

3Play Webinars | How To Be an Accessibility Advocate for Yourself (and Others)

KELLY MAHONEY: Hi, everyone. Thank you very much for joining us. Today's presentation is titled "How to Be an Accessibility Advocate for Yourself and Others." My name is Kelly Mahoney from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today. I'm a young, fair-skinned woman with my hair pinned back. And I'm wearing a reddish-brown T-shirt today.

With that, I'll go ahead and hand things off to our presenters today. This presentation is in collaboration with World In Sign. So I'm happy to introduce Josie Brown and Dustin Feldman.

JOSIE BROWN: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon, morning, depending on where you are located today. My name is Josie Brown. I am the Director of Sales and Partnerships here at World In Sign, a deaf-owned company located here in Silver Spring, Maryland, right across the DC line. I am a young, white woman with short brown hair with a little slice of purple in the front. I am wearing a pink top. And I have a microphone headset next to my face. And I will hand it over to Dustin.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Thanks so much. I am Dustin. I'm from Boston. I work for 3Play Media on the sales team here. I'm the Enterprise Account Executive for Higher Education, and I love it. I'm hard of hearing myself. We'll talk a lot about that into the presentation. But I am a young male with dark hair and a scruff, shaped beard with a peach T-shirt that says "walk for hearing" on it.

JOSIE BROWN: Great. Well, we're really excited to be here today, guys, where our agenda is going to include allyship, advocacy, and, of course, our fireside chat today, as Kelly mentioned. So make sure you're dropping those questions into the Q&A box so that we can have some interesting discussions later on.

So to start out, allyship-- what does that mean? Well, at least to me or everybody else, allyship is pretty much you doing the hard work to actively support people from marginalized groups, often those whom you have a relationship with or are in your sphere of influence. And allyship for me is I'm a CODA, which we'll get into what that means a little bit later. But as an ally, what-- we're going to get into what that means and how you guys can provide allyship with individuals of the deaf and hard of hearing community and other individuals who need accommodations as well.

So to get started, we're going to go over a few acronyms. These are pretty common. They're not limited to only this. There are other acronyms. We could go on, and on, and on.

The first acronym we have is ASL, which stands for American Sign Language. We next have CODA or SODA, which stands for Child Of Deaf Adult, which is me, or a Sibling Of a Deaf Adult. We have HOH, which is Hard Of Hearing, ADA, which stands for American with Disabilities Act, and NAD, the National Association of the Deaf.

And you're going to hear these acronyms as we get more into our presentation today. So keep your ears and your eyes open. And we look forward to continuing the discussion.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Awesome. So there's a distinction between different definitions or ways to identify yourself if you're in the hard of hearing or deaf community. You're seeing here the hard of hearing, lowercase D deaf, and capital D Deaf. I actually identify as hard of hearing but also lowercase D deaf, as I'm someone that communicates verbally, relies on lip reading.

And I've done really well over my 25 or so years with hearing aids. I do know a little bit of sign. But for me, hard of hearing, which is an identity of a person with mild to moderate hearing loss, although I actually have a profound hearing loss. So that's why I also identify as lowercase D deaf. When a lowercase D is used, the term refers to the audiological condition of not hearing.

So capital D Deaf is when an uppercase D is used. The term refers to a particular group of deaf individuals who share a culture in the language American Sign Language, although-- and Josie will talk a lot about it-- there's many different signed languages. Back to Josie.

JOSIE BROWN: Well, Dustin, I have a quick question for you. As a hard-of-hearing individual, I know one thing that I've heard a lot of is individuals who rely on lip reading. Say you're speaking with an individual wearing lipstick. Does lipstick tend to help you identify a word form better? I know that when I was recommended to take a test for becoming certified as an interpreter that they had recommended wearing lipstick to better show the enunciation of wording.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Very true, yeah. Anything to do with better vision of the lips will help. I will say, accents is very difficult. So that's where it gets even more challenging. And no matter how beautiful the lipstick is, it doesn't always help. But that definitely is something that will assist.

JOSIE BROWN: That's great. I'm glad to know that. But of course, everybody might not wear lipstick. So wear your best shade of Chapstick, I guess, everyone.

DUSTIN [LAUGHS]

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: So next, we're going to get into American Sign Language. So a lot of individuals tend to think that sign language is just an English version of using your hands when, in fact, American Sign Language is its own identified language. And a lot of times, what occurs is that with captioning, individuals tend to think that that's a good alternative for individuals with deafness and hard of hearing. And it was originally created for that intention.

But ASL is actually such an expressive language. And it has its own rules. So we have our own syntax, our own grammars. And even when we see text messages, for instance, for myself and my parents, they don't make sense. You'll try to do a lot of decoding if you ever had the opportunity to read our text messages.

For example, we say in English, I already went to the store. Well, in sign language, they're going to say, go to store went or already. So it's kind of reversed. And if I remember correctly in my ASL class that I took eons ago-- yes, I took ASL, even though my parents are deaf, and we're fluent-- that ASL is conjugated very similarly to Spanish-- so subject, time, verb.

So when you're reading it, it can be confusing. So when you are still putting in captioning in English, the deaf individual or sign language user may not quite understand what is going on in the captioning because they're still translating it. I do see that there's some issues with my microphone. Is everybody clear?

DUSTIN You're good.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: Good? OK, good. I just wanted to make sure. So when they're reading the captioning, ASL users are still translating that information. Now, that's not to say that deaf individuals don't know English because that would be a false statement. So ASL just really is a beautiful language. And it's a very visual language. And it's important to properly communicate those emotions when you're talking about something.

For instance, I had an individual at my employment who said, hey, I noticed your coworker. I came in, and all of a sudden, she was happy. And then she was really angry. And I assumed that she was talking about something that was not happy-related. And I said, no. She actually wasn't. She was talking about somebody who had road rage outside. And it really upset her.

So you really can tell the difference when it comes to the emotions, where in the hearing world, we take advantage of being able to have a tone of voice. We're able to say, oh, we have a question. So that's how it's supposed to work? We're able to draw out that tone. Whereas in the deaf community, we raise our eyebrows, and we're like, question? Huh? So it's all about those facial expressions. And there are mouth morphs that identify certain words as well.

And just to touch back on what Dustin was saying, there are a ton of sign languages around the world. There's British. There's German, French, South African, Japanese. And they are all different. There's not really one that I could really pick up right away.

There is a identified international sign language. But it is not a official sign language. And with that is more of a gestural communication. And the other thing that's really cool with sign language is that there are accents.

For instance, here in Maryland, I know that there's different signs for "birthday," and "grass," and those types of things. So my parents say "birthday." Or I see my parents say "birthday." But there are some people who literally say "birth day." So it just really depends on where you came from, and where you're living at, and your background. So with that, I'm going to head it back over to Dustin so we can talk about how to really become an ally.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Thank you. Thank you. So really, to become an ally is putting yourself in everyone else's position. Nowadays, the silver lining of the pandemic, in my eyes, was now we're so much more aware of all of us as humans. We're trying to help each other perform better, communicate better, and really look out for one another. And when we do that, things are better.

So what we're going to talk about here is just, how do we advocate for one another? How do we be an ally? And there's an interesting quote where if you're thinking about how to design accessibility, think about it as how to design your home. If you forget about designing certain aspects or elements in your home that are accessible from day one, it's almost too late. So think about how we help one another in different settings.

So let's start by eliminating communication barriers. And I'll talk about what this graph is in just a little bit. But think about, again, the pandemic. We all had to wear masks. That was a whole 'nother level of a barrier. And for people like myself that lip read, but also people that don't really realize they're naturally lip reading, mask-wearing was very difficult. So how do we accommodate in those different settings?

Well, first and foremost, who's ever been in a conversation where you were talking to somebody, and you couldn't hear what they said, and for the life of you, you just could never grasp what they were saying? The worst thing to do is say, oh, never mind. And at the end of the day, we're trying to hear. We're trying to communicate. And this is always helpful to keep in mind.

Sometimes it's great to ask, do you need help or how can I help you? But it's not always necessary. But in those settings with a mask, I've seen so many people friendly and nice enough to just pull the mask down, create some distance, but help one another and really understand how we can communicate effectively.

What this graph is is an audiogram. For anybody that doesn't know what an audiogram is or looks like, here it is. It is a graph that helps show your degree of hearing loss. So across the top, you see frequency from low to high pitch. And on the left side going down, you see different hearing levels.

So this is my audiogram. So in both ears-- the blue is one side, and red is the other side. We're doing a test. And this is how it kind of shapes out. As the pitch goes higher in tone, perhaps children's voices, women's voices mostly are higher pitched than men, bells and whistles, when it goes out to the right, that's where my degree of hearing loss drops significantly. You see that almost immediate drop.

And so at the top is just moderate hearing loss. Then you have mild hearing loss. You might have mild severe hearing loss, then severe hearing loss, and then severe profound. And at the very bottom, where you see a lot of my check marks, is profound. And my hearing loss is a profound hearing loss.

Without my hearing aids, I don't do too well. I'm lip reading much more than when I have them on. But I put myself-- what I like to call put myself on offense to help everybody else around me know how I communicate without my hearing aids.

Now, think about when that might be-- at the beach, at a pool, anywhere where-- it might be raining. I might take them out. So there's a lot of different scenarios where I need to be on offense. And that's something that I preach to all of us, whether you have hearing loss or any disability. Really think about how to put yourself on offense, get the help you need, and let everybody help you versus you go out of your way to scramble for the help.

I hope that makes sense. But we'll pass it back over to Josie, unless-- and, Josie, if you have anything to add, please do.

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah, absolutely. The mask example is a perfect example of a barrier to communication. Just as you were having issues, the deaf community also was, where we're using the clear mask, which was a great, innovative idea. I can read your lips. It works. But we kind of forgot about that heat issue. And we'd have a lot of fog up.

So then in the end, it became unhelpful to all of us. But the concept was there. And as we keep designing for a better tomorrow, we're always going to keep coming up with creative and innovative ideas to better create innovations and ideas for assistance for any kind of accessibility. And we're going to get into some of those tools a little bit later.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: And you nailed it-- clear masks. I even wore a clear mask. It was to help me, but it was also to build awareness to people that don't realize how hard it is for all of us to communicate. And I saw Lori's message. It's so hard for everybody.

I just want to try something. I'm going to show a video-- not even show it. But I was wearing a clear mask here. Hopefully, you can see it. This is me wearing my mask in front of a Peloton store doing some features on how Peloton is accessible. And people really realized, wow, why don't we all wear clear masks? Rhetorical question.

JOSIE BROWN: Besides the fact that you can see the lipstick, right? We had a purpose of wearing at least some makeup those days.

DUSTIN Exactly.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: So we're going to get into advocacy, which is-- many of you may have your own definition of advocacy. But in regards to what I think advocacy is, it's the action. It's taking action in the service of a cause and the people that it affects. And usually, those actions are going towards the influence of decision-makers or some type of decision-making. So just as we have people who protest--

DUSTIN Josie, could I just pause? There's some background noise that we're hearing, I think, on your side.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: Yep. Give me one second. Give me one second. I'll be right back.

DUSTIN Sure. Take your time. Thanks for pointing that out, Stephanie. And I love that everybody's so engaged already on

FELDMAN: the chat. And we really encourage it. At the end of the conversation, we're going to really open up to questions. And just keep adding your questions in the chat. I love it. So much engagement.

JOSIE BROWN: So that is a fun fact. So the noise you're hearing is actually one of my deaf coworkers. He uses a lot of noise to communicate. He does both lip speaking and signing at the same time.

And it's funny because I was having this conversation with Dustin earlier where I couldn't imagine watching TV or a video without captioning. It's like I can hear what they're saying. I know there's noise coming, but I just don't understand what they're saying.

And it's the same thing for my coworker, where he-- I don't know how to communicate with him without him not making noise. So I went over, and I was like, hey, can we just turn it down a little bit? He's like, oh, god, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. But, everyone, that introduction was to Mr. Roger Vass here, our CTO here at World In Sign.

So we were in advocacy. So I apologize for that interruption. But we want to talk about where you can find information and know your rights. So many of you, I'm sure, have heard of the Rehabilitation Act. We have Section 504 and 508 and also the ADA with the American Disability Acts has Title II and III.

With the Section 504 and 508, a lot of times you'll see that with technology requirements, requirements for accessibility within different departments, organizations, like education. 508 is a really big one. You'll see that on a lot of requirements for contracts that you do for technology with different companies that you may work with or your partners.

And then with the American Disability Act, how great is it that literally-- was it yesterday, two days ago? It was the 32nd anniversary of the ADA. I mean, how far have we come since that day? It's incredible.

And one of the honors that I have of working here at World In Sign is that one of our founders and also our CEO is one of the original attorneys who was on the board with other attorneys that implemented the ADA back in 1990. So it's just an honor to truly understand what went into determining how to customize these laws.

And what's really cool, too, is that he retired working from the DOJ and decided it wasn't enough. He came back and was like, all right, I'm setting up this company. And we're going to keep rocking and rolling.

DUSTIN Love that. That's awesome. I hope I get to meet him at some point. And coincidentally, I'm actually 32 years old.
FELDMAN: I just made the '80s, though. I was born in '89.

JOSIE BROWN: Just there.

DUSTIN But it's so cool that even I've seen the evolution of how this organization, this act has grown. And people have
FELDMAN: come together. And it's ever-evolving, right? It doesn't take a pandemic to think about how we make things more accessible. But like I said, silver lining to really think about it even more and start updating and transforming laws.

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah. And some of the language-- we could never imagine back in the '90s that the evolution of technology was going to be the way it was. So some of the wording may be a little bit outdated. But it does take a lot of time to advocate and submit a bill for changes and things like that.

