We're helping Minnesota move from segregation to inclusion.
I live in a neighborhood and work at a competitive job in the community.

I am included in the neighborhood. I go to block parties and have people at my house for lemonade on my patio. I am valued at my workplace. I eat lunch with my friends. And I play on the work softball team.

The Minnesota Olmsted Plan describes inclusion as people living full and meaningful lives in their communities with the housing they choose, supports they need, transportation to get places, work and control of money.
Attitudes toward disability inclusion are directly related to people getting to know each other and doing things together.

People with disabilities have a right to be fully integrated into society—living lives of their own choosing in their communities. In 2017, a survey by the MN Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities found that the public’s support for full disability inclusion is directly related to simply knowing and interacting with someone who has a disability.

The teams of the ACT Olmstead Academy are demonstrating every day how true this is. When people with and without disabilities get together to share a meal, garden, sing, or volunteer: stereotypes and misconceptions melt away and friendships develop. The goal of the Olmstead Academy (now in its fourth year) is to build leaders who test out new integration ideas in their communities. So often, simple ideas lead to profound results.

- Coffee with neighbors leads to transportation to church.
- Dinner with town leaders ends up with new volunteer opportunities at the local nursing home.
- Asking job coaches to get out of the way leads to invites to baby showers and birthday parties with co-workers.

Clearly, the Council survey got it right: attitudes toward disability inclusion are directly related to people getting to know each other and doing things together.

Leadership to promote community participation and integration is what ACT Center is all about. From our state conference for 500 Minnesotans, to our Disability Equality Training Series (DETS) in each region of the state, to our Disability Power Days, to our Side-by-Side People’s Chorus, to our intensive human rights programs, ACT Center is building leadership and human rights change every day.

This report gives you a snapshot of how ACT Center works on many fronts towards full inclusion of people with disabilities. We will share how our programs yield tangible change, change which we continue to measure, document, and share with others as we propel the movement for disability equality and integration forward.

We thank all our volunteers and supporters for joining us in creating opportunities for people with disabilities to live side by side with everybody else, and to make meaningful choices in their lives toward realizing their hopes and desires for a full life.

Mary Kay Kennedy
Executive Director
Advocating Change Together

Since 1979, ACT’s entire body of work has been about empowering individuals to work on their own behalf toward inclusion.
ACT CENTER for DISABILITY LEADERSHIP

ON INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

ACT CENTER is the only stand-alone self-advocacy organization in the state. Our programs reach every corner of the state; our training materials are used nationally.

About ACT Center

Advocating Change Together Center on Disability Leadership started in 1979 in response to a growing concern that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities were being isolated and excluded from decisions regarding their lives. ACT Center is a grassroots, member-controlled organization run by and for persons with developmental and other disabilities.

ACT CENTER FOR DISABILITY LEADERSHIP

ACT Center for Disability Leadership incorporates programs into a structured framework for equipping groups to:

• Understand disability equality and human rights
• Work together to make equality happen
• Inform society at large on disability equality

MISSION

ACT Center’s mission is to empower people with disabilities to create a culture of disability inclusion and equality.

ACT CENTER’S VALUES

Our members assert:

• As people with disabilities, we have the right to make choices about our lives
• As people with disabilities, we have the same civil and human rights as everyone else
• People with disabilities don’t need to be fixed, we are not broken
• Everyone wins when everyone is included

ACT CENTER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

There is a disparity between the rights people with disabilities have and the rights they actually exercise. ACT Center works to fix that disparity.

“Taking risks is part of life. Otherwise, life would be boring.”

- Adam Kendall, East Grand Forks
There is a disparity between the rights people with disabilities have and the rights they actually exercise. We work to fix that disparity.

ACT Center strengthens the self-advocacy movement by developing new leadership. We offer workshops, administer peer networks, and create training materials.

Our programs address three areas of need:

1. **Building Person Power.** Knowing ourselves and creating an appetite for community

2. **Connecting to Disability Rights.** Seeing ourselves as part of a broader rights movement

3. **Building Better Communities.** Getting out there and enjoying life—side-by-side with everyone else

**OUR APPROACH**

ACT Center’s work is driven by proven principles of community organizing and the Popular Education movement:

- Everyone teaches and everyone learns
- Start with the concrete experience of the learner
- Involves a high level of participation
- Must be a collective effort
- Is an ongoing process (not limited to the classroom or workshop)
- Leads to action for change
- Stresses the creation of new knowledge
- Strengthens the ability of people to organize themselves
- It’s fun!

