

Announcer ([00:26](#)):

(silence) On today's episode of Tune in Tuesday, we'll reflect on the Americans with Disabilities Act, as 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the passing of this historic Civil Rights law. SHRM's chief human resources officer, Sean Sullivan, will moderate a discussion between Kandi Pickard, the President and CEO of the National Down Syndrome Society, and Johnny Register, former Paralympian, and the President and CEO of Inspired Communications International, LLC, as they discuss how to build productive and inclusive teams. But first, here's your Tune in Tuesday cohost, Christopher Lopez.

Christopher Lopez ([01:02](#)):

Hello, everyone, and welcome to Tune In Tuesday. If you're tuning in for the very first time, we're glad you could join -- and if you're returning, welcome back. My name is Christopher Lopez, and I am so excited for today's episode, where we will reflect on the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Last month, we heard from SHRM President and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., as he discussed the work the SHRM blue-ribbon commission is doing to face racial inequity in the workplace, with Tricia Zulick and Jason Lawson.

Christopher Lopez ([01:36](#)):

In case you missed that episode, you can watch the replay at any time on this page. As the voice of all things work, we know the importance of cultivating inclusive cultures. Our member network of more than 300,000 HR and business professionals around the world impacts the lives of 115 million workers and their families each day. You can learn more about SHRM membership -- or join, if you're not already a member -- by visiting [shrm.org](http://shrm.org) today. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is no better time to hone in on the importance of cultivating diverse and inclusive teams.

Christopher Lopez ([02:22](#)):

HR knows better than most that when people feel empowered and included at work, they embrace their talents and maximize their potential -- which also drives organizational success. So, during today's lively discussion, we'll hear from two diversity, equity, and inclusion leaders as they share key takeaways that will help your organization to successfully recruit, hire, and retain differently-abled workers. But first, please welcome SHRM's Chief Human Resources Officer, Sean Sullivan.

Sean Sullivan ([03:02](#)):

Good afternoon. Thank you all for joining us today for Tune in Tuesday. As Chris mentioned, it's National Disability Awareness Month, and this year marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Over the last three decades, this landmark legislation has ensured a more accessible and equitable workplace for people with disabilities. However, these worthy, willing workers still endured difficulties obtaining and sustaining employment in the United States. As HR leaders, we need to take a hard look at the realities of inclusion and where we fall flat, like the way we treat people with disabilities in the world of work. Our workplaces are not as enlightened as we should expect in 2020. People are still excluded, discriminated against, and even abused because of their differences. According to the 2019 Employing Abilities at Work Research Report, only 13% of workplaces in the U.S. have initiatives that support inclusion specifically for people with disabilities. There are plenty of misconceptions and

misunderstandings about what people living with disabilities bring to the workplace, accounting for an unemployment rate double the national average. And yet, nearly all HR professionals and managers we surveyed said that these individuals regularly perform as well or better than their peers without disabilities.

Sean Sullivan ([04:30](#)):

It's clear that we need better knowledge, policies, and practices around hiring and integrating people with disabilities into the American workforce. We need to recognize the competitive advantage they bring, because diverse and inclusive workforces not only improve the bottom line, they create healthy business competition and they spark innovation. It's the right thing to do for everyone. Now to help us unpack the policies and practices we need to create welcoming workplaces and inclusive cultures, I'm very excited to welcome John and Kandi to our show. Welcome to both of you -- and first, Kandi, I want to thank you for your leadership at NDSS. John, I want to thank you for your service in the U.S. military. And now, we've got a great chance to start our discussion this morning. So, Kandi, I'd like to start with you: what problems do people with disabilities encounter in the workplace?

Kandi Pickard ([05:33](#)):

[Well, thank you Sean, for having me here today; I'm thrilled to be part of this conversation with both of you. I think one of the major problems that our community is still encountering in the workplace is transportation. About 31% of adults with disabilities do not have adequate transportation to and from work, compared to -- I mean, that's about twice the rate compared to adults without disabilities.

Sean Sullivan ([05:57](#)):

Very good ... and John, I know you have some thoughts on the same areas, in terms of the kinds of problems that people with disabilities encounter in the workplace. What have your observations been?

