



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

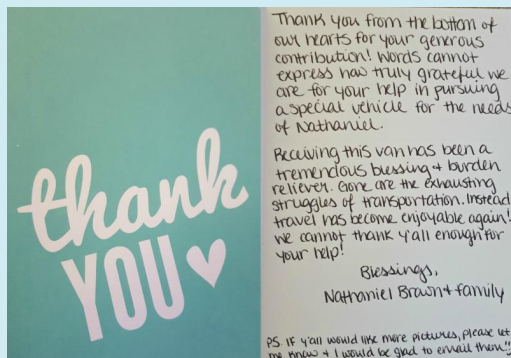


Building Bridges...Touching Lives Spring 2017



THANK YOU

Nathaniel Brown & family



Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generous contribution! Words cannot express how truly grateful we are for your help in pursuing a special vehicle for the needs of Nathaniel.

Receiving this van has been a tremendous blessing + burden reliever. Gone are the exhausting struggles of transportation. Instead, travel has become enjoyable again! We cannot thank you enough for your help!

Blessings,
Nathaniel Brown + family

PS If you would like more pictures, please let me know + I would be glad to email them!!

Accessible Van Leads to Freedom in Travel...and One Beautiful Smile

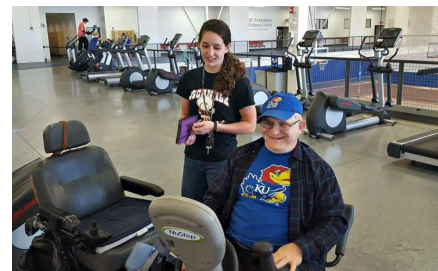
Meet sweet little Nathaniel. Through Independence, Inc.'s Assistive Grant Technology Program, Nathaniel's family was able to acquire a special vehicle to accommodate the travel needs of this smiling, happy boy. "Receiving this van has been a tremendous blessing and burden reliever" said Nathaniel's mom. "Gone are the exhausting struggles of transportation. Instead, travel has become enjoyable again!"

Interested in contributing to our mission to help individuals with disabilities lead independent, dignified and productive lives? [Click here to donate.](#) We welcome any amount and are [grateful for your support!](#)

Bridging the Gap: The Value of Partnerships

Independence, Inc. responds to consumer needs through KU's HAIL program

Teamwork is a very good thing. It fosters growth, form salliiances and promotes ongoing collaboration to work together for a common goal. As a non-profit Center for Independent Living (CIL), Independence, Inc. values its community partners as we work together to maximize independence for people with disabilities and for our aging population. Our collaboration with KU's HAIL (Health Access to Independent Living) program is one way in which Independence Inc. works to carry out this mission.



"The goal of HAIL is to give useful health information to physical disabilities who want to take action to improve their health." (<http://hail.ku.edu/node/8>) KU partners with area CIL's like Independence, Inc. to help equip and empower community members to live healthier, longer and more productive lives.

Meet Ron Miller. Ron is a Lawrence resident who needed assistance getting on a path to greater mobility. Ron and Independence, Inc. intern Franki Lane, were matched and brought together through the HAIL program and have since established a valuable partnership. They worked together to identify needs, set goals and come up with a fitness plan that would allow Ron to live a more productive, healthy and independent life. Each week, Franki assists Ron with strength and mobility exercises to address his chronic pain and weight management - and to increase Ron's overall quality of life. "We established a 2-part goal" said Ron, "to lose weight and strengthen my abs and upper body". This core strength is needed for Ron to transfer himself in and out of his wheelchair. "That's not getting any easier" he says, of the physical demand. "I knew I had to get stronger to deal with it". About 6 weeks into the 3 month plan and Ron says he can already tell a big difference in his physical ability. "Things are getting easier" he says, "even my wife has noticed a big difference".

Not just a plan, but a vision

For Ron, this program and this partnership are more than just about physical health and mobility. "Lawrence is supposed to be a progressive community" he says. "We need understanding and to bridge gaps between the differences in ages and abilities of people in our community. We need to be proactive and work towards those things now, before any kind of crisis hits". And he's right. Community collaboration such as this is beneficial to the community as a whole as doors are opened to experience and understand each others needs with greater knowledge and insight. This partnership, for example, is equally as valuable to Franki, a college intern who has had only minimal interaction with an aging or differently-abled population. It's a win-win situation. "An inter-generational experience like this helps us learn from each other and creates a better understanding of each other. This one-on-one gives us both a great experience" she said.

Such is the value of community partnerships and collaborative efforts to identify needs, set goals, bridge gaps, and establish pathways to mobility, strength, increased health and independent living. When one community member benefits, we all benefit.

Ms. Wheelchair KS, Independence, Inc. Board member, Deb Young

Congratulations Deb Young, for being named 2017 Ms. Wheelchair Kansas! Deb will soon be starting her year-long engagement and statewide speaking tour, sharing her platform which will include community education, reaching out to and advocating for women in wheelchairs, promoting "aging-in-place" rights and universal design for accessibility. Deb will serve as a role model and spokesperson for people with disabilities and will work hard to educate, empower and advocate for all people in Kansas. What she overwhelmingly wants people to know is that "everybody has different abilities. It's not that someone with a disability can't do things, we just do them differently". The term she prefers is "differently-abled" to represent her philosophy. And accommodating people who are differently-abled "doesn't necessarily have to be expensive" she says. Often there is just a simple fix, a different way of doing things to reach our goal".

[For more information on our new title holders, click here!](#)



Deb is a current Independence, Inc. Board member and is sponsored by Independence, Inc. in her endeavors. Working alongside Deb on occasion will be this year's Little Ms. Wheelchair Kansas, 10 year old Sophia Beers. We look forward to following the work of these two special ladies!

Independence, Inc. Independent Living Specialist, Nabila Formusoh, sponsored a booth at the 1st Annual Community Resource Expo for persons with disabilities and their families. Nabila talked with students, parents and other agencies about the needs of the community, the services we provide, and ways to network and collaborate to equip and support independent living. This was just one step in our ongoing effort to expand into the Franklin County communities with our services. The expo was a success and valuable connections were made!



Thank you to former Independence, Inc. board member Dot Nary and a team of advocates who assisted the City of Lawrence in finding and installing a much-needed adjustable-height, accessible podium! This remote-controlled beauty now calls The City Commission meeting room home and is all the buzz around City Hall as it serves to welcome in community members of varying abilities.



Participants Needed for a Research Study

Learn Disability Rights Advocacy and Letter Writing Skills

- Are you a person with a disability?
- Are you interested in self-advocacy including writing advocacy letters, but do not yet have much experience?
- Are you able to read and write in English?
- Are you able to type using a computer?

If you answered "YES" to all of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in our study.

For more information on this study, visit our website <http://www.independenceinc.org/blog/> or contact Alice Zhang by email at alicezhang@ku.edu or by phone at 785-864-4095 as soon as possible.



Above: consumers attended an Easter Egg decorating party and hunt! April 2017

Ranita Wilks, Peer Counseling Specialist at Independence, Inc. and her team are hard at work with our peer support groups and peer counseling.

Peer Counseling

Individuals with disabilities who have gained knowledge and coping skills assist others in coping with their disability-related experiences. Trained volunteer counselors provide information, resource referral, emotional support and training.

- Do you like sharing your personal experiences with others? Interested in getting to know new people? The Volunteer Peer Counseling program offers great opportunity to connect people with disabilities with their peers! We are always looking for new volunteers!

Peer Support Groups

The Center hosts or sponsors several support groups for people with disabilities for educational and/or social enjoyment. Please see the Calendar for meeting dates and times.



Independence, Inc. welcomes new staff member

Amy Ballinger joined Independence, Inc. in March as **Community Engagement Manager**.

Amy has a background in marketing and promotions and is a former business owner. She graduated from KU with a B.S. in Journalism: Broadcast management: marketing, promotion and sales. She enjoys life with her husband of 27 years, 4 kids and one grandson.

- M.A.G.N.E.T (Music Appreciation Group Not Especially Talented)
- Cooking Club
- Peer Support Group
- Science Fiction & Fantasy Club
- The Writers' Corner
- The Arts & Crafts Group
- The Accessible Gardening Group
- The Movie Club
- Living Well with a Disability

Still to come this month:

Accessible Gardening Group Planting and Garden Maintenance. Monday, April 24th, 4:00-5:00pm, Independence, Inc.

AUMI (Adaptive Use Music Instrument) Community Jam Session. Tuesday, April 25th, 4:30-6:30pm, Lawrence Public Library Sound and Vision Studio, 707 Vermont St.

Basketball Mayhem! B-ball showdown. Friday, April 28th 4:00-5:30 pm, Rock Chalk Park, 6100 Rock Chalk Drive

For information on any of these groups or events visit our website <http://www.independenceinc.org/peer-counseling-and-support/>

Visit our website

