

An exploration of two communities in Virginia

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Community Mobilization Team Members

Belief Statement on the Involvement of People with Disabilities in their Communities

Developed by:

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- Community Mobilization Team, Arc of Northern Shenandoah Valley
- State Steering Committee for the Community Mobilization Project



VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SELF ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP

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We all miss out...

... when people with disabilities are not fully included in our communities
... on knowing you and you on knowing us
... on a lot of possibilities for involvement
... on friendships, creativity, fun, and learning.

Living life as fully accepted and included members of our community enables us to do a lot of things on our own, have new experiences and meet new people. We get to know people we never would have met who have things in common with us, whether they have a disability or not. Accessible and affordable transportation, accessible sidewalks, parking lots and buildings, opportunities to volunteer and work, greater acceptance, and being welcomed into public places create community inclusion and make it possible for us to live the life we want and deserve.

Our Belief Statement on Community Involvement

We are people of all ages who are part of your community. Some of us have a disability you will notice. Others have a disability that is hard to see. We are people with ideas and values who can make a difference in other people's lives. We have a lot to offer and we want to give back to others. We want to take part in our community and become more involved. Although opportunities exist, some barriers remain in our way. We want to tell you about our hopes and dreams, and how you can help.

We want to be more involved in daily life and opportunities in our community. We enjoy meeting people and learning about our community. We want to develop our abilities and reach our full potential. We have a lot to offer and we want to give back to our community.

We want to be able to get around town to visit friends and do things. We want to be able to make new friends and learn new things. We do not want our options to be limited by transportation, accessibility or how welcome we are in our community. We want people to notice us and talk to us. We want others to learn more about us and ask what we like. We are people with a disability. But first and foremost, we are people. What we have in common with others far outweighs our differences. As you get to know us, you will notice our abilities far outweigh our disabilities.

We want people to give us a chance to show who we are for ourselves. We want to help others. We want opportunities to volunteer. We want to use our abilities and gain work skills and experience. We want people to know that we are people who have a lot to offer and we are willing and able to make contributions in our community. We want to be more active members of our community and to be fully included. To help us reach our goals, we need better transportation and public accessibility, more opportunities to work and volunteer, and to be accepted and welcomed in our community.



Transportation We don't like being limited in where we can go. We want the freedom to be independent and do what we choose. We want the freedom to get around town. We need more accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation to truly be free and go where we want.

Accessibility We want to go places in the community and be able to get in and out comfortably. We want the freedom to go where we choose. We need all public places to be fully accessible, both outdoors when we park and enter buildings, and indoors so we can move about and fully participate.

Jobs & Volunteering We want to develop our abilities and give back to our community. We want to be productive and successful. Jobs and volunteering offer us opportunities to participate more fully in our community, to demonstrate our abilities and learn new skills. Volunteering allows us to take pride in supporting our community and giving back what we have to offer. Jobs enable us to earn an income and live more independently. Through our work we gain self-respect and the respect of others in the community.

Acceptance We want to be accepted in our community. We want to be equally welcomed and included among people both with and without disabilities. We want to visit public places and participate in recreational activities. Embracing our humanity and accepting our differences makes us feel more comfortable and welcome.