



# Access Info



Access to Independence advocates and educates to support and empower people with disabilities



## ELECTION DAY IS NOVEMBER 2ND. WILL YOU VOTE?

With Midterm elections just around the corner, we are feeling the pressure of the current political climate. There is a new state budget cycle looming and much of the talk is about the three billion dollar deficit facing Wisconsin. A major part of this deficit is the \$645 million cost of Medicaid. Since thousands of people with disabilities rely on Medicaid to meet their healthcare and long-term care needs, we all need to be vocal about protecting Medicaid and maintaining services vital to independence. One of the major topics in state and federal elections is to balance the budget, and unfortunately optional home and community based services are prime to be the first thing to face the chopping block. The political process in America offers people with disabilities an opportunity to get involved and ensure these cuts do not happen. One of the most important ways to be involved is by getting out to vote! Historically, the disability community has had the lowest voter turnout of any group in America, and this is a big reason that our services are always in jeopardy. It's time for the disability community to become proactive and elect officials who support our issues, including the protection of home and community based services.

We often don't think our vote matters because we are one person and we can't make a difference. That's just not accurate. In the last election, if the entire disability community turned out to vote that would have been an additional 5000 votes cast here in Wisconsin! Although we may not all share the same views about what issues are important, we can all agree that the right to live in the community is a goal we all want to achieve. You have a chance on November 2nd to cast your vote for people who will support the disability community. When you vote, you ensure that your voice will be heard at the highest reaches of government.

### Voting Resources:

To find your polling place, go to: <https://vpa.wi.gov/>

To find your municipal clerk to ask questions about your polling place or other voting questions, go to: <http://gab.wi.gov/clerks/directory>

To see the check ADA polling place checklist, go to: <http://www.ada.gov/votingchecklist.htm>



**Holiday Potluck at ATI**  
December 9, 2010, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.



Join us at the office to celebrate the holidays! Bring a dish to pass and/or a food pantry donation. ATI will provide utensils, beverages, and some food items. **RSVP to the office by Friday, December 3**, to let us know that you plan to come. (We would like to know how many people to expect so we can make sure that we have enough space, and enough food for everyone.) *If you need a Sign Language Interpreter, materials in alternate formats, or any other accommodations to participate in this event, please contact us by Friday, December 3, to let us know.* Call Claire Draeger at 608-242-8484 or TTY 608-242-8485 email: [claired@accesstoind.org](mailto:claired@accesstoind.org)

## **Beyond Dane—News from outside of Dane County** ***In Columbia County...***

**By Tracy Miller**

Outreach in Columbia County involves a lot of driving through some very beautiful, rural areas of Wisconsin. On Saturday, October 9, it involved eating home-made pie at the “Celebrate Columbus” Fall Festival. It’s a tough job, but someone had to go to let people know about ATI and the programs and services we offer!

There was certainly a lot to talk about, but one topic that was quite popular was TEPP, the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program, and the free phones available for people with hearing loss or other issues that make it difficult to use a regular phone. This was a great chance to spend time getting to know the people of Columbia County, and talk about the programs and services we offer in the county! Columbia County is

very rural. In spite of not having as many resources as counties with large metropolitan areas, there are some very creative and resourceful people there who are doing all they can to make Columbia County a great place to live.

Recently, I visited Kindred Kids in Columbus - an example of that resourceful spirit. Kindred Kids is “a non profit lending library for children with differing abilities.” They lend out toys, books, and equipment (wheelchairs, walkers, communication devices, etc.) and operate a resale store for local families looking for quality used kid’s clothing and toys. It was very busy the day that I visited. Clearly, the community around Columbus appreciates this resource. The director told me that people come from as far away as Illinois to borrow equipment for their children.

Kindred Kids is a great example of what can be accomplished by motivated people. For more information on Kindred Kids, you can visit their webpage at <http://www.kindredkids.org/> or call 608-438-5844. Kudos to the Executive Director of Kindred Kids, Wendy Simyab, for creating a unique organization that reflects the independent living values of peer support and community inclusion.

