

## PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Media Contact:  
Mark Tannenbaum  
Director, Marketing and Communications  
(202) 274-3409  
mtannenbaum@sjcs.org

### **St. John's Community Services Recognizes March as Developmental Disability Awareness Month**

**Washington, D.C.** Nearly 25 years ago, the proclamation declaring March as Developmental Disability Awareness Month called for people to offer encouragement and opportunities to people with disabilities so that they could lead productive and fulfilling lives. While significant progress has been made, cuts in government funding threaten needed programs and services, and many challenges to full participation persist especially in the area of employment.

Since its founding over 143 years ago, St. John's Community Services has been committed to the belief that people with disabilities are valuable, contributing members of our communities. St. John's has pioneered non-facility, community-based employment and day services for adults and youth transitioning into the workplace. Through these efforts, we know that while many employers have become increasingly aware of the untapped resource available to them, thousands of hard working and dedicated people with disabilities remain unemployed.

As of February 2011 (Department of Labor Statistics), 20.6 percent of people with disabilities were in the labor force. By contrast, 69.5 percent of persons with no disability were in the labor force. The unemployment rate for those with disabilities was 15.4 percent and 9.3 percent for persons with no disability. These figures have not significantly changed over the past two decades.

In July 2010, President Obama marked the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by signing Executive Order 13548 to increase the recruitment, hiring and retention of people with disabilities in the nation's largest employer, the federal government. Now, as the economic recovery moves forward, we call on employers in the private sector to make the same commitment. This month is a reminder that by welcoming people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities to work, live and contribute alongside their peers and neighbors we can build stronger and more inclusive communities.

St. John's Community Services, founded in 1868, is a non-profit, non-denominational agency that is dedicated to *advancing community support and opportunities for people living with disabilities*. SJCS provides community living, employment, community participation and educational services to over 400 adults and children in Washington, DC, Virginia, Tennessee and Pennsylvania. ([www.sjcs.org](http://www.sjcs.org))

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