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. With the introduction of tax reform this year, you may be wondering about your best options for contributing to PILR. One option is to give from your IRA (if age 7-1/2 or older): Regardless of whether you itemize your taxes, this gift helps you fulfill your required minimum distribution and is not considered tabled 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!

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. - John Muir

Please like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and look for us on LinkedIn! We would love to keep you updated with special events and we have a weekly blog posted every Friday at www.pilr.org/blog. If you have an idea for a blog or newsletter article, please send it to our Executive Director, Chris: cowens@pilr.org.
In different towns, there are different agencies that can and do assist people. When a person goes into one of the agencies and does not get any help but is passed to another, a person feels that they are on their own to understand everything.

One day a person came into the office feeling very drain because they were turned away by 3 agencies for assistance. This person came to PILR feeling that they will be turned away. PILR assisted this person with a task that had a deadline later that day. This person was grateful because someone cared.

My Best Friend
By Mignon Luckey

Rochelle is 95 years old and lives independently in her home. She walks without assistance in her home and uses a walker when she is outside of her home. She wore glasses as a child but didn’t need them when she became an adult.

During her appointment with the eye doctor in 2010, he informed her that she had Macular Degeneration. Four years later she requested Older Blind services from Prairie Independent Living Resource Center.

When I met Rochelle, she said that she loved to learn by reading. This was becoming more difficult as her vision was deteriorating and she was having a hard time reading the small print that was in the newspaper and word puzzle that she enjoyed the most.

She was shown several magnifiers. She purchased a Pebble HD video magnifier. When talking about her Pebble HD, she said “Without God and my Pebble I couldn’t live at home. My Pebble is my best friend.” She said that now she can read the newspaper, make her grocery lists, pay bills and read recipes.
Dare to Lead: You just might change the world - was the theme for this year’s Youth Leadership Forum (YLF).

I really did not know what to expect when I volunteered to attend. What I did know was not good preparation. For years my Uncle Roger had attended and I just drove him and picked him up for the event. We would talk the whole way back about the week and what happened from meeting the governor to the dance, but I didn’t know the work that went into it. My uncle passed away a year ago and left a huge void at YLF so I figured I would try to fill his spot and see what I could do.

I completed the application and passed the background check and was accepted. I was getting excited. As I packed I started to get nervous. I didn’t know if I could handle it. Being away from my family would be the hardest part. I would be committed to a week where I wouldn’t be able to focus on what was happening at home just on what we were doing at the forum. Like I said I was nervous.

The first day was great! We got to meet the delegates and they took away my nervousness as they were way more nervous than I was. They were students from all over Kansas. The delegates some of which had never been away from their parents were now staying in the dorms of a Kansas college. I had never experienced this type of setting myself and thought it was very cool. As we all got settled and got our groups we were off and running. There would be so much to accomplish in the week. We attended breakout sessions and groups where we learned about disability history and advocacy. We learned what it was like to be a person with a disability in the “real” world away from parents. The delegates learned what resources were out there and how to use their voices to get accommodations in school and the workplace. The delegates were paired up with mentors that were successful people with disabilities for a luncheon so that they could see that just because we have a disability we can still lead the life we choose and be successful. This had such a huge impact on so many of the youth.

For as much as we learned we also had so much fun. We had a talent show where the delegates got to showcase their talents and let me tell you they had many. There was everything from beat boxing to joke telling to just singing but all were amazing and took so much to get up and perform in front of people that you just met. We played wheelchair basketball and let me tell you it gets intense when you are on the court. We even held a dance and showcased our moves on the dance floor.

Through all the learning and fun it made us experience feelings that a lot of us were not ready for. From getting home sick to just learning about our self in a more in depth way, the emotions would fly. There were tears of joy and tears of sadness, but we all felt some type of emotion. That was the best part to me was to see the students learn and feel strongly about what was going in their lives and preparing for the future. I think I learned more through their journey then I did on my own. These delegates started off scared and alone not knowing anyone and by the end had made lifelong friends. I felt honored to be able to experience these same feelings that my uncle had. It made me feel closer to him now that he was gone. Besides that I got to see the youth transform and blossom into true leaders of their own lives.

You are LOVED
You MATTER
You are ENOUGH
Don’t GIVE UP

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Veterans Press 1

Text “TALK” to 741741
Text with a counselor 24/7

Vet to Vet for war veterans and their families
1-877-927-8387 (WARVETS)

LGBTQ Crisis Helpline 1-866-488-7386
LGBTQ Text “TREVOR” 1-202-304-1200
Chat via the trevorproject.org

Brought to you by the Reno County Suicide Prevention Coalition
Last month I had the opportunity to attend the National Council on Independent Livings Annual Conference in Washington D.C. As I was flying out I was thinking…I should write an article for one of our next newsletters!

In my mind I was thinking I could tell everyone about the wonderful experience I had gathering with my peers from across the country. I was finally meeting some of the people I have only talked to on the phone.

