significant amount of my hearing, I have about half my hearing, as well as a neurological disorder. I have severe tremors from that. I have to have specific medicines from that event. It took me a good eight months to get back to normal, as you would say normal, being able to sustain work for forty hours, where for months and months I could barely walk because of how sick I was from the spinal meningitis. I lost my hearing from that event. I feel like it goes away, and the neurologist told me that when there's damage like that, especially as an adult, you never know what's going to happen. My eye-



sight gets worse. My eyes no longer focus. They fail to focus. You know how sometimes if people take their glasses off and they can still try to figure out what's on the paper? My eyes will not do that at all. It does not happen. Eventually I think it'll be that I'm possibly Deaf/Blind when I'm older. I'm not sure. The neurologists said that they have no idea what damage happens in the brain and the swelling that occurs from the spinal meningitis.

Martirosyan: Oh! That's deep! Where are you now?

Gallego: I'm in Austin, Texas, now.

Martirosyan: OK. How did you connect with Amazon?

Gallego: I believe they saw my work and some people pointed a couple of people towards me, and then I got an email and a call from a person named Sarah at Amazon. We started talking about what to do and how to do it. I said, "Can I give you all of my bucket lists of what I would love to have happen?" (laughs) Amazon has been such a huge champion in making this work and also making sure that one of my dreams came true: to have Deaf performance interpreters – Deaf people actually doing the work on-screen. Because it started from the roots of where I came from. It came from my dinner tables with my Deaf friends signing music, oftentimes better than a lot of hearing people. So, it's full circle to where I can find and cast these incredible Deaf signers who do music very, very well and cast them to the artist and then they are highlighted here on one of the largest stages possible, with Amazon, and they are role models for future generations now. I can't be more proud of this project and what we've been able to achieve as well as how much access is happening to music. I can't even begin to explain how humbled I am by it, but at the same time truly making my dreams come true.

Martirosyan: So you did Eminem, or someone from your team?

Gallego: I've done Eminem several times before, yes.

Martirosyan: I can't wrap my mind around how!

Gallego: My YouTube channel is full of different songs in all front genres, and those are all requests from Deaf individuals who have sent me emails and said, "Can you please interpret this?" Because they can see captions all day, but they're not going to see the emotions and the intonation and the feelings of what the artist is bringing until it comes off our hands, until that actually is seen. I did Rap God, which is one of the fastest songs on the earth. It took me a month to pick it apart and to really memorize it and work on all the different parts of what I wanted to be able to show in that and to try to be as equivalent as Eminem and his genius brain.

Martirosyan: People don't know that part. I didn't know how long it took. All I'm seeing is this beauty, and I'm like, "How are you doing this?"

Gallego: It took a month. (laughs)

Martirosyan: Wow, that's really impressive. Something just came to mind that I'd love to hear your opinion on. It's not music-related, but lately in the news we have been seeing people who are sneaking into conferences and signing incorrectly. How do you feel about that? How is that even possible?

Gallego: A lot of times people who are not a part of our world will hire individuals who are not a part of our world, and they don't listen to us. Deaf people often will request services, and they will tell you very specifically—I will tell you it's very specific people that I want working for my access — as well as other Deaf people will say, "This is the interpreter I want for my access." It will be either their voice or the voice they'll see. And who knows it better than the people who live and breathe the language and the access all day long? But oftentimes, hearing people who have no idea about our community or what our needs are will hire the cheapest bid. When that happens, we get people who are the fake interpreters or the people who are not qualified to be there and who can be very detrimental to health and safety for us in our community. We see that happening. I think the best thing to do is to go to your community, or listen. That's what I love about Amazon. Amazon listened. I said, "We have to do it this way because this is what our community wants." And I always go back to the community and say, "What do you want? What can we change?" I do the best I can to open those doors for as many people as possible.

Martirosyan: Wonderful! How many people are on your team?

Gallego: I believe right now I have 38, and I have four international as well in other countries that I have trained up. They're also Deaf as well, Deaf interpreters.

Martirosyan: Internationally, are they doing ASL?

Gallego: No, we do International Sign. [broad smile]

Martirosyan: And this is music still?

Gallego: Yeah.

Martirosyan: Oh, how fun! You have French, Italian?

Gallego: I teach music workshops on how to show my style as well as how to be more effective. I also teach them advocacy as well as training up Deaf interpreters in different countries. I've had the opportunity to do it in the Ukraine, in Czech, in Switzerland, in Romania, a little bit in Russia before all of the Russian thing happened. (laughs)

Martirosyan: So, you had nothing to do with it! (laughs)

Gallego: Yes, it was many years ago. I'm innocent! (laughs)

Martirosyan: Are you the only person who started with the physical instrumental?

Gallego: I want to say I was, but I wasn't, because I don't know, because we didn't have Internet when I first started. This is my 23rd year. Before the Internet, we're not sure. There have been two or three bands that have interpreters, but I don't think they've ever done it to the extent where I've studied and studied. I could write a book about showing instruments and using the parameters of the language to show all of the different layers of the music. I think that might be where I might be the first in talking about that and making sure that that's happening, and it's just known for my style. Most people will be like, "Oh, that's the Amber G style." There are people who don't like it, and that's OK. That's totally fine. But I do it because the Deaf people who attend the concerts that I interpreter or who request me love it and they want it and they feel connected to the music. I'll continue to do that.

Martirosyan: Wonderful! Is this something you've always had, this feeling with music, even before all of this? Or was it that all of a sudden it took over?

Gallego: I've always loved music, since I was little. If this dates me, I always thought I would be a Solid Gold dancer. There used to be a show in the '80s called Solid Gold. I remember dancing and copying all the dancers. I always thought I would be a professional dancer, but I never really wanted to go to dance class. I was just going to be an artist or whatever. (laughs) But then I also feel deeply connected to songs, because those songs mean something to me because it's usually whoever brought me that music. I have deep connections with old country because of my grandparents. My brother taught me about New Wave and all of that. I grew up with my friends, and they taught me all about rap and hip-hop, so I have a deep connection with that. My dad connected me with Bob Seeger and E.D. Nix and Fleetwood Mac. It's those connections with these people in my life and the love that I've experienced through those connections that truly drove me to make sure equality to the experience was happening. I know what music can do for your heart, your mind, and your soul, and a lot of times what I love is talking to my Deaf friends and asking them, "What's your connection to your family and music?" They'll tell me different beautiful stories of how their hearing parents introduced them to a specific band, or they're like, "I love Metallica, because my dad always had a Metallica shirt on." Or my ex-husband, he loved Arrowsmith because his brothers listened to it, but he's profoundly Deaf, and he was like, "I can't hear it, but they love it, so I love it." He would always have it on or tell me to interpret it because he loved it because of that connection. And I think that's the beautiful thing about music: it brings us together, from all different backgrounds, all different races, all different religions, as well as all different disabilities. It brings us together. It's bigger than what our abilities are, you know? It's bigger than that. So many people look at only what our abilities are and never highlight the disabilities and think outside of those disabilities, because my ears, yes, they halfway work, but that doesn't mean that I deserve



any less of an experience than any other human. We should always make sure that we are providing the best for all of those experiences. So, I'm always thinking and telling people, "Think outside of yourself. You are mostly limiting yourself and you're creating the barriers for us." Most of the barriers happen because other humans have created it, and we always have the burden to have to remove them, and that's not cool. So how can we lift up humanity? Remove all the barriers.

