

Independent Perspective #1929

WNYIL's Community Accessibility Program with Yoojin Kim

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:05 Speaker 1

I'm your host, Tracy LeBlanc, Chief Community Engagement Officer at Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:12 Speaker 1

WNYIL's focus on community accessibility for people with disabilities has recently been expanded to include a newly created position to assist the community with increasing physical and programmatic accessibility to local events, locations, and services,

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as well as to educate them about accessibility issues for people with disabilities.

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Joining us today to talk about community accessibility is WNYIL's Community Accessibility Specialist, Yoojin Kim.

00:00:41 Speaker 1

Welcome to the program, Yoojin.

00:00:44 Speaker 2

Hi, thank you for having me.

00:00:45 Speaker 1

Yoojin, can you provide us with a brief overview of what community accessibility means for people with disabilities?

00:00:53 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:00:54 Speaker 2

So basically, for able-bodied people, participating in community events is often a pretty simple question, right?

00:01:02 Speaker 2

You go, okay, when is this happening?

00:01:04 Speaker 2

Do I have time to go?

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And you go, all right, cool.

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Those two things are squared away.

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I'm going to just drive to the event.

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I'm going to have fun.

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For people with disabilities, that question is actually much more complicated.

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And for multiple reasons, right?

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So, there's a question of like, how will I get there?

00:01:22 Speaker 2

When I get there, what things will be accessible?

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Will I have access to certain features that I need?

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When is this event happening?

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And all those things are kind of determined by outside factors that might be availability of public transportation that day.

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It could also be the availability of accessible parking;

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other things like accessible bathrooms.

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It could also be a question of will there be an ASL interpreter?

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Will I be able to way find?

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How will I get around the place?

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All of those questions, and there are many, many more questions than just that, but as a brief overview, all of those questions kind of lead into some of the challenges for people with disabilities when it comes to participating in community events.

00:02:10 Speaker 1

Can you describe what your role as a community accessibility specialist entails?

00:02:15 Speaker 2

Yes, so my role at WNYIL is essentially all of those questions that we just kind of briefly went over.

00:02:24 Speaker 2

I'm synthesizing all that information, providing answers to businesses to say, these are the kinds of things that we need to talk about, that we need to plan for in order to maximize the ability for people to come to your events and to come to your business.

00:02:40 Speaker 1

How can this position help businesses and organizations in Western New York to be more accessible to people with disabilities?

00:02:47 Speaker 2

I would say one of the greatest challenges for businesses and events when it comes to event planning or how they want to structure their business is that there's sometimes a disconnect between like their level of understanding of what needs to be done, what needs to be modified, and their understanding of how complex it is, right?

00:03:08 Speaker 2

So, it kind of becomes an issue where it's just like, oh, well, I don't know how to fix this.

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Therefore, maybe it's not worth the time.

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Maybe it's just too much effort.

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I shouldn't have to.

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And that kind of leads to this ongoing issue where we have businesses going, yeah, I know we're not fully accessible, but...

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And for my role at WNYIL as the community accessibility specialist, I'm the person that can kind of go to people running events, running local businesses and go, hey, so these are the things that we need to address.

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And here are some methods that you could follow to actually implement some changes.

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And no, they're not going to cost you an arm and a leg.

00:03:52 Speaker 2

However, over time, these are how we want to structure these changes.

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Great.

00:03:56 Speaker 1

If someone is interested in learning more about community accessibility, how can they get started?

00:04:01 Speaker 2

The quick answer would be, you are always welcome to contact me, my number is 716-836-0822, extension 103.

00:04:11 Speaker 2

But generally, when it comes to community accessibility, we are often going beyond what's in the ADA and talking about what are some other needs beyond just minimum compliance, right?

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So really kind of getting connected with the disability community

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and understanding some of the barriers that they are dealing with and kind of figuring out ways to address those barriers and mitigate them so that more people can participate.

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It's really a...

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a feat of active listening and really seeking out opinions and wanting to make changes and not really looking for ways to be like, oh, well, we've met our ADA requirements.

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We're good.

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We have nothing else to add.

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Being open-minded in that regard.

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That's all the time we have for this week.

00:04:55 Speaker 1

Thanks for joining us, Yoojin.

00:04:57 Speaker 2

Thank you.

00:04:58 Speaker 1

You have been listening to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:05:04 Speaker 1

Our guest today was WNYIL's Community Accessibility Specialist Yoojin Kim, and I have been your host, Tracy LeBlanc.