

**Commission for Rehabilitation Services Meeting Report
Communications Office 04/12/21
People with Disabilities Awareness Day Report**

Communications Team: Brett Freeman, Brett Jones, Cathy Martin, Rachel McLemore, Dana Tallon and Jody Harlan.

For 26 years, DRS' People with Disabilities Awareness Day has assembled more than 11,500 Oklahomans with disabilities to engage lawmakers and share their stories about education, employment and other services that lead to productive lives.

The 2021 event on March 9 was virtual due to COVID-19 safety concerns and state Capitol construction; so the Communications Team explored options for making PWDAD a virtual success.



We asked participant to visit <https://oklahoma.gov/okdrs.html> to pre-register, get more information and enter a positive testimonial contest. Those who entered the contest had the option to answer three, short questions that helped them explore and share positive experiences.



Brett Jones designed the PWDAD logo, the Facebook frame and award certificates. He also wrote event media releases, Breaking Barriers newsletter stories and created the 2021 Annual Report in standard and accessible formats.

Cathy Martin mailed the annual report to legislators and elected leaders.

Dana Tallon created and updated the PWDAD website and collaborated with Brett Jones to design a contest entry form.

Dana also managed the PWDAD email list which included DRS staff, past exhibitors, community partners and participants from the current and previous years.

Cathy and Brett Freeman answered many questions and provided information about virtual PWDAD.

Rachel McLemore researched all the legislators' social media handles.

On March 8th, the Commission for Rehabilitation Services and DRS executive director launched PWDAD by honoring four Oklahomans who received DRS services: Jacob Fehr representing Vocational Rehabilitation, Christi Evans for Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Ben Middleton for Oklahoma School for the Blind, and Isaiah Holt for Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

Dana and Rachel had already scheduled posts celebrating award winners on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) accounts. Jody notified award winners and their legislators so they could share posts on their own social media.

Jody coordinated with award winners, managed the ceremony, wrote the script and award winners' media releases, and set up their media interviews.

Jonathan Cook from DRS Human Resources Development produced a PWDAD award video, which we emailed to winners and posted on social media.

On March 9, more of Dana and Rachel's posts began spotlighting 12 DRS social media contest winners between 8 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Again, Jody notified winners and their legislators to increase social media traffic.

PWDAD supporters and DRS staff posted selfies wearing traditional PWDAD green with our hashtag #PWDAD2021.

In conclusion, the Communications Team and loyal PWDAD participants faced challenges in 2021. Virtual PWDAD felt like we were going back to 1994 when the Capitol event was just beginning. This year, Dale Rogers Training Center – DRTC – posted dozens of awesome photos on social media with #PWDAD2021 signs, but also shared that their clients missed going to the state Capitol. So did we, but together we kept the event alive and are already preparing for the 27th People with Disabilities Awareness Day 2022 on March 8th.