Martirosyan: Absolutely. This is such a beautiful thing to expose the world to, really lovely. Is there something you'd like to share?

Gallego: If anyone is reading the article or seeing the article, if you're creating an event, create inclusivity from the moment of inception. That means inclusivity. Think outside of yourself and welcome everyone to the event. Because the moment you don't and you think only about your path and your walk, then you're not thinking outside of other people's paths and their journey and walk to where they need to be.

Martirosyan: Yes, absolutely! (laughter) I really appreciate it.

Cooper: When I heard you mention that people that are deaf don't like music, I was thinking, they certainly like the music in dancing. I've been to Gallaudet University dances where it seems like everyone loves music and dancing. As you probably know they drop the speakers down on the floor and crank up the bass.

Gallego: Yeah, it wasn't me saying that, it was my professors. It was such a complex for me. It was against everything I'm seeing and living and breathing. That happens all the time with people who don't experience or aren't in our shoes to walk through what we walk through, to see what we see, feel what we feel, hear what we hear, don't hear what we hear. It's all those things about how people will limit based off of their worldview and what the worldview has told them about other people, instead of asking the community members or asking what you want or just simply asking, "How can I support you in whatever you may need to feel equal to this experience?"

It's really important, I think, and we forget so many times to ask other humans, "How can I support you?" Even me taking off my glasses, everybody thinks, "Oh, glasses, that's just normal." But technically, if you think about it, it's a disability. The glasses are a tool for my eyes not being able to work. These are all tools. So let me provide you with the tools instead of creating barriers, or instead of making it so hard to try to find how to request services. Why don't we automatically provide them and make things so much easier? Because every day we have to start off with a struggle. There's a struggle daily just for life. So, if I want to escape all of that and I want to be at my favorite artist, why is that artist not stepping up and saying, "You know what? I want to welcome the whole community? And by welcoming

that, that means the inception of my tour, I'll make sure that I have all of the accessibility needs, the platforms that are needed so all of our wheelchair users can go up onto the platform easily, readily available and easily, and not for everybody to be able to do that. Places for people to sit when they also have mobility needs, as well as having audio descriptions." It's even more than just Deaf and hard of hearing and an ASL interpreter. We have a whole group and culture of disabled folks who also deserve to have access to this entertainment, to get away from the trials and tribulations of life and be able to experience this thing of connection. That's what I always feel is the most important, that connection with other humans. That's where you experience it. Because music doesn't discriminate, humans do.

Cooper: Let me know if you can hear this, and if you can figure out how to describe this instrument.

[sound of music playing]

Gallego: It's a little broken up, but is it a guitar?

Cooper: No.

Gallego: It's hard for me to hear and it goes in and out. It's choppy.

Cooper: Yes sorry, it is choppy. I'm playing it off of a website. Lia was sitting next to Stevie Wonder at his house, and he pulled out this instrument that he was apparently learning.

Martirosyan: Oh, the harpejji?

Cooper: Yes. He was explaining the uniqueness of him playing that instrument. It was a trick question, because you wouldn't know the instrument unless you'd been around Stevie Wonder.

Gallego: (laughs)

Cooper: It's on the website. If you go to ABILITY Magazine and type in "Stevie," you'll see the interview that Lia did with him. There's a link to that little section. It's only about a minute long, of him playing that. What you didn't know is that Lia is an opera singer. She's quite into music.

Gallego: That's awesome.

Cooper: The other thing I wanted to share with you quickly, because I know you're under the weather, and thanks for doing this, even though you're not feeling well. I know you know ABILITY magazine, but I want to show you this. Can you see my screen?

Gallego: Oh, yeah, mm-hmm.

Cooper: abilityE is something our nonprofit built. It's the largest database of talent with disabilities. It's free for all at this point, even casting. If you put your own profile in there, it would give you another resource to tap into more potential clients on your end. All the major studios know about it. It's a pretty cool thing. We also do this thing called the abilityE challenge, where people submit their reels. [one of the reels plays]

Gallego: Awesome!

Cooper: One other thing I'll show you before you take off and rest is this: ABILITYJobFair is also part of our nonprofit. This is the first online career fair that is face-based video, real-time captioning, but if you're a person who happens to be Deaf and you need ASL, a third video appears and there's a sign language interpreter at the ready whenever needed. Amazon is one of our clients — which I know is different from Amazon Music — Amazon's been with us for many years, which we really love the fact that they're doing that.

Gallego: That's awesome too!

Cooper: I wanted to share that with you so you'll know some of the back work we've done. We've worked with Gallaudet; we created their first online career fair ever. We worked with Deaf Blind students as well, to connect to the Web, which was a really interesting feat.

Gallego: Thank you for sharing that. Also, can I self-describe as well? I typically do so.

Cooper: Sure, please.

Gallego: I am a plus size [signing], voluptuous (laughs), white-presenting female with a pink kind of mohawk. I have glasses, dark glasses, and I have a dark black shirt on with little dinosaur earrings and maroon lipstick. (laughs)

Cooper: What are the dinosaurs, behind you?

Gallego: I think they're brontosaurus. They're little tiny, itty-bitty — I love minis — so my son for my birthday got me these itty-bitty, tiny brontosaurus that hang down — little white brontosaurus. They're about the size of a dime.

Martirosyan: Cute. Thank you Amber. Have a beautiful rest of your day.

Gallego: It was so nice to meet you. Bye! ■ ABILITY

ambergproductions.com

EARNEST CASILLAS

Celebrity makeup artist

Emmy award-winning Ernesto Casillas talks about his childhood and challenges growing up as a queer person with hearing loss in a Mexican immigrant family. He also discusses his journey from being a creative child to becoming a celebrity makeup artist, sharing experiences with clients such as Doja Cat and Gwen Stefani.

Throughout the conversation with *ABILITY Magazine*'s George Kaplan, Casillas emphasizes the importance of self-critique and continuous improvement. He also touches on the need for reassurance and understanding when working with clients, expressing a desire to fill the gap in the makeup industry for women of color.

George Kaplan: Tell me about what it was like growing up.

