

Valparaiso to Highlight March as Disability Awareness Month

To advance disability awareness, education and inclusion, the City of Valparaiso has announced activities marking March as Disability Awareness Month. "As a community, we strive to be a welcoming city where diversity is appreciated and viewed as a strength," said Valparaiso Mayor Matt Murphy. "We're advancing education and awareness of disabilities by introducing new ways of sharing information and support – actions we intend to build on," he said.

Disability Awareness Month activities will be led by Valparaiso's Advisory Human Relations Council's Disability Awareness and Inclusion Subcommittee, created in 2022 to advance disability awareness, education and inclusion in Valparaiso. The subcommittee has created a series of engagement and educational opportunities for March, including:

- A proclamation for March Disability Awareness Month
- Banners on City Hall to promote the initiative
- The creation of an Ally Toolkit, a blueprint of ways individuals and organizations can advance disability awareness and inclusion by encouraging community members to become an Ally
- A calendar of community events and activities, hosted by the City and partners including the Valpo Chamber, Porter County Public Library System, Valparaiso University and others. The goal is to offer flexible options to connect with the initiative. This will also include engagements through community clubs and organizations, including Kiwanis and Rotary.
- A Disability Awareness Spotlight presentation featuring Jason Benetti on Tuesday, March 21 at Ivy Tech Valparaiso. Benetti is a nationally recognized sports play-by-play announcer for Fox and the Chicago White Sox. Benetti has cerebral palsy, which impacts his balance and ability to walk, but not his on-air work. He will share an important message on "not judging a book by its cover" and overcoming adversity. This is a free community event supported by community sponsors
- The creation of a Downtown Public Parking Accessibility Guide
- The creation of page on the City of Valparaiso website, valpo.us, which will assemble all disability and inclusion information in a single location. Find this page at tinyurl.com/ValpoDAI

The City of Valparaiso has long embraced diversity and inclusion, establishing the Advisory Human Relations Council to advise the mayor and promote a better understanding of diversity and inclusion.