

May 2024



Stay in the Know



Picture above is of the Rat Fink tattoo. It was one of our more popular choice. It is a green cartoon mouse in a wheelchair with a shift stick to drive the wheelchair.



Ink for Independence Success!

Our organization had our first successful resource development since before the pandemic. We partnered with the Velvet Lotus Tattoo for our first Ink for Independence Event! We raised over \$2000 for the event.

We are so thankful for the support and work of the staff at Velvet Lotus and the amazing tattoos they designed for our attendees. We are also thankful for the people that showed up in the frigid temperatures to support our mission and get a tattoo from any of the talented artist.

Our organization is also thankful for the amazing staff we have that took the time to set up this event and brave the cold temperatures. We also have some testimonials from attendees that were willing to share their experience with us and now with you, the community.

If you would like to know more information about Velvet Lotus Tattoo and the great artists that work there, check out these Instagram accounts here.

Velvet Lotus Tattoo: [@velvetlotustattoo](#)
Michelle Balhan: [@michellebalhantattoos](#)
Kat Keller: [@katartandtattoos](#)
Mandy Betz: [@tatsbymbetz](#)
Giovanni Falcone: [@giovanni.falcone.tattooing](#)

Picture above is of the Service Frog Tattoo. This was one of the most popular tattoos from the event. It is a simple frog with a warm smile on it and a small blanket with the words service frog on it.



Picture above is of a tattoo known as the Brain Cocktail. This is a detailed tattoo of a human skull with a brain exposed. The brain has two band-aids, a straw and an umbrella in the brain with bubbles coming out.



Picture above is of one of the tattoos from the Ink for independence event. An aerial shot of a human brain with neuron branches sticking out. The neurons branch outward from the detailed brain.

Testimonial #1 (Halie)

My friend Taylor and I decided to participate in the fundraiser together because we are both wheelchair users. We actually met at a summer camp for disabled kids when we were 8 years old and have been friends ever since. We understand the importance of the services that your organization provides and thought that it was a great cause.

I got the brain with the neurons attached because I have a neurological disorder. Eventually I would like to get it shaded or water colored in to resemble my brain scans. Most people don't see my disability as a beautiful thing, so to have an art piece which not only affirms my autonomy, but also represents my incredible life journey is pretty amazing. I see my disability

as an intrinsic part of my identity so my tattoo is also a reminder to always be proud of the way I was born.



Picture above is of the Neurospicy tattoo. It is a red chili pepper with a mustache and eyes with the words Neurospicy written on a banner.

Testimonial #2 (Richelle)

Since my Diversity and Disability fellowship, I have continuously been bettering myself to be an advocate for the disability community. Today I had the opportunity to help support a local Iowa City organization, Access 2 Independence, at their Ink for Independence event today! 50% of the proceeds of every tattoo will go to their organization which helps support their mission.

It was my absolute pleasure to be able to support this event and get fabulous ink done at Velvet Lotus Tattoo!

I'm not neurodivergent, I'm neurospicy!

Testimonial #3 (Karma)

My tattoo is healing great and looking awesome! The design itself didn't necessarily have any meaning to me, but the reason behind getting it did. I've been working with children with special needs for three and a half years now and at this point I just look at them all like my own kids. I have so much love and respect for the kids I work with and when I saw the fundraiser I knew I wanted to get something to not only support your organization but also to remind me of the kiddos I work with and how important they are to me.

Goodbye Nate Albano!

After two years of being part of the A2I family, Nate Albano will be leaving our organization. Nate served as our part-time Independent Living Specialist for almost two years.

Nate's last day will be July 19th. He will head to Chicago to pursue his dreams. Our organization will wish him the best in his endeavors.



Picture above is of Nate Albano. He has dark black hair and wears glasses. He is wearing a dark blue sweater.



BECOME A VOICE THAT CREATES CHANGE

Do you want to learn about being a leader? If so, the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) is for you! YLA is a way to connect with peers with disabilities and learn leadership skills. Spend two hours per day for five days this summer and gain skills for a lifetime. **All sessions are virtual and FREE!**

Build Leadership Skills

- Goal Setting
- Self-Determination
- Civic Engagement
- Disability Rights
- Networking
- Mentoring

At YLA you will learn:

- How to become a leader,
- How to advocate for you and others,
- What you can do, and
- What you are capable of.

Attend With Peers Like You

YLA is for students with disabilities ages 14-21. This session will consist of 8-12 students from Iowa communities. Additional sessions may be added, depending on interest.

* American Sign Language will be made available. *

Youth Leadership Academy is brought to you by:



2024 SCHEDULE

Virtual Informational Session

Want to learn more about YLA before applying? [Attend this session.](#)

Date: May 22

Time: 5:30-6:00 PM

Virtual YLA Training

Date: July 29-August 2

Time: 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

Des Moines Graduation Ceremony with Virtual Option

Date: August 10

QUESTIONS?

Contact: Carlyn Crowe

Phone: (515) 201-8151

Email: ccrowe@dhs.state.ia.us

MORE INFORMATION

Go to iowaddcouncil.org/yla

or scan the QR code.



Community Living Skills Summer 2024 Workshop Schedule Available Now!

Did you know that A2I provides Community Living Skills (CLS) workshops for individuals with disabilities who would like to further develop their independent living skills? These interactive group workshops are designed to provide introductory information on a variety of independent living topics. Check out our



Summer 2024 workshop schedule below and sign up for a session today!

LEARN MORE & REGISTER

Tuesday June 11th
Healthy Relationships



Thursday June 27th
Time Management



Tuesday July 9th
Housing



Thursday July 18th
Transportation



Tuesday July 30th
Self-Care



Wednesday August 14th
Peer Support



Thursday August 29th
Disability Identity



Thursday September 12th
Self-Advocacy



**Fall 2024 Workshop
Dates Coming Soon!**

