

Philip Dallmann: Hello, inclusion believers, and welcome to the Access Champions Podcast. I'm your host, Phil Dallmann, for this week's journey into the galaxies of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion.

Philip Dallmann: Um, I am coming to you, uh, back in New York now. Uh, we spent the past week down in Atlanta at the Kennedy Center's LEAD Conference, which, uh, stands for Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability. Uh, and it was just the best. Um, we had a little popup studio. We gave away some swag. Shout-out to the champion intern, Kelsey Rose Brown was just killing the game, running around in a cape all the week, um, getting folks to come talk to us and share their stories. Um, and we're gonna start sharing those stories this week. Um, and, uh, we're gonna be pairing some of these mini episodes that we recorded with, with, uh, different topics.

Philip Dallmann: Um, it just ... There was such a breadth of knowledge and, and topics that came up over the three days that we were, um, doing the popup studio that, uh, it was just really ... It was really incredible, um, and really wonderful.

Philip Dallmann: So, uh, we're gonna start this week with, um, uh, one of the first popup interviews we did. And I, and I wan-, uh, put it in this episode, um, to give an idea of how not everyone that comes to this con-, this conference is connected with this sort of network of folks, um, is an expert. Uh, some people are coming for the first time. Some people are learning principles for the first time, and they're taking it back.

Philip Dallmann: So, um, our first, uh, popup guest was from the Townsend Center of Performing Arts. And she was absolutely lovely. And it was her first time. And she was able to come to this because the conference was in Atlanta. It was close enough, um, that, you know, she could get the approval from her university to come down. Um, and that's one of the things, you know, the conference does, while it changes, uh, venues, so, you know, from state to state to state, um, it's so that the local network can get access to these resources and, uh, to these new ideas, um, when it's, you know, put in their own backyard. So we're gonna start the episode off with that, our first popup interview.

Philip Dallmann: All right, and we are back for our mini episode, uh, at the LEAD Conference, in our popup studio. I'm here with Renee. Um, and Renee, where are you from?

Renee: I'm from the University of West Georgia, the Townsend Center for the Performing Arts.

Philip Dallmann: All right, and is this your first LEAD Conference?

Renee: This is my first year's, uh, LEAD's Conference and I'm very excited.

Philip Dallmann: What brought you here?

Renee: Um, we have a small venue. Our venue actually seats 455, but we have a high, uh, energy, large, um, crowd of patrons-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: ... that, that have changed over the years, as far as aging, you know.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: So we ... I'm here to learn, um, uh, what LEAD's can offer me-

Philip Dallmann: Mm.

Renee: ... and what I can bring back to the, our patrons.

Philip Dallmann: Fantastic. Uh, and you've been here for a day?

Renee: Yes.

Philip Dallmann: Yes. Uh, did you learn anything exciting yesterday?

Renee: I did. I learned that, um, you know, I'm so stuck on learning, or looking for visible disabilities-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: ... and not, um, so focused on those other hidden disabilities.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: So I've learned to, um, ask, you know-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: ... you know, if there's something we can help you with, and not just be stuck on the visible, uh, disabilities.

Philip Dallmann: Absolutely. That's, uh, I think a, a, an incredible guiding principle to, you know, look for the accommodations and just say, "How can I help you?" and-

Renee: Yes.

Philip Dallmann: ... and leave ... And then let them tell you-

Renee: Exactly.

Philip Dallmann: ... because lord knows they will.

Renee: (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Renee: I'm glad they do. And now, and here we can learn how to better accommodate them.

Philip Dallmann: Absolutely. Um, what are you excited about today?

Renee: Um, today I'm just excited about learning more-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: ... of course, um, and what I can learn, um, throughout the time that I'm here, to be able to take back to my staff and our students and our patrons.

Philip Dallmann: Fantastic. Um, and is there anything going on at the Townsend Center that you're excited about?

Renee: Um, well, school will start back on Wednesday.

Philip Dallmann: Oh boy.

Renee: Woohoo!

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Renee: So, um, hopefully we'll have a lot of patrons, or students and staff-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: ... and faculty, that we can use what we've learned here, um, over the next semester.

