



Michigan Partners for Freedom

Building statewide demand for Self-Determination

Summer 2008 Volume 2, Issue 2

Self-Determination in My Community

Grassroots organizing can call for a personal touch. Spreading the important message of self-determination to others often means telling one's own story. Personal stories are how we share experiences, understand and inspire each other, and create community.



From left to right: Jill Hawley, Ann Marie Funsch, Dan Moran, Jamia Brewer, Diana Miller, Erin McMahon, Bill Hubert, Heather Holloway, Dan MacDonald, Lenda Bialik, Sheryl Kuenzer (not pictured Sarah Geisert, Jackie Finn)

At the Michigan Partners for Freedom Summit this summer, Local Leaders (LL) from across the state worked together to build leadership and community. Together, at the Michigan Academy on Self-Determination in Midland, the LL used the principles of self-determination to tell their stories. They used a MPF template "**Self-Determination in my Community**" designed to educate others to understand what self-determination can mean in their lives. Leaders showed in their individual PowerPoint's what each principle (Freedom, Authority, Responsibility, Support and Confirmation) means to them. Erin McMahon, Local Leader based in Ann Arbor, explained that the principle of **Responsibility** in her life means "checking her bank account on line, paying her rent on the due date and having a job." (see page 2)

Upcoming Events

August 28

Gaylord Resource One

September 23

Kalamazoo CMH

October 21

Lenawee Community Connections

November 3

Manistee ISD

Successful Events

May 9

Kent County ISD

June 14

Bay City Arc Michigan

June 26

Grand Traverse RICC

July 18 & 19

Local Leader Summit
Michigan Academy on
Self-Determination
Midland

July 31

Grand Rapids RICC

August 1

Oakland Local Leaders

International Conference on Self-Determination

In late May, seven Michigan Partners for Freedom Local Leaders took advantage of the opportunity to learn about self-determination across disability and global boundaries. Eric Thomas, Local Leader from Flint reports, *“I liked all the different people reporting about the International Conference on Self-Determination,”* referring to the closing ceremony. Eric wishes he could have gotten on the microphone and let people know *“If it was not for self-determination I would not be there today. It is how I live my life, it's the way of my life, and without it I have no life.”* More than 1100 people from 40 states and eight countries attended the conference in Detroit.



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To contact a **Michigan Partners for Freedom Local Leader** near you call Sherri Boyd at 800-292-7851, Ext.105

Who are the MPF Partner Local Leader Coordinators?

Coordinators may assist MPF Local Leaders with scheduling appointments, promoting their presentations and other supportive duties. They are an important part of the MPF Partnership. Currently there are:

Two Local Arc Directors

Two CMH Self-Determination Coordinators

One CMH Support Coordinators

One CIL Director

One Agency Support Coordinator

One CMH Employment Coordinator

One Community Volunteer

Self-Determination in My Community

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A Local Leader from Manistee/Benzie said owning her own scooter and being able to use it on a regular basis brings her **Freedom**.

Most Local Leaders were unable to address the principle of Authority. They believed there is a lack of necessary control for individual budgeting.

Personal stories can make sense of difficult concepts and be an effective advocacy tool. When moved by another's story, one may be empowered to ask hard questions like *“Do I have to stay at this day program or is there another way?”* or *“Is this the right place for me to live?”* What seems routine to one can be life changing for others.

Leadership Summit : Be All That You Can Be

Heather Holloway has no problem speaking the truth about her life. An advocate from St. Joseph, she treasures being a Michigan Partner for Freedom Local Leader. Along with her partners Bill Hubert and Diana Miller, she especially enjoys making presentations about self-determination to students and families. “When we work together and all three of us have a part in the presentation, we make the most impact.” she says.

Heather says that because of the guidance and encouragement at the Local Leader summits, she always leaves with a “Be all you can be” attitude. In her attempts at increasing the demand self-determination, Heather maintains her conviction that the Local Leaders need to stand firm, provide inspiration and talk about freedom.

Recently, Heather faced a situation in her town she found unsettling. To address this unpromising practice that involves others she knows, Heather shared a personal story by using a tried and true tool of advocacy. She wrote to the editor of her local paper. She said:

“I’m writing a letter about a place called Gateway. There are some parents and siblings in our community who are afraid of Gateway closing. Here’s what I can tell you. I hated it ...The pay was very bad. I remember once I only made \$27 for working two weeks. Is this reasonable pay? I don’t think so. I know there are parents who cashed their adult child’s check and added money to it. The environment was that of a sweatshop. It’s noisy and hotter than all get out in the summer. I wonder if these siblings or parents know this. This is coming from an advocate, and I’m telling you the truth. If you don’t believe me go check it out yourself. If the parents and siblings saw this “safe” workplace, I’m sure they’d be pretty unhappy. I think they’re just settling for something that shouldn’t be settled for.” (The Herald-Palladium 06/05/2008)

One thing is for sure, Heather isn’t settling and readily acknowledges, “We have a lot to do.” With her leadership style of being firm and believing in herself, Heather continues to build an unwavering demand for self-determination for herself and others.



Heather Holloway, lower right, talks with others while enjoying the Optimists breakfast in Midland. Photo: Bill Hubert

Are You Looking for...

Michigan’s public policy on self-determination?

Some thoughts and stories of self-determination?

What the principles can mean in your life?

Then Visit ... www.mifreedom.org

Michigan Partners for Freedom website



**Building Statewide Demand
For Self-Determination**



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**Building Statewide Demand
For Self-Determination**

**Michigan Partners for Freedom is a
grassroots movement of people
with disabilities, family members,
advocates, and organizations working
in the field of disabilities to make
Self-Determination a reality for all
Michigan citizens.**

To join call 1-800-292-7851 ext. 105

or visit www.mifreedom.org

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