Becca Howell:
Welcome to The Heumann Perspective with internationally recognized, badass disability activist, Judy Heumann.

New Speaker:
Dragon by Lachi, Yontero and Juarren fades back in as the beat drops. Upbeat EDM music

Becca Howell:
Today, Judy is conversation with Julia Bascom, the Executive Director of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, also known as ASAN, whose mission is to empower autistic people across the world to take control of their own lives and the future of their common community and seek to organize the autistic community to ensure their voices are heard in the national conversation about autistic people. The Heumann Perspective is produced by me, Becca Howell, and Judy Heumann. Be sure to rate, review and subscribe to The Heumann Perspective. So let's roll up, lay down, dance around, get some snacks ready, whatever makes you feel best, and let's meet our guest today.

New Speaker:
Dragon by Lachi, Yontero and Juarren fades back in as the beat drops. Upbeat EDM music

Judy Heumann:
Welcome back to The Heumann Perspective. And today our guest is Julia Bascom. Julia Bascom is the CEO of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, otherwise known as ASAN. Welcome Julia.

Julia Bascom:
Hello!

Judy Heumann:
So Julia is someone that I have admired for many years. She has an amazing leadership quality and a personality that really allows her, in my view, to thrive in Washington, DC and nationally, and I'm sure growingly around the world. Julia, how would you describe yourself to people?

Julia Bascom:
I would describe myself as someone who does not enjoy being in DC, so I think it's very funny that you think I'm suited for it. I would describe myself as an autistic women who grew up not planning to go into politics or advocacy or anything like that, and then ended up doing that anyway. In my heart of hearts, I'm a stage manager. I like setting things up and having things go correctly, but not being the person in the spotlight.

Julia Bascom:
I don't always get to do that anymore, but that's, I think, still a lot of how I approach my work and just my life in general. And I like dinosaurs.

Judy Heumann:
Dinosaurs.

Julia Bascom:
I just know we're going to get to that.

Judy Heumann:
I actually know that Julia likes dinosaurs, and we're going to have a picture of the dinosaur that we gave Julia for her birthday. I found this amazing dinosaur in this really lovely gift shop, her dinosaur, and her cat really got on with it. Let ask you a question about the stage managing. Have you ever actually been in any performances? Do you act, do you sing, tell us a little bit about that part of you?

Julia Bascom:
Yeah. I stage managed a lot in high school and a little bit after that. I haven't had time to really do it since I came to DC, but I really enjoyed it. I got to assistant stage manager for a couple of professional program, like shows with real actors that a theater in my town did. They had a really cool program at the high school. I acted a little bit. Part of my autism is I have a hard time making my body do all the right subtle things. So that was a little bit challenging for me, but I do like to sing. I've had a lot of vocal training. Again that's not something I really have done in DC, but theater was a big part of my life prior to that.

Judy Heumann:
What kind of music do you like to sing?

Julia Bascom:
Really boring stuff, like show tunes in classical music and folk music, that kind of thing.

Judy Heumann:
Me too. I studied voice for about 10 years and that's the music that I really love.

Julia Bascom:
Great!

Judy Heumann:
It is. So Julia, when were you first identified as having autism?

Julia Bascom:
Yeah. By the time I was five, my family and my teachers knew that something was going on and I did my first evaluation when I was five and they were like, "Okay, this person's clearly autistic." She's walking on her toes. She's clapping her hands. She's reciting all these movies, autism. And then another doctor was like, "Well, but she's a girl. So she can't be autistic." And then they

realized that I had a cortical vision impairment and they're like, okay, that explains it. It didn't really explain it. S they tossed around autism again when I was 12 and then when I was 16, it finally stuck. I had figured out between 12 and 16, like when you're old enough to hear the words that doctors are using and look them up, I had figured out that I was autistic before then. But that's when it stuck.

Judy Heumann:
Did you know other people who had autism?

