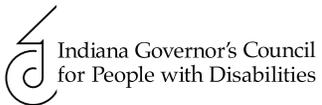


ignite thoughts into action

# spark



Indiana Governor's Council  
for People with Disabilities

**mar/apr 2011**  
volume 1 number 3

## in this issue on **ADVOCACY**



Advocate shares  
skills and insights



Social media  
and advocacy



Disability  
Awareness Month

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**spark** is a bi-monthly publication of the Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, an independent state agency that facilitates change. Our mission is to promote the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. This mission is accomplished through planning, evaluation, collaboration, education, research and advocacy.

**Suellen Jackson-Boner**  
Executive Director

**Christine Dahlberg**  
Deputy Director

**Chad Crowe, J.D.**  
Policy and Communication

**“Cultivate Inclusion” was a fitting theme for this year’s March Disability Awareness Month. It is truly a powerful message that reminds us all about the overarching goal of disability advocacy. But, more importantly, it symbolizes the teamwork needed to influence real change in our communities.**

The theme artwork – depicting a diverse group of people with and without disabilities planting a colorful garden – illustrates a team working in harmony toward a single goal. To achieve full inclusion of people with disabilities in our communities, we must follow that example, coming together as a team of advocates with a single, cohesive voice.

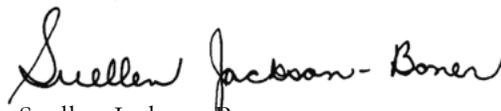
The idea of working side by side with friends and neighbors to build a garden demonstrates a number of positive life lessons that also apply to advocacy:

- Create fertile soil: With the help of your family and friends, build a well-thought-out plan to reach a desired outcome.
- Plant the seeds of action: Assess the various skills among the individuals in your group and divide tasks accordingly, allowing each person to contribute.
- Tend to what you’ve planted: Keep the momentum of your group going by meeting regularly and adapting your plan to achieve your desired result.

Cultivating inclusion in our communities requires dedicated advocates committed to a clearly defined goal, a spirit of camaraderie and the tenacity to stay focused on what you hope to achieve. By taking these steps, you’ll begin to see a beautiful community – one that’s respectful and appreciative of all its members – blossom.

Spring is here; let us plant our garden.

Sincerely,



Suellen Jackson-Boner  
Executive Director



# Successful advocate shares skills and insights

“Contact your legislator.” This is often the first piece of advice new advocates receive. But what does contacting your legislator involve, and how should you begin? Partners in Policymaking graduate and Huntington, Ind., resident Gary Johnson shows us the ropes.

**H**e worked with state legislators in 2009 to pass House Bill (HB) 1603, which allows individuals to be accompanied by their service animals in schools and places of employment. Using his robust advocacy background, Gary Johnson shares his own tips and insights for how to effectively influence legislators.

## Where to begin?

Johnson began his advocacy for HB 1603 by reaching out to his local legislator, Rep. Dan Leonard (District 50). Because the General Assembly was not in session at the time, Johnson called Rep. Leonard at the business he owns in Huntington. Johnson

gave a brief background on the issue at hand and requested the opportunity to discuss possible solutions. An in-person meeting with Rep. Leonard and Johnson took place the very next week. Johnson recommends advocates follow this model, using phone calls and face-to-face meetings to introduce issues to legislators and build relationships.

Johnson also stresses the importance of not shying away from legislators when they are out of session. “Hopefully my legislator will be my representative during the whole year, not just when the legislature is in session,” Johnson said. According to Johnson, waiting to contact a legislator when he/she is in session would likely be

too late for making progress on a new issue. “By early December, legislators have basically decided what bills they’re going to submit. It’s too late to talk to them about something new at that point, and they’re too involved in the current legislative session to think about something for the following year.” The best time to introduce an issue to your local representative? According to Johnson, the window of opportunity is August through October.

## Education and networking are keys to success

Once a bill gets to the committee level, it’s time for advocates to shift emphasis from local legislators to the legislators serving on the



committee that will first review and vote on the bill. “You need to demonstrate to the other legislators and committee members the universal nature of the bill and how it addresses an issue that is widespread throughout the state,” Johnson explained.

**“Ask people... to contact their legislators and say ‘I’m your constituent, this is my experience with the issue, and here’s how the bill can help. I need your support to get this bill passed because it helps me, one of your constituents.’”**

– Gary Johnson, Partners in Policymaking graduate

Cultivating a network of like-minded people who are supportive of the same issues is critical to successfully reaching and educating legislators from other districts. “Constituents really do make a difference. Legislators want to hear from their constituents about issues in the district more than they do from even another legislator. They want to hear from

the people who elected them,” Johnson said. “Ask people in your network to contact their legislators and say ‘I’m your constituent, this is my experience with the issue, and here’s how the bill can help. I need your support to get this bill passed because it helps me, one of your constituents.’”

When educating representatives, Johnson encourages advocates to always be respectful. “Avoid being antagonistic in your approach or treating the representative as if he’s not interested in the subject. A lot of these issues are issues only because people aren’t aware a problem exists. The proper approach is education and leading by example, rather than getting angry or trying to shame legislators into support. Be diplomatic.”

Respectful education might come in the form of giving testimonials

or providing published articles supporting your position, and as Johnson discovered, it’s beneficial to show how other states worked on a similar issue and what solutions they enacted. “Sharing what other states were doing led our legislators to the idea that this was an issue larger than just Indiana, and that Indiana was lagging behind.”

## Gatekeepers are crucial

Although Johnson initially contacted his representative directly, the lines of communication changed once the legislative session began. “Once the legislative session got going, about 90 percent of the correspondence I had with my representative was through his legislative assistant. Legislative assistants are gatekeepers, especially during a session, so it’s important to build relationships with them as well.”

## It’s a marathon, not a sprint

Johnson stresses that advocacy is about longevity – you have to be there guiding the entire process. “You need to be there every step of the way. You have to be in front of the bill the entire process, anticipating issues that might come up and anticipating the legislators who might impose opposition.” \*

### Quick tips at a glance

- Introduce issues to legislators when they’re not in office. August through October is usually a good time.
- Target legislators on the committee that’s reviewing the bill.
- Be respectful and diplomatic.
- Build relationships with legislative assistants.
- Continue your advocacy throughout a bill’s entire cycle.

# Power mapping: finding the route to change

Advocating for change comes down to one crucial bottom line: identify and influence the power source – the decision-maker. In cases of changing public policy or achieving full implementation of existing laws, those decision-makers are legislators or other elected officials, such as mayors, governors, and appointed officials and administrators.

Part of being an effective advocate is formulating a strategic plan to target the individuals who have the power to make change. “Power Mapping” is one method that identifies channels of influence that can be used to persuade the decision-makers in your favor.

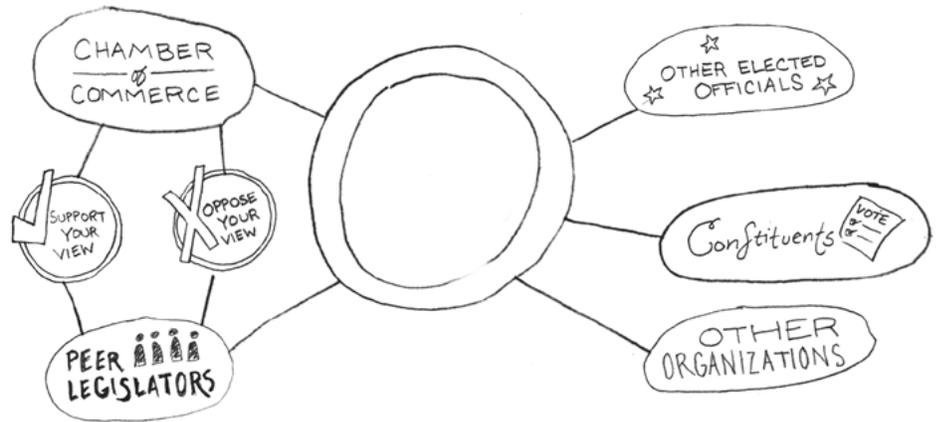
There are a few different ways to create power maps, some more detailed than others, but these are the basic steps:

## One: Identify your target

In power mapping, a “target” is the person or group who can make your desired change. For instance, if you’re advocating for passage of the Public Transportation Funding bill (House Bill 1372 in the Indiana General Assembly’s 2011 session), your primary target would be your local legislators who have the power to co-sponsor or vote for the bill and who can rally support from other legislators.

## Two: Map the target’s influencers

Create a visual map (see above) of



people and organizations that can influence your target. If your target is your local legislator, his or her influencers could be constituents/voters, peer legislators, associations he or she belongs to, other elected officials, etc.

These influencers could be supporters or opponents of your position, or they could be neutral. It’s important to not only identify your allies, but to also determine individuals who oppose your stance and could influence your target unfavorably. Opponents could be legislators who have historically voted against legislation similar to the current bill at hand.

## Three: Identify relational power lines and priorities

Determine connections among your target and the various influencers to identify the best avenues for your outreach. For instance, if your legislator is involved in the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of

Commerce, and other legislators who could vote for or against a bill you favor are also involved, then the Chamber of Commerce connects several of your legislator’s influencers – his/her peers – and should be a top priority.

## Four: Make a plan

Once your map is complete, it should be used to determine how and where to take action. For instance, if the first item on your plan is “Influence my legislator via the Chamber of Commerce,” your action could be attending one of the Chamber’s events to network with the various legislators.

Whether you use power mapping or another method, develop a carefully thought-out plan for reaching your target audience and influencing change. Using this type of strategic approach will help you more effectively achieve the results you desire. \*

# Stake your claim as an active, engaged citizen

In the United States, the success of democracy is especially dependent upon the involvement of its citizens at all levels of government. This civic duty, deeply rooted in our nation's history, is rewarded with many privileges allowing us to influence government outcomes: the freedom of speech, the right to assemble, the right to vote and the right to be represented.

We have the opportunity to participate in government decisions that shape our country. There are a number of ways that citizens can be actively involved in government at the local, state and national levels.

## Influencing public policy

Important public policy decisions are made by both the state and federal legislatures – the Indiana General Assembly and Congress, respectively. Currently in its 2011 session, the General Assembly is making critical budget decisions that will impact programs and services. Furthermore, many new congressmen/women have taken their seats on Capitol Hill and are setting new priorities for national policy.

As a citizen and advocate for people with disabilities, there are many ways you can lend your voice and influence public policy changes at the local, state and national levels:

- Prior to the legislative session, make an effort to become acquainted with your state and federal legislators.
- Communicate with your state and congressional legislators by writing letters, sending emails, making phone calls and requesting in-person meetings. Use these opportunities to share your concerns or express your support of a particular bill or current policy.
- Although you may be concerned about many issues, be cognizant of legislators' busy schedules by keeping your communication focused on one topic at a time.
- Offer to testify before a legislative hearing or committee. If you are in favor of the bill, contact the legislation's sponsor to offer testimony, or contact the opposing side if you're against the bill. Deliver a concise, well-informed testimony based on experience and facts, and be sure to prepare and practice in advance. Or, you may also submit a written testimony.
- Serve as a resource. If you have factual knowledge of and personal experience with an issue, make yourself available to elected officials as a credible resource on that topic.
- Participate in rallies, marches, protests and other gatherings to support or oppose legislation. It is your right to participate in



these demonstrations, but be sure to follow the law.

- Join a political interest group that aligns with your beliefs and values.
- Remember that you can't win them all. Just as you have the right to advocate for or against public policy, so does everyone else. Keep in mind that the opposing side will sometimes win.

## Participating in government

In addition to advocating for legislative changes, citizens can play an active role in their local, state and federal governments on a regular basis. The level of participation ranges from simply voting in elections to communicating with elected

officials – all the way to running for an elected office!

During political elections – whether for local or national offices – you can support your favored candidate by:

- Following his/her campaign trail and attending campaign events and public meetings.
- Working as a volunteer for the candidate's campaign.
- Contributing money to a campaign (even small donations add up).
- Circulating petitions in favor of or in opposition to a candidate.
- Volunteering to register voters or serve as a poll worker.
- Assisting others in organizing a candidates' forum.
- Voting. Every vote counts!

To stay informed and provide your opinion, consider attending public meetings sponsored by city councils,

**“Let each person do his or her part. If one citizen is unwilling to participate, all of us are going to suffer. For the American idea, though it is shared by all of us, is realized in each one of us.”**

–Barbara Jordan, civil rights leader, former U.S. Senator and Representative

planning and zoning boards, parks commissions and school boards.

In Indiana, various government agencies have regular public meetings and events that you're welcome to attend. Visit the agency listing at [www.in.gov/core/find\\_agency.html](http://www.in.gov/core/find_agency.html) to find meetings of interest, or visit the state's event calendar at [www.in.gov/core/calendar.html](http://www.in.gov/core/calendar.html). You can also call the state information center at (800) 457-8283 (toll free).

## Hold government accountable

Being an active citizen also involves holding the government accountable to ensure laws and policies are properly implemented. Indiana's public access laws, including the Access to Public Records Act and the Open Door Law, allow citizens to monitor government activity by attending public meetings and obtaining public records, including:

- Court records and decisions
- State plans, developed by each government agency to work toward specified goals
- Meeting memoranda explaining the general discussion and decisions made during a public meeting
- Public agencies' records, reports and various other documents

The Indiana Commission on Public Records assists state agencies in managing public information. Visit [www.in.gov/icpr](http://www.in.gov/icpr).

To learn more about what information is available to the public, visit the Indiana Public Access Counselor website at [www.in.gov/pac](http://www.in.gov/pac) or call (317) 234-0906. \*

## Know the facts

To effectively advocate for an issue, you must do your homework first. If you're well informed about the topic, elected officials and other decision-makers are more likely to take you seriously.

Do your research by attending seminars and webinars; talking with relatives, neighbors and friends; participating in online forums and blogs; and seeking out organizations that can provide information. Use the Internet, including social networking sites, to develop relationships.

Visit the following websites for updates and information:

- **[www.in.gov](http://www.in.gov)** The "Law & Justice" section explains Indiana's current laws.
- **[www.mylocal.in.gov](http://www.mylocal.in.gov)** Identify and contact your local legislators and look for volunteer opportunities.
- **[www.in.gov/legislative](http://www.in.gov/legislative)** The official site of the General Assembly gives updates on the current session.
- **[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)**, **[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)** These sites will keep you informed about current agendas and proceedings in the U.S. House and Senate.
- **[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)** Learn about the Obama administration's initiatives and agendas. \*

# Self-Advocates at the state and national levels work together for change

**P**ower comes in numbers. A group of determined individuals with shared beliefs and a resounding, unified voice is hard to ignore. Fifteen years ago, that very principle brought a group of Hoosiers with disabilities together – combining their ambitious spirits and dreams – to form Self-Advocates of Indiana.

**“The self-advocacy movement is at its strongest when organizations at every level connect to strengthen their voices.”**

– Betty Williams, president of Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (S.A.B.E.)

A non-profit organization, Self-Advocates of Indiana encourages people with disabilities and their families to advocate for complete fulfillment of their civil rights and the ability to fully participate in their communities. “It’s important for people with disabilities to reach out to their communities with the message that people with disabilities have rights and want to be treated the same as everyone else,” said Melody Cooper, Self-Advocates of Indiana president.

Self-Advocates, which is primarily funded by the Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, divides its work among four regions in the state, working with local organizations that advocate for change in each area. Together,

these regional organizations are made of up 500 individuals who form Self-Advocates of Indiana’s membership – and Cooper anticipates that number will grow. “We hope to add even more groups this year,” Cooper said.

Members gather quarterly for statewide meetings during which

they share advocacy initiatives and helpful tools. During a February 2011 meeting, members visited the Statehouse, where they combined voices to reach out to Indiana legislators.

Self-Advocates of Indiana also sponsors an annual conference, usually occurring during the spring.

Self-Advocates of Indiana is one of many state organizations supported by Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (S.A.B.E.), a national organization that brings together self-advocates groups from across the United States. “We try to offer assistance to state self-advocacy organizations in any area they need help with. Our officers are available for

speaking engagements, and we work to provide whatever help we can, be it technical assistance, marketing materials or guidance,” said Betty Williams, president of S.A.B.E. and past president of Self-Advocates of Indiana.

Williams recognizes the need for local, state and national organizations to collaborate. “The self-advocacy movement is at its strongest when organizations at every level connect to strengthen their voices,” Williams said, citing employment as an example. S.A.B.E. is working with the Alliance for Full Participation, a non-profit leading a national movement to double the employment of people with disabilities by 2015, and has noticed the initiative working its way to the state and local levels.

“People with disabilities are becoming involved in their communities. This is very important because the more people with disabilities make themselves known in their communities, the more likely it is for their skills and interests to be recognized and considered for employment,” Williams said.

For more information on how you can become involved in Self-Advocates of Indiana, visit [www.saind.org](http://www.saind.org). Learn more about S.A.B.E. at [www.sabeusa.org](http://www.sabeusa.org). \*

# Preparation is key to a successful testimony

Imagine you're in front of a room with all eyes upon you. The words you're about to speak and the ideas you'll share will be critical for an issue near and dear to your heart, and to the hearts of disability advocates throughout the state.

The opportunity to testify before state legislators or other decision-makers is a significant moment that carries pressure for anyone who takes on this important task.

Preparation is essential to making the most of your testimony, and to relieving any anxiety you may have about taking the podium. To make sure you're fully prepared, it's important to:

- Educate yourself on the legislative and rule-making processes.
- Know the workings of a testimonial procedure.



Disability advocate Greg Meyer testified before an Indiana Senate committee in 2010 in support of a bill that required early voting locations to be accessible.

- Be very knowledgeable about the bill you plan to address and be ready to deliver your opinion.

Bobby Silverstein, director of the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy, says the key to nailing a testimony is to practice until you feel comfortable. To help advocates deliver a successful testimony, Silverstein created the following “script” for use during the presentation:

- 1. Show your appreciation:** “Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Committee Members.”
- 2. Introduce yourself:** “My name is \_\_\_ and I live in \_\_\_ (city or town).” Pause and take a deep breath.
- 3. Identify the subject in one sentence:** “I am here to talk about . . .” Get to the essence of the issue and grab their attention.
- 4. Share your story:** Get to their heart and soul! Show the committee a picture of your family. A personal story lays the groundwork for the “ask.”
- 5. Give the reasoning:** Get to their heads. Relate the personal story to the policy you're addressing. Explain how the legislation will improve the lives of people with disabilities and their families, as well as positively impact society as a whole.

- 6. Make the “ask”:** Request specific action by the policymaker – to support or oppose a bill or amendment. Explain how their support/opposition will impact you, your family, other people with disabilities and their families, as well as the general community.

- 7. Wrap it up with a summary:** “So I hope you will join our efforts to . . . (restate the policy you are trying to achieve) and support/oppose this bill. Thank you for your time, and do you have any questions?”

You can learn more about the procedures involved with giving testimony in the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities' brochure, “The Legislative Process,” which is available online ([www.in.gov/gpcpd/2354.htm](http://www.in.gov/gpcpd/2354.htm)) or through mail (if requested). The brochure explains the life of a bill and how it becomes law, as well as provides “dos” and “don'ts” for communicating with legislators.

The Council also offers “Partners in Making Your Case,” a free, self-guided online course. This four-hour course will help you gear up to testify before legislators by teaching you how to tell your story, how to conduct meetings with legislators, and how to properly answer questions, among other important topics. You can access this course by visiting [www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/makingyourcase](http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/makingyourcase). \*



# Social media takes advocacy to a whole new level

**T**he evolution of social media during the past decade, including Facebook and YouTube, has ushered in an unprecedented era of communication. A tool that was once mostly thought of as a novelty has grown into a universally accepted platform to engage in dialogue and express opinions across an array of topics.

As the social media landscape has grown, it has emerged as a useful channel for community involvement and political advocacy. A 2010 national Pew Survey reported that 22 percent of online adults used social media to connect to November election campaigns. Another Pew survey found that 82 percent of social network users are active offline in voluntary groups and organizations.

“The Internet has become the new platform for freedom of speech and the expression of

civic ideas,” said Dr. Nicol Turner-Lee, vice president and director of the Media and Technology Institute for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, during a presentation in January.

Social media is an unparalleled tool that is just beginning to reveal its ability to impact public policy and enhance advocacy efforts, allowing advocates to build connections across boundaries that once seemed out of reach. New social media outlets continue to emerge on nearly a daily basis, giving advocates numerous channels through which to build networks, share real-time updates, photos, videos and articles, and publicize events.

A few social media sites have become well-known and respected outlets that are both effective and easily manageable.

## **Facebook** ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com))

Originally created as a site for friends to network online, Facebook has grown into a tool used by organizations, groups and individuals to promote themselves or their causes.

The Arc of Indiana’s self-titled Facebook page and Partners in Policymaking graduate Angela McGinnis’ page, “My home . . . my choice . . . no punishment,” are examples of using Facebook as a platform to grow a network of supporters.

The Arc currently has a following of nearly 1,100 “likes” and shares event details, links to articles, disability news and photos with its followers. In a Jan. 3 post, The Arc extended an opportunity for its followers to provide feedback on 25 new proposed policies for the Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services.

Working against a 10-day timeframe, The Arc was instantly able to reach 1,000-plus people with a single Facebook post. And, the post provided members of The Arc's network the ability to share information with their own networks, expanding the reach of the message – a powerful benefit of social networking.

The “My home . . . my choice . . . no punishment” page exemplifies an individual's ability to advocate via social media. McGinnis took to Facebook when she discovered the possibility her adult son with disabilities may be forced into a group home. Created near the commencement of state legislation budget planning, McGinnis' Facebook group worked to gain support for fully funding Medicaid Waiver programs that would allow adult children to remain at home with parents. The use of Facebook helped to personalize the issue, quickly spread the message and encourage swift action among other advocates and supporters.

### **YouTube** ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))

YouTube has made it easy for anyone to communicate with video. Mosaic Northern Indiana utilizes its national organization's YouTube channel (MOSAIC) to post and share videos highlighting the importance of providing a life of possibilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The organization is able to visually deliver its message to subscribers, who can in turn spread the message to others by sharing Mosaic's videos via other social media sites.

### **Twitter** ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com))

Using a max of 140 characters per “tweet,” Twitter allows organizations

and individuals to share information quickly and concisely with followers.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Indiana uses its Twitter account (@NAMIIndiana) to share multimedia links, provide event announcements, and elicit feedback from followers. NAMI's Twitter followers are able to post messages to the organization's account, and the organization is able to “re-tweet” other Twitter users' posts, creating an online conversation.



Privacy should always be taken into consideration when utilizing a social media site. An important first step to setting up any social media account is to adjust privacy settings. These settings allow account holders to decide who can view their pages and what information is viewable. However, social media site privacy options can change very quickly.

Ready for more advanced social media? Check out sites like Four Square ([www.foursquare.com](http://www.foursquare.com)), which lets you share your location in real-time with friends, and Quora ([www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com)), a question-and-answer network that allows members to contribute to a growing database of knowledge in various subjects. \*

## Ready to be social? Start here.

Getting involved in social media is quick and easy, but it should be approached with some caution and planning. Consider these tips to get started:

- **Explore your options.** Visit a variety of social media sites to determine which might work best for your advocacy efforts.
- **Establish a strategy.** Develop a strategic plan for posting regular content and engaging your audience.
- **Realize it's a commitment.** Social media is about building relationships and continuing conversations. Best practice requires ongoing updates and regular involvement.
- **Welcome comments.** Social media elicits conversation from all sides. Be open to other points of view, but determine in advance how you'll respond to negative comments.
- **Remember it's public.** Keep in mind that once something's posted on the Internet, it could end up being seen by others unintentionally. A good rule of thumb is to only make a post that you would be comfortable with appearing on the news. \*

## Disability Awareness Month helps cultivate inclusion across the state

This year's Disability Awareness Month marked the 20th anniversary of the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities' annual campaign. The Council wishes to thank the numerous volunteers and supporters who made this year's campaign a success by sowing the seeds of inclusion throughout all of Indiana. For a second year in a row, Duke Energy was the title sponsor of the campaign. This year's theme, "Cultivate Inclusion," received a prestigious ADDY Award for creative excellence from the Indianapolis American Advertising Federation chapter.

Every March, the Council produces campaign materials available free of charge to Hoosiers who want to help make a difference. The free campaign materials range from bookmarks and posters to activity guides, helping groups and individuals conduct activities such as mayoral proclamations, awareness fairs, essay contests and arts programs, in their own communities.

With adults and children with disabilities representing slightly more than 19 percent of Indiana's population, Hoosiers across the state worked to ensure Disability Awareness Month was celebrated in their local towns and cities. In fact, the Council received more than 1,400 orders for the free campaign materials. The following is a small sampling of the state-wide participation that took place throughout March.

### 2011 Disability Awareness Month events

#### Columbus

The Columbus Area Arts Council held multiple events celebrating Disability Awareness Month. On March 4, the Arts Council offered First Friday for Families, an accessible, free show that featured magic, juggling and comedy. The Arts Council also provided grant funding for a local artist with a disability to instruct art workshops at area schools and also hosted drumming workshops for students with disabilities. The students not only learned to use the instruments, but also built their own drums.

#### Hammond

On March 10, Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. hosted the

city's Annual Mayor's Commission on Disabilities Awards Breakfast where local individuals, businesses and organizations were honored for improving the lives of area residents with disabilities.

#### Goshen

Led by 2008 Distinguished Leadership Award recipient Sylvia Jackson, Northern Indiana Disability Advocacy Network (NIDAN) held its 12th annual disability awareness luncheon on March 19.

#### Evansville

The Evansville-Vanderburgh County Disability Advisory Board hosted the signing of a mayoral proclamation by Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel and released a Disability Resource Guide to provide information about housing, employment, education and other resources. The mayor also read a series of disability-related books to children at an awareness event sponsored by the Evansville ARC.

#### Bloomington

Down Syndrome Family Connection (DSFC) hosted its third annual "Celebrating Abilities Resource Fair" on March 26. The resource fair featured more than 25 exhibitors from around the Bloomington area. "DSFC



hosts this event to bring the community together, promote positive awareness of persons with disabilities, and to offer families and individuals with disabilities a way to connect with products and services beneficial to their unique needs," said Cyndi Johnson, a family advocate with The Arc Network.

### Terre Haute

The Disability Awareness Work Group (DAWG), a 2010 Community Spirit Award winner, coordinated yet another successful month-long campaign. DAWG, a collaboration of 30 Wabash Valley organizations,

Haute Ministries Association, a network of approximately 30 churches, to enact a campaign to end the "R" word.

### Statewide

United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Indiana hosted its 16th annual ATTITUDE Essay Contest. The contest was open to all Indiana elementary- and middle-school students, and entrants were required to write about one of three topics: an interview with a child or adult with a disability; a book about a person with a disability; or their own personal observations or feelings about

**"Disability awareness is not a one-month event. Achieving our goal of inclusion is a year-round effort, and the campaign is intended to ignite a dialogue among advocates, business and civic leaders, and individuals from all walks of life."**

— Suellen Jackson-Boner, Governor's Council executive director

arranged a mayoral proclamation by Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett which designated March as Disability Awareness Month for the city of Terre Haute. DAWG also sponsored a number of events aimed at raising awareness of disability issues and bringing together people with and without disabilities, including "DATE Day" (Disability Awareness Through Experience) and "Enabled not Disabled Day." During "DATE Day" a person with a disability was paired with a high profile member of the community, and "Enabled not Disabled" participants worked to spruce up designated areas in the community. Additionally, DAWG worked with the Terre

attitudes toward people with disabilities. Cash prizes were awarded to two entrants in each of the three categories.

## Get Involved

"Disability awareness is not a one-month event. Achieving our goal of inclusion is a year-round effort, and the campaign is intended to ignite a dialogue among advocates, business and civic leaders, and individuals from all walks of life," said Governor's Council executive director Suellen Jackson-Boner.

Visit the disability awareness website at [www.indianadisabilityawareness.org](http://www.indianadisabilityawareness.org) to find great resources and ideas for building awareness year-round. Anyone hosting a disability awareness event throughout the year is encouraged to share the details with others by registering the event on the website. Individuals who conducted events during March are also encouraged to complete the coordinator evaluation form, which can be submitted on the website. \*



## AccessAbility program recognizes Bloomington businesses

Several Bloomington-area businesses are leading by example to demonstrate their commitment to full community inclusion by providing accessible services, products and facilities. The Council for Community Accessibility (CCA) took notice of these businesses' efforts and is recognizing them with a CCA AccessAbility Decal.

The CCA's AccessAbility Decal program provides businesses meeting certain accessibility criteria with special window decals to display in their storefronts. The decals let customers know the businesses are accessible and welcome the patronage of people with disabilities.

Accessibility guidelines that must be met to obtain the decal include:

- If parking is provided, an accessible parking space (96" wide) must be included, accompanied by proper signage, an access aisle (60" wide), accessible sidewalk from parking to the building entrance and, if necessary, a ramp that is 12" in length for every inch of height.
- Entrance door must be at least 32" wide and easy to open.
- Interior must be free of obstructions, and aisles must be at least 36" wide. Water fountains and public restrooms,

if provided, must be accessible according to ADA standards.

- Must be willing to serve, with courtesy, people who have hearing or visual impairments and people who have developmental or other disabilities.

The decals were donated by the Bloomington Moose Lodge and were designed by Joel Fosha of Indiana University's Institute on Disability and Community. The CCA partners with IU's Institute on Disability and Community to provide businesses interested in obtaining AccessAbility status with free accessibility screenings. For additional information, visit [Bloomington.in.gov/cca](http://Bloomington.in.gov/cca). \*

## Children with disabilities "boundless" at future playground

Fourteen-year-old Taylor Reuille of Fort Wayne, Ind., is making it possible for all children to be able to swing, slide and explore on an area playground. Thanks to Reuille's efforts, Indiana's first Boundless Playground will open on Memorial Day 2011 at Ft. Wayne's Kreager Park.

Boundless Playgrounds, a Connecticut non-profit, works to build inclusive playgrounds for children and adults of all abilities. The organization has developed nearly 200 inclusive playgrounds across North America.

While in elementary school, Reuille noticed that many children with disabilities couldn't fully enjoy area playgrounds. With the help of her mother Kasandra Booher, Reuille discovered Boundless Playgrounds and the grassroots effort "Taylor's Dream" was eventually formed.

Reuille's network of friends, family and neighbors has brought together a number of Northeast Indiana organizations to ensure the dream becomes a reality. Together these organizations have raised the \$1.3 million needed to build the playground.

Plans for the playground include three pods of playground equipment and activity areas, a splash pad, accessible ramps and walkways, a picnic pavilion and accessible parking.

To learn more about Taylor's Dream or Fort Wayne's Boundless Playground, visit [www.taylorsdream.com](http://www.taylorsdream.com) or call Sarah Nichter, with Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation, at (260) 427-6024. More information about Boundless Playgrounds may be found at [www.boundlessplaygrounds.org](http://www.boundlessplaygrounds.org). \*

# Advocacy resources

## **American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)**

www.aapd.com  
(800) 840-8844 (Voice)

The country's largest cross-disability membership organization, AAPD organizes the disability community to be a powerful voice for change – politically, economically and socially.

## **Fifth Freedom Network**

www.fifthfreedom.org  
(260) 426-8789 (Voice)

This statewide grassroots, cross-disability organization is dedicated to removing the physical and social barriers faced by people with disabilities by coming together to learn about government processes, disability rights, and state and national legislative change initiatives.

## **ADAPT**

www.adapt.org  
(303) 733-9324 (Voice)

A grassroots organization, ADAPT works to ensure that people with disabilities' civil and human rights are fully realized.

## **Disability Rights Advocates (DRA)**

www.draregal.org  
(212) 644-8644 (Voice)  
(877) 603-4579 (TTY)

A non-profit legal center, DRA's mission is to ensure dignity, equality and opportunity for people with all types of disabilities throughout the United States and worldwide.

## **The Arc of Indiana**

www.arcind.org  
(317) 977-2375 (Voice)

The Arc of Indiana empowers families with information and resources on raising a child with a disability to lead a full and meaningful life and empowers people with disabilities to be self-sufficient and independent to the greatest extent possible.

## **Indiana Civil Rights Commission (ICRC)**

www.in.gov/icrc  
(800) 628-2909 (Toll free)  
(800) 743-3333 (TTD/TTY)

ICRC Enforces the Indiana civil rights laws and provides quality education and services in an effort to ensure equal opportunity for all Hoosiers and visitors to the state. ICRC investigates and resolves discrimination complaints in the areas of: employment, housing, public accommodation, credit and education.

## **Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services (IPAS)**

www.in.gov/ipas  
(317) 722-5555 (Voice)  
(800) 838-1131 (TTY)

A federally designated P&A system and an independent state agency, IPAS works to protect and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

## **Indiana Council On Independent Living (ICOIL)**

www.icoil.org

Federally funded independent living centers in Indiana provide resources, services and information

dedicated to giving people with disabilities the power to make choices and live independently. To find your local independent living center, click on the "Resources" tab on the ICOIL website.

## **Self-Advocates of Indiana (SAI)**

www.saind.org  
(317) 977-2375 (Voice)  
(800) 282-9100 (Toll free)

SAI is a statewide organization that advocates for equality, dignity and respect for people with developmental disabilities.

## **Mental Health America of Indiana**

www.mhai.net  
(317) 638-3501 (Voice)  
(800) 555-MHAI (Toll free)

With more than 60 local chapters and offices, this statewide organization works to increase understanding and acceptance of people with mental illness, promotes the use of the most appropriate treatments and services for people with mental illness, and advocates for reform of mental health public policy.

Additional resources can be found on the Council's website:  
[www.in.gov/gpcpd/2331.htm](http://www.in.gov/gpcpd/2331.htm)

ignite thoughts into action

# spark

We welcome your suggestions  
for newsletter content and  
ideas concerning the actions  
of the Council.

phone: (317) 232-7770  
email: [GPCPD@gpcpd.org](mailto:GPCPD@gpcpd.org)

[www.in.gov/gpcpd](http://www.in.gov/gpcpd)

