

THE INDEPENDENCE TIMES

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Low Vision
Program Launches

Assistance Animal
Open House

American Legion
Accessibility

TROY'S JOURNEY:
From Surviving
to Thriving

BETTER
THAN I WAS
BEFORE

Michael Jackson
Beep Baseball Player



CEO CORNER

Patricia Yeager, Ph.D., CEO



It is the middle of April as I write this column, which means there's a flurry of legislative activity taking place at both the state and federal level. During

this session, there have been

many bills flying around both legislative bodies, including the two below that The IC has had the most interest in.

HB19-1069 Interpreter Certification

At the state level, The IC worked with the deaf/Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind (d/D/HH/DB) and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting communities to help get this bill passed.

Status: Signed into law by Governor Jared Polis on April 16, 2019.

Background: Prior to the passage of this bill, the Legal and Educational Interpreting laws in Colorado stated that only Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)-certified ASL interpreters could be used in any business-type transaction (medical, legal, banking, etc.). At this time, the state only has 253 certified interpreters and RID had not been very responsive to the need for more certification sessions in Colorado. This law empowers the Colorado Commission on the Deaf, Blind, and DeafBlind to pick other certification processes that can be used instead of RID.

Bottom line: This law ensures that d/D/HH/DB people will have more certified interpreters to engage and can be much more confident of getting accurate interpretations. Interpreters will benefit from a faster certification process, or if their current certification is accepted by the state, they can go to work right away. Businesses and medical facilities benefit from having more qualified interpreters available.

Disability Integration Act (DIA)

The IC supports this rare, bipartisan bill that would help people with disabilities live in the community, rather than a nursing home.

Status: Just reintroduced mid-January in both the Federal House of Representatives (HR. 2472) and the Senate (SB 918).

Background: For a number of years, disability advocates across the country, including ADAPT, Protection and Advocacy agencies (now called Disability Rights Centers), and the National Council on Independent Living have been working to get programs funded to assist people with significant impairments to live at home and not in a nursing facility. Because this is Medicaid-based, it has been impossible to pass into national law. Time for a different tactic! The DIA makes it a civil right across the nation to live in the community with assistance for people at risk of nursing home placement.

The Center on Disability Rights (New York) explains it well:

"It would require both public and private insurances that cover any kind of long-term care to give equal coverage to home and community support services, so you could simply choose that option if it's what you want. It would require this in every state, so no matter where you live, your right to independence would be the same."

For more information on DIA, visit <http://cdrnys.org/blog/disability-politics/the-disability-integration-act/>. Follow the progress of this bill via updates on our website and Facebook page. If you would like to voice your support, please contact your elected representatives.

If you would like to get even more involved with advocacy on these and other public policy efforts, please call Rebecca Michael, Advocacy Manager, at 719-476-8181, ext. 167.

Inspiring Change

After The IC's Disability Integration Act Watch Party, we received this letter from one of the attendees.

Hi Elle, Rebecca and
The Independence Center,

You both did an AMAZING job setting everything up for us to attend and watch the Disability Integration Act Watch Party.

What a Powerful and Inspiring day to see movement and change happening across the United States for those of us with disabilities. Not only does the DIA affect us directly, but it affects our families, friends, healthcare providers, and our nation as a whole! I was very Proud to be there!

I don't know where I would be without access to disability services and Medicaid. More than likely, I would be dead because the medication I take is imperative for my ability to function on a day to day basis. I also get home care and other services through my (BI) Brain Injury Waiver.

I enjoyed speaking with you ladies after the Watch Party. During our conversation, I expressed how having an "Invisible" disability really effects my interaction with the outside world.

Having a traumatic brain injury (TBI) affects so many areas of my life including, but not subject to: how I communicate with people, long and



Rebecca Michael, Stephanie Symonette, and Elle Livengood

short term memory loss, organization, emotional and mental regulation, impulse control, social interaction, cognitive and executive functioning, and the list goes on and on.

I am learning how to advocate for myself, so that I can be sure to get the assistance and help that I need.

Thank you to The Independence Center for welcoming me into your family last year. Thank you for the great work you do advocating and provided us with the services to help us function better individually and collectively!

I especially want to thank Mr. Tim Ashley and Dr. Kevin Corrigan for your continued support, patience, direction and accessibility. You continually help me become a better person!

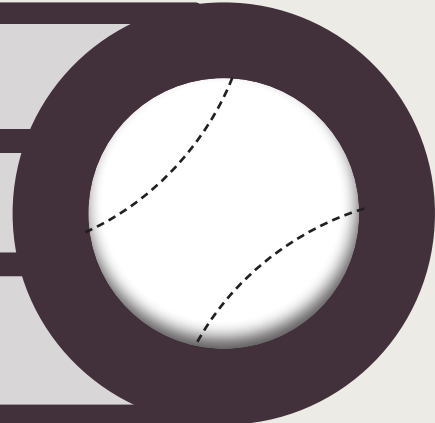
I am truly blessed and grateful for all that you do! Thank you! Peace & Blessings!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Symonette



BETTER THAN I WAS BEFORE



When Michael Jackson enrolled at Palmer High School in Colorado Springs, he had one goal: to break his parents' athletic records. The fact that he hadn't played competitive sports before didn't matter. His parents had been star athletes in high school, and he was determined to be even better.

Before long, Michael was excelling in a number of sports including basketball, football, and track. After graduation, his determination and natural gifts helped him secure spots on semi-pro basketball and football teams.

Then, on May 22, 2012, he was struck by three grand mal seizures, one of which left him clinically dead for a time. At the hospital, his family received grim news; if Michael survived, he would spend the rest of his life in a vegetative state.

But on his birthday, June 2, Michael woke from his coma and, with the same determination that made him a standout athlete, he made a remarkable recovery. He was released from the hospital just three weeks later. That same day, Michael and his mother stopped at The Independence Center to learn how to apply for disability benefits. The nerves in his eyes had been irreparably damaged, and he was now legally blind.

When they arrived, they found an entire community ready to help Michael regain his independence. "We walked in and Jeff (Henderson) met us," Michael recalls. "Me and my mom were still trying to figure out

what I'm going to do. All I really knew my entire life was sports and my kids."

Michael remembers Jeff, former Benefits Coordinator, telling him, "You have to play a sport." Then, a couple of weeks later, "He calls me and says, 'We found a sport for you. We're taking you to a tryout.'"

That tryout was for the Colorado Storm, a beep baseball team based in Denver. In the game, players with low vision or blindness hit a beeping baseball and then run to a beeping base before outfielders, who are also blind, recover the ball. Despite never having played baseball before, he won a spot on the team and by the next year, he was playing in the Beep Baseball World Series.

Since then, Michael has batted a .909 in one game, has played in four World Series, threw the first pitch at a Sky Sox game, and has appeared in ESPN Magazine. He is also a volunteer beep baseball coach at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, thanks to a connection Tim Ashley, former Peer Support Coordinator, made for him.

Through everything, Michael's lifelong determination to shatter records and expectations has remained firmly intact. "When something happens, you don't stop," he says.

"I know I'm not going to be the same as I was before. I'm going to be better than I was before."

For more information on help in applying for disability benefits, contact Maritta Coffey, IL Specialist, at 719-471-8181, ext. 140.

The Independence Center was recently presented with a Business for the Arts Award by the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA). This award is given to individuals and companies who "have gone above and beyond to support the arts and creative industries through innovative partnerships, arts integration, creative workplaces, economic development in the creative sector, arts advocacy, employee engagement, and/or philanthropy," according to the CBCA.

We are honored to have received such high recognition for our efforts to lift up the voices of the community we serve through unique partnerships and programming such as the Art of Accessibility series.

THE IC WINS BUSINESS FOR THE ARTS AWARD



Tim Gore and Courtney Stone accept award from Colorado Business Committee for the Arts.

AMERICAN LEGION PARTNERS WITH THE IC TO CREATE ACCESSIBILITY

The Victor-Cripple Creek American Legion Post 171 is a growing hub of activity and outreach in the area. Membership has more than doubled in the last three years, and its members provide numerous services to local veterans and to the community.

To better accommodate members and visitors, they've also been busy refurbishing the post, which was originally a church built in 1900. To help make the building more accessible, they reached out to The Independence Center for assistance in installing a ramp and new concrete sidewalk.

The project received a \$5,000 grant from The IC Fund, which supports projects that increase independence for people with disabilities. Thanks to the grant, along with the help of Post

members, community volunteers, and contractors, the new ramp is now welcoming people with and without disabilities into the historic building.

"As a result of your generous support...veterans and members of the community can now access our facility," Richard R. Ingold, Post 171 Adjutant, says of the grant. "Thank you!"

For more information on The IC Fund, visit bit.ly/theicfund.



New ramp welcomes visitors with and without disabilities.

OPEN HOUSE GOES TO THE DOGS

Did you hear the one about the emotional support squirrel that got kicked off a plane? If you've been paying any attention to the news, you probably did. It seems like stories like this are everywhere these days, leading to a lot of confusion about the rights and responsibilities of people with assistance animals. To help clear things up, The Independence Center held an Assistance Animal Open House for the public in March. A panel of experts covered the different types of animals, the laws surrounding them, and how to obtain and register one.

In addition to onsite opportunities such as this one, The IC can bring assistance animal training to companies that want to make sure that they're following the letter of the law on this important issue. To book a training for your organization, call Rebecca Michael, Advocacy Manager, at 719-471-8181, ext. 167.