John Register ([06:14](#)):

Well, I'm honored to be on this show -- Oh my gosh, all you HR folks out there, you are crushing it! So kudos to you who have been out and having this conversation, in many, many locations around the country -- virtually, and we had one actually in the moment, hybrid -- so I was really honored to do that as well. I think one of the things that -- adding to what Kandi was saying -- is that technology is really a hindrance, because you think about what we have right now, and how we're communicating, people that are maybe hearing-impaired or deaf, or visually-impaired or totally blind, have trouble really accessing the World Wide Web. And how do we build our websites out? How do we make sure that is inclusive for everybody that we can pull from that, this amazing talent pool of workers, as you said, Sean. So I think technology is really one of the gateways to entering the workforce -- and how do we make that accessible to all?

Sean Sullivan ([07:13](#)):

John, I think that's a great point on technology, and very much related to that -- most organizations don't have initiatives or training around hiring people with disabilities. So why should employers care about creating a disability-inclusive workplace? Technology is one part of it that you touched on, John. What else comes to mind in terms of creating a disability-inclusive workplace?

John Register ([07:43](#)):

Well, you know, great question. And I want to take a step back, because I think to get to the hiring practice and the widgets, because a lot of those come up with whack-a-moles, right? We have, okay, we need to hire more people with disabilities, and that's a whack-a-mole. We knocked that one down. More people, diversity. Oh, whack-a-mole. Knock it down. What is the underlying cause that doesn't have our organizations hiring in the first place? Why don't we see this talent pool in the first place?

John Register ([08:09](#)):

And I think one of the things we have to really consider is, you know, how we are attracting, and what's our mindset, around these issues. Why don't I see the value? And so when you look at a report like the Accenture report that happened in, I think it was Q4 of 2018, where they measured like companies to see what Company A and Company B, who are very similar, if one company hires, retains, promotes people with disabilities in their workplace, and the other one does not, Company A actually outperforms Company B two-to-one to shareholder returns.

John Register ([08:45](#)):

So this caused the comptroller of New York City, Mr. -- New York State -- Mr. Tom DiNapoli, to say, "You know what? With this trillion dollars in pension funds, we're going to invest in Company A versus Company B because we're going to make more revenue on our dollars." So it is a bottom-line imperative to actually hire and retain and promote people with disabilities in the workplace. We see Walgreens doing it right now, and it's on the autism spectrum -- and not just doing menial jobs, but actually on the floor working to get [inaudible 00:09:16] practices. They are hiring, retaining, promoting people in the workplace, and they are seeing a bottom-line increase to their shareholders because of it. That's why we need to develop these policies instead of playing whack-a-mole and just trying to solve the problem of the day.

Sean Sullivan ([09:31](#)):

I think that's a great point, John. Thank you for raising that. And Kandi, I know you've had similar discussions with many stakeholders and executive leaders in many organizations. How have those conversations gone, and what else can you elaborate on, based on what John shared?

Kandi Pickard ([09:51](#)):

No, and I echo John's thoughts. I mean, he's spot-on with his comment. I think it also is -- we have to do more training. We have to teach organizations how to have that inclusive culture. I think a lot of times when we're speaking with leaders within organizations on bringing in and hiring folks with disabilities, be it a physical disability or an intellectual disability, is their first question is always, "Well, where do I start? I mean, do I have to change the hiring practices?" You don't. You hire them the same way that they would interview or hire you or me that is on this meeting today. I think it's just a matter of increased training and increased, you know, awareness of people with disabilities.

Sean Sullivan ([10:38](#)):

Terrific. And when you have seen teams be successful, Kandi, at really bringing together an inclusive culture, what do you see as some of the hallmarks of either the investment or the culture of an organization that really helps to foster that sense of inclusion?

Kandi Pickard ([11:03](#)):

Well, at NDSS, a third of our staff are individuals with Down Syndrome, and we are very proud to really walk the walk and talk the talk when we're talking to other organizations about this work. And we incorporate our self-advocates, our individuals with disabilities, in every aspect of our organization. They're part of our team meetings, they're part of our trainings, they're part of discussions and strategy as we look forward. And I would encourage others to do the same thing. We all have our own strengths, and I think by looking at what these individuals can bring to their role is tremendously valuable for all of us.

Sean Sullivan ([11:41](#)):

Thank you. And John, what have you seen be effective in the workplace in terms of fostering a greater sense of inclusion?

John Register ([11:52](#)):

I love what Kandi just said, that everybody is in the meeting. Everybody has a voice at the table. And we look at this from that context of what NDSS is doing, and we can take a page from not being afraid of this, right? I think it was Judy Heumann. She's on the Trevor Noah show, and she -- on Comedy Central -- and she just wrote her book, *Being Heumann*, and she's the mother of the Independent Living movement.

John Register ([12:20](#)):

And if you looked at *Crip Camp* on Netflix, you would have seen her; she's one of the principle characters. I was interviewing her on LinkedIn Live, on my show, and she said, and she was on Trevor's show, that Trevor said, "Well, I just think of the able-bodied community." And that made a trigger for her. And the trigger prompted her to say, "Well, Trevor, I don't think you're able-bodied. I think you're temporarily able." And then Trevor came back and said, "What is that, a threat?" And we kind of look at that -- is that really the issue that hinders us from the underlying reasons why we do not hire, retain, and promote people with disabilities in the workplace? Do we have a fear around this -- some type of fear that negates the person that wheels up to the interview, or is totally blind and just made it there?

John Register ([13:11](#)):

I believe we have to switch our mindset around this, because the fear will drive division, it drives stagnation. And when we begin to look at individuals with disabilities with the lens of, kind of like those shows, *The Voice*, where you don't get a chance to see the individual until -- until you just hear their voice, and you turn around and vote for them. Can we do that in our work environment? And we do that by suspending our attitudes and our belief systems, our biases in the workplace to, what we often do is we forecast onto others what we believe they can or cannot do, which is based upon what we believe we could or could not do if we were in those situations. And we need to suspend that and be able to see what is a true value that's coming. As Kandi's pointing out, at NDSS, we're going to see your value, and we're going to have you have a seat at the table. You have to be in the room where it happens, the room where it happens, the room where it happens, right?

Sean Sullivan ([14:08](#)):

Yeah.

John Register ([14:10](#)):

That's a Hamilton throwback if you all didn't know.

Sean Sullivan ([14:14](#)):

Very, very nicely done there, John. But I think you touched on-

John Register ([14:19](#)):

Just making sure you all knew that, Sean.

Sean Sullivan ([14:26](#)):

But you touched on something that I think is a common issue. It's that notion of fear. And Kandi, you also stated something with respect to, where do people start, right? And I think addressing the fear and helping people understand that, start someplace, and start working from there can really set into motion. You don't have to boil the ocean on this. You can start in one place, but start it with intention and purpose. Kandi, where do you see the main challenges that may be there for hiring for people with neuro disabilities? And this may come back to that fear factor as well.

Kandi Pickard ([15:15](#)):

No, I think you're absolutely right. I think it's the low expectations. It's that stigma that's played a negative role for so many years for people with disabilities. And I think changing that mindset is crucial. We're seeing such success in folks with disabilities in corporate America. We're seeing them start their own businesses and thrive. I mean, I think that you guys shared the story of Kayla, who's on our team, that is lobbying on Capitol Hill, and changing mindsets on Capitol Hill, and changing policies that help people with disabilities. So I think it's that stigma, and I think also just looking at that skill gap, too. We have to be able to give our folks with disability training opportunities to learn skills. And again, I think it comes back to that fear of just taking the time to teach somebody what to do, or how to fill the need within your organization.

Sean Sullivan ([16:10](#)):

That's very helpful. Thank you, Kandi. With the rise of work from home due to COVID, employment stats for people with disabilities has gone up. How do you believe this experience will change hiring practices in the future? And part of this may play into some of the technology that you commented on earlier, John. So, how -- given where we are at this moment in time, John, how do you see the potential for hiring practices changing in the future?

John Register ([16:44](#)):

Yeah. I think we are in a moment right now where people are still trying to figure that out and answer this question. And we're beginning to see mother is the necessity of invention, so therefore, we are trying to figure out how we're doing things. Now, remember, going back to the technology piece, I still think that's a serious issue in the hiring practice, but let's take a step back just a moment to look at where we were pre-COVID. A lot of people with disabilities were saying, "You know, if I could just work from home, I can do the job. Just let me work from that." "Oh, no, we need you to work in the work environment. We need you to have a desk. We need to make sure that we have the accommodations set for you." And that's what we would tell individuals to make sure that they could be part of the collective, a part of the team.

John Register ([17:26](#)):

Well, guess what? We're all working from home now. We're having this remote. So we have the ingenuity and we have the adaptability of people with disabilities that we can lean on in times like these. When we show up and we're trying to have these conversations of hiring practices, we get the chance to lean on those individuals to help elevate our knowledge and skill base. If I can just go back and take one step backward and go back to what Kandi was talking about, and this fear, which you asked her about fear, fear is something that is internal to us first. So when I first had my leg amputated, I was fearful that my wife was going to leave me. I was fearful that my son would no longer see me as his father. I was fearful that I was going to lose my job in the military. I was fearful that I could no longer support my family. And then I was also fearful of other people's opinions, like we said earlier. Believing for me what I could or could not do, which was based upon what they believed they could or could not do if they were in my situation. And then finally, it was society. What did I believe and who did I believe in society that told me to believe those fears in the first place?

John Register ([18:31](#)):

And that's where the rubber really meets the road in this conversation, because every single time... Was it Captain Hook? When I saw the Walt Disney movie, Peter Pan, and Captain Hook's an amputee? He wears a hook, he's dark and mysterious -- he's scary. Wait a minute. I'm an amputee -- am I dark, mysterious, and scary too? Is that why kids in the aisle will say, "Hey, look at Robot Man. Look at Robot Man, Mom, Dad"? And then Mom or Dad say, "No, we don't want to look at them. Let's go around a different aisle." And we teach them that this is scary, that person is to be feared, and it perpetuates everything that in our society that's going on right now. Look at politics. We are fearful of what we do not understand, and we have to begin to open up and really understand and redefine the moments, our personal moments of why we're fearful of that, who's telling us this, and then have the courage then to amputate that fear to embrace this new normal mindset, kind of as Kandi was talking about earlier. And I want to put my earpiece back in because it fell out.

Sean Sullivan ([19:37](#)):

We'll give you a minute to do that, John. And Kandi, on those points that John made, a great place to build on in terms of what you're seeing has changed during this time of COVID, and what that may prompt you to think about in terms of what could change there for going forward even beyond this moment of COVID?

Kandi Pickard ([20:04](#)):

No, and I agree with John 100%. I think that we have to look at this differently. Even as our team has shifted remotely, our staff came into the office every day. They knew the role that they were doing every day. They had their routine, they had their schedule. And when this whole COVID piece hit, they're working from home, and we had to shift as an organization exactly what responsibilities we needed this team to do. And it allowed us to be more creative, it allowed us to challenge our team, and to put more opportunities in front of them to be able to help our organization be more successful. And I think we're seeing a lot of other organizations do the same thing, because our team has -- actually, I laugh, because I think our team has grown, and they've shown us that they could even do more than what we knew that they could in the past, and we're embracing that. And I would welcome others to do the same thing. Don't think that they fit inside this box. They don't. Give them the opportunity to grow and to do more. You'll see tremendous success.

Sean Sullivan ([21:07](#)):

I think that's, again, very helpful, Kandi. And with an eye towards our HR leaders in our audience on, how can HR leaders ensure workplaces and teams are inclusive moving forward? So John, you gave us a great shout-out to all the HR folks at the very beginning. As you think about their role, what advice might you give them in terms of continuing to open up the workplace and make it a more inclusive place to be?

