



DISABILITY
EMPOWHER
NETWORK



2022 Annual Report

When Disabled Girls Lead, We All Succeed!

A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I'm delighted to share our second annual report with you! As a young organization, we have been able to make great strides thanks to our incredible supporters. From volunteers who serve on our committees to organizations that partner with us and invest in our programs to donors who help us empower girls and women with disabilities, we would not be able to do any of this work without you!

In our second year we expanded our programs for girls and women with disabilities. We launched EmpowHer Stories, our blogging program that uplifts the voices of girls and women with disabilities, as well as EmpowHer Roc, a program in Rochester, New York that works directly with transition age girls

with disabilities. We also partnered with the Toledo Museum of Art to highlight disabled women artists through our Disabled Women Make History (And Art!) program. Lastly, we've laid the foundation for new programs that will begin in 2023!

We continue to make incredible progress in empowering girls and women with disabilities and we are so excited to continue this important work with your love and support. Thank you!

Best,

Stephanie Woodward
Executive Director

A Message from the Board Chair

Dear Supporters,

In my first message to you as Chairperson, I would like to recognize some of our volunteers.

I serve on the Development and Social Media committees and thank the volunteers who plan our social media calendar, create content, and write posts. They highlight our supporters and sponsors, advertise our programs, and showcase the work of our EmpowHer Stories bloggers. Development Committee volunteers are researching partnership opportunities and grants, and finding ways to assist our fundraisers in reaching their goals and getting recognized. (If you haven't signed up yet to be an EmpowHer

Champion, please do so!) Furthermore, a workgroup of staff and volunteers crafted our gender inclusion statement. This statement is available on our website. As the statement says, please reach out if you need more information to decide if our programs create spaces that will serve you and your goals.

EmpowHer is growing in all directions. If you are moved by our mission but don't know how to best support it, just ask.

Read on and see you next time,

Katy Carroll
Board Chair



Snapshot of 2022

2022 was a huge year of growth for Disability EmpowHer Network as we expanded our network, built out our programs, and brought on paid staff. We achieved so much and could not have done it without the support of everyone in our network. Just to name a few of our greatest accomplishments:

- Started two new programs: EmpowHer Roc, a monthly Rochester-local educational and social group for disabled girls ages 10-21, and EmpowHer Stories, a collaborative blogging program with Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation.
- Graduated 100% of our inaugural EmpowHer Camp class of Young Leaders.
- Hired a full time Director of Programs and Camp Director as well as two part time Program Coordinators for EmpowHer Roc.
- Were awarded several grants equaling \$147,678 that will support the continuation and growth of our programming.

2022 Board of Directors

Kathryn Carroll, Esq.

Association on Aging in New York

Paul Timmons

Portlight Strategies, Inc.

Yavonka Archaga, CPA

Resources for Independent Living

Jenifer Kasten

USC Gould School of Law

Judith Brown

Project 70Forward

Amy Tweedle

Spa Area Independent Living Services

2022 Committee Members

EmpowHer Camp Application Review Workgroup

Curran Brown, Kimi Dymont, Abby Ritter

EmpowHer Camp Planning Committee

Jenny Border, Curran Brown, Sophie Poost, Abby Ritter, Alexis Treichel, Kelly Timmons

Social Media Committee

Kathryn Carroll, Elizabeth McCormick, Sapphire Murphy, Sophie Poost, Alexis Treichel, CC White



"I am passionate about serving on the Disability EmpowHer Network board because it is a women-led, women-run organization that empowers young women with disabilities to step into their power and achieve their goals. Being around disabled peers and mentors is essential for young women. Not only does this organization help young women work towards and achieve their goals in leadership, it empowers them to harvest self-love and self-confidence that then radiates outward into the world. As someone who lives with mental health conditions, I know how powerful and life changing peer support and mentorship like this is. I am grateful and honored to serve on this board."

Amy Tweedle

EmpowHer Camp

2021-2022



"Without all of you at EmpowHer Camp, I would not be where I am today." – Opal Besaw, Young Leader

A Year of Impact

EmpowHer Camp launched in August 2021 and since then it has been a life changing experience for our Young Leaders and Mentors. A total of 15 Young Leaders from all over the United States have been a part of EmpowHer Camp.

Our first class of Young Leaders first met in the Adirondacks last summer and spent the year growing, bonding with their mentors, and impacting their communities with their year long project. 100% of the members of our first class graduated from the program with a rewarding trip to Washington D.C.

Our new class of Young Leaders are in the middle of their year-long journey. After just a week of camping to start it off, there has been tremendous growth in independence and communication skills and exciting project plans for how to help their community.

– Fast Facts –

Over 88% of the Class of 2022 have received employment opportunities through connections made from Disability EmpowHer Network

All 15 Young Leaders reported experiencing growth in various categories including self-advocacy, confidence, self-care, leadership skills, & more.

The Class of 2023's parents reported witnessing increased confidence & shared that Young Leaders are speaking up more after just a week of camping.

Class of 2022



The inaugural class of 9 Young Leaders accomplished so much in a year. After just the first week of camp in the Adirondacks, there was a significant growth in confidence reported by the Young Leaders and their parents. With their new skills and help from their mentors, they made serious change in their communities. Their year-long projects ranged from organizing a disability advisory board for their community, to providing a guide to make shelters accessible and service dog friendly, to a white paper on the importance of personalized evacuation plans for students with disabilities during a school shooting, and so much more. Over half of our Young Leaders received recognition from local news outlets, magazines, and podcasts. By the end of their yearlong journey, the Young Leaders reported their leadership skills were the biggest area of growth.

Not only did the Young Leaders learn so much from the rewarding connections with their mentors, EmpowHer Camp also had a significant impact on our mentors. They reported growth in patience, communication skills, leadership, and confidence.

"Thank you for expanding my knowledge of disability rights and how to advocate when I need to."

- Riley Hurt, Young Leader

Class of 2023

Year two welcomed 6 Young Leaders from across the nation, from Washington to New York. Our Young Leaders completed one week of camping in the Adirondacks in August. Camping with this bunch included fun, learning, growth, and connecting. We learned survival, independent living, and leadership skills! Communication skills (publicly & socializing) were the areas of most reported growth among the participants.

Now that the camping trip is over, the Young Leaders are meeting virtually with their mentors at least monthly to talk about their year-long projects, and other aspects of life. We will continue to connect virtually through the year until we reunite in Washington D.C. where the Young Leaders will present their projects and engage in various activities to develop their leadership skills and have some fun!



"There is magic in the Disability EmpowHer Network. It's clear that my child was truly seen and met in a way they haven't quite experienced before."

- Julianne Douglas, Ace's Mom

EmpowHer Stories

In March of 2022, Disability EmpowHer Network and Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation started a collaborative blogging series called EmpowHer Stories.

EmpowHer Stories features blogs by women and girls with paralysis who have a story to tell and want help with developing it. Our editor, also a woman with paralysis, provides peer support and advice throughout the writing and editing process as each writer takes their blog from idea to published piece.

In addition to having their perspective uplifted by Reeve Foundation, each blogger is paid when their piece is published.

At first, the series featured two blogs by women and girls with paralysis each month, however after seeing the incredible topics and perspectives that were being submitted for consideration, the series increased to three blogs each month.

Quick Facts

16

**Women & Girls with Paralysis
Who Received Paid
Opportunities**

\$3,200

**Total Payments Made to
Bloggers and Editors**

WHAT OUR BLOGGERS ARE SAYING:



"Working with Disability EmpowHer Network and Naomi was wonderful! I really enjoyed being able to share my story and feel solidarity with other bloggers who share similar experiences! It definitely was a highlight of my year."

Angeline Hamele



"I appreciate EmpowHer Stories Blogging Program because of the passion they put into women and girls with disabilities voices being heard. Knowing that my writing is going to an audience that can relate and value my story means the world to me!"

Kelsi Weaver

EmpowHer Roc

Empowering young women with disabilities in Rochester, NY

In March 2022 we launched EmpowHer Roc, a new program for girls & young women with disabilities (ages 10-21) around Rochester, NY.

Every month EmpowHer ROC brings together girls with disabilities to socialize with each other while learning new skills, having fun, building confidence, and becoming empowered. We have disabled women mentors at all of our programs to help guide the girls and serve as positive role models.

EmpowHer ROC creates a unique experience for girls with disabilities to feel connected and understood by peers and real-life role models. Participants are surrounded by peers and adults who understand their experiences and can relate to the hardships that they are going through. Girls report feeling less alone, more supported, and more confident after attending EmpowHer Roc programs. Additionally, parents report seeing an increase in their daughters' independence and overall happiness after participating in EmpowHer Roc.



