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!

Holiday, Memories, and Gifts – By Debbie Goertz
Definition of Holiday is “a day of festivity or recreation when no work is done”. Definition of Memories is “the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information”. Definition of Gifts is “a thing given willingly to someone without a payment”. Holidays always take me back to when I was growing up. I have such positive memories. As growing up our house was the gathering place. There were always a lot of decorations, food, stories, laughter, love, compassion, acceptance, hugs, kisses, and little gifts. Mom was known for getting a small gift for everyone. It was always wrapped in tissue paper and put in a bag or decorated box along with a hand written note. I seriously think some people would come for just the note. These gifts rarely cost over one dollar and sometimes were handmade, it was the manner it was given in, that made it a treasure. My parents made sure that each person that showed up felt at home. Anytime, anyone left their house, one of them would say, “call us if you need anything”. They meant it.

On this Holiday Season I wish to each person, from my heart, a Holiday filled with Memories and Gifts.
Thriller for PILR was a fundraising event that took place on October 26, 2019. The Rusty Needle Sports Bar and Lounge allowed PILR to hold the event in their establishment. The fundraising event was made possible by the monetary donations from the following: Pat Buxton, Dave Headerstat, Virginia Lytle, Molly & Earl McVicker, Border to Border Roofing, and Mid Kansas Seamless Guttering.

Raffle ticket sales were made possible for the items donated from: A Salon, Advance Pest Control, Critter Cleaners, Fox Theater, Hurst Chiropractic, Massage by Kelly, Legend’s Barber Shop, Lucille’s Boutique, Reflections Salon, Apron Strings, Pizzaco’s, Anchor Inn, Sugartime Confections, Cooper Tires, Scott Stiles-GM Burner Corporation, McPherson Opera House, RNR Tire Express, Skateland Family Fun Center, Kay Miller, T.O. Haas Tire and Auto, Browns Shoe Fit, Stone Chimney, Network Management Group, Inc., and Absolutely Flowers. Proceeds from the evening will go towards helping PILR continue the services we provide.

Elvis rose from the dead and brought along Marilyn Monroe. The evening was filled with karaoke, raffle drawings, and lots of laughs. Karaoke was provided by Roberto Pina with Pro Karaoke and DJ. Many. Thanks to the PILR Supporters and Staff.
Disability Mentoring Day 2019 – By Cindy Daniels

PILR’s Disability Mentoring Day in Hutchinson was a success once again with 110 students participating from Hutchinson, Buhler, Nickerson, Haven, Pretty Prairie and Fairfield High Schools, and 46 businesses providing mentoring to these students.

We would like to thank the following corporate sponsors for their help with this years’ event: One Oak, Ambucs, KCDD, Credit Union of America, First Presbyterian Church, Open Mortgage, Conrade Insurance, Preferred Real Estate, and First National Bank.

A special thank you goes out to Reno County Area Transit, Midway Motors, and Midwest Superstore for helping us with our transportation to help get students to and from their work sites, and to Emanuel Lutheran Church and Pastor Tim Carey for allowing us to use the church for DMD and Neal Gobber, maintenance supervisor at Emanuel Lutheran Church for setting up the tables and chairs needed for the event, and being someone that we could go to if we needed anything. He also makes a very good pot of coffee!

We would like to congratulate Coby Wiehl from Buhler High School, who won our DMD T-Shirt design contest. We invited students from participating schools to submit a design for this years' t-shirt that is given to each student at the end of the day. Left is the winning t-shirt design based on Coby’s entry showing a red bird breaking out of an egg and says “Break out of your shell and learn to fly” “We can do it.”

Doug Sherwood, with the Hutchinson Correctional Facility, and a former DMD participant, was our guest speaker for DMD. (Shown right) Doug is telling the students how he was once sitting where they are and the employment opportunities he encountered after graduation.

DMD is an event that really takes the entire community to make it a success; we appreciate everyone who had a part in it: employers, mentors, students, financial sponsors, staff, volunteers, schools, teachers, prize donors, contributors & everyone else involved.

New Board Member Spotlight
Cat Poland, Lead Storyteller and Strategist, Testify

Q: Why did you decide to become involved with PILR?
A: After having the opportunity to tour PILR and hear directly from executive director Chris Owens as part of my experience with Leadership Reno County, I was tremendously interested in the work being done in the community. As the parent of a child with special needs and the caregiver of a parent with physical disabilities, I've seen first hand how training, tools, resources and policy change can improve quality of life.

Q: What do you hope to bring to the PILR board?
A: As a communications professional, I want to share the story of PILR--the people, the successes, and even the challenges. The more awareness we raise in the community, the more affection grows toward our mission and vision. My hope is that more potential donors, volunteers, consumers, and staff are found through these efforts. I'm honored to be a part of it!

Cat Poland lives in Hutchinson with her husband David and their three children, ages 10, 8 and 4.
On October 22, 2019 the Southcentral Kansas Special Education Cooperative and Prairie Independent Living Resource Center met with 87 high school students at the First United Methodist Church. The students were transported to different local businesses in Pratt. The businesses taught the students what employers expect out of their employees. Some students had the chance to practice skills on the job and others watched as the employers demonstrated what to do. Each year students are excited to participate in Disability Mentoring Day. Disability Mentoring Day is designed to promote career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through hands on career exploration, job shadowing and mentoring relationships. Our goals were to enhance employment opportunities and increase confidence of students and job seekers with disabilities. On behalf of the Southcentral Kansas Special Education Cooperative and Prairie Independent Living Resource Center we would like to thank all the 44 businesses who participated in this event. Special thank you to: The Peoples Bank, Walmart, BTI, RSVP, Pilot Club, Alliance Cooperative, First United Methodist Church, and our special guest speaker, Darin Hedrick. We owe a great deal of thanks to the employers that gave so generously of their time. How do you measure success? One smile and one thank you from a student at a time.

5 TIPS TO ACE AN INTERVIEW

My name is Adam Fortna I am an Employment Specialist here at PILR. A big part of what I do is help people prepare for interviews and if I do say so myself I am pretty good at it. But I wasn’t always so good with interviews. When I was young and looking for my first job, I had applied at a local movie store and got an interview. My mom asked me if I wanted to practice questions the night before, but with my brimming teen confidence I said no. The next day I got up about 20 minutes before the interview, threw on a t-shirt and walked over to the store. I arrived 10 minutes late and stood around for about 5 minutes looking clueless before someone asked if I needed help. After telling them I was there for an interview I was taken to the manager. The manager offered a hand shake, and I sheepishly took it while staring at the floor. She took me into a back room and began to ask me questions.

Manager: Tell me about yourself
Me: My name is Adam and I like movies.
Manager: Okay, why do you want to work here?
Me: I like movies.
Manager: What is your greatest strength?
Me: I know a lot about movies?
Manager: …Okay, What is your greatest weakness?
Me: I crack under pressure...
Manager: I can see that.

Needless to say I didn't get the job.

I did a lot wrong in that interview and the reason I am telling you all about this is in hope that I can prevent you from making the same mistakes. I learned things that day that gave me the edge I needed to ace an interview.

Here are 5 tips I learned that day that can help you not make the same mistakes I did.

1. Practice
   Most interviews are done the same. You come in, shake the hand of the manager, sit down and are asked the same questions and are even expected to do the same traditions all of which can be found online. When you are looking for a job spend 15 minutes a day practicing interviewing in the mirror or with a family member.

2. Dress to Impress
   When you go to an interview make sure to dress well. First impressions are important. A good rule of thumb is to dress one step up from the dress code of where you are interviewing.

3. Be Early
   Being late to an interview normally means you didn't get the job. Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early. This shows the employer that you are punctual, and are serious about the job.

4. Don't Panic
   Interviews are nerve racking. And the employer knows that. If you are feeling nervous when you arrive at an interview take a minute to breathe and remember that this is just an interview not life or death. If you get stumped on one of the questions it is okay to ask for a second to think about it.

5. Learn from your mistakes
   No matter how much you prepare you will make mistakes. Take note of them; don't beat yourself up and next time you will do better.

Interviews can be difficult but there are a lot of resources available to help you get through them. Take the time to practice, and do your best to make a good impression. If an interview doesn’t go well, know we have all been there.
When I was asked to attend the Leadership Edge Training at the Kansas Leadership Center in Wichita I instantly said yes. I had heard great things about this organization. I was excited to grow my leadership skills and looked forward to a new challenge. I will be the first to tell you I had no idea what this was I was just excited to be asked.

As I waited to learn more I started to receive emails and a group of books that went along with the training, I started to get really nervous, like very nervous. I still didn’t understand what I would be doing. I was supposed to read the books prior to going. I’d glance through them as I had time but never read them completely. As the day got closer I did the pre training work online and realized I was not to in tuned to my leadership skills. So I was way more nervous.

The first day me and another self-advocate showed up we couldn’t find a parking spot so we were running late. We parked and rushed to the center. We registered and walked in to the class where there were over 100 people already working. Now my nerves were through the roof. As I sat down and started to try and catch myself up to the rest of the group I felt lost. But I did not let this stop me. I stayed calm and eventually caught on. We learned that to be a good leader you have to observe the situation and not just assume you know what was going on. Good thing for me because I was not completely sure I was even qualified to be sitting with all these people in high ranking rolls. Then the trainer said something that calmed me and made me comfortable with being there. He said “If you are sitting here today you are supposed to be here”. He was right, I was supposed to be.

As the two days went by we learned a lot, we were broke into small groups where we had an issue that we have in our real life that we wanted to become better leaders with. By using the skills we were taught throughout the large groups we shared the struggles that we felt with our small groups. I realized that no matter where you are on the totem pole of your employment we all shared some of the same struggles. My small group helped me to realize that I can be a good leader and that I am doing a good job with my issues.

The best thing I learned was that anyone can be a good leader. Leadership is an activity not a role one has. There are times you have to raise the heat to make people uncomfortable and get them thinking about change, but also know when to cool a situation off so that change can happen. I ended up being very thankful I took this training as I have already started to use the skills I learned in all aspects of my life. It has opened new possibilities in my life and led to new adventure in my career and personal life. I just know that I can lead and will continue to try my best to be a leader in life. So let’s continue to raise the heat and get change to start happening.

Drumming up Awareness – By Erica Rivera

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month and National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. PILR and BrightHouse hosted an event to raise awareness of these important issues. Our community was invited to enjoy free hot dogs, beverages, and beautiful music played on steel drums by our very own board member Kelly Miller, along with Brad Shores from Tropical Shores. We are looking forward to making this a yearly event.

We would like to thank the following people who made this awareness event a reality. Jackson Meat, Fastenal, City of Hutchinson, Chris and Dan Owens, Nancy and Alan Scott, Debbie and Joe Goertz, Kelly Miller, Brad Shores, Starbucks, Mayor David Inskeep, and PILR and BrightHouse staff.
“This is the time to remember cause it will not last forever” are words from a song written by Billy Joel. I have always liked this song but until recently never thought about it in relationship to my job at PILR. Earlier this summer I let the Board of Directors know I will be retiring at the end of January 2020. I didn’t make this decision lightly as I love my job and believe in the PILR’s mission and vision. However, I want to spend time with my family and friends and do the things I never have time to do now. I want to sleep past 6: AM, get up when I want and dink around the house. Dan and I want to ride our bike and/or take long walks with Zoe our Pekingese. Maybe travel a little, get involved with a church family, work in the yard, do my hobbies, play the piano and spend time with my children/grandchildren. There are so many things to do and enjoy; I am excited to start this new adventure.

That being said, I will miss my PILR family. Some staff I have worked with for many years. We have learned together, laughed together, cried together. We’ve been support to one another through good times and bad. Through it all we’ve stuck together and worked to carry out PILR’s mission.

PILR has taught me so much, introduced me to awesome people, brought me great joy and at times extreme stress. Growing up I knew I wanted a job working with people but never ever ever did I dream of being an Executive Director of anything. I didn’t dream it, but it has been a dream come true.

I can’t possibly thank everyone because there are so many people who’ve helped me. Growing up as a child with a disability I was blessed to have parents who believed in me, had expectations of me and did their best to give me opportunities to grow into a successful adult. I wish Mom and Dad had lived long enough to see me in my role as Executive Director.

In 1993, when Dan got this harebrained idea he and I needed to get our Masters in Rehabilitation counseling, my brother Calvin said “just go for it!” When I told him I was worried I’d never get a job and have lots of student loans, he repeated, “Just go for it!” so I did.