Finally, as a reminder, I generally have office hours from 1 to 4 p.m. on the second Tuesday of every month at the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) office on Murphy Road in Portage. I can also meet at other times at your home, school, or other convenient location in your community, to provide information and services to groups or individuals. Give me a call for more information.

## ***In Dodge County...***

**By Nick Isham**

Nick Isham has been working with people throughout Dodge County since joining ATI in March. Among the variety of activities that keep Nick busy is his role in the Dodge County Transition Advisory Council for students with disabilities transitioning into adult life. Nick also continues to hold office hours at the Administration Building in Juneau located at 127 E Oak St. for people who would like to drop in with questions, locate

resources or would like to take part in some of the services that ATI offers. Nick’s office hours are every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday in room 1D from 10 am to 12 pm.

In addition to set office hours, Nick is available to meet with people in the location of their choice, including their homes. To make an appointment during these hours or another time please call Nick at least one day in advance at the Access To Independence office at 1-800-362-9877, ext. 222. In an effort to get to know the people of Dodge

County and to increase ATI’s presence in the county, Nick will be reaching out to Dodge County area agencies and organizations to learn about what they do and to share what ATI can offer. If you represent an area agency or organization in Dodge County, Nick would love to hear from you and visit. Please call Nick to set a meeting time and Nick can present ATI’s services to you to start building relationships that will provide more opportunities for people with disabilities in

## ***In Green County...***

**By Matt Keller**

Access to Independence continues to expand its presence in Green County, and staff is available to provide services by phone or by appointment. All of ATI's core services, including Information and Referral, Peer Support, Advocacy, and Independent Living Skills Training are available to citizens in all of Green County. Additionally, we provide other services like assistive technology demonstrations to individuals and groups. Many items that are demonstrated are available for temporary loan at no cost. Over the past several months, many Green County residents have

asked about or taken advantage of technology programs such as WisLoan (statewide loan program for assistive technology), TeleWork (statewide loan program for purchasing equipment for a home business), Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP), and Action Net, ATI's new grassroots advocacy network with a local group right in Green County! The number of Green County consumers receiving services from ATI has increased considerably since last year, so more time has been allocated to meet this demand. IL

Specialist Matt Keller will hold office hours at the Green County ADRC on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month from 1-3pm. On days that office hours are held in Green County, Matt will also make visits throughout the county to meet with consumers and others. Please note that all appointments with Matt in Green County, whether at the ADRC office or in your home, need to be scheduled in advance. You can reach Matt at 1-800-362-9877 x 230 or email [mattk@accesstoid.org](mailto:mattk@accesstoid.org)

### **Director's Corner**

#### **Access has Grown! 2010 has been a year of positive and exciting changes**

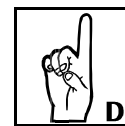
2010 has been a year of change and growth. The Board of Directors completed a three year strategic plan and adopted a new mission, vision and values for the organization. ATI launched its new logo, and redesigned our website that offers more information and resources, along with a staff blog, calendar, and we even joined Facebook! Our agency has grown with the addition of five new staff. In March, Jason Beloungy came on as Program Director and Nick Isham joined as an Independent Living Specialist who provides primary outreach and serves all of Dodge County. In June, Belinda Richardson joined the staff after having completed an internship and will provide presentations and services for assistive technology, including AT assessment, home modifications and training to use technology. In August, Marysa LaRowe joined the staff as our new Benefits Specialist and is undergoing training to become a Work Incentives Benefits Specialist. Our latest addition is Richard Harris, who recently came on board as the Veteran's Outreach Worker. ATI continues to work on the expansion of the role Peer Specialist play in mental health recovery services. And successfully kicked off the Peer Specialist certification exam.

Over the last year, ATI has expanded our programs and services. New to the array of services we offer includes: the Peer Power program for youth with disabilities, the development of the Southern Wisconsin Action Network for Disability Rights, also known as ActionNet, Vocational Futures Planning and Support (VFPS), and Veterans outreach. Access to Independence has also done a lot of work to increase the number and variety of items available in our assistive technology demonstration and loan closet. Finally, we have sent a lot of time and miles to increase our services to Columbia, Dodge and Green counties. Whew what a year!!

