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Alabama communities honor businesses that employ people with disabilities

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, a program of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), has planned a number of special events around the state as part of the October observance of National Disability Employment Awareness (NDEA) Month.

The 16 events will honor businesses that provide opportunities for successful employment for people with disabilities and recognize the success and contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. This year’s theme is “Talent Has No Boundaries: Workforce Diversity INCLUDES Workers with Disabilities.”

“It’s been a great year in Alabama for employment of people with disabilities, including America’s wounded warriors,” said Peggy Anderson, ADRS coordinator for business relations. “So many businesses have demonstrated exceptional outreach, employment and retention of workers with disabilities that we have seen a notable increase in the number of awards this year.”

The events also recognize contributions from the news media, community partners, and local professionals while also promoting the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

“It’s a great investment in our economic future,” Anderson said. “For every dollar that ADRS spends on successfully rehabilitating an individual, \$17.43 is returned to the economy through his or her employment.”

ADRS has several services to assist employers that are interested in hiring people with disabilities.

Through the Business Relations Program, ADRS staff recruit qualified people with disabilities to meet the employer’s needs, provide training for the individual, and provide suggestions for accommodating the individual with a disability.

With funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ADRS and its community partners have temporarily implemented other incentives for hiring individuals with disabilities, including offsetting the cost of training the individual, and covering the cost of an individual temporarily working at a jobsite so the employer can assess the individual before hiring them.

ADRS also provides services to help employers retain employees who acquire disabilities because of illness, aging, or accidents by providing or suggesting accommodations for those individuals.

The mission of ADRS is to enable Alabama’s children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential. In fiscal year 2010, the department assisted 5,969 Alabamians with disabilities in becoming successfully employed.

The Alabama Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities was created in the late 1940’s by Gov. Jim Folsom as a response to veterans with disabilities who returned home and found no work available. Since that time, many individuals with disabilities, both veterans and civilians, have received the benefit of activities of the Governor’s Committee. The committee coordinates a network of local volunteer groups throughout the state and works closely with ADRS staff to develop employment opportunities and raise awareness of the needs and rights of Alabamians with disabilities.

For information about NDEA events in your local area, contact Peggy Anderson at (205) 290-4457.