Disability Employment Is a Win-Win!

AMERICA’S WORKFORCE: EMPOWERING ALL

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

News about:
Voter registration
Legislative advocacy
Upcoming events

Learn about the importance of inclusion in the workplace.

Part-time caregivers are needed in all NW Missouri counties!
Notes from Executive Director Rob Honan

Successful MOCIL meeting
On September 24 and 25, I, along with Paul Bergonzoni and Deann Young, attended the annual meeting of Missouri Centers for Independent Living (MOCIL), and it was a smashing success.

There are 22 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Missouri, and in the recent past there has been some tension among the CILs. At one time, only three of the CILs were part of MOCIL and the others — while still collaborating in some fashion — came together to develop legislative strategies and to promote best practices among the CILs. But last year, the CILs, coming off the heels of a poor legislative session, decided to put differences aside and come together for the good of the consumers, the CILs, and the state.

The remarkable MOCIL annual meeting this September was a culmination of our “coming together.” I think that everyone “stepped up” and focused on the common good. I also think that we at MERIL have really come together to make sure that the consumers and the community are served. The point being, as the old saying goes, “United we stand, divided we fall.”

Support funding for Money Follows the Person
MERIL’s nursing home transition program — operated through Money Follows the Person (MFP) funding — is a great service that assists people moving back into the community, a place that most people would prefer to live. MERIL has been very successful in this process largely due to the work of our transitions specialist Lisa Gabriel and the resources provided by the state and federal governments. Yet, this wonderful program could end if the funding is not reauthorized on the federal level.

The good news is that there are two pieces of legislation sponsored in a bipartisan fashion that would allow the program to continue for at least two more years. The two bills, one on the Senate side (S.2227) and one from the House (H.R.5306), are exploring the possibility of continuation of the program. The House bill is the one that has been progressing through the legislative process and has a good chance to pass. It is important to contact your House member (in our district, it is Congressman Sam Graves) to encourage him to become a sponsor of the bill and to actually support it when it comes up for a vote on the full House. His office can be reached at 816-749-0800 or http://graves.house.gov. I must also remind the reader that once the bill passes the House, it must go to the Senate and have the support of Senators Blunt and McCaskill.

Voter Registration Deadline: October 10
Contact your county clerk’s office to make sure you are registered to vote in the November 6 election. Remember to bring your identification to the polling place when you vote: www.showit2vote.com.
For more voting information, visit: http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections.

Make your voice heard on November 6
It is vital for all citizens, especially citizens with disabilities, to vote. As Justin Dart, the “father of the ADA,” once stated, “Vote as if your life depended on it, because it does.” This is so true. The legislature holds tremendous power over the resources we need to live.

Persons with disabilities can vote by absentee ballot. You must mail your absentee ballot form by October 31. The forms are available on your county clerk’s website. If you do not have access to the Internet, please call our office (816-279-8558) and we can mail you a form. If you have a disability that is considered permanent, you can request to be included on the permanent absentee voting list so that an absentee ballot will be automatically mailed to you.

Persons with disabilities can also vote curbside at the polling place on the day of the election. Drive up to the polling place and have someone (your driver, a passerby, or call the county clerk’s office) get a poll worker to come out and give you a ballot.

Persons with disabilities should visit their polling place well before the election date to see if it is accessible. If your polling place is not accessible, request to go to an accessible polling place. The county is obligated to accommodate you. All polling places are required to have accessible systems, typically auditory systems.

As with anything, preparation is the key. Being a citizen requires responsibility, and it’s ultimately your responsibility as a citizen to make sure that you take care of your registration, and this includes updating your address if you move.

Stay up to date with the latest news, events, and resources:
Facebook.com/meril4u  Twitter.com/meril4u
Dear Vendor:

You are cordially invited to...

MERIL COFFEE & CRAFTS FAIR
A MARKETPLACE FOR LOCAL ARTISANS

December 8, 2018
10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
4420 South 40th St., St. Joseph
816-279-8558 ♦ meril.org

Vendors: $20 donation per table.
As a Center for Independent Living, more than half of MERIL’s board members and staff have a disability. We know the importance of inclusion in the workplace, and we have seen many examples of how simple workplace accommodations can allow an employee’s abilities to emerge, letting them fully contribute to their company.

MERIL provides information about ADA compliance, workplace accommodations, disability etiquette, career preparation for youth with disabilities, and self-advocacy support for employees with disabilities.

Workplaces are stronger when they include people with disabilities.

