

Member Spotlight: The disAbility Resource Center

Through all of its work, dRC is empowering those it serves—fostering understanding of disabilities and encouraging people to be strong advocates for themselves and others in the community.

Today, nearly one in five Americans is living with at least one disability. While Disability Awareness Month will increase awareness of the contributions and needs of these nearly 50 million Americans during the month of October, other groups in our community are working to do the same—and so much more—daily.

Among these is Center for Nonprofit Advancement member The disAbility Resource Center (dRC) in Fredericksburg, Va. With a staff of 18, about half of whom are part-time, dRC works to assist people with disabilities, those who support them and the community through information, education and resources to achieve the highest potential and benefit to independent living. dRC serves those in the City of Fredericksburg; Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George and Caroline counties; and areas of Westmoreland and Orange counties.

dRC's work is "cross disability" and "cross life span." This means they work with all age groups and all types of disabilities to provide assistance with daily living—actively serving approximately 750 annually in addition to providing information and referrals to community members.

Their work centers around four core services: independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy and information/referral services. Additional program areas include youth services, deaf and hard of hearing outreach, personal assistance services and a durable medical equipment recycling program.

Also launched this year was a program on emergency preparedness for people with disabilities. Under the program, dRC has assembled 300

personal emergency kits, half of which have already been distributed. Each kit includes a workbook which helps individuals to identify their personal support system and develop an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency.

All dRC services are provided free of charge and confidentially to community members. Like most nonprofit executive directors, "funding to meet the need" is dRC Executive Director Debe Fults' number-one challenge. Federal, state and local funding, as well as private grants and donations fund dRC services. In July, as part of its fundraising efforts, the group held its second Wheelchair Tennis Tournament, attracting top players from six states.

Program support also comes from volunteers throughout the community—from local Boy Scout groups to the Juvenile Justice Detention Center and various businesses.

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dRC is one of 16 Centers for Independent Living in the state of Virginia and one of 500 nationwide. Each is a grassroots, advocacy-driven organization run by, and for, people with disabilities. Like other Centers for Independent Living nationally, more than half of dRC's board and staff are people with disabilities.

To learn more about dRC, please visit www.cildrc.org. To find a Center for Independent Living in your community, visit www.ncil.org.