APRIL IS FAIR HOUSING MONTH

Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.
From the Editor....

BY VICKI LEEPER

HOME SWEET CAN'T FIND A HOME

Being Fair Housing month, it puts finding a home at the top of mind. But, oh wait, it's already been there for a long time. I'm lucky, I've been settled in a home I bought 30+ years ago. I worry about young people trying to find a place, even a starter home now. When I shopped there was a program called Fannie Mae that you could purchase a home with very little down. Then you could pay back your downpayment in about 5-6 years when you refinance.

Mortgage insurance was quite a bit less then too. As well as home prices. It was totally possible to purchase a home within the one third of your take home pay. I don't understand how anyone can purchase a home (starter homes starting at $250,000) and pay mortgage insurance, taxes, and interest and have it be only one third of your take-home. Mathematically, it's impossible. And yet, rental prices are nearly as bad. It's time to take a look at programs like Fannie Mae and help out first time buyers instead of banks.

"Regardless of your ability or disability we all face challenges in life. One can see them as hurdles or barriers. Barriers are designed to hold people back. Hurdles are made to jump over. The choice is yours." ~ Tom Moran, member White House Disability Summit
COMMUNITY EVENTS FOR YOU!
FEBRUARY 2022

Apr 9th       - 5K For Mental Health  
PCEI, Moscow, ID

Apr 15th      - Taking Action, Saving Lives  
LCSC, Lewiston, ID

Apr 20th      - Youth Transition Fair  
Moscow High School, Moscow, ID

Apr 20th      - Could I be Autistic? Webinar  
Spokane, WA

Apr 28th      - Emergency Preparedness Workshop  
Dept of Labor, Post Falls ID

Apr 30th      - Family Fun Fair  
Coeur d'Alene, ID

For registration and details of events visit  
www.dacnw.org/events/

MENTAL HEALTH 5K
Join us!  
April 9, 2022, 10am  
PCEI, Moscow, Idaho
The DAC NW office in Post Falls is happy to be open and to start doing things in person! They will be hosting Emergency Preparedness workshops - just in time for the approach of fire season in the inland northwest.

"We are excited to have our volunteer, Bill Steele, who is a retired Fire Chief lead these workshops," said Sherri Boelter, Independent Living Advocate in that office. The experience and expertise he brings to this will help answer questions anyone may have.

A person with a disability has to be especially prepared for an emergency. They have to consider things like medications, service animals and support animals, and assistive technology that they need.

In these workshops you will learn how to build a To-Go Bag and what to include to make it through several days to a week, possibly being in a shelter. How to check your smoke alarms and carbon dioxide alarms so they are in good working order. You can learn how to operate and use a fire extinguisher, which types are best suited to home use and where to store them for easy access. If you own your own home, you need to know how to keep a defensible space around it. He will explain how to create and maintain this space. Also, how to make sure you provide access for first responders to all parts of your property.

The workshop is free to attend! You can take part April 28th from 1-3 pm at the Department of Labor, 600 N Thornton in Post Falls. Bring your questions and get prepared! Call Sherri at 208.457.3891 to reserve your spot.
LINC - ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

Just because the state legislature is finished, that does not mean your chance to have your voice heard has ended. Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill might have said this while serving in Congress, his point is true - so many decisions made about our daily lives occurs at a local, not national, level. From cities and counties, to school districts and other special districts, each group that makes these decisions has a process through which we, the people, can give our feedback.

See a problem that needs to be addressed? Want to begin some local systems advocacy? No matter who is making the decision, if they are elected or paid by the tax payer, they can receive comments from the public. Here's how to get started:

1> Find out who makes the decisions about your issue. This may take a couple of phone calls or internet searches, but there is an answer.

2> Begin attending their meetings and read their materials like meeting minutes, communication and more. Most have a website and social media pages that show you what they have covered recently. Get to know this group. Research who is on the board or council. Understanding who they are as people will help you.

3> Find out when things happen. Every organization has a funding cycle. For large projects, that may be once a year. Once that budget is set, no amount of advocating will help. Talk to paid staff to find out these cycles.

