Welcome to the Uniquely Abled Project Newsletter

August 2017

An update as to what has been happening with the Uniquely Abled Project, and plans for the future.

Visit Our Website

The Uniquely Abled Project

The purpose of the Uniquely Abled Project is to
- Shift the societal paradigm from "disabled" to "uniquely abled".
- Provide vocational opportunities to uniquely abled folks by matching their unique abilities to jobs in demand

The UA Project currently has two programs: the Uniquely Abled Jobs (UAJ) program and the Uniquely Abled Academy (UAA) program.

A Possible Cause of 80-90% Unemployment

From five years of working with employing the uniquely abled, we have developed some thoughts about the causes of the unacceptably high un- and under-employment rates among the "disabled". Click here to read an article we recently wrote and hope to get published widely. This article can also serve to introduce people to the Uniquely Abled Project.
The Uniquely Abled Academy Program

The UA Academy program is focused on careers that require specialized training. The approach is to identify the unique abilities of folks with a particular diagnosis, and then match jobs in demand that require those unique abilities. The first career for which training is being provided is CNC (computer numerically controlled) manufacturing machine operator for those diagnosed with high functioning autism.

Naming and PR Guidelines

To promote the public associating the various UAAs with each other (so past successes are relevant for new UAAs), Naming and PR Guidelines for Uniquely Abled Academies has been published. Click here for the Guidelines.

UAA Replication Guidebook

The first version of the UAA Replication Guidebook has been released. The 110 page Guidebook is a compendium of lessons learned and will be a major source of information for those wanting to establish a UAA. It is already undergoing some rewrite to incorporate new information. As each group is formed to create a UAA, the Replication Guidebook will be provided to them.

New Uniquely Abled Academies

College of the Canyons (Santa Clarita, CA)

We are delighted to announce that the first Project Team meeting for a Uniquely Abled CNC Academy at the College of the Canyons (Santa Clarita, CA) took place on July 25. 33 people attended, all the various teams needed to make the UAA a success were populated, and monthly meetings were scheduled. The target start date for the first class is February 2018.

If you are interested in being on the UAA @ CoC Project Team or want to be informed when the UAA @ CoC is accepting applications, contact Michael Bastine at michael.bastine@canyons.edu.

South Bay, CA

We anticipate a third (and maybe a fourth) UAA will be implemented in the South Bay area (South of Los Angeles).

Elsewhere
We are receiving inquiries from all over the country. Locations in which interest in establishing a UAA has been expressed include:

- Orange County, CA
- Riverside, CA
- Sacramento, CA
- Oxnard, CA
- Plymouth, MA
- Tacoma/Bremerton, WA
- Seattle, WA

If you are interested in starting a UAA in your area, contact Ivan at IRosenberg@UniquelyAbledProject.org.

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**Results from the UAA at Glendale Community College**

The first training of the Uniquely Abled CNC Academy at Glendale CC took place summer 2016 (Cohort 1).

Of the 13 graduates, two decided to pursue other career paths. All of the remaining 11 have been placed in full-time employment, for a 100% placement! As we reported in the last issue, reaction of the employers has been estatic. We now have data that those with high functioning autism not only can learn to operate CNC machines, but their unique abilities enable them to operate at an extraordinary high level.

Cohort 2 just graduated, and is available for employment. Potential employers are encouraged to contact Marcel Becker, Employment Coordinator at DOR Glendale Branch, (818) 551-2149 or Marcel.Becker@dor.ca.gov.

Applications are now being received for Cohort 3 (see below).

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**Applications Open for GCC UAA Cohort 3**

Applications are now being accepted for Cohort 3 of the GCC UA Academy.

- Dates of program are September 18 - December 13, 2017
- Monday-Thursday, 8am - 3:15pm
- To teach those with high functioning autism to be entry-level CNC machinists.
- Includes CNC programming, setup, and operation and job readiness skills training
For those who qualify, most or all of the costs may be covered. See complete application procedure at: [http://uniquelyabledproject.org/applying-to-the-gcc-uniquely-abled-academy/](http://uniquelyabledproject.org/applying-to-the-gcc-uniquely-abled-academy/)

[Click here](http://uniquelyabledproject.org/applying-to-the-gcc-uniquely-abled-academy/) for an invitation to the Graduation & Open House taking place on August 9. Please distribute to your contacts and refer potential students.

[Click here](http://uniquelyabledproject.org/applying-to-the-gcc-uniquely-abled-academy/) for a video about the program.

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**The Uniquely Abled Jobs Program**

The UA Jobs program is focused on jobs that do not need specialized training, generally jobs with a high degree of repetition such as electronic assembly, deburring, buffing, filing, scanning, organizing, inventory management, etc.

To date there have been 18 job placements in this program. The major insights have been:

- Most organizations do not realize how many repetitive or simple jobs they have
- People do not realize that there is a population for which such jobs are highly desirable.
- Having these jobs performed can make a major difference to the morale and productivity of the organization.

Employers interested in hiring uniquely abled folks under the UA Jobs program can contact [Brian Larson](mailto:brianlarson@ecf.org) at the Exceptional Children’s Foundation (ECF). If the employer is not in ECF’s service area, we will find the appropriate agency for that employer.

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**The Uniquely Abled Project Board**

The UAP is fortunate to have a superior and committed Board of Directors. They are:

- Yudi Bennett, Co-Founder and Member of Board of Exceptional Minds, Past President of Foothill Autism Alliance
- Jay Phillips, General Manager, Haas Factory Outlet
- Scott Bowling, President & CEO, Exceptional Children’s Foundation
Thank you!

**Uniquely Abled Project Update**

The UAP has filed for 501(c)3 non-profit status with the IRS (thank you O'Melveny & Myers). We expect to hear about our application by the end of August. When we receive that status we will be able to begin limited fund-raising to pay for a small staff and other operational expenses.

We have a Facebook page (thank you Yudi!)! The URL is: https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=uniquely%20abled%20project
Please Like!

The UAP website is currently undergoing a complete renovation to enable us to post the large amount of information useful to potential students, parents, and supporting agencies, as well as to accomodate multiple UAP sites. We are hoping the new site will be operational during August.

How can you make a major (non-financial) contribution to the UA Project? Strike the word "disabled" from your vocabulary and only use the term "uniquely abled." Our experience is that almost everyone immediately "gets it" and is delighted with the new insight. Encourage others to do the same. Eventually "disabled" will disappear as have other pejorative and limiting words.

To be added to the UA Project Newsletter mailing list send an e-mail to IRosenberg@UniquelyAbledProject.org.

Ivan M. Rosenberg
The Uniquely Abled Project
818-505-9915 IRosenberg@UniquelyAbledProject.org
www.UniquelyAbledProject.org