

ON THE LEVEL

From the League of Human Dignity

August 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

League Says Good-Bye to Mitch Miller

The League of Human Dignity is mourning the death of Mitch Miller, a member of the League's Board of Directors, an officer in the League Membership organization and former League employee.

Mitch, 63, died Tuesday, June 6, at Bryan West Medical Center in Lincoln, surrounded by family and friends.

Mitch was born April 20, 1960, in Osceola, Nebraska, to William Miller and Anne Montag. He grew up in Nebraska City and graduated from high school there. After high school he worked on the railroad for several years. He attempted college before joining the Air Force on a delayed entry program. In the summer of 1982, a diving accident left him paralyzed from mid-chest down. Following rehabilitation, he attended classes at the University of Nebraska.

After college he settled in Lincoln and had the opportunity to buy a boat shop which he re-named Grandpa's Marine. He worked at the League of Human Dignity as Systems Change Coordinator from 2013 to 2016. He Later also sold Action Trackchairs for people with disabilities, which he really enjoyed. He was self-employed for the rest of his working years.

Mitch was an advocate for people with disabilities and he overcame many barriers and challenges throughout his life. He served on the League of Human Dignity Board of Directors for several years, most recently as Board Vice Chairman. He also was Second Vice President of the League's Membership Group for several years. He was a very active member of the Lion's Club in Lincoln.

Mitch enjoyed fishing, camping, hunting, traveling, and working on various projects with his family.

He is survived by his wife Lori, who he met in high school and married in 1984, their son Travis and daughter-in-law Megan, grandsons Broderick and Donovan, mother Anne, brother Eric and sister-in-law Janell, sister Becky and brother-in-law Rick, and many nieces and nephews and in-laws.

He was preceded in death by his father, Bill.

A private family burial was to be held at a later date.

CEO's Note

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. On July 26, 2023, we celebrated that for the past 33 years, this historic civil rights law has protected the rights of people with disabilities.

According to ADA National Network, the ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections) that relate to different areas of public life.

Each year, on the anniversary of this pivotal event, the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) organizes NCIL's March and Rally. This year, the March commenced at the Grand Hyatt Washington from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., followed by the Rally at the Capitol from 11:00 am to 12:00 Noon. This event is a representation of individuals with disability and is an opportunity to address issues that impact everyone living with diverse disabilities.

This year's March and Rally featured advocacy on three major causes:

Securing funding for all Centers for Independent Living through NCIL's "5 for 5" campaign, which aims to raise 500 million dollars to support the 5 core services.

Prioritizing Home and Community Based Services by advocating for the passage of the HCBS Access Act and Better Care Better Jobs Act.

Disaster Relief support for individuals with disabilities in crisis by urging the passage of READI and supporting the ACL legislative items that provide real-time funding for the Aging and Disability Network during emergencies.

The ADA started the journey to acceptance and protecting the rights of individuals who experience disabilities. Now, as advocates, we have to continue to keep the fight alive and also continue to make positive changes. The ADA has not accomplished everything to assist individuals with disability to live independently and with less restriction, but it was a start, and we have to continue to ensure rights are upheld and lives are continually improved for the people living with a disability.

Each year we pay homage to the historic law but we also realize what more has to be done to continue to break down the barriers that so many individuals face on a daily basis. On July 26, I joined advocates from across the country in showing our solidarity in this fight and to recommit ourselves to continuing our advocacy.

Happy Anniversary ADA!

Kathy Kay, League Co-CEO

Celebrating Disability Pride

July was Disability Pride Month and a crowd came out to celebrate Saturday, July 22, at Auld Pavilion in Lincoln's Antelope Park. About 50 organizations and vendors were on hand at the four-hour event.

The page is filled with three photos.

At top, People walk through a large room full of tables covered by clothe bearing logos of various organizations, along with brochures and giveaway items. visitors check out the information booths.

Above Right, a woman in a wheelchair speaks into a hand-held microphone as a woman standing next to her interprets in sign language. Disability advocate Kathy Hoell, right, speaks during the event.

Above left, two smiling women sit behind a table bearing the League of Human Dignity logo. Nita Sipple, left, and Sarah Weber were on hand with information about the League of Human Dignity.

2023 League of Human Dignity Lincoln Benefit Golf Event

Thursday, September 21, 2023, The Highlands Golf Course, 5501 NW 12th Street, Lincoln, NE

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

Register one four-player team for \$400.

Eagle Sponsor \$5,000 Donation includes 3 teams, 2 months on League's outdoor electronic sign, plaque for sponsor's office and signage at League office, and feature newsletter article. Ask about underwriting opportunities and Social Networking option. Sponsor the "19th Hole" (putting contest)

Birdie Sponsor \$2,500 Donation includes 2 teams, 2 months on League's outdoor electronic sign, plaque for sponsor's office and signage at League office, special banner for sponsorship. Ask about underwriting opportunities and Social Networking option. Sponsor the "19th Hole" (putting contest)

\$1,100 Donation includes a team, hole sponsorship, name recognition in event program, at hole, on poster in clubhouse, social media and in League newsletter. Ask about Social Networking option for an additional \$150. Sponsor the "19th Hole" (putting contest)

\$800 Donation includes hole sponsorship and name recognition in event program, at hole, on poster in clubhouse, social media and in League newsletter. Social Networking option for an additional \$150. Sponsor the "19th Hole" (putting contest)

\$350 Donation includes name recognition in event program, on poster in clubhouse, social media and League newsletter

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

Social Security Starts Audio Series, News Hub

Officials are continuing to try and make it easier to learn about Social Security.

The Social Security Administration announced in June that it has started a new audio series, SSA Talks, which aims to teach people more about the agency's top priorities. To listen to the new series, go online to www.ssa.gov/news/audio-series.html.

In the first episode, Acting Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi and Janet Walker, Associate Commissioner for Operational HR Services, talk about Social Security's current hiring initiative and how it is central to improving customer service.

Access the 17-minute episode, along with a transcript and fact sheet at the cited SSA web page. The fact sheet also provides more information about working at Social Security.

The agency is inviting the public to visit the SSA Talks page and subscribe to receive alerts about future episodes.

Social Security officials also have launched a new Communications Corner to provide a central information hub for the public, the press, researchers, and other stakeholders looking for information about the agency and its programs.

Visitors can access the Social Security blog, newsletter, bulletins, the new audio series, and more by going to the Communications Corner, online at www.ssa.gov/news

League Employees

Saying Hello:

Savannah Tellgren, Omaha Center for Independent Living and SW Iowa Center for Independent Living Director

Cassidy Wall, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Norfolk

Jeanne Swiercek, Secretary, Omaha

Dana Dougherty, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Michelle Niederhaus, Medicaid Waiver Supervisor, Lincoln (Michelle formerly was a services coordinator)

Elle Mannschreck, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Michelle Clark, Custodian, Omaha

Stacie Thomas, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Christopher Bennett, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Paidon Meyer, Secretary, Lincoln.

Jeremy Ely, Independent Living Advisor, Lincoln

Audrey Blenka-Murray, Secretary, Lincoln

Saying Good-Bye:

Sarah Weber, Independent Living Advisor, Lincoln

Magenta Wooley, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Kathleen Haran, Secretary, Lincoln

Debra Ersch, Senior Accounting Officer, Lincoln

Health Observances

August 2023

Children's Eye Health & Safety Month, Prevent Blindness

National Immunization Awareness Month, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Psoriasis Awareness Month, National Psoriasis Foundation

Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month, Cure SMA

Summer Sun Safety Month, CDC

September 2023

Pain Awareness Month, American Chronic Pain Association, U.S. Pain Foundation

National Cholesterol Education Month, CDC, American College of Cardiology

Blood Cancer Awareness Month, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, American Childhood Cancer Organization

National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, Men's Health Network, Prostate Cancer Foundation

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, National Ovarian Cancer Coalition

Healthy Aging Month, Health Aging

National Preparedness Month, Federal Emergency Management Agency

National Sexual Health Awareness Month, American Sexual Health Association

National Sickle Cell Month, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America

PCOS Month, National Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Association

National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, American College of Sports Medicine

National Suicide Prevention Month, American Association of Suicidology

Sept. 10-16 is National Suicide Prevention Week

Sept. 29 is World Heart Day, World Heart Federation

Pain is Focus of Awareness Month

Many would be surprised to learn how prevalent chronic pain is today — about 25 percent of adult Americans live with the condition.

That's the reason pain professionals, organizations and activists band together each September, to raise awareness of the issue

Pain Awareness Month is an effort to make the public aware of how widespread the condition is among the general population, educate people about how to deal with pain, and raise funds for research into the causes and treatment.

The observance was organized in 2001 by a consortium of organizations, coordinated by the American Chronic Pain Association.

Chronic pain can last months or years and can occur in any part of the body. It interferes with daily activities and can lead to depression and anxiety.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, the causes of chronic pain can include an initial injury, infection or disease but it also can have no obvious physical cause or come as a result of psychological factors. It's also possible that several causes can overlap.

Pain sufferers should see a doctor if the pain is intense, doesn't stop, or keeps them from doing their regular daily activities.

Pain is considered chronic if it lasts, or comes and goes, for more than three months -- beyond the normal healing period. It usually doesn't go away but it can be treated, including with medications, therapies and lifestyle changes.

The National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health also maintains a clearinghouse for information about complimentary health approaches, including acupuncture, hypnosis, massage, meditation, spinal manipulation, and other treatments. For more information, go to nccih.nih.gov.

Research into pain disorders is ongoing.

The U.S. Pain Foundation, one of the organizations sponsoring Pain Awareness Month will be sharing articles on social media throughout the month, focusing on different aspects of living with chronic pain. For more information, visit uspainfoundation.org.

