

Month-Long Observation Of Disability-Employment Awareness Begins October 1 In SD

PIERRE, SD – Gov. Dennis Daugaard continues to focus on making South Dakota a leader in employing citizens with disabilities, proclaiming October 2015 as Disability Employment Awareness Month. Events acknowledging the observation are planned across the state throughout October.

The executive proclamation advances the Governor's goal of making South Dakota an employment-first state, one in which employment is the first priority and preferred outcome for all citizens with disabilities.

"South Dakota is joining a nationwide campaign to raise awareness about disability employment issues and to celebrate the contributions of America's workers with disabilities," said state Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Gloria Pearson. "We encourage South Dakotans to take a look at AbilityForHire.com to learn more about how South Dakota is contributing to this effort."

This statewide observation coincides with National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a national awareness campaign that takes place each October. The 2015 theme is "My Disability is One Part of Who I Am." NDEAM history traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the observation to a month and changed it to its current name.

A host of South Dakota

agencies and organizations will engage in activities in October to promote awareness of disability employment issues and to help foster a disability-friendly culture in the workplace:

Oct. 1, Sioux Falls: A breakfast event will be held at 7:30 a.m. at the Sanford Research Center, 2301 E. 60th St. N. The event will feature an employer/expert panel focusing on the successes and challenges of hiring people with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act and accommodations in the workplace. For more information, contact Vicki Nelson at 605-367-5330 or Julie Briggs at 605-367-5260.

Oct. 6, Milbank: An event will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the Milbank Community Center on East Highway 12. The evening will start with a meal and include recognition of the 2015 Milbank NDEAM award recipients. As the keynote speaker, Jesse Saperstein will address disability, diversity, overcoming barriers, and realizing and achieving one's potential. For more information, contact Brigett Wookey at 605-882-5120.

Oct. 7, Brookings: A luncheon will be held at the Swift Center, 11:45 a.m. – 1 p.m., in partnership with the Brookings Area Human Resource Association and Women in Leadership and Learning. Jesse Saperstein will address disability, diversity, overcoming barriers, and realizing and achieving one's potential. For more information, contact Sylvia Bublitz at 605-688-4282 or Matt Simet at 605-695-8471.

Oct. 7, Eagle Butte: Oun'yekiyapi Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Chey-

enne River Sioux Tribe, is hosting an event from 10:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Old Agency Building in Eagle Butte. The event will include a walk, luncheon, speaker, and sharing of information by tribal and state agencies on available programs and services. For more information, contact Lyle Cook at 605-964-4400.

Oct. 7, Pierre/Fort Pierre: Kathleen Barrow from Jackson Lewis P.C. Law Firm will offer a presentation at the Capital University Center, 925 E. Sioux Ave. from 8:30 to 10 a.m. She will help employers learn how to focus on their employees' abilities rather than disabilities and outline legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Representatives from The Right Turn, Department of Labor and Regulation, and the Department of Human Services-Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired will share information and resources. For more information, contact Cindy Ryan at 605-773-3315.

Oct. 8, Aberdeen: Kathleen Barrow from Jackson Lewis P.C. Law Firm will offer a presentation at the Americlnn, 301 Centennial St. S. She will help employers learn how to focus on their employees' abilities rather than disabilities and outline legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The program will provide employers with an explanation of the reasonable accommodation process and how to coordinate this with certain protected leaves of absence. The event will also include a showing of the video "People with Disabilities WORK," followed by a

panel discussion. For more information, contact Laura Stoltenburg at 605-626-2398.

Oct. 8, Sisseton: Sisseton is collaborating with Brookings, Madison and Milbank for an NDEAM event that will begin with dinner at 6 p.m. at Sisseton City Hall, Community Room, 406 2nd Ave. W. As the featured speaker, Jesse Saperstein will address disability, diversity, overcoming barriers, and realizing and achieving one's potential. This event will also promote awareness and aim to create more employment opportunities for people with disabilities living in rural communities. For more information, contact Rachael Johnson at 605-698-7445.

Oct. 9, Madison: Jesse Saperstein will give a presentation, open to the public, at 9 a.m. at Madison High School, 800 N.E. 9th St. Saperstein was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and works to reduce bullying in schools. He has a unique perspective on the topic and has worked hard to overcome obstacles in his life, particularly related to social interactions. He uses humor and personal experiences to tell the story of how he overcame adversity to become successful in his career, and his struggles resonate with many generations, inspiring acceptance and understanding. For more information, contact Shaun Erschens at 605-688-4280.

Oct. 20, Mobridge: The local chamber of commerce's October "after hours" event will be held at the Silver Dollar Saloon, 205 N. Main St., sponsored by NDEAM partners. The event will present information on employing individuals with

disabilities and highlight services through the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. Local employers supporting employment of people with disabilities will also be recognized. For more information, contact Corinna Alander at 605-626-2398.

Oct. 21, Mitchell: Maria Flores – program manager, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) – will give a presentation at Mitchell Technical Institute, amphitheater, 1800 E. Spruce St., 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. She is a 20-year-plus veteran of EEOC, and she will share information on EEOC's responsibilities, employment discrimination trends, and ways for organizations to be proactive in hiring and retaining qualified individuals with disabilities. She will also discuss discrimination-charge processing procedures including mediation, new initiatives and other hot employment topics. For more information, contact Jessica Sehnert at 605-995-8072.

Oct. 21, Rapid City: The Workforce Diversity Network team and Rapid City Society for Human Resource Management will host an event, 7 – 9:30 a.m., at the Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn, 505 North St. The morning will begin with registration and networking, having representatives from disability-related organizations share information on available services. An employment video will be shown, followed by Joe Dresser and Kathleen Barrow of Jackson Lewis P.C. Law Firm presenting "Disability in the Work Place – At Work It's What People Can Do That Matters." An awards

program will also be held to recognize employers who have hired qualified individuals with disabilities. For more information, contact Catie Greseth at 605-787-2590.

Oct. 22, Watertown: A luncheon will be held, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., at County Fair Banquet Hall, 14 2nd St. N.E. Annette Gamber, a business owner who has worked with vocational rehabilitation services and other providers in recruiting and hiring qualified individuals with disabilities for various positions, and Tyler Gamber, an individual with a disability who has employment experience and can speak to the benefits of being employed, are the keynote speakers. For more information, contact Jessica Fischer at 605-882-5150.

Oct. 22, Yankton: Maria Flores – program manager, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) – will give a presentation at Minerva's Convention Center, 1607 E. S.D. Highway 50, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. She is a 20-year-plus veteran of EEOC, and she will share information on EEOC's responsibilities, employment discrimination trends, and ways for organizations to be proactive in hiring and retaining qualified individuals with disabilities. She will also discuss discrimination-charge processing procedures including mediation, new initiatives and other hot employment topics. For more information, contact Jennifer Trenhaile at 605-668-3050.



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