



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY

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GCD NEWSLETTER

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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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Watch the [NDEAM video](#)

CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

by Claudia Browner

This October marks the 80th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) — a momentous occasion to reflect on the progress made and renew our commitment to building work environments that welcome and support all individuals.

This year's theme, ***Celebrate Value and Talent***, emphasizes the meaningful impact and contributions individuals with disabilities bring to our state agencies, communities, and workplaces across the nation.

Established in 1945, NDEAM is led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and observed every October. It serves as a national reminder that equal opportunity and access to meaningful employment are essential to a strong and talented workforce.

As a state government, we have a unique responsibility—and opportunity—to model inclusive employment practices. Hiring and retaining people with disabilities strengthens our teams, enhances service delivery, and reflects the communities we serve.

Across departments, employees with disabilities are making meaningful contributions and are delivering results in all areas of state government. By recognizing their value and talent, we build stronger, more innovative agencies.

To recognize NDEAM, state agencies, businesses and organizations are encouraged to:

- Host educational events and webinars highlighting disability awareness and accessibility.
- Provide training opportunities for hiring managers and supervisors on effective hiring and employment practices, and workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities.
- Host events or panels featuring employees with disabilities.
- Share success stories of employees with disabilities making a difference.
- Visit the GCD's [NDEAM web page](#) for additional resources and information.

Display NDEAM posters and resources to raise awareness among team members and the public. The [GCD's 2025 NDEAM poster](#) can be downloaded from our website or requested in print by [contacting the GCD](#).

Participate in the [statewide NDEAM celebration in Jefferson City](#), held on October 10

As we recognize 80 years of NDEAM, let us reaffirm our dedication to building a workplace culture that values every individual's abilities, perspectives, and contributions. Together, let's *Celebrate Value and Talent* — this month, and every month.



GCD NAMES NDEAM POSTER CONTEST WINNER

by Reece Ellis

Evelyn Johnson, a senior at Affton High School in St. Louis County, has been named this year's winner of the Governor's Council on Disability's (GCD) annual poster contest. Her thoughtful and vibrant artwork, titled "Bruised Fruit is Still Edible," beautifully captures the spirit of October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a time dedicated to promoting a welcoming work environment and celebrating the valuable contributions of workers with disabilities. Her winning design will be featured statewide throughout the month.

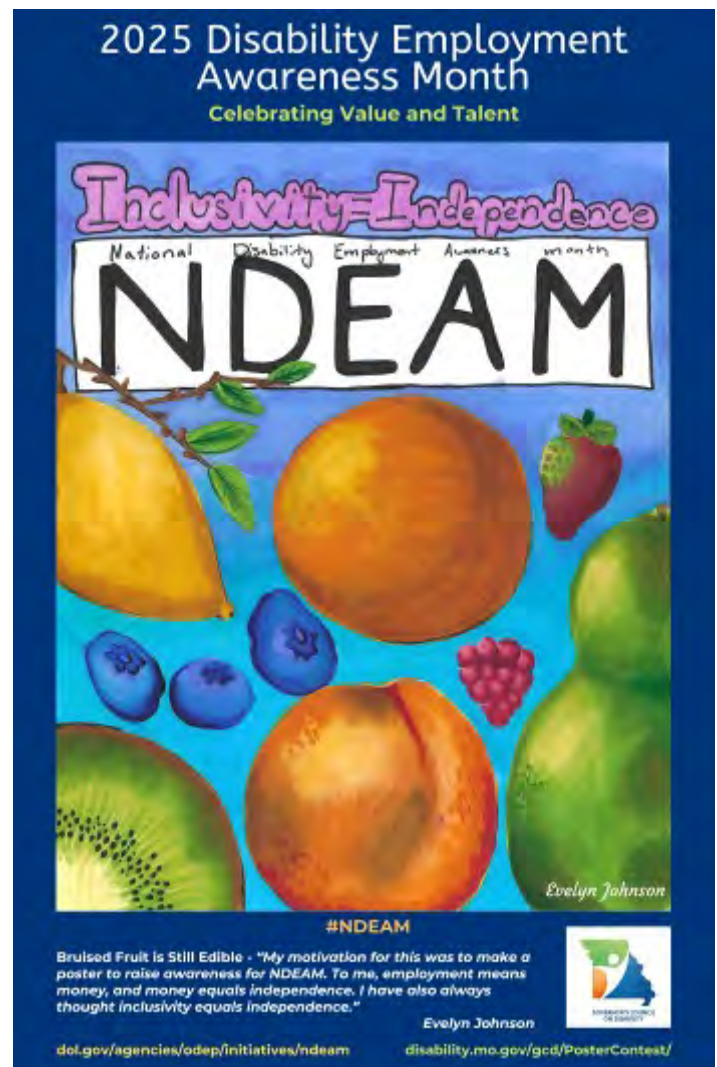
Evelyn's passion for art is a lifelong one, passed down from her mother, who is a painter. "I've been doing art as long as I can remember," she said. When asked about her inspiration for the winning poster, Evelyn explained, "I've always loved drawing fruit, it's probably my favorite thing to illustrate. My teacher told me about the contest, and it all just came together. Title and all."

The poster contest was introduced to Evelyn by one of her teachers who saw her artwork and encouraged her to enter. When she found out she had won, Evelyn was ecstatic. "I was so excited, I actually screamed," she shared. While drawing is a big part of her life, Evelyn's artistic interests are diverse. She enjoys many different types of art, including painting, drawing, and bracelet making. However, her favorite form of art is pottery. She estimates that she spends at least 25% of her free time on art, even when she has other things she should be doing.

Beyond art, Evelyn's hobbies include baking and playing video games. A fan of the game Stardew Valley, she recently achieved "perfection," a rare and difficult accomplishment. This feat is so challenging that it is only reached by about 0.8% of the millions of players and requires completing several time-consuming tasks, which can easily take upwards of 200 hours.

Evelyn also shared that she has autism spectrum disorder, which she was diagnosed with at age 13. The diagnosis was an eye-opener for her, helping her understand some of the struggles she had faced throughout her life without a clear explanation. Evelyn, who hopes to become a professional artist or art teacher, offered some words of encouragement to other students who want to explore their creativity. "Just do it," she advised. "It's fun. You don't need fancy materials. You can just take a pencil and a piece of paper." She likened it to writing, but with pictures, and emphasized the importance of practice, stating, "eventually you'll get better."

This October, Evelyn's artwork will be on display as part of NDEAM, sharing her talent and a powerful message of inclusion. The Governor's Council on Disability is proud to recognize her creativity and hard work. Congratulations, Evelyn!



GOVERNOR KEHOE ISSUES NDEAM PROCLAMATION

BY CLAUDIA BROWNER

In recognition of the 80th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), Governor Mike Kehoe has issued a proclamation designating the month of October 2025 as Disability Employment Awareness Month in Missouri.

The proclamation, along with additional information and resources related to NDEAM is available on the Disability Portal at disability.mo.gov/NDEAM.htm

STATE OF MISSOURI HOSTS NDEAM CELEBRATION AND RESOURCE EVENT

BY CLAUDIA BROWNER



The State of Missouri's second statewide annual **NDEAM Celebration and Resource Event** will be held on Friday, October 14, from 11 AM—12 PM at the Harry S Truman Building in Jefferson City.

Hosted by the Office of Administration's Office of Equal Opportunity and the Governor's Council on Disability, this event offers an excellent opportunity for state team members to connect with colleagues, employers, and advocates to learn about employment resources, network, and celebrate the successes of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The program features keynote presentations, recognition of the GCD NDEAM Poster Contest winner, and musical entertainment.

State agencies and disability organizations will provide exhibit tables to share resources, assistive device demonstrations, and information from 10:30 AM—12:30 PM.

The event is free and open to the public. All are welcome to attend.

STATE OF MISSOURI TALENT SHOWCASE COMING TO SIKESTON

BY CLAUDIA BROWNER

Join the State of Missouri for a Talent Showcase event in Sikeston! On October 14, 2025, from 2—4 PM, job seekers have the opportunity to step away from the typical job fair experience! The in-person talent showcase is a unique opportunity for job seekers to demonstrate their skills firsthand and find a career where they can truly thrive.



Job seekers are invited to:

- Create a display or presentation to highlight their skills, achievements and experience, in addition to providing resumes.
- Engage in meaningful conversations with State of Missouri recruiters from various departments.
- Receive professional resume support.
- Participate in mock interviews.

This hiring opportunity reflects the State of Missouri's commitment to ensure all job seekers can successfully and effectively engage with state government recruiters.

Job seeker registration is required as space is limited.

For more information and to register contact HiringEvents@oa.mo.gov

NEW MISSOURI LAW EXPANDS HEARING AID AND COCHLEAR IMPLANT COVERAGE

by Reece Ellis

A new law signed by Governor Kehoe will expand MO HealthNet coverage to provide hearing aids and medically necessary cochlear implants for all eligible persons. The legislation, which was included in the omnibus healthcare package, Senate Bill 79, and originated as House Bill 177, received strong bipartisan support from the state legislature. [The Senate package passed with a vote of 24-6, and the House vote was 147-1.](#)

Previously, MO HealthNet only covered hearing aids for children, pregnant women, and blind individuals. The new law authorizes coverage for all eligible persons. Proponents of the bill described it as a compassionate measure that addresses existing obstacles for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are described as necessities, not luxuries.



