

Governor's Council on Disability

2023 Inclusion Award Winners and Nominees

Winners exemplify standards of excellence in enhancing life for individuals living with disabilities

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 Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) selected the following award winner and honorable mention for the **32nd Annual Inclusion Award** in 2023.

2023 Winners

Winner – Alisha Favazza, Hollister R-V School District, Hollister, MO



Alisha Favazza, a dedicated educator at Hollister High School, champions inclusivity, promoting a school environment where every student feels valued and respected. Her passion for community engagement led to the development of transformative Community Based Learning Classes, fostering partnerships with over 13 local businesses and engaging students in five community events. These immersive experiences break down barriers and allow students to develop valuable life skills while building meaningful connections with the community.

Recognizing the importance of preparing students for their post-secondary lives, Favazza organized the inaugural Hollister Transition Fair. This landmark event brought together over 20 local agencies to connect students and their families with essential resources and support services. The fair's success, attracting participation from surrounding schools and exceeding expectations, is a testament to Favazza's vision and collaborative spirit.

Favazza's passion for inclusion has also brewed into a sweet success story with the student-run coffee shop. This initiative, envisioned and guided by her, provides students with disabilities with valuable hands-on learning opportunities, while simultaneously creating a sense of belonging and acceptance within the broader student body. The coffee shop welcomes all students with a smile, reminding everyone of the power of building a stronger, more inclusive community.

Favazza's dedication to inclusivity and student empowerment with disabilities has engendered a profound respect and admiration from students, colleagues, and community members alike. Her consistent work shines a light on the positive change we can all create by welcoming diversity and building bridges of understanding.

Honorable Mention – Kristi “KK” Kliewer, Abilities First, Springfield, MO



Kristi Kliewer has played a key role in enhancing lives at Abilities First since 2017, living out the organization's mission to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As an Inclusion Educator, she's consistently translated abilities into opportunities. Kliewer has helped develop pre-vocational classes for high schoolers, fostering their future success. Kliewer's expertise has also shaped a disability awareness curriculum for her local school district, ensuring wider understanding and inclusion. Notably, she has played a pivotal role in the "Good Life Group," where she cultivates self-advocacy, public speaking, and pre-vocational skills, with the goal of nurturing confident individuals ready to pursue their ambitions.

Kliewer actively advocates for inclusion through her participation in various boards and organizations, including the Ozarks Inclusion Partnership, Disability Rights Legislative Day, the Springfield Leadership's Civic

Awareness Committee and the Spinal Cord Injury Support Group with Empower Abilities. Her commitment is further demonstrated by her role in planning and hosting a Community Mixer. This event highlighted local businesses with inclusive practices and provided valuable insights for aspiring entrepreneurs. By showcasing the benefits of inclusivity and offering tangible resources, Kliewer empowered individuals to achieve economic success while promoting disability inclusion.

Kliewer's collaborative spirit and impactful advocacy have made a lasting difference in Southwest Missouri. By working alongside and empowering individuals with disabilities, she has demonstrably improved their lives and inspired others to take action.

2023 Inclusion Award nominees

The Governor's Council on Disability congratulates the following nominees on being nominated for the 32nd Annual Inclusion Award:

Abilities First – Springfield, MO

Nominated by Crystal Collins, for their inclusive community programming for individuals with and without disabilities from First Steps to the Next Step to Employment Services to several artisan inspired opportunities.

Dr. Beth Emmendorfer – Cape Girardeau County Board of Development – Jackson, MO

Nominated by Traci Ritter, for her exemplary service on the Cape Girardeau County Senate Bill 40 Board and her decades of work in Special Education in Jackson Public Schools.

Carrie Hammond – Missouri State Museum – Jefferson City, MO

Nominated by Angela Wells, for creating inclusive as well as accessible learning opportunities for visitors to the Missouri State Museum and her leadership in promoting inclusion among staff.

Job One – Independence, MO

Nominated by Aaron Martin, for their innovative programming in Career Development and Community Services as well as their rapid progress towards ending the use of the 14c wage structure for employees with disabilities.

Kim Hull – Hull House Coffee – Kansas City, MO

Nominated by Amanda Wilkinson, for her work in building a coffee shop that provides employment opportunities and an inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities.

Missouri History Museum – St. Louis, MO

Nominated by Sharon Spurlock, for their years of commitment to disability inclusion in their exhibits, tours, and programs including most recently in their exhibit commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Pawsperity – Kansas City, MO

Nominated by Wayne Crawford, for their pet grooming school's proactive agenda which focuses on providing opportunities for career advancement for individuals with disabilities along with support from Case Management and Social Work specialists.

Platte County Board of Services – Kansas City, MO

Nominated by Cassidi Jobe, for their recent opening of "Neuro Diverse City" which promises to be "an inclusive, safe, and fun social recreation center for adults who are neurodivergent or developmentally disabled."

Sodexo – Kirksville, MO

Nominated by Crystal Aminirad, for their partnership with the Adair County SB40 Developmental Disability Board and their employment initiatives providing competitive paying jobs for individuals with disabilities.

Southeast Enterprises – Kansas City, MO

Nominated by Hailee Baer, for the creation of an "ADAPT" zone in their warehouse for persons with specific sensory preferences and their partnership with the University of Kansas Medical Center Occupational Therapy Department.

Suzanne Baker – The STABLEs Equine Therapeutic Foundation Inc. – Farmington, MO

Nominated by Roxanne Miller, for her work empowering individuals with disabilities through horsemanship and equine therapy with a special emphasis on youth & children.

For additional information, please contact the Council at 573-751-2600 or by email at gcd@oa.mo.gov