

Philip Dallmann: Hello, Inclusion Believers and welcome to the Access Champions podcast. I'm your host, Phil Dallmann for this weeks journey into the galaxies of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. Uh, we've got another great episode for you this week.

Philip Dallmann: Um, this is the second of the interviews, uh, I was able to do with uh, some members of MAC here in New York City, which is the Museum, Arts and Culture Consortium. And uh, this week we have Meredith Wong, who's the manager of connect to culture over at CaringKind. Um, and this is our first guess that uh, is navigating the world of inclusions as it relates to individuals with dementia and their caregivers and their family. It was really, really interesting. It i- ... there are more and more um, access programs happening geared toward those with dementia um, and-and ... their caregivers and families.

Philip Dallmann: Uh, but it's not a ... it's not a broad conversation happening, or broad enough, I guess, in my opinion. Um, and uh, so it was really, really exciting to hear about what they're- what they're doing over um, at connect to culture within CaringKind and what Meredith has been doing. Um, and as always, I mean, she had an incredibly unique journey and uh, I was ... I mean, it's probably my favorite part of the show is hearing everyone's journey, um because it really, to me, just reminds me that ... hopefully reminds all of you that there's no correct way uh, to dive into the world of uh, accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

Philip Dallmann: There are a billion different paths to get here, and a billion different ways to serve uh, other humans in-in-in this uh, field. So uh, really, really excited to share that conversation with you guys. I do want to take a moment of a little bit of reflection, um, as I've sort of been digesting and evaluation the uh, experience that we had over at the Kennedy Center lead conference. Um, and uh ... the interviews were amazing um, it was so exciting to uh, to-to walk out with so many great conversations. But I was wearing sort of two hats at the conference and uh, I was presenting. I was in a session uh, presenting a session uh with last weeks guest host, Sarah Ham uh, as well as our points to ponder contributor, Lu Michaels um, session titled: When the Unexpected Happens.

Philip Dallmann: And the basic overview of this session was that uh, sort of ... unique problem solving, creative thinking um, but the idea is that there is a bit of levity at the end of the conference uh, you know we tried to make it fun, but while also presenting like, unique, challenging situations, such as, for example one of the ones I brought was uh, you know, a teaching artist who uses a service dog, but your class has individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities um, who consider dogs uh, triggers and are incredibly fearful of them. So, what do you do? Um, and I will leave that to all of you to think about.

Philip Dallmann: Um, but we-we were doing the session and um ... we-we actually pulled a scenario from the attendees, we pulled a lot of them, but we picked one out and I grabbed it and I was like, "Oh this is ... this is very different um, and incredibly challenging" it was a scenario where an individual was having sort of a ... dissociative uh episode um, involving aliens. Um and having a really, really

hard time in a potentially treacherous area uh, of a venue. And uh, as the-the sort of group problem solving went on um ... the line of levity was crossed to inappropriate uh ... and uh, it was not something that I jumped on immediately, you know you have those situations where you're like "Do I say something now? Or do I let this self correct?" Um because hopefully the next comment will bring it back.

Philip Dallmann: Unfortunately, the next comment took it even further and you know we ended up in a situation that was uncomfortable. Um, and ... I bring this up, it was eventually, before I even- before I spoke up uh, another attendee did speak up and note the issues with the comments that were being made um and sort of veered us back on. But I want to sort of bring this up because I think, you know ... it correlates pretty quickly to sort of um, you know the basis of this podcast and the evolution of it.

Philip Dallmann: You know, when I did the beta episode with Evan Hatfield um ... he stopped me, maybe thirty minutes into the conversation and said "What do you want this to be?" Um, "because right now we're just complaining about how hard things are and making jokes about how hard things are." And instead it was, I was like no I want it to be positive and uplifting and it is really easy for those in the non-profit arts field um, together ... at least in my experience, when we're all sat together to-to veer into the negative side and equally ... I think it's easy for us to try and veer into levity um, in sort of the more tense and frustrating situations. Um, but I want to put it out there to ... to everyone t-t-t ... we can find the humor uh, in many, many situations but to make sure that we're not tearing someone down to find it.

