



A2I NEWSLETTER

Quarterly Newsletter from Access 2 Independence

A Spring Time Message

by Leah Zapf Donald, Executive Director

Spring has sprung in the Eastern Iowa Corridor! The green grass is peeking through the brown and the robins are back from their winter reprieve. We had a particularly cold and long winter so it's great to see the warm temperatures coming back to stay for a while. This winter was a stark reminder of how life can be unpredictable and doesn't always follow our plans. Sometimes we find ourselves shoveling snow when we thought we'd be planting flowers!

We talk often about plans with individuals seeking our services. We have a small sign in the office that reads "A goal without a plan is just a wish." The quote is attributed to the French writer Antoine de Saint Exupéry and we think it speaks powerfully to the work we do here, which is helping individuals remove obstacles in their way to self-determination. The long road to springtime that we experienced this year makes me think of many of the individuals we serve who are working to achieve goals toward independence and the barriers that sometimes get in the way of those goals. This is exactly why our independent living specialists are here to help! It is truly wonderful to be able to witness individuals living life on their terms after they receive the support they need to empower them on their journey. We provide the tools to help them to pave the way.

This quarter we celebrated 9 individuals who completed goals that they had set for themselves. I'm very proud of the small but mighty team of Independent Living Specialists at Access 2 Independence who worked to provide 154 services in the last quarter alone. These services include things like life skills training and advocacy which all together help individuals to meet these goals. In that same spirit of growth and renewal, read on to meet our new faces here at the Center. Profiled this quarter is our newest Independent Living Specialist, Chanel Prince and our newest board member, Amy Robasse. We think you'll like them as much as we do.

Happy Spring from me and all of us at Access 2 Independence of the Eastern Iowa Corridor your local Independent Living Center!



Caption: Access 2 Independence Logo

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Staff:

Leah Zapf Donald, Executive Director
Kiersten Onanga, ILS
Chanel Prince, ILS
Talor Gray, ILS

Volunteers:

Evan Kress
Ron Carlson

Board Members:

Peggy Loveless, Interim Board Chair
Gary Fabian, Vice Chair & Treasurer
Troy Ward, Voting Member
Amy Robasse, Voting Member



Collaboration Corner

by Leah Zapf Donald, Executive Director

The team at A2I was very happy to meet University of Iowa Dental Public Health graduate student Spoorthy Suresh recently. We quickly learned that Spoorthy shares our passion for healthcare access, which of course includes the often overlooked dental care! We discussed some of the barriers to dental care and asked our consumers to share their experiences too. Spoorthy created educational materials to distribute and compiled information on local resources. Thank you, Spoorthy!

Pictured above: Leah and Spoorthy display oral health informational brochures created for A2I consumers.



New Training for A2I Staff Members

by Tolor Gray, ILS

A2I Staff members are encouraged to seek continuing learning opportunities to better work with our consumers and communities. Most recent trainings include: NAMI Provider Trainer, 5-Star Quality, Peer Support Specialist Certification, Benefits and Work Incentives Practitioner Certificate, Nursing Facility to Community Transition Webinars, Vocational Rehabilitation Training, IWD Youth Opportunities Training, and continual IL learning programs.

Basically, we're a busy bunch!

Pictured above: Tolor and a board full of notes.



Staff Member Spotlight: Chanel Prince

by Leah Zapf Donald, Executive Director



A2I is so excited to introduce you to our newest team member, Chanel "Nell" Prince! Nell is working out of the Cedar Rapids office to serve our northern counties. Originally from Philadelphia, Nell moved to Iowa in 2015 to enjoy a quieter life with her two-year-old daughter and her two cats, Monroe and Trudy. She enjoys the serenity of being outdoors and hiking, biking or going for a swim.

A self-proclaimed "people person", Nell loves to feel inspired and is truly passionate about helping people and inspiring them to reach their goals. She recalls being most inspired by her late grandfather, a Philadelphia minister, who ended each sermon with the charge to "keep love alive". What a wonderful legacy!

Pictured above:
Chanel in Cedar Rapids

Warmest welcome, Nell!

A Moment with Nell : Your Life Your Voice

by Chanel Prince, ILS

You have the choice whether you stay where you are or where you decide to go. Life is hard, but we have control over how we choose to handle it. Here's a practical coping skill that will help get you kick started to living a life full of happiness.



Get some fresh air



Sometimes leaving the environment can have such a huge impact on our current emotional state. Don't overlook the small things. Examine everything around you; how the wind blows through the trees. How the small ants on the ground work together, or how you can even gaze upon the sky and observe the clouds transform. We too can transform. Remember life can stink, but just like the clouds it doesn't stay that way for too long.

This has been a moment with Nell until next time, live free and keep love alive!

Info & Updates

April is Autism Awareness & Acceptance Month!

Corridor area Autistic Teens & Young Adults as well as their families are welcome to come and enjoy a social event on April 21st at the North Liberty Rec Center at 4:30pm. The event is free and offered to promote social connections in the community.



Due to the ever-changing April weather, the April 21st Mustard Pull at the Iowa City Harvest Preserve will be rescheduled for sometime in May. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for additional updates!

Upcoming Events

April (Autism Awareness Month)

- 10th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 10AM @ Choices, 114 W 2nd St, Washington
- 14th:** Bill Sackter Birthday Bash @ 10Am @ Uptown Bill's, Iowa City
- 21st:** Adults with Autism: Mustard Pull @ 9AM @ Iowa City Harvest Preserve (will be RESCHEDULED DUE TO WEATHER)
- 21st:** Teens with Autism: Social Group @ 4:30PM @ North Liberty Rec Center
- 26th:** Bottom Dollar Documentary @ 5PM @ 515 Kirkwood Ave, Iowa City
- 27th:** Expressive Art Group @ 3PM @ RPlace, Iowa City
- 28th:** Johnson County NAMI Walk @ 8:30AM @ Terry Trueblood Park, Iowa City

May (Mental Health Awareness Month)

- 1st:** Expressive Arts Group @ 4:30PM @ Uptown Bill's, Iowa City
- 8th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 10AM @ Choices, 114 W 2nd St, Washington
- 25th:** Expressive Art Group @ 3PM @ RPlace, Iowa City

June (Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month)

- 5th:** Expressive Arts Group @ 4:30PM @ Uptown Bill's, Iowa City
- 12th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 10AM @ Choices, 114 W 2nd St, Washington
- 22nd:** Expressive Art Group @ 3PM @ RPlace, Iowa City

Tell us a little about why you wanted to be on the board:

I firmly believe that every person has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. To me, part of respecting someone, is listening to their wants and needs instead of assuming you know what is best for them. I love that A2I helps people by respecting their desire for independence, listening to their needs, and helping them find ways to meet their personal goals. I wanted to do what I could to support these efforts, and so I applied to be on the A2I board.

What are you studying and why:

I am currently working on my MA in disability studies. It is a lifetime of experience with disabilities that led me down this path. Over and over I have seen or experienced how people are held back not so much by their impairment, but by our culture and societal expectations. I decided I wanted to learn more about what I could do to create change, and so I returned to school. I will be graduating this year, and I am looking forward to see where life leads me.

Share anything you'd like about your family or pets:

I have a very supportive family, who has encouraged me to pursue my dreams. Their love and encouragement has kept me focused on the big picture, and allowed me to forget things like making dinner without feeling guilty. Our two dogs are not as forgiving when I forget dinner, but their snuggles and dog kisses more than make up for their impatience. ;)

Do you have any special hobbies?:

I LOVE to read, camp, and be outside in nature. Any time outdoors is a good time in my eyes. Nature grounds me, clears my mind, and reminds me to slow down and appreciate all of the blessings I have in life.

Board Member Spotlight: Amy Robasse

by Amy Robasse, Board Member



Apply to be an A2I Board Member

Access 2 Independence of the Eastern Iowa Corridor is looking for a few talented and conscientious volunteer board members to lead and strengthen our programs for individuals with disabilities, both visible and invisible. We are a Center for Independent Living and our services aim to promote the self determination of people with disabilities.

We're especially looking for folks who have experience working with youth, as we look to grow our youth transition programs. In keeping with the Independent Living Philosophy, we encourage interest from persons who have personal experience with a significant disability, either visible or invisible.

If you live in either Johnson, Linn, Jones, Cedar, Henry, Iowa, Benton, or Washington Counties, can contribute your time, thoughtfulness, and leadership one evening a month, and are interested in exploring this opportunity, call our office at 319-338-3870 or email Leah Zapf Donald at ed@access2independence.org to find out whether this volunteer opportunity is right for you.



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