Using these 3 steps will enable you to understand who you are asking and how to ask them! If you are interested in self-advocacy training, check out LINC’s website for more information!
What does accessibility mean to me? Accessibility means living your life with dignity and respect. Limiting a person and their decisions, even unintentionally, diminishes their ability to have a say in their own life. It can even cause them to second guess every little thing. People with disabilities are often an afterthought in our own communities.

Feasibility of fully accessible housing or public businesses is often discussed. They seem to forget their aging parent or a child who cannot access their accommodation needs for education or healthcare. We have been fighting for over 50 years just to be a part of the larger community. We still struggle to be viewed as people too. Our culture has been exclusionary for far too long.

An issue that gets to me is my rights as a parent can be removed due to my disability. Or that if I get married then all my benefits will be taken away, or if I get divorced then my former spouse can use my disability as a legitimate disqualification to parent my own child. And would I even be viewed as able to adopt a child if I have a disability?

Being a parent is one of life's most precious gifts and people with disabilities are not taken seriously as parents. Parents with disabilities can be capable, effective and loving parents. It's true that there can be bad parents with disabilities, just as there are bad parents with those without disabilities. The disability should never be a part of the discussion as to whether someone is an effective parent.

During the 2002 and 2003 legislative sessions, Idaho became the first state in the US to pass comprehensive legislation aimed at ensuring the rights of parents with disabilities in child welfare, family law, guardianship, and adoption matters (Callow et al., 2011). Judges in Washington State will always make child custody decisions based on what is in the best interests of the child, but the issue is that many do not understand that just because a parent is disabled does not mean that he or she should not be part of a child's life. We can work together to change that!

Working for Independence, Equity, and Justice!
Empower Idaho is sponsoring the virtual Mental Health Art Exhibition on Saturday May 21, 12:00 - 2:00 pm MDT. This exhibition features Idaho artists' work that is inspired by their experiences with mental health. Each artist will have an opportunity to speak about their pieces and share their experience and relationship with mental health.

The online format will allow people throughout Idaho and beyond to take part and attend from the comfort and safety of their homes. Free and open to all. You can submit your art by April 30th. Register here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSChhmjSjg7i2hPuPVOzLFPhrF0pFDH9sFtgp_1OK5XnsHMGQ/viewform

May is Mental Health Awareness month and Idaho celebrates the strength and community mindedness of Idahoans. We are a resilient, caring and compassionate people and together we have faced many challenges in the past few years! Our goal is to change the dialogue around mental illness. Mental Health Matters - no more and no less than physical health. It’s important to acknowledge the two are intertwined and equally as important. Work to support your neighbor, create a stronger Idaho. The pandemic taught us that there is power in community. Human nature calls for collectiveness in times of need and beyond. Everyone's goal this year is to strengthen compassion through community.

A CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
In an ideal world, organizations would inherently practice accessibility because it is the right thing to do and because it is good for business. While organizations don’t explicitly go out of their way to create inaccessible content, it is oftentimes difficult to prioritize accessibility amongst constantly changing new technologies and development practices.

What most organizations don’t realize is that starting with accessibility in mind can unlock a huge, overlooked market share, reduce potential legal risk, lower operational costs, and boost brand value. These positive factors end up helping organizations control costs to the extent that the accessibility efforts can pay for themselves. And, if it’s really done right, accessibility can certainly become a competitive advantage, especially in the eCommerce space. Right now, the spending power of working age people with disabilities is huge. Roughly 35% of working adults report having at least one disability. That’s a market share of $490 billion.

70% of websites have some type of critical accessibility blocker for people who are blind. That means $6.9 billion dollars in sales were lost because a person who is blind was unable to register on the site or complete the purchase.

To lower operational costs of doing business, many are switching to more ways to do e-commerce. That means targeting 60% of their sales to digital sources. Of the sales that were lost due to accessibility issues, 90% of those reported the issue to customer service multiple times. Pushing more traffic to your call center is costing the business time and money.

Not being accessible leaves you vulnerable to lawsuits. These have increased because in the last two years, digital business has become more important to everybody. Legal fees alone are expensive and the required accessibility changes are on top of that.

We all wish we lived in an ideal world where accessibility was taught to all developers and treated the same priority as other functional requirements, like security. It’s time to for businesses to include accessibility as part of their core values. When businesses demand it as part of their web development - that will be the start of systemic change.
SELF-DIRECTED PA SERVICES

UNIVERSAL DESIGN BEING BUILT INTO HOUSING

Designing an accessible home can be modern and fun-loving. Planning for open, clutter-free floor space makes it easy for the whole family, including the wheelchair user, to get around. Accessibility takes from no one and gives to everyone. You will never regret having a zero entrance or a wider door!

Every home should be built with wide halls and doorways. A wheelchair-friendly bathroom can be spacious and elegant. And these features will make life easier in the future for your family and visitors. When you design for someone with the least mobility it brings greater freedom to everyone.

Things to consider is making a kitchen more usable for everyone, including kids, by having many lower cabinets and drawers, with wide easy-to-use pulls. This keeps things handy like dishes and the microwave and frees up wall space above the counter for an open airy feel.

Hardwood floors are easier to keep clean and maneuver with a wheelchair without tiring. Have sinks built with space to roll up to. Even if you do not have grab bars now, plan for reinforced studs for their placement later. Consider a low bed that is easier to get in and out of. Even accessories like lamps can be purchased that turn on and off with a single touch. And ceiling lights and window shades can now be controlled by voice command. Arrange furniture to create breathing room and make it easier to navigate. Utilize round tables and eliminate tough corners to bang into. And don't forget using lever handle door knobs instead of standard round ones.

By thinking about these principles now, you can build a home for you to age in place comfortably. And make a welcome place to visit for friends and family who may have mobility issues.

SERVICES YOU CONTROL!
IDAHO SILC - SPIL(L) IT!
It's time for a new Idaho State Plan for Independent Living. That's where YOU come in! Partnering with CIL's across the state, we will meet and gather information from you about:

›How your community is serving people with disabilities in regard to housing, transportation, healthcare, education, job training, employment, recreation, community access and any other area.

›Helping us determine where to direct resources for people with disabilities to be able to live in their community with the supports they need.

We also want to provide an overview of the duties and responsibilities of CIL's and core services they provide. And to tell the public about our State Plan for Independent Living. Meetings have been scheduled now through June in Southeastern Idaho and North Central Idaho. Coming this summer there will be more meetings scheduled in North Idaho and South Central and Southwestern Idaho. All locations are accessible. Materials are provided in accessible formats. You can request language interpretation (ASL, Spanish, etc) or other disability accommodations by calling the SILC at least 10 days in advance at 208-334-3800 or toll free 1-800-487-4866 or email janey.bruesch@silc.idaho.gov

If you are unable to attend a meeting or would like to give additional input, please complete our survey here. English: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5R7KZDV
Spanish: https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/Z25FVYV
Additional formats, including large print or Braille are available on request at the numbers above.

For dates, times and location of meetings, check the website here. www.silc.idaho.gov
Achieving the Business Career of your Dreams with a Disability

The business world is thriving. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the number of jobs in business and finance is protected to grow by 8% from 2020 to 2030. When you face challenges in your life, you can better your career outlook by choosing an industry expected to grow. It helps to know how to go about that process.

Go to school online. Maybe your disability hinders you from driving or makes it difficult to attend school in crowded buildings. Or maybe it's a time issue. You can increase your career prospects by earning a business degree. And you can do so online at your convenience. Earn you associate's, bachelor's, master's, or even a doctorate online on a schedule that works for you.

Choose a Degree Program. Select your degree program carefully. Think about career goals that make sense for you. Some examples include business administration, marketing, operations, accounting and economics.

Choose a University. Be up front with your counselor and let them know what types of accommodations you may need. Ask if they can help.

