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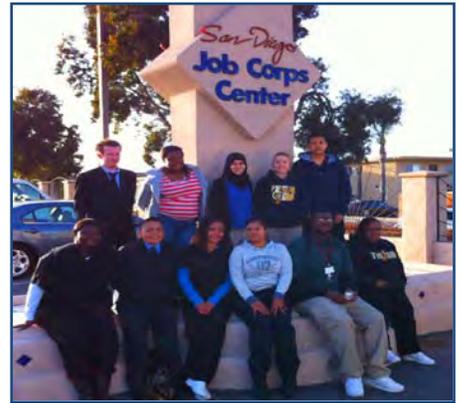


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Peer Ambassador Program at San Diego JCC

Students with disabilities may feel isolated, lack social interaction with their peers, struggle with conversational skills, have difficulty living a healthy lifestyle, and many times are not invited to participate in extracurricular activities. These struggles may interfere with their success during and after Job Corps. To promote a more positive experience for San Diego JCC students, Dr. Marilee Wasell, the center mental health consultant with the assistance of the career development counselor, Christina Bradley, has developed and implemented a Peer Ambassador Program.

The purpose of the program is to promote a greater quality of life by replacing poor coping skills with healthier life choices and better coping skills. Peer ambassadors serve as models of healthy living and encourage healthy alternatives to substance abuse and maladaptive behaviors, and assist peers deal with problems associated with stress, depressed or anxious moods, and bullying. They also assist students in overcoming academic and career technical obstacles and provide mentoring.



San Diego JCC's Peer Ambassadors

A number of students with disabilities have peer ambassadors. The program has helped students with disabilities that are at risk of negative peer pressure from other students by providing a safe place for these students to confide and question activities that are new to them. Peer ambassadors help with mini-goals and social skills and ease the fear of being friendless or bullied. The program is a built-in accepting social system where all students feel supported by a positive network. The ambassadors receive a 30-day training on facilitating an appropriate ambassador relationship, how to best intervene in circumstances of bullying, crisis intervention, bereavement, academic problems peer pressure, family conflict, substance abuse and self-esteem. They also receive guidance on how to establish a relationship of trust and confidentiality and understanding the importance and value of mentoring. In addition to the initial training, ambassadors are required to attend weekly meetings with Dr. Wasell.

What Mentees Are Saying about the Peer Ambassador Program . . .

- "My ambassador helps me feel like I'm everyone else. I can check in with her about anything."
- "I know I'm different, but my ambassador doesn't care. He helps me with listening to my problems and making better decisions."
- "I was an outcast before; I didn't know how to handle my "condition." My ambassador listened and helped me understand that I'm not just my "condition"—I'm me."

While ambassadors and mentees are matched based on their interests, they also are required to make their expectations and objectives about the relationship known. Some goals include meeting new friends, living a healthy lifestyle, remaining substance free, and even gaining confidence. Several Peer Ambassador Program alumni have seen great success in not just their academic life, but their personal life as well. For example, one student was struggling with substance abuse and self-esteem issues stemming from his disability. With the support of his ambassador and the program, this student successfully completed the Job Corps program, is employed, and because of the confidence he gained, has joined a band.

As individuals age into adolescence and toward adulthood, they deal with a number of pressures, especially social acceptance. For students with disabilities, there are fewer social experiences and a greater chance of living an unhealthy lifestyle.

Through mentoring programs such as San Diego JCC's Peer Ambassador Program, students of all backgrounds and abilities have a support system. The experience of the ambassadors and their desire to give back to others empowers mentees to reach their full potential.

Disability Awareness through Movies

A Great Dorm Activity!

Movies can be a great way to introduce students to disability awareness and start discussions about disability in our society. The greatest barrier people with disabilities face is *attitude*. There are still many misconceptions, myths, and stereotypes that create barriers to academic and employment success for people with disabilities.

A variety of activities have been organized to raise awareness about disability issues, including film. Using film is an effective way of increasing awareness about disability issues, breaking down stereotypes about individuals with disabilities, and educating audiences about the impact of disability on individuals, their families, and society.



Movies are exciting, engaging, and great educational or informational tools. Below is a list of movies with a disability theme.

