APSE Conversations: Meet Chanel (WA)

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Julie Christensen
Hi this is Julie Christensen with APSE. We're excited to launch the APSE employment first employment for all podcast as a new way to connect with you. This podcast is a way to provide updates, real time advocacy alerts and information related to all things Employment First, be sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode, and thanks for listening.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Good afternoon or morning depending on where you live. Thanks for joining us today. We're excited to have Chanel here with us to talk about her experiences and different things that she's done over the course of her life and her current position as well. Um, I know that if you're a member of APSE or if you're new that's okay to. We are focused of Employment First and a variety of webinar topics each month,

But introduce us to Chanel. She has a pretty cool job that I'm probably gonna ask her lots of questions about but I'm gonna stop talking now and actually have Chanel introduce herself and we will get started so Chanel, do you mind introducing yourself and just telling a little bit about yourself to get us started?

Chanel Keenan
And I say my house phone's been ringing like crazy all day today. So either not go off at all during this now that I said something, but it will go off multiple times. So I apologize for that. So my name is Chanel. I'm 24 years old. I'm from Boston, Massachusetts. I was born and raised here. And as actually adopted, I was adopted by my family here, Boston, but I was born in Boston few folks with disabilities and travel. And I was born with something called osteogenesis imperfecta which is also known as brittle bones disease. So I use a power wheelchair to get around those times. Always. And yeah, I'm I have three older brothers been discussing that a little bit earlier. You can kind of imagine what that was like growing up. They're also significantly in some way significantly older. It's probably on the younger side for a couple people but they're about six, six and 12 years older than me I don't know not been enacted. Actually, oddly enough. I share my birthday with my one of my older brothers, which has always been both weird and annoying to share a birthday when you're not a twin. Probably even more so when you are twin. But yeah, that was kind of a unique experience growing up is something I don't always like talk about because I forget the sexy thing sometimes but it's obviously a big reminder when it is our birthday, that we share it so that's kind of silly, fun fact. I work for the Seattle Kraken as intersectionality consultant and I do a wide variety of consulting my work with them on accessibility concerns but it also helped out a lot with our diversity, equity and
inclusion initiatives. Both ones that are not mandated but that are thrown out by the League to have us take part in and then more ones that are more personal to the Seattle area in advance. So that's kind of the unique experience as well collaborating through those for those events and game nights and stuff like that. Okay, I've been doing this all remotely for the last year for 14 months or so. And that's been one of the weirdest parts about this. And I think for me as being a younger person and I was still in college when I got this opportunity. It was really apparent to me and I probably wouldn't have if it weren't for the pandemic so I really tried to be respectful of that and to be mindful. You know, while people were really struggling, I got one of the biggest opportunities I probably ever have and in quite a while and so I'm really grateful for that and all the weird and unique and fun experiences that it's given me such as this.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Thanks so much. So you're outside of Austin, which I was going to just mentioned in terms of the Kraken. I'm not sure if all of our listeners or viewers know what they are. Do you mind letting folks know?

Chanel Keenan
Yeah, I think the Seattle Kraken is the 32nd team in the National Hockey League (NHL) and it's kind of a more smaller than major league sports I would say. I think, you think like baseball and football. Probably top 2. So it's kind of a very, like it's very New England heavy to know about hockey and to know what that's like and to enjoy it. I grew up with my brothers playing it and I could not have been less interested in it. When they were playing. I was super not into the coldness of it all and traveling and practices and all those things but had to go because I was the youngest one you know you can't leave me at home at the time. You know, it was it all worked out. I think it's kind of just funny. All of us kind of laugh about how you know they were the ones my older brothers were the ones that were playing it and more involved in it. And I'm the one that ended up working in sports. So, so always front can hold that over them in some ways.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Absolutely. So I'm sure No, I know I'll probably ask you more questions specifically about your job and the different things that you're doing in terms of consultation, but I'm curious um, you know, a lot of the people that are members of APSE or you know, listen to our webinars, they oftentimes are working with transition age youth, as well. I know, in my past physician, I got to do a lot of training for teachers and staffs on options for students after high school with disabilities. So I'm curious would you mind sharing kind of what your experience through school looks like? Um, just so, you know, hopefully, there were some, you know, great things that happen, maybe not but just suggestions that some of our listeners might have. Get some ideas on.

Chanel Keenan
Yeah I had a very new schooling situation, I would say. I grew up in sort of an inner city neighborhood and I went to a full inclusion Elementary School, which meant that children with all disabilities are all abilities or whatever. We're consolidating into their age group classes. And so I was not the only child with a disability by class and that provided a really unique
experience. And I was there from pre K till third grade, and then I moved to the district that my mom was working in when I went to fourth date. And I had amazing teachers and my soul included elementary school, it was one of the best experiences I've ever had and they get really formed who I am as a person today and how I see things. And I can imagine that that’s kind of a weird or unique situation to be in. And then I moved, as I said, and it was completely the opposite. I was the only disabled person in mainstream classes at the time. And it was really a reality check. In some ways, it was a culture shock. It wasn't necessarily bad. It didn't feel bad because I think, especially with fourth grade, it's like right before things get bad for middle schoolers. Like it being awful. So I got in a good time, I think transition wise. And I feel like my class has been together for a really long time. They've been with each other since kindergarten. So whenever there's a new kid that comes in, I happened to be the new kid. That year. It was actually good for me, as far as like making friends was concerned. But it really was a hard transition. At the time when I was told I was an acting move because my school only went up to fifth grade, my elementary school and went up to fifth grade so we had to pick a good time to get me out of there to go to a school that has no more traditional middle school ages. So I’ve been really fortunate with the teachers that I’ve had, you know, never really called me or treated me any differently. And I think that that also is because of how I present myself. My brothers were not the best in school and so I kind of was like, Oh, I don't really want to you know, end up like that a little bit. They were not fans of homework and neither was I but I am a fan of getting it done. So, school is really important. To me good grades are really important to me. I think it's probably more so like the fear of messing that all up. So that was a funny motivating factor. And when I got into high school, I kind of have always gotten more along with the student athletes that I was friends with. So I had a lot of friends on the football team, a lot of friends that were on the basketball team, you know, like multi season athletes, because they tended in some ways, to me more help academically and it was a challenge for them to connect with our teachers a little bit more. And so, you know, we had a piece of homework that they were stressed out about, or a project or something like I'd be around to help out because when I was doing it as well. And too I kind of just was able to reach them in a way that our teachers weren't and I don't know what, what the science behind that is, but it's been something that I've grown up with a lot as far as just feeling that connection with them a little bit because I think we both face a lot of adversity. It looks different for us. But I feel like we were able to connect a little bit more in that regard. So I had never had any programs at school that I participated in. That sort of helped me prepare for the working world or even really, for college until my senior year. And it was more like the general for the general population of school. Like hey, like you might need to find a summer job or something like that. And so I worked a lot of summers in high school with kids and like, you know, summer camp situations.

And that was also a super unique experience of being a disabled person trying to teach children you know, whether it be as just a plant in the classroom to kind of, you know, just be there to help out or there was as my last I did I get it as a paraprofessional, which was also a really unique experience. I feel like I work really well with all ages. Middle school is kind of my sweet spot, which is tricky because middle schoolers are kind of mean. And so our high school is a little bit tricky, but for some reason, I'm able to connect with them a little bit more even still, you know, as an adult, so I've kind of been everywhere and I've lived this life where as a
disabled person, sometimes life is kind of marketed to you as a you can go around and talk about your disability all the time. And sort of you know, make people aware and ask people to you know, help you find a care and all these things and I didn't want to do that I wanted to you know, I felt really selfish and bad at times to want to pursue something individual and not necessarily tied to my disability. But I was obviously able to find a way that kind of married, you know, a hobby and the passion that I had, and the reality that I face and how can I use that to help the greater you know fans or an audience that we don't even serve in a more public way. You know, like, we're not the best at providing the presentation for the disabled community in sports and professional sports. So that was kind of my mission. It's still my mission to try to normalize that a little bit more because, you know, I've been disabled my whole life, but I've been a fan of hockey for half of my life. So to try to find, you know, a sweet spot of being able to educate people and to learn myself. But also, you know, have a dream of my own and to perceive that outside of whatever I'm going through. So my schooling situation was really interesting. I had a lot of help along the way height college was very different, obviously a little bit more hands off, and that's where I really relied on myself. And what I suppose I develop in high school, as far as like study habits and stuff like that where it's concerned, because you're not having someone hold your hand through all that. Don't think I ever had growing up as more being the hand or someone else which is totally fine. I think that was more of a shock for me was not helping anybody during my college time, especially when we went remote. So I don't know that answer your question. It was very long winded. Yeah.

Erica Belois-Pacer
So what kind of teacher was your mom?

Chanel Keenan
My mom's a physical therapist.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Ah, interesting.

Chanel Keenan
Yeah. So i ... like from the beginning of time, I don't think I would have been able to avoid the disabled community per se because she works with kids who need physical therapy. And so when I wasn't at school, I would go to school with her and I get to see your view, work with their kids. And that was always really fun.

Erica Belois-Pacer
No, that makes sense. I was curious. My mother in law is an OT. And my mom also worked in a school so I think that often you know, it can be helpful. In Were any of your siblings in school at the same time as you?

