

SPRING...
**A TIME FOR GROWTH
AND RENEWAL!**

Written by: Holly Peterson

With the last of our “dirty snow” just barely melted, with the first warm breeze, with the hosta buds peeking through... I felt ready for spring, ready to shed my “baditude” that seemed to develop over this long winter!

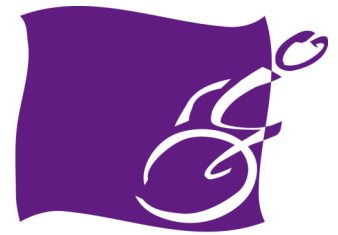
With this “Spring Newsletter” I look forward to sharing our fresh news of a new Executive Director; Lesia Pikaart (page 2) an introduction to some recent staff members and general happenings around disAbility Connections.

Additionally – we will share staff tips on springtime travel, spring cleaning, springing into action through advocacy and maybe even a recipe for spring rolls (am I sounding way too chipper?). So hop aboard the DC Springtime Express...and away we go!

Springboard: Our director Monica Moser (of 6 years) finished her MBA this last year and has moved onto the Jackson Community Foundation as their new director. Congratulations go to Monica and we thank her for her commitment to disAbility Connections and the growth that we incurred during her tenure!

Spring Cleaning: Lora Bigcraft is in the house...as Lora has taken over as the DME equipment coordinator, our loan closet has taken a turn for the best! With her commitment and Don Keith’s assistance, it is a clean, mean, smoother running machine!

Spring growth: This last year we acquired the Brails' Dry Cleaning building across the street from DC for the purposes of an equipment repair shop. It is currently undergoing some modifications



disAbility
CONNECTIONS, INC.

and will be appropriately named “*Fix Dis!*” Watch for updates on services!

Spring chickens: That is what I have to say about our awesome volunteers! Many of our building and grounds volunteers are retirees (but not all) . They share constantly how rewarding this experience has been for them to work at the front desk or in the garden or on special projects. There is always room for more volunteers and I must share that we are SO appreciate of the work that they do under the tutelage of volunteer coordinator Dodie Botsford. If you are interested in a volunteer opportunity, call Dodie at extension 243—and be sure to thank that volunteer who just answered the phone!

Spring into Action: There are many advocacy opportunities. In this newsletter we will focus on some that are in need of your help. The first is the issue relating to special education funding cuts. Staffer Holly Peterson along with Annette Anulewicz are chairing the upcoming proposed millage for special education. If you feel it is important, we ask you to get involved, it could be as easy as placing signs in your yard, making phone calls one evening or attending meetings and assisting with social networking to get the word out to gain the ongoing and much needed support of the community. Other advocacy opportunities may be serving on the RICC (see blue insert) .

Spring Fling: Social events for the Go-Gos and art and crafters continue and you won’t want to miss them! ■



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**disABILITY
CONNECTIONS
WELCOMES
LESIA PICAART
AS EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

*Written by: Holly Peterson
PERC Coordinator Extension 223*

Lesia Pikaart is in the house – and the DC staff seem to be enjoying it! As Lesia gets to know the staff, boards and their roles, she is also asking what goals they have for our agency and in what ways can we better serve our community. Yes, this is community she is familiar with, as she has served in the not-for-profit sector in her work and volunteer activities for many years.

Lesia was born in Flint, Michigan, married and moved to Oshawa, Ontario where she served as director of a summer day camp for children with autism and worked in the classroom with many of the same children during the school year. Later living in Windsor, Ontario she managed Special Services at Home workers who provided individualized programming for children with cognitive, behavioral or physical needs and started Respite Services at Home to assist families of adults or children enhance their independence and ability to maintain family stability.

Lesia came to Jackson in 1989 and became familiar with disAbility Connections – then known as HCA and UCP. She has worked with families in the Head Start Program and LifeWays helping

people link to resources in the community and meet their individual needs. She is committed to assisting individuals with disabilities cut through barriers in transportation, housing and other areas supporting their advocacy.



Recently, Lesia came into PERC/MAF while working with a family through the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry and to get the parent help developing skills to assist her child with appropriate educational settings and community supports.

Lesia has had a lot of interaction with staff at DC thru the years – on committees, sharing resources and advocating for individuals. Her background and experiences are rich – so are her goals as she took the helm at DC beginning May 1.

Lesia stated “The mission statement of disAbility Connections so closely integrates with my personal mission of assisting individuals with opportunities to remove barriers and creating greater richness in their lives.”

