

Wrapped in Accessibility

Layered in Care, Commitment, and Community

Accessibility is more than physical access or policies—it's how people are supported, included, and valued. It shows up in the quiet moments of care, in the commitment to do better when systems fall short, and in communities that choose belonging over exclusion.

This season, we pause to reflect on what it truly means to be wrapped in accessibility.

Wrapped in Support

Accessibility begins with care.

For families navigating disability, caregiving, and uncertainty, support means knowing they are not alone. It looks like emotional encouragement for caregivers, guidance during transitions, and help navigating systems that often feel overwhelming. True accessibility isn't just about what exists—it's about who shows up, listens, and walks alongside others when the path feels heavy.

Wrapped in Community

From support grows belonging.

When families are wrapped in community, isolation fades. Connection creates space for understanding, shared experiences, and mutual support. Inclusive gatherings, strong partnerships, and safe spaces help individuals and families feel seen, valued, and welcomed. Accessibility thrives in communities where differences are honored and everyone has a place to belong.

Wrapped in Advocacy

And from community comes action.

Accessibility requires commitment. It means speaking up when systems—that matter to our love ones fall short, and it means educating others about what inclusion truly looks like in practice—not just in theory. Advocacy ensures accessibility is not an afterthought, but a standard that benefits everyone.

Why It Matters

Because when families are wrapped in accessibility, they are wrapped in love, opportunity, and hope.

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Exceptionality of the Month: Landau-Kleffner Syndrome (LKS)

Landau-Kleffner Syndrome (LKS) is a rare childhood condition that typically appears between the ages of 3 and 8. Children with LKS experience a sudden or gradual loss of previously developed language skills, including understanding speech and expressing themselves verbally—despite having shown typical development earlier in life.

This condition may also be accompanied by seizures, behavioral changes, and attention difficulties. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, LKS may be linked to a combination of genetic and environmental factors and is seen more frequently in boys. Some children may also experience hyperactivity, intellectual disability, or challenges with focus and attention.

How It Affects Lives

Landau-Kleffner Syndrome can significantly impact a child's daily life and learning. Children may struggle to understand spoken language, even though their hearing is intact. This often leads to confusion and frustration, as they can hear words but cannot process their meaning.

Frequent seizures and communication challenges may contribute to learning difficulties, behavioral changes, and emotional struggles. Some children may withdraw socially, while others may experience hyperactivity, tantrums, or isolation. Sleep disturbances and ongoing communication barriers can further affect both the child and their family, making consistent support essential.

What Support Looks Like

Support for children with LKS requires a team-based and individualized approach. Research from the University of Arkansas emphasizes the importance of speech therapy and behavioral therapy to help children regain and strengthen communication skills.

In educational settings, children benefit from modified and differentiated instruction, along with strategies tailored to support how they receive, process, and express language. Consistent daily routines in the classroom and school environment are also critical.

Most importantly, success depends on strong collaboration among teachers, support staff, administrators, therapists, and families—working together to ensure the child feels supported, understood, and included.



For more information about Exceptionality of the Month: Landau-Kleffner Syndrome (LKS), please research the following websites:

Johns Hopkins Medicine

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/landau-kleffner-syndrome>

Children's Health

<https://www.childrens.com/specialties-services/conditions/landau-kleffner-syndrome>

National Institutes of Health

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK547745/>

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: PEOPLE THAT INSPIRE

Meryl Evans is a powerful example of what it means to lead with lived experience, purpose, and action. Born profoundly deaf, Meryl has built an extraordinary career as a professional speaker, trainer, author, and accessibility marketing consultant—using her voice to ensure others are never left out of the conversation.

A nationally respected advocate for accessibility and inclusion, Meryl has shared her expertise on stages such as TEDx and SXSW and has been recognized as a LinkedIn Top Voice for Accessibility Advocacy. She is a Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC) and is widely known for helping organizations move beyond awareness and into meaningful, accessible action.

We were honored to have Meryl as a panelist at The Not Forgotten 1st Community Town Hall, where her insights and lived experience made a lasting impact on the families in attendance. Her ability to educate, challenge, and empower—while remaining grounded in authenticity—helped create a space where families felt seen, understood, and encouraged.



[Meryl K. Evans](#)

Meryl's work extends across industries, from corporate and government roles to marketing, publishing, and the arts. She has written for and been featured in major publications, co-authored books on web standards, and continues to educate companies on why accessibility is not optional—it's essential. As Meryl often reminds us, accessibility is everyone's responsibility.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Meryl is also an advocate for inclusive and accessible theater, further demonstrating her commitment to creating spaces where everyone belongs. As a proud Texan, she balances her impactful work with family life, bringing the same authenticity and care to every role she holds.

At The Not Forgotten 1st, we are grateful for leaders like Meryl Evans—individuals who don't just speak about inclusion, but actively build it. Her work strengthens our community, opens doors, and reminds us all that when accessibility leads, everyone benefits.

Be a Beacon of Hope: Ways You Can Help

There are many ways you can help, whether you have time, resources, or simply the desire to make a difference. Every act of kindness, no matter how small, matters to the families and individuals we serve.

Volunteer: Your time and energy are a gift.

Spread the Word: Share this newsletter and help raise awareness in your community.

Donate: You can donate to our cause. Your generosity ensures that individuals with exceptionalities and their families are never left behind. When you give, you join us in building a future where families feel supported, included and empowered.

<https://www.tnf1st.org/donate>

No matter how you choose to get involved, know that you are making a direct impact on the lives of families who have often felt forgotten. You are helping us affirm the individuals and their families that they are not on this road by themselves, and their presence and their voices truly make a difference.



Winter Highlights

The past few months have been busy, productive, and deeply fulfilling as we continued showing up for individuals with exceptionalities and their families across North Texas.

We were honored to participate in two Thanksgiving Giveaways—Community Care’s Thanksgiving Giveaway and Minnie’s Food Pantry Thanksgiving Giveaway—where our team helped distribute food and support families during the holiday season. Being present in these moments of care and connection is a powerful reminder of why this work matters.



We also had the opportunity to sit in on the City of DeSoto’s Commission for People with Disabilities meeting. Listening directly to ones in the community share their needs—such as transportation, resources, employment, and accessibility—was invaluable. We were encouraged to hear from the Mayor and city leaders about the meaningful steps being taken to create a more inclusive and accessible community for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.



Winter Highlights

In addition, we were thrilled to attend several theater productions that intentionally included individuals with exceptionalities:

- Charlie Brown's Chaotic Christmas Spectacular by Community Connections
- Scrooge, the Musical by North Texas Performing Arts
- ELF by North Texas Performing Arts (Star Catchers)

Seeing theaters embrace inclusion and accessibility truly warmed our hearts and affirmed the importance of representation in the arts.



Other events we were grateful to attend include:

- The Arc of DFW – “A Look Ahead” Conference
- Volunteer McKinney Nonprofit Leaders Breakfast
- North Texas Disability Chamber Holiday Party
- Capable Minds, Hearts and Hands’ JOY Service



Each of these experiences strengthens our connections, expands our perspective, and fuels our commitment to ensuring no individual or family is ever forgotten.

Community Events

7 JAN



DOWN SYNDROME GUILD
OF DALLAS

VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB FOR ADULTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME AGES 18+

Wednesday, January 7, 2026
3:00pm-5:00pm
(Virtual)
www.downsyndromedallas.org

Space is limited and registration closes Tuesday, December 30 (or until the program is full).
[Click link to Register](#)

15 JAN



SPECIAL NEEDS Connect

Special Needs Connect Begin, Expand, Renew: Houston

Thursday, January 15, 2026
6:30pm
Hosted Online and In-Person by Houston's First Baptist Church
snconnect.org

[Click link to Reserve your spot](#)

21 FEB



The Arc
DFW Area

ACE Workshop (Advocacy - Collaboration - Engagement)

Saturday, February 21, 2026
9:00am-1:00pm
Stonebriar Community Church: 4801 Legendary Dr. Frisco, TX 75034
thearcdfw.app.neoncrm.com

[Click link to Register](#)

Awareness Month

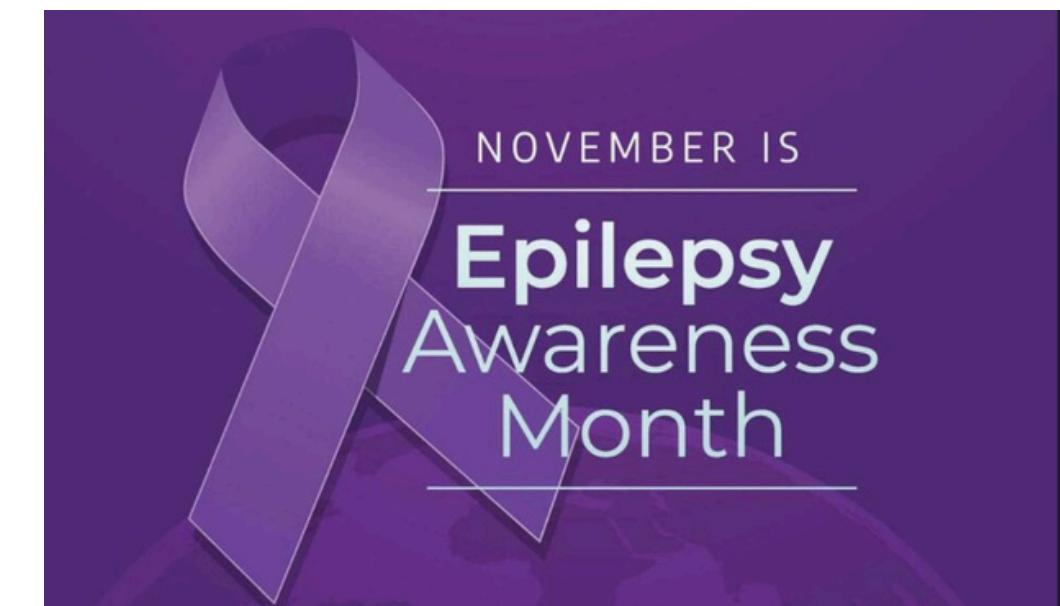
Celebrating Awareness & Inclusion - November & December

As the year draws to a close, we take time to acknowledge observances that deepen understanding, elevate lived experiences, and remind us of the diverse journeys within our community. These moments invite us to pause, learn, and move forward with greater awareness and intention.

November: Awareness, Understanding, & Appreciation

Epilepsy Awareness Month

Epilepsy affects millions of individuals and families, often bringing both visible and invisible challenges. This month encourages learning, reduces stigma, and highlights the strength and resilience of those living with epilepsy while promoting greater understanding and safety within our communities.



Diabetes Awareness Month

Diabetes impacts daily life in meaningful ways for individuals of all ages. This month brings attention to education, prevention, and management, while acknowledging the dedication it takes to navigate a chronic condition with consistency and care.

National Family Caregiver Month

Caregivers play a vital role in the lives of their loved ones, offering unwavering support, advocacy, and compassion. This month honors the commitment of family caregivers and recognizes the emotional, physical, and mental effort that caregiving requires each day.

December: Reflection, Accessibility, & Well-Being

International Day of Persons with Disabilities – December 3

Observed worldwide, this day draws attention to the importance of accessibility, dignity, and opportunity for people with disabilities. It serves as a reminder to remove barriers, amplify disability voices, and continue working toward communities where everyone can fully participate.



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Awareness Month

The winter months can affect mental and emotional well-being for many individuals. SAD Awareness Month encourages open conversations about seasonal mood changes, promotes mental health awareness, and reminds us to extend understanding and care to ourselves and others.

These observances are opportunities to learn and respond with care. By recognizing them, we strengthen our shared understanding and reaffirm the importance of thoughtful, inclusive support.



Always Here For You

Hello Friend,

As we move through the holiday season, I want to take a moment to speak directly to the families who may be feeling a mix of joy, anxiety, exhaustion, and uncertainty right now.

I love the holidays—but I'll be honest, there was a time when I dreaded them too.

When school closed for breaks, the weight of what came with that change felt overwhelming. The loss of routine. The disruption of consistency my child depended on. And the fear of how those changes might show up—frustration, anxiety, or a meltdown that neither of us could control.

I know our family is not alone.

For many families raising children and caring for loved ones with exceptionalities, the holidays can be incredibly challenging. Changes in schedules, unfamiliar environments, loud gatherings, and sensory overload can turn what is meant to be a joyful season into an overwhelming one—for both the individual and their family.

Before breaks even began, I often found myself counting down the days until school resumed—not because I didn't love my child, but because I knew how much structure and routine supported his well-being.

Over time, here are some of the approaches that have helped us—and other families we know—navigate the holidays with a bit more peace:

- Keep a modified routine instead of creating an entirely new one
- Prepare in advance using visuals, short stories, or conversations
- Create a safe space at every holiday location
- Bring comfort items from home
- Plan ahead for sensory overload
- Prepare family and friends with understanding and expectations
- Release the pressure to attend everything
- Adjust expectations—and give yourself grace

At the end of the day, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. These are not rules, but gentle suggestions meant to help you discover what brings the most comfort, stability, and joy to your household. Just remember to give yourself permission to adjust, to simplify and to step back when needed. There is no “right” way to do the holidays—only the way that best supports your child, your family, and your well-being.

Always here for you,

Portia

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” ~ Luke 2:11 (KJV)

Thank you for reading!

THE NOT FORGOTTEN 1ST

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Thank You!

To every donor, supporter, and community member who gave to our Holiday Hope Fund—thank you.

Because of your generosity, The Not Forgotten 1st was able to come alongside families who are caring for loved ones with exceptionalities during a season that can be especially difficult. Your support helped meet real, immediate needs—food, gas, utilities, and holiday gifts. These were not just donations; they were lifelines.

You reminded these families that they are not forgotten—not during the holidays, and not ever.

From the bottom of our hearts, and on behalf of every family whose burden was lightened through your kindness, thank you for believing in our mission and for making hope tangible. This work is only possible because of people like you who choose compassion, generosity, and community.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

With sincere gratitude,

Portia and The Not Forgotten 1st

