

# On The Level

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## *From the League of Human Dignity*

**December 2018**

ON THE LEVEL is the bi-monthly newsletter of the League of Human Dignity, Inc.

The League of Human Dignity is a consumer-based, nonprofit organization, dedicated to promoting independent living for people with disabilities, in their own homes instead of nursing homes. To this end, we will advocate for the rights and needs of people with disabilities, while providing quality services to assist them in becoming and remaining independent citizens.

Established in 1971, the League now offers services in all 93 Nebraska counties and eight southwest Iowa counties, through our Centers for Independent Living in Lincoln, Norfolk and Omaha, Nebraska, and Council Bluffs, Iowa; and our Medicaid Waiver offices in Scottsbluff, Kearney and North Platte, Nebraska.

ON THE LEVEL is available online, by email subscription, Braille and on audio CD. To subscribe in any of these formats, contact the Public Information Office in Lincoln or your nearest League of Human Dignity office. The newsletter also is archived on our website: [leagueofhumandignity.com](http://leagueofhumandignity.com)

## Volunteer of the Year

A photo shows two women smiling at the camera, one is holding a small plaque. Connie Hoile, left, is the Lincoln CIL's 2018 Ken Lindhorst Volunteer of the Year Award winner. CIL Director Shawna Keller, right, presented the award during the center's annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon Nov. 15.

## Airlines Now Required to Track Lost, Damaged Wheelchairs

Travelers who use wheelchairs soon will have a tool to help them decide which airlines are better for their mobility equipment.

New federal reporting regulations require Airlines to file monthly reports on mishandled wheelchairs and scooters. They are to be implemented starting this December.

The regulations, strongly supported by disability advocates, also include a more accurate method of calculating lost luggage. They originated in the Obama

Administration and were to have been implemented early in 2018. But in March 2017, the Trump Administration put them on hold at the urging of the Airline industry. Some major carriers say the rule will be too expensive to implement and will cause delays and inconvenience.

In July, the Paralyzed Veterans of America filed suit against the Department of Transportation, arguing that the delay is illegal. PVA officials say the reporting requirement will help fliers identify which airlines are most likely to lose or damage wheelchairs and scooters and avoid them. Airlines require passengers who use wheelchairs to store them in planes' cargo areas during flights.

National PVA Secretary Larry Dodson has been quoted as saying his organization regularly receives reports of lost or damaged wheelchairs. But no one knows exactly how common it is or which airlines are the worst because until now there has been no reporting on it.

In April, U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, a veteran who uses a wheelchair, complained about the rule delay to the Transportation Department.

"If a wheelchair or motorized scooter is damaged or lost, it represents a complete loss of mobility and independence for that passenger," Duckworth said.

## CEO's Note

### Giving Thanks

Sometimes, especially in the Independent Living world, it is easy to get frustrated and angry.

But I recently attended a networking event during which "Gratitude" was a topic of discussion. One particular presenter said it's a good idea to have a "Daily Gratitude Ritual". So, with that in mind, as we approach the Holiday Season, I would like to give thanks for a few recent developments which have made life a little more accessible for people with disabilities.

- The Ohio State School for the Blind is testing "Smart Paint", an invention designed to help individuals with vision impairments cross streets more safely, according to an article in the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center's In Focus Newsletter. The paint includes elements that cause specially-equipped canes to vibrate when they come in contact. The paint can be used, for example, on the edges of crosswalk to alert pedestrians and keep them walking inside the lines.
- Online streaming service Hulu has committed to accessibility for users with blindness. Hulu will make its website accessible via screen readers and will provide audio description tracks for streaming content. With this move, Hulu will join with other online streaming providers, like Netflix, that are prioritizing accessibility and making the entertainment more accessible to the disability

community. Kudos to these providers for realizing the need to address accessibility and helping to ensure that entertainment is for everyone.

- Lack of accessible clothing is a barrier to independence. It can be difficult for the nearly one in five people in the U.S. with a disability to find clothes that are stylish and meet their needs. That is now changing, though, News Hour Weekend's Megan Thompson reports, as the fashion industry moves toward accessibility. From Parsons' Open Style Lab to Tommy Hilfiger, the first major designer to launch a line for people with disabilities, accessibility is becoming a fashion industry goal. Zappos.com also launched an adaptive line last year, which includes clothing such as pull-on pants, and shoes that are orthopedic-friendly and easy on/off for both kids and adults. Open Style Lab (OSL), established in 2014, is a 501(c)3 organization "dedicated to creating functional wearable solutions for people of all abilities without compromising on style," according to their website. The organization teams designers, engineers, and occupational therapists to create clothing that address the needs of people with disabilities. Their mission is for all people to have access to style, regardless of cognitive or physical ability. The organization aims to accomplish this through three things: education, research, and raising awareness.

