

DISABILITY INDEPENDENCE, EMPOWERMENT & FAIRNESS

INTERSTATE CONNECTIONS



General Disability Etiquette - Respectful Communication

Speak directly to the person

Do: Speak to the person with the disability, not their caregiver or companion. It's important to engage with the person, not assume they are not part of the conversation.

Example: "Would you like help with that?" (spoken directly to the person, not the caregiver).

These "Think Again" reminders are courtesy of ILICIL Independent Lifestyles, Inc. in Sauk Rapids Minnesota.

UPCOMING EVENTS JUST FOR YOU!

NCIL 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

July 20-23, Washington D.C.

The theme of [NCIL's 2026 Annual Conference](#) on Independent Living is Protect. Persist. Prosper. There will come a day when the chaos and trauma of this moment are behind us. We cannot lose focus on building the future we deserve – a future in which our community thrives, prospers, and is respected for its contributions.

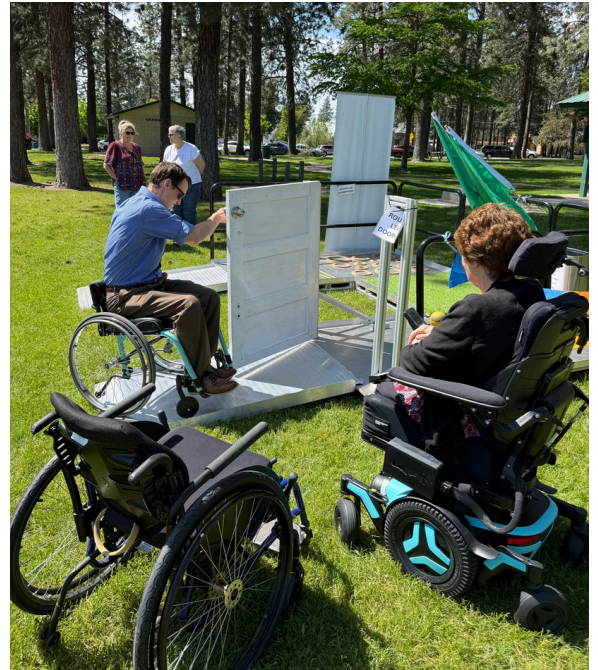
Find more accessible events at www.dacnw.org/events

**PROTECT.
PERSIST.
PROSPER.**

A Successful Wheelchair Obstacle Course Event

NEWS FROM DAC NW – Post Falls

A Wheelchair Obstacle Course event was held in Post Falls on May 21st with city personnel invited to attend. After setting up the course on a beautiful spring day, staff from different departments including City Administration and Community Development had a chance to try it out. The course requires a person to navigate through a door and around tight corners on unfriendly surfaces. They got to experience familiar barriers like opening a door on a slope, items in the pathway, overhanging shrubs, pot holes and cracks in the sidewalk. Just getting through the first few can be exhausting.



The Obstacle Course was designed and built by Washington State University Mechanical Engineering students. They compared the importance of different design factors including safety, durability, and portability. They designed a mix of commonly found obstacles people who use wheelchairs encounter everyday. There is one panel with truncated domes - an important community feature for the blind to be aware of entering traffic. But these and especially the cobble stone pavers can be very uncomfortable to people in wheelchairs, so should be used in a limited fashion.

“Having the City of Post Falls staff come out to experience it was wonderful,” said Mark Leeper, Executive Director of DAC NW. “They had lots of questions and DAC NW is able to help provide some answers. This experience can help prioritize projects in their City Transition Plan. And I feel the dialogue we had will help build a relationship in the future.”

Community members were also present at the event. Karen Krueger, a consumer and advocate from DAC NW was there and pointed out difficulties she experiences around the community and with her service animal in the past. She pointed out that although it’s nice for businesses to allow dogs inside, it presents a problem if they are aggressive in any way to a service dog, who is trained not to respond and fight back. Perhaps it would be better if only service dogs are allowed in businesses to help keep them safe.



DAC NW – YOUR KEY TO INDEPENDENCE

More Good Days, Together

NEWS FROM DAC NEW

By Erin Ferrier

Mental Health Awareness Month was last month and the theme is “More Good Days, Together” which encourages us all to reflect on what a “good” day looks like, both for ourselves, and for our communities.

As someone with Complex- PTSD and who has struggled with suicide ideation for decades with much of that time not understanding what was happening, and as a parent with lived experience, addressing mental health issues is very important to me.

Surviving has been prominent in my thoughts for most of my adulthood. Surviving was the driving force to get through the dark days and back out into the light. There were times when I would tell myself to just get through this minute or this hour, step by step, then work on the next minute or the next hour. I kept telling myself to keep breathing.

I learned that I didn’t need to go through this alone. There is support out there.

The journey is different for everyone, but eventually, there will be more good days than bad. You just need to keep breathing.

I wrote a poem in 2015 to express how hard things had become. At the time, I was a single mom working multiple jobs and going to graduate school. I was just trying to make it through each day. As a late-diagnosed autistic person, I learned along with my children how to sooth my nervous system in healthy ways.



Side to Side

I sit here with my eyes closed, unable to speak.

I wrap my arms around myself and rock.

Side to side, I rock, like I used to do to soothe my children when they were small.

Side to side, I rock, trying to soothe myself.

Side to side, I rock, trying not to cry.

Side to side, I rock, trying to envision a warm, comfortable place.

Side to side, I rock, missing the strong arms that once made me feel safe.

Side to side, I rock, my arms wrapped around me are not enough, the tears are coming anyway.

I stop the rocking; I can’t hold it in anymore.

I cover my face, I am falling apart, but no one notices it.

My arms feel heavy, my body is shutting down.

It is just too much, too much emotional, mental, physical, and sensory stress.

My son often asks me, “How do you do all that you do?”

I tell him I don’t know, I just keep going, because I have to.

I just keep moving forward reminding myself that tomorrow is a new day.

Tomorrow I can try again.

Tomorrow ... it will be better.

There will be a tomorrow when I will have strong arms wrapped around me again to help me feel safe.

Not the same strong arms of the past, but better arms attached to someone different.

There will be a tomorrow when I can come home and not cry from overload and lack of “spoons”.

I will not have so many jobs or homework to worry about.

But, those tomorrows aren’t here yet.

So, I will sit here with my eyes closed, unable to speak.

I wrap my arms around myself again and rock.

Side to side, I rock, to soothe myself.



DISABILITY ACTION CENTER
NORTH EAST WASHINGTON

WORKING FOR INDEPENDENCE, EMPOWERMENT, AND FAIRNESS

Deep Brain Stimulation for Parkinson's – Is it right for you?

Deep brain stimulation, or DBS, as it is commonly called, refers to electrodes implanted within specific places in the brain. The electrodes generate electrical impulses that have an impact on brain activity. The amount of electrical activity generated is controlled by a device positioned under the skin that is kind of like a pacemaker. A wire is placed under the skin to connect the device to the electrodes in the brain. DBS is used to treat health conditions, such as epilepsy, essential tremor, Tourette syndrome, and Parkinson's disease.

For people with Parkinson's disease, DBS can be a godsend. It can help with slowness, stiffness, dyskinesia, tremor, as well as movement issues that occur between medication doses.



At the last Peer2Peer Parkinson's Group meeting, Idil Baysal, ARNP and Ryder Guinn, M.D. of EvergreenHealth gave a presentation on DBS. Guinn is a neurosurgeon who performs DBS implants. Max Guici, Boston Scientific DBS representative, was also available to answer questions.

As with any surgery, DBS surgery is not without risk, which is why prospective candidates are carefully chosen. Idil Baysal, ARNP screens prospective DBS patients at EvergreenHealth in western Washington and takes care of them from the beginning to the end of the process. When it comes to DBS as treatment for Parkinson's disease, she said a good candidate is someone who has "significant motor symptoms like tremors, stiffness, slowing of movement, or dystonia. They must still respond to levodopa and are perhaps experiencing off/on fluctuations when their meds wear off unpredictably. These individuals might be experiencing dyskinesias from the amount of medication they are needing to take to have control over their motor symptoms." Another important factor is the DBS candidate needs to be in good physical shape. They also must not have significant cognitive issues. As part of screening, DBS candidates go through testing, including neurophysiological testing which picks up cognitive problems.

