

It's in our power to change.

THE INITIATOR

NOVEMBER 2010

Disability from a Strengths Perspective

In March 2010, DAKC's Workforce Development Department launched an intensive, 20-hour series of empowerment classes for persons seeking services from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). Through this series, which looks at disability from a strengths perspective, DAKC provided an opportunity for over 300 persons to regain a better sense of their own power and the opportunities that could be open to them.

Torrence Winbush was one such participant who acquired his hidden disability later in life. With his disability he feels like he needs to be on alert at all times. It has impacted visiting friends, going out to eat and even his success with employment.

Having an innate determination and positive self-perception, the biggest impact of the classes for Torrence was discussing barriers to employment and creating a network with other class participants. Through small group work, participants identified their own and each others' strengths, promoting further acceptance of their disabilities. He became more aware of how he perceived things through his disability.

The outcomes for the participants were truly amazing. "It was cool to see change take place within those in my class," Torrence commented. "People that came in shy and quiet became more comfortable to ask questions and open up.

They became more comfortable with their disability, to talk with others with disabilities and about their own disability." Participants who came into the classes with significant skills expressed the depression that comes with resigning themselves to the potential they may never have an opportunity to even interview with an employer, let alone become employed at their skill level. These same persons left the program with:

- Greater self confidence
- The knowledge that their disability did not define who they were as an individual or an employment candidate
- A heightened awareness that living with their disability had contributed to the development of skills that would be a valuable asset to an employer.
- A re-discovery of their own skills and how to sell them to employers
- The hope that prospective employers would open doors and see their skills rather than only focusing on their disabilities.

The classes were so impactful that DAKC will continue them this year for those who are MRS customers and other employment candidates with disabilities from the general community.

For more information on the classes or Best Highest Use, contact Denise Borges at denise.b@dakc.us or 616-949-1100, ext. 229.

"I always had goals and dreams. The classes have given me more avenues to take to achieve those dreams."

—Torrence
Winbush



Employment candidates with disabilities are invited to participate in Best Highest Use (BHU) in their search for an internship, job or career. BHU is Disability Advocates' new business venture aimed at leveling the employment playing field for persons with disabilities. To be considered for employment positions or internships, register with www.heart-sandsmarts.com and insert the promo code: BHU.

When employers submit their requirements for employment openings, the website provides the employers with the top candidates that match their skill requirements...like e-harmony for employment.

Also, search the Best Highest Use on Facebook and become a fan.





3600 Camelot Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
t 616 949 1100
f 616 949 7865

www.dakc.us

Who we are

Most people equate disability with limitations. But it's our job to change the perceptions and realities that prevent people with disabilities from sharing in the community. Every year, we provide training, mentoring, and referrals to help people with disabilities and their families live productive lives. Because disability touches so many people, we also work on a larger scale, helping governments and businesses make changes that benefit not just those with disabilities, but everyone in the community.

Non-profit
US Postage
PAID
Grand Rapids, MI
Permit 947

THE INITIATOR

Volunteers

We rely on our wonderful volunteers for so much of what we accomplish. To find an opportunity that fits your skills, interests, and schedule, please contact:

The Volunteer Coordinator
616 949 1100 Ext. 247

Donations

As a non-profit organization, we welcome gifts of all sizes. You may make a tax-deductible contribution by visiting www.dakc.us or mailing your contribution to:

DAKC (Disability Advocates of Kent County)
3600 Camelot Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Join Us

Your gifts of time and resources can help us change everything for the better.