John Register ([21:48](#)):

That's a great question, and I'm going to say, I am very new to this space. I'm going to put it out there just like that. And the way I came into this space was I walked into a SHRM event, didn't even know what I was walking into. I was like, "Oh my goodness." And all of a sudden I was at -- Johnny C. Taylor asked me to come into an event. So that's kind of how I got introduced. Now, here's what I've seen in this whole place -- and this is kind of beyond even disability. I believe that, what I've seen in the HR community, that we are mostly problem fixers. Something happens, it rolls down, and you got to fix the problem. I believe you have to have a seat in the culture of the organization. You have to elevate your role so that you are in that executive CEO suite, because that's where those decisions are being made, and you have to have voice in that community. And it's just that simple, because you can head things off at the pass. You see things before anybody else can, and you can set that tone. It is so important to have tone from the top in this issue -- or whatever issue you're trying to elevate, to make sure that executive knows exactly what he or she is dealing with, and the opportunities that are out there. Because your lens is valuable. It is important, and your voice counts. Your voice matters. So make sure, whatever you have to do, don't take the -- what I call power and status. Status is given from power, so get yourself to that power level so you're making those decisions so that company can elevate and move forward faster. And then any issue -- disability, race, equity, whatever it is -- can elevate faster with your voice because you're in the room.

Sean Sullivan ([23:31](#)):

Thank you. So Kandi, in terms of other aspects of helping the HR community think about this, anything that you would expand on in terms of what John just laid out for us?

Kandi Pickard ([23:48](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I agree with John. You have to have leadership buy-in, you know, 100%; but I think you can also prioritize disability inclusion in the talent acquisition process. Connect with organizations that are successful in this, for resources and supports for success. And I think internally you have to look at supports for accommodations and other pieces that can help folks be successful in the hiring process.

Sean Sullivan ([24:15](#)):

And I think that's a great point, Kandi. Let me stay with you for a minute. In terms of some of those accommodations, workplace flexibility plays a role in that. How have you seen progress made in terms of workplace flexibility, and what else do you think remains to be done there in terms of truly exercising flexibility?

Kandi Pickard ([24:42](#)):

Well, and I think you all did a survey or a research on accommodations. Accommodations vary very much between one individual to another. I mean, it could be as easy as a different chair to sit in, or it

could be an additional screen to look at, or it could be something a little bit more intensive. I think having that understanding and that knowledge of what is needed when it comes to accommodations for workplace flexibility -- again, not to always shift it back to our team, but we've had to invest a small amount into accommodations that our team needs at home to be successful. We've had to buy some cameras and some webcams, and some different pieces for them to be able to do their job effectively, but also have a flexible schedule to be able to fit in with this new, kind of, working from home model.

Sean Sullivan ([25:31](#)):

Excellent. As we mentioned before, this year is the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In your opinion, what critical updates should be made to address the advancements that have been made in this 30 year time span? John, I'd welcome your thoughts in terms of how you think about the journey that America has been on in terms of the ADA, and what else can be done?

John Register ([26:02](#)):

Wow, what a great question. I could spend an hour on that one. I think when George H. W. Bush signed the ADA into law in 1990, we're looking at I believe 72-ish, 72.5% of those that could work with a disability were not working in the workforce. So we've had curb cutouts, we've had a lot of physical barriers that have come down, we've had things that we have done in the workforce that's kind of elevated. But why hasn't that number come down except by 1%? And I used to call it attitudinal barriers. It's really about ableism. And those are the types of things that we really have to look at. Ted Kennedy, Jr. calls it -- he's the board chair for the American Association of People with Disabilities. He said it best, I think, in that the next frontier is employment. And we have to make sure that we have 20% of a workforce that we're not even tapping into. That is just crazy to me. And when you look at those straight numbers and you look at Tom DiNapoli and what they're doing in this space. We have organizations like Disability:IN, which has a consortium of companies -- top level companies -- that are really talking hard and serious about this issue. Jill Houghton, she leads that charge.

John Register ([27:23](#)):

So we have to look at individuals, like John Kemp -- I just interviewed him yesterday on LinkedIn Live, right? He helped start the American Association of People with Disabilities, as well as Disability:IN. So these individuals are still with us and among us, and they are looking at the next generation. And one of the things that John Kemp told me yesterday on our show was that, when I asked about Maria Town, who heads up AAPD right now, is that these young leaders, they have taken the step on -- I call, like, the "far side of the equation." So we talked about fear on one side, but when we actually release and have the courage to release and understand, as Kandi was saying, that these individuals are actually empowering the organization better than we actually thought, because we had low expectations, then we get these individuals that are resolved. They are resolute. And no longer are they going to say, "Give me your handouts. I'm going to dictate to you, you need to catch up to where I am." And that's where we're beginning to see the shift right now of going from that status, as I was talking about earlier, into taking power and -- because we might miss out on a great talent pool, right, because these individuals are finding out, "If I become an entrepreneur, I don't need your company. I can then be contracted out, and I'm behind the veil. You don't know I have a disability, and I'm doing spectacular work, and I'm getting the dollar." Dollar, dollar bills, y'all. So that's what we really want to make sure that we capture that talent force before they go out and start doing it themselves.

