

The LINK



A publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Spring into the Outdoors!

Exploring Accessible Outdoor Recreation Areas

There is no denying it—we had a pretty brutal winter here in Southwest Michigan this year, but that is all behind us now and it’s time to get outside! Whether it’s a visit to your local neighborhood park or an epic outdoor adventure, the benefits of fresh air and sunshine are tremendous.

If you are a person with a mobility disability, it can be intimidating to explore new recreational areas if you don’t know what to expect. Fortunately, more and more recreational sites are providing accessibility and making that information known. Whatever your outdoor activity is, from trails to fishing, to a day at the beach, you can find your place in the sun!

An internet search is a good place to start. Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides information regarding accessibility for state parks and recreation facilities throughout Michigan for all sorts of recreational activities. (Go to www.michigan.gov/dnr, click on “Things To Do” and scroll down to “[Accessibility](#).”). The DNR also provides a site called Recreation



Search (www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails) where you can view a list of State recreation sites with icons representing the types of recreation and amenities available and if they are accessible. Keep in mind the facilities listed on these web sites are specifically State owned/operated, it is not intended to be a complete list of all recreation areas in the state.

An “Access Pass” is a free, life-time pass which grants access for anyone with a permanent disability to any national park or Federal recreation area. At

many sites, it also provides a discount on amenity fees, such as camping, swimming, and guided tours. The “Access Pass” can be obtained for free at any Federal park or recreation area or purchased online for \$10. For more information about the Access Pass, visit the USGS website (<https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass>).

For a more local experience, try your city or county Parks Department or the local visitor’s bureau. This can be done online or by calling or visiting their offices.

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

www.dnswm.org

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

NEW WORKSHOP

Know your rights!

Overview of laws protecting people with disabilities

It's important to know your rights. In this workshop we will be discussing the laws which protect people with disabilities in the areas of employment, housing, education (K-12 & post-secondary), public places/access, voting, and transportation.

The information in this workshop is intended as an overview for the purposes of advocating for your rights, we are not providing legal advice.

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.



- St. Joseph:** **Thursday, May 2** **9:00 – 10:30**
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue
- Kalamazoo:** **Wednesday, May 8** **12:30 – 2:00**
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway
- Battle Creek:** **Friday, May 10** **9:00 – 10:30**
United Way of the Battle Creek & Kalamazoo Region | 34 W. Jackson Street, Ste. 4B

MOVIE + LUNCH + DISCUSSION

Infinitely Polar Bear

We wrap up our Lunch & Learn Movie Series with *Infinitely Polar Bear*, 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.

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.

- Kalamazoo:** **Wednesday, April 17** **11:30 – 1:30**
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway
- St. Joseph:** **Wednesday, April 24** **11:30 – 1:30**
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue
- Battle Creek:** **Tuesday, April 30** **11:30 – 1:30**
United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region | 34 W. Jackson Street, Ste. 4B

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.

Annual ADA Celebration Scheduled for July 26th

Mark your calendars and join us for a celebration of the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Friday, July 26 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. We are hosting a community-wide event at our Kalamazoo office, including a free lunch, awards, and speakers. We invite all community members and organizations to join us!



Berrien County Transportation Forum

Join the conversation!

Come be part of the conversation with representatives from the public transportation agencies serving Berrien County. This is an opportunity to share your concerns, raise issues, and ask questions about how you are directly affected by the transportation systems in your area. Representatives from area transportation agencies will be at this forum to hear your concerns and answer questions.

April 12, 2019 | 1:00 — 3:00 pm

2900 Lakeview Avenue, St. Joseph, Michigan

If you have any questions about this event or need an accommodation to participate, please contact Cindy at (269) 985-0111. This event is sponsored by Disability Network Southwest Michigan and the Self-Advocates of Michigan (SAM) Board.



Meet James: Born to be an Advocate!

The Transportation Forum described above would not be happening if James Ivey didn't make it happen. James is a young adult with a developmental disability and cerebral palsy who has a passion for the disability rights movement and isn't afraid to speak up about it. James represents the Berrien County area on the Self-Advocates of Michigan (SAM) Board. He serves on the Public Policy, Advocacy, and Public Relations committees of SAM, and is chairperson of the Transportation Committee. Through his involvement with the Michigan Developmental Disability Council and SAM board, James identified transportation as the biggest issue for people with disabilities in his area.

Disability Network staff worked with James to connect with community officials, politicians, and people with disabilities in his community to discuss issues around local public transportation and assisted him in planning a local transportation forum. This forum will be a model for SAM representatives to use throughout the state.

James is not a novice to advocating for the rights of people with disabilities. He has traveled to Lansing and Washington DC on numerous occasions to provide input to legislators. James speaks with a passion you can't miss – he is a voice to be heard!



Summer Employment Program for Young Adults

We are excited to be offering Advocacy Academy in both Kalamazoo and Battle Creek this year. Advocacy Academy is an eight-week, paid, summer program for youth and young adults. After an introduction to the Disability Rights Movement, participants will work as a group to select, plan and carry out a disability rights advocacy campaign.



Advocacy Academy provides training in advanced advocacy and leadership skills while participants do meaningful work in the Disability Rights Movement. Advocacy Academy also provides valuable experience and training which can be applied to other life experiences. Many of our previous participants have received employment recommendations

based on their performance during Advocacy Academy.

We are currently accepting applications for Advocacy Academy 2019. We are seeking individuals with disabilities who are between 16–29 years of age, able to commit to the entire 8 week position, and are motivated to increase their leadership skills. For more information or to apply

for this year's Advocacy Academy, go to Advocacy & Education in the Services area of our website (www.dnswm.org) or contact Miranda at grunwellm@dnswm.org or 269-345-1516 x120.

This year, Advocacy Academy is funded in part through generous community support. We are grateful for local support of our Advocacy Academy program.

You Can't Lose with an MiABLE Account!

MiABLE is a state-operated, federally approved program where account holders and their loved ones can save and invest money without losing eligibility for government benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid. The state reports that although approximately 300,000 Michigan residents with disabilities are eligible for MiABLE, less than 1 percent of those who qualify are currently using the accounts.

Many people with disabilities want to work but are fearful of losing their Medicaid and other benefits if they have more than \$2,000 in assets. With a MiABLE account, you can save and invest up to \$15,000 per year to pay for expenses such as rent, tuition, vehicle purchases, healthcare, personal needs and long-term care. If you're employed, you may be able to contribute up to \$12,140 of your income – increasing the total yearly contribution limit to \$27,140.

Account holders can withdraw and spend their money at any time, but they can also grow their money and save for the future. Earnings in MiABLE accounts are not subject to federal income tax and contributions to MiABLE accounts are tax-deductible. Anyone can contribute to a MiABLE account – family, friends and the account holder.

MiABLE accounts are available to individuals who develop their physical, developmental or mental disability before age 26. To find out if you're qualified, or to sign up for a MiABLE account, visit MiABLE online at www.miable.org.



We Love Our Volunteers!

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month and we would like to honor our great volunteers! At Disability Network, our volunteers fill a variety of important roles including board and committee members, advocacy team members, front desk receptionists, ramp builders, and office support.



Thank you for all that you do!

Robert Argue

Patrick Banks

Battle Creek Area Habitat for Humanity

Stephen Bristow

Janet Brode

William Chapman

Cheryl Baker

Diane Dalm

Sharon DeHaan

Doc Doxzon

Ashlee Eichler

Esquare Carpentry

First Congregational Church
St. Joseph

First Congregational Church
of Kalamazoo

First Methodist Church
of Kalamazoo

Rick Freridge

Janet Germain

Julie Gray

Great Lakes Chapel

Harvey Hanna

Harbor Habitat For Humanity

Robyn Hill

Eva Huddleston

John Huizinga

Impact Kalamazoo/Dale Miller

James Ivey

Shari Johns

Bob Kisiel

Kevin Klute

Konjoh Konjoh

Hayley Kreg

Tom Kruse

Mindy Kulasa

Ron Lambe

Bill McElhone

Michelle Moxley

Karlissia Munn

Red Arrow Ministries

Ann Sanford

Pamela Scurry

Senior Services Southwest
Michigan

Pat Simmons

Kirk Sims

Tim Sloan

Cheri Stoltzner

Brenda Stubbs

Jill Tooman

Patti Townsend

David Vinci

Jeff Visser

Westwood Christian Reformed

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 the Disability Rights Movement 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

www.dnswm.org



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

Michigan Alliance for Families Workshops

Michigan Alliance for Families (MAF) will be hosting workshops in both our Kalamazoo and St. Joseph offices in the coming months. MAF is a statewide resource to connect children with disabilities to resources to help improve their education. For more information about MAF programming visit them at www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org.

At our St. Joseph Office:

IEP Support Services

Wednesday, April 24 | 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Extended School Year

Wednesday, May 29 | 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Inclusion: Free & Appropriate Education

Wednesday, June 26 | 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

At our Kalamazoo Office:

Getting & Keeping the First Job

Wednesday, May 1 | 11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.



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.