



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Robert Weil, Chair

ABILITIES COMMITTEE MINUTES  
TUESDAY, MARCH 20 @9:00, 2018 AT WDB OFFICE

ATTENDANCE – ABILITIES COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		10-Jan	7-Feb	13-Mar	10-Apr	9-May	11-Jul	8-Aug	12-Sep	14-Nov	13-Feb-18	20-Mar-18
Maggio, Jim CHAIR	TFG/Judge Group	X		Snow n/m	holiday n/m	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abrams, Barbara	Jewish Family & Children Service of Southern NJ		X			X	X	X			X	X
Gpolla, Joe	Jewish Employment and Vocational Services		X									
Davis, Anthony	Mental Services of Southwestern New Jersey	X	X				X	X			X	
DeAngelo-Ferebee, Lamont	Ferebee Family Foundation											X
Deitz, Jeffrey	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services					X					X	X
Donato, Carl	Wawa											X
Farber, Dan	Bright Lights USA	X										
Forman, Lois	Bancroft	X				X	X			X	X	X
Geoffrey, Taylor	NJ DOL DVOP											
Hale, Dawn	The Arc of Camden County									X		
Lombardo, Rick	Target Stores											
Lope, Krista	NJ Division of Vocational and Rehabilitation Services											
Lucas, Angela	Hireability	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	
Newman, Jason	NJ DOL DVOP											
Peters, Annie	Sambulance									X	X	
Pryor, Regina	LWD Division of Workforce Operations and Business Svcs.		X				X					
Schwingel, Laura	Jewish Family & Children Service of Southern NJ											
Taguwa, Denise	LWD-WDB Coord + Support										X	
Tumolillo, Terry	Voice Print											
Walker, Dante	Mental Health Association											X
Walton, Marcie	VOA											
Waltz, Julie	ARC of Camden County											
Welder, Laura	Jewish Employment and Vocational Services											
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB Executive Director					X	X	X		X	X	X
Varallo Kathleen	WDB Administrative Assistant	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Williams, Leslie	WDB Comptroller											

**WELCOME**

Jim Maggio, Abilities Chair, Welcomed attendees and asked for roundtable introductions. He welcomed Lamant-Deangelo Ferebee, of the Ferebee Family Foundation and Dante Walker, Mental Health Association. He gave an overview of the last meeting’s discussions about upgrading the 2018 event to attract more Employers or Human Resource Managers. He said that we discussed a more focused workshop idea that would give HR managers more relevant information about the process of starting an inclusive hiring program, then he turned the discussion over to the committee.

Jeffrey S. Swartz, WDB Executive Director, referenced the minutes from the last meeting and told committee members who may not have been present about an interesting program segment he viewed on CBS Sunday Morning about the benefits of hiring talented individuals on the Autism Spectrum. (See link below for the full story)

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-growing-acceptance-of-autism-in-the-workplace/>

Kathleen Varallo, WDB Administrative Assistant, reported that she researched Human Resource teaching staff, online at Drexel University and other local colleges. She did not see any particular staff member who might have had a special expertise in disabilities management. She

said she also wrote to USBLN to request information about the Disability Equality Index (DEI). DEI is a free benchmarking tool for USBLN partners that provides a confidential opportunity to receive an objective score on disability inclusion policies and practices. It's an aspirational, educational, recognition tool that helps identify opportunities for continued improvement and helps establish a reputation as an employer of choice. The DEI is a joint initiative with the American Association of People with Disabilities. <http://www.usbln.org/what-we-do/disability-equality-index/>

Barbara Abrams, JFCS, said she wrote and contacted USBLN as well. They do not have anyone in the area that could speak at our event. She suggested we reach out to Deb Dagit and ask her to speak about the topic. She is a member of the organization and has a good understanding of the program. Kathleen said the WDB has her contact information and would contact her to get recommendations. Barbara said the program is directed toward fortune 1000 companies and sets a scoring indicator for how well a company is building inclusive hiring practices in such areas as retention, recruitment, co-worker mentoring, culture and accommodations to name a few. The program has been in practice for about five years and is catching on. This scoring index is considered by some to be a valuable indicator about company standards. Lois Forman, Bancroft said that USBLN is a very large well respected organization that hosts conferences during the year that attract well over 1000 attendees. We may be the first to bring attention to USBLN in our region. Jeff said that our past programs have created awareness to inclusive hiring practices. Now maybe we can take a deeper look at establishing this type of DEI standard of excellence within a company. We could use the DEI as the central focus of the program that would include awareness, the presenter, and practice, and the companies that use it as examples. The committee discussed the idea of creating a culture within a company and the process.

Lamant-Deangelo Ferebee, Ferebee Family Foundation, asked if the event could focus on all types of disabilities. Jim said that we do try to create awareness to all types of Disabilities. Last year's speaker, Deb Dagit spoke about the language of inclusion in all areas such as hearing impaired, wheel chair use, sight impairments and others. He said that an awareness to Epilepsy would be a very good topic. Jeff said the goal of the event is to bring attention to the fact that an individual with a physical or intellectual disability can still be an asset to the workforce. Employers are beginning to understand the assets these individuals can bring to the workplace. The focus of the Abilities Committee is to not only bring awareness to this employable population but to create help opportunities for employers to come together share best practices. We have used Autism as the leading vehicle to drive the message out to the community. Barbara said that it would be valuable to create a learning presentation that teaches strategies to work with individuals that have Epilepsy. Kathleen said that she thought that Deb Dagit's mention of how to create an accommodations plan would be an important topic. Showing an employer the nuts and bolts and giving them ideas for the forms that could be used within their company.

This topic could also include a presentation about how to work with effectively with a Career Coach. Carl Donato, Wawa, said the more knowledge a HR manager has in advance of hiring, the more likely they are to consider a path of inclusion. Employers are aware of initiatives. They could seriously benefit by learning more about professional supportive services. Creating the best road map toward inclusion will get the best buy in or support from the top of the organization especially when it addresses current compliance standards and best practices. Lois said this could be part of the panel discussion.

### ABILITIES EVENT 2018

Jeff suggested the general format of the upcoming program could include a presentation about the DEI and then a presentation about the components or performance measures such as creating an accommodations plan. Another speaker could make a presentation about educating the staff. Jim said that the companies listed on the USBLN website must have local affiliations we could contact. Again, our focus is educating companies how to start programs. We could tap into this list of employers to invite and speak about how they are using the DEI and how it has worked for these companies.

Jim read a quote that could be included as by-line to the event or be included in the program; “Kindness is the language with which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” *Mark Twain*

Jim said we have created the understanding in past events and now its time to get down to business by showing an employer how to put that understanding to work in their company. None of what we can teach a company how to do will work if they do not have the buy in or support of upper management. The executive level of management or owners of the company must be involved in order for any inclusive program to work. The concept of the DEI could push Company leaders to take on the challenge and get involved. Barbara suggested the program format as follows;

- Disability Equality Index (DEI) - What it is and how to implement it in the company.
- Accommodations Plan – Creating an individualized common sense policy for an individual that can be translated to the direct supervisor and staff so that everyone on staff understands what can to be expected from the employee with whatever disability they have. It can also include an example of a staff training developed to accommodate an individual with a disability such as epilepsy or hearing impairment.
- Creating an inclusive Culture – Staff training and supportive services
- Senior Management Support – Creating support for inclusive program starts at the top and includes everyone in the company.

Lois said there is a legal component to government contracts and that is a 7% minimum hiring requirement. Some companies are forced to meet these requirements as a result of an audit. This

is a sore subject within some companies that take on government contracts but an important point that should be addressed. The Committee discussed the issue and how to properly handle it in any public discussion. The Committee agreed that most hiring programs are started as a result of personal or family disabilities that have touched the lives of individuals within the company in some way. Jeff Dietz, DVRS, said we have TD Bank that is a participant in USBLN and Jefferson/Kennedy that are involved with Project Search. Representation from these companies should attract other employers. The Committee agreed that it will be important to diversify the message this year and include other disabilities and talk more about how the upper management took the chance and what steps they took to meet the DEI. Barbara said she would contact a speaker from the Bog Center to do a real specialized training. Carl said we should tie in examples of specific jobs and how inclusion can work in different sectors like Retail, or Banking or Manufacturing or Hospital.

The committee discussed locations. Jeff Dietz suggested we take a look at the TD Bank University. He will contact TD to set up a walk thru. Jeff Swartz said that he will contact Sandy Capell about the possibility of hosting the event at their new corporate Subaru location. Kathleen said that if we got the same sponsorship amount we could consider hosting the event at the Holiday Inn in Cherry Hill. Barbara said we discussed the date at the last meeting as being the second Tuesday in October which would be October 9<sup>th</sup>. That would be in place of our regular Abilities meeting.

Kathleen reported that she followed up with the One-Stop about taking a table at the Camden County Spring Job Fair in order to promote the objectives of the Abilities Committee as well as the October event. It was recommended that we share space with the DVRS table and Jeff Dietz agreed that he would make space available at their table. Hopefully we will be able to have a "Save the Date" flyer prepared in time for the job fair. She said the County is willing to produce a flyer for us and provide copies as well. Jeff said the WDB will send a sponsorship request to Bancroft. Lois said she will follow up with Bancroft once the letter is sent.

#### RE ENTRY – HIRE ONE EVENT

Kathleen Varallo, WDB, reported on the Hire One-Re-entry Event. Jeanne Paige-Soncrant, LWD, Business Service Representative for Camden County, met with Ken Brahl, WDB Literacy Chair WDB, about the idea of a Re-Entry event. Ken spearheaded the original Hire-One Event. The original Hire-One Program was an outreach to area employers where we asked them to take a chance and hire at least one person that may have been a previous offender, a veteran or disabled person with abilities to high level functions on the job. Our focus was on the employer who has never taken that chance. There were some benefits offered in the way of recognition for The BSR team is asking the Abilities Committee to support the event by helping to promote the event

Many employers are not aware of the supportive services that may accompany these individuals. Employers also do not know about the Bonding Program. The State will bond an employee before they are hired. It only takes a day or two notice to receive a bond. The bond is an insurance policy that protects an employer from liability due to an act of the employee. The employer is covered for a year or more with this bond. She said that Ken is on board and willing to support the event as a speaker.

The County has received a grant to put together a network of organizations, including the One-Stop, to assist Adult ex-offenders being released from incarceration at the Camden County Correctional Facility (CCCF). There are many different agencies represented including DVRS, AS, mental health, Board of Social Services, Social Security, Motor Vehicles and more. The program will serve adults but can include youth as well. Sharon Bean, CCCF Jail Population Coordinator, is the lead organizer.

### COMMITTEE UPDATES

Barbara Abrams, Jewish Children and Family Services, announced a film showing, at the Ritz about two individuals that have Autism, found love and how they journeyed together. The film will be shown at the Ritz and the actors who appeared in the film will be present at the showing. She made a comment that the Abilities Committee should be aware of the language of Disabilities and be good Ambassadors.

Lamant-Deangelo Ferebee, Ferebee Family Foundation, announced he has a fifteen minute training program that his organization offers to any company about how to recognize the signs of a seizure and how to help. This program can be offered for families or businesses. Through our organization we hope to offer comfort and support to those dealing with epilepsy. Also, because it is so widespread, but not properly understood, we will speak families, and even your staff on what to do if someone has had a seizure in your facility.

Our organization offers speeches to work staff, and families in order to help get a basic understanding of epilepsy. Our motivational speeches along with group support is offered at no cost no because of the generous donations of others. Visit <https://ferebeefamily.org/> for more information.

Carl Donato, Wawa – He and his wife attended a craft festival in Philadelphia. It was there he ran into a presentation about Brian's Dots. Brian grew up an active and adventurous kid in eastern Pennsylvania. In 2002 at the age of 16 things changed when he had a serious accident on

a ski slope that left him paralyzed, initially from the chest down. Not letting that slow him down, with determination and spirit he had a miraculous recovery and he is currently able to walk again with the use of crutches.

A few years after his accident, Brian left for Hawaii in search of something more. On his journey through the islands he discovered he loved making artwork using dots which developed into his own unique style of pointillism. An avid outdoors man and devoted music fan, Brian is on the move often; whenever he's not on a camping trip or heading to a concert he's likely to be found utilizing his studio in Pennsylvania to pursue his growing talent. He is very thankful for the ability to make and appreciate dot art. Visit <http://www.briansdots.com> for more information.

Jeff Deitz, DVRS, reported that Project Search may have another location in the works at the Jefferson/Kennedy Strafford location. It is in the early planning stages.

Jim thanked the committee for their ideas and continued support. He asked committee members to follow up on their suggestions for the next meeting.

#### NEXT MEETING

The Abilities Committee will meet on April 10th<sup>th</sup>, at 9am at the WDB office, 1111 Marlkrass Road, Suite 101, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003

Submitted by

*Kathleen Varallo*

Administrative Assistant