But the voice of matter or the empowerment comes behind all of us as allies and advocates. I always say, strength is stronger in numbers. So the more of us there are to speak out, the more of us there are to really make a difference. And one of the things that I love about working here at WIS and working with 3Play Media is every day, we're working on a new technology that's going to make people's lives even better and more simple to have equal access to information regardless of where they go.

DUSTIN Truth. #Truth.
FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: Yep. But last but not least on our page, we have the National Association of the Deaf. Funny enough, they are actually right down the street from our office here in Silver Spring, Maryland. And they just had their biennial conference just last month in Orlando, Florida, which I was grateful to be able to attend. It was a wonderful conference. And it was so nice to see everybody back in person since COVID. They hadn't had one since then.

And one of the great things about the community and-- deaf community, anyway-- is we are very friendly. There's a lot of hugs going on. There's a lot of high fives. It's just a very family-esque kind of relationship. So when you see people that you haven't seen in years, it just really makes that impact that much different.

And it was crazy because there are people that I had met online that I didn't even recognize them in person. They came to me, and they were like, are you-- and I'm like, I don't know who you are. But anyway, the NAD-- they are the National Association of the Deaf, who-- they are a legal plan and nonprofit-- I believe they're a nonprofit organization-- who battles cases on behalf of individuals who need accessibility with captioning or making information accessible.

So recently-- not recently, but in 2011, the NAD filed a case against Netflix for not being accessible. And Netflix has come a long way since then. They actually just gained an award, just recently was announced, for being more accessible. They didn't believe that captioning had to be alleviated or provided on their streaming applications. But their DVDs did it. But how many of us actually remember that Netflix used to mail out DVDs? That feels like eons ago.

DUSTIN Yeah.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: And then we also had *NAD versus Harvard*, which, Dustin, I believe you have a little bit more information on that, right?

DUSTIN Yeah. And I pronounce it "Hah-vahd," just so you know, being from Boston, the accent.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: My household has many accents. Whatever was on the TV, that was my accent for the day.

DUSTIN Yeah. So the NAD really pointed out that Harvard was not making their content accessible without captions and audio descriptions. And so the NAD ended up naming 3Play Media as the standard for closed captioning, which is 99% accuracy. And of course, the deaf community, myself, all of us rely on good captions, not "craptions," as I've heard them be said. And a year and a half ago, when I joined 3Play Media and I heard "craption" for the first time, I thought it was hilarious.

But it's very important. And 3Play Media-- I'm biased, right? But it's just amazing to know that when you request a file to be captioned by 3Play Media, you're going to get 99% minimum. The average is 99.7%. So it's just amazing. This was a big lawsuit that it really set the tone, pun intended, for the rest of universities to hit that benchmark of 99%.

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah. I believe that was towards their free classes they were offering, too. They were providing accessibility-- or not accessibility. They're providing classes for free for individuals who wanted the access to these lessons. And it's crazy. How can you not provide that? I believe it's under the Rehabilitation Act of 504. So insanity. And somebody in the comments said that Netflix actually still does the mail-- the DVD by mail still.

DUSTIN They do?

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: That's what I'm saying.

DUSTIN Wow. See, we learn something new every day. I didn't realize that. That's amazing. Very cool.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah. I will let Dustin get back to the accommodations. We'll get back on track.

DUSTIN Yeah. I mean, we're all hitting the nail on the head. Who doesn't use closed captions nowadays? I think the statistic we use here at 3Play is 82% of people that use captions are not deaf or hard of hearing now. It's just there's 48 million Americans that are deaf or hard of hearing, 330 million people in the country.

It's a large percentage of people that are really learning from the deaf culture and finding out what works for them because I'm starting to lose my hearing or I'm just having trouble hearing our favorite shows, *Game of Thrones*, and *Peaky Blinders*, and anything. We all use captions.

It's funny. When I was in college, all my buddies-- they didn't want the captions on. Too distracting. Now they use them. So that's just one of the most common combinations, of course, is closed caption and, of course, ASL interpreters for people that rely on sign language.

For organizational requests, accessible forms, individual outreach, putting yourself out there to really help others understand what helps you. But accessible forms-- think about document accessibility, website accessibility. So there's a lot of accommodations in that world, too.

Empower self-advocacy. Request the accommodation that works best for you. For me, it's right here. I just got this new microphone recently through work that is called a Roger. And it allows me to hand this to different speakers when we're doing stand-up company updates, and revenue updates, and things like that.

