



PATH - WAY
Providing Access To Happiness

JUNE 2015, Issue 1



RAISING THE CURTAIN

March 7, 2015

Over 70 people gathered at the Constitution Inn in Charlestown, MA on Saturday afternoon March 7, to celebrate **PATH-WAY's** inaugural event "Raising the Curtain". The event included a social hour with light refreshments followed by an informational program introducing the mission of this new non-profit organization. Bob Purcell, president of **PATH-WAY**, enthusiastically emceed the program and Stephanie Zaia, executive- director, spoke of her experiences as an individual with physical disabilities and explained her vision for **PATH-WAY**. Keynote speaker, Parker Thornton, addressed the attendees with an inspirational talk about his personal challenges living with a disability, and how he continues to overcome these. The afternoon was a huge success and the staff of **PATH-WAY** is thankful for all the support we received. **PATH-WAY** has evolved from an idea to a reality as we strive to elevate the lives of individuals of varying abilities “

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THOUGHTS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hi everyone,

Thank you so much for all of your support as we continue growing our organization. Without you and your support **PATH-WAY** would not be the organization it is today. I am humbly grateful to be writing to you to tell you about how your contributions have brought Path-Way's mission of "elevating the lives of individuals with varying degrees of abilities" to life.

This journey began with a simple idea of **supporting** people with disabilities by providing them access to **inclusive events** in the Boston area. **PATH-WAY** set forth to help find activities that individuals with or without disabilities could enjoy together. In our first six months we have made great strides in actualizing this simple idea.

Our “Kickoff Event” was great. The appetizers and desserts were delicious, and our keynote note speaker Parker Thornton gave an awesome and heartwarming speech. It was fun meeting new people and talking with everyone. It was truly an amazing night. The event raised over \$15,000 for **PATH-WAY**. Yes, you are reading the number correctly. With the money raised we were able to get started creating events.

Many people joined us to cheer on the wheelers and the elite runners at our first official event, a gathering to watch the 2015 Boston Marathon. People braved the rainy and cold weather to hang out and cheer for all the athletes including the wheelers from my Alma Mater, University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign. Illini Wheelers did great despite the poor weather conditions. Not even a week later they competed in the London Marathon and won in both the men’s and women’s division.



Since the “Kickoff Event” **PATH-WAY** has been in full work mode. We have been spreading the word about our mission by foot and chair, by website, and on Facebook. We have become a member of Access Recreation Boston - a collaboration of nonprofit organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities. We have also upgraded our office. It is no longer in my parents' basement. I currently have workspace at WEWORK on Atlantic Ave in Boston. It is a co-working office so it provides access to a lot of networking opportunities.

Thanks to our generous donors we will be hosting an exciting event of games, pizza, and socializing at KING's in Dedham. We are anticipating a great turnout for this June event.

The future of **PATH-WAY** is bright, and we have many exciting events planned. To keep abreast of our continuous efforts check out our webpage at www.path-way.org or follow us on FB. We hope you will join us at an upcoming event.

Best,

Steph

Check out the WEBSITE www.path-way.org for NEW FEATURES to include links to article from individuals living with a disability. The following is an excerpt of an article written by Kathleen Downes:



It's All Part of The Plan: Living In a World Where Nothing Is Spontaneous

A lot of people wonder what it is like to have a disability day to day. The truth is that it is fun and rewarding and stressful and challenging and ordinary and extraordinary all at once- which sounds very much like a description of life—with or without a disability. However, although my life with cerebral palsy includes so many of the humdrum daily encounters as any other life, I will be honest and say there are moments when it is very clear that my disability makes me “different.”

If there is one thing I could say to summarize what makes my life unique from that of the average 22-year-old it would be “damn, this ‘existence’ gig takes a *lot* of planning.” In addition to using a power wheelchair, I also have a team of eight personal care assistants who I must rely on to help me with activities of daily living that most people do without thinking. Those are all the tasks like bathing, dressing, going to the bathroom, getting out of bed... basically, if it's a task you thought was reserved for sacred solitude, I probably have company to accomplish it. When someone who you may have interviewed and hired just days before has to put you on the toilet, you develop a talent for awkward ice breaker conversations that would make your college orientation leader look like a total rookie.

But planning your daily activities, the basic things necessary to survive, is no small feat. The word *spontaneous* may as well belong in another language, because every aspect of living with a severe physical disability is anything but spontaneous. Spontaneity is like that distant relative you have seen in the photo albums and heard a few weird stories about, but never actually met. You know he exists and that others have met him. But when you have a disability, he is just an idea, so you smile, and say that he sounds like a lovely guy... then; go back to figuring out what time someone can help you bathe next Friday. If that cute café you wanted to try can accommodate a wheelchair. If you can get a ride to work, to school, or to a friend's house. Normally, the only spontaneous thing you expect is the spontaneous combustion of your ancient paratransit bus. I am used to some serious planning. Long ago, I accepted that spontaneity and I, for the most part, would be strangers.

Most of my peers make all their plans at the last minute. Not too many twenty two year olds want to think about the logistics of a lunch date that will happen next week. Not too many of them are anxious to jump online and investigate which restaurants in the area are wheelchair accessible. To many of them I represent extra time, extra hassle, and extra considerations at a time of life when convenience is most enticing. If the average Joe has a choice between spur of the moment plans and an easy ride in his buddy's new car or waiting for a crappy accessible bus with me, chances are I will not be his first pick. There are no words for how isolating that feels because the unspoken thought behind it is “it's so much work to be your friend.”

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

JUNE 27: 4 - 6 PM at KINGS in DEDHAM: Come join us for an afternoon of games, pizza, and socializing. Sign up at www.path-way.org or e-mail Steph stephz@path-way.org



at

JULY 22: 10 AM to 3PM: Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the ADA - Boston Common

JULY 29: 6 to 9 PM at WEWORK, 745 Atlantic Ave, Boston: Join us as we celebrate our new office location. Guest speaker, light refreshments, beer, wine and music.

SEPTEMBER 18-20: Visit us at the Abilities Expo-BCEC-Hall C-Booth 103

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