



*Serving Kansans with disabilities*



## Message from the Executive Director

By Chad A. Wilkins

An old Swahili proverb says, "If you ever think we are too small to make a difference, try spending the night cooped up with a mosquito." Well, it's time for us all to start buzzing.

Each year the legislature approves funding for the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers that assist thousands of people with disabilities to stay independent, make their own choices, and live as they prefer. Over the last few months, the HCBS Physical Disability (PD) waiver has helped more people than was appropriated in the 2009 budget.

Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) has put a freeze on the HCBS PD waiver funding effective December 1, 2008 through at least July 1, 2009. Individuals who are eligible and need these PD HCB services will be put on a waiting list until the freeze is lifted.

Advocacy will be more important now than ever! Talk to your legislators, network through your grassroots advocacy partners, and let the decision makers in Topeka hear your voice! It is important that they know what devastating effects this budget cut will have.

### RCIL Announces Addition of Legislative Advocate

RCIL is proud to introduce Kathy Cooper as our new Legislative Advocate. She will give us a strong voice and presence during the legislative sessions in Topeka. Kathy brings a wealth of Independent Living experience and a working knowledge of programs and services to RCIL. If you or someone you know has concerns about legislative issues, Kathy can be reached by calling toll-free 1-877-439-2847.



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"Great works are performed not by strength, but perseverance"

- Samuel Jackson (1709-1784)

# We Have Issues!

**ADVOCACY! ADVOCACY! ADVOCACY!:** This Year is Going to be a Tough One!

By Anne-Marie Hughey, Legislative Advocate, SKIL

Even though the 2009 legislative session has not yet begun, it is time to tool up for our biggest advocacy drive ever! As we are already feeling the devastating effects of the State's financial crisis, the State's budget for fiscal year (FY) 2010 is going to be **ONE BILLION DOLLARS SHORT**, and it is required by the Kansas constitution for the State to have a balanced budget. The state will be looking to agencies to cut 11% to 22% from each of their FY 2010 budget.

The first significant effect of the budget crisis came on December 1, 2008 when Social and Rehabilitation Services put a freeze on the Home and Community Based (HCBS) Waiver for People with Physical Disabilities. **What does this mean?** That as of December 1, individuals with physical disabilities who need and are eligible for PD Waiver HCB services will be put on a waiting list until June 30, 2009, or potentially longer.

The consequences of such a decision are devastating to persons with disabilities who are utilizing the program. It is disheartening to members of the families and advocates. Also, it means we will see an increase of persons going into nursing homes. The financial and health condition of eligible persons is the same for both programs. The nursing home program is an entitlement program that means for every two persons maintained in HCBS, it will cover the cost of only one in a nursing home. This is a break with the State's historical precedent over the last 25 years of emphasizing individuals being in their own homes and communities. It is also contrary to any kind of health care reform if health care reform is thought of in terms of lessening the need for expensive institutional care.



We also know that when people with disabilities are able to receive home and community based services through the waiver, the likelihood of them obtaining and/or maintaining integrated and competitive employment, and thereby becoming tax paying citizens of the state is much higher.

**That is why all of us must immediately develop a positive working relationship with our Representative and Senators, share with them the SILCK/KACIL Budget and Policy Priorities, and educate them on how funding the following budget requests will help Kansas AVOID more costly services.**



## RCIL Assistive Technology Specialist Makes a Real Difference for an American Veteran

RCIL Assistive Technology Specialist Mikel McCary was recently recognized by Sgt. Scott Stephenson and the Patriot Guard Riders' HOTH fund for his efforts to assist Sgt. Stephenson in securing donations of the expensive equipment needed to make his home accessible. Mikel's assistance supported Sgt. Stephenson's choice to live in his home after he was injured while on active duty in Iraq. An informal ceremony was held on December 7<sup>th</sup> in Atchison to thank Mikel and the others who made these modifications possible.

Mikel McCary specializes in Assistive Technology and works from the RCIL office in Topeka.

## SILCK and KACIL announce 2009 Budget and Policy Priorities

By Kathy Cooper, Legislative Advocate

SILCK (Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas) and KACIL (Kansas Association of Centers for Independent Living) have announced their 2009 Budget and Policy Priorities. SILCK is made up of members from diverse disability populations that, as a whole group, will develop a State Plan to ensure Independent Living in Kansas, advocate for people with disabilities, monitor and evaluate the State Plan. KACIL is made up of representatives from ten of the Centers for Independent Living in Kansas that work together to further Independent Living in Kansas. SILCK and KACIL work together to advocate and ensure that "all Kansans with disabilities have opportunities for independent living and enjoy their civil and human rights."

To prevent people with disabilities from having to go to a nursing facility we need to RESTORE services to the physically disabled.

Developed with these guiding principles from our grassroots network of individuals in the field:

1. Separate but equal is not equal.
2. We want to be homeowners and taxpayers.
3. We want employment in the private sector.
4. We want to be partners in settling housing and transportation issues.
5. We don't want labels. Labels are demeaning.
6. Assistive technology is vital in being independent.
7. We want to be a part of a working society.
8. We want less medical emphasis in the HCBS programs.
9. We want to move away from all varieties of institutional care.
10. We want incentives and accountability for competitive, integrated employment built into HCBS.
11. We want to be partners with input related to executive and legislative issues.

We ALL need to talk with our legislators and ask them to:

- Support SRS supplemental budget request for \$5.5M SGF (State General Funds) to eliminate the freeze (waiting list) for the FY 2009 PD waiver.
- Support SRS budget request for \$3.5M SGF to maintain no waiting list policy for the PD waiver in FY 2010
- Support SRS supplemental budget request for \$2.0M SGF to maintain the current number of persons on the DD waiver.
- Support KDOA budget request for \$700,000 to maintain no waiting list for the FE waiver in FY 2010.
- Support SRS budget request for \$7.3M SGF to reduce DD waiver waiting list
- Restore funding \$375,000 to the AT program

Also, let them know we appreciate the increase set forth last year by the legislature and Governor related to the Protected Income Level (PIL). However we need continue to work to insure that the 2009 SSA cost of living increase goes to consumers, not the state general fund.

I wish you all a very happy and peaceful holiday season, and look forward to ADVOCATING with all of you as we work to achieve the SILCK/KACIL Policy Committee 2009 Budget & Policy Priorities.



## Websites to Check Out! by Kathy Cooper, Legislative Advocate

If you are put on an indefinite waiting list instead of receiving services on the PD waiver, you can file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights. The Olmstead Act requires that consumers be given a choice for the most integrated setting to live in. Right now there is funding for nursing facilities but not the HCBS PD waiver, only one option is not a choice! Check out [www.hhs.gov/ocr/discrimhowtofile.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/discrimhowtofile.html).

Want to know who your local legislators are? Check out <http://www.kslegislature.org/legisportal/redistricting.do>

**Don't have access to the internet?** Remember that RCIL offices have computers available for our consumers to use for advocacy, job searches and research on disability related topics. Call your local office for more details.



***You are invited! Please Come!***

***RCIL Friends***

***By Adam Burnett***

RCIL "Friends" groups, formerly known as Consumer Advocacy Council (CAC) meetings, are held once a month at several RCIL offices. The purpose of these meetings is for RCIL consumers to share ideas, resources, and experiences, to learn about new services and programs, and to **have some fun!**

Want to learn more about Social Security work incentives?  
Do you want to hear a special guest speaker? Have an advocacy project that you'd like some support with?  
Just want to get out of the house and meet some new friends?

**Come to your next local "Friends" meeting!**

### **RCIL Friends Holiday MEETING SCHEDULE**

Iola: December 4<sup>th</sup>

El Dorado: December 5<sup>th</sup>

Osage City: December 10<sup>th</sup>

Fort Scott: December 15<sup>th</sup>

Emporia: December 16<sup>th</sup>

Overland Park: December 17<sup>th</sup>

Arkansas City: December 18<sup>th</sup>

Topeka: December 18<sup>th</sup>



## Kansas Gas Service's Cold Weather Rule

The Kansas Gas Service (or KGS) would like to remind all customers that it has the Cold Weather Rule option that runs from November 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>. The Cold Weather Rule allows for special payment and disconnection procedures for residential natural gas customers with unpaid accounts to continue or restore service through the cold weather period. In order to prevent service interruptions when the temperature is 35 degrees or above, or to have service turned back on regardless of the temperature, you must:

- Inform Kansas Gas Service if you are unable to pay the bill in full.
- Provide Kansas Gas Service with adequate information to start a monthly payment agreement.
- Pay 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the total account balance along with any disconnection or reconnection fees, or any required deposit installments.
- Apply for federal, state, and local energy assistance funds that you may be eligible for.

Another option is to sign up for the Equal Payment Plan. This allows customers to pay a 12 month average each month for their gas bill. For example, during the winter when gas usage is generally higher, customers will pay less than they actually use, but during the summer when gas usage is generally lower, customers will pay more than they are using to make up for the winter months. Please contact your local Kansas Gas office for more information.



## Disability Program Navigator Initiative

The Department of Labor (DOL) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) have established a new position, the Disability Program Navigator, within DOL's One-Stop Career Centers.

The Disability Program Navigator helps people with disabilities navigate through the challenges of seeking work. Fear of losing cash assistance and health benefits can often discourage people with disabilities from working. The Disability Program Navigator (DPN) initiative has been started to better inform beneficiaries and other people with disabilities about the work support programs now available at DOL funded Career Centers. These Centers provide information, training, and other employment related services at a single location. This initiative is developing new and ongoing partnerships to achieve seamless, inclusive and integrated access to services, creating systemic change, and expanding the workforce development system's ability to serve customers with disabilities and employers.

**Resource Center for  
Independent Living**

1137 Laing  
Osage City, KS 66523

**Phone:**

(785) 528-3105

(800) 580-7245

TDD (785) 528-3106

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(785) 528-3665

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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*  
[www.rcilinc.org](http://www.rcilinc.org)

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**Satellite Office Locations:**

Arkansas City  
126 E. Washington  
620-442-0775

Coffeyville  
811 Maple  
620-251-4655

Emporia  
625 Merchant, Suite 238  
620-342-1648

Iola  
726 W. Patterson  
620-365-8144

Overland Park  
10200 W. 75th, Suite 100  
913-362-6618

Burlington  
410 Cumberland  
620-364-2263

El Dorado  
615 ½ N. Main  
316-322-7853

Fort Scott  
710 W. 8<sup>th</sup>, Suite 201  
620-223-5670

Ottawa  
1302 S. Main, Suite 8  
785-242-1805

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