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Opportunities, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization committed to serving adults with disabilities.



**Prince Georges County Provider Council Acknowledges Achievements of Individuals with Disabilities**

In October, the Prince George’s County Provider Council hosted its fourth annual employment awards breakfast. The event is an opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of individuals with disabilities, their support staff and the area businesses that have provided meaningful employment opportunities to our participants. The audience was touched as individuals shared their stories of overcoming adversity in order to secure and maintain employment.

Opp Inc. participant, Dominique Thaxton, was honored for her hard work in maintaining her job and pursuing the education needed to secure her future dream job. Opp Inc. employment specialist, Cassandra Coates, was also honored for her hard work in supporting the individuals we serve. Cassandra has been job coaching and job developing for the past 15 years and has helped numerous individuals



find and secure job placements.

Opp Inc. Business Development Specialist, LaVerne Bridges was on the committee for planning the breakfast and played an important role in the success of the event.

~Tenille Ademiluyi, Executive Director

**A Special “Thank You” to Our Partners**

“Opportunities, Inc. would like to acknowledge our community partners and say thank you for working with our participants in the community this year. We appreciate your efforts to assist us with accomplishing our “Employment First” goals, and hope we can continue to serve each other. **Thank you!**”

**Barber Academy, BARCS (Animal shelter), Cadia Nursing Home, Capital Area Food Bank, Community Kitchen, DC**

**Central Kitchen, Habitat for Humanity, Heart Market, Horse Farm, Marshalls, Manna Foods, Meals on Wheels, Out of the Box (Thrift Store), Planet Fitness, Salvation Army, Sheppard’s Table, St. Peters Church, TJ Maxx, Warm Hearts, Wider Circle, and WUMCO.**

~Michelle King, Vocational Counselor

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**Special points of interest:**

- The audience was touched as individuals shared their stories of overcoming adversity in order to secure and maintain employment.
- Participants Celebrate National Disability Awareness Month.
- “Dress for Success” week teaches participants the importance of maintaining a professional appearance and good hygiene.

# Programs

## Employment Success

Some individuals have been pursuing their employment goals by searching for possible places of employment, interviewing, and taking professional development courses. Their efforts have paid off. The following Opportunities, Inc. participants have been recently hired to work in the community:

- Rafael Lartey – Planet Fitness (Germantown & Gaithersburg) | Cleaner
- Jennifer Griggs – TJ Maxx | Merchandise Associate
- Alison Silverstein – TJ Maxx | Merchandise Associate
- Melody McGuire – Salvation Army | Red Kettle Bell Ringer
- John Pedersen – Salvation Army | Red Kettle Bell Ringer

We congratulate them on their success and look forward to supporting other participants in reaching their goal. ~Elle Sojourner, Community Development Specialist

## Job Club Graduation

On October 19, 2018, the inaugural Job Club Fundamentals class celebrated their graduation at Outback Steakhouse. Each participant completed a 7 session course that covered topics such as interview skills, self-advocacy, implementing feedback, and ideal work conditions. Job Club participants were awarded Certificates of Achievement.

During the course, some participants secured employment. Others moved on to the Advanced Job Club which takes the classroom learning into the community for real life application. Please join us in celebrating the following individuals for their dedication to enrichment and employment goals:

**Jennifer Hernandez, Mark Kokiko, Ryan Lewis, Max Neloms, Melynda Pawulak, and Albert Ryu.**

~Elle Sojourner, Community Development Specialist



## Have You Heard?

Our TIP Grant is coming to a close! Over the past year, we have been working diligently alongside Subject Matter Expert, Corey Smith, to improve opportunities for employment for the individuals we serve. The TIP Grant funding has allowed us to receive trainings, expand our employment services, and develop clear policies and procedures surrounding customized employment.

Over the grant period, 11 Opportunities, Inc. participants secured integrated and competitive employment positions in the community! We are very excited about the progress made and know this is just the beginning.

For more information, please contact Erin Fig, Director of Operations at [efig@opportunities-inc.com](mailto:efig@opportunities-inc.com).