Philip Dallmann: Um, or that we're not belittling someone to find that-that levity, that break from you know, whatever difficult situations we may be navigation in our respective fields. You know, I don't think that's something that's talked about. We don't talk a lot about uh, self care. Um, we've had a few folks on the show speak about mental health, um, I-I've been candid on the show about my-my journey and struggles at times with mental health um, but I think self care is so important and how we go about it in a-in a healthy way not only for ourselves but those around us.

Philip Dallmann: You know, the idea of self care, we're thinking just about ourselves, but we do have to think about those around us and those we're speaking to and speaking of if that is the case, um as we're, as we're sharing these-these struggles or tough times or what have you. Um, I do think it is important to make sure that we're not belittling anyone um or inappropriately- inappropriately describing them, I guess is-is the word- the way I'll phrase it.

Philip Dallmann: Um, so uh, that was a thing that I've kind of sat on and uh, I waited 'til I really kind of had a full thought about it to address it here on the show. Um, but uh, I wanted to share it. It's something I've been sitting on and brewing on and thinking about and so. All of that, that being said uh, you know it was and

continues to be a fun session to present. I'm looking forward to presenting again and I think for me, this was uh, a really uh, great reminder t-to listen to- listen to my gut. Um and in those moments uh, not wait for something to self correct.

Philip Dallmann: As always, uh if you don't already uh, make sure you give us a follow on social media. Uh, we are @accesschampion on Instagram and Twitter, and the Access Champion Podcast on Facebook. If you don't follow us, there's really great content. Our champion intern Savannah Cooper uh, curates and we're about quality not quantity um and the episode line drawings that our associate producer Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown does every week are you know, I think really fantastic. So uh, make sure you're following us.

Philip Dallmann: This weeks episode is actually sponsored by the new doc series Able and inclusion believers, you're definitely going to want to mark your calendars for the launch of this new series coming to Amazon Prime Video on September 12th. Able consists of interviews featuring actors, writers, comedians and creators with disabilities. Through candid conversations, hosts Alie B. Gorrie and Kallen Blair meet with featured guests to discuss the importance and non-negotiable nature of inclusion in the arts.

Philip Dallmann: For more, you can visit ableaserious.com and mark your calendars for September 12th and as a special, special opportunity uh for all of our Patreon subscribers, you will have access to the first episode a week before it debuts um, or a little less than a week ... when is ... is it dropping on the 10th? A few days before ... uh we'll release it in advance. We'll release it in advance. We're going to release this as soon as I've uh, been done recording this and uh, we're gonna make a post about it and hopefully you guys saw it and if you weren't already a supporter on Patreon, you went ahead and signed up for as little as one dollar a month to get access to these- these perks, plus a sticker.

Philip Dallmann: Um, but you're going to get access to the first episode of Able um, before it debuts on Amazon Prime. Um, which is really, really exciting. Um and-and there are so many other things and extra content that we've put out on Patreon, this is, I think, the most exciting yet and we're going to continue to build off that but again, if you want to not only support us but have access to this episode in advance uh, go ahead and support us on Patreon. We're patreon.com/accesschampions or just go to patreon.com, search access champions we're the only one.

Philip Dallmann: Last little bit of business, um next week uh, or this week when this drops, I will be at the Art Reach event in Philly, the accessibility consortium that they're holding, really excited to be there. If you're in the Philadelphia area, make sure you register and come by. I think it's going to be a fantastic event, so many great humans there and I'm looking forward to grabbing all of those interviews.

