

Think *differently* about disabilities.



WHO WE ARE GRANT SEEKERS SHARE YOUR STORY

From the CEO

Virtually everything I read right now is all about COVID-19 (yes, that is the right term), so why would the AWSF newsletter be anything different? My email inbox is full of messages from every airline, hotel chain, restaurant or retail shop I have ever visited, assuring me that they are fully aware of the issue and that they are working hard every day to protect me.

If you are reading this newsletter then the odds are good that you work for, with or care deeply about someone with a disability. If that disability is paired with respiratory issues, being elderly, or living in poverty, then they are at greater risk for greater complications if they contract COVID-19. Our communities have responded with sharing of information and we want to be sure that you have support.



This virus is very contagious. It can live on hard surfaces for days. Just five minutes in proximity to someone infected is all that is needed to put me at risk for spread. It is 15-20 times more lethal than the seasonal influenza. Look to [CDC](#), [ISDH](#), or your area [Department of Health](#) for invaluable updates.

This is a rapidly changing situation. I suspect from the time I write this until you read it, there will be more changes. I want to remind you that this didn't present itself overnight, and it isn't going away any faster. This is not just a few days of inconvenience. We need to be prepared for weeks or more. Do you have a plan? It might not reach catastrophic levels here as we have seen in Italy or Iran but then, they didn't have a plan.

AWS Foundation is proud to make available emergency funds to area agencies. For more information, go to our [website](#). We are part of an inclusive community. It will take the entire community following the plan as directed by the professionals to weather this pandemic. Wash your hands. Don't touch your face. Social distancing is 6 feet...follow it.

Follow us on social media (links at the top of the page) to keep track as we hear of new resources, see changes in schedules or hear words of wisdom over the upcoming weeks.

Re-Imagining Disability by: Vicki Johnson

What do you think of when you hear the word "disability?" Do you see a person you know, remember a life experience or puzzle over a situation where help is needed? It's easy to believe how our understanding of "disability" may vary because we all have different life experience, stories and frames of reference that influence what we think and feel. Regardless of our differences, we all share a natural need to be included and appreciated for the abilities, experiences and perspectives we have to offer. A disability doesn't change our need to be part of something bigger.

When I was a child, the word "disability" was defined by my great aunt. She had a stroke that resulted in difficulty walking and speaking. While some of her daily activities changed and she found several new hobbies, her love of life and family never wavered. As I grew so did my experience and awareness of the world around me along with my understanding of disability.

We all differ in our abilities based on our backgrounds, training and interests to our physical strengths, artistic talents and more. We may excel in something about which we are passionate. Because we enjoy it, we engage and quickly build our skill set in that area. There are other activities that try as we might, we will never quite grasp.

Albert Einstein wrote that "if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." Our abilities should not define us as a person or influence how we define others. We all need supports in some area of our life and give support to others.

I challenge you to re-imagine the word 'disability' and think about a person who is a problem solver, resilient and someone who brings diverse experiences that benefit our community.

The 2020 Expo is Canceled

Dear Friends,

It is with heavy hearts that AWS Foundation has decided to cancel the 2020 disABILITIES Expo. The CDC made the recommendation over the weekend to cancel any event over 50 people in the next eight weeks, and the Expo falls into that time period. Those who attend the Expo are some of the most vulnerable to the virus, and everyone's health and safety is our priority, as well as our civic responsibility to limit the spread of COVID-19. As the Coliseum has many requests to reschedule, we just could not make rescheduling work.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Please know that we waited until it was necessary to cancel.

Stay safe and well,

AWS Foundation

Priority Initiatives



SOCIAL ENRICHMENT



EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT



TRANSPORTATION



EARLY DIAGNOSIS



HOUSING

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