

## **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

**December 3, 2022**

In 1990 the federal government passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which underscores the values of equal access and equal opportunity for people with disabilities and upholds that all people are entitled to a set of fundamental freedoms and protections regardless of ability status. We acknowledge the long history of isolation and discrimination of people with disabilities and esteem the decades of activism and advocacy by the disability community to combat systemic exclusion and injustice. These champions have paved the way for more individuals with disabilities to pursue their full measure of happiness.

Despite the ADA there are enduring challenges for this community that require ongoing support so that they may enjoy the same levels of protections and service as others. They face physical, social, and attitudinal barriers, are more likely to experience co-occurring health challenges and higher healthcare costs and, as a result, many live in poverty and are underemployed or unemployed.

The City of Boulder strives to exceed the requirements set forth in the ADA and to create a welcoming and supportive community. This is in line with the importance the community places on being a city that supports those with disabilities, as affirmed in the recent Parks and Recreation master plan - where 92% of respondents said that serving our community members with disabilities is very important/essential. To that end, the city's EXPAND program has been providing recreation and leisure activities to promote inclusion, health and connection since 1980. Despite the isolating nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, EXPAND participants were able to stay connected through online programming which provided an important space for rich company, building skills and community, as well as promoting emotional and physical wellness.

EXPAND's mission, *Creating a community of all abilities through recreation*, is strengthened by a strong community of participants, athletes, parents, care providers, partner agencies, Boulder Parks and Recreation staff, and the Boulder community, who continue to support programs and services for people with disabilities. With over 100 programs, 3 camps and 2000 participations in 2022, EXPAND continues to grow and change to best support the inclusion of people with disabilities.

We, the City Council of the City of Boulder, Colorado declare December 3, 2022 as

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And urge our city government and community members to commit to the ongoing work of advancing the experience and protection for people with disabilities. Get to know these unique individuals and their lived experiences so that we understand how our systems could better serve them. Share and listen to their stories of joy and community significance. Lead with compassion and empathy so that we create a city for everyone to thrive.



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Aaron Brockett, Mayor