Philip Dallmann: Fantastic. Uh, and then is there anybody else out there that you think's doing great work that you want to give a shout-out to?

Renee: Um, I want to give a shout-out to of course LEAD-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Renee: ... and the City of Carrollton-

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Renee: ... um, Auxiliary Services over at the University of West Georgia.

Philip Dallmann: Fantastic. Well, thank you for sitting down with us, and, uh, if you see me, uh, around the conference, grab me, because I want to know how it's going for you.

Renee: Okay. Super. Nice of you to have me here.

Philip Dallmann: (laughs) All right. Thanks.

Philip Dallmann: Awesome. So that was, uh, a good taste of some of the interviews that we have. They were all over the place in topic. There was, uh, curation of scent, uh, as a holistic experience for individuals, um, who are blind, uh, they attend museums. There was a lot of universal design ideas put out there. Um, we had some grad students come on that were doing, uh, incredible research. And, and so it's, you know, it's ... Uh, there's some arts education thoughts and, and across the board. So we're gonna be dropping, um, those hopefully ch-, every week, if not, um, several times a month. Um, and, um, it's gonna be fantastic. Ah, there's that word. U

Philip Dallmann: h, (laughs) if you listen to previous episodes, you know that that's a word that I, I've been banned from saying. Um, and I'll have to figure out some type of penalty. Maybe I'll ... Every time I use it I'll make a donation to a different, uh, uh, different inclusion organization.

Philip Dallmann: Actually, decision made. Uh, every time, uh ... And I, and I put out there to anyone who's listening, you, uh, looking for a volunteer to checking how many times I say "fantastic" in an episode, um, and I will donate, uh, that many dollars, uh, plus three we'll say, uh, to, uh, a different inclusion organization, um, every week.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, so moving on from me becoming more broke, uh, in the name of charity, uh, our, our guest this week is Betty Siegel. And, uh, Betty founded the LEAD Conference. And she works for the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. Um, she's the director of VSA there, um, and accessibility. And, uh, I'm not gonna spoil too much of the interview, um, but, uh, because I, I say some, you know, obviously a lo-, some of the context of when I met Betty.

Philip Dallmann: Um, but this is, it, it is rare I think in, in most fields, for the leader or leaders in the field to be as accessible. And, and I don't mean that in the context, uh, you know, obviously we're talking about in the world of disability, but as, as accessible as, um, willing to chat. Right? Um, Betty is always there f-, has always been there for me and, and for many others in the field, um, when we felt a little bit lost, when we weren't sure how to handle a situation. Um, and she always, you know, starts every email, "Well, I can't give you legal advice, but if I were to do this, I would dot dot dot." I think she has that on copy and paste.

Philip Dallmann: Um, and, uh, it's actually, you know, funny enough, the, uh, the first thing that, uh, happened when I got to the conference, um, I ran into Betty, and apparently her staff had given her a hard time because, uh, I referred to her as a premier mind, uh, in the LEAD preview episode. But I, uh ... It's not incorrect. Um, she is a premier mind. She is a leader and a ground br- breaker in this field a- and in many others. Um, but she's also one of the warmest humans, uh, I- I've met, and again, you know, someone that is willing to share knowledge. Right?

Philip Dallmann: Um, when I walked into my most recent job, um, coming on at Kaiser's Room, uh, I, I said I was interested in collaboration, not competition. And I, I think she ... I don't think, I know she lives that. Um, and the LEAD Conference and, um, sort of all the activities that have to do with LEAD and with the Kennedy Center speak to that. You know, they are true collaborators, they are true sharers of knowledge. Um, and I think this field would be lost with- without that, without that, that sort of touchstone, or o-, or at least one of the touchstones.

Philip Dallmann: The- there are other folks out there that are also creating sort of these networks, but I, you know, I think looking at a national level, and international level for that matter, um, because there was folks from all over the world at the conference, they're leading the way. I think the Kennedy Center's leading the way. And, um, Betty and, and her staff, um, the Sarahs and, and Jessica Swanson and, and everybody, who are just unreal. But again, it starts at the top. You have someone that, uh, just exudes that warmth and that willingness to share. So, um, we're gonna dive into this interview. Um, I hope you enjoy it. And, uh, without further ado, Access Champion Betty Siegel.

Philip Dallmann: All right, and we are back at the, uh, popup studio here at the LEAD Conference in Atlanta. And I am with the LEAD founder and, uh, I will defer to you on your full title, uh, (laughs) Betty Siegel.

Betty Siegel: (laughs) My full title is Director of VSA and Accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Philip Dallmann: That's a hefty title. (laughs)

Betty Siegel: It is a hefty, hefty title.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, you may remember Betty as being referred to as a premier mind in a previous episode.

Betty Siegel: (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: Uh, it's the first thing her staff grabbed me for, uh, the minute I arrived in Atlanta. Um, so we, we were actually, just before I hit record, I was just saying, um, that I love, this year, the titles have really upped their game, uh, for the sessions, and it's fantastic.

Betty Siegel: Yeah. That's because they didn't let me name any of them-

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: ... because I a-, just am terrible at naming things. I'm not allowed.

Philip Dallmann: There was a lawyer one that was like, uh, How To Stay Out of My Courtroom, essentially.

Betty Siegel: Oh I love that one.

Philip Dallmann: I was like-

Betty Siegel: That was-

Philip Dallmann: ... "That's great."

Betty Siegel: ... John Waldo.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah.

Betty Siegel: Oh yeah. And-

Philip Dallmann: And John is amazing.

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Uh-

Betty Siegel: I don't know if you've interviewed him, but you really should.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah. W-, I had spoke to him earlier. We're gonna get him on.

Betty Siegel: Cool, cool.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, the work he did in Seattle is, like, unreal.

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: So, uh, I don't know that I actually know the ... From a lot of people that sit down and I chat with, I kind of know already their journey. I don't think I know how you ended up in access.

Betty Siegel: Well, totally and completely by accident.

Philip Dallmann: Great.

Betty Siegel: (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: Do you want the two-minute version of my journey?

Philip Dallmann: Yeah. Break it down for us.

Betty Siegel: Okay. So I was, um ... Around the age of five, my mother decided that I wasn't gonna cut it as a pianist or a ballerina. And she was just alternating, you know, slowly working her way through all the art forms-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... music, dance. So she put me in a children's theater class and I fell in love. Like, there, that was the moment where I was like, "I'm gonna be in theater for the rest of my life."

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: Um, when I hit college, I went to Virginia Tech, small c- college, uh, for theater. And I graduated thinking, "Wow, you know, what I think I want to do is be a costume designer-"

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Betty Siegel: ... because of my lovely, beautiful scarves that I always wear-

Philip Dallmann: Your scarf game-

Betty Siegel: ... my signature scarf.

Philip Dallmann: ... is on point.

Betty Siegel: Yeah. Sparkly today.

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: And, uh, or I wanted to run my own children's theater company. So I started applying to those two types of jobs. And I said to myself, "I'm gonna take the first job that anybody offers me," which was a job as a wardrobe mistress at Texas Opera Theater in Houston, associated with Houston Grand Opera. I did that for a year, went on tour, and then I got to work at, at Houston Grand Opera with the big leagues, the-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... major designers. And I was able to look at the work that they were doing and, and compare myself to them and realize that although I was a good designer-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... I was not a great designer, and that I was never gonna have what it took to be a great designer. And I thought, "Well, now, now I'm not sure what I want to be." I'd also started feeling a little itchy in the job because I realized that I knew people by their shoe size and not their names. Right?

Philip Dallmann: Right, that's fair. That's a-

Betty Siegel: You know.

Philip Dallmann: That's a, a good thing to clock.

Betty Siegel: I know!

Philip Dallmann: Yeah. That's good self-awareness. (laughs)

Betty Siegel: It's very self-aware. You know, operas cast thousands. You got-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... the supers, you got the chorus. And it was always like, "Shoes, socks, pants, ties, you're, you're done!" And I would go, "Oh yeah, size 12."

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: "What's your name?" You know. So I just, I, I ended up going back to Washington, D.C. where my family was based, knocked on the doors of all the theaters in town saying, "I'm looking for a job," and they'd all say, "We don't have any costume design jobs." And I said, "I'm not, uh ... It doesn't have to be that. I don't want to do that anymore. I want to do something new." Knocked on the door at Arena Stage, and they said, "Well, we got this part-time theater manager position."

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And I said, "I'll take it." So I worked for a year being a temporary secretary during the day-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... and house managing at night at Arena Stage. And at the end of the year I went to my boss and I said, "You know, this temporary secretary thing, (laughs) this is not for me, and I really need a full-time job."



Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And he said, "Okay. If you take over responsibility for five of the 10 things that I'm responsible for, I'll give you a full-time job." I'm like, "Okay." So he wrote out this list, and it's really funny, because I was cleaning out my basement the other day and I found the original list that he had written out, wonderful man named Wayne White. And at the top of the list was something he called, uh, was doing all the accounting for the concession stands. I'm like, "I don't do math, so I'm, like, not gonna do all the accounting-"

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: "... for the concession stands. What's the next one?" Second one down was, "Help coordinate the 2,000 volunteer ushers." I'll coordinate ushers. And I went through the whole list. And I, I was at the very bottom of the list, and I picked four things. And remember, he said I had to pick five.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And I'm like, "Damn, I don't know what I'm gonna pick. I don't want to ... I'm not doing accounting for the concession stands." At the very bottom of the list was something that he called, and remember this was-

Philip Dallmann: Years ago.

Betty Siegel: ... many years ago, um, he called "handicap stuff."

Philip Dallmann: Okay. Technical term. (laughs)

Betty Siegel: It's a very technical term. And I said, "I don't know what it is, but it's got to be better than accounting. I'll take it." So he gave me a full-time job and I started doing "handicap stuff," as he called it. What I didn't know until many years later, because I was really young at that point and starting my career and I just thought, "Well, this is what we do," Arena Stage really was a, a mover and a shaker and ahead of the game. Looking back, I realize that what happened to me was I happened to get that opportunity right at the point at which the 1973 Rehabilitation Act regulations were signed and then were coming into the deadline for compliance.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And so the cultural community was confronting for the first time the idea that if you received federal financial assistance, you had to be accessible. And that's what handicap stuff was.

Philip Dallmann: Oh good. (laughs)

Betty Siegel: I know, and I-

Philip Dallmann: Small jump.

Betty Siegel: Just a small jump. So that is-

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: Uh, I was lucky because I happened to be in D.C. Uh, people like Paula Terry from the National Endowment for the Arts were my mentors. People at, um, Gallaudet University welcomed me and taught me about deafness. Um, people from the American Council for the Blind welcomed me and taught me about blindness and low vision. I learned from these amazing people. And that's how I got into the field. And I've stu- stuck with it ever since.

Philip Dallmann: (laughs) And, and we are all better for that.

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, well, and, and that's amazing that, um ... And, and D.C. I will say, um, having lived there for a brief time, um, has that vibe of there is ... Folks are, are willing to share knowledge-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... uh, especially from those organizations-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... that you ... And that hasn't changed over time.

Betty Siegel: No.

Philip Dallmann: You can reach-

Betty Siegel: No.

Philip Dallmann: ... out to any of them and they will guide you. Um, they kind of follow those LEAD principles of-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... um, safe space, no one's getting shamed for-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... wanting to learn.

Betty Siegel: Well, you know, what I've always found true is that with, with folks in the disability community or advocates or, um, educators, politicians even and federal people, federal employees in particular, you know, who are getting a little bit slammed these days. But it's, it's not fair. Federal ... The federal people I know are dedicated and committed individuals. And they are happy to work with you and share with you their knowledge and expertise. I e-, I find that if you are sincere and your intent is good a- and you reach out and people will reach back.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And that's stood me a good stead. I mean, you look at LEAD right now and we have people from the National Federation of Blind, we have people from the American Council for the Blind. And we're in it together.

Philip Dallmann: Yep. And that, and that, you can feel that here.

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Everybody, it's a sense of community.

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: We're here to lift each other up. Um, speaking about LEAD-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... um, it's, uh ... It amazes me that it, we're o-, it's only 19 years young.

Betty Siegel: I know!

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: Well, that's a good way of putting it.

Philip Dallmann: Uh-

Betty Siegel: (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: Because it seems like something that should've been around forever-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... um, in, in, in theory. Um, what was the, the, the catalyst for you to, to want to start this? I know it was however, 20-some-odd people that first year.

Betty Siegel: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: But what was that, what was that spark?

Betty Siegel: Well, I had done a lot of this work for about 10 years in, in D.C. at-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... Arena Stage. And I was really lucky. Um, I got married, however, and moved to Austin, Texas, which I was also very lucky. I love my husband.

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: Um, a- and I realized when I got to Austin that the awareness around, uh, compliance issues and legislation and regulation was really different outside of the beltway than inside of the beltway of Washington, D.C.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And I started working towards helping the cultural community be more accessible. Ultimately, um, when I came back to D.C. with my husband and got the job at the Kennedy Center, I was like, "I wonder what's different. Like, I've been gone for a while-"

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: "... like seven or eight years, and now I'm back and they're ... And things must've moved right along!" right, because they were moving along so fast where I'd left. And so I got together 25 people, went through my Rolodex, invited them to the Kennedy Center, put them in a room, locked the door-

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: ... seriously, put a bunch of [inaudible 00:19:12] to the wall and said, "We are just gonna sit here and talk, and you don't get up until it's lunch."

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: "And you're coming back and you won't get out until it's dinner, and that's it!" And what we realized was, A, not a lot had changed-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... that field of cultural access had kind of stagnated-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... a little bit. That wasn't because I wasn't in on it. (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: Don't ... That ... Those two things aren't related. It's just that it'd kind of been going along.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And, um, and that this group of 25 people, all doing amazing work in their individual institutions and organizations, they didn't know about one another. I knew about them, but they didn't know about each other.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And they didn't realize that they were all sort of struggling with the same thing. Wonderful woman named Cindy Brown who was part of that first group said, "You know, what's really wonderful is that when I go and talk to the cultural community-"

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: "... I have to explain to them what the value of having people with disabilities in the conversation is all about. And when I go to the, to the disability community, I have to explain to them what the value of having the culture, having cultural i-, culture and cultural arts in their lives is all about." And she said, "In this room, I don't ... I'm not ... I don't have to explain anything."

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: "Done explaining!"

Philip Dallmann: No explanations necessary-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... at the LEAD Conference.

Betty Siegel: So that small con-, group really connected, and they were like, "Let's do it again next year." And I thought, "Well, I am at the Kennedy Center, and that gives me the luxury of being able to convene people, and that seems to be a good role for us."

Philip Dallmann: And it, well, and you know, what was nice listening to Mario-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... um, every year at the opening, um, is he kind of reminds everyone the mission of the Kennedy Center-

Betty Siegel: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip Dallmann: ... which is something I think I forget about sometimes, because you see it as this institution, and you think the Kennedy Center Honors and-

Betty Siegel: Yeah yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... you know, the, a presenting house, and, and in some ways, uh, but you, you forget the, the, the really good mission that you guys live under, um, uh, specific-, uh, we ... One of the, the words this year, uh, was courage.

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: [inaudible 00:21:14]. And I, I love that as a ... And it makes sense. And that I think fits the LEAD Conference-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... so well.

Betty Siegel: Oh yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Um-

Betty Siegel: You know, the ... We were ... Congress created the Kennedy Center as a living memorial to John F. Kennedy. And, uh, leadership of the Kennedy Center now is looking at what are, what are some of the values that were kind of represented by Kennedy, like, um, service-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... which also fits the Ke-, LEAD, uh, Conference really well. I think most of us feel like we're in service to our communities and to our organizations, um, justice-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... which I think ties right into the issues of civil and human rights and disability rights. Um, courage was, is, was also one of them. So all of these things align with I think that LEAD is trying to do.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, absolutely. Um, obviously, LEAD has evolved, uh, from 20 people locked-

Betty Siegel: 20-

Philip Dallmann: ... in a room-

Betty Siegel: Right. (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: ... possibly who have Stockholm syndrome now-

Betty Siegel: Yeah, right. (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: Uh ... (laughs) Uh, uh, but, and it's grown and grown. What, what, what's been, uh, exciting, uh, about the last 19 years? (laughs)

Betty Siegel: Oh my gosh, that's too big of a question.

Philip Dallmann: Oh, what is ... What are a couple of the exciting, uh, things that have happened during the evolution?

Betty Siegel: Well, uh, well, first of all I think that when I started, there wasn't a sense that there was a field around-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... cultural access. Everybody felt like they were just doing it in isolation. And there wasn't a sense that there were best practices or common practices or a common set of standards. And I don't mean the written down kind of standards everybody has to comply with, but just like, the, that the field itself set standards. And I think when a field, when a group of people come together and they sort of start to say, "This is kind of what our expectations are of our own work-"

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... that you ki-, you start to create a field around it. So that field-building I think is really exciting, especially ... And I was just talking to someone, I forgot who, and I was saying that, you know, we're, we're ... What's amazing to me this year and, um, is that we have a really intergenerational group of people here.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And I don't think it can be a field if one generation doesn't, and then it just stops, because that generation is aging out or getting older or just-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... moving on to other work. But once you have this intergenerational idea, you've got that middle group, you've got the younger group. Now you're a field, because you know that it's gonna kind of ... It's being passed on and will continue.

Philip Dallmann: And one of the things I, I, in that same vein, it's, it's been ... And I'm, uh, still relatively new to the field. Um, in general I've only been do- doing this kind of work for I think eight years now.

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: Um, but when I came into it, it was similarly happenstance, kind of fell into it, but now I, I'm meeting folks who, from high school, were like-

Betty Siegel: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: ... "I want to do this."

Betty Siegel: Yes.

Philip Dallmann: And I didn't know it was an option.

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, I, I ... If I had, I probably would've gone to school-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... for this-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... or had, had focused in on it earlier. But now th-, it has become that thing-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... where it's like, you know, you're exposed to it at a younger age, um, inclusion work is just talked about-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... it's much bigger.

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: Um-

Betty Siegel: Think IDEA, Individuals-

Philip Dallmann: Yep.



Betty Siegel: ... with Disabilities Education Act for that, because getting kids out of, uh, the segregated special-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... education classroom and into mainstream integrated classrooms meant that disability was, became a normal part of our normal lives.

Philip Dallmann: Yep. A- and, and then w-, a buddy and, uh, of mine, we were just talking about, um, how when we were younger, it, you know, we just weren't exposed to disability.

Betty Siegel: No.

Philip Dallmann: It's not that there weren't disabled, uh, students-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... with disabilities in, in the school.

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: It just didn't seem-

Betty Siegel: Nope.

Philip Dallmann: Or it ha-, we- ... And s-, uh, that is, you ... That was 100% correct. Um, so, uh, we're headed to Denver next year for the-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... for the-

Betty Siegel: Yes, indeed.

Philip Dallmann: ... 20th anniversary of, uh-

Betty Siegel: Is it 20?

Philip Dallmann: Right?

Betty Siegel: 20, yeah. No, 19. No, what year we ... We're-

Philip Dallmann: Are w-

Betty Siegel: LEAD is 18 years old.

Philip Dallmann: Okay, s- sorry. Oh, that's what-

Betty Siegel: You were a year off.

Philip Dallmann: (laughs)

Betty Siegel: And next year's 19. So we'll have the-

Philip Dallmann: The-

Betty Siegel: ... 19th year. And then in 2020, we're not 100% sure where we will be yet.

Philip Dallmann: Fair enough. I, I, I know there are rumors.

Betty Siegel: There are rumors floating around.

Philip Dallmann: (laughs) Always rumors. Uh, but I, I was just speaking to Carol earlier-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... a- about how excited we are-

Betty Siegel: Denver.

Philip Dallmann: ... to go to Denver and-

Betty Siegel: Yes!

Philip Dallmann: ... Denver Center of the Performing Arts, the amazing work that, that she's done there and they've-

Betty Siegel: Absolutely.

Philip Dallmann: ... continued to done, to do there, and, and around Denver.

Betty Siegel: Yeah, yeah.

Philip Dallmann: There's a lot of amazing, inclusive art happening.

Betty Siegel: I believe some of our earl- ... I ... Early on [Arvata 00:25:55] from-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... uh, Center was a huge participant, uh, in, in, in LEAD. So yeah. Colorado, here we come.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, in that vein, oh, what in your mind or in your greatest hopes-

Betty Siegel: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Philip Dallmann: ... uh, would you like to see for the future of LEAD?

Betty Siegel: For the future of LEAD, I would ... Well, I'd like to see it continue to grow.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: Obviously, you know, seeing the numbers increase steadily every year validates that it, uh, its position in the field as a leader and as a place to go. You know, you mentioned, "If I'd only known about it, I would've studied this." Well, there's no college or university-

Philip Dallmann: Mm.

Betty Siegel: ... that will confer a degree on you as a cultural access person.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: And so LEAD is the place where people come to learn-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Betty Siegel: ... what it, what that means or what are the best practices. Um, so I guess I would kind of like to see LEAD continue to grow and to sort of find that way to reach back into that academic field.

Betty Siegel: You know, every college or university arts administration program should be required to provide a course on access and inclusion that focuses on the issues and needs of people with disabilities, because it's when you're a young arts administrator that you are forming your ideas about how your culture of your organizations as you move into your careers are gonna work. And access should be a part of what you just think about in the same way that you think about budgets and you think about, uh, donors and you think about development and you think about administration and boards. Access should be one of those things.

Philip Dallmann: Should absolutely be on that checklist.

Betty Siegel: So that would be my future.

Philip Dallmann: I think that, that's a great fut-

Betty Siegel: Access U.

Philip Dallmann: Access U. (laughs)

Betty Siegel: (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: That's a ... That's the next podcast, Access University.

Betty Siegel: (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: (laughs) Um, well, Betty, I, I do just want to say thank you-

Betty Siegel: Sure.

Philip Dallmann: ... um, because, uh, you know, how many years ago, back in Chicago at my first LEAD Conference, coming here, um, Lisa Carling introduced me to you, and, um, I ... You're a busy woman. You meet many people. But the fact that, uh, you remembered who I was next year-

Betty Siegel: (laughs)

Philip Dallmann: ... moments later, it meant the, it meant the world to me. And it was-

Betty Siegel: Great.

Philip Dallmann: But it was a, uh ... You've created this warm, welcoming environment, um, and that has become this asset to, to so many people and so many communities. Um, I know that I, I was just speaking to someone, I said my, you know, LEAD for me, I look forward to it every year-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... because it's coming home-

Betty Siegel: Right.

Philip Dallmann: ... with my people. It's my tribe here-

Betty Siegel: That's great.

Philip Dallmann: ... that, um ... And this podcast is founded with the idea that I ... You know, Evan Hadfield asked me, "What do you want, what do you want to do?" I said, "I want to have LEAD year-round."

Betty Siegel: Great.

Philip Dallmann: And, uh, so thank you.

Betty Siegel: Let's do it.

Philip Dallmann: Thank you so much.

Betty Siegel: Excellent.

Philip Dallmann: And you are truly an Access Champion.

Betty Siegel: Thank you, Phil.

Philip Dallmann: Thanks again to Betty, uh, for sitting down with us at the popup studio. And thank you again, Betty, uh, for the LEAD Conference, frankly, for, uh, deciding that you wanted to get all those people in a room, um, and now all of those people are well over 400, closing in on five. Soon it's gonna be thousands upon thousands of us, uh, working to, to, to follow this i- idea that everyone should have access, uh, to culture. Um, thank you to all of our popup guests. Um, I'll thank you every week, but, uh, it was ... Again, it was really wonderful to sit down with so many different people and everyone being so generous with their time, um, and sharing their experiences.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, we will be back again next week. Um, thank you to, uh, Matt Kerstetter, our producer, making us sound great every week, uh, our theme song from Eric Walton Music, and of course our champion intern, Miss Kelsey Rose Brown, who worked overtime this past week down at the conference, so shout-out Kelsey. Uh, as I said, we'll be back next week. And remember, inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.