

SUMMER 2021

ladd
Look

Going for Gold

DAVID TRIPATHY

His Road To Olympic Glory

INSIDE:



OTR INTERNATIONAL FILM
FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
FREEDOM CENTER

Empowering adults with disabilities since 1975



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Mission Statement:

Guided by the belief that every person has ability and value, we empower adults with developmental disabilities to live, work, and connect.

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TAKING

Flight

SAVE THE DATE

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When: Thursday, September 16th

Time: 6:30pm - 8:30pm

Where: Washington Park Lawn
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Go to: laddinc.org/events to purchase tickets

**“IT’S LIKE PEACE AND
MEDITATION AND SELF...
THE SELF EXPLODES.”**

David Tripathy



David Tripathy: His Road To Olympic Glory

Written by: David Marado

We hadn't sat down for a minute when the happiest dude I'd seen in a long time came to into LADD's conference room. Well-tanned and muscular with sandy brown hair, David Tripathy announced his arrival with the confidence and joy of someone who knows they are good. In David's case not just good at swimming — but good overall — inside and out.

David has been swimming for ten years. He started swimming on a family vacation and now he is an elite athlete with the Cincinnati Special Olympics. David can swim all the strokes, but butterfly, as his t-shirt with the words “I can butterfly, What's your super-power?” attests, is his specialty.

In 2018 David qualified for the Special Olympics National Games in swimming, which took place in Seattle, Washington. At nationals, David placed in each medal level—gold, silver, and bronze. He tells the story of winning gold in a compelling fashion: “It was complete margins.” During that meet he also medaled in the 400-meter butterfly.

From an early age David learned lessons on resilience and overcoming obstacles that he has applied to not only his swimming but also his life. Diagnosed with Autism as a toddler, he initially was unable to speak and had to learn sign language to communicate with people around him. He worked really hard to learn

how to speak and he utilizes his work ethic in everything he does, and he does a lot. In addition to swimming, David lives on his own in a LADD apartment in the Oakley neighborhood of Cincinnati. He has a girlfriend, which he shares he is “still on track” with. He has a job at the Madeira Kroger store where he works bagging groceries, stocking shelves, and collecting carts. Or as he puts it: “Anything they ask.”

David has won a total of 73 medals since he started competing, his winning ways are like that of his inspiration, Olympic Gold medalist Michael Phelps, whom David refers to as “David Phelps.” Phelps inspires David not only to be a great athlete but also to speak up, ask for help, and to give back. David, following in Phelps footsteps, has started coaching young Special Olympians and teaching them the tricks of his trade.” He tells young people, “Listen to your moms, be yourself, try your best. Anything can

be possible, the more you dream the further you’ll get.” David uses swimming as a tool to deal with the day-to-day stress of being a young person on his own. He finds solace and comfort in the water, “It’s like peace and meditation and self... the self explodes.” These meditative moments make him a gracious, fulfilled young man, he says, “Living in that moment, I handle things quite [well] frankly.”

David is indeed taking gold, in the pool and in life



David Authors A Children's Book

Recently, David wrote a children's book about documenting his road to glory. This book chronicles how he learned to swim at age 13 and how he eventually won 3 medals in the 2018 National Special Olympics in Seattle, WA. All profit will be donated to Special Olympics Hamilton County, OH. Go to lulu.com to find his book or search for, "David Tripathy"



National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Bestows OTR International Film Festival's Inaugural Freedom Award

Kripal Kalita's Bridge recognized for community impact and artistic excellence

LADD's OTR International Film Festival is the nation's only diversity film festival led by the disability community. LADD believes that in order for people with developmental disabilities to thrive, we must build a community that fosters empathy and embraces and celebrates difference. Given that disability knows no race, faith, gender or income, LADD is uniquely positioned to bring our community together around diverse perspectives. This film festival is a platform to see through another's eyes. In doing so, we take steps to connect us all and embrace our shared humanity.

This year, LADD announced a partnership with the The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

(Freedom Center) to create a Freedom Award. The award recognizes films that capture the broader notions of freedom and leaves viewers with a deeper understanding of and renewed commitment to equity and diversity.

This year, The Freedom Center awarded the OTR International Film Festival's inaugural Freedom Award to **Bridge**, a film by Kripal Kalita. Based on real life interactions, Bridge tells the story of Jonaki, a young woman from the Assam region in northeast India on the banks of the Brahmaputra River. The region is ravaged each year by heavy floods, affecting the livelihoods of the people who live there, destroying



The Bridge, winner of the The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and LADD's OTR International Film Festival inaugural Freedom Award. Bridge tells the story of Jonaki, a young woman from the Assam region in northeast India on the banks of the Brahmaputra River.

homes, crops, sources of income and taking the lives of loved ones. The lack of development and the disinterest of governments and organizations to address the basic needs of Jonaki and her community forces her and her neighbors to watch as their lives are literally swept away each year. Despite their struggles, residents of this region start over each year with a ray of hope in the green valley of a river they love.

“In a field of outstanding submissions, we were struck by the power and artistry of Mr. Kalita’s film as it addresses issues of unfreedom including poverty, systemic neglect, lack of access to healthcare and resource inequity. Yet, through these challenges shines the resilience of hope and the perseverance of people seeking the simple freedom to build a life without fear of hunger, illness or homelessness,” said Woodrow Keown, Jr., president & COO of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. “Freedom comes in many forms and is not one thing to all people. We need the visceral, vivid expressions of freedom that films like Bridge

present so people can see and to some extent feel the experiences of other people through their eyes and, in doing so, develop a better understanding and deeper empathy.”

The Freedom Award will be presented annually by the Freedom Center to a film that addresses the issues of freedom – and unfreedom – in its many forms. The award will recognize artistic excellence and community impact, with additional consideration given to those films that amplify voices and highlight perspectives that have been traditionally silenced or that address topics and causes related to systemic issues of freedom and unfreedom.



**OVER-THE-RHINE
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL**

organized by ladd



National Underground Railroad
FREEDOM CENTER

ladd 2021 FALL BENEFIT RAFFLE

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Bonus drawings are each Tuesday and Thursday at 2:00pm EST beginning August 31, 2021 and ending November 11, 2021. To qualify, you must enter by 1pm EST the day of the drawing.

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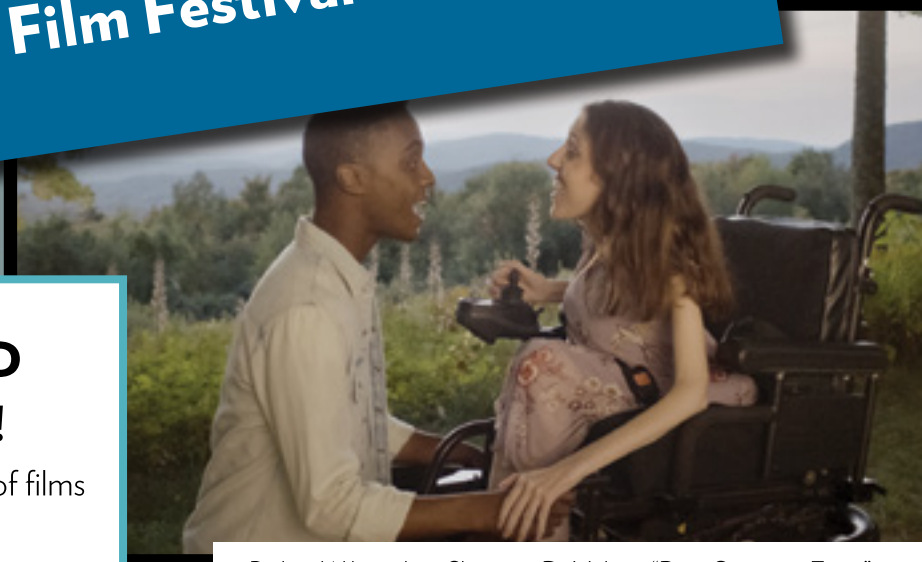
MAIL:
Download a form at
www.laddinc.org

The OTR International Film Festival – A New Lens on Life!

July 8th through 11th, LADD hosted its sixth film festival!

The festival featured an exceptional line up of films and stars.

The 2021 Over-the-Rhine International Film Festival returned this summer, with both in-person and virtual screenings of 46 films that celebrate diversity and our shared humanity.