Lesia has two adult children and two (preschool age) grandchildren. She loves spending time with her family. They are her BEST stress relief.■

SPRING / SUMMER TRAVEL PLANS MEAN PLANNING AHEAD!

*Written by: Brenda Bobon
Independent Living Specialist
782-6054 Extension 242*



Get out while the weather is great! But, think things through. Here are some things I've learned.

Think about your trip as a whole. Can you get to the airport or train station? What are your transportation options and do they fit your budget, your physical needs and limits? Can they get you to the airport or train station on time? Can the airline, bus company, whatever your mode you're using accommodate your needs? Can they give you the seating or space you need? Pay attention to timelines. For example, does the shuttle bus to the airport need advance notice to make sure they have room for you and how much advance notice?

If you need physical assistance, can an employee help you or do you need to have someone with you? If you need someone with you for all or part of your trip, can you afford to pay them and any accommodations they need? An employee will most likely expect you to pay for lodging and other things.

Can you get the lodging you need? Is an accessible room available? I always start with room reservations first. These can be easily broken, whereas tickets for travel can't.

The same goes for concert tickets...once you buy them, they are yours.

If I'm going to a concert or some other entertainment event -

I start with the tickets before I do anything else. It's not wise to think you'll get the tickets once you get there...it usually doesn't work.

You can always check into all the arrangements before you pay for anything, to make sure the pieces fit together.

Get confirmation numbers for everything, cancellations, too! That way if you get to a hotel, for example, they can't tell they have no room for you. They must do something!

If you need ground transportation, check on cabs and other options. Larger cities have wheelchair accessible cabs, but you may have to wait a bit.

If you're using Amtrak, you need to call ahead. Chair user's will need the lift at the station. They also need advance notice to make sure they have room for you and your chair. Also be aware of the times the station is open. If the station is closed and you need the lift or other help, you may be stranded! The lifts are kept in the station!

The more you get out, the easier it gets to plan trips! Do a few and soon it will be a breeze! ■

DID YOU KNOW....



disAbility Connections staffers Jim and Brenda serve on the LTAC?

The LTAC stands for Local Transportation Advisory Council. Transit authorities are required to have a group of consumers with disabilities, over age 65 and the agency representatives who serve these populations.

Jim and Brenda are the consumer representatives and can take any of your issues or concerns to this meeting as well as communicate with Jackson Transit Authority (JTA) staff. The LTAC meets four times a year and time is made for public comment at each of those meetings as well. Jim also sits on the JTA Board as a city representative.

Please feel free to call Jim or Brenda and let them know what is on your mind, they will be happy to be your voice! ■



Marijuana: A Growing Concern...

*Written By: Parrish L. Stahl
Public Relations - Extension 239*

Have you ever been asked repeatedly for an opinion on an issue that you have mixed feelings about? Particularly, when it is an emotionally charged issue. There are very few things I am expert about, so experience teaches to me rely on my life experiences to form opinions.

Americans have been debating the merits of legalizing marijuana for some five decades now. It is so difficult sometimes to wade through the Cheech and Chong comedy routines, pop culture references and the rational as well as irrational, fears of people and policy makers. It is a cloudy, murky tangle of issues.

Let's face it. Most of us are not qualified to discuss the scientific merits of this controversial plant. What feels more comfortable is talking about personal observations from the prospective of a person who came of age in the 1980's and has lived a lifetime as a person with a disability. I have lived both sides of this debate. The difficult part is that I am a witness to people who have become abusers of pot and other drugs. The facts are that marijuana is a mind-altering substance and can cause emotional growth to come to a grinding halt. People need to clearly understand that they must work closely with medical professionals to understand how this and other drugs affect, not only our ability to function, but how its use influences other

aspects of our life. Can you work, drive, reason, think or care for children? Is the symptom relief worth the trade offs? We cannot answers these questions alone.

We all know some people that started to smoke in there early teens and at 40 are still smoking and struggling with maturity and coping skills? The key is to try and separate abuse from legitimate medical uses. If a person chooses pot over groceries, bills, socializing and family, do the benefits outweigh the negatives? On the other hand, what if using the substance relieves spasms and chronic pain for a person with Cerebral Palsy or a spinal cord injury. If you have glaucoma and it's use may save your eyesight, would anyone not try and use it as a treatment? There are people that are able to lead full active lives because they use marijuana.

The legalization debate is over for now. We hear a lot about personal rights, but maybe we need to talk more about balance. If a person has a legitimate prescription, they have the right to use. I hope that they consider others— especially children/preteens who don't need to be exposed when visiting a friend or waiting at a bus stop. It is clearly time to work together as a community to form policies that seek fairness and workable solutions for everyone. So is legalization good or bad? Like so many things, the answer probably lies somewhere in the middle. ■



SPRING BREAK means RESPITE!

*Written by:
Carole Briggs*

*Respite Coordinator
Extension 242*

If you are a caregiver and spring fever is knocking at your door... then Respite might be the answer...or at least the needed break you have been day dreaming about!

We hear from individuals that they are often afraid to have a caregiver in as their child or spouse is non-verbal...I will suggest they try it out in a shorter spurt to begin. Some families will stay home and go work in the yard, then run out for groceries and maybe even coffee with a friend until they feel more comfortable. We are happy to put you in touch with others who *douse* our Respite *and* that had the same concerns!

So just what is Respite? It is a break from care giving. Our Respite workers come from Allegiance Home Health. Families signed up with our program qualify for 14 hours of Respite per month broken into 2 to 3 shifts (minimum 2 hour and maximum 8 hour shifts). The co-pay to families is \$5 per hour and disAbility Connections covers the difference in cost for this service.

If you have questions or would like to sign up for respite services, please call me... I think you will enjoy the (spring) break! ■

It's Ramp Building Time!

Written by:
Lora Bigcraft
Durable Medical
Equipment Coordinator
Extension 236



Don't miss the Care Options Expo!

Written by:
Lora Bigcraft

The coming of spring also means the beginning of Ramp building season. disAbility Connections, along with the Rotary Club are putting on our tool belts and getting ready to work.

To apply for a ramp, you must fill out an application. Call Lora to ask to have an application sent to you or stop by the office during business hours to pick one up. Once your application is completed, get it back into us quickly as ramps are built on a "first come, first served" basis. We have a limited building season in Michigan and we are in it! If you need a ramp or if you know someone who does, it is time to *spring into action!* ■

disAbility Connections is working with the **Jackson Care Providers** to offer a Care Options Expo on Wednesday, August 3, 2011 at the Westwood Mall from 1 PM to 7 PM.

This Expo will provide information for persons who are currently providing care or supervision for another person.

It is hard to think about the future and even harder to plan for it. We know this - and hope that we will bring you some solid planning ideas to begin your own process.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to learn, enjoy some entertainment and partake in a bit of well deserved pampering! ■

SPRING INTO... ROLLS!

From: Lora Bigcraft

Thoughts of Springtime are in our heads, and what better way to celebrate it than with a yummy, light and healthy recipe for Spring Rolls! Only 93 calories per roll. Enjoy!

EASY SPRING ROLLS

Ingredients

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil
- ¼ teaspoon sesame seeds
- 2 cups coleslaw mix (shredded cabbage and carrots)
- 1 (10 ½ oz) packages firm tofu, drained and diced
- 1/3 cup chopped peanuts
- ½ cup sweet and sour sauce
- 8, 9 inch round rice paper sheets
- Fresh cilantro (optional)
- Green onions (optional)

Directions-

- **FOR DIPPING SAUCE**
Stir together soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil and sesame seed in small bowl and set aside.
- **FOR FILLING**
Combine slaw mix, tofu and peanuts, add sweet and sour sauce, toss to coat and set aside
- **TO PREPARE**
Dip rice papers in a bowl of warm water and drain excess. Place between damp kitchen towels until ready to fill, one at a time. In the center of a rice paper place a cilantro leaf and/or a thin shred of green onion. Top with about ½ cup of the filling. Fold one edge over the filling, fold in sides, and roll up, serve with the dipping sauce. ■



*In memory of our
dear friend and
long time volunteer*
Allen Hathaway

Special Education Millage Committee looking for individuals to help!

Written by:
Holly Peterson
PERC Coordinator
782-6054 Ext. 223



The "Friends of Special Education" held their kick-off meeting on April 18th at disAbility Connections to garner support for a special education millage. Co-chairs Annette Anulewicz and Holly Peterson are continuing to seek the involvement of parents, teachers, administrators and supporters to assist us with sign placement, phone calls, online networking and the like.

Flyers will soon be available explaining the millage request and need. Upcoming meeting dates are June 13, June 27, July 11 and July 25 at disAbility Connections at 5:30 PM. Please call Holly at disAbility Connections 782-6054 if you are interested in attending a meeting or helping to get the word out.

