DISABILITY NETWORK OF MID-MICHIGAN

May 2020 NEWSLETTER

**ARTICLE 1 - Give Local Midland - TODAY**

Give Local Midland is TODAY, May 5th! Disability Network of Mid-Michigan is joining over 50 local nonprofits in raising money to help improve our community. Last year Give Local Midland raised more than $266,000 for local nonprofit endowment funds.

As you may know, DNMM is celebrating 30 years of advocating for accessible and inclusive communities. As we look to the next 30 years and beyond, we see an ever-increasing demand for services with an ever-tightening grip on state and federal funding.

Budget cuts at the state level and the COVID-19 health crisis have dramatically altered our ability to provide independent living services to people with disabilities throughout the mid-Michigan area. We need to ensure DNMM will always be there to help people with disabilities achieve and maintain their independence. With your help we can continue offering our summer programs for youth with disabilities throughout our twelve-county region.

The pictures and the video below show how your donation directly impacts people with disabilities in our communities.

**ARTICLE 2 - MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH**

Do You Know Your #Tools2Thrive? While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. The good news is there are practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency - and there are ways that everyone can be supportive of friends, family, and co-workers who are struggling with life's challenges or their mental health.

This May is Mental Health Month. DNMM is highlighting #Tools2Thrive - what individuals can do daily to prioritize their mental health, build resiliency in the face of trauma and obstacles, support those who are struggling, and work towards a path of recovery. One of the easiest tools anyone can use is taking a mental health screen at www.mhascreening.org when they need answers. It's a quick, free, and private way for people to assess their mental health and recognize signs of mental health problems. This May, we are also exploring topics that can help you build your own set of #Tools2Thrive - recognizing and owning your feelings; finding the positive after loss; connecting with others; eliminating toxic influences; creating healthy routines; and supporting others - all as ways to boost the mental health and general wellness of you and your loved ones.

When it comes to your feelings, it can be easy to get caught up in your emotions as you're feeling them. Most people don't think about what emotions they are dealing with but taking the time to really identify what you're feeling can help you to better cope with challenging situations. It's ok to give yourself permission to feel. We also know that life can throw us curveballs - and at some point in our lives we will all experience loss. It may be the end of a relationship, being let go from a job, losing a home, or the death of a loved one. It is natural to go through a grieving process. By looking for opportunity in adversity or finding ways to remember the good things about who or what we've lost, we can help ourselves to recover mentally and emotionally.

[Please click here to continue reading this article.](https://www.dnmm.org/post/may-is-mental-health-awareness-month)

**ARTICLE 3 – WHAT’S UP WEDNESDAY**

*We're Here For You!*

Due to the Shelter-In-Place order, DNMM will come to you during *What's Up Wednesday!* - a weekly discussion session over various topics.

This week's topic:

COVID-19 Stimulus Checks

When will I get my payment? Will it affect my eligibility for Medicaid or SSI? What should I do with the money? " To spend or not to spend?"  
  
Join us at Noon on Wednesday, May 6th, live on Zoom!

It's *What's Up Wednesday*!

[**CLICK HERE TO JOIN THE DISCUSSION**](https://zoom.us/j/92235982272?pwd=d0RCNzJUb3JsZjRpVGRnTlErSEdrZz09)**!**

If prompted, enter this ID and password:

Meeting ID: 922 3598 2272

Password: 007488

[**You can download Zoom at www.zoom.us.**](http://www.zoom.us/)

[**Click here for a step-by-step guide on getting started with Zoom.**](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Meeting)

**ARTICLE 4 – VIRTUAL PEER GROUPS**

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the Governor's "Stay Home" order, our Peer Groups will not be meeting in-person until such time as we can safely do so. We are reaching out to each member of the peer group via virtual platforms like Skype and Zoom. We are also planning virtual peer group meetings in addition to our already existing virtual groups.  [For more information, or if you just need someone to contact you, please email LaraBeth Sullivan](mailto:sullivan@dnmm.org).

"O.C.T - Our Chat Time"

Tuesday, May 5th  -  3:00pm

Join us for a friendly chat about whatever topics you want. A chance to get together - virtually - and hang out for a while!

"COOKING IN A CUP"

Thursday, May 7th  -  2:00pm

Join us to learn about crazy cool microwave recipes for cooking in a mug. Yep, a mug!

"MOVIE MATINEE"

Friday, May 8th  -  1:00pm

We'll be watching the 80's Comedy Classic "Ferris Bueller's Day Off."  Pop some popcorn and join your peers for an afternoon at the movies!  (We'll be watching over "Zoom" so be sure you've installed Zoom on your computer or tablet!  We'll be posting the link on Facebook and on our website shortly after noon on Friday.

[**Please click here to sign up for either of these new virtual groups.**](mailto:sullivan@dnmm.org)

**ARTICLE 5 – WE’RE HERE TO HELP!**

This is indeed a time of uncertainty. Many of our consumers are feeling a sense of isolation, many are confused, and many are rightfully scared. We are working to reach out to our consumers through virtual programs like Skye and Zoom.

We're also sending letters, making phone calls, and anything else we can do to keep in contact with our consumers and their families. We even got together to have a "drive-by" visit to Shay, one of our consumers who recently celebrated her 30th Birthday.

And while our offices might be closed, we want you to know, Disability Network is here for you. Our staff is working diligently to contact each and every one of our consumers. We are planning "virtual activities" for our peer groups, consumers, and their families. Our staff are available via email or on the phone to answer questions, to provide information, or just to lend a listening ear to anyone who might need it.

How Can We Help? - CALL TODAY - 1-800-782-4160

Our Information and Referral program is your first point of contact for all your disability-related questions or concerns.

Disability Rights & Resources - Know your rights, the law, find support groups, access community resources, and learn facts about disabilities.

Basic Needs - Our I&R specialists will help you access community resources for anything from utility shut off notices, food pantries, or resources for housing assistance.

SSI/SSDI - Anyone needing to apply for these programs can contact us for help with applications. No matter if you are just starting the process or are seeking assistance on the best direction on filing an appeal, we will work with you along the way.

Medicare/Medicaid - A certified MMAP (Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program) counselor is located at DNMM to help with any Medicare Part D, low income subsidy or Medicaid needs.

DHHS Applications - Home help services, food stamps, cash assistance, and more. We will help you determine what you want to apply for and offer assistance in applying if you need it.

Housing - Whether you're looking for housing or looking for help staying in your housing, we can help with resources for affordable and accessible housing, ramps, housing vouchers and payment assistance.

Peer Support and Mentoring - Sometimes someone with a disability wants to talk to someone else with a disability about obstacles in their life or in their community. We have a network of individuals dedicated to helping people overcome barriers. We also offer peer groups that meet monthly for a variety of activities in Bay, Midland and Saginaw Counties. During this "Stay Home" period, the peer groups will be meeting "virtually."

Assistive Technology - We can help you find the assistive technology you need and the resources to pay for the AT. We also have several low tech AT items and offer AT Demos on an individual basis to help you decide what you may need before buying an item for your home.

Please note, due to regulations in place during the COVID-19 outbreak, some of these services may be limited in scope and/or availability. We will do our best to address any needs or concerns we can. We appreciate your patience during this time.

**ARTICLE 6 – It’s Census Time! Be Counted 2020!**

Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census to count the number of people living in the United States. Starting in March, census invitations will be mailed to households, and now, more than ever before, the Census Bureau is encouraging people to fill out the census electronically (i.e. online).

WHY DOES THE CENSUS MATTER?

The census count has consequences we will live with for the next decade, if not longer. This makes the stakes even higher.

Michigan stands to lose millions of dollars in federal support for programs that use census data. These include Medicaid, nutrition assistance, highway construction and planning, Title I and Special Education Grants, Foster Care and Child Care Grants, K-12 education, Section 8 Vouchers, and Head Start/Early Start - for which Michigan received more than $14 billion in 2015.

The Census Bureau has identified people with disabilities as a hard-to-count population, which means they are at a greater risk of being under-counted in the census. The reasons for this include accessibility challenges and wider systemic inequalities. People with disabilities are also over-represented among other groups that are considered hard-to-count, such as people of color people with low incomes, and people experiencing homelessness.

Census 2020 Video Ad: Michigan (Confidentiality)

AN AREA OF CONCERN - THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The Census Bureau’s online response option represents both an opportunity and challenge to the disability community. For many, the option will be more convenient than responding by mail. This is, in part, due to the greater availability and increased effectiveness of screen readers, electronic magnifiers, and other assistive technology tools. However, a significant digital divide exists between people with and without disabilities: people with disabilities are about 20 percentage points less likely to own a computer, tablet, or smartphone or subscribe to home broadband. Without reliable internet access, people with disabilities may encounter difficulties completing the online form.

BE COUNTED 2020

We want to make sure Michigan gets as accurate a count of its residents as possible. You can help by sharing this article with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Click on the images below to download some helpful questions and answers about the census.

**ARTICLE 6 - STATEMENT OF INCLUSION**

At Disability Network of Mid-Michigan, inclusion is a universal human right for all people, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or any other discernible quality. To be inclusive is to promote a sense of belonging, respect, and value for who you are as a person. It is about equal access and opportunities for everyone. Inclusion is an integral part of our Independent Living philosophy and of our agency's vision of "Accessible and Inclusive communities that provide opportunities for individual choice."

In the twelve counties we serve in Mid-Michigan, Disability Network offices have been, and continue to be, places of solace, understanding, and information for all. We are committed to promoting and protecting diversity and inclusion, within our offices, among our community partners, and throughout the 15 Centers for Independent Living in Michigan.

**ARTICLE 7 – STATEMENT OF ACCESSIBILTY**

DNMM advocates for the removal of barriers to independence and full inclusion of people with disabilities throughout the Mid-Michigan area. DNMM pledges to ensure accessibility. Each year, DNMM conducts a review of its own architectural, environmental, attitudinal, employment, communication, transportation, and other barriers that may exist which prohibit full access to our services.

If you have any issues of concern regarding the accessibility of DNMM services and facilities, we encourage you to share that information with us.

Please send your concerns or suggestions to:

Executive Director  
Disability Network of Mid-Michigan  
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Midland, MI 48640