



Alabama

California

Florida

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New York

SPRING 2006

Volume 1, Issue 2

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.

Partnering – A Tool for Increasing Your Market

By Judy Young

Partnerships are the name of the game in today's business environment. Companies that had not worked together in the past are pooling their resources to more effectively capture greater market share. Take for example the telecommunication industry. It is very likely that if you have a cell phone you purchased equipment manufactured by one company while the service is provided by another. The package deal as a whole is probably marketed by a third organization or retailer.

Placement programs would do well to follow this lead and forge partnerships to more effectively serve their constituents – job seekers and employers. For example, if your program participants are largely seeking service jobs and you are unable to meet the needs of employers for higher level positions, you may want to team up with one or more other

organizations that serve a different group of consumers. One such organization is your local One-Stop Career Center which serves job seekers and are mandated to work closely with a variety of community partners that you may want to collaborate with. These include state VR, the National Council on Aging as well as representatives who serve veterans interested in transitioning into civilian life. You may be an excellent resource to these and other co-located agencies while your consumers could benefit by the services that these groups offer. By partnership with your local One-Stops, your consumers will have the opportunity to participate in job search workshops, have access to the on-site job bank or take part in interviews when employers come in to recruit. Through this kind of collaboration, you will be able to meet a broader range of employer needs. It is also important to develop strong partnerships with business, assure job



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opportunities for consumers, and a steady flow of applicants for employers.

Partnerships of all kinds require time and trust. Not all placement organizations or businesses will make suitable partners. Take time to get to know organizations in your community. Identify those who share your philosophy and values. Lay the groundwork

and discuss potentially thorny issues (like who will take credit for any placements or how long a new employee should be expected to remain on the job) right up front. This will help to avoid any misunderstandings later and result in a win-win situation for all involved.

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CAREER OPTIONS

“Networking”

By Anita Zimmerman

The Abilities, Inc.’s Business Advisory Council (BAC) is made up of professionals who represent business, industry, and labor unions and who willingly reach out to their communities. Individuals who participate in any of our training programs (Laboratory Assistant, Business Skills with Office Technology and Applications, and Retail/Custodial) become knowledgeable regarding these specific programs. Members also share labor market information and specific opportunities within the businesses and industries they represent. This results in establishing realistic training objectives and evaluative criteria that will enhance the ability of consumers to obtain employment. The major responsibility of the BAC is to work in a leadership role with staff to assist in carrying out all activities related to achieving employment for persons with disabilities.

In the past BAC members have been invited to attend practice interviews, round table discussions, and technical reviews. These sessions are very valuable and consumers benefit greatly from suggestions, techniques, and information provided by our BAC members. In addition to the effective skills learned, we have also found that their confidence is bolstered from the feedback they receive. During one of our Executive BAC Committee meetings, Stephanie Banach, HR Manger, GEICO, pointed out that while we prepare our consumers for the interview, we should also think about teaching them how to build an immediate rapport with the interviewer. As a result, we decided to add “Networking” to the 2006 BAC activity agenda. This event would provide consumers with valuable interpersonal skills needed to

establish a rapport with prospective employers, as well as give our BAC members a chance to meet and mingle with each other.

Seventeen BAC members responded and were looking forward to attending the "Networking" event and forty-one consumers were invited to join as well. Staff was excited about bringing forth this new and innovative endeavor. The biggest challenge we faced was in coordinating the time allowed to meet each BAC member. We wanted to give each consumer an opportunity to make contacts individually, as well as learn how to communicate effectively within in a group setting. We came up with a plan, but weren't sure if we would be able to get the idea across to them. To assure that the consumers were prepared for this type of event, we handed out materials on effective networking, such as, "Learn to Become a Natural Networker", "Networking Strategies For Shy Professionals", "Seven Steps to Business Socializing", and "Some Winning Strategies For Reluctant Networkers".

On the day of the event, each consumer was given an assigned number to be called when meeting with the representatives one-on-one. During the breakfast hour everyone had a chance to mingle as a group. The room was arranged to include round tables. There was no assigned seating; therefore, everyone sat where they wanted. After breakfast, BAC members

were asked to take their places, with one representative per table, and consumers were asked to leave the area. Once everyone was in place, the consumers were called by numbers and were asked to sit down at one of the tables. After six minutes a bell rang and the seated consumers left and the next numbered set of consumers entered. Each consumer was given the opportunity to meet with at least three representatives. After one hour and when everyone was back in the room as a group, introductions of the BAC members and the companies they represented were revealed. We planned this strategy in advance because it gave consumers a chance to mingle with people in a social business setting not based on knowing which companies were present in advance. After all, networking is a job search method used to establish rappings and contacts with people you only just come into contact with

The day was filled with energy and excitement. As a result BAC members and consumers have asked to repeat this event at least three times a year.

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AT YOUR SERVICE

Kick-Off in Orlando

By Jeannette Gassie

On February 15th, CVS hosted our kick-off to celebrate Working Together: Sourcing and Retaining Employees with Disabilities.

Members of the National Business & Disability Council were invited along with area employers. Information was provided to

employers on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through Abilities version of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire." The Center for Independent Living provided information on all of their services and local resources.

Prospective members of the Business Advisory Council have been invited to the first meeting to be held on Friday, April 28, 2006

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Kick-Off InViva Las Vegas

By Robert Saunders

Although the PWI programs have been around since 1968, the Year 2006 marks the first year that one has been funded for the Las Vegas, Nevada area. Special Employment Services, Inc. is a 501©3 non-profit organization which provides a host of services to individuals with disabilities living in Las Vegas. Services include job development, job coaching, job seeking skills classes, advocacy, along with a complete assessment program. SES is also proud to be the host agency for Las Vegas' first PWI program and is very enthusiastic about the possibilities associated with being able to assist individuals with disabilities in the community.

SES had its BAC kick-off in March 2006. Both community agencies and employers have expressed an interest in this new PWI program and in participating in the BAC. As an example, our kick-off was sponsored by the Community College of Southern Nevada (CCSN), providing a location for the kick-off, as well as A/V equipment and staff to operate it, coffee machines, ice and equally as important assistance with employer contacts. The First Congregational Church provided so many cakes and pies that many had

to be donated to the school for the student body. BVR provided staff to assist with the planning and execution of the event

Our kick-off became a two day affair when we became aware that CCSN was having a job fair the following day. In conjunction with CCSN, we used both days to promote awareness and participation in our BAC. The second day had been planned a year in advance and it drew a much larger attendance. Approximately 50 business representatives were at the fair. As a result of our efforts companies such as the Imperial Palace Hotel and Casino, Client Logic, and Cox Communications are now official members of our BAC. In addition, there are over 46 other employers who came to the second day combined PWI/CCSN event, so that over all we would have to count the PWI BAC kick-off as a success.

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EXPERIENCE COUNTS

The Birmingham Kick-Off

By Santoya Baxter

On January 31, 2006, Birmingham, Alabama's Projects With Industry Program held its "Sourcing and Retaining Employees" kick-off in connection with Adecco Employment Services held at the AmSouth Harbert Plaza. There were a number of agency and employer representatives that attended the kick-off event; which included Jefferson County WIA Career Center, Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (WIA), Jefferson County Commissions for Economic Opportunity (JCCEO), Chemical Solutions, Colonial Bank and UAB Medical Center East. For this event, attendees total 25. Among the attendees were Daniel Kessler whom has served as Director of The Birmingham Independent Living Center for 16 years.

The kick-off opened with a meet and greet session for all attendees. Judy Young followed with a presentation/game (Who Wants to Be a Millionaire), which focused on disabilities in the United States and the misconceptions about persons with a disability. The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation

Services (ADRS) collaborated on various services and accommodations that they offer for individuals with disabilities. Speakers from ADRS provided information on assistive technology devices that can be utilized in the work place. Debbie Clemons, ADRS Employment Development Coordinator, highlighted on a consumer who had recently lost motor functions of her hands and fingers. The consumer is employed as a switchboard operator and not being able to maneuver her fingers to route the calls to the correct extensions posed a serious problem. ADRS assisted her by providing a device similar to a hardened plastic cover called a template which was placed on top of the switchboard. The device allowed easy access for her to perform her job.

The kick-off concluded with both Judy Young and Daniel Kessler thanking the representatives for attending the event and extending an invitation for them to utilize all the services that are provided by the agencies. Overall, the kick-off was a great success.

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Experience Counts & At Your Service Kick-Off Events

By Michael Dolan

Craziness on the weather front this morning. High winds have tipped over tractor trailers on the George Washington and Tappan Zee Bridges, closing both for a while this morning. In the Bronx, where wind gusts have been up to 68 mph, trees have fallen across Metro North tracks, delaying their Harlem and New Haven train lines. [1010 WINS](#) is also reporting power outages in the Bronx. How was your favorite wind tunnel this morning?

Currently, the National Weather Service has issued the following statements for New York: Coastal Flood Statement; Coastal Hazard Message; Flood Statement; Hazardous Weather Outlet; and a High Wind Warning.

That was the weather on January 18 reported by 1010 News radio from New York and the National Weather Service for the day of our kick-off event hosted by Affinia Hospitality in New York City. This was bad news and not looking so promising in regards to the expected employer turnout.

But nothing was more further from the truth. All but one employer was unable to make it for the launching event for the Experience Counts and At Your Service PWI programs. The Disability version of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire was very successful with laughs and important information about

the abilities of persons with disabilities in the workplace.

The mixture of employers from companies in areas of retail, hospitality, pharmaceutical, government, philanthropic, television, just to name a few added to an eclectic mix of employers from all different industries and backgrounds. An impromptu discussion lead by the employers in attendance and moderated by Judy Young on disability perceptions in today's society added to the openness and enthusiasm to our new initiatives in the New York City area.

A big thank you to LuAnn Pavelin of Affinia Hospitality who was responsible for all accommodations including an excellent conference room, continental breakfast, video setup, and a place to hang our wet gear and umbrellas. Much thanks and gratitude to a very active member of our BAC, Russ Cusick of Forrest Solutions. It was he who gave us the name of LuAnn at Affinia. For that we are truly grateful.

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A Grand Start for Ann Arbor

By Kathy Herron

Though Ann Arbor has not had a kick-off event, we are off to a grand start anyway. In short, some of the accomplishments and activities so far include:

- Participation in the planning and organization of two job fairs in the community. The job fair at the Community College gave us a number

of referrals from employers and to students with disabilities.

- A site visit to a local cable company that is hiring many employees for their new call center opened several other doors. This visit led to conversations about how to assist individuals with visual impairments and access for wheelchair users. Three PWI consumers are in the interview stage now and may be hired soon. This company now sends job leads for all positions.
- Staff have made a presentation at the Department of Human Services to individuals and their families about the benefits of working while receiving social security benefits.
- A workshop for youth was held on “getting your first job, filling out applications and creating a resume”.

Some upcoming events include:

- The CIL received a grant to work with the Commission for the Blind to train individuals on computer software. Some of these participants will become PWI consumers and we will help them with employment.
- We also are making a joint presentation with our state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to the local Chamber of Commerce about placement in jobs for people with disabilities.

Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living continues to work towards our goals and enjoying every minute of it.

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PARTNERING FOR PLACEMENT

Off to a Good Start in Atlanta

By Jessica Long

On February 16, 2006, disABILITY LINK held its Projects with Industry kick-off event. Sponsored by CVS Pharmacy, the event drew a crowd of seventeen attendees all representing leaders from local businesses as well as representatives from the Georgia Department of Labor.

All attention was on Judy Young as she began her presentation, “Sourcing and Retaining Employees with Disabilities”. Employers listened intently as Judy spoke a

language familiar to them about future workforce trends, employment forecasts, the untapped labor pool and the cost benefits to hiring a person with a disability. It was obvious by the questions raised and the busy note taking that the information being provided was new and something most in the room had not yet considered. Judy ended the presentation with a game, “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire”, in which several questions pertaining to disability labels were asked. For some, the answers came easily; for others it was a real

eye opening experience forcing a shift in thinking.

Shortly after, to keep up the momentum, we scheduled a BAC meeting. Employers anxious to learn more attended our first Business Advisory Council meeting. This meeting prompted an open and honest discussion on some of the issues surrounding the hiring of people with unique employment barriers. However, fears neutralized as Doris Chadwell from the Department of Labor gave a presentation on assistive technology and adaptive equipment in the workplace. Hilary Elliott, Assistant Director at disABILITY LINK took employers on a tour of the disABILITY LINK offices to show how some of this equipment was used in a practical setting. Employers commented on how simple some of these techniques were and how they could improve their existing work environment.

These experiences serve as proof that this project is an essential piece in having people with disabilities hired and out into the community. Employers are receptive and willing, but lack the critical information essential to the process. I have since been given the opportunity to speak with several employers that were unable to attend the meetings mentioned above and their reactions have been as equally positive and optimistic. Perhaps this is why I'm so grateful to be involved with this project.

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Dayle McIntosh Center Launches Its PWI Program in Southern California

By Jose Perez

With a resounding voice of success, The Dayle McIntosh Center (DMC) kicked off its Business Advisory Meeting at the Anaheim Marriott, adjacent to the Disney Resorts and centrally located at the Anaheim Convention Center on March 21, 2006.

With over 40 people in attendance, the event was a big success. In attendance were businesses and agency representatives from all parts of Southern California. The success in turnout was due mainly to the pre-networking of the Dayle McIntosh Center staff with the business community and with the great collaboration DMC has with the State of California Department of Rehabilitation staff. Also in attendance was a representative from

the U.S. Department of Labor, who contributed to the visibility of the program.

Spearheading the event was Jose Perez, Business Development Manager from DMC. Enid Awad, Vocational Services Manager, led her team of Employment Specialists to network with the employers before and after the event to solidify business relationships and to ensure continued participation of the attendees for success of the program.

Invitees to the event were treated to an informational session presented by the key speaker Judy Young of Abilities Inc. regarding Sourcing and Retention of People with Disabilities in Employment. Many business representatives stayed long after the event to

network and gather more information on these new program initiatives. As a result of our kick-off, DMC received 8 job requests from a large corporation in attendance.

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Working Together

By Catrina Lian

The Riverhead (Suffolk County, New York) Projects With Industry (PWI) kick-off was held February 2, 2006. It was hosted by CVS Pharmacy and held at their regional headquarters in East Northport, New York. Approximately 20 hiring managers from local businesses attended the workshop entitled "Working Together – Sourcing and Retaining Employees with Disabilities" facilitated by our own Judy Young. After networking, an informative game of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" was played and enjoyed by all. Business representatives from CVS, US Post Office were in attendance. Judy Young facilitated the meeting with a networking session. As always, Judy captivated the group

with her extensive knowledge and sense of humor.

Representatives from VESID, our state VR agency were present. Aurora Farrington gave an overview of vocational rehabilitation services available to persons with disabilities and their working partnership with Projects with Industry and Abilities, Inc.

This event sparked further interest by CVS to host similar disability awareness workshops for company store managers and supervisors. This will surely benefit workers with disabilities, customers, and increase sensitivity of their staff members.

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News from NBDC

Etiquette and Service Animals

By Laura M. Francis

It has been estimated that over 12,000 people with disabilities use service animals for assistance. To most of us, the most familiar types of service animals are guide dogs used by people who are blind. Other service animals also include canine companions, dogs that provide assistance to people with developmental or physical disabilities to enhance their independence or quality of life. Capuchin monkeys have also been trained to assist individuals who are quadriplegic having no mobility in their arms and legs. These monkeys can perform simple tasks such as turning on and off lights or getting something to eat.

Service animals not only assist people with physical disability, but are also very helpful to people who are deaf, people who have traumatic brain injury, or people with seizure disorders. Therefore, every person who is accompanied by a service animal may or may not "look" like they have a disability. Two important facts that everyone should keep in mind when faced with a service animal is that service animals are NOT pets and are NOT required to have any special certification.

Tips to Remember...Service animals are generally highly trained and well behaved.

- Service animals are NOT pets!
- Service animals are NOT required to have special certification
- Do not touch a service animal, or the person it assists, without asking permission
- Do not make noises at the service animal; it may distract the animal from doing its job
- Do not feed the service animal, it may disrupt his/her schedule
- Do not be offended if the person does not feel like discussing his/her disability or the assistance the service animal provides.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), a service animal is any animal that has been individually trained to provide assistance or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a physical or mental disability, which substantially limits one or more major life functions. Therefore, the ADA advises public facilities to modify their "no animals" policy to allow the person to enter with a service animal. This requirement of the ADA is generally thought to take precedence over any health codes, such as those for restaurants, and personal preferences, such as those of taxi drivers, prohibiting pets.

If an employee with a disability uses a service animal at your workplace, the following accommodation recommendations are suggested:

- Allow the employee to bring the service animal to work
- Allow the employee to take leave in order to participate in individualized service animal training
- Provide the employee with a private/enclosed workspace
- Provide the employee with an office space near a door and/or out of high traffic areas
- Establish an accessible path of travel that is barrier-free
- Allow equal access to employee break rooms, lunchrooms, rest rooms, meeting rooms, and services provided/sponsored by the employer.

How to accommodate a service animal at the workplace:

- Provide a designated area where the employee can care for their service animal's basic daily needs, such as eating or bodily functions

- Allow breaks so the employee can care for the service animal's basic daily needs
- If the employee only requires the service animal to travel to and from work, provide a designated area the service animal can occupy until the employee's shift ends
- Provide staff training on the use of service animals in the workplace.

For additional information on how to accommodate an employee who uses a service animal or how you can obtain information on staff training on disability etiquette in the workplace, contact NBDC Information Services at 516-465-1519 or email lfrancis@abilitiesonline.org.

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This Newsletter has been developed by
The Edwin W. Martin, Jr. Career and Employment Institute
of Abilities, Inc. and it is partially supported by funds from
the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the
U.S. Department of Education

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We Focus on Ability

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