

THE INDEPENDENCE TIMES

Blind Athlete Hits Home Run With Beep Baseball

First impression of Mike Jackson is that he is athletic. Second glance sees the white cane in his hand. Mike is an athlete who played semi-pro basketball and football prior to the loss of his sight three years ago. Within weeks of connecting with The IC as he came to terms with his blindness, staff and peers recruited Mike to play his first game of recreational beep baseball. Fast forward three years and Mike has just returned from helping the Colorado Storm team take home 6th place in the Beep Baseball World Series.

“It was exciting to see thousands of visually impaired athletes playing a sport as if we were normal athletes,” says Mike. “They actually looked at me as a person with special abilities instead of a person without [certain] abilities.” Being seen again as an athlete instead of a blind person is “what I learned from The Independence Center—that there’s more to life than just being disabled.”

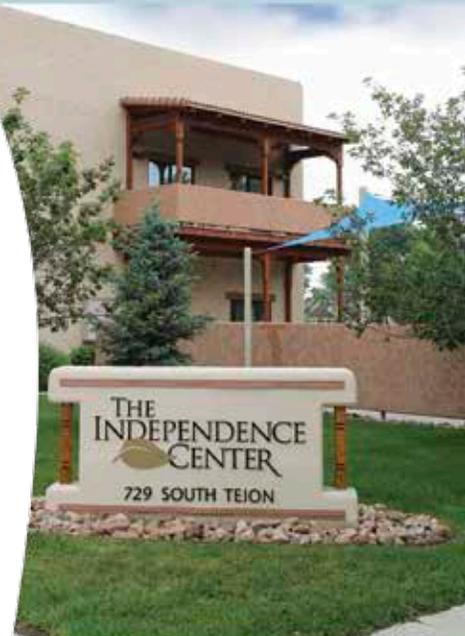
Mike is now bringing the game to children at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. Beep baseball enables them to experience team sport. He figures they are learning, “if I can get through this, my teammate can get through this. Other people can get through this. . . . Those kids should never feel that their life is over because they have one disability. That’s what my whole purpose is [in coaching].” ~ JT



Mike Jackson and Vicky Norwood

The IC's Mission:

Working with people with disabilities, their families and the community, we create independence so that all may thrive.



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CEO CORNER

Patricia Yeager, Ph.D., CEO

As I write this we are basking in the afterglow of our celebration luncheon of the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act here in Colorado Springs.

October marks my four-year anniversary as CEO at The Independence Center. Looking back to four years ago at the lack of accessibility or awareness of the ADA, it was a little discouraging then. It was obvious there was a lot of work to be done in the Pikes Peak area.

As I set about changing the course of the Center, people began to join us. Today, we have a wonderful staff and building dedicated to working with others to create choice and independence. We also have several thriving community groups working together to create change in transit, housing, and our local government's response to the ADA.

Working together is the key concept here. All of us must sit, stand, or lie (or however you show up in the world) in solidarity. When we focus our energies together on a change we want to make and stick to it, there is nothing we cannot change. Even in the Pikes Peak area.



We had 300 people attend the ADA luncheon celebration. People with disabilities were there. Local government officials, state legislators, and other policy makers were there. I believe their eyes were opened to the reality that a new political power base is forming here in the Springs—a cross-disability power base. Not just those who are blind or deaf or have a physical or mental disability but all of us together showed up and sat together. With numbers like this and the law on our side, developers and policy makers are going to have to pay attention. They are going to have to obey the law as we hold them accountable.

It is up to us to use our organizing and systems change advocacy tools wisely. I'm looking forward to another four years of doing just that with all of you here at The Independence Center.