Ernesto Casillas: As an adult, looking back, I feel like my parents set up a beautiful childhood for me. But for so long, I didn't look back on my childhood with fond memories, and that's because just of internal struggles that I would go through. I think as a queer person, I was always battling internal turmoil. I grew up here in LA. My parents are immigrants, and they were just always very hard workers, and they instilled that in me. I discovered that I had hearing loss at around maybe five years old, and it was absolutely a challenge, but I never looked at it as an impediment. I just looked at it as something that I just have to deal with, and it was fine. But there were some challenges that came with it that, coupled with my sexuality and a few other things, made me... It took me from being an extroverted child to very introverted, very insecure, and very shy. I would say my childhood was very colorful.

Kaplan: What were your interests back then? Did you foresee any of this happening?

Casillas: I did, because I was a very, very creative child since I was very little. I think one of my core memories I have of that is I'm making clay earring in first grade for Mother's Day. I just love creating beautiful things. I remember the students around me would see what I was making, and they're like, Oh, you're so good at this. Can you make us ours? That made me feel really good that people appreciated the things that I was making. I remember just being super creative. It didn't mat-





Doja Cat

ter what I was playing in. I remember my aunt that lived with us, she would make clothes. She would sew a lot. And so, I would ask her for scraps of fabric, and I would draw on those scraps of fabric, and I would design dresses for Selena and reimagine what she was wearing. So, I was always into that. I was always into scrap booking, into video, into taking pictures. And I want to say around fourth or fifth grade, my mom would take me to Costco, and I became enamored with Kevyn Aucoin's makeup book that they were selling there. I think I always liked the idea of transforming things and making them more beautiful. So even though I didn't know that I was going to grow up to become a makeup artist, I did think about being a photographer early on, and it's something that I still do here and there.

Kaplan: Yeah, I've seen it. You have great, beautiful photos that you do of your clients.

Casillas: Thank you.

Kaplan: How did you transition from a photographer to a makeup artist?

Casillas: I got into it because in high school, I had my mind made up I was going to be a beauty, fashion photographer. I would sneak my mom's makeup without telling her, and I would do my girlfriends' makeup and take the photos, and I loved it. But back then, I didn't know that you could have a career in makeup. I just didn't know anything about that. I had Kevyn Aucoin's book, but other than that, we didn't have social media like that for me to have an insight as to what that could be. I went to college to study studio art and photography, and I was doing photography for a while, but I got burnt out with it really quick. And the more I did photography and makeup, the more I realized I really, really love makeup, which is amazing because I remember going to the drugstore and nervously walking past the makeup aisle, hoping no one would see me looking at the makeup. I want to say halfway through college, I realized I was doing too much. I wanted to be a designer, a photographer, a makeup artist, and I was struggling to go full-time, work part-time, and a social life.

So, I knew something had to give, and I made the decision, let me just pursue makeup full-time. And what really helped was social media. That was coming up at the time, Myspace, and there was this website called Model Mayhem, which was like a Myspace, but more so like networking site for industry people. Through there, I met a makeup artist that I started assisting, and he became my mentor. I think the first time I assisted him was on a Forever 21 shoot, and I thought it was so cool and so glamorous. I was like, "Wow, I could do this."

Kaplan: That's really cool. Did you skip the beauty school experience and just went into assisting?

Casillas: I did. I was self-taught just by practicing with my friends. Then I started doing quinceañeras, weddings, on my cousins. And so because I was in college, I wasn't going to beauty school. So I don't have a cosmetology license, but I don't think it's necessary for makeup artists. I think it's more so for hair, if you want to work on sets, and whatnot.

Kaplan: You've said you've wanted to fill in the gap when it comes to doing makeup for women of color. Can you tell me more about that? And how have you seen the industry change since you started?

Casillas: Yes, for sure. I think growing up, I come from a Mexican family. It's a really big Mexican family, but a lot of them are very white-passing and the everyone where I'm from in Mexico is very light skinned, hazel eyes. So colorism is definitely very much a thing. I'm pretty brown compared to my family. I think I used to have a complex about it growing up, and I quickly learned I have to love my skin, my hair, all that. So that was my first inkling of this is something that needs attention. I think growing up, I was always conscious of colorism, of racism, homophobia, all these things as a little kid that made me pay extra attention. When I started doing makeup, that's when I realized how deep this stuff runs. I worked at a makeup counter for a little bit, and I remember women coming in, deeper complexion women, a lot of them were not comfortable because they don't have good makeup experiences. Maybe they could never find products in their colors, so maybe they will just come in for lip gloss.

A lot of them would come in and request really light foundation shade that did not match them. I remember I did a quinceañera one time, and she was just a little more brown than me. Her mom was very light skinned. She said something in Spanish to the effect of, "Yeah, so you know my daughter, she's brown, she's morenita. I don't know what you can do with her. You can do anything, but you could try." I was thinking that's not the way to speak about your daughter's complexion in front of her. So it made me sad, and it definitely made me want to help. It made me want to help. I think working at a cosmetic counter, there was a lot of time when the women would cry about how beautiful they felt. I was like, "Wow, this is something I want to work on. I want to make brown women, black women, women of color feel beautiful too." It's possible, obviously.

Kaplan: Have you seen the industry change in that way? How people treat women of color and the gap in the makeup industry? Because I know it took a while sometimes for deeper shades to come out and things like that.

Casillas: It definitely has changed, at least in terms of makeup products. Makeup companies are a lot more inclusive now, and a lot of that is thanks to social media giving people a voice and people going online to say, "Okay, why are these brands not making it for us? We're not going to keep buying this stuff." I think in terms of the industry, there's been change, but it's a little more, I want to say, maybe superficial. It looks inclusive from the outside, but being on the inside, I'm looking around, and sometimes the crews are still very white, or there's just not a lot of people of color in the union that can do wigs or textured hair. I think we definitely have made leaps and bounds, but we still have a bit of ways to go.

Kaplan: Well said. So, you have been an in-demand celebrity makeup artist for quite some time now. Who gave you your first shot?

Casillas: Oh, that's a good question. Queen Latifah. Because I was very fortunate enough to be introduced to the work of Sam Fine by my mentor. Sam Fine was the it celebrity makeup artist for black women back in the day. I would study his work and I would be like, Wow, this is beautiful. I got to meet him, and we became friends, and he would give me the opportunity to assist him. Through that, I started assisting him on the set of



Queen Latifah's show. He would bring me around and there were times where he wasn't available, so I would do touch-ups on Queen Latifah. She gave me a chance. There was, I think, something he couldn't do. He referred me, and that was my first celebrity client, I want to say.

Kaplan: That's really cool. You had, which must have been a very stable gig for a makeup artist, working on The Talk, for which you won two Emmys. How did you land that gig? And how was your experience working there?

