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***EveryBody Works NC* Campaign Kicks Off Effort to**

**Close Employment Gap for People with Disabilities**

**Oct. 5, 2017 (Charlotte, NC)** - In a collaborative effort to close the 45-point employment gap between working aged people with disabilities and their counterparts, the *EveryBody Works NC* campaign was kicked off by business leaders and disability advocates at the NC Business Leadership Network (NCBLN) Conference today. As of June, just 27.9 percent of working-age people with disabilities were employed which lags far behind the 72.8 percent of those working without disabilities - creating that 45-point employment gap.

The campaign is challenging North Carolina businesses to consider the untapped talents of people with disabilities when hiring, while urging discouraged job seekers with disabilities to rejoin the workforce. As part of the campaign, North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation (NCVR) is expanding its outreach efforts to better serve the disability community throughout the state. NCVR has programs and resources to help employers source and retain diverse talent and create a workplace that is accessible and welcoming for employees with disabilities.

"We are calling on teachers, educators, the medical profession and the families to encourage children and young adults with disabilities to know that employment is a possibility for them - and that they bring immense talents and skills to the workplace," said Alexandra McArthur, chair of the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD). "Employers who successfully recruit, hire, and retain people with disabilities see higher rates of employee loyalty and innovation - across their entire workforce."

“We also want to reach out and encourage people with disabilities who are discouraged, facing long-term unemployment or have never worked to improve their employability through training and support services offered by vocational rehabilitation,” said Tara Myers, NCVR division director. “We offer pre-employment screening and placement services, on-the-job training, assistive technologies and ongoing support to help people with disabilities of all kinds succeed in the workplace.”

“The NC Business Leadership Network (NCBLN) helps companies drive success through disability inclusion in the workforce, supply chain and marketplace by sharing best practices that demonstrate effective methods of sourcing, hiring and retaining the talents of people with disabilities,” Beth Butler, executive director of NCBLN and a Disability and Inclusion Consultant, said.

“For example, Richie Parker worked as the Vehicle Design Group Manager for four NASCAR Sprint Cup Series teams sponsored by Hendrick Motorsports and used his feet to design vehicle components for race cars on the computer.”

Born with a non-genetic birth defect in which limbs are not formed, Parker is the keynote speaker of NCBLN’s fall conference and takes pride in finding creative solutions that allow him to lead a perfectly normal and independent life. After his success with Hendrick Motorsports, the Beaufort, S.C. native is now back at Clemson University pursuing his MBA degree.

**About Everybody Works NC:**

The Everybody Works NC campaign is increasing awareness of the untapped pool of talent found in the disability community and creating more job opportunities for people with disabilities. October is **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)** which kicks off the year-long EveryBody Works NC campaign with a statewide speaking tour, media relations programs, social media and a series of special events.

The campaign is being led by the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD), the North Carolina Business Leadership Network (NCBLN) and North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation (NCVR) to promote and support inclusive workforce strategies. For more information, visit the website at [*everybodyworksnc.com*](http://www.everybodyworksnc.com/).