

Disability Advocates

Increasing Employment for People with Disabilities



For people with disabilities, it is much harder to find employment than it is for everyone else.

Currently, employers who hire people with disabilities do so mostly out of a charitable or social justice motivation. Disability Advocates of Kent County (DAKC) wants to move this motivation away from charity and focus instead on the value and skills that people with disabilities can bring. Through the development of a pilot project, called Best Highest Use, DAKC is creating a new approach. This approach supports people with disabilities in obtaining employment that embraces their full potential and skill set.

Best Highest Use is being designed to provide employers with candidates that meet their skill requirements **and** who are people with disabilities. Through a website called Hearts and Smarts, companies will be able to post their employment opportunities. Employment candidates with disabilities from local colleges, job placement firms, nonprofit job development organizations, and the general public will register on the site and post their skills and assets. Through this portal, people with disabilities will have the opportunity to showcase their skills and talents on a level playing field and employers will hire people with disabilities for their skills, attributes and experience.

The results from this development phase will be used to further structure a full pilot program, and lead to a three year implementation. Over the next five years, DAKC projects that a total of 1,500 job placements will occur involving over 700 employers.

This is Community Leadership

Through a grant to support development of the Best Highest Use program, people with disabilities will experience an **increased employment rate**. Employment rate is one of the primary measures of our community's **economic prosperity**.

Grant Facts

Organization: Disability Advocates of Kent County

Grant amount: \$50,000

Grant Purpose: To implement a workforce development program that provides employers with job candidates who meet their needs and whom are people with disabilities.

Web site: www.dakc.us

Started: 1993

Location: 3600 Camelot Drive SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Target Population: Working aged adults with disabilities, including those unemployed and underemployed.

Area served: Kent County

Ways You Can Help

To help ensure the success of this grant you may give to address any of the needs listed below. Please call Disability Advocates at 616.949.1100 ext. 237 to learn more.

- **Social media coordinator and web developer**, half-time - \$15,000
- **Marketing brochures and materials** - \$5,000
- **Booth/sponsorship fees** at recruiting events - \$100 to 500 per event

*To ensure the Community Foundation can make grants like this one in the future, please consider a gift to the **Fund for Economic Prosperity**. Please call 616.454.1751 to learn the benefits of Community Foundation giving and how gifts can be made.*



Grand Rapids

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185 Oakes SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
(616) 454.1751

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