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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eitas staff, board discuss importance of SB 40 tax levy

Kansas City, Mo. – October 29, 2019 – On Sept. 23, the Jackson County Legislature held hearings to address the tax levy funding. These hearings offer an opportunity for anyone who wishes to speak on behalf of eitas' tax levy to say a few words about the importance of the SB 40 tax levy and its impact on the citizens of Jackson County.

In attendance at the public hearing were eitas Executive Director, Jake Jacobs; the eitas Board Chair, Elizabeth Moran; and eitas Board members Tedi Rowland, Ed Van Haele and George Mitchell.

Jacobs gave a brief historical overview about the Board, which began 43 years ago.

“This Board started with a citizen’s vote in 1976 to fund and grow basic disability services that were lacking in Jackson County,” said Jacobs. “In the intervening 43 years the need for additional services for our citizens has grown far beyond those early basic programs. People with disabilities have more opportunities than ever before to have a good life, be part of their communities, work and contribute to our society in meaningful ways.”

In the 14 years that Jacob has been with eitas, he said he has seen eitas double the number served which now totals 3,500 individuals, as well as the additional services that never would have been imagined 43 years ago.

“It is critical that fundamental services such as sheltered employment, residential programs, transportation, day services and educational opportunities continue,” he said. “Without the tax levy, none of those would be funded adequately. And all of them contribute to a better life for individuals and their families.

“These services only continue because of the steadfast funding supplied by that 1976 vote and the County leaders, who to this day, commit to that 1976 promise. We exist in a complicated system that has evolved over the decades to include federal and state funding, but it’s the local funding provided by Jackson County that makes a real difference in local lives. We want to thank each of you for that ongoing support.”

eitas Board Chair, Elizabeth Moran, introduced herself and spoke about being the sibling of an independent, successful 57-year-old sister who has a developmental disability.

“Services and supports for individuals with disabilities - the good, the bad, and the ugly - has been a part of my life both personally and professionally for over 30 years,” added Moran. “We're here asking for your support on the adoption of this important tax levy funding for services and supports of individuals with developmental disabilities here in Jackson County.”

Moran said that it's everyone's “unalienable right” for “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” pursuant to the Declaration of Independence, essentially a “good life.”

“The services and supports provided by eitas for individuals with developmental disabilities helps them to achieve their "good life" through direct services,” said Moran. “eitas also supports innovative programs to reach individuals who may not have previously received supported services, including services and supports for young adults transitioning out of school-based settings and providing assistance for those individuals in community settings and social programs. The impact of the services provided by eitas -- made possible by tax levy dollars -- is far reaching, not just for the 3,500 individuals with disabilities that Jake spoke of, but for thousands of others, for parents of individuals with disabilities, their siblings and often their extended family.”

The impact of providing services for a better life can be extremely far reaching, Moran added.

“When thinking of that impact -- supports and services that help Jackson County residents in that "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" -- in just a family of four, if one person in that family is receiving services and supports from eitas in the area of transportation, employment, educational, residential or other services and supports, the impact of eitas' services and supports is reaching over 14,000 citizens of Jackson County.

eitas Board member, Tedi Rowland, said her son, J.P., has Down syndrome and receives supportive employment services through Blue Valley Industries.

“These services have improved J.P.'s quality of life,” she said. “He has the opportunity to interact daily with his peers. It creates opportunities for him to be independent. Speaking as his parent and on behalf of all the parents of people with developmental disabilities, this funding is vital. Without these tax levy dollars, our children may be isolated and languishing at home and with a much lower quality of life. We are asking your support for adoption of Ordinance No. 5266.”

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