

Phil 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. Uh, we got a great episode for you this week, uh, one that's been a decent time coming. We have Beth Prevor this week. Uh, super excited, uh, to have her on.

Phil Dallmann: Um, you may have heard me mention her name when I mentioned the four horsewomen of accessibility with Betty Siegel, Lisa Carling and Ruth Feldman. Um, just these badass ladies who have done so much for the field of accessibility over, you know, a decent length of time. You know, we tried to get this interview, I think it was last summer. Um, schedules just didn't line up and the ... come back and forth a couple times, but now, we were able to- to- to get a time and- and, uh, head over to the Art New York, where she's currently consulting.

Phil Dallmann: Uh, when we sat down in their conference room and had just a fantastic, uh, chat, and deep dive and, um... you know, I learned- I- I thought I had a handle on the- on the scope of her impact and I really didn't, um, for what she's done. Specifically in the world of- of, um, access for- for the Deaf community. Um, just an incredible amount of work and- and incredible impact. So, really excited to share that with you.

Phil Dallmann: Um, we also did an exclusive, uh, additional conversation on where sign interpreting lands in the world of ever changing and ever growing technology. That conversation is available exclusively on Patreon for our Patreon supporters, which you can be one for only \$1 a month. \$1. \$1 a month. Uh, you get access to all of our exclusive conversations, as well as a sticker and who doesn't love a sticker? My wife. My wife does not like stickers. Uh, but everybody else I've met love stickers, so, uh, and- and they're additional perks for- for a little bit more money. I think we have a \$7 tier and one maybe a little bit above that with different swag and- and shout-outs on the show. Um, or ad space or whatever you want.

Phil Dallmann: Um, so we're- if you- if you want to hear more and you want to hear some of these deep dives or, um, you know, last week, uh, I was quizzed on the constitution, uh, and I won't tell you how I did. You have to, uh, sign up to- to- to hear that. Um, but, uh, it was a blast. Uh, so if you want that, just go onto Patreon, and type in Access Champions. We're the only one there, um, or [Patreon.com/accesschampions](https://www.patreon.com/accesschampions).

Phil Dallmann: Uh, we hope to- to have your support and again, \$1 a month, uh, doesn't seem like a lot, but it really does help us underwrite a lot of our accessibility efforts, um, such as our transcripts so that we are as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. Um, so again, for our current Patreon supporters, we love you dearly, and for those of you out there, uh, please consider, uh, supporting us in that way.

Phil Dallmann: Another way you can support us. We are growing our board. We are a New York state non-profit. Uh, therefore we have to have a board. Um, and our board is much more like a steering committee than an actual board. There's no fundraiser requirement or anything like that. We just ask you to bring your expertise from your field, your resources, your opinions, your- your viewpoints, um, to the discussion, uh, the ever growing, and evolving discussion, uh, about this- this organization and this show, um, as we grow and grow and grow. 46 states, 17 countries now, um, just keep on going. The little tiny podcast that could.

Phil Dallmann: Um, but if you are interested in joining our board, you can reach out to us at accesschampion@gmail.com, again that's accesschampion@gmail.com. Another way you can contact us is on social media. We're all over social media. Uh, and we have a new champion intern, Savannah Cooper, who is taking our social media, um, and, uh, we're so excited to see what she's going to bring to all of our Twitter, which is [@accesschampion](#), our Instagram, also [@accesschampion](#) and Facebook page, which is The Access Champion Podcast. There's great content, uh, as I always say, we're quality over quantity, um, so, uh, I hope you'll consider following us and- and enjoy what we're- what we're sharing and what we're posting and, uh, all of the above because we do try to be as thoughtful as possible.

Phil Dallmann: Just a reminder, we will be at the Kennedy Center Lead Conference. Uh, again this year, we did a pop up studio this year, or last year. Myself and our associate producer, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, will be there this year. We're going to bring some games, we're going to bring, uh, some crowd sourcing things to get some ideas from you guys. We're going to obviously be doing mini interviews again, uh, some long form interviews. We may even do some panels, uh, especially post conference in the evening. It's going to be a blast, uh, and we're so excited to be there again this year.

Phil Dallmann: Um, and if you are attending, uh, you know, reach out to us, let us know. We'd love to schedule some stuff in advance, um, and then obviously pop by. Like I said, we're going to have a lot of games, we're going to have swag, um, all sorts of things, um, and we're really, really excited about it. So, that's that. So without further ado, Access Champion, Beth Prevor.

Phil Dallmann: All right, and we are here with Beth Prevor, the founder of Hands-On, uh, as well as a consultant and recently retired. Congratulations.

Speaker 2: Thank you very much.

Phil Dallmann: Um, and one of the people I've mentioned before on the podcast as- as one of the four horsewomen of accessibility, uh, with Betty and Lisa and Ruth, uh, who have really, uh, uh, excited me when I dove into the field, uh, with their passion and accomplishment. So I'm just so- this is check number two. We're- we're- we

had Betty on last summer, we're just going to every summer, knock one more out.

Speaker 2: Thank you very much for inviting me.

Phil Dallmann: Of course, so you know, I've known you for a while, but I- and I've known, uh, obviously the impact of Hands-On, uh, on the Broadway Theater community, but I'd love to hear a little bit of how you ended up in this field.

Speaker 2: Sure. Um, well, I started out as a stage manager, so that was my- that was my profession right outside of college. And I worked as state manager for a few years and, um, one of the- one of the jobs I got was through a woman who used to work for National Theater of the Deaf and she was setting up a small theater company that was going to tour the schools. And they were- and it was a company of deaf and hearing actors and she was actually looking for stage manager. And I was looking for a position at the moment in between jobs, and I thought, "oh sure."

Speaker 2: So I knew nothing about deafness. I knew nothing really about Sign language, I just got involved in this- in this program. And I was only involved for about three months, uh, with it, but I thought it was really interesting and as part of the company, you know, they were teaching some of the hearing people some Sign language and I just thought it was really interesting. And so I just- following that, I just started taking Sign language classes. So I took classes here, um, and then I really got into it and I found I had an- an interest in it and an affinity for learning the language and I just kind of dove into becoming an interpreter. So I went to Rochester, I did a whole interpretive training program, um-

Phil Dallmann: And that's RID right? Rochester-

Speaker 2: Yeah, it was actually NTID, so it was the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: And at that time, they actually had a- a- I think it was a 12 week free program in the summer that-

Phil Dallmann: That's awesome.

Speaker 2: That you had to apply for. I applied for it, I got accepted, I actually moved to Rochester for the entire summer, um, and really kind of dove into this program. Met people at NTID, met actors there. Actually, I tried to get a job in the theater department, um, didn't get the job and I- I never really wanted to become an interpreter, I really wanted the language. That was my interest and I always wanted to stay in theater. That's- that- that was always my goal. Um, and when I came back from NTID, I- I just kind of started... you know, I had regular jobs, but

I meet a few people in the field and that was the time when actually TDF had just started doing interpretive theater on Broadway. So this was like 1980 and Elephant Man was the first show that was interpreted. I was still in the, you know, in- taking courses, so I was going to anything that was interpreted, any event that was- that had deaf people or interpreters, I would just go to.

Speaker 2: So I just started going to the shows that TDF was- was offering at that time and because at- at that time is about once a month.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: That they were doing a different interpretive show.

Phil Dallmann: Wow.

Speaker 2: Yeah, it was really- it was the beginning of interpretive theater on Broadway, so it was very popular and, um, so I- I met, like, the ultimate co-founders of Hands-On, so that was Candace Broecker, uh, Janet Harris, who subsequently has moved to California and Janis Cole, who's a deaf actress. And we just kind of met through mutual friends, this one knew this one and- and we started talking about this idea that, okay TDF was interpreting on Broadway, but really nobody was looking at off Broadway and nobody was looking really at the non-profit sector. And I think, you know especially for me, I always had a special affinity for non-profit. I think I have a non-profit mentality or something.

Phil Dallmann: I call it a non-profit heart. (laugh)

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: I have it too. (laugh)

Speaker 2: Yeah, so I- so I always- I always looked at non-profit and the- I mean the really interesting- so- so anyway, so the four of us would get together and talk. And we basically talked for like a year, just on this idea about how to create an organization and what would we do and how would we work with theaters. Um, at the time, too, so there's- there's a couple of things that I'm not quite sure they were actually in tandem or kind of, like, circuitous or- or how it... But- but one event that we did was actually working with Art New York, which I thought was really interesting because now I'm back as a consultant with Art New York, but we really started through a consultancy program with Art New York in the early 80s. They had a consultancy program where a theater could ask for a consultant on a variety of topics and our topic was Sign language interpretive performances and then Art New York would send us, um, Art New York would pay for half the services and the theater would pay for the other half. It was like \$75 and \$75.

Speaker 2: But we would go and do in a two hour consultancy about how to do an interpretive performance, which really was what we had talked about for the year. We went through- we developed this timeline about how to do an interpretive performance. So every aspect from marketing, to audience development, to the production end, to what interpreters do and we developed this huge timeline about how to do these services. And we really thought we would do these consultancies, go in, talk to the theater for two hours, give them our four pieces of paper with this is how you interpret the show and leave and they would take over. And I think the very first theater we worked with was Circle Rep, which unfortunately no longer exists, but that was the first theater that called us. We went in, I talked for two hours, I told them about the timeline and they just kind of looked and with the deer eyes and just went, "I had no idea what you're talking about. We would much rather just pay you and you do it."

Phil Dallmann: Fair enough.

Speaker 2: And- and so basically that's really how we started as- as defining ourselves as to what organization we wanted to become.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: And then the other thing that was also going on was, Dance to the Workshop, which also unfortunately doesn't exist anymore. Um, they were doing a lot of performance art and they had just brought in a group called MUSIGN, which was a deaf musical group from California that they would come in and sign songs, um, and they got booked into Dance to the Workshop, which we found out. And so we contacted Dance to the Workshop and said, "look, you have a deaf theater company that's coming in for this run. We think you're going to have deaf people coming because they're very popular in the Gay community, so we will come in and we will volunteer our services so we will usher, we will help out, we will, you know, stay after if you're going to do post show discussions. We will interpret for you, um, and we'll just help." And they said, "great."

Speaker 2: And so we went to every show and from that, they- they really got into this idea of having the Deaf community part of their audiences and we interpreted, I think, one of the next shows that they brought in which at that time, was, I think the Traveling Jewish Theater.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

Speaker 2: Um, and then the second show we actually did was Whoopi Goldberg.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

Speaker 2: And that was- that was- but, I mean, honestly she wasn't- I mean she was Whoopi Goldberg, but she- nobody knew who she was. She was, you know, just

this woman named Whoopi Goldberg, who is doing a show, um, from which she got amazing reviews and- But- but we started this relationship with DWQ about really incorporating interpreters into productions and it- it was a- it was a fantastic, you know, interesting, innovative, really experimental theater time that was really interesting. And so that was- that was a long answer to a really short question.

Phil Dallmann: No, but that- that-

Speaker 2: So that's how we started.

Phil Dallmann: Well- well what a great, um, well one of great interesting journey, but too, a great, uh, partnership to kind of create, um, you know, the foundation, of- of what you can build on.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Um, so, you're- you're- you're design- you've designed this model now, um, and, uh, you have a great partnership, how- how does this- and- and- well first I want to take half a step back, um, uh, because I don't want to break your stride, but I- I did want to throw out there how much I love Candace Broecker. Uh, Ms. Candy, love her to death and- and was always wonderful to work with.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Phil Dallmann: Um, uh, in a variety of capacities, but she's just...

Speaker 2: She- she-

Phil Dallmann: A+ human.

Speaker 2: Yeah, and she's one of the top interpreters, so it's like- it's- we're very fortunate. I mean, I'm fortunate to have her as one of my close friends as well as the idea that she- she's one of the founders of Hands-On and she's one of the great interpreters, so it really-

Phil Dallmann: Oh yeah, absolutely. What an asset to start with, you know?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Um, so, uh, you- you've got the foundation now, um, how- how do you grow and- and- and- um, go beyond obviously this- this one partnership?

Speaker 2: Well we started from our beginnings, I think one of the first, you know, we did shows at Circle Rep and Manhattan Theater Club asked us to work with them. I mean, over the years, we definitely had relationships that have kind of come

and gone that- that we started working with and then it just kind of fades out after a while. I mean at this point, I think, um, we've been working with some theaters, Roundabout Theater, we've been working for 22 years-

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Which is-

Phil Dallmann: We had Sarah Hom on, back in January and- and- and she just raved the partnerships. I think she said she was walking in, um, to that already being set up, made her job a thousand times easier, uh, just knowing that there was a model and a part- a beautiful partnership, you know?

Speaker 2: I mean the thing that's really important to me, and it's- it's one of the- the areas that I think when we started was... you know, we're a very small non-profit. I mean, really, it's- it started as the four of us. I'm the Executive Director, which is like a really big word for a, you know, it's a generally huge encompassing job, but it's me, you know, so, you know, I work with Candy and Candy does work with me. Janet's is on our board still, but she's out in California. Janis is in Boston and we don't really see her that often, so it really is- we're very small.

Speaker 2: But the thing that's always been really important to me is that the services that we provide are the theater services so that it's always been really important for me to have anybody that hires us, pays for our services. That we don't go in and ... it's- I don't want it to sound harsh, but- so we don't bring the funding with us. The theater has to- and that to me shows the commitment of the organization that they're willing to put their money where their mouth is and that it's- that we are a program of the theater. I want Hands-On to be- I don't want us to be separate from Roundabout. I want it to be Roundabout's program that we coordinate. And so- so this idea of- of where the- where the money for the program comes from, to me, is always important that it comes from the theater itself.

Speaker 2: And whether, you know, whether the theater, you know, gives us discounts for the audiences or, you know, however... they don't have to if they don't want to, but, um, but that the funding for the programs is the commitment of the theater and the organization that it's- it's worth it to them and the work comes from they're ... putting the money.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

Speaker 2: To it.

Phil Dallmann: I mean we talk about this all the time at conferences, uh, I know that we've been at is that the need for a budget line for- for accessibility and coming back to your organization and making sure that not only in sort of gen op, but also

making sure that each program, there's that budget line and understanding how to actually make it inclusive.

Speaker 2: Right. And- and especially working at- at some place like Roundabout, where they do have subscribers and where, you know, members of the Deaf community have become Roundabout subscribers, that it's really- I want- I want the deaf people- they- they go through us. I mean they know- they know us. They know me. They know Hands-On, and so we're a recognizable organization within the community and I think, you know, I love that and that's why, you know, a lot of the reasons why I do this, because I like that connection with community. But I really want the deaf people that come to Roundabout to be Roundabout subscribers and we had a great, great, fantastic experience with John Lithgow, who did his one man show a couple years ago.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Where we had one interpreter for his one man show, where he came out at the beginning of the performance and said, "tonight, I normally do a one man show, but tonight it's a two man show." And he really introduced the Deaf community to say these are Roundabout subscribers. Like it wasn't so much that this was this group of deaf people over here, that these were Roundabout subscribers and that was- that was totally unprepared and it was unscripted. So he saw it, so he saw that this was a Roundabout program and these were Roundabout people and that to me was so phenomenally great, um, that- that this audience was introduced to the entire audience.

Speaker 2: And again, you know, because we worked at Roundabout for so many years, you know, I generally give out the tickets. I sit in the lobby with the, you know, little podium, um, and I- because we have the same subscription series and have for the last 20 years, that I think people, you know, hearing people that just happen to be in the audience that day, have known that this is also, you know, they're going to see in interpreters. So I- I saw, um, I was giving out tickets to one of the shows and these two women just kind of walked in, saw me, and said, "oh it's a Hands-On show." And just walked past. It's just now become, you know, part of Roundabout's DNA and it's just one of their programs, which is great.

Phil Dallmann: How important do you think that type of consistency is? Because I- I love hearing, "I've often believed that subscription houses should have access based subscriptions as well." Because again, I always say people with disabilities have money that they want to spend at your- your organization. Um, but Roundabout's really of the only ones I know out there that- or at least in New York, that- that- that has consistently done this, um, and to hear you say that they have, essentially, these subscribers from the Deaf community, um, how important is that commitment that they've made?

Speaker 2: It- It was phenomenally important and it was interesting because Ellen Richards, who I believe was the general- was she the general manager? Few years ago?

Phil Dallmann: I think so, yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean this was- this was her idea. I mean, we had never done a subscription series. We would do a show, you know, at a different theater-

Phil Dallmann: One offs.

Speaker 2: Right, and, um, when we started talking to Roundabout about doing programs, she was the one that came to me and said, "I want- I want a subscription series because I want the commitment from the audience to Roundabout." So she was willing- so she started- she started this idea of having, like, you know, a deaf and hearing subscription. So, she started out too that it was a Deaf subscription and a hearing subscription. The Deaf subscription- subscription was-

Phil Dallmann: Say that five times fast.

Speaker 2: I know. It's really hard. Was incredibly low. I don't think she- it was low cost. It was really low cost and the differential between... she made a differential price between deaf and hearing people within our- our community. Um, and she wanted to- because she wanted deaf people to commit to this idea of this subscription, which Roundabout, you know, has- that's one of their big things.

Phil Dallmann: That's their model.

Speaker 2: Their model. Um, and I just said, "okay, let's give it a shot." So we tried it, and then we continued over the years and you know, it's- the prices have changed over the years, but still, this idea of being around a Roundabout subscriber, and you know, they get little perks, they get like a little reception before the show, they get, you know, we get a post show. So we're a series, so we have- and if you go on Roundabout's website, there's a sign interpreted series, that again, it's really important to me that it's a Roundabout, you know, we might be the link that- for people that want to buy tickets for that show, but it's on Roundabout's website, so we're not- it's not hidden, it's not, you know, it's really-

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, you're not an outside group, you know?

