



Upcoming Events

Friends Groups

Arkansas City - 3rd
Thursday at 1:30 p.m.

El Dorado - 4th
Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Emporia - Last
Monday at 2 p.m.

Eureka - 4th Tuesday
at 1 p.m.

Fort Scott - 2nd
Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Iola - 4th Tuesday at
1 p.m.

Osage City - 2nd
Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Ottawa - 2nd
Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Paola - 2nd Friday at
1 p.m.

Topeka - 3rd Tuesday
at 1 p.m.

**Call your local office
for more details.**

Office Closures

May 28 - Memorial Day



Make Your Voice Heard

By Summer Ludwig, Targeted Case Manager

The disability community is truly facing a life-changing moment in the Kansas political landscape. All of the progress that we have made towards implementing programs and services under the Independent Living Philosophy is at stake.

The issues that we are facing are many and include:

- Medicaid Reform into a Managed Care model run by for-profit out of state companies
- Changes to Voter Registration and Voting that will make voting more difficult for many folks with disabilities
- Cuts in funding to Centers for Independent Living
- Cuts in funding and a reduction in people served on the HCBS PD waiver (In home services for people with physical disabilities)
- A push to abolish the income tax in Kansas, leaving programs and services unfunded
- The Waiting List for people with physical disabilities is almost 3 years long and over 3,300 Kansans are currently on it. There is no funding proposed to eliminate this waiting list or even to get it moving.

these issues is that programs and services for people with disabilities have already been cut to the bone due to hard economic times. Currently the State has a budget surplus of over \$100 million and the Governor projects the next fiscal year to see over \$400 million in budget surplus.

It is time for the disability community to rise up and make sure that this Administration and the Legislature hear and understand our message. It is time to share our stories, our struggles, our accomplishments, and let them know that we are a proud, productive community who will no longer tolerate the continual violation of our civil rights or being made to feel as though we are second class citizens.

To further this end, RCIL is asking each consumer to share their story. We will be capturing stories on video at each of our office locations. We want to let the Governor, SRS officials, and our Legislators see what it's like to be a Kansan with a disability. Please contact your local RCIL office to share your written or verbal stories or to schedule a taping to be sent to Topeka.

We will also be utilizing our RCIL Friends groups to coordinate additional advocacy actions. Please attend your next local meeting and make your voice heard. 

The most frustrating part about many of

RCIL Board of Directors

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Alternate Formats

To receive a copy of this newsletter in an alternate format, please call 800.580.7245.

Executive Director's Message

By Chad Wilkins, Executive Director

The media has given a lot of attention lately to Governor Brownback's plans to overhaul Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Many folks who utilize RCIL programs and services are on Medicaid. We thought it was important to share the information we have at this point.

The governor and his team have put together "KanCare" to address the rising costs of Medicaid. Private, for-profit managed care organizations, also known as "MCOs," have been invited to apply to become one of three KanCare companies that will run Medicaid in Kansas. People on Medicaid will be assigned to one of the three companies. The MCO will coordinate all aspects of the healthcare including medically necessary services and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). KanCare is scheduled to start January 1, 2013.



No other state has a system like what is being proposed. The governor's office is projecting that the "KanCare Solution" will save \$853 million dollars between the years of 2013 - 2017. Saving money and being more efficient are great things, but we as consumers and advocates need to pay close attention to what is happening and communicate with our legislators when we have concerns. We will share information as we receive it. Check our website at www.rcilinc.org for updates.

Consumer Success Story

By Macy Gaines, Independent Living Specialist

In the RCIL El Dorado office, Independent Living Specialist Macy Gaines assisted a consumer pursuing her education. It all started when a consumer came into the office to explore her education options. Macy provided peer counseling by sharing her personal experiences of what she knew about schools. She told the consumer about technical schools and the local community college.



The consumer decided to go to college.

Macy assisted the consumer with creating an Independent Living Plan (ILP) to help her achieve her goal. The first step on her ILP was to make a phone call to Butler Community College (BCC). The consumer began to cry because she was terrified to make the call. So Macy taught her the independent living skills needed to make a call by making the call to BCC together. During the phone call the representative at BCC explained the

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Spring 2012

Emergency Preparedness

By Beth Combes, Information and Outreach Coordinator

An emergency or disaster can happen at any time. Do you have a plan in place to help you keep in touch with your family and friends? What about some of basic essentials like food, water, electricity or even telephones? While each person's abilities and needs are unique, every individual can take steps to prepare for all kinds of emergencies from fires to tornadoes to floods. It is best to prepare for an emergency ahead of time by making an emergency plan that fits your own personal needs and those of your loved ones. Follow the 3

steps listed below to create a plan for any disaster.

Step 1 Get a Kit: put together basic supplies, medications and medical supplies, an extra set of wheelchair batteries, etc. and copies of important documents.

Step 2 Make a Plan: write a plan on paper and put it in your supply kit, make a list of emergency contacts, find locations to go inside and outside of your home, make transportation arrangements if needed, and decide



how to handle situations when accommodations are not available.

Step 3 Be Informed: understand what might happen and know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region.

For more information about the 3 steps you can visit the Ready website at www.ready.gov. It's time to be prepared!



Are You Ready to File Your Taxes?

By Beth Combes, Information and Outreach Coordinator

As of January 1, 2012 everyone is busy filing 2011 Income taxes, Homestead tax refund, and/or Food Sales tax refund. The deadline to file is April 17, 2012. Independent Living Specialists (ILS) at RCIL will be available to teach consumers who are interested how to file their Homestead tax refund and Food Sales tax refund on their own.

There is a resource library in every RCIL office that has a computer and Internet access if you prefer to file your tax refunds electronically. You can use the library on your own or with ILS assistance.

If you are a person who would rather have someone do it for you every

year, there are free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs (VITA) in every local community. They are trained by the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) on how to file Homestead and Food Sales tax refunds and Income taxes electronically. They will be available on a first come first served basis with evening appointments available. To find out where the VITA site in your area is located, contact your local Department on Aging, Community Action Program, Senior Center, Public Library, or County Clerk.

To prepare your taxes you will need the following information:

- Photo ID
- Social Security cards for all persons claimed on each return

- Birth dates for all dependents
- All documents showing 2011 income such as W-2, 1099's, Social Security year-end statements, and Unemployment statements
- Interest & dividend statements
- A copy of your 2010 return (if possible)
- Real Estate Property Tax Statements (if applicable)
- Persons claiming childcare expenses should bring name of provider, address, phone number, tax ID number, and amount paid
- If you prefer to receive your refund checks as a direct deposit you should bring bank or credit union routing and account numbers

We Have the Ability to Serve!

By Beth Combes, Information and Outreach Coordinator

This is the time of year when we get so tired of hearing about giving back to the community it makes us want to hurl. Hopefully, this won't be one of those times. Instead of talking about charity, let's reframe the conversation.

How about becoming active participants in our community? We spend so much of our time and energy fighting for accessibility in our daily lives, it's exhausting! Getting involved in a community that supports you may be the last thing on your list. But, let's say for a minute it isn't. What's the benefit of volunteering your time?

Volunteering is an easy resume builder and that means employment skills! Do you feel like the place you're volunteering at hasn't been using you to your fullest potential? Tell them that, get more experience, and start padding that portfolio for future employment.

Did you know that participating in AmeriCorps will not affect your social security? It's true! AmeriCorps is a nation-wide program that provides "AmeriCorps members to meet the vital needs of the country through intensive service." (You can find more information on local AmeriCorps programs at the Kansas Volunteer Commission website at



www.kanserve.org). Participating in AmeriCorps not only puts money in your pocket, but it looks great on a resume and broadens your network of colleagues and friends.

AmeriCorps isn't the only way to volunteer, of course. Maybe you're not able to make that kind of commitment. What about smaller volunteer opportunities? Think of the agencies and organizations that have helped you in your life. What

better way to show your appreciation than donating your time so that others may benefit from the same services you did? Did your local Center for Independent Living help you build a ramp to your house? Did your children meet new friends through their after-school program? Maybe a domestic violence shelter helped a friend get back on their feet again.

There are countless ways of figuring out where to best use your skills and start becoming an active participant in your community. Not sure where to start? Worried about accessibility and accommodations as a volunteer? Never fear! The Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy's (KYEA) AbilityToServe program is here to help you start making those connections and solving those problems. Contact Rachel with KYEA at 785-215-6655 or developmentcoordinator@kyea.org and she will get you on your way to making a difference in your community. 

Consumer Success cont.

Continued from page 2
enrollment process.

After their first phone call together, the consumer felt confident that she would be able to complete the remaining steps on her ILP. So she continued to complete the steps she had on her ILP.

Some of her steps were completing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and going to BCC to meet with admissions. This time the consumer did these steps on her own. She even went beyond the written steps on her ILP by visiting a couple

of schools in Wichita. The consumer decided to attend BCC this fall. Upon completing her ILP she told Macy that after making her first call to BCC and learning what to expect, it was not as scary anymore. 

How To Achieve Your Career Goals

By Beth Combes, Information and Outreach Coordinator

Many people with disabilities want to pursue their career goals but are afraid that doing so might disqualify their health coverage and their Social Security benefits. However, there are a lot of incentives that will help people with disabilities to achieve their career goals.

One of the programs is called Working Healthy and it offers people with disabilities who are working or interested in working the opportunity to keep their Medicaid coverage while on the job. It is a state and federally funded program that provides Medicaid benefits at a higher



income and resource level than ever before. This program can help people with disabilities earn more, save more, achieve their career goals, and still maintain their health coverage. There are Benefit Specialists across Kansas available to assist people with disabilities to understand how employment may affect their benefits and explain different options to be able to work and still keep their benefits. If you would like to contact your local Benefit Specialists, you can call at 1-800-449-1439 or go to their website at www.workinghealthy.org.

Social Security wants people to try to go back to work. Therefore people with disabilities can work and still receive Social Security disability benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. However, the regulations surrounding keeping your benefits while you try to go back

to work make it tricky. Generally speaking, the test of continuing to receive disability benefits is whether

you can perform a substantial gainful activity (SGA). In order to keep your benefits, your monthly gross earnings (income before taxes and deduction) must be less than the SGA amounts set by Social Security. However, you can learn the options for lowering your gross income if needed such as Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE), Subsidy, and Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) plans. Independent Living Specialists have received many Social Security trainings and they have a lot of experience teaching people with disabilities about their Social Security benefits. If you have questions or would like more information, feel free to contact the Independent Living Specialist at your local RCIL office.

Does it feel better knowing there are options out there that can help you achieve your career goals while still receiving your benefits? The two resources (Working Healthy and Social Security) that I mentioned earlier are just a small portion. There are other resources available to help you achieve career goals such as learning how to create a resume, job search, mock interview, request accommodations, and/or get assistive technology. Independent Living Specialists have knowledge and experience with a lot of resources to help people with disabilities who want to pursue their careers. 



You
Asked
for It

Where can I get a free cell phone?

The ReachOut Wireless program offers a free cell phone with free minutes automatically added each month. The service also includes caller id, texting, and voicemail. Credit checks, security deposits and contracts are not required. To find out more information you can contact ReachOut Wireless at 1-877-870-9444.

Where can I get a service dog?

KSDS, Inc. in Washington, KS, promotes independence and inclusion of individuals who are visually impaired or physically disabled by providing highly-trained canine assistance and support. Contact KSDS at 785-325-2256 for more information.

Contact the Information & Referral Specialist at 800.580.7245 if you have any questions or need any resources.



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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:
rcilinc.org

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Receive emails about events, resources and advocacy updates by calling 800.580.7245 or visiting rcilinc.org.

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