



Land a job without a scare
in the world!

Welcome to
DEAL 2023

**NINTH ANNUAL
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS LUNCHEON
OCTOBER 30, 2023
MUSIC CITY CENTER | NASHVILLE, TN**



Disability Rights Tennessee, celebrating 45 years of protecting the rights of Tennesseans with disabilities.



Welcome to the 9th Annual Disability Employment Awareness Luncheon!

On behalf of Disability Rights Tennessee, I am beyond grateful for your attendance and support over the last 45 years. With your support we have continued to provide free legal advocacy services to Tennesseans in all 95 counties. Thank you to all of our extraordinary partners and collaborators (many of them in this room) who collaborate with us to protect the rights of Tennesseans with disabilities.

I am especially thankful to be able to come together in person for the first time since 2019 to share stories and best practices because it is critical to remove barriers to employment for Tennesseans with Disabilities.

Hold on to your broomsticks - the job market shouldn't be scary! Please sit back and enjoy the presentation and the lunch today. I am confident that you'll be motivated by the multifaceted ways we can make employment a reality for all Tennesseans.

Together we will make disability rights history!



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Lisa Primm".

LISA PRIMM
Executive Director
Disability Rights Tennessee



ORDER OF EVENTS

WELCOME

Lisa Primm, Executive Director, Disability Rights Tennessee

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Cookie Brand, Metro Deaf School

PANEL 1: BUBBLE LOVE NASHVILLE

McKenzie Tuckson, Bubble Love Tea
Tamara Tuckson, Mission2Advocate
Anna Fields, Bubble Love Tea
Michael Fox, Metro Nashville Public Schools

NDRN VIDEO ADDRESS

Marlene Sallo, Executive Director, NDRN

PANEL 2: ASL IN THE WORKPLACE

Molly Anderson, Tennessee Disability Coalition
Craig Lemak, Disability Rights Tennessee
Chris Nipper, Disability Rights Tennessee

PANEL 3: IPS SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Richard Rittenberry, Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association
Bradley Shute, Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association
Jordan Young, Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association

CLOSING

Lisa Primm, Executive Director, Disability Rights Tennessee

MEET THE DRT FAMILY

DISABILITY RIGHTS TENNESSEE STAFF

Nicole Allen	Johnnie Hatten	Dennis Sauter
Rebecca Allen	Debra Haynes	Lee Sherwood
Eric Allman	Zoë Jamail	Jennifer Shilling
Ann Anderson	Jeremiah Jones	Stephanie Siegel
Anna Bass	Jessica Klacik	Angel Sims-Shack
Leslie Beach	Craig Lemak	Connie Stanton
Keitha Broyles	April Mancino-Rosete	Jamie Stuart
Holland Camara	William Moore	Jeff Vaden
Denise Capers	Dawn Munroe	Tiffany Walker
Alex Cooper	Chris Nipper	Nathan Walsh
Kelsey Craig	Alyssa Peacock	Jeshiqua White
Ryan Daggs	Stacie Price	Sherry Wilds
Jack Derryberry	Lisa Primm	Tina Williams
Brittany Farrington-Beasley	Karen Ramos	Freeman World
Rick Hall	Dalmys Sánchez	

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

James DiMarco, *President*
Dr. Evon Batey Lee, *Vice-President*
K. Andrew Tiberi-Warner, *Treasurer*
Irena Stjepic, *Secretary*
Chase Breland
Jackie Collum
Jaylon Fincannon
Timothy Hughes
Dr. Bruce Keisling
Katherine Moore
Robin Nobling
Emma Shouse

PAIMI ADVISORY COUNCIL

Caitlin Wright, *Chair*
Jan Cagle, *Vice-Chair*
Claudia Avila-Lopez, *Secretary*
Willa Felder-Boyd
Julia Johnson
Mark Liverman
Carey Menefee
Eve Nite
Halima Perry-Thurmon
Irena Stjepic

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT CHAMPION



DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVOCATE



DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT FRIEND

Metro Nashville Human Resources
Tennessee Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Tennessee Disability Coalition
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
WeGo Public Transit