Speaker 2: And- and that to me is- is really important and again it- it becomes, you know, an issue of it started with, you know, the money and who pays for it that we're not- we're not just kind of coming in as an appendage and saying, "I'm coming in, bringing the money and doing it," and then we leave. This is your program. This is a program of the theater. Um, so- so I think Roundabout's model of subscribers and them- their willingness to actually add on, like a deaf subscriber thing, has been phenomenal and, you know, I've watched it over the years and

it's- it certainly has created this feeling of welcome for deaf people that were not, you know, were not outsiders. It's people know, you know, you see the same people, so you know the house manager, you know a lot of the ushers, so we're definitely... it's- it's not- it's not that much of a special deal.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Which is great.

Phil Dallmann: It- it follows more of that inclusion model. It's built into the DNA of the organization. Um, we talk about organizational buy in all the time, again, that- that- that shows that, um, and- and when you talk about how- the importance of, um, the, you know, sort of the money, the financial aspect being from the organization, and I'd argue it's two fold too, because I think, um, the interpreter themselves are incredibly valuable and I think people don't necessarily understand the work that goes in. They think they just come out- come in and just sign what they hear, um, but there- there's a process to that. Can you explain a little bit of what that process is? Of- of coming into an interpretive performances from the interpreter's perspective?

Speaker 2: Oh sure, well generally, I mean, we, you know, we- I or you know, someone else goes to actually see the show first. So even before we've generally hired the interpreters to just get an idea about appropriate interpreters, um...

Phil Dallmann: Which is important.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, especially in this day and age, I mean definitely there's many shows that, um, it's- it's important to have interpreters of color-

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, you don't want three white women interpreting Raising in the Sun.

Speaker 2: Absolutely. So, uh, yeah, we just did Strange Loop, so...

Phil Dallmann: Oh, okay. Yeah, there you go.

Speaker 2: I mean it's definitely an important aspect of how we're now looking at, you know, picking interpreters for the show, but we're talking about, you know, generally been a month of preparation from the interpreters, so it's- it's seeing the show, it's- it's we always work with a deaf advisor on each production, so it's really seeing it, it's doing a character breakdown and, um, the- when we did Strange Loop, we actually were bringing in some newer interpreters that we had actually- we just did an interpreter workshop.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

Speaker 2: Through Art New York, um, in January.

Phil Dallmann: Awesome.

Speaker 2: January, which was awesome. Um, and had like 25 interpreters participate. It was great.

Phil Dallmann: Wow.

Speaker 2: It was a great event. We did- we actually did- we started the event. It was a whole weekend. It was the Friday night, we actually did a community, kind of a town hall, so we had keynotes, we had a panel, we had about 75 or 80 people in the audience, so it was- it was wonderful and then we did two full days of interpreter training with Candy and Lynette and Anne. Um, and so they did- so they got like the best of the best.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, that's a master class.

Speaker 2: Yeah, and then you know, and then what we wanted from that, we really wanted to start bringing new people in because we're really busy. Um, and so we, um, we brought in two newer interpreters that had taken the workshop and gave them a director in support, and they saw the show quite often, but they see show a lot. They work on the script, they do table readings, they do, um, translations, discussions and then they interpret the show, so it's a long process.

Phil Dallmann: I remember sitting in the room, um, in the back of the room because it not part of my job at TDF, but occasionally I got curious. Always thirst for knowledge over here, uh, but I sat in the back of the room with my colleague, Leah Diaz, um, Natalie [inaudible 00:27:13], was, um, leading a table read of- of Book of Mormon, uh, and, the decisions being made on translating certain words, was incredible. The care that was being taken and then the analysis of different signs and like creating a sign and establishing it early, which I was like, "what?" And short hand, you know?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: My mind was blown with the- the detail work.

Speaker 2: Yeah, it's a lot work, I mean and a lot of times now, we'll ask to talk with the dramator of the play, and actually Roundabout works with Ted Sodd, who's fantastic, who has known us for many years and is incredibly open and gracious and will talk to the interpreters and gives us a lot of information, you know, background information not only about the, you know, the playwrights but the script, about different things that we might want to kind of point out in terms of the interpretation. I mean, you want- the interpreters go see it, what the general process... I mean, we go see it first as an audience, so, you know, the interpreters go and just watch it because I think you want to always maintain what the- what the audience gets. Because then you're going to go off and do

an interpretation of it, but you want to make sure that the interpretation is the interpretation of the play and not your thoughts about the show.

Speaker 2: So, you go see the show first to just really experience it as an audience and what you get from the production and then you start working on the script. So it's a lot of work.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, I'm sure it's a lot of work and there's- there is a dollar value to that that I- I've always believed that, um, my first time tracking this, uh, with one of the, um, student matinees, um, that Candy was leading, and I just remember just seeing the amount of times they were rehearsing in the back of the theater, and like just...

Speaker 2: And whatever we pay them is not, you know, anywhere near what, you know, in terms of if- if the fee, and so the amount of hours they end up putting in on their time, you know, that aren't at the theater, it doesn't break down and it never could break down. Um, so it's- it's it's respecting their profession and we, you know, we give them a fee because they're professionals, and they should be paid, but it nowhere comes near what the amount of hours that they put in.

Phil Dallmann: 1000%. Uh, uh, uh and I wanted to make sure because I imagine a lot of- well a lot of our listeners are in the field and- and- or are individuals with disabilities, um, I'll say even having, again, having been in the field, I- it was a learning curve for me to- to learn just the sheer volume. And even when I thought, "oh, I get the rehearsals," sitting at the back of that table read and hearing, you know, the- the- detail work I was like, "oh my god, I had no idea." And again, I- I think and- and you can probably speak to this more than I can but I will say all of the interpreters that I've encountered here in New York are... or strive to reach that, sort of that part of detail work and also, um, delivering the- the... honoring the play for the patrons.

Speaker 2: Right, and I think we- we've created enough of an audience over the years that they expect good work.

Phil Dallmann: Standards? Standards are important.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, absolutely.

Speaker 2: Yeah, so we want to make sure. You know, and again, we're starting to look at, you know, different venues, how we can expand the pool because, you know, we're- we're all getting older and we're all getting- and we have to like, start sharing the experience, so people like Candy and Lynette have to start sharing what- what they know and how they do it with other newer interpreters, just to- just to expand how many interpreters we have because the need is so great.

Phil Dallmann: Absolutely. And- and- uh, mirroring that, how has it been, um, engaging and growing deaf theater goers?

Speaker 2: Well that- that to me is probably the biggest challenge-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: Is, you know, probably the same way as, like, every theater's going through and getting-

Phil Dallmann: Audience engagement is now a position at most theaters.

Speaker 2: Right, getting audiences is really just trying to connect with, you know, different audiences and getting them to come and, you know, I try to, you know, find out different communities. I mean, right now, we're actually working on Mojada.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: At the Public, so I'm trying to reach out to the Latino Deaf community, which is a community of, you know, of in itself. Um...

Phil Dallmann: Shout out Rich Denney, one of the podcast board members.

Speaker 2: Absolutely. So, you know, so it's- it's really just trying to go into, like, where deaf people are and getting information out there, um...

Phil Dallmann: And is there... my only experience, really- well not my only experience, but I- I- I've kind of dual experiences trying to engage the vision loss community and also the cognitive developmental disability. And both, there was a bit of a mistrust of services. Was that something you ended up navigating or was there an innate trust because interpreting has been around for a bit longer?

Speaker 2: I- I think the- what we've created with Hands-On- and that's why I think, you know, the importance of, like, us as working as this link-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: Between theaters, because I think we're a known entity within the Deaf community, so I think that, um, we're- we're basically trusted by deaf people and a lot of the theaters that we're starting to introduce the Deaf community to, are newer to... it's- it's a new event for a lot of theaters and getting through to the community. I mean that's always been- like my understanding when we first started Hands-On, um, that we were- that- I didn't want- I didn't want like a box office to hang up on a deaf person calling because they just weren't sure that there actually was going to be an interpretive performance if the theater was doing it.

Speaker 2: So when we first started and I said, "okay, but we handle everything." So we handle the- we do the marketing, we do the ticketing. You know, if a deaf person has a question, they call me because they know me and that's- that's how it started. You know, probably at this point, you know, the audience is much more sophisticated, but I do think that it's that connection with the community that's still beneficial to a lot of the theaters. And I've- I've talked to other theaters around the country or other organizations that are trying to do it. We seem to be a bit unique in how we work, just in terms of this idea that we do the ticketing.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: So that we do all the- everything comes through us. Um-

Phil Dallmann: That's a trust factor.

Speaker 2: And- and it is a trust factor and- and I just think that that's our model. I mean I don't- I don't necessarily disagree with any other organization and how they do it, um, I just think that it's worked for us, that I know- I know who's ordering the tickets, I know who's deaf, I know who's hearing. I do all the seating, so I, you know, when a person orders a ticket through us for show, they don't get a ticket, they have their reservation, but I- the block of seats is basically Hands-On's and then I- I have deaf people pay us and then I pay the theater, but I do the seating because I know deaf people, I know this one wants to sit on the aisle, I know this wants to sit in the fourth row, I know this one doesn't want to sit behind this one because they're too tall.

Speaker 2: You know, so I know like, you know I've learned all the details and people have told me all that information, which is really important to me.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah. Well it's an individualized experience in a lot of ways then, which is great.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: That's what we all want.

