

# Independence, Inc.

promoting independence, growing opportunities

quarterly e-newsletter | summer 2019



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## Guest Blog: Taking up Space

BY REVECA TORRES

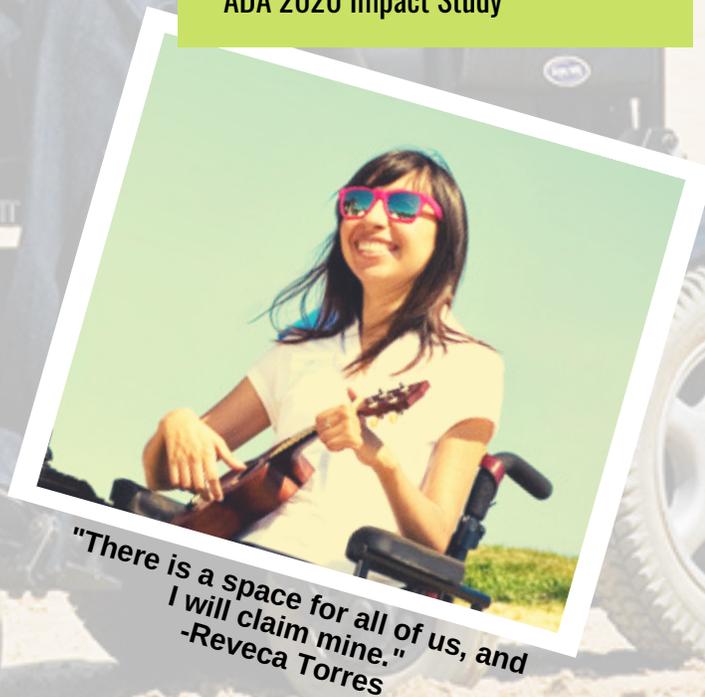
I wish I rode an ultra-light sexy wheelchair with a small turning radius, but I don't. I traverse the world in a large, clunky, heavy power chair. It's big, and together we take up a lot of space. There was a time when my dimensions made me feel like I was in the way. I was embarrassed. I apologized for being there. I was an inconvenience — an eyesore — a burden so big that all I wanted was to be invisible and disappear unnoticed. Taking up space was the last thing I wanted.

I am not sure how or when I started to realize that taking up space is wonderful, and I am deserving of it. If someone needs to get past me, they can wait for a moment while I move, and we can both exist in the world. No apologies needed.

Sometimes (uninformed) strangers get too close and I ask them to move and give me space. Sometimes when they see me coming down the hall, they move all the way to the other side, body up against the wall, attempting to give me room to pass ... too much room ... and I laugh.

It is not easy to take up space when so often the world implies we are not deserving. I don't want to shrink anymore. I want to inhabit every room I enter with a confident presence. I want my voice to matter and to be allowed to feel happy, sad, angry or excited without judgment.

I am not there yet, so I will practice until I can take a breath and fill my lungs and then fill the room with my physicality and the power of my voice. There is space for all of us, and I will claim mine.



*"There is a space for all of us, and I will claim mine."  
-Reveca Torres*

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# New Positions, New Faces: Here's to Change and Growth



**Alisa Snyder** was recently promoted to **Business and Payroll Manager**, upon the retirement of Joyce Ward who previously held the position. Alisa has been with Independence, Inc. for over 4 years and her proven skill set and dedication to serving the needs of our consumers through the Financial Management Services department, continues to be a valuable asset.



**Anna Tuckwin-Bethea** was hired in June as our **Billing and Payroll Specialist**. She comes to us as a recent graduate of Haskell Indian Nations University with experience in customer service, accounting and payroll and a dedication to problem solving and accuracy. There is so much to know and learn in this department and we look forward to watching Anna continue to grow in her new position.



**Cassandra Jones** was hired to a new position of **Front Desk Information and Referral Specialist**. You will see her bright, smiling face if you come in for appointments or information, Monday-Friday mornings. Cassandra is available to both call-in and walk-in consumers needing information or assistance with either our services or others in the community.

## Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) Oct. 29th: How can YOU Get Involved?

DMD is our biggest event of the year and we need lots of help to make it a success! Local business associates: We need YOU to mentor students for the morning! We match our youth participants with career interests of their choice and pair them with a professional for a morning of job shadowing. This is a valuable time as youth with disabilities are encouraged to work towards their future career goals with confidence and a team of support from people like you!

We also need financial support as this is not a fundraising event. We treat our youth participants to a celebration banquet at a nice venue with lunch and keynote speaker. We value our corporate and individual partners who help support this event! For more information on DMD, visit our website <http://www.independenceinc.org/dmd/>

**Ready to give to our DMD event? Please donate now...**

## Expanding Accessibility Modifications to Homeowners

**Our Accessibility Housing Program (AHP) is expanding this year thanks to a 2019 grant from the City of Lawrence Affordable Housing Trust (AHT). Our AHT program is open to homeowners and renters alike who need accessibility modifications to their home. For more information or to see if you qualify, contact Amy Ballinger: 785-841-0333 [aballinger@independenceinc.org](mailto:aballinger@independenceinc.org)**

# A Summer Season of Celebrations: Olmstead, ADA & Medicaid

## The Olmstead Decision Turns 20

"The 1999 Olmstead v. L.C. decision fundamentally changed the lives of Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson, who had both been institutionalized and living in isolation for an extended period of time after they had been voluntarily admitted into a state-run psychiatric unit for treatment. Even after mental healthcare providers approved their release, Curtis and Wilson were, essentially, stuck in the institution." - *National Center on Disability and Journalism*



**[Follow this link to watch the video]**

This decision was meant to free people from the confines of an institutional setting against their will and to afford to them the right to live in the setting of their choice. The ruling held that unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Court determined that public entities must provide community-based services to persons with disabilities when such services are needed and appropriate, when community-based treatment is not opposed by the persons and when these community-based services can be reasonably accommodated.

