



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 14, 2021

**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

Contact: Megan Weems

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**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awards \$275,000 to James Madison University to assist communities in leveraging resources and accessing new opportunities to transform the physical and emotional health of individuals with DD and their families.**

**Richmond, Va.** – The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) is pleased to announce that it has awarded a grant of \$275,000 to James Madison University (JMU) to assist rural communities in leveraging resources and accessing new opportunities to transform the physical and emotional health of individuals with DD and their families.

JMU aims to educate, equip, and empower individuals with disabilities and their families, along with community-based instructors, and organizations in rural areas across the Shenandoah Valley.

“The Board is delighted to be collaborating with JMU following their previous grant project, which allowed them to create a community-centered wellness program for individuals with disabilities, said Teri Morgan, the Board’s Executive Director. “We appreciate their ongoing commitment to serving Virginia’s demographically diverse population.”

JMU’s Executive Director of the Empowerment3 Center Thomas Moran said, “The Ability First project intends to transform the physical and emotional health of individuals with DD and their families in rural counties across the Shenandoah Valley.”

“Our project utilizes a collaborative, coalition-building approach designed to leverage existing resources, build capacity of local community entities, and/or promote access to new inclusive at-home, school, and community based opportunities, both in-person and app-based,” he continued. “James Madison University’s Empowerment3 Center is grateful for VBPD’s support.”

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**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awards \$10,000 to Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia to increase socialization and reduce isolation for individuals with a developmental disability, as a result of brain injury**

**Richmond, Va.** – The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) is pleased to announce that it has awarded a grant of \$10,000 to Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia (BISSWVA) to increase socialization and reduce isolation for individuals with a developmental disability (as a result of brain injury), and their families. Individuals with DD will be matched with a trusted community volunteer for socialization, increased community integration, social and emotional connection, as well as relationship building.

“The Board is delighted to be collaborating with BISSWVA on this important project to impact an often underserved population of individuals and appreciate their commitment to serving Virginia’s diverse population,” said Teri Morgan, the Board’s Executive Director.

BISSWVA Executive Director Jodi Judge said, “The funding and partnership with the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities will fully allow Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia (BISSWVA) to initiate and develop our new social and volunteer-based program: Providing a Link for Survivors (PALS). The partnership with VBPD is also unique in the development of a specialized focus that is typically very under-recognized for brain injury survivors.”

“PALS is a program designed to create a relationship between a community volunteer and an adult brain injury survivor,” she continued. “We are very excited for this unique opportunity.”

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**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awards \$41,000 to Children’s Assistive Technology Service to develop self-determination skills in young children with a developmental disability and empower the family to better meet the needs of their child**

**Richmond, Va.** – The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) is pleased to announce that it has awarded a grant of \$41,000 to Children’s Assistive Technology Service (C.A.T.S.) to develop self-determination skills in young child with a developmental disability and empower the family to better meet the needs of their child.

C.A.T.S, in cooperation with Emory & Henry College’s School of Health Sciences, will work with early intervention programs administered by the community services boards in southwest Virginia to provide them with assistive technology devices and technical assistance to support the development of infants and toddlers and their families.

“The Board is excited to work with Children’s Assistive Technology Service to support the assistive technology needs of the infants and toddlers in southwest Virginia,” said Teri Morgan, the Board’s Executive Director.

Children’s Assistive Technology Service’s Interim Executive Director John Naples said, “The program being funded will help fill a need in southwest Virginia to assist families with providing their child the mobility, positioning, and other forms of assistive technologies necessary to meet the unique needs of their individual child.”

“This project implementation will serve as another tool for Early Intervention programs and families to have equipment readily available that could impact children with disabilities’ educational needs and future productivity goals,” he continued. “C.A.T.S. is truly thankful for the opportunity to enhance the lives of children with disabilities in the southwest Virginia area.”

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**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awards \$50,000 to the Arc of Virginia to build the capacity of self-advocates as leaders through grassroots expansion of the membership and leadership of the ALLY Alliance**

**Richmond, Va.** – The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) is pleased to announce that it has awarded a grant of \$50,000 to the Arc of Virginia to build the capacity of self-advocates in Virginia as leaders in the DD Advocacy Movement through grassroots expansion of the membership and leadership of the ALLY Alliance. The grantee will be providing advocacy skills training to local self-advocates, as well as individualized coaching and experiential leadership training for liaisons.

“The Board is delighted to again be collaborating with the Arc of Virginia following their previous grant project, which allowed them to increase the availability of inclusive supports for people with developmental and other disabilities across the Commonwealth,” said Teri Morgan, the Board’s Executive Director.

The Arc of Virginia’s Executive Director Tonya Milling said, “The importance of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities leading the movement to shape the future of supports and services in Virginia can’t be overstated, and Virginia has made significant progress in this area thanks to investments by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.”

“This new investment by VBPD will focus development in the local self-advocacy groups throughout the state,” she continued. “...attracting new members, building advocacy skills and increasing the public influence of people with disabilities.”

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**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awards \$111,364 to Virginia Commonwealth University to build the capacity of Community Based Organizations, through developing and implementing a pilot Training program on Inclusion, Diversity and Equity**

**Richmond, Va.** – The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) is pleased to announce that it has awarded a grant of \$111,364 to Virginia Commonwealth University to build the capacity of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Virginia through developing and implementing a pilot foundational training curriculum on inclusion, diversity and equity (TIDE) and accompanying toolkit.

The program will be utilized by CBOs serving people with disabilities that includes assessments and reflective dialogue, as well as training to expand the knowledge and emotional intelligence of CBO staff, thereby increasing the quality of services and supports for Virginians with developmental and other disabilities.

“The Board is delighted to be collaborating once again with VCU following a recent grant project that translated into American Sign Language a handbook for individuals with disabilities about reporting abuse and how to obtain a protective order,” said Teri Morgan, the Board’s Executive Director. “We appreciate the Partnership’s and VCU’s ongoing commitment to serving our Commonwealth’s diverse citizens.”

VCU’s Assistant Director of Strategic Initiatives Dana Yarbrough said, “The Partnership for People with Disabilities at VCU is pleased to receive a grant from the VBPD to develop the TIDE project to increase the quality of services and supports for Virginians with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have intersecting cultural, ethnic and social identities.”

Ms. Yarbrough further stated, “It is vitally important that provider staff understand the potential for biases, the cycle of prejudice, and resulting service inequities when cultural differences exist between people with IDD (and families) and the staff who support them.”

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