

PRESS ADVISORY

2020 Virtual Alaska DISABILITY PRIDE Celebration July 20-26, 2020 via Live Facebook Event “2020 Virtual Alaska Disability Pride Celebration”

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July is Disability Pride Month! 30 years ago on July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed by Congress, establishing America’s commitment to end discrimination against people with disabilities. Disability Pride means accepting and honoring each person’s uniqueness and seeing disability as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity. Disability Pride awareness events promote visibility and mainstream awareness of the positive pride felt by people with disabilities. Alaska’s Virtual Disability Pride Celebration hopes to bring this message to our Alaskan friends and neighbors, and to raise awareness of the significance of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The volunteers coordinating this year’s event represent people with physical/intellectual/developmental disabilities, behavioral health disorders, autism, Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, and more.

What: This online event happens over the course of seven days, with each day featuring a different nationally-recognized guest speaker and an interview between the guest speaker and an Alaskan self-advocate interviewer. Each daily event will end with a pre-recorded video interview with an Alaskan disability advocate. On Sunday, the event lasts two-hours and will feature Guest Speakers, videos, and performances by Alaskan musicians.

When: July 20 - 26, 2020 (Monday through Sunday)

Times: Monday- Saturday (12–12:45pm, AK Time); Sunday (2:00-4:00pm, AK Time)

Where: Facebook event page: [“2020 Virtual Alaska Disability Pride Celebration”](#)

Special Guest Speakers/Performer/Interviewers: Temple Grandin, Zach Gottsagen, Judy Heumann, Micah Fialka-Feldman, Lydia X.Z. Brown, Erik Howk from Portugal. The Man, and *Stand Up For Mental Health*. See below for details about special guests and daily events.

Planners/Sponsors: Access Alaska, The Arc of Anchorage, Champney Consulting, Cindy & Vic’s R&R, Fairbanks Resource Agency, Wallbusters, Riverquest Group Home, Hope Community Resources, University of Alaska Center for Human Development, Frontier Community Services, Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Alaska Mental Health Board/Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and many self-advocates.

Close captions and ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters will be available for all events.

Featured Guest Speakers and Interviewers include:

Monday 7/20 (12-1:00pm): Zack Gottsagen is an actor, acting teacher, and Down syndrome advocate, best known for his film roles in *Peanut Butter Falcon*, *Best Summer Ever*, and *Bulletproof*. He was born with Down syndrome and grew up in a family that

promoted normalcy and mainstreaming. In 2020, Zack made Academy Awards history by being the first person with Down syndrome to present an award at the event. Alaskan interviewer is Garrett Dominick.

Tuesday 7/21 (12-1:00pm): Squirmy and Grubs (aka Shane and Hannah) are an inter-abled couple who host a daily vlog on Youtube, called Squirmy and Grubs, that posts humorous videos and answers questions about their lives together. Shane Burcaw was born with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and has used a wheelchair since the age of two. He is an author of three books, public speaker, and co-founder of a non-profit. Hannah Aylward studied liberal arts and is an accomplished swimmer and diver. She is able-bodied, and both she and Shane are disability advocates helping to end stigma about people with disabilities. Alaskan interviewer is Travis Noah.

Wednesday 7/22 (12-1:00pm): Micah Fialka-Feldman is a self-advocate, outreach coordinator, national speaker, and pioneer who advocates for disability pride, justice, and inclusion. He is part of the first wave of adults with an intellectual disability to attend college and be fully integrated in school and community. Micah advocates the notion that, “A community that excludes even one of its members is not a community at all.” Alaskan interviewer is Corey Gilmore.

Thursday 7/23 (12-1:00pm): Lydia X.Z. Brown is a disability justice advocate, organizer, attorney, educator, strategist, speaker, and writer whose work has largely focused on violence against multiply-marginalized disabled people. Lydia’s work has highlighted LGBTQ and issues impacting autistic people. Alaska interviewer is Ric Nelson.

Friday 7/24 (12-1:00pm): Judy Heumann is a disability rights activist who has used a wheelchair most of her life. Growing up, she experienced discrimination within the educational system, which prompted her and her mother to advocate for more inclusive school policies for children with disabilities. In 1974, she helped develop legislation that became the *Individuals With Disabilities Education Act*, and was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the *Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)*, which passed in 1990. Alaskan interviewer is Maggie Winston.

Saturday 7/25 (12-1:00pm): Stand Up For Mental Health is a Vancouver B.C.-based comedy troupe that promotes stand-up comedy as a way to break down stigma, prejudice, and discrimination around mental illness. Featured comedians for Alaska’s Disability Pride Celebration will include April Soon, Michael Morse, Kevin Scow, Bryan Hansen, Brianne Fung, and Juno Mac. Alaskan interviewer is Teri Tibbett.

Sunday 7/26 (2:00-4:00pm):

Temple Grandin (2:00-2:45pm) is a prominent author, advocate, and speaker on both autism and animal behavior. She is well-known for her work consulting on both livestock handling equipment design and animal welfare. She promotes acknowledging “differently-abled” individuals and education that recognizes and accommodates “different kinds of minds.” Alaskan interviewers are Jena Crafton and Tom Crafton.

Eric Howk (2:45pm- 3:00pm) is the guitar player for Portugal. The Man, an internationally-known indie rock band that originated in Alaska. Eric mobilizes through the use of a wheelchair, including performing on stage and traveling on an accessible tour bus. He will present a short video for Alaska’s Disability Pride event.

Hannah Yoter (3:00-3:15pm) is leader of the Hannah Yoter Band which performs original country, folk, bluegrass and Americana-inspired music in the Last Frontier. The band has recorded several albums. In addition to writing and producing beautiful music, Hannah works professionally with people with disabilities.

Kat Moore and the Forest That Never Sleeps (3:15-3:30pm) creates lyrical piano and cello compositions inspired by the Alaskan environment. Kat, who is based in Anchorage, also performs with Alaska's Super Saturated Sugar Strings.

Teri Tibbett (3:30-3:45pm) is a Juneau singer-songwriter who performs a variety of original songs rooted in personal experiences and Alaskan lifestyle—from salmon fishing, living off the grid, and snowboarding in the backcountry of the Tongass National Forest. She has both personal and professional experience in the field of mental health, addiction, and intellectual-developmental disabilities.

Disability Champions Awards (3:45-4:00pm). These awards recognize Alaskans who have made an extra effort to support the inclusion and rights of people with disabilities within their communities.