

ACCESS GUIDEBOOK

February 2024
Quarterly

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“IF YOU DON’T VOTE, YOU DON’T COUNT”

-JUSTIN DART, DISABILITY ADVOCATE

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that makes sure people with disabilities can vote just like everyone else. This is for all kinds of elections—big ones like for the president, and smaller local ones too. It covers everything about voting, such as signing up to vote, where to vote, and how to vote, whether it is on the actual election day or earlier, or by voting without going to the polls (absentee voting). Here are some important things you should know about voting:

- 1. Accessible Polling Places:** Every place where you can vote must be easy for all voters with disabilities to get into and use. If someone cannot go inside because of a disability, they can vote right from their car (this is called curbside voting).
- 2. Help with Saying Your Name and Address:** If you cannot say your name and address, you have the right to have someone else say it for you.
- 3. Help with Filling Out Your Ballot:** You can get help to fill out your voting paper, including having someone go with you into the booth where you vote. Almost anyone can help, like someone who works at the voting place. But your boss, someone from a worker’s group, or a person who is running in the election cannot help you.
- 4. Accessible Voting Machines:** Every voting place must have at least one voting machine that people with disabilities can use on their own. In La Crosse County, there is a special machine for this called ExpressVote. You can find more info about ExpressVote on page 2.
- 5. Assistive Devices Available:** At the voting places, they have special tools to help you vote if you need them. Just ask for them. These include things like magnifying glasses, signature guides or rulers, cards or paper for communication, and extra chairs if you need to sit down.

EASY VOTING WITH EXPRESSVOTE

The ExpressVote is a special voting machine that helps people who have trouble seeing, hearing, moving, or other difficulties to fill out their ballot by themselves and keep their choices private. But remember, anyone can use the ExpressVote if they want to.

Here is what the ExpressVote can do to help:

1. **Contrast Feature:** This changes the screen to black with white writing so it is easier to see.
2. **Zoom Feature:** This makes the words bigger or smaller so they are easier to read.
3. **Headphones:** You can listen to instructions through headphones. The voting place will have headphones for you, or you can bring your own.
4. **Switch Device Input:** There is a special spot on the machine where you can connect tools like a sip and puff device or a rocker switch to help you vote if you need them. But you have to bring your own switch device.
5. **Handheld Tactile Keyboard Control:** This is a special keyboard you can use to go through the voting ballot as you listen to the audio instructions. The buttons on the keyboard have Braille labels so you can feel them.



**All La Crosse County municipalities use the ExpressVote.
Each polling place should have at least one.**

MAKE YOUR PLAN TO VOTE

- Step 1: Check your voter registration status at myvote.wi.gov.
- Step 2: Register or re-register (if you moved since the last election).
- Step 3: Fill out a registration form if you are not registered.
- Step 4: To vote by mail, request an absentee ballot ASAP.
- Step 5: Learn about the candidates.
- Step 6: Complete your absentee ballot and ballot envelope.
- Step 7: Return the completed witnessed absentee ballot ASAP.
- Step 8: If you vote in-person, bring your photo ID.

Voter tip: If you cannot go inside the voting place because of a disability, you can vote from your car instead. This includes if you get sick easily (immunocompromised) or have signs of being sick, like with COVID-19. If you think you need to vote curbside, talk to the person in charge of voting (the clerk) before Election Day, or you can ask about it when you get to the voting place.

Have a Voting Question?

Contact your Municipal Clerk:

myvote.wi.gov/en-US/MyMunicipalClerk

Disability Rights Wisconsin Voter Hotline:

1-844-347-8683 / 1-844-DIS-VOTE / info@disabilityvote.org

Wisconsin Elections Commission:

1-866-VOTE-WIS / elections.wi.gov

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Voter ID Hotline:

1-844-588-1069

Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition:

disabilityvote.org

2024 ELECTIONS

Spring Primary	February 20, 2024
Presidential Primary &	April 2, 2024
Partisan Primary	August 13, 2024
Fall General Election	November 5, 2024

Information
obtained from:



disabilityvote.org
info@disabilityvote.org

**Wisconsin
Disability Vote
Coalition is a
non-partisan
group.**

**“Non-partisan” =
You don’t cheer
for just the blue
team or the red
team. You care
about playing the
game fairly, kind
of like being the
referee.**

WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?

Assistive technology (AT) is any device or service that is used by a person to increase or maintain their skills, independence, and safety. AT is often used by people with disabilities, people who are aging, or caregivers. AT can be as simple as a magnifier or as complex as voice-activated or eye gaze computer software.

AT A GLANCE: APTIV'S ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

BY JEFFERY ZIEL, TECHNOLOGY & ACCOMMODATIONS SPECIALIST

At Aptiv we take a person-centered approach to the implementation of assistive technology. Having the self-advocate drive decisions regarding their own planning is paramount to successful adoption of adaptive equipment. We follow this up with extensive education and training not just to the self-advocate but the caregivers as well as those within the advocate's larger circle of support. This may include teachers, case workers, employees, other health care professionals, and anyone the self-advocate receives support from during their day. From beginning to end the self-advocate helps guide all aspects of the process.

Acquisition and funding of assistive technology can be challenging even for those well acquainted with the different funders and government programs. Aptiv aims to address these challenges and others regarding adaptive equipment acquisition with an Assistive Technology Library. The library houses a wide variety of assistive devices for the purpose of demonstration, trialing, and lending out devices to members of the community who need them, at no cost. This project is in coordination with various nonprofits in the community.

There are over 1 billion people living with physical or cognitive disabilities who need assistive technology and as the population ages the need for assistive devices will only continue to grow. We are on the cusp of a future where autonomous wheelchairs, mind-controlled hearing aids and wearables monitoring health and emotion alleviate the impact of these limitations. With this important inflection point upon us, it is critical to understand AT and that everyone has access to assistive technology.

ANOTHER OPTION: INDEPENDENT LIVING RESOURCES ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY & DONATION CLOSET

Independent Living Resources (ILR) has a special closet where they keep helpful tools and medical equipment that people have used before but are still in good shape. These items are safe to use. People and groups in the community donate items, and then ILR gives them to people who need them. The best part is, it doesn't cost anything to get these items.

Here are some examples of items in the donation closet:

- Wheelchairs
- Knee Scooters
- Walkers
- Shower Chair/Bench
- Leg Lifter
- Grab Bars
- Bed Handles
- Hearing/Vision Devices

ILR also has assistive technology (AT) devices available for short term loan and demonstration. An Independent Living Specialist can assist you in figuring out what devices are right for your needs. They can tell you where to buy them and if there is financial assistance available.

www.wisconsinat4all.com



You can find a list of assistive technology available at Independent Living Resources & Aptiv on the Wisconsin AT4All website.

**Need something
from the closet?
Want to donate?
Call ILR!
608-787-1111**

SPOTLIGHT ON: MTU RIDE WITH A GUIDE

Riding the bus for the first time can be overwhelming and intimidating for a lot of people. La Crosse Area Transit Advocates (LATA), a volunteer group dedicated to promote the use of public transportation, can help – the **Ride with a Guide** program pairs a “Transit Advocate” veteran rider with a new rider until they feel comfortable navigating the MTU system on their own. The first ride is also free for the new rider.

Cathy Van Maren, volunteer and member of LATA’s leadership team, explains the program, “We can help new riders understand how to access MTU, pay for fares, find a seat and understand the MTU routes, change buses and get to where you want to go.”



Cathy says it doesn’t matter what your age or abilities are, everyone can use the MTU system. “We know people may not be able to drive or access their own transportation and that is one of the great things about having the La Crosse Area MTU as an option,” said Cathy.

“Not only is it a way to get around, but it is also a way to socialize,” Cathy explains. “I often run into a friend riding the bus, we have a nice time catching up as we ride together.”

Cathy also added riding the bus is a great way to see our area, broadening knowledge of where and what our community has to offer.

MTU bus drivers are also a great asset to the community. They are friendly, happy to help and provide excellent customer service – if someone realizes they left belongings on a bus, drivers will contact other drivers to look for the items and work to get it back to the proper owner.

Drivers are also aware of their riders, often watching out for their safety. The parent of a young woman with a developmental disability expressed thanks for drivers watching out for his daughter. “He realized that another rider was being bothersome, asking questions that were not appropriate.” The driver asked her to move closer to him and requested the other rider stop bothering her. “She feels more safe and knows if she feels uncomfortable, she can tell the driver.”

RIDE WITH A GUIDE CONTINUED...

“The more the merrier!” Cathy added, “We want more riders to use public transportation. And the more diverse the ridership is, the more feedback we can have to make better routes and services to serve all of our population.”

To request a Ride with a Guide, call LATA at 608-315-2693

The LATA is also looking for other volunteers to help with the program and forward their mission. If you are interested in becoming a guide you will be provided with training and can go on practice rides so you can help another new rider become a regular user, build confidence, and enjoy all of the benefits of using MTU to access our community.

DISABILITY ADVOCACY DAY 2024

MARCH 20, 2024

Registration information available February 1, 2024.

www.survivalcoalitionwi.org

Disability Advocacy Day is a day-long event focused on connecting self-advocates with their legislators to talk about issues that matter to them.

Participants support the Survival Coalition’s mission to maximize community inclusion for all people with disabilities. The day starts with a morning briefing and legislator visits take place in the afternoon.



**Survival
Coalition**

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

Advocacy is like being a superhero for a cause or for other people. Imagine you see someone who needs help, like a friend who is being bullied or a rule that is not fair. If you speak up for them or try to change the rule, you are being an advocate. That means you are standing up for others and trying to make things better. **It is about using your voice and actions to help people or support good ideas.**

You're Not Alone: Help is Available for Older Adults with Vision Loss

Until recently, we did not know much about how losing eyesight affects older people in Wisconsin. We could guess how many people had trouble seeing, and we heard a lot of stories about it. But we did not have real numbers to show what was happening.

This changed with a new report called "Wisconsin's Older Population and Vision Loss: A Briefing". This report helps us understand better how losing eyesight is a problem for older people in Wisconsin. It tells us how common it is, who is most affected, and how it is linked to their overall health. Here is some information from the report:

Who Has Vision Loss?

- In Wisconsin, more than 4 in 100 older people cannot see well or are blind.
- Older women in Wisconsin are more likely to have vision problems than men.
- African American older people in Wisconsin are three times more likely than white older people to have vision problems.
- Most older people with vision problems do not get special help to deal with their changing eyesight.
- Older people who cannot see well are more likely to be poor compared to those who can see well.



How is Vision Loss Linked to Health?

- Older people who cannot see well often have other health problems like stroke, arthritis, diabetes and kidney disease. They are also twice as likely to feel very sad (depression).
- Over half of the older people with vision problems in Wisconsin say their health is not good, compared to only 20% of older people who can see well.

So what does this mean for you?

First, if you are having trouble seeing, you are not alone! It is normal to feel lonely when you cannot see well. Remember, others are facing the same challenges, and there are services to help you stay independent and keep doing things you enjoy.

VISION LOSS CONTINUED...

Taking care of your eyes and visiting the eye doctor can help keep your eyesight as good as possible. They can find out exactly what is wrong and tell you how to treat it. If vision problems are affecting your everyday life, think about contacting an organization that teaches skills for living with vision loss. They can help you decide if vision rehab or other services are a good idea for you.

The report “Wisconsin’s Older Population and Vision Loss: A Briefing” is available online at Bit.ly/WisconsinBigDataReport.

NEED HELP FOR YOUR VISION LOSS?

Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired (OBVI)
Phone: 888-879-0017
Email: DHSOBVI@DHS.Wisconsin.gov
Website: DHS.Wisconsin.gov/OBVI

Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired
Phone: 800-783-5213
Email: Info@WCBlind.org
Website: WCBlind.org

Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP)

TEPP helps people with disabilities buy specialized equipment needed for the telephone. Must be hard of hearing, Deaf, have a speech disability, or a mobility/motion disability. No income or age requirements. A \$100 copay applies but there is assistance if you cannot afford that.

For more information contact Independent Living Resources.
Phone: 608-787-1111
Email: advocacy@ilresources.org
Website: www.ilresources.org



LOCAL RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

STAR Center

Physical fitness, adaptive and therapeutic recreation, parasports

The STAR Center programs are for youth, adults and seniors. Parasports or adaptive sports are designed for people with physical and developmental disabilities. They make adjustments to a game or sport so that everyone can play!

Spring 2024 programs:

- Adaptive Soccer
- Adaptive and Para Tennis
- Adaptive and Para Strength & Conditioning
- Brain & Body Fitness
- Parkinson's Disease programs
- Wheelchair La Crosse
- Sled hockey



Website: www.starcenterlacrosse.org

Email: info@starcenterlacrosse.org

Phone: 608-797-6718

Sign up for the STAR Center newsletter on their website!

Livin' Ona Spare! Adaptive Bowling

5:30pm @ Features in West Salem

February 12 March 11

April 8 May 13

For adults 18+ with cognitive or mobility challenges

\$8 for 2 games and shoes

Contact Keri: meske@onalaskaschools.com



YMCA Inclusion & Adaptive Programs

Various sports and programs offered throughout the year for children and adults with disabilities.

Website: <https://www.laxymca.org/inclusion/>

Phone/Text: 608-782-9622

Special Recreation Programs

La Crosse Parks & Rec

Game Club Nature Walks
 Movie Nights Craft Club
 BINGO Nights Fishing Club

More information at: www.cityoflacrosse.org/parks

Phone: 608-789-2489



**Special
 Olympics**
 Wisconsin

Special Olympics Sports

Spring Season (January-April)

Basketball
 Swimming

More information and register online at: www.cityoflacrosse.org/parks

Phone: 608-789-2489

North American Squirrel Association (N.A.S.A.)

Outdoor recreational therapy

N.A.S.A. provides outdoor opportunities for people with disabilities.

Activities include: fishing, pontoon rental, hunting, shooting clinic, skiing, golf, kayaking, sled hockey, bicycling, and free Action Trackchair rentals.

Website: www.nasasquirrel.org

Email: nasasquirrel@yahoo.com

Phone: 608-234-5988



HorseSense

Therapeutic horseback riding lessons with additional activities offered for individuals who have physical or medical complications that prohibit assisted mounting and dismounting. Private lessons—group lessons—group outings
 Financial assistance available.

Website: www.horsesensewi.org

Email: info@horsesensewi.org

Phone: 608-518-5356

RESOURCES CONTINUED

Home Accessibility Grants

Up to \$10,000 available to assist eligible homeowners and long-term renters with accessibility modifications to their homes in order to maintain or find employment for themselves or other household members.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Live in La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon or Crawford County
- Household income must be at 80% county median income or lower
- Participate in a home assessment provided by Independent Living Resources

The \$10,000 includes assessment fees and is granted to the client. Additional repair funds may be available pending eligibility.

Contact Sara Berger at CouleeCap

sara.berger@couleecap.org



Able Reads Collection

Books for all abilities

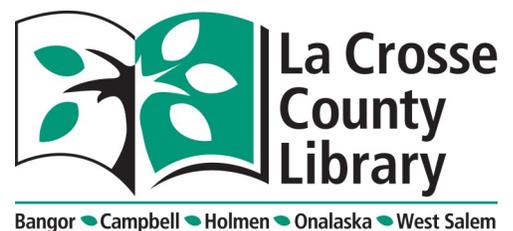
- Nonfiction
- Picture cookbooks
- Graphic novels
- Easy to read novels
- Picture books for adults

Check out these books at the Onalaska Public Library or on the county library website.

Website: www.lacrossecountylibrary.org

Email: onalaskalibrary@lacrossecounty.org

Phone: 608-781-9568



Healthy Relationships & Sexuality Workshop

Skills building & education

Part 1: General Relationships

Learn about different types of relationships, communication skills, internet and social media communication, being in a relationship and more.

Part 2: Sexuality and Advanced Topics

Learn about sexual feelings and attraction, body parts, caring for your body, talking about sex, having children, avoiding pregnancy and more.

