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## IOWA DISABILITY VOTE COALITION

ID Action is launching the Iowa Disability Vote Coalition (IDVC). IDVC brings together organizations to collaboratively overcome barriers that prevent people with disabilities from voting. IDVC will provide Iowans with disabilities and their advocates educational opportunities and resources to increase their confidence and to encourage them to vote.

IDVC will provide voter trainings, candidate forums and community events throughout 2012. If you know of an organization that would like to join, contact ID Action at **866-432-2846** or **contactus@idaction.org**. Check out the IDVC website at **idaction.org** for more information.

## 2012: A TIME TO TAKE ACTION

Winter has finally arrived in Iowa and spring is just around the corner. Last year was busy for ID Action. We are looking forward to 2012 and furthering our commitment to increase the active participation of Iowans with disabilities in political and civic opportunities that promote positive change. In March we will have exciting activities to celebrate National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Please visit **idaction.org** for additional updates.

The Iowa Legislature is in the middle of its legislative session. Legislators are making crucial decisions for Iowa's adults and children with mental health, developmental and intellectual disabilities in their efforts to redesign the system in its entirety. We hope you have had an opportunity to discuss these changes with your legislators. ID Action is committed to providing you the information you need to better understand these issues and to make it easy to take action. Please also check out the *InfoNET* newsletter and sign up at **infonetiowa.com** for more information on legislative activities.

The Iowa Caucuses have come and gone, and now we turn our attention to the general election in November 2012 between President Barack Obama and the Republican nominee. Our hope is people with disabilities' voices are heard and that disability issues are considered.

It is important for you to vote and to encourage your family and friends to do so as well. Voting is crucial in our efforts to bring disability-related issues to the forefront, to provide credibility to the disability community and to keep our communities and elected officials engaged. Please visit **idaction.org** and click "vote" to learn more about the Iowa Disability Vote Coalition.

As we look back at the many successes of 2011, we understand the need for improvements in 2012. We're counting on you to join with ID Action in making a difference in 2012 by being engaged, sharing your stories and being an advocate to help foster the positive change people with disabilities deserve.

- ID Action Team

## MENTAL HEALTH REDESIGN

The 2011 Iowa General Assembly reached a bipartisan agreement to take a serious approach in redesigning the state of Iowa system by which Iowans with mental health, intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities and brain injuries receive services to live, work, learn and play. Seven workgroups analyzed and made recommendations to the legislature during the months between the 2011 and 2012 sessions.

The redesign workgroups consisted of:

- Adult Mental Health
- Persons with Brain Injury
- Adult Intellectual and Developmental Disability
- Children's Disability Services
- Regionalization
- Judicial Branch and Dept. of Human Services (DHS)
- PMIC Transition

In December 2011, DHS Director Charles Palmer released the department's 5-year phase-in plan to redesign the state's mental health and disability service system. The recommendations to the legislature included a plan that would combine counties into five to 15 regions instead of the current 99-county system.

The Iowa Legislature will use the 2012 legislative session to review Director Palmer's recommendations and to plan for the implementation of a statewide system redesign. The legislature is tentatively set to adjourn on April 7, 2012. Look for an update in the spring ID Action newsletter. In the meantime, please check out *InfoNET* for updated information on the redesign legislation at [infonetiowa.com](http://infonetiowa.com).

## AIMING HIGH: MIA'S STORY OF INSPIRATION & ADVOCACY



Mia Peterson wants to make a difference. For decades, Mia has advocated on behalf of herself, for persons with Down Syndrome and for others with disabilities. In Iowa, Mia served on the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council), Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services Commission and Systems Change Council. She spent more than 10 years in Ohio working for Abilities Unlimited, a statewide organization focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities live healthy and happy lives.

After honing her advocacy skills in Ohio, Mia returned to Des Moines and has continued to be an advocate. Most recently, Mia participated in the Intellectual and Developmental Disability (ID/DD) Workgroup to assess and make recommendations to the legislature on the mental health and disability system redesign.

Mia was the only person with a disability on the ID/DD Workgroup and brought to the table a unique and invaluable perspective. Mia noted, "It was a good opportunity to hear from other people, and just being involved, and knowing what they were actually doing and what the whole purpose was in trying to redesign what mental health is supposed to be." Mia said sometimes "it was hard to speak up and say, 'Can you put this in people-first language for me, please?'"

She juggled the responsibility of this important workgroup with the many other jobs and activities she enjoys. Mia works at a local grocery store and at the YMCA where she has the opportunity to share her positive attitude. Additionally, Mia owns her own business, Aiming High, through which she travels across Iowa as a public speaker to share her message of ability and aiming for the stars.

Aiming High encourages anyone to reach for the stars because according to Mia, "We are the stars." She shares her story of self-advocacy, stating, "Self-advocacy is about speaking up for yourself and not letting other people speak for you and to grow to be where you want to be, to not label yourself; look at your capabilities and not your disabilities all the time."

Mia is a great example of the powerful message spreading across Iowa. Her self-advocacy has evolved into advocacy for all Iowans, particularly those individuals with a disability. It is the goal of ID Action to foster advocacy efforts like Mia's and to encourage other Iowans to follow in the footsteps Mia has trail blazed for us.

To learn more about Aiming High and to watch the full interview with Mia, visit the ID Action website at [idaction.org](http://idaction.org).

### ENGAGING IN YOUR COMMUNITY: LEADERSHIP

Are you interested in taking on a leadership role in your community? ID Action encourages you to get involved. We are looking for people throughout the state to serve as ID Action Champions. Champions will serve as points of contact for people in their community who are interested in becoming advocates and want their voices to be heard.

## ID ACTION ON THE GROUND

The mission of ID Action, as a nonpartisan organization, is to generate greater civic and political participation among people with disabilities, along with their advocates and service providers. ID Action will be in communities throughout the state providing support and resources to encourage participation.

As Mia Peterson shared in her story, she found her voice and the confidence to become a self-advocate through the support of her community and organizations like ID Action. ID Action would like to hear from you so we have a better understanding of the resources you need in your community to take action. Through the ID Action grant program we can assist in coordinating and facilitating any of the following events:

- Advocacy Trainings
- Legislative Updates (in person or via conference call)
- Candidate Forums
- Town Hall Meetings
- Voter Trainings

Let ID Action know what resources you need in your community to take action and become an advocate. Email [contactus@idaction.org](mailto:contactus@idaction.org) or call **866-432-2846** to find out more about grant opportunities.

## THE ARC OF EAST CENTRAL IOWA

The Arc of East Central Iowa took advantage of resources through ID Action to host several events. Jody Bridgewater, Director of Mission Advocacy/Planned Giving commented that “The ID Action grant that The Arc of East Central Iowa received was instrumental in educating self-advocates in our community about a variety of topics.” They hosted the following informational sessions:

- **Know Your Rights** – presented by the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission – participants learned about their rights concerning fair housing, employment and other related topics.
- **Voter Education Night** – presented by Rik Shannon from the DD Council - participants learned about how to register to vote, how to ask appropriate questions of candidates, how to find your voting location and how to find transportation for voting day.
- **Transportation and CABS program** – participants learned about the CABS (Cabs to Augment the Bus System), what it's for, how to sign up for it and other transportation options in Cedar Rapids.



The grant also supported the participation in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Celebration at Veterans Memorial Stadium. There was a picnic, a guest speaker who spoke about the importance of the ADA and a unity march. Later on, everyone enjoyed a Kernels baseball game to conclude the day.



## ID ACTION LOCAL CAPITOL DAYS

Organize a Capitol Day with your local advocacy group and make an impact on the issues important to you. ID Action will provide the resources you need to effectively talk with your legislators, including an advocacy training session and toolkit along with financial assistance to help you get here.

During your Capitol Day you will have the opportunity to:

- Attend an advocacy training
- Meet with your legislators
- Watch a live floor debate (*depending on legislative schedule*)
- Meet with the DD Council staff or the ID Action team

ID Action will provide eight Capitol Day grants of up to \$500 each during the legislative session. Grants will be provided as reimbursements for actual expenses, including transportation or accommodations for participation. Go to [idaction.org](http://idaction.org) for more information regarding the requirements to receive grant funds.

The dates below are available to schedule your group's Capitol Day. If one of these dates does not work with your group, please let us know and we can find an alternate date.

February 14, 2012  
February 22, 2012  
March 13, 2012  
March 28, 2012

Contact us at **866-432-2846** or [contactus@idaction.org](mailto:contactus@idaction.org) to schedule your visit.

## DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and ID Action is counting on you to help us raise awareness and make an impact. Here's what you can do:

### **Share Your Story**

We will be featuring stories of people with developmental disabilities, family members and advocates on the ID Action website. Please contact us before February 24 at **866-432-2846** or **contactus@idaction.org** and share your story with us.

### **Attend an Event**

ID Action will be hosting a series of events throughout the state to raise awareness. Check out **idaction.org** or **facebook.com/IDAction** for a calendar of events. If you would like to organize an event in your community, give us a call at **866-432-2846**. We would be happy to assist you.

### **Write a Letter**

Write a letter to your local newspaper, congressional representative or state legislators about an issue that is important to you. The only way we can expect change is if we ask for it.

## UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

Please contact ID Action at **866-432-2846** or **contactus@idaction.org** with address or name changes, if you would prefer receiving this publication via email or if you would like to unsubscribe.

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