

Introduction To Disability Pri...Pennsylvania Podcast Episode 1

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SPEAKERS

Vicki Landers, Phill Rosen, Ray Deca

P Phill Rosen 00:00
Welcome to the Living Loud and Proud podcast brought to you by Disability Pride Pennsylvania. If you need a link to the transcript for this episode, please visit our accessible website at www.disabilitypridepa.org/podcast. And now, here is your host.

R Ray Deca 00:28
Hello folks. Welcome to the very first Living Loud and Proud podcast from Disability Pride Pennsylvania. Today's episode, we would like to thank Highmark Whole Care for sponsoring. Our guests, our very first guest ever is Vicki Landers. And Vicki, do you care to introduce yourself and tell everybody who you are?

V Vicki Landers 01:03
Hi, everyone. My name is Vicki Landers. I am the founder and executive director for Disability Pride Pennsylvania. We are a 501 c3 disability-led organization that creates programming, inclusive programming, I should say, very important part, inclusive programming for folks across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

R Ray Deca 01:32
So now, Vicki, exactly how did you get involved with disability pride?

V Vicki Landers 01:42

I was down at the, Independence Edge Studio, which what used to be located underneath the Philadelphia CIL. And I had this person came rolling down in his wheelchair with this funny hat and said, hey! We're looking for folks who can make some art for a Disability Pride Parade that they were having. And so I, said I would help, and that's kind of how it all started. That was 12 years ago. It's very, it seems like yesterday that I've been doing this, but I would not have gotten started without, Allan Holdsworth and the Independence Edge.

R

Ray Deca 02:27

Okay, so tell us what is the mission of the organization Disability Pride Pennsylvania?

V

Vicki Landers 02:36

So we Disability Pride is a, Disability Pride itself is a movement. And to me, it means more than just like it's self advocacy, and it's a push for acceptance. Disability Pride is above all a celebration of inclusion, and disabled people who are proud of themselves. Our mission is to celebrate the pride that the disability community feels. It's a place for us to come together and to celebrate the disability experience with the entire community. And what makes what makes us special is that we think about accessibility and inclusivity. From day one, you know, it's the first thing on your list. If you can't do it that way, then we don't do it at all.

R

Ray Deca 03:24

Okay, well now, can you tell us about your programs and events?

V

Vicki Landers 03:31

Sure. So our programs always provide space for advocacy, celebration, and sometimes some good trouble. You know, we have we, of course have our Disability Pride celebrations, which, in 2024, we're hosting six Disability Pride events, across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, Pittston, Lehigh Valley, Williamsport, Pittsburgh, and then of course in Philly, as always. And you can find more information on our website about that. We also have one of our most exciting, our longest running program is called, All About Disabled Sex. We started this because we wanted there to be a place for folks to actually talk about disabled people having sex, because we do, and making sure that we could do it in a space where everybody felt comfortable doing it in public, doing it. We started doing, doing the events during the day, during the week, where, because you can talk about it at any point in time. And so, we have new, our programming started for 2024, and our next event is, February 13. And you can sign up on our website. We also have inclusive dance workshops, which are really great, they're being, they're being, taught by a master trainer, from that does the dance ability method, and it's all about moving together, and we believe that if you can wiggle your nose, then you can dance together, that move move me movement is movement, and doesn't really matter what you're moving, how you're moving it, as long as we're all moving together. And those classes are really exciting, because they're going to be done in person here in Philadelphia as a pilot project, starting, March 2, and they'll run every third Saturday, for the spring session, until June 15. And then we'll come back in the fall and do more.

R

Ray Deca 05:50

Yeah, okay. So, well, first off, are your events free? And are they all family friendly?

V

Vicki Landers 06:02

So, so we still we have, so we have a couple of our events, most of our events are free, or there are a sliding scale. Our large events that we have, that are the big Disability Pride celebrations are always family friendly, of course, our All About Disabled Sex is mature audiences. Inclusive dance is for 18 years and older. And then our, also our Outdoors For Everyone, which I forgot to tell everybody about, which is our new exciting program that we've, that we've kicked off today. Actually, I came back from it from this morning is kind of a program that is family friendly. We're going to be doing some things with other partners in the city, whether it's the Academy of Natural Sciences, which is where we were this morning doing some indoor birding, whether we're along the trails, the John Heinz Wildlife Refuge doing some of the accessible trails, or along the circuit trail along the Delaware River. Just some fun ways for us to engage with the outdoors in a fun and new way.