As we look to the coming year, ATI will be looking for a new office location to accommodate our growth, and the Board has begun the search. If you haven't visited ATI lately please stop by and meet the staff and visit our AT Demo and Loan closet. So in closing, keep a watch on Access as we develop more services and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

*Dee Truhn*, Executive Director

# Deaf and Hard of Hearing News...



By Denise Pulfer

Fall is here and we are excited to see some new events! Access to Independence is hosting the following events:

## Ladies Time Out

Deaf women meet monthly to support and learn from each other. Dates and times vary. Please contact Denise 608-234-4484 for more information!

## Deaf Youth

Youth have fun every month while learning different things.

Dates and times vary. Please contact Denise 608-234-4484 for more information!

## Workshops

We have several set up and coming soon. If you have a topic you would like to learn about please let ATI know!

## Family Holiday Party

Dec 5, 2-4pm

This is an event for families with a deaf/hoh member. More

information coming soon.

As always we can work with people on a variety of issues. If you would like to have me talk at a meeting or need information please contact me at 608-234-4484.

Don't forget to check our website or join us on Facebook to hear about what's going on.

## WisLoan and TeleWork Loan Programs

### *Funding Independence!*

WisLoan and TeleWork are alternative loan programs that assist Wisconsin residents with disabilities to pay for assistive technology, or to purchase the necessary equipment and technology to enable people 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 may have an item they need to maintain their independence, but have trouble coming up the money all at once, or finding other ways to pay for what they need. Simply call Access to Independence for information.

### WisLoan

What Can I Buy with a WisLoan? You can purchase technology such as wheelchairs, computers, ramps, vehicle modifications, or kitchen or bathroom remodeling projects or construction.

### 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 amounts range from \$5,000 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 ATI to complete the loan application materials in person. Application can be done at the ATI office or at a location of your preference.

# ActionNet is HERE!

By **Jason Glozier,**  
Grass Roots Organizer

Since our last newsletter, ActionNet has grown by leaps and bounds. In the short time that ActionNet has been active we have developed three local groups in Dane, Dodge and Green counties. These groups have been busy learning what it takes to build a grassroots effort, and identifying local issues to organize community members around. ActionNet gives the disability community in the Access to Independence service area a voice and an opportunity to work towards real change. Currently local groups are meeting on a regular basis with Green County Meeting the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of every month, Dodge county meetings the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of

every month, and Dane County meeting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of every month. You may notice that we have left out Columbia County, and that is because interest and development of a local group have been slow. That said, ActionNet always welcomes new members, so feel free to join us where groups have begun as we begin addressing local issues in your community. One of the benefits of being a part of ActionNet is that it offers unique opportunities for people concerned with disability issues to come together to voice their concerns. On December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in Madison, ActionNet will be partnering with the Triangle Neighborhood and residents of the Brittingham Apartments to offer an opportunity for

people concerned about Medicaid cuts in the next state budget to voice their opinions and ask the legislature to preserve funding that keeps people in the community. If you are in Dane County and would like more information on this event, or if you are in one of our other three counties and would like to set up a similar event, contact Jason Glozier (contact info on page 7). This will be great opportunity to get connected to a statewide issue that could have major implications for people with and without disabilities.

Since this is a grassroots program that means it starts with all of you! If you are interested in joining a group, showing support, or helping out around the office please contact Jason Glozier today!

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## **ATI provides individuals with mobility disabilities a \$100 voucher for TEPP voucher co-pay!**

### **TEPP– Providing Telecommunications Equipment...**

ATI can provide a solution through the Telecommunication Equipment Purchase Plan (TEPP), which helps people with disabilities buy equipments they need in order to use basic telephone service.

#### **If You Are Someone That Is:**

- A Wisconsin resident
- Needs special equipment to use the telephone in the home or when traveling
- Low income
- Motion/ mobility impaired



Wisconsin Universal Service Fund collects money from Wisconsin telephone service providers. This ensures that someone that is Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Severely Hard of Hearing, Speech Impaired, Mobility/Motion Impaired. Deaf with Low Vision and Deaf Blind can receive equal access to telecommunication equipment.

