



MSU Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities

2017-18 Newsletter
Advancing Student Success



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

A Note From the Director

Michael Hudson

Reflecting on the accomplishments of 2017, there is much to celebrate and we are thankful for you as a friend who advances our pursuit of excellence.

MSU leadership in accessibility originates from the 1934 Tower Guard Honor Organization. Through reading for blind students, the post-polio inclusion of people with mobility challenges, welcoming deaf students to the classroom, and now fully connecting a new generation of people with various hidden disabilities, we have certainly experienced positive progress in the disability community.

Spartan leadership is thriving through signature programs and services, ambitious students, dedicated staff, and a caring network of alumni and friends who extend our reach and quality. The RCPD is engaging the Empower Extraordinary Campaign with proactive progress, including gifts from many. The Alex Powell Great State Race ran the MSU game ball from East Lansing to Ann Arbor, with Lt. Governor Brian Calley and Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein joining Army ROTC Cadets for the last 6 miles of the 64-mile run. The event publicized our programs and many sponsors including Dean Trailways and the MSU Federal Credit Union, who supported the event while helping us raise funds for the Alex Powell Endowment.

This year we welcome Dr. Liza Squires and her husband Dr. Matthew Venema to our philanthropic family. Their creation of the Edith Moore Squires Vision and Resilience Endowment memorializes Liza's mother, Edith, and will foster new programming intent on showcasing ability and growing resilience in our students. We've highlighted a few of our ongoing efforts of the past year in the following pages and seek your continued partnership into 2018 and beyond.

Warmly,



Michael Hudson
Director



> A Transformational Gift from One Family to Another

Fall semester starts with a sense of novelty: new classes, school supplies, living spaces, and friends. The RCPD gained our own “new” in the fall of 2017 with three full-time Ability Access Specialists: Lina Wu, Lindsay Hill, and Ashley Maloff.

These Ability Access Specialist positions are brand-new to the RCPD, thanks to Dan and Jennifer Gilbert. They made a substantial gift to MSU’s Empower Extraordinary Campaign in October of 2016. A portion of that gift was dedicated to the RCPD, and we’re thankful to maximize the Gilbert family’s generosity to further our mission of making MSU accessible to all.

“Dan and Jennifer Gilbert’s support is a transformational boost to our mission. It provides vital new staffing that enables a quicker response to student needs and promises to accelerate our innovative activities,” said RCPD Director Michael Hudson.

As an outcome of the Gilberts’ generous gift to MSU, we have a larger team dedicated to ability access. Lina, Lindsay, and Ashley have joined forces with other specialists, giving everyone in the office more time dedicated to innovating and improving access in higher education. This stronger team brings a new sense of confidence, and we are able to re-center our approach to a more “ability first” mentality, changing our position names from “Disability Specialist” to “Ability Access Specialist.”



(Left to Right) RCPD Director Michael Hudson, Trustee Joel Ferguson, Coach Tom Izzo, Dan Gilbert, former Athletic Director Mark Hollis, Coach Suzy Merchant, Jennifer Gilbert, and former President Lou Anna K. Simon.



Lindsay Hill working with a prospective Spartan at Project Venture.

Although they fill new full-time positions, Lina and Lindsay are familiar faces at the RCPD; Lina starting as a part-time Ability Access Specialist for Accessible Media 4 years ago, and Lindsay serving as a Graduate Student Intern in January of 2017. Lina's main responsibilities include teaching students how to use accessible technology like the Livescribe Smartpen, as well as training Tower Guard students in e-texting and Braille. Lindsay Hill also fills vital roles at the RCPD as an Ability Access Specialist for students on the Autism Spectrum and those with brain injuries, as well as serving as coordinator for RCPD's BOND program.

Ashley Maloff joins the RCPD from Purdue University, returning to her undergraduate roots at MSU. She has been an asset to us as a new Ability Access Specialist for Chronic Health, teaming up with Caleb Sandoval to assist students with health-related obstacles in the classroom.

“Being diagnosed in high school with a chronic illness of my own, I know firsthand how important higher education is for reaching goals and overcoming the hurdles that accompany having a hidden disability,” said Ashley. “During my time as an undergraduate student at MSU, the RCPD provided me with knowledge, confidence, and resources needed for me to be successful. I am honored to return home to RCPD to support MSU students and employees.”

Lina, Lindsay, and Ashley's passion for helping others shines through, and we couldn't be happier to welcome them “home” to the RCPD.

“It is quite a luxury to be able to choose a place of employment that fits so perfectly with your passions and desired work style,” Lindsay Hill said. “I'm so fortunate to have found those things with this team.”



(Left) Lina Wu assisting a student in the RCPD technology room. (Right) Ashley Maloff collaborating with fellow Ability Access Specialist, John Pedraza.

Partnerships Empower Alex's Great State Race

Alex's Great State Race (AGSR), the 64-mile race in honor of Alex Powell, a former MSU student and cancer patient of Michigan Medicine, stands for many ideals; but the key theme is a partnership ensuring that students who stand in Alex's shoes can experience the same positive educational experience he did.

In this fourth run of AGSR, a first-time partnership included participation by Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley and Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein. Calley, an MSU alumnus and Bernstein, a U-M alumnus, ran in the race with the ROTC cadets. They were presented with game balls that were autographed by their respective alma mater's football coaches in recognition of their involvement.

The RCPD and U-M's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office were also thankful to continue their partnership with Army ROTC cadets from both the Spartan Battalion and the Wolverine Battalion. The cadets ran as hard as ever despite the low temperatures and cold rain. Still, spirits remained positive and the cadets provided high energy for the entirety of the race.

Dean Trailways returned as a title sponsor in 2017. As always, they were crucial to our success, providing funding and a bus to trail the cadets during the race. This allowed the cadets to take breaks throughout the long journey with snacks and water. Other sponsors this year included Oral Surgery Associates of Lansing, AF Group, Jackson National Life Insurance, MSUFCU, University of Michigan Credit Union, and Implant Dentistry. All of these sponsors support higher education for people of all abilities and make an enormous impact on both MSU's campus and U-M's campus.

This year, the RCPD and SSD were also lucky to partner with several in-kind sponsors. Kroger, Playmakers, Biggby Coffee, Bruegger's Bagels, The Mayfair, and Le Bon Macaron made sure that the runners were fed and happy. Team AGSR was especially thankful for Bravo! Cucina Italiana who provided a wonderful lunch of pasta, salad, and breadsticks to help the runners recover from the race.

Caleb Sandoval, an RCPD Ability Access Specialist for Chronic Health, made it his goal to further improve the race in 2017. Caleb's plan was to start a fundraiser at Zoobie's Old Town Tavern on the day of the big rivalry football game to keep the spirit going all weekend. He was able to secure a fundraiser with Zoobie's, and the restaurant also organized for Brewery Vivant to donate a portion of their signature sales to the RCPD, which Zoobie's matched.

Caleb remarked, "We laid the foundation for this event a year ago and were delighted to hear from Lisa McMahon from the Potent Potables Project restaurant group. Lisa has a connection to [Alex Powell's] family and helped organize the event on Zoobie's end. Brewery Vivant was also a great partner and we are looking forward to working with them on this event in the future."



(Left) Michigan Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein (left) and Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley (right) speak at the Alex's Great State Race finish line ceremony. (Right) ROTC Cadets gather in Demonstration Hall before the start of the race.

Project Venture: Helping Students Take the Next Step

Considering college can come with a mix of excitement and uncertainty for students with disabilities. Many prospective students don't know what to expect, what resources they have access to, and what their future educational experience could look like. That's where the RCPD and the help of the Wochholz Endowment come in.



Ability Access Specialist John Pedraza working with a student at Project Venture.

Project Venture is a unique on-campus, pre-college experience. It offers high school students with disabilities the chance to “try on” university life through an interactive stay at MSU. RCPD hosts the Project Venture program thanks to the generous contributions of the Wochholz Endowment, which encourages students with disabilities to pursue higher education at an inclusive university such as MSU.

In 2017, the RCPD hosted its 7th annual Project Venture program. Students enjoyed their stay in MSU's Brody neighborhood, made new friends, and worked on collaborative projects together as they learned about higher education.

Project Venture has had so much success that coordinators have extended the program from three days to four days, giving students even more time to learn and grow.

Project Venture Participants Will:

- Speak to current MSU students with disabilities who have “been there” and understand the journey.
- Consult with university ability access specialists to gain skills for college.
- Experience the latest assistive technology through breakout sessions.
- Attend a college class, stay in a dorm, and connect with other high school students with disabilities.
- Become aware of self-advocacy skills and resources for a successful transition to higher education.



