



Moving Forward!

Walmart sponsors 2016 AAPD Leadership Awards Gala

By: Zach Baldwin, Director of Outreach – American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

Walmart was among the corporate sponsors for the 2016 American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) Leadership Awards Gala, held March 23 in Washington, D.C. AAPD hosted more than 500 individuals representing the many diverse segments of the disability community as well as businesses, non-profits and the federal government.

The AAPD Leadership Awards Gala provides a unique opportunity for AAPD’s partners, supporters and colleagues to show their support of Americans with all types of disabilities while bringing together the national cross-disability community with business and government leadership for one night each year. The awards seek to recognize and celebrate those who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of people with disabilities. The first award of the evening – the Disability Catalyst Award – was presented to Valerie Jarrett.

Valerie B. Jarrett is a Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama, overseeing the White House Offices of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs, and chairing the White House Council on Women and Girls. Prior to serving in the White House, Ms. Jarrett held a number of leadership roles in both

the private and public sector, having served as CEO of The Habitat Company in Chicago and Chairman of the Chicago Transit Board, as well as Deputy Chief of Staff for Chicago Mayor Richard Daley.

AAPD recognized Ms. Jarrett for her tremendous leadership in helping secure changes to the regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These regulations are an important tool for reducing barriers to equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and addressing income inequality and poverty. The impact of Ms. Jarrett’s efforts will improve the employment landscape for people with disabilities for years to come!

Following the Disability Catalyst Award, we heard from AAPD’s President & CEO Helena Berger, who spoke of a new day AAPD, with the organization renewing its commitment to the

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I have a confession to make – there were times in my life when I wasn't the best disability advocate.

That might come as a surprise to the people who know me now, but it's true. There was a point in my life when I said some things I'm not proud of, but I'm admitting my mistakes in hopes of creating a safe space for others to do the same.

Every diverse community has a list of words that are emotionally charged and stir visceral reactions for many who hear or see them. The disability community is no different. Words such as handicapped and crippled are still heard from time to time however are beginning to be phased out in favor of more acceptable terms like disabled and mobility disability.

But those aren't the words I'm talking about. There's one word – it begins with an "r" that's still so casually used in our culture yet is so offensive and hurtful to so many that it needs to be called out. In case you're unsure what word I'm referencing, I'll spell it out just this once.

I'm talking about the word retarded.

Once upon a time, the "R" word and its derivatives were generally accepted in our society as a descriptor for a variety of disabilities that impact intellectual function, such as Down syndrome. The "R" word stems from the Latin verb retardare which means to "hinder or make slow", and was actually introduced to mainstream American vernacular in the 1960s by disability advocates searching for an alternative descriptor for people with cognitive disabilities than previously accepted terms like "idiot", "moron" and "imbecile" which had become mainstream insults.

Let's pause for a second – when is the last time you called someone a moron or an idiot? Hopefully the answer is "never", but if you have it was almost certainly out of anger or frustration and not in the general course of conversation. Yet as recently as 50 years ago these terms that are now considered insults in our culture were acceptable descriptions for a person with an intellectual or developmental disability – used matter of factly in conversation without the slightest hesitation.

We've long since reached the point where the "R" word is also a hurtful insult, and it's time to erase it from our collective vocabulary. I cringe when I recall using that word in high school or college to describe a person doing something I thought was less than intelligent or a situation that I didn't like.

If you're reading this and don't see what the fuss is about, read this excerpt from the online campaign "Spread The Word to End The Word" (www.r-word.org) which was posted by a high school girl about her younger brother:



Russell Shaffer
ADAE Chair

"I am 17, and my 15-year-old brother has Asperger's syndrome. He has been bullied his entire life. People use the 'R' word so lightly. They throw it around without thinking of the harm it does. People don't get that he's different, but he is so funny and a great person! They don't understand what he struggles with daily. He deals with endless panic attacks and as he got older, he started locking himself in his room due to these people who don't understand when to stop. A 15 year old should be out kicking a ball, not in their room afraid of the world. Please spread the word to end the 'R' word!"

As you can see, this has nothing whatsoever to do with being politically correct. It has everything to do with creating an inclusive environment in which people of all abilities feel comfortable living life to the fullest.