Philip Dallmann: Finally, we are in the process of piloting uh, ASL interpreted videos of each podcast episode. Uh, we're going to work on just one episode, try and sort out

all the logistics but we are looking for an advisory committee to help uh, guide us in this process and make sure that we're following best practices and we're creating the most inclusive and accessible product possible. So uh, if you are interested, if you're someone that uses ASL uh, um and you uh, follow the podcast, please reach out to us at accesschampion@gmail.com um, again we'd love your feedback and support.

Philip Dallmann: So, really long intro. Lots of business. To recap: follow us on social media, we're about to talk to Meredith Wong, uh, Patreon is really great, we're sponsored by Able the series and if you want to listen to- or watch that first episode uh, subscribe to- support us on Patreon, patreon.com/accesschampions and uh, I'm going to be in Philly next week. So uh, that's that (laugh) and without further ado, access champion Meredith Wong.

Philip Dallmann: All right, and we are here with Meredith Wong, who's the manager of connect culture here at CaringKind in New York City. Uh, thanks for taking the time to chat.

Meredith Wong: Sure. Thanks for having me, Phil.

Philip Dallmann: Um, so uh, we met briefly the other day, well, I guess a few weeks ago now. Um and uh, at the MAC social event of which you are a member. You're on the steering-

Meredith Wong: Committee.

Philip Dallmann: Steering committee, which is a wonderful organization that we've highlighted a few times on the podcast um, but I-I know very little about you, which is always fun. I love diving into an interview when I actually don't know every little bit of detail of someones journey um, so I'd love to hear from you a little bit of how you ended up here at CaringKind and in this field.

Meredith Wong: Well uh, depends how far back you want to go.

Philip Dallmann: (laugh)

Meredith Wong: Um, I-I spent most of my professional life in museums.

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Meredith Wong: I kind of fell into access programming. Um, I came out of college with an art history degree and the first thing my father said to me was, "What are you going to do with an art history degree?"

Philip Dallmann: (chuckle)

Meredith Wong: You know, good question.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: Um, from there I went ... I actually talked to a friend of mine who was an educator, as a teacher um, and she said, "Well, have you ever thought of doing museum education?"

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Meredith Wong: I said, "Oh, okay. Well that's an idea." Um, and from there just kind of said, "Oh- " ... I had gone on field trips, as you do um as a student in New York City and I thought, "Oh, that is maybe something that I'd want to do," 'cause I don't think- I think I knew at that point that I didn't want to be a classroom teacher, but education was something that was interesting to me. Um, and so I- through resources and researching um, figured out that museum education was a viable option for me.

Meredith Wong: Um, eventually went to graduate school in museum education at George Washington University.

Philip Dallmann: Oh okay, uh, -arrival of my alma mater George Mason.

Meredith Wong: Ah (laugh)

Philip Dallmann: (chuckle)

Meredith Wong: Okay. Um, and it was back in the day when there were actually, I think only two um, masters programs in museum education at the time.

Philip Dallmann: Oh, okay.

Meredith Wong: Um, there was George Washington and there was also Bankstreet.

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Meredith Wong: Which is uptown near the West side.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: Um, so from there I ... out of that graduate program thought, oh before I jumped into museums wanted to get actually more experience teaching in classrooms so I ... 'cause at that point I thought I wanted to work with kids in museums. So I ended up teaching one year in a general population third grade classroom.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: Uh, downtown in Greenwich village and the second year, I ended up being placed in a classroom of kids who were three, four and five years old, on the autism spectrum um at a center on the upper West side.

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Meredith Wong: Um, I was kind of thrown into that situation with barely any experience and they said, "Oh, you will just learn on the job".

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative) (chuckle) as you do.

Meredith Wong: As you do in any kind of, in any situation. So being thrown into the fire, it was actually really good, very intense learning experience. Um, I said okay, this-this is a very unique set of skills that I have started to develop and then I said, you know, but I really want to get back into museums.

Meredith Wong: So, I started sending out the resumes, as you do, and ended up at the Jewish museum.

