Season 8 - Episode 10 - 10/6/2023

**Recorded Introduction:** Welcome everybody to the National Trends in Disability Employment or nTIDE Lunch and Learn series. Just a few housekeeping items. Before we begin, this webinar is being recorded. We will post an archive of each webinar each month on our website www.researchondisability.org/nTIDE This site will also provide copies of the presentations, the speaker's bios, full transcripts, and other valuable resources.

As an attendee of this webinar, you are a viewer to ask questions of the speakers. Click on the Q and A box on your webinar screen and type your questions into the box. Speakers will review these questions and provide answers. During the last section of the webinar, some questions may be answered directly in the Q and A box. If you have any questions following this recording, please contact us at disability.statistics@unh.edu or toll free at 866-538-9521 for more information. Thanks for joining us. Enjoy today's webinar.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Hi everyone, this is Andrew Houtenville from the University of New Hampshire. Some zoom tips before we start. To select the speaker system. You can go to your audio settings and select the speaker settings that you want if you're not hearing it from the right area. Also, there's captioning available. Closed captioning available. You can use the close caption button to show subtitles, or you can also view a running transcript on the side of the, or wherever you put it, you can view running transcript.

nTIDE occurs on noon, Eastern time for the first Fridays of each month. We also now have a mid-month event as well to look at a few more details. But the first Friday is timed with the release of the nTIDE report, which is our press release that released the numbers for the most recent month. It's a joint effort at the University of New Hampshire Kessler Foundation and the Association of University Centers on Disability, AUCD.

You'll hear from John O'Neill at Kessler Foundation. I will talk about the numbers, from today's nTIDE report, some exciting results. No, I'm just kidding. You'll see though. Part two, we'll hear from Denise with nTIDE news and all the exciting things happening at the national level and from around the country. Then we have our guest speakers, Leslie Jones and Dalia Sakas from the Filomen M. D'Agostino Green Sorry that’s a mouthful. I was just moving the box. Greenberg Music School in New York City. And then we're going to open it up to Q and A, so John take it away.

**John O'Neill:** Thank you Andrew. Next slide. The nTIDE Report, as Andrew said, is monthly and actually it's twice during the month. Andrew mentioned that mid-month we present additional data and Andrew does is to desegregate it and look at specific issues around gender, race, type of disability, et cetera. It's very interesting addition.

**Andrew Houtenville:** This month we should update this slide to tell them what we're going to do this month. This month is going to be by gender, Male, female, right? I'm developing the charts for it as we speak.

**John O'Neill:** Look forward to it. It sounds good. But our basic monthly nTIDE report is usually the first Friday of every month. It's a press release with an infographic looking at the latest employment statistics. Basically, employment to population ratio and employment participation rate. We use data from the most recent jobs report, which is released by the US. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

It's the Current Population Survey which provides the official unemployment rate which the media makes so much of. It is a survey of civilians aged 16 to 64 who are not living in institutions. The data has been available since 2008. That was the date that the Bureau of Labor Statist, or I should say the Census Bureau, added the six disability questions that disability advocates had been pushing for a number of years. It's not seasonally adjusted, which is why we compare to the same month last year. But with the onset of Covid, we decided to track the month-to-month changes in those two, those two statistics. It's really provided a nice detailed longitudinal look when, and you'll see when Andrew presents the statistics. And Andrew onto you.

**Andrew Houtenville:** All right. Thank you, John. All right. As John said, we use the Current Population Survey data that's developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The employment to population ratio, we're going to look at civilians ages 16 to 64. That's one of the breakdowns that the BLS tracks. We do this to look, so we're not really focused. Disability rises dramatically with age. The 64 plus, 65 plus would really swamp and dominate the trends. And we would be looking more of an employment and aging pattern if we didn't do that. But the employment to population ratio is the percentage of people, percentage of civilians working, who are employed as a percentage of the population.

