

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. Really excited to, uh, launch into season two, year number two, of the podcast. Really enjoyed last week's, uh, mega episode with Evan Hatfield, uh, which, uh, was just fantastic to chat with him. Um, and, we're, we're kind of staying in the same track with our first episode, uh, here of season two, with, uh, Christena Gunther, a fellow Chicagoan, a fellow co-founder of the Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium, um, and really excited to share with you guys her, her journey, and, and, uh, the things that she's been able to facilitate and, and, and create out in Chicago, I, I think, is really, um, astonishing is the word that, that popped to my brain, and, and, I, I mean that in the, the grandest terms, and necessarily in the surprising terms. Because if you spend five minutes talking to Christena, you're never surprised when she just gets things done, um, and, and can dream some big dreams.

Philip D.: So, uh, really excited to share that. Um, in the vein that we were talking about, uh, that we're continuing the Chicago series, I do want to direct you guys to SoundCloud. Um, obviously, we're, uh, available for listening across a variety of platforms, um, the only one that allows us to do Playlist, uh, that I know of, is SoundCloud, and we've curated some playlists, um, on SoundCloud that are topic and region-specific, so, you know, there's a museum one, there's a theater one, there also a Chicago one, so you can follow the Chicago series, or organizational buy-in series. Um, and, and really hone in on, on the different specific topics or specific reading. So, uh, if you are looking to catch up, and, and you have particular interests in mind, go on, head on over to SoundCloud and, uh, it'll be an easier time, and a, a more concentrated, uh, experience.

Philip D.: The other bit of business that we have is that we are opening up suggestions for our next Access symbol or symbols, uh, inclusion symbols, or diversity symbols as well, um, to be added to the, the Access Champion Podcast logo, um, as we head into season two. You can take a look at our current, our current logo, to see what we currently have, but we want to continue to represent, uh, different types of inclusion, different types of access, and, uh, different communities uh across the world. If you look there, and you say, "Hmm, they're missing this one." Uh, go ahead and shoot us an email. We're accesschampion@gmail.com, or you can hit up, hit us up on social media, [@AccessChampion](#) on Twitter and Instagram, and, uh, The Access Champion Podcast on Facebook. Just tweet at us, or shoot us a message, uh, and we're going to start compiling these and hopefully we'll get, uh, at least a couple of new symbols, uh, heading into this new season. Uh, and I think that that.

Philip D.: Uh, so without further ado, Access Champion, Christena Gunther.

Philip D.: All right. And here we are with Christena Gunther, who is the co-, or who's the founder, and co-chair, of, uh, the CCAC out in Chicago. Thank you for taking the time to chat with us, Christena.

Christena G.: Thanks so much for having me. I'm really happy to be here.

Philip D.: Uh, I, uh, I'll say, from, from the jump, I've, uh, long been an admirer of your work. Um, you're up there, uh, in pantheon of sort of my access role models, um, who just get things done, uh, so, I, I was so excited to, to get the opportunity to have you on the podcast.

Christena G.: Oh, that's so nice of you to say. Thank you. I feel the same about you, so, it's mutual.

Philip D.: Uh, so I'd love to hear, because I, I actually, I, obviously, I knew you were in New York for a while, and, uh, just changed the game over in Chicago, uh. I, I'd love to hear a little bit about your journey, um, getting into accessibility, and what that looked like.

Christena G.: Yeah. Um, well, I think going, starting at the beginning, um, I grew up in Wisconsin, um, and so, if I occasionally have a nasally accent, it's from that. (laughing) But, I have a brother who's younger than me who has Down Syndrome, and his name is Travis. Shout out to Travis, who will be very excited to hear his name. Um, Travis is an amazing artist, and also just a wonderful human being, and I'm really happy he's my brother and my best friend. And, um, thanks to him, and my parents, um, I got really interested in accessibility, kind of unknowingly, um, just as we went about our lives. And especially Travis and I really love museums, and theaters, and so, um, as a kid, I think I was already an access coordinator-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: ... Um, I wasn't paid for it... (laughs) So, really, trying to make sure that, uh, wherever we went, um, my brother was included, and was a part of whatever was happening, and that we could all have a really great experience together. And so, I never thought that there was actually a career in that, and so I went into the, to art history, and then in arts administration, and ended up in New York getting my masters degree in arts administration at NYU, and through that I stumbled across a internship at the Brooklyn Museum, and there, um, I was an access intern. And I'd never really heard of accessibility in museums before this, and, um, started to really get a crash course about what accessibility was, and was especially introduced to the work of the Metropolitan Museum-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... and then after I graduated, was able to get a job there working in access. Um, so that was pretty incredible. I still can't believe that that worked out that well. That was probably the only thing in my life that's worked out super easily (laughing), um-

Philip D.: We only get one. We only get one.

Christena G.: Exactly. (laughing) so, that was it, and I'll take it. So, it was a great honor to work at the Metropolitan Museum for many reasons, but most of all, because I got to work with two really great supervisors, Rebecca McGuinness and Deborah Jaffe, and from them learned a lot about accessibility, and really got my next master's degree in, um, in accessibility from them, um, really watching and observing and learning from them.

Christena G.: And then, got involved with Museum Access Consortium in New York, and just got really connected with the access world. That's really pretty strong, especially in museums, in New York-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... and was super pumped, and when I was, found out I would be moving to Chicago, back to the Midwest, I thought, "Well, great. I'll get connected with the consortium in Chicago." And, of course, there really wasn't one, and we were lucky in New York that we had one, and so, I remember joking at a MAC meeting that I would start, uh, a MAC in Chicago, but little did I know that I actually would.

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: So, um, moved to New York, or moved to Chicago from New York, and didn't have a job. I wa-, moved to Chicago with my partner at the time, and so, it kind of made sense for us to be there, but I wasn't sure what I was going to do, and just started doing some informational interviews to hopefully find a job-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... and while I was doing that, um, I also just was talking a lot about accessibility, because that's a part of me that I never turn off. Um, so just was curious and asking lots of questions about what happens in Chicago, what the specific organization would do, and also sort of what Chicago's view on accessibility, and as I was doing all that, it became really apparent that there were some really cool things happening in Chicago, but no one else was aware of what the other cool things were and happening in other organizations. And so, there was just kind of a lack of cohesion, and communication about what was going on. And there also sort of this universal, like, sigh about ac- access, like, "Oh, yeah... "

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: " ... it's really important-"

Philip D.: Oh, I've heard that.

Christena G.: ... Yeah, you're familiar with that sigh, too.

Philip D.: Yeah, just a little bit.

Christena G.: So (laughs), yes, just hearing the sigh, and kind of like, "God, we don't really have the budget. I'm doing this all alone." Um, and certainly those are common, um, complaints you hear from people working in accessibility, and certainly I can relate to that, um, but it was kind of disheartening. I was pretty bummed, the more people I was talking to, like, "Wow, it really doesn't feel like I'm going to find a job, least of all a job in accessibility, um, in museums, or in cultural spaces."

Christena G.: And so, then I was, like, watching a lot of television, trying to figure out what to do, and then just decided to start CCAC in Chicago as a way the maybe segue into a job, but more importantly, to try to kind of perk up my feelings, and feel like we could actually be making ac- accessibility and inclusion a positive thing, and could be really learning and growing from each other, which is something that's really struck me every time I've attended the LEAD conference, as sort of that really, um enthusiasm, and motivation, in, in how we're learning and sharing from each other. And while we might be competitors in other areas, um, as, as cultural administrators, for the most part, when it comes to accessibility, we're really working together to just make it better for everybody. And, so, um, that's really what drove me to get things started. And, like you said, it was so nice of you to say, that getting things done is something that I like to do.

Philip D.: Yeah.

Christena G.: I don't like to just sit and talk in a meeting, and have nothing happen. And so, it was a really cool opportunity for me to really be a leader, whereas in New York I think I'd really been following in a lot of different people's shadows, and learning from really great people. Um, but in Chicago, it kind of felt like I could really start on my own, and just kind of make things work, hopefully better, and more efficiently, and to try to get some stuff done in Chicago, to make Chicago a better, more accessible place.

