# Independence Inc.

Our mission is to provide advocacy, services, and education for people with disabilities and our communities. Our vision is to work together in transforming our communities to be the best places in which people with disabilities can live, learn, and work.

Independence, Inc. serves 783 individuals with disabilities in Douglas, Franklin and Jefferson counties. Of that total, 680 of those served are Douglas County residents.

# Unique Programs

## Disability Mentoring Day-Lawrence

Disability Mentoring Day is a nationwide event that promotes career development for youth with disabilities through hands-on career exploration. It illustrates the importance of encouraging young people with disabilities to develop important skills necessary for future employment. Since 2001, Mentoring Day-Lawrence has matched 413 youth with disabilities with members of the Lawrence business community for one day of job-shadowing.

## The Youth Employment Program of Independence, Inc.—YEP!

The Youth Employment Program of Independence, Inc.(YEP!) provides 80 hours of supported, community-based, work experience combined with life & social skills development for youth with significant disabilities in Douglas and Jefferson counties. The program targets youth 15-21 years with no prior work experience. Since 2008, the program has enrolled **77** youth with disabilities in job skill development.

## YEP!

## Youth Employment Program of Independence, Inc.

Logo

Logo designed by Danielle Long, age 17

# *YEP!* How the Program Works

The primary objectives of YEP:(1) to increase community-based, paid employment outcomes for hard to place youth with disabilities through career exploration and job trials; (2) to improve the youth’s attitudes towards productive employment versus government benefits; (3) to provide life skills trainings related to successful transition.

* Youth eligible for the program are identified by the school’s special education staff & transition coordinators. Eligible youth are ages 15-21 years with a significant disability.
* Youth selected to participate must first complete the following before starting work trials:
  + A pre evaluation that collects data about the youth’s attitudes & abilities prior to work
  + An Independent Living Plan (ILP) with the YEP coordinator.
* Youth enrolled in YEP! complete 80 hours of community-based work trials at a local business.
* Independence, Inc. serves as the employer for YEP! students and takes care of all wages and liability. YEP! pays the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour.
* All youth are required to submit time sheets to the YEP coordinator.
* Youth can complete several work trials in the program until they are either hired or age out of the program.

At the end of each 80 hour work trial students and employers complete a post-evaluation form to collect data related to the student’s work and social skills

## Community Collaborations!

### Education Partners:

Baldwin City High School

Eudora High School

Lawrence-Free State High

Lawrence High School

KU Center on Research & Learning

### Business Partners:

Ace Hardware/Westlake

Aimee’s Café

Alek’s Auto Repair

Ballard Community Center

Blue Plate Dinners

Clinton Parkway Animal Hospital

The Children’s Learning Center

CiCi’s Pizza

City of Lawrence/Parks & Recreation

East Heights

Englewood Florist

Golf Course Superintendent Assoc.

Great Plains Media

Habitat ReStore

Hastings

Henry T’s

Hobby Lobby

Hy-Vee

Jarrett Small Animal Clinic

John Deere

Johnny’s West

KU Center for Research on Learning

Laird Noller Automotive

Lawrence Free Methodist Church

Lawrence Humane Society

Lawrence Memorial Hospital

Lawrence Public Library

Lawrence Recylery

New York Elementary

Owen’s Flowers

Pawsh Wash

Penn House

Pet World

Pioneer Ridge

Prairie Park Nature Center

Raven Bookstore

Royal Crest Lanes

KU Scheifelbusch

Sheridan’s

Sports Dome

Sunshine Acres Pre-School

TJ Maxx

U-Haul

University Bookshop

Watkins Museum

Walgreens

Warrender Physical Therapy

Wheat State Pizza

The Windsor

## YEP! Facts & Stuff

* Since 2008, YEP! has enrolled 88 youth with disabilities in community based work trials.
* YTD-- 26 have left the program as employed; 12 have transitioned to Vocational Rehab services; 8 have transitioned to tech schools or community college.
* Students with various types of disabilities participate in YEP!.
* 85% of the youth require supportive employment
* 90% are Medicaid eligible
* Nearly 50 businesses serve as YEP trial employers. Businesses are represented from both non-profit and for profit industries.

**“Letter from YEP! Employer to school social worker, Mistie Copas-Thomas”**

Hi Mistie,

[youth name omitted] has been fantastic; we have been very pleased to have him join us.  What really stands out is his attitude.  He's friendly, a self starter, and does a pretty good job staying on task.  When there is a position opening here, the number of applications & levels of experience can be a bit overwhelming.  I suspect that in a general pool, his application would not have been impressive enough on paper to make it too far in the selection process.  However, working through a program like this one, where he can show me what he can do, has greatly increased his chances in securing a position in this department when there is a future opening & he expresses interest.    Thanks, Amanda

## Working 9 to 5!☺

*“YEP! has been wonderful! The Students are given an opportunity to earn a paycheck, which in turn helps them to create a budget in the real world.”*

- Mistie Copas-Thomas, Community Transition Social Worker

*Quotes taken from Independence, Inc. May 2010 newsletter, “The Independence*

*Advocate.”*

“If it wasn't for Independence, Inc. and YEP!, I would have never come to

work at TJ Maxx,” says Anderson, who has attention deficit disorder,

obsessive compulsive disorder, and dyslexia. “I want to keep working here, and possibly

move to the jewelry counter.” Sandy Slemp (right) tried on her own to get jobs in the past.

“No one would hire me, and I became scared. Here (at TJ Maxx), no one discriminates

against me or puts me down because of my disability,” said Slemp, who has depression

and schizophrenia. “I am excited to have a job and get a paycheck.”