

ignite thoughts into action

# spark

 Indiana Governor's Council  
for People with Disabilities

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in this issue on  
Community Living:  
**GETTING  
CONNECTED**



Support comes  
full circle



Groups create  
change



Catching the  
community spirit

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**spark** is a bi-monthly publication of the Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, an independent state agency that facilitates change. Our mission is to promote the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. This mission is accomplished through planning, evaluation, collaboration, education, research and advocacy.

**Suellen Jackson-Boner**  
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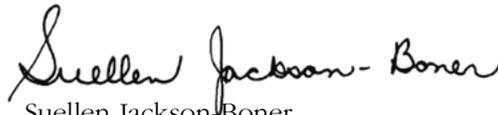
**A flourishing, successful community is built when each and every one of its citizens contributes to its well-being and helps make it a better place to live and work. As members of our communities, we not only have the right but also the duty to engage in society and give back to our neighborhoods, towns and cities to help them thrive.**

In this issue of Spark, we complete our three-part series on “Community Living” with enlightening and exciting stories that inspire all of us to challenge perceptions and break down barriers to achieve full community participation for ourselves and others. You’ll read stories that not only motivate community involvement, but also encourage giving back to our society through civic responsibilities, volunteering and much more.

When all of us take part in making our communities better places to live, we each enjoy the outcome – a sustainable and spirited community that embraces people of all backgrounds and all circumstances. As someone who has a disability, has a relative with a disability or is simply an advocate for disability rights, you are in a position to infuse a unique perspective that can help grow a community that’s inclusive and accepting of people of all abilities.

As you read the following pages, I encourage you to consider how your perspective, desires and talents can enrich your community. Each of us has individual skills and insights that can make our communities better – socially, economically and physically – for all. Do your part to build a community that is safe, prosperous and, above all, welcoming of everyone.

Sincerely,



Suellen Jackson-Boner  
Executive Director



# Community support comes full circle

**G**iving and receiving – it’s this ongoing cycle that builds a strong, supportive community, and Christine Guth, a 2009 Partners in Policymaking graduate from Goshen, Ind., has lived her life experiencing the joy and fulfillment that comes from both ends.

A personal and professional advocate for people with disabilities, Guth focuses her efforts on combating barriers to community support, building two-way bridges so people with disabilities can both contribute to and receive help from their communities.

Guth’s first experience of true community support came at a time when she was a seminary student exploring her call to the ministry and raising a family with children who have autism. Distancing herself from the care of others,

she also chose to hide her own mental health conditions. At that time in her life, she felt support was something she could pay for by the hour and was not worth burdening others.

When given the opportunity to speak at a chapel service in November 2005, Guth finally decided to go public about her mental health for the first time. Unknowingly, she accepted her first invitation to a network of community support.

**“...realizing how others were moved and inspired by my story made me realize I was an asset, not a liability.”**

– Christine Guth

“It was terrifying at first to finally come out and express my own mental health challenges, but the empowerment that came

from telling everyone and then realizing how others were moved and inspired by my story made me realize I was an asset, not a liability.”

Guth’s story paved the way for her to meet several individuals who helped her become a beacon to others searching for support and companionship. In March 2006, she joined Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet), an organization that invites communities of faith to also become communities

of support for people with disabilities. Now as program director, Guth’s role has helped her raise awareness, spark



Partners in Policymaking graduate Christine Guth excels at giving back to her community.

imagination, provide tools and connect communities of faith to resources that can help them take one more step toward inclusion.

Inspired by her own personal experiences as a mother, Guth also helped develop the Autism Asperger Parent Support Group of Goshen in partnership with Kaylene Ediger, now a close friend. Going strong since August 2006, the group helps parents by providing support and offering helpful resources and insights.

“The advice I have for anyone looking to build community support is: First, you must have the courage to start with one person at a time. Second, make sure that person really takes the time to listen to you,” Guth said.

Now as a speaker and self-advocate, she helps empower hundreds of people to begin identifying their own opportunities to both gain community support and take part in initiatives to build community support for others. She hopes her life story can encourage others to seek opportunities to build their own supportive circles, as well as give back to their communities by supporting others.

Guth continues to build bridges to support as the co-author/ editor of a revised version of a book first published in the 1980s by the Mennonite faith entitled, “Supportive Care in the Congregation: Providing a Congregational Network of Care for persons with Significant Disabilities.” Along with colleagues Paul Leichty and Bill Gaventa, Guth updated many of the book’s chapters by providing families with contemporary strategies to build support communities for their loved ones with disabilities.

