

SELF ADVOCATES NEWSLETTER

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, BE ABOUT IT

APPLE AND ACCESSIBILITY

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

Apple is set to offer some new capabilities for its new iPhone and iPad that will help people with disabilities. One feature they are adding allows a user to control the phone or iPad using the person's eyes. Without having to buy any other hardware, only using the front facing camera, people will be able to set up an eye tracker. They will be able to go between apps and swipe by moving their eyes.

Apple will also allow deaf and hard of hearing people to explore music through textures and vibrations to the music.

They also will use artificial intelligence to recognize user speech patterns and translate them to instructions for Siri. This will help people who had a stroke or have a speech impediment.

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Selection of apple devices

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KARATE TOURNAMENT

BY JENNIFER NAFTLOWITZ

My newsletter is about my karate tournament. I just wanted to say that I had such a wonderful time last Wednesday at the karate tournament because all my friends from the Tuesday group were there and we were practicing our kata. So when we got there we had to do our usual—take off your socks and shoes and then we had to bow in and then we had to go to the locker room to change into our uniforms. Then after that, we all had to go downstairs with the karate instructors and practice a couple of times our kata. While we were doing that, the instructors gave us instruction on how the order was going to be. Sensei Carol had a list of names of who is going first so she said that I was going first and my friend Quintin was last. After we finished with our kata then we had to go upstairs and listen to what everybody was saying. We had to sit on the floor and stay quiet. After we finished we had to stand still and face the judges for the score. So when I was up first doing my kata I did such a wonderful job that I scored a 41.5 in my karate and I came in third place and I am very proud of myself. I thank my two favorite people. Their names are Staci and A.J. When the last person went we were all shocked when Quintin scored big with 47 and his father was very proud of him. Fabian was very proud of me also.

CENTRAL PARK CHALLENGE - LIVING, LOVING, PEACE

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

It's that time again! The day everyone at YAI looks forward to, CENTRAL PARK CHALLENGE. You either walk, run, or whatever! Here are the many reasons why everything went so well on June 1, 2024.

1. The Weather-The weather went up to 84 to 85 degrees. Not too hot, not too cold. Nice day for a walk. You were in the right place, time, Central Park. To add, no rain!
2. The People-Wow a nice place to meet up with friends, colleagues. HUGS, KISSES, HI HOW ARE YOU FROM EVERYONE/ EVERYWHERE! This reporter met up with friends from every program at YAI. The staff, Self Advocates, Hankering For More, people working at the tables, all arrived on time. Staff was friendly, helpful, responsible. Tim Allen, one of the self advocate advisors, stated "If you need help just call me." Jessica, one the chief organizers of the CPC, stated "My phone is always open!" In every table people showcased their talent: Hankering for More art program features the works of many artists, there's face painting for children, games for everyone. In the kids races everyone was winner and all received a medal, to add everything started on time!
3. The Entertainment/Guests-Bill Ritter News Anchor at Eyewitness News Channel 7 comes every year! He stated "This is not a race, it's something to promote the positive, to show we are all human beings, and show love." One of the first acts to perform was the dance group NYPAC DANCE SQUAD! As the hip hop poetry, singing group would say "They were so cool"

Performing hip hop, break dance moves, here's the thing—everyone in the group has a disability! While they up on the stage they didn't care about their disability! The audience showed their support, to add they also got down!

Then an inspirational show by gentleman on a wheelchair/circus performer doing awesome stunts. From doing wheelies, standing on his head. Wow wish we could see this in all circuses everywhere.

The music group The Brass Queens provided music while everyone walked. The group had instruments like trumpets, trombone, tuba, drums, saxophones, and here's the thing—the group was composed of women only! Wow!

The Blue Man Group-Showed up provide cheer support, took pictures with everyone. Shooting bubbles with their toys, almost seems they were having more fun than the crowd.