So what can you do? It's easy – start by joining me in eliminating the "R" word from your speech. I haven't used it in 15 years, yet I still often hear it used around the office and when I'm out in the community. If you're using it as a pejorative, just stop. If you're using it to describe people with disabilities or types of disabilities, there are better choices. Use terms like person with a disability, cognitive disability, intellectual or developmental disability, or use diagnosis-specific terms like Down syndrome, autism, etc. when you know what the disability is.

You can also make a pledge to "spread the word to end the word" on the r-word.org website, and if you're a parent – particularly of middle-school or high-school aged kids – review the website and its lessons with your children. Encourage them and their friends to take the pledge with you.

We all have a part to play in making our community and workplace inclusive for everyone, and ending the use of hurtful words like the "R" word will go a long way toward creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, comfortable and safe. *Spread the word!*



Leaving a legacy: The importance of disability inclusion associate resource groups

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Mission Statement:

Educate, engage, and empower families, associates, and communities impacted by disabilities through inclusion, sharing ideas and resources, and implementing best practices.

This past fall I had the opportunity to visit the Walmart Home Office and meet with some of the ADA E leadership team as well as leaders in Walmart U.S., recruiting and compliance. Walmart brought our Disability Right's Museum to the Home Office and community as well as hosted an impactful event in the auditorium that brought associates and partners together to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the American's With Disabilities Act. I left Bentonville with members of our team feeling a great sense of "Juntos Podemos" (Together We Can) advance disability inclusion by uniting businesses like Walmart with others.

Depending on the company, many organizations refer to affinity groups as employee resource groups (ERG), associate resource groups (ARG) or business resource groups (BRG). No matter what they are called, ARG's are a great way to develop top talent and are a strong recruiting tool. Participation in an ARG can open up a dialogue within a company and lead to meaningful change as well as provide associates with the support network they may need within their organization.

At the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN), a national nonprofit that helps businesses drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain and marketplace, we have the opportunity to work with more than 100 Fortune 1,000 companies on disability inclusion programs and initiatives. Two companies come to mind for ARG best practices: EY and Microsoft.

EY's disability ERG is well established and has a public website that shares its accomplishments. They have four affinity groups within their Abilities Networks – AccessAbilities, Abilities Champion Network, Network for Parents

of Children with Special Healthcare Needs and Caregivers Circle. In addition, EY has included subpages within its website featuring stories of employees with disabilities, links

to resources, including company developed materials and awards received for work in disability inclusion. Last year, as a result of the work of the Abilities Networks, EY's New York Times Square billboard featured three of its associates with disabilities.

Microsoft's disAbility ERG was launched in 2009 and holds an annual Ability Summit to facilitate innovative thinking related to accessibility. In 2014, the ERG held its first one-week hackathon where employees worked on Eye Gaze technology championed by former NFL player Steve Gleason. The 2015 Ability Summit was keynoted by Microsoft's CEO. In addition, disAbility also funds the annual Microsoft Disability Scholarship for high school students who realize the potential technology can have in the world. As a result of the disAbility ERG's work engaging the entire company to think creatively about accessibility, Microsoft announced the appointment of Jenny Lay-Flurrie as Chief Accessibility Officer earlier this year.

In order to help lift up the good work many of our corporate partner's affinity groups are producing, the USBLN



Jill Houghton

*Executive Director,
U.S. Business Leadership
Network (USBLN)*

See *Jill* on page 4

launched an ERG/BRG Leadership Committee in 2015. This committee provides a business focused and integrated peer networking forum where knowledgeable representatives from partner companies can share challenges, strategies and best practices for developing, transforming or supporting a disability-focused affinity group that provides business value to the company and professional growth for its members.

The committee members landed on four main areas where a business savvy disability resource group could benefit both its members and the company.

- Enabling employees with disabilities to bring their whole selves to work
- Assisting the company in the creation of an all encompassing disability inclusive employment life cycle
- Helping to expand disability affinity groups to international offices
- Leveraging the affinity group to increase the company’s share of the marketplace

The committee decided to focus on the first two areas for 2016. They formed two subcommittees to delve deeper into the topics and create toolkits. The toolkits should be ready to share with our partners in 2017.

Participation in Walmart’s ADAE ARG is a great way to live out the company’s mission to help people live a better life. It also allows you to not only impact the company but those around you both at work and in your personal life. One of my favorite quotes is from Helen Walton, “It’s not what you gather, but what you scatter that tells the kind of life you have lived.” I hope the work we are all doing to make ARG’s successful will leave a disability inclusion legacy for future associates.

grassroots disability community. AAPD is a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities.

Closing out the evening was the presentation of the AAPD Paul G. Hearne Leadership Awards. Through the AAPD Paul G. Hearne Leadership Awards, AAPD recognizes outstanding emerging leaders with disabilities who exemplify leadership, advocacy and dedication to the broader cross-disability community. Two awardees each received \$2,500 in recognition of their outstanding contributions and \$7,500 to further a new or existing initiative that increases the political and economic power of people with disabilities.

AAPD founder Paul G. Hearne was a passionate advocate for increased employment of people with disabilities. Paul opened doors for thousands through his leadership of Just One Break, an employment agency for people with disabilities in New York City, and The Dole Foundation for Employment of People with Disabilities in Washington, D.C. AAPD is the product of Paul’s vision: an organization that would promote equal opportunity, economic power, independent living and political participation for people with disabilities, while cultivating the next generation of leaders. AAPD Paul G. Hearne Leadership Award recipients are his living legacy.

The 2016 AAPD Paul G. Hearne Leadership Awards were presented to Robyn Powell and Alice Wong.

Robyn M. Powell is the Project Lead and one of the co-founders of the Disabled Parenting Project. The overall mission of the Disabled Parenting Project (DPP) is to leverage technology to create opportunities for parents with disabilities to interact and use social media to share information relevant to the disabled parenting

community. The DPP seeks to inform social policy through the development of resources, created by and for the disabled parenting community, as well as to promote social justice for disabled families.

Ms. Powell is also the Principal of Robyn Powell Consulting, LLC, a disability law and policy consulting firm. As a disabled woman, Ms. Powell has dedicated her career to advancing the rights of people with disabilities. Most recently, Ms. Powell served as an Attorney Advisor at the National Council on Disability (NCD), an independent federal agency that advises the President and Congress on matters concerning people with disabilities.

Alice Wong launched the Disability Visibility Project (DVP) in 2014, an online community dedicated to recording, amplifying and sharing disability stories and culture. In partnership with StoryCorps, a national oral history non-profit dedicated to recording the stories of all Americans, the DVP allows people to tell their stories on their own terms with StoryCorps archiving them for posterity. The DVP aims to collect the diverse voices of people in the disability community and preserve their history for all, especially underrepresented groups.

Ms. Wong is a Staff Research Associate and part of the research team for the Community Living Policy Center (CLPC), a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research and the Administration for Community Living.

AAPD is grateful for sponsors like Walmart as well as the individuals who joined us for the 2016 Leadership Awards Gala. It is your support that leads us to increased political and economic power for people with disabilities, their families and their loved ones.

Store #3447 Recognized by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) for its efforts to employ members of disability community

Editor's Note: Store #3447 is located in Whitehall, Ohio, in Franklin County in the Columbus metropolitan area. Store Manager Jake Schooley has been with Walmart Stores Inc. in multiple capacities for 13 years and store manager for six months. Of the 317 Associates who work at the store, six are part of the disability community. Jake answered several questions in a recent Q&A that sheds more light on the reasons behind the recognition.

How do you think the shoppers react to the associates with disabilities?

The customers in our store embrace our associate's disabilities and accepts them for their abilities that they have, and their eagerness to do a great job.

Has your family changed your perspectives on disabilities in the workplace? If so, how?

Both of my Parents have worked in this field for a county agency in Ohio supporting individuals and families that are affected with disabilities since I have been a young child. Saying this, it has impacted me, and my behavior towards individuals with disabilities as I see them with abilities rather than disabilities. This has created an environment of acceptance and diversity within my family including my son who is now 10 years old.

My family and the environment in which I have had the opportunity of growing up in, has allowed me to embrace working individuals within the workplace. Everyone deserves the opportunity to work if that is what they desire to do. Individuals with Developmental disabilities have such a passion for their positions in which they work, and this gives me encouragement to continue to help them succeed in their life and achieve their goals any way

that I can.

Is there a particular disability you're passionate about helping?

There is not a disability that I am partial to. However, I feel that if an individual is faced with adversity and continues to possess the will, myself, and my management team will assist them in achieving the skill needed to perform the essential functions of their role

How do associates not in the disability community respond to those who are?

