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Our Mission

Abilities, Inc. is a non-profit agency dedicated to facilitating integrated employment and full participation of persons with disabilities in their work and living communities. Employment is accomplished through direct service to youth and adults with disabilities and to employers, insurance carriers, schools and colleges and other rehabilitation programs. Services are delivered, when possible, in diverse community settings in response to consumer and business needs and legislative mandates. Abilities, Inc. is committed to developing and demonstrating programs and services of national excellence.

Workers with Disabilities: Talent for a Winning Team

By Judy Young

The above title was declared as the theme of the 2007 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) which is celebrated each year in October. The effort to educate the American public about issues related to disability and employment actually began in 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week". In 1962, the word "physically" was deleted to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a full month and changed the name to the current one (NDEAM).

Many businesses take the opportunity that NDEAM offers to provide disability etiquette and awareness training to their employees and some expanded their initiatives to include Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) as well. DMD was observed this year on October 17 and it provided youth and adults with disabilities opportunities for

hands-on career exploration through job shadowing. Companies all over the country participate in Disability Mentoring Day annually and encourage their staff to host job seekers with disabilities for the day. In celebration of the month, the US Department of Labor in collaboration with the Office of Disability and Employment Policy publishes a poster and honors businesses, not-for-profit organizations and individuals with the New Freedom Initiative Award which is given out by the Secretary of Labor at a special luncheon in Washington, DC.

US Secretary of Labor, Elaine L. Chao, in declaring the theme of this year's NDEAM stated that "Americans with disabilities are an underutilized reservoir of ambition, talent, and skill ready to make great contributions in the workplace."

Through our efforts and our PWI programs, let's make every month National



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Disability Employment Month and demonstrate to the employers that hiring candidates with disabilities is good business.

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CAREER OPTIONS

Disability Awareness Month

By Anita Zimmerman and Renee Roach

Abilities, Inc. has been partnering with Citigroup for the past several years in recognition of National Disability Awareness Month. This year's program involved eight students from the Business Skills with Office Technology Applications Training Program. "Mentoring Day" this year was a huge success. The day began with a disability briefing presented by Renee Roach to Citigroup staff members. Some of the topics discussed were "What are reasonable accommodations" and "Do's and don'ts of interviewing a person with a disability".

After the students arrived and were introduced, brief overviews of the day's activities were presented. Students then we joined by their mentors. Students job shadowed Citigroup mentors from various departments. Each student ate lunch with their mentor and was given a tour of the Financial Center, Lock Box Department, and Foreign Exchange Department. After the teams returned from lunch, the students and mentors were placed in separate rooms to discuss their experiences, as well as develop one question

and statement they would like to ask the other team.

The teams were reunited and group discussions was summarized and presented. Citigroup coordinators distributed gift bags filled with logo merchandise to the students. The entire group then reconvened for a group photo. The students then returned to the Center. The next day thank you letters were sent to their mentors.

The students learned a great deal that day, as did their mentors.

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AT YOUR SERVICE

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

By Craig Pickens & John Hurt

The Center for Independent Living celebrated National Disability Employment Awareness Month with two events. Our Lakeland site took part in a Disability Mentoring Day with Goodwill Industries in Polk County. Meanwhile, our Winter Park office facilitated our second BAC meeting in honor of National Disability Employment month.

Disability Mentoring Day

Goodwill Industries indicated that they would be interested in participating in Mentoring Day. Mrs. Mary Perkins headed up the recruitment of qualified participants. She selected some individuals who work at the store because they would benefit the most. On October 17th, the six participants met Marcy Benton, Manager of Associate Diversity and Greta Dupree another Publix employee who works in the Diversity Department at the Oakbridge Publix store. The Store Manager and associates provided a tour of each department with a brief overview along with “sample”. Everyone was taken to the training room where Greta provided the history of Publix Super Market and how they continue to give back to the community. Next, everyone selected a department for their on-the-job work experience. Afterwards, the participants were transported to Publix Headquarters for a free lunch. Finally, the participants were taken on a tour of the Dairy Plant with a detailed overview of the manufacturing process for all dairy

products. At the end of the tour participants were provided free ice cream to enjoy.

