

THE PIPELINE

The newsletter from OIL

Volume 23,
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Third Quarter
2018



Artist David Kontra **Consumer Directed Services Spotlight**



ARTIST DAVID KONTRA in his studio.

David Kontra is an artist who has sold over 500 works. His pieces have been shown in group and solo exhibits in galleries across the country, from coast to coast. He is self-taught and draws inspiration from sources as varied as a visit to Europe and a cross-country bus trip he embarked on while he was still in his teens. All of that is impressive enough, but add to the mix that he's done it – including the traveling which he did alone – while also being legally blind, and David emerges as truly remarkable.

He was nine years old when he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa or RP, which is marked by degeneration of the retina. He says for seven years he was basically a “Guinea pig,” going from one specialist to another, sometimes as

often as twice a week, with doctors giving conflicting opinions about his condition and offering different kinds of advice for David and his family. Finally, when he was 16, the diagnosis was definitively reconfirmed. It was a diagnosis which verified David had a condition for which there is no treatment, as RP causes a progressive loss of visual field.

David says he went through a time of depression after that, taking chances, not really caring about the consequences of his actions, and not knowing what to do with his life. He also had a lot of people telling him what he could and couldn't do because of his blindness. After a while, he decided listening to the negative opinions of others and feeling sorry for himself was not the best course of action, so he moved forward. He has a love for music, and he had a band for a while. He ran a cafeteria. He was an antiques dealer. During that time he was still looking for direction. He eventually found it.

Starting at the age of 10, David had begun drawing and sketching, but he had been uncertain about his efforts, not really having any way to gauge how good they were. In the late 1980s, a friend saw some of his work. She liked it and encouraged him to think about developing his artistic talents. He started painting in 2001, sold a couple of small pieces on eBay for a few dollars each and was encouraged enough to get really serious about his art.

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ADDRESS:

Office Square
109 Aid Avenue
West Plains, MO 65775

PHONE:

417-256-8714
417-257-0038
Voice/TDD Toll Free:
1-888-440-7500

FAX: 417-257-2380

FACEBOOK:

Ozark Independent
Living

WEBSITE:

www.ozarkcil.com

E-MAIL:

info@ozarkcil.com

OFFICE HOURS:

Mondays-Fridays
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

MISSION:

To empower people with disabilities to live as full and productive members of society.

FIVE CORE SERVICES:

- Information/Referral
- Life Skills/Training
- Advocacy
- Peer Support
- Transitioning



INSIDE HIGHLIGHTS:

Corby Redburn: Scholarship Winner/OIL Board Member (page 3)
Joyce Christopher: Celebrating 25 years at Voc Rehab (page 5)
Jennifer Williams: MSU-WP graduate – She won't quit (page 7)



More from **MOORE**

*By Executive Director
Cindy Moore*

Sweet rain! Finally our area has been getting some relief. Still, there may be areas not up to their average rainfall. Just as our land gets relief, our center is getting some relief from Independent Living funding that was with-held and is now released to the 22 CILs! Every drop counts!

Fall festivals abound starting in September. Any publication usually has some listed and there are many! Get out and support your community and local vendors.

October also has numerous events PLUS it is DisAbility Awareness month. It's a time to recognize those who continually fight for DisAbility rights, bring success stories to the forefront and make the general public aware of the rights of those who just do things differently!

Can our office assist you in some way or do you have a friend/family member with a disability who needs some information? Our ILS Department, Consumer Directed Services Department or transportation manager will attempt to help.

Also, come by and see our new canopy....now we will be giving people directions to the office by saying "look for the striped canopy"! We love it!

Regards,
Cindy



A new look for the OIL Office!

To help block the harsh sunlight, make heating and cooling more efficient year-round, and as a shield from the elements for our sidewalk and entryway – no more wrestling with an umbrella to get in when it's raining! – OIL now has snazzy new awnings. Many thanks to landlords Toney and Kathleen Aid for the updated look for our historic downtown building.

