



**Southwestern Center for  
Independent Living (SWCIL)**

*Serving People with Disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota*

# 2023 Annual Report

# Contents

Mission	2
Message from Leadership	3
What is a CIL?	4
Consumer Demographics	5
Individual Services	6
Consumer Outcome Highlights	7
Consumer Activity Highlights	8
Consumer Success Highlights	9-10
Ramp Program	11-12
Agency Staff & Board of Directors	13
Financial Sources	14

***Mission Statement: The Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL) is dedicated to working with and responding to the ever changing needs of persons with disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota to promote societal acceptance, inclusion, and equal access for all persons with disabilities.***

Cover photo: 7 SWCIL representatives holding signs promoting equal human rights, standing together preparing for the National Council on Independent Living annual march to the U.S. capitol.

# Dear Friends

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to present SWCIL's annual report for the federal fiscal year ending September 30, 2023. In this report we celebrate new successes in independent living made through individual empowerment, learning new skills, gaining tools and resources, educating our communities, and breaking barriers, all driven and achieved by our consumers at an organization run by and for people with disabilities. Some outcome highlights from this past year include:

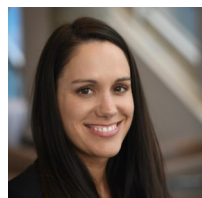
- Serving 427 consumers with consumer-directed independent living services.
- Offering 15 community education classes
- Facilitating 2 community workshops
- Providing 8 social recreational opportunities, fostering peer support relationships
- Serving on 24 councils, committees, and workgroups advancing disability policies and efforts to promote awareness, access, and inclusion
- And more!

Thank you for your interest, involvement and partnership this past year.

Sincerely,



Derek Klinkner  
Board President



Melissa Doherty  
Executive Director

# What is a Center for Independent Living?

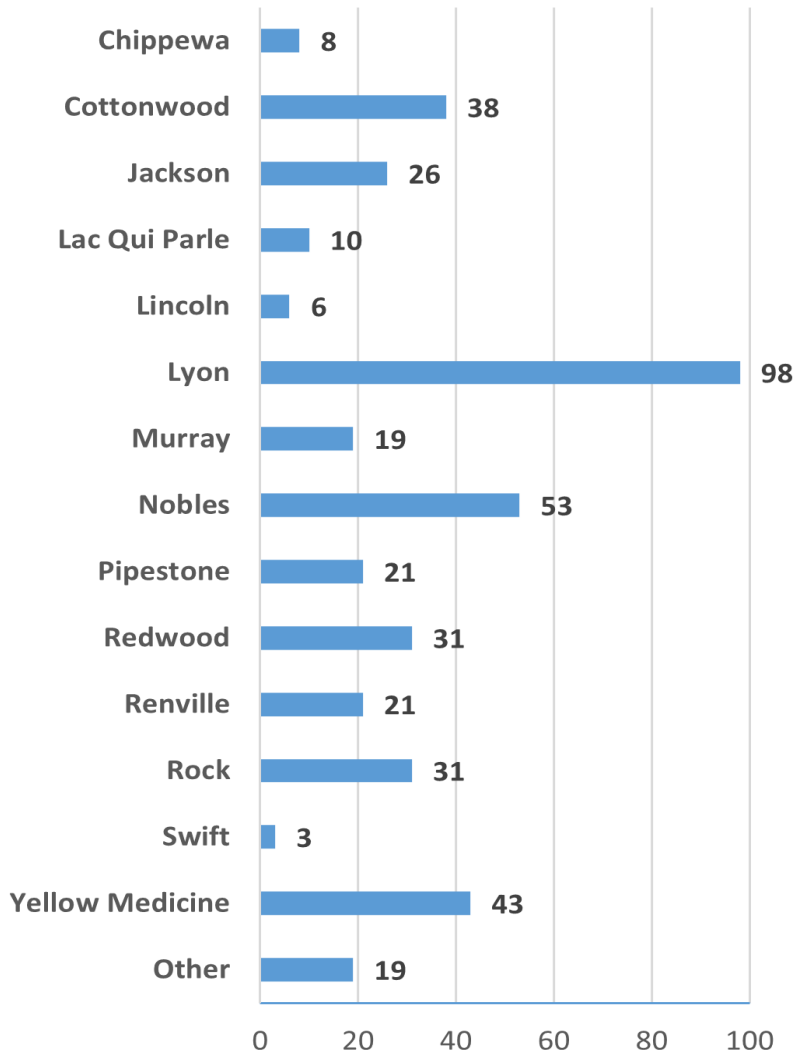
**A Center for Independent Living (CIL) is mandated to provide five (5) core services:**

