

West-Central Independent Living Solutions

The WILS Way



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News from West-Central Independent Living Solutions

Main Office
610 N. Ridgeview Drive
Warrensburg, MO 64093.

Questions, suggestions and story ideas can be directed to Kay Kocher, Editor
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Board Member Search

WILS is recruiting members for the Board of Directors of West-Central Independent Living Solutions.

Potential Applicants should be interested in promoting independence for people who have disabilities.

If interested, submit a letter of interest to:

WILS Board of Directors
610 N. Ridgeview, Suite B
Warrensburg, MO 64093

WILS Opens Office in Clinton

Following a period of rapid growth, WILS has opened a satellite office in Clinton, Missouri.

Located at 116 West Jefferson Street, the new office opened in late December. A ribbon-cutting and open house were held on January 9th. An Independent Living Specialist will be based in the office to better serve people with disabilities in Clinton and Henry County.

Partnering with Clinton Main Street, WILS is occupying the storefront of a building that was gifted to Clinton Main Street and renovated with a Neighborhood Assistance Grant from the



The new WILS office at 116 West Jefferson Street on the square in Clinton.

MO Department of Economic Development.

Kathy Kay, WILS Executive Director, stated, "We're so excited to be opening an office in Clinton - it's a growing, vibrant community and we're glad to become a part of it. We think our services are a real help for people with disabilities. As a nonprofit organization, our services are available to everyone. So, if you or a family member or a friend need help to live independently, please give us a call."

Henry County residents can call the office at 660.383.4745.



WILS Executive Director Kathy Kay, Clinton Chamber Executive Director Kelli Jenkins, Director Debbie Van Winkle, Mayor Samuel Gibbons, Chamber Ambassadors and WILS staff at the ribbon-cutting on January 9th.

Sleeping Mats for the Homeless

Linda Intelmann, a WILS consumer living in Sedalia, is carrying on a project that has become very popular with civic and church groups throughout the country.

Using plastic grocery bags, a little ingenuity, and a lot of help from her friends, Linda creates lightweight sleeping mats that are donated to organizations that work with the homeless. The church group Linda works with was able to make several mats by October of last year, which they donated to WILS. WILS, in turn, donated them to Johnson County's 2013 Project Community Connect.

The bags are simple to create: Flatten the bags and trim off both the handle and bottom ends. Cut the grocery bags crosswise into strips. Connect the strips together. Using the "plarn" (plastic yarn) created in this manner and a simple crochet stitch, crochet into 3 by 6 foot mats.

Various organizations in the WILS service area are now making sleeping mats for the homeless. For more information on the project or how to start a group in your area, contact Maurine Koeller, 2601 Foxtrot Road, Florence, MO 65329.

From the Desk of Kathy Kay



Kathy Kay, Executive Director

In 1987, then President Ronald Reagan signed into law legislation designating March as “Disability Awareness Month.” The goal of Disability Awareness Month is to increase awareness and promote independence, integration and inclusion of all people with disabilities.

Disability Awareness is significant for everyone because disability is universal. Think about the friends or family members you know who have disabilities. Perhaps they have arthritis or other physical limitations and are unable to walk up stairs. Perhaps they have a hearing problem, or are on a special diet due to diabetes, or have a visual impairment and wear glasses.

Disability of one kind or another is something that everyone experiences personally in life. People with disabilities are a large and extremely diverse group—parents, veterans, children, athletes, professionals, neighbors and friends. In 2008 in Missouri, the overall percentage of people with a disability was 14.1%, or 817,900 people, or 1 in 7 people.

Sometimes people are uncomfortable around people who have disabilities. They are afraid they will “say the wrong thing” or will inadvertently offend. The most important thing to remember about interacting with people with disabilities is that they are people first and all are different. Courtesy toward and respect for the person with a disability can ease the way in most all situations. In addition, there are a few key “rules” that can help:

1. Don’t make assumptions about the person or their disability. Don’t assume you know what someone wants, what he feels or what is best for him.
2. Ask before you help. It may sometimes appear that a person with a disability is struggling even though he is fine would prefer to complete a task on his own.
3. Talk directly to the person, not their attendant, interpreter or friend. It isn’t necessary to ignore any others completely, just make sure to focus on the person with a disability.
4. Speak normally. Use a normal tone of voice and normal language.
5. Use “people-first” language and avoid offensive terms and euphemisms. If you’re unsure what someone prefers—ask.
6. Be aware of personal space. Some people who use a mobility aid such as a walker, cane or wheelchair consider these items as part of their personal space. Don’t touch, move or lean on mobility aids. This is also important for safety.