The Lakeland Site Manager awarded each participant with a Certificate of Appreciation signed by Governor Charlie Christ for their participation in Mentoring Day.



National Disability Employment Month BAC Meeting

The Center for Independent Living hosted the BAC meeting with 42 people in attendance. The meeting kicked off with Welcome and Introductions by Kathryn Garcia, our BAC Chair and followed up with Mikaela Coffman, our BAC Vice Chair, Tom Jackson, our BAC Treasurer and Rogue Gallart, BAC/CIL Liaison providing an overview of the BAC's Mission and Vision.

Jeannette Gassie, Program Director with CIL began the next segment by introducing our

Employment Services team. Janet Gooding and Bernita Bethay each presented a success story of working with BAC members in providing two of our consumer's opportunities through either an internship or directly hiring a person with a disability. Denise Jamison presented our Business Interview Forms which were included in the meeting folders and will help us learn more about businesses hiring processes and recruitment needs.

Lastly, the BAC wrapped up with a presentation by Mia T Sylve with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Ms. Sylve discussed the benefits of hiring people with disabilities through tax incentives, including the Work

Opportunity Tax Credit, the Disabled Access Tax Credit (Title 26, Internal Revenue Code, and Section 44) and the Tax Deduction to Remove Architectural and Transportation Barriers to People with Disabilities and Elderly Individuals (Title 23, Internal Revenue Code, Section 190).

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October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

By Robert Saunders

Special Employment Service, Inc. is one of the few agencies in Southern Nevada specializing in the assistance to the totally blind population. We have always had a strong interest in assisting visually impaired individuals seeking employment and we have developed a two-thronged approach both looking to find competitive employment and establishing self employment for these clients.

During the month of October we made a special effort to both discover potential employers for the visually impaired, especially the totally blind, and in designing programs to assist this group discover self employment.

We developed a program with a totally blind paralegal that runs her own organization; to not only assist individuals with disabilities, but to promote the possibilities of self-employment for the blind. We held a workshop with blind clients who were interested and assisted in developing an at-home project for them to generate income. We also assisted with other difficult situation with a person who is a wheelchair user.

We believe that supported self employment will be a significant part of the future for difficult to place populations.

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EXPERIENCE COUNTS

Making a Connection

By Carolyn Agee

Knowing about the product you market is absolutely essential when meeting goals. To be the very best at what you do takes time and I have worked with individuals with disabilities for many years and learned great deal through intakes, interviews and discussions.

I have found it best when interviewing or speaking with individuals to always ask what they like doing. What their hobbies are. This practice always seems to work when trying to find employment.

Hobbies and/or interests always spark a conversation and breaks the ice when trying to get to know the individual you are trying to place. All people love talking about things or activities of interest.

Once I find out what my consumers' interests or hobbies are, the plan begins. I make a list of sources to contact. These sources may include businesses or individuals that can make a match. I also discuss with the consumers what current services they are receiving. State Vocational Rehabilitation is a key partner in this process because it allows the consumer to enter the workplace.

Always reassure consumers that you are available and available and make them aware of all resources available to them to ensure a good placement. Follow up with the consumer within a day or make the appropriate referral on the same day of the intake. It will let the individual know that you are serious about assisting them with their job search.

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October New York City National Disability Employment Awareness Month

By Michael Dolan

This month I have been able to take part in many wonderful activities to celebrate Disability Employment Awareness Month.

- A presentation during lunch at the US Army Corp of Engineers;
- Assisting the Mayor's Office for Persons with Disabilities in finding consumers to

participate in Disability Mentoring Day Activities;

- Assisting the National Business and Disability Council (NBDC) in its annual Wall Street Recruitment event program;
- Participation at the Lighthouse in New York for the Bank of America launch of their new talking ATM machines.

The final event was the annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month Awards ceremony at the United Federation of Teachers headquartered in lower Manhattan.

These events were the culmination of a whole year of activities that we providers are engaged in as an attempt to assist businesses in hiring qualified, skilled workers with disabilities.

Unfortunately, many of these events were attended by the same employers who “get it”. As Matthew Sapolin, the Commissioner of the NYC Office for Person with Disabilities, would say, “we need to grow the choir”. We need to increase the number of employers who “get it”! “Getting it” means that businesses understand that persons with disabilities are just as educated and can do the same jobs as others.

Having service providers and business representatives attending the same meetings and activities, we quickly realized that we have the same needs and concerns: securing qualified candidates for appropriate jobs.

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Investing in Abilities

By Kathy Herron

The month of October marks the time when we can, on a national level, celebrate and educate others about people with disabilities. Here in Ann Arbor, Michigan, at the Center for Independent Living, we are called to be at the forefront of a number of activities hosted by the University of Michigan. These events give us an opportunity to celebrate what people with disabilities are accomplishing in their lives. Additionally, we are able to educate individuals, institutions and businesses about the importance of access for individuals with disabilities in our community and in the workplace.

The events that took place this October were remarkable and varied. One member of our staff hosted a discussion about the issues

people with disabilities face in their daily lives. There was an Adaptive Technology Computing workshop. We had demonstrations of screen magnifiers and readers for computers, ergonomic seating, motorized adjustable height workstations and much more. A representative from the employment office at the University of Michigan and a panel of experts in our community held a discussion, including a questions and answers, titled “Questions you Always Wanted to Ask About Disabilities and employment at the University of Michigan”. And finally, there was an Award and Certificate of Appreciation Ceremony given for individuals who enhance the lives and the cause of access for people with disabilities in the world.

All of these activities were well attended by a variety of employers, health care providers, university personnel, people with disabilities and our staff. We learned, we gave, we talked, and we celebrated. These are just the kinds of things that make us proud of our work and true to our mission. While there is still so much to do to in our community to grow the awareness of employment for people with disabilities we are glad we invested, for at least a month, in Abilities.

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PARTNERING FOR PLACEMENT

Honoring Employees, Community Leaders and Role Models at Dayle McIntosh Center's Annual "Apple of Our Eye" Award Luncheon

By Lisa Bullen

To mark the event of "National Disability Awareness Month", on October 26th, 2007 Orange County PWI Partner, Dayle McIntosh Center held its 20th Annual "Apple of Our Eye" Awards Luncheon where we celebrated 30 Years of Service to individuals with disabilities.

The "Apple of Our Eye" Luncheon recognizes individuals in the following categories: Business, Youth Leaders, Media/Arts, Legislators, Educators, Community/Civic Service and Individuals who are role models of independent living. They honored awardees for their commendable efforts that improve the lives of persons with disabilities throughout Southern California.

Highlights of the "Apple of Our Eye" Luncheon included: Master of Ceremonies- Ed Arnold, who is a Southern California news and

sports anchor and who has a trusted presence in the community. He is active with civic organizations, youth groups and various charities. Renee Bondi was the Featured Speaker who is a gifted singer and dynamic, uplifting presenter, as well as a person with a disability. Other presenters included: Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez, representing the 47th District of California, Assemblyman Michael Duvall, Representative Mayela Montenegro from Assembly Jose Solorio's office, Representative My-Dung Tran from Senator Lou Correa's office and Councilman Vincent Saraminto from Santa Ana, CA. Their presence enhanced the event tremendously.

The "2007 Employer of The Year" award went to Von's Supermarket which was represented by Steve Lucero, Stephanie Betts, Robert De Santiago and Beth McLaughlin.

Their commitment and support in providing meaningful employment to people with disabilities is commendable and esteemed.

Dayle McIntosh Center is planning on an ongoing positive relationship for years to come.

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Aware All Year

By Catrina Lian

Upon learning the topic of this newsletter, we thought our biggest challenge would be deciding *which* NDEAM event we should write about. To our surprise, the challenge came when we discovered we could not find *any* NDEAM events in eastern Suffolk County to write about. What an eye opener, but not so much in a bad way.

To look at a list of companies doing business on the east end, you would see a predominance of small retail stores, medical offices and family owned farms. Although very different in the nature of what they do, there is a commonality – they employ small workforces, most of which report to the owner of the business. What a contrast against the large corporations of Nassau County and NYC, where dozens or hundreds of employees are found in one business and are managed by an HR department with established diversity policies. Or where they are guided by a mission statement and have a PR department available to generate fund raisers and events to

help a cause while simultaneously creating a positive corporate image. Companies such as these more than likely have the financial or personnel resources necessary along with a heightened awareness to the issue of creating and holding noteworthy events in recognition of disability awareness month.

So, is that our big excuse for not having any noteworthy events to report on? Not an excuse by any means, but perhaps the reason for no organized assemblies. But we can attest to this: in the past ten years or so, we've seen almost every small downtown business become accessible and an increase in the fleet size of local and county accessible transit vehicles along with extended hours of operation. Businesses seek out our services to fill job openings. Managers call for information on accommodations and accessibility. Seems like disability awareness is an ongoing event in Suffolk County.

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News from NBDC

Workplace Accommodation for Employees with Arthritis

Submitted By Laura Francis

Workplace accommodations for employees with arthritis may vary significantly depending on the nature and severity of the condition, as well as the person's specific job functions. It is, therefore, essential to consider having a professional perform a job assessment (or evaluation) for the employee. When an employee requests a special piece of equipment or a reasonable accommodation, it is often helpful to conduct a job accommodation assessment prior to purchasing the requested equipment or implementing the accommodation.

A job accommodation assessment is a systematic procedure that reviews the individual's essential job functions and performance, but goes beyond job analysis to determine the need, if any, for an accommodation and identify the type(s) of accommodation(s) to be made. Such assessments are often warranted when an employee sustains a disabling injury or illness; returns to work after an extended absence; experiences a change in job responsibilities or work site; is believed to be experiencing performance problems, or requests a new or different accommodation.

The assessment procedures are modeled on the ADA's emphasis on meeting with human resource officials, supervisors working directly with the employee, and the employee him or herself. It is conducted with the intent of promoting full participation in the workplace,

while recognizing the need for privacy and confidentiality for both the individual and the employing organization. Subsequent to the assessment, the employer is provided with a report of findings, including available job accommodations specific to the unique needs of the individual and the work environment, as required by the ADA.

Once the evaluation and recommendations are provided, there may be many different options to consider. Some types of accommodations may be administrative, some may be technological. For example, administrative accommodations may include reassigning or reallocating duties, flexibility regarding how and when tasks are performed, flexible work schedule or the option for telecommuting. Technological accommodations may include modifying an employee's work station or purchasing adaptive equipment.

During a study conducted by Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute, many arthritic conditions were studied. They found that at times providing an accommodation as simple as a stool for an employee with osteoarthritis of the hips and knees was a logical and low cost modification that enabled him to sit when needed without interrupting production. Other workplace accommodations can include:

- Ergonomic work station (modified to the users needs)

- Allowing a personal attendant (at the employee's expense)
- Allowing a service animal
- Providing a workstation near restroom
- Allowing longer breaks away from the workstation
- Providing a scooter to reduce walking
- Flexible work hours (i.e. flexible use of leave time; work from home)

Other workplace scenarios:

The secretary to a Facility Manager for a large organization was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and was not able to walk long distances. Fibromyalgia is a chronic, widespread pain in muscles and soft tissues surrounding joints, accompanied by fatigue. The secretary had difficulty moving throughout the facility to monitor departments, so she was accommodated with a motorized scooter, which reduced her fatigue and muscle pain.

A writer with arthritis in her hands (mostly at the base of her thumb, which affected hand function and grasp) caused her to have difficulty typing for long periods of time. After an evaluation by a job assessment professional, she was given access to a new keyboard, with a wrist guard and her standard mouse was replaced by a trackball with a wrist guard extension. These components were mounted at the appropriate reach ranges to be sure the equipment was being used properly. In

addition, her ergonomic chair was lowered at the appropriate range for her height and body structure.

A Vice President of a bank diagnosed with osteoarthritis had difficulty maintaining his stamina during his workday. Osteoarthritis is a form of arthritis involving the deterioration of cartilage at the ends of bones and joints. Generally this condition causes swelling, pain and stiffness. As an accommodation, he was given a flexible schedule and was set up with a company cell phone and office computer at his home to stay in touch with his office. In addition, the employer also provided him with a recliner in his office so he could take additional rest breaks throughout a long workday, if necessary.

These are only a few examples of workplace accommodations that can be provided to employees with arthritis. Most of them can be implemented with little cost and minimal job disruption.

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