



## **JACK BRANDT**

**Scholar, Artist, Community Leader,  
and Advocate for People with Disabilities**

**Recipient of the 2006 JACKIE CREWS  
EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARD**



Recent James Madison University (JMU) political science and philosophy graduate Jack Brandt has never let youth or his disability stand in his way, especially when it comes to advocacy for himself and others with disabilities. Despite brain injury due to birth complications and an early diagnosis of cerebral palsy, Jack has enthusiastically pursued education, achievement, and opportunities to help others as a Boy Scout, outstanding student, artist, community volunteer and activist, and most recently, as a 2006 Virginia Governor's Fellow.

An alumni of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council's Partners in Policymaking advocacy and leadership program, Jack is an active board member at Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL), the Harrisonburg-based Center for Independent Living. Jack has played a vital role in establishing and advancing the agenda of VAIL's advocacy group and serves as a role model for others. He has taken the initiative to begin a "get out the vote" campaign in his local community, issues action alerts on important issues, develops policy positions, and encourages others to become more active in the political process.

Jack has petitioned the state and federal legislatures for policy changes expanding community supports, including full implementation of the U.S. Supreme Court's "Olmstead" decision calling for greater self-determination and opportunities for people with disabilities to live in the least restrictive environments. Turning his words into actions, Jack serves as a peer mentor and counselor at VAIL, helping to demonstrate that those goals can be achieved at the community and individual levels. Working with VAIL's nursing home transition coordinator, Jack helps to identify, encourage, and support individuals with a desire to transition to community-living settings.

As a student at JMU, Jack was recognized for his academic achievements, studied the impact of disability legislation on the formation of advocacy groups, and served as an

## Profile of Jack Brandt

2006 Recipient of the Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership

information systems research cadet, identifying and developing grants for the university. In 2005, as an American Association for People with Disabilities' Congressional Intern for U.S. Senator Michael Enzi of Wyoming, Jack was involved in analysis of new federal regulations under the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and evaluated the impact of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) on individuals with disabilities. At Jack's urging and with his assistance, university faculty restructured its lecture-based health policy course into a program of self-directed study, which will become a regular offering beginning during the 2006-2007 academic year.

During his tenure as a Governor's Fellow, working with the Office of Community Integration, Jack further distinguished himself as a scholar and advocate with broad knowledge and skills in local, state, and federal policy. He drafted a large portion of Virginia's annual community integration status report, analyzed the state budget for its impact on people with disabilities, and participated in the Governor's Hurricane Preparedness Task Force.

Although his term as a Governor's Fellow has ended, Jack remains very active in state policy as a community volunteer and advocate. He continues to assist in the development of Virginia's emergency response plans and work with local emergency coordinators statewide on behalf of the Department of Emergency Management. He has also taken a lead role in development of Virginia's interagency "Money Follows the Person" proposal, made to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; helping to draft both the application and recommendations for the Secretary of Health and Human Resources on the grant's scope, target populations, and the services and supports which it will cover.

Along the way, Jack has also found the time and energy to develop his skills as an artist and found opportunities to use his artwork to advance his advocacy and to encourage other individuals with disabilities to fully develop their abilities and pursue their dreams. In addition to his presentation, "A Dialogue of Art: An Activist's Perspective", Jack has addressed disability professionals and advocates at the Society for Disability Studies Annual Meeting, the TASH National Conference, and the annual meeting of the Association for Human Sociology.

Just beginning his career as an advocate and leader in the area of disability policy, Jack's exceptional enthusiasm, dedication, and achievements have already won him numerous awards. These have included the Order of the Arrow Founders' Award as an Eagle Scout, the Outstanding Thesis in Political Science and Diversity Enhancement Award at JMU, and the National Merit Award.

In 2006, a panel of his peers – graduates of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities' Partners in Policymaking program – selected Jack Brandt as the second recipient of the Board's Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership. He now joins 2005 Jackie Crews Award recipient Ed Turner (recently designated as the Governor's Special Advisor on Disability Issues) as ambassadors for the values of leadership demonstrated by their fellow Partner, the late Jackie Crews, through her life and advocacy for individuals with disabilities – *independence, productivity, inclusion, and self-determination.*