



DRTC.ORG

QUARTERLY

JUNE 2021

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DOORS
WIDER**

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Deborah Copeland, M.Ed.
Executive Director

FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the proverb goes, ‘Necessity is the mother of invention.’ I believe, in many ways, the pandemic taught us the necessity of accessibility. Last year, millions of people suddenly realized their physical workplace was ‘inaccessible’ to them. The workforce flocked to home offices and hunkered down, but continued working; thereby changing the very nature of work, out of necessity.

Think of all the adaptations we readily accepted because it was now universal to everyone. ‘Outside of the box’ inventiveness to continue productivity is now the norm. Virtual meetings, flexible work schedules, expanded sick leave, accommodations for families, understanding of differing health needs, and the list goes on and on. Now, imagine it wasn’t a pandemic keeping you sequestered at home, but a medical condition, physical disability or a cognitive

difference. Simply stated, all the ways we’ve adapted for the pandemic are accommodations people with disabilities needed the whole time.

In many ways, we’ve seen our own vulnerabilities in a new light. Accepting the differing needs of us all, creates accessible workplaces for everyone. We can continue adapting and flexing to ‘open the door’ wider. Technology, flexibilities, connectivity, and new perspectives can ‘open doors’ to meaningful work for people with a disability. It really is necessary.

ACCESSIBILITY

Increasing access to employment and the community remain some of DRTC’s top priorities even during a global pandemic. Accessibility has many components that encompass both physical and digital elements, and DRTC is continuously working to provide the best user experience for each.

If you haven’t been on the main campus recently, we think you’ll be in for a pleasant surprise the next time you visit us. Some of the most noticeable changes are a new outside area by our Special Needs Program, as well as a renovated Friendship Circle. Both areas have a redesigned and accessible space creating more shade and an easier-to-navigate ground area.

Digitally, DRTC aims to increase access to employment via its new live chat ([see page 3](#)), while working to



maintain and increase its overall website accessibility. One of DRTC’s Employment Services Program participants has recently joined the agency’s Website Development Committee to provide fresh insight into DRTC’s web presence.

Do you have an idea for [DRTC.org](https://drtc.org)? Email pr@drtc.org!

Client on cover: Kermit



Kevin Clifton
DRTC Board President

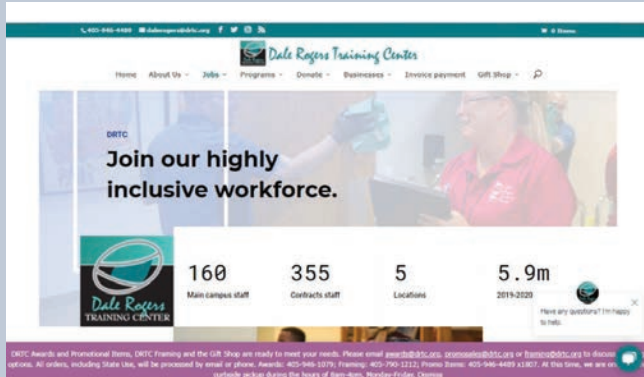
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Executive Director

Michael T. Jones
PR/Marketing Manager

James Helm
Comm. Engagement Coord.

Brian Landreth
Senior Graphic Designer

WEBSITE



ONLINE CHAT



VIRTUAL JOB FAIRS



EMPLOYMENT GUIDE



AN OPEN DOOR TO EMPLOYMENT

Hiring continues to be a major emphasis at DRTC as we all emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Human Resources staff have been working to reduce barriers to employment for those seeking to join our team of essential employees.

Recruiting has taken on a new look through virtual job fairs and hiring events, as well as the ability to provide real-time feedback and assistance for job seekers. DRTC's HR staff have participated in and hosted several virtual events, and have only just recently begun attending in-person events to speak with those interested in opportunities at DRTC's main campus or federal contracts locations.

Similarly, [the Jobs page at DRTC.org](https://www.drtc.org/jobs) has undergone a significant redesign to better explain various open positions at the agency. In addition, we now offer live chat to job seekers who can connect instantly with DRTC HR staff within business hours.

As we progress into the new reality of a post-pandemic world, we recognize the importance of employment in the lives of our current staff and prospective job candidates. DRTC remains vigilant in providing meaningful employment opportunities, as well as the resources and reasonable accommodations to aid staff reach their maximum potential. Join our team by applying at [DRTC.org/Apply-Now](https://www.drtc.org/Apply-Now).

HAVE A QUESTION? 405-946-4489



IMMERSIVE WORK

DRTC's Production Center has taken on new energy recently thanks to a new staff member. Jennifer McCall joined the DRTC team early in 2021 as a Vocational Instructor, but her role is already expanding into teaching staff and clients American Sign Language (ASL). Jennifer became Deaf before her third birthday, and some of her early jobs were teaching others sign language. She's taking on similar responsibilities at DRTC, helping staff and clients bridge the communication divide. Staff at DRTC have shown motivation and passion to learn ASL so they can communicate with Jennifer, and

others have expressed interest in doing the same. To aid with this effort, and to provide more educational opportunities for community partners, DRTC has partnered with [OSU-OKC's Interpreter Training Program](#) to have students complete "hands up" interpretation hours working with Jennifer. The student interpreter has benefited Jennifer by communicating with the staff and clients, and has allowed Jennifer to get to know the clients better. Clients receive training in ASL so they can express their needs and wants while at DRTC and home.

HAVE A QUESTION? 405-946-4489

“One of my passions is to advocate for the Deaf community to gain employment in a job they would like to have,” said Jennifer.

While working at DRTC, Jennifer has been able to explain some of the Deaf culture aspects to staff—teaching staff how to communicate with the Deaf directly through using an interpreter and making eye contact with the Deaf, etc.—so they can understand clients better. DRTC is planning on having Jennifer spend some time at federal contracts locations to provide similar classes for staff and to help Deaf employees at the contract locations.



Students practice their ASL skills with Jennifer and the interpreter in class.



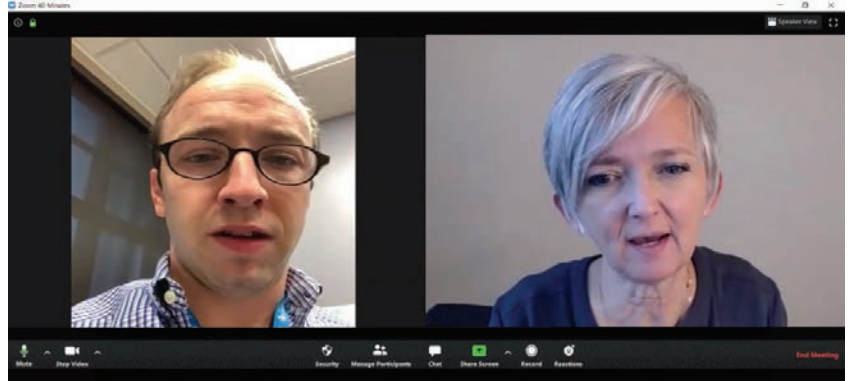
BIG EVENT

**Thank You To Our Volunteers:
Connor, Madison, Chinedu,
Robert, Michael, Karren, Fey!**



Board Member on Inclusion

Brian Smith is a Board member at Dale Rogers Training Center and a former employee of the agency. Brian currently works at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City as the Parish Engagement Director. He is a strong advocate for people with disabilities and that's one of the primary reasons DRTC recruited him to serve on the Board of Directors. DRTC Executive Director Deborah Copeland recently visited with Brian about his experience with inclusion in the workplace.



Deborah (D) - How have you seen inclusion and accessibility change for people with disabilities during your career?

Brian (B) - I think inclusion and accessibility has greatly changed. Not only in the workplace but really a lot of it has been the increase and development of media. Social media, Zoom, and other platforms have just increased the accessibility for individuals and the way we do business.

D – For you personally where does inclusion start?

B – Inclusion started with the basic simple thing of a stand up desk. I have a stand up desk and you know that may not seem like inclusion but when you have cerebral palsy like in my case, if you're sitting for so long, your muscles get tight and, my doctor has said "sitting is the new smoking."

D - Everyone needs higher accessibility; everyone probably needs an accommodation at some point. So, it's more universal than I think people really believe.

B - I think people laugh when I say this but you know, some people need five cups of coffee to get going in the morning. So that's in a sense an accommodation, but something they need to get going. We all have those things that we need to have a productive day. So, for me it's stretching in the morning and evening just to get the muscles loose.

D - If you could reach out to people who identify as having a disability, and you could tell them one thing, what would that be?

B - I would say articulate your accessibility needs but also be flexible. Give your employer a little grace. Give them the time that they need, but also provide them clear and concise instructions and communication on what you need, and why you need it. In the real world, it's all about clear communication so just communicate, communicate, communicate.

D – Do you also feel that social media has propelled social change?

B – I think that's opened up people's eyes to the challenges people face because everyone is more willing to share. They have the comfort to speak out.

SUMMER OF FUN!



Camp Tumbleweed is back for another great year in 2021!

This year we are looking forward to another fun, but safe year of Camp Tumbleweed in a virtual format. Camp will be open to 11-21 year olds with disabilities. While most of Camp will be held over video conference, we expect to add one day per week in-person on the DRTC campus.

What will virtual camping look like? A Tumbleweed Camper will be engaged in 2.5 hours of activities that focus on building independent skills through healthy meal preparation, hygiene and pre-employment skills —while still enjoying traditional camp elements like virtual field trips and fun craft activities and games. Daily sessions are held in the morning (10:00 – 12:30) or afternoon (1:30- 4:00) depending on group, and activity kits will be sent to each camper filled with craft supplies, camp shirt, and activity sheets.

Camp Tumbleweed staff, who also work in DRTC's Transition School-to-Work program, are dedicated to meeting the needs of each camper and will be sure and follow CDC safety protocols.

Camp is divided into two sessions—June 1-30 and July 6- August 6, with the option to have an in-person activity per week.

To apply for Camp Tumbleweed head to: drtc.org/programs/#camp-tumbleweed

Do you own a business and would be willing to host a group of campers for a site visit or do you know of a location for campers to volunteer? Contact our Camp Tumbleweed coordinator at CampTumbleweed@drtc.org.

CIVITAN COMMUNITY SERVICE

Civitan International is a global organization impacting lives at the grass roots level through local service clubs. Members of Civitan share a Servant's Heart and a desire to create positive change for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Happy Trails club membership is open to all adults.

Contact Kristin Bowles at: kbowles@drtc.org, or 405-946-4489 x1606

Civitan International's flagship project is the Civitan International Research Center (CIRC)—a world class research facility dedicated to the study and treatment of developmental disabilities like autism, rett syndrome, down syndrome and disorders of the brain.



"It was great to go outside with Happy Trails Civitan club members and help beautify Utah Ave in OKC," says Debbie Ladd, event coordinator.



See our virtual tour

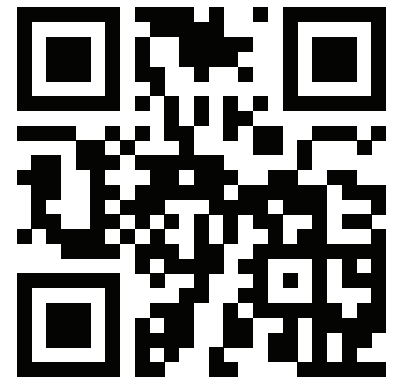


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We Are HIRING



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