All right, this gives us our time trend with August as the last month. So, we're going back to 2008. The gray areas reflect recession we had the Great Recession, and you can see employment starting to take a dive for both people with and without disabilities at the Great Recession. We also have the Covid Recession which is basically a two-month period of the lockdown, April and May of 2021. One thing to note is that employment typically lags recessions. Recessions are based on economic growth, GDP, gross domestic product, and so employment typically lags behind if we're thinking about the future and if the Federal Reserve slows down the economy to the point of recessing, which I don't think they're trying to actually fully recess the market as much as just keep slowing it down to get inflation under control.

That employment might be much later to respond. Especially in certain regions where there's labor market shortages. You can think of sales of a particular company. If the sales declined and they ratcheted down production, they might not change their workforce immediately. They may wait and hold on in any event. One thing to note in this chart is that people with disabilities, they had a much longer period of decline after the Great Recession until say, January 2014, when they hit rock bottom at 24.1%. We see steady rises and actually there is a period of time, a pretty rare period of time in pointing at my screen thinking, you guys are looking at it, 2016-17 and into 18, where the gap between people, these two lines get closer together. The gap between people with and without disabilities actually narrows.

We have the big covid lockdown which hits both people with and without disabilities percentage point wise, it hit people without disabilities more percentage wise, it hit people with disabilities because a big drop. When you're already low is a bigger percentage drop. There's a pretty rapid expansion afterwards, the big difference in this graph is that people without disabilities really didn't recover until recently in the last few months. Didn't really recover to their pre pandemic levels. People without disabilities not only passed their pre pandemic levels, basically a year and a few months after the lockdown, but blew past and passed the Historic High, and are increasing.

That brings us to August, July and August were both up months for people with disabilities, and we have to keep in mind that this is a sample whenever something goes up. It's possible that it might ratchet back a little bit just because there's sampling variation. It doesn't fully represent the entire population. We like the positive, we like seeing it go up. But because these aren't seasonally adjusted, and because it's a relatively small sample, we don't want to get too ahead of ourselves, and I'm probably giving away this secret to this month. Here's September numbers. For people with disabilities, there was a slight decline from 37.9% to 37.2%. If we do the math seven tenths of a percentage point. Again, it's a story of waffling around.

Best way to put it is, this could be sampling variation that's going on. If we think about the summer, as we're trying to come to some story, we're hovering around 37%, in the 37% range for most of the summer. Actually, almost back to May, it was 36.9% in May, that we've been hovering around this area. We look for seasonal effects to this decline. August to September, I initially thought. Yeah, sure, we're going from summer employment. Historically, people with disabilities have not really shown always declining from August to September. There wasn't real strong evidence that there's a seasonal thing that we're picking up from August to September.

The safest story we can glean that, safest meaning with the most statistical precision, is that we've been holding steady for the summertime and into September. People without disabilities, they've been the same thing. Hovering around in October, the number was exactly the same, 75.2% for people with disabilities. And as John pointed out on our call, we have a call to discuss these at around 09:00 every first Friday. And John said, you know, we're really looking at historic highs and things for people without disabilities as well. Although not as big as for people without, I'm sorry, for people with disabilities. But people with disabilities, I'm sorry, people without disabilities have reached their pre pandemic levels. And maybe they'll continue the upward trend, but maybe they're topping out at return to their slow trend that was at the 75 range prior to the pandemic.

I think that's pretty compelling. There's been a real slow, if you think about employment recovering from the Great Recession. They really never recovered from the Great Recession until just before the pandemic. They meaning people without disabilities. That's the story we've come up with in terms of labor force participation rate. This is the percentage that are not just working but also actively looking for work or on furlough. We snap in August a very similar story, declined during the Great Recession, a period of 17and 18 where we're getting a narrowing. The pandemic really didn't, visible evidence in this trend line of the pandemic is really small. It's almost within sampling variation. Back during the day, it was a double-edged sword, that labor force participation. Furloughing. You're still in the labor force if you're furloughed. So, a lot of the big things that you saw weren't evident here.

But I think a compelling story would also be that during the pandemic people, and it's a double-edged sword when there's a recession in double edged sword with the recession in that, sorry, you can't really. About 30% of people, 30% of people with disabilities live in families that experience poverty. And you really can't leave the labor market if your household is in poverty. So, it was a double-edged sword. People with disabilities were engaged in labor force, but one of the reasons they may have been was simply out of necessity due to poverty levels being high among people with disabilities. That's the story.

September mirrors, there's a small decline for people without disabilities and a similar decline that we saw in the employment to population ratio from 41.2%, to 40.3%. Nine tenths of a percent drop, which is pretty big. But again, it's ratcheting around this 40-mark, 40.5 mark since the spring. Are we going to see those big jumps that we saw earlier? Maybe, but right now, we're seem to be stabilizing around the 40 mark. That's what I'll say. I'll turn it over to Denise. Denise, take it away. If people have questions, we can answer them later. Denise.

**Denise Rozell:** Thanks, Andrew. Okay, Let's go to the first slide. We always start out with a federal policy update. I put what's happening in Washington on there first because I'm assuming y'all have been watching what's happening in Washington. At least to the extent of knowing that there's a new speaker coming to town, we don't know who that's going to be yet. The speaker's position has been vacated. In the House of Representatives, they voted to vacate the speaker, which means there is no speaker right now. There's an acting person, and they really can't do any work until they figure that out, things are on hold.

Again, I know I've said that to you in the past. However, having said that, they did get a continuing resolution passed since we last spoke, the federal government did not shut down on October 1. As we truly most of us around, we're sure it was going to shut down. The continuing resolution will go to November 17. And for those of you with federal funding, I will assume that, you know, that means that it just continues on at last year's rates, last year's funding levels until November 17. Again, if they don't pass their appropriations bills by November 17 on November 18 or another continuing resolution on November 18, the government will shut down. Well, they're not working at it at the moment. I mean, behind the scenes, I suppose they are, because they do have to figure out this issue in the house first.

The other thing to tell you about appropriations, just to remind you that in terms of the bills that we are most interested in, and that tends to be the labor, health, and human services appropriations bill in the Senate. The Senate has passed their bill out of committee. Still has to pass the floor. It's pretty much flat funded from 2023 levels. Again, for those of you on federal funding or who have federal grants, flat at the moment in the house, they have only passed their bill out of the subcommittee, the HHS bill out of the subcommittee. It still has to go to the committee then to the floor, then they have to conference it, then they have to pass. There is lower. The number that is in that subcommittee bill is lower than this year's bill, this year's appropriations.

The other thing to remember is well, I said the continuing resolution has to be passed, ends November 17, by the work that they did earlier in the year on the deficit reduction issue. There's one other date to know about, if they do not pass appropriations bills, and the President signs it, by January 1, the bill they passed earlier in the year for deficit to raise the debt ceiling. Debt ceiling, I meant to say, to raise the debt ceiling says that the spending level will be cut automatically 1% if it doesn't pass by January 1. There are a number of things, a lot of things going on right now, but we wait to see what they're going to do next. We continue to talk about the importance of all of the programs we work on. We continue to talk about the importance of funding for those programs, what happens if it doesn't get funded. All of those issues, obviously from an AUCD point of view and from a disability community point of view. But something has to happen on the hill first before next steps happen.

I stuck a note in here on the Rehab Act 50th anniversary. There was a huge celebration in DC. There was a White House event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Rehab Act and the 23rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. There's all kinds of stuff out there. If you want to go look, Google it, you'll find it. But I also want to point out to you something that happened. It was announced during one of those celebrations by the Acting Secretary of Labor, Julie Chu, that the Department of Labor is going to do a study on the impact and looking for public comment around some minimum wage. There are no details yet on that.

Let's go to the next slide. As a matter of fact. I gave you a bunch of information here so that you could have it. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it because we don't know the details yet. We were like, how do you submit your comment? Where do you send it? When is the deadline? We don't have any of that yet. But they announced it was going to be done and there is a press release which I'm also going to give you the link to, which has actually a bunch of good language about it. They're going to do a comprehensive review of Section 14 C, to reexamine its use and future viability. I know some of you out there, because I know some of you out there are sitting there thinking, been there, done that. Well, that's true, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it again. And it doesn't mean that there isn't a real opportunity here to make the paradigm shift happen away from 14C.

Let's flip to the next page. The next slide I'm giving you. Again, I'm not even going to review all of these. What I'm telling you is to try and get ready. The more people that make comments on this, the better. The more people who have worked for sub minimum wage and have comments to make to the federal government about why that is not appropriate, the better. The more you think about what you're going to say and prepare for that, the better. And you're going to hear about this from me again, and I hope you're going to hear about it from every disability organization that you work with. There's a great press release out by the American Association of People with Disabilities. AAPD, should have given you that link. There's another great one out by the Autism Self Advocates Network.

There are several others out there, and there will be more coming. I know AUCD is working on something. All these are resources that you may want in the future. When you do your comments, I'm assuming you're doing them or reaching out to people that you work with to ask them if they want to comment. Because I really believe the Department of Labor wants to hear about this. These are just the top two are studies one by the US Commission on Civil Rights that came out in 2019. One's, the National Council on Disability study, it came out in 2020. And then the press release I mentioned is the last one. Start listening, start watching wherever you get your disability news and updates because it will be there, and we need you.

Okay. Next slide. This one is a new one. This happened to come up at the same time as I was looking at everything else. There's a new article out from our friends at VCU, Virginia Commonwealth, Paul Wyman, and all of those folks on state level analysis of sub minimum wage for individuals with disabilities. And it looks at whether there are state level characteristics and policies that can predict the use of sub minimum wage.

They found, not surprisingly, probably for people who follow this issue, that it continues to be used in most states. There are a number of, should have looked at the number too, probably 15 to 20 who have done away with sub minimum wage. It tends to still be most prominently used in the Midwest. Then it goes into implications and recommendations for policy and what happens next, and how do we reduce that. They reduce the use of sub minimum wage. I recommend this one.

Next slide Andrew. One of the things that I don't know about you guys, but we talk a lot in every place, issue, whether it's employment, or home and community-based services, or education about blending and braiding of services and money. Particularly, blending and braiding of money, it tends to be complicated because you're bringing together, like in this case, you're bringing together, how do you blend money to promote competitive, integrated employment? And can you do that under WOIA, Workforce Opportunity Investment Act? What does that look like? And what about Can you blend things using the Olmsted Supreme Court decision?

I know in other areas we look at whether you can blend idea and vocational rehabilitation. Money does IDEA and WIOA allow that and what happens? Or maybe it's blending with Medicaid or whatever it is. How do you do this to promote competitive integrated employment? In this case, this is a really nice piece that I gave you, the lake for out of the department of labor and out ODEP, our friends at ODEP, it gives some examples of people who are doing it in the employment world. I thought this was really nice too from all of these states, and I would really recommend you take a look at it.

Next one, Andrew, we've talked a lot, and particularly as we started doing the mid-month nTIDEs, calls, about how do things split out in various categories of people. Like Andrew said, we're going to look at gender this month, this one in particular. And I've also talked to you all about apprenticeships and skilled trades and what's going on in those areas. This is around specifically employment of Hispanics with disabilities in skilled trade professions.

And it's a spotlight out of ODEP again. There's 430,000 or 30.5% of the currently employed who are who are Hispanic working in skilled trade professions, Hispanic and disabled. It compares with 32.2% non-Hispanic, non-disabled Hispanic. If I could just read what I've written or 21.9% of all workers, I thought this one was interesting. It highlights a particular group of people and I thought some of you might find that helpful.

Next slide Andrew. Last month was Mental Health Awareness month. This is again out of our friends at ODEP, the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion, EARN. They have a toolkit. They've updated, they've had a tool kit in the past. They've updated it. There are a bunch of good things in here. Cost calculators. This is EARN is the one who puts out things that can be used specifically by employers. There are some really nice things in here about costs, particularly coming out of Covid and the increase that we've seen in mental health disabilities.

There's also a really nice thing out of Jan on working with long Covid. It's literally two pages front and back. And I don't know about you guys, but I know a bunch of people who have long Covid and are struggling with how to work and what's allowed and what are the modifications or accommodations to which they're entitled, et cetera. I would definitely look at that one too.

Next slide, Andrew. This one is around, this is from a whole bunch of people. It's out of Millbank quarterly. But it compares employment services among autistic people with those with intellectual disability and goes through how they have been served by VR and Medicaid. Both really interesting. I gave you some of the specifics. The number of autistic people served through VR has literally tripled, and spending should be increased by 384% in the time of this survey, which was 2008 to 2016.

On the other hand, those served through Medicaid has only increased slightly, but the costs have decreased a lot, which makes you wonder about where that spending is going. This one was really, and clearly no one should be surprised to know there are a lot of working age autistic adults who need employment services through VR and Medicaid and are not getting one. Yeah. Not much to say about that, except there's more work to be done.

Next slide, Andrew, we've shared a bunch of stuff around rural. This is another one where we've looked at rural versus urban on the mid-month nTIDE. But this is a new one out of the Rural Institute in Montana. Both have service receipts and service expenditures as compared with ruralness and urban areas. Particularly, I thought this was also really interesting. They're looking at geography and the distance from a VR office, The availability of providers in an area and how that impacts particular groups of people, for instance, being black or living a long distance from a metro area, increased the probability of receiving agency based services, but lowered the probability of receiving purchase services. In other words, the agency folks are more in the metro areas. Interesting.

There are some other things on here that I thought were really interesting. Females, blacks, and those living at a distance greater than 50 miles from a metro area receive significantly lower expenditures. This is one that I think might be useful to share with your VR people. Particularly if you're in a state with rural areas to see if there's something you can help them think about doing better. Let's put it that way. T

Then, the last slide, Andrew, I couldn't believe without saying it's NDEAM, National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Happy NDEAM everybody. As usual, there are a ton of resources, a ton, ideas of things you can do this month. Pictures, posters, you name it. Sample articles. You name it up on the NDEAM website. The link is here. And happy NDEAM everybody.

Next slide. Andrew, it's my pleasure to introduce our guest speakers today. Leslie Jones is the Executive Director of the Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenberg Music School in New York City, where they foster inclusion for people with vision loss. She's been instrumental in developing an accessible music technology program within the music school, expanding community outreach through partnerships across the country.

Leslie is also a versatile musician playing chamber music and jazz piano. Dalia Sakas is the director of music studies at the school. She teaches piano in chorus and is the founder of the Comprehensive Music Program for Young People. She also maintains a piano studio of 15 students. I'm going to pass it to them, and I'm looking forward to it. Leslie and Dalia, it's yours.

**Leslie Jones:** Well, thank you everybody. I'm just going to take a second here to be able to share our slides. Let's see.

Oh beautiful.

**Karen Volle:** We'll just try this. You just let me know when you would like me to advance it.

**Leslie Jones:** Sure. Great. All right, let's go to the first slide. Please click the little arrows at the bottom and it'll advance.

**Andrew Houtenville:** It's flashing.

**Leslie Jones:** So FMDG Music School, as we like to call ourselves, or the Fil, because it's a very long name after a very wonderful lady. We are a music school and we are serving students of all ages and abilities since 1913. Yes, it's true. This is our 110th year of being in the business of music and vision. We are now five years into being an independent entity, which Dalia will tell you a little bit more about. But we are categorized as a community school of the arts. Just what that means is you are offering all progressive levels of instruction and performance opportunities. There's no audition to be in the school. It is open to the community at large. In our case at large means those with any type of vision loss. We are part of different national service groups. The National Guild for Community Arts and the New York City Coalition of Arts.

We're also part of Vision Serve Alliance. I guess the most important thing is what do we do and why are we on this panel today? But I think you'll see is that we are obviously teaching music. We are working in accessible music technology, both teaching it as well as providing all formats of music, braille, large print, audio, to our students and those beyond. We do many performances. You'll hear a little bit about our music transcription service and yes, we do teacher training.

But the photo you see I just think is a wonderful photo. It gives you a sense of the diversity of age, of color, of everything in our music school. With that, one of the things that we've decided to do today is really present anecdotal portraits of our students that come from all kinds of backgrounds and why are they succeeding in employment. Dalia, you want to take it?

