

# KEYS TO INDEPENDENCE



VOLUME 9 ISSUE 3 SEPTEMBER 2007



## CFI ADDS “REP PAYEE” TO MENU OF SERVICES!



The Coalition for Independence (CFI) is announcing the implementation of a new project that will complement existing programming – Rep Payee Services. CFI has been approved as an organizational representative payee by the Social Security Administration. The infrastructure and staffing necessary to successfully operate such a program have been put into place and services are now being offered to disability beneficiaries. Beth Driessel has joined the CFI team as Director of this new program.

The addition of Rep Payee Services advances CFI's commitment to being a cross-disability organization. While CFI will not be providing mental health case management and other therapeutic services, CFI will be working diligently to promote responsible independent living. Just as persons with physical disabilities may require a Personal Care Attendant to assist with activities of daily living and ensure the consumer's health and safety at home, a Rep Payee provides services to persons with mental health

disabilities that ensure their health and safety by making sure that rent and utilities are paid, necessities are present, and that the consumer is not subjected to the financial exploitations of others.



**Beth Anne Driessel** joins CFI as the Director of Rep Payee Services. Until recently, she was the Executive Director of Budget and Financial Management Assistance. From 1984 until 1991, Beth was the Administrative Director of Network Rehabilitation Services (now Truman Medical Center Behavioral Health Network). In addition to her years of experience providing representative payee services to our community's citizens with mental disabilities, Beth brings her relationships with the Social Security Administration and area mental health service providers to supply CFI's newest program with a jumpstart. Beth is a graduate of the University of Nebraska.

## SUCCESS STORY: RICHARD LAWRENCE

Richard Lawrence lives in the rural Missouri town of Norbor, almost a hundred miles from Kansas City. On Friday August 3, 2007, Richard and his five-year old son walked into the Coalition for Independence (CFI) office looking for service. Richard had first sought help from KSHB Channel 41, but the local television station was unable to help him. Station staff suggested that he contact CFI. Despite high gas prices and his truck having over 300,000 miles on it, he decided to visit CFI in person right away.

Independent Living Specialists Michael Spencer and John Pyle met with Richard to hear his story. For 24 years, Richard drove a trash collection truck for the city of Olathe. One day in 2000, he lost pieces of his load and stopped to pick up the debris. As he was climbing off the truck, he fell and landed on a jagged pole that once held a highway sign. The pole impaled Richard between the legs, penetrating deep enough to damage his spinal cord. The city paid for all of Richard's medical bills and he received workers' compensation until 2004. At that time, his condition deteriorated and he applied for Social Security. Richard was

eventually approved and received his first check from Social Security in July 2007.

Richard has been looking, without success, for an attorney since 2004. None have been willing to take his case. In the state of Kansas, Richard is eligible for benefits to continue up to \$150,000. He is entitled to approximately \$60,000 from the state for unpaid benefits. Michael and John helped advocate on Richard's behalf and provided contact information for Disability Rights Center, Missouri Protection and Advocacy, Missouri Legal Aid, and Kansas Legal Aid.

The CFI staffers were lucky enough to contact the right person at Kansas Legal Aid, who went above and beyond her normal course of action. She was able to find an attorney who was willing to meet with Richard. John Stanley came to the CFI office to meet with Richard and explained his rights. John felt that Richard had a valid claim and took the case.

They signed the contract and John will be representing Richard on August 27, 2007.



*From the desk of Clark Byron, Executive Director*

## PCAs Going Above and Beyond

Personal Care Assistants (PCAs) are those wonderful folks who provide in-home assistance to consumers (people living with disabilities). PCAs are essential to the safety, comfort and independence of consumers.

As most of you know, PCAs are chosen by the consumers they serve, and are paid by CFI through the various Medicaid Waiver programs. The pay certainly isn't great, yet PCAs work very hard because their hearts are in their work.

More often than we might realize, PCAs go above and beyond their required duties to provide additional services. They often do this without additional compensation and sometimes at their own personal expense. I hear the reports from various members of our CFI staff, and these stories of dedication and generosity are simply amazing.

There's the one about the PCA who used a good part of his paycheck each month to pay his elderly consumer's utilities. What's more, because his consumer had never had a piece of new clothing in his entire life, the PCA came to work one day with a collection of brand new attire which he purchased especially for his consumer. As you might imagine, the consumer was beside himself with delight.