Chanel Keenan
Um, we were all in school. At the same time, but we never own the same school. My brothers actually went to rival schools, they went to Boston Latin and Bosman Academy. I did not get
into that school is not smart enough when I applied so that was I was honestly fine with that. And both of them had like, made their own little reputations over there. So I was a little bit nervous about going there, regardless of which one I'd gone into. So I was really lucky that I was able to go to that school district that my mom was teaching.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Well, it sounds like it worked out well for you and I it does also I kind of agree you probably transferred at a really good time because those middle school years can be challenging. So so um, it sounds like you've finished off high school and then I know we talked a little bit before just kind of about your college. Experience. Um, did you use your wheelchair when you went to college?

Chanel Keenan
Yeah. So I'm a full time power wheelchair user. That's my only mobility ever. And it was it was challenging trying to find so I have considered going to school online. So already I was kind of thinking about that. My mom was not excited about that. She really wanted me to get out there and to have the experience and I was nervous about it. For a lot of reasons, I'd never really even gone to like a sleepaway camp so it was kind of a big deal, but I also really need to leave and I didn't know that until I got there. And so I knew I was fine. Independence wise, because I kind of have the training for this my whole life to move and to experience college. So that was an interesting transition. But it it's still an interesting transition. I feel like now that I'm considering moving a million miles away the you know, top of mind as far as you know how I can do that successfully.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Yeah, I mean, I often when I so I have kids that are in high school currently. So we're gonna be starting those college tours and I'm probably from my lens. I often think, oh, gosh, this isn't accessible. So did that have any, you know, issues?

Chanel Keenan
Yeah Yeah

Erica Belois-Pacer
I know you told me, do you want to let everybody know where you went to school and yeah, did it impact your choices?

Chanel Keenan
So I applied to a handful of schools i i was kind of nervous about this whole situation because you just never know and I feel like my my high school is pretty competitive. So not really me I just want to make sure I got out of there. Good grades. I wasn't really after anything special. But I obviously knows top consideration of you know, is this successful? How is this accessible to too old to historic because that comes with its challenges too. Just for fun, my mom made me go to a school that we weren't sure I was going to get into. And it was an old college town area and we were kind of piecing together like what we could do to make sure it would work.
Luckily, I didn't get into it because I don't think it would have been the best. And there was a little bit further away than we wanted. So there was a lot of times though, when we were doing college tours where I think about in particular and experience that we forget about all the time. But one of the schools that I got a scholarship through my high school. We went up there and one of their like taglines was like oh, we hold the door for everybody like this is a really welcoming and warm campus. And then when we were there, no one held the door for us. The theater that we were all kind of getting into to learn about the school or whatever. During this introductory meeting. The accessible seating area was full of filming equipment. So we didn't we couldn't like sit there nicely comfortably. So that was interesting and sort of everybody that we met along the way did not really vibe with either myself or my mom. We didn't feel comfortable with the idea of really having to adapt so hard. And it was an older building kind of reminded me of Harry Potter world, that type of vibe and I am not someone that's into that, but I kind of could see that happening. So that was definitely top priority. Choosing to go to UMass Amherst, which is not without its flaws. But the building that I knew I was going to be in most my major and our communications building was pretty much brand new. I got there. And it wasn't the most accessible building, but it was at the time. So that was a really big relief. And the living choices where I was able to stay are a little bit not the best. They kind of tell you like oh you can live anywhere you want. But this building over here is the most accessible so we definitely recommend that one the most. I'd like so just tell me that right away like Don't tell me I have all these options. You know the most and the best one is over here. And I love that building and I stayed in it the longest so it worked out fine. It was about a two minute walk to our infirmary. So if anything happened to me, whether it be like significant whatever, I could just literally roll out of bed and go over there. And that happened once the entire time and so it really did come in handy a lot. But yeah, I think accessibility is always top of mind. There's always something that I'm thinking about just isn't you know, whether it be if I'm going out with my friends like you know having to make sure that we're we're going as accessible or, you know, anything of that nature, like just everything has to be accessible.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Absolutely. And I unfortunately, just as you mentioned, that isn't always the case. So it's, you know, the first show that it narrowed your choices, you know, I think we've come forward with being compliant. But there's still a lot of work to do so. So college sounds like it went well. And then I you were you online for part of it, I think you mentioned?

