

# On The Level

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## *From the League of Human Dignity*

*June 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](http://leagueofhumandignity.com)

## **Giving Days Raise \$15M for Local Nonprofits**

Despite the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Omaha and Lincoln-area residents stepped up and raised more than \$15 million for local nonprofit organizations during two May online giving days.

Preliminary figures show that the ninth-annual Give To Lincoln Day, May 28, brought in \$6,883,714, from 30,567 donors. That is more than \$1.3 million more than last year. There were 449 nonprofits participating, including the League of Human Dignity.

The League received \$7,050 in donations from 28 donors – its best showing yet in the event.

The donation totals do not include matching funds, which will come proportionally from a pool of \$500,000 provided by the Lincoln Community Foundation and other event sponsors.

Food Bank of Lincoln topped the leaderboard with \$404,943 in donations, leading 11 Lincoln nonprofits receiving more than \$100,000.

The Lincoln COVID-19 Response Fund raised \$69,955

The eighth-annual Omaha Gives! and fourth-annual Pottawattamie Gives! May 20, raised \$8,528,221 from just over 65,000 donors. That is about \$1.8 million more than last year. Both events share the same giving platform. There were 1,010 nonprofits participating, including the League. There were 109 Pottawattamie County nonprofits, including the League, listed on the Pottawattamie Gives! page.

The event's COVID-19 Response Fund received \$141,221 in donations.

League Centers for Independent Living in Omaha and Council Bluffs will share \$460 in donations. The Omaha-Council Bluffs-area giving day is an online-only giving event.

Four Omaha-area nonprofits received more than \$100,000 in donations, led by Food Bank for the Heartland, receiving \$375,289 from 1,659 donors.

The 24-hour giving days are held each year to raise awareness of local nonprofits and encourage local philanthropy. The need for charitable giving in support of nonprofits has never been greater. The League wishes to thank all those who donated in support of independent living and equal access for people with disabilities.

The Omaha-area giving day has never offered an in-person giving option. The Lincoln event has -- which has been a major part of the League's donations. This year's COVID-19 pandemic precautions made off-line giving more difficult. Donors were able to mail their off-line donations before the giving day, or else drop them off the day of the event at lead sponsor West Gate Bank drive-thru locations.

## CEO's Note

First and foremost upon everyone's mind is COVID-19. How to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe during this time, how to get all the supplies that we need, how to access critical care and services during the pandemic. Another challenge that the disease throws our way is navigating the voting process during this time.

We need to be thinking about exercising our right to vote and how we can do this safely. Voting is one of the elementary freedoms granted under the constitution of the United States. People with disabilities need to ensure that their voices are heard and they are able to participate in this elemental part of being in a free country.

It is possible to safely vote and it is easy as well. In Nebraska and Iowa, the Secretary of State oversees absentee voting. One just has to go online to <https://sos.nebraska.gov/elections/voter-forms> for an early voting application form -- early voting is the official name for an absentee voting in Nebraska. You can fill out the form online if you want, but it must be printed and mailed to your county election official. You can also contact your county election official by mail or fax to apply for a ballot.

To find out who your county election official is, along with their contact information, go online to <https://sos.nebraska.gov/elections/election-officials-contact-information>. The form will be mailed directly to your home and you can safely and securely make sure that your voice is heard and your vote is counted. Election offices will accept the applications up to 120 days before an election.

In Iowa, a registered voter can request an absentee ballot from their county auditor, or download a request form online at <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/electioninfo/absenteeinfo.html>. Find out who your county auditor is at <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/auditors/auditorslist.html>.

Absentee voting is completely accessible as well as safe. So, no excuse-make sure to vote in upcoming presidential elections as well as any other elections. Voting is your right -- do not neglect to exercise this right!!!

Kathy Kay, League Co-CEO

## Please, Continue COVID-19 Precautions

Decisions to “reopen” are being implemented in many states, including Nebraska and Iowa, after damage to the economy caused by mandatory COVID-19 precautions.

But the disease is still going strong. And the U.S. continues to lead the world in COVID-19-related deaths. Residents should think seriously about continuing their personal COVID-19 precautions, including rigorous cleaning and disinfecting, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), based on currently available information, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including:

- \*People 65 years and older
- \*People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- \*People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
  - \*People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
  - \*People who have serious heart conditions
  - \*People who are immunocompromised (Conditions that can cause a person to be immunocompromised, include cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications)
  - \*People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
  - \*People with diabetes
  - \*People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
  - \*People with liver disease

For most Nebraskans and Iowans, COVID-19 will seem like a cold, however, it’s much worse than the common cold or flu. For our parents and grandparents, it could be very severe, and could result in death.

Recent data shows that the virus is also affecting younger people. A CDC report said 20 percent of those hospitalized for COVID-19 in the U.S. were 20-44 years old.

And even if you’re healthy, you can pass COVID-19 on to people who could be severely affected. Help protect those you love by avoiding crowds, distancing yourself from other people and isolating yourself even if you think you just have a case of the sniffles.

