

Centerpieces

a publication of

Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL)

Serving People with Disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota

Board Member Spotlight by Ted Stamp



Picture of Leah Hastad

One of SWCIL's newest board members is Leah Hastad, who works as a Disability Resource Coordinator and Work Incentives Practitioner for the SW MN Private Industry Council (PIC). She assists individuals who receive SSI and SSDI with understanding how work will affect their benefits. Also, as a SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) trained case manager, she helps people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to apply for SSI/SSDI.

Leah initially got interested in being involved with SWCIL and its board because she felt that its mission aligns perfectly with the

work that she does at PIC. "I am always looking for ways to partner, strengthen, align and improve the services we provide to individuals with disabilities," she said.

Leah has served on the SWCIL board for a year and says her experience has been positive. "This is the second board I have served on," she said. "I hope to support SWCIL and the work they do to assist individuals with disabilities and see them succeed and flourish in the future."

"The SWCIL board is a great group of individuals," she said. And when asked about

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some of her duties as a board member, she replied, “A board member attends monthly board meetings and important events hosted by SWCIL. We also offer support of various SWCIL initiatives.”

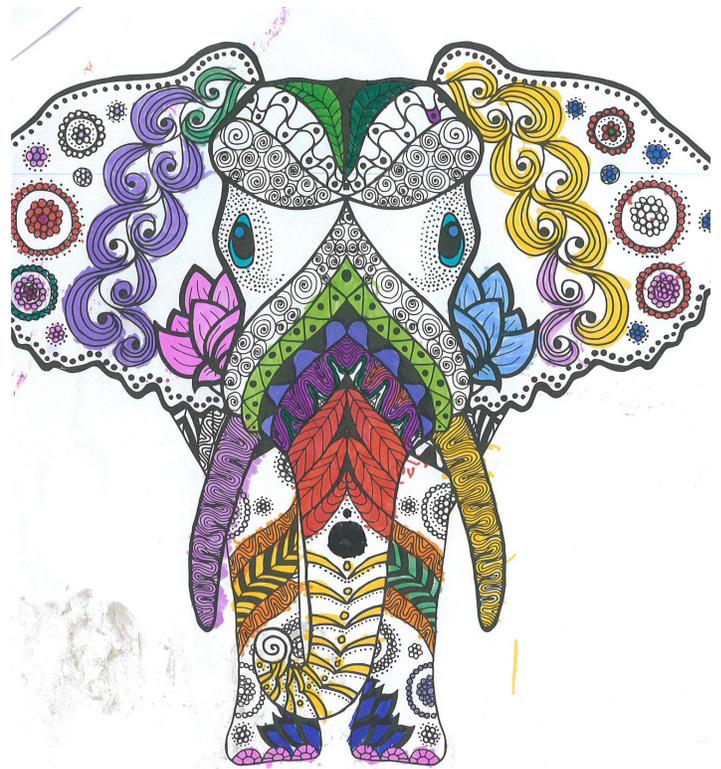
According to Leah, one of the biggest issues the board has had to face recently is supporting SWCIL during the global pandemic. Though she also noted that SWCIL leaders and staff did all the hard work and adapted very well.

Likewise, Leah says SWCIL has adapted well to providing services remotely during the pandemic. One particularly positive change she has noticed during her time on the board is the development and evolution of the ramp program.

She also said she would encourage anyone thinking of becoming a board member to fill out an application. “Whether you are an experienced board member or have never served in this capacity, it is a great group to work with.”

Consumer Success Story

“Alaina has had so much fun working with Shanda at SWCIL. It has helped her talk about a lot of different situations we don't always think to talk about at home. It does nothing but build her confidence and she always looks forward to their meetings. We appreciate the service for her life long quest of being as independent as possible! As her parents, we need a team of people around her, helping us also, to help her reach her full potential. Shanda **helps me** just as much as her.”



Picture of elephant beautifully colored
by Alaina

Additional Food Benefits by Jennifer Cox

Pandemic EBT providing additional food benefits up to an estimated 385,000 for Minnesota Children.

For the 2020-2021 school year the pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer is providing food benefits for children on the free and reduced lunch program. So many schools spent this year in distance or hybrid learning formats that children were not receiving the lunches they would normally get daily in school. “We understand the unplanned financial strain placed on family budgets when children are eating all of their meals at home,” said Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. “These new benefits will ease the burden on families so they can purchase nutritious food for their children.” For children in grades K-12 to receive free or reduced-price meals, their families must:

- Receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, or
- Receive Minnesota Family Investment Program benefits, or
- Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or
- Attend a community eligibility provision school, or
- Submit an Application for Educational Benefits and be approved through their school.

Completing the application for free or reduced-price school meals does not guarantee eligibility for the current school year’s P-EBT benefits. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools in Minnesota may be providing no-cost school meals through their own programs. These students may be eligible for P-EBT benefits but must submit an application to their school. In addition, their school must meet certain requirements for each month of benefits. Qualifying students receive monthly benefits when:

- The school reports distance learning for a majority of the month, or
- The school reports hybrid learning for a majority of the month, or
- The student elected distance learning for at least 11 days in a month.

Families who are receiving SNAP, MFIP or Tribal TANF benefits, or whose children are already approved by their school to receive free or reduced meals, do not need to take any action to ensure eligibility.

These food benefits are retroactive to September, 2020 and families must use the benefits to purchase food within one year of the date issued. Families are encouraged to contact their schools to apply for the free and reduced lunch program as soon as possible.

For more information visit www.mn.gov/dhs/p-ebt/

Invisible Disability

By Mandy Hoy

I am a disabled person
It is a part of me.
I have not lost an arm or leg
It is something you cannot see.

I do not use a wheelchair,
Walking stick or crutch.
I have no missing limb
Deformity or such.

These invisible disabilities
Come in many different forms
And because you do not see them
We appear just like the norm.

You will not sit and listen
Or stand and offer me your seat.
You will never understand
The daily hurdles I have to beat.

Everyone assumes it is a blessing
To look like nothing's wrong.
But to keep up this illusion
Means you have to be twice as
strong.

I do not understand
Why society is so ashamed.
But things need to change
So no one's alone and feels to
blame.

I hate to hear when someone
So desperate and alone.
Takes a drastic action
Instead of picking up the phone.

But until we open up our ears
And look and try harder to see.
These illnesses will remain invisible
And no one will know but me.

(found at [https://
cosmofunnel.com/poems/
invisible-disability-148712](https://cosmofunnel.com/poems/invisible-disability-148712))

Poem submitted by
Teri Woelfel

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.

Upcoming SWCIL Events via Zoom

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

All live events are smoke and fragrance free

Reasonable Accommodations upon request

2021 Social Rec Events (via Zoom)

**Changes to dates & times will be posted on
swcil.com and SWCIL's Facebook page**

May 25, 3:30 - 4:30 P.M. Garden Club (every Tuesday, all summer)

June 14, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Coloring Club

June 28, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Craft Night—Tie Dye

Community Education Classes

via Zoom...

Parents Supporting Parents, May 19, 6:00 P.M.

**To receive flyers by email, call or email swcil@swcil.com
Friends & family are welcome and encouraged to attend!**

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.

HOW TO TALK TO AND ACT AROUND A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

TIPS FROM PARENTS, CAREGIVERS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Treat them like you would anyone else. Say hi. Introduce yourself.

2. Don't assume you know what they want or need. Ask them!

5. Ask before offering to help. They may want to do things themselves, even if it takes longer!

8. Teach your children from a very young age that differences are OK. If they point or stare, don't shush or shame them. Encourage them to say hi and get to know the person!

9. Speak directly to a person with a disability—not their caregiver.

3. No two people with a diagnosis are the same. They are all different, with unique likes, hopes and dreams!

6. Staring makes people with disabilities and their caregivers feel really uncomfortable. If you're curious, come over and say hi!

4. Never use the "r-word!" Not as a joke, an insult or to describe a medical condition. That term is hurtful and outdated!

7. Empathize with them (but don't feel sorry for them). Your compassion and understanding goes a long way!

10. A wheelchair is an extension of a person's body. Don't lean on it or push it without asking.



Minnesota's COVID-19 Vaccination Program

Now Includes Ages 16 and Older

As of March 30th the Minnesota vaccination program will expand to include all Minnesotans ages 16 and older.

“Today is one of those days where we can start to make the big leap forward,” Walz said at a recent news conference, adding: “I can’t tell you how excited I am for the state of Minnesota.”

The state’s goal is to reach 80% or more people vaccinated. This is the threshold for herd immunity (or community immunity). Those who are eligible are urged to sign up with the state’s Vaccine Connector at <https://vaccineconnector.mn.gov/>. This site alerts users of where they can get a vaccine. The Governor noted “This does not mean you’re going to get this next week,” he said, “It means you’re in line.”

<https://www.startribune.com/all-minnesotans-16-and-older-will-be-eligible-for-covid-19-vaccine-starting-march-30/600038622/>



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

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.

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