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CHEER NY-YAI'S FAVORITE RED, WHITE, BLUE-Cheer NY cheerleading squad who participate in walks for cures, pride support marches. Yet YAI CPC is one they always look forward to. In talking to some members, "This is our favorite event! It's one event we get to socialize, dance with the people, when we see people cheering us, wanting us to take pictures with them, children wanting to hug us means a lot! It shows us giving back!" One can still hear their proud cheer for YAI "YAI! YELL IT WITH PRIDE!"

That day the good news was many people didn't want to leave like this reporter (who eventually had another event to attend). Yet everyone went home happy, the only bad news as they say in baseball is, "Wait till next year."

CENTRAL PARK CHALLENGE 2024

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

We went to Central Park Challenge at the Namburg Bandshell on Central Park West and 72nd Street in Manhattan. It was held from 8am to Noon on Saturday June 1st, 2024 from YAI. Timothy Allen registered me online at "centralparkchallenge.org" when I was working at the Self Advocacy program for the Central Park Challenge. I told them my name and email address. I met my friends and some volunteers at Central Park Challenge from YAI. I missed the 3K walk. We are working to turn the bad "R word" R to mean "R" as in "Rally." At the CPC they had DJ Rapper, 3K walk, 3K run, junior races, Cheer New York, Disability Circus, Blue Man Group, Magic Show, Rock & Roll and Face Painting. They sent me my 5x T-shirt from Central Park Challenge. I've been to the Central Park Challenge before. And I will go back to Central Park Challenge on Saturday June 7th, 2025 next year. I had a good time at the Central Park Challenge from YAI.



Top: Kenneth poses with Harvey, another self advocate. Bottom: Kenneth gives a thumbs up after the event



BEST BUDDIES WALK NEW YORK CITY 2024

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

Here's what this group says in their website, bestbuddies.org:

"Offering One-to-One Friendship, Integrated Employment, and Leadership Development programs for individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in New York."

On May 11th, 2024, the day before Mother's Day at Chelsea Pier 62 Hudson River Park at Pier 62 Between W 22nd and W 23rd St. New York, NY 10011 Best Buddies had their annual walk.

The website went on to specifically describe this event: "The Best Buddies Friendship Walk is the leading event in the country supporting inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). That one saw proudly the work they do!"

Then they added: "You'll be making the world more welcoming to people with disabilities: "One friendship, one job, and one life changing connection at a time."

That day this reporter witnessed three important considerations that were all in the favor of the people participating.

1. Staff/people-When posing for pictures staff would proudly say "C'mon join us! There were games there for children to play, whether shooting a basket, tossing a football, playing baseball, everyone was having fun, including the staff. In presentations the staff spoke well. Brittany Carroll one of the organizers of the walk stated proudly: "Look around you there's a buddy everywhere!" She was so right this reporter not only took photos, but also posed with staff, met several other individuals from YOUTH ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES. Juliann Whaley Deputy Director of Jobs/Transitions put it this way: "So glad you came, your always welcomed! The saying "My house is your house" was really well demonstrated.
2. The Walk-Before the walk "Blink Fitness" gave warm up exercises, and good music was played. The performers and the DJ, all performed well. When the walk started this reporter ran into two YAI Self Advocates Janice and Fred. Janice said, "The joy of the walk is almost everywhere, especially when I bump into another proud buddy." Fred added, "For me it shows me you can be a Best Buddy and a Self advocate." As the song goes "I was strolling thru the park one day in the month of May" No surprises. Joy was everywhere! The weather was great, the area was the perfect place for a walk. The result? People from all nationalities walking side by side!
3. Free food for everyone after the walk. No garbage was left behind, everyone looked out for each other, smiling faces everywhere. The only bad news, "Wait till next year." The good news? This reporter knows he'll be back. ARRIBA BEST BUDDIES!



