

Participant: Wordly [W] English (US)

00:00:00 [W] All right.

00:00:00 [W] We've got a good number of participants that. Oh. Hello, everyone.

00:00:04 [W] Hello.

00:00:04 [W] From all around the country and some names I recognize. This is awesome.

00:00:09 [W] Okay, great.

00:00:11 [W] A few housekeeping items before we get started.

00:00:14 [W] today's webinar is captioned by word delete.

00:00:17 [W] To access captions, please accept the invite in the chat.

00:00:20 [W] Megan, I presume you're going to put that there. to add wordly to your zoom.

00:00:24 [W] If you're joining this webinar via a web browser, there will be a separate link in the chat for you to view captions and awesomely, a transcript of this webinar will be made available afterward.

00:00:35 [W] Second, if you have questions for us today, please enter these into the Q&A section at the bottom of your screen.

00:00:41 [W] We're going to do our best to get to these, not just at the end of today's webinar, but hopefully throughout so that we can keep everybody, engaged and get your questions answered.

00:00:48 [W] And then finally, we want to thank our partners at Visit Richmond for making today's webinar possible via their sponsorship.

00:00:55 [W] With that, I want to turn this, this webinar over to Cvent Hutchings, who's a senior manager of accessibility at Cvent.

00:01:02 [W] Cvent is a champion of digital accessibility.

00:01:05 [W] And if you're not familiar with this area of digital accessibility, you're going to be, because it is increasing area of focus, both, both nationally and globally.

00:01:15 [W] And here in the US, there are increasing numbers of of rules and regulations regarding this, that I can almost guarantee are going to impact your work at some point. So I would like to turn it over to Cvent.

00:01:27 [W] He can introduce himself and, take it from there.

00:01:29 [W] Cvent. Yeah. Hey, thank you very much, Josh. appreciate it.

00:01:33 [W] So, yeah, I'm Cvent Cutchens.

00:01:34 [W] I'm the senior manager for accessibility here at Cvent.

00:01:37 [W] I've only been here just short of three years, but I've been doing accessibility for a couple of decades. my mother was an amputee.

00:01:45 [W] I had cousins who were in wheelchairs.

00:01:48 [W] so, one was unable to speak.

00:01:51 [W] I have a neurological disorder, so it's pretty near and dear to my heart.

00:01:54 [W] So, once I really looked into accessibility 20 plus years ago, you know, now it's my career.

00:02:02 [W] So, we talk a lot about accessibility, the need for it, how it enables our attendees with disabilities to come to our events.

00:02:09 [W] We talk about assistive technologies, things like screen readers.

00:02:12 [W] if you've ever created a site, then you probably know you have to do things like add alt text to images. But do you know why? Do you know?

00:02:19 [W] Do you know how a screen reader actually announces it?

00:02:22 [W] So what we thought we're going to do today is, for the webinars, actually demonstrate how one of your attendees or how a person with a disability would navigate a page.

00:02:29 [W] I'm going to show some keyboard only navigation.

00:02:32 [W] I'm going to turn on a screen reader, people with disabilities, by the way, can't use a mouse.

00:02:35 [W] So we're going to do keyboard only navigation. we're going to turn on a screen reader.

00:02:40 [W] We're going to play around with that for a little bit to see how somebody who might not be able to use your page could access it.

00:02:45 [W] I'm going to show some accessible pages, and I'm going to show an inaccessible demo

page.

00:02:49 [W] so first let's talk about keyboard.

00:02:51 [W] not all users can use a mouse. They might lack manual dexterity.

00:02:54 [W] They might be missing limbs, they might be older and lacking fine motor control.

00:02:58 [W] so for these, anything that you can do with the mouse for these users, anything you can do with the mouse, they also have to be able to do with the keyboard.

00:03:07 [W] keyboard users primarily use the tab key. They tab to all their controls and then use a spacebar.

00:03:12 [W] The enter key to select them to scroll.

00:03:14 [W] They can use arrow or page up or page down.

00:03:17 [W] let's check out a page.

00:03:19 [W] I'm going to hopefully somebody can give me like in the chat or give me a hopefully I'm sharing.

00:03:24 [W] Can you guys see this page?

00:03:27 [W] This is, TGI this is the company when we get our vpats done at Cvent, this is the company that audits us.

00:03:34 [W] So I want to show their page because it better be good because they're our accessibility auditors.

00:03:39 [W] I'm going to, from here on out, by the way, I'm only using the keyboard.

00:03:43 [W] I'm not going to use the mouse at all.

00:03:44 [W] So I'm going to hit the tab key.

00:03:47 [W] And I want you to notice two things.

00:03:49 [W] for one is there's this thing called skip to main content that appeared. And, that was not part of the page.

00:03:55 [W] It's something that a sighted user or mouse user would never see.

00:03:59 [W] but also focus.

00:04:00 [W] There's a box around that that's actually added by whoever created this page.

00:04:05 [W] So I'm going to tab over here a little bit.

00:04:07 [W] Notice I can follow focus.

00:04:13 [W] Okay I'm on this resources tab.

00:04:15 [W] Now I'm going to press enter to activate this dropdown menu.

00:04:19 [W] And I'm going to select an option with the keyboard.

00:04:23 [W] We'll go down to Ada compliance.

00:04:25 [W] I'm gonna hit enter.

00:04:28 [W] Now I'm going to hit tab. Now we're back on our skip navigation.

00:04:32 [W] Skip to main content link.

00:04:33 [W] this link allows keyboard users to jump over all of that repetitive top.

00:04:37 [W] And if they had left nav on this page and go directly to the main content area where they do their work. It's something that you can't really edit yourself.

00:04:44 [W] A lot of times as, let's say you're you're using a software application to create your sites, you might not be able to add it.

00:04:50 [W] It's up to the software to have that, or to add it for you.

00:04:53 [W] I'm gonna hit enter. So notice focus doesn't show.

00:04:56 [W] Now because I'm not on a thing.

00:04:58 [W] I'm not on a control, a button, a link, but I am in the main content area.

00:05:01 [W] When I hit tab, notice now I'm within that area I'm on on, schedule a demo.

00:05:08 [W] Let's try a page with bad keyboard access.

00:05:16 [W] It opens.

00:05:17 [W] There we go.

00:05:17 [W] Okay, remember that this is a this is a fictional site. This is a real university.

00:05:21 [W] It's created to be very inaccessible.

00:05:24 [W] I'm going to press tab a little bit just to, so you guys can try to figure out where we are.

00:05:28 [W] Hopefully you can hear my clicking. If not hit tab.

00:05:30 [W] Nothing tab nothing tab nothing okay. Now we're on a home link okay.

00:05:38 [W] So there were a bunch of links at the top.

00:05:41 [W] I'm assuming there's probably one for the university.

00:05:43 [W] There's maybe the before and after I don't know, those didn't work.

00:05:46 [W] I'm on about okay.

00:05:47 [W] Now notice I can hover on this and I can I could click it with a mouse if I want.

00:05:52 [W] I'm going to hit my enter key on the keyboard. Nothing.

00:05:56 [W] I'm going to hit spacebar. Maybe that works.

00:05:59 [W] That just scrolls it.

00:06:00 [W] So that this control right here, the only way to access that is, is, is with a mouse.

00:06:07 [W] let's tab through here a little bit more. I'm going to show you some things on this page.

00:06:10 [W] And notice I'm hitting the tab key over and over again. We're back at the top.

00:06:14 [W] Sorry. Something show focus.

00:06:16 [W] Some things don't down here within the page where it says like fictional university problems.

00:06:22 [W] Those are links I would never know it because this page doesn't show focus.

00:06:27 [W] I'm going to tab down to that submit button over there.

00:06:32 [W] Okay I went past it.

00:06:34 [W] So I'm going to hit enter.

00:06:38 [W] I hit enter. An error comes up. Your form has errors.

00:06:43 [W] Please correct them and submit.

00:06:45 [W] I have no idea what those errors are.

00:06:48 [W] I mean it turned out everything was wrong on the page, but, that's bad because I don't know what those errors are.

00:06:54 [W] Let's,

00:06:57 [W] Oh. Yeah. So it says required fields are in blue.

00:06:59 [W] That's not really common.

00:07:00 [W] It's a little more common to show errors in red.

00:07:04 [W] Let me show you page with that real quick. So I want you to notice something.

00:07:07 [W] I'm going to click on the submit button here.

00:07:08 [W] Watch what happens to these labels up here where it says like what's your favorite part? What's your favorite city park?

00:07:14 [W] What city do you find the greenest?

00:07:15 [W] Watch what happens when I click Submit.

00:07:18 [W] Notice how they turn red. that seems okay.

00:07:22 [W] As a sighted user. Like, oh wow, that's a big problem, I get it.

00:07:24 [W] Okay, let me show you something though, for there's a thing called a web disability simulator. It's a Chrome extension.

00:07:30 [W] I'm going to simulate a user who's colorblind watch what happens. Color stripped out of the page.

00:07:36 [W] I can't tell what those errors are anymore.

00:07:37 [W] So the problem on this page is now anyone.

00:07:40 [W] And by the way, 1 in 12 men have some degree of color blindness.

00:07:43 [W] 1 in 12 men now can't tell that there are errors on this page.

00:07:49 [W] Let me close that. Okay, enough a keyboard and color.

00:07:52 [W] Let's talk about assistive technology.

00:07:53 [W] Things like screen readers, things like Braille displays, screen readers allow users, primarily those who are blind to access your sites.

00:08:00 [W] these are things that I'm gonna scroll up on my notes here. Sorry.

00:08:04 [W] there are things that you must do to ensure your sites work.

00:08:07 [W] Although most of accessibility, honestly, probably 90% of it relies on the program, the software programs you use to actually create those sites.

00:08:13 [W] Now, I'm going to turn on Jaws. It's the number one screen reader.

00:08:16 [W] The number one combo is actually Chrome, which I'm using in Jaws, which I'm going to use.

00:08:19 [W] It'll read out some attributes on the page to let me know where I am, and kind of give me that mind's eye view of the page.

00:08:25 [W] listening to jaws can be a little bit confusing, especially if you're new, like some of you guys, so you can press control to quiet jaws.

00:08:32 [W] I might do that throughout the demo, and I'll let you know afterwards.

00:08:35 [W] If jaws just kind of starts rambling on.

00:08:38 [W] Let's go back to this TGI page and I'm going to start jaws.

00:08:46 [W] Jaws.

00:08:57 [W] I think it's thinking.

00:09:02 [W] Ada compliance web site checker. Free scan TPG.

00:09:06 [W] I Google Chrome Ada compliance website checker.

00:09:09 [W] Free scan okay, I'm going to hit control.

00:09:13 [W] to get it to stop I'm going to do control home. I don't know where focus is.

00:09:17 [W] So control home sets the jaws to the top of the page.

00:09:21 [W] Ada compliance website checker free scan TPG.

00:09:24 [W] I notice it read the title of the page, which is that Chrome toolbar to let me know I'm where I want to be.

00:09:31 [W] I'm going to press tab Ada compliance.

00:09:34 [W] Oh, it didn't go to the top. Let's try it again Ada compliant.

00:09:37 [W] Skip to main content. Same page link visited. There we go.

00:09:40 [W] Okay, here's our skip to main content.

00:09:42 [W] excuse me.

00:09:45 [W] when, where am I in my notes?

00:09:48 [W] Sorry, I have a whole lot of notes here because as you guys can imagine, using trying to give a demo of this can be a little rough.

00:09:54 [W] So, I'm going to hit the activate the skip nav, enter Ada compliance website checker, free scan TPG document Ada compliance website checker, free scan. Ada. I hit control again.

00:10:08 [W] the way TPG, I coded this page.

00:10:10 [W] Focus now is on this main H1 page page heading.

00:10:14 [W] But it read a bunch of additional information which honestly for a screen reader would be great for people who were new.

00:10:19 [W] It's just confusing. I'm going to hit the down arrow.

00:10:22 [W] The term Ada website compliance quote can be complicated.

00:10:26 [W] The word quote compliance quote implies a list of items. If I hit control to get it to stop.

00:10:31 [W] But do you notice that red highlight box? That's actually not the page.

00:10:34 [W] That's not chrome, that's actually jaws.

00:10:37 [W] Some users of screen readers like jaws are sighted so jaws to help them understand when they are on the page, adds that little box.

00:10:46 [W] jaws has a lot of different commands other than just tab and arrow keys that make navigation easier, some common ones.

00:10:51 [W] Or you can navigate by graphic or you can navigate by headings.

00:10:55 [W] I'm going to press G to go to graphic dpkg I visited link graphic jaws announces the alt text for this image, which is set by the person who created the page.

00:11:05 [W] Now I'm going to hit H Ada compliance website checker heading level one.

00:11:10 [W] That goes to the next heading on the page, which happens to be that main heading level one.

00:11:15 [W] you can also do things like bring up lists of things, anchors, headings, lists, graphics.

00:11:22 [W] That's to insert F3 virtual HTML features, dialog list one. List view anchors.

00:11:28 [W] List one of 22.

00:11:30 [W] To move to items, use the arrow keys.

00:11:32 [W] I can hit things like L, I links list 13 of 22.

00:11:37 [W] Enter links list dialog.

00:11:39 [W] This is all links on the page. Escape.

00:11:43 [W] Let's go back to our bad page again.

00:11:47 [W] Entering list page two before.

00:11:50 [W] Okay, let's do let's try our list of of images.

00:11:54 [W] That was insert F3 virtual HTML graphics list. Enter select a graphic.

00:11:59 [W] So for that first image notice it reads out the file, name it says you know images slash whatever logo before.

00:12:06 [W] That's jaws trying to say hey there's no alt text that when the or when the person who created this site, they never added alt text.

00:12:13 [W] I don't know what the purpose of this image is.

00:12:16 [W] I'm just going to read the file name and hopefully you can figure it out.

00:12:19 [W] Let's do the same thing and pull up list of headings.

00:12:21 [W] Escape virtual H.H. heading.

00:12:24 [W] Enter heading list dialog.

00:12:27 [W] Now notice here the pages. Excuse me, the page is called welcome.

00:12:32 [W] I'm assuming there's a heading there. There's one for Bienvenido.

00:12:34 [W] There's one for. Can you spot the barriers?

00:12:36 [W] These should all be headings but they're not.

00:12:39 [W] Instead they over here where it says December 1st a great holiday vacation.

00:12:43 [W] They coded those as headings. This is just wrong.

00:12:46 [W] So now on this page, as I navigated through it, I'm going to have to try to figure out in my what I like to say, mind's eye the heck is going on with this page because it just doesn't make sense from a heading heading structure.

00:12:56 [W] Just doesn't make sense. One more thing.

00:12:58 [W] Let's go and activate that submit button. Escaped search.

00:13:01 [W] Hit the wrong button.

00:13:03 [W] The go button. Submit button there.

00:13:07 [W] Let me hit enter. Listen. What happens?

00:13:09 [W] Enter the four accessible university demo site.

00:13:12 [W] Inaccessible version submit button to activate. Press enter. Why did I hit enter on that button?

00:13:18 [W] It didn't do anything.

00:13:19 [W] I actually I can scroll down. I'm using the mouse.

00:13:23 [W] Focus is still on that button, so I did select it, but it didn't really do anything.

00:13:29 [W] It didn't let me know what happened, which is which is bad.

00:13:32 [W] It's a bad experience.

00:13:34 [W] I'm gonna turn jaws off real quick.

00:13:36 [W] Jaws professional quit jaws dial before access.

00:13:41 [W] I want to show you a good site.

00:13:43 [W] This is a registration. Registration site for a conference.

00:13:46 [W] I thought it had some cool to talk about error handling.

00:13:48 [W] I want to show you the difference, because the error handling, clearly when you click submit, it doesn't do anything isn't very good

00:13:57 [W] since we're we've run short on time, I'm going to cheat a little bit.

00:14:00 [W] I'm going to use the mouse.

00:14:03 [W] I'm gonna pick a registration, type a client

00:14:14 [W] Okay, I'll use autofill here. I'll put in my phone number.

00:14:18 [W] I'm going to make up a title.

00:14:19 [W] I'm going to put how many years in the industry a long time. I'm gonna put big data. Sure. Okay.

00:14:24 [W] All my required fields are filled in now. Now I'm.

00:14:27 [W] I'm using the mouse. Okay.

00:14:28 [W] I'm going to delete first name. Okay?

00:14:31 [W] And I'm going to click away with my mouse.

00:14:33 [W] Like, say go to the next field, watch first name field.

00:14:36 [W] Watch what happens.

00:14:38 [W] Do you see how that red happens. That's okay.

00:14:41 [W] On the other page remember how it was only color that's bad on this one.

00:14:45 [W] It is color which is okay.

00:14:47 [W] But it also says first name is required. Two things.

00:14:50 [W] One for a user, like 1 in 12 men who have some degree of color vision deficiency, or maybe fully colorblind, they will notice, hey, wait a minute, I might not notice the red, but I notice where it says first name is required. That's a good thing.

00:15:03 [W] The second thing is, if it's properly coded in the software, this gives the screen reader something to announce.

00:15:10 [W] It'll say, you know, when it says first name field, it'll say first name is required. I'm gonna add name back real quick.

00:15:17 [W] And I'm gonna turn on jaws.

00:15:24 [W] Jaws.

00:15:32 [W] She's thinking

00:15:39 [W] Okay, I'm gonna press Tab. Personal information. She was on the page.

00:15:43 [W] I'm gonna press tab. Go to that first name field.

