

AT Awareness Day Panel Transcript

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Dominique's Presentation Speech

Text Description:

Hello, everyone! I'm Dominique Sessa.

I have curly brown hair, have a sash on that says Ms. Maryland Wheelchair 2024. I'm also wearing a tiara which is pretty great and I'm also a power wheelchair user.

So as you can see in my presentation— and I'm also going to visually describe it as well.

It says: What exactly is AT? It's okay if you don't know!

Assistive Technology is any item whether it's a piece of equipment or software that helps people with disabilities to be independent, thrive and function

And I included an illustration of a diverse group of people with various disabilities and their AT. There's an individual using an iPad for community. There's an individual with a service dog and a wheelchair user.

And my next slide says:

Disability is not one size fits all. And neither is AT.

Assistive technology is an umbrella term

The same way that disability is a broad term, so is AT! We can't forget that disability is a broad term, too.

A person with a disability can have a physical, visual, or learning disability as quick examples.

Then I included on this caption: someone next to an adaptive vehicle, someone using tablets, and another person with hearing aids.

So, Maryland TAP provides statewide access to assistive technology through equipment demonstrations, loans, reuse, financing, and training.

Maryland Assistive Technology Program that we often is say MD TAP serves Marylanders with all disabilities in many ways!

The 3D printing lab can give you free AT that can be 3D printed. It offers portable ramps to borrow and has statewide AT libraries where you can test out or borrow items for a span of time.

I use Assistive Technology everyday.

Not only do I use AT, I serve as the Chairwoman of the Maryland Technology Loan Program Board.

I created this presentation with my AT! I'm using it today as a presenter.

Maryland Technology Loan Program is one of our most important programs for Marylanders with disabilities.

ATLP allows individuals with disabilities to get low interest loans for adapted vehicles, home modifications, and items such as wheelchairs as examples.

It's crucial to fund AT programs and the AT financing programs. Without funding or AT, I cannot live a fulfilling life full of opportunities, independence and dignity.

Disability should not have a price tag. As Ms. Maryland Wheelchair 24, that is my platform. Every state titleholder has to have one. But unfortunately disability does have a price tag.

The financing loan programs allow disabled people to access things that they need to live a better quality of life.

When we talk about quality of life for people with disabilities, AT often allows you to participate in your community and be social. And it leads to opportunities from education, to work, to volunteering.

It can help ease pain and it leads to more functionality. It allows students of all ages to participate fully in the classroom.

I live in a very rural area and adaptive vehicles allow the mobility to travel where transportation is not available.

And it also, assistive technology also brings dignity. Home modifications allows individuals to stay in their own homes versus going to institutions.

And one thing is removing the barriers to loans that keep disabled people from having freedom and autonomy.

My state AT program gives people with disabilities, like myself, a better quality of life.

And this, I included photo of myself. I'm in the parade and I'm smiling. And I have a pink power wheelchair and butterfly clips in my hair.

Without AT, I would not be able to do the things I love. Whether it's hobbies like reading or being an advocate. I would not be here today; being able to present.

AT gives me freedom, independence and dignity and I can't think of anything better than that.

Not only does our current disability population benefit, our aging population benefits from AT. I included a photo of a senior citizen using a stair lift.

We all age into disability. The same way that anyone can become disabled at any time. And this is important to remember because anyone can join this minority group of disabilities.

Serving on the Board as a Director and being disabled, I have seen both sides. My own needs and those in my community when it comes to assistive technology and accessibility.

The reason I chose my platform is not only because of my passion of my about AT, but because I see the needs around us. A lot of times, we only talk about attitudinal, architectural barriers. We forget that the things give us function and independence are now a barrier.

So, one of the things that I wanted to bring up with my platform as Ms. Maryland Wheelchair are things that will make us more independent as all disabled people. Whether it's hearing aids or wheelchair or braille readers, is that we need to raise awareness of this because a lot of times people are not aware these cost money.

And I ended my presentation with one of my favorite quotes:

"For most people, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, however, technology makes things possible."

Visual Description:

Dominique has pale olive skin, curly brown hair, wears glasses, and is seated at the panel table. She is wearing glasses , a black top, and her Ms. Maryland Wheelchair sash and tiara. She is holding her custom stylus and her iPhone. The microphone is being held next to her.

She is seated at the panel table with the 2 other presenters. There is a name plate of her name in front of her on the table. To the right of her is her presentation.

As she speaks, there are times where she pauses with feeling or laughs. She has moments where she pauses speaking or tremors, as well, due to her neuromuscular disease. She occasionally moves her hands or will look intently at the audience with expressive gestures and a passionate expression of tone.

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