

Torch Light



5th Annual Inclusion Conference

By: Ashlee Brennan

It was another successful year for our Annual Inclusion Conference! We were able to provide meaningful information to over 100 individuals through this conference. Our focus on inclusion proved to be a popular topic as many described the conference as “eye opening, informative, and interesting!”



We continued our mission of self-advocacy through the power of story telling. Conference members heard from a panel of family members, individuals with I/DD, and professionals who all shared their story and how it related to the theme of ‘Inclusion.’ Individuals also had the chance to tell their story in our *Story Corps Workshop* where they were able to be recorded and have their testimonial formatted to a DVD. There was great feedback from attendees as to

how powerful these stories were. In addition to our conference, we hosted our Free Annual Film Festival on Thursday, November 10, 2011. Films were shown around topics including: inclusion in school settings, testimonials from individuals with I/DD and the debut of our film “Transitions: 6 Kalamazoo Area Families’ Stories.” Thank you to RAVE Motion Pictures for providing a venue and to Ben Deryke of Pi Kappa Phi for filming.

We were happy to be able to keep the registration down to only \$15 and were able to give away many scholarships for registration. This was all made possible through the help of our Community Partners Sponsors.



A special thank you to the following for your financial support of this conference:



RICC
Kalamazoo
814 S. Westnedge
Kalamazoo MI 49008-1162



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Board of Directors

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Our Mission

We exist as an advocacy organization to make it possible for each person with a disability to participate fully in all aspects of community and to support the effort of each individual to determine his/her own future.

Achieve with us...



53rd Annual Meeting & Awards Dessert

By: Chris Rettich



Our Annual Meeting was a great success! In addition to great desserts and the election of the new Board of Directors, we were proud to present our 2011 Community Advocates Annual Awards.

Kate Lalonde won the **Individual Service Award** for her volunteer work with Logan, a nine-year-old diagnosed with Autism. Kate has helped Logan progress amazingly through the IEP advice she has provided his mother Tina Robbins.

The **Community Service Award** went to **Carl Phalin** for his strong positive presence on the Community Advocates Board of Directors and his willingness to jump into anything given to him including mentoring a young adult who is connected to Community Advocates.

Jim Clark was the recipient of the **Special Contribution Award**. When he saw a need for more social programming, he took it upon himself to set up a movie outing one Saturday each month at the Kalamazoo 10 Theater. Jim has been able to provide individuals who have Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities the connections for friendships and is now exploring other social activities for the group.

This year's **Trailblazer Award** was awarded to **John Donlin** for involvement in his community and setting a true example for others. John continues his self-advocacy by working at the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services (KCMHSAS) as their first Peer Mentor for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities.

The **Community Advocates Award** was given to **Kathryn Nash** for her long time commitment to the people with I/DD served by Residential Opportunities, Inc. (ROI). When she realized there was a need for adaptive clothing to preserve people's dignity, she stepped up and filled it.

This year, three nominees were awarded the **Professional Excellence Award**: **Carol Sands, Jill Angell and Jenny Metz**.

Carol Sands, the Chair of the Special Education Department at Portage Central High School, was nominated for working tirelessly to come up with a solution for Giovanni Pedroloni and always listening to new ideas. His mother writes, "she has truly raised the bar for my son."

Jill Angell, Program Director for Boys and Girls Club, was nominated for transforming the programming at the Boys Club so that children with disabilities are better supported.

Jenny Metz, Experiential Education Director for the Kalamazoo Nature Center, was nominated for her work to assure that the Nature Center's programming is inclusive, making necessary accommodations along the way.

The **Pam Miller Self Determination Award** was awarded to **Kevin (Robert) Malnight** for embracing his disabilities and living his life his way. Robert speaks to doctors and medical professionals about the challenges he has faced and the process of turning his life from one which was out of control to one with purpose. An honored Special Olympian, Robert is also a renowned glass artist with his own home studio and sells his art at many local events.

John Argo was the recipient of the **George Martin Scholarship**. He is currently a Celebration Cinema employee, community volunteer and avid photographer. As a volunteer photo-monitor for the Nature Center, he walks the trails and takes pictures of the various stairways to monitor safety. John will be spending the money from this scholarship on getting better photography equipment and promoting his work.

Congratulations to all 2011 Community Advocates Annual Award Winners. Thank you for all that you do!

Mosaics by Kevin “Robert” Malnight



If you're looking for a holiday gift,
look no further!

Community Advocates has beautiful mosaics and garden stones on display and for sale. They have been created by local artist Kevin “Robert” Malnight.



There are a variety of designs available. Kevin also takes special requests! For more information stop in our office or call his mother Peg Malnight at 269.808.0292.



Eaton Gives Back!



Community Advocates is thankful for the newly formed partnership with Eaton’s Community Support Committee. We graciously received a \$3,000 Powering Communities Grant as well as two volunteers for our Annual Inclusion Conference and look forward to working with this committee in the future!

Sustainability and Eaton’s Social Commitment

“At Eaton, we see robust, healthy communities as a vital component of sustainability. Eaton people care deeply about the communities in which we live and work, investing our time, money and hearts in programs that make a difference in the lives of others.”

Charitable Contributions

“As Eaton has grown, so has our commitment to the communities in which we live and work. This is an important aspect of sustainability and one that Eaton people take personally.”

Galesburg Community Support Committee (GCSC)

Our mission as the GCSC is to make a difference in the greater Kalamazoo and Battle Creek communities by directing “Powering Communities Grants” to the agencies that we as a campus feel most need our support to make a difference in the lives of others in our communities and by connecting employee volunteers with those agencies.

Thank you, Eaton!



Powering Business Worldwide

What's New?

Community Advocates Receives DD Council Grant

by: Lori West

Community Advocates is proud to share that we are the recipient of a grant from the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council of Michigan to support the Regional Interagency Consumer Committee (RICC) Region 3 Coordinator. This grant will focus on improving the effectiveness of the advocacy efforts the Michigan DD Council, its RICC operations, and its other community initiatives.

The purpose of the Regional Coordinator is to provide regionally based technical assistance and supports to all DD Council initiatives in their region, including RICC's, grant projects, and any other activities of the DD Council and its work groups and committees.

We are excited about this new challenge and the potential it has to build an even stronger network of self advocates! Community Advocates will hire a full time position to carry out the objectives of the grant. The award begins January 1, 2012.



Volunteer Ventures

By: Connie Williams



*“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time;
they just have the heart”.*

~Elizabeth Andrew

In the Volunteer Spotlight is Jane Bilicki who has been helping in the office the past several months. She's a cleaning and organizing wizard extraordinaire. Thanks to Jane, we now know what has been hiding in our storage closet and she's now preparing to scan old photos and make a digital history of Community Advocates. She has helped with preparing conference packets and is mentoring other Volunteers. With her endless energy and her always positive attitude and smile, we are fortunate to have such a capable and willing Volunteer as part of the Community Advocates staff.

Do you have the heart to help at Community Advocates? It doesn't take lots of skill or expertise, just the will to want to help. There are plenty of opportunities and needs . . . from preparing for the Annual Inclusion Conference, greeting at the Annual Film Festival, signing in attendees at the Annual Spring Luncheon, putting together a special mailing, helping with marketing activities, being an Hispanic Liaison, to setting up for a training or event and then helping to clean and pack up afterward. You choose how and when you want to help and we supply you with plenty to do!

If you have the desire to Volunteer with us, please call the office at 269-342-9801.

Community Advocates Spotlight and Events

Low Cost Mobile Phone Service



You may qualify for **Assurance Wireless**, a Lifeline Assistance Program, if you participate in programs such as food stamps or Medicaid.