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Meredith Wong: And at that point, they had access programs for adults and for kids, um and at that point the uh, the person who was in charge of the docent program and also of the adult access programs was going on maternity leave and I was coming in at that point to be a scheduling coordinator. So, the person who was interviewing me said, would you mind taking over this part of um, part of the responsibilities? I said sure, why not? 'Cause that was really, it seemed to me more ... needier than scheduling.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: So that's how I fell into it.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: And from then on it was go go go and I loved it and worked with people of all different abilities and was introduced to CaringKind through that job.

Philip Dallmann: Okay.

Meredith Wong: Um, so at that point the Jewish museum didn't have a program for people with dementia and their caregivers. Um, we recognized that there was a need-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: As have other museums since then and before then. Um, and so we asked what was then the New York City of the Alzheimer's Associating to come in and do a training with us. That chapter became CaringKind.

Philip Dallmann: Oh, cool. That-that's super organic, I love that. That's so funny, I want to just, before we dive into CaringKind I want us to back I- um, I love the ... everyone's story is different but inevitably it's I fell into this somehow uh, I love that so much because it is incredibly organic and it is um, I think highlights a hidden part of uh, an individuals personality which I love. I myself was thrown into an autism classroom on the fly and uh, mine was teenagers in a high school level and uh, I walked in terrified, but came out with a passion that I didn't know I had.

Meredith Wong: Mm-hmm (affirmative) .

Philip Dallmann: So I-I love that and I appreciate that in everyone that says, you know well I kind of just stepped into this and then figured out that like, I kinda like this, so.

Meredith Wong: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: I kinda like helping people in this way.

Philip Dallmann: Um, so first of all, I just wanted to say, that's fantastic and wonderful and uh, so ... the previous iteration of CaringKind comes to the Jewish museum. How do we get from there to here?

Meredith Wong: Okay. So uh, we went through the training-

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: And um, I was kind of pulled into it. I had kind of taken on the responsibility- the responsibilities of developing programs for adults with disabilities.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Meredith Wong: Um, and so in that role- in that part of my job, and it was only part of my job at that point, um, I started talking to people, more people in access and how can I develop these particular programs for this particular audience? And through those conversations talked- ended up talking to someone and CaringKind, what was then the New York City chapter. Um, and at that point, one of the senior trainers here who had a personal interest in the connections and the implications of people with dementia and the arts, had really pursued this idea of creating a program around that.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: Um, that idea. So, um I was kind of pulled into conversations around that through focus groups and uh, with my colleagues and I started talking to the person who was on staff, the other person who was on staff here and he said, well you know we're trying to figure out whether this is a program that we want to pursue. You know, really have it funded and um, have it be a full time job. I said, well should you come to that point, when you come to that point, I'm here and I would love to talk to you more about it.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: And so two years later, I get a phone call and they say, we found the funding and we want to talk to you more about it and that's-that's ... I said, yes, yeah sure. Time, date, place, name it.

Philip Dallmann: Well then, I mean and it's also a little bit fortuitous in that, for two years, which is the like, the standard length for something to happen in the non-profit sector.

Meredith Wong: (laugh)

Philip Dallmann: Um, anything to develop or launch or what have you, but then nothing else came along or anything like that to pull you away or and so that, I mean, that's wonderful too.

Meredith Wong: It is wonderful and it gave me that extra time to really cement my interest in working with these populations and also to grow my network in the access world. Um, and so from then on it was okay, I really, really want to be working with caregivers and with people with dementia.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: Both of those populations um, and they said okay, come on in. So, I kind of took the ball and run with it- and ran with it. I was given basically carte blanche to come in and I brought all of my colleagues kind of with me. Um, and that was the beginning of connect to culture in its current state. Um, in its current state, if you wanna go forward from there.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah.

Meredith Wong: Um, of course, most of my colleagues were in the art museum world um, in the current state connect to culture is art museums, history museums, botanical gardens, performing arts organizations, theater programs, you know, whoever will talk to me. SO uh-

Philip Dallmann: That's a good baseline.

Meredith Wong: You want to know more? I'll tell you more. Um, so um, in that case, it was I had a model from meet me at MOMA and meta scapes and all of the over dementia friendly programs that are out there, and I thought, well why don't w- is it possible to take that format um, to a botanical garden or to a completely different venue, type of organization, so you don't know until you try, right?

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Meredith Wong: So, I went and talked to a near botanical garden, I went and talked to Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, I you know, I'd talk to anyone and I said, I have this model, we can either try this model here or um, we can um, and we can also look at what your resources are and what your space is like, because every space is different, and work from there.

Meredith Wong: It is actually very organic the way these programs come to be, depending on who I'm talking to and what the venue is like.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: So, for instance, a program at the intrepid, which has been there several years, um will be a very different experience than a program at a botanical garden. The logistics are different, the resources are different, the experience is very different even though really, the core format is very much the same.

Philip Dallmann: And, if you could, describe a little bit for those who don't know anything about dementia friendly, um a little bit of what that core format kind of entails.

Meredith Wong: Okay. So, for the most part, and I'm speaking on broad strokes, um it means that you have an experience with whatever collection is part of that venue, like an art museum collection, or um, a history museum or, in the case of the in intrepid, they have objects and they also have large pieces of military appliance. You know, for lack of a better description.

Philip Dallmann: (chuckle)

Meredith Wong: And they also have very unique spaces, 'cause it is on an aircraft carrier so you're-you're immersed in this experience. Um, so you spend time in that experience and then for many programs there will be a- some type of an interactive activity, be it a workshop on music making activity, art making, um maybe a dance or movement activity depending on um, what the resources are and how that museum decides to ... or that organization decides to format it.

Meredith Wong: But, for the most part, it's like maybe a 90 minute experience and so 45-50 minutes will be in there galleries or in the garden and then the rest of that time will be in that interactive experience.

Philip Dallmann: Okay. I mean, that seems great and that seems incredibly adaptable-

Meredith Wong: It is.

Philip Dallmann: As you move across.

Meredith Wong: So far, yes. So far.

Philip Dallmann: Knock on wood.

Meredith Wong: Knock on wood.

Philip Dallmann: Um, that's fantastic so um. As you go out in-into the world, what are some of the unique, I guess challenges that different venues ... like a botanical garden, to me, seems like its own beast to-to take on for this kind of program or for any type of program really. But what are some of the unique challenges you've faced?

Meredith Wong: So, well you bring up botanical gardens, so let's start with that. Um, uh my colleague Joann Daria, I'm gonna give her a shout out, at the botanical gardens, she has single handedly created this experience for many of the families in those communities around Brooklyn.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: And it really means that you're dealing with the-with the outside elements, you're dealing with nature. So, nature can be very unpredictable.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: Um, so it's having to be flexible and you're wanting to be flexible anyway with this audience because you can plan, plan all you like, and then you just have to throw it out the window and just go with the flow. And that's true with a lot of types of programming in museums, you just kind of go with the flow. If someone wants to talk about a topic that maybe is not directly related to what you're thinking, go there with them, because really, when you're engaging with this population the idea is that you want them to respond.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: In whatever way they can. If that's verbally, that's great. If that's through gesture, if that's through facial expression, if that's through um, sound or vocalizations, that's a good thing. That means that they're engaged and they're in that moment. So, if you're in a botanic garden, you're dealing with the natural elements and you're also dealing with um, just basically, how do you get from point a to point b? Sometimes you don't have level ground. Sometimes the

paths are winding and sometimes you're having to duck under branches or whatever. Um, so it's a logistical challenge and I think Joanne could probably say a lot more along those lines.

Meredith Wong: It's also, for families, sometimes going away from gardens and you go into places like the intrepid which is way, way over West.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: It's on the river, there is the challenge of getting there.

Philip Dallmann: Oh yeah, I uh, on the day before my wedding I sent my grandfather and step father over there like ... short story, my stepfathers uncle was on the intrepid and then my grandfather was in the Navy in submarines and the submarine happened to be there. And uh, I watched the lift that I put them in to go over there, oh I don't know, take forever to get there. Uh, just short of and then you know, they come back and my grandfather goes, the submarine that was there was uh, he was I don't know, made in '65 and he goes, "That's when they decided you should have headroom".

Meredith Wong: (laugh)

Philip Dallmann: I guess previous to that he was like, we all had back and neck problems because they uh, they hadn't updated the size of humans in the design of that which was funny but yes, it was, I mean it cost me a fortune to send them there, but yeah, that's a logistic you don't necessarily think about.

Meredith Wong: Yeah. So, you're thinking about an older generation who is experience dementia and many of the caregivers are also of the older generation. So, and they're dealing with, maybe they're dealing with their own mobility issues. Um, so getting from curbside, kind of past visitor center, across, up the elevator, into the hanger.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: It's a whole journey even before you're started the program. So, the people at the intrepid have become masters in how to get people from point a to point b. Um, and kudos to them.

Philip Dallmann: They have a great access team over there.

Meredith Wong: They are fantastic, they really are.

Philip Dallmann: Yeah. It's Barbara, right? Over there?

Meredith Wong: Um, Barbara's actually no longer there.

Philip Dallmann: Oh, see I'm out of date.

Meredith Wong: No, Charlotte, there's a whole team over there, actually.

Philip Dallmann: Charlotte is who I was thinking of. I said Barbara but I was thinking of Charlotte now that you say it.

Meredith Wong: Barbara is former, she is also, I want to give her a shout out to because she's wonderful as well. And then also, I think still connected to access, but I want to say in DC? Sorry, Barbara is I've forgotten. Um, but anyway, so the access team at the Intrepid is fantastic. They're very active with uh, working with veterans as well and there is crossover between the veteran population and dementia.

Philip Dallmann: Oh yeah.

Meredith Wong: Because it is-it is those generations that have been affected.

Philip Dallmann: How important is that collaboration with the organization or institution?

Meredith Wong: With Caring- between CaringKind?

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: It's really important. That's basically what connect to culture is and does.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: And so, all of the people who I go out and train, or talk with, or educate, um or help create programs, are through partnerships. We call them cultural partners here because CaringKind is an organization that includes social workers, includes support groups, includes help line, so there are many other services and programs here. So, when we talk about cultural partners, it's specific to connect to culture. And so, developing those relationships and building them um and sustaining them is really important to the life of connect to culture.

Meredith Wong: It's not just a one off, I'll do the training and I'll have those conversations, but once that program is off the ground, it's really checking in with them, or if they have a question that I'm not able to answer particularly, then I'll say, you know let me check with the social worker on staff and see if they have an answer. Because you have people who are experience cognitive differences and cognitive shifts and I don't have the training as a social worker but we do have the expertise in house. So that's really helpful, I think, and not really something that cultural institutions normally have access to, and that's what I bring to the table for them.

Philip Dallmann: That's fantastic.

Meredith Wong: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Um, before we let you dream your dreams for the future, I would like t-t-to I guess, two fold if you could share with us a little bit of what a training entails, and then how people how are interested at their respective organizations um, could enlist you for said trainings.

Meredith Wong: (chuckle) Okay, um so, training, I would say, it is actually two fold. There are two trainings, actually. One is called the understanding dementia- uh, understanding dementia for cultural professionals training. That is offered free of charge for non-profits and it's basically me coming in and talking about the disease, it's understanding the disease. Um, that is the pathology of it, that is how it may manifest in different people in different ways, um through the stages of dementia and it touches on how we might best communicate with those people.

