Changes in collecting disability info

How are people with disabilities counted as part of the U.S. Census? After a backlash from activists, the U.S. Census Bureau has set aside proposed changes to questions about disabilities.

The changes were to be part of the 2023 American Community Survey. The argument against changing the questions is that changes could artificially reduce the number of disabled people counted by more than 40 percent.

In mid-February the Census Bureau announced that it would retain the current American Community Survey disability questions for year 2023 after researchers and the disability community pushed back. The current set of six questions in the survey are already criticized as being very limited, and not effective in showing a range of types of disabilities.

Consideration has been sought for people living with mental health issues, developmental disabilities and chronic health issues such as long COVID. The American Community Survey is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about the nation and its people. Information from the survey generates data that help inform how trillions of dollars in federal funds are distributed each year. Survey numbers in turn affect resources for various programs, housing and education. It also is used when enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and looking at the programs the act is intended to help.

Census Bureau Director Robert Santos posted on his blog that bureau staff will meet with disability community advocates, to decide what changes are needed for the survey questions. He said the census bureau will continue to work with stakeholders and the public to better understand data needs on disability and assess which, if any, revisions are needed for the survey are already criticized as being very limited, and not effective in showing a range of types of disabilities.

The Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics have reviewed consideration has been sought for people living with mental health issues, developmental disabilities and chronic health issues such as long COVID. The American Community Survey is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about the nation and its people. Information from the survey generates data that help inform how trillions of dollars in federal funds are distributed each year. Survey numbers in turn affect resources for various programs, housing and education. It also is used when enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and looking at the programs the act is intended to help.

The Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics have reviewed how much if any money is available in 2024.

An April 2023 rally is photographed by a member of the crowd. Disability rally days get underway in March.

A hurried 2024 legislative session means uncertainty for many bills

by Jane McClure

We are about to a close, uncertainty was a watchword at the state capitol. Everyone was waiting for Minnesota’s budget forecast to be released February 28. That happened as this issue went to press. The forecast in turn will let Gov. Tim Walz, legislators, state department and agencies, and disability advocates know how much if any money is available in 2024.

Typically after the February forecast legislative leaders release spending targets, it’s not even clear yet if the House and Senate will announce spending targets in 2024. That of course depends on whether or not there is money to be spent.

The message Minnesota disability rights advocates, their organizations and allies have been getting this session is to not make fiscal asks. If anything, fiscal changes brought to the capital would be used to lay groundwork for 2025, which is a budget year.

Minnesota’s budget and economic outlook remains stable in the current biennium, according to the state’s Office of Management and Budget. But in December 2023, state officials warned about a significant structural imbalance that constrained the budget outlook for fiscal 2026-2027. As of late 2023, the current fiscal year 2024-2025 surplus was projected at $4.4 billion, up $808 million from the end-of-session estimate. That was attributed to reductions in spending, corporate profit growth and the

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by Carolyn Walkup

The new Highland Popcorn store in Highland Village Center in St. Paul is not your typical retail shop. The people who work there are mastering new skills while earning a paycheck—something most employees do and take for granted. But for the 10 employees at Highland Popcorn, it is a big deal. The majority have intellectual or developmental disabilities, and for them, just landing a job can be a challenge.

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Proposed legislation could make getting around more of a challenge

Most of us who live with disabilities don’t spend a lot of time worrying about zoning and land use issues. But we should.

The 2014 Minnesota Legislature is considering bills to eliminate what are called ‘parking minimums’ for new developments. This has already been done in more than 50 cities, including Duluth, Minneapolis and St. Paul. Developers can build up to a maximum number of parking spaces allowed under a specific zoning type. Variance can be sought if more parking beyond a maximum limit is required.

New apartment building might have fewer residents who rely on personal vehicles, for example. A similar move is afoot in Minnesota. This kind of parking requirement doesn’t affect existing buildings. But the change encourages developers to not construct new buildings without providing any off-street parking at all. While this is seen as modernizing parking lot rules and providing developers with rights as ‘best practices’ for land use and climate change, it raises red flags for some of us with disabilities who must drive to get around.

At a recent news conference, Sen. Omar Fateh (DFL-Minneapolis) claimed that regulations governing parking are arbitrary and capricious. He used examples in Twin Cities suburbs to back his argument, citing the amount of how much parking is required for bowling alleys in different cities. That and other parking regulations vary, city to city.

Fateh’s bill is called the People Over Parking Act. He and his allies, including several progressive groups, argue that mandates force developers to build more parking than is needed. Building parking facilities and creating lots is seen as making housing more expensive, at a time when more affordable housing is desperately needed. Parking lots, garages and ramps are increasingly expensive, with parking ramp costs cited at $400,000 or more per stall.

The act would take away local zoning authority and would instead have a statewide law that gives developers and property owners the right to decide for themselves much off-street parking is needed. Groups that represent tenants in Minnesota have already expressed opposition to the act. One issue, of course, is lost revenue. Another issue is the ability to finance new development. We have also heard some developers say they feel trapped.

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Our plea is for balance. Consider that none of us choose to be disabled, yet one in four of us becomes disabled in the course of a lifetime. Not all of us want to have to drive to our destinations. But we sometimes have no choice.

If you live with a disability or disabilities, and rely on a motor vehicle as primary transportation, not having a minimum number of parking spaces per unit is a huge problem. So here is our familiar message: Please don’t forget us.