This millage is actually a Headlee Override election on Tuesday, August 2, 2011 - Jackson County voters will be asked to approve a Headlee override on the special education charter millage. Voters last approved a 5.5 charter millage in 1989, but Headlee rollbacks have brought that down to 4.726 mills. The proposal will raise an estimated \$3,365,000 to better fund Special Education programs in Jackson County schools at a cost of \$3.22 a month

for the owner of a \$100,000 property – *that's less than a value-meal!*

There is information galore at the Jackson County Intermediate School District's website; jcisd.org where you will be able to request a yard sign, volunteer to work on the phone bank, make a donation to *Friends of Special Education* or receive an email reminder to get out to vote.

Be sure to get an absentee ballot if you won't be in town on August 2nd. Jackson county children need your support. ■

***I choose to rise up
out of that storm
and see that in
moments of
desperation, fear
and helplessness,
each of us can be
a rainbow of hope,
doing what we can
to extend ourselves
in kindness and grace
to one another.
And I know for
sure that there is no
them...there's only us.***

-Oprah Winfrey-

GOGOs Summer Camp is just around the corner!

Written by: Holly Peterson

So just who are the GOGOs? They are adults with disabilities (who have graduated from High School or Kit Young Center or CBI and are living at home with their families. They are also adults who love to have a good time! We gather monthly for a social event from games to bowling, dinners to holiday parties. You won't want to miss out on being a GOGO!

We hold an annual 3-day GOGOs Summer Camp that will be held at Camp McGregor this year from July 11-13th and will include a family BBQ, swimming and boat rides, arts and crafts, games, karaoke, dancing and *LOTS OF FUN!*

We are in need of volunteers and I promise you that once you come to a GOGOs event...either as a volunteer or a participant, you will wonder why you haven't been coming all along!

If you are interested in being a GOGO, contact Holly at 782-6054 Extension 223. ■

GOGO Summer Camp Photo



SPRING IS HERE: Plan to Have Some Fun & Adventure

*Written By:
Parrish L. Stahl
Public Relations
782-6054
Extension 239*



Does anyone else feel like winter or more recently RAIN was never going end this year? People with disabilities are often forced by our climate to spend way too much time inside or to limit travel, socialization and recreation during the winter months. With gas prices at the dreaded four dollar mark, we are forced to keep a tight grip on the travel and adventure budget. There are always things to do close to home. Here's a few low or no cost events to check out.

July 9, 2011

Human Relations
Commission Community
Picnic

Cascades Park:

Open daily 11am-11pm.
Illuminated dusk -11pm
in summer

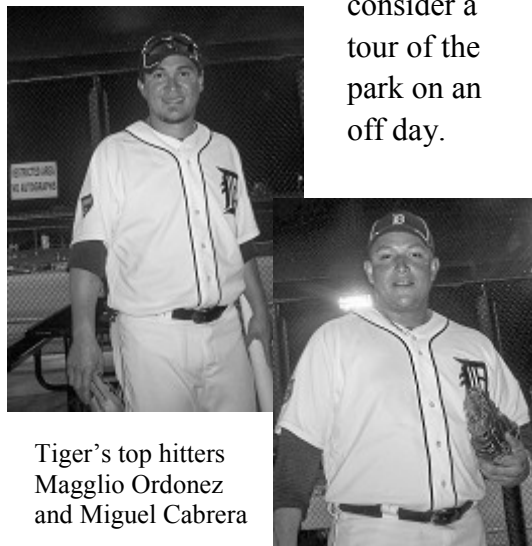
- **The 2011 Fireworks are:**
Saturday, May 28, 2011,
Sunday, July 3, 2011,
and Saturday,
September 3, 2011.

Whatever you do, it is important that you get outside. If you are into watching or participating in sports our community has

lots of options. Did you know that Jackson has 27 parks, totaling 635 acres? That includes 17 softball fields (4 lit, 13 unlit) 3 baseball fields, 12 Little League fields, 12 outdoor basketball courts, 4 full-size soccer fields, 10 small soccer fields and 2 outdoor volleyball courts.

If you want to watch baseball out of town, the Detroit Tigers and Comerica Park are extremely entertaining and accessible. They currently have some of the best hitters in the game like Miguel Cabrera and Magglio Ordonez. If game tickets and parking is out of your budget,

consider a tour of the park on an off day.



