



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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CELEBRATING NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

by **Claudia Browner**

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is celebrated nationwide throughout October to recognize the vital role that people with disabilities play in making the nation's workforce diverse and inclusive.



Initiated by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy in 1945, NDEAM recognizes the contributions of employees with disabilities, brings awareness to employment issues and inclusive hiring practices, and reminds employers of the importance of ensuring people with disabilities have equal opportunity to prepare for and succeed in employment. The 2023 NDEAM theme is "Advancing Access & Equity".

In Missouri, October is also recognized as Disability History Month to educate and raise awareness about the valuable contributions of people with disabilities and the proud heritage of disability history. Schools are encouraged to provide instruction in disability history and the disability rights movement through curricula, assemblies, and activities throughout the month.

Governor Parson has issued two proclamations, designating October as [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) and [Disability History Month](#) in Missouri.

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) recognizes and celebrates NDEAM by raising awareness about employment inclusion through its annual [poster contest](#) and hosting a [Virtual NDEAM Exhibit](#) on the Disability Web Portal. The exhibit provides background information and history of NDEAM, disability history, ideas to celebrate, employment resources for Missourians with disabilities, and other resources.

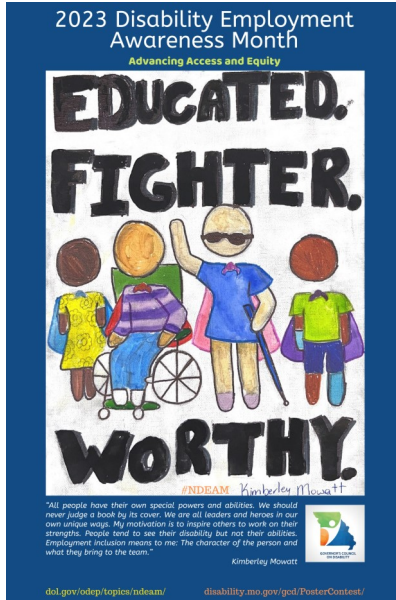
What can you do to celebrate and support NDEAM?

- [Display the GCD NDEAM poster in your office](#)
- [Check out the gallery of GCD NDEAM poster entries](#)
- [Watch and share the NDEAM Awareness Video](#)
- [Learn how to make your meetings, programs, and communications accessible to all](#)
- [Host or participate in diversity and disability awareness training](#)
- [Visit the NDEAM virtual exhibit for information and ideas to participate](#)

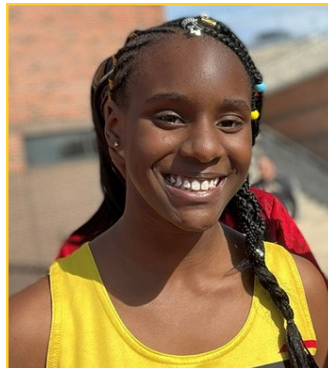
If you would like to request a printed GCD NDEAM poster, please contact the Governor's Council on Disability at gcd@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

GCD ANNOUNCES NDEAM POSTER CONTEST WINNER

by Claudia Browner



The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) hosts an annual poster contest celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), to raise awareness about the importance of employment inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Missouri residents can participate by submitting original artwork illustrating what employment inclusion means to them.



From the large number of entries the GCD received this year, voluntary judges representing the Council, state department liaisons, and Office of Administration team members selected artwork submitted by Kimberley Mowatt as the winner. Congratulations, Kimberley!

The GCD invites you to check out the [slideshow all of the artwork entries](#) on the [GCD NDEAM Poster Contest website](#).

The GCD invites agencies, organizations, and employers in Missouri to display the poster throughout the month of October in celebration and recognition of NDEAM. The poster can be downloaded from the GCD NDEAM Poster Contest website. To request a printed copy, please contact the GCD at gcd@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL NOW OPEN

by Laura Mueth

The House and Senate have begun preparations for the 2024 legislative session. Committees and taskforces have met over the last few months to receive updates and new information on various topics.

Your opinion matters!

You are invited to participate in the 2023 Governor's Council on Disability's **Legislative Priorities Poll**

https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/legislative_priorities_poll.htm

 GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/898XZ2Y>

The 2023 Legislative Priorities Poll (Poll) is available for completion by Missouri residents. The results will be shared with all state legislators and other state elected officials by the end of 2023 via a written report, so the issues can be considered in discussions as preparations continue for the 2024 legislative session. Responses will also be used by GCD staff and our Council members to create legislative priorities.

The Poll can be completed and submitted online at [Legislative Priorities Poll](#). If you would prefer to complete a PDF version, please contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov to receive a printable or fillable PDF. All versions can also be found on the [Legislative Priorities Poll web page](#). PDFs and paper copies can be returned via fax (573-526-4109), email (gcd@oa.mo.gov), or mail (Governor's Council on Disability, 301 West High Street, Room 620, P.O. Box 1668, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1668).

Assistance with completion is available by contacting the GCD office at 800-877-8249 or 573-751-2600.

All Poll responses must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 3, 2023.

DATES SET FOR 2024 MO-YLF—LEARN ABOUT THE PROGRAM

by Rachel Rackers

The **Missouri Youth Leadership Forum** (MO-YLF) planning committee is already gearing up for the 2024 MO-YLF, which will be held July 16—20, 2024 at the University of Missouri Columbia campus.

Each year, MO-YLF provides high school students with disabilities a week-long college setting experience, where they learn about disability history, advocacy, the legislative process, transition to employment or higher education, adaptive technology, and adaptive sports. It is important for students with disabilities to learn skills by example and interactions with others who share similar experiences, which is what MO-YLF provides. The program is designed specifically to help students grow into leaders. Students are selected to become delegates at the forum based on an application process. In addition to leadership skills, the delegates learn to set life goals, advocate for their needs, and give back to the community.