So, I give thanks for the innovations and changes that are impacting people with disabilities today. As always, more needs to be done, but I am thankful for each and every little thing that increases independent living.

I challenge everyone reading this newsletter to search out things to be thankful for in their lives and in the lives of others during this holiday season.

Thank you!

Kathy Kay  
League Co-CEO

## Happy Holidays

From the League of Human Dignity!

## Enjoy Riding the Bike Trails with New Three-Wheeler

### Hastings Man Creates 'Fun Bikes' Especially for Wheelchair Users

Kirk Halbmaier says people who use wheelchairs ought to be able to enjoy bicycle rides just like anyone else.

The Hastings, NE, man has started building what he's calling the Fun Bike, to ensure that they can do just that.

"I call it that because that's what it's supposed to be – fun — so they can have fun just like anyone else," he said.

The bike — actually a three-wheeler — has a seat in the front where the rider straps in, with a seat, handlebars and pedals behind for use by an assistant. The design is similar to a bike made in Australia, he said, but with modifications that strengthen the turning mechanism.

So far, Kirk said he has completed one of the bikes and is working on his second order. The first, in pink, went to a little girl who otherwise would not have been able to go riding.

"If you could have seen the grin on her face — it just couldn't be described," he said.

If anyone wants one of the bikes, Kirk said just give him a call, "and we'll get them set up."

To order a Fun Bike, or for more information, call Kirk Halbmaier at 402-469-4934.

The love of bike riding continues to grow across the country among people who have disabilities, as a way to develop independence, enjoy the outdoors, socialize and for physical fitness. One source of information about bicycling and other sports is Disabled Sports USA, a nonprofit founded in 1967 in Rockville, MD. Visit their website at [www.disabledsportsusa.org](http://www.disabledsportsusa.org).

A photo shows a man on a residential lawn, with a specially-build bike that allows wheelchair users to ride. Kirk Halbmaier of Hastings displays his Fun Bike, which he said he makes to allow wheelchair users to enjoy the bike riding fun they might not be able to otherwise.

## Norfolk CIL Honors Volunteers

Duane Dufek of rural Battle Creek received the League's Norfolk Volunteer of the Year Award for 2018.

Jane Fink, Independent Living Advisor in the Norfolk office, presented the award during the office's annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon Thursday, Oct. 12. About 12 staff, volunteers and friends attended the luncheon.

Duane was one of nine volunteers who supported the League's work in the Norfolk service area during the past year.

Two photos accompany this article. In the top photo, a woman and a man, hold onto a small plaque. Duane Dufek, right, receives this year's Ken Lindhorst Volunteer of the Year Award from Norfolk ILA Jane Fink, left.

The bottom photo shows a group of people seated around a table. About 12 staff, volunteers and friends attended the Oct. 12 luncheon honoring the CIL's volunteers.

## York Group Celebrates Volunteers

Volunteers for the League's York Chapter held their annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on Friday, Oct. 26, at the Chances "R" Restaurant in York.

A total of 13 volunteers and guests attended, out of 16 volunteers for the group during the past year. Following lunch, Randy Nun received a pin for 10 years of volunteer service. Other service awards went to Ken Mayberry, 30 years, and Mary Kohtz, five years. Each volunteer was presented with a thank-you gift – a soft-sided cooler and thermal bottle.

Chapter President Stan Dinkelman also led a business meeting to take care of end-of-the-year business.

A photo accompanies this article, showing a man in a wheelchair facing a group of people seated around tables. York Chapter President Stan Dinkelman, right, speaks during the chapter's Oct. 26 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at the Chances "R" Restaurant in York.

## League Employees Observe Anniversaries in 2018

### Six Staff Members Pass 10-Year Milestones

Seven League of Human Dignity staff members from four League offices observed work anniversaries during 2018, including six who have been on the job for 10 years.

