ATK receives Empower Kansans grant

Tim Spilker, president of UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Kansas, presented this BIG check to Sara Sack, Assistive Technology for Kansans Director and Sheila Simmons (far left), ATK Program Coordinator, at a press conference in the Parsons Municipal Building meeting room on Friday, April 10, 2015.

ATK received one of six grants awarded in the third and final round of UnitedHealthcare’s Empower Kansans program. The three-year program awarded $1.5 million in grants designed to help Kansans with disabilities find meaningful employment. The first two rounds, in 2013 and 2014, awarded more than $700,000 in grants to 12 Kansas organizations. The 2015 grants totaled $675,592 to six recipients.

The six Grantees were selected with the help of the Empower Kansans Advisory Committee that includes Kansans with disabilities, advocacy organizations, and local and regional community and business leaders. For more information about this year’s grantees, see the UnitedHealthCare Community Plan of Kansas Press Release online at http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/1

1/ks-unitedhealthcare-idUSnBw105987a+100+BSW20150411

Following the press conference, grantees and guests visited the Southeast Assistive Technology Access Site in Parsons. The AT Access Site had staff on hand to explain the ...

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The scope of their work including AT Specialists Vicki Souter and Rhonda Etter and Kansas AgrAbility Specialist Steve Hoover. Also present to welcome the visitors were SKIL CEO Shari Coatney; K-Loan Alternative Finance Manager, Jeanette Graue; Northeast Regional Loan Representative Marylyn Shue; and receptionist Evelyn Cox. Participants from ATK’s 2013 Empower Kansans grant attended and shared their success stories with the visitors and the press. For more about ATK’s previous award and plans for this new grant, plus comments from staff and participants, please go to the newspaper article by Jamie Willey, The Parsons Sun at http://www.parsonssun.com/news/article_d1381ac2-dff8-11e4-bdd9-c3eba8f323b.html

A catered luncheon was served, grantees were introduced and their new projects highlighted. In his remarks, Tim Spilker said, “The power of community and the commitment to helping people integrate into daily life have been remarkable. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with community and business leaders statewide in helping people identify skills, passions and talents that support their overall wellness as healthy individuals and contributors to society. Empower Kansans is making a positive impact on people’s lives, our state and our economy.”

Steve Webber, ATK grant participant in the 2014 project was interviewed by Tim Spears, KOAM-TV Reporter. Webber said that a lot of employers “don’t understand that people can overcome things and still be a good asset for them.” To view the text of the on-air interview and remarks from Sara Sack, go to KOAM-TV, Local News at http://www.koamtv.com/story/28775235/disabled-job-seekers-get-help

Just the “STATS” In FY 2014, LSI at Parsons’ faculty and staff gave presentations to 109 state, national, and international audiences in addition to 405 other training and outreach activities.

Computer Policy and Security Training Scheduled for May

Tony Grady, Systems Specialist/ IT Support Technician will provide LSI/Parsons staff a yearly policy and security training session during the month of May. The training addresses KU and unit specific policies and is meant to satisfy federal and state requirements.

This year’s training will be held in the Media studio on the following days:
May 4 - 10:30 to 11:30; May 12 - 1:30 to 2:30; May 20 - 9:30 to 10:30.

Note that you only need to attend one training session. For staff that work off campus Tony will provide an Adobe Desktop Connect link for each training session. Please notify Tony which day you plan to attend.
PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Empower Kansans: Achieving Employment and Health Goals with Digital Technology

Sara Sack, Ph.D., Project Director
Sheila Simmons, M.A., Project Coordinator

Funded by: UnitedHealthcare Community & State, UnitedHealthcare of the Midwest, Inc.

Project Summary

ATK staff will present five four-day iPad training workshops for seventy-five individuals with disabilities and/or health conditions interested in employment. Each of the workshops will be scheduled over a period of four to six weeks and be conducted by one of ATK’s five regional AT Access Sites. The two primary priorities of the project are: 1) provide access to digital devices that provide the support individuals with disabilities need to overcome barriers to achieving their employment goals and, 2) teach individuals with disabilities the technology skills needed to obtain and retain employment. Based on the data from the previous year, an additional objective and priority are identified:

• Identify skills that are most essential for individuals with traumatic brain injuries and/or mental health issues to master so they are successful in obtaining and maintaining employment

• Prioritize involvement of individuals with disabilities in rural settings in the technology and employment skills workshop.

Outcome Measures

ATK values the acquisition of technology skills to help people with disabilities overcome barriers to their personal goals. However, the priority of the project is to provide the technology supports individuals need to obtain and maintain competitive employment. The initial project did not target any specific population and the majority of the participants were local residents. Individuals participating in the workshops provided input on the need for additional supports to decrease or eliminate the demand for travel yet maintain the camaraderie of the three pilot workshops.

