



For the Hope and the How

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Senator Tom Harkin and Jeiri Flores, self-advocate, activist, and summit planning committee member. Jeiri facilitated a panel discussion at the summit on Lived Experience of Employment and Disability in Rochester.

Volume IV, Issue 3 • Fall 2018

Bridges

Bridges provides information and support to people with disabilities, their families, and the community to connect with the HOPE and the HOW.

ROC EmployABILITY

A Summit to Increase Employment and Decrease Poverty among People with Disabilities

Employment is the one sector (of the ADA) we have not been able to move the needle on, after all these years. The unemployment rate is still the same as the time we started, 27 years ago.

- Senator Tom Harkin

Self-advocates, family members, government officials, business partners, and community representatives gathered for the Roc EmployABILITY summit at The Strong on October 4. Participants were challenged to brainstorm strategies to decrease poverty and increase employment for people who have disabilities in our community. Senator Tom Harkin, author of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was the keynote speaker. A prevalent theme of his speech was the need to raise expectations for people who have disabilities.

Senator Harkin cited the national 33% disability employment rate and Rochester's 25% disability employment rate as "a national disgrace." According to the Rochester Area Community

Foundation's 2015 poverty report, "the poverty rate was almost 10 points higher for people with disabilities in Rochester, making Rochester's disabled community the poorest in the nation when compared to the 75 largest metropolitan areas." The City of Rochester's low graduation rate for students with disabilities "perpetuates the cycle of poverty."

Senator Harkin proposed two solutions to help counter the dismal statistics: youth preparedness and private sector commitments to offer more competitive integrated employment. He described the need for early work experiences and how people with disabilities don't usually apply for competitive employment because they often have been "battered with low expectations."

Senator Harkin shared a story of his brother, Frank, who was deaf. Harkin described his brother's transition from working as a baker, a job he disliked, to a machine production shop worker,

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Voices | A View from Where I Sit

by Jeiri Flores

Searching for and obtaining a job as person with a disability is like trying to play an impeccable game of Tetris, the puzzle video game. You have to be the best candidate for the position; your work environment has to be accommodating; and most importantly, you have to be able to create some sort of balance between the services you receive, your health, income, and health insurance. If at any time, any of these pieces land in the wrong place on your Tetris board, you stand to initiate a ripple of destruction. But honestly, for an opportunity to play our best game of Tetris, we'd all take that chance; we'd dream bigger and strive to make all the pieces fit together.



See next page for Jeiri's Interview with Jonathan Payne

Voices | Interview with Jonathan Payne by Jeiri Flores



Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: I'm a poet, scholar, gentleman and a creator. I am 21, Black, Puerto Rican, European, little bit of Jewish, African, and Native American.

Q: Who is a part of your support circle?

A: My support circle is mainly God, my mother, my grandpa, my grandma, my brother, and definitely my dog.

Q: What is your current title?

A: I am a receptionist clerk at Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities (SCDD).

Q: How did you find this position?

A: I found it through ACCES-VR who connected me to Project SEARCH®. My first internship with Project SEARCH® was as an office assistant. I loved it so much that I went to the director of SCDD, Dr. Hetherington, and told her, "I would like to work here for you," and she said, "Bring me a resume and I'll interview you." And so I did by the following week, and then I had to wait a couple months. I finally started August 14, 2017. A whole year has

passed and I still feel the same as day one. I feel great. I feel like I belong here. I don't think I'd want to work anywhere else but here because I have a personal connection to working here, considering that we're doing the right thing for those with disabilities, and my brother and I have autism.

Q: Did you look for a job before participating in Project Search?

A: No I didn't. I was pretty depressed and all I wanted to do was stay home. Then out of nowhere. I just decided, "You know what, fine, I'll go to Project Search," because that's what my ACCES-VR counselor told me. She said, "You'll be going to a hospital and interning there, doing work and learning skills." So I got off my bed, got dressed, and I began there midyear.

Q: Do you often disclose that you have autism? How does that work for you?

A: I don't really tell everybody. I think it depends on how connected I am with that person. It's like, do they really need to know or not?

Q: What is your dream job?

A: My first dream job was actually going into the military and the one before that was architecture. But now I don't think I need to think of the dream job because I'm living one right now.

Q: What is your favorite thing about your job?

A: My favorite part is every time I accept the challenge and I get it done. Every day I set a challenge for myself to finish as much work as possible.

Q: Have you made a lot of friends through your job?

A: Well there's a Jeiri Flores who is interviewing me right now. She's cool. Derek "Awesome Nerd" is a kind of a father figure. He's cool and so are some more of my other coworkers.

Q: What are your goals for the future?

A: I think to improve on something

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ROC EmployABILITY

A Summit to Increase Employment and Decrease Poverty among People with Disabilities

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his dream job. A bakery customer, who happened to own a machine parts company, discovered that Frank liked to work with machines. The customer offered Frank a job, and Frank immediately took off his apron as a means of accepting the job offer.

The senator also told the story of Emily Hillman, who was "pipelined into a dead-end sheltered workshop job" in Iowa. Emily told her mother she didn't like what she was doing: she wanted to be a barista. With her parents' support, Emily eventually learned to be a barista and opened up a coffee shop. Today, Em's Coffee Company employs five people, offers not only coffee but sandwiches and sweets, and serves as a local gathering place. A photo of Emily with President Obama hangs in her coffee shop, among other photos of Emily with notable friends and visitors. Senator Harkin mused, "How many more Emily Hillmans are there out there?"

Among other notable summit speakers were Dr. Cedric Alexander, Deputy Mayor for the City of Rochester; Andy Imparato, Executive Director of the Association of

University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD); NYS Senator Robert Ott, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities; Luticha Doucette, ADA Coordinator for the City of Rochester; Susan Hetherington, PhD., Director of Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities (SCDD); and Colin Garwood, President/CEO of Starbridge.

Facilitated breakout sessions focused on systems of support, transition, business, policy, transportation, and poverty. Each group compiled a list of recommendations to address the unique problems presented in their session.

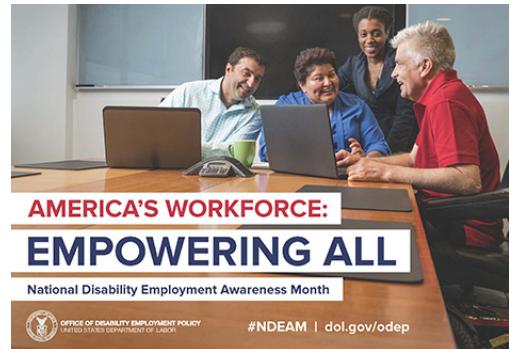
The summit was sponsored collaboratively by Starbridge and Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities. Colin Garwood reflected on the summit, "Starbridge is proud to partner with SCDD to bring this important event to Rochester. It lays the foundation for vital work that needs to be done in the areas of poverty and unemployment for people with disabilities."

Employment

Barriers to Employment

What gets in the way of employment? A panel addressed this at Roc EmployABILITY summit. Here's what the panel identified as barriers to employment:

- Attitudes towards people with disabilities; businesses are not always aware of the disability experience
- Lack of conversation between disability community and business community
- Legislation that needs to be updated
- Transportation
- Funding for job readiness programs and employment initiatives
- No easy pathway off of Social Security
- Job search process itself can be overwhelming
- Discriminatory language on job applications
- Medical conditions
- Challenge of getting first job when you don't have any work experience on your resume



National Disability Employment Awareness Month, October 2018

Reflecting a commitment to a robust and competitive American labor force, the 2018 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme is “America’s Workforce: Empowering All.” Observed each October, NDEAM celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities and educates about the value of a workforce inclusive of their skills and talents.

- <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/>

Employment Goals on the IEP

Did you know that your child's IEP includes a section for postsecondary goals, including employment?

The IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires transition services on the IEP (Individualized Education Program) to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually.

The IEP's Transition Services must include:

(1) Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition

assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and

(2) The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

Examples of measurable postsecondary goals in the area of employment.

- After graduation, Paulo will work 20 plus hours a week at the local grocery store and use temporary supports through Vocational Rehabilitation.

- Given a whole task instruction and a task analysis for bagging groceries, Paulo will demonstrate the steps in the task analysis with 80% accuracy and no more than one verbal prompt weekly by (specific date).



- Center for Parent Information and Resources, <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/transition-goals/#postsec>

Employment



Employment Gap for People with Disabilities

According to a 2016 report of the National Conference of State Legislatures, “a striking employment gap persists between Americans with and without disabilities. At nearly 20 percent of the population, people with disabilities are one of the nation’s largest minority groups. Yet the most recent U.S. disability employment statistics show that only 20 percent of people with disabilities are participating in the workforce, compared to 69.1 percent of people without disabilities.”

- <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/employing-people-with-disabilities.aspx>

What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

Under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done during the hiring process. These modifications enable a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity not only to get a job, but successfully perform their job tasks to the same extent as people without disabilities.

