Spotlight Session & Special Olympics Ep 10

[00:00:00] What's your story? What does accessibility mean to you?

**Josh:** Hello, and welcome to another episode of the special edition of the Inclusion Revolution Radio collaboration with accessiBe's Spotlight Sessions, the Special Olympic World Games berlin 2023 have officially concluded. We are excited to be speaking with a guest today who experienced the magic of the games firsthand.

My name is Josh Basile, I'm your cohost for today's show, I'm a C 4/5 quadriplegic, paralyzed below my shoulders, and a power wheelchair user. I'm the community relations manager at accessiBe and a passionate disability rights advocate and trial attorney focused on breaking down barriers to access and inclusion for people with disabilities.[00:01:00]

**Novie:** I'm Novi Craven, your other co-host. Today's show, I'm proud Special Olympics Athlete and employees Olympics International. I play bocce, basketball and about any other sport you can think of. I love Special Olympics and the work our organization does to promote friendship, respect, and of course inclusion.

**Josh:** Today we are talking with Victoria Arlen, professional athlete, television host, motivational speaker, author, dancer, ESPN host, Special Olympics Global Ambassador and a good friend of the podcast.

Thank you so much for joining us today, Victoria, and welcome back to the Inclusion Revolution podcast.

**Victoria:** Thank you for having me.

**Josh:** We are so excited to have you on today's show and just that list goes on and on, on what you do in this world. Just you're amazing.

**Victoria:** Thank you. As are you two, so I'm very excited to be here.

**Novie:** Last year on our show, we announced [00:02:00] you becoming a Global Ambassador. Tell us more about your first year and your favorite moments.

**Victoria:** Oh gosh, it's been a very fun year. Yes. You pulled a fast one on me last year. That was very, very exciting. It is an honor that I, it's a title that I'm very, very honored and it was really cool.

I remember I called my mom and told her, and I was crying after I found out and Chris, Chris was very, he was very excited for me and Chris works for Special Olympics International and Special Olympics North America. And he was obviously we've done a lot of things together and so it's been a long time coming like it had been brewing, unbeknownst to all to me. and I called my mom crying and it was really cool. I saw her a couple days later and she had had time to, you know, talk to my family and tell my family about it. And she said, you know, out of all the [00:03:00] things you've done and out of all the accomplishments and you know the gold medals cool and, you know, all your TV work and all the things you've achieved.

She's like, you know, being a Special Olympics global ambassador is probably the coolest achievement that we are the most proud of you for. And it's just a tremendous honor and it really is. And so it's been an incredible year. We were in Berlin for the World Games. I had a dual role there.

I had my Global Ambassador duty, and then I had my TV duty with ESPN. That was really incredible. I got to host the Night of Trees in DC which was really cool. And it's just been really remarkable to be able to be a part of the inclusion revolution and be up there with Tim Shriver to be more entrenched in the world of Special Olympics.

I just wanted, you know, I remember just saying, you know, I just wanna be as involved as you'll have me and be there with the athletes and [00:04:00] just be, be truly a part of that movement. And so, it's just been a really exciting year. It's been a year with just.. I couldn't have imagined a better first year.

We really started out, you know, coming off of the USA Games and just kind of keeping it rolling. So it's been really cool. I don't know if I can picture a favorite moment because I think when I say it's been a favorite moment, it's just there. Another one happens after that.

**Novie:** Absolutely. You know, you can't even, like, basically when I first joined Special Olympics, it was just like amazing. You know, when you get picked to represent your program and your Special Olympics. and USA Games, it was just, I would just be stars struck, you know? It was just amazing for me to meet other athletes, meet other, you know, my partners, meet other people, but also represent Special Olympics. You know, everybody is representing [00:05:00] alongside me, so definitely just amazing.

**Victoria:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**Josh:** We're still all recovering from the excitement of the Berlin Games, but we would love to know what some of your top experiences were.

**Victoria:** Oh gosh. Opening ceremonies was really remarkable and so I was there a bit early with some global ambassador duties. And then I was there also for my TV work, but for opening ceremonies, I found out I got to, I was going to walk with a delegation and I didn't know who.

So early on I had no idea what to expect, but the big, you know, obviously we were talking about inclusion and how, you know, we're gonna choose to include. And when we do that, all of us come together, we all win. And so I find out I'm gonna be walking with New Zealand. I didn't know anyone from New Zealand.

And that's the whole point is, you know, you learn. And so how it worked this time around, Is you don't meet anyone till literally right before you walk out into the tunnel. There's [00:06:00] thousands upon thousands. I think there was about 50,000 people there, so I. I'm a little freaked out about crowds, okay.

I'm not gonna lie. And so I'm down there, I'm in the tunnel. I'm waiting to meet my new friends and about to walk out on, and I'm terrified, okay? So I get out there, meet my new friends, and they're like, who is, who is she? And I'm like, who are you? And it is just a, there's a moment, right? And I'm like, Hi, I'm Victoria. We're walking out together. And so I'm walking there and I don't know anyone and I'm super nervous. And then all of a sudden there's this incredible athlete and he grabs my hand and he says, Hey, we're about to walk out of the opening ceremonies. And he grabs my hand and I didn't feel nervous anymore 'cause he was like, he chose, he included me.

And so we walked out there and it was just this incredible moment. I mean, it's opening ceremonies and it was just incredible. Um, just this, I mean, I don't even have a word for it, [00:07:00] but it was this moment. And I remember going up to Tim later on and telling him this story, and he's like, that's what Special Olympics is all about, is the athletes include us.

This is their world. This is their space. And it was really cool because, you know, you hear these stories and you talk about it. We've all witnessed it. but I was included and that was what was so cool is, you know, they chose to include me and they didn't know me.

I was just a stranger in a dress showing up and being like, Hey, I get to walk with you guys. That was a really cool moment. And then I ended up getting to interview a lot of New Zealand swimmers throughout the week 'cause they were just dominant in, in the swimming venue. That was my favorite moment.

That was really, really incredible. And that was how we kind of started. And you start there and it just kept going. And then swimming obviously was amazing and I just, I was just so blown away by just how [00:08:00] incredible all of the sports and all the athletes were. But that was just an amazing, I was like, I was included and I gotta be part of the inclusion revolution. So that was really cool.

**Novie:** I saw you on screen when you walked in, I saw you on screen. I was like, that is amazing. And definitely just, I could see your face was just booming. Definitely he was so excited. Were you able to reconnect during the week?

**Victoria:** No, I never, no, I don't know what sport he was in, but no, I, a couple of the other athletes that were in swimming, I did, and I made sure of that and then I made sure when we could to be, um, to be able to, you know, when we could highlight New Zealand and talk about New Zealand. 'cause the coaches were really cool and the athletes had, some of the athletes had some really incredible stories and also just were swimming crazy fast.

So I gave New Zealand love when I could, 'cause they gave me a ton of love at opening ceremony. So I did my [00:09:00] best, but it was happening so fast. It happened so fast,

**Novie:** you know, going outta the tunnel. When, when I was at USA games, when we came out from the tunnel I was just like going through the tunnel.

I would see everybody I knew and, you know, try the handshake and everything. But when I, we first started doing like the, you had to get through the, like the stadium and get to the stadium, then the tunnel and it was like tremendously. I'm a person who will, you probably can relate to. I'm a person who will automatically stand there and talk to anybody.

Doesn't matter what age, it doesn't matter who, how old you are. I was literally, but it was just amazing to see how everybody was just excited to see us. Come through that tunnel. And of course, I'm a person who loves to dance and I was just dancing with the dance, the, the band. It was just amazing to see come through that tunnel and just see everybody just cheering you on.

You know, it doesn't matter what program, what delegation comes out. It's just amazing to, to see that. And [00:10:00] there was just, I was mind blowing and I could just see everybody coming through. That tunnel was just starting to wave even when they. Didn't even, they saw the crowd and it was just, I was just mind.