Applications for staff, volunteers, and delegates will be available on our website by mid-October. The deadline for delegate applications is March 31 and staff applications are due April 15. For more information and the online application, please visit <http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/yf.htm>

The Governor's Council on Disability will be hosting several **FREE** informational webinars about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) this fall and next spring prior to the application deadline. Each webinar will provide an in-depth look into the MO-YLF and what participants will learn/experience during the program. These live webinars will be offered at various dates and times. Be sure to look for upcoming announcements and details on our social media pages and MO-YLF website. You can also sign up for our GCD email listserv to receive information and updates on the many programs that our agency has to offer. Please email us at gcd@oa.mo.gov to be added to our listserv.

Please help us share these exciting opportunities with students, parents, teachers, and colleagues!



MO-YLF ANNIVERSARY AND ALUMNI REUNION

by Rachel Rackers

In July 2024, the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) will be celebrating its 20th program year! The Youth Leadership Forum was first developed by the California Governor's Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons in 1992. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy set forth to replicate this initiative in all 50 states. Missouri held its first Youth Leadership Forum in 2001 and has grown tremendously throughout the years. Since the inception of the program, a total of 391 alumni have graduated from MO-YLF, representing 73 of the 114 Missouri counties, plus the city of St. Louis. Our past and future successes wouldn't be possible without the collaboration and support of our partners; Paraquad, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and MOCIL.

It's exciting to add alumni to our YLF family every year and to watch each of them blossom after graduating from the program. To celebrate the MO-YLF's 20th program year, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) and its collaborating partners will be hosting an Alumni Reunion on July 15, 2024, at the University of Missouri Columbia campus. Be sure to follow our social media pages (Facebook and Instagram handles are listed below) to stay up to date on the newest event information. If you are a MO-YLF alumni who haven't been receiving emails from GCD, please contact our office by email (gcd@oa.mo.gov) to provide an up-to-date email address.



Facebook MyLife Alumni Association (@MoylfAlumni)
Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (@MOLeadershipForum)
Governor's Council on Disability (@MissouriGCD)

Instagram Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (@mo_ylf)

EVERYONE IS WELCOME IN MISSOURI STATE PARKS

Information provided by: Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State Parks Division

New chairs help visitors with mobility issues navigate trails, beaches

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Division of State Parks recently received new chairs for visitors with mobility challenges. Using the chairs, visitors can now navigate both land and water.



Track chairs are electric all-terrain wheelchairs that offer guests with mobility challenges the opportunity to partake in outdoor activities. With a track chair, they can explore trails and visit parts of Missouri state parks or historic sites that are not suitable for regular wheelchairs. These sturdier, more rugged chairs use tank-like tracks instead of wheels to allow guests to traverse some of the rougher, uneven trails found in Missouri state parks. All-terrain track chairs can navigate through snow, water, mud, sand and other rough conditions.

"Everyone should have the opportunity to explore and enjoy our parks and historic sites," said David Kelly, director of Missouri State Parks. "Wheelchairs provide important mobility for their users, but they aren't always able to navigate our trails. Our all-terrain track chairs can!"

Missouri State Parks currently has three track chairs: one at Bryant Creek State Park in Ava, one at Battle of Lexington State Historic Site in Lexington, and one at Elephant Rocks State Park in Belleview. Bennett Spring State Park, outside of Lebanon, has applied for a grant to purchase another chair. Using the track chair is free. Reservations must be made at least two days in advance. Also, a friend or family member 18 years or older must go along to help, because park representatives are not always available or able to help users transfer to or from the chair.

"Missouri state parks are open for everyone to enjoy, regardless of ability," Kelly said. "We want all of our visitors to be able to discover the beauty of our parks and historic sites. This adaptive equipment will open up the trails that were once inaccessible to people with mobility issues." In addition to track chairs, St. Joe, Echo Bluff and Sam A. Baker state parks have adaptive beach chairs for use in the water. Beach chairs allow wheelchair users, people with special needs or those who just need some assistance, the chance to play and splash in the water.

To find out how to reserve a track chair, visit mostateparks.com/action-trackchair.

Visit <https://dnr.mo.gov/communications/news/everyone-welcome-missouri-state-parks> to read the full content of the article.

988 ADDS AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE SERVICES

by Claudia Browner

The [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) is now offering American Sign Language (ASL) services for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, in an effort to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in behavioral health care.

The 988 Lifeline is a network of state and local call centers offering help to individuals during a mental health or substance-use related crisis, supported by the US Department of Health & Human Services through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Since its launch in July 2022, the 988 Lifeline has received more than 5.5 million calls, texts and chats.

To connect to a 988 Lifeline counselor in ASL, individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing can dial 988 from a videophone, or click the "ASL Now" button on 988lifeline.org and follow the prompts.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org for help.



Missouri Governor’s Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee’s Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Traci Ritter, Cape Girardeau
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor’s Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY 2024

by Laura Mueth

SAVE THE DATE!

The 2024 Disability Rights Legislative Day will be Wednesday, March 13, 2024. The planning committee will begin meeting in the coming months to start preparing for this wonderful and empowering day.

Please subscribe to updates on the [Disability Rights Legislative Day website](#) to be kept aware of developments and registration information.

More information coming soon!



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **October 9-11, 2023**
[Virtual ADA Coordinator Conference](#)
- **October 16-17, 2023**
Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training, Adair County
<https://frdat.niagara.edu/training/trainings/>
- **October 18-19, 2023**
Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training, Warren County
<https://frdat.niagara.edu/training/trainings/>
- **November 7, 2023**
Equity Summit—Advancing Innovation in Rural Education
<https://eduvents.dhewd.mo.gov/equity-summit/>

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