



MORE  
than you think



Disability Network *Lakeshore*  
2008 Annual Report



One in five people live with a disability.



There are more people with disabilities than you might think. More kinds of disabilities. And more opportunities to partner. Disability Network is changing lives, communities and perceptions. When we work together we can do more than you might think.



“Disability Network taught us a lot regarding assumptions, what to ask in interviews, and just how to be more aware. I would recommend this for anyone in our business.”



Ruben Juarez



Paula Perkins



Lucia Rios



Rick Diamond

**At Disability Network, we recognize that employment is key to an independent and fulfilling life. That’s why we work to change perceptions and increase opportunities at every level of the community, from high school students to adults and the businesses who hire them. Our efforts pay off in so many ways. Beyond giving individuals a sense of pride and a paycheck, we supply the community with a valuable pool of talent, experience, and diversity.**

#### Youth Employment Summit

Laying the groundwork for a productive, satisfying life starts early. That’s why Disability Network’s Lucia Rios leads a Youth Employment Summit that offers 14- to 18-year-olds with disabilities the goal-setting, budgeting, resume, and interview skills they need to prepare for a job. This year, Rios teamed with staffing agency Adecco to provide mock interviews and individual feedback for students. Teacher Eryn Sluiter, whose Wavecrest Career Academy students completed the program, says, “It was so valuable to have outside people come in. Lucia really connected with the kids and helped them identify interests that might lead to a job. And meeting with the Adecco staff provided a great ‘real-life’ touch that helped the kids take the topic of employment seriously for the first time.”

#### Employer Awareness

How can we create more job opportunities for these youth – and everyone with disabilities? One of the most effective ways is to educate the

people who hire them. For example, last year, two local staffing agencies invited Disability Network to provide accessibility surveys and disability awareness training. Our Director of Employment Services, Rick Diamond, says, “After addressing the physical accessibility of one branch, Adecco asked us to provide sensitivity and awareness training for employees at several sites. As a staffing agency, they recognize that 20% of the population has a disability, including those they hire, fellow employees, and the people within the businesses where they’re placing staff.”

Adecco Branch Manager Mary VanVels explains, “Our business sees people from all walks of life, and we want to be comfortable and make others comfortable when they come to see us. When it came to disability, we weren’t aware of exactly what we should and shouldn’t do. The information Disability Network brought to the table gave us a better understanding and respect for other people. Afterwards, we all talked about how someone with disabilities is a person, no different

from the rest of us. That’s a valuable thing to understand not just here and now, but as each of us walks along life’s path.”

Holland-based Workforce Management also asked Disability Network to educate its staff about disabilities. After volunteering at a Youth Summit, Workforce Management President Ruben Juarez scheduled an accessibility survey and awareness training. Diamond says “Because they’re minority-owned, they really get the idea that disability is a dimension of diversity that cuts across everything else. A lot of companies don’t want to deal with the cost, time, or energy – real or perceived – they might have to invest to hire someone with a disability. Workforce Management sees it as the next logical step in being a company that embraces diversity.” Juarez adds, “The experience was very valuable. I would recommend this training for any business that wants to be disability-friendly.”

#### Employee Relations

In addition to educating staff, Disability Network also serves as an employment mediator – as we did last year with Adecco. Paula Perkins, Adecco’s Senior Client Program Manager, says, “I was struggling with a situation involving an employee with ADHD. Disability Network met with my colleague and me, gave me some information on her disability, and suggested some strategies and modifications to help. It was so nice to have

that support since it was all unfamiliar ground.” “It’s made such a difference in my life,” Paula continues. “We have corporate support, but it’s different when someone says they’ll come with me to meet the employee. Since our discussion, her office is going to be redone to help her do her job effectively. She’s in awe, too. Now I feel like someone’s holding my hand through this process, and he’s also put my colleague at ease. I wish all managers knew what a good resource Disability Network can be.”

Our ultimate goal is finding employment solutions that work for everyone, which is good news for businesses, employees, and even young people preparing for careers. Disability Network’s Rick Diamond explains, “We want employers to understand that this isn’t a ‘gotcha.’ We’re here to provide whatever support and accommodations a person needs to do a job completely. At the same time, we’re here as a resource for employers – and ultimately, they’ll benefit by having happier, more productive employees.”

Rios adds, “All the efforts put into educating employers about hiring, understanding and maintaining people with disabilities are important. If we can get employers to recognize the benefits and diversity people with disabilities have to offer, it will be one less barrier for our youth to deal with when they seek work now or later in life.”

# Our services

## Transportation

Disability Network develops and leads community workgroups to drive large-scale changes that will improve service for everyone in the lakeshore area. We also support people with disabilities by providing information on local transportation options.

## Housing

Our goal is to connect people with disabilities to affordable, accessible housing of their choice. This includes identifying personal and financial needs, collaborating with other agencies, and advocating for legislation and local support to improve housing options in our community.

## Employment

Disability Network provides work-related training, assistance, and consultation for both employees and employers. We support workers in searching for jobs, setting goals, requesting accommodations, and retaining jobs. On the employer side, we offer accessibility reviews, ADA consultation and coaching, employee retention services, and diversity/inclusiveness staff development.

## Accessibility

We strive to make all places, services, and information accessible to everyone in our community, including people with disabilities.

Led by our staff specialist, our team of trained volunteers responds to questions about the accessibility of buildings and public areas and provides detailed suggestions for appropriate, affordable ways to remove existing barriers.

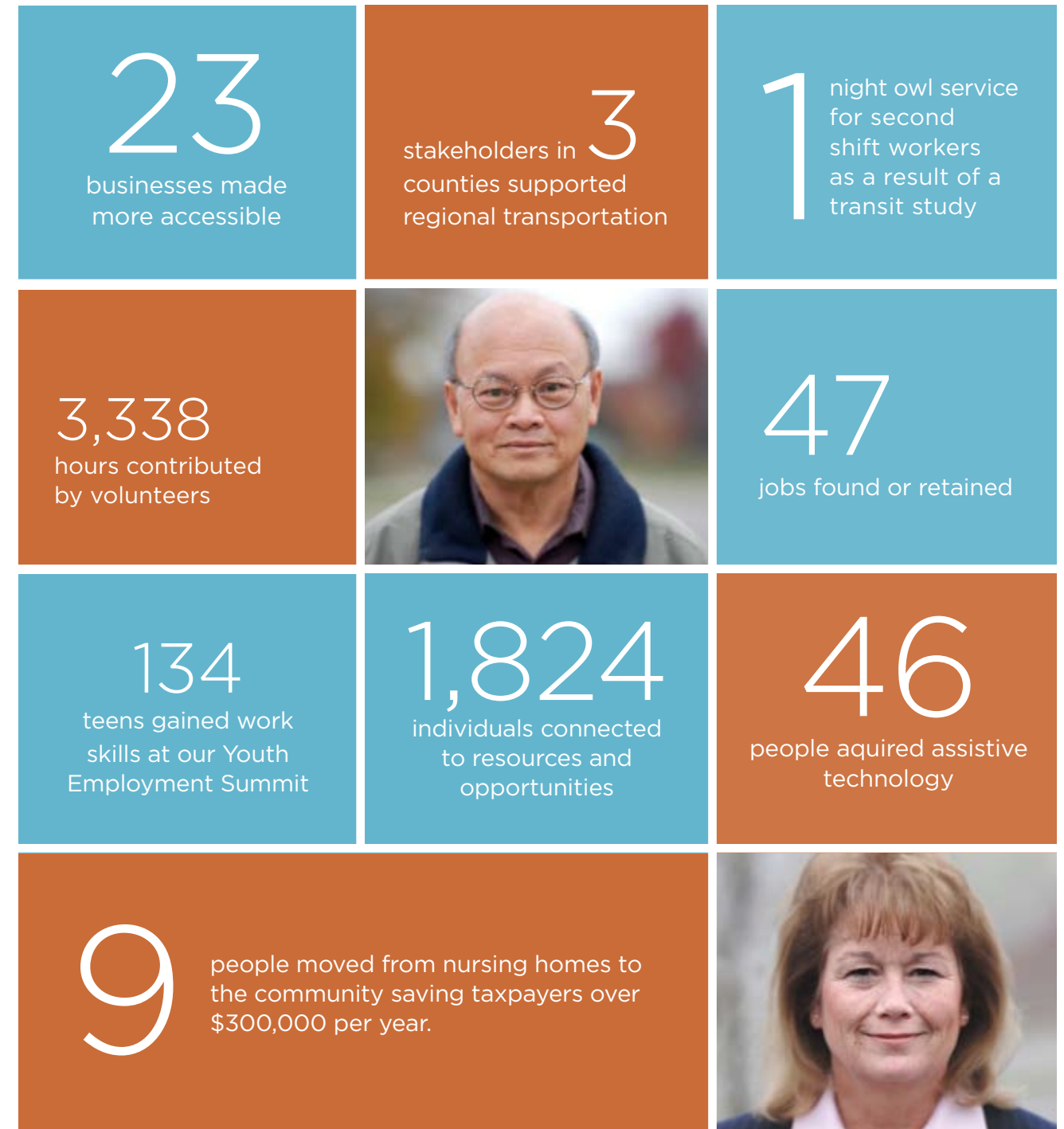
## Youth/Education

Because preparation is key to leading a productive adult life, we've developed services specifically for youth with disabilities. Youth Employment Summit gives 14-18 year-olds the opportunity to learn how to get and keep a job. Meeting twice a week for three weeks, youth focus on career choices and preparation, interview skills, and worker responsibilities. Our connections with local businesses provide students job shadowing, informational interviews, and industry tours. High school students may also participate in classroom presentations, where we cover topics such as careers, life skills, and self-advocacy.

## Support Services

As a resource hub for people with disabilities and their families, we advocate for the many different supports people need to live as independently as possible. Tailored to the individual, these supports may include case management, living arrangements, mental health services, transportation, life planning, and respite care.

Visit [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org) to find out more



**total revenue: \$841,777**

state and local grants: \$374,861, direct federal grants: \$209,680, fees for service: \$172,364, local contributions: \$72,889, other: \$11,983

**total expenditures: \$790,872**

program: \$693,911 (88%), administration & general: \$87,075 (11%), fund development: \$9,886 (1%)

# MORE thank yous.



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