



The Kamloops Self Advocate NEWSLETTER

January 2025

FREE! TAKE ONE! Serving people since September of 2013.

Welcome to the January 2025 Edition of The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter!

Happy New Year! As we step into 2025, it's the perfect time to reflect, reset, and set inspiring goals for the year ahead. Whether it's for your business, career, personal life, or health, the New Year brings new opportunities for growth and success. Let's make 2025 a year filled with hope, well-being, love, kindness, and compassion—a fresh start for us all.

We'd love to hear about your Christmas and New Year celebrations! Send us your stories and pictures, and you might see them featured in an upcoming issue. Sharing joy and community is what this newsletter is all about.

January is also a time to focus on mental health awareness with *Bell Let's Talk Day*. Let's remind ourselves of the importance of taking care of our mental health, reaching out for support when needed, and encouraging open conversations about mental well-being. Together, we can reduce stigma and foster understanding, inclusion, and compassion for everyone.

This month, we'll explore ways to recover from the holiday season with healthy eating tips and ideas to support your overall well-being. We'll also encourage you to dream big! Whether you're starting a new business, changing careers, or pursuing a passion, this is the time to set meaningful goals that align with your dreams and aspirations.

The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter is proud to highlight disability representation in the media. Our mission is to create awareness, share success stories, and promote inclusion for all. Let's celebrate the voices and contributions of people with disabilities and advocate for a more inclusive world.

Here's to a wonderful start to 2025—one filled with compassion, connection, and progress. Thank you for being part of our community.

Let's make this year one to remember!



Special thanks to The
Printing Place for your
continued
support of the Kamloops
Self-Advocate Newsletter.



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Celebrating Disability Awareness, success stories and inclusion for all! Written by people with Diverse Abilities **Do you have a story idea or an event you think would be good for our readers? Contact us at:**

thekamloopssselfadvocate@yahoo.com

113-540 Seymour St., Kamloops, BC V2C 2G9
Office phone: 250-828-1344.

We always look for writers and people to interview.

Please subscribe! Be sure to check out our online newsletter for bonus stories!

KSA Facebook page: **The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter**



The KSA has created a program to recognize and promote local businesses that are accessible and supportive of all members of the community. The businesses listed here are friendly, accessible, and great to deal with.

Ability Friendly Accessible Business Program

- Horizon Dental Clinic
- 5 Bean Brewbar & Café
- All Around Gamerz
- The Vic Downtown
- Kamloops Film society
- People in Motion
- New Horizons Professional Support Services Inc.
- Our Footprints Eco Store
- Kamloops Art Party

Krystian's Corner: Setting Goals for the New Year

Happy New Year, everyone! It's a new year, and that means it's a good time to make new goals. What do you want to do this year? Maybe you want to learn something fun, help someone, or start your own business! Goals help us know what we want to do and work towards it.

This month, I was happy to talk about a tribute artist who acts like Tim McGraw. Tribute artists sing and perform just like famous stars. It is fun to watch them, and it feels like we're seeing the real Tim McGraw!

If you have a business or want to start one, now is a great time to make goals for your business. Think about what you can do to make it better this year. Making goals helps us stay happy and work hard to reach our dreams. Let's make 2025 a year full of fun, growth, and goals!



Healthy Living and Big Goals: A Fresh Start for 2025

By Krystian

As we prepare to welcome 2025, it's the perfect time to focus on living a healthy, balanced life and setting meaningful goals. Your body and mind are your most valuable assets, and taking care of them ensures a strong foundation for the year ahead.

Start with simple yet impactful habits. Eating nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables fuels your body with essential vitamins and minerals. Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water boosts energy levels and supports overall health. Along with healthy eating, regular exercise can work wonders. Embrace the winter season by enjoying activities like skiing, snowshoeing, or even building a snowman with friends and family—fun ways to stay active while soaking in the beauty of nature.



Mental health is equally important. Take time to relax and recharge. Consider trying yoga, meditation, or mindfulness practices to help reduce stress and keep you grounded. Focusing on the present moment rather than worrying about the future can improve overall well-being and create a sense of peace.

As we step into the new year, it's also a fantastic opportunity to set **SMART goals**—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Whether it's improving your health, pursuing a new hobby, or advancing in your career, setting clear and attainable goals will keep you motivated and on track.

Remember, a healthy body and a calm mind are key to achieving success and happiness in the new year. Embrace this fresh start as a chance to take care of yourself, stay active, eat well, and dream big. Here's to a vibrant, fulfilling 2025!

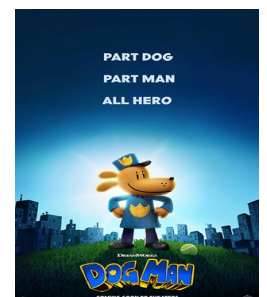
Dog Man

Coming soon

Releases January 31, 2025

Taken from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10954718/>

Dog Man, half dog and half man, he is sworn to protect and serve as he doggedly pursues the feline supervillain Petey the Cat.



Bell Let's Talk Day 2025: Moving Mental Health Forward

By Krystian



Mark your calendars for January 22, 2025—**Bell Let's Talk Day**, a day dedicated to raising awareness about mental health and fostering open conversations to reduce stigma and discrimination. This annual initiative, led by Bell, a prominent telecommunications provider in Canada, has become a powerful movement to move mental health forward in Canada.

Mental health challenges affect millions of Canadians, yet stigma often prevents people from seeking help. Bell Let's Talk Day shines a spotlight on the importance of breaking these barriers by encouraging meaningful conversations about mental health. By sharing stories, supporting one another, and learning more about available resources, we can all play a role in building a more compassionate and inclusive society.

