

Community Update

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 8

JANUARY 2015

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **NEW Staff**
- **Upcoming Events**
- **25th Anniversary of ADA**
- **Year in Review**

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Leaders in Policy Advocacy

The Arc Michigan is offering an intensive leadership training program for adults with developmental disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities to become leaders in the movement for people with disabilities to have full, productive lives in their communities.

Participants will learn about:

- Disability History
- Inclusive Education
- Assistive Technology and Social Media
- Self-determination and Alternative to Guardianship
- Person-Centered Planning
- Access to housing and employment
- Benefits and systems of support
- Systems change



Leaders in Policy Advocacy training requires a commitment to attend a total of six (6) overnight sessions, once per month for six months. Weekend training sessions run from 12:30 pm on Fridays to 3:00 pm on Saturdays and are offered in each Region. There is no charge for the program.

Trainings are scheduled in Region 5, (Upper Peninsula) and will be offered April through September of 2015.

To apply, go to www.arcmi.org/new/lipa.htm to fill out an online application or mail it in.

If you have any questions please contact: Salli Christenson at 1-800-292-7851, ext. 130, or salli.c@arcmi.org.

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Council Welcomes **NEW** Public Policy Analyst and Grants Manger

On January 5th, the Council welcomed Brett Williams as its new Policy Analyst! Brett comes from Michigan Consumer's for Healthcare where he worked as the Mid-Michigan Regional Coordinator. In this position he educated constituents, consumers and policymakers on healthcare reform laws. He also trained businesses and accounting firms on the implications of the Affordable Care Act.

His background also includes legislative, policy, and advocacy work that stretches over a decade. He has worked for two state representatives as a legislative assistant, is seated as a member of the Board of Trustees in Oneida Township, and serves on a multitude of boards and committees.



One of his passions is skiing and he is on the National Ski Patrol.

He can be reached via email at WilliamsB18@michigan.gov or by phone at 517-335-3139.

Tedra Jackson takes on a new role as Grants Manager. In her new position she will be working closely with the Executive Director on the budget as well as continuing to monitor Council's grants. She will continue to serve as staff for IFSEA and Diversity committee. Tedra has been with the Council for five years as the grants monitor and she takes on this new position with excitement and energy.

You can find her refereeing for varsity girls basketball league on the weekends.

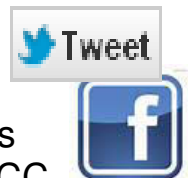
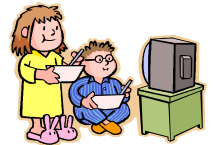


She can be reached via email at Jackson7@michigan.gov or by phone at 517-335-3150.

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

As March approaches, it is time to start thinking about Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Here are a few ideas to help get you started:

- ◆ Hold a viewing party to watch Possibilities DVD (from Wayne State's Developmental Disabilities Institute) and have a discussion afterwards. <http://ddi.wayne.edu/possibilities.php>
- ◆ 31 Days of DD Awareness Month---post content on your Facebook or Twitter each day that sheds light on Developmental Disabilities.
- ◆ Trivia or game night event with facts about DD awareness month or this could be an opportunity for the community to meet and interact with RICC members.
- ◆ Use DD Month as an opportunity to write a letter to the residents of your community to acknowledge their support in making housing, jobs, schools and recreation accessible to their fellow citizens who have developmental disabilities. Send it to "Letters to the Editor" at your newspaper.
- ◆ Ask for a proclamation
- ◆ Hold a "Meet the RICC breakfast" or "brown-bag lunch" — this is a great way to follow up with your legislator from the Legislative Event. Invite them over to discuss issues in your community and to let them know who the RICC members are.
- ◆ Hold a poster contest.
- ◆ Each week send an article to your newspaper about a person in your RICC or community that is doing something positive or feature DD awareness month in your newsletter.
- ◆ Reach out to local media —tell them about what you are doing to celebrate and what DD Awareness Month means to you.



RICC Member Spotlight: Kalamazoo RICC: Sarah Carmany

The Kalamazoo RICC has been working hard on Employment First in their community, especially RICC Chair Sarah Carmany. She helped to organize a meeting with Representatives Sean McCann and Margaret O'Brian and Senator Tonya Schuitmaker about collaborating on a bill about Employment First, last year.

Sarah has also started a petition to make Michigan an Employment First State. Because of her advocacy efforts she received something special in the mail; a Christmas card from Lt. Governor Calley and Gov. Snyder thanking her for all her help to "Reinvent Michigan". Keep up the good work! (*Employment first is the idea that individual integrated employment is the preferred outcome for people with disabilities.*)



Sarah Carmany at a Region 3 regional meeting.

ABLE Act becomes a Law

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act was signed into law Friday, December 19, 2014. The Act allows for the establishment of tax-exempt saving accounts (ABLE Accounts) that can be used for health, independence and quality of life for people with disabilities without the threat of losing Medicaid or other supports and services.

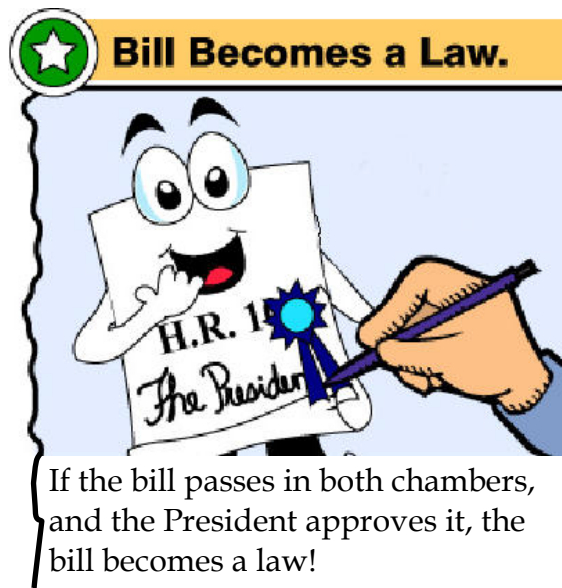
For fear of losing their eligibility for certain types of necessary supports and services, people with disabilities were discouraged to pursue competitive employment. With the passage of the ABLE Act, a significant barrier to economic freedom has been lifted.

The ABLE Act, however, only gives states the ability to begin this program; states are not required to start it.

For more information on ABLE Accounts, go to the National Disabilities Institute and check out “**ABLE Accounts: 10 Things You Must Know.**” <http://www.realeconomicimpact.org/News.aspx?id=460>

Content provided by Michigan Protection and Advocacy.

***Please see infographic on the next page**



Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE)— Understanding the ABLE Act

The ABLE Act, signed into law on December 19, 2014, gives individuals with disabilities the opportunity to establish tax-deferred savings accounts to maintain their independence, pursue their dreams and contribute to their communities. ABLE Plans fall under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Protects current disability and healthcare benefits

In general, ABLE Plan funds would not affect eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid and other federal means-tested benefits. Currently, individuals with more than \$2,000 in assets are not eligible for SSI.



Earnings on ABLE Plan contributions (made out of after-tax dollars) would be tax-free as long as the funds are used for qualified expenses.

Qualified expenses under the ABLE Act include:



EDUCATION



HOUSING



TRANSPORTATION



EMPLOYMENT TRAINING & SUPPORT



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY



HEALTH, PREVENTION & WELLNESS



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES



FUNERAL & BURIAL EXPENSES

Who can have an ABLE Plan?

You are eligible for an ABLE Plan if you are disabled before age 26. Proof of disability includes:

Receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) **or**

Receiving SSI **or**

Receiving a disability certification under rules that the IRS will write.

1.4 Million

Number of people who receive both SSDI and SSI benefits¹.

Estimated number of Americans who will be eligible for an ABLE account, according to the National Disability Institute.

5.8 Million

ABLE Plan amount that would trigger a suspension in SSI cash benefits while maintaining an individual's SSI eligibility.

\$100,000

\$14,000

Amount each family member and friends can contribute annually into an ABLE Plan and not pay taxes (gift tax exclusion).

Setting up an ABLE Plan

Each state is responsible for establishing and operating an ABLE program.

States can begin accepting ABLE Plan applications before the end of 2015.



For more information on the American Association of People with Disabilities, visit AAPD.com



For more information on Social Security Disability Insurance, visit Expert.Allsup.com

¹Annual Statistical Report on the Social Security Disability Insurance Program, 2013.

Legislative Event

“Alive! Alert! and Enthusiastic!” Was the theme for the 15th Annual Legislative Event at Radisson Hotel in Lansing. More than 100 Regional Inclusive Community Coalition (RICC) members, local self-advocates, talked to their legislators about issues affecting their community. Some of issues included: employment, housing, vulnerable roadway users and much more!



DD Awareness Month

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness month, which is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of people with developmental disabilities. In 2014, the RICCs got really involved. The Delta RICC did a “walk a mile in my shoes event” at their local mall. This event showcased what it was like to be a person with a disability. The Upper Peninsula’s RICCs created a video that highlighted dreams and goals of people with disabilities.

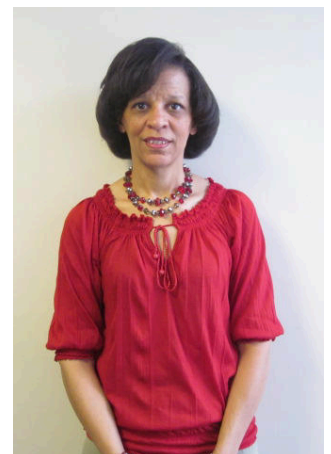


Removal of “R” word

In March of last year the legislature removed the word “retard” from all Michigan legislation and statues. This was a huge win for people with disabilities and the removal of hurtful speech.

New Staff

The Council welcomed new staff member Wendy Duke-Littlejohn as its new executive secretary. Wendy has been here for nine months and has been a great addition to the staff.



A Year in Review Continued...

Employment First Report

On September 22, 2014 the Michigan Developmental Disability Network - Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, Inc. (MPAS), the Developmental Disabilities Institute at Wayne State University, and the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council -released a report on employment first.

The report educates policymakers, stakeholders, and the public about the employment rate in Michigan for people with disabilities, the increase in segregated work environments, commonly known as "sheltered workshops" and the practice of paying individuals with disabilities less than the minimum wage. The report calls for the establishment of statewide policies that promote increased opportunities for competitive integrated employment among people with disabilities.



For more information about employment first, visit www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil

Facebook Page

In July 2014 the Council got its very own Facebook page. Make sure to Like us. Share. Comment on our posts.

www.facebook.com/middcouncil



A Year in Review Continued....

RICC Summit

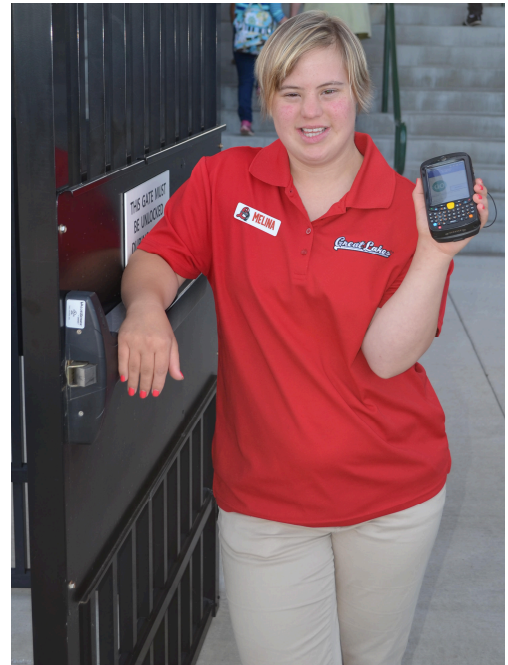
The 2014 RICC Summit held on July 8th at Crowne Plaza, featured self-exploration activities that centered on self-advocacy.

RICC members who were new to the concept of self-advocacy and wanted to learn what it means to be a self-advocate participated in Self-Advocacy 101.



Take Your Legislator To Work

The Council started an exciting new campaign last year, “Take Your Legislator to Work” in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Legislators got the opportunity to job shadow one of their constituents with a disability. The Council had 10 participants and 12 legislators. The campaign concluded with a closing ceremony where the Lt. Gov. gave opening remarks.



Feb. 2015: Workgroup and Committee

February 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Legislative Event	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Transportation 	13	14 Valentine's Day 
15	16 President's Day 	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 Health Issues 	24 Executive Committee Economic Justice	25 IFSEA 	26 RICC teleconference 	27	28

25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

This year is the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26th. This important law bans unfair treatment and ensures equal opportunity for people with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, and state and local government services (www.ada.gov).

To help celebrate the month, the Council ask that you send them your stories on what the ADA means to you. If you have any suggestions for the month, please email Meredith Smith at: smithm10@michigan.gov. Be on the look out for more information on how you can get involved with the 25th Anniversary celebration of the ADA.

Our Community Includes Everyone

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