

Governor's Council on Disability

2009 Inclusion Award Winners

The winners of the 18th Annual Inclusion Awards are:

The 2009 **Bob Aldridge Advocate of the Year** award winner is Darrell Wilson.

Mr. Wilson is employed at the Office of Veterans Affairs in Mount Vernon and serves on the Board of Directors of The Independent Living Center, Inc. in Joplin, Missouri.

Mr. Wilson provides services to over 200 veterans. He recently worked with a veteran who returned from Iraq with a disability. The individual required extensive home modifications and adaptive equipment to enjoy his life as a civilian. Mr. Wilson helped get the necessary modifications and equipment while helping him enroll in school. Mr. Wilson has served on the board of directors of the Independent Living Center, Inc. in Joplin for seven years and has been instrumental in the success of the organization. He has served on the City of Joplin ADA Committee, working to ensure community-wide access. Recently, he worked with the Joplin Radio-Controlled Airplane Club to host a social activity for individuals with disabilities.

The top honor in the category of **Employer of the Year** will be awarded to Friendship Village of South County, St. Louis.

For more than 10 years, Friendship Village of South County has partnered with the Special School District to provide students an opportunity to prepare for successful employment. Students work in a voluntary capacity throughout the school year. By graduation, students have been given the opportunity to work about 1,600 hours honing their work skills in a real work setting. The Friendship Village community exemplifies inclusion while supporting student success. Student experiences have led to competitive employment, along with tremendous gains in self-worth and work ethics.

The 2009 winner of the **Educator of the Year Award** is Chris Holmes.

Mr. Holmes teaches journalism classes at Hazelwood West High School and is the supervising teacher for the school newspaper and yearbook. He welcomes all students including those with disabilities and recognizes their individuality. He assigns projects and assignments based on the student's individual talents and interests to further those skills. Mr. Holmes practices inclusion and promotes disability awareness in the school. He has motivated other teachers to be understanding, tolerant, and appreciative of students with disabilities because of the challenges he has had raising his own son with autism. His real-life stories inspired students to learn more about their peers with disabilities and write a cover story for the school newspaper on three students with disabilities.

There was no winner awarded in the category of **Excellence in Universal Design and Technology**.

The Bob Aldridge Advocate and the Employer of the Year Awards will be presented at the Power Up conference in Columbia on April 27, 2010. The Educator of the Year award will be presented at the Hazelwood school district.

For additional information, please contact the Council at 573-751-2600 or by email at gcd@oa.mo.gov. Governor's Council on Disability: www.disabilityinfo.mo.gov/gcd, click on Inclusion Awards.