ADA CELEBRATION



Left to right: Rev. Dr. Benjamin Broadbent and Kirk Wohlhueter, Patricia Yeager and the late Richard DeVylder, and Jim Douglas. See all award winners at <http://bit.ly/theic2015awards>

AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

The IC recognizes that there is an extreme and drastic need for affordable and accessible housing in our community. With rising housing costs and income levels dropping below median wages, more and more people face challenges finding adequate housing that fits budget levels. For people with disabilities, location becomes a prominent factor, due to the requirement of close city transportation. When combining these needs with safety concerns, elderly persons' needs and health concerns, community resources delays, and other obstacles, the barriers often cause homelessness and other significant issues such as depression and hopelessness, which in turn stifle independent living.

The Independence Center brought together many people facing these issues through focus groups, interviews, and community forums in order to highlight the vast needs that are causing strain in the community. Carrie Baatz, Community Organizing Coordinator for The Independence Center, pulled these concerns, stories, and obstacles together to build a report detailing each issue, need, barrier, and recommendation to present to Colorado Springs and El Paso County officials, as well as to promote awareness and spark conversation and action. ~ NS

Recommendations

- Public education and advocacy
- A sustained effort to build capacity for affordable and accessible housing
- Building relationships and trust between service providers and housing providers
- Integrate affordable housing units with market-rate housing
- Increase staff and availability of Code Enforcement Officers
- More personnel to provide education and enforcement regarding Fair Housing laws
- Centralized method of tracking available affordable and accessible housing units
- A greater spectrum of resources to adequately fulfill the needs in the Pikes Peak Region

Get Involved

People's Access to Homes (PATH)

believes everyone has a right to a space they call home. They are advocating for housing rights and increased affordable and accessible housing in the Pikes Peak Region.

Meetings are at The Independence Center every Thursday from 3:00pm - 4:30pm.

For more information contact Carrie Baatz at ext. 167.

Read this report in its entirety at <http://bit.ly/theic2015housingreport>

UPCOMING EVENTS

THERE'S MORE!

Please check our website for a complete list of events and classes at <http://bit.ly/theiceventsfall2015>

SNOW DAYS!

We follow District 11's weather closures. In the event of a closure, classes will be held the following week and run an extra week.



Contacts for More Info:

Tim Ashley (peer support)
ext. 123 or tashley@the-ic.org

Angie Tenorio (Deaf and HOH)
ext. 121, VP 719-358-2513, or
atenorio@the-ic.org

Thanksgiving Celebration With Peers

Nov. 20th, 4:00pm - 7:00pm

Consumer White Elephant Christmas Celebration

Dec. 18th, 10:00am - 1:00pm

EVENTS

INDEPENDENT
LIVING

Registration Deadline: Oct. 23
Contact Edgar at ext. 168

Money Management-
Mondays, Oct. 26 - Dec. 14
9:00am - 10:30am

Independent Cooking-
Tuesdays, Oct. 27 - Dec. 15
11:00am - 1:30pm

Positive Attitude and
Overcoming Barriers-
Wednesdays, Oct. 26 - Dec. 16
11:30am - 1:00pm

Registration Required:

Contact Starr at ext. 109
*Classes rotate on a continuous
basis, contact for future dates.*

Employee Readiness-
Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22
10:00am - 12:00pm

Employee Retention-
Nov. 5, 12, 19, Dec. 3
10:00am - 12:00pm

EMPLOYMENT

The IC Coordinates Group Outing at Fishing Has No Boundaries Event



John Monteith

For people without disabilities, grabbing a rod and reel and going fishing is an activity that can be taken for granted. However, people with mobility-related disabilities face obvious barriers such as difficulty navigating foot paths and docks and boarding a boat. There are less obvious barriers as well. A father teaches his children to fish with hands-on work with the rod and reel. When the line gets tangled, fine motor skills are a must. John Monteith – who uses a wheelchair and has loss of fine motor skills – was more concerned about how to help his daughters handle the bait and tackle than he was concerned about accessibility for himself.

Monteith and over thirty consumers involved in disability support groups at The Independence Center attended the Colorado Springs Fishing Has No Boundaries (FHNB) event at Eleven Mile Reservoir. Peer support groups at The Independence Center frequently coordinate recreational activities and outings for people with disabilities, such as horseback riding, bowling, and glow golf.

