

advocacy | peer support | training | transportation | community education

INDEPENDENCE, INC.

Quarterly e-newsletter Fall 2020

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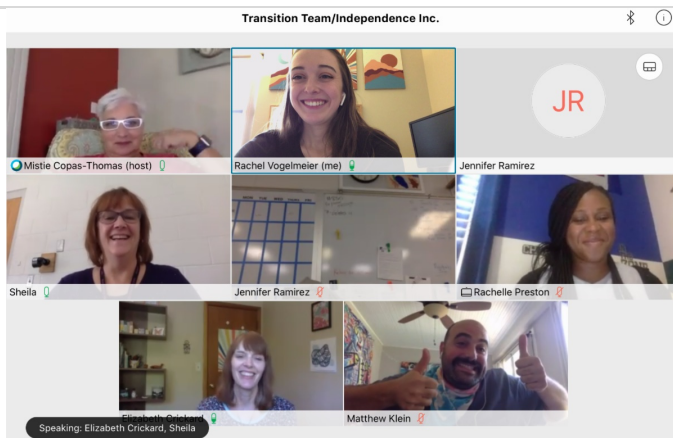


ADA 30 - Nothing About Us Without Us, A Virtual Celebration with Judith Heumann



In honor and celebration of both the American's with Disabilities Act 30th anniversary and 75 years of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), KU is hosting a live online, two-day celebration with lifelong disability rights advocate, thought leader and change-maker, Judith Heumann *[pictured above in a vintage black and white photo at a public rally]*, **October 28-29**. Independence, Inc. is a partner in the event and there is still time to register for one or all of the live virtual sessions...[Read More](#)

Independence, Inc. Youth Employment Program, Disability Mentoring Day Changing, Adapting in Response to the New Reality of Life with COVID



With community changes such as the shut-down or hybrid system taking place in schools and educational programs, temporary or even permanent closing of some businesses and ongoing safety precautions related to COVID-19, we are adapting to this new reality by placing on hold, our Youth Employment Program (YEP!) that features work trial opportunities for youth with disabilities, and moving instead towards a safer and more practically-structured program that serves youth transitioning from high school into adulthood.

We are working hard to implement a **Youth Transition Program** that will take the place of YEP! through 2021, and will serve to remotely and virtually assist youth with disabilities as they transition into adulthood and permanent employment. Resources will include online training opportunities, information and referral, one-on-one support and other assistance as needed.

Rachel Vogelmeier, Independent Living Skills/Peer Counseling Specialist, has been and will continue to collaborate with the Lawrence Public School System transition counselors [pictured, left] to brainstorm, plan and build programs that will adapt to the changing needs of high school students with disabilities. We will continue to work with students one-on-one on a case-by-case basis, in a safe manner with social distance and masks. Our primary form of training however will be virtual as we assist youth seeking permanent, paid employment with all of the attributes associated with that goal, including resume building, writing cover letters, applying for jobs etc. Our Disability Mentoring Day event is also on hold until late 2021 when we are looking forward to being past the need for such safety measures that keep us from gathering in person.

For information on our Youth Employment and Transition services, contact Rachel Vogelmeier, rvogelmeier@independenceinc.org or call us at 785-841-0333

Forward Thinking: Our Lobby Safety and Security Makeover is Complete



No matter what your personal views on or experience with COVID-19, I think we can all agree on one thing - it has shaken our foundation just a bit and caused us all to do some serious evaluating around safety, health, communication, relationships, work, school and more. For all of us here at Independence, Inc., the health and safety of our consumers, our community and our staff quickly became top priority and our response was swift and well-informed. *[above: Independence, Inc. Information and Referral Specialist, Cassandra Jones, speaks on the phone at the new front desk; below: Clayton Hawk with **Kearney and son Construction** and Bob the millwork master work together in the beginning stages of our front lobby makeover]*

In addition to following all safety precautions - masks, social distancing, virtual over in-person meetings, extra cleaning and disinfecting etc. - we designed a front lobby makeover to ensure the safety and well-being of visitors and staff well into the future. Our doors remained locked and entrance into the building is determined on a case-by-case basis. Once inside, you'll find a beautifully designed glass safety enclosure separating the lobby from the rest of the building, and accessing staff offices is through a buzz-in system and by appointment only.

This protects visitors and staff from any direct contact and limits the number of people in the building. Our [protocol](#) remains the same - our building will locked and closed to the public but all [staff](#) remain working in the office at full capacity and are available by email, phone, zoom or other virtual platform. Our computer lab is closed and in-person meeting is limited to essential or immediate needs that can't be met over other communication channels. Our [equipment loan bank](#) is still open for borrowing and donating and we will meet you at the door with equipment or to receive a donation.



