Hello Program Directors! Please enjoy these inspiring stories of inclusive service. We encourage you to consider forming these kinds of innovative partnerships for the future of your own programs.

Happy Holidays from Oregon Volunteers!

**Pioneers Prove What is Possible**

Launched in 2007, the Pathways Program of UCLA offers two years of post-secondary education to young adults with developmental disabilities. When the Pathways internship coordinator was introduced to the Program Director of California Safe Corps, an AmeriCorps program sponsored by the Red Cross of Greater Los Angeles, a unique partnership was formed.

For the first time last year, two Pathways students, Sivan and Jasmine were invited to intern with Safe Corps at the Red Cross. Safe Corps members Erika Helson and Katrina Rawls supervised the two, creating their work plans and ensuring that goals were being met.

During their time at the Red Cross, Sivan and Jasmine gained valuable office skills as well as "soft" skills such as arriving to work on time and communicating with supervisors and coworkers. In addition to general office work, both interns facilitated workshops for local community groups on the topic of disaster preparedness for people with disabilities.

Neither Erika nor Katrina, the Safe Corps members, had supervised someone with a disability in the past and both claim that it was an eye-opening experience. Katrina shares, "To be honest, I think I learned that just because people have disabilities does not mean they can't do better than me; they can do the same things I do."

After a successful first year, the Red Cross is eager to continue its partnership with Pathways and is hoping to expand the program next year to offer eight to ten intern positions.

As a result of working with Sivan and Jasmine, Safe Corps member Katrina has realized that more focus needs to be given to emergency preparedness for people with disabilities. She is also looking into offering more general Red Cross volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities and is interested in helping Pathways students transition into becoming national service members. "It doesn't have to end with an internship," she says.

**ABILITY Build: Having Fun While Doing the Impossible**

ABILITY Build, the signature program of ABILITY Awareness, engages volunteers with health conditions and disabilities in the building of accessible low-income homes. The program was founded by Chet Cooper in partnership with Habitat for Humanity in 1999 and has organized inclusive builds all over the country including in Alabama, Maryland, California and Hawaii.

Chet's philosophy is "Bring anybody on a build and we'll figure out how to make it work." ABILITY Build is creating major change in each of the communities where a build takes place. The construction supervisor of the Baltimore Habitat for Humanity affiliate said he'd never see people with disabilities the same way again.

"We like the area of home construction because it seems extreme," Chet explains, "When [people] think of the word disability, they think it means that you don't work, you can't work. It doesn't mean you build a house."

Thank you for reading! Critiques, suggestions, comments? Send them my way!
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