



July is Disability Pride Month

#DisabilityPrideMonth

July
2023

City of Detroit

Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department

Office of Disability Affairs Newsletter

CONTENTS

- 04 RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH
- 06 DETROIT-BASED TEAM MADE HISTORY ON PARALYMPIC WORLD STAGE
- 07 MS. WHEELCHAIR MICHIGAN: ADVOCATING FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND BELONGING
- 08 BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: JUNCTION PARTY STORE
- 10 ET4HS DETROIT COHORT OUTLINES MENTAL HEALTH PLAN TO ADDRESS DISABILITY CHALLENGES
- 14 2023 GAME CHANGER HONOREES

AND IN THIS ISSUE

- 03 A MESSAGE FROM THE CRIO DIRECTOR
- 03 A MESSAGE FROM THE ODA DIRECTOR
- 09 BUSINESS RESOURCES
- 11 SIDEWALK REPAIRS PRIORITIZATION PROGRAM
- 12 ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT
- 13 RECENT ODA ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- 15 DISABILITY ETIQUETTE AND UPCOMING AWARENESS



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CIVIL RIGHTS, INCLUSION AND OPPORTUNITY DEPARTMENT

Establishing and maintaining the mission of the Office of Disability Affairs (ODA) is a key component to the work of the Civil Rights, Inclusion & Opportunity department. I'm honored to witness the launch of the ODA's monthly newsletter as they make strides in staying connected with Detroit's Disability Community and its partners. Congratulations to ODA Director, Christopher Samp and his team, who have demonstrated their fervent commitment to ensuring the citizens of Detroit's Disability Community feel welcomed, represented, included, listened to and that they have a seat at the forefront of our strategic initiatives. Happy Disability Pride Month and I look forward to every issue of this newsletter to be a practice in asserting our beliefs that access belongs to all.



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY AFFAIRS

Happy Disability Pride Month! As we progress through the year, I want to take a moment to update you on some key developments through the Office of Disability Affairs and acknowledge remarkable achievements in the disability community in this newsletter. Additionally, over the past few months, we have embraced the theme "Disability is part of the equity equation" as our guide in our advocacy work. Transforming a city into a more welcoming, inclusive and accessible place would not be possible without the support of our residents, community stakeholders, and city partners.



Since the launch of the Office of Disability Affairs in February 2021, our team has grown. Together, we have strategically addressed various community concerns, including disability inclusion, public transportation, accessible housing, voting rights, sidewalk repairs, employment, emergency preparedness and healthcare. While we have made significant improvements, there is still more work to be done. I am also excited to share that we are preparing to announce our next 3-year strategic plan this fall.

I am deeply honored to serve as the director of the Office of Disability Affairs. This role fills me with immense pride and purpose, as I am committed to advancing disability rights and advocating for meaningful change. The Office of Disability Affairs represents more than just an institution; it embodies a collective force of passionate individuals dedicated to making a positive impact by increasing accessibility and equitable opportunities for everyone. I am truly grateful to all those who have contributed to this movement, and I eagerly anticipate the continued growth and success we will achieve together. Remember, "Nothing about us without us!"

Raising awareness through Disability Pride Month

Christopher Samp –
Contributing Author



Disability Pride Flag by Ann Magill

There are an estimated 123,000 residents living with disabilities in Detroit, which accounts for 19.6% of the population or approximately 1 out of 5 residents. These individuals not only contribute to the city's economy but also play a crucial role in influencing public policies to ensure inclusivity for all. They are actively involved in the city, whether it's living, working or doing business.

In the United States, the month of July is recognized as Disability Pride Month. It commemorates the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990, a monumental legislation that expanded civil rights protections for individuals with disabilities. Throughout July, several local community partners organize celebratory events or community resource fairs to raise awareness and provide support for this important cause. These events aim to foster inclusivity, empower individuals with disabilities, and promote a more accessible and equitable society.

