

The LINK



A publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Accessible Computer Lab Comes to Kalamazoo Office

As a result of a generous gift from a local funder, Disability Network Southwest Michigan has recently installed an accessible computer lab in our Kalamazoo office. The computer lab will provide increased opportunity for people with disabilities to access information, services, communication, socialization, and media. The computer lab is open to anyone upon agreeing to the guidelines and procedures.

Disability Network staff can provide basic instruction to help people get started using the computers. If someone requires further training, they can make an appointment.

Breaking Down Barriers to Technology

Accessibility is vital to enjoying all aspects of life, yet many barriers still exist for people with disabilities. True “access” is more than just physical access to buildings, stores and transportation. Access to information, communications, services, employment and education are also key components to being able to fully participate in community life. In today’s world, technology is often the key to accessing information whether it be directions to a job interview, information on a new doctor or connecting with social groups.

Assistive technology, such as screen readers, large print keyboards and adaptive mouse pads, are required for some people with disabilities to access the technology they need. These items can be expensive and are not realistic for many budgets. The computer lab at Disability Network



provides accessibility options not typically found in other community locations offering public access to computers.

Accessible Features

We have four workstations, two of which have a variety of accessible features including touch screen monitors, headsets and microphones, a trackball mouse, trackpads, an EZ See keyboard, JAWS screen reader software, Zoomtext, and Dragon Naturally Speaking voice commands and dictation.

You can find a complete list of accessibility features and more details about our computer lab on our website under “Services.” If you have questions about our computer lab, please contact our Kalamazoo office at 269-345-1516.

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

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

www.dnswm.org

MOVIE + LUNCH + DISCUSSION

2019 Movie Series

We are hosting a [series of disability-themed movies](#) over the next few months. Join us for lunch, watch the movie and discuss the issues afterward. We are offering these events in three locations:

Kalamazoo: Disability Network Southwest Michigan: 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

Battle Creek: United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region: 34 W. Jackson St., Ste. 4B

St. Joseph: Disability Network Southwest Michigan: 2900 Lakeview Avenue

Join us for one, two or all three movies; select the locations and dates that works for you and RSVP to Miranda for the event(s) you'd like to attend at (269) 345-1516 x120 or grunwellm@dnswm.org. Let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.



FEBRUARY: [Intelligent Lives](#) is a catalyst to transform the label of “intellectual disability” from a life sentence of isolation into a life of possibility for the most systematically segregated people in America. The film stars three pioneering young American adults with intellectual disabilities who challenge perceptions of intelligence as they navigate high school, college, and the workforce.

Kalamazoo

Monday, February 11
11:30–1:30

Battle Creek

Tuesday, February 26
11:30–1:30

St. Joseph

Wednesday, February 27
11:30–1:30

MARCH: [Keep the Change](#) is a romantic comedy that follows the budding relationship of two people with autism. Their relationship must weather her romantic past, his judgmental mother and their own preconceptions of what love is supposed to look like. This film casts actors with autism to play characters with autism, offering a refreshingly honest portrait of a community seldom depicted on the big screen.

Kalamazoo

Monday, March 18
11:30–1:30

Battle Creek

Tuesday, March 26
11:30–1:30

St. Joseph

Wednesday, March 27
11:30–1:30

APRIL: [Infinitely Polar Bear](#) is based on the true story of a father who is recovering from a manic breakdown and soon finds himself in over his head when he takes on the role of primary caregiver for his daughters while his wife returns to graduate school.

Kalamazoo

Wednesday, April 17
11:30–1:30

St. Joseph

Wednesday, April 24
11:30–1:30

Battle Creek

Tuesday, April 30
11:30–1:30

Disability Network Southwest Michigan has a fragrance-free policy. For the well-being of those with scent sensitivities, please do not wear scented products when visiting our office or attending events.

More Than 7,000 Served in 2018!

Disability Network Southwest Michigan has wrapped up our books for fiscal year 2017-2018. Here's a look at 2018 by the numbers:

- **7,332** people served in **8** counties
- **5,860** Information & Referral requests answered
- **1,378** people with disabilities received Independent Living supports
- **753** youth with disabilities served
- **247** people received Social Security Benefits Counseling
- **16** Veterans with disabilities received Independent Living supports
- **29** ramps built
- **48** people with disabilities transitioned out of nursing facilities and into community-based living resulting in saving Michigan taxpayers over **\$3,600,000**
- **167** people with disabilities received transportation assistance
- **236** presentations in the community with **2,937** people participating
- **39** informational booths in the community

Make Emergency Preparedness your New Year's Resolution!

Emergencies can strike at any time and winter weather brings some additional hazards. This year, why not make a New Year's resolution to put together an Emergency Preparedness Kit so you will have the peace of mind knowing that you are ready for anything!



What to include in your Emergency Preparedness Kit:

- A supply of bottled water and food that won't go bad and doesn't need to be cooked
- Flashlights, batteries, cell phone charger
- First aid supplies and a supply of any medicines
- Warm blankets and a change of clothing
- Extra toiletries and hygiene items. A collection of travel size items will save space and give you a variety of what you need.
- Up-to-date contact information for people or services you may need to reach in an emergency and copies of your ID and insurance card

For more information about [Emergency Preparedness](#), visit our website under "Resources."

Assistive Technology Resources

"Assistive technology" and "assistive devices" are names for the tools & gadgets that might be the key to remaining independent at home for people with a variety of disabilities. You will find a list of Assistive Technology resources on the [Assistive Technology](#) page of our website under "Resources."

The Assistive Technology Loan Fund (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. For more information, contact Lewis Whalen at whalenl@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x107.

"DISABILITY IS A STRENGTH"

"Our number one issue is still old attitudes toward us, and those old attitudes see us as helpless and unable and disability can make you **very strong** and **very able**." — Ed Roberts



Ed Roberts Paved the Way for Disability Rights Advocacy

January 23 is Ed Roberts Day. Roberts is often referred to as "the father of the Independent Living Movement" because of his persistent and successful advocacy work for disability rights beginning in the 1960s. As a result of contracting Polio when he was eight years old, Roberts was paralyzed from the neck down and required the use of an iron lung to assist him with breathing. He started advocating for his rights at a young age when his high school threatened to deny him a diploma because he had not completed driver's education and physical education.

From high school, Roberts went on to college and was eventually enrolled at the University of California–Berkeley where his advocacy work really blossomed. He organized a group of students with disabilities on campus to form a students' disability rights group known as the "Rolling Quads." Their success in advocating for disability rights on campus soon inspired the Rolling Quads to move out into the broader community which eventually led to the creation of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living (CIL)—the first independent living service and advocacy program run by and for people with disabilities.

Advocacy continues to be the cornerstone of the Independent Living Movement. CILs throughout the country have adopted the phrase, "Nothing about us, without us," which reflects the deeply held principle that people with disabilities should be included in, and central to, discussions and policy making pertaining to disability.

Ed Roberts is one of many dedicated disability rights organizers who have paved the way to a greater awareness of disability rights within the framework of civil rights. It's rarely just one person who makes change happen. You can be an important part of effecting meaningful change in your community, or the broader community, by working with advocacy groups, contacting your local, state or national representatives, joining committees that create policy, or simply showing up at committee meetings to add strength to the voices of others.

Disability Network's Advocacy Groups

Disability Network Southwest Michigan facilitates two disability advocacy teams which are open to anyone to participate in.

- **The Access Team** works on projects that improve accessibility for people with all types of disabilities and educates businesses and community leaders about barriers to full inclusion. This group meets at our Kalamazoo office on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, 12:30–1:30.
- **The Transportation Advocacy Group (TAG Team)** monitors the day-to-day service of public transit in Kalamazoo County to ensure that it complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This group meets at our Kalamazoo office on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, 11:00–Noon.

For more information about our [advocacy services](#) and [advocacy groups](#), visit the Advocacy area of our website under "Services."

NEW WORKSHOP

The Rise & Triumph of the Disability Rights Movement

Join us for this [ALL NEW Disability Rights workshop](#)! We will watch and discuss the new documentary film, *Defiant Lives* which traces the origins of the world-wide disability rights movement. This film tells the stories of the individuals who bravely put their lives on the line to create a better world where everyone is valued and can participate in society.



This event is free and open to the public. Select the location and date that works for you and RSVP to Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120 or grunwellm@dnswm.org and let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.

- Kalamazoo:** **Wednesday, January 23** **2:00 – 4:00**
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway
- Battle Creek:** **Tuesday, January 29** **1:00 – 3:00**
United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region: 34 W. Jackson Street, Ste. 4B
- St. Joseph:** **Wednesday, January 30** **10:00 – 12:00**
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue

MOVIE + LUNCH + DISCUSSION

Intelligent Lives

From award-winning filmmaker Dan Habib comes the film [Intelligent Lives](#), a catalyst to transform the label of “intellectual disability” from a life sentence of isolation into a life of possibility for the most systematically segregated people in America. *Intelligent Lives* stars three pioneering young American adults with intellectual disabilities who challenge perceptions of intelligence as they navigate high school, college, and the workforce.



This event is free and open to the public. Please RSVP to Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120 or grunwellm@dnswm.org and let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.

- Lawrence:** **Friday, January 18 | 11:30 – 1:30**
Van Buren ISD Conference Center - Elberta Room | 490 S. Paw Paw Street

Our Publications:

The LINK is our quarterly newsletter, available in print or emailed in electronic format. And is available in alternative format upon request.

Disability Digest is a monthly e-publication 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 abbottd@dnswm.org or (269) 345-1516 x123. Current and past issues of our publications are available on our website at www.dnswm.org.





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517 E Crosstown Parkway
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

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Are you looking for a Peer Support Group?

Peer support connects people to others with the same or similar situation. Peer support can provide emotional, social and practical assistance as well as fostering understanding and trust among group members in a safe environment.

Disability Network Southwest Michigan maintains an extensive [list of disability-related peer support groups](#) throughout Southwest Michigan on our website under "Services."

Additionally, 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 under "Services."



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.