

# The LINK



A publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

## October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

The purpose of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is to educate people about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of workers with disabilities.

Held annually, NDEAM is led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, but its true spirit lies in the many observances held at the grassroots level across the country every year. Employers of all sizes and in all industries are encouraged to participate in NDEAM.



“Disability Network Southwest Michigan is proud to take part in National Disability Employment Awareness Month,” said Joel Cooper, President and CEO of Disability Network Southwest Michigan. “We want to spread the important message that people with disabilities provide a valuable contribution in the workforce and throughout our community.”

Employers and employees in all industries can learn more about how to participate in NDEAM and ways they can promote its messages—during October and throughout the year—by visiting [www.dol.gov/ndeam](http://www.dol.gov/ndeam). Suggestions range from something as simple as putting up a poster to implementing a disability education program. Regardless, all play an important part in fostering a more inclusive workforce—one where every person is recognized for his or her abilities every day of every month!

### Disability Network holds Disability Disclosure Workshops Throughout Southwest Michigan

To celebrate NDEAM, Disability Network Southwest Michigan is conducting free disability disclosure workshops throughout Southwest Michigan during the month of October. The workshops are designed to inform employees with disabilities about their rights regarding disclosing their disability to an employer and requesting accommodations.

You will find a schedule of disability disclosure workshops inside this newsletter. Choose the date and

location that works best for you and contact us to register. For more information about the workshops, visit our website at [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org).

These workshops are just one example of how our Advocacy & Community Education team support the Disability Rights Movement in Southwest Michigan.

### Investing in Disability

The logo for 'Investing in Disability'. It features a blue circular graphic with a white dot inside, resembling a stylized 'i' or a person. To the right of the graphic, the words 'Investing in' are in orange and 'Disability' is in blue.

When we invest in disability, the entire community benefits. Join Disability Network Southwest Michigan in creating a diverse and inclusive community by investing in people with disabilities. We cannot do this important work without your support.

## 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.

## Meet our Newest Staff Members



Please help us welcome the newest staff members hired at Disability Network Southwest Michigan. **Anne Kooy** (left) and **Aimee Spieker** (right) are both working as Independent Living Specialists and will be serving our entire eight-county service area.

## Volunteer of the Year: Ashlee Eichler



We held our annual Volunteer Appreciation dinner in September where we announced this year's Volunteer of the Year—Ashlee Eichler.

Ashlee has volunteered with Disability Network for the past 3 years providing support in our Berrien/Cass office. In addition to helping with the Divine Diva's peer support group, you are likely to see Ashlee at our agency booths or at our Book Club meetings in St. Joseph.

Ashlee is also a great advocate for Disability Network; she tells everyone she meets about the work we do! Thank you Ashlee for all your hard work and dedication as a volunteer at Disability Network!

## MICHIGAN DISABILITY SUMMIT



## Michigan Disability Summit Scheduled

Disability Network/Michigan has partnered with Michigan Disability Rights Coalition and the Michigan Statewide Independent Living Council to hold a one-day Disability Summit. The summit is open to customers, families, support staff and professionals to engage in learning opportunities regarding self-determination and community-based living and employment options for people with disabilities.

The summit is being held on Thursday, October 12, 2017 at the Okemos Hotel and Conference Center located at 2187 University Park Drive in Okemos, Michigan.

For more information or to register email Terri Robbins at [terri@misilc.org](mailto:terri@misilc.org) or call 517-371-4872.

# New Accessible Voting Machines Coming to Michigan

New voting equipment is coming to all counties, cities and townships throughout Michigan. Three different vendors/systems were approved by the State and each county has selected the system they want to use. The change in voting systems will include providing new accessible voting machines, replacing the “AutoMark” machines that have been used throughout Michigan for many years.

In our eight-county service area, all counties except for Kalamazoo selected Dominion Voting Systems. Kalamazoo County selected Election Systems & Software who will provide the “Express Vote” machine.

The new accessible voting machines will be in place on Election Day this November. No doubt election officials all over the state will be working the bugs out of their new systems – you can help them by using

the new machines and providing feedback.

If you have questions about voting or the change in equipment, contact your County Clerk’s office.



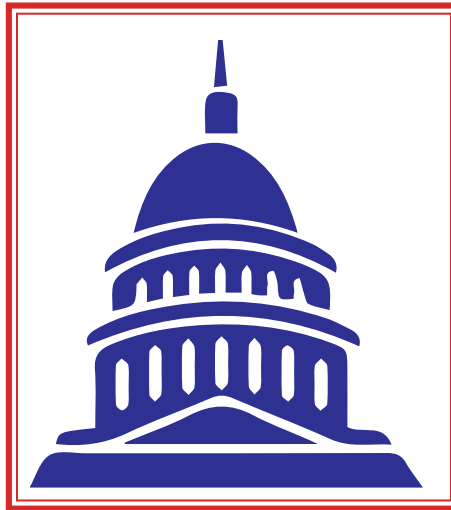
## Know Your Voter Rights!

By federal law, each polling location must include at least one accessible voting machine. If you require assistance using the machine or completing your ballot, you can bring someone with you to help you or ask the polling staff to assist you.

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## The ADA is being threatened! What you need to know about H.R. 620

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is under serious threat by a Bill that has been introduced in the House of Representatives. The Bill is titled “The ADA Education and Reform Act of 201 (H.R. 620).” The ADA is the cornerstone of civil rights law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability. Specifically, Title III of the ADA requires businesses to pro-actively provide barrier-free access to their establishments. Since it’s passing, the business community has been reluctant to comply with ADA requirements.



If passed, H.R. 620 would significantly reduce the effectiveness of Title III requirements. Instead of automatically requiring businesses to be barrier-free, the bill would only require businesses to provide accessibility when/if a person with a disability is denied access and files a complaint. At that point, the business would have six months to make “substantial progress” toward providing access

before a court order could be sought. This could allow businesses to remain out of compliance for years while they slowly make minor changes, claiming to be making “substantial progress.”

The National Council on Independent Living recently stated, “H.R. 620 is a terrible bill that would be a major step backwards for people with disabilities. Twenty seven years after the passage of the ADA, the fact that Congress is working to make it easier to discriminate against people with disabilities is shameful.”

H.R. 620 gained some momentum recently as it passed through the House Judiciary Committee. You can take action by contacting your U.S. Representative. If you are unsure who your Representative is or how to contact them, you can find the information at [www.CommonCause.org](http://www.CommonCause.org). Tell your Representative that H.R. 620 is harmful to people with disabilities and they must vote No!



# Disability Disclosure Workshops

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: Disability & Employment

Disability Network Southwest Michigan is conducting disability disclosure workshops throughout Southwest Michigan during the month of October. Join us for this free workshop to learn about disclosing your disability or medical condition at work. Here you will learn how, when & why to talk about your disability or medical condition with an employer. We will also discuss the best ways to ask for an accommodation at work. You will also learn about your rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and resources that can help you.



Choose the location and date that works best for you. You can find more information about these workshops on our website: [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org).

Date/Time	Location	RSVP
Tue. Oct. 3 2:00 - 3:30 PM	Disability Network Southwest Michigan <b>Kalamazoo</b> - 517 E. Crosstown Parkway	Miranda: (269) 345-1516 x120 <a href="mailto:grunwellm@dnswm.org">grunwellm@dnswm.org</a>
Fri. Oct. 6 2:00 - 3:30 PM	Michigan WORKS! <b>Paw Paw</b> - 32849 Red Arrow Highway	Miranda: (269) 345-1516 x120 <a href="mailto:grunwellm@dnswm.org">grunwellm@dnswm.org</a>
Wed. Oct. 11 2:00 - 3:30 PM	Michigan WORKS! <b>Dowagiac</b> - 601-D N. Front Street	Terezie: (269) 982-7761 <a href="mailto:harazinovat@dnswm.org">harazinovat@dnswm.org</a>
Tue. Oct. 17 3:30 - 5:00 PM	Hastings Public Library <b>Hastings</b> - 227 E. State Street	Miranda: (269) 345-1516 x120 <a href="mailto:grunwellm@dnswm.org">grunwellm@dnswm.org</a>
Mon. Oct. 23 2:00 - 3:30 PM	Kool Family Community Center <b>Battle Creek</b> - 200 W. Michigan Avenue	Miranda: (269) 345-1516 x120 <a href="mailto:grunwellm@dnswm.org">grunwellm@dnswm.org</a>
Tue. Oct. 24 2:00 - 3:30 PM	Disability Network Southwest Michigan <b>St. Joseph</b> - 2900 Lakeview Avenue	Terezie: (269) 982-7761 <a href="mailto:harazinovat@dnswm.org">harazinovat@dnswm.org</a>

## INFORMATION & REFERRAL:

# Resources for Getting Help with your Home Heating Bills

This fall, agencies providing assistance with utility bills will be newly funded and ready to assist. Here are two resources throughout the state of Michigan:

- **The State of Emergency Relief & Weatherization Program** through the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) has funding available to assist qualified applicants from November through May. You can create an account on their website at: [www.michigan.gov/mibridges](http://www.michigan.gov/mibridges) or contact your local DHHS office.
- **True North Community Services** offers resources for heating assistance. Visit their website at [www.truenorthservices.org](http://www.truenorthservices.org) and select "Heat & Energy" from the Assistance menu or go to their Resource Search page and enter your county, select Heat & Energy as a category and view other resources.

For local resources contact our Information & Referral Department.

## LUNCHTIME BOOK CLUB:

# A Piece of the World

by Christina Baker Kline

Join us at either our **Kalamazoo** or **St. Joseph** office on Wednesday, **November 1**, 12:00–1:30 p.m. to discuss *A Piece of the World* written by the bestselling author of *Orphan Train*, Christina Baker Kline.

To Christina Olson, the entire world was her family's remote farm in the small coastal town of Cushing, Maine. Born in the home her family had lived in for generations, and increasingly disabled by illness, Christina seemed destined for a small life. Instead, for more than twenty years, she was host and inspiration for the artist Andrew Wyeth and became the subject of one of the best known American paintings of the twentieth century.

A light lunch is provided, please RSVP to the office where you want to attend:

**Kalamazoo:** Leatrice  
(269) 345-1516 x118  
[fullertonl@dnswm.org](mailto:fullertonl@dnswm.org)

**St. Joseph:** Terezie  
(269) 982-7761  
[harazinovat@dnswm.org](mailto:harazinovat@dnswm.org)

More info: [www.dnswm.org/connect/book-club](http://www.dnswm.org/connect/book-club).

## LUNCH & LEARN FALL MOVIE SERIES:

We are hosting a fall Lunch & Learn movie series at both our **Kalamazoo** and **St. Joseph** offices.

### Front of the Class | October 20, 12:00–2:00 pm

After being diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome at a very young age, Brad Cohen defies all odds to become a gifted teacher. Growing up, he must face friends and classmates who don't realize that he sometimes cannot control his outbursts.

### Including Samuel | November 17, 12:00–2:30 pm

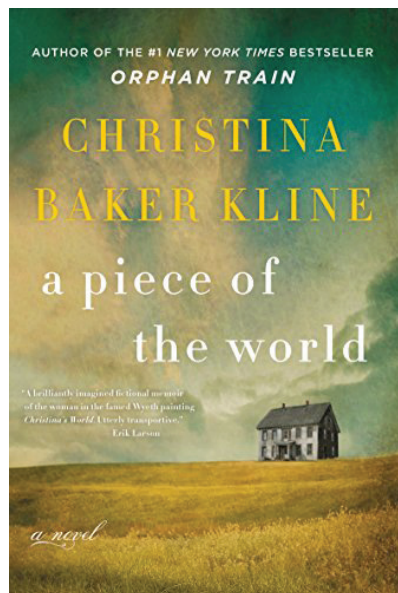
Before his son Samuel was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, photojournalist Dan Habib rarely thought about inclusion of people with disabilities. Now he thinks about inclusion every day. Including Samuel captures the cultural and systemic barriers to inclusion.

A light lunch is provided, please RSVP to the office where you want to attend:

**Kalamazoo:** Leatrice  
(269) 345-1516 x118  
[fullertonl@dnswm.org](mailto:fullertonl@dnswm.org)

**St. Joseph:** Terezie  
(269) 982-7761  
[harazinovat@dnswm.org](mailto:harazinovat@dnswm.org)

More info: [www.dnswm.org/lunch-learn-fall-movie-series-2017](http://www.dnswm.org/lunch-learn-fall-movie-series-2017)



## 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](http://www.dnswm.org), or contact Dale at [abbott@dnswm.org](mailto:abbott@dnswm.org) or (269) 345-1516 x123.

Current and past issues of our publications are available on our website at [www.dnswm.org](http://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

517 E Crosstown Parkway  
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

[www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org)



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publications!**  
Details inside



## OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR HEALTHCARE: November 1 – December 15

If you are planning to sign up for healthcare coverage through the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as “Obamacare,” the open enrollment period is November 1 through December 15. You can sign up or find more information online at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). If you have questions about enrolling or whether you qualify for healthcare under the ACA, call their help line at 1-800-318-2596.

## Are You In Need of a Device to Make Your Life Easier? The A.T. Loan Fund Can Help!

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. For more information, contact Lewis Whalen at [whalenl@dnswm.org](mailto:whalenl@dnswm.org) or (269) 345-1516 x107.