The 15th annual Missouri Disability Rights Legislative Day, with a theme of “Freedom to Choose my Own Path,” took place on March 10th at the Capitol Rotunda.

Over 425 people from all over Missouri attended the rally to hear exciting, enthusiastic and informative speakers and to learn about legislative issues. The day culminated with many of the audience participants visiting their legislators to tell their stories and advocate for legislative bills that are important to them.

There were a wide variety of speakers, from advocates, to state attorneys, to elected officials. All of the speakers had important information to give to the audience and the range of topics reflected this.

From information on guardianship reform to the Money Follows the Person Program to Medicaid Asset Limit and to Medicaid Buy-in, there was something for everyone.

Andrew Lackey and Becky Dickey were the co-chairs of the event and they were able to recruit the following outstanding speakers:

- Lt. Governor Peter Kinder
- Chuck Graham
- Reg Turnbull
- Representative Kevin Engler
- Cathy Enfield
- Stephanie Briscoe
- Brian Weisel
- Chris Worth
- Stella Vanvacter
- Senator Eric Schmitt

(Photo above: Audience at Disability Rights Legislative Day)
Spotlight on Bullying

by Laura Mueth

Bullying is a topic of importance in the 2016 legislative session. Four bills seek to address bullying in educational settings. They are House Bills 1384 and 1583 and Senate Bills 728 and 748. The bill that is farthest through the process is House Bill 1583 sponsored by Representative Allen.

Bullying, particularly of students with disabilities, is an issue that the GCD staff hears about often from adults and young people in school today. Last year, this was a topic during the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum. I recently saw a television commercial from Shriners Hospitals for Children featuring individuals with physical disabilities including RJ Mitte, an actor who has Cerebral Palsy and was bullied growing up. The commercial discusses the need to prevent bullying and asks the public to take the pledge. You can view the commercial at: https://vimeo.com/107625290.

You can find out more about the Cut the Bull campaign at http://cutthebull.org/. It provides an opportunity for individuals to share stories of bullying and become educated. Although this campaign only addresses bullying of people with physical disabilities, the GCD recognizes it can happen to anyone with any type of disability.

A concurrent resolution has been introduced geared toward the general public. These pieces of legislation may not have been introduced because of bullying, but could assist in the recognition of issues resulting from bullying.

2016 Autism Society Day on the Hill

By Spencer Hunley, Missouri Youth Leadership Forum 2004 Alum

The 2016 Autism Society Day on the Hill was a good experience, and allowed me to meet with various legislator offices and other affiliates and discuss ideas and methods that may have not been shared nor considered before. Even though Congress was in recess during the week of February 17-19, it was still a fruitful experience that taught me a lot about working with legislators to further our policy goals.

The first training session went over basic information, very useful if you were new to this event and/or visiting with legislators/legislative offices and their staff. It was thorough and provided a lot of tools to use, as well as explanations as to why the Hill functions the way it does - and how to use that to your advantage. We went over a few priorities and bills - one I chose to focus on intently was HR 927 - also known as the Keeping All Students Safe Act.

In summary, it directs the Department of Education to establish minimum standards that prohibit seclusion/restraint unless such measures are required to eliminate imminent danger of physical injury to student or others and certain precautions are taken; requires LEAs (Local Education Authorities) to ensure sufficient number of school personnel who receive state-approved crisis intervention training & first aid certification; and finally, prohibits physical restraint or seclusion from being written into a student’s education plan, individual safety plan, behavioral plan, or individual education program as a planned intervention.

In my opinion, I think seclusion and restraint should be completely banned in school settings; however, after some thorough research and study, I was shocked to find that seclusion and restraint is already being used in public schools in many parts of our country; some districts have even built seclusion rooms inside classrooms for this practice. The sad fact is that a full ban wouldn’t end seclusion and restraint, but compel it into a hidden and secretive part of our schools, which opens the potential for abuse. This bill, while not banning it altogether, forces schools to also disclose to parents the same day any seclusion or restraint is used upon a student - which will significantly lessen the likelihood of abusive and life-threatening conditions and actions being committed, while ensuring that parents of all students (non-verbal and otherwise) are properly informed if/when their child is secluded or restrained. It’s a step in the right direction towards ending this outdated, obsolete and cruel practice.

Maria Town, a self-advocate who is the Associate Director of Public Engagement for the Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs at The White House, spoke with us and provided a view from someone who has a disability who works within the D.C. system.
The Governor’s Council on Disability is still accepting applications for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) from delegates and volunteer staff.

MO-YLF is a unique 5 day training program for high schools students with disabilities, ages 16-21, designed to cultivate leadership, citizenship, social, and career development skills. The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is hosted by the Governor’s Council on Disability and Paraquad. This program is not funded by state revenues. All funding is handled through Paraquad, a nonprofit, 501(c)3. Donations are tax-deductible.

If you know of a student with disabilities who has leadership potential, please share the information about this exciting program with them. GCD is looking for applicants from all areas of the state.

The applications for delegates and staff are available online at http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm

For questions, please contact the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum at (800) 877-8249 or (573) 751-2600.
Missouri Governor’s Council on Disability

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- Yvonne Wright, Chair, New Bloomfield
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- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
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Staff Members

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- Claudia Browner, Office Manager
- Dawn Evans, MO-YLF Coordinator
- Laura Mueth, Legislative Coordinator

Mobility Management Planning in Missouri

By Rob Honan

There are some exciting things going on with transportation in Missouri for rural Missourians with disabilities, seniors, and low income individuals. For the last three years, citizens in 19 counties have had access to better transportation coordination than in the past, and I spoke with one of the persons who is making this happen on a regional level. I interviewed Holly Kreienkamp, who is the Mobility Manager of the Meramec Regional Planning Council (MRPC):

How did this project start?

In 2012, the Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities (now: Missouri DD Council (MODDC)) offered up $20,000 cash and $6,667 in-kind seed funds for a pilot project to develop and implement a strategy to promote Human Service Transportation. The project turned out to be Mobility Management Programs (MMP), and the MMPs are housed in three Regional Planning Councils: MRPC, Boonslick Regional Planning Commission (Warrenton), and Mid-MO Regional Planning Commission (Columbia). The scope of the project is 19 counties.

What is “Coordinated Transportation” and what is the role of the MMPs:

“Coordinated transportation” is primarily a transportation referral service that utilizes many different transportation providers. As part of the referral process, individuals seeking transportation can access: MORIDES.org or the three MMPs to learn more about their transportation options. The MMPs are employees of the three regional planning commissions who provide information to the public, plan and run quarterly meetings and work MODOT and the DD Council to operate the program.

Since the program has started are you seeing increased numbers of people using transportation?

Because the MMPs do not actually provide transportation, the actual numbers are not known, but we are seeing an increase in the number of calls about how to access transportation.

What is the average cost of a ride?

Again, the costs vary by provider. Transportation users can go to MORIDES.org to find out how to contact providers for fare charges. In addition to the transportation providers in the 19 counties of the three existing MMPs, users can access all transportation options for the entire state of Missouri, including some in Illinois.

What are some of the innovative things that you have done?

In July of this year, we are going to offer a Mobility Management Voucher Program. The program will assist individuals that have exhausted all other options and cannot afford transportation. The program will provide up to two vouchers per person. The maximum value of each voucher will be $10. The voucher program was developed to assist people with their transportation needs with an overall effort of improving transportation services within the Meramec Region. In addition, for a 45-day period, MRPC is partnering with Schwan’s Cares in a fundraising campaign to provide much need dollars to help cover transit costs when there is no other way to provide a ride. Schwann’s Home Delivery Service will give 20% of product sales & 40% of eGift card sales back to MRPC to support the MMP program.