Special Issue on Leisure, Inclusion and Ability

Lynn Anderson, Guest Editor

This special issue of Social Advocacy and Systems Change Journal addresses an important life area for people with disabilities - leisure. The importance of leisure, recreation, and play has been documented by philosophers, scientists, practitioners, and people with disabilities and their families. This issue focuses our attention on several aspects of leisure through the lens of inclusion and a social model of disability. I am honored to bring you this volume of articles and videos, written and recorded from multiple perspectives, many from people with disabilities themselves.

I set the tone of the special issue with an article entitled, Why Leisure Matters: Facilitating Full Inclusion. I delineate the importance of leisure and inclusion and share some best practices that facilitate inclusive recreation. Austin, Karsyn, and Darleen Lieber share the perspective of a family on the importance of play and recreation in their lives, in their article A Parent-Child-Sibling Perspective on the Importance of Play.

Austin, a young teen with autism, and his sister and mother give us a unique and delightful look at how important both every day and special leisure experiences are to them and how their family has adapted to help Austin flourish as a young person.

LaWanda Cook shares her research with adults with disabilities in the article “I’m not the typical handicapped person”: The Significance of Leisure for Employed People with Disabilities. Again leisure emerges as an important life domain in the lives of people with disabilities. As well, LaWanda shares her personal perspective of being a researcher with a disability and how that influenced the research process.

Vicki Wilkins provides a powerful rationale for the use of person-first language when talking or writing about people with disabilities in Communicating Humanness: Attitudes and Language. She also interviews her son, George Murphy-Wilkins, on a youth’s view of the importance of positive, sensitive, and accurate language when talking about people with differences, in the video, A Child’s Perspective on Person First Language.

Using an innovative research technique called PhotoVoice, Lindsey Brake, Stuart Schleien, Kimberly Miller, and Ginger Walton give a “visual voice” to self-advocates in their article, Photovoice: A Tour Through the Camera Lens of Self-Advocate. The approach can help us more accurately understand what is important in the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities, including recreation. In the article, Social Inclusion in the Lunchroom and on the Playground at School, Linda Heyne, Vicki Wilkins, and I share innovative inclusive programs in the school setting, specifically in those non-academic times and spaces that are less structured and monitored, providing models and helpful suggestions on how to facilitate social inclusion.

Because the internet is such an important and growing part of the leisure experience in today’s world, Michelle Cryan, in her article Understanding Web Accessibility from the User’s Perspective, helps us learn not only about accessibility features in good web
design, but also provides links and exercises to experience the internet with a simulated functional difference to truly understand the need for inclusion on the web.

The next two articles, again written by self-advocates, provide new ways of thinking about disability and leisure. Rich Fabend, an inventor, advocate, motivational speaker, and peer mentor, explains his theory of *Learned Empowerment*. He also provides two videos that show learned empowerment in action; one video is “uncut” to show the unvarnished view of living with a disability and the persistent creativity it takes to overcome daily challenges. In her article, *Beyond the Box*, Kerry Wiley shares her personal and lived perspective on the importance of the social model of disability and how labels and diagnoses cannot define us or limit us. In the video *Boxing Lesson*, Kerry shows us a training session with her personal trainer, James R. House III, putting the social model of ability into practice and helping Kerry move well beyond the lowered expectations historically set for her by helping professionals.

We end this special issue looking outside the United States and exploring inclusion in recreation in other parts of the world in Linda Heyne’s article, *An International Perspective on Inclusion in Recreation*. We can learn best practices from other cultures that can advance inclusion in recreation on a global scale.

This special issue of *Social Advocacy and Systems Change Journal* is interesting, unique, powerful, and important. The multiple perspectives of people with and without disabilities who range in age across the lifespan gives us a rare and delightful look at leisure, inclusion, and ability. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Dr. Lynn Anderson, CTRS, CPRP
Guest Editor