



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

Inside this Issue

Page 1:

- GCD Update
- Did You Know?

Page 2:

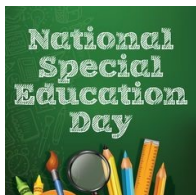
- Legislative Priorities Poll Results are in
- Date set for the 2019 MO-YLF

Page 3:

- Honor Leaders in the Disability Community
- Meet Council Member Betty Davidson

Page 4:

- Working Works
- VR Summer Work Experience Program
- Upcoming Events



GCD Update

by Claudia Browner



We wish all of our readers a very Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Peaceful and Healthy New Year!

With 2018 almost being over, the GCD is looking back on a very productive and eventful year. We reflect on the connections made with other state agencies, organizations, and the disability community and the new partnerships and initiatives that have been developed throughout the year.

We are thankful for the opportunity to be involved in many groups and committees that address the needs of individuals with disabilities and work hard to promote and improve full inclusion. With that in mind, GCD needs your help to recognize those individuals or organizations that already practice and demonstrate full inclusion by honoring them with one of the annual [GCD Awards](#). For agencies or organizations that would like to help increase disability awareness and promote full inclusion, the GCD offers educational training on disability etiquette, employment, inclusion, and service animals. Please contact our office to schedule a presentation.

As we gear up for the new year and the legislative session beginning on January 9, we encourage you to take a look at the [Legislative Priorities Poll](#) report. Individuals who want to learn about the legislative process in Missouri and how to advocate for themselves can view our [Legislative Education Project](#) (LEP) videos online or schedule an LEP training. To stay informed about proposed legislation impacting individuals with disabilities, please subscribe to the weekly [Legislative Update](#).

Did You Know?

by Rachel Rackers

Throughout each year, there are many days, weeks or months that are dedicated to a particular subject to raise and promote awareness. These are important because they allow individuals – along with loved ones and advocate groups, to come together in unison around a common cause and provide support. There are two dates during December and January that relate to disability history.

December 2nd is National Special Education Day, which is observed annually on this date because it marks the anniversary of our nation's first federal special education law. This law is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which made education available to all American children including those with disabilities. Special Education Day was first celebrated on the 30th anniversary of IDEA in 2005. This is a day that honors the progress and continued growth in special education in schools.

January 4th is World Braille Day. It is observed on this particular date every year because it is birthday of the inventor, Louis Braille. After becoming blind from a childhood accident, he created the system of writing and began to master his new way of living. World Braille Day is an important reminder that even though the accessibility and independence for those who are blind or visually-impaired has improved, there are still many areas that are lacking. This date is a great opportunity to learn about braille and other accessible forms of communication. We can all do our part to ensure that accommodations and services are available for the blind and visually-impaired.

Information provided online by Health Line Awareness and Braille Works

Legislative Priorities Poll Results are in

by Laura Mueth

The Governor's Council on Disability recently conducted its annual [Legislative Priorities Poll](#) to determine the level of importance disability related issues have to Missourians impacted by disability through their personal and/or professional lives. Thank you to everyone who participated.

The results have been shared with members of our Council, legislators, the GCD listservs, and social media. Five hundred and thirty seven (537) polls were returned from seventy-seven (77) different counties. Based on the responses received, the priorities for 2019 are:

1. All schools having evacuation plans for all people with disabilities
2. All public buildings having evacuation plans for all people with disabilities
3. MO HealthNet coverage for hearing aids for adults
4. Private insurance coverage requirement for hearing aids
5. Mandated insurance coverage for all physical and developmental disabilities

Survey participants were given the opportunity to list other topics that are important to the disability community. There were several topics mentioned frequently, which included:

- A lack of choice in employment
- Not having enough affordable, accessible housing
- Lack and/or failure of public transportation
- The cost of health care/insurance, and ensuring therapies and services are provided for adults and for additional disabilities
- Maintaining the motorcycle helmet law

The detailed report can be accessed on our website at https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/legislative_priorities_poll.htm.

Date set for the 2019 MO-YLF

by Rachel Rackers



The planning committee for the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF) has already begun putting things in place for the next year's Forum. The 17th annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum will be held July 16-20, 2019 at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

Many modifications and additions have been made during planning to ensure that delegates get the most out of MO-YLF and are able to continue to grow and lead after they return home. One addition, is a parent session on graduation day. This will give staff the opportunity to connect, inform, and educate parents/guardians on how to help their delegate during transition.

The next addition, is implementing independent living (IL) and relationships into the week. Both of these topics are of importance and will impact delegates at some point in their lives. In addition to incorporating these topics into the week, the planning committee will also connect each delegate to their local IL Center. Once each

delegate graduates to become an alumni, they will begin to work towards their goals. Strategies are being discussed on ideas on how to help them achieve and focus on doing so. One of the ideas is to do a year follow along, which would include a phone call each month. This would give alumni an opportunity to ask questions or discuss steps they are taking to achieve their Leadership Plan goals.

Applications for staff, volunteers and delegates are now available on our website. The application deadlines are March 31, 2019 for delegates and May 1, 2019 for staff.

The MO-YLF planning committee encourages you to spread the word about MO-YLF and to come experience this life-changing week!

For more information about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, please visit our website at <http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf.htm>

Honor Leaders in the Disability Community

by Christina Brazell

The Governor's Council on Disability is searching for the best of the best! There are so many individuals and organizations out there supporting the Disability Community, and we need to know who they are! The GCD only gives out these awards ONCE a year, please don't let those exceptional individuals go unnoticed. Help us find our Winners!

It takes only a few minutes to complete the nomination form and give the gift of recognition to those who truly deserve it.

The following GCD Awards are open for nominations:

- The [Inclusion Award](#) recognizes and honors individuals or organizations that have demonstrated the best practices in inclusion of people with disabilities.
- The [Youth Leadership Award](#) recognizes emerging young leaders (age 16-26) in the disability community.
- The [Website/IT Award](#) honors a Missouri non-profit organization, business or local government that offers accessible and user-friendly websites.

A panel of judges selects the winners for each award category and the winners receive their awards at the Power Up Assistive Technology Conference and Expo.

If you know of any individuals or organizations who deserve to be recognized for their accomplishments, please submit a nomination for one (or more) of these prestigious awards! The nomination forms can be found and completed online by January 31, 2019 at <https://disability.mo.gov/files/2018-GCD-Awards-announcement.pdf>



Meet Council Member Betty Davidson

by Claudia Browner



Betty Davidson, Ph.D. is a St. Louis resident who started working with students with impairments in high school and knew she wanted to become a special education teacher. Her first teaching position was at a school in St. Louis City called Michael School for Crippled Children. She knew in 1970 that special education needed to change and even the name of the school had to go.

Betty started teaching college in 1975 and continued until 2016. She was a director in a college and realized that she missed being with children with disabilities. She became principal at Missouri School for the Blind and then became Deputy Director of Missouri Rehabilitation Services for the Blind in Jefferson City. She retired from working for the state and became the supervisor for students with visual and physical impairments for Special School District in St. Louis in 2004 and loves her job even today.

Betty Davidson is currently the chair of the Transportation Subcommittee of the Missouri Governor's Council on Disability. She is on the St. Louis Disability Transportation Resource Network, the St. Louis Transition Council, the Missouri State Deafblind Advisory Committee, and the St. Louis Deafblind Task Force since 2004. She works with the Starkloff Disability Institute on the Dream Big Program. She works with the International Association for the Rehabilitation of the Blind and will serve as the Chair of the Leadership Division. She will be the President of the Missouri Association of the Rehabilitation of the Blind and prepare for the national convention in St. Louis in 2020. Betty works with Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis and was President of Variety Women. She was President of Home Services Inc. of St. Louis and President of Zonta Club of St. Louis. Betty has received numerous awards and her latest was the Special School District Lasting Impression Award this spring.

Betty is very proud of her 2 children and her 5 grandchildren. Her son, Brent, followed in her vision footsteps as an ophthalmologist in St. Louis and Farmington and he is planning to help set up a vision clinic in Honduras. Her daughter, Michelle, is a journalist, TV host, screen writer, actress, and producer and has written and produced pieces on disabilities.

Betty stated, "I'm honored to be on the Governor's Council on Disability as it gives us the opportunity to serve all people with disabilities in our state."

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
- Mary Ann Harter, St. Louis
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Todd Mayfield, Jefferson City
- DeAnna Noriega, Columbia
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Opeoluwa Sotonwa, Jefferson City
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Staff Members

- Christina Brazell, Administrative Office Support Assistant
- Claudia Browner Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Disability Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Disability Program Specialist

Working Works

By Claudia Browner

The US Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy has launched its newest campaign – Working Works



Working Works. It lets people earn a living and contribute their skills and experience. For some, it may also be about pursuing a passion, taking on new challenges or being part of a team.

PSA Working Works (open captioned):

<https://youtu.be/nlopcSrlz1E>

PSA Working Works (audio introduced):

<https://youtu.be/HFRdPIP8TKs>

Through the voices of several individuals, the “Working Works” PSA explores the many reasons people work, including after injury or illness. The PSA’s four primary cast members include Major League Baseball great Cal Ripken, Jr. and three other individuals who worked with their employers and health-care professionals to make a plan to stay at or return to work following illness or injury. Their stories emphasize the importance of working together on effective stay-at-work/return-to-work strategies—for the benefit of individuals, families, employers and the nation.

For more information, please visit <https://whatcanyoudocampaign.org/>

VR Summer Work Experience Program

By Claudia Browner

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Summer Work Experience Program is a work-based learning experience in a competitive integrated setting for students with disabilities and is provided in collaboration with approved Missouri VR Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). It is a six week, paid program with up to 20 hours per week; sixteen hours are spent on tasks associated with the summer job and the remaining 4 hours are dedicated to soft skills training facilitated by the CRP.

Qualified participants are students entering their final year of high school who have no prior successful paid work experience in a competitive integrated setting.

In 2018, 700 students and 203 employers participated in the program and 73 students were offered a job.

[Click here to watch a video](#) about the Summer Work Experience Program. For more information, contact your local [Vocational Rehabilitation office](#).

Upcoming Events

- January 9, 2019 Missouri Legislative Session begins (100th General Assembly)
- March 15-22, 2019 Legislative Spring Break
- April 1-2, 2019 [Power Up Assistive Technology Conference & Expo](#), Columbia
- May 17, 2019 Last day of Missouri Legislative Session
- July 16-20, 2019 [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), MU Campus, Columbia