### Issue 22
**July-Sept 2020**

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**LET US HELP!**

DO YOU, A FRIEND, OR FAMILY MEMBER STRUGGLE TO USE THE PHONE??

HOW CAN MILC HELP??

- TRY BEFORE YOU BUY LOAN PROGRAM
- HELP APPLY FOR THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT PURCHASE PROGRAM (TEPP)
- HELP ORDER AND SET UP NEW PHONE EQUIPMENT

CALL OR EMAIL FOR MORE INFORMATION

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**Website:** [MILC Run](https://www.milc-run.org)

**Contact:**

- Phone: (515) 247-2926
- Email: mail@milc-run.org

**Address:**

1640 S. Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50315

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**Thank You!**
COVID-19

We at MILC have dedicated our time to finding out the needs of consumers like you. Covid-19 has been on everyone’s mind and has changed how we as a nation have adapted how we live day to day. Many of MILC’s consumers are receiving calls from us to complete a survey on how the COVID-19 Pandemic has affected them. We would like to thank you for taking the time to speak to us. With your feedback we have been able to discover issues that are affecting so many people; such as their ability to vote, access to essential supports and resources, access to PPE, access to telecommunication, access to education for students, and much more. Not only have we been made aware of these issues, we have been able to provide consumers with resources, develop new goals, provide emergency preparedness information, and gather information for advocacy efforts.

One of the most requested services provided to consumers is over-the-phone peer support to members in our 11 county service area. Our Certified Peer Support Specialists have spent hours on the phone with consumers as they express their struggles with mental health during isolation and other concerns surrounding the virus.

If you are in need of resources, supports, peer support...give us a call. We would be happy to assist you in any way possible. If you are willing to complete a short survey to share how you have been affected, you can call and ask to speak to an Independent Living Consultant and we would be thrilled to talk to you. This information is extremely valuable to stakeholders, funders and state and local agencies as we all develop plans to meet the needs of our communities. Your personal information is kept confidential and will not be included in these reports.

We are all in this together; do not be afraid or hold back from calling us if you are in need of our services. One way or another we will figure out a way to help!

Keep strong, keep fighting.

~Eric Riskus, IL Program Director

SUMMER EVENTS

Due to COVID-19, we will be cancelling our summer events from June through August and we will be evaluating the conditions and guidelines for events during the remainder of the year. The summer events that will be cancelled are:

~Let’s Play! An Adaptive Gaming Event
  (Stevens Point and Minocqua)

~Adaptive Kayak Event

While we will be unable to host the event, you are still welcome to call and ask for information regarding adaptive gaming and adaptive kayaking. Demonstrations can be given one-on-one, in person or virtually via Zoom, to showcase and demonstrate the equipment. We apologize for any inconvenience and wish everyone a healthy summer.
We felt it necessary to acknowledge some of our remarkable team during the COVID 19 pandemic! Our agency staff, along with our in-home caregivers, are considered essential workers. Most of our team of in-home caregivers have continued to work with their consumers/families, which means there has been little or no interruption in services for our consumers during this tough time. We have guided and supported our employees along the way, making sure they were updated with necessary information. Their dedication to their essential duties has allowed our consumers to function in their homes during this time. We thank every one of our 214 in-home caregivers and commend their commitment to what independent living is all about; helping individuals with disabilities remain safe in their home.

As the needs for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff increased, orders for additional PPE were backdated or even lost as healthcare providers around the country struggled to ensure adequate supplies for their staff. Faced with this challenge, two of our devoted agency staff; Brenda Krohn and Kris Maynard volunteered to sew cloth face masks for our employees. With donated materials of their own, along with donations from other staff, Brenda and Kris made approximately 260 masks.

Brenda is the Personal Assistant Services (PAS) Administrative Coordinator and has been with MILC for 13 years. When asked why she volunteered to make the masks she responded, “I wanted our workers to have masks available for them to use while working with MILC consumers. The masks will help keep the workers and consumers healthy.” Brenda enjoys spending time with family and their 2 dogs, crafting and participating in craft shows throughout the year.

Kris is the PAS Payroll/Billing Clerk and has been with MILC for 10 years. When asked to share her thoughts about MILC, Kris states, “Working for MILC has opened my eyes to many things regarding individuals in the disability world. I am proud to be a part of an organization that helps individuals feel/stay a part of the active world”. Kris enjoys kayaking, quilting, crocheting, going to craft shows, visits with family and friends, being entertained by her little friend/dog, Mikey.

Please join us in thanking our agency staff, especially Brenda and Kris and our very special in-home caregivers!!

Pictured: Kris Maynard and Brenda Krohn
Hear All Cell Phone Amplifier

With wireless technology being used more in today’s society, we are seeing a shift in people moving away from “typical” cable TV and landline phone services. People are “cutting the cord” and using their cell phones as their main communication device. While using a cell phone is convenient, if you have a hearing loss, it can still be difficult to talk on the phone. Cell phone manufacturers have started including accessibility features in their Operating Systems, but there are few related to hearing. Features that are related to hearing mainly help with music or videos being played on the phone and not as much with phone calls.

When people think of hearing loss and the difficulties experienced, most people think that turning the volume up all the way or putting the phone on speaker phone will solve the issue. In fact, there could be other reasons that increase someone’s difficulties communicating on the phone that cell phones do not have solutions for.