A related thought—the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games are scheduled for March 7–16, 2014. The Paralympic Games embody the “can-do” spirit of individuals with disabilities, showing how they can and do overcome obstacles and persevere to achieve their dreams.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Kay".



THANK YOU!

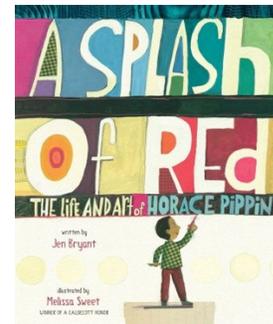
WILS would like to thank BJ and Windsor Furniture for their assistance with our Money Follows the Person transition program.

Children's Books Highlight Disabilities

Three books are being honored for focusing on the disability experience. The books — which include stories of a wounded soldier, a princess with a deformed foot and a look at medical experimentation by Nazi doctors — were named winners of the Schneider Family Book Awards in January 2014.

The honor is presented to authors and illustrators “for a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences.” Three Schneider awards — one for books aimed at kids up to age 8, another for stories targeted to children ages 9 to 13 and another for teen books — are given annually by the American Library Association.

The books selected for this year are the picture book “A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin,” written by Jen Bryant and illustrated by Melissa Sweet; “Handbook for Dragon Slayers” written by Merrie Haskell; and “Rose Under Fire” written by Elizabeth Wein.



A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin” is one of three winners of this year’s Schneider Family Book Awards, which honor children’s books that focus on the disability experience.

Winter Challenges for People With Disabilities

Just like their non-disabled neighbors, people with disabilities (PWD) can face additional complications during winter weather conditions.

Allison Easterwood, a WILS ILS Supervisor based in the Warrensburg office, says about her disability: “I have lupus and experience a lot of symptoms that mimic arthritis. My joints are very stiff and sore in the morning. In winter weather, it becomes more difficult to walk or stand from a sitting position. I have an overactive immune system so I have to take medications that weaken the immune system, so I find myself catching every winter illness that is around. I also have Raynaud’s Disease (a symptom of lupus). This causes my fingers and toes to lose circulation and it is quite painful. It can be freezing outside and my joints and extremities feel like they are on fire.”

In addition to added physical difficulties, snowy or icy sidewalks are an even greater hazard for a person using a wheelchair, cane or walker. When people don’t or can’t drive, getting from one place to another can be difficult, so many PWD simply stay in during wintry conditions. The WILS Transportation Program is one option to help in this situation; however, availability is often limited and reservations need to be made in advance. In the case of sudden wintry conditions, a person can’t always know beforehand that help with transportation will be needed.

While the disabled do have a responsibility to prepare for winter, the non-disabled can help in many ways. Cities and counties who remove snow from sidewalks and streets can do their best to keep those areas clear, while not creating a barrier for someone else in the process. Business owners can also make sure accessible parking spots and entrances are clear, especially if the accessible entrance is different from the regular entrance.

With the bitter cold and snow of winter upon us, it is important to be prepared!



Facing a snowy sidewalk in a wheelchair—a daunting task.

Contact Us!

Warrensburg
610 N Ridgeview, Suite B
(660) 422-7883
(800) 236-5175

Sedalia
1800 W Main, Suite A
(660) 829-1980
(866) 558-5588

Lexington
821 Business Hwy 13
(660) 259-3060
(877) 234 0655

Warsaw
225 W Main St
(660) 438-0016
(888) 840-6987

Clinton
116 W Jefferson
(660) 383-4745
(866) 806-5191

West-Central Independent Living Solutions is a non-profit Center for Independent Living that works to connect people with disabilities to resources within the community to help them achieve and maintain their independence.

WILS' four core services are information and referral, independent living skills training, advocacy and peer support.

For individuals, WILS offers supportive programs including accessible ramp construction, low cost accessible transportation, Consumer Directed Services, assistive technology, and help to transition from an institution to independent community living. We can also assist eligible participants to obtain adaptive telephone and computer equipment through Missouri's Telecommunications Access Program.

In addition, WILS staff can guide businesses and organizations through the process of performing accessibility surveys and implementing transition plans to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Where there's a WILS, there's a WAY!

www.wilshelps.org



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Empowering people with disabilities to achieve and maintain their independence.