

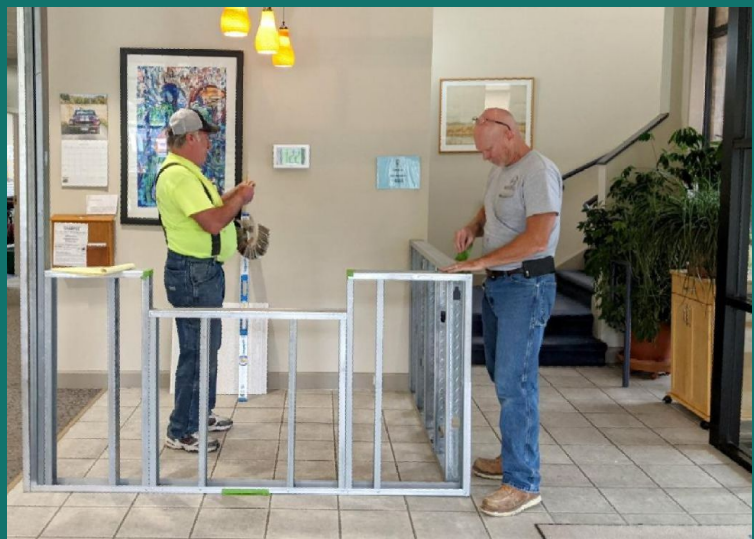


**Independence, Inc. | e-newsletter | Summer 2020 edition**

## Safety First! Our Lobby is Getting a Makeover

We are taking some important measures in response to the COVID pandemic, one of which is a new reception area! Beginning next month, visitors will be greeted through a safety glass enclosure and will be buzzed in to visit our Equipment Loan Bank or meet with a staff member. Our Computer Lab will once again be open to walk-in visitors once we re-open our building to the public.

### **COVID-19 Safety and Re-Open Plan**



*Clayton Hawk with John Kearney Construction and Bob the millwork master join forces to create a beautiful, safe and functional space in our lobby!*





## Welcome to our Team, Rachel!

One of the many things that COVID-19 has taught us is that graduating from college, interviewing, landing a new job and starting a career under unprecedented circumstances, is no easy task. But Rachel Vogelmeier did just that.

Rachel joined the Independence, Inc. team in May after graduating from Baker University with a degree in the fields of sociology and psychology. After a mask-wearing, hand-sanitizing, social-distancing interview process, we knew she was the right one for us. Rachel will serve as our new Youth Transition Services Coordinator (formerly Youth Employment Program/YEP!) and Independent Living Skills/Peer Counseling Specialist. That's a lot of hats to wear and she wears them well! Help us continue to welcome her!

## It may be Summer but We're Kind of Cool Over Here - Like, Instagram Cool

As Instagram has made important strides in creating an accessible platform, we've decided to give it a try! So what will you find here? Great photos, the building of our image and some great center, community and national disability-related information. It's our space to have a little fun, express a little more opinion and get a little more creative with the very real and important matter of disability advocacy, accessible communities and independent living. Won't you join us?

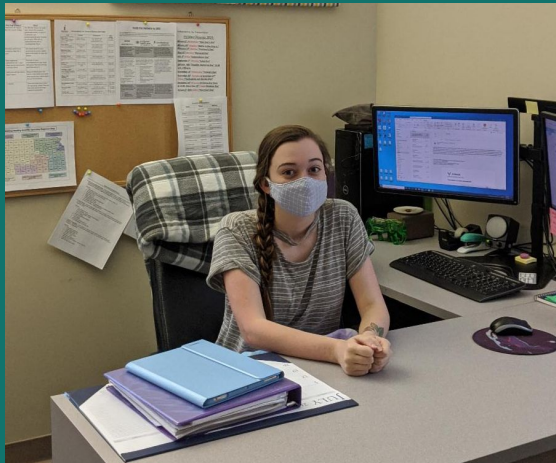


*Visit us on Instagram! Give us a follow and we'll follow you back!*



## A Season to Remember: Serving our Communities During the COVID Pandemic

Our doors here at Independence, Inc. may have been closed to walk-in traffic for the past several months, but our staff has remained in the office working hard for our communities. Re-thinking service delivery and adapting to the ever-changing COVID climate has been no small task. It takes problem-solving, working through tension and stress, a willingness to think outside the box, putting other's needs first and amazing leadership and staff to make it all happen. Hear directly from our a few of our staff members about their experiences in working at a Center for Independent Living during a national pandemic:



