The COVID-19 Vaccine—It’s Your Turn

Why the COVID-19 Vaccine is Important for Persons with Disabilities

It is important people with disabilities get the COVID-19 vaccine. Everyone 12 years of age and older is now eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccination. RICV encourages you to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can. Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic.

Vaccines are now available to help protect you from getting COVID-19. Disability alone does not put you at higher risk for getting COVID-19. You may be at higher risk because of where you live, or you may be at higher risk because you need to have close contact with care providers. You may also be at risk because you have difficulty wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from other people, or washing your hands.

Many people with disabilities have diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or obesity. These conditions may put you at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.

In-Home Vaccinations or Transportation to a Vaccine Site

You can now request in-home vaccinations and/or transit assistance to get vaccinated. Medical documentation is not required for an in-home vaccination request, and no one will ask you about your immigration status.

Transportation can be requested for next day appointments. Unfortunately, transportation for same-day appointments is no available.

Continued on Page 14
A Message from the Executive Director

Take Your Turn So We Can Get Back Together

Hello to Everyone!
Many organizations and individuals across the state of California, including RICV, have been working very hard to make sure people with disabilities have access to resources related to COVID-19, and more recently, access to the vaccine. We have sheltered in place in response to COVID-19 and in the effort to stay safe and healthy.

Doing activities via Zoom and other virtual platforms proved to be a success, but I know many of us are anxious to get back to some sort of pre-COVID-19 normalcy. We look forward to participating in-person activities—like peer support, summer programs, and one-on-one meetings.

We need to work together to reach herd immunity—where more and more people get vaccinated to help protect each other, and our communities. This will allow us to move forward with events—like an annual Disability Pride in the Park event for the Fall of 2022. And, so we can continue with more RICV events, and events like the annual California Foundation for Independent Living Center’s Capital Action Day in Sacramento. So, take your turn and get the COVID-19 vaccination.

If you, or someone you know, needs assistance in setting up an appointment to get the vaccine, or simply would like to learn more, please contact RICV! We are in this together, and we look forward to hearing from you.

All the Best,

Suzanna Gámez
Executive Director
Get Vaxed and get a chance at a trip to Great America

**RICV Hosting Vaccination Events at Fresno Location**

Every Friday in July, **it’s your turn**—not only to get your vaccination, but to be entered in a grand prize drawing for a trip to Great America in Santa Clara, with a $75 gas card, parking pass, and a two-night hotel stay. Total package valued at $790.

Resources for Independence Central Valley (RICV) will be hosting the five Vaccination Extravaganza events on July 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at their Fresno office.

Every person who is vaccinated at the Vaccination Extravaganza will have their name put in for a chance at the grand prize drawing on July 30 for the Great America trip package.

The first 50 people to attend the Vaccination Extravaganza will receive a $25 gift card. There will also be weekly drawings during the month of July for other items, such as iPads and Airpods.

Located at 3636 N. First Street, Suite 101 (between Shields and Dakota), the Vaccination Extravaganza is a safe indoor event featuring cool refreshments and giveaways. Those age 12+ can be vaccinated. An ASL Interpreter will be on-site. Both the Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson vaccines will be available. Walk-ins are welcome.

According to RICV Executive Director Suzanna Gámez, equity is a key reason for vaccination events specifically aimed at the disability community.

“The lives of persons with disabilities, many of whom have underlying health conditions, have remained at risk during the pandemic,” Gámez explained. “They have the right to access COVID-19 vaccines in an equitable manner. It is because of the advocacy work of many organizations stepping up to ensure people with disabilities did not remain at the bottom tier of the vaccination priority list.”

The Vaccination Extravaganza is a collaboration of the Disability Equity Project, which includes the County of Fresno, the COVID-19 Equity Project, UCSF Fresno, RICV, and other organizations.

“The organizations who make up the Disability Equity Project have come together to offer specific expertise so persons with disabilities have access,” said Gámez. “Accessibility was addressed from all angles. From an accessible site to communication access, and many other areas between.”

The Disability Equity Project can help with: vaccine registration, transportation, vaccine site assistance, vaccine and COVID-19 questions, and in-home vaccination.

To obtain more information, or to schedule a vaccination appointment, call 1-888-468-9115 or visit: depfresno.org.

