

Compass IL is a community based, nonresidential, private nonprofit agency that is staffed and governed by people with disabilities. Our focus is to empower people in making choices that maintain or increase their independence.

We serve people with disabilities, their families, and the community in which they live. We also work with area businesses and service providers that need assistance in responding to the needs of people with disabilities.

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Navigating Toward Independence and Freedom

2920 SCHNEIDER AVE SE  
MENOMONIE, WI 54751

OCT - DECEMBER 2025

## Note from the Executive Director

It looks like winter is here, whether we want it or not. I want to thank all the CompassIL staff, especially those on the planning committee, for our 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We held the event on October 24<sup>th</sup> at CompassIL and had great attendance and wonderful speakers. See the included article about the event. CompassIL was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Wispact Foundation to provide no-cost rides to persons with disabilities in our ten-county service area using our New Freedom Transportation Program. I want to thank the Wispact Foundation for awarding CompassIL the grant, and it will go a long way to providing rides for medical, nutrition, social, recreational, and employment.



We have all heard about the personal care crisis, so let me tell you about my personal experience when it comes to personal care worker needs and the near crisis I had to deal with. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, I had surgery to replace my right shoulder socket and repair a torn muscle in my bicep. After nearly two weeks in the hospital, my insurance company was calling at least four times a day to see where I was being transferred to or when I was going home. The problem was that every rehab facility/nursing home in the area did not have a bed, and I couldn't find a personal care agency that could take me on. Fortunately, at the last minute, a private pay agency was able to provide the care I needed. I was able to get the equipment I needed from our center, and thankfully, I was able to go home! My case is far from an exception after talking with the case managers at the hospital. The personal care crisis is affecting the rehab facilities, nursing homes, and agencies that provide personal care workers.

I think about how fortunate I am to have an IL center with the equipment I needed, and that I was able to pay out of pocket for personal care services, which greatly expanded my options when it came to providers. Having dealt with personal care workers for the past two months, I have a renewed appreciation for the work they do. Many don't get paid for mileage and truly make sacrifices when it comes to the people they serve. I talk with my personal care workers, and they tell me stories about how they took on an additional consumer that night because they wanted to be sure they got safely into bed that night. Many start their day at 6 am and end at 10 pm, serving 5 to 6 consumers throughout the day. One night, I had the administrative staff who does the scheduling come and help me into bed, because...

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Continued...

the scheduled person's care worker had a family crisis. It's not uncommon for personal care agencies' administrative staff to help out when needed. This demonstrates the need for more personal care workers to keep people living in the community and out of an institution. I consider myself lucky that I didn't end up spending two or more weeks in a nursing home, but there are just as many who aren't as lucky as I was, simply because they couldn't find the personal care services needed to go home!

Finally, this Holiday Season, I would like everyone to make just one gesture of kindness to persons in need. Put some money in the Salvation Army collection at the store, donate food to your local pantry, volunteer at a food kitchen for the homeless, or donate to a nonprofit in need. Even something as simple as wishing people a Merry Christmas or Happy Holiday! My grandma used to say that a little kindness goes a long way!

Kyle A. Kleist, Executive Director

CompassIL



## 45TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



On October 24, formerly the Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin (CILWW), now CompassIL, celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an event at the center. It turned out to be a great event, with strong attendance from the board, staff from the agencies we work with, caregivers, and volunteer drivers. We started the festivities with a ribbon-cutting, sponsored by the Dunn County Chamber of Commerce, followed by a wonderful lunch.

## 45th Anniversary Celebration

In the afternoon, we had three fantastic speakers. Jason Glozier, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers (WCILC), discussed the history of IL, tracing it back to the days of Wade Blank and his efforts to get persons with disabilities out of institutions. He was followed by Amber Snyder, who was an all-star barrel rider when she was paralyzed at the age of 19. Amber talked about her struggles and the adaptive equipment she used to return to competitive barrel racing, and the impact that her horses had on her recovery. Finally, we had Michael Perry, a best-selling author and humorist from New Ulm, Wisconsin, a small town in our service area. Michael provided both humorous and heartwarming stories about his life, family, friends, and many of the best-selling books he has written.

We want to thank all the CompassIL staff for making it a great event, especially those who were on the planning committee. The food was fantastic, the staff were able to mingle with our guests, and we had great prizes to give away, including a laptop and an HD TV. It turned out to be a wonderful afternoon, and we're looking forward to celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary five years down the road!

**JASON GLOZIER**



**AMBER SNYDER**



**MICHAEL PERRY**





# Personal Assistant Services



***Brandy, Tina, Lauryn, Samantha,  
Jamie, Jennifer***

Last year, our PAS and Finance department came together in a meaningful way to support several of our consumers who were facing a difficult holiday season. As Thanksgiving approached, we realized that some of the individuals we work with every day might not have the means to enjoy a holiday meal. Without hesitation, our team stepped up.

Everyone contributed in their own way—we all picked up groceries, and a few coordinated the logistics to make sure every meal made it to the right home. What started as a small idea quickly turned into a department-wide effort filled with generosity and genuine care.

On the day we delivered the meals, the gratitude we received reminded all of us why we do the work we do. Coming together to ensure our consumers felt supported and included during the holiday wasn't just an act of service—it was a reminder of the power of community. This simple gesture made Thanksgiving brighter not only for the families we served, but for each of us who took part.

# Caregiver Highlight

PAS proudly highlights **Kathy Allen** as this quarter's featured caregiver. Kathy is an incredibly dedicated and compassionate caregiver who has been with Compass IL since 2016. Though she works full-time as a bus driver for her local school district, she selflessly takes additional time to care for those she holds dear. Kathy is incredibly dependable and always shows up, never missing a day of work. We truly admire and deeply appreciate Kathy for her unwavering commitment and the many years she has spent making a difference in the lives of others.



**HELP  
EMPOWER OUR  
COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS TO  
LIVE AN  
INDEPENDENT  
LIFESTYLE  
WITHIN THEIR  
OWN HOMES!**

Are you searching for a truly fulfilling side hustle? We need caregivers to provide compassionate care in homes. Paid training and part-time hours. Competitive pay, flexible scheduling, and health benefits offered for full-time hours. Make a positive impact today as a caregiver. Start your fulfilling career now. Individuals with a criminal background are encouraged to apply-everyone deserves a chance to make a positive impact.

If you would like more information or an application contact

**Tina Joiner** [tinaj@compassil.org](mailto:tinaj@compassil.org) 715.233.1070 ext. 231.

A graphic featuring three overlapping speech bubbles in blue, orange, and pink. The text "JOIN OUR TEAM!" is written in a white, handwritten-style font across the bubbles.



## Assistive Technology Demonstration & Loan Program

WisTech is Wisconsin's Assistive Technology (AT) program. AT is a device or service that allows people to function as independently as possible at home, school, work, and in the community. CILWW is a regional AT Device and Demonstration Center. CILWW has almost 2,000 different AT devices that we can loan and/or demonstrate to people. CILWW staff can bring devices to people's homes, answer questions about devices, loan devices for a short period of time, give vendor and funding resources, and use their experience to help find the most cost effective options.

### Check out our new Assistive Technology devices!

## CapTel Phone

It is projected that by the year 2050, approximately 2.5 billion individuals will experience some level of hearing loss. To support these individuals, a variety of assistive technology devices have been developed. One device being the CapTel Phone. This phone assists users by providing real-time captions of phone conversations and are compatible with hearing aids. These devices resemble standard landline phones in appearance and functionality, featuring a screen that displays captions during calls.

Please note that captioned phones require a land line phone service and some models require an internet connection to operate effectively.

In Wisconsin, Residents may qualify to receive Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) voucher that would cover the price of the phone. Prices average from \$75.00 at Walmart and Amazon.