**Rachel Vogelmeier,  
Independent Living Skills/Peer  
Counseling Specialist**

*"I feel as though I am extremely lucky to have found a job during COVID-19, particularly one that falls within the realm of my degree. Going from being a full-time college student to participating in online courses was less than ideal, but to have to navigate the employment pool on top of that was overwhelming. There were countless advertisements for open positions, but no one ever got back to me. I applied to at least 20 companies a week throughout the month of April when everything was shut down. Being a sociology/psychology major, I was hoping to get a job that put my degree to use. However, as time went on, I was applying to be a part-time greenhouse attendant, a weekend nanny, or a receptionist at a chiropractic office. As part of my requirement to graduate college, I had to take a class on "adulthood". In the class, we learned how to create a budget, write an impactful cover letter, and format a resume. I feel as though this helped me to overcome the societal and economic barriers to find a truly fulfilling career. My goal is to help others do the same through Independence, Inc. employment services."*



**Amy Ballinger,  
Community Engagement Manager/  
Independent Living Specialist**

*"One word to describe my experience during this pandemic - adapt. Adapting to consumer needs through many avenues, including CARES Act funding, and adapting to ever-changing information through website and social media updates has been my focus for the past several months. Being able to provide a CARES Act-funded ramp (below) for a consumer who lost her job due to COVID and needed safe access to her home was a highlight for me. To assist someone in their time of need with very few options after a financially-devastating job loss was a significant turning point for me in concluding that through problem-solving, thinking outside of the box and teamwork, we really can, together, get through this!"*





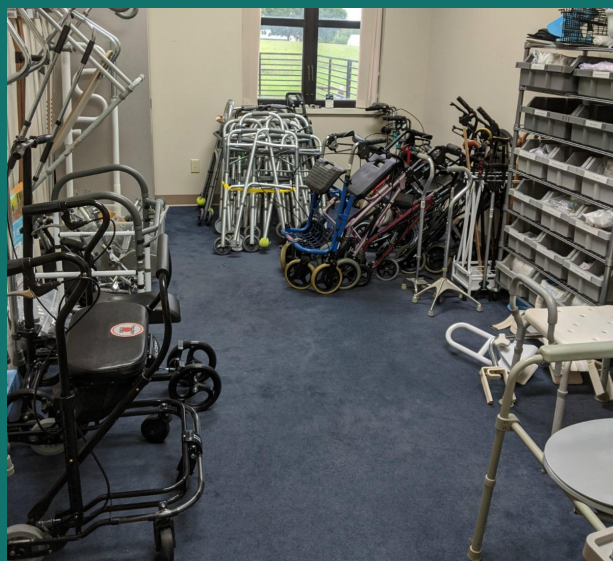
### Cassandra Jones & Wendy Smith Information & Referral Specialists

*"Many people who called in (during the pandemic) looking for information or equipment noted that Independence, Inc. has long been a resource for them and thanked the staff for continuing to serve the community. It was heartwarming to know that the work we are all doing has a very real and lasting impact, no matter how small the act." - Cassandra (pictured above) Wendy Smith echoes this sentiment: "People are so appreciative that they still have access to borrowing equipment from the loan bank (pictured below) during this difficult time."*



### LaNeece Jardon, Transportation Manager

*"Like everyone else when Covid-19 first hit, it effected or organization, our programs and our services in ways we weren't quite prepared for. We didn't close down our department or stop services, but our rider count in transportation dropped dramatically. We didn't want to lay off our drivers and were still offering rides, but not many people wanted to utilize our services at that time. So, we brain-stormed and came up with a solution: partner with Just Food to deliver boxes of food to their consumers (pictured below: driver Chip McConnell, loads up food from Just Food to be delivered). We did this for 3 months and provided 295 families with 2-week boxes at a time. This community partnership was essential to residents of Douglas County that otherwise may not have been able to get the food they needed. We were able to keep our drivers working thanks to this partnership and also thanks to RTAP (Rural Transportation Assistance Program), the*



*Our staff here at Independence, Inc. has stepped up to help sort and package personal protective equipment (PPE) (pictured below) to offer to consumers and to community members in need of masks, gloves, hand sanitizer etc. While some of this inventory has been supplied to us for use by those consumers in our FMS*



department receiving personal care attendant services, and another allotment has been supplied by KanCare Managed Care Organizations for their consumers, we have also received PPE to distribute to community members who are not current consumers but wish to do an intake process with us.

*If you are need of a one-time PPE package, please contact us and we will set you up with one of our staff to do a quick intake process.*



organization that provides continuing training our drivers must attend every 2 years. They partnered with the National RTAP and allowed everyone to obtain and finish their needed course online, allowing them to get both the training and the work hours in each week."