Chanel Keenan
Yeah. So I was I was there for two and a half years. Yeah. So I the spring break of my junior year is when I had to come home for the year. My mom at the time was like oh, like well, they're not like no I'm like I'm packing all the stuff that I know I want I just had a feeling I was like, if if we do come back I probably won't be with you probably be picking up stuff that we just you know weren't gonna bring home with us at the time and honestly, it's so it's such an interesting phrase because for me, I had a lot of personal responsibilities when I was at school outside of, you know, doing my work. I had to organize right pickups to classes. I had to organize personal care attendants, their schedules and you know, making sure that they got paid on time. So on top of my schoolwork I had a lot of outside responsibilities that I need to attend to. So when I
came home, I lived my aunt, my uncle, so when I came home, that all kind of went away and I was able to focus a little bit more on school and be a little bit more relaxed in a sense. And things are just more accessible so I don't have to worry about an objective snow to get to class. I just log on to zoom. And so again, like how I always you know, I'm really appreciative of what the pandemic is giving me that was one of the things was that it made going to school really easy. I don't think I would have been able to do it for the four years. I think I was really lucky that I got a good balance of the first you know, the first half of it being in person and meeting new people I know most different things, but I think I got the best balance of online and offline.

Erica Belois-Pacer
No, definitely sounds like it that's another really key thing though, that you're not only trying to go to school, do your classes and you know have relationships you had to like you said work with people that were helping you So and are seeing that which not that many college students have to do that. So it probably was time consuming and just you know one more thing that you had to do so never thought about it. Um, so I'm, I'm hoping you could talk a little bit about your job. And I'm sure people probably have questions about it because it is different. Um, I you know, of course, I'm a big hockey fan. So when I saw that I thought it was interesting and just your title you know, is different. So I'm curious, how did you you know, find the job and if you could just kind of talk a little bit about it. I think that would be great.

Chanel Keenan
Yeah. So I, in the summer 2020 was really are very interesting and how I can help be more effective as a human being what can I do to get back to my community and to give back in a way that makes sense and the way that was accessible to me. And I didn't really know where to begin. And at the time, we were kind of watching sports world react in the real world and what that looks like and how, how they were being affected by it. And the response to it and so, I wrote a couple pieces that were kind of just explaining, you know, my experience with hockey and feeling like there wasn't a place for me as a disabled person, because when you think about works like this, your idea of a fan does not automatically include someone with a mobility device or disability. And so I kind of wanted to change that narrative in the way and bring for a community that we weren't serving in a more public way. And I kind of just knew how to call out to the league itself to the National Hockey League. And just to you know, any team that might be listening that might want to change the way that they serve their community. Because you know, we have to buy have buy in from our local communities as as teams and to build a better fan base you because there's it's obviously not perfect. I feel like it's one of the more tough fan bases to be a part of because I love most sports. Not a big fan, but I I watch football, I see basketball games, and I did I participated when I was in school. I worked for a women's basketball team and I worked for our football team too. For a couple of years and it wasn't really what I what I thought I was most effective at is this kind of like how can I get involved any extra curricular engagement so no, I was at home I was watching all the other news and I was watching you know, everything sort of unfold. And the hockey community online is very tight knit and it's very interesting. And you can connect with people online. Way or away. It's an amazing tool you use it with good intent. And so that was some of the articles that I wrote got passed around in the community. One of the ones that I felt was most important, it kind of
pushed to people that I knew had a bigger audience so that they could share it. They get my story out there and it ended up getting in the hands of my boss, which was really, really just next because at the time they didn't even have a name yet they were just NHL Seattle. And so she asked me if she could, you know, present this to her team because she wanted to you know, make sure that they will be impactful and you know, making sure that this was something that was their priority. How’s it Well, it’s it’s a public article lady didn't even have to ask. Like that's totally fine. And she wanted to stay connected to me and so give me your email and explanation and, you know, we chatted on and off. And then one day, I was like, I can't believe like I actually have the ear of somebody right now. They don't ask for something that could possibly change the landscape of this team that's starting from scratch. Sounds brand new, just began over a season this year. And to see the potential there is I'm after Boston, as you guys know, that's an original six team and their history is very solid and they don't like to go off the beaten path per se. So I knew it was hard to get into that franchise. So to have the opportunity to come to work with a brand new one was really interesting to me. And so I wrote her a long email and was like I would love to help you guys make really thoughtful and meaningful decisions. I think, you know, I was brought on originally to help with their mobile app, and the accessibility around the mobile app. And so she asked me if that would be something I was interested in. She was like who compensate whatever and I was like, I don't care. Like I think it's cool to you know, be working on an NHL team, a lap like totally mind blowing to me.

