



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

GCD Update

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability wishes all our readers a very Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a Peaceful and Healthy New Year!



The year 2019 has been eventful and productive for GCD, and we are looking forward to continuing our work and starting some new programs and initiatives as we begin a new decade in 2020.

The last few months have brought some changes to our office. In October, GCD moved to a new space on the 6th floor of the Truman building in Jefferson City. Stop by for a visit when you are in town.



We also hired a new staff member—Jessica Zimmer, who joined our team on October 16 as the Administrative Office Support Assistant for our agency.

As the year 2019 is coming to an end, we want to recognize individuals and organizations who have promoted and advocated for full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community living. We need your help to hear about individuals or organizations who deserve recognition for their efforts in inclusion and youth leadership. The **2019 GCD Awards for Inclusion and Youth Leadership** will be awarded at the Power Up conference in Columbia.

Please help us **recognize leaders in the disability community** by submitting your nominations by January 31, 2020.



Inside this Issue

Page 1:

- GCD Update
- Did you know...?

Page 2:

- MO-YLF Program and Alumni Updates

Page 3:

- Preparing for the Legislative Session
- Meet Council Member Andrew Sartorius

Page 4:

- Remembering MO-YLF alum Mitchell Herndon
- Upcoming Events

Did you know...?

December 3 is International Day of People with Disabilities

Promoted by the United Nations since 1992, the International Day of People with Disabilities is observed on December 3 each year to raise understanding of people with disabilities and encourage their dignity, rights and well-being.

December 10 is International Human Rights Day

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, Human Rights Day was proclaimed as a “common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations” and is observed annually on December 10.



MO-YLF Program and Alumni Updates

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 18th annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum will be held July 14-18, 2020 at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

Last year's MO-YLF had several expansions and firsts in the program's history. One of which, was the number of delegates who attended the five day leadership training. There were 30 delegates who participated and graduated to become alumni. For 2020, we are planning on increasing the number of accepted delegates to 36. MO-YLF is an excellent opportunity for high school students in transition to realize their full potential. It's exciting to be able to expand and offer this life changing opportunity to more youth in Missouri.

Another change from last year that will be continued this year is a parent session before Saturday's graduation. There will be additional agencies and information provided during this year's parent session. It is an excellent opportunity to connect, inform, and educate parents/guardians on how to help their delegate during transition and to learn about what resources and agencies are available to assist with their needs after they return home.

An additional change that will continue from last year was to the leadership plan each delegate completes during MO-YLF. The new approach is more hands on with creating a vision board poster for their good life and what that might look like to them. It is broken down in such a way that allows them to identify possible barriers that could occur and what resources are available to help along the way. They also identify details on what steps are needed now and in the future to reach their goals. As MO-YLF continues to grow each year, so will the resources and opportunities that we can offer to delegates, staff and parents.



MO-YLF alumna Kayla Patek advocates for campus accessibility

One of the greatest parts about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is watching alumni take leadership skills and self-determination away the Forum, and seeing how they use these skills to be leaders in their community. There are way too many positive outcomes and transformations to list them all, but here are some most recent ones: One alumna was named a Patient Ambassador for Shriners Hospital, among other accomplishments. One alumnus was recently appointed as a council member for the Governor's Council on Disability. Another alumna has been advocating to make her college campus and community accessible, with great success. Many alumni have either recently moved into their own place, got their first job, or were accepted into college. There have also been numerous alumni who have promoted MO-YLF by giving a presentation or participating in a panel.



MO-YLF alum Steven Gregg proudly serves on the Bolivar City Fire Department as a reserve fire fighter

It is important for all alumni to remember that their accomplishments not only have an impact in their own lives, but for other individuals that have disabilities. As they are leading by example, they are making a difference and encouraging others to see their own potential, whether they realize it or not. Keep up the great work, alumni!

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

Applications for staff, volunteers and delegates are now available on our website.

The application deadlines are March 31, 2020 for delegates and May 1, 2020 for staff.

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

Preparing for the Legislative Session

by Laura Mueth

GCD 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, executive branch staff, the GCD listservs, and social media. The Council uses the results from the Poll which included 453 responses from individuals in 36 counties to determine our legislative priorities for the 2020 session. They are:

- ⇒ The increasing cost of medication
- ⇒ All public buildings having evacuation plans for all people with disabilities
- ⇒ Private insurance coverage requirement for hearing aids
- ⇒ Health care/medical services access
- ⇒ Schools having a restraint and seclusion policy



The complete Legislative Priorities Poll Report can be accessed at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/files/2019-Legislative-Priorities-Poll-Report.pdf>. These priorities will help guide our efforts as the legislative session activities get under way in December and January. Legislators and their staff are already working on bills to introduce during the pre-filing period (December 2, 2019 to January 7, 2020). The work of getting new bills to become law begins at 12:00 p.m. on January 8, 2020 with the official start of the 2020 legislative session.