We agree that housing is increasingly more expensive for everyone. Many of us who live with disabilities don’t worry about getting a new refrigerator or the latest fancy refrigerator. We just need safe, affordable places to live, with door widths and counter heights that work for us. We need to safely be able to get in and out or a bath or shower.

We consider that not all of us can easily walk or bike or take transit to our destinations. Many of our neighbors of walking a few miles to an office, or to a bathroom or closer to our destinations. Many of our neighbors of walking a few miles to an office, or to a bathroom or finding parking near a bus or light rail. For many of us with disabilities, those are no longer things we can do. Some of us still need to drive. We cannot travel for many blocks on scooters or in motorized wheelchairs, let alone with a walker or cane. While not all of us with disabilities have blue parking placards, we still have to drive to get around.

The State over parking brings to mind the Minneapolis ban on new drive-through services from a few years ago. Existing drive-through service can stay in place but new ones aren’t allowed.

We understand the need to reduce reliance on cars to reduce emissions and climate change. We understand the need to reduce dangers to pedestrians who have to risk hazards from drive-through entrances and exits. But drive-throughs are how many of us get our medications, do our banking and pick up our food.

And drive-through services are also a zoning consideration. Our plea is for balance. Consider that none of us choose to be disabled, yet one in four of us becomes disabled in the course of a lifetime. Not all of us want to have to drive to our destinations. But we sometimes have no choice.

Putting disabled people in a position of having to compete for on-street parking, and possibly travelling in a few blocks with a disability to get to and from a parked vehicle, creates difficult situations. It could deny us employment and housing options we want to stay in our home communities.

Our elected officials should consider a parking compromise that meets the number of disability-signed spots for residents and for business patrons. That would be a reasonable compromise.

Please don’t forget us.

HISTORY NOTE

Brown versus Board of Education opened doors for disability education

One recent lesson in school history classes centers on Brown versus Board of Education in 1954. The light, which ended 70 years ago, is remembered for integrating public schools. Many people remember the end of segregation and the rights case also played a key role in prohibiting segregation on the basis of disability.

The 1954 decision was hailed as opening the doors for everyone. But it took a long time for that to happen. Inclusive education for children with disabilities was one of the first goals of the parents’ movement that was growing at that same time. Parents were demanding better options for their disabled children, especially children with developmental disabilities. They spoke out against sending their children to state institutions.

In 1993, one year before the Brown decision, legendary advocate Elizabeth Monroe Boggs prepared the Association for Retarded Children position statement, ‘Education Bill of Rights for the Retarded Child.’ It stated that every child, including those with developmental disabilities, “has the right to a program of education and training suited to his particular needs and carried forward in the environment most favorable for him, whether that be the community public school, the state residential school or his own home.”

Boggs was not only a social policy analyst and researcher. She was also the mother of a son with developmental disabilities. She co-founded the National Association of Retarded Children in 1919, served on the organization’s board of directors from 1919-1959, and as its president from 1946 to 1947. She held numerous state and federal posts related to disability.

The Brown court case and the parents’ movement were instrumental in disability legislation at the state and federal levels, including the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, which we know today as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. Both were also factors in the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

Many people across the United States took the fight for a free and equal public education to court. Others joined school boards and disability advocacy organizations. One of the first was the Minnesota Department of Administration, which founded the National Association of Retarded Children in 1919, served on the organization’s board of directors from 1919-1959, and as its president from 1946 to 1947. She held numerous state and federal posts related to disability.

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Lung inflammation, damage linked to COVID-19 merits caution, scrutiny

There are days when the pain returns. It was terrible! I felt terrible. My lungs hurt. It could take a year or more for my lungs to recover. I am hopeful that will happen.

Dr. Lucy O’Meara, 26, is excited about the mission of Highland Popcorn and how it’ll benefit the community. "It’s an honor to be able to support the community, as to the support of our local businesses," she added.

Highland Popcorn is located at 2014 26th Ave. SE, South Minneapolis. The popcorn is available for delivery or at local retail outlets. A grand opening of the shop is tentatively planned for March.

At Highland Popcorn, we make fresh, gourmet popcorn with a variety of flavors. Our popcorn is made in small batches, ensuring a delicious and unique flavor experience.

www.highlandpopcorn.com

"I have complex health issues, but I’m getting help to clear the obstacles.
My diagnosis doesn’t get in the way of living my best life."

Your best life, your way.

Whether facing an immediate concern or planning for the future, the experts at the Hub have years of experience helping people with disabilities, and the people who support them. A free resource for all Minnesotans. We serve all languages.

Follow us on Facebook!
Help Access Press as we make transitions with our new delivery service

Dear readers,

Access Press has been bringing you news and information about Minnesota’s disability community since 1990. We’ve been through a lot of changes over the years. Our staff has changed. We went from for-profit to nonprofit status, and added a volunteer board.

We were one of the first Minnesota community papers to have a website. We’ve moved offices a few times and now work virtually.

A big change was made starting with the February issue. Newspapers do what are called “bundle drops.” That is, we take papers to a destination. Papers are left there for people to pick up.

We’ve worked with various bundle drop vendors over the years. Most recently we had worked with Independent Delivery Service (IDS). The St. Paul company had delivered many newspapers and flyers since 1973. But after losing a large delivery account, IDS shut down at the end of 2022.

The closure forced many papers to scramble for new delivery options, including Access Press. While we don’t have the challenge of hiring people to deliver papers door to door, we did have to find other options. We did bring on two new bundle drop contractors and we are pleased to work with them.

