

# Mid-Year Report: 2020

**ADA 30 FINALE**  
Don't miss Gaelynn Lea  
in Concert and Conversation  
July 30th!  
Visit [Starkloff.org/ADA30](http://Starkloff.org/ADA30)  
for details

## VIRTUAL CAREER CAMPS

Hands-On STEM Projects Engage High School Students at Home



While the pandemic forced many youth programs across St. Louis to cancel their summer activities, **DREAM BIG Career Camp never missed a beat.** It required some out-of-the-box thinking and last-minute adjustments, but students were able to enjoy the same immersive camp experience.

Morning field trips to SDI's various partner companies are always the highlights of camp. This year's facility tours and interactive exercises took place virtually over videoconferencing platforms like Zoom. As usual, our corporate partners made considerable contributions, proactively strategizing with program staff to ensure a seamless transition to virtual.

Tim Boeker has coordinated Bayer's involvement with DREAM BIG since the program's inception in 2018. The Bayer team came up with a creative solution for engaging campers with the scientific method remotely.

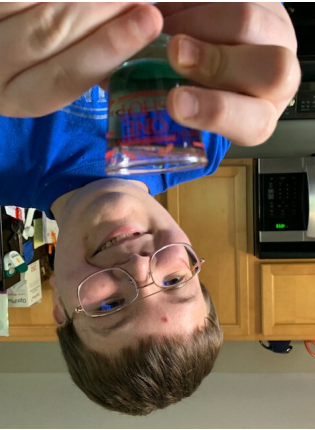
"Typically, we do a science-based activity with students at our research facility in Chesterfield. To try and replicate that," Tim explains, "we sent students in-house kits to do what's called a sugar tower. **They each had their own kit and got to follow one of our scientists through a hands-on activity** to show different densities in chemistry and how we use those at Bayer to innovate new products."

Scientists from the Danforth Plant Science Center demonstrated PlantCV, the image analysis software developed and used at Danforth for plant phenotyping. Students received their own plant images, using the software themselves to assess how leaf insertion angles and lengths influence crop yields.

Lesson materials for the afternoon sessions of camp also had to be adapted for virtual consumption, no small task according to Camp Coordinator Danielle Giuffrida. "We had to transfer our entire curriculum into a series of visual aids, which was a lot to do in a very short amount of time," Danielle says.

Although program staff and partners worked tirelessly to make each day of camp as engaging as possible, maintaining focus for six hours of videoconferencing is a tall order. Nonetheless, Danielle was impressed with the campers' ability to tune out distractions and absorb information.

"When our students did their final presentations on the last day, we knew as a staff that they did grasp the curriculum and learn from the sessions," Danielle observes. "Our students did a fantastic job."



## A Note to Our SDI Community

We can all agree that 2020 has been a challenging year and I want to introduce this update with a clear message: Starkloff Disability Institute has met the challenge with agility! As you can see in this report, SDI has met crisis with creativity as we continue to deliver and to augment our services to Adults, Teens, and College Students with disabilities. Rising to the occasion, we have leveraged our noteworthy history of leadership in the disability rights movement to participate in the important discussions happening nationally.

SDI quickly transitioned to completely virtual programming this spring and capitalized on new opportunities, including participation in national virtual conferences and hosting a hugely successful webinar series, while continuing to meet outcome goals in signature program areas.

The life-changing experiences in these stories were made possible because of your continued investment. We are currently celebrating Disability Pride Month and the **30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act**. It is also a time to reflect on the years of work by disability activists and advocates that paved the way for landmark legislation that guarantees equal rights for people with disabilities. Our work has prepared us to expand the current national dialogue to recognize that diversity includes disability. **Your support allows our mission to continue. Thank you!!**

  
Steve Degnan  
Board Chair

SO FAR IN **2020** WE HAVE:

Engaged **447 professionals with disabilities** through interactive webinars on **in-demand skills** to stay sharp in a difficult job market



Empowered **83 teens, college students and adults with disabilities** with the **skills and confidence** to get jobs they love through one-on-one services

Educated **1,883 people in the community** about **creating a world that welcomes people with disabilities** through virtual events



## ACCESS U EMPOWERING YOUNG LEADERS

Focus on Disability Pride Paves the Way for College Student's Bright Future

Like many students with disabilities, **Michaela Okosi** initially struggled to find the resources she needed for a successful academic journey.

"My transition from high school to college was not smooth because I did not have the right support," Michaela recalls. "The experience wasn't pleasant at my first university, so I transferred to community college until I regained the confidence to go back to a four-year school."

Michaela, a deaf student who uses American Sign Language, ultimately enrolled at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL), where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in sociology. Michaela first met Katie Fields, SDI's

College Outreach Coordinator, during a networking event on the UMSL campus. Michaela quickly realized that she had discovered a valuable new ally in Katie and the ACCESS U program.

"When I learned about ACCESS U, it was like I found a place where I fit in," Michaela says. "Katie gave me some great tips on things like freshening up my resume and finding ways to become more involved in campus life."

ACCESS U encouraged Michaela to own her disability as an asset to be leveraged rather than a liability to be overcome, a philosophical shift that helped bring her educational and professional aspirations into sharper focus.

"My career goal is to be a clinical psychologist for children with disabilities," Michaela explains. "ACCESS U helped me to build skills for the future, gain confidence during interviews and use my deafness as a source of strength, not weakness."

An eager participant in the program, Michaela fully embraced the concepts introduced by Katie and the ACCESS U curriculum. **Michaela is also serving as a camp counselor during the second week of DREAM BIG Career Camp**, a role Katie knows she will flourish in.

"Within Access U, she has put in so much hard work toward meeting her professional and career goals, always giving 110%. She is a great example of a strong self-advocate, something I'm excited for the campers to learn more about from her," Katie says. "Our campers will really benefit from having Michaela as a counselor, and I look forward to watching her share her own journey and experiences with them."

MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR

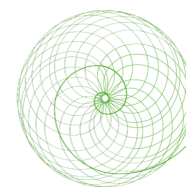
For these upcoming events:



Virtual Gala  
Hosted by Bob Costas  
September 26, 2020



National  
Disability  
Employment  
Awareness  
Month  
October 2020



Universal  
Design  
Summit 7  
May 12-14,  
2021