



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

GCD presents Annual Awards

by Claudia Browner

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The Governor's Council on Disability presented its annual Inclusion and Youth Leadership Awards at the Power Up Assistive Technology Conference and Expo on April 2 in Columbia.

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.



2018 Inclusion Award winner: Bloom Café, St. Louis

Bloom Café is a universally designed restaurant owned and operated by Paraquod that provides job training for adults with disabilities, and serves as a model of integrated employment. Approximately 60% of Bloom Café's staff have disabilities. In addition to the restaurant, Bloom Café provides individuals with disabilities a pathway to economic independence through a formal job training program which includes job

skills training, soft skills training and paid internships in the community as well as assistance with finding permanent jobs. Through this program, Bloom Café is promoting inclusion and equal participation for people with all types of disabilities.

(Photo: Christina Brazell, Lily Weeks, Aimee Wehmeier, Joe Wilson, Claudia Browner)

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In Memoriam



Laura Mueth had to say goodbye to her service dog Syler. He will be missed.

Legislative Education Project Success

by Laura Mueth

The [Legislative Education Project](#) (LEP) is wrapping up for 2019. There is one remaining in April at UMSL in St. Louis.

LEP's held in Springfield and Kansas City in February, and in St. Joseph in April were successful. The LEP in Springfield featured a great collaboration between three different area agencies to make it happen. This event had the biggest turnout with thirty-six people. Thank you to Empower: Abilities (formerly Southwest Center for Independent Living), Arc of the Ozarks, and Abilities First for encouraging people to attend. Even though the LEP in Kansas City was small in number, it was mighty. There was great discussion regarding bills and concerns. Both sides learned new things and individuals left empowered to use their voice to advocate for change.

We already look forward to providing LEP training during the next legislative session.

GCD presents 2018 Awards, continued

(Continued from page 1)



Honorable Mention: Jim and Theresa Edwards/Sophie's Run

Jim and Theresa Edwards are prime examples of community leaders for students with disabilities. In memory of their daughter, the Edwards started Sophie's Run, a non-profit organization to raise funds to support families and students who need augmentative and alternative communication devices in the Park Hill School District and throughout their transition to college and post-secondary opportunities. These devices allow nonverbal students to have a voice, independence, and the opportunity to advocate for themselves and live a meaningful, purposeful life.

(Photo: Christina Brazzell, Theresa Edwards, Jim Edwards, Claudia Browner)

The [Youth Leadership Award](#) and one honorable mention recognize outstanding Missouri youth (age 16-26) with a disability that have demonstrated exemplary leadership by making a difference in their community.

2018 Youth Leadership Award winner: Kaci Conley

Kaci Conley has dedicated much of her personal time to bring awareness to her community regarding accessibility and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. As a student at Maryville University, she joined the ABLE campus group to advocate for campus awareness and increasing accessibility features on campus. Kaci was elected co-president of ABLE and hosted a Disability Awareness event on campus, and was the only student chosen to join a faculty/student committee for accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Kaci demonstrates that her disability does not limit her ability to succeed and reach her goals. Her next goal is to ensure that the graduation ceremony is accessible to all students.

(Photo: Christina Brazzell, Laura Conley, Kaci Conley, James Conley, Claudia Browner)



Honorable Mention: Madelyn Hubbs

Madelyn Hubbs is a dedicated advocate for all abilities. A freshman at Maryville University, she is a role model for other students, giving presentations at area schools about disabilities, prosthetic limbs, and anti-bullying. For the last ten years, Madelyn has been a patient ambassador for Shriners Hospital for Children. She has volunteered hundreds of hours working at Shriners events, raised more than \$5,000 and collected over 2,180 new toys for the children at Shriners Hospital. Madelyn has demonstrated exemplary leadership skills, won numerous awards, and is an alum of the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum. It is her goal to become an occupational therapist and make this a better world for individuals with disabilities.

(Photo: Madelyn Hubbs)

April Awareness Events

- [Autism Awareness Month](#)
- [Donate Life Month](#)
- [Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month](#)
- [National Cancer Control Month](#)

May Awareness Events

- [National Arthritis Month](#)
- [Asthma and Food Allergy Awareness Month](#)
- [Mental Health Month](#)
- [Stroke Awareness Month](#)

Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Planning

by Claudia Browner

Are you prepared for an emergency? Do you have a plan in place for yourself and your family? Have you practiced your emergency plan?

Spring in Missouri can bring severe weather, flooding and other emergencies, so now is a good time to make or review your emergency plans and prepare emergency kits with the supplies needed to survive, as well as update your emergency contacts.

The Governor's Council on Disability is involved in workgroups and trainings addressing the needs of the disability community in emergencies, including the State Emergency Management Agency's (SEMA) Access and Functional Needs Committee and the [First Responder Disability Awareness Training](#) (FRDAT—a program funded by the Missouri DD Council).



What if an emergency happens while you are at work? Does your place of employment have a plan in place that includes the safe evacuation of individuals with disabilities? This includes accessible signage directing individuals to evacuation routes or accessible safe areas as well as communication systems to notify first responders about the location of individuals who may need additional assistance in an emergency, and drills to practice these plans.