Photos from the Best Buddies Walk

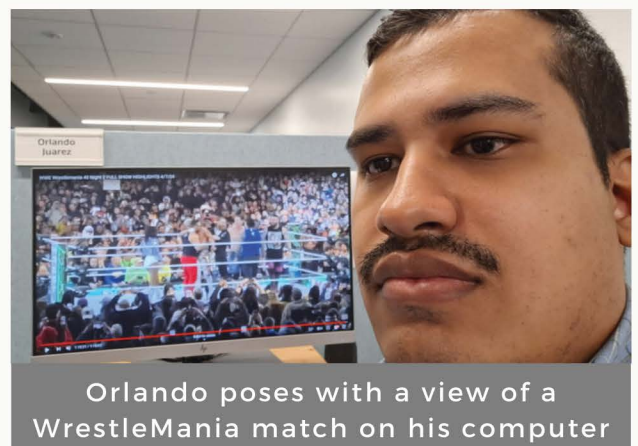
WRESTLEMANIA 40TH YEAR

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

WrestleMania, also known as the grandest stage of all, and the showcase of the immortals is now in the 40th year. WrestleMania began in March 1985 at Madison Square Garden by the former chairman of World wrestling entertainment Vince McMahon when he wanted to have an event once a year like the Superbowl and the Oscars, he decided to create WrestleMania. It was a success, with the main event of Hulk Hogan team up with Mr. T against Rowdy Piper and Paul Orndoff. Ever since then the world wrestling entertainment begin to host WrestleMania once a year on a Sunday between mid-March and mid-April. WrestleMania became so popular that even some good celebrities were there, and some of them were involved in certain matches like Mike Tyson, Alice Cooper, Snoop Dog, Cyndi Lauper, and of course Bad Bunny. Some of the famous singers performed at WrestleMania like Pitbull, Salt n Pepa, Ice T, and Kid Rock, some even sang the National anthem at WrestleMania, like Willie Nelson, Ray Charles, Reba McEntire Boyz 2 Men, Aretha Franklin, and Special Olympian Kathy Huey Sang the anthem in 1995.

WrestleMania was successful in holding attendance records from the biggest stadiums from different states. During the week of WrestleMania, The World Wrestling Entertainment held a convention known as the WrestleMania Axxess, it is like Comic Con and AnimeCon only they have more displays and they have a superstore where they have lots of merchandise. They even do some community events and support organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club of America, the Make-A-Wish foundation, and the Special Olympics. In fact, WWE formed a good partnership with the special Olympics in 1995 at New Haven. Before they began their event, they had been doing a few charity events for worthy causes, they even held the WWE hall of fame where they honor the most talented wrestlers and celebrities for their efforts and dedication. But now in the 2020s WrestleMania is now a 2-night event on Saturday and Sunday and is on its 40th year. WrestleMania was held in Philadelphia this year and it was very good. The week before the 2-day event WWE had been doing some community events at Philadelphia with a support of Slim Jim, and gave donations to 3 organizations, The Fly Forward, Yeah Philly - The Youth Empowerment for Advancement Hangout, and The Lighthouse Organization.

This year, WrestleMania Axxess had been renamed WWE World. It's still the same event only this year there was a special video game tournament call the WWE 2k24 Showdown is video game event with 6 WWE superstars going against 6 celebrities like rapper Wale and Comedian/Actor Gabriel 'Fluffy' Iglesias. WrestleMania 40 was successful with the performances from Rapper Lil Wayne, Philadelphia Mummers String Band Association, and Philadelphia School District All-City Orchestra. The matches were even good including the main event match of Roman Reigns Vs Cody Rhodes, hopefully if WrestleMania returns to New York, YAI can do some community events with WWE for both of our causes, and we can invite WWE to the Central Park Challenge in the future.