Giana, far right, smiles with her friends Simone (center) and Claire (left)

"EmpowHer Roc is a fun girl gang! I've made new friends and I feel a lot more confident!"

- Giana Bisnett, 14

"EmpowHer Roc continues to show Giana that she is limitless and not alone in her journey. Over the past year that Giana has been involved with EmpowHer, we have seen her blossom into an even stronger, braver young woman."

- Dana Bisnett, Giana's Mom

LETTER FROM A ROLE MODEL



Letter From a Role Model is our ongoing letter-writing program which matches disabled girls and women with successful disabled women role models who send them letters sharing encouragement and advice. Every week, we continue to receive and process applications from potential mentors and nominations for letter recipients. Each new form shows us the diversity of disabled girls and women excited at the prospect of connecting with a role model. With over 250 potential mentors, we're eager for each new nomination that comes in.

Throughout 2023, Disability EmpowHer Network staff continued to offer individualized career coaching sessions to disabled girls and women. This coaching included but was not limited to practice negotiations, support in preparing for interviews, resume and application reviews, and lessons on public speaking. Many of these career coaching sessions were followed up by celebratory calls upon meeting goals such as promotions from part time to full time, new titles, internship and job offers, and raises. No matter how big or small the success, we were happy to help empower more disabled women.



CAREER COACHING

Community Partnerships

They say it takes a village, but we say it takes a network! We are honored to work with so many incredible partners to empower girls and women with disabilities. Here are just a few examples of how we've partnered with other organizations in 2022.

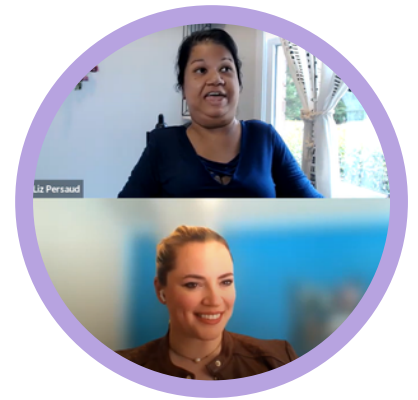


Disabled Women Make History (& Art)

In 2022, we hosted an event celebrating disabled women artists with the Toledo Museum of Art called Disabled Women Make History & Art. During this event, 17 women with disabilities displayed their art for the public to enjoy at the Toledo Museum of Art and for many it was their first time displaying their art publicly!

Webinars Featuring Disabled Women

We partnered with the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation to present two webinars highlighting the accomplishments of disabled women. In celebration of Women's History Month, we presented "Disabled Women Make History," a panel discussion exploring the complexities, struggles, and accomplishments of disabled women. In July, we presented Disabled Women Run: How Disabled Women in Office are Leading in Their Communities, featuring two disabled women in office: Rep. Jen Longdon of Arizona and Councilwoman Mary Zendajas of Long Beach, California.



I Scream About My Future

In June we partnered with the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living in Michigan to host "I Scream About My Future" where we talked about our goals and made vision boards with young disabled women ages 14-26, and also had ice cream! This was the first event of it's kind at the Monroe Center for Independent Living, but the girls all expressed that they don't want it to be the last! We're happy to report that the Monroe Center for Independent Living now plans to host regular programs for young women with disabilities.

Exploring the Accessible Outdoors

We partnered with the Adirondack Experience, the Museum on Blue Mountain Lake (ADKX) to explore the accessible outdoors! Staff from the ADKX came to EmpowHer Camp and taught our young leaders about plant identification and caring for the outdoors. Also, Disability EmpowHer Network partnered with ADKX for their Xperience for All event which was a celebration of recreation and introduction to the many opportunities for outdoor enjoyment for all!



In The News

Disability EmpowHer Network and the many people involved have done some incredible work. We love uplifting the youth and adults involved in our programs in a myriad of ways, but it is particularly exciting to have this work noticed and highlighted by disability-led and mainstream media 11 times across the year.

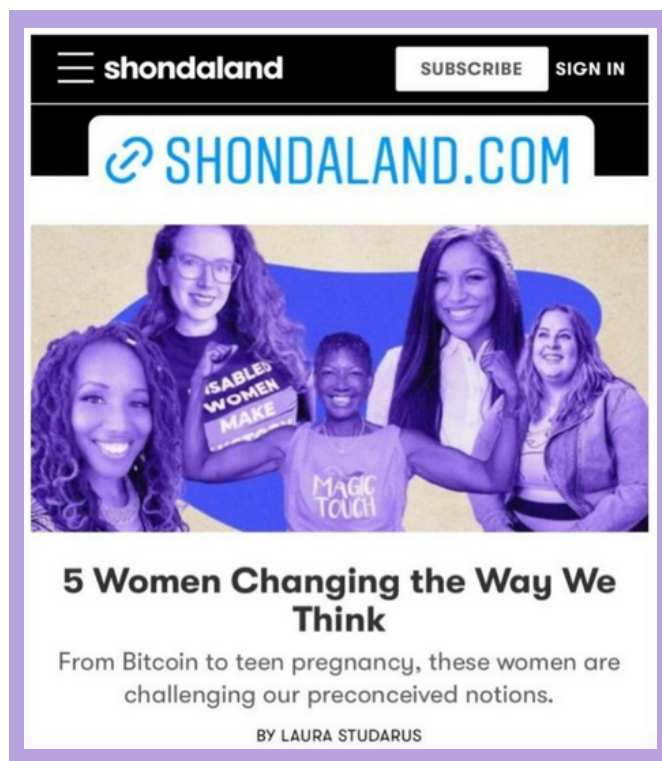
Whether it be features of our Young Leaders and their projects or our staff being sought after as experts on the issues, we are grateful for every story that we get to be a part of. Here are just a few of our features:

Shondaland

Stephanie was included in this list of "5 Women Changing the Way We Think" after the author saw the work Disability EmpowHer Network is doing to empower disabled women and girls.

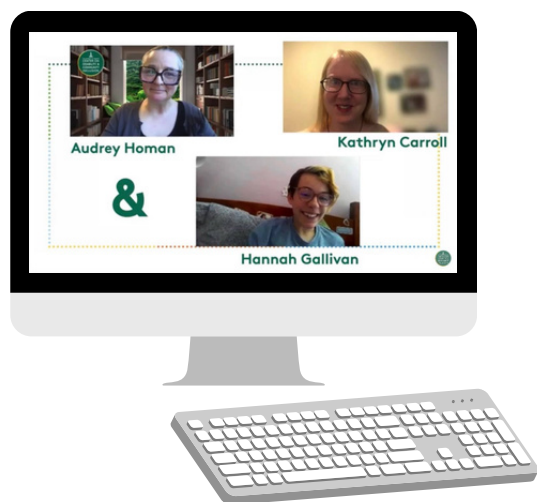
Stanford Social Innovation Review

The Stanford Social Innovation Review published a detailed article about EmpowHer Camp and the power of inclusive mentorship featuring some of our incredible Young Leaders and team.



Addison Independent & CDCI Connects

Young Leader Hannah was practically a Vermont celebrity after her project regarding emergency planning for service dogs was featured in the Addison Independent and on the Center for Disability & Community Inclusion Connects Podcast.



Additional Media Coverage

[Daily Interlake](#), [WXXI](#), [Teen Vogue](#), [Spectrum Life](#), [ABC News](#), [Addison Independent](#), and [Next City](#).

In Their Words

We have the privilege of working with a lot of incredible people in a multitude of ways. Their ongoing involvement is what ensures our continued success and the impact of Disability EmpowHer Network is best explained by those who experience it. Here's what a few of the disabled women involved with Disability EmpowHer Network had to say in their own words.



"Not only has being on the Social Media Committee allowed me to explore my potential and passion in social media, but it also has let me be part of an amazing team of talented women just like myself."

CC White, EmpowHer Volunteer & Participant



"By being connected with Disability EmpowHer Network, I feel driven and empowered to go further in my career. By being able to connect and receive support and encouragement from other disabled women I am reminded that I am not alone. That, I am able to accomplish so much more than the limits I or society puts on me."

Izzie Bullock, EmpowHer Participant



"Being a Mentor for EmpowHer has taught me the value of cross-disability support. My mentee and I have different disabilities but we support each other through our goals and find things in common to communicate. I am especially thankful for the support fellow mentors provide in offering solutions and strategies to be a better mentor."

Johileny (Jo-Jo) Merán, EmpowHer Camp Mentor

EmpowHer Champions

Our EmpowHer Champions are an elite group of individuals who are dedicated to empowering more girls and women with disabilities. EmpowHer Champions support our mission by committing to raising funds for Disability EmpowHer Network. EmpowHer Champions come from all over the country and have many different backgrounds, from students to professionals to activists and everything in between. However, our EmpowHer Champions all have one thing in common: they believe in our mission of helping disabled girls and women to grow, learn, and develop to their highest potential and have the confidence to lead.

2022 EmpowHer Champions

\$1000+

Hannah Gallivan, Jen Kasten, Jill Moore White, & Sophie Poost



\$501 - \$1000

Chrysanthemum Gates, Mia Howie & Riley Hurt



\$1 - \$500

Opal Besaw, Kathryn Carroll, Lily Wells, & CC White



BIG THANKS!

Because of you, we've been able to help girls and women grow, learn, and develop to their highest potential and have the confidence to lead. Your support has also helped us to expand our programs to impact even more girls and women with disabilities!

Donors

Monthly Donors

Jim Dukette & Tony Nary
Christy Dunaway
Katie Shelley
Kelly & Paul Timmons
Laura Van Tosh
Amy Wink

\$1000 - \$2,500

A Loving Supporter
Deanna Herrman
Paul & Kelly Timmons
Hannah Vickner Hough

\$500 - \$999

Mark and Jan Derry
Joan Gallivan
Ann Nielsen

\$200 - \$499

Latan Cox
Susan Douglas
Virginia Douglas
Rich & Windy Egeberg
Debra Kannan
Aaron Newton
David Ovington
Frank Siringo
Debra Kannan
Aaron Smith
Sharyn K Van Osdale

\$100 - \$199

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Karen Lawitts
Allison Maki
Sergio Manas
Justin Miller
Michele Morgan
Shalyn Pizzillo
Pamela Proctor
Bonanza Schell
Cecelia Sigman
Sandra Sigman

\$1 - \$99

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Jaydon Anthony
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Abigail Braithwaite
Lindsay Baran
Dana Bisnett
Dave Bisnett
Karen Boardman
Wendy Burns
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Meredith Waggoner
Cade Wahl
Elizabeth Walker
Michael Walsh
Elizabeth Wapelhorst
Robyn Wells
Chandler White
Freda Wilkinson
Brendie Williams
Crystal Williams

Special Day Donors

Many thanks to those who generously donated their birthdays and other special days to raise funds for Disability EmpowHer Network

\$500+

Jenny Border
Ryan Chalmers
Naomi Hess
Adam Prizio
Laura Van Tosh

\$250 - \$499

Taneeka Afify
Katie Shelley
Ann Dart Washington
Kim Woodward

\$1 - \$249

Carolyn Abdenour Bogues
Izzie Bullock
Asher Dianne
Jim Dukette
LeQuina Knox
Mandie McGinnis
Melanie Oyer
Abby Ritter
Emily Robinson
Krista Siringo
Ruth Smith Ingram
Liz Wood

We appreciate the generosity of all of our donors & respect the privacy of the individuals who wished to remain anonymous. If we omitted or misspelled your name, please accept our apologies & contact Stephanie at Stephanie@DisabilityEmpowHerNetwork.org

Partners in Empowerment

Our grantors have ensured that we can continue the work we do to empower disabled women and girls. With their support in 2023, we have been able to sustain and grow our programs and team.



**FORD
FOUNDATION**



**Developmental Disabilities
Planning Council**



Bernice Stauber Fund

WHAT OUR GRANTORS ARE SAYING:

"The Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation (MEAF) is proud to support Disability EmpowHer Network's EmpowHer Camp. We believe in the power of inclusive mentoring to change lives from education through employment to empower the next female leaders. I know firsthand that mentoring builds confidence and self-esteem and develops leadership skills. EmpowHer Camp provides access to disabled role models and a sense of community that leads to successful careers and fulfilling lives."

Tara Havlicek, Program Manager
Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation

Partners in Empowerment

Our partners help us to give disabled girls & women what they need to succeed – mentors to guide them, programming to empower them, and an environment that allows them to grow to their fullest potential.



WHAT OUR PARTNERS ARE SAYING:

"EmpowerHer Camp is the best thing to ever happen to John Dillon Park. We look forward to it every year and the transformation that we witness is inspiring. It reminds us of the potential we have to change peoples lives."

Jason Thurston, Outreach Coordinator
International Paper – John Dillon Park

"I love partnering with Disability EmpowHer Network because I love supporting strong women and encouraging growth, independence, and confidence in young women."

