

# COMMUNICABILITY



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR DISABILITY COMMUNITY

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"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

✍ Andy Warhol ✍

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**New Horizons Un-Limited Inc. (NHU)** is a non-profit organization based in Milwaukee with a mission to make information and life experiences more accessible to people with lifelong disabilities, their families and caregivers. To learn more about our mission and activities, please visit the NHU website at [www.new-horizons.org](http://www.new-horizons.org).

## Legislative News

### ***AAPD Presidential Election Action Center***

It's never too early to start preparing for a Presidential Election. With the 2008 Election just around the corner, and the primaries nearer still, now is the time to educate yourself on each candidate and his/her agenda. To help you with this task, the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) has developed a new online Presidential Election Action Center.

The center will keep you updated with action alerts, candidate and campaign news, get-out-the-disability-vote initiatives, and all things related to the 2008 presidential election. More specifically, you will have access to each candidate's questionnaire responses, links to each candidate's website, and an election timeline, which lists important dates and event information.

Historically, voter turnout has been very low among people with disabilities. It's time to turn this around! Get to know your candidates and cast an educated vote come election time.

Visit the Action Center today:

[www.aapd.com/News/election/peac2008.php](http://www.aapd.com/News/election/peac2008.php)

"Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard."

## Employment 101

### ***Be your own boss - Take control of your financial future***

It is a dream of many...*If only I could be my own boss, manage my own business, set my own course ...*

Stop dreaming and get moving! Only you can make your dream of owning and operating your own business a reality. If you're feeling a little overwhelmed, the Small Business and Self Employment Service (SBSES), a program of the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, can help you get started.

SBSES offers comprehensive information, counseling and referrals about self-employment and small business ownership opportunities for people with disabilities. More specifically, they can provide information and referrals on:

- Business plan development
- Market research
- Start up funds
- Business management
- Marketing plan development
- Disability related issues (including Social Security work incentives)

The services of SBSES are free. For more information, visit their website at [www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES). To get started with SBSES, call 1-800-526-7234.

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## Employment 101

### ***Are you ready to go to work? Getting started on a path towards employment***

#### **Employment Support Programs**

If you are receiving Social Security Disability Benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) there are several excellent programs that can help you obtain the training and services you need to prepare for employment.

Via Social Security's work incentives and Ticket to Work programs beneficiaries are eligible to receive:

- Continued cash benefits for a time while you work
- Continued Medicare or Medicaid while you work
- Help with education, training and rehabilitation to start a new line of work

These programs essentially eliminate the risk of trying employment by ensuring continued benefits during your trial work period and also guaranteeing a quick reinstatement of your benefits should your disability prevent you from working long term.

#### **Work Incentives for Social Security Beneficiaries**

As explained in the Social Security issued pamphlet *Working While Disabled – How We Can Help*, “the trial work period allows you to test your ability to work for at least nine months. During your trial work period, you will receive your full Social Security benefits regardless of how much you are earning as long as you report your work activity and you continue to have a disabling impairment. In 2007, a trial work month is any month in which your total earnings are \$640 or more, or, if you are self-employed, you earn more than \$640 (after expenses) or spend more than 80 hours in your own business. The trial work period continues until you have worked nine months within a 60-month period.” Upon completing your trial work period, you then have 36 months during which you can work and still receive benefits for any month your earnings are not “substantial.” In 2007, earnings of \$900 or more (\$1,500 if you are blind) are considered substantial. In other words you can make up to \$899/month (\$1499 if you are blind) and still keep 100% of your benefits.

As an added benefit, if, within five years of reaching “substantial” earnings, you are unable to continue your work due to your disability, you may request an expedited reinstatement of your benefits. No

additional application is needed and you will not have to wait for a medical review. Your benefits will be reinstated immediately.

#### **Work Incentives for SSI Beneficiaries**

Incentives are different for those receiving SSI benefits.

If you work despite your disability, you may continue to receive payments until your earnings, added with any other income, exceed the SSI income limits. This limit is different in every state. Even if your SSI payments stop, your Medicaid coverage usually will continue if your earnings are less than your state level.

Similar to Social Security incentives, benefits can be reinstated within the five years following the month your benefits stopped due to your earnings.

SSI recipients are also eligible to develop a Plan for Achieving Self Support, also known as a PASS. A PASS allows you to set money aside for the purposes of obtaining your work goal. Funds can be used to go to school for specialized job training or to start a business of your own.

PASS savings will not be counted when determining your income and thus your SSI payments.

#### **Your Medicare/Medicaid Benefits**

There are safeguards in place that will allow workers to keep their Medicare/Medicaid Benefits. Guidelines differ for each type of beneficiary.

For example, Social Security Disability beneficiaries who return to work may continue to receive Medicare Part A for up to 93-months after their trial work period ends. Beyond that time, workers may then buy into the program for a small monthly premium.