00:15:46 [W] I want you to hear what? Listen to what you hear. First name.

00:15:49 [W] Edit the required as pop up. Cvent, type in text.

00:15:52 [W] You hear it said first name.

00:15:54 [W] Edit required.

00:15:55 [W] Required is an attribute that was added to let a Non-sighted user, an assistive technology user, know this field is required. One more thing I want to show you.

00:16:03 [W] I'm gonna hit delete blank.

00:16:05 [W] Okay, now we have a required field that doesn't have a value in it.

00:16:08 [W] The big thing with accessibility is we want the experience. It can never be identical.

00:16:13 [W] we want it to be comparable.

00:16:15 [W] So identical is not possible if my eyes don't work.

00:16:17 [W] If my hands don't work, if my ears don't work, I can't have the identical experience as somebody who's, for example, can see the page, but I want it to be comparable.

00:16:25 [W] So before remember when I clicked on, when I deleted first name and clicked away and I saw that thing that said first name is required.

00:16:30 [W] Listen to what happens when I tab out of the first name field.

00:16:34 [W] This is really cool. Alerts. First name is required.

00:16:38 [W] Last name edit required as pop up Cutchins.

00:16:40 [W] Type in text.

00:16:41 [W] It said first alert, first name is required.

00:16:45 [W] And then it started saying last name edit required Cutchins.

00:16:49 [W] It did that because there's an attribute, an alert added to let users know just like a sighted user can see it.

00:16:56 [W] A non sighted user or braille user or screen reader user would hear hey, wait a minute.

00:17:00 [W] In the prior field you made a mistake.

00:17:02 [W] Now the with and I'll show you one more thing on this page.

00:17:06 [W] After you do submit it would set focus there anyway.

00:17:09 [W] But the nice thing is to give it a comparable, comparable experience.

00:17:13 [W] A sighted user goes, oh, I immediately I made a mistake. I can immediately correct it.

00:17:18 [W] Instead of having to do submit. Now a non sighted user can do that.

00:17:21 [W] Also, just in case they don't, I'm going to go down and click the A button on the bottom page.

00:17:26 [W] I want you to listen to what happens.

00:17:28 [W] Escape virtual profile impacts next button okay I'm going to hit the next button.

00:17:33 [W] Enter first name edit required.

00:17:35 [W] Invalid entry has pop up blank. First name is required.

00:17:38 [W] Type in text.

00:17:39 [W] by the way, at the end it says type in text. That's jaws letting me know that I can type away.

00:17:44 [W] so what this site does is set focus to that field.

00:17:47 [W] So immediately, if there's an error, it sets focus to it. pretty cool.

00:17:53 [W] now I know, I apologize, that's an insane amount of information. In, what, 12 minutes?

00:17:58 [W] way too much to teach about screen readers.

00:18:00 [W] Hopefully it kind of gave you enough of, maybe a basic experience that users with assistive

technology kind of their, their reality when they use them.

00:18:09 [W] One of the websites that you, Craig, made a little, you know, maybe build a little kind of empathy and awareness with the challenges they might face with inaccessible content.

00:18:17 [W] and that is all I have. I want to do a super shameless plug.

00:18:21 [W] We talk about this with Cvent Cvent. Com slash big book.

00:18:24 [W] It's the big book event. Accessibility. We just launched it.

00:18:26 [W] We're doing multiple multiple versions of it. So please download it.

00:18:30 [W] It's free. And, man, I hope you enjoyed this.

00:18:33 [W] And, Josh, back to you. Great. Cvent.

00:18:37 [W] that was awesome.

00:18:38 [W] We really appreciate, that primer on the experience that people who use various technologies have when they are trying to navigate websites, and especially registration pages.

00:18:48 [W] I know it's a big topic of conversation among event planners.

00:18:51 [W] Just a quick note that digital access from a software programming perspective, there are experts who can help you with that.

00:18:56 [W] Like Cvent, you don't have to necessarily become a software programming expert to be able to get through all of that.

00:19:01 [W] There are a lot of people, again, like Cvent and Steven's, who are working diligently on that and who can help you with that.

00:19:06 [W] But please don't forget that as a content creator, most of us are content creators.

00:19:10 [W] Digital access is equally important.

00:19:12 [W] So if you're making word docs, PDFs, Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoints, these are all digital assets that have accessibility guidelines as well.

00:19:21 [W] So again, what would it be like for the person who is using one of these technologies to to navigate through one of those types of content?

00:19:28 [W] But the great, great news is that all of those content creating platforms have built in accessibility checkers now.

00:19:34 [W] So if you have not tried that before, give it a try.

00:19:38 [W] After this webinar. Thank you again, Cvent.

00:19:41 [W] So we're going to move on to the to the panel section.

00:19:44 [W] first I'd like to introduce myself. my name is Joshua Klipp.

00:19:47 [W] I am a short white guy with a big smile.

00:19:50 [W] I used to have hair on the top of my head, but these days I do not.

00:19:53 [W] And instead I am sporting a luscious salt and pepper beard.

00:19:56 [W] as I talk more about myself, feel free to tune me out and put in the chat where you're joining us from.

00:20:01 [W] If you have not already.

00:20:02 [W] And I also encourage you to use the Q&A feature of this webinar freely if possible.

00:20:07 [W] I'm hoping to work in your questions throughout the webinar, as opposed to just waiting to the end.

00:20:11 [W] I am the founder and principal of Made Welcome, which is a consulting firm focused on accessibility at workplaces and events.

00:20:17 [W] I've been a lawyer for 25 years, and when I practiced, I specialize in the ADA.

00:20:22 [W] In 2018, I became a Certified Access Specialist with the California Division of the State Architect, which means I'm certified to evaluate accessibility in the built environment I'm most proud of.

00:20:32 [W] Recently finishing a multi year project with Starbucks to create a nationwide accessibility set of guidelines for all of their stores, which they are now using in coalition with other major retailers.

00:20:42 [W] Relevant to this webinar, I am an instructor for the Events Leadership Institute, and I teach a certification course on event accessibility.

00:20:49 [W] I was originally scheduled to be a panelist on this webinar, but ELI asked me to moderate and I immediately said yes, because as an ally, I believe it is my job to lift up the voices of people with disabilities and the voices of the people who do incredible work in this space.

00:21:04 [W] We've got three panelists today, and what we're going to talk about is essentially a case study.

00:21:09 [W] each of our panelists played an integral role in bringing the 2024 adult and junior division

wheelchair basketball national tournaments to Virginia and specifically to the Richmond area.

00:21:20 [W] I'm going to ask each of the panelists to introduce themselves and in their introductions, give their name a visual description of themselves, where they work.

00:21:30 [W] And one more thing that you may notice that there are no women on today's panel, and there is no way we could even be having this conversation if it weren't for the work of women like Judy Heumann, Alice Wong, Barbara Jordan, and so many more.

00:21:43 [W] So, in addition to introducing themselves, I'd like each panelist to tell us which woman has inspired their work and learning around accessibility.

00:21:53 [W] so let's start with, Brandon.

00:22:02 [W] Brandon, you need to unmute yourself.

00:22:06 [W] There we go. That helps. Right. Thanks. Josh.

00:22:10 [W] Welcome, everyone.

00:22:12 [W] my name is Brandon McBain.

00:22:13 [W] I am the chief operating officer for the National Wheelchair Basketball Association.

00:22:19 [W] I've been on staff with the NWA since 2016, but, been involved in the organization the last 14 years.

00:22:28 [W] spent a lot of time working in various sports organizations.

00:22:34 [W] Minor league sports, NCAA, Major League Baseball and various sporting events.

00:22:41 [W] but I have found my passion in the, Paralympic movement.

00:22:47 [W] When I worked for the Vancouver organizing committee in 2010 for the Vancouver Olympics and Paralympic Winter games, a Bachelor of Science and, a master of education and, definitely just passionate about, moving the needle in Paralympic sport.

00:23:08 [W] So that's a little bit about me professionally, I would say, I'm going to twist your, answer and impact in the I guess, Josh, I would say probably the most influential, person to me in the movement of sport and kind of where I am today, in the, realm of females would be, I have a family friend that was a member of the All American Redheads, which I think a lot of you probably don't know what that is, but it was the first women's, basketball team founded back in 1936.

00:23:50 [W] longest standing, basketball team.

00:23:53 [W] They would actually travel around and compete against, all men's teams.

00:23:59 [W] And it was one of the first, kind of barriers broken down of females playing against, males.

00:24:07 [W] And, they've kind of broken down a lot of barriers and now been recognized for that appropriately most recently, they were, enshrined into the Naismith Hall of Fame in 2012.

00:24:23 [W] But, yeah, I've just seen the opportunities they've created.

00:24:28 [W] And, similar to what we'll talk about in my organization is, coed play in sport is something that is needed at times.

00:24:37 [W] And it was, amazing story of kind of one of the first opportunities where coed play kind of promoted participation.

