

AT Banter Podcast Episode 236 - Canadian Helen Keller Centre...

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SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Laura Hayden, Ryan Fleury



R Rob Mineault 00:43

Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter



R Ryan Fleury 00:49

banter, banter.



R Rob Mineault 00:52

Hey, my name is Rob Mineault. And joining me today the lovely the talented, the one the only. Mr. Ryan Fleury.



R Ryan Fleury 01:03

I am Ryan Fleury.

R

Rob Mineault 01:07

That's the spirit. Yeah, that's right. And you are the one and only because no Steve Barclay this week.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:14

No, he's busy.

R

Rob Mineault 01:15

He's busy saving the world.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:18

Well, I don't know about that.

R

Rob Mineault 01:19

Well ..

R

Ryan Fleury 01:21

But he could be. I don't know. I've been wrong before.

R

Rob Mineault 01:23

He could have a secret identity. Who knows what happens at the Berkeley household on a Saturday night?

R

Ryan Fleury 01:34

That's right. Out come the superhero costumes.

R

Rob Mineault 01:37

Ah, how the hell are you?

R

Ryan Fleury 01:42

Good. All right.

R

Rob Mineault 01:44

Yeah, well, good. That's good. I don't know. I'm a little deflated this week.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:48

Why?

R

Rob Mineault 01:50

Just 2021 isn't really being much better behaved than 2020. There's just a lot of bad news floating around.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:58

Absolutely. Yeah. Good times.

R

Rob Mineault 02:02

No, no. But hey, but let's not dwell on that. Because this is not the bad news show.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:09

That's right.

R

Rob Mineault 02:11

Before we go any further, why don't we tell people what we're doing today?

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Ryan Fleury 02:15

So today from the Canadian Helen Keller Center, joining us is Laura Hayden. Who is the Consumer Programs Coordinator.

R

Rob Mineault 02:22

Cool. Yeah. I've been curious about this organization for a while. So I'm kind of glad that

we that we finally got them on because I don't next to nothing about what they do. So it'll be a good episode. We're gonna do some learning today.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:37

That's right. So what we're all about.

R

Rob Mineault 02:38

That's right. Hey, you know, speaking of good news, Hey, did you know that HBO Max is beginning to roll out audio descriptions on their new streaming service?

R

Ryan Fleury 02:52

I saw that again, I think it was thanks to litigation, was it not?

R

Rob Mineault 02:57

Well, yeah, we're jumping ahead. Way to ruin it. Spoiler alert. Spoilers. They did it because they were getting sued.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:08

If that's what it takes?

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Rob Mineault 03:10

Well, you know, and this goes back to that, that, you know, we've said it before, sometimes that is exactly what it takes. Um, in any case, this is good news. Because now select titles on HBO, Max do have audio descriptions. So what are the numbers? That's what you're maybe asking. So the agreement calls for at least 1500 hours of describe content as of the end of March. So that's a done deal already. And they're also saying that they will increase that to 6000 hours by the end of March 2023. So in two years.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:47

Yeah. Be curious to know if there's numbers out there for Amazon Prime video and Netflix to find out how many hours they actually provide now, because if you think about it, 6000 doesn't really seem like a lot when you consider the amount of content that's out there.

R

Rob Mineault 04:02

Yeah, well, it's true. We've along it, we have Yeah, we have a long way to go before we you know, get to where we should be, which is, you know, 100% but, you know, it's we're making some progress, and HBO max. I mean, it's a it's a relatively new streaming service. So the fact that that they already have 1500 hours at this point, and they're looking to triple that new within two years. I think that's a good sign. Now, as you alluded to earlier, this all came about as this all came about, because of a lawsuit that was brought up against them through various different advocacy groups down in the States, including our good friends at the American Council of the Blind, among others, so you know, I, I guess the cynic in us would have to say that you know, this is all comes about because of lawsuits. But again, this is this is why accessibility lawsuits are important. You know, just just the threat of litigation was enough to make these guys, you know, do some pretty, pretty serious movement on this. So, you know, that's what the courts are for.

R

Ryan Fleury 05:18

Well, I wonder what the additional costs are to obtain that descriptive audio track, you know, if they've already got the movie, and now they're adding the tracks? Was that a separate licensing costs? If so, you know, was that one of the barriers to them providing the service?

R

Rob Mineault 05:36

Yeah, it would be interesting. I would like I would love to hear the you know, sort of the real the deep, deep dive into the the ins and the outs of audio description. And just, you know, why it why it isn't ubiquitous at this point? Why everybody just doesn't do 100%. All across the board. I mean, obviously, that there's some, there's some costs involved in it's, you know, it's a process.

