

You First Podcast - Accessibility Outside the Box Episode 4: Recreation

Maddie Crowley: You're listening to "You First," The Disability Rights Florida Podcast. On this episode of our series, "Accessibility Outside the Box," we will talk about recreation.

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Maddie: Hi, there. I'm Maddie, co-host of the You First podcast. Welcome to our fourth episode of our series, Accessibility Outside the Box.

Keith Casebonne: Hello, everyone. I'm Keith, the other co-host of the podcast. Last week, we had a great conversation with Kathy D. Woods about making fashion accessible for all.

Maddie: Today, we're excited to have two guests on the podcast to talk about various aspects of recreation and how we can make recreation more accessible for all, especially for people with disabilities.

Keith: That's right. First, we're going to talk with Ashley Richmond from Help Us Gather or HUG for short about their organization, beach accessibility, and how to make recreational events accessible.

Maddie: Welcome, Ashley. Thank you so much for being here today. Let's get started and talk a little bit about yourself and your organization.

Ashley Richmond: Thank you so much for having me. My name is Ashley Richmond, and I work for Help Us Gather or HUG for short. HUG is a nonprofit that advocates for inclusion and connects people with disabilities to social events and activities.

Maddie: Thank you so much for being here. As you just mentioned, you just started talking about inclusion. Let's start there.

Since we live in Florida, we're surrounded by beaches. Beaches are not super accessible to many people and not very inclusive to people with disabilities. Can you tell us a little bit about how you advocate for accessible beaches and what your organization does?

Ashley: Yeah. Like you mentioned, a big part of HUG's mission is to advocate for individuals with disabilities in whatever form that may take. In our area and in many areas in Florida, we've had beach wheelchairs for a while. Those do come with issues that can be hard to track down.

If there are only a few, they may not even be available on a busy beach or for individuals who can't leave their wheelchair or power chair. Those who are not ambulatory, it's really not a solution at all for them to be able to move into beach wheelchair. For a while, we didn't really know what a solution would be. We felt pretty stuck.

Luckily, a couple of years ago, we discovered on Treasure Island Mobi-Mats. We had no idea these existed until an advocate in our area, who actually has a traumatic brain injury, called us up and told us about this Mobi-Mat.

Mobility Mat brought us out there. We were amazed by what an incredible solution this was. We saw not only individuals in wheelchairs using the Mobility Mat, but our elderly population in Florida, anyone with any sort of mobility issue, even someone with an injury, someone who uses the walker. We even saw a lot of families out on the beach using it with their stroller with children.

We were amazed by how useful the solution is. There's no one-size-fits-all solution, but the Mobility Mats really do serve such a broad audience. We were looking into why don't more cities have these and realized that the issue is twofold.

The cost is a major factor and then also just the amount of red tape. You have to submit a permit and your engineer drawings. There are a lot of steps to get a Mobi-Mat approved through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and through the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Our goal when we learned about this issue was to help solve the funding problem, which we've done. Thanks to a partnership with the Ford Foundation, which is a private foundation offering to fund Mobi-Mats.

Then, in our community here in the Tampa Bay area, we got together at least 20 mayors of these communities who wanted to learn more about this issue, wanted to bring Mobi-Mats to their city or community and just weren't sure how to get through all that red tape.

We've been working really hard to make it as easy as possible. Now that we've talked with these governmental bodies about our goal and our mission and our willingness as communities or willingness to meet them halfway and explaining that this is just a big step for advocacy, they've really been great to partner with.

I think it's different when you work for a governmental body, and you get an application for a Mobi-Mat. Maybe if you don't know what Mobi-Mats are, you're not super comfortable. You don't understand how important they are to the community. We've had a lot of communities tell us their applications were just rejected, and they didn't know why.

Now simply partnering with these governmental bodies and having contacts there who understand how important this is has made a huge difference. We've seen a lot more permits getting approved now. The process isn't taking as long as it used to.

That's a huge part of what we do at HUG is just being that middleman between communities that wants to be inclusive, but they aren't sure how or they can't afford it, and governmental bodies who also wants to be inclusive but just maybe didn't know how to get there.

We're really proud of the advocacy work that we've done. We're making a lot of progress. It is still a slow process. It's a three-month approval time on average for a Mobi-Mat. Once the engineer drawings are done, once the city approves it, and it's sent to the state, so it can be lengthy.

We had our first ribbon cutting two weeks ago, and many more in the pipeline...

Maddie: Congratulations.

Ashley: ...now that they're all coming through. Thank you. We're really excited. It's wonderful.

Maddie: That's incredible. Thank you so much for that persistent advocacy and showing how partnering with local folks. Government leaders, community leaders can really make a huge impact on the access that not only you all have been able to achieve, but creating that access for other folks on may have not understood why these applications were being denied.

I wanted to touch on something that you also brought up that accessibility really benefits so many people. It's not just these Mobi-Mat that are going to be helping folks disabilities and families with strollers.

It's folks maybe trying to get down further on the beach with their beach bike, things like that, that a lot of folks don't think about how these accessibility options are really going to benefit everybody.

I wanted to ask, how do you often get the word out to folks about these accessibility options when they're going to become available in their area and how can best help them?

Ashley: That's a great question. As we were doing research for this initiative, when we first started last year, we realized we had a mobility mat right up the road from us at the beach that no one know about. Even folks in the area didn't know it was right there, and a lot of that just comes down to visibility.

Whenever we have been planning ribbon cuttings, we make sure we get as much news coverage as possible. We've actually built a website to aggregate all of that data, helpusgather.org/accessiblebeaches.

Right now, we're just putting that data together in our area, but our goal is to expand it out to the entire state of Florida so that everyone knows these exists because some cities, as we've learned, have installed Mobi-Mats.

If it's not on their website, if no one knows about it, then we can't make sure that we're creating an equitable solution for everyone. We don't know what we don't know.

A lot of that really does that visibility comes down to building this website and getting news coverage. The biggest thing with news coverage is not only are people seeing it on TV when that story errors, but then that story lives online.

We get that SEO. We get those keywords people are searching for even not just residents but visitors. When someone's looking up accessible beaches in Florida, they're trying to figure out where to stay, what's nearby, how they can have a vacation that everyone can enjoy. We've found those two solutions have worked really well for getting the word out.

Maddie: Definitely. You've talked about the fact that you have a lot of advocacy in your local area. Do you have any idea about how many of these Mobi-Mats are available throughout the state?

To your last point, how can people plan for an accessible vacation to find a location in Florida, where they can access the beach using these mats if they don't live near your area or travel to your area?

Ashley: To answer your first question, from what we've heard from the actual company, Mobi-Mat, the brand name, they have about 30 installed throughout the state of Florida. There may be more or fewer.

Sometimes, they're removed depending on the condition of the beach, someone maybe has a Mobi-Mat. That's not the Mobi-Mat brand. They have a separate mobility mat, but that's our estimate is around 30.

When you think about the size of Florida and how much shoreline we have, it's not much. We really can do so much more to make our beaches accessible. That's why we've been working on. We've been trying to build this website, so it's not as difficult for families to find accessible beaches.

Anyone right now who's looking, there are a lot of accessible beaches, especially in the Sarasota area that we've seen, they have a handful in that area, but right now, all you can do -- really, I'm sure many families can attest to this -- you just have to Google, and you try to find the beach.

That's a challenge to know because it might say Hernando beach, but where on the beaches, the Mobi-Mat? If there's no details, it can be hard to find. Right now, my recommendation to families would be to contact the Parks and Rec Department of any city. Ask them if the Mobi-Mat is still there, which parking lot, where to access it.

That's our goal with this website. Our organization has been visiting to beaches in person. We ensure the Mobi-Mat is still there. We marked the actual GPS coordinates, so we can provide a precise location, explain the parking situation, how many restrooms are on site. Those all play into how accessible of a beach actually is.

We're a small organization. We can't be on every beach on Florida all the time. We're trying to develop partnerships and other cities and communities and looking to hire even contractors who can help us visit these other beaches.

Get those GPS coordinates and have this as a resource that's really developed. It doesn't take as much guesswork for families who are coming to visit or even residents in the area.

Maddie: Thank you so much. It sounds like it's going to be a bright future soon for a lot of vacationers and Floridians with disabilities that want to go to the beach. I'm so grateful that we have folks like you making this aspect of travel and vacationing accessible for folks.

Your org doesn't just do beach access work, but it also does a lot of accessible events and activities. Could you tell us a little bit about some of these events or activities and how you make them accessible for a wide variety of folks with disability?

Ashley: Yeah, absolutely. HUG started in 2017 when our founder's brother with autism moved here to the Clearwater area. She found that getting him housing, finding him job support, that was pretty straightforward. A lot of that is mandated by the state. There are a lot of amazing organizations like vocational rehab that help individuals with disabilities.

Finding him friends was incredibly challenging. He was really lonely and he had a hard time getting out into the community, finding ways to be connected. A lot of times, he just sat at home by himself.

That's something we hear from a lot of families that come to HUG, especially after high school. We hear all the time about this great drop-off in their younger 20s. Even though it's 2017, there were some great things going on in our community, it took a ton of research to find everything.

Our goal at Help Us Gather is to provide community calendars for folks in the Tampa Bay area so they don't have to spend hours researching what activities are in my age range? What activities are specifically for my disability? What's adaptive? What's low-cost?

We aggregate all of that into three community calendars on our website for children, teens, and adults. The goal is to just save individuals with disabilities and caregivers a ton of time. That calendar is a way to jump on, find out what's going on any given day, find programs to join.

When we first started, I think we had about 20 different organizations where we shared their activities, and now we're up to more than 90. Even since 2017, there are just so many more adaptive activities, but a lot of times, even for small organization, getting the word out is a challenge. You have a limited or no marketing budget.

That's our goal, is to act as that landing spot to provide a free method for users and for organizations to get connected and to make sure no one in our community has to feel lonely simply because they have a disability.

Maddie: Community is so important, and I find that a lot of folks sometimes underestimate how important community is and access to the community, and friendships and activities that are accessible for people with disabilities.

Could you tell us a little bit about some of these partnerships you've made with some of these organizations? You mentioned over 90 organizations that provide accessible options and low-cost options for a variety of disabilities. What do some of those look like? What activities are out there?

Ashley: There are so many. We're really lucky. There are some great nationwide organizations like Special Olympics -- we share their programming and how to get involved -- but even some smaller community resources.

We have adaptive gyms for children, even parenting courses for parents with young babies. Inclusive events are becoming much more popular, which is amazing to see. We've got adaptive kayaking. Even just social events. It doesn't necessarily have to be centered around a sport. A lot of times, there are just social groups.

There's an organization around us that does a Friday night dance party every Friday, and it's for all ages. Sometimes, that's what you need, it's just that outlet, to get out and let loose, and have fun and meet people in a welcoming space.

I think we all learned throughout the pandemic how isolating it can feel really quickly when you don't have a social outlet, when you don't have opportunities to leave your home, or your circle goes really wide to really small. It felt like that happened overnight.

We all have first-hand knowledge of how it feels, that socially isolated feeling. It's not just an emotional impact. We've seen a lot of research that it impacts long-term health, even just hope. We know the power of hope. I'm glad that other organizations in our community are seeing that power, because truly, a lot of the activities are easy to make adaptive.

We're seeing a lot of even traditional organizations that didn't host adaptive events now are. It's an incredible change. Obviously, there's still a lot more we can do and we want to do, but we're seeing since 2017, since HUG's inception, a lot of change that makes us hopeful for the future.

Maddie: Yes, and your work truly emphasizes the fact that advocacy has such an impact and inspires other organizations and folks to do the same and recognize their place to create their own spaces to be accessible.

To that, how can folks implement accessibility and what small steps can they take in their own lives to advocate for accessible recreational options?

Ashley: Absolutely. That's a question that we get a lot in our traditional HUG, where we've created a website where people can find that information. It's another branch of what we do. It's called weinclude.org. We've compiled resources for businesses, schools, and individuals on how you can be inclusive in those different spaces.

A lot of it just comes down to asking the question for many people we've spoken with. You don't know, you don't know, right? If you don't know how to be inclusive, you didn't know you needed to be inclusive, the steps could be really easy.

We've helped a lot of businesses in our area install ramps, or we've talked to a lot of businesses about sensory triggers and how to solve those issues, communicating with individuals in different ways. Having that phone number someone can call or having that menu that you can email. Having a menu that's all in text form, instead of just a PDF version of your menu.

Even those small things that you might not realize help you become inclusive.

There are a lot of different ways that sometimes when we talk about inclusion can sound like this huge, difficult concept. Oh, that will be too expensive to implement, or oh, that doesn't impact us, but you never know what barriers your business, or organization, or even school might unintentionally be putting up. That's why we've compiled those resources.

In individual lives, I think what we've seen works is just not treating individuals with disabilities like they're invisible, because otherwise, we create an entire generation of people who feel unseen. That leads to social exclusion, to isolation. Just by looking someone in the eyes and having a conversation with them, that goes a long way.

Maddie: To your point, being accessible and being inclusive, it's an action. It's an act of love and it's something that has to continue forever. You don't achieve accessibility in one day. It's molding, it's changing, and as people need certain things, you have to adapt and connect to accessibility.

I just want to thank you so much, one, for being on this podcast today, but continuing to not only provide resources on your own website, but sharing these educational and advocacy resources to other folks that are trying to do their best as well.

I know that Florida has a better future with folks like you, so thank you so much, Ashley.

Ashley: Thank you so much. Thank you so much for spreading the word. We really appreciate it. A lot of times, the biggest hurdle is just making sure people know about the amazing things that are going on here. I really appreciate the work you guys are doing.

Maddie: Thank you so much. It was great talking to you.

Ashley: Thank you. You, as well.

Keith: Next, we're going to chat with Stacy Busch from No Divide KC, an arts and music organization in Kansas City that strives to make all of their events and performances accessible and inclusive no matter who you are.

Maddie: Hi, Stacy. Thank you so much for being a guest on our podcast today.

Stacy Busch: Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Maddie: Please tell us a bit about yourself and your organization.

Stacy: Sure. My name is Stacy Busch. My pronouns are she/her. I am the Co-Founder of an arts nonprofit called No Divide KC. We're located in Kansas City, and we create arts events for social causes of all kinds. Our mission statement is to share the stories of those that are misrepresented or underrepresented in our community.

We do all types of things. We're not allied specifically with one issue or cause. Our main objective is to create arts events that are accessible, that are inclusive, and that are very high quality as well.

Maddie: Awesome. Thank you so much. Can you tell us a little bit more about your mission statement and how No Divide KC is different in making the concert space welcoming for all folks?

Stacy: Sure. My background is in music. I moved to Kansas City to pursue my master's degree in music composition. I have spent a lot of time in concert hall spaces and traditional concert music.

As a woman and as someone also with other disabilities as well, I felt stifled. The etiquette and the privilege were something that was a glaring issue for me as I was moving through. It also

didn't fit me creatively and the avenues that I wanted to go down personally in my art practice and in the kind of music that I was creating.

No Divide was created around the time when I was finishing school. My partner, my spouse, is English as a second language instructor. We were both fairly concerned about the political landscape at the time, and we wanted to create an event, so we started this benefit concert.

The concert benefited all the funds went to organizations in Kansas City that were supporting immigrant refugee populations. The Turn Up was great. We had all of these organizations, Turn Up, and wanted to be a part of it. Performers and artists, they all reached out. The event got larger than we expected. At the events, everyone was like, "What's the next thing?"

I happen to call the benefit concert, No Divide, and that along with my personal art practice as someone...I'm a recovering alcoholic, and I have bipolar disorder. A lot of my work is focused on mental health and addiction.

All of those things collided for us to form this arts organization that was focused on these issues, focused on sharing stories, and focused on presenting arts opportunities that really did benefit artists and the audience's that attended them.

Maddie: That's wonderful. What a beautiful way to start an organization just from community's interest and community grows just from the start.

Tell us a little bit about your more recent event that happened about a month or so ago as the Come As You Are -- Vulnerability in the Concert Space event. What kind of feedback did you get from those folks that attended?

Stacy: The Come As You Are -- Vulnerability in the Concert Space was a rethinking of traditional concert hall. It had actually been in the works for quite a while. Due to the pandemic, it was postponed and transitioned into multiple different stages.

We were happy to finally have the live performance premiere on March 19th of this year. It was a great turnout and it really came together beautifully despite a long process, ever changing process.

The way that we came up with it was one of our board members is also composer, also someone with disabilities of various kinds. I felt similarly to the way that I did in my experiences. We thought how can we go through No Divide and share our mission statement via the concert hall and what changes can we make. That's how the idea started.

What we did was partner with Ensembles in Kansas City of different kinds. We had newEar Chamber Ensemble, which is a premiere Contemporary Ensemble. It's high professional Ensemble. We also partnered with the Mid America Freedom Band, which is an LGBTQ community band, and a local choir as well called KC VITA.

We bought all of those together to commission some new works. We put a call out for composers to focus on particularly the theme of vulnerability as it relates to their experiences in the concert hall, their experiences with privilege and etiquette and accessibility, and create new work specifically for these Ensembles to perform.

We sent out that call. Then throughout, since it was such a long process, we also added a secondary call that was for art songs, which are solo vocal singing with piano. All of those composers were LGBTQ composers and sharing their experiences, particularly in the queer art field with vulnerability.

We brought those to Ensemble and art songs together to create our programming. I can share a little bit more about how we tackle different accessibility issues and disability issues specifically, but that was the concept for the project.

Maddie: It's wonderful to hear about all the different folks that were able to come out and also participate. As you mentioned -- I'm curious as well -- you alluded to this false prestige, false etiquette, and privilege that comes with the concert hall and how that makes folks uncomfortable.

It's not just the etiquette and the prestige of the concert hall that's inaccessible to folks. Music spaces in general are inaccessible to a lot of folks disabilities, just by the nature of how they're constructed, the nature of folks disabilities and things of that nature. How did you make that event accessible and how do you do that for a variety of folks different disabilities?

Stacy: I think the first obvious choice is to have people with disabilities involved in creating the project. That's something that we've really cultivated at No Divide.

Our board is a variety of different people, coming from different backgrounds, having lots of different experiences. I think that's always the number one choice when you are creating arts events or doing creative output is that you need to have people in the writing room, in the production room, that are representing the community that you're going to serve. That seems the clearest.

Then, I am particularly interested in, as a performing artist, all of the environmental variables that have to do with performing arts spaces. It's not simply we're going to perform these works, and you're going to sit there and listen to them, and we're going to clap in between.

There's actually so many other things going on, like the venue and the space itself. It goes back to that classic example of the premier violinist performing on this multimillion dollar violin in the subway. Far less, people understood the gravity of that situation, the prestige of that situation, when it was placed in a subway station.

That is just a little dip into how environment and venue and space can alter experiences for people. I think we have to be more understanding of all of these variables that are actually involved when we're putting out a concert. That's something that really inspires me. That's something that I think about a lot.

I tend to think more holistically about arts events. What does the space look like? What does it feel like? How are people moving in it? How are people experiencing it?

The other easy thing to do is just research, see what other organizations are doing, get involved with the organizations in your community that are serving those populations, and see what they're doing.

We came up with a few different things. The first of which is just to find a venue that's ADA compliant. That's also an easy tick to make, especially since that is on the radar of so many more people these days. That's not a very difficult thing to come up with.

The other thing that we wanted to address was socioeconomic standing and making sure that we were breaking down the restrictions in terms of the etiquette. The event was free to attend. There was no attire restrictions or different ways that you needed to dress.

We also broke down a common etiquette in the concert hall. A flaw was accepted at any time. We spoke to folks that were entering the space, as people came in, and we had this time to chat with people pre concert.

We had a video that was playing that was subtitled where you were introduced to all of the composers, which I think is nice to have some type of video elements along with concert hall music or when you're presenting music events, so that people can gain a better understanding of who these people are and to get to know the point of the project a little bit deeper.

We also made sure that the seating was arranged in a way that felt more inclusive as well. It wasn't a church setting, but we broke down all of the seating of the pews, of the chairs, and we just presented the concert on the floor and had a circular seating arrangement that was more spaced out, that was easy to access.

Not only does that help with people that have physical disabilities, but it also helps with people that may have hearing impairments or visual impairment, because you're so close to the action. You're so close to the work that's being performed.

It also makes it feel more welcoming. It makes it feel like everyone is a part of something, and it's more of a community-oriented environment space, compared to when you're sitting in a grand concert hall. Those often have a lot of stairs or a lot of ways that you need to get around, and you're very distanced from the performance itself.

Of course, we also had large-print programs and QR codes that you can zoom in and zoom out very easily. That was some of the main things that we tried to do to focus more on the full experience of attending an event.

There is something that's also intangible about No Divide in the way that we create a space that just feels welcoming to people.

That's often the feedback that we get from people that attend our events. It's something that we really take seriously, even though there's not specific elements that we're checking off the list to create that. It's mostly just having those personalities and having that intent from the start.

Maddie: Yeah, definitely. Thank you so much for naming those examples too, because as like you said, it's important to create the space and intrinsically do it and start from the ground and build up.

A lot of folks sometimes don't know where to start to make their spaces accessible, and for those who are listening that are trying to do better, I appreciate you naming some of those tangible steps that some folks can take in order to do better in the future.

It's also just so wonderful to hear...As we know, disability, a disability identity, as someone who identifies as disabled myself, disability is such a beautiful identity in the way that it demands innovation and creativity in order for the community to connect and function.

It's beautiful and wonderful to hear how that creativity came to life in such a real way in this concert space.

Stacy: Thank you.

Maddie: With that, I wanted to go back to what you were saying as far as all these different accessibility needs and ways to make the space accessible. A lot of folks may think that this work, making concerts accessible, providing all of the materials folks may need to participate, could be a lot of work or costly for some organizations or folks that may not have the resources.

What advice would you give them to create their own accessible events?

Stacy: I think this is definitely a large issue, especially in our consciousness right now as individuals.

I feel like a lot of people have this experience of feeling like almost like it's a defense mechanism where we feel maybe attacked or we feel like, oh, I am really a good person, and I don't want to feel like I'm not trying, I don't want to feel like I'm not doing the right thing, simply because these issues can be overwhelming. It's like, how do we start and how do we do this?

I think that feeling happens when we look at all these steps that need to take, like you're saying, the cost, and the amounts of time, and the amounts of energy. I don't actually think that's a real way of looking at it and something that makes it happen.

I think it's more appropriate to look at it just on the creation level. That's actually fairly easy to implement. When you're thinking about events that are creative or artistic events, just from the beginning and thinking about it more holistically, or thinking about it holistically in terms of the environment and all of these different ways that you can create an art event.

But then also thinking about it in terms of who are the actual people that are coming to this event? Who are the individuals that are there? If I'm attending this event, how would I want to feel, and how would I feel safe, and how would I feel comfortable?

Those questions, just thinking about those things in the beginning, that's not costly and that's not coming up with a lot of energy or difficult.

I think that's actually the main thing that is accessible to everyone. I think it also eases those tensions, also to understand that there's not an ending point to this. There's not people that are doing it correctly and people that aren't doing it correctly.

This is a never ending process of us learning and growing. We're always in this position where there's things that we're learning and there's things that we're going to continue to implement, and change, and learn. Getting rid of that divisiveness and thinking about these issues really helps just on the intellectual, emotional level.

I think it's also just about getting involved with your community, inviting people to the events that have disabilities and talking to people that are in your community that are working in this area, maybe looking up what are the organizations.

