



Office of Administration  
GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY  
301 West High Street, Room 620 \* Post Office Box 1668  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Michael L. Parson  
Governor  
Yvonne Wright  
Chair  
Claudia Browner  
Executive Director

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Contact: Claudia Browner, (573) 751-0880  
[Claudia.browner@oa.mo.gov](mailto:Claudia.browner@oa.mo.gov)

## Governor's Council on Disability Names Annual Award Winners

*Winners exemplify standards of excellence in enhancing life for individuals living with disabilities*

JEFFERSON CITY, MO - The [Governor's Council on Disability](#) (GCD) has selected the award winner and honorable mention of the **28th Annual Inclusion Award** and the **7th Annual Youth Leadership Award**.

The Inclusion Award and one Honorable Mention are presented annually to recognize private and public employers, individuals, and organizations that have successfully included people with disabilities in education, employment, housing, leisure activities, and website accessibility. Individuals are also encouraged to nominate state and local government divisions or employees they truly feel excel in inclusive practices.

The annual Youth Leadership Award and one Honorable Mention are presented to recognize an outstanding Missouri youth (age 16-26) with a disability that has demonstrated exemplary leadership by making a difference in their community.

### **2019 Inclusion Award winner: Artists First, St. Louis**

Artists First is an inclusive art studio empowering artists of all abilities and bringing art to the community as a means of integration, healing, support and finding common ground. Through innovative art programs, Artists First supports more than 225 individuals and connects them to the resources they need to grow socially, intellectually, and emotionally through creative self-expression. Artist First's participation in over 45 community events in 2019 provided opportunities for genuine community involvement and allowed artists with disabilities to be integrated into the art community and labor market.

### **Honorable Mention: BCI Skills Center, St. Peters**

Boone Center, Inc. established BCI Skills Center in January 2019 as a first-of-its-kind vocational training facility for people with disabilities. BCI Skills Center partners with local businesses that embrace diversity to create custom programs to prepare individuals living with disabilities for

*"Promoting community living and inclusion"*

573-751-2600 \* 800-877-8249 \* 573-526-4109 (fax) \* [disability.mo.gov](http://disability.mo.gov) \* [gcd@oa.mo.gov](mailto:gcd@oa.mo.gov)

employment. Upon graduation, students move directly into the integrated workforce and earn competitive wages.

**2019 Youth Leadership Award winner: Annie Donnell**

A recent graduate of Belmont University in Nashville, Annie Donnell has worked with the Starkloff Disability Institute's Dream Big program, and is currently a paid intern at Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments. Annie serves as a junior board member and volunteer for the St. Louis Recreation Development Group, assisting with fundraising efforts for an inclusive, accessible amusement park. Annie completed the 2019 New York City Marathon as part of the Achilles International team. She established and serves as president of the St. Louis Chapter of Achilles International, an organization where runners with disabilities and volunteers come together to train in an environment of support and community.

**Honorable Mention: Dylan Farmer**

Dylan Farmer is a 2015 alum of the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum and earned a bachelor's degree in history from Maryville University in 2019. During his time at Maryville University, he participated in the ABLE (Abolish Barriers to Leadership and Employment) advocacy group and served on the Accessibility Committee. He got involved with Starkloff Disability Institute's (SDI) Dream Big youth employment initiative and served as a student intern at SDI. He volunteered for the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis and was a team leader for Maryville Reaches Out. Dylan was proud to announce that he is a full-time employee with the National Archives and Records Administration.

The awards will be presented to the winners on March 31, 2020 at the Power Up Assistive Technology conference in Columbia.

For more information on the Inclusion Award, go [here](#). For more information on the Youth Leadership Award, go [here](#).

For additional information, please contact the GCD at 573-751-2600 or via e-mail at [gcd@oa.mo.gov](mailto:gcd@oa.mo.gov).

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