

AWARENEWS

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

By Resa Rombouts, ID 18402

Back in January of 2016, I joined the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD). At our first meeting, Chief Coyle, who chaired the ACPD at that time, was discussing the National Disabled Employee Awareness Months (NDEAM) events during the month of October. During one ACPD meeting, the Chief started a roundtable discussion to find a way to bring all the agencies to the same place to recruit instead of competing against each other. We knew we had to put the effort into hosting this event if we wanted it to happen. As Chief Coyle talked, I used my cell phone to search for what we needed to do to obtain a permit at the State Capitol grounds in Downtown Sacramento. I could feel the annoyance radiate off Chief as I frowned at my phone. I popped my head up and explained I found how to submit a request for a permit and the calendar for the State Capitol. By the end of the meeting, we had selected the first Saturday in October of 2016 and submitted the permit request. Within the week, we were approved for the first CHP NDEAM at the State Capitol. Thanks to the curse of competency, this was now my project. A few weeks later,

I discovered I was pregnant with my second child. Soon after, I found myself doing desk duty, and I was able to devote a large portion of my time to organizing and creating the ACPD's first-ever NDEAM event. I'm only slightly kidding when I call this event my baby.

Our first NDEAM event was a great starting point, but I wouldn't have called it an overwhelming success. The ACPD did a comprehensive after-action review and came up with some points for improvement. We moved the event from a Saturday to Thursday and focused on being available during lunch and break times. We started a "save the show" box with all the random little things we discovered we needed. That box grows every year. In 2017, we added a band, the "Early Birds" and the Mounted Patrol. The horses were a big hit. In 2018, we added honoring the winners of the ACPD's statewide art contest which features artists with disabilities. In 2019, we partnered with the California Department of Social Services and doubled in size to 45 vendors. My highlight was when an individual arrived with a resume in hand,

dressed for an interview, and looking for employment. I thought we had finally made it, and this was going to be a huge improvement for everyone.

Then in 2020 the pandemic hit, and we closed for a couple of years. We came back in 2022 with 24 vendors. It felt good to be back, and we expected a slow start. I figured 2023 would start the rebuilding process, and it would take a few years.

2023 was our biggest year; I have never been happier to be wrong. We had over 47 state and local vendors, our largest crowd (yet), we honored the art contest winners, and the South Side Unlimited Choir performed. It was a great success.

We are preparing for 2024: the Choir gained members and has agreed to perform again, the Mounted Patrol will be there, we have a food truck planned, and we might even have a special guest. This year's NDEAM event shows promise of being the biggest yet and will show the public that we are working hard to support persons with disabilities within our communities.

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The Role of the Department's ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

By Gerardo Serrato, ID 18437

"A healthy society is not one that waits for people to become ill, but one that sees how health is shaped by social, cultural, political, economic, commercial and environmental factors, and takes action on these for current and future generations."

– Ehsanul Chowdhury

My name is Gerardo Serrato, and I am currently assigned to the Dublin Area – the gateway from the Central Valley into the Bay Area. I was born and raised in the Central Valley. A couple of years ago, I had the opportunity to assist a departmental employee in coordinating a "Rock Your Socks" event and saw how a little bit of effort went a long way. The "Rock Your Socks" event occurs every year on March 21, and its purpose is to bring people all around the world to come together to bring awareness to Down Syndrome. Soon after, I learned about the Department's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD). I immediately knew I wanted to be a part of the committee to help other members develop strategies to help the disabled community. As chair of the Department's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD), allow me to explain the mission and work of the ACPD and share a story that, despite



seeming ordinary, had a profound effect on a Santa Cruz community. The ACPD works with the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEEO) to advise the Office of the Commissioner on matters involving persons with disabilities. Promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities into the Department is the overarching goal of the ACPD. In short, the ACPD supports the Department by actively promoting disability awareness and fair employment opportunities for all workers via outreach, hiring, advocating for, and supporting the needs of employees with disabilities and being present with the public through community engagement. This is important because inclusion for people with disabilities cannot be

achieved if disability awareness is not in our vision.

According to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 7,624,000 adults in California are thought to be disabled; this means that 1 in 4 adult Californians live with a disability (Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data: California). The Department's pride is in providing the highest level of safety, service, and security. The mission and work of the ACPD work in tandem with the Department's pride. Maybe you're asking yourself how you can help this cause. One way you can lend support is by taking the time to learn more about the difficulties and barriers individuals with disabilities face every day. "Developing a culture of awareness is



important in understanding the needs and challenges of people with disabilities inside and outside the Department.” Additionally, being aware the Department participates in the Limited Examination and Appointment Program (LEAP) can be a beneficial recruitment tool. The LEAP is an optional pathway to state service for people with disabilities and helps bring diversity to the Department. Cultivating a diverse workplace and becoming more inclusive helps us meet our goal of providing the highest level of safety,

service, and security. While the work the ACPD does within the Department is important to our success, we also work hard to support persons with disability of the public through community engagement. One great example of this is the ACPD’s annual art contest. Several years ago, the ACPD implemented an art contest where community members with disabilities could participate. The artistic ability on show has been astounding every year, and this forum has allowed ACPD members to engage with the public we have sworn to serve. Annually, ACPD members choose an art theme, which is shared with different community centers that assist individuals with disabilities. Every October, during the National Disability Employment Awareness Month Fair at the State Capitol, the contest culminates with the top winners and honorable mentions being awarded recognition. Each area office receives a poster of the winning artwork to put on display.

This past November, retired Captain Chris Sherry, Officer Manuel Robles, and I had the privilege of meeting two artists from Claraty Arts in Santa Cruz, Theresa Willett and Kira Andreas. They were recognized for their artistic talent, and Theresa and Kira were presented with their framed artwork and certificates of appreciation.

The theme of the art contest was “Animals in Law Enforcement,” and Officer Robles is depicted in Theresa’s painting. She was inspired after she saw a picture of Officer Robles holding an injured baby deer on social media and painted a picture of it. Officer Robles was able to present the award to her, and she became so moved by the moment, she was drawn to tears. During the presentation, there were approximately 20 other working artists from the disabled community. Based on the attendees’ reactions and conversations we had with them, it was evident the artists were moved and motivated to continue to show up to the studio the next day with a sense of purpose and belonging in the community. The adage, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” by Napoleon Bonaparte, lives on.



Works Cited: Chowdhury, Ehsanul Huda, et al. “CSR Reporting of Stakeholders’ Health: Proposal for a New Perspective.” *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 3, 22 Jan. 2021, 1133, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031133>.

“Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data: California.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 12 May 2023, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/california.html.

WHAT IS AN INTERNAL CARDIAC DEFIBRILLATOR?

By Sharon Palacios, OSSII, #A11730



An Internal Cardiac Defibrillator (ICD) is a medical device which is used to help the human heart maintain a normal heart rhythm by shocking the heart back into a normal rhythm if a person's heart is beating too fast or not at all. The ICD is a pocket-sized equivalent to the Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). You may have seen the AED on the wall in an Area Office, public facility, or maybe even the local supermarket. They usually have a sign with red lettering indicating AED over them. These devices can become a life saver for someone, maybe even you.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), a battery-powered pulse generator is implanted in a pouch under the skin of the chest or abdomen, often just below the collarbone. The generator is about the size of a pocket watch. Wires or leads run from the pulse generator to positions on the surface of or inside the heart and can be installed through blood vessels, eliminating the need for open-chest surgery. This allows the device to know when the heartbeat is abnormal and return the heart to normal rhythm. Some ICDs have a pacemaker feature when the

patient's heartbeat is too slow and works as a pacemaker and sends tiny electric signals to their heart.

New ICDs also provide "overdrive" pacing to electrically convert a sustained ventricular tachycardia (fast heart rhythm) and "backup" pacing if bradycardia (slow heart rhythm) occurs. They also offer a host of other sophisticated functions such as storage of detected arrhythmic events and the ability to perform electrophysiological testing. Stored information can help a patient's doctor optimize the ICD for their needs.

With the surgical placement of the ICD, the patient's lifestyle may have to be adjusted to certain changes. While having this life saver is a miracle, it also has limitations. If the patient was an active to athletic person before having this device, there can be a very difficult adjustment period. If they were into contact sports, say football or soccer, those days are essentially over due to the rough activity involved in these sports. Manufacturers, doctors, and specialists all say to avoid contact sports while having one of these devices. There are also other sports they advise the patient to stay away from, or perhaps, beware of due to the risks involved, such as biking, horseback riding, or swimming. This is in case the patient receives a shock therapy and can faint and fall from the bike or horse, or accidentally drown in water. According to the AHA, if a person has an ICD, they need to be aware of their surroundings and other devices that may interfere with its operation. Potentially disruptive devices include those with strong magnetic fields.

Some devices, such as cell phones, electronic security devices, and metal detectors can disrupt the ICD's signaling and prevent it from working properly. The longer they are exposed to the

potentially interruptive device, and the closer that device is in proximity to their ICD, the more likely it will affect the ICD's performance.

Patients may experience a "therapy" or a shock, which will feel like getting kicked in the chest. In some cases, this can cause patients to lose consciousness. As scary as this sounds, this is a good thing because this means the ICD is working and performing as it should. If they wake up from this therapy, the ICD did its job, and it has kept them alive. Because of these therapy sessions, many patients become apprehensive and go into a state similar to depression, or perhaps PTSD like behavior. With a high level of momentary pain involved with the therapy, it causes a fear of it happening again. Patients tend to slow down after these therapies because they don't want it to happen again. If a person has a heart condition, it is usually beneficial to stay active and healthy within their limitations.

There are simple, everyday things a patient needs to be aware of if they have an ICD. A cell phone or tablet must be kept at least six inches from the ICD. When walking into a department

store, they need to hurry through the detectors at the door because the detectors can interfere with the ICD. Going through TSA at the airport, they need to let TSA know they have this device because they cannot go through metal detectors.

The ICD battery lasts approximately seven to ten years. To replace the battery, an out-patient surgery needs to be performed. Doctors remove the old ICD and replace it with a new one. Full recovery is about six to eight weeks, which prevents the patient from lifting or any engaging in any strenuous activities until the doctor feels the surgery site is healed and the new ICD is working properly.

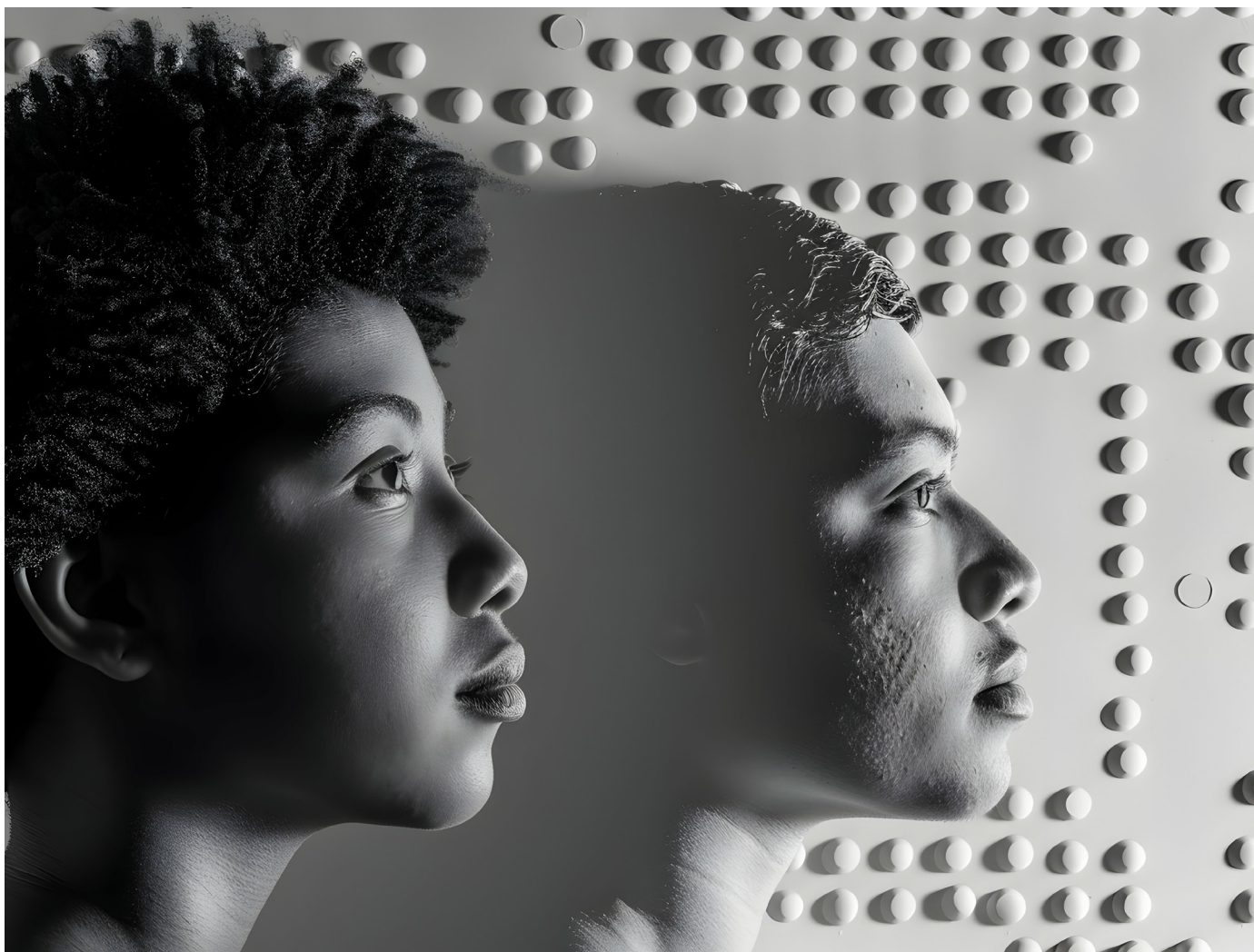
All in all, the modern science helps those with medical issues. Technology is moving ahead quickly, and with it is the hope that ICDs become more user friendly with fewer limitations. Wherever you may be in life, or wherever your loved one is, it's important to appreciate the things that modern technology can offer.

Some information obtained from the American Heart Association website:
<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/arrhythmia/prevention--treatment-of-arrhythmia/implantable-cardioverter-defibrillator-icd>

THE BRAILLE EDITION

LEAP Program Brochure

By Sharon Palacios, OSSII, #A11730



As a state employee, you may have heard the term “LEAP.” Often, the term goes unnoticed or unknown. However, it is a very crucial program to enable those living with a disability an ability to work and live independently by obtaining a state job.

The CalHR website states,

“The Limited Examination and Appointment Program (LEAP) is an optional pathway to state civil service for persons with disabilities. LEAP is an alternative to the traditional testing process, which allows applicants with disabilities to demonstrate competency through on-the-job testing, known as the Job Examination Period (JEP). Persons with disabilities may pursue state employment through the standard, non-LEAP process, or the LEAP process.”

Having served on various levels for the California Highway Patrol’s (CHP) Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) since 2017, I have worked at various disability awareness events. At these events, our purpose is to promote and recruit for the LEAP Program and careers within the Department. Our goal is to reach out to everybody in the disability community with this vital information. At one of our events just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a visually

impaired attendee asked me for a braille edition LEAP brochure. Much to my embarrassment we did not have a braille edition brochure. Like everything else at the time, this was put on hold due to COVID-19. Finally, when the world began operating again, and while working at our National Disability Employment Awareness Month Fair at the State Capital in October 2023, I saw our chance at redemption. Our booth was directly opposite a braille specialty booth that made books into braille. I immediately went to their booth and asked how to create a braille brochure to have available during events. They advised me to check with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to see about this idea. The DOR is also the department responsible for the LEAP Program brochure, and they just happened to be at our fair. I went to their booth, spoke to Ms. Chanel Duplessis with the DOR in Sacramento, explained my embarrassing experience, and asked about the ability to create a braille edition LEAP brochure. She loved the idea and brought it forward to her superiors at DOR. Approximately three months later, the braille edition of the LEAP brochure was developed and put into production. The CHP’s ACPD now has braille edition LEAP brochures to hand out as needed.

According to the American Foundation for the Blind, in a 2019 American Community Survey with the U. S. Census Bureau, California is home to 747,867

visually impaired individuals. Of these individuals, 96,956 persons are aged 18-34 and 258,872 persons are aged 35-64. I chose these two age ranges because these are the age ranges most people seek viable employment. There are so many potential employees within this demographic. If the ACPD and DOR could reach out to these people, think of what a rewarding career they can build upon. The State of California is a hospitable employer when it comes to reasonable accommodations for employees; so many jobs are available that can be performed by a person with disabilities just as well as a person without. With technology the way it is today, it can be straightforward to adapt a workstation to someone with a will to work and become an independent and productive member of society.

