



Office of Administration
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Governor's Council on Disability Names Annual Award Winners

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

JEFFERSON CITY, MO - The [Governor's Council on Disability](#) (GCD) has selected the award winner and honorable mention of the **26th Annual Inclusion Award**, the winner of the **5th Annual Youth Leadership Award**, and the **2nd Annual Website/IT Award** winner.

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 Youth Leadership Award is a program to recognize an outstanding Missouri youth (age 16-26) with a disability that has demonstrated exemplary leadership by making a difference in their community.

The Website/IT Award recognizes a Missouri-based organization that provides a user-friendly website that is accessible to all.

2017 Inclusion Award winner: Talent Connect, UCP Heartland, St. Louis

Talent Connect, a program of UCP Heartland, is changing the way hotels in the St. Louis metropolitan area fill open positions by offering a single point of entry for businesses and streamlining the hiring process. UCP staff partners with regional adult service providers and state departments to source potential program candidates. More than 53 individuals with a disability have been hired by collaborating St. Louis area hotel and hospitality companies. Because of the program's unique design and embedded on-site supports, 85 percent of these employees have retained their position, many receiving awards and accolades from their managers.

"Promoting community living and inclusion"

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Honorable Mention: Kate Hannon, St. Louis Arc

Kate Hannon's career as an early educator and inclusion advocate spans more than 30 years. For many families in the St. Louis area, Kate was the person who "opened the door" to inclusion for their child. As a therapist working in homes, as a teacher in the classroom, and an advocate and program director, Kate's commitment to inclusion has made a lasting impact on the St. Louis Community. Kate currently serves as a senior director of Belle Children's Services of St. Louis Arc, where she oversees programs serving more than a thousand young children and families each year.

5th Annual Youth Leadership Award: Andrew Tollefson

Helping people understand the ability behind the disability is a mission that Andrew Tollefson takes very seriously. As a junior at Francis Howell North High School in St. Charles, he excels academically and has maintained perfect attendance. Andrew is a member of Knights of Excellence Club, We Are All Knights Club, and has been on the Honor Roll for three years. Andrew serves as a tutor and mentor for elementary school children, and as an annual DisABILITY Awareness speaker to educate others and advocate for people with disabilities. He has been a guest reporter on Fox 2 News in St. Louis for *Variety the Children's Charity* fundraising week and was an advocate for people with disabilities on *The Thread*, a local television show.

2nd Annual Website/IT Award: Deaf Inc.

Deaf Inc.'s website has a great overall design. It provides high-quality, relevant information that reaches to a wide array of deaf community members and professionals. The featured videos are in American Sign Language with accurate captions that make it widely accessible and the text content is easily accessible through refreshable readers for people who are blind or visually impaired. The website's contrasting colors support easy navigation and readability.

The awards will be presented to the winners on April 17, 2018 at the Power Up Assistive Technology conference in Columbia.

For more information on the Inclusion Award, go [here](#). For more information on the Youth Leadership Award, go [here](#). Information about the Website/IT Award can be found [here](#).

For additional information, please contact the GCD at 573-751-2600 or via e-mail at gcd@oa.mo.gov.

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