

# Midstate Independent Living Choices

# MILC RUN

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Quarterly Newsletter | January - March 2024

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## A Note from the Executive Director:

Greetings!

As we step into a new year, I find myself reflecting on the journey we have undertaken together at MILC. The past year has been one of resilience, growth, and unwavering commitment to our mission. The turning of the calendar marks not just the passage of time but an opportunity to reflect on accomplishments, learn from challenges, and set the course for an even more impactful year ahead.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the incredible people who make up our vibrant staff. Their strength, determination, and sense of community are the driving force behind our success. Together, we have created a space where independence is not just a concept but a way of life—a testament to the power of unity and shared vision.

In the upcoming year, MILC is committed to embracing technology to enhance accessibility. Virtual platforms will play a pivotal role in ensuring that our services transcend geographical boundaries, reaching a broader audience. Additionally, we are eager to strengthen partnerships with local businesses and organizations, fostering a network of support that extends beyond physical walls.

Our core commitment remains centered on empowering lives and nurturing independence. We firmly believe that everyone, regardless of abilities, deserves the opportunity to lead an independent and fulfilling life. This belief drives our mission and guides our actions as we strive to make a lasting impact. As we look to the future, we invite each of you to actively participate in our journey. Your feedback is invaluable, and we encourage you to help shape the direction of our community. Together, we can create a supportive environment where everyone can flourish, leading lives filled with dignity, independence, and joy.

Thank you for being an integral part of the MILC family. Here's to a year of boundless possibilities and shared success!

Warm regards,

- Don Wigington, Executive Director



## Snow and Ice Safety: Clearing Sidewalks for Community

### Keeping the community safe:

Keeping sidewalks clear of ice and snow is especially important. It is good, if you are able, to clear the sidewalks around your house, if you have them. What may only take you a few extra minutes can have many benefits for others. Your mobility device using friends and neighbors for instance, by doing your part and keeping the sidewalks clear, you are not only making their commute safer, but you are making their commute possible. When snow and ice get built up on curb cuts that have not been cleared regularly, it makes using them virtually impossible and clearing them then is much more difficult.

### Keeping yourself safe:

We do live in Wisconsin after all, so there is going to be some ice and snow no matter what. The safest thing to do is stay inside until the storm passes. If you absolutely must go out, please take precautions. One of the simplest things you can do is use Yak Trax, or something similar, on ice. Yak Trax are devices that go on the bottom of any shoe to make it grip better. We have several pairs that you can borrow at MILC, you can see if you like them and then purchase your own. Just give us a call at (715) 344-4210 and we will get you set up with some.

*- Karalyn Peterson, Resource Coordinator*



## NEW: MILC Business Solutions

We're excited to introduce MILC Business Solutions (MBS). To help local businesses, schools and other spaces be accessible for people with disabilities, we are offering a variety of new services. These include various accessibility consults, and guest speakers. To learn more, visit our website, or contact Eric Riskus at [eriskus@milc-inc.org](mailto:eriskus@milc-inc.org), or 715-344-4210 ext. 238.

# Fiber grasping device:

## Assistive Technology Highlight

There are many aspects of life that individuals without disabilities take for granted. One is picking up items and holding them. Things like holding a glass of juice, or the handle on your bike. For individuals with conditions that impact their grip, this is often difficult, if not impossible.

One piece of technology that can help is the Fiber grasping device. This device allows individuals that have limited strength to grasp items. This is a lightweight device that attaches to your hand to be able to grasp and hold any item you wish. The device attaches the wrist and fingers with a retractable cord to hold the item in place.

If you would like to see this device in action or learn more about other similar devices, please contact us and ask to speak to an Independent Living Consultant.

- Alex Lena, Independent Living Department Manager



## Event Recap: Adapted Ice Skating

On December 16, 2023 we hosted our 3rd annual adapted ice skating event at the K.B. Willett Arena in Stevens Point. Individuals with disabilities and their family members came from all around Wisconsin to try ice skating and engage in an activity they may not have previously thought possible. We saw another increase in participants from our last event, with 77 people attending.

This was an open skate opportunity for people to engage in skating how they saw fit. Free skate rentals were available at the rink for those who didn't have their own skates. Walkers, wheelchairs, and sled hockey sleds were also available for participants.

*Continue reading on page 5.*



## Loan Programs

### Wisloan and Telework:

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.).

Telework is a statewide, alternative loan program allowing Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase equipment needed to start their own business. The loan cannot be used for salary or inventory, rather, it can be used to purchase things like technology, telecommunication equipment, equipment needed to perform the job. In addition to the purchase of equipment, the loan funds can be used for training in using equipment, extended warranties, the cost of maintenance and repair.

Loan amounts depend on the item, and ability to repay. The current interest rate is 4%. Don't let things like bad credit or bankruptcy keep you from applying. The focus is on the ability to make monthly payments. The circumstances for credit issues are taken into consideration by the review board.

Contact MILC and ask to speak to the Independent Living (IL) Department for assistance in completing an application.

### Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP):



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 (TEPP). TEPP provides funding through the Universal Service Fund (USF) for people with disabilities to help offset the cost of specialized telephones and related equipment on the eligible equipment list. To learn more about TEPP, visit our assistive technology page at <https://milc-inc.org/AT/> and scroll down to the TEPP section.

## Event Recap Continued from page 3

*One attendee said, "What a great event for our children/ community members living with a disability. We honestly have never thought about taking our son, without vision, on ice. We are very thankful for these types of experiences for our son to enjoy with his siblings."*

*Another attendee said, "I wasn't sure what to expect. Neither of my kids had ever ice skated before, and they were surprisingly not scared to try. My daughter that has down syndrome didn't hesitate at all to get skates on. She didn't last long as it's quite hard for her but then was super happy she could still participate and be pushed by the great volunteers! My son now wants to go to open skate regularly. This event allowed him to try with some additional help which I really appreciated."*

We are adding 6 sled hockey sleds to our loan and demonstration program. Once they arrive, individuals can borrow them at no cost. Please keep an eye on MILC's social media pages for updates.



Photo: Vincent Villarreal Media

Thank you to our partners K.B. Willett Ice Arena and the Stevens Point Parks and Rec Department. Also thank you to our volunteers including members of the Women's and Men's UWSP Hockey teams. Also, thank you to our sponsors Wood Trust Bank and Home Point Real Estate.

If you are interested in learning more about sled hockey, reach out to Alex Lena at 715-344-4210 ext. 232 or [alena@milc-inc.org](mailto:alena@milc-inc.org).



**17TH ANNUAL  
ADAPTED KAYAKING**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 29, 2024**

**Nepco Lake, Wisconsin Rapids**



# Staff Spotlight



## Madison Matijevich

Independent Living Consultant

Office: 715-344-4210 x228

Email: [mmatijevich@milc-inc.org](mailto:mmatijevich@milc-inc.org)

Hi! My name is Madison Matijevich, and I am an Independent Living Consultant. I started at MILC in 2021 with a primary focus on Architectural Accessibility. In September, I switched to the focus of Youth Transition. A Youth Transition focus involves working with families as an IEP (Individual Education Plan) advocate, teaching MILC's 5 self-empowerment courses (such as Self-Advocacy) and supporting young adults with disabilities as they transition into adulthood. In addition, I am a Certified Peer Specialist and can provide 1-on-1 Peer Support in the community.

I have a BA in Gender and Women Studies from UW Madison and have experience working in the mental health and substance abuse field, education, and advocacy. I was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis at the age of 12 and I personally understand that youth with disabilities face their own unique barriers, whether that's being supported in the school system and/or the transition from graduating high school and becoming an independent young adult.

I am excited to continue working with the community in this new focus. I am here to support you while you navigate through this process to become the best young adult you can be!

### We're Hiring! Join our PAS Team

MILC is in search of caregivers interested in assisting individuals in their homes providing personal, supportive, and or respite care.



- Variety of shifts
- Positions available throughout our 11 county service area
- Travel allowance for eligible cases/employees
- Experience preferred, or willing to learn new skills



For a full listing of our current openings visit: <https://milc-inc.org/careers>  
Complete the application online and submit to: [ebuckles@milc-inc.org](mailto:ebuckles@milc-inc.org) or call  
715-344-4210 ext. 222 to request an application.

# MILC Contact Us and Get Involved

Midstate Independent Living Choices works every day to further the Independent Living Movement. Here's how you can get involved:

## Follow us on Social Media:



facebook.com/milcinc



instagram.com/midstateilc



TikTok: @milcinc

## Visit our Website:

<https://milc-inc.org>

## Call Us:

715-344-4210

## Visit Us:

3262 Church Street  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
8:30am-5pm, Monday-Friday

## Sign up for Monthly E-Newsletters:

<http://eepurl.com/ikXA9z>

## Join our Advocacy List:

[kpeterson@milc-inc.org](mailto:kpeterson@milc-inc.org)

## Work for MILC:

[milc-inc.org/careers](http://milc-inc.org/careers)

# Accommodations in the Workplace

## What is a workplace accommodation?

An accommodation in the workplace is an adjustment to a job or work environment that makes it possible for an individual with a disability to perform their job duties. This may include specialized equipment, modifications to the work environment or adjustments to work schedules or responsibilities.

## What does the law require?

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers are only required to provide accommodations for employees who are experiencing workplace problems because of a disability. Therefore, unless you let your employer know that you have a disability, the employer is not obligated to consider accommodations under the ADA.\*

## What can you do?

Even if you are not sure what accommodation you need, you can go ahead and let your employer know that you need an adjustment or change at work because of a medical condition. Then, you and your employer can explore accommodation options together.\*

Want to learn more about accommodations? Check out the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) at <https://askjan.org>

*\*Information from Employees' Practical Guide to Requesting & Negotiating Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*

- MILC Human Resources Department



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Partially Supported by Wistech,  
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