



Greetings from the Research & Training Center on Independent Living (RTC/IL) at the University of Kansas. We are committed to supporting centers for independent living and other community-based organizations that serve people with disabilities. This update informs you about Center news and resources you may find useful.

### Celebrating the ADA at 25 Years



Two Center staff members were invited to address local ADA celebrations. Martha Hodgesmith (*pictured at left*) took part in the KU Dole Institute of Politics observation, which includes an [exhibit](#), and Dot Nary spoke at the Lawrence, KS, event ([listen to the audio](#)).

Nary was also featured in the *Washington Post* in July, when she wasn't able to book an accessible bus for a tour of the D.C. monuments. (After this negative publicity, the company located an

accessible bus. But how will the next wheelchair user fare?)

### Parking Equity: What's Van Accessible Really Mean?

The Center produced a new fact sheet about E (Alice) Zhang's master's thesis study titled "[Parking Equity: Encouraging Reservation of Van-Designated Spaces for Lift- or Ramp-Equipped Van Users](#)" (PDF).



Parking spots labelled "Van Accessible" have wider access aisles than standard accessible spaces, which gives wheelchair users ample room to maneuver off and onto a ramp or lift. Zhang is pictured here in one of the narrower access aisles that accompanies standard accessible spaces. Combined with an open ramp, this smaller space can create a

hazardous situation for the wheelchair user.

Zhang will present results of her study at APRIL's national conference this fall. She has also presented the research at NCIL's annual conference and the Kansas Disability Caucus.

## Center Staff Members Honored



Congratulations to Glen White, who received the Distinguished Service Award from NARRTC at its national meeting in May. This is the highest recognition conferred by NARRTC, whose members include current projects funded through the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). The award recognizes individuals who have made impressive contributions to the field of disability through research, teaching, service or advocacy.



The University of Kansas recognized Jean Ann Summers, Martha Hodgesmith, and KU alumnae Ranita Wilks and Katerina Birge as **Women of Distinction** at an Aug. 31 ceremony. Their photo appears on the 2015-16 calendar.

Hodgesmith (*back row, center*) is our Center's Associate Director and Summers (*back, right*) is Research Director. Wilks (*front*) is Peer Counseling Specialist and Youth

Employment Program Coordinator for Independence, Inc., the center for independent living in Lawrence. Birge (*back, left*) is currently a graduate student at the University of Colorado in Public Administration and was a leader in founding AbleHawks, KU's student advocacy group. Kudos to all!

## Health Care Resources

Good health is critical to one's ability to participate in life, and especially affects continuity of community living for people with disabilities. But people with disabilities have higher rates of chronic diseases and preventable hospitalizations, and are less likely to receive preventive care than those

without a disability. Jean Ann Summers and Dot Nary are developing a [health promotion assistance tool](#) that staff at centers for independent living (CILs) can use to help consumers manage their own health. They are now recruiting CILs to take part in this research study.

Here are other health resources you may find these helpful.

### ***Making Homes More Visitable***

Dot Nary published a guide to “[Making Homes More ‘Visitable’ for Wheelchair Users and Potential Hosts](#)” in the *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*. Health care providers can easily remove this informative page from the journal to share with patients and their caregivers – or you can give it to your physician for his or her education about living with a mobility disability.

### ***Video: Medical Exams CAN Be Accessible***

One of our center’s advisors, Catherine Graham, is featured in a video about “[Medical Examinations and People with Disabilities](#)” produced by Able South Carolina. There are two versions for full accessibility, with descriptive narration in the link above and ASL provided in a second version.

### ***Brain Injury and Health Care: First-Person Experiences***

Martha Hodgesmith and Val Renault produced an Issue Brief on “[Improving Access to Health Care for Kansans with Brain Injuries](#)” (PDF) based on a collaboration with the Disability Rights Center of Kansas. This report summarizes information gathered from Kansans who have brain injuries (BI) at town hall meetings held in three Kansas locations. The brief presents recommendations for changes in policy and practice to improve the health care experience of Kansans with BI.

## **The State of Employment in Kansas**

The RTC on Independent Living is working with seven other Kansas disability organizations to improve employment opportunities for Kansans with disabilities. As part of this [Employment Systems Change Coalition](#) (ESCC), Martha Hodgesmith and Val Renault conducted focus groups on employment in all regions of the state this summer, as well as at the SACK conference and the Disability Caucus. We will issue a report on the findings this fall.

## **RTC/IL Staff**

Glen W. White, PhD, director

Martha Hodgesmith, JD, associate director

Jean Ann Summers, PhD, research director

Dot Nary, PhD, assistant research professor

Aruna Subramaniam, project coordinator

Val Renault, communications coordinator

Pam Willits, grants specialist

Shelby Akers, office assistant

Jeff Gordon, graduate research assistant

Kelsey Shinnick, graduate research assistant

Alice Zhang, graduate research assistant

For more information, contact Val Renault, [vrenault@ku.edu](mailto:vrenault@ku.edu), 785-864-4095