



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY

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GCD NEWSLETTER

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[Governor's Council on Disability](https://www.gcd.mo.gov)

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Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) Application—
Deadline Extended to April 15!

GCD ANNOUNCES INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNERS

by Claudia Browner

Each year, the Governor's Council on Disability recognizes leaders in Inclusion and Youth Leadership through its annual [Inclusion Award](#) and [Youth Leadership Award](#) programs to raise awareness about the importance of inclusion and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community living, and to recognize and honor the accomplishments of the award recipients.

Inclusion Award honorees are chosen for their exceptional, proactive, and innovative measures to integrate and mainstream people with disabilities into their programs, activities, and operations. The Youth Leadership Award celebrates outstanding Missouri youths (aged 16-26) with a disability who exhibit exemplary leadership by making a positive impact on their communities.

The 2024 winners are:

Inclusion Award— True Manufacturing, O'Fallon

True Manufacturing showcases leadership in disability inclusion through its collaboration with the BCI Skills Center. Over five years, the company has created a job training program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, hiring 51 graduates with a 76% retention rate. Their inclusive hiring practices have strengthened their workforce and earned the 2024 Talent Pipeline Project of the Year award, showcasing the impact of equal opportunities in employment.

Inclusion Award Honorable Mention— Kit Brewer, Project CU, Inc., St. Louis

For over 25 years, Kit Brewer has championed disability employment as the Executive Director of Project CU, Inc., creating inclusive job opportunities for individuals with various disabilities. Project CU serves over 100 individuals by integrating employment services, accommodations, and advocacy for lasting success. His mentorship empowers employees, strengthens Missouri's workforce and establishes standards for disability employment.

Youth Leadership Award— Arabel StandingBear, Neosho

Arabel StandingBear is a passionate advocate for individuals with disabilities and rare diseases, motivated by her own experience. She engages in advocacy at local, state, and national levels, collaborating with legislators on initiatives like a childcare bill for families with disabilities. Her notable achievements include acting in "Killers of the Flower Moon," working with the Osage Nation Tribe, and contributing to a viral blood donation campaign. Arabel's leadership and advocacy embody the spirit of the Youth Leadership Award.

Youth Leadership Award Honorable Mention—Lucas Fritsche, Perryville

Lucas Fritsche has significantly impacted his community through his commitment to inclusion and accessibility. His journey began when he noticed a friend being unable to enjoy recess due to an inaccessible playground. This prompted him to advocate for an inclusive playground, leading to the Lucas and Friends Backyard Adventure project, which opened in 2021. Lucas's efforts have transformed his community and exemplify how young voices can drive meaningful change.

The awards will be presented to the winners at the Missouri Rehabilitation Association (MRA) Conference in Lake Ozark on May 29, 2025.

Read the full news release at <https://oa.mo.gov/commissioners-office/news>

For more information about the awards programs and this year's winners and nominees, visit our [Inclusion Awards](#) and [Youth Leadership Awards](#) websites.

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY WRAP UP

by Laura Mueth

[Disability Rights Legislative Day](#) (DRLD) 2025 was held on Wednesday, February 26. Over 500 people attended either in-person at the Capitol or virtually. **Access for All** was the theme for the day.

Transportation, employment, and access to services were the focus of the day. In a departure from previous years, the main speakers were all individuals with disabilities, family members, or service providers rather than just legislators. Governor Kehoe who was introduced by Representative Stinnett attended his first DRLD as governor.

Treasurer Malek discussed [Missouri's ABL Program](#). United States Senator Schmitt spoke via recorded video. Main speakers Duane Gruis, Erin Wiercinski, Nancy Loston, Saffron Weigand-Buckley, Michael Gentry, Jennifer "Allie" Friedrich, Erin Bowe, Julia Chaney Faughn, Cheri Montgomery, Miriam Galan, and Kayla Palmer shared their experiences and thoughts on one of the topics or on advocacy.

