



# A2I NEWSLETTER

Quarterly Newsletter from Access 2 Independence

## Growing Season

by Sarah Martinez, Executive Director

Happy summer to all of our friends in the Eastern Iowa Corridor and beyond!

We are thankful for warmer temperatures after what seemed like an endless winter and incredibly wet spring. Summer is a great time for us to reconnect with our communities, nature, and all the activities best enjoyed under the heat of the sun. For A2I, summer is an opportunity for outreach and connecting with the counties we serve to let citizens know what we do. You may just see us at a table at your county fair!

We are moving full steam ahead from a busy spring quarter! Staff cumulatively spent 74.25 hrs in community meetings collaborating with other providers, sharing our services, and tackling important issues. Consumers received 288 services and achieved 2 goals. We hosted 16 peer groups with 81 participants. A2I joined the Johnson County Affordable Housing Coalition and had 2 applications for board members. And last but not least, we received the funding from the City of Iowa City Social Justice and Racial Equity Grant to make our VisAbility photovoice project a reality for Iowa City, which you can learn more about later in the newsletter!

I am incredibly honored and excited by this opportunity to work with a great staff and board to help A2I grow. We would like to see A2I be a solid presence in all eight counties we serve in addition to expanding the services we provide. While our agency is small, we understand that it "takes a village". Without the partnerships in the disability service community, human service organizations, donors, volunteers, and community supporters, we wouldn't be able to do what we do. Thank you for being part of our "village" and supporting our mission!



Caption: Access 2 Independence Logo

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#### Staff:

Sarah Martinez, ED  
Kiersten Onanga, ILS  
Chanel Prince, ILS  
Talor Gray, WIP  
Gerald, Rath, ILS

#### Board Members:

Troy Ward, Chair  
Peggy Loveless, Vice Chair  
Amanda Sharp, Treasurer  
Amy Robasse, Voting Member  
Erin Kay, Voting Member



## Krafts with Kiersten Grows

by Kiersten Onanga, ILS

Hi everyone, Kiersten Onanga here, and I have some exciting news to share with you all about a new peer group I am starting in Henry County!

As many of you know, I have collaborated with Washington County Choices Drop-In Center for the past 2 years to bring Krafts with Kiersten to Washington, IA. Krafts With Kiersten is a peer support group that is held every second Tuesday of the month from 11:00am – 12:00pm in Washinton, IA. This peer group brings people together to talk through life's challenges while getting crafty with art projects. Choices offers a warm and safe environment, and craft projects are free to make and take!

With the success of Krafts with Kiersten in Washington, we have officially expanded into Henry County! When the opportunity to grow this program presented itself, I jumped right on board, and I am excited to share that A2I will be collaborating with the Henry County Choices Drop-In Center in Mount Pleasant, IA. With this growth, we will be able to reach more people in the rural areas and help connect residents with additional services we provide while breaking down barriers to independence.

Krafts with Kiersten in Henry County will be held on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 11:00am-12:00pm. If you are in the area, we would love for you to join us in making awesome crafts and and sharing welcoming conversations.



## VisAbility Updates

by Talor Gray, ILS

The VisAbility program is shaping up to be a spectacular Iowa City addition to our creative community! Our timeline is spot on, and we are ready for enrollment. If you haven't heard about this exciting program yet, here's your insider scoop:

VisAbility is a Photovoice-inspired program designed to empower and enable Iowa City residents with disabilities to advocate for social change through photography and community discussions. Participants learn how to take photographs around their community that represent their views regarding social justice topics; in this case, the topic would be the disability experience in and around Iowa City. Throughout the time people are taking photographs and after the photographs are developed, A2I plans to hold both peer and community discussion events to empower participants and bring additional importance to their photographic work. We hope to coordinate a traveling exhibit of the photographs around Iowa City and hold exhibit opening celebrations at each location for community discussion sessions. From the discussions, we plan to develop Iowa City policy recommendations to continue creating a more equitable community for all abilities!

Does this program sound interesting to you? Would you like to enroll, volunteer, or learn more?

Check out our Information Session dates below. To read more about this opportunity and RSVP, visit: [www.access2independence.org/visability](http://www.access2independence.org/visability)

### What?

VisAbility Program Information Sessions

### Where?

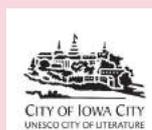
The Environmental Education Center  
2401 Scott Boulevard, Iowa City, IA 52240

### When?

July 18, 2019 @ 6:00pm - 7:00pm  
July 25, 2019 @ 6:00pm - 7:00pm



**Please note that for 2019 we will only be accepting enrollments for Iowa City residents who have some form of a disability and are 18 years or older.**



Powered by the Iowa City Social Justice and Racial Equity Grant 2019

# Disability is Diveristy: American's with Disabilities Act 29th Anniversary Celebration

by Gerald Rath, ILS

Planning continues by the Iowa City ADA committee for celebration of the 29th year since the passage of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). This celebration plans to include empowering discussions based on the progress of the Americans' with Disabilities Act.

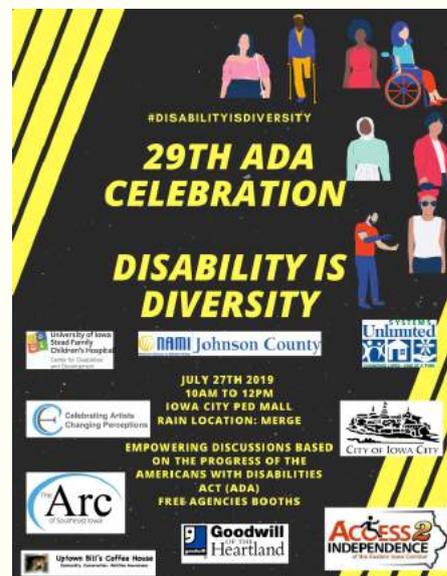
There is a consensus that this celebration should involve individuals who can speak on behalf of the experiences that they have had relating to how they have benefited from the ADA, including improved accessibility. Planning committee team members are making an effort to incorporate the voices of individuals who were born after the passage of the ADA, and subsequently how they may have benefited from it. Furthermore, these voices could contrast the experiences of individuals who possess experiences of living with a disability that predates the passage of ADA.

However, there is still more that needs to be done. Employment rates for individuals with disabilities continues to be very low. There are always opportunities for continued advocacy and disability sensitivity to promote awareness in the public areas, including enhancing accessibility. Additionally, legislative education will always be important for informed policy development in order to protect and advance access for the future.

Celebration planning includes coordination and planning with programs within the University of Iowa and other service agencies in the community.

Time and date for this **29th ADA Anniversary Celebration event is Saturday, July 27th, 2019 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.** on the Ped Mall in downtown Iowa City. Rain/Inclement weather location will be at MERGE Center on the Ped Mall.

Media coverage is planned for the event.



Pictured left:  
29th ADA Celebration:  
Disability is Diversity  
flyer.

## A Moment with Nell

by Chanel Prince, ILS

Luggage

Hey, let's take an inventory.

What is in your luggage? When we travel to the airport and before boarding the aircraft, we must go through a variety of security checks. The Transportation Security Agents are responsible for screening persons and their luggage. This ensures passengers aren't carrying any unauthorized items or weapons which can pose a threat to themselves or those around. I believe it is beneficial for us all to take a personal inventory of what we are carrying in our personal luggage.

So what are you carrying? Are you carrying any of these weapons: hurt, forgiveness, bitterness, anger, fear, insecurity, negative thinking, shame, guilt?

My friend, as your personal virtual Transportation Security Agent, I am here to screen you. In order to get past this checkpoint, to the aircraft, and ultimately to reach your final destination, there are things that you will need to unpack and leave behind. The luggage you are carrying, not only contains unauthorized items and weapons, your bag has exceeded the required weight limit.

Ease your load today, and fly to freedom!



Pictured Above:

(A) Sarah's dog, Duke, came to visit the A21 office this quarter!

(B) Krafts with Kiersten made up-cycled 4th of July wind socks out of cans, paint, and streamers.

(C) Adventures with Kiersten made painted river rock bugs for their gardens.

(D) Brittany led one last Expressive Art Group before she finished her internship with A21; the group made pom-pom keychains!

(E) During the rainy month of May, the Expressive Art group made rain ghosts to scare away the rain clouds in hopes of sunny weather!

## Upcoming Events

### July

- 2nd:** Expressive Arts Group @ 4:30PM @ Uptown Bill's, Iowa City
- 4th:** Access 2 Independence will be closed for July 4th
- 9th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 11AM @ Choices, 114 W 2nd St, Washington
- 10th:** Livable Communities Housing Action Team Forum @ 11:30AM-1PM @ Iowa City Senior Center, Iowa City
- 12th:** Cedar County Fair @ Cedar County Fair Grounds, Tipton
- 13th:** Saturday Social for Autistic Teens & 20s @ 3PM-5PM @ Terry Trueblood Recreational Center, Iowa City
- 17th:** VisAbility Information Session @ 6pm-7pm @ Iowa City Environmental Education Center, Iowa City
- 25th:** VisAbility Information Session @ 6pm-7pm @ Iowa City Environmental Education Center, Iowa City
- 26th:** Advocacy Workshop @ 2:30PM-3:30PM @ RPlace, Iowa City
- 30th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 11AM @ Choices, 211 West Monroe, Mt. Pleasant

### August

- 6th:** Expressive Art Group @ 4:30PM @ Uptown Bill's, Iowa City
- 10th:** Saturday Social for Autistic Teens & 20s @ 3pm-4:30pm @ Home Ec Workshop, 424 E Jefferson St, Iowa City
- 13th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 11AM @ Choices, 114 W 2nd St, Washington
- 14th:** Livable Communities Housing Action Team Forum @ 11:30AM-1PM @ ICAAR Education Center, Coralville
- 23rd:** Advocacy Workshop @ 2:30PM-3:30PM @ RPlace, Iowa City
- 27th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 11AM @ Choices, 211 West Monroe, Mt. Pleasant

### September

- 2nd:** Access 2 Independence will be closed for Labor Day
- 3rd:** Expressive Art Group @ 4:30PM @ Uptown Bill's, Iowa City
- 10th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 11AM @ Choices, 114 W 2nd St, Washington
- 11th:** Livable Communities Housing Action Team Forum @ 11:30AM-1PM @ ICAAR Education Center, Coralville
- 14th:** Saturday Social for Autistic Teens & 20s @ TBD
- 24th:** Krafts with Kiersten @ 11AM @ Choices, 211 West Monroe, Mt. Pleasant
- 23rd:** Advocacy Workshop @ 2:30PM-3:30PM @ RPlace, Iowa City

Join our email list for updates on these events and more

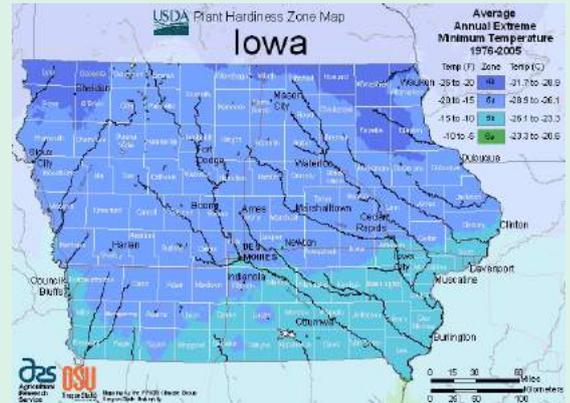
# Gardening with Gerald

by Gerald Rath, ILS

Gardening can be tricky as it is, but we can help out our odds by growing plants that work well with our growing conditions. To begin, we first have to consider what growing zone we are in (Zone 5a or 5b for our area- See map) and go from there. These "hardiness" zones help to identify what temperatures plants can typically survive before being killed by our cold winter weather.

It is also important to match plants to what kind of soil is available in your area. Soil quality conditions to consider are how well the soil holds or drains moisture/water; pH conditions (also known as acidity or alkalinity); balance of mineral content for nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus - commonly identified as N, K, and P respectively. There are those plants who have a huge need for nitrogen and no need at all for phosphorus or potassium while others are sort of a mixture of what types of fertilizers that are needed in our area gardens. This proper balance of N, P, K helps plants grow what they are intended to produce.

It would be pretty hard to guess just looking at soil what your garden needs the most. Therefore it is recommended to have a soil sample if you have not had one in the past year or two. These are available at your local Extension office.



Pictured above: Plant hardiness zone map of the state of Iowa.



Pictured above: Raised garden bed of lettuce, tomatoes, basil, marigolds, zinnias, garlic chives, zucchini.

A great option to enhance gardening accessibility for individuals with limitations is raised gardening. Raised-bed gardening is a form of gardening in which the soil is enclosed in three-to-four-foot-wide containment units known as "beds", which are usually made of wood, rock, or concrete and which can be of any length or shape. The soil is raised above the surrounding soil (approximately six inches to waist-high) and may be enriched with compost.

Gardeners also need to give enough space for plants to grow and mature. We know this already when we plant trees or shrubs but this is also the case for annuals and perennials too. You may not have as much of a show when it comes to bloom time if you plant your plants too closely together. The plant tags that come with each plant give the mature size spacing and not the beginning growing stages of size. This is important to note because you may end up placing too many annuals in any one given area and then you will have crowding issues.

Raised beds produce a variety of benefits: they extend the planting season, they can reduce weeds if designed and planted properly, and they reduce the need to use poor native soil. Since the gardener does not walk on the raised beds, the soil is not compacted and the roots have an easier time growing. Waist-high raised beds enable the elderly and physically disabled to grow flowers and vegetables without having to bend over to tend them.

For more information on gardening, you can reach me at 319-338-3870 or [gerald.rath@access2independence.org](mailto:gerald.rath@access2independence.org)



Pictured left: Raised beds for individuals with physical limitations

## Seeking Board Members

Access 2 Independence of the Eastern Iowa Corridor is looking for a few talented and conscientious volunteer board members to lead and strengthen our programs for individuals with disabilities, both visible and invisible. We are a Center for Independent Living and our services aim to promote the self determination of people with disabilities.

We're especially looking for folks who have experience working with youth, as we look to grow our youth transition programs. In keeping with the Independent Living Philosophy, we encourage interest from persons who have personal experience with a significant disability, either visible or invisible.

If you live in either Johnson, Linn, Jones, Cedar, Henry, Iowa, Benton, or Washington Counties, can contribute your time, thoughtfulness, and leadership one evening a month, and are interested in exploring this opportunity, call our office at 319-338-3870 or email Sarah Martinez at [ed@access2independence.org](mailto:ed@access2independence.org)



1556 S. 1st Ave Suite B, Iowa City, IA 52240  
601 2nd Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401  
[access2independence.org](http://access2independence.org)  
319-338-3870

