Disability Mentoring Day 2018

This year’s Disability Mentoring Day took place on October 17th and 38 students from five schools were placed 14 local businesses!

Whether it was walking dogs or cleaning cages at Joliet Township Animal Control, teaching preschoolers at Easterseals Joliet, learning the secret recipe at Steve’s Cheesecake Store and Sandwich Shop in Plainfield, sanding paint at Greg’s Autobody, or making their own sweet breakfast masterpiece at Home Cut Donuts, the students got to work in a workplace matching their area of interest. The event gives students with disabilities from high schools in Will County the chance to experience career paths, ask questions, and learn valuable lessons from their mentors. THANK YOU to this year’s participating businesses: AMC Theatre, Easterseals Joliet, Greg’s Auto Body, Home Cut Donuts, Joliet Fire Department, Joliet Library, Joliet Township Animal Control, Lewis University’s Phillip Lynch Theatre, Pilcher Park Nature Center, Plainfield Police Department, Steve’s Cheesecake Store & Sandwich Shop, Will County Auditor’s Office, Will County Executive Office, and Will County Treasurer’s Office.

Disability Mentoring Day is a national program of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) that promotes career development for students with disabilities through hands-on career exploration. Students experience a typical day on the job and learn about the world of work. Employers gain an increased awareness that people with disabilities represent an overlooked talent pool. For more information, visit https://www.aapd.com/disability-mentoring-day/

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My Reintegration Story  
by Susan Jarosinski, Past Board President

My name is Susan J. Jarosinski. I am 60 years young. I use a wheelchair due to a loss of strength and standing ability after a bout of full body blood poisoning in the late 1990s. I was also born with cerebral palsy which affected my legs and walking only.

In the summer of 2005, my mom had a stroke and my youngest sister was chosen to be her caregiver. This was because my father had passed away 13 months earlier. My sister did not think she would be able to take care of both Mom and me, so she decided to put me into a nursing home.

In the spring of 2009, the ombudsman at the nursing home told me about the Reintegration program at DRC (formerly Will-Grundy Center for Independent Living), and how the staff there could assist me with moving out of the nursing home and back into an apartment in the community. State and federal funds would help pay for this. I would also have a personal assistant to help me with daily living activities. "Would you like to learn more about the program?" the ombudsman asked. "Oh, yes, I am VERY interested!" I said.

In June of 2010, I began working with my caseworker at DRC. Together we worked out a plan to accomplish everything that needed to be done to help me live independently back in the community. On May 5, 2011, my dream came true. I moved into a wonderful apartment in Bolingbrook. The DRC staff helped me set up a beautiful, comfortable home, one that is near transportation, shopping, restaurants and even my church. I've been living happily there for seven great years.

As a way to thank the staff and show my appreciation for all their help, I started volunteering there and have been actively involved since 2014. I served a two-year term as President, served as Chairperson for the Outreach/AWC Committee, and have served on the Strategic Planning Committee, Governance Committee, Finance Committee and Development Committee. I am also a member of the Mayor’s Committee on Persons with Disabilities in Joliet, representing Disability Resource Center. At the 2018 Annual Meeting held in May, I was delighted to learn that the staff at DRC honored me with the "Ed Roberts" Award. This award recognizes people who work very hard towards their own independence and who also helps others work on ways to gain their own independence and live very happy lives.

Through this whole experience I have learned that I am a very strong and capable person who can do anything that she wants. All I need to do is set my goals and do everything possible to reach them, which means taking risks and never giving up, even during tough times.

"ALL I NEEDED TO DO WAS SET MY GOALS, DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO REACH THEM...AND NEVER GIVE UP, EVEN DURING TOUGH TIMES." - SUSAN JAROSINSKI
Disability Resource Center’s own Independent Living Advocate Katy Hoyer was chosen to be the keynote speaker at the 8th Annual Disability Awareness Program hosted by University of Illinois/Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Her talk was titled, “Student Engagement in the Disability Community.” The event featured a student panel and took place on November 14 in the UIUC Student Dining and Residential Program building; 275 people attended.

The UIUC Disability Awareness Program (DAP) focuses on issues facing the disability community; it’s organized and run by UIUC students with disabilities with assistance from UIUC staff. The program tries to raise awareness and educate the public about what it is like to live with a disability in today’s society, particularly as a young adult.

Katy, a UIUC graduate, used the college’s disabilities services and supports throughout her education there. She first attended the DAP in 2010 and was invited to speak at this year’s event because of her history with the program and with the college, and because of her professional experience with the disability community since graduation.

“As a person with a physical disability, I am so passionate about empowering people with disabilities so that they can find their own path to independence and success,” she says. “I’m also dedicated to bringing awareness to the community at large about issues that people with disabilities face every day, and teaching the public how to embrace more inclusivity and sensitivity in their everyday lives.”

Katy has been an Independent Living Advocate at DRC since August, 2017 and she has given numerous disability awareness presentations to local organizations. Previously, she worked at Easter Seals of Joliet, and interned as an Inpatient Rehabilitation Social Worker at Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, Illinois. As a student-mentor at UIUC, Katy helped students with disabilities transition to an independent living situation on campus. At DRC, Katy helps people with disabilities meet their own, self-determined independent living goals; supports the community through individual and systemic advocacy efforts; provides information and referral services to people in need; and educates the community about disability awareness and etiquette. She can be reached at (815) 729-0162 or by email at katy@drcjoliet.org.
S.K.I.L.L.S. - On The Go…

"Sharing Key Independent Living Life Skills"

Good news/bad news: Nine people (including a student intern from Lewis University) made it to Springfield for our October 25th trip; unfortunately the Capitol was on "lock-down" so we could not access the building during our day trip. However, what a wonderful opportunity to learn about contingency plans when things don't go according to schedule! We toured Lincoln’s neighborhood and did some other sightseeing. Our second visit ("Springfield 2.0") was scheduled for November 29 and included attending the Veto Session, along with talking to legislators about upcoming bills, the budget, and other matters pertaining to advocacy. Look for details in the next issue of Barrier Free Press!

COMING UP:

DECEMBER: Celebrating Holidays
Week of Dec. 3 - Holiday Traditions
Week of Dec. 10 - Time to Celebrate!

JANUARY: Household Management
Week of Jan. 21 - Home, Clean Home
Week of Jan. 28 - Laundry Loads

FEBRUARY: Travel Training
Week of Feb. 4 - Hop on the Bus
Week of Feb. 11 - Meet the RTA

(All information subject to change. Contact DRC for updates)

Time for Our Holiday Party!

Join us at our Holiday Open House!
Wednesday, Dec.12
1 pm to 4 pm

Enjoy food, drink and good cheer PLUS a visit from "Bumble" the Shetland pony!
Here at Disability Resource Center
77 N. 129th Infantry Drive
Joliet, IL 60435

Please R.S.V.P. by December 7th - Thank you! Call (815) 729-0162 (voice), (815) 768-2582 (VRS) or email cathie@drcjoliet.org

Please bring a donation of non-perishable food items, winter wear (hats, gloves, scarves) or a monetary gift.
Since September, **56 amplified phones** have been distributed to qualified Illinois residents with hearing loss through DRC. That's 56 more people who can enjoy using the phone, and maintain that critical lifeline with loved ones and their community. To date, we've helped 243 people!

**October** - DRC was at Joshua Arms in Joliet on Oct. 29, communicating with residents there about the ITAC program. Dr. Karen Pastell from Prairieland Audiology was conducting free hearing screenings. Altogether, 15 residents were screened and 9 qualified for free amplified phones!

**November** - "Learning My Options" Senior Health & Wellness Fair in Plainfield: Over 50 seniors attended this event at the Township hall. DRC had an information table promoting ITAC products and services.

**Coming Up**: ITAC Open House at DRC on Dec. 3, from 10 am-12 pm. Free hearing screenings while you wait; then if you qualify, select an amplified phone that works best for you - at no charge! Coffee and cookies will be served.

Here are some highlights of our activities these past few months that YOUR support helped make a reality. **THANK YOU!**

- **Disability Mentoring Day** - 38 students and 14 employers spent time working alongside one another, each learning something valuable about the other!
- **S.K.I.L.L.S.** - Sixty new enrollees since September! That's 60 more young adults who are learning important skills that will help them to live as independently as possible.
- **Housing** - The Housing Authority of Joliet awarded DRC seven vouchers for our consumers, helping us to help them find suitable and affordable housing.
- **Fast Track** - Our newest program, Fast Track, was created for high school students with disabilities to teach them valuable life skills as they transition into adulthood. DRC’s Grundy County Fast Track Coordinator, Tabitha Boshears, has been guest teaching 13 students in her alma mater, Coal City High School since September. We would like to send a big THANK YOU to CCHS for being our pilot school for this program!
- **Move-Outs** - Four more consumers were able to move out of a nursing home and into their own home, thanks to State funding and the hard work of our staff.
- **Assistive Technology for Children** - Four more children received assistive technology devices through this program, allowing them to communicate and participate in exciting new ways!
On to NEW Challenges...

Jerrod Nichols, who joined DRC as an Independent Living Advocate in July, is now the Community Reintegration Transition Coordinator, effective November 5th. He will be helping people with disabilities identify services and support systems they need in order to move into their own residence and live independently again. "When the position became available, I jumped at the chance to apply," said Jerrod. "I'm always looking for opportunities to grow and the CRP position is both a challenging way and a tremendously satisfying way to support people in our community. I'm really looking forward to helping people with disabilities achieve their dream of a more independent life."