Representative Stinnett brought the event to the attention of her legislative colleagues by introducing members of the Access Team on the floor of the House of Representatives. The Access team was available to assist individuals with navigating the Capitol and meeting with legislators.

Due to the event being rescheduled from its original date, several advocacy groups that had not previously participated were able to join, because their own advocacy events were scheduled for the same day. There were also resource tables available for participants to visit. These contained materials concerning advocacy, leadership, employment, resources, along with information on DRLD.

Special thanks go to the emcee, Michkeal Cross and the planning committee for their contributions to make the day a success.



VOLUNTEER APPLICATIONS FOR MO-YLF OPEN UNTIL APRIL 15

by Reece Ellis

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY
 July 14-19, 2025
 at MU in Columbia

Volunteer Staff Needed!
Apply by April 15!

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is a leadership program designed for young adults with disabilities to learn from successful leaders and role models.

Apply for one of our volunteer staff positions to support the youth participants at this week-long, empowering program on MU Campus!

Make a positive difference in the lives of young adults with disabilities and gain professional leadership experience and connections.

Learn more about this exciting volunteer opportunity at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf>

Questions? 573-751-2600 gcd@oa.mo.gov

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) will hold its 2025 session from July 15—19, 2025 at the University of Missouri in Columbia. We are currently seeking dedicated volunteers to help make this transformative experience possible for high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21). Volunteer opportunities remain open until April 15, 2025.

MO-YLF volunteers play an essential role in creating this life-changing program. Responsibilities include assisting with delegate orientation and registration, providing mentorship, supporting daily activities, and helping maintain a safe, supportive environment where students can develop leadership skills, build confidence, and learn about disability advocacy and transition to adulthood.

Volunteer-staff are asked to arrive on July 14 for orientation and preparation before delegates arrive on July 15. This preparation ensures volunteers are fully ready to support participants throughout the forum. For more information about volunteer roles or to apply, please visit our website at disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf/volunteer.htm.

If you or your organization would like to help us make this great program possible, please contact GCD for more information by email at reece.ellis@oa.mo.gov or by calling our office at (573) 751-2600.

MOCIL LEGISLATIVE DAY 2025

by Claudia Browner

The [Missouri Centers for Independent Living](#) (MOCIL) association hosted its MOCIL Legislative Day 2025 on March 25 at the Missouri State Capitol. The theme of the event was **Opportunities for All** in celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Advocates from Missouri's 21 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) traveled to the capitol to meet with legislators to discuss the importance of services the CILs provide to support individuals with disabilities living in their communities. Hundreds of people then gathered in the capitol rotunda to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the ADA and hear from elected officials, legislators, and individuals living with disabilities about the importance of this civil rights legislation and the work that needs to continue to advance disability rights and ensure equal opportunities for all.

Governor Kehoe presented a proclamation to MOCIL President Patrick Lee in recognition of the 35th ADA anniversary. Other speakers included Missouri State Treasurer Vivik Malek, Representative Stinnett and Senator Williams, Elizabeth Rajchart, Kyle Auxier, Tammy Teel, and Jessica Podesva. The Kapital Kicks Jazz Band provided a musical performance.



To learn more about the services the Centers for Independent Living provide and find a CIL near you, visit mocil.org

GCD NDEAM POSTER CONTEST OPEN NOW

by Claudia Browner

Governor's Council on Disability

POSTER CONTEST

 **SUBMIT ENTRIES BY August 15, 2025**

CALLING ALL MISSOURI ARTISTS

Submit your artwork for a chance to be featured on the Governor's Council on Disability's 2025 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Poster

The theme for the artwork contest is the **35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

ADA35

FULL PARTICIPATION - EQUAL OPPORTUNITY - INDEPENDENT LIVING - ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY



 **LEARN HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE AT disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest**

QUESTIONS? CALL 573-751-2600

The Governor's Council on Disability hosts a poster contest each year to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October.

