



Independence, Inc.  
e-newsletter



## Building bridges, breaking barriers

maximizing the independence of people with disabilities through advocacy, peer support, training, transportation and community education



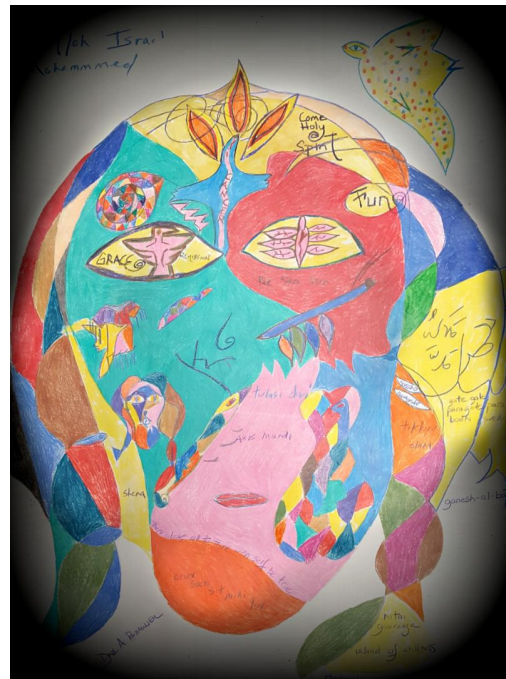
Spring 2018  
edition



## An Artist is Born

### Healing through Art

An awakening, an epiphany, an enlivening – whatever it was, when Dale Beaulieu, Lawrence, needed an outlet to process through his thoughts and emotions, he discovered the inner artist in him, and the floodgates opened. Dale, who has a background of abuse and has been diagnosed with Bi-Polar and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, has found a way to cope with his disabilities through creating works of art that "represent his inmost being" ...his thoughts, beliefs, struggles and triumphs. Although many experiences and relationships, some good and supportive, some wrought with hardship, have shaped his art over the years, Dale's primary focus has always been telling a story, showing connection and inter-dependence between the world and people around us - what we can't control - and our own lives - our actions, choices, beliefs and values. Dale's years of reflective artistry have produced around 800 pieces of art.



think whether or not people will appreciate them for their deep meaning and stories they tell". Stories like a family dinner table with "finger kisses" (depicted in the lower left drawing), a brother who has been in and out of his life, a sister-in-law who died of cancer, and a grandchild he rarely gets to hold. "These works show power and triumph and that we need each other", says Dale, when pointing out a soaring Thunderbird next to a more delicate dragonfly in one of his drawings (pictured above). We are all more connected than we are separate"

### Finding Beauty





### Exposure

For Dale, exposure has little to do with who sees his art, but rather what it says about him and the world around him. "To share my artwork", says Dale, "is a very vulnerable thing to do" And he doesn't do it often. Out of all his works, Dale has openly shared only a handful and has only sold 2 of them. "It's a struggle", he says, "to

The message throughout all of Dale's artwork seems to be this - struggle is an inevitable and necessary part of life, bringing about and unearthing the hidden beauty all around. "I believe in an under-girding harmony in all creation, I think all things work toward good. When it seems there is no purpose and meaning to my life, something will happen to reveal harmony and order"

Even in the practical, day-to-day world this belief seems to hold true for Dale, an Independence, Inc. consumer who has utilized many of our services and programs over the years.

"I have disability assistance because of Independence, Inc. and I am so grateful for that" says Dale.

"Without these struggles, I would have never had opportunity to meet the great people at Independence, Inc. who helped me take care of all the paperwork I needed to get disability. These services have changed my life."



*Pictured above: Independence, Inc. driver, Chip McConnell, assists Carolyn Palka of Lawrence, with a ride.*

### Service Highlight:

#### General Public Transportation

Getting where we need to go. It's an essential part of daily independent living. Our General Public Transportation Department here at Independence, Inc. serves around 490 consumers each month who need rides to stay active and independent.

**[Need a Ride? Click Here](#)**

### Transpo Staff go Above and Beyond in Assisting Consumers

Our drivers here at Independence, Inc., understand the importance of independent living and the role reliable transportation plays. When



Independence, Inc. driver, Chip McConnell, transported consumers Mr. and Mrs. Nagmeldin "Nagy" Salem, to a surgical appointment in Overland Park last month, he took the time to sit with Mrs. Salem during the surgery to help ease an anxious situation. "It really helped me take my mind off of worrying about my husband while he was in surgery" she said. Mr. and Mrs. Salem made an effort to stop by Independence, Inc. just to say how grateful they were for our services and for the caring generosity of our drivers. Compassionate care + valuable services = a win win in our book!