**How Can ATI Help?** ATI can assist with TEPP applications, vouchers, equipment or device selection and vendor information.

**If you are interested in learning more about TEPP, or the co-pay voucher, please call: Belinda at 1-800-362-9877, ext. 225**

## ATI Board of Directors Update...

In the last newsletter I mentioned the board and staff have been completing the Strategic Plan for ATI covering the next three years. We have developed several goals and number of objectives that will provide direction to the agency. One area the board and staff must move forward on is developing funding sources that are flexible and not tied to specific grant responsibilities.

These flexible funds will allow ATI to pay for agency administrative needs as well as moving the agency to a new building, which will provide additional needed space and better access.

Regarding office space for ATI, the Building Committee, along with the Executive Director, has been actively pursuing an alternative location. They have checked on a couple of sites and are now working with the owners of these sites to determine what can be worked out as far as renovations and costs. Our plan is to move into new space by the end of 2011.

An excellent source of flexible funding is from fund raising. The board is very interested in ideas of fund-raising opportunities from board members, staff and interested persons in the community. The board will be spending time at their October board meeting

strategizing on various possibilities and putting together a three year plan that will be incorporated into the agency's Strategic Plan.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to thank members of our Board of Directors whose terms expire in December. Jake Wartenweiler and Addrena Squires have been a tremendous asset and their service is appreciated. My term also ends in December, and I thank ATI for the opportunity to serve this agency.

Thank you.  
Chris Hendrickson, President  
ATI Board of Directors

## Peer Power...

### Hey Students and Parents! Have You Heard of Peer Power

Earlier this year, Access to Independence began a new program called Peer Power. Peer Power is a unique peer-based program designed to educate and empower high school students with disabilities to plan for their lives after high school. Participants of Peer Power learn how to actively take part in planning their future through learning about

jobs, college, social and recreational opportunities and life after high school. If you would like to learn more about or join Peer Power Please call Kirsten. Her contact information is on page 7 of Access Info.

### Peer Power is Now Recruiting Peer Mentors

The Peer Power program is recruiting young adults, who have left high school within the last few years, to become peer mentors. Peer Mentors help by providing support to the youth in Peer Power through sharing

their life experiences and serving as role models.

If you are young adult who has a few hours a month to share, some awesome high school students could use your help! If interested, see page 7 of Access Info for Kirsten Engel's contact information.



## New Staff Updates...

**Richard Harris...**Hello! My name is Richard Harris. I am your new Veterans Outreach Worker and my duties will include delivering and coordinating independent living services to veterans' with disabilities in order to assist them in living independently.

I will be serving the disabled veterans of Columbia, Dane, Dodge and Green Counties. I was born and raised in Chicago. I come from a large family. I have three brothers and four sisters. I am a graduate of Chicago's Carver High School Challengers.

After graduating high school, I joined the army and served as a field artillery soldier from 1986

through 1991. My duty stations included Fort Sill, Oklahoma (Home of the Field Artillery), Fort Polk, Louisiana and Bebenhausen Germany.

I have lived in Wisconsin for eight years. I am a happily converted Packers Fan! Go Pack Go!

**Marysa LaRowe...**My name is Marysa LaRowe, and I am the new Benefits Specialist at Access to Independence. I just started here in August, and I have already helped several people with questions about their benefits and with applications for assistance. I've also been through extensive training on Social Security disability work incentives. My role here will be to help

people with all kinds of disabilities sort through their options and gain access to the supports they need. I'll help people who want to go back to work see how working will affect their Disability, SSI, Health Care and Foodshare benefits.

I grew up in the Chicago suburbs, and came to Madison in 2006 to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I love working with people, and helping them to navigate these challenging legal and financial systems.

We also welcome **Jacob Emmerick**, ATI's new Administrative Assistant.

## ATI STAFF DIRECTORY

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THANK YOU!

**Access Info** is published three times a year, Spring, Summer and Fall/Winter, . Submissions of articles are always welcome. They are subject to editing for clarity. Opinions expressed are the authors and do not represent Access to Independence or its Funders.

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If you are interested in advertising please contact ATI at the information on page seven (7). Thank you!.



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