

# The LINK

*Changing Lives.  
Changing Communities.*

**A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan**

## **Preparing for disaster when you have a disability**

Do you know what to do if there is a tornado watch or warning? Or a flood or fire? What do you do if your electricity goes out for a few days?

Being ready for an emergency is important for everyone. When you have a disability, there may be extra things you need to plan for and think about BEFORE the emergency happens.

### **The four basic steps to preparing for a disaster are:**

1. Get informed.
2. Make a plan.
3. Make an emergency kit.
4. Keep your plan and kit up to date.

**Get informed:** For more details about being ready for emergencies & disasters, contact: American Red Cross at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or 1-800-REDCROSS or FEMA at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

**Make a plan:** Involve people in your family and support network when you make your plan. There are many things to think about, like the fact that cordless phones don't work when the electricity is off. Do you have a manual wheelchair in case your power chair batteries cannot be recharged?

**Make an emergency kit:** Kits should include a three day supply of drinking water and food per person, a first aid kit, a flashlight and batteries. Don't forget to include items for service animals or pets.

**Keep your plan and kit up to date:** Go over your plan and refresh your supplies twice a year - ideally when you change your clocks and test the batteries in your smoke alarms.

Detailed plan examples and emergency kit checklists are available from your local Red Cross agency.

*Educating and Empowering  
People with Disabilities to  
Create Change in Their  
Own Lives and  
Advocating for Social Change  
to Create Inclusive  
Communities.*

*This issue is available in  
alternative format upon  
request.*

[www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org)

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*Much of this information is taken from materials provided by the American Red Cross and FEMA.*



## Words Matter: Stop saying “handicapped”

We all know that words are important. Words are linked to images (mental pictures) and emotions (how we feel). For a long time, words describing disability were mostly negative.

Advocates in the Disability Rights Movement have worked hard to get the general public, including reporters, to use neutral words when they talk about disability.

Today, most of us use what is called **person-first language**. This means saying “person with a brain injury” instead of “brain injured person”. We have dropped many of the negative words and phrases like “cripple” and “stroke victim” from our vocabulary.

One word, however, is having trouble leaving. It is the word “*handicapped*”.

**Handicapped** is an old-fashioned, outdated and offensive word to most people in the disability rights community. It is certainly not neutral, since it clearly implies “less than, broken, or burdened”. Unfortunately it is still widely used.

You can do your part by making sure you update your language about disability to be as neutral and non-judgemental as possible.

### Don't use this

*Handicapped person*  
*Handicapped parking*  
*Handicapped restroom*

### DO use this instead

Person with a disability  
Accessible parking or disability parking  
Accessible restroom

For more information on person first language or to request a free copy of a brochure called “What’s in a Name?”, contact Michele at Disability Network at (269) 345-1516 or (800) 394-7450.

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### Public Comment Welcome at Disability Network Board Meetings

Our board meetings are open to the public.

Monday	April 27, 2009	5:00 - 6:30 pm
Monday	May 18, 2009	5:00 - 6:30 pm
Monday	June 22, 2009	5:00 - 6:30 pm

Persons needing accommodations to participate should contact Margaret at 345-1516 x 24.

Meetings are held in the Community Building at Disability Network in Kalamazoo.

### Support Mental Health Parity - end discrimination in Michigan

Michigan is one of only 8 states left that have not enacted Mental Health Parity Laws.

That means that employer-sponsored and individual health insurance plans can **legally discriminate** against people with mental illness by limiting visits and requiring higher co-pays and out of pocket costs for psychiatric illnesses than they do for other illnesses.

The Michigan Legislature can do the right thing. Contact your State Representative today and tell them YOU support parity legislation!

# Building an Accessible Community - One Ramp at a Time

Behind the scenes of any successful project is at least one unsung hero. This is definitely true of Disability Network's Ramp Up program.

Ramp Up started in 2004 with a plea for help from Disability Network staff in the form of a letter to the editor in the Kalamazoo Gazette.

Our Information & Referral program staff were frustrated because of the high volume of calls for ramps that fell through the cracks of the few small ramp programs that existed.

**Why aren't all homes built with at least one no-step entrance to eliminate the need for ramps? Our culture says that home design is market driven.**

**We say it is short-sighted and exclusionary!**

Tom Schaberg is the leader of the unsung heroes of the Ramp Up program. He answered our plea for help, and along with the men of the First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo, have been the core team of volunteers since the program began. Tom has recently expanded the Ramp Up program's volunteers base to include local youth groups and at-risk youth.

Every year 8-10 households in the Kalamazoo County area get a ramp through our Ramp Up program, and there is always a waiting list. On average, even using all volunteer labor, a ramp built through the Ramp Up program costs about \$1,000.

If you are interested in donating to our Ramp Up program you can send a check to Disability Network at 517 E. Crosstown Parkway, Kalamazoo, MI 49001 and put Ramp Up in the memo line.

For more information on Ramp Up contact Karen Halsted at (269) 345-1516 extension 63.

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## Kalamazoo County: Public Transit Needs YOUR Support Vote YES on May 5, 2009

Kalamazoo County voters will have an opportunity to re-instate a millage to support countywide public transportation on May 5, 2009.

The millage request is .4 mills - or about **\$20** a year on a home valued at \$100,000. This is less than what county voters approved in 2006!

Countywide transit service is a vital part of our economic and social infrastructure. Over 3 million trips were taken on Care A Van, Metro Van and Metro Transit during 2008.

For more information, to schedule a presentation about the millage to your group or organization, to volunteer or to donate to the campaign, call Adam at (269) 349-9170 or visit [www.publictransitnow.com](http://www.publictransitnow.com).

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**Disability Network is the first stop for people with disabilities and their families in Southwest Michigan.**

## Thank You WRKR 107.7!

Disability Network was the charity of record for the 2009 WRKR 107.7 Radio Poker Event here in Southwest Michigan.

An awesome time was had by all - including the top winner who took home \$2,820!

The tournament was held at The Prairie's Golf Course on West Main in Kalamazoo.



A special shout out to Mike McKelley, WRKR station manager, and his staff for their dedication to this event and our mission.

## Support Group Meetings

**Women with Disabilities** (Kalamazoo)  
Tuesdays 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

**Brain Injury Survivors** (Kalamazoo)  
Thursdays 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

**Spinal Cord Injury Survivors**  
Meets monthly in Charlotte and periodically in Battle Creek & Kalamazoo. Contact Karen at [khalsted@dnswm.org](mailto:khalsted@dnswm.org) or call (269) 345-1516 for more information.

**Parkinson's Disease Support** (Kalamazoo)  
Educational meeting: 3rd Friday 10:00 am  
Small groups: 2nd Thursday 1:30 pm  
*Location: The Fountains at Bronson Place*

## March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

To learn more about brain injury visit the Brain Injury Association of Michigan's website at [www.biami.org](http://www.biami.org) or call 1-800-772-4323.

*Social Workers: Earn FREE continuing education hours at [www.mitbitraining.org](http://www.mitbitraining.org).*