Then, there's the PCA who, after the passing away of her consumer, continued to work with the consumer's family as they tended to his belongings and grieved his passing. Since Medicaid benefits end with the passing of the consumer, the PCA assisted this family at a very important time, *without* compensation.

These are just two of many accounts of PCAs going above and beyond the call. I am certain there are many others. I hope that folks will tell us whenever a PCA goes the extra mile. We'd really like to know, and we'd really like to share the essence of the story (without names) as I have in this brief piece.

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COOPER'S CORNER BY KATHY COOPER, DIRECTOR OF HCBS

The heat has been bad! So, CFI invites you to come in and enjoy our brand new air conditioning system while taking advantage of our newly moved Resource Library. We have computers with internet and all the latest operating systems so you can find infor-

mation, job search, or write the perfect resume! We also have a selection of disability-related books, magazines, videos and DVDs. We have brochures and local newspapers so you know what is available in your community. Come and check us out and if there is a resource or informa-

tion that you need and can't find it in our library, we can set you up with an Independent Living Specialist who can assist you. So come on in to CFI where you can be cool! Haha! I know, that was bad!



**Disability Mentoring Day and Job Fair 2007**

This is a Kansas City metro area event designed to promote career development for job seekers with disabilities through hands-on career exploration, job shadowing, and internship or mentee/mentor relationships, in addition to a job fair with Kansas City employers. Contact Jay at 913-321-5140 for info.

**KANSAS**

When: Wednesday, October 17th

Where: Olathe Fire Administration

Address: 1225 South Hamilton, Olathe, KS 66061

Time: 9am to 4 pm - Lunch will be provided

**MISSOURI**

When: Wednesday, October 31st

Where: Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Conference Center

Address: 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110

Time: 9 am to 4 pm—Lunch will be provided



CFI staffers were on hand to celebrate the Kansas City leg of the Road to Freedom Tour, a yearlong, cross-country bus journey to raise mainstream awareness of the Americans with Disabilities Act. From left-to-right are Keila Gray, Kathy Cooper, Deb Wilmarth, Melissa Mortallaro, and John Pyle.

**NEW FACES AT COALITION FOR INDEPENDENCE**



**Matthew Rumsey** joins CFI as our new Recycled DME (Durable Medical Equipment) Coordinator. Matt comes to CFI after working as an Obituary Representative for the Kansas City Star. He recently graduated from the University of Missouri, Columbia with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy. Matt will coordinate the incoming requests for durable medical equipment, matching the recycled equipment inventory with the needs of our consumers.



**Jayme Gann** joins CFI as Clark Byron's new Executive Secretary. She will be answering phones, processing mail, managing supplies, and assisting Mr. Byron & Dan Germain, Mr. Byron's Executive Assistant. She comes to CFI from William Jewell College, where she recently obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Vocal Performance. Keep an eye out for any of her future performances because you won't want to miss them!



**Meredith Funkhouser** comes to CFI as the new Director of Assistive Technology. Meredith has a 10-year background with assistive technologies in K-12, post-secondary transitions, work environments as well as home environments. She has an extensive background working with multidisciplinary teams where all facets of assistive technology are determined. Her goals as director for the CFI community include ensuring a durable medical equipment re-use program that meets and exceeds the expectations of the consumer, providing supports to students, parents and school districts for evaluations and resources, and being a bridge for agencies and consumers to resources in the community. Along with durable medical equipment programs for Missouri and Kansas, Meredith will provide assessment and other supports for Missouri Assistive Technology programs that include refurbished computers, internet access, and telephone equipment for consumers who have special needs.



**COALITION FOR INDEPENDENCE**

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
AT [WWW.CFI-KC.ORG](http://WWW.CFI-KC.ORG)

**KEYS FOR INDEPENDENCE**

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Dan Germain, Editor



City of Olathe, Kansas

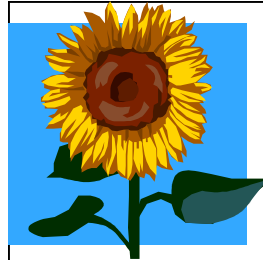
Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board and  
the Olathe Human Relations Commission present:

**Disability Awareness Week 2007**

**Navigating the Waters of Special Needs Planning**  
Monday, October 15  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

**Disability Mentoring Day and Job Fair**  
Wednesday, October 17  
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Community Services Informational Fair**  
Friday, October 19  
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.



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Breakfast and Lunch Served Daily

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Kansas HCBS Medicaid Provider



