On February 19, our first annual fashion show fundraiser FashionAbility was held at Ball Conference Center in Olathe. We worked hard for months preparing for the event – gathering auction items, clothing our models, securing caterers, a DJ/auctioneer, an Emcee – and then we held our breath. Would our community really come out and support Inclusion Connections? Boy, did they ever! There was not an empty seat in the house, and we couldn’t have been more pleased!

Shoutout to our Emcee, Jennifer Bertrand, HGTV Design Star winner, who enthusiastically hosted the stage and introduced our fabulous models. What made this fashion show so unique was the fact that our members with developmental disabilities modeled along with our peer mentors – it was a beautiful and truly inclusive show! We are very grateful to Dillard’s, Men’s Wearhouse and Camille La Vie for the trendy clothing. DJ/Auctioneer Jeff Holmes created a lively atmosphere for the show, and really made our Live Auction a resounding success. We had an abundance of Silent Auction items – something for everyone! Thank you everyone who bid on (and hopefully won!) a wonderful item.

One of the most touching moments of the evening was the Fund a Need for our Summer Camp. We were completely blown away by the sheer number of bid cards that were raised by our supporters who feel the need of our kids. Thank you for every dollar you bid (more than $1,500!) – which guarantees this Camp will be even bigger and better than last year’s!

Finally, thank you to our generous sponsors who helped make this event possible: KVC, Covenant Consulting LLC, Burdiss Letter Shop, David Cobb, DDS, Alletta Walton, Sharron Crawford and Merit Bank.

Plans for FashionAbility 2016 are now in the works. We are in need of committee members to ensure this event grows and flourishes, so please contact Debbie Horn if you’d like to participate on a committee. You can see pics of the event on the website ICkc.org. As soon as we have a date, we will let you know so you can make plans to attend next year!
Thank you to

Royals Charities

We recently had the good fortune to be granted $5,000 from Royals Charities – many thanks to that wonderful organization and kudos to their fantastic season! The funds were awarded for equipment for our Activity Center, so we shopped ‘til we dropped, comparing prices and bargaining deals with local stores. We purchased round folding tables and chairs, along with movable racks so we can move everything out of the way for activities which require open space, such as fitness classes and line dancing. We purchased a Wii system, a popcorn machine, and 36” and 60” televisions which will be great for viewing movies, sporting events and fitness and educational DVDs. Special thanks to Olathe Best Buy for helping us stretch our dollars! We can’t wait to get our new Activity Center open with all this great equipment – and just in time for Summer Camp 2015!

NEW LOCATION for Activity Center

Although we will miss many things about our Great Mall space, we are HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE that we have secured a new space AND a wonderful new space partner! Our new address is 2083 E. Santa Fe in Olathe – we share a parking lot with Sheridan’s Unforked, which now has a full menu, Little Caesars Pizza, Payless Discount Foods, a karate studio, a cookie store, Mexican bakery and jazercise! The new location is still close to the highway and a little more centrally located for our friends in Overland Park and Blue Valley.

Our new Activity Center offers lots of opportunities for us. We have agreed to share the space with another local nonprofit, Crosstown, which will be serving the local teen crowd with open mic nights, local bands, and a place to hang out together. They will be sharing our rent cost which is great for IC (this is an increasing national trend for nonprofits). We are planning a sleek industrial theme, and need volunteers to help make this place our own. We can get in April 1st, and need to tear out the carpet, stain the concrete floor, paint, redo the bathroom, hang our new tv’s and install our sound system. We have about half the square footage as in the Mall, which makes this decorating job a lot more doable! Our needs include a refrigerator, an electric stove, a microwave, commercial blender to make smoothies and a phone with an answering machine. Please call Debbie Horn at 913-221-6717 if you can donate these items or would like to help get our space in order.

Focus on FITNESS

Our most recent session of KAT Tae Kwon Do classes introduced a new leader, Master Shim, who is an amazing teacher with high expectations for our kids. She is helping our students with discipline, focus, strength and confidence, and they are responding by working hard and making excellent progress. On April 25 at 9 a.m., many of these students will participate in Belt Testing, and you are welcome to come see what they have been learning. If you’re an IC member or peer who would be interested in a fun, popular way to get fit, we are holding another series of classes beginning May 2!