00:24:46 [W] So that would be someone that I would say is, kind of been impactful and meaningful in my life.

00:24:53 [W] So, yeah, thank you for that. Brandon. I really appreciate that.

00:24:57 [W] Gerald, you want to turn on your camera and let's hear from you.

00:25:06 [W] Good morning, everyone.

00:25:07 [W] Thank you for coming out. so my name is Gerald Taylor.

00:25:10 [W] I'm the sports sales and event manager here at Richmond Region Tourism.

00:25:14 [W] I'm brown skinned, beard, short curly hair, six foot tall.

00:25:21 [W] and then educational wise and background history.

00:25:25 [W] kind of like Brandon.

00:25:27 [W] I worked in multiple aspects of sports. I played baseball myself.

00:25:31 [W] I'm a Division two baseball player.

00:25:33 [W] was a number two pitcher in the conference.

00:25:35 [W] outside of that, I got my undergrad degree in health, physical education and recreation with a concentration in sports management.

00:25:43 [W] And then I got my master's degree in, sports management as well.

00:25:48 [W] following that, I worked with the big 12 conference, doing championship operations, the Atlantic ten conference, doing championship operations.



00:25:55 [W] I've worked with, minor league baseball diversity program.

00:25:59 [W] I've been a part of NASCAR diversity program, where I worked there for three years, two years in Richmond and one year in Daytona.

00:26:06 [W] I've also, what else?

00:26:10 [W] I was a security based company that basically helped funded people for events.

00:26:15 [W] And outside of that, kind of saw this position here at Richmond Region Tourism applied for it.

00:26:23 [W] a lot of my connections helped me get to where I'm at today.

00:26:26 [W] and it'll be three years in April that I've been here.

00:26:29 [W] and then as far as, women empowerment inside of accessibility, and inside of the sports in general, I would say I have two, Dawn Staley at South Carolina just because of what she was able to do for the women's sports.

00:26:44 [W] she changed the narrative from actually being, you know, a great player.

00:26:48 [W] Olympic Hall of Famer.

00:26:50 [W] And then just to become an Olympic coach and a great coach and helped South Carolina. You'll go to back to back national championships.

00:26:58 [W] it can't get no better than that.

00:26:59 [W] And then as far as the industry, I would have to say my boss, Jarena Lee, she's been influential in the movement here in Richmond as far as sports, as far as accessibility, as far as just moving the needle forward for minorities.

00:27:15 [W] she really has done a great job.

00:27:18 [W] And, she's my role model, so.

00:27:22 [W] Thank you. Gerald.

00:27:23 [W] forest.

00:27:27 [W] Good afternoon everyone. My name is Forest Lodge.

00:27:29 [W] I use he him pronouns.

00:27:31 [W] I'm a white male with short brown hair.

00:27:34 [W] I'm about six foot two.

00:27:36 [W] on a good day, and, 32 years old.

00:27:40 [W] sporting a navy blue polo with, the Sportable logo on it.

00:27:44 [W] And Sportable is the nonprofit organization that I work for here in Richmond, Virginia.

00:27:50 [W] I'm the director of strategic partnerships and have been working with Sportable in the adaptive sports industry for over eight and a half years now.

00:27:58 [W] it's basically been my full time, adult career, since I left grad school, which is where I was introduced to, sportable and the adaptive sports world.

00:28:10 [W] I did my undergraduate degree at James Madison University in sport and recreational management and had internships in a variety of, different sport disciplines.

00:28:19 [W] And then I moved on to Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, for my graduate school, in the sport leadership program there.

00:28:27 [W] And, that is where I was introduced to Sportable through some volunteerism and, really fell in love with the mission and the work that they were doing.

00:28:37 [W] And, have stuck with it since I got hired at Sportable in 2016.

00:28:41 [W] So, very happy to, to be on this call with you all, in terms of first, I have to acknowledge the JMU Duke comments in the chat.

00:28:50 [W] So go Dukes, thanks for that.

00:28:52 [W] and, the you know, women in sports, that have inspired me and it's more recent, because of some closeness to Sportable and our mission is, Billie Jean King and the tennis industry and all of her advocacy work and gender equity and sport, across the board and over many years.

00:29:13 [W] And, and we even recently, just had one of our athletes, Hannah Smith from the Sportable organization in Richmond area, that was awarded the Billie Jean King Youth Leadership Award and was honored at the ESPYs.

00:29:24 [W] just a couple of weeks ago out in California.

00:29:26 [W] So, the work that Billie Jean King is doing to increase gender equity in sport and then also to recognize someone from the, Paralympic and adaptive sport space this year for the first time with an athlete so close to, you know, my, you know, journey in the industry, it was really, really special.

00:29:42 [W] So, that's who I would select.

00:29:45 [W] And, yeah, happy to be here. Thank you.

00:29:48 [W] Forrest, we've gotten a request in the chat for our panelists to share their pronouns for us.

00:29:53 [W] You just did that. Thank you for doing that.

00:29:55 [W] Josh, he him, Brandon.

00:29:57 [W] And then Gerald

00:30:03 [W] Gerald Taylor.

00:30:04 [W] He him.

00:30:07 [W] Yeah. Brandon McBain. He.

00:30:09 [W] Him I thought it was showing.

00:30:11 [W] I swear, when you change platforms all the time.

00:30:14 [W] so. All right. Awesome.

00:30:18 [W] So, thank you for those introductions.

00:30:20 [W] I do want to, you know, I I'm a teacher, and so I would be remiss if to not take a first teaching moment.

00:30:25 [W] So you know, we're going to talk about accessibility.

00:30:27 [W] We're all learning here, even the experts. And we all make mistakes.

00:30:31 [W] But the beauty of, you know, those of us who in the United States and are subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act is that it's the only piece of legislation that I am aware of that asks us to make good faith efforts.

00:30:42 [W] It's not asking for perfection, but it doesn't let us off the hook.

00:30:46 [W] it's asking us to operate in good faith.

00:30:48 [W] which is something I think everyone on this call is doing in their life every day.

00:30:53 [W] So with that, I want to start our questions and turn first to Gerald, if you could in 90s or so.

00:31:00 [W] Tell us the origin story on how the 2024 adult and junior division wheelchair basketball national tournaments came to the Richmond area.

00:31:10 [W] Yeah, so I'll try my best to sum it up pretty quick.

00:31:13 [W] so basically how I came to Richmond, force here is working with a, he works with the local group, accessible Group.

00:31:20 [W] for sports, they are called Sportable.

00:31:23 [W] they host a lot of accessible sporting events for the community of Richmond.

00:31:27 [W] Even people on the outside of Richmond, they host many tournaments.

00:31:30 [W] but for us has been going to the NBA games almost every year.

00:31:35 [W] they have a team that plays in it.

00:31:37 [W] And we saw the bid come through, and I talked to Forrest and kind of picked his brain a little bit to see if you think we could land it.

00:31:44 [W] with our new facility coming in play, I think everything kind of aligned together.

00:31:49 [W] and then we took a trip.

00:31:51 [W] I piggybacked with Forrest, went out to Wichita, Kansas.

00:31:55 [W] we saw this sporting event.

00:31:57 [W] talked to Brandon and some of his staff out there. Picked their brains a little bit.

00:32:01 [W] came back, put the bid in, and we were awarded the bid.

00:32:05 [W] but I think a lot of kudos goes to, you know, Forrest and his staff for the great work they do in our community. and then also our staff at Richmond Region Tourism.

00:32:14 [W] our destination sales staff and our accessible, partner that we have named Toni.

00:32:19 [W] she does a lot of great work for us as far as making sure our hotels are Ada accessible, making sure our buildings are accessible, our sporting facilities, even our airports.

00:32:29 [W] So, a lot of work kind of came together and that's how we made it happen.

00:32:34 [W] I think Tony's even on this call. And I just want to shout out that she is awesome.

00:32:38 [W] I think she took my class and I had the joy of of working with her.

00:32:41 [W] in that context, yeah. All right. In the chat.

00:32:45 [W] Go, Tony. Love it. All right. So, Brandon, I'm going to.

00:32:49 [W] I'm going to turn it to you with the next question.

00:32:52 [W] in your work with, you know, NBA, what are you looking for in a host city, maybe kind of focus on your top three, but I'd like to hear whatever it is that you're looking for when you're thinking about

bringing a tournament to a host city

00:33:08 [W] yeah.

00:33:08 [W] First, being a member, driven organization, someone that's going to welcome our members with a first class event in their community.

00:33:19 [W] you know, accommodating, from when they first roll off the plane to when they pull into town.

00:33:28 [W] So, just, being accommodating in that aspect.

00:33:32 [W] And then additionally, just someone that is, willing to put on, you know, an event that will surpass the previous year's experience for our members, whatever that event might be.

00:33:46 [W] we're always trying to improve what we're offering, to our members for experience of our events.

00:33:53 [W] and lastly, either making an impact or creating awareness around adaptive sports or the Paralympic movement. That's something personally to me.

00:34:04 [W] very important.

00:34:06 [W] there's still a lot of work to be done in the Paralympic movement in relation to our counterparts on the Olympic side.

00:34:12 [W] and, and or, create a legacy program of some sort, within that community if they're hosting an event for us, I would like them to connect.

00:34:23 [W] and create maybe programing offered in that community once we're gone.

00:34:27 [W] I don't want to just come host an event and then up, seeing another 6 to 10 years, and maybe that'll be the next time wheelchair basketball would be in that community.

00:34:38 [W] So those are kind of the top three things I'm looking for.

00:34:40 [W] Josh, when we're looking at eventually, you know, host organizations or, local organizing organizations for our events. You know, that's really interesting.

00:34:52 [W] Brandon, I work with so many event professionals, and what's really unique about what you described is that it's not just a, you know, go in, have an event, and then leave.

00:35:00 [W] You're really talking about changing, changing the environment, making an impact on that environment that, is longer lasting and sort of ripples out.

00:35:09 [W] And I really I really appreciate that about what you just shared.

00:35:13 [W] I do have a follow up question.

00:35:15 [W] You know, there's been some, you know, the first thing you mentioned was, you know, rolling off the plane.

00:35:19 [W] And I know that there's been a lot of attention lately on travel, and the use of wheelchairs and traveling specifically around transporting wheelchairs safely.

00:35:28 [W] and, you know, putting accessible restrooms on planes.

00:35:32 [W] Do you have any, any just, you know, 32nd reflection on on what's happening in that area? Yeah.

00:35:41 [W] I would say, we need to do better.

00:35:44 [W] Like the.

00:35:44 [W] That's the layman's, there's definitely, work that needs to be done in that space, and it needs to be done collectively between organizations like myself, host organizations, the airlines, a lot of groups.

00:35:58 [W] we've actually had an athlete of ours on our, men's national team go to speak to Congress about that, even, about, kind of the treatment or, traveling, with a disability.

00:36:14 [W] And so there's just a lot of work that needs to be done in that.

00:36:18 [W] I will say, spinning it back to this event and teeing up maybe Forrest.

00:36:22 [W] there was a lot of great work done with this case study and event.

00:36:26 [W] I think we truly rolled out the red carpet, in, in the sense of when our athletes arrived in Richmond.

00:36:35 [W] and especially with the work done with the airport and the coordinating efforts done by Gerald and Forrest.

00:36:41 [W] So that does teed up nicely. Thank you, Brandon, thank you for sharing that. yeah.

00:36:47 [W] Forrest, next question is for you.

00:36:49 [W] I mean, maybe you'd like to, just sort of tag on to what Brandon just talked about and maybe get into a little bit of the details of how you did that.

00:36:57 [W] and then I think, you know, I'm curious about your relationship with Sportable and the Richmond Regional tourism.

00:37:04 [W] so maybe just those two questions.

00:37:06 [W] And again, you know, let's try to do it in 100 and 20s or less.

00:37:11 [W] Yeah, I'll do my best in some rapid fire form.

00:37:14 [W] So, yeah, being, someone who works, you know, in the adaptive sport space for our organization that has competitive teams that travel to tournaments.

00:37:23 [W] And when you think about, travel and competition and the adaptive sports space, think about like travel or AAU baseball for, you know, the non-disabled sport community, it's like there's not enough competition opportunities within your locale to have, the exact competitive opportunities that you're looking for as an athlete.

00:37:42 [W] And so you travel a lot in the adaptive sports space.

00:37:45 [W] to go to competitions or you host, and, you know, depending on your resources and connections, it might be difficult to host. So you're traveling a lot.

00:37:54 [W] So through experiences with our team members and talking with other tournament coordinators, we got a lot of feedback on the travel experience and kind of what all goes into it.

00:38:05 [W] for travelers with disabilities.

00:38:07 [W] And, started at a very early time once we were awarded the bid, using our connection to Richmond Region tourism and their, contacts at our local airport, the Richmond International Airport.

00:38:18 [W] We started the conversation early as to what they could expect for our event.

00:38:23 [W] And that's, estimated number of teams and individuals traveling with assistive devices, through the airport.

00:38:31 [W] and immediately it became apparent to them that this was going to be, you know, drastically different than a quote unquote normal day at Richmond International Airport. And we had two consecutive weekends for this event.

00:38:43 [W] on back to back weeks.

00:38:44 [W] So it wasn't just, you know, one weekend, it was two back to back weekends where we were focusing on the arrival day and the departure day.

00:38:51 [W] and so, Gerald and I met with the airport probably starting eight months in advance of the event, and continuously started to get more stakeholders from, the various departments of the airport and also managers of the major airlines that were coming into play.

00:39:09 [W] and the ones that were located at the Richmond International Airport and just started to talk through with them about, what to expect and try to process best practices as to how these athletes are traveling, how they like to travel, how they anticipate, what a smooth experience is like, you know, with their travel, especially with, an additional piece of equipment like a sports wheelchair.

00:39:32 [W] and we even set up a form that we sent out to all the teams to, to basically submit their travel itineraries for all of their players.

00:39:43 [W] and what's included in that is if they used a wheelchair as an everyday assistive device, it's like a manual everyday wheelchair, or not.

00:39:52 [W] And or and if they're bringing a sports wheelchair and how many, and then if they also had a disability that impacted them where they would require an aisle chair to get from the gate of the plane down to their seat.

00:40:05 [W] So all of this information was for me to then provide to the airport.

00:40:09 [W] The airline staff, in as much advance notice as possible.

00:40:13 [W] So they had all of the possible information, that they would need to try and execute a smooth transition and experience for these athletes traveling to our city.

00:40:22 [W] All of that is out of my control.

00:40:24 [W] It's out of Gerald's control in terms of what ends up happening.

00:40:27 [W] But, we felt that we did as much as possible.

00:40:31 [W] on the front end to try and mitigate any, you know, issues that could arise.

00:40:37 [W] all that to say, you know, we still had, feedback and experiences that our teams had on their way here, and it wasn't necessarily things that happened in Richmond.

00:40:46 [W] It might have happened in a connection airport and a little bit of miscommunication that may have happened on the airline side, but again, I think, you know, we tried to do as much as we could, with the resources that we had and the context and the people that we were working with to, to set ourselves

up for success in terms of that first and last, experience point that our, attendees and members were having as they came to experience our event.

00:41:13 [W] for us, I'm going to break my own rule, and I'm going to give you more time and ask you a follow up question.

00:41:17 [W] If you had to do it over again, give me like, two things that you would do differently.

00:41:22 [W] start earlier, in terms of trying to get that information.

00:41:26 [W] And I think it was in Brandon, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but, you know, it might have been the first time that, you know, a host organization, went to that extent and collecting all of that information.

00:41:37 [W] So as something that's new to the membership, the participation was maybe like 70% of the, you know, people that flew in.

00:41:45 [W] So that may have impacted our you know, full scope of what was happening.

00:41:49 [W] So I'm hopeful that it's going to be a little bit more participation on that front in terms of submitting that information.

00:41:54 [W] And then, more intentional conversations with the airlines specifically because, ultimately the airport, Richmond International Airport, and the staff was all in from the jump, and they were involved, throughout the entire process where, you know, the earlier meetings, you know, airline participation was minimal.

00:42:15 [W] And then as it got closer and they started to actually pay attention to the numbers and, you know, what was coming in the coming weeks, it was kind of like then they started, you know, presenting in a very like, anxious, you know, sort of demeanor.

00:42:31 [W] And I'm just like, hey, we've been trying to tell you guys, you know, what's coming and and all that kind of stuff.

00:42:35 [W] So I think again, as a first experience for a lot of us here, it was kind of like, oh, okay. Like that's how that went.

00:42:42 [W] And here's some more opportunities for us to to be more successful and, aware of what's coming next year.

00:42:48 [W] And on top of that, we worked with Amazon to help with, sports chair transportation.

00:42:54 [W] they were an amazing partner for us.

00:42:55 [W] So, oftentimes you have to rent vehicles when you're flying, and as a team and as an organization and, you know, you have these additional chairs on top of your everyday assistive devices.

00:43:07 [W] And so as someone who's had to rent extra vehicles just to transport the chairs that sit in the gym for the entire time we're there, but you're paying for that extra rental vehicle.

00:43:17 [W] We partner with Amazon and NBA played a big role in that, with their connection to, to that organization and Amazon shuttle sports chairs from the airport, to the venue.

00:43:27 [W] And then back for departures and really made a huge difference for a lot of those, those teams.

00:43:32 [W] So just thinking outside of the box in ways that we can support and provide a top notch experience, while, you know, keeping their pockets, you know, not as empty.

