BACKGROUND...

A meaningful job truly can make a real difference in the lives of youth and young adults with disabilities. Yet, opportunities for these young people to share their strengths and talents in the workplace are far too limited. The TennesseeWorks Partnership is a systems-change project funded through the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The goal of the project is to increase the availability and quality of employment opportunities for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in every corner of our state.

We are partnering with communities across Tennessee to host a series of “Community Conversations” focused on how best to provide young people with disabilities the aspirations, preparation, opportunities, and supports they need to access competitive, integrated work in their community. In September 2013, the last in a series of six events was held in Greeneville, Tennessee. The local planning committee included local advocacy organizations, disability service providers, educators, and family members.

We shared invitations widely throughout the Greeneville community to gather a diverse group people who care about making their community more inclusive of people with disabilities. Family members, local employers, disability service providers, educators, faith community members, community organizations, and civic leaders were all invited to the event.
A community conversation is a creative, fun, and powerful way of identifying how diverse members of a community might work together in compelling ways to solve an important challenge. The focus of this event was on generating ideas, sharing resources, and making connections with other community members to enhance employment and community involvement for young people with disabilities and, ultimately, to strengthen the Greeneville community.

The Greeneville community conversation was held at the Comfort Inn. This evening event took place on September 16th and involved more than 50 members of the community. Karen Harrison, a parent and advocate, served as the facilitator for the evening. She shared with the attendees about the impact employment has on the lives of young people with disabilities. Using the World Café model, the group next began a series of “coffee-house” conversations—first at small tables and then as a whole group—in which they shared their best ideas related to three questions:

- What can we do as a community to increase meaningful employment opportunities for people with intellectual disability?
- How might we work together in compelling ways to make these ideas happen here in Greeneville?
- What are the most promising ideas you have heard this evening? Where should we go next to launch meaningful change here?

At the end of the event, attendees completed a short feedback form and indicated whether they would like to be involved in future efforts to promote employment for young people with disabilities in their community.

After the event, all of the notes taken at each of the individual tables and during the whole group discussion were compiled and organized. A full report of ideas across all six conversations will be available later in the year. A sampling of ideas and next steps is included on the next page.

**AGENDA**

- 6:10-6:15  Greeting
- 6:15-6:25  Opening Remarks
- 6:25-6:30  World Café Process
- 6:30-6:50  Round 1 Discussion
- 6:50-7:10  Round 2 Discussion
- 7:10-7:30  Round 3 Discussion
- 7:30-7:50  Harvesting of Best Ideas
- 7:50-8:00  Closing Remarks
A SAMPLING OF IDEAS TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT SHARED DURING THE EVENT

Ideas for Families
• Publicly thank employers who are supportive of employing persons with disabilities
• Utilize personal relationships as a starting point to network with potential employers
• Raise expectations regarding your child's capabilities

Ideas for Disability Service Providers
• Collaborate with other groups to create a resource directory available to the community
• Cultivate an open line of communication among providers in the area
• Make sure other professionals in the community have resources on the capabilities and achievements of youth with disabilities

Ideas for Community Leaders
• Share materials to raise awareness about the employment of persons with disabilities
• Spearhead local Disability Awareness Month activities
• Highlight the positive benefits of employing youth with disabilities
A SAMPLING OF IDEAS TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT SHARED DURING THE EVENT

Ideas for Employers and Business Networks

- Train managers and support staff on how to help youth with disabilities improve their “soft skills”
- Advertise job openings for youth with disabilities through local media and employer job fairs
- Film success stories of youth who are currently performing well at a job and share them widely

Ideas for Faith Communities

- Start a project within the congregation to educate volunteer job coaches and train employers
- Be a role model for employing persons with disabilities
- Implement a mentoring program for young people with disabilities

Ideas for Educators

- Teach students how to seek jobs and fill out applications online
- Establish service learning opportunities focused on mentoring youth with disabilities
- Add business etiquette class to course work for youth with disabilities
- Establish internship programs in high school

Ideas for Young People with Disabilities

- Explore different employment opportunities through job shadowing and taking tours of businesses
- Participate in interview skills training to sharpen your skills

Ideas for Our Entire Community

- Hold career fairs for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Assemble a directory of employers willing to offer job shadowing opportunities
- Recruit college students from within communication programs to help carryout awareness projects and tell success stories
- Promote opportunities for individuals transitioning to competitive employment
### RESOURCES ON EMPLOYMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TennesseeWorks</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tennesseeworks.org">www.tennesseeworks.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Numerous state and national resources focused on improving employment outcomes</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathfinder</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kc.vanderbilt.edu/pathfinder">www.kc.vanderbilt.edu/pathfinder</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Comprehensive, multilingual disability clearinghouse of information, referral resources, and support services to and for people with disabilities and their families in Tennessee</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Accommodation Network</td>
<td><a href="http://www.askjan.org">www.askjan.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ncwd-youth.info">www.ncwd-youth.info</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nsttac.org">www.nsttac.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign for Disability Employment</td>
<td><a href="http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org">www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for hiring people with disabilities</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com">www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment &amp; Training Administration’s Disability Program</td>
<td><a href="http://www.doleta.gov/disability">www.doleta.gov/disability</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Disability Employment Policy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dol.gov/odep">www.dol.gov/odep</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability &amp; Employment</td>
<td><a href="http://www.disability.workforce3one.org">www.disability.workforce3one.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about Ticket to Work</td>
<td><a href="http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work">www.socialsecurity.gov/work</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs for Tennessee Online</td>
<td><a href="http://www.jobs4tn.gov">www.jobs4tn.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcoming Tennessee Job Fairs</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tn.gov/labor-wfd/JobFairs">www.tn.gov/labor-wfd/JobFairs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Tennessee Workforce Investment Board</td>
<td><a href="http://www.westtennesseecareers.org">www.westtennesseecareers.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/rehab/vrs.html">www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/rehab/vrs.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Career Centers</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tennessee.gov/labor-wfd/cc">www.tennessee.gov/labor-wfd/cc</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT ATTENDEES SAID ABOUT THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Below is a summary of responses from evaluations completed by attendees regarding their views on their community and the event.

I am leaving this conversation with specific steps I plan to do to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The conversation tonight improved my views of the capacity of our community to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Follow-up events or actions on this issue are needed in our community.

Members of our community need help learning how to support people with disabilities in meaningful jobs.

Strong partnerships between employers, community agencies, and families currently exist in my community.

Our community currently has the capacity to support people with disabilities in meaningful jobs.

People in our community are generally receptive to employing people with disabilities.

I would invite someone I know to attend another event like this one in the future.

I was able to identify things I could do to enhance employment outcomes for people with disabilities from this conversation.

This conversation will contribute to increased employment opportunities for people with disabilities in our community.

I learned about resources, opportunities, or connections in my community that I previously did not know about.

This conversation was a good investment of my time.
ABOUT TENNESSEEWORKS

The TennesseeWorks Partnership was first funded in October 2012 with the purpose of equipping (a) youth with significant disabilities to aspire toward competitive work from an early age, (b) families to demand competitive work for their children with disabilities, (c) educators to prepare their students for competitive work across the grade-span, and (d) state systems to support competitive work in every part of the state. More than 25 agencies and organizations have collaborated with the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center to form this collaborative. State partners include Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

For more information, see www.tennesseeworks.org or contact Sarah Harvey at (615) 322-4999, tennesseeworks@gmail.com

Funding for this project is provided by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities