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USI to establish the USI Epi-Hab Center for Disability Studies

The University of Southern Indiana will establish the USI Epi-Hab Center for Disability Studies with a gift from Epi-Hab Evansville through the Vanderburgh Community Foundation it was announced today. The center will promote scholarship, community service, and teaching a broad range of issues related to epilepsy and other disabilities in consultation with business, industry, and social, education, governmental, and health agencies.

The center has multiple goals. Gary May, associate professor of social work, who wrote the USI proposal, anticipates the center will contribute, through scholarships, research, teaching, and community programs to the knowledge base on epilepsy and other contemporary disability issues. He said, "This initiative will accelerate the broader movement toward a community-based, community-inclusive life for persons with disabilities."

Himself a disabled veteran of the Vietnam War and long an advocate for the disabled, May joined the USI faculty in 1992. He serves on the Governor's Planning Council for People with Disabilities.

Through the work of the center, programs will seek to actively educate employers regarding hiring, retaining, and promoting people with seizure disorders and other disabilities and prepare students to work effectively with and for such individuals.

The center, which will open this fall, will provide USI students, faculty and staff with expanded opportunities for learning about epilepsy and other disabilities and encourage inclusion of disability-related course content across the curriculum. "It will provide a more focused push to help professors incorporate information about disabilities in their classes," May said.

Epi-Hab Evansville, Inc., opened in 1964 as a non-profit factory. It gave people with disabilities a chance to earn their living—a chance otherwise not available at that time. The facility closed in 1998 and was purchased by GI Tech Group Inc., and the assets from the sale are being used to create these two endowment funds to benefit the community's disabled citizens.