

# Put Ability to Work for You



## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

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## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

### Media Opportunity Workbook

**This is the month to celebrate opportunity...**to celebrate fulfillment and promise and hope. *Now is the time* to make people aware of the **AbilityOne Program**—and to turn that awareness into opportunity for thousands of Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities. National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is a great time for community-based nonprofit agencies to kick-off events that serve to build recognition of the **AbilityOne Program**, formerly Javits-Wagner-O’Day (JWOD), our employees and our federal customers at government agencies and military installations across America. NDEAM may be just one month, but the good work of the **AbilityOne Program** and all of our partners in opportunity takes place all year long, each and every day. It’s up to all of us to help create the excitement and encourage the good will that can make the program—and those whose lives it touches—stronger than ever.

We invite you to put your talents and abilities to work by highlighting your support for the **AbilityOne Program**.

**We have included a few ideas for events and activities that you may find useful. Please share your own ideas and success stories with us by emailing [nish\\_communications@nish.org](mailto:nish_communications@nish.org). We will post your email to the extranet.**

**Help us go from awareness to opportunity—and help a fellow American go from opportunity to independence— during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.**



- Educate** the general public, local businesses, civic leaders, strategic partners, potential customers, potential employees and the media—year round—about the purpose, capabilities and benefits of the AbilityOne Program.
- Host** a tour/open house of your local nonprofit agency.
- Invite** local and state dignitaries, media, and business and community leaders to attend.
- Use AbilityOne resources**, including videos, brochures/publications and speakers; all available free of charge from NISH and NIB (see contact info on page 4).

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- ☑ **Invite federal officials** to meet your staff and learn more about your capabilities.
- ☑ **Speak with your local media** outlets to obtain public service time [radio] or space [newspaper or local business journal]. Sample print ad and suggested local radio copy are available for download.
- ☑ **Plan an “AbilityOne Customer Appreciation Day”** at your federal customer’s location.
  - Present certificates or other recognition items to the Secretary, Commanding Officer, Procurement Executive, Contracting Officer, Purchase Card Coordinator or other appropriate federal officials in honor of their support.
  - Contact the agency or installation Public Affairs Office to provide coverage of the presentation for agency/base newspapers and magazines.
- ☑ **Send thank you notes** to your federal customers during this special month.
- ☑ **Invite a locally elected public official** to give a speech at your facility.
- ☑ **Host an AbilityOne Vendor Fair** to showcase your AbilityOne product and service capabilities. Invite your federal customers and other local AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies to attend and/or exhibit.
- ☑ **Consider special events** to celebrate significant milestones, such as business anniversaries, as well as business achievements and accolades, include new contract signings, awards, new strategic partners, civic initiatives and groundbreakings.
- ☑ **Send a letter to the supervisors of the contracting officers** and/or purchase card holders who are strong supporters of the **AbilityOne Program**. Recognize them for their efforts to create employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.
- ☑ **Recommend** a federal customer, senator or representative to NIB or NISH to be named an “AbilityOne Champion” and host an event if/when the nominee is inducted.

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**Take 30 Days and  
Make a Difference  
That Lasts a  
Lifetime.**



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- ☑ **Create a Mentoring program**—During the program *have a disability mentoring day* where you pair a mentee with a journalist to promote awareness.
- ☑ **Coat-tail on the anniversary of a CRP**—Celebrate and promote progress and opportunity.
- ☑ **Get Local Exposure**—Contact local radio or TV talk shows, use your network to get in the door.
- ☑ **Highlight a weekly feature story**, during NDEAM or throughout the year, about an AbilityOne employee (work with local media or leverage your CRP website).
- ☑ **Hold an AbilityOne Job Fair**—Invite local businesses to build awareness in the community.
- ☑ **Hold a Flag Ceremony**—Present a flag (one made by people with severe disabilities) to a local disability advocate or an AbilityOne employee.
- ☑ **Train the media on People First language** (Use the NISH Disability Awareness brochure).
- ☑ **Hold special events honoring employers and employees.**
- ☑ **Organize a Veteran’s Day March** to be held during NDEAM.
- ☑ **Add a banner to the CRP’s website** advertising NDEAM and employees’ involvement in the AbilityOne Program.
- ☑ **Approach Officers’ “Wives Clubs”** on military bases and ask them to help spread awareness. Leverage their ideas and networks to get the message out to Officers.
- ☑ **Hold a community or employee brainstorming session.**

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### FROM AWARENESS TO OPPORTUNITY:

### Hot Tips for Event Hosting



- ☑ **Write** and distribute a Media Alert. Notify the media of the date, time, location and purpose of your event. Include the names of any special guests, such as the mayor or governor. (Instructions for Media Alerts are available for download.)
- ☑ **Follow** all the recommended guidelines for securing pre- and post-event media coverage. (Instructions are available for download.)
- ☑ **Link** your website to the AbilityOne website ([www.abilityone.org](http://www.abilityone.org)) and/or design a page of your own, listing ways your agency supports the AbilityOne Program.
- ☑ **Hang** posters and decorate bulletin boards with AbilityOne Program information.

***For help in planning your own AbilityOne Celebration Activities, please contact:***

NISH

571.226.4660

[nish\\_communications@nish.org](mailto:nish_communications@nish.org)

NIB

703.310.0500

[communications@nib.org](mailto:communications@nib.org)



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## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

### Disability Mentoring Day: Completing the Circle of Opportunity, One Person at a Time Wednesday, October 17

Disability Mentoring Day offers another way to build awareness of the AbilityOne Program. The day is designed to help local communities throughout the country organize their own unique activities that bring students and employers together for information sessions about career opportunities and one-on-one mentoring with volunteers at public and private places of employment.

#### FROM AWARENESS TO OPPORTUNITY:

Mentor  
Matching and  
Beyond



- ✓ **Create one-on-one** job shadowing opportunities.
- ✓ **Meet with a group** of students and job seekers and feature several presentations.
- ✓ **Hold a reception** where students, job seekers and mentors can share their experiences.
- ✓ **Focus on specific** career advice, potential internships and job openings.

Leadership and coordination of these events is provided through the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). AAPD has local coordinators throughout the country who match students/jobseekers with local employers.

*For more information, visit [www.dmd-aapd.org](http://www.dmd-aapd.org).*

### Employ A Great Idea.

Thousands of people and organizations fully able to partner with the **AbilityOne Program** are out there. They simply don't know about the opportunities and benefits the program offers. Working together, we can raise awareness about the program. This heightened awareness can lead to employment; employment that can lead to lives changed for the better. Join us and start planning your newsworthy event today!

## 2008 Key Messages

### National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

*October 2008 marks the 20th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.*

- *In an effort to educate the American public about issues related to disability and employment, Congress designated each October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).*
- *Employment is the key to economic security and personal independence of all Americans, especially those with disabilities.*
- *According to a national survey, 92 percent of consumers feel more favorable toward companies that hire individuals with disabilities.*
- *To stay competitive, both public and private employers must seek quality employees from non-traditional employee pools, including the 54 million Americans who have disabilities.*

*People who are blind or have other severe disabilities remain one of America's greatest untapped labor resources, with 60 percent of this population not employed.*

- *The Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws have broken through many of the barriers that have kept Americans with disabilities out of the workforce, but attitudinal barriers remain the greatest challenge to employment for people with disabilities.*

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- *People who are blind or have other severe disabilities are a reliable workforce and are capable of meeting or exceeding industry quality standards.*
- *Through employment, people who are blind or have other severe disabilities achieve greater independence, reduce dependence on government support and join the ranks of taxpayers.*

*NDEAM is a time to celebrate and promote people who are blind or have other severe disabilities enjoying fuller participation in their communities and finding employment like that found through the AbilityOne Program.*

- *The AbilityOne Program is a federal purchasing program that enables people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to obtain employment while providing high quality, best value products and services to federal customers.*
- *The AbilityOne Program employs tens of thousands of individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities at more than 600 community-based nonprofit agencies across the country and is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States.*
- *Employment opportunities made possible through the AbilityOne Program equip people who are blind or have other severe disabilities with the skills and training necessary to earn equitable wages, benefits and greater independence.*