

The LINK



A publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Be Heard! Your Voice Counts!

The highly charged political scene in our country has motivated many people to become engaged in the democratic process. If you've never been involved in advocacy, it can be a little intimidating figuring out how to get started or what method of engagement is most appropriate for you. Here are some tips to help you get started.

Contact your elected officials

Remember, elected officials work for you! Your tax dollars pay their salary and they are in office to represent their constituents – that's you!

To learn who your local elected or appointed officials are, visit your city or town's website or call your town/city hall to inquire. To find out who your state and federal representatives are, you can go to www.CommonCause.org and click on "Find Your Lawmakers" at the top of the screen. Type in your address and the site will list your state and federal representatives along with links to their websites and contact information.

You can send a letter, email or call your representatives to let them know what issues are important to you and where you stand. You should include your name, address and zip code so they can verify that you live in their district. Many state representatives conduct town hall meetings or coffee hours to meet with the public. You can find that information on their website or by contacting their office.

Join a political party, volunteer with a campaign or run for office!

If your issues align with a political party or a specific candidate, you can volunteer with their campaign to further the cause. There are usually a variety of tasks volunteers can help with, such as stuffing envelopes, making phone calls, collecting signatures, or going door to door to talk with voters.



If a supporting role isn't what you had in mind, you can run for office yourself! Determine where you have the most experience and how you can make the kind of difference you want to make. Perhaps you can start at the local level with a County, City or School Board position.

Support organizations that are working on your issues

Find out if there are organizations already engaged in the issues you are most passionate about and lend them your time, talent or financial support. You might support your cause by attending a rally or peaceful protest or by volunteering in any number of ways.

Speak up!

If nothing else, be sure to talk about your point of view with other people – both friends and strangers. Develop your "elevator speech" – a concise but compelling description of the change you'd like to see. Don't be afraid to engage people in a respectful conversation. Be prepared to make your points and listen to theirs. This can be a little intimidating, so start with your friends and family; the more you do it, the easier it will become.

"The moment you let others speak for you, you lose."

– Ed Roberts
Disability Rights Activist

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.

www.dnswm.org

Preparing the Next Generation: Youth & Young-Adult Programming

Disability Network Southwest Michigan offers a number of programs centered on providing valuable training and experience to youth and young-adults with disabilities whether they are transitioning to employment or continued education.

This year, Disability Network Independent Living staff are providing programming in schools in all eight of the counties we serve. They provide training to students with disabilities in both group and individual settings within the school. The curriculum focuses on pre-employment training services aimed at getting students ready to enter the working world; topics include employment soft skills, self-advocacy and financial literacy & budgeting. The program also includes training to help students with disabilities transition to post-secondary school, whether it be college or a trade school.

Outside of the school environment, Disability Network is a proud partner in Project SEARCH which is a business-led school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training.

The Community Education & Advocacy team is once again holding Advocacy Academy at our Kalamazoo location. Now in its sixth year, Advocacy Academy is an 8 week paid internship program for young adults 16–29 years

old. Interns learn about the Disability Rights Movement and how to plan and implement a disability advocacy project while gaining experience in personal leadership and workplace skills. Advocacy Academy is helping to prepare the next generation of disability rights activist! Visit our website or call our Kalamazoo office to obtain an application for this year's Advocacy Academy.



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.

**Investing in
Disability**

MOVIE + LUNCH + DISCUSSION

The King's Speech

Monday, April 24

12:00 noon–2:30 p.m.

Join us as we watch and discuss *The King's Speech*, a film based on the true story of Prince Albert, the man who becomes King George VI of England. Are the stereotypes and fears of having a stutter different today than in 1939?

Film Description:

Set in 1939 Britain, the introduction of radio and newsreels changes how world leaders communicate with their countrymen. Prince Albert, now King George VI, never wanted to be King. After the death of his father, the throne was to pass to his brother Edward. But Edward renounced the throne for love and the duty to be King fell to Prince Albert, who had struggled with his speech from an early age. (Film rated R - profanity.)



RSVP to the location you will attend and let us know if you need an accommodation:

RSVP Kalamazoo
Miranda: (269) 345-1516 x120
grunwellm@dnswm.org

RSVP St. Joseph
Terezia: (269) 982-7761
harazinovat@dnswm.org

ADA Celebration July 21st

Mark your calendars and join us for a celebration of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Friday, July 21 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!



Financial Assistance for A.T. Devices

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 or (269) 345-1516 x107.

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, 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.

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](https://www.facebook.com/dnswm)

www.dnswm.org



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Lunchtime Book Club!

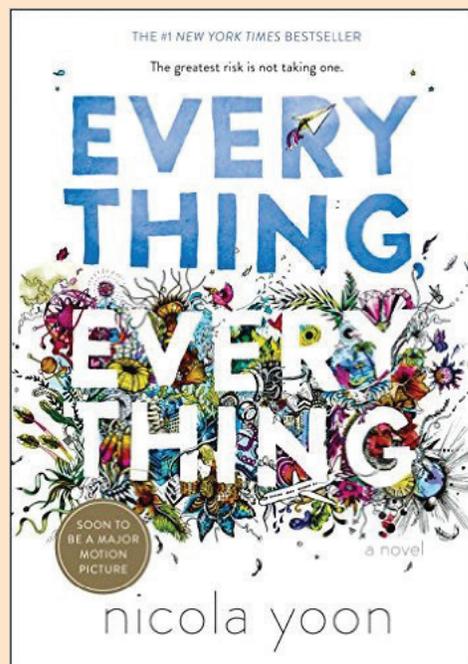
Wednesday, June 7, 12 noon–1:30 PM
Meets in both our Kalamazoo and St. Joseph offices

Everything, Everything by Nicola Yoon
Eighteen-year-old Madeline hasn't left her house in 17 years. She has SCID (severe combined immunodeficiency). For her, the outside world is filled with threats: viruses, allergens, bacteria, deadly airborne particles that her compromised immune system can't handle. But then one day a new neighbor moves in. He catches Madeline looking — he stares at her and she stares back. Madeline realizes quickly that she is going to fall in love with him and it's almost certainly going to be a disaster.

RSVP Kalamazoo:
Michele (269) 345-1516 x116 or mcgowenm@dnswm.org

RSVP St. Joseph:
Terezie (269) 982-7761 or harazinovat@dnswm.org

For more information about the Lunchtime Book Club, visit www.dnswm.org.



**Book is available in
alternative format!**