

Philip D.: Hello inclusion believers and welcome to the Access Champions Podcast. I'm your host, Dallmann, for this week's journey into the galaxy of accessibility, diversity and inclusion. Uh, we got another great episode for you this week. Um, a couple of our mini interviews from Atlanta, uh, and a special one, uh, that features a guest host champion intern, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown.

Philip D.: Um, first up, we have, uh, that interview, and that'll be with Elena SV Flys, uh, who is an associate professor and researcher at Eastern Michigan University, um, who's looking at, uh, accessibility as a whole, um, in the performing arts. It's a great interview. Um, it was really exciting, um, at the conference, uh, to have Kelsey there and to have the ability to, to, myself, uh, step away and, uh, uh, sit in on a few sessions and, and have Kelsey take the lead, um, and do some interviews. And I think you guys are really gonna enjoy it.

Philip D.: Our other interview this week is with Eileen Bagnall, um, who's the executive director at Artability AZ in out, in, uh, Tucson, Arizona. You know, she's up there with so many folks that are just doing incredibly, uh, amazing work, uh, and have been doing it for a long time. I first met Eileen, um, at the LEAD conference and it was when her and Ruth Feldman, who, uh, you've, guys have heard me speak about before, uh, as one of the, uh, four horsewomen of Access. Um, we're doing, uh, a session called, uh, Great Access Equals Great Customer Service. Um, and, uh, it, you know that sounds so simple, like, common sense, uh, but it was really enlightening. Um, in just how to speak about accessibility as, you know, when we talk about like the human aspect of it all, it was really that. It was that idea of just like these patrons are just like anybody else walking into your institution. Uh, they are humans and they should be treated, uh, i-in the best way possible. You know? You want to put that, uh, best foot forward.

Philip D.: Uh, so really great time, uh, sitting down with Eileen. Um, long overdue. Um. Even though the podcast has only existed six months, it feels like it was overdue. Uh, but it was really great to chat with her. Uh, so I think you guys are really gonna enjoy that.

Philip D.: A couple of business things to take care, um, again, we put out the call the action last week, and I'm just gonna put it, put it out again this week. Um. If you have the opportunity to share the podcast, uh, on social media, um, we have a couple things, uh, a couple of, what it is? Irons in the fire, I guess? Uh. Exciting things happening for the podcast and, um, really just want to spread the word as those things are happening. So if you have the opportunity, Facebook makes it really easy with like invite your friends to like the podcast, um, you just click and, and it sends it to all of them, and hopefully they want to listen. Um, and, uh, you know, on Twitter if you can tag us in a Tweet or share, share our, our, our page and, and our episodes that will be, um, really great and obviously we'd be incredibly grateful. And that's all I have here, uh, so first up, Access Champion Elena SV Flys.

Kelsey Brown: Hello. It is Champion intern Kelsey Rose Brown here at our pop-up studio at the LEAD Conference. We are on the last day and we are with a special guest. I'm gonna get her introduce herself.

Elena SV Flys: Hello. My name is Elena SV Flys, and I work at Eastern Michigan University.

Kelsey Brown: Great. Um, what is your role there?

Elena SV Flys: I teach arts administration, so I am an assistant professor, but my research is in accessibility for the arts and I focus in the performing arts.

Kelsey Brown: All right, awesome. Uh, so what brought you to LEAD?

Elena SV Flys: Uh, well I've always wanted to come and the only problem is that I usually go to the conference that is [Atha 00:04:19], and it's usually at the same time. So I'm always like struggling with that.

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Flys: So this is my first year and I'm really excited about it. Um, actually I met [Tallery 00:04:28], uh, what was it? A year ago in a [symposium 00:04:32] that she organized in Kentucky, and I was al-

Kelsey Brown: Oh, I was there, too.

Elena SV Flys: Oh, yeah.

Kelsey Brown: (laughs).

Elena SV Flys: And so we were thinking, and I was thinking about coming and she was like, "You definitely have to come here. You're gonna meet a lot of nice people-"

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Flys: "You're gonna learn a lot, and know what everybody's doing in terms of accessibility." And she was right, uh, and that's why I came. And I'm here with my husband, too. And it, so far so good.

Kelsey Brown: Great. Um, have there been any sessions that have really stood out to you?