Due to the teamwork with our two agencies, the CHP and DOR, we saw a need and created a solution. This has made a significant improvement for the CHP’s ACPD to have the ability to include and reach out to everyone to promote the LEAP program. Sometimes, just asking a simple question can help to improve someone else’s chances of success. As Colonel John “Hannibal” Smith once said, “I love it when a plan comes together!”

A HELPING HAND WHEN NEEDED

By Phillip Mackintosh, ID 17334

"Darn it, this kid is quick!"

I remember thinking as my five years old, autistic son, PJ, managed to elude my grasping hands yet again. We were at a new church after a move across two states. I took off after him yet again. Our weekly Sunday ritual had seemingly become me chasing PJ around the pews of the church and carrying him screaming out into the foyer. But this time around, instead of the standard two or three circuits with at least two double backs, somebody popped out of another pew and slowed PJ down just enough for me grab his shirt tail. Delighted with the additional obstacle on his racetrack, PJ giggled for once when I caught him, and things went a little more smoothly as I exited the Sacrament Hall of the church. We followed that ritual quite a few times before PJ outgrew his racing tendencies. The person that popped out is still a cherished friend at church; you just don't forget the people who offer help when you were losing an important race!

Fast forward eight years when my races with PJ had long since ceased, and I kind of missed them. As I was settling

in at church and trying to stay awake without an invigorating footrace, I saw a newly moved in mom two pews ahead lose hold of her oldest child and off he went. He had been recently diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum as well. Like any boy his age, he was a speed demon! Mom was trying to build up speed but still losing ground at the third turn on the track. My old racing instincts kicked in and, suddenly, I was back in a race! I came around turn four still accelerating. The escapee saw me and started to slow with Mom coming in hot! She caught up and the race was over. "I still got it," I thought, as I walked back to my pew and Mom headed for the door. I became a regular participant for a couple of years, and we are still close!

My son, PJ, is an adult now. Raising him and providing a happy and fulfilling life for him would have been immensely more difficult without the people who helped us along. Health concerns, school, social interaction, doctor's appointments, public meltdowns, and finding the right resources are just the start of the list of challenges parents of special needs children can face. One thing that can help ease the burden is

having people that know when to step in and help. Most of us know of a child with special needs or an adult with a disability, and many of us are close to a family working through with these issues. If you may have wanted to help but weren't sure how, here are some ideas you might find useful in that endeavor.

1. Understanding: Although it is difficult to completely understand all of the challenges parents of children with special needs may face, it is easy to not judge or condemn someone because of what their small child is doing right now. The situation may be loud and uncomfortable, but just ignore the disruption and encourage the parent by giving them a commiserating smile that says, "That doesn't look like much fun, but you got this," and then move on without staring.

2. Acceptance: Most of us have had the experience of seeing a child or even an adult with severe or visually obvious disabilities, only to have our own child start loudly asking questions about them. Many people with disabilities and parents of children with special needs are happy to answer questions.



When we engage with people, it helps us, and our children, see past the physical differences and recognize ways we are all the same. Engagement creates communication which leads to understanding. It allows the person with the difference to show how they belong and how they contribute. There may be times in which questions are not desirable: of course, we respect their choice, but we should always be willing to engage.

3. Ask what you can do to help: If you see someone in an obviously difficult situation, don't be afraid to offer help. Asking shows you respect their ability to manage on their own while letting them know in a polite and nonthreatening way that they don't necessarily have to do so. Parents with years of with experience caring for children with special needs may not need our assistance but that doesn't mean it wouldn't be appreciated; sometimes your help can be invaluable.

If you are looking for ways to help people who care for children with disabilities, these few ideas can be a great starting point. Simple acts of service can help families with a tendency to feel isolated to feel seen, accepted and valued.

Promoting Inclusion Through Sports: THE POWER OF ADAPTED ATHLETICS

By Jonathan Boyd, ID 21302

In the world of sports, inclusivity has become a fundamental pillar for breaking barriers and bridging gaps among individuals of all abilities. Among the most powerful avenues for fostering inclusivity are sports tailored for those with special needs. These adapted sports not only provide physical activity and recreation but also serve as catalysts for social integration and personal development.

