DISABILITY NETWORK OF MID-MICHIGAN

July 2020 NEWSLETTER

**ARTICLE 1 - CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

July 26, 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Starting on that date, DNMM will join a consortium of disability organizations in and around Michigan in hosting daily online events that examine Disability Rights, Disability Justice, and Accessibility. The celebration, "ADA30," will continue through September 27, 2020.

"We are thrilled to be a part of this wonderful series of events from its conception," states DNMM Executive Director Kelly PeLong. "The disability community has leveraged their creativity and many talents to overcome tremendous hurdles during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar to how we've adjusted our service provision by incorporating virtual events and meetings, the original in-person celebration of the ADA's anniversary has been transformed into a virtual "ADA Every Day" event that we hope will offer participants a unique and safe way to learn about and celebrate the advances in accessibility and inclusion we've made since the passage of the ADA.

Susan Fitzmaurice, founder and organizational leader of the ADA30 celebration, is also excited about the quality and breadth of the ADA30 activities. "When we realized that we'd need to change plans in the face of the pandemic, we quickly regrouped. Our new online program will let us reach a broader, national and global audience, and reach people with disabilities who face transportation and access issues."

Robin Jones, Director of the Great Lakes ADA Center and sponsor of the events also understands the importance of commemorating the ADA's passage "The ADA is the most significant piece of civil rights legislation impacting the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. It is critical that we keep the momentum moving forward to ensure that the accomplishments made to date are preserved but at the same time recognize that we are not done. Anniversaries allow us to reflect and celebrate the past while challenging and motivating us to do more."

In addition to the state-wide virtual events, DNMM will also be hosting a series of informational events celebrating the ADA's 30th Anniversary as part of our "What's Up Wednesday" virtual program. Each episode airs at Noon:

Wednesday, July 15: History of the Disability Rights Movement up to the passage of the ADA

Wednesday, July 22: Before and After - A conversation with local individuals with disabilities and their families about life before and after the ADA

Wednesday, July 29: Accessibility in Your Community

**ARTICLE 2 - We Stand Together!**

These past few weeks have been tumultuous for our nation. Tens of thousands have taken to the streets in protest; denouncing the societal impacts police brutality and institutional racism have played in our communities.

Disability Network of Mid-Michigan stands in solidarity with the black community, including those throughout our twelve-county region, in speaking out against oppression and discrimination. As a Center for Independent Living, we are committed to advocating for and working toward justice for all people. Our agency's guiding vision is of accessible and inclusive communities that provide opportunities for individual choice. Systemic racism and oppression directly challenge inclusion efforts and further marginalizes minority populations. We are therefore committed to doing our part to fight these injustices.

 We vow to purposefully identify, discuss and challenge issues of race and the impacts they have on the communities we serve. We will challenge ourselves to better understand and correct these inequities. As a first step, we will be joining with many other advocacy organizations throughout Michigan in engaging our staff and board of directors in a 21-day racial equity challenge. The challenge will focus on the concept of race and how it influences us as individuals and as an organization, as well as how perceptions of race have contributed to inequity in our laws, institutions, and systems.

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.

We invite you to join us in our efforts to develop and implement strategies that dismantle racism. Click here to access the challenge.

We are all in this together. Listen, Learn, and Lead.

**ARTICLE 3 - A Little Help - A Lot of Smiles**

COVID-19 and the recent floods have affected many area families. Local businesses, community groups, and countless individuals have rallied to the support of their friends and neighbors during these difficult times.

At 1:30pm on Wednesday, June 3 DNMM received a call from our board member, Thom Pepe, indicating that thanks to donations from United Way of Midland County, the Great Lakes Loons, and Dow, there was food available to distribute to our consumers if we could make arrangements to retrieve the food that very day.

By 2pm we had pulled together an impromptu Zoom conference to see how we could get the food picked and then effectively distributed to those we serve. By 3:30pm we had three vehicles at Dow Diamond ready to receive 60 cases (1500 pounds) of food consisting of potatoes, onions, apples, and oranges. The three vehicles, manned by agency staff, delivered food to consumers in Midland, Saginaw and Bay counties.

All 1500 pounds of food was portioned and delivered within 48 hours to driveways and porches in order to follow physical distancing guidelines. A total of 78 deliveries were made benefiting 196 people. At each stop, the consumers and their families were delighted not only by the unexpected delivery, but by the chance to visit with staff in person, instead of on a virtual conference.

During the delivery process one Saginaw consumer even donated 12 dozen duck eggs that he and his father raise and asked that they be shared with others. People from Saginaw Support Coordination program, the Bay Community Living Supports program, our Peer groups, and Representative Payee consumers were the recipients.

While we are obviously grateful to our friends at United Way, the Great Lakes Loons, and Dow for the opportunity, we wanted to give a big shout out to the following DNMM employees for making this happen:

Veronica Albin

Shannon Curtis

Jody Fetters

Lowell Gisel

Tammy Hynes

Sandy Lee

Sandy Miller

Stephanie Peterson

Mike Swartout

Danie Verhaege

Tara White

These are indeed challenging times. We were thrilled that we could bring a small bit of relief to so many. We are all in this together and we are always here for you. If you have questions, need assistance, or simply need someone to talk to, please call us today. 1-800-782-4160.

**ARTICLE 4 – WHAT’S UP WEDNESDAY**

*We're Here For You!*

During this time of uncertainty, DNMM will come to you during What's Up Wednesday! - a weekly discussion session over various topics.

July's Topics:

July 8 - Medicare Savings Plan and the Low-Income Subsidy

July 15 - History of the Disability Rights Movement up to Passage of the ADA

July 22 - The ADA's Impact on Local Families and Communities

July 29 - Accessibility in Your Community

Noon on Wednesdays in July, 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 5 - We Want To Hear From You!**

The Aging and Adult Services Agency at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services wants to learn how older Michiganders and Michiganders with disabilities have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you are age 60 or over and/or have a disability and reside in Michigan, please complete this short survey. Your responses will help determine how we can best support older adults and persons with disabilities in the upcoming months.

Please click here to take the survey!

This survey is due by July 3rd.

**ARTICLE 6 – OFF THE SHELF – Virtual Book Club**

STARTING WEDNESDAY, JULY 8th!

Are you feeling isolated? Do you love to read? Join us each Wednesday evening, from 5:30 - 6:30pm for "Off The Shelf" - a virtual book club showcasing books about or by people with disabilities. "Off The Shelf" will utilize Zoom Video Conferencing so you can discuss the book from the comfort and safety of your own home.

Our book selection for July is: "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas. The book follows a 16-year-old black girl who becomes entangled in a national news story after she witnesses a white police officer shoot and kill her childhood friend. Social tensions culminate in a riot after a grand jury decides not to indict the police officer for the shooting.

Click here to join "Off The Shelf."

Click here to purchase this month's book selection.

**ARTICLE 7 - 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.

**"O.C.T - Our Chat Time"**

**Tuesdays -  12:00pm**

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

**"ACTIVITY GROUP"**

**Thursdays  -  2:00pm**

Everything from virtual tours of museums, theme parks to cooking demonstrations. From arts/crafts to live music. Maybe even some magic from time to time. Peers pick the activity each week. Join us!

**"MOVIE MATINEE"**

**Fridays -  1:00pm**

Pop some popcorn and join your peers for an afternoon at the movies!  Classic 80s comedies, recent Pixar classics, always something fun! (We'll be watching over "Zoom" so be sure you've installed Zoom on your computer or tablet!  Links to the movies will be placed on our Facebook Page and on our website Friday mornings.

**Please click here to sign up for either of these new virtual groups.**

**ARTICLE 8 - DNMM's Medicaid/Medicare Specialists Are Here to Answer Your Questions**

Do you need extra help paying for your Medicare Part D prescription plan?

Call one of our MMAP certified Medicare specialists to see if you are eligible for the Low Income Subsidy for Medicare Prescription Drug coverage. We can help you with screening questions and do the application over the phone in as little as 15 minutes!

Do you need help paying your Medicare premiums?

Call us today to talk with one of our certified MMAP counselors to see if you qualify for the Medicare Savings Program. We can assist you with checking your eligibility and doing the application over the phone.

Did you know that there are many preventative health and screening services included with your Medicare coverage?

Some of the things you may be eligible for include:

Screening:

Diabetes

Depression

Lung cancer

Prostate Cancer

Testing and services:

Nutrition Therapy

Glaucoma

Mammograms

Tobacco Use cessation counseling

These are just some of the many services you could access. Call one of our certified MMAP counselors today for more information and a full list of preventative health benefits!

We can provide information about Part D coverage and finding the best plan for you!

CALL US TODAY! WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

1-800-782-4160

**ARTICLE 9 – 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.

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 10 – 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 11 - 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 12 – 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
1705 S. Saginaw Road
Midland, MI 48640