

Improving health equity and outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities

Like

As we work to advance our Social Justice Framework, we are called to celebrate, recognize and appreciate diversity-oriented events. Today marks two important events in our diversity and inclusion journey – the start of Women’s History Month, observed annually in March, and Zero Discrimination Day, where we celebrate the right of everyone to live a full and productive life.



*Chanda Hinton, Founder &
Executive Director*

Learn more at chandacenter.org

In honor of these events, we wanted to chat with a prominent woman within our Colorado community who is working to increase health equity in the Colorado community: Chanda Hinton. Chanda is the the founder and executive director of the Chanda Plan Foundation and Chanda Center for Health, which is one of 19 recipients of Centura’s [Health Equity & Advancement Fund](#).

Can you tell me a little bit about your background?

I would say I am an individual with vitality and determination and upon glancing down from my face, you will see my wheelchair and quickly understand that my goals as executive director of the Chanda Plan Foundation are personal. I founded this nonprofit organization in 2007 and provides access to integrative health care for individuals with disabilities. When I was nine years old, my spinal cord was severed at C5/C6 from a bullet fired during the accidental mishandling of a rifle, resulting in a complete spinal cord injury (SCI). I am an alumna of the University of

Denver where I graduated in 2005 with my bachelor’s in communications. I am also an alumna of Regis University where I earned my master’s degree in non-profit management in 2015.

How did Chanda Plan Foundation come about? What did you see within the community that indicated a need for the foundation?

As a result of my spinal cord injury, I had many secondary health care needs that ranged from ongoing urinary tract infections to chronic pain. The most common approach – due to lack of education and/or health insurance coverage – is to address these issues with medication, which could cost you your life. My pain became so severe in my early twenties that I was bedbound, addicted to opioids (without knowing), and weighed a mere 59 pounds ... my health was quickly declining. I took a leave of absence from the University of Denver and was hospitalized. The medical intervention included being fed intravenously as well as a feeding tube and detoxing from the opioids. My chances of living became overwhelmingly uncertain.

The medical intervention saved my life. But I needed the intervention because of the overutilization of traditional medical options to address my spinal cord injury. I had a big decision to make. There were a few things I knew for sure: One – My spinal cord injury was never going away. Two – I never wanted to be in this situation again.

During a meeting with my doctor, my sister, a yoga instructor, and licensed massage therapist, asked about integrative therapy options. The physician responded, “At this point, do it. Chanda has nothing to lose.” Within days of receiving integrative therapies including acupuncture, massage, chiropractic and physical therapy, my health began to improve and stabilize.

When I returned to finish my degree at the University of Denver, I began to research my experience, the spinal cord injury community, and more. I found that my journey was not unique. It was not a fluke or bad luck. While what I went through was the worst-case scenario, it was also happening to many others – in differing degrees. I didn’t want anyone else to go through this and so I started the Chanda Plan Foundation in 2005 to provide access to integrative therapies to others through donor dollars. I also found out that despite cost prevention and other benefits of integrative therapies, Medicaid would not cover them. We’ve accomplished so much in the last 17 years to address the need philanthropically as well as systemically.

“ I found that my journey was not unique. It was not a fluke or bad luck. While what I went through was the worst-case scenario, it was also happening to many others – in differing degrees. I didn’t want anyone else to go through this and so I started the Chanda Plan Foundation in 2005 to provide access to integrative therapies to others through donor dollars. ”

What communities do you serve and what resources do you provide?

In 2017, the Chanda Plan Foundation created the Chanda Center for Health. The Center’s mission is to deliver, advocate for and raise awareness of integrative therapy, primary care, and other complementary services to reduce health disparities and costs by improving health equity and outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities including spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, and spina bifida. All under one roof, we provide access to acupuncture, massage, chiropractic, care coordination, counseling through Jefferson Center for Mental Health, physical therapy through Thrive! Therapy and dental services through Ancillary Visiting Services. The Center’s services are available through a hybrid of Medicaid and donor funds.



What barriers have you come across as a woman and/or barriers you see within your community when it comes to inclusion?

While there are so many, access to disability competent care has been the most significant barrier as a woman living with a disability. This barrier is also the passion behind the Chanda Center for Health's most recent project, which is an online education curriculum for health care providers that address the issue.

What would be your advice to people wanting to make a more inclusive environment for the community you serve?

People with disabilities are considered a health disparity group and are subject to avoidable inequities in access and quality of health services. While concerns about transportation, communication and insurance are contributing factors, the knowledge gap amongst physicians in serving individuals with disabilities is the primary contributor to this inequity. In 2009, a report by the National Council on Disability noted that the absence of professional training on disability competency issues for health practitioners is one of the most significant barriers to preventing people with disabilities from receiving appropriate and effective health care.

Do you have a life motto to live by?

"Be the CHOICE you want to see in the world." I know Gandhi said it differently by using the word "change," which also resonates with me. But I believe that as humans we make choices throughout our entire lives. Sometimes an innocent choice can result in something we never imagined – good or bad – but when that result comes, we again are faced with a choice on how to approach it. If we keep in mind that our choices are powerful, holding grace for ourselves when a choice doesn't create a result we want and being open to creating a place where we know another choice needs to be made without fear of the previous choice, I believe we become more aware of ourselves and the impact of our choices and thoughts of others. Essentially, dancing with life as a partner versus letting it happen without your choice of music.

In our vision to make every community, every neighborhood, every life – whole and healthy, we are continually working to enable our associates and communities to inspire change. To learn more about the Chanda Plan Foundation and our other Health Equity and Advancement Fund recipients, please visit our [Diversity & Inclusion SharePoint site](#).

[^ Back to Top](#)

COMMENTS (0)

POST A COMMENT

Your Name *

OswaldoGrenardo@Centura.Org

Your Comment *

Send me an email when a new comment is posted.

protected by reCAPTCHA

[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)

Submit

In This Issue

[Home](#)

[Attend Epic Empower Hour: In Basket efficiencies](#)

[Epic video client: How to use and new features](#)

[New mandatory primary care LEARN trainings due soon!](#)

[Review current cancer screening rates and best practices](#)

[Vaccine education: MMR vaccine: M-M-R II®](#)

[Improving health equity and outcomes for individuals with physical disabilities](#)

[Fighting hunger with FarmBox](#)

[Our GHI impact: Step in a New Direction Program, Rwanda](#)

[Wellbeing programs to fit the needs of your whole life](#)

Scholarships available to promote more equitable health care

Walden scholarship applications now open!

© 2022 Centura Health. All Rights Reserved. Proprietary and Confidential - for internal distribution only.