

On Target

Informing Indiana About Disability Issues
Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities
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Order Disability Awareness Month materials now

Disability Awareness Month will again be celebrated this March. The theme of the 2008 campaign is "Attitude is Everything." The campaign's featured poster shows a team of teens playing a backyard game of football — led by a young lady with a physical disability. The poster text reminds us that to be a champion, you have to think like one, both on and off the field. And when you champion a winning attitude for yourself and your team, you can achieve anything.

Many materials are available to help advocates statewide promote disability awareness. This year's campaign materials are sponsored by

the world-champion Indianapolis Colts. From 20 packets filled with grassroots activities, to colorful posters, stickers and bookmarks, it's easy to implement ideas that promote positive attitudes toward people with disabilities. Topics range from special event planning to building awareness in classrooms. Theme-specific activity packets are also available. Advocates can order materials now by completing the order form included with this issue of "On Target."

Note there are a number of changes to this year's materials ordering process. The Governor's Council is now providing standardized kits to everyone who is interested in conducting an awareness campaign. This is different from the self-selection process used in prior years. The following materials will automatically be included with each order:

- A handout describing this year's theme and encouraging you to enter your campaign successes in the Community Spirit Awards sponsored by the Governor's Council.
- A CD loaded with 20 different informational packets with specialized offerings for a variety of audiences. The CD also includes a number of supplemental materials (referenced within the packets) that are also available for viewing or printing.
- A supply of theme-specific posters, bookmarks and stickers.
- An "Awareness Activities" booklet with a number of ideas for spreading the disability awareness message to adults and children throughout the year; a "Legislative Process" booklet describing how the local and federal processes work and how you can become more involved; and a supply of "Power of Words" brochures that describes people-first language and guidelines.
- An evaluation form asking for a description of your activity and seeking your feedback on the success of your program, as well as a new evaluation form to be used by the participants in your specific activity.

"Disability Awareness Month is the perfect time for every aspect of the community to come together to organize events. From businesses to government, and from schools to faith-based organizations, everyone is welcome to participate," said Suellen Jackson-Boner, executive director of the Council.

To place an order, fill out the enclosed order form or visit the Council's Web site at www.in.gov/gpcpd. For more information, contact Kim Dennison at Borshoff, kim.dennison@borshoff.biz (e-mail) or (317) 631-6400 (voice).

Governor's Council co-sponsors event at Spirit and Place Festival

This year's Spirit and Place Festival in Indianapolis featured several disability-related presentations, one of which was sponsored by the Governor's Council.

"The Collector of Bedford Street," an award-winning documentary, exemplifies the power of natural supports and community inclusion. It's the story of Larry Selmon, a man with a developmental disability who has devoted his life to collecting thousands of dollars for charitable organizations. When his elderly uncle and only caretaker fell ill, Selmon's New York neighbors pulled together to establish a trust fund for him so that he could continue his charitable work and keep his home in the community.

Created by Selmon's friend and neighbor, Alice Elliot, the film was followed by a discussion and question-and-answer session with both Selmon and Elliot.

Another Festival program on disabilities was titled "Embracing the Gifts of Children and Adults with Disabilities," and featured a panel of disability advocates.

The Spirit and Place Festival, which takes place in Indianapolis each fall, is a collection of more than 70 events in which artists, scholars and community leaders illuminate what "Living Generously" means. For information on next year's event, visit www.spiritandplace.org.

New project helps Hoosier veterans find work

To coincide with Veteran's Day on Nov. 11, a new program out of Crane, Ind., is creating job opportunities for Hoosier veterans with disabilities. The Crane Learning and Employment Center (CLEC), housed and staffed by EG&G Technical Services, Inc. at Crane Technology Park, is offering temporary employment for veterans as student trainees at Crane Naval Weapons Support Center. Initiated by Crane Technology Inc., CLEC provides on-the-job training, as well as educational opportunities through Ivy Tech and Vincennes University. At the end of their apprenticeships, veterans will have the option of full-time work in their selected field at Crane.

