Transcript of Episode 7: Meet Our Community Partner Easter Seals Canada

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## Hayley: [00:00:00]

So my advice to anyone is don't be scared of it. Take any opportunity you can get. A disability is not a not a barrier to a job; it's just a bump in the road. So take your time, be patient, and you'll find something that's right for you.

## Andrea: [00:00:26]

Welcome to Broadcastability, a podcast by for and about workers with disabilities and inclusive workplaces. As part of the Proud Project at the University of Toronto. You can find out more about the Proud Project on our website, theproudproject.ca.

## Chloë: [00:00:51]

This podcast was recorded and produced on the traditional ancestral territories of the Huron Wind at the Seneca and the Mississauga's of the Credit River. We would also like to acknowledge the other indigenous lands across Turtle Island where we conduct our research and record this podcast.

## Chloë: [00:01:16]

As you know, Broadcastability was made possible through a partnership between the Proud Project and Easter Seals Canada. It was also supported by a connections grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. In this special episode, we take a closer look at our community partner. Here is Dave Starrett, the president and CEO of Easter Seals Canada, describing the organization, its mission and its programs.

## Dave: [00:01:44]

Easter Seals is a registered charity, part of a non-profit here in Canada. We were founded in 1922, and this year is a big deal for us. We're celebrating our 100th anniversary, and that's a big deal, I think, in anybody's book. So we're really looking forward to this whole year and the little celebrations that are going on. Our aim, I guess, the real our purpose really is we would like a world without barriers. We raise awareness of disability issues, certainly. We challenge barriers and stereotypes. We want to promote access for persons with disabilities in all areas of life, whether it's social or recreational, economic, etc. Easter Seals Canada and our ten provincial organizations work together to provide programs and services in support of individuals and families living with disabilities. We like to think that we enhance the quality of life of these individuals and families. We promote independence and participation in the community in a total, holistic way. Easter Seals offers a range of programs and services that aims to support individuals and families from childhood to adulthood. Although the exact menu of services may differ from province to province, we like to think that our situation with our provincial members is unique, in the fact that the programs and services delivered within those provinces are exactly what the people in those provinces are constituents are actually looking for. So we tailor those programs to the needs of our community. But having said that, in general, we offer financial assistance to help purchase accessibility equipment or devices. We offer sports and recreational programs. We offer day and overnight camps -we look forward this year to getting back to overnight camps now that the protocols have been lifted. Academic scholarships and bursaries are also offered. Employment preparation and placement programs, which is something that is fairly new for our organization and respite and therapy services, are offered in some provinces as well.

[music]

## Chloë: [00:04:11]

Since Broadcastability’s focus is on disability and employment, we asked Dave what sorts of barriers people with disabilities face when trying to enter the workforce.

[music]

## Dave: [00:04:24]

We know that many persons with disabilities, even when they're well qualified for the job, face multiple barriers to securing employment. Issues range from the stereotypes that we talked about, the hidden biases, to non-inclusive hiring practices, to inaccessible workplaces. Those are all issues that people living with, with disability deal with in finding employment on a day-to-day basis. But there are numerous studies out there that show that that is not the case of all a case at all. There's a BMO study that found a majority of employers surveyed were hesitant about hiring persons with disabilities even when they were qualified or overqualified for the job because they overestimate how much it would cost to provide workplace accommodations for the employees. When the study found that a large percentage of persons with disabilities don't require any accommodations at all in the workplace to perform their job. There was another one that was put out by the Conference Board of Canada in 2018, and it indicated that reasonable investments in workplace access would allow over 550,000 Canadians with disabilities to participate more fully in the workforce, increasing the GDP by $16.8 billion by 2030. So, as we're talking about, persons with disabilities are an untapped and often overlooked pool of talent.

[music]

## Chloë: [00:05:48]

Dave also explained why, despite these challenges, employment is so important for people with disabilities.

[music]

## Dave: [00:05:55]

Well, first of all, I think that we, or Easter Seals Canada, recognizes that unfortunately many individuals and families who live with disabilities live in poverty or are living in financially precarious households. Through our initiatives, we hope that at the individual and the participant level to positively change and impact lives by helping secure employment. We think it's important for financial security, well-being and other opportunities that we know employment aids with able-bodied, or those Canadians living with disabilities, both.

[music]

## Chloë: [00:06:35]

We asked Dave what kind of employment programs and initiatives Easter Seals Canada runs to support people with disabilities in achieving their career goals.

[music]

## Dave: [00:06:43]

There are mainly divided into two categories. Firstly, there's employment preparation and placement. We offer training to equip participants with job skills and also working with employers to create paid and unpaid work opportunities. But I think it's important to highlight the fact that there are paid opportunities as well. So in the preparation piece, participants receive different types of training and coaching, ranging from help with creating resumes to practicing job interview skills, teamwork-building, critical thinking skills, skills to more basic practical skills, as well as CPR and WHMIS [Workplace Hazardous Material Information System] training so that the people are better prepared or better positioned to secure a job in their preferred industries.

[music]

## Chloë: [00:07:36]

Finally, we asked Dave what Easter Seals Canada was doing to be an inclusive employer in its own right.

[music]

## Dave: [00:07:42]

Well, we're not perfect. Easter Seals Canada recognizes that as an organization that serves persons and families living with disability, that it's important for Easter Seals to walk the talk, to be a leader. Hiring and employee well-being is a dynamic issue; it's not a static one. We're always constantly striving to do better in this area. Many Easter Seals permanent and seasonal employees across the country in all our organizations, both currently and in the past, I think, identify as persons living with disabilities. Many of them attended summer camps or other programs. Many of them have visible or physical disabilities, and many others have nonvisible disabilities. And I think it's important to point that out as well. There's a lot of issues classified as a disability that are not readily visible, but as an employer I think it's important that we be inclusive and look to hire all levels of ability and disability. As an employer, we start with the job posting itself and clearly indicate that we welcome diversity in hiring. Individuals needing accommodations to participate in job interviews are certainly welcome to inform us during the interview process without it impacting their ability to be hired for that for that position or job that they're applying for. Once a candidate is hired, we have workplace policies to support and set up employees to perform and succeed in their roles, whether it be acquiring new furniture, equipment or software or integrating equipment and software that they already have, they already own, and using that in the workplace or flexibility and working arrangements, setups, work hours such as enabling employees to attend media, or sorry, medical or physio appointments when needed and making up the hours at a different day or even work from home. Some changes are substantial, and others are more subtle.

## Chloë: [00:09:50]

After hearing about Easter Seals from its president, we wanted to understand what all these programs and initiatives were actually like for the people who participated in them. Fortunately, one of the Broadcastability team members is both a former client and a staff member of Easter Seals Canada.

[music]

## Jessica: [00:10:07]

My name is Jessica Geboers. I live in Toronto, I’m 32 years old, have been working with Easter Seals for about two years now, but I've been involved with Easter Seals pretty much my whole life. I started attending Easter Seals Ontario camps at the age of five and went every summer from 5 to 18. I went back for five more summers to work there as staff. That was my first summer job, and I still volunteer whenever I can. Easter Seals also sort of helped me lead to my current employment. I'm currently working for Owlware building online courses, and I'm going to be going into training and mentoring other young adults with disabilities who are looking to develop communication and web development skills. So all this is to say that this is a little bit of who I am, and why I'm involved with the Proud Project and the Broadcastability project with Easter Seals Canada.

[music]

## Chloë: [00:11:25]

So for this episode, Jessica interviewed her friend Hayley Redmond, who is a former client and current staff member of Easter Seals Newfoundland. Here are their reflections on Easter Seals, employment, and social inclusion.

[music]

## Jessica: [00:11:42]

How did you begin as an Easter Seals client?

## Hayley: [00:11:46]

When I was about eight, I joined our summer day program. So, just doing different activities towards the summer. At the day we used to have two activities a day actually, that that we'd go to different places and now we went, moved to a building in, in a park and then we moved to our current location, which is Easter Seals House.

## Jessica: [00:12:14]

Yes, yes, that's the location that you work at in St John's, correct?

## Hayley: [00:12:19]

Yup, yeah.

## Jessica: [00:12:20]

Okay. Yeah, I've been there. It's a very nice building. You have a degree in therapeutic recreation from Memorial University in St John's?

## Hayley: [00:12:29]

Yeah.

## Jessica: [00:12:30]

What made you want to study therapeutic rec?

## Hayley: [00:12:34]

I wanted to give back to the population that gave so much to me.

