

ON THE LEVEL

From the League of Human Dignity

April 2023

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. Our website: leagueofhumandignity.com

Annual Online Giving Event Set for May 24

Online charitable giving days are an easy way to show support for local nonprofits like the League of Human Dignity.

The annual Give To Lincoln Day, coordinated by the Lincoln Community Foundation, is just such an opportunity. The 24-hours of online giving starts at midnight on Wednesday, May 24, and runs through 11:59 p.m. This year marks the 12th straight year for the event.

During the annual giving day, residents go online and give during the 24-hour period, donating to the nonprofits serving Lincoln and Lancaster County, and demonstrating their support for the needed services these organizations provide in Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Donations primarily will be made online at www.givetolincoln.com. On the website, donors can easily find their favorite nonprofit or learn about other organizations and make their gifts. But the foundation also has in the past made arrangements for in-person donations.

All donation on May 24 will be matched proportionally, based on dollars raised by each nonprofit, from a \$500,000 match fund, provided by the Lincoln Community Foundation along with this year's presenting sponsor West Gate Bank, and more than 20 other sponsoring organizations and individuals.

Links soon will be available on the League's website, leagueofhumandignity.com and Facebook page. And follow the League on Twitter (@league68508) for the most up-to-date information.

The League has participated in each of the past 11 Give To Lincoln Days.

Last year's Give To Lincoln Day raised a record \$8,010,304 for 479 local nonprofits, from nearly 28,000 individual donations. In its 11-year history, the event has raised almost \$50 million.

League Golf Events a Chance to Give

League Centers for Independent Living in Omaha, Southwest Iowa, and Lincoln are again planning for golf fundraisers this year.

Planning is just getting under way for this year's events — which are the major fundraising events of the year — but the dates already have been set.

The Omaha and Southwest Iowa CILs traditionally hold their golf benefit together. This year, the event planned for Friday, June 16, again at Bent Tree Golf Club just east of Council Bluffs, Iowa. For more details, see information elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Lincoln event is Thursday, Sept. 21, at the Highlands Golf Course in Lincoln. For more details, see information elsewhere in this newsletter.

Proceeds from the two golf events will go to their respective CILs, helping them provide Independent Living services for people with disabilities in their areas.

CEO's Note

While some disabilities are present from birth, others are acquired throughout life. What are some common causes of developing a disability or a secondary disability? Injuries at work? Freak accidents? It's true, they do happen. But the answer might surprise you.

According to the Council on Disability Awareness, illnesses like cancer, heart attack or diabetes cause the majority of long-term disabilities. This is followed by back pain, injuries, and arthritis are also significant causes. Many of these are not work-related, therefore not covered by workers' compensation. Lifestyle choices and personal behavior that lead to obesity are also becoming major contributing factors. Musculoskeletal disorders are the #1

cause of disabilities and some examples of these are: arthritis, back pain, and spine/joint disorders.

What are the best ways to try to prevent developing a disability? While it is not always possible to prevent developing a disability, you may reduce your odds by making a few commonsense improvements in the way you live.

Quit smoking — Smoking has been linked to a variety of life-threatening illnesses including cancer, heart disease and stroke. Try to make quitting a priority. There are many resources to address how to stop smoking.

Get regular checkups — Regular checkups and screenings are especially important if you have a family history of risk factors.

Get regular cancer screenings — Your family history and certain risk factors are an important consideration when determining when and what screenings you need.

Watch your weight — Extra pounds can contribute to many risk factors including heart disease and diabetes as well as put strain on your skeletal system and joints.

Get regular exercise — Regular exercise is linked to a lower risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack and cancer.

Avoid excessive drinking — Heavy drinking may lead to liver damage and cancer as well as other serious health risks.

Become safety-minded — This means to stay alert to avoid accidents. Behaviors such as wearing your seat belts, driving defensively, not being a distracted driver and using proper safety recommended equipment at work and at play all fall under this category

Take extra care of your back — Back injuries are among the leading causes of preventable disability. Use proper techniques during workouts, lose excess weight as well as learn how to lift items the correct way to avoid injuring your back.

Make sure to pay attention to your mental and emotional health — Build time into your schedule for relaxation and doing things that make you happy. Cultivate healthy social relationships and try to reduce stress as this can help you avoid any illnesses.

So, make sure to work on ways to prevent developing a disability, or an additional disability. You can take steps to mitigate your risk. For more information on Living Well With a Disability, contact the League of Human Dignity, Inc.

Kathy Kay, League Co-CEO

Youth Transition Course

The League of Human Dignity is excited to announce a course designed to help young people with disabilities find success in their lives after high school.

Whether your plans include continuing education, joining the workforce or simply living productive, independent lives as part of your community, this six-week course will provide the tools needed to help you make healthy changes, set and achieve goals, overcome obstacles, and advocate for yourself as you make the transition from high school.

This is a six-week Youth Online Transition Course, Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., June 6 through July 18 (no class the week of July 4).

Classes will be held on Zoom. To register, contact Shawna Keller at 402-441-7871. The registration deadline is May 19.

Classes will focus on:

Effective communication and dealing with negative emotions.

Acquisition and use of information.

Physical activity and healthy levels of exercise.

Maintaining a healthy diet.

Advocating for personal and healthcare system improvements.

Maintaining positive changes.

Work on and discuss setting goals and problem solving.

Eligible students are age 14 through 21 and have a disability.

Fair Housing Act Turns 55 This Year

April marks the celebration of the anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. The annual observance highlights the country's efforts to end housing discrimination and raises awareness of fair housing rights.

This April marks the 55th anniversary of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 — commonly known as the Fair Housing Act.

The act was signed into law by Pres. Lyndon Johnson on April 11, 1968. The signing followed the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and was the culmination of a long, difficult legislative process.

The law was a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Enactment was such an achievement that its first anniversary in 1969, and each year since, has been designated as a time for celebration.

Fair housing means that everyone has the same right to buy or rent safe, decent housing without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability. For more information about fair housing rights, visit the Fair

Housing and Equal Opportunity website at www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/

For questions about discrimination or to file a complaint in Nebraska and Western Iowa, contact the Fair Housing Center of Nebraska and Iowa in Omaha at 402-934-6675 or toll free at 800-639-5853.

People who believe they have been discriminated against can also file a complaint by contacting HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at 800-669-9777 (voice) or 800-877-8339 (Relay). Housing discrimination complaints also can be filed at [hud.gov/fair housing](http://hud.gov/fair_housing).

Progress has been slow and much still remains to be done to make the dream of fair housing a reality, but the landmark Fair Housing Act at least keeps alive the dream of open and welcoming communities that are free from discrimination and hostility.

View 2023 Housing Month Opening Ceremony

The official ceremony celebrating this year's Fair Housing Month is set for Tuesday, April 11.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is celebrating the 55th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act with events highlighting the impact and significance of this landmark civil rights law. This year's theme is "Choices for All Voices: Building an Equitable Future."

The ceremony, from 12 to 1:30 p.m. Central Time, kicks off the month's celebration and is hosted by the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO).

The ceremony will highlight HUD's progress toward protecting and expanding fair housing rights for all. The program will include remarks from HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for FHEO Demetria McCain, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Council of Northern New Jersey Lee Porter, and the Texas Southern University Debate Team.

Those interested in watching the Opening Ceremony can register for free by visiting the Fair Housing Month website, www.hud.gov/FHM, and clicking on the Fair Housing Month Opening Ceremony link.

Also register to watch the Fair Housing Month 2023 National Event, a virtual housing policy conversation, on April 26. The title of the event is "Building an Equitable Future: HUD Conversation with Gen Z College Students."

Nebraska State Park Users to See Improvements

Projects at several Nebraska state parks, completed in 2022 or scheduled for completion in 2023 include many improvements, several of special interest to people with disabilities.

At Merritt Reservoir State Recreation Area near Valentine, improvements at the Willow Cove and Cottonwood Campgrounds include two restrooms in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, built at a cost of \$70,000.

