Tax levy provides many years of services to Jackson Countians with dev disabilities

By Jake Jacobs
Executive Director

In 1969 a state statute was enacted that allowed the citizens of Missouri counties to vote on a personal property tax levy to support various local services for individuals with developmental disabilities—creating what is commonly known as “SB 40 Boards” after the Senate Bill that created them. The voters of Jackson County approved such a board and the tax levy to support it in 1976. First known as the Jackson County Board of Services for the Developmentally Disabled, the Board voted in 2007 to change the name to Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County — eitas. The name change and a new logo were developed to bring more attention to the organization and the services provided. Eitas is an acronym that represents “empowering individuals through advocacy and support.”

Our initial charter was to provide funding for sheltered workshops and residential group homes for the persons who were employed by workshops. But since 1976 the needs and

Census 2020: Every person counts

By Malinda Barnett
Community Outreach Supervisor

When I was asked to participate in the Complete Count Committee, I was excited to be involved! Why? Because EVERY PERSON COUNTS.

What is the Complete Count Committee? It is a committee that has been established to increase awareness of the 2020 Census, as well as to motivate residents to respond to the 2020 Census. The Complete Count Committee serves as an “census ambassador” that will help to ensure a complete and accurate count of our community. We are an integral part in helping the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct the census. There are several Complete Count Committees across the United States, and the one I am participating in was formed to provide outreach to populations that have historically been difficult to reach for responses in the census.

What is the 2020 Census? The census counts every person living in the United States. A census is completed every ten years. The last census was completed in 2010, and so this is why a census is being completed this year. Information from the census is used to plan new stores, offices, and restaurants; distribute state and federal funds; and address needs such as transportation, housing, educational services, and medical care.

Census 2020 continued on Pg. 7
Partnering to make world accessible one sport at a time

Left to right: Malinda Barnett, eitas community outreach supervisor; Sam Stepp, eitas community resources coordinator; and Joe Henson, resource coordinator at the Platte County Board of Services.

By Malinda Barnett
Community Outreach Supervisor

The Community Outreach Department has involvement with a number of committees, to build relationships within and gain knowledge about the community; educate the community about eitas’ supports and services; and help to bridge gaps in services. Some of the committees we are involved in are the Disability Inclusion Network of Greater Kansas City; Pivotal Partners; Kansas City Regional Transition Network; and the Community Transition Team. And, beginning in June, Sam Stepp had the exciting opportunity to start representing eitas on the Accessible Sports in Greater Kansas City committee!

The Accessible Sports in Greater Kansas City committee was created in 2018 through a Healthy Communities Grant from the Health Forward Foundation. It is comprised of over 25 diverse organizations whose goal is to increase access to sports and recreational activities for people of all ages and all abilities. One of the ways in increasing access is by sharing information through their website, AS-GKC.net. The website is an all-inclusive adaptive sports website, and it includes a calendar that lists adaptive and accessible sports, and other recreational activities throughout the greater Kansas City area. Eitas is listed as a partner on this website, and we have a page on the website dedicated to information regarding eitas. Sam is able to add events that eitas is holding onto the calendar.

Another project of the Accessible Sports in Greater Kansas City is administering the Community Gaps Survey. The Community Gaps Survey can be found on the Accessible Sports in Greater Kansas City website. It is hoped that information received from survey answers will continue to help make Kansas City and the world of sports and recreation more accessible and inclusive. I encourage you and anyone you support to please complete the survey.

For more information about the committee, the website or the Community Gaps Survey, please contact either myself at mbarnett@eitas.org or Sam Stepp at sstepp@eitas.org.
Walking down the colorful hallways, greeted by a fantastical mural, which was created by famous Kansas City artist Scribe, one is quick to realize what a special place Children’s Center for the Visually Impaired (CCVI) truly is.

CCVI has educated more than 10,000 children who are blind or visually impaired since opening in 1952. The mission of CCVI is to prepare children with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities, to reach their highest potential in the sighted world.

What is the connection between CCVI and eitas?

CCVI receives funding from Missouri First Steps; however, the reimbursement rate they receive from First Steps is only 27 percent of the cost of their services. CCVI’s services are not covered under Medicaid or other insurance; therefore, CCVI relies heavily on fundraising and grants to provide quality services at little or no cost to families. Eitas has provided grant funding to CCVI through Jackson County SB40 funds for several years. Eitas funding serves eligible Jackson County residents enrolled at CCVI’s early childhood development program.

The CCVI Early Intervention Program is a comprehensive, individualized educational program for infants and toddlers. The Infant Team includes teachers of the visually impaired, certified orientation and mobility specialists, and physical, occupational, and speech-language therapists who collaborate on a regular basis to ensure quality programming. Regular learning sessions are carried out in the natural environments or the child’s home or daycare setting. Children learn to use all senses in unique ways—from aquatic therapy, to music therapy, to learning braille.

CCVI is the only specialized school in the area for very young children who have blindness or visual impairment. If you would like to help support the mission of CCVI, you can participate in their biggest fundraiser, The Trolley Run. The Trolley Run is one of the largest, timed four mile runs in the nation. The course takes you from Waldo to the Country Club Plaza and has an after party with great food and drinks.

By Sarah Vallandingham  
Agency Relations Specialist  

EITAS.ORG
Community Outreach: Bringing benefits counseling to eitas

The Community Outreach department provides a number of supports to people with developmental disabilities, including making connections with community resources; making connections with emotional and peer support programs; and connecting people with supports through SB 40 funding. They also provide information and referral services to anyone who calls within the community, and they represent eitas at events and on community committees, as well as give presentations regarding eitas’ supports and services.

Jennifer Seidel recently joined the team as the benefits specialist. She comes to eitas from Vocational Services, where she oversaw a team who worked to connect people with disabilities with quality competitive employment opportunities. She also has participated in a benefits planning seminar, and is scheduled to become certified as a benefits planner/work incentives practitioner.

Jennifer will be providing benefits counseling to people supported through eitas, and she may expand to people with developmental disabilities within the general community. She also will be assisting people with Medicaid, Social Security and food stamps applications, as well as representing eitas in the community at events and on committees, and in giving presentations.

First Mental Health First Aid training an eitas success

The first Mental Health First Aid training offered by eitas was held Dec. 9 and 10. The first class was a success, and eight eitas employees are now certified Mental Health First Aiders.

The goal of Mental Health First Aid is to equip people with the tools they need to assist someone who is dealing with a mental health crisis. One in five people live with a mental illness; however, the negative stigma that is associated with mental health causes people to not get help for their illness. In fact, only 41 percent of people with a mental illness seek treatment or services.

Being a Mental Health First Aider can help you identify persons supported, co-workers, family members and community members who may be having a mental health crisis and teach you an action plan for how to get them help. There will be more training opportunities coming in 2020. I hope you will join a class and make a difference in your community.
Disability Rights Legislative Day 2020

An eitas bus with Jackson County residents headed to Jefferson City for Disability Rights Legislative Day 2020 on March 11 where a rally was held in the Missouri State Capitol rotunda.

Individuals and families were able to arrange their own appointments with their local state representatives and senators.

Legislative bills that were the focus included the possible elimination of the personal property tax — eitas is a County Senate Bill 40 Board that depends on Jackson County Personal Property taxes to fund local services.

Another important topic was the state’s budget. The Governor has requested many things we need, including eliminating the waitlist, but it needs to get through the House and Senate intact.

The following are the 2020 Legislative Priorities for eitas.

**Adequately fund services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)**

- There is a direct support hiring and retention crisis as a result of inadequate rates, which affects our ability to provide adequate services (the increase in Missouri’s minimum wage will only increase the urgency).

- Adequately funded service rates and eliminating the waitlist will save on costs associated with crisis supports.

**Ensure ALL Missourians have the opportunity to work in a competitive, integrated setting**

- Establish “Employment First” legislation.

- Fully fund Vocational Rehabilitation.

- Support Medicaid-funded employment through DMH-DD.

**Safeguard existing programs, funding and services from Managed Care entities, which have been proven to be ineffective with I/DD services in every state where they have been introduced**

- Continue to collaborate with DMH-DD, MoHealthnet, legislators and other stakeholders to create a more efficient framework for delivery of long-term services and supports (LTSS) that produce successful outcomes that matter most to individuals with I/DD.

- Design a system to include the following core values:
  - Prioritize people with I/DD.
  - Provide stability and sustainability.
  - Provide ease in administration.
  - Preserve and strengthen local control.
  - Provide positive, measurable outcomes.
  - Comply with the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Final Rule.

- Ensure TCM stays at the local level, is independent of the Managed Care Organization and is not conflicted.
Intellectual and Developmental Disability Health Equity Collaborative

We are excited to announce our new project that is funded by the Health Forward Foundation to develop grassroots organizing on health policy issues impacting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Jackson County. This is a new project that builds on our experience implementing and sustaining collaborative efforts around health equity for people with I/DD. People with I/DD and their advocates will identify policies and issues to be addressed through the grassroots organizing.

In addition to people with I/DD and family members, we will engage partners including disability service providers, the Kansas City Health Department, Children's Mercy Hospital Beacon program, Greater KC Community Health Worker Collaborative and other health providers.

Emmett Reyes-Teeters, eitas community resource coordinator, will be recruiting community partners to join the Collaborative. Other project staff include Cassie Webb and Candace Cunningham, an advocate from the Institute for Human Development at UMKC.

Webb has experience mobilizing grassroots organizing efforts and will be training our collaborative members in the ways of grassroots organizing. Cunningham, recently named a Mental Health Champion for 2020, will be coordinating the activities of the advocates.

Our kick-off activities are scheduled for April 2020. Our outcomes include:

1. increased capacity of individuals with I/DD to influence health policies that affect them;
2. increased numbers of individuals with I/DD engaged in advocacy;
3. increased capacity of eitas, the Health Equity Collaborative, and member organizations to advocate for health equity for people with I/DD;
4. increased numbers of people with I/DD, family members, and direct support workers taking leadership roles in advocacy efforts; and
5. greater inclusion of people with I/DD and their needs in broader healthy equity work in the Kansas City area.

Angel Tree brings smiles for sixth straight season

By Brandi Webb
Senior Support Coordinator

The eitas Angel Tree provided holiday gifts to children supported by eitas and their siblings for a sixth straight year.

In 2019, 128 children were provided gifts. Of those 128, 56 children were supported by agencies and people outside of eitas, 34 children were supported by employees of eitas and 38 children received gifts purchases with funds from the Angel Tree group. The group received $1,200 this year in monetary donations.

New donors this year included the Pipe Fitters Union and the Boilmakers Union, who are both located near the eitas Administrative offices.

The children/families supported with the eitas Angel Tree do not qualify for other community resources; therefore, the Angel Tree is their last resort to provide presents for the holidays.
**Director’s Message continued from Pg. 1**

supports for individuals have changed tremendously.

Starting out with a $30,000 loan from Jackson County before the first tax levy dollars were received, the leaders of our organization have worked with hundreds of citizen volunteer Board Members over the years to fund services and facilities to meet the growing demands of thousands of persons in Jackson County with intellectual developmental disabilities. From those modest beginnings, we have grown to be one of the largest IDD service providers in Missouri. Today supporting a variety of services and programs, in addition to employment and residential services, which benefit thousands of people every year.

Traditionally we see ourselves as the “funder of last resort”, covering the costs of local providers, facilities, and equipment that are not paid by other sources such as Medicaid, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Health and Senior Services, or the First Steps program. By statute, we can only provide tax funds for services to citizens of Jackson County who are deemed eligible under the statutory definition of developmental disability and in accordance with our own local policies.

But in addition to local funding to providers, we offer direct services to eligible individuals for transportation and support coordination. We began offering transportation services in 1995 and since then have grown to be the largest transportation service of any SB 40 Board in the state, transporting 500 riders a day to work, day programing, and other supports.

In 2007, at the invitation of the Department of Mental Health, we began contracting with them to provide support coordination to eligible Jackson County citizens, and now serve almost 1,800 people. The costs for those services we are able to bill to Medicaid, whose payments have allowed us to expand services far beyond what we are capable of with just the tax levy dollars alone. Our entire organization advocates strongly for increased services and new supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and we are seen as a local and statewide leader in our efforts to support our citizens.

In the past 13 years, eitas has grown from a staff of less than 35 to a current staff of 158; increased our budget by more than 40 percent; and are serving over 2,000 more people in Jackson County. It is a true honor to have the privilege of serving so many people and meeting so many needs, and only possible because of the dedicated and devoted staff we have attracted over the years, and the ongoing, consistent funding provided from our local taxes that has enabled us to grow services and support both local providers and over 3,500 citizens with disabilities.

**Census 2020 continued from Pg. 1**

How can you respond to the 2020 Census? The 2020 Census will officially be open April 1st. Every household will be asked to participate in the census, and starting mid-March, the invitation will most likely be sent via mail.

The Census form will be available in a variety of languages, and you will have the option of responding on-line, by mail, or by phone. Responses are safe, secure, and protected by federal law, and are only used to produce statistics. Responses cannot be used against anyone by the FBI, CIA, DHS or ICE, and no private information such as Social Security numbers is asked to be given.

It is important that every person be counted in the 2020 Census, so please help spread the word about it.

If you have any questions about the 2020 Census, please feel free to contact me at mbarnett@eitas.org.
Let us keep you in the eitas loop

We would love the opportunity to keep you updated on everything going on in our orbit.

Here's how you can stay in touch with us:

**www.eitas.org:** Our website provides you with an opportunity to sign up to join our mailing list. This is a great way for us to be able to reach out to you with news items, upcoming courses and much more. We also include news releases on our website in the Announcements banner.

**Social Media:** We post related information on these social media channels:

- **Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/eitasJacksonCounty](http://www.facebook.com/eitasJacksonCounty)
- **Twitter:** [@eitasjacksonco](http://twitter.com/eitasjacksonco)
- **YouTube:** [www.youtube.com/channel/UCZmwKRMFstYJzQFyIvUPrg](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZmwKRMFstYJzQFyIvUPrg)
- **LinkedIn:** [www.linkedin.com/company/eitas/](http://www.linkedin.com/company/eitas/)

To submit news items or ideas, please reach out to us at communications@eitas.org.