

Opening Doors Newsletter



A publication to promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities within AmeriCorps programs.

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Self-Disclosure of a Disability

An inclusive service environment is more than just a program providing accommodations, accessibility, alternate formats, etc. It is recognizing individuals for their abilities and respecting and supporting a service environment inclusive on all levels. Sometimes a person attending an interview or a service member already employed in a program will not disclose that he or she may have a disability for fear of not being hired, concern of ignorance and the possibility of inadvertently building barriers. To advertise that AmeriCorps programs value diversity, I will be sending all program directors/supervisors a “Self-Disclosure” notice to post at their program site. The notice serves as an educational piece for members, possible members and program supervisors. The notice is not a compliance measure but a tool to open dialogue in an informed, inclusive, service environment. If you would like to express any feedback concerning this “Self-Disclosure” notice, please contact me at the Office of Community Service, Kathy Bean, (406) 444-5547.

Media Happenings

Recently disability grant monies have been used to purchase advertisement in recruiting individuals with disabilities to join AmeriCorps programs. A text message was displayed over a specified time period on the Weather Channel to encourage the engagement of individuals with disabilities. Where to inquire about AmeriCorps benefits and direct service opportunities within their communities was also advertised. The selected advertising market consisted of Billings, Great Falls, Jackson Hole, Kalispell, Missoula, Bozeman,

Butte, and Helena.

Disability grant monies will also be used in the making of a 30 second “public service announcement” in video format. This recruitment tool showcases two individuals who have graciously volunteered to appear on the video sharing their AmeriCorps experience and the reality of success for the committed member.

Please continue to promote inclusion. Have a success story? Now is the time to share it.

Possible Partnership with the Rural Institute

The National Corporation on Community Service outlined a proposal for a National Service Inclusion Mini-grant. The Montana Commission on Community Service was asked to collaborate with The University of Montana Rural Institute to increase the number of persons with disabilities recruited and enrolled in National Service. The project’s activities would offer: assistance with outreach opportunities, enhancement of service training, collaborative presentations and direct involvement with the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities. This partnership would be beneficial to all parties. The status of The University of Montana Rural Institute mini-grant proposal should be declared sometime in September or October. If accepted, all program directors will receive an introduction and information on the proposed activities.