



Fall | Winter Newsletter 2024



*Disability
Resource
Center*

A Center for Independent Living

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DRC Welcomes Amy, Alicia, and Julie!

We are delighted to welcome Amy Hahn our new Personal Assistant Coordinator, Alicia Purnell, our new Community Integration Transition Coordinator and Home Modification Point Person, and Julie Orasco, our new Pathways Program Coordinator.

We're thrilled to have you join us at Disability Resource Center, where your skills and dedication to inclusivity and empowerment perfectly complement our mission. Together, we'll continue fostering an environment where individuals with disabilities are empowered to reach their full potential. We're excited for the road ahead and look forward to all that we'll accomplish together. Welcome aboard!



Amy Hahn

Personal Assistant Coordinator

Amy, a southern Illinois native, earned a BS in Social Work from SIU-Edwardsville after a career in cosmetology. She spent 25 years as a Juvenile Probation Officer, working with youth, including those with disabilities. Now, as the Personal Assistant Coordinator at DRC, she is excited to support individuals with disabilities and their assistants. In her free time, she fosters cats, enjoys bike riding, and spending time with family. Amy is passionate about advocacy and proud to be part of DRC.



Alicia Purnell

Community Integration Transition Coordinator and Home Modification Point Person

Alicia helps individuals transition from nursing facilities back to community living and ensures home modifications support safe, independent living. Passionate about helping people with disabilities, she is dedicated to meeting their independent living needs. In her free time, Alicia enjoys crafting, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.



Julie Orasco

Pathways Program Coordinator

Julie, a lifelong area resident, is passionate about helping others reach their full potential. She holds a Bachelor's in Social Work from Valparaiso University and a Master's from Aurora University, with nine years of experience as a school social worker. Now, as the Full-Time Pathways Coordinator at the Disability Resource Center, she is excited for this new chapter. In her free time, she enjoys diamond painting, crafting, and spending time with family.

Peer Social Groups

Men's Group: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 11:30-1:30pm.
Contact Kevin Huckfeldt at kevin@drcjoliet.org.

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

Brain Injury Group: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 4:30-6pm at DRC. Contact Julee Opel, julee@drcjoliet.org for questions.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Group: 2nd Monday of the month, 1-2:30pm at DRC. Contact Riley Spreadbury, riley@drcjoliet.org for more information.

Game Night: 2nd Friday of the month from 3-5pm, contact Kindall Carmouché, kindall@drcjoliet.org for more information. (Check DRC Happenings Calendar for location details).

Accessible Will County (AWC): The 1st Wednesday of the month from 1 pm-2:30pm. Contact Sam Knight, sam@drcjoliet.org, (779)707-8736 for more information.

Introducing Adult Autism Group

The Disability Resource Center is excited to announce a new **Adult Autism Group for Ages 18+.**

This group meets biweekly with the purpose of providing social support led by peers, learning new skills, discussing executive function and problem-solving life experiences, listening to professional speakers, participating in games and activities, and much more! If you are 18 or older and are interested in participating or would like more information, please reach out to **Kevin Huckfeldt, kevin@drcjoliet.org.**

Fast Track & S.K.I.L.L.S.

Our Fast Track and S.K.I.L.L.S. Programs are thriving, providing essential training for consumers. **Fast Track** is a free, in-school program designed for students with disabilities (ages 14-21) who are not yet part of the Department of Rehabilitation Services vocational rehabilitation program. Taught by our Independent Living Advocates, this program complements school curriculum and covers key skills like Self-Advocacy, Job Exploration, Post-Secondary Education, Workplace Readiness, and Work-Based Learning.

The **S.K.I.L.L.S. Program** empowers individuals with disabilities to live more independently by offering a wide range of training, from financial education to communication skills, legislative internships, and household management. This program is available upon request in both group and individual settings.

Community Connections Program

In partnership with Joliet Junior College and Lewis University, the Community Connections Program offers students with disabilities (ages 18-22) who are not enrolled in a Transition Program the opportunity to gain a valuable on-campus experience. This free, non-accredited course focuses on Independent Living Skills such as Self-Advocacy, Work Readiness, Job Exploration, and Work-Based Learning.

Participants learn essential skills for living and working independently, including employment strategies, building healthy relationships, leadership, teamwork, and communication. Registered students receive a student ID and email address and have access to clubs, sports, and events open to enrolled students.

For more information, contact **Kindall Carmouché** at (815) 729-0162 or **kindall@drcjoliet.org**

Personal Assistant Program

The Disability Resource Center offers two services through our Personal Assistant Program:

- 1. Orientation for Personal Assistants:** Monthly sessions cover topics like disability awareness, ethics, and payment methods for those interested in becoming personal assistants.
- 2. Management Training for People with Disabilities:** We provide guidance on how to interview, hire, manage, and, if necessary, terminate a personal assistant. This service is available to individuals at risk of entering a nursing home or facing challenges with their current assistants.

For more information or to apply, contact Amy Hahn, amy@drcjoliet.org

Assistive Technology (AT)

The Disability Resource Center offers up to \$600 for the purchase of one assistive technology device for children with disabilities (ages 0-23). Funds are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. A letter from a physician or therapist explaining the device's benefits is required.


For more information or to apply, contact Julee Opel, julie@drcjoliet.org or Kevin Huckfeldt, kevin@drcjoliet.org.





Make Your Voice Heard in the Upcoming Presidential Primary!

As we approach the primary elections, it's important to ensure that every voice is heard, including yours. Here's what you need to know to vote in the upcoming election:

- 1. Accessible Voting Options:** There are several options available to help you vote with ease. Many polling places offer accessible voting equipment, including machines designed for those with mobility, vision, or hearing impairments. Be sure to check your local polling location to confirm these options are available.
 - 2. Vote by Mail:** If getting to the polls is difficult, consider voting by mail. Illinois offers accessible vote-by-mail options for people with disabilities. You can request your ballot online or through your local election authority. This allows you to vote from the comfort of your home.
 - 3. Curbside Voting:** If you prefer voting in person but cannot leave your vehicle, many polling places offer curbside voting. A poll worker will bring the ballot to you, making the process more convenient.
 - 4. Assistance at the Polls:** If you require help marking your ballot, you are allowed to bring someone to assist you. Alternatively, polling staff are available to provide assistance.
 - 5. Register to Vote:** If you are not yet registered, it's never too late! You can register online or in person at your local election office. Same-day registration is also available on election day at many polling sites in Illinois, but it's best to confirm this in advance.
 - 6. Find Your Polling Place:** Make sure to verify the location of your polling place, as it may have changed. Visit the Illinois State Board of Elections website or contact your local election authority to find the most accessible voting location for you.
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For any questions or further assistance, feel free to reach out to the Disability Resource Center. We're here to help make sure you can exercise your right to vote without barriers!

Voter Registration Deadlines

Register by mail: Must be postmarked by Tuesday, October 8, 2024

Online registration: Sunday, October 20, 2024

In person registration: **ELECTION DAY**, Tuesday, November 5, 2024



This year marks the 34th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a pivotal piece of legislation that has improved accessibility and protections for millions of Americans. As we reflect on this milestone, it is essential to continue advocating for greater inclusion, particularly in areas where accessibility gaps remain.

In light of this, U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Bob Casey (D-PA) have reintroduced the Exercise and Fitness for All Act of 2024. This significant legislation seeks to make gyms and fitness facilities across the country more accessible for individuals with disabilities. The Act would allow the U.S. Access Board to establish new guidelines that require fitness centers to provide accessible exercise equipment, inclusive fitness classes, and training services. The current accessibility standards for fitness facilities, which have not been updated since 2010, often fall short of ensuring equitable access for people with disabilities.

For individuals with disabilities, access to fitness is not just about staying healthy—it can also be a critical factor in living an independent life. Unfortunately, many fitness facilities today do not meet even basic accessibility standards. With the Exercise and Fitness for All Act, the goal is to ensure that every person, regardless of physical ability, can use fitness equipment and participate fully in physical activities.

As we honor the legacy of the ADA, we remain committed to advocating for stronger accessibility measures across all areas of life. Let us continue to work toward a future where inclusion and independence are guaranteed for everyone.

Consumer Success Stories

B.R.'s journey with Centers for Independent Living began about a decade ago when she found herself in a nursing home, eager to live independently. She reached out to her local CIL, and before long, she was settling into her own apartment.

After moving to Will County, B. connected with the Disability Resource Center, receiving support in finding and hiring personal assistants. Most recently, DRC provided her with a brand-new lift chair after her previous one—essential to her mobility—broke down. The chair, which functions like a recliner but helps the user stand, was vital for B., as it was the only seat she could safely use outside of her wheelchair and also served as her bed.

Thanks to Independent Living Advocate, Riley Spreadbury's quick action, B. now enjoys a new lift chair that has restored her independence, and she is deeply grateful for their assistance. Reflecting on her experiences, B. shared that self-advocacy and expressing her needs led her to discover Centers for Independent Living and the essential work we do.

TALLERES DE TRANSICIÓN



¿Eres padre de un joven adulto y buscas orientación para planificar su futuro? Únase a nosotros para una serie de talleres ofrecidos **exclusivamente en español.**

Obtendrás información valiosa sobre los servicios, recursos y sistemas de apoyo disponibles para tu joven adulto. Cada presentación incluirá una sesión de preguntas y respuestas, brindándote la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y obtener la información que necesitas.

Para inscribirse en una o todas las capacitaciones, por favor envíe un mensaje de texto a María Castillo al **708-733-3110.**

DECISIONES HECHAS CON APOYO

SABADO 26 DE OCTUBRE DE 2024
10 AM -12 PM

COMPRENDER LOS BENEFICIOS DEL SEGURO SOCIAL

SABADO 16 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2024
10 AM -12 PM

PUNS: PRIORIZACIÓN DE LA URGENCIA DE NECESIDADES DE SERVICIOS

SABADO 15 DE FEBRERO DE 2025
10 AM -12 PM

EMPLEO

SABADO 15 DE MARZO DE 2025 10 AM -12 PM

PLANIFICACIÓN FINANCIERA

SABADO 12 DE ABRIL DE 2025
10 AM-12 PM



2024-2025 Board of Directors

Susan Jarosinski, President
Ivan Bew, Vice President
Chris Boyk, Secretary
Jennifer Koff, Treasurer
Jenny Carey, Delegate-at-Large
Zachary Flaming, Past President
Kristine Czaplicki, Director
Connie Henley, Director
Rhonda Price, Director
Shannon Tipton, Director
Ericka Williams, Director

Business Office

Fran Smego, Chief Financial Officer
Emilee Shouldice, Bookkeeper

Staff Members

Missy Martin, Executive Director
Kindall Carmouché, Program Manager
Amy Hahn, Personal Assistant Coordinator
Alicia Pernell, Community Integration Transition
Coordinator/Home Modification Point Person
Kevin Huckfeldt, Independent Living Advocate
Sam Knight, Independent Living Advocate
Julee Opel, Independent Living Advocate
Riley Spreadbury, Independent Living Advocate
Sarah Sinner, Pathways for Partnership Manager
Julie Orasco, Pathways Coordinator
Brianna Blake, Administrative Assistant/ITAC
Coordinator
Miguel Vargas, Administrative Intern

DRC is always looking for new board members. If you're interested in becoming a board member, contact Missy Martin, missy@drcjoliet.org

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, educates them about their responsibilities, provides support services, promotes advocacy, and raises 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 the ongoing support from businesses, foundations, individuals, and organizations.



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