



disAbility
CONNECTIONS, INC.

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www.disabilityconnect.org



Find us on
Facebook

Supporting
people with disabilities

in their efforts to lead

Independent,

fulfilling, productive lives

Since 1925



Brenda Bobon Moves on from disAbility Connections

By: *Parrish L. Stahl*

Brenda Bobon came to disAbility Connections in 2005 when the Jackson Center for Independent Living (JCIL) merged with disAbility Connections and this organization evolved and became a Center for Independent Living (CIL.). Brenda was a volunteer with JCIL almost from its inception in early 2001 and shortly thereafter became an employee.

Her knowledge, keen wit, life experience and artistic soul are qualities that served her well over the years as she counseled people and helped individuals learn independent living skills. She was a major force in launching and administering games, crafts & wellness learning activities and the "*creatability*" website designed to display and promote works of art by people with disabilities. She is also a tireless advocate for recreational activities including helping to make adaptive bikes available for loan in the community.

It was a privilege to work with Brenda and we will miss her. Whatever she decides to do in the next chapter of her life we wish her well and thank her for her dedicated years of service and friendship.

newsletter #10

Kaitlyn Coffey of Brooklyn Awarded Jeannie D. Inman Scholarship

By: Parrish L. Stahl

disAbility Connections Inc., a Center for Independent Living is proud to announce Kaitlyn Coffey has earned a \$500.00 Inman Scholarship in part, for her tireless work with young people and veterans with disabilities. Coffey is a 2011 graduate of Jackson Christian and currently a senior at Michigan State University studying psychology.

During her junior year in high school, Kaitlyn was often ill and was diagnosed with a brain tumor. After treatment she was not only able to beat her tumor, but continued to thrive despite some peripheral vision loss and her bones being weakened by the treatments. During her senior year she was involved in an ATV accident and fractured her back. She again has largely recovered except for having to wear a back brace at times. The accident ended a promising athletic career. She dealt with this by becoming a coach and mentor to younger athletes.



Kaitlyn pictured with Mike Jaska
disAbility Connections Board President.

Because of her own experiences and passion to help people with brain injuries and our armed forces, she currently works with veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and wants to focus her career in that direction. She has applied to several graduate schools and plans to pursue a PhD.

The scholarship was named for Jeannie Inman, a person with a disability who was raised in Jackson. Jeannie was a tireless advocate for people with disabilities from the late 1970's until she passed away in 2002. She was a 1979 Parkside graduate and served on the Jackson City Council. Kaitlyn Coffey embodies the spirit in which the scholarship was created.

More scholarships will be available in the future as the fund grows. If you would like to make a donation to the Inman Fund please contact disAbility Connections or the Jackson Community Foundation at (517) 787-1321 for more information. ■



The Road Funding Proposal, which also includes transit funding, restoration of the Earn Income Tax Credit etc . will be coming up for vote in May. Town Hall meetings are scheduled in Jackson County. This will give everyone a chance to learn more about the proposal and what it means...
AND ask any questions you might have.

Monday, March 30, 6-8 PM Spring Arbor Senior Center

122 Star Road Spring Arbor, MI 49283

**With Sen. Mike Shirkey & MDOT representatives.*

Adaptive Seated/ Standing Tai Chi

For People with disAbilities and their Caregivers

Thursdays from 2:00 -3:00 P.M. at disAbility Connections

If you are able to stand or sit, are young or elderly ~ this class is for you. Take advantage of this offer as other individuals have and reap the benefits of this fall prevention class as it assists you in reducing stress, gaining better flexibility and coordination through a series of very gentle flowing movements.

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing, gym shoes/soft soled shoes
- * No special equipment needed
- * May be done in a chair
- * Those bringing an assistant to help them - assistant at no cost
- * Cost \$ 1.00 per class

Please call disAbility Connections at (517) 782-6054 to register



Front Desk Volunteers Needed

The position of front desk volunteer at disAbility Connections is an important role. The people who volunteer at our front desk create the first impression of who we are at disAbility Connections. They are sometimes the only contact person for someone coming in for assistance.

We are looking for people who are patient, kind and understanding. The best people for the role are those who enjoy working with others and who also feel comfortable doing tasks individually.

