

THE INDEPENDENCE TIMES

Caregiver Finds Missing Piece at Support Group

Thursday evenings you will find Alexia* spending time with the Family/Caregiver group at The Independence Center. Despite long days of caregiving for her daughter Brooklyn*, Alexia doesn't miss this time to connect with others who face similar challenges. Connecting with the group has encouraged Alexia to see the positive strides that have been made and acknowledge the work that both she and Brooklyn have done and how far they've come. Giving credit where credit is due and focusing on the positives for Brooklyn have helped shape Alexia's new perspective on caregiving.

"I finally made contact with The Independence Center and started coming to the Thursday Family/Caregiver Encouragement group. I needed help...some pieces were missing," Alexia tells. "Coming to The Independence Center has helped me navigate with a different way of thinking."

* Not their real names



Family/Caregiver Encouragement Group

Thursdays
5:30 – 7:00 pm
The Independence Center

If you are a caregiver or family member of person with a disability, you are invited and encouraged to attend.

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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Another year under the belt! And what a year it has been.... Here are some of the highlights.

The IC's Peer Support program really took off with the addition of some great recreational events and funds for people with spinal cord injuries from a grant from the National Council on Independent Living.

We were awarded certification to start providing Home and Community Based Services to Veterans and are just waiting for the VA in Denver to send us referrals. Now vets will be able to access paid caregivers and other services very shortly.

Our advocacy services have had a terrific year. The Mayor added a significant amount of funding for bus transit based on the work of the Transit Coalition. PATH, a new community group that emerged out of the housing study that The IC community organizing department undertook, is grappling with housing for homeless people in Colorado Springs, including advocating for a "Tiny Home" neighborhood that could serve as a transition home for people with disabilities who are homeless. Funding for Centers for Independent Living in Colorado got a big vote of confidence as the State Legislature increased our state funding by little over \$4 million dollars annually.

We held our first ADA celebratory luncheon in July at the Hotel Elegante with 300 people in attendance! Richard Devylder, long-time California advocate for persons with disabilities and emergency preparedness, gave a great speech for the gains made so far. To our dismay, Richard unexpectedly passed away a week later. What a gift for all of us that got to hear him speak.



Our Home Health/HCBS division has been struggling to find and hire Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs) which caused us to have to turn away consumers needing those services. So we took a brave, proactive step and bought our own CNA training school! As of December 1 we are the proud owners and operators of what was formerly *Front Range Nurse Aide Training Program*. We have renamed it The Independence Center CNA School. We are looking forward to including deaf individuals and others in training programs. Not only will we train CNAs, but personal services providers and home makers as well.

Health care is becoming a passion for The IC. This year the Community Health Partnership that serves as the healthcare coordinating agency for persons who receive both Medicaid and Medicare awarded funding to The IC to conduct research on barriers to healthcare that people with disabilities in the Pikes Peak region experience. Look for some announcements next year on ways we will work to remove those barriers.

New staff, new programs, even a few new board members! It's enough to make my head spin and I look forward to what 2016 will bring. Here's to a healthy, prosperous and barrier-free New Year for everyone!

The IC Gives Back

The IC Fund 2015
Awards Ceremony



The Independence Center gave out nearly \$75,000 in grant money to 11 different local organizations to help make improvements for people with disabilities in southern Colorado.

Checks ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 were awarded during a private ceremony on Sept 30th.

THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVED FUNDING:

\$10,000

Hearing Loss Association of America
Colo. Spgs. Chapter

Lincoln Community Hospital Care Center (Hugo)
Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind
Amblicab

\$8,000

Community Transit Coalition,
submitted by Women's Resource Agency

\$6,830

Rocky Mountain Wildlife Foundation (Guffey)

\$5,780

Pikes Peak Urban Gardens

\$5,000

Colorado Springs Amateur Hockey Association
Rocky Mountain Rural Health (Fairplay)
Prairie Family Center (Burlington)
Educating Children of Color

*To find out more about The IC Fund or
applying for your organization, visit us at
bit.ly/theicfund*

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Advocating for Accessible Housing

Carrie Baatz understands the deeper needs that having a home meet, because from December 2014 – April 2015, Baatz undertook the issue of housing from the community organizing office of The IC. It was out of these efforts that a dedicated group of individuals emerged to create a community organizing group with the name People's Access to Homes (PATH).

Baatz says, “Being a part of this process at The Independence Center out of which PATH emerged has been life changing for me.” As for the group members, who essentially have chosen themselves, she tells, “I look up to them. They are all so articulate and talented and self-aware.”

PATH's immediate goal is to see the Colorado Springs Sit/Lie City Ordinance fail. Making sitting illegal in certain places would negatively impact people with disabilities.

While everyone needs a home base, a place to come home to, a place to be well and a place to recover from illnesses, people with disabilities



Carrie Baatz speaking at a City Council meeting on Nov. 10, 2015

need that home in an accessible, affordable package. The Independence Center is engaging local government in advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities and inviting the community to join them. Through the IC's community influence and leadership, PATH has become an independent, active, engaged force advocating for better housing options for people with disabilities.

*To get involved go to
bit.ly/theicpath*

Improving Access to Job Services

Staff and consumers of The IC, and community members attended a public forum at The IC on October 13, 2015 regarding the merge of Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) and Division of Vocational Rehab (DVR).

The Independence Center supports the merger. Patricia Yeager, CEO of The IC, describes the goal of the merger as ultimately “a job for all who would need one,” while better using government resources to serve persons with and without disabilities looking for work. Under the new merger, if a person with a disability needs additional services centered around

functional limitations, DVR staff can join the CDLE team to provide services for the person in the Workforce System. Previously, persons with disabilities were served completely separate from CDLE. In the case of disability rights, Yeager sees “separate services” as not equal. Yeager's vision for persons with disabilities to be able to enter through the same door as everyone else at CDLE is a powerful place to start in accessibility and inclusion of DVR clients at CDLE.

*Learn more about our advocacy at
bit.ly/theicadvocacy*

The IC Joins Advocacy Discussion at UCCS

About 40 public affairs students were introduced to The Independence Center at a community discussion hosted by UCCS School of Public Affairs on October 29, 2015. Attendees were given theoretical and practical perspectives along with real life stories about policy barriers for people with disabilities.

For more info visit bit.ly/theic-uccs



Billy Allen, Carrie Baatz, Michael Hazard, Andrew Winders, and Gail Nehls.

First Annual Legislative Briefing Held at The IC

The Independence Center (The IC) held its first annual Legislative Breakfast at The IC on September 28, 2015. Issues on the table were housing, transit, employment, community transitions (referring to transition out of nursing homes into independent living), home modifications/assistive technology, emergency preparedness, rural issues and home health. Issues were framed as an opportunity for the legislators to observe that cost savings to the state and independent living for those with disabilities are not mutually exclusive.

"If we can get in the door, if we can get on the bus, if employers will hire us, we will be taxpayers," Patricia Yeager, CEO stated regarding the need for accessibility in buildings, transportation, and the employment sector.

State officials were clearly engaged, concerned, and expressed gratitude to The IC with an ovation at the conclusion. State legislature attendees were Sen. Kent Lambert (R), Rep. Terri Carver (R), Rep. Janak Joshi (R), Rep. Pete Lee (D), Rep. Paul Lundeen (R) and Rep. Gordon Klingensmith (R).

*Find out about the issues at
bit.ly/theicbriefing*



Sen. Kent Lambert

The IC is Chosen to Address Health Care Gaps

In the interest of creating better health outcomes for people with disabilities, The Independence Center joins a cohort of eight community-based organizations in The Colorado Healthcare Foundation's pilot program, Colorado Linkage Lab. The Colorado Linkage Lab is a 19-month executive and senior leadership program with the goal to promote integration between the health care sector and long-term services and supports community-based organizations that provide day-to-day support to people with disabilities in Colorado. The Linkage Lab will enable The Independence Center to gain an understanding of the language and processes to link programming successfully to the health care sector.

For more info, go to bit.ly/2016linkagelab

The IC Helps with Video Phone Testing for El Paso County



Matthew Ruggles using the video phone at The El Paso County Citizens Service Center.



Join our deaf and hard of hearing Facebook group at <http://bit.ly/fb-dhoh-group>

The Deaf & Hard of Hearing program of The Independence Center is involved in making telephone communication more accessible to the deaf community in the Pikes Peak Region. Matthew Ruggles and Angela Tenorio, deaf and hard of hearing program staff at The IC, helped with testing the new video phones at the Pikes Peak Workforce Center in August 2015.

Ruggles explained that the video phones help people with auditory disabilities have equal access to telephone communication. Video phones provide the ability for a person who is deaf to connect with a sign language interpreter via video. The interpreter then translates sign language to spoken voice to the person on the other end of the line.

Phones are being installed in other El Paso County buildings such as the El Paso County Criminal Justice Center, the Citizens Service Center, and Department of Motor Vehicle locations. The IC continues to advocate for civil and governmental accountability with ADA compliance and is committed to providing expertise with disability access concerns when invited to assist by civil or governmental entities.

The IC Trains the American Red Cross

At what kind of training would you look around the room and see county officials, disability training consultants, service dogs, Red Cross district officials, and people with disabilities? You would be at an emergency preparedness training emphasizing accessibility for persons with disabilities—the first of its kind in Colorado, actually—put on by The Independence Center (The IC).

Utilizing funding from two grants, The Independence Center has begun to educate local officials and Red Cross staff on disability accessibility and etiquette issues for emergency shelters. A grant from Disability-Benefit Support Contract Committee (DBSCC) funded the production of a training video, and a grant from The Daniels Fund paid for the creation of Emergency Preparedness Disability Kits to be given to all the Colorado Red Cross chapters. The kits contain over 45 accessibility items to assist seniors and people with disabilities with functional or access needs.

To view the training video and learn more visit bit.ly/theic-redcrosstraining



Photo by Michael Rieger/FEMA

THERE'S MORE!

Please check our website for a complete list of events and classes at <http://bit.ly/2016wintercalendar>

SNOW DAYS!

If District 11 is closed, please call 719-471-8181 to find out if your group or class is cancelled.

Achilles International Walk/Run

This event brings together athletes with disabilities and able-bodied athletes in a celebration of running, walking or rolling.

**1st and 3rd Monday,
begins at 6:15 pm**

Meet at:
Colorado Springs Running Co.
5262 N Nevada Ave, #140
Colorado Springs

Coming Soon!

Adaptive Yoga Workshop

Keep an eye out for more info at <http://bit.ly/2016wintercalendar>

Contact for More Info:

Tim Ashley ext. 123
or tashley@the-ic.org

PEER SUPPORT

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Registration Deadline: **Mar. 28**

Contact Edgar at ext. 168

Money Management

Learn about checking and savings accounts, how to manage your money, budgeting and using your money wisely.

Living Independently

Learn the skills to live independently. Includes: budgeting, cooking, advocacy, and other essential skills.

Cooking

Learn the skills to cook complete, healthy meals.

Self-Advocacy

Learn how to advocate for yourself.

Registration Required:

Contact Starr at ext. 109

Classes rotate on a continuous basis; contact us for future dates.

Employee Readiness

Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25
April 7, 14, 21, 28
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Employee Retention

Mar. 3, 10, 17, 24
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

EMPLOYMENT

We are
proud to
announce...

*Front Range Nurse Aide
Training Program is now*

THE INDEPENDENCE CENTER CNA SCHOOL

We are excited to announce that as of December 1st, 2015, The Independence Center purchased the Front Range Nurse Aide Training Program! Our goal is to train and grow future CNAs with the hope that they will consider applying for positions with The IC.

CNAs can use this program as a stepping stone into the health care industry, to train and take care of their family members, or to become a CNA for home health care, hospitals, assisted living communities, or long-term care facilities.

Find out more at the-ic.org/cna

Looking for Employment?

The Independence Center hires and trains graduates from the training program and offers tuition reimbursement and sign-on bonuses. We also offer tuition assistance for current employees. For more information, contact Katey Castilla at 719-471-8181, ext. 136.



Check out our Facebook Page!

www.facebook.com/TheIndependenceCenter