

More Than 90 Students Will Receive Career-Building Experiences During Disability Mentoring Day in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties

NEW CASTLE (Oct. 16, 2017) – More than 90 students with disabilities are expected to participate in career-building experiences during Delaware's Disability Mentoring Day on Oct. 18 at locations in New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties. Disability Mentoring Day is held each October during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

This year, several New Castle County school districts are joining together to host a Career Development Day at the Siegel Jewish Community Center in Fairfax, with sessions planned on dressing for success, how to be self-advocates under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and tips on developing employability skills. A morning panel will feature employers from manufacturing, culinary arts and outdoor recreation. The morning's keynote speaker will be George Tilson, a career and workforce development consultant from Maryland who operates Tilson & Diaz Solutions, Inc. Tilson has spent his career helping communities build or enhance programs that support children, youth and adults with disabilities in achieving their personal goals for employment, education, and full inclusion in the community. About 60 students from Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Christina, Colonial, Red Clay and New Castle County Vo-Tech school districts are expected.

Elsewhere, students will be gathering at host sites and then transitioning to work sites for job-shadowing experiences. At the Courtyard Marriott-University of Delaware in Newark, 13

students from UD's Career & Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program will participate in job-shadowing experiences in the Newark area. At Smyrna High School, eight students will gather and then move to job sites at the school and at Willey Farms. And at Woodbridge High School, 14 students are expected to learn job skills at different locations at the school, including the office, cafeteria and maintenance department.

"For students with disabilities, Disability Mentoring Day is another invaluable experience as they make the transition from school to the world of work or higher education," Gov. John Carney said. "Students get to experience what is expected of them in a workplace and how to advocate for themselves and their needs. Employers get the opportunity to meet young people with incredible talents and enthusiasm and a passion to embrace their dreams."

Disability Mentoring Day is a national program, and in Delaware, the collaboration involves several agencies, educational institutions, business groups, and organizations, including the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies, which started the first Disability Mentoring Day in Delaware eight years ago. Joining the collaboration are the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Education, Christina School District, and Smyrna and Woodbridge high schools, the Better Business Bureau of Delaware, the Delaware Business Leadership Network and Easterseals of Delaware & Maryland Eastern Shore. The group is co-chaired by two young people with disabilities – Alyssa Cowin, an operations support specialist with DHSS, and Julia Hensley, who is working through Easterseals at Victory Fellowship Church.

"Because employment is a social determinant of health, the experience that students with disabilities receive during Disability Mentoring Day is an important one," Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker said. "Increasing the number of workplace experiences that any student has, gives that young person a greater chance of being

hired by an employer who will harness their talents and skills. But that experience is especially crucial to students with disabilities because employment is the pathway to financial security, independence and inclusion in society.”

“We are encouraged and delighted by the increased support throughout Delaware for Disability Mentoring Day,” said Brian Freedman, associate director of the University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies. “We are hopeful that we will continue to see more employers each year giving opportunities to these incredibly talented and motivated students. Delaware businesses are realizing how people of all abilities can enhance their workplaces.”

The on-the-job experience that the students will receive illustrates why the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is such a strong supporter of Disability Mentoring Day.

“DVR is pleased to again support Disability Mentoring Day, which provides students with role models and experiences ensuring their future success in the workplace,” said Andrea Guest, director of the Department of Labor’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Employers participating in Disability Mentoring Day are:

New Castle County (23): Eagle Group, The Hospitality School, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Brandywine Creek Park, Community Integrated Services, Junior Achievement of Delaware, Olive Garden, Grub Burger, Season’s Pizza, Siegel Jewish Community Center, Independent Resources, Inc., Victory Fellowship Church, Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Newark Senior Center, VCA Newark Animal Hospital, PetKare, and at the University of Delaware, Student Financial Services, Carpenter Sports Building, University of Delaware Transportation, UD Messenger, WMPH Radio, Office of Student Conduct and Student Health Services.

Kent County (3): Willey Farms, and the Smyrna School District's Maintenance Department and Early Childhood Program.
Sussex County (7): Woodbridge High School's Custodial Crew, Buildings and Grounds Department, Nursing and Wellness Staff, Early Childhood Care, Cafeteria Crew, Criminal Justice and Secretarial Staff.

Follow Disability Mentoring Day year-round on Facebook at [Facebook.com/DelDMD](https://www.facebook.com/DelDMD) or on Twitter @DelawareDMD. To view a video that explains Disability Mentoring Day and features a 2016 Disability Mentoring Day participant who now attends Delaware Technical Community College:

NOTE TO MEDIA: To download photos from Delaware's Disability Mentoring Day 2016, go to:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/deldhss/albums/72157674343260311>

To view video highlights of U.S. Sen. Chris Coons and UD President Dennis Assanis giving keynote speeches at Delaware's Disability Mentoring Day 2016, go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sE0Jwi9feRw&feature=youtu.be>

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