Lincoln Center for Independent Living Director Shawna Keller joined the Lincoln CIL in March of 2008 as a Services Coordinator. She became the League's Education and Quality Assurance Manager in 2012 and became CIL Director in May of 2015.

Norfolk CIL Secretary Deb Anderson joined the Norfolk CIL staff in May of 2008, as a secretary.

Norfolk CIL Director Jean Kloppenborg joined the Norfolk CIL staff in August of 2008 as a Services Coordinator. She became the center's Director in 2009.

Public Information Specialist Jim Anderson started working for the League in August 2008.

Services Coordinator Nancy Laucomer started work in the Panhandle Medicaid Waiver Office in October 2008.

Panhandle Medicaid waiver Office Secretary DeeDee Mead joined the staff in Scottsbluff in December of 2008.

Celebrating five years is Omaha CIL Medicaid Waiver Supervisor Caroline Weihrauch. She started work in the Omaha CIL in June of 2013 as a Services Coordinator. This year she became the center's Medicaid Waiver Supervisor.

Members of the League staff are recognized with an award after five years of employment, and each five years thereafter.

The League serves Nebraska and Southwest Iowa through Centers for Independent Living in Lincoln, Norfolk, Omaha and Council Bluffs; and Medicaid Waiver offices in Scottsbluff, Kearney and North Platte.

## **Social Security Recipients to Receive 2.8 Percent Cost of Living Increase**

Americans who receive Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will get a 2.8 percent cost-of-living increase in 2019, the Social Security Administration has announced.

The raise kicks in for SSI recipients on Dec. 31 and for Social Security beneficiaries in January. Cost-of-living raises are tied to increases in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Other adjustments that take effect in January are based on the increase in average wages. The maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax will increase to \$132,900 from \$128,400.

Security and SSI beneficiaries normally are notified by mail in early December about their new benefit amounts. This year, those who have a "my Social Security" account also can see their notifications online. People can create or access their "my Social Security" account at [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount).

The Social Security Act stipulates how cost-of-living adjustments are calculated. To learn more, go online to [www.socialsecurity.gov/cola](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola).

## **Medicare Announces Parts A & B Premiums, Deductibles for 2019**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in October announced 2019 premiums, deductibles, and coinsurance amounts for Medicare Parts A and B.

Part B covers physician services, outpatient hospital services, certain home health services, durable medical equipment, and certain other medical and health services not

covered by Medicare Part A. The standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B enrollees will be \$135.50 in 2019, an increase of \$1.50 from 2018. An estimated 2 million beneficiaries will pay less than that due to a federal provision requiring that their premium increase can be no greater than the increase in their Social Security benefits.

The annual deductible for Medicare Part B will be \$185 in 2019, an increase of \$2 from 2018. Part A covers inpatient hospital, skilled nursing facility, and some home health care services. About 99 percent of beneficiaries do not pay a premium for Part A, which is free for Americans who have paid Medicare taxes for at least 10 years. The Part A inpatient deductible will be \$1,364 in 2019, an increase of \$24 from 2018.

In September, CMS released the benefit, premium, and cost sharing information for Medicare Advantage plans. On average, those premiums will decrease by \$28 (6 percent) from 2018, while plan choices and new benefits increase.

## League Employees

Saying Hello:

Dana Barringer, Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Andrea Pedersen, Independent Living Advisor, Omaha

Anne Reimer, Services Coordinator, Omaha

Samantha Beck, Level of Care Specialist, Lincoln

(Samantha formerly was LOC Specialist in Omaha)

Saying Good-Bye:

Erin Nevis, Services Coordinator, Omaha

Genette Albertsen, Level of Care Specialist, Lincoln.

## Talking Book & Braille Service

Just because you may have limited ability to read, hold a book or turn pages is no reason you can't still enjoy your favorite books and magazines.

The Nebraska Library Commission's free Talking Book and Braille Service provides audiobooks and audio magazines, as well as braille through the mail and through digital download.

The Talking Book and Braille collection includes books and magazines like those found in a public library. The program provides easy-to-use playback equipment on long-term-

loan free of charge. Materials in the collection and the playback equipment are mailed to and from the library postage-free.

The service is available to people, as well as schools and other facilities, like nursing homes, hospitals and senior citizen centers.

