



disAbility
CONNECTIONS, INC.

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www.disabilityconnect.org



Supporting

people with disabilities

in their efforts to lead

Independent,

fulfilling, productive lives

Since 1925



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facebook.

newsletter #9

Nursing Facility Transition Program at Work!



Jason's Story; Written by: Carmon Yeloushan

Jason was born with developmental delays and no voice box. He lived at home and attended school until the age of 23 but with his medical needs and strength, mom was no longer able to take care of him in their home. Over the years he has lived in Adult Foster Care homes, many times a distance from his home and mother. As his condition continued to change with more hospital visits and medical issues, Jason was transferred to a nursing facility further from his mother. This made it nearly impossible for his mother to visit, since she doesn't drive and needs to rely on others for transport.

Mom is a strong advocate and wants the best for her son. When she heard about the nursing facility transition program, she contacted Carmon at disAbility Connections - NFT Program for help. After addressing many barriers and much red tape, on September 12, 2014, Jason moved from the nursing facility to an AFC Home within a block of his Mother. Many tears were shed and though Jason has no speech, his eyes and body language told the story of his joy.

Since leaving the facility Jason is able to stand, walk a few steps (with one assistant), he gives "high-fives" and enjoys a daily shower. He loves participating in outings and is able to see his mother often. His mom states, " it is good to see him home. I can oversee his care. Mission Accomplished!"

LITE PROGRAM

Learning Independence Through Enterprise (L.I.T.E.) is a program provided to individuals with developmental disabilities in Hillsdale County to promote individual independence and opportunities to grow. The program focuses on independence in the community, socialization skills, continuation of the learning process, and establishing and maintaining friendships.



The participants are making a product to sell in the community. FIRESTARTERS are made out of toilet paper rolls and shredded paper dipped in wax. Each participant takes part in each aspect of their business, the production, packaging, inventory, and selling of their product!

Don't throw away your paper towel or toilet paper rolls...we'll take them! We are also accepting candles (used or new) and wax. You can drop your donations off at Key Opportunities 400 N. Hillsdale St. Hillsdale, MI or disAbility Connections in Jackson in care of Trish. For more Information call L.I.T.E. at (517) 437-4469.



Winter Wonderful!



Written by:
Holly Peterson



Adaptive skiing is a possibility – and not toooo far from home! Challenge Mountain is near Petoskey, Michigan. It offers individuals (along with their families) the ability to experience a day of skiing! I took my family there a few years back to give my daughter Sally the opportunity to experience the joy (and rush) of traveling down a snow covered hill - what a day it was!



We phoned ahead to the Mountain to make a reservation for our family, arrived and were met by the most wonderful volunteers. They outfit the whole family with skis, poles and helmets. They began to fit Sally with the least restrictive ski option...starting with a walker ski but finally settling on a sit ski. My husband wanted to learn to handle the sit ski so he was also trained to do that. My son, niece and I enjoyed some leisurely skiing. It is a beginners hill for certain, so no excuses for first time or novice skiers to try it out!



Other skiers were there and we also enjoyed watching some competitive skiers with disabilities training for a race. We were treated to lunch and met other families. There was no cost but we made a donation for a day well spent!!! It is an experience we have talked about for years, with a revisit in the plans!



Challenge Mountain is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to enriching and improving lives for the mentally and physically challenged through outdoor recreation.

Contact: Linda Armstrong at (231) 535-2141 or programming@challengemtn.org



Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors: Proving Nature Belongs to Everyone

Written By: Parrish L. Stahl



Long before daylight on a brisk fall morning, 24 year-old Chad Trumble with the assistance of Tom Jones from the Department of Natural Resources helps his middle-aged, overweight, uncle, born with Cerebral Palsy, into an extremely special all-terrain wheelchair. Their mission is to harvest a deer if the opportunity presents itself, but most importantly, live a dream of being deep in the Michigan bush together. No words are necessary and everyone is smiling in the dim light, as the powerful chair easily traverses ruts, holes, mud and anything else in its path as they head for one of the DNR's public ground blinds ideally positioned far away from civilization. The fully handicapped accessible camouflaged blinds are a marvel with eight sliding, flip up ports, great for hunting, but also for just being in nature in an unobtrusive way, ideally with a camera. They can also serve as a welcome respite from the elements with fully carpeted interiors.

Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors would not be possible without many partners including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Camp Liberty, Zero-Day, Eisenhower Center, Brain Injury Association of Michigan, Disabled American Veterans and several more. Its mission is "to provide improved outdoor recreation opportunities for wounded veterans and individuals with health challenges and to coordinate a support network that facilitates their recovery through connecting with nature".

Hunters with disAbilities from all over Michigan joined Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors October 16-19 for the first-ever Independence Hunt Event at Sharonville State Game Area in Jackson County. This firearm deer hunt was for wounded veterans and others with disabilities. If you are interested in reconnecting with Michigan's legendary natural resources and getting back outdoors you are welcome to contact program coordinator Tom Jones at 734-612-6677 or tjones@zero-day.us. He can get people connected with helpful resources and recreational opportunities on an individual basis.



Oh, by the way, the gentleman being helped by his nephew at the beginning of this story happens to be the author, who did not get a deer with his crossbow yet, maybe he will with a gun, but it does not really matter, does it? Being with people we love, living dreams and creating memories that last a lifetime will always be the greatest of gifts.

Working can actually help a Social Security claim

Written by: Parrish L. Stahl

One of the most important decisions a person with a disability makes during their individual journey is when or even if to seek out Social Security Disability Income or Supplementary Security Income. It is important to understand the differences of the programs. To qualify for (SSDI) a person must have earned enough work credits during their working life. In general, must have worked five of the last ten years, have a disability expected to last at least a year or be fatal, be under age 65 and have a doctor willing to document a disability and how it limit ability to work now and into the future.

Supplementary Security Income (SSI) is different in that it is designed for people who do not have enough work credits. Often disabled children and adults with a limited work history receive (SSI) the amount and eligibility is calculated using household resources, assets and income.

Living exclusively on SSI or SSDI is a tremendously limited lifestyle. The maximum SSI benefit is approximately \$761.00 and SSDI is typically only slightly higher. Getting approved is an extremely difficult undertaking. Most people will get turned down and the process can take years.

It is important to remember that the Social Security only considers people making over \$1070.00 per month net, to be performing Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) so, contrary to the myth that one cannot work and have a disability claim in process; a person can work as long as their income is below SGA. Judges are human beings and want to help people trying to help themselves. Show a judge ambition, drive, willingness to receive training and work ethic and you may have an ally looking to help you.

There are several work incentives and safety nets built into the Social Security system and the two programs have vastly different earning rules. If you would like to learn more about working and disability log onto www.ssa.gov



Holiday Wish List:

Driveway salt

(safe for asphalt)

Printer paper

Business sized envelopes

Sharpie markers

(fine and thick)

Paper products ...

paper towels, tissue

Paper shredder –

heavier duty

(used is fine if works well)

***Contribution of any
amount toward:***

Respite services

Youth Assessment/Training

Parent Support

GoGo Camp

Bus Tickets

Residential Ramp Program

**General disAbility
Connections needs**

The Nation's Leading Internet Grocer, Peapod, Makes a Commitment to be Accessible

By: Parrish L. Stahl

The announcement and commitment from Peapod of its agreement with the Department of Justice to make its website and mobile applications accessible and usable for shoppers with hearing, visual and other disabilities is important because as an industry leader others will undoubtedly follow suit.

This is exciting news. The internet and ability to shop online has become an indispensable tool for people doing all kinds of shopping for goods and services.

As we do more online shopping particularly this holiday season, it is important to be aware of scams and offers that seem too good to be true. If you are not sure ask a reputable search engine like Google. Internet scams are quickly identified for those that are willing to do a little research. Happy safe on-line shopping!

PARKINSON SUPPORT GROUP....

The Jackson Parkinson Support Group celebrated their annual Holiday Potluck and live auction on Tuesday, November 11th. Rev. Ed Ross cried the sale and we raised \$169.00 and had a lot of fun doing it. The food was delicious and the fellowship was priceless. We are so grateful to be able to meet regularly at disAbility Connections on the second Tuesday of each month.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 13th at 6:15 pm. All people with Parkinson's Disease, their families and friends are welcome. Following a 20 minute social time, we will break into discussion groups: Persons with Parkinson and Caregivers, to share, problem solve, and support one another. We hope you will join us. For more information contact: Carole Briggs 783-6527

We have been recognized for
Striving Toward...



*Access
for All!*

disAbility
CONNECTIONS, INC.

For more information, see the
"Access for All" checklist at
www.disabilityconnect.org
409 Linden Avenue • Jackson, MI
Ph. (517) 782-6054

The Latest Recipients of the "Access for All" Recognition are:

- Lenny's Sub Shop
- Ella Sharp Museum
- Bella Notte Ristorante'
- China House Restaurant
- Dahlem Center
- Meijer Branch Library
- Dunkin Donuts
- Bigby Coffee

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR ONLINE NEWSLETTER!

If you think someone else may benefit
by receiving our online news,
please send their email address to
hollyp@disabilityconnect.org



Honoring Caregivers with a little R & R!

The **2014 Caregiver Retreat** took place on November 4th at First Church of the Nazarene with approximately 50 caregivers in attendance. It was a festive atmosphere where local caregivers received a day of rest, relaxation and rejuvenation. Respite was available on site. Twenty-five vendors provided caregivers with great information, local professionals provided free massage and Reiki.

Caregivers could make a craft or purchase handmade crafts from local artisans. We had an "Ask the Experts" panel and a great "Self Healing" session where we learned some Tai Chi and Mindful Meditation. Caregivers received a great breakfast and lunch and many took home a door prize provided by the vendors.

The planning committee is already working on making next year's retreat bigger and better. Watch the disAbility Connections website for next year's date and time.



Dining in the Dark...

A RARE AND
UNIQUE SENSORY
AWARENESS
EXPERIENCE
TAKING YOU ON
A JOURNEY
OF TASTES,
SOUNDS AND
TOUCH.



"Dining in the Dark" Awareness Dinner

The "Dining in the Dark" Awareness Dinner was held on Friday, October 24th at the Ella Sharp Museum to a sellout crowd. The dinner was a true experience for all who attended. The museum galleries were open for all to enjoy and we did just that! It was a beautiful evening.

As most of us will never truly know what it is like to be blind, those that attended learned some of the challenges that persons with blindness or low vision face. We all came away with a new understanding. The dinner was not an actual fund raiser and was meant to be an awareness event however it did raise about \$7,000 to help us provide continued support for the many programs provided by disAbility Connections.

We are in the planning stages already for next years 90th anniversary dinner. Please look for further updates as they become available. Hope to see everyone there.

Amazing Man Spends Life Making Wishes Come True

Long before donating \$5,000 to disAbility Connections

Written By: Parrish L. Stahl

If you use a computer, you probably had a mentor or someone who believed in you enough to teach you. During the early to mid-nineties more people were coming online every day. The way people get and exchange information was changing and those not willing to change or those without enough resources were going to be left behind and isolated in multiple areas of life.

People with disabilities were in a particularly troubling place when it came to accessing computers. The vast majority had little if any discretionary income for expensive computers, modems and internet connections. The library was an option, if one could get there, and many were intimidated. This meant that our community lagged behind as compared to the general population. Gradually, disAbility Connections started working on the problem and built a computer donor program taking in old machines, and with a small dedicated group of volunteers refurbished machines and gave them to and trained consumers with disabilities to use them.

Phillip Brown rebuilt, delivered, setup and then spent weeks training individuals coming up with solutions to problems unique to computer users with disabilities. In 1995, Phil was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis; he kept working until the early 2000's. Last week, Phil called with that same positive spirit coming through the phone. He said, "I saw d.C.'s MLive wish list reposted on Facebook, I do not drive anymore, but I have a ride and can stop by at 3:30pm. I want to give you \$5,000." What a Christmas present from an old friend that has all ready given so much to so many. His legacy of teaching and giving is all these years later, incalculable. Thank you for the donation and your humanity.



Pictured L to R: Cindy Carlson, Phil Brown, Lesia Pikaart and DC Board President Mike Jaska.

Take 5...Send a Christmas Greeting

Words of encouragement and appreciation can be sent today to:

**Recovering American Soldiers
C/O Walter Reed
Army Medical Center
6900 Georgia Avenue NW
Washington DC 20307-5001**



Welcome Larry Taylor!

disAbility Connections newest board member, Lawrence Taylor, began his term on October 1, 2014. We are thrilled to welcome Larry to our



family. Larry has an associate's degree and has worked as a social work technician. He recently retired from Segue/Impact but continues in his ministry at Higby Street Church of Christ. Having six children and six grandchildren is busy but he still finds time to be on the board of the South West Michigan Lectureship and the Ethics Board of the Jackson County Medical care facility.

When asked why he was interested in joining our board, Larry stated, "I have a physical disability and feel that I need to give back to society. My joy is helping people."

We look forward to Larry being with us for many years!

Special thanks to our weekly Volunteers!

Mindy Albert
John Conley
Jeff Guillemette,
Desmond Herbert
Marilyn Johnson
Katrina Johns
Emily McGee

We would love to put... **Your Name Here!!!!**



Board of Directors

2014-2015

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Vice President - James Grose

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Immediate Past President - Brad Williams

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Jerry Jenkins Phil Moilanen George Page

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ROTARY CHRISTMAS PARTY 2014 A BUNDLE OF FUN!



Ella Sharp Museum was the site of this year's Noon Rotary Christmas Party. They have been hosting local special education classrooms in Jackson County for 76 years with this special event! Santa brings toys for all of the kids, lunch is served and Colour's the Clown puts on one-heck-of-a good magic show!



Staff and Direct Dial Phone Numbers

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JoAnn Lucas (517) 998-3094
Associate Director / Therapist

Staff

Lora Bigcraft (517) 998-3081
Resource Manager

Brenda Bobon (517) 998-3084
Independent Living Specialist

Tricia Bortell (517)998-3096
Youth disAbility Guide

Carole Briggs (517) 998-3079
Respite Coordinator

Cindy Carlson (517) 998-3090
Development Specialist

Cyd Collins (517) 998-3085
Data Support /Accounts Receivable

Jim Cyphers (517) 998-3083
Independent Living Specialist

Jon Hart (517) 998-3092

Youth Training & Assessment Coordinator

Shawna Hayes (517) 998-3093

Youth disAbility Guide

Michael Hester - Facility Maintenance Support

David Klenk - (734) 677-1207 - Rehabilitation Coordinator

Alan Lewis - Equipment Cleaning

Kim Parker (517) 780 -7450 - Vocational Coordinator

Holly Peterson (517) 998-3097

Parent Education & Resource Coordinator, Newsletter, GoGos

Dan Ramey (517) 998-3086

Nursing Facility Transition / VA Supports Specialist

Angel Rhines (517) 998-3091 Customer Relations Specialist

Parrish Stahl (517) 998-3089

P/R, Community Outreach

Dana Vance (517) 998-3087

VA Supports Coordination / Specialist

Carmon Yeloushan (517) 998-3080

Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator

Cathy Yori (517) 990-6813

Finance Director