

## **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED**

### **Missouri holds Housing Solutions Network Meeting**

The Missouri Inclusive Housing Solutions Network meeting, held April 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> at Stoney Creek Inn in Columbia, emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnership in the effort to increase affordable, accessible housing in Missouri. Sponsored by the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, the Missouri Inclusive Housing Development Corporation, and the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), the meeting brought together almost 200 professionals from the housing field, self-advocates and family members, professionals in the DD field, and other community partners.

Cassie Hicks, Coordinator for Housing Initiatives at the Institute for Disability Studies at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, gave the keynote speech. Ms. Hicks spoke about how Mississippi has forged housing partnerships to assist over 500 individuals with disabilities to purchase their own homes.

The meeting highlighted individual housing success stories and provided breakout sessions on a number of housing topics including Universal Design, use of technology supports, accessible housing and assistive technology, housing and real estate terminology, disability funding for services and supports, tenant and home ownership rights, Missouri Housing Development Commission programs, and USDA rural development programs. The meeting also provided an opportunity for local housing teams coordinated by the Community Living Coordinators at each Regional Office to network and plan strategies for increasing housing options in their local communities, and for self-advocates and families to discuss how to create a path to accessible and affordable housing through self-determination.



Cassie Hicks presented information regarding the Home of Your Own program in Mississippi.



Dick Dixson, a parent from Bolivar, told the audience about how moving to a new home increased his daughter's independence and self-determination.

## **Missouri Housing Plan: An Integral Link between Self Determination and Housing**

The Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) has included accessible housing as one of the Division's priorities. The DDD recognizes that there is an integral link between self-determination and housing.

Understanding the link between self determination and housing is critical if we are to move forward in our vision that individuals truly have control over their own lives.

In 2012, the DDD developed a Division Housing Plan, with a mission to develop quality, affordable, accessible housing for people with disabilities in safe locations where they can access support services, transportation, employment, and recreation throughout their lifespan.

Some of the plan's guiding principles state that housing is separate from services, new homes are built using universal design principles, individuals/families receive services they need where they live, individuals/families participate in designing their own homes, individuals/families are integrated into their communities, live in homes they can afford in safe communities, and are in control of their own environments.

DDD's plan includes working with the Missouri Inclusive Housing Development Corp to increase housing options, develop regional housing plans in local areas, work with providers, landlords, and developers to ensure that individuals/guardians are in control of their home environments through making choices about where they will live and signing their own leases, and ensure that service provision is separated from choice of housing.

In support of this priority, Community Living Coordinators are available in each of the Division's Regional Offices to provide technical assistance regarding accessible housing to people with I/DD, families, providers, and service coordinators. The Community Living Coordinators share information, attend meetings to assist with planning and clarifying people's housing needs and suggesting solutions, educate others on housing trends, and connect people with home modification resources.

To view the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities Community Living and Accessible Housing webpage, see [dmh.mo.gov/dd/Housing.htm](http://dmh.mo.gov/dd/Housing.htm)

To read about the Missouri Inclusive Housing Development Corporation, designed to provide information about accessible and affordable housing in Missouri for persons with developmental disabilities, see [mohousing.com/](http://mohousing.com/)

To view *It's My Home: A Guide for Individuals and Families to Understand the Division of Developmental Disabilities' Housing Initiative*, which provides information on the Division's Housing Plan with guiding principles and practical applications of the principles, see [dmh.mo.gov/docs/dd/hsgguide.pdf](http://dmh.mo.gov/docs/dd/hsgguide.pdf)

## **Autism Awareness Month**

April 2<sup>nd</sup> is World Autism Awareness Day, and April marks Autism Awareness Month, dedicated to the recognition of Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a developmental disorder which affects as many as 1 out of 88 children in the United States today. During Autism Awareness Month, organizations promote unique educational and fundraising events to increase awareness and understanding about autism and individuals who are affected with autism in communities worldwide.

Missourians recognized Autism Awareness Month during an autism rally that was held on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at the State Capitol Building in Jefferson City. Aaron Likens, author of the book, *Finding Kansas: Living and Decoding Asperger's Syndrome*, was the guest speaker who kicked off the rally with a captivating presentation about his challenges living with Asperger's, an ASD that affects a person's ability to socialize and communicate effectively with others. Rally goers then gathered around displays set up to

increase awareness about autism, and many of them paid visits to legislators to thank them for their support of the autism community.

Several cities and countries around the world took part in “Light it Up Blue,” an international campaign launched by Autism Speaks, an autism advocacy group, to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day and Autism Awareness Month by shining bright blue lights from iconic buildings and landmarks around the globe. The campaign aims to help raise awareness and bring focus on autism as a growing public health crisis.

By increasing awareness through activities that occur during Autism Awareness Month, there is hope for better understanding and acceptance of individuals with autism.

