
E-LIFELINES SUMMER 2021



Celebrating the ADA Anniversary – July 26, 1990

31 years is enough notice!

Thirty-one years ago, President George H.W. Bush said, “let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down” when he signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. Individuals with disabilities finally had a law in place to protect their civil rights.

The ADA was designed to create a more inclusive country, where every person has the ability and the right to participate in all aspects of society. Not only does the law create a more accessible and inclusive society, but it also prohibits discrimination based on disability.

The five major areas the ADA focuses on to provide accessibility, equality and quality of life are:

1. Workplace accessibility, including reasonable accommodations for someone with a disability.
2. Physically accessible public services.
3. Public transportation to be accessible to persons with disabilities.
4. Businesses to provide “reasonable accommodation” for customers with disabilities.
5. Ensuring communication, including websites and television programs that receive federal funding accommodate people with disabilities.

Wheelchair ramps, accessible stalls in public restrooms, accessible public transportation, alternative formats such as large print, Braille or audio, and closed captioning on television and movies are just a few examples of what is required by the ADA for schools, workplaces and businesses. Job accommodations, sign language interpreters, extra time on tests and service animals in public places are also examples of ADA requirements for individuals with disabilities. These requirements allow individuals with disabilities to be more independent and have equal access.

There are all kinds of disabilities – physical, vision, hearing, and cognitive, to name just a few. However, many disabilities are not visible. Due to cases of discrimination and a response to Supreme Court decisions that significantly narrowed the application and definition of “disability” under the ADA, a change was made. Twelve years ago, on January 1, 2009, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 took effect. The Amendments Act changed the definition of the term “disability” by clarifying and broadening to increase the number of individuals and types of disabilities that are protected.

However, thirty-one years after the signing of the ADA and twelve years after the Amendments Act, there is still work to do and barriers to break down.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

When you go somewhere, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there clearly marked accessible parking spots near the entrance of the building?
- Is there a ramp or curb-cuts that allow individuals with mobility devices to get to the entrance?
- Are there automatic doors to enter if the door is too heavy to open with a closed fist?
- Are you able to enter the building without having to step over anything (such as a raised threshold or other steps)?
- If there is a television in the business, does it have closed captioning turned on for individuals who are hard of hearing?
- If there are reading materials, do they offer alternate formats – large print, Braille, audio or an electronic version?
- If there are signs up that help you locate the restrooms, or a fire escape, do they have braille or tactile markings for someone who is blind or has low vision to know where to go?
- Does the restroom have an accessible stall?
- Look at the bus stops around town; is the bus stop accessible and safe for someone with a disability?

If your answer is “no” to any of those questions, a person with a disability would not be able to enjoy the place with you. These are just a few of the barriers that still stand in the way of individuals with disabilities having equal access in the community today.

Make your voice heard! If something is not accessible, or accommodations are not being met, advocate for equal and inclusive access for individuals with disabilities. If you want to learn how to advocate or need information on accessibility and accommodations, please contact LIFE CIL. To learn more about the Americans with Disabilities Act, you can visit the ADA National Network site <https://adata.org/learn-about-ada>.

P.A.s make all the difference!

What is a P.A.? A personal assistant, or P.A., is an individual who assists a person with a disability in activities of daily living. Personal assistance refers to the type of service being provided, which is “personal.” The personal assistant works under the direction of his or her employer, i.e. the person with the disability, and may assist the person with personal care, meal preparation, shopping, errands, and light secretarial duties. Duties will depend on the person’s functional abilities. P.A.s allow individuals with disabilities to remain at home instead of being placed in a nursing home, other care facility, or an institution.

“One day my P.A. came just like any given day but it wasn't a normal day. When she got there, she noticed that I was having a stroke and rushed me to the hospital. P.A.s are vital.” - Rob Ballantini Jr

We are always looking for individuals wanting to work in the homes of people with disabilities. Call Vicky, our Community Living Advocate, for an application to be sent to you.

Current pay with the DRS Home Services Program is \$15.50 an hour.

Questions? Contact Vicky at 309-663-5433, x 205

"PA'S are the true heroes in their clients' lives!" - Chris Gardner

An IMPACT Story: Home is Freedom

In just a blink of an eye, a moment of time that is so quick, one barely notices it. That is how fast a disability can occur. The everyday life of a young man working at a day care center, doing what he loved to do, changed dramatically on an Easter Sunday after enjoying time with friends. Struck by a hit and run driver, his life saved by a passerby who stopped and called for help.

Unable to use his arms or legs, he went from one rehabilitation center to another. Daily, he requested that he be able to return home. His mother set out on a journey to find a way to bring her son home and finally came across LIFE Center for Independent Living (LIFE CIL). She had no idea if it was possible to get the help that her son needed, but would not give up until she had exhausted all options.

LIFE CIL's Community Reintegration Program became their answer. The young man, Norman, was able to go home with the equipment needed. Items such as a hospital bed, Hoyer lift, stabilized lift in the bathroom, and wheelchair helped make his home accessible. Personal Assistants to help him with tasks during the times his family could not cover allowed him the freedom to be at home. Specialized items such as a device he can use by mouth to turn on and off his television, fan and lights and use the telephone increased his independence. LIFE CIL provided groceries, bedding and linens for the bathroom, and adaptable cups and utensils to make meals easier, all things that have made his home more accessible and Norman more independent.

That was twelve years ago. During those years, Norman continued to live the life he has always wanted – independently, at home! Today, he is quick to smile every time someone walks into his room and enjoys watching (while whooping and hollering) his beloved Chicago Cubs and Bears games. Norman says he will be "forever grateful for LIFE CIL's work" in helping him maintain the ability to be home all these years. His life changed in the blink of an eye, but he is still doing what he loves from the comfort of his own home.



Norman Wilson smiles for a photo in his home. He is seated in his wheelchair had has a large blue pillow behind him and a Chicago BEARS blanket across his lap.

An IMPACT Story: “Making my quality of life better”

After four years in a nursing home, 55-year-old Chris decided to look up services for people with disabilities and came across information on LIFE Center for Independent Living (LIFE CIL)’s webpage about their Community Reintegration Program.

Chris identified his housing interests, medical supports, and support system. With the help of Andrea Kindseth, LIFE CIL’s Reintegration Advocate, he was able to quickly secure an apartment and was approved for Personal Assistant Services through the Department of Rehabilitation Services. After he secured his apartment, he worked with our Reintegration Advocate to select furniture, household items, medical equipment and groceries of his choice that would make the apartment his home.

Chris transitioned home into a beautiful one-bedroom apartment on May 13, 2021. He is living an independent life in the community where he can eat, sleep, and do what he wants when he wants. He talks with family often and is now able to see them in-person. He has supportive friends he visits with often, attends church weekly, and has plans to start volunteering.



Chris has overcome a lot in his life and knows there will be some obstacles along the way, but is really looking forward to seeing what his new life will bring. Starting a new life during a pandemic has its challenges, but due to his resourcefulness and determination, he is now living a life of his choice in the community. Chris is extremely grateful for his family, social support system, personal assistant services, and the support he has received from LIFE CIL and the Community Reintegration Program.

Community Reintegration Advocate, Andrea Kindseth, left, stands next to Chris Gardner, right, in one room of his new apartment.

LIFE CIL Executive Director to Present at the ACLU of Central Illinois Virtual Film Festival

The Central Illinois Chapter of ACLU presents **CRIP CAMP: A Disability Revolution**, the third film in their virtual film festival. You are encouraged to pre-watch the film and they invite you to join their presentation on the film's civil rights connections, with time for questions after the talk.

LIFE CIL's Executive Director, Rickielee Benecke, will present the talk.

Join ACLU of Central Illinois on Wednesday, July 28, 2021 to hear Rickielee talk about **CRIP CAMP: A Disability Revolution**. You may submit questions when you register or during the online talk.

- PRE-WATCH: Netflix has made this film available to watch for **FREE** on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFS8SpwioZ4>
- REGISTER for the online talk: <https://aclu-il.org/CRIP-CAMP>.
 - Registrants will receive a Zoom link to view the program during the week of July 26th.

About the Presenter:

Rickielee Benecke became LIFE CIL's Executive Director in 2018, but has served in various positions there for nearly 20 years. A fierce advocate for change, she has been instrumental in resolving many individual and systemic advocacy issues and has received both state and national awards for her efforts. She serves on several state and national committees and is currently the VP of the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL)'s Board of Directors.

Her education includes a bachelor's degree in Economics with a minor in Business Administration from Illinois State University. She is a graduate of the Multicultural Leadership Program and holds professional certification as a Nonprofit Executive Director. As someone who is deaf and uses cochlear implants to hear, she understands the importance of the disability rights movement professionally and personally.

Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution is a 2020 American documentary film.

Crip Camp starts in 1971 at Camp Jened, a summer camp in New York described as a "loose, free-spirited camp designed for teens with disabilities". The film focuses on those campers who turned themselves into activists for the disability rights movement and follows their fight for accessibility legislation.



Crip Camp had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 23, 2020, where it won the Audience Award. Released by Netflix on March 25, 2020, Crip Camp received acclaim from critics. It also received an Academy Award nomination for Best Documentary Film. Barack and Michelle Obama served as executive producers.

MOVIE REVIEW: *CRIP CAMP: A DISABILITY REVOLUTION* (2020)

Cast: James Lebrecht, Judy Heumann, Denise Scherer Jacobson, Neil Jacobson, Lionel Je'Woodyard, Ann Cupolo Freeman, Larry Allison, Hollynn D'Lil, Corbett O'Toole and Dennis Billups

Directors: James Lebrecht and Nicole Newnham

Synopsis: In the early 1970's, a group of teenagers with disabilities went to camp and learned what it was like to live without judgement. They were able to have fun and live life independently with others who could relate. The experiences they shared and the bond that time at camp created led them back to Berkley, California. There, they worked together to advocate for individuals with disabilities and started the disability revolution with a protest that led to the signing of Section 504.

Review: **CRIP CAMP** is a true and powerful testament to what advocacy can do! This is an amazing documentary on how teenagers with disabilities who attended camp worked together and made a change for all people with disabilities.

The first time away from home for many of them, a group of teenagers came together and saw how different their lives were at Camp Jened versus in the world. They were able to share life experiences without being excluded or treated differently. They were given the opportunity to share opinions and feelings and have them validated and taken into consideration. They learned what it was like to feel human and worthy of a life like the one they lived at camp. The bonds the campers created led to many lifetime friendships.

A great example of how determination, teamwork and making one's voice heard can make a difference. Judy Heumann was a leader in the disability revolution. Her organizational skills, public speaking ability and determination to achieve what she was advocating for led to many systematic changes for people with disabilities. Her fearlessness and passion for what she was fighting for made others respect and support her in any advocacy she was doing, including a protest that involved a 23-day hunger strike for one individual.



The actual footage of the moments you hear while learning the history of the disability rights moment is indescribable and leaves you with feelings of pride, appreciation and motivation. While the film starts in the early 70's, it takes you through to present day. Judy and many of her friends and supporters were vital to the changes that were made in the disability rights movement, one that she referred to as an "international rights movement".

Well worth the 106 minutes and it might light a spark in you to make a difference too!

You can watch the full film on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFS8SpwioZ4>.

Reviewed by Brianne Anderson, Administrative Services Director, LIFE CIL

Last year, LIFE CIL impacted the lives of 855 people.

While this is a lower number than usual due to COVID-19, we were still able to provide our services in new and unique ways during this unprecedented year. Most notably, eight people with disabilities were able to regain their independence and move out of a nursing home into their own home. A record transition year for LIFE CIL even during a global pandemic!

- A 55-year-old former teacher and social worker was able to leave the nursing home after a four-year stay following an accident. He now enjoys having his “life back.”
- A 45-year-old man was able to move out of the nursing home and reunited with his son after a year of isolation due to the pandemic.
- A couple in their early 50’s from southern Illinois were able to move into their own home together in Ford County to be closer to their family after over three years in a nursing facility.
- An 83-year-old woman who contracted COVID-19 in a nursing facility, and was hospitalized for end-of-life care, returned home for the first time in over three years, reunited with her family, received hugs from her loved ones, and survived.
- A 45-year-old man is now enjoying time with friends and family in his own home after being confined in a nursing home during the entire pandemic without visitors.
- A 40-year-old woman who spent over eight months of the pandemic in a nursing home is now able to enjoy her crafting and scrapbooking activities in the comfort of her own home.
- A 50-year-old male who moved downstate from the Chicago area to escape the pandemic, only to find himself homeless and in a nursing home due to his disability, is now living his life independently.

On July 26 we will celebrate the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We invite you to join in our celebration and donate \$31 (or any other amount that you can), or join us at one of our fundraisers (see next page!) to help LIFE CIL continue to provide our valuable services that promote Living Independence For Everyone!

Sincerely,

Wes Cowden
Community Relations Committee Chair

Rickielee Benecke
Executive Director

Join us to celebrate the anniversary of the
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at



Monday, July 26, 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Located at 3002 Gill Street, Bloomington

Mention that you want to support LIFE CIL when you order, and Gill Street Sports Bar & Restaurant will give LIFE CIL 20% of the sale. Dine-in or carry-out.

PLEASE NOTE: The Gill Street Sports Bar & Restaurant website is being updated. They are open on Mondays and looking forward to having us on Monday, July 26.



To learn more about LIFE CIL, visit our website at www.lifecil.org or our Facebook page www.facebook.com/lifecil.

We appreciate your support!

It's almost time to go back to school, so
let's CELEBRATE summer with a cold sweet treat!



Saturday, August 14, 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

**Located at
2105 N. Veterans Parkway, Bloomington**

RSVP at <https://www.groupraise.com/events/187979-life-center-for-independent-living-life-cil-at-oberweis>

Mention that you would like to support LIFE CIL when you order, and Oberweis Ice Cream & Dairy Store (and That Burger Joint) will give LIFE CIL 20% of the sale. Dine-in, carry-out or drive-thru.



To learn more about LIFE CIL, visit our website at www.lifecil.org or our Facebook page www.facebook.com/lifecil.
We appreciate your support!

Low Vision Services Update

Kim Tarkowski, Vision Access Advocate, is now scheduling informational meetings and “Open Houses” in DeWitt, Ford, Livingston, and McLean counties. If you are part of a Social Service Organization, Assisted Living or Long Term Care Facility, or Home Health Care agency that provides services to older individuals with low vision, please call Kim at 309-663-5433 or email her at kim@lifecil.org.

She will tailor her presentation to your needs, including demonstrating assistive devices and providing services to persons over the age of 55 with severe vision loss.

There is no cost for the devices or services provided.

Some examples of the devices provided are large print items such as calendars, address books, check registers, clocks and watches, and talking devices such as talking clocks and watches, scales and blood pressure monitors. Products such as handheld and standing magnifiers and video magnifiers are also available depending on an individual’s needs.

Stay Tuned

LIFE CIL staff are still available by phone, email and online during regular business hours.

LIFE CIL’s doors are not yet open to the public. Our staff is in the office to take your calls, respond to emails and schedule appointments via Zoom or in-person, if necessary.

Our equipment loan program continues to operate via curbside pick-up and drop off. We are scheduling appointments between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If you need to borrow, return or donate equipment, please call to schedule an appointment **(309/663-5433)**.

We remain an ITAC Amplified Phone Selection Center. If you are hard of hearing and would like an amplified telephone or a cellular amplifier, contact us for more information. You may schedule an appointment to test the phones before selection, if desired at our Bloomington and Pontiac offices.



LOCATIONS

Bloomington

Phone: (309) 663-5433
Fax: (309) 663-7024
Toll-Free: (888) 543-3245
2201 Eastland Drive, Suite 1
Bloomington, IL 61704

Pontiac

Phone: (815) 844-1132
601 North Ladd Street
Pontiac, IL 61764



If you have any questions about services during this time, please reach out to us via phone, email, or message us on Facebook.

If a friend sent this newsletter to you and you'd like to be added to our email list, give us a call or email (brianne@lifecil.org) We never sell or give away your information!

Learn more about LIFE CIL, events, advocacy opportunities, & more at: www.lifecil.org and <https://www.facebook.com/lifecil>