Julia Bascom:
Yes. I knew a lot of people who are autistic, who weren't identified yet. There's a lot of autism in my family, so my brother is also autistic, my uncle, just lots and lots of people, which was nice because it meant that there were some things that growing up, another family might've been stigmatized, but in my family, they were just normal. And no one knew that they should be scared of someone being able to recite a whole movie after seeing it once or anything like that. They were just like, "Oh yes, that's what people do." No one cared about eye contact, that was nice. And then I did know people with various disabilities, including other autistic people at various points growing up.

Judy Heumann:
Were you bullied when you were growing up?

Julia Bascom:
Yeah, yeah. I think all autistic people are, unfortunately.

Judy Heumann:
Is that something that you worked on when you were younger? Is it something that you work on within ASAN?

Julia Bascom:
It's not something that I really did advocacy around when I was younger. I was trying to survive. At ASAN, we do try to make sure that people A, have accurate information about autism. I think that people often don't make the connection that the things that they are bullying someone for are disability traits. And sometimes they do. There's plenty of bullying that happens because you know the person has a disability. But when we talk about weird horse girls or people who just can't quite seem to get with the program and they're socially awkward, and so it's okay to ostracize them by this logic, usually talking about autistic people. So we try to share more information so that people can know that. And then we also try to make sure that people understand that bullying is violence, it is harassment. In an education setting, it can be a violation of a student's civil right. We did a little bit of work with the Department of Education on that, under the Obama administration and we want to make sure people know that they have a right to live in the world without harassment.

Judy Heumann:
So to me, it feels like we're talking about a couple of groups, those individuals who have autism and the general society, the healthcare community, the teaching community. So if we could divide those and right now, talk a little bit more about what role do you and other adults with autism feel is helpful to be working with younger people who may or may not have yet been identified, and their families.

Julia Bascom:
Yeah. I think it's really important for younger autistic people and families to know autistic adults right now, the way we talk about autism and society is very, very focused on kids, which has a few consequences. But I think one of the biggest is that it's really hard for autistic people to picture what our life can be like. And often what we hear is very scary or very limiting or just nothing. And so it's hard to just imagine. And I think, especially if you are someone who needs a lot of support in your day-to-day life, it's really, really important to see people like you living good lives, playing all kinds of different social roles, being a parent, having a job, being a member of your community so that you know that that's possible. And that's not unique to autism. I think that's common for a lot of different disabilities.

New Speaker:
For families, again, when a parent is told that their child is autistic, that's usually coming in a context where they've only really heard about autism as a scary thing and as a thing that this external force that happens to someone, right? And so they only have those scary ideas about autism and disability, and that can really change and really challenge their relationship with their kid and their kid's relationship with them and the whole family dynamic. And it's really important for parents to know that their kid can have a really good life and their kid can grow up to be an adult who is happy and who has all these different relationships, has a valued place in their community and who is in charge of their lives. And right now, because we haven't done a good job of supporting autistic people and because the way the media talks about autism is often not very helpful. They're not a ton of examples that families can look to off the top of their head. So getting to know autistic adults in person can be a really, really important remedy to that. And similarly, autistic adults can share advice to autistic kids and their families on how to get by. I think a lot of self-advocacy is motivated by a very strong desire on the part of autistic adults to make sure that autistic kids today aren't going through what we went through yesterday.

Judy Heumann:
When we look at the non-autistic community, which can include disabled individuals also, I think that's very important to say that while many of us are working in developing a cross disability movement, one of the aspects that I think is very important is that our separation from each other has also resulted in a limited amount of communication and misinformation. And again, one of the reasons I think ASAN is such an important organization and people who have autism who are willing to speak up about their autism. And I shouldn't say speak up, I should say communicate, since not all people, not just people with autism, don't necessarily vocally communicate. What do you see as some of the misconceptions and dangerous myths and

practices exist that are harmful? And what are some of the areas that ASAN is working on to address that harm?

Julia Bascom:
Yeah. So I think again, people think of autism as a strange, bad and scary thing that happens to someone, usually a kid, this external force, and maybe you can defeat it. Maybe there's a normal person hidden inside underneath the autism and if you just do the right thing, you can access it, which is a really, really harmful way to view us, for a variety of reasons. One is which autistic people are born autistic. Autism is just a different way of processing the world. I think it's also very closely tied up in stigma around intellectual disability in particular and cognitive disability, which is just very, very stigmatized. Most autistic people don't have intellectual disabilities. Some of us do, but that prejudice is very much entwined with how people think about us. And we need to be really, really clear that everyone is a person, really regardless of what their IQ is, or what their label is.

New Speaker:
I think that people think of autism also as something that makes you not quite human, and that means that you can't really connect with people. And people definitely think that autistic people don't have minds of our own, that we don't know that we're autistic and we don't have an opinion about our disability or about our experience. And so they're very shocked when autistic people speak up or share our opinions about our experiences. We're really just seen as this sort of alien force that present a problem for other people to solve, as opposed to human beings. Right? So what I would prefer is for non-autistic people to take a deep breath and calm down and to understand that autism is just one of a number of different developmental disabilities. It's another way of perceiving the world. Autistic people are normal, autism is common. We are friends and family members and parents and coworkers and community members. We perceive the world and think, and learn and socialize, move and communicate differently than non-autistic people. But we do all of those things. The way that us connecting with other people might look different than two neurotypicals connecting. But we do connect with other people. Not all of us communicate through speech and even someone like me who can use speech to do this interview, usually can't use speech all the time or to say everything we want. But there are other ways to communicate and everyone deserves support to access those other ways to communicate. Everyone learns and thinks differently, but also everyone does learn and everyone does think, and they deserve an education and they deserve to be surrounded by people who think that they have valuable thoughts in their head.

New Speaker:
I want people to know that with that right support, autistic people can live really good, self-determined lives and also just really boring ordinary lives that look a lot like everybody else. Some of those details might be different, but the broad strokes should be the same. I think that when we think about autism as this really scary alien thing, or when we allow stigma about cognitive disability to play a big role, it ends up justifying a lot of mistreatment. It's used to justify segregation. It's used to justify institutionalization. It's used to justify therapies like applied

behavioral analysis that focus on training autistic children to act neurotypical and really hide their disability, as opposed to actually supporting those kids to develop skills that matter to them, which we have large ethical problems with as a practice. It can lead to a lot of restraint and seclusion. It can lead to guardianship. It leads to all sorts of different abusive practices. Thinking of autistic people as people is not a cure for those practices, because certainly we can mistreat disabled people horribly in all kinds of different ways. But it is sort of the foundational first step.

Judy Heumann:
What does the word neurotypical mean?

Julia Bascom:
So neurotypical is just short for neurologically typical. It means a person whose brain functions the way the majority of the world's brain functions. So not just non-autistic people, but also people without ADHD or dyslexia or an intellectual disability. Technically, you can be non-autistic, but not neurotypical. I have a friend who is bipolar, for example. So she's not autistic, but she's not neurotypical. But people sometimes mix them up.

Judy Heumann:
So in the 1990s, facilitated communication was becoming a way that some people were beginning to communicate. And actually, when I worked at the World Institute on Disability in California, we had a grant from Neider and Doug Biklen, who at that time was with Syracuse University, had applied for a grant. We had awarded him this grant to go to Australia to learn about facilitated communication. And in the 1990s, Bob Williams and I, Bob is a friend of ours and has cerebral palsy and uses an augmentative communication device, and we had a meeting with about four or five people who use augmentative communication. That basically is people who are communicating and using different forms of technology. And one of the controversies that was going on was whether or not the autistic people themselves were typing their communication or whether there were other people around them that were helping them.