SKILLS (Current or with a willingness to learn)

Clerical Work: Filing, typing, organizing office documents, answering a multi-line phone, other miscellaneous jobs as needed.

Loan Closet Rental Equipment: Assist with rental equipment, accurately filling out loan forms and other paperwork associated with rentals, some light lifting.

Call Angel Rhines at (517) 998-3091



A Personal Advocacy Experience:

Written by: Celina Stanaway

My name is Celina, and I am a college student with autism. I have been going to college for 3 years, but not always the same college. Though I originally went to Jackson College, I left after finding out that they had cut the budget to their computer animation department. Spring Arbor College was my next destination, and I have just finished a semester there. The experience at the college taught me a lot about myself and my disability.

Listening to lectures in a crowded auditorium was not a pleasant experience, especially when they cheered at their lecturer's key points. I had to wear earmuffs there just so I did not feel I had to leave before the lecture was finished. Group activities were always very difficult for me, so I had the accommodation to be with a smaller group outside of the main group for whatever activities we had, usually discussions and questionnaires.

Whenever I had a problem too great, I would contact my counselor, Mr. Lewis, for advice. He's been most helpful in helping me realize where I fit in at Spring Arbor University, and how I can use my talents there to the best of my abilities. Since then, I have made quite a few presentations, which my teachers and classmates loved very much. I have also done many pieces of writing that, though possibly not to high academic standards, still reflected an honest and intelligent character.

Despite my love of writing, a past experience I had with a College Writing class was my least favorite. The teacher gave more negative criticism of my work than constructive critique, and she would not give me clarification to my assignments when I asked. She misinterpreted my verbal communication difficulties as rudeness or worse, and even after I tried to change my attitude, she seemed too willing to give me the choice to leave class during discussions. I cannot believe I had (what felt to me) to experience such discrimination at college.

I believe one of the most important things you can do in college is advocate for yourself, telling other people about your disability and what it means in the situations you face. I have had trouble doing so myself, but there is nothing wrong with asking for help. If you find it hard to advocate for yourself, you may ask trusted associates, such as family members and close friends, to help advocate for you. College isn't always the most pleasant of experiences, but the bravest thing one can do in these cases is to keep trying, and in the end, the experience will teach you as much, if not more, than any college course can offer. ■



Why We Celebrate

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age and religion.

5 Ways the ADA Changed Lives

1. More Diverse Opportunities for Employment
2. Accessible Voting, Recreation, Public Transportation & Healthcare
3. Universal Design & Public Accommodations
4. Video Relay Services, Non-Voice Devices & Closed Captioning
5. Greater Changes in Access to Communities

5 Titles of the ADA

Individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities under the following:

1. Employment
2. State and Local Government Services
3. Public Accommodations & Transportation
4. Telecommunications
5. Miscellaneous Provisions

NOTICE:

The offices at disAbility Connections will be closed on Wednesday, May 13th for staff in-service day.



GOGOs is a social club for adults with disabilities who are living at home. If you are interested in more information or would like to become a GOGO, or to RSVP call Holly at (517) 998-3097

APRIL 15th 6:30 - 8 PM

**Swim and Water Volleyball
at Tarrant Center**

(games in cafeteria if you don't want to swim!)

MAY 11th 6-9 PM

**Talent Show and Family Potluck
at First Church of the Nazarene**

you **MUST** let Holly know the number attending and if you are *performing* or just watching! (517) 998-3097



April is Volunteer

Appreciation Month!

At the heart of our organization there are those that serve with whole hearted commitment, but no monetary compensation. They give their time and energy willingly and are dedicated to the cause. At disAbility Connections we couldn't be luckier to have volunteers that are positive, up-beat and willing to do whatever is necessary. From helping at the front desk and loan closet to gardening to equipment repair we applaud their hard work and dedication. We do our best to convey to them on a regular basis how much they enrich our organization but we would like to take this special opportunity during Volunteer Appreciation Month in April to say how much they mean to us. If you happen to be in our offices or on our Facebook page, please take the opportunity to join us in thanking them for their service to our community.

WATCH FOR



these upcoming events!

