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### **Episode 3: We Carry Kevan August 8, 2021**

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**Mindy Henderson:** Welcome to the Quest podcast, proudly presented by the Muscular Dystrophy Association, as part of the Quest family of content. I'm your host, Mindy Henderson. Together, we are here to bring thoughtful conversation to the neuromuscular disease community and beyond about issues affecting those with neuromuscular disease and other disabilities, and those who love them. We are here for you. To educate and inform, to demystify, [00:00:30] to inspire, and to entertain. We're particularly excited to be launching this podcast during the summer months, which celebrate both disability pride month in July and SMA awareness month in August. We are here shining a light on all that makes you, you. Whether you are one of us, love someone who is, or are on another journey all together, thanks for joining. I'm so excited about today's episode. [00:01:00] Our conversation today is the first in a series of interviews addressing all the unique aspects of access to the world. Now let's get started.

Welcome to my two guests today, Kevan Chandler and Luke Thompson of We Carry Kevan, a nonprofit organization with the mission to mobilize individuals with disabilities by redefining accessibility as [00:01:30] a cooperative effort through investment, interaction and innovation. They've also filmed two documentaries about their adventures traveling to Europe and China, and Kevan has written a book also titled We Carry Kevan. You all, I'm so excited to talk to you today. I'm fascinated by what you've done and by what you've created.

**Kevan Chandler:** Thank you. It's good to be here.

**Luke Thompson:** Yeah. Thank you so much.

**Mindy Henderson:** Absolutely. So Kevan, why don't you kick us [00:02:00] off and tell us just a little bit more about yourself, your disability, and how We Carry Kevan came about?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah, my name's Kevan Chandler. I live in Fort Wayne, Indiana, grew up in North Carolina and I have spinal muscular atrophy, type two. And my sister does as well. And we grew up in a home of just figuring things out and being creative with what we should do and what we wanted to do. And [00:02:30] so over time, growing up with that, and being part of my friendships as well, as I got older and moved out on my own and everything, having really wonderful, brilliant, creative friends who helped me. That remained the theme of my life until my late twenties when I said to some of those friends, "Hey, what if we went to Europe?"

And we have done some previous smaller ventures with a homemade backpack [00:03:00] where they could carry me. We had explored some sewers and stuff like that. And so I said, "Well, what if we did that for three weeks above ground in Europe?" And one thing led to another, and we came up with a more professional backpack and headed out to Europe and got to see some really amazing things together. We got to dance in the streets of Paris and tramp through the woods and the open fields of England, and then hike [00:03:30] up on the island off the coast of Ireland, called Skellig Michael. Yeah, some really amazing sights, but also some great experiences with dear friends.

And so when we got back from that, we had a lot of people asking us, "Where'd you get these frames? Where'd you get this backpack? How did you make this adventure happen?" And so we started the nonprofit, We Carry Kevan, which was the name of our fundraiser campaign to go on the original trip, because we also [00:04:00] are all poor. And so unfortunately, we couldn't afford a trip to Europe on our own, so we asked for help.

Yeah, so now we have this nonprofit and that is striving to redefine accessibility as a cooperative effort, as people helping people and caring for one another. We believe that's where true accessibility happens, when people think outside the box, because you care about someone.

Mindy Henderson: No kidding.

Kevan Chandler: It leads so much better [00:04:30] innovation too.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah. And it sounds like that trip to Europe really gave you the proof of concept, probably, that you needed to move forward with this as a nonprofit and a business operation.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. We got to use your words, we got to prove it a little bit further, with our trip to China two years later. And we had a great experience there where it wasn't so much about fulfilling one of Kevan's dreams, but it was about [00:05:00] going and seeing other people, and meeting people where they are.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: We got to spend some time in some care centers for orphans with disabilities, and got to hang out with those kids and brought them some backpacks for the

staff to use with a few of the kiddos and it was just a really cool experience all around. Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: That's so great. That's so great. So Luke, let me bring you into the conversation. I've got so many questions for you guys. [00:05:30] But tell me if you don't mind, just how you met Kevan, how this friendship developed? And tell me if you don't mind, who gets true credit for the backpack idea? Who first had the idea?

