



ReachOut e-Diversity News

An Electronic Publication of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council

Important Information This Month:

1. A Voice for the Voiceless
2. The Divas With Disabilities Project
3. Tips for Recruiting People of Color
4. Story Slam

April 2021 Edition | Volume 16, Issue 2

Read, Pass on to Friends,
Family Members, Colleagues
& Constituents



Don't
Miss an
Issue!

It is the policy of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council to use person-first language in items written by staff. Items reprinted or quoted exactly as they originally appear may not reflect this policy.

FOCUS: Stories are Powerful

Introduction

This month's newsletter features personal and organizational stories. They demonstrate the power of stories.

Storytelling frees you from your problems, challenges, disappointments, struggles.

Stories provide a lens to view other people and their perspectives.

Story tellers challenge you to think about different questions. According to Robert McKee

“storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world.”

At the end of each story, you are invited to share your story. There are opportunities to get your story featured in the newsletter and win prizes. Do not be the best kept secret.



SHARE your story and make a difference in someone's life and/or organization.

A Voice for the Voiceless

Dr. Carolyn Peters uses her voice to speak for individuals with disabilities who cannot speak for themselves. She speaks up and advocates for their rights so that they are treated fairly. She speaks out to ensure they have access to the opportunities that will help them become independent, live productive, and fruitful lives. Not surprisingly, Dr. Carolyn Peters is the voice that leads the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council.

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The Divas With Disabilities Project



“Reshaping what disability looks like for Black and Brown women and girls with physical disabilities.”

A Diva is an “empowered Black and Brown women and girls with physical disabilities”.

A **Diva** is defined as ***Dynamic, Illuminating, Victorious, Achieving Sister***. The phrase means showing up unapologetically because Divas, show up in their space authentically, boldly and proudly ----- disabilities and all.

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Tips for Recruiting People of Color

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) issued a Resolution that resolved that the Multicultural Affairs Committee (MAC) be directed to develop and implement a policy encouraging African-Americans and other people of color to become involved in the leadership of the organization.

An essential part of the policy was to be a mentoring program designed to seek out and elevate African-Americans and other people of color into leadership positions, including a provision for recruitment of members from the population of African-Americans and other people of color who are blind or have low vision.



**American Council
of the Blind**

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ReachOut e-Diversity Story Slam

In our first Story Slam, ReachOut e-Diversity News presents a collection of stories being told by individuals representing un/underserved populations with disabilities.

The storytellers will inspire, empower, and enlighten you about a variety of issues impacting us all.

Our Slam starts and ends with Ohioans, who some of you may recognize.

[READ MORE-](#)

Did You Know?

Telling stories is one of the most powerful means that leaders have to influence, teach, and inspire. What makes storytelling so effective for learning? For starters, storytelling forges connections among people, and between people and ideas. Stories convey the culture, history, and values that unite people.



SHARE your story and make a difference in someone's life and/or organization.



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A Voice for the Voiceless

Dr. Carolyn Peters

Chair, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

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Dr. Carolyn Peters

ABOUT Dr. Carolyn Peters

While Dr. Carolyn Peters currently resides in Dayton, Ohio, her roots can be traced to Monroe, Georgia. In fact, it was on a trip home that she began experiencing loss of vision resulting in two surgeries and ultimately being determined legally blind. During this same time, she lost her cheerleader, encourager, supporter, caregiver, her beloved mother. Rather than letting the challenges she faced stymie her, Dr. Peters, with the help of her social work colleagues, developed a plan and received services from the Ohio State Rehabilitation Commission (now known as Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities), where she received mobility and technology training. Later, she retired from her employment as a Social Worker/Medical Social Worker, enrolled in Tabernacle Institute, and obtained her Doctorate in Theology. Using her doctoral research, Dr. Peters published her first book "Knowing When to Go" based on Ruth, a book in the Bible. It was through the introduction to a local chapter of the National Federation of the Blind that Dr. Peters became involved and assumed leadership positions in local, state, and national organizations. These experiences affirmed for her that she could do anything she put her mind to and that has been the message that she voices as she mentors and inspires others. Her abilities have been recognized by Ohio's Governor John Kasich who appointed her to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council, currently serving in her second term as Chair. Faith is an integral part of Dr. Peters' life. She is an active member of the College Hill Community Church, where she serves as a lay member and ruling elder.

Dr. Carolyn Peters' life epitomizes a commitment to transforming the lives of individuals with disabilities and communities. She represents the embodiment of hope, love, determination, and a servant's heart.

"You can do anything you set your mind to do."



Tell Us about the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Council (OOD)



The purpose of the OOD Council is to provide feedback to OOD on the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. The VR program, through OOD's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) and Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI), assists individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

The ODD Council consists of 16 members. The makeup of the Council follows criteria established by the federal government, including that a majority of the members on the Council have a disability. Other seats on the Council include an individual who has applied for or received vocational rehabilitation services; an individual who represents community rehabilitation program service providers; an individual who represents an organization that advocates on behalf of individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, or mental abilities; and four representatives of business, industry, and labor. Members are appointed by the Governor.

The current priorities of the OOD Council include providing input into OOD's Vocational Rehabilitation program policies. We have made recommendations on informed choice, confidentiality, administrative rule language.

During the pandemic, the OOD Council meetings have been scheduled virtually on a quarterly basis. The OOD Council's subcommittee meetings meet on an as needed basis and are also scheduled virtually.



What are OOD's outreach efforts to ensure people with disabilities from un/underserved populations receive the services they need?



The OOD Council members participate in OOD's job fairs, provide input to the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, and Ohio Combined State plan to ensure all individuals with disabilities are represented. Council members presence in Ohio's 88 counties gives us personal insight into the needs of the individuals with disabilities who reside in these communities. For example, in our rural communities, we are aware of the transportation restraints and limited support and employment opportunities which can have a potentially long-term consequence of losing independence, resulting in institutional placements. This heightens the need for innovative, non-traditional solutions in these communities. On the other hand, it was invigorating to hear the hope expressed by 300 young people seeking employment in a Cincinnati Focus Group and witness some of them getting hired on the spot. As Ohioans come to understand that you...

“can't count people out because of your personal bias,”

we have seen an increase in employment of individuals with visual impairments.

OOD provides services to eligible individuals with disabilities to assist them to attain and maintain competitive integrated employment. OOD works with adults seeking to enter the workforce or retain a job, and with youth beginning at age 14. OOD has a team of Business Relation Specialists who work through out the state to raise awareness of OOD and out mission with employer partners to promote and support the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Through OOD’s network of employer partners, OOD Business relations Specialists (BRS) identify job opportunities that match job seekers’ skill sets and experience, and also provide services and resources that promote an inclusive and diverse work environment.

In addition, our Independent Living Older Blind program assists older Ohioans who are blind meet their specific needs by providing independent living skills.



Q How can providers of services to people with disabilities who are un/underserved benefit from OOD?

A A video and additional [resources](#) are available to help providers learn about getting started with OOD.

Q How can people with disabilities who are un/underserved and their family members benefit from OOD?

A Individuals with disabilities who want to work can apply for services at <https://oodworks.com/> or call 800-282-4536. In addition, individuals can find more information about OOD at <https://ood.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ood/>

NOTE: This interview was facilitated by Patricia Larkins Hicks, Ph.D., Reach Out e-Diversity Newsletter Grantee, the Outcomes Management Group, LTD



Tell us about how you are using your voice and who is benefiting?

Post your story on ODDC’s Social Media Platforms.



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The Divas With Disabilities Project

“Reshaping what disability looks like for Black and Brown women and girls with physical disabilities.”



Are you a Diva or do you know one?

A Diva is an “empowered Black and Brown women and girls with physical disabilities”. A **Diva** is defined as **Dynamic, Illuminating, Victorious, Achieving Sister**. The phrase means showing up unapologetically because Divas, show up in their space authentically, boldly and proudly ----- disabilities and all.

What is the focus of the Divas With Disabilities Project (DWD)?

The Divas With Disabilities Project, also known as Divas With Disabilities (DWD), started out as a digital movement created to amplify the images of African American women with physical disabilities. It has since evolved into a

network supporting Black and Brown women and girls with physical disabilities by ensuring their identities are fostered in inclusive sources of mass media and popular culture, and their images are not erased from American history.

Who founded the Divas With Disabilities Project?

Dr. Donna R. Walton founded the movement in 2012. She earned her bachelor’s degree in 1979 from American University, a master’s degree in 1985 in Adult Education from Syracuse University, and in 2005, a doctoral degree in Counseling from George Washington University.



Dr. Donna R. Walton

Empowering women of color with disabilities



In addition to founding the DWD Project, Dr. Walton has spent over 20 years in diversity, and disability employment services where she distinguished herself as leader, advocate, and proponent of equal rights for persons with disabilities,

in both public and private sectors, including The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), The United States Department of Labor Office of Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management (OASAM), The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the George Washington University Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education (CRCRE).

Dr Walton has made it her life’s mission to create an unprecedented impact for black women and women of color with disabilities and foster as a hub for thoughtful discussion on issues, self-love, and showing up, unapologetically in all forms of media.

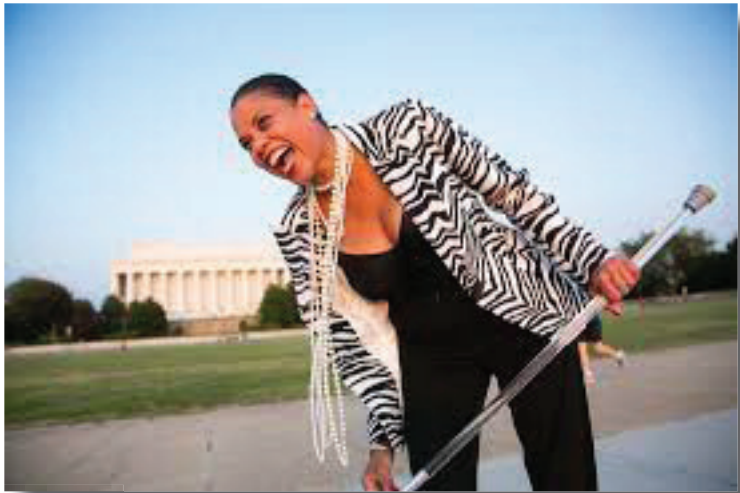
Donna Walton Quotes....

“Triple Jeopardy Syndrome represents how women of color with disabilities are subjected to discrimination based on three characteristics: gender (female), race (African-American), and disability(physical/mental).”

“I’m perfect for the job?” “What’s a leg got to do with it?” (meaning competence)
“I believe it has absolutely nothing at all to do with it.”

**“Divas never dim your lights...
Ask others to wear shades if your wattage is too bright for them.”**

“Do not try to constrain me. Never try to fit me in a box of your own making. For I am more...so much more...”



Have you met a DIVA? Share a your DIVA story on ODDC’s social media platforms.



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Tips for Recruiting People of Color

Compiled by

Ardis Bazyn, American Council of Blind Membership Chair

Background

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) issued Racial Justice Resolution 2020-11 that resolved the Multicultural Affairs Committee (MAC) be directed to develop and implement a policy encouraging African-Americans and other people of color to become involved in the leadership of the organization. An essential part of the policy was to be a mentoring program designed to seek out and elevate African-Americans and other people of color into leadership positions, including a provision for recruitment of members from the population of African-Americans and other people of color who are blind or have low vision.



Recruitment Tips

The following are recruitment ideas generated from a panel discussion of the Multicultural Affairs Committee led by Peggy Garrett, Chair. While these are addressing people of color who are blind or have low vision, the suggestions can be modified to address any type of disability.



“Have a Conversation”

Listen to each person you meet. You can ask about their ethnicity, how they lost their sight, what they are looking for in the organization, their background, their children, and other interests. After the conversation, embrace them. Ask what they would like to do, such as mentor others. Ask them to invite other new people and find out what they might bring to the chapter or organization.

“Use Current Resources”

Think about how to use current resources to reach new people. Reach out to colleges and universities disability service centers. Drop off blindness support information at those offices, and include your local chapter contact information. Sometimes there are specific ethnic group organizations at major universities, like Black Student Alliance. Contact them and ask them to attend one of your meetings. Sororities and fraternities may have blind member services. Reach out to alumni and ask if they know who in their group has a visual impairment. Mention you'd like to introduce yourself so you can familiarize them with ACB and its benefits. It will take time and effort to establish relationships with these organizations.



“Attend Events”

Attend cultural festivals and community events in your local areas. If you feel uncomfortable in new settings, take a friend to enjoy being. Focus on meeting new people. Invite them to your local meetings.



“Social Media, Radio & TV”

Meet people of Facebook or Twitter and have conversations. You may not be able to control the content. Learn how to de-escalate a bad conversation. Instagram is another site to visit. Check TV and radio (local and national) to find different channels. Most will air PSAa and diverse graphics, videos and voices. Most are open and feature diverse audiences.

“Churches and Religious Organizations”

Learn about different religious groups in your community. Know the strengths of your affiliate before you contact people. You want to build relationships with organizations, not just send them materials. In addition to what we offer, find out about activities you may already be involved in or how other members may be involved. There is usually no charge to share information in church bulletins or newsletters. Think about your initial contact as a first date. Think about where we want to go once in. Set goals and timelines for each goal, such as “contact 5 or 10 potential members within the next year.”

“Reach out to Support Groups”

Collaborate on projects and activities with these groups to get your chapter name recognized and meet many with different abilities. Share technology and resources.

“Build Relationships with Professional Organizations”

Partner with professional organizations by offering the organization and affiliates as resources. Check into minority professional organizations such as American Association of Equity and Inclusion. They might need resources for employment services. Look into associations such as museums of black history, black psychologists, black women’s physicians, Alliance of Blind School Educators, National Council of Lawyers, Black Data Processing, National Medical Association, and the National Hispanic Association. (this list of organizations is not inclusive)



“Inclusion Activities”

Once people of color become members, what can you do to make sure their voices are included in the work of the organization? Be intentional about getting new members engaged.

“Mentoring”

Assign new members to a current member who can help them to understand the organization, its structure, resources, activities, and opportunities for engagement. Make sure you introduce the new member to other members so that they can begin to connect and get to know members.

“Committee Assignments”

Find out new members interests, skills, abilities. Introduce them to committees that provide opportunities for them to contribute their skills and abilities to the organizations objectives and goals. Key your eye out to see if they have leadership potential.



Tell your organization’s story about your issues, challenges, successes in recruiting people of color, and engaging them in meaningful ways to share their voices.

Submit your story The Outreach Committee will select a story to be featured in a future newsletter, and you may WIN a prize!



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Our Slam starts and ends with Ohioans, who some of you may recognize.

Get ready to be challenged and discover something new.



Are you OK with yourself?

Shari Cooper | TEDxDayton



Fearless

Let's Talk About Intellectual Disabilities:

Loretta Claiborne at TEDxMidAtlantic



Using your voice is a political choice
Amanda Gorman | TedEd Student Talks | New York New York

No One Wants to Be Left Behind Intersectionality & Disability, ft Keri Gray, the Keri Gray Group



Making a Difference
Tykiah Wright on Montel Williams



Join the Reach Out e-Diversity Story Slam. Video or audio record your story and share on ODCC's Social Media Platform.

Ask your friends to SHARE AND LIKE. The story with the most likes and shares will be featured in the June Newsletter and will WIN a special prize!



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