**Alisa Snyder,  
Business/FMS Payroll Manager**

*"With day services for people with disabilities largely shut down during the pandemic, our Financial Management Services Department (FMS) has been able to step up to the plate and assist our current consumers with getting the extra care attendant hours they need, as well as bringing on new consumers who now need care attendants. This is another example of a major roadblock to independence and choice in one's living situation, that was overcome through problem-solving and adapting services to meet the needs of our communities."*



**Jill Dudley, Executive Director**

*"COVID 19 has impacted all our lives in such significant ways. I believe many of us did not appreciate the level of freedom we had in our day to day interactions. I am proud to be employed with a company that continues to put consumer needs first. Daily I see staff provide information so people can find the resources they so desperately need. We have found ways to work with physical barriers in place and still deliver services without compromising our mission and individual health. We continue to assist individuals with durable medical equipment so they may return home from the hospital, transition individuals back into the community so they may control their own environment for*

*safety, assist with unemployment applications and provide transportation so people may get to needed medical appointments like dialysis."*

## Youth Employment Program on Hold Due to COVID

It was a difficult decision to make, but in the ongoing efforts to keep our staff, communities, consumers and our area youth with disabilities safe, we found it abundantly necessary to discontinuing our **YEP! Youth Employment Program** and **Disability Mentoring Day (DMD)** for this year. Sending youth into work-trials through YEP! and job shadowing and gathering as a group through DMD are simply not safe options.

We have adapted by continuing to serve both youth and adults seeking permanent employment through individual employment services. Meetings can be held by phone, conference call, over email and if necessary, through in-person meetings with masks and social distancing. If you have a disability, are seeking employment and would like information, resources and assistance to help prepare you for your search, contact Rachel Vogelmeier 785-841-0333 ext. 115.

[More information about Youth Transition/Employment Services](#)



Independence, Inc. is currently hiring for the position of **Payroll & Billing Specialist II**. This is a part-time position, 20 hours per week, Monday through Friday 8:00-noon. For full details, job description and how to apply, please [visit our listing on Indeed](#). **Qualified persons with a disability are encouraged to apply.** To be considered for an interview, you must submit resume, cover letter and 3 professional references to [asnyder@independenceinc.org](mailto:asnyder@independenceinc.org). Please visit our listing above or our the job announcement on our [website](#) and become familiar with job requirements and experience needed before applying.

**Lost Your Job due to COVID?**

**This may be YOUR Chance to Train for a New Career!**

One of our community partners, **Peaslee Tech**, is offering **FREE** classes to help those who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, learn a new trade and perhaps even build a lifelong career.

The "Raise Income, Security and Equity" or RISE,





program is open to Douglas County Residents and is hoped to provide no-cost tuition to about 70 people. These on-campus courses include training for auto-body repair, carpentry, plumbing, welding and more.

Contact Peaslee Tech for more information



Above: M.C. Escher's famous lithograph print of staircases that go nowhere with artist's additions in red by Amanda Russel, Portland Oregon

## The American's with Disabilities Act Turns 30

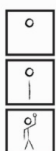
You've heard it said before - so much has been done, so much yet to do. Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) means reflecting on just that - the wins, the losses, the progress and the work that lies ahead.

From the #ThanksToTheADA campaign to the Campaign for Disability Employment and the New Mobility Real Life ADA series, there is an abundance of information, tools, celebrations and campaigns at your fingertips. And don't forget to read up on the history of the ADA, the key players of the early movement and the facts about how YOU may be protected, what is covered and what is not. Knowledge is power!



We're doing it for you, won't you join us and do it for those around you? #wearamask

## National Disability Voter Registration Week July 13-19: Your Vote Matters!



**BE SEEN.  
BE HEARD.  
BE COUNTED.**

REV UP Campaign



Did you know? July 13-19 was Disability Voter Registration Week

organized by the American Association of People with Disabilities to "increase the political power of people with disabilities by sharing resources and getting folks registered to vote". And what a great time to celebrate and take action during the ADA 30th Anniversary month! Your vote matters, YOU matter - register to vote today !

[Register to Vote!](#)

**Shape Your Future! It's Not Too Late to be Counted! You Matter, Your Voice Matters, Your Count Matters.**

Help make sure valuable resources go where they are needed so YOU can get the services that are necessary for you and your independence. "The results of the 2020 Census will help determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding flow into communities every year for



the next decade. That funding shapes many different aspects of every community, no matter the size, no matter the location." -

[2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov)

**Shape  
your future  
START HERE >**

United States®  
**Census  
2020**

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