Learning Never Stops!

Katy Hoyer attended The Arc of Illinois Living with Autism 2018 Conference in Lisle on October 4th. She said it was a great learning experience for people with autism, their families and for professionals who work with them. One important takeaway according to Katy: "No two people with autism are the same! If you've met a person with autism, you've met one person with autism."

Jerrod Nichols attended The 14th Annual Illinois Statewide Transition Conference in Itasca on October 25 and 26. The conference, titled “Stepping Stones of Transition,” invited participants to imagine the possibilities for students with disabilities in the areas of independent living, education and training, employment, community integration, health care, and self-advocacy. "This conference was really well done and really stresses the need for community partnerships," said Jerrod.

Ongoing Activities

Men's Group - Every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Locations vary - contact Sam Knight for more information at sam@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.

Young Women's Group - Every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Locations vary - contact Katy Hoyer for more information at kathy@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.

Weekly Women's Group - Every Monday from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at Disability Resource Center. Contact Katy Hoyer for more information at kathy@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.

Accessible Will County (AWC) - First Wednesday of the month from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm, at Disability Resource Center. AWC is a cooperative, broad-based partnership between the Disability Resource Center, disability advocates, persons with disabilities, the City of Joliet, businesses, the Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry, professional trade organizations, media representatives and civic leaders. Contact Sam Knight for more information at sam@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.

Deaf Senior Club Bingo - Every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at Croatian Cultural Club, 1503 Clement St., Joliet. Bingo starts at 10:00 am. Lunch, donuts, soda and water available for purchase, or bring your own lunch. Bring your friends and have fun!
Under Development...

The DRC Development Committee is working on next year's fundraiser already! The date and location is still being determined, but the theme is one we're really excited about: Everyday Heroes. Heroes come in all shapes, sizes, lifestyles and backgrounds. The 2019 Empowerment Event will be celebrating the everyday heroes in our lives: from the paramedics who save our lives, to the teachers who inspire us to learn and grow, to the personal assistant who is there for us rain or shine, to the legal aides who guide us through legal mazes, to a special family member who gave us unconditional love and encouragement...the list goes on and on. While we work out the event details, take a moment to consider: Who is YOUR hero? Who would YOU like to celebrate at our fundraiser event?

Mark Your Calendars: Annual Transition Conference

Join Disability Resource Center at the 21st Annual Transition Conference on April 13, 2019, 9 am to noon at Joliet Junior College - "Everything You Wanted to Know About Transition - But Were Afraid to Ask". This event is presented by presented by the Will-Grundy Transition Planning Committee, a consortium of schools, agencies and not-for-profit organizations banded together to improve vocational transition from education to jobs for all learners but particularly for individuals with disabilities. Who should attend? Students, parents, educators, community service providers, social workers, counselors, program coordinators, special education directors, administrators, youth advocates, psychologists, and college students in educational and other public service programs. For a complete list of participating agencies and other information, visit www.transitionplan.org.

DRC Staff & Board

STAFF:
Missy Martin - Executive Director
Tabitha Boshears - Personal Assistant Coordinator/Independent Living Advocate
Bill Hombaker - Maintenance
Katy Hoyer - Independent Living Advocate
Sam Knight - Independent Living Advocate
Marie Malfatti - Clerical Aide/ITAC Specialist
Jerrod Nichols - Community Reintegration Transition Coordinator
Cathie Stewart - Administrative Assistant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018-2019:
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Marvin Tunstall - Delegate-At-Large
Susan Jarosinski - Past President
Ivan Bew, Connie J. Henley,
Brandon Ivins, Dianne Mundle,
Kevin Pruitt - Directors
**Upcoming Events**

- **ITAC Open House** - Mon. Dec. 3
- **DRC Holiday Party** - Wed. Dec. 12 - 1-4 pm
- **DRC Staff Party** - Thurs. Dec. 13 - **office closed at noon**
- **Men's & Women's Groups** - Dec. 12, Jan. 9, Feb. 13
- **Deaf Senior Club Bingo** - Dec. 12, Jan. 9, Feb. 13
- **Personal Assistant Training** - Dec. 14, 21, Jan. 18, Feb. 8 (Contact tabitha@drcjoliet.org for details)
- **Accessible Will County Meeting** - Dec. 5, Jan. 2, Feb. 6
- **Christmas Week CLOSED** - Dec. 24 - Jan. 1 (re-opening Jan. 2nd)
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Day CLOSED** - Mon. Jan. 21

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**Give Yourself the Gift - of Hearing on the Phone!**

**Ho! Ho! Hear!** Remember, Disability Resource Center is a Selection Center for the ITAC program. Do YOU or someone you know qualify for a FREE amplified or captioned telephone? Find out today by calling (815) 729-0162.