Casillas: Yes. I had worked with Eve doing promotion for "Barbershop 2", I want to say. I was referred to her by somebody, and she was the loveliest, still is to this day. Eve is one of the most kindest, funniest, coolest people I know. I had done her for press a few different times. When she landed that gig, she hit me up right away. At that time, it was a blessing because I had just stopped working with another celebrity artist, and we had gone through a very tumultuous time. It's kind of traumatizing actually, a lot was going on in her personal life, and I was involved in it. And so that stopped. And because I was only working with her, I don't really have any other income or clients. A few months after that was when Eve hit me up to do The Talk, and I was like, "This is great. I'm going to have stable, regular, consistent income, and I can work on my mental health at the time." I needed it. "And I can just chill out for a little bit and just collect my money, make sure I'm good for a while, so I can build my career."

Kaplan: You seem to have a close working relationship with Doja Cat. How did you two meet and what's it like when you collaborate with her?

Casillas: Doja, I met through a referral from another makeup artist. I really liked her the first or second time I did her. She loves makeup. She's a very creative person, and she's very sweet. She's very considerate. That's what I like about her. And a very compassionate person. And I know by the third time we worked together was for a music video with Ariana Grande and Megan Thee Stallion. And this was the first time I got to give her a proper beat, you know? Full, glam face. She was in love. And then I was in love with her, watching her work, watching her be very hardworking, very dedicated, but most of all, just a really good human being. Obviously, we work together a lot, so we're going to form a bit of a bond. But it would be a lot different if she wasn't the type of person she is. I always make sure I keep a little bit of distance between my personal life and my work-life, keep it separate. But when it comes to her, I see her as a friend.

Kaplan: Do you have any funny behind-the-scenes stories with her that you can share?

Casillas: I don't know. It's just always very silly, like the tiniest things. I remember, recently, we were doing a video shoot, and we were pretty burnt out. It was a time when we were working almost every day. So, we're just really tired. So, sitting in my makeup chair, just tired looking in the mirror. I started applying a concealer. I'm not doing anything extravagant or impressive. I'm just putting a concealer on it. She goes, "Amazing..." And then I don't know why it was the funniest thing. So now it's the thing, "amazing…" It's always a silly, fun time on set.

Kaplan: You were touching on it, but I was curious, have you had any experience with any nightmare clients? Obviously, you don't have to name them but do you?

Casillas: Absolutely, I do. (laughs) I think the most exhausting thing is sometimes these clients want a friend in their glam team and sometimes that comes natural, and sometimes you're trapped into it. I have so many stories. I think, generally, it's usually a nightmare when the clients are not in a good mood, when they're going through something and it makes work hard. Like maybe they're late, maybe they're feeling extra insecure, so nothing we're doing with makeup is right. Maybe they're yelling at somebody and it's super awkward for us. But a lot of times it's never personal, and they just need to feel like they're in good hands with you. They just need to feel reassured like, "Look, I know you're going through it. I'm so sorry, but I'm going to take care of you. Don't worry about me. I'm going to make sure you look beautiful. If you need anything, let me know." I think I've learned that reassurance goes a long way in this industry. I think if they feel like they can trust you and they're going to be a good friend and not judge them, you're going to listen to them, then it makes things run smoother.

There's a lot of time with this industry will make these girls super insecure, and it really affects the vibes.

Kaplan: A lot of pressure.

Casillas: There's a lot of pressure. And then you could couple that with unprofessionalism. It's just like a mess.

Kaplan: I imagine you have to be a therapist at some moments.

Casillas: Absolutely. There's been times where I had to quit one client a while back because the pressure would always get to her, and it would always be really long, sad days. I just at one point, decided, you know what? I can't take it anymore, so I ended up quitting. And she just texted me back to back to back, over and over, and I had to accept that she was just very disappointed and just wish her well and keep it pushing.

Kaplan: Sometimes you just got to do that. Is there anyone you were intimidated to work for but ended up



Gwen Stefani

being an easy client?

Casillas: That's a good question. I'm thinking, have I been intimidated? Give me one second. When people ask me who I work with, I blank out a lot of times. I don't know why.

Kaplan: But you're working all the time. You basically work for everybody. (laughs)

Casillas: I will say that I was a little intimidated to work with Gwen Stefani, who I'm on set with, because she's such an icon, and she has such a signature look. But upon the first day of meeting her, I was like, I like this girl. She's an angel, super, super sweet. And it ended up

being and still is a great working relationship because she trusts me. She lets me do my thing. I think a lot of times when clients start doubting their makeup artists over and over, it makes their makeup artists insecure. And so, the work doesn't come out as good.

Kaplan: So being a makeup artist has taken you around the world. Do you have any fun travel stories or any place you'd like to go next?

Casillas: I'm not a great traveler. I'm basically exhausted.

Kaplan: Always jet-lagged?

Casillas: I'm always working every day. Yeah, and then on top of that, I get jet-lag. Airports, man. Oh, my God, airports.

Kaplan: What's the worst airport?

Casillas: London, Heathrow. I wish to never fly into Heathrow Airport again. But I think next, you know what? I've been wanting to explore just America. I'm in California. I don't really venture out to other states that often. Maybe like New York, Miami, all the big, hot spots. But I'm excited to go on tour with Doja Cat and get to visit all these cities. Matter of fact, I'm going to be in Omaha, Nebraska, for my birthday. I don't know much about Omaha, Nebraska, but we're going to find out.

Kaplan: That's funny. I'm originally from Miami. It's a good time. I just don't like living there.

Casillas: It's a good party time if you're in Miami.

Kaplan: Yeah, a certain part of Miami, it's super fun. Do you have a dream client you'd love to work on? Somebody you haven't yet?

Casillas: Leona Lewis. And everyone's like "Leona? Is she still making music?" But Leona Lewis is a queen. I discovered her back in her X Factor UK days on YouTube, and I was mesmerized by her. Her voice is just very beautiful, and she's beautiful. She's a very shy, timid girl. I've always wanted to work with her, and still do.

Kaplan: Do you have any advice to a makeup artist that's starting out?

Casillas: I think my advice would vary depending on which area of the industry they want to venture in. But just across the board, I think it's a good thing to be your own worst critic. I think that that's what helped push me to become better and better every time, because I didn't start out being a great makeup artist. I still have my off moments. Part of what makes me a decent makeup artist is I'm very critical of my own work, and I'm always looking to see how I can improve, how I can learn, how I can make it better. So, I would say don't be stagnant in your journey as a makeup artist. Always evolve. There's been times in my journey where I felt like, "Oh, I'm just doing the same makeup over and over, and it's looking a little dated." And sometimes it just takes a client to push you, to evolve, to become better and just more versatile. I feel like I had that with Doja. I wasn't as creative before because I was doing a lot of TV makeup, beauty makeup.

But with her, she's like, "Go for it." And so, I think that really helped me out a lot.

Kaplan: Well, that's great. I only have one more question left, and that's what's the best way to get rid of glitter?

Casillas: I feel like the only way is tape because glitter is so sticky, right? So, you need another sticky surface to remove it. I would just say Scotch tape. You know what? I wouldn't know. I apply makeup. I don't take it off. (laughs)

Kaplan: I did glitter beard one time, and I will never do it again. Never again.

Casillas: Oh, I can imagine it's all latched in there.

Kaplan: Oh, there. Yeah, I tried olive oil. I tried so many different things. But yeah, tape is good.

Casillas: Maybe not so much on the beard, the tape.

Kaplan: Oh, yeah, that's true. Well, like a little softer tape.

Casillas: Yeah, you can use a lint roller if it's on your clothes or something. I feel like that's the fastest way to do it.

Kaplan: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Casillas: Yeah, I want to give a little bit of encouragement to people that are struggling or maybe have imposter syndrome. I, myself, have had not the best mental health in the previous years, but I got to where I'm at in my career because I told myself, “You cannot wait around for things to get better to make your dreams happen.” Sometimes, you just have to work through the bullshit to get that journey. And so sometimes, I'll say you got to make your mental health work for you. If you're feeling manic, then get productive. If you can't sleep, then maybe organize your makeup or watch some TV shows. Just really work through your issues to get to where you want to be, not in spite of them.

Kaplan: That's great advice. ■ ABILITY

instagram.com/ernestocasillas


LAWRENCE WORLD CLASS KARATE ORGANIZATION
AAU • USA



matthew KILLIAN

Getting a Kick Out of Karate

Matthew Killian, a 24-year-old student at Lawrence World Class Karate dojo in Fayetteville. He won two gold medals for Special Demonstration of kata and kumite at the 2023 Niagara Karate Championship and received an official Senate Commendation as well. For Matthew, karate was not only just a sport but a means to break down personal barriers and overcome personal challenges in his personal life successfully.

Nina Chatterjee, a contributor to *ABILITY Magazine,* sat down with Matthew's parents Kimberly and Tom Killian as well as his karate tutor Hanshi (Master) Rande Lawrence to discuss Matthews' struggles and wins through life. His journey and his success an embodiment of hard work and team spirit. Matthew even brought his medals to the interview, waving them happily at the camera lens.

As narrated by Kimberly, Matthew has been epileptic since the age of three and he was diagnosed with autism when he was ten years old. He became blind at the age of 19 due to a rare disease called Leber Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON). "When he was 19, the teacher sent a note and said, "He seems to be not seeing things. He can't see the board. He's walking into people. He's walking into the walls." So, we took him to the doctor, and his doctor said, "His eyesight's off the charts. You've got to see a specialist." So, we saw a specialist and found out he has a rare eye disease. It's genetic. And within just months, he went from being sighted to losing 90% of his sight. That was a big change for him."

Matthew was not welcoming the helplessness that he faced and asked to learn karate. And today, Kimberly happily confirms, "Karate has given Matthew his confidence back, his strength back. His balance has improved. He had to relearn and rethink where his body is in space and around him. He has a little bit of peripheral vision, so he can see movement and shadow off to the side. Karate has helped him know where his body is in space. I have nothing but positive things to say about it."



Matthew and Hanshi (Master) Rande Lawrence

Killian has been training on a one-on-one basis for over a year with Lawrence, head instructor at LWC Karate dojo. He has lessons every Wednesday, about an hour a week. Apart from practice, he continues to do his exercises at home and independently gets ready for the upcoming next week's session. As stated by his parents: "He simply loves it!"

Kimberly emphatically praises the 2023 Niagara Karate Championship, saying it was just a wonderful experience where everybody was very supportive of Matthew.

Tom and Kimberly both agreed that Master Hanshi Lawrence enthusiasm towards Matthew added to his motivation and thirst to achieve success. The best instructor they could have asked for, Master Hanshi's encouragement and Matthew's unwavering determination brought back the medals that are now proudly on display. Truly a commendable team effort.

When asked how the team came to life, Kimberly explained that "about two years ago, she walked in off the street into Rande's Karate place and simply asked if they taught blind people." Master Hanshi's reply was that he never had, but was not opposed to the idea and was willing to try. Matthew then walked in for a consultation where he had a lesson to see if they could work together. Matthew enjoyed it, they started and then life took its turn. Master Hanshi added to the story by adding his part. "I had never tried it before. I teach people with Down syndrome, and I also have taught people who were deaf, but not blind. I looked at it and I said to myself, "You know what? I'm up to this challenge. Personally, I could learn a lot." That's what I thought. But I know when you teach anyone or anything, the most important thing about teaching is that you must develop a trust with each other. The first time Matt came, and we worked, he kind of got a feeling for me. He probably figured I'm not that bad of a guy after all, right? He explained that the process worked both ways. Just as Matthew learned from him, he himself learned a lot too. Matthew's father Tom Killian chimed in with the fact that Matthew steadily worked his way up from the white belt to the green belt.

"Everyone thinks that learning karate is just learning the moves. No. You have to redefine your body in some way. You've got to know what you can do, what you can't do, the things that you can't do we can work on so someday," said Master Hanshi. "So we started to do exercise that would allow us to do the karate moves. Like, squats, bending your leg, kick so that those leg muscles are strong enough to raise the leg up"

Unfortunately, as Master Hanshi observed, blindness causes deficits as some of the key human muscles are not used regularly. Examples he gave was kicking your legs as high as you could or raising arms as high as one is able to. So Matthew initially worked on strengthening muscles with Master Hanshi during his one-on-one basis. Balance and spatial requirements were also a large focus in the beginning, both crucial in karate.

According to Master Hanshi, "the results were mind blowing". Lack of vision meant it was hard to emulate various sequences of attacking and defense techniques. "We had to work on strengthening the muscles so the arms could be raised up high, so if he does get challenged from a head shot or someone trying to harm him by hitting him on top of the head, he has that reflex, that muscle, that power to protect himself. His balance, his coordination, timing, reflex—really, it's really come full circle."

Master Hanshi put emphasis on the word "self-defense" which he labeled as a really big word carrying a lot of weight to it. "It really dictates what we do, what we can't do, where we go, where we can't go. When I started karate when I was young, I kind of grew up with it. I'd had run-ins when I was younger, and I ended up getting involved. But I can't imagine not doing this and not having confidence to go where I want to go. But most people don't do self-defense, so it must be awful for them to not have the confidence to go here or go there. But then you add in a disability such as blindness, it must be really a challenge for them not being sure of things. So, when Matt came in and he said he wanted to learn self-defense, we started with small things. First, your feelings. Because from what I was told, when one of your senses goes, the other senses heighten a little bit."


Matthew's parents Kimberly and Tom Killian

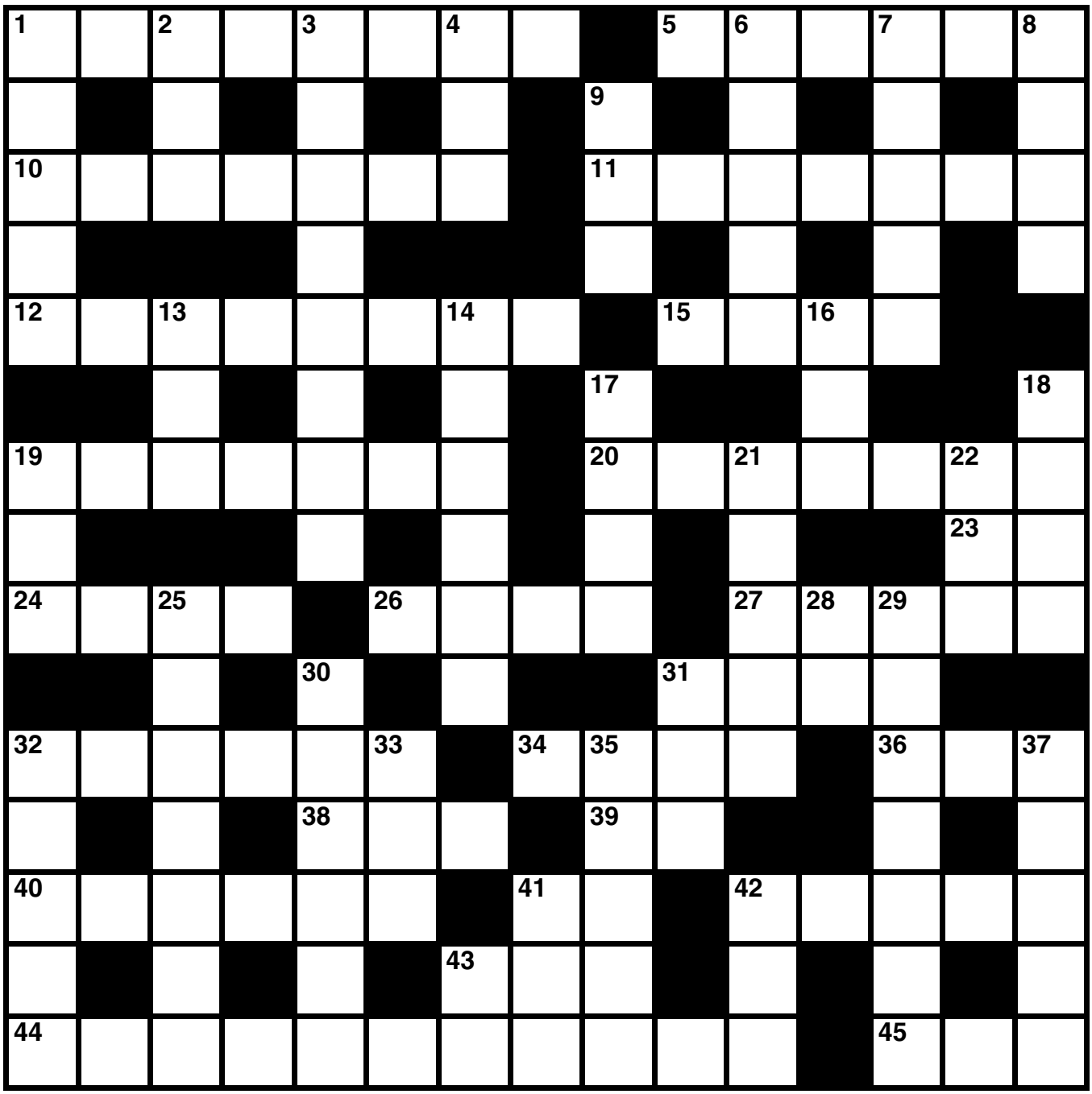
These abilities were utilized to attain unbelievable levels in Matthew. The sense of feeling when someone is close to the opponent, the energy, keeping the balance, the mental focus and most importantly the balance so that if someone does come and starts to grab us, we're not going to get knocked on the ground.

Master Hanshi added that Matthew is currently on a very good schedule and willing to do more. Matthew even practices moves while walking the neighbor's dog regularly! As Kimberly stated "He will practice his karate moves when he walks the dog. He'll walk backwards for his balance and his strength. He'll move his cane up and down and practice walking with his cane." Master Hanshi explained "In karate, we always like to step back. When we do our defense, we bring one leg back or we move backwards to get our balance and to move around. But unfortunately, when you're blind, you hardly ever step backwards. So your balance, your coordination, it's different. So we started to do it in the dojo, and I didn't tell him this, but he and his mom and his dad started to have him walk the neighbor's dog backwards." He laughed: "That wasn't my idea! I wish I had come up with that idea, but I can't take credit for that one."

Conventional teaching is very visual. In Matthew's case, Master Hanshi successfully developed methodologies to understand techniques and process information pertaining to karate in a unique and unconventional way. He insists "It is a different teaching, but I love learning things, learning how to do things. You never know what life brings you." ■ ABILITY

lwckarate.com

ABILITY's



Crossword Puzzle

HERC
Higher Education
Recruitment Consortium

Find Jobs at Smart Places

Find your ideal job within our national network of 700+ colleges, universities, hospitals, and labs working together to promote *equity* and *excellence* in the higher education workforce.

Visit www.hercjobs.org to access free resources and manage your career:

- Search 30,000+ faculty, staff, and executive-level jobs
- Create a free account to save searches, upload your resume and get job alerts
- Get career advice from higher ed professionals including advice for professionals wtih disabilities

To browse jobs or become a member institution visit www.hercjobs.org



ACROSS

1. Actress, writer, director, producer and ASL consultant, Michelle Mary _____
5. "Children of a Lesser God" star, Marlee ___
10. Pays attention
11. Cure-all
12. Supporter
15. Exercise areas
19. Shows emotion, 2 words
20. Fashion designer teaming up with 1 down to launch a line of accessible fashion on QVC- Isaac _____
23. Buddhist sound
24. Helps
26. Enjoy books
27. Stares at
31. The C in TLC
32. Motocross rider who started his own Foundation to support the health and wellbeing of children, Ryan _____
34. Multi-modal power wheelchair in which users can climb chairs or curbs and drive through rough terrain
36. Stretch out
38. ___ of hope
39. Weight measurement, abbr.
40. Hold in high regard
41. "The Life of ___" movie
42. See 1 down
43. Riddle of the Sphinx answer
44. Non-profit organization with a mission to build self-esteem in girls and women with disabilities, 2 words
45. Criticize, in slang

DOWN

1. Co-star in "Legally Blonde", diagnosed with MS, who has supported many disability causes (goes with 42 across)
2. "The Eagle ___ Landed"
3. Work out
4. First responding group, abbr.
6. Hassle
7. Fengzhao ____ Xu: Chinese photographer who created "Rye Above the Sea"
8. Cool!
9. Relevant
13. By way of
14. Surpassed
16. Spoil
17. In the thick of
18. Goals
19. Peppermint or chamomile
21. Restaurant ratings company
22. Turn over earth
25. Gives to charity
28. Rogers' state, abbr.
29. The man behind Million Miles for MS, Paul ____
30. Saintly Mother
31. Corn holder
32. Belief for the future
33. Sweet potato
35. Small, light pancakes
37. Deserves
41. La ___, Bolivia
42. Mammoth
43. Cellist Yo-Yo ___

Crossword Puzzle

answers on page 72

Crossword Puzzle

A N S W E R S



American Cancer Society®

We're here to help you through every step of your cancer experience. Visit **www.cancer.org** or call **1-800-227-2345** anytime, day or night.



Information

We can answer your questions about cancer, including prevention, diagnosis, treatment options, and clinical trials.



Day-to-day Help

We can help you with everyday needs like transportation and lodging during treatment.



Emotional Support

We can connect you to local and online support groups for both patients and caregivers.

abilityJOBS.com

ADA - Affirmative Disability Action



ABILITYJOBS.COM

Prepare for Power Outages & Save Money

GENERAC®

PWRCELL

SOLAR + BATTERY STORAGE SYSTEM

PWRcell, Generac's fully-integrated solar + battery storage system, stores solar energy that can power your whole home during utility power outages and save you money on your electric bill.

REQUEST A FREE QUOTE!

ACT NOW TO RECEIVE A $300 SPECIAL OFFER!*

| (877) 665-2693



$0 DOWN FINANCING OPTIONS!**

*Offer value when purchased at retail.
**Financing available through authorized Generac partners.
Solar panels sold separately.

Need help Getting Social Security Disability Benefits?



We can help!

FIGHTING FOR YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR OVER 25 YEARS!

You Could Be Eligible To Receive:

- Steady monthly income depending on your paid in amount
- A lump sum payment of benefits owed from back-pay
- Annual cost of living increases

- We simplify the process & strive for quick claim approval
- Starting the process is easy and takes only minutes to complete

BILL GORDON & ASSOCIATES

877-243-3499

Helping thousands get the benefits they deserve

Bill Gordon & Associates, a nationwide practice, represents clients before the Social Security Administration. Member of the TX & NM Bar Associations. Mail: 1420 NW St Washington D.C. Office: Broward County, FL. Services may be provided by associated attorneys licensed in other states.

DIRECTV

DON'T JUST KINDA TV

DIRECTV



- **ACCESS 70,000+ SHOWS AND MOVIES ON DEMAND.**
  Requires subscriptions to top-tier PREMIER programming. Other packages will have fewer shows and movies.
- **DOWNLOAD YOUR DVR RECORDINGS** to your devices at home and watch offline anywhere.**

- **THE MOST LIVE SPORTS IN 4K HDR.**
  Limited 4K HDR programming available. CHOICE Pkg or higher required for most 4K HDR live sports. 4K HDR compatible equipment, minimum programming, 4K account authorization and professional installation required. If 4K TV does not support HDR, content will be viewable in standard 4K. Other conditions apply.
- **STREAM ON UP TO 5 SCREENS AT ONCE.**

Available only in the U.S. (excl Puerto Rico and U.S.V.I.). Req's compatible device. Live streaming channels based on your TV pkg & location. Not all channels available to stream out of home. To watch recorded shows on the go, must download to mobile device using Genie HD DVR model HR 44 or higher connected to home Wi-Fi network. Rewind and fast-forward may not work. **Limits:** Mature, music, pay-per-view and some On Demand content is not available for downloading. 5 shows on 5 devices at once. All functions and programming subject to change at any time.

SIGN UP AND *GET DIRECTV AND GET FIRST 3 MONTHS OF HBO MAX, CINEMAX, SHOWTIME, STARZ AND EPIX INCLUDED!*

Access HBO Max only through HBO Max app or hbomax.com. HBO Max also includes HBO channels and On Demand on DIRECTV. Online account registration required. Data rates may apply for app download/usage. **EARLY TERMINATION FEE OF $20/MO. FOR EACH MONTH REMAINING ON AGMT., $19.95 ACTIVATION, EQUIPMENT NON-RETURN & ADD'L FEES APPLY.** New approved residential customers only (equipment lease req'd). Credit card req'd (except MA & PA). [See offer details]

Contact your local DIRECTV dealer!

IV Support Holdings

888-905-1337

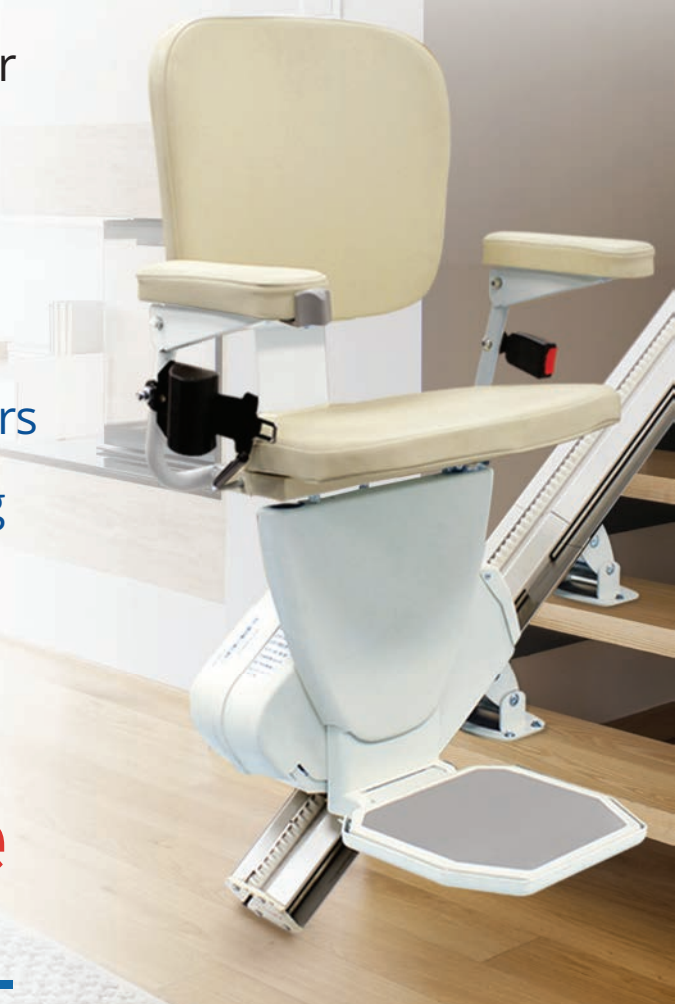
DIRECTV DEALER

DIRECTV SVC TERMS: Subject to Equipment Lease & Customer Agreements. Must maintain a min. base TV package of $69.99/mo. Programming, pricing, terms and conditions subject to change at any time. ©2022 DIRECTV. DIRECTV and all other DIRECTV marks are trademarks of DIRECTV, LLC. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

Contactless consultations, installations and delivery available!

Don't let the stairs limit your mobility.

Discover the safe and affordable way to regain access to all of your home and allow you to use your stairs safely.