**Read more about the Olmstead decision from the US Department of Justice...**

## ADA Celebrates it's 29th Anniversary

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.



The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections) that relate to different areas of public life. Each year, the anniversary of the ADA is celebrated in July. We have a lot to celebrate as so much has been accomplished, however, much still needs to be done.

## Happy 54th Birthday Medicaid!

Fifty-four years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson traveled to Independence,



Missouri and Signed the Social Security Amendments into law, creating the Medicare and Medicaid programs. These two programs have served as foundations of the health care system and today provide coverage to more than 110 million Americans, including nearly 900,000 Kansans.

**Continue reading...**

# Advocacy: K-10 Connector Struggles to Meet the Needs of Some Passengers

Choice. Inclusion. Accessibility. Independence. Accommodation. Opportunity. Dignity. These foundation-level needs may be so available and readily met for some people, that they are taken for granted. For others, these basic rights come with barriers. If getting on a bus to get to your college classes seems like a simple, every-day task to you, think again. For some wheelchair users, taking the K-10 Connector bus system to Johnson County Community College has been anything but a simple, everyday task. Enter in advocacy.

Independence, Inc. learned of a Lawrence Public Schools student this summer who was denied access to ride the K-10 Connector bus to Johnson County, not once, but twice. On one occasion, the youth reported that the bus driver denied him access because the bus had 35 passengers on board and he couldn't ask anyone to move to different seats in order to make the wheelchair accessible seating available. The driver offered to call another bus, leaving the youth stranded at the stop until a different bus arrived. On a separate occasion, the youth was told he couldn't ride the bus because there was already one person on board with a wheelchair and there weren't enough chair straps to accommodate securing down another one. Again, the youth was asked to wait 45 minutes until another bus came.

Ranita Wilks, Independence, Inc. Independent Living Skills and Peer Counselor Specialist, is working with the student, Lawrence Public Schools and Johnson County officials to educate and train the public transportation staff and to work together to remove these barriers making riding the K-10 Connector a reliable and positive experience for everyone.



Your Voice Matters!  
We are YOU'RE center  
and we are here for  
YOU!  
Won't you join us?

## How can YOU be an integral part of our center?

**Consider joining our board!** What a great way to learn about our organization, the community we serve and to lend your experiences and voice to our mission!

Ask about this volunteer opportunity today!

**Be a guest writer or blogger!** Write about what matters to YOU and if it fits within our mission and vision, we'll publish it in our quarterly e-newsletter.

**Become a volunteer Peer Counselor!** Have you gained knowledge and experience in living independently with your disability? You can be a source of information, support and encouragement to others on their journey to independent living.

**Join our team by becoming a donor!** We need YOUR support as we continue to grow our services and programs in our communities!

**Donate Now!**

## What is a Center for Independent Living and how can YOU be involved?

Centers for Independent Living are community-based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities.

As a center for independent living, Independence, Inc. works with and advocates for people with various disabilities to live in the environments of their choice. We offer options, resources and advocacy to help people live fulfilling lives. Our vision is to work together in transforming our communities to be the best places in which people with disabilities can live, learn, and work.

Our daily work consists of advocacy on behalf of individuals and the community, independent living skills training, financial management and personal care service worker support, information and referral, home modifications and housing services, durable medical equipment lending, youth employment support and so much more!

**For information on any of these opportunities, visit <http://www.independenceinc.org/volunteer/>**

**Or contact Amy Ballinger 785-841-0333 ext. 119 [aballinger@independenceinc.org](mailto:aballinger@independenceinc.org)**

# August Peer Group Activities

Independence, Inc. hosts and/or sponsors various peer groups and activities throughout the year for anyone with a disability, aimed at enhancing social and educational experiences including:



## Learning the I-Phone

August 13, 20 & 27  
10:00-12:00  
Independence, Inc.  
training kitchen

M.A.G.N.E.T (Music Appreciation Group Not Especially Talented)

Cooking Club  
Peer Support Group  
Science Fiction & Fantasy Club  
The Writers' Corner  
The Arts & Crafts Group  
The Accessible Gardening Group  
The Movie Club  
Living Well with a Disability

August Activities:

## Dinner and a Movie w/ the cooking and movie clubs: Ultimate Wing Fest!

Tuesday, August 13, 3-5 pm  
Independence, Inc. training kitchen



## Book Club is starting a new book this month!

The Mysterious Benedict Society  
Aug. 26th 3-4:30  
Lawrence Public Library

For more information on our Peer Groups visit our website  
<http://www.independenceinc.org/peer-counseling-and-support/>  
or call Ranita Wilks 785-841-0333 ext. 115

# ADA Impact 2020 Survey

The Southwest ADA Regional Center is conducting a survey to investigate the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA Impact 2020 Survey is open to people with personal and/or professional experience in disability issues. The information gathered will be used to understand

what aspects of society have become more accessible due to the ADA; understand what areas still require further investigation and proposed solutions; and develop and improve the information, support, and guidance needed to help further the goals of the ADA.

The survey results will be announced prior to the ADA 30th anniversary in 2020. It's important to have results that represent people with every type of disability, from every subset of the population, and from all regions of the country.

Please participate in the ADA Impact Study by taking a few minutes to fill out the survey!

[Begin the Survey now](#)