



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD AWARDS LEADERS IN INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) recognizes leaders in inclusion and youth leadership through its annual Inclusion Awards and Youth Leadership Awards programs. These programs are intended to raise awareness about the importance of advocacy and inclusion for individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community living, while recognizing and honoring the accomplishments of the award recipients.

On April 9, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) presented the awards to the 2023 awards recipients at the Power Up Assistive Technology Conference in Columbia, where more than 480 conference attendees and exhibitors were gathered to celebrate the winners and hear about their great accomplishments.

The 2023 winners are:

Inclusion Award—Alisha Favazza, Hollister R-V School District, Hollister

Inclusion Award Honorable Mention—Kristi Kliewer, Abilities First, Springfield

Youth Leadership Award—Lydia Olmsted, Columbia

Youth Leadership Award Honorable Mention—Margot Epstein



Photos: (from left to right) Alisha Favazza, Lydia Olmsted, Margot Epstein.

Not pictured: Kristi Kliewer

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Read the complete [news release here](#), and visit the [Inclusion Awards](#) and [Youth Leadership Awards](#) websites to find out more about these great individuals and their amazing accomplishments. You will also find information about all of the 2023 award nominees on these websites. Award nominations for the 2024 awards will be available online this fall.

GCD COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

by **Claudia Browner**

On March 15, 2024, Governor Parson appointed Stacy Elster of Wildwood, Missouri as the newest Council member to the Governor's Council on Disability. The GCD welcomes Ms. Elster in her new role and congratulates her on her appointment.

The GCD recognizes three outgoing Council members for their years of service on the Council. They are: Joan Bergstrom of Lee's Summit, Traci Ritter of Cape Girardeau, and James Trout of St. Louis. The Council is grateful for their active participation, support and dedication to the Council and wishes them well.



*Photos from left to right:
Joan Bergstrom, Traci Ritter, and
James Trout with GCD director
Claudia Browner*

Individuals who are interested in serving as Council members for the Governor's Council on Disability can apply online at boards.mo.gov. Applications are reviewed by the Boards and Commissions office and Council members are appointed by the Governor.

VOLUNTEER-STAFF APPLICATIONS FOR MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPEN UNTIL APRIL 15

by **Reece Ellis**



Volunteer Opportunity
July 15-20, 2024
at MU in Columbia







Volunteer Staff Needed!
Apply by April 15!



The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is a leadership program designed for young adults with disabilities to learn from successful leaders and role models.

Apply for one of our volunteer staff positions to support the youth participants at this week-long, empowering program on MU Campus!

Make a positive difference in the lives of young adults with disabilities and gain professional leadership experience and connections.

Learn more about this exciting volunteer opportunity at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf>

Questions?
573-751-2600
gcd@oa.mo.gov

A friendly reminder! The [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf) (MO-YLF) will be held this year from July 16th* to 20th at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO. We're still seeking passionate volunteers to help make this transformative experience a reality for high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21).

MO-YLF volunteers play a crucial role in creating a transformative experience for students. They help facilitate delegate orientation/registration, provide mentorship, assist with daily tasks, and ensure a safe as well as supportive environment where students can develop leadership skills, build self-confidence, and gain valuable knowledge about disability advocacy and transitioning to adulthood.

Even if you can't commit to the entire week, we have flexible volunteer options that might suit your availability! You can find out more about applying here: <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf/volunteer.htm>

If you or your organization would like to help us make this great program possible, please contact GCD for more information by email at reece.ellis@oa.mo.gov or by calling our office at (800) 877-8249 or (573) 751-2600.

* *Volunteer-staff arrive July 15 for orientation and to prepare for the delegates' arrival on July 16.*

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY 2024 HAPPENINGS

by Laura Mueth

Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD) 2024 was Wednesday, March 13. Over 800 people attended either in-person at the Capitol or virtually and demonstrated to legislators that ***We Are Here***. This theme was chosen by the planning committee because it emphasized that people with disabilities live in Missouri communities and that they were at the Capitol.



Providing an event like this takes a lot of planning and commitment. Each of the following organizations had a representative on the planning committee: the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, Empower: Abilities, People First, Boone County Family Resources, St. Louis Arc, The Arc of the Ozarks, Abilities First, the Arc of Missouri, UCP Heartland and GCD. We collaborated frequently beginning in October 2023 to make it a success.

Transportation, employment, and the caregiver crisis were carry-over topics from last year's event. The caregiver crisis and employment topics were addressed differently this year by discussing the intersection of the two topics in that having a caregiver (aide, attendant, direct support professional) often

allows individuals with disabilities to be employed. Therefore, having a strong caregiver workforce is critical to individuals being involved in community life. Housing and accessibility were new topics discussed by the rally speakers.

In-person attendees had the opportunity to visit with several disability-related organizations to learn more about offerings as well as talk one-on-one with legislators or their staff. For virtual participants, three virtual afternoon learning sessions were also available. These sessions included more in-depth information on transportation, the caregiver crisis, and housing. Participants were provided with information on ways they could become engaged with these concerns in addition to being encouraged to visit with legislators the following week during the Legislative Spring Break.

To speak to the crowd, the planning committee was pleased to welcome the deputy treasurer, Clayton Campbell as well as Representatives Melanie Stinnett, Cody Smith, Wendy Hausman, Bridget Walsh Moore, Deb Lavender, along with Senator Lauren Arthur. All the legislators selected to speak had some connection to the disability community whether through personal experience or legislation. The rest of the speakers were individuals with lived experience as individuals with disabilities or family members. Those were Katie Johnson, Scott Steelman-Rhoden, Jeffrey Foust, Anushka Shah, Wayne Lee, Susie Parker, Miss Missouri 2023 Hayley Leach and her brother Matthew Leach. Michael Cross served as the emcee.

New for this year was an Access Team. It was comprised of individuals experienced with the Capitol who were available to accompany attendees to legislative visits or to provide assistance with navigating the Capitol.

If you attended this year and have not completed the [feedback survey](#), please do so. The planning committee would like to hear from everyone. If you missed the day entirely or want to see it again, you can view it at [DRLD livestream](#).



VETERANS UNITED SHOWCASES COMMITMENT TO MO-YLF AND EMPLOYEE FAMILIES

by Reece Ellis

During a company-wide event on February 12th, GCD staff were fortunate to witness an incredible display of generosity from Veterans United. TJ Clime, a recent graduate of Capital City High School and a 2023 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) delegate, presented a \$5,000 sponsorship check from Veterans United to the GCD staff. This sponsorship supports MO-YLF, a program close to the Clime family's heart. T.J. was joined by his parents, Sara and Craig Clime. However, this act of kindness wasn't the only gift Veterans United had in store. With the help of GCD, they orchestrated a fantastic surprise that left a lasting impression on everyone in attendance.

The presentation that day held even greater significance for those familiar with TJ's story. TJ's week at MO-YLF was his first independent adventure away from home and proved to be extremely formative in developing new confidence and independence for him. Before the presentation of the sponsorship, we heard from Craig, TJ's father, who attended the MO-YLF closing ceremony. He witnessed firsthand the positive change in TJ and felt immense gratitude towards the program. This appreciation grew even stronger upon learning that his employer, Veterans United, was a dedicated sponsor of MO-YLF.



Veterans United's generosity extended far beyond the sponsorship presented by TJ. TJ's Duchenne muscular dystrophy necessitates ongoing medical care, requiring frequent trips, including twice-yearly visits to a specialized center in Cincinnati, Ohio. Their current vehicle presented limitations and anxieties during these crucial journeys. Recognizing the Clime family's situation, Veterans United employees surprised them with a generous donation to help purchase an accessible van. This incredible act of support will provide the Clime family with a newfound sense of freedom and peace of mind. As Sara Clime, TJ's mom, stated, "This will provide a freedom of life that I don't think we can fully comprehend at this point."

The GCD staff were honored to be a part of this special occasion. Witnessing the immense gratitude of the Clime family and the spontaneous outpouring of support from VU employees created an unforgettable experience for everyone involved.

APRIL IS AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH



Autism Acceptance Month is observed in April each year in partnership with World Autism Awareness Day on April 2, promoting the inclusion and acceptance of individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and breaking the stigma of people living with autism.

Learn more by visiting the [US Department of Health & Human Services' Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee website](#)

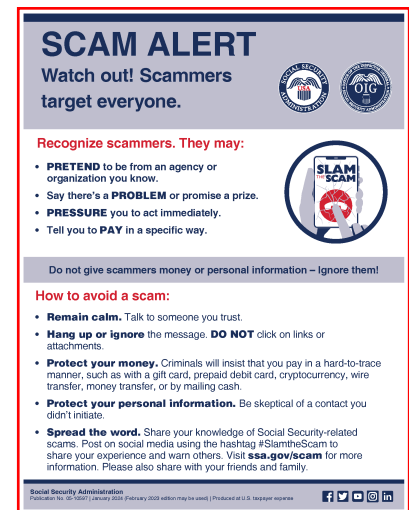
NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

Social Security Administration warns about Scams

The Social Security Administration (SSA) designated March 7 as National "Slam the Scam" Day, an outreach campaign raising public awareness of Social Security scams and other government imposter scams. The SSA asks you to share the following tips with clients, friends, and family members:

- Hang up on suspicious calls from "government officials" calling about a problem with your Social Security number or account
- NEVER make payments with gift cards, wire transfers, or by mailing cash
- Report Social Security scams to [OIG.SSA.GOV](https://www.ssa.gov/01scam)
- Report other scams to [reportfraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud)
- Download and share the [info graphic](#) (image on right)



Accessible Air Travel

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has announced a new proposed rule ensuring airline passengers who use wheelchairs would be able to travel safely and with dignity. The proposed rule would be the biggest expansion of rights for wheelchair users since 2008. The rule's three major action items would be: 1. Penalties and remedies for wheelchair mishandling, 2. Safe, dignified, and prompt assistance, and 3. Improved standards on planes. DOT encourages members of the public to submit comments on the proposed rule. The proposal can be found at <https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/latest-news>

Missouri State Parks offer Virtual Tours of Historic Sites

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources' State Parks Division has created an accessible, [virtual tour of the Bothwell Lodge Historic Site](#). Accessibility features include audio narration and captioning. This is the first of more than 21 virtual tours that will soon be completed and available online at [mostateparks.com](https://www.mostateparks.com)

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPEAL OF UGLY LAWS

by Reece Ellis

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the end of *Ugly Laws* in the United States. Many people today are unfamiliar with so-called *Ugly Laws* but starting in the mid-19th century many cities and states enacted these laws as a way to criminalize disability. The first *Ugly Law* was passed in San Francisco in 1867, it read "any person, who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or deformed in any way, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, to expose himself or herself to public view."

Similar laws followed, Chicago in 1881, New Orleans in 1883, Denver in 1889, and in 1891 the entire state of Pennsylvania. These statutes allowed for the jailing and/or fining of individuals with cognitive and physical disabilities for simply participating in society. One of the few exceptions made was for performances, such as circuses, side shows, and human zoos which were rife with economic exploitation. These laws were often arbitrarily enforced, but prosecution could mean being confined to a psychiatric institution or forced labor on a work farm.

The Great Depression saw a sharp decline in enforcement of Ugly Laws, though many localities retained them on the books. Criminal focus shifted from targeting people with disabilities to criminalizing vagrancy, but discrimination persisted. This became evident in 1972 when disability rights activists Art Honeyman (who has cerebral palsy) and Richard Pimentel (who is deaf) were denied service and arrested at a Portland pancake house under an Ugly Law. This incident is believed to have been a major catalyst for the repeal of the remaining Ugly Laws in the United States, culminating in Chicago's successful removal of the last such law in 1974.

Though the concept of Ugly Laws seems barbaric today, their existence serves as a stark reminder of the historical mistreatment of people with disabilities. These discriminatory laws aimed to control who could access public spaces, effectively erasing people with disabilities from everyday life. The 50th anniversary of their eradication is a moment to celebrate the progress made in inclusion and accessibility.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

- **April 23—25, 2024**
[Charting the LifeCourse Showcase 2024, Kansas City](#)
- **May 7, 2024**
[Mental Health Champions Banquet, Jefferson City](#)
- **May 20—21, 2024**
[Aging with Developmental Disabilities Conference, St. Charles](#)
- **June 9—12, 2024**
[National ADA Symposium, Minneapolis, MN](#)
- **June 12—14, 2024**
[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference, Osage Beach](#)
- **June 17—20, 2024**
[National APSE Conference, Charlotte, NC](#)
- **June 26—28, 2024**
[Transition Training Institute, Columbia](#)
- **July 16—20, 2024**
[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, Columbia](#)
- **July 17—19, 2024**
[APSE-MO Employment Summit, Columbia](#)
- **July 24—26, 2024**
[Special Education Director Academy \(SEDA\), Columbia](#)
- **August 25—27, 2024**
[Real Voices - Real Choices Conference, Margaritaville Lake Resort](#)
- **September 9—11, 2024**
[Ma4 Show Me Summit on Aging & Health 2024, Springfield](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.