

ON THE LEVEL

From the League of Human Dignity

December 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 Mourns Passing of Nancy Erickson

One of Founders, Incorporators of the League of Human Dignity; First Director of Lincoln Center for Independent Living

The League is mourning the death of one of our founders, Rev. Nancy Erickson, 76, of Lincoln. Nancy passed away on Sept. 25, 2022, after a short stay at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Lincoln.

Nancy was a charter member of the League, which was formed in 1971, and worked toward the organization's incorporation. She was an integral part of the League during its early days. She served three terms as President, and several more years on the League's executive committee. She led the League's Legislative Committee through most of the 1970s. In 1976, she was the League's representative at the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals.

In 1980, the League became the first private, non-profit, consumer organization to receive federal funding to establish an Independent Living Center. Nancy assisted with the writing of the initial CIL grant, while she served as Planning Director of the United Way of Lincoln Lancaster County. She then was hired to direct the CIL, hire its first staff and lead the development of its programs. She held the position until 1985.

Nancy lived a life of service to others, advocating at the local, state and national levels for the rights of people with disabilities and others who need a helping hand. She earned a number of awards and honors for her work.

At the state level, Nancy also was appointed by Governors Jim Exon and Bob Kerry to serve on the Governor's Committee for the Employment of the Handicapped, as well as the Public Buildings Safety Advisory Committee, and the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission.

Nancy was born on Sept. 12, 1945, to Joseph and Dorothy Erickson. As a child, she lived on a farm between Wahoo and Ceresco, NE.

In 1969, she earned a degree in psychology and sociology from Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, followed by a master's degree in educational psychology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and in 1989 earned a Master of Divinity degree from Yale University.

She became an ordained minister and served as Associate Pastor at First Plymouth Congregational Church in Lincoln from 2004 until retiring in 2017.

A celebration of Nancy's life was held Oct. 1, at First Plymouth Church.

Nancy is survived by her husband, Aaron Gibbs; brother Bill Erickson (Kris), Lincoln; sister, Joan Erickson (Brian Husby), Greeley, CO; Bill's children, Ellie Erickson (Lindsay Smith), Austin, TX; AnnieLaurie Erickson (Patch Somerville), New Orleans, LA; Conor DoRan, Lincoln; Joan's children, Aaron Rankin, Houston, TX; Jonathan Rankin (Carrie), Concord, MA, and Hannah Rankin (Billy Alexander), North Aurora, IL; and Mason Husby of Richmond, VA, a step-nephew; five great nieces and nephews, and many extended family members, former colleagues, and friends.

CEO's Note

As the days get shorter and the air gets colder, we realize the season of Winter is upon us. Now we start to be prepared for winter weather driving. We make sure our tires on our cars are ready to tackle the challenges of snow and ice. We start dressing in our layers and setting up our supplies of snow shovels, ice melt and even snowblowers for combating the conditions unique to this time of year.

We need to realize that if it is hard to drive and walk on the ice and snow, it will be even harder for individuals who experience mobility impairment to navigate safely and easily. This is not only a concern for the disability world, it is a concern for all. Slips and falls

can happen to anyone when the surface conditions are icy or snow packed. Plus, this runs the risk that a person could develop a disability as a result of falling.

Please make sure to adequately treat your sidewalks at your homes or businesses by removing snow and putting down chemicals or sand so that the surface is not hazardous and creates a slipping and/or falling risk. Also, make sure that curb cuts are cleared and treated as well. Winter is dreaded for many reasons, let's not make the additional burden of obstacles for individuals who have difficulties with mobility.

Please ensure that your sidewalks are cleared of snow and treated to ensure the safest conditions possible for all pedestrians.

Kathy Kay
League Co-CEO

Woman at Heart of Olmstead Decision has Died

[Advocate, Artist Lois Curtis, 56, Passed Away at Home in Georgia](#)

Lois Curtis, who was at the center of one of the most important disability rights cases in U.S. history, has died.

Curtis, 55, was lead plaintiff in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, the case that led to the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1999 Olmstead Decision. She died of pancreatic cancer on Nov. 3, 2022, at her home near Atlanta, GA.

As a child, Curtis's cognitive and developmental disabilities made it difficult for her family to care for her. As a result, she spent nearly 20 years of her life in institutions. When she was 27 and a patient at a Georgia psychiatric hospital, a social worker and other staff believed she could benefit from a community-based program, but she was not eligible due to her hospitalization.

The state of Georgia refused to allow Curtis to move into her own home in the community. Her cause was taken up by Atlanta Legal Aid, which filed suit on her behalf and on behalf of a patient at another institution, Elaine Wilson.

A District Court in favor of the women, and the case eventually reached the Supreme Court. On June 22, 1999, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg delivered the court's decision. Justices ruled 6-3 that the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits segregation of people with disabilities in institutions when they are able and willing to be integrated in the community.

People with disabilities have a right to community-based, state-funded services.

The argument at the heart of the Olmstead decision is that people who live fully integrated in their community live better, more fulfilling lives – it's the same case the League of Human Dignity has made throughout our history and the driving force behind the Independent Living movement.

Following the decision, Curtis advocated for people with disabilities and discovered her talent as an artist.

In the lawsuits that followed the ruling nationwide, courts made it clear that the decision applies not only to psychiatric hospitals but to all state and Medicaid-funded institutions, as well as to people living in the community who are at risk of being institutionalized.

While there is still much work to do, the Olmstead Decision helps us see a future in which all Americans, regardless of disability, receive the support they need to be part of the community rather than segregated in institutions.

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: knavratil@leagueofhumandignity.com

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Parking Benefit Aids Lincoln Non-Profits

This year's Cornhuskers football team may not have had the season fans would have liked, but true to their reputation as the best fans in the sport, they continued to show up, and are doing more good than they may know.

Each football season, the League of Human Dignity Membership Group sells parking spaces to fans on Husker home game days. This year the Membership will use the proceeds from the fundraiser to benefit four Lincoln organizations that help people in need.

The Membership is giving \$500 to the League of Human Dignity's Lincoln Center for Independent Living, helping promote the full integration of people with disabilities into the community.

In addition, the Membership voted to donate \$500 to Bridges to Hope.

Bridges to Hope offers services designed to help formerly incarcerated men and women to successfully transition back to life in the community.

At least \$500 will go to the Food Bank of Lincoln. The mission of the Food Bank of Lincoln is to alleviate hunger in Southeast Nebraska.

The Membership will give \$500 to Clinic With a Heart. The organization is a faith-based initiative that serves people who are uninsured or underinsured by providing healthcare free of charge.

Join Us on Social Media

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

League Donors

Sept. 28 through Nov. 21, 2022

Builder (\$500 or more): Susan Wiederspan. David Knorr, Nancy Buckley

Century (\$100 to \$249): W.D. & Judy Peterson, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Shapiro

Thank you all for your generosity!

Social Security Benefits Set to Increase in 2023

People who receive Social Security benefits can expect a raise starting in January — what amounts to the biggest Cost of Living Adjustment in 40 years.

About 70 million Americans will see a 8.7 percent increase in their Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments in 2023. On average, benefits will increase by more than \$140 a month.

“Medicare premiums are going down and Social Security benefits are going up in 2023, which will give seniors more peace of mind and breathing room,” said Acting Social Security Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi.

The raise is the result of an increase in the cost of living, as measured by the Department of Labor’s Consumer Price Index. The index rises when inflation increases. This change means prices for goods and services, on average, are higher. The cost-of-living adjustment in Social Security helps to offset these costs.

COLA notices have been mailed to recipients throughout December. Recipients also can go online to see their new benefit amount by using the Message Center in their “my Social Security” account.

“This year’s substantial Social Security cost-of-living adjustment is the first time in over a decade that Medicare premiums are not rising and shows that we can provide more support to older Americans who count on the benefits they have earned,” Kijakazi said.

January also marks other changes in Social Security, based on the increase in the national average wage index. The maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll tax in 2023 will rise to \$160,200.

Also, the retirement earnings test exempt amount will rise to \$21,240 a year or \$1,770 a month in 2023. One dollar of Social Security benefits will be withheld for every \$2 in earnings above the limit.

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.

The League is a statewide partner agency with Nebraska's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). The ADRC is a state agency providing information, referral and assistance for accessing community services and long-term care options.

Medicare Premiums, Deductibles to Drop in 2023

CMS Announces Projected Costs for Parts A, B & D

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is reducing premiums, deductibles, and coinsurance amounts for Medicare Parts A and B in 2023.

The standard Part B monthly premiums will be \$164.90, a decrease of \$5.20 from 2022. The annual deductible for all Medicare Part B beneficiaries is \$226 in 2023, a decrease of \$7 from 2022. The CMS announced the decreases on Sept. 27, 2022.

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 decrease in the Part B premiums and deductible is largely due to lower-than-projected spending on the Alzheimer's drug Aduhelm other Part B items and services, CMS officials said.

The Medicare Part A deductible that beneficiaries will pay when admitted to the hospital will be \$1,600 in 2023, an increase of \$44 from 2022. The Part A inpatient hospital deductible covers beneficiaries' share of costs for the first 60 days of Medicare-covered inpatient hospital care in a benefit period.

Medicare Part A covers inpatient hospital, skilled nursing facility, and some home health care services. About 99 percent of Medicare beneficiaries do not have a Part A premium since they have at least 40 quarters of Medicare-covered employment.

The projected average Medicare Advantage premiums are expected to drop 8 percent in 2023, from \$19.52 per month in 2022 to \$18.

The average basic monthly premium for standard Medicare Part D coverage is projected to be approximately \$31.50 in 2023 — a decrease of 1.8% from \$32.08 in 2022.

The Medicare Part D program helps people with Medicare pay for brand-name and generic prescription drugs. Part D is one of Medicare's most popular programs, with more than 49 million beneficiaries enrolled.

Source: CME.gov

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

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, imagine the difficulty for someone using a wheelchair, walker or other mobility device. The League reminds everyone to keep that in mind this winter and please keep your sidewalks and curb cuts clear and passable.

Sidewalks are a lifeline for people with disabilities and seniors. When snow or ice makes them impassable, 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.

This is more than an issue of good citizenship and neighborliness – 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.

Let's Keep In Touch

Get On The Level in your email box! Subscribe here – send your email address to janderson@leagueofhumandignity.com

A publication of the League of Human Dignity, promoting independent living for people with disabilities since 1971

Health Observances

December 2022

December 5-11 is National Handwashing Awareness Week, Sponsored by Henry the Hand Foundation.

Dec. 5-9 is National influenza Vaccination Week, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dec. 3 is the International Day of Persons with Disability, United Nations.

January 2023

Mental Wellness Month, Mental Health Center

National Cervical Health Awareness Month, sponsored by the National Cervical Cancer Coalition.

Glaucoma Awareness Month, Glaucoma Research Foundation.

National Birth Defects Prevention Month, National Birth Defects Prevention Network.

Thyroid Awareness Month, American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists.

Jan. 29 through Feb 4 is World Leprosy Week, The Leprosy Mission

League Employees

Saying Hello:

Alexis Wagner, Omaha CIL Director and SW Iowa CIL Director

Lora Young, Level of Care Specialist, Omaha (formerly Omaha CIL Director and SW Iowa CIL Director)

Kayla Jones, Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Jerry Bergman, Services Coordinator, Omaha

Ashley Senn, Services Coordinator, Omaha.

Saying Good-Bye:

Jolene Zochol, Medicaid Waiver Supervisor, Lincoln

Ashley Foltz, Independent Living Advisor, Lincoln

Brandy Brown, Level of Care Specialist, Lincoln

Ceah Midder, Services Coordinator, Omaha

Gail Johnson, Services Coordinator, North Platte

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.

League Loan & Rental Program

Has a recent illness or accident required that you or a family member 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 equipment.

We loan Tub Seats & Benches, Walkers, Canes, Crutches, Commodes, Toilet Risers, Reachers, Grab Bars and more.

A small one-time fee is required and the loan lasts as long as the items are needed.

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 maintenance and servicing during the rental period.

All loans and rentals are subject to availability.

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

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

For details, call or visit the League of Human Dignity office nearest you.

National Handwashing Awareness Week

December 4-10, 2022

www.henrythehand.org

Annual ADA Symposium Set for Kansas City

Registration for the 2023 National ADA Symposium opens on Jan. 8.

The annual event is May 21-24, at the Westin Crown Center n Kansas City, MO. A virtual event is June 12-14.

The symposium is the most comprehensive conference on the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is the source for the latest information on regulations and guidelines, implementation strategies, and best practices related to the ADA. Presenters include nationally recognized representatives of agencies and organizations that are involved with the ADA.

The ADA will mark its 33rd anniversary in 2023. The annual conference is coordinated and hosted by the ADA National Network and the Great Plains ADA Center, based in Columbia, Mo.

Other details for this year's symposium are yet to be announced. For the most up-to-date information, visit www.adasymposium.org.

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.

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

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.

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 Products

Long-Sleeved T Shirts, limited sizes, \$13.95

Cotton Tote Bag \$5.95

Fleece Vests, limited sizes, \$29.95

Get Yourself and Your Family Vaccinated!

A yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses

National Influenza Vaccination Week Dec. 5-9

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 What You Buy & Support the League

1. Download the TAGG mobile app.
2. Choose us & Upload a photo of your receipt from a participating business.
3. The business will make a donation to us AT NO EXTRA COST TO YOU