When it comes to DBS versus Parkinson's medication, DBS "can provide superior outcomes than pharmacological treatment alone in specific situations, such as when a patient stops having reliable control of their motor symptoms," Baysal said. Because DBS provides continuous stimulation, motor symptoms are usually better managed and more stable, hour to hour, she said. Baysal added that levodopa, when taken at higher doses, can cause dyskinesia that can be helped significantly by DBS. "With DBS therapy, patients can take less levodopa and have more on-time with less dyskinesia," she said.

There are some things DBS may not help, such as energy level, walking, or mood, particularly if levodopa didn't help prior to DBS treatment, according to the Parkinson's Foundation. It can even worsen speech and swallowing problems or balance, especially if levodopa didn't improve it before treatment with DBS.

Genetics can also play a role in how someone will respond to DBS. Patients with the LRRK2 mutation usually do extremely well with DBS, while those with the GBA mutation tend to have "a slightly higher risk of cognitive changes after DBS therapy," Baysal said. In general, patients with the GBA mutation are thought to have a "somewhat faster disease progression," she said. Still, "DBS can absolutely help the motor symptoms of Parkinson's in patients with a GBA mutation, but these individuals should be evaluated more carefully," she added.

The Peer2Peer Parkinson's Group meets the third Thursday of each month at Disability Action Center NW in Moscow.

NW ADA CENTER ~ Idaho

ADA Question of the Month

QUESTION:

What about these new toilets with the push button on the top?

ANSWER:

For public restrooms the answer is a clear no. But consider this if putting one in your home:

Flushing a toilet appears to be a simple task, however it is actually an emerging accessibility issue because modern fixtures are exposing gaps between “technical compliance” and actual usability for people with disabilities.



Many accessibility reviews focus heavily on grab bars, turning radius, clear floor space, and door maneuvering clearance, while overlooking whether a person with a disability can independently flush and operate the toilet after use.

Many modern dual-flush top-button systems were originally designed for aesthetics and water conservation, not necessarily for accessible usability. A smaller button is harder to push with limited arm strength or hand movement. And locating it in the center of the tank is difficult to reach from the transfer side. Water conserving dual flush toilets are available with a lever handle. A much better choice!

For additional information contact **Dana Gover, MPA, ADAC, Training & Technical Assistance Consultation**
Northwest ADA Center-Idaho Email: dananwadacenteridaho@gmail.com ADA TA
Hotline: voice and text
208-841-9422

Did U Know?

17% of Americans have Dry Eye Disease? According to a study of more than 2,000 people, 67% brushed off symptoms, eye fatigue, itchiness and (surprisingly) watery eyes. If you regularly experience these symptoms, it's important to see your eye doctor. If left untreated, dry eye disease can raise your risk for eye infections, inflammation, and even vision loss. Most cases can be treated with over-the-counter eye drops.

Smart Strategies for Gardening with a Disability

by Dean Burgess

Gardening with a disability opens up real rewards, including fresh food, connection to nature, and a meaningful daily routine, yet the path to an accessible garden can feel unclear. Disability and gardening also share a familiar tension: most gardening advice assumes a "standard" body and leaves disabled gardeners doing extra research just to get started. Adaptive gardening tools and accessible growing methods can change what is possible when the right fit is clear.



Photo by Garden Tech

Understanding your needs reduces wasted effort and helps you choose options that work alongside daily living needs like energy management, mobility, and pain levels.

- > **Raised bed gardening** reduces bending and kneeling for people with mobility and joint issues. Consider the upfront build cost, and the need to provide good drainage.
- > **Container gardening** is fully portable and height adjustable for renters and people with fatigue and limited space. Requires more frequent watering with smaller yields.
- > **Vertical gardening** keeps plants within reach without stooping for people with upper body strength limitations. Plants require structural support.
- > **Adaptive hand tools** reduce grip and wrist strain for people with arthritis and limited hand strength. Tool selection takes trial and error to figure out what works for you.
- > **Sensory garden design** engages non-visual senses for people with low vision. Select plants based on texture and scent.
- > **Community garden plots** offer social support and shared infrastructure for those without a yard. Moscow, ID and Pullman, WA both offer accessible plots.

Q. How do I figure out which gardening set up meets my needs?

A: Start with your non-negotiable: how long can you stand or sit, what grips or tools cause pain, and whether you garden alone or with help. Then match your setup to those limits rather than pushing through them. You are not alone in needing a tailored approach, because the CDC reports that [1 in 4 Americans](#) identify as having a disability.

Q: What are the main differences between raised beds, containers, and in-ground gardening for accessibility?

A: In-ground gardening is the least forgiving for mobility challenges but costs the least to start. Raised beds can be built to chair or standing height and reduce stooping significantly. For those looking for DIY inspiration, [The Old Farmer's Almanac provides a comprehensive guide](#) on the logistics of raised bed gardening.

Q: How can connecting with disability-focused gardening programs help?

A: Programs that build a support network can connect you to occupational therapists who specialize in adaptive gardening. Organizations like [AgrAbility](#) offer extensive resources and tool databases specifically designed for farmers and gardeners with disabilities. Bring a short description of your space and a clear question so those referrals become actionable quickly.

Build a garden that works with your body, not against it, a realistic setup that aims for enjoyment and small wins rather than a perfect harvest.

The Importance of Avoiding Falls

SELF-DIRECTED PA SERVICES

Falling turns out to be the leading cause of injury for people over 65. One in four Americans report they have fallen, and 1 in 10 falls lead to serious injury and even death.

The reason we fall as we get older isn't that complicated. Vision problems, foot pain, nerve issues, and general weakness and balance issues. Obstacles in the home such as uneven steps are a common culprit.

Sustaining a fall causes both a physical and mental issues. The physical part because sometimes surgery, physical therapy, etc. extends through many months, altering your lifestyle.

The emotional toll involves swallowing your pride, acknowledging your vulnerability and admitting you need help. While recuperating you will need help putting on your socks, getting something to eat and not becoming glum that you may never regain your mobility fully.

Thankfully, the Idaho Commission on Aging has a [Falls Prevention Coalition](#) that offers free webinars and more on reducing the chance for a fall. You can take a short quiz to determine your risk and learn more about prevention.

Things like securing loose rugs with double stick tape or getting rid of them altogether. Adding grab bars in the bathroom and any stairs. Have nightlights strategically placed throughout the home. Some are simply plugged into outlets. Store frequently used items on lower shelves. Remove clutter, low-rise furniture, and make sure electrical cords are not across traffic areas.

You can incorporate daily exercise into your routine. Focus on ones that work on your balance like Tai Chi. Practice sit - and - stand exercises out of a chair without using your hands. Review your medications for side effects like drowsiness and dizziness. And always wear sturdy shoes with non-skid soles. Let's stay safe out there!



Services YOU control!

Some Favorite Workout Products VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES

Wanting to stay fit while using a wheelchair poses some barriers. Some gyms have questionable accessibility (tho we found [Planet Fitness](#) to be very accessible and affordable) so working out from home is a good choice. Here are some suggestions for workout equipment from [New Mobility](#).

Wrist Weights: adjustable wrist weights is a great way to get started with strength training. Look for ones you can adjust the weight. They work everything from biceps, triceps, shoulders, chest and back muscles. Search adjustable ankle weights on Amazon or Walmart.

Resistance Bands: available in a wide variety of resistances, they often come in a combo pack. You can even get a door anchor to make it easier to use. The ones with rings are good if you have less hand dexterity. Search seven ring resistance bands online.

MAXPRO Portable Cable Machine: If you have a little more money to spend, this fitness device mimics a gym weight machine. You mount it on your door or wall. The big advantage is you can use it for rowing type exercises, and from pull-downs to presses. It's quick and easy to adjust the resistance levels even if you are a quad. \$749 from [maxprofitfitness.com](#).

Multi Ropes Adaptive Jump Ropes: also known as split ropes are a way to do a cardio workout from your chair. You hold a rope in each hand and "jump" rope. Sounds easy but it is a good workout! Search split jump ropes online.

Concept2 SkiErg: This is a popular indoor fitness machine that recreates full body movement used for cross country skiing. Many gyms have them so you can try it out ahead of time. You can use [Active Hands gloves](#) if you are a quad with limited hand movement. Be ready to spend around \$900.

Ready to move up to a trainer? Try an online app like **Wheel With Me Fit**. For \$15 a month you get workout videos, online classes and even on demand classes. Most only require some dumbbells or resistance bands.

By having the right equipment in your home, you can stay fit without the barriers of accessibility and transportation.



**Questions about Veteran Directed Care?
Call Spokane 509-434-7000
Or Walla Walla 509-525-5200**

Mountain West Bank Supports Youth with Disabilities Young Adults – Next Chapter

Mountain West Bank is dedicated to building strong communities. A key part of that mission is supporting youth with disabilities as they prepare for independent and successful futures. In Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, the Mountain West Bank partners with local agencies, schools, and workforce programs. These partnerships provide hands-on career experiences, financial education, and tools that help young people thrive.



Mountain West Bank supports youth enrolled in Project SEARCH, a nationally recognized transition to work program for students with significant disabilities. Project SEARCH places students in real-world work environments during their final year of high school. Students gain practical job skills, explore career options, and build confidence. Mountain West Bank's participation helps create opportunities for youth to learn valuable skills and explore competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Mountain West Bank also supports youth during Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Career Quest. Career Quest connects students with disabilities to local businesses. Students can explore careers, learn about workplace skills, and meet employers. By welcoming Career Quest participants, Mountain West Bank helps students better understand professional expectations and imagine their future careers.

Through support for programs like Project SEARCH, Career Quest, and ongoing financial education efforts, Mountain West Bank continues to support youth with disabilities in Coeur d'Alene and across Idaho. These initiatives help young people build skills, knowledge, and confidence for lasting success.



Rewriting the narrative of what's possible!

QUOTES TO MAKE YOU THINK

"Society's accumulated myths and fears about disability and disease are as handicapping as are the physical limitations."

~ William J. Brennan Jr.

A NEWS FROM LINC



Podcasts have become one of the most powerful communication tools for young people - and it's no mystery why. Unlike traditional media, podcasts feel like a real conversation. There's no script-polished anchor reading from a teleprompter, no perfectly lit studio set designed to impress. It's voices, stories, and honesty - the kind of exchange that is like catching up with a friend.

For a generation that grew up on streaming content on demand, podcasts fit naturally. Easy to access, easy to pause, easy to return to on your own schedule.

What makes these podcasts especially meaningful for young people is that they create space for voices that don't always get a seat at the table in mainstream media. You don't need a major network deal - you just need something to say and the courage to say it.

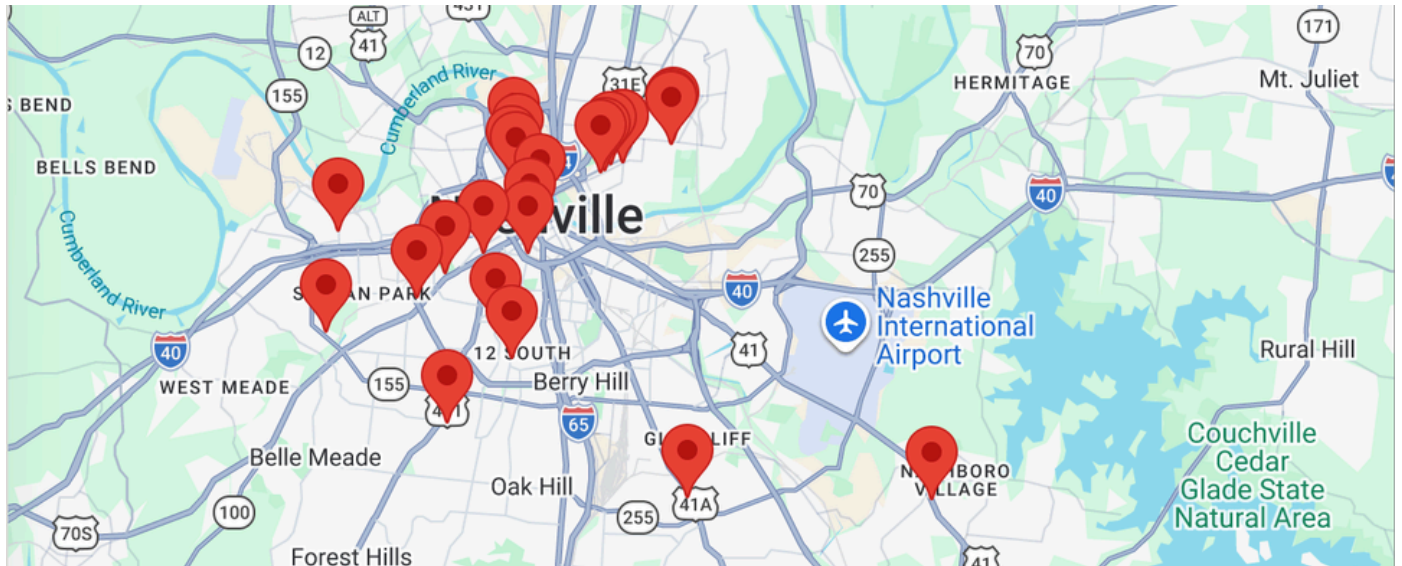
It's a vibrant space for communities to share lived experiences, navigate identity, and build connection across distances. When you hear someone speaking candidly about challenges in their own lives, something shifts. They feel seen. That's not just entertainment - that's belonging. And belonging, for any young person, especially those with disabilities, helps them figure out their place in the world.

Check out "[A Little Bird Told Me](#)", a podcast on Spotify created by youth with disabilities in Idaho, for youth with disabilities, sharing real stories, experiences, and ideas about independence, identity, and navigating everyday life. It's a space to connect, learn from each other, and build confidence through honest conversation and shared perspective.



Empowering Independence!

BLUEPATH - Nashville Tennessee is Working on Accessibility



Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, is a vibrant, fast-growing metropolis famously known as "Music City". Nestled along the Cumberland River, it seamlessly blends legendary musical roots with a booming modern economy, world-class Southern cuisine, and a rich cultural and educational heritage.

Nashville is also working on becoming the most accessible city in the world! Access Music City is utilizing volunteers to survey venue and business accessibility. They are using BluePath, the platform that helps people with disabilities make informed decisions based on the ADA and also supports businesses as they create more inclusive spaces. Nashville has been awarded the 2034 Special Olympics USA Games, and they want to be ready for it!

Volunteers are trained in using BluePath to map accessible businesses and venues to contribute to this change. It could be as simple as a person mapping their favorite coffee house, or someone leading a corporate team in a larger mapping event.

If you want more information you can contact [Empower Tennessee](#), the local CIL in Nashville.

BLUE  **PATH** Find **YOUR** path!

LIFE HACKS For Disability



Wheelchair Soccer Plow

These are specialized v-shaped front attachments designed to let athletes trap, dribble, and pass a soccer ball. Individuals using power or manual wheelchairs can play soccer in school sports or on competitive power soccer leagues.

Manufactured soccer pads feature adjustable widths, velcro and straps to attach to a wheelchair.

But the most common version is homemade. Constructed of PVC pipe, elbows and t-joints and padded with pool noodles to protect the ball and other players.

It sits on the front of the chair hovering just above the floor or turf. It acts as an extension of the chair, enabling a player to hook or pass the ball as they move.

Watch this [video](#) on how to make one yourself!

Stuff to make life easier!

Help in Feeding Your Family

Everyone is feeling the squeeze of inflation right now, especially at the grocery store. If you are trying to find ways to feed your family and save money, you can check out the TikTok blogger **@chat_n_chops**. He has a series of easy to follow \$5 menu ideas utilizing the dollar store and a grocery store. Wanna try one? Check this one out!

Dollar Store: Buy a can of Campbells ChiliMac, a package of macaroni and a can of Van Camps Beanee Weenee for a total of \$4.40.

Grocery Store: Get an onion and a head of garlic for around \$1.00.

Now you are ready to cook!



Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add salt. Dice half of the onion, saving half for later. Brown the onion in a little bit of oil in a fry pan for 2-3 minutes til translucent.

When the water is boiling, add as much of the pasta as you need for your family. Cook to al dente which is about 8-10 minutes.

To the onions add 2-3 cloves of minced garlic and heat for a minute or so. Add 2-3 T. of the pasta water. Reduce some of the water and then add the can of Beanee Weenee. Simmer until it thickens, and add any seasonings you want. Add another 2-3 T of pasta water and let thicken again.

Add the can of ChiliMac and bring to a simmer. Add the cooked pasta and shut off the heat. Stir until the pasta has been coated with the sauce.

Plate it up and you are ready to eat for around \$5!

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING



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