R

Ryan Fleury 05:59

Well, we have a show coming up in the near future that I think we're going to talk a little bit more about audio description, and human narrated, or synthesized speech, which we're hearing more about on TV programs. So stay tuned for more.

R

Rob Mineault 06:16

Oh, okay. So I have I have something else interesting to talk to you about. Yeah, so this is, this is something else that I noticed this morning, when I was looking around. I was very

excited to see here locally, there's a city here close to Vancouver called Chilliwack. I was really excited to see they made a bit of a splash here in the local media, about how they were really leaning into the idea of diversity and inclusion. And they had given their city's website, a complete overhaul and made it really, really incredibly accessible, you could alter the website, depending on whether or not you wanted it to be enhanced the the colors on it to make it more friendly for people with cognitive disabilities, or fewer distractions, if you had ADHD. For blind people, there was a screen reader mode, there was a keyboard navigation mode. And you know, and it was, you could just sort of change all these things on the fly. And so I went to the site, and I started to play around with it. And actually, Ryan, I sent it to you. And the first thing that you notice, you're like, Hey, this is powered by Accessibee.

R

Ryan Fleury 07:36

Right? For those who don't know, Accessibee is an overlay that a company or organization can add a line of code to their website, and Voila! Supposedly your site is now accessible, all that sort of web accessibility meeting guidelines stuff. There is quite a bit of pushback right now, Accessibee is not the only company doing this, but they seem to be the one that's in the forefront of the assistive technology field and assistive technology trainers, you know, some of the podcasts that I've listened to really good one was done by Jonathan Mosen, who had some assistive technologists on his podcast, and it wasn't a "Let's attack Accessibee", but what were the pros and cons of an accessible overlay. You know, a lot of people are thinking or saying that this is snake oil, you know, can one line of code and AI actually make your website compliant? You know, I highly suggest listening to Jonathan's podcast, and we'll link to it in the show notes. This goes out of their way you can form your own opinion, you know, I definitely do your research. But it's gonna be interesting to watch this and see what happens.

R

Rob Mineault 08:56

I did a little bit of digging to here before the show and access to be actually has a few lawsuits. And and most of them are around this, this screen reader portion of it. And from what I'm taking from this is that really this the problem, the problematic part of Accessibee is their screen reader mode, all these other modes that are for lift things like low vision or you know, cognitive impairments, all that stuff is is fine. And and it actually is pretty cool. Like with using that, that that widget. You can do things like you can make the colors brighter or dimmer or turn it monochrome or turn a dark mode or turn a light mode. All that stuff is is no problem. I think that part of this is that they did not bake the screen reader part of this enough. And that's because screen readers, honestly it's complicated. It's they're extremely complicated. And so to just sort of try to to roll that in

To all these other accessibility features that Accessibee offers, may have been a mistake. Now, the lawsuits also do sort of mentioned some maybe questionable marketing techniques on behalf of Accessibee like things like, you know, they'll, if you sign up with Accessibee and put it on your website, they'll give you like a little badge that says, hey, this site is ADA compliant. And of course, it's actually it's not, well, ADA doesn't actually have anything to do with websites like so you're not actually at like, it has nothing to do with with that. So it's a little bit of just, you know, marketing. So it is a tough one, because then you know, on the one hand, I feel like you, we want to give companies, organizations, city websites, the ability to easily make their websites more accessible. And for them, if they can just go in, they can pay whatever the Accessibee fee is to put it on their website. And it, it helps a lot of people. That's great. But I think that you're right, if they're marketing to do something that it actually is not doing. That's where the that's where the problem is, and I don't know if these guys are just, we're just anxious to sort of get out in front of this first, that they did some questionable marketing, I don't know. But I would love to talk to somebody who's a little bit more well versed in this and sort of get do a little bit more of a deep dive into into just what some of the problematic aspects of this is. And you know, what, what are some aspects that are maybe are not so problematic? Because I think that this could, something like this, that does actually work as intended, but could actually be something that's, that's really quite powerful. I mean, if you think about it, if if the screen reader mode did actually work properly, it would be it'd be pretty cool.

R

Ryan Fleury 11:58

Well, I will reach out and get some guests to come and talk to us about it. It's a really interesting controversy. That's that's brewing out there right now.

R

Rob Mineault 12:06

And I don't know like, I sort of don't know anything about these guys. And whether or not they are snake oil or if they're they have well, intentions, but their marketing department got out too far ahead of them or, or just what the deal is.

R

Ryan Fleury 12:20

Right.