RAISING AWARENESS, TAKING ACTION

By Newsletter Editor - Terry Hampton

OIL celebrates Disability Awareness Month in October in conjunction with National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).

Observed each October, NDEAM is a nationwide campaign that celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities throughout American history, and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all Americans have access to the services and supports to enable them to work.

In keeping with the U.S. Department of Labor's commitment to ensuring an American workforce for Americans of all abilities, this year's official NDEAM theme is "America's Workforce: Empowering All."

As a bit of background to show how times have changed, NDEAM began in 1945, when Congress declared the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was dropped to acknowledge individuals with all types of disabilities. Then, in 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to NDEAM.

Many individuals with disabilities are capable and willing workers. In this issue of The Pipeline, we're featuring three whose abilities come shining through, in spite of obstacles. Artist David Kontra, Missouri State University-West Plains student Corby Redburn and MSU-WP graduate Jennifer Williams have worked hard to not be defined by their disabilities which are merely one part of who they are. They want to work and contribute to their communities and they're doing a fabulous job of it!

One of the reasons for observing NDEAM is to move from being simply aware to taking action. Employers should be aware that individuals with disabilities have a lot to offer. Many of them merely need an opportunity to shine, to be empowered and given a chance to prove themselves.

If you are someone who makes hiring decisions, why not investigate employing someone with a disability? There are resources available to assist you. Non-profit organizations can get workers at no cost through various programs, whereby volunteers for the organization get paid by outside sources. See news articles on the Resource and Community Partnership pages in this newsletter or give us a call at OIL, and we'll give you contact information.

As U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta says in discussing NDEAM, "A workforce that empowers everyone is good for job seekers as well as job creators."

Staffer Spotlight

MELISSA BENTLEY

Melissa has been working at Ozark Independent Living for the past six and a half years, having started in March of 2012. She created and maintains the office database and also works in the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) Department doing reassessments and intakes as needed.

Melissa is a West Plains native and continues to make her home in the area. As a newlywed who will be celebrating her second anniversary in October, Melissa says, "I LOVE married life. I have a stepson and a house full of rescue dogs and cats. We enjoy hunting and fishing and are very active in our church."

Also in her spare time, she serves as a volunteer board member for OIL's sister-agency Independent In-Home Services (IIHS).

Melissa says, "I love what I do here at OIL and feel blessed to work with some really amazing people."



OIL Executive Director Cindy Moore and Corby Redburn.

Staff Updates



MARRIYA COPE – Marriya has recently joined the OIL team as a Consumer Directed Services (CDS) coordinator.

Marriya, who is 35 years old, was born and spent her childhood in Tennessee. She moved to West Plains her sophomore year of high

school and graduated from West Plains High School with the class of 2001. She attended MSU-West Plains and graduated with an Associates Degree in 2007.

She says, "I live in West Plains with my boyfriend of six years, my beautiful 11-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son. Before coming to OIL I worked for Hiland Dairy Foods for seven years. I enjoy watching my son play football for the Willow Springs Bears. Go 73!! I love watching my daughter do gymnastics, play volleyball, and all the other sports she decides to explore."

Marriya says she enjoys getting together with friends and family and likes doing anything outdoors such as swimming and playing games. She adds, "We love going to Cloud-9 Ranch to camp and ride our UTVs."

We welcome Marriya (pronounced like Marriah Carey's first name) to OIL.

OIL Board Member Corby Redburn Receives Gary Moll Scholarship

Corby Redburn, West Plains, is one of three students in the State of Missouri to be awarded the Gary Moll Memorial Scholarship for 2018. He was nominated for the scholarship, which is administered by the Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council (MOSILC), through the sponsorship of Ozark Independent Living (OIL). OIL sponsored Corby for the scholarship in April. He has since joined the OIL board of directors as a member/advocate. Other board members include Chair Jane Kramer, Vice Chair Debbie Mayers, Secretary/Treasurer Marty Simpson, Scott Schneider, Eryn Walters and Ruth Hones.

