

We are the *Her Power* team: four women of varied professional backgrounds working to end gender violence against women and girls with disabilities. To end violence we are working as a collective, building the capacity of both service organizations and teen girls with disabilities to address violence.

Our work is based in disability pride. We promote these radical notions:

- People with disabilities are not broken.
- There is no reason to feel shame associated with disability.
- All people should be able to embrace their unique differences, and accept all aspects of who they are as individuals.
- The work to end gender violence includes working to end systems of oppression, including but not limited to: racism, classism, sizeism, ableism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.

Girls and women with disabilities face multiple, compounded forms of discrimination and stereotyping, which makes them more vulnerable to gender violence and creates cascades of challenges throughout their lifetimes. This isn't something we've just read about. All four of us have disabilities ourselves, whether you can see them or not.

Both disability groups and domestic and sexual violence (DVSV) organizations can do better at serving people with disabilities who experience violence. *Her Power* works with these organizations to cross train, create change, and raise awareness. In addition, *Her Power* works directly with girls with disabilities through a unique, four-day event designed to promote critical thinking about society's messages, eliminate shame, develop leadership skills and encourage self-acceptance. This event is built on the best practices of the disability justice community and emerging research in female development, and goes beyond self-esteem programming to provide a venue for real self-empowerment.

Our Team:

Theresa Squires is the *Her Power* program's founding Director at Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, responsible for creation of and program development for the *Her Power* event. She has spent the past eight years working at the intersections of disability, gender and violence.

Candice Lee has spent the past seven years working in disability health. She has seen the way disability amplifies other health problems and social disadvantages. For her, nowhere is this more apparent than in interpersonal violence.

Leah Smith is currently serving as the Director of Public Relations for Little People of America and has worked at the intersections of disability rights, media relations and gender for the past six years. Leah had the privilege of getting involved as Co-facilitator with *Her Power* in 2014.

Val Erwin works as the program advisor for the Women & LGBT Center at Southern Methodist University, and loves working at the intersection of gender and disability, specifically how it relates to gender based violence. Val has served as a co-facilitator and program developer at *Her Power*.

"Holding an event like this is important because it's crucial that others know that they aren't alone and that they are on a journey like everyone else. With this event, girls build onto skills, learn new skills, make new friends, and most importantly become confident of ourselves, our disabilities and what we can do." Her Power Event Participant

For more information, contact:

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Her Power Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/HerPowerHerPride>

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