

The Center's News



— OCTOBER IS —
DOWN SYNDROME
• AWARENESS MONTH •

October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month, which is a time dedicated to bringing awareness and promoting the understanding of Down Syndrome. This awareness month is established to celebrate the lives and achievements of people with Down Syndrome and serves as an important reminder of the progress that has been made in supporting people with Down Syndrome. Down Syndrome Awareness Month highlights the importance of continuing efforts to ensure individuals with Down syndrome are fully recognized, respected, and given equal opportunities to thrive.

Down Syndrome Awareness Month was first launched in the United States in the 1980s, led by different advocacy groups such as the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS). These groups recognize the need for a specific period to highlight the challenges and successes faced by people with Down Syndrome.

The creation of this month was part of a broader societal movement to change the conversation around disabilities, pushing back against stereotypes and stigma all while promoting inclusion, acceptance and education.

Down syndrome, also known as trisomy 21, is a genetic condition caused by an extra copy of chromosome 21. It affects physical growth, intellectual development, and causes characteristic facial features. While the degree of cognitive impairment varies among individuals, with proper support, education, and advocacy, many people with Down syndrome lead fulfilling and productive lives.



Raising awareness about Down syndrome is vital for breaking down misconceptions. For many years, individuals with Down syndrome faced societal marginalization, limited opportunities, and even exclusion from basic rights, including education and healthcare. Today, public awareness campaigns play a crucial role in shifting the narrative. Through events, social media campaigns, and community initiatives, Down Syndrome Awareness Month aims to educate people about

what Down syndrome truly is and encourage empathy and understanding.

Awareness also fosters a more inclusive society by promoting the idea that people with Down syndrome are not defined by their diagnosis. The focus shifts to their abilities, talents, and contributions. This awareness helps create a more accepting world where individuals with Down syndrome are provided with the resources and support necessary to thrive.

Empowerment is a cornerstone of Down Syndrome Awareness Month. It is crucial for individuals with Down syndrome to be encouraged to speak for themselves, make choices, and lead independent lives to the greatest extent possible. Supporting them means providing access to education, healthcare, employment, and community resources that enable them to reach their full potential. Advocacy groups and individuals work together to ensure that people with Down syndrome are included in all aspects of life, from school to the workplace, and that their rights are protected.

Advocacy for individuals with Down syndrome is not just about raising awareness—it's about effecting tangible change in society. Advocacy ensures that people with Down syndrome receive equitable healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. It challenges outdated stereotypes and combats the discrimination that people with Down syndrome may face. In a world that is becoming increasingly diverse, it is essential that everyone is valued for their unique abilities and talents, rather than their differences.

Down Syndrome Awareness Month is an opportunity to reflect on the progress made and the work still to be done. Raising awareness, empowering individuals, providing support, and advocating for the rights of people with Down syndrome are all essential to creating a more inclusive and



compassionate society. By promoting understanding and acceptance, we can help ensure that individuals with Down syndrome have the opportunity to live fulfilling and independent lives, contributing to their communities in meaningful ways. This month reminds us that advocacy is not just about helping people—it's about recognizing their inherent worth and potential and ensuring that society provides them with the opportunities they deserve.

Independent Living Program

Embracing Fall Weather to Boost Mental Health

Krista Smith – IL/Transition Coordinator

As the fall season arrives many people experience changes in their mood and energy levels. The transition from summer to fall brings cooler temperatures and shorter days. This can be challenging for mental health, but it also offers unique opportunities to enhance well-being.

One of the most effective ways to improve mental health during the fall is to spend time outdoors. The crisp air and vibrant foliage provide a refreshing change of scenery. Engaging in outdoor activities such as walking or simply sitting in a park can reduce stress and improve mood. Nature has a calming effect on the mind, and the physical activity involved in outdoor pursuits releases endorphins, which are natural mood lifters.



Fall is an ideal time to practice mindfulness and gratitude. The changing season encourages reflection and appreciation of the present moment. Mindfulness exercises, such as deep breathing, meditation, or mindful walking, can help reduce anxiety and increase feelings of calm. Keeping a gratitude journal, where you write down things you are thankful for each day, can shift your focus from negative thoughts to positive ones, enhancing overall mental well-being. Social connections can also improve mood. Stay connected with your friends and family. Talking to loved ones about your feelings can provide support and reduce stress.