Olathe South is CONNECTED

Olathe South High School has set a high mark for successful connections between peers and individuals with disabilities! This Spring OSHS Student Council chose Inclusion Connections to be the recipient of receipts from its WPA dance. The student body also chose two of our members as their WPA King and Princess: Matthew Horn and Rachel Mast – what an honor! The school produced a video which featured some of our members and peers speaking about erasing the “R word”. We couldn’t be more pleased that our peers are advocating for those with disabilities in their community! It should also be noted that students from several High Schools asked IC members to be their dates at their spring dances – inclusion just makes the world a nicer place to live for everybody!
Stacking to **VICTORY**

The members of IC’s Stacking Club, led by Kathy Zink, continue to improve their hand eye coordination skills while having fun. Pictured are team members Ryan Prothe, Rachel Zink, Larry Noah Angel, and Cody Partrich, who competed in a local tournament in February. Our members enjoy attending competitions, and are gearing up for a tournament on April 25 at Crown Center. If you are interested in joining the IC Stackers, please contact Kathy Zink or Debbie Horn. New practices begin April 1.

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**PEER SPOTLIGHT:**

**Paige Engle**

**Q:** You are one of Inclusion Connections’ most valuable peer mentors. Tell us a little about why you became involved with IC and why volunteering is so important for teens.

**A:** I heard about Inclusion Connections through my school’s Leadership Program. After my first time volunteering, I completely fell in love with it! I’ve always had a special place in my heart for kids with disabilities, but had never gotten the opportunity to connect and build relationships. Hanging out with the members never fails to be the highlight of my week. I’m so thankful for this organization and all of the good it has brought to my life over this past year. I think it’s extremely important for teens to volunteer. In serving others, you’re not only making someone else feel good, but you’ll feel good about doing it, too. Volunteering is the best reality check teenagers can give themselves! Volunteering always reminds me how grateful I am for everything I have.

**Q:** What are some of the favorite things you do at IC and what are you looking forward to most during Summer Camp 2015?

**A:** My favorite part is always getting to hang out with the members, but some of my favorite activities from last summer were going to the parks, seeing movies, and bowling. I can’t wait for Summer Camp 2015!!

**Q:** Have you made a special bond(s) with any of our members through IC?

**A:** It’s impossible to go to Inclusion and not leave with a new friend! I’ve made a lot of friendships with the members including Matt Horn. Matt is constantly smiling and brings so much joy to my day every time I see him. I’ve also created a lot of friendships with the peers that attend Inclusion’s activities and events. Two friends that have specifically touched my heart are Maddy Pittman and Emma Thompson.

**Q:** What are your plans for the fall?

**A:** I plan to attend Kansas State University to major in Public Relations and minor in leadership with a focus on non-profit.

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**How You Can Invest in Inclusion Connections:**

- Become a Monthly donor or give a one-time donation at ICkc.org
- Ask your employer to match your donation
- Teach a class using your gifts, hobbies, talents
- Host a fundraiser – at work or in your neighborhood – we’ll show you how!
- Choose Inclusion Connections as your charity for Amazon Smile

Email us at info@ICkc.org today and we’ll help you invest in our kids’ future!

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**Family-Friendly Theater**

Inclusion Connections is pleased to partner with Martin City Melodrama for the original production of “The Code of the West, or The Good, The Bad & The Funny”! This is a wonderful opportunity for our members to hone their acting skills alongside professional actors and actresses in this rollicking, laugh-filled show. The play will be held at MCM at the Great Mall in April.
SUMMER CAMP 2015

Monday ’Trips, Tuesday/Thursday Activities, and Friday in the Parks. Yes, summer is right around the corner and it’s time to put Inclusion Connections’ 8 week Summer Camp on your schedule. We will spend time at our Activity Center as well as get out and about into the community for some great activities. Last year we rode horses, went swimming, made crafts, prepared delicious snacks, went to movies, visited several local parks and attractions, and got active – wow! Watch for more information about dates and times at ICkc.org, then be sure to REGISTER early. We had a full camp last summer and you don’t want to miss out on all the fun!

Volunteer for IC — IT’S FUN!

Have you always wanted to donate some time to a local charity but you just didn’t know how to get connected? Volunteering at IC is a positive experience and we have lots of committees that need your help. We need help with Event Coordinating (getting information out to our members and the public, getting what’s needed to hold the event, etc.). We also need help with our Volunteer recruitment and development. There are plenty of ways to help IC.

Check us out at ICkc.org and send us an email - we’ll match you up with your interests.