One of the most popular sports among individuals with special needs is wheelchair basketball. Originating in the mid-20th century, wheelchair basketball has evolved into a dynamic and highly competitive sport, attracting participants worldwide. By modifying traditional basketball rules and equipment, individuals with mobility impairments can actively engage in the game and showcase their athleticism and skill on an equal playing field. Through teamwork, strategy, and determination, wheelchair basketball cultivates a sense of camaraderie and empowerment, fostering relationships and instilling confidence in its participants.

Similarly, adaptive soccer, also known as power soccer or wheelchair soccer, has gained traction as a premier sport for individuals with physical disabilities. Played on a basketball court with specialized wheelchairs

equipped with guards, power soccer enables players to maneuver and kick a large soccer ball, emulating the exhilarating experience of traditional soccer. This sport not only promotes physical fitness and coordination but also emphasizes teamwork and communication as players strategize and execute plays to outmaneuver their opponents.

Additionally, swimming stands out as a universally inclusive sport, offering individuals with special needs the opportunity to experience the freedom and joy of aquatic movement. Through adapted swimming programs and facilities, swimmers with disabilities can develop their skills, improve their cardiovascular health, and participate in competitive events at local, national, and international levels. Beyond the physical benefits, swimming cultivates a sense of belonging and acceptance as individuals of diverse abilities come together to celebrate their shared passion for the water.

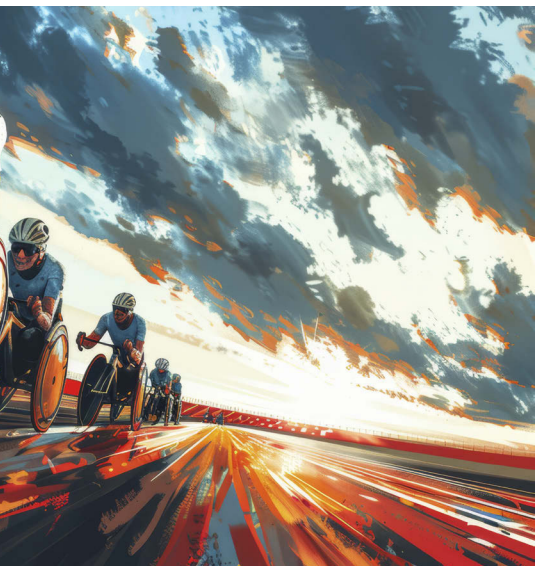
The rise of inclusive sports leagues and organizations has further propelled the movement towards greater accessibility and acceptance in sports. Initiatives such as the Special Olympics have revolutionized the landscape of adapted athletics, providing athletes with intellectual disabilities a platform to



showcase their talents and compete at elite levels. Through a myriad of sports ranging from track and field to bocce, the Special Olympics fosters a culture of inclusivity, respect, and dignity, enriching the lives of millions worldwide.

Adapted sports play a pivotal role in promoting inclusion and diversity within the realm of athletics. By breaking down barriers and fostering a culture of acceptance, these sports empower individuals with special needs to participate, compete, and thrive on their own terms. Through the universal language of sports, we can celebrate the unique abilities and talents of every individual, creating a more inclusive and equitable society for generations to come.

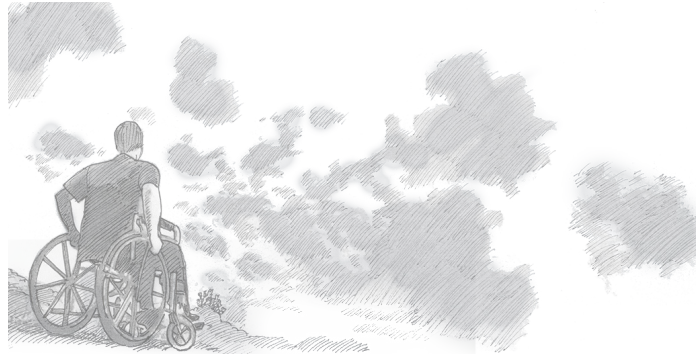
ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



The Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) is a group of appointed departmental employees who meet to discuss issues affecting persons with disabilities. The ACPD makes recommendations to the Commissioner on disability issues regarding accessibility, recruitment, training, and service to the public.

RESOURCES

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