



# 2024

# Annual Report

# About Access to Independence

Access to Independence is a non-profit organization that serves communities throughout Columbia, Dane, Dodge, and Green counties in South-Central Wisconsin.

What makes Access to Independence unique is that the majority of the staff and board members are people with disabilities.



# Our Services

## Who Can Receive Services?

1. People of any age, and of any disability, regardless of severity
2. Family members, friends, and others who assist people with disabilities
3. Businesses, governments, and anyone in the community who has disability-related questions and/or concerns

## How Are Services Provided?

Individuals decide on what services they wish to receive, and direct the goals they wish to achieve. Services can be provided at the Access to Independence office, as well as in someone's home, workplace, or other community setting.

Accommodations like interpreters, or materials in alternative formats can be arranged with notice.

## What is the Cost?

All of our direct services are FREE of charge to those who receive them



# Our Services

We provide a wide variety of services which empower people of all ages and with any type of disability to live as independently as they choose



## Information and Referral

Information, resources and referrals about disability-related topics such as housing, education, transportation, employment, finances, benefits, long-term care and more.



## Assistive Technology

Over 1,000 devices can be tried, and many can be borrowed, free of charge for up to three weeks. Assistance with purchasing, locating funding, and set-up/training are also available.



## Peer Support

Staff and trained volunteers with disabilities assist consumers with reaching independent living goals.



## Benefits Assistance

Access to Independence provides assistance with families for children's SSI applications and appeal paperwork.



## Skills Training

Individualized and group training in skill areas such as budgeting, transportation, communication, computer skills, technology, cooking, and many more.



## Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

Individual assistance and group classes are available for IL skills and educations, interpreter information, and specialized assistive technology information.



## Transition Services

- Individuals who currently reside in nursing facilities who wish to transition back to the community - Individuals at risk of placement in a nursing facility who wish to remain in the community. - Youth with disabilities in the post secondary phase of their life.



## Youth Services

Classes and services such as daily skills training, advocacy, employment soft skills, money management, and healthy relationships.



## Advocacy

Access to Independence works directly to assist individuals to communicate their needs to obtain services and supports. This includes IEP advocacy, housing matters, and appeal processes. Access also has a grassroots advocacy network called ActionNet.



## Accessibility Services

Consultation and technical assistance services provide companies, organizations, governments, and community groups with a menu of services including website evaluations, event accessibility, disability and inclusion training, and accessibility evaluations.



## Home Accessibility Assessments

Home accessibility assessments to improve independence at home.

# Highlights

2024 marked a year of expansion for our agency. Our 7th annual Artists Beyond Boundaries event successfully reached a broader audience, showcasing 77 entries from 40 talented artists with disabilities. We also launched our inaugural Adaptive Gaming Expo, which highlighted cutting-edge adaptive technology in the video gaming industry and attracted nearly 120 attendees.



# Highlights



## Access Welcomes the Caravan for Disability Justice and Freedom

The Access to Independence office was buzzing with excitement on July 18th as the Caravan for Disability Freedom and Justice made its much-anticipated stop in Madison. From 3 to 6 p.m., the agency opened its doors for a crowd eager to engage with local disability organizations and advocates.

Guests were treated to light refreshments while exploring informative kiosks about legislation aimed at enhancing home and community-based services. The event also encouraged attendees to share their personal stories to support advocacy efforts.

Attendees visited booths hosted by organizations such as Disability Pride Madison, the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition, and the UW Madison Disability Cultural Center.

The City of Madison Department of Civil Rights was also in attendance, alongside authors Jean Logan and Jim Wahner, who showcased their upcoming book, "Wheelchair Commandos and Legislative Lions."

At 3:30 p.m., the event featured brief yet impactful remarks, underscoring the significance of the caravan's mission. Throughout the afternoon, ASL interpreters ensured accessibility for all participants, making the gathering inclusive and welcoming.