By slowing the spread of COVID-19, our hospitals and clinics won’t be overwhelmed and can continue to provide care to families, friends and neighbors who need it. Flattening the curve means everybody does their part to reduce spread of COVID-19 for as long as possible. If we slow it down enough, our hospitals might just be able to keep up.

This article contains information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

## **Celebrate ADA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary July 26**

July 26 marks the 30th anniversary of Pres. George H.W. Bush signing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law.

The ADA is a landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Pres. Bush signed the ADA into law in a ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House in front of an audience full of activists, Congressional supporters, people with disabilities and their families and friends. It was, he said, "the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities."

The ADA gives civil rights protections to people with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections) that relate to different areas of public life.

In 2008, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) was signed into law and became effective on Jan. 1, 2009. The ADAAA made a number of significant changes to the definition of "disability." The changes apply to all titles of the ADA.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy has announced plans for a yearlong celebration of the ADA, centered around the theme of "Increasing Access and Opportunity." The ADA anniversary will serve as a key component of this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) observance in October.

June 22 also marks the 21st anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision. The court held that under the ADA, people with mental disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than in institutions, if community placement is deemed appropriate.

The League of Human Dignity has been active in the Independent Living Movement since its founding in 1971 and has promoted the full integration of people with disabilities into society.

While we recognize that barriers persist, we celebrate the many ways in which the ADA has transformed American society with the promise that Americans with disabilities can thrive. We recommit to our work of making the promise of the ADA a reality, enabling all Americans with disabilities to achieve their dreams and reach their full potential.

## **Omaha-SW Iowa Benefit Online Auction**

Start your bidding Monday, June 1

You have until noon Friday, June 5 to lock in those items you can't live without!

To get there:

Find the link to the auction and rules on our Facebook page.

Go there directly with the link in the electronic edition of this newsletter.

Scan the QR code accompanying this article in the electronic edition of this newsletter.

All proceeds will benefit the League of Human Dignity's Omaha and Southwest Iowa Centers for Independent Living, to help fulfill their mission: promoting independent living and the full integration of people with disabilities into their community.

## **Migraine & Headache Awareness Month**

June is National Migraine & Headache Awareness Month.

The headache, migraine and cluster communities are working together to gain awareness and recognition of headache disorder as a legitimate neurobiological disease. The communities also encourage those with headache or migraine to see a healthcare provider for proper diagnosis and treatment, and to learn about new treatments available.

For more information about headache disorders, visit the National Headache Foundation website, [headaches.org](http://headaches.org).

## **Deaf-Blind Awareness Week**

June 21 through 27 is Helen Keller Deaf Blind Awareness Week.

The observance is sponsored by the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults.

This year's theme is Deaf-Blind. And Thriving.

The essence of the message for this year's event, according to sponsors, "is that of all the obstacles people who are deaf-blind overcome, misconceptions don't have to be one of them."

People who are deaf-blind thrive in the workplace. But they also make their workplace thrive, experiencing an increase in productivity, company morale and innovation.

"So forget everything you think you know about people who are deaf-blind and experience their positive impact for yourself," event sponsors said.

For more information, visit [helenkeller.org/hknc](http://helenkeller.org/hknc).

## **2020 Golf Events Cancelled**

This year's League golf benefits for the Omaha-Southwest Iowa and the Lincoln CILs have been cancelled due to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on our communities. We are very grateful for all of the generous support the events have received in the past and we look forward to that same support again in the future.

We are aware of how deeply the coronavirus has affected our communities economically. We realize there are more critical needs during this time. We ask you all to stay safe and healthy during this period and we hope to see you on the golf course next year!

## 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!

## 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

## Nebraska Medicaid Expansion: New Benefits to Start by Oct. 1

Nebraska's expanded Medicaid program is on track to begin offering benefits to newly eligible adults through Medicaid Heritage Health Adult Expansion by this October.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will begin accepting applications on Aug. 1, through [AccessNebraska.ne.gov](http://AccessNebraska.ne.gov) or at the nearest DHHS office.

Heritage Health Adult expands Medicaid to low-income, able-bodied adults age 19 to 64. Low-income is defined as up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level.

According to the DHHS, Medicaid expansion enrollees will receive Basic benefits through a managed care program which integrates physical health, behavioral health, and pharmacy benefits into a comprehensive, coordinated program.

DHHS plans to use a demonstration waiver of Section 1115 of the Social Security Act to allow Medicaid expansion beneficiaries the opportunity to qualify for enhanced Prime benefits by participating in wellness, personal responsibility, and community engagement activities. Prime benefits include Basic services plus dental, vision and over-the-counter medications.

The plan to use of the waiver, though, must receive final approval from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

DHHS officials said they remain focused implementing Medicaid expansion and ensuring necessary processes are in place, services are available, and those qualifying know how to access the care and services.

For more information, visit the DHHS website at [dhhs.ne.gov](http://dhhs.ne.gov).

## League Services Promote Independence

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 or from school to the next phase of life
- \* 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.

We serve all 93 Nebraska counties and eight counties in Southwest Iowa.

## League Donors

March 25 through May 18, 2020

Builder (\$500 or more): Brad A. Husak, Robert Bahr, Schneider Electric North America Foundation

Supporter (\$250 to \$499): Linda Jewson,

Century (\$100 to \$249): Michael Baumgartner, Chad Stutzman, Clay Peterson, Kathy Miller, Tim Poole

Believer (\$50 to \$99): Helen Pope, Kathleen Lukesh, Tanya Smith, Kacee Conley,  
Friend (\$25-\$49): Jill Heese,  
Other: Erin J. Hergott, Thomas Carrell  
Anonymous: 8 donations  
Thank You All for Your Generous Donations!

## 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."

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.

## TAGG Purchases, Support the League

Here's what you do:

Download the free TAGG app to a smartphone and select the League of Human Dignity from the list of participating causes.

After purchasing goods or services from a participating business, take a photo of the receipt.

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.

## League Employees

### Saying Hello:

Margaret Llewellen, Secretary, Omaha.

Sheila Spanel, Secretary, Lincoln

Nada Resnik-McNenny, Metro Housing Development Manager, Lincoln

### Saying Good-Bye:

Amy Hayes, Secretary, Lincoln.

Michele Jurey, Secretary, Kearney.

Abbey Greene-Walsh, Services Coordinator, Omaha.

Terri Kremer, Metro Housing Development Manager, Lincoln

## Qualifying for SSI Program

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is designed for people with disabilities who have little or no income and few resources, and people who are age 65 or older without disabilities who meet the financial limits.

The program provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter.

SSI is administered by the Social Security Administration and is an income supplement program funded by general tax revenue, not Social Security taxes.

Income includes wages, Social Security benefits, and pensions. Income also includes things like food and shelter. The amount of income you can receive each month and still get SSI depends partly on where you live.

Resources include things like real estate, bank accounts, cash, stocks, and bonds. The total value of a person's resources count in deciding if they qualify for SSI -- a single person can have resources valued at \$2,000 or less to qualify and a couple can have resources worth \$3,000 or less to receive SSI.

People who own property they are trying to sell may be able to get SSI while trying to sell it.

Economic impact payments, also known as coronavirus stimulus payments or CARES Act payments, are not counted as income for SSI. The payments also will not count as resources for 12 months.

To learn more about how to qualify, read Social Security's online SSI booklet at [www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-11000.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-11000.pdf). The agency also offers a five- to 10-minute online Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool. The tool is available at [ssabest.benefits.gov/](http://ssabest.benefits.gov/)

If you're an adult with a disability intending to file for both SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance, you can apply online for both benefits at the same time if you:

\*Are between the ages of 18 and 65;

- \*Have never been married;
  - \*Aren't blind,
  - \*Are a U.S. citizen residing in one of the 50 states, District of Columbia, or the Northern Mariana Islands; and
  - \*Haven't applied for or received SSI benefits in the past.
- For more information about SSI, go to the SSI website: [www.ssa.gov/ssi](http://www.ssa.gov/ssi)

## Keep Reading with TBBS

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 Talking Book and Braille Service.

The free 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](mailto: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](http://nlc.nebraska.gov).

## Classifieds

FOR SALE: 2001 Dodge Ram cargo van handicap van, with electric lift, good condition. Asking \$6,350. Call 402-601-4368 (Lincoln).

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

### Get Your League Cotton Tote Bags

\$5.95 (includes sales tax) while supplies last! Only at the League of Human Dignity.

### Fleece Vests

\$29.95 (includes sales tax) while supplies last! Blue or Gray, sizes large through 4XL.

## **Hooded Sweatshirts**

Navy blue, sizes small through XL \$24.95; size 2XL \$25.75 (prices include tax). While supplies last!

## **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 Nada Resnik-McNenny at 402-441-7871 or 888-508-4758 (toll free) V/TDD or email: [nresnik-mcnenny@leagueofhumandignity.com](mailto:nresnik-mcnenny@leagueofhumandignity.com)

Equal Housing Opportunity

## **To Our Consumers**

During the current coronavirus pandemic, the League of Human Dignity has updated its procedures to best follow the directions of federal and state agencies to protect our consumers, staff and the community. With this in mind:

League offices will remain locked during business hours. League staff will continue to provide services to our consumers via phone, email, fax, mail or through other arrangements designed to emphasize minimal personal contact.

If you need to drop off timesheets, correspondence or other documents please use the mail slot or the receptacle provided.

If you need to rent or borrow durable medical equipment, please call the League and make arrangements by phone first, then you may sign the required documentation and pick up your equipment at the designated location.

If you have any questions or concerns, call your local League office. Thank you for your understanding.

## **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](http://leagueofhumandignity.com) & Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter