

# The LINK

Changing Lives.  
Changing Communities.

## A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

### Growing the Disability Rights Movement: Michigan Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF)

**What:** A leadership development program for high school students with disabilities.

**When:** June 18-22, 2011 at Michigan State University

**To apply, you must:**

- Be a high school student with a disability
- Be a junior or senior by September 2010
- Demonstrate leadership potential
- Be no older than 19 by time of 2011 Forum
- Be a Michigan resident



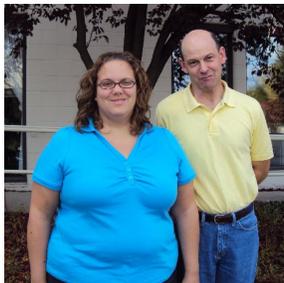
**Deadline to apply: December 10, 2010**

**30 students with disabilities will be selected.** If you are selected, there is a \$100 deposit to attend. Let us know if this will create a hardship for you.

Contact Miranda at Disability Network at (877) 674-5209 for more information.  
[www.mylf.org](http://www.mylf.org)

### DISABILITY NETWORK STAFF MEMBERS ARE LEADERSHIP ALUMNI!

Disability Network staff members Tim Allgor and Miranda Grunwell both attended leadership programs when they were in high school. Now, they are mentors at MYLF to the next generation of leaders in the disability rights movement!



The **Kalamazoo Civic Theatre** has added one **ASL signed show** for each production this year! Call 343-1313 or visit [www.kazoocivic.org](http://www.kazoocivic.org) for more information.



*Educating and empowering people with disabilities to create change in their own lives and advocating for social change to create inclusive communities.*

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

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

# The AutoMark is for Everyone

## What is the AutoMark?

It is a voting tool that everyone can use, although it was designed so that people with disabilities could vote independently and privately. Unfortunately, most people don't know what it is, and it sits unused at polling locations.

To use it, you insert your paper ballot – the same ballot everyone else gets – into the AutoMark. Then you use a computer touchscreen or keypad to make your choices between candidates or to vote for ballot proposals. When you are finished, it marks your ballot for you. You then take your ballot to the tabulating machine and it is counted with everyone else's.



The ability to privately and independently vote in elections is a right most Americans have always enjoyed. For some people with disabilities, however, this has only been a very recent accomplishment, brought about by years of advocacy under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"The first election that I was able to cast my vote independently was wonderful," says Angie Lee. "The AutoMark is very important to me and I'm thankful for it."

 **Pledge to vote using the AutoMark every election.** Ask your poll worker to show you how!

Disability Network Southwest Michigan has a DVD that shows you how to use the AutoMark. If you would like to borrow it to show a group, or would like a presentation about voting and people with disabilities, give Michele a call at (877) 674-5209 or email [mmcgowen@dnswm.org](mailto:mmcgowen@dnswm.org).

## HELP FOR BUYING ASSISTIVE DEVICES

If you need helping paying for something like a motorized scooter, a wheelchair ramp, a hearing aid, a lift-equipped van, or other item designed to help you be independent, the Assistive Technology Loan Fund (ATLF) may be able to help.

The ATLF ([www.michiganloanfunds.org](http://www.michiganloanfunds.org)) program is a low-interest loan that allows you to borrow money to purchase adaptive equipment or devices and pay it back over time.

Contact Lewis Whalen at (877) 674-5209 for more information about this program. It is available to people with disabilities and their family members anywhere in Michigan.



## PRESIDENT OBAMA SIGNS TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY LAW

Earlier this month, President Obama signed the **21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act** into law. The bill requires smart phones, TV programs, the internet, menus on DVD players, program guides on cable TV, and other modern communications technologies to be accessible to people with hearing and vision disabilities. It also requires that emergency broadcast information be accessible to people with visual and cognitive disabilities. The bill was passed with bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress before being sent to President Obama.



Find us on Facebook!

## Member Spotlight

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



Membership is about more than being a donor. It is about a commitment to knowledge.

During my final year of graduate school at Western Michigan University, I completed an internship with Disability Network Southwest Michigan. Working with the dedicated staff at Disability Network was one of the best experiences of my educational career and I was very fortunate to have done my internship at such a dynamic organization. I became more knowledgeable about disability rights, resources for individuals with disabilities, and best practices for organizations. As a professional in special education, this is invaluable. Now, as a member of Disability Network, I know that I will continue to receive updates on all of these important issues and more through newsletters, donor updates, and volunteer opportunities. I became involved with Disability Network for the educational experience, and I became a member so I can keep learning!

If you would like to receive a membership brochure, call Kristen at (877) 674-5209.

## DISABILITY DISCLOSURE WORKSHOP

**When:** November 3, 2010 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**Where:** Benton Harbor

If you have a disability and aren't sure how to tell your boss, then come to this workshop! You will learn your employment rights under the ADA and the best way to tell your boss about a disability.

Call Michele at (877) 674-5209 to register.

## AUTISM SPECTRUM PLAN: YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED

A statewide committee has started work on the **Michigan State Plan for Autism Spectrum Disorders**. They want parent and professional feedback on this plan early in the process.

Go to [www.asdplan.cenmi.org](http://www.asdplan.cenmi.org) for details and to fill out a survey. You must make your comments before November 15, 2010. A draft of the final plan is due in the spring of 2011.



## Do You Have a Disability-Related Question?

**Disability Network is the first stop for people with disabilities in Southwest Michigan.**

People call for information about disability resources, to ask questions, and to look for answers. Maybe you want to find the nearest tandem bike club for persons who have a visual disability, or maybe you need medications for your disability but do not have insurance and aren't sure what to do. Whatever your question, we want to help.

Our toll-free number is (877) 674-5209. Our Kalamazoo office number is (269) 345-1516, and the direct number for our Berrien & Cass County office is (269) 985-0111.



**Sign up to receive this newsletter by e-mail! Contact Michele at [mmcgowen@dnswm.org](mailto:mmcgowen@dnswm.org) or (877) 674-5209.**

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# New Construction Gets Accessibility Boost & Ramps for Existing Homes Change Lives

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## An Accessibility Boost for New Homes

Builders and developers competing for Low Income Housing Tax Credits to finance affordable housing projects are more likely to get awarded funding if they include elements of accessibility. The work of advocates around the State, including Disability Network Southwest Michigan Advocate Paul Ecklund, brought about this change of policy. Good work!

## Ramps for Existing Homes Change Lives

Thank you to the City of Kalamazoo for CDBG funds that funded 5 of the 9 ramps we built through our Ramp Up program. Ramps provide access to the community – jobs, shopping, appointments – and can prevent people from entering a nursing facility. The need for ramps is ALWAYS greater than our ability to help. For more information about ramps, contact Karen Halsted at (269) 345-1516 x 115 or [khalsted@dnswm.org](mailto:khalsted@dnswm.org).



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



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