Guth’s contributions explain how theological organizations are some of the best locations to start connecting to community.

“Communities of faith have enormous potential to be a place of connection for people with and without disabilities. Each congregation shares common values, making it a prime location for those looking for encouragement, direction and a sense of community,” Guth said.

In the future, Guth hopes to put together an additional book containing a collection of stories about faith communities that have implemented the book’s ideas and benefited from the results. She is also actively making contacts to solicit volunteers willing to stabilize ADNet’s existence, staff childcare during her autism group meetings, and start a community support group for Spanish-speaking parents.

As she continues her work, Guth’s hope is that the sense of support shared from one person to another can ripple through an entire community, making it easier for all individuals to lend a hand as well as take a hand. In her words, “Nobody operates all by themselves.” \*

**“The advice I have for anyone looking to build community support is: First, you must have the courage to start with one person at a time. Second, make sure that person really takes the time to listen to you.”**

– Christine Guth

# Advocacy groups create change and build friendships

**P**ractice self-advocacy, serve others, be politically active and practice patriotism, be environmentally aware, and enjoy life. These guiding principles are what The Change Makers' co-founder Sharon Anderson fondly refers to as "the good life."

With more than 50 participants – including people with disabilities, their friends and family and other supporters – The Change Makers is a community advocacy group based in Fort Wayne, Ind., that demonstrates the power of bringing people together to carry out a shared mission.

As Anderson's grandson and his friends were transitioning out of the Boy Scouts, she wanted more opportunities for them to stay continually active within their community and maintain their many friendships. So Anderson and her daughter Terri Harless, both Partners in Policymaking graduates, spent the summer of 2008 sitting on the porch "scheming" ways to create a program that would provide a meaningful outlet for people with disabilities to connect with and contribute to their communities.

It was decided early on that the club would be open to families, but voting privileges were reserved for men and women 16 years and older who have a physical,

intellectual or emotional disability. Through personal invitations and referrals, many became aware of the group, and the first meeting of The Change Makers took place Sept. 1, 2008.

"We had a really nice turnout on our first night," Anderson recalled. "One of the first things we did was take a vote on what to name our club. All the voting members came together and decided on one name, the colors and logo. From the very beginning, it was 'our' club."

The goal of each member of The Change Makers is to participate in a group of caring individuals with a common mission of advocacy – for themselves, their neighbors, their community and for other people throughout the world.

Now just three years into its existence, the club has been busy. "The first project we ever did was Pennies for Peace. Each of our members was asked to bring pennies to each meeting to support students in Afghanistan. When we reached \$100 (or 10,000 pennies) we donated the money to help those in need," Anderson said.

The club has also raised the same amount for Fort Wayne's Kreager Park's Boundless Playground and a U.S. soldiers fund. And, they have helped pack backpacks for those



The Change Makers marched in the 2011 Memorial Day parade in Fort Wayne, Ind., to show their patriotism.

experiencing homelessness and planted trees.

To practice patriotism, The Change Makers march proudly in parades, recite the Pledge of Allegiance at every meeting and even receive visits from local and regional politicians. However, it's not all work and no play. Club members always look forward to activities like Garage Sale Bingo, bonfires and the ever-popular Cookie Dance – a party with lots of cookies and lots of all-out dancing.

"The biggest tip I can give to those who want to start a community group is to keep it simple, and have fun! We are all doing this for the enjoyment of our members," Anderson said. "Socialization and meeting others – that's what is important."

To see The Change Makers in action and to learn more about the club, visit their website at [www.thechangemakers.us](http://www.thechangemakers.us). ✨

# Exposing the gaps: our communities 20 years after ADA

The gap between people with and without disabilities who indicate they regularly socialize with peers has remained steady at a relatively narrow 11 percent difference, according to a recent study, “The ADA, 20 Years Later.” But significant gaps across various lifestyle areas – employment, financial circumstances, access to health care and more – still remain.

Conducted by the Kessler Foundation and National Organization on Disability (NOD) in conjunction with Harris Interactive, the 2010 study gives important insight into some of the most notable gaps between people with and without disabilities and their involvement in their communities. The study uses 13 measures to assess the quality of life experienced by people with and without disabilities, revealing both disappointing trends and notable progress since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

## Socialization

Life outside the home, an important component in community living, has seen steady gaps, due largely to limited mobility and greater transportation needs. While only 79 percent of people with disabilities reported that they socialize at least twice

each month, 90 percent of people without disabilities reported the same. However, younger people with disabilities, ages 18 to 29, are more likely than their same-age counterparts (94 versus 91 percent) without disabilities to socialize with friends, relatives and neighbors regularly.

The study also revealed a significant gap when it looked at the amount of times people with disabilities eat out at restaurants. Those with disabilities lag 27 percent behind those without disabilities (48 percent versus 75 percent) in dining out. Survey responders cited financial constraints, lack of accessibility, negative public attitudes and discomfort as barriers to dining out for people with disabilities.

## Civic participation

The 2008 election was historic in more ways than one, signaling a close in the voting gap between people with and without disabilities. According to the study, 59 percent of both populations showed up to the polls – a zero percent gap that had once peaked at 17 percent in 1996.

Due largely to the passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002 and profound accessibility improvements of voting machines and polling places, a record number of people with

disabilities cast a ballot in 2008 – approximately 18 percent more than in 2000.

## Religious activities

Attendance at religious services tends to be populated more by people without disabilities than those with disabilities. In fact, the study shows a 7 percent gap when comparing attendance between the two groups (50 percent versus 57 percent). This number has stayed relatively the same since 2004, suggesting a limited push within churches to make accessibility accommodations. It is also noted that people with slight to moderate disabilities attend church more often than those with more severe disabilities (an almost 9 percent difference).

## Employment

Employment statistics from the national study showed approximately 21 percent of working-age participants with disabilities were employed full- or part-time. In comparison, the percentage of working-age participants without disabilities was much higher – 59 percent. This 38 point percentage gap, although high, has made a slight decline since its 1998 score of 50 percent. However, because of the economic recession still affecting many Americans, this gap may remain for several years to come.

## Trends in gaps for “indicator” measures – 1986–2010 (percentage points)

	1986	1994	1998	2000	2004	2010
<b>Employment</b> Works either full- or part-time (ages 18–64)	n/a	n/a	50	49	43	38
<b>Poverty</b> Annual household income \$15,000 or less	22	22	22	19	17	19
<b>Education</b> Has not graduated from high school	24	12	11	13	10	6
<b>Health care</b> Did not get needed care on at least one occasion in past year	n/a	5	10	13	11	9
<b>Transportation</b> Inadequate transportation considered a problem	n/a	n/a	13	20	17	18
<b>Socializing</b> Socializes with close friends, relatives or neighbors at least twice a month	n/a	n/a	n/a	11	10	11
<b>Going to restaurants</b> Goes to a restaurant at least twice a month	25	n/a	n/a	28	16	27
<b>Attendance at religious services</b> Goes to church, synagogue or any other place of worship at least once a month	11	10	3	18	8	7
<b>Political participation*</b> Voter turnout in the presidential election	n/a	11 (1992)	17 (1996)	11	4	0 (2008)
<b>Satisfaction with life</b> Very satisfied with life in general	11	20	28	34	27	27
<b>Access to mental health services</b> Did not get help from mental health professional on at least one occasion in past year	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4
<b>Technology</b> Uses a computer/electronic device to access the Internet	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	31
<b>Financial situation</b> Struggling to get by or living paycheck to paycheck	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	24

\*Source: Harris Poll, selected presidential election years

Further results reveal that 56 percent of unemployed people with disabilities cited an inability to find a job in their line of work, and 37 percent were unable to get the accommodations needed to effectively perform their work. Of those employed, 84 percent were comfortable with or indifferent to sharing their disabilities with coworkers. Only 26 percent reported feeling discriminated against, offering hope that this trend continues to decline.

### Filling in the holes

Overall, the survey finds that only seven in 10 people with disabilities

express satisfaction with their lives, not such a shocking statistic when considering the many disadvantages revealed by the study. The 2004 survey revealed the same result, indicating that progress made during the last six years has had little impact on overall quality of life.

Furthermore, 61 percent of people with disabilities don't feel the ADA has made a difference in their lives, while only 23 percent feel the ADA has made their lives better.

This statistic, along with many others uncovered in the study,

stresses the need to improve the gaping holes within our communities and level the circumstances among people with and without disabilities. Policymakers, employers and the disability community are being counted on to take action and find necessary solutions to narrow the gaps. Sealing these holes will improve the quality of life in all communities and help guide the success of the ADA for the next 20 years.

To read the full report, visit [www.2010disabilitysurveys.org](http://www.2010disabilitysurveys.org). \*

Follow your interests

Instant updates from your friends, industry experts, local celebrities, and what's happening around the world.

# Online networking brings offline benefits

**S**ocial media allows us to engage in light chatter, share tidbits about our lives and promote important causes without ever speaking to or seeing the recipients of our messages. But, these online mediums that can be accessed from the comfort of our homes also give us a new way to build relationships and connect with our communities in the outside world.

The dialogue that begins on Facebook, Twitter, Four Square or other online platforms can extend into real-world conversations that inspire community involvement and introduce new relationships. For instance, have you ever been invited to a friend's event – maybe a birthday party or an art fair – through Facebook? Or maybe entered a contest through Twitter to win tickets to a concert? These are examples of using an online

social tool to interact with peers and engage in your community.

In addition to the social media sites that have become second nature, like Facebook and Twitter, new specialized sites are emerging to target niche populations and interests. These sites can be used for everything from meeting up with new friends and enjoying a shared hobby to organizing an advocacy campaign, as well as expanding career opportunities and discovering new volunteer options.

## **Help others and seek help**

A popular use of social media sites is exchanging advice and seeking support from others. For instance, Cafemom.com is a place where moms connect to share helpful tips and seek advice about pregnancy, parenting, marriage and more. Weddingbee.com is a site where

brides swap ideas and share helpful planning hints.

Some sites go beyond the online conversation to help individuals find assistance offline. Neighbor Link is a web-based nonprofit program that connects individuals who need assistance with various tasks – such as yard work, home improvement and maintenance projects, auto repairs and more – to local volunteers who can assist with such needs free of charge.

The first Neighbor Link program launched in Fort Wayne, Ind., ([fortwayne.myneighborlink.org](http://fortwayne.myneighborlink.org)), and now two additional Indiana communities have adopted the program: Porter County ([porterco.myneighborlink.org](http://porterco.myneighborlink.org)) and Dekalb County ([dekalbco.myneighborlink.org](http://dekalbco.myneighborlink.org)). Each website makes it easy to post requests for assistance and sign up to volunteer.

Anyone can start a Neighbor Link program in his/her local community by going through the Neighbor Link Network Foundation, [www.neighborlinknetworkfoundation.org](http://www.neighborlinknetworkfoundation.org). The organization's turnkey affiliate program provides all the materials and instruction needed to help launch a local, low-cost site. Neighbor Link also gives you the option of joining as a non-affiliate, allowing you to integrate its website technology and software into existing volunteer programs.

## **Make friends and build relationships**

Going back to the original purpose of social media – socializing – there are also sites dedicated to linking people by common interests. Meetup.com, the largest networking site of its kind, connects people to groups of other individuals who have a shared interest. For instance, you can search in your local area to join a cooking group, a book club, a group of history buffs and much more.

In Indianapolis, a few college students came together to form the Meetup group “Indianapolis college students with disabilities,” allowing students with disabilities to come together to share resources and tips for having a successful college experience. More than 180 moms in Fort Wayne are part of “The Fort Wayne Moms Meetup Group,” and come together regularly to exchange advice and share laughs about motherhood.

For people with disabilities specifically, Disaboom.com has become a popular site for locating resources and information. Disaboomlive.com is the site's

community networking portal that connects people touched by a disability. Disaboom also has a dating social media site, [www.lovebyrd.com](http://www.lovebyrd.com), as well as a job networking site, [www.disaboomjobs.com](http://www.disaboomjobs.com).

Social media sites organized by location are also springing up on the scene. Metromix.com boasts itself as a one-stop local entertainment guide, including location-specific sites for Indianapolis and Chicago where local individuals can create a profile and connect with others in the city.

## **Advance your career**

Some social media sites are particularly targeted for helping job seekers boost their professional presence, or help those currently in a job expand their network of professional contacts. LinkedIn.com is one of the most popular business networking sites, allowing users to share their experience, skills, expertise and career ambitions with peers, employers and other professional contacts.

Other sites encourage professional growth by helping expand individuals' knowledge bases. Focus.com brings together insights and expertise of thousands of experienced business leaders to host online events – such as webinars and round tables – and share knowledge about numerous topics, such as marketing, finance, human resources and many others.

Furthermore, nowadays it's not uncommon for employers to screen potential job candidates on social media sites. Whether it's your professional profile on LinkedIn or your personal page on Facebook, it's important to

remember that anything you post online could potentially be seen by employers.

## **Finding the right sites for you**

As social media continues to revolutionize the way we communicate and network with others, more and more sites will undoubtedly emerge. Choose the sites that are right for you by first determining your goal. If you want to connect with different businesses to get quick updates and offers, Twitter.com may be the best fit. If you love traveling and want to swap hints about the best vacation spots, you may want to try Exploroo.com. If you like taking and sharing photos and want to get a glimpse into others' lives through the camera lens, Flickr.com could be perfect for you. For a comprehensive list and brief explanations of current social media sites, go to [www.sociallifefnetwork.com](http://www.sociallifefnetwork.com).

Also consider privacy options. Does the site allow you to keep your information shielded from those who are not on your “friends” list? Are you able to control who can post content to your profile on the site? For some helpful safety tips when using social media, visit [www.microsoft.com/security](http://www.microsoft.com/security) and click on “Privacy,” and then click on “Social networking.”

Social media gives us the opportunity to share pieces of our lives – everything from our professional goals to photos of our family vacations to our favorite baking recipes – and connect with others. You can find career opportunities, make new friends and discover new hobbies – all with the click of a mouse. \*



# Catching the community spirit

**L**ook up the word “active” in the dictionary and don’t be surprised if you come across the name Douglas Hughes. As a committed, fully-connected member of the Indianapolis community, Hughes might just be one of the busiest people around.

With so many community projects, self-advocacy meetings and service clubs on his agenda, Hughes is definitely a person who knows what it means to be connected.

## Working with youth

Hughes has always been fond of the time he spends volunteering with youth of all ages. “They are not just kids, they are the future. I want to be a mentor to our future and touch their lives.”

Hughes has spoken to youth about being a self-advocate since he was 12 years old. As a young child,

he began traveling with a mentor to many different schools in the “Everybody Counts” program to educate other students about disability awareness.

Growing up in foster care and group homes, Hughes learned different ways to become your own self-advocate, and since that time, he has volunteered at a children’s hospital and helped build a school in the Philippines through a church mission trip.

Hughes was also a camp counselor for the YMCA, counseled youth at a juvenile center and volunteered with the Jaycees and 4H. Most recently, he volunteered through AmeriCorps in the Indianapolis Public School system as a reading helper, motivational speaker and conflict resolution mentor.

“If you believe it, you can achieve it. That’s what I tell kids. After

meeting me, I think kids realize I am someone they can relate to.”

## Advocating for change

Hughes’ extensive involvement in municipal projects has made him quite a familiar face among city and state leaders. “I’m not about fighting City Hall. I just want to do what’s right,” he commented.

As president of the Bethel Park Neighborhood Association, Hughes played a large role on the committee to replace his neighborhood’s outdated pool with a new \$2 million aquatic and recreation facility. The opportunity allowed him to take part in meetings that included Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Indianapolis Parks and Recreation and the Lilly Endowment, and he helped cut the ribbon on opening day in July 2010.

On the state level, Hughes is an advocate for Back Home in Indiana Alliance, which works to increase the availability of affordable and accessible housing for people with disabilities. He also was appointed by Gov. Daniels to serve on the Community Residential Facilities Council, a board that determines the needs of residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities in Indiana.

Hughes also took a trip to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

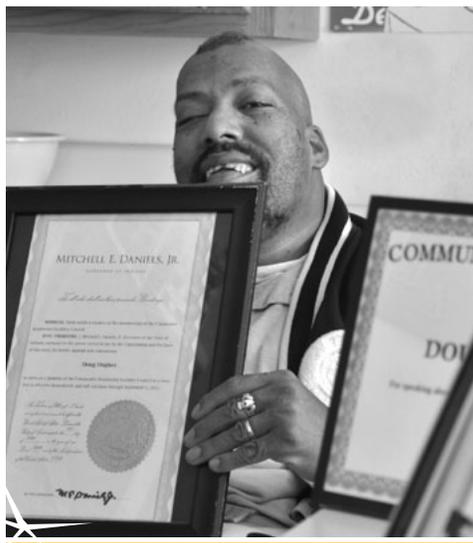
## Making a difference

Hughes' extensive list of volunteer work has certainly captured the attention of many organizations and colleagues. As a 1998 Partners in Policymaking graduate, he has been a prolific community member, and his accomplishments prove it. Hughes is also involved with Tangram, a non-profit empowerment and support program for people with disabilities.

"Doug came to us in the early '90s and has been a great asset to Tangram," said Peter Zubler, director of operations at Tangram. "He currently sits on our self-advocates and human rights committees and adds a key perspective to both. His involvement here has really opened the doors to other opportunities that have come his way."

Since childhood, Hughes knew he had a calling in public speaking, which made his participation in a local Toastmasters club the perfect opportunity to strengthen his skills and even win state-level awards. He's also had the chance to do stand-up comedy at two Indianapolis comedy clubs.

Among other activities, Hughes holds a membership in the Greater Indianapolis NAACP, he's a proud homeowner through Habitat for



Doug Hughes, Partners in Policymaking graduate, goes above and beyond to improve his community.

Humanity and was even invited to sing in a Special Olympics ceremony in Indianapolis.

"I thrive on the word 'no'. If you tell me 'no', I'll show you 'yes,'" he proclaims.

With all of his experiences throughout the years, Hughes says that each of his accomplishments were due to his efforts to build his community network. "When you're looking to become involved, find out what's important to you. Then, find the right people who can help."

Hughes learned early on that finding the right contact was the first step, but keeping that contact was even more important. Starting from childhood and into adulthood, he found that the contacts he built with organizations like The Arc and Tangram and involving himself in community service through groups like AmeriCorps and his church have given him a firm sense of belonging to his community.

What's next on Hughes' agenda? "I'm starting a book called 'No Excuses, No Returns,' and I really want to become an actor." \*

## Experience community through the arts

Whether exploring a museum, taking in a play, attending a symphony concert or browsing an art gallery, absorbing the culture around us helps us grow as individuals and enhances our sense of community.

There are many opportunities in our communities to express our creativity and explore our interest in the arts. VSA Indiana (VSAI), a nonprofit organization, provides art education opportunities as well as promotes access to the arts for people with disabilities. To learn more and get involved, visit [www.vsai.org](http://www.vsai.org).

ArtsWORK Indiana takes it a step further by helping artists with disabilities advance their careers. The organization's website, [www.artsworkindiana.org](http://www.artsworkindiana.org), posts employment opportunities and lists upcoming events throughout the state.

Museums, art galleries and other cultural attractions typically offer classes that enable participants to explore their interests in fine art, sculpture, history and many other topics. To find local classes and attractions, go to [www.visitindiana.com](http://www.visitindiana.com) or visit your area's convention and visitor's bureau. \*



# Building inclusion one community at a time

**V**olunteer organizations, action committees and dedicated individuals are transforming Indiana cities, towns and neighborhoods into accommodating and sustainable communities everyone can enjoy. Across the state, tireless group efforts and strategic thinking are making Indiana communities more livable and more viable – one by one.

From the modern suburbs of bustling Indianapolis to historic downtowns in Rising Sun, Ind., and even to rural areas such as Linton, Ind., communities are pioneering redevelopment projects that will lead to full inclusion, economic vitality and better quality of life. And, people with disabilities and others have the opportunity to play a significant part to ensure communities are designed to meet the needs of residents and visitors of all abilities.

Although many communities are undergoing revitalization – whether in the planning stages or in the midst of making improvements – a couple of projects are making exemplary and notable changes.

## **Avondale Meadows – Indianapolis**

Led by the Meadows Community Foundation, Avondale Meadows is a community situated in the Fall Creek area of Indianapolis that's undergoing drastic revitalization to become a livable, safe community that's welcoming of all. The project is Indiana's first Purpose Built Community, a nationwide program that takes a holistic approach to revitalizing towns and neighborhoods. Purpose Built Communities focuses on transforming and sustaining vibrant communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

When completed, Avondale will include 800 multi-family, mixed income units – including 150 affordable housing options for seniors – in close proximity to schools, open green space, new retail establishments, and bus and future transit routes. Residents and visitors will enjoy a full-service grocery store and retail shops, a five-acre community park, community gardens and green spaces, and recreational walking, running and biking paths.

The overarching goal of the Avondale project is to create a community that:

- Reduces crime;
- Boosts employment;
- Builds student achievement;
- Fosters involvement and civic pride;
- Benefits the local economy; and



A rendering of the East Village apartments in Avondale Meadows.

