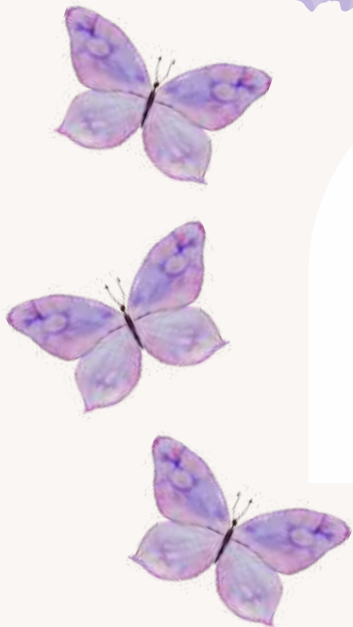


SPRING | SUMMER 2024



77 N. 129th Infantry Drive
Joliet, IL 60435
Voice: (815) 729-0162
VRS: (815)768-2582
TTY: (815) 729-2085
www.drcjoliet.org

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER NEWSLETTER

Inside This Issue

Welcoming New Staff.....	2
Saying Goodbye.....	3
Annual Meeting.....	3
Peer Social Groups.....	3
Fast Track.....	4
Lewis University.....	4
ITAC.....	5
Success Stories.....	5
Ways To Give.....	6
Highlights.....	6
DRC Staff and Board.....	8

DRC Welcomes Viviana, Miguel, and Brianna!

We are delighted to welcome to Viviana Amaya our new Personal Assistant Coordinator, Miguel Vargas, our new Administrative Intern, and Brianna Blake, our new ITAC Coordinator and Administrative Assistant.

Your talents and shared commitment to inclusivity and empowerment align perfectly with our mission here at Disability Resource Center. Together we will continue to create a supportive environment where individuals with disabilities can thrive and achieve their fullest potential. We are excited to embark on this journey with you. Welcome to the team!



Viviana Amaya
Personal Assistant
Coordinator

Viviana has 17 years of customer service experience and has worked in Home Health care for over 2 years. Viviana managed an office that helped seniors and consumers with disabilities obtain assistance from caregivers and homemakers. She cared for her grandmother before she passed away-“the importance of helping your loved ones and knowing there are more consumers out here without the help of family or friends. Being able to do the small things for those consumers brings me great joy.” Viviana enjoys spending time with her nieces and nephews. Viviana is a people person with a great sense of humor who enjoys helping others. In her free time, she enjoys catching up on the latest series, watching the Chicago Bulls, or just visiting friends and family.



Miguel Vargas
Administrative Intern

Miguel is our new Administration Assistant Intern. Miguel energetically greets consumers who come into DRC. He directs calls to the appropriate staff members based on consumer needs. Miguel is from the Joliet area and has a passion for helping the people in his community. He often volunteers at local food drives. Miguel is compassionate about the struggles other people may be facing. He always makes sure to be a listening ear to those in need. In his spare time, he enjoys biking, walking, video gaming, and listening to music.



Brianna Blake
ITAC Coordinator &
Administrative Assistant

Brianna is a dedicated professional with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia College Chicago. Commencing her career as a Senior Administrative Assistant and Music Teacher, she has honed her skills in managing diverse tasks and fostering an inclusive learning environment for students ranging from ages 18 to 60, including those with disabilities. With a rich background in marketing, events, and hospitality, Brianna is poised to leverage her multifaceted expertise to empower and advocate for the Disability Resource Center - Joliet and its constituents.

"We rise to great heights by a winding staircase of small steps." ~ Francis Bacon



farewell!

Saying Goodbye is Never Easy

DRC bids farewell to three cherished members of our team: Maureen Kelly, Personal Assistant Coordinator of 5 years, Tammy Semmler, Administrative Assistant of 4 years, and Delaney Woodall, Independent Living Advocate, Fast Track Coordinator, and Deaf Services Coordinator of 4 years. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors!

Open House & Annual Meeting

DRC's Open House and Annual Meeting was held on Wednesday, May 15th, 2024. Approximately 30 people were in attendance. Our staff lead tours of our facility and answered questions regarding our Independent Living Services and Peer Social Groups. DRC would once again like to congratulate our award recipients:

Miguel Vargas, Ed Roberts Excellence in Independent Living Award

Kindall Carmouché, Five Years of Dedicated Service Award

Maureen Kelly, Five Years of Dedicated Service Award

Julee Opel, Five Years of Dedicated Service Award

Peer Social Groups

Men's Group: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 11:30-1:30pm. Contact Kevin Huckfeldt at kevin@drcjoliet.org, or Sam Knight at sam@drcjoliet.org. Ages 18+.

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

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

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Group: 2nd Friday of the month, 3-4 PM at DRC. Contact Riley Spreadbury, riley@drcjoliet.org for more information.

Game Night: 2nd Friday of the month, 3-5pm, contact Sarah Sinner, sarah@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 for more information.



Teaching Life Skills and Empowering Students

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

Our Fast Track & S.K.I.L.L.S. Programs are flourishing. From July 1, 2023 to April 15, 2024, DRC taught over 700 individual services combined. Consumers 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 classroom environment and will compliment your child's school curriculum.

"Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start."

~ Nido Qubein

Lewis University 

The Community Connections Program is for students with disabilities 18-22 years of age that aren't enrolled in a Transition Program through their local school district. This is a free and non-accredited course that allows students to obtain an on-campus college experience. Consumers learn Independent Living Skills such as Self-Advocacy, Work Readiness Training, Job Exploration, and Work Based Learning Skills.

Lessons focus on providing students with information for living and working independently within the community. Topics include obtaining and maintaining employment, building healthy relationships, teamwork, leadership, and communication.

Participants will be registered as Lewis students and are issued an ID and email address. Students can also participate in all clubs, sports, and events open to enrolled students.

Please contact Kindall Carmouché at (815) 729-0162 or via email at kindall@drcjoliet.org for more information.



From July 1, 2023 to April 15, 2024, **107 amplified phones or devices** were distributed by our office to consumers with hearing loss.

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. We are the # 1 distributor of 47 selection centers in Illinois!

ITAC provides FREE amplified telephones and other equipment to all qualifying Illinois residents with hearing loss regain telephone usage. DRC is an official ITAC selection center where consumers can schedule an appointment to test different equipment to find the best amplified phone for their needs.

Call (815) 729-0162, or visit itactty.org for equipment information and to find a testing center near you!

"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." ~ Confucius

Success Stories

Joliet Junior College Community Connections Program is designed to assist individuals with disabilities 18-22 years old with learning Independent Living Skills. The program is designed to assist students in preparing for life after high school. Lesson focus on advocacy, housing, banking/budgeting, healthy eating, community safety, medication management, and more. Students receives support from an Independent Living Advocate to help plan their futures based on their dreams and goals. One of our current students "D.R." expressed interest in renting an apartment to live on her own. She did not think her dream could come true due to her income. DRC Independent Living Advocates were able to assure D.R. that her dream was attainable. D.R. was placed on an affordable housing database and was recently selected for a brand new unit with income based rent. D.R. is very excited about moving into her first place.

Ways To Give

Your support allows us to continue providing core services that are so important in helping our disabled community achieve their goals. Everyone benefits when all of us have a chance to fulfill our 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 for specific usage. Your donations allow us to continue serving people with disabilities.

If you wish to donate to DRC, you can do so through our **Annual Appeal**, or by sending monetary donations to Disability Resource Center at 77 N. 129th Infantry Dr., Joliet, IL 60435.

Thank you for your donations and supporting our mission!

Highlights from July 1, 2023 to April 15, 2024

Advocacy:

Staff assisted 380 consumers with Advocacy related issues.

Information and Referral:

Staff assisted 1866 people with information and referral inquiries.

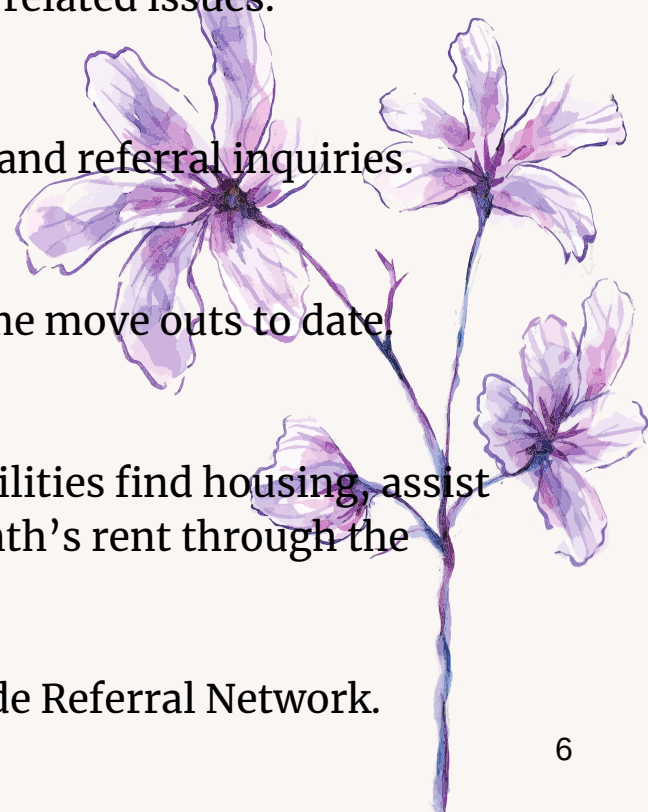
Transition Services:

The Center has had 2 successful nursing home move outs to date.

Housing:

146 individual services for people with disabilities find housing, assist with utilities, security deposit, and first month's rent through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

293 individuals were referred to the Statewide Referral Network.



Highlights from July 1, 2023 to April 15, 2024

Assistive Technology for Children Program:

38 consumers (0-23 years old) with disabilities received an assistive technology device that helped them to participate more fully in their lives.

Fast Track:

Counseling on Post-Secondary Education 98

Introduction to Self-Advocacy 98

Job Exploration Counseling 103

Work-Based Learning Experiences 49

Workplace Readiness Training 103



Peer Counseling:

DRC has 7 support groups.

The following groups had 364 individual services combined -

Deaf/HOH Social Group 50

Women's Group 53

Men's Group 66

Spanish Parent Support Group 48

Game Night 75

Scrapbooking 21

Brain Injury Social Group 51

Personal Assistant Training:

33 individuals were recruited, trained, and put on the P.A. List.

"I don't know what lies around the bend, but I'm going to believe that the best does." ~ L. M. Montgomery

2023-2024 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

Staff Members

Missy Martin, Executive Director
Fran Smego, Chief Financial Officer
Emilee Shouldice, Bookkeeper
Kindall Carmouché, Program Manager and
Community Integration Transition Coordinator
Viviana Amaya, Personal Assistant Coordinator
Sam Knight, Independent Living Advocate
Julee Opel, Independent Living Advocate
Kevin Huckfeldt, Independent Living Advocate
Riley Spreadbury, Independent Living Advocate
Sarah Sinner, Independent Living Advocate
Marie Malfatti, Clerical/ITAC 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.





*Disability
Resource
Center*

A Center for Independent Living

Disability Resource Center

77 N. 129th Infantry Drive
Joliet, IL 60435

Voice: (815) 729-0162

VRS: (815)768-2582

TTY: (815) 729-2085

www.drcjoliet.org