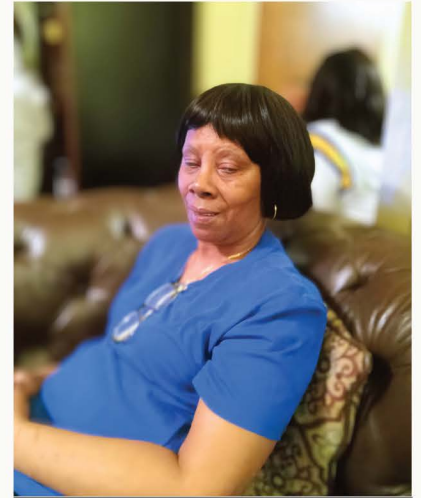


Orlando poses with a view of a WrestleMania match on his computer

MOTHER'S DAY CELEBRATION

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

We celebrate my Mother's Day every year. My mommy retired in 2017. Because she didn't go to work anymore, she was 62 years old. Mommy took me to school, clinic, and program when I was a little boy. I have disability, but I help and taking good care my mother. My mother helped me with my homework, reading, mathematics, and counting my money when I get home. We went to my sister's house for Mother's Day on Sunday May 12th, 2024 at 3pm. My mother helped me cook dinner and make dessert for Sunday. I was holding my hands with my momma when we go out. My mother didn't carry the box, bag, or groceries. Because she hurt her right arm. I was helping mom to carry the bag and grocery. We wished Happy Mother's Day to my mother, grandmother, aunts, and sister.



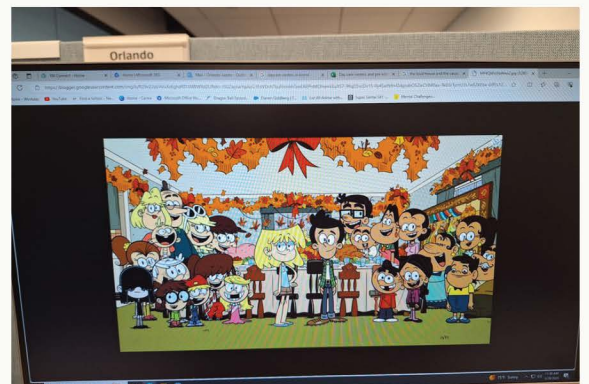
Kenneth's mother

THE LOUD HOUSE AND THE CASAGRANDES

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

Lincoln Loud and Ronnie Anne are two main characters that are friends who have a lot in common, they have their own cartoon shows on Nickelodeon and have their own big family. Lincoln has a mother, a father and 10 sisters, 5 older and 5 younger with him in between, each one of his sisters has her own distinctive personality and hobbies. And sometimes they use them to help find a solution even if they create mistakes or a huge mess. Ronnie Anne had a Mexican family, she has a mother working in a hospital, a brother, an aunt, an uncle, 4 cousins and 2 grandparents, a dog, and a talking parrot. One of Ronnie Anne's cousins named CJ - also known as Carlos Casagrande junior - is special, why? Because he has down syndrome. Even though he has down syndrome he always brings smiles to his family, he even enjoys playing children's games and is obsessed with pirates. What was very surprising was that he was voiced by Jared Kozak who also has Down Syndrome.

Nickelodeon supports individuals with disabilities, they even announced at their live action shows that auditions are even for young performance with disabilities. Nickelodeon is also a proud supporter to the National disability employment awareness month and one of their disabled employees was Johnathan Rodriguez who was shy but likes to draw. He was one of the artists for the loud house show. Maybe there might be more people like him for Nickelodeon and hopefully Nickelodeon might find more young talented people with disabilities in the future.



Orlando shows The Loud House on his computer monitor

SUPER BOWL 58

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

SUPER BOWL 58 between The Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers was an exciting one to see, with KC winning 25-22. Everyone saw the great catches, the defense, the announcers telling it like it is, cheerleaders and the half time show. Yet here are a few troubling things:

1-The Black National Anthem was performed at the game and there were negative responses. Awful! Hey the greatest Football Players are Black, half of the players in the National Football League are Black, to add to this, February is Black History month. So what's the anger?

"Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," a song often called the Black national anthem, was sung before the Super Bowl for the fourth year in a row Sunday. Grammy Winner Andra Day was given the honor of singing the tune, after a ceremony in honoring a ceremony for the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award.

Shockingly, the inclusion of the Black national anthem, along with "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America The Beautiful," was met with both praise and criticism. Why the negativity? Is it because the person being honored is an Black? Or is it because the greatest players in the NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE are Black?

