National Disability Employment Awareness Month!

MERIL Costume Contest Fundraiser!

Part-time caregiver jobs with benefits!
A Perspective to Consider: People First, Identity First, and Individual Choice

Historically, people with disabilities (PWD) have often been viewed and treated based on perceived “limitations” of their disabilities. In other words, these “limitations,” be it medical, social, psychological (and more), have been the primary focus of the PWD, rather than other aspects of the person.

Due to the continued spotlight on so-called limitations, there began a movement to say: “Hey, we are more than just our disability.” This is how the “people first” movement began.

In 1968, parents of students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Sweden attended a meeting and wanted to speak for themselves, instead of allowing the school administrator to speak for and about them. So, “people first” was born. The basic premise is that people with disabilities are greater than just our disability; in fact we are just people.

And this is why we say “people with disabilities.” Of course, there are other variations of people with disabilities, such as individual who uses a wheelchair, or a citizen with a disability, or a person who has spina bifida, but the point is to put the emphasis on person, individual, or citizen, rather than disability.

Today, “People First of Missouri” is an advocacy and support group for anyone with a disability, though most have some type of Intellectual and Developmental Disability. MERIL hosts two chapters: one in St. Joseph and one in Maryville. For more information on these groups, please contact Lisa Gabriel (St. Joseph) and Lauren Lynch (Maryville). Either can be reached at 816.279.8558.

As stated, many people with disabilities prefer to be known as people first and then by their disability. However, there are some folks with disabilities who strongly identify with their disability and reject the notion of “People First.”

Referred to as “Identity-First,” they are (usually) not outwardly hostile to “people first language,” but their lives are very connected and identified to and with their disability due to a variety of circumstances. Often, these are due to common experiences with those who have the same disability. They take pride in their disability and they show it!

Three examples of this group include Deaf (notice the capitalized “D”), autism (who often call themselves “Autistic”), and Blind individuals.

Confused? You don’t have to be. The key to terms and labels is to know that they belong to the those who are actually disabled or have disabilities. If you are unsure of what to call a person, simply ask them, but definitely accept the choice they have made for themselves.

- Rob Honan, MERIL CEO

People-First & Identity-First Language

“People First Language.” [https://gcdd.org/news-a-media/people-first-language.html](https://gcdd.org/news-a-media/people-first-language.html)


“People-First Language or Identity-First Language?” [https://www.paraquad.org/blog/people-first-language-or-identity-first-language/](https://www.paraquad.org/blog/people-first-language-or-identity-first-language/)

In Remembrance of Chris Overman

MERIL remembers Chris Overman, a member of the People First of St. Joseph self-advocacy support group, who passed away on September 10, 2021.

Stay up to date with the latest news, events, and resources: [Facebook.com/meril4u](https://Facebook.com/meril4u) [Twitter.com/meril4u](https://Twitter.com/meril4u)
Virtual COSTUME CONTEST
FREE ENTRY - WIN $200!
MERIL FUNDRAISER!

Easy to Enter
Upload a photo of your costume. The photo with the most votes wins a $200 Walmart gift card. 2nd place wins $100. 3rd place wins $50.

Easy to Vote
By 8 p.m. on Nov. 5, vote for your favorite costume as many times as you want. Each vote is a $1.00 donation to MERIL, a local nonprofit that helps people with disabilities.

www.GoGoPhotoContest.com/MERIL
Or call us at 816-279-8558 for more information.
We help caregivers find part-time jobs!

MERIL accepts applications for caregivers to work for a Consumer Directed Services (CDS) participant, and/or to work for participants in MERIL’s In-Home Services program. Caregivers help people with disabilities with personal care tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, and bathing. Caregivers do not need any prior experience and the hours are flexible. Visit meril.org/caregivers to learn more.

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. Thank you!

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Caregivers are needed in all nine counties!

MERIL Caregivers Are Amazing!

CAREGIVER JOBS
WITH BENEFITS, INCLUDING:
PAID VACATION!

- EARN PAID TIME OFF EVERY WEEK!
- EXTRA PAY ON WEEKENDS & HOLIDAYS!
- COMPANY-MATCHED RETIREMENT PLAN!

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY. FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE.

APPLY AT MERIL.ORG/JOBS

Apply in our St. Joseph or Maryville office to become a 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 participant! Visit www.meril.org/caregivers to learn more.
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.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)!

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](http://www.dol.gov/ndeam). It’s full of valuable information, including links to other websites and resources. One of our favorite resources is the What Can You Do Campaign.

We have learned that workplaces are stronger when they include people with disabilities.

What is People First?

People First of Missouri is a self-advocacy support group, which was created by and is run by people with developmental disabilities. The St. Joseph chapter meets monthly at MERIL.

Our Mission

People First (www.MissouriPeopleFirst.org) is a statewide organization that promotes equality for people with disabilities so they can live the life they want in the community. Our members:

♦ Teach and empower people to understand their rights and responsibilities and to speak up for themselves (self-advocacy);

♦ Stand up for one another to help people live the life they want with the supports they need (advocacy for one another);

♦ Advocate for community services that allow people to have choices and control over their supports and lives (advocacy at the systems level);

♦ Create change in communities to ensure opportunity and full, meaningful participation for all people (advocacy within the community).

Core Values

P = Pride
E = Equality
O = Opportunity
P = Power to choose
L = Leadership
E = Educate

F = Freedom
I = Inclusive Communities
R = Respect
S = Self-determination
T = Taking Responsibility

Meetings are held at MERIL • St. Joseph: 4420 S. 40th St. • 816-279-8558 • www.meril.org
If you have a developmental disability and want to be part of an amazing group:

Join People First!

SELF Advocate
BE A Leader
HAVE Fun
MEET Peers

We are looking for new members to join our St. Joseph Chapter and our Maryville Chapter. Contact MERIL at 816-279-8558.

People First Members Chris and Gary testified in Jefferson City about increasing broadband access to those with developmental disabilities.

People First Member Chris appeared on KQ2 Live at Five to discuss a virtual presentation that he and Gary presented about the importance of voting.
Local Eagle Scouts helped to beautify the sign in front of our St. Joseph office. Thank you!

MERIL donated 534.3 pounds of food to Second Harvest during the Food Fight fundraiser!

We wished Deann Young, our former Chief Human Resources Officer, a happy retirement!

People First of St. Joseph members donated school supplies to the “Stuff the Bus” event.

We met a lot of great people at the annual Stay Fall Free health and resource fair in September.

We let people know about our open caregiver positions at the Red Carpet job fair.
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, use our PayPal link, or donate on Facebook.

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.

Visit www.meril.org/help to read more about people who have benefited from our services.

Support MERIL.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates.

If you go to smile.amazon.com and shop, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase amount to a nonprofit of your choice. We hope you choose MERIL as your donation recipient!

Employee’s children’s book teaches perseverance

My name is Monica and I live with a form of muscular dystrophy. My book can show kids about inclusivity and not underestimating others who live with a disability.

My character Rebel does use a wheelchair and joins a roller derby team to showcase her talents. Despite getting knocked out of her chair, she picks herself back up and finishes the game.

The game is a lot like life for Rebel, in that the game has components that can literally knock you down. However, this is not new to Rebel because her whole life includes barriers.

Speaking as someone who lives with a physical disability, it is not always easy to pick yourself up and look beyond what you may feel as another limitation.

My story shows that in the face of struggle we need to try and resolve our problems head on. It’s okay to lean on others for help, but also remember when things are difficult to roll with the punches.

“Rolling with the Punches” is available on Amazon.
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](http://www.mosilc.org) and at [www.mocil.org](http://www.mocil.org).

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**disability resources & referrals** Nonprofit

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

**Phones & devices for low hearing, low vision** independence

**Nurse visits at home**
medication, blood pressure, diabetes care

**Independent Living Skills Training** Services

**Nursing home transition**

**Accessibility** www.meril.org 816-279-8558

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Call us. Tell us about your health condition or disability. We’ll help you get the resources you need to live independently.

MERIL offers a wide variety of services and resources for people with disabilities.

Our most popular service is our Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program, which allows a person to hire a caregiver of their choice to perform personal care tasks in their home.

**We help caregivers find part-time jobs!**

MERIL helps the CDS participant (the person with a disability) find a potential employee (caregiver). Anyone who is interested in becoming a caregiver should contact MERIL to fill out an application. The hours are flexible and no experience is required.

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Midland Empire Resources for Independent Living (MERIL) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization governed by a board of directors: L. Kent Allen (chair), Sandy Lewandowski (vice chair), Christy McGuire (secretary), Joseph D. Hegeman (treasurer), Tammy Blakely (director), Kelly Narowski (director), and Robert Honan (CEO).