I would be able to share my personal account about how great it was for all of us to have this shared experience as we all marched to the Capital and participated in a Disability Rights Rally right on the front lawn of the Capital.

I could provide all the details about how individuals with disabilities from every region of the country were able to participate in the legislative process by meeting with their own elected officials and as a united front share our disability issues and concerns.

Yeah, it was all of that and so much more!

Well, the story doesn’t end there. On the flight home, I kept having the same thoughts running around in my head. Once I got back at work I continued to be haunted by a panel discussion that took place during the conference opening session.

To make a long story short, every organization large or small have issues that from time to time require all of us to confront issues on an organizational level. With that said, the topic of this panel discussion was about issues as they relate to race, its impact organizationally, its impact on participation and ultimately its effect on membership.

The panel discussion was organized and very well done. Personally, what I can tell you is that the mood of the room was tense and you could feel the emotion of those who spoke. I was surprised by my physiological response; my heart rate increased and I was very uncomfortable. I never really considered myself racist. Yet everything in my world has always been white. The family I was born into, the town I grew up in, the church I went to, the schools I attended, even my friends were white growing up. It wasn’t until college that I was able to meet and work with individuals of color.

As I listened to the panel speak and interact with the audience, I remember thinking I haven’t done anything! Wait a minute…I haven’t done anything! I really don’t know anything about the subject of race. One of the panel members challenged the audience to read a book called: White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo and Michael Eric Dyson.

It was this challenge that I had been struggling with since my return to Kansas. As a white man who will be 55 years of age this year, I found it hard to believe that I was not aware. It has been very disorienting for me to get this far in life and know so little on the subject of race.

I thought I was just going to a conference. I would go, come home, go back to work and carry on as usual. Of course, I will always have the stories I shared at the beginning of the article, but something happened at the panel discussion that changed me.

What has Changed? Well, I bought the book and I have finished reading it. I am still processing the definitions and impact of white fragility. I’m trying to wrap my mind around the concepts and create a new framework from which to navigate my own thoughts and bias. I don’t know how much I can change; all I know is that I want to try.

I too would like to personally extend this book reading challenge to our entire PILR staff, our consumers and our community partners. I think our humanity depends on our willingness to understand our roles individually, societally and as a member of the human race. Intellectually, we are charged; as is justice, to not only seek but to find the truth. It is critical to recognize truth when it is evident in order to repair the institutional and psychological barriers that prevent us from achieving the ultimate goal of racial peace. I have always judged our humanity on two factors; are we still killing each other and are there people on our planet who are still starving? Without engaging in constructive and positive racial conversations we continue to participate in the status quo. As a result, if we are not willing to talk to each other about race nothing will ever change.

My next book: How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi.

“Becoming conscious of racism does not mean you are a racist.”  
— Auliq Ice
LOCAL ADVOCATE RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Prairie Independent Living Resource Center, Inc. is proud to announce that the Center’s Executive Director, Chris Owens, has been awarded for her incredible advocacy work. Chris has been at the forefront of the local Disability Rights movement since 1997, providing invaluable insight and leadership to our community.

Chris was recently honored at the national level, receiving the Region VII Advocacy Award from the National Council on Independent Living. NCIL recognized her efforts, remarking the following, “The work you have done to extend services to resource-starved areas of the state, advocacy for populations of Kansans with disabilities otherwise left without support or resources, and your leadership to amplify the voices of people with all types of disabilities through your work with statewide organizations have been tremendous contributions to keeping advocacy alive in our state, even though very dark times.”

Please join the staff and Board of PILR, Inc. in congratulating Chris for this prestigious award.

Picture of Christine Owens holding her award and Ami Hyten

Advocacy
By Chris Owens

I try not to check my work email on weekends; it usually just gives me something to fret about till Monday. However, on a Saturday late in June I decided to look and was totally shocked to read an email from Ami Hyten from TILRC. The subject title was NCIL Region VII Advocacy Award winner. I was curious so I opened the email. It started out; “Hi Chris” so I thought to myself this year’s award winner isn’t from Kansas. I don’t know any one named Chris who’d get it. I kept reading about things in south-central and southwest Kansas, advocating for accessibility, work with people with visual impairments and helping people with disabilities get jobs. OK, I am thinking, who is Ami writing to? I look at those she sent it to and it was Lou Ann from SKIL and me. I take my phone and go upstairs and ask Dan, “Who is she talking to?” He reads it and says, “You!” I told him to look again because it couldn’t be me. I was near tears and speechless. It is such an honor to be given this award from The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL). Dan and I went to Washington D.C. to the NCIL Conference so I could accept the award in person. It now hangs proudly in my office.

I have had the privilege of working with some of the best Advocates in the country; several have worked with me at PILR and others for other Kansas CILS. They have all taught me so much.

