



News Release

For Immediate Release

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City of San José to Host 2nd Annual Disability Awareness Day

SAN JOSE, CA – Thursday, October 8, 2009, the Therapeutic Services Strategic Plan Advisory Board will host the 2nd Annual Disability Awareness Day in the San José City Hall Plaza and Rotunda, at 200 East Santa Clara St. The Advisory Board is an innovative partnership of numerous organizations that serve the needs of persons with disabilities in Santa Clara County. This event grew out of a desire to increase awareness among the general public of the challenges and accomplishments of persons with disabilities. It will showcase the services available to those who support and serve the disabled community.

Disability Awareness Day brings together persons with disabilities, their loved ones, policy makers, advocates, educators, and service providers. The event focuses is on celebrating the abilities of persons with disabilities, sharing community resources, providing a disability-friendly environment, and educating the non-disabled public about the issues and stigma that the disabled community faces every day. For many, it will be the first time that they learn of services that are available to them or have the chance to meet others who share their experiences. The day includes empowering presentations from individuals who have overcome incredible obstacles like Justin Walker, who suffered a debilitating spinal injury while playing baseball at West Valley College. Walker struggled through intensive physical therapy and now plays for a San José Division 3 National Wheelchair basketball team.

Educational Workshops

Beginning at 8:30 a.m. attendees will have the opportunity to participate in workshops that are geared toward persons with disabilities and their care givers. Twelve workshops are being offered by the leading service providers in the county, including Project Hired, San Jose State University, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and licensed psychologists. The workshops will focus on essential life skills ranging from filing taxes with the IRS to tips on applying and interviewing for jobs.

“Last year, attendees commented that the workshops were invaluable. It is a great opportunity for people to learn about programs in the community that they would normally have to search for,” explained Scott Shields, Planning Committee Chair

In addition, there will be a display of art work from individuals with disabilities and well over 40 community based organizations and service providers sharing information about their services and the individuals they serve.

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Constant Challenges Colleagues to Experience Empathy

Councilmember Constant has challenged his colleagues on the City Council and Valley Medical Foundation executive staff members to compete with him in the empathy experience as a good-natured way of creating awareness among policy makers. The three-part empathy experience requires participants to maneuver a wheelchair through an obstacle course and shoot a basketball in the hoop. The final obstacle imitates visual impairment and involves opening a pad lock. "I have done the wheelchair obstacle course a couple of times and feel it has given me an insight, albeit a limited one, into the challenges faced by so many in our community. I want to share this insight with my colleagues through friendly competition," explained Constant.

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