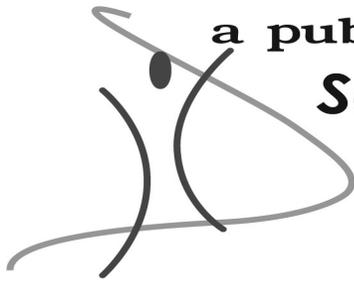


# Centerpieces

a publication of

**Southwestern Center for  
Independent Living (SWCIL)**

*Serving People with Disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota*



## SWCIL Travels to the MN State Capitol

*Each year, SWCIL staff makes a trip to the State Capitol, taking along individuals who want to share their story and advocate for what is important to them.*



Pictured above from left to right are Gabbie Holthe, Tom Holthe, Melissa Doherty, Skylar Jones, Charlene Ramirez, Senator Dahms, Caroline Frodermann, Jen Thovson, Kathy Monahan, and Ben Medenwaldt



*Spring Issue 2020*

*Also In this issue . . .*

*Improving Accessible Transportation*

*Consumer Success Story*

*Low-vision Aids*

*and more*

## Improving Accessible Transportation in SW MN by Ted Stamp



Ted Stamp, SWCIL staff member

Finding a means to get to where you need to go in and between rural communities in Southwest Minnesota can be very difficult. Resources are limited, and many smaller communities have no accessible or affordable transit option. And because equal access to transportation is needed throughout this region for all people to

live, work, and play, SWCIL works to improve access to affordable, accessible transportation through community advocacy efforts and individual training services.

Part of this work in 2019 included involvement on various transit-focused groups. During a MnDOT Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAVs) scenario planning workshop, SWCIL offered insight to potential issues and safety concerns specific to individuals with disabilities, including the need to address chair tie downs, loading/unloading, and other functions drivers might normally perform for individuals with disabilities. SWCIL staff serving on the MN Council on Disability also continued advocacy efforts to improve accessibility at state parks and to amend state policies to allow reimbursement for personal care attendants to drive individuals with disabilities to work, appointments, and other activities. SWCIL staff also participated in a MnDOT transportation equity interview, informing MnDOT on barriers to transportation in the region.

SWCIL staff serve on six local United Community Action transit advisory committees representing the Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, and Redwood County areas. During 2019 these groups worked on improving local transit by promoting and establishing: new transit agreements, a new bus route connecting

## Improving Accessible Transportation ... Cont'd

rural towns, transit staff training on understanding mental health disabilities, an additional accessible bus, added bus stops near low-income housing, and other items. While improved accessible transit options are needed, access to public walkways, streets, and bus stops are equally important. An accessible bus does little good if the bus stop cannot be found or reached. To help address public access concerns in Marshall, SWCIL conducts assessments of public transit areas. During 2019 this included 30 bus stops, various walkways, and 15 intersections. Updated information on the accessibility and functionality of intersections, crosswalks, audible pedestrian signals, curb cuts, etc. was provided to the Marshall City Engineering Department & MnDOT, and the City has maintained communication with SWCIL on issues requiring correction, including repairs and improvements to signs, pushbuttons, audible signals, and visual warnings.

SWCIL also offers transportation related training services, including learning the MN driver's manual and how to use available local transit. During 2019, 57 individuals achieved transportation related goals with SWCIL. Eleven of these individuals gained their MN driver's permit. Some local successes include one young woman who passed the driver's exam using adaptive learning techniques. In rural Balaton and Tracy communities, workers can now use a bus route to reach employment in Marshall, one of the area's larger towns. Each of the many successes from 2019 carry forward SWCIL's efforts into 2020, continuing to promote change that creates inclusive rural transportation.

Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL) is a community-based, non-profit organization serving people with all disability types in the ten counties of southwestern Minnesota through: \*Individual and Systems Advocacy \*Cross-disability Peer Counseling \*Information and Referral \*Independent Living Skills Training and \*Public Education All of SWCIL's programs and services are consumer controlled with an emphasis on improving the quality of life for all people with disabilities. SWCIL's aim is to provide education and awareness to promote inclusion, acceptance and equal access in society for all people with disabilities.

For more information about SWCIL programs and services, please contact us at: 109 South 5th Street, Suite 700—Marshall, MN 56258 Phone: (507) 532-2221 or (800) 422-1485 (For MN Relay, dial 711) or fax (507) 532-2222.

## Consumer Success Story – by Shanda Walker



Picture of Ali in the kitchen

Ali Andree is a fun, quirky, talented 15 year-old girl with a vibrant personality. Ali has been working with SWCIL staff to overcome personal barriers to increase her confidence, self-esteem, and abilities in general.

Ali has also been working on developing positive self-talking skills, a core group of dependable friends, and social events that fit her personality and interests. One of the most surprising skills that Ali learned which helped increase her self-confidence is cooking and baking. For the first time in her life, she has become confident enough to prepare cookies in the kitchen with SWCIL staff. Ali was successful in reading the recipe and measuring all ingredients, mixing and placing dough on the pan, and even using the oven. Ali and staff celebrated when she successfully cracked an egg for the first time!

During her second cooking session, Ali called her grandma to get her favorite family recipe, writing down all ingredients to develop the grocery list and gathering all the materials and ingredients before preparing the meal. With a little encouragement, Ali fried, chopped, boiled, whisked, and mashed her way to a delicious meal for her family.

Our Mission Statement: SWCIL is dedicated to working with and responding to the ever changing needs of persons with disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota to promote societal acceptance, inclusion, and equal access for all persons with disabilities.

## **Upcoming SWCIL Events**

RSVP: 507.532.2221 OR 800.422.1485 (for MN Relay, dial 711)  
[swcil@swcil.com](mailto:swcil@swcil.com) OR message us on Facebook

All events are smoke and fragrance free

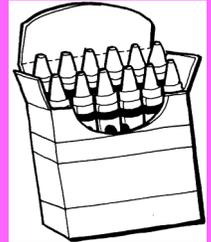
Reasonable Accommodations upon request

### **Adults-Only Coloring Club**

When: Mar. 30, April 20, May 18, June 29

Where: Marshall SWCIL Office

Time: 4:30-6:00 P.M. Cost: Free Please RSVP!



### **Craft Night**

When: April 13, June 15, August 10

Where: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Please RSVP!

Time: 4:30-5:30 P.M. Cost: \$2.00 (receipts available)

### **Marshall Area Social Rec**

When: May 1 St Stephen's Church June 26 Independence Park

Time: 5:30-7:30 P.M.

Cost: \$5.00 per each individual attending - receipts available - RSVP

### **Community Education Classes**

#### **Back to the Kitchen:** Snap-Ed Healthy Cooking Series

Tuesdays, March 24 & 31, April 7, 14, 21, & 28. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - 4-5:30 P.M. - Maximum of 12 Participants - RSVP

**Expanding Your Social/Support Circle:** Learn how to make/meet friends and develop healthy friendships

Wednesday, March 25 - Redwood Falls Library - 4:00-6:00 P.M. - RSVP

To receive flyers by email, call or email [swcil@swcil.com](mailto:swcil@swcil.com)  
Friends & family are welcome and encouraged to attend!

## Low-vision reading aids – by Adam Chandler

Low vision reading aids come in all shapes, sizes and price ranges. They can be as simple as a hand held magnifier or a pair of corrective lenses. Hi-tech aids such as an Acrobat HD ultra can zoom in on a presentation from across the room or a book sitting right in front of you. Coming in with a price tag of over \$2,300, this may not be the most cost effective solution for everyone.



Acrobat HD 20" \$2,350

There are much more inexpensive option that may do the job just as well. The Optelec compact is a 6-inch touchscreen electronic magnifier with text to speech or Optical Character Recognition (OCR) capabilities with high contrast colors. Portable magnifiers like



this can cost anywhere from \$100 to over \$1,500, depending on the device features.

Optelec Compact \$895



C-pen reader \$300

\$80 and can cost as much as \$300 for models like the C-pen.

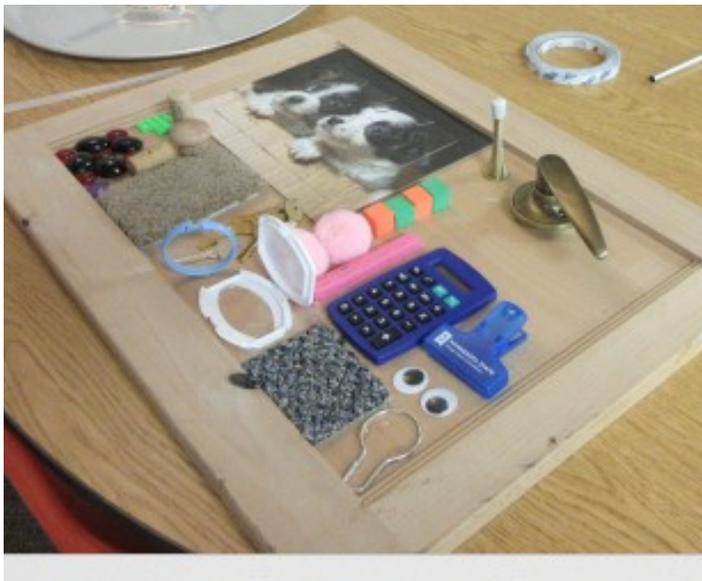
## Sensory Board-Making Class – by Shanda Walker

In February, members of the community had the opportunity to participate in a Sensory Board Making Class hosted by SWCIL. Individuals and their families or caregivers came to learn how to create a sensory board for their loved one with sensory impairments or concerns.

What is the purpose of a sensory board? Sensory boards are created with the idea of helping an individual to promote brain development, sensory processing, and cognitive retention. Sensory boards can be used to help an individual relax, practice fine motor skills, or learn about cause and effect.



Sensory Board



Sensory Board

The best part about sensory boards? They're pretty inexpensive to make! SWCIL Staff were able to assist participants in learning how to use household items or old "junk" (door stops, cotton balls, carpet remnants, calculators, stickers, and mirrors to name a few) and fasten them to cabinet doors to turn them into boards that provide hours of entertainment and sensory development.



**Find us on Facebook and Like our page to keep up with all the latest SWCIL news and events.**

If you have poems, personal successes, letters to the editor or questions for our readers, send your submissions to: Deb at SWCIL 109 S. 5th Street, Suite 700, Marshall, MN 56258 or call the office at 507.532.2221 ext 101.

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Teri Woelfel, IL Specialist

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