



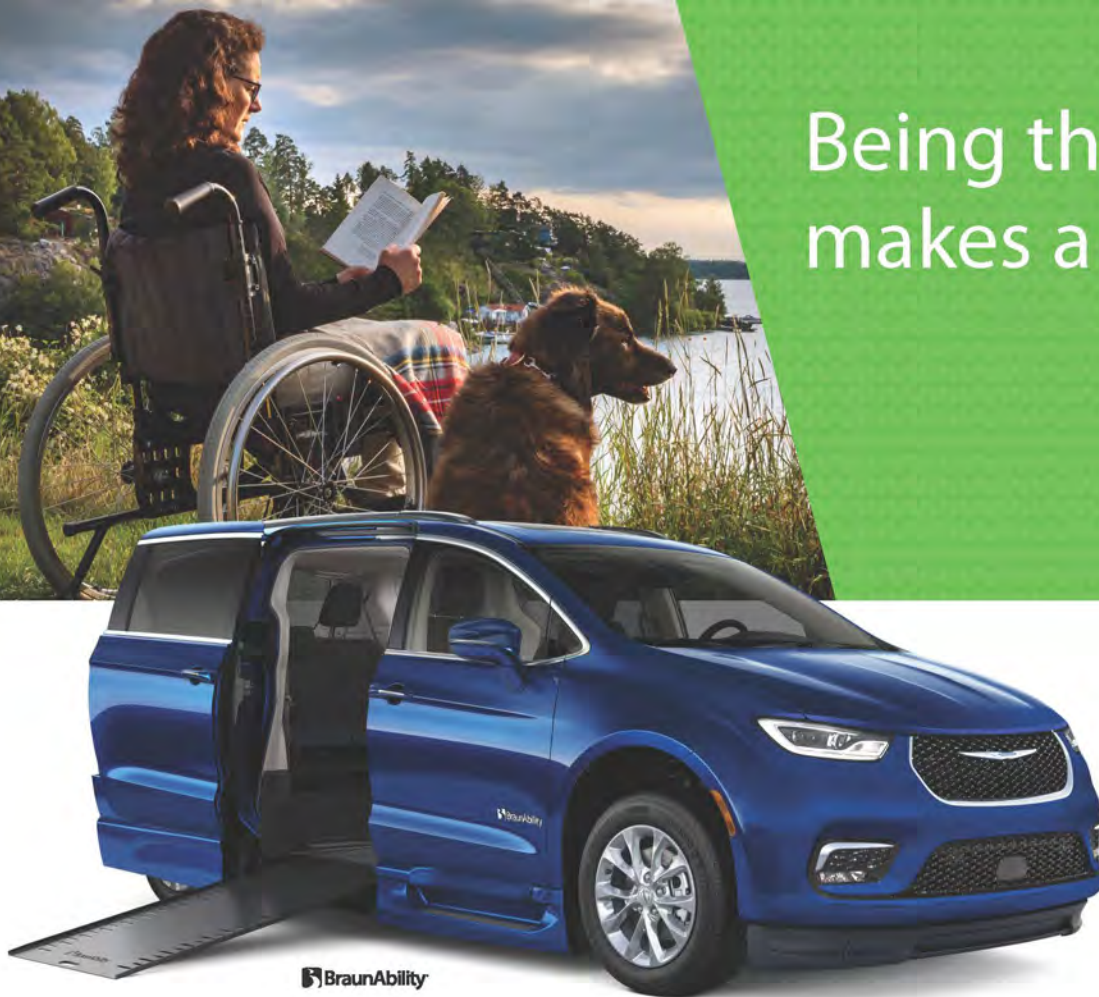
Ms. Wheelchair
AMERICA

presented by
Mary Free Bed Guild

AUGUST 19-25, 2024 | GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Empowering Women of Achievement Through Leadership, Advocacy & Education

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Ms. Wheelchair America 2024
Chandra Smith



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be there

Dear Contestants, Families and Supporters

Welcome to the 2024 Ms. Wheelchair America hosted by the Mary Free Bed Guild.

We are thrilled to have you here and to celebrate your incredible achievements, resilience, and advocacy. Your participation in this event is a testament to your strength, determination, and dedication to making a difference in the lives of others.

The Ms. Wheelchair America pageant is more than just a competition; it is a platform for you to share your stories, amplify your voices, and inspire change. Each one of you brings a unique perspective and a powerful message that can influence hearts and minds across the nation. Your presence here is a beacon of hope and empowerment, reminding us all that beauty, strength, and leadership come in many forms.

Throughout the pageant, you will have the opportunity to connect with fellow contestants, engage in meaningful discussions, and showcase your talents and passions. We encourage you to embrace every moment, build lasting friendships, and continue to advocate for the causes that matter most to you.

As you embark on this exciting journey, please know that you have our utmost admiration and support. Your courage and commitment are an inspiration to many, and we are honored to have you as part of this extraordinary event.

We look forward to witnessing your amazing contributions and celebrating your accomplishments. Best of luck to each of you as you participate in the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant. May this experience be enriching, empowering, and filled with unforgettable memories.

With warmest regards,



Mary Beth Brown
Mary Free Bed Guild, Co-President



Maureen Kozel
Mary Free Bed Guild, Co-President





City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ROSALYNN C. BLISS
MAYOR

Dear Guests:

Welcome to Grand Rapids – we are delighted to host the 2024 Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant.

While you no doubt have a full agenda, I do hope you will take time to explore our beautiful City and its dynamic neighborhoods. From a walkable downtown with more than 150 restaurants, clubs and museums to endless outdoor options such as golfing, fishing, hiking and biking, Grand Rapids is a great place to be – and we're so glad you're here.

Grand Rapids is widely recognized as one of the most sustainable cities in the U.S. In fact, we have been honored as having the most number of LEED-certified buildings per capita and have been named the most sustainable mid-sized city.

And that's not all we're known for – our metropolitan area is a knowledge center that boasts 22 colleges and universities. Plus, human medicine, medical education and health research make up our most rapidly growing economic sector.

And yet, these comprise only a sliver of what makes our City so great – it is the people who live and work here who have made us who we are today and who have contributed to our success.

We have been named the Best City to Raise a Family and selected among the Top U.S. Destinations to Visit. We also have been recognized among the Most Exciting Mid-sized Cities and Best Places to Retire.

But don't take my word for it – check it out yourself.

The creative energy of our City – with its wonderfully diverse culture, vibrant downtown and beautiful community spirit – will inspire you and beckon you to return.

On behalf of my colleagues at City Hall and all those who call Grand Rapids home, we hope you enjoy our City and have a wonderful time here.

Sincerely,
Rosalynn Bliss

A Message from the President & CEO of Experience Grand Rapids

Welcome to Grand Rapids! You are being welcomed to a city that is fast becoming the most talked about, emerging destination in the country. While there are too many to mention, our destination continues to be recognized by a wide range of media outlets and other reputable sources for our bountiful amenities, unique characteristics and as a clean, safe community.

While our destination continues to emerge and one of America's "coolest cities," it is the people that create a vibe that is noticed by our visitors. Wherever you go during your stay, you'll be surrounded by friendly faces and helpful attitudes. We are confident that you will find our city to be not just physically attractive, but socially responsive and completely hospitable in every way.

The Grand Rapids experience begins downtown, where you'll find eleven first-class hotels, including 3, connected via skywalk to a state-of-the-art convention center. Two of these connected hotels are AAA Four-Diamond rated. Our other downtown properties are within a 10-minute or less walk, as are 150+ restaurants, shops and performance venues. Also within easy walking distance:

- Six premier museums: The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Rapids African American Museum & Archives, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids Public Museum, Grand Rapids Children's Museum and the Urban institute for Contemporary Arts.
- A scenic riverwalk, picturesque historic home district and public art everywhere.
- The vibrant Downtown Market is a must for food lovers and "home chefs."