Speaker 2: I think that's what we all want and so, you know, it's- I- so I've learned over the years that- that's somewhat unique and how we work, but I do think having talked to other organizations, it seems to be a bit more successful.

Phil Dallmann: I would agree. I would very, very much agree, uh, from other organizations that I've encountered or worked at or worked with, the ones that close- more closely follow that model, I think have a greater success of- and greater retention, I think.

Speaker 2: Yeah, it's more work. I mean, I will admit it's more work and it's more aggravation and... but it's also more pleasure. So it's like a combination of ...

Phil Dallmann: Dealing with personalities... it's 50/50. (laugh)

Speaker 2: Absolutely. Absolutely. So as much as you go, "oh my god, somebody's calling me again" or you go to a- another event or you go to, you know, a building and you see somebody. Somebody kind of grabs you and asks you about a ticket for something... you know, and the nature of it and while you're just going, "oh my god" but it's- it's- that's what I like. I mean it really is quite lovely.

Phil Dallmann: Shifting gears a bit to your, uh, sort of newer gig, uh, tell me a little bit about what you're doing here at Art New York, as we are in their conference room right now.

Speaker 2: So I- I- as you kind of said, so I recently retired from my- my day job, which I worked at the Department of Education and reach my- hit my goal and got out.

Phil Dallmann: (laugh)

Speaker 2: Um, so, which is lovely and so now, I wanted to really kind of focus on Hands-On and consulting and I've been talking to Art New York over the years. I- like we first said, you know, I've known them forever, um, I love working with Jenny and have known her for many, many, many years starting with Manhattan Theater Club.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

Speaker 2: I first met her. Um, and so, and their commitment to accessibility has really blossomed over the years, which is wonderful to be watching that. And so, I've been kind of hire as their disability/ accessibility consultant. So I'm just- I've just been working with them, um, on what they're developing. So, you know, partly it's a relationship with Hands-On and, um, they're interested in what we're doing. Like I said, we did this workshop that were- that was under their hospices, that was fantastic, um, but they're creating a calendar of events for the theaters.

Speaker 2: We've been running these cohort meetings with a variety of theaters. We've just finished our third cohort group of theaters that are interested in accessibility so it's been, uh, kind of a four- four workshop process of conversations about disability, which, to me, is always where the conversations should start before you talk about anything about programming. That really having an understanding about disability and looking at that and then looking at programs. And then I meet with- I've met with each of these individual theaters, um, I go to their theaters and we just talk about what they want to do specifically and then it kind of culminates with every theater coming up with a plan.

Speaker 2: So it's been a great model that- that Art New York created and hopefully we're going to continue doing that as well. So it's been- it's been really interesting. I mean, it's- it's fun because we're developing something.

Phil Dallmann: That's creative work.

Speaker 2: Yeah, so it's been really interesting, and I'm just totally thrilled that... I've always felt that, you know, accessibility in New York City theaters, especially in the non-profit sector, should be here. Should- I mean, Art New York is a membership organization. I mean, they're the membership organization of Broadway so ... And I- I think that- that theaters having a place to reach out to, to ask questions about, to get information about, is- is- this is the perfect spot for it. So I'm thrilled at that- that-

Phil Dallmann: That's incredible resource.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Uh, and- and when you look at the list of their members it's the who's who of ...

Speaker 2: Right, and it's big to small. So it's from the biggest biggest, is from, you know, Lincoln Center and the Public, to the smallest, you know, off-off Broadway theater, and so I think-

Phil Dallmann: They have wonderfully scaled membership fees.

Speaker 2: Right, so they have all the tiers and so I think that this idea that, um, that information about accessibility, now, is coming out from Art New York to their members, is great. And you know, I know you talk to other MAC members, you know, the steering committee and I think that we've been building a relationship between MAC and Art New York. Um, we've done a couple of big workshops for theaters at Art New York spaces, so I think that how we can continue, you know, a lot of this is exploration, which I think is great.

Speaker 2: I mean, I think that one of the- one of the biggest things I see in New York is that, you know, theaters are spread out so far and there's, you know, and especially with accessibility, there's no- there's no kind of centralized place to get information and I think that it belongs at Art New York. And so I think that Art New York has kind of taken this on as a project in a program is fantastic.

Phil Dallmann: Absolutely fantastic. All right, I'm going to get you out of here on this. Uh, it's my favorite part of the show, as everyone knows. I like to people dream their dreams. So I'd love to hear a little bit about, um, what you hope for the future, um, I guess access. I guess in your role specifically here, um, at Art New York. What you hope for the future of access with all of these off Broadway and off-off Broadway theaters.

Speaker 2: Um, I think for what I'm- what I'm learning over the years is that I want- I want there to be a connection between, like, us all. And I think especially in this area of access, that everybody's doing work on their own and- and I want everybody to know what everybody else is doing and, you know, which again, like going back to why Art New York is a great place for it to be centralized is- is terrific. You know, I've been doing access for so many years and especially in New York City, like I know individually, a lot of things that are going on in the city, but I don't think that they necessarily know about what each other is doing and so I think that consortiums are fantastic and I think that this idea of people, um, being connected to other kind of like minded people is fantastic. And that's- and that's... so- so this whole idea of serving on the museum... no I have to get the name right. Museum Arts Cultural Access Consortium, it's just kind of say that right? Did I say that right? Did I get that-

Phil Dallmann: I think it's right.

Speaker 2: Terrible, I know. MAC, I'll say MAC. Um, but you know this idea that there's MAC, there's DANT, which is a new organization, um, you know, they're doing work. I mean there's- there definitely are... there's TDF, there's Art New York. I mean there definitely are, you know, pockets of organizations that are doing access work. I want us all to be connected. I want us all to be connected. I want us all to kind of support each other, to share resources, to know each other exists to- to-

Phil Dallmann: What an opportunity to learn from each other, as well, or is it as Betty says, borrow? Uh...

Speaker 2: Yeah, I mean don't reinvent the wheel. I mean there are other people that are doing it and- and that's one of the pleasures I'm finding with these, uh, cohorts that we've been doing is that, you know, theaters are meeting other theaters. Like whether it's in their neighborhood or because they're kind of matched because of geography or because of, you know, their tier in terms of their budget. Um, that there's other organizations that they can ask questions to and say, "well how do you do this and can I borrow this equipment" or... you know, I mean, why- if somebody's interested in doing in relaxed performances, go look at one, I mean...

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Theaters are doing it, so there's- there's organizations that are out there doing the work that everybody should know about.

Phil Dallmann: And I always say, um, because sometimes there's that fear of competition and- and an audience. There are plenty of people in this city to come to these shows. You're not really competing so why not collaborate, um...

Speaker 2: Well also, I mean every theater does their own kind of work and they get their audience based on the fact of, "I like the- you know, I like the classics or I like Shakespeare, or I like avant guard or I like experimental." I mean, that's how create my taste in... I don't go to every theater in New York City.

Phil Dallmann: Exactly.

Speaker 2: I mean, I go because I like the kind of work that that theater does and what we have to create with the disability community is the same- is an equivalent to that. To just go, "I like this kind of work" or "I'm willing to- you know, I want to see this so that I can develop what my aesthetics are. What my taste is in this- in this theater world."

Phil Dallmann: I say it often on the show, Roger Deshaies said, "access is options."

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm.

Phil Dallmann: And, uh, I- I think the more options we have, the better.

Speaker 2: Exactly.

Phil Dallmann: Well, thank you so much, Beth, Uh, it was a long time coming and I really appreciate it. And I really appreciate learning even more to this scope of the work you've done and continue to do, um, thank you for all of that and thank you, uh, for being an Access Champion.

Speaker 2: Thank you, it was a pleasure.

Phil Dallmann: Thanks again to Beth for taking the time to chat, uh, I- I can say it enough. It was just a really exciting conversation to have. Um, Beth and I have known each other for a long time, but as I said, before we really sat down, um, I didn't know the scope of her journey and- and the impact that she's had and where- what the, you know, the true current status is of interpreting, uh, here- theatrical interpreting here in New York City is, um, so it was just super exciting. Um, and you know, that's my favorite part of this show, um, having this show is- is getting to deep dive with some people, uh, folks who I don't know at all and- and folks who I- I, you know, felt like I- I knew enough, um, but in reality there was so much more to learn.

Phil Dallmann: Um, and I- I hope all of you are- are learning with me. Uh, that's the goal right? Um, so again, thank you Beth. If you want to hear that deep dive with Beth on, uh, the evolution of theatrical interpreting as it relates to, uh, growing and evolving technology in the theater, go ahead and support us on Patreon. Again, that's patreon.com/accesschampions. You can- just \$1 a month and you can get access to, uh, all of our exclusive, uh, additional conversations that we have on there, as well as some swag.

Phil Dallmann: Um, as always, thank you to our executive producer, Matt Kerstetter for making the sound great each and every single week. Our associate producer Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, who does so much for us, including the- the fantastic artist renderings that, uh, accompany each and, uh, every single episode. Uh, as well as our new champion intern, Savannah Cooper. Uh, so grateful to her- her join our- our team, uh, and just really excited for, uh, her perspective and her experiences influencing our program and our social media, so, uh... and of course thank you to Eric Walton for our dope theme song and Tommy Karr for our dope logo.

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