We had a bunch of team members from out of state come through two weeks ago. And each person wore it so that I could hear because it Bluetoothed directly to my hearing aids. And that's something that--

JOSIE BROWN: That is a fantastic tool. That's amazing.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: That's something that I discovered. And immediately-- hey, 3Play, this is something that will help me. Can we order this? And 3Play has been an unbelievable company to really accommodate, not just for me being the only one that's hard of hearing in the company, but-- profoundly deaf, rather. But yeah, I'm just so grateful to be open and continue-- we learn from each other. And I hope that's the same. I can only imagine it's the same at World In Sign.

JOSIE BROWN: It absolutely is. And we actually have a new platform out called Smart VI. And it's so that you can provide language accessibility on demand because we don't only see deafness as a disability. We see communication as a barrier. And that's for anybody who speaks any type of language, any kind of language.

And so to be able to offer language access on demand is just amazing. I can literally get connected with an interpreter within a click of a button and literally pay for what I use, and it's amazing. And the Roger-- that just sounds fantastic. I think that that's so awesome because now I can recommend that to my friends and family who need it. But I do know that--

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Anybody with hearing aids-- I wear Phonak hearing aids. And this is a Phonak product. But any other brand hearing aids, this is compatible with.

JOSIE BROWN: Well, I know that we have some members in our audience who would love for us to touch on audio description. Would you be able to touch on that for us?

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Sure, yeah. Briefly, I'll say audio description is just an amazing accommodation for people that are low vision or blind. However, it's become really interesting for all of us to think about how it works, and how it helps, and why it helps people that are blind or low vision.

So audio description describes what's happening in a video. Think for a second a movie trailer, *Batman*. How does somebody that's blind or low vision understand what is happening in the movie trailer? So audio description will, as the video is going, describe Batman is standing by the window, and it's raining outside. He's waiting for his call. Suddenly, the light of Batman appears. Batman jumps out the window. And you're visualizing that.

So think all things video accessibility. And that's what 3Play stands for. And it's just amazing. There's something out there for everybody. And bigger picture is, again, there's 48 million Americans that are deaf or hard of hearing. There's 23-some-odd million Americans that are blind or low vision.

Only a certain percentage actually admit it, or a certain percentage don't get the help that they need. There are solutions out there, guys. So I love that we're all asking those type of questions. More to come on audio descriptions in another webinar in the future, I think two weeks from now. And there it is.

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah, absolutely. And it's phenomenal because audio description was something that was new to me when I started working at World In Sign. And I think it's very important for us all to be aware of the different tools that are out there so that we can provide those. And I know that with audio description, we call it-- we don't call it something. It's a little bit different.

But audio description helps individuals with blindness, while we, actually, it's called-- we call it "sign description." And it's because, like you were saying in a movie trailer, well, if Batman is running and he hears the wind, you hear the wind running. Well, deaf people don't hear that wind when they're running. So we are actually signing, the wind is running.

So it's fascinating to see the increases. We have to be just creative in how we provide the accessibility. So I believe that it's just growing every day. And it's just fascinating to be a part of.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: It really is. It really is such a blessing. So here, we're going to talk about some movies that we highly recommend. Maybe some of you have already seen a couple of these movies or maybe all of them. If so, \$100 gift card. No.

But yeah, no, definitely take a look. Write these down. I'm already seeing another one in the chat was *Feel the Beat*. *Deaf U* is another great series. So there's more and more. We'll alternate, Josie. I'll kick off *Audible*. You talk *CODA*. We'll switch off.

JOSIE BROWN: Sure.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: *Audible* is, for any football fans out there, a great movie that really highlights athletics and academics. It's all about high school football, these students from Maryland School of the Deaf in Frederick, Maryland, right by-- you went there?

JOSIE BROWN: Home state. Home state. No, I lived there. Well, I grew up in Frederick.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: That's right. Amazing. So you're very familiar with it. And it really shows the emotion behind the deaf culture but also shows the way that they communicate helps them win-- I'm not going to ruin it for you-- but many games in a row, many games in a row.

JOSIE BROWN: Fun fact-- the football huddle was actually created because of the deaf community.

DUSTIN And that came out of Gallaudet, right?

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: I don't want to confirm nor deny, but--

DUSTIN I'm 99.9888% sure. So Gallaudet--

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: My dad played on that team back in the '90s, back in Maryland School for the Deaf.

DUSTIN Yep. So think about it, just to touch on it, the huddle. The other team could see the other team sign. So they

FELDMAN: created this huddle. Now they can't see, and they're signing among that circle. So really cool. Great point.

JOSIE BROWN: There's so many adaptive things. And we have somebody in the audience who said they played Maryland School for the Deaf. And they could feel their court-- or feel the vibration because the courts are hollow. And it's actually - fun fact, too-- is that they would have a lot of their dances and stuff there because they could feel the vibration of the music when they would have homecoming and things like that as well.