As temperatures drop, creating a warm and inviting home environment can have a positive impact on mental health. Incorporate elements that bring comfort and joy, such as soft blankets, warm lighting, and seasonal decorations. A cozy space can provide a sense of security and relaxation, making it easier to unwind and de-stress.

The change in season can disrupt daily routines, but maintaining a consistent schedule is crucial for mental health. Ensure you get enough sleep, eat nutritious meals, and stay physically active. Regular exercise, even if it's just a short walk, can boost your mood and energy levels. Additionally, sticking to a routine helps regulate your body's internal clock, improving sleep quality and overall well-being.

Fall offers a variety of seasonal activities that can enhance mental health. Participating in activities like apple picking, visiting pumpkin patches, or attending festivals can provide a sense of connection. These activities often involve social interaction, which is essential for emotional well-being. Engaging in fun experiences can help combat feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Creating an Inclusive and Safe Halloween for Youth with Disabilities

Jared Price – IL/Transition Coordinator

Halloween is a time of excitement and adventure for children, but for youth with disabilities, it can present unique challenges. With a bit of planning and creativity, we can ensure that every child has a fun and safe Halloween experience. Here are some tips and ideas to make Halloween inclusive for all:

1. Costume Considerations

- **Comfort First:** Choose costumes that are comfortable and easy to wear. Avoid costumes with masks or accessories that can be cumbersome or obstruct vision.
- **Adaptability:** Look for costumes that can be easily adapted to accommodate mobility aids like wheelchairs or walkers. For example, a wheelchair can be transformed into a pirate ship or a race car.
- **Sensory-Friendly:** For children with sensory sensitivities, select costumes made from soft, non-irritating fabrics and avoid those with itchy tags or seams.



2. Accessible Trick-or-Treating

- **Neighborhood Planning:** Plan your trick-or-treat route in advance, ensuring it includes homes that are accessible. Look for houses with ramps or level entrances.
- **Trunk-or-Treat Events:** Consider attending trunk-or-treat events, where children can go from car to car in a parking lot. These events are often more accessible and can be a safer alternative to traditional trick-or-treating.
- **Buddy System:** Pair children with a buddy or a group to ensure they have support and companionship throughout the evening.

3. Inclusive Activities

- **Pumpkin Decorating:** Instead of carving pumpkins, which can be difficult for some children, try decorating pumpkins with paint, stickers, or markers.
- **Sensory Play:** Create sensory bins filled with Halloween-themed items like plastic spiders, fake eyeballs, and colored rice. This can be a fun and engaging activity for children with sensory processing needs.
- **Story telling:** Host a Halloween story time with books that are inclusive and feature characters with disabilities.

4. Safety Tips

- **Visibility:** Ensure costumes are visible in the dark by adding reflective tape or glow sticks. This is especially important for children who may have difficulty navigating in low-light conditions.
- **Emergency Plan:** Have a plan in place in case of emergencies. Make sure children know what to do if they get separated from the group and have a way to contact an adult.

5. Community Involvement

- **Educate Neighbors:** Encourage your community to be mindful of the needs of children with disabilities. Share information about how to make Halloween more inclusive and accessible.
- **Inclusive Events:** Support or organize inclusive Halloween events in your community. This can include sensory-friendly haunted houses or costume contests that celebrate creativity and participation.

By taking these steps, we can create a Halloween experience that is enjoyable and safe for all children, regardless of their abilities. Let's make this Halloween a memorable and inclusive celebration for everyone!

Stay Warm and Informed: Key Changes to the 2024-2025 Energy Assistance Program

Jared Price – IL/Transition Coordinator

How to Apply

- Online: Use the EAPCONNECT system at eap.ihcda.in.gov or through the WICAA website at wicaa.org.
- Mail: Send your application to the Terre Haute WICAA Energy Assistance Program office at 705 S 5th St, Terre Haute, IN, 47807.

Urgent Situations

If you have a disconnection notice, your service has been disconnected, or you are within 10 days of losing heat/electricity, contact the WICAA Terre Haute office immediately.

