

Candidates for Board of Directors

ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

Advocacy Director – Bekah Bailey

To LPA Friends, Family, and those I haven't met yet,



It is an honor to be writing this today to announce my candidacy for your next Advocacy Director. As a lifelong member and third-generation Little Person, it would be a privilege to serve this community as it has served me. Little People of America has laid the groundwork and then some for 65 years in advocating for the fair treatment, representation, and respect of people with dwarfism. And I would love to help continue the work that so many have done. After the passing of my father during the 1999 National in Portland, Oregon, LPA became a sacred and safe space for me like it has for you and so many of us.

When I think of why I want to be here in this space and in this role, the quote, “Nothing about us, without us.” comes to mind. This quote has been used in the disability justice movement, and as a disabled person, has been a fundamental belief that I hold in the work that I do daily. In 2020, I earned my Master’s Degree

in Advocacy and Political Leadership. Within that program, a vast majority of my projects and papers revolved around the disabled community, specifically the dwarfism community, and one of my final projects was creating a National Voter Turnout plan to engage more young and non-voters who have dwarfism. Through this degree I gained an abundance of knowledge and experience on what it means to advocate for not just myself, but for disabled people as a whole.

As a community organizer and activist, I have worked with groups such as Women’s March National, Women’s March Minnesota, Center for Popular Democracy, and the Organizing Leadership Fellows program to fight for the rights and justice of marginalized groups throughout our nation. Because of these organizations I learned how to advocate at a legislative level beyond the lived experience I already had within me, helping me better advocate for those whose rights are consistently under attack. With both the knowledge and experience I have, my plan as Advocacy Director is to continue where we are with removing hateful language from teams and mascots. I plan to help create a more progressive approach on how we interact as an organization. Through the work and personal relationships my life has created, I plan to make LPA a more familiar group. One that is recognized widely in the disability community as a champion for supporting its members and other organizations. LPA should be proudly known for its 65 years of advocacy, pride, diversity and resilience.

Like I mentioned earlier, “nothing about us, without us,” to me means more than just the identities and groups you personally belong to, but to do your individual part in making sure that all have a seat at the table. Even when it means you give that seat up for someone else. Little People of America belongs to the people, by the people. LPA has a duty to represent ALL Little People, with a board and executive team that mirrors those it exists for. My hope is that by becoming your next Advocacy Director, we can be the progressive, disability-justice led, and dedicated organization we need today and for our next generations.

Thank you, and I look forward to seeing you all in Spokane this Summer!

Advocacy Director – Jillian Curwin



My name is Jillian Curwin and I am a proud candidate for the advocacy director position. Being a little person, being a disabled person, I learned at a young age how to advocate for myself and the community. It started with making sure I was receiving reasonable accommodations at school and has since expanded to me creating platforms for myself to advocate for myself and the little person and disabled communities. In January of 2020 I launched my blog, *Always Looking Up*, that was originally focused on advocating for adaptive fashion. Once the pandemic hit I decided to expand my focus to raise awareness on the wider range of issues impacting the little person community. I started a series called “Girl Talk” where I interviewed my friends about a topic of their choice and made their voices heard through the written word. Wanting to amplify these conversations I decided to launch a podcast, also entitled *Always Looking Up*, where I talk to little people, disabled people, and allies about living in a

world that is not necessarily designed for them. Through these conversations I have learned more about what it means to be a little person and to be a disabled person in an average-height, able-bodied world.

Since moving to New York City in May of 2021 and making friends within the disabled community but outside the little person community, I realized how important it is to embrace the word “disabled” when advocating for reasonable accommodations and disability rights. If we want people with dwarfism to be seen and heard within the disability rights movement, we have to work with other organizations within the disability rights movement. We cannot continue to be silent and then say we, as little people, are not being seen.

If elected as advocacy director I promise to make our community, our organization seen and heard. I will network with other disability organizations and find ways for us to work together to advocate for civil rights. I will make sure that our member’s voices are heard both within LPA and the disabled and non-disabled communities at large through launching an official LPA podcast. Members will be invited to share their stories and talk about issues they feel should not be ignored.

As advocacy director I will be unafraid to speak out, making sure that when I speak for the community that I have first listened to what our members have to say. I will welcome dissent and debate. I will do my part to ensure that the needs of our community are being addressed in the advocating efforts of the disabled community at large. I am running for advocacy director to ensure that little people are no longer overlooked.

