

Speaker 1 ([00:08](#)):

Experience Columbus' Live Forward Live podcast, introduces you to a new frontier of undiscovered possibility. Columbus is a city with an energy of its own. Join Boxer, Kelsey and their guest for an insider's look at a destination that invites visitors and locals alike to share and explore. We'll go behind the scenes of popular attractions, uncover best-kept secrets for things to see and do, and meet people who embody what it means to live forward.

Boxer ([00:39](#)):

Welcome back to Experience Columbus and specifically Live Forward Live, the Live Forward Live Podcast, season three, episode three. I am Boxer, and guess who is back? It only took the third episode for her to finally show up, but Kelsey Webb, welcome to season three.

Kelsey Webb ([00:57](#)):

Aw, I've missed you, Boxer.

Boxer ([00:59](#)):

Missed you too.

Kelsey Webb ([01:00](#)):

I get to see you at work, but yeah, there's been illness in the fam and just juggling kids. And it's so nice to not be with them today and instead with the two of you.

Boxer ([01:10](#)):

Well look, we're pretty excited because our guest today, so inspirational, internationally known and famous. Our theme is live for the thrill. Rosemarie Rossetti is a leading disability inclusion expert and universal design and accessibility consultant and president of Rossetti Enterprises, Inc. Rosemarie, welcome to Live Forward Live.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([01:34](#)):

Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

Boxer ([01:36](#)):

And I found out off the recording here that you and I live pretty close to each other. I live out at your neck of the woods. So if you see a stalker, a short little guy stalking you, now you know why. Well, look, let's get to something. Were you born and raised here? Are you from Columbus originally?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([01:54](#)):

I am a Columbus native, absolutely.

Boxer ([01:57](#)):

Through and through. So where you live now, in the Northeast side of town, is that where you grew up?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([02:03](#)):

I grew up on the East Side.

Boxer ([02:05](#)):

Okay.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([02:05](#)):

Okay. And went to school on the East Side and my graduate work and undergraduate work is at Ohio State University, and I was on the faculty there for 11 years, and I'm still there, part-time for the last four years. So I've got a lot of connections here in Columbus.

Boxer ([02:23](#)):

You are doing something that I've always wondered if... People in our business, Kelsey, if we have the ability to do, but how do you go about doing it? And that is being a speaker. How come about?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([02:37](#)):

Well, I always wanted to be a teacher and when I went for my undergraduate work, I loved plants. And so my-

Boxer ([02:45](#)):

You love plants.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([02:46](#)):

Plants. I love plants. I love botany and I got my love from high school being in a horticulture class. So when I started the undergraduate program, it was a dual major in horticulture and agriculture education. So I wanted to teach and that brought about the ability to communicate and taught at a career center at the Delaware Area Career Center for three years, and then went back for my doctorate and started teaching communications through Ohio State University and the College of Agriculture. So teaching was really where my speaking emphasis was born. And then in 1997, I left the university to start my business Rossetti Enterprises, to be a full time speaker, trainer, writer, and consultant.

Boxer ([03:34](#)):

How often are you on the road speaking? I mean, how often are you traveling?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([03:38](#)):

Well, because of COVID, there's still not a lot of travel involved. I learned a lot about doing virtual during the last two or three years and doing a lot of podcasts and a lot of Zoom meetings, ON24, Teams meetings. So invested in a lot of equipment for my home office so that I could be broadcast far and wide in people's own living rooms.

Kelsey Webb ([04:05](#)):

But she's going to Barcelona this summer.

Boxer ([04:08](#)):

Oh, I didn't know about this. Have you ever been? I was there once.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([04:11](#)):

No, this is a first.

Boxer ([04:12](#)):

You're going to love it.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([04:13](#)):

I'm excited.

Boxer ([04:14](#)):

It's beautiful. Well, good for you. You are also an author and if you don't know, Universal Design Toolkit, what... Tell us about that. Is that your first book or just your latest?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([04:25](#)):

That's my latest.