There was a time when the political climate in Kansas was extremely unfriendly to Centers for Independent Living. The stress was almost unbearable. In tears I told my brother Conrad I was going to quit. He informed me in no uncertain terms, “You are not a quitter”. He went on to tell me PILR needed me and to go to work Monday morning, so I did.

I have had the privilege of presenting at state and national conferences. I’ve testified to the Kansas State Legislature. One of my greatest joys was marching in the NCIL Civil Rights March down Pennsylvania Avenue to our Nation’s Capital, participating in a rally on the lawn and then going to the Hill to meet with elected officials. Even more rewarding has been the times people have come to me to tell me how much PILR’s services has helped them; what a difference our services has made in their life. Hearing DMD participants share their experiences makes me smile. It also makes me smile to know PILR’s good work will go on long after January 31, 2020.

“This is the time to remember” and I will always remember fondly my work with PILR, the people I met and the places I’ve gone. This is a little bittersweet. I am excited for the next chapter in my life but a little sad to close this chapter. I want to leave you with this thought. If you have someone in your life who has a disability, believe in them, encourage them, show them by your actions and words that they can be whatever they want to be. To all of you who’ve helped me in one way or another, I give you my heartfelt thank you. I couldn’t have done this without you! Finally, to Dan, Jen and Danielle, thanks for being there for me over the past 23 years! I know there were times when I took PILR home with me and made it part of our family. You lovingly took PILR to your hearts and encouraged me to be the best I could be for PILR.
**New Faces at PILR**

**Bob Gilbert - Employment Specialist Hutchinson/Newton.** I have a degree in accounting from Wichita State University and a graduate banking degree from Rutgers University. I am a retired CPA and have worked with PILR for 20 years. After retiring I learned of the part-time opening at PILR for an Employment Specialist. I am a Vietnam veteran having served in the U.S. Army. I have been married to my wife, Brenda, for almost 52 years. We have four sons and seven grandchildren. My wife and I are active in Grace Bible Church in Hutchinson. We enjoy traveling and playing with our Shih Tzu, Mae Ling.

**Danielle Mowery – Employment Specialist Dodge City.** My name is Danielle Mowery. I'm married and have 5 kids, 1 grandson and another grandson due in January. My oldest daughter has Down syndrome and my son has ADHD. My most favorite holiday is Christmas. I live in the little town of Dodge City. I am the new Employment Specialist here at PILR but look forward to many years with the organization!

**Counties Served:**

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

**Older Blind**

**Older Kansan Employment Program**
- Pratt, Reno, Rice, Kingman and Harper

---

**PILR Staff**

**~Hutchinson~**
- Andy Reichart, Assistant Director
- Debbie Goertz, Accounting Coordinator
- Erica Rivera, Independent Living Services Coordinator
- Heather Jones, Independent Living Specialist/Counselor
- Tammy Fuhr, Independent Living Specialist/OIB
- Nicole Scott, Independent Living Specialist
- Seth Kelley, Business Account Manager

**~Pratt~**
- Chelsey Rose, Independent Living Specialist
- Tom Harrison, OKEP Employment Specialist
- Linda Adelhardt, Service Coordinator

**~Dodge City~**
- Adam Fortna, Employment Specialist
- Bob Gilbert, Employment Specialist
- Dan Owens, Employment Specialist
- Cindy Daniels, Employment Specialist
- Anthony Frischenmeyer, Employment Specialist
- Christina Castor, Administrative Assistant/HR

- Mignon Luckey, Independent Living Specialist/OIB
- Danielle Mowery, Employment Specialist
- Rosa Mendoza, Information & Referral Specialist
The Voice of PILR
Newsletter
December 2019: Volume 18, Issue 4

Board of Directors
Cammie Rumble – President
Kelly Miller – Vice President
Dave Hederstedt – Treasurer
Bonnie Lloyd
Cat Poland

Interested in becoming a board member?
Please contact Chris Owens cowens@pilr.org
or visit our website www.pilr.org to submit your application!

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please send to Chris Owens at:
cowens@pilr.org

The editor reserves the right to edit or omit letters. Views stated in this column are not necessarily the views of PILR.

PILR receives funding from Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education, grants, contracts, and fees for services. Private donations are appreciated.

PILR is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider.