

Access PCC

The future is accessible, and so is PCC.
Volume 3 Issue 03 - Summer 2026

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From the Dean

This issue of Access PCC features the contributions of different voices. It highlights ways in which progress and improvement are linked to both individual and collective contributions and it celebrates growth.

As we start the new academic year, there are many opportunities to learn and grow. There are opportunities for all of us. Whether we are students, engaged in learning new ideas and concepts in the classroom, or employees, engaged in ongoing learning through our work.

- Kaela Parks



Caption: The Oregon Wheelchair Hiking Group at Orenco Woods Park. [Read more in this issue.](#)

From the Editor

Progress is perfection in my book. This issue focuses heavily on the progress that strategic nonviolence protests have made within the Disability Rights movement. One nonviolent action building on another is strategically most ideal, and leading thought is that it is the consistent, collaborative, and diverse actions of the disabled community that continue to advance access and equity for all.

In that spirit, this article in this issue is the first in a series celebrating, examining, and learning about aspects of civil resistance and the pursuit of justice within the Disability Rights movement. Next issue we will be looking at transportation, and how Disability activism within that industry has shaped access for folks universally.

Please weigh in. Letters to the Editor can be sent to precious.golden@pcc.edu.

PCC Pride: A Place Where Everyone Belongs

by Josh Espanto

Every June, communities across the country celebrate Pride Month. Pride Month is a time to recognize the history, achievements, and contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals while also promoting equality, acceptance, and inclusion. At Portland Community College (PCC), Pride Month is an opportunity to celebrate diversity and support a campus where everyone feels valued and respected.

As a student with a disability, Disability Pride Month is very meaningful to me. After my spinal cord injury, I learned that my disability does not define who I am or what I can accomplish. It has made me stronger, more determined, and passionate about advocating for others. Being a student leader has given me the opportunity to help create a campus where students with disabilities feel respected, included, and supported. My hope is that every student knows they belong and has the opportunity to succeed.

I got the chance to ask questions from Ira McKinzie from PCC's Accessible Education and Disability Resources (AEDR) department to learn more about the importance of pride, inclusion, and belonging on campus.

One message that stood out to me was Ira's belief that pride is both a celebration of how far communities have come and a commitment to continuing the work toward equality and inclusion. Ira shared that

visibility matters because it lets students know they are welcome, valued, and safe to be themselves. As someone in a leadership role at PCC, Ira believes it is important to help students see that they belong on campus.

Ira also explained that inclusion goes beyond simply following policies. The AEDR team works to meet students where they are by respecting names and pronouns, using inclusive language, listening to students' needs, and collaborating with other departments to support the PCC community. Ira encouraged everyone to be an ally by learning about different communities, treating people with respect, and asking what support they need instead of making assumptions.

One message from the interview especially resonated with me: everyone belongs at PCC. Ira shared that every student deserves to feel accepted, respected, and supported, including students who are both disabled and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Hearing that reminded me how important it is to continue building a campus where every person feels welcome.

Disability Pride Month reminds me that inclusion is everyone's responsibility. Whether it is improving accessibility, listening to someone's story, or simply treating others with kindness and respect, every action matters. Together, we can continue building a Portland Community College community where every student has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

Happy Disability Pride Month! Let's continue celebrating our differences, supporting one another, and creating a campus where everyone truly belongs.

Oregon Wheelchair Hiking Group

By PJ Golden

Each Monday, from 12:00 - 3:00 PM, a group of Portlanders get together for community and camaraderie, and to explore the beautiful, and accessible parks and trails around the Portland metro area.



Image courtesy of Franklin Ouchida

The group was started five years ago by Franklin Ouchida as a way for people to get out, create community, and explore accessible places in Oregon. A different spot is picked each week, and the group often gathers for additional fun activities all over the Portland metro area, with all locations being accessible via TriMet.

This time the group met at the Orenco Woods Nature Trail. All are welcome, and many newcomers came out.

One of those newcomers, Beaverton resident Michelle Ocker, said that, while they generally got nervous and quiet around

strangers, they felt comfortable in this group and they were eager to connect with other power wheelchair users.



"I want to get out of the house more, now that my cancer is in remission. I just don't know how far I can push things with the battery in my wheelchair. I have lots of questions and I am excited to connect with others and find out what they know!"