Advocacy is the best part of my job. It is what I will continue to do after I retire. It is what all of us need to do to keep our civil and human rights. Grassroots Advocacy is why we have the ADA and other disability rights legislation. We cannot rest or we will lose our rights. Don’t be afraid to share your story. Don’t be afraid to educate elected officials. Don’t be afraid to use your voice. And please educate yourself and vote in state and national elections. As people with disabilities we can make a difference. Remember the words of Justin Dart, “Vote as if your life depended on it…because it does.”
Disability Mentoring Day 2019
By Tasha Konrade

It’s that time of the year again! Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) is sneaking up on us here at PILR in both Hutchinson and Pratt! I am the DMD Coordinator of the Pratt event and am excited to see what this year will bring. This year’s Hutchinson DMD event will be held on October 16th at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, KS, and the Pratt DMD event will be held on October 22nd at the First United Methodist Church in Pratt, KS. For those that aren’t aware, Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) promotes career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands-on career exploration. Last year, we had 110 students from 13 different area schools participate in our Pratt DMD event, along with around 40 businesses in Pratt alone and Hutchinson had 125 students from Reno County and around 45 businesses participate.

We are currently seeking businesses and organizations that would like to volunteer as a job shadow site for some students for this year’s event. Our job shadows typically take place from about 9:30 AM- 11:30 AM the day of the event. Businesses and organizations are asked to give students a hands-on career experience in their field of interest. We match the students to the business and students arrive to “job shadow” for about two hours the day of the event. If you are interested in being a job shadow site or member of our planning committee, in the Pratt area please contact me at (620) 672-9600 ext: 440, or by email at nkonrade@pilr.org, in Hutchinson, please contact Cindy Daniels at (620) 663-3989 ext: 245 or by email at cdaniels@pilr.org. We are always looking for donations for these events for items such as lunch for the students, door prizes for students, and other needed supplies. If you are interested in donating for the Pratt event, please contact me at (620) 672-9600 ext: 440, or by email at nkonrade@pilr.org, for the Hutchinson event, please contact Cindy Daniels at (620) 663-3989 or by email at cdaniels@pilr.org.

CORPORATE LEVELS OF SPONSORSHIP
(Each sponsor level is per PILR DMD location)

Bronze Level – Donate $100
- Your business name displayed at Prairie Independent Living Resource Center for three months
- Your business name mentioned in the next newsletter
- Your business name displayed at the Disability Mentoring Day Event
- Your business name mentioned at the Disability Mentoring Day breakfast and afternoon reception from the podium

Silver Level – Donate $300
- Your business name displayed at Prairie Independent Living Resource Center for six months
- Your business name mentioned in our quarterly newsletter for a year
- Your business name displayed at the Disability Mentoring Day Event
- Your business name will be mentioned on our PILR Facebook page
- Your business name mentioned at the Disability Mentoring Day breakfast and afternoon reception from the podium
- Your business will receive a certificate at the morning breakfast or afternoon reception.

Gold Level – Donate $500
- Your business name displayed at Prairie Independent Living Resource Center for six months
- Your business name mentioned in our quarterly newsletter for a year
- Your business name displayed at the Disability Mentoring Day Event
- Your business name will be mentioned on our PILR Facebook page
- Your company logo displayed on the PILR Website for 6 months
- Your business name mentioned at the Disability Mentoring Day breakfast and afternoon reception from the podium
- Your business will receive a certificate at the morning breakfast or afternoon reception.

Platinum Level – Donate $1000
- Your business name displayed at Prairie Independent Living Resource Center for a year
- Your business name mentioned in our quarterly newsletter for a year
- Your business name displayed at the Disability Mentoring Day Event
- Your business name will be mentioned on our PILR Facebook page
- Your company logo displayed on our website for one year
- Your business name mentioned at the Disability Mentoring Day breakfast and afternoon reception from the podium

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.
Congratulations to our PILR Stars of the Month

**June Star Employee of the Month: Anthony Frischenmeyer** for his dedication in promoting the IL movement, going out of his way to be a part of YLF and helping lead the decision makers of tomorrow, and for all his help with the 18 ADA assessments and his willingness to make everything work with such short turnaround time!!

**July Star Employee of the Month: Debbie Goertz** for always getting information quickly to everyone with a smile, and for always having a great attitude no matter what’s on her plate!

**Counties Served:**

**Independent Living**
- Barber County
- Clarke County
- Comanche County
- Edwards County
- Ford County
- Harper County
- Harvey County
- Hodgeman County

**Older Blind**
- Kingman County
- Kiowa County
- McPherson County
- Ness County
- Pratt County
- Reno County
- Stafford County

**Hutchinson Office:**

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

**Dodge City Office:**

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**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~**
- Tasha Konrade, Service Coordinator
- Chelsey Rose, Independent Living Specialist
- Tom Harrison, OKEP Employment Specialist
- Linda Adelhardt, Information & Referral Specialist

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

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The Voice of PILR
Newsletter
September 2019: Volume 18, Issue 3

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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.

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PILR is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider.