



Disability Resource Center

-a Center for Independent Living-

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Disability Resource Center Newsletter

LIFE SKILLS CENTER
A DREAM IS NOW A REALITY...



DRC's Mission Statement reads "we strive for equality and empowerment of persons with disabilities". When DRC was presented an amazing opportunity to bring our Mission Statement to life in a HUGE way we jumped at the chance.

On March 15th, 2021 DRC purchased the unit next door, the construction began, and that's when the "Life Skills Center" dream became a reality.

The Life Skills Center is an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible faux apartment. When you walk in the door of the Life Skills Center you can immediately see the thought and effort into the ADA design. You will first be greeted by an inviting living room where our consumers can hang out in bean bag chairs, play games and participate in our peer support groups. The bedroom is equipped with a 1000lb wheelchair scale as well as complete bedroom set. The fully accessible kitchen is not only beautiful but functional. Our wheelchair consumers will have no problem accessing any of the amenities due to the open counter design, wall oven, counter cook-top, side faucet sink sprayer, and low front facing electrical outlets. The laundry room is equipped with a front load washer, dryer and sink.

Our ILA team will be teaching consumers independent living skills such as Cooking, Cleaning, Laundry, Budgeting, Money Management, Household Maintenance, and Hygiene etc. These Independent Living Skills will help empower people with disabilities to live independent lives and set them up for success when living on their own.

We are very passionate and proud of this opportunity for our consumers and plan to use the Life Skills Center opportunity to its fullest. We will be posting our open house ribbon cutting ceremony on our Facebook page as well as our new website www.drcjoliet.org.

We invite you to make an appointment to view our new Life Skills Center. Contact one of our Independent Living Advocates today for more information or to enroll into one of our life changing programs at 815-729-0162.

A big **THANK YOU** to the following businesses who contributed in making this project a reality:

Jonathan Darin-Coldwell Banker (14851 Founders Crossing, Homer Glen, IL)

Brian Miller-Lasting Impressions Painting (Shorewood, IL)

Cathy Smith-Rolando's Furniture & Appliances (140 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL)

Dago Torres-Casa Bella Furniture (1600 N. Farnsworth Ave, Aurora, IL)

Paul Marolda-Mars Medical (333 N. Maple St., New Lenox, IL)

Jon Osborne-Image 360 (9960 W. 191st. St. Suite E. Mokena, IL)



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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

"It's all about choice. You can either be angry for what you don't have, or grateful for what you do have"

-Nick Vujicic



Fall/Winter 2021



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 4 new PAs, will you be our next one??

Interested in attending one of the mandatory orientation classes or need more information on this rewarding program? Please contact Maureen Kelly, Personal Assistant Coordinator at 815-729-0162 or via email at: maureen@drcjoliet.org.

"You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream"
C.S. Lewis



DRC's Peer Support Groups

As our Life Skills Center programming gets underway we will be revamping our Support Group's dates and times.

If at any time you or your loved one needs to speak to someone please contact Jerrod, Julee, Lorrie, Kevin, or Kindall.

ADA Affordable Housing

DRC has worked with the Joliet Housing Authority to help find people with disabilities affordable and accessible housing.

Since January 2021 we have helped place 78 people with 35 vouchers in homes within the Will County area.

There are approximately over 150 people on the housing waiting list. If you have a disability and are in need of accessible housing, please contact Sam Knight 815-729-0162 or sam@drcjoliet.org to be placed on the DRC waiting list.



NEW ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE

DRC has a brand new accessible website and we couldn't be prouder of how it turned out. Our new website is not only accessible but also informational, functional, and intuitive.

Some business websites claim to have accessibility however, ours is built right into the website from the ground up.

Designed for all users, we designed our website for everyone, including those who use assistive technology, including screen readers for the blind.

Video and Audio Content -For our deaf visitors, any videos we share contain captions, text transcripts, or both, so no content is unavailable to anyone. This information is also available for indexing and searching, making it easy to find on our site and easier to understand.

Text You Can See & Resize - All text has proper color contrast for visually impaired visitors, including difficulties with vision due to age. In addition, all text can be resized by zooming in (hit Control + Plus Sign on your keyboard) or changing the settings in your browser or your computer settings. This site is also compatible with software that enhances and zooms for the visually impaired.

Flashing and Blinking Content Elements - Flickering lights can trigger seizures for people with epilepsy. DRC does not have flashing or blinking elements.

If for any reason you are having difficulty with the website, please let us know.

A big **THANK YOU** to Tom & Jason at Anttix, Inc. for taking our ideas and turning them into this amazing website.

Now without further adieu...<https://www.drcjoliet.org>.



"Teaching Life Skills & Empowering Students"

FAST TRACK & SUMMER PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

The Summer Pathways Initiative was designed to bridge the gap between the end of the current academic year and the beginning of the next school year. We taught our Five Core Services this summer to approximately 10 consumers.

Going into the 2021-2022 fall school year we have over 60 re-enrollments and 8 new consumers in our Fast Track program.

Our ILA's are very excited to get back into the schools to see our existing consumers as well as building new relationships with parents, teachers and students.

If you haven't sent back your Fast Track Service Agreement paperwork, don't delay, we don't want you to miss out on a single session.

SKILLS PROGRAM (SHARING KEY INDEPENDENT LIFE LESSONS)

In 2021 we will be teaching 135-150 consumers. Topics include: Money Management, Personal Relationships, Job Interviews, Public Transportation, Driving Tools, and more. Our goal is to assist people with disabilities gain more confidence in their everyday life.

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.

Classes are offered Mondays from 10:30-12 pm, Tuesdays from 9:30-10:30 am, and Wednesday from 10:30-12:00 pm. If you are interested in our SKILLS program please contact Sam Knight at 815-729-0162 or via email at sam@drcjoliet.org. We would love for you 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 taught in a classroom environment and via Zoom when applicable.
- 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.



ITAC (ILLINOIS TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS CORP)

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.

The ITAC program provides FREE amplified telephones and other equipment to 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 815-729-0162 to make an appointment with Marie Malfatti to test different types of amplified phones and equipment to find the one that best suits their needs.



WELCOME TO THE DRC TEAM KEVIN!!



My name is **Kevin Huckfeldt**. I am a full-time Independent Living Advocate and Fast Track Coordinator at Disability Resource Center. I am excited to work with students in the Fast Track program and work in a team supportive environment.

I am a proud alum of Joliet Junior College and Aurora University where I received my Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Social Work. I have experience facilitating, teaching, and developing life skill lessons such as self-advocacy and peer support groups. Self-advocacy is a topic very important in my life. I want to instill in consumers that self-advocacy is about knowing yourself, and knowing what supports you need. Additionally, I have previous experience as an intake and referral intern, I assisted with senior care programs such as meals on wheels and community care programs. I also answered a variety of information and referral questions that directed consumers to the appropriate services. In my spare time I believe in the benefits of self-care.

SUCCESS STORIES

Disability Resource Center Assistive Technology for Children's Program provides up to \$500 in Assistive Technology equipment such as iPads, weighted blankets, trampolines, etc. to children with disabilities.

Trinity School which is through Trinity Services provides education to students with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Through outreach, DRC was able to provide Trinity School with iPads, noise-canceling headphones, rocking chairs, weight vests, trampolines, etc. By providing AT to these students we are helping to lay the groundwork towards them living independent lives.

DRC has joined Joliet Junior College in creating our Transitions to Life program. This program focuses on Independent Living Skills, Job Skills, Self-Advocacy, Job Exploration Counseling, and Workplace Readiness.

Students discussed various forms of identification that adults need to conduct business. Students discussed how to get a Illinois State ID, through this lesson a student self-advocated for himself to his parents about obtaining a state ID. His parents listened and were able to take him to get his first stated ID. DRC staff is so proud of this student's progress and effort to learn to live as independently as possible.

Junior's mother was recently referred to DRC by her son's physical therapist. The family was seeking Adaptive Equipment for Junior. Due to his small stature, a normal bicycle just does not fit him. Currently Junior just watches his friends ride their bikes and his family felt so bad for him. An Adaptive Tricycle would help Junior get exercise as well as being able to socialize with his friends.

Junior's application for his Developmental Youth Trike was approved by DRC. When Junior's mother was contacted to let her know of the approval she responded, "I know I said thank you on the phone the other day, but there are not enough thank you's in the world for people like you and organizations like yours. We have heard "no" or "we can't help you with that" so to finally hear someone say "YES" just brought tears to my eyes- I had to get off the phone so I wouldn't break down while we were talking. I know it is going to be several weeks before Junior gets his bike, but I know his reaction when he gets it will be priceless!!!"

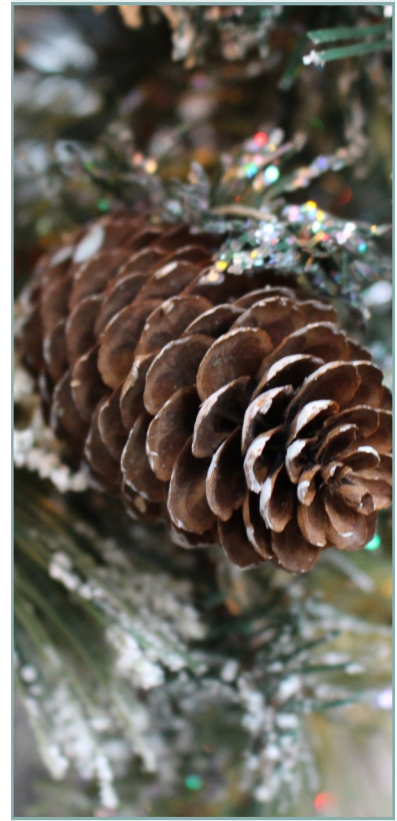
Pictures of Junior and his new bike are on our website www.drcjoliet.org.

WAYS TO GIVE

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 help people with disabilities of all ages achieve 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 generous to DRC in 2021.**



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

UPCOMING EVENTS

DRC will be conducting several informational sessions within the next couple of months. During these sessions the following topics will be discussed:

- Disability Resource Center, Who We Are and What We Do
- Social Security
- Guardianship
- PUNS List
- Cornerstone Services
- Fast Track
- After School Program
- Healthy Relationships
- April 2022 DMD (Disability Mentoring Days)
- Entrepreneurial Business Class for people with disabilities (Starting your own business and how to potentially get up to \$1500 towards start up)



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.



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*

Jerrold Nichols-*Community Reintegration Transition Coordinator*

Julee Opel-*Independent Living Coordinator*

Kindall Carmouche'-*Independent Living Coordinator*

Kevin Huckfeldt-*Independent Living Coordinator*

Marie Malfatti-*ITAC Coordinator*

Board of Directors 2020-21

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Rhonda Price-*Vice President*

Susan Jarosinski-*Secretary*
(Past President)

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Connie J. Henley

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Jenny Carey

Directors

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