The “Hear All Cell Phone Amplifier” by Serene Innovations is a great option for individuals with hearing loss that want to have a cell phone as their only phone. This device can connect to any Bluetooth enabled cell phone and can be used in many different situations. There are three (3) modes to use this device; handset, speaker and T-coil. Handset mode allows you to use it like any other phone. Speaker mode allows you to use it hands free. You can clip it to your visor of your car or have it set on the counter while cooking and still have the benefits of the device. You should not put the device next to your ear while on speaker mode. T-coil mode allows you to use it with T-coil enabled hearing aids. The Hear All amplifies incoming calls up to 40 dB and allows calls to be answered or ended with a single button. The tone can be adjusted by you with a button on the side of the device, depending on the person you are talking to. This device gives you the benefits of an amplified landline phone, while giving you the convenience and mobility of a cell phone. If you are interesting in getting more information about this device or would like to try it, please contact us at 715-344-4210 and ask to speak to one of the Independent Living Consultants.

~Alex Lena, IL Consultant

Inline Voice Magnifier

Do you have trouble with people asking you to repeat yourself on the phone? I did. I got an Inline voice magnifier by Harris Communications and it has been great. I tend to have a soft voice on the phone and people had a hard time hearing me. This Voice Magnifier connects rather easily between the telephone receiver and the base of a corded telephone. It tucks away out of sight so oftentimes people won’t even realize I have it.

My issue had an easy and fairly inexpensive fix. Whether you are having trouble hearing or being heard on the phone or if you have a different issue all together with the telephone, MILC can help you. Just call our office at (715) 344-4210 and ask to speak to an Independent Living Consultant.

~Karalyn Peterson, Resource Coordinator
Deciding on an alerting device that is right for you could be tricky; there are a few things you will want to consider. If you have questions, call our office. Staff is available to assist you in making an informed choice about your telecommunication needs.

First consideration for the device: **Do you need an alert that is sound, vibration, or visual?** Some transmitters and receivers work by visually alerting the person, some have sound (even amplified sound) and most are compatible with bed shakers or come with bed shakers that you can use to alert you of the phone ringing even when you are far away from the phone.

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<th>TRANSMITTERS:</th>
<th>RECEIVERS:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Designed to alert you of a specific event that is occurring, such as the door-bell or phone ringing.</td>
<td>How many rooms do you want to be notified in?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With TEPP you can have more than one receiver.</td>
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**COMPATIBILITY**

When you purchase a signaling device, be sure to purchase the same brand receiver for compatibility. Some transmitters and some types of receivers may not be available through TEPP, so ask your consultant to point you in the right direction.

**TECHNOLOGY**

**RF (Radio Frequency) Technology:** RF Technology sends a signal from the transmitter to the receiver through radio waves.

**Line Carrier Technology:** This technology sends a signal from your transmitters to your receivers through your homes electrical circuit.

"Selecting An Alerting System"

~Tiffany Bredlau, IL Consultant"
Revolar Personal Emergency Response App and Pendant

The Revolar can be an approved TEPP item for the speech impairment category since the purpose is to use telecommunication equipment to notify loved ones if there is an emergency or a sketchy situation. So what are the specs?

The pendant is small enough to attach to a keychain and blends in. It has a button in the center that requires some pressure to push, but no more than a gentle squeeze. (Of course this is subjective to the person using it. If you would like to try it out for yourself you can call one of MILC’s Independent Living Consultants for a demonstration). The app has a screen that has the same function and only requires a tap on the screen. The button sends three type of alerts to 5 contacts on your device. A Green, Yellow, and a Red Alert.

The Green alert is used as a method of checking in. It sends a message to your contacts with a notification that the user is safe. You tap on the phone, or push the button once in order to activate a green alert. The Yellow alert is used as a method of letting your contacts know that you are in an unsafe or uncomfortable situation and someone needs to be on stand-by. A Red alert signals to your contacts that you are in need of emergency assistance right now. Along with a text message indicating a red alert, a map is sent to your contacts through a text message that have your GPS coordinates.

This device doesn’t have to be purchased through TEPP. You can find the Revolar Instinct Pendant for $79.99, and the Classic Pendant for $34.99, however the app is free.

For more information on the Revolar Pendant you can visit their website at https://revolar.com/, or get in touch with us at MILC and we would be happy to give you a demonstration.

~Eric Riskus, IL Program Director

RCx-1000 Remote Control Speakerphone
From Serene Innovations

The RCx-1000 can be invaluable for people who have mobility issues. Pre-programmed phone numbers can be ‘dialed’ without ever having to touch the phone! The phone comes with a wireless remote control, but can also be operated with a wide variety of switches, such as a pillow switch or a chin switch. Calls can be answered with voice commands, and it also works with a headset/external microphone.

The one negative feature, in my opinion, is that a call cannot be ended with voice commands.

~Nancy Keller, IL Consultant
LOAN PROGRAMS

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.).

Both Telework and Wisloan loan amounts will depend on the item being purchased and the ability to repay. The current interest rate is 6.5%.

Bad credit, including bankruptcy is not a reason to not apply. The focus is on the ability to make the monthly payments. Reasons for credit issues are taken into consideration by the review board. Contact an IL Consultant at the MILC office for assistance in completing an application.

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. 243
IL Program: Ext. 238
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

Information regarding EVV: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/evv/index.htm

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