We also made changes to our bundle drop list, contacting as many places as we could reach. The list was dated and needed a review. We’ll continue to refine the list, adding and dropping bundle drop location.

The reality is that fewer public places allow papers to be distributed at their locations. Free papers can get messy and that understandably causes frustration for those who have to keep public spaces tidy. Here is what we need from readers. If you read our papers at a public location, and sometimes seems amiss, let me know. I can work with our board to address it.

You might see too many papers, old issues or other problems. We at Access Press need to know so we can make corrections.

Readers can help us monitor drop sites and let us know if they see problems.

We also may consider adding drop sites if readers suggest them. Contact me at 651-644-2133 ext. 1 or email me at jane@accesspress.org.

Jane McClure, Editor

Learn about civil rights for people with developmental disabilities, courts

An Unfinished Journey: Civil Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities and the Federal Courts is offered 1:45-4:55 p.m. Tuesday, March 19 at the Diana E. Murphy U.S. Courthouse, 300 5th St., Minneapolis. The reception is at 5 p.m.

The event was put together over the past 10 months by an outreach committee, and is co-sponsored with the District of Minnesota’s Public Outreach Committee, and is co-sponsored with the Minnesota Disability Bar Association. The panel will be moderated by Magistrate Judge Becky R. Thomson, U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota.

The second panel will explore the ethics, best practices, and challenges relating to class settlements and communications, with the input of the panelists.

The panelists are Daniel Gustafson, Gustafson Glueck PLLC, Michael Fargione, McEllistrem, Fargione & Associates; Paul Floyd, Minnesota State Bar Association; and Ann Bar-El, University of Minnesota School of Law. The program is presented in conjunction with the Minnesota Disability Bar Association, the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Minnesota Disability Bar Association.

Please direct any accommodation requests to Rebeccah Parks at Rebecah_Parks@mn.dcoe.uscourts.gov.

People need not register for the reception but space is limited for the CLE classes.

Find us on Facebook! We post daily updates from our Minnesota disability partners www.facebook.com/accesspress.org

FIND US ON FACEBOOK!
As February ended, it appeared that much ground had been reached on the controversial issue of school resource officers and how they can use physical restraint on students.

The bill was signed into law last year, resulting in a negative structural balance in the current budget. Uncertainty about the forecast is just one factor. Another caveat is that 2024 is one of the most contentious legislative sessions in recent memory. Some committees got a late start, which is adding to questions.

The bill also addresses concerns about the increase in the number of school resource officers. One training policy for schools. The intent of the policy hasn't been easy. Law enforcement advocates worry about limits on what police can do. Parents and advocates argue that students have been harmed. The parents included Sen. Judy Seaberger (DFL-Afton) whose own special needs child was injured by a school officer. She said officers could benefit from training.

“To suggest we’re creating issues where they don’t exist is offensive to me and my family,” she said.

The bill numbers are HF1486/SF354. Go to https://www.leg.mn.gov/to track these and other bills.

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near-term U.S. economic outlook.

Was a compromise reached on use of restraint in Minnesota schools?

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What’s now proposed is a bill that would exempt school resource officers from the ban on prone restraint. Training would be required starting in 2025. Educators, law enforcement and the Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST Board) would work together on a model policy for schools. The policy of the intent would be to minimize use of prone restraint.

Different ideas have been on the table, including a series of trainings for school resource officers. One training proposal would be on youth rain development. There would also be a focus on working with students with disabilities.

The bill has been to the House Public Safety Finance and Policy and Ways and Means committees, and the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety and Education Policy committees. It has had several amendments. Getting changes started in the committee process hasn’t been easy. Law enforcement advocates worry about limits on what police can do. Parents and advocates argue that students have been harmed. The parents included Sen. Judy Seaberger (DFL-Afton) whose own special needs child was injured by a school officer. She said officers could benefit from training.

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Interact sees change in leadership

Jeanne Calvit, founder of Interact Center for the Arts, has stepped down after almost three decades as the arts organization’s artistic director and leader. Calvit’s retirement was effective February 14.

Calvit founded Interact in 1990. In a letter on the organization’s website, she said, “I am proud to say that with the help and support of our incredible arts community, an exceptional staff, and a cadre of collaborators and mentors, the families and friends of our artists, and most important of all – our company of theater and visual artists with disabilities – Interact has been a vital part of the Twin Cities professional arts community for almost 30 years.”

Under Calvit’s leadership Interact won two Ivey Awards as well as multiple awards from the National Endowment for the Arts. The nonprofit in 2018 received an Innovation Award from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, the highest honor for the quality of work coming out of its studio. That allowed for the virtual gallery launch. Interact has had numerous collaborations with theaters. Visual artists work in galleries throughout the region.

And while the Interact board planned for the future and leadership succession before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Interact moved creativity sessions for theater and visual arts online, hosted virtual exhibitions and produced Interact’s first-ever virtual theater event, Zootopia.

Joe Price, who joined Interact in 2013 as operations manager, succeeds Calvit. Price is the father of a disabled child. He has a long history as an artist himself, as program director for the University of Minnesota’s Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program, and most recently as Department Head of Theater and Dance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

‘A her working side-by-side with Joe for the past year, I know he is the best person to take Interact forward into the future,” Calvit said. Her next task is to go through almost 30 years of Interact history on film and in articles and testimonials and to create a living archive that will document and share Interact’s story. Read Calvit’s story at https://intoucharts.org/jeanne-calvit-announcement/

Another key person at Interact, art teacher Deborah Ann Helmke-Wodtke, died in February. She was 72 and lived in Brooklyn Park. She was a hairdresser until a stroke in 2019 left her paralyzed on the left side of her body. She attended Hamline University and after graduating, found her dream career of teaching art to disabled adults at Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. She worked there for many years until her own disability made it too difficult to continue.

Harrison-Hadler is now on board

Lisa Harrison-Hadler is the state’s new Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. The appointment was announced by Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan.

Harrison-Hadler has served as the Department of Economic Opportunity’s Director of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. She has been leading the agency during the appointment process after the death of Deputy Ombudsman, J. “Bud” Rosenfeld last year.

“I am honored to be appointed Ombudsman,” said Harrison-Hadler. “While our previous ombudsman’s time at the agency was too short due to his tragic passing, I look forward to carrying forward the critical work that he did at OMHDD and to the important ongoing work of protecting the rights, justice, inclusion, and advocacy to improve the service system are essential elements of Minnesota’s disability services system. It is an honor to serve. The office oversees work done by state agencies, local school districts, and county social services agencies that monitor, provide, or regulate services or treatment to clients. OMHDD also oversees work done by programs and facilities licensed, registered, or certified by the Department of Human Services or Minnesota Department of Health providing services for mental health, developmental disabilities, chemical dependency, and emotional disturbance.

“I am pleased to select Lisa Harrison-Hadler as the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities,” said Walz. “Lisa has extensive experience serving and advocating for compassionate care, treatment, and justice for all Minnesotans. She is well prepared to take on this role, and I’m grateful for her continued leadership and staff work.”

“Lisa Harrison-Hadler is a true servant leader who is dedicated to protecting the rights of all Minnesotans,” said Flanagan. “By advocating for the dignity, fair treatment, and inclusion of all Minnesotans, she is making our world a better place for everyone. I look forward to working with her.”

New board members named

New board members have joined the Down syndrome Association of Minnesota (DSAMn). The new members will help DSAMn fulfill their mission to empower individuals and families, to create community, and to celebrate the abilities of people with Down syndrome.

John Estrin is the CEO of Hammber/NER, one of the largest disability services providers in Minnesota. Born and raised in Minneapolis, Estrin has spent his plus 25-year career in ministry and Human Services. In 2011, he was appointed the position of Community Director for the University of Minnesota where he earned a certificate in Pediatric Dentistry. She also completed a fellowship in leadership and education in neurodevelopmental disability through the University of Minnesota. She is a clinical director of Special Smiles for Special Olympics and the faculty advisor for the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry Student Chapter. Olson and her husband have two children including a teenage daughter with Down syndrome.

Tara Solen is the district manager and water planner for Lake County. She is a resident of Two Harbors and longtime volunteer with the DSAMn - most recently has served as DSAMn’s Duluth and Northern Minnesota Parent Group co-facilitator. In addition, Solen is a recent graduate of Partners in Policymaking. Tara has three children. Her youngest has Down syndrome.

Appointees are announced

Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan have announced appointments to boards, commissions and committees that work with the state.

John Fechter, Wyoming, was reappointed to the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing. The Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing serves as the principal agency of the state to advocate on behalf of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing Minnesotans by working to ensure those persons have equal access to the courts, programs and opportunities available to others.

Jacqueline Buffington, Duluth, was reappointed to the State-Competency Attainment Board. Buffington serves as a mental health professional with experience in competency attainment. The State Competency Attainment Board creates...
Access, accommodations are offered at new Dakota County library

The new Kaposia Library in South St. Paul joined the Dakota County Library system with a grand opening in February that showcased the building’s many modern features and inviting design. Dakota County leaders, federal lawmakers and local officials pointed to the library’s importance as a place for learning and for gathering. It is the county’s most accessible and inclusive library.

Library services have expanded beyond traditional books and research work. Technology has changed and broadened the services that are available, Dakota County Library Director Margaret Stone said.

“What we’re also seeing is as communities change, communities need libraries for other reasons — it’s the space in the building that people are looking for now,” Stone said, calling the library a community hub for social, educational and work gatherings.

One highlight of the new library is its accessibility. It is 16,000 square feet on one floor, improving access for all users. It also has a calming room for people who need a comforting space while visiting, and a fully accessible entrance.

Other features include an interactive children’s area with a light display, activity wall and other learning resources, multiple study rooms and meeting spaces to accommodate groups of different sizes and lab creative space operating, including a 3D printer.

The library also has a Quiet Zone, which celebrates South St. Paul history and features murals created by a local artist. It will find an outdoor reading space, a polinator-friendly garden, on-site parking, including EV charging stations and a bike rack.

The Library Director Margaret Stone said.

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Eight from LSS honored with awards for excellence in shining service

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) has recognized eight honorees statewide with the annual Excellence in Service Awards.

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New higher education center offers assistance to students

As a means of increasing college options for Minnesota students with intellectual disability, the University of Minnesota’s Institute on Community Integration (ICI) has unveiled a new Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center. The center is collaborating with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education as it implements a competitive grant program. The grants will provide up to $425,500 in the first two years of the program (fiscal years 2023 and 2024) to eligible institutions to create or enhance post-secondary education programs providing meaningful credentials or certifications to students with intellectual disability.

Universities want to increase enrollment of students with diverse backgrounds, and there is nobody more excluded from higher education than people with intellectual disabilities and people with disability of any kind, for that matter,” said ICI Director Amy Hewitt. “It is also tied by the state legislature in the 2023 legislative session, the Technical Assistance Center is coordinating and presenting new ideas. Minnesota has offered economic education opportunities and providing information to students and families about the benefits of attending college and their families, educators, and state agency staff. It is also collaborating with the existing education program at the grant program. Mary Hauff, director of ICI’s Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium, is director of the new center.

“We’re optimistic about the enthusiasm we’re seeing that far from the state, more opportunities for higher education in Minnesota for students with intellectual disability,” Hauff said. “There are a number of colleges and universities that are, in fact, now pursuing inclusive higher ed initiatives on their campuses. And in conversations with the existing programs, we know there is interest in improving and expanding their offerings.”

The center will support colleges and universities to design, implement, and evaluate post-secondary education programs consistent with Minnesota standards that are best practice, research based, and aligned with national accreditation standards. They will be truly inclusive programs, where students are part of the fabric of college life and not segregated to separate programs that are limited to teaching life skills,” Hewitt said.

About 3,000 Minnesota students with intellectual disability complete 12th grade each year, and there are about 5,000 students with such a disability who are college age. Minnesota’s capacity, however, is limited to about 900 students per year because just three institutions have more than 200 designated as comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs.

In addition to working with the learning community event by Beth Myers of Syracuse University, who leads InclusiveE. They are collaborating on a recognized model for college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Other components of the new higher education at ICI include the National Center for College Students with Disabilities, the only project in the center with information and resources for future and current college students with disabilities. Collaborating with the Minnesota Department of Higher Education, the Transition Model for Minnesota Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, a dedicated Project of National Significance; and the TIES Center, which works with university mural projects to help support the movement of students with disabilities, including those with extensive support needs who are moving from inclusive to more inclusive environments.

(Source: University of Minnesota ICI)

Nursing home workers to strike

Hundreds of nursing home workers across the Twin Cities are planning a one-day strike on March 5. Workers will stage a one-day strike on March 5 to protest being overworked, understaffed and underpaid.

As Access Press went to press workers at 10 nursing homes had announced an ongoing strike. St. Thomas is pursuing a strategy in New Hope, the Estates nursing homes in Excelsior, Fridley and Roseville, the Villas at The Cedars on St. Louis Park, Cerenity Humboldt in St. Paul and the Villas in Richfield.

Staff said they are burning out from taking extra shifts because of staffing shortages, and that they are getting the wages or benefits they deserve.

Jamie Guellich is the President of SEIU Healthcare Local 71, speaking about the union representing these nursing home workers. Travis Burth is a union member, but he works at the company Cerenity at Humboldt Nursing Home. He currently works there as a chef and has been part of the push to get better minimum wage for nursing home workers.

Cerenity Senior Care said in a statement it was not able to comment at this time because of its membership position that our associates deserve a wage increase. Associates who work in senior care settings work in some of the most challenging and compassionate people who are committed to the care of Minnesota’s elders.

Cerenity’s statement goes on to say that the union needs to fund higher wages for caregivers. Humboldt has been conducting good faith negotiations for three time and has offered several incentives at levels higher than market trends, but the company has not been able to make that effort to reach a satisfactory settlement with our associates represented by SEIU Healthcare Local 71.

In an interview with MPR, Burth said many care workers regard residents as family.

“So taking this action to go on strike, even for one day, it’s a hard decision for us as a union. But it’s what we need to make that decision, however, because of the states and what’s at issue. And what really is at issue here is that the company has not been working in nursing homes have deteriorated such that we’re working short, we’re working understaffed, we’re working over the row, workers reporting working 20, 30 days in a row. And it’s just not sustainable, and so we’re taking this action to highlight the conditions in nursing homes and to call for change.”

(Source: Minnesota Public Radio)

Help available for employers

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is rolling out the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund. The funds are for small- to medium-sized employers who can request reimbursement for expenses related to reasonable accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities.

Across Minnesota, people with disabilities are working in every kind of job. Some have adapted some or many part of their job so that it fits how they work with a specific disability.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to pay for the cost of reasonable workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities. The new fund from the State of Minnesota is reimbursing small and mid-sized Minnesota businesses for the cost of those accommodations.

The purpose of the new Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund is to reimburse employers for the cost of reasonable workplace accommodations for workers with disabilities. The new fund from the State of Minnesota is reimbursing small and mid-sized Minnesota businesses for the cost of those accommodations.

The project has three goals. One is to expand much-needed housing options and programs for clients who are able to live more independent lives. It will provide staff support to help them to live, work, and participate in the community successfully.

It substantially reduces the cost of caring for clients compared with group homes or adult foster care settings. It substantially reduces the number of staff necessary to provide the same level of care.

Minnesota-based North Bay Cos. developed the building, which opened in 2013. Unit sizes range from 466 to 547 square feet, according to the website. The website indicates that no units are available.

The price works out to $157,813 per unit. The average sales price per unit for apartments in the Twin Cities metro area is $35,850, according to the Finance & Commerce Apartment Sales Tracker at finance-commerce.com. The tracker has recorded the sale of 8,420 apartment units since Aug. 31, 2011.

DHS plans to reserve 24 units for its clients, with 24 available to the public. Rent will continue to be at or near market rates. Level 10 Property Management will continue to manage the property.

The program will be run by the DHS Direct Care and Treatment Administration, which serves about 12,000 people a year with mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and developmental and intellectual disabilities. The announcement notes that because their conditions are complex and challenging to treat, other health care providers and families will include many of these patients. The DHS-operated health care system includes psychiatric hospitals and treatment facilities, inpatient substance-abuse treatment facilities, dental clinics, group homes, vocational training sites, and other treatment facilities. In all, DHS delivers these services at about 60 sites statewide.

Peer recovery services came under scrutiny amid concerns about the nonprofit Refocus Recovery and its related recovery health care company, Kyros. A KARE 11 series highlighted issues with the company, including problems with improper billing. Minnesota’s Department of Human Services Inspector General Kulani Moti said they had been aware of concerns with the organizations before the media scrutiny and have an ongoing investigation into Kyros and Refocus Recovery.

Daniel Larson, who founded Refocus Peer recovery specialists have been key to helping many people struggling with addiction, but Minnesota lawmakers are considering safeguards to prevent bad actors in a growing field that has had little oversight.

Peer recovery workers receive professional training and help people with disabilities, the fund can take away some of the barriers to hiring and retaining employees for jobs that fit how they work. As a rule of thumb, it can be said that without accomplishing good faith negotiations, workers are treated with dignity and respect. The new fund from the State of Minnesota is reimbursing small and mid-sized Minnesota businesses for the cost of those accommodations.

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Two new board members named for MCIL

The Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL) has named two new board members, Kai Thar and Joan Willshire, who will join current board members, providing strategic guidance, valued perspective and expertise in oversight of the non-profit organization.

Having advocated for disability rights for more than 20 years, Thor brings a deep-seated commitment to justice, equity, and inclusion. As a person living with a disability and a leader who has helped design more accessible and inclusive systems for people with disabilities, she has brought meaningful change to the community.

Joan Willshire has served as president of Willshire Consulting, which is involved in health policy and administration. She has worked with the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, and non-profit agencies to advocate and advance disability community concerns and engagement. With a passion and mission to advance disability inclusion and equity, Willshire brings a depth of personal and professional experiences to her work. From disability rights, autonomous vehicles, transportation, healthcare, and emergency preparedness, she has deep knowledge of the issues impacting the disability community. She served as executive director of the Minnesota Council on Disability (MCD) for 5 years and brings a thorough understanding of navigating complex public policies across multiple state agencies, including the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, and non-profit organizations.

Willshire has championed disability rights and worked to transform policies and practices across Minnesota. As president of Willshire Consulting, she currently works with businesses and organizations to help them to embrace an intersectional, equity-driven approach to disability inclusion, citing how diversity and inclusion drive innovation, collaboration and success.

"We welcome this dynamic duo to the MCIL Board of Directors," said MCIL Board Chair Beth Foll. "Mai Thar and Joan Willshire bring impressive backgrounds, proven leadership, and deep commitments to the causes and concerns of the disability community. We are so pleased to have them join us in our continued work. I look forward to their contributions in advancing MCIL’s mission of removing barriers, promoting choices, in assisting individuals with disabilities to live their most independent lives.

MCIL Executive Director Jesse Bethel Gomez, said, "MCIL is thrilled that Mai Thar and Joan Willshire have joined our distinguished board of directors. The MCIL board is deeply dedicated, and I welcome the addition of these two extraordinary individuals and all they bring to complement our current board. Their combined expertise and advocacy are inspiring, and their input will be pivotal in supporting the board’s work and our mission. We are profoundly grateful for such a wealth of expertise and guidance to help position MCIL for a promising and productive future."

Guided by its mission to advance the independent living of people with disabilities by removing barriers and promoting choices, MCIL has assisted people with disabilities in living their most independent lives for more than 40 years. Serving the seven-county metro area through a wide range of services, programs, resources, partnerships, and advocacy, MCIL is among the largest centers for independent living in Minnesota.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

From page 6 and 8

Two new board members named for MCIL

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REGIONAL NEWS

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We are moving more options online! Don’t forget to use our free events calendar. Go to the same page, look for ‘subscriptions’ and find ‘post an event’ under that tab. Remember to list accommodations.

Questions about Regional News and e-newsletters? Contact Editor Jane McClure at jane@accesspress.org or 651-644-2313 ext. 1. The events calendar, news updates and health e-newsletters are available for sponsorship. Please contact ads@accesspress.org or 651-644-2313 ext. 2.

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Join us in advancing the Minnesota Council on Disability’s mission of removing barriers, promoting choices, in assisting individuals with disabilities to live their most independent lives.

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All about Radio Talking Book

Radio Talking Book is not just for listeners with visual disabilities. Anyone with difficulty reading or turning pages can enjoy the service. The service has 22 new books this month, with no rebroadcast. This is the first time that has happened since prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Books broadcast on the Minnesota Radio Talking Book Network are available for loan through the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library in Faribault. The catalog is at www.mnbtbl.org or archived programs online at www.mnssb.org.

Chahtaqua* Monday – Friday 6 a.m. Right, nonfiction by Kimberly Smith, 2023. A return to a truly liberal society. Read by Doyle, 2022. A sober but devastating skewering of cancel culture and the political correctness that has replaced it with a form of fundamentalism, and an urgent appeal to return to a truly liberal society. Read by Joseph Pappel, 13 broadcasts; begins Mon, March 25. – L


Off the Shelf* Monday – Friday 8 p.m. The River Me Remember, fiction by William Koeleway, 2023. A dazzling debut set in 1958, where a small Minnesota town is rocked by a shocking murder, pouring fresh fuel on old grievances. Read by Tom Spech, 14 broadcasts; begins Wed, March 26.

