

The LINK

Changing Lives.
Changing Communities.

A publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Peer Support and Why it Works

Peer support connects people living with a disability to others with the same or similar situation. Peer support provides a safe environment for people who share similar experiences to exchange knowledge and resources.

Peer support can provide emotional, social and practical assistance as well as fostering understanding and trust among group members. Some group members form deep connections and find that their support group is like a family to them.

Local Peer Support Groups

Disability Network facilitates several peer support groups. In Kalamazoo County we host a Brain Injury Survivors Support Group and Phenomenal Women, a support group for women with disabilities. In Berrien County we facilitate Divine Divas, a support group for women with developmental disabilities. You can learn more about these support groups on our website.

Disability Network also maintains an extensive list of disability-related peer support groups throughout our eight-county area on our website at www.dnswm.org. Look under the "Services" category for Peer Support. If you know of a support group that should be added to this list, please contact Dale Abbott at abbottd@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x123.



The Divine Divas, a support group facilitated by Disability Network in Berrien County enjoyed an outing at Grandpa's Cider Mill in Coloma.

Two Office Locations

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

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

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

ABLE Account Update

The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, commonly known as the ABLE Act, allows people who acquired a disability before age 26 to accrue up to \$100,000 without losing access to Social Security and other government benefits. Medicaid coverage will not be affected no matter how much money is saved in an individual's ABLE account. The ABLE Act will permit savings accounts to be used for spending on education, housing, transportation, employment training, assistive technology, personal support services, health, prevention and wellness, financial management, legal fees and other expenses.

When the ABLE Act was first proposed it included strict reporting regulations which would make the program cumbersome to administer. In response to concerns from disability advocates and state officials, the Internal Revenue Service is now indicating that fewer reporting requirements will be necessary for the new ABLE accounts than was originally outlined. This is good news for both individuals establishing ABLE accounts as well as the State administrators administering the program.

ABLE accounts are expected to start becoming available to consumers this year although the exact timetable is not yet known. If you have questions about how the ABLE Act might impact you, please contact our Information and Referral department at (269) 345-1516.

2016 Leadership Team

The Board of Directors at Disability Network Southwest Michigan is made up of a dedicated group of volunteers with a strong commitment to the Independent Living philosophy. Board members work with our President & CEO to provide exceptional leadership for our organization. The board works to develop policies that guide Disability Network in providing excellent service to people with disabilities, as well as creating social change in Southwest Michigan.



Cheri Stoltzner
Board Chair



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Immediate Past
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Bob Tonander
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Officer At Large



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Diane Dalm
Director



Joel Cooper
President & CEO

Lunch + Movie + Discussion

What does a science fiction movie from 1997 have to do with the Disability Rights Movement? Join us in either our Kalamazoo or St. Joseph office for this “Lunch+Movie+Discussion” event to find out. Pizza and pop provided, please RSVP. Everyone is welcome!

Kalamazoo Office

Friday, January 15, 2016

12:00 noon – 2:15 p.m.

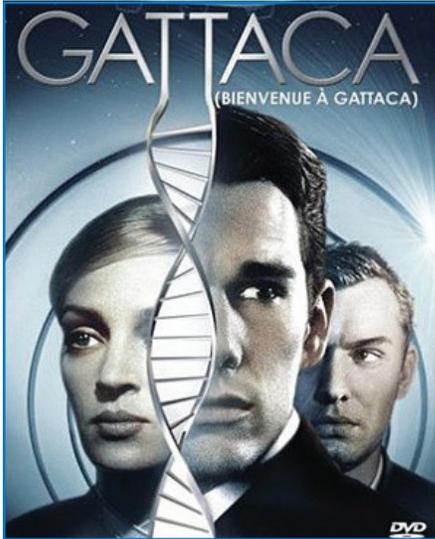
RSVP: Miranda (269) 345-1516 x120

St. Joseph Office

Tuesday, January 19, 2016

12:00 noon – 2:15 p.m.

RSVP: Joanne (269) 982-7761



Gattaca

In “the not-too-distant” future, where genetic engineering of humans is common and DNA plays the primary role in determining social class, Vincent (Ethan Hawke) is conceived and born without the aid of this technology. Suffering from the nearly eradicated physical dysfunctions of myopia and a congenital heart defect, as well as being given a life expectancy of 30.2 years, Vincent faces extreme genetic discrimination and prejudice. The only way he can achieve his life-long dream of becoming an astronaut is to break the law and impersonate a “valid” — a person with appropriate genetic advantage.

(PG-13) 1 hour 36 minutes

The movie will be shown with open captions and a hearing loop is available during discussion. Let us know if you need other accommodations to participate.

This is a fragrance-free environment. Please do not wear perfume, cologne or other scented products to these events.

WORKSHOP: Disability Language & Assumptions for Human Service Professionals

The language we use is powerful and can reveal hidden assumptions we might not know we have. We invite human service professionals to attend this **free workshop** to explore new ideas, ask questions in a safe environment and challenge some assumptions about what it means to live with a disability. More info on our website at www.dnswm.org.

————— **Berrien** —————

OR

————— **Kalamazoo** —————

Thursday, February 25, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

2900 Lakeview Avenue, St Joseph

RSVP: johnsonj@dnswm.org / (269) 982-7761

Friday, February 26, 10:00 a.m. – Noon

517 E. Crosstown Parkway, Kalamazoo

RSVP: grunwellm@dnswm.org / (269) 345-1516

Volunteer of the Year - Karlissia Munn

Karlissia Munn has been named Volunteer of the Year at Disability Network Southwest Michigan. She has been helping to support our customers since 2007. In addition to her eight years of volunteer service at our front desk, Karlissia also volunteers time staffing community outreach booths, participating on disability panels in the community and making satisfaction survey calls to customers.

Many thanks to Karlissia for her generous gift of time and talent to Disability Network. It means so very much to all of us.



Don't Miss Our "AT of the Month" Feature

"Assistive Technology" is the name for tools and gadgets that might be the key to remaining independent at home for a variety of individuals. Each month we highlight a different Assistive Technology device. Our St. Joseph office creates a display of the featured AT devices and we post the highlighted item on our website and Facebook page. For more information about Assistive Technology, visit the Assistive Technology page of our website or call us at (269) 345-1516.

Assistive Technology Funding Assistance is Available

The Assistive Technology Loan Fund (ATLF) is available to help people pay for tools for independence. The ATLF is a low interest loan available to people with disabilities and their family members to help purchase items like wheelchair-accessible vehicles, hearing aids, mobility devices, communication devices, or adapted recreation equipment. The ATLF can also pay for home modifications, including ramps, to make your home more accessible. Contact Lewis in our Kalamazoo office (269-345-1516 x107) for more information.



We're Social. Are you? Like us on Facebook.

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



www.dnswm.org

Disability Network Southwest Michigan
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Kalamazoo, MI 49001



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