



The ArcTM

Community Advocates



19th

**ANNUAL
INCLUSION
CONFERENCE**

March 18, 2026

8:30AM - 4:15 PM

Delta Hotel & Conference Center



Juliet Kuehnle
Keynote



Kathy Lentz
Closing Keynote

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

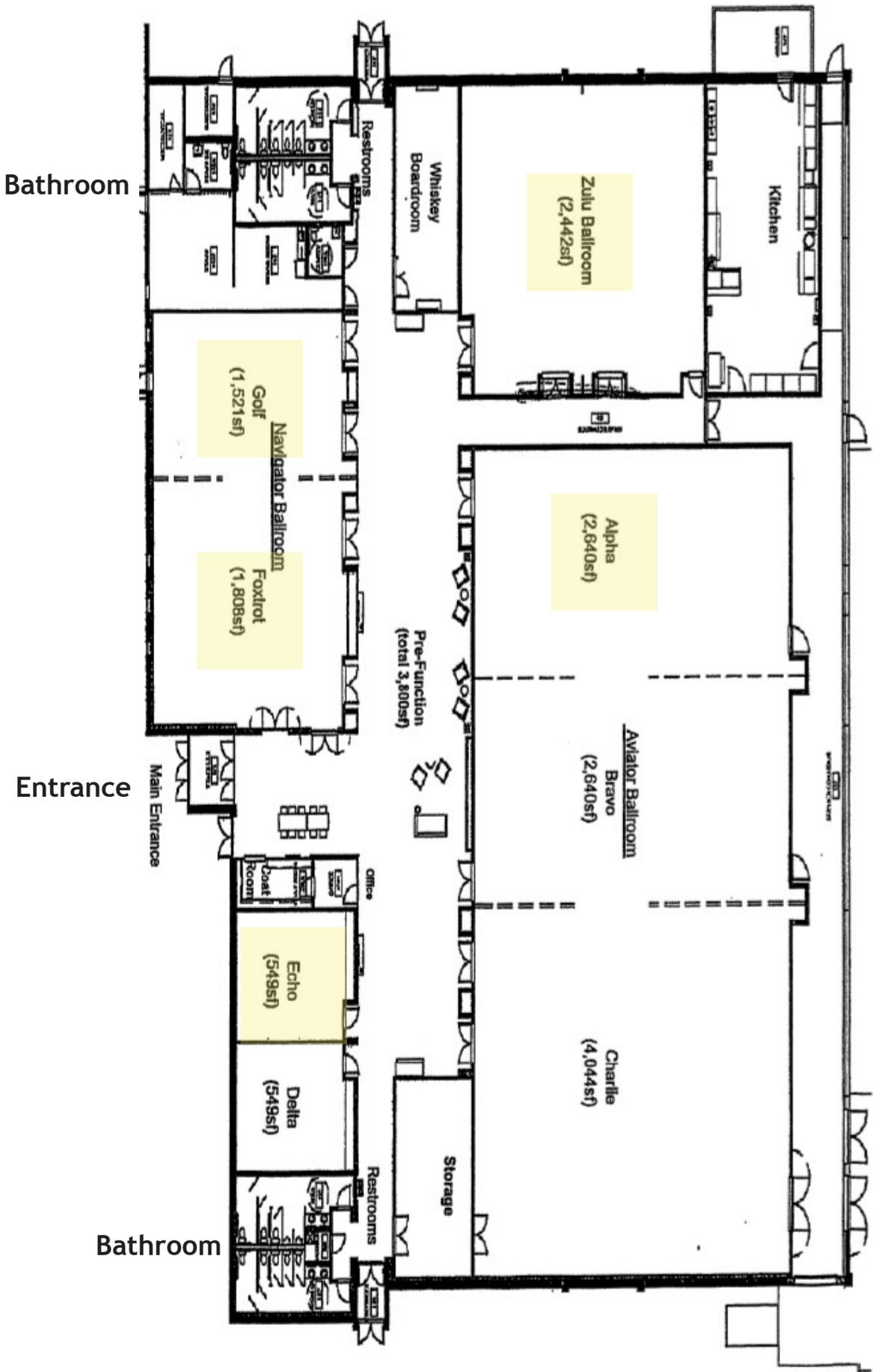
- 8:30-9:00 AM:** **Registration**
(Continental Breakfast & Beverages Available)
- 9:00-9:15 AM:** **Welcome** (Room Alpha)
- 9:15-10:15 AM:** **Keynote Speaker** (Room Alpha)
- 10:15 AM:** **Networking Break**
- 10:30-11:45 AM:** **Breakout Session 1**
- 11:45-12:30 PM:** **Lunch** (Room Alpha)
- 12:30-2:00 PM:** **Voices of Self-Advocates: Real Experiences, Real Change**
(Room Alpha)
- 2:00 PM:** **Afternoon Break**
(Beverages & Assorted Snacks Available)
- 2:15-3:30 PM:** **Breakout Session 3**
- 3:30-4:15 PM:** **Closing Keynote Speaker** (Room Alpha)



MISSION STATEMENT

We exist as an advocacy organization to make it possible for each person with a developmental disability to participate fully in all aspects of community and to support the effort of each individual to determine their own future.

Delta Hotels Marriott Kalamazoo Conference Center



WELCOME

9:00 - 9:15 AM
(Room Alpha)

WELCOME TO THE 19TH ANNUAL INCLUSION CONFERENCE



On behalf of our entire team, it is our great pleasure to welcome you to the 19th Annual Inclusion Conference. We are truly grateful to have you here with us today as we come together to learn, connect, and continue building a more inclusive community for everyone.

This conference is made possible by the passion, dedication, and collaboration of so many individuals who believe deeply in the importance of inclusion, advocacy, and support for people with disabilities and their families.

First, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our incredible conference planning committee. Your time, creativity, and commitment have helped shape this event into a meaningful experience for all who attend.

We are also deeply grateful to our presenters, who generously share their knowledge, experiences, and expertise. Your voices help inspire new ideas, strengthen advocacy, and empower individuals and families across our community.

A special thank you goes to our exhibitors, whose organizations provide valuable resources, services, and connections that make a real difference in the lives of the people we serve.

And finally, thank you to you—our attendees. Your presence here demonstrates a shared commitment to learning, collaboration, and creating opportunities for people of all abilities to thrive. Together, we continue moving toward a future where inclusion is not just a goal, but a lived reality.

We hope today's sessions spark meaningful conversations, inspire new partnerships, and leave you feeling energized and connected.

Thank you for being part of the 19th Annual Inclusion Conference and for the important role you play in strengthening our community.

Thank you!
The Inclusion Conference Team

Achieve With Us.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

9:15-10:15 AM - 1 CEU & SCHECH
(Room Alpha)

Juliet Kuehnle Mental Wellness CEO & Author Award-Winning Licensed Therapist

Juliet is a therapist who goes to therapy. She is on a mission to elevate and normalize the way we understand and talk about mental wellness. A National Board Certified Counselor and founder of Sun Counseling & Wellness, a thriving private practice in Charlotte, North Carolina (also offering telehealth across multiple states), Juliet is dedicated to making mental health conversations relatable, accessible, and stigma-free. Beyond the therapy room, Juliet wears many professional hats: mental health consultant, global keynote speaker, and writer with a magazine byline. Her debut book, *Who You Callin' Crazy?! The Journey From Stigma to Therapy* (May 2023), is a three-part guide that takes readers from curiosity to action in caring for their mental health. She also hosts the podcast *Who You Callin' Crazy?!*, where she blends practical therapy insights with engaging conversations featuring fascinating guests you need to know. She is regularly featured on WBTV and WCNC and has been featured in many publications including Newsweek, Insider, Shondaland, PsychCentral, and Medium/Elemental. You can follow Juliet on social media @YepIGoToTherapy for relatable, helpful, and often humorous insight.



Today, Juliet will be “Breaking Down the Buzzwords: Accessible Mental Health Language”. Mental health terms are everywhere, but when buzzwords dominate the conversation, the true meaning often gets lost. For those working with individuals with developmental disabilities, clarity and accessibility are crucial. This keynote peels back the jargon, explains what these common terms actually mean, and explores how language can either empower or unintentionally exclude. Through relatable examples, humor, and evidence-based insight, mental wellness expert Juliet Kuehnle helps attendees translate complex concepts into everyday language that resonates with the people they support, their families, and their colleagues. The goal: build shared understanding, reduce stigma, and use language as a tool for advocacy and inclusion.

BREAKOUT SESSION 1

10:30-11:45 AM

Room	Session	Presenter/Description
ECHO	What is Disability Network Southwest Michigan?	<p>At Disability Network Southwest Michigan, we are people with disabilities advancing justice, access, and inclusion for the Disability Community. We serve people of all ages with any type of disability across eight counties in Southwest Michigan. Disability Network can help people find local resources, learn about disability rights, connect with disabled peers, and much more. Come learn about the programs and services that we can offer you and your loved ones!</p> <p>Presenter: Max Hornick, BA, ADAC, CNP - Community Education Coordinator for Disability Network Southwest Michigan</p>
FOXTROT	My Story, Her Voice, Our Lives	<p>This presentation will give insight into why peer-to-peer support is important and can help reduce the stress of families raising children with a diagnosis and disabilities. Through personal storytelling, Latrieva will share some of the stressors families may face on a daily basis and how families and youth can access peer services. Interaction is strongly encouraged during this presentation.</p> <p>Presenter: Latrieva Boston, BSEd - Executive Director, ASK Family Services</p>
GOLF 1 CEU & SCHECH	Adult Home Health Services	<p>ROI supports individuals with daily living needs while promoting independence, dignity, and personal choice. Services include coordination of care, assistance with daily activities, and oversight of health and human services to ensure individuals receive appropriate medical attention, personal care, and community supports. ROI works closely with families, guardians, and service providers to maintain high standards of health, safety, and quality of life for the adults they serve.</p> <p>Presenter: Nick Cahill - Program Coordinator, Residential Opportunities Inc.</p>
ZULU 1 CEU & SCHECH	Sexuality, Inclusivity, and the Dignity of Risk: New Developments & New Tools for People with IDD	<p>We understand what the lack of sexuality and relationship education for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) can lead to: High rates of abuse, being charged with a sex crimes, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and isolation and loneliness. We also know that self-advocates want to learn about this topic and often say they are still healing from the trauma of learning the hard way.</p> <p>Presenters: Mary Shehan & Frank Vaca, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council</p>

11:45 - 12:30 p.m.
LUNCH (Room Alpha)

BREAKOUT SESSION 2

12:30 - 2:00 PM

Room	Session	Presenter/Description
ALPHA	Voices of Self-Advocates: Real	<p>Join a panel of self-advocates as they share their personal experiences, perspectives, and insights about living, working, and being part of their communities. This discussion will highlight the importance of self-advocacy, independence, and having a voice in decisions that impact their lives. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, successes, and goals of people with disabilities directly from those with lived experience.</p> <p>Panel Leaders: Stephanie Sutton, The Arc Community Advocates & Jennifer Patrick, Family Bound LLC Self-Advocates: Emma Carnell, Sarah Carmany, Lena Spicer, John Argo, Bon Grindol, Delvon Vallar</p>



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Our Advocacy Supports & Services are provided at no cost to individuals and families. The Arc Community Advocates is a prime example of fiduciary stewardship of dollars received. Through philanthropic generosity, Community Advocates sustains operations & programming mostly through donations, grants, and fundraising.

- Educational Advocacy
- Family Advocacy
- Systems Advocacy

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BREAKOUT SESSION 3

2:15-3:30 PM

Room	Session	Presenter/Description
ECHO	Michigan Autistic Needs Assessment	<p>What is the Michigan Autistic Needs Assessment? A statewide survey of Autistic people 13 and older that asks questions on topics like school, jobs, and healthcare to find out what kind of support Autistic people in Michigan have now and what kind of support Autistic people in Michigan need to improve their lives</p> <p>Presenter: Max Hornick, BA, ADAC, CNP - Community Education Coordinator for Disability Network Southwest Michigan</p>
FOXTROT 1 CEU & SCHECH	MiABLE Disability Savings Program	<p>Financial security shouldn't come at the cost of essential benefits – and with MiABLE, it doesn't have to! Join MiABLE Program Director Scott de Varona for a deeper dive into how MiABLE accounts empower people with disabilities to save money while preserving critical benefits like SSI and Medicaid. MiABLE is a vital financial resource designed for individuals with disabilities, who have historically faced barriers to saving money. Learn how MiABLE works, who qualifies and how you can help your clients take advantage of this game-changing program.</p> <p>Presenter: R Scott de Varona, MBA - Executive Director, Michigan's ABLE</p>
GOLF	Understanding ADHD in Education	<p>Fostering Success Through Collaboration This session, explores the impact of ADHD on students' academic performance, behavior, and emotional well-being. Attendees will learn to identify ADHD's unique challenges, including gender differences in symptoms, and discover practical strategies and accommodations to support students effectively. The session emphasizes the importance of collaboration between families, advocates, and educators to create a strong support system. Join us to dispel common myths, explore actionable solutions, and unlock the potential of every student with ADHD.</p> <p>Presenter: Kallie Griffin-Pena, Individual & Family Advocate - The Arc Community Advocates</p>
ZULU 1 CEU & SCHECH	The Basics of Supported Decision-Making	<p>Tools Families Can Use, Guardianship, for many generations has been seen as a benign way to "protect" people with disabilities, is now seen as an intrusion into a person's basic civil and human rights and a legal process to be avoided. Thus, support systems in most states are exploring alternative means to guardianship and ways to restrict the effects of the imposition of guardianship on the choices of individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Presenters: Mary Shehan & Frank Vaca, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council</p>

CLOSING KEYSTONE SPEAKER

3:30-4:15 PM
Room Alpha

Kathy Lentz

Kathy started her career in the mental health and developmental disabilities field as a Direct Support Professional, working in group homes while attending college. While never intending to pursue work in the mental health field, Kathy fell in love with the individuals she supported, changed her career path and never looked back. Since then, she has worked in program supervision, program management, quality improvement, program design and administration. Kathy has both directly provided and managed services to individuals with a mental illness/and or an intellectual/developmental disability; as well as administered from the local and regional funding organizations.

Today, Kathy will be presenting, “Inclusion as Advocacy in Our Communities”.

All of us, all humans, look for that feeling of belonging, of being fully included and in community with others. People who are part of any marginalized group are often excluded from communities and are left out of that feeling of belonging. People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) are often marginalized, set to the side and seen as “other” or “less than”. How do people who are part of marginalized groups get included in their communities, feel like they belong? How can we help communities be more inclusive of people with I/DD? This session will discuss how advocacy for community inclusion cannot occur separate from being part of the community. Inclusion strategies are advocacy strategies.



ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

LATRIEVA BOSTON

Latrieva Boston is the Executive Director of ASK Family Services, a nonprofit organization in Kalamazoo, MI that supports families raising youth with developmental, mood, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Her youngest child is diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome, a genetic disorder. Latrieva believes that peer-to-peer support is vital in helping families and youth feel that they are not alone as they navigate life and the systems involved in their lives. Partnerships and collaboration are essential components in helping families and youth achieve their goals and build the lives they desire. Latrieva has had the pleasure of working in the nonprofit sector for over 25 years. She worked in child welfare in Florida before relocating to Michigan with her husband and youngest child in 2012. She may not have chosen this journey, but she believes that she is where she is meant to be.

NICK CAHILL

Nick Cahill is a lifelong resident of Kalamazoo. For 18 years, Nick has provided home health cares as direct care worker and as a manager. Nick operates and oversees two programs: supported living and group homes.

SARAH CARMANY

Sarah Carmany has been advocating personally and legislatively for over a decade. She is the Vice Chair of the Self-Advocates of Michigan (S.A.M.) board, and a board member for Integrated Services of Kalamazoo. Sarah is also involved on a number of committees at the local, state and national level, advocating for fair representation and inclusion of people who experience IDD. Additionally, Sarah is an experienced presenter on topics related to promoting self-advocacy, self-determination and inclusive employment for individuals with developmental disabilities in Michigan.

KALLIE GRIFFIN-PENA

Kallie Griffin-Pena is a dedicated Individual and Family Advocate and certified ADHD Coach with a career shaped by her professional expertise and personal experience as someone with ADHD (combined type). Her journey began at 18 as a paraprofessional, where she discovered her passion for advocacy and inclusive education. Over the years, she has specialized in supporting individuals with ADHD, helping them develop personalized strategies to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

For 18 years, Kallie has also served as the director of Challenger Little League, creating a welcoming and inclusive community for children of all abilities to enjoy sports. She is passionate about helping others uncover their “ADHD superpower,” encouraging them to embrace their strengths and overcome challenges with confidence. Through her compassionate, empathetic, collaborative and empowering approach, Kallie continues to make a lasting impact on the lives of the individuals and families.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

MAX HORNICK, BA, ADAC

Max Hornick (they/them) is a Community Education Coordinator for Disability Network Southwest Michigan, where they have worked since 2018. They are a graduate of Western Michigan University, a Certified Nonprofit Professional, a certified Emotional CPR Practitioner, and a nationally certified ADA Coordinator. Their lived experience as a disabled, neurodivergent person informs their work providing education on disability-related topics and facilitating Disability Network's virtual Autistic adult peer support group.

KATHY LENTZ

Kathy started her career in the mental health and developmental disabilities field as a Direct Support Staff, working in group homes while attending college. She fell in love with the individuals she supported, changed her career path and never looked back. Since then, she has worked in program supervision, program management, quality improvement, program design and administration. Kathy has both directly provided and managed services to individuals with a mental illness/and or an intellectual/developmental disability; as well as administered from the local and regional funding organizations. Kathy learned the life changing impact of Self Determination, full community inclusion, Supported Decision Making and peer support systems, not from higher education, but from working directly with individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The direct support experiences laid the foundation for all that she does is to support individuals to lead included, contributing and happy lives in their communities. Kathy currently serves as the Senior Executive Officer for Intellectual/Developmental Disability Services for Integrated Services of Kalamazoo.

CORISSA PITTMAN

Corissa began their work with MiDDC in 2022 when they applied to become a CYVYC Supported Decision-Making Youth Ambassador. They did this at the ripe old age of 13, knowing they would turn 14 before the work began. Corissa has been involved in many advocacy initiatives both for MiDDC and other organizations. They embody the ideals of inclusivity, and true advocacy in all they do.

- Center for Youth Voice, Youth Choice (CYVYC)-Supported Decision-Making Youth Ambassador-2022 to present
- Youth Employment Ambassador Host (YEAH)-2023 to present
- Youth Member to Elevatus Training Advisory Panel-2024 to present
- East Lansing High School, Social Justice Club-2023 to present
- Multi-cultural Student Achievement Network (MSAN)-2024 to present
- Student for Gender Equality (SGE)-2023-2024
- East Lansing High School-Chair of Youth Committee Board-2023-2024
- Youth Equity Ambassador for the National Center for Disability, Equity and Intersectionality-2024 to present
- Member of East Lansing High School's Black Student Union-2024 to present

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

MARY SHEHAN

Mary Shehan grew up with family members having disabilities. This set her on a path that would lead to a lifelong career, supporting the empowerment and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life. Mary is a graduate of Northern Michigan University with a bachelor's degree in psychology. She holds a Master of Science Degree from Eastern Michigan University, and a Sexuality Education Qualification from Western Michigan University. Throughout her 40-year career, Mary has worked at a variety of organizations in the private, non-profit and public sectors. Currently, she holds the position of Community Inclusion Coordinator for the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council. Throughout her more than forty-year career, Mary has fought for the inclusion of people with disabilities and is a frequent speaker on topics such as, Self-Determination, Person-Centered Planning, Supported Decision-Making, Expanding Employment for Youth, and Sexuality Education.

FRANK VACA

Frank is a longtime advocate working toward inclusive, integrated lives for all Michiganders. He is a person who identifies as being on the Autism Spectrum. He attended Lansing Community College where he received an associate degree. Frank is a Michigan Disabilities Right Coalition (LDO) graduate; a program where he learned about disability history and gained skills to become an advocacy leader. He is a former certified Peer Mentor working at Clinton Eaton and Ingham County Community Mental Health. Frank attended the Michigan Developmental Disability Council's 2018 Sexuality Education Summit where he was trained to co-facilitate programs on sexuality education for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities I/DD. Frank has been one of a group of self-advocates from various states, who provide virtual trainings nationwide, to people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Currently, Frank is working at the Michigan Disabilities Rights Coalition, as the Leadership for Inclusion Coordinator.

R SCOTT DE VARONA

Scott is the MiABLE Program Director since its creation in 2015. Scott has worked for the State since 1999 in various positions within the Departments of Treasury & Health & Human Services. Throughout his career, Scott has served the citizens of Michigan by:

- Returning lost, abandoned, and unclaimed property to the owner or heir.
- Designing, Developing, Testing, and Implementing new Management Information Systems
- Teaching Financial Empowerment, Loan Literacy, and Repayment Strategies
- Scott holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Northwood University and an MBA from Devos Graduate School of Business Administration and Management.

THANK YOU SPONSORS!



Since 1978, Residential Opportunities, Incorporated (ROI) has provided residential and support services in southwest Michigan for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We offer a unique person and family-centered philosophy that creates a strong connection with the community for the individuals we serve. Driven by our Core Values, we place the needs of the individuals we serve as our highest priority.

OUR SERVICES

Last year, ROI served over 700 individuals and provided over 80,000 days of care in the following areas: Group Homes, Supported Living, Affordable Rental Housing, Representative Payee Services, and Intensive and Outpatient Autism Services.



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Kalamazoo, MI 49001
Phone: (269) 343-3731
Fax: (269) 343-2940
<https://www.residentialopportunities.org>





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Family Bound is Committed to:

- Strengthening family ties within all types of households.
- Informing and equipping teams of professionals who work with children.
- Inspiring community members to build teams of support around foster, adoptive or kinship families.

CONTACT: Jennifer R. Patrick, M.A., Certified Family Life Educator Executive Director
Phone: (269) 993-9671

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Annie Gaertner, The Arc Community Advocates

Darci Stevens, Great Lakes Center for Autism Treatment and Research

Jackie Van Horn, The Arc Community Advocates

Jennifer Patrick, Family Bound, LLC

Kallie Griffin-Pena, The Arc Community Advocates

LaTaynia Conant, The Arc Community Advocates

Lisa Carnell, The Arc Community Advocates Board Member

Max Hornick, Disability Network Southwest Michigan

Nick Cahill, Residential Opportunities Inc.

Tamiko Garrett, Parents for Transition

***THANK YOU TO ALL OUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR THEIR
HARD WORK AND DEDICATION TO THIS EVENT.***