

PRESS RELEASE

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St. John's Community Services Recognizes March as Intellectual and Developmental Disability Awareness Month

Washington, D.C.: Having recently celebrated its 140th Anniversary, St. John's Community Services (SJCS) remains committed to the belief that people with disabilities are valuable, contributing members of our communities.

With between seven and eight million Americans and their families affected by intellectual and developmental disabilities, we must continue to break down the barriers that stand in the way of full community participation and inclusion. As stated by President Obama during his historic journey to the White House—

"We must build a world free of unnecessary barriers, stereotypes, and discrimination.... policies must be developed, attitudes must be shaped, and buildings and organizations must be designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to get the education they need and live independently as full citizens in their communities."

-- Barack Obama, April 11, 2008

As of February 2009, the unemployment rate of persons with a disability was 14 percent, compared with 8.7 percent for persons with no disability (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). This contrasting picture is even more dramatic when looking at the employment-population ration—nearly 20 percent of persons with a disability are employed, compared with 65 percent for persons with no disability.

In this time of a severe economic downturn, we must not forget those who so often have been omitted from enjoying the same benefits provided to all citizens. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month reminds each of us that together we can build better communities by welcoming all people with all abilities to work, live and contribute alongside their neighbors.

St. John's Community Services, founded in 1868, is a non-profit, non-denominational agency that is dedicated to *advancing community support and opportunities for people living with disabilities*. SJCS provides community living, employment, community participation and educational services to over 400 adults and children in Washington, DC, Virginia, Tennessee and Pennsylvania.

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