

ON THE LEVEL

From the League of Human Dignity

June 2022

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

League Recognizes Employee Milestone

Nita Sipple is celebrating 20 years with the League of Human Dignity.

Nita joined the League staff in June of 2002, as an Independent Living Advisor at the Lincoln Center for Independent Living, where she continues to work today.

Nita is a native of New York State. She graduated from St. Lawrence University in her hometown of Canton, NY, with a Bachelor's Degree in psychology. She moved to Lincoln to continue her education, receiving a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Nebraska.

Nita said her work at the League has been a natural extension of her life experience.

She was involved in a life-altering car accident at age 17, which resulted in a brain injury and nearly a year of inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation.

"This experience has really brought me the compassion and understanding regarding what it is like to be a survivor of a serious injury," Nita said. "To this day, I experience the residual symptoms of my brain injury, but have learned to compensate for these, for

the most part. To help others with similar experiences, I have been a brain injury support group facilitator for many years and am active in the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska.”

As an independent Living Advisor, Nita’s work with League consumers includes advocacy, information and referral, and helping people find funding for the services they need.

She said she’s seen many state and federal changes that have affected her work over the years. Some have made things more challenging and some have made it easier to help consumers get the services they need.

Examples include adding transition services – particularly youth transition – to the core services of Centers for Independent Living and the COVID-19 pandemic.

While things are slowly getting back to normal after the pandemic’s lockdowns, COVID has resulted in a number of alterations in the way Nita does her work, she said. Included among them has been the advent of Zoom meetings and classes. Federal COVID relief funding and emergency Medicaid funding due to the pandemic have made it a bit easier to get funding for consumers in many cases, as well as the state’s adoption of Medicaid Expansion in recent years.

Nita celebrated her work milestone with the League staff during a party in her honor June 7, at the League office in Lincoln.

The League of Human Dignity honors its employees who have achieved five years of employment, and each five years thereafter.

Give To Lincoln Day Raises Nearly \$8 Million

Give To Lincoln Day on May 26 raised nearly \$8 million for Lincoln and Lancaster County nonprofits.

The 11th annual charity event, presented by the Lincoln Community Foundation and several local sponsors, including West Gate Bank, collected 27,451 individual donations, totaling \$7,964,416.27.

Preliminary figures show the League of Human Dignity received \$6,745 in donations, about \$325 more than last year’s event.

Each donation also will be matched proportionally, based on dollars raised by each nonprofit, from a \$500,000 match fund, provided by the Lincoln Community Foundation and other event sponsors.

Food Bank of Lincoln was the No. 1 fundraiser with \$343,766.

The League has participated in each of the past 10 Give To Lincoln Days.

CEO's Note

After what seemed to be a long winter, we now have Summer in full swing. The flowers are blooming and the grass always seems to need cutting! Other than springtime allergies, I love this time of year. It is easier than ever to get outside to go for a walk or bike ride.

When getting prepared to exercise, I do not give much thought to my shoes. Other than I have to have arch supports, I can wear just about any sports shoe on the market. This does not hold true for many people with disabilities. So, the news that another major shoe brand has created styles specifically made to meet the needs of people with disabilities, is very welcome.

In May, Reebok announced that it is launching its first-ever line of adaptive footwear. It will be known as Reebok Fit to Fit. The shoes have features like zippers, heel pull tabs, extra wide options, removable sock liners and low-cut designs.

“At Reebok, we continue to prioritize innovation and creating products that inspire human movement,” says Todd Krinsky, senior vice president and general manager of product at Reebok Design Group. “We’re proud to introduce our first official adaptive collection to help those with disabilities thrive — from sports and fitness to everyday life.”

Reebok collaborated with Zappos Adaptive — a special section of Zappos offering clothing and footwear tailored to those with various disabilities — to develop the new shoes. They worked with people who experience disability to design this line of adaptive footwear.

“First-hand feedback from the disability community is essential when designing or modifying a product that is accessible and also delivers on fashion,” said Dana Zumbo, business development manager for Zappos Adaptive. “We’re thrilled to have partnered with Reebok on their Fit to Fit Collection, and for the opportunity to introduce our first functional and fashionable athletic shoe to the Zappos Adaptive shopping experience.”

Styles that are part of the Fit to Fit adaptive collection are available from Reebok and Zappos in adult unisex sizes. In the future, Zappos said it will offer single shoe options.

Reebok joins other shoemakers that have rolled out adaptive styles in recent years including Nike, Ugg, Steve Madden and Stride Rite.

Kudos to all these shoemakers being inclusive in their footwear. Hopefully, this will help more people to get out and enjoy this beautiful weather — before the snow comes back!

League Donors

May 4 through May 26, 2022

Builder (\$500 or more): Garner Industries

Supporter (250 to \$499): Cada, Cada & Jewson; Crete Carrier Corporation

Century (\$100 to \$249): University Television UNL, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Reeves

Believer (\$50 to \$99): Ameritas, Continental ContiTech, Farmers Mutual of Nebraska, Lincoln Electric System, North Star High School, Facilities Planning & Construction UNL, UNL College of Engineering

Friend (\$25 to \$49): Union Bank & Trust, Academic Services & Enrollment Management UNL

Other: Kloefkorn Elementary, Lincoln Transportation & Utilities Dept., University Libraries UNL, Academic Services & Environment Management

In Memory of Marcia Jacobson: Sonja Marr

BRP 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

Inclusive Swing Installed at Woods Park

Equipment a Memorial to 5-Year-Old Heart Transplant Recipient

Lincoln's newest inclusive playground installation is complete and open to the public.

The Lincoln Parks Foundation announced in May that the basket swing, interactive chimes and rubber tiling were completed at Woods Park, near 30th and O streets. The new equipment, "Iggy's Unity Swing," is a memorial to 6-year-old Ingrid "Iggy" Borer.

"Lincoln Parks Foundation is proud to honor the life of 6-year-old Ingrid Borer," said the Parks Foundation website in announcing the memorial installation. "Iggy – as she was often known – reveled in time with her family at Woods Park swinging the day away with her twin brother and sister."

Ingrid Borer was born prematurely and with a heart defect in 2014. She and underwent a heart transplant when she was only two months old and spent nearly the first six months of her life in a hospital. She died at age 6 in December 2020.

The park installation in her honor was paid for by donations and fulfills her family's dream of creating a park space that is accessible to all and promotes inclusive play. This is the second such swing in Lincoln parks. The other is in Van Dorn park.

The project was completed at the same time as Lincoln parks officials are working on a plan to increase access to inclusive, adaptive play facilities throughout the city for children of all ability levels.

A photo accompanies this article showing a large bow-shaped frame from which is suspended a round swing. To the left of the structure are three tall chimes, rising from the rubber-tile playground surface.

Tacos for a Cause

Come Join Us: July 13, 2022

Tipsy Tina's Taco Cantina, Lincoln, NE

The League of Human Dignity is a nonprofit, consumer-controlled nonresidential community-based organization promoting a more independent lifestyle for people with disabilities.

A portion of the day's sales will be donated to help support this impactful Lincoln non-profit.

Save the Date . . .

Omaha and Southwest Iowa Centers for Independent Living 2022 Benefit Golf Event
Friday, August 12, 2022, Bent Tree Golf Club Council Bluffs, Iowa

- Four-Player Golf Scramble
- Silent Auction
- Buffet Dinner
- And More!

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.

2022 Health Observances

June

Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, Alzheimer's Association

National Aphasia Awareness Month, National Aphasia Association, American Stroke Association

Cataract Awareness Month, Prevent Blindness, American Academy of Ophthalmology

Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Month, MG Foundation of America

National Congenital Cytomegalovirus Awareness Month, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Migraine & Headache Awareness Month, Coalition for Headache and Migraine Patients

National Scleroderma Awareness Month, National Scleroderma Foundation

PTSD Awareness Month, National Center for PTSD

The last week in June is Helen Keller DeafBlind Awareness Week, Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths & Adults

June 6 is National Cancer Survivor's Day, National Cancer Survivor's Day Foundation

June 18 is Autistic Pride Day, American Autism Association

July

International Group B Strep Awareness Month, Group B Strep International

Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month, the Arthritis Foundation

National Cleft & Craniofacial Awareness & Prevention Month, AmeriFace, cleftAdvocate

Sarcoma Awareness Month, Sarcoma Foundation of America

Ultraviolet Safety Awareness Month, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
July 28 is World Hepatitis Day, World Hepatitis Alliance

July is UV Safety Awareness Month

Summer officially begins on June 21, the longest day of the year, and with it comes more time outdoors soaking up those rays — fun in the sun — and an increased risk from exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

And that makes July the perfect month to highlight UV Safety Awareness. Because too much exposure to the sun's short wavelength and longer wavelength radiation — UV-A and UV-B — can damage skin and eyes.

