

The LINK

Changing Lives.

Changing Communities.

A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Changing Lives, Changing Communities

People often ask us "What does Disability Network do?". There are many ways to answer this question! We might describe our programs and services. We might talk about advocacy and how we work to create inclusive communities. We also encourage people to tell *their* story about working with us:

My name is Pat Simmons and I am a brain injury survivor. My journey began in 2001 with an aneurysm. After 2 years filled with rehab, divorce and a failed attempt to return to work, I retired on disability. I felt lost and overwhelmed with the future. I had a volunteer job one morning a week but felt out of place with the world. My therapist told me about the brain injury survivors group at Disability Network.

I began attending in May of 2005 and felt at home immediately! I had found people who understood what I had been through! I knew I'd found a special place where I truly belonged. I felt connected again. The group is a very important part of my life. The weekly topics have helped me learn more about brain injury. And I've learned a few things about myself too. The group connected me to other services at Disability Network that I didn't know existed! It's also a social group. I'd never been to a Kings game and we go every summer. The group's social activities are varied and include an annual zoo trip, Kings Game, picnic and so much more! All these activities have enriched my life greatly. Plus, I've made new friends. Now I am an officer for the group. They trust me to handle their money! Sometimes, I sit back and wonder where I would be now if I hadn't found the brain injury group. It's been a real blessing in my life.



Note: A similar version of Pat's story appeared in a 2010 issue of The Donor Connection, our newsletter for donors of Disability Network. We felt Pat's story about how Disability Network impacted her life was just too compelling not to share with our entire readership.

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



Watch for our **new** Women with Developmental Disabilities support group starting this spring in Berrien County. Call Cindy Gray at (269) 985-0111 for details.

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

Accessible Parking - Respect the Spot!



*Don't park in a designated accessible spot.
When you do, you are **breaking the law**, will get an expensive ticket
and you are **disrespecting** people with disabilities.*

Not sure what to do in those frustrating moments when you see a car without disability plates or tags parked in an accessible spot? We've created a flyer to put on windshields to let drivers know they've been spotted doing something illegal and disrespectful.

Stop by our offices in Kalamazoo or the City of St. Joseph to pick one up, or call us and we can mail one to you! We can be reached at (269) 345-1516 or (269) 985-0111. You may also call your local non-emergency police number and let them know someone is illegally parked.

GET TO KNOW US!

Attend a Disability Roundtable Discussion

May: Politics are Personal

June: Movie & Discussion - "Monica and David"

July: Disability Rights Movement

Roundtables meet in Battle Creek, Kalamazoo & St. Joseph. Call (269) 982-7761 to find out more, or visit www.dnswm.org. Everyone is welcome.



We've created a **lunch & learn event** designed for community professionals to:

- ▶ learn about Disability Network Southwest Michigan services
- ▶ learn when and how to refer your clients to us
- ▶ learn how we can assist your agency with disability-related questions

May 18, 2012 - Coldwater

May 24, 2012 - Cassopolis

Contact Michele at (269) 345-1516 for information.

LOANS FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY OR HOME MODIFICATIONS

We are an application assistance site for the Michigan Assistive Technology Loan Fund program. Assistive Technology is any device or item designed to help people with disabilities maintain or increase their independence.

Common items purchased by the Loan Fund are motorized scooters, hearing aids, ramps, accessible vans, and communication aids. Call Lewis at (269) 345-1516 or go to www.michiganloanfunds.org to learn more.

SPRING STARTS OUR RAMP UP SEASON

With support from First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo, Haven Reformed Church, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Greater Kalamazoo United Way, and The City of Kalamazoo - Community Development Block Grant, Disability Network may be able to help you create an accessible entrance to your home through our Ramp Up program. To find out if you qualify, contact Karen at (269) 345-1516 x115.



Member Spotlight



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

"My name is Sharon DeHaan and I am a member of Disability Network Southwest Michigan because I feel *dedicated* to their mission. I have been volunteering at Disability Network as a receptionist for 18 years. I am a member of the Women with Disabilities Support Group, the Brain Injury Support Group and Crafty Ladies. I also work with other members and volunteers on Disability Network's advocacy groups – Transportation Advocacy Group, Access and Friends of Transit.

I know that the people at Disability Network are doing a lot of good work for people with disabilities and the community. I enjoy being involved and helping Disability Network in its mission."

If you would like to become a member of Disability Network, fill out the form below and mail it to our Kalamazoo Office at:
517 E. Crosstown Parkway, Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Membership at Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Did you know that Disability Network is a member-driven organization? By becoming a member today, you join others in the disability rights movement who are changing lives and creating inclusive communities. Some of the benefits of membership include:

- ▶ **new** Starting July 2012, a monthly subscription to our Disability Digest - a summary of the top disability-related news from around the state, county and world. This publication is only available to members.
- ▶ Subscription to our newsletters, *The Link* and *The Donor Connection*
- ▶ A Disability Network Southwest Michigan reusable canvas bag
- ▶ The ability to vote during the annual election and special meetings of the membership
- ▶ Invitation to the Annual Meeting and other Disability Network events
- ▶ Exciting volunteer opportunities
- ▶ Donor impact updates
- ▶ The opportunity to serve on a committee that meets your unique interests, such as public policy, marketing, or advocacy
- ▶ The satisfaction of knowing that you are part of a dynamic organization that creates real change in Southwest Michigan

☐ **Yes!** I/We would like to join Disability Network and become part of a national and local movement to end disability discrimination and to create inclusive communities:

___ Individual \$15.00 ___ Household \$25.00 ___ I need my membership fee waived.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ ☐ I would like to receive newsletters electronically.

Amount Enclosed: _____ (Annual Membership Fee) + _____ (Gift) = _____ (Total)

Please return this card with your check or money order payable to *Disability Network Southwest Michigan* to:
517 E. Crosstown Parkway Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Attend Michigan Rehabilitation Services Orientation Online!

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) helps Michigan residents with disabilities achieve employment and self-sufficiency. If you have access to a computer, you now have the option of learning about Michigan Rehabilitation Services and participating in their customer orientation online!

The MRS On-Line Orientation allows you to view videos explaining what MRS does and if they can assist you with obtaining employment. The MRS On-Line Orientation is presented in 10 different sections:

Section 1 - Welcome to Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Section 2 - Six Steps to Vocational Rehabilitation

Section 3 - Determining Eligibility

Section 4 - Career Exploration

Section 5 - Creating Your Individualized Plan for Employment and Following Your Plan

Section 6 - Finding Employment

Section 7 - Closing your Case

Section 8 - Your Rights and Responsibilities

Section 9 - MRS Special Programs and Partners

Section 10 - Becoming an MRS Customer

Search “MRS online orientation” on your Internet Browser to find and view videos. For more information, you can contact your local MRS office. To find your local office, call 1-800-605-6722 (voice) or 1-888-605-6722 (TTY).

This information was taken directly from the MRS webpages. Disability Network is not responsible for inaccurate or out of date information.



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



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