First Place - Again!

Thanks to the tireless dedication of Marie Malfatti, DRC’s ITAC Coordinator, and the entire DRC team Disability Resource Center has come in first place for ITAC distribution in 2018 – for the entire state of Illinois!

That means that 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. The ITAC (Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation) program provides free amplified telephones and other equipment to 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 visit our center and test different types of amplified phone equipment to find the one best for them.

There are 28 ITAC selection centers in Illinois, including highly populated Chicago, Springfield and Aurora. For 2018, our Joliet-based selection center distributed almost 300 amplified devices and outpaced all the other centers by over 10 percent! DRC also came in first place in 2016 and third place overall in 2017. A recognition award will be presented to DRC at the annual ITAC conference in Springfield in May, 2019. Congratulations to Marie and the team, and a big thank you to Dr. Karen Pastell of Prairieland Audiology for generously donating her time and talents to our efforts, and finally THANK YOU to everyone for supporting DRC!

OTHER THINGS GOING ON:

- My Empowerment Story... pg 2
- "For Now, We Wait" ... pg 3
- S.K.I.L.L.S. News ... pg 4
- Annual Board Meeting ... pg 4
- Spring Fundraiser ... pg 5
- HIGHLIGHTS... pg 5
- Disability Awareness Cinema ... pg 6
- Ongoing Activities ... pg 6
- Holiday Cheer! ... pg 7
- Annual Transition Conference ... pg 7
If it wasn't for Disability Resource Center, I don't know what my life would be like today. I have epilepsy and partial paralysis, and this unique organization has helped me in more ways than you can imagine.

Six years ago, it was suggested to me to visit Disability Resource Center (at that time it was called Will-Grundy Center for Independent Living), but I knew next to nothing about it. I always thought it was a place that did strictly counseling. Boy was I wrong! When I met the staff, I was able to sit down and talk to them and let them know what had been going on in my life. Everyone was so supportive and understanding! Right then I knew it was a place for me. It felt comfortable. It felt like home.

Six years seems like an eternity now! At the Center I have learned things that I never thought possible. The Center offers many opportunities for volunteers like me. These include secretarial help, fundraising and outreach. I have learned many business skills and I have learned how to dress more professionally.

The Center offers a variety of programs that are focused on teaching people with disabilities the various skills they want to learn. One of these programs is the Legislative Internship. In this program, consumers learn how local, state and federal government works. I was part of an internship group that went to Springfield to meet with legislators to discuss important issues. The visits are work. Once we had to walk several blocks, but the effort was worth the effort. The Center staff educated us on what issues were important and how to effectively advocate with legislators.

The Center is very fortunate to have the support of a group of dedicated individuals who make up its Board of Directors. When I learned that the board was looking for more members, I knew I wanted to apply. I was interviewed and have served on the board for more than three years now. The Center also teaches people with disabilities to become leaders. I'm being mentored to be a leader. We are focusing on issues that are very important to people with disabilities. Right now, our three areas are housing, transportation, and general accessibility. I am working with other people who have disabilities to encourage them to get involved with these exciting projects. When enough people unite for a common cause, wonderful changes can come about!

Nowadays I volunteer almost every day at the Center, answering phones, helping with mailings, writing letters, and so much more. I won the "Volunteer of the Year" Award twice, once in 2009 and again in 2017, as well as the "Outstanding Service" Award in 2011. I've been serving on the Board of Directors since 2016, and I am also on the Development Committee. Disability Resource Center has enriched my life more than I could have imagined! I encourage people with disabilities and others to visit us. You will be surprised at what you learn.
"For Now, We Wait"

Persons with Disabilities Desperate for In-Home Care Left Waiting For Nearly A Year

by Tabitha Boshears,
DRC Personal Assistant Coordinator/
Independent Living Advocate

Clarence F. unexpectedly had a stroke at the age of 51. Clarence and his wife, Kim, submitted his application for Home Services in May of 2018. In June 2018, extremely distraught and worried about Clarence, Kim called me.

Clarence had endured months of medical treatment, rehab, and therapy to be able to return home. None of the medical professionals or social workers in the handful of treatment centers along the way ever mentioned the in-home care available to them. Coming home was a dream come true for the couple. Unfortunately, without the proper supports in place, their dream mutated into a nightmare.

Kim was not physically or emotionally prepared for the challenges caring for Clarence at home presented. The time she needed to take off work was affecting her job performance and thus their ability to thrive. The progress her husband had painstakingly made slowly faded. Clarence and Kim were in every way possible desperate for help.

I advocated for Clarence’s case in our local Department of Rehabilitation. I pleaded for his Home Services Program application to be escalated. I contacted supervisors of supervisors. I reached out to Springfield. I communicated with other Centers for Independent Living in Illinois only to hear stories just like this. I talked to Kim several times a week only to tell her I was trying my best and that it was out of my hands. I listened to her weep, felt her heartbreak and her fear for her Clarence, and did everything I could possibly do.

After months of talking regularly, Kim and I slowly lost contact. We both felt helpless and our calls were almost scripted, “Hear anything?”, “No, you?”, “No.” Maybe next week, maybe next month, until it was an entirely new year.

Finally, in February 2019, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) has scheduled Clarence’s interview and evaluation. For now, we continue to wait. Wait for staffing, wait for funding, wait for people with disabilities to become a priority.

Institutional Diversion is part of the transition services Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are contracted to provide. However, without the staff, the funding, or the partnerships with our DRS offices, CILs fail. Not only do we fail, we don't even have the opportunity to succeed.

At DRC, Tabitha trains people with disabilities on how to interview, hire, train, and pay their personal assistant; provides orientation to people who want to become personal assistants, and provides support to people with disabilities through our five core services: Advocacy, Information and Referral, Peer Support, Independent Living Training, and Transition. For more information, feel free to contact her at (815) 729-0162 or by email at tabitha@drcjoliet.org.

"UNFORTUNATELY, WITHOUT THE PROPER SUPPORTS IN PLACE, THEIR DREAM MUTATED INTO A NIGHTMARE."
On November 29, Independent Living Advocates Sam Knight and Katy Hoyer and seven SKILLS students went to Springfield to speak with legislators about the Affordable Health Care Act and how it affects people with pre-existing conditions. They met with the aides of Representatives Natalie Manley, Mark Batinick, Larry Walsh Jr., John Connor, David Welter, and Margo McDermed. They also discussed protecting the safety of undocumented individuals who have been assaulted and are cooperating with law enforcement to help bring the violators to justice; they can be granted a temporary visa under these circumstances.

In our S.K.I.L.L.S. classes, we’ve been focusing on disability awareness and the importance of INTERdependence, that everyone has something to give one another and we all need each other regardless of ability or disability: social connectedness, a sense of purpose, helping our fellow citizen, the list goes on. To help illustrate these concepts, the students have been watching and discussing the documentary, ”Darius Goes West” during class time. The film is about Darius Weems, a teenager who develops a new strategy to spread awareness of his illness, Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, among a younger generation, and not just to the ”Jerry Lewis Telethon” crowd. He recruited eleven able-bodied friends to accompany him on a cross-country trip and fulfill his mission. Along the way, Darius and his friends learned how much they needed one another, in both expected and unexpected ways.

COMING UP in S.K.I.L.L.S.:
MARCH: Self-Advocacy;
APRIL: Personal Relationships, Legislative Advocacy;
MAY: Wrapping Up the Year; Going Forward
(All information subject to change.)

Annual Board Meeting - APRIL 17, 2019

Join us at our
Annual Board Meeting
Wednesday, April 17, 5 pm to 7 pm
Meeting to start at 5:30 pm at
Disability Resource Center
77 N. 129th Infantry Drive Joliet, IL 60435
Light hors d’oeuvres and refreshments will be served
Please R.S.V.P. by April 12 - Thank you!
Call (815) 729-0162 (voice), (815) 768-2582 (VRS) or email cathie@drcjoliet.org

Would YOU like to serve on our Board of Directors? DRC is looking for new board members! Contact Missy Martin for more information at missy@drcjoliet.org or call (815) 729-0162.
FUNDRAISER: Springtime "Sip & Paint"

Friday, March 22nd - 6 pm to 9 pm
at Disability Resource Center

Join us for some springtime fun and take home a colorful picture that YOU paint! No experience necessary! The friendly instructors from “So Much Fun Paint & Sip” of Plainfield will walk you, step-by-step, through the process of painting a springtime flower picture. We'll all be creating the same basic painting (see image of flowers, left), but everyone is encouraged to explore their creativity and make it your own; different colored paints will be available. At the end of the night, everyone will have a unique piece of art to take home.

Tickets are $55 each and include instruction, all painting supplies and light hors d’oeuvres. Beverages will be available as well. Meet & greet starts at 6pm; painting starts at 7pm.

**Seats are very LIMITED - purchase tickets by Friday, March 15 to guarantee a seat**
For TICKETS call (815) 729-0162 or visit www.drcjoliet.org/events

HIGHLIGHTS!

Here are some highlights of our activities these past few months that YOUR support helped make a reality. THANK YOU!

- **Advocacy** - On January 23rd, Senator Pat McGuire and State Representative John Connor came to our office to meet the staff, tour the facility and learn about the services DRC offers to the community.

- **P.A. Orientation & Training** - Outreach efforts for recruiting and training Personal Assistants are ongoing throughout the community including Tinley Park, Minooka, Manhattan, Braidwood, Wilmington, Channahon and at Joliet Junior College.

- **Move-Outs** - Enrique, who was diagnosed with renal failure and vision loss, had an amputation after an injury in 2017 and had been living in a nursing home ever since. Thanks to the Community Reintegration Program at DRC, he was able to move into his own apartment in 2018; thanks to Enrique’s hard work and determination, he was able to walk out of the nursing home, just as he had envisioned! DRC helped him to obtain personal assistant support at home and he has been living independently ever since. His ultimate goal: “A house, a dog and a picket fence."

- **Assistive Technology for Children** - R.H., a 13-year old boy from Joliet, received an iPad with specialized apps at no cost to him or his family. Now a jubilant R.H. is able to easily communicate his wants and needs AND his personality to his schoolmates, family and friends by using the "TouchChat" app. The first thing R.H. communicated: that he was hungry and wanted pudding! This was a huge step for R.H. and one of many more to come.
Disability Awareness Cinema

Are you looking to learn more about people with disabilities and the challenges and triumphs they face? Katy Hoyer, DRC Independent Living Advocate, recently recommended a series of videos and films that fit the bill. Enter these titles in your favorite search engine to find the best way to view them; some may even be available for free online. Grab some popcorn and get ready to expand your disability awareness!

Darius Goes West
Darius Weems, a 15-year old young man with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, travels the country to shed light on his disability and discovers obstacles, both expected and unexpected. Accompanying him are 11 of his able-bodied friends, and together with Darius their adventure reveals the interdependence they all have on one another.

The Fundamentals of Caring
A writer retires after a personal tragedy and becomes a caregiver to a disabled teen. When the two embark on an impromptu road trip, their ability to cope is tested as they start to understand the importance of hope and friendship.

The Game Changer – Dr. Tim Nugent
The Game Changer tells the story of how Dr. Tim Nugent changed the world for people with disabilities. Nugent fought against prejudice to establish the first college program for people with disabilities at the University of Illinois. Nugent, who is known as the "Father of Accessibility," was also a pioneer in the wheelchair sports movement.

Me Before You
Quirky Louisa’s cheerful attitude is put to the test when she becomes a caregiver for Will, a wealthy young banker paralyzed from an accident two years earlier. Will’s cynical outlook starts to change when Louisa shows him that life is worth living. As their bond deepens, their lives and hearts change in ways neither one could have imagined.

Rory O’Shea Was Here
Michael leads a lonely life as his cerebral palsy makes it difficult for people to understand his speech. But everything changes when Rory O’Shea enters his life. Although muscular dystrophy limits Rory to a wheelchair, he has the wild, carefree attitude that Michael lacks. Together, they make an unstoppable team -- eventually landing their own apartment and a beautiful assistant.

The Upside (in theatres - check local listings)
Phillip is a wealthy quadriplegic who needs a caretaker to help him with his day-to-day routine. He hires Dell, a struggling parolee who’s trying to reconnect with his ex and his young son. Despite coming from two different worlds, an unlikely friendship starts to blossom as Dell and Phillip rediscover the joy of living life to the fullest.