**AT-A-GLANCE**

**WHAT:** Vaccination Extravaganza
- Covid-19 Vaccinations
- Prizes, Giveaways, Refreshments & More
- Accessible Event

**WHEN:** Every FRIDAY in July
From 9-11 a.m.
- July 9
- July 16
- July 23
- July 30

**WHO:** Anyone 12 and over
‘I exist’: How one TikToker is trying to normalize limb difference—and bionic arms

For years, Laiken Olive pretended. "For most of my life, I ignored the fact I was disabled. I didn't want to be disabled, so I pretended like I wasn't," said the 21-year-old Houma, Louisiana resident. "But ignoring that part of myself didn't make it go away."

For her TikTok followers, Olive is known for her realism and her desire to make disability normal. She shares videos about her daily life, using hashtags such as #disabled and #amputee. They stand in stark opposition to Hollywood, where people living with disabilities is one of the most underrepresented groups. Its 56.7 million members constitute nearly 20% of the population, according to the 2010 Census—and a study from the University of Southern California Annenberg Inclusion Initiative focused on 900 popular movies from 2007 to 2016 found only 2.7% of speaking characters were portrayed as disabled.

Even when they are represented onscreen, it’s often by able-bodied actors. To wit: Eddie Redmayne, Colin Firth, Daniel Day-Lewis, Dustin Hoffman, Tom Hanks, Al Pacino and Jamie Foxx have all won Oscars in the past two decades by playing visibly disabled characters.

Jenni Gold, a wheelchair-using director who made “CinemAbility,” a documentary about disability in Hollywood, explains, “In a crowd scene, there often isn’t one person with a disability. If you don’t exist in the world of the film, how do you exist in real life?”

“There’s been a severe lack in limb different and disabled representation in the media for a long time,” Olive said. “Usually when you see a character with a disability, it unrealistic or they’re falsely portrayed.”

Meanwhile, people such as Live who identify as nonbinary are not commonly seen in mass media.

“Even if I’m going to get negativity, I’m still accomplishing my goal. They’re still seeing me. They still know I exist, and people like me exist. In the end, that was all I really want.”

—Laiken Olive

Now Olive, who was born without part of their right arm, uses TikTok to education people about disabilities and limb difference, posting to more than 28,000 followers on the TikTok account @thebionicbabe.

Olive has long explored limb differences through art, from making sculptures of arms to writing a screenplay about “finding the limb-different community”—all with the hope of normalizing something that is, well, normal.

Olive’s videos are part of a trend on TikTok where creators living with disabilities will tell their stories or explain how they perform certain tasks, using hashtags such as #disabled and #amputee.
Leading By Example:

RICV Board Member Takes Her Turn

RICV Board Member Rebecca Donabed took her turn and received the COVID-19 vaccine. As a leader in the Disability Community, Rebecca knows the COVID-19 vaccinations are important. “It’s an extra help for our bodies to fight off the virus quickly and effectively,” she shared.

Concerning hesitancy in getting vaccinated, Rebecca believes there was concern when the vaccines were in the testing phase. “People with disabilities weren’t even thought of, and there were a lot of unanswered questions in general,” said Rebecca.

According to Rebecca, she is glad she received the vaccine and reports she had a minor reaction. “I want to get back to my normal life. I’m a very active person in my community and COVID just stopped it.”

It’s your turn! Attend our Vaccination Extravaganza, and visit depfresno.org or call 888-468-9115 to schedule your appointment. Transportation and in-home vaccination assistance is available.

RICV Board Member, Rebecca Donabed, sets the example by obtaining her COVID-19 vaccination.

RICV Cares: Assistance Available

If you or someone you know is a person with a disability experiencing a hardship due to the pandemic, please visit our website, www.ricv.org. Click on the RICV Cares icon. You will be asked questions regarding food, durable goods, hygiene products, and technology. Complete and submit the form requesting assistance. A RICV Team Member will contact you within 48 business hours.
The Three Parts of Self-Advocacy for People with Disabilities

Self-advocacy, while important for everyone, is especially important for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. When people do not advocate for themselves, they may be pushed to do things that do not feel right to them or become depressed. They may also lack self-confidence and feel as though their life is out of their control. Learning to advocate for yourself may seem daunting, but you do not have to do it alone. There are many resources available to help people become confident in their self-advocacy skills and express themselves authentically. The goal of self-advocacy is to equip people with knowledge to make informed, authentic decisions, and to empower them to make those decisions.

What is Self-Advocacy?
In short, self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself. As an advocate for yourself, you are empowered to ask for what you need, what you want, and develop a plan to achieve your goals. Examples of self-advocacy include:

- Asking your employer for equal opportunity in the workplace.
- Choosing to have or not have a medical procedure.
- Deciding to paint your bedroom.

The Four Parts of Self-Advocacy
For thousands of people with disabilities around the world, self-advocacy is a term of personal identity and includes a multitude of benefits. It focuses on their political power and right to self-determination. Further, people who self-advocate ultimately enjoy a higher quality of life, as they have confidence in themselves, know how to properly express their feelings, and are empowered to make their own decisions. To achieve your goals, there are four parts of self-advocacy.

Know yourself. The first step in self-advocacy is learning everything you can about your needs, disability, strengths, and challenges. Are you self-motivated or a bit of a procrastinator? What goals are you trying to achieve? As you learn more about yourself, it is imperative to learn exactly what your rights are, and where you can go for help, support, and information on standing up for those rights.

Know how to get what you need. You have identified your strengths and weaknesses. You know what it is you want to accomplish, and what you need to make it happen. Now, there are three area worth exploring to help you bridge the gap between your strengths and weaknesses.

Continued on Page 7
Interventions are evidence-based instruction to improve skills (reading, spelling, speech, math, comprehension, etc.). This instruction is systematic and multi-sensory and includes opportunity for guided practice. After all, practice makes progress.

Accommodations are tools to help you accomplish a task without compromising its integrity. For example, if you are not a strong reader, you might consider listening to an audio book; or using a calculator for people who are not great at math. Accommodations vary from person to person and from situation to situation.

Modifications are an alteration of the task, without changing the outcome of the task. Think of push-ups. If you lack strength in your arms to do a regular push-up, or have an injury, you might do push-ups with your knees on the floor. You are still doing a push-up—it has just been modified.

RICV: An Advocate for Self-Advocacy

The fundamental key to self-advocacy is the work right at the beginning: self. To be a successful self-advocate, you must understand your rights and responsibilities, and develop a plan to achieve the life you want. Of course, this does not mean you cannot ask for help along the way.

At RICV, we believe that everyone deserves to live as independently as possible. Serving Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, and Tulare counties, we are strong advocates for self-advocacy, and we understand speaking up for yourself can be hard at first. With creativity, compassion, and individualized care, we offer virtual and in-person skill building classes to help individuals with disabilities build confidence, develop meaningful connections, and reach their fullest potential.

Join in our Disability Advocacy Team virtual meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at 1:00 p.m. These meetings are an opportunity to talk about self-advocacy and systems change advocacy. These meetings focus on self, but also get us thinking of others, and how different systems in our society affect programs and services for persons with disabilities.

Be an advocate for yourself. You never know who else you will encourage! Contact our Systems Change Advocate, Vidal Medina at vmedina@ricv.org for more information on self-advocacy, and the Disability Advocacy Team meetings.
RICV’s
SPIRIT CLUB
FITNESS FOR ALL

MONDAY
1:00 PM
2:00 PM

MID-DAY
MOTIVATION
MEDITATION

TUESDAY
10:00 AM
11:00 AM

TAKE CARE
OF YOUR
BODY

WEDNESDAY
1:00 PM
2:00 PM

GET UP
AND
DANCE

THURSDAY
10:00 AM
11:00 AM

GETTING
FIT

FRIDAY
10:00 AM
11:00 AM

BOXING
THE WEEK
OUT

RICV IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH SPIRIT CLUB! COME AND GET YOUR FITNESS ON WITH RICV MONDAY-FRIDAY ON ZOOM.

CLICK HERE TO JOIN A SESSION

RESOURCES for INDEPENDENCE
Central Valley
www.ricv.org
VIRTUAL SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

Summertime - 2021

Youth Discovering Opportunity
Are you a youth or young adult age 14-25 with a disability?
Are you looking for something to do this summer?
Join RICV for two, fun-filled summer sessions to learn more about opportunities, yourself, and skills for all aspects of life!

SESSION 1
June 29th-July 8th
Tues-Weds-Thurs
10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
plus Weds 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Topics: Civic Duty/Responsibility, Advocacy, Nutrition, Disability Pride, Career Exploration, Intersectionality, Diversity and Culture, and more!

SESSION 2
July 27th-August 5th
Tues-Weds-Thurs
10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
plus Weds 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Life Skills for Success—Email, Electronic Scheduling, Notetaking, Time Management, Critical Thinking, Decision Making, Self-Knowledge, General Reading and Math Skills.

www.ricv.org
559.221.2330

Stay informed & connected.
Follow us on Facebook.
Disability Advocates Warn the For the People Act’s Paper Ballot Mandate Will Disenfranchise Voters with Disabilities

The undersigned disability organizations express deep concerns over the paper ballot mandate included in the For the People Act (H.R. 1/S. 1). Additionally, organizations offer proposed changes to reduce the harm of the mandate to voters with disabilities.

The For the People Act in particular contains numerous provisions to expand voting access in the United States by addressing the many barriers to voting in America, such as onerous registration and vote by mail systems, and limited voting hours across the country. Further, the bill prohibits its deceptive practices and prevents voter intimidation, prohibits voter caging, and restores federal voting rights to disenfranchised Americans.

We urge Congress to make changes to the For the People Act, excluding voters with disabilities, covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), from having to use a voter-verified paper ballot for both in-person and remote voting. Until fully accessible paper-ballot voting systems, ready for widespread use, are available, accessible in-person and vote-by-mail voting options must be offered to ensure all voters in America can receive, mark, verify, and cast a private and independent ballot. The For the People Act cannot eliminate the only accessible voting options for many voters with disabilities, including Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machines and electronic absentee or vote-by-mail systems that make voting accessible to voters with disabilities as many states have already tried to expand access to voters with disabilities during the 2020 elections.

While the For the People Act will remove significant barriers to voting for people with disabilities, without addressing the unintended consequences of the paper ballot mandate, this important voting legislation will disenfranchise many voters with disabilities. Simply put, the current paper ballot mandate in the For the People Act will exclude many voters from the ballot box, counteracting the purpose of this well-intended and important legislation.

Before paper-based voting systems become the law of the land, the concerns of voters with disabilities must be addressed.

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Before paper-based voting systems become the law of the land, the concerns of voters with disabilities must be addressed.

Signed by over two dozen national disability rights organizations, including the Nation Council on Independent Living, and the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and the National Disability Rights Network.
Socializing and creating lasting relationships with others are important components to life. For some, it comes easy. For others it is a struggle. Jason Chadwick found himself in the latter group.

A student at Fresno City College, he found himself struggling to effectively communicate with his auto body teacher, an issue as it was preventing him from finishing his assignment—the restoration of his dad’s classic ‘65 Mustang.

Thanks to RICV’s Work Readiness Independent Living (WRIL) program, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Chadwick has made strides in the past year with his socialization goals. According to his WRIL Specialist, Erika Brown, the positive advances came during the COVID-19 shelter-in-place.

“Jason and I had to meet virtually, which surprisingly, helped his socialization skills,” explained Brown.

Chadwick feels the RICV program has helped him to be less shy and meet new people. He now participates virtually in the Cooking for Independence classes and Peer Support Group meetings.

“Jason has not missed one cooking class, and he has participated in the actual cooking at every single session,” Brown boasted. “The Peer Support Group has continued to help Jason meet new people and learn how to make friends.”

Chadwick is grateful for Brown’s guidance and encouragement. He says his long-term goals are securing employment in the auto body field, and getting married and having kids.

Brown believes he can. “Jason still has his shy qualities but, he continues to put his best foot forward at any task he is given,” she said.

North Valley Woman Helped with Bathroom Remodel

The COVID-19 pandemic set up a disaster for a consumer in a wheelchair. With both of her care providers contracting COVID-19, the consumer was forced to use her bath/shower combination without assistance. Unfortunately, the consumer fell, with the incident resulting in severe injury, emergency intervention, and a trip to the hospital.

RICV was able to assist the consumer after she reached out for assistance. Department of Rehabilitation diversion funds were obtained to help the woman with a remodel of her bathing area to make it fully accessible. The woman has recovered from her injuries, and thanks to RICV, can now bathe easily and safely.
Get Involved

PEER SUPPORT
Be lifted and lift others!
Every Wednesday
2:00 p.m.
Email: ldownum-hanzal@ricv.org

DISABILITY ADVOCACY TEAM
Help push for disability awareness and rights.
2nd & 4th Tuesdays/month
1:00 p.m.
Email: vmedina@ricv.org

BE ABOUT IT!
Get involved and engaged.
Youth-ages 16-25
Every Friday
3:30 p.m.
Email: sharris@ricv.org

COOKING for INDEPENDENCE
Learn new tricks in the kitchen and test new, delicious recipes.
2nd & 4th Tuesdays/month
2:30 p.m.
Email: tmorris@ricv.org

CHLOE’S SELF-CARE CORNER
Join in Take Care Tuesdays and learn how to practice self-care.
1st & 3rd Tuesdays/month
4:00 p.m.
Email: chagen@ricv.org

Follow us on Facebook to stay informed and connected.

Get Fit and Healthy with Spirit Club
Want to feel better and get fit? Then, you are going to love Spirit Club. RICV is thrilled to announce a partnership with Spirit Club, an organization providing virtual exercise and healthy opportunities. Currently, Spirit Club allows independent participation via a health and fitness schedule. In the future, we will do in-person sessions in order to support and promote positive self-care and mental health.

Spirit Club’s mission is to offer a universal design for fitness empowering people of all abilities to exercise successfully in a socially integrated setting. They provide each person with the right to choose how to exercise, rather than being forced to fit into a one-size-fits-all mentality.

For more detailed information, contact Chloe at chagen@ricv.org.

Recap or Revisit:
Youth Self-Advocacy Sessions
Do you need a recap? If you missed the virtual Youth Self-Advocacy Conference, RICV has you covered. You can view session recordings and learn about how advocacy can be used in everyday life. From self-care to food choices, creating goals to employment—advocacy is at the core. To experience recordings of each session, visit:
https://youtube.com/channel/UC4JFy7WEo1iKyf5x8IP81kg

Helping Households Connect During the Pandemic
The Federal Communications Commission has launched a temporary program to help families and household struggling to afford internet service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Emergency Broadband Benefit provides a discount of up to $50 per month toward broadband service for eligible households. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to $100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers. Learn more by visiting: www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, or by calling 833-511-0311.
New Faces: HAI NORMEN

Who is your hero?

A “hero” is defined as someone who is looked up upon for their amazing traits of courage, achievements, or nobility. My father is definitely close to the title as he has shown his courageous acts of fatherhood, his personal achievements of being a business owner, to being in and coaching American National Teams for Petanque, and his honorable and noble upbringing, however it just doesn’t seem right to call him my hero.

My wife would probably bring out a closer sense as she was the one who came into my life and encouraged and pushed me to achieve the great heights I am at now, AND she has all the above qualities of courage, achievements, and nobility, however, even then I would not feel completely satisfied in calling her my hero.

Instead, I think the true hero, MY hero would be my past self. All the experiences he has gone through, all the courage it took to get through it, and the great achievements he achieved. He is still pushing me every day, every second, to be a better man. I think it is truly a noble act of sacrifice, and although he has had many great role models and those who love and support him, it was his personal motivation to want to be better that makes me who I am today.

If you could live anywhere, where would it be?

“If I could live ANYWHERE, I would definitely say somewhere in the countryside of Japan! However, it is not where family is. Although it’ll truly be an aesthetic utopia there; with its clear streams, filled with beautifully colored koi fish, running through the town, the ever pristine and peaceful view of mountains and valleys dancing together, and the quiet bustling of the market square as farmers try to sell their organic goods, it can’t be called home without family. I am a family man, and home? That’s where family is.”

What would you change about yourself if you could?

“….it can’t be called home without family. I am a family man, and home? That’s where family is.”

What is your favorite family vacation?

“If I could live ANYWHERE, I would definitely say somewhere in the countryside of Japan! However, it is not where family is. Although it’ll truly be an aesthetic utopia there; with its clear streams, filled with beautifully colored koi fish, running through the town, the ever pristine and peaceful view of mountains and valleys dancing together, and the quiet bustling of the market square as farmers try to sell their organic goods, it can’t be called home without family. I am a family man, and home? That’s where family is.”

To be honest, nothing really. I love myself, my life, and everything about me. Don’t take this the wrong way, I’m definitely not a narcissist, but I have come to the point where I accepted myself for who I am, mentally, physically, and spiritually, and one of my personal missions is actually to show and teach and encourage others to see themselves the same way. With all of our personal abilities and quirks, I feel that there really is at least one thing that only we can do, and mine? Well, I am more than blessed to feel that I have many of those things that only I can do, such as being the husband I am for my wife, being the brother I am for my siblings, and being the best of a role model I can be for those who look up to me.

Every time I think about my favorite vacations, I remember the smell of pine trees, the sound of a river flowing through its path towards the ocean, or some lake, and the sight of never ending trees. If you are imagining what I am, yes! It is camping! I love the outdoors, and especially when I get to live and be free from city worries and paying bills. My family has an annual camping trip where we go up to the mountains of the Sierra Nevadas, pitch a few tents, light a huge campfire, and just spend a weekend away from all the stresses of modernity. Every one of those times would be my favorite family vacation!
COVID-19 Vaccinations Offered In-Home or with Transportation

Continued from Page 1

You can schedule online or by phone to get transit assistance or a vaccination at home. Here's how you can arrange an in-home vaccination or transportation to a vaccine site:

Call the CDPH COVID-19 Call Center at 1-833-422-4255, or register online at MyTurn.ca.gov.

If you need transportation, the CDPH Call Center can assist with booking medical transportation or non-medical transportation for individuals who need specialized assistance to get to their vaccine appointments.

If you need an in-home vaccination, the Call Center will confirm the need for in-home vaccination and gather relevant information.

Now Vaccinating Persons Age 12 and Older Every Tuesday at Fresno City College

Get vaccinated. It’s your turn. Each Tuesday from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. vaccinations are available at Fresno City College.

Organized by the Disability Equity Project, (DEP), the vaccination events are offering the Pfizer vaccine. ASL interpreters are also available.

In addition, Disability Equity Project can help you make an appointment to get the vaccine, pay for or provide transportation, provide assistance at the vaccine site, answer your vaccine and COVID-19 questions, and coordinate in-home vaccinations for people who cannot leave their residence.

Call the Disability Equity Project at 888-468-9115 or visit depfresno.org to schedule an appointment.

The vaccination event is at 1101 E. University Avenue in Fresno and can be accessed using the Blackstone and Weldon entrance at Fresno City College.

This Disability Equity Project vaccination event is in partnership with the COVID-19 Equity Project, and UCSF Fresno. RICV is a Disability Equity Project partner.

What to Expect After Your Vaccination

You may have mild side effects—like pain, redness, or swelling on the arm—or you may have tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever or nausea. These side effects are normal and can last a few days. If you get the COVID-19 vaccine and have side effects that do not go away in a few days or have serious symptoms, call your doctor.

Stay Safe.
RICV Has You Covered.

Even though the rate of COVID-19 case in the Central Valley has slowed, it is still important to wear a mask and use hand sanitizer if you have to go out in public.

To help, RICV has masks, gloves and sanitizer available. If you need personal protection equipment, email Tracy at tbeckham@ricv.org, or give us a call at 559.221.2330. Leave a message stating your need of PPE. We will call you back to either set up a pick-up time, arrange delivery, or mail you a package of PPE.

We encourage continued physical distancing, mask usage, and frequent hand washing.

Remember, RICV has you covered.
I Exist: Normalizing Limb Difference

Continued from Page 4

“I’ve never seen someone such as myself, and I thought it would be nice to have that kind of representation,” Olive said. “To let other people know I do exist.”

TikTok—as all social media platforms—allows Olive to circumvent the Hollywood system, Live joined the platform last May but began posting regularly about six months ago, often focusing on the limb difference. An early one titled “a personal message to film makers who fake disabilities rather than casting actor” shows Olive standing with the middle finger of their left hand defiantly raised.

Now though, Olive is focusing less on such statements and more on educating the public about limb differences. One way of doing so came from a partnership with Open Bionics, the creators of bionic limbs. Olive wears one inspired by the “Metal Gear Solid” video games, which features a character named Venom Snake who loses his left arm and requires a bionic replacement.

Olive regularly posts TikToks showing them using the arm in various ways, everything from weightlifting to goofily caressing their boyfriend’s face.

In others, they answer questions from comments left on those videos. In one, Olive explains how lifting weights with the bionic arm forces their biceps to engage, thus strengthening the muscle even though the bionic hand grasps the bar.

“The thing that really gets to me is the amount of people who have told me they want to cut off their arm so they can also have a bionic arm. I know their intention is not to be malicious, but every time I hear it, it just floors me,” Olive said. “They’re lacking the full understanding of what this experience has presented challenge-wise to me.” Usually though, Olive encounters people who are “curious and want to learn more.”

“...the University of Southern California Annenberg Inclusion Initiative focused on 900 popular movies from 2007 to 2016 found only 2.7% of speaking characters were portrayed as disabled.

Though Olive said the experience has been mostly positive, they still face toxic comments on all their social media platforms. Some, Olive said, are “purposeful” while other are “ignorant.”

“Even if I’m going to get negativity, I’m still accomplishing my goal,” Olive said. “They’re still seeing me. They still know I exist, and people like me exist. In the end, that was all I really want.”

This article was provided compliments of Travis M. Andrews, 2021, The Washington Post
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