

THE OPEN DOOR

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

ARTISTS BEYOND BOUNDARIES LIVE STREAM EVENT & FUNDRAISER

October 7th, 2021 marks the date of our 4th Annual Artists Beyond Boundaries event! Like last year, this year's event and fundraiser will be live-streamed.

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NEW EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Welcome, new staff



Brandice Hatcher
Peer Specialist Program Administrative Assistant

Brandice Hatcher joined Access to Independence, the contracting organization for the Wisconsin Peer Specialist Employment Initiative, in May 2021 as the Peer Specialist Program Administrative Assistant. Prior to taking on this role, Brandice worked as a Crisis Counselor for WISCAP/Project Recovery and has a professional background in customer support.

Brandice has completed the Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist training as of April 2021, United Way Professional Development, UW Odyssey Project, and UW Upstart Business Initiative. Brandice values service and community and is very engaged with the Madison community. For over five years, she has served as a community volunteer, ambassador, and resource guru. Brandice is skilled in many areas and seeks out continual opportunities for learning, resources, and life experiences.

Brandice connects with her family, friends, and community in her personal time. She also has several business projects, including her boutique, Big Thinz Popping LLC, which provides stylish clothing and accessories for plus-size women, and Righteous Voice Mentoring, a mentoring service focused on supporting girls with accountability, growth, and self-love as they begin the process of becoming “Who They Want to Be”. Brandice finds rejuvenation in taking in the sun, relaxing, making crafts, and engaging in activities and learning.



Ava Martinez
Administrative Assistant

Ava Martinez joined Access to Independence in May 2021 as the Administrative Assistant. Her background includes a variety of work for several other Dane County area non-profits.

Ava has two grown children that live in the Madison area and three grandchildren whose lives she enjoys being an active part of.

She enjoys camping in the state parks in the summer months, spoiling her grandchildren’s family dog and has recently started walking.



Katelyn Vilmo
Independent Living Specialist

I started at ACCESS in 2021 as an Independent Living Specialist. I moved from North Dakota to Wisconsin to explore a new state and expand my horizons. I have previously worked as both a Mental Health Practitioner and Mental Health Technician with degrees in Sociology and Criminal Justice. I joined ACCESS to continue my passion for helping others.

I enjoy relaxing at home when I have nothing else planned. I spend time playing video games on my ps4 and socializing with my family and boyfriend. I love nature and spending time outside. I love to write and dream of being an author one day. I love learning new things and am excited for this opportunity at ACCESS.

THE AGENCY OFFICE IS BACK OPEN



The Access to Independence office re-opened to the public on July 12th. Appointments are preferred, and please note that masks must be worn by all visitors and staff members inside the building. If a visitor does not have a mask, one may be offered at no cost. Anyone unable to wear a mask should contact us in advance of a visit to request an accommodation. Please note that we are continuing to monitor new developments in CDC guidelines and will adjust our services as needed. If you have any questions or concerns leading up to an appointment, please contact us at (608) 242-8484, or by email at info@accesstoind.org.



BECOME A FUNDRAISING LEADER

Are you looking for an easy way to support Access to Independence and our mission? We are currently looking for Fundraising Leaders who would be interested in promoting our agency through social media! If you are interested in helping the agency by becoming a fundraising leader, reach out to Amber at (608) 716-7199 or amberb@accesstoind.org for more information!

ACCESSIBLE & INCLUSIVE *Festivals* and events

Since 2018, Access to Independence's executive director, Jason Beloungy, has served as Chair of the Downtown Madison Inc. (DMI) Beyond Compliance Taskforce. The Taskforce, which is part of DMI's Inclusiveness Committee, has the goal of an accessible and inclusive Downtown Madison, for all people with disabilities. In addition to Jason, Access to Independence board member, Wendy Weiler, has been an active member of the Taskforce.

In early 2021, the city of Madison Parks Department made changes to their parks and street use permit application, by requiring applicants to include an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) plan. This was an important step in improving accessibility, but not the full solution. After discussion within the Beyond Compliance Taskforce, and with the City of Madison Disability Rights Commission, it was decided that providing event organizers with information and resources to develop a thorough plan that goes beyond the minimum compliance standards of the ADA.

SEE FESTIVALS, PAGE 6

YOUTH SERVICES

Preparing youth for independence

Access to Independence is based on the belief that all individuals, of any age, of any disability have the right to live as independently as they choose. Access assists youth with disabilities to achieve this goal through our Youth Services Program. Access to Independence facilitates four curricula that focus on self-advocacy (Help Yourself), financial literacy (Dollars and Sense), and employment soft skills (Skills to Pay the Bills). The fourth that has recently been added to the Youth Services Program is Explore Work. Explore Work is an online-based curriculum offered to youth ages 14-21 that focuses on career planning and exploration, first work experiences, school beyond high school, workplace readiness, and self-advocacy.

These separate curricula are facilitated within local school districts, community centers, and youth programs, and interested parents, teachers, and others should contact us to learn more!

These classes assist students in preparing for life after high school and becoming an adult. Just like every teen, students with disabilities are going through a time of transition, preparing for adulthood, getting a job, and becoming more independent.

In addition to these classes, Access to Independence is also continuing to offer its Healthy Relationships class as well. Healthy Relationships is a class centered around youth with disabilities building healthy relationships as friends and as romantic partners. The impact of the Healthy Relationship class is improved health outcomes for the students. Please note, the Healthy Relationships class is only offered in Dane County. This class is also available within local school districts, community centers, and youth programs, so please contact us for more information.



Pictured above: Youth Services Coordinator Ashley Beal teaching the youth curriculum, Dollars and Sense.

For more information about any of these classes, or to inquire about starting classes, please contact Ashley Beal at ashleyb@accesstoind.org or (608) 716-7278.

BECOME A PEER MENTOR

Peer support helps people increase mental and physical wellness. Please let us know if you are a person with a disability who would be interested in volunteering to connect with others to provide support, or if you are interested in being matched with a mentor to work on your goals.

Learn more by contacting Tracy at (608) 716-7101 or tracym@accesstoind.org.

FESTIVALS

FROM PAGE 4

Jason and Wendy, along with Gregg May of the local organization 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin, got to work developing the Madison Festivals and Events Accessibility Guide. The online version of the guide can be found here: downtownmadison.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Beyond-Compliance-DMI-Festival-Guide-Final.pdf. The guide is free to download and use, and is applicable for any size festival and event. Feel free to share with organizers you know.

While the guide provided over 20 pages of compliance and best practice information to help make festivals and events more accessible, the Beyond Compliance Taskforce agreed that it would go further if local organizers could be provided a free training that would assist them with understanding the material, and learn how to implement the information into their own event. With that in mind, Jason, Wendy, and Suzy Wood, from American Family Insurance, got to work developing a virtual training that was provided for several event organizers on July 13th. Organizers were provided examples, and spent much of the time sharing their own examples of what they have been able to do successfully, and where they have struggled, with ensuring accessibility and inclusion at their events.

Although the training is complete, Jason, Wendy, and others in the Beyond Compliance Taskforce will continue to work on improvements for the guide, and explore ways to work with organizers to ensure accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities at festivals and events. For more information, or technical assistance, please contact Jason at (608) 716-7266, or by email at jasonb@accesstoindependence.org.

ARTISTS

FROM PAGE 1


Tune in as we highlight all of the amazing artwork we've received to the event, and announce this year's top twelve works of art! Be sure you stick around until the end to learn how YOU can help us choose the 13th and final winner by voting on the People's Choice Award!

Artists Beyond Boundaries is an amazing opportunity to showcase the talents of artists with disabilities living across Wisconsin, and also serves as a fundraiser for our agency. All money raised during our live stream event will go toward funding the programs and services we provide to empower people with disabilities to live as independently as THEY choose.

To learn more about this event, and to watch the live stream on October 7th, visit our Facebook page [@Access.to.Independence.WI](https://www.facebook.com/Access.to.Independence.WI) or visit the Artists Beyond Boundaries event page at artistsbeyondboundaries.weebly.com.



Thank you to this year's main event sponsor Colony Brands for your support.



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

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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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Malachy Bishop	Joanna Storm
Christina Burzinski	Keith Wanta
Ernest Lee	Wendy Weiler

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

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like YOU!

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