



**Disability Resource Center**  
-a Center for Independent Living-  
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## Disability Resource Center Newsletter

### YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC & WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN...

We can't believe that a year has gone by since the COVID-19 pandemic started. As a not for profit agency we were unsure how we would reach all of our consumers and stay connected with them through this trying time. DRC was able to think outside the box and connect with more people that have disabilities than ever before!

Disability Resource Center staff worked remotely for many months. We were able to teach Fast Track and SKILLS classes as well as continuing our Peer Counseling Groups and Personal Assistant Orientation through Zoom.

We continued to take phone calls and emails for Information and Referral, and we continued to advocate. Surprisingly, we were able to move some people with disabilities out of nursing homes and back into the community.

DRC is also in the process of creating a new accessible website with Anttix, Inc. that will launch next month. We are very proud of our newly designed accessible website. Our website will be accessible to those with auditory, visual, motor, or cognitive impairments. This website will allow you to access a variety of topics such as: Support Groups, Fast Track, PA Orientation, Zoom Classes, Advocacy, and Updated News & Events, etc.

Speaking of news and events, we have an exciting new project in the works so be sure to LIKE our Facebook page and visit our new website often. We cannot wait to share this AMAZING addition to the center with our existing and future consumers. Stay tuned!!!



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Thank You .....	2
PA Program .....	2
Fast Track .....	3
SKILLS .....	3
ITAC.....	4
Success Stories .....	4
Ways To Give.....	5
Up Coming Events.....	5
DRC Staff & Board.....	6

*"The greater the struggle.....  
the more glorious the  
triumph!"  
-Nick Vujicic*





## THANK YOU!

Thank you to the following businesses and people who arranged for our Fast Track students to obtain Work Place Readiness & Work Based Learning Skills through virtual job shadowing.

**Mike Cemenos-Cemenos Pizza**

**McDonalds-Kathy Woods**

**Jewel-Alexis Simes**

**Marianos-Pamela Kaatz**

**Holiday Inn-Patti Vonder Heide**

Interested in participating in the virtual job shadowing program?? We are always looking for places of employment that will assist our Fast Track students gain new job skills. Our students have varied interests in all career fields. Please contact our office to discuss this wonderful opportunity for your business.

*"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold, when it is summer in the light and winter in the shade." Charles Dickens*

### Peer Support Groups Via Zoom

**Teen Talk**– Mondays starting June 7th from 3-4 pm. Ages 14-18.  
Contact Jerrod Nichols at:  
jerrod@drcjoliet.org

**Men's Group**-TBD  
Contact Sam Knight at:  
sam@drcjoliet.org.

**Young Adults Group**-Mondays starting June 7th 11 am-12 pm.  
Ages 18-30. Contact:  
jerrod@drcjoliet.org.

**Woman's Group** -TBD Contact  
Julee Opel at: julee@drcjoliet.org.

**Accessible Will County (AWC)**  
The First Wednesday of the month from 1 pm-2:30 pm. AWC is a partnership between DRC, disability advocates, persons with disabilities, the City of Joliet businesses, the Joliet Regional Chamber of Commerce & Industry, professional trade organizations, media representatives and civic leaders. Contact Sam Knight at: sam@drcjoliet.org.



## PERSONAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM (PA)

Are you KIND, CARING, RELIABLE and looking to make a difference in someone's life?

If you are looking for a rewarding job and are interested in gaining valuable work experience working one-on-one with consumers in the community; then you would be a great fit for our PA program.

Centers for Independent Living are looking for people to become Personal Assistants to help people with disabilities. Duties include but not limited to: bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, cleaning, cooking, shopping, running errands and mobility exercises, etc.

Benefits include competitive pay, flexible schedule, and professional as well as personal development. The Personal Assistant Program has recently added 2 new PAs, will you be our next one??

If you are interested in attending one of the mandatory orientation classes or for more information on this rewarding program, please contact Maureen Kelly our Personal Assistant Coordinator at 815-729-0162 or via email at: maureen@drcjoliet.org.





*“Teaching Life Skills & Empowering Students”*

## FAST TRACK PROGRAM

Before March of 2020, we primarily taught Fast Track in school classrooms. After the pandemic hit we switched to Zoom classes and we have had more consumers than ever before learning the Five Services. We have taught over 100 Fast Track students since 2020. These numbers have doubled from the previous year. We have had very positive feed back from parents with children who are enrolled in our Fast Track program.

## SKILLS PROGRAM (SHARING KEY INDEPENDENT LIFE LESSONS)

Our goal is to help people with disabilities gain more confidence in their everyday life. In 2020 we taught over 100 consumers topics such as Money Management, Personal Relationships, Job Interviews, Pubic Transportation, and Driving Tools.

We teach these classes to students 18-22 years old that are in a Transitional School within the Will & Grundy County areas. We also have a partnership with Lewis University students majoring in Education that assist us in the program.

These classes are offered Mondays from 9-10 am and 10-12:30 pm, Tuesdays from 9-11:30 am and on the first Friday of each month from 10-11 am. If you are interested in our SKILLS program please contact Sam Knight at 815-729-0162 or via email at [sam@drcjoliet.org](mailto:sam@drcjoliet.org).

Come and join us!



## WHAT IS FAST TRACK

Fast Track is a free program for students with disabilities ages 14-21 who do not have an open DRS case and are enrolled in an education program.

- Fast Track is designed to teach student life skills such as; Self Advocacy, Job Exploration, Work Place Readiness, Post Secondary Education, Work Based Learning and much more.
- Classes are being taught in a safe Zoom environment. (When restrictions are lifted we will be back in the classrooms.)
- Fast Track will not interfere with your child's school curriculum. Fast Track will only enhance learning and help prepare students for their future.

For more information on dates, times, parent's informational sessions and questions, please call DRC at 815-729-0162 and ask for Jerrod Nichols or via email at [jerrod@drcjoliet.org](mailto:jerrod@drcjoliet.org).



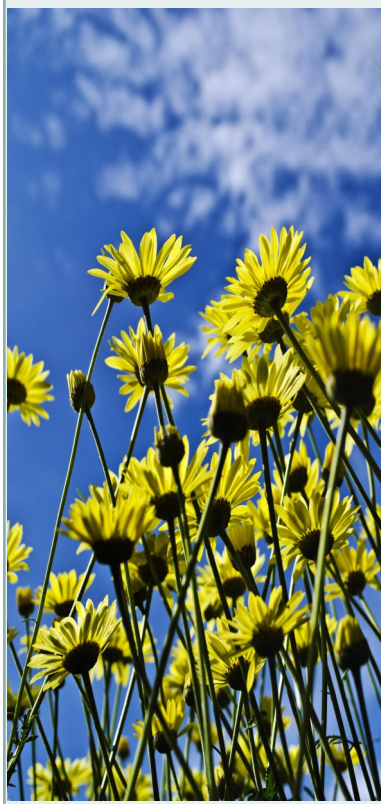
## ITAC NEW EQUIPMENT

ITAC, has been providing Illinois residents with equipment for over 30 years.

This is a state-regulated, non-profit program that is funded by a small surcharge that every Illinois resident already pays on their telephone bill. This fund is utilized by the ITAC program to provide communication equipment to Illinois residents with a disability.

ITAC has just launched a new Pilot Program with limited inventory geared towards individuals with a Speech Disability. Individuals can apply to receive a Speech iPad with AAC apps, free of charge.

Please visit DRC's Facebook page or contact ITAC directly at 800-841-6167 for the applications that need to be completed by a doctor.



## ITAC (ILLINOIS TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS CORP)



Marie Malfatti is DRC's ITAC Coordinator. Marie has once again put Disability Resource Center in **first place for the ITAC distribution in 2020 for the entire state of Illinois!!**

What does this mean? DRC has helped more Illinois residents with hearing loss obtain free amplified telephones, cell phones, and answering machines than any other selection center in the state.

The ITAC program provides FREE amplified telephones and other equipment to all allow Illinois residents with qualified hearing loss regain the ability to hear on the phone. DRC is an official "selection center" for ITAC. Consumers can call to make an appointment with Marie to test different types of amplified phone equipment to find the one that best suits their needs.

There are 28 ITAC selection centers in Illinois, including the highly populated Chicago, Springfield, and Aurora areas. For 2020, our Joliet based selection center distributed over 300 amplified devices and outpaced all the other centers by over 10 percent! **Thank you everyone for supporting DRC, and WAY TO GO MARIE!!**

## SUCCESS STORIES

Z. Z. and C. S. are students in our JJC Community Connections Program. This program teaches 18-22 year old's with disabilities independent living and Life Skills. When Z. Z. & C. S. entered the program both were very shy and quiet but they worked very hard. Throughout the year their self confidence grew and they are preparing to return to college and the work force. Their parents are very excited to see them become more independent, social, and working towards their goals. Best of all Z. Z. & C. S. have become friends. These gentleman have proven that hard work and dedication can help you accomplish anything you set your mind to.

M. H. is a consumer in DRC's Fast Track Program. Due to COVID, M. H. joined Fast Track virtually with her mom every week. Our DRC staff noticed M. H. had a need for assistive technology. (AT). DRC assisted with the purchase of a laptop and Touch Screen monitor to help M. H. succeed in her Zoom learning environment. DRC's staff also provided resources to assist M. H. in getting a new power wheelchair that better suits her. Since receiving the Assistive Technology M. H. is able to participate in her lessons and engages more with her peers and teachers. This is all possible with DRC's Assistive Technology grant which is funded through United Way.

T. M. participates in DRC's Joliet Junior College Transition to Life Program. This program is for students 18-22 years of age and focuses on Independent and Life Skills. During her first year within our program, T. M. has gained more confidence and is now willing to share her life goals with her peers and instructors. Through her hard work and dedication, T. M. began submitting applications for employment and immediately received a call for two interviews with two different companies. Since the interviews, T. M. has been called back by both companies for a second interview. T. M.'s family and DRC's staff is very proud of her accomplishments and we are looking forward to continuing our work with T. M. so she achieves all her life's goals.

## WAYS TO GIVE

It is better to give than to receive. This adage has withstood the test of time. There's truly nothing more rewarding than giving to a worthy cause and seeing your contributions help those with disabilities continue to live full and rewarding lives.

Your support allows us to continue providing the core services that are so important in helping people with disabilities achieve their goals. And the truth is, we ALL benefit when everyone has a chance to fulfill their potential. Thank you for being a part of the solution that helps motivate people with disabilities of all ages fulfill their goals. We couldn't do it without you.

Disability Resource Center and our consumers rely on many sources for funding but many of those funds are earmarked only for specific uses. Your donations help fund *everything* that it takes to allow us to continue serving people with disabilities.

If you wish to donate to DRC you can do so through our [Facebook page](#), [Amazon Smile](#), or [Pay Pal](#) and submit your payment online. We can't say it enough – **THANK YOU! Thank you for supporting our mission, and thank you to everyone who was so generous to DRC in 2020.**



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*"We ALL benefit when everyone has a chance to fulfill their potential."*

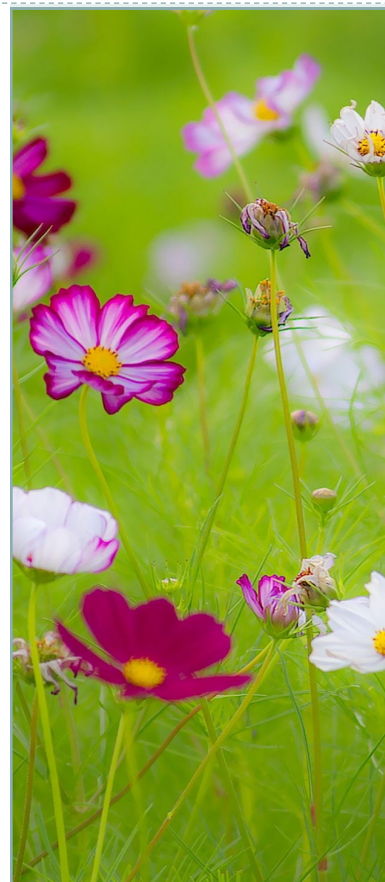
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

DRC will be conducting several informational sessions for parents in May, June and July. During the sessions the following topics will be discussed:

- Disability Resource Center, Who We Are and What We Do
- Social Security
- IEPs
- Guardianship
- PUNS List
- Cornerstone Services
- Fast Track

If you are interested in any of the above topics, or have questions on dates, days and times, please contact Jerrod Nichols at 815-729-0162 or [jerrod@drcjoliet.org](mailto:jerrod@drcjoliet.org).



## Mission Statement:

As people with disabilities and their advocates, Disability Resource Center strives for equality and empowerment of persons with disabilities in the Will and Grundy areas.

## Who We Are

Disability Resource Center informs persons with disabilities of their rights, educate them about their responsibilities, provide support services, promote advocacy, and raise community awareness about disability issues. Disability Resource Center is a cross-disability, community-based non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that operates solely on grants and contributions. We welcome and appreciate ongoing support from businesses, foundations, individuals and organizations.

## DRC STAFF & BOARD

### Staff:

Missy Martin:  
*Executive Director*

Tammy Semmler:  
*Administrative Assistant*

Maureen Kelly:  
*Personal Assistant Coordinator*

Sam Knight:  
*Independent Living Coordinator*

Jerrod Nichols:  
*Community Reintegration  
Transition Coordinator*

Julee Opel:  
*Independent Living Coordinator*

Kindall Pullen:  
*Independent Living Coordinator*

Marie Malfatti  
*ITAC Coordinator*

### Board of Directors 2020-21

Zachary Flemming  
*President*

Rhonda Price  
*Vice President*

Susan Jarosinski  
*Secretary/Past President*

Jennifer Koff  
*Treasurer*

Ivan Bew  
*Delegate-At-Large*

Connie J. Henley  
Dianne Mundle  
Kevin Pruitte  
Chris Boyk  
Ericka Williams  
Christine Doran-Beechler  
*Directors*

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