

ON THE LEVEL

From the League of Human Dignity

June 2024

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

Lincoln Giving Day Raises \$8.37M

Lincoln-area residents gave more than \$8.37 million May 30, to local nonprofit organizations.

The 13th annual Give To Lincoln Day was sponsored by the Lincoln Community Foundation in association with West Gate Bank and several other businesses and organizations. It capped a month of charitable giving with a 24-hour online event.

Preliminary figures show that the event brought in \$8,375,137.99 from 25,085 donations. That's about \$700,000 better than last year. There were 464 nonprofits participating, including the League of Human Dignity.

At this writing the donations were still being tallied but preliminary figures show the League received \$1,290.23 from 21 donors.

The 24-hour giving day is held each year to raise awareness of local nonprofits and ultimately to provide needed services and improve Lincoln. Donations are accepted beginning May 1 and then applied to the Give To Lincoln Day total.

Leading the list of nonprofits this year was Food Bank of Lincoln, which raised \$409,404.27. Rounding out the top 5 were Cedars with \$332,262.17, Center for People

with \$263,989.72, Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach with \$249,620.18, and Lincoln Literacy with \$170,740.

The League thanks all those who donated in support of independent living and equal access for people with disabilities.

In addition to its on-line giving, Give To Lincoln day also has an offline and in-person giving component. Offline donations traditionally have been a major part of the League's donations. Donors were able to mail their gifts and drop off donations at the Lincoln Community Foundation during the business day. Donations also were accepted during an event at Tower Square in downtown Lincoln and at an evening event.

The donation totals also do not include matching funds, which will come proportionally from a challenge match fund of \$650,000 provided by event sponsors.

In addition to West Gate Bank, other event sponsors were ABC Electric, Allo, Assurity, Rich Bailey, Jan & John Blumer, The Hsin & Chao Families, DA Davidson, Davis Design, Firespring, Frontier Bank, HBE, Jeff & Judy Greenwald, Kile & Cuz Johnson, Kawasaki, Kubly Family Foundation, Lutz, Jim McKee & Linda Hillgass, JoAnn & Derrel Martin Charitable Fund, The Family of J. Gates & Daisy Minnick, William J. Mueller & Kim M. Robak, Olsson, Pepsi-Cola Lincoln, Pinnacle Bank, Runza, Sampson, Joe W. & Ruth K. Seacrest Fund, Tom & Lisa Smith, Dr. Gene & Kristen Stohs, Ronald & Camilla Svoboda, Talent+, Mark H. Tallman, Bill & Mae Whitmer Family Fund, and WRK Real Estate LLC

CEO's Note

Twenty-five years ago, on June 22, 1999, the Supreme Court decided in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that under the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with disabilities cannot be unnecessarily segregated and must receive services in the most integrated setting possible.

The Court held that people with disabilities have a qualified right to receive state-funded supports and services in the community rather than institutions when the following three-part test is met:

1. the person's treatment professionals determine that community supports are appropriate;
2. the person does not object to living in the community; and
3. the provision of services in the community would be a reasonable accommodation when balanced with other similarly situated individuals with disabilities.

This decision has been one of the most important in the Independent Living movement. Because of *Olmstead*, choice in where to live has been one of the major building blocks of the disability rights movement and is integral to independence, well-being, and the health

of people with disabilities. For years, many people living with disabilities did not have any choice in where to live. Institutional or hospital settings were their only option. Now, the least restrictive setting is possible. According to ACL.gov., the Olmstead decision required states to ensure that people with disabilities can receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs, opening the doors to community inclusion and integration for even more people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, there are still people in the disability world who are not able to exercise this freedom of choice in where to live. Often, people are still living in institutions even when community placement would be more appropriate. At the League of Human Dignity, we fight for the rights of people to live in the community where they choose. There are many programs and supports nationwide to support independent living.

This now 25-year-old decision is at the heart of Independent Living. Some courts have required that states provide Medicaid Waivers in order to be in compliance with Olmstead. A Medicaid Waiver is a package of Medicaid-funded services states can provide to specific types of people with disabilities, who meet the requirements for institutional level of care. Waivers makes it possible for people to live in the community where they choose and receive the supports and services they need to be safe.

The League of Human Dignity provides the Medicaid Waiver for the state of Nebraska. To learn more, contact us at one of our locations:

- The Lincoln Center for Independent Living, 1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, Ph. 402-441-7871
- The Omaha Center for Independent Living, 5513 Center Street, Omaha, NE 68106, Ph. 402-595-1256
- The Norfolk Center for Independent Living, 400 Elm Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701, Ph. 402-371-4475
- The Panhandle Medicaid Waiver Office, 17 E 21 St., Scottsbluff, NE 69361, Ph. 308-632-0470
- The Kearney Medicaid Waiver Office, 3811 29th Avenue, Suite 2, Kearney NE 68845, Ph. 308-224-3665
- The North Platte Medicaid Waiver Office, 2509 Halligan Dr., North Platte, NE 69101, Phone 308-532-4911

The League of Human Dignity celebrates the anniversary of this monumental decision, which has impacted the quality of life for so many persons with a disability. A major component of independent living is choice, and this decision has given people choice in where and how they want to live in their community.

Kathy Kay, League Co-CEO

Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Olmstead Decision

June 22, 1999 to June 22, 2024

This landmark civil rights case affirmed the idea that nobody should be separated from society and denied the right to make decisions for themselves.

Unjustified institutionalization of people with disabilities is illegal discrimination.

2024 Lincoln Benefit Golf Event

The 2024 Lincoln Benefit Golf Event is Thursday, September 19, 2024, 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!

Mark Your Calendar!

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.

Sponsorship and underwriting options also are available. For more information, contact:

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

Nebraska Disability Pride Celebration

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, July 27, 2024, Auld Pavilion in Antelope Park, Lincoln

Look for updates on the celebration on our Facebook page at facebook.com/NebraskaDisabilityPride

Rule Change will Expand SSI Program

A new Social Security rule is set to expand access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

Specifically, Social Security officials are planning to expand the definition of “public assistance household” when determining who will get SSI benefits. Currently, rules dictate that all members of a household must receive public assistance for the home to qualify as a public assistance household.

Under the new rule, households with an SSI recipient or applicant and at least one other member who receives one or more of the listed means-tested public income-maintenance payments would qualify. The list now also includes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

“I’m committed to making systemic changes to help people access the critical benefits they need, including SSI,” said Martin O’Malley, Commissioner of Social Security. “By simplifying our policies and including an additional program geared towards low-income families, such as the SNAP, we are removing significant barriers to accessing SSI. These changes promote greater equity in our programs.”

The change will allow more people to qualify for SSI – potentially millions more -- increase some SSI recipients’ payment amounts, and reduce reporting burdens for people living in public assistance households.

The new rule takes effect Sept. 30, 2024.

SNAP is the first PIM benefit added to the agency’s public assistance household definition since it was established in 1980. This change helps ensure the agency’s policies better represent the current landscape of means-tested programs in the United States.

To read the final rule “Expand the Definition of a Public Assistance Household,” visit [Federal Register: Expand the Definition of a Public Assistance Household](#).

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

2024 Health Observances

June

Cataract Awareness Month, Prevent Blindness
Scleroderma Awareness Month, Scleroderma Foundation
Migraine & Headache Awareness Month, National Headache Foundation
PTSD Awareness Month, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, Alzheimer's Association
Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Month, MS Foundation of America
Aphasia Awareness Month, National Aphasia Association
National Men's Health Month, Men's Health Network
June 2 is National Cancer Survivors Day, National Cancer Survivors Day Foundation
June 18 is Autistic Pride Day
June 27 is National PTSD Awareness Day, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

July

July is Disability Pride Month
Group B Strep Awareness Month, Group B Strep International
Healthy Vision Month, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month, Arthritis Foundation
National Cleft & Craniofacial Awareness & Prevention Month, NCCAPM.org

Sarcoma Awareness Month, Sarcoma Foundation of America
UV Safety Month, American Academy of Ophthalmology
July 22 is International Brain Day, World Federation of Neurology
July 24 is International Self Care Day, World Health Organization
July 26 is Disability Independence Day, the 34th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act
July 28 is World Hepatitis Day, World Hepatitis Alliance

ADA Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

A: The ADA is the first comprehensive civil rights law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination. It was passed almost unanimously by Congress and signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990. The ADA protects people with disabilities from discrimination in employment, access to public services, and access goods and services provided by businesses such as restaurants, stores, hotels, law offices, and medical facilities. The ADA also requires Standards for Accessible Design that provide design criteria for built environments, transportation, communication, medical equipment, and information technology.\

Q: Why is the ADA important?

A: In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 56.7 million people in the United States have one or more disabilities. That was an increase of 2.2 million since 2005. So, 19 percent, or one in every five Americans have a disability. And the number continues to grow. Disabilities often are the result of aging, accidents, or injuries incurred in combat, as is the case with returning veterans.

Q: What are the ADA's Titles and how do they differ?

A: The ADA has five sections or Titles that cover employment, state and local governments, public accommodations (private businesses), and telecommunications:

Title I focuses on employment. It requires private employers with 15 or more employees to provide equal opportunity to qualified workers with disabilities to the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others. Title I prohibits discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, pay, social activities, and other privileges of employment. It also requires that employers make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of qualified individuals with disabilities, unless it results in undue hardship.

Title II covers all activities of state and local governments. It requires that governments give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services and activities. Examples include public education, employment, transportation, recreation, health care, social services, courts, voting and town meetings. Public entities are required to make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures to

avoid discrimination, until doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of the service. Title II also covers public transportation services.

Title III focuses on public accommodations, which includes private business. It covers entities that own, lease, or operate facilities such as restaurants, retail stores, hotels, movie theaters, private schools, convention centers, doctors' offices, homeless shelters, transportation depots, zoos, funeral homes, day care centers, and recreation facilities including sports stadiums and fitness clubs. Title III also covers transportation services provided by private entities.

Title IV addresses telephone and television access for people with hearing and speech disabilities. It requires common carriers to establish telecommunications relay services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Relay services make it possible for people with hearing and speech disabilities to communicate with each other through third-party communications assistants. Title IV also requires closed captioning of Federally funded public service announcements.

Title V includes miscellaneous provisions, requiring the U.S. Access Board to issue accessibility standards, requiring federal agencies to provide technical assistance, stating specifically that the illegal use of drugs is not a covered disability, and provides that state and local laws that mandate equal or greater protection to individuals with disabilities are not superseded or limited by the ADA.

Q: What is the ADA National Network?

A: The ADA National Network consists of 10 Regional ADA Centers located throughout the United States and the ADA Knowledge Translation Center. The Network promotes the voluntary implementation of the ADA through technical assistance, training, and information. The Network's target audiences include people with disabilities, businesses, employers, state and local governments, and educational institutions. ADA Centers also provide free and confidential responses to ADA questions received on the ADA hotline: 1-800-949-4232.

League Employees . . .

Saying Hello:

Megan Hagedorn, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Mike Modica, Services Coordinator, Omaha

Cierra Waller, Services Coordinator, Omaha

Morgan Hansen, Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Saying Good-Bye:

Mark Zulkoski Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Omaha

Hope Robson, Medicaid Waiver Services Coordinator, Lincoln

Morgan Hansen, Services Coordinator, Lincoln

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.

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.

Plan Would Boost Kidney Transplant Access

Federal health officials are hoping access to kidney transplants will improve under a new proposal.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced the new Increasing Organ Transplant Access Model (IOTA) on May 8. The model would be implemented by the CMS Innovation Center for six years beginning 1, 2025. It would need about 90 of the 257 transplant hospitals in the country to participate.

The model aims to increase access to kidney transplants for all people with end-stage renal disease, improve the quality of care for people seeking kidney transplants, reduce disparities among people going through the process to receive a transplant, and increase the efficiency and capability of participating transplant hospitals. It also would help reduce Medicare spending and pinpoint living donors, according to the CMS.

“Modernizing the organ transplantation system is a top priority for the Biden-Harris Administration,” said CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure in a press statement. “Kidney transplantation helps people live healthier and longer lives because they no longer have to undergo dialysis. The Increasing Organ Transplant Access Model would be an important step forward in improving the kidney transplant process for everyone on a waitlist and those who have received a transplant.”

A kidney transplant is the best treatment for most people with end stage renal disease, when the kidneys are no longer able to function properly.

Kevin Longino, Chief Executive Officer of the National Kidney Foundation, commended CMS and its Innovation Center for the proposal.

“This proposal has the potential to significantly enhance the likelihood of a kidney transplant for the nearly 90,000 individuals on the national kidney transplant waitlist and instill hope in the more than 500,000 people currently dependent on dialysis to live,” Longino’s said in a press statement.

“While we are still reviewing many elements of the proposal, the NKF strongly supports its objective of improving overall rates of transplantation.”

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 \$10 fee — \$35 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 donating, call or visit the League of Human Dignity office nearest you.

Life of Social Security Trust Funds Extended

Economy, Low Unemployment, Jobs & Wages Add a Year

The Social Security Trust funds are in better financial condition than last year, according to a recent report.

Social Security's Board of Trustees released its annual report on the health of the trust funds on May 6. The funds include Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and the Disability Insurance funds. They are projected to have enough money to pay all scheduled benefits and associated costs until 2035. That's a year later than projected last year, with 83 percent of benefits payable at that time.

In their 2024 Annual Report to Congress, the Social Security Trustees announced:

The asset reserves of the combined OASI and DI Trust Funds declined by \$41 billion in 2023 to a total of \$2.788 trillion.

The total annual cost of the program is projected to exceed total annual income in 2024 and remain higher throughout the 75-year projection period. Total cost began to be higher than total income in 2021. Social Security's cost has exceeded its non-interest income since 2010.

The year when the combined trust fund reserves are projected to become depleted, if Congress does not act before then, is 2035. At that time, there would be sufficient income coming in to pay 83 percent of scheduled benefits.

"This year's report is a measure of good news for the millions of Americans who depend on Social Security, including the roughly 50 percent of seniors for whom Social Security is the difference between poverty and living in dignity," said Martin O'Malley, Commissioner of Social Security.

The programs still are running out of money and Congress needs to take action. The report just means that any potential benefit reductions have been pushed back from 2034 to 2035, O'Malley said.

"Congress can and should take action to extend the financial health of the Trust Fund into the foreseeable future, just as it did in the past on a bipartisan basis," O'Malley said. "Eliminating the shortfall will bring peace of mind to Social Security's 70 million-plus beneficiaries, the 180 million workers and their families who contribute to Social Security, and the entire nation."

View the 2024 Trustees Report at www.ssa.gov/OACT/TR/2024/.

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; 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 – Mobility Package:

2016 Solax Transformer Foldable Mobility Scooter, 50 lbs weight, red; 2016 Bruno Scooter lift; 2023 Indeed Power Lift for indoor use, hold up to 300 lbs; Two walkers, Guardian with a seat and Luminex II MAXKARE under-desk elliptical exerciser

And to carry everything:

2016 Nissan Murano SUV, 50K miles, gray, good condition with scooter lift installed. Plus accessories, \$18,000

Contact Mary at mhuskerm@gmail.com

Photos of a silver-colored SUV, a partially folded mobility scooter and a lift accompany this ad

FOR SALE: 5-year-old Quantum Edge Power Chair, like new, with less than 400 miles with charger and manual. \$1500.00. Call: (402) 228-3585 Beatrice, NE.

The League of Human Dignity Building Corp. Is Taking Applications

The League of Human Dignity Building Corporation is taking applications for 1 & 2 bedroom ground-level apartments, wheelchair accessible, with roll-in showers in Lincoln, Omaha, Norfolk, Columbus & York.

These apartments are HUD Section 202 & 811 projects and are available to individuals who experience disability or who are elderly. Units come with a Section 8 Certificate. Eligible applicants 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) or email knavratil@leagueofhumandignity.com

Equal Housing Opportunity

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