

WELCOME

BY JEFF LAFATA-HERNANDEZ

As many things in our country are changing quickly, Triangle's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is more important now than ever. The Disability Justice Task Force continues to do our work to ensure that Disability Justice and Anti-Ableism work are foundational pillars of our work, supporting people with disabilities and being a leader in disability services.

We also want to acknowledge and celebrate Black History Month at Triangle and the many black disabled leaders of past and present. Below are links to Triangle Blogs that highlight just a few black disabled leaders who worked to make our world a more just and equitable place for all. We encourage you all to learn more about these leaders and share them with the people we serve as ways to continue to teach Disability History and Disability Justice through our work.

Black History Month Posts on Triangle's Blog:

- **Dr. Oluwaferanmi Okanlami**
 - <https://triangle-inc.org/2024/02/16/celebrating-black-history-month/>
- **Claudia Gordon, Jazzie Collins, Brad Lomax, and Lois Curtis**
 - <https://triangle-inc.org/2023/02/16/celebrating-black-history-and-disability-history/>
- **Kathy D. Woods, Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, Vilissa Thompson, and Barbara Jordan**
 - <https://triangle-inc.org/2023/02/22/celebrating-black-history-and-disability-history-part-2/>



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Accessible Recreation - Accessible Martial Arts

BY MELISSA STROUT

During the winter months, it can feel tough keeping yourself active. We have found a cool accessible martial arts program!

Easterseals of Massachusetts offers an accessible martial arts program for anyone on Zoom. This program focuses on learning self-defense, stretching, exercise and relaxation techniques. The class is held every Thursday at 6pm (ET) virtually on Zoom. This class is free of charge and comes with no specific commitments to join. If you do choose to participate you will need to fill out intake paperwork and complete a waiver form.

For questions or to express interest reach out to Partick Remy (email Premy@eastersealsma.org) who oversees the program. Check out the link below for additional information!

<https://www.easterseals.com/ma/programs-and-services/recreation/accessible-martial-arts.html>

Accessible Meditation

BY KRYSTAL LINN

It is theorized that people with AD(H)D have lower dopamine levels due to a higher number of dopamine transporters compared to those in a non-AD(H)D brain. More transporters mean that the brain removes dopamine more quickly, leading to an increased need for dopamine, which can result in difficulty concentrating. When someone with AD(H)D is hyper-focusing, they can maintain that focus for an extended period since the brain continuously releases dopamine as a reward for completing tasks. fMRI imaging provides evidence that meditation boosts dopamine levels in the brain, assisting individuals with AD(H)D in sustaining dopamine levels and enhancing concentration and attention.

At first, it can be challenging for someone with AD(H)D to meditate, particularly if they perceive meditation as a chore, something impossible, or dull. Dopamine is often referred to as the "reward" chemical. The AD(H)D meditator needs to see meditation as having benefits that lead to a positive outcome. Individuals with AD(H)D frequently require fidgeting or movement to concentrate effectively. Movement such as swaying, rocking, or fidgeting may be needed to focus properly. Mantra and guided meditation are typically good options for those with a neurodivergent mind, as auditory stimulation can aid concentration.

Misconceptions regarding what is and is not meditation often discourage individuals with AD(H)D and other neurodivergent disorders from participating in the practice. Meditation doesn't have to be seated, still, or silent. Meditation is restful awareness, so doing whatever in your body makes you feel restful and aware is successful meditation. Mind clearing is not meditation but can be a byproduct of it. Meditation involves acknowledging thoughts and letting them go; making meditation an active thought practice can enhance the sense of reward for neurodivergent individuals, increasing dopamine levels and strengthening the connection between the prefrontal cortex and amygdala, improving concentration and impulse control. Over time, meditation becomes more accessible, and its effects are experienced and observed beyond the meditation cushion.

Local Arts + Culture

BY CHARLIE WARREN

Looking for a way to get your steps in, but want to stay out of the cold? Try a museum!

It's a nice way to take a walk, see something new, and talk about it.

We are lucky to have a number of world-class museums in our area, and they are all committed to providing accessible experiences. It can be helpful to check out different museums' accessibility pages to see what's available.

Here are a couple museums in our area with links to their accessibility pages:



- **Museum of Fine Arts - Boston**

- <https://www.mfa.org/visit/accessibility>
- The MFA has a variety of different programs and accommodations for people with disabilities. For example, noise-reducing headphones are available on a first-come first-served basis. For a more structured experience, visitor-centered, interactive tours for people with different accessibility can be booked in advance.

- **Peabody Essex Museum**

- <https://www.pem.org/visit/accessibility>
- PEM is certified Sensory Inclusive and partners with KultureCity to promote accessible and positive experiences at the museum for people with diverse sensory needs. To view available sensory features, visitors can download the KultureCity app for free. The museum has a limited number of sensory bags equipped with noise-canceling headphones, fidget tools, and verbal cue cards.

- **Museum of Science**

- <https://www.mos.org/visit/accessibility>
- All of the theater and presentation spaces in the museum are equipped with assistive listening systems to support people with hearing loss. Mobility devices such as wheelchairs for all ages, and electric scooters are available for sign out at the information desk.

Everyday Accessibility - Adaptive Clothing

BY ANNE GACHOHU

Adaptive clothing is specially designed apparel that makes dressing easier for individuals with disabilities, limited mobility, sensory sensitivities, or medical conditions. It can also benefit anyone who finds traditional clothing challenging to wear.

Adaptive clothing enhances independence, dignity, and comfort for those who struggle with conventional attire. This type of clothing is used by seniors, individuals recovering from surgery, and those with conditions like arthritis, cerebral palsy, or autism. Would you like recommendations on where to find adaptive clothing?



These clothes often include features like:

- Magnetic or Velcro closures instead of buttons or zippers for easier fastening.
- Open-back designs for individuals who need assistance with dressing.
- Elastic waistbands and adjustable fits for comfort and flexibility.
- Flat seams and taggled labels to reduce irritation for those with sensory sensitivities.
- Wheelchair-friendly designs with higher backs and longer front hems for better coverage and comfort.
- Medical-access clothing with discreet openings for feeding tubes, ports, or catheters.

In Massachusetts, there are several options for purchasing adaptive clothing:

- **befree:** Founded by two mothers, in Lynn, Massachusetts, befree specializes in adaptive clothing for individuals with disabilities and those recovering from surgeries. Their products are designed to be both functional and stylish.

Online Retailers:

- **Resident Essentials:** Offers a comprehensive selection of adaptive clothing for seniors, including items with easy closures and designs that facilitate dressing.
- **EasyWear Adaptive Clothing:** Provides fashionable adaptive apparel designed for individuals with reduced mobility or those undergoing rehabilitation.
- **Buck & Buck:** With over 40 years of experience, Buck & Buck offers a wide range of adaptive clothing for seniors, focusing on styles that make dressing easier.
- **Joe & Bella:** Specializes in adaptive clothing that promotes independence and comfort, catering to individuals with limited mobility.
- **Vertige Adaptive:** A fashion-forward brand offering adaptive clothing that combines style with functionality.

Disability History - The Wheels of Justice Campaign and Capitol Crawl

BY KASSI SOULARD

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which occurred on July 26, 1990. But earlier that year, two events took place that were instrumental in getting the ADA passed, as it had stalled in committee.

On March 12, 1990, over 700 disability activists assembled in front of the White House and began the mile-long Wheels of Justice March to the US Capitol. This march was organized by ADAPT, an organization founded in 1983. ADAPT originally stood for Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit, but they later changed their name to Americans Disabled Attendant Programs Today to accompany an expansion in their mission.

When the crowd reached the West Front of the Capitol, they heard several featured speakers, including ADAPT national leader Mike Auberger, who delivered a speech proclaiming that they would “not permit these steps to continue to be a barrier to prevent [them] from the equality that is rightfully ours.”

When Auberger’s inspiring speech concluded, the crowd moved to the base of the steps. There, spontaneously, more than 60 people who used wheelchairs, canes, and other assistive devices crawled and pulled their way up the 83 steps to the Capitol. The Capitol Crawl, as it came to be called, illustrated plainly how physical barriers and inaccessible architecture impacts people with disabilities, and in doing so, highlighted the need to pass the ADA.

Many activists then went and spoke with leaders in Congress, including Speaker of the House Tom Foley and House Minority Leader Bob Michels. Speaker Foley’s refusal to commit to an exact date of passage was frustrating, but not unexpected.

The next day, over 200 ADAPT activists continued the Wheels of Justice campaign, meeting with more representatives, asking them to stop stalling and to pass the ADA. Many representatives were not receptive to the activists’ arguments, leading some activists to chain their wheelchairs together in the Capitol Rotunda, chanting their demands to pass the ADA now. Capitol police used bolt cutters to unchain their wheelchairs, arresting 104 demonstrators. After being detained, police and activists had to wait for accessible police transportation to arrive.

For a third day, on March 14, over 300 activists participated in a sit-in in the offices of Representatives Hamilton Fish and Bud Shuster, plus the Judiciary Committee meeting room. More arrests followed at the end of the day.

The Wheels of Justice campaign and the Capitol Crawl were pivotal in encouraging lawmakers to act on the legislation and move it out of committee, and on July 26, 1990, the ADA was signed into law by President Bush.



Anti-Ableism Resources & Tips

BY JEFF LAFATA-HERNANDEZ

One way to challenge ableism in our work and daily lives is to challenge our assumptions of the abilities of others, whether it's the abilities of the people we serve, our co-workers, or strangers on the street. We often see a disability or know of a diagnosis, and we make assumptions about what a person may or may not be able to do. When we do this and act upon these assumptions, we often limit the opportunities of others and take away their autonomy. Instead, it is essential to ask what support one may need and how they want you to provide this support.

This is also important for the individuals we serve, as it will teach them how to advocate for themselves outside of Triangle. When they land a new job, they will eventually need to ask for help, whether that is to understand how to complete a specific job task or request a reasonable accommodation. By supporting individuals in asking for help and directing that help, we are giving them the self-advocacy tools they will need to thrive in the workplace and beyond.



Want to join the DJTF?

Reach out to Jeff at

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