R

Rob Mineault 12:20

But I think the big thing to take away from this is that it's actually making a lot of headway because I did notice this morning, too. I went into our, our podcast host to go

mess around to do some things. And I noticed that, hey, look down in the lower right hand corner, there's that same icon that was on the website for for the city of Chilliwack. And I was like, Oh, really, and I clicked on it. Sure enough, there's Accessibee on this really major podcast hosting platform. So it's, it's getting some traction on, on like some of the larger websites. And it's certainly getting some traction in the in the mainstream media because it's a little alarming if it's not what it's supposed to be. Yeah, that's a problem.

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Ryan Fleury 13:08

Yep. Joining us now is Laura Hayden from the Canadian Helen Keller center.

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Rob Mineault 13:55

Hello

L

Laura Hayden 13:56

Hi. Nice to see everybody.

R

Rob Mineault 13:59

Oh, hey, well, listen. Thanks for thanks for joining us.

L

Laura Hayden 14:03

Thanks for having me on.

R

Rob Mineault 14:05

All right. Well, listen, why don't we start out by just giving us an idea of what the organization does and what its some of its mandates are?

L

Laura Hayden 14:15

Sure. So the Canadian Helen Keller Center has many different components to it. The part that I work with the most is the Canadian Helen Keller's Center's Training Center. It's a bit of a mouthful. But we are a training center for individuals who are deaf blind so that they can learn how to become or maintain their independence as they lose their vision or hearing or as they become older and want to have more independence. And so that's the section that I work with the most but we also have different umbrellas and so we also the

Canadian Helen Keller Center is a has a barrier free apartment building. It has 16 apartments and it is for individuals who are deaf blind. And all the individuals who are deaf blind who live there have access to an intervener 24 hours a day, there's always an intervener in the office. So if they have an emergency, or if they want help with something around their apartments, they have access to that. And they also have access to intervenors to go out with them in the community. We also provide outreach services for individuals who don't live at the apartment buildings, they live in the community with their families around their own, they can also have intervener services to help them. We also have an emergency on call system. So if someone does have an emergency, with the police, with the ambulances with fire, they can call the office and someone will come and meet them where their emergency is so that they have access to communication that way. So it's just a few of the things that we offer at the Canadian Helen Keller Center.

R

Rob Mineault 16:05

Now, are you guys based in Ontario?

L

Laura Hayden 16:07

Yeah, so we are located in Toronto, and in North York specifically. But we do provide some services to all residences in Ontario. So the training center can provide great services to residences and Ontario, the intervener services are mainly focused throughout the GTA, so the Greater Toronto Area.

R

Rob Mineault 16:33

What sort of age range do you really find that most of your programs and services are sort of tailored towards?

L

Laura Hayden 16:40

So our age starting point is 18 years old, so we don't help anybody who's under 18. And it can range to 100, you know, or above. So we've had people who are quite young, who have just graduated high school or college and they want to have intervener services, then, so they can be helped with intervenors. Or if they are thinking about moving out on their own, and they want to develop life skills, then the Training Center can help with that. We can help with technology, setting that up, we can help with cooking, learning how to manage your money, learning how to do laundry, and things like that. So just general life skills. And then we also have a pretty robust Seniors program. So people who are deaf blind because of age, and so they might have macular degeneration, or they might have

hearing loss because of that general aging. We have people who will go with them to doctor's appointments, or they will help advocate for them. And we're in nursing homes or long term care homes. And so it the age range is actually quite, quite large.

R

Rob Mineault 17:59

So it sounds like the mainly the focus of a lot of the programs and services is sort of like the help in terms of transition, is that right?

L

Laura Hayden 18:09

Kind of -- at the training center, we help with life skills, and independent living. And so a lot of it can be transitional. But as far as the apartment buildings and intervenor services are concerned, it's if you are deafblind and you qualify, then it can be someone who receive services. And they are not going through transition, but they have intervenors to help them right with doctor's appointments with going, you know, for walks around the neighborhood, if they have any thing that they need to have communication and guiding for them. The intervenors are there for help.

R

Rob Mineault 18:54

So there's also sort of like an ongoing support component of it as well?

L

Laura Hayden 18:58

Yeah, so the Canadian Helen Keller Center is kind of like an overarching umbrella. And so as I said before, there's the Training Center, there's the Independent Living apartment buildings, there's the Intervenor Services, and then there's the Community services that also help them so it's a large, a large umbrella. But the one that I mostly work with is the Training Center.