Testimony from supporters highlighted how the ability to hear and communicate is critical to a person's independence and quality of life. Representative Cameron Parker (R-Campbell), who sponsored the bill, shared the story of a constituent who lost their job after turning 18 and being unable to afford repairs for their hearing aids, which caused them to lose their independence. The new law is expected to help over 15,000 Missourians who are hard of hearing.

The fiscal note for the legislation estimates the total cost over three years to be approximately \$13 million, with Missouri's portion at about \$3.16 million and the rest coming from federal funding. The cost of a single hearing aid can range from \$1,000 to \$4,000, which proponents testified is a barrier for individuals whose annual income may be below the \$21,597 cap to qualify for Medicaid.

With this change, Missouri joins 37 other states that offer comprehensive Medicaid coverage for hearing aids and cochlear implants for adults.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the impact of breast cancer and supporting those affected by it. This annual campaign encourages individuals to educate themselves and others about the importance of early detection, screening, and treatment options.

Breast cancer remains one of the most common cancers worldwide, affecting millions of women and men. By wearing pink, participating in events, and sharing information, we can empower one another to take proactive measures for our health and wellbeing. Regular mammograms and self-examinations are crucial steps that can lead to early detection and improve chances for successful treatment and survival.

This month, let us honor those who have battled breast cancer, celebrate survivors, and support ongoing research to find a cure. Together, we can foster a community of awareness, compassion, and hope.

Get involved by attending local events, donating to research, or simply spreading the word. Every effort counts in the fight against breast cancer!



DISABILITY INCLUSION SUMMIT—DIVING DEEPER, TAKING ACTION

by Claudia Browner

The 2025 Disability Inclusion Summit, hosted by the Center for Disability Inclusion in Kansas City this September, brought together corporate leaders, disability inclusion champions, and industry experts for two powerful days of learning, action, and connection.

Under the theme *Diving Deeper, Taking Action*, the summit centered on advancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, sharing practical strategies and proven approaches for turning commitment into meaningful change.

Keynotes and breakout sessions explored accessible hiring practices, inclusive leadership, and creating workplaces where everyone is treated with dignity and has the opportunity to thrive.

A highlight of the event was the vendor exhibit, which showcased disability-owned businesses and organizations led by or serving the disability community. Even the catering was intentionally sourced from businesses that actively employ people with disabilities—demonstrating that equal opportunity can be built into every detail, from policy decisions to procurement and daily operations.

The summit left attendees reenergized, motivated and with a clear message that real progress requires thoughtful action at every level, not just in planning, but in how organizations operate, hire, and engage.



GCD LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL NOW OPEN

by Laura Mueth

Do you have disability-related concerns or topics you are passionate about? Share them with us and help raise awareness with state legislators, elected officials, and our agency.

One way to do that is by filling out the GCD's 2025 Legislative Priorities Poll. The topic areas of the poll are accessibility, education, assistance services and healthcare, housing, employment, and transportation.

All available formats can be found on the [Annual Legislative Priorities Poll](#) web page. Our staff is available to assist anyone who has difficulty understanding the questions or completing it independently. To receive assistance, call 800-877-8249.

Please return all Polls by **5:00 p.m. Monday, November 3, 2025**. Online versions are submitted directly to our office. All other versions can be returned via fax (573-526-4109), email (gcd@oa.mo.gov), and mail (Governor's Council on Disability, 301 West High Street, Room 620, PO Box 1668, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1668).

The results will be shared by the end of this year.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Aaron Durso, Taneyville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Jennifer Meyer, O'Fallon
- 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 register or learn more.

October 4, 2025

[**FestAbility, St. Louis**](#)

October 10, 2025

[**Statewide NDEAM Celebration, Jefferson City**](#)

October 14, 2025

[**State of Missouri Talent Showcase Hiring Event, Sikeston**](#)

October 16—17, 2025

[**MACDDS Conference, Columbia**](#)

October 21—22, 2025

[**Brain Injury Association BIA-MO Annual Statewide Conference, St. Louis**](#)

October 23, 2025

[**Starkloff Disability Employment Summit, St. Louis**](#)

November 14, 2025

[**Statewide Veterans Day Celebration, Jefferson City**](#)

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



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