

THE **Open** **Door**

VOL. 42 • ISSUE 3 • APR. 2022

A PUBLICATION OF ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE INC.

BEFORE



IN
WITH
THE
NEW

AFTER



By Amber Brunes

PROGRAMS & COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT

We are thrilled to unveil our refreshed brand identity. Our agency has continued to grow and evolve since opening our doors 44 years ago. As you'll learn while you continue to read through this edition of the newsletter, we have new programs, opportunities, and a few new faces here at our office. And so, in the spirit of growth and advancement, we have seized an opportunity to further reflect who we are today and where we see our future.

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NEW FOR 2022

Access to Independence Announces Accessibility Services Program

By Jason Beloungy
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Access to Independence is excited to announce a new program starting in June, 2022. The Accessibility Services Program is the culmination of several years of experience with providing consultation and technical assistance to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness for people with disabilities. This new menu of services will finally provide companies, organizations, governments, and community groups with an opportunity to utilize the expertise that comes from south-central Wisconsin's only disability-run, cross-disability organization.

WHAT ARE THE SERVICES?

Consultation to understand barriers that exist for people with disabilities, and how to address those barriers. Consultation is available for:

- Existing buildings (new and old), spaces inside and out of a building, and particular elements of a building

- Building designs (including landscape and interior), and blueprints
- Parks, open spaces, and recreation areas
- Festivals and events (including business or trade events, public or private)
- Programs and Services (to improve access and inclusion for employees, customers, and clients)

Technical Assistance with implementing recommendations provided in a consultation report, or as a stand-alone service for:

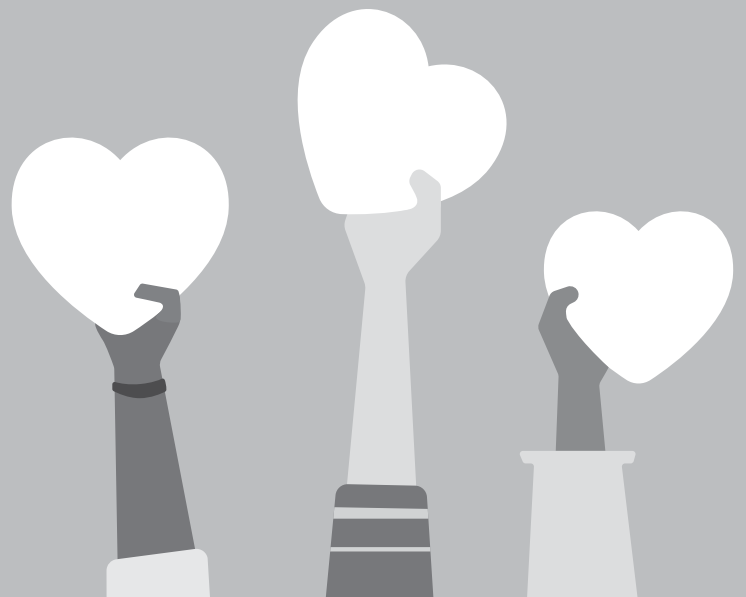
- Creating policies and procedures
- Event planning
- Training for leadership, staff, and volunteers
- Community engagement strategies (for project planning or review)

By now you may have more questions. To learn more, or request a free estimate, contact Jason Beloungy at (608) 716-7266, or email jasonb@accesstoind.org.



Volunteer Opportunity

Seeking people to volunteer and/or attend virtual support group/reading group/film group for people with disabilities. Possibly meet outside in the summer a few times, depending on what the group wants. Call (608) 242-8484 or email Susan at intern1@accesstoind.org if interested.





Welcome Staff!



Gaochi Vang

PEER SPECIALIST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

Gaochi Vang (she/her/hers) is serving as the Peer Specialist Community Engagement Coordinator for the Wisconsin Peer Specialist Employment Initiative (WIPSEI). She is a Hmong American daughter, sister, writer, and organizer. Understanding that she not only carries her story but her ancestors too, she became a Certified Peer Specialist in May of 2021 and a Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Trainer in August of 2021. Through this journey, she found grounding in the identities of her history and healing in her own story. This certification has also expanded her opportunities to share empowering spaces with those who, too, believe in collective healing and courageous love in community.

Before her path intersected with Access to Independence, Gaochi's professional peer support journey began as a substitute peer companion at Iris Place - a peer-run mental health respite located in Appleton, WI. Shortly after, she took on Iris Place's Assistant Director role and continues to take every part of her story into the next chapter of her life.



Marguerit Galindo

PEER SPECIALIST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Marguerit Galindo coordinates core professional and workforce development projects as the Peer Specialist Workforce Development Coordinator with the Wisconsin Peer Support Employment Initiative (WIPSEI).

Prior to employment at Access to Independence, Marguerit became a Certified Peer Specialist in May of 2021 and a Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Trainer in August of 2021. She has since offered peer support and facilitated trainings and supports in a variety of settings. Marguerit began her journey in peer support with Milwaukee Behavior Health Access Clinic South in crisis care while providing online trainings to new and upcoming Certified Peer Specialists. Prior to peer support, Marguerit contributed by providing service as the Intake Director for Teen Challenge Women's Center in Milwaukee and as the Volunteer and Stewardship Coordinator at City on a Hill in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

NEW!

Welcome More Staff!



Sanay Brown

INDEPENDENT LIVING SPECIALIST

My name is Sanay Brown. I was born and raised in Milwaukee, WI. During my high school years, I was very active in my community. I joined a non-profit, at-risk homeless and youth shelter called Pathfinder Youth Shelter. My role at this shelter was Peer Advocate. This job experience allowed me to make a name for myself. I did amazing things like go to South Dakota and help the Native Americans and build outhouses and build beds. I also got experience working with Street Beats, teaching on safe sex, and packaging up 10,000 condoms to pass in the Milwaukee community to reduce teen pregnancy and spread of STDs. I also got involved in the Urban Underground Organization. This particular program focuses on building future leaders in the community. I was able to speak out and protest the systemic injustice in Milwaukee County. I even protested the KKK in 2012 on state fairgrounds. I have many achievements at these two organizations and even facilitated a Youth Mental Health Summit to bring awareness around children's mental health. I continued my journey by going to Oshkosh, WI to further my education. I gained experience working in adult living programs as a shift leader for several years and assisted with pushing clients to be as independent as possible. I held the position of Youth Mentor in Winnebago County helping children with disabilities overcome the trauma and stigma that they face day to day. I came to Madison and joined Access to Independence at the end of December, and I am very excited to be a part of the team and gain new insight on how to best assist people to live as independent as possible.



NEW!

YouTube Channel

Have you checked out the Access to Independence YouTube channel? We've recently started adding informational videos about some of the many different services, programs, and assistive technology here at Access to Independence! Find us at www.bit.ly/AccessToIndYouTube to tune in!

UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUNDS
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Sonic Alert Wireless Vibration Alarm

By Nicole Sanders

INDEPENDENT LIVING SPECIALIST

Don't sleep through your Spring plans! If you have difficulty hearing your alarms because you are a heavy sleeper, or if you are you Deaf or hard of hearing, and can't hear your cell phone ring then The Sonic Alert wireless vibration alarm might be of use to you! It connects wirelessly to your smartphone and can be put under your pillow or mattress. The wireless alarm will keep you alerted to text messages, phone calls, and notifications on your phone, and you can also use it as an alarm in the morning! There is a free Sonic Alert app that you use to set multiple alarms, notifications, vibration patterns, and strengths!

If you would like to try this bed shaker for three weeks for free, or check out other Assistive Technology we have, please contact us at info@accessstoind.org or (608) 242-8484.

Access staff can help identify telecommunications devices that are right for you, and help you apply for the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP).



Photo of the Sonic Alert wireless vibration alarm device.



THE BEST FESTIVAL IN MADISON IS BACK!

Disability Pride Festival returns July 30th, 2022! Disability Pride Fest builds on a long tradition of disability pride celebrations all around the world. Since its inception in 2013, they've been proud to showcase the arts, creativity, and talents of disabled people in Madison and beyond!

Please visit their website at www.disabilitypridemadison.org, and like them on Facebook to continue learning more about the festival and how you can be involved.





Preparing for the 2022 Fall Elections

DATES

August 9, 2022 • Partisan Primary

Races where there are more than one candidate for any recognized political party will have a primary election.

Voters can only vote for candidates of one party, for any races on the ballot. To be on the ballot in November, many candidates have to first win a primary race.

November 8, 2022 • General Election

Winners of these races will take office in January 2023.

This is not a partisan election, so voters do not need to only vote for candidates from one party (but can, if they choose).



BEFORE YOU GO TO THE POLLS

#1: Register to Vote

Register to vote or be prepared to register at the polls.

Call your local clerk and find out what you need to register before, or on, election day.

#2: Do Your Homework

Know where the candidates stand on the issues that are important to you. Here are some resources:

A good place to start is to know who is on your ballot. You can do that by going to MyVote Wisconsin online at www.myvote.wi.gov/en-us/Whats-On-My-Ballot

MyVote Wisconsin is also a helpful site to find your polling place. Connect with your local clerk to learn how accessible it is at www.myvote.wi.gov/en-us/My-Municipal-Clerk

The Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition is a terrific resource and offers useful information for voters with disabilities at www.disabilityvote.org



VOTING ISSUES & CONCERNS

If you experience any barriers to voting, whether it is early voting, absentee voting, or election day voting, contact: The Disability Rights WI Disability Voter Helpline: 1-844-347-8683

And as always, if you need assistance with these resources, don't hesitate to contact Access to Independence.

BRAND

FROM PAGE 1

After careful thought and plenty of consideration, we chose an updated logo that reflects a more modern look and captures our mission to deliver important resources, services, and advocacy to the communities and people we serve. The new logo evokes feelings of energy, empowerment, and impact.

While we are excited for what the future of the agency holds, it's just as important for us to acknowledge our roots. We will always maintain the core values that power us as an Independent Living Center: empowerment and advocacy for people of all ages and any disability, and consumer control. The "open lock" symbol, that has been a part of Access to Independence for over a decade, will continue to be a symbol of barriers being removed, and will serve as a visual reminder of our core values.

As you notice changes in our branding, signs, and promotions, we would certainly love to connect with you. Feel free to reach out with any thoughts, requests, or compliments. If you enjoy social media, please connect with us [@Access.to.independence.wi](https://www.facebook.com/Access.to.independence.wi) on Facebook. We appreciate your kind support. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call us anytime.



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

- Nathan Altmann
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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!

Financial Donation
Giving Tuesday 2021

Financial Donation
Local United Way 2021

Financial Donation



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Access Board Members

Nathan Altmann	David Rosenthal
Furman Avery	Greg Smith
Malachy Bishop	Joanna Storm
Christina Burzinski	Keith Wanta
Ernest Lee	Wendy Weiler
Carlyn Mueller	

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

ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE IS SUPPORTED BY PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND



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