Potpourri* Monday – Friday 9 p.m. Comes, nonfiction by Martin Pucher, 2022. An acclaimed professor and public intellectual takes us on a breakneck tour through pivotal moments in world history, providing a global introduction to the arts

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Katharine Knowles
Brian Lefkowitz
Steffan Lozada
Hilary Matthew
Sue Miller
Sue Miller
Sharon Miller
Estelle Mott
John Nieder
Bob Niswonger
Claudia Nutini
Eleanor O’Hara
Maxine Parker
Steve Porter
Kathryn Proctor
Don Quale
Barbara Sander
Linda Sattler
George Sherry
Robert Skelley
Cherylene Sonnenburg
Mary Timmerman
Cindi Tracy
Mark Vaagen
Tom Vielhauer
Jeff Vocelka
Bruce Walter
Cynthia Washburn
Laura Watrous
Liza Weiss
Susan Wolak
Greg Young
Lauren Zanenburg
Thomas Zier
Richard Zeigler

SILVER ($150 – $499)

Robert Gregory
Craig Dunn & Candy Hart
Patrick Eben
Judy Hunt
Rick & Sølvi MacPherson
Brian Mussett
Marlon Mussett
Mike N. Tramel &
Diane Sprague
Joan Taylor
Jen Peterson
Juliette Quinn-Peterson
Hilary and Stuart Ratner
Ken Rodgers
Lindsey Rieke
Amanda & Mark Tempel
Hammer Residences, Inc.

BRONZE ($75 – $149)

Jane Chevrette
Jane Larson
Ronna Linroth
Brannon Miller
Lynda Milne
Ann and Larry Roscoe
Walter Siebert
JoAnn Stadler
Kay Willshire
Tamarack Habilitation Tech., Inc.

FRIEND ($50 – $74)

Sarah Berg
John Bethe-Gomez
Joan Christy
Richard Cloud
Marjorie Cross
Diane Dicus
Dawn R. Doering
Erin O’Hara
Amanda & Mark Tempel
Linda Wolford
Ken Rodgers
Hilary and Stuart Ratner
Julee Quarve-Peterson
Rick & Susie MacPherson
Judy Hunt
Debra Norgaard
Andrea McKee
Shelley Madore
Phil Jacobsma
Gretchen Jacobsen
Gretchen Jacobsen
Mike Gude
Marjorie Goldberg
Claudia Fuglie
Annalisa Galewood
Marcia Goldstein
Mike Goll
Terry Hagenah
Johie & Marilyn Clark
Tom Clark
Mark Daly
Shauna Delk
Anonymous
Ellen Litman
Stefan Johns
Daniel Ness
Anita Schenkelberg
Mike W. Tramel &
Donna Verner
Katherine Tomlinson
Katherine Tomlinson
Debra Mussett
Anne L. Henry
Anita & Luther Schermer/Granquist
Carol Anne Sheets
Becca Levy
Mollie Trimble
Monica Youn
Low cruise
The Rat Queen
The Writer’s Voice*
Past is Prologue*
Afternoon Report*
Choice Reading*
March 2024
Volume 35, Number 3

March 12. – V, R

World War II from the African American perspective. Read by Holly Sylvester, 12 broadcasts; begins Wed, March 13. – V, R

Monday – Friday 10 a.m.

Heavenly Hoe, fiction by Charles Buech, 2023. A widow in her seventies refuses to be the victim of scammers and goes on an adventurous bid for justice. Read by Yelva Lyndfield. 13 broadcasts; begins Tue, March 12.

Choice Reading* Monday – Friday 2 p.m. The Big Sugar, fiction by Mary Logue, 2023. A grisly death near her new homestead draws Big Reardon into a complicated mystery story after her arrival in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1881. Read by Greg Olson. Six broadcasts; begins Thu, March 14.

Be Mine, fiction by Richard Ford, 2023. A man in the twilight of life faces down mortality while caring for his son with ALS.

March 18. – L

March 19. – L

March 19. – L

March 20. – L

March 21. – L

March 22. – L

March 23. – L

March 24. – L

March 25. – L

March 26. – L
Young Dance mini golf

Young Dance hosts its third annual Build-Your-Own Miniature Golf Event. 1 to 6 p.m. Sat, March 23 at Lake Monster Brewing Company, 650 Vandalia St., #100, St. Paul. This year’s theme is to design mini golf hole inspired by Alice in Wonderland. Work individually or collaborate with friends, utilizing materials like cardboard, wood, and tubes to bring your imaginative concepts to life. Skilled construction workers will be present to offer guidance and ensure that the creations shine. At 4 p.m., the course opens to the public for play. Choose one’s price to participate, with a suggested donation of $15 per person. All proceeds directly support Young Dance’s mission of transforming lives through movement by expanding access to its inclusive dance programming. FFI 612-423-3064, info@youngdance.org.

DSAM benefit concert

A benefit concert for the Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota (DSAM) is 7 p.m. Sat, March 23 at the Undergound Music Cafe, 468 3rd Ave N., Mpls. Tickets are $50 and can be purchased in advance or at the door. Attendees must be age 18 or older. The concert features the band Turn Turn Turn and singer/songwriter Adam Levy. This special event aims to raise funds to support DSAM’s mission of empowering individuals and families, creating community, and celebrating the abilities of people with Down syndrome. The event also continues DSAM’s World Down Syndrome Day Celebrations. FFI: https://dice.fm/venue/underground-music-venue---event-space-3ab8-or www.dsam.org.

Opportunities

Online

Website changes

For other accessibility resources or who use accessibility accommodations and families. Facilitators are Tara Inmon and Andy Sturdevant from the Open Flow Forum in Mpls. and organized by the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Sports and Recreation Team. FFI: 612-775-2311, daniel.edmondson@alina.com

Open Flow Forum

The Artists with Disabilities Alliance meets on the second Thursday of the month - March 9. Virtually join artists with disabilities and supporters to share visual and performing arts, music, their interests and creative efforts or disability issues. Facilitators are Tara Inmon and Andy Sturdevant from the Open Flow Forum in Mpls. and organized by the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Sports and Recreation Team. FFI: 612-775-2311, daniel.edmondson@alina.com

Resources to Enjoy!

The Enjoy listings are for arts events as well as banquets, fundraising efforts or disability issues. Facilitators are Tara Inmon and Andy Sturdevant from the Open Flow Forum in Mpls. and organized by the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Sports and Recreation Team. FFI: 612-775-2311, daniel.edmondson@alina.com

Children and families

PACER workshops sampling

PACER Center offers many useful free or low-cost workshops for families of children with any disabilities. Some in-person workshops are offered at PACER Center, at Greater Minnesota locations and also offered online. Other workshops are online and livestreamed at any time. Advance registration is required for all workshops. At least 48 hours’ notice is needed for interpretation. Check out the website and link to the newsletter of statewide workshops that allows participants to pick and choose sessions for their needs. Access Press only lists a sampling of the workshops offered.

Effective Communication: How is the Year Going? is 6:30-7:30 p.m. Wed, March 20. Spring is always a good time to be sure that a relationship with a parent or guardian as an equal member, is working well together. The workshop will cover how to approach the team with concerns, as well as nine more top tips to ensure a collaborative process. Online.

Using Your Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) to Advocate for Your Child and Family is 6:30-8 p.m. Thu, March 21. Families will learn about early intervention services, the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), how they can be involved in writing child and family outcomes, and how to become active participants in the IFSP process. Online.

What’s So Special About Turning Three? is 6:30-8 p.m. Tue, March 28. A child’s third birthday is an important day, it marks the transition from early intervention services to preschool. The workshop will explain the difference between early intervention services and preschool special education services. Online.

Preparing for Your Child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) to Advocate for Your Child: Preparing for Your Child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) to Advocate for Your Child is 6:30-7:30 p.m. Thu, March 28. IEPs for children ages three to five focus on the educational and functional needs of the child. This workshop will help prepare parents to actively participate in the development of their child’s IEP. Online.

Tech for Teens Club: Robotics is 10:30-11:30 a.m. Sat, March 16 at PACER Center. In a workshop on robotics, participants will learn about robots, construct their own MBot robot, and test the robot in an obstacle course. All ages are welcome. FFI: PACER, 952-838-9000, 800-537-2327, www.pacer.org

Info & Assistance

Many classes available through the University of Minnesota (University of Minnesota on Mental Illness) has set up a wide variety of free and in-person online mental health classes. Choices include Hope for Recovery, Transitions, Ending the Silence, Understanding Early Episode Psychosis for Families, In Our Own Voice, Family to Family, Positive Psychology, Creating Community, smoking cessation, a suicide prevention class called QPR – Question, Persuade and Refer, a special QPR workshop, Art, a special QPR workshop, Agricultural Communities and many more.

NAMI Minnesota’s Online Support Groups moved to a new and improved platform, HeyPeers. HeyPeers provides a safe, easy to access environment exclusively designed for online support group meetings.

The classes and online support groups are designed for family members and caregivers, persons living with a mental illness, service providers, and also the general public. Find a complete listing of these classes and how to join in by going to namimn.org and clicking on “Classes” or go straight to https://namimn.org/ education-public-awareness/classes/ schedules/
Access Press received a Community Engagement and Diverse Media Grant from the Minnesota Department of Health to provide information about Covid-19 and vaccinations to our readers and the community of people with disabilities. There will be many informational items we will share with you.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

FOR MORE INFO, PLEASE VISIT
www.cdc.gov/hygiene/cleaning/cleaning-your-home.html
www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html

WORK WITH YOUR CARE PROVIDER TO STAY HEALTHY

PROTECT YOURSELF

VACCINES ARE YOUR BEST PROTECTION AGAINST BEING SICK

KEEPING YOUR VACCINES UPDATED IS A MUST IF YOU LIVE WITH DISABILITIES!

EMPHASIZE TO YOUR CARE PROVIDER THAT WORKERS NEED TO HAVE THEIR VACCINES UPDATED TOO.

FAMILY MEMBERS AND CAREGIVERS MUST DO SO, TOO.

PREPARE

PLAN WHAT YOU WILL DO IF YOU OR YOUR DIRECT PROVIDER GETS SICK.

CREATE A CONTACT LIST OF FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS AND LOCAL SERVICES AGENCIES THAT CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT.

URGE HELPERS TO BE VACCINATED AND DIRECT THEM TO VACCINE RESOURCES.

PLAN AT LEAST TWO WAYS OF COMMUNICATING FROM HOME AND WORK THAT CAN BE USED IN AN EMERGENCY.

HAVE ENOUGH HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND GROCERIES YOU WILL NEED FOR A FEW WEEKS, AT LEAST 30 DAY SUPPLY OF MEDICINES AND ANY MEDICAL EQUIPMENT OR SUPPLIES.

FOR MORE INFO, PLEASE VISIT
www.cdc.gov/hygiene/cleaning/cleaning-your-home.html
www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html