R

Ryan Fleury 19:23

One of the things I wanted to touch on a little bit and this will probably show my ignorance, but I'm totally blind myself -

L

Laura Hayden 19:29

Yes.

R

Ryan Fleury 19:30

So with regards to technology, what are some of the types of technologies somebody who is deaf blind might use, let's say to recognize currency? You know, we we know about braille displays, but you know, is there like deaf blind communications, if someone was to walk into a bank and need to communicate to a teller what they have to have an intervener with them?

L

Laura Hayden 19:54

Um, well as you know, deafness is a spectrum, blindness is a spectrum, so Deaf blindness is also a spectrum. And so you have people who are completely deaf and completely blind. And then you have people who have varying degrees of hearing and varying degrees of vision. And so it kind of just depends on where they are in that spectrum. And so if there is someone who is completely deaf and completely blind, then there is technology that can help them. There's trying to remember, it's the Braille -- it was a technology by Humanware. And I used to know it, but it's a communication device for people who are completely deaf and completely blind. And they can communicate with people who have vision and hearing. But it wasn't very popular among our population, because if you want to go to someplace that is specific, like you know that you'll need help with communicating, then they will usually go with an intervener. That being said, we do have a lot of Braille Display users. And we do have a lot of people who use like, Magnification Software is a big one. And we have some people who use Voiceover software, it's just a matter of like tailoring it. So if you're using the magnification software that you might use that in conjunction with Voiceover and, or you might make sure that all of the systems that you're using, has a lot more like haptic feedback. And so you're using the vibrations instead of the voice. And you're using things like that, so that you're not relying on hearing or relying on vision when you are using the technology.

R

Ryan Fleury 21:36

Yeah, it's interesting, you know, because we've been in the Assistive Technology field for - some of us 20/30 years, yes. But have never really dealt with the, you know, specifically Deaf community. You know, when it comes to alarm clocks, you know, like you say, it's a spectrum. I've heard of, you know, bed shakers, and you know, different things like that. It's, it's gonna be fascinating to see what actually is available and where technology might be going.

L

Laura Hayden 22:07

Yeah, it's, it's really interesting, I'm kind of dealing with where deafness and blindness meet, because I know a lot of the technology that we do purchase is more related to blindness, we do a lot of purchasing of braille displays, and things like that, because that's something that people really want to learn how to use. But there is a huge component of people who do use things like bed shakers, and like vibrating things. But it's always interesting trying to do that from a vein of not being able to see to set things up. And so a lot of the bed shakers and things like that, assume that people have enough vision, that they can easily set these things up. But then when you couple, you know, the need for haptic vibrations with the inability to possibly see what's going on. It can be frustrating. Yeah, I think recently, and I'm by no means an expert on this, I'm not a technology instructor. But I am aware of technology, there's been a lot of things that you can use that are connected to smart phones. So like iPads, or iPhones or tablets of any kind. And that's been really beneficial, because you can usually set up your iPhone or tablet to be accessible to you. And so that kind of smart device is like the middle point in which they make it more accessible. And so that's been really interesting having that ability. And so a lot of times when I do look for technology, I oftentimes look for ways that it can connect to people's phones or tablets and stuff, because a lot of times that's like the first thing that people get set up for their vision and for their hearing is having their phone because it's something that's easy to do.

R

Ryan Fleury 24:08

Right.

L

Laura Hayden 24:08

Most people have them.

R

Rob Mineault 24:10

So I'm so I'm curious, you know, we on the show a few weeks ago, we had somebody from a local organization here, the Developmental Disabilities Association. And we were sort of discussing - and they do sort of similar things, especially in terms of providing housing options for people. And I know that during that discussion, you know, it sort of came up that for us here in British Columbia, housing is really a problem. I'm sort of curious to hear your experience being based in Ontario, is that one of the major challenges that the organization finds as well? Just finding enough housing for people?

L

Laura Hayden 25:00

Yes, I don't know if you know how awful finding housing in Toronto is, is, it's pretty similar to I don't know if it's as bad as Vancouver, but it's on par. It's pretty similar. And so the apartment buildings, the CHKC apartment buildings are rent geared to income, apartments. And so they're really good at providing that level of support. So not only are you making sure that everyone's needs met, through Intervenor services, it's also a barrier free apartments, it's making sure all the signage is accessible, making sure that the lighting is good. And things like that. But it's also making sure that someone isn't spending their whole monthly income on housing, it gets a little bit more difficult when people don't live because obviously, there's more than 16 deafblind people in Toronto who live outside of that apartment building, it can be really difficult to find accessible apartments that are affordable. So we have four individuals who work with us who they're called Consumers Support Specialists, and they are kind of like case workers for lack of a better word. And, and so they would be responsible for helping people with like medical appointments, helping them navigate, like the job market, and one of their other responsibilities is helping people find housing. And it can be really difficult to have affordable accessible housing here in Toronto, it's definitely one of our more pressing needs.

R

Rob Mineault 26:47

Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's it is very similar here, too. I it was kind of a loaded question, because I kind of knew the answer. Yeah, I mean, I think that even just finding accessible housing period was enough of a challenge, but then to, you know, have that component of "Yeah, needs to be affordable as well". Yeah, good luck. That, you know, opens up a whole different conversation about, you know, the fact that accessible housing needs to just be a thing across the board. I mean, it's ridiculous that, that, you know, just a general apartment building doesn't have more accessible features built into it, aside from, you know, maybe a wheelchair ramp or, you know, an elevator that is wide enough to take a wheelchair, I mean, there's so much more that needs to be done on in that, in that sense.

L

Laura Hayden 27:36

And it's definitely something that we're looking into for the future, is to provide more accessible housing, obviously, it is a big need. But as it stands right now, we have the apartment building that we have, and then we have the additional services for people who are receiving services from CHKC. So the CSS's is can definitely help as much as possible with that.

R

Rob Mineault 28:02

Now, is there sort of a sort of an educational component of the organization? Like do you guys try to say go out into the general public and and educate people about Deaf blindness? Or are you guys mainly just focused on services and programs for people who are deafblind?

L

Laura Hayden 28:20

Advocacy is one of our bigger, it's one of the things that we do focus on. We're trying now more than ever to get the name of the Canadian Helen Keller center out there because definitely, this is such a low incidence still disability, that it can be surprising to most people because they think they're like, Oh, I know, people were deaf. And oh, I know, people were blind, but they never thought about the fact that there are people out there who are deaf blind. So it's definitely a big push recently. I don't know if you knew, but June is actually deafblind Awareness Month across Canada, because June was the birthday of Helen Keller. And so there are activities that happen throughout Canada, but the main one happens here in Toronto, and it's something called Junefest. The first Junefest happened in 2003. And it was started as a way to bring knowledge about Deafblindness to the general public. And so it is something that happens every year since 2003. It used to be at one location in North York, and it was the Deafblind community. So it wasn't just CHKC, it was all the other agencies in Ontario who could come, would come and we would have information booths, and we would have demonstrations and things like that. And in the most recent couple of years, obviously that hasn't been able to happen. But even last year, because it was in June, we weren't able to gather because of the Coronavirus, but we still - the CN Tower lights up blue for them Deafblind awareness and I think the Niagara Falls also does and so there's still like a component out there, it's just not going to be the same kind of thing that it was in previous years. But this year, we are definitely we're trying to, we're trying a couple of different things, to get the word out there that there is people who are deaf blind, and that services exist for them. So that people are a little bit more aware about things.

R

Rob Mineault 30:37

Well, speaking of the dreaded topic that we normally try not to talk about, but because we're sick of hearing about it, but talk to us a little bit about COVID and just what kind of an impact it has had on the organization and how maybe you guys had to pivot some of your programs and, and services.

It has been a huge pivot for us. For people who are deaf blind, it's not everybody, but there is definitely a group of people who rely on touch for communications. So if you are deaf, and you're using sign language, you can usually see the signing. If you're deaf blind, then you rely on tactile information. So you do like adapted ASL or tactile ASL. Or more recently, there's been a huge push for something called pro tactile communication, which is kind of similar to American Sign Language, but it relies more on touch, and to give you extra cues that you wouldn't get with just straight tactile, American Sign Language. And so when that happened, so when the Coronavirus happened, it was really difficult because even if you don't use sign language, and you are like a Voiceover user, you still rely on touch to be guided places to get additional information. And so for the first little while, it was everybody just sitting around trying to figure out how we could continue with the services. And so the intervention arm of CHKC had its own protection for the intervenors and things like that, so that they could still continue to offer services. But the Training Center where I work, it was really difficult because we had to close down because it was just too many people at any given time. Because if you are working with people who are deaf blind, they usually have an intervener accompanying them. So even if you have two deaf blind people in the training center, that's at least four people, right? And for people in close proximity is never going to be like it can't work very well within Coronavirus parameters. And so what I had to do was I had to pivot for - you know, that's the word of the year it seems this pivot. I had to pivot and offer most of our training online, which is something that we had talked about previously, because we wanted to make sure that our reach would be expanded. But it was always something that we never thought was possible because with online becomes problems with technology becomes problems with accessibility and everything like that. But when the Coronavirus happened, we had to pick it offline if we wanted to continue to be relevant, and we wanted to continue to offer services, it was something that we had to do. And so it was difficult. In the beginning, it was a lot of helping people understand how to access things via Zoom, it was a lot of having workshops and providing notes for people. But it also was really great because we're accessing people who we never would have been able to access before. Because if someone was traveling into the training center, they would have to take in, like travel hours and if they had intervention, like Intervenor services if they lived outside of the GTA, and things like that. But now we have everything set up that we are as accessible as possible. And we have people who are coming in to not coming in but who are accessing our programs from BC from Alberta from North Bay or Sudbury. And so all of these people who maybe never would have been able to receive training or access our programming. They're actually doing it now and it's kind of fantastic, right? It's not ideal in any ways, but it's kind of amazing that had happened.

