

SELF ADVOCATES NEWSLETTER

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, BE ABOUT IT

MONSTER SCULPTURE

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

I went with the YAI Arts Studio to Monster Sculpture at Museum of Modern Art on 4 West 54th Street between 5th Avenue and 6th Avenue in Manhattan. I did this on Saturday July 23rd, 2022. I met my friends at the Monster Sculpture. I showed the people there that I made my monster sculpture with Mr. Beast. I have disability, but my teacher was helping me to make the monster sculpture. We used cardboard and Reynolds Wrap and a roll of paper towels. I also used a glue gun, a glue stick, pom poms, a soda can, bottle caps and tape to make the monster sculpture.

A lot of people helped us out. Priscilla Frank showed us how to make flowers for a monster sculpture. Schmel showed us how to make the monster sculpture. Then I was able to make my monster sculpture by myself.

My family didn't come to monster sculpture this weekend because it was just too hot. So I used my smartphone to put my monster sculpture on Instagram and Facebook.

I had a good time at the monster sculpture.



Kenneth's monster sculpture

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THE HOT DOG EATING CONTEST BACK ON STILLWELL AVENUE

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

On the 4th of July I was at Coney Island to enjoy the view and enjoy the hot dog eating contest. Everyone was pigging out—first there was the females, and then the males. It was my third year going, but I couldn't go last year or the year before because of COVID. I was surprised and excited to be back after that time.



Orlando at the hot dog eating contest on the 4th of July

When the competitors began eating their hotdogs there was music and festivities before they began. The defending champion ate more than 50 hotdogs and defended his title. The people were all enjoying the hotdog eating contest because of the music and the beach. It was crowded, but it was full of excitement on a special hot day on Independence Day.

ONE OF THE STRONGEST WOMEN I KNOW

BY JUDY RYBAK

The following piece was written about me, Janice McPhillips. I met the writer of this piece through Best Buddies. As the writer will explain, we hit it off right away, and we became really great friends.

About six years ago, I met a woman who would quickly become one of my closest friends and my hero. Janice McPhillips and I were both in search of company when we met through the Best Buddies Citizens Program. We had both recently lost our parents, ended long term relationships, and we both were feeling somewhat lonely. That didn't last long. At our very first meeting, Janice and I bonded instantly and realized we had something very special. I knew this woman was going to make a huge difference in my life, I just could not imagine how much she would teach me.



Janice and Judy enjoying time together

I knew this woman was going to make a huge difference in my life, I just could not imagine how much she would teach me.

Janice and I spent the next few years doing what close friends do, going to the theater, movies, and museums, and, in general, just having fun. There was a lot of shopping and many a meal, but mostly there was laughter and love. We shared our pasts as well as our dreams for the future. We celebrated our wins and supported each other through our losses. Janice's sound advice taught me great lessons and saw me through some tough times. The moments were made even more poignant because, while I have had some challenges in my life, my friend Janice has Down Syndrome. But as the saying goes, "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger" and Down Syndrome is one of the things that makes my friend Janice one of the strongest and bravest women I know. Always living her life to the fullest, Janice strives to make the world a better place for children and pets, and especially others with disabilities. Through her work as a YAI peer advocate and President of the Board, Janice is a strong voice for the disabled. She has even spoken at the United Nations on International Day of People with Disabilities. But just when I thought my friend could not get any braver, events unfolded which showed me the true depth of her courage.

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Just before Christmas 2021, Janice underwent a hip replacement. Routine surgery that promised to have her home for the holidays and belly dancing by early spring. But the day after surgery, while Janice was up and walking on that new hip, she suffered and stroke. Days later, Janice was diagnosed with a rare blood vessel disorder that reduces blood flow to the brain. The strongest among us might have descended into a deep depression, but not Janice. While family and friends were devastated and terrified of what might come next, Janice kept us calm while she herself kept carrying on. There were a lot of tears and we all feared that we might lose this incredible woman, but Janice was not about to let that happen. Through a long and difficult course which included brain surgery and many hours of rigorous therapy punctuated by alternating episodes of recovery as well as setbacks, Janice stayed strong. With determination and a bravery beyond almost anything I have ever witnessed, she survived—and after celebrating Christmas through Easter in one hospital bed after another, Janice defied all odds and made it home.

Today Janice is a literal walking miracle—able to put ten thousand steps on her fitness tracker for the YAI Central Park Challenge and then go for a swim that afternoon

Today Janice is a literal walking miracle—able to put ten thousand steps on her fitness tracker for the YAI Central Park Challenge and then go for a swim that afternoon. She is reading and writing (something doctors feared she might not be able to do again) and is back to her tireless work as a YAI advocate and board member. So, the next time you think you can't face a problem and conquer it, remember my hero, Janice McPhillips. She is what true strength, courage and compassion look like—and I am forever grateful to call her my friend.

YAI'S CENTRAL PARK CHALLENGE 2022

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

WOW Had fun at YAI CENTRAL PARK CHALLENGE! BEST THING SEEING FRIENDS AND STAFF AGAIN! CHEER NY ALWAYS SO COOL, GREAT AND NICE! The weather was beautiful! Beautiful day for walking, singing, dancing, etc etc. No anger just cheers of joy!

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Here are some pictures I took at Central Park Challenge highlighting great moments in the day, including the YAI Self Advocates, NY Cheer, and more.



POOR PEOPLES CAMPAIGN RALLY & PRIDE PARADE

BY MICHAEL HOWARD

On June 18, I went to Washington DC for my very first in-person Poor People's Campaign rally. I joined that organization in 2019. The Poor People's campaign has picked up the work to lift the voice of over 140 million+ poor and low-income people, no matter if any of us have a disability or not, Co-chairs Rev. William Barber & Rev. Liz Theoharis have been on our sides for decades.

On June 24 I went to the LGBTQ Pride parade and advocated for Women's Rights and all other rights on the chopping block by the Conservative Majority Supreme Court of the US. I heard that "We the People" have until a decade to fight harder than we are doing right now or else we are screwed!



Michael at the Poor People's Campaign rally in DC

MY DAD

BY JENNIFER NAFTLOWITZ



I am going to have a sad Father's Day because I used to take my father Gerry out for breakfast every Father's Day. I will always remember our good times we had on our father daughter date.

My mom and dad had been together for 43 years and their anniversary was on August 25. Gerry was a really nice and caring person. I love my dad a lot. We played games together and he was the best mentor and teacher that I had in bowling. My dad was always cheering for me in bowling. I wish that he was still here to walk me down the aisle when I get married. I am glad to have a great relationship with my dad because he went on vacation with me and my mom. My mom and dad were set up on a blind date by their friends.

On my 16th birthday my dad dedicated a song for me. Then on my 21st birthday my dad dedicated a song again but this time we had our father and daughter dance before he got sick.

LEVEL THE CURVE IS BACK AGAIN WITH PRIDE

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ



Arlene is a Bronx creative artist of Puerto Rican descent.

As people in this country prepared for cook-outs or were making other plans as to where to go this past July 4th weekend, Level the Curve was showing their creativity at La Casa de la Herencia Cultural Puertorriqueña, on E 99th Street between 2nd and Third Avenue in East Harlem. In the Facility there is a program called ARTSPACE.

Here is a description of their program: "Artspace is proud to provide affordable space for artists and arts organizations. We encourage artistic expression of all type, and hope this space is used for a broad spectrum of artistic endeavors and ideas" They go on to add that "Art displayed in this building and all Artspace projects represents the artistic vision and viewpoint of the artist alone, and does not reflect the opinion of Artspace Projects Inc."

That gives a proud definition of the organization Level the Curve. Here's some more of what they say. "At Level the Curve, we aim to make everyday life easier for people by creating products that adapt to the customers' needs and wants, and at a low price. The result is a consumer-oriented approach which caters specifically to, as our name suggests, 'leveling the curve' as well as 'leveling the 'playing field' for the disabled community!"

This reporter observed their work at the same place. It is still an excellent event. On July 2nd of 2022 their work of Photography, Art, and poetry was put on display. This all happened in a perfect month, because this July was proclaimed as DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH!



Eli Ramos is a Co-Founder/COO of Level the Curve, Inc.

JOINING CELEBRITY FAN CLUB PAGES!

BY ROBERT CARDONA

Throughout the last 2 years of pandemic- I have been keeping busy- not only with advocacy meetings and doctor's appointments- but- writing to celebrity fan club pages- such as nick cannon's wild- n- out, Tyler Perry's House of Payne, the Chi, Raising Kanan, love and hip- hop New York, etc,- I also have been writing to this actor from Chaka Kahn's I feel for you video- Michael "Boggaloo shrimp" chambers- i am trying my damndest to get into show business- I have been writing to nick cannon for 2 years- but- I think this year- I will get my big break in show business.





Allan's bowling awards

THE BOWLING DINNER DANCE

BY ALLAN FRASER

I've been bowling for a loooong time. I like the bowling, I'm very, very happy. I'm bowling good and I feel good about myself. I'm happy about the bowling dinner dance. I scored 106 and the other one was second place. My teammates and all help me out, they teach me and they coach me and that's good. I'm very proud of myself and I'm very proud of my teammates. The Special Olympics of bowling.

MY BEST FRIEND TRACEY

BY JENNIFER NAFTELOWITZ

I met this nice girl at Stephanie's meeting and she told me about this girl that she got to meet. Her name is Tracey and she is such a wonderful and caring person. We are going to become roommates in Savannah Georgia. Her birthday is on the same day as New Years, December 31st. She works in a group home. Her parents are really nice people that we got to know.



Tracey and Jennifer have a lot in common. We both like baseball even though she lives in Manchester, New Jersey. I live in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Her favorite team is the Brooklyn Cyclones.

My mom and her parents hung out a lot over the summer. Last week for my 40th birthday she and her parents Carol and Al came out to help me celebrate my birthday with my friends and family.

Tracey is also 40 years old and she is such a great driver. She is always going to be my best friend forever. We talk every night on the phone and also we e-mail each other.

DJING AT CENTRAL ART CHALLENGE

BY ALLAN FRASER

I started in the late 80s I was DJing and I'm very proud of myself DJing. I'm very good DJing at Bragg Street and a lot of residences and a lot of houses. Jessica had me DJ at the Central Art Challenge on April 19, 2022. It's been a very, very long time, now because of COVID I don't DJ in the residences so this was my first time DJing at the art studio so I feel good about myself. I played all the music I like to play—no cursing (like my mother taught me) a little salsa, a little reggae, a little rock and roll, R&B, disco, all of that. I did very, very good.



Allan DJing at Central Art Challenge

NANCY AND HER FAMILY

BY ROBERT CARDONA

I'd like to present my newsletter article about my long-time 36-year friendship with my high school friend: Nancy Ward!

I 1st met Nancy in 1986 in our junior year of high school - at 1st- it seemed like it was going to be love at 1st sight for the both of us as much as I was chasing her in the school cafeteria and the school yard- hahaaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

But- seriously- our friendship had turned into something more than that- her family had accepted me into their lives!

They had begun to invite me over to their home for the holidays- and- the other family gatherings they did!

As of last week- her dad passed away- he was like my own dad to me- I will miss him soooooo muchh!

Nancy- i owe my entire life to you, babeeeeeeeeee!

MY MOM AND ME

JANICE MCPHILLIPS



My mom always tried to make me happy. She even dressed up in a poodle skirt for my 1950s theme birthday party.

She was a fantastic cook. She cooked 6 nights a week for years. My favorite dish was her clam chowder.

She took care of me when I was sick and when she was sick I took care of her.

HOW I MISS GETTIN' MY SWAG ON AT THE ZEREGA AVENUE DANCES!

BY ROBERT CARDONA

Since the pandemic started, I have missed going to the YAI dances at Zerega avenue in the boogie-down Bronx! for 10 years, I had gone out to support the YAI group homes from Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, etc, and, I used to have such a marvelousssssssssssss time, gettin' down to allllllllllllllllllll of that rap, R&B, disco music, etc, I would even go so far as to sing on the DJ's microphone, but, all in all, I miss going to represent allllllll of YAI: I'm hoping to come back to Zerega avenue after covid is over; pleaseeeeeeeeeeeeeee end covid, soz I can get my groove back to Zerega asap!



BOWLING DINNER FROM SPECIAL OLYMPICS

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

I went to the Bowling Dinner from Special Olympics on Saturday June 11th. The dinner lasted from 1pm to 5pm. They had salad, mashed potatoes with gravy, soda, pasta, turkey, chicken strips, french fries, dinner rolls and cake. I took pictures at the bowling dinner, which was at Buckley's restaurant. It was hosted by Patricia Smith from the Bowling Alley. Patricia gave me an award at the bowling dinner, I told her thank you and she said you are welcome. I met my friends at the bowling dinner at Buckley's restaurant.

Some of the people at the dinner were in wheelchairs and some of the others with disabilities took Access-a-Ride to the bowling dinner at Buckley's Restaurant on Avenue S and Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn.

Bowling starts again in September. I had a wonderful time at the bowling dinner with my friends.



Kenneth and Allan at the bowling dinner

WHEN I GOT HURT

BY JENNIFER NAFTELOWITZ

My article is about me. I just wanted to say that I was going to work on Wednesday March 9th to Morgan Stanley with my friend and coworker and I couldn't get up, such a terrible accident. I fell down on the street and I hurt my knees because construction workers don't take care of the potholes.

There are a lot of cracks and a lot of elderly people could get hurt or run over by speeding cars. They need to fix this problem because I don't want to get hurt anymore. I am just trying my best to make sure that other people out there don't fall or get hurt like I did. I fell down on my right knee and I was so upset because I didn't see the cracks on the sidewalk.



Stock photo of cracks in a sidewalk