**Compass IL offers the opportunity for individuals to borrow or try out items mentioned in our articles before making a purchase.**

**To learn more about this assistive device or other devices that can improve your independence, please contact CILWW at 715.233.1070 or 800.228.3287. Our services are provided free of charge. However, we do not directly fund the purchase of assistive technology. Through the WisTech Assistive Technology Program, CIL provides a variety of services, including information on alternative financing options like WisLoan, Telework, and TEPP, upon request.**

# AT Programs & Services

## TEPP

### WisLoan + Telework

Loan programs designed for Wisconsinites with disabilities



**Independence First**  
The Resource For People With Disabilities

Are you or someone you know....

- Having difficulty hearing or using the telephone?
- Hard of hearing?
- Deaf or severely hard of hearing?
- Mobility/Motion impaired?
- Speech impaired?
- Deaf with low vision or blindness?
- Deaf and blind?



If you answered yes, you may be interested in finding the AT you need to access telephone services. Equipment could be amplified phones, captioning phones, neck loops, and other devices. Schedule an appointment to try a variety of equipment with one on one assistance from knowledgeable and experienced staff!

Staff can also help you apply for funding through TEPP: Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program. Money collected through WI telephone service providers goes into the WI Universal Service Fund, which pays for TEPP. CIL's role is to help you access the funding you need to get the equipment you need!

## Loan Programs

**WisLoan** offers loans to help people buy assistive technology or equipment such as modified vehicles, wheelchairs, and ramps. There are no income requirements and individuals are not required to exhaust personal or public funding. Under the program, banks provide loans at a fixed interest rate of 6.5% to qualified borrowers. Loan amounts depend on the item and ability to repay.

**Telework** is a loan program that allows residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to work from home or from other remote sites away from the office, such as work on the road or at a Telework center.



# The Harkent Atomic Talking Watch

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For elderly individuals and those with vision impairments, checking the time can be a challenge. Tiny numbers, dim lighting, and complicated digital settings can turn a simple task into a daily frustration. That's where the **Harkent Atomic Talking Watch** comes in — a watch designed to make timekeeping easy, accurate, and accessible.

The Harkent Talking Watch keeps perfect time by connecting automatically to the U.S. atomic clock signal. It even adjusts itself for daylight savings time. Once the correct time zone is set, the watch takes care of the rest — no more resetting or confusion.

With a press of a button, the watch clearly announces the time, date, and alarm in a loud, friendly male voice. This feature is especially helpful for people with limited vision or those who struggle to read small print. The voice is clear enough for most users to hear easily, even in a noisy room.

The large, high-contrast display shows bold black numbers that are easy to read. Four simple buttons — for time, date, alarm, and setting — are placed in consistent positions, so users can learn by touch. The watch runs on a long-lasting battery, so there's no need to charge it or worry about it running out too quickly.

The Harkent Talking Watch isn't just convenient — it can also make daily life safer and more organized. Hourly chimes or alarms can remind wearers to take medication, start meals, or keep appointments. For caregivers, it provides peace of mind knowing loved ones can stay on schedule independently.



Technology doesn't have to be complicated to make a difference. The Harkent Atomic Talking Watch combines **accuracy, clarity, and ease of use** in a design that truly supports independence. For elderly and people with vision challenges, it's a small device that makes a big impact — helping users stay confident, punctual, and in control of their day.

Other product details include: 1.5" width of watch, silicone band and buckle clasp. There are multiple styles and variations that can be found on amazon. Prices vary but average around \$37.99.

Compass IL offers the opportunity for individuals to borrow or try out items mentioned in our articles before making a purchase.

To learn more about this assistive device or other devices that can improve your independence, please contact Compass IL at 715-233-1070 or 800-228-3287. Our services are provided free of charge. However, we do not directly fund the purchase of assistive technology. Through the WisTech Assistive Technology Program, Compass IL provides a variety of services, including information on alternative financing options like WisLoan, Telework, and TEPP, upon request.

# Annual Regional Driver Training

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025, New Freedom Transportation held our annual regional driver training. We had approximately 60 drivers total from our program and other local programs join us here at our center in Menomonie, WI. This year's topics for training were Mental Health Awareness, First Aid Basics, and Burnout. We provided a delicious catered lunch and ended the day with a road sign game with gift drawings in appreciation to all who attended. Veteran drivers who attended received a little extra thank you with special pins and wreaths that will be placed on soldiers graves in honor of them this Christmas. This will be provided by a generous driver who is sponsoring the wreaths through Wreaths across America. Thank You to all who attended and helped make our day successful. A special Thank You to all businesses who donated prizes for the drawings, and speakers who donated their time!



## Driver Spotlight

Meet Mary Sikora! She has been driving for us since June of 2013. Mary was born and raised in Wisconsin, she has been in the Chippewa Falls and Cadott area her whole life. She held various jobs prior to volunteering with us, from manufacturing to tax preparation. Mary has 3 children and 6 grandchildren. In her free time, Mary enjoys line-dancing, going to festivals, pickle ball, kayaking, exercise classes, roller blading, snow shoeing, camping, hiking and exploring new Christmas lights to see in the wintertime. Mary loves to travel and does not like going to the same place twice, she likes to explore new places. Lastly, Mary said "I really enjoy driving for New Freedom and meeting new people!" Thank You for being a volunteer driver for us Mary!



**Support your community by becoming a Volunteer Driver!**

**For more information, contact Bobbi at [craigb@compassil.org](mailto:craigb@compassil.org) or call 715.233.1070 and ask for Bobbi.**



# *Warm Holiday wishes from Compass IL*



## CIL upcoming events

### **IL DAYS**

March 25: Training day

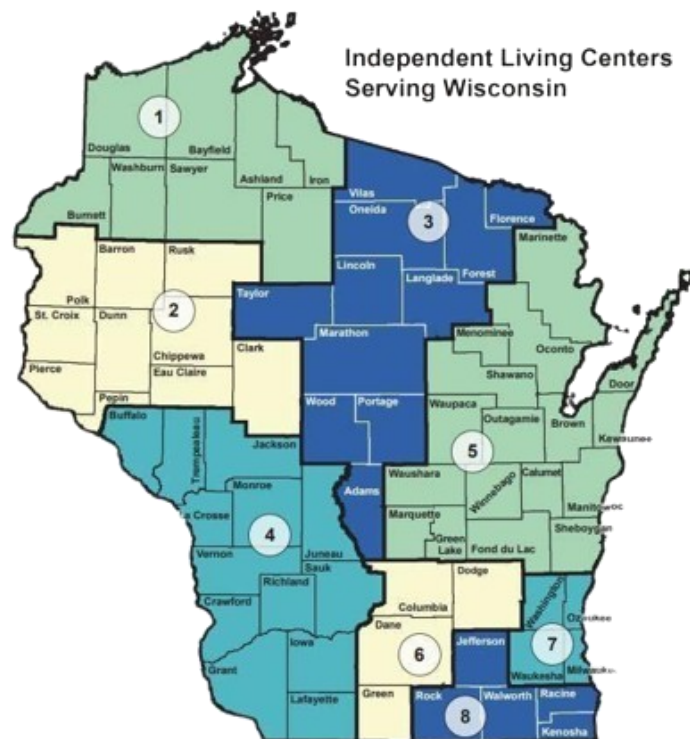
March 26: Visiting Legislators



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Need help finding a personal care attendant? Looking for advice or support from someone with the same disability as you? Want to find an accessible form of recreation? All this and much more is available at your local independent living center.



1. indiGO
2. Compass IL
3. Midstate Independent Living Choices
4. Independent Living Resources
5. Options for Independent Living
6. Access to Independence
7. Independence*First*
8. Society's Assests