# Highlights

## Celebrating the 2024 Artists Beyond Boundaries Event

On October 3rd, the Goodman Community Center in Madison, Wisconsin came alive with creativity, connection, and empowerment as our annual Artists Beyond Boundaries event unfolded for its seventh annual year. This year's event was a true testament to the power of art to bring people together, break barriers, and uplift the voices of artists with disabilities.

### A New Layer of Creativity:

Among this year's exciting new additions was a vibrant community art project. Attendees were invited to collaborate on a sponsor board, drawing, writing, and sharing their creativity to produce a collective masterpiece. We also introduced an in-person art gallery, where artists participating in the event could showcase their work directly to attendees. This addition was not only a visual treat but also provided artists with opportunities to engage with the community and gain greater exposure for their creations.



### Event Success from an Artist's Perspective

Kelly Godman, one of this year's finalists, shared their personal story of transformation through art and how the Artists Beyond Boundaries event made an impact.



"I've struggled with various mental illnesses and diagnoses for a long time, and several years back learned how much art could be used to fight the things that disabled me. However, I did this in solitude ... Within the last year, through the help of social workers, I've begun to put my art out there. ... Not only did it feel good to be included with all the other artists, but when I found out that I was one of the Top Twelve, it was a great relief ... It made me feel like I was a part of a larger community, which is something that I'm often missing."

Kelly's words capture the heart of what Artists Beyond Boundaries is all about: creating a platform for artists with disabilities to showcase their work, feel seen, and connect with others.

# Highlights



## Access to Independence Introduces the Adaptive Gaming Expo!

The inaugural Adaptive Gaming Expo, held on June 7th at the Madison Marriott West in Middleton, Wisconsin, was a remarkable success, attracting a diverse audience interested in the future of gaming. This free event united gamers, developers, and accessibility advocates, allowing participants to experience the latest in adaptive hardware and software. Presentations, led by industry experts, shared their knowledge and experiences in the realm of accessible gaming.

One such presentation came from Randy “NOM4D” Fitzgerald, a professional gaming champion, and lead accessibility consultant on the Call of Duty Franchise. He gave an insightful talk about his experience with accessibility in gaming, and demonstrated his personal accessible controller set up.

The expo provided an excellent platform for networking, fostering new collaborations aimed at enhancing accessibility in gaming, and gave attendees hands-on opportunities to learn about emerging options for gamers of all abilities.

The Adaptive Gaming Expo was a testament to the power of community and the potential for gaming to be inclusive for everyone. We look forward to building on the success of this initial event!



# Highlights

## Forest's Housing Success

Forest received support from Access to Independence staff in navigating the housing process, including assistance with creating a letter of mitigating circumstances to accompany his housing applications.



Staff provided guidance, reviewed documentation, and offered strategies to clearly communicate Forest's needs and circumstances to potential landlords. Through this support, Forest was able to submit stronger, well-prepared applications and navigate complex housing requirements with increased confidence. Forest reported feeling less stressed and more empowered throughout the housing search process. As a result of these services, Forest experienced improved access to housing opportunities, increased self-advocacy, and enhanced independence in managing his living situation. Staff support helped Forest take meaningful steps toward securing stable and appropriate housing.

## Candy's Employment Success

Candy participated in Independent Living Services to work toward goals related to budgeting, employment, and increased independence. After regular scheduled meetings with Access to Independence staff, Candy reviewed her progress and shared that she had successfully met the goals that she set.

Through budget training and job search support, Candy developed the skills needed to secure full-time employment and manage her finances. As a result, she is now living independently and funding most or all of her living expenses.

Candy reported that the job-hunting skills she gained through Independent Living Services directly supported her ability to obtain her current position.