Luke Thompson: Yeah, yeah. Take it all the way back. I think I've known Kevan for eight years, eight and a half years. I played in a band, Kevan was a fan of the band and knew some of the other people, and so he would come out to the shows and we just started talking organically through that. And then [00:06:00] after some time, I think Kevan had a book that he was self-publishing and he wanted to do a trailer to just show what was going on. So we came up with an idea and filmed something in my backyard, just super casual. And we found out from that, that we worked together really well. And we decided, after staying in touch for some time, to take it to the next level, and actually film something of a larger scale. And that's how we got started with the whole process, is building from there. So, yeah, it's been something we've developed over a long time.

[00:06:30] And for the backpack, Kevan you may need to help me with this one, but I would say Tom was the instigator of that and many other things. But he seems to have the wild ideas that we're like, "Huh, can this actually happen?" And I think his idea was to do something less than ideal to carry you on his back that developed into what it is now, right?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. It was his idea to go into the sewers and we were like, "Well, how do we do that with a wheelchair?" And yeah, just through your [00:07:00] conversation, he was like, "What if we did come in a backpack?" And so that's how we ended up with that.

Luke Thompson: Kevan, did he come up to you and say, "Hey, the sewers are cool. You should come into the sewers?" Or were you like... How did that actually happen?

Mindy Henderson: Yeah. You might have to explain the sewers to me, because what I'm picturing isn't very pretty.

Kevan Chandler: It wasn't pretty at all.

Luke Thompson: And I'm actually curious, yeah.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah, yeah. No, it was not pretty. It was awesome, but... We were hanging out, and Luke was part of this group that... We were part of a potluck group, just a lot of [00:07:30] starving artists that would get together once a week and make dinner together. And we did this at a bunch of different people's houses, and some of those houses were accessible and some weren't. And so, I had gotten really used to being out of my wheelchair. They would sometimes take me out of my chair and just carry me up two, three flights of stairs and then sit me on the couch or on the floor and that would be how I'd spend the evening.

So we were actually driving to, Luke, I think [00:08:00] the band was recording somewhere up in the mountains. And so I hitched a ride with Tom, and we were driving up there and I said, "You know, I'm getting used to not being in my chair. It'd be really cool if we did a weekend thing where I just left my wheelchair behind." And he was like, "Well, yeah. But we can't just sit on the couch and play video games. So we have to do something really awesome and-

Mindy Henderson: Seriously.

Kevan Chandler: ... Adventurous and stuff". Yeah. And so he said, "Well, what about the sewers?" And he had always wanted to do it, and wanted me [00:08:30] to go with him. And so that's how that conversation started. And we grew up on ninja turtles and [Batman 00:08:38] and the sewers seemed like a really good idea. So, that's how we ended up there.

Mindy Henderson: Okay. So there's nothing particularly special about these sewers? It was just some sewers in your city that you thought it would be fun to go explore?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. Yeah. That was basically it. Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: Okay. I'm trying to wrap my girl brain around this. It sounds like an adventure, [00:09:00] for sure.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. Yeah. There's no deep spiritual reason or anything.

Luke Thompson: Is it one of those just do it, do it... Well yeah, what are the odds of you being able to do that too? In terms of range of options. Here's something that's basically like the moon, for you, in terms of accessibility. It's like, "Let's see if this can happen." Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: Very True. Very true. So tell me about the travel that you did, maybe prior to this. Did you travel much? Obviously there were [00:09:30] limitations and things before the backpack came along, so did you have much experience traveling or did you get to do much of that before?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah, and I think that's the thing too with travel, is you build up to something. You don't just one day wake up and say, "I'm going to go do this crazy thing, because I've never done anything like it." So growing up, my dad worked for the airlines, and we also have family all over the US and Canada. [00:10:00] And so we did a lot of family trips, whether it was road trips or flying. We did a lot of flying out to California and Vancouver and areas like that.

And then we're originally from Florida, and so taken road trips down there. And so, really, I've traveled a lot in that regard. And then whenever I graduated high school, I was in a band and we did some touring and I also had a college internship out in [00:10:30] Arkansas. And so I did a lot of road trips with my friends when they started doing care giving for me and stuff.

But this trip was the first time for a lot of things. Which was, it was the first time I was flying without my parent. And so that was going to prove to be a little

different. It was also the longest flight by quite a bit. Kind of exponentially. And then also the first time I had done a trip without my wheelchair, because [00:11:00] we left the wheelchair home for the whole trip.

Mindy Henderson: Right.

Kevan Chandler: And just took the backpack. And so those aspects of it were new, but yeah, I had traveled a lot growing up and it just always involved a lot of either planning ahead or just thinking on your feet when you got there. And saying, "All right, this will work and this won't. How do we do this differently?" And yeah, just really, I'm thankful for having a lot of friends who could think creatively [00:11:30] with me, so I wasn't just leaving it up to them, but we would come up with ideas together, and solve problems together.

Mindy Henderson: That's really great.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: So, I want to talk about just the backpack for a second. Because I also have spinal muscular atrophy and I've envisioned trying to get into one of these backpacks myself and I've got some tricky joints, and my bone density's not great. So tell me a little [00:12:00] bit about how you designed the backpack so that the pressure was on the right places, and you didn't injure or cause discomfort to sensitive areas. Those sorts of things.

Luke Thompson: Yeah. That's a great question. We started with an existing product. So this was a backpack that was designed for children.

Mindy Henderson: Wow.

Luke Thompson: Of like average body type. And with that, we were able to break it down [00:12:30] and adjust things that needed to be adjust in particular. So a lot of it was the seat of the backpack, and some of the padding, you had to bolster that a little bit. Adjustability was the big thing.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Luke Thompson: Just allowing for different movement and different placement of things. Actually in The View From Here, which is the documentary we ended up making about the trip to Europe, we actually have a short scene in there, where Tom breaks down the backpack that we used...

Mindy Henderson: Oh, okay.

Luke Thompson: ... To go to Europe. So he actually goes through a lot of the different adjustments [00:13:00] that were made. You see the before and after of that, which is pretty cool. Those were two of the main things. And then actually, there's a production version that's available now, that we have taken to the next level in terms of some of the safety features, and some more flexibility for people. Not just

Kevan, right? So people who do have unique needs as well. So yeah. It's taken on its own life from there.

Mindy Henderson: Okay. It's mind blowing to think of this. Is there a weight limit? Or...

Kevan Chandler: [00:13:30] Yeah. That's really the only major limitation on the backpack is, it's a 70 pound weight limit. Which doesn't sound like much until you realize someone's going to have it on their back. And so they're like, "OK, that's fair." But...

Mindy Henderson: Yeah, and there would have to be a limitation on that because...

Kevan Chandler: Right.

Mindy Henderson: ... Like you said, it's on someone's back. There couldn't be an unlimited...

Kevan Chandler: Right.

Mindy Henderson: ... Amount of weight, a person could carry.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. And [00:14:00] that was a big breakthrough for us, because most child carriers, the limit is 40 or 50 pounds.

Mindy Henderson: Okay.

Kevan Chandler: So we worked with the company to actually reinforce the frame so that it is stronger and reinforced the [inaudible 00:14:17] in order to meet the criteria to say they can hold this much. So yeah, that was a big thing. And then as Luke said, the seat was another major change that we made. Which was in order to, [00:14:30] as you suggested, distribute the weight more appropriately for an adult or anyone that's not a toddler, really.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: So the design that you have now puts the weight on the back of your [legs 00:14:44] and kind of your tail bone. So...

Mindy Henderson: I see.

Kevan Chandler: ... It gives you more points of contact. And then yeah, we really wanted it to be a thing that people could pull out of the box and say, "We need this part. We don't need this part. We need to adjust this part." And just [00:15:00] not have to reinvent something, or make a lot of major alterations themselves. They can just move this strap or buffer once, and it's better.

Luke Thompson: Yeah. I think support is probably the key word that differentiates this. Adjustability and support. Because in terms of muscle ability and like you said, bone density, there's just a need for more of that supportive structural existence.

Mindy Henderson: Absolutely. I absolutely love... I have to say, my brain is spinning [00:15:30] right now, because the level to which you saw a problem and just bit by bit, solved the problem. I think that it's absolutely amazing. And I think it's a testament to, like you were saying earlier, what people can do if they put their minds to it and get creative.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about the two documentaries that you filmed. You filmed your first one in Europe, and the second one in China. So let's start with Europe. [00:16:00] I know this was your inaugural trip, so to speak, with the backpack. Tell me what went well and maybe what didn't go as well, and what you learned.

Kevan Chandler: Oh yeah. We learned a lot.

Luke Thompson: We had to make this up completely as we went along.

Kevan Chandler: I'm sure. I'm sure. Yeah.

Luke Thompson: It was one step at a time. It was like, "All right, let's figure out what the budget needs to be just to make this happen, and let's raise some money. Let's do GoFundMe, let's create social media." So the documentary was [00:16:30] the tip of the iceberg. There was so much underneath the water that went into making this thing float, and making it really happen.

Mindy Henderson: Did you go into the trip knowing that you were going to film a documentary or did that come later?

Luke Thompson: Yes.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah.

Luke Thompson: So that was like the third sentence that we talked about.

Mindy Henderson: Okay.

Kevan Chandler: When I had the idea of going to Europe, I reached out to Tom because I knew I wouldn't go without him. I reached out to another friend who is a pretty busy traveler and just, he knows the financial and [00:17:00] the personal cost of doing something like this. And so I wanted to get his approval, really. And then I reached out to Luke and said, "Hey, I'm thinking about doing this. You think it's a good idea? And if it is, we're going to need proof that we did it. So can you come and film and make a documentary?" Yeah. That's where that came from.

Mindy Henderson: I love it. So tell me about some of the places that you went and did you still have surprises along the way? I [00:17:30] can't imagine that you wouldn't.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah, I would say we had surprises around every corner. Because each place that we went, sure, we were moving past your typical sense of accessibility. We didn't have to worry about whether there were stairs or not, but we still had to

keep in mind, and this goes back to your other question about things we learned, we had three guys, four guys, taking turns carrying me and doing caregiving and everything.

[00:18:00] And even with four guys, that ends up being a lot of work.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: And so figuring out our boundaries of, "Okay, now we need to rest. Or this hike, or this process takes a normal person about an hour. It's probably going to take us two." That kind of thing. So I think we really came... We were on top of the world, we were overcoming a lot of obstacles that no one else had ever overcome, or not many [00:18:30] people had overcome.

And yet at the same time we were coming face to face with our weakness and mortality every day. Just by getting worn out and getting tired. And so yeah, that's something that we learned to figure out.

Luke Thompson: Yeah, I think it was a reality check, in every sense.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah.

Luke Thompson: It was like, here's what we can do. Here's physically what's capable beyond what we think is possible, but here are also the limitations that we're going to have to deal with either way. So it's the reality of both [00:19:00] of those things.

Mindy Henderson: Right? Give me just a handful of examples, some of the places in Europe that you were able to go that maybe you couldn't have, if you in there in your wheelchair.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. One of my favorites to look back on is one day in England, the family that we were staying with, the husband said, "I wanted to take you out for a walk." And we thought it'd just be an hour or so. But it ended up being a six mile hike through the countryside. And so [00:19:30] we're walking through fields where cows are resting and eating. And we went through the woods. We were literally climbing over fences with me on these guys backs. And yeah, just every sense of that was not wheelchair accessible. It was not wheelchair friendly.

And yet at the same time, you don't want it to be. Because it's all so natural and grown up on its own, it's just [00:20:00] the world. And so you don't want a paved path through these super old forests, that who knows who's walked through there in history? And you want to feel the crunch of leaves under your feet, and have to step over roots, and look up and see the sun streaking through the trees, and yeah.

So another would be the islands that we went to at the end. Skellig Michael. Which has a monastery at the top. It's a jagged mountain [00:20:30] with an old collection of huts at the top there, and monks gathered. They had been chased out into the country, and they gathered there to pray for their homeland, which



you can see. It's about seven miles away from the coast. And on a clear day, you can see Ireland.

And so with a setup like that, and that kind of history and legacy, you don't really want them to install an elevator, you know?

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: You want to feel the struggle [00:21:00] that they felt to climb up these stairs and rocks and everything. Yeah, so those were the sort of things that we wanted to experience firsthand. And we realized, well, they may not be wheelchair accessible, but they can be accessible. We're allowed to go there. So we just had to figure out how to do that. That's what we did.

Mindy Henderson: That's amazing. Luke, did you have a favorite moment from the Europe trip? Where [00:21:30] you saw the proof of what you all were trying to do, and got to live the success of it?

Luke Thompson: Definitely. It would have to be Skellig Michael, for me. I know Kevan just spoke on that a little bit, but just to add to it, it really felt like a different world. It's a super unusual landscape. Back to the iceberg analogy, it's basically that. It's a mountain on the ocean floor that's so tall that it sticks up above the surface. So you're at actually the peak [00:22:00] of this really, really major mountain that's underneath the water.

And so at the top, you get a very different sense of the world, for sure. So just being there and being in a place that, if I'm correct, and Kevan, you may need to correct me on this, I believe that you were the first person with a physical disability to access that spot, I believe.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah, definitely. I would say the first person in a wheelchair.

Luke Thompson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: Incredible.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. It's not for the faint of heart.

Mindy Henderson: I love it.

Luke Thompson: Yeah. [00:22:30] Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: I love it. So how long ago was the Europe trip and how long were you there?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah, so that was 2016 and we were there for three weeks.

Mindy Henderson: Wow.

Kevan Chandler: And then, yeah, we went to China in 2018 and that was also three weeks.

Mindy Henderson: Got you. I think the other question, before we move on to China that I want to ask was, just the leap of faith that you took to go to Europe, knowing you were going to be there for three [00:23:00] weeks and leaving your wheelchair behind, what kind of emotion or fear did you have to work through? Just knowing that was what was happening?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. Because we had to design the seat and everything for the backpack, we had been doing a lot of test runs with that. And so I'd gotten really used to leaving my wheelchair behind and using the backpack for a couple hours here and there, [00:23:30] and just living in the backpack. And so when we left it at the airport hotel and headed for the airport and everything, I honestly didn't really think about it. We were just on our way. That's what we were doing.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: And it didn't set in until almost maybe a little over a week into the trip. And what hit me was that we spent a day in London, and London for the most part, I mean it's a big city, [00:24:00] and so there are a lot of acceptable aspects of it, like of the sidewalks and the ramps and elevators and everything are there. And so I kept looking around going, "Man, if I had my chair I could just wander off and do my own thing this way and that way." And that's when it really hit me like, "Oh, I've not traded my chair for something better. It's just another way of getting around." I've...

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: ... Traded one form of accessibility for another form.

Mindy Henderson: That makes a lot of sense.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. So, that was really cool.

Mindy Henderson: [00:24:30] Yeah, definitely. So I want to move on and talk about China, because I actually have been to China in a wheelchair. And it is not a wheelchair accessible country. You know, it's thousands of years old. The buildings, the structures, everything that's there is so much older than the country that we live in. And the ADA doesn't exist over there, and it's just a completely different experience. So tell me [00:25:00] a little bit about how you chose China, and again, what went well? What you learned? What didn't go maybe as well as expected, if anything?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. So, near the end of our Europe trip, we were talking about where we would want to go next and what we would like to do next. And one of the guys on the trip, Ben, he had gone with his brother and sister-in-law to China because they had adopted two children from there. And so [00:25:30] he got to see firsthand the different way that they view disabilities versus how we might.

And so he had suggested maybe that would be a good next step. Because what we found in Europe was that we didn't have to use words. We didn't have to describe what we were doing. If people saw us on the street they could figure

out, for the most part, what we were doing and they understood our message. And so that's what we had started asking [00:26:00] ourselves is, where could we go where language is a barrier? And culture is a barrier, and yet the message could come through just by us walking through town and letting people...

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: ... See us. And so that was his suggestion and the further in we got, we made some great connections with the care centers there and they invited us to come and visit. And so yeah, one thing led to another and that's how we ended up there. And it was an [00:26:30] amazing trip. Because we also got to experience... For the first week we were in the countryside, which is one culture. And then the second week we were in this older city, and that was its own culture. And then the last we were in Beijing, which is very new and clean and kind of westernized in some ways.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: And so that was its own culture. And so I feel like we got to experience [00:27:00] all these different kinds of China. Rather than just showing up in the one town and saying, "Oh, this is what the whole country's like." We [inaudible 00:27:13] really got a...

