

# MDDDC

Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council

## 2014 ANNUAL REPORT



*Our Community Includes Everyone*

## **Council Members:**

**Chair:** Kristen Columbus-Family Member

**Vice-Chair:** Paul Palmer-Self-Advocate

Justin P. Caine-Self-Advocate

Heidi A. DeVries-Self-Advocate

Kristin L. Kleinheksel-Self-Advocate

Jeremiah J. Prusi-Self-Advocate

Robert Spruce-Self-Advocate

David J. Taylor-Self-Advocate

Jill Barker-Family Member

Celena L. Barnes-Family Member

Robert L. Brown-Family Member

Lori A. Campbell-Family Member

Richard Suhrheinrich-Family Member

Melanie Brown-Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs

Elmer Cerano-Protection & Advocacy Services

Deborah Wiese- Department of Human Services

Debra Huntley-Department of Human Services

Barbara LeRoy- DDI-University Centers for Excellence

David T. Verseput-Department of Community Health

## **Council Staff:**

Vendella M. Collins-Executive Director

Yasmina Bouraoui-Deputy Director

Wendy Duke-Littlejohn-Executive Secretary

Tandy Bidinger-Public Policy Analyst

Dee Florence-Advocacy Secretary

Terry Hunt-Community Services Consultant

Tedra Jackson-Grants Monitor

Meredith Smith-Communications Representative

Tracy Vincent-Resource Analyst

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201 Townsend St.  
Lansing, MI 48933  
517-335-3158 (voice)  
517-335-2751(fax)  
517-335-3171(TDD)

Mdch-dd-council@michigan.gov  
www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil

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# LETTER FROM CHAIR AND DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council's 2014 Annual Report. Within these pages are an overview of our accomplishments, photo journey and financial status report. Our investments continue to uphold the Council's mission of supporting people with developmental disabilities to achieve life dreams. During 2014, the Council continued to focus on promoting Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination through a variety of activities and events through the work of its members, staff, work groups, committees and partners.

As we look forward to another year, we will continue our work for systems change through education of our policymakers and our communities. We are committed to continually providing people with developmental disabilities the self-advocacy skills they need to live self-determined lives. On behalf of the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council members and staff, we would like to thank everyone for their contributions and tireless commitment to making sure "Our Community Includes Everyone".

