

Spring in to Action: Connect to Your Community!

Spring is a great time to break out of your shell and look for ways to connect to your community—volunteer with a non-profit, join a cause or get involved with your local civic/government entity.

Getting engaged in your community doesn't mean you have to step into the spotlight and run for office, although that is certainly one way to get involved! Getting involved can take a lot of different forms: individually or as part of a group; going out in the community or working from your home; being a vocal activist or working behind the scenes—whatever your preferred style is, there is something out there for you to do!

Volunteering

Volunteer opportunities could be anything from stuffing envelopes to serving on a committee or board of directors. You can start by looking at the organizations or causes you feel passionate about; most non-profits have volunteer opportunities.

If you don't know where you want to volunteer you can contact your local "211" agency or area United Way, they will help connect you or refer you to the agency in your community that handles volunteer coordination. You can also search the internet for volunteer opportunities.

Becoming Publicly Active

Getting involved in your local government is also a great way to engage your community and get involved with issues that interest you. All governing bodies hold scheduled public meetings—you can simply attend to show your support for an issue or prepare a public comment for consideration at the meetings. Becoming involved with a public campaign, whether in support of a particular candidate or policy issue, is another way to become involved.

Bringing disability rights issues to the table

As you become connected to organizations in your community, don't be shy about raising disability rights issues. You don't have to be working with a disability-related agency to be a disability rights activist! While serving an organization in whatever capacity you are in, you can help them be more inclusive to the disability community. This might relate to physical access, the formats they offer their information in, the language they use or their ability to offer accommodations. Remember, disability rights are civil rights, and it's important when we are out working in the community to shine light on these issues.



LUNCH & LEARN workshop:

Making a Difference in Your Community

Are you ready to "be the change you want to see in the world" but are not sure where to start? Join us for a light lunch as we talk about finding ways to put our passion into action!

Kalamazoo: Wed., May 16 12:00–1:30 p.m.

St. Joseph: Tues., May 22 12:00–1:30 p.m.

For more information and to RSVP please contact Miranda at grunwellm@dnswm.org or 269-345-1516 x120.

WORKSHOP:

RISE UP!

Disability Resistance, History & Pride

Many of us in the disability community are unaware of the depth of our culture and history and feel shame and stigma instead of pride around our disability identities. Family, friends and human service professionals also have a lack of knowledge of disability history and struggle to find ways to support our journey to disability pride. Let's change that!



Disability Network has partnered with Van Buren Intermediate School District to present this workshop to raise awareness of disability rights and pride! Everyone is welcome to join us for a light breakfast with discussion and activities that promote knowledge of disability history and support the journey to disability pride.

Tuesday, May 15

9:00–11:00 a.m.

**John H. Dominguez Special Services Building
701 South Paw Paw Street, Lawrence**

This workshop is free; however, we ask that you pre-register with Miranda at grunwellm@dnswm.org or 269-345-1516 x120.

For more information, visit our website at www.dnswm.org.

Annual ADA Celebration Scheduled for July 27th

Mark your calendars and join us for a celebration of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Friday, July 27 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. We are hosting a community-wide event at our Kalamazoo office, including a free lunch, awards, and speakers. We invite all community members and organizations to join us!



Our Publications:

The LINK is our quarterly newsletter, available in printed format or emailed in electronic format.

Disability Digest is a monthly e-newsletter focused on Disability Rights issues and upcoming Disability Network happenings. Available in electronic format only.

You can sign up online for our publications at www.dnswm.org, or contact Dale at abbott@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x123.

Current and past issues of our publications are available on our website at www.dnswm.org.

This newsletter is available in alternative format upon request.

Support Our Work:

You can help support the work we do with a tax-deductible donation to Disability Network. Visit our website to donate online or call Kristen at (269) 345-1516 x119.



**Find us on
Facebook**

Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Serving 8 counties in
Southwest Michigan:

BARRY
BERRIEN
BRANCH
CALHOUN
CASS
KALAMAZOO
ST. JOSEPH
VAN BUREN

Office Locations:

517 E. Crosstown Pkwy
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
(269) 345-1516

2900 Lakeview Avenue
St. Joseph, MI 49085
(269) 985-0111

For the accessibility and well-being of our employees and visitors, Disability Network Southwest Michigan is a fragrance-free office. Please do not wear perfume, cologne or other scented products when visiting.

Mission Statement:

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

Vision Statement:

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

Advocacy Academy:

Preparing the next generation of disability rights activist

We are currently accepting applications for this year's Advocacy Academy. We are seeking six individuals between the ages of 16–29 to form our 2018 Advocacy Academy team. This is an 8-week paid summer job in our Kalamazoo office.

Participants will choose a disability advocacy issue to learn about and then create an advocacy campaign around that issue. Advocacy Academy is an opportunity to learn advanced advocacy and leadership skills while doing meaningful work in the Disability Rights Movement! Advocacy Academy also provides valuable experience and training which can be applied to other life experiences. Many of our previous participants have received employment recommendations based on their performance during Advocacy Academy.



Advocacy Academy team visiting the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing.

For more information or to apply for this year's Advocacy Academy, go to Advocacy & Education in the Services area of our website (www.dnswm.org) or contact Miranda at grunwellm@dnswm.org or 269-345-1516 x120.



Say YES to Seniors in Kalamazoo County!

Disability Network Southwest Michigan is a proud partner on the Senior Millage Planning Committee in Kalamazoo County. Kalamazoo is one of only ten counties in the state of Michigan that does not have a senior millage—what does that say about the way we care for the elderly in our community? After tireless work with the County Commission, the Senior Millage Planning Committee has successfully gotten the Senior Millage on the ballot for the August 7 election.

The proposed millage would be used to support in-home and community services. This encompasses basic needs, such as home safety & repair (including ramps), home delivered meals, and in-home care services. Successful passage of this millage would make a significant difference in keeping seniors safe and living independently in their own homes.

If you live in Kalamazoo County, be sure to get out and vote on August 7 to support independent living and the needs of seniors in our community!

Youth in Transition Programs Are a Big Success

Disability Network Southwest Michigan offers a number of programs centered on providing valuable training and experience to youth and young adults with disabilities, whether they are transitioning to employment or continuing their education. In the past year, we have worked in nearly half the high schools throughout our region and have assisted youth in all eight counties we represent.

Our Independent Living staff provide training programs to assist students with disabilities transition to post-secondary school, whether it be college or a trade school. Moving from a familiar high school environment to a post-secondary school can bring a new set of expectations and stresses. We work with students to help them learn how to ask for accommodations and establish routines that will make their school experience successful.

We also offer school-to-work training programs for young adults with disabilities in both group and individual settings within schools. The curriculum focuses on pre-employment training services aimed at getting students ready to enter the working world; topics include career exploration, employment soft skills, self-advocacy and financial literacy & budgeting.

Charting the Course: Meet Bradley

Bradley, a young man who is autistic, was referred to Disability Network by a concerned family member. He was facing significant challenges living at home and wanted to gain some independence. Our staff worked with Bradley to help him find his own apartment and work on his independent living skills.

Disability Network staff encouraged Bradley to enroll in Project Search to gain employment training and experience. Project Search is a business-led school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace to provide a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training. As a partner in Project Search, our staff continued working with Bradley to overcome barriers to successful employment. Staff provided independent living skills training, including transportation and soft-skills training to help him understand the expectation of a work environment.

Bradley did such a great job during his Project Search training at Lakeland Hospital, they hired him as a permanent employee at the end of the program.



Staff member, Jackie Curtis, working with Bradley to complete his new-hire paperwork.

Our partnership in Project Search is one way Disability Network helps prepare young adults with disabilities for their path forward. At Disability Network Southwest Michigan, we are helping people with disabilities chart their course to increased independence in a more inclusive community. We cannot do this important work without your support. To learn more about our programs and services, visit our website at www.dnswm.org or find us on Facebook.



LUNCH+LEARN+MOVIE

Dina

Join us for lunch and a movie in either Kalamazoo or St. Joseph. We will be watching the film *Dina*. While juggling all the decisions that come along with planning a wedding, Dina, an autistic woman, faces her fiancé and impending in-laws with head-on directness that makes her who she is. Note: this film is a real-life documentary that deals with mature content.

In **Kalamazoo**: Wednesday, April 18 12:00 –2:30 p.m.

In **St. Joseph**: Tuesday, April 24 12:00–2:30 p.m.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact Miranda at grunwellm@dnswm.org or 269-345-1516 x120.



NEW WORKSHOP!

DO'S & DON'TS: Assistance Animals

There is a lot of confusion about what qualifies as a Service Animal and how they differ from Emotional Support Animals. There are specific laws regarding what type of assistance animals are allowed in different places and whether an establishment can deny access to an assistance animal. Join us to learn more!

In **Kalamazoo**: Friday, April 27 3:00–4:30 p.m.

In **St. Joseph**: Monday, April 30 3:00–4:30 p.m.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact Miranda at grunwellm@dnswm.org or 269-345-1516 x120.



LUNCHTIME BOOK CLUB

Lottery by Patricia Wood

Money isn't the same as treasure, and IQ isn't the same as smarts! Perry L. Crandall knows what it's like to be an outsider. With an IQ of 76, he's an easy mark. Before his grandmother died, she armed Perry well with what he'd need to know: the importance of words and writing things down and how to play the lottery. Most important, she taught him whom to trust—a crucial lesson for Perry when he wins the multimillion-dollar jackpot. As his family descends, moving in on his fortune, his fate, and his few true friends, he has a lesson for them—never, ever underestimate Perry Crandall.

Wednesday, May 2, 12:00 noon–1:30 PM

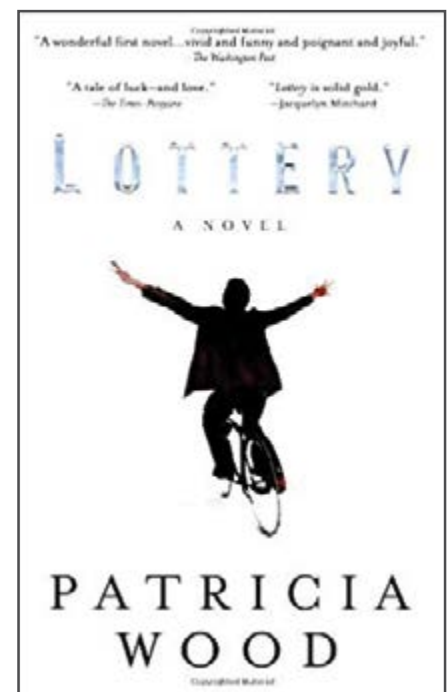
Meets in both our Kalamazoo & St. Joseph offices

RSVP:

Kalamazoo – Leatrice: fullertonl@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x118

St. Joseph – Cindy: grayc@dnswm.org or (269) 985-0111

For more information about the Lunchtime Book Club, visit www.dnswm.org/connect/book-club.





Disability Network Southwest Michigan

517 E Crosstown Parkway
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

www.dnswm.org



Sign up for our
**electronic
publications!**
Details inside

SPRING EVENTS

Look for these Spring events inside:

Lunch+Learn+Movie: Dina

Kalamazoo: April 18

St. Joseph: April 24

Do's & Don'ts: Assistance Animals

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St. Joseph: April 30

Lunchtime Book Club: Lottery

Kalamazoo: May 2

St. Joseph: May 2

Rise Up! Disability Resistance, History & Pride

Lawrence: May 15

Making a Difference in Your Community

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