## **With Support from Business Leaders, New Strategies and Forward Thinking in the World of Disability Employment Could Lead to Real Change**

With self-proclaimed statements like "solving the root problem", "a human capital revolution" and "being a game-changer", InReturn Strategies better have some bite to their bark. And after several meetings between Independence, Inc. and InReturn Strategies Founder and CEO, Jim Atwater (pictured) and Chief Marketing Officer, Joe Sundermeyer, we believe they do. InReturn Strategies is more than a business, it's a social enterprise focused solely on revolutionizing the path to employment for people with disabilities through changing the the thought process and practices in the way businesses hire.

From the employers side, it's the opening up of a whole new pool of talented, enthusiastic and dedicated employees. From the side of the job-searcher, it's a foot in the door that levels the playing field in the world of employment opportunity. For both, the InReturn Strategies model of changing the business world from a reaction-based hiring process to an action-based process, makes the integration of employees with disabilities into the workforce, easy and mainstream.



between skilled and willing workers with disabilities and access to the open market of job availability. Think of this model in likeness to Girl Scout cookies, vacuum cleaners or replacement windows. Hang in there with me. Businesses need to stop being talked into the purchase of a single product they don't think they need by a well-meaning door to door salesman but rather be trained in the value of these great products in the first place, then be given a vast storefront in which to go shop.

### **The Solution**

So what exactly is this solution-driven, revolutionary model? It's a single transaction point with a single goal - to connect the best employees with the best businesses.

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***"This segregation between charitable and market-driven forces have hidden the true value of people with disabilities, perpetually minimizing their ability to contribute a positive economic impact in the private sector." - InReturn Strategies***

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### **The Problem**

According to InReturn Strategies, the problem is this: "The traditional approach to finding employment for workers with disabilities, operates in exactly the opposite way that businesses need it to operate. Thousands of localized service providers push out one person at a time and businesses are forced to react. This segregation between charitable and market-driven forces have hidden the true value of people with disabilities, perpetually minimizing their ability to contribute to a positive economic impact in the private sector. Our model presents people with disabilities for what they are: high-performing employees with unique and valuable skill sets"

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***"People with disabilities want to work. And they're really good at it. No one wants to be a charity. Everyone wants the same satisfaction that comes with being a dignified, contributing member of society - just like you. And if you can understand that about yourself, you can begin to understand what makes (people with disabilities) such uniquely valuable employees." -InReturn Strategies***

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And it's done through a business-focused approach rather than a tried and failed single individual approach, taking the traditional social model built around people and tailoring it instead to the needs of the business. Why is this model seemingly all about the business - its' needs, its' goals, its' financial outlook and performance? Because without a transformation at the business level, the way employers think about people with disabilities and their value to the company in meeting their goals, the employment gap will continue to grow. This access point for employers puts everything they need for finding the right employees, right at their fingertips. And who benefits? Everyone. If businesses in need of great employees understand the value and ease of process in hiring people with disabilities, barriers to employment will begin to break. If employers can see first hand that things like transportation can be accommodated for the employees that need it, that work place accommodations can be simple and low cost, that people with disabilities are reliable, committed workers with the same competitive skill sets as the non-disabled population, often with very unique abilities of their own, we might just have a game-changer indeed. "People with disabilities simply need a point of entry driven by businesses that understand and can integrate their value. The rewards of joining InReturn Strategies are astronomical for your business, all your people, and your customers." - *InReturn Strategies website*

Whether you're a business leader in need of talent, a person with a



In other words, it really doesn't benefit anyone if a business sees the hiring of a person with a disability as a charitable event to meet a quota. This old model continues to widen the divide



disability looking for a job, a service provider who assists people with disabilities, or a community member who wants to learn more about this vision of transforming the way businesses hire and think about people with disabilities, visit [inreturnstrategies.com](https://inreturnstrategies.com) or contact **Independence, Inc.** We look forward to our partnership with InReturn Strategies in changing the landscape of disability employment and Helping to find great jobs for qualified people with disabilities.

**TOGETHER WE CAN  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Contribute Now



## Our Spring Campaign is underway!

Interested in giving now or receiving future fundraising letters? We would love to have you partner with us through a financial contribution to help support our mission to

maximize the independence of people with disabilities. Donate today - your gift matters! Click the link above to give online!

## Consumer Corner: Accessible Housing Program Assists Renters With Disabilities in Modifying Their Homes for Accessibility



Independence, Inc. consumer, Barbara Skeet, who uses a walker for assistance



Stairs without proper handrails can present a challenge for anyone with

and stability, needed a way to safely enter her home. Through the Independence, Inc. Accessible Housing Program, Barbara was able to gain access and independence with the construction of a new ramp. "She can now come and go more safely from her home without falling" said Barbara's daughter"

mobility issues. Through the Accessible Housing Program, Independence, Inc. consumer, Kay Carson, was able to receive newly constructed hand railings to safely enter and exit her front door. "They did an excellent job" said Kay, of the whole process. "I don't feel like I'm going to fall backwards now when I go up the stairs".