- A Beautiful Mind - Schizophrenia
- As Good As it Gets - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Asthma
- At First Sight - Blindness
- F.A.T City Video - Reading and Decoding
- Freedom Machines - Assistive Technology
- Girl Interrupted - Mental Illness
- I Am Sam - Intellectual Disabilities
- Miracle Run - Autism
- Monica and David - Down's Syndrome
- Mozart and the Whale - Asperger's Syndrome
- My Left Foot - Cerebral Palsy
- Philadelphia - AIDS
- Radio - Intellectual Disabilities
- Rain Man - Autism
- Simon Birch - Dwarfism
- Soul Surfer - Physical Disabilities
- Temple Grandin - Autism
- The Boy Who Could Fly - Autism
- The Mighty - Learning Disabilities
- The Other Sister - Intellectual Disabilities
- The Smallest People in the World - Dwarfism

Movies make a lasting impact and are a great way to facilitate a discussion about disability and diversity. Follow the movie with a group conversation among all students about the importance of focusing on ability and talent; not making assumptions about what people can or cannot do; and setting goals for Job Corps, employment, and independent living. To facilitate this discussion use *The Campaign for Disability Employment's* "I Can" PSA and accompanying Youth Discussion Guide. For more information on the PSA and discussion guide, visit <http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org/blog/index.php/toolkit/>.

So, pop your popcorn, break out the treats (healthy of course), and plan a movie night.

For more resources on movies and videos with a disability theme, see Disability Resource, page 4.

AT for Individuals with Diabetes

Assistive technology (AT) can help people with diabetes function more efficiently at home, in school, and in the workplace. Some possible AT options for individuals with diabetes include:

Glucose Monitoring Systems



Advocate Duo Talking Blood Glucose Plus
Blood Pressure Monitor



Prodigy Auto-Code Talking Blood Glucose
Monitoring System

Benefits: Talking glucose meters offers individuals that are blind or have a visual impairment more independence by allowing them to check their daily blood sugar level without having to depend on someone to assist them.

Visual Aids



Syringe Magnifier



ZoomText Reader/Magnifier

Benefits: Many diabetics experience issues with their vision. The syringe magnifier clips on to the insulin syringe making it easier to read the calibrations in order to avoid dosage errors. For individuals that use a computer there are screen magnification/reader software programs that are available that allow users to enlarge their electronic environment that can help with alleviating eye fatigue.

Medication Reminders/Organization



Vibrating Alarm Watches



CADEX Medication Reminder Watch

Med Center System 31-Day
Interactive Pill Organizer



Personal digital assistant –
HP iPAQ 211



Benefits: Vibrating alarm watches and personal digital assistants allow users to set an alarm to remind them to take their medication. The Med Center system pill organizer also provides this feature as well as a way to organize pills by date.

Interested in purchasing any of these products, visit: ZoomText reader/magnifier, <http://www.aisquared.com/zoomtext>; syringe magnifier, <http://www.americandiabeteswholesale.com/>; CADEX medication reminder watch, <http://www.epill.com/cadex.html>; vibrating alarm watches, <http://www.forgettingthepill.com>; HP iPAQ 211, <http://www.walmart.com/ip/HP-iPAQ-211-Enterprise-Handheld/8154790>; Med Center system 31 day interactive pill organizer, <http://www.wayfair.com/>.

Promising Practices

Paul Simon JCC: The center has a small library of assistive technology that includes Dragon Naturally Speaking software and reading pens.

Gadsden JCC: The TABE administrator has outfitted each testing station with monitor screens, noise-cancelling headsets, and covered overlays, which are used in testing situations and in the classroom.

Lyndon B. Johnson JCC: Students with disabilities can access the applied academics laboratory for extra support, if needed. This support includes tutoring, individualized instruction, and a quiet work area.



Disability Resources

Recent Information Notices

Program Instruction 11-16, Applicant File Review Process Forms

Information Notice 11-54, Disability Program Partners

New Publication from the Office of Disability Employment Policy

Skills to *Pay* the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>

Movies and Videos about Disabilities

<http://videos.disabled-world.com/>

<http://www.coastal.edu/library/media/disabilities.html>

Peer Ambassador Guidelines

Visit the Job Corps Health and Wellness website under New Health Documents

Upcoming Job Corps Disability Webinars

Working with your Charter or Public School Partner to Improve Services for Students with Disabilities

Bookshare: Let Reading Come Alive

Disability Coordinator Orientation

Center Disability Coordinators will receive email alerts of upcoming webinars.

Also, Check out JAN's 2012 trainings and webinars at:

<http://askjan.org/webcast/index.htm>

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