



Disability in Action Partners with United Way To Provide Employment Support through the Catalyst Grant



DIA Board member, Shirley Olson and DIA Executive Director, Leah Beltran

Disability in Action is pleased to accept this generous grant from United Way Abilene. 211 A Call for Help has been instrumental in getting the proper referrals; allowing us to greatly increase the number of people who have been able to assist.

The Catalyst Grant will allow our agency to provide dedicated, one-on-one assistance for those who are motivated to go into the workforce or return to the workforce.

The Employability Program will provide:

- *Up to 3 hours a month of assistance in-office and out in the community
- *Financial assistance to obtain documents such as a birth certificate, ID card and other legal documents.
- *Create an individual action plan for transportation and assist with the cost.
- *Four days a month will be devoted to accompaniment in the community to attend job fairs, vocational programs and the Workforce Center.

Call us for more information.



Changes at Disability in Action

We are still here to serve you!

You may have noticed the changes going on here at the Center. The economy and the pandemic have effected all of us. It's also effected the Center. We are still at the same location, although we have down sized the space that we utilize.

We will no longer hold in-person events at the Center but we will be holding classes and events in the community. You may attend by Zoom for all of classes posted on the calendar. If you need assistance learning how to use Zoom, please let us know.

For example, our peer support groups will be held at different locations around Abilene. This will allow us to reach more people, learn more about our community and add some variety to what we already do!

We will still continue to provide all the services and classes we have had in the past. Don't forget, we want to hear from you. What do you want to learn? What recreational activities do you like? Be sure to let us know by phone, in person and email.

Exciting news! We will add an additional case manager to our staff, making it easier to serve more people in a more efficient way!

leah.beltran@disabilityinaction.org

Upcoming Events hosted by Disability in Action

Craft Night: Bring your favorite creative craft project and join us for a night of connection and fun. Pizza will be provided

Meditation: Hosted by Leah Beltran, learn the basics of relaxation through meditation

Community Outings: Now that the weather has cooled off, DIA will be planning trips to the Zoo, Nelson Park, Art Walk Abilene and many more

Peer Support: Watch the calendar or the website for the new places we will be meeting to hold our monthly peer support meetings

Center Advisory Meetings on Zoom: Every month, we ask people with disabilities to join us and talk about the needs of the disability community.



Our New Employees!

Jeremy Bara-Independent Living Specialist in Abilene



Jeremy is an Abilene local and disabled Army veteran who has worked in the mental health field for over 5 years. He began his career in social services in April of 2017 at the Local Mental Health Authority in Abilene. Jeremy is passionate about helping others by utilizing transparency and mutuality in his daily work while offering hope through sharing lived experience with the clients he meets. Jeremy possesses a Peer Specialist Certification, Associate of Arts degree, and a black belt in mixed martial arts. He hopes to increase his knowledge and skills in case management with Disability in Action before completing his degree in Rehabilitation Services at the University of North Texas.

"When I began this line of work, it certainly validated everything positive or negative that I experienced in my life thus far, I have come to appreciate how my past experiences are valuable to organizations like Disability in Action, because now I have the unique opportunity to use them to help others." – *Jeremy A. Bara*

During office hours, Jeremy is an Independent Living Specialist who is also responsible for housing referrals, relocation follow-ups, facilitating peer support groups, and producing our monthly event calendar. When Jeremy is not working, he enjoys his free time by visiting national and state parks, foraging for wild useful or edible flora, tabletop gaming, cooking, and spending time with his two Boston Terriers; Molly & Louie.

LeAnn Mathews –Independent Living Specialist Abilene



It took LeAnn a few years to make her way into a career in the helping services. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Communications in 2002 from Angelo State University. The next 15 years would take her on a winding road of jobs where she learned a little bit about a lot of things: LeAnn sold shoes at JC Penney, cell phones for AT&T and leased apartment homes at Timber Ridge. She assisted grieving families at the front desk at Elmwood Funeral Home and greeted customers at a small insurance agency with an ocean view in Florida.

It wasn't until she worked at a rural Health and Human Services in Breckenridge, TX that she would settle into a career. After taking a few years off to care for her elderly mom, LeAnn began working again as an Independent Living Specialist at Disability In Action. It's a position that finally brings her joy of helping others in a true time of need. Whether it's providing transportation assistance, advocating for accessible environments, or offering emotional support, she works to empower individuals with disabilities to live a fulfilling life on their terms, in their own community.

LeAnn connects individuals in the community with resources such as food banks, access to applying for affordable housing and job training programs. She enjoys being part of a team that offers a lifeline to financial stability and self-sufficiency here in Abilene.

Results: The 88th Texas Legislature and people with Disabilities

Disability advocates in Austin, namely the Coalition of Texas with Disabilities (CTD) have spent numerous hours working at the capitol talking to representatives about the issues that Texans with disabilities face on a daily basis.

Here are some of the highlights from the legislative session.

Community Attendant Care wages

CTD, their supporters and partners, advocated for a base hourly wage of \$15. In April, it looked like the legislators would approve \$11. As the session continued, representatives agreed on \$10.60. Although this falls below what attendants need to make a living, it is an increase from the old rate of \$8.11 an hour.

Medicaid Interest Lists

The interest list programs are HCS, CLASS, MDCP and Texas Home Living (TXHL). They are Medicaid waiver programs for people to receive Medicaid services in the community. Texas has the largest and longest waiting list. These programs allow people with disabilities to have access to more services and better community living. During the recent session, the legislature add funding for 1,831 slots in the next biennium, less than 1% annual reduction of the interest list. Someone joining the interest list today would potentially not reach the top of the list for 27 years.

Medications and Private Insurance

HB999 the Copay Accumulators bill was a long-term effort by CTD and it's many partners to ban the practice of commercial insurance companies double dipping into copay assistance funds while not applying those funds to a patient's deductible or out-of-pocket maximum. CTD helped lead the Texas All Copays Count Coalition and the Coalition for Stable Patients to get this bill across the finish line.

Medicaid and Medications for Mental Health Treatment

HB3286 allows Medicaid managed care organizations to go outside their preferred drug list for their outpatient formulary in certain circumstances. When a patient is being prescribed a non-preferred antidepressant or antipsychotic in a hospital setting, is doing well and wants to discharge with that medication and continue the same medication. There are other stipulations in this bill that assist the patient to continue their wellness path on the medication that is working for them.

Postpartum Medicaid Coverage for mothers

HB12 allows an expansion of Medicaid coverage for mothers from 2 months postpartum to a full year.

Guardianship

CTD discovered a bill addressing guardianship that would remove due process for children with under 18 with IDD. The protections that are in place are important to guarantee the rights of the child in a guardianship. CTD and it's advocates fought the changes and the bill did not pass in the Senate.



*All information in this article is courtesy of CTD.

www.TXDisabilities.org Subscribe and Advocate!

We all make choices every day.

What if you couldn't?

What if that power was never given to you?



People with disabilities face this challenge.

Make a difference in your life or the life of someone you love.

We need YOU!!!! All are welcome
Become an Officer or Board Member



Contact: leah.beltran@disabilityinaction.org

Or call Leah Beltran at (325) 672-5460

Preparation Time: 25 minutes

Cooking Time: 45 minutes

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds lean ground beef
- 5-7 medium-sized potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced or cubed
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 5-7 stalks of celery, chopped
- 2 cans of dark red kidney beans, including the liquid
- 2 cans of whole kernel corn, including the liquid
- 2 cans of diced tomatoes, including the juice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a spacious pot, heat and crumble the ground beef over medium-high heat until it's no longer pink. Drain any excess grease if necessary.

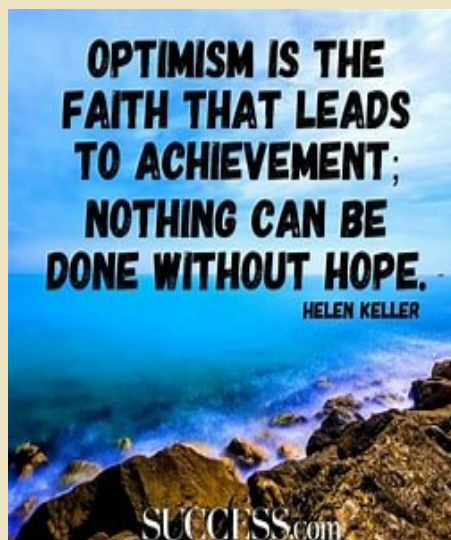
Now, let's build the layers of flavors:

- Begin with a layer of thinly sliced or cubed potatoes.
- Next, sprinkle the finely chopped onions evenly.
- Add the chopped celery to create a fresh and crunchy layer.
- Now, gently pour in the cans of dark red kidney beans, ensuring you include the flavorful liquid.
- Follow up with the cans of whole kernel corn, including their tasty juices.
- Lastly, incorporate the cans of diced tomatoes with all the rich juices they hold. Don't forget to season with salt and pepper to your liking.

Grandma's Kitchen

Tried and True Recipe. Enjoy!

Shipwreck Stew



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Disability in Action, Inc.



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Hours of Operation: Monday—Thursday 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
Accessible entrances at the front and the back of the building