



ABOVE: THIS YEAR'S NDEAM POSTER AND THEME

ISSUE 1: OCTOBER 9, 2015

October Marks 70th Anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month

“Montgomery County is committed to serving as a model to local jurisdictions by providing job training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities,” said County Executive Isiah Leggett. “Providing employment opportunities is good for the individual, the employer, and for the communities in which they live.”

Montgomery County Government is proud to participate in the National Disability Employment Awareness Month, held each year in October. This year’s theme, “My Disability Is One Part of Who I Am,” reminds us that America’s workers with disabilities make significant workforce contributions in local communities where they live and work.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month began in 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week of October to be the “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.” In 1962, the word “physically” was removed to recognize the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to “National Disability Employment Awareness Month.”

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Working Together to Provide Workforce Opportunities

Montgomery County Government is dedicated to providing training and employment services to people with disabilities. Coordinated efforts by the following organizations and groups have resulted in a number of programs that serve people with disabilities, including disabled veterans:

- Office of the County Executive
- County Council
- Office of Human Resources
- Health and Human Services
- Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
- Commission on Veterans Affairs
- Montgomery County Department Directors

Major accomplishments include the Non-Competitive Hiring Process for People with Severe Disabilities, the Montgomery County Customized Employment Public Intern Program, and Project SEARCH Montgomery.

Non-Competitive Hiring Process for People with Severe Disabilities

On November 6, 2012, Montgomery County voters approved an amendment to the County Charter that enables the County to operate a program within the merit system to recruit and select qualified individuals with severe physical and mental disabilities on a non-competitive basis. This initiative allows a qualified person with severe disabilities to be hired non-competitively for a vacant merit position.

To be eligible, individuals must have a severe developmental, physical or psychiatric disability, as well as be certified by the Maryland Department of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services (or equivalent out-of-state vocational rehabilitation agency), meet the minimum qualifications for the position, be able to perform the essential functions of the job with or without a reasonable accommodation, pass a background check (if required) and meet the appropriate medical qualifications for the position.

Montgomery County Customized Employment Public Intern Project

An example of a successful County program serving individuals with significant disabilities is the Montgomery County Customized Employment Public Intern Project (MCPIP). Created in 2007, MCPIP provides flexible employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities to fulfill the work requirements of County departments. Department representatives work with a customized employment career specialist to identify and create part-time positions based on a department's workforce needs.

MCPIP participants serve as paid interns in department positions based on their individual job interests, skills and competencies. MCPIP interns gain valuable work experience by developing on-the-job skills to help them compete for County merit positions or opportunities in other organizations.

Fun fact: Successful employment results!

As of October 2015, 31 participants of the Customized Employment Public Intern Program and Project SEARCH Montgomery obtained gainful employment with Montgomery County departments or in other organizations.

Project SEARCH Montgomery

Another County initiative designed to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities is Project SEARCH Montgomery.

Launched by County Executive Isiah Leggett in 2012, the program consists of three 10-week work and study job training assignments that help participants learn skills that will aid them in obtaining gainful employment. Interns are supported by a business-based support team of SEEC* job coaches, a full-time Ivy Mount School instructor, and intern worksite supervisors. Interns gain practical work experience in a variety of County department job training settings and partner agencies, including:

- The City of Gaithersburg
- The City of Rockville
- Montgomery College
- Montgomery Parks

*Seeking Equality Empowerment and Community for People with Developmental Disabilities (SEEC)

At right (from left to right): Former Council Member Phil Andrews, Council Members Craig Rice and Sidney Katz, 2015 Project SEARCH Graduate Steven Seo and County Executive Isiah Leggett



Above: Graduates of the 2015 Project SEARCH class with County Executive Isiah Leggett



Above: 2015 Project SEARCH Montgomery Graduation Class with County Executive Isiah Leggett and Office of Human Resources Director Shawn Stokes



Meet the Providers of County Services to People with Disabilities



Karen Hochberg

Employed with Montgomery County Government since 2000, Karen Hochberg has worked as the County's Disability Program Manager, a Human Resources Specialist and, currently, as the County's Targeted Recruitment Specialist in the Office of Human Resources. In her present role, Karen coordinates the hiring preference process for people with disabilities, veterans and veterans with disabilities, and handles the noncompetitive hiring process for people with severe disabilities. She also serves as a partner to the Montgomery County Customized Employment Public Intern Project (MCPIP) and acts as the business liaison for Project SEARCH, expanding the program to include the City of Gaithersburg, City of Rockville and Montgomery College.

Karen is proud to be part of the County's commitment in developing work opportunities for individuals with disabilities and facilitating the cultural change that inclusion brings to the workplace.



Marie Parker

Marie Parker serves as TransCen's Program Manager and County Liaison for the Montgomery County Customized Employment Public Intern Project (MCPIP), in partnership with the American Job Center and Montgomery County Government. As the County's MCPIP Liaison, Marie identifies and creates part-time positions in County government offices based on specific department needs. She recruits qualified individuals with significant disabilities for County positions based on interns' interests, skills and competencies, ensuring that necessary supports are in place.

Additionally, she oversees the efforts of the local Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Youth with Disabilities Initiative. Through this initiative, she provides the framework and supervision for participants to transition into employment opportunities based on their interests, skills and abilities.

In Upcoming Issues...

This newsletter is a special weekly publication for the month of October 2015. In future issues, look for program participant spotlights, fun facts, photos and more as we continue to celebrate the 70th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month!

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