Checklist for Application

- Income Documentation: Include income for all household members.
- Social Security: Provide a bank statement or award letter if applicable.
- Age Verification: For those 18 and in school, provide a current class schedule.
- Landlord Affidavit: Required if utilities are included in rent.
- Utility Bills: Provide current gas/fuel and electric bills.

Changes for 2024-2025

- Program End Date: Ends on April 14, 2025.
- Disconnections: Fees paid only with a disconnect notice.
- Crisis Cap: Assistance capped at \$800 for electric and gas.
- Credit Balances: No benefit if credit balance is \$250 or more.
- Award Amounts: Reduced amounts; max payment of \$150 for utilities included in rent.
- Social Security Card & ID: No longer needed.

Important Reminder

Continue to pay your bill to avoid service interruptions. For more information, visit wicaa.org or contact your local WICAA office.

Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Bianca Nosek – IL/Transition Coordinator

October marks National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a time to recognize the vital contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce and to promote inclusive work environments. This year's theme, "Advancing Access and Equity," focuses on dismantling the barriers that still exist for people with disabilities seeking meaningful employment.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, people with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented in the workforce, despite numerous legal protections such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Advocates stress the need for employers to take proactive steps to create accessible workplaces, including providing reasonable accommodations and ensuring equitable hiring practices.

Judy Heumann, a renowned disability rights advocate, once said, "Disability only becomes a tragedy when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives—job opportunities, or barrier-free buildings." This sentiment echoes the current struggle for equitable hiring practices, despite laws in place to protect workers.

Recent studies from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) suggest that providing accommodations for employees with disabilities is often cost-effective. According to their research, 56% of workplace accommodations cost nothing at all, and those that do often have a one-time expense averaging \$500. JAN highlights that "these accommodations lead to increased productivity and employee retention, benefiting both the individual and the organization."

As NDEAM shines a light on the importance of workplace inclusion, it's also a reminder of the work that remains to be done. Employers are encouraged to go beyond compliance with ADA standards and embrace a culture of inclusion that values the unique perspectives and talents of individuals with disabilities.



L.I.V.E. Program

Navigating Fall with Low Vision: Tips and Strategies

The fall season, with its beautiful foliage and cooler temperatures, can be a wonderful time of year. However, for individuals with low vision, the changing environment can present unique challenges. Here are some tips and strategies to help those with low vision make the most of the fall season safely and enjoyably.

As daylight hours decrease, it's important to ensure that your living spaces are well lit. Use bright, adjustable lamps and consider installing motion-sensor lights in frequently used areas to improve visibility and reduce the risk of falls.

High-contrast colors can make it easier to see objects and navigate spaces. Consider using brightly colored tape on stair edges, door frames, and other potential hazards. Wearing clothing in contrasting colors can also help others see you more clearly.

Engaging in outdoor activities is beneficial for mental and physical health. Choose well-maintained paths for walking and use mobility aids if necessary.



Carry a flashlight or wear reflective gear to increase visibility during early morning or late afternoon walks.

Fall weather can be unpredictable. Keep an umbrella and a warm jacket handy to stay comfortable and dry. Ensure that walkways around your home are clear of leaves and other debris that could cause slipping.

There are many assistive devices available to help those with low vision. Magnifiers, screen readers, and talking clocks can make daily tasks easier. Smartphone apps

designed for low vision users can provide additional support, such as navigation assistance and text-to-speech functions.

Keeping your living space organized can help prevent accidents. Store frequently used items in easily accessible places and keep pathways clear. Label items with large print or tactile markers to make identification easier.

Don't hesitate to ask for help from family, friends, or community resources. Many organizations offer services and support for individuals with low vision, including transportation assistance, home modifications, and social activities.

Social interaction is crucial for mental well-being. Participate in community events, join support groups, or simply spend time with loved ones. Staying connected can help reduce feelings of isolation and improve overall quality of life.

Regular visits to an eye care professional are essential. They can monitor your vision and provide recommendations for managing low vision effectively. Early detection of any changes can help prevent further vision loss.



Despite the challenges, fall is a season to be enjoyed. Take time to appreciate the beauty around you, whether it's through touch, sound, or the vibrant colors that you can see. Engaging with the season's sensory experiences can bring joy and relaxation.

By implementing these strategies, individuals with low vision can navigate the fall season more safely and enjoyably. Remember, it's about making small adjustments to enhance your comfort and independence while embracing the beauty and opportunities that fall has to offer.

Celebrating White Cane Day: Empowering Independence and Awareness

White Cane Day is observed annually on October 15th which is a significant event dedicated to recognizing the achievements of individuals who are blind or visually impaired and promoting awareness about the importance of the white cane as a tool for independence. This day serves as a reminder of the progress made in the field of accessibility and the ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive society.

The white cane has long been a symbol of independence for people with visual impairments. Its history dates back to the early 20th century when it was first introduced as a mobility aid. In 1964, the United States Congress officially recognized October 15th as White Cane Safety Day, thanks to the advocacy efforts of organizations like the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). This recognition aimed to educate the public about the significance of the white cane and the rights of individuals who use it.

The white cane is more than just a mobility tool; it represents freedom, confidence, and self-reliance. For individuals who are blind or visually impaired,



the white cane provides a means to navigate their surroundings safely and independently. It helps them detect obstacles, identify changes in terrain, and maintain a sense of direction. The white cane also serves as a signal to others, indicating that the user has a visual impairment and may require additional assistance or consideration.

White Cane Day plays a crucial role in raising awareness about the challenges faced by individuals with visual

impairments and the importance of accessibility. It encourages communities to take proactive steps in creating inclusive environments. This includes advocating for accessible public spaces, promoting the use of assistive technologies, and supporting policies that enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities.

On White Cane Day, various organizations and institutions host events and activities to educate the public about visual impairments and the significance of the white cane. These initiatives often include workshops, demonstrations, and

public awareness campaigns. Schools and community centers may organize activities that allow sighted individuals to experience navigating with a white cane, fostering empathy and understanding.

White Cane Day is also a celebration of the achievements and contributions of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. It highlights their resilience, talents, and the diverse ways they enrich our communities. By sharing success stories and recognizing accomplishments, White Cane Day empowers individuals with visual impairments to pursue their goals and aspirations confidently.



White Cane Day is a powerful reminder of the importance of independence, accessibility, and inclusion for individuals with visual impairments. It calls on society to recognize the capabilities and rights of people who use the white cane and to work towards creating a world where everyone can navigate their surroundings with confidence and dignity. As we celebrate White Cane Day, let us commit to fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.

October Events

Oct. 4 - 12 Points First
Friday 5:00pm-8:00pm 12
Points Terre Haute, IN

Oct. 5 – Fall Fest 2024
12:00pm-9:00pm 10382
Grotto Road Terre Haute, IN

Oct. 5 – Fruitridge Festival
of the Arts 10:00am-
4:00pm 1875 S Fruitridge
Ave Terre Haute, IN

Oct. 5 – VCPL Friends
Book Sale – 9:00am-
4:00pm

Oct. 11-20 Parke County
Covered Bridge Festival
9:00am-6:00pm 401 E Ohio
St, Rockville, IN 47872

Oct. 12 – Library Show-
and-Tell 2:00pm-3:00pm
Wabash Senior Activity
Center

Oct. 18 – Un-Haunted
Happenings 6:00pm-
9:00pm Deming Park

Oct. 19 – Mosaic Tile Pumpkin
9:00am-12:00m 649 Chestnut
Street Terre Haute, IN
Contact: Emily Bennett (812)
237-2528

Oct. 25-26 – 4th Annual
Holy One Harvest Festival
6:00pm-8:30pm Faith
Wesleyan Church

Oct. 25 – Halloween Book
Giveaway 6:30pm Vigo
County Public Library

Oct. 25-26 – Haunted
Halloween Happenings
7:00pm-10:00pm Deming
Park

Oct. 26 – Trunk or Treat
11:00am-2:00pm Vigo
County Fairgrounds

Oct. 27 – Annual Trunk ‘n
Treat 3:00pm-5:00pm
Union Baptist Church –
4075 E Harlan Drive

Oct. 31 – Trunk or Treat
6:00pm-8:00pm First
Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Terre
Haute

