



# GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

## Inside this Issue

### Page 1:

- **GCD names Annual Award Winners**
- **COVID-19 Information and Resources**

### Page 2:

- **Legislative Advocacy Updates**
- **Financial Support for Missouri Renters**

### Page 3:

- **Virtual Regional Leadership Forum a Success**

### Page 4:

- **Travel with Service Animals**
- **April Awareness Events**

## GCD NAMES ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS

by Claudia Browner



The [Governor's Council on Disability](#) (GCD) has selected the award winners and honorable mention recipients of the 29th Annual [Inclusion Award](#) and the 8th Annual [Youth Leadership Award](#).

*Photo: 2020 GCD Awards*

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, leisure activities, universal design and website accessibility.

The 2020 Inclusion Award winner is the St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station and the Honorable Mention goes to Job One, Independence.

For more information on the Inclusion Award winners, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclwin.htm>

The annual Youth Leadership Award and one Honorable Mention are presented 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 2020 Youth Leadership Award winner is Luke Barber and the Honorable Mention goes to Olivia Apollo.

For more information on the Youth Leadership Award winners, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/youthleadershipaward.htm>

The awards will be presented to the winners at the quarterly meeting of the Governor's Council on Disability on April 30.

## COVID-19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Get up to date information and resources about free community testing, vaccination eligibility and events, and transportation resources available for Missouri citizens:

**COVID-19 Free Testing**—<https://mako.exchange/splash/MOmakotesting>

**COVID-19 Vaccine Information**—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/>

**\*NEW\* COVID-19 Vaccine—Get a Ride**—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/ride/>

Additional disability related information is available on the **Disability Web Portal's COVID-19 Resources** page.

<https://disability.mo.gov/covid-19.htm>

## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY UPDATES

by Claudia Browner



On March 23, Missouri disability organizations and advocates met for the annual Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD). Hundreds of individuals participated in the first ever virtual DLRD and discussed important disability issues and legislation with several Missouri legislators. Among the invited guests were Governor Parson, who issued a proclamation declaring March Development Disability Awareness Month, and Missouri State Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick who spoke about the [MO ABLE](#) accounts for Missourians with disabilities. Throughout the event, participants were able to connect with legislators via email message to raise awareness about DLRD.

The last day of the 2021 Legislative Session is May 14, 2021, which is only a few short weeks away. However, there is still time to meet with your legislators, either virtually or in-person at the capitol.

To assist in preparing for a visit with your legislators, the Governor's Council on Disability has put together a flyer titled [Tips for Meeting with Your Legislators](#), which can be found on our website, along with many other resources and educational videos about the legislative process in Missouri. If you have questions after viewing the information on our [Legislative Education Project](#) (LEP) website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm>, you can schedule a [Virtual Q&A Session](#) with our office by contacting Laura Mueth at [Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov](mailto:Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov). The Q&A sessions will be offered throughout the month of April.

As a reminder, if you are interested in attending a House or Senate hearing, the House [hearing](#) page contains a weekly list of scheduled hearings, as does the Senate [hearing](#) page. You can attend hearings, or provide testimony either in person or virtually.

Both chambers provide a system to submit testimony electronically. For information about Senate testimony, visit <https://www.senate.mo.gov/senatewitnesssystem/>; for House testimony, visit <https://house.mo.gov/WitnessForm/>

Lastly, if you are planning a visit to the state capitol and require accessibility accommodations, you can find helpful information on the House Accessibility Page (<https://house.mo.gov/Accessibility.aspx>) to prepare for your visit and request accommodations if needed. Additional information is available in the Capitol Access Guide, which can be found at <https://at.mo.gov/information-resources-publications/cap-access-booklet.html>

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MISSOURI RENTERS

by Claudia Browner

The Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC) recently announced the [Missouri State Assistance For Housing Relief \(SAFHR\)](#) program to assist Missouri renters impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program provides rent and utility assistance for eligible Missouri residents. The money is paid directly to the landlord or utility company. To be eligible for the program, you must be a resident of the State of Missouri and at least one member of your household must be directly or indirectly financially impacted as a result of the pandemic, and you must be at risk of losing your housing or having your utilities shut off due to this financial hardship. Income limits apply.

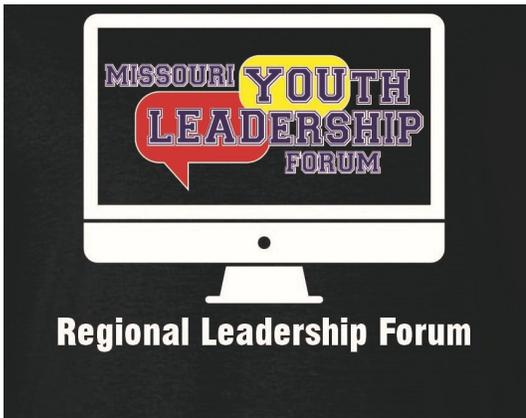


More information on program eligibility and the application can be found at [mohousingresources.com/safhr](http://mohousingresources.com/safhr)

If you can not apply online or need help with your application, please call 833-541-1599 or email: [mo.safhr@mhdc.com](mailto:mo.safhr@mhdc.com)

## VIRTUAL REGIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM A SUCCESS

by Rachel Rackers



The Governor's Council on Disability hosted its first virtual **Regional Leadership Forum** in 2021. On two consecutive Saturdays, March 13 and March 20, twenty-eight high school students who represented 17 different Missouri counties, met virtually with leaders in the disability community and heard from employers, mentors, alumni, and keynote speakers about the importance of goal setting, self-advocacy, and leadership.

To kick off the event, participants heard from keynote speaker, Derrick Duncan about the importance of setting goals for yourself. They also learned a lot of valuable information about employment, interviewing and applying for jobs from a panel of different employers throughout the state. To wrap up the first day, SIL in Columbia lead a session about self-

determination, self-advocacy and independent living.

Day 2 was full of great sessions, information and MO-YLF alumni.

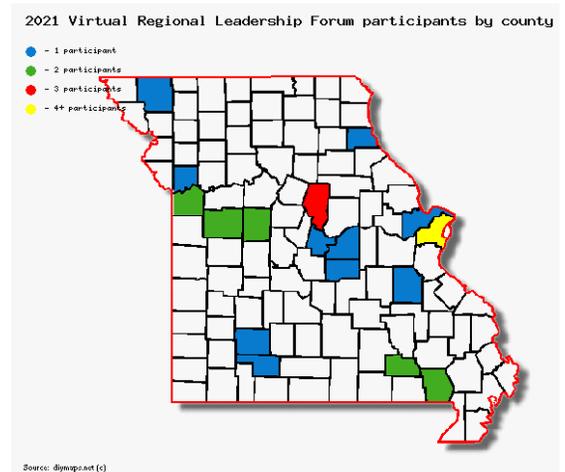
To start the day off, participants heard from keynote speaker and Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) alum, Madelyn Hubbs about the importance of self-advocacy in all aspects of life. During a small group session, youth had the opportunity to learn from the alumni about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum and how it impacted their lives. They also learned about the importance of mentors in school, college and at work. A panel of mentors provided great tips & tools for self-advocacy and leadership. Participants also heard from representatives from community colleges and Vocational Rehabilitation about college, accommodations, and disability services. MO-YLF alumni also joined in to share their experiences at college.

A special thank you goes to Paraquad, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Services for Independent Living for their involvement in the planning and staffing of the event. Also, thank you to the many panelists and 12 MO-YLF alumni that participated in the very first Virtual Regional Leadership Forum.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 **Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)** has been canceled. Our planning team is saddened by the cancellation, but the well-being and safety of everyone is important to all of us. The planning team will soon start preparing for MO-YLF 2022. Be sure to watch for announcements and the application this fall.

In the meantime, stay tuned for additional upcoming youth leadership opportunities throughout the remainder of the year!

For more information on the **Missouri Youth Leadership Forum** program and events, please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/yjf.htm>



## Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Members

- Yvonne Wright, Chair, New Bloomfield
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Ronald Hack, St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- DeAnna Noriega, Columbia
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

## Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jessica Zimmer, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

## TRAVEL WITH SERVICE ANIMALS

by Claudia Browner

As the numbers of positive COVID-19 cases are starting to decrease and Missouri residents are able to receive their vaccinations, people may start thinking about travelling again in the near future.

Whether you travel by car, bus, train, or airplane, here are some important facts to remember if you require a service animal to accompany you on your trip:



- \* Places of public accommodation, such as public transportation (bus, train, public transit), hotels, and restaurants are required (by the Americans with Disabilities Act—ADA) to allow individuals with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal without charging an extra fee for the dog. The same applies to places of entertainment such as amusement parks, museums, theatres, zoos, etc.
- \* If you are planning to travel by airplane, airlines are required by the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) to allow persons with disabilities to travel with their service dogs. Please note that due to a recent change in the final rule about [Travel with Service Animals](#), airlines can require service dog owners to complete paperwork prior to their flights and airlines are no longer required to allow individuals with disabilities to travel with emotional support animals. If you travel out of the country, please keep in mind that the laws about travel with service animals may be different in the country of your destination.
- \* To avoid unnecessary issues or surprises, it is always a good idea to plan ahead, do your research about your destination, and communicate any accommodation needs ahead of time.

To find out more information about the rights and responsibilities of service dog owners, and the laws that apply, visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/serviceanimals.htm> or contact our office at [gcd@oa.mo.gov](mailto:gcd@oa.mo.gov) or 573-751-2600.

## APRIL AWARENESS EVENTS

**Autism Awareness Month**—to celebrate differences and build an inclusive society. <https://www.autismacceptance.org/>

**Distracted Driving Awareness Month**—Information about the dangers of distracted driving and the injuries or fatalities it can cause. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/distracted-driving/april-distracted-driving-awareness-month>

**Limb Loss Awareness Month**—Information and resources for live with limb loss or limb differences. <https://www.amputee-coalition.org/events-programs/limb-loss-awareness-month/>

**Parkinson's Awareness Month**—Information about available resources to make life better for people living with Parkinson's disease. <https://www.parkinson.org/parkinsons-awareness-month>