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## Meeting Minutes

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April 6, 2022

### In Attendance

attendance taken by Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace

### Institutional Updates

#### Topics Discussed

- No in person announcements
- Elyse not in attendance.

### Program - Kat White - Accessibility Program at Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace

- Introduction to access for all project
- What has been learned
- Accessibility overview of site

In 2018 funds were granted from the Institute of museum and library services to fund the access for all project.

- Juliette Gordon Low, The founder of Girl Scouts, was hard of hearing
- Because of Juliette Gordon Low's disability it made sense for the historic home of all Girl Scouts to be made accessible for all visitors
- 2019 staff worked with consultants from the Institute of Human Centered Design (IHCD) to make the birth place more inclusive for all visitors with disabilities

Some info provided by the IHCD States the following about disabilities

- In 2008 the number of kids with disabilities has increased from 3.9% to 4.3% because of medical advancements and new diagnoses
- Prevalent disabilities among kids are cognitive focusing in the area of autism and ADHD
- What about adults?
  - 61 million adults in the United States have disabilities both physical and mental. That averages out to one and four adults having a disability
- What is a disability?
  - The old model of disability identification is a medical model which sees a disability as a condition that can be fixed while also alienating the individual with disabilities from society
  - This identifies the person with the disability as the problem rather than the social system
- In 1919 just after World War I servicemen returned home with both physical and mental disabilities this forced the need for appropriate treatment for disabilities on a national level.
- The social model of disability was created in the 1970s and has been the preferred way of thinking about disabilities.
  - This identifies the problem being with society's structure rather than the individual with the disability. It is viewed that it is society's responsibility to remove the barriers both

physical and psychological so that individuals with disabilities have equal advantages to their peers.

- This identifies The lack of access for those with disabilities as not only a social justice issue but a human rights issue
- In 1973 Congress passed the rehabilitation act that prohibited the discrimination of disabled citizens. Section 504 of this bill meant that if you received federal funding you had to be accessible to anyone with a disability.
  - This bill passed through Congress then went to the secretary of the department of health education and welfare. Before it could be signed into law corporations that worked for the federal buildings said that it would be way too expensive to execute.
  - This caused the bill to sit on the secretaries desk for four years before protest began forming at federal buildings nationwide. The occupation protests lasted four weeks at the secretary of the department of health and education welfare's office making it the longest nonviolent occupational protest in a federal building in US history.
- In 1977 A photo was taken of Bradley Lomax of the black panther party in Lafayette Square protesting for disabled rights with Judith human the mother of disability rights activism. They were protesting for the passage of the section 405 law that would ensure that disabled people had access to federally funded buildings and programs.
- In 1990 George Bush signed into law the legal definition of a disability. That definition is as follows:
  - “ A person with a disability is someone who has a physical or mental limitation that places a substantial limit to one or more life activities. This person either has a record of such impairment in the past or is regarded as having such an impairment.”
- In 2001 the world health organization redefine disability, and the ICHD encourages of thinking of disabilities in this way:
  - “ Functional limitation is a universal human experience that almost everyone is likely to experience in some form of disability in their life. Mental and physical limitations are equal in importance. Disability relies on a context of a person plus environmental factors.”

Keys that got the program started.

- IHCD recommends that any institution wanting to restructure how their institution assists with accessibility must start with design.
  - “ design matters most to those of the edges of the spectrum of disability“
- The birth place was reviewed by local user experts who gave detailed evaluation's and feedback on the site's accessibility for those with disabilities.
- Pandemic plus project setbacks delayed the project and caused for much of the work to be completed after the consultant timeline expired.
- An interesting point to note is that meeting ADA requirements does not mean that your site is fully inclusive or accessible.

An example of a mistake made at the birth place where accessibility was overlooked.

- The welcome desk at the ticket area versus the gift shop counter
  - At the welcome desk the desk height is at a height where wheelchair-bound staff or guests can access the desk, counter space, computer, register comfortably.

- However the shop counter is not accessible because storage needs took priority due to the smaller shop space. There is a lower counter for a visitor who has physical disabilities to access however what was overlooked was the accessibility for a staff member who may be wheelchair-bound.
- Overall the site Reno was a success and has re-opened with a space that is friendly and accessible to visitors and staff members with disabilities. This feedback was provided via online reviews and by visitor testimonies and surveys.
- As with most sites the pandemic, while challenging, saw the creative creation of a self guided audio tour. The benefits of this tour are as follows:
  - The audio tour can be utilized for people with sensory sensitivities
  - It can be used for self guided Tours for sight impaired visitors
  - End it created an opportunity to enhance the visual descriptive language used by staff guides

At your own sight think about accessibility as design thinking and being able to create an, and improve the experience for everyone.

Based on an assessment of the site visit to the birth place I HCD noted an area of strength and weakness

- Where the site excelled was providing an enjoyable and meaningful experience when matched with a quieter time during the day
- Where the site needed to improve, we're at the busiest times of the day when staff were managing large groups at a time

A recommendation was made on how to calm down the day so that guest and stuff load without increased anxiety.

- Originally to check in troops, everyone would be outside in the heat or rain with no access to bathrooms or water creating an environment of chaos and confusion
- The solution, is a new Gallery space to welcome troops inside away from the elements. There they would have access to the bathrooms, water, seating, And for program start times. Having for program start times helps to avoid sensory overwhelm and simplifies the check in process.
- Additionally, giving troop leaders access to early planning tools helps to save time on check-in. It also gave extra time for troop leaders to address questions with staff and gave staff the time to understand troop needs before the program begins

One of the programs included a game to improve public speaking confidence. This game was vision based and a new game called "soundscape" was created for those with low vision. The game is made up of cut up cards that are passed out. And groups have to create a soundscape of that place with their voice or bodies. This game is structured specifically for those with low vision and heightened auditory senses. A recommendation was made to add quiet places to the soundscapes for those with auditory sensitivity or anxiety.

One more area of accessibility design is in choosing a font for readable text. When choosing a font a sans serif font is standard for Reading disabilities or disabilities that create challenges for processing information. However when using a San serif font having text in all upper case letters makes it hard for some disabilities to process information.

Lastly it is important to have your accessibility information listed on your website. So that visitors know what you can provide and how they can plan their visit ahead of time. Currently the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace is getting a website makeover so that all online information is accessible to guests.