

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month



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This month's newsletter is dedicated to employment of persons with disabilities. Many of the individuals in the featured articles have taken extraordinary measures to attain their goals. The staff at Westchester Disabled On the Move applauds every step of independence achieved by each consumer. What may seem like a small step of progress to others may be a great achievement which takes courage and breaks the notion of learned helplessness.

Our center realizes that many of our consumers have enormous struggles just to hold on to their independence caused by circumstances beyond their control. These struggles may be due to a sudden onset or progression of a debilitating disability or illness. WDOMI is committed to assisting you to maintain essential supportive services, such as health care, personal assistance and housing subsidies, so that you can focus on your abilities. Keeping positive about your achievements and goals will hopefully leave you with a taste for greater independence.

Submitted by the Editorial Staff

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE RECEIVE "ON THE MOVE"?

Please contact Westchester Disabled On the Move to be added to our mailing list. Contact us by telephone at 914-968-4717.

On The Move editions are published in
Spring and Fall.

NEWSLETTER DESIGNED BY:



E-MAIL: INFO@CONFIDTECH.COM

A Message from the Executive Director

We are preparing this newsletter as summer 2005 is winding down and we prepare for fall. Ah, the lazy, hazy days of summer, when the worker looks forward to this year's vacation with his or her family. For many of our constituency summer just means more of the same. If you are unemployed, like almost 70% of our consumers are, vacations are often a fantasy that you cannot afford. While working people may think you have a life that's stress-free, a continuous vacation, they have not had to live with the constant pressure of paying rent you really can't afford, constant haggling with the social service system and the daily struggle to maintain independence. I believe that most of our consumers dream of a better life that includes employment. Unfortunately, for all of the attitudinal changes, all the systemic work incentives, and all the support that's out there from professionals, there is still not a level playing field for people with disabilities seeking employment. Employers still have misconceptions regarding the capabilities of job seekers with disabilities, the nature of the social service bureaucracy is not well suited to people who need to maintain a regular work schedule, and many of us need continued supports and services even after we go to work. So for those temporarily able bodied persons who believe people with disabilities just don't want to work, don't speak until you've tried to walk in our shoes.

We have a long way to go and there are many obstacles in our way. Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) is reinventing itself again, as it faces case loads for its counselors of between 150-200 consumers. It's no wonder that even dedicated professionals find themselves overwhelmed and unable to provide quality services. The VESID system is inadequately funded and is struggling to find new ways to provide better services for less money. There are some exciting possibilities as well. This fall the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council will be funding five community based organizations to develop a peer mentoring system for consumers utilizing VESID. This grant will allow people who have successfully negotiated the vocational rehabilitation system to provide guidance and support to those who are currently using it. Our ILC and our staff have been providing similar services for many years, as more than 50% of our staff have gone through the system. We hope that new funding will allow these services to become more available.

So if you are in the middle of the VR process and are frustrated, angry and confused, I urge you to "keep the faith". Come visit our dedicated staff that has experienced the process personally and have emerged as helping professionals dedicated to assisting their peers.

Sincerely,

Melvyn R. Tanzman, CSW

A wake up call . . .

The one-and-a-half to two hour commute to and from work is not something I would exactly call a joy. The fact I use public transportation makes it even more “enjoyable”. You see, I live in the Bronx. If I had a car, I could be home in twenty minutes – tops. The overcrowded, too hot or too cold buses and trains are an experience in itself. But what gives it the oh-so-perfect flavor is the all the yelling and excited banter of teenagers; the shrieking babies, toddlers and pre-teens; not to mention (though, I will) all the bumping, shoving, pushing, arguing, rushing and impatience each commuter endures during the trek. Don’t get me wrong. I understand this is all part of the package and we all have to get where we’re going somehow, hence, public transportation. It’s just sometimes I, too, have to remind myself: “patience, grasshopper.”

