



Independence, Inc.  
e-newsletter



## Building bridges, breaking barriers

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



Winter 2019  
edition



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### Alliance for a Healthy Kansas "KanCare Expansion Holiday Card Campaign" Aims Warm Wishes at Legislators While Urging Expansion in Effort to Insure the Uninsured



Independence, Inc. participated in the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas "KanCare Expansion Holiday Card Campaign". Our own Ranita Wilks (*pictured with Independence, Inc. consumer, Elinor*) show off their holiday card that was sent to Kansas Legislators this holiday season, as a cordial way to urge them to support

expansion. Kansas remains one of 17 states yet to expand KanCare, leaving many kansans with disabilities uninsured or under-insured. For more info on KanCare expansion visit <https://www.expandkancare.com/>

# Bits & Pieces

## A Welcome to LMH as Reconstruction Date Nears



We look forward to LMH joining our building and sharing our space! We value collaboration and hope that our two valuable organizations being represented in close proximity will be a win-win for the community! (Above: Russ Johnson, President/CEO, LMH Health)

[Click to the view the video](#)

## Thank you to the United Way for our 2019 YEP! Funding



United Way of Douglas County

Thank you **United Way**, for the Community Impact Grant that helps fund our **Youth Employment Program!** YEP! matches youth with local businesses for job skill development through an 80 hour work trial. Many students are eligible for hire after the completed work trial and go on to secure permanent employment with their mentor company.

## Independence, Inc. Board Member Dustin Stumblingbear, Back on the Campaign Trail



Stumblingbear at the March for our Lives Rally, Kansas Statehouse grounds, Topeka, March 24th 2018

## Free Event! Special Screening of Must-See Film, Intelligent Lives at KU Woodruff Auditorium Jan. 25th



Still screen from trailer of the Intelligent Lives film. [Click image to view](#)

The KU Department of Special Education is hosting a FREE special



**Independence, Inc.** board member, Dustin Stumblingbear is back on the campaign trail hoping to win a City Commission seat in 2019. "I still feel I have something to contribute to the discussion of the issues coming to the City Commission," Stumblingbear said in a recent LJWorld article.

*For the full LJWorld article, continue reading...*

screening of a highly-praised film by Dan Habib. **Intelligent Lives** "challenges what it means to be intelligent, and points to a future in which people of all abilities can fully participate in higher education, meaningful employment, and intimate relationships". January 25th, 5:00p.m. Woodruff Auditorium. Free snacks and drinks! For more information, *see attached flyer...*



## Spotlight: Consumer and Volunteer Recognized for Community Work

**Independence, Inc.** consumer and longtime volunteer peer counselor, Kelly Smith (pictured right, after receiving her award), was honored with a "LiveWell 2018 Culture of Health Action" award at **LiveWell's** 10-year milestone community breakfast celebration and recognition program, Friday, November 30th at the Lied Center in Lawrence. Along with serving Independence, Inc. for the past 17 years as a Peer Counselor, Smith, an employee at S.A.C.K (**Self-Advocate Coalition of Kansas**), has been a dedicated participant in the LiveWell Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group. "She has provided valuable guidance to help make the work group's community assessment and survey more accessible to Lawrence's disability community." (source: [ldchealth.org](http://ldchealth.org)) LiveWell Lawrence is a coalition of community leaders who have developed several approaches meant to foster healthier lifestyles and the overall well-being of community members. "The approaches aim to change everyday places - neighborhoods, schools, after-school programs, workplaces, restaurants, and city streets - into environments where people thrive." (source [livewellldgco.org](http://livewellldgco.org))



## February is AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month

An infographic titled "What is low vision?" with a cartoon illustration of an older man with glasses. The infographic contains several sections: "What causes low vision?" (listing eye diseases, eye injuries, and birth defects), "What are the numbers?" (stating 2.9 million Americans have low vision, expected to increase 72% by 2030, and most people with low vision are 65 or older), "What can I do?" (advising to see an eye care professional and learn about vision rehabilitation), "What is vision rehabilitation?" (describing services that help people make the most of their vision), and "Where can I learn more?" (directing to www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision).

So where do you start if you or someone you know is experiencing low vision and wondering what kind of vision rehabilitation and low vision resources are available? A good place to check in can be a Center for Independent Living like **Independence, Inc.** (serving Douglas, Jefferson and Franklin Counties). Our Independent Living Specialists can offer valuable information and referrals as well as talk about assistive devices

Whether the cause is Age-Related

Macular degeneration (AMD), an injury to the eye, birth defect, eye disease or other health disorder, low vision affects 2.9 million American's and 4.2 million are visually impaired. According to the National Eye Institute and the National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP) these numbers are expected to increase up to 72% by the year 2030. "By 2030, when the last baby boomers turn 65, this number (of people who are visually impaired) is projected to reach 7.2 million, with 5 million having low vision." (source: **NEHEP**)