You’re Not You
A life-changing bond develops between a woman with ALS whose marriage is on the rocks and the brash collegian hired to be her assistant.

Ongoing Activities

- **Men's Group** - Every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 11 am to 1 pm. Locations vary - contact Sam Knight for more information at sam@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.
- **Young Women's Group** - Every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 11 am to 1 pm. Locations vary - contact Katy Hoyer for more information at katy@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.
- **Weekly Women’s Group** - Every Monday from 1 pm to 3 pm at DRC. Contact Katy Hoyer for more information at katy@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.
- **Deaf Senior Club Bingo** - Every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 9 am to 4 pm at Croatian Cultural Club, 1503 Clement St., Joliet.
- **Accessible Will County (AWC)** - First Wednesday of the month from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm, at DRC. AWC is a partnership between DRC, disability advocates, persons with disabilities, the City of Joliet, businesses, the Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry, professional trade organizations, media representatives and civic leaders. Contact Sam Knight for more information at sam@drcjoliet.org or (815) 729-0162.
- **"My Child is Special"** - Make a special book about your child with your stories, pictures and memories at this monthly workshop at DRC. Consuleo Puente, mother of two sons with autism, will guide you in the process. Mar. 25, Apr. 28, May 20, 10 am to 12 pm. $15 for album and materials. Bring photos of your child(ren).
REMINDER: Annual Transition Conference

Join Disability Resource Center at the 21st Annual Transition Conference on Saturday, April 13, 2019, 9 am to 12 pm at Joliet Junior College - "Everything You Wanted to Know About Transition - But Were Afraid to Ask". This event is presented by presented by the Will-Grundy Transition Planning Committee, a consortium of schools, agencies and not-for-profit organizations banded together to improve vocational transition from education to jobs for all learners, but particularly for individuals with disabilities. For a complete list of participating agencies and other information, visit www.transitionplan.org.

Holiday Cheer!

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Holiday Party on Dec. 12th! It was wonderful to see so many friends of DRC! We enjoyed a tasty hot luncheon catered by Chicken n' Spice, followed by an assortment of delicious holiday treats. We also received an astounding amount of canned food and clothing donations, which we proudly passed on to Guardian Angel Community Services of Joliet.

DRC Staff & Board

STAFF:
Missy Martin - Executive Director
Tabitha Boshears - Personal Assistant Coordinator/Independent Living Advocate
Katy Hoyer - Independent Living Advocate
Sam Knight - Independent Living Advocate
Marie Malfatti - Clerical Aide/ITAC Specialist
Jerrod Nichols - Community Reintegration Transition Coordinator
Cathie Stewart - Administrative Assistant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018-2019:
Zachary Fleming - President
David Cumbo - Vice President
Rhonda Price - Secretary
Jennifer Koff - Treasurer
Marvin Tunstall - Delegate-At-Large
Susan Jarosinski - Past President
Ivan Bew, Connie J. Henley, Brandon Ivins, Dianne Mundle, Kevin Pruitte - Directors
Upcoming Events

- Accessible Will County Meeting - Mar. 6, Apr. 3, May 1
- Men's & Women's Groups - Mar. 13, Apr. 10, May 8
- Deaf Senior Club Bingo - Mar. 13, Apr. 10, May 8
- Personal Assistant Training - Mar. 15, Apr. 12, May 17
- Board Meetings - Mar. 20, Apr. 17, May 15
- DRC "Sip & Paint" Fundraiser - Fri. Mar. 22
- "My Child is Special" - Mar. 25, Apr. 28, May 20
- Annual Transition Conference - Sat. Apr. 13
- ANNUAL BOARD MEETING - Wed. Apr. 17
- Memorial Day CLOSED - Mon. May 27

Don't Miss Out!
Get YOUR Free Amplified Phone

Remember, Disability Resource Center is a Selection Center for the ITAC program. Do YOU or someone you know qualify for a FREE amplified or captioned telephone?
Find out today by calling (815) 729-0162 or visit itactty.org

Disability Resource Center
~ a Center for Independent Living ~
77 N. 129th Infantry Drive, Joliet, IL 60435
www.drcjoliet.org
Voice: (815) 729-0162  VRS: (815) 768-2582
TTY: (815) 729-2085