

# Inspire

## Ensuring Continuity of Critical Stroke and Brain Injury Services

Two days before the pandemic shelter-in-place order was implemented in March 2020, Mary suffered a debilitating stroke that left her unable to communicate or walk. Mary, who lives with her husband Jim in the East Bay, went from living a full and active life to suddenly being restricted to a hospital bed and using a wheelchair for mobility. “The quality of Mary’s life was really diminished,” said Jim. “She was isolated, despondent, and had no stamina. She was becoming very depressed and irritable.”



In June 2021, Mary and Jim began traveling from the East Bay to Palo Alto to attend weekly physical therapy group classes at the REACH Program. A few months later, REACH closed their doors due to the pandemic. Fortunately, AbilityPath worked with REACH to hire their speech, occupational, and physical therapists and continue providing these life-changing services for

individuals who had a stroke or traumatic brain injury.

“We are now the only organization on the Peninsula providing rehabilitation services to adults who have experienced a stroke or traumatic brain injury,” said Mary’s physical therapist Brenda. “We are beyond grateful that AbilityPath made it possible for our students to continue their therapy services.”

The AbilityPath group class format is unique in that it adds a social aspect that allows students to connect and encourage one another to achieve their goals in communication, living skills, and mobility. For example, Mary watches her classmate Mona get in and out of her wheelchair and pivot onto a bench or mat. Mary says she wants to do that too, and when she practices the movement, Mona cheers her on!

“These classes have made a tremendous difference in Mary’s outlook on life and the way she feels. It’s improved her mobility, concentration, and her interest in the world around her. She’s happier now,” Jim said. “We’d be lost without this program and Mary’s wonderful teachers.”

Learn more about services at  
[abilitypath.org/strokeandbraininjury](https://www.abilitypath.org/strokeandbraininjury)



# CEO Corner

As we begin emerging from the pandemic and reflect on all we've accomplished the past two years, I'd like to thank you for your support and partnership in helping us maintain critical services for children and adults with developmental disabilities. I am also very excited about what lies ahead for our organization and those we serve. Starting this month, many of our programs that have been offered virtually are returning in person, bringing a welcome change and meaningful impact to the more than 1,000 individuals we serve daily.

We've also established new partnerships and deepened existing relationships that will enable us to commence several capital projects to expand our current services, create new employment opportunities, and meet the significant need for affordable housing in our community.

March is Developmental Disabilities and Brain Injury Awareness Month—an important time to reflect on our mission. While we have made significant advances, many people with disabilities still face barriers in connecting to the communities in which they live. AbilityPath strives to inspire inclusion and advocate on behalf of and in partnership with people with disabilities to increase awareness about disability justice in our community. This includes addressing decades of severe underfunding of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Unfortunately, Governor Newsom's current 2022-23 state budget proposal does not include adequate investments in DDS. AbilityPath will always advocate for sufficient funding to ensure the nearly 400,000 Californians with developmental disabilities are accepted, respected, and included.

I am pleased to welcome four incredible new members to our Board of Directors—Alex Cabral, Carole Middleton, Denise Pollard, and Felicia Stacker. I am looking forward to working with everyone and furthering our mission of inclusion for individuals of all abilities!

Be well,  
*Bryan Neider*  
Bryan Neider, CEO



# Actor Zack Gottsagen to Join 14th Annual Power of Possibilities

Each year the AbilityPath community comes together to celebrate the power of inclusion and recognize the accomplishments of those we serve at our *Power of Possibilities* event. Our *14th Annual Power Possibilities* will be held on May 5, 2022, and we are returning to Filoli Gardens after last year's rave reviews! We will also be streaming the event live online so you can join us from home.

We are thrilled to introduce our keynote speaker Actor Zack Gottsagen, who starred in the indie film *The Peanut Butter Falcon* alongside Dakota Johnson and Shia LaBeouf. Zack has been widely praised by film critics for his authenticity, comedic timing, improvisational skills, and wholesome charm. He has been interviewed in multiple print media, radio, and television programs including *People Magazine*, *The Today Show*, and *Good Morning America*. Additionally, Zack is a strong advocate for people with disabilities and will share with us his amazing journey and accomplishments. Please be sure to watch *The Peanut Butter Falcon*; it is a wonderful, uplifting movie.

One of the highlights of *Power of Possibilities* is the presentation of our Neal Poppin Award to an individual who has overcome challenges and achieved their goals of community-based employment. Please mark your calendars for May 5, 2022 to join us for a fun and memorable evening. We can't wait to introduce you to this year's award winner!

Learn more at [abilitypath.org/POP](http://abilitypath.org/POP)



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# POWER OF POSSIBILITIES

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**THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022**

Read more inside and visit:  
**abilitypath.org/POP**



Guest Speaker  
**Zack Gottsagen**



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**March 23, 2022**

Your support will provide critical resources as we return to full-time, in-person services. **Donations will be matched, up to \$35,000, thanks to Sharon and Joel Friedman, Linda and Richard Leao, Janice Uccelli, and the AbilityPath Auxiliary.**

**[abilitypath.org/GivingDay](https://abilitypath.org/GivingDay)**

*If you prefer to donate by check, please use the enclosed envelope. Thank you!*

