

# Annual Report

2021



# Fully engaged, period.

Staff, consumers, community members, and allies embraced our 2021 theme in lasting ways, allowing people with disabilities a place at every table to give input on every part of society that affects their lives. Consumers are learning to lead the way forward in advocating for themselves.

Technology barriers were broken as staff trained consumers with iPads provided

through additional funding. Online grocery ordering, new job opportunities, and greater independence are becoming the norm for many of our consumers!

Thank you for continuing to engage and advocate for full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life. Period.



## VALUES THAT LEAD TO ACTION

We believe that core values and beliefs are meaningless without action to back them up. At The League, when we value something or someone, we will always respond accordingly.



We value and believe people with disabilities, no proof required



We value consumer control



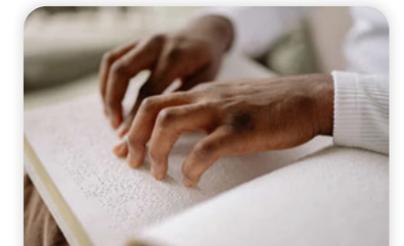
We value equal opportunity



We value diverse thoughts & ideas



We value the community



We value quality

## OUR HISTORY

The beginnings of a fully engaged community were sown many years ago by someone outside our community who used her voice to plant seeds of change.

In 1949, Helen Keller challenged Fort Wayne residents to improve services for the Blind and helped raise funds for the endeavor.

Her seeds sprouted into the creation of the Allen County League for the Blind, known today as The League.

Over the years, the organization went through changes, leading to growth and greater impact in the lives of people across Northeast Indiana. In 1981, the organization became the state's first Center for Independent Living, and in 1991, updated its mission and purpose to begin serving people with any type of disability.

Today, The League impacts thousands of individuals and families annually.

# Our Services



## Who we serve

The League serves people of all ages with any disability

We respect people with disabilities as **service consumers**, rather than patients or clients who need to be “fixed,” “rehabilitated,” or cared for by providers.

In 2021, The League served more than 2,700 individuals with a variety of disabilities in our service area, providing them with one-on-one services across our programs.

94

people with cognitive disabilities



34

people with mental/emotional disabilities

47

people with hearing disabilities

108

people with physical disabilities



273

people with visual disabilities

88

people with multiple disabilities

OUR SERVICES

# Information & Referral

## Connecting for independence

Having a central hub of resources is vital for our consumers. When they can access the right resource, they live a more independent life. We connect them with resources that match their needs so they can maintain, gain, or increase their independence.

People who do not qualify for service, live outside The League’s service area, businesses, or loved ones of people with disabilities are able to call to ask questions about disability-related topics or resources.



**2,499**  
individuals  
served

Being connected to the right resources removed barriers to independent living for 2,499 individuals who received Information & Referral program services during 2021.

OUR SERVICES

# Advocacy

## The heart of all we do

Our staff fully engaged in advocating for our consumers to make a place at the table for discussions that impact their lives. We worked to increase awareness among community members and business owners around issues as broad as public transportation, and as simple as having sidewalk ramps to make events inclusive for all community members.

A big part of our advocacy work is empowering people with disabilities to advocate for themselves in areas of housing, education, employment, and more. We give them a voice in the discussions that impact their lives—because they know their lives best.



**1000+ hours**

devoted to community change, including advocating on key issues to reduce barriers to people with disabilities being fully included in community life.

**50 staff**

engaged in systemic advocacy through education and involvement on national, state, local, and community boards, committees, and advocacy projects.

**10,436**

individuals and followers engaged with digital platforms and social media.

**100**

collaborations with 49 organizations in Northeast Indiana to open opportunities for people with disabilities.

**600 hours**

and nearly \$11,000 intentionally invested in staff development.

# Community

Building peer support and independence

## Peer Support

People with disabilities are the experts in what they need and want. Peer Support is a way for people with disabilities to come together and share social time, help each other navigate challenges, or simply participate in educational activities.

## Peer Support Groups

The Allen County Adult Peer Support Groups are part of the personality of The League and never fail to boost the spirits of staff when they meet in the building.

## Community Living Skills

Thanks in part to the digital age and advanced technology, more of our consumers are transitioning out of or diverting from institutions. Having the ability to order groceries online and access community living services enables our consumers to live more independent lives—from home.

## Youth Services

Our staff works to engage whole families to serve our youths even better. We offer social opportunities and camps for youths to interact with peers at the same stage of life. The program prepares youths to transition into adulthood and become their own advocates.



# Home Care

The day-to-day and specialized care you need to safely live in your home

## HomeCare+

Household chores, personal care assistance, and respite care supports people with disabilities to live safely and comfortably at home. The League's HomeCare+ program puts consumer needs and goals first to provide in-home, day-to-day, non-medical staff services.

## Home HealthCare+

Skilled nursing, home health aide, and private nurse duty allows consumers to meet their individualized goals for independent living and support for family members and caregivers. Services are provided by skilled healthcare staff in the homes of people who are elderly or have a disability so they are able to safely remain in their home.



OUR SERVICES

# Assistive

Professional and volunteer help for both our consumers and The League

## DeafLink

The DeafLink services are fully engaging in new ways as community members and professionals adapt to virtual communication. Previously, physicians were hesitant to allow virtual interpreters instead of their physical presence. But with proven technology, it's now possible and even preferred for one of our consumers to have a virtual interpreter during a visit to the doctor. Use of our interpreters grew exponentially during 2020 and 2021.

## Volunteers

Volunteers rule the world! At least, maybe they should. At The League, volunteers invest thousands of hours to open up the world for our consumers.

## Braille Services

We transcribe documents into Braille or Large Print for ADA compliance for both consumers and businesses. Transcribed business cards, signage, documents, and more help people who are blind or low-vision to read and navigate, giving them better access to the community.

## Assistive Technology

Last summer, staff provided consumers with iPads and training in how to use them for living tasks, like ordering groceries. Technology overcomes one of the largest barriers for our consumers—transportation. Access to technology can change the life of a person with a disability, enabling them to become more independent.



OUR SERVICES

# The Inclusion Institute

Fully engaged, period

Our 2021 theme is the core of the Inclusion Institute, a groundbreaking division forming within The League. Led by Institute Director Luke Labas, the Inclusion Institute will launch people with disabilities fully into advocating for themselves in every aspect of their lives.

The Inclusion Institute is developing a curriculum for its Leadership Academy where people with disabilities are trained to not only be at the table providing input, but to lead and bring other people along with them, expanding representation in decision-making that impacts their own lives. The academy will train people with disabilities, family members, and allies on what their rights are and how to exercise them.

The Inclusion Institute is creating the opportunity to dive deep into issues and barriers, giving people with disabilities the opportunity to learn what the barriers are and the systems that maintain them. We are building community action teams to spread awareness and build partnerships to create solutions to remove these barriers.

**The Institute weaves together every aspect of The League to expand and fully engage every consumer, organization, business, and community member in northeast Indiana.**



We want to create systems and best practices to shift mindsets and the standards in which society and our community views disability.

**Instead of being an afterthought, it's something that you think of from the get go.**

LUKE LABAS  
*Director, The Inclusion Institute*

# Vision 2025



## VISION 2025

# The future is here for The League

Currently in year 1, curriculum development is underway for the Inclusion Institute's Leadership Academy. The academy will launch in year 2, positioning people with disabilities to become their own advocates as we engage with our communities as a team.

After an extensive research project and sustainability study, The League is strategically planning our service expansions to create "best of the best" practices and programs. This resulted in a two-phase project that includes:



A pooled trust



Culinary program & facility expansion



Revolutionizing youth transition

Thank you for partnering with us for the future of our communities!

# Get Involved



# Join us in our mission

## Donate

Your donation is an investment in inclusion, bringing us one step closer to a future where full inclusion for people with disabilities in every aspect of community is a reality.

### DONATE ONLINE

Visit our website to make your secure donation:  
[the-league.org/donate](https://the-league.org/donate)

### DONATE BY MAIL

The League  
5821 S. Anthony Blvd.  
Fort Wayne, IN 46816

### DONATE BY PHONE

1-800-889-3443  
260-441-0551

## Volunteer

Your time and talent can help us create a more inclusive community! The League approaches volunteering in two ways:

1. Supporting people with disabilities by providing direct services
2. Working in our offices to help reduce operating costs

Volunteering can include working on short and long-term projects, group projects, special events, internships, experiential and job shadowing, and community service.

To get started volunteering, visit our website at [the-league.org/volunteer](https://the-league.org/volunteer) or contact Ali Revolt, Volunteer Engagement Specialist, at 260-441-0551 or [alir@the-league.org](mailto:alir@the-league.org).

However you choose to get involved, we're incredibly grateful for your support!



**Address:**

5821 S. Anthony Blvd.  
Fort Wayne IN 46816

**Voice/TTY:**

260-441-0551 or  
800-889-3443

**Videophone for Deaf and  
Hard-of-Hearing:**

260-440-3013

**DeafLink Emergency Pager:**

260-481-8153

**Fax:**

260-441-7760

**Email:**

[the-league@the-league.org](mailto:the-league@the-league.org)

**Website:**

[the-league.org](http://the-league.org)