Judy Heumann:
And it was a wonderful meeting for me. It was the first time that I ever met four or five people who were using augmentative communication. And for me, it was a very empowering event to really be in a room where people were expressing their views in funny, in hostile ways, arguing with each other on a whole series of issues. And then later I had been at a meeting again with Doug at Syracuse, where there are many individuals with disabilities who were studying. And there were a number of people there who were using facilitated communication, who were getting their doctorates and post-docs. And I would like you to just to talk a little bit about facilitated communication as it pertains to people's biases of how people communicate in different ways.

Julia Bascom:
Yeah. So there are a lot of different ways that people could communicate without speaking, alternative and augmentative communication. And one way is to type or spell or point to a large

board or whatever. Sometimes with physical support from someone else, sometimes not.

Judy Heumann:
Yep.

Julia Bascom:
One of the things that's really frustrating to me is that there are actually a lot of different methods of AAC that require a communication partner, like PODD, like partner assisted scanning, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And you always need to be careful when there's a communication partner, because you want to make sure that the person is expressing their own thoughts. But for some reason, people who are presumed to have an intellectual disability, typing thoughts and expressing opinions about how they've been treated gets treated very differently than other forms of AAC, where there's a communication partner. One of the things I know from the folks in Australia is one of the first things you start with is making sure that the person has an independent way to signal yes or no. That's not the same as being able to express really complex thoughts. But again, you have those skills, that's a really important part of the process.

Julia Bascom:
I think that the conversation about supportive communication, there are so many different methods at this point, right? It's really about people's biases around non-speaking people and people with intellectual disabilities and people who are presumed to have intellectual disabilities. I know that a lot of disability service and special education professionals get into those jobs because they want to do the right thing and they want to help people and they want to be a good person.

Julia Bascom:
And when it turns out that they were really dangerously mistaken about someone and they treated that person very badly because of their assumptions. And they learned this because the person now has an effective way to communicate. They're kind of in a bind, right? They can either process that information and change what they're doing, or they can refuse to accept it. And I think, unfortunately, we see some people really refuse to accept that and really attack non-speaking people who use these methods in really, really vicious ways. It's sort of at the point where if I know anyone who communicates through pointing or typing or spelling, even if they communicate independently, I know that they're going to be attacked and people are going to try to say their words aren't their own.

Julia Bascom:
And A, it's really ableist. And it's really upsetting. Like, yes, absolutely, when there's a communication partner, we need to be careful. But also, there are lots of ways that speaking people can be influenced by other people.

Judy Heumann:

Exactly.

Julia Bascom:
I'm thinking about a friend I have, who types independently, but needs his support person to sit next to him, to help him with regulation. Right? And in a lot of high stress meetings, I also need my support person to sit next to me and no one is ever like, "Okay, Julia is not really expressing that opinion," because I'm using my mouth to express it. That's a huge double standard. And as we work to have more and more non-speaking people access the opportunities they're entitled to, get an effective method of communication, whatever that might be, go to school, go to college to do policy work. We see this more and more and more, and it's such a double standard. I think it's a really complicated issue. We could talk about access to effective communication for like five hours and not even scratch the surface.

Judy Heumann:
Right.

Julia Bascom:
And I understand why it's complicated, but that double standard is just absolutely ridiculous.

Judy Heumann:
And harm felt.

Julia Bascom:
Yeah. It harms people, to think about having to go through your life with people constantly demanding that you do difficult and humiliating things to prove that you're really a person. And to refuse, first of all, to insist that you pass that test at some point in your life, and then to refuse to believe that you've passed it, and to think that they get to just make you do that whenever you want, which is how a lot of typers are treated right now. It is just so unfair and unacceptable.

Judy Heumann:
My late mother, there was an incident in the early nineties, as I was saying, when facilitated communication was emerging, of this young student who had been in a segregated program and then had started using FC and had become quite integrated in school where he was very highly regarded, on and on. Then, when they found out that it wasn't always his voice that was being used, people completely pulled him back from everything that he had been doing and put him back in a segregated environment.

Judy Heumann:
And I remember my late mother saying, "Why?" It's like he was doing so well in this fully integrated program because people viewed him differently. And I think that's really-

Julia Bascom:
Right, right.