Elena SV Flys: Oh, yeah. Uh, I think that there, there were a couple of sessions that I, I was really impressed with. And I was also really happy to see the work that people were doing-

Kelsey Brown: Sure.

Elena SV Flies: And that accessibility's really very important for a lot of people. So, I would like to highlight, for example, the one that I went to yesterday, and I can't remember now the name, but it was organized by Stacy from the Kentucky Arts Center.

Kelsey Brown: Oh yeah.

Elena SV Flies: It was really, really helpful. Uh, they gave a lot of material, they gave a lot of practical insights that you can carry and bring to your own organization, and that was really useful. Uh, I loved today's one that it was, I'm gonna read it because I have it here, Creating Meaningful Connections with Immigrant Communities.

Kelsey Brown: Oh yeah.

Elena SV Flies: I really loved it. I thought, uh, I went to Roger's and Ann afterwards and I said, "You guys have touched all the topics that are important for me." I'm an immigrant myself and I do access, I mean, I'm really involved with accessibility and it was all in one package.

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Flies: They had such a beautiful project that I really want to try to, you know, bring to Michigan. And so they gave me a lot of good ideas. It was wonderful to hear the stories, but also really incredible to be able to connect with them after LEAD, because they were very open-

Kelsey Brown: Sure.

Elena SV Flies: About that. And the other one that I would like, I did love the workshop. I did a workshop in-

Kelsey Brown: Oh, great. Which one?

Elena SV Flies: Audio description.

Kelsey Brown: Oh, audio description. Great.

Elena SV Flies: Yeah. The art of words and it was really fun.

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Flies: And fun to do. I highlighted, and if someone wants to do a really fun workshop, go to it. It was very good in terms of, you know, um, refreshing the basics of audio description, but at the same time innovating. How can we innovate with audio description? Which brings me to another session that I really enjoyed, that was, oh my gosh, I cannot remember now the name, but it had Alice in it.

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Fls: And we were talking, she was talking about her dance piece and how she was trying to search for a way of describing her dance in different ways. And I connected a lot with that because my research is really based on how can we work with the creators, work with the artists, and really transform access into art. Not transform it, but have access as an aesthetic-

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Fls: In an artistic thing, and the designs from the beginning, right?

Kelsey Brown: Yeah. I loved that.

Elena SV Fls: Yeah.

Kelsey Brown: Uh, so, Elena, what, what's next for you? What, what are your, what are you working on right now?

Elena SV Fls: Well, I'm working right now ... So I just came, which was really fascinating. This summer we were, uh, doing, I did the audio description and the captioning for an international festival in Golden Age Period Theater. And that was really cool. It was the first time that [Amodrel 00:07:45] is a festival from Spain, and it's a very famous festival. It was the first time that they were having, uh, full inclusivity within the creative group, so we had actors that had disabilities. And we also did audio description, captioning, touch tours, tactile tours, sensory-friendly, so we did the whole package.

Kelsey Brown: Ah, I love it.

Elena SV Fls: That was really fun, and now in December I'm gonna do the accessibility for James and the Giant Peach, and it's gonna be the first time that EMU, uh, brings a lot of the access services.

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Fls: And so I'm excited about that because we are going to have students participate in that. And the whole idea is that not only we do it on a basic-

Kelsey Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Elena SV Fls: But that we create an access class that students will take as arts administrators or theater designers so they can really be aware of accessibility from the very beginning and start incorporating those into their projects.

Kelsey Brown: Oh, that's awesome.

Elena SV Flys: Yeah.

Kelsey Brown: Good to hear. Uh, before, before I let you go back to the conference, um, are there any Access Champions that are, uh, fighting the good fight that you'd like to give a shout out to?

Elena SV Flys: Oh. I will definitely, first of all, I would definitely want to give a shout out to the Kennedy Center, and thank you for organizing this. That was wonderful. And Betty, and Tallery, I would definitely want to say thank you, Tallery for everything you've done for me. And also Stacy from the Kentucky Art Center. Uh, Roger, uh, Ideishi and Anna Pern. I love their project. And I also would like to give a shout out to everyone that is starting. Thank you for, you know, uh, for being interested in this, and that we are all learning and it's wonderful that we are all learning.

Kelsey Brown: Definitely. Well, thank you so much, Elena, for talking to us, and I'm sure we'll connect again soon.

Elena SV Flys: Perfect. Thank you.

Philip D.: Thanks, Elena, and thanks, Kelsey, for, uh, taking on, uh, that interview. Um, and, uh, we'll definitely be having more, uh, uh, of those, uh, guest hosts options in the future. Uh, there's so many people out there, you know, Kelsey included, uh, that I think would be great, uh, in just driving the conversation. And also, you know, at some point you guys are gonna get tired of hearing my voice. (laughs). Uh, so, uh, keeping the ball rolling, uh, next up, Access Champion Eileen Bagnall.

Philip D.: All right, and we are back at the pop-up studio here at the Kennedy Center LEAD Conference in Atlanta. And I am joined by Eileen Bagnall, uh, and I'm gonna let her give her title with her organization.

Eileen Bagnall: I'm the executive director of Artability AZ. We are a statewide arts access organization.

Philip D.: Fantastic. And AZ stands for Arizona.

Eileen Bagnall: Correct.

Philip D.: (laughs). Um, so how many LEAD conferences is this for you?

Eileen Bagnall: 17 or 18. I believe this is 19.

Philip D.: Oh, I think you win.

Eileen Bagnall: And I've made it to all but the very first one. However, my organization is a founding member, so [crosstalk 00:11:12].

Philip D.: There you go.

Eileen Bagnall: Points there.

Philip D.: Yes, you do. That's fantastic. I think, yeah, I think you win out of everyone that we, we've talked to so far. I think, I think you are the, the Champion LEAD attendee.

Eileen Bagnall: Excellent.

Philip D.: Um. So obviously, I, and since you [inaudible 00:11:26], I actually want to get your perspective. Um, you know, we, we spoke to Betty earlier and we were talking about, um, it's, in case this episode airs first, Betty Siegel, founder of, of this conference, um, about the evolution of LEAD. And-and, uh, how it has grown. And wh-, and what have you seen over the last, uh, 18, uh, years?

Eileen Bagnall: What's been really exciting is sessions have moved from this is what access means, this is how you serve a person with a vision disability and hearing and mobility, to very, it was very, very basic in the beginning. This was before audio description, um, this was before captioning started-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: So that was presented-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: I think it was at only at the second year. Um. And it's now moved to incredibly in-innovative programs, ideas, really pushing the field forward, but yeah, there's clearly been an evolution in the last two decades.

Philip D.: Yeah. No, I-I, the, that's, yeah, and I think what you've described is it became that. It went from having to define access-

Eileen Bagnall: Right.

Philip D.: To now, like, the, the, the small details and having standards of audio description and having, and like, the new technology that comes into play with, with our ever evolving world of technology. Um. And I'll say what I, for me, the last couple of years, um, expanding what access means, um, and-and sort of seeing some sessions go, um, towards like financial inclusion and, within the disability community. Like, breaking it down and access on different levels. I think it is really interesting a-as well.

Philip D.: So, uh, you are at-at a tremendous arts organization in Arizona. What, um, break us down a little bit about what, uh, what you guys do.

Eileen Bagnall: Well, we do quite a few things-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: In the world of arts access. We'll come and meet your staff, meet with your staff, and talk through any issues that they're-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: Going through, give them some solutions, help them connect the disability community if they feel that they don't have an avenue. Uh, we do trainings. In a couple weeks when we go back, we have a whole day training. And we're looking at creative aging and volunteer management. Um.

Philip D.: Fascinating.

Eileen Bagnall: And deployment for people with disabilities, rather it's for a job position or an internship.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: We partner with, um, Arizona Commission on the arts, they're our biggest fan, and they helped start our organization.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: And we're the go-to resource in the state. We also provide services. So we can provide captioning, audio description, ASL interpretation, or we can come in and train your staff on captioning or audio description. Um. So we're kind of full-rounded.

Philip D.: So you do everything (laughs).

Eileen Bagnall: We try.

Philip D.: That was, yeah, I mean-

Eileen Bagnall: We try.

Philip D.: That, uh, there are not enough hours in the day it feels like. Uh. That is, that is amazing. You are, uh, that is so a holistic approach to, to access. That's great. It's, it's, you're not only working just in sort of, uh, the standard arts access, th-, you know, captioning, but you're also looking in the world of employment, which is fantastic, um, and so needed. Um. Our first episode was the supporting transitions group that is, uh, working on employment for cognitive and developmental disabilities in cultural institutions in New York. And the statistics that they were throwing out for general unemployment rates, uh, for individuals

with disability or, um, underemployment, as well, um, were staggering. So, and- and I know so many organizations have that fear, right, of-of not being able to accommodate an in-, uh, an individual with a disability.