Boxer ([04:27](#)):

Okay.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([04:27](#)):

The Universal Design Toolkit was a labor of information from my husband and I. Mark Leder and I decided to share what we learned as we were designing, building and live in the Universal Design Living Laboratory. So let's go back a little bit. Mark and I worked with a design team and found over 200 sponsors and hundreds of volunteers to build the National Demonstration Home and Garden, the Universal Design Living Laboratory. It is the top-rated universal design home in north America, earning three National Universal Design certifications. So we decided to write a book about it. And we had so many photos that Mark had taken. So we decided to put this all together and answer the questions that we kept getting from people who were touring or in my audiences so that people could have a guide as they're working on modifying or building or remodeling. And that way it was all in one and we self-published it, put it out there as a digital copy. We packaged it with 16 videos and then later we decided to print it and let Amazon distribute it for us.

Kelsey Webb ([05:43](#)):

Rosemarie, let's go back to this unique experience you've had as being an able-bodied person, and you also had a brother with a disability, and then you had a spinal cord injury, and now you use a wheelchair. And so you have this just unique perspective of what it's like to be able-bodied and disabled. And what has that transformation in your life been like?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([06:09](#)):

Well, it was a rude awakening coming home from the hospital.

Kelsey Webb ([06:12](#)):

I'm sure.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([06:13](#)):

My accident was in June of 1998 when I was hit by a tree while bicycling and suddenly paralyzed from the waist down.

Kelsey Webb ([06:21](#)):

Wow.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([06:21](#)):

So coming home in July in a wheelchair was really... It was very heart-wrenching to see the house from that perspective and to be in such pain and such trauma, to realize that walking was probably not in my future. So to get into the house, for example, there was three steps to get into the front door. And my husband had to physically manhandle the wheelchair to get me into the house. And then once we got into the house, I started rolling the wheelchair on the carpet and I was too weak to even roll on the carpet.

So I said, "All right, you have to push me into the kitchen." And that's where the linoleum flooring was, the vinyl flooring. So I could roll around in the kitchen and that's it. I couldn't get out of the kitchen to go onto the carpet. So he would push me into the bathroom areas. And then I'd say, "You have to take the door off. I can't get in here." And it just continued. It was like, I wanted a glass of water in the kitchen, I couldn't reach the glasses. I couldn't get to the faucet. I couldn't get anything to cook. I couldn't reach things in the freezer. And so it was so frustrating, so depressing when I came home.

Boxer ([07:41](#)):

Rosemarie Rossetti is with us. She is the president of Rosatti... Rossetti, excuse me, Enterprises, Inc. What happened to you, Rosemarie, could have happened and happens to other people as well. Just normal... One day you're on a bicycle and the next day you can't walk anymore. So I'm curious, how long did it take you... When did you realize, and it hit you, "I'm going to have to get my act in gear and get moving and be inspired to move forward." I don't know how else to put this. Was there a mourning period of, "I'm not going to walk again, but I have to do something."

Rosemarie Rosetti ([08:22](#)):

Well, it was huge depression waking up from intensive care after the surgery. I mean, it's four and a half hours of surgery, emergency life-flighted here. And waking up was the first time I looked around the room and realized I was alive. When the anesthesiologist put that needle in my arm and I went to sleep, my last thought was, "Will this be my last thought?" And so waking up alive with all the tubes in me and in the hospital bed and the beeping noises, I realized I was alive. And I thought to myself, "I've got another chance. I got to make something happen here."

Boxer ([09:05](#)):

Rosemarie, how did your thinking change after that? Were you now inspired in different ways to do different things moving forward?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([09:14](#)):

Well, the whole path that I took was incredibly different for me now to be on a path of accessibility and inclusion, where that was in no way part of my business or my personal life, to realize that, "Why not me? Why can't I get involved with showcasing what is possible?" Imagine if a world had fewer barriers. Imagine if more homes were designed with inclusion and accessibility through universal design, which is

a concept looking at design for all abilities, all ages, all people. Let's put it together as we look at product design, as we look at buildings and environments, as we look at hotels. It's the whole world of universal design, to get more focus on that.