DUSTIN Wow. So cool.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah. But moving on to *CODA*, which is the first movie I have ever truly been able to relate to. I am a child of two deaf parents, one who has it skipping generations through their family and one who became deaf due to a medical issue at birth. *CODA*, starring Marlee Matlin and Troy Kotsur, many-award-winning show. Just wow.

CODA really highlights what our children are dealing with when they have come from deaf families. There's a caretaker role. There's an interpreter role, a lot of these things that families are now fighting for to kind of be eliminated. When a parent goes to the doctor, they should be able to go to the doctor on their own and their own dignity and not have their parents-- or their children interpret for them.

I don't want to ruin too much of the movie if you haven't seen it yet. But there are some funny and crude parts. And there's a conversation between the parents that no child should probably ever have to converse for their parents.

DUSTIN Yep. And it was filmed just north of Boston, where I'm from. And my mother actually lives in the town that it was

FELDMAN: filmed called Gloucester, right on the water. Beautiful, beautiful area. But you'll see that in the movie. Highly, highly recommend it.

JOSIE BROWN: That is awesome. I know that I was watching an interview with Troy Kotsur and Daniel Durant. And they were saying when they first came to stay at their Airbnb, that the original Airbnb was used to alert boats coming in. And there was a foghorn. Well, they went to the house to turn on the lights. But they didn't realize that they had turned a foghorn on. And so they were sitting out on the balcony. And--

DUSTIN And I'm pretty sure it's really late at night, right?

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah. And the police showed up and--

DUSTIN The police came.

FELDMAN:

JOSIE BROWN: Yep.

DUSTIN Yep. So they didn't know the foghorn was going off. And that last movie was-- just to keep going, the last movie
FELDMAN: was *Sound of Metal*. That's an Amazon movie. The gentleman was a drummer. And just because of being in a band, being about music, he punctured his drum over and over again. Later in life, he ended up losing his hearing, becoming deaf, and just the challenges that go with that. It's an unbelievable movie, very highly recommended.

So here we're just going to touch on how to give back, how to get involved, again, advocacy and nonprofit work. There's the National Association of the Deaf, nad.org. We touched on that. World Federation of the Deaf, wfdeaf.org. The Hearing Loss Association of America, which is what this shirt is and I've been involved with for many years, it's an unbelievable organization.

They host the Walk4Hearing, below, which is an annual walk that takes place in 24 different cities-- Boston, New York, Chicago, you name it. Wherever you may be located, there is likely a walk near you. Or if not, come to the Boston run on October 2. So it's always around the fall here in Boston. Beautiful when the leaves are turning. 5K walk-- not timed, super friendly, music, food, you name it.

The last is Canadian Association of the Deaf, cad.ca. So there's so many different organizations. Use these for resources and information. There's just tons of great stuff there.

KELLY All right. Well, that was a wonderful presentation. Thank you both. We have a little under 20 minutes left. So
MAHONEY: we're going to go ahead and dive into questions. As you both have commented on, we've had a really engaged audience. So I'm excited to dive into this. People listening, please don't hesitate to keep sending questions. We're going to just try and get through as many as we can.

So starting off, it seems like a lot of people were relating to your discussion about the communication barriers and the difficulties that you faced during the pandemic. Somebody asked, Dustin, have you ever had problems with your hearing aids itching, which is a little off topic but important for someone to know. And then, potentially, could you give us some more examples of how either or both of you managed those communication barriers during the pandemic besides clear masks? There was a lot of discussion about those.

DUSTIN Absolutely. The itching part-- a little bit, not so much. I keep a trim haircut, and that might help. But I get my ear
FELDMAN: molds changed every so often and keep them nice and taut. Not too much itching.

As for-- what was the second half you said-- was the mask, and accommodations, and things like that. Let it be known, mental health comes into play here. And I'm not shy to talk about it. It was very challenging and definitely quite depressing.

And I will say that I've been through that phase of being depressed before in my life, having lost my dad years ago and so on and so forth. But it makes you stronger. I hope that we can all see the bright side, no matter what you're going through.

But in this case, we're talking about the masks and that communication barrier. I worked with my closest friends and family to really let them know how to help me. And it just became natural. People, when we would meet outside, create distance. We would not wear a mask and just sit six feet away. That was really helpful for me.

We would do Zoom calls. And of course, that helped to read lips. And people would get closer to the screen at the beginning of Zoom time. It was a lot of ways that we figured it out. And it doesn't happen overnight. And accessibility does not happen overnight. So we got by. And it's getting better and better over time. Josie, do you have anything to add to that?