Eileen Bagnall: Or it's just they don't, they don't know what it is, so let's just ignore that.

Philip D.: (laughs).

Eileen Bagnall: It's much easier to just hire anybody than really to seek, um, someone who needs a position.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: And really kind of thinking outside the box when they hire, where they post positions, and all of that.

Philip D.: Um, I have to, I-I, just 'cause it popped in my head, I want to make sure, uh, I don't let this interview go without acknowledging that you did a session a couple times, uh, with, uh, Ruth Feldman, uh, that is one of my favorite sessions ever in LEAD. Uh, and it was Great Access Equals Great Customer Service. Um. And, uh, if you don't mind giving the elevator pitch of what that meant, 'cause I just think it was, uh, so, um, beautifully simple, in like it just made sense. Um. But, but break us down, break that down for us.

Eileen Bagnall: One of our big tenants of training is always the disability et-etiquette.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: And we always just say, you know, all you need to say is welcome. How may I help you?

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: In a nutshell, someone, if they need assistance, they most likely will ask you.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: But-

Philip D.: Yeah.

Eileen Bagnall: And that's always our approach. Just say welcome.

Philip D.: Yeah.

Eileen Bagnall: How would you welcome, you know, what would you, how would you interact with another patron? Any other patron, because they're just any other patron.

Philip D.: And that's, there you go. It's so simple, uh, but it gets so muddled and so complicated when you start. Like oh well, I need to do this, I should be doing this. And in reality, it's like no. Just say hey, how can I help you? It's amazing. Uh, and it blew my mind when I sat down in that session. I was like, yes. You are correct. Like (laughs) I had never thought about it in that way.

Philip D.: Um, so you're at, we're on our, uh, last day of LEAD, again, this year. It's always, uh, inc- as always it was a great conference. Has anything at this conference stuck with you? Any ideas?

Eileen Bagnall: Yeah, really looking at immigrate, um, immigration communities.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eileen Bagnall: And how someone with a disability who's in an immigration situation, may not be able to fully access services, and how you can help reach out. The program that Robert, Roger [Ideishi's 00:17:27] doing in, um, Three Temple University where he has occupational therapist students coming in and working, and it looks like they're game playing but it's all occupational therapy that they're working with. And then the parents learn how to play these games, and that they're able to give services to their child if there's someone who are a little bit outside the norm or can't physically or financially access services.

Philip D.: Yeah. That's amazing.

Eileen Bagnall: It-it was, it was incredible. It was, and-and again, it's taking these ideas and just blowing them up another step and looking at it, turning in on its head. And really just, you know, how else can this be applied?

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And finding the need. Right? Find-finding where the needs are within co- various communities, right? And-and-and honing in on how to serve that s- that need specifically for that community, I think, is-is so good.

Philip D.: Well, thank you for sitting down. I won't take up any more of your time. I know you're very busy, but I appreciate you sitting down in our pop-up studio as many people are about to come by, and the rest of this footage would probably not be usable. Uh (laughs).

Eileen Bagnall: Well thank you for being here. I'm excited about this podcast.

Philip D.: Absolutely. And you, Eileen, are absolutely an Access Champion.

Philip D.: Thanks again, Eileen for a great conversation and for all the great work you're doing. And thank you to Elena, uh, for all that, uh, work you're doing and the research you're doing. Um, you know, the field only improves with people like the both of you, um, hustling day in and day out to make this stuff happen. Um. I want to say a quick thank you again to our, uh, guest host and our Champion

intern, Miss Kelsey Rose Brown. Uh, always killing the game and always stepping up, uh, just when the podcast needs you to. So, uh, incredibly grateful there. Uh, thank you to our producer, Matt Kerstetter for making us sound great each and every single week. Uh, thank you to Eric Walton for that fantastic theme song.

Philip D.:

Uh, we'll be back again with you next week. We have a ton of great interviews coming up over the next couple weeks. Um, really excited. I'm always excited, but really, really excited, uh, so many sure that you subscribe, uh, follow us on social media @AccessChampion, um, and uh, remember, inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.