Advocacy Director – Stephanie Farfan



My name is Stephanie Farfan and I want to be the next Advocacy Director. I believe I can bring a perspective to this role given my previous advocacy skills and my passion for creating a more inclusive LPA.

I am an experienced disability advocate who has been a member of LPA since I was 16 years old. With LPA, I have been a part of various districts and served on the Hispanic Affairs Committee because as a Latina Little Person, I wanted to make sure Latino LPs had an impact on the broader LPA organization. Besides LPA, I worked with broader disability organizations in the US and has given presentations to colleges on disability rights. I am currently a Program Manager with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) where I work on the Equal Rights in Action Fund team to provide small grants to local organizations led by and for different populations - including disability organizations on

projects relating to Safe and Secure Environments, Political Participation, and Empowered & Inclusive Movements & Organizations.

As LPA's Advocacy Director, I want to push LPA into the future. I want to advocate for LPA to have stronger stances in issues that affect us such as representation in media and pharmaceutical involvement in conferences. I also want to work to strengthen LPA's ties to the broader disability community. As the Advocacy Director, I aim to advocate for us all.

Advocacy Director – Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk



I am asking for your support in my bid to become LPA's next Advocacy Director.

I attended my first LPA National Convention at four years old. My parents, both average size, were 'all-in'. They made LPA a priority for our family, and every summer the conference became our family trip. No matter how amazing the host city was, they would park themselves in the lobby for the week and would develop relationships with other parents, while I developed my own critical relationships. My parents are so passionate about LPA that my father continued to attend the conferences up until his passing and my mother still attends when her schedule permits.

My experiences with LPA and the annual conferences continue to be meaningful and overwhelmingly enjoyable. The most significant impression made on me was its tireless work advocating on behalf of the little people community. Many members have taught me by example what advocacy work looks like and how to get things accomplished. I've seen many successes, and when the outcome is not a complete success, this organization just regroupes and tries again. The support that I received from my parents and my involvement with LPA shaped who I am today with a great deal of dwarf pride. I was brought up to believe in myself; believe that I could be anything and accomplish anything I set my mind to.

My ultimate goal is to help all LP kids understand how perfect they are and to provide them with the skills and confidence that they need to take on the world.

In 2020, my friend Ellen and I decided to launch a virtual weekly teen session to give teens a sense of community during the pandemic. We also initiated a virtual parent's group intended for average size parents raising LPs, called *Real Talk*. Our group of experts are all examples of Dwarf Pride.

I am passionate about advocacy. In 2015, I became President of Little People of Manitoba. In 2017, we advocated for a bill to be passed making October 25 Dwarfism Awareness Day in the Province of Manitoba. That bill was passed, and Manitoba became the first Province in Canada to have this distinction. One of the pieces of advocacy work that I'm most proud of was inspired by LPA's attempts to persuade a school in Freeburg, Missouri to remove its offensively named mascot. I lobbied Directors of 16 different minor sports organizations in Manitoba to eliminate the term midget. In 2018, all major sports removed the term from their terminology, including hockey. Thereafter Hockey Canada announced that they would follow suit.

In 2019, I travelled to Dickenson, North Dakota advocating as part of a team for Little People of America. Our mission was to address the local school board in an appeal to change their mascot from *The Midgets* to something more appropriate. Although, our goal was not successful, we were able to further our message to the greater public through media attention, including an article in the Washington Post.

I have sat on LPA's advocacy committee since 2019 and know how much work needs to happen. The road to true advocacy isn't easy and requires single-minded dedication. I believe that I have that attribute.

I am currently completing a master's degree in Disability Studies, hold a BA in Labour and Workplace Studies, and I hold a certificate in Workplace Learning. I work as a Human Resource Advisor & Accessibility Manager for an international corporation.

Other accomplishments I am proud of include writing a chapter in a book named *Still Living the Edges: A disabled women's reader*, receiving the Nellie McClung Manitoba 150 Women Trailblazer Award, and being placed on the 100 Most Fascinating Manitoban's list twice for my advocacy work.

I am the mom to a 16-year-old who, like me, was born with Achondroplasia. I am married to Ryan and we have just celebrated our 10th anniversary.

These are extraordinary times; advocacy is more important than ever for all LPs. In addition, ensuring that our BIPOC community is seen, heard, and included is critical in shaping LPA for tomorrow. I know the road can be hard, but I thrive on the hard and am eager for this challenge.

There is no doubt that LPA shaped me into who I am today. It was the launching pad for the advocacy work that I do. I want to give back to this organization that has given me so much. I would be honored to serve as your Advocacy Director.