This year, Bell Let's Talk also emphasizes awareness of the **988 Suicide and Crisis Helpline**, a vital resource for anyone in need of immediate mental health support. This helpline provides free, 24/7 confidential assistance to individuals experiencing crisis, ensuring that help is just a phone call away.

In addition to Bell's efforts, countless non-profits and organizations work tirelessly every day to provide mental health services and support. Bell Let's Talk Day helps amplify these voices, shedding light on their incredible work and encouraging everyone to get involved in the fight for mental health advocacy and suicide prevention.

As we head into 2025, let's remember that mental health is just as important as physical health. Whether it's by starting a conversation, sharing resources, or simply listening to someone in need, every action counts. Together, we can reduce stigma, promote mental well-being, and create a future where everyone feels supported.

Join the movement on January 22 by participating in Bell Let's Talk Day and let's keep the conversation going all year round. Because mental health matters—for everyone.

For more information about Bell Let's Talk Day, go to their web-site:

[Bell Let's Talk Day 2025 to Prioritize Youth Mental Health as Young Canadians Face Growing Crisis](#)

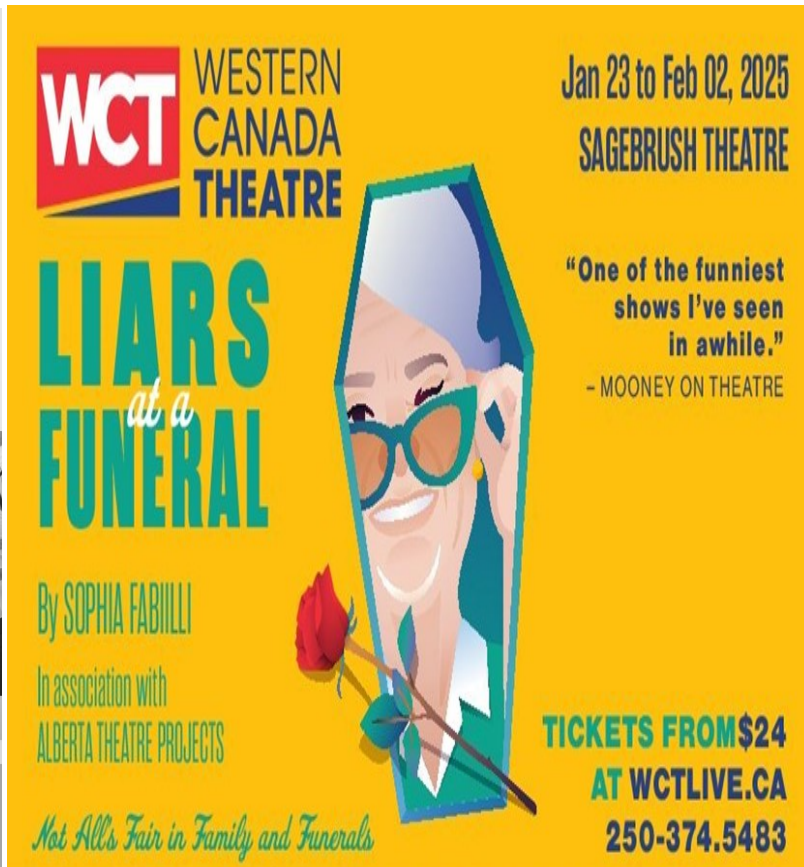


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for Each Individual



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WCT WESTERN CANADA THEATRE
Jan 23 to Feb 02, 2025
SAGEBRUSH THEATRE

LIARS
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FUNERAL

By SOPHIA FABIILLI
In association with
ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

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"One of the funniest shows I've seen in awhile."
- MOONEY ON THEATRE

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RELAXED PERFORMANCE 2 pm - Sat Feb 01, 2025 SAGEBRUSH THEATRE

A relaxed performance is adapted to suit people who might require a more relaxed environment when going to the Theatre—such as people with autism, anxiety and sensory sensitivities.

Kindness and Compassion Interview with Anna Cecchini

By Lisa Coriale

As self advocates, we teach those around us how to look at life from our perspective. Kindness and compassion change our interactions from strained, stressful, unpleasant, and hurtful to easy, peaceful, joyful, and healthy. There are many simple ways to express and offer kindness and compassion each day. This feature shows us how different individuals from a variety of backgrounds use kindness and compassion to improve their daily lives and the lives of those around them.



COMPASSION

Please tell me about yourself.

My name is Anna Cecchini. When I was 9 years old, I immigrated to Canada with my family in 1966. It was a great adventure for me, but for my parents, it was a big adjustment. New language, new culture, new jobs, and new people. We settled down in a very small place called Louis Creek, with a population of about 100 people. My dad worked at the sawmill, my mom stayed home, and me and my five siblings went to school. I have a lot of fond memories of Louis Creek. We later moved to Kamloops in 1974, where I graduated from North Kam High School. I worked at the Irvin Clinic as an exeat assistant for a year. I then worked at the Women's Emergency Shelter while attending TRU. It was called Cariboo College then. I got my Social work Diploma. I worked at the shelter for 8 years. After I got married and had my first child, Angelina, I decided to stay home. Got pregnant with my second child, Christina. Went back to school and took early childhood education. Four years later, I had my son Jonathon. Stayed home and ran a little daycare in my home. Once all three children went to school, I went back to work at 6th Avenue Daycare as an early childhood educator. Sadly, my husband passed away of cancer when I was 55 years old.

What do you do for a living?

I am now retired. I do volunteer work as a Reiki master at Happiness Centre.

What does kindness and compassion mean to you?

Kindness and compassion are the first and most important to have for ourselves. We can't give to others if we don't have anything to give. To understand what that means for ourselves, we deserve first to take care of ourselves.

Why is it important to show kindness and compassion to others?

We need more kindness and compassion in our world, and it starts with each of us. By being kind and compassionate no matter what. It's important because it makes a better world to live in.

How do you show kindness and compassion to others?

I show compassion and kindness by smiling at people. Taking the time to sit and listen to those who need to talk. Providing Reiki to those in the community. By being present in the here and now. Not reacting to situations and what people say.

How can people show compassion when they are in community?

People can show kindness and compassion in community by being respectful of each other and their surroundings. By taking care of themselves, seeing their worth as a human being, seeing and believing that they are kind and compassionate, and understanding that it's within them to give.

Being kind to ourselves improves our mental health. In what ways are you kind to yourself?

I try to take care of myself. Walk every day, meditate, pray, and hang out with positive people.

What are some ways people can show kindness and compassion to people with diverse abilities?

People need to have patience and understanding that we are all the same. Give them a chance to prove themselves with no judgment. We can never assume. Get to know them, and show kindness and compassion.

People sometimes have negative views and/or attitudes towards people with diverse abilities. What do you do, or can you do, to increase kindness and compassion for those who are diversely abled?

Get to know them. Treat them like any other person. They are not different than us. They have a spirit. They have a soul. We are more than just our body. Wayne Dyer said, "We are spiritual being(s) having a human existence".

The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter's 2025 Update

Happy New Year! We are so excited to start 2025 with you. The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter has lots of fun and interesting stories planned for this year. Let's look back at 2024 and talk about what's coming up in 2025!



Celebrating Accessibility in Kamloops

We love sharing stories about businesses that are accessible and inclusive. These businesses help everyone in Kamloops feel welcome. We are happy to continue with the Ability Friendly Accessible Business Certificate program. Some of those businesses include:

- ♦ The Kamloops Film Society, which is a wonderful place to watch movies. They are a great example of accessibility in our community! This business accepts the Access 2 Card from Easter Seals Canada.
- ♦ Western Canada Theatre is another fantastic business that supports inclusion. They are advertising a play in 2025 and offering a *relaxed performance*. What is a relaxed performance? It's a special show for people who might find regular performances too overwhelming. Relaxed performances make theater fun and comfortable for everyone!

Looking Back at 2024

The year 2024 was amazing for The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter! We had more advertisers than ever before and talked about so many important topics like: mental health, entertainment, disability awareness, success stories, and inclusion. These topics inspire, educate, and bring people together.

What's Coming in 2025

This year, we are planning even more exciting stories and interviews as we follow the KSA Mission. The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter is for everyone in our community. We share stories about people with and without disabilities. We teach others about diverse issues and how we can all make a difference. Everyone should feel welcome and included. We want to focus on strengths by highlighting what people can achieve, not what they can't. Disability is not a bad word. It's part of who people are. At the same time, we also use the term "diverse abilities" to focus on people's strengths and achievements. Our stories show that everyone has something special to offer.

A Message for You

We hope you had a wonderful holiday season filled with happiness and love. Thank you for supporting The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter. Stay tuned for more interesting stories, interviews, and fun ideas in 2025. Together, we can make Kamloops a kind, inclusive, and welcoming community for everyone. Let's make this year one to remember!

Crafting in the New Year

By Tami

The new year is a great time to try something new, especially when we're spending more time indoors during the colder months. Why not use this time to explore a fun craft and learn a new skill?

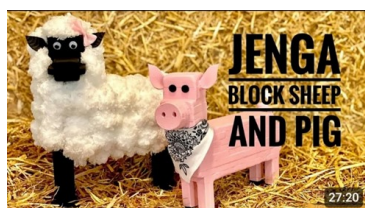
One idea I'm excited about is painting on glass. It sounds so cool to design your own glasses—imagine sipping from a cup with a pattern or picture you created yourself! Plus, hand-painted glassware can look super unique and make awesome gifts or decorations.

What about you? Is there a craft you've always wanted to try? Maybe it's learning how to crochet, make jewelry, or work with clay. Whatever it is, this is the perfect chance to give it a shot.

Let's make 2025 the year of new crafting adventures. Who knows—you might find a hobby you'll love forever! Happy crafting!

Here's a craft idea from The Crafty Shopper on YouTube. You can watch her here:

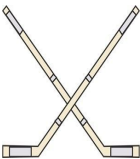
[Jenga Block Sheep and Pig](#)



Kamloops Blazers Report (2024-2025)

By Andrew

The Kamloops Blazers are on the road and will be back at home after the Christmas break on December 27 to start the second half of the 2024-25 Regular Season. They will be hoping to create momentum to have a promising regular season record to finish the season and make it to the playoffs.



Networking Event

By Riley

I went to a networking event that had to do with getting jobs in the acting industry. I got to meet a few people and learn from their experience about what you need to get different jobs in the industry and how to make connections. I felt like I grew as a person and as an actor.

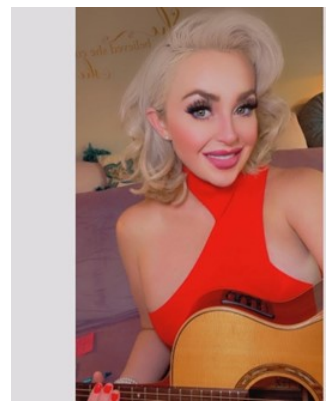
Basically, they said that anyone can get a job somewhere in the industry if you have the experience, even someone working at Starbucks or a construction company. For some jobs, you need a WHMIS certificate, especially for the union jobs.