“We’re tired, we’re gonna fight back and we’re gonna keep fighting back until we win our rights”

- Gloria Steinbring (1945 - 2016), ACT Founding member
Now entering its 5th year, the ACT Olmstead Academy is a 12-month program of classroom and fieldwork through which self-advocates are positioned as leaders within the state's Olmstead Plan. The Academy gives participants a hands-on opportunity to learn together and return home as teams of 3 to carry out an integration project. Since 2015, 27 projects have been launched. Dozens of emerging leaders have taken part.

**METHODS**
ACT Center knows what it takes for people with disabilities to fully engage as disability equality leaders: a kinesthetic learning culture of music, art, stories, laughter, hugs, lots of big visuals—and usually food.

**CLASS OF 2017 RESULTS**
All seven teams completed their hometown disability integration projects by December 2017 and gave their final reports in the chambers of Judge Donovan Frank in downtown St. Paul on Friday, Dec. 15, 2017.

**PROGRAM FEATURES**
The eight days of classroom learning features 100% group learning, and provides participants the tools to learn about integration mandates, build skills to design and lead their own project, and connect with each other and with leaders in the wider disability community.

2018 Disability Integration Project includes:
- Getting to know our elected officials on a first name basis
- Learning to use public transportation
- Overcoming barriers that keep us segregated
- Creating creative ways to meet new people in our community
- Bringing together Eagles clubs and self advocacy groups
- Dealing with overprotective guardians and staff.

"I just want to be treated like everyone else. That's what they call inclusion."
- Brian Heuring, Litchfield Minnesota

**LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES TEAM**
We offered a tour of homes to show group home residents what living in a less restrictive place looks like.

Result: Ten people took steps toward less restrictive living situations.

**OWAKIHI TEAM**
We explored ways to get more alone time.

Result: Four people had more time away from watchful eyes.

©2018 Advocating Change Together
The Academy has set the stage for hundreds more people — with and without disabilities — to work side-by-side, to build inclusive, strong communities

**SAM NW TEAM**  
We found people with human rights barriers and helped them overcome.  
Result: Six people broke through barriers to their human rights.

**SAM NE TEAM**  
We visited people in community jobs to find out if they were being socially included at work.  
Result: Six people confronted their job coaches on coaching style.

**SAM SW TEAM**  
We hosted dinners to build relationships with leaders in the community.  
Result: Eight people made new community connections.

**MERIDIAN TEAM**  
We hosted two dinners in our team members’ homes to meet our neighbors.  
Result: Twelve people met their neighbors.

**MAINS’L TEAM**  
We offered a tour of homes to show group home residents what living independently looks like.  
Result: Eight people were blocked by over-protective guardians.

**CLASS OF 2018**  
Eighteen new participants are currently enrolled in the 2018 ACT Olmstead Academy.  
Result: Communities across the state will experience the benefits of meaningful inclusion.

“**I didn’t always know that I had rights, but now I do. I spoke up and said I wanted more privacy and now I have a lock on my bedroom door.”**  
- Heidi Cartier, East Grand Forks.
ACT Center organized and continues to administer the only statewide network of self-advocacy groups: groups of people with developmental disabilities working on their own advancement. The network is called Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM). The network continues its wide reach, empowering groups to take action.

OVERVIEW:
ACT Center contracted with Willow consulting to assess the strength of the SAM Network. The assessment drew heavily on the input from the self-advocates who serve on the SAM network’s leadership body, the Leadership Circle.

Current Strengths: Relationships and Collective Power
1. Meaningful relationships and friendships are extremely important aspects of the network for members. For some, SAM is the only place they feel treated as fully human.
   “From the moment I walked in (to SAM) I’ve felt encouraged. I don’t want to go home.”
2. Making a difference and seeing results was equally important to members. Their achievements made possible by the SAM structure, generated confidence and a strong drive to effect change in their lives and communities.

NUMBERS SERVED
Over the past year 172 people have made significant commitments to leadership programs or leadership roles to advance disability equality and inclusion. These 172 leaders are in the game to make a difference:
• 140 people completed a 12-session Disability Equality Training Series (DETS) course
• 60 people served on regional disability stealing committees
• 27 people planned and hosted regional disability conference
• 26 people participated in two separate Olmstead Academy classes
• 24 people served on the state network leadership circle
• 20 people are serving on the 2019 state conference planning committee
• 18 people served as peer mentors or on Community Councils
• 17 people co-facilitated disability equality training courses
• 15 people performed at the national Disability Pride event in Chicago
• 8 people participated in Kiwanis leadership retreats

In addition, the network reached 1,530 people to spread the message of disability pride and power.
• Each region reached out to help

“My old place felt like a prison. I had to do the same things everyone else did and I was not happy. It took three years, but I kept standing up for myself. Now I’m able to go where I want, when I want.”
- Nate Clark, Mankato
SAM is the framework of a statewide developmental disability community... we owe it to all our neighbors to continue building this network so all can move toward equality.

people understand community service options related to housing, employment, education, and transportation and support them to take steps toward greater independence.

• People participated in theater productions, regional gatherings, self-advocacy picnics, Disability Power Days and regional disability rights conferences.

Total number served: 1,702

“*The most common barrier to participation in the SAM network was restrictive, inflexible living situations.*”  
- Maggie Treichel, Cambridge

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**Northwest**
- NE — Hold annual picnic that attended by local, county and state leaders; as well as disability advocates.
- NW — Active participants in community festivals including musical plays in the Art Festival, fishing clinic for kids at Catfish days, and selling lefse at the Heritage Festival.

**Central**
- Central — Build raised beds on community garden and recorded stories of former state hospital residents for historical society.

**Metro**
- Metro — Train people with disabilities to use Uber and other ride sharing services, giving them spontaneous transportation options.

**Southwest**
- SW — Serve on the local transportation committee and advise on bus routes and schedules.

**Southeast**
- SE — Advise medical facility on disability issues.
ACT Center makes an impact on a larger scale by creating tools to help other organizations grow their own disability rights groups. DETS is a catalogue of courses that provide proven, structured sessions for groups to use in building a culture of disability equality.

**TOOL FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION**

DETS courses are designed to be self-led by a team of two people with disabilities and a support ally. Each 12-session course includes four sessions on building personal power, four sessions on connecting to disability rights, and four session on building better communities.

The empowerment, understanding and community integration found in the rigor of this training series will build the strong peer groups and the new leadership we need to reach that equality.

*"I’ve led dozens of self-advocacy sessions over the years. The DETS course is by far the best I’ve come across. It walked our group through 12 sessions—every minute of every session was meaningful, engaging and fun. It helped our group understand disability equality at a deeper level."

- Bev Kaler, St. Cloud

*I didn’t even know I had rights. I knew I had the right to vote, but that’s about it.*

- Jonathan Wolner, Fairmount
The self-advocate peer trainers make a commitment to facilitate all 12 sessions. It feels great to write the checks to pay them for the work. This year, we issued 17 1099 tax reports for self-advocates making more than $600.

- Patrick Michell

Understanding disability equality and inclusion at a deeper level... that's where we need to make the investment of time, resources and passion.

“The self-advocate peer trainers make a commitment to facilitate all 12 sessions. It feels great to write the checks to pay them for the work. This year, we issued 17 1099 tax reports for self-advocates making more than $600.”

- Patrick Michell

“ACT helped me see that I have something to give—my voice counts.”

- Carol Robinson, Minneapolis

COURSE 101 LAUNCH

The training has been piloted throughout Minnesota and shaped by the feedback of trainers and participants.

• 140 people have gone through the first 12-session DETS course.
• Small group sizes of 8-12 ensure meaningful participation
• Applying disability equality to everyday life.

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• Applying disability equality to everyday life.
Disability Power Day

Disability Power Day is held twice a month and brings people together from different circles. For a lot of folks this is a fun way to be introduced to disability equality concepts. For others, this is an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in helping others learn.

Disability Power Day features a morning session, a social lunch, and an afternoon activity. It’s held the second Thursday and Friday of each month at the St. George Greek Orthodox Church in St. Paul.

Since October, hundreds of people with disabilities have attended and learned about their rights, met new people, and gained confidence. We’ve hosted sessions around assertive communication, personal empowerment, disability rights history and law, and group power to name a few. It has proven to be a great way to introduce disability equality concepts to new people.

“People were shy at the beginning but now made new friends. Some of us are still breaking out of our comfort zone.”

- Amanda Hanson, St. Paul

“If a bossy person is telling me what to do, I say ‘I have rights. I’m in charge of myself.”

Sam Hesla
Minneapolis
The ACT Side by Side People’s Chorus is rare program in this way: it is intended for both people with developmental and intellectual disabilities and people without disabilities. With a monthly rehearsal that includes a free meal, the chorus has built lots of enthusiastic participation. At rehearsals, we see 45-50 people with and without disabilities singing side by side, as equals, helping each other find page numbers, laughing during warm-ups, raising their hand and offering suggestions for how better to include everyone in the singing of a particular song.

Last year two chorus members, Abby and Natalie, offered to teach the group signed gestures to accompany “America the Beautiful.” Abby does not speak, but together they taught and led us in gestures for both rehearsals and performances.

“I have loved developing friendships as peers with people who have an intellectual disability. I’m not here as a responsible party of some sort, we’re just becoming friends. That is so rare in our culture.”

-Jaimie Bennett
Minneapolis

“T’ve been to programs at Hamline for more than 25 years, and the chorus that opened the program tonight was the most powerful thing I’ve ever seen.”

- Audience member at the People’s Chorus performance
Every other year ACT Center hosts a two-day state self-advocacy conference for over 400 people. People come from across the state to make friends, learn about disability rights issues, and become connected to the larger disability equality movement. What makes this conference unique is its “nothing about us without us” approach. The conference is planned by a committee of people with disabilities from metro area organizations and Self-Advocate Minnesota greater Minnesota groups. Most of the workshops are led or co-led by self-advocates.

SAVE THE DATE
MARCH 8-9, 2019

“This conference is about everyone getting involved, learning from each other and taking ideas back to our groups to build up people with disabilities.”
- Carol Robinson
Minneapolis

“I’m working at the Mall of America!”
- Kenisha Conditt, St. Paul
“Life in a community is a necessary condition for a person’s complete flourishing as a human being.”

Aristotle
(384-322 BCE)
“I know my parents want me to be safe because they love me, but there should be a way for me to be both safe and happy.”

- Don Neu - Monticello
“It’s a two-way street. Treat others how you want to be treated.”

- Richard Schultz, St. Paul
“Don’t ever give up. Be persistent.”

- Kevin Koening, Monticello
HOW IS THE WORK FINANCED?

The Minnesota Council on Developmental Disabilities supports the Central and Northwest regions of the Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM) network with a $100,000 annual grant.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services supports the Northeast and Southeast and Southwest regions of the Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM) network with a $130,000 annual grant.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services supports the Olmstead Academy with a Moving Home Minnesota grant of $75,000.

A 2017 legislative appropriation (administered thought DHS) of $248,000 supports the ACT Center’s work to include 1) maintain state network infrastructure, 2) outreach and conferences 3) support annual leadership programs and 4) program coordination and evaluation. Of the $248,000, $105,000 is used statewide to conduct outreach to persons in each region of the Self-Advocates Minnesota network.

A $10,000 grant thought the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council supports the Side-by-Side People’s Chorus.

The ACT Center is a member of Community Shares, with annual gifts of approximately $6,000.

The ACT Center has a long history of earned income via sales of products and services. In 2018 we focused on development and piloting our Disability Equality Training Series (DETS). In the coming year we will focus on further development of new resources, as well as marketing existing courses.

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Financial Summary

Advocating Change Together
Operating Finances FY 2018
July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018
Unaudited

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<td>Conference Expenses 350</td>
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<td>Net Ordinary Income -17,099</td>
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Information is summarized from ACT Center end-of-year QuickBooks reports. Our 2018 financial review and statement of financial position is scheduled for October 2018 with CliftonLarsonAllen LLP.

“I want to be more independent and not have staff around at night. I’m working on it.”
- David Peterson, Brainerd
We started this report by talking about how full disability inclusion is directly related to a very simple concept: people with and without disabilities knowing and interacting with each other.

When people with and without disabilities get together to share a meal, garden, sing, or volunteer, stereotypes and misconceptions start to fade, and genuine relationships grow in their place.

Simple ideas lead to profound results. Coffee with neighbors leads to transportation to church. Dinner with town leaders ends up with new volunteer opportunities at the local nursing home. Asking job coaches to step into the background leads to invites to baby showers and birthday parties with co-workers.

**THE GOOD NEWS:** The ACT Center methods and programming are transforming disability inclusion in many parts of Minnesota*

**THE BAD NEWS:** We reach less than one tenth of one percent (.0075%) of Minnesotans with intellectual and developmental disabilities: 1,702 of the 227,000* people.

**THE OPPORTUNITY:** For funders, policymakers and service providers to follow through on the promise of full inclusion for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities by fully investing in programs that put action behind the promise — bringing people together with ACT Center programs that truly change communities.

**OUR POSITION:** ACT Center is ready to partner widely, take programs to scale.

The ACT Center is positioned to build out the network. We developed a detailed plan for expanding our service partnerships and multiplying the number of people engaged in our programming. Our objectives are for greater community integration; more support from service providers; and increased funding.

We invite our policy and funding partners to help us serve a full 10 percent of the population of Minnesotans with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the next five years — that’s 27,000 diverse individuals in every part of our state.

The ACT Center has the capacity, the will, the passion and the plan to get us all closer to the day where we truly have full disability inclusion.

* access to program effectiveness and network effectiveness evaluations available at selfadvocacy.org by clicking on Accountability.

* 2015 MN State Demographics Center