

Voice



Do You Know the Facts About Disability and Employment?

Disability is the world's largest minority group, and the only one you can join at any stage of your life. A disability can be acquired through injury, illness, and the natural aging process.

57 million

57 million Americans have a disability. That's 1 in 5 people.



32%

32% were employed part-time, compared to 18% of people without disabilities.

<20%

<20% participate in the labor force, compared to 68.7% of people without disabilities.*

2X the unemployment rate

8.7% are unemployed, versus 4.6% for people without disabilities.

1 in 4

1 in 4 live in poverty, with a rate of 28% versus 13% for people without disabilities.

These numbers need to change. Although October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is behind us, it's still a good time to reflect on a difficult truth—more than 26 years after the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with disabilities are still largely underrepresented in today's workforce.

More than ever, The Viscardi Center is working to address existing challenges that face differently abled individuals—a group that will continue to grow as the global population rises and Baby Boomers age—while shifting corporate perceptions in favor of inclusion and diversity.

The Viscardi Center educates 165 medically fragile students with severe disabilities, from Kindergarten to age 21, and positions them for success in higher education and today's workforce. We collaborate with local school districts to prepare adolescents with developmental and intellectual disabilities for a smooth transition

from the classroom to the working world. We prepare thousands of adults with a range of disabilities for jobs through hands-on training, coaching, and placement. We partner with over 250 local companies, as well as those nationally to change attitudes and diversify their corporate culture and workforces.

And recently, the Center launched Document Accessibility Remediation Services—with Web Accessibility Training to soon follow—to help businesses update their digital media pages in compliance with Section 508 standards. The service makes it possible for employees and consumers with limited motor skills and/or visual impairments to access information like everyone else.

Numbers don't lie. But at The Viscardi Center, we aim to elevate disability above the statistics. Through education and employment programs and services, we are equipping candidates with the skills to maneuver today's competitive job market and lead happier lives.

*September 2016, U.S. Department of Labor.

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COMMENTARY

Want to Create an Inclusive Workforce? Look to Kindergarteners



Author Robert Fulghum's bestseller, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* made a compelling case that life's most important lessons are best learned through the eyes of a child. I agree, and my experiences indicate that his principle applies not only to individuals, but also organizations.

Yes, kindergarten—home to energetic, wide-eyed five-year-olds with open minds, vivid imaginations and a zest for life—is a true think tank for the ideals needed to transform any

organization's workplace into an inclusive one. It is a classic symbiotic community made up of children working together for the benefit of the whole group.

Kindergarteners possess the basic characteristics needed in today's workforce to create diverse, inclusive settings that whole-heartedly welcome all people.

Kindergarteners don't focus on differences. They just see people—not their age, gender, ethnicity or disability. Employers should similarly focus foremost on the talent and diversity people with disabilities bring to the team.

Kindergarteners have keen insight into human behavior. They sense emotion and fearlessly act accordingly. As people with disabilities, our emotional intelligence allows us to quickly access and understand others, manage frustrations and put things in perspective—attributes smart employers recognize and value.

Kindergarteners are aware of the changing world around them and adapt. If something doesn't "fit in the box," they are quick to adjust, learn new ways to approach it, or simply change the rules. Employers can and should do this, too. Creating accessible workplaces is often easier than one thinks.

Kindergarteners are naturally inquisitive and resourceful. This is easily seen through their endless "but why?" questions and their sharp negotiating skills. People with disabilities are inherent problem solvers. We have to be. We're naturals at finding a way to work around and through challenges. What workplace couldn't benefit from that form of thinking?

Most of all, kindergarteners teach by example. Watch them—they find a way to include everyone.

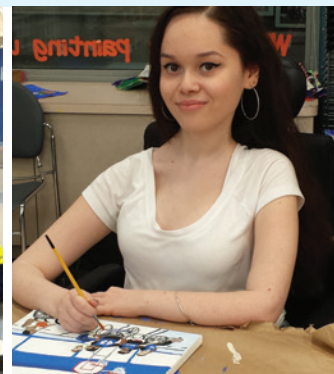
I grew up in and attended kindergarten in Bismarck, North Dakota, where winters were typified by single-digit temperatures, 50 inches of snow, and seemingly endless dark days. I saw daily how these winters bred a community culture built on helping one another and inclusivity. My use of four prostheses may not have made me the best player on the baseball team, but I was happily and naturally included.

Inclusion works in communities—and it works in the workplace. Act on the wisdom of youngsters. Build an inclusive workforce, one where we can all achieve our corporate and human goals.

John D'Kenya
President & CEO

Supporter SPOTlight

Lee Steinberg:
Investing in the future



Lee Steinberg has touched countless lives with her generosity. For decades, the successful entrepreneur and published poet has supported organizations around the world—from donating a new ambulance to the Glen Oaks Volunteer Ambulance Corps in Floral Park to backing Meir Panim's latest nutrition center for the hungry in Kiryat Gat, Israel—and was recently named the 2016 Person of the Year by the Long Island Crisis Center.

Adding to her large portfolio of beneficiaries, Lee is setting her philanthropic sights on The

Viscardi Center. By endowing the Center with a significant planned gift, she helps ensure that we have the necessary resources to fulfill our vision of education, employment, and empowerment for children and adults with disabilities in the years to come.

According to Lee, who built a thriving ladies' apparel business in her native Ohio before moving to New York, philanthropy is part of her DNA. She was inspired to support communities in need, both locally and internationally, by her family's commitment to the Girls' Agricultural School in Israel and the

Indiana State School for the Blind. "I could see how rewarded my parents felt by the work they were doing, and I wanted to follow in their footsteps," she said.

As someone driven by cause, Lee continues searching for ways to make the world a little better. "It's frustrating to know you can't reach out to everyone," she said. "But it feels good to know I'm being helpful in some way when I can."

For more information about planned giving, contact Development at 516.465.1593.

Meet Nirath

From summer intern to full-time data analyst



When Nirath left India to pursue her master's degree in Engineering Management at The University of Texas at Arlington, she knew having a hearing impairment would present some additional challenges. But she credits the condition for inspiring her determination to prove that people with disabilities can change the world.

"I can't stand being told that I can't do something," said Nirath. "Our abilities matter not our disabilities."

Last summer, Nirath had a "life changing" opportunity. With guidance from the Emerging Leaders Internship Program for College Students with Disabilities, funded by The UPS Foundation and coordinated by the National Business & Disability Council (NBDC) at The Viscardi Center, she landed a spot at Booz Allen Hamilton's renowned Summer Games Internship Program.

The Washington, D.C. based consulting firm is selective about the interns it hires for the program—out of 6,000 applicants, only 318 interns were chosen this past season.

Nirath joined a multi-disciplined team tasked with developing an assistive tech prototype that could help those with visual impairments navigate their environments independently, and crafted a headset equipped with sensors and GPS for obstacle detection. They presented the model to a

panel of senior consultants, and took home the Summer Games Challenge cup trophy, beating out 60 competing teams.

Booz Allen Hamilton hopes to partner with the National Federation of the Blind in an effort to further develop the headset. The project's success encouraged Nirath to consider how advances in technology could also remove obstacles for people with hearing impairments in the future.

"Technology is changing our lives," she said. "I sometimes face difficulties when it comes to having group conversations, and I am trying to find ways to overcome this. I hope to come up with something that makes our lives much easier."

Nirath may soon be on the road to discovery. Recognizing her leadership potential, Booz Allen Hamilton has offered her a full-time data analyst position upon graduation. She plans to relocate to D.C. after completing her degree and begin a career with the firm.



out & about

Viscardi supporters teed off at Glen Head Country Club in benefit of our 4th Annual Golf Outing, which raises vital funds for employment training and youth transition services for adolescents and adults with disabilities. After a day on the green, the Center honored S&P Global—lead sponsor

of Viscardi's upcoming Career Fair on April 12—and Thomas F. Scaturro, Senior Vice President & Regional Managing Director of Wells Fargo Private Bank, for their commitment to our mission to educate and employ people with disabilities.

Guest speaker Jimmy Valdez, who works in broadcasting at CBS Sports, concluded the experience when he addressed attendees about the impact The Viscardi Center has had on his life—from the Henry Viscardi School to the job placement services that jumpstarted his career. Read his story at viscardicenter.org/stories.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES



Chris Alvarez, who graduated valedictorian from the Henry Viscardi School at The Viscardi Center last spring, was honored by the Town of North Hempstead in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. Councilman Peter Zuckerman selected Chris as an exemplary Hispanic-American who has "positively influenced and enriched the North Hempstead community," and recognized his achievements at Town Hall before Supervisor Judi Bosworth and other councilmembers.

Born with a rare skeletal condition, Chris hasn't let his physical challenges get in the way of his dreams. An avid player on the Viscardi Cougars Varsity basketball team and a member of the National Honor Society, he graduated with an Advanced Regents Diploma. Now a freshman at Adelphi University, he's pursuing a career in broadcast journalism.

NewsBytes



Counting down the days until our next Celebrity Sports Night fundraiser? Watch our new highlight reel from 2016's star-studded 50th event and relive the experience—or, if you haven't attended, find out what you've been missing!

Visit our YouTube page for this video and more at youtube.com/user/AbilitiesOnline.

201 I.U. Willets Road
Albertson, NY 11507



Calling All Employers!

Diversify your workplace with qualified people with disabilities. Register and join us for our Career Fair for People and Veterans with Disabilities, sponsored by S&P Global, on **April 12, 2017**. It's free to exhibit.

For more information, contact Mike Dolan at mdolan@viscardicenter.org or 516.465.1546.

You're

I N V I T E D

35th Annual Reach for a Star Luncheon

4 APR | Crest Hollow Country Club
Woodbury, NY

Join us for an unforgettable afternoon. Special entertainment to be announced. Last year we featured the star of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*.



Celebrity Sports Night

18 MAY | The Viscardi Center
Albertson, NY

Meet your favorite sports stars and enjoy cocktails, dinner, and auctions. Last year we were joined by Eli Manning, Joe Namath, and Bryant Gumbel.



For more information about these fundraisers, visit viscardicenter.org or call 516.465.1595.

YOUR LASTING IMPACT



For some middle and high schoolers, summer break means closing the books and kicking back. But that wasn't the case for Destini, Alexa, and Dylan, three ambitious students from the Henry Viscardi School at The Viscardi Center. Thanks to a generous donation by long-time Viscardi supporters Iris and Saul Katz, they were instead cultivating their professional interests in business, law, and politics at youth leadership conferences around the country.

The programs afforded each student the opportunity to learn new skills, tour college campuses, live independently, and hang out with others their age—simple things we often

take for granted, but aren't always possible for children with severe physical disabilities.

The three also acted as ambassadors for the Henry Viscardi School and the disability community at large by promoting acceptance among their able-bodied peers.

Dylan's mom, Debbie, says the program was the highlight of her son's summer. Destini, who dreams of opening her own clothing boutique in the future, feels the same. "I was really nervous at first because I was the only person in the program who used a wheelchair, but I felt like I belonged right away," she said.

Honor student Alexa says her time at a national youth forum eased her concerns about dorm life. "It made me rethink my views about college and what I'm capable of doing," she said. "I know for sure that I want to live away from home after high school."

Due to the Katz family's continued support, Destini and Alexa will have another experience to add to their résumés when they attend the Presidential Inauguration Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. this winter.