

Philip D.: 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. Uh, we got another great episode for you this week, I'm really, really excited to sit down with Courtney Overton, uh, from the D.C. area, a speech-language pathologist down there, um, and originally from Burlington, New Jersey. Uh, Courtney and I grew up together, and, um, I think one of the coolest things, um, you can have, um, in this age of social media I guess is, uh, the ability to, to see, uh, sort of the overview of everyone's journey.

Philip D.: Um, and as I dove into this world of, uh, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion, in a sort of cultural arts, uh, standpoint, uh, it was really interesting to see her journey, uh, as she moved, um, into this world of speech-language pathology. Uh, Courtney and I, uh, did theater together growing up, um, for years and years. She has a, an amazing, amazing voice, um, but it is also just a, an incredibly, uh, empathetic person, um, and, um, I think you're gonna really, uh, interested to hear the work that she's doing, uh, the research that she's doing, um, and the potential impact that it can have, um, long-term for, uh, many folks in our country, mm-hmm (affirmative), and, and everywhere for that matter. Uh, so really excited to share that.

Philip D.: Uh, before we get to that interview I have a bit of a call to action for all of our listeners. Um, we have a, some potentially, uh, exciting opportunities for the podcast coming up, um, wh- which is really, really great. Um, I mentioned a few weeks ago we are an official non-profit now in the state of New York, uh, an- and things in that realm are, are moving forward. Um, one of the things that you can do to help this podcast if you do enjoy listening to it, uh, I'm not going to presumptuous, um, but if you're listening on Episode Twenty Six, which is technically half a years' worth of episodes, uh, you, you are probably invested to some extent. Um, we, we really would love, uh, to invite more folks, uh, to the party. Um, so if you have the ability, uh, and the time to, to share this podcast on whatever, social media platforms invite your friends, you know, Facebook has a really nice invite your friends to like this page situation. Um, you know, tag us maybe in a Tweet to share with your friends on Twitter.

Philip D.: Um, we really just wanna boost how, how many folks we're reaching, uh, consistently, uh, because I think these are great conversations to share. I mean I, uh, spoke last week about how grateful I am, I am that, you know, we've got, you know, six months' worth of episodes now of folks, um, willing to share their journey, their experience, uh, the work that they're doing, um, an- and, uh, the hopes that they have for, for their fields, uh, so, uh, I think worth sharing. So across the board we are at Access Champion, um, and as always, uh, if you have, uh, either a thought you'd like to share feel free to tag us on social media, or email us at [accesschampion@gmail.com](mailto:accesschampion@gmail.com), uh, we're always down to chat. Um, you know, we have the long running, uh, hashtag soft inspiration point conversation, uh, but we- we're open to diving into so many other things as well. Um, there's so much going on as you can see, we've come back to different

themes, uh, over the past few episodes, um, in the world of decolonization, and youth advocacy, and so on, and so on.

Philip D.: Um, also a little bit of a preview, in a few weeks we will also have, um, Michelle Bishop, uh, will be rejoining the podcast as we head into, uh, voting time. Um, so, uh, if you haven't, uh, listened to her episode before, um, you go ahead and give it a listen. It is technically Episode Eleven, uh, The Voracious Voting Rights Defender, Michelle Bishop, give that one a listen, and, and in a couple weeks we're gonna have her back on, uh, to chat a little bit about, uh, some different voting things heading into the election. And that's all of our business, so, uh, without further ado Access Champion Courtney Overton.

Philip D.: All right, and we're here with Courtney Overton, uh, a fellow, um, Burlingtonian, uh, (laughing) uh, thanks for joining us, Courtney.

Courtney O.: Thanks for having me.

Philip D.: Uh, so I'm, I'm incredibly fascinated, um, to, to hear a little about your journey into, uh, speech-language pathology because, uh, m- the last time, I mean many, many years ago, I remember talking to you, uh, in high school about, (laughs) uh, what your, you were intending to do. It was, uh, I believe heading to be a dentist, correct?

Courtney O.: Yeah-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... that's correct, I'm surprised you remember. (laughs)

Philip D.: Uh, so how, how do we get (laughs) from there to here?