Judy Heumann:
So my point in all of this is how looking at different behaviors, flapping hands and jumping, I remember going into the meeting at Syracuse with Doug, with this table of graduate students who were exhibiting different behaviors like this and realizing how important it was for me to recognize the brilliance of these in the fields they were studying. And I was going around and talking with them and laughing because to see the biases that we have grown up with. Sorry, go ahead.

Julia Bascom:
If I can just really quickly, I also think it's really important. I think that people have that really instinctive response whenever someone's disability is visible, right? And especially what people are clapping and moving around in ways that sort of code as autistic or as intellectually disabled. And I think that even when the person isn't a grad student and doesn't turn out to actually have really complex academic thoughts, people should still chill out. You're going to meet really great people if you can see past that, but it's such a barrier.

Judy Heumann:
Yeah. And certainly I'm not implying that all autistic people are-

Julia Bascom:
No, I know. I just always feel obligated to say that because people can all go, "Okay, well, if you're a secret genius, then I'll treat you like a person. And we're always like, "No, go further, go all the way."

Judy Heumann:
I think that's a very important point, really. So many people with disabilities that are not as typical as non-disabled people, autistic people, people with intellectual disabilities who are winding up in separate classes and being demeaned all the time. What I think has been beneficial about some of the laws that we have in the US is as advocates and as families are really pushing towards kids and adults being fully included. I think it is breaking down myth. Let's talk a little bit more about ASAN. So when did you join ASAN?

Julia Bascom:
I started over the ASAN in, let's say 2011. For our first few years, we didn't have a bank account or an office, anything like that. So it's kind of fuzzy. But by 2011, I was officially working on projects for ASAN.

Judy Heumann:
Why is ASAN important to you and why is ASAN important to society?

Julia Bascom:
To me, ASAN is an outgrowth of what I found when I was a teenager and I knew I was autistic

and I was scared about what that meant. And so I was googling autism and I got really lucky because I was really bad at Googling. And I found writings by autistic adults telling me that they existed, telling me that I was going to be okay, telling me that some of what I had heard was wrong and just really letting me know I was going to be okay. And I think in a very fundamental way, ASAN continues and extends that, and lets people know that we exist, that autistic people exist, that we turn into adults, that we have opinions about autism and about our disability and we have a voice. However that voice is expressed, that needs to be heard.

Julia Bascom:
The work ASAN does is all about making sure that whenever autism is being talked about or whenever disability is being talked about, whether that's by policy makers or the media or researchers, that autistic people are at that table, that we're part of the conversation, that we're leading the conversation. That was a very new and controversial idea in the autism world 10 years ago. I would say there's still a lot of people who aren't super happy about it now, but they have come to expect that self advocates will show up, and that we will share our opinions about what they're doing. And I think that's the first step towards creating a world where self advocates really have a meaningful say in what happens to our community.

Judy Heumann:
So how do you feel ASAN has made a difference in the Congress?

Julia Bascom:
This is always difficult because I feel like so much progress is incremental. I think again, you can see this really well with the law, Autism CARES, which authorizes autism research is done in the United States. So while it was first authorized in the mid 2000, it was called the Combating Autism Act, and it was focused entirely on preventing autism from happening and finding a cure for autism. And it was very much focused on this idea of an autism epidemic, some really scary thing that was happening to our children that we had to stop. Autistic people were not involved in any way in the creation of this law. And over the next couple of reauthorizations, we pitched a fit and we fought our way into a lot of those rooms. And as a result, when the law was authorized in 2014, the name was changed from the Combating Autism Act to Autism CARES. CARES is an acronym that stands for something that I don't remember, but it's better than combating. And in a lot of ways, that was a symbolic change, but it was an important symbol. And it indicated that the conversations that our country had been having, wasn't acceptable, and needed to change. We got a couple of other small changes as part of that reauthorization. So there's a committee that sits within NIH that looks at all the different autism research spending in the United States and makes recommendations. That committee is called the IACC. And in 2014, we were able to secure the idea that one seat on this committee should go to an autistic person. Over two dozen seats, but we got one of them. And then we kept increasing that number. In 2019, we got another seat and we got some acknowledgement in the law that autistic people grow up into adults and that things like our healthcare and our quality of life are important research issues, although we still see research spending very, very heavily focused on prevention and quote unquote treatments or cures, which we don't think are ethical uses of

that money. The announcement of who's going to be on this committee are still coming out. It's been really delayed by COVID. But I know, from talking to folks, that we actually have more autistic representatives than is required by law, which is really, really exciting. And we have some really strong folks. We have autistic people from a lot of different backgrounds. We have an autistic person with an intellectual disability. We have an autistic person who's non-speaking. So I'm really hopeful that we'll continue to advance this idea that autistic people get a say in what happens to us and in conversations about our community, and that we can keep building on that to eventually have a research agenda that really reflects what our community cares about, which are things like, what are effective services? What does autism look like across the lifespan? And not, "Oh my God, how can we prevent autism from happening?" We have a long way to go, but I think we have some toe holds in place that we didn't have before. And I feel like that's the story of a lot of different laws.

Judy Heumann:
Yeah. And I think it's the story across disability, where disabled people have not been included in peer reviews for awarding money from the government. And I worked a lot on that when I was in the Clinton administration, requiring that there be at least one disabled person on every panel, which was more like four to five people, but sometimes we had more than that. So I think that's really critical. How has COVID impacted the autistic community? And let me also say that Julia had her vaccine, I've had my two vaccine shots. She got Johnson & Johnson. Is that right, you got Johnson & Johnson?

Julia Bascom:
Yes.

Judy Heumann:
Only one shot. What impact has COVID had within the autistic community?

Julia Bascom:
I think that autistic people have been affected similarly to disabled people and people with high risk conditions, sort of broadly. We've seen how dangerous institutions in congregate settings are. People have really struggled with social isolation. Kids with disabilities who need one-on-one support have really struggled to access education because who don't need that support have also really struggled to access education. I think a lot of autistic people have also had this more unique experience where some of the requirements like masking are very, very difficult for us from a sensory perspective. And many of us can do it, but it can be really painful and really exhausting and really limit what activities we can do. And then there are some autistic people who can't tolerate it and they've had to become very isolated in order to stay safe during the pandemic.

Julia Bascom:
I really want to stress, I feel like the impact of COVID on the autistic community has been pretty broadly similar to the disability community overall. But one thing that's been really frustrating for

me has been seeing all of this panic about anti-vaxxers in the context of the pandemic. And I don't mean people who come from communities, especially communities of color, where there's really solid historical reasons to not entirely trust the government. I mean anti-vaxxer, anti-vaxxers.

Judy Heumann:
Right.

Julia Bascom:
Because the autistic community has been really struggling with this for a really long time and it wasn't taken as seriously as a public health issue when it was just impacting autistic people or just impacting disabled people. And when it was about something where people are like, "Well, this is wrong, the scientists who support it." But autism is scary. So you got to give them credit. I feel like if our society more generally had been more concerned earlier on about anti-vaxxers and had really listened to autistic people about why this is such a problem, we wouldn't be in such a tough situation now. So I got my shot. Everyone should get their shot, if they can safely get it. The sooner everyone gets their shot, the sooner that people who can't mask are safe, the sooner that home and community based services that have been really challenged in some places can hopefully regain a little bit of equilibrium, the sooner kids can go back to school, et cetera.

Judy Heumann:
So what brings you joy in your life?

Julia Bascom:
Well, there are dinosaurs. I don't know. I always have to give this disclaimer. I don't actually know anything about dinosaurs, I only know two dinosaur names. I just think they're really cool.

Judy Heumann:
And you like soft ones, right?

Julia Bascom:
I like really soft stuffed animals. So getting a dinosaur that is also a soft stuffed animal is really, really peak. I think that a lot of autistic people have really intense interests or enjoy really specific things. And I think that when the things that we enjoy are more associated with children, like dinosaurs or like stuffed animals, people can feel a lot of shame around that and that can be really stigmatized. So I try to be really open about it because as an adult, actually, it doesn't matter what I like. I'm in charge of my life. I can decide if it's school or not. And I think that that's a good thing. And I also enjoy when people send me pictures of dinosaurs because they've heard me talking about it so much.

Judy Heumann:
You can send her pictures to ASAN.

Julia Bascom:
So we have, at ASAN, our membership tiers are all themed around different special interests. And we're going to be focusing on the dinosaur tier this year, and I'm very excited for it.

Judy Heumann:
So in another confession, I love stuffed animals. And in my bedroom, I have all these stuffed animals, Beanie Babies and others. And then I have this huge bag of stuffed animals in the closet, that when my husband's on vacation, I've put a lot of them on the bed because he can't stand them.

Julia Bascom:
Yeah, yeah.

Judy Heumann:
Can you please tell me what "Yell and Cake" is? I heard about yelling cake and I completely didn't understand what it was. Can you explain to our audience what yelling cake is and why it's important to you?

Julia Bascom:
"Yell and Cake" is a very important tradition. This tradition began because I have a hard time going to bars or to other spaces where people would go, like at the end of the day after work to get a drink and to complain about their jobs or to vent with their friends and so on and so forth. That's not really accessible to me for a lot of different sensory and social reasons. But there are different stores in DC that specifically sell cakes or cupcakes or cheesecake, and several of them have seating.

Julia Bascom:
And so I started going with one friend and we would get cake and we would yell about our jobs, and it became yelling cake. And it's now a thing I do with a couple of different people. And I just really like how A, it's a funny name, B, it's a really important ritual. And C, I think sometimes when parents hear that kid is going to have a disability, they think about all the things that their kid won't be able to do. And they don't realize that they're also things that their kid is going to invent or adapt to make work for them. And they're going to be really fun things. And I think yelling cake is a good example of that.

Judy Heumann:
So do you literally get up and yell?

Julia Bascom:
I think we've gotten a little bit too loud sometimes, but I don't like loud noises. So it's usually more just venting.

Judy Heumann:
And what's the place you do it here in DC, because you can create your own place, any place in the country. Right?

Julia Bascom:
Right. I will say during COVID what's often happened is that I'll pick up cake and then I'll go to a destination I've selected with this person where we can be outside or something and we can have our cake. And I think we should continue that forward because we found some really nice spots.

Judy Heumann:
Well Julia, I really want to thank you for joining us today. And as always, I learned so much from talking with you and I want to really thank you for your leadership. There's so much more work that ASAN is doing. I really would encourage you to go to their website. They are so innovative and creative and plain language, easy language, is another area where I think you've made some amazing contributions, taking complicated legislation that most people in our country and other countries will not understand, and really breaking it down. Theoretically, it was for disabled people with autism, but at the end, is for anybody in the United States who's not a lawyer or a specialist in healthcare. So thank you for one of those contributions. And they have a wonderful program where they bring college students together to share their stories with each other and to learn more about how government functions. And so Julia, thank you and your great staff and your board for the ongoing leadership. And I really look forward to continuing to work with you.

Julia Bascom:
Absolutely. Me too. Thank you.

Judy Heumann:
Thank you.

Becca Howell:
You've been tuning in to The Heumann Perspective, with Judy Heumann. This week, our guest was Julia Bascom. You can find links to the Autistic Self Advocacy Network in the episode description below and on our website. Be sure to follow Julia on Twitter, @JustStimming. The intro music for The Heumann Perspective is Dragon, which is produced and performed by Lachi, Yonetro, and Juarren. And the outro music is I Wait, by Galen Li. Please be sure to rate, review and subscribe to The Heumann Perspective and follow Judy on Twitter, @judithheumann, and on Instagram and Facebook, @TheHeumannPerspective.