

# Centerpieces

a publication of

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

*Serving People with Disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota*

## Board Member Spotlight by Ted Stamp



For this edition, we asked Derek Klinkner to tell us a little about himself and his role on the SWCIL board: I am an SMSU graduate and have been coaching the wheelchair basketball team since 2012. I enjoy watching and helping people be successful. I also enjoy being with my family (3 daughters and wife Audra) and building things with my hands.

I initially got involved with SWCIL and its board through Dan Snobl. SWCIL's mission and values line up with my current role at SMSU. This is my first year on the board, and it has been awesome being able to help guide the organization to achieve its goals and mission, particularly to help people live and grow independently. My current role is treasurer. One key issue the board has had to face recently is the challenge of COVID. One positive change I have seen SWCIL undergo so far is its

ability to adapt to the challenges of COVID and still provide service for its consumers. I would tell someone thinking of becoming a board member that there is no reason not to do it, and about a million reasons to do it. **Don't let fear hold you back.**

### *Winter Issue 2020*

*In this issue . . .*

FEMA Project America Strong, (mask Distribution)

8 Ways to Boost Your Immune System

Upcoming SWCIL events ...and more

# FEMA “Project America Strong” by Annette Swanson



Picture of Semi in SWCIL parking lot

In October 2020 SWCIL was given an opportunity to participate in FEMA’s “Project America Strong.” The federal government, through local organizations, is distributing cloth, reusable, adult-size face masks to help slow the spread of COVID-19. With no guarantee our request could be fulfilled, SWCIL decided to “go for it” and submitted a request for a full pallet of masks (45 boxes/500 masks/box = 22,500 cloth masks!).

And we waited . . . and we hoped . . . that we would be bestowed the honor to be a part of this very important project.

**Guess what!** They came! Friday, 11/6/2020 at 8:00 A.M., there was a knock at the SWCIL office door. A semi-truck was waiting to unload a pallet of boxes.



Picture of two stacks of 45 boxes

In no time at all they were unloaded and stacked in the SWCIL office, ready for distribution. It is humbling that SWCIL gets to be a part of this project. To connect with our communities and make a difference.

Now, to go forth and get these masks where they belong – **on faces!** . . . . . *which is exactly what we are doing. Please see next page to find out more!*



Picture of a very excited - and humbled -Annette with a big smile (wearing her own mask), opening the first box of 500 masks.

## Meet our new SWCIL Staff Member Jennifer Cox



Picture of Jennifer

Hi! I am Jennifer Cox, the new Community Projects Coordinator. I have lived in this area most of my life. I was a foster and adoptive parent of children with mental and developmental delays. In 2014 I became very ill. Finally, in 2017 after a long period of being bed ridden, with no answers about why, I was diagnosed with Lyme disease and PTSD. The transition from able-bodied adult to an adult with limitations was painful at times. This experience gave me the ability to be more compassionate when trying to find solutions for consumers. I am so grateful to be helping other people with disabilities and getting to work with the fantastic team at SWCIL. This position is new to SWCIL based

on COVID-19. We are all learning how to navigate and problem solve in this time of uncertainty. My position allows me to find current challenges our consumers and providers are facing. With this information we are better able to create projects and programs to meet the new needs.

I am currently working on a Community Needs Assessment, as well as the Project America Strong mask distribution. They are separate projects, but we found a way to seamlessly combine them for our consumers and providers. When you complete a survey, you can put in a request to participate in Project America Strong to receive free masks. So far, participation on both projects has been great.

### CNA:

The community needs assessment is intended to identify gaps in resources, fears about the current situation, and struggles with the forced technology. It also allowed us to reach back to past consumers who have requested follow-ups on our services. Our hope is to better serve our consumers with this information.

### Mask project:

Project America Strong is brought to SWCIL by FEMA. This project is allowing SWCIL to distribute free adult-size cloth masks to individuals, families, and supports living in SWCIL's service areas. Provider organizations are partnering with us to deliver masks to the local area. SWCIL received 22,500 masks in November. So far, we have distributed over 4,900 masks.

**To request masks, please visit our website at [SWCIL.com](http://SWCIL.com) and click on "Mask Request Forms".**



## Parents Supporting Parents - by Teri Woelfel

Parenting is a tough job for everyone but caring for a child with a disability adds a whole new layer to that job. So many parents of children with disabilities, including adult children, feel alone as they travel the road of being the parent or guardian of a child with a disability. Not having supportive and helpful people around them makes it even harder to deal with struggles and many families face a lack of understanding from others, including family and friends. Some even face a lack of real understanding from school staff, professionals, and service providers that can lead to feelings of frustration, loneliness, and even hopelessness.

Though it can be quite difficult to connect with other parents of children with disabilities, it can help to meet and talk to others who “get it”. Nothing can beat advice and support from parents who have been there and truly understand the ups and downs of raising a child with disabilities. Many parents are so busy taking care of their child’s unique needs, and taking care of the rest of their family, that they haven’t had the opportunity to seek encouragement from those who have walked a similar road. Many parents forget or don’t feel they have the time to do things for themselves, things that help them take care of their own mental and emotional health.

Another common struggle these parents and guardians face is navigating the different systems that offer programs and services to help. It can be very overwhelming. Information about these programs and services can sometimes be hard to find or access. It’s hard to get what your child needs if you don’t know what is available or how to get it.

SWCIL has created a way to help with these challenges. In July 2020, a group was established for parents and guardians of children of any age with any kind of disability. It’s a safe place for parents and guardians to share their struggles and successes, offer and receive support, share ideas and resources, and know they are not alone. This group brings together parents that have “been down this road” with parents that are just beginning their trek. The goal is for those who have more experience to share with those who don’t. The Parents Supporting Parents group meets once a month. It uses the Zoom virtual meeting app to allow people from all over SW MN to participate. Currently, approximately six people regularly attend these sessions and they have commented that they have finally found the support they have been looking for.

If you, or someone you know, would like to attend these meetings, or would like more information about the group, please call (507)532-2221 extension 202 or email [teri@swcil.com](mailto:teri@swcil.com).

## **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**

**January 25, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Coloring Club  
February 8, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Valentine's Craft night  
March 29, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Coloring Club  
April 30, 5:30 - 7:30 P.M. Spring Dance  
May 24, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Coloring Club  
June 28, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Craft Night  
July 16, 5:30 - 7:30 P.M. Summer Dance  
August 30, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Coloring Club  
September 27, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Craft Night  
October 22, 5:30 - 7:30 P.M. Halloween Dance  
November 29, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Coloring Club  
December 13, 4:30 - 5:30 P.M. Craft Night**

## **Community Education Classes**

### **All via Zoom...**

**Introduction to the SSI/SSDI Application Process, January 14, 10:00 - 11:00 A.M.  
Accessibility: What is it and how can you achieve it, January 18, 4:30 P.M.  
Parents Supporting Parents, January 20, 6:00 - 8:00 P.M.  
Youth Transitions Workshops, February 2, 16, March 2, 16, 6:30 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.

## 8 Ways to Boost Your Immune System by Marie Grengs

While building up your immunity is easier said than done, several dietary and lifestyle changes may strengthen your body's natural defenses and help you fight harmful pathogens, or disease-causing organisms, and have an added benefit of boosting your mental health also. No supplement, diet, or lifestyle modification can fully protect you from developing COVID-19. The strategies outlined below may boost your immune health, but they do not specifically prevent COVID-19.

1. **Hydrate more** – Dehydration can hinder mood, digestion, organ function, etc.
2. **Get enough sleep** – Poor-quality sleep has been linked to a higher susceptibility to sickness.
3. **Eat more veggies & fruits** – Colorful fruits and vegetables are full of antioxidants that protect your cells.
4. **Exercise** – Moderate exercise can reduce inflammation and promote the healthy turnover of immune cells.
5. **Limit sugar intake** – Research suggests added sugars and refined carbs may contribute disproportionately to obesity, which may increase your risk of getting sick.
6. **Manage your stress levels** – Long-term stress promotes inflammation; meditation, exercise, journaling, yoga, or receiving counseling may help reduce stress.
7. **Take steps to prevent infection** – Washing hands frequently, sanitizing surfaces, cooking meats thoroughly can greatly reduce the spread of germs.
8. **Supplement wisely** – No evidence supports use of supplements to prevent/treat COVID-19 or other illnesses. But some studies indicate the following supplements may [strengthen your body's general immune response](#): Vitamin C, Vitamin D, Zinc, Elderberry, Echinacea, Garlic.

By making several lifestyle and dietary changes today, you can strengthen your immune system. This may reinforce your body's defenses against harmful pathogens and may also boost your mental health. Taken from the following sites.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/how-to-boost-immune-health>

Please visit for additional information.



# SWCIL staff sends greetings to each of you for a great 2021

## [New "Back to SCOL" Guide for Families](#)

Parents of children with disabilities are facing difficult decisions about how to keep their children safe and learning. To help, Stanford University has developed [a Back-to-Safe Communities of Learning \(SCOL\) Decision Guide in English and Spanish](#). The tool was designed with and for parents of children with special healthcare needs based on input from public-health experts, parents, and health providers. It is meant to serve as a conversation starter and to guide discussion between a parent and a trusted advisor, such as a pediatric health provider. Taken from the US Dept of HHS Administration for Community Living Visit [ACL.GOV/COVID-19](https://acl.gov/COVID-19)



**Find us on Facebook and Like our page to keep up with all**

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.

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.

Southwestern Center for Independent Living  
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E-mail: [swcil@swcil.com](mailto:swcil@swcil.com)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SWCILMarshallMN](http://www.facebook.com/SWCILMarshallMN)

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Shanda Walker, IL Specialist  
Teri Woelfel, IL Specialist

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