More than 100 additional hotels and meeting venues are located within a 15-minute drive of downtown, close to such attractions and activities as:

- Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, one of the world's "Top 30 Must-See Museums."
- Shopping galore, including Tanger Outlet Mall, Woodland Mall, Rivertown Shopping Center and Breton Village Mall.
- The Grand Rapids Food Trail – 30+ delectable destinations that also serve as an introduction to eight distinct "destinations within the destination."
- Quaint cities and towns, offering diverse dining, retail and endless entertainment options sure to please your own tastes.
- As Beer City USA, you'll find 60 breweries throughout greater Grand Rapids, with 8 being located downtown.
-

You can find information on all of this and much more at our award-winning website, **ExperienceGR.com**. Search for events on specific dates, activities that match your unique interests and even special hotel deals – perfect if you want to extend your stay or make a return visit with friends and family.

On behalf of Experience Grand Rapids, our tourism partners and the entire community, I want to thank you for visiting our special city. We are committed to showing you a great time – and we hope you'll share your experience with others!

Cheers,



Douglas Small
President & Chief Executive Officer



Empowering Women of Achievement
Through Leadership, Advocacy & Education
Since 1972

Dear Class of 2025 Titleholders,

On behalf of the Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc. Board of Directors, we welcome you to Ms. Wheelchair America 2025 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This week will challenge you. You will learn about yourself and others. Exploring new ideas and activities and finding unique strengths that help you understand your value and power is encouraged. Are you ready to experience, explore and excel?

Ms. Wheelchair America began in 1972 because Philip K. Wood wanted women that used wheelchairs for mobility to be recognized for their achievements and accomplishments instead of being pitied. He wanted everyone to understand their incredible determination, capabilities, and talents. Ms. Wheelchair America has provided that platform. For over 50 years, women have gathered not just to compete for a title but to find their voice and gain the confidence to use it. Since the first competition with three contestants, there have now been over 1,000 state titleholders that have broken barriers for change. We must thank Dr. Wood for being a visionary; this organization would not exist without his passion.

Ms. Wheelchair America has challenged and changed countless individuals in big and small ways. This year, 22 state titleholders will show their talents, capabilities, and determination and share a platform that has special meaning and importance to them. We want to congratulate each titleholder for the achievements that have brought them here. These titleholders truly represent why the Ms. Wheelchair America organization is essential. Your challenge is building a solid legacy like Dr. Philip K. Wood. Your legacy will require action that starts with you. Ready, set, go!

Be an Advocate,

Shelly Loose

President, Ms. Wheelchair America

Box 695 - Madison, MS 39130

1-616-840-0717

www.mswheelchairamerica.org



Ms. Wheelchair AMERICA



Ms. Wheelchair America Creed

*As Ms. Wheelchair America,
I promise to do my best to
promote public awareness of
people with disabilities, to use my
time and efforts to this purpose, to
strive to achieve the best that is
within me, to offer my hand in
friendship to everyone I meet, to
be cheerful, honest and loving, to
give hope to the less fortunate, to
set an example by my attitude,
and to do all this with of grace,
warmth and dignity.*

Continuing the Legacy

For 50 years, volunteers have staffed Ms. Wheelchair America. What started with Dr. Wood and a few of his associates have become the Ms. Wheelchair America of today. Since 1972, there have been over 1,000 diverse state titleholders with disabilities from 49 states and Puerto Rico that have attended a National Competition. Behind the scenes, there have only been volunteers! Dedicated volunteers of all races, ethnicities, ages, genders, backgrounds, and abilities. To bring women together, not simply compete for a crown. With the goal to empower, encourage and celebrate their unique abilities to help remove barriers that all people have faced with disabilities.

These volunteers are the Ms. Wheelchair America legacy. Their work continues through the actions of our current volunteers. The Ms. Wheelchair America State Coordinators are a dedicated group of volunteers that played a tremendous role in the success of Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc. Without the dedication and efforts of these State Coordinators, Ms. Wheelchair America could not survive. Many have held the state title and experienced the power of Ms. Wheelchair America. They are passionate about advocating, educating, and empowering women to understand their value as a woman, not just as a woman that uses a wheelchair for mobility.

Throughout the year, a state coordinator is responsible for many aspects of leading and cultivating the program in their state. They ensure the state program operates within the policies of Ms. Wheelchair America. State coordinators recruit contestants, plan, hold a state competition, and crown a titleholder. They actively mentor, guide, and support the titleholder in all aspects of their reign, for instance, helping find appearance opportunities, raising funds, and helping them prepare them for the National Competition. These tasks require using their time, talents, and resources. State coordinators are amazing volunteers trying to impact people with disabilities positively!

It is essential to recognize and thank the current state coordinators. Together they have accumulated more than 100 years of service to Ms. Wheelchair America. It is their work that is keeping the legacy alive.

**“ I WANNA SEE
FEISTY
DISABLED PEOPLE
CHANGE
THE WORLD
JUDY HEUMANN ”**

Our History

In 1972, Dr. Philip K. Wood of Columbus, Ohio, devoted his career to treating and rehabilitating people with functional impairments. During his practice, he became aware of the talents, capabilities, determination, and courage of people with disabilities. As a result, he established Ms. Wheelchair America as a forum for promoting the achievements and accomplishments of women who utilize wheelchairs for mobility and the needs of all persons with mobility challenges.

The mission of Ms. Wheelchair America is to provide an opportunity for achievement for women who happen to be wheelchair users to successfully educate and advocate for the more than 64 million Americans living with disabilities. The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is in no way a traditional beauty contest.

Our Purpose and Goals

Each year the Ms. Wheelchair America Program holds a competition to select an accomplished, articulate spokeswoman for people with disabilities. The national titleholder must be able to communicate and educate the public, business community, and lawmakers regarding the dignity, productivity, and value of people with disabilities. Ms. Wheelchair America continues to eliminate the architectural and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disabilities from assuming their rightful place in society, which promotes inclusion.

Ms. Wheelchair America has numerous duties. As the National Titleholder, she will travel, visit advocacy groups, make public appearances, and conduct interviews. Ms. Wheelchair America promotes her chosen platform in various settings with a wide range of individuals. She is a positive role model for the next generation of Americans with disabilities, inspiring them to have an impact and leave a positive legacy. Her commitment and personal example serve to further the mission of Ms. Wheelchair America.

This competition gathers advocates from across America to participate in various activities, to become better advocates to impact people in their state. These activities allow a panel of judges to spend time with each state titleholder while allowing the competitors time to share and develop strong bonds of friendships and sisterhood. They develop better advocacy skills while attending engaging workshops that strengthen them. The workshops build leadership skills, heighten awareness of the issues within the community, and open a dialogue between the women about their thoughts, ideas, values, and experiences.

Ms. Wheelchair America, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is staffed and coordinated solely by volunteers from various community organizations, businesses, private citizens, and previous titleholders. Through many sponsors' monetary and in-kind support, the national titleholder can fulfill her duties throughout the year and travel across the country with her message of empowerment for people with disabilities. The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is actively seeking volunteers and sponsors and would appreciate any support.



National Titleholders

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1973 Patricia Nevins of Michigan | 1998 Terri Cecil of Kentucky |
| 1974 Caryl Jane Robinson of Texas | 1999 Christina Gilmore of Wisconsin |
| 1975 Diana Kenderian of New Jersey | 2000 Tracy Charlton-O'Connor of South Dakota |
| 1976 Dixie Lee Etheridge of Mississippi | 2001 Nicki Ard of South Carolina |
| 1977 Beverly Chapman of Florida | 2002 Candy Marsh of Colorado |
| 1978 Margie Sloan of Georgia | 2003 Catherine Gugala of Wisconsin |
| 1979 Marge Chmielewski of Michigan | 2004 Cinda Hughes of Oklahoma |
| 1980 Nancy Pudvin of Georgia | 2005 Juliette Rizzo of Maryland |
| 1981 Vivienne Thompson of Massachusetts | 2006 Kristen Connors of Rhode Island |
| 1982 Marian Schooling-Vessels of Maryland | 2007 Autumn Grant of Massachusetts |
| 1983 Barbara Crozier of Alabama | 2008 Kristen McCosh of Massachusetts |
| 1984 Gaynell Colburn of Maryland | 2009 Michelle Colvard of Texas |
| 1985 Lori Cottam of Utah | 2010 Erika Bogan of North Carolina |
| 1986 Donna Cline of Nevada | 2011 Alexandra McArthur of North Carolina |
| 1987 Sandra Honbaier of North Carolina | 2012 Josie Badger of Pennsylvania |
| 1988 Peggy Simpson of Alabama | 2013 Mariah Kilbourne of Texas |
| 1989 Jewell Massey of Georgia | 2014 Jennifer Adams of Washington |
| 1990 Kathy Garcia Farnsworth of Utah | 2015 Samantha Schroth of Wisconsin |
| 1991 Mercedes Rodriguez-Fowler of Florida | 2016 Alette Coble-Temple of California |
| 1992 Deanna VanHook of Texas | 2017 Eliza McIntosh-Stauffer of Utah |
| 1993 Kim Mensi of Alabama | 2018 Sheri Melander-Smith of Minnesota |
| 1994 Dawn Blodgett of California | 2019 Karen Roy of Louisiana |
| 1995 Wendy Petzold of Wisconsin | 2020 Hilary Meuhlenberger of Missouri |
| 1996 Amy Baxter-Ley of Texas | 2022 Christine Burke of California |
| 1997 Elaine Stefanowicz of Washington | 2023 Ali Ingersoll of North Carolina |
| | 2024 Chandra Smith of Maryland |



Ms. Wheelchair America Leadership

2024 Board of Directors

President	Shelly Loose
Vice President	Mary Zendejas
Secretary	Angela Piazza
Treasurer	Kathleen Barajas
Member at Large	Rebecca Sentell
Member at Large	Sameka Andrews

2024 State Coordinators

Arkansas	Erica Graser-Gates
Arizona	Brooke Brown
California	Angela Piazza
Colorado	Jennifer Ochs
Florida	Shari Wilson
Iowa	Samantha Edwards
Kansas	Carrie Greenwood
Kentucky	Beth Bryant
Michigan	Shelly Loose
Mississippi	Rebecca Sentell
New Jersey	Kathy Ford
New York	Shameka Andrews
Ohio	Laura Sykes
Oregon	Leslie Keller
Pennsylvania	Kristin Rebstock
Rhode Island	Ashley Cabrita
South Carolina	Angela Young
Virginia	Garrett Brumfield
Washington	Krystal Monteros
Wisconsin	Autumn Neugent
Wyoming	Masha Flinn
Delegate Coordinator	
Louisiana	Teka Perry
Maryland	Shannon Minnick
Missouri	Lea Donaghy
North Dakota	Annie Heath

Ms. Wheelchair America 2024 Chandra Smith Farewell

**“A crown worn on the head will last a year,
but a crown worn in the heart will last a lifetime. “**

A year ago, I embarked on my journey as Ms. Wheelchair America 24. The largest and most selfless village of human beings on this earth made this journey possible with their support, hard work, and dedication; I was crowned Ms. Wheelchair America 24, and the journey of a lifetime began. When I was crowned that night, I saw my crown and sash not as a prize but an opportunity. It was an opportunity to represent this great organization, not only to change the world but to serve it with passion and grow into my best version.

As I bid farewell to a chapter filled with unforgettable memories and triumphs celebrated, it marks both an end and a beginning—the conclusion of my reign and the dawn of new adventures for us all. Throughout this year, I hope I have served you all well. Perhaps through my advocacy, I have brought the many issues facing the disability community to the forefront of society.



Throughout this year, I have been able to promote my platform, “Accessibility Starts with Us,” and educate hundreds on how to create accessible information communication technology and raise awareness about the importance of digital accessibility. The impact of this platform, seen through the growth and influence of hashtags like #AccessibilityMatters and #TechForAll, has been significant. It has created vibrant communities where knowledge is shared, and voices are amplified. I am hopeful and confident that this momentum will continue and inspire more people to join this cause.

These online movements have empowered individuals and organizations to prioritize and champion accessibility in their digital endeavors. During my quest to advocate, educate, and inspire, I have relentlessly pursued the empowerment of individuals of all abilities, striving to create a more inclusive and accessible world for everyone in both the physical and virtual realms. This cause is not just important; it is essential. It is a cause that we must all continue to fight for, a cause that demands our unwavering commitment to accessibility and inclusivity.

PICTORING MARYLAND



‘USE YOUR VOICE’

Chandra Smith, Ms. Wheelchair America, visits The League for People with Disabilities with the message that everyone should “Use Your Voice” to be a champion. Surrounding her from left are Tasha Brown, Angie Smith, Rosemarie Bartholme and Erica Cooney. Smith, 36, of Trondheim, is an IT engineer for the Defense Intelligence Agency. She became a triple amputee two years ago after suffering multi-organ failure. Kidney by organ and a stroke that kept her hospitalized for a year. Smith embraces her new role to be a champion for the 64 million Americans living with disabilities.





I have traveled to over ten states and completed more than 41 engagements, ranging from participating in parades, conferences, and special events to appearing in TV interviews, newspapers, podcasts, and radio stations. I have collaborated with legislators and policymakers, testified for impactful policies such as the Universal Design Housing Bill, and successfully won a lawsuit to improve hotel ADA conditions.

Additionally, I have visited hospitals, served as a mentor, and spoken at schools. I have conducted workshops, created presentations for the Intelligence Community and other Federal sectors, and produced videos and vignettes to educate people on creating accessible documents, meetings, and more.

Furthermore, I have been elected to the Disability Council in Maryland and elected to serve as a board member for The League for People with Disabilities. My advocacy efforts have been recognized with numerous awards, including Governor, Senate, and executive citations. Reflecting on these accomplishments, I am deeply grateful for the support and camaraderie of my Ms. Wheelchair America sisters, class of 2024. Thank you for allowing me to represent you this year and for lifting me every step of the way. Your encouragement and warm welcomes whenever I was in your state have meant the world to me.



I boast about you all daily and am constantly inspired by the hardworking, influential women you are. I cannot wait to see how you continue to change the world. Some notable events that will stay with me forever include skiing in South Dakota, testifying for legislation, leading a parade in New York, volunteering at local community events, and speaking at numerous venues alongside other disability advocates. These moments were monumental in my journey, but what truly stands out are the smaller, more personal interactions that have defined this incredible path.



I'll always cherish the laughter shared with new friends, the heartfelt conversations with attendees after my speeches, and the incredible sense of community and belonging that has been a constant companion. These moments of connection remind me why I do what I do. One such moment occurred with a girl in Texas who uses a wheelchair for mobility but loves to dance. Her joy was infectious as she asked me to join her in a dance. Seeing her face light up as we moved together reminded me of the power of representation and shared experiences.

Then there's Erica, whom I met at The League for People with Disabilities in Baltimore after giving a speech. Erica is a bright and spirited young girl who uses a wheelchair and has always dreamt of being an advocate. Her eyes lit up with hope and determination when she saw me speak. With tears in her eyes, she told me she wanted to be just like me, advocating for others and making a difference in the world. Witnessing Erica's excitement and watching her take her first steps toward advocacy was a moment that will stay with me forever.

These small yet profound events have reinforced a vital truth: you never know when you will improve someone's life. They remind me that every interaction, no matter how seemingly insignificant, holds the potential to inspire and uplift. These connections fuel my passion for advocacy and commitment to creating a more inclusive and accessible world for future generations.

As I conclude this incredible journey, I am reminded of a powerful quote by Mahatma Gandhi: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Advocacy is not just about changing the world; it's about serving it with passion, empathy, and unwavering commitment. I encourage everyone to be advocates, stand up for what is right, and make a positive impact wherever they can.



This year has been a period of tremendous growth for me. Although I have only been disabled for three years, I have learned that my disability does not define me—it has empowered me to become a more vigorous, more compassionate advocate. Through this journey, I have discovered that serving others is my true purpose, which I believe was guided by God. My faith has given me the strength and determination to turn my challenges into opportunities to help and uplift those around me.

I have discovered new depths of resilience and determination. I am more committed than ever to fostering an inclusive and accessible world. I sincerely thank the volunteers, sponsors, supporters, and everyone who made this journey possible. Your encouragement and belief in this mission have been the driving force behind every success.

To my family, friends, mentor, and wheel sisters, thank you for your unwavering support and for inspiring me every step of the way. Let's continue to create an accommodating and inclusive world for everyone.

All the best,

Chandra Smith, Ms. Wheelchair America 2024

Meet the Titleholders



Ms. Wheelchair Arizona 2024 is Sharon Malone

Sharon lives in Mesa, Arizona, and works as a Peer Mentor Specialist at Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Arizona State University. Sharon enjoys scuba diving, camping, and self-defense. On October 24, 2012, she was involved in a motor vehicle accident that resulted in a spinal cord injury. The injury severed her spine at the T5/T12 level, leading to a diagnosis of T5 complete paraplegia. Her platform focuses on safety education for people with disabilities. Sharon describes herself as adventurous, tenacious, and driven.



Ms. Wheelchair Arkansas 2024 is Erica Vaughan

Erica Vaughan lives in Pettigrew, Arkansas and works for ATG Consulting. On January 10th, 2022, Erica was traveling home, when 3 deer ran out in the road causing the driver of the vehicle to run into a ditch. The vehicle then hit a tree head on causing Erica to become a quadriplegic, sustaining injury C3-C7 and T2-T4. But this hasn't stopped her! Only 2 years out from her injury, Erica is an advocate and volunteer at "Heart and Soul Outdoors", "Cast for Kids", "Heroes on Water" and "Child Care Aware"; Erica also feeds the unhoused with the rotary and works closely with local chambers. Erica received a Bachelor of Hospitality in business at University of Arkansas. In her free time, she enjoys hunting, fishing, and riding her ATV. Her platform focuses on "Never Say Never! Equality for All In the Outdoors!". Erica describes herself as humble, passionate, and fierce.



Ms. Wheelchair California 2024 is Julienne Dallara

Julienne lives in Camarillo, California, and works for Abilities Expo. Julienne has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mills College and enjoys gardening, painting, and making jewelry (and she didn't want to leave out dancing)! In 1996, Julienne was paralyzed overnight, by Idiopathic Transverse Myelitis. Her platform is to get non-profits to work together to streamline change. Julienne describes herself as intelligent, kind and unstoppable.



Ms. Wheelchair Kansas 2024 is Tamara Blackwell

Tamara lives in Bel Aire, Kansas, where she owns, Tammy's Tots Home Daycare. She also does a lot of work within her community through her church and as a licensed missionary. She studied Early Childhood Education at Walden University. Tamara enjoys making social media content, spending time with her family (including her fur-babies), and singing. Thirteen years ago, Tamara was diagnosed with Limb-Girdle Muscular Dystrophy. Her platform focuses on navigating Accessibility Through Personal Experience. Tamara describes herself as resilient, inspirational, and multifaceted.

Meet the Titleholders



Ms. Wheelchair Kentucky 2024 is Briana 'Breezy' Williams

'Breezy' lives in Louisville, Kentucky, and founded the non-profit organization Breezy's Closet, which supplies items that are essential to daily living for people with disabilities but are not typically covered by insurance. She obtained her Associate of Science in Accounting in 2014 and her Bachelor of Science in Accounting in 2021. She loves doing crafts, volunteering at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, and anything that keeps her involved in the community. On July 5, 2020, Breezy sustained a C6-C7 incomplete spinal cord injury in a motor vehicle accident. Her platform focuses on wheelchairs in the Community Breezy describes herself as resilient, loyal, and direct.



Ms. Wheelchair Louisiana 2024 is Justina Plowden

Justina lives in Abbeville, Louisiana, and is the founder of WeMatter disability organization. She studied psychology at McNeese State University and is currently studying to obtain her associate's degree in the paralegal and social sciences at South University. Justina enjoys reading, writing, and sharing live music experiences with her daughter. In October of 2011, Justina was in a car accident which caused her to become a C-5/6 incomplete quadriplegic. Her platform focuses on Bridging the Gap for more inclusive accessible transportation for the disability community. Justina describes herself as resilient, dedicated, and caring.



Ms. Wheelchair Maryland 2024 is Dominique Sessa

Dominique lives in Salisbury, Maryland. She serves on many committees and boards that serve the disability community, both locally and statewide. Dominique enjoys writing, reading, adaptive arts, volunteering and spending time with her loved ones (including her fur baby). Dominique's disability is a neuromuscular disease. Her platform centers on the high financial price of having a disability and aims to remove the cost barrier. Dominique describes herself as compassionate, energetic, and innovative.



Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2024 is Shanta' Favors

Shanta' (Shawn-tay) resides in Taylor, Michigan. She is a wife, mom and a passionate disability advocate. She dedicates her time volunteering at senior centers in Taylor and at Focus Hope in Detroit. Shanta' is an active member of the Michigan legislative disability caucus, a peer mentor for the United Spinal Association, and serves as the regional advocacy chairwoman of her chapter. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and Public Health from Oakland University and has acquired multiple certificates in health care. Her hobbies include photography, exploring interior design, and watching Law and Order avidly. On July 3, 2018, Shanta' became a C2-C7 incomplete quadriplegic spinal cord injury warrior following a severe fall down a flight of stairs while working as a director of care. Her platform focuses on bridging the gap between direct caretakers and the disability community. She describes herself as resilient, a believer, and tenacious.

Meet the Titleholders



Ms. Wheelchair Missouri 2024 is Tyra Randle

Tyra lives in Kansas City, Missouri, and works at North Kansas City Hospital. She studied at Maplewood Community College for nursing. Tyra enjoys shopping, history, and basketball. On January 15th of 2020, Tyra became a T-11,T-12 paraplegic due to being shot 8 times in her home by her son's father. Her platform focuses on Advocating for Empowerment. Tyra describes herself as independent, kind, and witty.



Ms. Wheelchair Mississippi 2024 is Mercetia Jenkins

Mercetia lives in Columbus, Mississippi, and works at AEG vision remote & PROM campaign. She earned her associate's degree in liberal arts at EMCC, bachelor's degree in public health and master's degree in health education at the Mississippi University for Men and Women. Mercetia enjoys ATV and horse riding, traveling with her family, and online shopping! At the age of sixteen, she was left paralyzed from the breast line down due to a hit and run car accident. Her platform focuses Equal Job Opportunities for Those with Disabilities. Mercetia describes herself as self driven, resilient, and encouraging.



Ms. Wheelchair New Jersey 2024 is Kelly Stout

Kelly lives in Gibbsboro, New Jersey and works at St. John of God Community Services in Westville. She received her Master of Science Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Wright State University. Kelly enjoys attending weekly mass at her catholic church, spending time with her family, friends, and boyfriend, and helping other people with disabilities achieve their dreams. She was born with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy after experiencing a hemorrhage in her cerebellum. Her platform focuses on Independent Living for All. Kelly describes herself as determined, resilient, and compassionate.



Ms. Wheelchair New York 2024 is Amar Sharif

Amar lives in Brooklyn, New York, and spends her time interviewing people in the disability community for her website and Instagram called Sexy Disabled Folks, which aims to close the gap on the lack of sexual health resources and services for people with disabilities. She earned a master's in social work from Hunter College. Amar enjoys diamond art, going to museums, and shopping. Amar was born with Spina Bifida. Her platform focuses on disabled women's health is disabled women's wealth. Amar describes herself as friendly, empathetic, and sociable.

Meet the Titleholders



Ms. Wheelchair North Dakota 2024 is Agatha Gietzen

Agatha lives in Bismarck, North Dakota and works at the YMCA. She also volunteers with CPABLE, Dreams in Motion and the McQuade's Softball Tournament. In 2013, she obtained her general education diploma. Agatha enjoys adaptive sports, spending time with her nieces and nephews, and wheelchair dancing and listening to music. Agatha has congenital cerebral palsy that was diagnosed at six months old. Her platform focuses on If you choose to embrace us as we are, you will discover a sky full of stars. Agatha describes herself as energetic, cheerful, and tenacious.



Ms. Wheelchair Ohio 2024 is Gabby Kozinski

Gabby lives in Bucyrus, Ohio, and volunteers her time reading to the kids at the local YMCA. Gabby is the daughter of Craig (Holly) Kozinski and Kathrine (Bryan) Miller with numerous siblings on both sides. She received her high school diploma from Bucyrus High School. Gabby enjoys reading, hanging out with friends and family, and is an active part of Special Olympics- where she is involved in cheerleading, basketball, track, and bowling. Gabby also has a strong passion for working with children. She has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy because of encephalitis during infancy. Her platform focuses on "Knowledge Is Power". Gabby describes herself as determined, outgoing and ambitious.



Ms. Wheelchair Oregon 2024 is Anne Giffin

Anne lives in Salem, Oregon, and works at Willamette Health Counsel she also volunteers at Project Able, and R.O.C.C. She is currently working on obtaining her general education diploma – she has already passed the social studies portion of the test. Anne enjoys dragon boating and doing volunteer work. In 2005 Anne became an above the right knee amputee. Her platform focuses on peer support for all people with disabilities. Anne describes herself as empathetic, dedicated, and driven.



Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania 2024 is Christine Vasui

Christine lives in Erie, Pennsylvania, and is employed at Voices for Independence. She received a bachelor's degree in individualized studies with a focus on social work from Edinboro University. Christine enjoys going to concerts, adaptive water skiing, and spending time with family and friends. Christine has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy. Her platform focuses on Better Pay, Better Care. Christine describes herself as ambitious, dedicated, and compassionate.

Meet the Titleholders



Ms. Wheelchair Rhode Island 2024 is Cheryl Monroe

Cheryl is a native of the indigenous community and lives in Providence, Rhode Island, where she is a certified Holistic Health and Mental Emotional Wellness Life-Coach. She obtained an associate degree from Community College of RI. Cheryl enjoys creating crafts, ministering and mentoring women, music, quiet time and traveling. Her disability is post-polio. At the tender age of two, she contracted Poliomyelitis which left her paralyzed from the waist down and damaged her nervous system as well as her spine. Her platform focuses on we are not our disability. Cheryl describes herself as unstoppable, empathetic and resilient.



Ms. Wheelchair South Carolina 2024 is Kathryn Hicks

Kathryn lives in Six Mile, South Carolina, where she volunteers all over her community. While a student at D.W Daniel High School, Kathryn obtained one of the highest Work Keys test scores. Kathryn enjoys attending church, writing, and going to concerts. Kathryn was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy at 13 months. Her platform focuses on Voice of the People. Kathryn describes herself as faithful, determined, and a fighter.



Ms. Wheelchair Virginia 2024 is Hani Baloch

Hani lives in Reston, Virginia, and works at Regal Cinemas. She received a certification in business administration from Wilson Workforce & Rehabilitation Center. Hani enjoys painting, dancing, and writing. At birth, she was diagnosed with Spina Bifida. Her platform focuses on Learning to love yourself. Hani describes herself as determined, trustworthy, motivated.



Ms. Wheelchair Washington 2024 is Jill McAuley

Jill lives in Woodinville, Washington. She is Senior Vice President of Administration and a partner in the consulting company, Certainty Management. Jill volunteers with the Disability Advocacy Coalition of Washington, Seattle Children's Hospital, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' youth program. She earned an associate's degree from Cascadia Community College and a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Brigham Young University. Jill enjoys being in nature, writing, and finding deep purpose in her experience through her faith. In 2000, Jill was in a car accident which resulted in her becoming a C5 complete spinal cord injury. Her platform focuses on Wheeling Toward Wellness: Navigating Mental Health in a Wheelchair. Jill describes herself as faithful, unwavering, and perceptive.

Meet the Titleholders



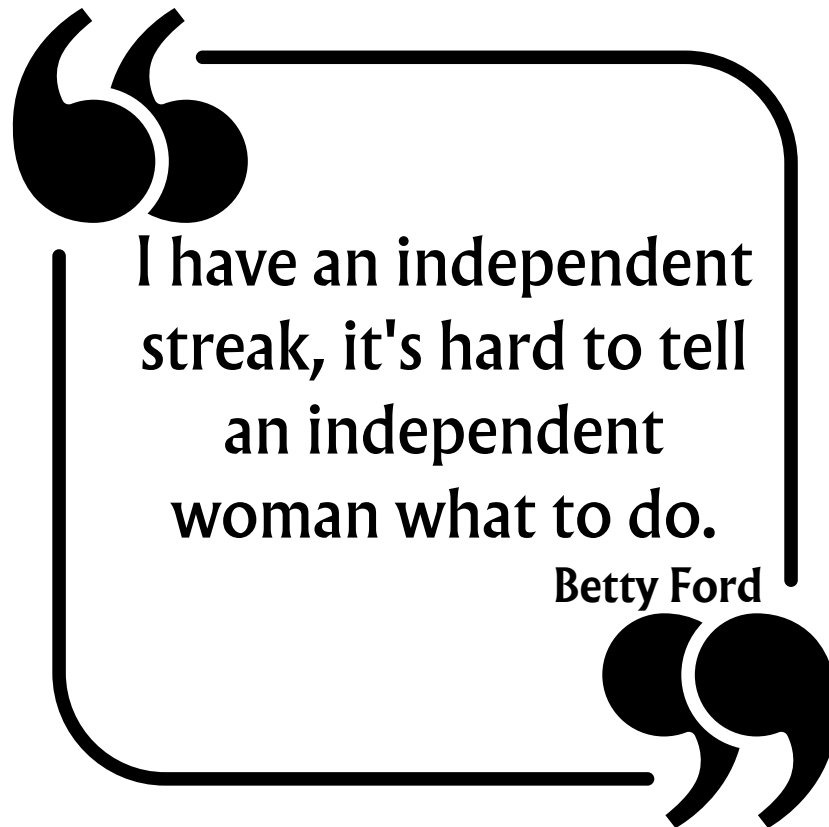
Ms. Wheelchair Wisconsin 2024 is Rayquetta Lawrence

Ray lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and has volunteered at St. Joseph's Hospital in the administration department. Currently, Ray is volunteering at K&C Learning Center LLC, reading to kids. She has the goal to obtain her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication. Ray enjoys music, fashion, modeling, and going to the movies. She has Cerebral Palsy which was diagnosed at 1 year old. Her platform focuses on equality and proving to the world that having a disability does not mean that you have the inability to succeed. Ray describes herself as creative, determined, and observant.



Ms. Wheelchair Wyoming 2023 is Harlee Speyer

Harlee lives in Riverton, Wyoming, and works at Jackson Elementary school and volunteers at the Special Olympics. She has received an Associates of Science in Social Science at Central Wyoming College. Harlee enjoys going to concerts, farmers markets, and is a DJ in her free time. On June 30, 2014, Harlee was in a car accident and became a C6/C7 quadriplegic. Her platform focuses on accessibility for all. Harlee describes herself as strong, resilient and funny.



**I have an independent
streak, it's hard to tell
an independent
woman what to do.**

Betty Ford

Meet the Judges



Stephanie Deible

Stephanie Deible is a disability services professional and nonprofit leader. She has a deep rooted passion for creating pathways that lead to and elevate inclusion, belonging, and accessibility. Stephanie is serving as the Program and Partnership Manager for Michigan Nonprofit Association where she is integral to the design, management, and evolution of MNA programs. Her work solidifies the organization's dedication to elevating the voice and leadership of the nonprofit sector. She was appointed to the Michigan Statewide Independent Living Council in 2020, she collaborates with Michigan Rehabilitation Services, the Bureau of Services to Blind Persons, Michigan's Centers for Independent Living, and other partner organizations to work to ensure that people with disabilities are valued and their rights are inherent in all aspects of life. Stephanie has also been involved with the Ms. Wheelchair America organization in varying capacities over the last 12 years. In March of 2012, she was crowned Ms. Wheelchair Michigan. She also previously served as the Executive Director of Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc. from 2015 to 2021. Stephanie holds dual degrees from Grand Valley State University a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, and a Master's in Education focusing on student affairs and leadership. Outside her professional sphere, Stephanie is an avid adventurer and sports enthusiast. She finds joy in traveling, swimming, skiing, and spending quality time with her loved ones.



David Hale

David Hale, born and raised in South Mississippi, faced early adversity with his father in prison. At 16, a drunk driving accident left him paralyzed from the chest down. Struggling with his new reality, David battled depression and addiction, eventually becoming homeless. On August 7, 2011, David's life transformed when he dedicated himself to Jesus Christ. Since then (9th grade education), he has earned a GED, Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling(em: Mental Health) graduating with honors. Now a counselor for those with alcohol and drug addictions, David is also pursuing certification as a Prevention Specialist and is a Provisionally Certified Licensed Counselor. David is passionately involved in the PIE (Prevention Includes Everyone) initiative with the Arc of Mississippi. He is also the founder of "Life Without Limits." As a motivational speaker, he emphasizes the power of choices and their consequences. His mission is to inspire others to believe that with faith, determination, and hard work, they can overcome any obstacle and lead a life without limits, "Breaking Chains".



Mira Jourdan

Mira Jourdan is a clinical neuropsychologist and currently serves as a Vice President of the Mary Free Bed Guild, which is devoted to restoring hope and freedom through rehabilitation. A significant portion of her work is focused on autism and traumatic brain injury. She lives in Grand Rapids, MI, with her husband, Teri. Besides advocating alongside people with disabilities, she is also active in LGBTQ+ advocacy, and other service includes serving on the board of Special Olympics of Michigan and as a member of the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association. Mira got introduced to Ms. Wheelchair America through the Mary Free Bed Guild, attending the night of contestant speeches, a couple of years ago, and was instantly hooked! She joined our judging panel last year, and is serving as a returning judge for this year's competition.

Meet the Judges



Alesha Savannah

Alesha Savannah is a proud Black, Disabled, Queer woman who acquired a spinal cord injury in an auto accident in 2019. Alesha had the opportunity to do her rehab at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta. She continues volunteering to serve as Peer Support to newly injured patients and a Welcome Liason for many of their adaptive camps. Alesha worked as a Master Cosmetologist and Herbalife Nutrition Coach before winning the title of Ms. Wheelchair Georgia 2022, which helped change her life trajectory. Meeting disabled people across the state of Georgia, discussing her platform, “disability isn’t a curse,” and competing in the national competition where she won the Ms. Congenitally award, she realized she loved serving the disability community. Alesha is currently a full-time sophomore at William Paterson University of New Jersey, working to earn her BA in Disability Studies. She also volunteers for the non-profit organization Open Inclusion as a panel lead, amplifying the voices of the mobility-impaired community amongst other impressive panel leads with various disabilities. In her free time, she loves to travel, exploring different foods, participate in adaptive sports, create, and spend quality time with her significant other, K along with family, friends, and their fur baby, YoYo.



Leandro “Leo” Robles

Born in Tucumán, Argentina, Leandro Robles has been a resident of Grand Rapids, Michigan for the last 17 years. He practiced law for 10 years in his family’s law firm, focusing on criminal, family and constitutional law. He earned a law degree and a Masters in Political Science in Argentina, and a Masters degree in Public Administration from Grand Valley State University. Leandro taught as an Adjunct Professor at Grand Valley State University for several years, educating students in a wide variety of courses including Human Rights in Latin America, Trade Commerce and Society in Latin America, Diversity in the United States and Spanish for Law Enforcement.

Currently, Leandro is a realtor with Coldwell Banker where he excels at providing exceptional customer service when listing a client’s property or when helping client buy their homes. He is a Certified Global Luxury Marketing Specialist.

He enjoys traveling throughout the United States and abroad, all forms of art, especially symphony and opera, foreign films and golf when the courses in Michigan are free of snow.

More on the Judging Process

Each state titleholder will receive a score in four different areas from each judge on the judging panel. They are:

- Titleholder Application
- Essay Written by the Titleholder
- Two Panel Judging Sessions, one 10-minute and the other a 15-minute interview
- Platform speech

In addition, the top five finalists named during Saturday’s Crowning Gala will answer two questions in front of the audience that will be scored. After all the judging sessions are complete, the titleholder with the highest overall score will become Ms. Wheelchair America 2025.



Awards

Ms. Wheelchair America 2025

is chosen by the judging panel. The contestant that earns the highest total score during the judging sessions will become Ms. Wheelchair America 2025.

Lifetime Achievement Award

is chosen by the judges and given to the contestant that they believe has made the largest contribution and significant impact for people with disabilities.

Nicki Ard Achievement Award

is chosen by the judges and awarded to the woman who exemplifies the philosophy of Nicki Ard, to “always exhibit a positive attitude and be willing to serve others.” for outstanding contribution to the disability community with her talents, her efforts, and her example.

Outstanding Speech Award

is chosen by those in attendance on speech night for the most memorable speech of the evening.

People's Choice Award

is chosen by the public for receiving the most votes during this online fundraiser. Forty percent of the funds raised are given to the state program of the winner, while the remaining sixty percent go to the Ms. Wheelchair America Personal Care Attendant Fund.

Congeniality Award

is chosen by the contestants for displaying sincere kindness, helpfulness, and a caring throughout the week.

Hope and Freedom Award

is chosen by the Mary Free Bed Guild for demonstrating hope and positivity in their life, advocacy and a commitment to our mission of hope and freedom for all those living with a disability.

Judy Hoit Legacy Award

is given to an individual who has displayed a commitment to the Ms. Wheelchair America organization and the disabled community through humility, selflessness, and perseverance, qualities Judy displayed during her 20 years of service to Ms. Wheelchair America.

Blooming Artist Award

is given to an individual who embodies the spirit of growth, resilience and innovation, making a lasting impact on their community and the world of art.

Ms. Wheelchair America says **Thank you!**

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Susan Bloss
Kristina Breon
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Volunteers are not paid,
not because they are
worthless, but because
they are priceless.

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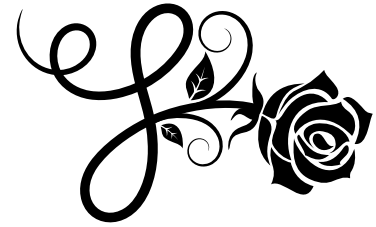
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Angela Piazza, California State Coordinator
Gina Louise Dallara
Hilary Elizabeth Marie Skov
Nicholas Angelo Skov
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Angelina, Angel and Alecia

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2025 Titleholder Sponsors

Ms. Wheelchair Michigan

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Stacey Alberty
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Teresa Sutter and Alena Fox
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Christine Vasui

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Organization
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The Social Club
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2025 Titleholder Sponsors

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Kathryn Hicks

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*Thank you for your outstanding service
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Ms. Wheelchair Arizona, Sharon Malone
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From your friends in the brain injury survivor community.



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Best of luck and ongoing success!



*Sharon Malone
Ms. Wheelchair Arizona*



*Justina Plowden
Ms. Wheelchair Louisiana*



*Harlee Speyer
Ms. Wheelchair Wyoming*

Thank you for your invaluable contributions to our National Paralysis Resource Center. We greatly appreciate your commitment to promoting our free resources, services, and programs. The relationships you cultivate and the education you offer to elected officials are essential to advancing the Foundation's mission.

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We Are So Incredibly Proud of You Erica and ALL your accomplishments! Love Your Ms. Arkansas Wheelchair Family!



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Congratulations Julienne!

Ms. Wheelchair California 2024

You love us...
but we
love you
MORE!!!



xoxo,

FEELDOM

Congratulations Julienne, Ms Wheelchair California 2024



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The Feeldom logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a stylized bag icon inside. Above the bag is the text "ONE BAG FOR ALL" and below it is "FEELDOM".

FeeldomLife.com

A QR code located below the FeeldomLife.com text.



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Ms. Wheelchair California
Julienne Dallara!

And thank you to Ms. Wheelchair America for their impressive efforts to empower women with disabilities.



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Julienne,

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We are thrilled to be a part of this empowering community. Congratulations to Julienne, Ms. Wheelchair California 2024!

Ms Wheelchair California Leadership Institute

wishes our own

Julienne Dallara

Ms. Wheelchair California 2024

*the best of luck in
this year's national competition!*

We love you, Julienne!



***Ms. Wheelchair KY 2024
Briana Williams***



***GOOD LUCK
From Your
Friends,
Family
&***



Ms. Wheelchair Kentucky

Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2024
Shanta Favors



*Thank you for
your advocacy!*

*Continue to
Bridge the Gap!*



Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2024

Shanta Favors

Congratulations and best of luck in the Ms. Wheelchair America competition! Your achievement is a powerful example of your determination and resilience. I admire how you continue to shatter glass ceilings and inspire others.

Best wishes for your ongoing success

Nicole Huddleston
Candidate for Oakland County
Circuit Court Judge



You have been an exemplary representative for both caretakers and the disabled community, showcasing dedication and compassion.

Your tenure as the Director of Care at Evangelical Home Care set a high standard of excellence. Your unwavering passion for the well-being of caretakers and those with disabilities has not only guided your platform but has also inspired and elevated all those around you.

Best of luck at Ms. Wheelchair America.

Your former team at EHC!

**Congratulations Shanta' Favors on being
Michigan's Ms. Wheelchair 2024!**

**Shanta' you are intelligent, trustworthy and an
awesome person who cares about her family,
friends and community.**

**Wishing you the Best on becoming Ms.
Wheelchair of America 2025. You have the skills
and ability to complete this endeavor.**

YOU GOT THIS!!!

Forver in my heart ❤️

Your friend, sister, and soror

Muriel Cerise

**I know you got this. Keep on making us and the
world proud.**

Ernie

Love you, Cierra



**“There are four kinds of
People in the world:**

**Those who have been caregivers;
Those who currently are caregivers;
Those who will be caregivers;
And those who will need caregivers.”**

**Rosalyn Carter
Former First Lady**

**Shanta Favors provided loving care for my
brother,
went above and beyond for him,
the other residents,
her staff, and for me and the other families.**

**I am forever in her debt and wish her Godspeed
in her journey.**

**We wish you the best in your quest becoming Ms.
Wheelchair America 2025**



**Love,
Eunice**

a world where you can be anything, be kind

Shanta' Favors

Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2024



Dearest Shanta,

I think you are absolutely amazing, and yes; to God be the Glory! I am forever grateful that the time and season of our lives aligned, and we have been a part of each other's lives for the past 28 years. It has been an honor to watch you and support you as you have reached very significant milestones in your life; some natural and easy, and others hard fought and unimaginable. Here are a few reasons I think you are amazing, and I hope this sums it up for all who don't know you; just how amazing you are.

S-selfless, smart

H-happy, humble, helpful, hopeful

A-advocate

N-nice, neat, nurturing

T-thankful, thoughtful, trustworthy

A-admirable, artsy

F-faithful, friend

A-available

V-victorious

O-overcomer, odds beater

R-respectful, resilient, real

S-spirit filled, sincere

I have witnessed how these gifts and qualities you have are just who you are, as they are manifested in all areas of your life. You don't have enough names for me to capture all of you, but I hope you know that you are an angel, a blessing and an inspiration to a lot of people.

Continue to be that vessel for the Lord to use; He keeps filling you up, and you keep pouring out on, in, to and for others. I'm so very proud to call you, "my daughter from another mother". You are the right warrior for your current and future positions.

Love

Momma T (Roselyn Traylor)

Congratulations Shanta!



"It's always seems impossible until it's done."

Congratulations!

Ms. Wheelchair Michigan

I am so proud of your many achievements, as well as your inspiring focus, imagination, and determination. You truly are a leader to admire. Keep fighting to bridge the gap. I love you and wish you the best on your journey to becoming Ms. Wheelchair America!

Love,
Nancy Watson

You are an inspiration to some many!



We Love You, Mercetia

Love,

#ChairChicks



Congratulations

Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania 2024!



Christine Vasui



Thank you for your service and dedication to the Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania Organization. You make Pennsylvania proud!

Love, The MWPA Board of Directors

Kathryn, I'm so incredibly proud of you. You have worked so hard since the day you were crowned to get things changed for the disabled community despite all the pain you have been in yourself. You have always pushed harder than anyone I know. You get your strength through your weakness and by God's good grace. Every day, I get several comments from people around town. Some that know you and some that don't know you personally but have followed you and are so proud of what you've accomplished even with a disability. They talk about your determination and a job well done. I'm also thankful to God for trusting me with your life. Instead of me raising you, you have raised me and taught me to be a better person. Your positive outlook and your faith are unmeasurable. I will just say. "You've got this!" We have so many adventures ahead of us. I can't wait. I love you! -Karen/Mom
Remember this above all others. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil. 4:13



A father is bound by love to be proud of his child, but in Kathryn's case, proud would be an understatement. She is disabled by description alone. A label by society. I am amazed how she does not allow a label to keep here from achieving her dreams. Phil/Dad

Kathryn, is a inspiration to me for being so smart , everyone she meets she is always thinking of ways to help others she even wrote a book for people to enjoy. people at church always talks about how smart she is and always has a smile for everyone with love. Virginia/Grandma



Kathryn is very smart and determind! MaryAnn/Grandma





Niece

Aunt Tay continues to blow my mind in many ways, she is a strong, independent, beautiful woman. She is my inspiration to do anything I put my mind to and always look up to God, for he is my light and strength, and all things are possible through Christ, as he continues to give me strength day by day. Emma



Nephew

No matter what you go through you never give up. Bryson



Nephew

What inspires me most about Aunt Tay is... Even though she is in a wheelchair, she isn't afraid to be a normal person and doesn't let her wheelchair stop her. Hunter



Niece

My aunt inspires me because she does what every other person would do even in a wheelchair. Hayden



Kathryn Hicks is an inspiration to us all! She has accomplished so much, and if you tell her she can't do something, then she will find a way. I could not do the things she has done, she wrote a book and has published it and everyone loves it. She is a positive, strong minded young woman that fights for what she believes in, and today, she is fighting to make a change in this world for the Better! Go get em Kathryn! Danny



Brother in laws

Kathryn... For a woman who has never been able to stand, Kathryn sure does stand tall! She has had to overcome adversity since she took her first breath, and I've never heard her complain, unless I ate one of her pop tarts lol. From writing books to becoming Miss wheelchair, Kathryn's work ethic is undeniable! Just knowing her is a blessing! Jason



When anyone asks me about Kathryn, I always say "she's just like me, she just can't walk." Where there's a will, there's a way! Kathryn is faithful, strong, courageous, fearless, and kind. I have been blessed with two amazing sisters and for that I am so grateful. -Kaylin



"A sister is a gift to the heart, a friend to the spirit, a golden thread to the meaning of life." - Isadora James I have been blessed with two beautiful sisters. The three of us have shared a bond unlike any other. People will sometimes ask if I ever feel like I missed out because of Kathryn being in a wheelchair. My life has been incredibly enriched because of Kathryn. She is an inspiration to anyone she meets. Growing up I watched Kathryn get up and face each day with determination and faith knowing that God will get her through whatever she may face. When faced with adversity many people will question God and give up but she has had unwavering faith. She probably doesn't know this, but on the days that I think I absolutely cannot, I think of Kathryn and know that if she can do it so can I. I will forever thank God for giving me the sisters that I have! Felicia

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Ms. Wheelchair America is always recruiting the next State Titleholder. If you are interested or know a woman that uses a wheelchair for community mobility please email: director@mswheelchairamerica.org or call 616-840-0717



Alabama
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Updated 08/2024



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Contestants Needed From:

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Missouri
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New York
North Dakota
Ohio
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island

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Virginia
Washington
Wisconsin
Wyoming



Updated 08/2024

MISSION

Since 1972, Ms. Wheelchair America's mission has not changed: "Empowering women of achievement through leadership, advocacy, and education" by providing an opportunity for women to use their voice by promoting their achievements and communities and advocating for others with disabilities. This competition encourages women to see their potential, share their accomplishments, and use their voices to spark change.



STATE ORGANIZATION

Each state has an annual statewide competition to select a state titleholder. Who will travel throughout the state, meeting individuals with and without disabilities, speaking with elected officials, and attending different functions. She will share her message to raise awareness of the many accomplishments of people with disabilities, to remove both attitudinal and architectural barriers, and to increase knowledge for people with disabilities. Each state titleholder will advance to the National Competition representing their state.

NATIONAL TITLEHOLDER

Ms. Wheelchair America has many responsibilities. These include traveling across America and raising awareness of the many accomplishments of people with disabilities. She serves as a role model to everyone by making appearances to

- Help others become better advocates.
- Increase public awareness
- Provide a public forum to raise awareness about disabilities and remove barriers impacting the disability community.



ANNUAL COMPETITION

Yearly, Ms. Wheelchair America holds a National Competition to select the most accomplished, articulate spokeswoman for people with disabilities.

Each titleholder has panel judging interviews and presents a platform speech. The questions focus on their accomplishments, communication skills, and advocacy through the following areas:

- Personal interviews
- On stage interviews
- Platform speech presentations



www.mswheelchairamerica.org
director@mswheelchairamerica.org
 616-840-0717

INDEPENDENT DELEGATE

The Independent Delegate program allows women who live in states without an active program the opportunity to become a state titleholder for one year. After talking with our director, applying with references, and having an interview, the decision is announced. If selected, there is a crowning gala. They start advocating to raise awareness of various issues, travel their state, spread their message, AND compete in the National Competition!

FRONTLINE

You Can Be A Roll - **MODEL**

Make up your mind!

1 Timothy 4:12b

Others First!

Phillipians 2:3-4

Don't Give Up!

Galatians 6:9

In **E**verything Give Thanks!

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Lift Each Other Up!

Hebrews 10:24

Titus 2:7 - And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good deeds of every kind. Let everything you do reflect integrity and seriousness of your teaching.





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--Sherri Raeford, Daughter and Caregiver

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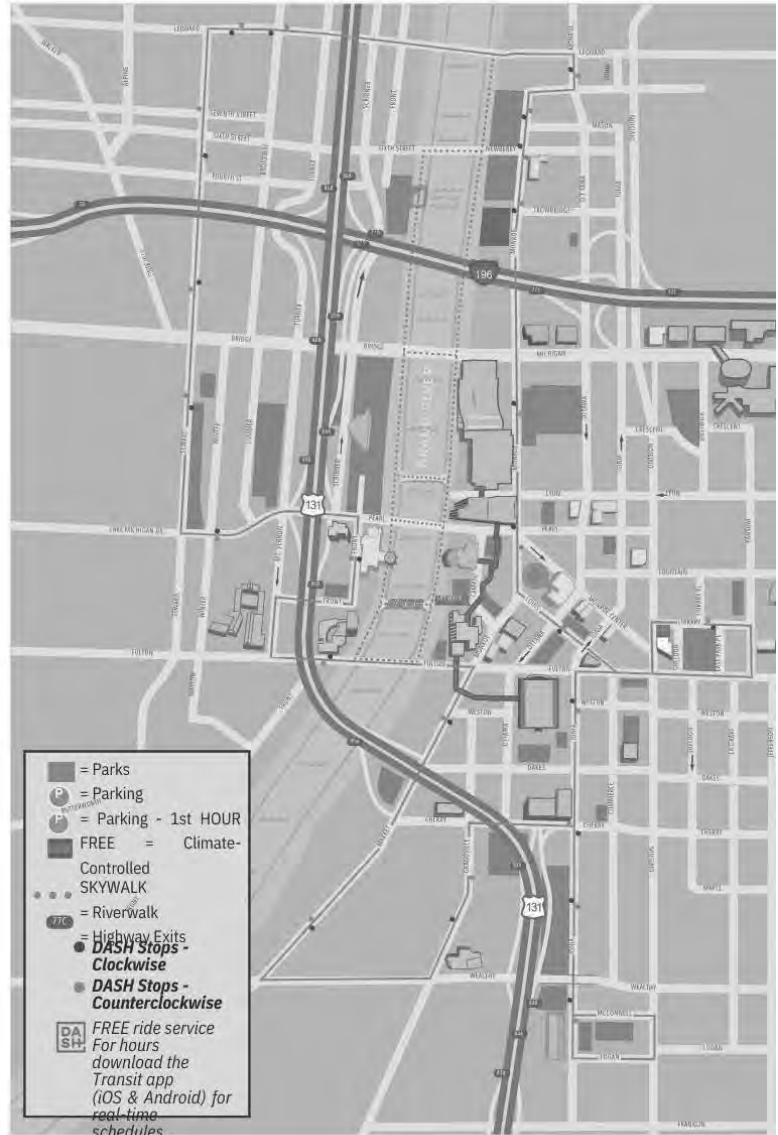
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Chandra Smith

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