



Lights and Cameras on Financial Health for People with Disabilities

By Susan Wang, 2018

June 7, 2018 was another perfect, sunny day in Southern California. Near the Dolby Theater, several streets were blocked off, and security guards and barricades kept onlookers away from the seemingly endless red carpet leading up to the theater entrance. From where I was staying at the Loews Hotel, I rolled down Hollywood Blvd. on my electric scooter, feeling a bit like a movie star myself. And a bit curious. Someone in the huge crowd said, “We’re hoping to see George!” George Clooney was being honored by the American Film Institute with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

While the people on the streets of Hollywood were excited to catch a glimpse of a movie star, I was excited that @WID (World Institute on Disability) had sponsored me and three other Disability Ambassadors to attend the Center for Financial Services Innovation’s (@CFSInnovation) #EmergeForum18—a financial health conference being held at the Loews Hollywood Hotel, right next door to the theater. #EmergeForum18 had gathered 500 leading experts, pundits, businesses, and government agencies to discuss the financial well-being of people in their communities.

Thanks to a grant from @JPMorgan @Chase, in 2018 @WID will provide creative and inclusive hotel accommodations, flights, scooter rentals, and captioning services for forty people with disabilities who will be represented at ten large conferences, all paid for by @JPMorgan @Chase.

When I was ten months old I contracted Polio, which left me with the need for a leg brace and two crutches. Having a disability has made it difficult to travel and attend large conferences. The @WID’s disability concierge services, provided by Elizabeth Layman (@lizzlayman) and Tom Foley (and his lovely guide dog), helped me reserve an electric scooter, my hotel room at Loews, and other travel arrangements. Even more important, the presence of the Disability Concierge Desk at the conference provided a feeling of comfort and a sense of security because I knew I had a “go to” place should I have any issues navigating the conference.



Susan as a Disability Ambassador

During the opening session on Wednesday, June 6th, CFSI's president and CEO, Jennifer Tescher, asked, "Where are the financial life boats?" With mounting credit debts and student loans, more and more working families and young people are becoming financially insecure—even homeless.

But the news is not all bad! I see corporate America, such as @jpmorgan @Chase, @paypal, @foursquare, and @wellsfargo, genuinely trying to figure out the solutions to "fix" these financial health issues—making money with meaning! Corporations are now teaming up with startup fintech companies to make financial tools more accessible and affordable for small business owners and for people like me.

Best of all, in addition to staying at the amazing Loews Hotel, I was able to meet other disability ambassadors: Ray Grand (@iamGrandWorld), Harry Hebler, and Ray Parker (@RayOkadaParker). We hung out together and compared notes about the different breakout sessions we attended during those three days. We all agreed that we had learned a great deal from the @CFSInnovation financial health conference and hope to bring what we have learned to our work and communities.

Susan Wang is an ITS Senior Advisor at AARP, where she manages the 38 million membership database. She is interested in the newest financial technology, aging, and disability inclusion. A Chinese-American in Los Angeles, she is quick to disseminate information in English and Chinese in hopes of making the city more livable and accessible for all ages and abilities.



Susan with the other Disability Ambassadors