00:43:44 [W] So was the was the Amazon was that sort of a sponsorship partnership situation? More or less.

00:43:50 [W] I would say like like like an in-kind trade. So, you know, we didn't pay for any of their services.

00:43:55 [W] and we offered them some opportunity to get some, you know, logo placement on our t shirts and on the website and some social media recognition for the work that they were doing.

00:44:03 [W] so not much, you know, cash was traded, but it was certainly an awesome value for us and, and all the members and, they're very efficient in what they, what they do. So it worked out really well.

00:44:15 [W] I really love that for us, because what you're describing is a way of solving multiple things at once.

00:44:20 [W] You know, you're you're you're giving this company an opportunity to essentially a sponsorship in a really unique way and solve for transporting, equipment.

00:44:30 [W] So I think that that's I'm just going to say, I think that's brilliant. Nice job.

00:44:35 [W] I think that answers also in the Q and a, Missy's question about how, how was the transportation addressed?

00:44:42 [W] and then, Jamie Stevens has a question for I'm going to direct this to forest.

00:44:48 [W] What staff role did you seek at?

00:44:51 [W] So who did you talk to at the airport?

00:44:56 [W] yeah.

00:44:57 [W] So it was mainly it was a combination.

00:45:00 [W] There was probably like 3 or 4 different departments that had a representative at most of the meetings.

00:45:05 [W] and I might be blanking on their title just because I, you know, got so close with them over the time and just reference them by name.

00:45:11 [W] But I would imagine it's mostly, operations.

00:45:15 [W] So airport operations, in terms of just someone who is working with all these different stakeholders within the overall facility, including the airlines, it's going to have, you know, a nice communication line to those individuals that will ultimately impact whatever you're trying to, you know, achieve and make, make people aware of what's going to impact your event.

00:45:37 [W] And so operations for sure.

00:45:39 [W] we also worked with the communications and marketing team to, figure out signage and different opportunities for the environment of the airport to feel welcoming for our event specifically.

00:45:51 [W] So getting, marketing materials up on the digital boards and messages that were strategically scheduled during that window of our event, to, be present.

00:46:02 [W] And so when athletes are coming out of security and down to baggage, they're seeing, you know, our event, and the event that they're there for front and center as they're going to get their bags is that first initial experience.

00:46:13 [W] So definitely on the communications and marketing side.

00:46:16 [W] And and they're also helpful, in case anything were to go awry, like that's the those are the people that are going to be communicating to the news or, you know, to the press and, and I'm not going to be at the airport, as you know, someone who's helping coordinate the overall event and so if something were to go down, they would be the, you know, someone to be good to be connected with so that you're kind of in the know and can mitigate any issues where they come up throughout the event.

00:46:43 [W] and then I would say the, the airline, you know, managers, I mean, that's those are the ones who are going to impact, sort of that, flow of people coming in and going out and, and their staff is the ones there that are handling the assistive devices and the sports chairs when they're coming off and going on the planes, it may be a third party vendor, but still, that's more of the airline's responsibility versus the airport.

00:47:07 [W] so getting those stakeholders engaged in the conversations and the planning process was, was very key and certainly something that will be more, even more intentional and making sure that they're aware of our plans and, and the scope of and scale of our event, for next year.

00:47:23 [W] So for us, it sounds like you started with the operations folks.

00:47:26 [W] And then effectively that kind of, it went along a sort of a user journey.

00:47:32 [W] What's it going to be like for somebody who lands, who's trying to navigate through the airport, who's trying to get to their destination?

00:47:38 [W] one of our administrators has been throwing some questions, in, in directly to me.

00:47:44 [W] that came in through the registration process.

00:47:46 [W] And so I also wanted to kind of throw those in as we go along to make sure that, you have shown up, get some of your questions answered.

00:47:53 [W] And the first one I've got is how to somebody interested in learning how to make events accessible while controlling costs.

00:47:59 [W] this is probably the number one question that I get.

00:48:03 [W] as, as an instructor for the certification course with ELI.

00:48:07 [W] And my answer is my my first piece of advice is to get proactive about it.

00:48:12 [W] So the more proactive you are about implementing accessibility, then the less you're going to be looking at the back end on on costs.

00:48:19 [W] So for instance, something that costs nothing is to develop, you know, develop an internal training on how to recognize and respond to a request for accommodation.

00:48:29 [W] disability etiquette, setting up how to set up chairs in a way that is accessible.

00:48:35 [W] things like that.

00:48:35 [W] So just effectively setting up your event, to, to maximize accessibility is a is a number one

way, in my opinion.

00:48:45 [W] to reduce costs. All right.

00:48:47 [W] We have not heard from Gerald in a while.

00:48:49 [W] So I want to throw a question to Gerald and what I'd like to hear from you, Gerald, is if you could, just sort of describe briefly the economic impact of having this event, in the Richmond region.

00:49:03 [W] so outside of, I mean, like, our overall goal is, is, you know, to get heads in beds to have a strong economic impact, to bring money into our region and stuff like that.

00:49:15 [W] but I think as far as this event, like it was a great economic impact for us.

00:49:19 [W] But outside of just the funding aspect, it was the community engagement of it, like we did many different aspects to get our community involved, not just with, the Sportable group, but we use like, visible training to get our front line hotel staff and our airport staff kind of on the know of what's like, hey, this is how this needs to be done, or these certain words that you can use or if they don't ask for help, don't help until they ask.

00:49:45 [W] Like different things like that, different trainings that kind of keep them ahead of the game.

00:49:49 [W] As far as mentioned earlier, and then we also use that same group to facilitate a hospitality training, the week of the event where it was, sportable myself, visible and, six wheels consulting, all of us sat on a board panel and we kind of talked to different hoteliers and kind of mentioned the same thing about like, hey, these are things that you should look for.

00:50:14 [W] These are things that are going to happen. These are ways you can help.

00:50:17 [W] These are ways you shouldn't help.

00:50:19 [W] and then Tony had a big part in, bringing a guy named John Morrison.

00:50:25 [W] He came in and basically did, like, a, a travel blog, and that travel blog was basically the most accessible places in Richmond for people.

00:50:34 [W] and we kind of used that to give to some of the participants that came so they know where exactly to go, what places were very acceptable.

00:50:41 [W] And so it kind of created a more community environment for us as a whole.

00:50:47 [W] and it kind of piggybacks to, you know, all of the work that Sportable does on their side, and us to bring this event in just kind of help elevate it.

00:50:55 [W] Our whole community outside of just the funding and all of that standpoint, it was more of a togetherness to show that Richmond is, you know, a good destination for accessible and adaptive sports.

00:51:08 [W] I am a big fan of training, and I'm so glad that, Gerald, that you did that and that Tony was part of that and that you brought in some experts, to help you do that.

00:51:17 [W] We did have a question in the Q&A, which I think you may have answered, but I'm going to ask it anyway, just in case.

00:51:23 [W] Did you provide the airport staff with training on accessibility sensitivity?

00:51:29 [W] Yes, sir. So we did it both ways.

00:51:31 [W] Like, like as mentioned earlier, when we had those meetings with some of the airlines and some of the operational staff, we kind of talked to them on, on our experience from going to these, going to these events.

00:51:43 [W] So, like what we experienced in the airport, what we saw work, what we saw didn't work different ways that kind of maneuver around that we think will help them.

00:51:51 [W] But then not only our airport has some experience, if I'm not mistaken, for us, it was like 2010.

00:51:57 [W] a event came in similar to NBA, where our airport had some kind of experience with it, but it was just a little different feel to it.

00:52:06 [W] So, they kind of already had some experience.

00:52:08 [W] We just kind of helped enlighten them a little more from a different perspective.

00:52:12 [W] And then outside of that, like, I mentioned, the hotel training and also stuff that we did with visible, week of event and then the prior to just sending out links and things like that.

00:52:22 [W] So that's awesome.

00:52:25 [W] I want to point out that, Forrest has put a couple of links in the chat, wheelchair travel org slash Richmond and another one slash Richmond slash attractions.

00:52:36 [W] I, you know, I have to say, just personal anecdote. I was watching the Olympics last night. I mean, who wasn't?

00:52:42 [W] That was just historic with Simone Biles.

00:52:45 [W] and but one of the ads that I saw was for travel website and the in the commercial, they had this little simulated chat where somebody asked, Is the Rome Coliseum tour wheelchair friendly?

00:52:59 [W] And that was the first time that I had seen something like that on just sort of a general travel website.

00:53:04 [W] But this is really this is catching on, folks.

00:53:07 [W] And what's really awesome about, you know, going back to what Brandon said, this wasn't just about doing a single event.

00:53:13 [W] This was really about changing the entire culture of accessibility in the Richmond region.

00:53:16 [W] And, you know, forest links in the chat are sort of proof of that, that this is not just an event.

00:53:22 [W] This is really a culture shift.

00:53:25 [W] And, or as they, as the kids say these days, a vibe.

00:53:29 [W] so thank you for laughing at that, fellow panelists.

00:53:34 [W] I would love to hear from Brandon if you could just give us, you know, again, we're going to get to that 90s or less, because we're hitting close to 10:00.

00:53:41 [W] I believe this goes till 1015.

00:53:43 [W] so we've got a little more time, but I would love to hear if you could just speak briefly to overall, the economic impact of accessibility in events and sort of what are we talking about here in terms of market?

00:53:58 [W] Yeah.

00:53:59 [W] well, I would say, you know, for these events, particular, I know heads and beds is the primary thing.

00:54:08 [W] So, looking at 3 to 4 competition days based on how we frame the event.

00:54:15 [W] so 3 to 5 bed nights and each of the weekends, we had, 52, 48 teams.

00:54:24 [W] So we had about a thousand athletes, roughly over the course of the weekends.

00:54:29 [W] And then, you know, one weekend we probably had 1 to 1 ratio on athlete to fan.

00:54:37 [W] And the juniors weekend, we probably had a 3 to 1 fan to athlete ratio.

00:54:42 [W] So, for those that are on here looking at that side of the coin of like, hey, I understand that trying to drive sales when they host events and they need to, you know, drive services and whatnot.

00:54:57 [W] but kind of flip your, answer a little another impact in the community.

00:55:04 [W] will also be the way you're looking at facilities and how you're building facilities.

00:55:10 [W] I know Forrest hit on it a little bit, but they did a great work with, six wheelchairs, consulting, and actually did a, facility assessment on accessibility of that facility.

00:55:24 [W] And that's super critical when you're talking about impacting your community as as you build these facilities, you need to look at them with a different lens.

00:55:32 [W] Like when I go into a facility, I'm looking at number of curb cuts with the doorways, all of these different things that a lot of people don't look at when they're looking at facilities.

00:55:44 [W] and unfortunately, once a brick and mortar facility has been built, there's a lot of times, unfortunately, you can't adapt or modify it.

00:55:51 [W] So, when you talk economic impact, I say like literally brick and mortar impact, like how you are.

00:55:59 [W] designing and featuring facilities.

00:56:03 [W] What kind of parking availability and accessible parking you have available.

00:56:07 [W] You know, all of these things are super critical when you're designing or, you know about new facilities in your community coming up, make sure they're thinking about those things because they might be limiting the type of events they could host.

00:56:21 [W] So yeah, and what's really great about that too, Brandon.

00:56:26 [W] And one of the one of the things that I'm a, I, I just can't stop talking about is that accessibility when you build for accessibility, you're really building to welcome exponentially more people because there are permanent disabilities, but there are also a temporary people can have temporary disabilities, and people can also just have situations where they're, for whatever reason, unable to hear something or unable to see something.

00:56:47 [W] And so when you build for people with disabilities, you're actually welcoming exponentially more people into those facilities.

00:56:55 [W] We do have a question in the Q&A. Well, I'm going to go through these.

00:57:00 [W] So, Missy asks, was that John with wheelchair Travel Blog? I don't know the answer to that.



00:57:05 [W] Does anyone on the panel know the answer to that? Yeah.

00:57:08 [W] So the links that I shared, wheelchair travel org was what Gerald was referencing from the individual John Morrison that came in, a couple months before the national tournament.

00:57:18 [W] And he does a pretty popular, blog where he travels quite a bit, as a power wheelchair user and, writes a blog based on his experiences with things like restaurants and attractions sporting events, public transportation user or Uber and Lyft experiences in certain cities and kind of, blogs all about that.

00:57:40 [W] And so it was really cool to be able to spend time with him and pick his brain.

00:57:43 [W] He also had a lot of great connections to, airline, accessibility services contacts, across the major airlines that we may be calling upon more again, intently in 2025.

00:57:56 [W] and I believe he's actually in Paris for the Olympics and maybe the Paralympics as well.

00:58:01 [W] And so I'm sure there'll be a blog about the accessibility experience of the the Paris Games, that's going on right now too.

00:58:08 [W] So great.

00:58:11 [W] I strongly recommend everyone on this call after you're on this webinar, after you get off this webinar, look up blogs like that and subscribe to them because there's nothing like learning a, you know, firsthand, that there's no substitute for that.

00:58:23 [W] okay. Next question. I'm going to throw this to Gerald.

00:58:26 [W] from Shayna. Shayna asks.

00:58:28 [W] I recently hosted an event and there were more requests for accessible guest rooms than the hotel had. How do you plan better for that?

00:58:35 [W] How do you figure out what to do?

00:58:36 [W] if you're in that situation?

00:58:40 [W] I would say basically try to get as many, you know, contacts with all of the local hotels surrounding that facility. Right?

00:58:49 [W] So if you're looking at hosting it at, you know, one hotel, if you could find another one that's within that, you know, district or like close proximity, try to use two.

00:59:00 [W] But if you can't use two, maybe get the, impact report from the event.

00:59:05 [W] So show like how meaningful the event is to your area.

00:59:08 [W] Like how many people came in town, the restaurants and things they went to, the money they spent, like, all of that stuff makes an impact.

00:59:16 [W] And what what you're trying to you can share that with a hotel and say, hey, look, we need more accessible hotel rooms because we bring in people that spends money in our area.

00:59:27 [W] They want to come, they want to visit.

00:59:28 [W] They love it here. It'll help move the conversation forward.

00:59:33 [W] And I think people will, you know, check that box off and say, hey, look, let's let's go ahead. Let's build more.

00:59:39 [W] Ada accessible hotels.

00:59:41 [W] and get those rooms moving more.

00:59:42 [W] So yeah, I would add to that too, that not all, not all rooms that are designated accessible are alike.

00:59:50 [W] you know, some are built for people who have disabilities related to vision and hearing.

00:59:55 [W] Some are specifically related, built for people who have a mobility related disabilities.

01:00:00 [W] So when you're working with your, your hotels and you say, we need this many accessible rooms, you know, say we need 50 accessible rooms and they say, sorry, we only have 40.

01:00:08 [W] You can drill down into that a little bit, drill down into exactly what types of accommodations do your guests need?

01:00:15 [W] Because not all accessible rooms.

01:00:17 [W] just saying that a room is accessible does not mean, you know, accessible to.

01:00:22 [W] You can break it down a little bit, is what I'm trying to say.

01:00:24 [W] So you can you can sort of drill down into that a little bit.

01:00:28 [W] we got a couple more questions here.

01:00:30 [W] any advice on how to market to communities that don't currently come to an event because they don't know that the event has a lot of accessibility accommodations? I'll take that.

01:00:40 [W] it's all about, you know, personally, I think it's all about the communications.

01:00:43 [W] Are you putting a a thorough FAQ on your website?

01:00:47 [W] Are you, describing what is accessible, what accessibility features will be part of your event?

01:00:53 [W] Are you including those in your pre-event communications?

01:00:57 [W] what does it look like on your registration form?

01:01:00 [W] The more that you are showing that you pay attention to this and that you are aware of this and that you are really highlighting this, the more people are going to feel that, that they can they can come to your event and be welcomed and fully engaged.

01:01:13 [W] are any, organizations facing issues with the current Dei backlash?

01:01:21 [W] I know I'm that's that's a very big question.

01:01:27 [W] what I'm going to say, what I'll just say is that, you know, that there's dei woke.

01:01:34 [W] We've given all of the, you know, somehow these have become, you know, loaded terms.

01:01:41 [W] I just look at this as making people feel welcome wherever, wherever we're coming from.

01:01:46 [W] and, you know, so I just basically, I just try to tune that out because we're dealing with human beings, and that's that's what this is.

01:01:56 [W] then we have a very specific question.

01:01:59 [W] Our refrigerator and microwave considered Ada requirements for the hotels.

01:02:03 [W] what I will I will kind of answer that generally, which is to say that if you have, those if those are features in every hotel room, then they need to also be part of an accessible room. All right.

01:02:17 [W] Just because it's an accessible room doesn't mean it should have fewer features.

01:02:20 [W] And if it is, a feature of all hotel rooms, then in the accessible room, especially around mobility, it should be within the appropriate, reach ranges.

01:02:30 [W] So with that, we're getting close to 1004, and I have some questions. Let me just pull up my questions that I want to ask.

01:02:38 [W] Okay.

01:02:40 [W] lightning round I want to ask each of our panelists, for your top three event accessibility tips.

01:02:51 [W] And I'm going to start, so that you have time to think about it.

01:02:56 [W] If you haven't yet.

01:02:57 [W] the first is creating a designated quiet area.

01:03:01 [W] You know, we take a look around in our world, and there's just massive sensory overload.

01:03:06 [W] And we have to imagine how this is for people who already have sensory needs.

01:03:09 [W] So I strongly recommend creating a comfortable, quiet zone.