SSI beneficiaries on the other hand will generally have their Medicaid coverage continue until their income reaches a certain level, which varies by state. Furthermore, to qualify for continued coverage you must: (1) Need Medicaid to work; (2) Be unable to afford similar medical coverage without SSI; (3) Continue to have a disabling condition; and (4) Meet all other SSI eligibility requirements.

To learn more about how SSA can support your employment pursuit, contact the Social Security Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program (WIPA). To locate the WIPA project nearest you, call 1-866-968-7842 (Voice) or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY).

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## Employment Services in Wisconsin

### *DVR – your first step towards employment*

Preparing for and finding employment can be a daunting, if not frustrating task. There is no need to travel this road alone. There are many services in Wisconsin that can help you find a job you'll love.

Most employment services in Wisconsin require referrals from the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR is a federally and state funded program that supports Wisconsin residents with disabilities in their pursuit of employment. DVR will match you with an employment counselor who will assess your interests and skills and identify appropriate services.

### **The DVR Process**

#### **Step One: Develop a Plan for Employment**

You and your counselor will talk about your abilities, needs and interests. This is your first step in choosing a job or career. Together you will set up an Individualized Plan for Employment, a plan to meet your work goals.

#### **Step Two: Identify Available Resources**

Once you have developed your work plan, your counselor will connect you with the services and training needed to pursue your particular employment goal. This could include higher education, on the job training, office skills training, or assistive technology assessment, among others.

If you are interested in taking college level courses you may apply for a DVR Training Grant to help pay for school related expenses.

#### **Step Three: Find and Keep a Job**

Your counselor will be your partner throughout your job search and after. He/she will remain in touch with you and your employer to ensure that your employment experience is successful.

DVR services are open to people with a variety of disabilities. Due to limited funding however, DVR will focus on those with the most significant functional limitations before those with less significant limitations. Each applicant is individually evaluated to determine his/her need for services.

To learn more about DVR services, contact the main office at 1-800-442-3477. A representative will be able to refer you to your local DVR office.



## **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Flower Bulb Fundraiser**

*Tulips, Lilies & Daffodils! Oh My!*

Another great selection of VanBourgondien spring-blooming flower bulbs will be offered for sale during our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Flower Bulb Fundraiser, running from July through September. Beauty abounds in the selection of Tulips, Daffodils, Alliums, Lilies and more!

Each package of bulbs costs just \$10, with 50% of sales going to New Horizons Un-Limited.

Help us make this year's sale the best ever! Contact your friends, family and neighbors and ask them if they have a spot or two in their gardens for flowers that will not only bring beauty for years to come but also support programs for our community members with disabilities.

If you would like to receive a fundraiser packet, please contact us at (414) 299-0124 or download the brochure and order form from our website at [www.new-horizons.org/07bulb.pdf](http://www.new-horizons.org/07bulb.pdf).

*With your help we are confident that this year's sale will be the best yet!*



## **Wisconsin News**

### ***Artists wanted!***

Looking for an outlet to share your creative talents with the public? Look no further. Easter Seals Kindcare can connect you to those outlets. Via their ArtLink program, artists are referred to area agencies that serve individuals with disabilities, senior citizens and children at risk for paid performances, workshops and artist-in-residency programs. They are looking for artists specializing in Dance/Creative Movement, Visual Art, Music, Creative Writing, and Theatre.

For more information, please contact Erica Jasna Struble, ArtLink Coordinator at (414) 550-0158 or [ericaj@eastersealskindcaresewi.com](mailto:ericaj@eastersealskindcaresewi.com).

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## Another great golf event at Hawk's View

Our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit Golf Outing proved to be another enjoyable day for the 90+ golfers that joined us at Hawk's View on June 6<sup>th</sup>. From the golf pro offering swing tips at the driving range to the Great Lakes Distillery Vodka and Gin tasting on Hole 11, our outing offered something for everyone!

Thanks to repeat Gold and Silver Eagle Sponsorships from Johnson Controls and Miller Engineering Information Technologies Group, as well as generous sponsorships from Chicago Switchboard, Uihlein Electric, Kramer Datapower and Electrical Energy Experts, our event proved to be another great success! Of course, sponsorships from dozens of other companies, which offered everything from tee sponsorships to silent auction and golfer gift donations, added to this success!

Behind this success we had a team of wonderful volunteers. We want to extend a very special thank you to each and every volunteer who contributed his or her time and talents with us!

### Eagle Sponsors

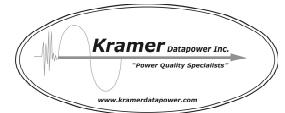
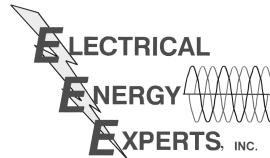
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