

THE OPEN

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DOOR

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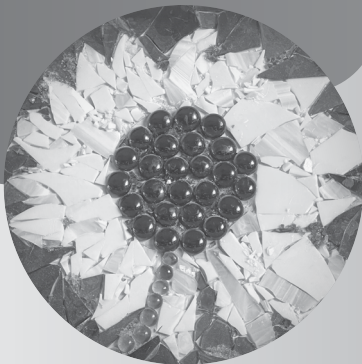
ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL EVENT

By Amber Brunas

Programs and Communications Assistant

Thank you for another successful Artists Beyond Boundaries event and fundraiser! Artists Beyond Boundaries is an unique art event which celebrates the talents of artists with disabilities in Wisconsin.

SEE ARTISTS, PAGE 6



Pictured left:

The 2021 People's Choice Award winner, Grandma's Mosaic Flower by Amanda Lojeski.

PROUD SPONSORS FOR 2021 ARTISTS BEYOND BOUNDARIES



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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CORNER

Meet the New U-Step 2 Walker

By Nicole Sanders
Independent Living Specialist

Nowadays, there are many different kinds of walkers available to assist individuals with ambulating with greater independence and safety. I wanted to share a new assistive device that Access has for you to borrow for up to 6 weeks free of charge. The walker is called a U-Step II and it is designed for individuals with neurological conditions (as well as many other disabilities.) It provides greater maneuverability, stability, and control compared to other walkers. The U-Step has many features that make it stand out from standard four-wheeled walkers. My favorite feature of the U-Step is its ability to adjust the rolling resistance, making it roll slower or faster to meet individual needs. Going from 0-60 mph is nice if you are a NASCAR driver, but maybe not for your walker!

Another cool feature, especially helpful when standing from a chair, is the reverse braking system. With this system, you don't have to worry that the walker will roll away from you if you forget to engage the brakes before standing. The U-Step will not roll until you lightly squeeze either hand brake. Once you release the hand brake, the U-Step will stop immediately.



Standard U-Step II Walker by In-Step Mobility



The U-Step Laser & Sound Cue Module



The Laser Cue Module for Canes projects a laser line every time your cane touches the floor, providing you with a visual cue as you are walking.

OTHER FEATURES

- ✔ Spring loaded front wheels allow the U-Step to glide over uneven surfaces, including indoor thresholds, rugs, and cracks in the sidewalk.
- ✔ The U-Step folds easily, making it easy to take with you on the go!
- ✔ The U-shaped base surrounds you and braces you in the event of a fall, and also allows you to turn around in 29 square inches, while other advanced walkers require 50 inches to turn!
- ✔ The U-Step has a padded seat and backrest for comfort and support, as well as a basket under the seat to carry all your needed items.
- ✔ The hand grips are padded for added comfort, and it has ergonomically positioned handlebars.
- ✔ The U-Step walker comes in 3 sizes:
 1. Standard, for individuals 5'2" to 6' 1" tall (this is the size we have available for loan)
 2. Small, for individuals 4'6" to 5'2" tall
 3. Tall, for individuals 6'2" to 6'6" tall

THE AGENCY OFFICE IS BACK OPEN



The Access to Independence office re-opened to the public on July 12th. Appointments are preferred, and please note that masks must be worn by all visitors and staff members inside the building. If a visitor does not have a mask, one may be offered at no cost. Anyone unable to wear a mask should contact us in advance of a visit to request an accommodation. Please note that we are continuing to monitor new developments in CDC guidelines and will adjust our services as needed. If you have any questions or concerns leading up to an appointment, please contact us at (608) 242-8484, or by email at info@accesstoind.org.

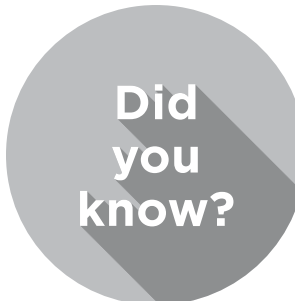
An optional addition to the U-Step is the Laser and Sound Cueing Module. It attaches to the hand grip on the U-Step, and is especially helpful for individuals with Parkinson's, or anyone with an irregular walking/stepping pattern. The module has been clinically proven to reduce Parkinson's-related freezing and falls. It cues you to help you get started with walking, normalize your walking, and increase your stride. It projects a red or green laser line on the ground between the rear wheels that gives you a visual guide as you walk. The sound feature allows you to choose from 11 different audio beep patterns, ranging from slow to fast beeps. This lets YOU choose a beep pattern that will meet your walking speed. There is also an adjustable volume control, to ensure you can hear the beeps!

Please reach out to us for more information about the latest assistive technology devices to increase your independence and mobility. And let us know if you would like to borrow the U-Step walker that we have available for loan, to see if it fits your needs!

For more info on products from U-step, visit www.ustep.com.



Funding for the U-Step II, and hundreds of other devices available for free demonstration and loan, is graciously provided by Wistech.



The Laser Cue for canes, also manufactured by the same company that designed the U-Step, was designed with encouragement from Michael J. Fox? The Laser Cue can be retrofitted to any cane and has very similar features to the laser cue for walkers. It projects a laser line every time your cane touches the floor, providing you with a visual cue as you are walking.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is coming to Madison in 2024

By Ben Hinkel

Independent Living Specialist

These new buses will allow riders to get across the city much faster than they can now. The BRT line will go from the northeast to the southwest of Madison and will have dedicated BRT lanes and stops. The BRT buses will come every 15 minutes during peak times, and will have traffic signal priority, which will allow them to get around the city faster than the rest of the vehicles on the road. Some of the BRT stops will be on the side of the road, and some will be on the medians. This work is being done in tandem with the Metro transit network redesign, which will change the rest of the Madison Metro system.

We have a unique opportunity to provide real and meaningful feedback to the people designing the BRT system. There have been many community engagement meetings since the start of this project, and community members have been encouraged to ask questions and make suggestions. The development process just passed the 30% mark, and there are still more community engagement meetings coming up. The next community engagement meeting will

take place in the first quarter of 2022 and will focus on Capitol square station location and design. The design process is expected to last through 2022, with construction beginning in 2023 and service beginning in 2024. A mock station will be built, and members of the public will be able to see and feel it, and then give feedback.

It is so important that the voices of people with disabilities be heard by those involved with the development and funding of the BRT system, so accessibility can be made an integral part of the design process. You can contact your local alders to discuss funding and the project as a whole, and any questions, concerns, or suggestions can be directed to BRT@CityOfMadison.com. Questions, concerns, or suggestions about the Metro transit network redesign can be directed to MetroRedesign@CityOfMadison.com.

For more information on the BRT system and upcoming community engagement opportunities, go to cityofmadison.com/metro/routes-schedules/bus-rapid-transit. For more information on the Metro transit network redesign, go to cityofmadison.com/metro/routes-schedules/bus-rapid-transit/transit-network-redesign.

Community collaboration for Accessibility

How a public-private partnership is working to address inaccessibility in Madison

By Jason Beloungy

Executive Director

Access to Independence is committed to community-impact services, which has been on display through a partnership that also involves Downtown Madison Inc. (DMI), and the City of Madison's Disability Rights Commission (and city staff).

In the August edition of The Open Door, we highlighted the latest project of the collaboration, the Madison Festivals and Events Accessibility Guide, and training. That project was just one of a few projects the partnership has engaged in since 2018, when it conducted a community survey of people with disabilities to determine what barriers exist in downtown Madison related to transportation, mobility, private businesses, festivals and events, parks, and other spaces. The results of the survey were published in a report that was released in 2019 and has provided guidance for the partners as they look at solutions to address the multitude of barriers.

As the pandemic consumed 2020, and the City of Madison offered its Streatery Program for local businesses, the Partnership came together to create an Accessibility Guide for businesses to incorporate accessibility into their planning. That was followed by this year's festivals and events efforts, and the partnership is now turning its attention to an event in 2022. Modeled after conferences that address building design, wellness, and environmental best practices, partners have begun developing an event that will bring together

SEE COMMUNITY, PAGE 6



PEER SUPPORT CORNER

“People First” Language or “Identity First” Language

By Tracy Miller

Independent Living Specialist

Over the years, Access has taught that it's always best to use “people first” language when talking about people with disabilities, as in “a person who uses a wheelchair,” or “a person with multiple sclerosis.” But in recent years the discussion has changed for many people who feel their disabilities are an integral part of their human experience, and who choose to embrace language that reflects that - people who are choosing to use “identity-first” language.

“Capital D” Deaf people have long chosen to put Deaf first, as a sign of cultural and linguistic pride, and don't see deafness as a disability. And some people have chosen to take back words once used in a demeaning and hurtful way against them, to define a new kind of culture of disability pride.




Several years ago, the first time I met someone with a disability who was genderqueer, I wasn't familiar with that term. I told them it was new to me, hoping that wouldn't offend them. They patiently explained their choice of that term to define themselves, and how it made it hard to fill out forms that ask us to define ourselves as either male or female.

SEE LANGUAGE, PAGE 6

Become an Ultimate Giver!

Are you ready to start the season of giving? This year, Access to Independence is working toward raising \$2,500, which will go toward our Independent Living Programs. Your support will make it possible for individuals of any age and with any type of disability to #AccessEmpowerment by achieving their independence goals, big or small. We hope you'll join us to make that goal a reality! Even a small gift can make a lasting impact! Learn more at accesstoind.org/accessempowerment.

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT ACCESS:

-  **Like and share** our posts on Facebook @[Access.to.Independence.WI](https://www.facebook.com/Access.to.Independence.WI).
-  **Tag us** when you share photos on your social platform about what our organization means to you.
-  **Shop** on Amazon at smile.amazon.com/ch/39-1240200. A portion of your purchase will automatically be donated to our agency.

ARTISTS

FROM PAGE 1

This year, we invited artists to submit up to two works of art for a chance to win one of thirteen \$200 awards and have their artwork featured in the next Artists Beyond Boundaries calendars.

We were so grateful to have been able to showcase close to 70 works of art, in a wide variety of styles and mediums, from artists living all across Wisconsin. The talent this year was incredible, and it was an honor to have been surrounded by such great amounts of creativity throughout the year.

This year's virtual event featured segments from our Executive Director, the three jurors who helped to view and score each work of art, ALL of the artwork submitted to the event, and a segment that highlighted the top twelve works of art.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the artists, jurors, sponsors, donors, and event viewers who came together to make this event such a success. It was truly a pleasure to create and share this event with you.

We are also happy to announce that we'll be hosting this event again next year! Keep an eye out for more information about next year's event. Information regarding the event will be posted on our agency website and Facebook page [@Access.to.Independence.WI](#) in Summer of 2022.

DID YOU MISS THE EVENT?

You can still watch the event and learn more about this year's artists and jurors at artistsbeyondboundaries.weebly.com!

COMMUNITY

FROM PAGE 5

architects, designers, and other related professions, along with people with disabilities, to address new and best practices to designing building and spaces that are not just accessible, but inclusive for people with disabilities. The event is expected to occur next Summer, and we look forward to sharing updates as planning progresses. We also expect to make other announcements about related community impact work, and will share those here, and online.

LANGUAGE

FROM PAGE 5

The word "queer" is another example of language once used negatively, that people have chosen to define in a new way for themselves. I learn new perspectives every day from the people I meet through my work at Access, by listening to the different ways that they choose to describe their lives. Respectful curiosity about our different lived experiences has helped me understand more about how my disabilities, and other aspects of identity, affect my own life.

Words are just labels, but labels are powerful. Human beings seek ways to use language to define complex experiences, and none of us is just one thing. Some of us find it difficult to separate our "disabilities" from who we are as human beings, bringing me back to those who choose to embrace identity-first language.

What does all this have to do with peer support? These are the kinds of important conversations that peers have with one another. Conversations that help us understand how we as individuals experience disability, as well as the many other aspects of our identities. About who we are and how we want to be seen in the world.

Join the conversation! Access is beginning to evaluate the importance of Peer Support as a core service, and how we can better utilize volunteers to uplift all voices in supporting one another. If you are interested in volunteering or have ideas about how we can improve our peer support services, we would like to hear from you. The richness and beauty of the lives we touch shine out when we take time to listen to one another, when we explore together all that it means to be us.



WISLOAN + TELEWORK LOAN PROGRAMS

FUNDING INDEPENDENCE

WisLoan and Telework are alternative loan programs that assist Wisconsin residents with disabilities to enable people to become self-employed or to work from home. These loan programs are different than traditional bank loans because a bank doesn't make the final decision, the WisLoan and Telework Board does. That allows flexibility for people who have an item they need to maintain their independence, but have trouble coming up with the money all at once or finding other ways to pay for what they need. Simply call Access to Independence for information (608) 242-8484.

WISLOAN

What Can I Buy with a WisLoan?

You can purchase technology such as wheelchairs, computers, ramps, vehicle modifications, or home modifications.

TELEWORK

What Can I Buy with a TeleWork Loan?

You can purchase items such as computers and software, scanners or fax machines, tools, office furniture, or modifications for an accessible office.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

How much can I borrow?

Loan amount range from \$250 to \$50,000. The loan would be for the exact amount of the item.

Can I apply if I have no job?

Yes. Social Security Disability or Retirement benefits and other sources of income are considered.

Can I apply if my credit is poor?

Yes. The reason for the poor credit is considered, as is one's ability to repay the loan.

How do I apply?

Contact ACCESS to complete the loan application materials in person. Application can be done at the ACCESS office or at a location of your preference.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & SPONSORS

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- 💰 Jeff Sasser

Access to Independence greatly appreciates the generosity of all those who have made a financial contribution – big or small – to our organization. Through the generosity of our donors, ACCESS is able to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to access demonstrations and free loans of assistive technology equipment, skills training in peoples' homes and classes at our office in Madison, among the wide array of services we provide. We would like to thank each of our sponsors for their generosity!

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