



# NEWS RELEASE

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## NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH KICKS OFF IN OCTOBER

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK – Workforce Oklahoma is proud to announce that October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This annual event, which observed its sixtieth anniversary last year, is an effort to educate Americans about issues related to disability and employment. The theme for 2006 is “Americans with Disabilities: Ready for the Global Workforce.”

"This year's theme reflects the fact that increasing the opportunities for Americans with disabilities in the workforce can produce far-reaching, positive results for employers," said Roy Grizzard, assistant secretary of labor for the Office of Disability Employment Policy. In an address to human resource and marketing professionals in New York City this past summer, Grizzard presented the business case for hiring people with disabilities. "There are more educated and better prepared workers with disabilities than ever before," he said. "Right now businesses have the opportunity to tap into a young and growing talent pool" of more than 1.5 million U.S. college students who identify themselves as having one or more disabilities, he told attendees.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that more than one-fifth of working-age Oklahomans (ages 16 to 64), or approximately 440,450 individuals, have disabilities. Workforce Oklahoma centers across the state can assist Oklahomans with disabilities in finding and preparing for employment. Available resources include Americans with Disabilities Act technical assistance, job accommodations, Social Security Work Incentives and training. For employers, Workforce Oklahoma can help retain valued employees with disabilities, expand the available labor pool by targeting those with disabilities, and provide other types of assistance, such as tax incentives.

This observance began in 1945, when Congress set aside the first week in October of each year to recognize workers with disabilities and the barriers they face. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

To contact the nearest Workforce Oklahoma center, customers can call (888) 980-9675 (WORK). Please join Workforce Oklahoma in recognizing October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

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