And because we had been talking about that opportunity through email, I was like I want to do more. I want to help with you know, like our fan engagement and then development and really anything I can get my hands on to help make it more inclusive and more diverse and unique. And just something that I had never seen reflected in the best way possible. So you know, I put it out there to her. It took her only I think a week and a half to respond, but it felt like a month. I was like I just messed this whole thing up like I don't know what's happening anymore. And then she asked me to have a call with her. You know when she eventually got back to me and she offered me the part time position and that was honestly like one of the weirdest, coolest things to happen. But that's kind of how I got started. It's intersectionality because I am a mixture of all these different things. Adopted, I'm Asian I'm a woman, I'm disabled, things that tie into my experience and how I could help them. And so we kind of, you know, I, I titled it the way I titled it, I'm working on adapting that title to be something that more people can understand without having to Google it. Because a lot of people don't know what that even means. And I don't even really do it justice when I describe it to but I think it's one of those words, that once you get a general idea that you kind of come up with your own description of it. And to me, it's just all these layers that make me get me and make up how I can be effective, whether it be in hockey, or just in life in general. So that's kind of how I got the position and obviously, we were all remote at the time. So that was also helpful. There was a lot of like Chain Reaction things that if we weren't in a weird time, that these would never come together that way. And I was talking to someone yesterday and I was like, I probably would have ended up working, you know, with Inaki at some point. They think it would have been in the more traditional, like, baseline, you know, internship to part time to full time type deal. So, it's been interesting trip so far.
Erica Belois-Pacer
Absolutely, so, um, I was gonna ask you just in terms of diversity, and, you know, do you think there's a certain like, do you see if you look at data, are you seeing that maybe certain people are more interested in hockey? And when you talk about diversity, are you you know, trying to think of how you can engage other fans?

Chanel Keenan
Wow, Mmm hmm. Hockey is a super white male sport. It's very, not diverse. And one of the things that you know, we take pride in in Seattle is how diverse our our franchises Our club is. So you know, the people that you don't often see, not our players. We have a really diverse group of people. And you know, it was interesting, one of the things that I noticed and allow spaces that I'd look around, maybe the only person you know of color, basically, you know, and that's something that I grew up with. So when I was in my early elementary school, White was kind of the minority. So then to go to my mom's more suburban area. Growing up, it was completely the opposite. I think there was maybe five or 10 of us that were diverse. So as always kind of been this person that's inserted themselves in the situation, not necessarily by dois by any means, but trying to change how our fan base works. So Washington itself is a super diverse area, which is very cool and exciting. And, you know, we want to make sure that we're presenting a product in the sense that everybody can enjoy it. That you know, no matter if you actually play or if you go play if you're a girl and you're playing non binary, like whatever, that you can enjoy hockey, you can be a part of our fan base and not, you know, have to worry about anything happening, any any negative, you know, experiences and I think that that's super important to me, because the large scale of our audience as far as just hockey in general, it's super basic, I'd say super not know, as diverse as it could be. And it's hard because we are challenged all the time. Usually do all this amazing work within our community. But you know, all of our players are white, so it's kind of like how really you actually walk the walk and talk because when it comes to having, you know, really amazing new programming and our connection with people in Seattle and for their community within the state. Now we make sure that everybody's buy in even if at the current moment, you know, our honest product doesn't necessarily reflect you know, what our greater mission is. So it's kind of find that balance of, of making sure that every understands that, you know, we're in the earliest early stages of this, and that we're reaching for a goal as a lead to become more diverse and inclusive. But sometimes it does start with like showing positions of work that you might not see yourself reflected in normally. And I didn't think I could work in the sport at all because I didn't see anybody that looked like me as far as they just be performing efforts. That's got on the up more and be less of an issue when I got older, and then it just became like people who were white women, and now that's getting a little bit more different. And now it's hoping that there's gonna be more disabled people weren't even there are now at the more centered and more talked about, not necessarily like you have to do a whole press release about it because I think doing authentically is important, but how to figure out like, if this is even something that they can do, despite the fact that they don't see anybody around here, who resembles me at all.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Yeah, I was actually going to ask you because I know that you had talked a little bit about youth programs as well. So you know, in terms of providing opportunities for a variety of people you know, across the board. I'm just curious, you know, what initiatives maybe you're helping put in place or having conversations about that would increase, you know, opportunities for people?

Chanel Keenan
Yeah, so we have a foundation, highlighting programming and most of it right now is a curriculum that we plan to bring into schools in the local area of just sort of teaching them about the game very basic. Not necessarily making them travel outside to like come to our our practice arena and just actually stay I think that's obviously a goal and something that we do regularly now, but not necessarily what we bring to their schools. It's kind of like, bring it bring the stairs school, go home, tell your parents and they can look up, know when you could come by and join a little league team or whatever, to participate. So one of the things that I was able to achieve was a more diverse curriculum. And I was asked by one of my colleagues to look at the curriculum we had to bring to the school and it's all very basic and easy to digest stuff because we're showing it to kids. It was like basic stick handling things and form and stuff like that. And one of the parts that was our warmup section. And it was interesting, because within the book that we have, I think we had a little graphic about like passing the puck and there was a girl in a wheelchair in the graphic. And I was like, Whoa, this is really awesome. Like, I didn't even think that this was gonna be in here, you know, like, it's not the traditional artists that I would have thought it so it's already really impressed and then I went back. They looked at the warm up section and I saw that all the exercises were like standing positions. Sounds like Oh, interesting. Um, you know, I have done adaptive PE, physical education my entire time, up until like late high school. So I kind of have always been going through these warm ups and how, you know, had ideas and like, kind of what we could implement. So I wrote back like, it looks great, hyped it up a lot and said, Is there any way we can add some adaptive warmup exercises? And I was like, you don't even have to include, you know, the graphic of a person in a wheelchair doing it. You can just do someone sitting down and doing it but I think there’d be benefits to just showing that that's in there as an option. And so we were able to come up with our current curriculum and it made into a final cut which is really special. To me because one of the more tangible products or projects I could see come to light and to know that that's, you know, whether or not they actually have a student that can use that. It didn't matter because, you know, who knows? And that was really difficult to see that come to life.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Oh, that's great. And I think, you know, a lot of folks don't realize that there is adaptive PE or physical education that you mentioned. I know that where my kids go to school, you know, anybody could be in that class and that they are learning lots like you said, you know, is there are there things you can do from a seated position? It doesn't always have to be standing. There's lots of different options out there, which I don't know that everybody realizes so. Yep, that's great. Um, so my other question in terms of your job, um, you know, in terms of the fan base, and, you know, other initiatives that you're doing, um, how can you, you know, kind of explain what you're doing on that front as well in addition to the youth programs, which is great.
Chanel Keenan
Yeah, so when I started there, we had something called disabled hockey and we highlighted some edible goals like hockey team, and we highlighted another person in our organization, a colleague that I have, and then myself and our radio host and a q&a session that was live, which was really stressful because it was live, and it was kind of middle of the night for me is around 8pm. I had to sort of balance the East Coast West Coast timing situation and it got a lot of concurrent viewers. I tried not to pay attention to that. But we did a couple things. In the beginning to sort of advertise it. And it was really just to talk about my role obviously, and it had happened that it was a month and a half or so into my time with them. So it was a really daunting and a lot of ways. I didn't really have much to show or as far as what I'd been able to achieve at the time. But to me it was really important to show, you know that I that I'm here that I'm disabled body in this weird niche of sport, and they know that another tip could see that and be impressed by it or you know, be inspired by it. And I don't know love to be this person draws inspiration out of people like they don't want you to apply maybe the same breathing. But if I'm actually doing something worthwhile or something different, I feel like that to me is the most important. And so that was something that I was able to do that really gave the community a sense of, of My presence there. And so that helped build more of my relationship with the fans because I have been a fan and understand what it's like to be a fan in the online space and they kind of have this really strong community. So that's always been kind of a touch point for me because I've been able to see what that's like and to sort of be connected in that way with our fans. And then over the summer when we had something called the Expansion Draft, which is when we show, you know, the world, I guess, the team we're going to be having this year, I was asked to present one of our picks, which was our first 32 team members, which was honestly one of the most stressful 30 seconds of my life. It was on ESPN. It was big. It was a lot. But the response I got after it was something I just was not expecting that a lot of parents messaging me and even people with disabilities messaging me. And even though I had grown my audience a little last year and a half that kind of tipped the scales for me as far as bringing for the disabled community into this conversation. Because there were people that were super impressed by and really wanted to know, know, how can they do this and how can they make this sort of impact or just to know them there to sort of have a goal to get to know and I have those conversations still and they like blow my mind because I don't ever think that I'm doing a whole lot and I think I just you know, I just don't give myself the amount of credit because I feel like I've only scratched the surface in a lot of ways. But that's been an interesting experience to just hear the response from people and their families.

Erica Belois-Pacer
So we do have a question. So what you're talking about, which is great, um, one of our listeners wants to know, how did you find the motivation to keep trying when you didn't see yourself in all these situations? So, you know, you talked a lot about representation. And again, I mean, ideally, it should just be normal every day that your person, um, you know, announcing a pic for team, but you're right, I probably was, you know, something different. The others had not seen in the past. So yeah, how do you keep up that motivation?
Chanel Keenan
Um, it's, it's, it's honestly like week by week, sometimes. This is a very fast moving sport, and it's climate as far as stands and it's just in general changes all the time. stuff always seems to be happening with us good or bad. And for me, I do go through like waves of like, Am I doing enough? Like, is this even worth that thing? Seem underwhelming or overwhelming and it's trying to find the balance of you know, what I'm able to achieve while I'm here. And it's tricky. I'm not gonna lie to you. But I feel like I've been in the situation, my entire life, whether I've wanted it to be or not, and I think anything that I would have tried to attempt within sport if it wasn't what I was doing right now. I got a degree in communication. So it's kind of leaning towards more marketing, comm PR type thing. So even that would have been to be a disabled woman sports on that side of things. So it was going to be a challenge. No matter what say think it's kind of just for me, it was accepting that it wasn't gonna be easy, but is really nothing has been super easy for me. And I think the general fear of being unemployed as a disabled person in general and what the job planning processes like it's so stressful. And I've gone through that even just with summer jobs. And so to think about my experience around that I was like, like, get somewhere I have to stay and make sure I water this plan and make sure I'm doing it well. Because I like to be a sustainable position. And you know, I've been kind of setting it up like if I'm not here, someone has to replace me like this needs to be a permanent fixture in our organization, whether it's me or someone else. And that has been received, you know by the league and by other clubs. This felt like people were paying attention to this is something that I kind of forget sometimes, because it seems so insular. But it is becoming something that people are talking about.

Erica Belois-Pacer
It makes sense. And I think you know, always having that in the back of your head that making sure that it's a position that someone else could walk into as well. I was going to ask if you had heard from other franchises or organizations about adding additional positions, similar tears.

Chanel Keenan
Yeah, so I've kind of been developing recently. Um, you know, like, what this role actually entails, like one of the day to day things that I do because I'm trying to flip it into a full time position and to to present to someone what I've been able to achieve in the last 14 months is really hard because time feels really weird right now. I feel like I've done a lot and I feel like I've done nothing at all but it's just because it just feel like we're living in real times. I think the remote part has something to do with that you like those very connected into my computer and then anything else. So I in the middle of the beginning of this year, this season, I had started to sort of connect with more DNI programs within different clubs, just to reach out because I felt like I was in a position. I still feel like I'm in a position kind of so new, that I don't really have a lot of people to talk about it with. And so it's kind of missing something is like, everybody's doing their own job and have their own thing. Like they're an HR, marketing and comms and they're doing their own thing and they're not really focused on your DNI stuff. And so, it was kind of hard for me to feel like you know, they had a place here that I had just anybody really to talk to you about this stuff. So that's been kind of hard until I started reaching
out to the crowd and like kind of seeing what their climate is like, and it's the same. This is a really new concept to sports, which you know, you can say whatever you want about that, but it is something that is new and important. And everybody is trying to find their footing in this space to really do this in a way that makes sense to their communities and for their team. So everyone's looks a little bit different. Everyone's focuses a little bit different. But I've actually had a lot more connections, the teams in Canada and discussing you know what, you know what we're doing, what they're doing, and that's always been interesting to me because a lot of the teams in Canada, or in particular, has more built out the Life program. And so I was really interested in what they were doing and if they were considering having someone likely, in a role like this over there, and at the time, I didn't really have anything new to present to them to be like, I obviously explain what it feels like to give someone more like a concrete example. So I think once I sort of define what that is and the in a productive way in a way that can make sense for a lot of people to go to work in Europe probably work with the league in China. The league as a way to help me connect with other clubs because, you know, ask for someone to just interview to talk to them, and it would always go off with that. So it's kind of like I think it was myself, but it would be nice to have a little bit of help to break into those spaces to start discussing conversations.

Erica Belois-Pacer
Absolutely. So we have about nine minutes left. I have a few other questions, but that I can ask, but I was going to see if any of our attendees either wanted to raise their hands to ask a question and I can unmute you or if anyone had questions they wanted to put in the chat box and I'd be happy to read them to shut out as well. So does anyone have any questions? Okay, well, if you do have a question, feel free to put it in the chat box. I have a question in terms of supported employment, and different, you know, supports that you might choose. Do you work with either with VR in your state or are you able to you know, do things I guess, without supports for supported employment? I'm just curious, you know, what you've done in the past and what you're doing now I know with COVID It probably looks a little different.

Chanel Keenan
Wow. Absolutely. I know that. You know, the Kraken. They have some programs that we sell and employment with are part time employees and our ultimate place I would not approve of that. I have my own weird way of how I got my job. And I was offered some assistance when I was in college and high school with the whole transition and everything. I sadly did not have a great experience with that the rep that they had was so disorganized that I was like I don't I think I'm more organized by my So and So luckily, not going that route helped me so far. But I think for me, asking for help is one of the biggest things that I push because I've been in so many situations, or a shovel or something for a really long time. And then I finally ask someone for help, and then they would feel within two seconds. And I'm like I am someone that hates wasting time. I love time management and everything around. So I'm always you know, pushing and advocating for people to ask for help and to ask for, you know, experts help and people who know what they're doing. My person did not know what they were doing. So I did not ask them to help. But you know, it's all a learning curve as far as you know what people are comfortable with doing themselves. They've been the most successful when it's a team work
related and collaborative and stuff like that. So it's really important to talk about programs like that. And I think I probably would have helped in some ways depending on which one I went through as far as you know, preparing me for what it was like to be managing other people because I think myself now I'm like, okay, my resume can I put literally managed for three to four people at one time, like with their schedules, where payroll stuff and all those things because other skills that you know, not the average 2021 year old at the time, wouldn't have to be worrying about necessarily. They'd more be the ones clocking into something and sort of, you know, managing all these things and those are just skills that were completely learned my end and because I'm very organized, heavy person, it was easy for me once I got the hang of it. But I think you know these services are so important to engage with and to talk about because just the way that we present them people I think is really important and how we can do that effectively without making it feel like a big deal. I think at the time it definitely overwhelmed me a little bit. And you know when you're in your late teens or whatever like is the last thing that you want to be thinking about, you know, you want to enjoy your summer and go school and all these things, but that's not necessarily the reality for everybody.

Erica Belois-Pacer
No, I think you're right. I mean, even talking about you know, students that receive additional supports probably kids that your mom works with in terms of PT ot speech, you know, oftentimes, a lot of their time is taken up with those amazing supports. It's great, but yeah, it's you know, how do we do it maybe a little more naturally or just, you know, understand that it can be a lot, especially if you're in high school and trying to manage everything in addition to, you know, transition supports that you might be getting. So it sounds like that you have used things that are in your environment and people around you pretty efficiently in terms of getting the support that you need, though.

Chanel Keenan
Yeah, I've got tomorrow. Forgotten documenting earlier, like I was in special education programs for most of my time in school. Definitely when I switched districts, and then I had my services in high school, for one semester, pretty much. Yeah, half a half of the year and then they keep them away from me. Because I was doing so well. Because my school just didn't really know how to deal with situation because we had our separate areas for kids with needs of all kinds or whatever, that were engaged in classes. And so I was kind of an anomaly, I think because they weren't really prepared for what that looked like. I was just automatically shoved into special education programs. And it was they was, like impossible to keep me in them because it took away from my other classes and stuff like that. But then I'd have this like free block and my schedule, were supposed to be in that class that go back to my special education room and I'd help deal with students and that's kind of you know, what I was talking about earlier with working with student athletes, like a couple of them are in those classes with me so I would use that time to help Tinker them or do or work together at least. And so that was a unique experience being both in mainstream and special education classes

Erica Belois-Pacer
recently, and I think probably a lot of students have experienced similar things. So thanks for sharing that. And ideally, we want everyone integrated. Yeah.

Unknown Speaker
And then just

Erica Belois-Pacer
before we have off today, I know we only have two more minutes. I did just want to see if you had any advice or any parting words before we hop off.

Chanel Keenan
Now I am thinking kind of I said earlier, like asking for help is super important. You really weren't necessarily built as a society to be alone and separate each other. We were built a community and togetherness and obviously now are challenging times to get that and to adapt that to what our world looks like right now. But there's plenty of ways to help people without you know being in the room with them. And I know that for a fact since I've been able to do my job effectively remotely for as long as I have. So you know, just check in on people to guarantee they're being nice to people because they don't know what they're going through. A lot of people use a lot of different words to describe me, but you know, I try to act in kindness as much as even when I'm not feeling the best. Because someone could be dealing with much worse and I don't know it, and I'm interacting with them. No, it doesn't hurt to be kind. It's also weird to say because naturally from where I'm from, we're a little bit more cold and aggressive. And I'm also that year when it's necessary. But for the most part I try to lead with compassion

Erica Belois-Pacer
it's funny Chanel. Yeah, I'm from New York. So I think people often think that about me too, so only when it's necessary, but otherwise, act with kindness. I think you I would absolutely agree. So, thank you again for your time today and thank you for our listeners and viewers. If you have you know any questions, feel free to email at info@afcea.org and I'd be happy to share Chanel's email if you have questions for her on that she didn't addressed or if you want to just you know reach out I'm sure she would love to hear from you as well. And shall I one last question before we hop off. I know you're sports fan. So are you a Patriots fan?

Chanel Keenan
I rely on the PC and it's definitely in my blood. And it's weird to have I've not been watching very consistently since Tom Brady with a little bit of a difficult situation for me, mentally and emotionally. But yeah, I'm definitely all the Red Sox, Bruins patriots.

Erica Belois-Pacer
I'm really hoping that my Bills because I live in western New York

Chanel Keenan
I'm worried about you
Erica Belois-Pacer
are going to win on Saturday, for the playoffs!

Chanel Keenan
They might, you might!

Erica Belois-Pacer
We better! Oh goodness, we'll take you again.

And I hope to see folks at the end of the month we'll be having another webinar with Ryan who is on our National Board and he'll be covering some different things that are applicable for employments and for professionals and managers in the field. So more to come on that but thanks again Chanel.

Chanel Keenan
No problem.

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