Getting Financial Aid. Fill out your free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) to determine if you're eligible. Look to other organizations that work with disabled individuals for grants and other financial assistance to get a degree.

Land a Great Internship. An internship can change the direction of your career. Search for one where you will stand out and have the possibility for employment in the future. Ask professors and counselors for internship options. Search career boards like ZipRecruiter.

As you apply for jobs, remember that you aren't your disability. Leverage your strengths and sell yourself. Set up a LinkedIn profile. Create a solid reference list. And don't hesitate to ask the company if they can make accommodations for you.
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

GO TALK BUTTON

Because you create the recording, the Go Talk Button message can be in any language, dialect or accent! Its compact size (about 2" in diameter) makes it easy to slip into your pocket. Or use the built-in magnet to keep on the fridge or any other metal surface. Use several GoTalk Buttons for multiple messages in different places. Each holds a recording of up to 10 seconds.

At a cost of $19.99 each you can have several. www.autism-products.com

Elastic Shoe Laces

If you find bending over and tying your shoes difficult, try these elastic shoelaces. They turn any lace up shoe into a slip on, yet hold the shoe on securely. Allows enough stretch to slip on or off easily. Comes with a cord-lock feature so they stay in the shoe. Or you can tie them in the usual manner.

About $9.00 from www.autism-products.com

STUFF TO MAKE LIFE EASIER
Here's a document designed to help you advocate for systems change. This guide was created to help transform the way disabled people plan for and participate in multiple forms of activism with the support of community and fellow organizers. We hope this contributes to the life-affirming and essential practice of interdependence within activism.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-g2dkq17NsRmLum-Km-eTykoBtv5xNHAIJK2hS9fs/edit?fbclid=IwAR3guezFiGwDtCyNL-PcqwsoK4bKR2dL5bD7WZKBpwwLLQ7762ZbHZX7QjSU

This guide will help you write in EasyRead, an accessible format that uses pictures and easy to understand language. Creating your resources in Easy Read helps make sure that all people with disabilities have the tools they need to understand documents.


Through a blog, social media following of 900,000 and now a book, one mom fosters greater understanding of severe autism. Mom Kate candidly describes how she overcomes things in her parenting. Both funny and serious, you are sure to come away with a gem.

https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2022/04/04/a-mom-shares-secret-world-autism-how-transformed-her-life/29790/

Too often, when parents find out their kid is autistic, they receive negative messages from all sides. This resource cuts through myths and misconceptions and explains autism from an autistic perspective. When you learn your kid is autistic, you’re also learning that they’re part of a larger community of autistic people! Download the free ebook.

https://autisticadvocacy.org/book/start-here/

You can explore a number of topics related to autism at the Autism Resource Center. Facts sheets, plus video clips, and clinical resources round out the information you can find on the site.

NEW DISABLED PUPPET ON SESAME STREET

Ameera, the latest Muppet character from the team at Sesame Workshop, will soon make her debut on the new season of "Ahlan Simsim," the version of "Sesame Street" that airs in the Middle East and North Africa. A born leader, Ameera is 8 years old and loves science and basketball. When she's not dreaming up experiments or shooting hoops, she loves cracking jokes and making her friends laugh.

Ameera also happens to use a wheelchair or forearm crutches because of a spinal cord injury. That small detail is meant to acknowledge the estimated 12 million people with disabilities around the world who have been forcibly displaced. The hope, the Sesame Workshop team says, is that children with physical disabilities will see themselves in Ameera, and that able-bodied children will see Ameera as not so different from them after all.

"Ameera is a really fun and cool girl," said Deborah Marie Rodríguez García, education manager of humanitarian programs at Sesame Workshop. "She loves sports, and she loves science, technology, engineering and math. We wanted to make sure that that is represented as well -- that girls can go against the gender stereotypes and biases." Aside from being a regular character on "Ahlan Simsim," Ameera will also be featured in a series of early learning videos aimed at children displaced by conflict around the world -- the videos are currently being adapted for kids affected by the war in Ukraine.
CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

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