

respect
ability

A Decade of Impact, A Future of Change

Annual Report
2023



Fighting Stigmas.
Advancing Opportunities.



www.DisabilityBelongs.org

Dear Colleagues and Supporters,

As we close out a phenomenal decade of service, inclusion, change, and evolution, we reflect on all we have accomplished and look forward to our next decade of impact as an organization. We are thrilled to share the highlights of 2023 with you.

This past year has been a monumental one for us. We've hired new leaders who will help us achieve new heights. While we celebrated our growth, we also experienced a painful loss. In September, we lost one of our team members, Ben Spangenberg, who managed our National Leadership Program and helped us live one of our core values of developing leaders every day. Although Ben is no longer with us, we're working tirelessly to keep his vision of an inclusive future alive.

We deepened our commitment to our mission of fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities so people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community. We made progress in dismantling systemic barriers that have prevented a fully inclusive community. We partnered to make an impact through our training, workshops, digital content, pipeline programming, advocacy, and action.

Our theory of change guides our focused approach, advancing opportunities, developing leaders, and changing attitudes across our four programmatic areas:

Policy and Civic Engagement

Faith Inclusion and Belonging

Leadership and Workforce Development

Entertainment and News Media

We recognize the dedication of our staff, advisors, and board members who contribute to our work. Despite the challenges of working across different time zones and navigating organizational obstacles in a constantly evolving social environment, our collaborative efforts help drive our progress forward.

This report showcases key accomplishments in 2023 and illustrates the significant impact we have made in improving inclusion for our community. However, we cannot achieve this without the continued support and contributions of our partners and supporters.

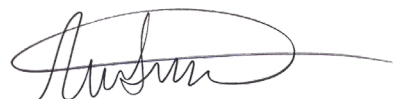
We celebrate the diversity of the disability community and acknowledge all of its intersections. We firmly believe that a brighter future is achievable only if we continue to work together towards it. Despite any challenges that may arise in the future, we remain committed to promoting full inclusion of disability in our community.

Sincerely and in solidarity,



Linda Burger (she/her)

Board Chair



Ariel Simms Esq. (they/she)

President & CEO



“ It was an honor to represent Wells Fargo at the RespectAbility 10th Anniversary Celebration. So many great leaders in one room advancing #disabilityinclusion!



At RespectAbility, we confidently rely on our theory of change to guide our work, empowering us to maximize our efforts across our four advocacy pillars, with unwavering resolve.

Changing Attitudes: Challenging stigma and amplifying authentic narratives on disability – nothing about us, without us!

Advancing Opportunities: Taking down barriers to education, employment, and civic life to enable disabled individuals to lead lives of their choosing.

Developing Leaders: Modeling training and empowering the next generation of leaders in disability advocacy and inclusion.

Our Advocacy Pillars:

Entertainment and News Media: We work towards changing attitudes by collaborating with media and entertainment outlets and providing them with guidance, reviews, and strategic direction to uplift disabled talent both on and off the screen. Our intensive training Entertainment Lab helps create space for disabled creatives. Our ultimate goal is to promote authentic and accurate representation of people with disabilities in the media, to challenge the harmful narrative that disabled people are not multifaceted, talented, and do not contribute significantly to society.

Leadership and Workforce Development: We offer a paid Fellowship program that aims to develop leaders for the next generation of disability advocates and self-advocates. The program includes training for two cohorts of Fellows per year, providing them with writing direction, work assignments in their chosen field, feedback, and robust training to equip them for the next stage of their career. We are actively working towards creating access to opportunities and strengthening a diverse talent pipeline of people with disabilities, enabling their full participation in decision-making, career advancement, and networking opportunities.

Policy and Civic Engagement: Our policy work intensified in preparation for the upcoming election year. We focused on securing partnerships within the disability community and staying informed about upcoming federal, state, and local policies that will affect people with disabilities. Throughout the year, we advocated for inclusive voting centers and accessible materials that would provide the disability community with access to information about policies and bills. Driving home the need for advancing opportunities for disabled voters to be able to participate and engage in civic activity.

