

The LINK

*Changing Lives.
Changing Communities.*

A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Count On Us *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.*

Please attend Disability Network's 27th Annual Meeting

Date: Monday, October 26, 2009

Time: 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Location: Metro Diner & Bar
411 N. Westnedge Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI

Cost: \$10 per person (scholarships available)
Appetizers are included; cash bar is available

Keynote Speaker: Juan Olivarez, President & CEO
Kalamazoo Community Foundation

This event is not to be missed! It is a chance to spend time with Disability Network staff, volunteers, members, supporters, and consumers in a relaxed atmosphere.

In addition to hearing from our keynote speaker, you can find out who is receiving the Bob Davis Independent Living award, the Lifetime Achievement award & the 2009 Volunteer of the Year award.

Members of Disability Network Southwest Michigan have voting privileges and choose the slate of officers that will be announced at the Annual Meeting.

Contact Kristen Potts at kpotts@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 extension 61 to be sure to receive a formal invitation and learn about membership.

VOTE! November 3, 2009

Local elections are very important and have a direct impact on our day-to-day lives. Be sure to vote and make your voice heard.



*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

Disability Network welcomes the Blind Starfish self-help group

The Blind Starfish is a self-help group founded in 2005. After trying out a few different “homes” the group decided that Disability Network would be the best fit for them.

“Disability Network’s commitment to individual empowerment and advocacy is a perfect match for the group” says Blind Starfish facilitator Ron Lambe.

The **Blind Starfish** meet the second Tuesday of every month from 7:00 - 8:30 pm at Disability Network. Call 383-1544 for more information.

Other support groups at Disability Network:

- **Brain Injury Survivors** Group: This group meets every Thursday from 1:30 - 3:30 pm.
- **Women with Disabilities** Group: This group meets every Tuesday from 11:00 am - 12:30 pm.
- **Spinal Cord Injury Survivors** Group: This group meets periodically in both Battle Creek & Kalamazoo. The group has an email newsletter to keep in touch with one another.

Information about **other disability-related support groups** in Southwest Michigan can be found at our website www.dnswm.org.

Workshop: How, When & Why to Disclose a Disability to an Employer

Knowing when to tell an employer you have a disability can be challenging. Come to a free workshop to find out about your employment rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and learn the best way to disclose your disability to an employer.

September 22, 2009	Battle Creek	1:00 - 3:00
October 7, 2009	Kalamazoo	1:00 - 3:00
November 4, 2009	Benton Harbor	1:00 - 3:00
November 16, 2009	Paw Paw	1:00 - 3:00

For more information or to register, contact Michele at (269) 345-1516 or (877) 674-5209.

Please let us know right away if you will need an accommodation to participate.

Disability Disclosure Workbook for Youth with Disabilities

The 411 on Disability Disclosure is a free resource for transition-aged youth. It includes information on knowing yourself and your disability, disclosing in school, social situations and employment, and self-determination.

To download a free copy, go to http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/guides/411/411_Disability_Disclosure_complete.pdf

Volunteer Spotlight: Karlissia (Kay) Munn

If you have called our office on a Tuesday or Thursday morning, chances are you’ve spoken to Kay Munn. Kay is a volunteer receptionist for Disability Network Southwest Michigan.



Kay began volunteering in 2007. In addition to answering the phone and greeting guests, Kay is part of our speakers panel that educates the community about living with a disability. As part of the speakers panel at a local conference, Kay met Lois Baldwin, Special Needs Advisor at KVCC, and learned about accommodations for students with disabilities at college.

“I never thought I could go to college because of my learning disability,” says Kay. “Lois opened up a new world of possibilities for me that day.” Kay is beginning her 3rd semester at KVCC this fall. “Public speaking scares me,” admits Kay, “but if I hadn’t volunteered to speak that day, I wouldn’t have believed in myself enough to start college.”

Disability Network's Ramp Program Extends into Van Buren County



A wonderful new collaboration has emerged in Van Buren County and is changing lives.

With \$2,000 funding from the Van Buren United Way, Disability Network collaborated with volunteers from Red Arrow Ministries and an Eagle Scout candidate to build three ramps for people with disabilities in Hartford and Bangor.

The quality of life for the people who received the ramps has improved now that they can remain in their homes and gain access to the community.

Tom Schaberg of the First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo (our partner for Ramp Up in Kalamazoo County) provided technical support for these ramps.

We want to extend a sincere THANK YOU to all the people who made these ramps possible.

Questions about our ramp programs can be directed to Karen at (269) 345-1516 or 1-877-674-5209.



Join the Public Transit Listening Campaign in Battle Creek

Disability Network is partnering with JONAH to listen & record the stories of people who ride the bus system in the Battle Creek area. The listening campaign begins now! Contact Ebony at ebonyjonah09@yahoo.com or Michele at mmcgowen@dnswm.org to find out more.

Do you have Medicare and need extra help paying for premiums, co-pays or deductibles?

The "Extra Help" Program and the Medicare Savings Program are available to help people who have Medicare and need help to pay for:

- Prescription premiums, co-pays & deductibles
- Medicare Part B premiums, co-pays and deductibles.

To find out if you may be eligible for this "extra help" call Crystal at Disability Network at (269) 345-1516 or 1-877-674-5209.



AT Loan Fund

The Assistive Technology Loan Fund (ATLF) provides loans for home accessibility & assistive devices to qualified people with disabilities and seniors.

The loan program is a partnership between Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, UCP Michigan, and Option 1 Credit Union.

More information and application packets can be found at www.michiganloanfunds.org or by calling Lewis Whalen at Disability Network at (269) 345-1516 or (877) 674-5209.

Disability Network is the first stop for people with disabilities and their families in Southwest Michigan. Learn more about us at www.dnswm.org or become a fan on Facebook!

Creating Community Together: **3rd Annual Inclusion Conference features Karen Gaffney**

Community Advocates for Persons with Developmental Disabilities is holding the 3rd Annual Inclusion Conference this fall in Kalamazoo.

Keynote speaker Karen Gaffney is the president of a non-profit organization dedicated to championing the journey to full inclusion in families, schools, the workplace, and the community for people with developmental disabilities.

Karen has earned an Associate of Science degree and successfully swam the English Channel as part of a six-person relay team. Karen Gaffney has Down Syndrome.

Everyone is invited to this conference as we work together to find ways to make real inclusion happen here in SW Michigan.

Date: October 30, 2009 (Friday)

Time: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm

Location: Transformations Spirituality Center
3427 Gull Road, Kalamazoo

Cost: \$15 per person, lunch is included
scholarships are available

Contact: Community Advocates 342-9801 x200 or
commadvocates@communityadvocates.org

Disability Network Southwest Michigan is a sponsoring partner of this event.

The Business & Disability Bulletin launched July 31, 2009!

Disability Network has launched a new bi-annual electronic newsletter, The Business & Disability Bulletin. It is designed for business leaders and human resource professionals in Southwest Michigan who believe in the value of an inclusive workforce and in creating a welcoming customer environment. You can view the first edition at www.dnswm.org/employment.aspx.
