

# Workforce Diversity Matters

Women's Equality Day - Aug. 26

## NEWSLETTER

We believe diversity drives innovation and the more inclusive we are, the better our work will be.



OFFICE of **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

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Accessibility and belonging at work. Both are within reach.

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Women's Equality Day is celebrated every year on August 26th.

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- Fall Conferences
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- NDEAM
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### Diversity Spotlight



#### **Reece Ellis - Governor's Council on Disability**

Reece embraced his new role as the coordinator of the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum program by leading a group of 23 delegates and almost 30 volunteer staff. He demonstrated great leadership skills and quickly gained the respect and friendship of the participants. The future is bright with Reece as the facilitator of this program! Congratulations, Reece!



# ACCESSIBILITY & BELONGING AT WORK

by Kim Hicks

Accessibility and a sense of Belonging are both vital components in the framework for a more multicultural and welcoming environment. Employers who prioritize these practices create a healthy workplace culture that empowers and values team members. For employees to accept that workforce diversity is a priority, leadership must model a diverse and inclusive environment. And when they succeed, it pays off.



Accessibility in the workplace refers to the guiding concept of providing all team members with fair and equal opportunities depending on their specific needs. It is the ability to access and utilize the workspace (physical and digital) equally. Not all applicants and employees are afforded the same set of circumstances and the aim is to address any imbalance of opportunities available to them. Ensuring equal access to accommodations, information and resources for individuals cultivates a diverse and rich pool of job candidates and employees. Furthermore, organizations can reduce stress and sickness in team members by prioritizing a healthier work-life harmony for staff and improve focus and decision-making capabilities.

Accessibility at work is about removing barriers to ensure that the workplace and the work are accessible to everyone. Accessibility practices enable us to hire, retain, and advance people with disabilities, by establishing a healthy workplace culture and demonstrating a dedication to equal opportunity in the workplace.

Another essential component to a positive and healthy business culture is a sense of belonging. Belonging is about feeling welcomed, included, supported and accepted. People may experience a strong sense of psychological safety when they know they truly belong. An absence of belonging may cause team members to feel insecure about their place in the organization. It limits performance and creativity, as well as the ability and willingness to work together. The result is a bland, bureaucratic, and sterile environment where genuine conversations are nonexistent, relationships are shallow, and innovation is scarce. Belonging in the workplace is incredibly vital, perhaps the most crucial component. Belonging could be viewed as both the "ending" and the "beginning." How is it the ending? Belonging is the grand finale everyone has worked toward. Belonging is achieved when Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion principals are successfully implemented. Belonging is the accumulation of day-to-day experiences that enables you to feel safe and bring your full, unique self to work. So then how is Belonging also the beginning? Just as a strong and sturdy house is built from the bottom up, Belonging could be viewed as the stable foundation upon which great organizations build. If we could actually bring our entire selves to work, our genuine selves, life experiences, viewpoints, cultural beliefs, humor, and creativeness - that is when the ordinary becomes extraordinary and that's what makes an organization a great place to work.



**Diversity, Accessibility, Inclusion, and Belonging** are more than mere concepts. When we consciously practice and apply these elements into our workplace we can supercharge the success of our organization by boosting team member engagement and retention, maximizing performance and innovation, and improving business outcomes.

# OEO JOINS GCD AT THE 2024 MO-YLF

by Kim Hicks

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) took place on July 16-20, 2024, at the University of Missouri in Columbia. Hosted by the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD), MO-YLF is a five-day, four-night leadership training and career awareness program for high school students with disabilities.



This year's event included 24 delegates from 17 counties across Missouri. These young leaders engaged in an intensive week of learning and growth, exploring topics such as leadership, career development, disability history and advocacy, self-determination, mentorship, and independent living. The week concluded with a resource fair and graduation ceremony, where delegates and alumni shared their experiences and insights, celebrating their growth and achievements.

# WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

by Dara Sailer

August 26 is designated as Women's Equality Day in the United States to commemorate the passage of the 19th Amendment, which prohibits the government from denying any American citizen the ability to vote on the basis of gender. Beginning in the mid-19th century, women organized, petitioned, and picketed for the right to vote. Activists like Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and former slave turned abolitionist, Sojourner Truth, championed the cause along with many other women. The movement gained significant momentum with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which issued the Declaration of Sentiments calling for equal rights for women. The persistent advocacy throughout the decades led to the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution on August 26, 1920, granting American Women the right to vote. This victory was a pivotal moment in history and in the larger issue that is gender equality. It inspired further advancements in women's rights throughout the world. This year marks the 104th anniversary of the passing of the 19th amendment and we encourage all women to let their voices be heard in upcoming elections.





## Upcoming Celebrations

### NDEAM 2024

10/21/24 from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
The state's first National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Celebration. The theme for 2024 is "Access to Good Jobs for All."



### Veterans Day

OEO is gearing up for the 2024 Veterans Day Celebration at the Capitol, a time for us to pay our respects to those who have served. More details coming soon.



### Black History Month

Plans are underway for the 2025 Black History Month Celebration. This event will take place on February 27. Additional details will be provided in upcoming editions.



## Conferences

Team Members from OEO have plans to exhibit at the 66th Annual Governor's Conference on Economic Development held September 4-6, 2024, in St. Louis and the 2024 Inclusion Summit September 26-27, 2024, in Kansas City.

## Committee Volunteers

We are seeking creative new volunteers for upcoming events organized by the Office of Equal Opportunity. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on a committee, please reach out to Kim Hicks in OEO at: [kim.hicks@oa.mo.gov](mailto:kim.hicks@oa.mo.gov).

## Workforce Diversity Plan

The Workforce Diversity Plan sets direction for achieving a diverse and inclusive workplace. The departments within the Executive Branch of government are required to submit a revised Workforce Diversity Plan by September 30th of each year.