## Jessica: [00:12:39]

And what was that experience like? You'd been participating for so long. What was it like to go and sort of look at it from another perspective?

## Hayley: [00:12:51]

I think, as my professor said during class, I brought a very different perspective to class, and I was able to draw in on personal experiences, which often when people are going through things, if they can connect with the person that's delivering their programs or they have done the programs in the past, it's much easier for the participants to believe that they can do whatever it is that we're asking them to participate in.

## Jessica: [00:13:25]

That definitely makes sense. And I know from my skiing experience, you know, I always say like, have you ever sat in the sit-ski? Have you ever tried to make it work? It usually goes better if they had. So it makes a lot of sense. And how has, like you're a very active person, how has therapeutic recreation, what role has it played in your life? How has it impacted your life?

## Hayley: [00:13:49]

I feel that it's given me all of my opportunities in sport and just life in general too. Either sport sample, or join the national team like I have for Boccia Canada. And without therapeutic recreation, I don't feel that people with disabilities would have the lives that they have today.

## Jessica: [00:14:12]

You went through a therapeutic rec in university. Did you know exactly what you wanted to do with it when you…

## Hayley: [00:14:19]

Yes, yeah.

## Jessica: [00:14:20]

Yes? And what was that?

## Hayley: [00:14:24]

I wanted to work with people with physical and mental disabilities.

## Jessica: [00:14:30]

Disabilities. So kind of again, give back to that community.

## Hayley: [00:14:36]

My ultimate dream is to run a camp for people with disabilities. But Easter Seals Newfoundland has given me the opportunity to write the day camps and run our Build Your Skills program. So I'm getting there.

## Jessica: [00:14:50]

Yes. Yes. I was going to ask you about that, too. So you finished school and then you went into Easter Seals Newfoundland Horizons program. Before you went to the Horizons program, what was, if you can remember back, I don't know, but like, what did you think it was going to be? And then what has changed?

## Hayley: [00:15:16]

I had no expectations of working at Easter Seals, working in my field, when I started the Horizons program. My idea of starting the Horizons program was to get out of the house so that my parents would stop irritating me about being finished school and being home. I remember one of my workers said, you know, you should really join the Horizons program. And I said, “no,” and “I don't really feel like it.” And my application was due on January 5th, and this was December the 29th. So I told my other worker that this worker had been saying I should join and she said, “You know, she's not wrong. You can't just sit and wait for me to come twice a week and take you out for the day.” And I'm like - because she was daytime at the time - and I said, okay, I’ll try it. And then I applaud you.

## Jessica: [00:16:17]

Just needed her to put it in a different perspective.

## Hayley: [00:16:20]

A little bit of perspective, a little bit of a different voice, you know?

## Jessica: [00:16:24]

Yeah. It wasn't so much your parents nagging you.

## Hayley: [00:16:28]

Yes. I don't… I usually respond to anybody outside of the home and, I mean, don't we all? That was in January of 2021. So we started with a four-week, every day we did like first aid training, OHS [Occupational Health and Safety], anything that you would need for basic - any job. And then we went to class every Wednesday. and again, it would be the same thing as skills training that it would be for the four weeks. I didn't speak for the first day. The recreation staff came up and they said, “Are you broken or… is there something we can do? [laughter]

## Jessica: [00:17:17]

Well, yeah, I guess I'm jumping around a little bit, but what was your experience like in the Horizons program? So you told us a little bit about it, but what was your experience with it like?

## Hayley: [00:17:27]

Well, we got a lot of valuable skills that anybody can take into the workplace. We used a lot of the well, we called it Easter Seals University, the stuff that you had put online there last year. But it was actually my second time looking at it, because during the pandemic I did the online LIT [Leader-in-Training] program through Easter Seals Ontario, so we'd be doing the slides… “Oh yeah I already did that, okay.” So they'd often let me help some of the other participants in the program through, through that, because I basically had finished maybe 85% outside of the OHS training, and the first aid and things like food safety and the courses that we did to broaden our resumes and resume writing and stuff.

## Jessica: [00:18:20]

That kind of thing. But as far as like the skills, skill-based training, that we sort of developed…

## Hayley: [00:18:28]

Oh everyone should do a program like that before they go in to a job. It's just great, they’re great skills to have. I have all the kind of like the pre-reqs for any basic job now and that. That's very important that people have those skills and learn how to act in a workplace and… And you really don't know until you start doing these things to know. I think that I've learned that there is a job out there for everyone. It's just a matter of getting the right training and the right job coaching, to get you to where you need to be.

## Jessica: [00:19:08]

Definitely.

## Hayley: [00:19:09]

And that that's a different path for everyone. So everyone needs to be patient with themselves and understand that the time will come, it’s just when.

## Jessica: [00:19:24]

Yeah.

## Hayley: [00:19:25]

For five months, the first four months of my program were very, very frustrating. Who wants to go to eight Wal-Mart interviews in a row? And not get the job? But I kept going for the experience of the interviews. Every interview was a little bit different. Every interview taught me something more that maybe I could say next time or… And I think Walmart also learned a thing or two as well, because when they did interview, they didn't always advertise that they were hiring an overnight stock person. Had I known that, if the position didn't say Door Greeter, I maybe wouldn't have…

## Jessica: [00:20:11]

So. So you went for, you applied for a position that was called “Door Greeter.”

## Hayley: [00:20:20]

And then I got there, and the job was an overnight stock person.

## Jessica: [00:20:25]

Oh, so clearly that's not going to work.

## Hayley: [00:20:29]

No. I mean, they’re are jobs that are going to work and there’s jobs and aren't, and I don't want anyone to get discouraged. And think that that it's not a step in the right direction. It is. It's every interview, every conversation that you have with anyone in the outside world can be a benefit to you in some way or somehow, whether it be in your work life or personal life. And everything that you've gone through in your personal life can help you in the work life as well. At the beginning of the training, we tried many jobs for me to apply for. I actually had six different interviews for Walmart and one of my good friends from Easter Seals said to me, “You know, this is not really you, even if you didn't have a disability. You know, maybe try working here, would you be willing to sign on with us as a recreation program assistant?” And I said, “Sure. I'll give it a shot.” And I haven't regretted it since. I absolutely love my job and I hope to be there for many years to come.

## Jessica: [00:21:43]

Wow. Well it was it was only it was like an internship for a short term thing for a little bit, wasn't it? And then it's been extended. It was extended and now it's been extended again.

## Hayley: [00:21:53]

In September. And now I'm permanent part time. And I didn't know that until last week.

## Jessica: [00:22:01]

Right on. You were just going along.

## Hayley: [00:22:02]

It was a surprise!

## Jessica: [00:22:02]

It was a surprise, yes! You're just going along and maybe someone forgot to mention it. Or maybe you forgot that they'd mentioned it.

## Hayley: [00:22:13]

I may have forgotten, but, you know. Details, details. We'll get there.

## Jessica: [00:22:19]

As long as you're enjoying the job, I guess. As long as you’re still willing to show up and they're still willing to have you. I guess it works out fine.

## Hayley: [00:22:27]

Yeah. So my advice to anyone is don't be scared of it. Take any opportunity you can get. A disability is not a barrier to a job; it's just a bump in the road. So. Take your time, be patient, and you'll find something that's right for you.

## Jessica: [00:22:45]

What was your experience like? Obviously, you were quite familiar and comfortable with Easter Seals, having spent so many years participating in programs, in their programs…

## Hayley: [00:22:58]

You mean like the transition?

## Jessica: [00:23:00]

Yeah.

## Hayley: [00:23:01]

I didn't find that there was much of a transition whatsoever because I'll work all day and then I'll wheel down the hallway to my next recreation program. I didn't find that there was much of a transition because many of the programs that I'm helping to run I would have volunteered my time with in the first place anyway. So I kind of know how to separate. For some of the other participants, they weren't… they're like, “Oh, you walk here now?” Like, it took a while for them to transition there, but of course, with patience and time, everyone adapted.

## Jessica: [00:23:40]

Was there any sort of job accommodations that you needed?

## Hayley: [00:23:45]

Just the fact that I'm working part time and if I ever have an appointment or something like that, they're very very accommodating to my schedule and they're very very accommodating to my Boccia training and stuff like that. So the job really fit my lifestyle and also I'm going into an accessible environment. It's Easter Seals, so a lot of what I had to do was already made accessible for others. I think the small adaptations like making sure I can reach my computer and stuff like that weren’t as difficult because they just… we want to make sure everybody can reach the computer. The most challenging thing during skills training was I can't write. So I'd have to be like… they’re like, “Can you write down ten things that you'd like to do with a job?” I'm like, Yeah, sure, I can list them, but someone's going to have to go.

## Jessica: [00:24:40]

So you would dictate them, and someone would scribe them.

## Hayley: [00:24:41]

Yes, because I'm not a very fast typer. When I'm writing programs, I think about the programs that that I still do every day and say, “Jow can I adapt this for the group that I'm working with now?” And the and the camps that I've participated in in Ontario, I mean, I've gone every year that's possible to go and plan to go for the next six, seven years. So these are programs for young adults that I'm writing. So who better to do it than people that have experienced it themselves?

## Jessica: [00:25:13]

I agree. And, you know, that's why I still go volunteer.

## Hayley: [00:25:16]

Even the programs that I don't so much love to participate in myself, I can still remember how to write them.

## Jessica: [00:25:22]

Like arts and crafts.

## Hayley: [00:25:25]

Yeah.

## Jessica: [00:25:27]

[Laughs] Hayley and I have a love-hate relationship with arts and crafts.

## Hayley: [00:25:31]

I have lots of ideas. That doesn't mean I want to…

## Jessica: [00:25:35]

Do them! But you can appreciate those who do and create something accessible for them. So I probably know this, but why don't you tell us a bit about what you do at Easter Seals Newfoundland, like what kind of programs?

## Hayley: [00:25:51]

I'm a lead on our Build Your Skills program, which is basically a cross between career and recreation. So we found that there's a there's a gap in recreation and skills programs for people who are not quite work, not work ready, but out of high school. So this is something like we'll do a skill in the morning and recreation in the afternoon. And often I'll find out what the skill… what the Career Services Department have done with them and relate it back. Like they might do a nutritional session and then I'll do healthy fitness games and then yoga, make a healthy snack, you know, something of that nature. We might do a sport in the afternoon or jeopardy learning trivia and learning… I made up a life skills trivia for them and I would say, “You get money out of me. What am I?” An ATM.

## Jessica: [00:26:57]

An ATM! Yeah.

## Hayley: [00:26:58]

Little things that anybody can learn that will help them progress in their lives in whatever way they can.

## Hayley: [00:27:07]

I do a lot with the new participant intakes as well. So that, bringing the perspective of someone who's participated in every program that they had. The feedback from participants and families that they get to hear my personal experience, has been really very positive.

## Jessica: [00:27:30]

Yeah. I guess that would be a new perspective that not many could offer, right?

## Hayley: [00:27:37]

No, for sure. I often forget to tell them that I'm in a wheelchair and my coworker will say, “Hey, Haley, you might have a different perspective because cause you’re in a wheelchair yourself!”

## Jessica: [00:27:50]

Oh, you mean when you speak to them on the phone or on Zoom because of COVID?

## Hayley: [00:27:51]

Yeah, because of the… I mean, they can see it when we're in person, but since we transitioned to working from home for the pandemic, it was tough because it's just not something I think of. I've been in a wheelchair all my life, so.

## Jessica: [00:28:07]

It's very obvious, right? You don't think to mention it. I think I've had some situations like that as well that you and I have talked about in the past. You know, whenever I go to the hospital or something, my mom says, “Did you tell them you have CP [Cerebral Palsy]?” Yeah, sorry, I forgot, I have CP. That's why I walk funky. Yeah. No, that's great. And you do bring that perspective, right? And even with the other campers at camp that you've gotten to know and working and talking with them, you bring that experience. So even though it might be a little bit different from what your skill set is or your ability, you have a lot of experience with lots of different types of people.

## Hayley: [00:28:53]

Absolutely. And yeah, everybody has something to bring to the table. Yeah, and that's my biggest message after entering the workforce. I did not realize the value that I would feel once I started my job.

## Jessica: [00:29:07]

Mm hmm. Mm hmm. And you're also helping to plan for the summer? You were telling me the other day?

## Hayley: [00:29:16]

Yes, I'm writing camp plans and making a camp plan for Easter week day camp and also doing a new participant intakes.

## Jessica: [00:29:27]

Just out of curiosity, what does an average day at work look like for you?

