



Disability Organization Contacts

Local Resources for Inclusive Program Development

Panelists from the November 2011 VIP Session

Change attitudes! Training staff and volunteers on what to expect when building an inclusive volunteer program can be a great way to dispel fears and begin your readiness for accessibility and inclusion. These agencies are great resources for information for your program!

Trish Gustaitis

Work Study Coordinator
Bloomington High School South
1965 S. Walnut St.
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 330-7714 ext. 51019
pgustait@mccsc.edu

Layne Kent

Work Study Coordinator
Bloomington High School North
3901 North Kinser Pike
Bloomington, IN 47404
(812) 330-7724 ext. 53161
lkent@mccsc.edu

Kayle Lewis

Vocational Coordinator
College Internship Program
(812) 323-0600 ext. 19
klewis@cipbloomington.org

Eric Ford

Stone Belt - Hand in Hand Coordinator
(812) 332-2168 ext. 287
eford@stonebelt.org

Jeanne Gunning

Volunteer Director
WonderLab
(812) 337-1337 ext. 21
jeanne@wonderlab.org

Other Organizations:

Abilities Unlimited Disability Services (www.abilitiesunlimited.net)

Lynne Argent, Executive Director
(812) 332-1620
au@abilitiesunlimited.net

MISSION: Abilities Unlimited Disability Services deals mainly with people with disabilities and with the elderly, who fall between the cracks of larger agencies. We work to make it possible for people to remain in their homes and in their community. We are a small agency with a big heart.

DESCRIPTION: We lend durable medical equipment at no charge, (wheelchairs, transfer benches, bath seats, walkers, crutches, canes, etc), make free accessibility modifications (ramps, safe bathrooms, etc) for homes of all types within Bloomington City limits. We act as advocates for persons with disabilities and for the elderly, and offer one-on-one and online support for those dealing with intractable, chronic pain (including fibromyalgia). If we can't help, we do our best to find someone who can. We depend on public donations to keep our doors open.

HISTORY: Abilities Unlimited Disability Services has been serving Monroe and the surrounding counties since 1954. We were originally called the "MC Society for Crippled Children and Adults." That name was updated in 1987. We are a United Way of Monroe Country Agency.

City of Bloomington Volunteer Network

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Citizen Advocacy of South-Central Indiana Inc. (<http://casciweb.org>)

Diana Reynolds, Coordinator

(812) 219-1637

casci.inc@gmail.com

MISSION: Citizen Advocacy of South-Central Indiana, Inc (CASCI) facilitates and supports one-to-one matches between individuals with disabilities (Partners) and other members of our community (Advocates) for advocacy and friendship.

DESCRIPTION: Citizen Advocacy of South-Central Indiana, Inc is a community-based program which facilitates the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and interests of people with disabilities through Volunteer Advocates. Too often, people with disabilities have almost all of their interactions with paid health care workers and human services professionals. Citizen advocacy efforts help people with disabilities integrate more fully into their community. CASCI matches Advocates whose personal qualities and talents "fit" those of their Partners. There are a variety of roles that a citizen advocate may adopt such as a friend, mentor, assistant, ally, or protector. Advocates provide practical assistance and provide freely-given companionship, helping their Partner fully integrate into the community.

HISTORY: In the 1960's, advocates for people with disabilities realized that too often people with disabilities have almost ALL their interactions with paid health care givers and human services professionals. With health care providers, there is often a constant turnover. Although friendships may develop, they are often not long lasting. Key service providers in the area worked together to enable the formation of this independent organization, that is free of any connection with any service provider or agency so the one advocating for the partner, or person with the disability, will be free from any conflict of interest. In 2001 CASCI was awarded a grant from the Governors Planning Council for Persons with Disabilities and CASCI began. CASCI survives today through donations, fund raisers, and grants.

Down Syndrome Family Connection (DSFC) (www.downsyndromefamilyconnection.org)

Cyndi Johnson, Secretary

kajcyndij@hotmail.com

MISSION: DSFC's purpose is to promote greater acceptance and understanding of Down syndrome; to educate, inform and involve all people to recognize the uniqueness and capabilities of individuals with Down syndrome and the inherent dignity of all people with developmental disabilities; and to provide education and support for communities, families and individuals living, learning, and growing with Down syndrome.

DESCRIPTION: DSFC is group of self-advocates (persons with Down syndrome), their families, and their caregivers. We seek to enhance the lives of persons with Down syndrome. DSFC provides a number of services to Bloomington and the surrounding areas. These include the following: (1) a new parent information and resource pack; (2) an annual disability information fair; (3) an annual Buddy Walk for fun and fund-raising; (4) a monthly Women's Night Out; (5) regular educational events for the families and caregivers of persons with disabilities; (6) a DSFC brochure; (7)"Beautiful Faces, Extraordinary Lives," a calendar featuring persons with Down syndrome from Bloomington, Ellettsville, Bedford, Mitchell, etc.

HISTORY: A group of families began meeting in 2006. Some strategic planning sessions took place in 2007, and a leadership team was formed. In the fall of 2008, DSFC became incorporated and a Board of Directors was established. Then in October, the first annual Bloomington Buddy Walk was held, which raised funds that afforded DSFC the opportunity to apply for 501(c)(3) status, which it received in March of 2009. In January of 2009, officers were appointed by the Board. While DSFC does not have members or dues, all who are open to improving the lives of persons with developmental disabilities are welcome to participate.

LifeDesigns, Inc. (www.lifedesignsinc.org)

Karen Scherer, Volunteer Coordinator

(812) 332-9615 ext. 218

kscherer@optionsfbl.com

MISSION: Provides quality services and supports to people with disabilities in south central Indiana. Services are tailored to each individual based on their interests and support needs.

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DESCRIPTION: Partners with people with disabilities and their communities to bring about self-directed and fulfilled lives. LifeDesigns provides holistic services through community and supported living, supported employment, respite and behavioral management. LifeDesigns provides customer oriented services that focus on community involvement which results in active citizenship, rewarding employment and fulfilling relationships within the communities of South-Central Indiana.

HISTORY: LifeDesigns Inc.(formerly Options and Christole) was created in January 2012. Options was established in 1982. Serves over 300 individuals with a variety of disabilities in a 7-county area.

People & Animal Learning Services (PALS) (www.palstherapy.org)

Fern Bonchek, Executive Director
(812) 336-2798 ext. 2
fern@palstherapy.org

MISSION: PALS is dedicated to providing high-quality, safe, educational, fun and therapeutic animal assisted activities such as therapeutic horseback riding, hippotherapy, animal care and pet encounter therapy to children and adults with physical, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities.

DESCRIPTION: PALS is a nonprofit organization that provides EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES (EAA) such as therapeutic horseback riding and hippotherapy to children and adults with disabilities and at-risk youth. PALS treats our riders as individuals focusing on ability rather than disability. PALS serves riders from Monroe, Brown, Greene, Jackson, Johnson, Lawrence, Morgan, and Owen counties. THERAPEUTIC RIDING is mounted activities including traditional riding disciplines or adaptive riding activities conducted by a NARHA certified instructor. Riding lessons are developed to suit each rider's needs in conjunction with physicians, parents/caregivers and therapists. Available for individuals ages four and up with physical, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and at-risk youth. HIPPO THERAPY is physical, occupational or speech therapy treatment performed by a licensed health professional that utilizes equine movement as a part of an integrated treatment program to achieve functional outcomes. In order to participate in hippotherapy, a physician's prescription is needed. Hippotherapy is recognized by both the American Physical Therapy Association and the American Occupational Therapy Association. Hippotherapy is a physical, occupational or speech therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement. Available for individuals ages two and up with physical, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities.

HISTORY: PALS is the only therapeutic riding program in Monroe and surrounding counties that is accredited as a North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) Premier Accredited Center. PALS is also a member of the Indiana Horse Council and a United Way of Monroe County Certified Member Agency. PALS follows the safety standards developed by NARHA and uses NARHA Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors who are trained in therapeutic riding techniques, CPR, first aid, and safety. PALS uses carefully selected and specially trained horses and other animals, to provide the safest and highest quality learning for a therapeutic environment. Since its founding in 2000, PALS has provided 13,900+ high quality therapeutic riding lessons & hippotherapy sessions improving the lives of hundreds of children, youth, and seniors in our community. PALS has 11 program horses and over 150 weekly volunteers.

Southern IN Center For Independent Living (www.sicilindiana.org)

Suzie Rimstidt, Program Coordinator
(812) 332-1916
suzie@sicilindiana.org

MISSION: The Southern Indiana Center for Independent Living (SICIL) is a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, non-residential and not-for-profit organization that promotes and practices the philosophy of independent living.

DESCRIPTION: To people with all disabilities of all ages, we provide information and referral, peer support through various support groups, help in finding and applying for services, and advocacy for whatever is needed to live as independently as possible. Each of the 8 counties that we serve including Monroe County has a local coordinator so that they will be familiar with the resources. We help or refer folks to agencies to acquire independent living skills training. Both our staff and our Board of Directions have a majority of folks with disabilities so that we can use our experience and passion to truly help folks who have needs.

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HISTORY: (Our web site www.SICILindiana.org has a video that explains our history, but basically it was started by a support group from Lawrence County that included people with physical disabilities in 1995. Independent Living Centers were established by the Federal Rehabilitation Act in 1973 and are all over the United States.

Special Olympics Indiana - Monroe County (www.soimc.org)

Denise Brown, County Coordinator

(812) 325-1548

soimc.cc@gmail.com

MISSION: Gives individuals with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to practice and participate in Olympic-type sports. Our organization is available for those ages 8 on up. We compete locally, away and in area and state tournaments.

DESCRIPTION: Special Olympics is a not-for-profit organization that provides sports training and athletic competition in Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Indiana-Monroe County is part of the international network of accredited Special Olympics Programs that reaches more than 2.5 million athletes with intellectual disabilities worldwide. Our mission is to provide our athletes year-round sports training in preparation for competition in various sports. We offer our athletes continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Stone Belt (www.stonebelt.org)

Yolanda Toschlog, Community Engagement Associate

(812) 332-2168

ytoschlog@stonebelt.org

MISSION: We believe in the uniqueness, worth and right to self-determination of every individual. Therefore, it is our mission, in partnership with the community, to prepare, empower and support persons with developmental disabilities and their families to participate fully in the life of the community.

DESCRIPTION: Provides residential, employment, educational and clinical supports and resources for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Stone Belt is one of the oldest and largest service providers for individuals with developmental disabilities in south central Indiana. We are committed to quality services, and we invite the entire community to play a role in preparing, empowering and supporting individuals with developmental disabilities to fully participate in the life of the community. We value Stone Belt's tradition of excellence and leadership in the field that is founded on our belief that everyone deserves dignity, self-worth and the right to self-determination.

Visually Impaired Preschool Services Bloomington (www.vips.org)

Rebecca Davis, Program Director

vipsbloomington@vips.org

MISSION: The mission of Visually Impaired Preschool Services, Inc. (VIPS) is to offer appropriate services to infants, toddlers and preschoolers who are visually impaired and to their families - to maximize each child's developmental potential through direct services, advocacy and community education.

DESCRIPTION: As much as 80% of all learning occurs through the use of vision. An infant or toddler with a visual impairment has a significant chance of experiencing delays in all areas of development. VIPS helps children learn to use what vision they have as well as their other senses to develop an understanding of the world and how it works. We help families cope with the reality of vision loss by offering a variety of individualized services.

HISTORY: VIPS is a private non profit 501c3 agency established 25 years ago in Louisville, Kentucky. VIPS was founded in 1984 to provide early intervention for an underserved population of visually impaired infants and toddlers. The Bloomington office opened August 1, 2011. It is the only agency of its kind in the state of Indiana.

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