Disclaimer:

This manifesto was created in part with ChatGPT.

Dedication:

I dedicate this manifesto to Yehovah, the Holy Spirit and Yesshua. The three of you are awesome and I couldn’t take credit for my creations if I wanted too.

My Accessibility Journey:

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I lost my sight three months after birth. I have Retinopsy of Prematurity.

Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) is a condition that primarily affects premature infants and can potentially lead to visual impairments or blindness. While the sithted may not experience ROP firsthand, understanding the condition is crucial for raising awareness and promoting support for those affected.

Retinopathy of Prematurity occurs when the blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive tissue lining the back of the eye, do not develop properly in premature infants. The retina plays a vital role in converting light into electrical signals that are sent to the brain for visual processing. When the blood vessels in the retina are underdeveloped or abnormal, they can lead to complications that may impair vision.

In infants born prematurely, the blood vessels in the retina are still growing and developing. Factors such as low birth weight, oxygen therapy, and other medical interventions can disrupt this delicate process. As a result, abnormal blood vessels may start to form, leading to ROP.

The severity of ROP can vary, ranging from mild cases that resolve on their own to more severe cases that require medical intervention. Ophthalmologists closely monitor premature infants to identify signs of ROP, such as the presence of abnormal blood vessels or the formation of scar tissue. If left untreated, ROP can progress and cause retinal detachment, which can result in permanent vision loss.

For the sighted, understanding the challenges faced by individuals with ROP can foster empathy and support. Vision loss or impairment can significantly impact a person's daily life, independence, and overall well-being. It is important to recognize the importance of early detection, appropriate medical interventions, and ongoing visual rehabilitation for those affected by ROP.

I’ve been using Jaws, the world’s most popular screen reader since approximately early 2002.

Jaws is a widely recognized and popular screen reader specifically developed for individuals with visual impairments.

Jaws (Job Access With Speech) is a software application developed by Freedom Scientific, now part of VFO Group. It is primarily used by blind and visually impaired individuals to access and interact with computers. Jaws provides auditory output, converting on-screen information into synthesized speech or braille, allowing users to navigate through different software applications, browse the internet, read documents, and perform various tasks using their computer.

Here are some key features and functionalities of Jaws:

1. Text-to-speech output: Jaws converts on-screen text, menus, dialog boxes, and other elements into synthesized speech. It supports different voices and allows users to customize speech rate, volume, and other speech parameters.

2. Braille support: Jaws can also interface with refreshable braille displays, providing users with tactile output. It translates on-screen information into braille characters, allowing users to read and interact with content through touch.

3. Navigation and interaction: Jaws enables users to navigate through different software applications, operating systems, and web pages. It provides keyboard shortcuts and commands to efficiently move between elements, read specific sections of text, interact with forms, and access various features.

4. Document reading: Jaws can read a wide range of document formats, including text files, PDFs, Word documents, spreadsheets, and more. Users can navigate through the document, skim headings, jump to specific sections, and even perform text searches.

5. Web browsing: Jaws supports web accessibility standards and allows users to browse the internet. It can read web pages, follow links, fill out web forms, and interact with web-based applications.

6. Application support: Jaws is compatible with a variety of software applications, including productivity suites, email clients, instant messaging programs, media players, and more. It helps visually impaired users access and utilize these applications effectively.

7. Customization and personalization: Jaws offers extensive customization options, allowing users to tailor the screen reader's behavior, speech output, braille display settings, and keyboard commands to suit their specific needs and preferences.

It's worth noting that Jaws is just one of several popular screen readers available today, with other notable examples being NVDA (NonVisual Desktop Access) and VoiceOver. These screen readers have significantly enhanced accessibility and inclusivity for individuals with visual impairments, enabling them to independently use computers and digital resources.

As I explored the web, I noticed an unfortunate pattern. The pattern I noticed was that many websites weren’t accessible. They were either partly accessible or completely inaccessible. As I contacted the webmasters, I discovered to my horror, they weren’t interested in being inclusive.

Then Covid hit and my podcast Uniquely Abled was launched.

Along the way, I’ve discovered an accessible web host Hostgator and an accessible podcast host Blubrry.

I’ve also discovered an accessible royalty-free music platform called Epidemicsound which has been and continues to be responsive to my accessibility ideas.

The content management system I use for my website is Wordpress which has been very accessible since version 3. This is all great news.

Introduction:

We, the advocates and supporters of inclusivity and equal opportunities, come together under the banner of the "Uniquely Abled." This manifesto seeks to amplify the voices of individuals with unique abilities and disabilities, encouraging society to recognize and celebrate their diverse talents, contributions, and potential. We firmly believe that every person, regardless of their abilities, has value and should be afforded the opportunity to thrive in a world free from discrimination and barriers.

Uniquely Abled Unlocked aims to change the systemic patterns and stereotypes that limit the possibilities for those with unique abilities. We strive to create a world where differences are embraced, accommodations are accessible, and equal opportunities are provided to all. By challenging assumptions and championing inclusivity, we envision a society that values and empowers every individual, allowing them to unlock their full potential.

I. Embracing Diversity and Unique Abilities:

1. Shifting Perspectives:

We advocate for a paradigm shift in the way society views unique abilities and disabilities. Rather than perceiving differences as limitations, we encourage a perspective that recognizes and celebrates the diverse strengths, talents, and perspectives that individuals with unique abilities bring to the table.

2. Equal Opportunities:

We demand equal opportunities for education, employment, healthcare, and social participation for individuals with unique abilities. It is crucial to break down barriers and provide reasonable accommodations, fostering an inclusive environment that allows everyone to thrive and contribute to society.

3. Person-Centered Approach:

We emphasize the importance of adopting a person-centered approach, where individuals with unique abilities are empowered to make decisions about their lives, and their preferences and needs are respected in all aspects of society.

II. Accessibility and Inclusion:

1. Accessible Environments:

We advocate for the creation of physically and digitally accessible environments that ensure the inclusion of individuals with unique abilities. Buildings, public spaces, transportation, technology, and online platforms should be designed with universal accessibility in mind.

1. Inclusive Education:

We call for inclusive educational systems that cater to the diverse learning needs of all individuals. This includes providing appropriate support, accommodations, and specialized services to ensure that everyone has access to quality education that prepares them for future success.

1. Employment Opportunities:

We demand equal employment opportunities and advocate for workplaces that embrace diversity and provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with unique abilities. Employers should be encouraged to foster inclusive environments that value the unique contributions and perspectives of all employees.

III. Challenging Stigma and Discrimination:

1. Raising Awareness:

We strive to raise awareness about unique abilities and challenge the stigma and misconceptions surrounding disabilities. By promoting positive narratives and showcasing the achievements of individuals with unique abilities, we seek to shift public perceptions and foster a more inclusive society.

1. Advocacy and Policy Reform:

We engage in advocacy efforts to bring about policy reforms that protect the rights of individuals with unique abilities. This includes advocating for anti-discrimination laws, accessibility standards, and the inclusion of diverse voices in decision-making processes.

Conclusion:

Uniquely Abled Unlocked envisions a world where the potential of every individual, regardless of their unique abilities, are recognized, celebrated, and fully unlocked. By embracing diversity, fostering inclusivity, and challenging stigma and discrimination, we can create a society that values and empowers every person. Together, let us work towards building a future where individuals with unique abilities can thrive, contribute, and live their lives to the fullest.