I was just like amazing.

**Josh:** So many beautiful moments and memories. I love it. And Victoria, could you remind our listeners how you first got involved with the Special Olympics?

**Victoria:** Yes, so I am, if we go way, way back, I first got involved, um, I was actually a coach in high school for Special Olympics and so I was a coach in high school for Special Olympics.

And, um, 'cause we had a local team at my high school and so that was kind of my first kind of understanding of the Special Olympics movement. And then my very first assignment at ESPN was the Special Olympic World Games in Los Angeles in 2015. So that was really very much, you know, my first ever assignment, my first ever TV opportunity.

what got me [00:11:00] in the door at ESPN was the Special Olympics World Games in 2015.

**Josh:** Wow.

**Victoria:** Then I was hooked.

**Novie:** You can never be unhook from Special Olympics.

**Victoria:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Josh:** We'd also love to know more about your role at the games this time around and how you used your platform to bring attention to all of the amazing athletes.

**Victoria:** Yeah, absolutely. I was the venue reporter for swimming. And so my roles at ESPN are all over the place. I'm a host by day, but I still, I started off as a reporter, but I still do a lot of TV hosting now. But I still tap my toes into reporting. So my role this time around was reporting and hosting from the swimming venue.

So I shared stories from our swimmers [00:12:00] and we had a ton of swimmers. And so my space was, let's take stories and let's look at, yes, we were watching incredible swimmers, but also like, These are individuals and athletes who have stories, and teams who have stories, and coaches who have stories, and families who have stories.

So for me, I think the experience I've learned is that, you know, I have a story and I've learned how to share my story. And so how can I use the tools I've learned to share my story, to share someone else's story? That's really what I take into account when I'm sharing anyone's story is how do I take the tools I've learned? The right way to share the story and the wrong way to share the story, and how do I share it correctly and how do I honor each athlete and each family Because at the end of the day, this is their moment, and this is a chance because you have no idea who's watching. And I think that's the thing that's the beautiful thing about Special Olympics is [00:13:00] it's so much more than sports.

It's so much more. It's even so much more than their intellectual disability and what they can't do, it's celebrating what they can do. It's celebrating their achievements, but it's also celebrating the stories that got them there, the families, the support systems, the coaches that got them there. And so...

**Josh:** All the hard work!

**Victoria:** All the hard work and the fact that, you know, it's not easy. And that's the thing that I think for me personally, is we highlighted that as this wasn't easy. This wasn't an easy task to get here and so let's celebrate that hard work.

Let's celebrate each of these athletes and how hard they work to get there. And yes, there's a dance party along the way. Yes, there's a lot of handshakes and fun moments, but there was also a lot of hard work to get here. And there's emotions and there's victories and defeats all the more.

And so I think [00:14:00] for me, that's what I approach when I'm there and when I'm given a microphone.

**Josh:** Thank you for that.

**Novie:** How would you compare the Berlin Games to other sport events you have attended?

**Victoria:** There is nothing like Special Olympics and you knew that answer before you even asked it.

There's really nothing like Special Olympics, and I think when you. How I've always said it, but I think with Special Olympics, you know, I think it's, it's truly sports in its purest form, and I think it's sports in its essence. It really brings it to a space where it showcases sports in a pure form, in a form that like shows the hard work shows the energy, the emphasis, but also too, it's, there's no, there's no egos involved.

There's no [00:15:00] arrogance involved, which, like I said, that taints sport and that ruins sport. But for me, there's nothing like Special Olympics. There really isn't. And so it doesn't, there's no comparison. You can't compare it, right? Like that's like, that's like comparing like what's a superior snack?

I don't know.

**Novie:** Right. When you get, when you become, when you're a part of this organization, it's just like, how do you let go? And it's like when you have, when you are meeting millions of people like yourself and just amazing people that really care about Special Olympics and really, you know, when you people, when you tell somebody that doesn't know about Special Olympics, they're like, When they were, when they respond, it's like they say, how do you, how do I get involved?

How do you, how do I get involved? And I'm just like, blown away Because you know, at first you told 'em you didn't know. [00:16:00] They didn't, they didn't know anything about Special Olympics but when you told 'em about Special Olympics, just blown away. And they're like, automatically I wanna get involved.

How do you get involved? Do you know who do I contact? And that's just amazing part of Special Olympics because a lot of people think Special Olympics is just like Paralympics. They're sort of similar but not as, as similar as people think. And it's just always amazing because you know all the people I've met, including you, it's just, I would never imagine that, you know, the people I've met, would I ever meet people like you if I never got involved with Special Olympics?

**Victoria:** Yeah.

**Josh:** I'm just so glad everybody's paths crossed and it's just a beautiful thing. Victoria, can you tell us a little bit about your journey with paralysis and how living with a disability affected your life and really that changed your trajectory on [00:17:00] both personal and career ambitions?

**Victoria:** Absolutely. Yeah. I was paralyzed from the age of 11 to 21. I got really sick when I was little and my spine was badly damaged and so I was in a wheelchair from the, I was paralyzed from T 11, T 12, and so for me, my whole life changed in the blink of an eye. And I also had a brain injury as well, so I was dealing with a spinal cord and brain compromises.

So basically the doctor is like, so you have a spinal cord injury and a brain injury, and, uh, but the brain injury is more of the problem than the spinal cord. The brain injury is what we have to address because, you know, like they basically said to my parents, they're like, she's not gonna make it.

And. You know, if she does make it, she's not, she's gonna be a vegetable. So, you know, yes, her spine is irreversibly [00:18:00] damaged, but that doesn't matter because her brain is obliterated essentially. So at that point, you know, it like, you know, the, the spine wasn't even the problem and so, or was a problem, but it wasn't a focal point.

And then four years later I come out of this vegetative state and, and they're like looking at scans and being like, We don't know what you're gonna be dealing with. And, and I'm neurologically for the most part intact. I just am incredibly, at least for my brain, I'm just incredibly atrophied.

But I can, I can retain info, like I can communicate in different ways. And then, but the paralysis was very much like the. They were right about one thing, you know, the, the spine part. And so for 10 years I'm just navigating the world in a wheelchair and so it, it did [00:19:00] change my life. I mean, I became a lot more passionate.

I mean, I was always an athlete, but I think sports were more of a safe haven for me just because I needed an outlet because I just, I didn't know what my new normal was looking like and then I think for me, I was very much bullied in high school for being in a wheelchair.

And I didn't know when you go through a traumatic ordeal as a kid, you're very, it's very challenging to try to find ways to process and deal. And so I think for me, it changed a lot of things. I also, you know, I started working in television in a wheelchair. So my first TV assignment, I was a chair.

And then I was on crutches. My, my family, we, you know, we have a neuro recovery center. So I was trying to see, you know, maybe there was a, you know, maybe I could, I could see and [00:20:00] there was no chance. And so there wasn't, I wasn't holding out that was gonna be the case scenario for me.

But it was still, you know, I might as well at least try to get stronger and at least, you know, help with certain elements that I was dealing with health-wise, that maybe they could improve. 'cause they were looking at drastic, you know, medical options to try to fix things. So it was interesting.

But for me, it changed the trajectory. I mean, had I not gotten sick, I definitely wouldn't be where I am today. I probably wouldn't be, I wouldn't have become a professional athlete. I wouldn't have started working in tv. I wouldn't have, I think, pursued the life that I pursued. But I think when you almost lose your life and when you're almost, when you're almost put in a place where all the odds are stacked against you, it makes you.

Kind of fearless to just go against scenarios where the odds are already gonna be stacked against you,

**Josh:** [00:21:00] your perspective becomes your superpower.

**Victoria:** It really does. It really does. Because you're like, I've already been in situations where the odds are stacked against me. So what's another, I've already been in situations where someone is gonna tell you every reason it's not gonna happen.

I've already been in situations where, The likelihood of this happening, you know what I mean? So for me, I just, I kind of, I really, it forced me to reevaluate different things and just go for things in different ways. And so, yeah I would not be where I'm today had I not gone through that. And it really inspired me to start my foundation to help individuals with disabilities.

It inspired my mom to open up a facility to help individuals with disabilities. It really, it changed my life in every, which, it turned my life upside down and blew it up a couple times, but at the same time, I wouldn't choose it, but I wouldn't change it, you know? and [00:22:00] I wouldn't be where I am today had I done that, you know, and or had I gone through that and I wouldn't, and, and having a disability, it opened up my eyes and I still deal with neurological, I still have significant impairments that no one would know about.

Like no one, to the naked eye would know about, but, People who have lived in that world or in that world, see the drop foot, see the impairments that I deal with, or if I get tired, see the decline that has happened and the different deficits that I live with on a daily basis. But it's my superpower and it's made me who I am today.

And I don't hide it. Like, I don't sit there and go like, oh, don't look like, It is me. And that's, I think the thing too is like our differences are a beautiful thing. And it took me a really long time [00:23:00] to embrace that. And I think it's hard for a lot of us to embrace the things that make us different, our challenges, but challenges make life interesting.

So for me, that's really the perspective I've lived with and I had to make that decision. When I was in my chair, when I was on crutches, when a year ago I had to relearn how to walk again. When I had a setback. So I think for me, it's like you gotta, you gotta just embrace the life you're given and the challenges you're given and just roll with it, you know, or when my nerve pain is so debilitating that I just wanna curl up in a ball, but I have to host a show, I just.

I just remind myself like, a pain means you're alive. And B, challenges make life interesting. So better than a boring one.

**Josh:** Thank you so much for sharing all that.

**Novie:** Wow.

**Josh:** Really powerful.

**Novie:** Definitely. When, you know, my mom had a, when she had her brain injury, you know, [00:24:00] they said the exact same thing.

They said the exact same words that they told you, and it was remarkable. I mean, I'm like, She can remember, she remembers some stuff, but not it's, but it's like your brain works in so many different places and when you have somebody telling you, oh, you're not gonna be able to do something, the both of us look at each other.

Like, we've both gone, have gone through that. Well, I haven't gone through the brain injury, but definitely when she, I'm like, How, I'm very surprised that she can remember stuff after she's had that traumatic brain injury. Yeah. And it's amazing because you have all these people saying, oh, you're not gonna be able to remember anything.

You're a Global Ambassador, you're a TV host, you're everything. She's a mother, [00:25:00] she's a person. Definitely having those people that surround you, your family, your friends, people that support you. It's a blessing because

**Victoria:** yeah,

**Novie:** it, I just can't say nothing.

**Josh:** It's a blessing.

**Victoria:** Yeah.

**Josh:** But Victoria, from your own experiences, how can people with disabilities continue to make their voices heard and kind of advocate for their community?

**Victoria:** I mean, I think the cool thing that we have at our fingertips, which I've learned to embrace, which is really hard is the fact that we have, you know, social media and the fact that we could use it for good is just being a positive voice, is being a beacon of light. And I think that's the biggest thing is, someone said to me the other day, and I struggled for a long time to embrace social media. I don't like social media. It stresses me out. I'm a poster and a ghoster where I just [00:26:00] like post ghost, but I have to do it for work and I understand it's a platform for me. but I have boundaries for it. But Someone said to me the other day, and then someone a couple days later said something too, and I felt like it was a big old sign from God in the universe that was like, Hey, you're doing great, sweetie.

Like, keep it up. Because it was one of those things that I was really struggling with. Like, I need a sign that I shouldn't just like throw my phone or just like, just, just delete it all. And it was, um, This one person was just like, Hey, like your social media just really is like the highlight of my day. and I post...

**Novie:** mine too. It's mine too. It's mine too. Definitely!

**Victoria:** Another sign. Another sign! It's like someone said that to me and it was not someone I would've expected to say that. And [00:27:00] then someone else said the same thing is like, Hey, when you post things like I know it's just gonna like cheer me up.

And make me smile and I post silly things and I post, it would be really, I'm just like crazy hair or my dog or it's like work related or informative or inspiring. Like anything I try to be just like me, like just a little glimpse of me. And so my point is, is that if you wanna get a message across, if you wanna be a beacon, especially in the disability world, because it can be a really isolating world, it can be a really.

A really a world where there can be misinformation, there can be information where you can almost feel like it's very doomy, gloomy. And I was just talking to a friend of mine whose dad is, um, who's her friend of a friend who's someone's newly into this world and they were talking about the fact that it's doom and gloom, like doctors very much are doomy gloomy.

And so it's like if we [00:28:00] could just put good out there and be like, it's gonna be okay. Or like, let's be beacon of hope and beacon of light. And that's what we try to do even with my foundation is like, let's be, let's be champions of hope. Like let's go out and put our superhero capes on and spread good and spread light.

Like that's, that's a big thing that we have the access to do right at our fingertips instead of like posting like the next like sad thing. Posting good things or posting something that's just gonna make someone's day. I think that's just having the presence wherewithal to, to do that as like a tool of, you know, you're just kind of, you're being someone else's highlight.

That's a big one. I think being a resource for people. That's a huge one too. And I, I didn't realize the power of being someone's resource or just being a support, how far that can go for people and just being just a support and you don't understand that even if you're just [00:29:00] that for one person, the ripple effects, that can be it, especially in the disability community because it is a very isolating community.

And how that can lead to so many other things. And just being that, being a resource for someone, even if you only have, if you have limited, like limited reach, that doesn't matter. You don't have to have 50,000 followers. You can just have 50 followers. You have no idea who's watching. And that was a big piece of advice I was given, is you have no idea who's watching.

You have no idea who needs to hear what you have to say. So if you have something beautiful to say, then say it.

**Novie:** Because I always, when you always post them, it's always amazing because you always make me laugh and definitely when you,

**Victoria:** that's my goal.

**Novie:** It's hilarious because

It's funny because when you posting, I say it's just hilarious because, you know, I'm not thinking, okay, she's gonna be thinking [00:30:00] she's serious, or she's not serious. But it's hilarious because when you. And it's amazing to see how you really, you know, put your yourself out there and you put your, your, not your whole life, but your day by day into, a story

**Victoria:** or this guy

**Novie:** Yeah. Oh my gosh. What's his name again?

**Victoria:** His name's Bear.

**Novie:** Hi Bear. What's up? Bear you're on Inclusion Revolution Radio Podcast.

**Victoria:** He wants to make his debut

**Novie:** yeah, he's made his debut on the Inclusion Revolution Radio.

**Victoria:** He's shy. Well no, he's not really. Now he's misacting

**Novie:** can you give us an update on a project your foundation is working on right now?

**Victoria:** We are continuing with our scholarship program. So we have a scholarship program where individuals can apply and it's our Victory Scholarship Program. So really what we've been focusing on is increasing donors for our scholarship [00:31:00] program. So we are opening, um, we have our, we have different scholarship cycles throughout the year, and so individuals, All throughout the country can apply.

And whether it's nursing care hours, it's adaptive equipment, they need home adaptations, recovery training hours, you name it, we have, we have fulfilled all types of scholarships. That has really been our biggest focal point is getting. The awareness out of what our foundation does, but also getting donors in and kind of essentially bringing in Captains of Hope who want to get in on what we're trying to do, which is basically giving as many scholarships as we can to as many people as we can all throughout the country.

Because a lot of folks need our help and a lot of folks feel very forgotten in this space. So that's really what we've been focusing on. Yeah. Is our scholarship program.

**Josh:** Where can people go to donate?

**Victoria:** They can go to victoriasvictory.org. [00:32:00]

**Josh:** I love it. I love it. And we asked this question of your coworker, Kevin Negandhi, and would love to get your perspective.

