DISABILITY NETWORK OF MID-MICHIGAN

FEBRUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER

**ARTICLE 1 – FEATHERS AND FEDORAS 2020**

Break out your black silk fedora or your best flapper dress and get ready to Foxtrot the night away!

Find Lady Luck at the casino tables, dance to the rhythm of Detroit's Louis Johnson Jazz Ensemble, bid on exciting auction items, enjoy delicious food, and hit the speakeasy for champagne and gigglewaters!

Join us for the party of the year: FEATHERS AND FEDORAS!

Saturday, February 15, 2020

The Great Hall in Midland

5:30 - 11:00pm

Tickets are just $50 per person. All Patrons Receive One drink ticket for beer or wine. Heavy Hors d'oeuvre stations are also featured throughout the venue.

Our honorary event chairs this year are Tony and Sara Stamas.

Space is limited. [Click here to reserve your seat today!](http://www.dnmm.org/feathersandfedoras)

If your business would like to sponsor the event or if you need additional information, please contact Matthew Ivan at 989-835-4041 extension 227.

Casino tables are for entertainment purposes only and are free and open to the public.

**ARTICLE 2 - FORWARD PROGRESS**

It was a cloudy, gray day when William saw Nora in his class at school. It was three years ago but he remembers the day like it just happened. Nora talked about a program that would help William, and his classmates, learn independent living skills and other skills that would help him find a job.

William took the paperwork home and was the first in his class to have it signed and brought back to school. William was so shy he was afraid to talk to anyone, he had a few friends but even with those teens he was known as the "quiet one." He just rarely talked. Additionally, he had never helped make anything in the kitchen, and did not know how to turn on the vacuum cleaner. He dreamed of getting a job, and his own apartment, but until that fall day three years ago those were only dreams. William did not think they might come true someday.

It's now three years later. William has been working with Nora through DNMM's STAGES program. He is much more social and has found a new confidence. "I've learned a few key things about how to keep conversations going and I know how to meet someone I've never talked to before, even a store owner". Additionally, William has made a variety of meals using the stove, oven, and microwave.

In regard to getting a job, he has been encouraged and enabled by Nora to investigate careers, he has practiced asking business people for applications, and he is filling them out. He has worked on his interview skills in Job Clubs put on through the STAGES program.

"I have a long way to go to independence," said William. "But I never thought I'd even get this far. I have learned so much and I know I just have to keep moving forward. I am very grateful to be part of the STAGES program. I can't wait to get to work!"

**ARTICLE 3 - FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH – CELEBRATING THE OVERLOOKED HISTORY OF BLACK PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

NOTE: This article was written by Vilissa Thompson for Rewire.News. It is re-printed here to ensure accessibility. It has been edited. Please visit www.rewire.news to read the article in its entirety.

What do Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Mary Davidson have in common? They were all important Black historical figures who made incredible strides in our nation's ongoing struggle for human and civil rights, and they all had disabilities.

If you were surprised to learn that these women had disabilities, you are not alone. Many Black historical figures, innovators, and activists have had their disabilities erased when their stories are taught in schools and covered during Black history and women's history observances-by educators and advocates alike.

This erasure speaks volumes about how our society recounts stories of people with disabilities and the narrow lens through which stories are told, particularly those involving disability. Our history is forever incomplete if we fail to highlight and respect the identities of Black heroes and trailblazers with disabilities.

Being a Black millennial with a disability, who minored in African-American studies in college, I did not learn that many of the pioneers I respected had disabilities like me until I became an activist. It baffled me that their disabilities were downplayed or eliminated altogether; those disabilities are instrumental to their complete narratives and could provide a mirror for Black people with disabilities to see themselves.

Within my activism work, I have made it an objective to spotlight the progress made by Black people with disabilities during Black History Month. Since 2015, I have highlighted the accomplishments and work of Black activists in the disability community. The most poignant feature occurred last year, when I shined a light on the activists who were influential to the development of the Independent Living (IL) movement in Berkeley, California. The IL movement proclaims that people with disabilities are entitled to the same civil rights as those without, are the experts in stating their needs, and should be in control of how they live their lives.

What resulted was a four-part series that centered around Joyce Jackson, Johnnie Lacy, Black Panther Party member Brad Lomax, and Donald Galloway. Learning of their involvement and telling their stories was my way to right the wrongs of them being reduced to a footnote within both Black history and the history of the IL movement, where the activism of people of color with disabilities has not been given the same attention as that of white people with disabilities.

Every time I learn of a new Black person with a disability who created a path that has influenced our lives, I think, “How can I make others care?” Black history is about embracing the richness, resilience, and tenacity of our people. If we do not care to make an effort to empower all of us by including every aspect of Blackness in our storytelling and collective pride, it will always be short of true inclusion.

Heather Watkins, a writer and mother with a disability, had this to say about where our history fits and why it cannot be ignored:

“Black Disability History matters to me a great deal because so many of our cultural icons have had disabilities, apparent and/or non-apparent as I’ve discovered. It more than likely factored in self-awareness, decision-making, and how they governed their lives. It’s an important factor that is often downplayed or gets erased in the retelling of their stories, if/when their stories get told at all. Black disability history is part of Black history which is American history. It needs to be chronicled and respected in the same manner we archive forebears who’ve richly contributed to the tapestry of our history and held with the same gleam and esteem. I didn’t learn about many Black history-makers with disabilities until I was well into adulthood and involved in advocacy. I imagine how it might’ve beneficially impacted my budding adolescent self-awareness knowing disability was part of their lived experience.”

*“Black disability history is part of Black history which is American history.”*

That line from Heather perfectly describes disability history’s significance. We as Black people with disabilities have always been here. We have steadfastly proclaimed our rights and humanity to the communities that chronically overlook us, and yet we still rise to do the work needed to free us all. Black disability history matters because without us putting our voices and very bodies on the line, the political and societal strides many of us take for granted would not have occurred. Our communities are forever indebted to the achievements made and the fights won by past and present Black figures.

Black disability history should be observed and celebrated year round. I charge everyone to learn and share one Black figure with a disability in history so that our people are no longer a secret to anyone, especially to ourselves.

**ARTICLE 4 – VIRTUAL PEER GROUPS**

DNMM is pleased to announce the formation of two "Virtual" Peer Groups. We will be utilizing Google Duo technology to conduct peer group meetings that you can enjoy from the comfort of your own home.

"AMAZING WOMEN"

This virtual peer group will meet every two weeks starting Thursday, February 13th from 11:00am to Noon. This group seeks to empower women with disabilities as advocates and active community members.

"VIRTUAL PEER"

This virtual group meets once a month starting on Monday, February 17th, from 11:00am to 12:30pm. Each month will feature a new topic. The topic for the first meeting will be "Feeling Good About Yourself and How Others See You."

To sign up for either of these groups, please email Lara Sullivan. Her email address is sullivan@dnmm.org.

**ARTICLE 5 – PEER GROUP UPCOMING EVENTS**

SAGINAW PEER GROUP

"Game Day and Cell Phone Assistive Technology"  
Thursday, February 6  
3:00 - 5:30 pm  
YMCA - 1915 Fordney St.

BAY CITY PEER GROUP

"Game Day and Karaoke!"  
Thursday, February 13  
3:00 - 5:30 pm  
United Way Conference Room

MIDLAND PEER GROUP

"Assistive Technology and Phone Tech"  
Thursday, February 20  
3:00 - 5:30 pm  
DNMM Conference Room

The Peer Groups will be touring "Butterflies in Bloom" at Midland's Dow Gardens in March! Our thanks to our friends at Dow Gardens for having "Accessibility Days" to help ensure everyone has access to this remarkable interactive exhibit.

**ARTICLE 6 - MI ABLE CAN HELP YOU SAVE**

The Michigan Able Act was signed into law in October 2015, following passage in December 2014 of the federal Stephen Beck Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, which authorized states to establish tax-advantaged savings programs for individuals with disabilities.

The goal is to encourage and assist individuals and families in saving funds that help individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independence and quality of life without jeopardizing benefits provided through private insurance, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, the beneficiary's employment and other sources.

The goal of MiABLE's "I Will Never Lose" campaign is to reach out to individuals with disabilities, and their families, who haven't yet taken advantage of the program created to help them save for current and future expenses without jeopardizing eligibility for government benefits.

Approximately 300,000 Michigan residents with disabilities are eligible for MiABLE, including 28,000 in the Great Lakes Bay Region and Thumb. Yet largely because of a lack of awareness, less than 1% of those who qualify are currently enrolled.

Need more information? Attend this free session! Learn more about who is eligible for MiABLE, how to open an account, and what MiABLE funds can be used for.

WHEN:

Thursday, February 6

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

WHERE:

Saginaw County Community Mental Health Association  
A & W Professional Development & Business Center  
1 Germania Platz  
Saginaw, MI 48602

WHAT: MiABLE is the state-operated program that allows children and adults with disabilities, disabled veterans and their families to save and invest money while retaining government assistance like Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

To contact the MiABLE program, please call 1-844-656-7225.

**ARTICLE 7 – WE’RE HIRING!**

WE'RE HIRING!

Whether you're seeking full-time employment or just a few hours of part-time work:

YOU can make a difference in someone's life! YOU can help a person with a disability live independently!

As part of our Bay County Independent Living Assistance program, you provide personalized support to individuals who need assistance accessing support in their communities. You work directly with the consumer to help them meet their goals and create the lifestyle they choose.

IMMEDIATE OPENINGS. WAGES: $10 - $10.50 PER HOUR

Must have a valid Michigan Driver License, with a good driving record, and dependable and insured transportation. Must be able to pass a criminal background check. Training will be provided.

If you want to make a difference, please call 989-895-2363.

To learn about additional employment opportunities at DNMM, please visit http://www.dnmm.org/employment

**ARTICLE 8 - 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 9 – 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