In awarding the scholarship, officials with MOSILC said, "Corby has faced his life challenges with his head held high and his goals even higher. He overcomes Dwarfism and its stigmas. Corby

Continued on next page

DAVID CONTRA - Continued from page 1:

“It opened up a whole new world for me,” he said.

It’s a world where he relies mostly on his memories and imagination to create his work. Because of his condition, as time goes on, David sees less and less on the periphery of his vision, leading to ‘tunnel vision’ which over the years has become increasingly narrow. Using his left eye, he strains not only against severe tunnel vision, but also blind spots, blurred vision and nystagmus (involuntary eye movements) to make his art. When he paints, his field of view on the canvas is less than one-quarter of an inch. Essentially, it’s like looking at his canvas through a straw. Basically, he says, “I can’t see what I paint.”

His method is to lower his head until his nose almost touches the surface of what he’s painting. He uses extremely strong glasses for some details, other special tools, powerfully bright lights focused on the canvas and even his sense of touch. Given his limited sight, perhaps it’s natural he would gravitate toward expressionism as his preferred style, relying on the emotions he experiences when encountering people, places and events to spur his creativity rather than visual observation.

The bold and often contrasting colors which typify expressionism are also well-suited to David’s condition. For example, in one of his pieces, called “Miser,” he has painted a man with bags of money stacked all around, including on shelves behind him. Asked how he is able to paint a shelf and then paint something sitting on that shelf, David says, “I don’t really know,” but he does offer that the contrast of the light bags on a dark shelf helps. The miser’s face is rendered in more subtle colors and yet, the details, especially the eyes, are extraordinary.

His subject matter includes portraiture, architectural design, landscapes, cityscapes, fantasy, abstracts, political art and more. The price for his work has increased significantly from what he made on those first couple of pieces sold on eBay, and now he has several regular customers who are art collectors.

As a testament to David’s talent, he’s had shows in galleries where he would be standing with his cane and attendees would praise the pieces in the exhibit, not realizing he was the artist. It is further proof that David’s work is exceptional, not because he is a ‘blind artist’ or even because he is an artist who happens to be blind. His work is exceptional on its own merits.

David currently resides in Wright County, but he’s originally from Cleveland and has also lived in Maine and in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.

At right is one of David’s cityscapes. More examples of his work can be seen at www.saatchiart.com.

CORBY REDBURN - Continued from previous page:

graduated high school in 2017 with a cumulative 3.8 GPA. He is in his second year of college at MSU - West Plains where he pursues a Communications degree and has maintained a 3.5 GPA.”

The scholarship program is for Missouri students with disabilities who are attending, or will be enrolling in, a junior college, college, university or accredited vocational school located in the state of Missouri. It was set up in remembrance of Gary Moll, the Director of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation’s Independent Living (IL) program for 26 years. “He was a tremendous supporter of Missouri’s Centers for Independent Living (CILs),” said Patrick Chambers, Heartland Independent Living Center’s Executive Director. “Gary played a key role in the number of Independent Living Centers more than doubling during his 26 years as the IL Director.”

After Moll died in 2013, MOSILC established the scholarship program as a memorial. Each year the organization strives provide two scholarships to deserving students with disabilities either beginning or continuing their secondary education. Officials with MOSILC said this year three applicants stood out and the council decided to award all three with \$1,000 scholarships. The other winners are Savannah Anderson, Bunker, and Eric Kaiser from St. Louis.

Congratulations, Corby, on your hard work and dedication to your education and community!

Each year, OIL has an opportunity to sponsor students in our seven-county region of Douglas, Howell, Oregon, Ozark, Shannon, Texas and Wright as nominees for the Gary Moll Memorial Scholarship. If you or someone you know is interested in finding out more about this opportunity, contact Cindy Moore via email, cmoore@ozarkcil.com, or phone, 417-256-8714.



Celebrating Community Partnerships

25 Years with Vocational Rehabilitation Joyce Christopher

On August 16, Joyce Christopher marked 25 years of employment with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Her VR colleagues thanked her for her service with cake and an afternoon get-together.

VR helps people with disabilities obtain and maintain employment. Counselors like Joyce help determine eligibility for the program and work with clients to develop a vocational goal to assist in reaching an employment outcome.

We offer our hearty congratulations to Joyce and thank her for her years of service!

All 22 Centers for Independent Living in the State of Missouri, including OIL, have Independent Living Services Departments which are funded by a grant from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.



With Vocational Rehab Counselor (VRC) IV Joyce Christopher, seated, are other VR staffers, including Regional Manager Toby Eckert, District Supervisor Robin Thomas, Assistant Director "Ticket to Work" Program Gwen Jackson, VRC III Counselor Barbara Green and Billing Specialist Ruth Farrow.

Call Vocational Rehabilitation, 417-256-8294, to learn more about various programs for either hiring workers with a disability or for working with a disability. Get started today!

IN-SERVICE TRAINING:

Fire Safety with WPF



Lucas Cyr and Drew Findley, firefighters with the West Plains Fire Department (WPF), attended a recent training for OIL staffers. They provided information about fire safety and led a review of emergency procedures. They also reminded that there is a free smoke alarm program available to West Plains residents through the American Red Cross. This program is available, administered through other agencies, to most residents within OIL's service area. Contact your local fire department for more information.

OIL appreciates Lucas and Drew sharing their time and expertise, and we're also grateful for the entire WPF. Recently, they conducted their "Fill the Boot" fundraiser, with all proceeds going to the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Good work!

SENIOR HOUSING IN DOUGLAS COUNTY

The Douglas County Senior Citizens Housing Association has announced availability of one-bedroom apartments for low-income applicants who are 62 years or older or who are disabled.

Contact Redbud Village Manager Connie Sherrill, 417-683-4033, for more information.

Newton's Agency

**Call us today
417-257-0954**

Visit our website at
www.newtonsagency.com

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*Partnering
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to help people
with special needs
live as productively
and independently
as possible to
reach their full
potential.*



Resources

OIL does not endorse websites or attest to the accuracy of information from other sources, but sometimes we find resources on topics of interest which we pass along for our readers' own investigation.

Are you 55 or older? Need Help Finding a Job?

Then you may qualify for the...

MERS Goodwill Senior Community Service Employment Program

Call toll-free, 1-888-651-4177, for more information.

Non-profit organizations can get workers at no cost through this same program.

As Election Day Approaches...

This is a reminder that those with disabilities who are homebound should contact their County Clerk to sign up to vote at home via absentee ballot. Our elected officials need to hear the voices of those with disabilities! If anyone has questions about voting at home, please contact Ozark Independent Living.

And for the deaf and hard of hearing community here is a resource to note, "Sign Vote." According to their website, this organization is about "bringing people and ideas together, to share issues, and to create a space where members of the deaf and hard of hearing community learn why we should register to vote and the importance of your choice to vote." Visit signvote.org for more information.

New Medicare Cards on the way...

...DON'T BE CONFUSED! ...DON'T BE SCAMMED!

As Medicare begins to mail new ID cards to its 60 million members, a recent article in the AARP Bulletin says that more than three-quarters of them might be confused about the newly assigned ID numbers which will be used in place of Social Security numbers.

The new numbers and new cards are meant to help prevent fraud, but scams have already been circulating about the switch.

...REMEMBER:

- **The new cards are FREE** (don't let anyone try to convince you they have to be paid for).
- **There are NO processing fees for the new cards** (scammers posing as Medicare representatives have called some people demanding a fee).
- **You will NOT be owed a refund from your old card** (one of the scams circulating has scammers asking for bank account information to transfer funds).
- **NEVER give your bank account information** to someone who calls you on the phone!



This cordless phone is one of the telephones available on the TAP program.

Jitterbug Flip added to telephone line-up at OIL

OIL is a telephone demonstration center for the Mo. Assistive Technologies Telecommunications Access Program (TAP), offering cordless and standard handset-style phones with features such as adjustable volume, loud/lighted ringers, large numbers and more.

Jitterbug Flip cell phones have recently been added to the program, **available within certain guidelines**, including that service **must be obtained through cell service provider Great Call**, with monthly fees starting at \$15.

To qualify for one of the TAP phones at no cost, individuals must be a resident of Missouri and have:

- A hearing, vision or other disability/impairment which makes it difficult to communicate on a standard phone.
- Existing phone service. (Phones are free, **service is not.**)
- Annual income of \$60,000 or less.

Contact Terry at 417-256-8714 for more information.



The Jitterbug has big numbers and a larger screen than most flip phones.

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH



Couch. I waited a few years before starting college. While I was waiting, I went to therapy at Physical Therapy Specialists Clinic.

While I was recuperating, Ozark Independent Living (OIL) contacted me and they explained the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program to me, which could let me hire a friend or family member to take care of me. I immediately thought of Mom (Edith), she takes care of me and gets paid for it which is GREAT!

When I started college (at Missouri State University-West Plains) I thought that getting my degrees would not take me as long as it did to achieve. Boy, was I wrong. It took me five years to get my Associate of Arts in General Studies and six more years to get my Bachelor of Science in General Business. Some of the college professors kept asking me, "Aren't you done yet?" I told them I needed to take a few more classes.

Going to college in West Plains I had some awesome professors and advisors who took time to help me understand the class material. With a lot of them, when it was test time, I went to their office and took it there. I'm afraid if I name some of the names of professors I will forget one or more, but I felt truly blessed taking their classes.

I had thought at times during my college classes that I might quit but decided that would not accomplish anything, so then I said, "No, I WILL NOT QUIT!" I became determined to reach my goal of graduating with my degrees. I will tell you that I had the Lord, family, and friends who encouraged me and blessed me through my years of college. I cannot forget about my wonderful Church Family at Oak Hill Missionary Baptist Church praying for me and encouraging me during my college classes. My mom was with me through it all, including late nights and bad weather. Mom even received an Honorary Associate degree from MSU-WP for helping me through it all. Now I can substitute teach at area schools, and I have and love doing it.

My name is Jennifer Lynn Williams and I live in Couch, Mo. I was in a car accident on July 19, 1997, which was the summer between my junior and senior year of high school. I was in a coma for four to five months with third-degree burns on my arms and legs. Now I'm a paraplegic. Thank the Lord I was able to finish my classes and graduate with my high school graduating class in May of 1998 at

People with disabilities make important contributions to businesses every day. They have the drive to succeed and the skills and talent to deliver value and results for employers. This message bears repeating far and wide. And that's what the Campaign for Disability is all about.

If you have a disability and you're looking for work or you're an employer looking to hire good help, contact OIL. We can put you in touch with agencies who can answer your questions and get you started.

AMERICA'S WORKFORCE:

EMPOWERING ALL

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

 OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

#NDEAM | dol.gov/odep



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When you like and share items from our page, you stay informed and it helps us grow our web presence.

If you would like to remove your name from this mailing list or would like to [sign up for our email list](#), please contact OIL newsletter editor Terry Hampton by phone at 417-257-0038 or toll free/TDD 888-440-7500 or via email newsletter@ozarkcil.com.

If you or someone you know would like to know more about **Consumer Directed Services** or any of the other services offered by OIL, please give us a call or clip this form and drop in the mail to: OIL, 109 Aid Avenue, West Plains, MO 65775.

Check and or all that apply:

- Add to the Pipeline newsletter mailing list OR Remove from list
- Contact for more information about Consumer Directed Services
- Contact for more information about Independent Living Services

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays

September is National Preparedness Month

It's a good idea to make or refresh your emergency plans. Every individual has unique needs, but older adults and people with disabilities may need to give extra thought to their preparedness plans. Three items to plan in advance:

- How will you communicate during emergencies when power may be out?
- Can you pre-arrange transportation with family, a friend, or a neighbor in case of evacuation?
- How can your essential care be planned for emergency situations?

Find emergency preparation resources at www.ready.gov.