Deadly Beauty

By Krystian

Alexa Shea Falk-Johns, professionally known as Alexa Shea, is a woman, a songwriter, an artist, a philosopher, a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, a spiritual being in a human body, a friend, a singer, a survivor, but she sums it up with "I'm a creator, just trying to live from love-doing my best day to day." She is also the creator of the song 'Deadly Beauty'. Find out more about her music and journey in this interview.



Can you tell us about your journey into the pop music business? What inspired you to pursue a career in music?

My career journey started in a round about way. My mom always wanted to be a singer herself, so when I was two years old apparently I came out of the movie theater after seeing the little mermaid and my mom said I was singing the Aerial song in full sentences before I could even speak them. From then on she put me in music classes and I excelled quickly.

Soon my sister followed in my footsteps and by the time we were ages 2 and 4 we were singing in harmony, and performing together most weekends. Then things excelled when I was eight years old. I was riding in the back seat of my nana's car, and I had an idea. I asked her for a paper and pen, and all she had was a utility bill envelope in her glove box. So, I used that, and wrote out my first song on the back of that envelope. I showed my parents who instantly recognized that it was an actual song. They then put forth the resources to let me do a recording of it. Later that year I won a big contest in Las Vegas called "Star Mania," and the prize was to record an original song in a Nashville recording studio. From then my song was submitted in the Utah's songwriting guild, and I won.

I had to go through a lengthy process of providing proof that I had written the song myself since the lyrics and composition were seemingly advanced. And thanks to my music teacher Dean Kaelin I was vindicated and honored with the award which soon caught the attention of Nashville songwriter/producer Jason Deere.

Jason took an interest in me as a young songwriter and artist, and decided to see if I could hold my own in a cowriting session. I did, and together Jason, myself and my sister Natalee wrote an album of songs which later were recorded by famous Brazilian artist Wanessa Camarago. This caused me to tie with Michael Jackson as the youngest writer to be signed to a major publishing company. I had 5 platinum hits and 2 #1's by the time I was 13. And that was the beginning of my official professional music career.

Your song "Deadly Beauty" has been recognized as a powerful anthem for eating disorder awareness. What inspired you to write this song, and what message do you hope it conveys to your listeners?

At the time of writing the song, I used "third person" with a different situation than myself but with the same core feelings as a way to be honest, yet to stay hidden in my own eating disorder. It was a way for me to process everything I was experiencing and through writing that song, my own process of recovery began. That song, and the attention it got opened the door for conversations that I hadn't had before. Not only with my parents, but with my peers. The universal feeling of not being good enough I think is what caused so many of us to take drastic measures just to try to "measure up." That song opened the door for me to be honest with myself and my loved ones, and with that -I was able to begin healing while helping others as well.

You've been an advocate for eating disorder awareness for many years. Can you share your personal experiences with overcoming an eating disorder and how it has influenced your advocacy work? Unlike addiction where once you can get off the substance your aim is to never use that substance again, eating disorders don't work that way. Food is required to live, and because of that... navigating & overcoming an eating disorder is really a whole mind, body, approach. I tried, and relapsed many times, but the beginning point was finally reaching a place of wanting to get out of my head and into my life.

I struggled with bulimia nervosa, and it not only nearly took my life, but my voice as well. I found healing through transforming that personal pain into some form of power through the process of artistic expression. There were so many untouched emotions I had buried that felt stuck in my cells. The whole saying "your issues are in your tissues" was very true for me. I realized I was never battling with weight in terms of body, but instead I wasn't metabolizing the weight of the emotional load I was carrying. It got so heavy, and so did my body.

It sounds simple, but just the simple act of allowing myself tears was actually more profound than I had initially realized. It was the beginning of me learning how to nourish myself with my own love, and that first act was just letting myself have the space to cry. To take up space. To matter... at least to myself. To feel, and to be my own witness to the traumas I had endured and the powerlessness I felt.

Continued on next page

Deadly Beauty, Continued

You've been an advocate for eating disorder awareness for many years. Can you share your personal experiences with overcoming an eating disorder and how it has influenced your advocacy work?

By being able to claim it, it no longer had such a claim on me. I then discovered Louise Hay's book "you can heal your life" and the principles in that book really did heal my life. After that, another impactful book that helped me release weight naturally was a book called "A Course in Weight Loss" by Marianne Williamson. Those books carry such profound wisdom that gave me an inner peace from the first page on. As I learned to love myself, I felt an inner urging to connect and help others do the same. I wanted to shorten their recovery journeys, while letting them know that they are not alone, and that there is another way of life... healing is possible. And that healing comes with inner peace and freedom from the constant hell inside your head when an ED is present.

Helping others also helped me stay connected to what I call my "why power." Why I needed to keep going on my own journey of self love, and why I needed to keep sharing that experience. It was a heart opening experience that allowed light to shine on the darkest pieces, and places of myself.

What challenges have you faced in the music industry, and how have you managed to overcome them?

Oh wow... I could write a novel on this... I could start with my weight, what I looked like, my parents being my managers, the beginning of streaming and what that did to the music industry, having 6 record deals fall apart, my sister duo splitting, not having access to my own finances, being forced/pressured into paths I detested... I could go on and on, but I think the biggest challenge for me was finally trusting myself over the "experts."

I used to abandon myself, my ideas, my likes, my wants, my dreams, my personal expression for the sake of appeasing producers, record execs, and basically all the successful people who claimed to know better than me. I wish I had just followed my heart, said no more often, and I wish I didn't second guess my own intuition. In a way I'm also grateful for those painful lessons of self betrayal, and abandonment. They taught me that no amount of external validation or people pleasing was going to fill that space within me... that my own love was what I was seeking all along... and that by being my own friend, having my own back and trusting myself that would be my own golden path... and even if it wasn't "successful" by industry standards... it was mine. All mine, and the integrity in that gave me self esteem and confidence.

What advice would you give to someone who is struggling with an eating disorder and aspiring to pursue a career in music? I'd say stop making yourself wrong for the path you've chosen as a way to make yourself more lovable. Something in you is doing this to protect you, and adding shame, and self criticism will not cause you to change or heal, but instead acceptance and even the approval of your approach will begin to open your heart and allow the love and wisdom within to guide you. Follow what feels better, lean into personal alignment over anyone else's opinion. Value your own opinions more than anyone else's especially about your own work. Affirm your worthiness to yourself daily... even if at first you don't believe it. Just do it.

How do you stay motivated and inspired to continue your advocacy work and create music that resonates with your audience? I feel like inspiration can be easy when you stay in touch with your spirit. Hence "in-spir-ation". I take time with myself each day to write and dream, and that time with myself really helps me self-encourage and also come up with new ideas.

And as far as work that resonates with audiences... I feel like that is a byproduct of the work resonating with myself first. If it doesn't, and I'm just creating something for someone else to like... then it feels inauthentic to me, and I think people pick up on that.

What role do you think music can play in raising awareness about mental health and eating disorders?

I think music can be a huge positive... in not only awareness, but in soothing, release, and guidance towards a solution. Music has an ability to connect us all on a heart level, and let us know we're not alone. I often feel that music is a message from higher love, and how we receive it is through feeling. It's pure magic, and I believe it can alchemize anything.

Why did you want to be an advocate for eating disorders? Because there is power in personal honesty, and by bringing dark things to light, we can illuminate them... thus causing a mass healing, and a universal change of perception.

What new year goals do you have for 2025?

Definitely seeing my TV Show "Soul Sound" air on ABC, having another baby, and buying a new (bigger) house for our growing family! I'd also love to speak with Abraham Hicks in person, and to record and release a new album.

Also, my TV show "Soul Sound" is filled with the most incredible grammy award winning songwriters, producers and artists, and I'm so excited that audiences around the world will get to see their collaborations and performances honoring charities, and creating positive change around the world. -stay tuned :)

What else would you like to add? I have a unicorn room, and it's epic! Haha

How can people find you online? Instagram : @alexasheamusic; TikTok: @Alexa.shea.music; YouTube: @alexasheamusic; [facebook.com/alexasheamusic](https://www.facebook.com/alexasheamusic); Twitter: @alexasheamusic
www.alexashea.com and www.vibe-hi.com

How to Approach Disability Representation in the Media

Taken from <https://www.purplegoatagency.com/insights/disability-representation-in-the-media/>



Representation is everything.

Whether it is the latest Netflix show or a new campaign from one of the biggest brands in the world, audiences are seeking more than just entertainment, they want to see themselves reflected in the stories being told and the images being shown. And even though things have improved in the last few years, there is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

For example, there are **1.3 billion people** in the world that hardly ever see themselves authentically represented in the media. This statement on its own should be shocking to anyone who reads it, but the disabled community is still largely underrepresented.

The reality is that, too often, disability is either overlooked or misrepresented, contributing to harmful stereotypes and misconceptions. How many times have you seen a disabled character portrayed as a villain, the inspiring hero, or even the miserable character? There is so much nuance around disability, and the media should showcase all the facets of the community.

As we push for more diversity and inclusion in media, it's essential to address disability representation with the same urgency we apply to other forms of underrepresentation.

This article dives into why disability representation matters, the challenges involved, and practical steps media professionals and brands can take to approach it thoughtfully and authentically.

Why Disability Representation Matters

Representation in the media shapes how society feels about different groups of people. In the case of the disabled community, an untruthful portrayal can feed into the outdated narrative around disability, and further alienate them from broader societal conversations. On the flip side, positive and authentic representation has the power to change perceptions, break down barriers, and encourage acceptance and equality.

The mainstream media has an immense influence in the world. For disabled people, seeing themselves truly represented can foster a sense of belonging, while also creating positive emotions towards the brand, company or show that is portraying them.

However, representing the disabled community is not just the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do for any business. Customers want to see themselves and others represented in the media.

Added to that, a study by the Ruderman Family Foundation found that **only 22% of disabled characters on TV were portrayed by actors with disabilities**, reinforcing the gap between perception and reality. Authentic representation ensures that people with disabilities can own their narratives, influencing societal attitudes and fostering inclusivity.

Challenges in Disability Representation

When it comes to disability representation, we often see some of the same mistakes being made. But don't panic if you think your company might be committing some of these, one of the things we always say at Purple Goat is that it's always better to do something than nothing at all, and we're here to hand hold you through this process!

Stereotypes: Disabled people are often reduced to one-dimensional characters, and their disability is the main and most important thing about them. We usually see the "inspirational overcomer" or the "tragic victim." These portrayals fail to capture the complexities of their lives, interests, and identities.

Lack of Disabled Talent: There's a significant lack of Disabled people within the media industry. This absence results in stories being told about disabled people by non-disabled people, leading to inaccuracies or misrepresentations.

Tokenism: This is usually what a lot of brands are scared of. Many media outlets or brands include a character with a disability or a disabled model simply to tick a diversity box, and consumers can usually tell when this is being done.

How to Approach the Issue Addressing disability representation requires intention, effort, and a commitment to authenticity. Here are some practical steps for approaching disability representation in the media.

Avoid Stereotypes One of the most important rules when approaching disability representation is to avoid stereotypical portrayals. Disabled characters should not exist solely for inspiration or pity. Instead of reducing their identity to their disability, create characters who have well-rounded personalities, dreams, flaws, and stories that extend beyond their condition. Yes, they might have a disability, but that's not the most important thing about them.

Work with the Community To avoid telling inaccurate stories about the disabled community, or creating an unauthentic portrayal of diversity, make sure to have disabled people in your team, and work with organisations like Purple Goat. Having people around with lived experiences of disability will help you understand the community better, and create something really exciting and progressive.

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How to Approach Disability Representation in the Media, continued

Avoid Tokenism

To avoid being called tokenistic, aim for genuine commitment to inclusion and representation. Hire disabled actors to play disabled roles, consult with disabled writers, directors, and consultants, add disabled creators and models to your campaigns, etc. Make sure it's not just a one time thing, but inclusivity is embedded into every part of your company.

The Benefits of Inclusive Representation for Brands Positive disability representation isn't just good for social justice—it's good for business. As brands increasingly look to align with values that matter to younger, socially-conscious consumers, representation can be a powerful tool for growth.

Increased Audience Reach: By representing a wider range of people, brands open themselves up to larger, more diverse audiences. When brands make the effort to include disabled people in their projects, they create loyalty and trust with them.

Enhanced Brand Reputation: Consumers are drawn to brands that champion inclusivity and social responsibility. A 2020 survey by Accenture found that **63% of consumers prefer to purchase from companies that represent diversity in their advertising.** By leading the way in disability inclusion, brands can enhance their public image, foster goodwill, and have an advantage over competitors.

Attracting Top Talent: Companies that demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity are more likely to attract diverse, top-tier talent. Positive representation in media and marketing can be a powerful way for brands to signal that they welcome diversity not only in their products but in their workforce.

Innovation and Creativity: Embracing diversity in all forms, including disability, leads to more innovative and creative ideas. When people from different backgrounds and experiences come together, it fosters out-of-the-box thinking and problem-solving, which is a massive advantage for brands in any industry.

Conclusion It's time to truly represent the world around us, and there are companies out there who have the power to do this. Let's leave behind all the outdated narratives around disability, and look at inclusion as an exciting thing to tap into.

There are many benefits of creating authentic disability representation in the media. Getting it right can deepen connections with the audience, enhance brand reputation, and foster a culture of innovation and inclusivity, among many other things. But it's important to work with the community to avoid any stereotypes or backlash. Companies like Purple Goat work with all types of brands to create a more inclusive and authentic media industry. So make sure our [reach out to them if you're ready to start your inclusion journey!](#)

Thoughts from Krystian About Disability Representation:

What Does the Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter Do? The Newsletter is special. It's not like general news outlets that often miss out on stories about people with disabilities. Here's what makes it stand out:

It's by and for people with disabilities: The newsletter shares stories written by people with disabilities. This makes the stories real and personal.

It celebrates achievements: It highlights people with disabilities starting businesses, creating art, or making their communities better.

It shares important resources: The newsletter gives tips, phone numbers, and advice to help people with disabilities live full lives.

It spreads kindness: It encourages understanding and inclusion so everyone feels like they belong.

Why Is the Newsletter Needed? It fills a big gap. General news outlets don't often focus on disability issues or share the successes of people with diverse abilities. This newsletter changes that. It gives people with disabilities a platform to share their stories, which helps build a stronger, more inclusive community.

In Kamloops, across BC, and beyond, the newsletter is a voice for people who are often unheard. It raises awareness about important topics like mental health, accessibility, and inclusion. It also helps people connect with resources and support in their communities. When people read stories in the Newsletter, they learn to see disabilities differently. They understand that differences are okay and that everyone has value. This helps make schools, workplaces, and communities friendlier and more accepting.



Continued on next page

Thoughts from Krystian About Disability Representation, continued

How Does the Newsletter Help Everyone?

When people read stories in the *Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter*, they learn to see disabilities differently. They understand that differences are okay and that everyone has value. This helps make schools, workplaces, and communities friendlier and more accepting.

Why I Started the Newsletter

I started the *Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter* because I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to show that people with disabilities are amazing and can do great things. Everyone deserves to feel included and valued.

How Media Can Follow the Newsletter's Lead

The media can learn a lot from the *Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter*. Here's how they can do better:

- Listen to real stories: Let people with disabilities tell their own stories in their own words.
- Focus on fairness: Show people with disabilities as capable and valuable, not as objects of pity or inspiration.
- Celebrate diversity: Share stories that highlight the different talents, challenges, and successes of people with disabilities.

When media outlets include these ideas, they help make the world a better place for everyone.

Let's Keep Making Media Better

Disability representation in media is important because it shows the truth. It helps people grow, understand, and care about each other. When we share real stories about people with disabilities, we make the world kinder and more fair.

The *Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter* is proud to lead the way in disability representation. Let's keep sharing stories, breaking down stereotypes, and showing the world what inclusion really means!

Gifts of Time & Togetherness

By Krystian

I want to say a big "thank you" to my mom for two amazing early Christmas gifts! On December 13th, she took me to see *Stars on Ice*. It was so much fun! There were Santa Clauses skating on the ice, and they played beautiful Christmas music. Some of the skaters were even past Olympic champions. It felt magical to watch them glide and spin. Spending time with my mom made it even better.

The very next day, on December 14th, I got another special gift, a ticket to see the Kamloops Symphony with my best friend. It was a great experience. This Christmas, I felt so spoiled! I got to enjoy two amazing events and share them with the people I love most. These memories mean so much to me, and they are gifts I will always treasure.

Thank you, Mom, for making this Christmas so special!



New Year Quotes

"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right." - Oprah Winfrey

"New beginnings are in order, and you are bound to feel some level of excitement as new chances come your way." —*Oscar Auliq-Ice, author*

"You can get excited about the future. The past won't mind." —*Hillary DePiano, playwright and author*



Christmas With the KSO

In December, the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra (KSO) performed a beautiful Christmas concert for the Kamloops community. Ben and Krystian attended the concert, with tickets kindly provided by their moms, Louise and Linda. It was a heartwarming evening that filled them with Christmas spirit and joy.

Ben and Krystian want to thank everyone who made the evening possible. It truly helped kick off the holiday season in a wonderful way!





Setting SMART Goals to Achieve Your Dreams

By Krystian

Do you have a dream? Maybe you want to learn how to ride a bike, become a great artist, or start your own business. Setting goals can help make your dreams come true! But how do we set goals? One way is by using something called SMART goals.

What are SMART Goals?

SMART stands for:

S = Specific: Your goal should be clear. For example, instead of saying “I want to be good at sports,” say “I want to learn how to play soccer.”

M = Measurable: You should be able to measure how well you are doing. For example, "I will practice soccer for 20 minutes every day."

A = Achievable: Your goal should be something you can actually do. Start small, like “I will learn to kick the ball properly.”

R = Realistic: Make sure your goal is possible for you. For example, you may need some help from a coach or family member to learn soccer.

T = Time-bound: Set a time to reach your goal. For example, “I will learn how to kick the soccer ball in one month.”

By following the SMART method, you can make sure your goals are clear and achievable, which will help you reach your dreams!

Setting Goals for Health

If you want to get healthier, setting goals is important too. Just like with other dreams, using SMART goals can help you get there. Let’s say you want to improve your physical fitness by increasing your weekly running distance.

Breakdown:

Specific - I want to improve my physical fitness by running 10 kilometers per week.

Measurable - Track progress using a running app to ensure I meet the weekly goal of 10 kilometers.

Achievable -I currently run 5 kilometers per week, so doubling this within two months is reasonable with incremental increases.

Relevant- Improving my fitness aligns with my overall health goals and supports training for a local 10K charity run in the spring.

Time-Bound - I will achieve 10 kilometers per week by February 28, starting with a 1-kilometer weekly increase starting next week.

Final SMART Goal Statement:

"I will increase my weekly running distance from 5 kilometers to 10 kilometers by February 28, 2025, adding 1 kilometer each week, and tracking my progress using a running app."

This way, you know exactly what you need to do to reach your goal. Whether it's playing soccer or starting a business, SMART goals help you take small steps to make your dream come true.

So, think about your goals, use the SMART method, and you’ll be on your way to achieving your dreams this year!

Winter Jokes



What bites but doesn’t have teeth? Frost.
What happens when you catch a cold? You get cabin fever.

What do you get when you cross a vampire with a snowman? Frostbite!

What did one snowflake say to another? Let's stick together.

What is a snowman’s favorite seasoning?
Chilly flakes.

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Standing Room Only for Tim McGraw Tribute Artist

By Krystian

Peter Phillips isn't just a Tim McGraw fan. He is the first professional celebrity impersonator tribute artist to country superstar Tim McGraw. Find out how Peter became a tribute artist and why he really enjoys Tim McGraw.



What do you enjoy about Tim McGraw?

Performing as Tim McGraw has taught me how to become a person, a respectable person on stage and offstage. I enjoy that we are very much alike; we are much like-minded to begin with and his outlook on life is inspiring because he's been through many, many challenges and obstacles and, like myself, never gives up believing in himself. That is inspiring and it continues today, where he has now become the most listened to requested country artist in the history of media play ever.

Have you ever seen him in person at a concert?

Yes. I have worked for Tim McGraw twice in Michigan at the Detroit energy music theater. It's there I've met Faith Hill, his road manager, his band and him. He also paid me, which was not even expected. I walked out as a decoy started concert and slip into the PA console where nobody saw him. This was in 2001, during his 'Set This Circus Down' tour. I also was backstage at Mandalay Bay 2006 I believe, where Faith Hill was right next to me with Brett and his brother who wrote 'Blank Sheet of Paper' and multiple other songs and they also went on to sing with him that specific song. Faith Hill was wearing a ball cap, standing beside me. I did not recognize her until she went on with the Warren brothers to sing with him during his performance at Mandalay Bay. I was able to speak with the band on a few occasions, especially Bob Minor and Billy Mason, his drummer. It's actually Billy Mason with whom I was going to be a part of his show called The Ultimate McGraw. He is from Murfreesboro Tennessee. They felt that I was his missing ingredient to his ticket sales; however, covid happened and none of this ever transpired. We were going to be doing a Canadian tour hitting all the rule areas in Canada with Billy Mason playing the drums. He's no longer with Tim McGraw; however, he was with him for over 18 years.

Where are you based? I am based out of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. However, I do have family based in Vancouver.

What kind of songs do you enjoy from him?

I enjoy probably all his music now. It seems to have matured through the years, as we both have. Songs that I perform with are songs that are very powerful and meaningful. I especially like singing ballads stuff like 'If You're Reading This', 'My Best Friend', 'Not a Moment Too Soon', 'Live Like You Were Dying', 'Humble and Kind, and 'Standing Room Only' - amazing songs. They complete a person, his character, if you can follow those guidelines within those songs, they're powerful and very meaningful they create character. Tim McGraw carefully chooses his songs when he plays and so do I; hence the reason why when you're done seeing me play and perform, I'm hoping that I was able to capture your spirit, where you can cry and laugh and feel energy through me and engaged through my show

How do you feel being a Canadian Tim McGraw tribute artist?

I am very comfortable as Canadian tribute artist Tim. However, there was a time when I did not want to be Canadian anymore, performing in the states for so long. It's only the states that have actually lent itself to its lucrative aspect, which is my pay....[It]... has been...the most I've ever made in life in the United States though performing as Tim McGraw...I worked for Legends in Concert at the Imperial Palace in Las Vegas for five straight years. [H]owever, being in Canada currently, I am now in [the] process of rehearsing and reestablishing my show with hopes [of] becoming the number one tribute show on the planet once again.

How did you become a tribute artist?

I was performing in a band at a bar and before I knew who Tim McGraw was, I was already singing two of his songs: 'I Like It, I Love It' and 'Just To See You Smile'. It was then when my drummer said that I looked like Tim McGraw and I researched and to my surprise there was a resemblance. So, I had a date at this small town... where the main attraction was a tribute show that was coming. After I had heard I had made calls they had come to see me on stage I sang a couple songs from McGraw. Long story short, 2 rehearsals later I was performing in front of 1200 people in southwestern Ontario with a show called The Hits Tributes.

How can people find you online?

My website is www.timmcgrawrtribute.com

You can actually Google me and ask Google this one question and that question is who is country singer Peter Phillips. To my surprise I always find it very flattering to hear what it says. Other than that, you can check my website for further dates or just [search] my name...on YouTube for videos.

Standing Room Only, continued

What else would you like to add?

To add more to this, I would actually just lend my two cents by saying, regardless of what you do in your walk of Life, whether it be music or whether it be school, always believe that you can achieve and don't let anybody tell you that you cannot; those people have not walked in your shoes. Believe in yourself and when you think you can't, you must. There's nothing that you can't do, as this creator of this universe has already made it possible by bringing into existence what already exists. Surround yourself with people who make you feel as though you belong here and bring out the best version of you. Remember, think like minded [and] when you think you can't, you must. I have walked this walk, performing as Tim McGraw since 1998, deliberately making this a reality....I've already done this once....by moving to Las Vegas and working for Legends in Concert at the Imperial Palace and all the amazing opportunities that followed such as performing on The Ellen DeGeneres Show, the WBTB series 7th Heaven, Hollywood Squares, featured in national magazines, you name it I've done it.... This time around I've chosen to make my ideals worthy enough again by progressively seeking them deliberately, making them a reality on purpose and, to me, that's what defines success. I have gone on to ODSP, stopped working as a skilled trade, gone through struggles and obstacles and undesirable circumstances such as homelessness, no food, no family and no one to call a friend. To survive that you must believe you can, stay focused on your end result. When everyone considered me down for the count, and would not last, here I am. I am still here. So, I know what's it feels like to struggle, to not be able to do your pants back up because you are frozen from below zero temperatures. To be looked down at, being that guy. I never once allowed my end result of where I saw myself to be compromised. At the end of the day, it's our spirit that fights the good fight and keeps us from any mundane, undesirable circumstances that have no promising outcome to offer. Let the past be the past, it has nothing new to offer you and consider today a new day that shines its light for the best version of you. It means to not ever walk away from your desired end result, stay the course and climb your mountain. Get down the other side, don't jump off, The best of you is at the bottom of the other side...I hope my walk can be an inspiration to anybody, knowing I have gone from rags to riches to rags to riches a few times now, and I'm no stranger to the old adage "feast and famine". I believe in a purpose, I believe in me, even if others do not. Let me just say without even knowing you or meeting you, I believe in you, I know you can, because I did. Start to embrace the undesirable circumstances as equally as you do your desired ones. It is through both you find what you need. Now it's your turn to become an inspiration and give it away! And when you give it away, you will always have it! See you down the road, come say hello if you ever attend A MCGRAW EXPERIENCE 2025! Take care of you!

Peace

Peter Phillips

Easy Chili

Taken from <https://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/easy-chili/66ef2bb4-4580-415e-84f7-6849179703a7>

This easy chili recipe has everything you love about the dish. It's richly seasoned, hearty and free of any hard-to-find ingredients or unnecessary steps. After a quick bit of chopping and sautéing, stir in stewed tomatoes, beans and seasonings, and you'll be well on your way to serving up this favorite winter pick-me-up dinner. If you're serving this at a get-together or on game day, impress your crowd by setting up a toppings grazing board! Fill bowls with different types of cheese, sour cream, chopped cilantro, guacamole, fresh salsa and corn chips—the topping possibilities are endless.

Ingredients

- 1 lb ground beef round
- 1 1/4 cups chopped onions
- 1 1/4 cups chopped green bell peppers
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 cans (14.5 oz each) no-salt-added stewed tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (15 oz) Progresso™ dark red kidney beans, drained, rinsed
- 1 can (8 oz) no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 package (1 oz) onion soup mix (from 2-oz box)
- 1 cup water
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 1/4 teaspoons red pepper sauce
- 6 tablespoons shredded reduced-fat sharp Cheddar cheese

Step 1

Spray 4-quart Dutch oven with cooking spray; heat over medium-high heat. Add beef, onions, green peppers and garlic; cook 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until beef is thoroughly cooked. Drain.

Step 2

Add tomatoes, beans, tomato sauce, onion soup mix, water, chili powder, paprika and pepper sauce. Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Cover; simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Top each serving with 1 tablespoon cheese.