For details, e-mail [nlc.talkingbooks@nebraska.gov](mailto:nlc.talkingbooks@nebraska.gov) or call 1-800-742-7691. The Web site is [www.nlc.state.ne.us/TBBS/applyforservice.aspx](http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/TBBS/applyforservice.aspx)

## Transportation When You Need It

The Extended Hours Service is for people with disabilities in Lincoln who need accessible, affordable rides when other options are not available.

Service Times: 5 to 11 p.m. weekdays; 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Holidays (Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas & New Year's Day)

Service Area: Lincoln, NE

Cost: \$4 per one-way ride

Reserve rides 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Call for reservations 1 to 7 days in advance. Same-day requests are subject to space availability.

A HandiVan or EHS identification is required: You can get both at the League of Human Dignity, 1701, P Street, in Lincoln. Stop in or call 402-441-7871 for more information, details about eligibility and registration.

Questions or complaints about EHS scheduling & service may be directed to Servant Cab Company: Kirby (owner) 402-770-3683

A service of the League of Human Dignity.

## Government Proposes Changes in Medicare Prescription Drug Policy

The Trump Administration has proposed changes in Medicare policies it says will lower prescription drug costs, thus saving both the government and beneficiaries' money.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the proposal Nov. 26. CMS officials said the proposals will strengthen and modernize the Medicare Part C and D programs, starting in 2020.

The changes include a proposal that officials say will give Medicare Part D, Medicare's prescription drug coverage, greater flexibility to negotiate discounts for drugs in six "protected" therapeutic classes. Currently, private Medicare health plans are required to cover all or "substantially all" drugs in the classes — which include HIV treatments,

antidepressants and cancer drugs — regardless of cost. Drug companies thus have little incentive to make the drugs affordable, officials said.

The proposal would allow health plans to exclude some of the drugs from coverage — if the prices increase more than inflation, as well as certain new drug formulations that are not a “significant innovation” over an original drug. Officials said the proposal could save Medicare enrollees \$692 million and taxpayers \$1.85 billion over 10 years.

Other proposals include requiring Part D plans to provide enrollees and their doctors with a patient’s out-of-pocket cost obligations for prescription drugs when a prescription is written; and “step therapy” — allowing private plans to require patients to try cheaper drugs before turning to more expensive ones, regardless of what their doctor prescribes.

CMS are accepting public comments on the proposals.

A fact sheet on the proposal is available online at [www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/contract-year-cy-2020-medicare-advantage-and-part-d-drug-pricing-proposed-rule-cms-4180-p](http://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/contract-year-cy-2020-medicare-advantage-and-part-d-drug-pricing-proposed-rule-cms-4180-p).

## Barrier Removal Grants

Barrier Removal Grants are available to qualifying renters or homeowners and their family members who have mobility limitations.

Grants are available to:

- People in Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Lincoln & Lancaster County.
- People with low to moderate income, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- People who need help removing barriers in their homes.

Examples of eligible modifications include outside ramps and lifts, grab bars, handrails, widened doorways, accessible tubs and showers, and reachable sinks and counters.

League staff offer a variety of services to assist in making homes more accessible to people with disabilities. For more information or for an application for a Barrier Removal Grant, contact:

Lincoln CIL, 1701 P St., Lincoln, NE 68508; Ph.402-441-7871

Omaha CIL, 5513 Center St., Omaha, NE 68106; Ph. 402-595-1256

SW Iowa CIL, 1520 Avenue M, Council Bluffs, IA 51501; Ph. 712-323-6863

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# League Donors

Sept. 12 to Nov. 15, 2018

Builder (\$500 or more): Anonymous

Century (\$100 to \$249): Anonymous through Facebook; Anonymous through Network for Good.

Believer (\$50 to \$99): Two Anonymous donations through Facebook.

Other: Two Anonymous donations through Facebook; Amazon Smile Foundation

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

## Support the League When You Shop at Amazon By Buying Through AmazonSmile!

Go online to Amazon's AmazonSmile site, sign in and shop away - Amazon then will donate a portion of the value of your purchase to the League of Human Dignity!

## You Can Help Someone in Northeast Nebraska as a Private Care Provider

If you are a people person who likes to keep busy, and if you're interested in self-employment, then working as a private care provider may be a perfect fit.

By assisting with household duties and everyday activities, you can earn a competitive income — while helping someone who has a disability maintain an independent lifestyle. Your work could include cleaning the house, preparing a meal, doing the laundry, or other similar duties. You might also provide transportation to the doctor's office or the grocery store.

Filling in occasionally for those caring for a family member with an illness or disability is another valuable service you may provide.

If this sounds like the self-employment opportunity for you, contact the League of Human Dignity in Norfolk. We can connect you with individuals in your community who could use your services.

Norfolk Center for Independent Living, 400 Elm Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701; Phone 402-371-4475, Toll free 1-800-843-5785; [ninfo@leagueofhumandignity.com](mailto:ninfo@leagueofhumandignity.com) ; [leagueofhumandignity.com](http://leagueofhumandignity.com)

# Achieve, Maintain Independence through League Services

The League of Human Dignity's Centers for Independent Living provide services that people with disabilities need to achieve and maintain their independence.

Services include, but are not limited to:

- Individual and systems advocacy
- Information and referral
- Independent living skills training
- Peer counseling and support
- Transition from institutions or school into the community
- Training in personal assistant hiring and management
- Barrier removal grants
- Equipment loan and rental

Call the League at 402-441-7871 to find out more. Or drop by our offices at 1701 P Street in Lincoln, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Or contact any of our other Centers for Independent Living.

Through our CILs and Medicaid Waiver offices, the League serves all 93 Nebraska counties and eight counties in Southwest Iowa.

## Associations & Support Groups

The League maintains a list of associations and support groups in Nebraska, Southwest Iowa, the region and the nation for people with disabilities and their loved ones.

To see the complete list, in pdf format, please visit our website: [leagueofhumandignity.com/getinvolved/](http://leagueofhumandignity.com/getinvolved/) and click on "Support Groups."

## Where to Find Us

LINCOLN Center for Independent Living  
1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68508  
Phone 402-441-7871

OMAHA Center for Independent Living  
5513 Center Street, Omaha, NE 68106  
Phone 402-595-1256

NORFOLK Center for Independent Living  
400 Elm Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701  
Phone 402-371-4475

SW IOWA Center for Independent Living  
1520 Avenue M, Council Bluffs, IA 51501  
Phone 712-323-6863

PANHANDLE Medicaid Waiver Office  
17 E 21 St., Scottsbluff, NE 69361  
Phone 308-632-0470

KEARNEY Medicaid Waiver Office  
3811 W. 29th Avenue, Ste 2, Kearney NE 68845  
Phone 308-224-3665

NORTH PLATTE Medicaid Waiver Office  
2509 Halligan Dr., North Platte, NE 69101  
Phone 308-532-4911

leagueofhumandignity.com  
and Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

## Classifieds

Classified ads cost \$5 for the first 25 words and 25 cents for each additional word. To place an ad, write to: On The Level, League of Human Dignity, 1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68508; call Jim at 402-441-7871 v/tdd; call toll free at 888-508-4758; or fax: 402-441-7650. Equipment, supplies and other items for sale must be accessible to, or for the use of, people with disabilities.

FOR SALE: Low airloss mattress prevents bedsores) & all-electric medical bed, with remote, new, best offer for both; high-back wheelchair, new, best offer; roll-in high shower chair, best offer. Call Nancy, 402-309-6895 (Lincoln).

FOR SALE: Like new Golden MaxiComfort 505 Medium Lift Chair, purchased in August 2018 & seldom used to early November 2018. \$1,100 firm, call after 10 a.m. 402-464-7871 (Lincoln).

## The League of Human Dignity Building Corporation

is taking applications for 1 and 2 bedroom apartments with roll-in showers in Lincoln, Omaha, York, Columbus, Norfolk and Hastings.

These units come with Section 8 certificates and rent is based upon income. Eligible applicants must qualify under income guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Applicants must experience disability to qualify.

To apply or for more info, call Terri Kremer at 1-888-508-4758 V/TDD or email [tkremer@leagueofhumandignity.com](mailto:tkremer@leagueofhumandignity.com)

Equal Housing Opportunity

## **Winter Weather Closing Information**

In times of severe weather, turn to KFOR 1240 AM, or go online to [www.kfor1240.com](http://www.kfor1240.com) for the latest on cancellations.

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Find us on Facebook — just click the logo in the electronic version of this newsletter or on our webpage or search for us from your own Facebook page. Follow us on Twitter too. Just click the logo in the electronic version of this newsletter or on our webpage or find us @LHD68508.