

OCALI | Podcast - Inspiring Change Teaser

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SIMON BUEHRER: Hi it's Simon Buehrer from *Inspiring Change*, the new podcast from OCALI. This has been a long time coming. I mean, we've been talking about the OCALI podcast for years, and we're so excited to finally share it with you. Soon, it's coming soon, I promise.

We're going to be delving into all sorts of topics, and talking with all sorts of amazing and interesting people, who do all sorts of amazing and interesting things, and share with you these different ideas, and experiences, and perspectives, and stories, all in the spirit of inspiring change and promoting access for people with disabilities. It's going to bring to life a new way of understanding and experiencing the work we do at OCALI. You'll be hearing from our administrators, and center directors, and content staff, and support people, and from all of the partners, the professionals, and parents, and self advocates that we're so fortunate to collaborate and work with on a daily basis.

Once again, it's called *Inspiring Change*. Look for it later this fall at OCALI.org, or wherever you get your podcasts. In the meantime, here's a little teaser from one of our first episodes.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

On July 31, the first sensory friendly morning was held at the 166 edition of the Ohio State Fair. Now when you think of a state fair, you probably, and understandably, think of an event that is anything but sensory friendly. In fact, a fair is maybe the least likely candidate for a sensory friendly experience, which is maybe why it took 165 versions of the Ohio State Fair before the attempt was made to double back against its very nature and make it a more sensory friendly experience, at least for a few hours. OK, so let's step into the fair for a minute.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

[AND SOUNDS [FROM THE FAIR]

[BACKGROUND NOISE]

SIMON BUEHRER: Yep, that seems familiar. So you can picture the midway. You've got all the noise, the lights, the music, the smells the crowds, the ride that will make you dizzy, the games of chance, the

calliope, the carnival barkers-- sorry. I did read that they prefer to be called talkers, carnival talkers.

Anyway, layers upon layers of a no holds barred, in your face, up your nose, down your ears, full-on sensory assault pressing in on you from every single direction. Couple that with all the waiting that you've had to do-- to exit the freeway to the fairgrounds, to find a parking space, to enter the fairgrounds, then to ride the rides, and then to stand around for minutes that seem like hours while they deep fry your stick of butter or your ear of corn or those chocolate and peanut butter buckeye things. Plus, it's hot.

It's the middle of summer. And even if you park close, it's a lot of walking-- a lot of walking. It's a lot to deal with. It's a lot to absorb. I mean, it's the state fair.

So how did this grand experiment go? The July 31 first sensory friendly morning at the Ohio State Fair. Well, we talked to a few attendees to find out.

[UPBEAT MUSIC PLAYING]

Can you spell your name for me?

KEIA GRAY: Keia-- K-E-I-A.

SIMON BUEHRER: K-E-I-A?

KEIA GRAY: Uh-huh.

SIMON BUEHRER: And your last name?

KEIA GRAY: Gray-- G-R-A-Y.

SIMON BUEHRER: G-R-A-Y. That's pretty easy. So I'm Simon.

KEIA GRAY: Hi, Simon.

SIMON BUEHRER: It's nice to meet you.

KEIA GRAY: Nice meeting you.

SIMON BUEHRER: Tell me a little bit about your experience so far today.

KEIA GRAY: Well, I actually came out today specifically. I hadn't planned on it, but because of a news

article from the local paper online-- one of my friends linked it on Facebook.

SIMON BUEHRER: Cool.

KEIA GRAY: And it mentioned they were doing a sensory time frame where they turn down all the lights and music and that there was going to be a sensory room. And I got really excited about it because I haven't had the chance to experience a fair without being-- having to deal with being overwhelmed and being cranky and just pushing myself generally well beyond my tolerances--

SIMON BUEHRER: Yeah.

KEIA GRAY: --to be able to stay. But like-- so I'm autistic. And--

SIMON BUEHRER: So usually, the fair is kind of overwhelming?

KEIA GRAY: Yeah.

SIMON BUEHRER: Yeah.

KEIA GRAY: I get a little cranky after a while. [LAUGHS] [UPBEAT MUSIC]

KEIA GRAY: We came at-- we showed up at 10:00.

SIMON BUEHRER: You were here right at 10:00.

KEIA GRAY: Yeah. Normally, we'd only really be out here for maybe an hour or two. But like, because of the sensory room, we can stay longer, and [INAUDIBLE]. Yeah.

SIMON BUEHRER: Really? Yeah.

SYDNEY BRAVERMAN: [INAUDIBLE] down to the ones closer to us, we would hit about an hour, two hours or so, and head out. And this has been awesome because we tried to do fairs the last few years. And this, I think, is the first time in a couple of years where we've been able to come out and spend the day out because even-- and, like, we were even talking about being able to stay a little after when things kicked on since we didn't have to go through the overload and craziness of it starting off super loud.

SIMON BUEHRER: Yeah.

SYDNEY BRAVERMAN: So we're thinking we'll hopefully be able to stay awhile too, which we haven't been able to go to a fair and, like, spend the day there in ever.

SIMON BUEHRER: Are you local?

RACHEL STARK: We're down, like, in Oregonia, which is close to Lebanon, Ohio, south.

SIMON BUEHRER: OK, so this was--

RACHEL STARK: South an hour and a half.

SIMON BUEHRER: Yeah, a little bit of a trip for you.

RACHEL STARK: Yeah, but it was worth it because we don't take her to any local festivals or anything. We wanted to try something like this first. So when we saw this, we jumped on it.

SIMON BUEHRER: Oh, that's awesome. And it works pretty well? So--

RACHEL STARK: Oh, wonderful. Yeah, like I said, it's her first time out in a big outing like this. She's nonverbal, and she's just loving it. [UPBEAT MUSIC]

SIMON BUEHRER: How was your day going so far?

JENNIFER Great. He's loving the rides and the no sounds. And, like, the music and stuff has really

SCADDEN: helped.

SIMON BUEHRER: Has it really?

JENNIFER It has.

SCADDEN:

SIMON BUEHRER: Yeah.

JENNIFER It's made a big difference.

SCADDEN:

SIMON BUEHRER: Do you do a lot of events like these?

RACHEL STARK: No, this is her actual first time.

SIMON BUEHRER: Wow.

JENNIFER She's never done anything like this.

SCADDEN:

SIMON BUEHRER: Wow. [MUSIC]

KEIA GRAY: I'd rather stuff my face than go on rides. And I only have so much money. [MUSIC]