



2020 ARTISTS BEYOND BOUNDARIES

EVENT SUCCESSFUL, DESPITE
CHANGES DUE TO COVID 19

Access to Independence has recently wrapped up its third annual, but first virtual, Artists Beyond Boundaries event!

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**New Employee
Spotlight:
Sarah Katzman**
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**Diversity, equity,
and inclusion
at ACCESS**
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**When Voting
is Not
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Top: Demonstration of the rocker knife.

Right: Large, bright, and colorful measuring cups.



EASY ACCESS Get Cooking!

by Rebecca Patterson
Independent Living Specialist

One of the most necessary and enjoyed tasks in our lives is cooking! However, sometimes there are a few steps in the process that can make cooking difficult. If you have trouble understanding recipes, have difficulty using kitchen utensils, have a difficult time seeing the markings on measuring cups or thermometers, or if it's hard to hear timers, there's no need to worry! These days we are lucky because there is so much technology designed to help! In our Wistech Assistive Technology Demonstration and Loan program here at Access, we have a lot of this technology! Here are just a few examples:

SEE COOKING, PAGE 9

— NEW — EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Sarah Katzman
Bilingual Independent
Living Specialist



My name is Sarah Katzman, and I am new to Access as a Bilingual Independent Living Specialist. I started this role in September 2020 amid the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the need to work remotely and be physically separated from coworkers, I am truly amazed by the warm welcome I received. I am honored to be part of such a talented, versatile team that is dedicated to creating a more inclusive world.

SEE SPOTLIGHT, PAGE 9

A Correction and Update

by Tracy Miller
Independent Living Specialist

In the August edition of our newsletter, we shared a quote from Dr. John A. Powell, "...I believe that the struggle for racial and social justice provides an unparalleled lens through which to visualize – and achieve – more honest, just, and positive interrelationships in all aspects of our lives together."

We inadvertently capitalized his name, while he chooses to write his name in lowercase, in the belief that we should be "part of the universe, not over it, as capitals signify." The quote comes from Dr. Powell's book *Racing to Justice: Transforming Our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*.

SEE POWELL, PAGE 9

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Diversity, equity and inclusion at Access to Independence, Inc.

by Jason Beloungy
Executive Director

In our August edition of The Open Door, I wrote that work is needed by Access to Independence to end our perpetuation of systemic racism, from within our agency. Since then, we have begun a months-long effort to develop a long-term action plan to improve the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) at Access to Independence. To do this effectively, we hired local experts at EQT by Design to guide us and support our work. EQT by Design is a woman- and Person Of Color-owned business with experience in strategic advising and planning to help organizations and communities develop and design their engagement and inclusion activities to meet their diversity needs for today and tomorrow.

The first phase in developing and implementing our DE&I strategy is taking place in these last months of 2020. We are doing the pre-work of grounding and professional development. Meaningful change is difficult, and our staff members need to be prepared. In early 2021, Access to Independence will begin evaluating our organizational truths, strengths, and opportunity areas, as well as how we use the DE&I goals within our existing strategic plan. As we move into spring, we'll begin crafting our vision, and understand what is keeping us from that vision. In our April edition of The Open Door, we'll reflect on the progress we've made, as well as the next steps we will embark on. While this stage of our work is months-long, our DE&I work will continue indefinitely. There is no date or task completed that allows us to claim that we are

diverse, equitable, or inclusive. We will certainly identify measurable accomplishments, but we have to maintain, learn, and build upon those accomplishments.

Lastly, I want to comment about the relevancy of this work for us as a disability organization. At a recent grounding workshop with EQT by Design, our facilitator, Diara, shared a quote that I felt speaks to this. The quote was from Audre Lorde, the Black feminist, lesbian, poet, mother, warrior: "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives". Our diversity, equity, and inclusion work is not a single issue, and must become entrenched in our services and advocacy. I look forward to sharing more about our work, and our accomplishments, as we move through this journey.

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ARTISTS
FROM PAGE 1

Due to Covid-19, the Board of Directors and the management team at Access to Independence decided the safest way to host this year’s celebration of artists with disabilities was through a virtual platform! We invited artists living across Wisconsin to submit up to two works of art for a chance to win one of thirteen, \$200 prizes. Thirty-three different artists from around the state submitted over 60 works of art to the event! Just as in years past, there was an incredible amount of talent and skill on the artists’ behalf, and we felt so lucky to be surrounded by such incredible artwork for the past few months!

After receiving this truly amazing body of work, we partnered with three jurors from various visual arts organizations to help us determine which twelve works of art would be included in our 2021 Artists Beyond Boundaries calendar, and would receive cash awards. We then included all artwork submitted to the event in a virtual fundraising video which we aired live on our Facebook page on October 8th. In addition to featuring all of the artwork from the event, the video also featured cameos from our Executive Director, two staff members, our Board Chair, and the three jurors who helped us through this event, and announced the top twelve works of art.

SEE VIDEO, PAGE 10

THANK
YOU TO
ALL WHO
HELPED
MAKE THIS
EVENT A
SUCCESS!



View all of the artwork submitted to this event by going to [acesstoind.org/all-artwork-2020](https://www.accesstoind.org/all-artwork-2020)



We have so many people to thank for helping make the 2020 Artist Beyond Boundaries event a success!

Thank you to each and every artist who submitted their work! The judges told us time and time again how hard it was to pick from all of the incredible works we received. They wanted you to know that you should all be extremely proud of the work you’ve created! Without you, the artists, this event would not be possible!

A huge thank you needs to be made to our incredibly generous sponsors for supporting this fun and exciting event. Your sponsorship was a big part of what made our first ever virtual event a success! This year’s sponsors were: Colony Brands (event sponsor), GT Independence (promotional sponsor), Summit Credit Union, The QTI Group, Madison Gas and Electric, and Wispect (segment sponsors).

Thank you to our three jurors, Margaret Plotkin, Mary Diman, and Carey Zawlocki for helping us with the seemingly impossible task of determining this year’s top 12 works of art!

And lastly, thank you to everyone who tuned in to watch our event! Thank you for being there to support our agency and the amazing artists who submitted their artwork. We look forward to another successful event in 2021!



Our goal is to engage and empower people with disabilities to get involved in grassroots advocacy. Join our ActionNet list for more information.

VOTING
When voting
is not enough

by Tracy Miller
Independent Living Specialist

We just came through a hotly contested election, and we hope that many of you exercised the right to vote. The ability to choose our elected officials is one of our most important rights, and a privilege that is not available to everyone in the world.

But we believe that real civic engagement goes beyond just voting. Are there issues in at a local or state level that you feel passionate about? Are there things in your community that you want to see changed? We encourage you to get involved in advocacy, and we want to help. Access to Independence has developed an advocacy committee with staff members, and in addition to how we as an agency identify and act on local and state issues, we believe it is crucial for us to engage in grassroots advocacy.

SEE VOTING, PAGE 10



Join the ACCESS
to Independence
Board of Directors

Do you want to be a part of a unique, cross disability organization? Does representing diverse 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 608-716-7266 or via email at jasonb@acesstoind.org



“I can hear the videos of my grandson!”

Above: Katie poses with her dog Brynnlee while wearing the headphones from ACCESS.

KATIE’S SUCCESS STORY

Katie lost hearing in her right ear due to the influenza virus. She only had 10% hearing remaining in her right ear, and was waiting to be scheduled for bone conduction implant surgery to improve her hearing.

She was concerned that her surgery might be delayed due to the pandemic, and she was looking for ways she could remain independent until the surgery. She was referred to Access to Independence, who suggested she might try a set of bone conduction headphones from the Assistive Technology loan and demonstration program.

Katie tried out the headphones, and found that they allowed her to listen to music and make phone calls more independently!

But what had the most impact for her was being able to hear the voice of her baby grandson, who lives in another state. She later told the Independent Living Specialist that “these headphones have me crying my eyes out! I can hear the videos of my grandson making baby noises!”



“I feel better.”

Above: Corneil and his son take a selfie.

CORNEIL’S SUCCESS STORY

Corneil contacted Access to Independence seeking help with housing, employment, and state/federal benefits in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. His state unemployment claim was in the queue for 27 weeks, and with no income, and difficulty finding new work due to the pandemic, the situation was putting his housing at risk.

Through a series of applications and advocacy work, Corneil’s application for COVID-relating funding and unemployment claims were approved! With those successes, Corneil now had access to funding and the peace of mind he needed to focus on his income and employment needs.

ACCESS assisted Corneil with applying for services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Soon after he had started working towards his career goals, Corneil was able to land a job!

Through the advocacy and services that Corneil received, he now has stable housing, stable income, and opportunities for additional training/education. Corneil said it best, “I feel better.”

Services for youth of any age and of any disability

by Ashley Beal
Youth Services Coordinator

ACCESS offers a robust youth services program for youth with disabilities that includes workshops on self-advocacy, financial literacy, employment soft skills, job readiness, and healthy relationships.

These workshops empower students as they transition from high school to the next phase of their lives, whether that’s college, entering the workforce, or focusing on living independently.

SEE SERVICES, PAGE 10



WISTECH

Assistive Technology Needs in the midst of Covid-19

by Shar Brunes

Assistant Director

We all need to be safe, but we still have needs.

Are you in need of a magnifier, wheelchair, ergonomic kitchen utensils or other Assistive Technology to use for a short period of time? Would you like to try out an amplified phone to make sure it meets your needs before you buy one?

Access to Independence (Access) provides Assistive Technology loans and demonstrations at no cost. If you are in need of a device or would like to explore options of different devices from our Wistech Assistive Technology Loan and Demonstration program, please give Access a call to schedule an appointment. Access has safety protocols in place to make sure the persons we serve and the staff who serve them remain safe during the pandemic.

Equipment being loaned can be dropped off at a residence, or picked up at the Access to Independence office safely with no contact or safe distancing. Demonstrations of items can be provided through video conferencing, YouTube videos, or safe social distancing. If you are interested in utilizing this program, please call our office at (608) 242-8484 or email info@accesstoind.org.

Pictured below is a demonstration on how to sanitize your electronic equipment with a cleaning utensil.



SPOTLIGHT

FROM PAGE 2

I am originally from Nashville, TN but moved to Madison in 2006 to pursue an undergraduate education. I graduated in 2012 from UW-Madison with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish and a Certificate in Dance. Although my educational background is not in human services, I have always been drawn to this field because I am passionate about supporting people in their journey to wellness and creating a better quality of life. I have worked in a variety of settings, supporting volunteer coordination, case management, and advocacy for different organizations in Madison, including: Goodman Community Center, Just Dane (formerly MUM), DAIS, and Focus Counseling. I also have lived experience as someone with a mental health disability, which has deeply influenced my work.

In my spare time, I love to dance, eat good food, and enjoy hanging out with friends and family! I sincerely look forward to a time when social-distancing (and COVID!) is a thing of the past. In the meantime, I am grateful to be connected with such an extraordinary team and excited to dive into my new role!

COOKING

FROM PAGE 2

Rocker Knives: The basic concept is that rather than a straight knife blade, a rocker knife has a curved blade, so you don't have to pick up the knife and push it down. They come with a variety of handles to ensure you can get one that meets your particular needs. There are even ways to cut food if you only have one hand.

Colored measuring spoons/ cups with raised labels:

Sometimes measuring cups or spoons can be hard for people to see or understand. We have measuring cups that display the various measurements in different, contrasting colors to help identify the measurements easier. There are also measuring cups and spoons with raised labels. This can be

either raised letters or Braille.

Unique timers and thermometers: One of the necessities of cooking is knowing when to pull something out of the oven or the temperature of the food. There are timers and thermometers that speak, can be set to blink, or set to make a loud noise.

Phone apps: Did you know there are easy to use apps for your phone that can help you in the kitchen? Some of these apps can identify sounds, explain recipes, and much more.

We have so much knowledge and equipment to share! If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to borrow a piece of equipment at no cost, please contact us so we can help you get cooking!

POWELL

FROM PAGE 2

On September 29, I was honored to hear Dr. Powell speak at the YWCA's Racial Justice Summit. A big thank you to the YWCA for inviting Dr. Powell to speak, and for

hosting this wonderful summit each year! Dr. Powell spoke about "building belonging in a time of othering," and explained how we need to go beyond just inclusion, to real belonging. For more information about his work, visit: belonging.berkeley.edu



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*.

VOTING
FROM PAGE 5

As some of you know, we have an advocacy email list called ActionNet, where we send out information and action alerts, primarily on state and federal issues. As we increase our focus on local issues, we want to engage and empower people with disabilities in our region to be involved. Stay tuned for our April 2021 edition of The Open Door when we plan to share new opportunities for engagement and action. Until then, you can request to join the ActionNet list by going on our website at accesstoind.org/actionnet.html, or by contacting Mikael Snitker at mikaels@accesstoind.org, or (608) 716-7256. Our democracy works best when everyone has a voice, not just a vote!

VIDEO
FROM PAGE 4

If you haven't already seen this year's Artists Beyond Boundaries video, tune in to our YouTube Channel! The video features ALL of the

artwork submitted to the event, as well as highlights the top 12 works of art as chosen by this year's jurors. To view the artwork from this years participants, please visit bit.ly/ArtistsBeyondBoundaries.

SERVICES
FROM PAGE 7

About the Workshops

- The self-advocacy workshop focuses on teaching youth the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination.
- The financial literacy workshop focuses on the basics of financial freedom such as the difference between needs and wants, banks vs credit unions, use of credit cards, and fraud prevention.
- The employment soft skills workshop focuses on important skills needed when

in the workforce such as professionalism, networking, and communication. The job readiness workshop helps students prepare for entering the workforce or moving on to higher education. The healthy relationships workshops focuses on how to be advocate for yourself when making decisions for your body. ACCESS also offers services for youth such as teaching daily living skills, IEP advocacy assistance, children's SSI application, and assistive technology services.

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 that 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.



All of us need peer support in these times! Would you be interested in becoming a volunteer peer mentor? We would love to talk with you and connect you with our training program. Call Tracy at (608) 716-7101 or email tracym@accesstoind.org. How are you staying connected? Our peer support and volunteer peer mentor services can help you get connected and stay connected. While we can't be together in person right now, we can talk by phone, or video chat if people have the technology. Some people are even going old-school and writing real hand-written cards and letters. If you need support at this time, please don't hesitate to call us. Staff will connect with you to help you find resources. We may even be able to help you access the technology to connect virtually, if that is something you need. Call or email today!

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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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