Disability Employment Awareness!

INCREASING ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY
Celebrating 30 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act

News about:
- State Plan for Independent Living
- Emergency prep

Voting information for November 3 general election

Part-time caregivers needed in all NW Missouri counties!
Vote on November 3

This issue is full of outstanding information to inform and educate those that are impacted by disability. In my brief article, I touch on “getting involved” in the electoral process, emergency preparation for people with disabilities, and the Missouri State Plan for Independent Living.

Justin Dart, “the father of the ADA,” often stated: “Vote as if your life depended on it, because it does.” This is so true. The laws, rules and regulations that come from government are a direct result of the Congressmen and women, presidents, governors, etc., that we vote into office. The supports that are needed for persons with disabilities are often funded through Medicaid dollars (and other public funds), and the state and federal legislatures control this spending.

If you receive services, it is vital that you register to vote by the October 7 deadline, educate yourself on the candidates and the issues, and actually vote. There is additional information about voting and the voting process in this newsletter.

Emergency Preparedness Month

One of the things that we stress as folks with disabilities is that managing a disability takes planning and preparation. This is true in everyday life. “Is the battery to my wheelchair adequately charged for the day?” “Do I know when the bus is coming?” “Am I able to get to my doctor on time?”

These are questions that we must ask ourselves daily. But what happens when we have to deal with a disaster, be it man-made or natural?

During times of disaster, planning and preparation are the key to surviving and even thriving. September is “Emergency Preparedness Month” and there is a great deal of information about how people with disabilities (and the general population, really) can prepare themselves in the event of a disaster. Make a plan, build a kit, prepare for disasters, and get others involved.

For additional information, please see the extensive list of resources in the Spring 2020 MERIL newsletter available on www.meril.org/news.

State Plan for Independent Living

The Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council (MOSILC) publishes a State Plan for Independent Living (SPIIL) every three years, and the 2021-2023 is effective on October 1, 2020.

The SPIIL lays out a “blueprint” of independent living in the state of Missouri. The five goals that are important to individuals with disabilities are: (1.) Housing, (2.) Transportation, (3.) Civic Engagement, (4.) Emergency Preparation, and (5.) Employment.

The purpose of the SPIIL is to set goals in each of these categories and to ensure that more folks with disabilities are able to successfully access them by implementing specific strategies, such as increased awareness and tips on advocacy. For more information, please visit the MOSILC website: https://mosilc.org/state-plan/.

- Rob Honan, MERIL CEO

MERIL was featured in news stories about accessible housing and accessible voting options (text and video).
November 3 Voting Checklist

Before October 7: Verify that you are registered to vote.
Before the registration deadline, every voter should visit www.sos.mo.gov/elections/voterlookup to make sure your voter registration is current and that you know the address of your polling location. If there are any issues with your registration, you need to contact your “local election authority” immediately by visiting www.sos.mo.gov/elections/govotemissouri/localelectionauthority or calling 1-800-669-8683.

Before October 21: Decide how you will vote.
There are three voting options: (1.) in-person, (2.) absentee, or (3.) mail-in.

- **In-Person:** Polling locations are open from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Bring your ID documents. Vote as early as possible to avoid long lines! Polling locations must be accessible (e.g., curbside voting, personal assistance, etc.)*

- **Absentee:** Vote in advance of election day if you have a qualifying reason.* October 21 is the last day to request an absentee ballot.

- **Mail-In:** Vote by mail for any reason. The ballot will need to be notarized. Call MERIL (816-279-8558) if you need a notary to come to your home to notarize your ballot.

*Visit this site for all of the details: https://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/goVoteMissouri/howtovote.

Before You Vote: Gather your ID documents and research the ballot issues.
You must bring identification documents to the polling place when you vote in-person. Find out which documents are acceptable at www.showit2vote.com.

Request a sample ballot from your “local election authority” or download one from their website so you can see which candidates and issues will be on your ballot. You can also visit https://voteroutreach.sos.mo.gov/prd/VoterOutreach/VOSearch.aspx.

Then, research the candidates and issues and decide which ones you support. Beware of information on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, which is too often false and misleading. Instead, seek information from reputable journalistic sources, such as newspapers.

Icons from www.flaticon.com author “freepik.”

As a Center for Independent Living, more than half of MERIL’s board members and staff have a disability. We know the importance of inclusion in the workplace, and we have seen many examples of how simple workplace accommodations can allow an employee’s abilities to emerge, letting them fully contribute to their company.

MERIL provides information about ADA compliance, workplace accommodations, disability etiquette, career preparation for youth with disabilities, and self-advocacy support for employees with disabilities.

Workplaces are stronger when they include people with disabilities.

About NDEAM and workplace inclusion

Observed each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is a nationwide campaign that celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities throughout American history, and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all Americans have access to the services and supports to enable them to work.

Take a few moments to browse the NDEAM website: www.dol.gov/ndeam. It’s full of valuable information.

“As with any customer segment, one of the best ways to tap into the disability market is to ensure it is represented in your workforce. Employees with disabilities can help businesses understand and meet the needs of this important and expanding customer base. What’s more, research shows that consumers both with and without disabilities favor businesses that employ people with disabilities, and that people with disabilities can provide your business with the flexible, innovative thinking required for a competitive edge in the 21st century.”


Missouri’s Vocational Rehabilitation is a great resource for persons with a disability who are seeking employment: http://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation

Technology can and should break barriers for people with disabilities in the workplace. Let's ensure that the future of work is born accessible.

https://peatworks.org

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"Employment of people with disabilities gives everyone the opportunity to learn. It allows the person with the disability the opportunity to work and contribute to society. Being different is an opportunity to showcase our talents. Others are able to see that we are just like they are, only with differing abilities and talents we can share with everyone."

– Susie Dains, 2020 GCD NDEAM Poster Contest Winner
Assistive Technology at MERIL

Magnifier helps participant with low vision

Deanna Hunt (pictured left) experiences significant vision and hearing loss, which makes it difficult to read documents. MERIL’s Russell Gilfillan met with Deanna and demonstrated several types of handheld magnifiers that have features—such as built-in lights—designed for people who experience vision loss. Deanna was able to find one that fit her needs.

Deanna said prior to receiving this low vision demonstration, she had to have her attendant or family and friends to assist her with correspondence, and relying on others took away from the independence she most cherishes.

As an official demonstration center for Missouri Assistive Technology, MERIL is able to offer a wide variety of assistive devices to people with disabilities in Northwest Missouri.

Some of the most popular devices are phones available through the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP). These specialized phones are designed for people who have hearing loss, low vision, and other types of disabilities.

Assistive technology devices are important tools that allow people with disabilities to live independently in their homes. And many people qualify for free devices!

More information is available at www.meril.org/tech.

Show Me Loans provides low-interest financing for assistive devices

Missouri Assistive Technology provides financing for adaptive modifications and assistive devices with a program called Show Me Loans, which offers a low interest rate based on income.

This program is available for all Missouri residents with a disability or age-related change that are facing a purchase of things such as:

- Adaptive employment equipment or workspace accommodations
- Everyday devices such as hearing aids, accessible vehicle modifications, home modifications, communication devices, etc.
- Durable medical equipment and power chairs

Visit https://at.mo.gov/show-me-loans or call 816-655-6700 to learn more.

MERIL was featured in a news story about the role assistive technology plays in promoting independent living.
We help caregivers find part-time jobs!

MERIL accepts applications for caregivers to work for a Consumer Directed Services (CDS) participant, and/or to work for participants in MERIL’s In-Home Services program. Caregivers help people with disabilities with personal care tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, and bathing. Caregivers do not need any prior experience and the hours are flexible. Visit meril.org/caregivers to learn more.

Caregivers make a big difference in the lives of people with disabilities, making it possible for them to live independently in their own homes and communities. By working for a MERIL participant, caregivers also support all of the other Independent Living (IL) services MERIL provides.

For providing care to our participants and for supporting our services, we appreciate the caregivers who partner with us to fulfill our IL mission. Contact us if you know of an outstanding MERIL caregiver. We would like to feature them in our newsletter and on our website!

MERIL provides equipment to help mobility

Since experiencing a stroke, Felicia Dydell has used a cane to maintain her balance and assist her with her mobility needs. When her old cane no longer provided her with the support she needed, she sought out alternatives.

A MERIL staff member met with Felicia to demonstrate cane options. After reviewing two types of “quad canes” — canes with four points of contact with the ground — Felicia chose the one pictured here.

Because she needed financial assistance, MERIL was able to purchase the item for her using funds from our Consumer Assistance Fund (CAF).

CAF is used to purchase a wide variety of items — including durable medical equipment, fire safety devices, shower chairs, and other items — that MERIL participants need, but cannot afford. These are items that participants are unable to receive through Medicaid or other community resources.

CAF operates on a limited budget, and much of the funds MERIL receives from fundraisers and individual donations is used by CAF to provide these types of items to people in need so they can achieve their independent living goals and remain safe and comfortable in their homes.
Making a Difference at MERIL

Your contribution will help change lives!

Donations to MERIL help fund programs that assist people with disabilities in their goal to live a full life in their homes and communities.

Please consider a financial gift to MERIL. You may mail a check, use our PayPal link, or donate on Facebook.

In addition to donating, you can help us immensely by spreading the word about our services. The more people who know about us, the more we can help.

Visit www.meril.org/help to read more about people who have benefited from our services.

Support MERIL.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates.

Go to smile.amazon.com

Thank you to our recent donors:

♦ Steven Pickett  ♦ Nancy Zeliff  ♦ Lauren Lynch

We also want to thank the many others who donate equipment to us. We accept donations of assistive technology devices and durable medical equipment.

People First of St. Joseph donated shoes to the AFL-CIO Soles for Christ fundraiser!

St. Joseph Youth Alliance brought us five canes! We will put these to good use in our community.

If you go to smile.amazon.com and shop, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase amount to a nonprofit of your choice. We hope you choose MERIL as your donation recipient!
Helping people with disabilities and people who are aging live independently in Northwest Missouri.

Northwest Missouri’s Center for Independent Living

Since 1994, MERIL has provided five core services for people with disabilities in our nine-county service area:

- Information and referral
- Independent Living skills training
- Transition services (youth and nursing home)
- Peer support
- Advocacy

Our vision is: A Barrier-Free Northwest Missouri.

More than half of our board members and staff have a disability. We use our personal experiences to see the abilities that people have, and we respect people for who they are.

We believe people with disabilities should have control over their own lives, achieve their own goals, and fully participate in their communities.

Learn more about Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Missouri at www.mosilc.org.

Choose your own caregiver

help with cleaning, cooking, shopping, personal care

Phones & devices for low hearing, low vision

Nurse visits at home
medication, blood pressure, diabetes care

Independent Living Skills Training

Nursing home transition

Accessibility

Call us. Tell us about your health condition or disability. We’ll help you get the resources you need to live independently.

MERIL offers a wide variety of services and resources for people with disabilities.

Our most popular service is our Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program, which allows a person to hire a caregiver of their choice to perform personal care tasks in their home.

We help caregivers find part-time jobs!

MERIL helps the CDS participant (the person with a disability) find a potential employee (caregiver). Anyone who is interested in becoming a caregiver should contact MERIL to fill out an application. The hours are flexible and no experience is required.