Please visit: www.assurancewireless.com or call 1-888-321-5880 for more informations

OR

You may qualify for **SafeLink Wireless**, a provider of the Government's Lifeline support program. Visit www.safelinkwireless.com for more information.

Low Cost Cable and Internet

Cable and Internet provider Comcast is launching a new program to offer discounted internet service and computers to low-income families. The program, called Internet Essentials, will "provide low cost access to the Internet and affordable computers as well as digital literacy training to families with children who are eligible to receive free lunches under the National School Lunch Program" according to the company's blog.

Internet service provided through Internet Essentials features download speeds of up to 1.5 Mbps and upload speeds of up to 384 Kbps. The plan costs \$9.95 per month (plus tax) and is available to qualifying families. For more information visit: <http://www.internetessentials.com/index.html>

Community Advocates Training Opportunities

IEP Trainings

(These will be consistent throughout the school year on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Thursday of the month, except on holidays)

- Tuesday, December 13, 2011 9am-10:30am
- Tuesday, January 10, 2012 9am-10:30am
- Thursday, January 26, 2012 6pm-7:30pm

Content includes:

1. The four parts of the IEP
2. Transition planning
3. What is a "SMART" IEP?
4. What is (ESY) Extended School Year?
5. What to do if you don't agree with the IEP

There is no cost to attend trainings

Reservation required, space is limited
All trainings are held at Community Advocates' office
Please contact Ashlee Brennan at 269.342.9801 to RSVP

Alternatives to Guardianship Trainings

(These will be consistent throughout the school year on the 4th Monday of the month, except on holidays)

- Monday, January 23, 2012 6-7:30pm
- Monday, February 28, 2011 6-7:30pm

There is no cost to attend trainings

Reservation required, space is limited
All trainings are held at Community Advocates' office
Please contact Ashlee Brennan at 269.342.9801 to RSVP



Kalamazoo County Tax Counseling Initiative



Helping you keep your money Free Tax Preparation and Filing.

Free federal and state tax preparation for individuals and families with household income of up to \$49,000 in 2011. This includes the Michigan State Property Tax Credit. Free electronic filing is also available at all locations. Since 2003, this service has been provided by IRS-certified community volunteers. Beginning January 9th, 2012 call 2-1-1 for information on appointments, tax site locations and required documentation or go online to www.gryphon.org or www.goodwillswmi.org.

Everything My Child Needs to Know About Sexuality But, I Was Afraid to Tell!



Is based on sixteen areas of sexuality, which should be part of every individual's learning on this topic. Basic body parts to abuse and exploitation will be covered. It will be factual, but fun, with many real life stories that illustrate the perils of having too little, or the incorrect information in this area. Examples will be given that help you get ideas and make a plan to meet the needs of children and their families. There will be no off limit topics, since this presentation will be geared toward teaching teens through adulthood. So come ready with your questions and be prepared for open, and frank, and fun discussion.

January 23, 2012

9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Greater Kalamazoo
United Way

709 S. Westnedge Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269) 343-2524

To Register For This Session Visit

www.bridges4kids.org/f2f

or Families May Register by Calling (313) 557-8780

Workshop: \$10 (Includes Meal) • CEUs: \$15

A limited number of scholarships are available for families. Please inquire.

The Michigan Family-to-Family Health Information and Education Center is an approved provider with the Michigan Social Work Continuing Education Collaborative. Approved Provider Number: MICEC-0064. This program has been approved for 5 CE Hours for Social Workers and .5 SBCEU 's by the Office of Professional Preparation and Certification Services.



For more information or to request accommodations call (313) 557-8780



Michigan Developmental
Disabilities Council

For ADA procedures or grievances call MPAS
1-800-288-5923

Thank You

Community Advocates would like to thank the following individuals & businesses for their financial or in-kind contributions to our organization:

Jerry Angeletti
Cathy Ash
Elizabeth Augustins
Beverly Barrone
Russell Bierma
Clifton Pullen
John & Helen Coats
Ruth Collins
Richard & Diana DeVries
Linda Driscoll
Rebecca Hoang
Cynthia Green
Vicki Groll
Ernest and Marilyn Hamilton
Michael & Claudia Hanley

Amy Helmuth
Sherrie Herrick
Ron and Fran Hoard
Rebecca Howe
Jim Jump
Bob & Sue Kiser
Laura Lewis
Sally Lindsay
Mary Mazei
Sarina Mcdougal
Julie Nostrant
Laurie O'Meara
Edward & Ruth Ossewaarde
Richard & Lynn Pattison
Kim Rainey

Sandra Roethler
Lavon & Larry Rolfe
Paul & Julia Rozeboom
Deborah Russell
Deb Shauer
Norma Simmons
Robin Skitt
Dan & Thelma Spencer
Catherine Stevens
Valerie Stroupe
Evelyn Sturkin
June Taft
Mary Van Tuinen
William & Sherry Vigen
Richard & Thelma Walker

Meet Diana Devries

Community Advocates is pleased to introduce our new Board of Directors' Chairperson, Diana Devries. She is a lifelong resident of Kalamazoo and joined the board at Community Advocates in 2006. She has continued to serve as committee chair for the Marketing and Fund Raising committee since 2006.

Diana has an associate degree in Micro Computer Technician (KVCC) and a B.A. in Business Management (UoP). She was previously employed at Bronson Methodist Hospital and most recently worked for United Healthcare. She and her husband have four grown children and they enjoy volunteering as a family at Community Advocates Ribfest. Her hobbies include gardening, knitting & crocheting, stained glass and many other crafts.



Meet Chris Rettich



We are proud to announce that Chris Rettich has joined Community Advocates as our Development Intern through May 2012. He will be working on social events, programming, fundraising, and implementation of the Benevon Model of Fundraising. Chris is a Junior at Western Michigan University, majoring in marketing with minors in Spanish and non-profit leadership. He is from Chesterfield, Michigan, northeast of Detroit. Originally, he started volunteering with Community Advocates as the philanthropy chair for Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity and is very passionate about serving people with developmental disabilities. On campus, Chris serves as Administrative Vice President of the Interfraternity Council, University Pride Chair for the Western Student Association, and is a member of the Non-profit Leadership Student Association.

Please welcome Chris to our team!

P 269.342.9801
F 269.342.4638
www.communityadvocates.org

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Did you know there are over 4,400 individuals in Kalamazoo County with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability?

What is a Developmental Disability?

- Developmental Disabilities: (when applied to an individual who is older than 5 years)
- Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental and physical impairment
 - Manifests before person is 22 years of age
 - Is likely to continue indefinitely
 - Results in functional limitation in 3 or more of the following areas of major life activities:
 - Self-care
 - receptive/expressive language
 - learning
 - mobility
 - self-direction
 - capacity for independent living
 - economic self-sufficiency

How Can You Help?

- \$100** Educator:
\$100 provides a group of 4-6 individuals training on one of the following topics: transition, IEP (special education), alternatives to guardianship
- \$500** Problem Solver:
\$500 helps someone to completely move through the 5 problem solving steps to the best of their abilities
- \$1000** Advocate:
\$1000 allows an advocate to participate in Systems Advocacy which is working to change policies, rules or laws in order to benefit many people utilizing systems that are charged to support individuals with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities and their families.

We ask you to consider joining to advocate for the rights of individuals with I/DD by making a tax deductible donation; simply fill out and return the form below. For more information about how you can partner with Community Advocates, please contact Ashlee Brennan at 269.342.9801 x.200.

Name _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Donation Amount: _____ \$1000 Advocate _____ \$500 Problem Solver _____ \$100 Educator _____ other (Amount: _____)

Donate online via Paypal at www.communityadvocates.org
We appreciate your ongoing support!
Community Advocates is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and is funded by
Greater Kalamazoo United Way.

