

Council for Advancement & Support of Education

Nominee: Rutgers University

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Award categories: Digital Campaign: Student Oriented

Award title: [Disability Awareness Month](#)

Introduction



Every October, Rutgers marks Disability Awareness Month with a series of events and programs designed to educate faculty, staff and students about the key role disabilities play in making the university vibrant and inclusive.

To raise awareness for the 2022 program, the Office of Disability Services (ODS), which hosts the event, sought support from Rutgers Communications and Marketing (R-Comm) to build a calendar of activities. But after reviewing ODS's objectives, R-Comm decided to go further and create an internal marketing campaign to educate the Rutgers community about disabilities and to increase Disability Awareness Month participation.

"Typically, students don't read emails, so a calendar with event listings sent to inboxes wasn't going to be enough to achieve ODS's goals," said Marsha Samuel, an R-Comm digital strategist. "We had to find other ways to reach students online."

Goals and Objectives

- Raise disability awareness on campus; showcase the many support resources offered by the Office of Disability Services
- Increase participation in campus-wide events during Disability Awareness Month
- Highlight the research Rutgers faculty are doing on disability and employment

Activities

The campaign was organized and executed in three phases.

Phase 1:

Events page: Development

The first phase was to create a central landing page for [Disability Awareness Month events](#). Using Qualtrics, R-Comm created a submission form for proposed events. This was connected to Rutgers' central calendaring system, which enabled program hosts (ODS) to solicit proposed events from the public and control their approval and display.

Events: Disability Awareness Month at Rutgers

SEP	Disability Awareness Month at Rutgers
30	Kinetic Light: DESCENT Friday, September 30, 2022, 7:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m. Elizabeth Johnson Theater, New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, New Brunswick
OCT	Disability Awareness Month at Rutgers
1	Kinetic Light: DESCENT Saturday, October 01, 2022, 3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Elizabeth Johnson Theater, New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, New Brunswick
OCT	Disability Awareness Month at Rutgers
2	New Jersey Film Festival Presents: Sign the Show: Deaf Culture, Access & Entertainment Sunday, October 02, 2022, 12:00 a.m.-11:59 p.m. Voorhees Hall, room 105, or stream online, New Brunswick
OCT	Disability Awareness Month at Rutgers
3	RU OK? Informational Event: What is CAPS?/Mindfulness Workshop Monday, October 03, 2022, 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Busch Student Center Multi-Purpose Room B, Piscataway
OCT	Disability Awareness Month at Rutgers
4	RU OK? Informational Event: What is Mental Health? How to Support Our Needs Tuesday, October 04, 2022, 3:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. Busch Student Center Room 122, Piscataway

Phase 2:

Microsite

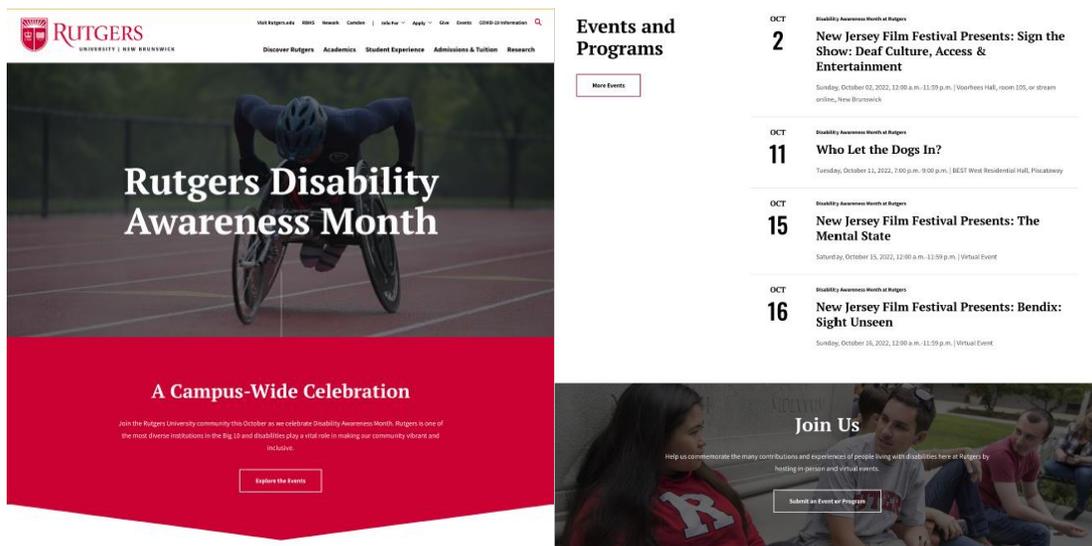
Phase two, which was launched on September 16, was anchored by a [dedicated microsite](#) built using the Rutgers Core Component Library (RCCL). RCCL provides a set of visually attractive

website design elements based on Drupal that adhere to Rutgers brand standards and make it easy for people with disabilities to access content.

“Resources and Action” links were placed at the top of the page, just below the hero image. The placement was intentional: We wanted to increase visitors to the ODS site, highlight Rutgers’ [leadership in disability and employment research](#), and cultivate awareness among current and prospective students. A call to action for ODS’s “[How to be an ally](#)” program was also featured high on the page.

Events page: Launch

Previous work on the events page was incorporated into the microsite. CTA banners and buttons were placed prominently to invite community members to submit their event for inclusion and to learn more about the planned activities.



Event highlights included:

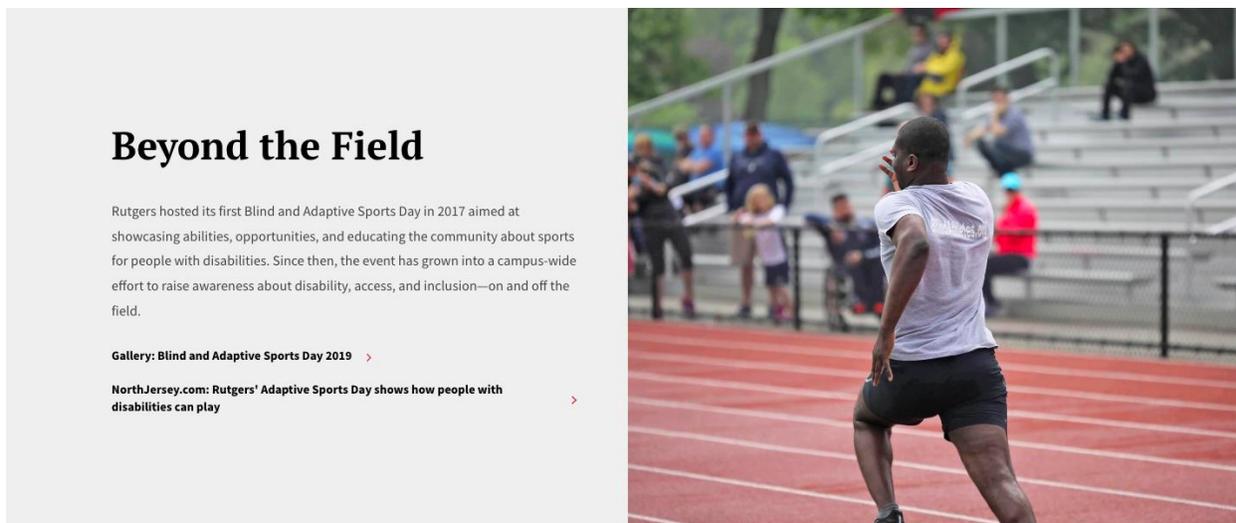
1. [Rutgers University Adaptive Sports, Health and Wellness Day](#), organized by the Department of Kinesiology and Health
2. [Who Let the Dogs In?](#) An evening event to learn about emotional support animals, service animals and therapy dogs, presented by Residence Life-Student Support
3. New Jersey Film Festival screening of [Sign the Show: Deaf Culture, Access & Entertainment](#), a feature length documentary providing insight to Deaf culture and the quest for access to entertainment.

Phase 3:

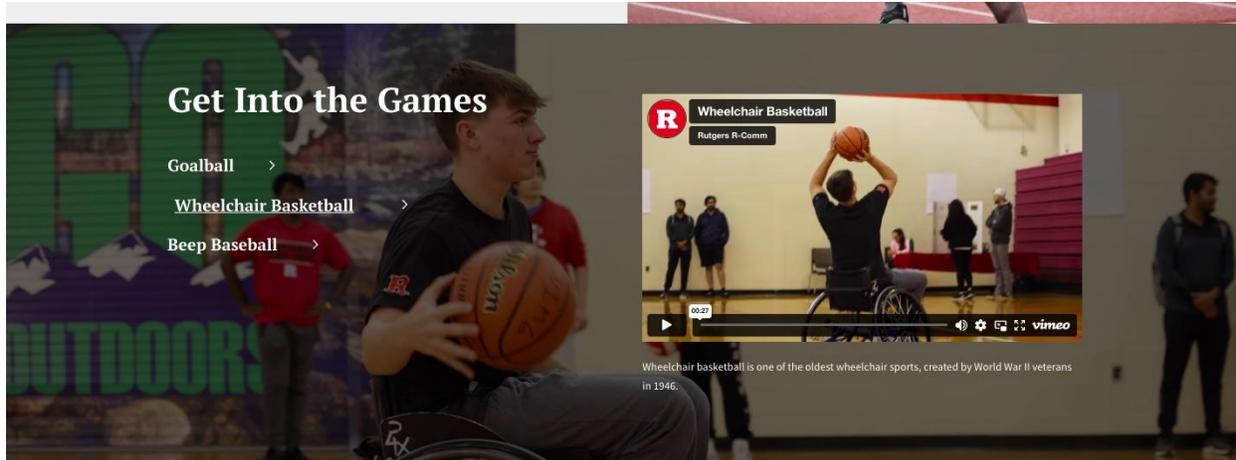
Archival

When the month's activities ended, promotional content was replaced with photos and footage of event participation, creating an archive of the 2022 celebration. This is the version of the [microsite that is live today](#).

For example, we created a photo scroller for events like “beep” baseball and wheelchair basketball. We also showcased [local news coverage of the Adaptive Sports Day](#) ...



...and created videos explaining the sports themselves. The short videos were embedded on the site and used in social media. R-Comm developers created a video player with toggle to ease on-site navigation of the videos.



Finally, we created an archive of selected events and placed these on the site:

2022 Select Events

Kinetic Light: DESCENT

Kinetic Light is an internationally recognized disability arts ensemble that creates, performs, and teaches at the nexus of access, queerness, disability, dance, and race. Presented by Mason Gross Dance Department.

About the Event -

Voices of Diversity: Rutgers Student Stories

The first panel discussion in the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences Office of Undergraduate Education's Voices of Diversity series for the 2022-23 academic year, focusing on the topic of "Students with Disabilities."

View the Event -

The Intersectionality of Domestic Violence and People with Disabilities

A discussion about the unique challenges experienced by disabled people in seeking help when faced with domestic violence. Presented by the RBHS Office of Disability Services.

About the Discussion -

Sign the Show: Deaf Culture, Access & Entertainment

Presented by the New Jersey Film Festival, this special screening is a feature length documentary that provides insight to Deaf culture and the quest for access to entertainment.

About the Screening -

Who Let the Dogs In?

Students learn all about emotional support animals (ESA), service animals, and therapy dogs, and have the opportunity to connect with some furry friends. Presented by the Department of Residence Life Student Support.

Learn More -

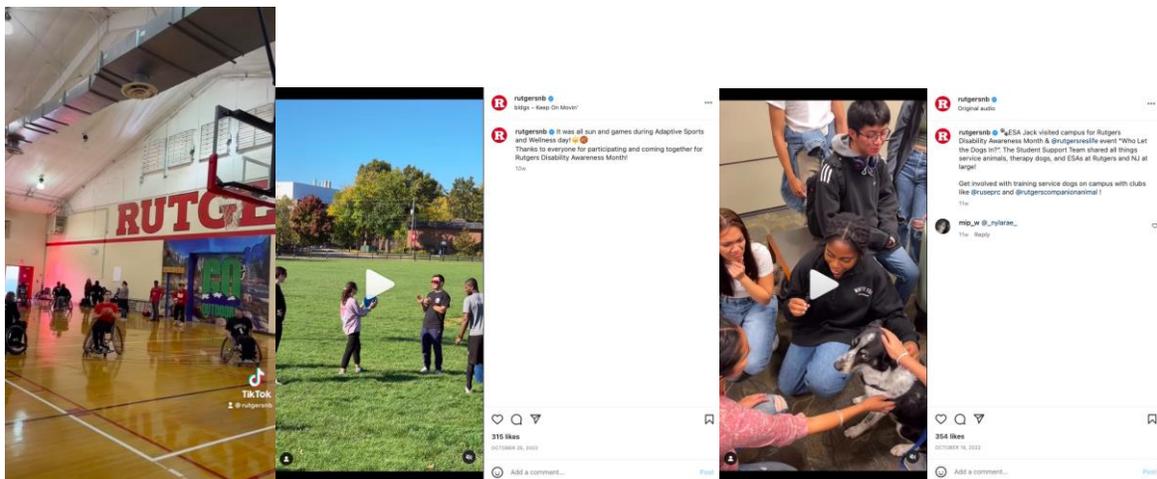
Are Accommodations for Me?

A discussion about accommodations and the support services offered at Rutgers, presented by the Office of Disability Services.

View More -

Social media

To increase student participation in the month's activities, R-Comm sourced and shared social posts on Rutgers-New Brunswick channels. Some of the top content included: an Instagram Story takeover by a student with a learning disability who uses resources through ODS; a short explainer video about how to create [inclusive and accessible meetings and events on campus](#); tips for becoming an ally to students with disabilities; and coverage of select events like "[Who Let the Dogs In](#)" and "[Adaptive Sports, Health and Wellness Day](#)."



Outcomes

Social media

The organic social media campaign across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok and Instagram generated 76,432 impressions and 1,347 engagements.

Site traffic

Referrals to the ODS website, including its main resources page and “How to be an Ally!” program page, increased 40 percent during the campaign.

Coverage: Owned

Disability Awareness Month campaign content was used and promoted by other university departments for their own communications needs. Information about the event was shared in The Current, a faculty and staff email newsletter; by the Office of the Chancellor-Provost; and by the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. In total, these newsletters reached 23,947 community and alumni subscribers.

The events were also featured by Rutgers Today, the university’s news site.

Media coverage: Earned

Rutgers’ [Adaptive Sports, Health and Wellness Day](#) 2022 was covered by Gannett newspapers.

Summary

R-Comm’s efforts to raise awareness of disability services and research across the university were widely successful. During previous years, participation in Disability Awareness Month activities was limited, but in 2022, in-person and virtual attendance grew across the board. As a result, more people are better informed about the disability resources that Rutgers offers.