Examples of reasonable accommodations:

Physical changes: Installing a ramp or modifying a rest room; modifying the layout of a workspace

Accessible and assistive technologies: Ensuring computer software is accessible; providing screen reader software; using videophones to facilitate communications with colleagues who are deaf

Accessible communications: Providing sign language interpreters or closed captioning

at meetings and events; making materials available in Braille or large print

Policy enhancements: Allowing a service animal in a business setting; adjusting work schedules so employees with chronic medical conditions can go to medical appointments and complete their work at alternate times or locations

-U.S. Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment, <https://www.dol.gov/odep/>



October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month



Employment



Employment Services

Supported Employment

Employment Counselors help individuals to find and maintain employment through job search resources, guidance on resume development and interviewing, job coaching, and assistance with implementing workplace modifications.



Employment Track Program

100% community-based, this program offers opportunities for people to develop transferrable skills to prepare for competitive employment.

YES Internship Program

Youth and young adults gain 160 hours of paid work experience in careers that interest them.

Contact Jason Wood at 585-224-7239 or jwood@starbridgeinc.org.

How do you get started?

For individuals seeking job placement or job supports, please start by contacting your local ACCES-VR (Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation) office or attending an orientation session at ACCES-VR. The schedule for orientation sessions for the Rochester District Office is available here. ACCES-VR staff may be able to refer you to Starbridge for Employment Supports.

To learn more about Starbridge Employment Services, please contact Ursula Nicholson, Director of Individual Consumer Services, at 585-224-7342 or email unicholson@starbridgeinc.org.



RESOURCES

Employment Issues for People with Disabilities

<https://www.thearc.org/what-we-do/public-policy/policy-issues/employment>

State-by-State Employment Rank <http://fortune.com/2017/02/28/disability-employment-rank/>

Ability jobs website <https://abilityjobs.com/>

Five Moore Minute website about Inclusive Education <https://fivemooreminutes.com>

Voices |

Interview with Jonathan Payne

by Jeiri Flores

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every day and if I fully improve on that, improve on something else. I also need to balance my creative passions with my job and income.

Q: If you had any piece of advice for a Project Search grad or someone with a disability who is looking for a job, what would it be?

A: I think if you haven't been through Project Search, go through Project Search and if things don't work out or if you're over the age limit, go to Job Club. (Job Club is a program of Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities that provides a network for social and technical support in developing various job-related skills.)

Take the knowledge you learned and put your best foot forward. Get your resume out there as much as you can and go for something that you're going to love and enjoy. Set a goal for a job that you can work up to earn enough money. Maybe take a college course. Take the road wherever it will take you or wherever you want to take it.

Acces-VR, <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr>

Project SEARCH®, <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/strong-center-developmental-disabilities/programs/project-search.aspx>

Disclaimer: this interview is a transcription and some answers are edited for brevity and clarity.

Starbridge Workshops, Conferences & Special Events

Check our website event calendar for updates! www.starbridgeinc.org/events

Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans

November 1, 12:00-2:00pm

1820 Lemoyne Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13208



Are behaviors getting in the way of your child's learning? When a child's behaviors interfere with learning, students and teachers need strategies to minimize those behaviors. Join us to explore the nature of a child's behavior, when a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) should be requested, and how a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) can be put into place to support the whole team. Whether you are a family member or an educator, learn tools and strategies to support student success.

Registration is required. This workshop is FREE to family members.

To register, please contact Karen Adams at 315-478-1462, ext. 337.

Family Education & Training (FET) credit is available.

Please request special accommodations at least two weeks before the event.

In partnership with 

Opportunities to GET INVOLVED!

Do you have a story or information to share?

We'd love to hear from you! Email mschaertel@starbridgeinc.org

Webinars

Pathways to Graduation: Local and Regents Diplomas

October 30, 12:00-1:00pm

Diploma options for students with and without disabilities



What is the difference between a Local and Regents diploma? Join us for a webinar to discuss current requirements for high school graduation in New York State and safety net options available for all students.

Presenter Jennifer Cacioppo is a Specialist with the Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Center (RSE-TASC), where she provides professional development and technical assistance to area school districts. She was previously a special education teacher for 12 years.

This webinar will not be broadcast in our office. To participate, you must have access to a computer at another location – your home, office, or other facility.

Registration is required. To register, please use this link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2741483102560444675>

Bullying Interventions: An Attorney's Perspective

October 31, 12:00-1:00pm

Bullying is an increasingly serious problem in schools. Families, teachers, and children need help and support in knowing how to respond. Patrick McNelis will discuss the difference between bullying, discrimination, intimidation and harassment. Participants will learn more about the Dignity for All Students Act and what a school district's role is in responding to reports of bullying.



This webinar will not be broadcast in our office. To participate, you must have access to a computer at another location – your home, office, or other facility.

Registration is required. To register, please use this link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6556458597057412099>

Starbridge Workshops, Conferences & Special Events

Understanding Dyslexia: An Overview for Families

December 5, 6:30-8:30pm

AI Sigl Community - Sports Conference Room, Use Door #1
for nearest access to conference room
1000 Elmwood, Rochester, NY 14620

Do you suspect or know your child is struggling with dyslexia? Are you looking for new ways to help them? Is dyslexia a mystery to you?

Presenters Kelli Sandman-Hurley, Ed.D., and Tracy Block-Zaretsky of the Dyslexia Training Institute will be here in Rochester to share:

- Simulation of Dyslexia
- Brief overview of Dyslexia
- Ways to work with your child's school to develop appropriate interventions and services

FREE to families of children with disabilities and suspected disabilities. Light refreshments and beverages will be available.

To register: www.starbridgeinc.org/events or call Registration at 585-224-7399. Seating is limited, so reserve your seat early!

Please request special accommodations at least two weeks before the event.



Do you have a question for one of our advocates, a topic or issue you'd like some guidance on? Submit your question on our Facebook page or by email to mschaertel@starbridgeinc.org - we'll choose one or two to include in the next issue!

Join us for Starbridge's 2018 Education Conference! Dyslexia: What It Is and How to Help

December 6, 8:00am-3:30pm

Hilton Garden Inn College Town, 30 Celebration Drive, Rochester, NY 14620

Do you suspect there are children with dyslexia in your classroom? Are you looking for new ways to help those struggling students? Is dyslexia a mystery to you?

Presenters Kelli Sandman-Hurley, Ed.D., and Tracy Block-Zaretsky of the Dyslexia Training Institute will be here in Rochester to help demystify dyslexia and provide practical tools to help teachers and families support children, ease stress, and clear the path to educational success.

The morning will start with a simulation of dyslexia to help us understand the social and emotional distress that dyslexia can cause a student in the classroom. Kelli and Tracy will then:

- cover what dyslexia is and what it isn't
- dispel common myths
- discuss the social & emotional benefits of appropriate instruction
- describe what an appropriate intervention should include
- provide strategies to use in the classroom

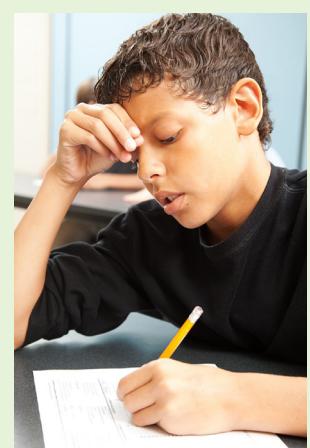
You will leave with practical activities you can implement immediately in your classroom or share with your child's school team.

Registration is required. Fee: \$89/person, which includes conference materials, continental breakfast and refreshments.

To register: www.starbridgeinc.org/education-conference

A limited number of scholarships are available for family members of children with disabilities or suspected disabilities. Please contact us at 585-224-7248 for more information.

Thank you to the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council for supporting these scholarships.



**Starbridge Business Hours:**

Monday to Friday,
8 AM TO 5 PM

Location:

Wolk Campus of the
AI Sigl Community of Agencies

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Bridges

This newsletter is published by
Starbridge
1650 South Avenue, Suite 200
Rochester, NY 14620
(585) 546-1700
1-800-650-4967
www.starbridgeinc.org

Funding is partially provided by a Family Support Services Grant by the OPWDD (Office for People With Developmental Disabilities) and by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

Publication within this journal of articles and information should not be considered an endorsement by Starbridge and/or the funders.

EDITOR: Maria Schaertel

DESIGN & PRINT: On the Move Contracting Services - Maát Reed and Sarah Stein



Why is employment important to people who have disabilities? The best way to answer this is to ask why work is important to *anyone*. In addition to a paycheck, what can work offer? Work provides:

- A wider circle of social interaction beyond our family and friends
- A chance to use our strengths and pursue interests
- The satisfaction of pursuing and achieving a professional goal, however small or big that may be
- Being a part of a community working toward a common goal
- An opportunity to learn new skills as the job progresses or as the need comes up
- An opportunity to mentor co-workers
- A challenge for us, either physically or mentally
- The experience of seeing the impact we have on our customers or clients

Maria Schaertel