

The LINK

*Changing Lives.
Changing Communities.*

A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Celebrating Freedom & Independence

On the 4th of July, Americans traditionally celebrate the qualities of **freedom** and **independence**. In fact, we often refer to the 4th of July as "Independence Day." Similarly, on the 26th of July, many of us celebrate the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a civil rights law that mandates **freedom** from discrimination and segregation based on a disability – another important "**Independence Day**."



Here at Disability Network, we celebrate our Ramp Up Program volunteers that make **freedom** and **independence** possible for people with disabilities in Southwest Michigan.



This July, two groups partnered with our Ramp Up volunteers to build ramps for 3 families in Kalamazoo. The groups were Impact Kalamazoo, a group of youth and adults from Haven Reformed Church, and the Youth Group from the First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo. Additionally this month, Disability Network was able to assist a family in South

Haven to get a ramp, providing the **freedom** and **independence** to get out of the house, come and go without assistance, and be part of the community.



Our Ramp Up Program is funded by City of Kalamazoo, the United Way of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo and private donations from people like you. For more information, contact Karen Halsted at (269) 345-1516 x 115.

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

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.

Voting is the Easiest Kind of Advocacy

Be Sure to Vote on August 7, 2012

Voting in elections is the first step in making your voice heard in a democracy, and elected officials pay attention to the ideas and concerns of people who vote. **Your vote is your voice in the election process.**

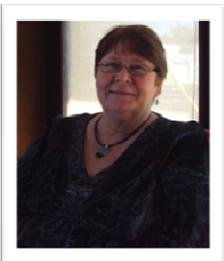
A **Primary Election** is held by the political parties to select their nominees for the offices to be elected at the upcoming general election. In a primary, Republicans run against Republicans and Democrats run against other Democrats. And, of course, if other parties qualify to appear on the primary ballot, their candidates run against each other as well. In a primary, you may vote on only one party's candidates. You cannot split your ballot between the various political parties or your vote will not be counted.



As a result of redistricting based on the 2010 Census, certain Congressional, Legislative and County Commission district boundaries have changed. **Be sure you know your district for each race.** You can call your local clerk's office or you can visit www.michigan.gov/sos and click the big VOTE button. This will take you to the Michigan Voter Information Center where you can enter your information and get a sample of the ballot you will be using in the August primary.

Questions about voting? Contact Michele at **(269) 345-1516** x 116 or Joanne at **(269) 982-7761** at Disability Network – we're happy to help!

MEET OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS



Jo Slusher works in our Information and Referral Program and our Independent Living Skills Program. When you call us with a question, Jo just might be the friendly voice assisting you.

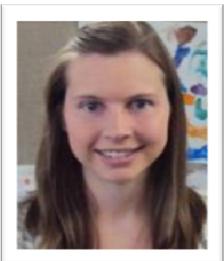
Holly Smith

works in our Independent Living Skills Program, assisting youth and adults reach their goals for self sufficiency.



Brandi Gibbs

works in our Community Education & Systems Advocacy Program, providing support to our advocacy work and increasing our presence throughout Southwest Michigan.



THE WHITE HOUSE DISABILITY GROUP E-MAIL DISTRIBUTION LIST

In order to keep the public informed about various disability issues, the White House has been hosting monthly calls. To learn about future calls, request to be added to the White House Disability e-mail distribution list by [visiting the White House website](http://www.whitehouse.gov). These calls are open to the public and offer a unique opportunity to hear about important disability issues from individuals who work in the Federal government. You can also submit questions before the call at disability.gov.

RENOVATIONS TO OUR BERRIEN/CASS OFFICE

Our Berrien/Cass office has grown in size! Our office is located at 2900 Lakeview Drive (inside the Area Agency on Aging building). Stop in and see our new space!



Fulfilling the Promise of the ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) just turned 22 years old!



The ADA is a civil rights law that says people cannot be discriminated against or excluded due to their disability. It is a simple idea that reflects our values of equality and equal opportunity here in America. Unfortunately, carrying out the promise of the ADA, the nuts-and-bolts of HOW Americans end discrimination and exclusion, has been anything but simple.

Progress made in 2012:

- ▶ March 15, 2012 was the date that **new accessibility requirements** brought about by the ADA Amendments Act of 2010 went into effect, impacting new construction, alterations, effective communication, designated event ticketing, the hotel industry and more.
- ▶ The FCC issued rules that re-instate **video description for television**, making TV programs accessible to people with visual disabilities by providing narrated descriptions of a program's key visual elements inserted into natural pauses in the TV show's dialogue.
- ▶ A federal court held that the ADA applies to **Website-Only Businesses**, striking down arguments by the business community that the ADA only applied to physical buildings. Web-based businesses will need to ensure equal access for users who have a variety of disabilities. (*National Association of the Deaf, et al. v. Netflix*)

This progress didn't just happen. It is result of sustained advocacy efforts from the disability community and its allies: People just like you who speak up and speak out to elected officials and government leaders. Thank you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Berrien County

August 7 @ 1:00 Disability Roundtable

Tools & Techniques for Accommodations

August 23 @ 1:00 Change & Communication

Free advocacy workshop – RSVP by 8/15/12

September 4 @ 1:00 Disability Roundtable

Ableism, Allies and Oppression

Calhoun County

August 21 @ 1:00 Disability Roundtable

Tools & Techniques for Accommodations

September 18 @ 1:00 Disability Roundtable

Ableism, Allies and Oppression

Kalamazoo County

July 31 @ 1:00 Crafty Ladies

A time for women who like to craft!

August 14 @ 1:00 Disability Roundtable

Tools & Techniques for Accommodations

September 11 @ 1:00 Disability Roundtable

Ableism, Allies and Oppression

October 22 @ 5:00 Annual Meeting

Save the date! We'll be at CityScape.

Look for our booth at community resource events all over Southwest Michigan! For more information, call our Community Education Staff at (269) 345-1516 or (269) 982-7761.

HELP PLAN FUTURE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS IN MICHIGAN

Adults 50 years and older and adults 18 years and older with a disability are being asked to take the **Michigan Aging and Disability Needs Assessment Survey** www.needsmichigan.com. Your input matters – please take the survey today!

CONNECT WITH US THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Be sure to bookmark our website www.dnswm.org, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DNSWM, and subscribe to our YouTube channel by going to www.youtube.com/dnsouthwestmi.

The more you're connected, the more you'll know!

Want to Donate in a Non-Monetary Way?

Our **Nursing Facility Transition** Program works to help people in nursing facilities move back into the community. Some people we help transition back into the community need items to help furnish their new living space. The NFT program accepts donations of the items listed below (new or gently used):

- ▶ Kitchen items (can openers, dish trays, hot pads, measuring cups and spoons)
- ▶ Dishes, cups & silverware
- ▶ Pots and pans
- ▶ Small kitchen appliances (coffee pots, microwaves, toasters, crockpots)
- ▶ Small furniture (end tables, lamps, coffee tables, night stands, etc.)
- ▶ Home telephones
- ▶ Vacuums
- ▶ Clocks



If you have items you are interested in donating, please contact Lisa Hansen at (269) 345-1516 x 111.

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



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