The associates at 3447 are some of the best associates that I have ever had the opportunity of working with. They are passionate, hardworking, team players, willing, striving, accepting, empathetic, and overall GREAT! Overall I feel that the associates that are not in the disability community have embraced our associates with developmental disabilities as a part of the team, and family with no boundaries making them wanted and needed to assist us in Saving People Money, so They Can Live Better.

Is there a standout among those associates in the disability community? If so, what makes them shine above the others?

Larry!!:) Larry is a great associate and is currently a people greeter in our facility. Larry struggles with a disability that limits his mobility and speech abilities.

But Larry continues each and every day, and has adapted to this lifestyle, and the cards that he has been dealt. He utilizes a motorized wheel chair that allows he uses to get to work, go home from work while also utilizing it in the store. On top of this, Larry utilizes a specialized tablet in which he has pre-programmed buttons that enhance his communication skills with customers, other associates, and managers. Larry is definitely a Great associate, and we love having him as a part of our team.

Please share anything you think could benefit the ADAE resource group here in our efforts to be more inclusive of those in the disability community.

We need to continue to raise awareness in Developmental Disabilities in the workplace while focusing on abilities rather than disabilities. I also believe that we need to have active relationships with agencies that provide assistance to these individuals whether it be social, or workplace skills. Hiring individuals that have disabilities that are able to complete the essential functions of a job serve as an asset for our stores and goes hand and hand with being a part of the community in which we serve.



AUCD holds inaugural “Education for All” event with support from Walmart

By: *Laura Martin, Director of Operations – Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)*

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) held its inaugural spring fundraising event on March 2 at the Carnegie Library in Washington, D.C. Titled Education for All: An Evening with AUCD, the event highlighted the efforts of AUCD and its member centers and programs which have been working for more than half a century towards the highest quality inclusive education. Walmart was among the many sponsors for this event which brought together more than 300 leaders in the disability community from policymakers to businesses to advocates.

The broad goal of what will be an annual event is to bring a wide range of stakeholders in the disability space together around a common issue to celebrate achievements and create momentum around the important work that still needs to be done. Given the depth and breadth of the AUCD network, it was decided to focus the first event on inclusive education and expand on the “For All” theme in future years around inclusive employment, healthcare and other issues important to people with disabilities and their families.

The program opened with AUCD Policy Advocacy staff member, Liz Weintraub, who welcomed everyone and spoke of her experience as a person with an intellectual disability and challenges with inclusive education as a child. Key speakers at the event were then Assistant Secretary Michael Yudin at the Department of Education along with Deputy Assistant Secretary Sue Swenson. United States Senator Chris

Murphy from Connecticut also spoke and introduced the first of two awards given that evening. The first award was presented to Understood.org, an organization that works to help the millions of parents whose children are struggling with learning and attention issues.

AUCD chose to recognize the team behind Understood.org because of the phenomenal work they have done to build a state-of-the-art online platform to educate parents of children with learning and attention-related disabilities about how best to advocate for and support their children.

The second award of the evening was presented to Wade Henderson, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights for his longstanding leadership as a champion of children with disabilities and children from underserved communities at large.

A parent of children with disabilities and former trainee in the AUCD Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program, Zipporah Levi-Shackleford, closed the program with passionate words about how the current policies and reforms have helped her kids in their education settings, but also how far we have to go

as a community to ensure full inclusion for all children.

Working in conjunction with families and local schools, state education agencies, and federal offices of education, AUCD’s university Centers have spearheaded instructional strategies, inclusive education models, early intervention programming, education efforts that embrace cultural diversity, and many more innovations. There were several member centers from the AUCD network at the event who showcased their work around inclusive education in the areas of assistive technology, legal supports and training.

AUCD is grateful to all of its supporters, including Walmart, who helped launch this inaugural event and make it a success. This event gave us the opportunity to raise the visibility of an important issue like inclusive education, and highlight what AUCD and its member centers can do to assist policymakers, businesses and other stakeholders in moving the needle forward on this and other civil rights that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families.

To learn more about AUCD, its member centers and their collective work, visit www.aucd.org.



The Carnegie Library was host to AUCD’s 2016 “Education for All” event, highlighting AUCD member and partner work in promoting high quality education for all.

National Autism Awareness Month represents an excellent opportunity to promote autism awareness, autism acceptance and to draw attention to the tens of thousands facing an autism diagnosis each year. From the White House to the Home Office, efforts that mimic the ADAE mission statement are being made to educate, engage and empower those impacted by an ASD diagnosis. Scan the QR code to read the President's proclamation.



If you missed the Autism at Work event Monday, April 25, John Leachman, Director of Talent Development for Walmart US, orchestrated an excellent panel discussion that featured local educators; Andrea Hampton, Director of Vocational Services at Arkansas Support Network; Danny Funkhouser, General Manager of Walmart Print Solutions; Bryan Morse, Autism Involves Me Board Member, and others in the community committed to enriching the lives of those impacted by autism (see photo below).

The event highlighted the successes achieved in the educational realm and the workplace while informing us of the volume of work still to be done.

Need Help?

A multitude of resources are available for those with a new diagnosis as well as those who have encountered a new challenge in their life with autism or that of a loved one with autism.

Below are some websites that provide a wide-range of information for those on the spectrum.

www.autismspeaks.org

www.autism-society.org

www.autismsupportnetwork.com

nationalautismnetwork.com

Local Organization

Autism Involves Me was founded in 2002 with a mission to serve families impacted with autism in both direct and indirect ways. Autism Involves Me has worked with families, schools, medical providers, as well as, congress and senate members, to serve those touched by autism. Autism Involves Me hosts events for the autism community to engage in. It is a time to meet great people in an environment safe for individuals on the autism spectrum.

www.aimnwa.org

How do I know if my child has Autism?

Early Symptoms

The characteristic behaviors of autism spectrum disorder may be apparent in infancy (18 to 24 months), but they usually become clearer during early childhood (24 months to 6 years).

As part of a well-baby or well-child visit, your child's doctor should perform a "developmental screening," asking specific questions about your baby's progress. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) lists five behaviors that warrant further evaluation:

- Does not babble or coo by 12 months
- Does not gesture (point, wave, grasp) by 12 months
- Does not say single words by 16 months
- Does not say two-word phrases on his or her own by 24 months
- Has any loss of any language or social skill at any age

Any of these five "red flags" does not mean your child has autism. But because the disorder's symptoms vary so widely, a child showing these behaviors should be evaluated by a multidisciplinary team. This team might include a neurologist, psychologist, developmental pediatrician, speech/language therapist, learning consultant or other professionals who are knowledgeable about autism.



JP Mccrory shares his story

JP is a Senior Programmer Analyst in ISD and a 15-year associate who has a very direct understanding of autism.

JP initiated an insightful conversation on autism in the workplace in the David Glass Technology Center (DGTC) auditorium. JP shared his story, the obstacles he has faced, the challenges he has overcome, and offered strategies to help you become a better advocate for disability inclusion in the workplace.

A Q&A Panel led by JP was also set to discuss working with and/or managing associates with autism, and parents/associates with children on the autism spectrum.



JP Mccrory



Bryan Morse



Lyle Mercer

Lyle Mercer is the Operations Manager at Walmart Print Solutions where they are partnering with the Arkansas Support Network to provide gainful employment to ASN clients. Bryan Morse is on the Board of Directors at Autism Involves Me and Backhaul Strategy

Manager at Walmart Transportation. He also has a son on the spectrum..

Follow the link below for many additional resources that JP has assembled.

<http://wmlink/asdpath>

How did finding out I have autism change my life?

To be honest knowing has done nothing but improve my life

- I read and realized I wasn't alone in feeling soooo different
- My relationships with my wife & kids improved
- I learned better how to connect with others in something more than a superficial way
- Things that annoyed me and things I didn't make sense gained clarity

So what exactly makes someone 'autistic' then?

Per the DSM-V

1. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction
 - Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, ranging
2. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
 - Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, ranging
 - Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships
 - Hyper- or hyporeactivity to sensory input or unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment
 - Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized behavior
 - Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
 - Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech
3. Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period
 - When social demands exceed limited capacities
4. Something else doesn't better define the symptoms

Autism Defined

From autismspeaks.org

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. They include autistic disorder, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome. With the May 2013 publication of the new DSM-5 diagnostic manual, these autism subtypes will be merged into one umbrella diagnosis of ASD.

ASD can be associated with intellectual disability, difficulties in motor coordination and attention and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances.

ADAE Speaker Series kicks off with Dan Kelly

ADAE hosted the inaugural session of its new quarterly Speaker Series on Feb. 19 in the Home Office with Dan Kelly, a world-class athlete and business executive who shared stories of leadership and inclusion from his life and career.

Dan Kelly went completely blind at 13 as the result of a rare genetic eye condition that also affected his father and grandfather. He did not allow blindness to set boundaries in his life, taking to the pool at 12 and emerging on the international swimming scene at 16 with a spot on the 1992 U.S. Paralympic team. Dan went on to compete in three Paralympic Games, finishing his career as one of the most decorated Paralympians in history with a total of 17 medals – five Gold, six Silver and six Bronze.



Following his prolific athletic career, Dan used his competitive spirit to successfully enter the business field as a job placement specialist serving clients with and without disabilities in Greater Minneapolis. Dan leveraged this experience to land a global position with National Industries for the Blind in Washington, D.C., where after a series

of promotions he served as Director of Community Program Development with responsibility for NIB's employment growth initiatives. In 2006, after earning his MBA from George Mason University Dan and his family relocated to North Carolina for his current position as Chief Operating Officer of Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind – the nation's largest employer of blind individuals.

Dan engaged in a moderated Q&A with ADAE Chair Russell Shaffer during the session, answering questions about his athletic and professional career while also taking participants through a presentation focused on the business case for disability employment inclusion. Participants in the session were able to further their knowledge in the following areas:

- The essential leadership skills that made Dan a successful world-class athlete and business professional
- Strategies for creating an inclusive community and workplace for people with disabilities
- Effective methods for considering and integrating the disability market into business planning decisions

The ADAE Speaker Series is designed to promote inclusion and reinforce the business case for considering people with disabilities as employees and



Dan Kelly

customers. Future sessions in the series will feature successful professionals with disabilities sharing their personal stories, leaders of local and national disability-focused non-profits, and business executives presenting case studies on how their company realized ROI through disability-related initiatives.

The next ADAE Speaker Series event is being planned for late June 2016 and will feature Channing Barker, anchor for FOX 24/KNWA TV in Northwest Arkansas. Watch the ADAE Connect site and distribution list for additional information on this event.

“Our task now is to complete the revolution of free enterprise democracy by implementing the inalienable responsibility of all people to fulfill their personal potential to be fully equal, fully productive participants in the mainstream of society.”

– Justin Dart, widely considered the “father of the ADA”

Did You Know?

People with disabilities can be very adept at getting around and also quite independent. Ask before you assume they need help.

Best Buddies Arkansas holds inaugural Friendship Walk in Bentonville

Best Buddies Arkansas in partnership with Bentonville Public Schools' Diversability Awareness initiative held its inaugural Friendship Walk on April 23 in downtown Bentonville.

The purpose of the walk was to create awareness of the Best Buddies program and raise funding to open a Best Buddies chapter in Northwest Arkansas in order to bring the program to Bentonville schools. The Friendship Walk attracted more than 200 participants and raised approximately \$40,000 toward Best Buddies Arkansas' local goal of \$75,000.

Walmart Print Solutions was among the event sponsors and Don Frieson, Executive Vice President – Operations, Sam's Club spoke about the importance of creating an inclusive community and Walmart's commitment to disability employment and inclusion.

The Friendship Walk was held in conjunction with a Diversability Awareness fair during which Bentonville students of all ages hosted booths showcasing interactive projects aimed at educating about

various disabilities and emphasizing the importance of inclusion for people of all abilities. One project had participants place a marshmallow in their mouth then try and say their name in order to simulate the challenges in speech faced by people with Down syndrome as a result of difficulty moving their tongue.



The event also featured a performance by Bentonville High student Thomas Stringfellow – fresh off a stint on Season 15 of "American Idol" – along with a hip-hop dance routine from fellow BHS student Zane Smith. Readers may recall Smith who dazzled and inspired Walmart associates in October as part of our ADA 25th anniversary celebration with his slick moves and personal story of overcoming a degenerative eye condition which will eventually lead to blindness.



Best Buddies International (Best Buddies) is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). To learn more about Best Buddies, visit www.bestbuddies.org; to learn more about how to support the local Best Buddies initiative visit www.bestbuddiesarkansas.org.

Photo: <http://tuesdayfolder.blogspot.com>



We hope you've enjoyed this edition of **Moving Forward!** If you have a story that will make a positive impact in the disability community, share it with us - we may include it in a future issue. Contact any of the officers shown on the organizational chart on page three to share your ideas and offer support for this Associate Resource Group.