

# The LINK

Changing Lives.  
Changing Communities.

## A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

### Do you have *Disability Pride*?

We are partnering with Michigan Disability Rights Coalition and local RICCs to bring Proud & Powerful workshops to Southwest Michigan!

#### What is Disability Pride\*?

Accepting and honoring our uniqueness and seeing it as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity. Pride comes from celebrating our own heritage, culture, unique experiences and contributions.

- Disability Pride recognizes the power we have to make change.
- Disability Pride results when we challenge and ultimately undo the negative beliefs, attitudes, and feelings and systematic oppression that come from the dominate groups' thinking that there is something wrong with our identify or our disabilities.
- Disability Pride rejects shame and the need to "blend in".
- Disability Pride is self acceptance and validation of our uniqueness.
- Disability Pride results in making choices based on the respect for interdependence, accommodations, and creativity.
- Disability Pride is the feeling of strong connection with a community of other people.
- Disability Pride recognizes that it is our uniqueness that will transform all people and institutions (society).



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 Pride workshops will happen in Berrien, Calhoun, Kalamazoo & Van Buren Counties this summer. Contact Michele at (269) 345-1516 or Joanne at (269) 982-7761 to get on the mailing list for an invitation.**

\*taken from MDRC's website [www.copower.org](http://www.copower.org)

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

## Ramps are Springing Up!

Spring means ramp-building season is here and our volunteers are ready to begin. The need is as big as ever and we do the best we can to stretch our resources to allow us to build 10 ramps in Kalamazoo County. Disability Network's Ramp Up program uses CDBG funds from the City of Kalamazoo, as well as donations from the Greater Kalamazoo United Way, Kalamazoo Community Foundation and other donors along with the expertise of volunteers from the First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo and other church youth groups to meet the need for ramps in Kalamazoo County. We work to develop other community partnerships to address the need for ramps in the other 7 counties of SW MI. Ramps are expensive and represent a major barrier to people with disabilities trying to remain in their homes and part of their communities. We estimate the cost of ramp materials to be about \$30/linear foot or more than \$1000 for an "average" ramp. If you would like information about applying for a ramp, or are part of a group who wants to financially sponsor a ramp, contact Karen Halsted at (269) 345-1516 or [halstedk@dnswm.org](mailto:halstedk@dnswm.org) today.



## Member Spotlight

Disability Network Southwest Michigan is a membership organization. Hear what **Brenda Stubbs** has to say about being a member:



"My name is **Brenda Stubbs** and I am a member of Disability Network Southwest Michigan because I wanted to get involved.

I first became active in Disability Network's mission through Friends of Transit, an advocacy coalition focused on accessible, affordable, safe and convenient public transit. I learned that I really enjoyed advocating for people with

disabilities, so I joined the Transportation Advocacy Group and the ACCESS team at Disability Network.

Becoming a member of Disability Network has helped me to stay involved in my community and the disability rights movement. My experiences with Disability Network have also helped me realize that my disability doesn't define me – it is just part of me."

For more information on the benefits of membership, contact Kristen at (269) 345-1516 x119.

## ON-LINE RESOURCE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**www.punch-in.org** is designed to help college students with disabilities be successful with their employment endeavors.

The website offers self-paced tutorials, expert advice and resources to develop job seeking strategies.



## LOW INTEREST LOANS FOR ASSISTIVE DEVICES

The ATLF ([www.michiganloanfunds.org](http://www.michiganloanfunds.org)) program is a low-interest loan that allows you to borrow money to purchase adaptive equipment or vehicles, ramps, or other devices and pay it back over time.

Contact Lewis at (877) 674-5209 for more information about this program.



## Visit Us at a Resource Fair Near You

We invite you to stop by and meet Disability Network staff and learn about our services at a variety of events this spring around Southwest Michigan.

### ✓ May 2 in Mattawan

Come to the **Senior & Veterans Expo** from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Antwerp Township Hall in Mattawan. This event is hosted by Senator Schuitmaker and Representatives Nesbitt & O'Brien.

### ✓ May 11 in Kalamazoo

**Project Connect** is happening at the Kalamazoo Fairgrounds and provides services on-site to low income families in Kalamazoo County, including free haircuts.

### ✓ May 24 in Battle Creek

Visit the **Active Aging expo** from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm at The New Burnham Brook Community Center.

### ✓ May 25 in Benton Harbor

Attend the **Community Resource Event** at Orchard Grove, 1385 E. Empire. The event runs from 10:00 am—3:00 pm and a free lunch will be provided from 11:00 am—2:00 pm.

### ✓ June 24 in Coldwater

**Step Up to Wellness** is an event from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm at the H & C Burnside Senior Center. Disability Network staff will also be presenting an informational session on Tools and Gadgets to Maintain Independence.



## VOLUNTEER FOR PRODUCT TESTING AT WHIRLPOOL!



Disability Network Southwest Michigan is partnering with Whirlpool's User Experience Department to create a pool of volunteers who are interested in helping Whirlpool engineers observe and learn how people with a variety of disabilities use small and large appliances. The research experiences will most often take place in Benton Harbor. For more information or

to sign up as a volunteer, contact Joanne Johnson at (269) 982-7761 or [johnsonj@dnswm.org](mailto:johnsonj@dnswm.org). This is a great opportunity for you to influence the accessibility of everyday products!

## YOUR VOICE COUNTS: CALL OR WRITE YOUR ELECTED LEADERS TODAY!



Now is the time to let your Senators and Representatives know what is important to you. Elected officials are making decisions about what programs to cut or eliminate. Many programs critical to people with disabilities are in danger. Let them know what is important to you.

Need to know how to contact your elected official? Contact Michele at (269) 345-1516 or Joanne at (269) 982-7761 or visit [www.michiganlegislature.org](http://www.michiganlegislature.org).



# Help Us Reach Our Goal of \$10,030 this Spring!

We were founded in 1981 by a group of disability rights activists who believed in the possibility of a community free of stereotypes, discrimination, and unnecessary barriers.

A lot has been accomplished in the past 30 years – but the work continues. Your investment in Disability Network's future will ensure that:

- Disability is seen as a characteristic to be celebrated, not pitied.
- Segregation and discrimination of people with disabilities is eliminated.
- Communities are designed with everyone in mind.

Take the next step with us. Your generous gift today will create a better tomorrow. We have enclosed an envelope for your convenience.



## YOUR INPUT IS WELCOME AT BOARD MEETINGS

Our Board meetings are open to the public. We welcome your input! Public comment is taken at the beginning of each meeting. The Board meets on the 4th Monday of every month (except July & December) from 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm at Disability Network's Community Building in Kalamazoo.

*For more information, or to request an accommodation, contact Margaret at [\(269\) 345-1516](tel:(269)345-1516) x101.*

## Coming This Fall...



### GET-TO-KNOW-US LUNCHES

Watch for more information in our July newsletter.

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



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