

DVI Views

A Celebration of Champions

The employment achievements of Delawareans who are blind or have visual impairments were honored on Oct. 16th at a special luncheon hosted by the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) and the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) for DVI. Also recognized were legislators and business leaders who work to empower their fellow Delawareans to realize their potential.

"During National Disability Employment Awareness Month, it's important to recognize the contributions of employees with disabilities, employers who provide opportunities, and our legislators and advocates who know we are a stronger Delaware when we value everyone's abilities," Gov. Jack Markell said. "I

offer my thanks to all those honored at the Legislative/Business Luncheon."

In addition to recognizing Sens. Bethany Hall-Long and David Lawson, awards will be presented to Linda Riecker (Delaware Park employee), Patti Addison (Advocate), Bayhealth Medical Center and Delaware Park (Employers). The event was held at Dover Downs Hotel, in celebration of White Cane Safety Day, World Blindness Awareness Month and National Disability Employment Awareness Month. "The people we serve demonstrate creative leadership and successes, not in spite of the barriers they may face, but through their unique capabilities and talents that they bring to our community," said DVI Director Daniel Madrid, "It's an honor to celebrate these successes as well as acknowledge the hard work of our





legislators, community partners, and business leaders who strive to promote a world without barriers."

Immediately preceding the award luncheon, the Division for the Visually Impaired and the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council hosted a Community Enrichment Fair during the morning at Dover Downs Hotel. The fair featured exhibitors who specialize in assistive technology and services for people with visual impairments.

Since 1964, the nation has recognized October 15th as White Cane Safety Day, the day when governments reaffirm their commitment to providing services to increase the independence and self-sufficiency of people who are blind or visually impaired. In addition to White Cane Safety Day, President Barack Obama also has named every October 15th to be Blind Americans Equality Day to celebrate the important role that Americans who are blind or visually impaired have played in the nation's life and culture.

World Blindness Awareness Month was established each October to help people understand the realities of living without sight. The World Health Organization estimates that almost 285 million people live with blindness or visual impairments worldwide. In the United States, about 4 million Americans are blind and 47,000 people (1 person every minute) become blind each year. Roughly one in 50 Delawareans is a person with a significant visual impairment or blindness. At least 40 of the 50 United States and countries worldwide organize events through the month of



October as part of World Blindness Awareness Month to bring awareness to blindness and related blindness issues.

For 70 years, October also has marked National Disability Employment Awareness Month, a nationwide campaign to advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities and to celebrate the contributions of American workers with disabilities.

Governor Markell Launches Employment Video

Governor Jack Markell launched the *Delaware Pathways to Employment* video with an event on Thursday, Nov. 12, at Breaking Barriers in Wilmington. Breaking Barriers is owned by Dwayne Adams, who has a visual impairment and is one of five people with disabilities featured in the video.



Department of Health and Social Services, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Education, schools, and nonprofit groups plan to use the video to promote the benefits of employment opportunities for people with disabilities among individuals, their parents and prospective employers. During 2012-2013, Gov. Markell's initiative as the Chair of the National Governors Association was on advancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. His work resulted in a blueprint for his fellow governors called, "A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities." Joining Gov. Markell and Mr. Adams was DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraf, DVI Director Daniel Madrid, other state and City of Wilmington officials as well as, several people featured in the video. Click here to watch the [Pathways to Employment video](#).



Dwayne Adams-Breaking Barriers in Wilmington



Dwayne Adams is no stranger to DVI and the power of work! A couple of years ago, Adams requested the assistance of the DVI Vocational Rehabilitation team because he wanted to move from Philadelphia to Wilmington. Under normal circumstances, this request would include searching for a job so DVI would offer counseling, job development and job preparation services; however, this situation had a slightly different twist. Along with his residency, Adams wanted to move his non-profit organization Breaking Barriers to Delaware and DVI was happy to assist!

After a tragic, life-altering event, Adams developed the concept for Breaking Barriers, a non-profit fitness center designed to positively influence youth by helping them develop an interest in the sport of rowing. Several years ago, Adams was victim of a shooting and was struck by a stray bullet intended for someone else. Entering through his eye, the bullet left him with very limited vision in one eye and visionless in the other. While in a physical rehabilitation center, Adams learned about several sporting opportunities offered to aid in his physical and mental recovery. Immediately after leaving the facility, he began his pursuit of rowing; a sport he was consistently drawn to watching prior to the accident. Before long, he was traveling the world to compete in different rowing events, winning a bronze medal in the 2002 World Rowing Championship, in Spain. After competing on the rowing circuit and publishing an autobiography, Adams set his sights on giving back to the community and helping youth to avoid street violence.

Adams' passion for rowing and desire to help youth before being devoured by street violence, prompted him to ask himself on some questions. What if he could motivate kids to stay off of the street by providing training, encouragement and confidence? What if he could prevent at least on young

adult from succumbing to the temptations that has led to the demise of so many? His self-reflection resulted in the founding of Breaking Barriers. The well-respected organization successfully operated in Philadelphia for several years; helping hundreds of youth to develop a passion for rowing. After the possibility of losing another lease to real estate developers, Adams made a wise business decision to move his organization from Philadelphia to Wilmington. Adams worked tirelessly to ensure the transition was seamless. He met with the Mayor of the City of Wilmington, multiple city officials, the Wilmington Youth Rowing Association (WYRA), DVI and realtors. His hard work paid off as he established the necessary relationships to open the Wilmington location in 2014. Breaking Barriers recently celebrated their 10th anniversary and are thrilled with their new location.

DVI was instrumental in the Breaking Barriers move and essentially helping Adams maintain his employment. By providing Adams with a grant, he was able to secure the current 3500 square foot building in Wilmington, complete renovations and purchase some new equipment. The organization is in the second year of operation in Delaware and has successfully served nearly 200 Delaware youth. The two day/week training program consists of a combination of cardio, circuit, weight, rowing and teamwork training before meeting at the WYRA to use the rowing simulators. Those who successfully complete the training program are thoroughly prepared to apply for competitive rowing with WYRA.

Although the move to Delaware has been successful, Breaking Barriers is a non-profit that is always in need of funds and community partnerships. In order to offset some of the costs, there are adult athletic training programs available for a fee. To learn more about any of the youth programs, seek the assistance of a personal trainer or to make a donation, visit their website www.projectpanther.com/breaking/ or call 302-656-1210.

Men with a Message Recognized by the Library of Congress

The Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program was established to help support organizations working to alleviate the problems of illiteracy, both in the

United States and worldwide. The awards reward organizations for doing exemplary, innovative and easily replicable work over a sustained



period of time. They also encourage new groups, organizations and individuals to become involved with worldwide literacy issues. In October 2015 DVI was proud to be among the 17 organizations honored that represented organizations from 25 countries in all parts of the globe. Men with a Message (MWM) Braille Program was recognized for having best practices in promoting literacy.

MWM is a work program designed through a partnership with DVI and the Delaware Department of Corrections. Eleven residents of the James T. Vaughn Correctional Facility in Smyrna, spend hours each day transcribing written and visual material into formats that are accessible to readers with visual impairments. Every participant has earned a Literary Braille Certification and will soon be certified in the new Unified English Braille Code, adopted in 2012. Several of the workers have gone beyond the standard Braille requirements and received advanced certifications to translate math and science texts or written music. In order to access materials, DVI maintains a library of translated materials that are available for borrowing. In addition, readers with visual impairments can easily request translated materials through schools or state agencies. This system ensures that the reading selection is not limited to material that has already been translated.

“We are very excited to be recognized among such an elite group of organizations,” DVI Director Daniel Madrid said. “I would like to thank the dedicated workers of Men with a Message, the DVI manager who oversees the program and his staff for their tireless efforts to increase literacy accessibility for Delawareans with visual impairments and for helping incarcerated workers to develop real, transferrable job skills.”

Best practice recognition is an honor in and of itself but DVI is not planning to stop there; organizations are encouraged to reapply in hopes of winning one of the top three awards and the accompanying monetary gift. “If won, the cash award would help to propel this program to a new level,” said Madrid, “the existing model could be expanded to include public, private and commercial sectors that need accessible materials created.”

Get Involved with the Division for the Visually Impaired!

DVI relies on local community members to provide guidance and assistance with special projects. If you have a passion for helping others, a desire to make a difference and some time to get involved, consider volunteering with DVI. Here are some ways you can help!

Advisory Councils

Advisory councils provide DVI with guidance, stakeholder feedback, and community support. Specific focus is dedicated to strategic direction, quality of services and impact on the community served. Councils are a great way for you to get involved or simply learn about what DVI is doing. Those interested can apply for vacant council seats or attend meetings as a member of the public. Meeting times and locations can be accessed on the public meeting calendar at <https://egov.delaware.gov/pmc/>. To learn more about getting involved in any of the State of Delaware advisory councils please review the application found on the Governor's website at <http://governor.delaware.gov/boards-comms.shtml>.

- **Governor's Advisory Council on the Blind (GACB)**- meets on a monthly basis
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Division for the Visually Impaired (VRAC)**-meets on a monthly basis
- **Commission for the Purchase of Products & Services of the Blind & Other Severely Handicapped Individuals**-meets on a monthly basis
- **Independent Living Advisory Council (ILAC)**-meets on a quarterly basis. (*ILAC members are appointed by the Director DVI. For additional information or an application, please contact DVI at 302-255-9800.*)

Daily Volunteers Needed!

In addition to councils, DVI encourages community members to get involved by volunteering at one of our office locations in New Castle or Milford. Opportunities for volunteers are constantly changing and growing. Your skills and talents are important to us and we hope that we might provide you with a satisfying experience. If you are interested in an opportunity not listed here or would like further clarification about the opportunities noted above, please contact the DVI Volunteer Services program at **(302)577-2083**.



**FREE
MATTER
for the
Blind**

**Biggs Building
1901 N DuPont Highway
New Castle, DE 19720-1199**

DVI has two location to serve the State of Delaware

1901 N. DuPont Highway
New Castle, DE 19720
(302) 255-9800 and

Milford State Service Center
12 S.W. Front Street
Milford, DE 19963
(302) 424-7240

DVI Views

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