Michelle continued, "It was liberating and comforting to be around other people, and everyone was so friendly!"

Ocker took TriMet Lift to the park, as did several other attendees. However, not all attendees were using wheelchairs.

Everyone is welcome. Wheelchair accessibility is important, and a priority of the group, but everyone of any ability is welcome. And Franklin works hard to accommodate everyone's needs. For example, the event at Orenco Woods was responding to requests to hold more activities here on the west side, and the event had a record turnout!

The Oregon Wheelchair Hiking Group meets each Monday, and can be found on Facebook or you can reach out to Franklin at info@sandnonprofit.org.

Disability Pride

by Michelle V.

I'm sitting in my car at a trailhead stuffing my face with food. My thoughts race between wondering if I'll be able to get an hour walk in today to if I'll manage to find a way to celebrate disability pride month. What's an appropriate and inclusive way to celebrate? Are there parades? Could I take an entire day and go kayaking? Do I have time? Maybe there's a local business hosting an event that I could support?

My eyes drift from my steering wheel to trees in front of me and my thoughts break from the productivity worry spiral I had fallen into. I admire the crooked, mossy branches of an old tree in front of me. I notice the diverse forms. Other trees and shrubs, molded, morphed and crookedly grown to reach sunlight.

I guess like the plants, disability doesn't have a single form and really the best way to celebrate disability pride might be to just exist.

My attention drifts over to a runner who is preparing their dog for a jaunt. I realize how tired I am.

My phone rings and a nurse from my surgeon's office informs me of lab results I've already looked at in my patient portal.

Michelle V. is a student at PCC, works as a Student Advocate, runs the ADHD affinity group, and is a contributor to the Access PCC Newsletter and Let's Talk Podcast.



<https://www.facebook.com/Sandnonprofit>



[Oregon Wheelchair Hiking on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/Sandnonprofit)

Access Granted: Empowering Students Through Technology

by Josh Espanto

Technology can make a huge difference in a student's success, especially for students with disabilities. As a student with a disability I know firsthand how important it is to have access to tools and resources that support learning. Technology helps remove barriers and gives students more opportunities to participate, learn, and achieve their goals.

PCC's Accessible Education and Disability Resources (AEDR) office works to make sure students have equal access to education. AEDR helps students connect with accommodations and technology that support their individual needs. These resources can help students who have physical disabilities, learning disabilities, vision or hearing impairments, chronic health conditions, and other challenges.

Some examples of helpful technology include speech-to-text software, screen readers, text-to-speech programs, captioning services, accessible classroom technology, and adaptive computer equipment. These tools allow students to complete assignments, participate in class discussions, take exams, and access course materials in ways that work best for them. Assistive technology helps students become more independent and confident in their education. Assistive technology and

accessible learning tools help reduce barriers and support equal access to education for all students.

Students can access these services by connecting with AEDR staff and discussing their accommodation needs. The staff work closely with students to identify tools and services that will support their success. Whether a student needs alternative formats for textbooks, note-taking support, adaptive technology, or testing accommodations, AEDR can help guide them through the process.

Technology is not just helpful for students with disabilities. Many accessibility tools benefit all students by providing different ways to learn and engage with course materials. Creating accessible learning environments helps everyone succeed and promotes a more inclusive campus community. Research shows that accessible technology supports personalized learning and helps students participate more fully in their education.

As a student advocate, I encourage students to learn about the resources available to them. Asking for accommodations is not about getting an advantage—it is about having equal access to education. Everyone deserves the opportunity to succeed, and technology can be a powerful tool in making that happen. If you think you may benefit from accommodations or assistive technology, contact [the AEDR office](#) to learn more about the support available to you.

- [PCC Accessible Technology](#)
- [Digital Navigator Program](#)
- [Equipment Loans](#)
- [PCC Information Technology](#)

Celebrating the Success of Strategic Nonviolence in the Disabled Community

by PJ Golden

The passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a landmark legal achievement, and to this day, the ADA serves as not only a global foundational blueprint for Disability Rights, but a blueprint for achieving social and political change. However, the passing of the ADA literally wouldn't have happened without decades of strategic nonviolent protests.

"The disability rights movement is one of the few movements that has stayed entirely nonviolent throughout its history."

One of the most successful campaigns of nonviolent protest in not just disability justice history, but in US history, was led by the disability community during the [504 Sit-In of 1977](#). A group of disabled activists, led by Judy Heumann, occupied the San Francisco federal building for 26 days. The purpose of the sit-in was to encourage the Department of Human and Welfare (HEW) to enforce regulations that were passed in section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. By 1977 these regulations were not implemented and persons with disabilities were still being discriminated against. The

sit-in is still the largest and longest, most successful peaceful occupation of a government building in U.S. History, however the history of strategic nonviolent protest within our community dates all the way back to the 1930s, and the fight was for employment for disabled people.

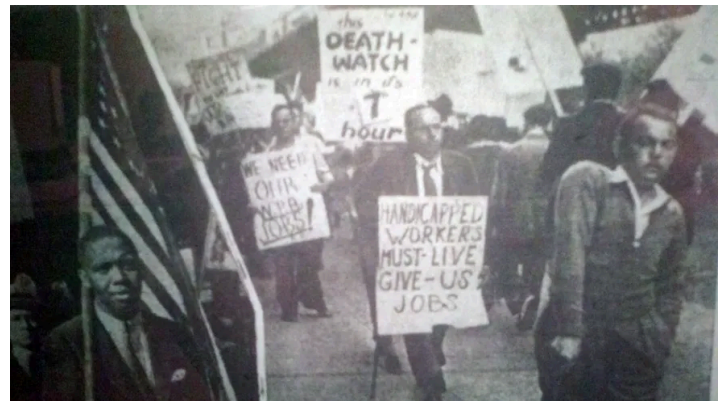


Image: Sit-in at the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s (origin unknown).

The First Sit-In

On May 29th, 1935, after being told they would need to wait a week for a meeting with the director of the Emergency Relief Bureau (ERB), Oswald W. Knauth, a small group of six Disabled people staged a sit-in. On day five Knauth met with the protesters but rejected most of their demands. On day nine, many of the protesters were arrested. But the event brought press, and the attention to the matter brought support, and over the next 6 months the movement grew into "[The League of the Physically Handicapped](#)."

The group picketed the Work Programs Administration (WPA), they got a commitment to make more jobs available for Disabled people, and by the end of the six months, all six original members were employed.

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March 6, 1988 "Walk of Shame" protest in Los Angeles. Photo Credit: City of Los Angeles

"Nonviolence isn't just not being violent. It is its own strategy. It's not something simple. You do need to learn about it, and its tactics. This isn't something that's necessarily been accessible to everyone."

In 2008 Political Scientist Erica Chenoweth examined all conflicts from 1900-2006 and found that campaigns of nonviolent civil resistance were twice as successful as violent campaigns, and published ["Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict."](#) Chenoweth, along with co-author Maria Stephan, researched why this counterintuitive phenomenon was taking place, and what characteristics of nonviolent resistance made movements for change successful, or not. The disability community has a long history of successful nonviolent protests, and the pursuit of Disability Justice has been a subject of study for academics across disciplines to this day.

Erica Chenoweth is a political scientist and professor at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. In 2008 Chenoweth published pivotal work indicating that nonviolent campaigns have been more successful than armed

campaigns in achieving their ultimate goal. While this seems counterintuitive, campaigns of nonviolent resistance were nearly twice as successful as violent counterparts.

"The most important thing to know, I think, about nonviolence is that it is a truly inclusive method of resistance."



Greyhound bus depot in LA, Bill Zuke, Bill Bolte, Yvonne Nau, Sylvia Drzeweicki, Susan Gross, Ed Tessier, Ryan Duncanwood protestors with protest signs gathered on the sidewalk and in front of a parked bus in the street. Photo Credit: City of Los Angeles

The success is attributed to several factors. Nonviolent movements have the potential to attract mass participation. Lack of violence allows for a broader range of participation as people feel safe to join the movement. The more people that join, the greater support it gains, allowing for increased civil disruption.

In ["Civil Resistance, What Everyone Needs to Know,"](#) Chenoweth says, "The most important thing to know, I think, about why nonviolence is that it's a truly inclusive method of resistance."

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According to Chenoweth, all people have a natural tendency to protest nonviolently, and

nonviolent movements have a tendency to attract disabled people.



A Disability Pride Parade in New York City, from disabilitypridenyc.org.

