

# The LINK

Changing Lives.

Changing Communities.

## A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

### Disability Network Celebrates 30 Years!

Disability Network Southwest Michigan began in 1981 when a small group of disability rights activists formed what was then called the Kalamazoo County Center for Independent Living. Its main purpose was *"To help the handicapped community achieve and maintain independent living and to facilitate the education of the handicapped and the general community concerning . . . handicapped culture."*



*Will Harter & Bunny Gaines-Summe, founding members*

A lot has happened in 30 years. We've changed our name a couple times (remember when we were Disability Resource Center?), we've grown geographically, we've adapted to changing times and to the changing needs of people with disabilities. We've changed laws and policies that impact people with disabilities. We've let go of programs that are no longer needed and added new ones when a need became apparent.

What has not changed in 30 years is our commitment to creating fully inclusive communities, free of discrimination and segregation based on disability, and our commitment to providing tools and supports to others with disabilities working toward self sufficiency.

statements for Disability Network Southwest Michigan. They build upon the values we have held for 30 years, and lead us into the future:

**Vision:** Our vision is a community that values disability as human diversity, free of attitudinal barriers, where all people benefit with full access and inclusion.

**Mission:** We educate and connect people with disabilities to resources while advocating social change.



*Ron Lambe, Board Chair stands next to the new Vision & Mission statements in our lobby.*

*We educate and connect people with disabilities to resources while advocating social change.*

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

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

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

# The Date You Receive Your Food Assistance Benefits Will Change in 2011

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is changing the dates most people will get their food assistance benefits, starting in January 2011.

The change will be based on the **last digit** of your recipient identification number.

Last digit of ID #	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
1	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
2	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
3	6	7	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
4	7	8	9	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
5	8	9	10	11	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
6	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	15	15	15	15	15
7	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	17	17	17	17
8	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	19	19	19
9	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	21

**Example:** A person whose ID number ends in 4 will receive benefits on January 7, February 8, March 9, April 10 and on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of every month beginning May 2011.

If you have questions you can contact your caseworker or Disability Network.



## KALAMAZOO SUPPORT GROUPS AT DISABILITY NETWORK

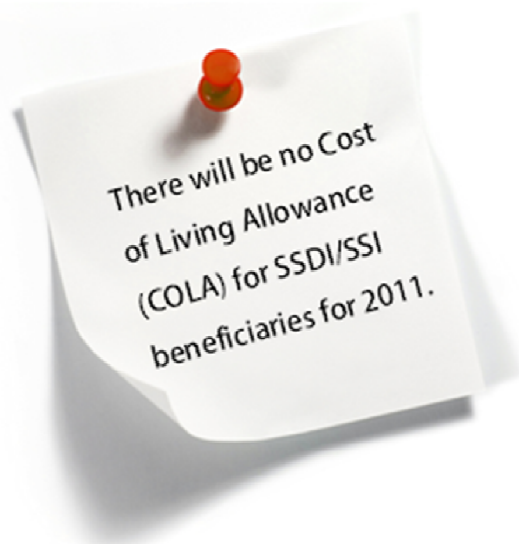
**Blind Starfish:** Meets the 2nd Tuesday of most months at 7:00 PM.

**Brain Injury Survivors:** Meets Thursdays from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM.

**Women with Disabilities:** Meets Tuesdays from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM.

**Spinal Cord Injury Group:** Meets periodically throughout the year.

All groups meet at 517 E. Crosstown Parkway, Kalamazoo  
Call (269) 345-1516 for more information.



Sign up for the WRKR 107.7 Texas Hold 'Em Tournament benefitting Disability Network Southwest Michigan by registering at [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org) or calling Kristen at (269) 345-1516.

## Workshop Attendees Alert Us to ADA Violations

Two very large businesses – one in Berrien County and one in Kalamazoo County – have changed their on-line job applications after two people attending our *How When & Why to Disclose a Disability to an Employer* workshops alerted us to illegal questions about disability they found on the forms.

Job applications **cannot** ask if you have a disability or if you will need an accommodation to do a job. This is a protection you have a right to under the Americans with Disabilities Act.



### Upcoming Disability Disclosure Workshops

This workshop is for people with disabilities who want to learn about their rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to know how, when and why to tell an employer about a disability.

March 2, 2011	Battle Creek	1:00 – 3:00 pm
March 24, 2011	Paw Paw	1:00 – 3:00 pm
April 6, 2011	Hastings	1:00 – 3:00 pm

Call Michele at (269) 345-1516 x116 to register.

“In both these instances, the companies removed their illegal question voluntarily and immediately after we contacted them,” says Paul Ecklund, our Disability Rights Advocate.

A big thank you to the people who brought this to our attention! Everyone can play an important role in changing policies and practices that negatively impact people with disabilities.

If you see an application with an illegal question about disability, call us at (269) 345-1516 or toll free at (877) 674-5209.

## Accessibility at Disability Network

Starting in February, we will have audio versions of Disability Network’s brochures and newsletters available on our website [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org)!



We created these audio versions to ensure that people with a print disability have access to our publications. The audio versions are simply a recording of someone reading the information out loud.

A person with a **print disability** cannot effectively read printed documents and needs an alternative format. A print disability can be the result of a visual, physical, developmental, cognitive, or learning disability.

An audio document is one type of **alternative format**. You might see the statement “Alternative formats available upon request.” This typically refers to printed documents that are available in Braille, large print, electronic, or audio versions.

We are a role model of accessibility for agencies and businesses in Southwest Michigan. Having audio versions of our publications available is just one of the ways we lead by example in creating a welcoming and accessible environment.

**Sign up to receive this newsletter by e-mail! Contact Michele at [mmcgowen@dnswm.org](mailto:mmcgowen@dnswm.org) or (877) 674-5209.**

## SOCIAL SECURITY ENDS PAPER CHECKS

Starting May 1, 2011, new Social Security Recipients will have to get benefits in the form of direct deposits or on a debit card.

People already on Social Security will have until March 1, 2013 to make the switch to direct deposit or a debit card to receive benefits.

To help with the switchover for those still getting paper checks, the government has created a website, [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org) and a toll free phone number, 1-800-333-1795, that people can call for assistance.



## SIGN OF THE TIMES

New signs have arrived announcing the presence of our Berrien/Cass office at 2900 Lakeview Avenue, St. Joseph, MI 49085.

If you have a disability related question, our Berrien/Cass Disability Information & Referral staff are happy to help! Call (269) 985-0111.



**BARRY ♦ BERRIEN ♦ BRANCH ♦ CALHOUN ♦ CASS ♦ KALAMAZOO ♦ ST. JOSEPH ♦ VAN BUREN**



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