



2022 MELWOOD ABILITY AWARDS
CELEBRATING DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH

PROGRAM

Wednesday, July 27, 2022
8:00 a.m.

Top of the Hill
Minuteman Memorial Ballroom
One Constitution Ave, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002

Presenting Sponsor

GDIT

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OPENING REMARKS

MS. ALLISON SEYMOUR
MASTER OF CEREMONIES

MR. BRAD SPENCER
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESENTATION OF ACCELERATOR AWARD

MR. SCOTT GIBSON
CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, MELWOOD

ACCEPTANCE REMARKS

MS. KAY SARGENT
DIRECTOR OF WORKPLACE, HOK

PRESENTATION OF ADVOCACY AWARD

MS. JEWELYN COSGROVE
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ACCEPTANCE REMARKS

THE HONORABLE CATHY MCMORRIS
RODGERS
PHOEBE BALL ACCEPTS ON BEHALF OF THE
HONORABLE CHAIRMAN ROBERT C. "BOBBY"
SCOTT

BREAKFAST SERVICE

KEYNOTE REMARKS

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

PRESENTATION OF THE TEAMWORK AWARD

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MS. REBECCA MEYERS
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MS. LARYSA KAUTZ
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MS. TONYA WILKERSON
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-
INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

ANNOUNCEMENT: 60TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

MS. LARYSA KAUTZ
PRESIDENT & CEO, MELWOOD

CLOSING REMARKS

MS. ALLISON SEYMOUR
MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Honorees

2022 Accelerator Award

HOK

accepted by

KAY SARGENT



The 2022 Accelerator Award winner is HOK, a global design, architecture, engineering, and planning firm. HOK's pioneering research on the importance of embracing neurodiversity in designing public spaces, including cultural institutions, community amenities, and workplaces, is helping to reimagine a more inclusive world that breaks down barriers and empowers people with and without disabilities to participate and succeed in community life.

"At HOK, we are passionate about creating spaces that challenge misconceptions and accelerate access for people with disabilities," said Kay Sargent, Senior Principal and Director of WorkPlace, HOK. "Being recognized as a Melwood Ability Award honoree serves as a reminder to keep innovating and driving more solutions to quite literally build more inclusive communities."

Honorees

KAY SARGENT

DIRECTOR OF WORKPLACE, HOK



Kay is a director of HOK's global WorkPlace practice. With a passion for using design to transform how and where people work, she spends her days (and many nights) working with clients on workplace strategy and design.

Based in Washington, D.C., Kay leads project teams that solve clients' business and organizational challenges related to real estate business process, strategic planning, workplace strategy, and change management. She collaborates with organizations ranging from tech startups to Fortune 500 companies to optimize their real estate portfolios and create the most innovative work experiences.

In 2021, the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) announced the induction of Kay into its prestigious College of Fellows. Admission to the College of Fellows is the highest honor given by the IIDA and recognizes those whose design work has significantly influenced the profession.

The American Society of Interior Designers honored Kay with its "Designer of Distinction" award in the 2020 ASID National Awards. The award is bestowed on an ASID professional member who exemplifies a commitment to the profession as demonstrated by a significant body of work representing excellence in interior design.

Kay is on the international board of directors for AVIXA, the Audiovisual and Integrated Experience Association. She is co-chair for the ASID Foundation research task force and on the leadership team of IFMA's WE Workplace Evolutionaries and the advisory board of Work Design Magazine. She recently served on the board of directors for CoreNet Global and the International Federation of Interior Designers/Architects, and has served on the international boards of IIDA, ASID, NCQLP, IFI, and NCIDQ. She is an active member of ASID, IIDA, CoreNet Global, and IFMA.

Kay has authored numerous reports and articles on the workplace and has spoken at CoreNet, IFMA, and other industry events. CoreNet and Tradeline, Inc. both have honored her as a top-rated speaker. A mentor to many, she is a founding member of the D.C. chapter of UPWARD, which accelerates career advancement for executive women.

Honorees

2022 Advocacy Award

THE HONORABLE CHAIRMAN
ROBERT C. “BOBBY” SCOTT

&

THE HONORABLE
CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS



The 2022 Advocacy Award co-honorees are Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, House Committee on Education and Labor (VA-03), and Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05). Chairman Scott and Rep. McMorris Rodgers have been on the front lines of policy efforts impacting employment opportunities for people with disabilities, tirelessly fighting for a more just and equitable system that affirms the value and contributions people with disabilities make to our workforce and economy. Their bipartisan effort to eliminate section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which currently allows companies holding 14(c) certificates to subject employees with disabilities to timed productivity tests and pay them below the minimum wage, is a remarkable beacon of leadership.

“Empowering workers with disabilities is critical to achieving diversity, equity and inclusion – not only for our businesses – but for our communities. For too long, the 14(c) subminimum wage has denied equal opportunity for many workers with disabilities. I will continue to champion legislative solutions that would help businesses shift their business models to hire workers with disabilities and pay them the full federal minimum wage,” said Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott. “I am honored to receive this award and grateful to Melwood for raising awareness, providing resources, developing trainings, and forging partnerships so that all workers can succeed.”

“Disability employment is the next policy frontier to empower people with disabilities to live full and independent lives,” said Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers. “Unfortunately, people with disabilities struggle to find a job that gives them dignity, purpose, and the opportunity for a better life. I’m honored to receive this award and look forward to continuing to work in a bipartisan fashion to ensure more people – who are ready, willing, and able to work – find employment.”

Honorees

THE HONORABLE CHAIRMAN ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT



Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott has represented Virginia's third congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1993.

Prior to his service in Congress, he served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1978 to 1983, and in the Senate of Virginia from 1983 to 1993.

During his tenure in the Virginia General Assembly, Congressman Scott successfully sponsored laws critical to Virginians in education, employment, health care, social services, economic development, crime prevention, and consumer protection. His legislative successes in the state legislature included laws that increased Virginia's minimum wage, created the Governor's Employment and Training Council, and improved health care benefits for women, infants, and children.

Congressman Scott currently serves as the Chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor. In this capacity, he is advancing an agenda that improves equity in education, frees students from the burdens of crippling debt, protects and expands access to affordable health care, ensures workers have a safe workplace where they can earn a living wage free from discrimination, and guarantees seniors have a secure and dignified retirement.

From 2015 to 2018, he served as the ranking member of what was then called the Committee on Education and the Workforce and developed a strong record of working across the aisle to pass critical legislation. In 2015, he was one of the four primary authors of the Every Student Succeeds Act, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for the first time in 13 years and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act.

Congressman Scott is also a recognized champion of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and he has fought to protect the rights and civil liberties of all Americans. In 1997, he protected the right of all children with disabilities to obtain a free and appropriate education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by leading a successful effort to defeat amendments aimed at curtailing that right for some children. Congressman Scott also actively opposed passage of the USA PATRIOT Act and has been a leading critic of both Republican and Democratic Administrations' misuse of surveillance authorities. He is also a leading opponent in Congress of efforts to permit employment discrimination in federally funded programs.

Honorees

THE HONORABLE CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS



Cathy McMorris Rodgers is Eastern Washington's chief advocate in Congress, serving as the representative for the state's 5th Congressional District. Since first being elected to the House in 2004, she has earned the trust of her constituents and praise on Capitol Hill for her hard work, conservative principles, bipartisan outreach, and leadership to get results for Eastern Washington. Growing up on an orchard with a fruit stand in Kettle Falls, working at her family's small business, and later becoming a wife and working mom of three, Cathy has lived the American Dream. Now, she works every day to rebuild that dream for our children and grandchildren.

Cathy currently serves as the Republican Leader on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has broad jurisdiction over the issues that matter most to the people of Eastern Washington. As leader of this committee, Cathy is focused on delivering real results on everything from expanding access to rural broadband and improving healthcare to addressing climate change and securing America's energy independence.

Prior to leading in this role, Cathy served as Chair of the House Republican Conference from 2012 to 2018. She was the 200th woman ever elected to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives and the first woman to give birth three times while in office.

Cathy's top priority has always been to get results for the people of Eastern Washington that she has the honor of representing. Her mission is to restore trust and confidence in representative government and the rule of law, and lead as a trust-builder, ability-advocate, and unifying force for the hardworking men and women in Eastern Washington.

In 2006, Cathy married Brian Rodgers, a Spokane-native and retired 26-year Navy Commander. In 2007, she gave birth to Cole Rodgers. Cole was born with an extra 21st chromosome and inspired Cathy to become a leader in the disabilities community. She has since welcomed two daughters into the world – Grace Blossom (December 2010) and Brynn Catherine (November 2013).

Honorees

2022 Teamwork Award

REBECCA MEYERS



The 2022 Teamwork Award is awarded to Rebecca Meyers, two-time Paralympian and three-time gold medalist. In a brave act of self-advocacy, Meyers opted out of the 2020 Paralympics when her request to bring a personal care assistant was denied. Her decision not only inspired people with disabilities around the globe to know and advocate for their needs, but also spotlighted the important role of direct support professionals in creating a more inclusive world.

“As a Paralympian, nothing is more important to me than teamwork and creating truly inclusive spaces is a team effort,” said Meyers. “I’m thankful to receive this award from Melwood as we continue to raise awareness around the importance of self-advocacy, accommodations, and direct support professionals.”

Honorees



REBECCA MEYERS

PARALYMPIC SWIMMER, TEAM USA

Rebecca Meyers is a Paralympic swimmer for the United States. She won three gold and one silver medals in Rio 2016. She was also a member of the 2012 Paralympic Team, and won a silver and bronze in London. Rebecca Meyers has also competed at the 2009 Summer Deaflympics which was held in Taiwan, which is also her only appearance at the Deaflympics. She also clinched a bronze medal in the 4 × 200 m freestyle relay event in the 2009 Summer Deaflympics.

She has a total of 15 medals - 6 gold, 3 silver, and 3 bronze.

Meyers has Usher syndrome and has been deaf since she was born. Since she was young she has used a cochlear implant, an electronic device that allows her to hear. Meyers is also losing her vision to a disease called retinitis pigmentosa (RP), and has a Seeing Eye dog named Birdie, who helps her navigate the world.

In 2015 and 2017, Meyers received a Best Female Athlete with a Disability ESPY Award. She won gold in record time at the 2016 Summer Paralympics.

She grew up in Baltimore, attended Notre Dame Prep, and went on to graduate from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA where she studied history with a concentration in Disability Studies. She was a club swimmer with Loyola Blakefield Aquatics for eleven years. In 2012, she joined North Baltimore Aquatic Club where Michael Phelps trained. Becca then switched to Nation's Capital Swim Club located in Bethesda, MD, where she trains under Bruce Gemmell, Katie Ledecky's coach. She holds multiple world records in the S13 and S12 classes.

In June 2021 the US announced the 34 Paralympic swimmers who would be going to the delayed 2020 Summer Paralympics in Tokyo. The women's team was Meyers, Jessica Long, McKenzie Coan, Elizabeth Marks, and Mallory Weggemann. On July 20, 2021, Meyers withdrew from the Paralympics after being denied her request for a personal care assistant due to reduced allocation of staff members amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Honorees

2022 Impact Award

THE NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-
INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

accepted by

TONYA WILKERSON



The 2022 Impact Award honoree is the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). After being the first government agency to participate in the Neurodiverse Federal Workforce Pilot, NGA has demonstrated its commitment to expand opportunities for people with disabilities in the workforce. By embracing neurodiversity in the intelligence community, NGA has expanded understanding of the types of jobs people with disabilities can hold and the vital contributions they can make.

"We were pleased and honored to take part in the Neurodiverse Federal Workforce Pilot. Neurodiverse individuals are a valuable part of our workforce and we are learning more and more about how to leverage their unique skills and abilities," said NGA Deputy Director Tonya Wilkerson. "We hope to inspire other organizations across the public and private sectors to seek out populations that will add to the diversity and success of our team."

Honorees

TONYA WILKERSON

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



Tonya P. Wilkerson serves as the ninth Deputy Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Ms. Wilkerson brings a wealth of knowledge and over three decades of experience across the Intelligence Community, including leadership skills, experience across multiple mission areas, and deep expertise in the space sector.

From February to November 2021, Ms. Wilkerson served as the Associate Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency for Science and Technology/Strategy.

She also held many prominent positions within the National Reconnaissance Office spanning a range of activities, including research and development, acquisitions, and operations. Ms. Wilkerson served as a change management leader within the NRO during a time of significant and complex structural transition.

Ms. Wilkerson held simultaneous leadership roles in the NRO and CIA's Directorate of Science & Technology. She successfully leveraged her technical skills, combined with her background in space operations, to enhance technical capabilities within the DS&T.

Ms. Wilkerson holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a master's degree in engineering management from George Washington University.

Keynote Speaker



TARYN WILLIAMS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Taryn Mackenzie Williams is the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy. In this position, she advises the Secretary of Labor on how the Department's policies and programs impact the employment of people with disabilities and leads the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), which works with employers and all levels of government to promote evidence-based policy that improves employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities.

Previously, Williams was the managing director for the Poverty to Prosperity Program at American Progress, which works on progressive policies focused on a broad range of anti-poverty strategies. Before joining American Progress, she worked at ODEP on a variety of issues related to education, workforce policy, Social Security, Medicaid, and civil rights. In her role as director of youth policy, Williams led agency efforts to coordinate education and employment policy in support of improved labor force outcomes for disabled youth. From 2014 through 2016, Williams served as ODEP's chief of staff. She also undertook detail assignments as associate director for public engagement and liaison to the disability community at the White House from 2014 through 2015, and as a policy adviser on the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions from 2012 through 2013.

Prior to joining the federal government, Williams worked as the research coordinator for leadership programs at the Institute for Educational Leadership and as the director of programs at the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues headquartered in Chicago. She holds a bachelor's degree in public policy from Brown University and a master's degree in education with a concentration in administration, planning, and social policy from Harvard University. She resides in Washington, DC.

Master of Ceremonies

ALLISON SEYMOUR

ANCHOR, WUSA9



Allison Seymour is an Emmy® award-winning anchor who has been waking up viewers on morning news in her hometown of Washington, D.C. since 1999.

Allison started her career in television at the D.C. bureau of ABC News, behind the scenes, before earning her Master of Mass Communication from the University of South Carolina. She is a proud graduate of Hampton University, where she is enshrined in the Mass Media Hall of Fame.

Allison's on-air career began during the blizzard of 1993 in Upstate New York. She would go on to work in Utica, Binghamton, and Albany, New York. During the summer of 1998, Allison took an anchor position in St. Louis, Missouri where, on her first day on the job, she met her future husband, radio host Marc Clarke.

Allison is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Jack and Jill of America, Inc. She and her husband Marc share three daughters and two shelter pups.

Program Participants

BRAD SPENCER

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, MELWOOD



Mr. Spencer is a retired labor, employment, and nonprofit attorney. He was a partner at Gordon & Barnett (1987-2006) and associate at Bishop, Lieberman, Cook, Purcell & Reynolds (1986-1987), and Dickstein, Shapiro & Morin (1982-1986).

As a member of the American Bar Association Labor Section and Employee Benefits Subcommittee, Mr. Spencer has been a contributing author of the labor section's Employee Benefits Law treatise (BNA). Mr. Spencer is the former General Counsel and a current advisor to the board of Post-N-Track Corporation (the nation's premiere provider of e-commerce solutions in the healthcare field). After practicing for more than 20 years, Mr. Spencer suffered a brain injury that caused him to give up practicing litigation. Experiencing first-hand what it means to function with a disability, Mr. Spencer welcomed the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors of Linden Resources, where he chaired the Governance Committee. He was also integrally involved in the merger of Linden Resources into Melwood a few years ago.

Program Participants

LARYSA KAUTZ

PRESIDENT & CEO, MELWOOD



As President & CEO of Melwood, Larysa Kautz is a leading employer and advocate for people with disabilities headquartered in the DMV. Kautz brings nearly 20 years of experience in law, business, advocacy, and nonprofit management to the role, driving practical policy change to expand the field of employment for people with disabilities and create a more inclusive workplace for the future. Kautz has been instrumental in advocating for the abolition of Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows employers to pay workers with disabilities below minimum wage. Larysa previously served as Melwood's General Counsel and Chief of Staff.

After receiving her law degrees from Yale Law School (JD) and the Georgetown University Law Center (LLM, tax), Larysa focused her career on affordable housing development, venture philanthropy, and advising national and international nonprofits. Prior to joining Melwood, Larysa was a partner at the Schaner & Lubitz law firm and served as counsel at Bingham McCutchen (now Morgan Lewis).

As a first-generation American, a daughter of parents with invisible disabilities, and a mother of a child with autism, Larysa is passionate about Melwood's mission of inclusion and has been a fierce advocate for individuals with disabilities throughout her life. She founded Melwood's Advocacy department, which has significantly increased the organization's effectiveness at influencing policies and legislation that benefit the communities that Melwood serves, including people with disabilities and injured veterans. Larysa has also been instrumental in advocating for the abolition of Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows employers to pay workers with disabilities below minimum wage.

Larysa serves on the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board and the Arlington County Chamber of Commerce Board. She previously served as a consultant to President Obama's Office of White House Counsel, Virginia Governor Northam's Transition Team, the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) State Rehabilitation Council, the Foundation for the National Archives, and Lawyers for Good Government.

Larysa was named one of the 2017 Leading Women in Maryland by The Daily Record, has been honored by the Association of Corporate Counsel with the 2019 In-House Innovator Award, and is an alumna of the Arlington Leadership Center for Excellence.

Outside of work, Ms. Kautz enjoys sailing and ballroom dancing. She lives in Alexandria, VA, with her husband, Ryan; their son, Symon; and their dogs, Lucky and Ziggy.

Program Participants

SCOTT GIBSON



CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, MELWOOD

Scott Gibson is Melwood's Chief Strategy Officer. He joined Melwood in 2013, bringing more than a decade of public policy expertise, strategic planning leadership, and enterprise-wide human resources management to his role with the organization.

Gibson shapes Melwood's long-term strategic objectives helping the organization respond to market changes and drive service innovation. By forging partnerships with industry leaders and community stakeholders, he has launched innovative new programs such as *abilIT*, which prepares people with disabilities to launch careers in IT.

Gibson's leadership extends beyond Melwood. Governor Larry Hogan appointed Gibson to serve on the Community Health Resources Commission, a grant-making public body established by the Maryland General Assembly to expand access to health care services in underserved communities in Maryland. Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley appointed Gibson to serve as the Chair of the Finance Subcommittee of a Task Force to evaluate the City's proposed real estate transactions. Previous appointments have included the Boards of Directors of pension funds, employee benefits trusts, and regional non-profits.

In 2017, Gibson was honored by The Daily Record and named to its VIP List, which recognizes Maryland's leaders who are 40 years old or younger based on their professional accomplishments, community service, and a commitment to inspiring change.

Gibson is a graduate of Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program, as well as the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government, where he earned a Master's in Public Administration. At Fels, he was awarded the top prize for excellence in political leadership. Gibson earned his Bachelors of Arts from Mount St. Mary's University, where he later served as an adjunct professor of Political Science for 11 years.

Program Participants

JEWELYN COSGROVE

VP, GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC RELATIONS, MELWOOD



Jewelyn Cosgrove joined Melwood in 2021 as the Vice President of Government and Public Relations, bringing with her 15 years of experience in public policy, lobbying, and advocacy.