**Dalia Sakas:** Next slide please. This slide talks about yes. Again, you have to press it again as we go into the braille. Thank you. Our comprehensive music program for young people. This whole nTIDEs presentation, the webinar, the focus on occupation. Why are we starting back here with children? Well, with music, I don't think you can come into music at the age of 20 and have a career. This starts at a very young age. It's very important to build the skills needed for music performance or work in music. Starting from a younger age, we wanted to just show you our comprehensive music program for young people.

As you can see, these kids all have quite joyous faces as they receive their certificates for the completion of the year. There have been countless studies about music education, the benefits of music education, development of spatial reasoning in the brain, better time management skills, attention to your self-presentation. When you have to play in a recital, you have to dress up. This all prepares one for careers, for job opportunities, self-discipline, time management, knowing how to juggle your time with doing homework and practicing, and all the other activities that you have.

Our music school was part of Lighthouse Guild when our school was closed in 2018. Leslie and I both had, knew how critical it was to keep this school open, especially for this community of people with vision loss. This environment that promotes music study, that promotes preparing, developing characters, developing people for life with these various skills is incredibly important. And we wanted to keep this program alive. And this one is the first one that we were able to house and keep going here in New York City at 92 Y where we're now located. We can go on to the next slide. Of all of our students, not all of them go on to have careers in music. And that's not what we're espousing, just because you go to music school and take piano lessons.

I've had some parents ask me, well, can you guarantee me a career in music for my child? Well, no. This student, Matthew Whittaker, is a huge exception. He was an incredibly gifted student, a prodigy. He did very, very well at our school. He graduated high school and left our school and went to Julliard graduated this past May in Juilliard, has traveled the world with his quintet, is currently in Pittsburgh, which is why he couldn't be here with us today. Musical Directing, a show destined for Broadway, the Billy Strayhorn musical, Something to Live For. He has gotten so much experience. He is such a capable artist. And all of my contacts with him when he was a child, of course, the struggle to get him to read braille music, the fights because his ear is so good, but all paid off because he was able then to function in the university setting.

Now as a musical director, creating scores, making arrangements, working with sighted musicians, he is able to interact with them and deal with them on the same level, even though he can't see the printed score. He understands how the music operates; he understands what he has to do to create a score. This has made him very successful. We're celebrating our five years with a benefit concert with Matthew in just a couple of weeks. If you're in the New York area, come out and join us.

Next slide, please. Another one of our students, Daniel Gillen, he's currently 29 years old. He's actually employed by us as a certified braille proofreader and music transcriber. He has a double degree from Haverford College. He has a major in Physics and he also studied music. He plays the piano. He still currently studies the piano and sings in our chorus.

Our transcription department would be lost without Daniel's meticulous attention to details and proofing our braille scores. We create braille music for all of our own students in house that comes with the registration if they're capable to learn braille music. Some students continue to use audio formats, and that's all right. But we do provide braille music for anyone that needs it, but we also have a transcription service for people on the outside. You'll hear more about that later.

Next slide. Thank you. And another one of our students, Simon, he's 27 years old. He has a Bachelor of Music degree in music education, as well as a master’s degree in music education. He's currently not working as a music educator, but he's employed at the New York Public Library as an assistive technology instructor. To see Simon work with technology - his iPhone and his computers - is amazing. But he worked with us as an intern and helped us out in our classes, was an instructor, taught some of our students and has gotten a lot of experience working with students and other things at the library. He is helping catalog our braille music collection, which will be housed at the Andrew Haspel Library, part of the New York Public Library System. They've accepted our collection of about 2,500 braille scores. That will be unveiled next month. Next slide. Thank you.

**Leslie Jones:** Okay. And now we have Madeline Mau. We love to call Madeline, Maddie, and you'll wonder why am I showing this slide? She's not an employed person at this point. She's only 17 years old. She started with us at 5. One of the things that people find amazing about Maddie is that she travels weekly from Princeton to New York City and has now for the last ten years to study at our school. She's going to graduate this year and she's going to study music and technology in college. She's a highly accomplished young woman, incredibly articulate, studies many instruments as you see there. And one of the things I loved about this slide was you see her from a young child starting to learn to dance and getting that whole socialization.

The second slide, you see here at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reciting a poem that she wrote. The last one is just from this past May. Here again is the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where we do a concert every year. Maddie is playing solo piano on a nine-foot grand. The point here being her poise and her ability to feel self-confident enough to do something that most adults would find daunting. Maddie does it with panache and with excellence. She's going to be a force. L

Let me tell you next slide. The next one is another one of our former students, Emily Racinos. She's 25 years old. She's immigrant from Ecuador. She started with us at the age of eight in a very precarious position. Really struggling with an eye condition that was just going to deteriorate. So, she was caught in the world of reading large print to braille, and learned at an early age that she really had to advocate for herself. She went to NYU in International Relations and peace and conflict studies. I know she went to Argentina to do some work abroad. She worked at the Supreme Court. She's done all kinds of things and now she's pursuing a law degree at Syracuse University. Still working as a case support associate for immigrants and disability rights. Another force of nature.

**Dalia Sakas:** I may add, when she was eight years old, the anger she had as a child, losing vision, it was painful to watch. But I do think that her involvement with the music school really helped propel her forward and gave her some kind of stability.

**Leslie Jones:** It totally did. I think it helped her work her anger out and to know that she could make a difference in the world. And she accepted her vision loss and it became an attribute that she has used for herself. The next person, Francesco Magisano. I've got it. Okay. In this one, Francesco is 28. He started at the school in high school but had already studied music. He has a BA from Fordham. Francesco learned a lot about discipline focused. He lost his vision late due to cancer. Also took on the necessity, I think, of physical fitness. He is now working as the director of the New York Metro for Achilles International. He has competed at the preliminaries to the Para Olympics, and I'm not surprised if he goes again very shortly. He is winning all kinds of things and is very well known nationally in the world of para sports.

**Dalia Sakas:** Next slide, please. Melissa came to us as she was maybe 12 years old. Her parents were here from Montenegro, and she came to our music school. She was so thrilled at being in America and getting mobility skills, studying so many things, being able to study at a school of music. She became such a strong advocate, she brought her TBI with her back to Montenegro, bought 30 canes so that she could introduce mobility to her friends and colleagues in Montenegro. She fought, her father was a diplomat, and he was recalled to Montenegro.

But she somehow managed to come back, finish high school. I think she was in South Dakota. She found a host family to live with a South Dakota or Idaho, somewhere out in the Midwest, and then finished high school. Found herself back in college in New York, always coming back to the music school to work with us or be in the chorus or something. Now she has completed her BA from the Manhattanville College. She's employed as a TVI by the International Academy of Hope. She works with children with severe brain trauma. It's wonderful to consult with Melissa now when I have difficulties with a student or I'm not sure because this is not my field, I can ask Melissa for advice now. She is a very strong advocate, a strong friend, and a good colleague.

**Andrew Houtenville:** We're running a bit low on time. We've only got about 9 minutes left. And we want to leave some time for Q and A.

**Leslie Jones:** Okay. I won't say too much except for that Andrew Zhang, one of our students here, is a contract accountant by the federal government, started with us at the age of seven. He's very friendly with another one of our students, Jillian Raquet, who is an Executive assistant to the Hertog Foundation. She's also a musical theater coach. Again, you can see performances and races and how they factor into their work today. How that I just run through these. Yeah, here's an example of what our students do in learning to give back. They formed a junior advisory board that is working on peer-to-peer fund raising right now. But all employed and very capable adults.

**Dalia Sakas:** After us advocating for them for all these years, they are now working adults. And they have in turn now started advocating for our music school, which I'm so touched by their efforts and by their commitment.

**Leslie Jones:** This last one is if you want to tune in, please do. It's conversations with the Fil which is a series we hold. This one is going to be especially special because we have guest panelists that again, are all people who are working in the field of disabilities or themselves have vision loss. You can just see the panelists, they have a lot of credentials there and Dalia will be leading that one. Talking about the necessity of braille music in the field.

**Dalia Sakas:** Sometimes the difficulty in procuring braille music, the cost involved in getting braille music, the inability to find what you need current music in braille. So, these are all difficult issues, and so all of these panelists will discuss that. We'll also be touching on the subject of large print or modified staff notation, that'll be in the New year, January, February, also with a panel. And how to make the music really usable for someone with vision loss, large print music.

**Leslie Jones:** Okay, and then our last slide is again, we started with a professional who was working in the field of music as a performer, which is a very challenging field in music. But our last slide is a gentleman who has also been working for a long time as a professional musician. We thought that we had to hear a little bit of music since this is a music school. So, I'll cut it short. But listen.

**Dalia Sakas:** Oh, the sound is not being shared.

**Andrew Houtenville:** You'll probably have to go back out and

**Leslie Jones:** That's fine.

**Dalia Sakas:** It's okay. It's okay. Okay.

**Leslie Jones:** Yep. Thank you everyone.

**Andrew Houtenville:** What was the name of the artist, just so we can look him up ourselves.

**Leslie Jones:** Vanderlei Pereira

**Andrew Houtenville:** Oh, sure.

**Dalia Sakas:** He is one of the best jazz drummers around, sought after as a Latin music teacher.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Somebody could type his name in into the chat. That would be helpful. We have one question from Chelsea Chamberlain. What percentage of your students go on to careers in music and music education? Do you have a sense of how music itself, but also music education?

**Leslie Jones:** I would say not more than 25% go into actual music. What I can say is that the graduates of our comprehensive music program for young people are at about 75% employment, all with vision loss.

**Dalia Sakas:** That's general employment, not in the music world. It's not a large number that goes into the music field is complicated. And what is the sad thing is that the younger students are often not supported by state agencies, government agencies. Music study is seen as an outlier, and we feel that it is just such a valuable part of the upbringing or the overall building of character and a personage that sometimes I'm at a loss.

**John O'Neill:** Leslie, Dalia, could you say a word or two about technical assistance you provide to colleges and universities as students are pursuing their music education?

**Leslie Jones:** I'd love to say something about that. Dalia, can I speak to that?

**Dalia:** Okay.

**Leslie Jones:** We are doing at this time, we do some consultations with offices of disabilities. If there is a self-identified student with vision loss, what we've been doing is able to go there often, to go there in person and do a real assessment of their capabilities in terms of braille music, in terms of being able to provide music for them. I think the greatest trouble we see is many of our students do well in the public schools, Private schools. The school districts will engage us to do transcription where there is the biggest hole at this point is offices of disabilities at universities and colleges.

It's mostly a matter of not knowing that there is a resource out there and not being able to access it quickly. Because the point is with music, if you don't get a student their score so that they can participate in a chamber of music concert, a band concert, a chorus concert, the concert is over by the time they get their music. Often that is where there is a gap. That is something that we hope to fill in the next few years. Dalia, if you want to add anything to that.

**Dalia Sakas:** Universities tend to take a student with a disability and just deal with that one student, and then that student is gone and it's like that never happened and there's another student and they start from scratch again, There are no best practices in place, there's no guidelines in place these students. That's, I think, what we would like to change, what we'd like to establish, get in touch with schools, private music schools, the Julliard’s, the Manhattan Schools of Music. Where things are not in place, there are incredibly gifted musicians out there that are just not getting their materials in time.

**Leslie Jones:** Often what happens is the stereotype myth, oh, all musicians have good ears, doesn't always work. Even if it does work, it's not fair. The problem is that they'll say, oh, you can pick this up by ear, but that is one of the things that the school is fostering is music literacy. Literacy cuts across all platforms and really does break down the barriers we have found with our students, when they get their music in time, they are often even better than their sighted peers.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Okay. Well, thank you both very much. We're right at the 1:00 mark Dalia, thank you very much, Leslie. Thank you very much. All right. Well, that's it for tonight. For today's nTIDE. Everybody have a great weekend. And feel free to reach out to Leslie and Dalia directly.

**Dalia Sakas:** Thank you very much for having us.

**Leslie Jones:** Yes. Thank you so much.

**Andrew Houtenville:** You're welcome. All right. Bye everybody.