

# Disability awareness week

## HELPING STUDENTS AND STAFF NAVIGATE COLLEGIATE LIFE WITH DISABILITIES

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Disability is a term that society hears frequently and, depending on the inflection, can be a word that shackles those it affects both emotionally and physically.

Thanks to Clackamas Community College's Disability Resource Center and the heaps of information and opportunities they provide for all, students with disabilities on campus are looking at a brighter future regardless of whatever impairment they bring to the table.

Last week the DRC hosted Disability Awareness Week, shedding light on those affected by disabilities and how we as a community can help them succeed. Filled with speakers, booths and movies the week helps students and faculty educate themselves on the topic.

Makayla Blackburn, a student and peer assistant at the DRC, first brought the idea to life in an office meeting — the goal was to come up with ways to properly bring awareness to the subject of disability.

"We were talking about things that we wanted to do and this was one of them. We weren't expecting it to be as big as it ended up," Blackburn said. "We ended up having four speakers. We had activities that would simulate what it would be like to have a specific disability such as dyslexia or schizophrenia to bring understanding and awareness to it because it's hard to understand things that people can't see."

The DRC focuses primarily on accommodating students with disabilities offering assistance with course sign ups, schedule planning, communicating with instructors and more. It serves as a safe haven where students can relax and plan their steps carefully and accordingly. Christina Bruck,

disability coordinator for the DRC, has spent the last three years rebuilding the program from the ground up in hopes of instilling the fact that education doesn't have to stop at high school no matter who you are.

"There's this sort of culture where in society, intellectual ability for example, you're lucky if you get through high school and you have no choice to go to college and that's just not true," said Bruck. "The great thing about Clackamas is that there's this overall goal of wanting to see students succeed. Our faculty and administration are really supportive of students with disability."

David Green, First Year Experience instructor and counselor, is a proponent of the DRC and how it gives back to the community. According to Green, the DRC is a key factor in helping those with disabilities strive for excellence.

"The students that I teach that experience disabilities are some of the hardest working students I know," Green said. "Thanks to our Disability Resource Center, these students can succeed in school and in life."

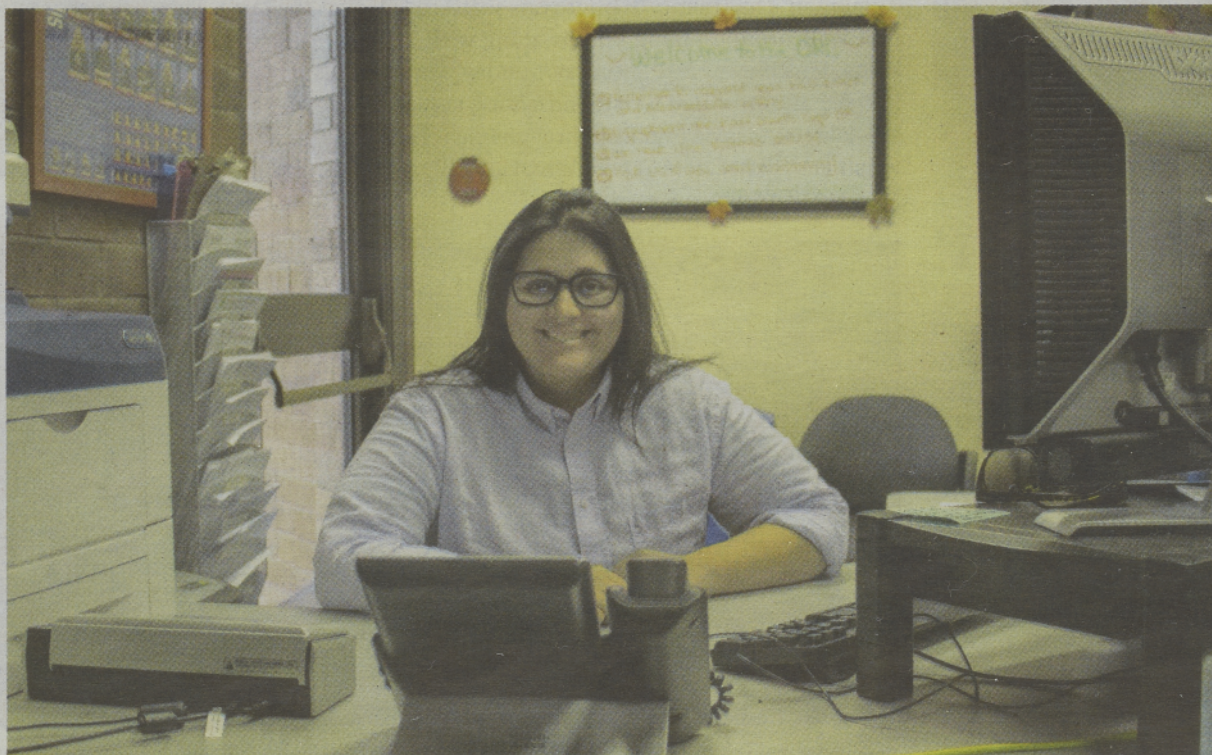
Assistive technology also plays a large part in the outcome of students efforts, and without the progress that has been made today the number of students with disabilities attending college would not be as impressive as they are today.

Universal design is the prime concept, and more steps are being taken to give students the access and resources they need to perform well. Closed captioning, reader pens and voice recognition programs are only a few of the resources that students utilize, though the community shouldn't view these as tools that only the disabled can make use of.

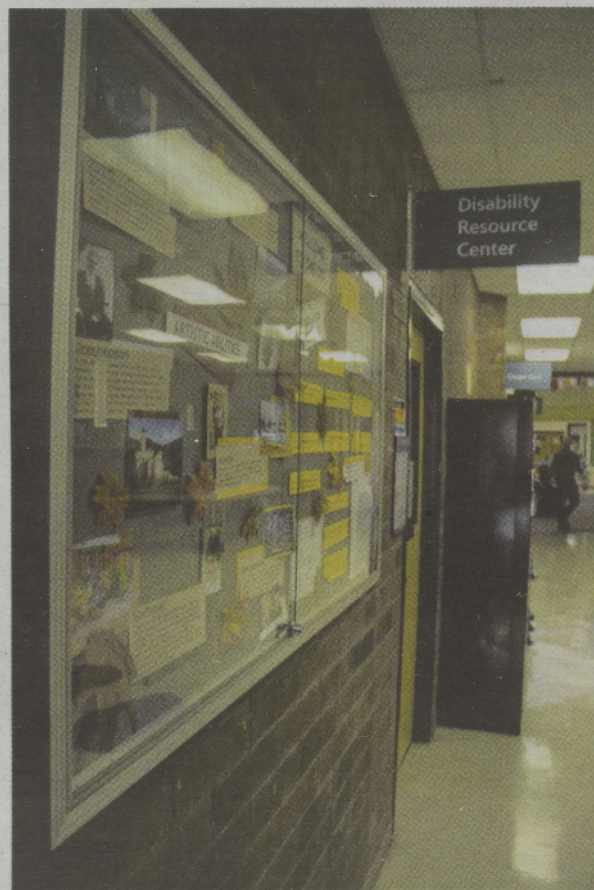
Felicia Arce, Assistive Technology Specialist for the DRC, believes that implementing these technologies on a wider scale can help to broaden students understanding of how the benefits of these tools can be shared by all.

"I want to do more of an approach of really widening people's ability to learn. If everyone's using assistive technologies, not just people with disabilities, then it's more acceptable for everybody," Arce said. "Because once we break that barrier and help people realize that there's a lot of different ways that you can learn, then it'll help others feel more comfortable."

Photos by Jonathan Villagomez



Felicia is the Assistive Technology Specialist for the Disability Resource Center.



The entrance to the Disability Resource Center, top, displays prominent artists with disabilities.

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*-Felicia Arce*