

THE OPEN DOOR

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

**Housing
Discrimination:
The Fair
Housing Council
Fights Back**

Page 2

**2020 United
States Census
is here**

Page 3



**Upcoming
Fundraisers**

Page 5



When defining a relentless badger, we often think about people who demonstrate the independent living philosophy through their own lived, or professional, experiences. However, it can be a challenge to find someone who exemplifies the philosophy through actions that positively impact the broader disability community.

SEE RELENTLESS • PAGE 6

Above: ACCESS staff pose around Relentless Badger award winner Kate Moran (seated) with badger claws up.

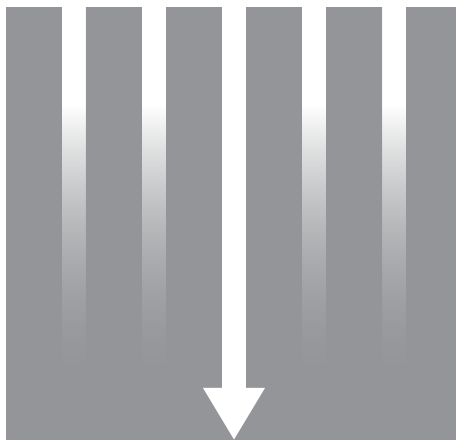
**ACCESS welcomes Independent Living Specialist,
Mikael Snitker. Page 5**





Calendar

2020 is a busy election year, so be sure to mark your calendar for the upcoming election dates in 2020.



AUG 11 Partisan Primary Day

NOV 03 General Election Day

This General Election is for President, U.S. Representative, even-numbered Wisconsin State Senate seats, all Wisconsin Assembly seats, and all District Attorneys.

Be sure to visit myvote.wi.gov to register online, vote absentee, learn where your polling place is, and see what's on the coming ballot.

FAIR HOUSING

Housing Discrimination

The Fair Housing Council Fights Back

Housing discrimination against people with disabilities is common, in fact, in 2019, 58% of statewide housing discrimination complaints filed with the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) alleged discrimination based at least in part on disability.

Fair housing laws define “disability” quite broadly as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. MMFHC assists housing consumers with many different kinds of disabilities.

Housing discrimination based on disability occurs in a variety of ways. Many complaints are filed by housing consumers who have been denied a reasonable accommodation or modification. Reasonable modifications in housing are changes to the physical structure that enable a person with a disability to reside there. Examples may include installation of ramps or bathroom grab bars, if the consumer is willing to pay for such modifications. Reasonable accommodations are changes to a housing provider’s rules, policies or procedures. Examples of reasonable accommodations include:

- Allowing a service animal if a tenant requires a service animal because of their disability.
- Use of non-toxic or organic cleaning products in the common areas of an apartment building for someone whose disability involves chemical sensitivities.
- Assigning a specific parking space for a tenant with mobility impairment.

In other cases, people with disabilities experience discrimination when they are denied the opportunity to rent, buy, or otherwise obtain a home because of a disability. Discrimination also occurs when housing providers offer unfair terms and conditions to housing for persons with disabilities: for example, charging a higher security deposit for someone who uses a wheelchair than for someone who does not.

MMFHC assists people who have experienced illegal housing discrimination and unfair lending practices. If you feel that you may have experienced illegal housing discrimination call (608) 257-0853 or visit www.fairhousingwisconsin.com.

U.S. CENSUS

2020 United States Census is here

Everyone living in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) is required by law to be counted in the 2020 Census. The results are used to determine how much funding local communities receive for key public services and how many seats each state gets in Congress. State and local officials also use census counts to draw boundaries for congressional, state legislative, and school districts.

How can I be sure someone talking to me is really from the Census?

If someone visits your home to collect information for the 2020 Census, check to make sure that they have a valid ID badge with their photograph, a U.S. Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. Census workers may also carry bags and other equipment with the Census Bureau logo. If you still have questions about their identity, you can call 800-923-8282 to speak with a local Census Bureau representative.

TIMELINE

March 30 - April 1: The Census Bureau counted people experiencing homelessness over these three days. They counted people in shelters, at soup kitchens and mobile food vans, on the streets, and at non-sheltered, outdoor locations such as tent encampments.

April 1: Census Day was observed nationwide. By this date, every home will have received an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. Once the invitation arrives, you should respond for your home in one of three ways: online, by phone, or by mail. When you respond to the census, you'll tell the Census Bureau where you lived as of April 1, 2020.

April: Census takers will begin visiting dorms, group homes, and

other facilities containing large groups of people. An administrator at these locations will provide the Census with required information. Census takers will also begin conducting quality check interviews to help ensure an accurate count.

May - July: Census takers will begin visiting homes that haven't responded to the 2020 Census to help make sure everyone is counted.

December: The Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the President and Congress as required by law.

March 31, 2021: By this date, the Census Bureau will send redistricting counts to states. This information is used to redraw legislative districts based on population changes.

Note: during the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will never ask for:

- Your Social Security number
- Your bank account or credit card numbers
- Money or donations

Under Title 13, the Census Bureau cannot release any identifiable information about you, your home, or your business, even to law enforcement agencies. The law

ensures that your private data is protected and that your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court. In fact, every employee takes an oath to protect your personal information for life.

There is no citizenship question on the 2020 Census. Visit us at www.2020census.gov for more information!



HELP ACCESS REDUCE COSTS

By requesting your newsletter in email format, you can help ACCESS reduce printing costs while still receiving the same great information! Contact us today to change how you read *The Open Door*.

PEER SURVEY

Survey Results, and more chances for feedback

By Tracy A. Miller

CPS, Independent Living Specialist

ACCCESS recently did a survey, asking about interest in opportunities for people with disabilities to connect, receive and give support, and participate in activities that they enjoy. A big thank you to everyone who responded to the survey! If you gave us your email address, and expressed a possible interest in helping us develop more resources, we will be staying in touch with you about future events and peer support opportunities over the coming months.

Most of the people responding to the survey said that they wanted more information about current opportunities. We have a lot of resources available, and are gathering more to share. If you are looking for specific information about support or social groups, or other opportunities, please contact us. Also, if you know of any resources that have been helpful for you, please let us know, so we can share them with others.

ACCESS is excited about people's interest in increasing opportunities to connect and build community.

JOIN US!

More Info:

ACCESS will be hosting a get-together on Thursday, May 21, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. for anyone who may be interested in providing more feedback about opportunities for people with disabilities to connect, receive and give support, and participate in activities that they enjoy.

Please contact Tracy Miller if you would like more information, or to RSVP. *If you need any accommodations to participate, please let us know by Friday, May 8.*

Deadline to RSVP:
Friday, May 15

Support the work and impact of ACCESS.

DONATE TODAY!

**2 EASY
WAYS TO
DONATE**

ONLINE

Visit www.accesstoind.org and click the 'Donate' tab.

CASH or CHECK (payable to
ACCESS to Independence):

3810 Milwaukee St., Madison, WI 53714



NEW STAFF

Welcome Mikael Snitker

Mikael Snitker recently started at Access to Independence as a part-time Independent

Living Specialist.

He previously worked with military veterans experiencing homelessness,

and veterans who were interested in meaningful employment opportunities to enhance their lives through the world of work. His areas

of interest are self-efficacy, building for consumers to promote their financial independence, and building social connections which further recovery.

Mikael served in the military during the First Gulf War; thoroughly enjoys motorcycling in Wisconsin and pretty much anything mechanical or motorcycle related, and is most grateful to be at Access to Independence helping others.



Snitker

2020 RECAP

Independent Living Days

On February 19th Independent Living Center staff, Board of Directors, and Independent Living Council members from across the state of Wisconsin met in Madison. This year there were trainings by staff from several Independent Living Centers about Home Modifications and Assistive Technology, Accessible Documents, Adaptive Gaming, Cultural Competency and more! Each year the IL network looks forward to coming together to learn and network, and this year was truly exceptional.

Jason Beloungy and Maureen

Ryan gave a brief history of the Independent Living Movement in Wisconsin, which gave the audience nuggets of knowledge that even seasoned attendees enjoyed.

On February 20th the Independent Living center's staff, Board of Directors, and consumers attended legislative visits to promote what a great asset Independent Living Centers are to those we serve. Advocating for change is a huge part of what every IL center strives for, and at the end of the day, knowing that we have a voice and we were heard was highly satisfying.



Access to independence has two fun and exciting fundraisers this year! Find more information about our fundraisers on our website and Facebook page.

9th Annual Brat Sale

This year's Brat Sale will take place on June 19th from 11am-5pm right here in our parking lot! We've served thousands of hungry customers over the years, and we can't wait to serve up some more brats this year! This event will happen rain or shine! Don't forget that you can pre-order online and pay with a credit card! More information can be found on our website!

3rd Annual Artists Beyond Boundaries

This event is an exciting way to recognize the talents of artists with disabilities across Wisconsin! Starting in June, we will ask artists with disabilities to submit up to two works of art. In September, a panel of judges will deliberate which 12 works of art will be selected for monetary awards. These 12 works of art will also appear in our 2021 calendar. Then, on October 8th, a gallery of ALL artwork submitted to the event will take place at the Goodman Community Center Brassworks building from 5-8:00pm. All artists who have submitted artwork will receive two complimentary tickets to this event. Interested in submitting work or attending the event? Find more information on our website beginning in June 2020!

RELENTLESS

FROM PAGE 1

That is why Access to Independence was thrilled to present our 2020 Relentless Badger to Kate Moran. Kate's leadership within the disability community has been invaluable. For the past several years she has been the cornerstone of the Madison Disability Pride Festival and a driving factor in the growth of Disability Pride Madison as an organization. Kate was integral in the early success of our ActionNet grassroots advocacy program. While working for a regional transportation program in south-central Wisconsin, Kate

worked to provide transportation services to ActionNet members in Green County, which assisted people involved in two successful grassroots advocacy campaigns. Additionally, Kate is committed to intersectional disability justice and demonstrates that commitment through her work at Disability Pride, and through her activism. Her commitment to inclusion for all is something that sets her apart from other organizers, and is integral to the diversity represented by Disability Pride Madison.

This commitment has led to the expansion of opportunities for a variety of artists with disabilities to showcase their talent, and

has fostered a sense of pride within the greater Madison disability community. Congratulations, Kate!



ACCESS' Executive Director, Jason Beloungy with Relentless Badger award winner, Kate Moran.



Join the ACCESS to Independence Board of Directors!

Do you want to be a part of a unique, cross disability organization? Does helping to represent communities in Dane, Dodge, Columbia, and Green counties sound exciting? Help support our agency by becoming a Board Member!

Talents Needed:

- ✓ Lived experience with a disability
- ✓ Fundraising and development knowledge
- ✓ Non-profit service or management experience
- ✓ Business development experience
- ✓ Marketing or public relations experience
- ✓ Legal background

Expectations:

- ✓ Attend bi-monthly meetings (2 hours long)
- ✓ Participate in at least one committee (1-2 hour meetings)
- ✓ Participate in agency events, including fundraising events (2-3 times a year)

Are you interested? We'd love to chat!

Contact Jason Beloungy at (608) 242-8484 ext. 233 or via email at jasonb@accesstoind.org

WisLoan and 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 amounts 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.

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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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ACCESS Board Members

Mary Meunier	Keith Wanta
David Rosenthal	Georgia Allen
Joanna Storm	Malachy Bishop

ACCESS is seeking new board members.
Contact us if you'd like to know more.

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