All Missouri residents are invited and encouraged to submit original artwork to spark conversation and raise awareness about the importance of equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The winning artwork will be featured on the 2025 awareness poster.

This year, we invite the artists to incorporate the **35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** as a theme for their artwork. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantees individuals with disabilities equal opportunities and full participation in all aspects of society, including employment.

Start your artwork now and submit your entries prior to the August 31 deadline for a chance to be the winner!

For more details and the entry form, visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: HOW TO FILE A DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT

by Reece Ellis

At the Governor's Council on Disability, we frequently receive questions about how to address disability discrimination. While we **don't** handle complaints directly and cannot provide legal advice, we want to ensure Missourians know their rights and options under federal law. If you've experienced discrimination in employment, air travel, housing, or public accommodations, here's what you need to know about filing a formal complaint.

Issues at Work or in Applying for a Job: **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**

- What to file: A Charge of Discrimination is a signed statement asserting that an employer, union or labor organization engaged in employment discrimination. It requests EEOC to take remedial action. If you believe that you have been discriminated against at work because of your race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information, [you can file a Charge of Discrimination](#).
- Deadline: File within **180 days** of the incident (or **300 days** if your state has a Fair Employment Practices Agency). Missouri's is the [Missouri Commission on Human Rights](#)
- How to file: Submit online at eeoc.gov or visit the EEOC's St. Louis or Kansas City offices. An individual, organization, or agency may file a charge on behalf of another person in order to protect the aggrieved person's identity.



Issues involving a Specific Airline: **Department of Transportation**

- How to file: Use [DOT's online form](#) or call the disability hotline: **1-800-778-4838**. DOT also accepts completed paper complaints at – ATTN: C-75-D U.S. Department of Transportation 1200 New Jersey Ave, SE Washington, D.C. 20590
- Act fast: File complaints **soon after the incident**; first try resolving directly with the airline.
- Note: The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA, 49 U.S.C. 41705) prohibits discrimination by U.S. and foreign air carriers based on physical or mental disability. DOT can't investigate ADA violations at airports (those typically go to the FAA or DOJ).



Issues involving Housing: **Department of Housing and Urban Development**

- Covered by: The Fair Housing Act protects against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, familial status. Discrimination in renting or buying a home, getting a mortgage, seeking housing assistance, or engaging in other housing-related activities is illegal. Property owners, property managers, developers, real estate agents, mortgage lenders, homeowners associations, insurance providers, and others who affect housing opportunities can be held liable.
- Deadline: File within 1 year of the incident.
- How to file: [Submit online](#) at or call 1-800-669-9777 (TTY: 1-800-927-9275). Protection: Retaliation for filing a complaint is illegal. If you believe you have experienced retaliation, you can report housing discrimination.



Other Complaints: **Department of Justice**

- Covers: If you believe that you or someone else was discriminated against based on a disability, you can file an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complaint against a state government or local government, such as a public hospital, public school, or other state/local program. Additionally, you can also file a complaint against a private business that serves the public, such as a restaurant, doctor's office, shop, or hotel.
- Deadline: In general, complaints under Title II of the ADA must be filed with the DOJ within 180 days of the date of the alleged discrimination.
- How to file: File a complaint by submitting a report on the Department of Justice's [Civil Rights Division website](#) or Fill out and send the paper ADA Complaint Form ([Regular Format](#) | [Large Format](#)) or a letter containing the same information, to U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20530



APRIL IS PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity

James Parkinson was a surgeon and political activist who wrote several medical journals that demonstrated his passion for public health. He fought for legal protection for those living with mental health conditions, their doctors, and their families.

He is best known for his 66-page booklet, published in 1817, which secured his legacy in the history of medicine, titled *An Essay on the Shaking Palsy*. In this ground-breaking book, he shared insights on this condition, relying solely on his observations of just six individuals. In the first chapter, he starts with a description of Shaking Palsy, which closely resembles modern Parkinson's disease: "Involuntary tremulous motion, with lessened muscular power, in parts not in action and even when supported; with a propensity to bend the trunk forwards, and to pass from a walking to a running pace: the senses and intellects being uninjured."

Dr. Parkinson was the first person to describe individuals with symptoms of the condition that now bears his name.

Parkinson's disease mainly affects movement and is marked by symptoms such as tremors, stiffness, and balance problems.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Parkinson's disease varies from person to person; it is currently the fastest-growing brain disorder and is progressing even more rapidly than anticipated. This variability not only makes it difficult for doctors to diagnose and treat but also implies that patients can experience a wide range of symptoms that may change and worsen over time. This situation highlights the urgent need for increased awareness, research, and innovative treatment options to address this growing health condition. The exact cause remains unknown, but it is believed to be a combination of genetic and environmental factors. There is currently no known cure, but various treatment options, including medications and therapies, are available to help manage symptoms.

In April, various awareness initiatives will be launched, including informational campaigns, community events, and fundraising activities designed to support research for better treatments and potential cures. Organizations such as the Parkinson's Foundation and the Michael J. Fox Foundation provide valuable resources to patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals.

Individuals can contribute to Parkinson's Awareness Month by donating to research initiatives, volunteering at fundraising events, participating in life-changing research efforts, advocating for additional funding, and sharing information on social media. If you want to get involved but are unsure how to help, you can download [The Michael J. Fox Foundation's Advocacy Toolkit](#) for tips.

If you or someone you care about needs local support, you can visit the [Parkinson's Foundation Missouri Support Groups](#). These support groups allow people to share support and coping skills related to Parkinson's.

Parkinson's Awareness Month focuses on raising awareness, fostering understanding, and encouraging action to support individuals impacted by Parkinson's disease. Together, we can strive toward a future with improved treatments and a brighter outlook for the Parkinson's community.



BLIND AND LOW VISION RESOURCES

by Claudia Browner

Established in 2024, the [Blind and Low Vision Community of Missouri](#) is an organization that assists people who are blind or have low vision through monthly peer support calls, social activities, and other programs to unite and improve the lives of individuals with visual impairments. Find out more or join as a member at blindlowvisionmo.org/organization-history-blind-support

ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES FOR WORK, HOME AND PLAY

(Source: National ADA Network)

Following are a number of resources for assistive apps and technology for the blind and low vision community. *These resources are intended as educational information and are not an endorsement of any particular product or service by the Governor's Council on Disability. The links point to the Apple App Store, however, these apps are also available through the Google Play App Store.*

APPS FOR WORK



Meta View with the Ray-Ban Meta View Smart Glasses: Free app that manages your Meta Smart Glasses and allows you to set up and control voice control features, manage photos, music services, and working with other apps.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/meta-view/id1558240027>



BARD mobile: Free app from the National Library Services for the blind and print disabled. Search for over 150,000 books and magazines to download and play on your mobile device.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bard-mobile/id705229586>



Seeing AI: This free app opens up the world to people who are blind or low vision. The app can recognize currency, read text, read product codes, identify faces, and more. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/seeing-ai/id999062298>



Microsoft Teams: Free app for collaborating with co-workers, family, or friends. Join audio and video calls, set up meetings, and chat one-on-one or to a large group.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/microsoft-teams/id1113153706>



Zoom: Free app that allows people to conduct meetings and share content and documents.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/zoom-one-platform-to-connect/id546505307>



EyeNote: Free app developed for people who are blind or low vision by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) to identify U.S. bank notes. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/eyenote/id405336354>

APPS FOR HOME



Comerica Mobile Banking: Free app to manage your bank accounts and transactions.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/comerica-mobile-banking/id403598968>



Aira Explorer: The free Aira app provides on-demand remote visual interpreting for the blind and low vision community to enhance independence. Connect with a trained visual interpreter to accomplish a large number of tasks. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/aira-explorer/id1590186766>



Honeywell Total Connect Comfort: This free app allows you to connect to your thermostat to change home heating and cooling temperatures, create a schedule, view humidifier and dehumidifier settings, and more.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/total-connect-comfort/id469517819>



Lyft: Free app that allows you to book a ride, see your cost up front, set up a payment method, know when your ride is arriving, and more. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/lyft/id529379082>

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6) **BLIND AND LOW VISION RESOURCES**

Uber: Free ride sharing app that allows you to book a ride, no when your ride is arriving, know your up front costs, and more. This app works "alright" except for the issue with putting in "Other Amount" when tipping.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/uber-request-a-ride/id368677368>

APPS FOR FUN

Bookshare: Free app that allows people with print disabilities, blindness, low vision, and physical disabilities to read over one million books in audio, text, or braille. You can read best sellers, educational books, children's books, and more. You need a subscription to Bookshare to download books. If you want to read braille books you will need a refreshable braille display.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bookshare-reader/id1605201737>



Amazon Kindle: Free app that allows you to read Amazon books. I use this app, but the app does have some access issues. I had a book that I needed for a training at work that took my wife who is sighted to help me figure out how to access the book so I could move from chapter to chapter, read by letter, word, sentence, or line.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/amazon-kindle/id302584613>



Learning Ally: Free app gets access to human-read audio books from Learning Ally. Subscription required to download books.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/learning-ally-audiobooks/id1131235021>



Netflix: App that allows you to watch TV shows, Movies, and more. You can look up a movie or TV show to see if it has audio description right through the app. Netflix requires a month-to-month subscription.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/netflix/id363590051>



NFB Newsline: Free app that allows access to over 500 publications, TV listings, weather alerts, and retail ads. Designed for people who are blind or low vision. You need to be a Newsline subscriber to access the content.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/nfb-newsline-mobile/id530470425>



Merlin Bird ID: Free app that allows you to identify birds by their song, a photo, or get a list of birds for a particular geographic area. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/merlin-bird-id-by-cornell-lab/id773457673>



Voice Dream Reader: Free app that works with Voiceover to read aloud these formats PDF, plain text, MS Word, MS PowerPoint, RTF, and Google Docs. Built-in scanner to scan documents. Works with Bookshare books, audio books in Mp3, MP4, or zipped MP3 and EPUB eBooks.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/voice-dream-text-to-voice/id496177674>



Wiim Home: Free app that allows you to control your music services like Amazon music, Spotify, title, Pandora, Deezer, Qobuz, and more. I use this device and the app to stream music to my vintage stereo equipment.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/wiim-home/id1573883295>

FEATURED APP

NaviLens and NaviLens GO: Free app to provide accessible wayfinding information for everybody. Provides directions and context information. NaviLens was designed specifically for people who are blind or have low vision to be able to access and locate information and interact with the environment around them. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/navilens-go/id1313878412>

Learn more about NaviLens at navilens.com

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

April 29—May 1, 2025

[Charting the LifeCourse Showcase 2025, Kansas City](#)

May 1, 2025

[Mental Health Champions Banquet, Jefferson City](#)

May 5—7, 2025

[Virtual ADA Symposium](#)

May 12—13, 2025

[34th Annual Aging with Developmental Disabilities Conference, St. Charles](#)

May 28, 2025

[Children and Youth in Disasters Conference, Jefferson City](#)

May 28—30, 2025

[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference, Lake of the Ozarks](#)

June 15—18, 2025

[National ADA Symposium, Atlanta, Georgia](#)

June 25—27, 2025

[Transition Training Institute, Columbia](#)

July 15—19, 2025

[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, Columbia](#)

July 24—25, 2025

[Missouri APSE Employment Summit, Columbia](#)

August 24—26, 2025

[Real Voices, Real Choices Conference, Lake Ozark](#)

If you know of additional events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



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