



One Voice Brevard

1 October 2024

Who we are

One Voice Brevard is the new Coalition of Disability Voices advocating in Brevard County.

Welcome to our inaugural edition of the One Voice Newsletter! My name is Nicole Grabner and I am the founder of the One Voice Organization and a co-editor and writer for the Newsletter. Our organization began as a discussion, as most probably are. We (multiple disability nonprofits in Brevard County) were discussing our frustration with no centralized or representative voice for our concerns to legislators. There are so many wonderful and important organizations working with the disabled in Brevard County, but we needed a place to come together to speak as one loud voice. It was with this effort, that One Voice's mission began.

Our mission statement is **"United in Purpose, we bring together diverse nonprofits dedicated to advocating for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Collectively, we want to amplify their**

voices, drive meaningful legislature change, and promote inclusivity and equity. Together, we harness our unique strengths to ensure that all individuals are heard, respected, and empowered, forging a future where their rights and needs are prioritized in every policy decision."

This mission began with our nonpartisan disability-focused candidate forum event that we hosted in September. *(See article on Page 3).* Our next step was the founding of this newsletter and Facebook page. We hope to create a monthly publication that discusses important efforts in disability advocacy, educates legislators about our priorities, and brings awareness to issues affecting our community. Look for our website *(coming soon)* and live legislative awareness events to keep everyone as informed as possible. We welcome any feedback and hope our audience will submit letters to the editor, art submissions, and wins, which we hope to feature every month.

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you will find:

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Empowering Young Adults for Future Success

Having a job is crucial for a person's self-esteem, providing a sense of purpose and belonging. Employment fosters independence and financial stability, enabling individuals to support themselves and contribute to their communities. The daily responsibilities and achievements at work boost confidence and encourage personal growth. Positive interactions with colleagues can enhance social skills and create a sense of camaraderie, further reinforcing self-worth.

In today's evolving workforce, it is essential to think beyond the traditional 9-to-5 jobs. Taking advantage of diverse opportunities, such as dog walking, freelance writing, or artisanal crafts not only promote work-life balance but also allow individuals to pursue passions. These roles often encourage flexibility, creativity, and personal connection, making work more enjoyable. Embracing unconventional jobs can foster innovation and resilience in the economy. By reimagining what work looks like, we can create a more inclusive environment that values diverse skills and lifestyles, ultimately enriching both personal fulfillment and community engagement.

A good place to begin looking for resources regarding employment would be your local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) office. This includes personalized support such as job training, counseling and assistance with finding suitable job opportunities tailored to each person's unique needs and strengths. One of the first programs to consider would be Pre-ETS or pre-employment transition services. Pre-ETS focuses on providing essential skills and support to young adults aged 14 to 22. Pre-ETS encompasses five core services: job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling and post-secondary educational opportunities, workplace readiness training and self-advocacy training. These services are tailored to meet individual needs, ensuring that each participant can explore various career paths, allowing them to make informed decisions about their futures. Additionally, partnerships with local businesses (like Health First and Publix) and educational institutions create a supportive network that fosters growth and development.

Another great program to consider

Empowering Young Adults for Future Success (cont.)

is REACH (Realizing Employment and Career Hopes). The REACH program in Florida is administered by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and is a part of the Department of Education. By providing personalized job coaching training, and resources, REACH empowers participants to develop their skills and find suitable job opportunities. The program emphasizes collaboration with local employers to create inclusive workplaces that value diverse talents.

Disability rights in employment ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities in the workplace. Legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates reasonable accommodations, prohibiting discrimination based on disability. Employers are required to create accessible environments, promoting inclusivity and diversity.

Lastly, consider the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program, which is a Social Security Administration initiative that allows individuals with disabilities to set aside income and resources to pursue special work goals. By creating a personalized plan, participants can receive assistance in funding, education,

training, or other expenses necessary to achieve greater financial independence and self-sufficiency.

Person-centered planning, or person-driven planning, is an approach that prioritizes the individual's preferences, strengths, and goals in creating a personalized support plan. This method is crucial for individuals with disabilities, as it empowers them to take an active role in decision-making and ensures their voices are heard. By focusing on what truly matters to the individual, person-centered planning fosters greater independence, satisfaction, and a sense of ownership over their life and future.

For more information about transition planning and employment, please see the Florida Developmental Disability Counsel's website for planning toolkits. Also see Project 10's website, as well as the Abilities Work Florida, and the Social Security Administration's websites.

Autism CARES Act Update

The Autism CARES (Collaboration Accountability, Research, Education and Support) Act of 2024 recently faced a significant stall in the Senate due to ongoing negotiations surrounding the continuing resolution. This legislation, aimed at enhancing support and resources for individuals with autism, has been caught in a broader debate over federal funding priorities. As lawmakers grapple with budgetary concerns, advocates for the autism community are urging swift action to ensure that crucial services and research initiatives continue without interruption. This bill, HR 7213, which allocates \$2 billion over the next five years in authorized funding, recently passed Congress with bipartisan support on 18 September and was received at the Senate on 19 September. While this bill has retained broad bipartisan support in the house, citizens can follow-up with their Senators to encourage their continued support once the Senate is back in session, following the election in November.



The First of It's Kind Candidate Forum

The first coalition effort of One Voice Brevard, the Disability Candidate Forum, was a success. This event pulled together partner organizations in Brevard County and across the State of Florida, to advocate the concerns of the disability community with candidates running for local office. While many people may not realize how much governing gets done at the local levels, this event aimed at not only raising awareness of the disability concerns, but also bridging the divide between local legislators and our community.

This is a presidential election year – the one time that most people pay attention to what's happening in politics. And while the news' spotlight might be on the candidates running for the White House, most of the laws and policies affecting citizens happen in offices that are in our same county. There's still time to register to vote if you haven't already, but for those preparing to cast their vote on 5 November, taking the time in advance to become familiar with candidates running and their platform can be an overwhelming undertaking. Events like candidate forums aim to help bring the community and candidates together, so people can hear direct from the candidates their stance on current issues and to be able to ask questions about their outlooks on policies.

While many issues like immigration, taxes, and overseas conflicts have been at the top of headlines in recent news, the intent of our forum, hosted at the Space Coast Health Foundation on 20 September, intended to highlight and focus conversations surrounding the concerns of the disability community – concerns like healthcare, housing and transportation. We hosted candidates running for the following offices:

- U. S. House of Representatives
- State Senate

- State Representative
- County Commissioner
- School Board

Each of the races gave us the opportunity to focus on local issues like housing availability, disabled adult day programs, local accessibility and accommodation issues and support services offered at local public schools. The candidates were given the opportunity to discuss their platform for three minutes and then given one minute to answer questions, which had previously been submitted to the coalition. The event began at nine in the morning and concluded around two that afternoon.

Another exciting part of the event was the Straw Poll, which gave attendees the opportunity to share who they would vote for after they spoke at the forum. What was interesting, is that usually most people, when voting, typically stay with their registered party, either all democrat or republican. At the end of the day, we had a good spread of "elected" candidates, including the only third-party candidate, Mr. Nathan Slusher, a registered Libertarian candidate running for County Commissioner in District 1. In fact, many of the races were pretty tight and most of the attendees commented on how their opinion changed after getting the opportunity to hear the candidates speak.

This event was first of its kind with such a policy focus in our county. We announced that we will be hosting a town hall on 3 October 2025, as a follow-up to this event; but surprisingly, most of the candidates said they didn't want to wait that long before we call met again. It is my hope that this event will be the first of many that we can host together, that prove that regardless of where you might stand politically, we can all come together as a community...with **one voice!**

Art Submission for October



“Pause”

This month’s art work was submitted by Siena Grabner, age 15. It’s made with acrylic, colored pencils and stickers. Ms. Grabner also created and designed our coalition’s logo. When struggling to find an all-inclusive disability logo, her thought was to have each disability represented in the stars with their colors.

Please submit your artwork for our November Newsletter. We’d love to put the spotlight on on our budding artists!

Resources and Contact Information

- Brevard Autism Coalition; <https://brevardautismcoalition.com/>
- Angels Bridging Gaps; <https://angelsbridginggaps.org/>
- The Parker Foundation; <http://www.theparkerfoundation.com/>
- S.O.A.K.; <https://www.soakautism.com/>
- Down Syndrome Association of Brevard; <https://www.dsabrevard.org/>
- UCF CARD; <https://ucf-card.org/>
- Florida Developmental Disabilities Council; <https://www.fddc.org/>
- Project 10; <http://project10.info/>
- Vocational Rehabilitation; <https://www.rehabworks.org/contact/area3.html>
- FLAPSE; <https://apse.org/chapter/florida/>
- The Arc of Space Coast; <https://www.arcofsc.org/>
- Promise in Brevard; <https://promiseinbrevard.com/>
- Brevard Resource Center for Disability Solutions; <https://rcdsfl.org/>

For Newsletter Questions or Submissions:
ausomeannouncements@gmail.com



October Events

October is Learning Disabilities Awareness Month

October						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

- Saturday, October 5, 7-10 p.m. SOAK Spooky Soiree, Annual Fundraiser, Space Coast Health Foundation, Rockledge, FL
- Wednesdays, October 2 and 9, Speak Through Sports, Adaptive Basketball with Coach Mims & Florida Tech Men's Basketball Team, Clemente Center at Florida Tech (Small Gym), info @ theparkerfoundation.com
- Saturday, October 19th, 7th Annual #BeABuddy 5K, 5K Run and Family Health & Fitness Expo, Space Coast Field of Dreams, The Parker Foundation, Register at <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/WestMelbourne/Beabuddy5K>
- Saturday, October 26th, 10:00 AM, UCF CARD - PALS, Brevard Mini Golf, 3811 N. Atlantic Ave, Cocoa Beach, FL 32931 (eventbrite to register)
- Saturday, October 26th, 11:00-3:00 PM; Angels Bridging Gaps, Kid's Passport to Good Health, Covenant Church, 760 Emerson Drive, Palm Bay, FL 32907
- Friday, November 15th, 5:00-8:00 PM, Brevard Autism Coalition's Uncorked event, Hotel Melby, 801 E. Strawbridge Ave, Melbourne, FL 32901 (eventbrite to register).



