



# LOV-Dane

## Living Our Visions

### CELEBRATING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING IN DANE COUNTY WISCONSIN

## What is new for 2010?

Last year brought tremendous growth in membership and opportunities to create better lives for ourselves and our loved ones. This newsletter serves as a celebration of that progress and a promise of more to come! Entering 2010, our membership consists of over 75 families and a growing number of community members and organizations. Partnerships include Lussier Community Center, Grassroots Leadership College, Family Exchange Center and the UW Dietetics club.

With this growth comes a need to clarify our organizational structure and values. This will help us attract more families, build stronger community partnerships and at-



tract additional funding sources. Most importantly, a bit more structure will help us get more done! After much research, LOV's leadership team has decided to pursue becoming a non-profit. This will facilitate the long term sustainability of the

organization as well as allow us to directly receive grants and donations. Clarifying membership and decision making structures will be part of this process. You can expect more information to come as the leadership team moves through this process. It's amazing to think that less than 3 years ago LOV-Dane was 8 families sitting in a living room and now we are such a vibrant and "official" organization. As part of this structural journey, we have a new mission statement that clarifies our values and purpose and can be used to give new members and partners an increased understanding of our work.

Living Our Visions (LOV-Dane) is a grassroots organization of individuals with disabilities, families and community members building fulfilling, community centered lives for all citizens. To achieve this goal, LOV is:

- Engaging in collective action
- Mobilizing individual and community assets
- Increasing civic engagement
- Building reciprocal relationships of caring and mutual support
- Developing inclusive and sustainable employment, recreation and living opportunities

Members of the Community Connections Project groove together to music as a way to build relationships.

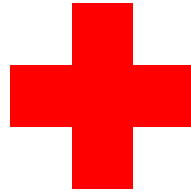


We look forward to the relationships and celebrations that we will create together in the next year. See you soon!!!  
Amanda Bell  
bell@waisman.wisc.edu  
Stefanie Primm  
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# Celebrations



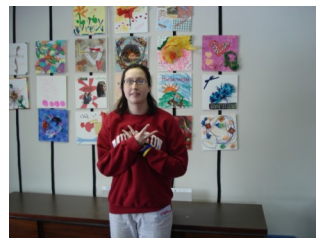
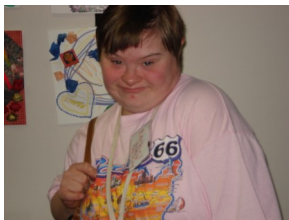
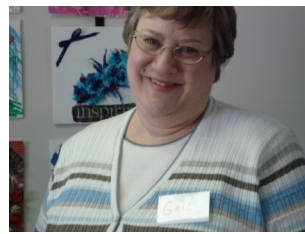
In 2009, our leadership team focused on bringing members more deeply into the work of LOV-Dane. We are proud to say there are 23 new active members and over 100 people gathered for this year's holiday celebration.



## American Red Cross



The LOV-YAAs are committed to making Madison and the world a better place. In addition to joining local civic groups, they organized a food drive at this year's holiday party and mobilized quickly to donate money to the Red Cross's Haiti fund.



The Wildcats is a group of young women who began gathering to socialize and have fun in early 2009. Jen says, "the Wildcats matter to me because I have made friends here, and I don't really have any other friends my age. I am so grateful for this group."



The UW nutrition club in partnership with LOV-Dane received a substantial grant from the Wisconsin Idea Undergraduate Fellowship. With support from LOV families, students will plan and teach a cooking class designed to help LOVies make healthy food choices get more independent in the kitchen.

# Celebrations



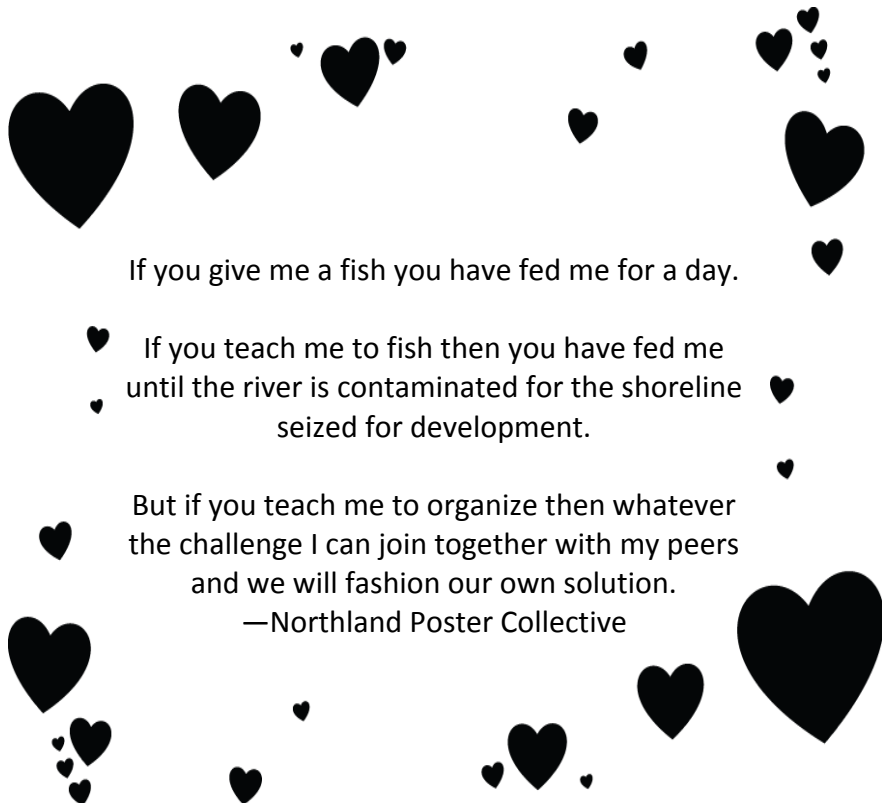
Steve bought his own home last year! Even though his bid was not the highest, the owner knew him from the neighborhood and felt he was the best man for the house! He's been busy getting to know the neighbors and can't wait for spring so he can get started on his yard work.



Almost a year ago a small group of LOVies began meeting at a local bowling alley each week for dinner and a few games. A community has developed! One young man chose to have his birthday celebration on bowling night; he invited his whole family to come celebrate with him and his bowling buddies.



Hired in December to work with the Connections Project, Michelle is the first "official" LOV employee! "I am so happy and proud to be working with a group that I respect, am inspired by and am able to learn from. This is such an incredible, genuine and innovative organization."



If you give me a fish you have fed me for a day.

If you teach me to fish then you have fed me until the river is contaminated for the shoreline seized for development.

But if you teach me to organize then whatever the challenge I can join together with my peers and we will fashion our own solution.

—Northland Poster Collective

# Community Connections

Nine individuals with disabilities and their families have pooled funding to launch LOV's Community Connections project. The funds are used to hire Michelle, a part time "Bridge Builder" to facilitate community membership. After identifying their gifts and areas of interest, individuals are joining clubs, interest groups, and congregations or volunteering in organizations of their choice. To facilitate the connections, the LOV-Citizen Connector group formed. This group of well connected citizens use their rolodexes to identify places where a person might give their gifts and facilitate connections by making personal introductions into organizations. This project will be growing in 2010. If you have interest please let us know!

Jonathan's interest in travel started new group open to all Madisonians who love to learn and talk travel. The group meets monthly to hear presentations about international travel and to get to know one another.



It was important to the individuals that are part of the project to get to know Michelle who is helping them make the great community connections. Evan is getting to know her by going bowling and to the YMCA.

*Why do I want to be part of a group of citizens that help get people connected? Meeting other people who's Rolodexes are as full as mine! I'm discovering people to add to my circle. For people-collectors like me, we live for that!*  
-- A.B. Orlick



Daniel and Tom share an interest in woodworking and good coffee. They have already built a birdhouse together and are in search of the next project.



# Community Connections

*Kate's coworkers have noticed she seems more mature and has better focus. I suspect that it's because her life is more stimulating*  
--Dee

Kate has joined the hospitality committee at her church!



Peter and Alex just did a radio show for WORT radio. They are working on finding a permanent volunteer opportunity for Alex at the station.

*“When the connection project started, I was passive, not an active participant. Now have taken on more of a leadership role and become more active in LOV and in the project.”*  
--Jeremy Gilomen



Sadler is a member of the Eastmoreland neighborhood association. He helped host a planning meeting for East side neighborhoods and is beginning a column in their newsletter titled, “Sadler Says”.



Currently, Jeremy is getting involved in the PC Users group to share his love for all things computer.

# Circles of Support

An ongoing action team of LOV-Dane works to build circles of support around individuals with disabilities. A circle is simply a group of committed, unpaid people who intentionally choose to work together to support a person. Three new circles are beginning this spring and there is always room for more!



*Out of everything I worry about as an aging parent of an adult with a developmental disability, I worry most about his having no one that will care about him when I am no longer around. I know the service system will make sure he eats and goes to the doctor, but who will keep him from being lonely, isolated and sad? The best parts of our lives are our relationships with others and looking forward to what's going to happen next--that's what makes it worth getting up in the morning. I want that for my son too.*

-- Donna

## Questions for 2010

- How do we support new circles to start?
- What strategies are working?
- How do we support struggling circles?
- How do we engage people with disabilities in circles?
- How do we deepen the commitment of circle members?

Steven is a member of his local Catholic Church, but had never received any formal religious education because the church could not accommodate him. He also did not have a valued role at church. Circle member Gerard volunteered to help, since he was also a member of the church. Steven has begun to usher alongside Gerard, and eventually will be able to independently usher more regularly. Gerard has also been working with one of the nuns to find a way to help Steven through the confirmation classes so that he can officially be confirmed in his Catholic Faith.

Manny is a collector of people, but he has always kept his people separate.

Starting a circle challenged some boundaries for him, but has enabled all of the people in his life to be supportive in the same ways. His circle contains several LOV-Dane members, some



parents and two of his closest friends. It also includes some very good friends he has made through his work on the Dane County Timebank. Manny's circle is helping him to find the good life by helping in his job search, finding the perfect place to live and any other issues that come up along the way.



# Wanna get connected?????

LOV has a strong culture of relationship building. Building trust with one another allows us to act collectively and to support each other. Since we are not a “program” or “service” it is the work of our members that make all this possible. There are several ways to get connected, stay connected and to contribute.



## Coffee Conversations:

New members often begin with meeting one of our Community Organizers or Leadership Team (usually over coffee). Existing members also take time to meet each other individually to share stories and support.

## New and reconnecting Members Gatherings:

LOV hosts gatherings about 4 times a year for new members and those reconnecting to learn what projects we are working on and to get to know each other.



## Play!

LOV takes time to have fun together. A holiday party in December, cookout in June and regular potlucks are some of those opportunities. Helping plan and host these activities is a great way to contribute to the larger group so please let us know if you would be interested.



## Action Teams:

Action Team is LOV-Dane’s term for a work group or committee. They form around issues or ideas that families and individuals with disabilities are motivated by. Action teams are one way to contribute and deepen relationships. Current action teams include the Circles of Support and Community Connections Projects described earlier in the newsletter. In addition, LOV-YAA is an action team working to support small group social activities for our members with disabilities. Finally, LOV-Living is working collectively to share paid supports for living independently. These are open action teams and we would love to have you involved! Please let Amanda, Stefanie or a member of Leadership Team know if you are interested.



## Contact Us:

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