For more information about the laws and regulations pertaining to service animals, visit our website at bit.ly/ServiceAnimals

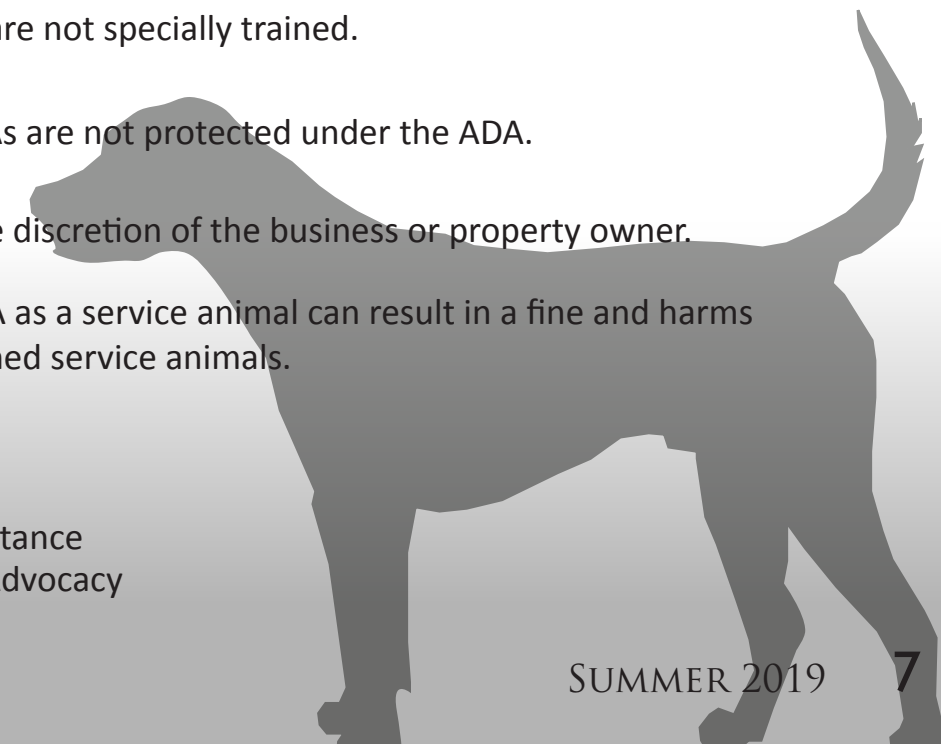
5 Fast and Furry-ous Facts... About Service Animals

1. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a service animal as one that has been individually trained to perform tasks for a person with a disability.
2. Only dogs and miniature horses qualify. So no cats, birds, snakes, or squirrels!
3. A service animal doesn't have to wear a vest, ID tag, or specific harness.
4. Proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal is not required.
5. If a service animal is out of control or not housebroken, access may be legally denied.

About Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)

1. ESAs are often used as part of medical treatment for anxiety and phobias.
2. ESAs provide comfort but are not specially trained.
3. Unlike service animals, ESAs are not protected under the ADA.
4. Access for ESAs is up to the discretion of the business or property owner.
5. Falsely representing an ESA as a service animal can result in a fine and harms those who depend on trained service animals.

To learn more about the rights and responsibilities associated with assistance animals, contact Rebecca Michael, Advocacy Manager, at 719-476-8181, ext. 167.



BENEFITS



Suzi Arnold



Daniel Ratcliff

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Q&A

Think you might qualify for disability benefits but don't know where to start? The IC offers free services that can empower you to advocate for yourself when it comes to benefits. Check out what Benefits Specialist Suzi Arnold and Benefits Coordinator Daniel Ratcliff have to say about the most commonly asked questions they receive.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DISABILITY BENEFITS?

Daniel Ratcliff (DR): That everyone will be denied the first time they apply; that you can't work while receiving benefits; that it covers short term disability like a broken arm. There's also a big misunderstanding about the difference between SSI and SSDI.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SSI AND SSDI?

Suzi Arnold (SA): SSDI is Social Security Disability Insurance, which is a benefit that people can get if they have enough work credits with Social Security. SSI is Supplemental Security Income and it's needs-based.

WHAT TYPE OF BENEFITS CAN THE IC HELP CONSUMERS WITH?

DR: We help with all applications for state and federal benefit programs, and we also provide education and referral on these same benefit programs.

IS IT DIFFICULT TO GET DISABILITY BENEFITS?

SA: It just depends. There are very specific rules. There are some very black and white situations like blindness and deafness. But then there are other disabilities that aren't as cut and dried, and you have to have extensive testing and documentation in your medical records. And you have to prove that the disability is preventing you from performing Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA).

DR: You also have to be receiving current treatment, and that can just be as simple as a medication regimen.

CAN THE AVERAGE PERSON APPLY SUCCESSFULLY FOR DISABILITY BENEFITS?

SA: Absolutely! But if we're helping with an application, what is submitted is usually more comprehensive than if they tried to do it on their own, and that can increase their chances

of being approved the first time. We help teach them where they need to add more of their story to the application.

DR: And not to downplay certain things. A lot of individuals want to appear more able than they really are.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY APPLICATION IS DENIED?

SA: If somebody gets a denial letter, they have 60 days to file an appeal. We can't help with that. An appeal involves going to court and arguing it, so it needs to go through a disability consultant or attorney. But we can provide referral names for both, and we can help connect you to other disability resources at The Independence Center.

If you would like help applying for disability benefits, contact Maritta Coffey, Independent Living Specialist, at 719-471-8181, ext. 140, to set up an intake appointment.

TROY'S JOURNEY: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

Troy is an energetic, outgoing 12-year-old boy with a mischievous smile, a quick wit, a big heart, and a love for snowboarding. Looking at him today, it's hard to believe that it's something of a miracle that he's alive. His mother's uterus ruptured while she was in labor and he was without oxygen for over 20 minutes, resulting in several disabilities including a traumatic brain injury (TBI), a seizure disorder, Tourette Syndrome, and autism. But despite the odds, Troy not only survived, he has thrived!

Troy's parents, Mike and Colleen Gagliardi, attribute much of Troy's progress to a Medicaid waiver that allows them to act as paid caregivers through The Independence Center. Colleen is now able to stay at home with Troy to provide him with the hours of therapy he requires each day. Mike, who has a full-time job in I.T., acts as her backup. Because they can devote much more time to their son, Colleen says that "Troy has come so far."



*Colleen, Troy, and
Mike Gagliardi*

The program, which pays the Gagliardis for the hours that go above and beyond their normal parenting responsibilities, has been a "godsend," says Colleen. "The Independence Center has been great as a job. But I really do believe they care about us, and I know they care about Troy. We love the communication, the training, and the fact that they know us the way that they do. That really sets them apart."

The couple encourages others who are caring for loved ones with disabilities to investigate the paid caregiver program. Mike adds, "Why would you not use everything that you can to take care of your loved one?"

For more information on becoming a paid caregiver, call 719-471-8181 x107.

TBI FACTS

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are a "major cause of death and disability in the U.S." Falls are the leading cause of TBIs; however, they can be caused by any blow or jolt to the head, or can be the result of a stroke, vascular malformations/anomalies, or neonatal/perinatal/developmental injuries. Those who survive a TBI may feel the effects for a few days or the rest of their lives, including difficulty with memory or thinking, vision, hearing, movement, and personality changes or depression.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP

When:

2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month

Time:

1:30 – 3:00pm

Where:

The Independence Center

For more information, contact
Kevin Corrigan, Peer Support Specialist,
at 719-471-8181, ext. 106.

WHAT IS TOURETTE SYNDROME?

Troy is one of thousands of school-age children in the U.S. living with Tourette Syndrome (TS). A condition of the nervous system, it causes "tics," which present as repeated twitches, movements, or sounds that can't be controlled. While there is no cure for TS, there are treatments that can help. Learn more at tourette.org.

THE IC LAUNCHES NEW LOW VISION PROGRAM

As part of its commitment to helping individuals with low vision and blindness live a full and active life, The Independence Center has launched a brand new Low Vision program.

The goal of the Low Vision program, which is geared toward people ages 18 – 54, is to help individuals maintain their independence and improve their quality of life by learning new skills and connecting with peers.

SERVICES PROVIDED INCLUDE:

- Peer support meetings.
- Home visits to assess and assist with making the environment safe and accessible, including:
 - ✿ Techniques for using appliances safely.
 - ✿ Cooking and cleaning.
 - ✿ Organizing wardrobes and other personal affects.
 - ✿ Demonstrations of and training on the latest adaptive technology and devices.

There is no cost for these services, and the program can assist anyone living in El Paso, Teller, Park, Kit Carson, Lincoln, and Cheyenne counties.

Life can be fulfilling and productive with any degree of vision loss. Give The IC a call at **719-471-8181, ext. 103** to learn more!

Be Our Guest!

ADA  ADVANCING
Disability-Friendly
HEALTH CARE

Friday, July 26, 2019

Networking: 11:15 AM — 11:45 AM
Program: 11:45 AM — 1:00 PM

RSVP at <http://bit.ly/ADA-Event>

The IC cordially invites you to our annual ADA Celebration Luncheon.

Health care providers and individuals with disabilities will speak about their perspectives concerning accessibility in health care, which for far too long has been filled with obstacles for people with disabilities.

Join us for this free event!

729 S. Tejon Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80903 | the-ic.org
719-471-8181 | Video Phone for the Deaf 719-358-2513
A Nonprofit Organization

**RSVP
now!**