Tiger's top hitters
Magglio Ordonez
and Miguel Cabrera

For just a few dollars, the tour includes areas usually off limit to fans, such as visitors' clubhouse, visitors' dugout, Ernie Harwell Media Center, Walk of Fame, party suites and more. Public tours run from June - September, on Tuesday's and Friday's (non-game/non-event days), at 10 am, 12 and 2 pm. Why- it's a real grand slam in my book! ■

It's Storm Season Are you ready?

Written by: Parrish L. Stahl

Michigan's storm season is here. With these inevitable storms come power outages, blocked roads and possible supply shortages. Does your life depend on water, power, oxygen or devices that keep you safe or allow you to leave your home? You may have a garage door that requires electricity to open. Electricity is so important in our lives, but we almost fail to notice until it doesn't work. If you depend on electricity to keep you or a family member alive, notify the power company that you need to be on a priority list, plus you probably should look into a generator or a have a good plan for a quick and temporary move in an emergency.

Many times you can get by using a mobile car inverter or car jump starters, which often come with AC and DC ports. The key again is a plan. If you do not make sure your back-ups are easily accessible or charged, you will still have a major problem.

One thing in this life is certain; emergencies can happen any, day, time or location. If you are a person with or without a disability a great website to visit to work on a checklist is <http://www.disability911.com/>. Every one of us needs a plan to avoid major problems.■

ROSE AWARDS... WHAT A BLOOMIN' GOOD EVENT!

Written by: Holly Peterson

May 12th marked the 20th celebration of the ROSE AWARDS, honoring individuals in the community who provide exemplary service to students and individuals with disabilities. Held at LIFEWAYS, over 125 Rose Award recipients, their families, co-workers and friends attended to applaud their unique contributions.

Rose Award nominations go out in the early spring and nominations come in many categories such as general and special education teachers, support service providers, local agency personnel, parent, employer, community volunteer and the Kit Young Memorial Award that is given to a student who has a disability and has shown incredible strength, commitment and self-advocacy.

This event is so pleasurable to be a part of, it is always humbling to be a part of an evening that honors a community that cares so much and works so hard to make life better for others.

The 2011 Kit Young Memorial Award was presented by Kits daughter, Jenna Otto, her daughter and her grandson.

It was awarded to **Autumn McLaury** a student at the Kit Young Center. The Kit Young Certificate of Recognition went to Jackson High School student **Nathan Murray**.

Other Rose Award Recipients included;

Special Education Teacher
Rebecca W. Hover

General Education Teacher
Maureen Hesslau

Teacher Assistant
Robin McDonough

Agency / Staff
Jean Mc McCullough



Sue Jones-Elkins presents Rose award to Shawn Hogan (far right) for her exceptional service to Early On families.

Parent
Don and Kellie Colliau
Amy Fracker

Peer Buddy
Brianna TenBrink

Citizen - Volunteer
Don Keith

Related Services
Elaine Coleman - Nurse
Judy Formolo - Social Work
Bill Hofer & Amy Rogers - TC Team

Support Services
Shawn Hogan - Secretary
Lisa Hession & Pat Kemp - Food Services Team

Employer
Ford Kennedy Jr - Polly's Country Market

Certificate of Recognition Recipients include;

General Education Teacher
Sherri Price
Robert Riedel

Special Education Teacher
Patty Gregory

Related Services
Cheryl Kay Arney
Kammy Hollow
Melissa Paschall

Teacher Assistant
Lori Guilfoil, Carla Hashley
Paul Doher – Student Teacher

Rose Award Committee members; Jerry Walmsley, Pam Hill and Holly Peterson and are always looking for others who may be interested in joining the committee! We would like to thank all of the volunteers, presenters and recipients for all that they do to make this event so spectacular!■

SPRING / SUMMER CLEANING... WE WANT YOUR SCRAP METAL!

Submitted by: Lora Bigcraft

When you are cleaning out that attic, basement or garage this summer, save all of your metal. From old freezers, refrigerators, bicycles, metal shelving, aluminum or steel cans, metal desks, filing cabinets, old plumbing...why *anything* made of metal will work! disAbility Connections will be working in conjunction with Omni Resource for a fall fundraiser. Call disAbility Connections in August for our scheduled drop off date.■

Michigan Alliance for Families (MAF)

Written by: Cathy Heins
Michigan Alliance for Families
782-6054 Extension 238



MAF is the state's federally designated Parent Training and Information Center. MAF provides information, education, and resources for families who have children, birth through age 26, who receive (or might be eligible to receive) special education services under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). All services and programs offered through MAF are free to families. The goals of MAF are to increase parent involvement with their child's education, and to help parents:

- Know their rights (procedural safeguards)
- Effectively communicate their child's needs
- Help their child develop and learn
- Participate in the development of IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) and IF (Individualized Family Service Plans)

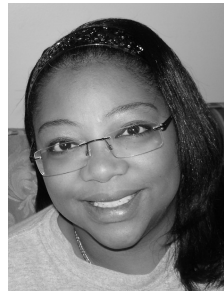
In Jackson county, MAF is represented by Cathy Heins and Jeanna TenBrink who serve as regional parent mentors, offering help and resources to local families, as well as coordinating workshops and seminars locally. MAF in Jackson county is housed with PERC at disAbility Connections. We can be reached at (517)782-6054 ext 238 or by email at cathy@michiganallianceforfamilies.org Please visit the MAF website at www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org ■



Jackson Autism Support Network has a full summer planned!

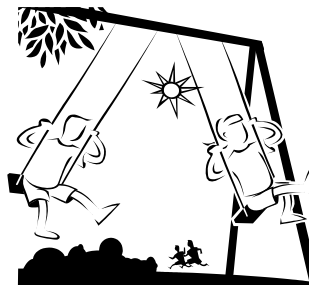
Reported by: Jeanna TenBrink
Michigan Alliance for Families
782-6054 Extension 238

JASN will be enjoying the summer by having the support group meetings at the Jackson Christian School playground at 801 Halstead Blvd. in Jackson. There will be no childcare provided however, please feel free to bring your children - as the playground area is completely fenced. Picnic style food will be provided. Plan to put on your thinking caps... we would love to have families participate in brainstorming fundraising and awareness ideas for the fall!



Meeting dates and times:

- Tuesday June 14th 6-8pm
- July 12th, 6-8pm
- August 9th, 6-8pm. ■



disAbility Connections

Staff & Extensions

Lesia Pikaart- 222
Executive Director

JoAnn Lucas - 225
Associate Director

Brenda Bobon - 242
Independent Living Counselor

Dodie Botsford - 243
Administrative Assistant
& Volunteer Coordinator

Carole Briggs - 242
Respite Coordinator

Jo Corder - 228
Tech Coordinator

Daniel Cantrell - 227
Accountant

Jim Cyphers - 224
Independent Living
Specialist

Lora Bigcraft - 236
Resource Coordinator

Cathy Heins - 238
Michigan Alliance for
Families - Parent Mentor

Don Keith - 232
Maintenance

Holly Peterson - 223
PERC Coordinator,
Newsletter, Go-Gos

Dan Ramey - 240
Nursing Home &
Hospital Transition

Parrish Stahl - 239
P/R, Community Outreach

Jeanna TenBrink - 238
Michigan Alliance for
Families - Parent Mentor

Carmon Yeloushan - 231
Nursing Home & Hospital
Transition Coordinator

Thanks to our
Weekly Volunteers
Herb Botsford

Megan Carlson • John Conley
Cyd Collins • Alice DeVries
Chuck Dillon • Gary Eckert
Karen Grace • Suzanne Maus
Desmond Herbert • Judy Jenski
Elissa Konkol • Jerry Miller
Pat and Mike Shipley
Sherrie Rogers • Jerry Walmsley

The Tech Center
PERC &
Home to

Rotarians and other volunteers hit the streets, parking lots and their own pockets for the annual fund raiser called "Rotary Ruler Days". The event began in 1960 and is still going strong. Rotarians hold out their white jugs hoping to collect odd change and a few bills from individuals in the community. This year they netted Nearly \$2400 to go toward services at disAbility Connections. The top 3 collectors were **Rod Riggs** (\$419), **Elissa Konkol** (\$250) and **Judy Reynolds** (\$153). Additional thanks go to Doug Barber, George Page, Lindy Wilson, Chris Welliver, Dave Fleming, Ed Green, James Egan, Jerry Jenkins, Manya Otis, Phillip Mollanen, Bill Marcoux, Bob Henning, Jim Grose, Al Herman, Nick B, Shannon Price, Jim Sunday, Jon Hart, Dan Brown, Shelly Hendrick, Roger Roty, Roxann Davis and Jim Goodwin. Special thanks go to all of the staff and volunteers who provided snacks and lunches for our esteemed collectors and of course... those of you who made a contribution!!

ROTARY RULER DAY THANKS!



disAbility Connections
409 Linden Avenue
Jackson MI 49203
517-782-6054
www.disabilityconnect.org

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