



# Connections

NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2025

## Introducing The Academy at Jubilee

### Frontline Workers Gain New Opportunity to Increase Skills

When James Kivembele took a part-time job working at a group home, he never imagined it was the start of a 15-year career with Jubilee. Fast forward to 2025. James provides one-on-one support to Jubilee community member Tyler Munson, and supervises seven direct support professional colleagues.

The high-level training James received at Jubilee helped him in his career growth.

**“Jubilee’s student-centered trainings refined my skills and increased my confidence in helping people with disabilities,” said James.**

Today, the trainings that helped James are available to all disability service professionals through the new Academy at Jubilee. The Academy opened this past Fall to improve the quality of direct support for people with disabilities. **It also aims to combat an industry-wide workforce crisis.**

“The entire disability community can now benefit from The Academy,” said Jubilee’s Executive Director Steve Keener. “Hiring and retaining quality staff is an issue that affects our entire industry. Training empowers support staff and deepens their commitment to working in the disability field.”



**James Kivembele (left) incorporates his advanced training in his work supporting Tyler Munson.**

James’ favorite class at Jubilee is Coach Approach. It taught him a mindset that all people are capable and helps him be more present in his work with Tyler. Coach Approach is one of seven classes now taught at The Academy.

Melanie Moore leads The Academy. She shares that **more than 250 direct support professionals have completed trainings since The Academy opened.** “We have a special environment at The Academy. People come to class eager to learn. They want to grow in their careers helping people with disabilities.” ●

•••▶ *Turn the page for Melanie’s perspective.*

**Special thanks** to the Patricia Abell Fund and the Maryland General Assembly for providing start-up funding for The Academy at Jubilee. Collaboration with other disability agencies shaped trainings that benefit all frontline workers.

# MEET Melanie Moore

## Academy Program Director Believes Lifelong Learning is Key to Justice

As a longtime teacher in the states and abroad, I believe education is a powerful vehicle for justice. At Jubilee, we live this value through our professional development programs for people of different cultures, religions, and economic backgrounds.

I've led Jubilee's learning and development programs for the past six years. In addition to state-required training, we've created extra courses on interpersonal and cross-cultural communication. The result? **Learners are more satisfied with their jobs, stay longer, and see career growth opportunities.** People with disabilities get more committed and attentive support. That's justice at work.

Our success at Jubilee made me think about how we could have a greater impact in the disability field. I helped create Maryland's DSP II advanced training program, and seeing its success made me dream about what else providers could do when working together.

Now, those dreams are coming true with The Academy at Jubilee. Partner agencies Ardmore Enterprises, Compass, and SEEC helped us launch in Fall 2024. Ten agencies have already sent students to The Academy, and we're planning more learning opportunities for the coming year.

Our work at The Academy is near and dear to my heart. My younger brother Jason has a developmental disability. Gabriel is his direct support professional staff. After 16 years together, he's very much a part of my family back home in California.

**The type of training we're offering at The Academy will help people like Gabriel and Jason reach greater heights together.** ●

Read Bethesda Magazine's "Helping the Helpers" article about The Academy.



Scan here!



## Spread the word!

The Academy is open to new students.

Courses currently offered include:

- CPR/First Aid/AED
- DSP II
- Certified Medication Technician Training
- Mandt Relational & Mandt Technical
- Coach Approach
- Transformative Communication
- Cultural Humility



Use the QR code or visit [jubileemd.org/about-the-academy](https://jubileemd.org/about-the-academy) for class descriptions, schedule, and registration.



Trainer Sadé Thompson (denim shirt) teaches proper techniques to assist a person with limited mobility get into a chair during the Mandt technical class.

**This is only the beginning of our exciting vision for The Academy at Jubilee!** We look forward to sharing more details with you in the coming months. To learn more about our future plans, and how you can help, please contact Bethany Keener, Director of Communications and Development, at [bkeener@jubileemd.org](mailto:bkeener@jubileemd.org).