



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF CENTER FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION

## PARTNERING FOR WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS

2010

Disability Champions Award was created to recognize companies who demonstrate excellence beyond compliance in their disability employment effort. Since 2010, the awards luncheon for employers and the GKCBLN Volunteer of the Year has been held each October with 100+ attendees, a national speaker and John Holt, Fox4News evening anchor as our emcee.

2011-2015

Actively involved in the Add Us In Consortium through ODEP and UMKC Institute for Human Development. This five-year grant focused on disabled and disadvantaged youth in the urban core. The Urban Career Academy was launched, curriculum developed, classes held and about 180 students completed the program with majority finding employment or pursuing higher education.

2014

Brenda Perkins, Partner/Consultant with Joshua Communications served as president in 2014. During the year, Rob Hoffman joined GKCBLN as Executive Director. Three significant grants were secured that have been instrumental in propelling our efforts and success

Darla Wilkerson joined the leadership team as Project Coordinator for consulting under the grant projects. .

Grant 1 - Three-year grant from Poses Family Foundation (October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2017) was the catalyst for KC@Work initiative and Nexus consortium of service providers.

Grant 2 - Three-year grant from the Missouri Council on Developmental Disabilities provided funding for development of web-based business resource to connect business with qualified candidates with disabilities. Online tool launched in April 2016.

Grant 3 - Multi-year grant through Show-Me-Careers supported community collaborations to assist youth and young adults with disabilities gain work experience and employment.

2016

Teresa Salinas, EEO, Affirmative Action Specialist with Cerner was elected president for 2016-2017. GKCBLN received its 2nd Affiliate of the Year Award and recognized at the annual conference.

2018

In July, National announced a new brand changing from USBLN to Disability:IN, the IN stands for inclusion. Affiliates required to re-brand using same name and city. By December grants ended and ED Rob Hoffman resigned.

2009

Organization was founded through the support of the SHRM-Kansas City chapter and a grant from Kansas Works under the name Business Leadership Network of Greater Kansas City as an affiliate of the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN). Our organization was referred to as GKCBLN. A group of business representative came together to form a group who wanted to do more about hiring and retaining workers with disabilities. Founding president was Keith Wiedenkiller, Chief People Officer of AMC Theaters and he served as president 2009-2013.

2011

Recognized as USBLN Affiliate of the Year at national conference in Orlando Florida for our success in engaging business.

2013-2014

USBLN recognized the scope of accomplishment in the Kansas City area and Keith Wiedenkiller was elected USBLN Board Chair for a two-year term, 2013-2014. In that role, he was the driving force behind the USBLN Disability Equality Index that is now one of the leading benchmarks for organizational effectiveness in disability employment.

2015

David Westbrook, SVP of Strategy & Innovation at Children's Mercy Hospitals served as president in 2015. The first annual Disability Inclusion Summit was held at the BEST Conference Center at KU Edwards Campus in April. This full-day event with national speakers and breakout sessions attracted 135 attendees. In August, the first annual Thought Leaders Luncheon was held at the Federal Reserve Bank. Jill Houghton, Executive Director of USBLN addressed the 50 attendees at this invitation event. The 6th Annual Disability Champions Event was held in October at the Ritz Charles where Dr. Jennifer Arnold, Medical Director at Texas Children's Hospital and star of the television program, Little People, was keynote speaker.

2017

Mary Beth Majors, VP Talent Acquisition with UMB was elected president for 2018 - 2019.



## 2019

January 2019 Darla Wilkerson was appointed Chief Executive Officer. We began the process of re-branding, creating strategies to roll that out to our partners and the community. Our re-brand was announced, and we are now Disability Inclusion of Greater Kansas City (Disability:IN GKC).

In March Brenda Perkins was contracted to be the Business Relations Consultant to continue outreach and communication to current and potential partners.

In June we launched the Kansas City Disability Inclusion Network, meetings being held monthly to connect business, pivotal partners and academic partners together to elevate disability inclusion in Greater Kansas City. For the first time we designed a partnership option for community provider agencies called Pivotal Partners. Educational/Academic partners began attending Network meetings. Also, in June we launched our new job board "Our Ability Connect", a partnership with Disability:IN NY. This is another tool to help connect our business partners with candidates.

## 2020

Kathy Cooper/Enterprise Bank and Trust was elected at Board President to serve 2020 - 2023. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic starting in March, we transitioned all programs/events to virtual. By year end, we provided - 10 webinars, 3 trainings in partnership with Greater KC Chamber and 8 partner company presentations on disability awareness. Hosted Diversity & Inclusion Consortium meetings with Michael Gonzales and co-hosted the Construction Roundtable with Cecily Bee at Performance Contracting Group. First Thing Thursday virtual chats became an integral way to foster connections and conversations. Held all 3 annual signature events virtually, 6th Annual Disability Inclusion Summit, 11th Annual Disability Champion Award and 6th Thought Leaders Event. Added 9 new business and community agency partners, and hired Jill Webb as part-time Social Media Coordinator.

## 2021

In February, Jill Webb was contracted to be the Assistant Director to continue outreach and communication to current and potential community agency partners. We continued to experience significant growth with new corporate partners, community agencies and strategic partnerships across the region. Based on extensive conversations with organizations in Omaha, we expanded our efforts in that area. We held all 3 annual signature events virtually, 7th Annual Thought Leaders Forum, 7th Annual Disability Inclusion Summit and 12th Annual Disability Champion Award.

In September, due to tremendous growth and the need to expand beyond a 4-county area, the decision was made to become our own national organization and disaffiliate from Disability:IN. We launched our new name and new brand -

Center for Disability Inclusion - at our Annual Summit.

That month, Meaghan Walls also joined the leadership team to be the Director of Business Relations in our Nebraska market

## 2022

In April 2022 Andy Traub joined the leadership team as the Director for Corporate Disability Inclusion. In September the Seal of Accomplishment for Leader in Disability Inclusion was announced. This national seal recognizes businesses who accomplish milestones from the disability inclusion process designed by the Center for Disability Inclusion. By year end there was a 24% increase in new business partners, 95% renewal rate, 4,981 attendees in training, training and events have reached employees in 22 countries.