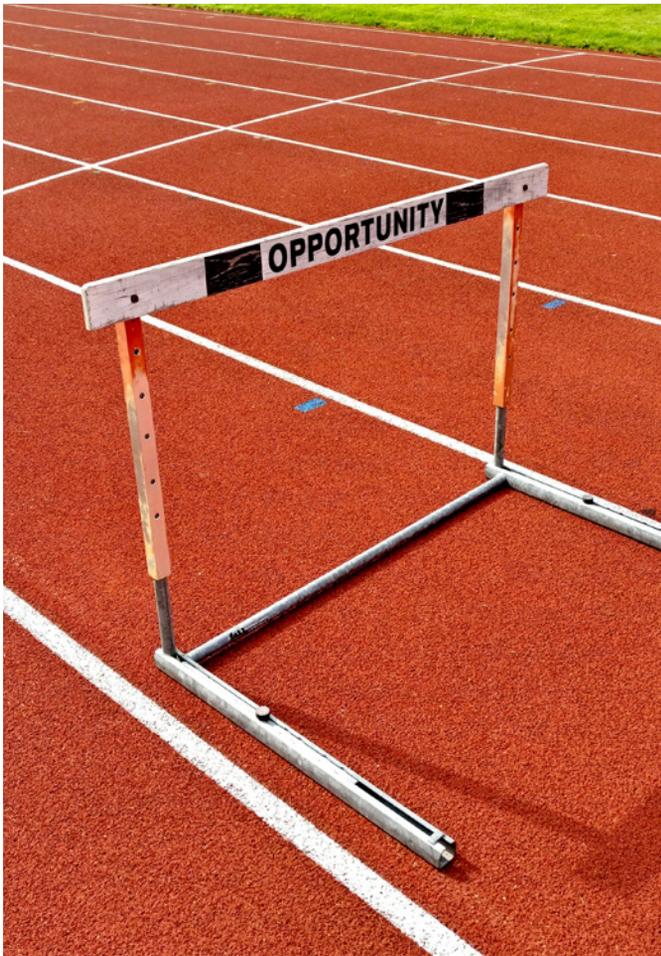


CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO



A few months ago, I join my friend Kathy Nimmer for an awards luncheon. Kathy is giving the keynote speech. As Indiana Teacher of the Year and a National Teacher of the Year finalist, it is no surprise that Kathy is chosen for this honor.

The surprising part, for those who don't know Kathy, is the moment she stands to walk to the stage with her guide dog assisting her to the podium. Yes, Kathy is blind.

Kathy has challenged my preconceived notions of disabilities for many years. When she was an inquisitive high school Senior, I would guide her toward a variety of destinations while having a series of fascinating discussions. Focused on our talk, I would inadvertently walk her into walls, tree branches or over uneven

ground without warning. Kathy gracefully forgave my absentminded "help" and I would silently remind myself that even with the gift of sight, there are so many obstacles I don't see.

Remarkably, Kathy doesn't allow obstacles to stand in her way. She sees opportunities. She climbs mountains. She writes books. She is a talented public speaker. She even met and chatted with the President of the United States.

Kathy isn't focused on her own opportunities. As we send letters via e-mail and notes on Facebook, I see that Kathy is concerned about others. She uses her keynotes to voice concern that far too many people with disabilities aren't in the workplace or even given opportunities to volunteer.

And she is calling for us (yes, you!) to think about inclusion in our day-to-day organizational management. *Have we considered...*

1. The sense of community that comes with inclusion?
2. The value of hiring people with disabilities?
3. The importance of organizations using accessible software?

My company supports numerous national and state level Special Olympic events. I'm always impressed how many Special Olympic organizations have successfully hired and/or engaged people with disabilities as part of their event support team.

I'm wondering what obstacles we unconsciously create for those who could be great additions to our work and volunteer teams? And how can we do a better job rolling out the welcome mat?

Last year the American Heart Association challenged TRS to follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to make our volunteer registration sites ADA compliant. We took on the process and are pleased with the results. But now looking around we are surprised how many websites and other software platforms don't meet the most basic ADA criteria.

Is your organization accepting the challenge to become more inclusive? Please share your stories of tearing down barriers and creating opportunities with me!

Florence May is the President of myTRS Volunteer Management Solutions. Flory challenges events to grow their volunteer base. She brings workshops, seminars, hands-on examples and software solutions to events across the United States, Canada and Europe. myTRS festival and event clients include the 500 Festival, Fayetteville Dogwood Festival, Amelia Concours, Wings Over Water, Celebrate Fairfax, Cine Passion, ComicPalooza, Gilroy Garlic Festival, Night to Shine, Waco Cultural Arts Fest and so many more! You can reach Flory at fmay@my-trs.com.