Danielle Bentley, Owner
Charlee Marie & Me Craft Studio

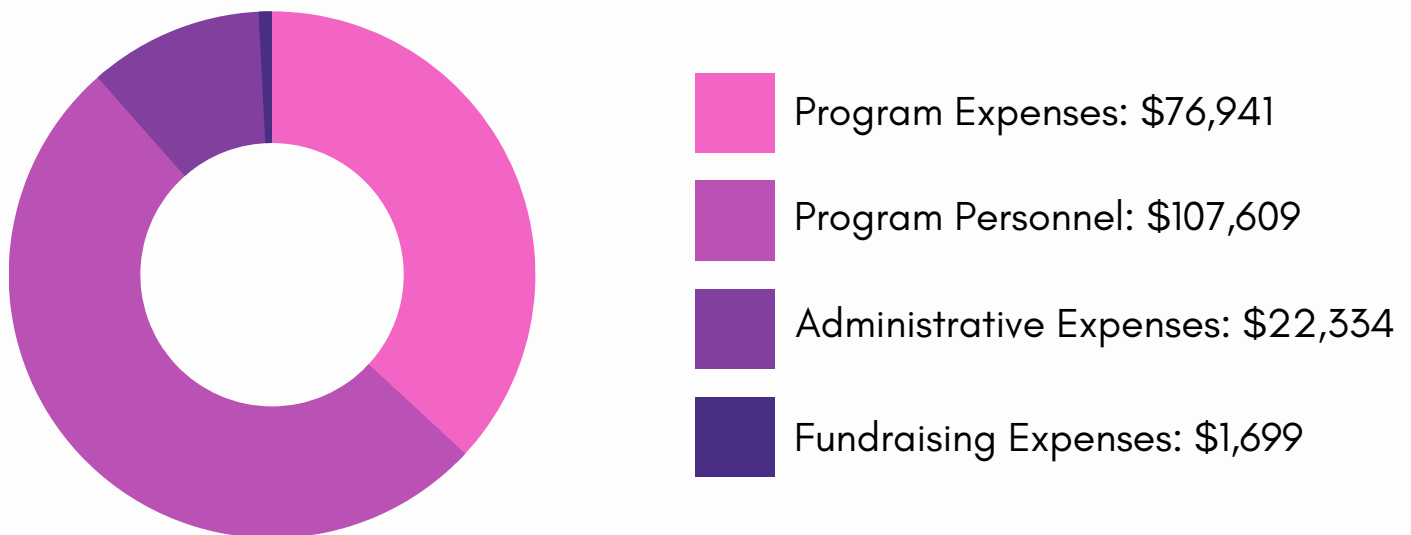
2022 Financials

We are delighted to report another year of strong support from our amazing grantors, donors, and corporate partners who have allowed us to empower even more girls and women with disabilities! As we look towards the future, we are committed to being fiscally prudent to ensure sustainability and high quality programming.

Support & Revenue



Expenses



More than 88.5% of expenses go directly to our empowering programs!

Reflections

We tried to sum up our work in this report, but there's always more to say and so many perspectives to include. Participants, volunteers, and mentors all play an extremely important role in shaping the community we aim to create within our network. As we wrap up 2022, we are reflecting on the impact of being surrounded by strong disabled women.



"Overall the camp was a life changing experience. Being around all disabled people and feeling seen and heard while simultaneously helping the next generation will forever be one of the greatest experiences of my life."

**Jacqueline (Jac) Wentworth,
EmpowHer Camp Mentor**



"Being involved with Disability EmpowHer Network has given me opportunities to see women with disabilities in action and an environment that my 13 year old self hoped for."

**Sapphire Murphy,
EmpowHer Volunteer & Participants**



"With this group of amazing women, I feel like I finally have a place where I am safe and accepted for who I am. What really makes Disability EmpowHer Network special to me is that we work together as a unit, a family of sorts, to help each other. Because of EmpowHer I can be vulnerable and express issues or difficulties that I'm going through related to my disability and know that I will truly be heard."

Jenny Border, EmpowHer Volunteer



DISABILITY
EMPOWHER
NETWORK

When disabled girls lead, we all succeed!

Thank you for believing in the potential
of girls & women with disabilities.

We'd love to talk!

Stephanie Woodward

Executive Director

585-269-9184

Stephanie@DisabilityEmpowHerNetwork.org

DisabilityEmpowHerNetwork.org