- Advocacy—Individual and Systems
- Peer Counseling –including cross-disability peer counseling
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Relocation, Diversion and Youth Transition Services
- Information Referral & Assistance

<p><b>Consumer Control</b></p> <p>In decision making, service delivery, management, and establishment policy and direction of the Center including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Being governed by a board of directors comprised of at least 51% people with disabilities</li> <li>-Employing a minimum of 51% people of disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Based</b></p> <p>Located in the area served by the CIL, responding to the unique needs of the area and having knowledge of and access to local resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Serving counties: Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, and Yellow Medicine.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cross Disability</b></p> <p>Ensuring that services are provided to individuals with a diversity of significant disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Conducted outreach with 91 entities (unduplicated) in an effort to reach underserved and unserved populations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Nonresidential</b></p> <p>Private, nonprofit agency designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provides an array of IL services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-SWCIL services are provided in a setting of the consumer’s choice, in their home, schools, community buildings, or online</li> </ul>
<p><b>Self-Help and Self-Advocacy</b></p> <p>Promotes self-help and self-advocacy among individuals with significant disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-238 consumers received advocacy/legal services; and 234 goals were set, 48 were achieved and 184 remained in-progress for consumers in the self-advocacy/self-empowerment life area.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Equal Access</b></p> <p>Promotes equal access for individuals with disabilities in society and to all services, programs, activities, resources, and facilities, whether public or private.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-SWCIL staff provides input on equal access projects in the local communities, as well as ensuring the accessible set-up of meetings and events held by SWCIL.</li> </ul>

# Consumer Demographics

## Consumers Served By County

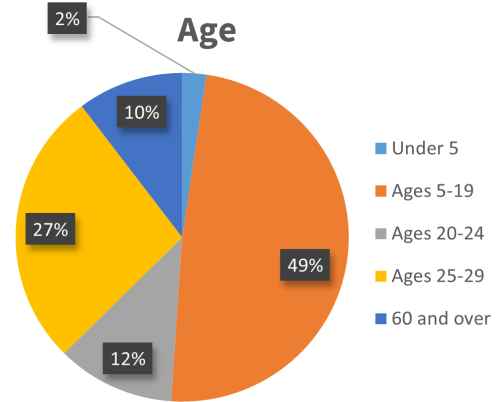


## Gender

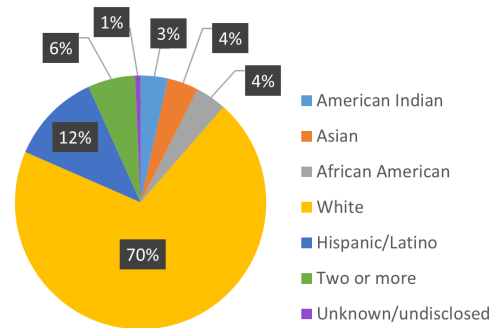
Male—263

Female—164

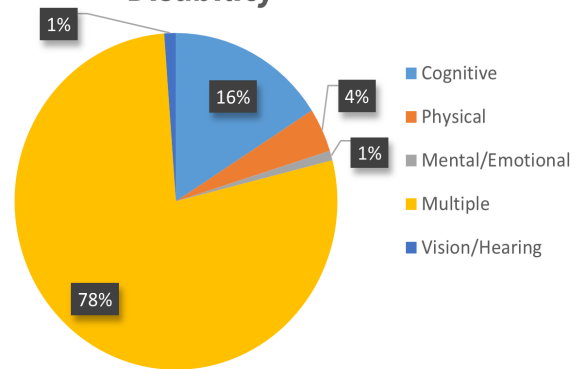
## Age



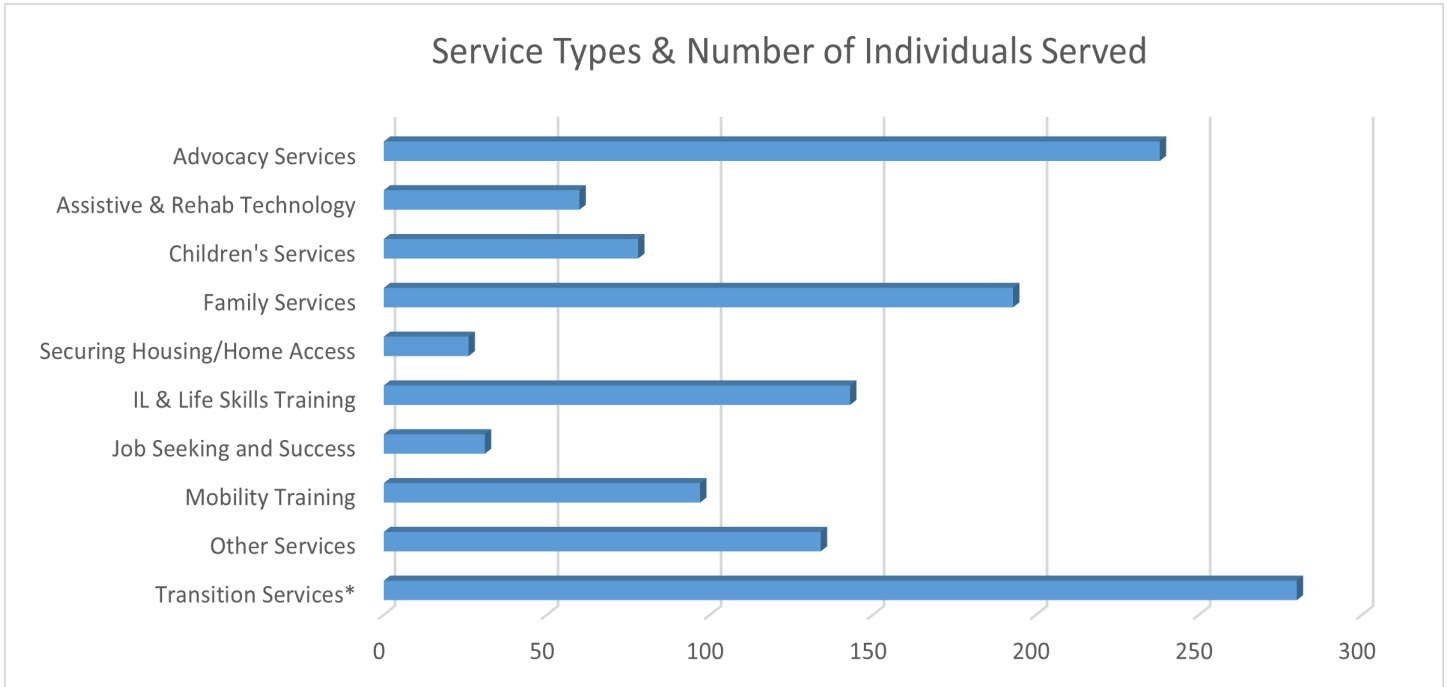
## Ethnicity



## Disability



# Individual Services

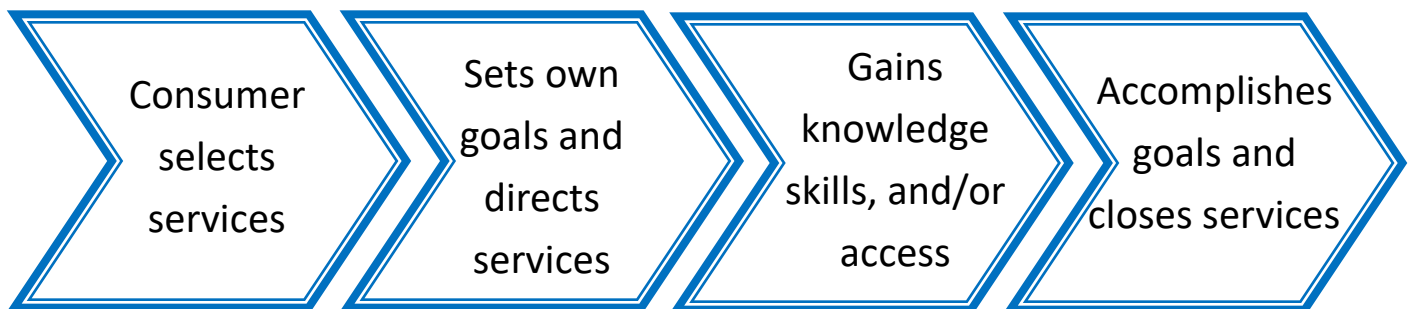


**\*Transition Services include:**

Relocation to community living, prevention of institutionalization, and youth transition to post-secondary life.

**Other Services include:**

Communication, Recreational Services, and Peer counseling.



# Consumer Outcome Highlights

## SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER ACHIEVEMENTS:

- 3 Consumers obtained competitive community employment
- 10 Consumers were assisted in sustaining employment
- 29 Consumers obtained their driver's permit and/or other necessary means to acquire driving independence.
- 12 Consumers gained entrance into post-secondary education.
- 9 Consumers secured Social Security benefits improving their financial stability.
- 51 Consumers sustained their independent living situation
- 16 Consumers relocated from a nursing home or other institution to a community-based living arrangement
- 205 At-risk consumers received services that prevents institutionalization.



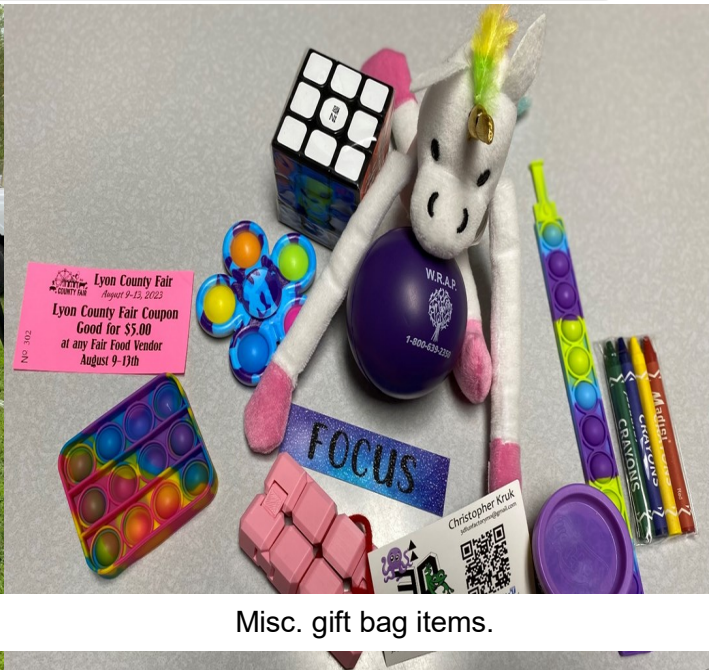
Three participants smiling for a photo with Santa at a Marshall Area Social Rec. group gathering.

# Community Activity Highlights

**Lyon County Fair:** SWCIL facilitated Disability Awareness during the 2023 Lyon County Fair. SWCIL's mission was to promote public awareness and provide opportunities for people with disabilities to access fair events. During the fair, 295 attendees with disabilities received a fair event ticket for either carnival rides, rodeo or demolition derby grandstand events, along with a food ticket redeemable at participating fair food vendors. For individuals who did not desire an event ticket, an alternative sensory bag was available, which contained stress balls, fidgets, infinity cubes, pop-its, etc.



SWCIL's outdoor booth at the Lyon County Fair.



Misc. gift bag items.

SWCIL sponsors the Marshall Area Social Recreation community group, which provides socialization activities and opportunities to develop and foster peer support relationships at events planned by and for the disability community. SWCIL hosted dances and craft events. A volunteer committee of individuals with disabilities meets once a year to plan events. During the period of October 1, 2023—September 30, 2023, Marshall Area Social Recreation held 8 events.

## Large Group Dances/Activities:

- 4 events, 128 participants

## Coloring Club:

- 1 event, 6 participants

## Craft Night:

- 1 event, 9 participants

## Game Night:

- 1 event, 10 participants



# Consumer Success Highlights

**Financial Management Skills:** A middle-aged man, with multiple disabilities, was struggling with his finances and sought help with budgeting skills. With assistance from SWCIL, he learned how to create and maintain a budget. He realized that if he was going to get out of debt, he needed to cancel a lot of his subscriptions. Struggling with figuring out how to cancel certain subscriptions, SWCIL provided resources with instructions to assist him with the task. SWCIL also provided financial management resources he could utilize to help him maintain his budget, and he started using the EAP program through his work, utilizing their budgeting services. With SWCIL's assistance, he was able to start paying off past due bills and felt that he was back on the right track with budgeting.

**Post-Secondary Education:** A young woman completed her FAFSA application, applied to and was accepted into the college and program of her choosing. SWCIL staff assisted her with finding an assistive device to help with note and test taking. She trialed a LiveScribe pen and notebook from SWCIL's assistive technology library and finding that it worked for her, she worked with Vocation Rehabilitation Services to acquire the pen and purchased the notebook with other funds. She is currently enrolled in a diesel mechanics program at a local two-year college and reports that she has the top grades in the class.

**Obtained Employment:** A transition age adult, with multiple disabilities, about to graduate high school was not sure what he wanted to do for a career/job after school. With assistance from SWCIL, he was able to explore different careers and the training he would need. He decided that he wanted to work at Wal-Mart after graduation, but he didn't have the skills needed to complete an interview. With assistance from SWCIL, he was able to learn the skills needed to succeed during an interview. He applied for a position at Wal-Mart, completed the interview process, was offered, and accepted a full-time position.

**Received MN Driver's Permit:** A young man had been with SWCIL staff since March 2022 working on learning Minnesota driving laws and rules needed to obtain his driver's permit. He had great dedication, working with SWCIL staff before or after school, and during the summer months. Once he knew the information, he worked on test taking skills to overcome his testing anxiety. He passed the permit test on his sixth try and was excited to report on his success.

# Consumer Success Highlights

**Supplemental Security Income:** A 20-year-old man, diagnosed with Autism, had not left his home since before the COVID-19 pandemic. He spent all his time in his bedroom, leaving only during the night when his family member were in bed. According to his mom, no one had seen him for more than a year except for her and a SWCIL staff member, when they began meeting virtually to begin the application process for Supplemental Security Income. He was hesitant to share details of his life, illness, and he limitations it brought to his life. But over the course of meeting to complete an SSI application, he began to share his experiences so that the necessary paperwork could be completed. He SSI application was successful, and his mom stated that he has since stepped outside to look at the stars, attended some therapy appointments and that she'd heard him laugh, something he had not done in many years.

**Improved Communication Skills:** A 46-year-old man struggled with interpersonal relationships and communication, with anger outbursts and inappropriate responses when in past conflicts or difficult situations. He worked to identify past problem situations and developed scripts to use in conversations and practiced with role-play. He was able to successfully request information from his last employer, file his taxes, and apply for other benefit programs, which was his top priority. He was also able to secure employment.

**Diversion Service:** A wife, mother, and an immigrant to the United States survived a severe stroke, which resulted in physical limitations. She was in need of a ramp, built to code, that would enable her to safely enter and exit her home. At the time of her assessment, it was determined that she was not eligible for financial assistance through the county. Due to her husband having to stop working in order to provide for her care, their personal financial resources were scarce. SWCIL utilized IL Program funds to construct and install a residential wheelchair ramp at her residence, supporting her ability to remain living at her home, on a small rural acreage with a growing family.

**Self-Advocacy Skills Development:** A high school student, and his parent, participated in SWCIL's annual legislative activity traveling to the State Capitol. There he visited with state senators and representatives sharing with them what he was working on and how SWCIL was assisting him.

# Ramp Program



Aluminum roll-a-ramp assembled with two landings.

A consumer, in Lyon County, was having multiple health issues resulting in weakness and the inability to climb the steps to get into his home. Staying in hotels, within the Marshall community, was his best option until learning of SWCIL's rental ramp program. After the installation of a temporary ramp, he was able to move back into the comfort of his own home.

## During FFY 2023 SWCIL completed:

- 7 Wooden Ramp Projects
- 8 Temporary Aluminum Ramp Installations
- 2 Interior Threshold Ramp Installations

With continued increase in referral and use of temporary ramps, SWCIL increased its aluminum ramp inventory with the purchase of four 4'x5' platforms, 96' of ramp length, 5'x5' landing pads, and an 8' multifold wheelchair suitcase ramp



Wooden modular ramp with landing next to house.

# Ramp Program

## Temporary Ramp Rental Program

Providing temporary residential access solutions to facilitate: prevention of institutionalization; relocation to the home/ community-based living settings of an individual's choice; societal inclusion; and opportunities for individuals to explore the use of AT to remove access barriers.



Aluminum roll-a-ramp product next to a house.

SWCIL setup a temporary ramp for a woman newly diagnosed with Guillian-Barre syndrome, a condition in which the immune system attacks nerves, and damaged nerve cells cause progressive paralysis. The woman lives with her husband, who had to stop working in order to care for her. The temporary ramp at their home allowed the woman to safely leave to attend physical therapies until the couple moved to an accessible apartment.

---

# Meet Our Staff

---



Pictured from left to right, top row: Angela Algood, IL Specialist/CDCS Support Planner; Annette Swanson, Grants & Financial Manager; Ashley Reynaga, Community Activities & I&R Specialist; David Haen, Ramp Program Manager; Harry Remley, Peer Mentor; Jordan Glad, CDCS Support Planner/IL Specialist; Kristina Tollefson, IL Program Support.

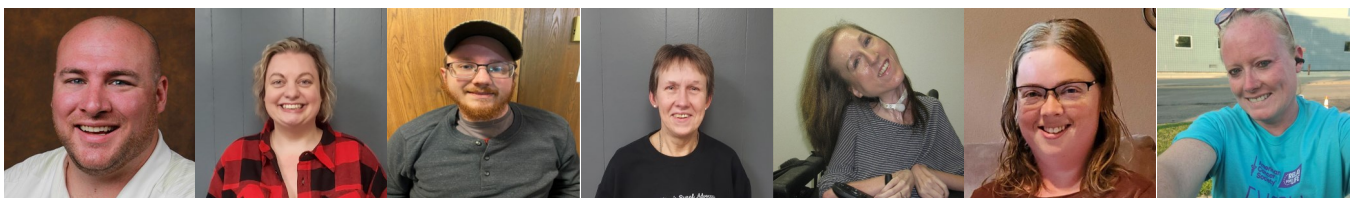
Pictured from left to right, bottom row: Linda Halbur, LSW, CDCS Program Manager; Rachel Thalacker, IL Specialist/CDCS Support Planner; Ruth Hubbling, IL Specialist; Samantha Wolff, IL Specialist; Sharlett Glidden, IL Specialist; Sherry Olson, IL Program Manager; Ted Stamp, IL Advocate.

Not pictured: Amy Illies, Administrative Assistant; Melissa Doherty, Executive Director, Steve Thovson, Ramp Crew Lead.

---

# SWCIL Board of Directors

---



Pictured from left to right: Derek Klinkner, Chair; Leah Hastad, Vice Chair; Cody Seehafer, Secretary; Pamela Russell, Treasurer; Tashauna Swanson, Member; Carrie Stiernagle, Member; Jessica Coil, Member.

# Financial Sources

## Public Support

### Support for Core Independent Living Services

State..... \$429,554  
Federal ..... \$178,635  
Total..... \$608,189

**Total Public Support..... \$608,189**

## Program Service Revenue

Ramp Program, Veteran Directed Care, Consumer Directed Community Support –  
Support Planner Services, & Other Sources

Revenue..... \$276,779

**Total Program Service..... \$276,779**

## Other Sources of Revenue

Other ..... \$ 5,272

**Total Other Sources..... \$ 5,272**

**Grand Total from All Revenue Sources..... \$890,240**

# Get Involved

**Volunteer:** We place tremendous value on the individuals, groups, and companies that support our goals. Volunteers can make a large impact by giving a small amount of their time. Join us at [www.swcil.com](http://www.swcil.com)

**Donate:** As a non-profit organization, we rely on the generosity of people like you. Join us in our mission to promote societal acceptance, inclusion, and equal access for all persons with disabilities. Support our work at [www.swcil.com](http://www.swcil.com)

“All I can say is: Thank-You”

“SWCIL services used to be my support team and I love their service so much.”

“She does very good at her job and fits your needs when needed.”

“Does good job of finding answers to questions if they don’t have the answer themselves.”

“(Rachel) is very awesome and helps through a lot of things that came up.”

“(Jordan) was wonderful. :)”

This document is available in alternate format  
upon request.

Contact us at [swcil@swcil.com](mailto:swcil@swcil.com) or 507-532-2221