



PossAbilities
for people
with disAbilities™

Contact: Nancy Phalanukorn
FRA Executive Director
732-747-5310 x112
NPhalanukorn@frainc.org

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Discovering Unique Employment in Monmouth County

FRA celebrates Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month by offering *EmployAbility* services for those with developmental or acquired disabilities.

Red Bank, NJ – March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, and Family Resource Associates (FRA) is doing its part to help educate the community about the *EmployAbility* of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). FRA, located in Red Bank, NJ, proudly offers *EmployAbility* services to prepare individuals with disabilities for success in integrated and competitive employment.

FRA utilizes a Customized Employment Options (CEO) program, a unique component of *EmployAbility* at FRA that focuses on meaningful and inclusive work in a fully integrated community setting. Phillip Duck is FRA's Director of *EmployAbility*, which encompasses the Monmouth Medical Center Project SEARCH program, as well as FRA's employment supports and internship program for high school transition students. "Our CEO program is particularly successful for people with unique employment challenges including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities," said Duck. "Employment opportunities range from everything between golf clubs to schools."

A community can be found in an office, factory or online. Customized, or niche jobs, including self-employment options are all considered. "Participants benefit from learning more about themselves in the 'Discovery Process' in order to better define their strengths, interests and passions for the type of work they seek," said Duck. "A creative Employment Team and a Business Advisory Council work together to locate unique work opportunities focusing on local venues that minimize transportation difficulties. Success in long-term employment improves with fewer obstacles. Success is defined when both the employee and employer are satisfied."

FRA has existed for 40 years, primarily because the agency has always looked at the support services it provides through a unique lens. FRA's vision for *EmployAbility* dates back to 2015. "From the beginning, we developed a strategic plan for the program," said Duck. "Unfortunately, funding is always an issue with support services, so our vision was largely a 'paper' vision."



The Impact 100 Jersey Coast grant allowed FRA to take that vision from paper to reality. “We were able to hire staff and implement many of the elements of our strategic plan,” said Duck.

The future of FRA’s *EmployAbility* program depends on the community. “The work we do is challenging and rigorous, and we need additional supports from the larger community in order to be successful,” said Duck. “With the assistance of Carol Stillwell, President and CEO of Stillwell-Hansen, we have initiated a Business Advisory Council (BAC) that will be comprised of 10-12 local businesses. The BAC will be a great resource of connections, employment opportunities, professional advisors, etc.”

FRA has also received assistance from Tom Monaco, Program Director with IEEE Entrepreneurship in order to start a monthly Job Club program. IEEE Entrepreneurship’s mission is to foster engineering and technological innovation for the benefit of humanity. “This club will provide those we support with an opportunity to present their shared experiences, brainstorm ways to solve challenges and build personal networks,” said Duck. “Looking to the future, we will continue to work daily to provide opportunities to people with disabilities so that they can work in jobs that are meaningful.”

According to the Department of Labor, 80 percent of people with disabilities are not part of the workforce. “This is a startling statistic that always gives me a pause,” said Duck. “There are a number of reasons for this bleak reality, including issues with transportation, community and business awareness, and prejudice. Our goal is to tackle all of the issues that have traditionally been a barrier to employment for people with disabilities. In doing so, we hope to see the labor statistics shift in the other direction.”

Community members interested in helping FRA meet the needs of its *EmployAbility* Program, can first become aware of the inequities that exist for people with disabilities in the labor force. “Do you own a small business? Do you work for a large organization with a purpose around diversity and inclusion? Do you have contacts that might be amenable to learning about our programs and the fantastic people we support? Finding employment is mostly about mining our networks,” said Duck. “The public can assist us best by availing themselves to be a part of our growing network.



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To learn more about supporting FRA's Employability programs, please email Phillip Duck at pduck@frainc.org. To learn about FRA's upcoming Pre-Vocational, Wellness and Technology virtual classes, please visit frainc.org or email frontdesk@frainc.org.

About Family Resource Associates

[Family Resource Associates, Inc. \(FRA\)](http://frainc.org) is a 501(c)(3) in Monmouth County helping children, adolescents and people of all ages with disAbilities to reach their fullest potential. FRA connects individuals to independence through specialized therapies and advanced technology. Acknowledging the powerful influence of the family, we remain committed to them by offering both support and education.

FRA assists individuals of all ages who have developmental delays or disAbilities as well as acquired disAbilities. FRA provides home-based early intervention for infants, therapeutic recreation programs, pre-vocational and educational classes for adults, EmployAbility training and job coaching, along with family and sibling support groups.

TECHConnection, a signature program of FRA, leverages technology to help increase, maintain or improve the capabilities of individuals with disAbilities as a result of accident, injury, illness or aging as well as related issues affecting hearing, vision, reading or mobility. To learn more, visit frainc.org.

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About Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, #DDawareness2020

Each March, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (**NACDD**) partners with Association for University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) and National Disability Rights Network (**NDRN**) to create a social media campaign that highlights the many ways in which people with and without disabilities come together to form strong, diverse communities.



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The campaign seeks to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all areas of community life, as well as awareness to the barriers that people with disabilities still sometimes face in connecting to the communities in which they live.

FRA celebrates DD Awareness Month



Jimmy K. on the job at Jumping Brook Country Club.