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OIL Newsletter



A monthly publication of THE OKLAHOMANS for INDEPENDENT LIVING

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If you are receiving this newsletter in error or no longer wish to receive it, call and we will remove you from our mailing list.

INFORMATION ALERT

President Obama recently signed the \$1.1 trillion 2015 Omnibus Appropriations Bill ensuring that the federal government will be funded through September 2015 (with the exception of the Department of Homeland Security, which will be funded through February 27, 2015). The budget stays within the caps set by Congress last year, and it keeps many disability programs at level funding.

There are several notable items in the FY15 budget. The agreement includes a general provision supporting implementation of section 491 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which transfers NIDRR (which will soon be NIDILRR), independent living programs, and programs under the Assistive Technology Act from

the Administration for Community Living. All three of those programs are level-funded. The budget also designates \$2 million of the \$33 million Assistive Technology Programs funding towards competitive grants to support alternative financing programs for purchasing assistive technology devices.

Within the Department of Education, the budget includes \$1 million in increased funding for Client Assistance State Grants to help transition-aged students with disabilities and individuals with disabilities in subminimum wage positions obtain competitive, integrated employment. It also designates no less than \$2 million of the \$11.8 million Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) funding to support research on strategies to promote academic, social, employment, and independent living outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities.

The agreement also includes language that allows the Secretary of Labor to transfer and use additional funds to provide technical assistance activities related to

implementing the WIOA as quickly and effectively as possible. These additional funds are intended to be a one-time provision only.

The FY15 funding bill keeps the Independent Living Program at level funding, which as we all know, is just not enough. The Independent Living Program is vital, ensuring the rights of people with disabilities and saving the federal government millions of dollar a year.

This is something we need to make sure our elected officials understand when they consider funding for FY16 and beyond. The National Council on Independent Living has pushed Congress and the Administration to invest an additional \$200 million dollars in the Independent Living program, and will continue to do so in the next fiscal year. This next Congress will need to hear from you, too, to understand how important the IL Program is to you, family and friends who benefit from Services and Programs offered by Oklahomans for Independent Living. You are your strongest advocate. Speak up and be heard! Call your representatives and senators today!

US Senator(s)
Senator Thomas Allen Coburn
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Representative Donnie Condit
(Democrat)

State Representative

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IMMEDIATE
OPENINGS AT ROCK
RIDGE ACCESSIBLE
APARTMENTS

If you have a qualifying physical disability and meet the HUD financial requirements, Rock Ridge Apartments are an excellent choice at 808 East Jefferson in McAlester. The one and two bedroom apartments were built one year ago and meet the needs of anyone who utilizes a wheelchair. The units feature for the wheelchair user a roll under kitchen sink and counters, lowered stove and cabinets, and a roll in shower.

Other features and amenities include;

Controlled access entry system
On-site laundry facilities
Outdoor patio
Community room with full kitchen
Off-street parking

If you live in a rural area and are looking to re-locate, now is the time.

For more information or to request a housing application, please call;
toll-free 1-800-466-7722
tty/tdd 1-800-627-3529
Apply online at
www.accessiblespace.org or
pick up an application at OIL.

FREE TAX
ASSISTANCE

The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program provides free assistance to anyone under \$50,000 annually with basic income tax

preparation. The program helps determine if you are eligible to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit and any other credits available. They prepare a simple tax form and then e-file it for you. The service is free to those who meet the income guidelines but new regulations require you to provide proof of your medical insurance. There are two places where you can be helped.

The Ki-Bois Community Action agency is assisting individuals and will continue through April with no appointment necessary. You can reach their offices by calling;
Pittsburg County 918 423-3525
Haskell County 918 967-3325
LeFlore County 918 647-3267
Latimer County 918 465-3381

The Southeastern Public Library in McAlester, 401 South Second Street, 918 426-0930, also offers free tax assistance. They are available only on Mondays from 9:00 a.m. thru 4:00 p.m. The AARP volunteers see individuals on a first come first served basis only.



DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR HOME CARE
RULE VACATED

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) staff members were excited to be at the U.S. District Court for D.C. to hear Judge Richard Leon's ruling in *Home Care Association of America v. Weil* regarding the Department of Labor's Home Care Rule. On December 22, 2014, Judge Leon vacated the third-party employer regulation, and he issued a temporary restraining

order on the entire rule that was set to expire in January. Judge Leon vacated the revised definition of companionship services, the other major provision of the rule, thereby canceling both major provisions of the rule before the restraining order expired. Judge Leon stated once again that the DOL's rule was "trying to do through regulation what must be done through legislation".

NCIL is extremely supportive of and understands the need for higher wages and benefits for personal care attendants. However, the Home Care Rule was an unfunded mandate that would have resulted in widespread service caps and service disruptions, leading to negative health consequences, decreased independence, and increased risk of institutionalization for millions of consumers with disabilities. Before the rule was set to go into effect, we already heard about attendants receiving notices about hours, and therefore income, being cut.

An e-mail from the Department of Labor expressed their dissatisfaction with the ruling and stated that they are considering their legal options. The DOL can decide to appeal, and they will likely do so. However, NCIL applauds Judge Leon's decision and hopes that the DOL will engage with the disability community as they make their decisions moving forward.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS BOWLING RESULTS

Recently, twelve athletes competed in Midwest City for the 2015 Oklahoma Special Olympics Winter Games. The team made the long trip to the competition in January where

six of the twelve qualified to bowl at the Summer Games this year. Congratulations to the OIL Freespirits!



RECREATIONAL MEETING

Come share with us your ideas on Wednesday, February 11th at 1:00 p.m. Let us know what things you would like to do! Call for free local transportation.

VALENTINE'S DANCE

The dance will be on Friday, February 13th from 7:00 -10:00 p.m. It will be held at the Stipe Center, 801 N. 9th Street in McAlester. Bring your sweetheart or maybe come and meet one! Please bring a 2 liter of soda pop or a package of chips or store bought cookies. A live DJ will be there and we will have a dance contest with prizes for the winners! Call OIL for free local transportation.



GAME DAY

We will be playing board games on Tuesday, February 24th. We will gather at 12:00 noon at OIL so if you would like to bring a sack lunch, we'll begin play afterwards. If you have a favorite game, bring it with you.

OIL CLOSED

OIL will be closed on Monday, February 16th for observance of President's Day.

Transportation

O.I.L. provides lift-equipped transportation in McAlester and the surrounding area.

Monday – Thursday, 8:00 – 4:30

Friday 8:00 – 1:00

A twenty-four hour minimum notice is required. The cost is \$2 per pick up in McAlester and \$3 for Krebs and Frink Chambers. Outside this area, fees are based on actual costs of gasoline needed to provide the service.

**Prices are subject to change.*



You can have the freedom that comes with living at home even though you have a long-term illness or disability. The Oklahoma Living Choice Project can help you move out of a nursing home and back into the community.

This project gives Oklahomans like you or your loved one more options to manage health care needs and adds more balance to the state's long-term care system.

If you live in a nursing home and qualify for SoonerCare, then Living Choice may be able to help.

Contact Leah Medina for a referral to the Living Choice Project at (918) 426-6220v/tdd.

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All donations to OIL are tax deductible.

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<i>*Events are held at OIL unless otherwise noted</i>						
EVENTS						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 	2 <u>Brain Injury Gp.</u> 1 pm	3 <u>Social Patron's</u> 5:30 pm	4	5 <u>Shopping</u> 7:00-10:45am	6	7
8	9	10 <u>Men's Gp.</u> Rib Crib 5 pm	11 <u>Recreational Meeting</u> 1 pm	12	13 <u>Valentine's Dance</u> Stipe Ctr. 7 pm 	14 <u>Saturday Transportation</u> 8 am
15	16 OIL CLOSED President's Day	17 <u>Women's Gp.</u> Noon	18	19 <u>Shopping</u> 7:00-10:45am	20	21
22	23	24 <u>Game Day</u> Noon	25	26	27	28 <u>Saturday Transportation</u> 8 am
<p>*Low Impact Exercise Class for Sr.'s meets Mon., Wed., & Fri., 10:00 a.m., Stipe Center *Alzheimer's Support Group, 3rd Wed., 12:30 p.m., Main & OK Church of Christ, call Glenda at 916-1210 *Diabetes Support Group, 1st Tue., 6:00 p.m., McAlester Regional Health Center Wellness Conf. Room, contact Kathy at 421-6812 *For information on Men's & Women's Grief Support Groups – call Hospice of McAlester at 423-3911 for their groups or for information on a 7 week Dealing with Grief Course – call Heartland Hospice. at 302-0700, *For information on the Stroke Support Group, call the McAlester Regional Health Center at 426-1800</p>						