About the Disability Pride Flag

In the image above and on the front cover of this edition is the disability pride flag, which is used to increase the visibility of the disability community. In 2019, Ann Magill, a disabled artist, gathered community input and designed a flag that was later refined based on additional feedback. The flag features five diagonal stripes of different colors, set against a faded charcoal black background.

The charcoal black background represents mourning and rage for victims of ableist violence and abuse against persons with disabilities.

The diagonal stripes represents “Cutting across” the walls and barriers that separate the disabled from society. Below are the meaning behind each color stripe in particular order from left to right:

The red stripe: Physical disabilities

The white stripe: Hidden and undiagnosed disabilities

The green stripe: Sensory disabilities

The gold stripe: Neurodivergence

The blue stripe: Psychiatric disabilities

Each of us should consider the contribution we can make to help transform Detroit into a more welcoming, inclusive and accessible city. It is also important to think about our unconscious bias and work to break down the disability stigma. We can achieve this by educating ourselves and treating everyone with dignity and respect.

The City of Detroit Launched Disability Awareness Employee Resource Group

On January 27, 2022, the Human Resources Department's Employee Engagement Team officially announced the establishment of the Disability Awareness Employee Resource Group. This group provides an outlet for city employees with similar interests to collaborate towards goals and strategies that support the City of Detroit's values and mission of fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace. The group has organized engaging speaker events featuring esteemed individuals such as Michigan Supreme Court Justice Richard H. Bernstein, Ms. Robin Ann Jones from the Great Lakes ADA Center, and Dr. Chris Allen Shreve on the topic of mental health. Additionally, Detroit Disability Power has conducted anti-ableism workshops to educate and help city employees explore unconscious biases and to create a safe place to share experiences. The Disability Awareness ERG currently boasts over 60 members who convene on a monthly basis.

Remembering Judith Heumann

It is with heavy hearts that we commemorate the life and legacy of an extraordinary individual, Judith "Judy" Heumann (1947-2023). Judith Heumann was an internationally renowned disability rights activist and advocate, widely regarded as "the mother" of disability rights. Throughout her life, Heumann played a pivotal role in the disability rights movement, working tirelessly to advance the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. Her significant contributions included her instrumental role in the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Heumann's personal experiences and challenges as a wheelchair user allowed her to effectively communicate and connect with others in the community. Importantly, she employed strategic thinking to navigate complex systems, embraced collaboration and coalition-building to fight for a common cause, and articulated issues and challenges in an accessible manner to decision-makers.



Photo of Judith "Judy" Heumann and her books:
Being Heumann and Rolling Warrior

“

Change never happens at the pace we think it should. It happens over years of people joining together, strategizing, sharing, and pulling all the levers they possibly can. Gradually, excruciatingly slowly, things start to happen, and then suddenly, seemingly out of the blue, something will tip.

- Judith Heumann

Detroit-based Team Made History on Paralympic World Stage

Contributors: Christopher Samp and Loren Glover

A Detroit-based team of extraordinary athletes is shattering barriers in the world of Paralympic sports. They recently made history through their participation in the Global Games 2023 in France and were even honored with the Fair Play award for the men's basketball competition.

Athletes Without Limits plays a crucial role in ensuring that athletes from the United States with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the opportunity to participate in Virtus (formerly Inas), Paralympic, and other international competitions. A group of dedicated professionals conducted a rigorous assessment process to determine eligibility, paving the way for these athletes to showcase their skills on the world stage. Loren Glover, the basketball coach and executive director for the Arc Detroit, adds, "Since 2009, we have increased the number of Virtus/Paralympic-eligible US athletes from one to over 150. The Detroit-based team has competed in France, Australia, Portugal and Poland in the Men's Championship, the largest event for Virtus athletes."

When asked what participating in the competition means to the team players, Glover responded, "Our model promotes excellence in sports through the inclusion and integration of athletes with disabilities into mainstream training and competition. Our efforts to improve opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities have engaged, inspired, and involved athletes of all abilities and backgrounds, including armed services veterans and active-duty members, professional athletes, novices, and high schoolers."

As their achievements continue to resonate on a global scale, we couldn't be prouder of Detroit's Paralympic athletes, who embody the spirit of perseverance, passion and triumph.



A Detroit player jumps in mid-air to shoot a basketball into the hoop



Ms. Wheelchair Michigan: Advocating for Accessibility and Belonging

Contributors: Christopher Samp and Jamie Junior

Ms. Wheelchair America was established with the intention of recognizing the spirit of all individuals with disabilities. While its focus lies on appreciating the abilities, endeavors, and achievements of women who navigate life on wheels, it serves as a platform to acknowledge the strength and resilience of people with disabilities.

The current title holder of Ms. Wheelchair Michigan is Jamie Junior, a Detroit native and advocate for people with disabilities. Junior's platform, titled "Right on the Money," highlights the critical importance of financial empowerment strategies for people with disabilities in the areas of employment, housing, and transportation. Junior adds, "Another important aspect of my platform is to highlight the need for overall accessibility of the built environment and a sense of belonging in the communities in which they live."

Junior travels throughout the state to share a message of awareness, acceptance, and understanding of disability culture. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 2.2 million adults have a disability in Michigan. "The most valuable thing I have learned through my travels and speaking engagements this year is that not enough people know about Ms. Wheelchair Michigan, nor do they have a clear understanding of what it means to be disabled... It really shouldn't surprise me, but a lot of people still think that disability is about being sick and needing 'special' treatment. When in reality, having a disability is about the beauty and uniqueness of the human experience and about being innovative enough to find out of the box solutions to exist in an environment that wasn't built for us."

Looking ahead, the next milestone for Ms. Wheelchair Michigan is competing in the prestigious Ms. Wheelchair America competition, scheduled to take place during the last week of August. This national pageant offers an opportunity to showcase the strength, accomplishments, and aspirations of women who face the unique challenges of life on wheels. Jamie shares her next steps, "My next steps are to continue advocating and educating the general public about the importance of multidimensional accessibility and belonging for people with disabilities, particularly concerning economic stability and community development."

The Ms. Wheelchair America 2024 National Competition will take place at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan from August 28 to September 3, 2023. Details can be found at www.mswheelchairamerica.org.

We wish Ms. Wheelchair Michigan, Ms. Jamie Junior, the best of luck in her upcoming competition.



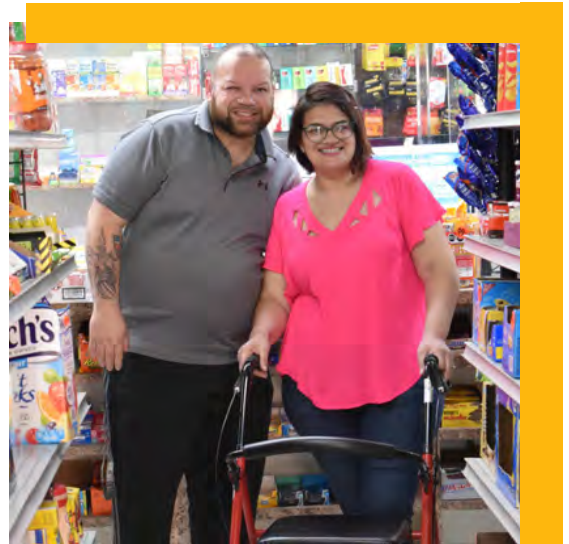
BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Jacqueline and Rose Cuevas

Junction Party Store

3260 Junction Avenue
Detroit, MI 48210
junctionpartystore.com

The vibrant Junction Party Store welcomes customers with an extensive selection of Mexican products, refreshments, snack foods and staple items for your kitchen, such as tortillas and chorizo.



Jacqueline Cuevas, who was born and raised in southwest Detroit, lives with epilepsy, a neurological condition that triggers seizures due to excessive electrical activity in the brain. Seizures can vary and may be induced by factors like prolonged exposure to bright lights, lack of sleep or stress. Rose Cuevas, Jacqueline's spouse, is blind in his right eye.

Both Jacqueline and Rose faced challenging experiences while searching for employment. Despite applying to over 20 different companies, Rose was asked in an interview, "What's wrong with you?" and he responded, "I was born blind, but I can work hard." However, the employer never contacted him with a job offer. Jacqueline adds, "I cannot work non-stop without a break every three or four hours... it was clear that the workforce was not going to accommodate our needs." Fortunately, they knew the owner of a nearby corner store who was planning to sell. "We decided to use our 401K to purchase the store, so we could work and accommodate our needs," said Jacqueline.

Now proud owners of the Junction Party Store, Jacqueline and Rose had no prior experience in operating a store. However, the previous owner generously trained them in essential business operations during the ownership transition. "You need passion, motivation, and dedication. It's something that has changed our lives," explains Rose. By running their own business, they can accommodate their disability needs, such as having a work schedule with reasonable breaks for tasks like bookkeeping or prolonged computer use.

When asked for advice to aspiring entrepreneurs, they advise, "Find an ally who specializes in business and helps people, and don't hesitate to advocate for yourself. No one is doing you a favor. You are part of society. This experience has motivated us to become advocates... We are 20 times stronger in pursuing our goals."

If you're inspired to start your own business in Detroit, business resources are provided on the next page.

BUSINESS RESOURCES

Detroit offers numerous opportunities for small businesses to thrive due to the city's ongoing revitalization efforts. The affordable real estate market allows for cost-effective commercial space, and the supportive business ecosystem includes programs like Motor City Match and TechTown that foster entrepreneurship and provide resources.

Ready to grow your business dream? Check out the two great programs below.

Detroit Business Opportunity Program

The Detroit Business Opportunity Program (DBOP) offers ten certification options to businesses whose operations are expected to benefit the City and its residents. These businesses gain visibility to City Procurement and other potential business partners through a business registry maintained by the DBOP Team. The Team also hosts networking and informational events throughout the year to raise awareness about the program and build Detroit's business sector.

Most importantly, DBOP certification gives Detroit-based businesses a competitive advantage in bidding on City contracts.

For more information, please visit the Civil Rights, Inclusion & Opportunity Department's webpage at www.detroitmi.gov/crio (click on 'Detroit Business Opportunity Program').

Detroit Means Business

Detroit Means Business (DMB) is a collaborative effort involving small business owners, support organizations, large corporations and public entities in Detroit. Their goal is to create a fair and thriving environment for small businesses in the city. DMB is a part of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation and works closely with various stakeholders to enhance the existing support system for small businesses. They listen to feedback from Detroit's small business owners and focus on identifying and eliminating systemic barriers that hinder their success.

DMB also serves as an important platform for promoting shared prosperity. Their aim is to help small business owners adapt to the challenges previously imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. DMB works to establish themselves as a go-to resource hub for stability, growth and success for Detroit's small businesses. Small Detroit businesses with under 50 employees are eligible for DMB's resources, including business expert guidance, financial assistance, real estate assistance and navigating other opportunities within the city.

More information can be found at www.detroitmeansbusiness.org

ET4HS Detroit Cohort Outlines Mental Health Plan to Address Disability Challenges

Marisa Spain – Contributor

The City of Detroit has been selected to participate in the Centre for Public Impact's Earning Trust to Build Equitable and Healthy Societies (ET4HS) program, which aims to assist local governments in developing innovative approaches to address health disparities. The Detroit cohort includes members from the Civil Rights, Inclusion & Opportunity Department; Office of Disability Affairs; Detroit Health Department; Wayne State University; Michigan Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Institute; and the Color of Autism Foundation.



During the 15-week program, our cohort extensively researched the history of health inequities in Detroit, with a specific focus on mental health and the disability community. This research encompassed the effects of redlining, racial segregation, historical impacts on wealth distribution, and access to quality healthcare in the city. Additionally, the cohort conducted interviews with different local community members to gain insights into their experiences with the mental health system. Community listening sessions were also organized to delve deeper into the availability of mental health resources and to address the public's lack of trust in the government's ability to provide adequate care for residents. Detroit residents expressed the need for increased advocacy and representation of the disability community in government, particularly to enhance the overall accessibility of the city's transportation system, infrastructure and the handling of mental health issues.

As the program concludes, the cohort has developed a comprehensive plan to address these concerns and meet community needs. The Office of Disability Affairs plans to create a dedicated webpage listing existing mental health resources and will collaborate closely with the Detroit Health Department to develop a sensitivity training curriculum for healthcare professionals working with patients with disabilities.

We are immensely grateful for the ET4HS program, as it has empowered us to take meaningful steps towards creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for mental health and disability in Detroit.

To learn more about the Centre for Public Impact's Earning Trust to Build Equitable and Healthy Societies (ET4HS) program, visit www.centreforpublicimpact.org/north-america/earning-trust-to-build-equitable-and-healthy-societies.



Image: A pedestrian who uses a walker and a service dog is taking a photo of a broken sidewalk with a smartphone.

SIDEWALK REPAIRS PRIORITIZATION PROGRAM

Many public right-of-way sidewalks throughout the City of Detroit are in desperate need of repairs due to older trees uprooting them, overgrown grass taking over, or simply missing. Broken sidewalks pose a tripping hazard and create inaccessible paths, presenting challenges for pedestrians.

The Detroit City Council has listened to community concerns and allocated funding to the Department of Public Works with the goal of repairing 70,000 out of an estimated 380,000 broken sidewalks during the 2023 construction year.

In collaboration with the Office of Disability Affairs, the Department of Public Works has implemented a new sidewalk repairs prioritization program. This program aims to prioritize the repair of broken sidewalks that impact senior residents and people with disabilities, thereby creating safer and more accessible neighborhoods and daily routes.

For senior residents (over 65 year old) and residents with disabilities, submitting a sidewalk repair request must meet the following,

- The broken sidewalk is in the public right-of-way and is in front of the residence (a shared sidewalk with the city, not on the homeowner's property side). Private walkways, driveways, and porches do not qualify
- Street intersections that are missing curb ramps
- Up to three photos that are recent and show the broken sidewalk (Google Map images will not be accepted)

To submit your request, visit www.detroitmi.gov/disability/accessibility/sidewalk.

Please note that due to the high volume of requests, the Office of Disability Affairs may not be able to respond to or follow up on each submission.



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

(313) 224-3901

WWW.DETROITMI.GOV/DEPARTMENTS/DEPARTMENT-PUBLIC-WORKS/SIDEWALK-PROGRAM

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

CIVIL RIGHTS, INCLUSION AND OPPORTUNITY (CRIO)

The Civil Rights, Inclusion & Opportunity (CRIO) Department's mission is to advocate for inclusion, increase opportunities and to provide excellent service to all who live, work, play or do business in Detroit, resulting in a positive impact on our city. Whether investigating civil rights complaints, advocating for people with disabilities, uplifting Detroit businesses, or hosting community outreach events, CRIO works to ensure opportunities are available for all, and that everyone is treated fairly in our city.

CRIO consists of the following collaborative teams: Civil Rights, Communications & Engagement, Construction Outreach, Detroit Business Opportunity Program, Incentives Compliance, Language Access Program, Office of Disability Affairs, Office of Marijuana Ventures & Entrepreneurship, and Policy & Performance.

Members of the public can reach out to CRIO if they have a civil rights question or complaint, accessibility feedback, language translation or other accommodation requests (including American Sign Language interpreters). More details can be found on CRIO's website (link below).

Website: www.detroitmi.gov/crio

OFFICE OF DISABILITY AFFAIRS TEAM



Christopher Samp
ODA Director



Hallie Bernstein
ODA Assistant



Marisa Spain
ODA Policy Research Assistant

MISSION

To increase independence, opportunities, community participation, safety, and wellness for persons with disabilities in the City of Detroit, and to ensure inclusion, representation, and equity for persons with disabilities as it relates to City employment, programs and services.

RECENT ODA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Partnered with the Human Resources Department's Employee Engagement team and launched the Disability Awareness Employee Resource Group, which currently has over 60 members
- Developed online courses and presentations for city employees on reasonable accommodations and the disability community with the Office of Talent Development and Performance Management
- Received funding to grow the Office of Disability Affairs team
- Coordinated the National Disability Employment Awareness Month with the Michigan Rehabilitation Services; Detroit at Work; Civil Rights, Inclusion & Opportunity; and the Human Resources' Employee Engagement team
- Worked with the Department of Public Works, Office of Mobility Innovation, Housing and Revitalization Department, Detroit Department of Transportation, and other city departments to ensure ADA compliance and accessibility
- Provided a community presentation on Detroit Alerts 365 with the Detroit Homeland Security & Emergency Management team
- Mentored five college students through 2023 fellowship opportunities

The Office of Disability Affairs is currently developing the next 3-year strategic plan for 2024-2027 (TBA FY2024). Take part of our upcoming virtual community listening session to discuss accessibility challenges and priorities on August 16, 2023 (4:30pm to 6pm). Contact us at disability@detroitmi.gov to receive a Zoom invitation or check our Facebook page ([Facebook.com/DetroitODA](https://www.facebook.com/DetroitODA)) for upcoming events.

GAME CHANGERS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH Comerica



CELEBRATING LEADERS IN THE DISABLED COMMUNITY

For 2023 Disability Pride Month, Ilitch Sports and Entertainment is proud to recognize four influential individuals who are making a positive impact in the Detroit community by working to create an inclusive environment for all. In partnership with Comerica Bank, the Game Changers series honors community members who are making a real impact on young community members, businesspeople, and others throughout their careers. In addition to a celebratory reception, each honoree receives a \$1,000 grant dedicated to the charity of their choice from the Detroit Tigers and Red Wings.

Dessa Cosma

Executive Director & Founder, Detroit Disability Power

David Franco

Director of Exceptional Academy, Living and Learning Enrichment Center

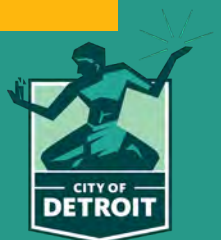
Jamie Junior

ADA Coordinator, Disability Network Wayne County Detroit

Raphael Mostyn

Founder and President, Mostyn Community Development

*Photos by courtesy of Ilitch Sports + Entertainment
Additional details about each honoree can be viewed at
<https://www.mlb.com/tigers/community/equality>*



DISABILITY ETIQUETTE 101

This is a quick guide on using current, respectful, and inclusive language when talking about people with disabilities. It is also helpful to ask the person with a disability what they prefer if you are not sure how they identify themselves.

- Instead of saying **able-bodied** or **normal**, say **nondisabled** or **person without a disability**.
- Instead of saying **mad**, **psycho**, or **retarded**, say **person with mental illness**.
- Instead of **differently abled** or **special**, say **disabled**.
- Instead of saying **suffers from** or **is afflicted by a disability**, use neutral language like **has a disability**.
- Instead of saying **wheelchair-bound**, say **wheelchair user**.

LEARN MORE through the **DISABILITY LANGUAGE STYLE GUIDE**

<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

UPCOMING DISABILITY AWARENESS

JULY



Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

AUGUST



Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month

SEPTEMBER



National Guide Dog Month

OCTOBER



National Disability Employment Awareness Month

 *Follow us at [Facebook.com/DetroitODA](https://www.facebook.com/DetroitODA)*

City of Detroit
Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department
Office of Disability Affairs

Together, transforming Detroit into a more welcoming, inclusive and universally accessible city.

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