Additionally there were ASL American Sign Language (ASL) performers at the game, yet the American Public did not see them! Further, there was no mention of this omission from the American media! You'll see them on You Tube, but that's it. Almost three decades earlier, deaf actress Marlee Matlin won the Oscar for Best Actress in 1987 for her outstanding performance in "Children of a Lesser God." At the time she was only 21 years old when she became the first Deaf winner in Oscar history. In 1993 Matlin herself performed the national anthem in ASL at the Super Bowl, alongside Garth Brooks. She proudly stated in the magazine "Entertainment Weekly and on Entertainment Tonight "I am absolutely SHOCKED at CBS for just introducing the deaf performers at today's pregame #SuperBowl and then not showing even a moment of their performance... as has been tradition for the last 30 years." WHY!?

Among ASL performers were "Daniel Durant who performed the national anthem, Anjel Piñero who performed "America the Beautiful" Shaheem Sanchez who performed "Lift Every Voice and Sing," as well as Usher's halftime show during the big game.

The game spends so much money on commercials, as well as showing the quarterback throw the winning touchdown and showing a player shouting I'm going to Disneyland, along with showing the beauty of the cheerleaders on the sidelines. Yet cannot show people with disabilities, then WHY CAN'T THEY SHOW PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ALSO PARTICIPATING? Come on! This is one of the biggest sporting events in the country!

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) President put it this way< ""It was disappointing to see the lack of accessibility of the ASL performances at the Super Bowl, and we hope that for next year at Super Bowl LIX the NFL and FOX will consider showing these talented performers along with their hearing counterparts." The NFL and CBS have made no comments.

MAKING 20 YEARS IN BROOKLYN

BY ROBERT CARDONA

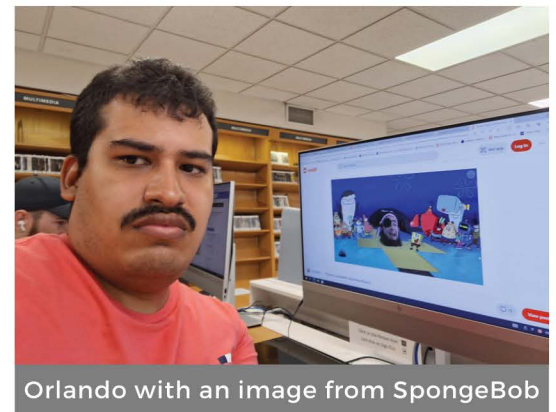
this coming oct. 31st will mark my 20th anniversary of my moving to my palatial pad in flatbush, brooklyn when i moved to my supported apt. in 2004 - over 20 years ago- i was scared to deathhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh- that i wasn't going to make it on my own- not knowing how to do independent daily living skills- such as cooking, grocery shopping and doing laundry- which i had to learn how on my own in order to continue to keep the apartment- which is run by an organization called job path- an agency for ind. w/ disabilities that helps them find housing and employment when i moved i had no problems adjusting to the neighborhood - it only took me 2 weeks to adjust- and- shockingly- i was able to find peace of mind with the new neighbors i met- all of whom i stillllllllllllllllll have good relationships with - 20 years later to my peers who reallyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy want to live on their own bad enough- don't just do it- GOOOOOOOOOOO FOR ITTTTTTTTTTTTT!!!!!!

SPONGEBOB'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

This year our yellow main sponge character, SpongeBob SquarePants is celebrating his 25th anniversary since his debut on Nickelodeon in 1999. SpongeBob was drawn by marine science educator and animator Stephen Hillenburg. Since its first season, SpongeBob received worldwide critical acclaim and had gained popularity by its second season. As of 2019, the show became the fifth longest running American animated series for bringing laughter and some hilarious scenes. Unfortunately, Stephen Hillenburg is no longer with us, in March 2017 in his article in the Varsity Magazine he announced that he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis also known as Lou Gehrig's disease and on November 26, 2018, he died from the same disease. Although Stephen passed away, The SpongeBob show was still a multimedia franchise for airing 14 seasons, having 3 films and a few spin-offs shows as well of selling merchandise and performing their song "sweet victory" at the Superbowl this past February.