## Hayley: [00:29:32]

On a Tuesday or Thursday is when I run my adult day program. So in the morning I'll go into the office. I'll look at the plan that I had made for recreational activities that afternoon. I'll go out and I'll give the Career Services group a hand with whatever activity they have, because we often collaborate. Often the rest of the recreation won't join me till after, but, because of my skill set, sometimes they'll have me help them explain something if they're doing winter safety or something like that. Or if they're doing, acting out scenarios such as like “being safe when you're home alone” and stuff. Because of my experiences, they'll have me. Talk to the group and…

## Jessica: [00:30:30]

Well I would imagine, yeah. You were talking earlier about your value, right. That you didn't even realize. But a lot of the times these programs, you know, bless their hearts and everyone means well, but a lot of times these programs are run by or planned by people that don't actually have the same disabilities that they’re tailored too.

## Hayley: [00:30:51]

Yeah, nobody understands it better than the people that have experienced it themselves.

## Jessica: [00:30:55]

Right. So, yeah, I think about safety while being at home or winter safety. Automatically look at it from being in a wheelchair, right?

## Hayley: [00:31:06]

And we did like… another one that I did with them, cause I'll do a skill and recreation as well, like I did a “is this a prank?” So, you know, the phone call. I’m teaching them, “No.” But I went up there and made an absolute fool of myself acting it out. So they thought it was hilarious. But they'll never answer. They will never answer a prank call again because they'll remember.

## Jessica: [00:31:35]

That's amazing. But, yeah.

## Hayley: [00:31:41]

They’ll remember my skit that I acted out and how silly it was. Yeah, but it got the skill right.

## Jessica: [00:31:49]

And that's another great thing about you, too, is that you're so entertaining and have a great sense of humor. For a long time I attributed it to you being from Newfoundland. I think that's part of it, but I also think it's just part of who you are. So having a lot in common with these kids and these adults that you're working with, right? It's sort of… takes away that potential intimidation factor.

## Hayley: [00:32:15]

Yeah. They're definitely more comfortable asking, you know? My favorite moment was I had my dad come and dress up as Santa for our Build Your Skills program, and at the end of it, one of the participants said, “I knew Santa was coming. You can make anything happen.”

## Jessica: [00:32:44]

That's awesome.

## Hayley: [00:32:45]

That stuck.

## Jessica: [00:32:27]

Yeah. They think you can do anything, and that, it's just so great. And you made them so happy. And I'm sure your dad dressed up as Santa was a real hoot, too. Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. And so we've kind of talked about it, but it's still kind of sticking out in my mind. You mentioned that you that not even you realized everything that you could bring to the table until you started.

## Hayley: [00:33:18]

I have counted myself. The participants in my programs will do more for me because they see me do it.

## Jessica: [00:33:25]

Yes. Yes. I've come across a similar thing when I was working for Easter Seals as well, because we can't do it for them. So it sort of in order to help us, sort of forces them to try and then in the process they learn new skills.

## Hayley: [00:33:42]

And they absolutely love when I try something and can't do it, they think it's so funny. And I think what's made me learn a lot is, Easter Seals Newfoundland in 2018 expanded their mandate to include all types of ages and disabilities. So I've gotten a chance to work with kids with autism and Down syndrome, which in Ontario I didn't see a whole lot of because of their mandate being physical being the prominent disability.

## Jessica: [00:34:17]

Yes, it would be there... if there was an intellectual disability in addition to…

## Hayley: [00:34:22]

It was always in addition to.

## Jessica: [00:34:23]

In addition to. Yes. Yeah. Oh, that's very true. And...

## Hayley: [00:34:29]

So that's been a bit of a learning curve because I don't always… I didn't always have to recognize that. But now I'm thinking. You know, let's make a program that's towards everyone's level and not just one that…

## Jessica: [00:34:48]

It’s kind of, kind of forcing you to take what you've learned but expand it.

## Hayley: [00:34:54]

Yeah, exactly.

## Jessica: [00:34:56]

Expand your viewpoint. And my work is often done the same lately. So that's really, really cool. So you are on that same boccia line, you are on the Newfoundland Boccia team?

## Hayley: [00:35:15]

Yes.

## Jessica: [00:35:16]

And you have played for Canada. Played…

## Hayley: [00:35:18]

Yes, I have.

## Jessica: [00:35:19]

On behalf of Canada.

## Hayley: [00:35:21]

Yes, exactly.

## Jessica: [00:35:23]

Yes. And you mentioned you you've traveled quite a bit. So you've been to…

## Hayley: [00:35:31]

Brazil, Spain and all over Canada.

## Jessica: [00:35:34]

That's amazing. Are you are you playing right now or are you getting ready for a competition right now?

## Hayley: [00:35:41]

I am not. I'm on a bit of a training year, we'll call it. My next competition will probably, outside of the province, will probably be in September.

## Jessica: [00:35:57]

Okay. Okay.

## Hayley: [00:35:58]

But I'm soon headed to Canada Games for sailing.

## Jessica: [00:36:03]

Yes. Yes. That is in August, correct? Yes. Yes, yes. Why don't you tell us a little bit about Boccia for those at home who might not know as much about it?

## Hayley: [00:36:18]

So, Boccia’s a cross between long bowling and curling that was originally developed for athletes with cerebral palsy, but now it's an inclusive game that anyone can play. You can be two years old and play with your grandfather for recreation purposes. Or you can... Or you can join the national team and go as far and travel to Brazil and Spain like I have.

## Jessica: [00:36:47]

I thought, until a few years ago, I thought of it only as a sport for people with disabilities because that's how I had experienced it. But…

## Hayley: [00:36:55]

It’s the only sport that's only in the Paralympic Games.

## Jessica: [00:37:01]

The only sport.

## Hayley: [00:37:00]

But it’s meant for… it can be used as a recreational tool as well.

## Jessica: [00:37:05]

Yes. I was at an Italian wedding a few years back and these old Italian grandfathers brought it out and I was like, “Oh, my goodness, you guys have boccia?” And they were like, “You know what this is?” And I was like, “The disabled people love Boccia!” So that was funny. We were both surprised. So I'd never seen it in the mainstream and just like they had never thought of it outside of their backyards, I guess. And just to keep going on that line of sport, you are, like I said, you're very active. You play Boccia as we just talked about sailing through AbleSail Newfoundland and going to the Canada Cup when it's on. When I visited you in the summer, you took me sailing on the ocean; I got to drive a boat, first time ever. You also, in winter, play sledge hockey, correct?

## Hayley: [00:38:05]

Yes I do, yeah. Sledge hockey and wall climbing and target shooting on my recreational sports.

## Jessica: [00:38:12]

I forgot about Target shooting. Fun. Fun. And with a little bit…

## Hayley: [00:38:17]

I also snorkel.

## Jessica: [00:38:19]

Yes, snorkeling and a little bit of low-key archery in there too. I did that with you in the summer as well. So, very active person, sports is a big deal. So I guess it's not overly surprising that you went into therapeutic recreation. Based on your experience, what insights or suggestions would you have for other hiring managers, hiring or business managers to make their workplaces more accessible?

## Hayley: [00:38:49]

I feel like I would say don't be nervous. Don't be intimidated. These people have more to bring to the table than what you would think. Often they'll be your best workers, because we'll be so thankful for having a job that we can make anything happen. And it's just so… it's nice when you see an employer be inclusive and be open to people doing things in a different way. And also there's lots of subsidies out there if you want to make your business or workspace more accessible. It's just about finding it, it's just about reaching out to the right people. It's there. It's hard to find, but it's... There is ways around it. And if you don't know something, just ask. Just ask.

## Jessica: [00:39:49]

Don't be afraid to ask.

## Hayley: [00:39:52]

There's no stupid question. There's no…

## Jessica: [00:39:54]

A lot of times I think we'd rather people ask than not ask. And then… so there's no stupid questions. But sometimes not asking can lead to something that can be perceived as stupid, right?

## Hayley: [00:40:08]

Absolutely.

## Jessica: [00:40:09]

So, yeah. So you're better off to risk it up front than not. Hayles, is there anything that I haven't asked you or that we haven't talked about that you think...

## Hayley: [00:40:23]

I think that I just want to finish up by saying, to anyone out there listening, please reach out to those that can help you. Please. Do your best to reach your full potential and never give up on yourself. There will be frustrating moments, but that doesn't mean that you can't make it and you can't get there. There's always a way. If there’s a will there’s a way.

## Jessica: [00:40:48]

Mmmhmm, leaning on your community has really done a lot for you.

## Hayley: [00:40:51]

Absolutely. Lean on your community, lean on your resources, have conversations with people, go out for coffee, just relax with your friends. You never know what you might learn.

[music]

## Casey: [00:41:28]

Hello everyone. My name is Casey Sabawi and I am the Senior Manager for National Corporate Partnerships at Easter Seals Canada. And I have been with the organization now for about four years. My role at Easter Seals is mainly twofold. One is to work with my Easter Seals colleagues across the country to plan and implement a variety of programs and services and initiatives, and to also find and secure corporate partners that are willing to contribute financially to these programs and services. Accessibility, inclusion and disability issues in general are issues that are close to my heart because I have a sister who lives with disabilities almost since birth and growing up, I saw and experienced how disability issues affect the entire family. So as an adult, when the opportunity came along, I joined Easter Seals so as to be able to contribute in assisting individuals and families who are likewise living with disabilities. And now, as a staff member, I also see how accessibility and inclusion are issues that affect society as a whole, whether we as individuals recognize it or not. When Dr. Chloë Atkins and Dr. Andrea Whiteley reached out to Easter Seals about a year ago to propose the collaboration on the Broadcastability project, we were right away excited and eager to work together because it was a natural extension of our advocacy work, and it also reinforced some of the broader goals that we were trying to achieve as an organization and more specifically with our various initiatives in the employment area.

## Casey: [00:42:48]

My role with the Broadcastability Project is largely to help promote the podcast among the public as well as our program, constituents and partners across the country to amplify the voices and experiences of people in the community. And with that, hopefully bring about positive change and greater inclusion for persons living with disabilities in workplaces across the country. Like Dave said earlier, Easter Seals runs a range of programs and services across the country for persons and families living with disabilities who require or welcome our support. And Hayley and Jessica in many ways epitomizes what Easter Seals strives to ultimately achieve as an organization. Both of them connected with the Easter Seals programs and services from a young age and accessed various Easter Seals programs and services at different points in their lives as they grew up. And now as adults, they are each talented and accomplished individuals who are contributing to society in many ways. They certainly bring valuable alternative insights and approaches that enhances and strengthen our work as an organization, to the organizations they work for and to the communities they live in. We also see these qualities in many of the participants that come through our employment programs. I think as a society we have come a long way in Canada at improving the accessibility of physical spaces and changing attitudes towards disability. But I also think we have a long way to go in improving accessibility inclusion in many other areas, including employment and workplaces.

## Casey: [00:44:22]

Hayley and Jessica are just two of many people with disabilities that have so many skills and positive qualities to offer, but often are overlooked as potential employees, often underestimated. At Easter Seals, we are pleased and grateful to have a network of employers who are willing, open minded and insightful enough to work with us to create temporary or permanent employment opportunities for participants that access our employment programs. And I believe in so doing, have also gained a lot from it in terms of securing talented and dedicated employees for themselves. We hope that more employees and funders will come forward and partner with us, and I also challenge other employees and managers out there to open your mind and take a look around you and your workplaces and your policies and practices and at what you can do to improve inclusion of people living with disabilities in your workplaces and to also consider what you are losing out on if you're not.

## Casey: [00:45:17]

Thank you for your time and listening to this special episode of Broadcastability. We hope that you have enjoyed it and would greatly appreciate it if you could share this episode, as well as other early episodes of the Broadcastability podcast with your friends, with your family and networks, so that together we can develop greater awareness and understanding of the issues and what people with d isabilities bring to the table and hopefully lead to greater accessibility and inclusion in workplaces and spaces everywhere.

[music]

## Chloë: [00:46:04]

Thank you for listening. We hope you've enjoyed Broadcastability. You can find us on the web at theproudproject.ca and broadcastability.ca. You can also find us on social media at the Proud Project on LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube, wnd we're the ProudProjectCA on Instagram.

[music]

## Chloë: [00:46:32]

Broadcastability is produced by the PROUD Project at the University of Toronto, Scarborough and by Easter Seals Canada. The music in this podcast was composed and produced by Justin Laurie. Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon created Broadcastability’s cover art, Jessica Geboers and Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon edited this episode.

## Andrea: [00:47:04]

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