Meredith Wong: Um, the second level is when that cultural institution decides that they want to create a program, then I'll come back and work, really, with the program facilitators. So, that may mean the administrative staff as well as the teaching staff. Um, and that is a deeper dive into communications and behaviors and um, using what their venue and their site has um, to ... to have conversations and make connections and make memories.

Philip Dallmann: Fantastic.

Meredith Wong: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Now, if somebody, many of our listeners are a variety of cultural organizations, so if they're interesting in-in expanding their program or learning more, how would they uh, how would they reach out to you?

Meredith Wong: So, you can reach me, my name is Meredith Wong, I'm the manager of connect to culture, so can either email me directly at mwong@caringskindnyc.org or you can call our helpline. It's a 24 hours helpline which is 646-744-2900.

Philip Dallmann: Fantastic and uh, if for some reason you forget all of that, email access champion and we will connect you with Meredith.

Philip Dallmann: So, my favorite thing to do with this podcast is to let people dream their dreams, especially in the non-profit sector. Because we don't get to go it that often, we always get hit with budgets and-and not right now's. So, uh for you, um what do you hope for the future of connect to culture and then really, inclusion as it relates to this world of dementia and Alzheimer's in general?

Meredith Wong: Well, can I, my dream for connect to culture is very simple.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Meredith Wong: And that is to grow it. Um, to make um, to make sure that communities in the five burrows, on all five burrows of Manhattan of, New York, um have access to at least two programs within their burrow. Um, right now there are a couple of burrows that have one or two programs, but there are other burrows that have nothing.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: So, to equal- I want to equalize it. Um, the dream, dreaming my dreams. That's a hard question, that's a really big question, Phil.

Philip Dallmann: Well, we don't get asked it often, so. It is tough but, I like to you know, it's a safe space.

Meredith Wong: Yeah no, totally safe space. Dreaming my dream. I would have to say, having more organizations um ... how do I say this?

Meredith Wong: I can't even put it into words. Uh. So I- so my mission is to reach out to as many different types of organizations as possible, because not everyone wants to go to an art museum or to a botanic garden, and it's not necessarily large organizations that I reach out to. It could be a community based organization, it could be a community garden, it could be a small neighborhood orchestra, it could be one musician. I mean, the sky's the limit.

Philip Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Wong: From where I sit.

Philip Dallmann: So you want choices, and that, my favorite, or one of my favorite folks in accessibility Roger Adeishi, he says that. Access is choices, so true access is ... because we always ... we used to say at TDF, um you know when we captioned or sign interpreted something um, just because they have hearing loss doesn't mean they want to see waitress, maybe they want to see show x, so I love that and I support that goal.

Meredith Wong: Yeah.

Philip Dallmann: Um, well, thank you so much, Meredith, for taking the time. Thank you for the breath of work that you're doing and the impact you're making especially in the world of dementia and Alzheimer's and culture um, and thank you for being an access champion.

Meredith Wong: Thank you, Phil.

Philip Dallmann: Thank you to Meredith for taking the time to chat uh, just really great conversation and a really unique journey. Uh, just was so exciting to hear and um, the work that's being done is so very important. Uh, thank you to our episodes sponsor, Able the series, which is be debuting on Amazon Prime on September 12th as previously mentioned, we do have access to the first episode before it debuts. All you have to do is support us on Patreon for as little as one dollar a month and that's patreon.com/accesschampions and you'll have access to that first episode before it debuts on Amazon Prime.

Philip Dallmann: Thank you, as always to our executive producer Matt Kerstetter for making us sound great each and every single week, even when I struggle through intros as I have this week. Uh, cleans it up, makes it amazing and I'm forever grateful for that. Uh, thank you to our associate producer, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown for everything that she does and uh-uh, all the support that she provides this show.

Philip Dallmann: Thank you to our champion intern Savannah Cooper, and thank you to Tommy Karr for that dope logo and Eric Walton for our amazing theme song. We'll be back again next week and remember inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.