

ON THE LEVEL

From the League of Human Dignity

December 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

Season's Greetings from the League of Human Dignity

League Employees Celebrate Work Anniversaries

Bryan Kubicek leads of list of 11 League of Human Dignity employees who have noted work anniversaries during 2020.

Kubie, The League's Service Manager, celebrated 30 years with the League on Sept. 24.

Four others have been with the League for 10 years:

Kendra Green, a Services Coordinator in the Lincoln Center for Independent Living, started on March 1, 2010, in the Kearney Medicaid Waiver Office.

Travis Davis, custodian in the Kearney office, started on March 10, 2010.

Stacy Eickman, Kearney office Director, started on March 23, 2010.

Mary Silvester, a secretary in the Kearney office, started on Sept. 1, 2020.

Six employees reached the 5-year milestone:

Brenda Johnson, Independent Living Advisor in the Norfolk Center for Independent Living, started on Jan. 2, 2015.

Lynn White, secretary in the Lincoln office, started on Jan. 5, 2015.

Susan Hanneman, secretary in the Lincoln office, started on May 26, 2015.

Jennifer Jacob, Independent Living Advisor in the Norfolk Center for Independent Living, started on June 1, 2015.

Roger Gorn, custodian in the Southwest Iowa Center for Independent Living, started on July 9, 2015.

Myles Peterson, Level of Care Specialist in the Kearney office, started on Nov. 23, 2015.

The League recognizes its employees with length of service awards after five years of employment and each five years thereafter.

Nation Votes for Change

In this year's general election Americans rejected a second term for Pres. Donald Trump and picked Democrat Joe Biden as the next President.

The President Elect encouraged many in the disability rights community during his victory speech by mentioning people with disabilities. Biden has never shied away from mentioning his own speech disability.

Biden's running mate, Kamala Harris, records a number of firsts, including the first woman, first Black American and first Asian American vice president.

The two have a big job ahead of them.

It was the highest voter turnout in more than 100 years at more than 65 percent and the most votes cast ever in a presidential election, with Biden receiving nearly 80 million votes to Trump's 73 million.

CEO's Note

As I write this it is November, a time to take stock of what we are thankful for and to count our blessings. While it is always good to be appreciative of things like family, friends, a good job and a place to live, there are other important items to be included on the list.

Covid-19 has really turned the tables on all of us. Holidays will not be the same this year. The self-quarantine and health measures will affect all of us. Gatherings are restricted or cancelled. Many people will be celebrating the holidays alone.

So this year, I will be thankful that:

- I was able to enjoy many previous holidays (which I took for granted that we could gather as a family and celebrate)
- no one in my immediate family has been stricken with the virus.
- the League of Human Dignity has been able to keep our doors open during this trying time.

- no employees have been lost to this terrible virus.
- a vaccine is on the horizon.
- masks are plentiful and protect us against the virus
- many people actually wear masks and take health measures seriously

So, if you are reading this newsletter, be thankful that you have a chance of being around next year to celebrate in a very different way. We have hope that we can get through this if everyone takes responsibility and the precautions recommended by health officials — wear a mask, wash your hands frequently and stay six feet apart.

Stay safe and have a good holiday season, even if it will be different this year!

Kathy Kay, League Co-CEO

Social Security Recipients See Slightly Larger Checks in 2021

Nearly 70 million Americans will see a 1.3 percent increase in their Social Security benefits and SSI payments in 2021.

The benefits increase when the cost-of-living rises, as measured by the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index, which goes up with inflation, leading to a higher cost-of-living. The cost of living increase is meant to help offset these costs.

National news outlets have reported that the adjustment is less than the 1.6 percent increase in 2020 — which was one of the lowest Social Security increases ever — and means about \$240 more per year or less than \$20 per month for the average retiree.

The hike will be partially offset by rising medical costs, though. Medicare premiums are on the rise in 2021, including Medicare part B, which is going up \$3.90 per month for the standard premium — about 2.7 percent.

Social Security will mail cost of living notices throughout December to retirement, survivors, and disability beneficiaries, SSI recipients, and representative payees.

January 2021 marks other Social Security changes. The maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security payroll tax in 2021 will increase to \$142,800, up from \$137,700.

People who collect retirement benefits before reaching their full retirement age will see a change in their wage earnings test limit. Currently they have \$1 in benefits withheld for every \$2 in earnings over \$18,240 a year. That threshold goes up to \$18,960 in 2021. The year they reach full retirement age, the earnings test limit goes up to \$50,250. The month they reach full retirement age there is no longer an earnings limit.

For more information about Social Security's 2021 cost of living adjustment, go to the agencies COLA web page: www.ssa.gov/cola.

Medicare Premiums, Deductibles Going Up in 2021

Medicare Part A and Part B premiums and deductibles are going up next year. The standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B will increase by \$3.90, to \$148.50 in 2021. The Part B annual deductible will go up by \$5, to \$203.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced the hikes on Nov. 6.

Medicare 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 increases are less than had been feared due to increases emergency Medicare spending and losses from postponed care caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Medicare Part A — which covers hospitalization and some nursing home and home health care — hospital deductible will increase by \$76, to \$1,489.4.

Only about 1 percent of Medicare recipients pay a Part A premium.

National Handwashing Awareness Week December 6-12, 2020

The power to prevent COVID-19 and the Flu is in your hands!

Practicing the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness will help you remain healthy during COVID-19 or flu season! It is the best way to stop epidemics and pandemics! Adhering to the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness you will be in virtual isolation regardless of the people around you because direct contamination (inoculation) of your facial mucous membranes (eyes, nose or mouth) is the most common way infectious disease enters your body.

The 4 Principles of Hand Awareness:

1. Wash your hands when they are dirty and BEFORE eating.
2. DO NOT cough into your hands.
3. DO NOT sneeze into your hands.
4. Above all, DO NOT put your fingers into your eyes, nose or mouth.

Learn more at the awareness week website: www.henrythehand.org

Future of Obamacare in Hands of Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments early in November in a case that many fear could result in eliminating the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare.

National news organizations reporting on the case said it appears unlikely that will happen based on the comments of justices.

They could strike down only one part of the law, the individual mandate – the law’s requirement that individuals have to buy insurance. Congress in 2017 eliminated the penalty for not buying insurance under the law.

The case is California vs. Texas, and a decision most likely won’t come until at least spring. The case was brought by Republican-led states and the Trump administration, who want the ACA eliminated.

About 20 million Americans depend on the ACA for health insurance. ACA open enrollment is under way, continuing through Dec. 15.

During his campaign, President Elect Joe Biden has said he intends to build on the ACA, providing universal health care at a lower cost. All eyes are on the two upcoming Senate runoff elections in Georgia, which will determine whether Biden and the Democrats will have a chance to reform the law.

Nebraska to Issue Free Lifetime Park Passes to Veterans with Disabilities

Nebraska is now issuing free lifetime state park vehicle passes to eligible military veterans with disabilities.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission began issuing the “Disabled Veteran Vehicle Park Entry Permits” on Nov. 16.

To be eligible, a veteran must be a legal resident of Nebraska and be either rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as 50 percent or more disabled as a result of military service, or receive a pension from the department as a result of total and permanent disability that is not connected to military service.

An application form and signature from a Veteran’s Service officer is required. The application can be presented in person when applying for the permit.

Nebraska Game and Parks Service Centers can provide information and print out the application for applicants, but they must send it to the Department of Veterans Affairs for certification or to the Permit Section in Lincoln if they have already met the qualifications through a prior application for a disabled veteran Hunt/Fish permit.

To apply by mail, fill out the application and have it signed by a Veteran’s Service Officer. Mail to: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, PO Box 30370, Lincoln NE 68503-0370.

The application is available online on the Nebraska Game and Parks website, outdoornebraska.gov/veteransandmilitarypermits/

Legislation providing for the free lifetime state park entry permit passed the Nebraska Legislature and was signed into law earlier this year.

Keep Sidewalks Clear, Passable This Winter

Winter is on the way and with it chances for snow and ice, making it harder for everyone to get around.

If you find it difficult walking through snow or on ice — or parking in a space that's used for dumping snow — imagine the difficulty for someone with mobility issues. The League reminds everyone to keep that in mind this winter and please keep your sidewalks and curb cuts clear and passable.

Sidewalks and clear handicap parking spaces are a lifeline for people with disabilities and seniors with mobility issues. When snow or ice makes them inaccessible, that may prevent people from getting to work, to the store, or to the doctor. If someone using a wheelchair is forced into the street because of a blocked sidewalk, that puts them at the mercy of traffic and could become a matter of life or death.

So let's do what we can to keep sidewalks, curb cuts, ramps and handicap parking spaces clear of ice and snow this winter.

This is an issue of good citizenship and neighborliness — but it's also the law. Lincoln, Omaha, Council Bluffs, Norfolk, and most other cities and communities have ordinances that require snow removal on public sidewalks within a specified period of time. Fines may result for not abiding by the ordinances. Contact your local city government for more information on snow removal ordinances.

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.

League Employees . . .

Saying Hello:

Erin Nevius Goodrich, Services Coordinator, Omaha.

Karri Roling-Wilson, Services Coordinator, Norfolk.

Abbigail Eickmeier, Services Coordinator, Norfolk

Sunday Davis, Level of Care Specialist, Lincoln.

Tracy Grieb, Panhandle Medicaid Waiver Office Assistant Director, Scottsbluff.

Chris Grandgenett, Chief Financial Officer (formerly Financial Assistant)

Saying Good-Bye:

Jodi Mason, Chief Financial Officer, Lincoln

League Donors

Aug. 24 through Nov. 3, 2020

Supporter (\$250 to \$499): Susan Wiederspan

Century (\$100 to \$249): Lonnie Mueller

Other: AmazonSmile Foundation

*Thank You
For Your Generosity!*

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

Community Healthy Living Class

Free Via Zoom – from the comfort of your home

The League of Human Dignity, Norfolk Office, is excited to announce a new course designed to provide tools to enhance skills to advocate for and be part of the community in which you live.

Classes will focus on:

- Goal setting and Problem solving
- Receiving and using information
- Advocacy
- Physical activity
- Sustain a healthy diet
- Maintain positive changes

Classes are held for 6 weeks for one hour, once a week by Zoom!

Please contact Jane Fink at 402-371-4475 for more information to participate in this wonderful opportunity.

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 & 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.

Join Us on Social Media

Find us on Facebook and Twitter — just click the logos in the electronic version of this newsletter, the links on our webpage, or search for us from your own Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Amazon Smile

Support the League of Human Dignity When You Shop at Amazon By Buying Through AmazonSmile! Just go online to AmazonSmile, sign in and start shopping!

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.

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; 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.

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.

Long-Sleeved T Shirts

\$13.95 (includes sales tax) while supply lasts. Navy Blue, sizes small through 2XL

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: nmcnenny@leagueofhumandignity.com

Equal Housing Opportunity

League Services Promote Independence

People with disabilities have the same rights to live independently as anyone else. That's why the League of Human Dignity has been here for nearly 50 years — the services provided by the League's Centers for Independent Living help people 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.

Our CILs serve 43 Nebraska counties and eight counties in Southwest Iowa. We serve all 93 Nebraska counties with Medicaid Waiver services.

To Our Consumers

While a vaccine appears to be on the horizon, the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic currently is still going strong. The League of Human Dignity is continuing its procedures 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. Our phone numbers are listed elsewhere in this newsletter. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

And please protect yourselves — at the very least, practice social distancing, wash your hands and wear a mask.

Roll Your Sleeves Up to Fight the Flu

**December 6-12, 2020 is National Influenza Vaccination Week
Get Your Flu Shot**