

# CAREERS & the disabled

THE CAREER MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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## Melding Science & Business

Employers Make  
Strides In the  
Computer Arena

Retailers Sell  
Career Options  
To Graduates

How To Stay  
Positive In Your  
Job-Search Journey

John Sage  
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CAREERS  
& the disabled  
MAGAZINE'S  
*Career Expo*  
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### NTID News

Here are news developments from the National Institute for the Deaf (NTID), a college of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). NTID is the first and largest technological college in the world for students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. One of eight colleges of RIT, NTID offers educational programs and access and support services to the 1,100 deaf and hard-of-hearing students from around the world who study, live, and socialize with 14,400 hearing students on RIT's Rochester, NY, campus.

•Explore Your Future, a six-day, summer career awareness program that gives high-school juniors with hearing loss the opportunity to experience college life and perform hands-on activities related to different career choices will take place at RIT this summer. Each year, some 200 students get a taste of real-world careers within the business, computer, engineering, science, and art fields. Evenings are spent meeting other students from around the country and participating in organized social events such as dances, multicultural dinners, and visits to local points of interest. On the final day of each session, parents attend a workshop that helps them prepare their student for life after high school.

•Girls who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, girls who are entering 8th grade, and who are interested in science, technology, engineering, and math attend Tech Girlz, a new summer camp at NTID. Tech Girlz is designed to help girls learn and think about jobs and careers in science and technology. Campers learn through hands-on activities such as building their own computer to take home, discovering the secrets of roller coaster design, and becoming a commander on a simulated mission to Mars. They also will meet other girls with similar interests, get their own lab coat, and engage in social activities. Camp classes are

taught in English and in sign language.

•Five student winners of a Haiku poetry contest sponsored by NTID visited Japan in a cultural exchange funded by the Postsecondary Education Network-International (PEN), an NTID grant program dedicated to bringing 21st Century technology to deaf college students in developing countries. The contest, begun by PEN-International in 2001 as a way to bring culture to a program whose main focus is on technology, is named after NTID professor emeritus Robert Panara. NTID students Stephen McDonald, Sam Sepah, Jessica Thurber, Jack Williams, and Christopher Zahnel, accompanied by faculty and staff members Jerome Cushman, Luane Davis Haggerty, Aaron Weir Kelstone, Debra Makowski, and Ethan Sinnott visited Japan.

### ECSU Intern

By Dwight Bachman

When Kevin Pratt '06, a student with a disability, wanted to do an internship in the office of university relations here at Eastern Connecticut State University, I wondered how in the world he would pull it off. Kevin uses a wheelchair and has limited use of his hands. How would he hold the phone to do interviews, how would he take pictures or type stories? I quickly found out.

Kevin rolled into our office that first day like a wave rushing to shore. With him was Amy Buick, his notetaker. One of my questions was already answered. Kevin was using his best natural resource—another cheerful Eastern student—to gather information. Kevin finished his first assignment more quickly than any previous student intern in our office, and his story appeared in the *Willimantic Chronicle* two days later. When I showed it to him, he thought nothing of it. "What did you expect? This is me you're dealing with!"

The message is simple, and Pam Starr, director of AccessAbility Services at Eastern, says it best: "People need to understand that a person with a disability is a person first and not their disability. He or she is not victim, not 'crippled' or 'handicapped.'"

Nearly 50 million Americans have impairments—physical, mental, hearing, speech, or visual impairments; diabetes; severe forms of arthritis; hypertension; cerebral palsy; epilepsy; HIV and AIDS; learning disabilities; ADHD; brain injuries—the list goes on. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) describes someone with a disability as a person whose condition "substantially limits one or more major life activities."

One of the major challenges facing persons with disabilities is the attitude other people have about them. Starr says that education is the key to prevent discrimination and harassment of people with disabilities. She cites an example of a professor who harbored a stereotypical attitude about a student with a disability who was taking her 400-level class. The professor called Starr, concerned the student might not be able to complete the course and asked for the student's SAT scores. "The professor was shocked to learn the student had a combined SAT score in the 1,400–1,500 range."

Starr bridges the gap between ignorance and understanding at Eastern. Her major hands-on education program began six years ago with students in professor Charlie Chatterton's sport and leisure management class, and has spread to include resident assistants, student orientation counselors, and other faculty and staff.

"Imagine yourself in a wheelchair having to navigate your way across campus to get a book from the library," she notes. "I have students figure out how to retrieve the book from the top shelf of the library without getting out of the wheelchair. To become more