Disability Awareness Month: A Reflection

ODS offered a series of strong panels and presentations in October as part of celebrating Disability Awareness Month. ODS partnered with Career Services to present “Because We are EQUAL to the Task,” a panel focused on interview skills, dress attire, and hiring practices in the world of jobs. Continuing its commitment to self-advocacy, ODS also offered a panel entitled “Whispering Loudly: Learning How to Be Heard” that provided attendees with tips on assertive communication in the classroom and beyond. Finally, the panel discussion “Discussing Disability: In Their Words and Through Their Eyes” brought together members of ODS and students with disabilities to foster discussion of how to raise awareness and understanding of disabilities on campus. These panels were crucial in helping to both raise awareness of students with disabilities on campus and in helping to provide them with valuable skills that they need to succeed in class and after graduation.

SPOTLIGHT: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

SAD is caused by a dopamine imbalance which is the result of fewer daylight/sunny hours in the day. It is most common in cold regions, but warmer climates also see some SAD cases.

Common symptoms: fatigue, social withdrawal, oversleeping, carb cravings, weight gain, suicidal thoughts.

Long periods of overcast or cold weather can further affect those with SAD

Fighting SAD: Wake early—take advantage of daylight!

Exercise, exercise!

Spend as much time as possible outside

Eat foods high in dopamine: almonds, avocados, dairy, pumpkin—also eat fruits and vegetables high in antioxidants

Keep sleeping hours consistent

Use light therapy (there are special SAD lamps)
**An Interview with Tabitha Williams, Case Manager, ODS**

*What drew you to working in ODS?*

Okay….well to be honest, I’ve always had a hand in working to provide accommodations for students with disabilities ever since I started working in Student Affairs. Whether it was making sure that we had sugar free desserts for programming for students who are diabetic or ensuring that space was available within the residence halls that met the needs of students who were visually or hearing impaired. Today, however, I am able to ensure their success as students within the classroom and that is definitely something that I am happy to do. Cause for me, it doesn’t matter if I’m helping in the academic setting or social setting. I just want to make sure that students are successful.

**Self Advocacy—YOU are the Key to Your Success**

The best advocate for what you need in accommodations from ODS is YOU! ODS expects students to be active participants in the accommodation process. You understand your disability better than anyone, so don’t be afraid to express your needs to ODS staff and to faculty members so that you can receive the most appropriate accommodations. They are always patient and willing to listen so that, together, you can find the best solution. Also, remember that a good self-advocate knows how to compromise, when necessary, for the good of the situation, but never settles for an accommodation that doesn’t work. It’s YOUR education—speak up! Get the most out of it!

**What do you think is the biggest challenge facing students with disabilities on campus today?**

I think one of the biggest challenges facing students with disabilities on campus today is the fact that people don’t understand. Not that they don’t understand that a person with a disability has a disability. But that they are still human. Their disability doesn’t define them nor does it make them “special.”

**How does ODS help meet that challenge?**

The ODS helps meet that challenge head on through its programming and outreach efforts.

**It’s Not Too Early…**

Spring semester is here, so it’s time to request spring accommodations. As a reminder, guidelines for accommodation requests, including forms and lists of required documentation, can be found on the ODS website at http://www.ods.bstate.edu/current-student-resources/how-to-register-with-ODS.html.

Once you are approved, you will be reminded via email to request accommodation letters at least 72 hours prior to the start of classes. Once you have picked up the letters from the ODS office (5-5.1 LBJSC), you have 12 days to visit the professor to discuss the accommodations, obtain signatures, and return the form to the ODS office. Then, your accommodations are in effect!

For already approved students, accommodation letters are now available through ICAT. Sign in with your web ID and follow the instructions.

**Holiday Charity Work**

ODS, along with the Food Recovery Network student organization, collected over 10 boxes of food for the Sunrise Retirement Community during the 2014 holiday season. We also participated in the Angel Tree Adoption Program in partnership with Harambee and adopted a family through the Salvation Army, which provided the children with gifts for the holidays. Go Bobcats!

**Thought for the Day**

*Create the highest, grandest vision for your life because you become what you believe.*

Oprah Winfrey
Important Upcoming Dates:

ODS Disability Awareness Week
Feb 10-16, 2015
This special recognition week will feature programs, panels, and an ODS open house.

Bobcat Build
March 28, 2015
A great way to give back to the Greater San Marcos community, and there are jobs for all accessibilities. Contact 512-4245 and be sure to mention your needed accommodations.

TXST Counseling Center Workshops and Support Groups
The Counseling Center offers individual sessions with trained counselors, workshops on stress, time management, and test-taking strategies as well as support meetings for a variety of differently-abled groups. Visit counseling.txst.edu/outreach/DEAL or call 512-245-2208 for more information.

(Spring Disability Awareness Week: February 10-16, 2015)

Monday: Outreach Day in the Quad—come by and get a FREE button!

Tuesday: Popcorn Cinema—THE HAMMER, a film that bridges the gap between the hearing and deaf worlds. (5:30-7:30pm, LBJ 3-15)

Wednesday: “Spread the Word to End the R Word Pledge Day,” 10am-12pm, The Quad—come sign your personal pledge to end the use of the R-word in colloquial speech. Also “Blind Ambition,” with Patricia Walsh, a world-champion triathlete and engineer who has been blind since age five.

Thursday—“Discussing Disability Through Their Words and Eyes, Part II,” —A continuation of the panel discussion held by students, faculty and staff with disabilities on campus.

Friday—ODS Open House (LBJ 5-5.1)—Come meet the ODS Gladiators! Learn more about ODS! Light refreshments and DOOR PRIZES!!
Our Vision and Mission

The Office of Disability Services will strive to become a model program serving students with disabilities in higher education. We are committed to developing a society in which individuals with disabilities thrive and participate fully. These individuals will be challenged to become responsible decision-makers, problem solvers and self-advocates in charge of their own destiny. We envision a campus community where all individuals are seen as valued and contributing members of society. Respect for all will encompass everything we do.

The mission of the Office of Disability Services is to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to all university programs and activities. We provide students the opportunity to reach their full potential by:

- coordinating academic accommodations and support services
- promoting independence and self-advocacy
- providing information and referral to appropriate resources

We help to foster a supportive and inclusive educational environment by:

- building and maintaining partnerships with faculty and staff
- promoting disability awareness among all members of the university community
- providing guidance regarding university policies and procedures to ensure the full participation for persons with disabilities in all aspects of campus life

Tip of the Week

Independent Living Experience (ILE) is a customized support service for adults desiring a life of independence. Together, the ILE team works collaboratively, with each client and their family, to determine personal and professional goals, individual needs, and the desired direction for their future. For more information, contact James Williams at jwilliams@independentlivingexperience.com.