R

Ryan Fleury 34:48

Those who say that's one of the things I've been saying for a while now is that as sucky as this pandemic has been it has definitely showed us the gaps in our systems, whether it be education, whether it be training, whether it be whatever the case may be, you know, we've noticed that we've been able to reach people in the blindness community that we didn't know we're out there, and are accessing our services as well. So there have definitely been some benefits to it for sure.

L

Laura Hayden 35:20

Yeah. And I think that you guys have done a fantastic job, like I get your emails, and I see what you guys are doing. And just creating the sense of community is a huge thing for me. And I think that you guys are doing it really well. But being deaf blind can be really isolating, or in and of itself, just because of the nature of that blindness. And so you take, you know, an isolating disability like that blindness, and then you compound it with, you know, the isolation that Coronavirus is, then you're just that's what I'm trying to do. And I think you guys are also doing is creating a place where people can, like, get rid of some of that isolation. And that's a big push for me, I've been offering many more programming options than I might have otherwise, just to make sure that if anybody wants to join anything, in order to make sure that they still have the sense of community, they still can't.

R

Rob Mineault 36:18

So yeah. And I feel like we're - I'm going to be really optimistic here - but I feel like you, we're starting, we're starting to get to the near enough to the possible end of all this that we can start to think about life afterwards. Have you guys at the organization started to think about that in terms of online services and programs? Like do you think that that going forward post COVID, that's you'll have some sort of a hybrid system where you'll still provide this online component for people that you can reach remotely, that that don't have to come in, or you guys just see going right back to face to face.

L

Laura Hayden 37:04

I think that we are definitely going to continue with the hybrid model. There is definitely some clubs and workshops that we offer that make more sense doing it in person. But that being said that there's a lot of clubs that I can't imagine just getting rid of completely or saying that you have to come into the training center to access. So it might be that some of the clubs remain 100% online, and then some of them go back to in person. Or it might be that we still will do in person clubs. But with the option of joining via Zoom, I don't

100% know how it's going to work in the future. But I do know that I'm never going to go back to just offering in person clubs, because it doesn't. It's not available for everybody. You know, even with people who lived in Ontario and lived close enough to the center where they could come in for, you know, a cooking club, that they would still be using most of their intervene or times traveling, because they intervened would go and pick them up and then travel in and then you would have a certain amount of time and then you would have to leave. But when you are accessing it via zoom, you don't have any of that you don't have any of the extra time that it takes. And so you can focus more of your hours on things that are beneficial to you. So, and it's also good, because I like being able to reach people in different provinces or who live in Ontario, but live too far away. It's been really great to be able to have that. And I don't want to stop having that.

R

Rob Mineault 38:54

Yeah, and that's really that that's really the case here too. And BC, you know, it's such a big province. And there are a lot of little rural areas and rural communities that aren't anywhere close to a main hub, they wouldn't have access to services that they could just, you know, drop and just go in and do a face to face visit. So yeah, I think that a lot of organizations are sort of looking at the same thing going forward.

L

Laura Hayden 39:19

And I think that once you in the beginning, there was a lot of hurdles, there was a lot of people getting used to the technology and having like the mindset that they won't be able to access Zoom, and they won't be able to access all of this technology. But once you get over that hurdle, and we they do realize that they can then why wouldn't you continue because you've already done all the hard work, you've already done everything, you know, setting things up, understanding the program's understanding how to make it accessible. And so it's really at that point, then to continue offering these services online. It's kind of a no brainer. Because you're able to offer it to more people.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:03

Yeah, it goes to show how complacent we've been for so many years.

L

Laura Hayden 40:07

Yeah, I mean, it was, as I was saying before, we had always talked about ways that we could expand our services. And we always said, it's not going to happen, because technology is not going to be conducive to people who are deafblind. And then we were

proven wrong. It was like a great being proven wrong. So it was kind of just like, figuring out ways to make it work, because we had to make it work. But in the, you know, ultimately, it was beneficial to everyone.

R

Rob Mineault 40:37

So yeah, and I think that the resistance to that was sort of on all sides, too. I think that a lot organizations were leery about providing any sort of an online service. And I think that that people weren't ready for something like Zoom. Pre COVID people, you know, people weren't into Zoom. And now, you know, it's pretty much ubiquitous all over the place. So I think that we're, it'll be a brave new world. I think once this is all over with, and I do, I think that that will be the silver lining is that we're going to be able to reach a lot more people than we ever have been before.

L

Laura Hayden 41:21

Yeah, if there is any silver lining in all of this, that is definitely it. Yeah.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:26

A more inclusive society. Whoo.

L

Laura Hayden 41:30

I mean, yeah. Are there things that I would like to change about Zoom? 100%? I think that, yeah, even. I would love to be able to just sit down with, like, the people who are the programmers for Zoom, and be like, Hey, I think that you guys have the idea of accessibility. But you know, users might be the best people to actually talk about true accessibility. And I mean, even I'm coming at it from a person who is sighted and hearing. And so I don't even, like 100% know, the issues that are involved with Zoom, but it's just having spent so much time basically, almost all day every day, moderating Zoom clubs and workshops, there's definitely issues, but it's still better than nothing. And it's significantly better than what would have happened if this had happened, like 10 years ago. Geez, Yeah, no kidding. would have been a completely different situation, then. And we would have been unbelievably isolated.

R

Ryan Fleury 42:36

Yes. That's why we would rely on Skype or MSN Messenger.

L

Laura Hayden 42:43

I can't even get started on how bad that would be.

R

Ryan Fleury 42:48

No accessibility.

L

Laura Hayden 42:50

Yeah. And so yeah, so like I say, That's that Zoom could be better. Yeah. But you know, knowing that this could have been a lot worse than it is.

R

Rob Mineault 43:02

We would all have those Nokia flip phones. And listen, I'm aware of time. I know we have a few more minutes with you. So was there was there anything that we didn't hit on that you want to talk about? Or or mention or anything at all?

L

Laura Hayden 43:19

No, actually, I think we did a pretty good overview, other than to maybe encourage, if you have users who are deaf blind, I don't know who your reach is. But if they are deaf blind, and they want to access the services at the Canadian Helen Keller Center, via Zoom, especially right now, because all of our programming is online, they are more than welcome to contact me. I don't know if I should get my email address. And then we can figure out ways to make it accessible for them so that they are able to connect with the deafblind community because we do have everybody there not just from Ontario, as I said before, we have people from all over Canada, who are joining right now. So if they're thinking that they want to access our training and access the things that we have to offer at the training center, now is the best time to do it.

R

Rob Mineault 44:13

Sure. And what's the what's the what would the best and fastest way to reach out?

L

Laura Hayden 44:19

So my email, I have a my emails, my phone is connected to me. 24 seven, and so I always get emails. And it is I'll spell it out for you. lhayden@chkc.org

R

Rob Mineault 44:39

Well, listen, thanks so much for for taking some time out of your day to chat with us. And yeah, let's have you back on closer to June. And we can talk all about Junefest.

L

Laura Hayden 44:51

Yeah, that would be fantastic. I will. I'll put you in touch with our marketing person and he is very, very well versed in everything and so he'll be able to speak with you more about that.

R

Rob Mineault 45:03

Fantastic.

L

Laura Hayden 45:04

Thank you guys very much for having me today.

R

Rob Mineault 45:06

You're very welcome and have a great rest your day.

L

Laura Hayden 45:09

Thanks you as well.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:10

Okay, thanks, Laura.

R

Rob Mineault 45:11

Okay, man, wow. Yeah, that brought up a whole bunch of things I hadn't even thought about. I hadn't considered how big of an impact COVID would have had on the deafblind community in terms of communication.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:29

Well, I think that's something like, tweaked my interest as well. And I'm going to have to

try to find a guest to come on and talk about even just the way deaf and deafblind, do communicate. You know, she mentioned ASL, she mentioned a few other different methods tactilely of communicating with people.

R

Rob Mineault 45:50

Yeah, I don't know if you've seen it. Like, there. There's things like palm spelling and stuff

R

Ryan Fleury 45:56

Yeah, so it could be a fascinating discussion.

R

Rob Mineault 45:58

Yeah, it would be it really would be and we haven't really talked much about deafblindness on the show before, so yeah, I think that that would be something to talk about. So well, mull that over. In one of our many meetings,

R

Ryan Fleury 46:15

Mull mull

R

Rob Mineault 46:16

Junefest, damn was so close, we were just a few months off, if we had her on closer to June that would have been perfect.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:23

I can't keep track of everybody's Awareness Month.

R

Rob Mineault 46:26

I know. I can't either. I honestly I can't either. There's too many.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:31

Everybody's got one.

R

Rob Mineault 46:32

This is a problem with that I have with it. I really think that there should be a better vetting system for Awareness Month because there's just too many days, too many. Like I don't need a Spaghetti Awareness Day, like we've clogged the calendar full of ridiculous days. So that when you have important ones, like Junefest, and you know, DeafBlind Awareness Month, they get lost in the shuffle of Talk Like a Pirate Day.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:58

I'm gonna I'm gonna declare right now on this show. And you heard it here first. May 32nd is AT Banner day.

R

Rob Mineault 47:06

Okay.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:07

May 32nd. Everybody AT Banter Day

R

Rob Mineault 47:10

AT Banter Awareness Day.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:12

That's right.

R

Rob Mineault 47:13

Go visit the website. Go leave us a review on iTunes. Subscribe.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:19

And yes, everybody, I know there is no May 32nd. But I'm declaring that day AT Banter Awareness Day.

R

Rob Mineault 47:25

That's right. Okay. It's a deal. I don't know who we email about that to put it on the calendar. But we'll find out. I'll do some research.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:34

That's right.

R

Rob Mineault 47:35

Hey, Ryan. Rob, where can people find us?

R

Ryan Fleury 47:39

They can find us online at www.atbanter.com

R

Rob Mineault 47:43

They can also leave us an email if they so desire. If they email cowbell@atbanter.com

R

Ryan Fleury 47:53

And they can find us on Twitter and Instagram and Facebook or wherever you get your podcast.

R

Rob Mineault 48:01

Hey, you know what I meant to ask you?

R

Ryan Fleury 48:03

What?

R

Rob Mineault 48:03

Are you still exercising?

R

Ryan Fleury 48:05

I started last Friday.

R

Rob Mineault 48:07

Yeah. How's it going?

R

Ryan Fleury 48:09

It's going. I do 30 minutes every morning before work starts on the bike. So yeah, it's going.

R

Rob Mineault 48:17

Yeah, have you found it's pretty hard to adjust to that? Are you getting up earlier than usual to do this, or you're just sort of building it into your normal schedule?

R

Ryan Fleury 48:26

No, I'm getting up 10 minutes earlier than I used to. So I used to get up at 10 after six. I'm now up at six, I get the dog outside, get the dog fed. Then I just come down to the Guitar Dungeon where the bike is and turn the tunes on and pedal pedal pedal. I actually trying I was talking to a friend of mine as well. And he suggested the the fitness app on the Apple Watch and the iPhone because you get three months free when you buy an Apple Watch. And so I have an Apple Watch that one to get to start tracking some health stuff. And signed up yesterday. And so I actually had a pre recorded but I had a personal trainer actually guiding me through my 30 minute ride this morning. So encouraging me doing intervals.

R

Rob Mineault 49:09

Wow, really? That's cool.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:11

Yeah, it was good.

R

Rob Mineault 49:12

Well, and Do you feel better? Yeah. Are you noticing anything any difference yet? I mean, I guess it's kind of early. It's like first week, so ...

R

Ryan Fleury 49:20

Yeah, it is, you know, like, as soon as I get off the bike, of course, my legs are wobbly and stuff. And they're a little achy for half the day. But you know, it's it's fine. You know, they say it takes what six weeks to develop a new habit or to stick with a habit or something. So we'll see if I go the six weeks

R

Rob Mineault 49:38

You'll do it.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:40

Like I said I'm not getting up much different much earlier than I did before. Anyway, it's not breaking, It's not changing my routine.

R

Rob Mineault 49:47

So, man, I'll tell you Steve's running. You're doing that. I'm beginning to feel like you guys are trying to steal the podcast by outliving me.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:57

Well, and I haven't had fast food in the year since the pandemic started. Although once we get back, that's getting all thrown out the window. But yeah, no, it's been good.

R

Rob Mineault 50:10

Well, we'll check in again next week and see .. that'll be our new bit. I think that's gonna about do it for us this week. Thanks, everybody for listening in. And big thanks to Laura Hayden, for joining us. And we will see everybody next week.

R

Ryan Fleury 50:29

Bye bye.