R

Ray Deca 07:24

Okay, and all right, now, gotta ask this question, how do you ensure your events are accessible?

V

Vicki Landers 07:34

Now, that's easy. We start from we x, we think about it, as one of the first steps. I come about every event or program that we're going to do is, can can we make it accessible? Because if you can't make it accessible for anybody to be able to participate, then you're not doing it right. And so we won't do it. So we think about, of course, you know, the things that happen, our, our, you know, the things that most people realize, you know, they're like, oh, can a wheelchair get into it? You know? Yeah, can can can they use the restroom? So we, you know, those are very basics, like is there an ASL interpreter? If you have something in public, you should have an ASL interpreter, because you don't know if there's going to be somebody who's deaf or hard of hearing that needs to have that interpreter. But we're also thinking about sensory friendly spaces. We're thinking about folks who have are blind or have low vision and how they would move around this, around the space. It's thinking about, you know, everyone, everyone, you want to come to your program or your event, and making sure that you are welcoming, welcoming them to what you're doing. I mean, it's, it's just that simple.

R

Ray Deca 09:03

Ah, very good. Very good. Now, can people volunteer with DPP Disability Pride Pennsylvania?

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V Vicki Landers 09:12

Yes, we have lots of different ways for folks to volunteer. The most basic way is at our Disability Pride celebrations is a really like all hands on deck. We, as many people as we can get to help us make sure that this day is fun for everyone and that everybody is able to enjoy themselves. So there's always opportunities on those days. Besides that, we have some opportunities through our some of our new programming to to get some help to ask for volunteers.

R Ray Deca 09:47

Okay.

V Vicki Landers 09:49

And then also, you know, let's have a conversation. Tell me what you want to do. I, I'm always looking for folks who are interested in the work and say, hey, we have a couple hours, you want to help with some social media, please? You can you can file some paperwork, you can make some phone calls, you can, you know, whatever that looks like, you know, we we do have some spaces, and sometimes it's not all the time. But we will find spaces for folks that want to.

R Ray Deca 10:28

Ah. Okay, okay. Well now tell me this Vicki, how can we better educate the community about Disability Pride?

V Vicki Landers 10:39

How can we better educate the community? So I, a lot of that is in what we do is marketing. You know, making sure that they know about who we are, but also like for Disability Pride itself. Like, I always tell folks, I'm like it. Pride, if we take the word, if we take Disability Pride, and you make it to words, so disability, most people know what disability is.

R Ray Deca 11:10

All right.

V Vicki Landers 11:10

I want to tell everybody, most people don't understand the concept. Yeah. And pride gets very it's a sensitive term.

R Ray Deca 11:24

Yes

yes.

V Vicki Landers 11:25

Because of the fact that it's, it's such a buzzword around the LGBTQ community, okay. Being a part of the queer community, I understand that. But pride actually, is a feeling. And it's something that each and every person can have and should have in themselves, no matter what that looks like.

R Ray Deca 11:50

Correct.

V Vicki Landers 11:52

So when you're saying Disability Pride, it's about having pride in yourself, just like everybody else. But for me, I'm proud of being I'm a proud disabled person. I live with bipolar disorder and some other things. But I do my thing, I'm the best person that I can be. And that I should be proud of myself for, you know, and I always, I always tell folks, if you really thought about it, like pride really started in the Civil Rights Movement.

R Ray Deca 12:28

Yes.

V Vicki Landers 12:29

So, you know, so it's not, it didn't start with LGBT community. It actually started much further back than that. But good civil rights, which we all are, you know, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Civil Rights Movement, the LGBT Civil Rights Movement, the Disability Rights, Civil Rights Movement, we're all, we're all doing the same work. And we do take and borrow and spin some of the work that somebody has done, that's great. And that's what we should be doing. So, I just want everybody to know that you can be proud of yourself, you don't have to be proud of all your parts. You know, there are some things that I would like to change, but I am proud, I am a proud person. And I deserve that. And it's mine, and nobody else can tell me how I how I can be proud of myself.

R Ray Deca 13:23

Okay, all right. Now, okay, now, how do you work with companies around issues of etiquette and also being an ally?

V Vicki Landers 13:36

So, we work with a lot of the other organizations and different companies around coming in and doing workshops, setting up panel discussions, helping them look at their, their, just the work that they're putting out to make sure that it is, that it is friendly, you know, workshops around disability etiquette. Terminology is is a huge, you know, it's huge, you know.

R

Ray Deca 14:09

Yes.

V

Vicki Landers 14:09

And, and it's ever evolving. So, all we're trying, all we try to do is give some folks like, this is like right now, this is where we're at, and this is kind of the terminology, just trying to help folks not feel uncomfortable by saying something or not, or just deciding not to engage because you're afraid of what you're going to say. So we're just trying to help folks be more comfortable. And I always tell folks, it's so much easier if you just ask. But remember...

R

Ray Deca 14:46

Just ask!

V

Vicki Landers 14:47

Just ask, but as a disabled person, remember that is not our job to have to answer if we don't feel like it.

R

Ray Deca 14:56

Got it. Definitely got it. Definitely understand.

V

Vicki Landers 15:01

You know, there's there's lots, there's lots of ways, you know, we've set up some really great, the Public Library, we set up some really great self-advocacy panels where we actually had disabled folks come in and talk about who they are, their, how they, they advocate for themselves, you know, because to me, when you are aware of yourself, you become proud of yourself. You start to advocate for yourself. And when you advocate for yourself, you know, you're showing your, your pride. And whether you realize it or not, as you start to become more comfortable and be like, no, that's not the way it works, or this. This is the way it's gonna happen.

R

Ray Deca 15:54

Right, right.

V Vicki Landers 15:55

You start to make those changes for other folks who may not have said something, or who have said something and they've been ignored, or, you know, it starts, it starts bigger conversations. And it's just.

R Ray Deca 16:07

Yes, yes.

V Vicki Landers 16:07

The more we, the more we talk about it, the better it is. So, self-advocacy panels are really great. But you know, the etiquette, always for the five or six years I've been doing etiquette trainings and workshops. People always have really great questions. People just really want to know, like, they don't want to offend anybody. Nobody wants to, I believe, wants to truly offend anybody. So, it's asking those questions, and being a safe space for them to ask those questions where I'm not going to be annoyed by the by the comment or the language that they use, because it's a learning experience. And if you use it as, use it as a learning experience, it helps more people and they actually start to advocate when they hear language that they now know, we shouldn't be using, they'll actually turn around and advocate advocate with us.

R Ray Deca 17:07

Yes, that's correct. Okay.

V Vicki Landers 17:10

I mean, it's, you know, it's advocacy is a lifelong journey. I was just talking to somebody who was like, I don't know what that looks like, I don't know how that works. I don't know what you know, how to get involved in, really your everyday life, you're advocating for yourself, whether you're disabled or not. You know, that it's a thing and I think, yeah, I mean, anybody can advocate, you know, they advocacy is so many different things. You can be on the front lines, you know, in DC, you can be in Capitol Hill, making visits like I was a couple weeks ago, you can be, you know, you can be sitting across the table with somebody and saying, "Hey, let's work this out." You can also be that person who's like, "These are the legal things that need to get done." And they're writing the policies, sending them letters, stuffing envelopes, making phone calls, you know, there's so many ways that you can advocate and I always say that, that being a self-advocate, self-advocacy is what starts Disability Pride. You know, when you're proud of yourself, you self, you advocate for yourself, and the world just gets better because now you're learning to express yourself and what you want and what you need.

R

Ray Deca 18:46

Okay, well, Vicki, it looks like we're just about out of time. And is there anything you want to say in closing?

V

Vicki Landers 19:02

Sure. I want everybody to know that we we have some things coming up. And What's In Your Pantry? cooking show is coming down the line very shortly. We have lots of stuff that are coming up around cooking shows and cookbooks, asking people for recipes. We're going to be doing some some different kinds of, of of outdoor adventures, some indoor adventures. We're looking for folks who are just interested in what, what's going on or looking for a place that let's do something we're always up for. Let's have a conversation and see what it looks like. But also, lots of information on our website, which is very easy. It's disabilitypridepa.org. We all, you can also call us at (267) 621-1480. And you can always reach out, we have we're really good on on Facebook and Instagram. And those handles are @disabilitypridepa. And we'll be linking up and doing a whole lot more on our new TikTok channel very soon.

R

Ray Deca 20:28

Okay, all right. Well, Miss Vicki Landers I'd like to thank you for being the very first guest for the very first Living Loud and Proud podcast, which by the way, folks, was sponsored by Highmark Whole Care once again. Okay, folks, so thanks for listening and until next time!

P

Phill Rosen 20:53

Please visit our accessible website at [www dot disability pride pa dot org](http://www.dotdisabilitypridepa.org). You can find us on social media @disabilitypridepa on Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok