

# SLATE Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT (SLATE)



Francis G. Slay, Mayor



ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

**SLATE**  
americanjobcenter

Michael K. Holmes, Executive Director  
[www.stlworks.com](http://www.stlworks.com)

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SLATE Update is a quarterly newsletter produced by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), a unit of St. Louis City helping match area job seekers with businesses through a variety of no-cost services.

The purpose of this publication is to share the progress and outcomes of our many programs, and will be of special interest to legislators, Workforce Investment Board members, vendors, partners, educational institutions, other public agencies or anyone with an interest in workforce development.

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## EMPLOYERS EMBRACE HIRING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Second Annual *Accommodation for Success* event was organized to highlight transformative benefits of hiring persons with disabilities and address the fears about employing these individuals. The two-day event took place on August 9 – 10, 2016, at the St. Louis Community College's Florissant Valley Campus. The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act

**Brandon Morris (left) and Alishea Johnson, from Centene's Diversity and Inclusion Division**

(ADA) marked a pivotal moment for the approximately **50** million adults living with mental or physical disabilities nationwide. The employment rate for individuals with disabilities remains at **20** percent but key stakeholders believe this can be improved dramatically – the overall goal of this event.

This year's *Accommodation for Success* focused on the successes of hiring people with disabilities. New was a Job Fair, a separate event where job seekers with disabilities had the opportunity to network with the employers. Over **100** individuals, representing estimated **70** different businesses, attended



Left: **Andrea Jackson-Jennings, St. Louis County Director Department of Human Services, Steve Stenger, St. Louis County Executive, Michael K. Holmes, SLATE Executive Director, Kelley Bernardi, SLATE Deputy Director**



Above: **Panelists discuss the successes of hiring persons with disabilities.** Below: **At the Job Fair**

For more photos, go to [stlworks.com](http://stlworks.com)

the keynote and panel discussion on August 9. An estimated **229** job seekers, along with **49** participating employers, attended the Job Fair on August 10 – participation beyond everyone’s expectations.

“Employers were enthused by the quality of talent who came,” said **Jim Sahaida**, SLATE’s Equal

Opportunity Officer who helped organize the event. “It was truly phenomenal.” A number of participating businesses were selected by each partnering region and presented with awards for *Inclusive Hiring Practices, Supportive Training Environments* and *Emerging Partnerships*. The awards were generously donated by the Missouri Rehabilitation Association (MRA).

“As I stood in the doorway watching all of the job seekers engaging and conversing with the employers, I couldn’t help but be overcome with emotion. What a beautiful sight!” said **Richard Coleman**, Director of Employment at Center for Head Injury Services.

Initial guests were welcomed by St. Louis County Executive **Steve Stenger**, who acknowledged the tremendous regional effort to improve services for disabled citizens of St. Louis County, St. Louis City, Jefferson and Franklin Counties and St. Charles. Stenger also recognized the hard work and participation of many local agen-

cies: “St. Louis County government is proud to partner with MERS/ Goodwill, Vocational Rehabilitation, Paraquad, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, and others in providing this opportunity.”

Truly regional, the event’s extensive list of honorary guests included **Andrea Jackson-Jennings**, St. Louis County Director of Department of Human Services, **Kevin Whirley**, St. Louis County Workforce Investment Board Chair (Master of Ceremonies), **Yvonne Wright**, Director of Workforce Development at Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation, **Duane Shumate**, Director of Youth Transition & Employment at Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities, and **Michael K. Holmes**, Executive Director at SLATE Missouri Job Center on behalf of St. Louis City.

A keynote speaker, **Andrew Sartorius**, delivered a powerful and inspiring message. An attorney and successful graduate of Starkloff Disability Institute, Sartorius is legally blind and had to learn to advocate for his needs early in his life. Now, he continues to support the disability community, and emphasized personal empowerment: “People with disabilities have to meet halfway for accommodations...Stop hiding behind excuses. Move forward, *be bold*,” he said.

A highlight was the panel discussion of employers and persons with disabilities they had hired. “I want

“It’s really these types of events that pave the way to action and transformation for generations to come.” ~ JENNIFER TRUDEAU, PR ADVOCATE FOR CHALLENGE UNLIMITED

my employers to know that I have a disability but the disability doesn't HAVE ME," said **Brandon Morris**, a quadriplegic, now working at Centene's Diversity and Inclusion Division. His supervisor, **Alishea Johnson**, said: "When people look at Brandon, they see limitations. But he's NOT limited." The panel was moderated and thoughtfully led by an Advocacy Specialist with the St. Louis Regional Office, **Daniel Mellenthin**. Other panelists included **Tim Combs**, Director of HR at Hyatt Regency at the Arch, **Sabina Ademovic**, Executive Steward at Hyatt Regency at the Arch and **Nate Stevens**, Steward at Hyatt Regency at the Arch; **Felisha Clay**, HR Manager at Embassy Suites in St. Charles and **Joseph Hunn**, Complimentary Breakfast Utility at Embassy Suites in St. Charles; **Charlotte Hammond** and **Jennifer Trudeau** from Challenge Unlimited; and **Adriana Borojevic** and **Angell Farley** from Watlow.

The 2016 *Accommodations for Success* event wouldn't be possible without the generous support of Gold-level sponsors - *US Bank, Kiosite, Ranken Technical College, Challenge Unlimited* and *SSM Health*. In-kind contributions were provided by *MERS/Missouri Goodwill* (continental breakfast for both days). *St. Louis Community College* (location), *Job News USA* (advertising), various *Missouri Job Centers*, including SLATE (staffing, career workshops), *Job Corps* (students for parking lots, greeters), and Independent Living Centers such as *Delta Center, Paraquad, Disability Resource Association* and others (volunteers and out-

reach). A *Dress for Success* mobile trailer was parked nearby for use by participants. The outpouring of support was truly heartwarming.

Special recognition goes to the members of the *St. Louis Regional Disability Committee* who selflessly donated their time and energy to making this event such an enormous success. The committee consists of individuals from Missouri Job Centers representing St. Charles County, St. Louis County, Jefferson/Franklin Counties, and St. Louis City, Vocational Rehabilitation, MERS/Goodwill, Department of Mental Health, and Challenge Unlimited. **Jennifer Trudeau**, PR Advocate for Challenge Unlimited, and Disability Committee member, said: "People with disabilities constitute the largest minority group... we've come a long way, but it's really these types of events that pave the way to action and transformation for generations to come."

*Thanks to Jim Sahaida for contributing to this article.*

### SLATE'S HOUSE OF APPRENTICESHIPS

SLATE's Special Projects Department has developed, and is growing a *House of Apprenticeships*. The House is a collection of established ways to enter a number of industries as part of a Registered Apprenticeship - flexible training that offers immediate employment while receiving technical instruction and on-the-job learning.

Traditionally, Registered Apprenticeships are associated with construction-related trades such as plumbing and carpentry. However, this is no longer the case; nation-

wide, a movement is underway to create apprenticeship programs in IT, healthcare and other high-growth industries that offer livable wage entry level positions and career advancement. SLATE's *House of Apprenticeships* has already established program partnerships with *Ranken Technical College* (Advanced Manufacturing and Automotive Technician), *EXPLORE St. Louis* (Conventions and Tourism), *Urban Labs Diagnostic Healthcare Solutions* (Phlebotomy and Laboratory Technician), *LUME Institute* (Early Childhood Education), *BLUE1647* (IT) and *HOSCO SHIFT* (Agricultural). These newer programs supplement SLATE's existing *Building Union Diversity (BUD)* initiative and its numerous building trades.

This is only the start of an extensive planned network of apprenticeship opportunities throughout the St. Louis region - programs with over a dozen additional partners, of all kinds and sizes, are already in



Photo credit: Beth Fiorello

**Gino Austin, Apprenticeship Coordinator, displays the House at SLATE's Ferguson 1000 job fair table**

development. SLATE's Special Projects Manager, **Stacey Fowler**, said "Apprenticeships have always been seen as another word for 'blue-collar', but this is definitely changing. Whatever the interests or abilities a jobseeker has, odds are we can help find an appropriate apprenticeship to match." The advantages of Registered Apprenticeships include wage increases, portable credentials, college credits, and experienced mentors in addition to the ability to 'Earn as you Learn'. For additional information, contact SLATE's Apprenticeship Coordinator, **Gino Austin** at [gaustin@stlworks.com](mailto:gaustin@stlworks.com).

### SLATE PART OF MULTI-CITY TECHHIRE COALITION

In June, the U.S. Department of Labor announced the organizations receiving funds under the *Tech-Hire* grant initiative. Among them was the Compete Midwest H-1B TechHire Partnership consisting of three TechHire communities in the Midwest — Milwaukee, WI, St. Louis, MO and Cincinnati, OH.

Employ Milwaukee Inc., SLATE and the Cincinnati WIB formed a coalition to help connect participants to good jobs, such as Web Developers and Database Administrators, in high-growth sectors including IT and health-

care. Over the next 4 years, the three regions will serve **400** young adults, including **100** low-wage and long-term unemployed jobseekers, while sharing best practices to tackle common challenges.

**Earl Buford**, President and CEO of Employ Milwaukee, has stated, "There is a need for workers trained in technical occupations across industries. We are looking forward to working with our partners to put individuals, especially our young people, on a career pathway in tech fields."

The *TechHire* project follows and builds upon an earlier collaboration between Milwaukee, St. Louis and

Detroit to secure grant funds through the DOL American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI). SLATE Executive Director **Michael K. Holmes** states "It makes sense for Midwestern urban areas with similar issues and populations to work together. We will share effective workforce development tactics, seek out each other's advice, and continue to look for additional partnership opportunities."

## SLATE *in Photos*



Photo credit: Beth Fiorello

### BACK-TO-SCHOOL EXTRAVAGANZA

Over 90 young students received free backpacks and school supplies at the Clinton-Peabody 1st Annual Back-to-School Extravaganza, part of SLHA & SLATE's Jobs Plus Program. *Photo:* sponsor representatives (Aetna, 1st Financial Federal Credit Union, Urban League of Metropolitan Saint Louis, First State Bank Mortgage, Myrtle Hilliard Davis Comprehensive Health Centers, Inc., and Gateway Region YMCA.)



### BON APPÉTIT HIRING EVENT

**Aki Causevic**, SLATE (*left*) assists Bon Appétit Management Co., which provides dining services at Washington University, with recruiting event.

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