Sean Sullivan ([28:55](#)):

Yeah. Those are great points, John. Kandi, when you think about the ADA, and again, the trajectory from 1990 to now, but what else could be out there beyond 2020? How do you frame it? What are your thoughts in terms of what else can be done in this space?

Kandi Pickard ([29:19](#)):

Yeah. I mean, we've come a long way, but we still have a lot more work to do. I think that that's very clear, and all of us on this call today would agree with that. But I think we need to incentivize our employers to hire people with disabilities. I think we need to provide more education and support around accommodations so folks can understand that. And I think additionally, we need to -- again, it goes back to education and skill development for people with disabilities. I think those are huge aspects for us to consider as we look at the next phase of celebrating the ADA and when we go forward.

Sean Sullivan ([29:52](#)):

Outstanding.

John Register ([29:53](#)):

Hey, Sean, real quick -- because I want to riff off what Kandi just said, because that's a brilliant answer, right?

Sean Sullivan ([29:58](#)):

Yeah.

John Register ([29:58](#)):

And oftentimes, what we do not do, is first we look outwards before we look inward. How many people are in our organizations right now that identify as a person with a disability that won't self-identify that to the organization? That might be a trigger as well to say, "Why is it so difficult for a person to self-identify? What's going on in my culture that I might need to do a little bit more digging on, so that might give me some clues into the hiring practice that I might be able to do in the future?"

Sean Sullivan ([30:30](#)):

John, I think that's a great point. And it's interesting that you brought that up, because we are, even within SHRM, we're going back to our workforce to encourage people during open enrollment to once again consider the full spectrum of their status, and whether it's veteran status or on disability, is there any additional way of identifying that they would like to add to their profile? Because we do absolutely recognize there's both the invisible and the notionally visible sense of people with disabilities. And we know that a significant percentage are not captured. And I think you bring an excellent point to the conversation about, what is happening within the culture that would inhibit somebody from wanting to be able to share, "This is a part of who I am"? And to one of our earlier points, that's something that the HR community can absolutely support, foster, and really shift for each of their organizations.

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Moving forward, how else do you think HR and business leaders carry a workplace inclusivity policy throughout their organization, from hiring to team building? And we've talked a little bit about the hiring piece, but there is a lot to be done in the culture piece, and the notion of team building. Kandi, I'd

love to get your thoughts in terms of what you've seen work and what you really encourage organizations to think about to really carry this further.

Kandi Pickard ([32:28](#)):

Well, and I think it goes back to the leadership buy-in. I think when you have leadership buy-in from the top of your organization, it filters all the way down through the employees. But I think you need to involve all members of your team, and especially in the management in that hiring process, and disability inclusion training. I think folks need to understand people-first language, and how people want to be recognized and spoke to, be it if they have a physical disability or an intellectual or developmental disability. We need to just make sure that folks have that training and that understanding through all processes, because it could just be a support person or a coworker that's working with an individual with disability, and you need to make sure they feel comfortable to ask questions, and to know how to support this person in the best possible way.

Sean Sullivan ([33:18](#)):

John, same question to you. What else do you think can be done in the notion of fostering a culture and really for HR and businesses to advance in this aspect of their workplace?

