

LOCAL STORIES JUNE 7, 2022

Community Highlights: Meet Lori Frisher of Ready or Not! Media



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Today we'd like to introduce you to Lori Frisher.

Hi Lori, it's an honor to have you on the platform. Thanks for taking the time to share your story with us – to start maybe you can share some of your backstory with our readers?

I was born with moderate-to-severe hearing loss, and over time, I lost more even more hearing.

After wearing hearing aids for 30+ years, I was the first person in the world to receive an Esteem implant (an invisible hearing device) with my Cochlear implant. I never imagined this technology would exist in my lifetime. The challenges and gifts in my life have driven me to use my creativity – through my work, art, and my love for people.

I have worked hard to make sure that my disability did not stop me from fully engaging in the joys of life –learning, building relationships with people, and playing sports. I have also always enjoyed sharing the fact that people with disabilities are powerful contributors to society. I was mainstreamed in school, played Division I tennis at the University of Hartford, joined a sorority, and delivered my commencement address. After college, I worked in the competitive fields of advertising, enterprise sales, and media in New York City. When my hearing loss presented hurdles in the corporate world, I found ways to jump over them.

I have been so blessed to work with incredible movers and shakers in the disability community who are leaders in the world of entertainment, fashion, arts, tech, health, sports and philanthropy. Being vice-president of community development at We Media, a multi-media company enabled me to connect with the disability audience through print, digital, and broadcast content early in my career.

In that role, I championed more than 100 nonprofit organizations to place disability issues in the media, and organized events with some extraordinary people who could raise awareness about their mission. This was a turning point when I gained a lot of confidence, and I could also see how important this work was.

Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges and lessons you've learned along the way. Looking back would you say it's been easy or smooth in retrospect?

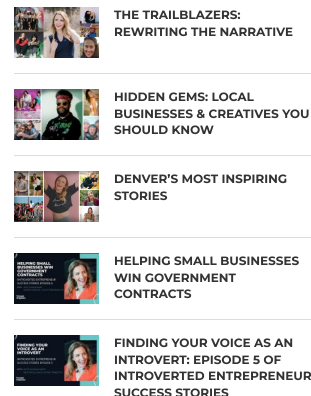
My experiences as a person with a disability have not been easy. I have struggled, but have had the constant support of my family and friends. In the hardest of times, I have been forced to reflect, to slow down, and imagine new pathways for my own development and for the disability community.

Let me share a couple of examples.

While I was fighting for the rights and visibility of people with disabilities, I was also fighting cancer and the impact of interferon chemotherapy on my hearing. Interferon treatments reduced what limited hearing I had.

I no longer have any of my own residual hearing. I am now deaf. Being deaf is a new way of life for me, and I believe and it has made me deeply appreciate the deaf culture even more that I had before.

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impossible to communicate. And then I became in with all of the symptoms of COVID-19, but no definitive diagnosis. Week after week, the undiagnosed illness continued, and eventually, it took my voice. I was robbed of the ability to speak and advocate for myself. Eventually, I was finally diagnosed with a Functional Neurological Disorder and with time, my voice has gradually returned.

When I could not speak for myself, I knew I needed to develop a new kind of voice. A voice that would allow me to advocate for myself and for others who are facing similar obstacles. I spent my whole life trying hard to listen and now knew it was my time to be heard.

I didn't have a choice at that point. I was forced to slow down and reflect on my life. I asked myself, "What do I want to champion for the rest of my life?"

I have recently founded Ready or Not Media – where we bring disability awareness to companies and organizations to align their diversity initiatives with their mission. I'm ready! In fact, it's fair to say that as a deaf, proud member of the disability community, I have been preparing for this moment my entire life. I am now learning to sign and working with those who have been touched by the deaf and disability community.

Thanks – so what else should our readers know about Ready or Not! Media?

"Ready or not" is a question I am asking all of you. Are you ready to learn more about people with disabilities? Are you ready to rise above discomfort and become comfortable with the disability community? Are you ready to erase the stereotypes?

If your answer to that question is, "I want to learn more," then I am the one to consult. And, yes, I am ready, especially at a time when communities and companies are focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which I believe should include enhanced awareness of the needs and buying power of people with disabilities.

"If you are going to talk the talk, then you should be willing to walk the walk," "If you are committed to supporting DEI, then you should integrate people with disabilities within the fabric of your organization."

With Ready or Not Media, on this journey I'm tapping into community resources I have built throughout my career to give people with disabilities a voice. I offer impactful services including public speaking, media appearances, corporate training for both management and employees, compelling event planning, and consulting on marketing and branding campaigns.

My website points out that one out of every seven people on the planet lives with some sort of disability, a population with \$13 trillion in global purchasing buying power. It's a community that people can join at any point in their lives by sustaining temporary disabling injuries that may eventually heal. Doing the right thing with this community is more than just checking a box. It's the smart thing, especially for companies looking at their bottom line.

Is there anyone you'd like to thank or give credit to?

My mom not only dedicated her career to teaching but has been my biggest teacher in my life and continues to be. She worked tirelessly with my teachers, tutors, speech therapists, and audiologists to guide me through the challenges of learning in school. She helped me overcome adversities I faced as a child, as a teenager and as an adult.

My father was a collegiate athlete who introduced me to the world of sports at a young age, which inspired me to become a Division 1 collegiate athlete.

Both of my parents were very outgoing and they expanded my world so that I could participate in a wide range of social activities. Having these diverse experiences has blessed me with the opportunity to get to know people from all walks of life.

My sister is my cheerleader who has my back and continues to remind me never to give up.

The founders and staff of We Media, the first media company for people with disabilities in New York believed in me. With them, I have been able to play an instrumental role in uplifting and serving the community of people with disabilities, by leading by example to corporate and community leaders which forever touched my life.

My community of friends and colleagues here in Colorado have brought me unforgettable gifts in my journey and for that, I am forever grateful.

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