Maybe it's disability rights. Here in Kansas City, we have The Whole Person. We have other organizations that are all over the place and really easy to just talk to or go to their events, sign up for their newsletter. If you're in the arts, the NEA, the National Endowment of the Arts, arts.gov, has ADA information and research on ways that you can do that.

I think it's just being a part of the conversation more than anything, and rather than feeling like these are tasks that I have to do in order to do this right, and I'm so behind, and I'm not doing it right, and this is going to cost a lot of money.

I think just coming at it from a more community level and understanding that we're all in this together, and we're all trying to make the right choices, and we're all learning, eases those tensions.

Maddie: Definitely. How can listeners of this podcast or folks that are reading the transcript learn more about No Divide KC, other folks that are doing this work, or just accessibility in concert spaces, event spaces, things like that?

Stacy: If you're interested more in what No Divide KC does, we are at nodividekc.org. We are on social media, Instagram and Facebook, @nodividekc. You can email us. You can reach out to us.

You can attend our events or be on our newsletter. We love hearing from people and even getting pitched ideas of events that they'd like to see in their community or be a part of.

Some other resources that I think I mentioned, I was going to say arts.gov/impact/accessibility, which is the National Endowment of the Arts page for accessibility.

Also, I would just recommend attending local events and getting more involved. Thinking about it more as I am a neighbor, I am a person of my community, I'm trying to be more involved in the lives of my neighborhood and my community, is really a nice way of thinking about it.

Maddie: Wonderful. One last question, what do you hope to see in the future of music, the concert hall, performances of that...things of that nature, what do you hope to see as far as accessibility in breaking down these previous prestigious and privileged ideals of music in the concert space?

Stacy: I think that we are making progress in that area, particularly with the concert hall, though there's so much progress to be made. It really feels like dropping the bucket, but people are talking about it more and others are having these conversations where they feel like, "Actually, I feel other than this, and maybe it actually doesn't create the best artwork."

Maybe, there are more people that have different things to say that their opinion and their voices is valued in a way that's not tokenism, that's not seen as not mainstream or a different perspective. Maybe, that's something that we need to voice more.

There is positivity at all of this. I think also, though, it really does come down to grassroots organizing and doing it ourselves in DIY situations.

I'm really excited about the work that No Divide does, and that there will be other iterations of this Come As You Are events. There was a lot of positive reception afterwards. People reached out to us from larger organizations and more established concert hall spaces in Kansas City. We're interested in pursuing different iterations of this events. That's how it starts.

Even though there's large establishment and systems in place, there are people that are really interested in this. There are individuals that care, and we need to connect with them and build from there.

Maddie: Plus, Stacy has been wonderful to talk with you today and learn more about your work. We are hopeful for the future of accessibility of the concert space as well. Thank you so much for being here, sharing your lived experience and your knowledge with us and we hope to connect with you soon.

Stacy: Thank you so much for having me. I love having this discussion. Thanks so much.

Keith: Thank you, Ashley and Stacy, for being our guests on this episode of Accessibility Outside the Box. We hope our listeners have been able to take something tangible from this episode and implement it in their own lives.

Maddie: Definitely. Just as a reminder, be sure to subscribe to our podcast. We're on all podcast platforms -- Apple podcast, Spotify, Google, Amazon, YouTube, and more. You can also find us on our website at disabilityrightsflorida.org/podcast.

Keith: We'll catch you next week for our next episode. Thank you for listening to the You First podcast or reading the transcript online. Please email any feedback, questions, or ideas about the show to podcast@disabilityrightsflorida.org.

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Announcer: The You First podcast is produced by Disability Rights Florida, a not-for-profit corporation working to protect and advance the rights of Floridians with disabilities through advocacy and education.

If you or a family member has a disability and feel that your rights have been violated in any way, please contact Disability Rights Florida. You can learn more about the services we provide, explore a vast array of resources on a variety of disability-related topics, and complete an online intake on our website at disabilityrightsflorida.org.

You can also call us at 1-800-342-0823. Thank you for listening to You First, The Disability Rights Florida Podcast.

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