Courtney O.: Yeah, so I guess you could say I've always been fascinated with the mouths, (laughing) um, so, uh, Phil and I met in high school, and we were doing lots of theater, so I've always been interested in, uh, different ways that you can use your voice, and different ways that you can use your mouth. So I do, um, still enjoy singing in the shower, in the car. Um, and then I transitioned and I said I wanna be a dentist when I grow up, and I observed lots of different dentists, um, in the chapter, the area, so I got to see what it was like day-to-day.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: And then once I entered, um, undergrad at the University of Pittsburgh, and I started taking all of the prerequisite classes like chemistry, and biology, I realized that I really didn't wanna go on that sciency fact. So-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... I was trying to kind of find myself, and I didn't really know what I was doing. Um, so University of Pittsburgh has great resources, I actually went on something called a Reflection Retreat during the second semester of my freshman year, and during that retreat, uh, you go away to the, to the mountains, uh, at a ski resort, and you do different meditation techniques, and, um, reflect on how did the previous semester. You also take, uh, one of those test that tells you what you should be when you grow up-

Philip D.: Okay.

Courtney O.: ... so I actually took that test, and speech-language pathology was on the list, I had never heard of it.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: So, um, immediately I, you know, opened my laptop, got on the computer, started researching what it was, and, um, similarly to high school I reached out to different SLP's to figure out what they did day-to-day-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... and that way I was able to see, um, I was able to observe SLP's in different settings. So I got to see what it was like to work, um, in a school, uh, I mean on elementary school, and I also got to see what it was like to work in a private practice.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: And, um, I just fell in love with it, and, so I've been studying it ever since, and that was in, uh, spring of 2007.

Philip D.: Oh, wow. Uh, so-

Courtney O.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip D.: ... let's see. (laughs) And, and as I, uh, as I pulled up your bio on the, uh, the Speech of Cake website, uh, yo- you've, you've been completing a, a few degrees along the way. Um, so you, you also went to Emerson, right?

Courtney O.: Yeah, so I finished University of Pittsburgh, and I actually, um, took a year off from school because I wasn't really ready to dive back in-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... um, so I actually worked as an instructional assistant at a private school for kids with autism, and that's where I learned a lot about the principles of ABA-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... applied behavior analysis, and I was able to learn more about how I can use that, that, um, type of therapy in my therapy as an SLP. And during that time I also took night classes to study for the GRE, which you have to take to get into grad school. So saving money, studying, you know, that whole year was a good year for me to take off, and I applied to lots of different grad schools along the East Coast, and I got into Emerson, which is in Boston. So then I, uh, I traveled to Boston, and I lived there for two years, and, um, I learned a lot about how to be a practitioner. Um, you know, I learned a lot of the foundation, and the theories, at University of Pittsburgh as an undergraduate, and then once I got to Emerson they have a great clinical program, actually had an internship in lots of different settings each semester. So I got to see, and I got to actually work, you know, as a, as graduate clinician-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... and that's where I was able to, um, really focus on what I liked, and what I didn't like in the, in the field.

Philip D.: That's, that's fantastic. Um, and actually in a, a small world our, uh, the podcast intern, uh, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, uh, just started the, uh, graduate speech-language path- pathology program at Emerson, uh, this fall.

Courtney O.: Oh, nice.

Philip D.: So, uh-

Courtney O.: Excellent.

Philip D.: Yeah. And she, it's tough, uh, she said, uh, but, uh, she's seems to really love it. She is dreading, uh, the Boston winter, she's from Kentucky, uh-

Courtney O.: Oh, no. (laughing)

Philip D.: ... um, and I-

Courtney O.: Yeah, it's-

Philip D.: ... uh-

Courtney O.: ... gonna probably start snowing in like two weeks. (laughs)

Philip D.: Yeah. (laughs) I told her, I was like, "Just get a coat, just get, get the biggest coat you can-" (laughs)

Courtney O.: Right.

Philip D.: "... and some boots." Um, but, uh, yeah, she's, she's a little bit nervous about that, but. Um, so that, that's fantastic. Um, now, you know, a- th- there you mentioned earlier, um, you know, looking at both, uh, in school and private practice, um, it, it appears that you are in private practice with Speech of Cake. Um, what, uh, what led you to that, to that move?

Courtney O.: Yeah, so after I graduated Emerson I got a job at an elementary school in New Jersey-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... and I really loved it. I learned a lot about, um, what it is to be school SLP, and managing different caseloads, and, uh, learning more about different disabilities.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: And then after about a year and a half I moved to the DMV, and I-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... got a job in Virginia, in Alexandria, Virginia at another elementary school, and I learned even more. Um, I feel like that's when I really got to hone in on my articulation skills, and, um, I'm really good remediating the R sound, which is really funny because a lot of SLP's hate doing that-

Philip D.: Hmm.

Courtney O.: ... um, but I'm really good at it, (laughing) uh, 'cause I did it lot in, in that specific elementary school. Um, it seemed like every kid was referred for, um, the R sound.

Philip D.: Okay.

Courtney O.: Um, and then after a little while, um, after feeling like I'm, you know, I'm, I know what I'm doing, I know the profession pretty well, uh, I have my solid ground. I felt like I was ready to start branching out and doing my own thing, so that was in October of 2017, so we just celebrated our two year anniversary.

Philip D.: Congratulations.

Courtney O.: Um, my ... Thank you. Uh, I started Speech of Cake, and it was more so, uh, because in my specific school district, uh, we don't get paid over the summer, so I said well, I don't wanna. You know, that previous summer I worked at the Barista, the previous, um ... Uh, excuse me. The summer before that I just saved money, and I sat at home, and watched talk shows, and-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Courtney O.: ... I was just like I don't wanna do this anymore, I'm ready to, um, make my mark-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... so I said I'm gonna start a business, and it's only gonna be in the summer during the months that I don't get paid, or am not working.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: Um, so I built that foundation in the fall, you know, with, um, the different, uh, incorporation, um, forms, and the different, you know, opening your own bank account, building-

Philip D.: Oh, yeah.

Courtney O.: ... a business.

Philip D.: It's a, it's a-

Courtney O.: So-

Philip D.: ... whole-

Courtney O.: ... um-

Philip D.: ... process.

Courtney O.: Oh, yeah-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Courtney O.: ... it took a couple of months.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: And, um, I was actually sharing a classroom at the time with a special education teacher, and her name was Leigh Hutchison, and she came to me, um, at the end of December, and she said, "You know I really think that we should pair, and we should do this thing together." And at the time I had been listening to a lot of different podcasts like StartUp that says-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... that businesses do very well when they have co-founders.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: So at first, you know, I was apprehensive like okay, I'm going to it. Another marriage, I don't know if it's-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Courtney O.: ... gonna be a good idea, but, uh, I felt that it would be a good pair because we could push each other, you know, and-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... if somebody doesn't wanna do something the other person can do it. Um, it also helps with startup costs when you have two people putting in their money-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... to establish something together. So I agreed to it, but also at the time I was studying for the GRE again because I was applying to, um, doctorate programs. So I said, "Uh, just give me like one more month, I'm gonna take the GRE in a little bit, and then we can start meeting." um, and, so basically in February of 2017 we started meeting every week, um, to develop our Summer Enrichment Program.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: And, so we started the Summer Enrichment Program in summer of 2017, and, uh, we got a great space at one of the local churches, so we were able to rent a few classrooms there, uh, at a low cost, which was awesome.

Philip D.: Great.

Courtney O.: And we just took off with the marketing, you know, we used different things like, um, sharing our website to different, um, social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, and we also posted flyers all around town to different places like, you know, the Panera's and that Starbucks types of places. You know-

Philip D.: Any, any place that a, a parent or caregiver might be, yeah, that sounds-

Courtney O.: Yeah-

Philip D.: Yeah.

Courtney O.: ... exactly. So (laughing) we were really excited, and, um, in May of 2017 we still hadn't had any clients, so we were freaking out.

Philip D.: (laughs)

Courtney O.: We're like oh, we just spent all this money, and all this time, and we're not getting any bites, and we were pretty devastated, um, so we said we're gonna have like a little meet and greet. So since you, since the business is called Speech of Cake we said that we were gonna be at a local Starbucks, and we'd pass out cake tops, and we'd answer different ques- different questions about the program. And, so we were all excited, we showed up, you know, like three hours early, we bought all the cake tops they had, we had our flyers, which we spent hundreds of dollars on, our business cards, and nobody showed (laughs) up.

Courtney O.: So of course we're just like oh, are, are we making the right choice? We were freaking out even more, and, you know, months and months went by, and, um, I also got married at the end of May of last year, so-

Philip D.: So not busy-

Courtney O.: ... I planned-

Philip D.: ... at all? Like- (laughs)

Courtney O.: Yeah, exactly. (laughs) So I'm like, I'm spending all this money on the business, you know, the, the wedding is a lot of money too, and I was like, "What am I gonna do? I'm running out of money." (laughs)

Philip D.: Isn't it surprising-

Courtney O.: Um-

Philip D.: ... how quickly, uh, wedding costs add up? I'm, I'm in the process right now, uh, of, I'm getting married next May, and, uh-

Courtney O.: Okay.

Philip D.: ... and, uh, that budget just keeps growing and growing. (laughs) And-

Courtney O.: Yeah, you're-

Philip D.: ... and things cost-

Courtney O.: ... like oh, I gotta get favors, I gotta-

Philip D.: Yeah.

Courtney O.: ... buy these little napkins, and it's like by the time you look at it you're, you're used all your money-

Philip D.: Yeah. (laughs)

Courtney O.: ... and you still have so much m- so many more things to purchase.

Philip D.: Exactly. (laughs) It, uh-

Courtney O.: So-

Philip D.: ... it always feels like-

Courtney O.: ... unless-

Philip D.: ... something co- everything costs a little bit more than it should in my head as well. I'm always-

Courtney O.: Right.

Philip D.: ... like this shouldn't be, this should definitely be at least \$200.00 less than this, (laughs) like, um-

Courtney O.: Yeah, it was, it was a little point for me. (laughing) So, uh, Leigh and I, we actually, we're like oh, well, I guess it's not gonna really take off this summer, so then we looked into a local restaurant, and we applied to be waitresses. And we said, you know, we're gonna, you know, keep pushing, but, you know, we still need to get through the summer, so we'll look for something. And, um, the Summer Enrichment Program was supposed to start, uh, the first week of July, so by June we applied for jobs for the summer, and we got them. And then, um, school ended probably like the third week of June, and I just, you know, relaxed that last week of June because we didn't have anything to prepare for for the first week of July, so it was just more of a relaxation point.

Courtney O.: And actually got a call at the end of June, and we got our first client finally. So it was ... So I said, "You know, I'm not going to commit to this, um, job as waitress, I'm just gonna keep pushing with the business." and, um, it just took off from there. So then after we got that first call at the end of June of 2017 we basically got a call every week. So word of mouth is real-

Philip D.: Oh, absolutely.

Courtney O.: ... um-

Philip D.: Especially-

Courtney O.: Yeah.

Philip D.: ... um, in the world of cognitive and developmental disability. I feel like, I feel like mom's talk, uh, and they-

Courtney O.: Yeah, exactly.

Philip D.: ... and they, and they share when something's good.

Courtney O.: Right, right. So we had a really good price for our program, so, um, since I'm a speech-language pathologist and Leigh is a special education teacher-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... we really wanted to pair our interests. And, so I worked, I focused on the speech and language skills-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... so I worked on articulation, as well as expressive and receptive language, and Re- uh, Leigh worked on the reading, writing, and spelling skills. So we had a program, it was a six, I think it was a four week program from nine to 12, and we catered to, um, parents that, you know, their kids may have had an IEP, or they may have not, it really didn't matter.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: It, it was more so geared to people that didn't want to regress over the summer.

Philip D.: Okay.

Courtney O.: So a lot of times, um, in our school district you can qualify for something called Extended School Year services, and, so that really looks at the disability, and if they have any critical life skills that they need to maintain over the summer then they'll qualify. But a lot of kids don't qualify for it, so parents say, you know, my kid is below grade level in reading, but they don't qualify for services at school, but we don't really wanna put them in a traditional camp either-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... so we're ... You know, it was a good model because we were, we were, um, we were in a, in a position where we had something that wasn't being offered at the time.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative), mkay.

Courtney O.: So, um-

Philip D.: That's great.

Courtney O.: ... we really ... Yeah, it was good, and we had ... We ended up with about nine kids last summer.

Philip D.: That's fantastic, that, that's-

Courtney O.: Yeah, it was good, yeah.

Philip D.: From, from zero to nine in no time at all, that's wonderful. Um, and now I know that you are also at University of Maryland, correct?

Courtney O.: Yeah, so I'm still working, I'm part-time, part-time, part-time, and I say that three times-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Courtney O.: ... because I have three part-time jobs. True Millennial-

Philip D.: Oh, yeah.

Courtney O.: ... um, a-

Philip D.: I, I know-

Courtney O.: (laughs)

Philip D.: ... that struggle. (laughs)

Courtney O.: So, um, I'm still working for the local school district part-time-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... and I'm really loving that. So I'm not in middle school now, I'm, um, expanding so I can learn more about the different levels of education.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: And my second position is Speech of Cake, um, so that is actually, um, part-time as well. Wh- Uh, my office in Alexandria is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays-

Philip D.: Okay.

Courtney O.: ... and then on Mondays and Wednesdays I'm at the University of Maryland. So I just started at the University of Maryland about two months ago, and I'm on a research project here-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... and we're researching, um, we're researching African-American English. So a lot of times, um, students that speak a different dialect or are diagnosed as

having a language disorder, and, um, it's very important to be culturally and linguistically, um, responsive to different, to the fences because-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... you know, we can't diagnose everybody with a disorder just because they're different from us.

Philip D.: Yeah.

Courtney O.: So we really wanna make sure that, um, when SLP's are touching kids that's having a speech and language disorder, and determining if they do have a disorder, that they take into account, um, dialectical differences. So we're basically making, um, we're ... It's hard to explain so that it's not in technical terms, (laughs) but-

Philip D.: It's okay, we can-

Courtney O.: ... it's basic-

Philip D.: ... put definitions in the podcast. (laughs)

Courtney O.: Okay. (laughs) Um, it's basically creating, uh, new norms based on African-American and English dialect.

Philip D.: Okay, that's ... And, and would this, uh ... This research would then be distributed to SLP's everywhere so that they know when coming into an evaluation, uh, that they, this should be in consideration in addition to everything else to make sure that they're making an accurate, um, diagnosis, right?

Courtney O.: Yes, exactly, and we're looking at language samples from all over the country because even within that dialect you do have differences, um, based on regions.

Philip D.: Oh, yeah, abs- I'm sure, absolutely. I, I mean we have ... I mean just as a whole in America our regionalisms when it comes to dialects is, a- astounding. Um-

Courtney O.: Right.

Philip D.: ... I'm, I'm s- sure the difference between if, if you would have seen it firsthand going from Boston to Virginia, um-

Courtney O.: Oh, yeah, it's-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Courtney O.: ... been very good. Um, it's been good to go all over the East Coast, and now I'm in graduate school at Indiana University-

Philip D.: Hmm.

Courtney O.: ... and I'm in the distance program my doctor of education. And, so my, my major in my program is called Literacy, Culture, and Language Education-

Philip D.: Hmm.

Courtney O.: ... so that ties into the research that I'm doing at the University of Maryland because we're looking at different cultures, and the way that they use language, and how we can really, um, use those cultural differences in education, and in therapy to enhance their experience. And we'll be able to relate to them, and you use those cultural differences, um, as an asset.

Philip D.: That's amazing. That's, that's really amazing. Um, we, we talked about it a little bit ... Oh, first I wanna say, um, (laughs) as, uh, as I have the Speech of Cake site up, um, that, uh, I, I definitely think you made a great choice with, with Leigh, uh, as a fellow George Mason Patriot as I see in her bio.

Courtney O.: Oh, yes, (laughing) yeah.

Philip D.: I fully support, uh, that partnership. Um, (laughs) um, but, uh, one of the things I'd like to do on here is like, you know, uh, I'm a e- eternal optimist and idealist, um, so for you in the, in the world of, of speech-language pathology, um, an- and you've, I guess you've talked about it a little bit in the research that you're doing, um, what would you like to see i- in the future, uh, of speech-language pathology? An- and I know that's, um, a little broad, but maybe e- even in, uh, sort of the work, the cultural work that you're doing, um, you know, what would you like to see the movement be going forward?

Courtney O.: Uh, so I'm very much ... Um, we studied lots of different theories in my first year of my doctorate program, and I was just really tied to the critical theory, which ties to social justice. So I'm very much, uh, passionate about social justice in terms of, uh, students that are different from one another, so not only cultural differences, and ethnicities, but also, um, students with disabilities. So my, um ... I'm doing research now for my doctorate on, um, critical literacy theory, and that looks at the way that, um, different marginalized groups are represented in literature.

Courtney O.: So I really want, um, I really want more, uh, people with disabilities and cultural backgrounds to be represented in literature because, um, I always say, uh, you know, when you're looking at a group photograph the first person that you're looking for is yourself, and if you don't see yourself in literature, you don't see yourself in your educators, then it's gonna be a, a bigger challenge for you to identify with the material that you're learning from, and the people that you're

learning from. So I think it's really important for, um, marginalized and minority groups to re- to be, uh, represented in the materials that they're learning from.

Philip D.: 1000% agree. Um, we've talked about that a little bit on the podcast, just the, the importance of representation-

Courtney O.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip D.: ... um, i- it can't be, uh, overstated. Um, and, uh, uh, we're, I think it was few episodes ago we were talking, and I, you know, I, I've said, um, a couple times, uh, you know, it's a, um, it's something I never considered growing up, um-

Courtney O.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip D.: ... but that is as a straight white male, uh, who doesn't identify as having a disability. Everything was written for me, um-

Courtney O.: Right.

Philip D.: ... and everything was made for me. And, so looking at it no- uh, through this lens over the last decade or so now, um, seeing that gap, um, for all these other communities is astounding. Um, and, uh, I, I'm so happy that there are people like you, um, and other folks out there, that are working towards, um, fixing that, and filling that gap, an- and making things more evenly distributed, so that a- you know, as we look at the country, you, we should all, we should all be able to find ourselves in literature, um-

Courtney O.: Right.

Philip D.: ... but we, we have so, so much to make up for. Um, and, uh, I know at times I, it seems overwhelming, but I just, uh, you know, as someone's that's now ... So you're what? What are we? I wanna count here, we have two master's, and, and pursuing a doctorate? Uh, I, I feel-

Courtney O.: Oh, no.

Philip D.: Well-

Courtney O.: Undergrad, um, so bachelor's, um, master's, and now I'm pursuing a doctorate.

Philip D.: Still, and, uh, uh, business owner, researcher, I have great confidence, uh, that you are, uh, going to help fulfill that gap, and help make that difference. Um-

Courtney O.: Thank you.

Philip D.: ... when ... Uh, I always like to sort of wrap up these interviews by sort of spreading the love a little bit, um, and, uh, I like to think that it all comes back

around to everyone. Um, is there anyone out there that you'd love to, um, highlight, or, or mention, uh, that you think is doing really great work?

Courtney O.: Yeah, definitely. Um, I am in a group chat with two of my best friends, and, uh, one of them, she and I went to the University of Pittsburgh together, her name's Christina, and the other her name's Ana-Maria, she is, uh, here in D.C., and she and I went to Emerson together. So the three of us are all SLP's, we're all working, um, in the schools. So Ana works for a D.C. public charter high school, um, as you know I'm in Virginia-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Courtney O.: ... and, uh, Christina is in Maryland. So we've got the whole DMV-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Courtney O.: ... and we also are, uh, private practitioners, so we all have opened our own private practice in the last year or so, year or two. And, so we all bounce ideas off of each other constantly, we're always texting each other, asking each other, um, questions like okay, this happened today, what do you think about that? So I really wanna shout out Christina, and, uh, Christina, her private practice is called Play on Words Therapy. And-

Philip D.: Hmm.

Courtney O.: ... Ana who's private practice is called [Rose 00:30:54] Therapy, and she's a bilingual, uh, speech-language pathologist. And Christina specializes in, um, augmentative and alternative communication devices, and she also, um, specializes in, uh, younger, younger children that are, you know, learning their first words.

Philip D.: Fantastic. Uh, well, thank you again, Courtney, for taking, uh, the time to come on the podcast and chat. Uh, I am incredibly fascinated by the research that you're doing, um, both at University of Maryland, and at, um, at Indiana for your doctorate. So I'm excited to see where all that goes, um, and follow that journey. And, um-

Courtney O.: Thank you.

Philip D.: ... thank you for all the work that you're doing, um, it's, it's incredibly important, and, uh, you are truly an Access Champion. Thanks again to Courtney for taking the time to chat with us, really appreciate it, and really, really excited, um, about all the research you're doing at, um, at ... I don't know if you listeners could tell, uh, uh, but, you know, from s- When you look at things from sort of that, um, macro, uh, social media level where you're just kinda following along and seeing that folks are like oh, they're doing well in their career. Um, it was really great to hear the specific and the details, uh, of the research that

Courtney is doing, um, and it's incredibly exciting, um, it's important work, but it's exciting work as well. Um, so, uh, I'm excited to see, uh, ano- I'm excited to see how many times I can say excited in this altro, uh, bu- (laughs) but also, uh, where the research goes, um, in the future.

Philip D.:

Um, I wanna give a quick thank you to our producer, Matt Kerstetter uh, who makes us sound great each and every single week. Eric Walton for that fantastic theme song, and of course our Champion intern Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown. Uh, we'll be back again next week, and remember inclusion believers never stop running through that brick wall.