Honoring Abilities

by Jake Jacobs

For more than twenty years Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County—eitas has held an annual Board Meeting in April. That meeting traditionally has been combined with a dinner and awards presentation that recognizes the accomplishments of both people with disabilities and the professionals who support them. Nominated by providers, case managers, and individuals, people with developmental disabilities receive awards for Personal Success of the Year and Advocate of the Year. There are also awards given for Direct Support Professional, Support Coordinator of the Year, and Public Official of the Year.

This year’s dinner and awards presentation was held at the Hilton Garden Inn—Independence on April 23rd with over 630 guests pre-registered for the ceremonies—most of whom have a disability. I have been told that this night is like the Academy Awards to the individuals we support. People get to dress up in their finest, have a great sit-down dinner, and visit with friends and peers at a social event that pays no attention to a disability someone may have. This is the largest event we hold each year and a recurring problem is our inability to invite everyone who has a developmental disability and those who support them. With over 4,000 people in Jackson County with a developmental disability it just is not possible for everyone to be there. We have to draw the line at about 630 people with advance reservations. We have looked at larger venues in other locations, but most cannot handle a larger crowd with the needs we have for easy accessibility and transportation.

This year twenty-seven individuals were nominated for the various categories. The awards and the honors focus on the abilities that someone has, not on something they cannot do; and that is important to everyone. Mike Sanders, Jackson County Executive, was on hand to open the awards program; and several local and statewide officials were present to help celebrate the accomplishments we honored.
Eitas Executive Director, Jake Jacobs welcomed everyone to the 2013 Awards Presentation & Dinner on Tuesday April 23rd at the Hilton Garden Inn—Independence.

Independence Mayor Don Reimal, Mayor Pro-Tem Jim Schultz and eitas Board Chair, Tammy Kemp

Miss Rachel Gaydusek, Michael Haseltine Scholarship Award Winner. Anna Snow, Scholarship recipient was not in attendance

Deputy Division Director DMH-DD, Vicki McCarrell, Etta Mitchell, KCRO Director and Julie Lillich, Asst. Director/Treatment KCRO

Pat Turner, Executive Director Habitat for Humanity Truman Heritage & Exe. Director of TNC Community, James Landrum

Betty Sharp, eitas Board Member & Mike Sharp, Jackson County Sheriff

Keith Schafer, DMH Director, and Kathleen Featherstone, Interim Director, KCRO
Anita Parran with Rep. Mike Cierpiot, the Public Official of the Year Award Winner

John Humphrey with Berniece Barritt, the Personal Success of the Year Award Winner

Barbara Winkler with Barbara Cowan, the Direct Support Professional of the Year Winner

Tammy Kemp and Paula Smith with Derrick Baston, the Dr. John McGee Spirit of Gentleness Award Winner

Betty Sharp with Beth Bloom, the Support Coordinator of the Year Award Winner

Mark McCaskill and Candace Cunningham with Joshua Hamilton, the Advocate of the Year Award Winner
The Second Annual Ability 5K Run, Walk and Roll event was held at Swope Park on Saturday, March 30, 2013. The purpose of the event is twofold: to bring awareness of developmental disabilities during the National Awareness Month of March and to raise funds for the Michael Haseltine Scholarship fund.

This year, in addition to funds received for participating in the race, we also had several great corporate sponsors that worked with us to make the race a success. Those sponsors included the Dream Works; S.A.V.E.; Lathrop & Gage; Metzler Brothers; Mayer, Hofmann & McCann, UMB; JobOne and Austen-Dooley.

John Crayton, a person that eitas supports, won the t-shirt design contest for the race this year.

The Michael Haseltine Scholarship was created to honor the memory and work of eitas’ former Deputy Director. Scholarships are awarded each year to Jackson County residents who have a developmental disability and want to further their education beyond high school; or for individuals who want to have a career in working with people who have developmental disabilities.

This year eitas awarded two $1,000 scholarships. The first to Miss Anna Snow, who plans to study at UMKC to become a Music Therapist working with people with developmental disabilities and the second to Miss Rachel Gaydusek who will be attending William Woods University to become an American Sign Language Interpreter.

The race was well-attended despite the cool and damp weather, and as you can see from the pictures everyone had an enjoyable time.
Let’s Make Friends (LMF) is a group of eitas co-workers and individuals supported that meet on a monthly basis to promote relationship building in the community. The purpose of LMF is: “Having more friends gives a positive self-image and quality of life. “

LMF plans to develop activities that promote meeting new people, determining shared interests amongst those we support and finding places in the community where these interests can be explored. The goals of LMF also include:

- Facilitate in building a diverse network system,
- Promote better sense of self,
- Provide support to increase the number of friends in the lives of people we support,
- Support staff know how to provide support to people to develop friendships,
- Reconnect with past relationships, and
- Befriending housemates.

Eitas has several groups committed to supporting people to be healthy, increasing community involvement, and developing meaningful friendships. LMF thought it would be a great opportunity to share community resources that incorporate these things! LMF recently collected information for people that are interested in becoming healthy and running with community groups. To learn more about these resources please e-mail friends@eitas.org

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**Heather’s Poetry**

The poem below was written by Heather Smith, a person supported by eitas. Heather writes poetry as well as using her creative talent at the Imagine That! Art Studio in the Crossroads district.

**You Are Not Alone**

You are not alone, we are family. We need to stick together forever.

We have to care for each other. Yes, we will have hard times but we will also have good times. Our family should care like family should.

No amount of money, fortune or fame is not what our family wants. We just want to care and love each other. That is why our family says, You are not alone. That is why we need to stick together forever in life.

*Heather Smith*