Mindy Henderson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: ... A wide swathe of the experience.

Mindy Henderson: And did any of you speak Mandarin?

Kevan Chandler: So we actually took a translator with us.

Mindy Henderson: Oh, okay. Very smart.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. A friend of ours. He was a 16 year old who had been born there and his family lives in Vancouver now, and we [00:27:30] knew them through my family. And he [inaudible 00:27:33] when he was 10 or so. Eight or 10. Yeah, so he was fluent and just came with us and he was a trooper. He was great. I felt sorry for him when we would have dinner with a bunch of people and he would have to translate five conversations at once. I don't know if he signed up for all that, but...

Mindy Henderson: Sounds like a good person.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. He was great.

Mindy Henderson: And how long did you say you were [00:28:00] in China for? Three weeks also?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. Yeah. That's something that we'd learned is we feel like that's a good marker where we've had a full experience, but everyone is, by the end of that, they're ready to get home and take a nap and have a rest.

Mindy Henderson: And I was looking at your website earlier and there's a picture... I mean, you've got lots of great pictures on your website, but there's one in particular where you're climbing the great wall, which... [00:28:30] And it's all but straight up and down. And I think that picture said everything that probably needs to be said, it was an absolutely incredible picture and it really captured the power of what you all were doing.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. And I really loved that part of the trip, which I think was really a, no pun intended, but a real pinnacle [00:29:00] moment as far as the holistic message and story of what we're doing, which is, these guys are carrying me, but I'm also encouraging them. And they're also supporting one another. There're pictures of someone carrying me, but someone else is giving them a hand to help them over something. And we definitely can't do it alone.

Mindy Henderson: Absolutely. Yeah. Incredible. What was your favorite [00:29:30] part of the trip to China?

Kevan Chandler: Oh, man. I would say the time at the care centers with the kids, just getting to roll around on the floor with them, and play with them. And getting to see... We got to try out the backpack with a couple of them and see what that experience was like for them to be high up and to be playing with their caregivers in a whole new way. A whole new capacity and that was fun. They would chase each other around [00:30:00] and stuff. So yeah, it was a special experience because it was what we wanted. We wanted it to not be about me. We wanted it to be about others. And that was the ultimate expression of that.

Mindy Henderson: Right.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: That's beautiful. Luke, how was the trip to China? Obviously the focus was different, like Kevan just said. But apart from that, how was the trip to China [00:30:30] different for you, than the trip to Europe?

Luke Thompson: I felt way more prepared this time, for sure. The China documentary, that whole experience, plus things that happened since then got me in the right mindset for it. So I went into it a with a little more confidence. And then also, just seeing the next phase and the future start to manifest itself, too.

Like Kevan said, being able to see it expand and really make an impact in other people's lives in a way that when we really first, [00:31:00] first started, we had no concept of that. We knew that would be awesome if that happened. But there was so much that had to go into place just to get things off the ground, that it was such a distant thought. At this point it became a reality, and it really set the groundwork for where we're at now, which really is just an incredible thing that's happening.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah. It's so incredible. It's absolutely wonderful. But I want to ask you... I mean, you guys are probably the ultimate travelers, at this point. [00:31:30] If someone

doesn't have a backpack, what suggestions or advice would you have for wheelchair users when traveling, to make their trips as successful as possible?

Kevan Chandler: I kind of referenced this earlier, but I'd say there's three things. One is to do some research, know where you're going and what you're getting into. So that you can plan accordingly. I would also say when you get there, approach it with an open hand. [00:32:00] So you may have done a lot of research, but you may get there and it's entirely different. And so you need to be willing to roll with that and bend with that. And then thirdly, take people with you who can also do both of those things. So to take people with you who are going to think through things, but also are willing to roll with it and figure things out on the fly. Yeah. I would say those are the basic pieces of advice.

And [00:32:30] then there's a lot of practical, small things. Like if you're flying with a power wheelchair, take your joystick off and take that with you and stuff like that. And when you're looking into hotels, figure out what you're going to need and make sure that they have all of that in place already. If you can pare down your personal needs, like you don't need to take your medical grade bed with you, then don't. That kind of thing. [00:33:00] Just pare that down and simplify your needs for the experience.

Mindy Henderson: That's good advice.

Kevan Chandler: In order to make it easier. Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: Great.

Luke Thompson: And I think the only thing I'll add to that, is just communicate as much as possible, or as much as you're comfortable with, in terms of those specifics. Because you never know who might be able to help or what options might be available to you without asking. So that's one thing I'll say.

Mindy Henderson: Very true. That's a great point as well. So, where and how [00:33:30] can people watch your documentaries? Because... Now I know that the Europe one was a couple of years ago. If I'm not mistaken, I think this upcoming weekend you're premiering the documentary from China. Is that right?

Luke Thompson: That's correct. Yes.

Mindy Henderson: Okay. And I think that this episode, unfortunately, is going to air after that. So are there places where people can find the documentaries or see snippets [00:34:00] of them, pieces of them anywhere?

Luke Thompson: Yeah. So currently, we're working on future screenings as well. These are the first round of those that we're testing some things out and refining that process. So once we get that happening, it'll happen probably more frequently. The China series has been shown in different places on social media. There was actually a short micro news channel that put together a video of us recently. A couple weeks ago. That actually used a lot of this footage in a different context. [00:34:30] But if you wanted to see a three and a half minute review of both,

you can look that up and that's something we've linked on our Facebook profile, for example.

Mindy Henderson: Great.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah. And then the China series, or the China documentary is being premiered, but we also did a series of mini episodes that are on our YouTube. I think maybe our Facebook page.

Luke Thompson: Yeah.

Kevan Chandler: You can get a lot of this story there.

Mindy Henderson: Okay, great. And I'm going [00:35:00] to put in the show notes, we're going to make sure that the links to all of those social media spots are included, so people can go and watch the videos. Because I am sure that a lot of people are trying to picture this and visualize it. Definitely going to want to go check it out. So what's next for We Carry Kevan? What are you guys working on now?

Kevan Chandler: Yeah, so we actually just got back a couple weeks ago from a trip that we called the family tour. [00:35:30] And we made the backpacks available about two years ago. We started selling and distributing them. People can apply for a scholarship online and receive a free backpack or a partially paid for backpack. And people can give donations, or even just purchase it outright. And so we started that about two years ago this month, actually. And we have over 500 backpacks around the world.

Mindy Henderson: Wow.

Kevan Chandler: In [00:36:00] several countries. And so, what we're doing now is this family tour where we find pockets of those families who have the backpack, and we go and visit them. So for example, we just got back from Colorado where we spent about a week just hanging out with seven different families who have the backpack. And we did a group hike with a few of them through Red Rock Canyon, open space. And then also just spent time in the [00:36:30] park or in their living room or their backyard or wherever they wanted to spend time.

And yeah, that time was really... There's no agenda beyond encouraging them and hoping that they feel seen, and known, and loved. Because we're taking these trips just to see them, and know them, and love them. And yeah, that's our adventure right now, is doing more of those family tours, and spending time with these families. Quality [00:37:00] time, and getting to know them on a personal level.

Luke Thompson: Just to throw a statistic out there, give some context to it, we have backpacks in 43 different countries.

Mindy Henderson: Wow. That's incredible.

Luke Thompson: So there's a lot of potential there when it comes to... So we're making these connections, and at this point we're just keeping a real open mind to all that.

Kevan Chandler: Yeah.

Mindy Henderson: That's amazing. Well, you guys are the ultimate problem solvers in my mind. Just the world of possibilities [00:37:30] and opportunity that you're opening up to people, I think is incredible. And the way that you're opening people's eyes to can be done, I think is incredible. So I really commend you.

Kevan Chandler: Thank you.

Mindy Henderson: Absolutely. Well, we are about out of time. I could talk to you guys forever. But I just want to thank you for spending the time that you have with me today, and sharing your story and just this incredible [00:38:00] journey that you guys have been on. I really appreciate it. Best of luck to you.

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