

2013 Highlights & Donors

Throughout the year, the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL) accomplished many great things, including building ramps, educating elementary students about disability history and awareness, receiving donations from businesses and individuals, installing fire alarms, facilitating Low Vision Support groups, celebrating ADA, RCIL Friends groups achieving their advocacy projects, and hosting a couple of Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies. While the accomplishments described below highlight some of the great things that happened at RCIL, there is great pride in the many accomplishments for 2013 and we are excited to find out the opportunities and challenges RCIL will face in the upcoming year!



Build-A-Ramp Program (BARP)

RCIL is proud of its association and long-standing partnership with the United Way of El Dorado. The United Way of El Dorado has done much to support programs and services for people with disabilities and RCIL makes that known whenever an opportunity presents itself. In September 2013, RCIL used the United Way of El Dorado funding that they received to build a ramp for a consumer who lives in El Dorado. A few months later,

the consumer wrote her BARP success story to RCIL. Here is what she wrote,

“When we think of angels, we think of heavenly angels up in heaven. For those of us who believe, we know there are truly earth angels as well.

On July 26, 2011 I had a very life changing back surgery that went wrong over days into months. As the days went by it became crystal clear, I was in deep trouble being able to walk or function in everyday life. The pain was free, no charge.

Thanks to Macy from RCIL, she came to my rescue by putting me in touch with the Build-A-Ramp program. As the months passed by, I was pulled into deeper despair over my back problems. Nothing can be done to correct the back anymore. Just when I thought matters couldn't get any worse, they did! On July 4, 2013 brought with it, the untimely death of my beloved son.

Falling deeper into blackness and darkness, I felt...”Why me Lord? What had I done to deserve this kind of fate in life?” Then it happened! With all the love and care from RCIL and the Build-A-Ramp program I was given a new hope and purpose in life, when work started on September 17, 2013 to build a ramp just for me. The ramp was completed on September 18, 2013 which was also my beloved son's birthday.

I was puzzled by this, so I asked the Lord to bless this home to where the ramp would bless others and help them after my time on earth was done. That's when I knew, God had sent me his personal band of earth angels from RCIL and the Build-A-Ramp program to watch out for me in their selfless, profound way of care. For this, I'm so thankful and humble.”

Building ramps are often costly to build, and RCIL is limited to only selecting a few projects each year. However, with the United Way of El Dorado's support, RCIL has been able to help additional residents in El Dorado receive repairs to their ramp, or build new ramps so they can overcome one barrier to living independently.

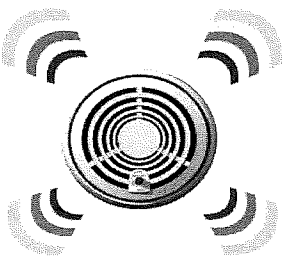
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Disability History and Awareness Days

RCIL educated approximately 300 students and faculty members about disability history and awareness at McKinley Elementary School, Lincoln Elementary School, and Lyndon Elementary School during October and November 2013. RCIL partnered with Jay Hatfield Mobility and Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy (KYEAA) by bringing their accessible vans to demonstrate to students and faculty members on how their van operates for people with disabilities. Each school had kindergarten through 5th grades participate in stations designed to give them information or an experience of what it is like to have a disability. Some of the stations were performing activities of daily living with one hand, a hearing loss activity, a beep-ball game simulation, a wheelchair pushing course, and a video featuring children with disabilities. By the end of the day at each school, students and faculty members were inspired and had a better understanding about people with disabilities. The overwhelming positive feedback from teachers and students has prompted plans for next year to be even bigger!

Donors

In 2013, RCIL served around 1,450 individuals through our many programs and services. While we received funding from state and federal grants and waiver programs, many of our programs and services would not have been successful without the continued support of local businesses, organizations and individuals. In 2013, we were able to add new equipment to the Durable Medical Equipment Loan Program, build or repair four ramps, and share with community members about issues concerning the disability community. These were just a few of the great ways RCIL was able to use donations to serve Kansans with disabilities. We cannot thank our donors enough, but we would like to recognize businesses, organizations, and individuals who helped make 2013 a successful year for RCIL: John Aufleger, Mike Bean, CBIZ MHM, LLC, Kathy Cox, El Dorado Charities Auxiliary, Steve Grisham, Deborah Hensley, Robert Madl, Jane Patrick, Doris Paul, Delores Reid, Barbara Rush, Ron Stiffler, United Way of Bourbon County, and United Way of El Dorado.



Kansas Fire Safety Solutions

The RCIL Assistive Technology for Kansans team was trained to conduct in-home surveys, install equipment and assist with planning and practicing a fire escape plan through the Kansas Fire Safety Solutions program. This program has made available, free of charge, for qualified Kansans, specialized smoke alarms designated to meet the unique needs of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. The ATK team educated 20 individuals on fire safety and installed smoke alarms in their homes in 2013.

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Low Vision Support Groups

RCIL's Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Mandy Smith, started two new low vision support groups during 2013 for individuals who are blind or have low vision and are 55 years or older. These groups met every month in Council Grove and Wamego. The participants learned community resources, techniques and technology from presenters such as Talking Books and Audio Reader along with stories and ideas from others who have vision loss. These groups will continue to meet in 2014.

RCIL Celebrated ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for people with disabilities in employment, State and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. In celebration of the ADA's 23rd Anniversary, each RCIL Friends group hosted a BBQ during their July meeting and they did the ADA proclamation at their local City Council meeting.

RCIL Friends Group: Advocacy Project was a Success!

The Eureka RCIL Friends group completed their advocacy project involving pedestrian safety in Spring 2013. The group invited the sheriff to attend the Friends group meeting. The sheriff came to their meeting and the group members addressed their concerns about the traffic moving too fast beside their apartment buildings. They advocated for additional monitoring and enforcement due to the number of elderly, people in power chairs, and children in the area. The sheriff stated that he would go to the city and county commission to pursue obtaining additional signage for the road. He also stated that he would increase patrol. Following the Eureka Friends group meeting, the city posted "slow" signs in the area.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies

RCIL had two Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies, at the Emporia office on February 11, 2013 and the Iola office on May 9, 2013. These events were hosted by their local Area Chamber of Commerce. Each ceremony had about twenty-five people attend to tour the office and learn more about RCIL programs and services. The Emporia RCIL Office is located at 215 West 6th Avenue, Suite 208. The office is in the Emporia Humanitarian Center with Flinthills Technology College and other non-profit agencies such as Kansas Children's Service League and Kindermusik. The Iola RCIL Office is located at 335 North Cottonwood, Suite C.



RCIL staff with the Emporia Chamber of Commerce and local businesses at the Emporia Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the Emporia RCIL Office.