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah. So when the pandemic occurred, like everybody else, the world was turned upside down within a matter of hours. And one of the things that I know that I tried my best with was-- and it kind of comes as a part-- it's part of the culture of being a CODA is that you're always willing to interpret for somebody when you see somebody who's deaf or you're looking to just help anybody out to communicate.

And we always have to remember that always ask. And sometimes I, personality-wise, am just like, hey, like this is what they're saying. But during that time, there were so many people that I had come across who were sign language users and just impromptu was like, hey, they just wanted to know what you were looking for, is there anything I can do to help you, and just taking that extra step of kindness along the way to helping individuals.

And I believe we should all be-- treat others how you want to be treated. So this is not a disability, but I am very short. So a lot of times, I have to ask taller people in the store to help me get things off the shelf. So it's like be kind to one another, and help each other out where we can.

And that was just one thing that I learned a lot about the pandemic-- is that the patience was not always there. But we're all human. And we're all growing.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Another thing I'd add is going to Dunkin' Donuts, getting a coffee at a coffee shop. There was the glass in front of you. They're wearing a mask. I'm wearing a mask. It's loud, confusing. We're all trying to figure it out. Imagine that?

I would write down on my phone or on a piece of paper what my order was and say, I'm hard of hearing, if you can just write that down to place the order. And sure enough, most of the time, they'll pull down the mask for five seconds, 10 seconds. So again, it's all about being on offense, accommodating for yourself, not being afraid to-- you might not know what you don't know. And that's OK, too.

But learn from others, and really put yourself in their position. The other thing is you might not be hard of hearing or deaf. But you can relate to somebody that is. You are right now. We're learning from each other.

Take that back to your friends and family. Hey, I was on a webinar with 3Play Media and World In Sign, and they talked about this. And I know you have a cousin that's deaf. It was just very interesting. Check them out. And that's how we learn from each other. And that's how the world goes round.

KELLY MAHONEY: Absolutely. I think those are great points both of you. And it's a great example of something that-- we had a webinar speaker on about accessible social media a couple of weeks ago.

And they said something that stuck with me, that accessibility causes people to be more creative. Because of circumstances like that, you have to be creative in order to find a solution that works. So thank you both for sharing those. Another really interesting question that I'd love to hear both of your perspectives on is, what is the experiential difference between being born deaf versus becoming deaf?

JOSIE BROWN: So I know growing up, both of my parents were deaf since birth. But just as we have in the regular able-bodied world, we all come from different places. So what one person's feeling, another person may not experience. It can really depend on your education and your background.

I was grateful to have parents who exposed me to a deaf community, learn sign language. They had parents who were willing to learn sign language for them. But there are others that were born into hearing families. They didn't have the resources. There wasn't enough information.

So being born deaf or not or becoming profoundly deaf at a later time can have the same feeling or emotions that occur. But with becoming profoundly deaf later in life, I do know that there have been some individuals that I'm friends with who they struggled a lot because they were trying to find their identity. And they were trying to figure out who they were.

Were they still the same person? Or now do they have to do something different because they have profound deafness? And if you watch *Deaf U*, you'll see that some of the students on there go through that because they come from mainstream schools, which are just regular public education schools, going to Gallaudet, which is a huge deaf community, and just trying to find their place.

So it's just kind of a learning curve for some. And for others, it's just kind of a way of life. And everybody experiences it different.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: Yeah. Yeah. Echo that. For me, having lost my hearing when I was four and a half, five, five and a half, around there, I fooled my family. No one actually knew that I was hard of hearing, including myself. I was young, so I didn't know what even being deaf or hard of hearing was.

So for me, I did what I had to do until we realized it. My mom took me to Children's Hospital. We got the audiogram, got the hearing aids, and did what we had to do. So it was a learning in progress, just like-- my automatic comparison with what hearing aids were were, oh, you know how your dad has glasses? Well, these are hearing aids. They help me hear, just like glasses help you see.

And that's all they ever were when I was in school, and I was really good with school and sports, basketball. And one thing I will show you-- and I pulled out my phone. This is my grandfather. If you can see it, he was a double amputee. And he had a hook and a right leg, wooden leg.

And so that, to me, was a handicap. That was a disability. That's what I grew up around. And so when I was young, I was like, this isn't a handicap. This isn't a disability. I just can't hear. I just need to wear something that helps me hear.

I look at my grandfather, and he really showed me what a challenge was but also showed me what overcoming a challenge was. And that's what's very important in life, no matter how old you are.