The Rave 2 stair lift is the ideal solution for anyone:

- Who struggles using the stairs
- That is worried about risking a fall on the stairs
- Who wants to access ***all*** of their home

Call now to save on a Rave 2 stair lift!

1-844-471-2346

AmeriGlide
ACCESSIBILITY SOLUTIONS

WELLS FARGO

Who we are:

Wells Fargo & Company is a diversified, community-based financial services company with $1.9 trillion in assets. Wells Fargo's vision is to satisfy our customers' financial needs and help them succeed financially. News, insights, and perspectives and perspectives from Wells Fargo are also available at Wells Fargo Stories (https://stories.wf.com).

Key Facts

70M Customers

26.7M Mobile Banking mobile active users

1 in 3 Households

32.9M Wellsfargo.com digital (online and mobile) active customers

$161.8B Market value of stock*

**Based on sales, profits, assets, and market value as of March 31, 2021.*

Diversity and inclusion

At Wells Fargo, we believe that diversity and inclusion is key to being one of the world's great companies. We strive to build and sustain a diverse and inclusive culture for all Wells Fargo team members – one where they feel valued and respected for who they are as well as for the skills and experiences they bring to our company.

What other people are saying about us:

- ***DiversityInc*** magazine has ranked Wells Fargo No. 7 on the list of the 2021 Top Companies for People with Disabilities. ***DiversityInc*** also ranked Wells Fargo No. 25 on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity, No. 17 on the list of Top Companies for Employee Resource Groups, and named among the Top Companies for LGBT employees.
- For the tenth consecutive year, readers of ***CAREERS & the disABLED*** magazine recognized Wells Fargo as one of 2021's Top 50 Employers of people with disabilities.
- ***Equal Opportunity*** magazine ranks Wells Fargo No. 15 on the 30th Annual Top 50 Employers 2021 list.



Wells Fargo helps strengthen communities through:

Diversity & Inclusion:
Ensure all people feel respected and have equal access to resources and opportunities to succeed.

Economic Empowerment:
Strengthen financial self-sufficiency and economic opportunities in underserved communities.

Sustainability:
Accelerate a just transition to a low-carbon economy.

Accommodations and accessibility assistance for team members and job seekers: wellsfargojobs.com/accessibility

Accessibility at Wells Fargo: wellsfargo.com/about/diversity/accessibility

Relevant military experience is considered for veterans and transitioning service men and women.
All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or status as a protected veteran.
©2021 Wells Fargo N.A. All rights reserved.

PROTECT YOUR HOME 365 DAYS A YEAR

LeafFilter® GUTTER PROTECTION

BACKED BY A YEAR-ROUND *CLOG-FREE GUARANTEE*



THE NATION'S #1 GUTTER GUARD²

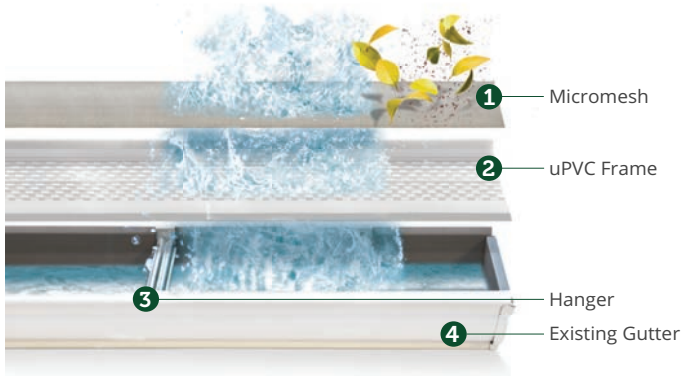
INSTALLS ON NEW & EXISTING GUTTERS

Trustpilot ★★★★★

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

LIFETIME WARRANTY

A COMPANY OF LEAFHOME





"LeafFilter was a great investment for our home."
–Bill & Jan. ★★★★★



Keeps Out All Debris
Completely sealed system protects your gutters — and entire home — from damaging debris.

EXCLUSIVE LIMITED TIME OFFER!

20% OFF YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE* + **10% OFF** SENIORS & MILITARY!

FINANCING THAT FITS YOUR BUDGET![1]

ASSEMBLED IN THE USA

[1]Subject to credit approval. Call for details.

Promo Code: 285

FREE GUTTER ALIGNMENT + FREE GUTTER CLEANING*

CALL US TODAY FOR **A FREE ESTIMATE**

1-877-505-0577

Mon-Thurs: 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat: 8am-5pm, Sun: 2pm-8pm EST

*For those who qualify. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. **Offer valid at time of estimate only. 2The leading consumer reporting agency conducted a 16 month outdoor test of gutter guards in 2010 and recognized LeafFilter as the "#1 rated professionally installed gutter guard system in America." Manufactured in Plainwell, Michigan and processed at LMT Mercer Group in Ohio. See Representative for full warranty details. Registration# 0366920922 CSLB# 1035795 Registration# HIC.0649905 License# CBC056678 License# RCE-51604 Registration# C127230 License# 559544 Suffolk HIC License# 52229-H License# 2102212986 License# 262000022 License# 262000403 License# 2106212946 License# MHIC111225 Registration# 176447 License# 423330 Registration# IR731804 License# 50145 License# 408693 Registration# 13VH09953900 Registration# H-19114 License# 218294 Registration# PA069383 License# 41354 License# 7656 DOPL #10783658-5501 License# 423330 License# 2705169445 License# LEAFFNW822JZ License# WV056912

More products.
More resources. More Fun!
All to empower your abilities...





Abilities EXPO
Serving the Community Since 1979

Dial up your independence with:

- Latest product & tech
- Informative workshops
- Adaptive sports & dance
- Service dogs
- And so much more





Los Angeles March 15-17, 2024	**New York Metro** May 3-5, 2024	**Chicago** June 21-23, 2024	
Houston August 2-4, 2024	**Phoenix** Sept. 6-8, 2024	**Ft. Lauderdale** Oct. 18-20, 2024	**Dallas** Dec. 6-8, 2024

FREE ADMISSION

Abilities.com • Get registered and join us!

@AbilitiesExpo @AbilitiesExpo @abilities_expo



Walmart Family Mobile's Truly Unlimited Plan makes it easy to stay ahead. Choose from accessible Android and iOS phones, or bring your current phone with you, and keep your phone number.

At $49.88 per month, with no contracts or activation fees, the Truly Unlimited Plan is the best way to stay connected, and stay ahead.

Walmart
FamilyMobile
Powered by T-Mobile



Image does not depict coverage

If congested, customers may notice reduced speeds vs. T-Mobile customers that may be further reduced for a small number of customers who use more than 40GB. Terms & Conditions at MyFamilyMobile.com

Walmart Family Mobile is a registered trademark of TracFone Wireless, Inc. ©2020 TracFone Wireless, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks, service marks, and trade names referenced herein are the property of their respective owners.