



Disability Resource Center
-a Center for Independent Living-
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Disability Resource Center Newsletter



THE QUEEN OF ITAC... LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

Marie Malfatti has worked at Disability Resource Center for over 22 years! She was the first face you saw when entering DRC, and most of the time, the voice on the phone.

Marie started in July 2001 as a seasonal worker in the bookkeeping department and eventually became interim bookkeeper. When a new bookkeeper was hired Marie became the Front Desk Receptionist and ITAC Coordinator.

One of her duties was working with consumers who have hearing loss choose an amplified phone. Marie enjoyed this portion of her job very much because she came in contact with seniors her own age.

In June of 2022, Marie decided to take a leave of absence to spend more time with her husband, Frank. Unfortunately, March 8th 2023 Frank passed. Marie will still help at DRC on a limited basis during big projects. Marie is enjoying spending time with her daughter grandchildren and the occasional vacation.

Marie, we thank you for all of the laughs, cries, wonderful talks and advice in your 22 years with us. We miss seeing you every day at the office, but whenever we have staff events, you will always be first on our guest list.

Tammy Semmler, has been assigned Marie’s duties as Receptionist, and ITAC Coordinator in addition to her job duties as Administrative Assistant. “I am up for the challenge taking on Marie’s job duties, especially as ITAC Coordinator. I have learned from the best and I plan on keeping DRC in 1st place for the distribution of amplified phones.



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***“for every disability you have, you are blessed with more than enough abilities to overcome your challenges”
- Nick Vujicic***

Spring/Summer 2023



OPEN HOUSE & ANNUAL MEETING

DRC's Open House and Annual Meeting was held on Wednesday, May 17th. Approximately 50 people were in attendance.

Light refreshments were served and the DRC staff lead tours of our facility and answered questions pertaining to our Independent Living Services and Peer Support Groups.

During our Annual Meeting Dovile Bliudzius received the Ed Roberts Excellence in Independent Living Award. Our very own Sam "THE" Knight received his 10 years of dedicated service award.

DRC would like to once again congratulate our award recipients !

Keep up the great work and we will see you at the next meeting in 2024!!

"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop!" -confucius

Peer Support Groups

Men's Group-Third Wednesday of the month, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM at DRC. Please bring a lunch. Contact Kevin Huckfeldt at kevin@drcjoliet.org, or Sam Knight at sam@drcjoliet.org. Ages 18+

Woman's Group Biweekly on Thursday's, 3 PM - 4:30 PM at DRC. Contact Julee Opel, julee@drcjoliet.org. Ages 20+

Brain Injury Group: Third Wednesday of the month, 4:30 PM - 6 PM at DRC. Contact Julee Opel at julee@drcjoliet.org for questions.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Group
Second Friday of the month, 3-4 PM at DRC. Contact Delaney Woodall at delaney@drcjoliet.org.

Accessible Will County (AWC)
The first Wednesday of the month from 1 pm-2:30 pm. AWC is a partnership between DRC, disability advocates, persons with disabilities, the City of Joliet businesses, the Joliet Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry, professional trade organizations, media representatives and civic leaders. Contact Sam Knight a sam@drcjoliet.org for more information.

JUDY HEUMANN 1947-2023



Judy was an internationally recognized leader in the disability rights community. She has been instrumental in the development and implementation of legislation, such as Section 504, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which have been advancing the inclusion of disabled people in the US and around the world and fighting to end discrimination against all those with disabilities.

Judy was such an inspiration to everyone especially the disability community and she will be greatly missed. To learn more about Judy and her work please visit <https://judithheumann.com>.

Thank you for all that you have done Judy! We will try and make you proud!



“Teaching Life Skills & Empowering Students”

FAST TRACK & S.K.I.L.L.S.PROGRAMS

Our Fast Track & S.K.I.L.L.S. Programs have grown!! From May 19th, 2022 to April 30th 2023 we had over one thousand four hundred and fifty nine (1,459) enrolled consumers . Students learned skills such as Pre-Employment Transition Services, Self Advocacy, Post Secondary Education, Work Place Readiness, Work Based Learning, and Job Exploration Counseling. The Fast Track Program is taught in a class room environment and will compliment your child's school curriculum.

If you have not turned in your Fast Track Service Agreement paperwork for the 2023-2024 school year or have enrolled in one of our S.K.I.L.L.S. program.....don't delay. Our teachers have some great new resource materials for the upcoming school year! We don't want you to miss out on a single session.

JJC COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The JJC Community Connections program has had a year! DRC added another class and currently have 28 students enrolled. Community Connections is located on JJC's main campus and allows students to obtain college experience while learning Independent Living Skills. This year our students focused on learning about employment which will help them build job skills. The course also offered education on self-advocacy and self-awareness, while also learning teamwork, leadership, and communication skills.

The Community Connections program also worked with Lewis University Nursing students, Guardian Angel, JJC Disability Services, Crown Staffing Company, Workforce Development, and Consuelo Puente from Lo que Puede Venir. These local agencies educated our students on topics such as healthy eating, healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, interview skills, ADA rights, and more.

The staff at DRC is currently working on providing internship/volunteer opportunities for the students in the program through local community businesses and non-profits.

If you would like more information on Community Connections, please call Kindall Carmouche' at 815-729-0162 or at kindall@drcjoliet.org.

ITAC (ILLINOIS TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS CORP)



From May 19, 2022 to May 30th, 2023 DRC had **One Hundred Forty One (141) people** obtain a free amplified phone.

What does this mean? DRC has helped more Illinois residents with hearing loss obtain free amplified telephones, cell phones, and answering machines than any other selection center in the state. Out of the 28 selection centers, **DRC is still in 1st place!**

The ITAC program provides FREE amplified telephones and other equipment to all allow Illinois residents with qualified hearing loss regain the ability to hear on the phone. DRC is an official “selection center” for ITAC. Consumers can call to make an appointment to test different types of amplified phone equipment to find the one that best suits their needs.

Call Tammy at 815-729-0162, visit **itactty.org** for more information on the amplified phones and the equipment available, or to find a testing center near you!



SUCCESS STORIES

On March 23, the Plainfield Transition Students (P-Step) testified at the Will County Board Meeting. The Will County Board Votes to Fund Public Transportation (Dial a-Ride) . The students spoke about the need for better Public Transportation Services in Will County, specifically for people with disabilities. These students have been taught to use Public Transportation and can use it independently for everything from getting to and from work, the mall and the movie theatre. The problems they face with Public Transportation in Will County is the limited or non-existing amount of services that are offered in our county.



Six of these students spoke in front of a room of over 200 people including Elected Officials about the need for better Public Transportation in our area. These students put faces to their transportation issues. They spoke about how the lack of service affect their social lives. One young lady said “I am a social butterfly and I want to spread my wings independently”.

Those of us in attendance were all proud to be in the audience as they practiced their individual and systemic advocacy on the issue of Transportation. This was just part of their journey in being voices on this problem. They are the future and they know that their voices can bring about change.



K. spent time in the Life Skills Center kitchen to work on cooking skills! K. learned how to cook pancakes independently with support from Independent Living Advocate, Delaney. K. and Delaney will continue to use the life skills center to practice cooking and to work on independent living skills!"

WAYS TO GIVE

Your support allows us to continue providing the core services that are so important in helping people with disabilities achieve their goals. And the truth is, we ALL benefit when everyone has a chance to fulfill their potential. Thank you for being a part of the solution that helps motivate people with disabilities of all ages fulfill their goals. We couldn't do it without you.

Disability Resource Center and our consumers rely on many sources for funding but many of those funds are earmarked only for specific uses. Your donations help fund what it takes to allow us to continue serving people with disabilities.

If you wish to donate to DRC, you can do so through our yearly **Annual Appeal, or by sending monetary donations to DRC at 77 N. Infantry Drive, Joliet, IL 60435.**

We can't say it enough – **THANK YOU! Thank you for your donations and supporting our mission.**



“So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable.” -Christopher Reeve

HIGHLIGHTS (MAY 19, 2022 - APRIL 30, 2023)

Advocacy: Staff assisted Three Hundred and Fifteen (315) consumers with advocacy related issues.

Assistive Technology for Children's Program: Forty Two (42) young consumers (0-23) with disabilities received an assistive technology device that helped them to participate more fully in their lives.

Community Reintegration Program: DRC had Six (6) successful move outs to date.

Fast Track/S.K.I.L.L.S.: One Thousand Four Hundred and Fifty Nine (1,459) students participated in our Fast Track/S.K.I.L.L.S. program.

Housing Vouchers: DRC obtained Twenty-Five (25) housing vouchers which helped Seventy Three (73) people and their families get placed into housing.

Peer Counseling: One Hundred Forty Six (146) consumers participated in one or more of our Seven (7) peer support groups:

Personal Assistant Training: Over Fifty Four (54) individuals were recruited, trained, and put on the P.A. availability list for consumers.



Spring/Summer 2023

DRC STAFF & BOARD

Mission Statement:

As people with disabilities and their advocates, Disability Resource Center strives for equality and empowerment of persons with disabilities in the Will and Grundy areas.

Who We Are

Disability Resource Center informs persons with disabilities of their rights, educate them about their responsibilities, provide support services, promote advocacy, and raise community awareness about disability issues. Disability Resource Center is a cross-disability, community-based non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that operates solely on grants and contributions. We welcome and appreciate ongoing support from businesses, foundations, individuals and organizations.

Staff:

- Missy Martin
Executive Director
- Tammy Semmler
*Administrative Assistant
ITAC Coordinator*
- Maureen Kelly
Personal Assistant Coordinator
- Sam Knight
Independent Living Advocate
- Julee Opel
Independent Living Advocate
- Kindall Carmouche'
Program Manager
- Kevin Huckfeldt
Independent Living Advocate
- Delaney Woodall
*Independent Living Advocate
Deaf Services Coordinator*

Board of Directors 2022-23

- Susan Jarosinski
President
- Ivan Bew
Vice President
- Chris Boyk
Secretary
- Jennifer Koff
Treasurer
- Jenny Carey
Delegate at Large
- Zachary Fleming
Past President
- Connie J. Henley
Rhonda Price
Ericka Williams
Riley Spreadbury
Shannon Tipton
Directors

DRC is always looking for new board members. If you are interested in becoming a board member, contact Missy Martin, Executive Director at missy@drjoliet.org.

If at any time you have suggestions for classes, peer support groups, or informational sessions please contact us.

We would love to hear your ideas!

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Disability Resource Center Newsletter Inside

DRC will be closed:

**September 4th, November 11th, November 23rd & 24th,
December 22, 2023-January 3, 2024**