John Register ([33:34](#)):

Well, I totally agree with Kandi on that. I think some of the other things that we think about, right, is "How am I measuring what matters?" It's important to make sure that people of different abilities are able to advance in the organization. And I'll use an outside analogy with what I just saw happen with the United States Olympic and Paralympic Museum that just opened a couple months ago in Colorado Springs, Colorado. So your experience -- this museum was built out by Olympians, Paralympians, insights for those that were using universal design to make sure everybody's experience was the same. So when you come into that building, and you're given your credential to go through, you register this credential on either your phone, your iOS, or your smartphone device, or you can do it by a kiosk, and you can choose how you want to experience the museum. So if you're totally blind, you could have audio described coming through for you. If you have hearing loss, you can increase font, or you can do something that's going to have a tactile feature for you. So everybody gets to experience the museum in the same way. You start from the top, you go down to the bottom. It's beyond ADA compliant, so the grades -- you don't even realize you're going down ramps into these different exhibits, and everybody gets to experience [inaudible 00:35:06].

John Register ([35:06](#)):

And what that does is it builds and fosters community, and it increases culture. So that's I think what we have to be doing inside of our own organizations. What's the outcome that we're looking for, and how can we use our entire workforce to help us get there? Because we all have brilliant ideas, and we're all so unique, and we have these various experiences, we need to capture that in the policy-making to make sure that it's not lost from one generation to the next, one change and transition to the next, that we have these in place, so that that culture remains the same as best as possible.

Sean Sullivan ([35:42](#)):

Outstanding. I have a question for both of you that is kind of in the aspirational realm. I'd like you to think about, um -- you know, each of you have advocated so strongly and so effectively in this arena for

people with disabilities. What gives you hope going forward that real progress is being made? And any aspects of that that you think will be different from where we are today if we just stay at this? Kandi, can I start with you?

Kandi Pickard ([36:28](#)):

Absolutely -- no, I'm happy to. I think for me, I have an eight-year-old son with Down Syndrome, and he is what has brought me into this space and allowed me to be as passionate as I am about all things disabilities, but specifically employment. And I think I look at the future for Mason, and hopefully that the work that I'm doing and the work that both of you are doing and others that are in this space is just going to continue to grow. I think it's no different than looking at where we've come from 30 years from the ADA. We're making progress, we just need to continue to educate folks, and we need to continue to embrace differences. And I think that we will see our community and everything just expand and grow and do better. I look forward to seeing in 20 years what Mason's doing and where he's doing it at, because I think that -- you know, I laugh, I'll tell you guys this real quick, because I always think that... Our team always says to me, "Kandi, I want to be in your role." That is my goal. I want a person with Down Syndrome to be running the National Down Syndrome Society in five years, in 10 years. Whatever time limit that is, I want to see that -- but I want other organizations to embrace that and see the same opportunities.

Sean Sullivan ([37:43](#)):

That's fantastic. We look forward to seeing that as well, Kandi. John, same question. What gives you hope that we're on the right path? What gives you hope for the future here?

John Register ([37:54](#)):

Comments like what Kandi just said. I mean, go Mason, right? That's awesome. When I was building out the Paralympic youth program for the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee, as well as the military sport program, one of the things I saw was, as we were building these programs out, we had a lot of Mom-and-Pop organizations that were sometimes stove-piping and installing out with where people could go. But one of the things I often said was, "Hey, if you want your child to live at home with you when they're 30 and 40 years old, you're on the right path." So we have to begin to let individuals live as independently as they can, because we all want to live independently. What gives me hope also are the Paralympic Games. We see these games coming up now in Tokyo 2021, and the media cover that's beginning to happen around the world. I hope that we're going to have more in the United States, but in countries like England and Germany, we're really seeing an elevation -- not of, "Oh, that's so incredible that this athlete is running and jumping, and on an artificial limb, or totally blind," but they're actually celebrating sport. I call it the "What to Wow to Now." What's going on here? Wow, that's amazing. How are they doing that? And now what's my responsibility now that I understand this information? So that's kinda the what-wow-now-how.

John Register ([39:16](#)):

The other thing is, we just had a conversation yesterday with Sharifa Yateem. She is the first board-certified specialist from the United Arab Emirates. And so as I work with the State Department and countries around the world on this topic, she is a behavior specialist for Down Syndrome, Special Olympics. And it's amazing to see what the United States is beginning to build and bring to other countries, and to see other youth begin to elevate that moment as well. So I hope that that gets to a

broad brush of what's going on, now just in the United States, but globally, of people beginning to understand the value that people with disabilities bring to the workplace.