At Sherman Reservoir State Recreation Area near Loup City, a \$1.1 million campground improvement project includes ADA-compliant sites. In addition, two accessible restrooms were installed at the Thunder Bay boat ramp and Fisherman's Bridge Area at a cost of \$70,000.

At Smith Falls State Park near Valentine, a \$2.2 million project now under way includes a new accessible boardwalk with possible future ADA-compliant upgrades.

At Keller Park State Recreation Area near Ainsworth, two ADA-compliant restrooms were built at a cost of \$50,964.

At Victoria Springs State Recreation Area near Anselmo, a \$289,852 project included two new accessible cabins. In addition, two new accessible restrooms were built at a cost of \$63,000.

The new and ongoing improvements were announced by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Improvements are part of the Commission's 10-year capital maintenance plan. Funding is largely from the Capital Maintenance Fund, Park Cash Fund, and other state, federal and nonprofit sources.

For more information, visit the Nebraska Game & Parks website, outdoornebraska.gov/parksprojects

Omaha & SW Iowa Benefit Golf Event

Save the date! The Omaha and Southwest Iowa Centers for Independent Living 2023 Benefit Golf Event is Friday, June 16, 2023, at Bent Tree Golf Club, Council Bluffs, IA.

The event includes a four-player golf scramble, silent auction, buffet dinner and more!

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

For more information, call 402-595-1256 in Omaha or 712-323-6863 in Council Bluffs.

Health Observances

April 2023

Irritable Bowel Syndrome Awareness Month, International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders

Medicaid Awareness Month, Medicaid- Awareness.com

World Autism Awareness Month, Autism Speaks

National Sarcoidosis Awareness Month, Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research

Occupational Therapy Month, American Occupational Therapy Association

Oral Cancer Awareness Month, Oral Cancer Foundation

Parkinson's Awareness Month, American Parkinson Disease Association

April 24-30 is World Immunization Week, World Health Organization

April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day, United Nations

May 2023

Arthritis Awareness Month, Arthritis Foundation

Hepatitis Awareness Month, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Lupus Awareness Month, Lupus Foundation of America

Mental Health Awareness Month, National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Asthma & Allergy Awareness Month, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

National Celiac Disease Awareness Month, Beyond Celiac

High Blood Pressure Education Month, National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

National Osteoporosis Awareness Month, American Society for Bone and Mineral Research

National Stroke Awareness Month, American Stroke Association

National Women's Health Month, National Cervical Cancer Coalition

Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

May 31 is World No Tobacco Day, World Health Organization

Learn Your Risk Factors for Stroke

May is National Stroke Awareness Month in the United States.

This observance aims to create public awareness about stroke risk factors and to lessen the occurrence of stroke in the U.S.

A stroke is a medical condition where poor blood flow to the brain results in cell death. — a stroke happens in America every 40 seconds, and someone dies of it every four minutes. Stroke is the second leading cause of death worldwide and a leading cause of adult disability, according to the American Stroke Association.

There are two main types of stroke — ischemic stroke, which occurs due to lack of blood flow, and hemorrhagic stroke, which occurs due to bleeding. Both conditions cause parts of the brain to stop functioning properly.

Recent evidence shows that stroke survival and cognitive decline are driven by blood pressure levels measured as young as age 40.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the most important and controllable risk factor for stroke and heart disease. May also is National High Blood Pressure Education Month.

Studies over the past few years show a connection between hypertension and age-related cognitive decline and dementia — suggesting that what is good for the heart is good for the brain. Chronic hypertension can weaken blood vessels throughout the body, including those that supply the brain with valuable nutrients.

For more information about stroke, visit the American Stroke Foundation website, www.stroke.org

Awareness Key to Deterring SS Scams

It's Social Security scam warning time again.

Deceiving Social Security recipients in order to steal their money is such a big business that the Social Security Administration and partner agencies sponsor an annual event aimed at raising awareness about it.

Officials say consumer awareness is the most effective method of deterring these crimes. So, this year's Slam the Scam Day was March 9, during the Federal Trade Commission's National Consumer Protection Week.

“Slamming the scam begins with consumers quickly taking a step to hang up the phone, or delete suspicious texts and emails, without responding to the scammers,” said Gail S. Ennis, Inspector General for the Social Security Administration. “That remains the easiest and most effective method to avoid falling prey to these vicious scams.”

A typical tactic is the government imposter scam. Someone claiming to be a Social Security or other federal agency employee, tries to pressure victims into making cash or gift card payments to fix alleged Social Security number problems or to avoid arrest. They may ask for personal information, demand payment or make threats.

These scams primarily use the telephone, but some criminals may also use email, text messages, social media, or U.S. mail.

SSA and the Office of the Inspector General — one of this year's partner agencies -- urge everyone to be cautious of any contact claiming to be from a government agency

about a problem you don't recognize. Be aware that real government officials will NEVER:

threaten arrest or legal action against you unless you immediately send money;

promise to increase your benefits or resolve a problem if you pay a fee or move your money into a protected account;

require payment with gift cards, prepaid debit cards, wire transfer, Internet currency, or by mailing cash;

try to gain your trust by providing fake "documentation," false "evidence," or the name of a real government official.

For more information, go to www.ssa.gov/scam/resources.html. Report Social Security-related scams and fraud online at secure.ssa.gov/ipff/home. Other government imposter scams may be reported to the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/scams.

The Federal Trade Commission reported consumer losses to government imposter scams climbed to more than \$446 million in 2021 and nearly \$509 million in 2022.

TAGG Your Purchases & 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

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:

- 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 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 from 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 adults who are aged or have disabilities.

The League of Human Dignity 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.

Where to Find Us

LINCOLN

Center for Independent Living
1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone 402-441-7871

OMAHA

Center for Independent Living
5513 Center Street, Omaha, NE 68106
Phone 402-595-1256

NORFOLK

Center for Independent Living
400 Elm Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701
Phone 402-371-4475

SOUTHWEST IOWA

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

PANHANDLE

Medicaid Waiver Office
17 E 21 St., Scottsbluff, NE 69361

Phone 308-632-0470

KEARNEY

Medicaid Waiver Office
3811 29th Avenue, Suite 2
Kearney NE 68845
Phone 308-224-3665

NORTH PLATTE

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

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

Barrier Removal 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

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.

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.

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 Talking Book and Braille Service.

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

The collection consists of books and magazines like 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 free, easy-to-use playback equipment on long-term-loan. 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.

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.

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

The League of Human Dignity Building Corp. Is Taking Applications

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 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 Katie Navratil at 402-441-7871 or 888-508-4758 (toll free) V/TDD or email knavratil@leagueofhumandignity.com

Equal Housing Opportunity

League Employees

Saying Hello:

Lewis Ruberti, Omaha Center for Independent Living Director and SW Iowa Center for Independent Living Director

Matthew Nicholson, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Lavonda McClinton, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Kandi Holmes, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Melanie McGinnis, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Abbey Locatis, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Andrea Rodriguez, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Norfolk

Kelsy Heusman, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Saying Good-Bye:

Tyler Briggs, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Alexis Wagner, Omaha Center for Independent Living Director and SW Iowa Center for Independent Living Director

Lincoln Benefit Golf Event

Save the date! The 2023 Lincoln Benefit Golf Event is Thursday, September 21, 2023, at The Highlands Golf Course, 5501 NW 12th St., Lincoln, NE.

The event includes an 18-hole, four-player golf scramble, silent auction, buffet dinner and more! Register a team!

Proceeds from this annual fund-raising event go to the League of Human Dignity Lincoln Center for Independent Living to help fulfill its mission: promoting and supporting independent living and the full integration of people with disabilities into society.

Contact the League of Human Dignity, 1701 P St., Lincoln, NE 58508, call toll free 1-888-508-4658 or email janderson@leagueofhumandignity.com