

# Ms. Wheelchair America

EMPOWERING WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY & EDUCATION

## 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

**NATIONAL  
COMPETITION**

August 9-15, 2021



**Featuring** International Disability Rights Leader  
**Judith Heumann** and special messages from  
activists, advocates, and leaders from across the nation.



*presented by*  
**Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation**





Dear Fellow Advocates,

50 years ago, Phillip K. Wood started the Ms. Wheelchair America organization. Throughout this monumental time span, hundreds of women have been impacted by what this amazing program has to offer. It is because of his insight and determination that the women competing this week have the opportunity to show the world just how valuable they are.

This past year has not been without its challenges. 2020 has presented us with things we never thought we'd have to think about. Going into stores with masks. Statewide shut downs. Words like "quarantine" and "social distancing" became a part of our everyday vocabulary. Despite this, our titleholders met these obstacles with grace and ingenuity. It is with these qualities that they've also had to navigate life. We are so proud of their perseverance, as this an integral part of what we look for in a nationally recognized advocate.

While most years we have a theme for our national competition, this year has definitely aligned itself with continuing to think outside of the box. The board of Ms. Wheelchair America has worked hard to create an experience that each of the titleholders will cherish for the rest of their lives. In these unique circumstances, we hope you will come alongside them in a way that is meaningful and creates a new theme for 2021: rising together.

50 years ago, Phillip K. Wood couldn't have imagined how great of an impact his idea would have on so many lives. So much has changed in this time, but we have so much more work to do. It is only through the empowerment of others and the recognition of individual voices will change continue to happen. With this in mind, we want to remind you that while we don't know what the next 50 years will bring, we do know that life is an occasion. We must rise to it.

Sincerely,

**Ms. Wheelchair America Board of Directors**

P.O. Box 86 – Byron Center, Michigan 49315  
1-877-MSWHEEL (679-4335)

Friends,

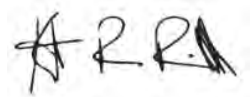
The past year-and-a-half has tested us all. We've collectively experienced immense sadness for those who suffered the ravages of COVID-19 and traveled unknown paths overloaded with change.

One of those changes was cancellation of the 2020 Ms. Wheelchair America competition. When we heard that might occur again for this year's 50th annual program, we just couldn't let it happen.

And so, it's with great joy that Mary Free Bed collaborated with Ms. Wheelchair America to spotlight 2021's amazing contestants. We applaud the work you do in advocacy, education and leadership.

My hope is that each of you realizes the critical role you play not only to inspire thousands of other women with disabilities, but also to teach us all lessons of hope, love and fortitude.

Let the competition begin!



**Kent Riddle** | *CEO*

**Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital**

235 Wealthy St SE Grand Rapids, MI 49503

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*Freedom*



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## WOULD YOU LIKE TO REPRESENT YOUR STATE IN THE FUTURE?

Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc. is looking for future titleholders from every state. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming involved with the organization, please call (877)679-4335 or email [director@mswheelchairamerica.org](mailto:director@mswheelchairamerica.org).

At the current time, we are looking for Independent Delegates from:

Alaska	Montana	Puerto Rico
Connecticut	New Hampshire	South Dakota
Hawaii	New Mexico	Vermont
Missouri	North Dakota	West Virginia
Montana	Oklahoma	



## MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA TITLEHOLDERS

1973	Patricia Nevins	Michigan	1997	Elaine Stefanowicz	Washington
1974	Caryl Jane Robinson	Texas	1998	Terri Cecil	Kentucky
1975	Diana Kenderian	New Jersey	1999	Christina Gilmore	Wisconsin
1976	Dixie Lee Etheridge	Mississippi	2000	Tracy Charlton-O'Connor	South Dakota
1977	Beverly Chapman	Florida	2001	Nicki Ard	South Carolina
1978	Margie Sloan	Georgia	2002	Candy Marsh	Colorado
1979	Marge Chmielewski	Michigan	2003	Catherine Gugala	Wisconsin
1980	Nancy Pudvin	Georgia	2004	Cinda Hughes	Oklahoma
1981	Vivienne Thompson	Massachusetts	2005	Juliette Rizzo	Maryland
1982	Marian Schooling-Vessels	Maryland	2006	Kristen Connors	Rhode Island
1983	Barbara Crozier	Alabama	2007	Autumn Grant	Massachusetts
1984	Gaynell Colburn	Maryland	2008	Kristen McCosh	Massachusetts
1985	Lori Cottam	Utah	2009	Michelle Colvard	Texas
1986	Donna Cline	Nevada	2010	Erika Bogan	North Carolina
1987	Sandra Honbaier	North Carolina	2011	Alexandra McArthur	North Carolina
1988	Peggy Simpson	Alabama	2012	Josie Badger	Pennsylvania
1989	Jewell Massey	Georgia	2013	Mariah Kilbourne	Texas
1990	Kathy Garcia Farnsworth	Utah	2014	Jennifer Adams	Washington
1991	Mercedes Rodriguez-Fowler	Florida	2015	Samantha Schroth	Wisconsin
1992	Deanna VanHook	Texas	2016	Alette Coble-Temple	California
1993	Kim Mensi	Alabama	2017	Eliza McIntosh-Stauffer	Utah
1994	Dawn Blodgett	California	2018	Sheri Melander-Smith	Minnesota
1995	Wendy Petzold	Wisconsin	2019	Karen Roy	Louisiana
1996	Amy Baxter-Ley	Texas	2020	Hilary Muehlberger	Missouri



# THE HISTORY OF MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA, INC.

In 1972 Dr. Philip K. Wood of Columbus, Ohio had devoted his career to treating and rehabilitating persons with functional impairments. During his practice he became aware of the talents, capabilities, determination, and courage of people with disabilities. As a result, he established Ms. Wheelchair America as a forum for promoting the achievements and accomplishments of women who utilize wheelchairs for mobility, as well as the needs of all persons with mobility challenges.

The mission of Ms. Wheelchair America is to provide an opportunity of achievement for women who happen to be wheelchair users to successfully educate and advocate for the more than 64 million Americans living with disabilities. The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is in no way a traditional beauty contest.

## PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE ORGANIZATION

Each year the Ms. Wheelchair America Program holds a competition to select an accomplished, articulate spokeswoman for people with disabilities. The national titleholder must be able to communicate and educate the public, business community, and lawmakers regarding the dignity, productiveness, and basic value of people with disabilities. Ms. Wheelchair America continues to eliminate the architectural and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disabilities from assuming their rightful place in society, which promotes inclusion.

Ms. Wheelchair America has numerous duties. During her reign she travels visiting advocacy groups, makes public appearances, and conducts interviews. Ms. Wheelchair America promotes her chosen platform in a variety of settings with a wide range of individuals. She serves as a positive role model for the next generation of Americans with disabilities, inspiring them to have an impact and leave a positive legacy. Her commitment and personal example serve to further the mission of Ms. Wheelchair America.

This competition gathers advocates from across America to participate in a variety of activities, which develop stronger advocates to impact people in their state. These activities allow a panel of judges to spend time with each state titleholder, while allowing the competitors time together to share with each other and develop strong bonds of friendships and sisterhood. They become stronger advocates while attending a variety of interesting workshops that strengthen them. The workshops build leadership skills, heighten awareness on the issues that exist within the community and are designed to open a dialogue between the women about their thoughts, ideas, values, and experiences.

Ms. Wheelchair America, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is staffed and coordinated solely by volunteers from many different community organizations, businesses, private citizens, and previous titleholders. It is through the monetary and in-kind support of many sponsors that the national titleholder is able to fulfill her duties throughout the year and travel across the country with her message of empowerment for people with disabilities. The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is actively seeking volunteers and sponsors and would appreciate any support that is offered.



# A FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM HILARY MUEHLBERGER

## *Ms. Wheelchair America 2020-2021*

Winning Ms. Wheelchair America is COMPLETELY life changing. It has opened my eyes to so many people, not just in my community, but nationwide that have the ability to be exceptional if they were only given the opportunity and the resources to reach their full potential. I have been inspired by each and every one of these people to be better and to strive for more every day.

At every Abilities Expo I had the pleasure to attend, I made new friends and left with new ideas on how to advocate more affectively. Craig Harlow at MobilityWorks is a shining bright light of positivity and good humor who was essential at these expos for a much-needed boost of energy after a long day of interactions. He always keeps me going and is a kind ear for me to turn to if ever I need help with anything. Mickae Lee with NCART leads amazing talks and inspires me to become a better advocate every day. She is so accomplished and an amazing role model for us all. Lucy Jones with FFORA is the most FIERCE woman I have had the pleasure to meet and call a friend. She is always looking for ways to make any wheelchair user feel more fabulous with accessories designed FOR us. No more shopping at a bike store for me 😊. Robin Wearley with Adapts always has a smile to offer and a nice chat whenever I need it. NuMotion, I can't say enough about their continuous love and support. Every state I travelled to NuMotion was there, always smiling, always friendly, always happy to help.