Sean Sullivan ([40:00](#)):

Outstanding. Thank you. I'd like to close on this question for both of you. And the question is kind of circling back to one of the issues that both of you touched on at the beginning of our discussion today, and that is around the notion of fear. John, I know in one of your TED Talks, you talk about a moment where a mom came up to you with her two sons to ask about, "Gosh, can you just explain what's happened with your leg?" And it took you aback, but it gave you an opportunity. And I think those are the opportunities to connect and have a conversation that really can be the gateway to getting beyond fear. So I'd like each of you to just comment on your thoughts on how people can start this conversation if they haven't entered into it before, in terms of really opening up and thinking about a more inclusive workplace for people with disabilities. How do they start the conversation if they haven't been there before? John, can you help us think through that?

John Register ([41:27](#)):

I love that, and thanks for bringing up that TEDx, because I didn't have it, like, three days before. I was like, what am I even going to talk about at this show? And that woman -- really, we talk about this person who has this much courage, because in the [inaudible 00:41:44] what was happening was, all these people were challenging the learning opportunity that was before us all. And the children were saying, "Hey, Mom, look at that man's leg. There goes Robot Man." And everybody could hear it. I could hear it, right? So I kind of chuckled and laughed. But then I heard everybody else say, "Get that mother out of here. Get those kids out of here. It's bad mom." And I was like, wow, that's interesting, but I went back to reading my USA Today newspaper. Then she gets up, walks over with her two children, and I think she's going to do like the song says and just [sings] "Walk On By." But no, she stops, she leans in, and begins this dialogue and this conversation which I hadn't had in such a public setting before. So let's fast forward, okay?

John Register ([42:27](#)):

So I told kind of the story, but fast forwarding it is that because of her courageous actions, the conversations of people who are now listening in on the story, they changed. She changed those people's opinions. They were now saying, "How cool was that? Did you hear that guy's story? That's amazing. Those kids' lives will never be the same." I'm like, never be the same? And I began to think about myself. How many times did I miss it because I was into my own self, reading my own proverbial newspapers, while people were trying to understand who I was and how I was showing up? So as the HR community, having the conversation is being courageous just like that woman. We might not know all the answers, but our children, so to speak, our employees and workers and everybody that we have, we want to create those opportunities for them to have this conversation so that our culture can grow and we can truly get the best talent, and invite that 20% that we're not even thinking about into the workplace.

Sean Sullivan ([43:29](#)):

I really love that story. And Kandi, I know this notion of where do you start in the conversations has been very salient for all the work that you do as well. Help us with your thoughts on getting people to a point where they can enter the conversation and feel confident about it.

Kandi Pickard ([43:51](#)):

Well, I think as many of us, and me included, we have to be vulnerable, and we have to ask the questions. I think that as we look at what's going on in our country right now, with the racial tensions and everything else, as an organization, we've had to step back and be a little bit more vulnerable and ask some questions, and understand this process that folks are going through. And I think it's no different with employment and disabilities. Ask the questions. I've had similar experiences as John has as a parent, and even as an employer. When we go and we're talking to folks about disability inclusion, and they're talking to me when I have Kayla McKeon sitting next to me, who works for us and is a registered lobbyist on Capitol Hill, Kayla can answer these questions herself. And so I encourage that, and I do it in a very kind way, but I think it's just a matter of folks understanding that, just be vulnerable and say, "I don't know. Could you help me? Could you educate me?" Because we will, and individuals with disabilities are going to. If you encourage that conversation, they want to talk. They want to share their experiences and help you embrace that knowledge.

Sean Sullivan ([45:08](#)):

I think that's extremely helpful, especially for our HR folks in the audience, Kandi. Kandi, I want to thank you. John, I want to thank you. It's been my privilege and my pleasure to be with you this morning, and I really appreciate your insights and all your candor.

Christopher Lopez ([45:32](#)):

Thank you so much, Sean, Kandi, and John; your expertise today was invaluable. Thank you to all of you for joining us this afternoon. We'll see you back here on November 10th at 2:00 PM Eastern for our next episode of Tune in Tuesday. (silence)