**The Promise and Realities of Disability Rights**

**NonProfit Center**

**89 South Street**

**East/West Room, 2nd Floor**

**Boston, MA 02111**

**July 26, 2018**

**9:30 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.**

Our MC for the morning:

***Debra Vey Voda-Hamilton***Hamilton Law and Mediation, PLLC, (HLM)

9:30 A.M. to 9:50 A.M. Arrivals and networking, light breakfast provided

9:50 A.M -10:00 A.M. Welcome: ***Debra Vey Voda-Hamilton***

10:00 A.M. - 10:15 A.M. *A U.S. and Global Disability Rights Overview*

* *Kerry Thompson, Executive Director for Silent Rhythms, Inc.; Information and Program Coordinator for Disability Rights Fund*

10:15 A.M. – 10:20 A.M. Break/Panel Transition

10:20 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. Using the Arts to Create Inclusive Communities

Moderated by: Kerry Thompson

* *Nicole Agois, VSA Massachusetts*
* *Ellice Patterson, Abilities Dance*
* *Elbert “EJ” Joseph, a Hard of Hearing Actor*

11:00 A.M. – 11:15 A.M. Break/Panel Transition

11:15 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. Strengthening Advocacy and Leadership Skills

This session will include a sub- focus on the current state of healthcare and how to advocate for the change we need.

Moderated by: Gary Norman & Kerry Thompson

* *Commissioner Heidi Reed, Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH)*
* *Carl Richardson, ADA Coordinator for Massachusetts State House*
* *John Winske, Executive Director for Disability Policy Consortium*

12:00 P.M. to 12:30 P.M. Reflections and Closing Remarks

Moderated by Gary Norman

Join us after for networking and cake!

We would like to thank the following sponsors for their contributions:

Debra Vey Voda-Hamilton

Disability Policy Consortium

The German Marshall Fund of the United States

Mid-Atlantic Lyceum

The NonProfit Center

Silent Rhythms, Inc.

SPEAKERS BIOS

**Nicole Agois Hurel** is a musician, educator, arts administrator and disability advocate who works at the intersection of arts, education and disability. As the Managing Director of VSA Massachusetts, the State Organization on Art and Disability, she oversees programs that provide inclusive arts-integrated instruction to 1500+ students, supports educators with inclusive arts teaching practices, and creates opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in the cultural life of their communities. For the past 12 years, she directed VSA MA's COOL Schools program, where she closely examined and contributed to research on the application of Universal Design for Learning in the Arts, contributing to publications, and developing numerous professional development initiatives on the subject. She served as a UDL curriculum reviewer for SchoolTalk in Washington, D.C., and as National Institute Faculty for VSA International. In 2016 Nicole was selected as a member of the Leadership Council for Boston Creates, the cultural planning process for the city of Boston, where she contributed to conversations about equity and inclusion that were critical to the development of the plan. She currently serves on the Advisory Boards of the Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs, and the Adaptive Music Institute in Springfield, MA. Born and raised in Lima, Peru, Nicole received her Master of Education in Arts in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the Boston Conservatory.

**Gary C. Norman, Esq. L.L.M**. is this uncommonly heard person with a disability on the transatlantic stage with his third guide dog, Gary leads at the intersection of law practice, personal connectivity because of the power of partnership, and shared responsibility about disability. He has extensive experience as a dispute resolution oriented attorney, always hoping to broker people together. He serves on rosters as an arbitrator and as a mediator. Gary was a 2008 Marshall Memorial Fellow.

**Ellice Patterson** is the founder and director of Abilities Dance, a Boston- based dance company that welcomes dancers of all cognitive and physical abilities. Her work in Abilities is modern focused with an adaptive twist so that dance is accessible to all. The concept started eight years ago when she had a spinal operation that left her relearning how to dance. Outside of exclusively Abilities Dance's shows, her choreography has appeared in Third Life Choreographer Series, Green St. Studio's SEEDS showcase and Garage Festival, Lacey Sasso & Company's Deeply Rooted, Bill Evans Somatic Conference, Boston Contemporary Dance Festival, and The Series: Vol IV at the Ailey Citigroup Theatre. She has appeared in the Dove Real Beauty and Slick Chicks campaigns. She has given lectures and workshops at universities and organizations across the country. She also earned her Bachelors of Arts in Biological Sciences from Wellesley College and her Masters of Science in Management Studies from Boston University Questrom School of Business.

**Commissioner Heidi L. Reed** leads the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) as the state’s centralized resource for specialized programming, communication access, and public policy on behalf of the Commonwealth’s population of 546,000 adults and children who are deaf and hard of hearing.  She ensures oversight of statewide Interpreter and CART Referral, Case Management and Children’s Services, Communication Access Training & Technology Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Programs, and special projects including Victim of Crime Services. The Commission’s collaborative working agreements with other state agencies, task forces, and steering committees result in strengthened policies, procedures, equity of access, and effectiveness in service delivery.  Commissioner Reed is a Massachusetts native who previously led non-profit deaf and hard of hearing community based agencies in Boston and in New Orleans. She holds a BA degree from William Smith College and a MA degree from Gallaudet University, and has experienced life as a deaf person since the age of two.

**Carl Richardson** is the ADA Coordinator/504/Diversity Officer for the Massachusetts State House. He collaborates with the Executive branch, legislature, and state agencies which serve the disability community to make the State House fully accessible to all.  As a deaf-blind individual, Carl understands firsthand the many challenges that a disabled person faces when it comes to education, employment, and daily living. Formerly, Carl was a marketing representative for one of the world’s leading access technology organization, WGBH’s Media Access Group; the Media Access Group helps to make media such as the web, movies, and television accessible to all.   Carl also serves on several boards which includes the Carroll Center for the Blind, Boston Disability Commission Guide Dog Users of Massachusetts, and more. He also serves on the Audio Description Project and Information Access Committee for the American Council of the Blind, the information access Committee is currently working with companies such as Comcast, Google, Apple, and Microsoft to increase accessibility in an ever increasing digital age.

**Elbert “EJ” Joseph** is a Hard of Hearing actor who is fluent in both American Sign Language as well as spoken English. He started his acting career when he was thirteen and his passion and dream is to transform lives and inspire the world through his craft. He believes success is found in collaboration, desire for personal growth and constant pursuit of new opportunities. He received professional theatrical training at The Boston Arts Academy and has worked with award winning theatres including Huntington Theatre and Wheelock Family Theatre.

**Kerry M. Thompson** is the Executive Director for Silent Rhythms, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to achieving inclusion in the arts for people of all abilities. Silent Rhythms’ programs include “Movements to Move the Marginalized from the Margins,” “Salsa-ASL workshop,” and Salsa in the Park among numerous other programs. She has been a lifelong activist for people with disabilities beginning as a self-advocate as a DeafBlind individual. She co-created Text4Deaf, a communication tool to bridge the communication gap between the Deaf and Hearing communities in healthcare. Since 2008, she has worked to advance human rights through United Nations Conventions and the Sustainable Development Goals as part of her work with the Disability Rights Fund. She is the co-author for *Human Rights and Adolescence (2014. University of Pennsylvania Press)* and has written several blogs including “[A Human Rights Issue: Access to the Arts,”](http://silentrhythms.org/2018/06/20/a-human-rights-issue-access-to-the-arts/) “[Crossing the Street: Lessons from a Self-Advocate](https://www.usher-syndrome.org/our-story/blog/crossing-the-street.html)” and “[DeafBlindness: The Lefts Behinds in a Leave No One Behind Era](http://disabilityrightsfund.org/deafblindness-the-left-behinds-in-a-leave-no-one-behind-era/).” She completed a Master’s from Harvard University. She was a 2014 Marshall Memorial Fellow and a 2016- 2017 White House Fellowship National Finalist.

**Debra Vey Voda-Hamilton** is the principal at Hamilton Law and Mediation, PLLC, (HLM) the first solo mediation practice in the US dedicated to helping people resolve conflicts involving animals. She presents programs that teach people how to communicate, as a speaker and receiver of information without feeling they need to resort to litigation. Debra is the go to person for information regarding the use of mediation in disagreements over animals for the NY Times, Wall Street Journal, the Chicago Sun Times, Bloomberg and the US News and World Report.

**John Winske** is the Executive Director of the Disability Policy Consortium (DPC), a cross-disability advocacy and research organization based in Boston, Massachusetts. He brings more than thirty years’ experience in building coalitions of people with a wide variety of disabilities to bring about policy change to empower his community. John is the former Executive Director of the Massachusetts Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. He has more than twelve years’ experience in non-profit management and has served on the Board of Directors of more than a dozen non-profit organizations. As the CEO of non-profits he has built a reputation for developing and acquiring funding for innovative programs designed to empower people with disabilities. His projects have been funded by a variety of organizations and foundations including Patient Centered Outcome Research Institute, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, Community Catalyst, National Easter Seals Society, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Department of Transportation, Administering Agency on Developmental Disabilities and the Boston Foundation. Mr. Winske served as the Vice President of Human Resources and Development with the Boston Center for Independent Living. In addition to his work in the non-profit arena Mr. Winske has also started four businesses. His unique blend of non-profit and for profit experience has allowed him to cross pollinate best practices from both sectors. Mr. Winske has testified before Congress on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Special Education. He has extensive experience in public speaking and conducting training sessions.