TBBS Helps Nebraska Readers Keep Reading

Don't think you have to give up enjoying your favorite books or magazines just because your ability to read, hold a book or turn pages may be limited.

You still can enjoy reading with the aid of Nebraska Library Commission's Talking Book and Braille Service. The service is a part of a nationwide network of cooperating libraries, spearheaded by the National Library Service, a division of the Library of Congress.

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

The program's collection consists of books and magazines like those found in a public library. Easy-to-use playback equipment also is provided free 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, including how to apply for the service, email nlc.talkingbooks@nebraska.gov or call 1-800-742-7691. The Nebraska Talking Book & Braille Service main web page is at the Nebraska Library Commission website, nlc.nebraska.gov.

Equipment Loan Program

If you or a family member should find yourselves recovering from an injury or medical procedure and in need of a specific piece of durable medical equipment, either short term or long term, where would you turn? For crutches? A shower chair? A toilet riser?

Through the League of Human Dignity's Equipment Loan Program, you can borrow many durable medical equipment items for a small fee, for as long as you need them.

Items we loan include Tub Seats & Benches, 2-Wheel Walkers, Canes, Crutches, Commodes, Reachers, and Grab Bars.

There is a one-time \$6 fee — \$25 for Rollator Walkers — and the loan lasts as long as the items are needed. All loans are subject to availability.

We also have items for rent, including 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 rental period. All rentals are subject to availability.

We do not loan or rent items that require special or custom fitting supervision by a doctor.

We also encourage donation of gently used equipment. All donated items need to be in good shape. We do not accept donations that need repair.

For details, about obtaining equipment or making a donation, call or visit the League of Human Dignity office nearest you.

Job Market Recovery Benefitting Workers with Disabilities

Some good news for workers with disabilities: as a group they've been a big beneficiary of the post-pandemic recovery in the nation's job market.

That's the report from NBC News, based on data from the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Employment among people with disabilities increased by about 175,000 in June, the biggest rise since 2008, when the agency began keeping track of disability employment.

The gains are the result of ongoing demand for workers and the rise in remote work, which has reduced the need for transportation, a traditional barrier for workers with disabilities.

Despite the gains, though, there's still a way go before workers with disabilities achieve their fair share in the labor market. Unemployment among workers with disabilities remains about twice the rate of the general work force.

August is National Immunization Awareness Month

A graphic shows a father and daughter enjoying listening to music together. In the lower left are the words Protect Precious Moments Stay Up to Date on Routine Vaccines. In the lower right is the Center for Disease Control logo and the National Immunization Awareness Month logo.

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 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

Social Security Expands Outreach Efforts for SSI

Social Security officials have announced a campaign to raise awareness and increase access to programs for people facing financial hardships.

The campaign is aimed at people in critical need, who are not aware that they may qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI provides monthly payments to adults age 65 and people with a disability or blindness who have limited income and financial resources.

SSI helps pay for basic needs like rent, food, clothing, and medicine.

“We identified underserved communities in rural and urban areas across the country,” said a Social Security release. “We focused on areas with the greatest decline in SSI applications since the pandemic. Our outreach efforts targeted areas where a majority of people are living at or below the federal poverty threshold.”

People who receive SSI may qualify for other financial help, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, Medicaid, and discounted internet service through the Federal Trade Commission’s Affordable Connectivity Program. Social Security beneficiaries may also be eligible for SSI.

People with limited income and financial resources and internet access can visit www.ssa.gov/ssi to learn more about SSI eligibility and request an appointment to apply for benefits. People without access to the internet can call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to speak with a representative.

Rule Would Improve Web Accessibility

As the ADA celebrates its 33rd anniversary, the Biden Administration has proposed a rule that would make government websites and apps more accessible to people with disabilities.

The Department of Justice rule falls under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It would apply primarily to state and local government web-based services.

Despite the progress made under the ADA, said a July 25 White House announcement, many people with disabilities cannot access web or mobile-based state and local services — such as voter registration, filing taxes, applying for critical social services, accessing vital records, registering for vaccines, and taking online courses. This lack of accessibility has led unequal access to critical services for millions of Americans.

The new rule would establish clear technical standards, like including text descriptions of images for people using screen readers, providing captions on videos, and enabling navigation through use of a keyboard instead of a mouse for those with limited use of their hands. Clearer standards will both ensure that people with disabilities can access vital services and make it easier for states and localities to understand their ADA obligations.

The proposed rule will soon be available for review on the Federal Register's website, www.federalregister.gov. A fact sheet that provides information about the proposed rule will soon be available on www.ada.gov.

The Department of Justice is inviting the public to submit comments on the proposal once it is published. The comment period will be open for 60 days from its date of publication. Public comments can be submitted on www.regulations.gov.

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

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.

FOR SALE: Power wheelchair, 4 years old, Permobil M3 multi-power, includes power lift, recline and legs. \$3,000 OBO. Call 402-890-5821 (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 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

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