

The Center's News

Note from the Director:

Thanksgiving is almost here, and the Holiday season is looming large after that.

Family holidays are difficult to celebrate in a time when we are all concerned about the spread of coronavirus. The tradition and urge to gather is overwhelming. Enjoy your family, but remember to be safe.

Wear your mask. Remember that the larger the gathering, the greater the risk to everyone attending. And consider that this may be a good time to miss seeing everyone so that you will be able to see them in 2021.

Living with Low Vision:

Seasonal Affective Disorder Awareness:

In the Wabash Valley we are experiencing less sunlight with the time change, the overcast, and arrival of winter. This puts us at risk of a double whammy: Seasonal Affective Disorder in a season of Covid-19.

According to Jane Brody, this winter the pandemic is expected to intensify the depression experienced by many people with the syndrome known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. This disorder already affects hundreds of older Hoosiers who suffer annually from seasonal depression. This winter the pandemic is expected to make it worse.

SAD predictably kicks in each fall when the hours of daylight shorten in the valley. Dr. Norman E. Rosenthal believes that an estimated 5 percent of the population or 1 in 20 people suffer from full-blown SAD syndrome. Dr. Rosenthal was the psychiatrist who first identified the disorder in the 1980s and then devised an effective treatment. He estimated that three times

as many people have a milder version of SAD, commonly called winter blues. Those blues zaps their energy and enthusiasm for life.

Except for its seasonal pattern, the symptoms of SAD are similar to those of clinical depression: pervasive sadness, undue fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and excessive sleep, lost interest in normally enjoyed activities, and cravings for starches and sweets and its attendant weight gain.

The WILL Center hosts monthly peer support meetings via the telephone. These peer support meetings can be very beneficial for people struggling with SAD. You can contact the Center at (812) 298-9455 for a peer meeting schedule.

Another option for treatment is exposure to sunlight or its artificial equivalent for 20 to 30 minutes every morning. The WILL Center low vision staff researched the lack of sunlight and found an inexpensive resource called the "Happy Light."

According to research done by Elaine Kitchel, the idea is to place the light source near your ankle and or knee for 20 to 30 minutes each day. This daily light exposure therapy is done by exposing a portion of your body to the blue light that is omitted from the lamp. Kitchel researched the benefits of lighting and worked for American Printing House for the Blind for many years. Kitchel also helped to educate our staff about the benefits of the Happy Light. Kitchel was a strong advocate for lighting advantages for low vision individuals and has since retired.

The center has received positive feedback from individuals whom we provided a Happy Light for use in their own living environments. The standard recommendation of light needed daily is 10,000 lux. Sitting under a commercial light box at least one-foot square is another option. The combination of exercise and outdoor light is crucially important. It connects you with your environment – not just the light but also the birds, trees, animal life, neighborhood all can act as an antidote to the cocoon of isolation.

Another valuable tip is to establish and maintain structure by doing things in a more-or-less set pattern every day. The center also helps to provide sensory challenged seniors with a 11 x 17-inch calendar. We encourage consumers to write a daily note in the large squares reflecting their experiences for that day and important dates to remember.

The "Happy Light" by Verilux can be purchased thru this link:

<https://verilux.com/collections/happylight-therapy-lamps-boxes>

Independent Living Program

Advocacy:

I want to congratulate all of you who made the effort to vote. It's clear that Americans voted in the greatest number in our history.

Whatever your choice is, please know that this duty is an essential part of being a citizen.

And please understand that now that the votes have been cast and the results determined, it's time for the real work to begin. Our elected officials will be gathering – I hope with respect for social distancing and regard for the safety of others – to make decisions that will affect all of us. Whether you voted for the individual or not, it's time to let them know what you need, how their decisions will change your life, and why they need to look at all aspects of an issue before deciding.

Being an active citizen is essential to making this all work.

The staff at The WILL Center is ready to help you do that. We can direct you to places where you can learn about bills that are pending. We can help you connect with legislators and public officials.

We won't tell you what to think or to say, but we'll give you food for thought and a platform to express those thoughts.

Energy Assistance Applications:

It's that time of year when we start thinking about our heat bills. As the temperatures drop and energy bill goes up!

We can help you complete your applications for assistance with Duke Energy and Vectren providing help in paying those bills. You can contact Ada Ruth Short at the WILL Center with our main number of 812-298-9455. She will need your income, photo ID, and your most recent bill. For your income she can use your bank statement for Social Security or your award letter from Social Security. The process of the paperwork doesn't take more than approximately 30 minutes. The process is completed by the WICCA office. You will see a credit on your bill showing how many dollars were applied to your bill. We are more than happy to help you with this process. It's a great way to stretch your dollars in staying warm.

Now Hiring:

Help Wanted:

The WILL Center is looking to hire a part-time ramp program coordinator. The job description is posted on our website and on our social media pages. Some essentials:

- Must be able to work with volunteers to plan and execute ramp construction projects.
- Must be able to lift 40 pounds.
- Must have basic keyboard skills to enter data in our management system.
- Valid driver's license preferred

If you are interested, or know someone who might be, please send a resume and cover letter to The WILL Center, attention Peter Ciancone.