Sincerely,



*Kristen E. Columbus*

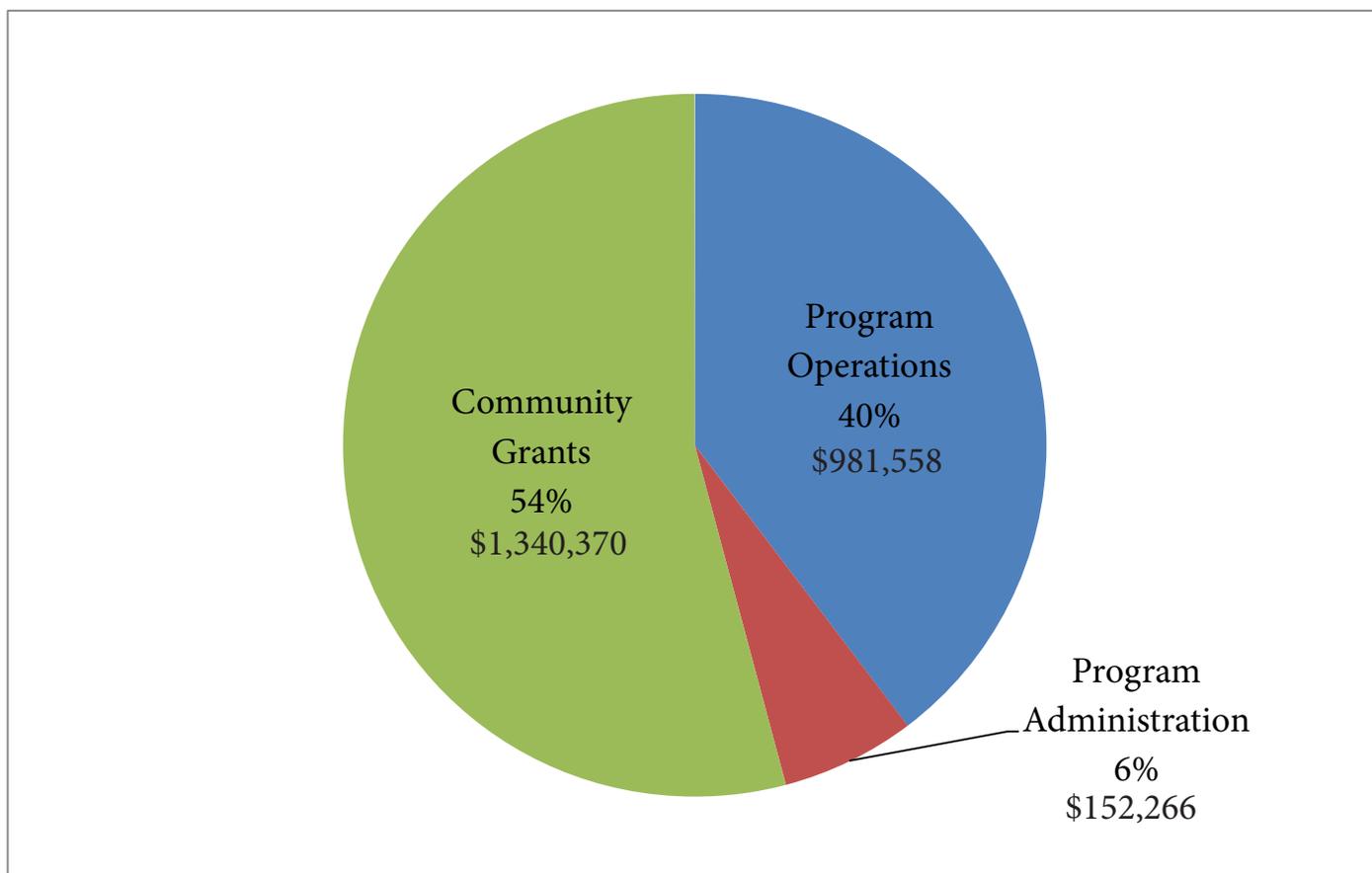
Kristen E. Columbus  
Chair



*Vendella M. Collins*

Vendella M. Collins  
Executive Director

# 2014 FEDERAL GRANT



# TAKE YOUR LEGISLATOR

To promote community employment opportunities for people with disabilities the DD Council had its first “Take your Legislator to Work” Campaign in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. More than 40 individuals with disabilities applied to have their legislator job shadow them. Ten individuals were selected along with their employers and 12 legislators and a district liaison participated. Each job shadow lasted about an hour and legislators got a chance to see various jobs from ticket taking, program aide, inclusion specialist, porter, cleaning technicians, library aide and grocery bagger.

The Campaign ended with a closing ceremony on October 29th. People traveled across the state to be in attendance, including Lieutenant Governor Calley, who gave opening remarks. Participants got to share their job shadow experiences in two panel discussions saying, “the best part was having their legislators actually do their job.” Even employers and a legislator shared their experience. Participants, employers and legislators were presented with certificates of participation by Vendella M. Collins, Executive Director of the DD Council.



Lt. Gov. Calley poses with the participants in the Take Your Legislator to Work Campaign.



Sen. Pappageorge learns how to change a feeding tube from Anne DeFrain at Wing Lake Developmental Center.



Melina Bucci(left) rallies her co-workers at Dow Diamond Stadium.



Executive Director Vendella Collins (left) shakes the hand of Paul Miller (right)at the October 29th Closing Ceremony.

# TO WORK CAMPAIGN



Eric Chojnacki (left) teaches Rep. MacMasters (right) how to mop.



(left to right) Sen. Booher, Sara Piersma and Rep. Franz help shoppers with their groceries.



Sen. Marleau pulls books with Marty Jenson.



(left to right) Rep. Kivela and Sen. Casperson help Lindsay Griffith sort bottles at Econo Foods.



Rep. Stamas (left) helps Katie Waters (right) pour waters at Colonial Villa.



Rep. Schor (left) shakes hands with Paul Miller(right).



Steve Abramson takes a break from mopping to smile for the camera.



John Argo wipes down the counters at Celebration Cinema.



# EMPLOYMENT

In Michigan, 81 percent of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are unemployed compared to 9 percent of people without disabilities. To combat these statistics the Council focused on two issues around employment in 2014.

1: **The Social Welfare Act’s program, Michigan’s Medicaid “Freedom to Work”**, which passed in 2012. It would allow people with disabilities to work and not lose their healthcare benefits. This legislation could not take immediate effect due to Affordable Care Act rules and concern about how it would affect beneficiaries. New legislation to amend “Freedom to Work,” SB 961, was introduced and passed the Senate in late December 2014. This amendment would lower the premiums for individuals for a specific income range.

2: **The DD Network** (the Michigan DD Council, Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services, and the Developmental Disabilities Institute at Wayne State University) released its report around the status of employment of people with disabilities in Michigan, entitled “Employment First in Michigan”, at a press conference on September 22, 2014, attended by Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley.

## The report discusses:

1. The unemployment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
2. People with disabilities in Michigan who want a job in their community; but only a few of them have one.
3. Sheltered workshops are paying their workers with disabilities less than minimum wage. The average wage being paid is \$2.75 an hour.
4. Employees with disabilities should be paid at or above the minimum wage and have benefits just like people without disabilities.
5. People with disabilities should be employed in community-based jobs, where they work alongside people with and without disabilities.

The full report is available at: [www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil](http://www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil)



# LEGISLATIVE EVENT

“Alive! Alert! and Enthusiastic!” was the theme for the 2014 Legislative Event on February 11th at the Radisson Hotel in Downtown Lansing. More than 100 statewide advocates with developmental disabilities met with their state legislator to discuss important issues affecting them in their communities. Lisa Gigliotti, who is a lawyer and disability advocate, got the crowd pumped with her speech about *Corraggio* ~Courage~ and the power to tell your story to legislators. She wrapped up the event with a debrief that helped RICC members understand the importance of educating policymakers, following-up with them after the meeting and building relationships.



# RICC SUMMIT

Self-exploration was the theme for the 2014 RICC Summit. Activities centered around self-advocacy. RICC members who were new to the concept of self-advocacy and wanted to learn what it means to be a self-advocate participated in Self-Advocacy 101. Sheryl Kuenzer, Manistee RICC, and Andre Robinson, Wayne RICC, facilitated activities around “Dreams and Goals” and “Gifts and Giving.” At the end of each activity, participants were given an opportunity to share their experiences with the entire group. Agency staff that support the RICC in its day-to-day operations participated in Advising through Self-Determination. The session focused on how the RICC advisors could better support self-advocates to lead the RICCs.



# COUNCIL PRODUCTS

## **The Training Community Organizers Project (TCOP)**

provides training on the history, principles and methods of community organizing. TCOP supports trainees and local groups that want to organize around common issues, and facilitates development of peer to peer learning networks.

This year the grant worked on the “RICC to RICC Network” which focused on coalition building among the RICCs (over 120 people participated), networking peer to peer support on local community organizing plans and strengthening large scale advocacy. The grant planned a large scale public policy advocacy around the federal legislation: ABLA Act (savings account for people with disabilities). RICC members called-in to their federal legislators about passing the ABLA Act. As a result 175 people were active in advocacy calls and the ABLA Act was signed into law.



**Michigan Partners for Freedom** is a grassroots movement of people with disabilities, family members, advocates and organizations working in the field of disabilities to make Self-Determination a reality for all of Michigan. Local Leaders, who are advocates, go across the state doing presentations on self-determination, bringing awareness to the topic. Self-determination means individuals served by the public mental health system have the right to control their own life. There are five guiding principles to self-determination: freedom, authority, support, responsibility and confirmation.



**Leaders in Policy Advocacy (LIPA)**, led by the Arc of Michigan, is a grant that supports participants (Leaders) to become leaders in the movement for people with disabilities to claim full, productive lives in their communities. Leaders are parents of young children with disabilities or adults with developmental disabilities.

Leaders learned about disability history, inclusive education, assistive technology, self-determination, person-centered planning, social media, systems change, access to employment, housing and recreation. The grant had two cohort classes this year with combined total of 35 participants graduating from the program. After graduating, many Leaders became involved in various advocacy opportunities. One Leaders graduate ran (unsuccessfully) for a seat on her local school board. Another started a newsletter for parents of children with disabilities, one presented at the 2014 Arc Michigan conference and another organized training at her workplace, a hospital ER, about interacting with patients who have disabilities.



**Connections for Community Leadership (CCL)** helps people with developmental disabilities to take charge of their lives and become leaders in their communities.

This year, CCL finished the fully accessible disability history activity. Participants would sit in a circle and read off dates of significant pieces of history targeting people with disabilities on a laminated card. For those who could not read or were afraid to read, a smart pen to record an audio was used to read the card aloud.

The 5th Annual Her Power! Her Pride! Her Voice!, which is a multi-day event, was held for teen girls with disabilities. The retreat host a series of activities to promote self-acceptance, community building and leadership development. This year the grant was able to include someone who needed 24-hour support. The girl communicated through limited eye movement. After the retreat, the girl's mother said she didn't want to leave and enjoyed making new friends.



# SELF-ADVOCACY: RICCS

Regional Inclusive Community Coalitions (RICCs) are local self-advocacy groups funded by the Council. The Council had 27 RICCs across the state and the Upper Peninsula in 2014. RICCs work to change local systems and the way communities interact with people with disabilities. Some of the changes RICCs accomplished this year include:

## **Region 1 (Livingston, St. Clair, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne)**

**Wayne RICC** was able to create a training around person-centered planning, independent facilitation and peer mentoring and how they can all work together. They created a mock person-centered planning meeting where a young adult was trying to move out of their parent's house. They held their training at a RICC meeting, regional meeting and the Wayne RICC's Disability Summit.



## **Region 2 (Capital Area, Midland and Central Michigan)**

**Capital Area RICC** was able to successfully work with the Meijer Corporation and get some benches moved within the local stores so that the benches were easily accessible. Collaboration was made between the Capital Area RICC and Meijer so that in the next fiscal year the RICC will plan to do a similar project with the Dollar Tree.



### **Region 3 (Muskegon, Ottawa, Kent, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Berrien and Allegan)**

**Kalamazoo RICC** has been working on Employment First in their community. At the Kalamazoo RICC meeting in August, Representatives Sean McCann and Margaret O'Brien and Senator Tonya Schuitmaker were invited to a conversation about collaborating on a Employment First bill. The goal is to offer students with disabilities, who exit special education services, help find competitive employment instead of sheltered workshops where people receive subminimum wages and no meaningful work. Representative Sean McCann stated at the end of the meeting that he would be interested in sponsoring a bill on Employment First.



### **Region 4 (Northern, Cheboygan, Iosco, Ogemaw, Benzie-Manistee and Grand Traverse)**

**Iosco RICC** is part of a county-wide committee that plans ways to educate youth regarding bullying. The committee is made up of law enforcement, educators, and other interested community partners and is currently working on “Rachel’s Challenge” (national non-profit that helps create safe school environments). The Iosco RICC has partnered the messages of Rachel’s Challenge with Shred the Hate. In the spring of each year, a large county-wide rally is held and the teens and other youth from around the county gather together to learn how to stop bullying. Skits and other entertainment focusing on this theme are prepared and shared. This year the RICC will return to the schools to share a new anti-bullying message which focuses on using language of “kindness.”



### **Region 5 (Ontonagon, Houghton, Baraga, Marquette-Alger, Delta and Eastern U.P.)**

**Delta RICC** made a video advocating for a stoplight to be placed at a busy intersection. As a result, the video was shown at a city commission meeting and to Senator Casperson. The Senator invited a member of the RICC to speak at the Transportation Committee meeting in Lansing about the stoplight. The RICC is still working on this issue.



## *Our Community Includes Everyone*

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council works to support people with developmental disabilities across the state. The Governor appointed 21-member council consists of people with disabilities; family members and advocates of people with disabilities; and representatives from state and local agencies who work with people with developmental disabilities.