Christena G.: And so, got connected with really great people at Steppenwolf, Evan Hatfield, as well as Lynn Walsh at the Chicago Children's Museum, at the time, and so the three of us really rolled up our sleeves, and got to work. So, that's sort of the long and short of how I got in Chicago.

Philip D.: And what a fantastic journey. Um, and one that seems ingrained in-

Christena G.: What a ride it's been. Yeah. (laughs)

Philip D.: I know, and it's, uh, but it, accessibility, uh, is so clearly ingrained in your DNA, um, and inclusion-

Christena G.: I know, and I discovered that it actually was, uh, something you could do for a professional career, I think I just pinched myself, and was, like, "Of course, this is what you have to do."

Philip D.: Oh, my God, that is the same feeling I had when, uh, I was working in a terrible job, and saw the listing for the Autism Theater Initiative, and was just like, "What? Someone will pay me to make Broadway accessible? Are you kidding?"

Christena G.: Yeah, all of these things sound so fun. Yeah.

Philip D.: Yeah. Like, I get to go help people?

Christena G.: Let's do it, yeah.

Philip D.: And, and that's pay my rent.

Christena G.: Yeah, it's very-

Philip D.: Like, that's fantastic. Um, so, I, I, um... One, I want, I want to backtrack a little bit is just, um, you mention LEAD, and obviously, I'm a big fan of LEAD, and, and that's where I, I met you, um, but I love the idea that Betty Siegel has really instilled in that conference, which is the idea of collaboration instead of competition.

Christena G.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip D.: Uh, because you're right. In so many ways, or so many other instances, these arts institutions are, are competing for money and they're competing for, uh, audience members, in a lot of ways, but when it comes to access and inclusion, uh, we're just looking to collaborate, and so, when you were reaching out to s- uh, connect all of these, uh, cultural institutions in, in Chicago, um, what was the feedback like once you had this sort of entity, um, that could connect them?

Christena G.: The feedback was, I think, some was positive and some was sort of neutral-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: Nobody was against it at all, but I think, um, some people were like, "Well, good luck to you."

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: And then other people (laughs) were, like, "Wow, this sounds like this could potentially be a little interesting." Um, I, and I think, I had a real advantage just in, um, connecting with Evan and Lynn, who both were pretty connected in Chicago, and Lynn in museums, and Evan in theater, um, to really get the word out that way. 'Cause I was kind of a new person in town, and had definitely, I did probably, like, 30 to 40 informational interviews when I moved here, so I definitely tried to meet lots of different people, but I was sort of an unknown entity, and so having them already be part of this world helped a lot. And I think, um, also kind of helped, they kind of spoke the language of the, of theaters or museums, to try to get people a little more excited about it too.

Christena G.: So, a-, there, people were like moderately interested, and at our first program, which we did sort of an ADA 101 type of session, to try to just start at the, the beginning, and (laughs) get people, really educate people about what their legal responsibilities were, because often, as you know, you hear, when people talk about, like, accessibility, they talk about ADA compliance. And so, kind of starting with what does the ADA compliance even mean, and hopefully pushing people to think beyond compliance to actually start, uh, really including and welcoming everybody, and seeing the ADA as the, the minimum of what we have to do.

Philip D.: So-

Christena G.: And, sorry, and at that session, what I was going to say-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... was just that there were, I think we had like, 75 people who showed up, and it was-

Philip D.: Oh, wow.

Christena G.: ... we had to reschedule because of the polar vortex-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: ... that also hit, um, so that was huge, 'cause it was a re-schedule date-

Philip D.: Which never happens in Chicago.

Christena G.: ... No, I don't know if you've heard, Chicago's always hot. Yeah. (laughing). Yeah, so, um, so we had re-scheduled, and, uh, but we had all those people show up, and so I think that was a good, like, first thing to talk about the ADA, and try to get people coming, and just really take the temperature, so to speak, of where

everybody was. So that was one way to gauge the enthusiasm. And then it was, like, easy from then out.

Philip D.: That's great! Uh, what a turn-out for your first seminar. (laughs) uh-

Christena G.: Yeah!

Philip D.: ... that, yeah, uh, so, when you're, when you go from there, 75 people, uh, at the jump, uh, what type of programming, uh, opportunities did, uh, you guys sort of evolve into?

Christena G.: Well, we thought a lot about it, what to do next-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... and we thought, um, that it kind of made sense to sort of divide up disability into different categories, so, starting with, um, we did people who were deaf or hard of hearing, uh, people who are blind or have low vision, um, people with cognitive disabilities, people with physical disabilities. So, trying to break disability down a little bit. And we didn't have many speakers to choose from. We certainly had no budget. Um, and for a long time, we've had no budget. We have a little bit of a budget now, which is cool. But we had nothing, so, we just had some people who've been to LEAD before, and some people who are doing some interesting things, but for the most part, we were just basically reporting to others what other institutions were doing.

Christena G.: So, um, I can remember being on a panel for people who are blind or have low vision, and be like, "Some museums do this. Some theaters might have audio description. And here's what audio description is. Here's what an audio description kit looks like." So, re- just starting at the basics of sort of what is this disability group, how many people are there, and then talking about different types of accommodations, and whenever possible, of course, trying to also have people with disabilities speaking for themselves about what their experiences were like as well.

Philip D.: And that's so important. Um, I, I talk about that often, where it's, it should never be, uh, just a bunch of people in a room making decisions about another community that's not in the room. Uh-

Christena G.: Right.

Philip D.: ... you don't want to be othered. Um-

Christena G.: Definitely not. And that's something we, we try really hard, and I, are increasingly trying hard to do I think CCAC is to in- insure that people with

disabilities are speaking for themselves, and, and for almost, a lot of the panels we've had recently, or programs we've had, we've, we've just had audience members, um, with people with disabilities sharing their own stories, and those are the most powerful programs by far.

Philip D.: That's fantastic. Uh, so, I mean, that's a, a, an incredible arc. What, uh, if you could give us a, sort of a, a brief overview, what, where is the CCAC right now, um, in, in what it's doing?

Christena G.: Well, we're now in our sixth year, which is amazing, and we've really, um, grown a lot. And most importantly, last year, we incorporated, so we're now a non-profit, and so, um, we're, we're still volunteer-run-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... um, but now we have the ability to fund-raise, which is great. We also, because we're volunteer-run, have a lot more work that we have to do (laughs) to do all of this, um, and to just make sure we're being a really, um, really good n- non-profit, and taking good care of everyone's money that they're giving us.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: Um, but, uh, really where we're headed is to try to, um, keep, sustain where we are. So, we, we offer right now professional development workshops that happen more or less eight times a year-

Philip D.: Yeah.

Christena G.: ... and that also includes, like, networking opportunities, like you were able to come to recently, Phil, at the Second City. So, just getting people in a room together, and getting them talking, and getting everyone thinking about accessibility, and getting connected with each other, um, which is sometimes the most effective way to get things done too, is just putting a face with a name, and getting the conversation started. Then-

Philip D.: Oh, yeah, so you're not just a email address somewhere.

Christena G.: Right. Right. That is, that is key. And, uh, then, also, we have an access calendar, so that lists accessible offerings that are happening in the Chicago area, and that's really a service for people with disabilities, and we hope that they're checking it to see what's audio-described, what's, when there might be a next touch tour. If you're visiting Chicago, you'd know sort of what is happening on a specific day that would be an accessible program or performance.

Christena G.: And then, thirdly, we offer an accessible equipment loan program that we administer through Steppenwolf Theater. And so, Steppenwolf, um, helps to store the equipment, and helps to loan to out, but at no charge, um, to the organization. Cultural spaces can rent different types of equipment, including captioning equipment. It could be audio -description equipment. It could be assisted-listening devices that they're borrowing. And so, they can use that for one day, and then they return it back to us. And that has also been hugely popular in getting people started with accessibility, because-

Philip D.: Oh, yeah!

Christena G.: ... so often you hear, um, um, organizations saying, like, "Well, we don't have an audience." And you say, "Well, perhaps the audience isn't coming because you're not offering them anything." And then, and so, it's sort of the chicken and egg conversation, and so-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... hopefully, by giving them this equipment, they're able to figure out how it works, and how they can actually communicate to the audience that they're offering the service, and then hopefully bringing people to their organization. And we found a lot of success with that, so there's-

Philip D.: Yeah, that's zero-risk as- access-

Christena G.: ... So many... Ex-, exactly. And then the beauty of it too is it's still kind of a pain for organizations 'cause they have to come and pick it up, and they have to return it really fast, because someone else needs it, and so we're also seeing that a lot of these organizations are then budgeting for this equipment for themselves. So, they use it-

Philip D.: Love it. (laughs)

Christena G.: ... and then they buy it themselves, which is exactly what we wa- want to happen. Um, so, we're definitely seeing that happen at lots of different spaces too. So, we basically are offering those three different services, um, for the Chicago region cultural community, and so, just basically sustaining all of that while being a functioning non-profit that is volunteer-run is really where CC, CCAC is headed in the next year or two.

Philip D.: And that was the, the, the great segue to my next question. (laughs)

Christena G.: Oh, good!

Philip D.: Uh, what, uh, would you like... I guess, I think I said before we started recording, I love to give an opportunity for everyone to dream their dreams. Um, what would you like to see for the, the future of the CCAC?

Christena G.: There's a lot of different ways that I think CCAC could go, and we're at an interesting crossroads right now, is we're starting our fundraising efforts, um, but I, I would love to see CCAC continue to grow, and hopefully have, um, maybe a couple of actual staff that could, could work on it. Um, maybe that's me, maybe that's not me. I'm not sure. But I think, um, there is a demand for it, and with the turnover that we see in cultural spaces, and, um, and just with the different types of situations that arise, and we know accessibility's never done, I don't see CCAC as ever becoming obsolete-

Philip D.: Right.

Christena G.: ... Um, and so, I would love to be able to really support it by having some staff, because doing this as a volunteer organization is really great, and this was a, a really essential way for us, I think, to get started, uh, because this has been a passion project for all of the people who are part of it from the beginning. Um, but now, it, I'd love to see that sort of translate into a little bit more of a professional or- professional group, um, and I would also just love to be able to really support our community in other ways.

Christena G.: I've talked about doing sort of an awards or recognition ceremony, or some way to really, um, honor the work that's being done in Chica-, the Chicago region. There's a lot of amazing people doing really interesting things, um, and really finding creative solutions to lots of different access, um, issues that arise. And so, we would love to be able to honor that, and share that, and support them, because so often you hear from cultural administrators just about what a lonely hard road it can be to change your institution and really get them on board, um, with accessibility. And so, we would love to be able to support that in other ways too, and we also get lots of requests from different organizations to go in and do an audit, or to help them sort of one on one, grow their accessibility in their organization, and right now, we're not able to do that type of thing. And so, I would love to see CCAC be able to do that in the future too.

Christena G.: So that's my modest dream. (laughs)

Philip D.: That's a bit an excessive [crosstalk 00:23:22]. Oh, that's, that's a, I think it's a great dream. It's practical. I, I could-

Christena G.: Oh. Good!

Philip D.: ... I could envision the steps along the way.

Christena G.: Good!

Philip D.: You know? Uh, no, you're doing just fine. (laughs) Uh, we've heard some, some much, uh, far, further reaches. Everything is doable, I'll say.

Christena G.: Okay!

Philip D.: And I don't want to tell someone like, their dream's not doable, but I couldn't necessarily envision the steps. (laughs)

Christena G.: Yeah. Exactly. And I'm not sure I know either at this time.

Philip D.: Yeah.

Christena G.: But we also joke with CCAC that our, our next step is also world domination.

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: So, I just throw that in there too.

Philip D.: I love it.

Christena G.: So, that's another plan.

Philip D.: Just, yeah, just small little world domination. No big deal.

Christena G.: Yeah.

Philip D.: Uh, that's amazing. Um, well, I know you work with some wonderful people, and you mentioned a few, Evan and, and Lynn. Um, but are there other folks in, um, either in Chicago or, or outside of Chicago, um, who you think are doing really great work?

Christena G.: Well, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the amazing steering committee that CCAC has.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: We have a great steering committee of cultural administrators and people with disabilities who really are doing (laughs) the work of a staff, um, which is amazing. Um, and so, we have all their names and bios on our website. If you go to chicagoculturalaccess.org, you could check them out. I would list everyone, but I'm sure I would miss one person, and I'd feel horrible. Um, but we have an amazing steering committee, and so that is definitely who I would turn to first for any access queries. In terms of, uh, there so many people right now that are doing really creative access work that I'm kind of at a loss to think about who

specifically to call out, but I would say right now we're really, I'm really proud of what the Shedd Aquarium is doing-

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: ... um, and they have recently received a lot of accolades, which is extremely well-deserved, for their access work. Um, but it's really been the brainchild of a lot of different people, but especially of Kris Nesbitt, who is a part of CCAC's steering committee as well, and um, and Lynn Walsh, who now works at the Shedd Aquarium, and is their access and inclusion manager. And so, they have really worked pretty tirelessly to infuse accessibility into every department of the Shedd Aquarium, so that everyone is considering accessibility and inclusion, and it is not just one person repeating over and over again, that we really should be thinking about people with disabilities.

Christena G.: And so, that has just been amazing to watch that transformation happen. She's been working on it for a long time, but it basically has been like, five years, and it's, like, exploded in terms of accessibility. So that is one, uh, organization I'm super proud of, and really just in awe of.

Christena G.: Another good one in Chicago is the Second City has really, um, taken, taken accessibility and ran with it.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christena G.: Um, they started, they came, I think, two years ago to a CCAC social, which is what we call our, uh, networking event, and though they came, really didn't know much about accessibility, but we were meeting at a bar, at Steppenwolf, down the street from, from where they are. So, they kind of decided to show up. And then, from there, um, just now have been doing audio-described performances, I believe, and doing open-captioning, and are just really excited about accessibility, and doing a really good job about including everyone in what they do. And so, that's awesome, because as we know, Second City can kind of be the, um, sort of the, uh, um, premier example of, like, what Chicago culture is all about. And so-

Philip D.: Oh, yeah.

Christena G.: ... it's cool to see them really, really take that, and especially improvise anything is super hard to do when you're talking a captioning, or you're talking about audio-description, or you're talking about a lot of different access services, and so they're also really kind of trail-blazing in that way too.

Christena G.: Those are to that come to mind right now, but obviously there's many, many exciting people doing really cool things, and so, I, I want to just, like, give everyone a major pat-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: ... on the back for the work that they're doing, and just all of the different, um, the different little, uh, networks that are popping up in cities big and small around, um, around America as well. There's a new, um, there's a new consortium that's, that's growing in Seattle, for instance that, where they're trying to really mobilize and start kind of something similar to what CCAC has done, and, and a lot of other places like that as well. So, it's really cool to see the work, big and small, that's happening.

Philip D.: Uh, that's amazing. And you guys, again, uh, you, uh, it's just as you were inspired by MAC here in the city, others are inspired by you, and, uh, the CCAC, I'll say, is always such a, a, a presence at LEAD every year, um, that it's not surprising to hear that consortiums are, are happening around the country, uh, because they see the impact, uh, what... as a siren goes off behind me, because [crosstalk 00:28:21].

Christena G.: Yeah, it, it was a really good New York... It's really bad, you guys-

Philip D.: Oh, yeah.

Christena G.: ... going off right now. (laughs)

Philip D.: Ah, it, it never fails. It never-

Christena G.: Yeah.

Philip D.: ... ever fails. Um, but, a- again, like, I think, it, it's so easy to see the impact that you guys have had, um, and it does inspire folks, and I, and I think, uh, it, it's just so important. Um, and, and it's so wonderful to, to see, and, and to see, you know, I, uh, I was so happy to be at that CCAC social at Second City, um, in February, um, uh, and just to meet so many people I didn't know-

Christena G.: Right.

Philip D.: ... uh, that I hadn't met at LEAD, uh, that were so well-involved within a, and so heavily involved in access in the city, um, there, and, and it was, it was just, I mean, it was just a wonderful experience and a beautiful evening, and, and, and, you know, a credit to the, the organization. And I know that was, uh, Britney Pyle, and, and Rachel Arfa and Matt Bivins, uh, that were helping-

Christena G.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip D.: ... organize that-

Christena G.: Yeah.

