

MORE than you think.

THE INITIATOR

DECEMBER 2009

Toward Community

This morning, while taking MAX transit to Disability Network/Lakeshore from downtown Holland, I met a gentleman who was on his way to spend his money at Meijer. When I asked what he hoped to buy, he said he was looking for an inflatable mattress that he could use to stay at his brother's home on occasion, because "it gets awfully lonely at my house." In contrast, he didn't care to spend time with his sister, who "always tells me what to do."

Our brief but delightful conversation supports two out of three conclusions of a study cited by the American Psychological Association: what makes us happy is autonomy—feeling that I have choice over my activities; competence—feeling that I am effective and capable in what I do; and relatedness—feeling a sense of closeness with others.

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Many people who come through our doors are isolated, frustrated, and don't know where to turn. Some have been dependent on others for basic needs. Disability Network has always assisted people to develop their competence and autonomy. With our teach-to-fish approach, we help people define their own goals, develop related skills, and then we coach to support their efforts to achieve their goals.

However, we have not deliberately taught those we serve how to develop a network of long-term relationships

through which one both gives and takes. Such networks position all of us to grow personally, achieve our goals, and make contributions to others. People with strong social networks not only survive, but thrive. Not to mention the added benefit of personal happiness.

We're changing the way we work.

Our ultimate goal has always been full community participation of the people with whom we work. But we cannot expect individuals to be connected in our community simply because we assist them to meet their needs in employment, accessibility, or housing, though addressing these needs is important. We cannot expect people to participate in our community simply because transit options exist where they were limited before, though such options are essential. We are called to do more.

Help us innovate.

We are in the process of discovering ways to teach people how to build networks that position them to meet their goals and help others. In this creative space between chaos and order, we want your ideas. Please stop by and chat (see *Cocoa and cookies* at right), call with your suggestions-616.396.5326 x108, or email your thoughts to ruth@dnlakeshore.org. Hearing from you will definitely increase my happiness.

Ruth Stegeman
Executive Director



"People with strong social networks not only survive, but thrive. Not to mention the added benefit of personal happiness."
— Ruth Stegeman

Books we're reading

The Whuffie Factor by Tara Hunt

The 29% Solution by Ivan Misner

The Art of Possibility by Rosemund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander

Cocoa and cookies

Stop in any Wednesday morning before Christmas in December, 10:00 a.m. to noon, for cocoa and cookies. Tour our office, meet our staff, and share your ideas about helping people build their networks.

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Electronic Newsletter

Did you know that Disability Network/Lakeshore has an electronic newsletter that includes: more info, pictures, video, links and upcoming events? Visit www.dnlakeshore.org to register!

Join Us on the Web

Disability Network/Lakeshore is now on Facebook and Linked-In.

Volunteers

We rely on our wonderful volunteers for so much of what we accomplish. To find an opportunity that fits your skills, interests and schedule, please contact Annie Hilchen at 616 396 5326.

Donations

As a non-profit organization, we welcome gifts of all sizes. You may make a tax-deductible contribution by mailing a check (payable to Disability Network/Lakeshore) to:

Disability Network/Lakeshore
426 Century Lane
Holland, MI 49423
Or online at: www.e-giving.org



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Who we are

Most people equate disability with limitations. It's our job to change the perceptions and realities that prevent people with disabilities from sharing in the community. Every year, we provide training, mentoring, and referrals to help people with disabilities and their families live productive lives. Because disability touches so many people, we also work on a larger scale, helping governments and businesses make changes that benefit not just those with disabilities, but everyone in the community.

Return Service Requested