



## Reaching People with Disabilities through Healthy Communities

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### **This project has impacted my life because:**

On May 6, 2019, I participated on a panel to share my experience of being a person with a disability (in a wheelchair) accessing trails and natural areas in Benton County. Being on this panel provided me with a chance to talk to the community about my concerns. Often no one understands my concerns, and through this opportunity, I finally felt heard. It was also powerful to hear the experiences of others who have cultural and mental health barriers and understand how similar their experiences are to mine.

### **The most influential policy, system, or environmental change of this project to me was:**

Through my testimony, I was able to reach and influence decision-makers who work on trail design throughout the State of Oregon. Telling my story has shifted the focus of organizations to better meet the needs of people with disabilities in our county and state.

### **As a result of this, I:**

I was able to help the community understand what I go through trying to access the outdoors. Through this understanding, people attending the workshop will better be able to help myself and others address the barriers that exist in accessing parks, natural areas, and trails in our community.

### **What was the emotional connection, self-efficacy, or “ah-ha” moment for this project?**

It was powerful having so many people listen to my issues. I felt like I was not so different after all; sharing the stage with people with other concerns (PTSD, mental health issues, cultural barriers, etc.) helped me to realize that their concerns are not very different from mine. There are many similarities in the challenges that we all face.

*Please note that testimonials may be edited for clarity by the NACDD Communications Department.*