

# Our Network News

DISABILITYnetwork



SERVING LAKE, MASON, MUSKEGON, NEWAYGO, & OCEANA COUNTIES

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Staff Spotlight: Meet Brad Hastings! Pg. 2
- Wall of Fame Pg. 3
- Newaygo County Summer Transition Youth Camp (STYC) Pg. 3
- Consumer Spotlight: Meet Andrea Simerick! Pg. 4
- If you need answers, we can help! Pg. 4
- Upcoming Events Pg. 5

## DNWM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mark Stein  
President

Carl Occhipinti  
Vice President

Caryn Vennema  
Treasurer

Frank Hollister  
Secretary

John Wahlberg  
Director

Mike Hamm  
Director

Joe Doyle  
Director

Sandy Baker  
Director

Brian Fulton  
Director

OCTOBER 2018 VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3

## YOUR VOICE, YOUR VOTE!



Diane Fleser, CEO

It's almost time to vote! Our newsletter focus for this quarter is promoting the vote and advocacy efforts in our communities to advance voter registration for people with disabilities. All people, with or without disabilities, should be free to follow their own path and decide for themselves who they are and what they want to be and do. This idea is an essential part of Independent Living, and voting can play such an important role in personal empowerment and provides the opportunity for us to speak up for ourselves and for each other.

In many corners of our region, we've had great occasions to connect with each other; from the Oceana County Fair in Hart where we were honored to register new voters, to an incredible Vote & Float event in Bridgeton (Newaygo County) and an AutoMARK demonstration in Muskegon, the energy is high and contagious. At the other end of the spectrum, concerns remain regarding barriers that can prevent voters with disabilities from casting their ballot. There are resources pertinent to the power of the disability vote, providing tools for ensuring your rights are known. One such resource is <https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/voter-resource-center/>

Best wishes for an empowering fall,

## ADVOCACY IN ACTION

***Diane Fleser, CEO & Brad Hastings, Advocacy and ADA Coordinator attend the National ADA Symposium***

In June 2018, Diane Fleser (CEO) and Brad Hastings (Advocacy and ADA Outreach Coordinator) attended the National ADA Symposium in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This conference was a great learning opportunity that not only provided training and information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, but also gave opportunity for companies that provide services to im-

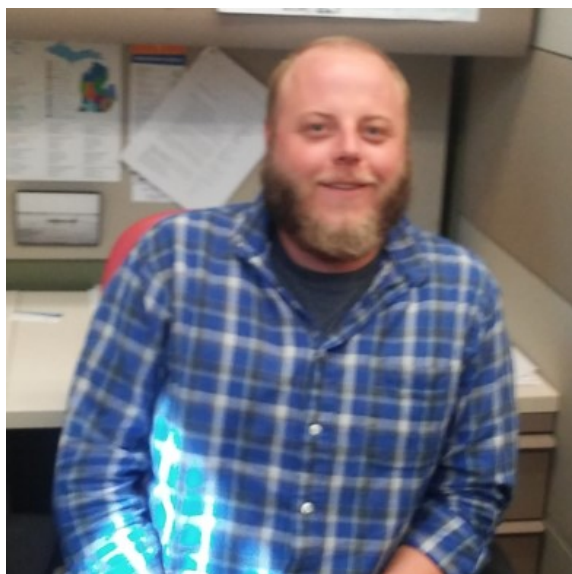
prove accessibility and assistive technology to showcase their latest innovations.

There were opportunities to learn about transportation, service animals, universal design, requirements and best practices of state and local governments, as well as current case law surrounding the ADA. Many of the sessions provided here were a part of Brad's training

to become a Certified Coordinator for the Americans with Disabilities Act. This certification will make him a stronger advocate for the consumers of Disability Network West Michigan and give him expertise to help guide municipalities and businesses throughout our 5-county region towards full inclusion of persons with disabilities in their processes, policies, programs, goods, and services.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## *Meet Brad Hastings, Advocacy & ADA Coordinator*



Join us in introducing Disability Network West Michigan's new Advocacy & ADA Coordinator, Brad Hastings.

Brad is a Muskegon local and graduated from Reeths-Puffer High School in 2007. From there, Brad attended Michigan State University where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology with a Minor in Philosophy and Law. Through his coursework, Brad studied many topics surrounding human cultures, social systems, and ways of thought. Much of his coursework focused on systematic disadvantage, structural barriers to socio-economic mobility, civil rights, and how historical events and policies have impacted broader societal structures and individual abilities to achieve a basic quality of life and well-being.

After college, Brad pursued an internship with Global Youth for Education and Change that took him to a Township in South Africa, where he worked at a drop-in care center for children who had been impacted by HIV/AIDS. In this capacity, Brad helped with after school programs for chil-

dren, preparing meals, as well as working on basic life and employment skills with young adults.

Prior to Disability Network West Michigan, Brad spent 5 years with TrueNorth Community Services as their Community Food and Wellness Coordinator, overseeing the food pantry, teaching cooking classes, assisting with fundraising efforts, and leading the Newaygo County Hunger Elimination Force. In this position, Brad facilitated community collaboration on issues surrounding poverty and hunger, as well as community outreach and education, and the coordination of policy advocacy efforts.

During his tenure with TrueNorth, Brad was also a member of the Staff Training and Social Committee and helped to organize and lead social events, as well as staff trainings and professional development.

In his new role as the Advocacy and ADA Coordinator, Brad is working toward becoming a Certified Coordinator for the Americans with Disabilities Act. He is excited for the opportunity to promote the many issues

impacting people with disabilities as well as the opportunity to work alongside the disability community and local governments, businesses, and other organizations to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to all the community has to offer. He hopes that the community continues to grow and move forward with accessibility and inclusion as top priorities.

We welcome Brad to the Disability Network West Michigan team!



Brad attending the National ADA Symposium in Pittsburgh PA

# Wall of Fame

## Newaygo County Summer Transition Youth Camp



Putting teamwork and creative thinking into motion by locating resources and items; a scavenger hunt.



Enjoying conversation, sunshine and fresh air during lunch time.



While partnering with other community resources, our youth learned about healthy eating, physical fitness and hygiene.



A "friendly" game of air hockey during our end of week celebration.



After a week of hard work, accomplishments were celebrated with ice cream and games at a local business

## Newaygo County Summer Transition Youth Camp 2018 (STYC)

### *Learning, Connecting, Thriving, Working and Leading!*

Summer of 2018 kicked off with a Career Exploration Camp. This Summer Transition Youth Camp (STYC) is designed to be the participant's first real introduction to potential employment opportunities. The camp is intended to offer behind the scene information and first-hand communications from current employees and/or business owners on how to obtain employment; this includes daily tasks, education and any previous experience needed.

Here's some of what we did:

- ◆ Self-discovery activities designed to help students learn more about themselves.
- ◆ Outdoor activities planned to help students develop leadership, teamwork, and self-confidence.
- ◆ Took assessments designed to help students, parents, and VR counselors learn more about strengths, areas of improvement, values, interests, and potential careers.
- ◆ Development of a mini portfolio with support to bring home to share with parents, school staff, and VR counselors.
- ◆ Several learning experiences to enhance community knowledge and awareness of resources and opportunities to explore Newaygo County.





Andrea Simerick & Diane Fleser, CEO.

## CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT

### Meet Andrea Simerick: A Lesson in Determination

You have three weeks to find a new job – to replace your only source of income. Add to that, your job also provides your housing. That's what Andrea Simerick was faced with this summer. Instead of hanging her head and wondering how her cerebral palsy would limit her, Andrea got busy seeing where her potential could take her! By reaching out

to local community resources and her support network, Andrea was able to find temporary housing and start training classes at Disability Network West Michigan.

After completing Job Club and 80-hours of On the Job Experience, Andrea was equipped with important office training, an updated resume and the skills to shine during an

interview. Andrea was also armed with the confidence she needed to realize her goal of moving to a larger city and finding a full-time job she enjoyed.

Where is she now? Andrea is living in Grand Rapids, working full time for a government agency and looking at getting her driver's license. Congratulations Andrea – your determination has paid off!

#### LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

Everything we do at Disability Network West Michigan is geared toward helping people with disabilities live independent lives and become their own advocates. But that does not mean you cannot get a little help from your friends along the way!

**we can  
help**

### If You Need Answers, We Are Here To

- ☐ Information & Referrals
- ☐ Disability Rights and the ADA
- ☐ Benefits – SSI, SSDI
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Peer Mentoring/Support Groups
- ☐ Independent Living Skills
- ☐ Community Services
- ☐ Counseling/Other Supports
- ☐ Individual Advocacy
- ☐ System Advocacy
- ☐ Youth Transition
- ☐ Nursing Home Transition
- ☐ Adult Transition

- ☐ Senior Millage Transportation Voucher Muskegon County
- ☐ Transportation Voucher Newaygo County
- ☐ Transportation Voucher Oceana County
- ☐ Employment Supports
- ☐ Health Care Services
- ☐ ADA Accessibility Evaluations
- ☐ Disability Inclusion and Awareness Training
- ☐ Employment and Hiring of Individuals with Disabilities

**For More Information About Any Of Our Programs Or Services, Please Call 231-722-0088, Or Reach Us Through Our Website's Contact Page.**

[www.disabilitynetworkwm.org/contact](http://www.disabilitynetworkwm.org/contact)

# Schedule of Events

## OCTOBER

**24th - Ignite Fire Youth Group. Pumpkin Painting!** 5p-7p at the United Way, 31 E. Clay Muskegon MI 49442



## NOVEMBER

**12th - DNWM CLOSED. Veteran's Day**

**14th - Stronger Together Women's Group.** 12p-1p at Recovery Cooperative, 1122 S. Getty St., Muskegon MI 49442 **(Note new location)**

**14th - Veteran's Connection Group.** 1p-2:30p at the United Way 31 E. Clay Muskegon MI 49442

**14th & 28th - Ignite Fire Youth Group.** 5p-7p at the United Way 31 E. Clay Muskegon MI 49442

**22nd & 23rd - DNWM CLOSED. Thanksgiving**



## DECEMBER

**12th - Consumer Holiday Luncheon & Cookie Exchange.** 11a-1p at the United Way, 31 E. Clay Muskegon MI 49442

**24th - Jan 1st. Note: Disability Network West Michigan will be closed for the holidays**



## Our Staff...

**Diane Fleser** - Chief Executive Officer

**Will Wilson** - Deputy Director

**Ada Linderman** - Programs Manager Newaygo & Oceana Counties

**Lynn Korabik** - Accountant/Benefits Planning

**Karen Wynne** - Transitions Navigator/Benefits Planning

**Danna Pittman** - Office & Communications Manager

**Kim Lilly** - Independent Living Specialist/Volunteer Coordinator

**Lisa Sullivan** - Information and Referral Specialist

**Janet Perreault** - Nursing Facilities Transitions Outreach Coordinator

**Amanda Van Tubergen** - Employment Navigator

**Brad Hastings** - Advocacy & ADA Coordinator (Certified)

**Jeffrey VanDyke** - Graphics Design Specialist

**Ja-Relle Thomas** - Youth Transition Specialist

**Danielle Bennett** - Youth Transition Specialist

**Leslie Green** - Employment Navigator/Benefits Planning

**Vicki Comeau** - Mobility Manager, Newaygo County

**Lisa Andritsis** - Mobility Manager, Oceana County

**Carla Morat** - Mobility Manager, Oceana County

**Sue Harris** - Administrative Assistant



**OUR NETWORK NEWS** is a quarterly newsletter and is available in alternative format upon request. Issues of our publications will be available on our website at [www.disabilitynetworkwm.org](http://www.disabilitynetworkwm.org)

### SUPPORT OUR WORK

You can help support the work we do with a tax-deductible donation to Disability Network West Michigan. Visit our website to donate online or call 231-722-0088.

Address Label

Disability Network  
West Michigan  
27 E. Clay Ave.  
Muskegon MI 49442  
[www.disabilitynetworkwm.org](http://www.disabilitynetworkwm.org)



Disability Network West Michigan is committed to accessibility, inclusion, and diversity while being consumer directed and accountable.

**OUR MISSION** is to advocate, educate, empower, and provide resources for persons with disabilities. We promote accessible communities, fulfilling our vision of ensuring that accessibility will be an accepted civil right.

Serving Muskegon, Mason, Lake,  
Oceana and Newaygo Counties

**Muskegon Office (Main)**

27 E. Clay Ave.  
Muskegon MI 49442  
Office: 231-722-0088  
Fax: 231-722-0066

**Newaygo Office**

5479 W. 72<sup>nd</sup> St., Ste. 400  
Fremont MI 49412  
Office: 231-538-0738  
Fax: 231-924-4860

**Oceana Office**

907 State St., Ste. 102  
Hart MI 49420  
Office: 231-720-5879  
Fax: 231-231-1338

[www.disabilitynetworkwm.org](http://www.disabilitynetworkwm.org) [www.facebook.com/disabilitynetworkwm](https://www.facebook.com/disabilitynetworkwm) [www.twitter.com/disNetworkWM](https://www.twitter.com/disNetworkWM)