
PYD EXPANDS MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON A NATIONAL SCALE

BOSTON, MA – Over the next three years, Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) will be launching a new online, professional mentoring program to support community college students with disabilities across five states.

According to the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Policy, people with disabilities continue to have an unemployment rate over two times that of people without disabilities. While higher education often improves employment opportunities, college graduates continue to face barriers when seeking employment, which can lead to unemployment or underemployment. Thanks to a three-year grant from the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, Partners for Youth with Disabilities is planning to address this issue by expanding professional mentoring opportunities to community college students with disabilities in five states.

PYD will offer e-mentoring to 330 young adults with the goal of improved employment outcomes through partnerships with Business Leadership Networks in Massachusetts (Work Without Limits), Connecticut (Connecticut Business Leadership Network), **Maine (Maine Business Leadership Network in partnership with the Maine Chamber of Commerce)**, Wyoming (Unita County Business Leadership Network), and Kansas (Greater Kansas City Leadership Network), as well as community colleges in these areas.

Community College students will access professional and peer mentors to increase their networks, receive advice, and gather support about achieving goals. They will also participate in topical webinars related to employment readiness, and engage in live networking and interview fairs hosted by the Business Leadership Networks.

According to Regina Snowden, Founder and Executive Director of Partners for Youth with Disabilities, “For 31 years, PYD has witnessed the transformative power of mentoring in the lives of youth and young adults with disabilities in their efforts to gain employment and achieve independence. We are thrilled to be expanding our program model beyond Massachusetts through e-Mentoring. We know that this effort between many collaborating partners will result in increased employment opportunities for the participating young adults.”

About Partners for Youth with Disabilities

Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) empowers youth with disabilities to reach their full potential by providing transformative mentoring programs, youth development opportunities, and inclusion expertise. To learn more, visit www.pyd.org.

About Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation

The Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, based in the Washington, DC area, was established in 1991 by Mitsubishi Electric Corporation and the Mitsubishi Electric U.S. companies, which produce, sell and distribute a wide range of consumer, industrial, commercial and professional electronics products. The foundation has contributed

more than \$15 million to organizations that are empowering young people with disabilities to lead more inclusive and productive lives. To learn more, visit the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation's website at www.MEAF.org.

Taking the Next Step

If you have questions or concerns that you feel might be holding you back from hiring someone with a disability, we want to help! Contact the Maine Business Leadership Network (MEBLN) and we'll put you in contact with another business who has overcome similar concerns.

The Maine Business Leadership Network is an affiliate of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. It is a statewide, employer driven program designed for business leaders to promote hiring practices that enable qualified people with disabilities to enter and succeed in the workplace.

For more information about the MEBLN or how your business can get involved, please go to www.mainebln.org or contact Amy Downing, MEBLN Program Manager, at adowning@mainechamber.org.