To learn more and to register, contact Aptiv:

Website: www.aptiv.org

Phone: 608-785-3527



Neurodiverse Connections Network

Socialization & peer connection

Event dates, times, locations to be determined

Ages 18-30 and 30+

Are you interested in meeting other neurodivergent individuals? Try one of our speed-meeting events or just a casual social mixer.

For more information, contact the ADRC:

Email: adrc@lacrossecounty.org

Phone: 608-785-5700

What's After High School?

Education & family support

February 28, 2024 5:30—6:30pm

This virtual information session provides a broad overview of the transition to adult life for youth with disabilities. Learn about the role of schools, employment, long-term support, supported decision-making, and how youth can be fully engaged in their community.

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84247074502>

Website: www.familyvoiceswi.org

RESOURCES CONTINUED

Online Adult Support Group

Peer support

For adults with Autism 18+ years old

Every other Tuesday 7:00pm

This online, peer-led support group is for adults with autism. It is an opportunity to meet other autistic adults in a casual and welcoming environment, to share experiences, resources, challenges, triumphs, and to lessen feelings of isolation.

Register online: www.autismgreaterwi.org

Dad's Virtual Support Group

Family support

Third Sunday Monthly 7:00—8:00pm

This virtual support group is an opportunity for dads, grandfathers, and other male caregivers of autistic children to network, share experiences, and learn from one another.

Register online: www.autismgreaterwi.org

35th Annual Conference—

Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin

April 25—27, 2024

Kalahari Resort & Convention Center

Wisconsin Dells



Connect. Learn. Engage.

This conference brings the Autism community together to learn, connect and belong. It is a place where Autistic adults, parents, family members and professionals come to share experiences and learn together.

Learn more and register online at:

www.autismgreaterwi.org/2024-annual-conference/

Questions? Contact: Amber LeFevre, alefevre@autismgreaterwi.org

Coffee Connect for Visually Impaired Persons (VIP)

Peer support

Open to people with visual impairments and their caregivers.

Meets 1st Friday of the month

10:45am—12pm

Harry J. Olson Senior Center

1607 North St., La Crosse, WI

Zoom option available

Contact Jeannie Nylander for more information

Phone: 608-781-3361

Email: mjnylander61@charter.net



Parkinson's Disease Support Group

Peer support

Mondays February 6, March 6, April 3 5-6:30 pm

Black River Beach Neighborhood Center, 1433 Rose St., La Crosse

Looking for support with Parkinson's disease? You are not alone. Parkinson's disease. This support group is for care partners and persons who are living with a Parkinson's diagnosis. Members will have an opportunity to ask questions, share resources, and learn tips from one another for how to proactively manage Parkinson's.

Contact facilitator Amy Brezinka at La Crosse Parks & Rec

Phone: 608-519-2088 or 608-789-8640

Tell us what you think of Access Guidebook!
Take our online survey here: <https://forms.gle/JXZz4kV1LincFEC58>

Disclaimer

This resource directory has been developed by the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of La Crosse County. It is intended to help you find resources in the community. It is not a complete list of services. It is not a marketing tool and is not meant to endorse or recommend specific businesses or agencies. The ADRC of La Crosse County is not responsible for any changes that may have been made after publication. Please contact your desired resource for the most up-to-date information.

**Ageing & Disability Resource Center
of La Crosse County**

300 4th St. N

La Crosse, WI 54601

Phone: 608-785-5700

Fax: 608-785-5790

E-mail: adrc@lacrossecounty.org

The next issue of Access Guidebook will be available in May 2024.



FROM THE ADRC

Do you need help signing up for Social Security disability benefits?
Are you getting ready to retire and have questions about Medicare?
Are you having trouble with your prescription drug coverage?

A Benefit Specialist at the ADRC is here to help!

Benefit specialists know a lot about different public help programs. They can tell you which benefits you might be able to get and help you apply for them. They can also help if your application is denied and you need to appeal. Here are some things a Benefit Specialists can help you with:

- Medicaid
- Social Security Disability (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medicare and Part D
- Help with paying for medicines
- FoodShare
- Getting rid of student loans if you cannot work because of a disability
- ...and more!

If you need help, just contact the ADRC.

Call us at 608-785-5700 or email adrc@lacrossecounty.org