

LIFE Connections

September 2008 to November 2008

LIFE/RUN Center for Independent Living



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Time for a Change!

The election is over and America has a new President, Barack Obama! We can be proud of our country for defeating stereotypes, for transcending racial issues, and for turning out in such great numbers to vote in this historic election.

With change in administrations, come changes in policy. Only time will tell as to whether President-Elect Obama will be able to implement the changes he has outlined and that will, of course, depend on the willingness of both houses of Congress to cooperate. Regardless of political affiliations, it is time we all move towards the center to achieve the goals that will benefit the country.

With the new economic times, people in this country will have to work together to change the way we conduct our lives. Very few of us, as Americans, are unaffected by the impact of the economic downturns. Jobs are more scarce, grocery prices are up, and our dependence on foreign oil is debilitating to our economy.

We, as a country, must remember that no one man can change our path alone. Remember the famous words of John F. Kennedy in his Inaugural speech on January, 20, 1961: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country!" What we all can do is limit our excesses, use good judgment when making purchases, and be accountable for our own decisions.

We did not get into this situation overnight, nor will we get out of it overnight, but if we all work together towards the common goals of peace, prosperity and good will towards all men, we can make that change happen!



Good News! SSA Announces 5.8% Increase for 2009!

The largest increase in Social Security benefits since 1982 will be in effect as of January 2009. Benefits will increase by 5.8%. For those receiving SSI, the maximum monthly payment will increase from \$637 per month to \$674 per month. For couples, the maximum federal payment will be \$1,011 per month, up from the 2008 amount of \$956. The resource limits of \$2,000 per individual and \$3,000 per couple will not change in 2009.

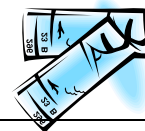
For those who receive SSDI, there is an increase of Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA). The 2008 level was \$940 per month and will increase to \$980 per month in 2009. SGA is how the SSA determines if you are still eligible to receive SSDI benefits. In other words, in 2009, you can earn less than \$980 per month by working and still be eligible for SSDI benefits. The SGA level is higher for people who are blind, going from \$1,570 in 2008 to \$1,640 in 2009.

The other piece of good news is that there is improvement in the long backlogs of people waiting for a decision for Social Security benefits. In 2008, SSA added 190 New Administrative Law Judges to expedite applications and hearings. Listed below, are some of the accomplishments of the SSA in 2008:

- More than 2.6 million initial disability claims processed;
- Approximately 560,000 reconsideration cases processed;
- Over 575,000 hearing requests processed;
- Over 83,000 Appeals Council Reviews processed;
- Implemented procedures to allow attorney adjudicators to issue fully-favorable decisions with over 24,000 decisions issued;

- Improved the process to identify and expedite military casualty claims;
- Implemented a process that allows the public and third parties to file disability reconsideration and hearing requests via the Internet.

In order to make it easier for Consumers to attend activities at the Center, LIFE/RUN will now provide a round-trip bus pass to a Center-sponsored activity. You must attend the activity and ride the bus to qualify for a bus ticket.



Holiday Answers

Out of Money? More family than income? Too much month left when the money runs out? A lot of people feel that the Christmas holidays are not complete without lots of shopping and gifts. In today's economy, prices are up, wages are not. It is time to look at what the Christmas holidays really mean and find a better way to celebrate.

If you have a large family, consider changing how you exchange gifts this year. You might:

- Pick names to reduce the number of presents you buy.
- Make gifts such as cakes, cookies, a casserole for a busy family.
- Prepare crafts, ceramics, crocheted items, etc.
- Prepare a photo album for a family member.
- Offer a "gift coupon" of a service you can provide, such as an evening of babysitting.

Use your imagination and give more of yourself.

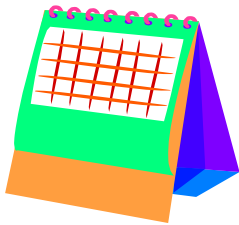


The LIFE/RUN Dignity U Wear Clothing Closet will be open every 3rd Wednesday of each month.

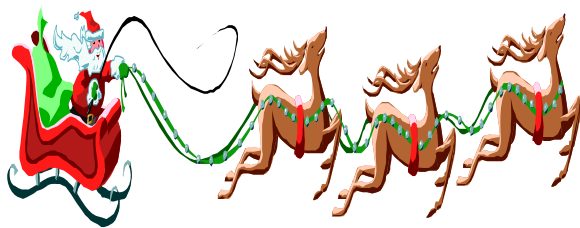


LIFE/RUN Activities

We love the holidays at LIFE/RUN! The Center strives to provide a holiday season for Consumers that will provide opportunities to celebrate together and enjoy the season. Starting in November, we will have our Annual Thanksgiving celebration for Center Consumers. This is a wonderful time to meet old friends and make new friends.



In December, we will have a variety of holiday activities, such as tree trimming on December 2nd, cookie baking day on December 18th and a Holiday get together for Consumers on December 22nd. There will be a gift exchange at the Consumer party, so, bring a gift to get a gift! Remember, LIFE/RUN will be closed for the holidays from noon on December 23rd, until January 5th. We hope you all have a wonderful Holiday season!



Computer class time will change beginning December 1, 2008 to Wednesdays, from 2:30-3:30, following ASL class.

Medicare Part D Open Enrollment

People who currently receive Social Security Medicare Part D assistance must remember that from November 15, 2008 through December 31, 2008, is the open enrollment period for those benefits. This is an opportunity for people to identify a new Part D provider. If your medications have changed, or if you are unhappy with your current provider, this is the time to make a change.

LIFE/RUN will schedule 3 days to assist people with identifying the appropriate Part D provider. On December 4th, 11th, and 18th John Hobgood will be available to help you sign up with a new Part D provider. Part D assistance will also be offered at South Plains Association of Governments, (SPAG).

Your donation to the LIFE/RUN Center for Independent Living is tax deductible. It will be used to further enhance the quality of services offered to Consumers, and to promote equality, dignity, independence and the full inclusion of people with disabilities into every aspect of their communities. To give, please clip this and mail it with your donation to:

LIFE/RUN Center
4902 34th Street, Suite #5,
Lubbock, TX 79410

I would like to donate:

\$5___ \$10___ \$25___ \$50___
\$100___ \$1,000___

Or go to www.liferun.org

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

Anne Frank

Accessibility



LIFE/RUN Center continues to take part with Hub City Access, by helping to make Lubbock more accessible to ALL of its citizens. To that end, we asked a staff member to relay back her experiences at various restaurants in Lubbock, to see how accessible it is for a person using a wheelchair. These are her observations.

Cotton Patch – 6810 Slide Rd.

At the Cotton Patch you will find an offering of a nice variety of comfort foods, at moderate prices and friendly wait staff. From their down home offerings of meat loaf or grilled pork chops, to banana pudding or cobbler, you are sure to find something you like that is moderately priced with not too much and not too little portions.

With eight TV's and music at the bar, it is surprising that the overall volume is low enough that you will not need to raise your voice to be heard. In keeping with their semi-rustic atmosphere, the tables have faux tin tops that match the light fixtures. Overall it was clean, pleasant and well lit.

Seating consists of some platform and ground level booths, as well as ground level tables that may be a tight fit for some wheelchairs in spots. At the bar, you will find a good selection of drinks from peach or raspberry tea, to wines and beers. However, your drink will need to be brought to your table since all bar seating is quite high. While there is no companion restroom, there is maneuverability space for a wheelchair. If you're tired of traditional restaurant fair, do give Cotton Patch a try!

Additional observations include:

- Accessible parking: 4 spaces
- No automatic doors

- Booth and table seating
- Ramps located near designated parking
- Close to public transportation
- Accessible restrooms
- No Brailled menus

Amigo's – 6501 34th St

If you're in the mood for Mexican cooking, try Amigo's. While the restaurant is small, their prices are great, the food is good, and the portions are generous. On the menu, you will find a good range of choices from Chorizo and egg burritos, enchiladas, to menudo on the weekends. They also offer burgers, sandwiches, and a delicious fried ice cream.

All seating is wheelchair accessible. There is no companion restroom, and the restrooms are not truly wheelchair accessible due to narrow doors. The décor is simple, atmosphere and staff pleasant, and noise volume minimal. If you are in the mood for a quick bite of good, inexpensive Mexican food, Amigo's could become a favorite especially, if they were more accommodating to people with disabilities. ¡Sí, ellos hablan Español!

Additional observations include:

- No accessible parking designated
- No automatic doors
- All tables wheelchair accessible
- Non accessible restrooms
- One parking lot ramp
- Close to public transportation
- No Brailled menus

If you have any restaurants you would like us to review, call Monica at LIFE/RUN.

In helping others, we shall help ourselves,
for whatever good we give out completes
the circle and comes back to us.

Flora Edwards

Veteran's and Disability

Because of increased technology and improved medical treatment, we are lucky that many of the injured military troops in war zones are now surviving injuries that would have been fatal in previous years. However, not all of these injuries are apparent. Incidences of resulting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental disabilities have increased greatly. The Veteran's Administration reports that 28% of all returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans file disability claims with the VA. Out of those who file, 58% that have been reviewed have been granted disability benefits.



It can be projected that 400,000 veterans may eventually apply for benefits, with 232,000 potentially being approved.

The time it takes to be approved for claims is purported to be 205 days, or approximately 7 months. The Disability Rights Advocacy (DRA) non-profit group claims that disability claims may take years to be determined. For many, returning home without VA benefits in place means no income and no medical benefits, 2 situations that can only exacerbate mental and physical disabilities. It is imperative that we address the needs of these veterans and do so in a timely manner.

Barack Obama's Disability Platform.



With each new administration, there are significant changes. New cabinet positions are filled, new policies are identified and change comes.

Our new President-Elect, Barack Obama, has identified his stance on various issues, but the position on issues that

affect people with disabilities are outlined below.

- ✓ Provide educational opportunities to Americans with disabilities:

Fight to provide students with disabilities the public education they have a right to, invest in early intervention programs, improve college opportunities, and support universal screening of infants.

- ✓ End workplace discrimination and promote equal opportunity:

Restore the Americans with Disabilities Act, reducing workplace and labor market discrimination against people with disabilities.

- ✓ Support independent, community-based living for Americans with disabilities:

Ensure people with mental or functional disabilities are placed in community settings.

- ✓ Change the Medicare Home-bound requirements:

Support amending the Medicare "home-bound" rule so that those with disabilities have the freedom to leave their homes without fear of having their government benefits taken away.

In addition, the new administration has specific goals for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders. They are as follows:

- ✓ Fully Fund the Combating Autism Act and Federal Autism Research Initiatives
- ✓ Support Special Needs Education for Children with ASD
- ✓ Support Universal Screening

If you would like more detailed information on President-Elect Obama's disability platform, go to:

<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/disabilities/>

LIFE/RUN programs are free and open to anyone with a disability. If you need help to participate (interpreters, etc.), please let us know 24 hours in advance, so that we can provide these services. Also, let us know if you need help with transportation.

New Resource in Lubbock - ADRC

The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services recently awarded \$110,000 in grant funds to Lubbock MHMR to implement an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) in the Lubbock area. ADRCs provide information and assistance to individuals needing either public or private resources, professionals seeking assistance on behalf of individuals, and those planning for their own future long-term service and support needs.

ADRCs assist individuals with publicly administered long-term supports including those funded under Medicaid and other federal and state-funded programs.

Through the coordinated efforts of community partners, an ADRC supports efforts to streamline access to long-term care services and supports for older persons and persons with disabilities through the development of "one-stop shops", where Consumers can access local providers of such services and supports. The ADRC initiative also supports the development of community programs that will help people make informed decisions about their service and support options.

Information from the DADS website @ <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/homepage/adrcs.html>

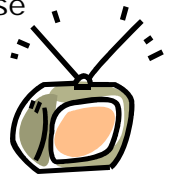
Computers and TVs Wanted

This Christmas, many people will get new TVs and computers as gifts. If you would like to have the satisfaction of knowing your old working computers and televisions will benefit someone who would not be able to afford to buy one, now is your chance!



LIFE/RUN's nursing home relocation program relocates between 5-10 individuals a month. The majority of these people do not have income sufficient to be able to buy either a TV or a computer, both of which can alleviate isolation.

LIFE/RUN is accepting donations of working televisions and computers to pass along to people with disabilities. Your donation can make life more enjoyable for those who cannot purchase these items for themselves. Please contact Irean Harvey at LIFE/RUN to arrange your donation and thank you for passing on the holiday spirit!



Second Annual Heads Up Reunion

LIFE/RUN is planning the second Annual Heads Up Holiday Reunion party to give the group a chance to catch up on old times and plan new activities. Heads Up has been in existence as a peer support group for people who have survived traumatic brain injuries, since the inception of LIFE/RUN. Over the years, some Heads Up participants have moved on or moved away. In 2006, the group decided to include any person with any disability into the group.

The reunion party will be held on December 18th, from 11:00 to 3:00. Please, plan to attend the reunion and meet up with old friends. There will be a gift exchange for those who want to participate.

Post-Holiday Blues

During this season of celebration, are you are experiencing a dip in your mood, just when it's the season to celebrate thankfulness and to be jolly? Does the hustle and bustle get you down? Are you overwhelmed with the busyness of the season?

Are you dreading the holidays? Feeling behind before you even begin preparations? Wish you could hibernate until the season's over? Avoiding tree-trimmings and office parties? Is your attitude, "Bah-humbug!?" For your own well-being, don't boycott the holidays.

Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza, Ramadan, New Years Eve, whatever you celebrate this season, being single doesn't suck as much as you think. You have a choice between sitting home and wallowing in your own self-pity and crying into a warm beer, watching re-runs of "It's a Wonderful Life" or creating a very special holiday just for you. Embrace your situation. There is hope.

According to the National Mental Health Association, reasons for feeling blue around the holidays are numerous. They range from fatigue, a result of all of the increased holiday activity, to financial limitations and family tensions. Experts say one of the fastest routes to holiday depression is unrealistic expectations.

Holiday blues can affect both men and women, young and old. Factors contributing to holiday blues include increased stress and fatigue, unrealistic expectations, commercialization, and the inability to be with one's family. The increased demands of shopping, parties, family reunions, and house guests may also contribute to tension and sadness during the holidays. Common stress reactions during the holidays include headaches, excessive drinking, over-

eating or not eating enough, and difficulty sleeping.



A post-holiday let down, resulting from emotional disappointments during the holiday months, as well as the physical reactions caused by excess fatigue and stress, may cause holiday blues to continue into the New Year.

One thing to remember: There is no cure-all for the holiday blues; however, it is important for you to understand that the only person in charge of how you "feel" is you.



LIFE/RUN Center for Independent Living
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Lubbock, TX 79410

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This publication is supported by funding through DARS (27%), U.S. Dept. of Education (23%), DADS (48%), and other grants and contracts (2%) received by the LIFE/RUN Center.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of LIFE/RUN's funding sources.