01:03:13 [W] because again, this is going to benefit everyone, but is especially critical for people with sensory needs.

01:03:18 [W] The second tip is this is kind of a new one that I'm hearing from folks, and I really like it, which is including offer, offer mocktails.

01:03:27 [W] If any part of your event includes cocktails, then also include mocktails because when you do this, you're offering people who are in recovery something other than soda water or juice, and you support them in their sobriety journey, which in turn makes them feel more welcome at your gathering.

01:03:44 [W] and then the last piece of advice I have is to ramp every stage, every time I say this in front of a live audience, I hear at least sort of one audible gasp.

01:03:54 [W] so I'm just going to have you do a quick thought exercise and flip the script.

01:03:58 [W] What if everyone who went up on a stage had to use a lift?

01:04:02 [W] I can guarantee you that they would probably get pretty annoyed because it takes more time.

01:04:06 [W] It is not elegant and it kind of makes you feel put on the spot.

01:04:09 [W] So the next time somebody says, well, we'll just put a lift on the stage, ask why not a ramp?

01:04:14 [W] And if the answer is that the room is too small to accommodate a ramp, then perhaps ask if the room needs a stage at all.

01:04:21 [W] All right.

01:04:22 [W] Brandon, top three tips.

01:04:27 [W] Oh, man.

01:04:30 [W] I think facility assessments are like, necessary.

01:04:34 [W] not only for the venue use, but the hotels.

01:04:37 [W] I know you were talking earlier about hotels, like bathroom configurations. Like the number one thing.

01:04:44 [W] like, what does the shower lip look like?

01:04:46 [W] Does a door swing into the restroom? Like, all these things are small things.

01:04:50 [W] So, like having someone on a chair or just jump in the seat, a chair and wheel around that room?

01:04:57 [W] and I think that's super critical to understand is this hotel or is this property going to fit the needs of my, attendees?

01:05:06 [W] so facility assessments for sure.

01:05:09 [W] another one.

01:05:11 [W] Honestly, I know this like, but having a having a partner like Sportable and visit Richmond, having someone that's, willing to lean in and kind of go the extra mile on those small things where it's going to provide a level of service that maybe sometimes isn't there.

01:05:30 [W] for our events, I mean, a lot of times, there's just things that others aren't thinking about or considerate of.

01:05:38 [W] So having a someone within that community that are really mindful and thoughtful about the experience.

01:05:45 [W] Sportable, who has programing in that community?

01:05:49 [W] there's a Richmond who is obviously want to showcasing their community as very accessible.

01:05:54 [W] So having good partners, super critical and being mindful of what that experience, and last tip, I mean, I think I just would say always, learning from others.

01:06:09 [W] I think one thing that we did great with this event, both Gerald and Forest were willing to come out the year prior, learn what this event was hosted in the prior year.

01:06:20 [W] learn what we shouldn't be doing and what we should be doing.

01:06:24 [W] and so super critical.

01:06:27 [W] You always can learn from others, either positive things that you don't recreate the wheel, but then also learn from their own doing.

01:06:33 [W] So yeah, I would say those are kind of some of the tips. Awesome. Thank you. Brandon.

01:06:40 [W] just note to all the attendees I've invited you to add your own tips in the chat, so that everyone has the benefit of our collective wisdom.

01:06:47 [W] Gerald, top

01:06:48 [W] three.

01:06:51 [W] my top three, I would say, especially from the tourism standpoint, accessible restaurants.

01:06:57 [W] Like, making sure that is perfect for, you know, everybody to attend, everybody to feel welcome.

01:07:04 [W] I saw one person mention like, the, the food being able to have, you know, if it was, say, like a buffet or anything like that, like the counter space is, is accessible, people can reach and grab it.

01:07:16 [W] so so that's one, he mentioned, the facility aspect of it.

01:07:21 [W] I think that's another big one, making sure all of your facilities are accessible.

01:07:25 [W] and then the last one I would say for us, I would say like the, the airport aspect, like making sure that's really down to a T, people can really move around and function inside of an airport, with no issues with, with minimal help.

01:07:41 [W] I would say those are our three biggest from the tourism standpoint. Great. Thank you Gerald.

01:07:47 [W] for us top three. Yeah.

01:07:50 [W] The benefit of going last, a lot of the guys have taken most of mine, but, kind of getting a little bit more specific, specifically on the facility side, as someone who's non-disabled, I, we always look to our community that we serve and who we're planning to serve in this event to, provide their feedback and experience, whether it is something like a facility audit.

01:08:12 [W] I'm not going to have the same experience walking through.

01:08:15 [W] I can use my experience in working in this industry as best as I can to, you know, a facility's accessibility.

01:08:24 [W] But it's, extremely different and more effective to have the, you know, community that we're serving in these events, that we're trying to accommodate, to go through and be a part of that process and whether that's, physical structure or overall experience, expectations, wishes, what they want to see at these events.

01:08:43 [W] all of that, coming from the people that we're trying to serve, is kind of what we, took in our approach to helping plan as best as we could for this event.

01:08:52 [W] So I think that's like paramount across the board.

01:08:55 [W] and really helped us kind of provide what we think is one of the best national championship experiences, in the org's history. And that's very biased.

01:09:05 [W] But we heard we heard a lot of great feedback and, are excited about it. I'm not going to go into more detail.

01:09:12 [W] I know we have limited time.

01:09:13 [W] So I just think that that piece, in terms of the end user and the community that you're trying to serve, having, involvement, whether it's in the planning committee or in certain aspects that you're trying to evaluate, for that, that community, you're trying to serve, to have them involved in that.

01:09:27 [W] evaluation and assessment process is very key. Awesome. Thank you. For us.

01:09:34 [W] And also thank you for everyone who's putting your, your own nuggets of wisdom into the chat. I really appreciate that. We've got three minutes left.

01:09:40 [W] Lightning round.

01:09:41 [W] I don't know about all of you, but I love the Olympics.

01:09:44 [W] It is the greatest reality drama television that there is.

01:09:48 [W] I am glued to it every four years.

01:09:50 [W] And right after the Paris Olympics come the Paris Paralympics.

01:09:53 [W] Those are starting, I believe, at the end of August.

01:09:55 [W] So, lightning round, I want to hear from each of you what you are most excited about and what to look for at the Paralympics. we'll go. Brandon.

01:10:03 [W] Gerald Forrest.

01:10:07 [W] us men and us women.

01:10:09 [W] Wheelchair basketball teams both going for a repeat or three peat on the podium.

01:10:15 [W] So men have back to back gold medals.

01:10:17 [W] Women have gold and bronze. So.

01:10:20 [W] And we both looked both teams looked strong and top favorites.

01:10:25 [W] So go team USA.

01:10:28 [W] Yeah Gerald I would say like Brandon mentioned, it was for me going out to Wichita to see some of the you know, best of the best Olympians play.

01:10:38 [W] And then actually having them come to Richmond and compete.

01:10:41 [W] was a was a joy to me.

01:10:43 [W] So I'm looking to see some of those same people compete on that big stage.

01:10:47 [W] and rooting for them from from the couch.

01:10:51 [W] Awesome. Forest. Yeah.

01:10:55 [W] It's not an exciting or different answer because of, obviously our strong connection to the wheelchair basketball community.

01:11:01 [W] we actually have, Paralympian Trevon Jenifer, who's based in the D.C. area, coming down to Richmond this weekend to be our special guest camp counselor at our youth wheelchair basketball camp for about 30 plus junior wheelchair basketball players.

01:11:16 [W] And this is his second or third summer in a row coming down and kind of lending his talents and his, status as a player.

01:11:24 [W] just one month prior to getting on the plane and going over to compete in one of the biggest competitions of his life, it's it's really awesome to be that close and connected, to these high level athletes.

01:11:35 [W] So certainly rooting on the folks that we're close with, and I'm interested in just being exposed to all the other sports that we may not do or offer here at Sportable and kind of see what's out there and what might be possible.

01:11:47 [W] in terms of what we can offer our community next, with any sports in the Paralympics that we may not be offering here in Richmond. So I'm excited about it all.

01:11:56 [W] So, everyone, please, check out the Paralympics coming up at the end of August.

01:12:02 [W] I'm personally so stoked about it. I can't wait to watch that.

01:12:06 [W] I'm just a big fan of, like, the stories and the drama and just, I just sit there and get so excited about it all.

01:12:12 [W] I want to wrap this up by giving a special thank you again.

01:12:16 [W] to the Richmond region tourism.

01:12:19 [W] I want to thank, Cvent at Cvent forest exportable.

01:12:23 [W] Brandon at the National Wheelchair Basketball Association.

01:12:27 [W] And I also want to give a big thank you to PCMA and the Event Leadership Institute for continuing to make us curious and bring these wonderful panels together and help us to go out there and make this world and our events, a better and more welcoming place for everybody. thank you everyone.

01:12:43 [W] And, we'll see you out there.