Every additional event I was invited to came with new experiences and new people that have forever changed my life. Ski for Light...I could write a 5-page letter on all the amazing people at this event and the opportunities they offer to so many people with a wide array of abilities. The Gould Family are unlike any other. Their love and dedication for not only this event, but the people involved is unparalleled. George Lee insures not a single detail is overlooked, from the moment our flight landed to the day we left everyone of us was taken care of. I was taken to see Mt. Rushmore and Crazy Horse in the middle of a snowstorm, nothing was going to stop these South Dakota Natives from showing me EVERYTHING that they had to offer. They put my athleticism to the test every day either in a sit ski on a 5K cross country push or on a Mono-Ski with Brad coaching me on the bunny slopes. They showed me great kindness and I have every intention of attending again.

Tennis is what gave me the confidence to even apply for Ms. Wheelchair Missouri, let alone competing for Ms. Wheelchair America! So, it only seems fitting to offer a MASSIVE amount of appreciation not just for the sport but for my entire team and my amazing coach Rick Haith. Rick had a hand in



pushing me to be a fierce competitor not just in tennis but in my life. He became a pageant mom of sorts, helping me to book events and editing my speeches. Today he is a lifelong friend and brother figure to me. I will forever be grateful for everything he has given me. My teammates were there every roll of the way, we went to tournaments together and cheered each other on. They helped me dial in my game and got me through some rough times with nothing but a tennis racket and some practice drills. We competed in the Quad Cities tournament in Iowa and at the Wheelchair US Open during my reign. Through wins and losses, they have had my back and I wouldn't trade them for anything.

None of my reign would have been possible without the tremendous love and support from my family and friends. Don Weber, you have been a constant supporter of mine since I won in July of 2019, thank you for having faith in me and believing in me throughout my entire reign. Chelsea Anderson, you are my best friend, you support every decision I make even if you don't always agree it is for the best. You are a sister to me, and I appreciate you and your family for everything. Heather and Jordan, you two are my family and you are always going above and beyond for me. You are my sounding board and on occasion my therapist. You take me to Target for retail therapy when I have had a long difficult week. Seth, you are my favorite travel companion/photographer/little brother a girl could ask for, thank you for keeping me company and always having something funny to say at the very moment I need it. Emma, my stylist, you make me look beautiful even when I don't feel that way. Nicole, without you my reign, short as it was, would have never gone as smoothly as it did, always making sure we are running on schedule (or actually have a schedule 😊), printing t-shirts, driving me anywhere and everywhere I needed to go, I couldn't have done any of it without you.

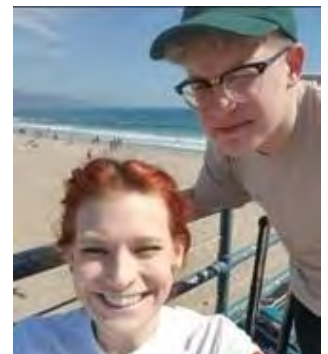
Mom. Deserving of your very own paragraph. You are my travel companion, my encouragement, my strength, my persistence, my stubbornness. Without you, none of this would be possible, literally. From the moment I was injured in 2015 you told me to turn this trauma into something beautiful. I hope I did that justice here and forever.

Thank you to every person I met on this journey, to those who believed in me and trusted me. Those who invited me to your events or even just stopped by to say hello. I appreciate you all and without you Ms. Wheelchair America wouldn't be possible.

With love and gratitude,

*Halany Muehlberger*

Ms. Wheelchair America 2020-2021



# MEET THE TITLEHOLDERS



## MS. WHEELCHAIR ALABAMA

*Nicole Kennemur*

Nicole lives in Russellville, Alabama and works at Marion County Treatment Center as a lead counselor. She received a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from Athens State University. Nicole, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys cooking, traveling, and going to concerts. Nicole's advocacy platform focuses on the importance of accessibility in medical settings. She describes herself as strong, independent, and openminded.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR ARKANSAS

*Audrey Booth-Williams*

Audrey lives in Manila, Arkansas and is a stay-at-home-mom who volunteers at the Community of Christ and is active with the state of Arkansas Councils. She obtained a Master of Science in Education with a focus in School Counseling from Arkansas State University. Audrey, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys outdoor activities, swimming, and working with various communities throughout her state. Audrey's advocacy platform is, "LIFE: Living Fully Empowered." She describes herself as energetic, innovative, and gracious.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR CALIFORNIA

*Christine Burke*

Christine lives in Danville, California and works as a talent manager for C Talent Management. She received a Master of Arts in Leadership from Capella University. Christine, who is living with spina bifida, enjoys theatre, superhero conventions, and teaching or coaching wheelchair tennis. Christine's advocacy platform is, "Putting Disability Back in Diversity." She describes herself as tenacious, communicative, and as a multifaceted nerd.





## MS. WHEELCHAIR COLORADO

*Chris Layne*

Chris lives in Aurora, Colorado and volunteers as a board member for the Home Builders Foundation as well as serving as a peer mentor for the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation and Craig Hospital. She received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Pacific Lutheran University. Chris, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys swimming, traveling, and motivational speaking. Chris' advocacy platform is, "Get Up, Get Out, Get Rolling." She describes herself as compassionate, kind, and fun.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

*Katie Bruckmann*

Katie lives in the District of Columbia and works as a classroom aide assisting elementary students with and without disabilities with their schooling. She received a Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Saint Michael's College in Vermont. Katie, who is living with spina bifida, enjoys reading, cooking, and traveling. Katie's advocacy platform is, "Disabled is Not a Bad Thing: Disability Positivity and Education in Schools." She describes herself as compassionate, enthusiastic, and funny.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR FLORIDA

*Samantha Lebron*

Samantha lives in Seffner, Florida and is a benefits planner and information resource specialist at Hope 4 Life. She received an Associate of Arts in Information Technology from Miami Dade College. Samantha, who is living with cerebral palsy, enjoys competing in adaptive sports, listening to music, and writing fiction stories. Samantha's advocacy platform is, "Where is my Vehicle to Opportunity?" She describes herself as ambitious, influential, and enthusiastic.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR GEORGIA

*Kasey Whitworth*

Kasey lives in Atlanta, Georgia and is active with an organization called 501<sup>st</sup>, which carries out volunteer projects in the community. She received a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural, Food, and Life Sciences from the University of Arkansas. Kasey, who is living with epilepsy, neurological disabilities, and a spinal cord injury, enjoys cosplay, riding horses, and working with animals. Kasey's advocacy platform is, "Laws and Paws." She describes herself as a fighter, loyal, and selfless.





## MS. WHEELCHAIR IDAHO

*Devyn Burdett*

Devyn lives in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and is involved with Diseases and Disabilities Advocates Riding Club, Shine Bright, Coeur d'Alene Homeless, and Special Olympics. Devyn, who is living with paraplegia due to transverse myelitis, enjoys painting, sewing, and skiing. Devyn's advocacy platform is, "Adventures For All." She describes herself as adventurous, passionate, and generous.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR ILLINOIS

*Mya Hendrix*

Mya lives in Momence, Illinois and is the co-president of the Illinois Prisoner Rights Coalition. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Political Sciences from Southern New Hampshire University. Mya, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys activism, studying, and music. Mya's advocacy platform focuses on the importance of diversity, inclusion, and representation. She describes herself as honest, willing, and courageous.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR INDIANA

*Risa Wright*

Risa lives in Anderson, Indiana and works as a specialty servicing advisor for Sallie Mae. She studied medical office assisting at Harrison College in Indianapolis. Risa, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys reading, fishing, and playing board games. Risa's advocacy platform focuses on healthcare accessibility. She describes herself as honest, inquisitive, and resourceful.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR IOWA

*Heidi Kriener*

Heidi lives in Alpha, Iowa and works as an English language learner teacher at Turkey Valley Community School. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from Upper Iowa University. Heidi, who is living with spina bifida, enjoys horseback riding, live concerts, and camping. Heidi's advocacy platform is, "Everyone Plays Together." She describes herself as strong, beautiful, and unique.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR KANSAS

*Hilary Garrett*

Hilary lives in Westmoreland, Kansas and is currently a full-time student. She received an Associate Degree in General Studies from Cloud Community College. Now, she is pursuing a bachelor's degree at Kansas State University. Hilary, who is living with cerebral palsy, enjoys making YouTube videos, family game nights, and movies. Hilary's advocacy platform is, "Find Your Voice: The Power of Self Advocacy." She describes herself as sedulous, funny, and kind.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR LOUISIANA

*Tamara Green*

Tamara lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and works at TLG Tax Service and T&T Credit Consulting. She received a certificate in medical office administration from Delta College. Tamara, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys traveling, cooking, and writing. Tamara's advocacy platform focuses on mental health awareness while living with a disability. She describes herself as resilient, independent, and loving.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR MAINE

*Monique Smith*

Monique lives in Dover Foxcroft, Maine and works as a bookkeeper and property manager in her community. She studied general education at Golden West Community College. Monique, who is living with a spinal cord injury due to transverse myelitis and multiple sclerosis, enjoys reading, concerts, and spending time with family. Monique's advocacy platform is, "Healthcare Disparities For The Disabled With A Focus on Motorized Independence." She describes herself as an introvert, diligent, and conscientious.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR MARYLAND

*Brittany Rieman*

Brittany lives in Waldorf, Maryland and works as a transition's specialist at Accessible Resources for Independence. She received a certificate from Shenandoah Valley School of Therapeutic Massage. Brittany, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys swimming, painting, and spending time with family and friends. Brittany's advocacy platform focuses on substance abuse in and outside of the disability community. She describes herself as strong, determined and selfless.



