
SAVE THE DATE



13
MARCH

**ANNUAL
MEETING**

8:00
AM

 **empower:abilities**

When the mission grows, so do we. Come see what's next!

1450 W. Cambridge | Springfield



Join empower: abilities on Friday, March 13 for our Annual Meeting. This year we are hosting a continental breakfast for attendees, followed by a look at where we've been and what's to come. We have big plans on the horizon! Reservations not required, but appreciated.

Call 417-886-1188 or email michele@empowerabilities.org

What's New?

Prime Time Radio Show on KICK 92.3 FM

Listen live every Monday at 4 pm as Juli Jordan and Taylee Gregg host live interviews with experts from the disability and aging community.

If you missed an episode, you can listen to recordings on the [KICK website](#).

Empower Hour Podcast

Hosts Afton Harper and Juli Jordan talk all things disability on our new podcast. Catch it on [YouTube](#), [Spotify](#), or [Apple Podcast](#).



Empower: Youth

Are you age 14–24 and ready to learn real-world skills for independent living? Empower: Youth offers a supportive space to build confidence, gain independence, and connect with peers. Join us every Tuesday at 4 p.m. as we explore life skills you can use every day.

Topics may include budgeting, cooking basics, communication, self-advocacy, and preparing for adulthood, or we might just focus on peer fun. To learn more, contact Nikki at nicoler@empowerabilities.org or call 417-886-1188.

Join our [Empower: Youth Peer Power Facebook group](#) to stay connected.

Youth Game Night (and social club) - offers a weekly space to play, laugh, and socialize. The group meets every Thursday at 4 pm for games, social time, and opportunities to hang out with friends. Come play our games, or bring your own. Snacks are provided (feel free to bring your own), and new games are always welcome.

Coming Up: Thursday, March 12 BYOC (Bring Your Own Craft)

Bring in the craft/project you've been working on or want to start. If you don't have a project, that's fine too, we will have some inspiration projects for you! Create, snack, and socialize.

Goal(s):

- Sharing interests as a group.
- Learning to bounce ideas off of each other in a creative space.
- Squashing perfection and prioritizing the fun/creative side of art.

Parents, guardians, and attendants are welcome to stay and socialize during game time. If you need assistance during a 2-hour period, please bring someone to assist. Please note: We try to offer a scent-free gathering space.

Save the Date

Mark your calendars for Friday, April 24, for our Spring Fling Dance Party (which replaces this year's Valentine's Dance). Dive into the new season with empower: abilities - we'll provide the music featuring DJ Mike, snacks, and guaranteed fun for everyone. There is no cost to attend this event - open to all ages.

Circle of Friends

Our Circle of Friends group kicks off a new year with new faces. Ernest Crunkleton has stepped into his new role as Assistant Director of IL, with new ideas to connect adults with others, build friendships, and develop everyday life skills in the community.

Our next Social Club event takes place **Wednesday, February 25**, at the Center (1450 W. Cambridge) for games and bingo. Participants who require personal assistance for activities lasting two hours or longer are asked to bring an attendant to assist them.

Wednesday, April 22, will play host to Bingo at the center from 1:30 - 3:30 pm. Come have some fun and win cool prizes.

And don't forget, our regular **Gaming Club** meets on the first Friday of every month at 4:00 pm. This is open to individuals age 14 and over who want to come play or learn new games with friends. These sessions feature:

- Themed game nights
 - Instructional sessions (upon request)
 - Exciting tournaments for healthy competition
-



Empower: Success at it's Best

When Lisette first came to empower: abilities, she was ready to take charge of her future. A 33-year-old woman with Autism and ADHD, Lisette had spent her life living with and relying on her grandparents for support. With a monthly income of less than \$1,000, her dream of living and working independently felt out of reach—but she was determined.

From the start, Lisette came prepared with clear goals. She wanted to strengthen her time management, improve her money and math skills (especially making change), and build her reading comprehension. Her Independent Living Specialist (ILS) opened a case with Education as the primary goal, and the two began meeting weekly.

Together, they used real-world tools— analog and digital clocks, faux money, and reading materials—to practice skills that promote self-reliance. Each week, Lisette worked through realistic scenarios involving budgeting, bill payments, and scheduling work and appointments. She also participated in a four-week budgeting workshop.

Lisette's journey is a true community collaboration. She's received job training through Vocational Rehabilitation, has been approved for a housing waiver through the Regional Center, and has active Medicaid coverage. Once she moves into her own apartment, her ILS will assist with applying for SNAP benefits to ensure she can meet her nutritional needs.

Lisette continues to grow, and her Independent Living Specialist will remain by her side as she builds skills in meal preparation, personal safety, and home management. With the right support, Lisette is well on her way to turning her dream of independence into a reality.

Know Your Rights: Accessibility Basics Everyone Should Understand

Accessibility isn't a courtesy—it's a right. Yet many people with disabilities (and their families) aren't fully aware of the protections in place to support access, independence, and inclusion in everyday life. Understanding your rights is one of the most powerful tools for self-advocacy.

What Does Accessibility Really Mean?

Accessibility means people with disabilities can fully participate in community life—whether that's entering a building, applying for a job, attending school, using transportation, or accessing digital content. It goes beyond ramps and parking spaces.

Accessibility includes:

- Clear paths of travel and usable entrances
- Reasonable accommodations at work or school
- Effective communication, such as captions or interpreters
- Accessible websites and digital tools

When accessibility is built in, everyone benefits.

The ADA: A Foundation for Access

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in many areas of public life, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, and government services.

Under the ADA, people have the right to:

- Equal access to public places and services
- Reasonable accommodations in the workplace
- Equal opportunity to participate in programs and activities

These protections help ensure independence, dignity, and choice.

Reasonable Accommodations: What You Can Ask For

A reasonable accommodation is a change or adjustment that allows a person with a disability to participate fully—without placing an undue burden on a business or organization.

Examples include:

- Modified work schedules
- Accessible seating or entrances
- Assistive technology or adaptive equipment
- Alternative formats for written materials

Requesting an accommodation is not asking for special treatment—it's asking for equal access.

Self-Advocacy Starts with Knowledge

Knowing your rights makes it easier to speak up, ask questions, and address barriers when they arise. Advocacy doesn't have to be confrontational; often, it starts with education and conversation.

If a barrier exists, you have the right to ask:

- Is this space accessible?
- What accommodations are available?
- Who can help resolve this issue?

Accessibility Is a Shared Responsibility

Creating inclusive communities isn't solely the responsibility of individuals with disabilities. Businesses, organizations, and communities all play a role in removing barriers and creating welcoming spaces for everyone.

When accessibility is prioritized, independence grows—and communities become stronger.

To learn more about Access and Advocacy, join our Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/empoweraccess>. Your voice matters — whether you're sharing a story, posting about a barrier, or celebrating an access win. Together, we're building communities where everyone can thrive.

Love, Independence, and Disability

For people with disabilities, independence doesn't mean doing everything alone. It means having the freedom to make choices, the support to live fully, and the confidence to define success for yourself.

Independence Is an Act of Self-Love

True independence begins with self-respect. It's knowing your needs, setting boundaries, and asking for support when it's needed. Choosing services, attendants, adaptive tools, or accommodations is not a loss of independence—it's an expression of it. At empower: abilities, we help you through all of it.

When individuals have control over their daily lives, routines, and decisions, they gain more than independence—they gain dignity and confidence.

Relationships Built on Respect

Healthy relationships—romantic, familial, or friendships—are rooted in respect, communication, and mutual understanding. Disability doesn't limit the ability to form meaningful connections, but misconceptions often do.

Independence within relationships means being seen as an equal partner, having your voice heard, and being supported without being controlled. The strongest relationships honor autonomy while offering encouragement and care.

Independence Looks Different for Everyone

There is no single definition of independence. For some, love is living on their own with the right supports in place. For others, it's participating in social clubs, building friendships, or engaging in the community in ways that feel safe and empowering.

What matters most is choice—choosing how you live, who you connect with, and what independence looks like in your life.

Celebrating All Forms of Love

This February, we celebrate love in all its forms:

- Love for yourself and your independence
- Love through advocacy and self-determination
- Love found in community, friendship, and belonging

At its core, independence is about living life on your own terms—and that is something worth celebrating every day.

[See All Events on Our Website](#)

Connect with us





empower: abilities

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