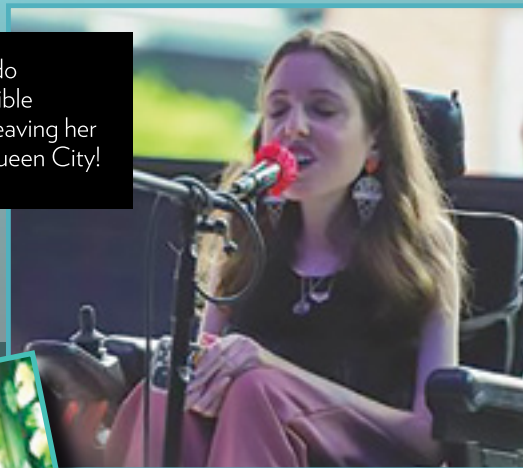


Rickey Wilson Jr. & Shannon DeVido in **"Best Summer Ever."**
Chris Westlund, Alexa Carroll and Kent Willard/FreeStyle
Digital Media



Kate Rigg, OTR Film Fest's
Creative Director, and Cincinnati own,
singer Eve Bronsink, celebrate at
closing night!

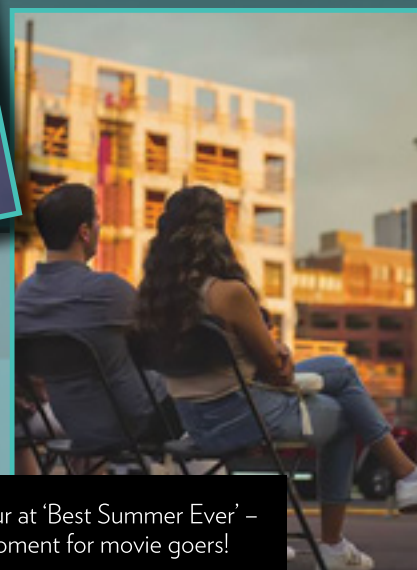
Shannon DeVido
gives an incredible
performance, leaving her
mark on the Queen City!



BETTY the band gave a
spectacular performance
Friday night!



'Best Summer Ever' brought out a
fantastic crowd!



Golden hour at 'Best Summer Ever' –
priceless moment for movie goers!



OVER-THE-RHINE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



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LADD's Affordable Housing Program Supports More People Than Ever During Pandemic

Last year, a mother and son from the Republic of Tunisia began searching for affordable housing in Cincinnati. They applied for apartment after apartment, and each time, the mother felt the same frustration and exhausting disappointment.

"She was constantly saying she wasn't approved, the landlord wasn't talking to her and she really felt like she was being discriminated against," said Cliff Fennell, a housing resource assistant with **LADD's SOAR** (Services for the Ownership and Acquisition of Residences) Program.

Her son has a disability and after a painstaking process to obtain documents from Tunisia, in order to be approved for a Housing Choice Voucher that assists with rent, she now felt like landlords were ignoring her because of the language barrier.

"I was constantly trying to help them in sending any housing opportunities and one by one it was the same situation," Fennell said. "They just felt like everything was against them and didn't know what else to do."

But Fennell encouraged them to keep going. "We're not going to give up on you," he told the family. Almost a year since their housing search began, on the

last day before the voucher was set to expire, Fennell met in person (masked and socially distanced) with the mother and another landlord.

"I spoke to the landlord about their situation, that they would be good tenants," he said. "On that very last day, we were able to secure housing for her son."

Though the stories vary, this is what the SOAR team is dedicated to – helping people with disabilities and their families secure affordable, safe and accessible homes.

It does this through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Choice Voucher program, a federal program that offers assistance for people with very low-incomes, senior adults, and people with disabilities to find housing in the private market.

SOAR works with someone every step of the way – from the initial application process, to working with landlords and property companies, to helping maintain recertifications so people don't lose their rental assistance year to year.

In 2020, **SOAR** saw a need for these services rise substantially, likely because of the economic hardships people are experiencing.

It referred more than 70 people to the voucher program, which means there is potential for these individuals to receive assistance at any given time. And it recertified around 180 people, ensuring they keep receiving their rental assistance.

At the same time **SOAR** has been assisting more people than ever, it's also had to innovate throughout the pandemic.

"Technology has been an issue; a lot of people we support don't have internet access or computers so it can be hard to get digital documents to them while we're working remotely," said **SOAR** Program Manager James Tecco. "I was working with someone last week who had limited technology and transportation available. So I had a virtual walkthrough from a property manager playing on my computer and then did a video call on the person's phone so she could view that."

Fennell says they are trying to do anything they can to make things easier for the people they are supporting. Even before the pandemic, people with disabilities

faced plenty of challenges in finding affordable housing. Expense funds that pay for moving, deposits and applications add up quickly and place a heavy burden on potential tenants. Finding a truly accessible apartment or home is another major challenge.

"We're not only a housing resource, but we are housing advocates," Fennell said. "It's never a situation where you get a voucher and you have to figure it out on your own...we're with you the entire journey."

And, 2020 has surely been a journey. As **SOAR** emerges from the pandemic and 18 months of growth and change, it's looking forward to building an even stronger community, and supporting even more people this year and in years to come.

"We've grown not just in the number of people we're serving but internally, each member of this team has grown through this pandemic, through the social ills we've been confronted with," Tecco said. "It's made us stronger individuals and more creative in assisting people."

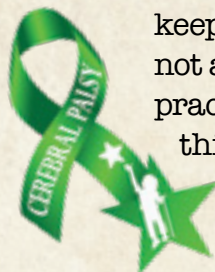
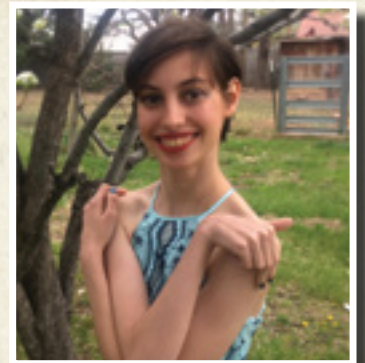
GETTING STRONGER AND LOUDER, EMMA STONE'S STORY

Emma Stone, student, and fierce young woman, wrote this inspiring piece about her experience growing up with Cerebral Palsy. We thought it worth sharing!"

When I was a child I was diagnosed with CP.

What does this mean? It means I'm different, unique, and I'll be different for the rest of my life, unseen. My right hand and right side sometimes acts strangely. Most people don't notice or even see it changes me. CP doesn't always affect people this way. It's a spectrum like any other disability, okay? I cannot count the times I've been told you can't do this. People can be ignorant to the way those impactful words hit. Sometimes I dream and pretend my right hand works, because I'm so ashamed that it hurts. Hurts to feel this never-ending disappointment that I'll wake up and remember my joints and close my eyes and calm my mind and breathe. I remember

I'm not alone. There are thousands like me. Cecily, Veronica, Wyatt – people I only see every other year. They are like me. They have the same fears. I am not alone and this is what keeps me going. I am not alone and I am not slowing. Slowing my practices to get stronger and louder. Because this is who I am and I could never be prouder.



Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a group of motor disorders affecting over 764,000 people in the United States alone. There are several types of CP that can affect a person throughout their lifetime. CP is most common among young infants and children; around 10,000 babies are born each year with CP, and it is the most commonly diagnosed childhood motor disability in the U.S.

forever, home.



Left to right: Trailblazers, Drew, Dan, Matt and Jim in front of their home—The Heidt Smart Living Home.

LADD Launches First-of-its-Kind Smart Living Pilot to Increase Independence, Support More People with Disabilities

The developmental disabilities field is facing a crisis with staffing shortages, the rising cost of services and an increasing number of people needing services, according to the Case for Inclusion 2020 Report. The result: tens of thousands of Ohioans with disabilities are unable to receive the supports they need. LADD, a Cincinnati nonprofit empowering adults with developmental disabilities, has launched a first of its kind in the nation Smart Living Pilot to meet this challenge.



Jim utilizes the technology of the smart refrigerator to order groceries during the pandemic.

The pilot utilizes smart home technologies, including virtual remote supports, and wearables to further independence while keeping people safe. The technology and supports are designed to anticipate challenges and threats to safety and resolve them before they happen, allowing staff to intervene only when needed instead of being present 24/7, which is, for many, the current service model.

Ohio currently spends more than \$4 billion on services based on 2018 levy totals, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities FY 2020 budget and Medicaid matching funds. Yet, thousands are still left without services. The efficiencies realized through technology could be life changing for people with disabilities and their families.

“To our knowledge, no other organization in the country has set down this path,” said LADD Chief Strategy Office Brian Hart. “We’re accomplishing transformative results for independence, safety and affordability.”



As part of the Smart Living Pilot, the Heidt Smart Living Home in Anderson Township was completed at the end of September, with Drew, Jim, Matt and Daniel moving in soon after and demonstrating immense courage to be the first – to do something that’s never been done before.

“I don’t know the words to say it, I’m just...I’m finally home,” said Matt Chaffin, one of the residents.

The home is the fourth in LADD’s Forever, Home initiative and is named in honor of the Heidt Family Foundation, which contributed the lead gift. This home is now joined by two other homes recently purchased in Anderson that will incorporate some of the technology found in the Heidt Home.

Cinnova – a Cincinnati-based software consulting company focused on developing custom web, mobile, and cloud solutions for clients like HP, The University of Cincinnati, and Comcast – has been leading the charge in developing the technology plan with LADD to remotely support residents in their daily living.

“Cinnova believes in LADD’s vision to provide those with disabilities the independence that they deserve,” said Jeff Holtmeier, Cinnova executive chairman. “Providing smart home technology is paramount to the safety and success of independent living and LADD is at the forefront of these services. While some technology is available, it’s fragmented and the cutting edge capabilities that we are developing will result in the deployment of a

single platform and service focused on the needs of people with developmental disabilities. This project has the potential to disrupt the entire system for the benefit of those with developmental disabilities. We are immensely proud to play a role as the technology partner with LADD and we’re really excited to see the pilot home in action!”

The Heidt Smart Living Home is just the beginning. In order to scale this model of community living, LADD is working with Xavier University’s Department of Occupational Therapy on research to determine the technology’s impact on independence and affordability.

“We have thought for so long what it would take for us to provide Drew a situation like this and the cost, the right supports, the right environment,” said Drew Jones’ father Steve Jones. “We didn’t imagine that that was going to happen for so long or if it could happen at all.”

“This project is a rare chance to create systemic change in how we empower people with disabilities to live their best lives and widen access to essential support services,” said Chip Heidt of the Heidt Family Foundation and LADD board member. “Two years ago, I talked about the future of community living for people with developmental disabilities; I’m proud to say today that future is here.”

For a virtual tour and other videos go to <https://laddinc.org/program/smart-living/>

State Senators Blessing, Wilson and Representative Seitz pass bill to protect Find-A-Way and Geier Apartments



State Senator Louis W. Blessing



State Representative Bill Seitz



State Senator Steve Wilson

June 30th, 2021 Ohio's House of Representatives passed HB 110. This bill will allow LADD's Find-A-Way and Geier Apartments to apply for a tax exemption. Both buildings house 39 people with disabilities each and have a multi-year waiting list. When the buildings were constructed, they received a 30 year tax abatement from the City. However, that particular abatement is no longer in existence. Moreover, Find-A-Way and Geier Apartments are, per federal law registered as independent corporate entities. As such, LADD is able to provide service coordination in the building while also protecting a resident's right to pick their own service provider without jeopardizing their housing.

This federally mandated organizational structure is very important to protect a resident's right. However, Ohio tax law was such that a building must deliver services to receive a property tax exemption. LADD and FAW and Geier Apartments were caught in a catch 22.

So, after years of effort, LADD found Senator Blessing, Senator Wilson and Representative Seitz as local champions to fix this loophole. And, on June 30th, HB 110 passed. Now, FAW and Geier Apartments will be able to reinvest these desperately needed funds back into the building and continue to offer quality, affordable housing for people with disabilities in our community.





forever, home.

FUNDING UPDATE

WE HAVE REACHED OUR \$3.6 MILLION GOAL! (see page 12-13 for an update)

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE THAT ARE MAKING OUR FOREVER HOMES POSSIBLE:

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Psychedelic Moon Acrylic Abstract | by Michael Weber

MW