“The disability rights movement is one of the few movements that has stayed entirely nonviolent throughout its history,” McLeod writes in their thesis. McLeod is a leader in the Oregon disability community, a Portland State University Honors College Alumni, and their thesis, “[We’re Here to Stay: Nonviolence and the Disability Rights Movement](#),” earned them their Bachelor’s degree from PSU with a major in psychology and a minor in conflict resolution.

In their thesis McLeod highlights the success of strategic nonviolent protest within the Disability Rights movement. I had the fortune of working with Sky on [The Portland Peace Team](#), and they were good enough to sit down with me for an interview.

“Nonviolence isn’t just not being violent. It is its **own strategy**. It’s not something simple. You do need to learn about it, and its tactics. This isn’t something that’s necessarily been accessible to everyone,” McLeod offered.

Civil resistance is strategic and targeted, and protesting is only one strategy. Industry pioneer, Gene Sharp, actually came up with a list of [198 Methods of Nonviolent Action](#), and protesting is only one of them. Public

speeches, letters of opposition & support, banners, leaflets, marches, sit-ins and die-ins...these are all forms of protest, and when done strategically, with one building on the other, can see sweeping social change.

One thing McLeod stressed was that we often see big protests like [The Capitol Crawl](#) as the pivotal event that creates change, but it is actually more “discrete acts of non-violent resistance” that contribute momentum to the overall movement providing the crescendo that creates change. This serves to remind us what is possible when people put aside their differences to come together to further a common cause.

Special thanks to Sky McLeod for their contributions to this article.

[Want to learn more about Strategic Nonviolence Resistance?](#)

[Check out these great resources!](#)

- [Erica Chenoweth - Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know](#)
- [We’re Here to Stay: Nonviolence and the Disability Rights Movement - by Sky McLeod](#)
- [Curious about that 3.5% number...? Read about Bill Moyer’s Movement Action Plan.](#)
- [198 Methods of Nonviolent Action by Gene Sharp](#)
- [The success of nonviolent civil resistance: Erica Chenoweth](#)

PJ Golden is Editor of the Access PCC newsletter. She is a PCC alumni, a graduate of Portland State University’s Honors College, and holds her degree in Conflict Resolution.

Gaming Without Limits

How Accessible Technology Keeps Me in the Game

by Josh Espanto

Gaming has always been something I enjoy, but after becoming a quadriplegic, the way I play video games had to change. I could no longer pick up a regular controller and play the same way I used to. At first, I wondered how I would be able to continue doing something that brought me so much enjoyment. That is when accessible gaming technology became an important part of my life.

For me, accessible gaming is about much more than entertainment. Gaming gives me a sense of independence.

As a quadriplegic gamer, I use adaptive technology that allows me to control games differently. One of the most important pieces of equipment I use is a QuadStick. Instead of using my hands to control everything, the QuadStick allows me to use my mouth to interact with games. Learning how to use adaptive equipment takes time and practice, but once I became more comfortable with it, I was able to get back into gaming.

For me, accessible gaming is about much more than entertainment. Gaming gives me a sense of independence. When I am

playing, I can make my own decisions, develop strategies, compete, and challenge myself. I am not focused on what my body cannot do. I am focused on the game in front of me and figuring out how I am going to win.

I enjoy playing different types of games, including sports, action, and multiplayer games. Games like NBA 2K, Madden, Call of Duty, Fortnite, and other games allow me to compete and connect with other players. I might play differently from someone holding a traditional controller, but I am still a gamer. Gaming also gives me a way to connect with other people. Having a disability can sometimes create barriers to social activities, especially when transportation or physical accessibility becomes an issue.

When I am playing, I can make my own decisions, develop strategies, compete, and challenge myself. I am not focused on what my body cannot do.

Online gaming gives me another space where I can spend time with friends, meet other gamers, communicate, and be part of a community without worrying about whether a physical location is accessible. There are still challenges. Not every video game is designed with players with disabilities in mind. Some games have controls that are difficult to customize, menus that are hard to navigate, or actions that require buttons to be pressed very quickly.

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For someone using adaptive equipment, those small design choices can determine whether a game is enjoyable or even playable. That is why accessibility options are so important. Features such as customizable controls, difficulty settings, subtitles, button remapping, and other accessibility settings can open gaming to more people. I believe game developers should include people with disabilities when designing and testing their games.

Accessibility should not be something added at the end. It should be part of creating the game from the beginning.

My experience as a quadriplegic gamer has also motivated me to advocate for accessible gaming. I want other people with disabilities to know that gaming can still be possible, even if they cannot use a traditional controller. Sometimes it just takes finding the right technology and discovering a different way to play.

I also hope people without disabilities understand why accessible gaming matters. Adaptive equipment does not play the game for me. I still have to learn the game, practice, make decisions, and compete. The technology simply gives me access to the same experience that other gamers already have.

Being a quadriplegic changed the way I play, but it did not take away my love for gaming. If anything, it has given gaming a deeper meaning in my life. Every time I turn on my system and start playing, I am reminded of what accessible technology can make possible.

I may play differently, but I am still competing, still connecting, and most importantly—still gaming.



**Coming this Fall - Being Heumann:
The Movie!**

Go Bananas

by Xenia Klistoff

A few months ago, I met a group of several dozen people in recovery from addictions and mental health, with the individuals coming from such diverse and varied walks of life. Some are parents of young children, some were other queer youths like myself, some had been incarcerated or are currently experiencing houselessness.

“We traded stickers, paper cranes, phone numbers, and personal stories”

We traded stickers, paper cranes, phone numbers, and personal stories. I developed a friendship with another young woman who sat next to me in the front row of our classroom, and we started calling each other “Birthday Twin” upon discovering that we shared the same birthday, though she is one year my elder.

My peers shared with each other and with the group small tidbits about our families, our backgrounds, and our personal experiences. Many of us had gone through both hardships and triumphs within institutional systems which had often done us harm even while intending to help us.

In this group I felt a sense of safety, fellowship, and community such that I felt accepted and known as my messiest and most-genuine self. We were given ample opportunity to share tender parts of ourselves: our traumas and our marginalizations. I was met overwhelmingly with responses which reflected that while not alone, I am a unique and precious creation. That the hardships I have experienced are real and they matter. That

leveraging my personal experiences of struggle can be a purposeful way to not only advance in my own recovery, but to help others too.

“...the hardships I have experienced are real and they matter. That leveraging my personal experiences of struggle can be a purposeful way to not only advance in my own recovery, but to help others too.”

For a final presentation I delivered a short speech on the concept of Disability Justice and how I might apply concepts of Love, Radical Acceptance, and Liberation I’ve learned about through a Disability lens in my future. I recently met up with a small group from the class over lunch at a local food cart pod, and we intend to make it a recurring meeting.

In my participation in the Peer Wellness Specialist training, I learned from and taught this group nothing that we didn’t already intuitively know: that the people you meet when in your lowest and darkest places are often those who will help uplift you beyond what you ever thought imaginable. That one of your most resilient faith communities you had ever experienced could come in the form of a fleeting band who you would meet in the training classroom of a mental health urgent walk-in clinic.

Xenia Klistoff is a Student Advocate with the Disability Cultural Alliance

Share Your Talent & Creativity!

All Creative Art Forms are Welcome!

Please email precious.golden@pcc.edu to be featured!

Student Spotlight: Candidate for City Council, T.J. Anderson



Photo: courtesy of T.J. Anderson

by Michelle V.

PCC alumnus and former AEDR Student Advocate, T.J. Anderson is making a run for this fall's City Council election for District 4.

T.J. attends Portland State University, is double majoring in business administration and business economics, and their time in AEDR advocating for fellow students' accessibility and disability needs has inspired them to get involved in local government.

T.J. got their start in PCC's student government as ASPCC's Finance Chair and as part of the executive branch as pro

tempore. They said they are very blunt and the opportunity gave them the chance to hone speaking skills, communicate in front of people, and get comfortable putting themselves out there. Additionally, PCC helped them become more social.

Disabled at 24, T.J. says AEDR helped them process that more and understand to slow things down and take a moment to process life. Being in AEDR allowed them to understand other's needs and thought processes behind people and why one may need help to better aid in college, career or other endeavors.

"PCC gave me the capability to be comfortable in my own skin. All the class work and new exposure took someone who was not socially apt and helped them develop more social skills."

Through Voc Rehab, after experiencing over 6 months of homelessness, T.J. began their journey at PCC, and it was here where T.J. was inspired to get into student government. They said volunteering on councils for feedback such as the TriMet Committee for Accessible Transportation, and serving as TriMet Lift subcommittee cochair prepared them for this moment. T.J. wanted to know why resources being talked about were ineffective and how the city handled those budgets.

T.J. hopes to continue advocating for those who are struggling and advocating for accessibility and disability in city council.

Congratulations on all your accomplishments T.J & best of luck to you in the upcoming election! [You can read more about T.J. on their website.](#)

Turning Challenges into Opportunities: Remote & Online Classes at PCC

by Josh Espanto

When people think about college, they often picture students walking across campus, sitting in classrooms, and meeting friends between classes. My college experience looks different. As a quadriplegic student at Portland Community College (PCC), I take my classes remotely from home. While my journey is different, it has shown me that success isn't determined by where you learn—it's determined by your determination and the support around you.

In February 2021, my life changed after a spinal cord injury left me quadriplegic. I had to learn how to adapt to a completely new way of living. Returning to school was a big step, and taking online classes allowed me to continue my education while managing my health and daily care needs. Although I don't attend classes in person, I still work hard to participate in discussions, complete assignments, and stay connected with my instructors and classmates.

Being an online student has both advantages and challenges. It gives me the flexibility to attend class from a safe and accessible environment, but it also requires a lot of planning. I depend on technology, reliable internet, and accessible learning tools to complete my coursework. There are days when my disability makes things more

difficult, but I remind myself why I started. Every assignment I finish and every class I complete brings me one step closer to my goals.

One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness. PCC's Disability Resources and my instructors have helped make my education more accessible. I have also learned the importance of speaking up for myself and communicating what I need to be successful. Those experiences have helped me grow not only as a student but also as a leader.

“One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.”

As a Student Disability Leader, I want others to know that students with disabilities belong in higher education. We have dreams, talents, and goals just like everyone else. Accessibility and accommodations don't give us an advantage—they give us an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.

My goal is to continue advocating for inclusion and accessibility at PCC so that future students with disabilities feel welcomed and supported from their very first day. I hope my story encourages others to never give up on their education, no matter what obstacles they face. Every journey is different, but every student deserves the chance to succeed.

Thank you to everyone at PCC who continues to support students with disabilities. Together, we can build a college community where everyone feels respected, included, and empowered to achieve their goals.

Deaf Community Spotlight: ASL Camping Trip

by Michelle V.

AEDR advocate Naia Holte partnered with Adventures Without Limits (AWL) to host an upcoming deaf campout this October. The camp is part of AWL's CampAbility program, making camping more accessible to persons with disabilities. AWL is an outdoor team helping to create fun and accessible adventures and their mission is *"to provide access to outdoor adventure for all people, regardless of their ability level, socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity or age."*

Everyone (18+) is welcome to join this event regardless of ASL fluency!

The main details:

Date: October 9–11th

Arrival Time: 4:30pm check in.

Checkout time: 12pm.

Location: Milo McIver State Park in Estacada, Oregon

ADA accessibility notes: toilets in camp not accessible. Bring batteries and chargers for any electronic assistive devices since there are no outlets in the camp ground.

Activities might be disc golf, kayaking, ASL campfire stories, stargazing, games and more!

Tickets are offered on a sliding scale, with an estimated cost of \$175 for the entire

weekend. AWL will provide food and kayak rentals. Participants are encouraged to bring their own food and snacks. If participants need camping supplies, such as a tent or other equipment, they can fill out a request form, and AWL may be able to provide those items as well.

If you face transportation barriers please email Jennifer at jennifer@awlouddoors.org.

To find out more about the event and to sign up visit:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/adventureswithoutlimits/2393401>



The poster features a circular logo at the top with the text "DELTA ALPHA PI HONOR SOCIETY" and a stylized "ΔΠ" in the center. Below the logo, the text "Join the Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society!" is written in a large, bold, blue font. Underneath, it says "Become part of an organization that recognizes high-achieving college students with disabilities!". At the bottom, there are two columns of text, each preceded by an orange vertical bar. The left column lists "Build lifelong friendships." and "Boost your academic performance." The right column lists "Participate in philanthropic activities." and "Enhance your leadership skills." At the very bottom, a dark blue banner contains the text "Contact your advisor for more..."

Join the Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society!

Become part of an organization that recognizes high-achieving college students with disabilities!

- Build lifelong friendships.
- Boost your academic performance.
- Participate in philanthropic activities.
- Enhance your leadership skills.

Contact your advisor for more...