Boxer ([10:06](#)):

I can see where a lot of this inspiration came from now. You know how it was when you had your life when you could walk, and now you're in a wheelchair, Rosemarie, did you notice people treated you differently at all? If they did.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([10:24](#)):

Some people do, of course.

Boxer ([10:26](#)):

Okay.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([10:26](#)):

You'd go to the malls and people would say something about you're speeding. And it's like, "Yeah, right." Because I'm going pretty fast in the malls.

Kelsey Webb ([10:35](#)):

Wow.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([10:38](#)):

Little comments like that. But I was never felt belittled in any way or that people weren't talking to me respectfully. I felt like I was a VIP in a new world, that people were automatically seeing things before I saw something. They would open a door before I would go to the door, or I'd be looking at a blouse on an upper rod at a clothing store and someone would suddenly appear and go, "What size you're looking for?" And go get it for me. And it could be just someone that was shopping there rather than a clerk whose duty is to assist. So I kept finding out that people were looking out for my behalf and helping me.

Kelsey Webb ([11:21](#)):

And in turn, now you look out for... I mean, you are an icon for disabled people around the world because of what you have done. And talk about what it's like to live in your house and open it up to everyone.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([11:38](#)):

Well, it was an interesting experience when we first allowed the public in, after we had moved in. People were seeing the house during construction. That's one thing, but then they're in my bedroom, they're in my bathroom. They're using my toilets. It's like, "This is different now, Mark. But we've committed to this." That was our intention from the beginning.

We had the home open to the public for 30 days as a fundraiser for my spinal cord injury research fund at the Ohio State University. And with those 30 days, we had volunteers serving as docents. We also had professionally done a audio tour. So people had headsets on and they were listening to the 26 stations in the narration. We also put little booties on, little paper booties so we

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didn't get a lot of dirt through the house. So when they would come, they would put their booties on, they'd put the headset on, they'd clamp on the MP3 player. And it'd be totally quiet with 40 people in my house. It's like, this is really weird. It's like a zombie experience.

Boxer ([12:50](#)):

If someone wants a, I don't know if you would call it a call it a tour, Rosemarie, do they go to your website and reserve a time? How does that work?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([12:59](#)):

We closed during COVID and we're starting to open again.

Boxer ([13:02](#)):

You are, okay.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([13:03](#)):

So contact me, Rosemarie at Rosemariespeaks.com. The website for the house is just the simple initials. UDLL.com.

Boxer ([13:14](#)):

That's easy. Okay.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([13:15](#)):

Universal Design Living Laboratory, and anyone can go there and take the video tour. We also have a wonderful virtual tour, thanks to Google with a 360 experience. They can play a game and look for our cat. She was photo bombing throughout photo experience, and they can get a free chapter of the Universal Design Toolkit and download it from UDLL.com, which is a list of the universal design features in our home, room by room.

Boxer ([13:45](#)):

Yeah. Live for the thrill is our theme this week. This is season three, episode three for Live Forward Live, our Experience Columbus podcast. I'm boxer, Kelsey Webb, and our guest this week is Rosemarie Rossetti, who is the president of Rossetti Enterprises, Inc. Your story is very fascinating. This is an uber-themed Columbus podcast. Every week we celebrate different things that makes the people and the places and the companies that make Columbus so special. You were born and raised here. How important was it to... And I think I heard you earlier saying that the Universal Design Living Laboratory, it is the only one of its kind here in North America. Did I hear you right?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([14:25](#)):

It's the top-rated-

Boxer ([14:26](#)):

Top-rated one.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([14:27](#)):

.. universal design home because of the three national certifications.

Boxer ([14:30](#)):

Incredible. So Rosemarie, do you have people from all walks of life and all over the country, if not the world, come and visit?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([14:38](#)):

Yes, the world is there. We've had people from other countries come in and actually take classes. We have a classroom in the home too. We put in a training room, we have room for 22 people and we host classes. My husband and I are the trainers. And then we allow other organizations that have programs to use our room for the good of universal design.

Kelsey Webb ([15:02](#)):

And then you also go on tours and you go to consult cities like New York City to help the people there make their city more accessible.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([15:13](#)):

Yes. And I love the idea of working with Columbus.

Kelsey Webb ([15:17](#)):

So now you're working with Experience Columbus and having an area on their website so that people with disabilities can see and know where to go, what to do, and how to navigate the city. Right?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([15:29](#)):

Yes. We're going to help them feel like they don't have to make a bunch of phone calls to check things out, that we'll check things out in advance for them and know from a real-life experience, what that event would be like, what that experience would be like, what that facility would be like, traveling to Columbus by air or by car, parking in Columbus and navigation. There's a lot to consider when you're in a wheelchair.

Kelsey Webb ([15:58](#)):

I mean, you were talking earlier about airport accessibility, then the cabs outside of the airport have to have accessibility, then the hotel. I mean, just stuff that we, of course, don't think about. And that's probably what you're seeing through your perspective all of the time, and you're looking at ways to improve it everywhere you go.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([16:20](#)):

Yes. I try to leave comments. I bring the manager around and say-

Kelsey Webb ([16:24](#)):

I love it.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([16:25](#)):

"Who's the manager on duty today. I just want to give you some feedback." And then when they come, I say, "I'm not making a complaint. This is a gift. I am a consultant on accessibility. I'm not charging you for this, but here's what I found that needs to be changed. I think you can do this."

Boxer ([16:43](#)):

Rosemarie, what areas do you still find need improvements in our everyday life, out in public? What are some of those areas?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([16:53](#)):

Well, there's tons of them, in terms of the path of travel. Parking usually is not as big of a problem now, as I go to public garages or surface lots, I'll find sometimes enough parking. Some complexes, they're all taken by the time I get there. I use a van that has a lift that comes out of the side with a ramp. And so I have to have a wide space. It has to be van accessible parking, and sometimes they're lacking. So I'll have to take two spaces instead. So we look at the path of travel. We look at the entries, we look at the steepness of the sidewalk or any ramping and the width of that pathway too. And if there's any foliage, trees, limbs, shrubs are in the way, you've got to get them out of my way or otherwise I can't get through here.

Boxer ([17:47](#)):

You just made me think about something. Modern day, disabled parking spots, at least the new ones tend to be a lot wider. Now, I have a better understanding why with what you just described.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([18:00](#)):

Yeah, there's an access aisle, if you notice that. That's not a place for you to park.

Boxer ([18:05](#)):

No, no.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([18:06](#)):

So I was just at a fast food restaurant two nights ago. And we parked in a van accessible spot with the access aisle clearly marked. I get out of the restaurant and this guy just pulls right in there.

Boxer ([18:06](#)):

Oh wow.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([18:20](#)):

And he gets out of the car and I go, "Are you planning to park there? That's the access aisle. I need to get back in my van." And he quickly got back in his car and moved over to the space. But so many people think that that's a parking space. No, that is reserved for the accessible entrance and exit of the passengers.

Boxer ([18:43](#)):

Rosemarie. I'm so glad you brought that up. Because I see that every so often, people doing that. And it's obviously marked with white Xs and lines and grids. So you can tell that's not really a spot for you, but still people will park there.

Kelsey Webb ([19:00](#)):

Never thought about it. Rosemarie, what are some of the places that you like to go in Columbus where they're completely accessible and enjoyable for you?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([19:11](#)):

Well, completely accessible-

Kelsey Webb ([19:13](#)):

Doesn't exist.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([19:14](#)):

... probably needs to be modified. I'm going to find something about that facility that might have caused me to do a little wheelie to get into a door, to have to wear gloves on my hand because going down some kind of slope, I would just ruin my hands and burn them. So there are some obstacles in most common, in public spaces, and there might be a piece of sidewalk that's missing. It's cracks in the sidewalk.