TABLE HOSTS AND DONORS

BlueCare Tennessee
Candice Ashburn
Dell, Inc.
Group Benefit Systems

Mental Health Cooperative
Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities
Tennessee Human Rights Commission
United Healthcare

KEYNOTE SPEAKER COOKIE BRAND

Cookie Brand is a BlackDeaf School Counselor at the Metro Deaf School. Cookie spent two years in central Kenya as a Peace Corps Volunteer where she taught deaf and hard of hearing children. Returning to the U.S., Cookie fulfilled the third goal of the Peace Corps - "to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans" by sharing her first-hand world experience and found a love for supporting people as a whole person. Counseling has allowed Cookie to be a first-hand advocate in ensuring resources and materials are culturally appropriate and available in a range of languages. She emphasizes the importance of recognizing multiculturalism in the process.



Cookie loves to spend time with her two deaf and hard of hearing daughters, enjoys hiking, still-life photography, dancing and being president of the St. Paul & Minneapolis Black Deaf Advocates.

Learn more about Cookie at the National Deaf Center website,
www.NationalDeafCenter.org/News-Items/Deaf-Success-Story-Cookie-Brand-School-Counselor/

DO YOU KNOW COMMON BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT?

1. Bias in the hiring process

Checking the box to disclose your disability should NOT be a chance for an employer to cast your application aside. Everyone pursuing employment has a unique set of skills to bring to a workplace, having a disability or mental health diagnosis doesn't change that.

2. Fear of negative judgement

Judgement can come at any stage of the employment process from submitting an application to interviewing all the way down to performance reviews and promotion consideration.

3. Lack of accessibility within the workplace

Accessibility barriers can happen at any stage of your journey as an employee. One example of this is a business website or job board that has poor color contrast, no captions on videos, or inaccessible online forms. Whether a prospective employee can depend on a wheelchair ramp, automatic doors, or accessible restrooms might be the defining factor in applying for a job.

4. Employers being unwilling to provide reasonable accommodations

Providing reasonable accommodations ensures every employee can perform their best and fosters an inclusive and diverse work environment.

NDRN VIDEO ADDRESS MARLENE SALLO

Marlene Sallo is the first woman, first Latina, and first person with a disability to lead the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN).

She believes that amplifying where disability intersects with other identities such as LGBTQIA+, non-native English speakers, and Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color is critical component of successful advocacy. Before

joining NDRN, Sallo served as Director of Preventing Targeted Violence at the McCain Institute for International Leadership. Marlene is no stranger to the Protection & Advocacy Network and has served as Executive Director of the Massachusetts Disability Law Center (DLC) and Education Attorney with Disability Rights Florida.



Learn more about DRT's parent organization, NDRN, at www.NDRN.org

PANEL #1: BUBBLE LOVE NASHVILLE

McKenzie Tuckson has worked at Bubble Love Tea for two years. Her mother and job coach, Tamara Tuckson, supervisor and owner of Bubble Love, Anna Fields, and teacher at Metro Nashville Public Schools, Michael Fox, join us to discuss the important role of advocacy and assistive technology in the hiring process.

McKenzie Tuckson is a fashion forward and intelligent 20-year-old varsity cheerleader. McKenzie is the first nonverbal Ambassador for Metro Nashville Public Schools, and the President of her junior and senior class. McKenzie is the 2019 Westley-Rice Student Advocate for the year for the state of Tennessee, and the 2022 Westley Morgan Tennessee Titans Community Hero. McKenzie lives with Rett Syndrome, but it does not define her. She defines Rett Syndrome. She enjoys attending classes at Whites Creek High School, Public speaking, and praising God. McKenzie has worked at Bubble Love Tea for the past two years.

Tamara Tuckson is a special education advocate and an IEP consultant. She is the founder and CEO of Mission2Advocate. Tamara is the proud mom of McKenzie Tuckson who was diagnosed with Rett's Syndrome at the age of two. Tamara is the Wayne Parker Advocate of the year for the state of Tennessee, a public speaker, and job coach. She currently serves as the President of the Family Support Council with the Arc of Davidson County. She is a member of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center council and a graduate of Partners in Policy Making.

Since McKenzie's diagnosis, Tamara's purpose is to advocate for her daughter and others with exceptional needs and to ensure individuals with exceptional needs have a voice.

Michael Fox is a teacher at Whites Creek High School. He has been in Metro Nashville Public Schools for 18 years. He has also been a volunteer, coach, and unified partner for the Special Olympics since 1997. Michael was elected as "Teacher of the Year" at Whites Creek High School in 2018 and 2021. He has helped improve and expand the inclusive settings at Whites Creek by ensuring that students in his class are able to participate in all appropriate activities that are offered to all students. Mr. Fox has helped show students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders there are more than just the "traditional" ways of communication and classroom success. Michael has helped develop modified tests for the school district and assists with implementation of Special Olympics programs in high schools.

Anna Fields worked in China for 9 years after college helping children with disabilities learn self-care through play therapy. She and her family moved back to America in 2015 so her husband could attend Vanderbilt's Special Ed Master's program. After her twins were born, she opened a small bubble tea shop in the Nashville Farmers' Market. Through some relationships and the Next Steps program, she hired and trained her first employee with different abilities, Peach, to run the front and take orders. After a few years, Peach then suggested Anna hire her friend, McKenzie to do the same. As an inclusive bubble tea shop, Bubble Love hopes to change the social perception of people with disabilities in the workplace. Anna believes that our businesses should reflect our communities and that's only possible if we are including everyone.



PANEL #2: ASL IN THE WORKPLACE

Chris Nipper, Craig Lemak, and Molly Anderson join us to discuss what it is like to be deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing but non-speaking in the workplace and common practices everyone should know when hiring and working alongside people who speak ASL and/or use assistive technology.

Chris Nipper works for Disability Rights Tennessee (DRT) as an American Sign Language (ASL) Advocate and Investigator. He graduated from Tennessee School for the Deaf in 1985 and attended Gallaudet University in Washington, DC – Bachelor of Science in Physical Education and Secondary Education; University of Tennessee, Knoxville – Master’s Degree in Deaf Education. Chris also took endorsement classes at the University of Northern Iowa and Upper Iowa University where he received a license as Work Experience Coordinator for Transitional Services in planning and programming at the Iowa School for the Deaf.

Chris is married to Jodyann and has two deaf young adults. Chris’s son, TJ, attends National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, NY and his daughter, Kalista, attends Gallaudet University. Chris worked as a Deaf Educator at the residential schools for the deaf for 32 years before retiring in 2022. He also served as an athletic coach for middle and high school-sanctioned sports for 30 years and athletic director for 7 years. When not working, Chris enjoys traveling to historical sites and reading history books.

Craig Lemak currently resides in Knoxville, Tennessee. He is an Advocate with Disability Rights Tennessee in the Client Assistance Program and Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) program providing services to Tennesseans with disabilities. He has a wonderful wife, Jamie, who is a certified sign language interpreter and working in a high school in Deaf and Hard of Hearing services. He has two teenagers, a son and a daughter. Currently his son is learning how to drive. He received his master’s degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling and has been working in general human services with deaf and hard of hearing for almost 20 years. Outside DRT, he is an adjunct instructor for The University of Tennessee teaching American Sign Language. He enjoys teaching and continuing working on repurposing with wood for wood projects.

Molly Anderson is the Director of Peer Support at the Tennessee Disability Coalition and joined in August 2023. Molly has a nonverbal disability, called Apraxia, and utilizes American Sign Language and assistive technologies for communication. Molly is an Alabama native and moved to Tennessee to get her bachelor's degree from Maryville College. She is married with a beautiful two-year-old daughter named Lucy. Molly also holds a master's degree in Political Management from George Washington University. Molly helped get Texting 911 across the state and ASL as a foreign language in Tennessee high schools.

DID YOU KNOW?
There is no universal sign language. Different sign languages are used in different countries or regions.

PANEL #3: IPS SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

In partnership with the Department of Human Services - Vocational Rehabilitation and a network of community providers, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services offers services in the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment model. People receive assistance in obtaining employment, and once employed, supports are provided to assist in maintaining the job. Jordan Young, Bradley Shute, and Richard Rittenberry join us to discuss their experience.

Jordan Young (he/him) is the Director of Employment, Education, and Support at the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association (TMHCA) and has been working in the peer recovery field for four years. When Jordan began working with TMHCA as an employment specialist, he knew he found his passion in supporting his peers on their journey to find meaningful employment. Jordan states, "One of my goals is to grow the IPS Supported Employment Program in Tennessee so that anyone with a desire to work can get the support they need." Jordan continues to advocate for increased access to supported employment programs and has implemented IPS expansion plans across the state.

Jordan is also a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and considers his life experience with mental illness and substance use along with the lessons that he has learned from his personal recovery journey to be his most valuable asset. Jordan says, "I have learned a lot about myself and my own recovery doing peer support work. I am grateful for all the opportunities that have allowed me to learn and grow while also giving back to my community."

Bradley Shute has been a member of the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association for over 13 years. Bradley has utilized the support of the Individual Placement and Support team to begin his employment journey, and has been proudly employed since 2019. He has had an excellent track record of success and has achieved his goal of becoming more independent financially. Bradley considers his strengths to be his dedication to achieving his goals, his outgoing personality, and perseverance. Bradley has overcome many barriers and continues to succeed in spite of obstacles. Bradley has developed a solid resume and is currently taking steps to begin a new career path soon that will allow him to continue to improve his overall quality of life.

Richard Rittenberry is an education coordinator for the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association. Rittenberry is a visionary leader and plays a huge role in mental health wellness in the state of Tennessee. He navigates community, culture, crisis, and effective communication through healing in the mental health sector. Richard, who lives with co-occurring disorders, has visible achievements in educating peers, doctors, nurses, teachers, law enforcement, and mental health hospital professionals on how to conquer stigmas and treat patients. He has a stellar track record and is a facilitator for Wellness Recovery Action Planning®, Building Recovery & Individual Dreams and Goals®, Emotional CPR® (e-CPR), Introduction to Peer Support® Curriculum, and is trained as a Peer Grief Group Leader through Heart of the Cumberland Anchor of Hope® Curriculum. Rittenberry is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) through the Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services.

10 WAYS TO FOSTER INCLUSION YEAR ROUND

1. *Gather Ideas from Your Corporate Disability Employee Resource Group*
2. *Hold a National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Kickoff Event in October*
3. *Host a Disability Mentoring Day*
4. *Sponsor a “Lunch and Learn” Series About Disability Issues*
5. *Provide Volunteer Opportunities to Your Employees*
6. *Display Posters Promoting Disability Inclusion*
7. *Offer American Sign Language Training Classes to Your Employees*
8. *Interview Students with Disabilities During Campus Recruiting Trips*
9. *Host a Disability 101 Event for Employees*
10. *Incorporate Disability Into Your Onboarding Processes*



TRANSFORMING LIVES, BUSINESSES & COMMUNITIES



Helping transform lives of Tennesseans through Vocational Rehabilitation, the Tennessee Technology Access Program, Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers, Tennessee Rehabilitation Center—Smyrna, and more.

For more information about the Tennessee Department of Human Services and TDHS Rehabilitation Services, visit <http://www.tn.gov/humanservices>

Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Telephone: (615) 313-4891
TTY: (615) 313-5695
TTY (Long Distance): 1-800-270-1349





NOTES

Proudly supporting
competitive, integrated
**employment for
all** people.



An Anthem Company

Learn more at
www.myamerigroup.com/tn.

NOTES

NOTES

STAY IN TOUCH

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Disability Rights Tennessee,
celebrating 45 years of
protecting the rights of
Tennesseans with disabilities.



Visit our website,
www.DisabilityRightsTN.org
to view all of our resources
and learn more!



Inclusive employment doesn't have to
be spooky! Disability Rights
Tennessee thanks you for making
employment a priority!

For 45 years, Disability Rights Tennessee's
mission has remained the same, to protect the
rights of Tennesseans with disabilities.

