

BoggsCast Episode 9: Keith Diaz

[MUSIC PLAYING]

BETHANY CHASE: Welcome to BoggsCast, where faculty and staff at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities explore best practice, showcase success stories, and help listeners envision possibilities for innovation through interviews with state and national experts.

Part of Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, The Boggs Center is New Jersey's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and Leadership Education and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program. I'm Bethany Chase, Training and Consultation Specialist at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, and I'm thrilled to be kicking off season two of BoggsCast during Disability Employment Awareness Month.

In this episode, we'll be discussing employment advocacy with Keith Diaz. Keith Diaz is a husband, father of two-- including his five-year-old son, who has Down syndrome-- and a health scientist living in New Jersey. He is the co-founder of a disability hiring program at his employer, Columbia University Medical Center.

Keith's goal is to inspire others to advocate in their everyday spaces to include individuals with disabilities, and he is a passionate advocate for inclusive employment. So Keith, thank you so much for being with us today.

KEITH DIAZ: Thanks for having me. Pleasure to be here.

BETHANY CHASE: So why don't we get started by just having you tell us the story of how you became involved in employment advocacy?

KEITH DIAZ: Sure. So, I'm just a dad of a son who has an intellectual disability, who knew next to nothing about disability advocacy, or really had limited experience about what is the plight of people and experience of people with disabilities, and how they continue to be marginalized in our society. And we were just starting to think about-- as a parent, I think anyone thinks about, what does the future look like for their son?

And we did one of these kind of exercises when he was transitioning into the school district, of what is our vision for him. And on the top of our list of what his life would look like 20 years from now-- because he's five, but he was three at the time that we did this-- on the top of the list were things like live independently and have a social life. Have a job.

And so we started piecing together all those things that were meaningful to us for what we wanted his life to look like, and a lot of it was centered on or could be fixed by or addressed by having a job in his community. And a lot of our trajectory-- the trajectory of him going into school-- is ultimately for him to have life opportunities, and that ultimately is to have a job and be included, right?

And so that's where my interest in employment started, was just recognizing that the most important thing that we can prepare him for was for employment. And so I was like, I want to start working on this now. I want to get into this now and learn about this space.

But what really, I think, struck me-- we've seen the statistics, that 63% of individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities are unemployed, and another 17% work in sheltered workshops, so they're segregated away from the community. So 80% of individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities don't have inclusive employment, and for me, that's like a daunting statistic as a parent.

To realize, like, oh, the odds of my son actually having a real-world job are slim to none? Like, he has a 2 out of 10 chance of making it? I just couldn't live with that, and I wanted to do something about it. And obviously that's a big issue to tackle, but I thought, at least I could do something about it in my space and my community.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah, and I think what I find so interesting about your story is that your son's five, and you're looking at where your son was at, and I think that a lot of parents, when they have a child with a disability, their advocacy efforts are really focused around where their child is at in terms of their development, in terms of their trajectory. But what's interesting about your story is that you've got this little guy, and immediately you start looking up employment statistics and thinking about that long-term trajectory.

And I think that's really unique about your story. What do you think-- you mentioned that employment is where we're all going and it's the point of all of these opportunities. But can you tell us some more just about why you were so drawn to employment, beyond the obvious? So that's why you go to school.

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah. Well, I mean, I think about what employment means to me, and that it gives you a sense of purpose. It gives you a reason to wake up every morning. It gives you opportunities to be social, and I want that for my son, too, and I want that for everybody. Everybody should have those opportunities, to have purpose in life. To have something to wake up to every day, to go towards.

And obviously, disability and poverty, we know go hand-in-hand, unfortunately. And so, well, what's the best way to get out of that cycle of poverty or being stuck in poverty? Is to have a job, right? And so there's a saying that I've heard before and I'll say it now, that I believe it's true that people with disabilities don't need more charity. They need jobs.

Right, how do we address a lot of the major societal issues for people with disabilities? Well, one of the best ways to address them is to actually get them jobs. And so I think that, for me is where I felt like, if you

were to pick what are the most important advocacy areas for people with disabilities, I would argue that employment is one of the most, if not the most important, because it can address many of the issues that people with disabilities face.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah. Yeah, we often say here at The Boggs Center, in our employment trainings, that employment really is all of the things. It hits on all of those things that help create a good life, in terms of social opportunities, access to your own finances, personal agency, self-esteem. It really is all of the things that it can be hit on by employment.

So why don't we explain to our listeners today about the employment program that we keep referring to. What's going on at Columbia University?

KEITH DIAZ: Sure. We started a program-- it's called Project PossABILITY. And it was started 2019, 2020, we started working on it. And it's a disability hiring program that's specifically designed to hire individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at Columbia University Medical Center. And to do that, we partnered with an organization-- actually, it's multiple organizations.

It's a community-based organization, or consortium, called the Consortium for Customized Employment. And so that actually is 14 different organizations that support employment for people with disabilities. And so we partner with this consortium and work together to really place individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities into different departments at our University.

BETHANY CHASE: And how did that-- describe the process of how that all got started. That's quite a daunting mission. People think a university hospital might be hard to get access to. So how did that get started? How did that go?

KEITH DIAZ: It started with just a personal goal of mine. Just to hire somebody with a disability in my department. And I just wanted to hire one person in our department, and we couldn't even pull that off. And we hit a lot of roadblocks to just achieving that goal.

And that actually was probably where this started, was recognizing that, oh, there's like some system-level issues that we have to address-- that it's not as simple as just me as one individual wanting to hire another person with a disability, we have to address this at a bigger, larger scale.

And so it began from us running into an issue, and then having to take it up the chain. And I actually had the opportunity to meet with our Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer in HR, and was telling her about our issues, and if she could help us address them. And that's where she asked me bluntly, like, "Well, what are you trying to do with this? Where are you going? What's the point of all this?"

And I shared with her what we're talking about now, about all the issues in the disability community, and the dismal employment rates. And for her, I think, it was-- even as someone who's in the diversity, equity,

and inclusion space, it's not something I think she thought too much about, and maybe didn't know quite that there was that much of an issue.

BETHANY CHASE: Right.

KEITH DIAZ: And so she immediately jumped on board and said, "Well, why are we doing just one? Let's do many people. This is a problem we've got to solve. Let's solve it now and we can do something about it."

And we looked into this and we saw Walgreens has a program and Microsoft has a program. And it was like, well, why can't Columbia have a program? We can do that too. So I think it started there, of just me having this idea in my back of my head, of a goal, that maybe we could hire somebody, and then it becoming bigger once I got other people involved and wanting to be partnered with me, doing this on a bigger scale.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah, I think a lot of these stories, you end up hearing about finding champions to the cause from inside an organization or inside an employer. It seems like your first contact, you found a champion. Were all of the folks that you spoke to as open and excited as she was, or did you encounter some folks that were more skeptical?

KEITH DIAZ: You know, I think we usually get two kinds of folks when they hear about the program. We get the one type who are, wow this is an amazing program. I need to be a part of this. How can I be involved? We need people like this in our department, we want to hire people with disabilities in our-- like, we want in immediately.

And then the other group of people we would get is, oh, that's nice. That's cool, good for you. And pat on the back, like, that's not for us but, good. Keep it up.

Those are usually the two kind of groups of people. I don't think we've ever faced, like, oh, you shouldn't be doing this, or that's not for Columbia. It's just more like, oh, isn't that nice. Unfortunately, I think the majority fall into that category of, that's nice, but that's not for us.

BETHANY CHASE: And it's funny-- people aren't usually that outright, say no, no thank you. We don't want to hire a person with disability, but the, oh, isn't that nice. What a nice program, you must be such a special person--

KEITH DIAZ: --Yes.

BETHANY CHASE: That's something that a lot of folks who-- I probably have some job coaches listening to this episode today, that we hear a lot. And it's not-- it's perhaps well-intentioned, but there is definitely some ableism laced into that kind of comment. That like, oh, that's so special of you, to be doing that. Did you respond to that or did you just move on to find someone who seemed more genuinely excited about

the program?

KEITH DIAZ: So we started with what I'll call the Champions. Right, the people who, through thick or thin, are committed to making this work. Because when we started, we were still learning. So we definitely didn't know what we were doing, and we had to reach out to a lot of people for help.

And so we started with people we knew would work with us and work through it, even if we encountered headaches and hiccups. We are now moving towards, how do we get to the other group of people who are apprehensive, and don't feel compelled to be engaged in this program?

That's where we're focusing-- we're moving to focus in our efforts, are how do we address those groups of individuals, and how do we get those divisions and departments involved? But we started at a place where we just wanted the Champions first, who would really help us be successful in the beginning.

BETHANY CHASE: Right, and then their success stories can then speak for themselves.

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah, and that's what we've found, thus far, most powerful, is I can sit here and try to convince you as if you're a potential department or division who wants to hire. I can give you stats and tell you about-- that this is a social issue that we can address and it be for social good. But it's far more effective when I have somebody who has done it-- who's at your level, who's also a department administrator-- say like, hey, here's what we did and here's how it benefited us. Let me tell you how it worked for us and let me tell you how it made our department better.

And that has been so much-- has opened up doors far better than me just trying to sell people or pitch them on participating in a disability hiring program.

BETHANY CHASE: Right. Right, because you don't want it to come across-- as you started off this discussion earlier, that it's not about, the last thing that folks need is charity. Right, so people are responding to you like, oh, you want me to do quote, the right thing, unquote. That's missing the mark across the board, for the folks to support, for the employers, for everybody. That's missing the mark across the board, as opposed to showing the benefit of the hire and how it's been beneficial for that department.

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah, I think that's where the hesitation is, is more the perception that it's a business. It's a job, and I just, I need it to get done. And I don't have time to hold hands or invest in lots of training. I just need the work done.

And I think there's a perception or belief that hiring a person with a disability is maybe going to impede that and make it difficult. And so I think a lot of times-- and I'm stereotyping. It's not everybody feels this way, but I think there's a lot of perceptions about how it may actually be more work than help, and they see it as a charity and not as actually a good business decision.

BETHANY CHASE: Right. I think that there's a lot of that out there, and when you're working in this advocacy area, and you're reaching out to employers, or in your case, to departments, and they have that response of, I don't have time for this or this is going to be expensive-- but it's helpful to remember when you're engaging with employers that this is new for them. Right, like as you've mentioned, you quoted the employment statistics at the beginning of this podcast-- beginning of our conversation-- that we're just not used to seeing a lot of folks with disabilities in the workplace.

And so employers are also not used to seeing disabilities in their own workplaces. And it's about, again, having folks who are employed-- their efforts speaking for themselves. Have you had any instances where people's responses for you have made you-- have you had a reaction of, like, how could you say such a thing? Have you gotten frustrated in your work?

KEITH DIAZ: Oh, of course. Our first hire was the most frustrating experience. So we had identified a candidate, thought they were really great match, and took it to HR and said, here's our person we want to hire. And by the way, they have a job coach.

And the response was, whoa, whoa, whoa. If this person needs a job coach, then they must not be the most qualified person for the job. And they put a halt to that, and we were livid, because, I mean, that's a clear violation of ADA. A job coach is an accommodation. It doesn't disqualify you or make you any less capable.

And so that, for us, was-- we wanted to go, to use the phrase, we wanted to go scorched earth, and be like, all right, we're getting lawyers involved. That's it, like, you guys are discriminating. And we had to step back and say, well, hold on. What do we really want to achieve here? What's the purpose of this? And is it really that they're trying to discriminate, or they just don't know?

BETHANY CHASE: Right.

KEITH DIAZ: And in our experience, that's been more so the case, is that people just don't know. That disability is just foreign to them. You and I in the disability community world, like, we understand. But to most people, they don't understand or have any clue of what the day in and day out issues that people with disabilities face. And to me, my sense is it's a lack of awareness or lack of knowledge, not a true intent to discriminate.

That's not always the case. Not always the case, but it tends to be, in my experience, what is usually what's going on.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah, and that's why I think these efforts are so important, because it is brand new to a lot of folks. And so it takes persistence, and patience, and understanding, to move the needle forward in this area. And I think a lot of people hear the word advocacy-- they hear the words like policy, they hear words like advocacy, and they immediately shut down.

They're like, no, no, no. Not for me, I don't know anything about laws or policy, or like, that's too much. No thanks. But you see it differently. Can you tell us a little bit about what policy and advocacy means to you?

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah. You know, I think, obviously, advocacy is informing state level or federal level change in law and policies, but I don't think it has to be just that, and that advocacy can just be done in your everyday life spaces. And for me, advocacy can be as simple as taking my son to the playground, or taking him to the rec league soccer. And just showing up, and showing people, and bringing people with disabilities into the community.