If you need assistance understanding the legislative process or how to work with your legislators, please consider participating in GCD's **Legislative Education Project (LEP)**. It provides an opportunity for individuals to receive training on these topics through videos and narrated PowerPoints, local presentations with a GCD staff member, or presentations with a GCD staff member at the Capitol. If you would like more information about the LEP, you can find it at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm>.

If you understand how to communicate and advocate but need some assistance keeping track of the hundreds of disability bills each session, you might consider signing up to have the **Legislative Update** sent to your email weekly during the legislative session. To sign up to receive the Legislative Update, contact Laura at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov.

Meet Council Member Andrew Sartorius

by Claudia Browner



Andrew Sartorius was appointed to the Council on July 9, 2019. Andrew follows in the footsteps of his father Joseph, who served on the Council from 2002–2010.

A St. Louis native, he attended the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum during his junior year of high school in 2004. After graduating from Lindbergh High School, he studied biology at Rockhurst University in Kansas City and was working towards his Master's degree in molecular biology when he decided to follow his true calling—the practice of law.

Andrew graduated from University of Missouri—Kansas City School of Law in 2013 and attended the Trial Lawyer's College in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He moved to Jefferson City and worked as an assistant public defender for the State of Missouri until 2017, when he joined as a partner of Jefferson City based law firm Sartorius Kirsch.

Andrew teaches as an assistant professor of Criminal Justice and Political Science at Lincoln University, where he will instruct on state and local government next semester. He has continued his disability awareness and advocacy efforts through participation in the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum as a staff member, mentor, and panel speaker.

Andrew, his wife Katherine, and their son AJ reside in Jefferson City.

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
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- DeAnna Noriega, Columbia
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Opeoluwa Sotonwa, Jefferson City
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Staff Members

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

Remembering MO-YLF alum Mitchell Herndon

by Claudia Browner

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum lost one of its alumni—Mitchell Herndon. As we mourn the passing of such a charismatic and outgoing young leader, we will remember him as a very brave, courageous young man with an affectionate smile and a great sense of humor. Mitchell had such a positive attitude, a passion for advocating, and an ability to bring smiles wherever he went.



Mitchell participated in the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum in 2016, where he played a large part in the legislative day at the capitol. He enjoyed engaging with the legislators and advocating for people with disabilities.

Mitchell was elected student council president at Affton High School. His campaign slogan was, "Taking a stand for you!" which carried a special meaning for Mitchell.

He was a very intelligent young man, receiving a 32 on his ACT and being awarded the presidential scholarship for a full ride to St. Louis University. Majoring in political science, his goal was to be a lawyer.

In January 2019, he participated as an amateur lobbyist for the day and advocated for disability rights at the Missouri state capitol, where he met Governor Parson.

Mitchell was diagnosed with a disease so rare it did not have a name and until recently, there was only one other person in the world diagnosed with this disease. The first symptoms showed up around age 12. Over the years, Mitchell was in and out of the hospital. Along with hearing and vision loss, he lost the ability to walk several times, forcing him to learn to walk again after each relapse, but Mitchell never gave up hope.

Mitchell was always eager to help medical professionals and was hoping a cure for his disease would be found in his lifetime. His health took a turn for the worse and Mitchell passed away October 2, 2019, but his legacy lives on.

NBC News aired a documentary about Mitchell that can be found at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/teen-had-disease-so-rare-it-didn-t-have-name-n1063656>



Upcoming Events—Save the Dates

- January 8, 2020 Missouri Legislative Session Begins
- February 7, 2020 [GCD Quarterly Council Meeting](#), Jefferson City
- March 23-27, 2020 Legislative Spring Break
- March 30-31, 2020 [Power Up Assistive Technology Conference & Expo](#), Columbia
- May 1, 2020 [GCD Quarterly Council Meeting](#), Jefferson City
- May 15, 2020 Last Day of Legislative Session
- June 18-21, 2020 Career and Advocacy Forum for the Deaf/HH, MSD, Fulton
- July 14-18, 2020 [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), MU Campus, Columbia