

Career Center adds automatic doors

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Norris Branick tries out Tennessee Career Center at Dyersburg's new automatic doors shortly before touring the center to offer suggestions for further accommodations. Not pictured, Glen Barr from the Jackson Center for Independent Living visited the Tennessee Career Center at Dyersburg, who also gave his input. The new doors offer a key piece to the center's ability to increase independence for residents with disabilities in the area.



The Tennessee Career Center at Dyersburg offers numerous accommodations for individuals with disabilities and language barriers, but until recently, a key piece providing independence to local residents with disabilities was missing.

The Career Center offers an adjustable computer desk for easy wheelchair access; TDD (telecommunications device for the deaf); ZoomText Magnifier, which enlarges and enhances everything on a computer screen to make all applications easy to see and use; large print, Braille, and Spanish materials; and interpreters, signers and readers available on request.

While the center offers a wealth of accommodations within its walls, entering the building itself could be somewhat of a hardship due to heavy double doors. An attendant was always on hand at the front desk and staff members were happy to assist individuals with disabilities, the elderly or with residents with children in tow, but this alone was not the preferred solution.

Ann Pennell, Disability Program Navigator for the Tennessee Career Centers in northwest Tennessee, identified automatic doors as a top priority for the comprehensive Career Center.

"Automatic doors enable the Career Center to welcome everyone entering regardless of their physical capabilities," said Pennell. "It's also a good way to demonstrate excellent customer service."

The need for automatic doors was first noted by the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence as the Career Center pursued recognition. At the time, funds were not available and the substantial cost would have presented a hardship to the center.

In January 2009, the Tennessee Career Center had Stanley Magic-Force Swing Door Automation Solution installed on the doors through the use of Workforce Investment Act Incentive funds. The additional funds were received due to the Workforce Investment Act program meeting and exceeding performance standards.

"Probably the greatest single benefit of the automatic doors is our ability to offer easy access to anyone," said Career Center Coordinator Ronnie Gunnels. "Many people experience problems using manual doors due to the physical effort required. Most manual doors are designed with an able-bodied person in mind and can be difficult for the disabled, and elderly. Incorporating the manual doors with the automatic-open option eliminates obstacles and makes the center more accessible."

The Tennessee Career Center at Dyersburg, located at 439 McGaughey St., is open to assist jobseekers and employers from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.