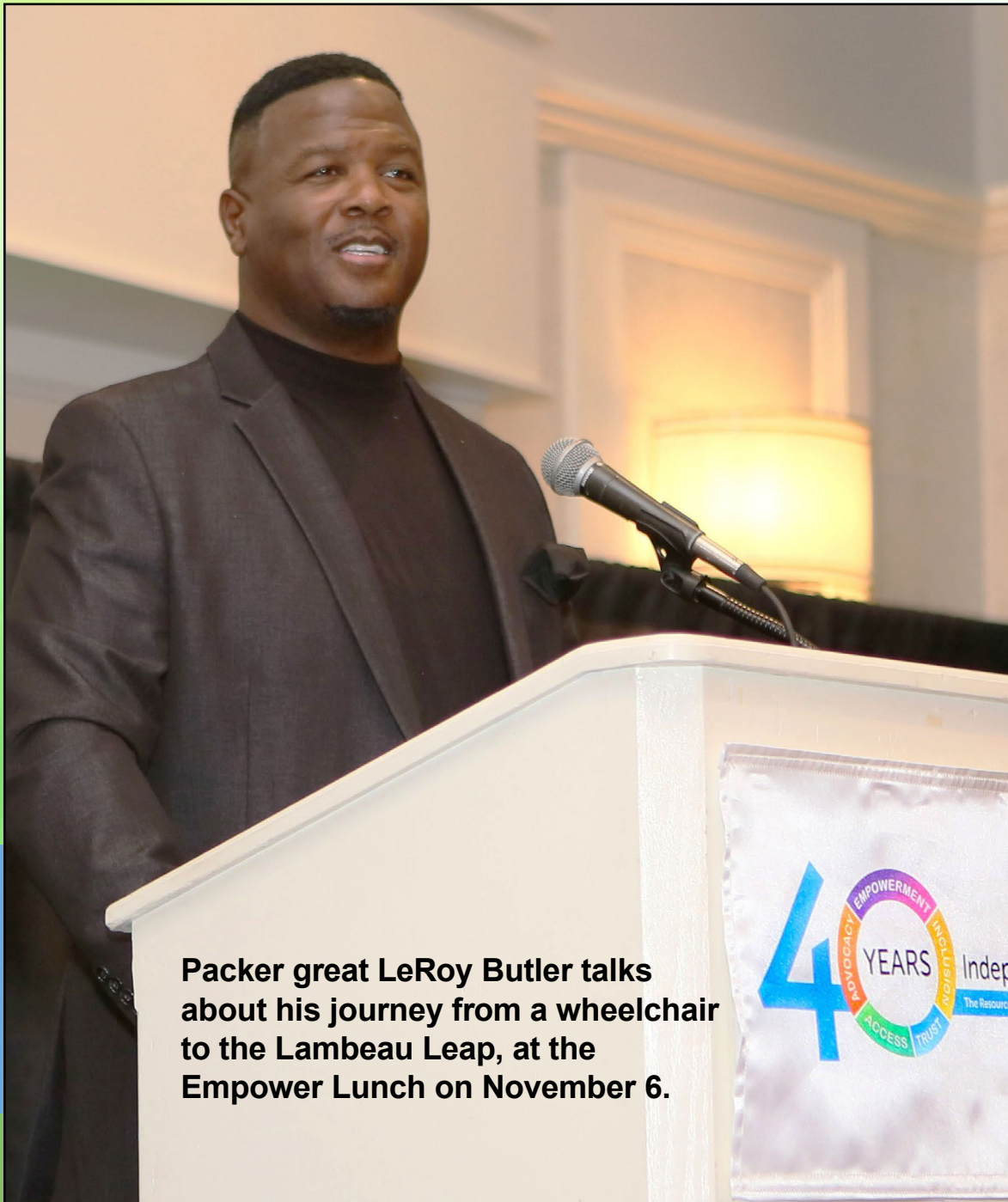


A Publication of Independence First

First Look

Winter 2020



Packer great LeRoy Butler talks about his journey from a wheelchair to the Lambeau Leap, at the Empower Lunch on November 6.

A Publication of
IndependenceFirst

First Look is a quarterly publication of Independence First, a nonprofit serving the Greater Milwaukee area through more than 20 programs and services that empower people with disabilities of all kinds and in all age groups. More than 50% of our staff, management and board are people with disabilities, and this peer approach leads to excellent outcomes. We believe that individuals with disabilities have the right to live with dignity and with appropriate support in their own homes, fully participate in their communities, and control and make decisions about their lives.

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What's Inside

Nursing Home Transition	Page 3
President's Corner	Page 4
IndependenceFirst is now a Polling Place	Page 5
Used Equipment - Where to Donate	Page 6
Can You Hear Your Phone?	Page 7
Accessibility Problems?	Page 8
Legal Definition of Accessible Parking	Page 9
Disability is not a Barrier	Page 10
Sensory Rooms Created at Fiserv Forum	Page 11

Nursing Home Transition Corner

By Julie Alexander, Independent Living Services Coordinator

Cynthia is a 63-year-old woman who has multiple disabilities, including a condition that affected the nerves in her spine and body so she is no longer able to walk and get around without the use of assistive technology and a wheelchair. Cynthia spent a lot of her life working but as her nerve damage increased, she lost her jobs and insurance and ended up in a nursing home without a place to move to called “home.”

She connected with IndependenceFirst because she didn’t want to be in a nursing home—she wanted to be out in the community. IndependenceFirst staff assisted Cynthia in her housing search by providing resources, support and encouragement as she looked for housing. Cynthia was also eligible for a special grant from IndependenceFirst through the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, which allowed her to receive funding to help restart her life when she found housing and moved out of the nursing home. Through this grant, Cynthia was able to purchase furnishings for her new apartment, batteries for a scooter that she had gotten previously and some startup supplies that allowed her to have things she needed now that she was on her own again.

Cynthia indicated to me that she feels so grateful because now she has a bed to sleep on instead of just an air mattress. This is the first time in her life that she has ever had a bed. She is also so grateful to have working batteries for her scooter because now she can get out into the community and enjoy going to different tv places and connecting with people. She thanks IndependenceFirst and the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation for working with her and providing her with support, encouragement and the startup supplies that she needed so badly. She said she wakes up every day being grateful.



Cynthia Enjoying her New Life



For more information, please contact me at 414-226-8378 V/Relay or jalexander@independencefirst.org.

In our 40th year of being a trusted community partner, IndependenceFirst directly served more than 10,000 people—providing choices and available services to individuals with disabilities.

President's Corner

Marci Boucher
President & CEO



Thank you to everyone who braved an early fall snowstorm to attend our Empower Lunch on November 6. Your support contributed to a hugely successful event that raised more than \$50,000 for our programs and heightened public awareness of IndependenceFirst's mission and our accomplishments. We are also grateful to the participants in the Summer Arts Program who decorated centerpieces displayed on every table that were greatly admired by our guests.

Special thanks to our presenting sponsor BMO Harris Bank, and to our other sponsors for their generous investment in our mission.

Our keynote speaker, Green Bay legend LeRoy Butler, delivered an engaging speech on his journey from using a wheelchair as a child to his successful career in the NFL. Indie Award Winners the Milwaukee Bucks accepted an award for the accessibility of the Fiserv Forum, and Moriah Iverson of the Medical College of Wisconsin was awarded the Martha Valerio Disability Advocacy Award. We want to thank Martha's longtime friend Doris Heiser for presenting this award and Martha's son Joe for traveling to Wisconsin to be a co-presenter.

In our 40th year of being a trusted community partner, IndependenceFirst directly served more than 10,000 people—providing choices and available services to individuals with disabilities. IndependenceFirst has more than 20 programs and 40 workshops that teach people with disabilities how to advocate for themselves, where to receive services in the community and how to perform independent living skills such as budgeting and cooking, and we also have one-on-one and group mentoring. We also assist with transition out of nursing homes or diverting individuals so they can live at home with their loved ones. This work can't happen without the generosity of the community, so thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

As 2020 begins, I'd encourage everyone to help us continue the wonderful work we do at IndependenceFirst and remember us in your giving. Thank you and have a great start to the New Year.



IndependenceFirst is now a polling place

By Julie Alexander, Independent Living Services Coordinator

Election time in 2020 is right around the corner. For the first time ever, IndependenceFirst is now a recognized polling site for District 12. This allows individuals with and without disabilities access to a site that is fully integrated and accessible to all.

IndependenceFirst will be open and available as a site for District 12 residents to cast their ballots. Our agency will have accessible voting stations so that people with disabilities can utilize assistive technology to cast their vote. We are looking to have people onsite to assist those with disabilities in casting their ballot upon request.

During the February 18 election, primarily judges and city and county officials will be on the ballot. A lot of people don't think that these elections are important, yet many decisions, positive and negative, have been



Accessible
voting at
IndependenceFirst
polling place

made by local officials and judges. If we do not have local officials and judges who understand the needs of people with disabilities, it will be hard to convince people to help with issues such as accessible housing, transportation and employment. These elections are just as important as the presidential primary, which will be taking place on April 7.

Remember that you don't have a voice in how things work in your city, state or federal government unless you take time to vote and make your voice heard.



For more information, contact Heather Perkins at 414-226-8314 V/Relay or hperkins@independencefirst.org.

Used equipment: Where to donate or find it

By Cindi Pichler, Senior Assistive Technology Specialist

Have you ever wanted a piece of equipment, like a walker, a wheelchair, an accessible telephone or maybe something as simple as a magnifier or eating utensil? Maybe your insurance won't pay for it, maybe money is tight and you wish you could find something for free or maybe you need a backup device in case your primary device fails.

Or maybe you will need a piece of equipment for a short time, and don't want to buy something that you may not need for long.

Or maybe you have a piece of equipment that you no longer need. It's in good shape and you want to give it to somebody who could really use it.

What are your options?

Option 1: Katy's Klostet

Katy's Klostet is a local nonprofit that recycles and loans out used equipment at no charge. They are located at 404 Wilmont Dr., Unit D, Waukesha, WI 53189. Their phone number is 262-746-9034 V/Relay and their website is www.teamupwithfamilies.org/katys-klostet/. They are open Wednesdays from 3-5 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. They have a wide variety of equipment available. Donations are accepted during their open hours as well. Katy's Klostet is a volunteer-run organization, and they are not able to pick up or transport equipment.

Option 2:

Our "Free to a Good Home" Cabinet

IndependenceFirst has installed a "Free to a Good Home" cabinet in our waiting room.

Lightly used equipment of all kinds, from phones to magnifiers to pill containers to utensils, and much more, are available at no charge (selection changes frequently and there are no guarantees about what will be available at any given time). A limit of two items per person can be requested.

We sometimes have larger items as well, so keep an eye on the digital picture frame on top of the cabinet for larger items we may have available. Donations of lightly used devices are gratefully accepted during business hours. We are not able to pick up or transport equipment.



Reuse and Rehome
– A Great Idea for
Everyone



For more information, contact me
at 414-226-8385 V/Relay or
cpichler@independencefirst.org.

Can you hear on your phone?

By Tonya Villwock, Independent Living Services Coordinator - Branch Offices

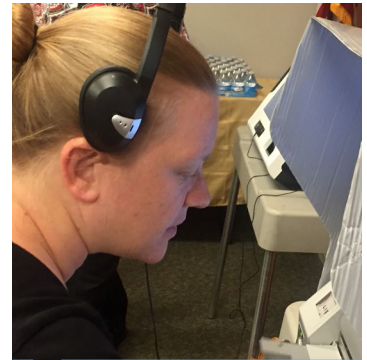
The Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) is a statewide program that helps people with disabilities buy adaptive telephone equipment that they need to live independently. TEPP is paid for by the Universal Service Fund (USF) established by the Public Service Commission.

- Do you want a large-print or talking caller-ID?
- Do you want your lights to flash when the phone rings?
- Do you want your phone to ring more than 4 times?
- Do you need memory buttons to assist with dialing?
- Do you need a louder amplified answering machine?
- Are you tired of asking people to repeat themselves?

There is NO catch! All you have to do is fill out an application and meet these three requirements:

1. Be a Wisconsin resident
2. Be a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, or have speech, mobility or motion limitations
3. Have a need for adaptive equipment in the home

There is no age or income limit, but an applicant can only apply every three years. Some of the higher voucher categories will require a recent certificate of hearing loss OR physician/audiologist signature.



Options for Phones



Contact IndependenceFirst if you would like to see what kinds of adaptive phone equipment are available! We will help you fill out the TEPP application, assist you in ordering the correct equipment, install the equipment in your home and get your independent living needs met!

Accessibility problems? Tell your community!

By Brian Peters, Community Access & Policy Specialist

Winter is here! As we all know, winter in Wisconsin can bring heavy snowfalls.

Obviously when you have snowfalls, the resulting snow on the sidewalks and streets can cause access problems for people with mobility disabilities, whether they use wheelchairs, scooters, walkers or canes, or perhaps just have an unsteady gait. The most frequent complaints we've gotten here at IndependenceFirst are about sidewalks and bus stops not being cleared of snow and about accessible parking spaces and access aisles being used as a dumping spot for plowed snow.

What can you do to encourage communities to be more proactive in clearing snow? Many communities have a website or even an app for the phone where you can report issues. For example, the City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services has an online process for people to not only file complaints, but also to follow its process using

the address of the property. The City of Waukesha's "Citizen Request Portal" has a webpage where you can report issues. The City of West Bend has a "Citizen Complaint Registration" page in the Office of Building Inspection. Go check out your community's website and add it to your bookmarks!

Some communities were not thinking of accessibility issues when they created the complaint process. If you don't see an option for your access issue, feel free to call or email the municipality to find out who the appropriate person to send the complaint to is. It will most likely depend on who owns the property—is it residential, commercial or owned by the municipality?

When you contact the municipality, insist that their online complaint process start including options for access issues such as snow/ice on sidewalks, snow/ice in accessible parking spaces and access aisles, etc.



Getting Around in Winter and Beyond

This process is not limited to winters, either. Many communities should have a place on their website for you to notify them of problems with sidewalks and curb ramps, too, which can be useful in warmer weather.



For more information, please contact me at 414-937-5912 V/Relay or bpeters@independencefirst.org

Do you know the legal definition of “accessible parking spot”?

By the IndependenceFirst ADA/Access Consumer Advocacy Team

The signage alone does not make a parking spot accessible. If a parking spot is identified by the sign then the dimensions of the parking spot must comply with the legal definition according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines.

A regular accessible parking spot must measure a minimum of 96 inches wide with an attached access aisle measuring 60 inches wide and a slope not to exceed 1:48.

A van accessible parking spot must measure either 132 inches wide with an attached access aisle measuring 60 inches wide or 96 inches wide with an access aisle measuring 96 inches wide and a slope not to exceed 1:48.

Every parking lot must have a minimum number of accessible car and van parking spots according to the total number of parking spots in the entire parking lot/structure. Each lot/structure is counted separately, not combined. Accessible spaces in distant



parking facilities can be moved to parking facilities closer to the building. Please see the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design for complete guidelines on the parking requirements. Accessible parking is also covered in the state building code that is enforced by code enforcement inspectors.

There is no rule on the amount of accessible parking spots over and above the minimum; however, any additional accessible parking spot over the minimum should also comply with the legal definition of an accessible parking spot. If the parking spot is identified by the signage

then it should have an access aisle. Confusion should be avoided about what an accessible parking space is. If businesses want to provide additional parking but not follow the accessible parking requirements, they should use different signage.



In the city of Milwaukee if you know of a parking spot labeled with signage as an accessible parking spot which does not comply with the ADA measurement guidelines you can anonymously report this information to the Department of Neighborhood Services Commercial Code Enforcement division at 414-286-3874 V/Relay.

Disability is not the barrier

By Michael Hineberg, Independent Living Services Coordinator

The greatest barriers in the lives of people with disabilities are not caused by disability in and of itself. Environment and negative stereotypes cause some of the greatest obstacles. With the right accommodations, a disability does not restrict someone. Let me illustrate. If someone was placed on the side of Mount Rainier with no rock climbing equipment, you could say he has a “disability.” Without ropes, tackle, climbing boots, gloves, there are overwhelming limitations. In this context this allegedly able-bodied person is no longer able-bodied because of the environment. Likewise the environment



Overcoming
Obstacles Takes
Understanding
from Others

limits a person with a disability. Without accommodations, a person with a disability can be very limited. But in a fully accessible environment complete with ramps, widened doorways, cutaway areas under the sinks, lever doorknobs and levered faucets—obstacles are eliminated.

Likewise, bad attitudes from the public can be even more insurmountable to a person with a disability than a millions stairs. Most people fail to realize that people with disabilities simply want full inclusion. Yet, prevailing attitudes promote segregation and exclusion. Bad attitudes suggest people with disabilities are inept and unworthy to participate in all aspects of community life.



For information on how to advocate when you encounter barriers, contact us at 414-291-7520 V/Relay.

IndependenceFirst Partners With The Milwaukee Bucks To Highlight Sensory Rooms

By Myra Sanchick, Marketing and Communications Manager

IndependenceFirst joined Milwaukee Bucks Vice President Alex Lasry to announce several efforts to make Fiserv Forum inclusive and accessible. Fiserv Forum is the first sports and entertainment venue in Wisconsin to earn a national Sensory Inclusive Certification. Gerald Hay, Independent Living Services Program Manager at IndependenceFirst, spoke to the media which gathered for the November 21st press event at Fiserv Forum. Hay talked about the importance of making the sports and entertainment venue accessible for everyone. In addition, a consumer family from IndependenceFirst attended the news conference, and answered questions about how they and others could use the sensory devices and sensory rooms. Fiserv Forum says it has trained 800 event staff members on how to recognize and assist guests with sensory needs. They also recently added sensory bags for guests, with tools such as noise-cancelling



One of Two Sensory Rooms at Fiserv Forum

headphones. The facility is the first NBA venue to offer two dedicated sensory rooms. The sensory rooms are quiet spaces with tactile elements on the walls, as well as a monitor with bubbles for relaxation.

At the November Empower Lunch, IndependenceFirst recognized the efforts of The Milwaukee Bucks with an award for its accessibility .



For more information please contact us at 414-226-8334 V/Relay msanchick@independencefirst.org

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