



BIAAZ Honors Katie Griffith for Her Advocacy Work

BIAAZ Noggin committee member Keerthi Vemulapalli caught up with Katie Griffith after she completed her reign as Miss Wheelchair Arizona. Katie was recently honored by the BIAAZ board for her work promoting youth leadership and disability inclusion.

You could say that Katie Griffith made the most of 2016. As Miss Wheelchair Arizona, she spent the year traveling and speaking on her platform issues. A few highlights for Katie were being a model for Valley Metro, meeting crown winners from other pageant systems while participating in the Chandler Electronic Parade, and speaking at the Arizona Disability Sports Ability Ball. "You get more recognition for what you can do because of the title," Katie said. "I used this recognition to give back to the TBI community."

Another highlight for Katie was speaking to over 350 attendees at the 2017 BIAAZ Rays of Hope conference during the luncheon program. She hopes that, by sharing what she has accomplished with others, people will hear what she has done and realize their own potential. Her platform as Miss Wheelchair Arizona 2016 was to advocate for youth involvement in community and leadership roles through education and advocacy for people with disabilities. It is important to Katie to tell people how much potential students with disabilities have. At the conference,



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she shared that she didn't get very much acknowledgement as a student, and she believes that shouldn't be the case just because someone has a disability.

Katie was born with cerebral palsy and had an accident when she was 10 years old that led to a TBI, or traumatic brain injury. Katie moved past her accident, but did not realize she now had a TBI in addition to her cerebral palsy until her recent involvement with BIAAZ. She now realizes she must account for TBI as one of her disabilities. Katie believes all people should have equal opportunities and, for people with a TBI, she believes the way to do this is by always pushing forward. Katie's favorite experience as Miss Wheelchair Arizona was getting to compete in the Miss Wheelchair America Pageant 2017 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Even though she didn't win, Katie says it was a great experience because she could go even further as a TBI survivor by sharing her story. The outcome of her experience is that Katie is now more involved with advocacy organizations and shares her story as a TBI survivor with the community.



Carrie Collins-Fadell of BIAAZ accepts BIAAZ's IMPACT award nomination at the IMPACT awards 30th anniversary reception along with Phil Pangrazio, CEO of Ability 360 and Gus LaZear of the Ability 360 Center. Ability 360 was also a nominee.



For the second year in a row, the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona was named a IMPACTful nonprofit by the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce. Congratulations to the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona volunteers, supporters, board of directors, and staff who make great things happen for the over 3,000 families we serve each year. "This year's IMPACT Awards recipients are a testament to the success that can be achieved through dedication to leadership, innovation and community," said Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Todd Sanders. "These businesses and organizations will continue to drive the growth of the Greater Phoenix region for years to come."