MILC RUN MIDSTATE INDEPENDENT LIVING CHOICES
“Working for persons with disabilities towards empowerment to make informed choices.”

15th ANNUAL Adaptive Kayak Event

A FREE and unique opportunity for people with disabilities and their caregivers to try Kayaking. The day will include:

Music! Prizes!
Games! Free Lunch!

Location to be determined yet
Wed. August 21st, 10:00am - 3:00pm
(Rain Date August 28th)
More info to come!

PAGES 2-3
• Let’s Play! An Accessible Gaming Event
• 4th Annual Roller Skating Event
• Youth Self-Advocacy

PAGES 4-5
• Tips for Saving Money on a Tight Budget
• Social Security News in 2019
• Call To Action
• Focusing on the Positive at IEP Meetings
• Board of Directors

PAGES 6-7
• Assistive Technology Review at MILC: Skylink Automatic Swing Door Opener
• Robotic Cane
• Loan Programs

ISSUE 17 APRIL - JUNE 2019
We are working with the Tech Lounge LLC, and Gaming Generations to put on the first, “Let’s Play! An Adaptive Gaming Event” in Stevens Point! This accessible gaming event will be held at the Tech Lounge (completely accessible) and is open to all people with disabilities, whether you need the adaptive controller or not.

We will have two times on June 14th. For children under the age of 17 we will have a time slot from 5-7PM and for adults 18 and older we will have a time slot from 7-9pm (This is so we can have appropriate age groups for different ratings of games).

With the help of volunteers (called co-pilots) we can help gamers configure the controllers to work however is needed for comfortable play! The cap for the event is 30 people for each time slot. To register and save your spot you can visit https://letsplaymilc.eventbrite.com. Registration begins April 1st.

We still have costs we are trying to cover so if you know someone who would be interested in donating towards the event to cover the cost of extra adaptive controllers and switches we would greatly appreciate it and will happily offer recognition for their generosity!

~Eric Riskus, IL Consultant
4th Annual Roller Skating Event

Our Roller Skating Party for children with disabilities and their families is scheduled for **Friday, April 19th, from 11:00 AM-2:00 PM, at Skate City in Wisconsin Rapids.**

Thanks to another generous donation from the Sisters of Skate Roller Derby Team, we are able to offer **free admission** to the first 25 kiddos to register! We are excited to have several members of the S.O.S. team joining us this year as well.

Please call Nancy Keller, 715-344-4210 at ext. 211, for more information and to register.

(All attendees are required to register. The cost is $3.00 per person, and includes skate rental, pizza, and soda.) We hope to see you there!

Youth Self-Advocacy

For the Second Semester of this school year (2018-19) MILC has enrolled just over 50 students to learn our Help Yourself Curriculum. Students will learn or have learned about the following by enrolling in this program which is funded by DVR.

- **Disability History and Legislation**
- **Self-Awareness & Self-Esteem**
- **Communication Skills** with peers, co-workers and persons of authority such as teachers, parents, work place management, etc
- **Self-Determination Skills** & How to run their own IEP meetings
- **(And lastly, but most importantly)** how to put their advocacy skills to work for them

MILC’s Youth Self-Self Advocacy Teachers, Eric, Sandi and Tiffany would like to extend a special thank you to the following DVR Counselors in WDA 6 and teachers from each of the schools. This is a thank you for reaching out, communicating and coordinating these services. Without collaborations like these, this would not be possible. Thanks for making it a great semester!

**FROM WDA 6:**
- James Doebereiner (Wisconsin Rapids)
- Bao Lee (Wausau)
- Chad Bowe (Wausau)
- Debra Soulier-Ramsey (Rhinelander)
- Natalia Graf (Rhinelander)

**SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS TO BE RECOGNIZED:**
- Marshfield High School: Taylor Varsho
- SSTEP 2– Wausau School District– Patricia Masanz
- Antigo High School: Michelle Arlan
- Lakeland Union High School: Jeannine Bolton
- DC Everest: Tami Mlodik, Jeremy Brandt & Sharon Bartling

~Tiffany Bredlau, IL Consultant
Tips for Saving Money on a Tight Budget

You’ve probably heard the saying: Why is there always so much month left at the end of the money? Living on a tight budget is hard. But don’t let it defeat you. Here are some tips that may help you put some money back in to your budget.

• We all need to eat, but there are ways to save on food costs:
  ⇒ Use coupons.
  ⇒ Limit your trips to the store.
  ⇒ Plan several meals during the week which do not include meat.
  ⇒ Cook at home instead of buying prepared food or eating out.
  ⇒ When eating out, order water – drinks are expensive.

• In Wisconsin we are always trying to keep ourselves warm or cool – depending on the season – and sometimes that can vary from day to day. While we need electricity, heat and air conditioning, there are ways to keep those costs down:
  ⇒ Unplug electronics such as phones, computers, DVD players, TVs, etc...when not in use. According to EcoMyths Alliance: Turning an electrical product off doesn’t stop the energy draw. For many items, unplugging it is the only way to stop the use of electricity.
  ⇒ Do not stand with refrigerator or freezer door open while deciding what to eat.
  ⇒ Shut the lights off when they are not needed.
  ⇒ Use a programmable thermostat, if available or simply adjust heat or air conditioning levels when no one is home.

• Shopping for clothing can be expensive so be creative:
  ⇒ You can have fun and save money when you shop at second hand stores.
  ⇒ Consider trading clothes with a friend who needs a change in their wardrobe too.

As with most things in life, half the battle is attitude. Be thankful for what you have and use it well.

~Cindy Groshek, Director of Finance

Social Security News in 2019

As we turn the calendar to the New Year, we find some changes in the Social Security world. Those who receive SSI saw an increase of $21 to the Full Benefit Rate. Annual increases for the Trial Work Period amount and Substantial Gainful Activity amount may allow you to work a couple extra hours without it affecting your cash payment.

It is recommended that persons receiving benefits have a benefit analysis performed every 2 to 3 years. If you have changes in employment, pay rate, or hours you are working, you may want to have this done sooner.

If you have benefit related questions, please contact Shari Brunes at 715-344-4210 ext. 232.
Call To Action

Occasionally, I am made aware of legislation that is trying to be made into law, Action Alerts. MILC employees are required to respond appropriately. I am wondering if you would be willing to help in this effort. Oftentimes, the more constituents legislators hear from, the more willing they are to listen.

If you would to make your voice heard by advocating on behalf of individuals with disabilities in WI, you can do this by responding to Action Alerts. If you would like to be added to the email list, please either call or email me your name and email address. If your name is put on the Call to Action (CTA) list, it does not necessarily mean that you must respond to all of the emails, just the ones you feel passionate about.

Your name and email information will be kept confidential. To be added to the CTA list please contact Karalyn at MILC, (715) 344-4210 ext. 230 or kpeterson@milc-inc.org.

Focusing on the Positive at IEP Meetings

Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings can often be a negative experience for the parents or guardians of the student. Parents feel overwhelmed and left out of the conversation. Often the IEP team focuses on the things a student cannot do and the goals that need to be met.

The Positive Student Profile (found online) can help parents prepare for the meeting and introduce school staff to a child they might not see in the classroom. Talking about the student’s strengths, successes, and dreams can help the IEP team create goals that are relevant to the child’s life. Add a photo of your child doing their favorite after school activity or have the student attend the meeting. Parents can also write down their concerns and ask them to be included in the IEP document.

If you have questions about the Positive Student Profile or need help advocating for services at your child’s next IEP meeting, please contact Sandi Walkush at 715-344-4210 ext. 237.

We are looking for motivated, compassionate leaders to join our team. If you would like to be more involved with MILC in meeting our mission and serving people with disabilities:

Join our Board of Directors!

Contact Zoe at 715-344-4210 or zkujawa@milc-inc.org
Assistive Technology Review at MILC:

**Skylink Automatic Swing Door Opener**

Are doors becoming a more prominent barrier in your home? We have a solution for you! Skylink’s Automatic Swing Door Opener has just been added to our AT loan library! With this device, you can attach it to your door and use a button to open and close the door.