Patience wears extremely thin with many commuters. I remember recently, maybe about a month or two ago, I witnessed a bit of commuter impatience. It was the middle of the morning rush on a Bronx bus almost filled beyond capacity...*almost*. Traffic was heavy and it felt like we were traveling at a snail’s pace, literally. The bus driver pulled into a stop and asked several people to move towards the rear of the bus to make room for a female passenger using a motorized wheelchair. The bus driver was smiling and talking to the young woman while operating the chairlift, preparing for the young woman to board. It was apparent the young woman was a regular passenger on the bus driver’s route. Suddenly, another woman already seated on the bus, not even asked to move by the bus driver, mind you, rudely blurts out: “Oh, come on! We don’t have time for this! We have to get to work, you know!”

Now, I don’t know if the young woman heard the angry words, but I know the bus driver did. He was not happy. He quickly spun around, looked the complainer in the eye and said, “Where do you think she’s going?”

The complainer shut her mouth and said nothing else for the rest of *my* ride, at least. Questions began popping up in my mind. Where exactly did the impatient woman think the young woman was going? To a doctors appointment? Probably. I mean, where else would a wheelchair user go? Where in the world was this angry woman coming from? WAKE UP, PEOPLE!!! Guess what, there’s more to a disabled person’s life than doctors appointments! Many disabled people are active in the workforce and positively contribute to their communities and society, as a whole. If commuters don’t like it, tough. Get over your lack of awareness and deal with it. Everyone has the right to improve and live their lives to the fullest.

Ada Cabassa

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and look at what is going on . . .

The month of October, otherwise known as National Disability Employment Awareness month is an exciting time for those of us who are disabled and/or work with people who have disabilities seeking employment. I would like to share with all of you some of the happenings around Westchester County in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

National Disability Mentoring Day (DMD), which will be held on October 19th this year, is a nationwide day put aside for students and job seekers alike to shadow a professional at a job site to gain exposure and possible employment in that field of work. The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is the founder of DMD, and each year thousands of students and job seekers participate in this program. As the local coordinator for DMD, I seek out employers willing to participate and match up high school students and job seekers in Westchester County. This exciting day offers employers exposure to skilled job seekers with disabilities where as they may never have had the opportunity to do so previously, or have shied away from seeking people with disabilities to work for them. As we all know, seeking employment for a person with a disability is not always a positive experience. The more exposure employers can get, the better it is for those of us seeking work. This is also a wonderful opportunity for those job seekers and students who have the desire to learn about a certain career before dedicating time and effort toward that goal.

On October 24, 2005 there is an award breakfast being held at the Arrowood in Rye, NY sponsored by the Westchester County Office for the Disabled and the Westchester Employment Network. This breakfast celebration recognizes companies and employers who welcome employees with disabilities. This breakfast celebration also honors people with disabilities who have overcome challenging hurdles in their lives and have reached their goals of gainful employment.

At this year's breakfast, Representative Nita Lowey will be our guest speaker. Ms. Lowey has supported the disabled community and our needs, and it will be an honor to have her speak at our celebration.

Now, all of you remember that October is not the only time of the year that celebrates employment. Seeking gainful employment is an ongoing task for many people with disabilities. Finding that perfect job is not always easy, but together we can work hard to find that perfect match. Please feel free to call me at Westchester Disabled On the Move anytime if you are trying to find that job you always wanted, and I will try my hardest to make your dreams come true.

Sherry DeFrancesco, Disability Program Navigator

**Are you interested in volunteering at WDOMI?
Please contact Claudia Slater
at 914-968-4717 ext. 21**

Disability Mentoring Day

Disability Mentoring Day is a nationwide effort to promote career development for students with disabilities through hands-on career exploration.

What is Disability Mentoring Day?

Students with disabilities (mentees) are matched with workplace mentors according to expressed career interests. Mentees experience a typical day on the job and learn how to prepare to enter the world of work. Employers gain an increased awareness that people with disabilities represent an overlooked talent pool. Disability Mentoring Day is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD).

Background

Disability Mentoring Day began in 1999 with fewer than three-dozen student participants as part of a White House effort to increase the profile of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), celebrated every October. In 2004, 9,000 youth with disabilities participated nationally and in nearly 20 international locations. They were mentored by almost 1,500 private, non-profit, governmental, and educational organizations.

What are the goals of Disability Mentoring Day?

To enhance internship and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

To promote disability as a central component of diversity recruitment for a more inclusive workforce.