This event made fishing from a pontoon accessible for people with disabilities. For John, this was the first time he had been fishing since becoming a wheelchair user in 2011. When asked about the experience, he answered, “The most fun was my whole family was able to go. The whole thing was awesome.... My kids were ecstatic.” He was particularly impressed that the boat captain and first mate helped his children with the tackle. Boat captains donated their time, fuel, crew, and drinks and their generosity helped make memories for persons with disabilities and their families. ~ JT

Living Well With a Disability

Open to anyone living with a disability, this class is taught in a group setting. Each member contributes and participates in the discussions in an interactive setting, which results in good suggestions and conversations. The last group’s topics covered were: Healthy Communication, Beating the Blues, Physical Activity, and Healthy Nutrition. New classes will begin in January 2016; please contact Tim Ashley at ext. 123 for more information or check The IC website for updates to the schedule at

<http://bitly.com/livingwelltheic>



“I feel like now I know how to lead a healthy, better life.”

Diabetes Education Grant Helps Secure Independence

Charlene was eager to start cooking in her apartment after living in a nursing home for two years. She wanted tasty food and she wanted to cook it for herself. She found it especially trying for someone attempting to eat gluten free in a nursing home.

“At the time... I had very limited choices for nutritious gluten free meals. Quite often, it was a plate of gluten free pasta, or Rice Krispies.”

She transitioned out of nursing home care to her own apartment through the Community Transition Services offered at The Independence Center in July of 2014. During her two years in a nursing home, her husband had passed away unexpectedly. This left Charlene with no place to go home to. Having never lived alone, she was being discharged from a nursing home to live independently all by herself.

Once settled in her new apartment, she began to cook for herself. Her concerns were to make nutritious food that also tasted good. Charlene admits she put on weight after leaving the nursing home and says, “Knowing about food and nutrition is very helpful for weight loss and a lot of things, seeing as how I am doing everything on my own now.”

About a year after transition, when her transition services were about to be finished, she was offered a spot in the Diabetes Education Class at The Independence Center. The class is part of a program to help people with disabilities learn how to prevent or control diabetes through diet and exercise. This is important because people with disabilities experience diabetes at a much higher rate than the general population.

Charlene takes a great deal of notes throughout the Diabetes Education Class. “They teach us how the pancreas works, what glucose is and how it goes into the cells, what are simple carbs, complex carbs, a lot of information... Every two months we come here and talk to Martha the nutritionist and she’ll catch up on what we’ve been doing and give us a new set of information to practice the next two months and then come back.

“I think one of the biggest things [I’ve learned] is peas are not a vegetable. Peas are 100% carbs. If you have peas on your plate, then you [shouldn’t] have the potatoes. We were really upset about the peas,” she chuckles good-naturedly.



When asked if there is one word that describes the difference in her as a person between now and eighteen months ago, Charlene answers enthusiastically: “Independence! I’m way independent now! I had always been married so I didn’t know anything about living alone. The Independence Center with the community transition program was amazing. If it wasn’t for them, I don’t know

what I would have done because I didn’t know anything about where to begin.”

The Diabetic Education program was made possible by a \$7,500 grant from the Myron Stratton Grants Program. Support from the program aims to promote healthy living as a person with diabetes or prediabetes. It serves to make her independence that much more secure, so she can live as she wants to live – independently. ~ JT



Assistive Technology Grant Provides Tangible Benefit

A retired professor at Pikes Peak Community College (PPCC), Sandy Bailey had full sight until about two years ago. She was diagnosed with a tumor on her pituitary gland and was operated on. Her surgeon predicted she would lose all of her sight but she considers herself blessed to have 25% remaining.

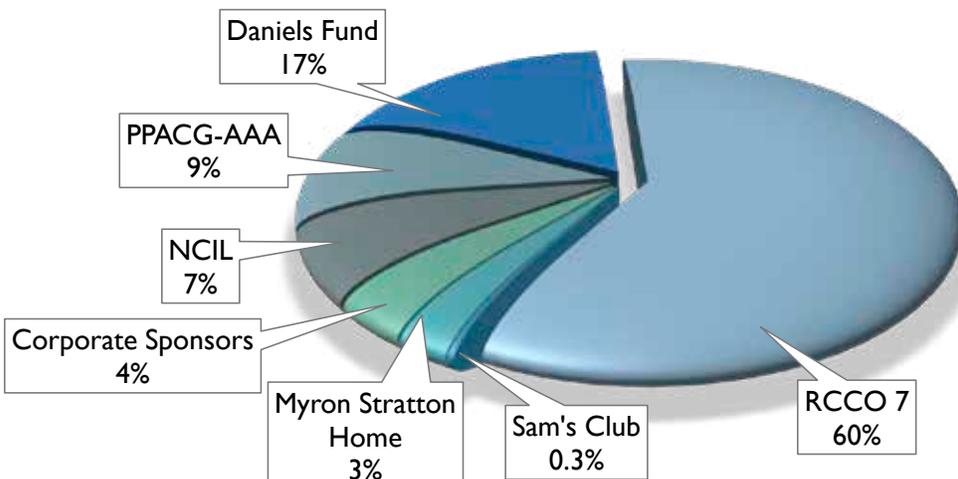
As Sandy grieved her sight loss, she sought assistance. With the diminishment of her vision, one of the biggest losses was her ability to read. “My thing has always been if I have personal issues, look for support groups. So when this happened to me, the first thing I thought was ‘I cannot just sit at home. I have got to find something [to help].’” Sandy found The Independence Center and began attending groups. One day at her low vision group she was told that a grant was coming for seniors over sixty years old to buy assistive equipment. She was invited to participate and requested an iPad. Her face lights up when she describes how her iPad has helped make books accessible again. She’s installed NFB Reader, Kindle, BARD Library, and utilizes the voice over function. “I love that iPad. I love it for the reading,” she states.

Sandy still remembers having a blind student in one of the classes she taught at PPCC (before her own sight loss). She recalls being impressed by the young woman’s positivity and artistic expression. “I like positivity,” she declares, “I just have this thing that positive people can do anything that they put their mind to. But if you’re negative, then you’re not going to do it, because you don’t want to. You have to want to do it.” Sandy’s philosophy motivates her to help others. Now she helps teach others what she has learned on the iPad. “I am still teaching,” she says with a smile. The iPad was provided through the Area Agency on Aging grant to The Independence Center’s Older Individuals with Blindness program. ~JT

The IC’s 2015 Grants and Sponsorships

as of Oct. 1, 2015

\$272,030!



For more information on grants we earned and what they are being used for visit us at <http://bit.ly/theicgrants2015>

Family/Caregiver Encouragement Group

The purpose of this group is to give family members and caregivers an outlet to safely disclose any problems or frustrations they may be encountering. Self-care is emphasized at each discussion and all members are encouraged to take at least one hour per day doing something pleasurable. Members are reminded at every meeting that if they don't take care of their selves, they cannot properly care for another person. Participants share their experiences of how they have overcome barriers in order to assist other members of the group facing those same obstacles. Members find the group very supportive and encouraging. Each session ends on a positive note of hope. Many members meet on their own during the week to exercise or simply to socialize with each other.

“One of the best things about this group is how much we support and care about each other. We help one another with ideas, solutions, resources, listening, and caring. We are able to trust one another because respect and confidentiality are the golden rules.”

Cheryl

CONGRATULATIONS HOME HEALTH!

2nd Place, Best Home Health Care Agency



OUR NEW ANNUAL REPORT IS OUT!

See it at <http://bit.ly/theicannual>



The IC's New Website!

Check it out at <http://bit.ly/newsitetheic>