## **MS. WHEELCHAIR MICHIGAN**

*Laura Jackson*

Laura lives in Northville, Michigan and is a board member for Mi Work Matters and a young professional board member for North Star Reach. She received a Master of Science in Business Administration from Madonna University. Laura, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, and painting. Laura's advocacy platform is, "Move Your Mind." She describes herself as bubbly, generous, and passionate.



## **MS. WHEELCHAIR MINNESOTA**

*Nina Harrison*

Nina lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota and is a former certified nursing assistant who volunteers her time to raise awareness for multiple sclerosis and other disabilities. She received various trainings from the American Red Cross and Vision Lost Resource Center. Nina, who is living with paraplegia and a vision impairment, enjoys reading audiobooks, cooking, and painting. Nina's advocacy platform is, "Rolling With A Vision." She describes herself as confident, determined and strong-minded.



## **MS. WHEELCHAIR MISSISSIPPI**

*Allyson Bell*

Allyson lives in Jackson, Mississippi and works as a receptionist at Living Independence For Everyone of Mississippi. She attended Hinds Community College and has received trainings pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Allyson, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys kayaking, bowling, and to race cars in her wheelchair. Allyson's advocacy platform is, "Flight Not Plight." She describes herself as optimistic, humorous, and determined.



## **MS. WHEELCHAIR NEBRASKA**

*Amanda Snook*

Amanda lives in Fairbury, Nebraska and is a stay-at-home mom and a peer mentor for Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. She received training in early childhood development with Blue Valley Community Action. Amanda, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys attending her boys' sports activities, planting flowers, and raising goats. Amanda's advocacy platform is, "Positive Attitude – Positive Outcome." She describes herself as outgoing, fun-loving, and adaptable.





## MS. WHEELCHAIR NEVADA

*Angelica Wallace-Bazile*

Angelica lives in Las Vegas, Nevada and is a volunteer in her community with a passion to encourage others and create spaces where everyone is welcome. She studied at Crawford Academy in 2004. Angelica, who is living with spina bifida, enjoys singing, archery, and painting. Angelica's advocacy platform focuses on disabled minorities. She describes herself as elegant, proud, and lively.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR NEW JERSEY

*Lindsay Tuman*

Lindsay lives in Garwood, New Jersey and works at Insights Counseling Center as a psychotherapist. She received a Master of Social Work with a concentration in Clinical Practice with Children and Families from Monmouth University. Lindsay, who is living with spina bifida, enjoys ballroom dancing, surfing, and attending Broadway shows. Lindsay's advocacy platform is, "Judgmental Attitudes Create Barriers." She describes herself as curious, empathetic, and resilient.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR NEW YORK

*Lauren Arena*

Lauren lives in Gansevoort, New York and is a full-time student and trained speaker for RespectAbility. She is currently pursuing an Associate in Applied Science in Media Arts at SUNY Adirondack. Lauren, who is living with myoclonic epilepsy and ataxia due to a KCNC1 mutation, enjoys ballroom dancing, digital drawing, and painting. Lauren's advocacy platform is, "Dream Big – Work Hard – Inspire Others." She describes herself as strong, resilient, and determined.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR OHIO

*Laura Sykes*

Laura lives in Bucyrus, Ohio and recently served as a practicum student at Bucyrus elementary school where she provided support to students who visited the social services office. She obtained an Associate in Applied Science in Human and Social Work Services from North Central State College. Laura, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys spending time with family, relaxing in the pool, and watching dramas. Laura's advocacy platform is, "Sudden Impact." She describes herself as compassionate, determined, and resilient.





## MS. WHEELCHAIR OREGON

*Leslie Keller*

Leslie lives in Grants Pass, Oregon and is the work incentives coordinator for the Work Incentives Network at HASL Center For Independent Living. She received an Associate of Arts in Psychology from Rogue Community College. Leslie, who is living with arthrogryposis multiplex congenital, enjoys swimming, spending time with her daughters, and spending time with her grandkids. Leslie's advocacy platform is, "Why Can't We Reach The Damn Buttons?" She describes herself as stubborn, fierce, and driven.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR PENNSYLVANIA

*Jessica Gardner*

Jessica lives in Johnstown, Pennsylvania and volunteers with the Alternative Community Resource Program and AseraCare Hospice Care. She received an Associate in Human Services from Pennsylvania Highlands Community College. Jessica, who is living with cerebral palsy, enjoys volunteering, reading, and spending time with family and friends. Jessica's advocacy platform is, "Working to Eliminate Service Dog Fraud Through Education, Advocacy and Working with Legislators." She describes herself as determined, optimistic, and ambitious.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR UTAH

*Lina Nguyen*

Lina lives in West Valley City, Utah and is active with the Disabled Rights Action Committee and leads a support group called Ladies in Motion. She studied communications at Salt Lake City Community College. Lina, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys listening to K-pop, watching movies, and watching k-dramas. Lina's advocacy platform is, "Let's Roll Together." She describes herself as strong, courageous, and ambitious.



## MS. WHEELCHAIR VIRGINIA

*Ryann Kress*

Ryann lives in Roanoke, Virginia and is a registered nurse at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. She obtained a Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences with a concentration in Human Sexuality from James Madison University. Ryann, who is living with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, enjoys weightlifting, playing wheelchair basketball, and singing dive-bar karaoke. Ryann's advocacy platform focuses on advocating for existing and future disabled healthcare workers. She describes herself as strong, determined, and vocal.



## **MS. WHEELCHAIR WASHINGTON**

*Kaitlin Skilton*

Kaitlin lives in Seattle, Washington and volunteers with the Bayview Intergenerational Learning Center, Seattle Adaptive Sports, and the Seattle Disability Commission. She attended South Seattle College. Kaitlin, who is living with spina bifida, enjoys photography, music, and sports. Kaitlin's advocacy platform focuses on interactions between law enforcement and the disability community. She describes herself as resilient, adaptable, and sincere.



## **MS. WHEELCHAIR WISCONSIN**

*Martha Siravo*

Martha lives in Madison, Wisconsin and is a mother, volunteer, and the president of Madtown Mama's and Disability Advocates. She received a technical diploma for medical coding from Madison Area Technical College. Martha, who is living with a spinal cord injury, enjoys advocating at legislative events, going on cross-town adventures, and getting outside on sunny days with her daughter. Martha's advocacy platform is, "Embrace Inclusive Education." She describes herself as determined, independent, and cheerful.



## **MS. WHEELCHAIR WYOMING**

*Masha Flinn*

Masha lives in Casper, Wyoming and works as a peer specialist for Wyoming Independent Living. She received an Associate of Arts in Social Work from Casper College. Masha, who is living with cerebral palsy, enjoys training animals, making art, and hanging out with friends and family. Masha's advocacy platform is, "Service Dog's: Much more than a man's best friend, they inspire, they educate, and help the next generation." She describes herself as determined, witty, and compassionate.

# **CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE TITLEHOLDERS!**

# 2020-2021 NATIONAL COMPETITION AWARDS

## *Ms. Wheelchair America 2022*

Ms. Wheelchair America 2022 is chosen by the judging panel. The contestant that earns the highest total score during the judging sessions will become Ms. Wheelchair America 2022.

## *The Lifetime Achievement Award*

The Lifetime Achievement Award is chosen by the judges and given to the contestant that they believe has made the largest contribution and significant impact for people with disabilities.

## *The Nicki Ard Achievement Award*

The Nicki Ard Achievement Award recipient is chosen by the judges and awarded to the woman who exemplifies the philosophy of Nicki Ard, which is to "always exhibit a positive attitude and be willing to serve others." The contestant receiving this award will have made an outstanding contribution to the disability community through her talents, her efforts, and her example.

## *The Outstanding Speech Award*

The Outstanding Speech Award is chosen by former titleholders on speech night. Former titleholders will receive one vote to cast for the contestant that feel delivered the most memorable speech of the evening.

## *The People's Choice Award*

The People's Choice Award is presented to the contestant who receives the most votes. Votes cost \$1.00 each and can be purchased in the weeks leading up to the National Competition until August 13, 2021. This year, forty percent of the funds raised will be distributed to the award recipient's Ms. Wheelchair State Program while the remaining funds will go to the Ms. Wheelchair America 2022 National Titleholder.

## *The Congeniality Award*

The Congeniality Award is chosen by the contestants. Each contestant cast one vote for the person that they feel was kindest, friendliest, most helpful, and caring throughout the week.

## *The Cinda Hughes Community Impact Award*

The Cinda Hughes Community impact award is being given in memory of Ms. Wheelchair America 2004 Cinda Hughes. This award is chosen by the judges and given to the contestant that they believe has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to positively impact the lives of others through advocacy and community service.

## *The Mercedes Rodriguez Fowler Promising Leader Award*

The Mercedes Rodriguez Fowler Promising Leader Award is being given in memory of Ms. Wheelchair America 1991 Mercedes Fowler Rodriguez. This award is chosen by the judges and given to the contestant that they believe shows great promise and initiative to empower, encourage, and mentor the next generation of advocates.

## *The Judy Hoit Legacy Award*

The Judy Hoit Legacy Award is given in memory of former Ms. Wheelchair America Executive Board Member and Iowa State Coordinator Judy Hoit. Judy devoted over 20 years of her life to serving the disability community and the Ms. Wheelchair America Organization. Her contributions and impact on those around her were extraordinary. The Judy Hoit Legacy Award will be given to an individual who has made a significant impact within the Ms. Wheelchair America Organization while displaying humility, selflessness, and perseverance.

## **PRESENTATION OF THE AWARDS**

The awards will be presented to the chosen recipients on Saturday August 14, 2021 during the Ms. Wheelchair America Virtual Crowning Gala.





# MEET THE JUDGING PANEL



## *Jennifer Adams*

Jennifer Lynn Adams is a passionate extraabled entrepreneur and advocate for the extraabled global community. In 2011 Jennifer started a motivational speaking business SHIFT. Drawn from her own personal experiences with bullying, her first pro-inclusion campaign was The Power of Words – an anti-bullying campaign designed for schools that demonstrates to students the power behind words and how they affect their peers and themselves. Jennifer continues to share this message today. In 2013, she became Ms. Wheelchair Washington and Ms. Wheelchair America in 2014. Her platform of Inclusion Revolution advocated for the inclusion of people with extra-abilities in all facets of society. In 2015, Jennifer founded her non-profit Making Dreams Come True, which provides advocacy and life resources for people with extra-abilities. In 2016, Jennifer won an award for her Power of Words campaign through the Miami Dade school district recognizing her accomplishments of reaching youth all over the nation with this campaign.

She has been a guest speaker for universities, schools, businesses, and conferences all over the world.

Like everyone in the world, Jennifer has spent the past year finding her new normal. In this quest, she procured a new digital platform for her voice as an advocate. In addition, as a content creator, she has curated 17,000 followers from the extraabled community across all of her social media platforms.



## *Susan Bloss*

Susan Bloss is the president of Lifestyle Kitchen Studio, a premier design studio located in Grand Rapids, Michigan where she resides. Ms. Bloss has owned her business for over 30 years and is a graduate of the University of Michigan.

It was on a travel adventure with one of her daughters in 2002, that Susan was bitten by a mosquito. That bite changed her life forever. The resulting California Virus caused a year-long paralysis and very slow recovery period, still ongoing. After months on a ventilator, a tracheotomy, and long-term therapy provided by the Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, Susan has made significant progress. She uses an electric scooter for mobility, but with the help of her husband, daughters, extended family and friends, her life has once again become rich and rewarding.

In addition to her love of family and design, Susan has been blessed to be involved in volunteer opportunities. A few years after her hospitalization, she joined the Mary Free Bed Guild, an organization formed by women in 1911 which governs Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital to this day. Susan co-chaired the Guild Art Committee for several years, which oversees the Mary Free Bed Art Exhibition. It is a show featuring work created by artists who have a physical disability. She helped oversee the installation of the Guild's art collection throughout the hospital. Susan developed the Guild Kitchen at the hospital and served on the Architectural Oversight Committee when the hospital underwent building and renovation a few years ago. She was also on the Guild advisory committee developing the hospital kitchen which serves hospital patients and the café serving patients, family, and staff.

Presently, Susan is the president of The Mary Free Bed Guild Fund, which supports not only the hospital, but also contributes to programs for people with disabilities throughout the community. She serves on the Board of the Mary Free Bed Guild, the Hospital Board of Trustees, and as chair of the First United Methodist Church Board of Trustees. That board recently completed a major renovation of the 150-year-old church's chancel, making it accessible and inclusive.



## Tameka Citchen-Spruce

Tameka Citchen-Spruce has a strong passion for disability advocacy and media. It started at 21 years old, as Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2006. As Ms. Wheelchair Michigan, she spoke out about supporting women with disabilities who are being abused. Two years later she formed Women Empower Inc, its mission was to empower women with disabilities to live their best lives. Later she studied Broadcast Television and graduated with a bachelor's degree in journalism from Oakland University.

Tameka has been advocating for over 15 years for access to affordable and accessible housing, fighting against voting oppression towards people with disabilities, racial and gender injustices, and health equity.

Because of the combination of her journalism knowledge, and activism she learned the importance of telling a person's story. Her short film, Justifiable Homicide, has been nominated and won an award and her My Girl Story documentary has been selected for film festivals.

Besides film, she's a community organizer for Warriors on Wheels of Metro Detroit. A facilitator for Michigan Disability Rights Coalition. And a Program Assistant and chairperson of the Inclusive Health Committee for Beaumont Health, Healthy Dearborn.

She has been selected for numerous fellowships Americorp, Public Allies of Metro Detroit, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition's LEAD program and Detroit Equity Action Lab at Judge Damon Keith's Wayne State University Law Center. She's a proud member of the National Black Disability Coalition.

Another important role of Tameka's life is being a wife and mother of two young children.



## Gabriel Grant

After being injured in an automobile accident at the age of 18, Gabriel's life changed forever. The crash rendered him an incomplete quadriplegic. What did not change was Gabriel's determination to make a difference in his lifetime. Gabriel played baseball, basketball, and golf in high school. After he was discharged from the rehab hospital, he joined the wheelchair rugby team. Two years into the sport, Division I teams started recruiting him to join, and he chose a scholarship with the University of Arizona where he attended. Over the past decade, he has committed his work to providing care and accessibility for all.

In 2016, Gabriel founded Care Granted, a home healthcare company focused on compassionate, client-focused home health care. In 2019, Grant formed Access Granted, a consulting firm that champions diversity, equity, and inclusion solutions for marginalized communities.

Today, Gabriel resides in Phoenix Arizona, with his wife, Angel Grant. Gabriel's goal is to make sure his clients have access to quality health care providers, while making the world more inclusive and accessible for everyone, everywhere.



## Anila Jivanji

Anila Jivanji is currently a Senior Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Specialist at Bell where she is involved with projects that align the diversity, inclusion and belonging strategy with the company goals. She also leads the employee resource group and business resource group relationships for Ascend North Texas.

Previously she was at American Airlines, where she gained diverse experience in human resources, global sales strategy and analytics, account management, and customer experience training. In her last role at American Airlines, Anila was the Inclusion and Diversity, Senior Specialist responsible for developing and growing external partnerships, employee business resource group coordination, diversity advisory council leadership, and inclusion and diversity programming and project management.

She is the recipient of the Earl Graves Award for advocacy in Diversity, Inclusion and Equity, as well as the American Airlines Chairman Award of Excellence in 2016 for her exemplary commitment and dedication in advancing the inclusion and diversity narrative at American Airlines while supporting the vision and company imperatives.

Anila continues to serve underrepresented groups thru affiliations with organizations like North Texas Disability:IN; Advisory Board of Elevate, Spectrum Knowledge; and Global Champions for Out & Equal. Anila is an ardent advocate and supporter of the Ms. Wheelchair organization by making lucrative introductions and strengthening the network.

## MORE ABOUT THE JUDGING PROCESS

Each state titleholder will receive a score in four different areas from each judge on the judging panel. The areas being scored are the titleholder application, an essay written by the titleholder, a 15-minute interview with the panel of judges, and a platform speech. In addition, the top five finalists named during Saturday's Crowning Gala will be asked to answer two questions in front of the audience. The answers to those questions will also be scored. The titleholder with the highest combined score after all the judging sessions are complete will become Ms. Wheelchair America 2022.



# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

## *Fireside Chat with Judith Heumann and Kent Riddle*



About Judith Heumann: Judith (Judy) Heumann is a lifelong advocate for the rights of disabled people. She contracted polio in 1949 in Brooklyn, New York and was denied the right to attend school because she was a "fire hazard" at the age of five. Her parents played a strong role in fighting for her rights as a child, but Judy soon determined that she, working in collaboration with other disabled people, had to play an advocacy role due to the continuous discrimination.

She is now an internationally recognized leader in the disability rights community. Her memoir, authored with Kristen Joiner, of Being Heumann "Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist," was released through Penguin Random House in February of 2020. She also is a part of a film called Crip Camp which shares the story of disabled teens at camp in the 1970's and how they helped sparked the disability civil rights movement. She has been featured in numerous documentaries on the history of the disability rights movement and she delivered a TED talk in the spring of 2018. Her story was also told on Comedy Central's Drunk History in early 2018, in which she was portrayed by Ali Stroker, the first disabled woman to play on Broadway. As a former Senior Fellow at the Ford Foundation, she also currently serves on several non-profit boards and is an Ambassador for Leonard Cheshire based in London.

Judy was a founding member of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living and then served on its Board of Directors from 1973-1993. CIL Berkeley was the first of its kind in the United States and helped to launch the Independent Living Movement both nationally and globally.

In 1982, Judy co-founded the World Institute on Disability with Ed Roberts and Joan Leon, a nonprofit that works to fully integrate people with disabilities into the communities around them via research, policy, and consulting efforts.

From 1993 to 2001, Judy served in the Clinton Administration as the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the Department of Education.

Judy then served as the World Bank's first Adviser on Disability and Development from 2002 to 2006. In this position, she led the World Bank's disability work to expand its knowledge and capability to work with governments and civil society on including disability in the global conversation.

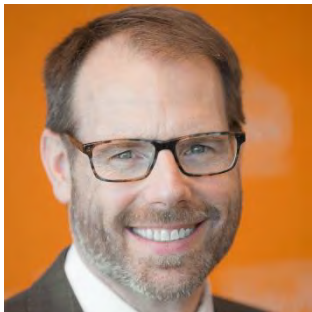
During his presidency, President Obama appointed Judy as the first Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State, where she served from 2010-2017. Mayor Fenty of D.C. appointed her as the first Director for the Department on Disability Services, where she was responsible for the Developmental Disability Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

She was also responsible for the implementation of legislation at the national level for programs in special education, disability research, vocational rehabilitation and independent living, serving more than 8 million youth and adults with disabilities.



Throughout her life, Judy has traveled on her motorized wheelchair to countries on every continent, in urban and rural communities alike. She has played a role in the development and implementation of major legislation including the IDEA, Section 504, the Americans with Disability Act and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Judy graduated from Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY in 1969 and received her Master's in Public Health from the University of California at Berkeley in 1975. She has received numerous awards including being the first recipient of the Henry B. Betts Award in recognition of efforts to significantly improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and the Max Starkloff Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Council on Independent Living. She has been awarded six honorary doctorates: an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Long Island University (1994), an Honorary Doctorate of Public Service from The University of Toledo, Ohio (2004), an Honorary Doctorate of Public Administration from The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2001), an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Brooklyn College (2018), an Honorary Doctorate of Education from Middlebury College (2019), and an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from Rowan University (2019).



About Kent Riddle: Kent Riddle is the President and CEO of Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. You may not expect an engineer to be at the helm of one of the nation's largest rehabilitation systems, but Kent Riddle is more than comfortable in that role. After graduating from Purdue University with a Bachelor of Science degree in construction management and engineering, Kent's career followed a likely track: commercial and industrial real estate development, building design and construction, and global mergers and acquisitions.

But his professional path realigned in 2002 when his wife, Susan, suffered a traumatic brain injury in a car crash and recovered at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. Kent joined the hospital board and in 2011 was invited to become Chief Executive Officer.

Kent's leadership has resulted in transformational accomplishments including: a \$66 Million expansion and renovation project in Grand Rapids more than doubling the number of beds and staff; the creation of the Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Network with over three dozen acute care hospitals across Michigan and Indiana; and the development of the Mary Free Bed Foundation.

But Kent considers the most significant achievement is a 700% increase since 2011 in the annual number of patients treated by Mary Free Bed experts, and no one understands better than Kent what it means to have futures transformed by rehabilitation.



# THE WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTERS

General Overview Of The Workshops: Advocacy, education, empowerment, and leadership are cornerstones within the Ms. Wheelchair America organization. Throughout the week, titleholders will participate in various workshops to help them grow as advocates, gain new resources to continue to positively impact the disability community, and learn from each other a long the way. In addition to a keynote address from international disability rights leader Judith Heumann and Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital President Kent Riddle, Ms. Wheelchair America is proud to present eight different workshops for titleholders during the National Competition this year.

## DISABILITY HERITAGE: THE LONG ROAD OF ADVOCACY



*Presented by: Carrie Greenwood*

About The Workshop: Are you proud to be a person with a disability? Did you know that the disability community has a long, rich history and culture behind it? This session will take you down the long road of disability history and how advocacy for our community has evolved over the years. From the early days until today, you will learn all about the treatment of people with disabilities, important milestones over the years, the leaders who paved the way, laws that were passed, and much more. Ultimately, this session will demonstrate the importance of knowing and passing along our disability history as a Ms. Wheelchair titleholder. It will leave you feeling "Disabled and Proud!"

About Carrie Greenwood: Carrie has a passion for promoting empowerment and leadership for ALL people, especially youth and women with disabilities. She expresses her passion through her work and volunteer activities. Carrie currently works for the Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy (KYEA) in Topeka, KS, which is a non-profit organization that works to educate, mentor, and support youth with disabilities in Kansas. She has served as the Program Coordinator for the past twelve years and previously served as the Outreach Coordinator for four years prior to that. Carrie also serves as the President and CEO of Ms. Wheelchair Kansas, Inc. and has been the treasurer for Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc. for the past 10 years. Carrie was originally an independent delegate for Ms. Wheelchair Kansas in 2004 and has been the State Coordinator for the past 17 years! She currently serves on the State Rehabilitation Council of Kansas, Kansas Disability Caucus Board of Directors, and is the Vice-Chair of the Association of Youth Leadership Forums (AYLF). Carrie holds an Associate of Applied Science degree in Design Technology from Washburn University. She is also a graduate of the Kansas Youth Leadership Forum, served as Ms. Wheelchair Kansas 2004, received the YWCA of Topeka Women of Excellence Award in 2008, and was one of Topeka's 2013 20 Under 40 Honorees. In her free time, Carrie enjoys listening to music, volunteering at her church, reading a good fiction book, shopping, and spending time with friends and family.

# PERSPECTIVES ON ADVOCACY



*Presented by: Madonna Long, Juliette Rizzo, and Mary Zendejas*

About The Advocacy Panel: Advocacy comes in many forms and plays an important role in creating positive changes in our communities. Get ready to learn from three experienced advocates in our community! Madonna Long, Juliette Rizzo, and Mary Zendejas, team up to share their unique experiences as advocates. The trio has spent a great deal of time advocating for change in healthcare, education, in government, and much more. During this inviting conversation, they will share what they have learned as advocates, provide resources, and answer questions along the way.

About Madonna Long: Madonna, who lives in Wyoming, is a respected and established personality in the disability community who works with disability organizations, leaders, and businesses around the United States. She has a **bachelor's degree in Homeland Security**.

Currently, Madonna is the owner, CEO and President of Summit Services and Supplies, which offers urological supplies or home medical equipment to people who are disabled nationally.

Since 2007, she has worked as a consumer advocate for people who have disabilities where she educates members of Congress or local leaders on disability policy and legislation for people who have disabilities.

Madonna is passionate about accessible transportation, and she has advocated throughout the country with local regulators and policy makers working on progressive solutions on transportation. She helped advance the first factory made accessible vehicle when working with VPG Autos on the MV1. She has helped communities like Washington DC, New York City and other cities in our nation with the concerns of accessible transportation.



About Juliette Rizzo: **As one of Maryland's Top 100 Women**, Juliette Rizzo knows firsthand the power of advocacy to transform limitations into opportunities. A trained journalist with excellent storytelling abilities, Juliette is a tireless advocate for removing the barriers that prevent the more than 64 million Americans with disabilities from living full and productive lives.

Juliette is a recognized and sought-after public speaker, appearing in publications and on radio and television around the world.

As the former Ms. Wheelchair America, Juliette became the first person with multiple, severe disabilities to appear on the Discovery Health Channel's "National Body Challenge" series advocating fitness for "every body," reaching millions. Juliette also appeared on the CBS Early Show as the first woman with a disability to serve as the national **spokeswoman for National Women's Health Week**, advocating to millions for preventative health screenings for all women and breaking down firsthand the myth that disability equates to sickness. Juliette also was called upon by the U.S. Surgeon General to launch a national call to action advocating for walk-able, and thanks to Juliette, roll-able communities nationwide.

Much of the advocacy Juliette does is in addition to her professional employment as the Managing Director of Special Projects, Partnerships and Events at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., where she designs and produces large-scale, high profile and accessible special events for the nation. She began her career at the Department as the Director of Communications for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services under the leadership of international disability rights advocate and then Assistant Secretary Judith Heumann. Juliette holds a Master of Journalism with a minor in Rehabilitation Studies from the University of North Texas and a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from Texas A&M University.



About Mary Zendejas: Mary Zendejas was born in Michoacán, Mexico. At the age of eight months old she was diagnosed with polio, which left her completely paralyzed.

One of Mary's greatest passions is to help those less fortunate and to help advance the disability community. Her advocacy dates back nearly three decades starting in high school, where she organized citizenship fairs to help community members follow their American Dream of becoming US citizens.

She is also the founder of Professional Abilities Association of America, an organization created for working professionals with disabilities by working professionals with disabilities, focusing on inclusion in the workforce. In 2012 she was crowned Ms. Wheelchair California and Ms. Wheelchair America Third-Runner-Up 2013, in which she traveled throughout the state to advocate for disability rights. Mary is a two-time graduate of Leadership Long Beach, served as a member of Mayor Robert Garcia's Transition Team, a former board member of Housing Long Beach and a former Director on the Board of Long Beach Transit.

Now, Mary is serving as Councilwoman for the 1<sup>st</sup> District in the City of Long Beach. She is the first Latina wheelchair user to be elected to office in the nation. She has never met a challenge she could not tackle and overcome. In this role she has been a champion for the people by leading on policies such as those that protect tenants from being evicted unfairly. She has really shined during Covid-19 by authoring policies like "Worker Retention" and "Hero Pay" which have both gotten national recognition and where other cities have followed her lead.

## ADA LAW & A BRIEF GUIDE TO SELF-ADVOCACY



*Presented by: Edward I. Zwilling*

About The Workshop: This workshop will take contestants through an overview of federal laws that prohibit disability discrimination and allow the titleholders to gain understanding about various pieces of legislation that impact people with disabilities. They will also have the opportunity to discuss and learn how self-advocacy can impact accessibility and their communities.

About Ed I. Zwilling: Ed is the managing member of the Law Office of Edward I. Zwilling, LLC. He is rated AV Preeminent by Martindale Hubbell and has been nominated to SuperLawyers on multiple occasions.

Ed went to college at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia and attended Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham, Alabama. He has been practicing law for approximately 28 years. Ed has spent the last 18 years largely engaged in the representation of people with disabilities. He helps those individuals enforce their civil rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Rehabilitation Act, Fair Housing Amendments Act, and various state and federal civil rights laws against discrimination on the basis of disability.

As there are relatively few attorneys who practice primarily in this area, Ed has been asked to represent people with disabilities across the country. He is admitted to practice in the state of Alabama as well as numerous federal district courts in Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin and has handled cases in numerous other states.

# SHARING YOUR PLATFORM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA



*Presented by: Jenny Smith*

About The Workshop: As a contestant in the Ms. Wheelchair America competition, you have chosen a platform with which you are passionate. But how do you get that message out to the people who need to hear it?

In this workshop, Jenny will share her journey as a timid representative from the state of Kentucky at the 1998 national competition and how she gained the confidence to share her story with thousands through social media.

About Jenny Smith: Jenny is an advocate, peer mentor, and encourager for those living with spinal cord injuries, and anyone who has faced unexpected or seemingly impossible challenges. Her popular blog and YouTube channel, Jenny Smith Rolls On, explore the practical aspects of life as a quadriplegic. Jenny has a passion for motivating and educating others about living the impossible through her speaking and writing. Her desire is to see people of all abilities living a full and active life. Jenny is a dynamic speaker and loves to share her message of motivation and education with associations, students, medical professionals, and faith-based groups.

When Jenny was 16 years old, she sustained a C6-7 spinal cord injury, leaving her paralyzed from the chest down and without the use of her hands. After completing her master's degree in counseling psychology, she distributed wheelchairs for eight years in developing countries including Mexico and Afghanistan. Currently she works with a non-profit organization supporting her co-workers while they live overseas.

She is the author of *Live the Impossible: How a Wheelchair Has Taken Me Places I Never Dared to Imagine*. In her book, she shares what it looks like to live with paralysis, from the everyday details most people never think about, to the countless people who have impacted her life along the way. With honesty and humor, faith and fortitude, Jenny shows us how we can all live the impossible, even when life doesn't go as planned.

Rowing on the Ohio River with Louisville Adaptive Rowing and playing wheelchair rugby are a few of the ways she enjoys staying physically active.





# MOBILITYWORKS: EXPLORING ACCESSIBILITY, DISABILITY & TRAVEL



*Presented by: Craig Harlow, Fred Maahs, and Maggie Redden*

About The Travel Panel: Join Ms. Wheelchair America's exclusive transportation sponsor MobilityWorks, as company representative Craig Harlow leads a discussion focused on accessibility, transportation, and travel. Craig will partner with advocates and wheelchair users Fred Maahs and Maggie Redden who will share their unique experiences navigating the travel industry.



About Craig Harlow: Craig is a Regional Marketing Manager for MobilityWorks and has been in the field of assistive technology since 2010. Craig began his career in the automotive mobility field as a New Business Development Representative, marketing locally to help boost visibility of accessible equipment in the Philadelphia Market. After a couple of years, he became the General Manager of the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania location. For the last seven years, Mr. Harlow has been the Regional Marketing Manager. He travels around the country educating people on mobility solutions through support groups, conferences, symposiums and expositions.

Craig holds his automotive mobility credentials from BraunAbility, VMI and Bruno.



About Fred Maahs: Fred Maahs, Jr., has worked for some of the country's largest Fortune 50, 100, and 500 companies. He is the founder of Maahs Travels, which works across the globe to redefine accessible travel; provide accessibility, diversity, and inclusion training for corporations, governments, resorts, and entertainment, media and advertising companies. Maahs has also been the subject of many publications and articles for his accomplishments as a devoted champion for making the world more accessible for those with disabilities. He has decades of experience in the disability and travel and tourism space, having worked with Ministries of Tourism in Israel and Dubai, and

the governments in the Caribbean and the US to help assess and promote accessible travel and tourism.

Fred has shared his personal and professional journeys with countless audiences around the world from D.C. to Dubai; Greece to Georgia; Israel to the Islands of the Caribbean.



About Maggie Redden: Maggie has worn many hats in her life including being a 2008 Beijing Paralympian, Penn State graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, and Ms. Wheelchair New Jersey 2013, finishing as the third-runner-up in 2014. None of that would have been possible had it not been for a stroke of luck. She was adopted from India at age two, after having contracted Polio as an infant. After spending 2012 abroad, living and working at a home for orphan girls in Kolkata, India, she decided to pursue a Master of Public Administration degree.

She currently works as a Communications Manager at SAFE Project, a national nonprofit based in the Washington, D.C. area working to address the addiction epidemic and mental health. Before that, she was a Communications Specialist at National Disability Institute.

Growing up competing in adaptive sports, Maggie got to travel the world. She grew up in New Jersey but now lives with her husband in Falls Church, VA. They are both avid photographers and started Photos with a Spin, a photoblog that combines their love of photography and travel with accessibility. Together, they have done a self-drive tour of the Republic of Ireland, been on safari in South Africa, and will be visiting Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks in August 2021.

# SELF-CARE FROM THE EYES OF THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST



*Presented by: Carly Cribbs and Gabrielle Martino*

About The Workshop: Get some helpful self-care advice from two occupational therapists working at one of the nation's largest rehabilitation hospitals, Mary Free Bed. Learn some easy tips from Carly and Gabby on things you didn't know or might have forgotten, to take better care of one of the most important things, you!



About Carly Cribbs, OTR/L: Carly is a full-time Occupational Therapist at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. She is currently a member of the Day Rehab Team in adult outpatient services. She specializes in rehabilitation related neurological disorders including stroke, traumatic brain injury, and spinal cord injury. She is CPR certified and trained in Dynavision and the Neuro Sensorimotor Integrator. She also administers Pre-Driving Evaluations to determine appropriate driving recommendations for patients and guidance for family members. Carly is a graduate of the 2018 Grand Valley State University Occupational Therapy program. She joined the MFB Occupational Therapy team in Spring 2019.

About Gabrielle Martino, OTR/L: Gabrielle is a full-time Occupational Therapist at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. She is currently a member of the outpatient adult neuro program where she specializes in rehabilitation for neurological disorders including stroke, traumatic brain injury, and spinal cord injury. Gabby is also the lead occupational therapist for limb loss and limb differences. She has obtained her certificate in interprofessional education and has presented at the MiOTA annual conference. Gabby is a graduate of the 2020 Grand Valley State University Occupational Therapy program and joined the MFB Occupational Therapy team in the Fall of 2020.