ATK staff who led the workshops noted that participants with traumatic brain injury and mental health issues appeared to need more structure to develop an employment and learning plan that met their needs. Follow-up post workshop data supported these impressions. ATK is targeting similar size workshops of 15 participants in each region but increased the employment outcome targets based on the performance of the initial pilot participants. Data on participation and skill acquisition is collected throughout the workshop implementation, in the third quarter follow-up period, and employment data collection will continue through the fourth quarter.

1. Minimum 70 of 75 completing workshops and the individualized goals on their employment plans.
2. Minimum of 5 – 7 individuals with traumatic brain injury and/or mental health issues participating in each of

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Project Spotlight continued from page 3...

the five workshops (25 – 35 participants; 33%-50% of 75 participants).
3. Minimum of 35 individuals from rural communities complete the workshop training (50% of 75 participants).
4. Minimum of 25 individuals obtaining full and/or part-time employment (33% of the 75 participants).

ATK is committed to helping people with disabilities achieve their personal employment goals. After completion of this project, ATK management staff will utilize data analyzed from the rural outreach training methods and employment data to approach state agencies to propose possible data driven service delivery models that support people with disabilities to obtain and retain competitive employment that could be managed by ATK or other community service providers across the state.

PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATIONS

Nelson, C. (2015, February). *Using MyIGDI Literacy+ data based decisions to support learning.* Presentation at the Kansas Preschool Programs Regional Meeting, Hutchinson, KS.

Nelson, C. (2015, February). *Using MyIGDI Literacy+ data based decisions to support learning.* Presentation at the Kansas Preschool Programs Regional Meeting, Topeka, KS.


Walters, S., & Kemp, P. (2015, March). *Enhancing partnerships with tiny-k programs.* Presentation at the 2015 Kansas Parents As Teachers State Conference, Topeka, KS.


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**Staff to be recognized for years of service to KU**

The LSI/Parsons Business Office notified Sheila Simmons, Debbie Moody, Patty Black Moore, Sandy Hill, Laura Doyle-Colvin, and Alan Engels that it’s been five years since we got our last pins and we’re to gather along with about a thousand other University of Kansas employees on May 6th in Lawrence for the annual event to honor University employees for their years of service. On June 9 at 2 p.m. in the Parsons Research Conference Room, we’ll convene for a smaller but no less important reception to celebrate our work together. Please join us. To peruse the entire 2015 list, please follow this link [https://humanresources.ku.edu/2015-employee-recognition-honorees](https://humanresources.ku.edu/2015-employee-recognition-honorees)

The Insider  
April 2015
Staff Profile

Stuart D. Jones, Project Coordinator
KEE Reuse Program and
Telecommunications Access
Program (KS TAP)

Born in 1970 in Parsons, KS to Candace Denney Jones and Darrell Jones, I attended Washington Elementary in Parsons through second grade before moving and growing up in Topeka attending USD 501 schools. With a deep family heritage working within education and social service, I sought and became employed by Parsons State Hospital and Training Center, Special Support Team Unit, as an MRT1 in 1989.


I have 26 years of work history with individuals with disabilities in a variety of positions including Vocational and Life Skills Trainer, Special Education Teacher, Educational Consultant, Mobility Consultant/Technician, and Assistive Technology Specialist. I am now using this experience to maintain and increase the availability of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities of all ages. My new position with Assistive Technology for Kansans (ATK) gives me the opportunity to assist individuals on a state level and fits well with my goals as a lifelong learner.

I am the proud father of three children and one grandchild. My wife is also in the field of special education and we have enjoyed our home in the country outside of Dover, Kansas for the past sixteen years. I enjoy fishing, camping, and restoring vintage items with my sons.

Community Service

Sara Sack, left, and Patty Black Moore, with help from colleagues, friends, and family, were released from the Muscular Dystrophy Association Fundraiser Lock-up on April 22, 2015. Donations support research and treatment for persons of all ages with MDA.

Visit the KU Life Span Institute (LSI) at Parsons website at http://parsons.lsi.ku.edu/newsletters
Parsons Community Garden

2015 marks the sixth growing season for the Parsons Community Garden. With grant support from the Parsons Area Community Foundation, the garden has three new rain barrels installed and new raised beds will be installed on the sunny side. The garden will be tilled this week as gardeners prepare for the new growing season. Originally a part of a federally funded 3-year grant, the Parsons Community Garden continues with returning gardeners and beginning gardeners ready to start planting.

For more information, follow this link [http://parsonsareacf.org/category/grants-in-action/](http://parsonsareacf.org/category/grants-in-action/) and scroll until you find “Conservation Rain Barrels” and scroll further to find the article “Parsons Community Garden” with pictures featuring two of our youngest gardeners.

The Parsons Community Garden welcomes people of all ages, of all abilities and all levels of gardening experience. To become a Parsons Community Garden member, call 620-421-8367.