# 2024 By the Numbers

## Services and Impact

**1,733**

Access to Independence provided 1,733 hours of Information and Referral service

**1,392**

Access to Independence responded to 1,392 unduplicated Information and Referral requests (I&Rs)

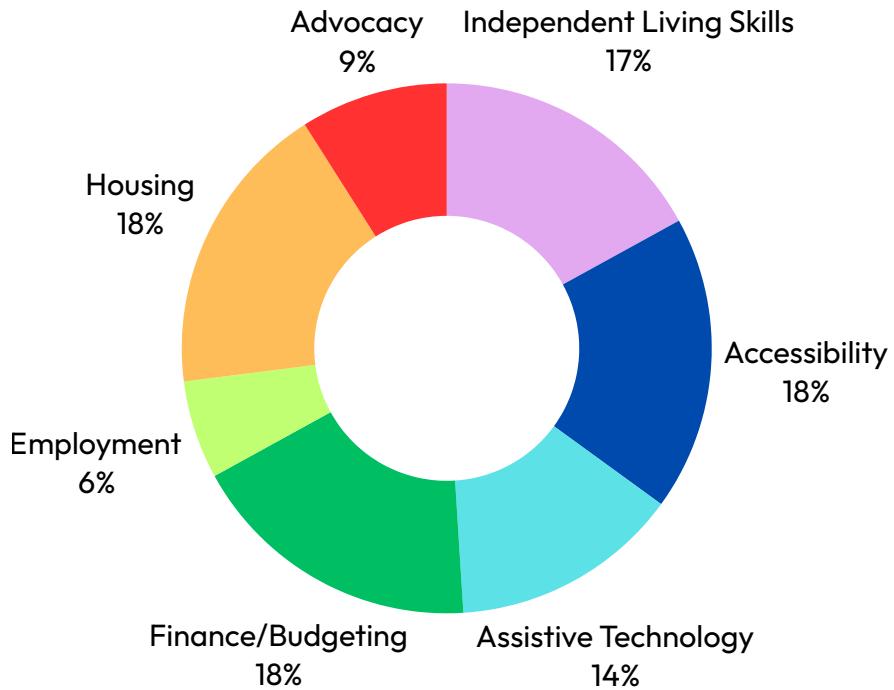
**3,489**

Access to Independence completed a total of 3,489 contacts.

**248**

Access to Independence assisted 248 consumers to achieve their Independent Living goals

## Types of Goals by Percentage



# 2024 By the Numbers

## Income, Expenses and Assets

### Income

Public Support	\$1,290,912
Donations/Fundraising*	\$95,801
Fee for Service	\$380,098
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$1,766,901</b>

\*Donations and fundraising include events like Artists Beyond Boundaries, Giving Tuesday, and a United Way giving campaign. They also include direct fundraising appeals and smaller fundraising activities like selling concessions at UW athletic events.

### Expenses

Program Services	\$1,420,515
Management & General	\$233,684
Fundraising	\$31,393
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$1,685,592</b>

### Assets

Current Assets	\$338,287
Fixed & Other Assets	\$193,279
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$531,566</b>

### Liabilities/Net Assets

Liabilities	\$301,866
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$199,750
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES/NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$501,616</b>

## LEADERSHIP

Jason Beloungy  
Shar Brunes  
Goachi Vang

## STAFF

Amber Brunes  
Rachael Carbaugh  
Victoria Carter  
Benjamin Hinkel  
Carly Major  
Ava Martinez  
Tracy Miller  
Rebecca Patterson  
Zuleika Rodriguez  
Mary Rodwell  
Shirley Short  
Kaden Watford  
Acienda Yang

## BOARD MEMBERS

Furman Avery  
Sarah Barnes  
Sarah Best  
Malachy Bishop  
Rebecca Fitzgerald  
Joel Gouker  
Sam Katz  
Rebekah Pollack  
Bryant Ray  
Wendy Schill-Simyab  
Greg Smith  
Wendy Weiler

## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Receive a copy of this report by using the contact info below. Or find a copy on our website at [www.accesstoind.org/about](http://www.accesstoind.org/about)



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
of HEALTH SERVICES



Providing advocacy, resources, and services for people with any type of disability and of all ages.

## Contact

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