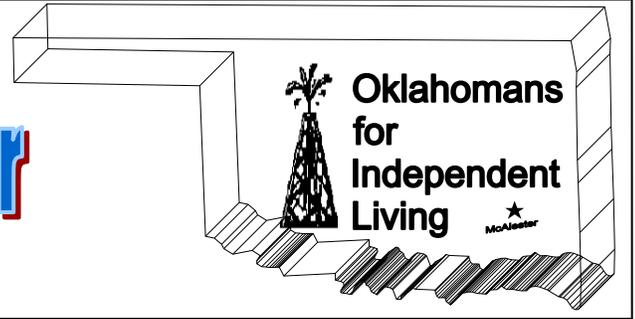


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OIL Newsletter



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.

FUNDRAISERS

Appreciation goes to all who helped with the fundraisers and preparing for and at the Pittsburg County Children with Disabilities Christmas Party. The kids had a great time with Santa and they and their families had a wonderful meal!

TAX-FREE DISABILITY SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

Recently the House & U.S. Senate passed the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) -- a victory for grassroots advocacy for parents and people with disabilities.

Under current rules, many individuals with disabilities can have no more than \$2,000 in assets in order to qualify for needed government benefits.

The ABLE Act will dramatically alter that scenario as it will allow savings accounts without

jeopardizing certain important federal benefits such as SSI and Medicaid. The funds saved in these accounts, if managed correctly, can be another tool in planning for the lifetime support needs of an individual with disabilities.

What this does is simply give individuals with disabilities a chance at the American dream.

Though widely supported in the disability community, a provision limiting eligibility for ABLE accounts to individuals with conditions occurring before the age of 26 has led to misgivings from some disability groups.

The bill must now be signed by the President to become law. Once the law is implemented in each state, the ABLE Act will allow the following:

1. Enable people with disabilities or family members to put \$14,000 up to \$100,000 total in savings.
2. ABLE accounts could generally be rolled over only into another ABLE account for the same individual or into an ABLE account for a sibling who is also an eligible individual.
3. The funds must be spent

on qualified expenses related to the individual's disability, such as health, education, housing, transportation, training, assistive technology, personal support, and related services and expenses.

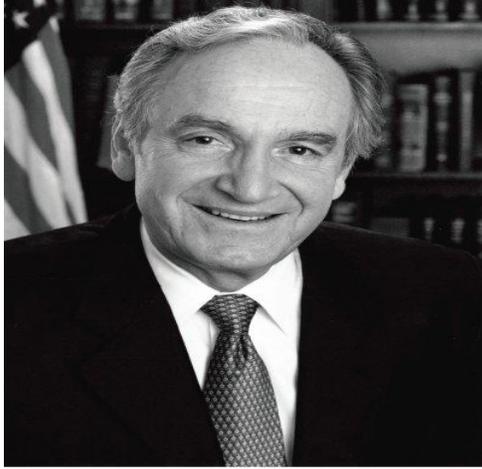
Sadly, the man who conceived and worked tirelessly to pass the legislation, Steve Beck of Burke, Virginia, died suddenly only weeks ago. Steve was 44 years old and the parent of two daughters, including Natalie who had a disability. Steve, along with a group of parents around his kitchen table, conceived the idea of a savings account for his daughter, similar to the 529 account used for college savings. The passage of this Act is a wonderful tribute to the memory of Steve Beck.

ADAPT PUSHES BILL TO END

INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

Senator Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, probably would be the first to admit that when he retires from the United States Senate in January, he will leave behind one major piece of unfinished business.

It has long been Harkin's desire to put an end to the institutional bias in Medicaid that has forced



Senator Tom Harkin/Google Images

hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities into nursing homes and institutions against their will. For people with disabilities who qualify for long-term services and supports (LTSS) under Medicaid, states are required to provide placement in a nursing home. But there is no requirement to provide home and community-based services.

So on June 24, to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court's Olmstead decision, Harkin introduced the Community Integration Act. **The bill would put an end to institutional bias by amending the Social Security Act to guarantee individuals eligible for LTSS under Medicaid "the choice and opportunity to receive such care in a home and community-based setting..."**

The CIA is a collaboration between Harkin and the direct action disability rights group ADAPT. ADAPT organizer Bruce Darling said he and other ADAPT members came up with the language of the CIA and sent it to Harkin's office, where the wording was massaged some more.

But Darling said that when the CIA passes in its current form, it

will be the next great milestone in disability rights legislation. "It ... levels the playing field and says states must provide long-term services and supports and not just nursing home placement."

The Olmstead decision was supposed to accomplish that same goal. But it's no secret that state governments often ignore federal legislative and judicial civil rights mandates until they are forced to comply.

According to the CIA:
*Spending on individuals with disabilities in institutions as compared to home and community-based settings, more than 75 percent of states continue to spend the majority of their long-term-care dollars on nursing homes and other institutional settings, and the number of individuals with disabilities under age 65 in nursing homes increased between 2008 and 2012.

*As of June 2013, there were more than 200,000 individuals younger than age 65 in nursing homes -- almost 16% of the total nursing home population.