The Independence, Inc. **Accessible Housing Program** (AHP) assists renters with disabilities and low incomes in Lawrence, Kansas make needed accessibility modifications in their housing. AHP is funded by a community development block grant from the City of Lawrence, Kansas. Contact us to learn about the current availability of this grant and other resources that can assist you make needed accessibility modifications regardless of where you live in our three county service area. ***For more information click here***

## Independence, Inc. Annual Report 2017



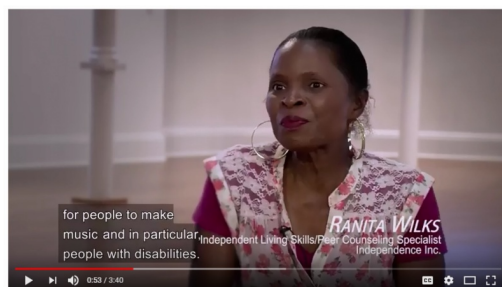
### The Faces of Independence

The Independence, Inc. Annual Report, "*The Faces of Independence*", is published and ready to view :

***View Online***

***Download or print the PDF***

## The Scoop: What's Happening, What's New...



### Improvising Inclusive Communities: AUMI Music Through Movement

Just a wonderful little film about the beauty of making music together through movement with AUMI and the

# MOBILIZE

RESISTANCE THROUGH ACTION

2018 Annual Conference on Independent Living

### 2018 Annual Conference on Independent Living, Washington D.C.

NCIL's Annual Conference is "the largest Independent Living event of the year" (*2018 conference guide*) and is a great opportunity to join the independent living movement. From grassroots advocates to CIL leadership and representatives from major



KU-InterArts Improvising Inclusive Communities event last Fall at the Commons on the KU campus. Independence, Inc. co-hosted the event and our own Ranita Wilks is featured. You'll also catch a glimpse of Drew, one of our fabulous volunteers!



### **Universal Design initiative reaches the gaming industry!**

Microsoft introduced accessible gaming with the Xbox adaptive controller.

"We have been on a journey of inclusive design, which celebrates and draws inspiration from people who are often overlooked in the typical design process. When we truly design for all, we help make the world more equal" - Satya Nadella, Microsoft CEO. [Read the full story here](#)



### **Independence, Inc. Peer Group Activity: Game Night Part 2!**

We had so much fun at game night last month that we've decided to do it again. Charles "Game Guy"

Kelly will bring his assortment of old school and new school games. Thursday, May 24th 4:30



### **Did you Know? Our Independence, Inc. Board Meetings are open to the public!**

And we want YOU to join us! Public comment is always welcome. Board Meetings are the 2nd Monday of every month in the Independence, Inc. conference room, 2001 Haskell Avenue. Our next scheduled Board Meeting is Monday, June 11, 5:30 p.m.



### **Don't forget about our Equipment Loan Bank!**

Our Independence, Inc. Medical Equipment Loan Bank is open M-F 8:30-5:00 with new arrivals weekly. With Wheelchairs to walkers, shower seats to commodes, personal care items and so much more, we may just have

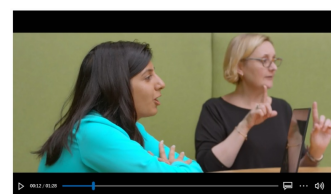
organizations that work for justice and equity for people with disabilities - this conference is for you! Volunteers are needed too! July 23-26, Grand Hyatt, Washington, D.C. Get all of the information here: [Get all of the information here!](#)



### **Independence, Inc. Volunteer Opportunity!**

Have you always wanted to jump into the world of volunteering but didn't know quite where to start?

Are you a person with a disability or someone interested in the rights and needs of people with disabilities? We could use you at our front desk to welcome visitors, answer phones and assist with our equipment loan bank. For more information, call Amy Ballinger, Community Engagement Manager, 785-841-0333 ext. 119



### **Reimagining Accessibility in the Modern Workplace**

This is a must-read article and a [great video](#) on best practices to build more modern and inclusive workplace environments and how accessible-by-design technologies empower every person

pm-6:30 pm  
Independence, Inc. Large  
Conference Room RSVP w/  
Ranita 785-841-0333, ext.  
115.

what you are looking for!  
We also accept donated  
equipment. Call, come by  
or ***visit us on the web*** for  
more information .

to create, communicate,  
and collaborate. It also  
highlights new Microsoft  
365 accessibility  
features. ***Read the full  
article...***

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