Boxer ([19:14](#)):

Oops.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([19:45](#)):

And if I get my little caster wheel stuck, it's going to be a flip and I'm going to go out of the wheelchair and who knows what I'm going to hit and damage. So I've got to be looking down anytime I'm... For example, at Easton. Easton's a wonderful place for my husband and I. We're there quite frequently on a Friday night to have dinner or to shop and just to have the exercise for me to have the cardio and roll around and for my husband to get to his 10,000 steps a day.

Boxer ([20:18](#)):

Rosemarie, but what is your hotspot for you and your husband? Where do you guys... You said Easton. Is there a certain restaurant, certain places you'd like to frequent in Columbus?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([20:27](#)):

Well, you're going to find this odd. The one that we frequent the most is Condado Taco. My husband loves that restaurant. He has his own taco he builds out of custom things.

Boxer ([20:27](#)):

I love it.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([20:40](#)):

Any time I say, "Let's go to Easton and have dinner," and I'll go, "Where would you like to go?" And he'll just look at me like, "Condado."

Kelsey Webb ([20:46](#)):

Please.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([20:48](#)):

But then the special events, the birthdays and the anniversaries, we'll go to the Ocean Club. A wonderful experience. Just top-rated restaurant with service. [inaudible 00:21:00]

Kelsey Webb ([20:59](#)):

Cameron Mitchell.

Boxer ([21:00](#)):

Yep. Cameron Mitchell.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([21:01](#)):

It's a great place. That'll be our first love. And when people come into Columbus and we're trying to treat them and I say, "What kind of food do you like?" If seafood is a part of their answer, I'll say, "I think I've got a place for you."

Boxer ([21:16](#)):

Rosemarie, I'm guessing that this city has to thank you for where we're at right now with accessibility for the disabled. But I have to ask, when it comes to other cities, how does Columbus rate compare to other ones with accessibility?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([21:33](#)):

I have toured many cities. Some are geographically difficult like San Francisco, for example.

Boxer ([21:41](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([21:41](#)):

So we have some diversity in the topography that just can't be denied. New York City is a famed city for being accessible. The mayor's council just released this fall, a gigantic guidebook for accessibility. And as I met with the commissioner from the mayor's office, looking at what they've done for accessibility, they really shine.

Kelsey Webb ([22:07](#)):

And you said Indianapolis, as well.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([22:09](#)):

Indianapolis' website is a wonderful place for looking at a model of how they're promoting the accessibility. I have not been to the city to experience it myself, but when I looked at the website, it really enticed me to want to go.

Kelsey Webb ([22:26](#)):

So they likely have a Rosemarie in their presence, someone like you, who's raising awareness and helping lead the way. Rosemarie, I want to hear more about your relationship with your husband because you've been through so much together and it just seems like you guys are so solid.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([22:44](#)):

We are. He's an amazing man. I mean the most important decision in a person's life is when they choose their spouse. And I chose mine wisely. He is a nicest guy. He is brilliant. He is smart. He is kind. He is loving. He's my business partner, my life partner, the love of my life. We were married at the conservatory on June 10th, 1995 and he's just amazing. And he's so smart. He fixes things.

Kelsey Webb ([23:18](#)):

And he's been such a supporter in your mission. I mean, gosh, your biggest cheerleader, obviously, but just... I mean, you two, your life just changed in an instant and you went with it and you're just thriving and helping so many people.

