

THE INDEPENDENCE TIMES

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FROM THE INDEPENDENCE CENTER

FALL 2016

Vietnam Veteran Pays It Forward in Teller County

Vincent Thoms is a Vietnam veteran who loves the A-frame home he has in Teller County. A widower who lives alone, Vincent requires the use of oxygen for a heart problem that probably started with exposure to Agent Orange during his service in Vietnam. He tires easily and doesn't have the stamina to handle normal housework. It was starting to look for Vincent like remaining independent in his beloved home was at risk.

"It's hard to admit you need help. For veterans, it is awful hard." Thoms says, as he looks thoughtfully around the interior of his home.

After receiving a flyer from the Independence Center, Vincent learned about a new program designed to help veterans remain independent in their own homes as long as possible. The program, called Veteran in Charge, serves eligible veterans who need assistance with bathing, dressing, transferring, yardwork, transportation, cooking, medication management, etc. Veteran in Charge is a Veteran Directed – Home and Community Based Services (VD-HCBS) program that supplements, not replaces, Veterans Administration (VA) benefits.

"This program has been key to allowing Vincent to remain right where he wants, in his mountain home as a vital participant within his community," Ashley Billington, Veteran Coach at the Independence Center, explains. "The best part is Vincent gets to determine how he spends his monthly budget. This is huge because Vincent is the expert on his own needs."

Veterans of any age with a disability who need assistance to remain independent in their home are encouraged to start with their VA contact for an eligibility assessment. Veterans who are interested in the Veteran in Charge program may contact Ashley Billington at The Independence Center at (719) 476-3170.



Vincent Thoms



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CEO CORNER

Patricia Yeager, Ph.D., CEO

Have you seen a new curb cut or curb ramp in your neighborhood recently? If not, and you have sidewalks, those accessible path of travel tools are coming your way! Recently, I had the opportunity to hear Mayor John Suthers speak at two different events about sidewalks and curb ramps, as the city calls them. Having well-constructed curb ramps and passable (not to mention smooth) sidewalks are both critical to the independence of people with disabilities and seniors who have mobility and/or balance issues.

A small community organizing group, ACT or Access the Community Today had identified a large number of inaccessible sidewalks and curb ramps, and brought those to the attention of The Gazette last year. A front page article featured Sharon King, a wheelchair user, trying to navigate a crumbling curb ramp and potholed street. It appears that the City had not been following the law over the years, which states that when streets are repaved, curb ramps must be added or repaired if existing ramps are in place and need it. Missing curb ramps should be added at intersections where only one or two exist. In short, make the public path of travel usable by all



people as roadways are repaved or added.

What a difference a year, a vote, and advocacy makes! With the passage of 2C, the voters of Colorado Springs sent a message to improve our roadways. One of the provisions of 2C was that 45% of the funds were to be used for improvement or installation of sidewalks, curb and curb ramps, as well as gutters. This equals about \$25 million a year for the next five years to be spent on these items. Using just 2C funds, Mayor Suthers stated at our ADA Celebration in July, that 114 new curb ramps had been created, 99 curb ramps repaired, and 3 miles of sidewalk laid. In addition, through a “variety of funding sources”, more than \$4 million was spent in 2015 that resulted in the construction of more than 500 new or reconstructed ramps and 10 miles of sidewalk.

I sure hope your personal path of travel through this city is getting better! A tip of the hat, the flash of a wheel, and the bark of a guide dog to Mayor Suthers and City staff in every department for their commitment to improving the walkability of our city for everyone, including the disability and senior communities.



Photo courtesy of The Gazette

Young Professional Aims for Nursing Career After Son Born With Disability

Amber Turner, 35, originally studied health sciences and received a BA from UCCS. Her goal was to be a high school athletic director. The birth of her son in 2007 set her on a different course. Born with a rare genetic condition called Townes-Brocks syndrome, Cortland required round the clock care. Life began for Cortland in the NICU for 6 weeks, but soon transitioned to having Amber not only as his mother, but as his medical caregiver.

In 2009, Amber became a paid caregiver for her son through a Medicaid waiver program. This allowed her to receive reimbursement for the nursing care she was giving her son. Becoming a paid caregiver required taking CNA classes and getting certified as a CNA.

After working as a CNA caregiver to her son for seven years, Amber



began working at The Independence Center as Home Health Assistant. Amber's ambitions began to shift from health sciences to medical advocacy.

She has a vision to become a medical advocate for parents with children in

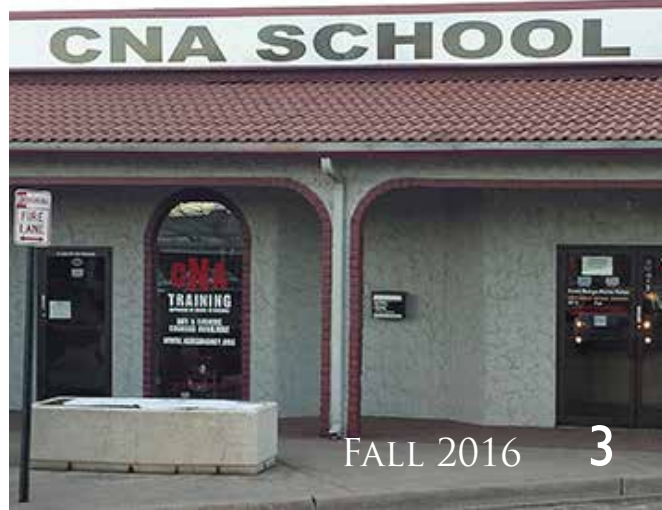
NICU. She bases this on the need she felt when Cortland was in the NICU. What was particularly difficult for Amber during that time was the fact that she had to navigate Cortland's medical diagnosis and care, while trying also to simply be Cortland's mother. This sadly caused her to miss enjoying and recording several early milestones in her son's life.

Of the chaotic time when Cortland was in NICU she said, "I unfortunately felt like I was on an island alone with Cortland," and her vision is to change this for anyone else who goes through a similar situation. Through tuition reimbursement at The Independence Center, she plans to pursue her nursing degree as a stepping stone into medical advocacy. Ultimately, her passion for caregiving for her son has given her a new direction for a fulfilling career.

CNA School Exceeds Colorado State Average Pass Rate

During the first full quarter since being purchased by The IC and renamed The Independence Center CNA School, graduates of the school have collectively received a 94% pass rate on the Colorado Nurse Aide Competency and Evaluation Exams (State Boards). Colorado State average pass rate is 79%. The IC purchased Front Range Nurse Aide Training Program in the fourth quarter of 2015. The acquisition was made to fill the shortage of CNAs needed to serve home health clients of The Independence Center.

For more information visit <http://bit.ly/becomeacna>



ADA Celebrating Progress in TRANSIT

This year's annual event was a huge success, bringing in over 300 people to help celebrate the ADA. This year's focus was on transit within our community, where we are now, where we came from, and what important factors we need to consider for the future in order to create a robust transit system, so that the Pikes Peak region does not fall behind the city's growth.





Photos: Mayor John Suthers (left); Patrica Yeager, CEO (right, photo courtesy of Matt Getze); Melvin Smith, Amblicab Bus Driver hugging Zena, Bus Rider (bottom left); Charles Jennings, Mountain Metropolitan Bus Driver and Jon Karroll, KRDO News Anchor (bottom right)



We were honored to have many elected officials in attendance, including Mayor John Suthers who spoke about the city's current transit development plans. He distributed the People's Choice Drivers Awards which were given to nominated bus drivers across the community for their valued services and dedication to their work. Thank you drivers for all you do!

If you would like to view the videos which were presented at the event, please go to <http://bit.ly/2016adavideos>



Mayor John Suthers, Mevin Smith (Amblicab), Jack Souders (Silver Key), Ray Schwartz (Community Intersections), Wayne Peacock (Fountain Valley Senior Center), Robert Bailey (Metro Mobility), Ricky Brooks, Gary Mastas, and Charles Jennings (all 3 from Mountain Metro. Transit)

The Independence Center Brings Assistive Technology Home

The Independence Center is a great place to start if you or someone you know needs a home modification or assistive technology device. Paul Spotts, Independent Living Specialist (Assistive Technology Emphasis) can help you walk through the process of finding out if you are qualified to obtain funding for your home modification needs. The qualification process can take anywhere from 2-8 months.

The most common needs Paul handles are ramps and bathroom modifications. Paul also handles Colorado's Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP), which provides telecommunications equipment and accessories to qualified deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind residents of Colorado. Unsure if you will qualify? Paul says, "You aren't going to know unless you ask." Set up an appointment with Paul to discuss your specific needs by calling (719) 471-8181 x 122.

The Independence Center Sends Delegates to NCIL Conference

The Independence Center sent two delegates to the National Centers for Independent Living (NCIL) Annual Conference on Independent Living that was held in Washington, D.C. July 24 – 28, 2016.

Carrie Baatz, Community Organizing Coordinator, and Nina Kamekona, Youth Advocate Specialist, attended the conference on behalf of The Independence Center. Nina attended on a youth scholarship awarded by NCIL that paid for her registration and up to \$1,000 for travel expenses. Nina was one of only 10 youth around the country chosen for the scholarship. Carrie attended workshops to equip her to effectively advocate for housing solutions in Colorado Springs. Nina attended workshops with the goal of learning how to strengthen youth programs at The IC. Both participated in a disability rights march and rally on the

Capitol on the anniversary of the passage of the ADA on July 26, 2016.

Founded in 1982, the National Council on Independent Living is a national cross-disability, grassroots organization run by and for people with disabilities. It represents thousands of organizations that advocate for the civil rights of people with disabilities throughout the United States.



Carrie Baatz (left) and Nina Kamekona (right) proudly display their handmade signs for the march to and rally at the Capitol on July 26, 2016.

Adaptive Bicycle Helps Calhan Man Move About in More Ways Than One

Ross Huddleson is a faithful consumer of The Independence Center's east office located at the fairgrounds of Calhan. He lives with Parkinson's Disease, a slowly progressive disorder of the nervous system that causes difficulty in regulating body movements. Because he is unable to drive and there is no bus service in Calhan, his only mode of transportation is walking. Walking in Calhan is no easy feat, partially due to its sprawled out, hilly country landscape; partially due to fluctuations in weather. Nevertheless, Ross takes care of his errands and visits by foot. He also visits his Independent Living Specialist, Fran Dorrance, at The IC office frequently, even in the snow.

Fran and Ross ran across a few articles that mentioned the healing benefits of bicycling for people with Parkinson's. Intrigued, they decided to pursue obtaining a bicycle for Ross. The benefit of a bicycle would be two-fold: to help combat the degeneration of Parkinson's and to help Ross with his transportation needs.

Ross Huddleson (left) and Francis Dorrance (right)



Ross Huddleson rides his new bicycle

Fran set up Ross with Paul Spotts, Independent Living Specialist (Assistive Technology Emphasis) at The Independence Center, to help obtain funding for an adaptive bicycle and helmet. Funding was granted and Ross was fitted by Biketricity for a brand new adaptive trike with motor. The trike helps Ross maintain stability despite balance issues, while the motor is available for use when Ross tires. Ross' new mobility has freed him. "When he first got on it, we had to get in a car and chase him down." Fran recalls with a laugh. "When I go someplace now it doesn't take me a half hour to get there," Ross says. Both Fran and Ross also mention that Ross' coordination of movements has improved after riding.

"We've all noticed a huge difference. We really have. The therapy part of the trike has been very beneficial," Fran says as she smiles at Ross. Consumers of The Independence Center with assistive technology needs are encouraged to contact Paul Spotts at (719) 471-8181 ext. 122.



VOTE
BY NOV. 8

VOTE AT THE INDEPENDENCE CENTER

729 S. Tejon Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

NOVEMBER 7-8

For other polling locations visit,
epcvotes.com

IMPORTANT DATES

Monday, October 17th

Mail-in ballots sent to all registered voters can be returned by mail or at a ballot drop off location

Monday, October 24th

Some local in-person polling places open early

Thursday, November 3rd

Final day to send mail-in ballots through the mail

Monday, November 7th

All polling places, including The IC, are open from 8 AM- 5 PM

ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, November 8th

Final day to vote in person or drop your ballot at a drop box from 7 AM - 7 PM

If you are voting the day of the election, you must drop off your ballot at a drop off location or vote in person at a Voter Service Polling Center (VSPC). You may visit any VSPC to vote or receive a replacement ballot. Visit www.epcvotes.com for more information about VSPC and drop off locations.

To register or update your registration, visit govotecolorado.com

To contact the County Clerk, call 719-575-VOTE
or email elections@elpasoco.com



Check out our Facebook Page!

www.facebook.com/TheIndependenceCenter