

Governor's Council on Disability

2015 Inclusion Award Winners

Winners exemplify standards of excellence in enhancing life for individuals living with disabilities

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) has selected the award winner and honorable mention of the **24th Annual Inclusion Award**. The Inclusion Award and one Honorable Mention are presented annually to recognize private and public employers, individuals, and organizations that have successfully included people with disabilities in education, employment, housing, and leisure activities. Individuals are also encouraged to nominate state and local government divisions or employees they truly feel excel in inclusive practices.

The **2015 Inclusion Award winner** is the **THRIVE** program in Warrensburg.

Transformation, Health, Responsibility, Independence, Vocation, Education (THRIVE) are the goals of any college student. At the University of Central Missouri (UCM), they are the foundation of THRIVE. This two-year certificate program prepares students with disabilities for independent living, personal interaction, and employment fitting their goals and abilities. THRIVE provides improved academic abilities, interaction with age peers, computer skills, job skills, and career-focused internships. THRIVE partners with UCM's Communication Disorders, Kinesiology, Social Work, Counselor Education, and others to develop the knowledge of their own students for the benefit of the THRIVE program. Students in peer organizations of fraternities, sororities, intramurals, and other UCM groups embrace the THRIVE students and will ultimately become employers who hire persons with disabilities. THRIVE graduates have achieved results equivalent to other college students.

The **Honorable Mention for 2015** goes to **Kelsey Mack** of Blue Springs.

Kelsey's dream was to create and operate her own business, to assist other individuals with disabilities, to be more fully included and explore their talents through employment. As a result, Kelsey created The Bird's Nest in November 2014. Located in Blue Springs, The Bird's Nest is a gift shop which sells items handcrafted solely by individuals with disabilities. Kelsey's secondary goal is to hire these same individuals to work within the shop. During 2014 and 2015, Kelsey signed 27 crafters, bakers, and artists to sell their creations, and has employed an adult with a traumatic brain injury to create her logo. Kelsey has demonstrated excellence in leadership and advocacy within The Bird's Nest.

The awards will be presented at the Power Up conference at the St. Charles Convention Center in St. Charles on April 19, 2016.

For additional information, please contact the Council at 573-751-2600 or by email at gcd@oa.mo.gov