Measures of Growth: Recent Staff Additions and Changes Keep us Continually Moving Forward and Adapting

Though the COVID pandemic has had an undeniably negative impact on individuals and society, from financial to physical, emotional to educational, our staff here at Independence, Inc. has been working continually to serve our communities and consumers. As some of our workload has increased, we've adapted with staff changes and additions that keep us working for YOU at full capacity, week after week. Our commitment to our community continues as we work to make Lawrence and surrounding areas the best place for people with disabilities to live, work, learn and play - through this pandemic and beyond.



Bob Mikesic, Information & Referral

Bob Mikesic is stepping into semi-retirement after nearly 36 years with Independence, Inc.! Bob has held many positions over the years, including Advocacy Specialist, Co-Executive Director and most recently, Program Manager among others. Bob will be using his expertise in advocacy to transition into a part-time position of Information and Referral Specialist. We



Daniel Brown, Core Services Manager

Daniel has been with Independence, Inc. for twelve years and has recently been promoted into the position of Core Services Manager. "As I transition into this new role, I am discovering many new challenges, but am looking forward to taking on more of a leadership role at an agency I really enjoy



Debbie Jones, Payroll and Billing

An increase in the number of consumers we serve through our Financial Management Services (FMS) department prompted a need for another Payroll and Billing Specialist to help manage the load! Debbie is just a few weeks into her position with Independence, Inc. and is learning

are grateful for his years of service both within the organization and the community and are looking forward to his continued work with consumers and the community in this new position!

working for." Daniel previously held the titles of Information and Referral Specialist and Lead Independent Living Skills Specialist. Welcome Daniel, into your new position!

quickly and doing a fabulous job! She has a degree in Business Management and is a self-described "people person", which lead to her interest in working with consumers at Independence, Inc. Welcome Debbie!

We're Hiring! Independent Living and Payroll/Billing Specialists

► Independent Living Specialist

Independence, Inc. is currently seeking a full-time Independent Living Skills Specialist to join our team! We are looking for a qualified, responsible, team-player to work with consumers to reach their independent living goals. For a full job description, details and how to apply, visit our website

<https://independenceinc.org/careers/> or look for us on Indeed.



► Payroll and Billing Specialist

Independence, Inc. is currently seeking a 32 hour per week Payroll and Billing Specialist to join our busy Financial Management Department. The ideal candidate will be detail-oriented, take instruction well, have the required experience and be a fast-learner. For a full job description, details and how to apply, visit our website

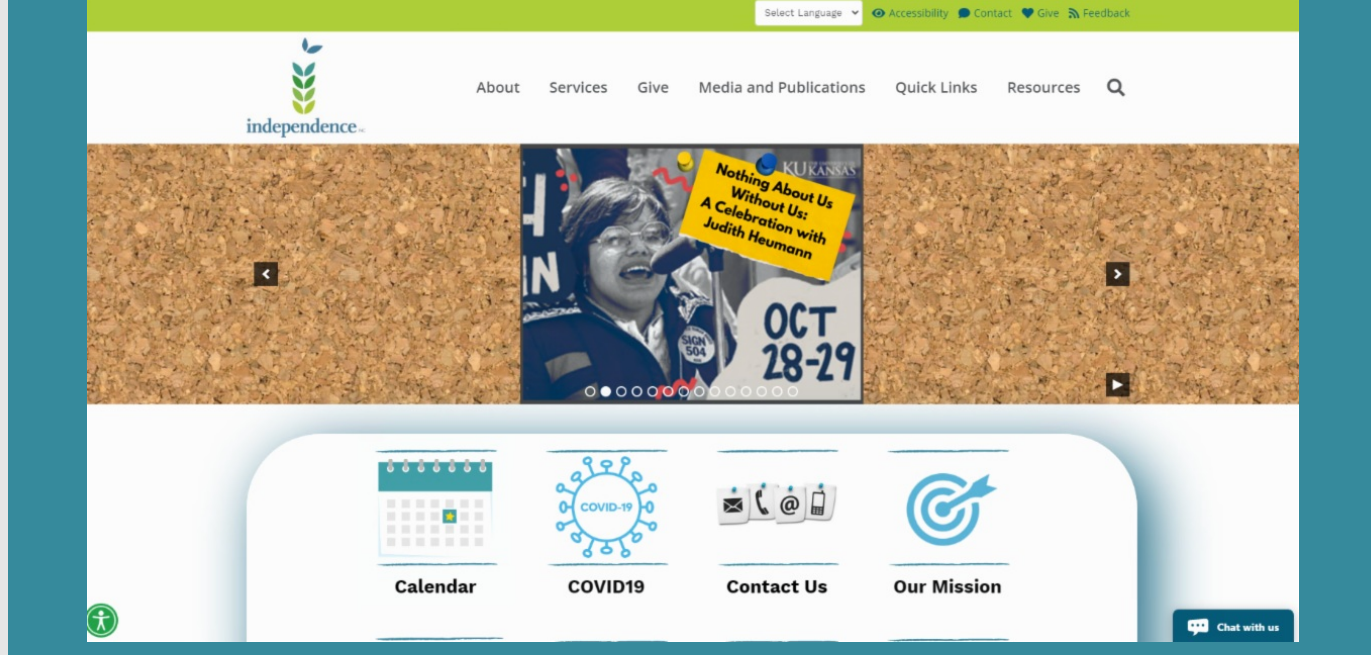
<https://independenceinc.org/careers/> or look for us on Indeed.

After a Year of Planning, Designing and Developing, our New Website is Live - and Fully Accessible!

Dreaming about an attractive, user-friendly, well-designed and fully accessible website might be your thing, but it sure was ours! Motivated by the desire to offer full access, pertinent information, a great layout and fabulous images to YOU, our consumers and community, we have spent the better part of 2020 creating our new website. Thanks in part to a grant from the [Kansas Health foundation](#), our new website has launched, complete with a full accessibility menu where you can choose

the settings that are right for you, a new calendar feature, chat box, simplified menus and layout, an easy-to-navigate snapshot to quick links, a running newsfeed and more. And we are certain you will love our new look! This is a great place to start when looking for information, community resources, disability-related events, advocacy opportunities and of course, all of our programs and services.

Take a look and see what you think!
<https://independenceinc.org/>



Independence, Inc. Service Highlights: Making a Difference

So much unseen goes on behinds the scenes here at Independence, Inc. as we work to support the independent living goals of our consumers. From seemingly small things like getting a tablet into the hands of a consumer who needs telehealth to assisting in extending stable housing for someone at risk of losing it, the work we do matters. Here's a brief snipit of just a few things we've been working on...



Access to Telehealth

A consumer needing telehealth in order to limit possible exposure to COVID-19 through in-person appointments, acquired a new tablet - an essential piece to ongoing health care during the pandemic. Access to federal funding for COVID-related needs allowed us to work with this consumer and get the technology needed to stay safe at home and maintain healthcare.



Disability Vote Campaign

Independence, Inc. participated in a statewide Center for Independent Living voter registration outreach campaign in October. Core services staff made personal phone calls to our entire consumer base, asking them if they were registered to vote, encouraging them to do so and walking them through the registration process. It was a fabulous day of outreach with many consumers getting registered to vote on November 3rd!



Stable Housing

A consumer was able to renew and maintain stable housing, avoiding homelessness, with the assistance of an Independence, Inc. staff member who helped this consumer complete the application process to move from the Housing Authority's 2 year Transitional Housing Program to permanent Section 8, rent-subsidized housing.

Increasing Access and Opportunity: Celebrating 75 Years of NDEAM and 30 Years of the ADA

INCREASING ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Celebrating 30 years of the
Americans with Disabilities Act

30th ADA **75th NDEAM**

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

#ADA30 | #NDEAM75 | dol.gov/odep



OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



2020 marks not only the 75th observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), but also the 30th anniversary of the ADA. Both are celebrated every October and both milestones are being commemorated with a range of events and activities centered on the theme "Increasing Access and Opportunity." Visit the U.S. Department of Labor website

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam> for all things NDEAM and ADA 30! And don't forget to register now for one of the fabulous #ADA30 virtual events with Judy Heumann <https://accessibility.ku.edu/judith-heumann-2020/schedule>

Fall Fundraising: We need YOU!



These are uncertain times and our world may seem topsy-turvy but work continues at nonprofits like ours and we need YOUR help! Will you consider giving to our Fall Campaign? You can [give online](#) or simply mail us a check: 2001 Haskell Ave. Lawrence, KS 66044. Monthly giving is an option if you are able! Visit our [Douglas County Communication Foundation](#) site to set up recurring gifts. Thanks for your support in whatever form that may be!

Independence, Inc.
[www.independenceinc.org]

