

## NEWSLETTER OF THE DISABILITY JUSTICE TASK FORCE (DJTF)

### Welcome!

BY JEFF LAFATA-HERNANDEZ

Summer is finally here, and so is the new addition of the DJ Times! The Disability Justice Task Force continues to do great work to support the Triangle Community, and I am excited to share some of our latest updates.

The Disability Justice Task Force is pleased to announce that, following collaboration with the Racial Equity Committee and Triangle Executive Team, Triangle has developed a new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Statement. This statement serves as another means of communicating our ongoing commitment to DEIA work in all aspects of Triangle's operations. The new DEIA Statement is now live on the Triangle website, and you can find it by [clicking here](#).

As a Task Force, we have focused a great deal on supporting staff, but it is also crucial for us to bring our work directly to the people we serve every day. To support participants in developing their self-advocacy skills as they enter the workforce, we are pleased to announce the development of a new curriculum on Reasonable Accommodations. This curriculum will help participants understand what reasonable accommodations are, identify the accommodations they may need to be successful, and learn how to effectively advocate for themselves to receive these accommodations. Charlie Warren and Ethan Linsky have led this project with the support of the Task Force. Starting in June, Ethan and Charlie will conduct trial runs of the curriculum before rolling out the training to participants across Triangle's programs.

In addition to the highlights mentioned above, the Task Force has ongoing projects aimed at enhancing accessibility and equity for both staff and participants. We are excited to share these with you in the near future. In the meantime, we are always seeking input from Triangle Staff. If you have any thoughts you would like to share with the Task Force or ideas for projects we should pursue, [please fill out this form](#).

As we kick off the summer, we hope you enjoy this issue of the DJ Times, full of resources and knowledge to enjoy the summer in fun and accessible ways!

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# Local Arts + Culture

BY CHARLIE WARREN

This summer, there are lots of disability-friendly arts and culture opportunities throughout Massachusetts. Whether you are looking for a peaceful museum visit, an engaging performance, or a chance to be creative, there are more inclusive options for adults with disabilities to connect with arts and culture than ever before. Here's a look at some disability-friendly arts and culture activities:

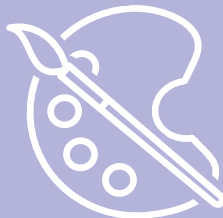
- **MIT Museum (Cambridge):** The MIT Museum offers "Quiet Hours," providing a dedicated evening with a limited number of visitors, reduced audio, and makers activities. They offer sensory maps and a social narrative to help plan your visit, and staff are on hand to assist. This is an excellent opportunity for adults to explore science and technology in a calm environment.
- **Museum of Science (Boston):** The Museum of Science is committed to accessibility, offering assistive listening systems, AIRA access for visitors who are blind or low-vision, and an Accessibility Coordinator to help plan visits.

For those who enjoy live performances or hands-on creative pursuits:

- **New Art Center (Newton):** The New Art Center runs inclusive arts programs specifically for adults with developmental disabilities, including weekly ceramics classes and an inclusive art program with an art therapist for adults in residential group homes.
- **Community Access to the Arts (CATA - Berkshire and Columbia counties):** CATA offers a wide range of workshops in various art forms—singing, drumming, dance, theater, painting, sculpture, creative writing—for people with disabilities. Check their schedule for public events or exhibitions.

When planning your summer arts and culture adventures, remember to always:

- **Check websites or call ahead:** Many venues have dedicated accessibility pages or staff who can provide detailed information on accommodations, quiet hours, or specific sensory-friendly offerings.
- **Look for "social stories" or pre-visit guides:** These resources can be valuable for preparing for a new experience
- **Inquire about specific needs:** Don't hesitate to ask about specific accommodations like assistive listening devices, wheelchair access, or quiet spaces.



# Everyday Accessibility - Summer Accessibility: BOSTON

BY ANNE GACHOHU

Accessibility is not seasonal—it must be consistent. Inclusive summer environments ensure everyone, regardless of ability, can enjoy the sunshine safely and with dignity.

Boston offers a variety of accessible options for residents and visitors to enjoy the summer months. Here's a guide to navigating summer accessibility in the city.

## Accessible Cooling Centers and Heat Relief

- During heatwaves, Boston opens **cooling centers** at various Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF) locations. These centers are wheelchair-accessible and provide a safe, air-conditioned environment for all residents. For instance, during a heat emergency declared from June 18–20, 2024, 14 BCYF community centers were opened to help residents stay cool ([boston.gov](https://www.boston.gov)).
- Additionally, the city offers **splash pads** at parks and playgrounds, and **indoor pools** across various neighborhoods. Registration for swimming times at BCYF's indoor pools can be found on the city's website ([boston.gov](https://www.boston.gov)).

## Accessible Outdoor Recreation

Boston and Massachusetts provide several accessible outdoor recreational opportunities:

- **State Parks:** Many state parks feature accessible pools, spray decks, and beaches equipped with mats and floating beach wheelchairs ([spedchildmass.com](https://spedchildmass.com)). Annually, Triangle, Inc. hosts Beach:Ability at Constitution Beach which is a family-friendly, free and accessible fun day.
- **Adaptive Recreation Programs:** The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) offers adaptive activities such as cycling, hiking, kayaking, and rowing at different state parks ([mass.gov](https://mass.gov))

Boston hosts numerous inclusive events during the summer:

- **Eastie Week:** Celebrated from July 14 to July 28, this event offers free and low-cost, family-friendly activities in East Boston, emphasizing community engagement ([bostonharbornow.org](https://bostonharbornow.org))
- **August Adventures:** Throughout August, the Highland Street Foundation provides free access to various cultural institutions across Massachusetts, promoting accessibility and inclusion ([highlandstreet.org](https://highlandstreet.org)).

## Accessibility Improvements and Resources

The Boston Disability Commission offers programs to enhance accessibility, including applications for accessible parking spots and requests for curb ramp installations or repairs. They also provide information on housing, transportation, and employment resources for individuals with disabilities ([boston.gov](https://www.boston.gov)).

For those seeking public restrooms, the city provides a map of all public restrooms available, aiding in planning accessible routes ([boston.gov](https://www.boston.gov)).

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## Tips for Navigating Boston

- **Plan:** Before attending events or visiting locations, check their accessibility features online or contact organizers directly.
- **Use Accessible Transportation:** While many sites in Boston have made efforts to accommodate wheelchair users, some historic neighborhoods may present challenges. The Seaport area is noted for its wide, well-graded sidewalks, making it more accessible for those with mobility aids.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep an eye on city announcements regarding heat advisories and the opening of cooling centers, especially during extreme weather conditions.

Boston is continually working towards enhancing accessibility for all its residents and visitors. By utilizing available resources and planning, individuals can enjoy a comfortable and inclusive summer experience in the city.

NB: Check in with your local city to find out what accessible activities they have that would make your summer more enjoyable!

## Accessible Meditation - Accessible Seating Options for Meditation: Find What Works for Your Body

BY KRYSTAL LINN

Meditation doesn't have to look like sitting cross-legged on a cushion. For many individuals, particularly those with disabilities, chronic pain, or mobility challenges, traditional seating can present a barrier. The good news? There are numerous ways to meditate exactly where you are, as you are.

- **Standard Chairs:** A supportive chair with a straight back can be perfect for seated meditation. Place both feet flat on the floor and rest your hands on your thighs or in your lap. If your feet don't reach the ground, use blocks or a folded blanket underneath.
- **Wheelchairs:** Meditation in a wheelchair is not only possible; it can also be ideal. Find a comfortable position, perhaps using cushions behind your back or under your arms for extra support.
- **Bolsters and Cushions:** For those who prefer sitting closer to the ground, consider using a meditation bolster, zafu cushion, or even a stack of folded blankets. If sitting cross-legged feels uncomfortable, sit with legs extended or supported by props.
- **Bed or Reclined Positions:** For individuals with limited mobility or fatigue, meditating while lying down is perfectly valid. Use pillows to support the knees, neck, or sides. A body scan meditation is particularly beneficial in reclined positions.
- **Floor Seats with Back Support:** Floor chairs with built-in backs (like stadium seats or beach chairs) provide additional support while allowing a grounded feeling. These are ideal for individuals who enjoy being closer to the floor but require spine support.
- **Stools or Kneeling Benches:** Meditation stools encourage an upright posture when kneeling. Place a cushion under the knees for added padding. This works well for those who have more flexibility in their knees but need hip support.

Meditation should support your well-being, not create pain or discomfort. Explore different seating until you find what lets you settle, breathe, and be present. Every body is welcome in this practice.

# Disability History - 35 Years of the ADA!

BY KASSI SOULARD

July 26 marks the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the ADA! In previous issues, we've covered various efforts over the years that were influential to the passing of the ADA: Public Law 176, originally enacted in 1945 and expanded in 1988 to become NDEAM (National Disability Employment Awareness Month); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which marked the first time that the exclusion and segregation of people with disabilities was seen as deriving from discrimination; and the Wheels of Justice Campaign and the Capitol Crawl in March of 1990, which were pivotal in encouraging lawmakers to act on the pending ADA legislation.

These are just a few examples of the many efforts that contributed to the signing. In this issue, we'll cover three events that occurred in 1988 that played a significant role in building the momentum needed to pass a civil rights law protecting people with disabilities.

In April of 1988, Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut and Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa introduced S.2345, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1988. This landmark legislation built on years of work by disability advocates, including the National Council on Disability or NCD (then known as the National Council on the Handicapped), an independent federal agency created to make recommendations to the President and Congress. S.2345 included an expansive civil rights policy, and became the blueprint for the Americans with Disabilities Act that passed in 1990.

In June, President Reagan's HIV/AIDS Commission issued a report on the ongoing epidemic. This commission was chaired by Admiral James D. Watkins. One of the commission's chief recommendations called for the passage of a comprehensive civil rights law that would protect people with HIV/AIDS, including them with people with other disabilities. On June 6, in a speech on the Senate floor, Senator Weicker praised the commission's report and tied passage of the ADA to recommendations made in the commission, saying, "The Chairman of the President's Commission has stated that 'The foremost obstacle to progress raised was the discrimination faced by those with HIV.' The job before the President and the Congress is to remove this obstacle and expand the protections against discrimination for all those with disabilities, including HIV infection, ARC, and AIDS."

In August, then-Vice President Bush, running for President, made a campaign promise during his acceptance speech at the National Republican Convention: "I am going to do whatever it takes to make sure the disabled are included in the mainstream." This marked the first time that an American presidential nominee had acknowledged people with disabilities as a political force. He added, "For too long they've been left out. But they're not going to be left out anymore."

Disability advocates worked over the next two years to hold President Bush to his campaign promise, and on July 26, 1990, he signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law, which was the world's first comprehensive civil rights law for people with disabilities.



# Anti-Ableism Resources & Tips

BY JEFF LAFATA-HERNANDEZ

Language is a powerful tool, and the language we use to discuss our work and the people we serve presents an opportunity for empowerment and education. Ableist language is common in our society and even within our field of work. Ensuring we use terms like “disability” and “disabled” instead of phrases like “special needs” and “differently abled” offers us opportunities to educate the community while helping participants embrace their disability identity.

To assist Triangle employees and our community partners, the Disability Justice Task Force created the “Quick Reference Tool for Disability Terms and Language” to support this initiative. We encourage everyone to [download this tool here](#), print it, and place it in your office or display it in a community space for easy access. When working with potential employment partners, make sure to print this tool for them. This not only ensures they are using anti-ableist language but also alleviates their concerns about saying the wrong thing. This is a simple step to set everyone up for success.

Language serves as a powerful tool in our efforts to build inclusive, accessible, and anti-ableist communities for everyone. As Triangle employees, it is our responsibility to lead by example in how we talk about our work, mission, and the community we serve.

**Want to join the DJTF?**  
**Reach out to Jeff at**  
**[jlafata@epicleaders.org](mailto:jlafata@epicleaders.org)**

# Accessible Recreation - Spaulding Adaptive Sports Centers

BY MELISSA STROUT

Mass General Brigham’s Spaulding Rehabilitation offers so many wonderful programs. This season, we are highlighting the Spaulding Adaptive Sports Centers.

Offered on the Cape all the way up to the North Shore, the program provides access to a wide range of land and water-based activities, as well as activities to do at home. You can golf, do stunt kite flying, fishing, paddleboarding, and more!

[Click here to check them out!](#)