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman formally announced CLEC in late September. "We owe it to our service men and women to improve their futures in any way we can," said Skillman. "The new Center gives us the opportunity to show our support for our veterans with disabilities, and also show them that we are invested in their futures." CLEC received a \$400,000 grant from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, as well as a matching grant from the Lilly Endowment.

Finding employment is an ongoing issue for veterans with disabilities. Indiana's veterans can also turn to the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office in Indianapolis for employment assistance. Eligible veterans must be approved for Social Security benefits, and must be considered 20 percent disabled or have a disability that severely hinders finding employment,

according to Allan Ware, employment coordinator for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Division of the Indianapolis regional office.

Veterans who qualify for the Department's assistance undergo vocational assessment testing to match them with appropriate training programs. The program is free and monthly stipends are provided during training. Participants receive a certificate or degree once training is complete, and the Department helps with job placement, typically through a referral process and by acting as a liaison between employers and veterans. Once the veteran finds employment, the Department maintains oversight for some time to assure the veteran is able to adjust and receives appropriate accommodations.

For more information about assistance offered by the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs, call (800) 400-4520 (voice) or visit www.ai.org/veteran. To learn more about CLEC, call (812) 863-5044 (voice) or visit www.sdg.us/clec.

Indiana parks receive \$1.5 million from Kellogg Foundation

Several Indiana parks have received a total of \$1.5 million in grants from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support projects aimed at expanding accessibility for people with disabilities. "These grants will open the door to a variety of recreational opportunities at Indiana's parks," said Ric Edwards, director of safety and ADA compliance, Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The following community foundations received funding:

- Harrison County Community Foundation was awarded \$411,000 to support "Access Harrison County," a collaborative effort between O'Bannon Woods State Park and Harrison County parks to make features more accessible, including cabins, fishing docks and trails. An aquatic park will feature four new aquatic chairs and walkers. In addition, the park will receive two beach wheelchairs.
- Parke County Community Foundation received \$53,000 to add a zero-depth entry to a park pool, as well as new features to increase tactile, visual and auditory sensory experiences for all guests. PVC wheelchairs and a hydraulic chairlift will also be added.
- Whitley County Community Foundation was granted \$54,000 for the addition of a splashpad in Morsches Park, which will be free to the public and feature wide walkways, comfortable seating, nearby tables for picnicking and attractive landscaping. Two water access wheelchairs will be purchased, and signage and information will be provided in alternative formats, such as raised letters or large type.
- Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County received \$411,000 to create "Karst Farm Playscape" — an accessible recreation area at Karst Farm Park. The project will include a water adventure sprayground that is themed to reflect the natural landscape with water features resembling lakes, limestone quarries, waterfalls and caves. Two accessible playgrounds, a sand lot, shelter house, picnic tables and grills are also planned additions.
- Community Foundation of St. Joseph County was awarded \$411,000 for an exercise path throughout the picnic area at Potawatomi Park. Features will include seven exercise modules, a universally accessible play structure, picnic tables and grills. A new entranceway and sensory node will also be added to the park entrance. The sensory node will include an accessible gazebo or pergola with a sound wall and interpretative maps with an audio component for people who have hearing or visual impairments.

- Blue River Community Foundation was awarded \$160,000 to fund “The Ability Project,” which includes an 8,549-square-foot fully accessible playground to be located in a Shelbyville park.

Internet provides social networking community

Going online to meet new people has become more and more common with social networking Web sites such as MySpace.com and dating services such as eHarmony.com. As the popularity of Internet connecting grows, so does the variety of networking and dating sites for specific circumstances, such as Prescription4Love.com — a place for singles with various health conditions such as arthritis.

People with disabilities can find an entire community online with these networking sites:

- DisabledPassions.com: This site offers a free membership to an online dating and social networking community for singles with disabilities.
- DisabledUnited.com: An extensive social networking forum, this site offers employment information, recent news, health updates and a dating service for people with disabilities.
- Whispers4u.com: With more than 33,000 registrants, this site claims to be a place that “makes love happen for thousands of differently abled people.”
- DisabledFriends.com: This international site helps people with disabilities build friendships around the globe.
- Disabled-World.com: In addition to a free online dating service, this site provides the latest news related to the disability community.
- AllDisabled.org: This site offers a free dating service for connecting people with disabilities, but is also open to people without disabilities.

Keep in mind that although these sites may open new doors for meeting people, it’s important to be cautious when networking online. Consider these safety tips before doing so:

- Don’t communicate personal information over the Internet, such as your address, phone number or Social Security number.
- Review Web sites’ privacy policies — get to know the site before you join!
- Even if you feel an instant connection, don’t be in a rush to meet in person. If you do plan to meet, choose a public place, go with a friend and be sure to tell others where you’re going.
- When setting up an account, choose an unidentifiable screen name and e-mail address. For example, Jane Smith shouldn’t use JaneSmith@yahoo.com.
- Trust your instincts. If a particular conversation just doesn’t feel right, stop communicating with that person immediately.

For more Internet safety tips, visit OnGuardOnline.gov.

Web site available for job seekers with disabilities

Easter Seals and the Arc of Northeast Indiana have designed a Web site that enables people with disabilities to connect with potential employers. “Reach Your Hire Potential,” the Web-

based employment service program, is free to employers and job seekers who register through the Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services Web site at www.esahirepotential.com.

The site, live since July, is able to provide its services free of charge to both employers and job seekers due to the stipends it receives from Vocational Rehabilitation Services. This is unique in that most classified ads and other job site postings require employers to pay a fee to advertise positions. As Leah Parris, community liaison for the employment services program, told the "Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly," "It's a free way for employers to get that position out there."

The site is open to anyone with any type of disability and offers job positions requiring all different levels of education, from janitorial positions to positions that require advanced college degrees. "We have a wide variety of abilities. It's not the 'dis,' it's the 'ability,'" Parris said.

For more information on "Reach your Hire Potential," visit the Web site above.

Of Note

Last chance to register

The registration deadline for this year's Indiana Conference for People with Disabilities is Nov. 16. The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Indianapolis Nov. 27–28. For copies of this year's registration materials, visit the Council's Web site at www.in.gov/gpcpd or call (317) 232-7770 (voice).

AAPD offers 2008 internship opportunities

The American Association for People with Disabilities (AAPD) offers many internship opportunities for students with disabilities in organization and government offices, including the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, Microsoft, and The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars. Application deadlines vary, but most are in November or December. For more information on the internship opportunities, visit www.aapd-dc.org/employment/internships.

Applications available for scholars program

College seniors and recent college graduates who have a strong interest in addressing racial and ethnic health disparities, or who themselves are a member of a population that is adversely affected by these issues, are encouraged to apply for the 2008 Barbara Jordan Health Policy Scholars program. During the nine-week experience, the scholars work in congressional offices in Washington, D.C., participate in seminars and site visits, and present one research paper in an area of health care policy research. Applications can be found at www.bjscholars.org, and the submission deadline is Dec. 14.

NCD releases employment report

The National Council on Disability (NCD) released "Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities: Breaking Barriers to Careers and Full Employment" to kick-start National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The report reviewed issues essential to the employment of

people with disabilities. It summarized the existing knowledge regarding the employment of people with disabilities, and presented new information on the key barriers and facilitators of employment from the perspectives of employers, people with disabilities and disability specialists. To view the full report, visit www.ncd.gov and click on the link at the top of the page.

On Target is a monthly publication of the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. We welcome your suggestions for newsletter content and ideas concerning the actions of the Council. on target is made available in accessible formats upon request.