- Enhances neighborhood sustainability.

Recognizing that real estate development is only half the battle, Avondale has established a human development plan that includes new job training programs, the relocation of social and human services to the area and long-term funding from the Meadows Community Foundation. Furthermore, a health and wellness center will offer physician visits, recreational activities and family programs geared toward enhancing the well-being of all residents.

To learn more about the redevelopment, visit [www.avondalemeadows.org](http://www.avondalemeadows.org). For more information about the nationwide program, go to [www.purposebuiltcommunities.org](http://www.purposebuiltcommunities.org).

### **Rising Sun, Ind. – Ohio County**

Located along the banks of the Ohio River, Rising Sun, a tight-knit community with a rich history, is undergoing revitalization as part of Indiana Main Street – a statewide initiative to rejuvenate downtown areas in Indiana cities and towns. Leading the charge is the Rising Sun Historic Downtown Program, a nonprofit membership

organization of business owners, public officials and residents.

Meeting the needs of its nearly 2,500 residents and businesses, and providing an inviting environment for future residents and new businesses, is at the heart of Rising Sun’s mission. Aiming to continually improve, the project combines four key elements to enhance the community:

- Promoting community pride through social activities and events;
- Restructuring the economic platform by expanding existing businesses, converting unused space to productive property and attracting new businesses that support healthy market competition;
- Designing the community’s physical elements – buildings, landscapes, public spaces, storefronts, signs, etc. – to be appealing to a diverse population; and
- Organizing the community’s infrastructure by maintaining cooperation and consensus among all the groups who have a stake in the downtown area, including residents, business owners, public officials and others.

To learn more about the Rising Sun program, visit [www.enjoyrisingsundowntown.com](http://www.enjoyrisingsundowntown.com). For more information about the Main Street initiative, including a complete list of Indiana cities and towns implementing the program, go to [www.in.gov/ocra/2492.htm](http://www.in.gov/ocra/2492.htm).

### **Other communities making progress**

Phil Stafford, Ph.D., director of the Committee on Aging and Community, part of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, works diligently to promote communities that are better suited to fit the needs of the aging Hoosier population, which results in better communities for everyone. His efforts include advocating for a statewide model that would help communities adopt appropriate features, policies, amenities and more that support the aging and disability populations.

Dr. Stafford points to many Indiana cities and rural areas that are making headway to becoming more inclusive:

- Linton, Ind.: Among many focus areas, a neighborhood-based committee, with support from the city, has spent five

years developing resolutions to address mobility issues.

- Muncie, Ind.: With the help of local nonprofits, Muncie has done significant work in planning and developing a strategy for creating a more disability- and aging-friendly community.
- Winimac, Ind.: A local foundation is leading efforts in this rural community, heading up an initiative focused on partnering with health care providers to maintain access to health care institutions in the downtown area.
- Stafford mentioned that additional initiatives are underway in Valparaiso, Bloomington, Kokomo and the LaGrange area, among others.

## How you can get involved

People with disabilities have unique perspectives that can influence how a community functions and evolves, ensuring that every resident has the opportunity to live, work and grow. As a person with a disability, a caregiver or other individual who's familiar with disability-related concerns, you are a valuable asset to the planning and implementation of livable, accessible and inclusive communities.

Community revitalization projects often begin when one, everyday individual takes action and gathers a group of other residents with a shared goal to enact change. Although city and county support is needed to implement such projects, it's many times up to a community's residents to bring

attention to problems, propose resolutions and get the ball rolling.

To determine if your community is undergoing an existing revitalization or development project, start by contacting your

local neighborhood association, mayor's office or community development organization. Once directed to the appropriate group or individual, learn how you can help by attending meetings, participating in events, joining in planning discussions and more.

By sharing your knowledge and voicing your opinions, you can help ensure that new and revitalized communities are designed to be physically, socially and economically accessible to everyone. When determining if a development project is considering the needs and abilities of all its residents, follow Dr. Stafford's "community planning model," which promotes four areas:

- 1. Addresses basic needs:** Does the community offer affordable and accessible housing? Do you feel safe in your home and neighborhood? Is everyone able to afford appropriate meals? Is there access to information and resources?
- 2. Promotes social and civic engagement:** Are there opportunities to establish

meaningful relationships, actively engage in community life and secure meaningful paid and volunteer work? And, are disability and aging issues a priority for the community?

## People with disabilities have just as much right and opportunity as all residents to be involved in making decisions and implementing changes that lead to better communities.

- 3. Optimizes physical and mental health and well-being:** Does the community foster the ability for healthy behaviors? Are community activities offered to enhance well-being? Do you have access to preventive health and other medical services? What about social and palliative services?
- 4. Maximizes independence:** Are resources available to help you continue living in your home and community? Are accessible transportation options offered? Does the community provide support for caregivers?

People with disabilities have just as much right and opportunity as all residents to be involved in making decisions and implementing changes that lead to better communities.

To learn more about community development across Indiana, visit the Indiana Association for Community Economic Development's website at [www.iaced.org](http://www.iaced.org). \*

# Community-building resources

## **Volunteer Match**

[www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)  
[facebook.com/volunteermatch](https://facebook.com/volunteermatch)

Volunteer Match is an online database that connects individuals with organizations and volunteer projects that align with their interests. Searched by millions of people each year, the site aims to strengthen communities by pairing good people with good causes. The site currently lists volunteer opportunities in Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, including several other cities across the nation. On the site's home page, scroll to the bottom navigation and click on "more cities" beneath "find opportunities."

## **United We Serve**

[www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)  
(202) 606-5000 (Voice)  
(800) 833-3722 (TTY)  
[info@cns.gov](mailto:info@cns.gov)

United We Serve, a nationwide initiative spearheaded by President Barack Obama, helps individuals find and create volunteer opportunities within their communities. The program connects volunteers to causes such as ending hunger, supporting veterans and military families, combating childhood obesity and increasing civic engagement. In addition, the website provides toolkits and other resources to help individuals create new projects to enhance their communities, as well as a social component that allows volunteers to share their stories.

## **National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP)**

[www.serviceandinclusion.org](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org)  
(888) 491-0326 (Voice)  
[nisp@umb.edu](mailto:nisp@umb.edu)

NSIP is an organization focused on engaging people with disabilities in meaningful volunteer opportunities. The website provides the information and resources you need to help ensure inclusion in every volunteer project. In addition to a toolkit of manuals and handbooks, NSIP offers training and technical assistance to help organizations and service programs accommodate volunteers of all abilities.

## **Indiana Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI)**

[www.volunteer.in.gov](http://www.volunteer.in.gov)  
(317) 233-4273 (Voice)  
[info@ofbci.in.gov](mailto:info@ofbci.in.gov)

The OFBCI, with assistance from the Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism, provides information, training, technical assistance and limited grant funding to both community-based and faith-based organizations, seeking to make Indiana a better place to live for all citizens. The website also provides an interactive map to help individuals find volunteer opportunities in their counties.

## **Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

[www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm)  
(202) 566-2878 (Voice)  
[smartgrowth@epa.gov](mailto:smartgrowth@epa.gov)

The EPA Smart Growth program works with local, state and national experts to discover successful strategies to help communities improve their development practices and achieve sustainability. Specifically, the Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities initiative provides technical assistance, tools and resources to help communities implement successful strategies.

## **Partners for Livable Communities**

[www.livable.org](http://www.livable.org)  
(202) 887-5990 (Voice)  
[livability@livable.org](mailto:livability@livable.org)

Partners for Livable Communities is a nonprofit leadership organization that promotes liveable communities nationwide by offering technical assistance, leadership training, workshops, publications and other resources. The organization includes a network of more than 1,200 individuals and groups from the private and public sectors as well as government agencies. The website offers best practices and other resources for building and sustaining a liveable community.

ignite thoughts into action

# spark



We welcome your suggestions  
for newsletter content and  
ideas concerning the actions  
of the Council.

phone: (317) 232-7770  
email: [GPCPD@gpcpd.org](mailto:GPCPD@gpcpd.org)

[www.in.gov/gpcpd](http://www.in.gov/gpcpd)

## Take the 2011 Disability Poll on Livable Communities



[www.thepollingplace.org](http://www.thepollingplace.org)

### How livable is your community for people with disabilities?

You are invited to participate in the annual Disability Poll to help identify the current state of services, programs, and supports for people with disabilities in your community. The purpose of this survey is to ask people with disabilities, family members, and professionals in the disability field to share their

thoughts about how "livable" Indiana communities are for people with disabilities. The results will be used to help guide programs in local communities around the state, ultimately with the goal of fostering independence, choice and control for people with disabilities.