## Participants Celebrate National Disability Awareness Month

Mr. Donnell Boone, Jr. and Mr. Mark Byamugisha joined in celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month at the US Department of Labor in Washington DC.

US Secretary of Labor, Alexander Acosta, talked about “Working Works”, a campaign for Disability Employment. The Public Service Announcement was a video about people with disabilities and the challenges. Mark and Donnell were thrilled to watch Cal Ripken, formerly of the Baltimore Orioles on the video as taking an active role to help employers and individuals shape positive attitudes and hire people with disabilities.

Donnell and Mark really enjoyed every aspect of this event.

~Vicky Geiger, Job Coach

## Opportunities, Inc. Supports the Mental Health Association Through An Event with Planet Fitness, Germantown



In October, Opportunities, Inc. had the chance to participate in a virtual 5k run/walk with Planet Fitness in support of the Mental Health Association with evidence-based research on how different forms of holistic treatments support a healthy lifestyle. Our participants had a wonderful time walking on the treadmills while Planet Fitness personal trainers encouraged them to complete 1 mile!

~Kristin Nelson, Community Development Coordinator

# In the Know

## Meet the Counselors

Opportunities, Inc.'s Lanham Office is excited to introduce its participants, parents, providers, staff and CCSs to our new Vocational Counselors - Muna Fodys and Lauren Pearson. Muna and Lauren joined Opportunities, Inc.'s team only a few months ago, but both have already demonstrated a genuine care for the wellbeing of our participants and the agency's success and prosperity.



participants with home management tasks, provided daily counseling and mental health support. When Muna was asked about her challenges she has faced so far and growth goals, she stated "I am looking forward to

taking trainings and webinars in an effort to advance my communication skills with parents and providers." Muna also emphasized that she enjoys working with Opp.Inc.'s participants and being a part of their lives and growth. Her goal is to get a Master's Degree in Social

Work and continue to provide support our participants.

Lauren is an innovative and highly motivated counselor who has a great passion for assisting Opp.Inc.'s participants to achieve their career goals and dreams. Lauren has four years of experience working with individuals with special needs. As a Rehabilitation Counselor, she facilitated groups based on topics of interest for individuals which include, anger management, social skills, crocheting, past/present/future portraits, stress reduction, and creating boundary groups. As a

residential counselor, she provided strategies to de-escalate household disputes and worked with individuals who experienced suicidal thoughts. Lauren is currently working on her Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling with the hope of becoming a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and opening her own practice. When Lauren was asked about her favorite part of the job, she stated "I enjoy working with participants and learning more about them. They brighten my day. My coworkers offer a lot of support if I need assistance with anything." Lauren also added that all of Opp Inc.'s participants are wonderful people with unique skills, interests, and goals, and she is still learning coping skills that work for each participant during dilemmas.

Both Muna and Lauren have a great deal of passion and enthusiasm to help Opp Inc.'s participants become self-sufficient and independent members of society and pursue their good life. There is no doubt Opp Inc. will benefit from the knowledge and experience the new counselors will bring to the agency and the impact they will have on the participants. ~ *Elena Laun, Program Manager*

## Planet Fitness Donated Equipment

Opportunities, Inc. is very thankful for the recent equipment donations from Planet Fitness. With these donations, more individuals have the opportunity to exercise in-house and also have the opportunity to learn transferable work skills such as cleaning the equipment. Thank you, Planet Fitness!



~*Kristin Nelson, Community Development Coordinator*

## Opportunities, Inc. Holiday Schedule

### Christmas Holiday

*Holiday Party.* Opp Inc. will close at 2pm.

Friday, December 21—

Monday, December 24—Closed

Tuesday, December 25—Closed

Wednesday, December 26—Closed

Thursday, December 27—OPEN

Friday, December 28—OPEN

Monday, December 31—Closed

Tuesday, January 1—Closed

**Tuesday, January 2—OPEN**

Opp Inc. follows the Montgomery County Public Schools' Policy for the Germantown location and the Prince George's County Public Schools' Policy for the Lanham location regarding inclement weather. If you have questions or concerns, please call Germantown (240-686-0866) or Lanham (301-731-4242).

## Highlights

# DRESS FOR SUCCESS

“Dress For Success” Week is a new initiative that occurs once a month. The goal is to educate participants about the importance of appropriate dress in the workplace and maintaining good hygiene. We want participants to know these skills are necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment, and building confidence.

The “Dress For Success” week focuses on “business casual” clothing that could be worn across a multitude of professions. Participants were encouraged not to wear t-shirts, shorts or sweatpants. Every morning, those who participated had their pictures taken and were given awards at the end of the week. Don’t they look professional?!



~Beverly M. Powell,  
Vocational Counselor



### Celebrating Those Who Support Individuals With Disabilities

This year, Opp Inc. celebrated National Direct Support Professional Week. September 9-15, 2018 marked the week where staff all over the country are recognized for the amazing work they do to support individuals with disabilities.

At Opp Inc, these direct support professionals teach work skills, monitor goals, provide in the moment feedback, assist with goal implementation and help with conflict resolution. As we all know, it is the little things that make a big difference in the lives of the individuals we serve. Our direct support staff understand this and do a wonderful job of helping our individuals move along their path to greater independence.

Opp Inc support staff received an appreciation award as well as special acknowledgment from their supervisors and the individuals they serve. Opp Inc. is

very fortunate to have staff that care deeply and often go beyond the call of duty to support our mission.



### Winter Wellness

The fall’s vacillating weather has produced the early onset of colds and other illnesses. Opportunities, Inc.

encourages good daily hygiene amongst staff and participants including hand



washing and sanitizing, fist bumps in lieu of handshakes and high fives, and sneezing into the elbow instead of the hand. Along with this frontline germ defense, we would like to maintain group winter wellness by encouraging participants to stay at home if they are experiencing a possible contagion, virus or bacterial illness. They may include fever, chills or sweats; achiness, rash, vomiting or diarrhea; a new persistent cough; and/or unusual exhaustion.

Some illnesses are contagious prior to the most serious symptoms occurring. If a participant has any of the above symptoms (not associated with a current medical condition), we encourage them to stay at home and take good care of themselves. This expedites healing and allows the staff and other participants to stay well.

~Elle Sojourner, Community Development Specialist



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**Established 1964**

*About Us*

Opportunities, Inc. assists adults with disabilities allowing them to achieve their fullest potential for independence and self-confidence. Our services include supported employment, employment focused training and support, and community inclusion activities.



At Opportunities, Inc., our participants are excited about discovering new employment opportunities and spending more time in the community.

The Achievement Award recognizes individuals for their outstanding participation in the services we offer, and encourages our participants to reach higher to obtain employment goals and/or spend more time in the community.

Individuals are nominated by staff and can earn the Achievement Award for things such as taking steps towards getting a job or finding employment, advocating positively for themselves, trying something new, volunteering, completing travel training, taking the public bus for the first time, dressing appropriately, being helpful at a worksite, and much more.

Please join us as we acknowledge and congratulate the recipients of the Achievement Award for this quarter:

**Melissa H., Perry S., Meghan M., Jarvis G., Darryl M., Dante P., Candace B., Keith J., and Tina A. (Lanham), and Clinton R., Ed L., Steven G., Brandon C., Fred R., Max N., Linda D., Alex B., and Jacob W. (Germantown)**

We are so proud of each and everyone of you for taking the first steps toward independence and reaching higher than ever before!

*~Beverly M. Powell, Vocational Counselor*



*“Reinventing Opportunities”*

Plan a visit to Opportunities, Inc. and take a tour. We are excited about our new community programs, and would love to show you around.

Lanham—301-731-4242  
Germantown—240-686-0866



Drivers Wanted  
Germantown, MD  
Part-Time Split Shift  
\$12.50 per hour  
Contact: Stacey Thomas  
240-686-0866 ext. 237

**START IMMEDIATELY!**