

# Independence, Inc.

promoting independence, growing opportunities

quarterly e-newsletter | Fall/Winter 2019



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## Design the Future: STEM Camp Challenges Students to Design a Product for People with Disabilities

Design the Future - an intriguing name with an important purpose - to bring students together to design and build everyday products useful to people with disabilities.

Design the Future is a 6-day immersive program for high school students interested in technology, design, engineering and math, to be part of a collaborative effort to identify a need, design a product and put it to use for someone with a disability. Project Partners are local community members who have a disability and are interested in meeting with the students to discuss an accessibility product or modification that would be useful to them. The project partner then meets with the group throughout the process to provide feedback and testing of the product. At the end of the camp, the team has designed and built a useable accessibility-related product and the project partner leaves with the product for their own use. It's a fabulous win-win collaborative!

This year, Independence, Inc. board member Deb Young, was chosen to be a project partner at the STEM Camp held at the University of Kansas. "This was an exciting project!" said Deb. "Meeting these dynamic students was an invigorating experience! The project showed creativity and teamwork. They were great interviewers and listeners. Empathy was an overarching theme and they nailed it!"

Design the Future has sponsor locations at 4 different Universities: Stanford, Boston, Louisville and Kansas. The University of Kansas will host a camp again in 2020 with dates yet to be finalized. For more information and how you can be involved, visit <https://youdesignthefuture.com/>



Independence, Inc. Board Member Deb Young, participating in Design the Future program 2019

## Change and Growth: New Service Covers Kansas Consumers with Independent Living Counseling

*Independence, Inc. Brings on New Staff to Expand Services and Provide Independent Living Counseling Through the Working Healthy Program*

Independence, Inc. is expanding its services in 2020 to include Independent Living Counseling (ILC) through the Working Healthy - W.O.R.K. program. With independent living as our adhered-to philosophy and the basis of the work we do, bringing on board some fabulous Independent Living Counselors and offering this service to consumers state-wide, just seemed like the right fit and the right step. Working Healthy is a work-incentive, Medicaid Buy-in Program that supports and encourages people with disabilities to work, thus increasing income while not jeopardizing health care benefits. W.O.R.K. (Work Opportunities Reward Kansas) is the program through which consumers can enroll in various Working Healthy services - one of which, is Independent Living Counseling. We are

pleased to begin offering this service in January and our coverage is state-wide! Who is Eligible for ILC services? You must be: age 16-64; meet SS definition of disability; have verified earned income from competitive employment subject to FICA/SECA taxes; earn at least \$65.01/month; Earn at or above the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour and be a Kansas Resident.

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## Guest Blog: Person-Centered Approach and Self-Direction are the Wind Beneath the Wings of Missouri College Student



*"Joyful" is the word often used to describe Rachel Mast, posing in front of Missouri State University where she is a student in the Bear POWER Program (Promoting Opportunities for Work, Education and Resilience)*

**Photo and Blog submitted by Jawanda Mast, mom of Rachel**

My daughter Rachel receives services under the Home and Community Based Waiver Services (HCBS) Self-Directed Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Waiver. She qualified for services just before her senior year in high school. Rachel was fully included throughout her school journey and has been included in the community and church activities. It is only natural that she wanted to go to college like her friends. When she was born with Down syndrome just over twenty years ago, no one was talking about college. There were only a handful of programs. Fortunately, today there are around 280 college programs for students with intellectual disabilities.

As part of Rachel's person-centered plan, she made it clear that she wanted to go to college like her friends. So, like other students dreaming of college, we visited different programs. The program Rachel decided to attend is the Missouri State

had confirmed through case managers and care managers that Rachel would be able to use her waiver services for these supports even if the college is out of state.

We found several students who would be helping provide support and submitted paperwork to the Fiscal Management Service (FMS) we were working with and about a month before time to go to college, we hit a snag. Seems like there is some tax issue and not every FMS is able to administer what we needed. I was nearly panic stricken as we had a very short amount of time to find a new FMS agency and get all the paperwork resubmitted.

Rachel's case manager, care manager, and people up the chain of command all jumped into action. Our case manager identified two other FMS providers who could manage what we needed. I quickly spoke to a few other families and we chose Independence, Inc. We have been



Bear POWER program in Springfield, MO. There are multiple reasons for her choice. The program is inclusive. She takes some typical classes, some classes with other students in her program where they work on things like resumes and job interviews, she accesses speech language clinic services, and she has the opportunity to participate in an internship each semester. While Rachel has many interests, she decided the theater and hospitality would give her the training to prepare her to do many things. While the program provides some supports, our family and Rachel's circle believed she needed a little more support, specifically in the area of independent living. Long before she chose a college, we

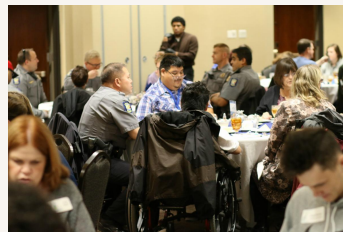
so pleased. Alisa Snyder, Independence, Inc. Business and FMS Payroll Manager, is the person we have contact with with most of the time and her customer service skills are amazing. She went above and beyond to help make everything happen quickly and pretty seamlessly. We've had some technological bumps, and she has worked with me and Rachel's personal care assistants to work through these issues. She promptly responds to requests and has really turned what could have been a disaster into a winning situation.

We are thankful that we found Independence Inc. and appreciate the supports Rachel receives so she can live the life she chooses. Rachel says, "I love being a college girl. It makes my heart happy to go to Missouri State University and live my dreams."

## Disability Mentoring Day 2019 Recap: A Great Day of Work Exploration, Mentoring for Area Students



*Student stands to give an account of his mentoring experience at the DMD celebration banquet*



*Police officers from Lawrence Police Dept. were among the mentors at DMD 2019*

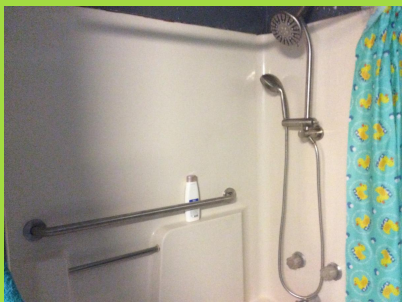


*Keynote speaker Peter Steimle, motivates and informs students at the DMD Banquet*

Disability Mentoring Day is a nationwide effort to promote job readiness and career development for high school students with disabilities. Independence, Inc. holds an annual DMD event in October where area high school students are matched with business mentors to provide a morning of job-exploration and hands-on experience in a career field of their choice. This year, we matched nearly 100 students with mentors for a morning of job shadowing then hosted a banquet to come together with the students, mentors, school staff and community partners to celebrate the efforts of everyone involved. Independence, Inc. Board Member, Craig Weinaug was the MC and Peter Steimle, Workforce Services Professional, gave an informative and motivational keynote presentation on being the best "YOU" you can be, in the workplace and beyond. Our theme this year was "Dream Big, Start Small...Every Step Counts!"

What's on the horizon for DMD and Independence, Inc.? We have a team of innovators working together as we partner with area high schools and business partners to look at what changes, if any, we can make to ensure that Disability Mentoring Day is a meaningful, impactful experience with measurable and positive outcomes for our students. As we move into 2020, we will explore expanding mentoring opportunities throughout the year, engaging more business partners and creating a program that truly lives up to the mission of readying transition age students with disabilities for future success in employment.

**Independence, Inc.  
Granted City Funds to  
Expand Accessible  
Housing Program**



*After picture of an Accessible Housing Program bathroom modification project including grab bars and a hand-held shower unit.*

Our Accessibility Housing Program (AHP) is expanding this fiscal year thanks to a 2019 grant from the City of Lawrence Affordable Housing Trust Fund (HTF). Our HTF 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)

# ADA 30



Americans with Disabilities Act

## ADA 2020 Impact Survey

*(Reposted from our summer newsletter as the survey is still open and in need of participants)*

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.

[Begin Survey Now](#)

## Independence, Inc. Receives Nearly \$18k Kansas Health Foundation Capacity Building Grant for Technology Updates



KANSAS HEALTH  
FOUNDATION

Independence, Inc. received a much-anticipated \$17,872.00 Capacity Building Grant from the Kansas Health Foundation of Wichita, Kansas for needed technology updates including new staff computers, a move to a cloud-based server and a website re-design.

December 17th, our office staff made the switch to the new computers and new server and over the next couple of months, we will begin building our new, fully-accessible website. We couldn't be more excited!

The Kansas Health Foundation is a philanthropy dedicated to improving the health of all Kansans. For more information about the Kansas Health Foundation, visit [www.kansashealth.org](http://www.kansashealth.org)

## An Important Win for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities: Harvard Web Captioning Class-Action Settlement Underway

The Harvard Extension School reached a settlement in late November in a 4-year legal battle brought about by the National Association of the Deaf. The lawsuit alleged that the University failed to adequately close caption its publicly accessible online video and audio content. Captioning for content such as podcasts and online lectures the lawsuit claims, were either not captioned at all or captioned inadequately, resulting in unintelligible content. The lawsuit also alleged that the University failed to meet its obligation under the 1973 United States Rehabilitation Act, to provide people with disabilities equal access to their programs and activities”.

The University must now pay close attention to its online content, making accessibility of their website and other media platforms, top priority. For the official Notice of Proposed Settlement of Class Action Lawsuit, visit <https://harvardcaptioningsettlement.com/> . If you are deaf or hard of hearing and have tried to access or would like to access Harvard's online video content with captions or to access Harvard's online audio content with a transcript, you may be a member of the proposed Settlement Class affected by this lawsuit.



*Interpreter captured from a clip of the Harvard Notice of Class Action for people who are deaf or hard of hearing*

**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)

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**





# Thank you!

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND BEST  
WISHES FOR A WONDERFUL AND  
PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!**

*From all of us at  
Independence, Inc.*

FOLLOW US

