



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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THE MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (MOPD) ASPIRE CHICAGO AND MICROSOFT TO ANNOUNCE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

CHICAGO_– The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) is partnering with Microsoft and Aspire Chicago on a 6-month mentorship program connecting mentors with mentees who have disabilities. Mentees are connected to mentors who work at Microsoft and gain an introduction to the field of technology. Aspire Chicago facilitated identifying mentees and helped to match individuals to mentors from Microsoft.

"This partnership with Microsoft and Aspire Chicago will make a tremendous difference in the lives of Chicagoans who are living with a disability," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Through mentorship opportunities, these residents will gain more independence, new skills, and explore employment opportunities in the technology sector. I'm proud of Commissioner Arfa and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities' work to make our city more inclusive and accessible."

"MOPD is thrilled to provide this partnership with Microsoft and Aspire Chicago. Mentorship is a key role in increasing pathways and advancing growth and learning opportunities for both mentors and mentees and will encourage individuals with disabilities to pursue employment opportunities in the technology field," said Commissioner Rachel Arfa of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

MOPD works to make Chicago the most accessible city in the world through systemic change, information and referral, education and training, public policy, and direct services. This partnership aims to be the first of many employment-related programs through MOPD's new employment center.

Aspire is a non-profit organization that provides services to children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families in Illinois and Wisconsin. Aspire has a variety of programs, including employment, independent living, life skills coaching, and family enrichment. The organization aims to promote inclusion for people with disabilities within the community.



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Clare Killy, Vice President of Digital Experiences at Aspire, states “Aspire is proud to partner with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities and Microsoft to launch this mentorship program focusing on careers in the technology sector. This collaboration will provide tremendous professional development opportunities for mentors and mentees alike. It also represents the benefit of businesses and community organizations collaborating to advance inclusive employment in technology. We’re grateful to be a part of this innovative initiative to create new opportunities for people with disabilities and strengthen workforce diversity.”

Microsoft Corporation is a technology company that produces computer software, electronics, computers, and related technology services. Microsoft’s Disability Employee Resource Group, Disability at Microsoft, enables employees and customers with disabilities to have access to and build accessible and inclusive products, as well as to promote an inclusive work atmosphere.

Global Director of Philanthropies for Microsoft Corporation, Adam J. Hecktman, says, “Microsoft’s mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. One of the ways we fulfill this ambition is through an unwavering commitment to a diverse workforce that includes the over 1 billion people on the planet with disabilities. We understand how important it is for anyone to have the right support from job search through employment. Microsoft is delighted that our employees have the opportunity to leverage their skills and experience to mentor people with disabilities alongside the City of Chicago and Aspire”.

This program is being supported by research into the impact of peer mentorship in employment settings by Emily Villanueva, an occupational therapy doctoral student at Rush University Medical Center.

Rush University System for Health (RUSH) is an academic health system whose mission is to improve the health of the individuals and diverse communities it serves through the integration of outstanding patient care, education, research and community partnerships. RUSH comprises Rush University Medical Center, Rush University, Rush-Copley Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital, as well as numerous outpatient care facilities. Rush University, with more than 2,500 students, is a health sciences university that comprises Rush Medical College, the College of Nursing, the College of Health Sciences and the Graduate College.

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