Throughout the year, the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL) accomplished several great things, including participating at the Kansas Disability Caucus, educating elementary students about disability history and awareness, receiving donations from businesses and individuals, participating in the formation and implementation of KAN-DO statewide consumer advocacy group, giving away a lift chair, receiving funding from United Way of El Dorado, transitioning 14 individuals out of nursing facilities and into their own homes, celebrating ADA’s 25th anniversary, and electing 2015 Ms. Wheelchair Kansas as a member of RCIL Board of Directors. While the accomplishments described below highlight some of the great things that happened at RCIL, there is great pride in the many accomplishments for 2015 and we are excited to find out the opportunities and challenges RCIL will face in 2016!

2015 Kansas Disability Caucus: Igniting the Fire!

After three years, the Kansas Disability Caucus has returned and was re-energized! Over 200 members of the disability community from across the state came together on August 13-14, 2015 at the Ramada Hotel in Topeka. The theme was “ADA 25: Igniting the Fire!” and it got everyone pumped up and excited to accomplish great things for the Kansas disability community.

RCIL was able to send 10 staff members to the Caucus. Many staff volunteered and participated in the sessions and other caucus functions. The Information and Outreach Coordinator, Beth Burnett, was on the panel for the Kansas Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) during the opening session and she gave a short presentation on Outreach. The Director of Core Services, Adam Burnett, along with his workgroup members, gave a presentation on the SPIL Employment workgroup efforts during a workshop session, and the Independent Living Specialist, Macy Collins, gave a presentation on the SPIL Housing workgroup efforts during a workshop session, along with her workgroup members. RCIL’s Assistive Technology Specialists, Mikel McCary and Sarah Knutson, displayed their Assistive Technology for Kansans booth in the exhibitor hall throughout the entire event.

During the two day Caucus, there was a Regional Caucus Session to assist in gathering information to be used developing the new SPIL and for other advocacy efforts. The state was split into three regions and those regions came up with barriers/issues facing Kansas’ disability community and solutions to these issues. Many solutions focused on more advocacy, employment, and education. By the end of the Caucus, Kansans were igniting the fire! They were geared up and ready to accomplish great things for the Kansas disability community by the next Kansas Disability Caucus in 2017.

Disability History and Awareness Days

In 2015, RCIL went to 2 elementary schools in the Eastern part of Kansas to educate students and faculty members about disability history and awareness. The first awareness event for the year was held on May
14th at the Oil Hill Elementary School. They educated approximately 278 kindergarteners through 6th grades students and 30 faculty members, allowing them to participate in six stations designed to give them information or experience of what it is like to have a disability. The stations were performing activities of daily living with one hand, an accessible van demonstration, a hearing loss activity, a beep-ball game simulation, a wheelchair pushing course, and a video featuring children with disabilities. RCIL also received extra time with the 4th through 6th grades students and they educated them about learning disabilities.

On October 8th, RCIL held their second for the year disability and history awareness event at the Scranton Elementary School. They educated approximately 150 3rd and 4th graders and 20 faculty members with a video featuring children with disabilities before participating in four stations. RCIL partnered with Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy (KYEA) by bringing their accessible vans to demonstrate on how their van operates for people with disabilities. The three other stations were a hearing loss activity, a beep-ball game simulation, and a wheelchair pushing course.

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 to educate students and faculty members at the Overbrook Elementary School in March 2016!

**Donors**

While RCIL 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. We cannot thank our donors enough, but we would like to recognize businesses, organizations, and individuals who helped make 2015 a successful year for RCIL: Anna Becker, Clyde Burns, CBIZ MHM, LLC, Sherry Clymer, Robert Cooper, Ted Dankut, Susan Davis, Carolyn Lydick, Kevin and Ann McDowell, Osage County, Overbrook Community Chest, Dena Paul, Judy Reeser, Mary Tomlinson, Mildred Waltman, Dennis Wilkins, and Deone Wilson.

**KAN-DO**

Kansas Advocacy Network-Disability Organization (KAN-DO) is a new statewide consumer advocacy group created by the Kansas Association of Centers for Independent Living (KACIL) Core Service Committee. The purpose of KAN-DO is provide consumers across Kansas with opportunities to gain advocacy and leaderships skills, experience peer support, and to become educated on issues that impact persons with disabilities. KAN-DO can keep consumers informed by providing frequent conference calls, email updates, Facebook postings, and other contact methods. Not only does KAN-DO connect consumers across Kansas, but it can also put consumers in touch with professionals who are knowledgeable with
Kansas’ disability services.