### **Division of DD Employment Service and Youth transition Coordinators Complete College of Employment Services Curriculum**

DD Employment Service and Youth transition Coordinators across the state participated in a pilot to assess the College of Employment Services (CES) Curriculum. **The College of Employment Services** is an integrated, web-based curriculum designed for professionals who work with people with disabilities and other challenges to find jobs. The self-directed courses connect professionals with a nationally recognized set of competencies for the field of employment services. The College of Employment Services course content was created by the [Institute for Community Inclusion](#) at the [University of Massachusetts Boston](#). DD Employment Coordinators completed the coursework and participated in an evaluation of the curriculum. The curriculum is now available free of charge to DD employment service providers. Those interested in receiving the training should contact their regional office employment services and youth transition coordinator.

## ***IN FULL SWING***

### **MoCDD Waiver Renewal**

The Missouri Children with DD Waiver, also known as the Sara Lopez Waiver is due for renewal in October. The renewal application was submitted by MO HealthNet to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services March 12. New services to be added to the waiver include Independent Living Skills Development, Behavior Analysis, Person Centered Strategies Consultant, and Assistive Technology. The service limit for specialized medical equipment and supplies and environmental/vehicle modifications will be increased from \$5,000 to \$7500 to be consistent with the other Missouri DD waivers. While the current service limits may be exceeded on an exceptional basis, increasing the limit to \$7500 will enable these services to be managed in a manner consistent with the other waivers.

### **PfH Waiver Renewal**

The Partnership for Hope Waiver renewal was submitted by MO HealthNet to CMS March 27. Changes in the renewal application include:

- a) Replacing Day service with Independent Living Skills Development. (This service was added to the Missouri Comprehensive and Community Support Waivers during 2012);
- b) Adding a provision that will allow temporary residential supports to be billed in 15 minute increments;

- c) Re-naming employer-provided job supports to co-worker supports and removing the 12 month limit so that a participant may continue to receive the service as long as they are employed in an integrated workplace at competitive wages;
- d) Adding a clarification to the two-year limit for job preparation so that it is not construed to be a life-time cumulative limit; and
- e) Adding a provision enabling exceptions to the 60 day annual limit for temporary residential supports if approved by both the directors of the County Board and the Regional Office. These changes will be effective October 1, 2013.

## ***IN DEVELOPMENT***

### **DESE-Office of Special Education, Effective Practices-Transition Institute**

Registration is now open for the DESE Transition Institute to be held June 17-19, 2013, at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City, Missouri. The theme for this year's institute is GREAT EXPECTATIONS: It's All About Employment. The presentations during this year's institute will be focused on school-, community-, and business-based employment. Division of Developmental Disabilities Employment Coordinators will be participating.

To register and/or to view the draft agenda, follow this link: <http://dese.mo.gov/se/ep/training.html>. Reservations may be made by calling 800-338-8088 or online at <http://www.capitolplazajeffersoncity.com/>. Rooms are blocked as Missouri Transition Institute.

## ***BRIGHT IDEAS***

### **Antonio**

Antonio is a young man who lives with his family in Northeast Missouri. Antonio has autism and uses an I-pad to communicate with others and a computer to complete homework. He enjoys reading, swimming, watching movies, jumping on the trampoline and writing. Antonio has had articles published in *School and Community* a magazine published by the MSTA (Missouri State Teacher's Assoc.) and in *the Catholic Missourian*. Antonio has said that he hopes to write about what it's like to live his life so others will have a better understanding of the disorder.

Antonio recently entered some of his art work into an art show sponsored by the Kirksville Regional Office, the Senate Bill 40's from Adair, Macon, and Livingston counties as well as Rural Advocates of Independent Living and Regional Advisory Council, and took first place in the youth division. Since the art show, his award winning wooden piece, "Autism Pathways", has been displayed at a conference in Springfield as well as at the Kirksville Regional Office.

If you look closely you will see Antonio's view of the "red of the city" down a path where paperclips along the edges represent education and closed cones are autism while open cones are normalcy. Antonio's work is incredibly touching and a great study in what it is like to have autism. Once you see the work and read the poem you will know that Antonio's dream has come true and he has helped you to understand autism through his writing about his life.

Congratulations on your success Antonio!



photo courtesy of Brenda Linder

In Antonio's words- "Autism Pathways"

*As you walk through my life, autism will come alive in your mind. Follow me. The world is full of noises: some pleasant, some not. These noises, textures and sights are magnified in my world, so I choose to follow a path of least restriction. The path of red outskirts the commotion of the city. The path, very successively, lead me away from my fears and annoyances. On this path, education (paperclips) is helping me cope, finding my way in. The wall of normalcy does its best to keep me out but luckily I find a tunnel that allows me to enter occasionally. Normalcy (spheres with holes on top) graces my life on occasion, however autism (spheres without holes on top) dominants my existence. I am my happiest in the country, where the noises are less. But at times even there my head unwillingly spins as the spiral towers in the middle appear to be doing. The goal is always the same. Walk with confidence, love and faith and God will give me the key and let me in.*