KELLY MAHONEY: Great. [AUDIO OUT] --thinking about these different forms of communication. Someone asks, language is constantly evolving. So how do you stay up to date on changes in ASL signs? And then sort of related to that, someone asks more broadly, how do you keep updated on the appropriate or the acceptable language and terms to refer to certain groups of people? Josie, maybe do you want to start off on that one?

JOSIE BROWN: That is a great question. It is the same way we keep up with fashion, and makeup, and trends. We follow the people who enact the change so following individuals who are sign language users. Culture is that, typically, the deaf, or hard-of-hearing person, or sign language user is the one who implements the change or the new sign.

I know that when COVID came out, everyone was like, oh, this is the sign for COVID, COVID. But I wouldn't use it until they had actually officiated the actual sign. So keeping your eye on the NAD, following deaf influencers, people who are profoundly deaf or sign language users-- always follow those individuals.

I know TikTok has a huge stream. I know Facebook and Instagram. So just follow those who it's their culture. We wouldn't ask somebody who speaks French how to speak Spanish or how to change Spanish. So just always look in that.

But, Gary, I can see you posted this week. You can actually see the time-- he just posted the article at *New York Times*. They shared a article that shows the different signs over the years, just like those trend videos of how we wore hair in the '80s and whatnot. There's actually different signs that show what they used to use for phones for the sign for phone. But yeah, just keeping up the trend, keeping up to date, follow individuals who are reputable in the deaf community, and yeah.

KELLY MAHONEY: Something interesting that we received a question about-- I'm not sure who may have expertise to speak on this. But do either of you have thoughts on auditory processing deficits and how to accommodate for those? I'll just say quickly, for anyone who's not familiar, auditory processing disorder is a hearing problem that affects about 3% to 5% of school-aged children.

In kids with this condition, it can also be known as central auditory processing disorder. Can't understand what they hear in the same way kids do because their ears and their brain aren't entirely in sync with one another. So would either of you have any thoughts on that?

DUSTIN FELDMAN: So a little bit. So having lost my hearing when I was around five, it was due to Ramsay Hunt syndrome, which is a virus. Chicken pox got into my cochlea, damaged the cochlea, and I started to lose my hearing. But prior to that, I could hear fine, from what I could remember and hearing tests back in those days.

But telling you that preface because when I was five, six, seven, eight, I had to take speech lessons, although I was doing just fine. I thought I was, at least. And I was. And auditory speech-- I can't speak too highly of it. And maybe, Josie, you can.

But I wanted to say, it wasn't so much for me to sit into speech lessons every day because they pulled me out of recess in school. And I was so bummed. I wanted to keep playing basketball. I did what I had to do and learned how to really speak well and enunciate. But I will give hats off, praise to speech pathologists because those people in that profession are so passionate, and helpful, and professional. And I don't know if they get the credit that they deserve every day.

JOSIE BROWN: I have to agree with Dustin on that. Shout-out to the speech pathologists that I've worked with and my previous history. They truly are a blessing. They figure out every creative way that a child could use or even a learner to use a language or overcome any type of barrier or learning that they need to overcome.

One of the speech pathologists I used to work with would use ASL with children who had autism. And they weren't necessarily nonverbal. But they just didn't know how to communicate because they were behind. So they used sign language until they were able to catch up verbally. And they were able to communicate for themselves.

And I do see there are a few questions about how to learn more about sign language and where they can find them. I'm putting my email in the chat. And you guys can follow up because we are running short on time. But I agree. And I have ADHD, which is not CAPD. But I definitely cannot live without my captions. I need my captions because my brain thinks too fast. I want to be able to go back and reread. That really helps, and also with transcriptions.

KELLY MAHONEY: Great. Yeah. So it looks like that might be just about everything that we have time for today. But this has been an incredible conversation. Thank you both for being here.

I just have a few more housekeeping things and some resources to share with people who are here. So at 3Play Media, we have tons and tons of stuff. We have a resource portal on our website, where we post blogs, ebooks, checklists, and research studies, a lot of it on the topics that we brought up today. We have monthly webinars by accessibility experts.

And we also have a podcast, *Allied Podcast*. You can hear from accessibility professionals on topics across industries, [INAUDIBLE] industry, theater and the performing arts, and so much more.

And once again, thank you to our speakers, Josie Brown from World In Sign and Dustin Feldman from our very own 3Play. We were so happy to have you here today. And everyone who attended, thank you for your engagement.

JOSIE BROWN: Well, thank you guys so much for joining. And thank you, 3Play, for having me today. I really appreciate it.

KELLY MAHONEY: Thank you both so much. And everyone, have a great rest of your day.

DUSTIN FELDMAN: And thank you to the interpreter. I really appreciate it.

JOSIE BROWN: Yeah. Thank you, Madison.