Some celebrities like the show and even did voice cameos in certain episodes like Betty White, Johnny Knoxville, Mark Hamill, Adam West, Bob Barker, Dennis Quaid, and John Goodman. To support the show, Nickelodeon and Paramount consumer products launched SpongeBob SquarePants: Operation SeaChange in hopes to restore the ocean ecosystem and prevent more pollution of the ocean, as well as to educate millions of fans on how they can help. And finally, Nickelodeon is planning a few things in the future for SpongeBob, such as hosting an art series event, the premier of the 15th season and a new movie coming in 2025. I hope the fans continue to enjoy SpongeBob as much I am, because as he says, "If you believe in yourself and with a tiny pinch of magic, all your dreams can come true!"



Orlando with an image from SpongeBob

CARAVAN

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

A group of disabled people are traveling the country in a van for an event called the Caravan for Disability Freedom and Justice. They are going to stop in many cities and towns to have people observe and celebrate the history of the disability movement. They want to bring awareness to current important issues and build a national coalition to advocate for the problems for the disabled.

The Caravan will be in New York City on September 15, 2024, where they will make a few stops, including the Stonewall Inn, where the gay rights movement got its start; the site of the old Willowbrook State School that was shut down because of its terrible conditions; and RAMPD (Recording Artists and Music Professionals with Disabilities). The Caravan will also visit Kinetic Light, an internationally known disability arts ensemble, as well as The United Nations. Good travels! Good luck!



Caravan for Disability Freedom and Justice

LET'S GET GLOW '80S PARTY

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

I went to the '80s Party at YAI Headquarters on 220 East 42nd Street on the 7th floor in Manhattan from 5pm to 8pm on Friday April 12th, 2024. I told my mother, I need a big necklace so I can dress up as Run DMC. I wore my dress hat, black and white sneakers, black sweat shirt, black jeans and necklace. I have a disability, but I listened to the '80s music from IHeart Radio, Spotify and Pandora on my smartphone. I use a earbud to hear the '80s music. I paid my \$7 fee to get into the '80s party. My favorite '80s songs are, Billie Jean, Uptown Girl, New Attitude, Jump, Rhythm of the Night, It's Tricky, Push It, Morning Train, Whip It, 1999, Wake Me Up Before I Go Go, Cool It Now, She Works Hard for the Money, I Wanna Dance with Somebody, Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, Who's That Girl, What's Love Got to do With It, Footloose, Time of my Life, We Are the World, Nasty Boy, I Feel for You, and finally, Rock Steady. Timothy Allen and Mallory Perry sent me an email about the YAI '80s party. I learned to breakdance, bust-a-move and hip-hop. I met my YAI friends at the '80s party. I watched the '80s music video on TV cable network when I was teenager. I took all the pictures to post on my Facebook and Instagram. I was born in November 30th, 1982. So we always watched the New York Hot Tracks, Video Music Box and America's Top 10 on TV when I was a kid. I had a good time at the '80s party from YAI.



Kenneth and friends at the 80s party

DJ-ING

BY ROBERT CARDONA

On June 14th I will be DJing at the YAI Manhattan gathering at 220 East 42nd Street!

Having only been a guest and dancing at all YAI parties for many years, this will be my 1st time actually working the turn tables throwing down on the 1z and 2z, showing and proving that an individual with a disability can showcase his talents. And don't let any oneeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee on the outside world say you are a quitter, a nothing or a loser- you have something to offer to your peers and friends and family. Be as successful as you are- there is no such word as can't - YOU CAN!!!!!!!!!!

TREASURE

BY BRIAN LOUVIERE

Treasure the time we come together
 Treasure the moments have together
 Treasure the union we form together
 Treasure the value we found together
 Treasure the gift we create together
 Treasure the essence we bring together
 Treasure the world we join together



Watch Brian read his poem