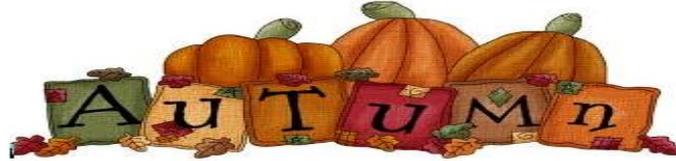


## Erica's Corner

Erica Rivera – Executive Director



It is hard to believe that half the year has passed us by. And boy has this been a year I am sure none of us will forget. Although PILR has remained open during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not been what any of the staff or consumers have been accustomed to. We have had to make several changes in regards to our service delivery to ensure the safety of staff, and those we serve. I want to mention how proud I am of the staff; never once have they stopped doing whatever they could do to help consumers achieve their goals. When times get tough, PILR family always stays committed, and sticks together. This is one of the many reasons I am proud to be a part of this organization.

There are events that we have hosted, and or participated in for as long as I can remember, that we could not do. Sadly, we were unable to host our annual celebration of the signing of The American's with disability Act (ADA). This year we celebrated 30 years. Many of us participated in virtual events, as this has started to become the new norm. Every two years, Centers for Independent Living, consumers, and advocates come together for the Disability Caucus held in Topeka. Like the ADA, we attended Caucus sessions via Zoom. Even our annual Disability Mentoring Day held in October is going to look a little different this year. I know for myself, I cannot wait until we can all be together again. The energy at these events is something I truly missed this year.

We are continuing to do what we can to ensure our consumers and staff have the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that will help us to continue to stay healthy and working together. If you or others are in need of assistance, please let us know. We hope that each of you are staying safe, and healthy.

### WE NEED YOU!

Prairie Independent Living Resource Center, Inc. provides a wide variety of important services to people with disabilities in Kansas. As a nonprofit we are mostly grant funded and these grants don't always cover necessary costs to run our programs. We would greatly appreciate any amount you could donate to our organization to ensure our sustainability to continue to serve residents of Kansas with disabilities. You may be wondering about your best options for contributing to PILR. One option is to give from your IRA (if age 70-1/2 or older): Regardless of whether you itemize your taxes, this gift helps you fulfill your required minimum distribution and is not considered taxable income. Please consult with your tax or financial advisors to determine the best charitable giving strategies for you. Please send your generous donation to:

**PILR Development Department**  
**17 S. Main St**  
**Hutchinson, KS 67501**

### LOAN CLOSET

PILR has durable medical equipment available to loan. There is a minimal application fee. All equipment is not available at all times; please contact our offices for equipment options. PILR also has limited personal hygiene items available.

### DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Thinking of getting rid of that medical equipment you no longer need? If so, please consider donating it to PILR. Our consumers need wheelchairs, walkers, rollators, shower seats, CCTVs, video magnifiers, and canes. If you have any of these items or others you would like to donate, please call 620-663-3989. Your donation will be appreciated!

## PILR CALENDAR



<http://www.pilr.org/contact-us/calendar/>

### SEPTEMBER 2020

#### Self-Improvement Month

2<sup>nd</sup> – V-J Day, WWII

5<sup>th</sup> – World Beard Day and Cheese Pizza Day

7<sup>th</sup> – **LABOR DAY – ALL PILR OFFICES CLOSED**

11<sup>TH</sup> – 911 Remembrance

13<sup>th</sup> – Grandparent's Day

22<sup>nd</sup> – National Ice Cream Cone Day and Fall Begins

### OCTOBER 2020

#### Blindness and Breast Cancer Awareness Month

2<sup>nd</sup> – World Smile Day

12<sup>th</sup> – Columbus Day

15<sup>th</sup> – White Cane Safety Day

16<sup>th</sup> – Bosses Day and World Food Day

24<sup>th</sup> – Make a Difference Day

31<sup>st</sup> – Carve a Pumpkin Day and Halloween

### NOVEMBER 2020

#### National Caregivers Appreciation Month

1<sup>st</sup> – Daylight Savings Time Ends

6<sup>th</sup> – National Nacho Day

11<sup>th</sup> – **VETERAN'S DAY – ALL PILR OFFICES CLOSED**

17<sup>TH</sup> – World Peace Day

26<sup>th</sup> – Thanksgiving – Eat, Drink and Be Thankful Day

26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> – **ALL PILR OFFICES CLOSED**

## PILR ANNIVERSARIES

### SEPTEMBER

**Cindy Daniels**

**9 years**

**Adam Fortna**

**4 years**

**Tammy Fuhr**

**11 years**

### OCTOBER

**Bob Gilbert**

**1 year**

**Debbie Goertz**

**4 years**

**Danielle Mowery**

**1 year**

**Andy Reichart**

**13 years**

**Nicole Scott**

**2 years**

Summer may be fun, but when the weather gets cooler and the leaves start falling, we can tell that a change is happening. Autumn is the transition season that leads us from the hot, bright sunny months into the cold, dark nights of winter and all of the fun the end of the year will bring. When Fall begins, we are just a hop, skip and jump away from pumpkins, hot apple cider, warm sweaters, fluffy scarves, boots... these are all things we have to look forward to in the coming weeks.

The Autumn season is known as Fall in the US because one of the characteristics of the season is the shedding of leaves from deciduous trees. The colors we all associate with Fall – the transition from green to light yellow, deep gold, orange, crimson and dark red – are all inspired by this natural process.

This is the best season to get out outside with friends and family. From group hikes to apple picking, pumpkin patches and more.

It can be a time to adopt a fresh new outlook on life and find enjoyment in the little things. There may be fewer flowers, but there are plenty of ripe fruits to be found! Head out for some apple picking at a local orchard, hit up the corn maze, or go to the pumpkin patch to see the abundant beauty of all that nature has to offer this Fall.

## *The Americans with Disabilities act and what it means to me.*

### **Anthony Frischenmeyer – Employment Specialist - Hutchinson**

“The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 or ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. It affords similar protections against discrimination to Americans with disabilities as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics illegal. In addition, unlike the Civil Rights Act, the ADA also requires covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, and imposes accessibility requirements on public accommodations”.

July 26<sup>th</sup> 1990 is a day that may not mean much to most people, but to the disability community it's a day to celebrate. You see on this day the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, our civil rights law.

I want to explain how the ADA has affected me in my life time. I was 8 years old when this law was passed, but the impact it has had on my life has been huge, as it has for many, many people.

Growing up I was partially raised by my uncle and my grandmother both of who were people with a visual impairment. This did not stop them from doing anything they wanted. When my uncle decided he wanted more than what he was getting on government assistance, he decided he would enter the work force. However when he would get an interview and they found out he was blind they would tell him “We can't hire you because you could get hurt” or some other excuse just so they would not have to hire a person with a disability. I witnessed this and could not understand. My uncle cooked at home and never hurt himself, he cleaned his house, and he raised his nieces and nephews never really hurting himself. I witnessed this discrimination and knew it was not right even at the age I was. My uncle would go on to find his dream job working for PILR, he was proof of what people with disabilities can do.

In school I struggled a lot. Without the accommodations that the ADA gave me, I would have struggled even more. When I wanted to attend college, these same accommodations helped me to be able to feel comfortable to enroll. So many people with disabilities won't even attempt to enroll in college classes due to the lack of understanding that they have a right to continue their education. There are laws in place to assist them and make sure they can get the education everyone deserves. The ADA gives them the protections they may need to do so.

When I, as a person with a learning disability joined the work place, I didn't know it was a law that the employer must provide reasonable accommodation's to assist in me becoming a good employee for the company. I struggled to learn multiple jobs. Then I found success in the same place as my uncle. The same place that gave my uncle his opportunity to help others that were just like us to live, breathe and be free in our communities hired me. When I started at PILR I knew a little bit of the issues people with disabilities dealt with. As an Employment Specialist I've gotten to see first-hand how much the ADA protects our people. I've seen the accommodations some employers make to allow employees with disabilities to be successful. I've seen what a difference a side walk with a curb cut makes in a person's life. I've witnessed the joy on a person's face when they were able to access public transportation and the freedom they get by doing so. I have seen one person with a disability make a business install automatic doors so that he and every person disabled or not can access them to do business. The ADA gave them the power and protections to do so.

Yet I have also witnessed cities that hold dollars at a higher level than the people who live and raise their families there. Some cannot just go down a street to access the community they live due to not having proper sidewalks. I've seen people who still have to fight to be able to access public transportation. I have looked in the eyes of a person who has been kicked out of their home and cannot find one that is accessible or that they can afford on an SSI check, and the pain and fear this causes them.

Yes the Americans with Disabilities Act has changed a lot of things for the better in theory. Yet people with disabilities are still discriminated against at a higher degree than their non-disabled counterparts, and live in fear that they will not have what they may need to sustain themselves, let alone a family. We must not forget we are people and we are all the same and want the same out of life.

So on July 26<sup>th</sup> we celebrate the Americans with Disabilities Act and the words of Justin Dart: "Most importantly, ADA is a landmark commandment of fundamental human morality. It is the world's first declaration of equality for people with disabilities by any nation. It will proclaim to America and to the world that people with disabilities are fully human; that paternalistic, discriminatory, segregationist attitudes are no longer acceptable; and that henceforth people with disabilities must be accorded the same personal respect and the same social and economic opportunities as other people."

During the Singing ceremony of our civil rights law President George Bush said some of the most powerful words in regards to the ADA. Those words were "Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down", in a sense these walls have tumbled yet we must all ways remember the fight for freedom is not ever over, we must rest when were tired, but must never quit this fight for complete and total inclusion in all area of life. We must continue to fight to keep programs funded and our people free from institutions.

To sum it up, to me the Americans with Disabilities Act means freedom for our people, it means my people have a law that protects them. I am a tax paying American citizen and I demand the same rights as my fellow Americans who do not have a disability. It means that my children, my nieces and nephews are protected to live the life they choose regardless of the fact they may have a disability. But it also means that our work is never over. This fight must continue! We must continue to make our voices heard. We must hold our elected officials accountable; we must get out and vote to ensure we elect people who believe we matter. We must make sure the words set forth in the ADA, which gives us our rights are not taken away or changed. We must continue to get into "good trouble" and protect what so many fought for, so that ALL Americans can live the American Dream regardless of their differences.

## **Behind the Artist**

### **Danielle Mowery – Employment Specialist - Dodge City**

True talent comes in many shapes, sizes, and forms and doesn't care about your race, nationality, or even if you have a disability. Such is true in PJ's case. PJ is a 19-year-old artist. Just like all 19 year olds he has hopes, dreams, and hobbies. One such hobby is absolutely amazing. He loves to draw and paint. To some, that might not be a big deal but once you meet PJ, you quickly understand how amazing it truly is.

According to the Mayo Clinic; Transverse myelitis is an inflammation of both sides of one section of the spinal cord. Transverse myelitis interrupts the messages that the spinal cord nerves send throughout the body. PJ has the use of his shoulders, head, and neck. As you can imagine, he is unable to draw with his hands, and this is what makes his drawings so unique. He draws by using just his mouth.

I sat down with PJ and discussed his artwork. When asked what inspired him to draw he said: "I use drawing as an expression of my feelings". He escapes the pressures of reality and it's very calming to him he stated. He's been drawing since he was 8 years old and has taken art in high school, but he said it just comes naturally to him. When I asked him what he saw in his future with his artwork, he replied: "I want to be a famous artist and everyone is buying my artwork". He wants to move to New York or maybe even California to continue pursuing art classes. He said he does custom drawings for people and can draw almost anything except perfect circles, and faces, although he is continuing to work on those sets of skills. When asked if his disability affects his art he said: "Yes sometimes it does because it limits what I can do". For example, he wants to do spray paint art, but cannot find the right device to help him hold the spray paint cans. But that is not going to stop him; he is a very determined individual.

PJ plans to create YouTube videos of him painting and drawing. He is also preparing to set up a website to sell his artwork. PJ applied to the Disabled Artists Foundation and was approved to receive free art kits when they are available and also be a part of their foundation. He will also be applying for membership in Mouth and Foot Painting Artists (MFPA). For more information on these two organizations, I have included the links.

<https://mfpausa.com/pages/mfpa-in-the-usa>

<https://www.disabledartists.org/>

Given the right opportunities, PJ will one day make his dreams come true. If you are interested in buying his artwork, getting to know more about him, would like more information on how to donate to his artistic needs, or to follow his artwork pages, please contact us here at Prairie Independent Living Center office in Dodge City at 620-371-7023 or [dmowery@pilr.org](mailto:dmowery@pilr.org)



\*In the picture is PJ sitting in his wheelchair. He is wearing a grey t-shirt, black shorts, and black shoes. He is smiling and holding his drawing of an orange pumpkin. The picture was taken in front of his home that is made of stone and stucco. Next to him is a green plant with white flowers.

# Western Kansas Community Foundation Grant

## Phil Handsaker – Service Coordinator - Dodge City

Prairie Independent Living Resource Center, Inc. is happy to report that we are about to send out twenty-six consumer care packages to folks in Finney, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Kearny, Lane, Meade, Morton, Scott, Seward, Stanton and Wichita counties thanks to a generous grant received from the Western Kansas Community Foundation out of Garden City, Kansas.

These care packages consist of food items, a first aid kit, other emergency items and cleaning supplies.

This grant award was part of the Western Kansas Community Foundation's "Urgent Needs Fund Grant Application" in response to the effects of Covid-19 in their service area.



We are so pleased to be able to help with items to help people out through these difficult times.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## The Power of Movement

### Chelsey Rose – Independent Living Specialist - Pratt

In this period of COVID 19, people do not want to get out much. This is true for one of the people I work with who is scared to go into businesses, and wearing a mask is difficult for her. So, on my visit with this person, we looked up different chair exercises on YouTube and tried some out. Also, we listened to different types of music and grooved to it. She enjoyed being active.

For another person, I work with walking is a form of relaxation and a way to de-stress. Walking with a person that he trusts is a way for him to get his feeling out about what is bothering him. One day, I had the pleasure of walking with this young man. He talked about his fear of going to work and living on his own amid COVID 19.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), being active 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week is recommended. <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adults/index.htm>

**Mission Statement:** The purpose of Prairie Independent Living Resource Center (PILR) is to achieve the full inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities through education and advocacy. PILR is a Non-Profit organization.

**Vision Statement:** A world of inclusion where diversity is celebrated and choices are honored.

## FRIEND OF PILR 2020

Prairie Independent Living Resource Center, Inc. is proud to announce Vi Graber has been awarded the 2020 Friend of PILR award.

Vi is a long time monthly supporter who continues to support PILR. Here's to you Vi! Thanks to you, together we are changing lives.



\*Photo of Vi Graber holding Friend Of PILR plaque

### Counties Served:

#### **Independent Living**

Barber County	Kingman County
Clarke County	Kiowa County
Comanche County	McPherson County
Edwards County	Ness County
Ford County	Pratt County
Harper County	Reno County
Harvey County	Stafford County
Hodgeman County	

#### **Older Kansan Employment Program**

Pratt, Reno, Rice, Kingman and Harper

#### **Older Blind**

##### Dodge City Office:

Cheyenne, Clark, Decatur, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Gove, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Lane, Logan, Meade, Morton, Ness, Norton, Phillips, Rawlins, Rooks, Scott, Seward, Sheridan, Sherman, Stanton, Stevens, Thomas, Trego, Wallace, Wichita.

##### Hutchinson Office:

Barber, Barton, Cloud, Comanche, Edwards, Ellsworth, Harper, Harvey, Jewel, Kingman, Kiowa, Lincoln, McPherson, Mitchell, Osborne, Ottawa, Pawnee, Pratt, Reno, Republic, Rice, Rush, Russell, Saline, Smith, Stafford.

### PILR Staff

#### *~Hutchinson~*

*Erica Rivera, Executive Director*

*Andy Reichart, Assistant Director*

*Debbie Goertz, Accounting Coordinator*

*Heather Jones, Independent Living Services Coordinator*

*Adam Fortna, Independent Living Specialist*

*Tammy Fuhr, Independent Living Specialist/OIB*

*Nicole Scott, Independent Living Specialist*

*Bob Gilbert, Employment Specialist*

*Cindy Daniels, Employment Coordinator*

*Anthony Frischenmeyer, Employment Specialist*

*Seth Kelley, Employment Specialist*

*Pam Krankenberg, Administrative Assistant/HR*

#### *~Pratt~*

*Linda Adelhardt, Independent Living Services Coordinator*

*Chelsey Rose, Independent Living Specialist*

*Tom Harrison, OKEP Employment Specialist*

#### *~Dodge City~*

*Phil Handsaker, Independent Living Services Coordinator*

*Mignon Luckey, Independent Living Specialist/OIB*

*Danielle Mowery, Employment Specialist*

*Rosa Mendoza, Information & Referral Specialist*



**PRAIRIE INDEPENDENT LIVING  
RESOURCE CENTER, INC  
17 SOUTH MAIN  
HUTCHINSON, KANSAS 67501**

*DEDICATED TO THE FULL INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES*

## The Voice of PILR Newsletter

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### **Board of Directors**

***Kelly Miller – President  
Cat Poland – Vice President  
Dave Hederstedt- Treasurer  
Bonnie Lloyd, Kim Rohr  
Cammie Rumback and Dave Mullins***

**Interested in becoming a board member?  
Please visit our website [www.pilir.org](http://www.pilir.org) to  
submit your application!**

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please send to Erica Rivera at:  
**[erivera@pilir.org](mailto:erivera@pilir.org)**

The editor reserves the right to edit or omit letters. Views stated in  
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