To dispel employers' fears about hiring people with disabilities.

To increase confidence among students and job seekers with disabilities.

To launch a year-round effort to foster mentoring opportunities.

Who participates?

Employers (private, non-profit, government, educational), students with disabilities, and educators participate in Disability Mentoring Day.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the [American Association of People with Disabilities](http://www.aapd-dc.org) web site, www.aapd-dc.org .

To participate in Westchester County contact
Sherry DeFrancesco at WDOMI 914-968-4717 ext 19

Having a Severe Disability is a Full-Time Job!

Maintaining Independence Even If You Can't Work

Eighty percent of all people with disabilities in the United States are unemployed. This percentage is reflected in the records we keep at Westchester Disabled On the Move (WDOMI). When a new consumer fills out our intake application, we keep employment statistics. Approximately 20% of our consumers report they have jobs, but less than 10% of those who are "employed" work full-time, most work part-time. We ask, "Are you looking for a job?" About 40% answer that question "Unemployed, looking for a job," while the other 40% answer "Unemployed, not looking." This is because many of us simply can't work.

As a quadriplegic since 1988, I contend that just *having a severe disability* is a full-time job. We know the amount of work involved in just getting through the day. Many of us rely on home health care aides and nurses to assist us with the basic activities of daily living. This is where our agency can be of assistance to you. For those of us who can't work due to our severe disability, we still find that we are working a job called "advocating for my own survival."

Do you spend hours on the telephone negotiating with bureaucrats, insurance companies, doctors, lawyers, or DSS case managers? Are you unhappy where you live? If you feel overwhelmed by your disability or disabilities, you are not alone. Please join our Transitions Workshop, which meets the last Tuesday of each calendar month. Collectively we provide mutual support to one another as we share our experiences and hopes for the future. We specialize in preventing unwanted institutionalizations; hospital stays; nursing home placements; and other congregate settings. We also welcome nursing home residents who are seeking discharge and wish to move back to the community.

For more information, please call John Strothenke, Nursing Home Transition and Diversion Coordinator at WDOMI 914-968-4717.

Join The
Systems Advocacy Network.
Contact Brian I. Hauser at WDOMI
914-968-4717

DID YOU KNOW . . .

- That there are 54 million people with disabilities in the United States who want to work but can't find a job? People with disabilities represent the largest minority in America.
- That in New York State there are 2.6 million people with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64. Two out of three aren't working. This is an untapped resource.
- That a disability is a physical, mental or learning impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual. Disabilities can include:

Low vision

Orthopedic impairments

Leg and Knee problems

Muscular dystrophy

Mental Retardation

Cardiac Problems

Speech Impediments

Digestive System conditions

and many others

Hearing Impairments

Carpal Tunnel

Neck and Shoulder limitations

Multiple Sclerosis

Allergies and Asthma

Respiratory conditions

Learning Disabilities (severe)

Alcohol and Drug Abuse (in remission)

Deafness

Low Back Strain

Arthritis

Cerebral Palsy

Diabetes

Epilepsy (Controlled)

Mental Health

- That accommodations cost less than you think: *The Job Accommodation Network (JAN), international information and consulting resource for accommodating persons with disabilities in the workplace, report 31% of accommodations cost nothing. 19% cost between \$1 and \$50 and 80% cost under \$500.*

Myths Vs Facts:

Myth: Workers with disabilities are not as productive as others.

Fact: On-the-job performance: 91% of workers with disabilities were rated as average or better. **On willingness to work hard:** 81% of managers surveyed rated workers with disabilities as about the same or better than non-disabled workers. **On leadership ability:** 72% of managers surveyed rated employees with disabilities as better or the same as non-disabled employees.

Myth: Workers with disabilities don't remain employed very long.

Fact: On turnover rates: 99% of workers with disabilities have a turnover rate that is lower or the same as non-disabled workers.

Myth: People with disabilities are more susceptible to accidents.

Fact: On safety: 96% of workers with disabilities were rated average or better on the job and off.

Myth: Other workers will not accept co-workers with disabilities; this will create personnel problems.

Fact: A worker with a disability wants to be treated as a regular employee. **On fitting in:** Of managers surveyed, 93% disagreed with the myth that workers with disabilities don't fit in.

