

On The Level

From the League of Human Dignity

February 2020

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

Nebraska “Restraint” Bill Stalled for Now

The “Restraint Bill” is down but probably not out.

The latest version of LB147, officially titled the “Student Discipline Act,” was introduced in the current session of the Nebraska Legislature by North Platte Sen. Mike Groene. It would allow teachers and other school employees to “physically intervene” to control students who become violent and to protect school property from destructive students – and would remove criminal and civil liability for the intervention as long as it is “reasonable.”

After three hours of debate on Jan. 13, the Legislature recessed for lunch before voting on the bill or its amendments. That effectively stalls the bill. In order to bring the debate back to the floor, Sen. Groene now has to show he has the support of 33 senators – enough to support a vote to end a potential filibuster.

The bill is supported by the Nebraska State Education Association. It is opposed by disability advocates and organizations who argue that it will adversely affect students of color and students with disabilities. Opponents, including Arc of Nebraska, ACLU of Nebraska, Voices for Children, Down Syndrome Alliance, Brain injury Alliance, and

Disability Rights Nebraska, held a press conference in the capitol Monday, Jan. 13, urging opposition to the bill.

Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh of Omaha, an opponent of LB147, said state law already authorizes teachers and administrators to defend themselves. She said the bill would not help address the root cause of problems that can lead to school violence, such as large class sizes, adverse childhood experiences and a lack of behavioral and mental health services.

Amendments to the bill would add training for school employees, as well as a provision for paying for training from state lottery funds.

Groene originally introduced LB147 last May but it became deadlocked in committee. He said next he intends to take it to the Legislature's Education Committee, which he chairs, and bring it back to the floor for a vote later in the session.

In other legislation:

LB976 would revise the definition of "handicapped or disabled person" in the state statute providing for handicapped or disabled parking permits. The bill, introduced Jan. 14 by Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz, adds "neurological" to the definition of impairments that can qualify for a permit.

The current definition includes visual, or physical impairment which limits personal mobility to less than 200 feet without stopping or without use of a wheelchair or other assistant equipment.

The definition also includes mobility limitations due to respiratory and cardiac problems, and loss of the use of one or more limbs.

The bill has been sent to the Legislature's Urban Affairs Committee. A hearing has not been scheduled.

LB994, the Organ Transplant Fairness Act, would prohibit discrimination on the basis of mental or physical disability against people who need organ transplants.

The bill was introduced Jan. 14 by Sen. Dave Murman of Glenvil and Omaha Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh, and is in the Judiciary Committee.

CEO's Note

Winter and Accessibility

It's that time of year when the wind blows, the snow comes down, and the ice accumulates on the streets and sidewalks. In Nebraska, we know how difficult this winter weather can make transportation.

For people with mobility issues or who use chairs, the winter can be even more impactful.

Snow and ice are problems for everyone living in winter climates. But they are exponentially worse for people with disabilities. This is especially so for disabled people who don't drive, and have to rely on sidewalks and other pedestrian pathways to go to work, shop, or leave their homes for any reason.

Wheelchairs and mobility scooters have a harder time navigating sidewalks, curb ramps, and streets. People who use canes or walkers and individuals with vision impairment may find the smallest patches of ice or snow dangerous. Individuals who drive may find that accessible parking places are not cleared. Here are some quick tips to ensure that access is being provided:

- The entire accessible route should be cleared.
- Do not push snow into accessible parking
- Shovel and pretreat ramps
- Remove doormats as this can hinder access for wheel chair or power chair users

What can each of us do?

1. Do all we can do personally to clear sidewalks, ramps, and other public pathways.
2. Offer to help disabled people shovel out after storms.
3. Support more proactive sidewalk clearing plans in our own cities and towns.

We have no control over the weather, but we can do a better job of reducing the impact on people with disabilities.

Kathy Kay, League Co-CEO

Iowa Service Brings Text to Listeners

The Iowa Radio Reading Information Service, or IRIS, is a free service available to anyone in Iowa living with a visual, cognitive or physical disability that prevents them from reading print material.

More than 300 Iowa volunteers read print information to the more than 3,000 print-disabled listeners. Listeners can access the IRIS signal in multiple ways: with an IRIS radio receiver, through your digital-ready television, through the service's webstream and podcasts, and even on your mobile phone. All IRIS equipment and services are provided to listeners at no cost to them.

The service broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Volunteers at seven locations around the state read each morning from local newspapers including the Daily Nonpareil in Council Bluffs, and national newspapers and magazines.

IRIS is a nonprofit organization with an annual budget of \$175,000. About \$30,000 of that comes from the state, but the rest is in grants and donations. The service ranges in cost from about \$30 to \$335, depending on what type of device is needed by a listener.

To become an IRIS listener, fill out and submit the short online form available on the service's website, www.iowaradioreading.org. Potential listeners also can download the form, fill it out and mail it in. Call 877-404-4747 for more information.

Radio Reading for Nebraskans with Disabilities

Nebraska's Radio Talking Book Network is a free radio reading service that broadcasts over the second-audio-program channel of Nebraska public television. It also provides human-voiced information choices to individuals who have disabilities that prevent them from reading.

The service was founded in 1974. More than 70 volunteers read print media aloud, either live or as recordings, and their diverse voices are broadcast throughout Nebraska over the radio and internet to blind, low vision, or print impaired listeners.

RTBN programming includes readings from 12 local newspapers from across the state, as well as live daily readings of the Omaha World Herald and Lincoln Journal Star; weekly regional grocery and department store ads; current information from over 70 magazines; and more. The network also has a weekly statewide Community Calendar program, features on local nonprofits, and a Veterans Hour.

Programming reaches listeners via FM radio receivers, provided at no cost to eligible individuals and care facilities. Fill out an application for a radio on the service's website, rtbs.org. RTBN's internet stream can be accessed on, personal computers and tablets, via two smart phone apps, two internet receiver options, and via telephone. To increase accessibility for our listeners, RTBN implemented a home or mobile telephone option.

RTBN began podcasts of daily live newspaper reading in 2017 and added weekly department store and grocery ads in 2018. These podcasts also are available on the website and iTunes.

Keep Reading with Talking Book & Braille Service

People with limited ability to read, hold a book or turn pages still can enjoy their favorite books and magazines, through to the Nebraska Library Commission's free Talking Book and Braille Service.

The program provides free audiobooks and audio magazines and braille through the mail and through digital download to individuals with a visual or physical condition, or a reading disability which limits use of regular print.

The collection consists of books and magazines similar to those found in a public library. The service is part of a nationwide network of cooperating libraries headed by the National Library Service, a division of the Library of Congress.

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 individuals, as well as schools and other facilities, such as nursing homes, hospitals and senior citizen centers.

The program's in-house sound studios also record and produce audiobooks and audio magazines from Nebraska and regional authors as well as material about Nebraska and the Great Plains. The recordings from the Nebraska Collection also are made available for loan to patrons.

For more information, e-mail nlc.talkingbooks@nebraska.gov or call 1-800-742-7691. For more information, the Nebraska Talking Book & Braille Service main page is at the Nebraska Library Commission website, nlc.nebraska.gov.

2020 Omaha/Southwest Iowa Benefit Golf Event

Save the date

Friday, May 29, 2020, at Miracle Hill Golf Course, 1401 N. 120th St., Omaha, NE

Proceeds from this annual fund-raising event go to the League's Omaha and Southwest Iowa Centers for Independent Living, helping fulfill their mission: promoting and supporting independent living and the full participation by people with disabilities in their community.

If you would like to help out as an event planner, player, underwriter, sponsor or all of the above, contact the League of Human Dignity: 402-595-1256 in Omaha or 712-323-6863 in Council Bluffs.

Think Heart Health: Wear Red Day Feb. 7

It's February and that means it's time to raise awareness about the leading cause of death among Americans, especially women — heart disease.

Every February is American Heart Month and the first Friday in February is designated Wear Red Day, designed to highlight the goal of eradicating heart disease and stroke.

Men and women are encouraged to wear red On Feb. 7, in symbol of their support of women's heart health.

It's also a day in which women are encouraged to find out their five most important health numbers: Total Cholesterol, HDL Cholesterol, Blood Sugar, Blood Pressure and BMI (Body Mass Index). By knowing these numbers women can find out their risks for developing heart disease and take measures to prevent it.

Diabetes Alert Day Set for March 24

Observed annually on the fourth Tuesday in March, Diabetes Alert Day is a one-day “wake-up call” that focuses on the seriousness of diabetes and the importance of understanding your risk.

This year the observance is on March 24. The American Diabetes Association encourages everyone to take the Type 2 Diabetes Risk Test and learn how to reverse the risk for diabetes. Take the test online or download a paper version at www.diabetes.org.

30.3 million Americans or about 9.4 percent of the population have diabetes.

Nearly 1 in 4 adults who have diabetes are unaware they have it.

Another 84 million Americans have prediabetes — 90 percent of them are unaware.

Health Observances

February

Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month, organized by Prevent Blindness America

American Heart Month, organized by the American Heart Association

Gallbladder and Bile Duct Cancer Awareness Month, organized by the American Institute for Cancer Research

National Cancer Prevention Month, organized by the American Institute for Cancer Research

National Senior Independence Month

Feb. 7 is National Wear Red Day, organized by the American Heart Association.

Feb. 22 is National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day, organized by the Alliance for Aging Research

March

Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month, organized by the Hemophilia Federation of America

Brain Injury Awareness Month, organized by the Brain Injury Association of America

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, organized by the Colon Cancer Alliance

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, organized by the Special Needs Alliance

National Kidney Month, organized by the National Kidney Foundation

Trisomy Awareness Month, organized by the Support Organization for Trisomy 18, 13, and related Disorders

March 8 – 14 is National Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week, organized by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation

March 24 is American Diabetes Alert Day, organized by the American Diabetes Association

March 24 is World Tuberculosis Day, organized by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and other nonprofits

Social Security Expands Office Hours Nationwide

Agency Also Plans to Hire 1,100 More Front Line Employees in 2020

Social Security offices nationwide are now open to the public on Wednesday afternoons.

The change restores public service hours that were reduced in 2013.

Currently, field offices generally are open to the public from 9 a.m. to Noon on Wednesdays. They now will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Social Security reduced weekday hours at its field offices seven years ago and expanded its online presence. People still can access most services online through their “my Social Security” accounts. Register for the accounts at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Those not yet receiving benefits can use the accounts get their Social Security information, including earnings history, estimates of future benefits, a retirement calculator, and links to other online services.

Many Social Security services are also by dialing toll-free, 1-800-772-1213. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call Social Security’s TTY number, 1-800-325-0778.

In another move to improve service to the public, Social Security will hire 1,100 front line employees to provide service on the agency's National 800 Number and in its processing centers.

Social Security Commissioner Andrew Saul announced plans for the moves in an open letter to the public last November.

The agency is currently hiring 100 new processing center employees and approximately 500 new teleservice representatives for the 800 Number. The agency will hire 500 more later this year.

"Improving service is my top priority. Increasing full public service hours at our nationwide network of more than 1,200 field offices is the right thing to do and will provide additional access," Commissioner Saul said.

To get more Social Security news, follow the agency's press office on Twitter @SSAPress.

League Services Promote Independent Living

People with disabilities need the services provided by the League of Human Dignity's Centers for Independent Living 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 to 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 come to our offices at 1701 P Street in Lincoln, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Or contact any of our other Centers for Independent Living.

The League serves all 93 Nebraska counties and eight counties in Southwest Iowa.

Snow Closing Info

We have designated KFOR radio as our weather station. In times of severe weather, please turn to KFOR 1240 AM, or go online to www.kfor1240.com for the latest word on cancellations.