## THE VALUE OF DISABILITY & INTERSECTIONALITY



*Presented by: Jennifer Kumiyama*

About The Workshop: Jennifer will lead an engaging and dynamic discussion that focuses on the importance of ensuring that disability is discussed at all tables of identity — gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, religious — or “intersectionality” that create complications for people with disabilities when seeking full inclusion.

About Jennifer Kumiyama: Jennifer was born with Arthrogryposis and uses a wheelchair daily. Jennifer received voice lessons at Long Beach City College and California State University of Long Beach. In 2000, Jennifer earned a spot on Warner Bros. reality TV show “Popstars 2” and earned national accolades from many publications including Variety Magazine and TV Guide — referring to her as “the girl in the wheelchair, who’s voice blew everyone out of the water”. Shortly after that in 2002 – Jennifer was cast in Disney’s “Aladdin; a Musical Spectacular” at Disney California Adventure Theme Park, where she is the first performer in a wheelchair to ever be on any Disney stage in the world. It was at Disney that Jennifer took on her real role as an advocate for people living with disabilities – showing the entire world that talent sees no boundaries.

In 2010, Jennifer was crowned Ms. Wheelchair California and Ms. Wheelchair America 2011, First-Runner-Up. During her reign she spread the message of hope through her platform “Empowering Children with Disabilities to Make Their Own Dreams Come True”.

Since the closing of 'Aladdin' Jennifer worked for former Long Beach Councilwoman, Senator Lena Gonzalez. She currently works at Progressive Solutions Consulting, a firm that works to elect more women, women of color, and members of the LGBTQ and disability communities.

# ROLLING TOGETHER: WITH MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA TITLEHOLDERS



*Presented by: Ms. Wheelchair America Hilary Muehlberger,  
Dr. Alette Coble-Temple, Karen Roy, and Samantha Schroth*

About The National Titleholder Panel: Reigning Ms. Wheelchair America Hilary Muehlberger will team up with former Ms. Wheelchair America titleholders Dr. Alette Coble-Temple, Karen Roy, and Samantha Schroth to talk about their memorable experiences as Ms. Wheelchair America. They will provide tips and ways to continue to succeed as advocates as we roll forward together.

About Hilary Muehlberger: Hilary grew up in Olathe, KS. In September of 2015 Hilary was the passenger in a car that drove head on into a house at 50 mph, the driver was intoxicated. She suffered numerous injuries including a T-12 incomplete spinal cord injury. She was treated at Overland Park Regional and attended outpatient rehab with Mid America Rehabilitation Hospital. In February of 2016 she moved into her own apartment and started her journey toward independence. Since then, she has spoken for ThinkFirst, Northland Dependency Center as a part of a Victim Impact Panel, Midwest Adaptive Sports, Educate the Educators, The Whole Person, Kansas City Missouri Coast, and Adaptive Sports of Greater Kansas City. In 2019 she represented Missouri at the Ms. Wheelchair America Competition. Today, Hilary holds the title of Ms. Wheelchair America 2020-2021, which allows her to no longer tell her story as a victim, instead she uses her platform to encourage all people living with disabilities to go out and try an adaptive sport, find their team or community, and live their most independent life. Hilary has played Wheelchair Tennis for four years and has competed in many tournaments including the 2019 Wheelchair US Open.



About Dr. Alette Coble-Temple: Advocacy, mentorship, and adventure serve Dr. Alette Coble-Temple in her professional journey as a licensed clinical psychologist, director of clinical training, advocate, mentor, and mother. Dr. Coble-Temple emphasizes personal growth and the intersectionality of contextual factors in all areas of her life.

Dr. Coble-Temple is the Director of Clinical Training and lead faculty for the Correctional/Forensic Concentration at the JFK School of Psychology at National University. Dr. Coble-Temple actively mentors doctoral-level graduate students, staff, and faculty from a developmental perspective with an emphasis on equity, diversity, and inclusion. Her culturally-responsive leadership style promotes innovative academic and training structures to strengthen accessibility and effectiveness of psychological services across populations.

Dr. Coble-Temple was crowned Ms. Wheelchair California 2015 and subsequently Ms. Wheelchair America 2016 for her innovative and lifelong advocacy efforts for people with disabilities. She serves as a "roll" model in a society where so few exist for people with disabilities. Our nation's disability community cannot flip through the pages of a magazine or turn on the television and see people that face similar challenges to their own. In 2016, Dr. Coble-Temple traveled across 42 states, speaking to local and state government agencies on improving successful living with a disability. She actively promotes her platform PRIDE: Parental Rights Include Disability Equality. Her aim is to transform social response, advance public policy, and strengthen community collaborations for people with disabilities in their quest of parenthood.



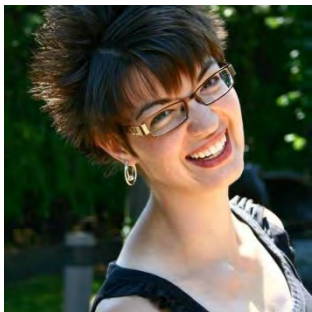


About Karen Roy: Karen Roy of Baton Rouge, Louisiana is passionate about her platform, **"Stand for Life"**. Karen sustained a T-10 complete spinal cord injury in 1987, as the result of a gunshot wound to the back. She was the victim of an armed robbery in a parking lot during her sophomore year at Louisiana State University. Although, she never let that slow her down for a minute!

After completing her rehabilitation at Mississippi Methodist in Jackson Mississippi, she went on to finish her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. Next, she obtained a master's degree in Social Work, also from Louisiana State University. She completed two years of supervision after her master's degree and became a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Most of her social work career was spent working with patients in physical rehabilitation hospitals in Baton Rouge. The past four years she has worked on the sales team at Numotion, the largest vendor of custom wheelchairs in the country. She was recently promoted to be their Brand Ambassador. Her proudest achievement is that she had three kids after sustaining her injury. Caroline, Austin and Joseph are all now in college and they are the joy of her life!

Karen travels the country speaking to people in the disabled community, medical professionals, law makers and insurance companies about the medical and psychological benefits of standing devices, functional electrical stimulation and any technology created to keep people healthy and active.

Her platform, **"Stand for Life"**, was created by her years ago, because she realized that the use of technology that has existed for well over 30 years is terribly underutilized by people with disabilities. She has used these devices since her injury and as a result has never had a wound or any other medical problem. She wants this to become the norm by bringing awareness to policy makers that keeping people healthy not only saves money, but it saves lives!



About Samantha Schroth: Samantha is a passionate advocate, avid learner, and is always ready to take on another challenge, usually with a cup of coffee in hand. Originally from Wisconsin, this farm girl grew up in a tight knit family with plans to pursue veterinary school until a freak accident and spinal cord injury in 2013 resulting in paraplegia altered her life trajectory. Since her injury, Sam has sought to challenge disability related bias, serving as Ms. Wheelchair Wisconsin 2014 and Ms. Wheelchair America 2015.

During her reign as Ms. Wheelchair America, Sam encouraged others to start conversations about disabilities through her platform, **"Learn. Teach. Repeat."**

Currently pursuing MD PhD training at Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, Illinois, Sam continues her advocacy efforts and has published in the Chicago Tribune and Journal of Academic Medicine, serves as a board member of the Disability Advocacy Coalition in Medicine (DAC Med), and even participates in adaptive sports.



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*Laura Jackson*

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Love, Mom & Dad, The Amaimo's, Freel's  
and McKenna's



# Laura Jackson

MS WHEELCHAIR MICHIGAN 2021



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# Gratitude & Well Wishes **FROM**

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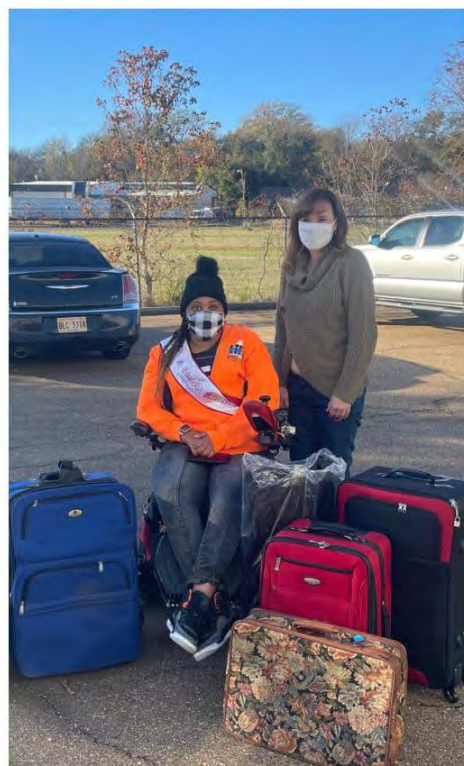
**Thank you to my sponsors and other supporters  
You are appreciated. Congratulations to my fellow  
titleholders! You've all accomplished so much. May  
this experience be a blessing to you this week and beyond!**





**Dedicated to the  
Empowerment of people  
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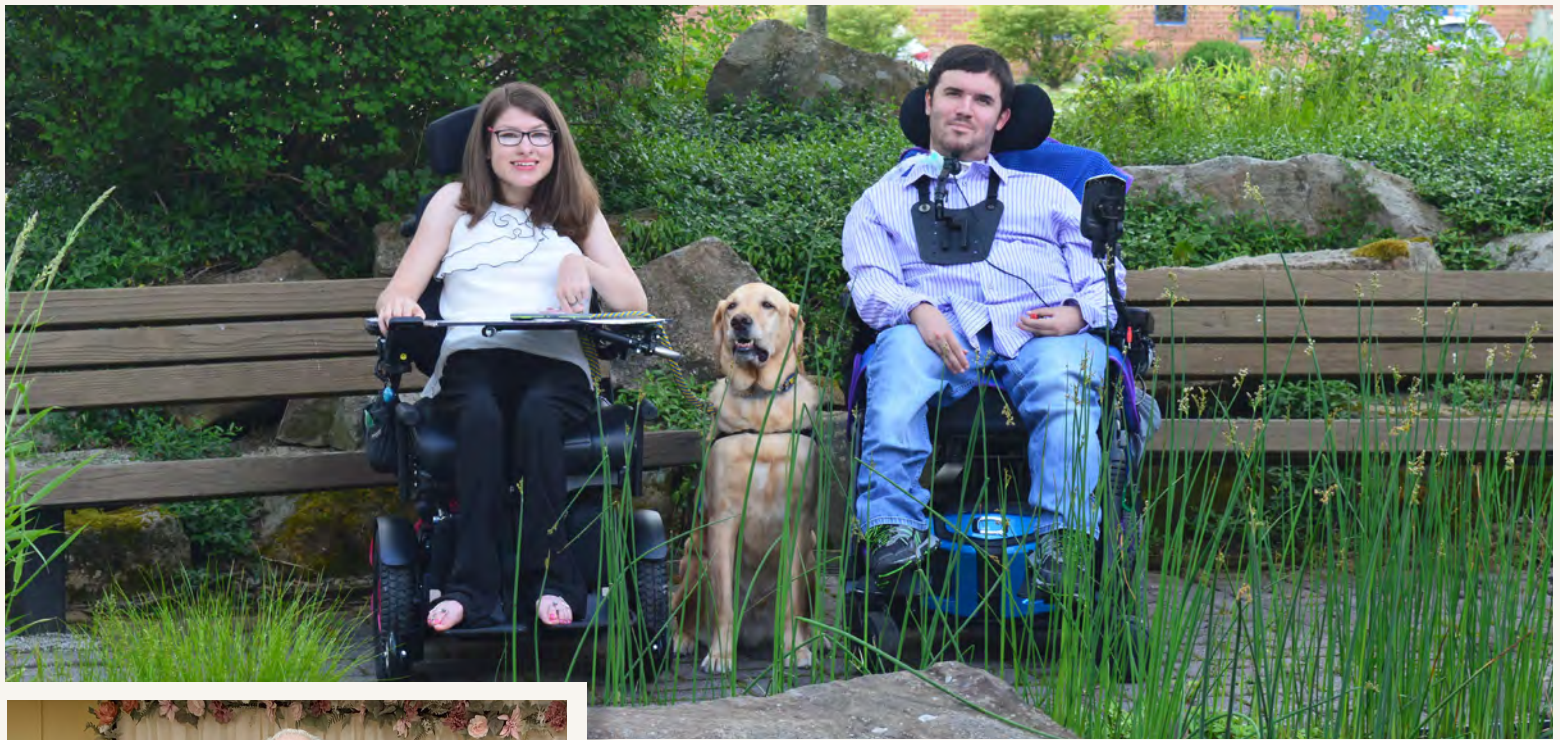
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# JESSICA GARDNER

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Jessica Gardner and Ford

Thank you for your service and dedication to the  
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and Ford make Pennsylvania proud!

*Love,*

The Ms. Wheelchair  
Pennsylvania Organization  
Board of Directors



Photo:  
Barb, Kristin Cathie (missing from  
photo), Amanda, and Marty



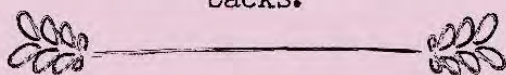


## WHEEL SISTER |

•noun • wil sister•

a female wheelchair user in the Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania organization who exemplifies all the qualities of a true friend

Example: Jessica Gardner is an amazing wheel sister, she always has our backs.



*We are so proud of you, Jess! Good luck at Nationals!*

*Love, Amanda, Jessica K., Kate, Karli,*

*Laurah, Megan, and Noemi*





# Ms. Wheelchair Tennessee

The Ms. Wheelchair Tennessee organization would like to thank all of our current titleholders, friends, family, and supporters for an amazing year! We would also like to congratulate the newly crowned Ms. Wheelchair America and wish her all of the best in her journey to come!

*Ms. Wheelchair Tennessee  
2020/2021*



*Megan DeJarnett*

*Jr. Miss Wheelchair Tennessee  
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*Kaylie Hill*

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The school's not far. Jennifer rolls outside, down the sidewalk, to the corner.

But... **STOP!**

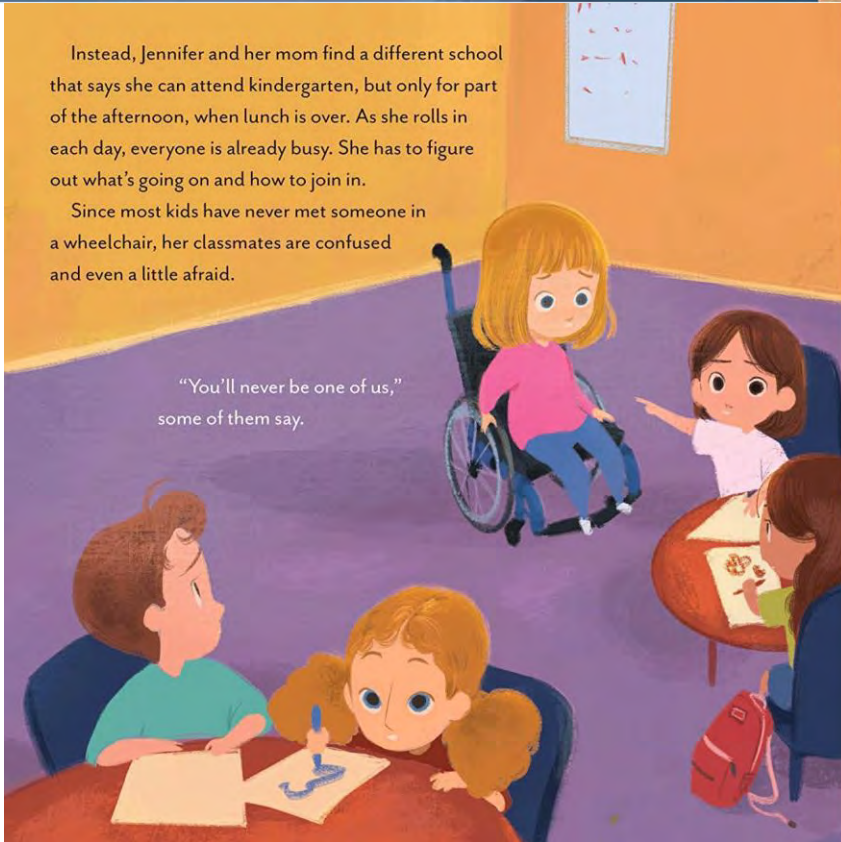
A four-inch curb is a cliff to someone in a wheelchair.



Her Grandpa eases her wheelchair over the curb. Though the drop jolts Jennifer, she makes it to the building.

But... **STOP!**

The school says Jennifer doesn't belong there because she uses a wheelchair.



Instead, Jennifer and her mom find a different school that says she can attend kindergarten, but only for part of the afternoon, when lunch is over. As she rolls in each day, everyone is already busy. She has to figure out what's going on and how to join in.

Since most kids have never met someone in a wheelchair, her classmates are confused and even a little afraid.

"You'll never be one of us," some of them say.



Jennifer knows they're wrong. She's just a friend waiting to happen! But how do you change someone's mind? She's not sure, but she's not about to give up.

**Images submitted by Disability Rights Activist Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins**

**Author: Annette Bay-Pimentel**

**Illustrator: Nabi H. Ali**

**Publisher: Source Books Explorer**



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*Let love and faithfulness never leave you...You will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Prov. 3:3-4*

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Ms. Wheelchair America 2020  
Hilary Muehlberger



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A nighttime photograph of a city skyline. A tall, modern glass skyscraper is the central focus, its windows glowing with warm light. To its left and right are older, multi-story brick buildings. The scene is reflected in the calm water in the foreground. The sky is a deep blue.

# Ms. Wheelchair America 2023 Finishing Fifty Years of Advocacy

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