

THE INDEPENDENCE TIMES


**FOR THE THRILL OF IT
ADAPTIVE GO-CARTS
FULFILL THE NEED FOR SPEED**

**ASSISTIVE
TECHNOLOGY Q&A**

**ART OF ACCESSIBILITY
CELEBRATES DIVERSITY**

**H2H HELPS PATIENT
STAY IN HER HOME**

**VETERAN TURNS 100
ON VETERANS DAY**

A person wearing a blue and white racing helmet and a white racing suit with red and blue accents is driving a black go-kart on a track at night. The kart has a white front panel with a red and blue logo. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting a night race environment.

Lisa Harrison makes her way around a curve at Overdrive Raceway during The IC's accessible racing event.



CEO CORNER

Patricia Yeager, Ph.D., CEO

The IC Fund: Working to Make Health Care Accessible to All

Over the last two years, The Independence Center has been working hard to make medical and dental care more accessible for people with disabilities. Through our IC Fund, created to honor our founder and her late husband, we have donated nearly \$150,000 in accessible equipment and other tools to Medicaid/Medicare primary care and dental providers in the Pikes Peak region. By helping health care professionals take a larger role in providing accessible

health services through disability-friendly equipment, The IC Fund committee hoped it might start a trend among other health care providers.

Last year, the IC Fund awarded accessible tables with built-in scales and Hoyer lifts to nine select Medicaid/Medicare medical practices in the region who had been nominated by patients. Medical practices love the tables because it helped them provide more comprehensive exams to their patients with disabilities. Many patients reported that it was life-changing knowing that their practice was fully prepared to accommodate them. For example, people with invisible disabilities were relieved that they could simply sit down on the table rather than being asked to “hop up” on it. Others appreciated the security of being safely transferred via the Hoyer lift instead of worrying about falling or being dropped. Some were just thankful to finally have an accurate weight after many years of “guesstimates.”

This year, we awarded accessible dental equipment to four area dental practices: Briargate Advanced Family Dental, Simply Kids Dental, Mission Medical Center, and Community Dental Health. They will receive Versatilt wheelchair lifts, medical masks with clear windows that allow patients to read lips, a complimentary ADA accessibility audit, and complimentary disability competency training for staff.

The dental groups were officially recognized at a celebratory luncheon here at The IC and they were so enthusiastic about getting the equipment! They each brought their entire staff to the luncheon and stayed for an introductory session on disability competency training. We anticipate the Versatilt lifts to arrive in the Pikes Peak area sometime after the first of the year, and their staff will be trained how to use it.

I write for the entire IC Fund committee and our board of directors to say how thrilled we are to be able to make physical health and dental care more disability friendly in the Pikes Peak region. One’s health is precious and must be taken care of to live a long, independent life. In a few years, we’ll see if our investment sparked others to purchase disability-friendly medical equipment for their patients.

If you’ve had the chance to use the accessible exam tables or Versatilt lifts, I’d love to hear about your experience! Drop off a postcard at The IC or send me an email at pyeager@theindependencecenter.org.

For a list of locations of medical and dental practices that serve people with disabilities, visit bit.ly/accessiblemed.

Read more about our recent dental equipment giveaway at bit.ly/dentalequip.

Mission Medical Center



“Since 2007, this free clinic has been serving the needs of low income, uninsured patients in the region.”

-Nominator

Community Dental Health



“This nonprofit organization...is compassionate, caring, and provides excellent dental care.”

-Nominator

Briargate Advanced Family Dental



“They are accessible, friendly, and skilled at addressing the unique needs of people with disabilities.”

-Nominator

Simply Kids Dental

“Every last one of the staff is amazing with kids and as accommodating and helpful as they can be.”

-Nominator





Paul Spotts



Stacy Gibson

Q&A

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

If you have a disability, there are numerous tools and equipment available to help you live a full, independent life. The Independence Center can guide you toward resources that can help you obtain various types of assistive technology (AT). Learn more below from Paul Spotts, IL Specialist – Assistive Technology, and Stacy Gibson, IL Specialist – Hard of Hearing Emphasis.

What is assistive technology?

Paul Spotts (PS): It's any kind of technology that helps individuals throughout their lifetime – whether it's work, play, driving, etcetera – to become more independent. It includes things like durable medical equipment, car lifts for scooters, and ramps for vehicles. It also includes home modifications like ramps and roll-in showers.

Stacy Gibson (SG): For people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, there's also technology like pocket talkers, hearing aids, amplified phones, and captioned phones.

What does The IC's Assistive Technology Program do?

PS: A lot of times people think that we actually have the equipment here or can get

the equipment for them. But that's not the case. What we do is talk to you and figure out what you need. Then we guide you toward the resources that are out there, like funding sources to help you pay for the equipment.

SG: We also have some accessible demo equipment here – like phones – that consumers can try out to determine if it will help them.

Are there other specialists at The IC who can help with AT?

PS: Yes. Matthew Ruggles is our IL Specialist – Deaf Emphasis. He has information about technologies like the Home Aware system, which alerts you to things like a smoke detector, an alarm clock, or the doorbell ringing by using flashing lights and a bed shaker. He can also connect Deaf consumers to a company that can help them get a free video phone.

For people who are blind or low vision, they can speak to Jeannette Fortin or Matthew Morris, who are our Older Individuals with Blindness (OIB) Specialists. They help people with technology like text-to-speech, closed circuit televisions (CCTVs), and ZoomText, which is a program on the computer that enlarges the screen.

What kinds of funding resources are available?

PS: There are two to three main grants people can apply for. I don't write the grants for the consumer but I can give them the grant paperwork, explain it to them, and offer advice. Then it's up to them to fill it out. After they give it back to me with all the documentation, I review everything and then submit the online forms based on what they've given me.

I try to have them apply for as many grants as possible. That way, they hopefully won't have to pay out of pocket. But every case is different, so I do let them know that there's a possibility they may have to pay something.

SG: On the hard of hearing side, I help people navigate the application process of a couple of different programs. One is HEARS (Hearing Education & Assistance by Rocky Mountain Sertomans), which supplies hearing aids to eligible applicants. There's another program through the Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind to help people get amplified phones, cell phones, iPads, and caption phones.

How do people get started?

PS: Current consumers of The IC can make an appointment to talk to any of us. People who

are new to The IC will complete an intake with Maritta in Information and Referral to discuss the services they want help with. If someone is blind or low vision, they start with Jeanette. If they're Deaf, they start with Matthew, and if they're hard of hearing, they start with Stacy. Anyone with any disability can start with me; if I can't help them, I can always direct them to where they need to go.

What do you like most about your job?

SG: I like talking to people and helping them figure out the best option for them. For instance, if hearing aids won't work for them, let's try a pocket talker.

PS: It's great being able to help somebody obtain whatever they need to open up their life.

To learn more about assistive technology, watch our video at http://bit.ly/AT_at_IC. If you'd like to talk to someone about available resources, call 719-471-8181.

FOR THE THRILL OF IT

ADAPTIVE GO-KARTS FULFILL THE NEED FOR SPEED

On a bright, sunny afternoon, the sounds of revving engines and screeching tires vibrated through the air as drivers sped around a racetrack. Jockeying for position, the looks on their faces ranged from steely determination to pure joy. One driver made a point to wave at his biggest fan – who also happens to be his wife – each time he completed a loop.

When the race was over, the competitors transferred themselves out of the go-karts and into their waiting wheelchairs. They compared times, discussed strategy, ribbed each other good-naturedly, and reflected on how the experience made them feel.

“I’m a thrill seeker,” said Lisa Harrison. “I love fast. I love dangerous. I love risky. This was awesome to be able to get on the gas and go!”

This event, which was held at Overdrive Raceway in Colorado Springs, was made possible thanks to a national grant The Independence Center (The IC) received from the National Center for Independent Living (NCIL). Awarded to only five Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in the U.S., the grant provides funding through the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation for Path to Empowerment to enhance the quality of life for people with spinal cord injury (SCI).



“I thrive both mentally and physically on getting out and doing things. It keeps me going and keeps me motivated, so I try to make it a part of my life all the time.”

- Drew Wills



Pictured (L to R): Drew Wills, John Monteith, Mitch Riffle, Lisa Harrison, and Tim Ashley

Overdrive makes it easy for thrill seekers like Harrison to satisfy their need for speed. Owned by Jim Mundle, who is himself a double amputee, the facility is equipped with four hand-controlled go-karts commissioned from Italy. The machines are as fast as any other go-kart but can be programmed to run more slowly for those who have autism or other sensory disabilities.

“This is not something we (people with SCIs) usually get to do,” said Drew Wills, who participated in the event and is also a Board member for The Independence Center. “It’s really cool that they have adaptive carts that we can work. It was a total blast!”

The Overdrive event was just one of numerous adaptive recreation opportunities that The IC offered through the NCIL grant this year. Participants also enjoyed curling, camping, bowling, indoor skydiving, pickleball, and fishing.

For both Wills and Harrison, these experiences are vital for creating camaraderie, building confidence, and continuing to live full, independent lives.

“I was always into sports before my injury. I’ve been through some trauma in my life and the sports I’ve done is how I got over it,” said Harrison, who continues to play sports every chance she gets. “I just figured I’d count myself in before I counted myself out.”

Wills agrees on the lasting impact of opportunities like these. “I thrive both mentally and physically on getting out and doing things,” he said. “It keeps me going and keeps me motivated, so I try to make it a part of my life all the time.”

Innovative Program Helps Patient Stay in Her Home

For patients with complex recoveries or conditions, the nursing home is often their only option in order to receive the supports and services they need. However, with The Independence Center's innovative Hospital to Home (H2H) program, patients are able to transition from the hospital back to their homes more quickly and at lower cost.

Recently, Melanie Baker, Oncology Social Worker at UCHHealth Memorial Hospital sent us this powerful testimonial about how the program helped one of her patients.

"This patient had a metastatic cancer, no insurance, and had \$40,000 in the bank from an inheritance. The patient was unwilling to spend down these funds to qualify for Medicaid, as her goal was to remain in her home and she needed money for her mortgage and other monthly costs. A financial counselor followed up with the patient

H2H

frequently to get her on the Colorado Indigent Care program (CICP) with minimal success. The patient had two hospital admissions just a couple weeks apart and in that time incurred medical costs of more than \$350,000. At the end of her second hospital admission, the patient was discharged home with the support of the Hospital to Home program and remained in her home until she passed. She was receiving hospice care.

"I think this case is a beautiful example of the Hospital to Home program allowing us to honor this patient's wishes while still using our health care resources effectively. Had she not discharged home with support, I anticipated she would have re-admitted within a week and continued with this type of re-admission trend until she passed, costing hundreds of thousands more dollars while also increasing her suffering. In a brief conversation with Mandi from The Independence Center, it was estimated that the patient's care costs were less than \$5,000 with the Hospital to Home program. This represents a significant savings for health care systems. Kudos to The Independence Center for making their funding count for our patients."

For more information on how the H2H program can help you or a loved one, call 719-471-8181.



VETERAN CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY ON VETERANS DAY

100TH

Retired Army Master Sergeant Albert C. Mosley beamed as the crowd sang "Happy Birthday" to him at the Veterans Administration Clinic in Colorado Springs. He had good reason to smile. After all, this wasn't just any birthday. Mosley, who had been born on the very first Armistice Day on November 11, 1919, was celebrating his 100th birthday.

According to Mosley, he spent "20 years, five months, and six days in the Army." He served in the 92nd Infantry Division, the "Buffalo Soldiers," and fought in both World War II and the Korean War.

Mosley says he doesn't feel his age. In his mind, he told Fox21 news at his party, "I'm only 21!" And thanks in part to The IC's Veteran In Charge (VIC) program, this young-at-heart centenarian continues to live independently in his own home.

The VIC program, which is a partnership between the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) and The IC, serves eligible veterans of any age who want to remain living

in their home and community. VIC is veteran-directed, and veterans work with one of The IC's veteran coaches to plan and manage VA-funded supports and services.

Mosley's veteran coach, Brock Ernst, appreciates the opportunity to assist someone who has devoted so much of his life to service.

"I have to pinch myself that I'm actually talking to someone who is a hundred years old," says Ernst. "It's incredible to hear him tell the same kinds of stories my granddad told me when I was eight, and now I'm 38!"

For those who want to hear not only his stories, but his secret to a long life, Mosley gives this advice: "Eat good, sleep good, treat everybody good, and be nice and be helpful."

Words to live by!

If you are a veteran who would like to learn how the VIC program can help you live more independently, call The IC at 719-471-8181.

The IC employees, Kim Howell, Michele Kirby, Brock Ernst, Ashley Billington, and Marsha Unruh, celebrate with Veteran Albert C. Mosley.

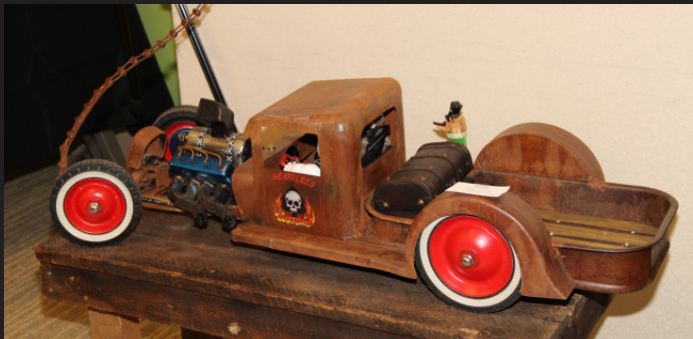
Art of Accessibility Celebrates Diversity

On September 6, 2019, the halls of The Independence Center (The IC) buzzed with activity during its award-winning Art of Accessibility (AoA) event. As part of the Downtown Partnership’s First Friday Artwalk, AoA showcases brand new exhibits that honor the visual artistry created by people with disabilities and their community. The works of 40 artists were on display, and encompassed a wide variety of media including pixel art, acrylic, metal art, watercolors, pencil drawings, photography, and mixed media.

For the first time at the event, The IC also celebrated the art of the spoken word with an Open Mic Night. Participants signed up for a 3-minute slot and shared stories, read poetry, sang Karaoke, or performed stand-up comedy.

Bethany Monk, Development Manager at The IC, coordinated the event with the help of nine volunteers. According to Monk, AoA offers something for everyone.

Brian Reed



Linda Fincher



Mark Cooney



Nikki Stewart Art



Reggie R.



Lelia G.



Yong Guzman



Laurel Rankin

“From experienced artists, to artists who are new to showcasing their work, The Art of Accessibility draws an array of talented people who turn our downtown building into a beautiful art gallery where creativity is encouraged and celebrated,” she said. “Our gallery is also unique in that most of our artists attend the event. This gives people the chance to really get to know the artists and talk to them one-on-one about their artistic process.”

The next Art of Accessibility event will be held on September 4, 2020, and The IC is always looking for new artists. If you or someone you know is interested in participating, visit bit.ly/theicaoa, email ArtOfAccessibility@the-ic.org, or call 719-471-8181, ext. 222 for more information.



Laural R.



Blind Illustrations- Nina Kamekona



Christi V.



Dori Reay

**Caring for
a loved
one with a
disability?**

**See if you
qualify to be a
PAID caregiver**

Your local nonprofit for over 30 years
theindependencecenter.org

Introducing Our Brand New Website!



**Our website has a whole new
look, full of helpful features
and information for a more
independent life.**

**Check it out at
theindependencecenter.org.**