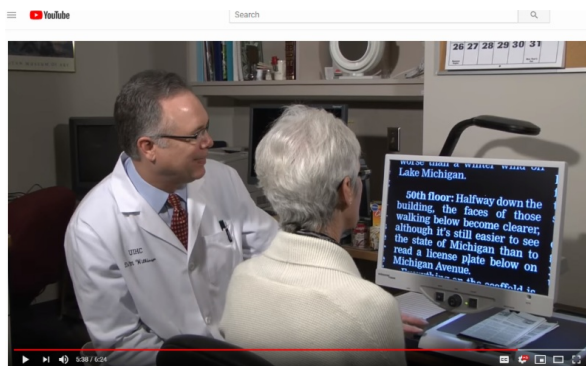
With people in the United States living longer, eye diseases and vision loss have become major public health concerns.

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*"Although there might be nothing more that can be done at this time from a medical or surgical standpoint, this does not mean that there is nothing more that can be done to improve visual function" - Mark Wilkinson  
O.D./Specialist in Low Vision*

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that may be available to help with your independent living needs. Check out this video (below) from the National Eye Institute for great insight into recommendations into various options, services, resources and where to find the assistance you may want.



Above: Video - **NEI: Living With Low Vision: Stories of Hope and Independence**

#### Online resources for Low Vision:

- **National Eye Institute Health Education Program**
- **Low Vision Fact and Information Sheet**
- **National Eye Institute infographic on low vision**
- **AMD Risk Factors, Symptoms and more info/EyeHealth Northwest**

### **#BeYou - Embracing Differences and Celebrating Uniqueness: Independence, Inc. 17th Annual Disability Mentoring Day Recap**

Disability Mentoring Day 2018 was a great success and a fabulous day with 160 banquet attendees including students, staff, business mentors and community members.

"Believe in Yourself: #BeYou" was the theme of

our event, focusing on the unique gifts and abilities of every single person.

Nearly 50 business mentors and 90 high school students from 6 area schools came together for one common goal: to work towards the inclusion of people with disabilities into the workforce and build on individual strengths with a skill-building and job shadowing experience.

DMD is a nation-wide effort to promote career development for youth with disabilities through a morning of hands-on career exploration and job shadowing followed by a celebration banquet for the students, their mentors, our sponsors, school staff & other community members &





leaders. (***pictured above:** DMD Banquet attendees at the Double Tree Hotel, Lawrence, October 23rd, 2018* )

Independence, Inc. is the primary coordinator for this annual event and while it's not a fundraiser, it is our biggest event of the year. Celebrating DMD at the local community level, helps bring awareness to disability employment and how we can all, as community members, employers, educators and people with disabilities, work together to close the gap in employment inequality that far favors the non-disabled population. (***pictured below:** Independence, Inc. Executive Director, Jill Enyart, invites banquet MC, Ev Taylor, LMH Health VP/Chief Talent Officer to begin the program*)

We are always looking for more sponsors, mentors and partners for this event! If you are interested in learning more about DMD and how you can be involved or help support our work, [\*\*contact us\*\*](#) or [\*\*visit the DMD page on our website...\*\*](#)



## Behind the Scenes: Advocacy in Action Helps Create Safety and Foster Inclusion at Local Recreation Site, Mary's Lake

When Kevin Smith, member of the Independence, Inc. Access Task Force, approached the Lawrence Parks and Recreation department to discuss needed improvements to the fishing dock at Mary's Lake, one he himself uses, he was just doing what comes naturally to him - advocacy. Inclusion into all aspects of the community is not just a necessity, it's a civil right and the ability to access recreational spots is no exception. So when Smith noticed an increasing need for safety and accessibility to the Mary's Lake Dock, he approached Nature Interpretive Supervisor, Marty Birrell, with his concerns, fully expecting



quick and reasonable resolution. And he was right - the response from the City of Lawrence Parks and Rec Department was immediate. "I only talked to Marty", Smith said. "All I did was mention it and she and maintenance took it from there."

When it came to Mary's Lake, a small fishing pond and dock near the **Prairie Park Nature Center** in Southeast Lawrence, accessibility was proving to be difficult for some. Changing lake levels combined with the particular way in which the ramp was attached to the sidewalk, and the month-by-month "sinking" of the connecting plate, resulted in an unsteady ramp and one too steep for wheelchair users to safely access it.

Thanks to advocacy in action and the conscientious response of the City of Lawrence, the dock (**pictured below**) now has a fully accessible ramp for all to enjoy!



**TOGETHER WE CAN  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

[Contribute Now](#)



## Our End-of-Year Campaign is a Wrap!

A HUGE Thank you to everyone who gave during our 2018 End-of-Year Campaign! The support of our partners like YOU is essential to continuing and growing our

programs and services. For more information on specific services we offer, program highlights, news and information, **visit our website**. Missed our campaign? Ready to give now? Click on the link above. Every dollar counts and is appreciated!

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