

It's in our power to change.

THE INITIATOR

SEPTEMBER 2010

The Americans with Disabilities Act—Celebrating 20 Years

On July 26th, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Similar to the Civil Rights Act, which protected people against discrimination based on race, gender, religion and other characteristics, the ADA protects people against discrimination based on disability.

With such sweeping legislation, it can make people wonder about local impact, "What has the ADA done for Kent County and my neighborhood?" The short answer is, "A lot."

- Accommodations are offered and provided in employment settings, government services and public places. These are not "something extra" given to persons with disabilities by Congress. Rather, accommodations simply level the playing field to allow the same chance to access the many opportunities our community has to offer.

- Restaurants, movie theatres and other public places have been built accessible so people with disabilities can access desired goods and services.

- Curb cuts in sidewalks have been made to the benefit of those using mobility devices like walkers and wheelchairs and also kids riding bikes and those pushing strollers.

- Lifts have been installed on every Rapid bus so all people can take the bus to be active in the community.

Disability Advocates has worked to achieve gains in these areas and more. Our Accessibility Advocate, Clark Goodrich, was on the front page of the Grand Rapids Press on July 26th this year applauding the changes occurring from the ADA. At the same time, he rightly pointed out that there is still far to go. Over the past twenty years, people with

disabilities have become far more integrated and visible in society as a direct result of the ADA's improving access to the same opportunities those without disabilities have. Because there is still a ways to go towards achieving this goal, Disability Advocates continues to exist. We need to work on issues like better public transit in Kent County, increasing the employment rate for people with disabilities, assisting people to live independently in the community rather than going into a nursing home and educating businesses that are still inaccessible.

It will be great when DAKC does not need to exist. Until then, we will continue to advocate and facilitate change by persons with disabilities and the community to achieve equal access for all.



The Michigan Assistive Technology Loan Fund (MATLF)

Providing low interest loans to people with disabilities and seniors to purchase needed assistive technology.

Lisa Nelson-Williams
lisa.n@dakc.us
616-949-1100, ext. 255



INVEST IN ABILITY
DAKC's Annual Celebration
Inaugural Invest in Ability Award
presented to
The Mary Free Bed Guild
Monday, October 25, 2010
5:30pm Cocktail Reception
6:30pm Dinner/Award Presentation

Frederik Meijer Gardens
and Sculpture Park
1000 East Beltline NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
For tickets, contact Linda Larson
linda.l@dakc.us or 949-1100, ext. 247

PEPSI REFRESH PROJECT

Disability Advocates was accepted into the Pepsi Refresh Project! If awarded, this \$250,000 grant will help to modify the homes of persons with disabilities with low income and of all ages.

We need YOU to VOTE every day in the month of September.

To VOTE, go online
www.refresheverything.com

Once on the site, type Disability Advocates into the Search box to find our project. To win, we need to be in #1 or #2 slot at the close of voting on September 30th.

You can also vote via your Facebook page and text message. Go to www.dakc.us for details.



3600 Camelot Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
t 616 949 1100
f 616 949 7865

www.dakc.us

Who we are

Most people equate disability with limitations. But it's our job to change the perceptions and realities that prevent people with disabilities from sharing in the community. Every year, we provide training, mentoring, and referrals to help people with disabilities and their families live productive lives. Because disability touches so many people, we also work on a larger scale, helping governments and businesses make changes that benefit not just those with disabilities, but everyone in the community.

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Permit 947

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Volunteers

We rely on our wonderful volunteers for so much of what we accomplish. To find an opportunity that fits your skills, interests, and schedule, please contact:

The Volunteer Coordinator
616 949 1100 Ext. 247

Donations

As a non-profit organization, we welcome gifts of all sizes. You may make a tax-deductible contribution by visiting www.dakc.us or mailing your contribution to:

DAKC (Disability Advocates of Kent County)
3600 Camelot Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Join Us

Your gifts of time and resources can help us change everything for the better.