Right, and that, to me, is advocacy in itself-- is just being able to bring a person with a disability into the community and have them be included. And it doesn't have to be this big, huge task, that we have to push a tremendous boulder up a mountain, in terms of policy. It can be just simple things that you do in your everyday spaces to make sure that people with disabilities are fully included.

And so for me, it's been, how can I just, in my everyday life, make sure that I'm including people with disabilities? Yes, I spend time in trying to advocate for state and federal-level change. But how can I, just in my everyday space, do something to include people with disability?

And so that's how I see, obviously, too-- is it doesn't have to be always at this huge level. It can be just in your everyday circles.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah, and if people can't see it around them, it makes it harder for them to envision big, sort of macro-level change. You have to be able to see in your day-to-day life, oh, here's so-and-so with a disability that I order my coffee from every morning at the coffee shop. Makes me more able to envision larger policy change in terms of full inclusion of folks with disabilities.

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah, the ripple effect.

BETHANY CHASE: Exactly.

KEITH DIAZ: Of, I see one person in my everyday life with a disability, and then that maybe changes my perception, and then I'm going to include somebody else, or I'm going to go hire somebody. And so we don't know, the people that are working with the people with disabilities in our program, that maybe they'll go on to different jobs or different employers and maybe they themselves will try to hire people with disabilities, right.

And so I think that just whole ripple effect could have tremendous, important implications that we don't necessarily see. We may never see, but it's still important. And for me, personally, I have so much shame over the fact that I knew nothing about disability before I had a son. Until I walked into this, I knew nothing.

But sometimes, I've got to walk myself back, and I've had people in the disability community walk me back from that shame, and recognizing that our world and our society was designed to keep people with disabilities away. Like, I never had experience with disability until I had a son. Like, I didn't see anybody with a disability when I went to school.

In high school and middle school, and elementary school and college, like, in my workplace experiences, I've never seen a person with a disability. It wasn't until I had a son that I was finally exposed to it. And so that, again, I guess, it just reinforces we have to put people with disabilities in our community. Just seeing it, I think, has tremendous implications.

BETHANY CHASE: Absolutely, just in your day-to-day life. And those implications can be business implications, employment implications, or they can be very, very personal. I think about if you're a parent of a child with-- especially like in your case, where you're new, and you have a baby, and just you have a very young child.

And the process of understanding what that means for your trajectory, of your life and for the trajectory for your child's life-- and I mean, I've spoken with a lot of families. They go through a period of just feeling really unsure and really scared, and then going to the hospital and seeing a person with a disability come in and help you at the hospital, and having that realization of, like, look at that. Oh, wow. Like, that person is doing great. They've got a job, like, oh my gosh.

There's something here, I think, can have really profound impacts on new parents, who are just adjusting to this new landscape.

KEITH DIAZ: I've always had this vision of what it would have been like for me when I was in the hospital after my son was born, and there was so much-- I don't want to say negativity, but there was just lack of excitement for the birth of my son while we were in the hospital room, from all the visitors, from the doctors, to the nurses, to just family members visiting.

There was just more of this solemnness to it. And what it would have meant to me if, while we were there, somebody with Down syndrome came into the room to like, clean up, or was a patient greeter, or just for me to have seen them while I was in the hospital.

BETHANY CHASE: [INAUDIBLE], yeah.

KEITH DIAZ: Just seem like, oh, yeah. Look at that. And that's partly my vision for the program. I work at a hospital, so partly, I have aspirations of having individuals with disabilities in public-facing jobs, so that the community sees them, the patients see them. And I would love to get them into the spaces where kids are being born.

BETHANY CHASE: Absolutely. That could be pretty amazing, the impacts there, yeah. Yeah, the ripple effects. I love it.

In terms of your advocacy efforts, what would you say to any business owners, any employers listening today, who might be feeling nervous about hiring someone with a disability?

KEITH DIAZ: I mean, I'd say first off, I think it's totally natural to be nervous or apprehensive. It's maybe new and maybe different, right, and we've talked about that it's not a common experience for most individuals to have this exposure to people with disabilities. And so I think that's one that's totally natural, to have maybe some apprehension.

But I would say, also, that it's just good business. That it's good business practice to hire people with disabilities. It's-- one, it's a talent pool that can address a lot of performance deficits that you may have. And two, depending on what line of business you're in, hiring people with disabilities gives you access to a potential pool of customers, right?

And so it can change your image and be good for business in that perspective. But it also can improve your workforce, and improve your workforce culture, and that's what's been really cool to see. That's been a lot of the feedback we've got-- have gotten from departments that have participated, has been about how workplace morale and workplace culture has changed.

Right, so one, the individuals that we hire have been phenomenal. But two, that they've had this effect about just the culture of a place, has been really cool to see. And it's been helpful for other employees to just see that their employer is about promoting an inclusive environment and are committed to societal-level change and addressing other issues.

It's actually been really good for just improving a team culture. So that's been-- that, I guess I would say back in short, is it's good for workplace culture. And the other thing I would say back too, is we often look for, when you're trying to hire somebody, there's so many soft skills that you just can't find. Like, how do you find somebody who's really, like super motivated, and has great work ethic?

And those are skills that you can't really necessarily find on paper, but you look for, and oftentimes, individuals with disabilities have those traits. They're really hungry, and a lot of the ones that we've hired have just-- I mean, I can't give them enough work, because they want to do everything, and do it so thoroughly, and comprehensively, and quickly, because they're so eager.

And I wish I could find more employees like that. And so I think there are so many benefits to hiring people with disabilities. So I'd say, if you're nervous, I think you have to weigh that with, what are the benefits? And I the benefits outweigh any possible downsides that you may run into.

BETHANY CHASE: So I think the other thing that oftentimes gets missed in this conversation is when it's not the right fit, right? Like anybody else, sometimes it's the right job for you. Sometimes it's not the right job for you. Have you had any of those situations with your program, where it hasn't been the right fit? And how has that gone?

KEITH DIAZ: Our first hire, we had some real challenges in the beginning. We had, in our minds, a specific job role that we wanted this person to fill, and it just wasn't a great fit for them in terms of their interest and skill set. And so actually, we kind of crashed and burned in the first two to three weeks, to the point where we thought, this isn't going to work, and maybe we need to rethink this.

But we had to step back and reevaluate, well, what is he really good at? And can we match that with something here, maybe a different role? And so for us it was, we almost walked away, but then said, let's reevaluate. Maybe there's something else we can do and find a better fit. And so I think we were able to-- fortunately, he's still employed and he's been with us for a year and a half now, and he's been doing phenomenal.

But the fit up front wasn't great, and so there was this initial fear about, what am I going to do if this doesn't work out? And because it was a first hire, obviously there was tremendous pressure because we didn't want to fail.

BETHANY CHASE: Right.

KEITH DIAZ: But I think recognizing that there's not-- even with regular employees, sometimes you don't have a great fit.

BETHANY CHASE: Right.

KEITH DIAZ: And things don't work out, and that's OK. You know, I just hired somebody in January that I had to let go four months later, that just didn't work out. It wasn't the right fit.

And so I think we put too high of expectations, that it had to be perfect and that this person was going to be perfect. And I think that was a mistake, and we had to lower expectations and realize that you have to treat it just like any other employee. That there's sometimes there's good fits, sometimes they're not, and that's OK.

BETHANY CHASE: Absolutely. Yeah, the stakes sometimes feel so much higher. Usually not for the supported worker. Usually the stakes feel higher for everybody else, thinking, oh gosh, what if this goes wrong? Like, what are we going to have to do? Well, just like literally everybody else.

You try the best you can to get the right fit. If it's not the right fit, you move on. And I think we talk a lot with job coaches at The Boggs Center about facilitating the entire process of employment, from, as you mentioned, really trying to get that right fit, to also recognizing when it's not the right fit and moving on, and really normalizing the entire process.

And I think that that's really what a lot of this work is, is simply providing access to what is, ultimately, a pretty everyday, mundane process of looking for good people to hire.

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah, I mean, that's what it comes down to, right? Our goal is just to make hiring individuals with disabilities just like hiring anybody else. And so holding them to the same expectations, but holding ourselves to the same expectations at the same time, I think, is what this is really about. And yeah, to your point, we have to normalize this just like everything else.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah, and ultimately, it's in line with treating supported workers, treating people with disabilities, with dignity and respect, to acknowledge when it's not the right fit. Right, not to be like, oh, we can't say anything, because so-and-so has a disability. So it's really fine. Like, it's not fine. If it's not fine, it's not fine, and holding people accountable is treating them with dignity and respect.

KEITH DIAZ: To business owners or employers who are nervous, I think one of the most important things that you should do, and what I recommend you do as a first step, is to reach out and find community partners who do supported employment, right. And so for us, it was recognizing that there's organizations who are solely dedicated to holding your hand through this entire process.