Rotary Ruler Days

Rotarians will be out in force on Friday, May 8th, 2015 for the **55th Annual Rotary Ruler Days** event. What an amazing commitment by the Breakfast Rotary Club and Rotary Club of Jackson to raise funds and bring information about disAbility Connections to people in our community! Rotarians are covering six locations this year: Polly's, Sam's Club, Downtown Post Office, Beck's Flower Shop, and Prime Cuts Meat Market, in 2 hour shifts.



*Newel Oren
(Breakfast Rotarian)*

SAVE THE DATE!

June 17th

90th Anniversary Open House Celebration

of disAbility Connections



Parkinson's Support Meetings

APRIL 18th 6 - 8 PM

MAY 12th 6 - 8 PM

at disAbility Connections
for meeting information
call Carole Briggs 783-6527

Around the Park for Autism

5K Run/Walk at Cascades Falls Park on May 16th at 9 AM. To register or get more information, contact 812-4303 or jasn_mi@hotmail.com ■



The Rotary Club of Jackson is celebrating their 100th Anniversary this year. disAbility Connections has been an important local project of Rotary for 90 of those years. Please stop by and thank our dear Rotarian friends for their ongoing support and generous service! ■

Roger Roty (above)

*Henry Grayson,
Jim Grose and
Fred Walters change
shifts at Polly's*



Why Young People Should Compete

Written by: Parrish L. Stahl

We all want the fairytale perfect life for our children and the young people we care about. There is no doubt that tremendous adult role models and mentors have a huge impact on future choices and self-confidence. No matter how old one grows, do we ever forget the power of messages positive or negative during our formative years? Almost all successful people can count on one hand the individuals that believed in them and gave them time, patience and shared some life lessons along the way to help them compete.

Some individuals believe that young people should not look up to or emulate sports or entertainment stars. Maybe it is all right to a point. What if the particular celebrity usually projects good actions and has a driving desire to use notoriety to help the world be a better place? Jackson, Michigan's own Tony Dungy is a great example. He comes from a good family and the lessons he learned ultimately made him famous. His athletic ability helped, but the kind of gentleman he is towers over any sports accomplishments.

On January 30, 2015, six time Olympic gold medalist Amy Van Dyken-Rouen was in the broadcast booth to call a women's swimming meet for the PAC 10 networks. She has had a long road back from an accident that happened only about seven months ago. She underwent an emergency life threatening procedure where surgeons worked over six hours stabilizing her fractured vertebra. She has made great strides, but the accident has left her a wheelchair user. She hopes for a medical breakthrough, but in the meantime, she is getting on with her life. With her mind, voice, knowledge and competitiveness intact getting back to work is one major milestone. Thanks to hundreds of hours of physical therapy, soon she will drive, be more independent and live a full life again.

The same competitive juices that flow when humans compete in a healthy way at anything, whether it is a trivia contest or a sport, help us in times of crisis. With mentors and coaching we learn to push ourselves beyond what we thought we could do. Life is full of greatness and adversity. Shouldn't we be prepared for dealing with the bad and the good? ■





Board of Directors
2014-2015

Officers:

President - Mike Jaska
Vice President - James Grose
Immediate Past President &
Treasurer - Brad Williams
Executive Director - Lesia Pikaart
Secretary/Associate Director - JoAnn Lucas

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DC Foundation Board Officers

President - George Page
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Trustees

Sarah Ermatinger Lloyd Ganton
Karyn Rice Jason Valente

Special thanks to our weekly Volunteers!

John Conley, Jeff Guillemette,
Desmond Herbert, Marilyn Johnson,
Katrina Johns, Mindy Albert...and you?

Staff and Direct Dial Phone Numbers

Lesia Pikaart (517) 998-3082
Executive Director

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

Cathy Yori (517) 990-6813
Finance Director

Staff

Lora Bigcraft (517) 998-3081
Resource Manager

Tricia Bortell (517) 998-3096
Independent Living 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

Angel Rhines- (517) 998-3091 Customer Relations Specialist

Jon Hart (517) 998-3092
Youth Training & Assessment Coordinator

Shawna Hayes (517) 998-3093
Independent Living Guide

Ladarius Jeffries – Facility Maintenance Support
Nicole Johnston – Vocational Coordinator (734)677-1139

Toni Jordan – Vocational Coordinator (734)677-7501

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

Matt Rose - Youth Training, Fix-dis Coach

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