GCD's Disability Web Portal provides a number of resources related to [Emergency Preparedness and Safety](#). To learn more and access these helpful resources, please visit our website at <http://disability.mo.gov/emergency.htm>

Meet Council Member Mary Ann Harter

by Claudia Browner



Mary Ann Harter (nee Gerber) is an attorney and retired teacher for the St. Louis Special School District. She holds degrees in law (J.D. cum laude St. Louis University); and English (B.A. summa cum laude) and Psychology (M.A. summa cum laude) from the University of Missouri at St. Louis. She also holds an elementary school teaching certificate from Central Methodist College and taught at St. Bridget's Catholic School in Pacific, Missouri.

In her practice of law, Mary Ann has been an assistant prosecuting attorney, assistant public defender, assistant general counsel for the Missouri Department of Revenue, in corporate practice, a research attorney for the Missouri Court of Appeals Eastern District, and has been in private practice for several decades. She volunteers to represent indigents through the Legal Services of Eastern Missouri. She also helps organize the instruction of English language to children in China over the internet with teachers in the United States.

Mary Ann has always had great interest in the disability community. Her disability of Rheumatoid Arthritis forced her to retire from active teaching. She has served on the Governor's Council for years, is a member of the council's advocacy committee and chairs the employment subcommittee.

Mary Ann lives in South St. Louis County with her husband Charles, a practicing attorney with disabilities, and children, some of whom have disabilities, and who study pre-med at Purdue University, engineering at Washington University, English at U.M.S.L. and at Lindbergh high school. She has two adult daughters, one in Potosi and a nurse practitioner in Dallas, and loves to visit her four grandchildren.

Mary Ann has served on the parish council at both St. Elizabeth's of Hungary and Our Lady of Providence in Crestwood. She is a former long standing board member of Missouri Parent Act (MPACT). She is a member of the Missouri Bar Assn, Lawyers for Life and the St. Thomas More Legal Society.

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

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

Meet MO-YLF alumna Kelsey Redding

by Rachel Rackers



This month's MO-YLF spotlight is on Kelsey Redding. Kelsey graduated from the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF) this past summer, right before the start of her senior year in high school.

While growing up, Kelsey not only faced challenges with her disabilities, but also with being placed in foster care. Although Kelsey was up against a lot from a young age, she has always felt it was important to help others and put a smile on their faces. In the months leading up to MO-YLF, Kelsey moved into the home of pair of high school instructors. That is when the world began to open up for Kelsey.

During the MO-YLF, Kelsey realized that nothing will ever be handed to her and that she is going to have to work every day to be the successful person she wants to be, and that even with a disability, she can do anything she sets her mind to. She also realized that a barrier in her education was a lack of confidence. Kelsey has been able to achieve many things and overcome barriers in the last eight months since attending MO-YLF. She's been able to conquer fears when it comes to her school work and was able to test out of special education.

Kelsey participated in the Vocational Rehabilitation Summer Work Experience and was hired by the same employer afterwards. Since attending the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, she has been sharing her inspirational story with the community, agencies, and students with disabilities and their parents. So far she has had the opportunity to speak at a Transition Atlas for Youth meeting, MPACT Transition Expo, school board meetings, MU Pre-ETS Boot Camp, among many others. She was also featured in VR's state-wide newsletter.

Kelsey was selected to go to Washington D.C. with the JAG (Jobs for America's Graduates) Organization. She is the Club President for JAG, a member of Advanced Choir, FCA, Writing Club, and has assisted in her church's Vacation Bible School and other projects.

Kelsey enjoys writing and has had three poems published in three different books. This last winter was an exciting time for her as she got her license and a car, and won Homecoming Queen at East Carter High School. Kelsey has been accepted into Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff, and has applied to come back as a staff member for this year's MO-YLF. Although she isn't sure which career path she wants to take just yet, there is no doubt that she will make a difference everywhere she goes. She sees herself making a difference by showing everyone that no matter what your disability is, you can do great things. That is okay to ask for help, but it is not okay to give up. Kelsey has been a prime example as to what can happen when you take those first steps.

Kelsey is forever grateful for her teachers, her foster parents, Pre-ETS, Vocational Rehabilitation, MO-YLF, and everyone that has been a part of her journey thus far.

Upcoming Events

- April 22, 2019 [Legislative Education Project](#) (LEP), UMSL, St. Louis
- April 30, 2019 [Disability Inclusion Summit](#), Disability:IN GKC, Kansas City
- May 17, 2019 Last day of Missouri Legislative Session
- May 17, 2019 [Charting the LifeCourse for Health](#), Jefferson City
- June 16-19, 2019 [National ADA Symposium](#), Grapevine, Texas
- June 17 -20, 2019 [Transition Training Institute](#), Columbia
- June 18-20, 2019 [National APSE Employment Conference](#), St. Louis
- July 16-20, 2019 [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), MU Campus, Columbia