That you don't have to be experienced in hiring people with disabilities. You don't have to know anything about it, that there's organizations that will support you through. They'll provide job coaches, help you find candidates. That you don't have to go this alone.

And so for anybody who's interested in hiring a person with disabilities, is seek out those organizations that can help and support you through this, that you don't have to do this alone.

BETHANY CHASE: Absolutely. And I think, again, if we have job coaches listening today, I think that's also a really powerful reminder to them, that they are resources to the business community, just as much as they are resources to folks with disabilities. That they can be useful-- they have two customers. They have the business, and then they have the individual. And I think that that's a great reminder for business owners, as well as any job coaches, who are listening today.

There has been a lot of focus recently on behalf of employers and organizations to meet sometimes newly-defined or newly-tweaked inclusion, diversity, and equity objectives. Have you found any conversations around EDI helpful for you in your advocacy with Columbia University?

KEITH DIAZ: Yes and no. Yes, it's been helpful that we're talking about it and people are thinking about it so much more. So that has been really helpful, that I think a lot of doors are open, now, that weren't open before. That people are thinking about it in ways they never thought about it before.

But what's been really, I think, from a disabilities perspective, frustrating, is that disability is not in the conversation.

BETHANY CHASE: Yes.

KEITH DIAZ: And that's what's been, for us-- and it's been educating those folks who are doing those efforts that they should include individuals with disabilities in those conversations. And so in many ways, though, I think it's been overall positive, because I think we've been able to ride the coattails of those programs.

Of, they've paved the way of trying to make our employer departments more diverse, more equitable, and inclusive. And that has just opened us up to being able to get in and talk, and have those conversations that people just didn't want to have those conversations before.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah, it's interesting how often disability is left out of the conversation, and I think it takes-- to your point-- whatever spaces we are all in, these conversations are happening everywhere right now. Organizations are trying to put their money where their mouth is, so to speak, and for anyone listening today who's having those conversations, adding disability to those conversations is absolutely a piece or an act of advocacy.

And we have to get the word "disability" included in those conversations. And I think you're right. Agencies, businesses, employers-- they want to meet those objectives, and this is another way to do that. Does your son know what he wants to be when he grows up yet? Does he have any ideas?

KEITH DIAZ: No, I'd say my best guess right now is I think he wants to be a landscaper.

BETHANY CHASE: Nice, nice. (CHUCKLES)

KEITH DIAZ: He is obsessed with the people who go and cut grass, and blow leaves, and he just, any time we're walking around the neighborhood and sees them, he has to stop and sit and watch them. And I have a lawn mower, and any time it's out, he needs to go push it and wants to go cut the grass for me. And I'm ready to put him to work now, I wish I could.

BETHANY CHASE: Yeah. (LAUGHS)

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah, he just has a fascination with grass cutting, for whatever reasons, so like, maybe there's a future in there for him. I'd love to start, like, have his own business, right, where he can do that himself.

BETHANY CHASE: Absolutely. It sounds like a true passion there, and it could really work out for you and your landscaping needs.

KEITH DIAZ: Yeah, you know, I hear lots of parents of people with disabilities, or children with disabilities, want to just-- they start businesses for their kiddos, so they have something to give them. And I guess that's one way to do it, maybe so you don't have to try to convince employers to hire people with disabilities. That you just start your own business.

BETHANY CHASE: Absolutely. There's so many different pathways for accessing employment, again, similar to literally anybody else, right? That there's multiple pathways to employment, from pursuing education, starting your own business, working with a job coach-- the avenues are far and wide. Well, thank you so much for joining us today to talk about employment advocacy. I hope that Project PossABILITY continues to be successful, and I look forward to hiring a very qualified landscaper in about 15 years or so. Thank you so much for being with us.

KEITH DIAZ: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

BETHANY CHASE: Thanks for listening to this episode of BoggsCast, a podcast by The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. A full transcript of this episode can be found at theboggscenter.podbean.com. Be sure to subscribe to this podcast on your favorite streaming service, to stay up to date with the newest episodes. To learn more about The Boggs Center, visit our website at rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter, and follow us on Facebook at [TheBoggsCenteronDevelopmentalDisabilities](https://www.facebook.com/TheBoggsCenteronDevelopmentalDisabilities).