

# Higgins, People Inc. announce \$2 million to expand telehealth for seniors & people with disabilities

Budget funding secured by Higgins will allow for expansion of People Inc.'s virtual health care services

Congressman Brian Higgins secured \$2 million in the federal 2023 budget to expand and improve telehealth services for Western New York senior citizens, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, people who are deaf and hard of hearing, and people with Alzheimer's. The funding will support People Inc.'s model addressing health equity among vulnerable populations.

"We know that access to routine and preventative services is a determining factor in health and well-being," Higgins said. "People with disabilities have unique needs and circumstances, creating additional hurdles to connecting with quality care. This funding for People Inc. will break through health access barriers for families, improving wellness and life quality for the people of Western New York."

Higgins' team said, "Utilization of telehealth grew drastically during the pandemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately

37% of all Americans used telehealth in 2021. When implemented correctly, telehealth can be an especially useful tool for individuals with chronic conditions and disabilities.

"People Inc.'s telehealth service, in partnership with Virtual Medical Care, is designed to support a patient's ability to live independently while promoting better individual outcomes and overall wellness.

"For medically complex patients, there are many benefits. Telehealth allows for more consistent health monitoring and improved stability of care for people with chronic conditions. For those who are immune-compromised, virtual appointments reduce unnecessary exposure. It eases family and caregiver participation in health discussions for seniors with dementia, or individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Virtual visits also reduce delays in care, eliminate office wait times, and lower stress by facilitating appointments in the

comfort of one's home.

"Accessing health care is often challenging for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing due to language barriers with providers. Through a partnership between People Inc. and Deaf Access Services, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation skills are incorporated into virtual visits, eliminating communication barriers for individuals with hearing challenges."

Anne McCaffrey, president and CEO of People Inc., said, "We are so appreciative of Congressman Higgins for securing this fund-

ing, which will help People Inc. to greatly expand the impactful work clinicians are providing to people, their families and caregivers. As we continue to focus on increasing access to care, and removing health-care barriers, this grant will allow further opportunities to offer expert, face-to-face care to vulnerable people right in their homes."

Added Rhonda Frederick, "From his professional and personal experiences – and throughout his public service career, Congress member Higgins has been a champion for people with

Alzheimer's and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are grateful for what he and his staff do for the betterment of the people we serve."

Higgins' team said, "This federal investment also delivers cost savings to the health care system and patients alike, reducing emergency room visits; monitoring health to prevent exacerbating conditions, which then require more costly treatment; and eliminating additional expenses associated with in-person visits such as transportation and child care."

## Lewiston Democratic Committee to honor Congressman Brian Higgins

On Sunday, April 23, the Lewiston Democratic Committee will honor U.S. Congressman Brian Higgins as its Lewiston Democrat of the Year. The ceremony will take place at a brunch beginning at 11:30 a.m. at the Niagara Falls Country Club, 505 Mountainview Drive, Lewiston.

Lewiston officially became part of Higgins' representative district as of January.

Event organizers said, "Higgins has embraced his new role as Lewiston's representative in Congress. All are welcome to join the committee in recognizing Congressman Higgins, and welcoming him to Lewiston and all it has to offer."

To reserve seats or obtain additional information, email [lewistondemchair@aol.com](mailto:lewistondemchair@aol.com) or text to 716-622-6275.

## IN THE NEWS

### Alzheimer's Assn., Niagara Pride hold forum for LGBTQ+ seniors and loved ones

In partnership with Niagara Pride, the Western New York Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association will hold a forum about Alzheimer's disease and dementia for LGBTQ+ older adults and their loved ones.

The forum will take place from 2-3:30 p.m. Saturday, April 15, at Lock City Books in Lockport. Organizer said it is an opportunity to bring community members affected by the disease together with dedicated staff and volunteers to talk about available resources, programs and services.

The event is free, but space is limited. Interested individuals are encouraged to register as soon as possible at [bit.ly/LGBTQforum415](https://bit.ly/LGBTQforum415). The forum is funded by a grant from Foundation 214 Inc.

To learn more about Alzheimer's disease or other dementias, call 800-272-3900 or visit [alz.org](https://alz.org).

### NIMAC scholarship applications available

The Niagara Military Affairs Council (NIMAC) is accepting applications for the Merrell Lane Memorial Aviation Scholarship. The award is presented to an enlisted member assigned to the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station (NFARS) in pursuit of an aviation-related career.

The scholarship was established in memory of Merrell Lane, co-founder and the first chairman of NIMAC. Lane enjoyed all aspects of aviation and was very active in the Thunder of Niagara airshow. He enjoyed a lifelong hobby of rocketry and was a longtime member of the National Association of Rocketry.

"Merrell, who was an enlisted soldier himself, would be thrilled to know a scholarship is offered in his name for enlisted members to further their careers in aviation," said John A. Cooper Sr., chairman of NIMAC. "The United States Air Force has identified pilot shortages as a challenge going forward,

and to know that NIMAC can assist in this area is exciting – especially with the 914th and 107th missions. Five service members have already benefited from the scholarship since 2017."

Applicants must be enrolled in an accredited private pilot licensing program or enrolled in an aviation-related curriculum at an accredited college/university. Aviation-related fields can include, but are not limited to, A&P mechanic, aeronautical engineer, aviation educator, air traffic controller, flight attendant, and commercial or airline pilot.

"Western New York has a very rich history in aviation. NIMAC is proud to support our enlisted members through this scholarship, to enrich that history as they further their education in an aviation career," said Chief Master Sgt. Michael Zimmerman, USAF retired, NIMAC vice chairman.

"The Merrell Lane Memorial Scholarship reflects the NIMAC mission to support the growth and prosperity of the NFARS and its personnel, creating a positive

economic impact on the Western New York community," said Cooper. "Working together with our members, strategic business partners and our community we can continue to build and be the foundation of future missions."

Scholarship eligibility criteria and applications are available at [www.NIMAC.org](http://www.NIMAC.org). Applications must be postmarked by April 28, 2023. The winner will receive their award at the NIMAC annual meeting in June.

### Niagara County Youth Bureau: Applications for Summer Food Service Program

Submitted by the Niagara County Public Information Office

The Niagara County Youth Bureau will return as a sponsor for the 2023 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This program ensures that children who are economically disadvantaged continue to receive nutritious meals during summer vacation. Meals

are comparable to the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs (NSBP and NSLP, respectively) throughout the school year.

The Summer Food Service Program is a federally funded program (funded by USDA and administered by the New York State Education Department [NYSED]) that provides free meals to all children at approved SFSP sites. Meals (including breakfast and/or lunch) are provided to children ages 18 and under.

Applications are now being accepted from prospective Summer Food Service Program sites. Approved sites will receive meals during the program, which plans to run from June 26 to Aug. 25. Site requests are individualized, including meals needed and program dates.

### Mississippi Mudds open

Mississippi Mudds is now open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Sunday at 313 Niagara St., Tonawanda.

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