**Bridges**

**Did you know...**

- Over 4% of people have a cognitive disability? In a city the size of Olathe, that translates to approximately 6,000 individuals.
- After age 18 the government allots people with intellectual disabilities only $721 per month to cover all their living expenses?
- People with disabilities remain on the job longer and maintain better levels of attendance than those without disabilities?

**Our mission** is to strengthen the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities by creating opportunities for community involvement, access to meaningful employment and better options for independent living.

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This past year IC offered cooking classes, a drama program which performed a play, horseback riding, a trip to Sea Life, a fantastic 8-week Summer Camp, Tae Kwon Do lessons and more – adding up to over 300 hours of programming. We provided our families with free tickets to Starlight Theatre performances, American League Champions Kansas City Royals’ games, WWE events and the Winter Jam 2014 concert. IC received the Inclusion Award from the City of Olathe, and has been recognized several times at City Council meetings for the impact we are having on our community. We have recruited more than 160 Peer Mentors from area High Schools to participate in our programming. In the spring we held our first Bowlathon, a cookout at Rawhide Harley-Davidson, and a memorable night hosting a Red Skelton impersonator. Moms enjoyed our Mother’s Day Banquet where our members served them for a change! This summer IC brought awareness to our cause with a booth at the Great American Balloon Fest at the Kansas Speedway and welcomed the PUSH America cross-country cyclists at our Activity Center at the Great Mall. Grant money was awarded to us by UPS, Hannah & Friends, Overland Park South Rotary and Kohl’s. Wonderful partnerships have been formed with Hy-Vee, Chaps Equestrian, College Church of the Nazarene and KAT Tae Kwon Do.

So, what is in store for 2015?? We are looking forward to FashionAbility on February 19 where our members will walk the runway in an exciting Fashion Show and attendees will have the opportunity to bid on a variety of live and silent auction items. Rawhide Harley-Davidson plans to do a charity ride for IC, and a Zumbathon is in the works as well. On April 10, our very first original production in partnership with Martin City Melodrama will star our members alongside a cast of local middle and high school actors. We are working on an employment program, planning a fun-filled Summer Camp 2015, and are talking with the community about a future independent living program. IC promises to never sit still!
Why does our community need Inclusion Connections? Times are changing. We are about to graduate a generation of kids with Developmental Disabilities who have been fully included in the classroom. No longer are they at separate schools or down the hall in “that” room. Our members have experienced many real life situations and have expectations like none before them. They see themselves as typical teens and want the same things as their siblings and peers: friendships, an active social life, meaningful jobs and living on their own.

While kids with disabilities are included in school and enjoy classroom relationships with their peers, there is a disconnect when it comes to after school friendships and summer activities. Kids with disabilities remain lonely and isolated, desperate to make connections with people their own age and get out of the house. My own son, Matthew constantly asks “what about me?” as he sees his brothers go out the door or hears his friends at school make plans. It can’t be left only to the families to answer this question. We as a community need to ask ourselves “what can we do to help?”

Inclusion Connections is working closely with local middle and high school students in our Peer Mentorship Program to encourage teens to engage more after school and during the summer. We provide a safe, fun and encouraging setting where these relationships can be formed and enjoyed. We help the peers get over any fears they have and to see the strengths and gifts our members have. All the activities and classes at IC are attended by our members and same age peers!

We are embarking on a jobs program in 2015 in which we will provide skills assessment and training for our members, advocate for hiring, and explore the feasibility of creating a small/micro business. We are already in the process of establishing plans for independent living options in the JoCo area, talking with families to determine what model best suits our community and exploring what other communities are already doing.

We believe it is time our community offered more opportunities to our individuals with disabilities. Inclusion Connections offers real solutions – but we can’t do this alone. We need your support!

Message from Executive Director Debbie Horn

THANKS!

Thank you to all our amazing friends, parents, community members, businesses, local foundations and neighborhoods for supporting Inclusion Connections during our first full year of activities. We are continually amazed by the generosity and support we receive and feel incredibly blessed to be serving the wonderful kids in our community.

Myth The lives of people with disabilities are totally different than the lives of people without disabilities.
Fact People with disabilities go to school, get married, work, do laundry, grocery shop, volunteer, laugh, cry, pay taxes, get angry, vote, plan and dream like everyone else.

Does IC only help people with disabilities?
No! IC has recruited over 160 middle and high school aged students as volunteer Peer Mentors. We have trained them to advocate and give back to their community, to be giving and think of someone in need. By serving as Peer Mentors, these teens develop leadership skills, serve on committees and participate in fundraising activities.
KUDOS!

Patrick Chapman recently attained the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout! Patrick started his scouting career in 2006 as a Webelo in 4th grade in pack 3385 and has been on many memorable campouts with Troop 10 including biking the Katie Trail and camping in the Rain Forest at the Omaha Zoo. Patrick has served as an instructor, a librarian, and a Den Chief in Troop 10 and has earned 39 merit badges. He attended Camp Bartle for six years and is a Fire Builder in the tribe of Mic-o-Say. He is a brotherhood member of Order of the Arrow (OA) and has served as a member of the ceremonial team.

Patrick's Eagle Project involved planning, designing, and coordinating the construction of three training bridges for an equine therapeutic riding center, Sugar Creek Equinapy, in Harrisonville, MO. The bridges are used by the students in the arena and on a sensory trail to simulate crossing a wooden plank bridge. Congratulations, Patrick, IC is proud to call you one of our own!

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!

A special thank you to Jimmy and Sarah Clayton!

With their help we were chosen as the beneficiary for the Parkhurst neighborhood Oktoberfest fundraiser. This special neighborhood in Lenexa comes together every year to get to know one another, have fun and raise money for charity. A live and silent auction were held at the event and they raised just over $12,000 – all for IC!
Inclusion Connections – Annual Fundraiser

FashionAbility 2015

Thursday – February 19th

5:30 pm
Ball Conference Center, Olathe
Fashion Show and Auction
Great Food, Cash Bar

Visit ICkc.org to purchase tickets or to be an Event Sponsor