Overexposure can suppress the body's immune system, cause premature skin aging, skin cancer, and eye conditions that lead to cataracts and macular degeneration. The damage builds up over time, so start taking sun safety precautions at an early age. To minimize your risks:

- Cover up - wear tightly-woven clothing that blocks light, and a hat that protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose and scalp, and wear UV-absorbent sunglasses
- Use sunscreen - at least SPF 15. You want to block both UVA and UVB rays – and use the right amount: at least an ounce every two hours.
- Limit exposure - find some shade. UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Enjoy the outdoors this summer but remember to protect your eyes and skin.

Airport Joins 'Hidden Disabilities' Program

UK-Based Project Aims to Help Travelers Get Needed Assistance

Air passengers with "hidden" disabilities are one step closer to getting the help they need while traveling.

The Lincoln Airport has partnered with the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower organization, to bring its Sunflower Lanyard Program to Lincoln. The airport is the first in Nebraska to implement this program.

Disabilities that are not obvious to others include autism, chronic pain, learning difficulties, mental health conditions, speech impairments, sight loss, hearing loss, respiratory conditions diabetes, chronic pain, depression and anxiety disorders — disabilities that significantly impact day-to-day life. You may not be able to see these conditions but they're still there.

People living with these disabilities often face barriers in their daily lives including a lack of understanding and negative attitudes. Travelers may choose to wear the Sunflower lanyard to discreetly identify that they may need support, help, or just a little more time in shops, transport, or public spaces.

The Sunflower organization, based in the United Kingdom, helps people discreetly inform others that they have a disability that may not be readily apparent. They do this by obtaining and using a free Sunflower printed lanyard or another Sunflower-branded item. The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower indicates to anyone, particularly airport personnel, that the wearer may need more assistance and that patience is appreciated.

Any travelers who feel they have a hidden disability can ask for a lanyard, bracelet or sunflower pin badge at the airline ticket counter or customer service counter. There is no registration required.

Those who wish to participate in the program determine for themselves when to wear the items. When someone working at the Airport sees an individual wearing a Hidden Disabilities Sunflower-branded item, they will know that this person may need extra assistance/patience.

Wearers are not exempt from normal airport operations like security screenings.

The program is relatively new to the United States. It began in the United Kingdom and is recognized in several other countries. The program is recognized at a growing number of U.S. airports.

For more information, go online to hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/us.

The Transportation Security Administration also offers "TSA Cares," a helpline number designed to assist travelers who have disabilities and medical conditions, prior to getting to the airport. Travelers may call TSA Cares at 1-855-787-2227 with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint.

Try the League's Equipment Loan & Rental Program

Have you or a family member ever suffered 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?

Through the League of Human Dignity's Equipment Loan Program, you can 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

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

CMS Unveils More User-Friendly Medicare Website

Medicare & Medicaid officials have updated their agency's website to make it easier to access and navigate.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) unveiled the more "user-friendly" Medicare.org website May 18.

"CMS is making Medicare.gov easier to use and more helpful for people seeking to understand their Medicare coverage, which is an essential part of staying healthy," said CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure. "We are committed to listening to the people we serve as we design and deliver new, personalized online resources and expanded customer support options for people with Medicare coverage and those who support them."

The website updates, ongoing since 2021, are based on consumer feedback. The site features timely initiatives and messages on a redesigned homepage. They highlight key tasks and information most frequently sought by people with Medicare, people nearing Medicare eligibility, and their families.

The latest improvements also, add more detailed pricing information about Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) Policies, providing the information people need to compare Medigap plan costs and coverage options.

CMS is committed to providing comprehensive and easily accessible information to support Medicare decision making. Additional improvements are planned for the next

few months to streamline the Medicare Plan Finder landing page and the Medicare Account landing page, and align the look and feel with the new home page.

CMS continues to use feedback from Medicare.gov users, along with human-centered design principles, to explore and plan future enhancements to the website and is committed to expanding personalization to create an optimized customer experience for people with Medicare and those who help them.

2022 Lincoln Benefit Golf Event

Thursday, September 15, 2022, The Highlands Golf Course, 5501 NW 12th Street, Lincoln, NE

This is an 18-hole, four-player scramble. Register a team!

Sponsorship and underwriting options also are available. 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

Proceeds from this annual event will go to the Lincoln Center for Independent Living, to help promote independent living and the full integration of people with disabilities into society.

League Services Promote Independence

People with disabilities often face barriers to achieving and maintaining their independence.

The services provided by the League of Human Dignity's four Centers for Independent Living in Nebraska and Southwest Iowa are designed to help them overcome those barriers.

Services provided by the League 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

The League has the experience and the expertise — we have been helping people achieve and maintain their independence since 1971.

Find out whether we can help you achieve or maintain your independence by calling 402-441-7871. Contact our offices at 1701 P Street in Lincoln, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, or call any of our other Centers for Independent Living, listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

Our Centers for Independent Living serve 43 Nebraska counties and eight counties in Southwest Iowa. We also serve all 93 Nebraska counties through the state's Medicaid Waiver Program for people who are aged or have disabilities.

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 changes are welcome. Call the League at 402-441-7871.

Classifieds

HELP WANTED: Services Coordinator - Omaha, Norfolk

The League of Human Dignity is seeking full time Services Coordinators in Omaha and Northeast Nebraska to assist adults with disability to remain in their homes and communities.

Baccalaureate or graduate degree in human services fields required AND at least two years full-time experience in long-term care, teaching, gerontology, rehabilitation, community health, working with individuals with disabilities, or closely related social human services.

Qualified candidates with disability are strongly encouraged to apply. These positions remain open until filled. Send cover letter and resume to: In Omaha, Lora Young, lyoung@leagueofhumandignity.com

In Norfolk, Jane Fink, jfink@leagueofhumandignity.com
EOE

HELP WANTED: Independent Living Advisor - Omaha

The League of Human Dignity Omaha Center for Independent Living is expanding and seeking to add to our team a full time Independent Living Advisor to provide services that assist people with disability to live independently in their homes and communities.

Applicant must have a degree in a human service field or experience working with individuals with disability.

Qualified candidates with disability are strongly encouraged to apply. Open until filled. Send cover letter and resume to: Lora Young, lyoung@leagueofhumandignity.com
EOE

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

League of Human Dignity Building Corporation

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 are HUD units, and rent is based on income.

Eligible applicants must experience disability and must qualify under income guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

To apply, or for more information, call 402-441-7871 or 888-508-4758 (toll free) or email: kkay@leagueofhumandignity.com

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Join Us on Social Media

Find us on Facebook — just click the logo in the print 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 print version of this newsletter or on our webpage or find us @LHD68508.

Radio Reading Networks for Iowans, Nebraskans

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 400 Iowa volunteers read print information to the more than 11,000 print-disabled listeners. Listeners can access the IRIS signal in seven different ways, including custom radio and digital receivers, via web stream, podcasts, on their mobile phones and devices, and smart speakers. 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 supported by the state, grants and donations. The service ranges in cost from about \$40 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. You also can download the form, fill it out and mail it in. Call 877-404-4747 for more information.

Nebraska's Radio Talking Book Network, or RTBN, now in its 46th year, offers a similar service for the estimated 39,700 people who are blind and visually impaired across the state.

More than 70 volunteers read aloud print media including local and statewide newspapers, including local grocery store and department store ads, and magazines. Listeners also can access programming in several ways — via RTBS FM radio, internet stream, smartphone app, internet receiver options, via phone and from the RTBS website, rtbs.org.

To apply for a free RTBS radio, fill out the form available on the organization's website or call 402-572-3003 for more information.

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.