Organizations Plan National Conventions

National Council on Independent Living

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the ADA and serves as a time to reflect and celebrate.

With that in mind, the theme of the 2020 Annual Conference on Independent Living is Evolution of Our Revolution. The conference, an annual event sponsored by the National Council on Independent Living, is July 20-23, at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, D.C.

NCIL's annual conference is the largest independent living event of the year. The organization regularly hosts more than 1,000 people, including grassroots advocates, CIL and SILC leadership, members of Congress, government officials, and representatives from other organizations that work for justice and equity for people with disabilities.

The Independent Living Movement is built on advocacy, love, and empowerment. NCIL leaders say we must fulfill this promise through discussions and real work to include and elevate individuals with disabilities who have not been welcomed or included. Together we can build a more just, equitable, inclusive, and powerful Independent Living Movement.

For more information about this year's conference, visit the NCIL website at ncil.org.

National ADA Symposium

Registration is now open for the 2020 ADA Symposium.

The symposium is May 10-13, at the Downtown Loews Hotel in Kansas City, MO. The annual event is the premier conference on the Americans with Disabilities Act, designed to provide comprehensive information on all areas of the ADA.

This year, the 30th anniversary of the ADA, the main keynote speaker is former Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin, author and sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The conference will also feature Haben Girma, the first Deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School.

The conference brings together a wide range of professionals to get the latest information on ADA compliance, best practices and implementation strategies. This conference is designed for professionals who are involved in direct ADA implementation.

Standard registration is \$900. Register before March 6 to save \$150.

The National ADA Symposium is a project of the ADA National Network, and is hosted by the Great Plains ADA Center in Columbia, MO. For more information and registration, visit the symposium website: www.adasymposium.org

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Christopher Reeve's spinal cord injury and the foundation he and his wife, Dana, founded is instituting what is hoped will be an annual conference.

The 2020 Reeve Summit is Feb. 26-28 at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, D.C. This three-day event will bring together the paralysis community, key thought leaders, and individuals who have had an impact on the lives of people with paralysis and related disabilities.

Retired Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin, a disability rights champion and chief architect of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, will give the keynote address on Thursday, Feb. 27.

The ADA, signed into law in 1990, is the crowning achievement of Harkin's 40-year career in Congress, first as a Representative from Iowa's 5th Congressional District, then as a Senator for five terms, but his commitment to disability rights extends beyond the ADA – including the passage of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act of 2009 and other legislation

Registration for the summit is \$200. To register or for more information, go online to the foundation's website: www.christopherreeve.org.

League Donors

Nov. 12, 2019 through Jan. 14, 2020

Builder (\$500 or more): Peed Corporation, David Knorr, Joyce Holtmeier, Diane Klima,

Supporter (\$250 to \$499): Caretech Inc., Norman Hedgecock, Johnson's Inc.,

Century (\$100 to \$249): Lonnie Mueller, Jeff Patterson, Eunice Underwood, Frank Velinsky, Charles Francis, Edward Roche, Tim Poole,

Believer (\$50 to \$99): Paula Luther, Ken Mayberry, Alan Radke, Madison County Bank, Debbie Kee, Kristen Kyle, Tim Keelan,

Friend (\$25 to \$49): Timothy Lockwood, Grant Hrabovsky, Vernon Williams,

Other: AmazonSmile Foundation, Lorene Ludy, Katherine Hancock, Samantha Bates, Raymond Danczek,

In Memory of Stan Dinkelman: Derek Knorr

In Memory of Kathy Garza: Anonymous, Emilio Arispe

In Memory of Margaret Thorson: Sharon M. Thorson

In Memory of Dick Filbrandt: Betty Filbrandt

In Memory of Maggie Albertson: Rosanne Staniford

Thank You All for Your Generous Donations!

League Employees

Saying Hello:

Antonia “Toni” Olson, Services Coordinator, Norfolk.
Christine Grandgenett, Accounting Assistant, Lincoln.
Charley Bonanno, Services Coordinator, Norfolk.
Karen Mchenry, Services Coordinator, Omaha.

Saying Good-Bye:

Melonie Johnson, Secretary, Omaha.
Ashley Clark, Level of Care Specialist, Lincoln.
Samantha Beck, Level of Care Specialist, Lincoln.

AmazonSmile

Support the League of Human Dignity When You Shop at Amazon By Buying Through AmazonSmile!

Do you already shop online at Amazon? Please try AmazonSmile! It’s the same great Amazon you love, but a percentage of the value of your purchase will automatically be donated to the League of Human Dignity. You shop. Amazon gives!

Just go online to AmazonSmile, sign in and start shopping!

TAGG Purchases & Support the League

1. Download the free app to a smartphone and select the League of Human Dignity from the list of participating causes.
2. After purchasing goods or services from a participating business, take a photo of the receipt.
3. The business then will donate a percentage of the purchase to the League.

Loan & Rental Program

Have you ever had a family member suffer a minor injury that required the use of crutches or a wheelchair for a short time? Has a recent illness or accident made it necessary to use a walker, transfer bench or a commode? Do you have equipment that you no longer need?

The League of Human Dignity's Equipment Loan and Rental Program allows you to rent or borrow many durable medical equipment items for a small fee. We also encourage donations of these items.

We do not loan or rent items that require special or custom fitting and/or supervision by a doctor, such as braces or corsets.

All donated items need to be in good shape. We do not accept donations that need repair.

Items we loan include Tub Seats & Benches, 2-Wheel Walkers, Canes, Crutches, Commodes, Reachers, and Grab Bars.

A one-time fee of \$5 is required — \$25 for Rollator Walkers — and the loan lasts as long as the items are needed. All loans are subject to availability.

Items we rent include Manual Wheelchairs, Transport Wheelchairs, Rolling Shower Chairs, Knee Walkers, and Hoyer Lifts.

Monthly rental and deposits vary by item and rent includes all maintenance and servicing during rental period. All rentals are subject to availability.

For details, to see if we have what you need, or to see if you have what we need and would like to make a donation, call or visit the League of Human Dignity office nearest you.

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

SOUTHWEST 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 29th Avenue, Suite 2
Kearney NE 68845
Phone 308-224-3665

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

Online at: leagueofhumandignity.com & Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter

Barrier Removal Program

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
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

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

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/ and click on "Support Groups."

We aim to keep the list as up to date as possible, so additions and suggested changes are welcome. Call the League at 402-441-7871.

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: 2018 Quantum Edge 6 series 2.0/2.0x full-size power chair, used only 5 or 6 times, practically brand new. Call Carole, 402-742-4110 (Lincoln).

RECYCLING: We are recycling electric wheelchairs and scooters. Will pick them up if needed. Call 402-890-8235 (Lincoln).

The League of Human Dignity Building Corp.

The League of Human Dignity Building Corporation is taking applications for one and two 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 on 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 information, call Terri Kremer at 402-441-7871 or 888-508-4758 (toll free) V/TDD or email: tkremer@leagueofhumandignity.com

Equal Housing Opportunity

Cotton Tote Bag

Get your League of Human Dignity cotton tote bag, \$5.95 (price includes tax), while supplies last, only at the League of Human Dignity.

Fleece Vests

Get your League of Human Dignity fleece vests, blue or gray, sizes large through 4XL, \$29.95 (price includes sales tax), while supplies last -- only at the League of Human Dignity.

2020 League of Human Dignity Lincoln Benefit Golf Event

Save the Date

Thursday, September 17, 2020, The Highlands Golf Course, 5501 NW 12th Street, Lincoln, NE

This is an 18-hole, four-player scramble. Event includes lunch, silent auction, cash games, prizes & dinner buffet. Register a team for \$400.

Sponsorship and underwriting options also are available. To register or for more information, contact:

The League of Human Dignity,
1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68508,
call toll free:
1-888-508-4658 or email

janderson@leagueofhumandignity.com