About NDEAM and workplace inclusion

Observed each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is a nationwide campaign that celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities throughout American history, and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all Americans have access to the services and supports to enable them to work.

Take a few moments to browse the NDEAM website: www.dol.gov/ndeam. It’s full of valuable information.

“As with any customer segment, one of the best ways to tap into the disability market is to ensure it is represented in your workforce. Employees with disabilities can help businesses understand and meet the needs of this important and expanding customer base. What’s more, research shows that consumers both with and without disabilities favor businesses that employ people with disabilities, and that people with disabilities can provide your business with the flexible, innovative thinking required for a competitive edge in the 21st century.”


www.WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org
The purpose of NDEAM is to recognize the value of persons with disabilities and their contributions in the workforce, and also to promote companies that hire folks with disabilities.

One of the linchpins to true independence is employment. This is true for everyone, but particularly for those with disabilities. Employment means money, identity, and a sense of belonging.

Approximately one in five people have a disability in the U.S., yet only 25%-30% (depending on the source) are working. This is despite the fact that more than 70% of people who are currently unemployed actually want to work. This gap needs to be filled.

One of the reasons — and many studies back this up — that people with disabilities are not hired is the perceived cost of accommodations.

The reality is that workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities are not all that expensive: only $500 on average (source: Job Accommodation Network), and many cost nothing.

I’ll use myself as an example. I am hard of hearing, and the things I need really don’t cost much. Some of the accommodations I use are what I call “self-accommodations.” By this I mean that I take it upon myself to make sure my hearing needs are met. I do this by positioning myself in meetings in a manner that best suits my right ear (my “good ear”), making sure that a microphone is used if needed (and they are always needed for me), and asking people to speak up if their voice is soft. In addition, I do need a phone with a volume control, and most come already equipped with what I need. I use a hearing aid, and the workplace is not required to pay for devices like this.

The reality is that this type of self-accommodation is common for many people with disabilities. Yes, there are some accommodations that cost a bit more than average, but studies show that when you provide an accommodation to someone, that employee becomes very loyal to the company.

- Rob Honan, MERIL Executive Director

It is important to recognize this month for people who live with various forms of disability. As a person living with a physical disability, I can honestly say that being employed has given me a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

I am writing this article for two reasons: one is to let people who live with a chronic illness, mental illness, or physical limitation know that they are vital to the workforce. I say this because living with a disability — invisible to society or not — you have the opportunity to show employers what you have to offer to the job and that you aren't defined by your disability.

The second and most important reason for writing this article is to offer tips to employers who interview people who may live with a disability. Firstly, do not make assumptions when the person walks (or uses a motorized scooter) through the door. Do not assume that people with disabilities will be less reliable or will have to take time off of work.

The best advice I can give is to focus on what someone with a disability can do and not let your assumptions overshadow the value of a potential employee.

Should there need to be some special accommodations made, then educate yourself on what the state has to offer to assist that person. If there is one thing I’ve learned from living with a disability, it is adapting. Hiring someone with a disability is worth adapting the work environment because this person brings with him/her unique experiences, as well as the opportunity to expose and educate other colleagues about the myths and misconceptions of the term “disability.”

As an employer, don’t be an obstacle, but rather set an example for other businesses by acknowledging that people with disabilities are pivotal to the workforce.

- Monica Boeh, MERIL CDS Specialist
Our MERIL Community

Lisa Gabriel from MERIL (left) and members of People First learned about services and self-advocacy for people with developmental disabilities at the annual Real Voices Real Choices conference.

Lisa Gabriel (left) and Rob Honan greeted hundreds of children and parents at The Salvation Army Back-to-School Fair in St. Joseph.

Rob Honan shared information about MERIL at the Noyes Home Block Party.

Ashley Tucker (right) and Samantha Butler (center) met people at the Nodaway County Fair in Maryville.

Welcome our newest staff members!

Jean Boyer is our new IL Outreach Specialist!

Angie Church is our new CDS Support Specialist!
Caregivers Are Amazing!

We help caregivers find part-time jobs!

In our Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program, people with disabilities can hire caregivers to help them with personal care tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, and bathing. Caregivers do not need any prior experience and the hours are flexible. Caregivers are especially needed in lower-population areas of Northwest Missouri.

Caregivers make a BIG difference in the lives of people with disabilities, making it possible for them to live independently in their own homes and communities. By working for a MERIL participant, caregivers also support all of the other Independent Living (IL) services MERIL provides.

For providing care to our participants and for supporting our services, we appreciate the caregivers who partner with us to fulfill our IL mission. We try to show this appreciation in many ways. For example, at our Halloween Bash this year, our attendants can enter a free raffle for the chance to win gift cards and prizes worth hundreds of dollars! And we love to feature CDS caregivers in our newsletter!

Caregivers are needed in all nine counties!

Apply in our office to become a CDS caregiver!

If you are responsible and have a passion for helping people with disabilities live independently in their homes, we want you to work for a MERIL CDS participant! Visit www.meril.org/cds.

CDS participant hired his mother to be his caregiver

Cody Grove was in a coma and lost the majority of his mobility due to an illness. Now, he has hired a caregiver to help him with daily tasks so he can live independently in his own apartment.

“The CDS program has been vital,” Cody said. “It’s so much more comfortable of a situation to be in, especially when it’s in my control.”

As the director of his own care, Cody hired a family member to be his caregiver.

“My mom is my attendant, and it’s so much easier to work with her,” he said. “I could’ve gotten used to having someone I didn’t know helping me with some of the more personal stuff, but thanks to the MERIL CDS program, I didn’t have to do that. Really, it’s so much less awkward.”

CDS Specialist Jay Claywell said Cody has an understanding of his disability and his barriers, as well as how to overcome them.

“As he continues his journey further into independence, he is advocating more and more for himself,” Jay said. “MERIL will continue to support, encourage, and assist Cody every step of the way.”
We thank our donors for their support!

We are incredibly grateful for the contributions that so many people have made to support our mission of helping people with disabilities lead independent lives in their homes and communities.

There are many ways you can help us. Visit www.meril.org/help to learn more.

We thank Allied Arts Council for donating several Trails West tickets to our participants. This generous donation allowed our participants to attend and enjoy a memorable community event.

Lauren Lynch (pictured above) at the Nodaway County Fair in Maryville. We thank her parents, John and Nancy Zeliff, for donating two Chiefs tickets for our raffle!

Many local businesses made donations to our Halloween Bash this year. Thank you!
How You Can Help

Your contribution will help change lives!

Donations to MERIL help fund programs that assist people with disabilities in their goal to live a full life in their homes and communities.

Please consider a financial gift to MERIL. You may mail a check or use the PayPal link on our website.

In addition to donating, you can help us immensely by spreading the word about our services. The more people who know about us, the more we can help.

Mike (pictured right) now lives in his own home with the help of our Independent Living Services and the Money Follows the Person program. Visit www.meril.org to read more about people who have benefited from our services.

Money Follows the Person: Transitioning to independent living

Jessica was living in a nursing home in Maryville, recovering from a brain tumor surgery. She had been in the nursing home for about a year, and was now ready to move into a place of her own.

Read more at www.meril.org.

In-home nurse visits keep patient healthy and independent at home

Tiffany Diaz, LPN, and Roy Dalbey exemplify the success of MERIL’s In-Home Services program. Roy receives help setting up his medications, vital sign checks, and diabetic toenail care.

Read more at www.meril.org.

We recognize CDS attendants Debora and Connie!

Debora and Connie are fantastic attendants for their mother Virginia. Virginia said the girls know that her preference is to stay away from the hospital and nursing home.

Read more at www.meril.org.
Helping people with disabilities and people who are aging live independently in Northwest Missouri.

Northwest Missouri’s Center for Independent Living

Since 1994, MERIL has provided five core services for people with disabilities in our nine-county service area:

- Information and referral
- Independent Living skills training
- Transition services (youth and nursing home)
- Peer support
- Advocacy

Our vision is: A Barrier-Free Northwest Missouri.

More than half of our board members and staff have a disability. We use our personal experiences to see the abilities that people have, and we respect people for who they are. We believe people with disabilities should have control over their own lives, achieve their own goals, and fully participate in their communities.

Learn more about Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Missouri at www.mosilc.org.

Choose your own caregiver
help with cleaning, cooking, shopping, personal care

Phones & devices for independence
low hearing, low vision

Nurse visits at home
medication, blood pressure, diabetes care

Independent Living Skills Training
Nursing home transition

Accessibility

Midland Empire Resources for Independent Living (MERIL) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization governed by a board of directors: Jaren Pippitt (chair), E. Wayne Crawford (vice chair), Dr. Susan M. Bashinski (secretary), L. Kent Allen (treasurer), Joseph D. Hegeman (director), Dr. Rebecca D. Lawrence (director), Sandy Lewandowski (director), Dr. Terry Robertson (honorary director), and Robert Honan (CEO).