*Thirty-eight studies published from 2005 to 2012 concluded that providing services in home and community based settings is less costly than providing care in a nursing home or other institutional setting.

It's also no secret that even when states have LTSS programs, arbitrary restrictions keep many people who need those programs from actually receiving them. "Things like waiting lists (and) caps on services are the insidious ways people are forced into

institutions," Darling said. "(The CIA) says it's not enough to provide LTSS. You can't limit access to them."

The CIA says states cannot "impose or utilize policies, practices, or procedures, such as unnecessary requirements or arbitrary service or cost caps that limit the availability of services in home and community-based settings."

The CIA even attempts to address the profound shortage of affordable, accessible, integrated housing that keeps disabled people trapped in nursing homes. It says that within 180 days of enactment, each state must "develop a state-wide plan to increase the availability of affordable and accessible private and public housing stock for individuals with disabilities ..."

The CIA will have to be reintroduced in the next Congress, and a new champion will be needed because Harkin is retiring. Darling said that his organization is talking to certain senators and representatives who are willing to assume that role. He also said that the reintroduction strategy may include amending the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make the CIA another title rather than amending the Social Security Act.

"It moves it into a discourse that we're extremely comfortable with," Darling said. "If you don't support our efforts on this, you are fundamentally opposing the civil rights of people with disabilities. You're either with us or against us. It shows the people who are opposing our civil right for what they are."

It is being seen as the next great disability rights frontier.

“Americans with disabilities have a civil right to live in the community,” he said. “With the ADA, we mobilized our community to take action. That’s what we have to do 25 years later.”

OIL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

This is a **tentative** schedule only. The dates may change so be sure to check each monthly newsletter for any updates.



2015

February

- 2nd Brain Injury Group
1 pm
- 3rd Men’s Gp – 5 pm
Rib Crib
- 5th Shopping – 7am
- 10th Social - 5:30 pm
Patron’s
- 13th Valentine’s Dance
7 pm
J.I. Stipe Center
- 14th Saturday Transportation
- 17th Women’s Group - TBA
11 am
- 19th Shopping – 7 am
1 pm
- 24th Game Day
1 pm
- 28th Saturday Transportation

March

- 2nd Brain Injury Group
1 pm
- 3rd Men’s Group - 5 pm
Steak n Shake
- 5th Shopping – 7 am
- 10th Social - 5:30 pm
Pizza Inn
- 13th St. Patrick’s Day
Breakfast - 8:30 am
Boomerang Diner

- 14th Saturday Transportation
- 16th Brain Injury Group
1 pm
- 17th Women’s Group - TBA
11 am
- 19th Shopping – 7 am
- 24th Movie Night – 5:30 pm
- 28th Saturday Transportation

April

- TBA Area Special Olympics
- 2nd Shopping – 7 am
- 6th Brain Injury Group
1 pm
- 7th Men’s Group - 5 pm
Steak n Shake
- 11th Saturday Transportation
- 14th Social - 5:30 pm
Boomerang
- 16th Shopping - 7 am
- 21st Women’s Group
11 am
- 20th Brain Injury Group
1 pm
- 25th Saturday Transportation

May

- TBA Special Olympics
State Games
- TBA Picnic - 5:30 pm
Chadick Park
- 2nd Armed Forces Day
Parade – Downtown
- 4th Brain Injury Group
1pm
- 5th Men’s Group - 5 pm
Mazzio’s
- 7th Shopping – 7 am
- 16th Saturday Transportation
- 19th Women’s Group - TBA
11 am
- 21st Shopping – 7 am 30th
Saturday Transportation
- 26th Game Day - 1 pm
Chadick Park

June

- 1st Brain Injury Group
1 pm
- 2nd – 4th Children’s Camp
PLEA
McAlester AAP
- 4th Shopping – 7 am
- 6th & 7th Endeavor Games
OCU - Edmond

- 9th – 11th Adult Camp PLEA
McAlester AAP
- 13th Saturday Transportation
- 15th Brain Injury Group
1 pm
- 16th OIL Social 5:30 pm
Chadick Park
- 18th Shopping – 7 am
- 23rd Women’s Group
12 pm
Chadick Park
- 27th Saturday Transportation

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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The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

<i>*Events are held at OIL unless otherwise noted</i>						
EVENTS						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 OIL CLOSED	2	3 <u>Saturday Transportation</u> 8 am
4	5 <u>Brain Injury Gp.</u> 1 pm	6 <u>Men's Gp.</u> Mazzio's 5 pm	7	8 <u>Shopping</u> 7:00-10:45am	9 <u>Special Olympics Bowling Competition</u>	10
11	12	13 <u>Social</u> Western Sizzlin' 5:30 pm	14	15	16	17 <u>Saturday Transportation</u> 8 am
18	19 OIL CLOSED	20 <u>Women's Gp.</u> TBA 11am	21	22 <u>Shopping</u> 7:00-10:45am	23	24
25	26	27 <u>Movie Night</u> Aldridge 5:30 pm	28	29	30	31
<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 <u>Dealing with Grief Course</u> – call Heartland Hospice. at 302-0700, *For information on the Stroke Support Group, call the McAlester Regional Health Center at 426-1800</p>						