**Victoria:** I love Kevin.

**Josh:** What are some of, what are some things you've learned about accessibility and inclusion while attending the games that you'd take back to ESPN and try to implement?

**Victoria:** Ooh, well, accessibility. I've learned a lot about that. And that's just, that's just personally, I learned that through my own world, that the world is getting better when it comes to accessibility. It, they still just have a lot more to go. But one thing too, when it came to ESPN has done a stellar job when it comes to accessibility. And that is, and I'm, that's not even, that's not even a shameless plug at my employer. From the very first time I went there, when I spoke there, I was blown away.

At how accessible our campus and everyone there was just [00:33:00] so I didn't feel like I was the outsider at a wheel on a wh in a wheelchair there. It's a very accessible campus on every which way. But as far as inclusion goes, I think it's just the fact that awareness is everything. And I think when you.

With us, especially, I mean, ESPN got in 2015 with Special Olympics. And so I think the fact that we have been continuing to have these conversations and they're, and have these broadcasts and these inclusion revolutions essentially within our network and even beyond is really, really cool.

And so I think for. For us, it's continuing that charge beyond the broadcast, which is what we're doing. And, and I think, you know, Kevin and all of us are, you know, it's taking that beyond our jobs. [00:34:00] And, you know, for me, I think that was me raising my hand and wanting to get and more involved beyond my microphone.

And I've seen individuals I work with volunteering at Special Olympic events and torch runs and so it's, it's really cool because we have a whole volunteer program at ESPN and with Disney. So, we're very fortunate that we have a company that is very much like encourages to get involved in your community, get involved with organizations, and Special Olympics is a big part of that. so it's really cool. And then I've been able to do that with also with Topgolf too, which is really cool. And Topgolf and Special Olympics are coming together and have been doing a lot of cool stuff too.

So I think it's just continuing those conversations is key. Because when you, when you talk, people listen, and that's the thing [00:35:00] that, you know, Kevin has such a powerful voice, but we all have powerful voices and so if anything, it's just being able to talk and have those conversations and let people have a chance to hear what you have to say. And I think that took me a really long time to understand that because I'd be like, oh, I don't know if you'll, people don't wanna hear what I have to say. It's like, no, I think people do like, and that's for anyone watching this. If you have something to say and it's a good thing and it's gonna lead to something really good, then say it because people do wanna hear what we have to say.

So that's really a long ramble answer to this question, but

**Josh:** thank you, Victoria.

**Victoria:** Yeah.

**Novie:** We know you've answered this question before, but we'd still love to hear you answer it again. What's accessibility and inclusion mean to you?

**Victoria:** Accessibility and inclusion, oh gosh, that's a good, I feel like I had trouble with this last time too.

'cause I feel like I can go on and on and on [00:36:00] about it. It honestly means everything to me because I think for me, the day that we don't even have to ask this question is gonna be such a great day. But for me it means that we're, Hmm, I don't know. I feel like I could

**Novie:** No, no worries.

**Victoria:** Um, it means, it means that it shouldn't, I wish I, for me it means, That we're working towards something that should be guaranteed for all. And so I think it, it means that, you know, I think we're getting there, but we still have a long way to go, but it means that it means everything to me, honestly, and on many ways [00:37:00] personally.

It's a very personal thing for me, but also, On so many levels, everyone should have that right to have access and feel included. So it, it means everything to me. But I think the mo, the day we don't have to ask that question, and the day that every single person feels like they have access and feels included is gonna be a really, really epic day.

**Novie:** Thank you Victoria for joining today's episode of Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast and Spotlight Session collaboration. Your passion for Special Olympics is inspiring and we are so lucky to have your support.

**Josh:** You can learn more about accessiBe, Inclusion Revolution Radio and Special Olympics by subscribing on YouTube and following us on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Find us through our handles @accessiBe\_Community and @SpecialOlympics. Thank you all and we look forward to our next episode and thank you so much, Victoria, for being our guest today.

**Victoria:** Thank [00:38:00] you.

**Josh:** Bye everyone.