(Above) Project Venture participants collaborating on a group project. (Below) A Project Venture RA holds a focus group to demonstrate the technology available to students.

RCPD Specialists Obtain Grant for Innovative Technology

Specialists at the RCPD noticed a need for technological improvement, and worked to obtain a grant to close the gap between contemporary technology and assistive technology. The “2017-18 Creating Inclusive Excellence Grant” is striving to make technology used by STEM majors more accessible for students with visual impairments or blindness. One of the main goals is to make homework websites more clear when it comes to displaying mathematical equations, allowing students with visual impairments to have more independence.

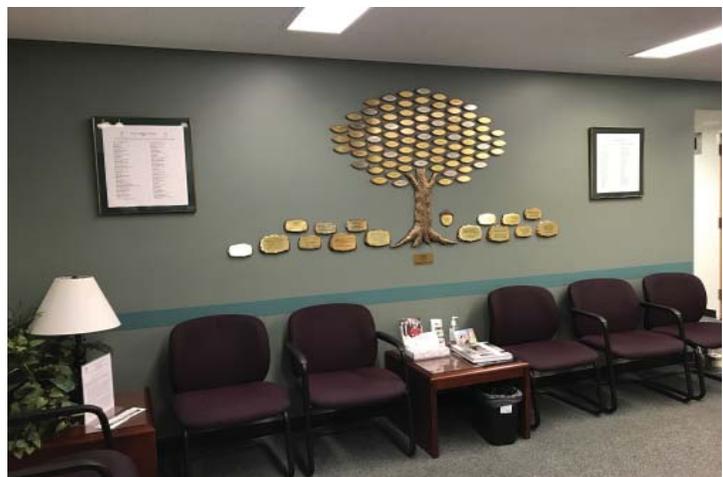
This grant was initiated by RCPD specialists Stephen Blosser, Lina Wu, and Angela Sebald. Angela was excited to share her hopes that, “with this grant, we can do something that has never been done before. We are innovating new technology that every school, college, university, and office can use.”

The RCPD is joined by representatives from MSU’s College of Education, the Center for Integrative Studies in General Science, the Department of Physics and Astronomy, and the Department of Mathematics. A company called SeeWriteHear is also working with the RCPD team to promote accessibility. They have already blazed the way of accessible technology and will be helping the RCPD tailor what exists to the needs of our individual students. With this diverse group of people coming together to promote accessibility, we are confident this grant will deliver on its promise of inclusive excellence.

Donor Tree Redesign: More than just Decor

When visitors walk into the RCPD lobby, it’s hard to miss the tree hanging on the wall. Complete with rocks, acorns, and leaves, this intriguing piece of decor includes the names of the donors who have made a significant impact on the lives of RCPD students, staff, and operations. Their generosity provides book and tuition scholarships, accessible technology, and funding for students and staff to have opportunities to expand their educational experience outside the classroom.

As the RCPD’s donor family has grown over the years, the donor tree naturally expanded. With the help of MSU’s Infrastructure Planning and Facilities (IPF) department, the tree was moved from a frame to the wall itself. These plaques signify more than generosity; they express how much the RCPD has grown over the years and continues to strengthen to meet the unique needs and potential of each student.



Tower Guard: *Service, Scholarship, Leadership, Character*

Tower Guard members assist RCPD students by reading exams, translating books to e-text and Braille, and tutoring to complete 120 volunteer hours during their sophomore year. Established in 1934, Tower Guard is among the oldest active student organizations at MSU.

The 2016-17 group became the first to include Braille classes for their members. Angela Sebald, Ability Access Specialist, arranged the class to equip Tower Guard members to further assist students with visual impairments.

Tower Guard members had great success in their fundraisers in 2016-17, most notably with the annual Shamrock 5k Run-Walk-Roll in March having record-breaking attendance of over 425 participants. The 2016-17 group raised the most money for the RCPD out of any other group in Tower Guard's history, donating a total of \$16,000, supporting student scholarships and media accessibility.

Tower Guard
raised **\$16,000** for
the RCPD during
the
2016-17
Academic Year



(Left) A Tower Guard inductee receives a red rose at the May Morning Sing initiation ceremony.

(Right) 2016-17 Treasurer Nick Corsi presents RCPD Director Michael Hudson with the largest donation of any Tower Guard class.

Carlson Accessible Media Program (CAMP)

This year, the Carlson Accessible Media Program Endowment, a meaningful contributor to the RCPD community, provided Braille project materials and software, as well as education for our staff to make better use of our Braille technology. The Carlson fund also brought new Livescribe Smartpens to our technology center for use by RCPD students.

Michael J. Hudson Emerging Opportunities Endowment

The Emerging Opportunities Endowment made an evident and appreciated impact this year in the lives of our staff and students. Scholarships were awarded to a veteran with disabilities and a student who traveled for graduate research in accessible athletics. Ability Access Specialist John Pedraza was able to attend a conference focusing on students in graduate, professional and health science programs. The RCPD also purchased iBeacons to support the cafeteria accessibility project, and handcycles to promote the health and wellness of students with disabilities. The office also provided financial support to the Gabriela Frank and Korean Hearts of Vision Chamber Orchestra musical events showcasing the role of people with disabilities in fine arts.

Bosco Careers Collaborative

The RCPD offers a unique Careers Collaborative initiative with private gifts matching state and federal funds in partnership with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). The Bosco family has been a vital donor in building this innovative program.

Students gain a full-time, on-campus vocational rehabilitation counselor and specialized guidance with new synergies among several campus departments intent on strong student outcomes. This partnership enhances student opportunities through employer partnerships for internships and careers, connecting academics with practical experience and deliberate vocational rehabilitation approaches. Corporate partnerships include Meijer, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and MSU Federal Credit Union.

Edith Moore Squires Vision and Resilience Endowment

This year, the accessibility community was saddened to learn of the passing of one of our valued supporters, Edith Moore Squires. Edith was a lifelong Spartan and received her Bachelor's Degree in Education and Music from MSU in 1957, as well as a Master's Degree in Special Education in 1979. She also served as an adjunct faculty member in both undergraduate and graduate programs. On top of her significant education and standing in academia, Edith was passionate about bringing education, accessibility, and strength to children with visual impairments.

Edith's impact made a broad and reaching impression. Our department's own Caleb Sandoval worked with her when he was young. Edith was Caleb's teacher consultant through Ingham County Intermediate School District, starting in kindergarten. In this role, Edith worked with Caleb's mother on an individualized education plan (IEP) and then worked with Caleb's teachers to ensure that the IEP's provisions were implemented to the highest degree. Edith felt that Caleb had high potential, and because of this, she recommended that he be in a better learning environment, like the one that Cumberland Elementary School's visually impaired room had to offer. This room provided support to Caleb and other students with varying degrees of visual ability. When asked what Edith meant to him, Caleb said "She was, historically, my first disability advocate apart from my mom. So, I'm not sure if it will ever be known how greatly she impacted my education and, therefore, my whole life. I owe a lot more to her than I will ever know."

With this personal connection to Edith in our office, it was heartwarming to hear that her daughter, Dr. Liza Squires, and Liza's husband, Dr. Matthew Venema, thought the best place to keep Edith's name, vision, and purpose alive would be here in our community. After Edith's passing in September, her family created the Edith Moore Squires Vision and Resilience Endowment. The purpose of this endowment is to "promote ability and help students envision their highest potential."

The RCPD is incredibly grateful to have been impacted by an advocacy pioneer such as Edith and it is our honor to be able to keep her name alive. Our entire staff warmly thanks the Squires family for their investment which will allow us to promote accessibility in our home as she did in hers.

2017 RCPD Outstanding Alumnus: Brett Kopf



Brett Kopf (left) and Scott Westerman (right) at the 2017 RCPD Awards and Appreciation Reception.

Brett Kopf has had a very successful career since graduating from MSU in 2009. Shortly after receiving his degree, he introduced Remind, an e-mail and text message platform initially launched at MSU. He reported that he “created the product out of need as a student,” but later realized it could help other students stay on track with assignments and class activities.

After securing an initial \$30k investment, in true Spartan fashion, Brett planted a seed that has now grown into a renowned school messaging platform.

His locally-grown, successful business employs 70 people, serving 90% of K-12 schools in America, and is routinely used by 40% of America’s K-12 teachers. Today, Remind is helping 20 million teachers, parents and students work for better academic outcomes.

Brett reflects back on how his most inspirational teacher, Mrs. Denise Whitefield, saw his needs and connected with him and his family, helping him advance and ultimately inspiring his awareness that his insights might hold the key to helping create more success stories. Through Remind, he is leading a platform that increases connectivity and engagement between teachers, students and parents to help ensure students with diverse learning needs are not left behind. He used his learning differences, positive experiences, and his MSU education as a call for innovation. Like other outstanding alumni, he leveraged his differences to build techniques that addressed his needs while helping others move past similar challenges.

Brett Kopf has been featured in Forbes, Venturebeat, CNBC, Fortune, the Wall Street Journal, BuzzFeed, Fastcompany, and the New York Times. He is an innovative and persistent visionary who exemplifies the Spartan spirit, both personally and professionally.



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Samaritan Scholar Award

Alumni Jim and Judy DeLapa established this scholarship to provide educational support for students with disabilities. Five students were awarded this scholarship, each receiving \$3,500.

Katrina Tagget Fellowship

This fellowship was created in memory of Katrina Tagget, who passed away in 2008. One high-achieving scholar was awarded \$4,000 to mentor STATE Program students.

Robert L. Decker & Benjamin Muns Friendship Memorial Scholarship

Five graduate students were awarded a total of \$20,000 in memory of two Ford Motor company executives who valued the power of education to change lives.

Shawn M. Koch Memorial Scholarship

One student was awarded \$2,000 in honor of Shawn Koch, an MSU alumnus who didn't let his spirit and zest for life be overshadowed by cancer.

Anita Giampalmi Scholarship

One student was awarded \$3,600 for their academic goals and achievements, leadership ability, and strong writing skills. This award was established to recognize a student with cystic fibrosis in honor of Anita Giampalmi.

Victor Troubalos Scholarship

Three students received this award totaling \$3,000. This scholarship is awarded to students who have a learning disability and excel in the STATE program.

Education Abroad Scholarship

Three students received a total of \$11,000 to help them study abroad in countries such as Germany, Ireland, Scotland, and England.

In 2017,
25 students were
awarded
scholarships
totaling **\$63,600**



(Left) 2017 Student Leadership Award recipient
(Right) Samaritan Scholar Award group with Virginia Martz, Ability Access Specialist.

The RCPD Vision

Together, we create a welcoming environment, fortify capacity and compassionately challenge people to redefine disability. We grow ambition into personal and professional success by fostering self-advocacy, connected knowledge, innovative technology and community partnerships.

We thank you for being part of this vision through your generosity, kindness, and Spartan determination. The RCPD is grateful for your contribution to this year's success!

RCPD Staff

Office

- Michael Hudson, *Director*
- Liz Fuller, *Operations Coordinator/Alternative Testing Coordinator*
- George Morrison, *Career Services Consultant*
- Beverly Stehlik, *Budget/Personnel, Assistant to the Director*

Ability Access Specialists

- Stephen Blosser, *Assistive Technology*
- Kelsey Foote, *Learning Disabilities*
- Lindsay Hill, *Autism Spectrum, Brain Injury Disabilities*
- Leslie Johnson, *Psychiatric Disabilities*
- Ashley Maloff, *Chronic Health Disabilities*
- Virginia Martz, *Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Mobility Disabilities*
- John Pedraza, *Psychiatric Disabilities, Resource Coordinator for Employees*
- Virginia Rutan, *Learning Disabilities, Student-Athlete Liaison*
- Caleb Sandoval, *Chronic Health Disabilities*
- Angela Sebald, *Visual Impairment Disabilities, Media Access*
- Darryl Steele, *Learning Disabilities*
- Grace Tong, *Psychiatric Disabilities*
- Lina Wu, *Media Access*

Real-Time Captioners

- Denise Hartman
- Susanne Hoffmann
- Shelly Martinez

General Office

- Allison Bertram, *Public Relations Coordinator, Editorial/Design*
- Paola Delaj, *Public Relations Coordinator, Editorial/Design*
- Arianna Dickason, *Reception Assistant*
- Lauren Edlbeck, *Assistant Project Coordinator*
- Rebecca Fadler, *Public Relations Coordinator, Editorial/Design*
- Sarah Ford, *Reception Assistant*
- Aditya Mathew, *Accessible Applications Developer*
- Miglena Mihaylova, *Reception Assistant*
- Jordan Swigart, *Reception Assistant*
- Andrea Vortriede, *Reception Assistant*

Alternative Format Production

- Ryan Griffin, *Braille Assistant Manager, Technology Trainer*
- Victoria Marinas, *Alternative Format Production*
- Kyle Silva, *E-Text Assistant Manager, Technology Trainer*



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