Philip D.: ... and they're three of my favorite people, uh-

Christena G.: Same here.

Philip D.: ... yeah. Uh, so, uh, anyway, that, my long-winded way of saying, uh, what you, what you have accomplished and, and what your team has accomplished at the CCAC is, I. I think the impact is, is nationwide at this point. So-

Christena G.: That really awesome to hear. Thank you for saying that. And I would just like to say, while I love to toot my own horn sometimes-

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: ... I also want to say that I think what we've done in Chicago, while super important, really, um, has, was pretty easy because what we're doing is not, um, on the one hand, is not revolutionary. It's basically just organizing, and it's basically sharing resources, and it's basically sharing a common passion with each other. Um, and so, that's also, I hope, will inspire groups where you might feel like, you might not have enough energy, or you might not have enough time, or you might not have enough know-how to get started, and I think, uh, like you said so well, with LEAD and Betty Siegel, what I love is just when you start to collaborate, great things can happen. And I would just really encourage anyone listening who is interested in starting a group like this to just start talking with your colleagues at an organization, just like, make a friend and talk about accessibility and start having a lunch once a month, where you're talking about different things that are going on, as, like, a way to get started, because good things happen when you're working together.

Philip D.: Absolutely. Well said, well said. (laughs)

Christena G.: Oh! I thank you.

Philip D.: Uh, well, thank you again for taking the time. I know, uh, you're very, very busy. Um, so, I appreciate that.

Christena G.: And I know you are too.

Philip D.: (laughs)

Christena G.: And I'm, but I'm so glad to be here, because it's, it's so fun to talk about accessibility and-

Philip D.: Isn't it? (laughs)

Christena G.: ... really cool to see what, what's all been done, and so, being referred to as a powerhouse in Chicago, like, when we, when I moved here, accessibility really was not talked about very much, and I certainly do not deserve half of the credit at all, but I think that, um, just knowing that I'm a part of it is super cool. And so, it's fun to talk about it, and fun to know where we've come into, like, six years.

Philip D.: Absolutely. Well, thank you, again, and, of course, thank you for being an Access Champion.

Christena G.: Thank you. Talk to you later.

Philip D.: Thanks again to Christena for taking the time to chat. Uh, so, funny stuff, we both ended up under the weather, uh, while I was in Chicago, and, and weren't able to connect in person. Um, but, uh, she was able to find some time in her very, very (laughs) busy schedule, uh, to give us a call, and chat a little bit. So, uh, I'm very, very appreciative of that.

Philip D.: Uh, a reminder from the beginning of the episode. We're crowdsourcing what our next, uh, symbols should be added to the Access Champions logo, so if you have any thoughts on that, hit us up on social media, @AccessChampion, uh, on Instagram and Twitter, or The Access Champions Podcast on Facebook, or just shoot us an email, accesschampion@gmail.com. Uh, hopefully, there'll be some great suggestions, and we'll have a couple of new symbols, uh, added to the logo, uh, very, very soon. Also, a reminder from the beginning that we have some new curated playlists on SoundCloud, um, if you're looking for specific topics, or things about specific regions, um, you can find a few there. And if you have suggestions about different curated playlists, feel free to, uh, same as the logos. Just go ahead and shoot us a message and let us know. Uh, we are a podcast for the people, by the people. So, uh, always, always looking for suggestions, and all that [inaudible 00:33:00], uh, new discussions.

Philip D.: Uh, as always, thank you to our executive producer, Matt Kerstetter, uh, for making us sound great each and every single week, uh, especially last week, when I handed in close to two hours' worth of audio, to sift through on Easter weekend. Uh, just incredibly appreciative of the tremendous job that he does every week, um, in making us sound great.

Philip D.: Thank you to our associate producer, Miss Kelsey Rose Brown, for everything that you do, uh, across social media, and more, uh, and, of course, thank you to Eric Walton for that dope theme song.

Philip D.: We'll be back again next week, and remember inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.