



HEARTLAND INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER

Because home is where the heart is.

**January-
March
2019**

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The Director's View

In February, the Missouri Centers for Independent Living (MOCIL) held our annual Independent Living Advocacy Day at the Capitol in Jefferson City. This event gives us the opportunity to advocate with legislators and state officials on legislative issues that impact individuals with disabilities and the organizations that support their right to live independently. It is also a time for advocates to meet newly elected lawmakers who are serving their first term in the legislature.

MOCIL's theme this year was "I.L. (Independent Living) ROCKS!" Many of the MOCIL member centers hand painted rocks featuring a map with the location of the centers and a wide array of artwork depicting the positive impact I.L. programs and services can have on a person's quality of life. The rocks revealed a great deal of artistic talent by center staff and volunteers. MOCIL members hand delivered an "I.L. Rock" to each state senator and state representative. The response has been very positive. It certainly was a unique way of creating awareness and visibility for Centers for Independent Living!

Did you know that a new law passed by voters in 2018 has placed a maximum value of \$5.00 on any gift given to an elected state lawmaker or official? The rocks certainly were well below the \$5 value, but a couple of lawmakers refused to accept the rocks, citing the new law. Interesting.

Also interesting is an issue I personally had to deal with. More than a week before our event, I called the office of every state senator and representative whose district includes all or some of Heartland's primary service area. I was able to meet some of our new legislators and renew relationships with others. Overall, it was a positive and productive day with one exception. I was refused an appointment with one of the newly elected state representatives who serves a section of one of our counties. The representative's liaison told me that the representative was not taking appointments. When I arrived at the Capitol, I tried again to make an appointment, and this time the conversation was very dismissive. It is very disturbing to see how quickly some lawmakers forget that they are elected to represent their constituents. These individuals are certainly in the minority of lawmakers, but it is unfortunate that attitude exists at all.

Pat Chambers
Executive Director

Ameren's Veterans Assistance Fund



In honor of our veterans, Ameren Missouri made a donation to assist active military families and veterans who need assistance with their electric bills. A media push was made to urge active military families and veterans to apply to their Community Action Agency (CAA) or 2-1-1 for assistance. Two primary CAAs serve residents in the Heartland service area. Missouri Ozarks Community Action (MOCA) serves Gasconade, Maries and Osage counties. MOCA is based in Richland. Their phone number is (573) 765-3263. Jefferson Franklin Community Action serves Franklin County. Their number in Hillsboro is (636) 789-2686.

To be eligible, an Ameren customer must be:

- A veteran, either honorably or dishonorably discharged,
- Active military or spouse of an active military member.
- Their Ameren Missouri bill must be in disconnection status or threat of disconnection. This fund does not cover any other utility provider.
- This assistance is available in all counties in Missouri covered by Ameren.
- The maximum amount of assistance is \$250.00

To apply, the customer must call Ameren and identify themselves as being a veteran, active military, or spouse of active military, and state they need assistance with their Ameren Missouri electric bill. The caller can connect with United Way 2-1-1 for assistance or go through their local community action agency.

Heartland Provides Disability Education for Students in Gerald.



Several Heartland staff and a dedicated volunteer spent time last month providing disability awareness education to about 50 second grade students at Gerald Elementary School.

Staff members Molly Steinbeck, Lacey Raaf and Dani Voss, along with HILC board member Denny Huff and his service dog Sounder, spent a morning not only talking with the young students about how to accept and respect people



with disabilities, but also had the students participate in several activities that showed them first-hand about some of the day-to-day challenges facing people with disabilities.

HILC's Disability Awareness Education (DAE) is available to provide programs with any interested area school. The program is offered at no cost to the schools. For more information and/or to schedule a DAE event, call Molly Steinbeck. She can be reached at (866) 322-3224, extension 104.

Heartland Welcomes New Board Member

Heartland welcomed a new board member during our March Board of Directors meeting. John Kiehne of Labadie is a man of many talents. John is a talented singer-songwriter and musician. He is a former foster parent and currently is the guardian for two young adult family members. John has also entered the political arena. He was the Democratic candidate for Missouri's 26th District Senate seat in 2018 and is currently beginning to organize a campaign for the state's 109th House of Representatives district.



Scam Alert from the Federal Trade Commission

The Federal Trade Commission is getting reports about people pretending to be from the Social Security Administration (SSA) who are trying to get your social security number and even your money.

In one version of the scam, the caller says your Social Security number has been linked to a crime (often he says it happened in Texas) involving drugs or sending money out of the country illegally. He then says your Social Security number is blocked- but he might ask you for a fee to reactivate it or to get a new number. He will ask you to confirm your Social Security number.

In other variations, he says that somebody used your Social Security number to apply for credit cards and you could lose your benefits. He might also warn you that your bank account is about to be seized, that you need to withdraw your money, and he'll tell you how to keep it safe.

All of these are scams. Here is what you need to know:

- The SSA will never call and ask for your Social Security number. It will not ask you to pay anything. It will not call to threaten your benefits.
- Your caller ID might show the SSA's real phone number (1-800-772-1213), but that is not the real SSA calling. Computers make it easy to show any number on the caller ID. You cannot trust what you see there.
- Never give your Social Security number to anyone who contacts you in this way. Do not confirm the last four digits. Do not give a bank account or credit card number-ever- to anyone that contacts you by phone asking for any of that information.
- Remember that anyone who tells you to wire money, pay with a gift card, or send cash is always a scammer no matter who they say they are.

If you are worried about a call from someone who claims to be from the Social Security Administration, get off the phone and then call the real SSA at 1-800-772-1213.

On the subject of the Social Security Administration...



April is National Social Security Month. Heartland Independent Living Center provides services to individuals with disabilities in Franklin, Gasconade, Maries and adjacent counties

You can learn a lot about Social Security online with a "my Social Security account." You can replace a lost or stolen Social Security card, get a copy of your 1099 (SSA-1099), or check the status of your Social Security benefit application or claim. Three other advantages are the ability to set up or change direct deposit information, change your address, or establish instant access to your award letter.

Use the website to set up or change your Social Security direct deposit information. In most cases, you are required to receive federal benefits electronically, so when you choose direct deposit the SSA will electronically deposit your funds directly into a bank account. If you do not have a bank account, you can choose *Direct Express* and your funds will be deposited into a prepaid debit card account. *Direct Express* has no enrollment fee or minimum balance requirement to open or use the account. They strive to provide online services that best suit when, where and how you do business with Social Security. You can set up a direct deposit at SSA.gov/myaccount, or you can call 1-800-772-1213. Visit Social Security.gov to learn more about online available services.

Consumer Stories

Danny lives in his own home in St. Clair and enjoys sitting on his front porch with neighbors and friends who stop by to visit. Danny suffers from numerous physical disabilities, including severe diabetes, COPD, heart problems and struggles to get around independently due to issues with his knees and feet that make it difficult for him to keep his balance. Despite the daily challenges Danny faces due to his disabilities, he continues to keep a positive attitude and is thankful he is able to continue living independently in his home.



Danny has been a part of HILC's Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program for a few years. His attendant assists him with everyday tasks that are difficult for him to complete due to the limitations from his disabilities. His attendant comes three days each week and helps him with household chores, cleaning and his grocery shopping and errands. He has also received several pieces of assistive equipment from Heartland. He recently had a need for a rollator following an amputation of his toe. The rollator helps with his balance and allows him to get around his house and outside with ease.

Danny said the staff at Heartland have helped to meet all his needs that allow him to live independently in his home. He's not sure what he would do without Cindy, his Independent Living Specialist at Heartland. She has always ensured his needs are met.

Air Conditioner Loans Again Available



The Heartland Air Conditioner Loan program is designed for consumers with heart, lung or other medical conditions that require air conditioning. Heartland will loan a 110 volt, single room air conditioner when the consumer meets these guidelines:

- The consumer must have a written prescription from their doctor
- The program is only for consumers who do not have any existing air conditioning in their homes.
- The consumer must meet Heartland Independent Living Center financial guidelines.
- A \$75 deposit (check, cash or blank money order) is required. This deposit will be refunded when the loaned A.C. unit is returned to HILC in clean and working condition.
- The consumer must sign a loan agreement.

Youth Transition Team Being Formed in Gasconade County

A new resource is being organized in Gasconade County to assist students with special education needs to transition from high school to higher education or into the world of employment and independent living.

MPACT staff member Nicole Brinkmann has begun to pull volunteers together to form a Gasconade County Transition Team. The organization held their first meeting in January and plan to meet monthly. Heartland Independent Living Center is happy to be able to provide room in our building for these meetings. These meetings are open to parents, educators, human and social service providers, or to any person or agency committed to helping youth reach their full potential.

At this time, the group is meeting on the third Wednesday of each month at 10:30am at Heartland. For more information on the new Gasconade County Transition Team, contact Nicole at MPACT in St. Peters. The number is (800) 743-7634.

Staff News & Notes



Becky Throm has been promoted to the position of HILC In-Home Services Trainer. Becky joined Heartland last March as a part time aide for HILC In-Home Care. In August she became a full time Care Provider. Her newest position became effective in January. In her new role, Becky will be certified to provide CPR and First Aid training to staff in both our In-Home programs, the Department of Health and Senior Services In-Home Services and the Department of Mental Health's Personal Assistant program.

Becky is the mother of two. She, her son, daughter, and her fiancé live in Bland.

Michelle Neustaedter has rejoined the HILC In-Home program. Michelle, who previously worked as an In-Home Aide and as the In-Home Assistant, has been hired to fill the full time Care Provider position that opened with Becky Throm's promotion to In-Home Services Trainer. Michelle and her daughter Audi live in Owensville.



Heartland's Personal Assistant program has its second full time employee. Thanks to the recent growth in the program which Heartland is able to provide through our vendor agreement with the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Jessica Foree has been hired to provide in-home services in that program. Jessica joined the staff in March. She is currently providing services to clients in both of HILC's In-Home programs but will transition to working only in the DMH Personal Assistant program as the number of clients increases in that program.

Heartland is sad to be losing a valuable long time staff member. In early April Cindy Humphrey announced that she is leaving Heartland at the end of the month due to ongoing health issues.

Cindy was originally hired as one of the very first part time aides when our In-Home program launched in the summer of 2011. She left that position to become A Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) assigned to Heartland. After 13 months as a VISTA, Cindy was hired in the fall of 2013 to be the Administrative Assistant for Heartland's Outreach program. Because of her outstanding work with those duties, Cindy was promoted to a Consumer Directed Services (CDS) Specialist in early 2014. She has held that position for the past five years.



Real ID Licenses Now Available



Missouri has started offering licenses and identifications that comply with the strong federal identification requirements under the Real I.D. Act.

The Missouri Department of Revenue says there is no immediate need to rush to apply. The current state-issued license and ID cards can be used to board domestic flights through October 2020. That is when licenses that comply with the tougher proof-of-identity requirements will be needed at airports. The new Real IDs will also be needed to get into federal facilities and onto military bases.

State officials emphasize that if you do not plan on flying and do not need access to federal facilities or military bases, you do not need to get the new I.D.s

Heartland Independent Living Center is looking for potential board members.



If you;

- ✓ Want to work on behalf of individuals with disabilities.
- ✓ Have a disability and successfully function in everyday life.
- ✓ Live in Franklin, Gasconade or Maries County.

What HILC asks for our board members:

- Attend monthly board meetings on the third Monday of the month in Owensville.
- Advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities.
- Share your strategic thinking skills at meetings.

If you are interested, please contact Heartland Independent Living Center Executive Director Pat Chambers: pchambers@heartlandilc.org or by phone at (573) 437-5100, extension 105.

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