Throughout her long career in the field, Jewelyn has been passionate about reimagining how organizations train, empower, and recognize self-advocates. She leverages her vast experience in communications and government affairs to advance the stories of the unheard.

Cosgrove leads the effort to develop and maintain relationships with lawmakers at the federal, state, and local levels to advance and support policy priorities on behalf of Melwood and the communities we serve, including people with disabilities, injured veterans, and their support systems. Before arriving at Melwood, Cosgrove has worked on campaigns, in state government, for trade associations, and in media affairs.

Cosgrove holds a Masters in Public Policy from George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government in Arlington, Virginia after receiving her Bachelors degree from Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. She is also an alumnus of the Arlington Leadership Center for Excellence and the Public Affairs Council's Grassroots and PAC Certificate Program.

Outside of work, Cosgrove is passionate about elevating the needs of mothers and families. She serves as Treasurer of Raising Our Future Political Action Committee and as a coach for women returning to work after maternity leave. Her work has been focused on promoting and empowering parents to negotiate and advocate on their behalf. She lives in Ashburn, VA with her husband, Greg, two children, Adeline and Elijah, and two cats, Loki and Nero.

Program Participants

REBECCA CHERAQUIT

CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER, MELWOOD



Rebecca Cheraquit serves as the Chief Program Officer at Melwood. She was previously the Vice President of Community Services with Melwood and has held senior management positions in the nonprofit and social services fields for 20 years.

Over the last decade, her focus has been job readiness and job retention for young adults and adults with disabilities. Her professional journey began in New York City, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from City University of New York at Brooklyn College.

In 2000, Ms. Cheraquit completed a Master of Science degree in Social Work at Columbia University School of Social Work with a concentration in clinical work, and she holds an LMSW license as a social worker. Ms. Cheraquit successfully managed alternative education programs in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education. In these roles, she also demonstrated her ability to lead grassroots advocacy efforts to affect public policy.

About seven years ago, Ms. Cheraquit moved to Maryland and joined the Melwood team as the Director of Vocational Support Services. She turned Melwood's Vocational Support Services program into an industry-leading operation with an emphasis on process and professional development. In 2016, she was selected as the Vice President of the Community Services Division, responsible for approximately 15 programs and services and 300 staff members.

Ms. Cheraquit will continue to lead the development of new and innovative programs to better serve people with disabilities by growing opportunities for community integration.

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MELWOOD'S abilIT

In partnership with Cybrary, abilIT leads participants through an intensive training program consisting of technical training and professional and personal development. abilIT is designed to ensure participants are equipped with both the know-how and soft skills necessary to join and succeed on any project team.

With approximately 350,000 unfilled positions in the computer science industry, the demand for entry level technology staff has never been higher, while people with disabilities remain underemployed. abilIT offers a solution to leverage the untapped potential and talent of people with disabilities while creating an opportunity for meaningful employment through a top-quality IT workforce solution to those who want to benefit from a neurodiverse workforce.

Since 1996, the Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) has helped millions of Americans find jobs and produced over \$1 billion in tax savings to employers who hire people with disabilities. Through this program, Melwood can help employers maximize this added benefit while working with people with disabilities to launch their careers.

Melwood's abilIT is a 14-week program offered in partnership with Cybrary, creator of the most extensive massive open online course (MOOC) in the cybersecurity arena. By pairing innovative, highly technical training with personalized soft skills instruction, abilIT equips participants with the skills they need to build lifelong careers as competitive technology professionals through job search assistance, placement, and on-the-job coaching.

During weeks 1-5, students participate in an IT Fundamentals Assessment. In the remaining weeks, students choose a skilled track to pursue, including options such as IT Systems, App Dev, and Microsoft Office. After completing the course, students will be prepared to sit for A+ certification, Network+ certification, and Security+ certification, which can lead to entry-level jobs in IT career fields. Melwood also works to connect abilIT with employers who have been trained on team integration and creating an inclusive environment that encourages employees to succeed.



MELWOOD'S BUILDING PATHS

In partnership with the College of Southern Maryland, Building Paths consists of both construction pre-apprenticeship credentialing and professional development training. The program is designed to ensure participants are equipped with the technical know-how to enter the construction and skilled trades field through a job or apprenticeship program.

The skilled trades continue to have a high demand for workers, while people with disabilities remain underemployed, pointing to a natural solution – leveraging the untapped potential and talent of people with disabilities while creating an opportunity for meaningful employment.

Since 1996, the Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) has helped millions of Americans find jobs and produced over \$1 billion in tax savings to employers who hire people with disabilities. Through this program, Melwood can help employers maximize this added benefit while working with people with disabilities to launch their careers.

Melwood's Building Paths is a 14-week program offered in partnership with the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) through their Workforce Center and the Maryland Center for Environmental Training. Training is held at the Melwood Country Lane campus in Waldorf, Maryland and at the CSM campus in Hughesville. College coursework is delivered online with in-person facilitation. Additionally, there is an in-person Construction Core Lab class designed to develop construction trade application skills. The college training will follow the CSM construction pre-apprenticeship credentialing. A post-instruction career development phase follows the 14-week instruction.



60th Anniversary Campaign: Built for This Moment

Melwood is incredibly proud of its past but remains focused on the future and what lies ahead for people with disabilities in the greater Washington, DC region, particularly in Charles and Prince George's Counties in Maryland, and Arlington and Fairfax Counties in Virginia.

Melwood is launching its 60th Anniversary Campaign: Built for This Moment. This \$5 million fundraising and awareness-building campaign has a bold vision and requires an increased investment in Melwood to build more inclusive communities in our region. The Campaign will bring key influencers, community leaders, donors, and Melwood constituents together to raise awareness of the problems Melwood is working to solve and fund strategic projects in the region.

The Need

Disability impacts all of us. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four adults in the U.S. lives with a disability. COVID-19 shed light on the longstanding disparities that people with disabilities face, including limited employment opportunities and a lack of options for community living. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was adopted in 1990 to remove barriers to full inclusion and promote full independence and participation in society. Over the last several decades, organizations like Melwood have made remarkable progress, but we still have a long way to go to dismantle centuries of systemic mischaracterization, discrimination, and isolation of people with disabilities.

Why Melwood?

Melwood has an evidenced-based track record of helping people with disabilities secure and retain employment and thrive in their communities.

- Serves as one of the largest employers of people with disabilities in the country, employing nearly 1,000 people with disabilities, creating meaningful job opportunities across a wide variety of industries.
- Offers career exploration, job training, and coaching programs that empower people with disabilities to live, work, and thrive in their communities. This includes programs like abilIT, Building Paths, and youth initiatives such as Camp Accomplish, an inclusive camp for children with and without disabilities.
- Partners with employers to create pipelines for talent, break down barriers in the hiring process, and train leaders and managers on how to create a workplace where everyone can be successful.
- Advocates for federal, state, and local policies that support fully inclusive workplaces and communities, including fair and competitive pay, pipelines for career exploration and advancement, and opportunities to build wealth.

60th Anniversary Campaign Built for This Moment

Join Us

Melwood has been here since the 1960s, learning, growing, connecting, and advocating. We have partnered with Fortune 500 companies, community organizations, schools, policymakers, and more to dismantle stereotypes and deconstruct barriers through revolutionary programs, partnerships, and legislation. We have the expertise, history, and vision to do this – now we need your help. Be our partners in this moment.

Let's reimagine the workforce of the future and build a more inclusive society together. With your support, we can ensure that Melwood and people with disabilities are not only part of today's diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations, but shaping them.

Melwood's vision for a world that is fully inclusive of people with disabilities has not yet been achieved for far too many. People with disabilities have been overlooked for far too long – now is the time to step up and it starts with us.

To start the conversation, please contact Heather Sherman at Hsherman@melwood.org or 301-599-4512.