Boxer ([23:34](#)):

He took those vows very seriously. I mean, because if you think about that, and it'd be an interesting question you could ask to so many different people, with what happened to you, Rosemarie, how many people could continue after that? I would hope it'd be everyone, but that's a heck of a commitment and God bless your husband. I mean, that's pretty awesome that you guys are together and he didn't blink or think twice about it.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([24:02](#)):

No, he never doubted it. He said, "You were worth saving." He saved my life. He was with me on the bike trail when the tree hit. And so he went and found people to help and started the rescue. So without him being there, I wouldn't be here today.

Boxer ([24:18](#)):

Absolutely. Rosemarie, you mentioned something earlier about something at the Ohio State University, some kind of a fund with this spinal injury. I'd like to get that info out so if someone would like to donate, including myself, because I'm inspired here, where can we go? What's the website?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([24:36](#)):

Yeah, just go to my website, rosemariespeaks.com. That's my business website. And there's a section about me and I believe that's where the link is to the spinal cord injury research fund with a link to Ohio State University. You could always do some kind of a internet search, but it's the Rosemarie Rosetti Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund at the Ohio State University.

Boxer ([25:00](#)):

Okay.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([25:00](#)):

Rosemariespeaks.com is my main business website.

Boxer ([25:04](#)):

Kelsey, should we do the listener question?

Kelsey Webb ([25:07](#)):

Sure.

Boxer ([25:08](#)):

Do you want to-

Kelsey Webb ([25:08](#)):

Let's do it.

Boxer ([25:09](#)):

Should we do that? So Rosemarie, we got this from a listener. What's your favorite Columbus festival? And by the way, this is from a Twitter user @aa_MC. What's your favorite... Not that matters, but what's your favorite Columbus festival?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([25:25](#)):

Well, let's put the Jazz and Rib Festival as number one.

Kelsey Webb ([25:28](#)):

Yeah.

Boxer ([25:29](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([25:30](#)):

Yes, I would stay there every night. It doesn't matter. I'm just there. I'll eat ribs every night. I'll just park at the different venues. I'll go from one stage to another. In fact, I've got a girlfriend coming in from Florida, one of my best friends from high school and I go, "Guess what, you're here for the Jazz and Ribs Festival. You're going to come with us."

Kelsey Webb ([25:56](#)):

That's awesome.

Boxer ([25:58](#)):

As far as summer goes, I know we talked about Barcelona, but specifically Columbus, what's your favorite things about summer in Columbus?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([26:05](#)):

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Oh, summer is outdoors for me, biking and kayaking. We're out every weekend, somewhere at a park. We bike in our neighborhood almost every day. So I have a three-wheeled recumbent bike and so does my husband, and that allows me to exercise on a regular basis. So it's summer fun in the sun and exercising and enjoying the beautiful parks and the rivers. Our kayak is a tandem where I sit in the front and he's in the back. We have a trailer that we attach to the car and off we go on a weekend with everything. We spend the whole day playing.

Kelsey Webb ([26:45](#)):

You're awesome. And so is your husband and I'm so inspired.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([26:50](#)):

Thank you.

Kelsey Webb ([26:50](#)):

Absolutely.

Boxer ([26:51](#)):

One of the themes, of course, the name of the podcast is Live Forward Live. So with one final question, what do you live for?

Rosemarie Rosetti ([27:00](#)):

I live to make a significant, positive difference in the lives of others. That's an easy one to answer.

Boxer ([27:08](#)):

Ah, I'm inspired, Kelsey.

Kelsey Webb ([27:09](#)):

And you do it.

Boxer ([27:09](#)):

And you do it. Yes, you do.

Kelsey Webb ([27:12](#)):

You've done it, you do it, and you'll continue to do it.

Boxer ([27:14](#)):

Rosemarie Rosetti, thank you for being a guest this weekend, Live Forward Live and Experience Columbus podcast and we will definitely be in touch.

Rosemarie Rosetti ([27:22](#)):

Thank you. It's been my pleasure.

Speaker 1 ([27:31](#)):

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Thanks for listening to Experience Columbus' Live for Live. For this podcast and others go to experiencecolumbus.com.