Myth: We don't have a job a person with a disability can fill.

Fact: Ability, not disability is the key word. People tend to focus on what a person cannot do. If we change our perspective and look for the multitude of activities a person can accomplish, many more career opportunities come into view.

Myth: People with disabilities are not well educated.

Fact: Of managers surveyed, 75% rated job applicants with disabilities as having better, or the same formal education as non-disabled applicants.

Myth: Workers with disabilities require extensive training.

Fact: Workers referred from the State Vocational Rehabilitation System (VESID) are certified job ready. In those instances when additional specialized training is indicated, on-the-job training and support and/or a work try-out is provided by VESID.

Myth: I am not interested in VESID financial incentives because there is too much paperwork for me to complete.

Fact: We do most of the paperwork for you. We make it as easy as possible to access these financial incentives that can add up to **\$15,000 or more per individual hired.**

Myth: I am not interested in any tax benefit if it means I have to get involved with the IRS!

Fact: Making use of available tax credits and deductions to business involves no more than completing one additional form on your annual tax return. If you own or operate a business, you should be aware of the tax incentives that relate to creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Scott Barber

WASHINGTON—Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao this week announced the official theme for October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month — "Workers with Disabilities: Ready for Tomorrow's Jobs Today."

"This year's theme emphasizes that people with disabilities are a vital part of America's workforce—they are important to our country's future economic success!" said Chao. "The President's *New Freedom Initiative* recognizes the tremendous contributions and potential of persons with disabilities and promotes greater job opportunities in high growth sectors of the economy, such as healthcare and advanced manufacturing."

The theme will be used by the private sector, federal, state and local governments, and advocacy organizations to plan events and programs that showcase the abilities and skills of job candidates who have disabilities.

"People with disabilities are and will continue to be an important part of the nation's labor pool, and this year's theme reflects that fact," said Roy Grizzard, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy.

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is the nation's first assistant secretary-level office specifically addressing policies that impact the employment of people with disabilities. Collaborating with other Labor Department agencies—the Employment and Training Administration and the Civil Rights Center—ODEP has developed methods, including a disability checklist, to make the 3500 One-Stop Career Centers nationwide better serve people with disabilities.

Public Law 176, enacted by Congress in 1945, designated the first week in October as "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." President Harry S. Truman designated the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities to carry out the law. Congress changed the name to "National Disability Employment Awareness Month" in 1988. The responsibility for leading the nationwide recognition was transferred to ODEP in 2001.

**Secretary
Chao
Announces
2005 National
Disability
Employment
Awareness
Month Theme
— "Workers
with
Disabilities:
Ready for
Tomorrow's
Jobs Today"**

Visit our
Web Site
www.wdom.org

A Happy Ending With A New Beginning

About a year ago, I began working with a Roosevelt High School student at the request of his mother. This student was discharged from school for excessive absences. His mother reported that he wanted to return to school, continue his studies, and obtain a local diploma. However, in discussing the case with the transition facilitator, it appeared that this student wouldn't be allowed back into school.

I scheduled a meeting with the school's special education department head to discuss this issue and during the meeting, the student, who was taking several regular education courses in an effort to obtain a local diploma, stated that he stopped going to school because he wasn't doing well in two of these regular education courses. He didn't feel he could tell anyone because he felt he would be letting down the people who believed in him and gave him this opportunity, not to mention his mother. He felt he had no one to turn to, so he began spending a lot of time with a group of kids who were cutting school on a regular basis. Rather than talk to someone about his problem, he continued to miss school and became lackadaisical and sullen at home.

After some discussion between this student, this advocate, the department head, and his mother, it was agreed that this young man would indeed return to school and continue to work toward obtaining a local diploma. The department head told the student that he could complete the regular education classroom work in the special education program class. She reassured him that he would still qualify for the local diploma as he had earned enough credits to do so. More importantly, this student received reassurance that there were several people to whom he could go to in the future, should he feel overwhelmed. He was told, in the future, he should never let a problem related to his education and completion of high school keep him from talking to someone, especially his mother. The student was told that he would need to work harder than ever to finish school and that this would also involve after school and summer school study.

Recently, I received a phone call from this student's mother who wanted to thank me for my involvement regarding her son. She told me that not only did he return to school, but he also threw himself totally into his work and was able to complete the missed schoolwork sooner than anticipated. She also stated that her son stopped hanging out with the crowd of friends who contributed to his class cutting and absenteeism and got himself a part time job at Target. He will graduate this June with a local diploma. This young man's mother stated that she will encourage her son to remain involved with Westchester Disabled On the Move to ensure that he remain on the right path toward success.

Phillip Dyson
Life After High School Transition Coordinator

Helpful Resources

<http://www.abilitybeyonddisability.org/home.cfm> - Ability Beyond Disability - To enable individuals whose independent living skills are impaired by disability, illness or injury, to achieve and maintain self-reliance, fulfillment and comfort at home, at work and in the community, by providing the best comprehensive home, health and rehabilitation services.

<http://www.alanon.org.za/> - Alanon - Al-Anon offers understanding help; support to families and friends of problem drinkers.

http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/default/en_contact.cfm - Information on alcoholics-anonymous and finding an AA meeting

<http://www.ssa.gov/work/ServiceProviders/BPAODirectory.html> - Nationwide BPA&O Directory, find the benefits Specialist near you.

<http://www.bgclubfoxvalley.org/> - Boys & Girls Club Of America -The mission of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley is to be a safe place for youth from all backgrounds to learn and grow, with special concern for those from challenging circumstances. The Clubs provide resources and opportunities for youth to be active, happy, responsible, and caring community members.

<http://Burke.org> - Burke Rehabilitation Hospital - Burke is a private, not-for-profit physical rehabilitation hospital and medical research center.

http://www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/disability_program_navigator_dpn_.htm - Disability Program Navigator - The "Navigator" will conduct outreach to the disability community and organizations that serve them, provide expertise and information on SSA work incentives and employment support programs, provide assistance on navigating through the variety of programs and services that impact their employment (e.g., transportation, housing, health care, etc.) and serve as a resource to other One-Stop Center staff.

<http://mail.ctcnet.org/americconnects/panel20/subject.htm> - America Connects Consortium: Panel Twenty: Youth Transitions By Subject a resource guide

<http://www.odod.state.oh.us/cdd/ocs/heap.htm> - Home Energy Assistance Program designed to help eligible low-income families and individuals meet the high costs of home heating.

<http://www.foodpatch.org/> - Food Patch

<http://www.ssa.gov/work/> - The Social Security official website

<http://www.burquip.com/> - Burquip - Full line of mobility products

<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/cbvh/> - Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped

<http://204.131.235.67/programs/health/Forum/tickettowork.htm> - Information on the Medicaid Buy-In for working people with disabilities

<http://www.yourtickettowork.com/> - Ticket To Work web site

Detach and Save



ON THE MOVE
Fall 2005

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Have you, a family member, neighbor, co-worker, friend recently become disabled? If the answer is "Yes" then you need to know what independent living is with a disability!

Independent Living is a social movement, a worldview, as well as a provider of advocacy services to our consumers. Our foundational belief is that people with disabilities should be given an equal opportunity to realize their full potential as citizens, members of their communities, and as productive members of our society.

In an attempt to assist our diverse consumer population, it is necessary to coordinate services from professionals and individuals in our communities. This year at our Annual Spirit of Independence Award Ceremony we will be honoring two individuals who have made superior contributions into the lives of people with disabilities with respect to preserving control over their lives; full of independence, choices and rights afforded all people in society.

MG Power
Coordinator, Lower Hudson Valley Regional Technology Center
Westchester Institute for Human Development

Ann Seligsohn
Fair Housing Director
Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc.

If you would like to join us for this occasion on Thursday, October 6th 2005 at The Crowne Plaza in White Plains when we will be *Celebrating People Empowering People*, call Claudia Slater for an invitation at 914.968.4717 x-21 or mail a check in the amount of \$75.00 payable to:

Claudia Slater, Event Coordinator
Westchester Disabled On the Move, Inc.
984 North Broadway, Suite L-01
Yonkers, NY 10701

Looking forward to seeing some new and old friends!

