

[FLIPPING THROUGH RADIO STATIONS]

[THEME MUSIC]

Welcome to *Inspiring Change* from OCALI, our monthly forum of stories and connections, from our ongoing work of inspiring change and promoting access for people with disabilities. I'm Simon Buehrer.

[THEME MUSIC]

[UPTEMPO MUSIC]

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Are you local?

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

**SIMON BUEHRER:** OK. So this was--

**RACHEL STARK:** About 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 want to try something like this first. So when we saw this, we jumped on it.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Oh, that's awesome. And it's worked pretty well?

**RACHEL STARK:** Oh, wonderful. Yeah, like I said, it's her first time out in a big outing like this. She's non-verbal and she's just loving it.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** How is your day going so far?

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

**SCADDEN:**

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Has it really?

**JENNIFER** It has. 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.

**RACHEL STARK:** She's never done anything like this.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Wow.

**KEIA GRAY:** I'd rather stuff my face than go on rides, and I only have so much money.

[MUSICAL FLOURISH]

**SIMON BUEHRER:** The Ohio State Fair is one of the largest state fairs in the nation. It happens every summer in late July, early August, at the sprawling Ohio Expo Center in Columbus. It last 12 days. It costs around \$10 for adults and \$8 for kids, though there are all kinds of discounts and coupons if you just search around a bit. It's \$5 to park your car, and \$25 for an all-day ride wristband.

There's a concert each night, and they start at free. And they go up to something like \$65 for Toby Keith, but he's probably worth it.

[INSTRUMENTAL COUNTRY MUSIC]

A few more numbers for you. The 2019 edition was the 166th Ohio State Fair. The first one was held in 1850, and there have been a few fairs canceled over the years because of war or other factors. Over 930,000 human beings attended the 2019 Ohio State Fair.

Numbers aside, like all state fairs, the Ohio State Fair is filled to the brim with people, and events, and happenings. There are thousands of hardworking, passionate, and dedicated kids and teens, showcasing livestock, or artwork, and demonstrating their knowledge, skills, and leadership qualities. There's the midway, filled with a wide assortment of rides that will spin, flip, or drop you. And numerous games of chance. Those also cost extra, by the way. But go ahead, try your luck.

There are musicians, artists, dancers, magicians, comedians, and other entertainers performing throughout the day. There's a life-sized cow sculpted out of butter, there's a

human cannonball, and a 14-foot tall animatronic Smokey Bear.

**SMOKEY BEAR:** Hello, how are you. It's going to be a great picture. Great view.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Thanks Smokey.

**SMOKEY BEAR:** Say cheese. Got it. We got a good picture!

**SIMON BUEHRER:** And of course the food. So much food. Everywhere you look, much of it-- like deep fried corn on the cob, pickle popsicles, or a grasshopper funnel cake-- you're only going to eat at the fair. And thousands upon thousands of fellow fairgoers, from the new ones who aren't really sure where to park, to the ones who return year after year, sometimes traveling hundreds of miles to reconnect with family and friends, and bathe in the warm stories and nostalgia of past fairs, while generating new memories and experiences.

**CARNIVAL TALKER:** You'll have to win her a prize. We'll guess your birthday month. She can win her own toy.

**TALKER:**

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So you've got this fantastic mix of history, novelty, tradition, and legacy, with a few new faces and features every year. It's the state fair, one of those classic and increasingly rare offerings. A great institution that provides something for everyone-- well, almost everyone.

**RACHEL STARK:** This is my step-daughter, Michaela. She's is 22.

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

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

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Wow.

**RACHEL STARK:** She's never done anything like this.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Wow. That's Rachel Stark. She's the stepmother to Michaela. As Rachel said, this was Michaela's first time attending any kind of fair or festival. She's 22 years old.

**RACHEL STARK:** So we've got her on the merry-go-round and the sky-lift across the fair. And she's loving it and having a good time. And we're just enjoying ourselves. So you can tell she's checking everything out, but she's loving it, and having a good time laughing and laughing every once in a while.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Staying cool?

**RACHEL STARK:** Yeah.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yeah.

**RACHEL STARK:** That's why we came--

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Michaela is non-verbal, so she doesn't talk very much or at all. But that doesn't mean she doesn't communicate or understand. And that certainly doesn't mean she can't enjoy the fair.

**RACHEL STARK:** Even the people on the rides been very patient with her, helped her on and off. And everybody's been very nice, talking to her. I think it's went very well.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So it sounds like Michaela had a great day at the fair, but, again, this was the first time she ever attended the state fair. Or any fair, for that matter. Why is that? Well, as we've already said, the fair is big. It's huge. There's a lot going on. And for many people, it's simply too much.

CACOPHONY OF FAIR SOUNDS ] [CALIOPE, [SIREN] [MUSIC]

[CHATTER]

Yep. That sounds familiar. It's a little taste of the fair. You've got all your classic sounds of the fair-- the midway rides, the calliope, a siren, for some reason, the carnival barker. Sorry, I did read the preferred nomenclature is talker. Carnival *talker*. If you close your eyes for a sec, it feels like you're there, right?

**FAIR** Roller skates? Oh, no!

**PERFORMER:**

[BABY LAUGHING] FAIR PERFORMER: Bill! Bill!

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Now, for some of us, this sounds like fun.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** A summer day at the state fair. But for others, it's 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.

[CACOPHONY OF INTERPOSING VOICES, SIRENS, GRINDING,] [AND CLANKING]

And this is what that same midway of the 166th edition of the Ohio State Fair sounds like during the Sensory-Friendly Morning, held on Wednesday, July 31st.

[QUIET VOICES AND GENTLE SOUNDS]

It sounds like a different event, right? But it's not. It's the same fair, just turn down a bit.

**JEN BAVRY:** The Ohio State Fair is hosting its very first Sensory-Friendly Morning today from 10:00 to 1:00. And it's exactly that, it's an opportunity for people to come out and enjoy the fair with a different type of setting, to support those who have different sensory needs.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** Sensory-Friendly Morning is something that we wanted to do just to make the fair a little friendlier. You know, if it's a simple thing like turning down the lights and sounds just to make the fair a little more inclusive and accessible.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** That's Alicia Schultz. She's the marketing and PR director of the Ohio Expo Center and State Fair. Before that, we heard from my colleague Jen Bavry. She's the Program Director of the Family & Community Outreach Center at OCALI. We'll hear more from Jen in a minute.

But while I had Alicia's ear, I really wanted to press the issue of making the fair a sensory-friendly experience. Fairs in general are kind of like sensory overload experiences, right? There's the sights, the sounds, the smells, the heat, the people. So walk me through like that process of, how do you dial back the fair?

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** That's a very good question. I mean, it is a challenge, because, like you mention, there are many things going on at the fair every single day.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Right.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** And when we thought about doing this, we had met with some other fairs that have had similar programs in the past. And we wanted to see what it was that they had done, and how we could implement something here at the Ohio State Fair. And we were at a board meeting, and I mentioned this, and Angela Krile, who is on our board, shared that she worked with OCALI, and they would be a wonderful resource.

And so, that began our relationship in the steps toward, how is it that we can actually dial back the fair? Because as much as this is something that we would like to do, I'm not an expert in

this area. But OCALI are the experts in this area.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So that's our connection to this. That's how OCALI got involved. And the idea isn't a new one.

As Alicia mentions, other state fairs across the country have offered sensory-friendly hours and features for the past few years. And you've probably already heard about, or even experienced sensory-friendly movies, for example. Those have also been going on for years. They turn down the movie volume and turn up the lights in the theater, and let kids get up and move around if they need to.

It's a relatively simple concept. You modify or turn off the sound and lights, make things a bit quieter and softer. So those who have sensory sensitivities or challenges can be part of something they might not normally be able to experience because it's too loud, or too bright, or too much. But was it hard to get buy-in for this?

I mean, you've got to get a bunch of different people-- the right operators, the performers, the food vendors, those same carnival talkers we mentioned earlier. You've got to get all of them to agree to this. It's not going to work if just a few of them do it. And after you agree to it, then you actually have to do it. Was that difficult?

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** It's amazing, because everyone is so supportive of this initiative. And we're very fortunate. We have a brand-new ride provider this year, Talley Amusements, and they have actually been a part of this at another fair. The state fair in Texas

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So they knew it. They knew what it was.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** Exactly. They knew what it was. And so, they're very familiar with the process. And we worked with the individuals who manage our grounds entertainment out on the grounds, and the band, and the choir. We're the only fair in the country that has their own youth band and choir. They each have about 200 members, and everyone was more than willing to adjust their schedules and make sure that anything that could be a sensory overload is an opt-in. That you would have to try to be a part of these, and that we're out on the grounds, and trying to make everything just toned down a little bit.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So we got the buy-in from all the key partners and players. Then it was just a matter of letting everybody know, hey, we're doing this! Come to the fair! Here's Angela Krile. She's Vice Chair of the Ohio Expositions Commission.

**ANGELA KRILE:** I do know from personal experience with taking my niece to Walt Disney World, what a

challenge it is-- I'm getting teary-eyed. I'm sorry. What a challenge it is for kids who face those issues to enjoy the things that other kids get to enjoy. And knowing that those kids are going to get-- sorry-- to come to the fair today, and have an experience here that they would never otherwise get to have is really, really great.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** And it's just like everybody else.

**ANGELA KRILE:** Just like everybody else. That's the important thing. Yep.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So for Angela, her interest in, and passion for the sensory-friendly morning was both professional and personal. And when we focus on the barriers and obstacles that can prevent people from participating in something like a state fair, we start to open doors and create opportunities to help people discover and follow their own interests and passions. Here's Alicia again.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** We realize that crowds are a factor.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Sure.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** And that it's difficult to control the crowds. We don't necessarily know when people are going to attend the fair, but so what we did do was we picked a weekday morning, when crowds are naturally lighter, so that we can try to make sure that this experience can be maximized, because there's just fewer people on grounds as a whole. This is something where perhaps a Saturday morning is more convenient for family schedules, but unfortunately it's convenient for a lot of families' schedules.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** I've been here on a Saturday, yeah.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** Yeah, see? You know.

[LAUGHTER]

**SIMON BUEHRER:** It's wall-to-wall people.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** It is. It's packed. So we wanted to do this at a time when you've got a little more room to breathe.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yeah. As Alicia mentions, the decision to hold the Sensory-Friendly morning on a Wednesday, was a deliberate one. As you might expect, the fair is typically less crowded on a Wednesday,

and a smaller crowd is one way to help support a more sensory-friendly experience.

**KIA GRAY:** We showed up at 10.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Right at 10:00?

**KIA GRAY:** Yeah.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** That's Kia Gray. She and her fiancée, Sidney Braverman, showed up right at 10:00, when the Sensory-Friendly Morning began.

**KIA GRAY:** Normally, we'd only really be out here for maybe an hour or two, but because of the sensory room, we can stay longer. [INAUDIBLE]

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Really? Yeah.

**SIDNEY** : [INAUDIBLE] down to the ones closer to us. We would hit about an hour, two hours, or so,  
**BRAVERMAN:** and head out. And this has been awesome.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Kia and Sidney mentioned the sensory room, otherwise known as the quiet room, which was one of the special features of the Sensory-Friendly Morning. It was this private, low-light, air-conditioned room-- that's important in July-- that Jen Bavry and our colleagues outfitted with comfy chairs, and little fidget toys and games, and some gentle classical music in the background. Oh, and a water cooler. That's also important in July.

**JEN BAVRY:** So the quiet room is a space off to the side in which we've lowered the lights, the sound is down. It's a little bit darker in there. There's cushy seats to sit on. It's just a place to go to, to actually just take a break from all of the activities that are happening at the fair.

So the quiet room really is just a place for people to go, and-- exactly what it is-- have some quiet time.

**KIA GRAY:** Having some place like this to just go, and sit, and get away, and let my brain reset, then I can go out and have fun again.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Good.

**SIDNEY** We've tried to replicate it in other places, because they'll have indoor spaces. But even then,  
**BAVERMAN:** they're still typically really busy. Either there is a lot of people walking around booths, vendors,



things like that. Or you find a bathroom, which hanging out in a bathroom is not--

**SIMON BUEHRER:** [LAUGHTER] That's not as sensory-friendly.

**SIDNEY** Yeah, this is much better.

**BAVERMAN:**

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yeah, hanging out in a bathroom. Not that much fun. But the quiet room, that was one of the features that helped Kia to come to the fair.

**KIA GRAY:** 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 to Facebook.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Cool.

**KIA 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 having to deal with being overwhelmed, and being cranky, and just pushing myself generally well beyond my tolerances.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yes.

**KIA GRAY:** So to be able to say, so I'm autistic--

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

**KIA GRAY:** Yeah, I get a little cranky after a while. [LAUGHTER]

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Kia mentioned hearing about the Sensory-Friendly Morning in a Facebook post. There was a lot of attention in the press ahead of time, including local, state, and national news coverage. So the Sensory-Friendly Morning at the fair got a significant amount of publicity. I met Kia and Sydney around 2:00 PM. So they had already been at the fair for four hours by the time I caught up with them. They had traveled some 90 miles from Cincinnati, so it had already been a pretty full day by the time we talked, and they were still going.

Remember Rachel and Michaela from the beginning of this story? They had also traveled some distance to get to the fair. Are you local?

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

**SIMON BUEHRER:** OK.

**RACHEL STARK:** It was about 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's worked pretty well?

**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.

**JENNIFER** He's loving the rides and the no sounds, and the music and stuff has really helped.

**SCADDEN:**

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Has it really?

**JENNIFER** It has. It's made a big difference.

**SCADDEN:**

**SIDNEY** Because we tried to do fairs the last few years, and this, I think, is the first time in a couple of  
**BRAVERMAN:** years we have been able to come out and spend the day out.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** That's cool.

**SIDNEY** Because we were even talking about being able to stay a little after when things kicked on,  
**BRAVERMAN:** since we didn't have to go through the overload and craziness of it starting off super loud.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yeah.

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

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So it seemed like a big success, the Sensory-Friendly Morning at the Ohio State Fair. And the final numbers showed an increase of 15,000 people attending the fair that day, compared to the same day in 2018. Of course, we don't know exactly how many attended because of the Sensory-Friendly Morning. But 15,000 more people for the day? That's a lot. Those who did attend were full of smiles and positive vibes. Everyone I talked to that day was having a good

time. Mostly a good time. You guys want to be on a podcast?

**MAX ANGEL:** I guess.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

How's your day so far?

**MAX ANGEL:** Good. It was good, yeah.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** What did you do?

**MAX ANGEL:** Not much really. I just got here.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** OK, so the day is still unfolding?

**MAX ANGEL:** Yeah, but I'm about to go eat and buy some stuff.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** I don't want to get in your way of eating. What are you going to eat?

**MAX ANGEL:** I don't know yet.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** OK.

**MAX ANGEL:** There's a lot of stuff. There's a lot of options.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** There are a lot of options. You came to the right place. What's your name?

**MAX ANGEL:** Max.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Max, I'm Simon.

**MAX ANGEL:** All right. Nice to meet you, Simon.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Nice to meet you, Max. Handshake?

**MAX ANGEL:** Yeah.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Go enjoy the fair.

**MAX ANGEL:** All right. You too.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Besides turning down the sound and lights on the midway and offering the quiet room, Alicia points out that there were other features already built into the Ohio State Fair that are pretty sensory-friendly by their very nature. Speaking of nature, there's the Ohio Department of Natural Resources area.

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** We have a beautiful eight-acre Natural Resources Park, that's actually a level two arboretum. And as I've spoken more with all of the experts at OCALI, I've learned how that kind of an environment is actually naturally sensory-calming.

**JEN BAVRY:** The Natural Resource Park, it's a park. And so, there's trees everywhere, there's rocks-- we're sitting on rocks right now.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** We're sitting on rocks.

**JEN BAVRY:** We're sitting on rocks. There's water, there's birds, there's butterflies, there's a prairie to walk through. This is actually just a naturally sensory-friendly area. And I mean, you walk through that entrance, and the temperature drops like 10 degrees.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** It does. Like, instantly!

**JEN BAVRY:** Instantly, yeah.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** The ODNR park is one of the best kept secrets of the fair. On a hot July day, you really understand in a very sensory-friendly way, how trees and shade can make all the difference. The sensory-friendly morning wasn't the only new feature this year designed to make the state fair more accessible. I spoke with Director Kevin Miller of Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, about another one of the new offerings at the fair.

**KEVIN MILLER:** We're also involved in putting wheelchair charging stations throughout the fairgrounds, and that's a permanent investment.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** And it's the first time this year?

**KEVIN MILLER:** First time.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So if I'm in a wheelchair, and where I need to charge up, there are stations throughout the fair where I can go and charge up.

**KEVIN MILLER:** And they've put them on the map, so you can see those. It's great that we're here at the fair,

and it's kind of a timed event like this. But people forget, there's 200 plus events year round. That are here for the general public. We had a gentleman who said, you know, I've wanted to come to a couple concerts, but I was afraid my wheelchair was going to run out of battery juice. And so he said, now, I can think ahead and go, well, you know what? I can go and do that.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** As Director Miller mentions, the wheelchair charging stations are a permanent addition to the fairgrounds. There are events held there throughout the year, from concerts, to model train shows, to Oktoberfest, to the quarter-horse congress. Now, all of these events can take advantage of the charging stations, and offer their attendees a little more support for access and independence.

Of course, there is always more to think about and do. These are simply steps in an ongoing process. So why did we do this? Why did we invest so many months and hours, and bring in so many different people and partners into this endeavor? Why is this important? Here's my colleague Jen Bavry, talking among the cicadas in the ODNR park at the state fair.

**JEN BAVRY:** Everyone should have the same opportunity to participate in their community, and for those opportunities to be wonderful and meaningful experiences. So it shouldn't be that something needs to change so that you can be there. It should just naturally be happening so that anybody can participate.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** So really, what these collective efforts are all working towards is not to produce something extra, different, or exceptional. We're working towards access and integration that's automatically built-in. The default. Just how it is. And whatever it is-- a fair, a play, a movie, a sporting event-- these things will be structured, and formatted, and built to intrinsically have supports in place that allow everyone to participate.

We're not there yet, of course. Not even close. Again, these are steps. We're working towards a day when a sensory-friendly morning at a state fair is not news. It just *is*. Here's OCALI's Executive Director Shawn Henry.

**SHAWN HENRY:** That's the ultimate goal, is that this is not a news story. It's when we're not getting coverage. And we're at a place where the capacity-- they feel comfortable in saying, yeah, we got this. You guys have walked us through what needs to be done. So it might be a couple of years into it. It might be other partnerships. There's other wonderful central Ohio and state organizations for individuals with disabilities that we probably could bring in, that we'd love to help support

today.

It's going to be about bringing it back to community. If this was happening in Toledo, or Cleveland, or Cincinnati, we're going to have to build their community up to be able to do this. And actually, Jen and I had some discussions about that happening. Why not across the state? You could really almost package the accommodations needed, if you had the partnerships to do it locally.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yeah.

**SHAWN HENRY:** So it's scalable. It's scalable, for sure.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Because, of course, you should be able to go to the Ohio State Fair, or your local county fair, or any fair anywhere. And once you're in the door, you should be able to choose your own path, your own adventure.

[UPTEMPO MUSIC]

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** Maybe touching the udders and milking a cow.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Is that legal? You can do that?

**ALICA SCHULTZ:** You can really do that. Yeah, we have a milk-a-cow exhibit every single day, where you can really do that.

**MARIA ANGEL:** There is a debate on the rides. We like the slide. You can do the slide.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** The slide's awesome.

**MAX ANGEL:** What's it called? The giant--

**SIMON BUEHRER:** The giant slide.

**MAX ANGEL:** Yeah.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Yeah.

- And then what's that thing over there? That's the merry-go-round. Right? Maybe. I don't know.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

**MARIA ANGEL:** You guys will like to see the animals. We did that.

**MAX ANGEL:** Well, we haven't seen any, because we passed the barns already.

**KEIA GRAY:** I'd rather stuff my face than go on rides, and I only have so much money.

[OHIO STATE BAND AND CHOIR PERFORMS "HANG ON SLOOPY"]

**SIMON BUEHRER:** The 2020 Ohio State Fair runs July 29th through August 9th. Discussions are already happening around expanding the sensory-friendly experience beyond a single day next year, and including more options for making the fair accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

[CHEERING AND MUSIC FADES]

[THEME MUSIC]

Thanks for taking a walk with us through this episode of *Inspiring Change* from OCALI, our monthly forum of stories and connections from our ongoing work of inspiring change and promoting access for people with disabilities. Join us for our next episode.

**JARED BALY:** Yeah, so we're in Warrensville Heights, which is the eastern suburb of Cuyahoga County, outside of Cleveland.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Mm-hmm.

**JARED BALY:** And we have 22 employers coming to interview about 75 job-seekers with different barriers. So that could be developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, some ex-offenders, veterans, things like that. So we try to bring in a broad population of job-seekers, and really just try to connect job-seekers that have the qualifications, to businesses that are looking and in need of good employees.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** We're spending the day at a job fair outside of Cleveland, where we talked with businesses about their hiring needs and job-seekers who are eager to fill those needs.

**TREVOR:** Well, actually I'm undecided between full-time or part-time. Probably full-time on different things such as guest services and food service.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** And what are you looking for today? What kind of employment?

**DAWN** Truth be told, any. I have a six-month-old son that I have to take care of. So any one that will

**VIGILANTE:** actually allow me to work, because I'm a convicted felon.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** You are?

**DAWN** Yeah. I've been home eight years. So anybody that'll actually allow me to come work for them,

**VIGILANTE:** I'm blessed to have them.

**SIMON BUEHRER:** Don't miss it. Subscribe to *Inspiring Change* wherever you get your podcasts. And if you or someone you know needs an accessible version of this podcast, visit [ocali.org/podcast](http://ocali.org/podcast), and click on the link to *Inspiring Change*. Be sure to also check out *Inspiring Conversations*, bonus content that includes some of the full interviews from this and other episodes of *Inspiring Change*. Again, you can find those at [ocali.org/podcasts](http://ocali.org/podcasts), or wherever you get your podcasts.

Thanks again for listening to *Inspiring Change*, because the need for change is everywhere, and inspiration can come from anywhere. I'm Simon Buehrer. See you soon.

[THEME MUSIC FADES]