Faith Inclusion and Belonging: Our Faith Inclusion and Belonging department helps create an inclusive environment for disabled individuals to participate in their faith practices and explore their identity while feeling a sense of belonging. We provided valuable insights to faith leaders on creating a more inclusive and welcoming religious institution for both current worshipers and future religious leaders. The goal is to guarantee that individuals with disabilities can actively engage and feel a sense of belonging, while also fostering a change in attitudes toward disabled members before, during, and after religious services.

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Developing Leaders

Our **Commitment**

As we strive for a future that is fair and just for individuals with disabilities, we must also acknowledge the importance of doing the internal work that we challenge others to take. While the workforce is constantly changing, we believe it is crucial to live our values and consistently evaluate ourselves to ensure that we provide a safe, equitable, competitive, and caring workplace for our diverse team.

Our **Values**

We are a “Nothing About Us, Without Us” organization. This means we are led by disabled people and promote disabled leadership on all issues that impact our lives and community. Disabled people are experts on their lived experience, and these experiences inform and guide RespectAbility’s advocacy.

Disability is one of many identities. We acknowledge and appreciate that disability intersects with other identities, and that for many marginalized groups and communities, there is a higher representation of disability. We honor and respect the intersectional identities within the disability community.

Bias, stigma, and discrimination that harm people with disabilities can be compounded by other factors, including race, ethnicity, immigration status, veteran status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. While we advocate for the disability community as a whole, we prioritize the needs, priorities, and experiences of disabled people who are multiply marginalized.



Advancing Opportunities

- Pay equity and ongoing market analyses
- Fully remote workplace, with flexible time off
- Health insurance from Day 1
- Employer-match retirement plan
- Leave options



Changing Attitudes

- Disability-led and majority-disabled team
- DEIA vision and values that guide the work of our organization and team
- Promoting education and learning with our partners
- Prioritizing participation in inclusive spaces, including speaking engagements



Developing Leaders

- Investment in professional development
- Access to coaching and leadership development programming
- Pipeline programming: National Leadership Program and Entertainment Lab

Changing **Attitudes**

Challenging stigma and amplifying authentic narratives on disability – nothing about us, without us!



Successfully completed 170 consulting projects and partnerships across all our advocacy pillars which helped **change attitudes about disability in the workforce, policy, and media.**

- During National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), we celebrated seven disability-inclusive films in a Top Picks collection on the seatback in-flight entertainment system on Delta Airlines. Six of these films were created by Disabled filmmakers, giving them a platform to showcase their talents to a wider audience. These films were made even more accessible with captions and audio descriptions, providing an opportunity for viewers who are Deaf and/or blind to enjoy them.
- Conducted five training courses with some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry, including Pixar Pixability, Disney Publishing, Unscripted Warner Bros Discovery, and Children's Media Association. These courses focused on language in filmmaking, accessibility in print and digital media, and inclusive and authentic storytelling, empowering creators to produce stories that are diverse and representative of all.
- Conducted numerous workshops and training sessions across various faith segments throughout the country, promoting a culture of belonging and practical accessibility. These sessions aimed to educate and encourage individuals to create a world that is more inclusive and accepting of everyone, regardless of their differences.

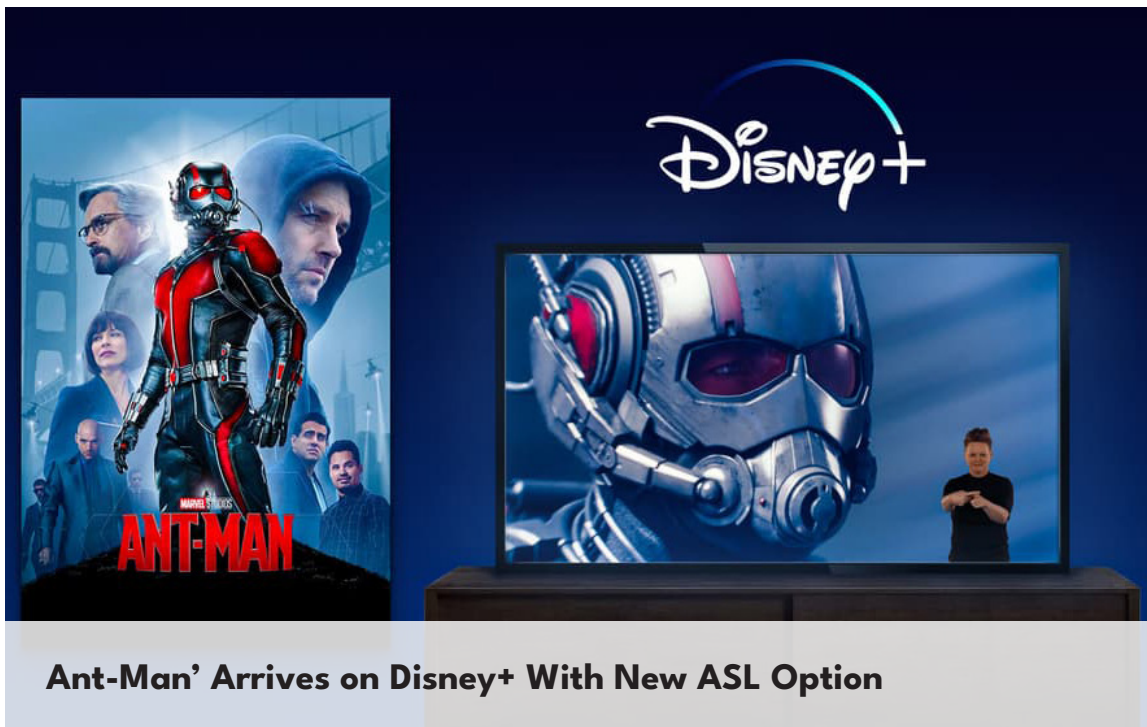


“

As a person on the autism spectrum looking to break into disability advocacy, RespectAbility gave me the honor of a lifetime in picking me as a Fellow. I look to the future now more emboldened than ever and with a determination to make my colleagues proud.

– Abraham Shapiro, Policy Fellow, Fall 2023 Cohort

- Notably provided trainings at groups like Jewish Family and Children’s Service, TASH Annual Conference, AAIDD Annual Conference, Faith Communities are Pipelines for Employment, USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture, and many more.
- Conducted an intensive workshop on Presenting the Business Case for Disability Inclusion Within Your Organization.
- Wrote about important topics such as improving paratransit services, promoting self-employment for disabled individuals, and enhancing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).



Advancing Opportunities

Taking down barriers to education, employment, and civic life to enable disabled individuals to lead lives of their choosing.

- Engaged in panels for Kidscreen, ScreenFest, and an internal Creative Artist Agency (CAA) panel for disabled writers to emphasize the importance of hiring disabled creators behind the camera.
- Partnered with many organizations of various faith practices to create practical guides and adjustments so disabled congregants have access to their faith practices.
- Policy staff supported 18 bills and gave testimony on two. Testimony was submitted to state workforce boards in CA, AZ, NM, OH, and UT in support of full inclusion of people with disabilities in state and locally administered training programs, closing the gap in labor force participation rates, and improving Employment Transition Services.
- Leveraged our expertise through consulting services to numerous groups, including the Irvine Foundation and United Spinal Association, ensuring disability is not left out of the conversation.
- After reconsidering our approach to how we partner with organizations, we concentrated on offering training, workshops, and digital content to help professionals create a more inclusive workspace. As a result, we have partnered with multiple organizations during our consulting projects to conduct virtual training sessions via lunch and learns, ERGs, and internal staff trainings.
- Our staff provided informational trainings to staff on voter accessibility, eliminating sub-minimum wage based on disability, and global disability organizations.
- Provided a month long of programming for our annual Road to NDEAM Series highlighting Medical Professionals with Disabilities, Educators with Disabilities, and Veterans with Disabilities.





“

Before RespectAbility, I really had a hard time even identifying as disabled. I’m visually impaired, legally blind, but I hide it really well, and I had spent most of the last 20 years hiding it in most circumstances. And being in RespectAbility totally blew my mind, and just helped me become a lot more comfortable being who I am and self-identifying as being visually impaired.

– Lab alumnus and writer Matt Opatrny

Developing **Leaders**

Modeling training and empowering the next generation of leaders in disability advocacy and inclusion.

- The Faith Inclusion and Belonging Associate co-chairs the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition which met with 25 Congressional offices and secured five co-sponsors for SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act.
- As part of their commitment to making a difference, the Policy Fellows actively participated in supporting the staff with research and bill analysis. Together, they worked towards preparing our 2024 legislative agenda, driven by a common passion for creating a positive impact in our community.
- Policy Fellows contributed articles to blogs on Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, Medicare, Medicaid, accessibility standards for communication technology, and voting.
- Conducted another successful year at the Entertainment Lab, with 39 new lab alumni who have gone on to work at some of the top studios and productions this past year.



The importance of a strong disability rights community which is – cross-disability, cross-age, and is also working with other entities like the civil rights community, the religious community – I think when you were talking about RespectAbility and the work that you do in the area of religion, it doesn't just focus on the Jewish community but it focuses on working with other religious communities. And as we know for many people, some people, religious community is very important and is an example of if we get it right in the religious community, if disabled people feel that the barriers are being removed, and that we're being treated equitably, then it's a great roadmap – an example for how the rest of society can move forward.

– Judy Heumann JDAIM 2023 Conversation





Supporting **Our Theory of Change**

At RespectAbility, we base all our work on our theory of change. Our approach is to seek out media opportunities that align with our goals of advancing opportunities, changing attitudes, and developing leaders within the disability community. We are deeply committed to highlighting our work and challenging harmful stigmas that often isolate disabled people and prevent them from fully participating in community.

AMAZON
MGM STUDIOS prime freevee | **cc:deia** Customer & Content,
Diversity, Equity,
Inclusion, Accessibility

Forbes

▶ The **James Irvine** Foundation

Candid.
Learning

THE
Hollywood
REPORTER

disability**scoop**

Amazon MGM Studios Inclusion Progress Report

Disney's 'Firebuds' Wants To Show People Young and Old Disability Representation Is, In Fact, Diversity, Forbes

How Inclusive and Accessible Workplaces Support Economic Opportunity, The James Irvine Foundation

Build a More Disability-Inclusive Organization with RespectAbility, Candid Learning

How 'Barbie With ASL' Came Together on Max — Along With Its Own Accessible Live Premiere, The Hollywood Reporter

Characters With Disabilities At Center Of New TV Show Disability Scoop

In Memoriam

RespectAbility will continue to honor the legacies of these truly impactful individuals. Your impact on those around you and your unwavering commitment to disability advocacy and inclusion will forever be admired.



Ben Spangenberg
Senior Manager, National
Leadership Program



Judy Heumann
Disability Rights Activist



Continue to support our work as we move into another decade of advocacy and service for disabled people in all aspects of community.

Give.DisabilityBelongs.org

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Toby Wong

2023 Financials

Statement of Functional Expenses, Year Ended December 31, 2023

| | Programs | | | | | Total | Management and General | Fundraising | Total Expenses |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | Policy and Civic Engagement | Entertainment and News Media | Faith Inclusion and Belonging | Leadership and Workforce Development | Community Outreach | | | | |
| Salaries, payroll taxes and benefits | \$ 407,673 | \$ 591,375 | \$ 223,318 | \$ 338,162 | \$ 210,214 | \$ 1,770,742 | \$ 536,760 | \$ 495,526 | \$ 2,803,028 |
| Advertising, promotion, and media communications | 2,805 | - | - | - | 2,096 | 4,901 | 2,233 | - | 7,134 |
| Conferences, conventions and meetings | 1,301 | 2,230 | - | 485 | 1,299 | 5,315 | 5,152 | - | 10,467 |
| Depreciation | 1,581 | 2,293 | 866 | 1,311 | 815 | 6,866 | 2,081 | 1,921 | 10,868 |
| Dues and subscriptions | 2,906 | 9,854 | 748 | - | 1,183 | 14,691 | 21,378 | 2,164 | 38,233 |
| Fees for services | | | | | | | | | |
| Legal | - | - | - | - | - | - | 83,349 | - | 83,349 |
| Accounting | - | - | - | - | - | - | 74,605 | - | 74,605 |
| Other professional services | 1,904 | 28,047 | 2,291 | 42,864 | 7,716 | 82,822 | 129,150 | - | 211,972 |
| Insurance - general | 1,225 | 1,777 | 671 | 1,016 | 632 | 5,321 | 1,611 | 1,489 | 8,421 |
| Office expenses | 456 | 252 | 267 | 3 | - | 978 | 21,597 | 133 | 22,708 |
| Other | 4,677 | 6,739 | 2,563 | 3,837 | 2,385 | 20,201 | 8,536 | 5,638 | 34,375 |
| Postage, printing and copying | 234 | 137 | - | - | - | 371 | 5,877 | 3,463 | 9,711 |
| Professional development | 937 | 1,976 | 526 | 199 | - | 3,638 | 16,827 | - | 20,465 |
| Special programming | 118 | 18,112 | - | - | 62,007 | 80,237 | - | - | 80,237 |
| Telephone/teleconferences | 4,411 | 6,399 | 2,416 | 3,659 | 2,275 | 19,160 | 5,807 | 5,362 | 30,329 |
| Travel, lodging and meals | 13,833 | 18,859 | 4,847 | 1,114 | 679 | 39,332 | 162,041 | 458 | 201,831 |
| | <u>\$ 444,061</u> | <u>\$ 688,050</u> | <u>\$ 238,513</u> | <u>\$ 392,650</u> | <u>\$ 291,301</u> | <u>\$ 2,054,575</u> | <u>\$ 1,077,004</u> | <u>\$ 516,154</u> | <u>\$ 3,647,733</u> |

2022 Financials

Statement of Functional Expenses, Year Ended December 31, 2022

| | Policy and Civic Engagement | Entertainment and News Media | Programs | | | Total | Management and General | Fundraising | Total Expenses |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | | | Faith Inclusion and Belonging | Leadership and Workforce Development | Community Outreach | | | | |
| Salaries, payroll taxes and benefits | \$ 233,659 | \$ 503,883 | \$ 149,325 | \$ 549,360 | \$ 70,537 | \$ 1,506,764 | \$ 532,462 | \$ 305,603 | \$ 2,344,829 |
| Advertising, promotion, and media communications | - | 5,988 | - | 448 | - | 6,436 | 7,676 | - | 14,112 |
| Conferences, conventions and meetings | 5,152 | 354 | - | - | - | 5,506 | - | 1,000 | 6,506 |
| Credit loss expense | - | - | - | - | - | - | 19,420 | - | 19,420 |
| Depreciation | 1,078 | 2,324 | 689 | 2,534 | 325 | 6,950 | 2,455 | 1,410 | 10,815 |
| Dues and subscriptions | 7,754 | 9,308 | 3,813 | 127 | - | 21,002 | 10,808 | 2,591 | 34,401 |
| Fees for services | | | | | | | | | |
| Legal | - | - | - | - | - | - | 51,831 | - | 51,831 |
| Accounting | - | - | - | - | - | - | 40,275 | - | 40,275 |
| Other professional services | 1,975 | 85,719 | 24,444 | 32,109 | - | 144,247 | 243,969 | 4,965 | 393,181 |
| Information technology, websites and webinars | - | 144 | - | - | - | 144 | - | - | 144 |
| Insurance - general | 1,928 | 4,158 | 1,232 | 4,533 | 582 | 12,433 | 4,394 | 2,522 | 19,349 |
| Office expenses | 3,346 | 533 | 500 | 1,731 | - | 6,110 | 10,944 | 1,610 | 18,664 |
| Other | 2,048 | 4,418 | 1,309 | 4,817 | 619 | 13,211 | 4,668 | 2,680 | 20,559 |
| Postage, printing and copying | - | 67 | 21 | - | - | 88 | 2,541 | 2,388 | 5,017 |
| Professional development | 516 | 3,446 | 607 | 1,602 | - | 6,171 | 10,122 | 1,962 | 18,255 |
| Short-term lease expense | 1,392 | 3,003 | 890 | 3,274 | 420 | 8,979 | 3,173 | 1,821 | 13,973 |
| Special programming | - | 140,716 | 38,095 | - | 10,025 | 188,836 | 20,094 | - | 208,930 |
| Telephone/teleconferences | 2,414 | 5,205 | 1,543 | 5,675 | 729 | 15,566 | 5,500 | 3,157 | 24,223 |
| Travel, lodging and meals | 14,496 | 40,192 | 8,081 | 3,562 | - | 66,331 | 55,866 | 4,739 | 126,936 |
| | <u>\$ 275,758</u> | <u>\$ 809,458</u> | <u>\$ 230,549</u> | <u>\$ 609,772</u> | <u>\$ 83,237</u> | <u>\$ 2,008,774</u> | <u>\$ 1,026,198</u> | <u>\$ 336,448</u> | <u>\$ 3,371,420</u> |

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