**Lift Chair Give Away**

During the 2015 holiday season, RCIL had a drawing to give away a brand new, high quality lift chair to benefit a person with a disability who wants to get in and out of their chair independently. RCIL had a lot of individuals sign up for the drawing. On December 21, 2015 RCIL drew the lucky winner and it was Rosemary Hubbard. When Rosemary received a call from RCIL she said, “I’m surprised! I didn’t think I would win!” Rosemary selected the size and color of the chair and it was delivered to her home. Rosemary said, “I love my chair! Thank you very much!”

**RCIL Receives Funding from the United Way of El Dorado**

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 and an opportunity presents itself. In 2015, RCIL received a great amount of funding from the United Way of El Dorado for the following programs: the Phyllis Patteson Equipment Loan Program, the Build a Ramp program, and Deinstitutionalization/Transition program.

The Phyllis Patteson Equipment Loan program was started after a generous donation was received and has continued to grow ever since. The program is available free-of-charge to the entire community in Butler County. Most items are loaned on a temporary basis. When resources to meet long-term needs are unavailable, consumers are permitted to keep the equipment permanently. The United Way of El Dorado funding and support has significantly increased the capacity of the Phyllis Patteson Equipment Loan program. Items such as crutches, bath benches, toilet risers, grab bars, wheelchairs, walkers, commodes, bathtub lifts and wheelchair lifts have been purchased and loaned or distributed to people with disabilities.

Many times people with disabilities are faced with accessibility barriers that prevent them from safely entering and leaving their own home. To overcome this barrier, RCIL developed and implemented the Build-A-Ramp Program. RCIL is limited to only selecting a few projects each year because ramps are often costly to build. 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 a new ramp so they can overcome one barrier to living independently.

RCIL provides deinstitutionalization/transition program by assisting individuals’ transition out of nursing facilities and into their own home. While funds are available for Independent Living Specialist (ILS) to do the work through the Money Follow the Person program to pay for some moving expenses, not all expenses are covered. The United Way of El Dorado funds have gone a long way to support individual goals to live in a home of their own rather than in a facility. RCIL is able to use funds to purchase the necessary items
not covered through other programs such as initial groceries, some or all of the first month’s rent, and other day-to-day items as identified. All of these items are able to help individuals to have a successful transition from the facility to their own home.

**Growth in Transition Coordination Services**

Transition Coordination Services (TCS) is growing rapidly at RCIL. RCIL provided services to 26 individuals during the fiscal year of October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015. Fourteen individuals transitioned from nursing facilities into their own home during the fiscal year and the remaining 12 individuals were either in progress of transitioning to community based living or have subsequently ended efforts to transition. This was a 271% increase from last year.

TCS are for individuals who are on the Money Follow the Person (MFP) program to transition from a nursing facility to community based living. It takes several staff in various departments at RCIL to help consumers to have a successful transition. Independent Living Specialists (ILS) have the privilege to work along with consumers throughout the transition process. Some of the tasks ILS help consumers with are finding housing, setting up finances, purchasing household items from the transition funds, and helping them move into their home from the nursing facility.

Information and Outreach Coordinator/ILS Beth Burnett had the opportunity to provide TCS to Lavonne Foster throughout the transition process over two months. Lavonne told Beth during their first appointment that she wants to move back into the apartment complex where she lived for 13 years. Beth assisted Lavonne with the housing application. Lavonne received an approval and accepted an apartment within a week when they submitted the application to the apartment manager. She made a list of items she needed for her apartment with Beth. Lavonne received $2,500 in transition funds from the MFP to help purchase household items, pay the security deposit, and durable medical equipment in her apartment. Beth worked with Lavonne by purchasing those items and making sure Lavonne had everything she needed to help her live independently. On December 31, 2015 Lavonne moved into her apartment with the help from her family and Beth.

A few weeks later, Lavonne told Beth, “I learned that items I used to have before living in the nursing home are not as important today. When I was making my list of items I need during my transition process, I thought I needed to replace all items I used to have. I realize now I don’t need to replace all items I used to have to make me happy. I am happy for what I have now and I don’t need items to make me happy. I appreciate for RCIL for helping me move into my apartment. I am more independent in my apartment than in the nursing home. I have Direct Support