This universal opening system can be installed on most doors including wooden and metal doors. Let’s talk safety features! First off, there is an audio warning as an indication that the door opener is working. There is a “Hit and Stop” safety feature that will prevent a door from closing if an obstacle is present. It’s important to note that you should still look out for little fingers before using, but you can also use a button to stop the door.

There is a built-in mechanical clutch to prevent the motor from being damaged, which means if someone doesn’t realize that the door is automatic and tries to force it closed, it won’t do damage. Some of the other features include a Timer Operation which will close the door automatically after a specific period of time, and the user can program how much time that is.

Lastly this device can be paired up to 16 different remote controls, so everyone in your home or facility can have access. If you think that this would be an asset to your home and improve accessibility then give us a call. We will let you try this out before you purchase one of your own.

~Eric Riskus, IL Consultant

**Robotic Cane**

Mobility is the most problematic issue for independence for someone who is blind or has vision loss. I have come across a technology currently being developed for people who are blind or have vision loss. This technology is for indoor travel such as offices. It is a robotic cane; this cane guides the user with a robotic roller ball at the end of the cane paired with a camera and voice recognition software to get to your destination. You tell the cane where you want to go and the roller ball rolls and guides you through the space.

There are many different products being developed for the blind. Many never reach the public because there is not enough funding. The robotic cane is a wonderful idea. I wonder if it will ever make it to market. It is difficult to develop a product that has a limited consumer base. The research for a product such as this is expensive, and because it will only be a product for people who are blind or have vision loss, there will not be a great need for it. This means that the cost will have to be high to cover the cost of manufacturing and the time and materials spent on the research and development. Those who are blind or visually impaired cannot afford to spend a lot of money on something that may not work for them.

Any new technologies for aid in mobility is always exciting. This is another mobility aid that I would love to have access to.

~Adam Lewis, I&R Specialist
What is Wisloan?

Wisloan is a statewide, alternative loan program that allows Wisconsin residents with a disability, or their families, to purchase adaptive equipment, assistive technology or modify their homes so that they can live more independently. The applicant must be 18 and a resident of Wisconsin who wishes to improve his or her quality of life through the acquisition of items (examples include assistive technology, modified vehicles, etc.).

What is Telework?

Telework is a statewide, alternative loan program allowing Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to work from remote sites away from the office, including at home, on the road or at a Telework center. In addition to the purchase of equipment, the loan funds can be used for training to use equipment, extended warranties, the cost of maintenance and repair.

What is TEPP?

Telecommunications, Equipment Purchase Program

If you are one of the millions of people who have difficulty using a telephone, you should know that help is available through the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program, or TEPP. The TEPP Program provides funding, (through the Universal Service Fund), for people with disabilities to purchase specialized telephones and related equipment.

The TEPP program issues vouchers, each with different dollar amounts, based on several categories of disability. For example, the Hard of Hearing voucher is $100, the Deaf/Severely Hard of Hearing voucher is $800, and the Mobility Impaired voucher is $1,600. (Vouchers over $100 require a $100 co-pay, but there are programs available that may help cover that cost).

If you don’t know what kind of phone will work for you, we have several different types of phones that you can borrow from our Wistech Loan and Demonstration Program so you can ‘Try before you buy’.

Please contact MILC for further information about the TEPP Program or to schedule an appointment to try a few phones. (We can also assist with the application).
How To Get a Hold of Us:

Midstate Independent Living Choices
3262 Church Street
Stevens Point, WI 54481
715-344-4210 or 800-382-8484
milc@milc-inc.org or www.milc-inc.org

Newsletter Editor: Jennifer Strike: I&R Specialist

To contact the following departments dial:
Mental Health/Peer Support: Ext. 228
IL Program: Ext. 232
PAS Program: Ext. 224
Human Resources: Ext. 226
Accounting: Ext. 214

MOVING?
Let us know so we can keep you on our mailing list.
Contact us at milc@milc-inc.org

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK