



FLORIDA INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL, Inc.

Educating the Media to Inclusive Reporting

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Educating the media to the issues effecting persons with disabilities is a huge undertaking by disability organizations and government agencies. Last year a Harris Poll conducted a survey to determine Americans fear of the disabled. The report entitled, "Dispel the Fear Factor," found 58% of Americans are uneasy around persons with disabilities, and 47% feel actual fear. So it's no surprise that the media is reluctant to cover stories regarding disability issues – there is a fear of the unknown. The only way to change the perception of persons with disabilities in the media is to humanize the stories and utilize individuals with disabilities as authorities on a specific subject rather than by portraying individuals as victims of their disability.

A study from the *National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research on News Coverage of Disability Issues*, found print media was finally covering education issues related to disability. "Almost 70 percent of the stories concerning disability had no identifiable source with a disability in it," reports study author Beth Haller. The study found print journalists more likely to use people with disabilities as examples in their news stories rather than as sources. Another concern is few women with disabilities are involved in news stories about disability issues. This perception is problematic, given the fact there are 72.3 million U.S. families caring for loved ones with a disability and 73 % of all family caregivers are women.

A study by the *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication* revealed images of *People with Disabilities on Prime Time Broadcast Television*, found persons with disabilities were either nonexistent or hidden behind able-bodied leads. The broadcast evening news is the number one news source in the United States, but it rarely covers issues faced by persons with disabilities to educate the general public.

Government agencies and nonprofit organizations representing issues for persons with disabilities need to learn the art of persuasive communications. It's time to take a pro-active

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May Calendar

May 1, 2006
Rehabilitation Services Administration Meeting 1:00—3:00 p.m.

May 2, 2006
Personnel Committee Teleconference 2:00 p.m.

May 3, 2006
Planning Committee Evaluation Committee Teleconferences 2:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m.

May 5, 2006
Executive Committee Teleconference 1:30 p.m.

May 10—12, 2006
Technical Assistance Visit—W. Palm T.B.A.

May 10, 2006
Finance Committee Teleconference 10:30 a.m.

May 17, 2006
POINTS Teleconference 10:00 a.m.

May 18, 2006
Advocacy Committee Teleconference 2:00 p.m.

May 19, 2006
Standards Task Force Teleconference 11:00 a.m.

May 22— 26, 2006
National Council on Independent Living National Conference T.B.A. Washington D.C.

May 30, 2006
Nominating Committee Teleconference 2:00 p.m.

Activities initiated/hosted by the Florida Independent Living Council are open to the public. For information about these or any other FILC events please contact the FILC office @ (850)488-5624.

Getting Ready for Another Hurricane Season

The 2006 hurricane season is just around the corner and runs for six months - from June 1st through November 30th. A good preparation plan is necessary for all individuals and families in Florida, but increased attention to preparation is essential for individuals with disabilities. While an individual or family may be displaced by a natural disaster, they may be able to return shortly after a hurricane has passed. However an individual with a disability may not be able to return so quickly. Some disabilities may require an individual to postpone their return until electricity has been restored for elevators, ventilators, dialysis machines, or refrigerators for medications. An individual with a mobility impairment who remains in their home during a hurricane may find that they are unable to get help following the storm. Between areas being flooded, cut off by fallen debris and lack of functional electric and water/sewer systems, it may be impossible to get to recovery sites that have been

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Hurricane Planning

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established to distribute food, water, and emergency medical assistance. First responders may not be able to get to you. It is essential that individuals with disabilities work within their communities to ensure appropriate and accessible disaster planning occurs.

In addition to stocking up on essential supplies such as batteries, water, medications, and non-perishable food, individuals who remain in their homes must remember:

- Telephone lines and cell phone towers may be inoperable at the disaster site. Establish a meeting place/contact away from the disaster site for family members to call or regroup should separation occur.
- Pets are family too. Make sure you have a pet carrier or transportation device for each pet in your home along with a plan for your pets should evacuation be necessary. Many communities are now planning pet-friendly shelters to discourage people from refusing to evacuate. Vaccination records, leashes, and food are needed too. Service animals must be allowed in public shelters. Know the policies and locations of shelters in your community.
- Cash is a must. ATM machines will not work when the electricity is out.
- Find out about pre-registration for assistance should you need help in relocating when an evacuation is ordered.
- And most of all, remember that personal safety is the most important factor in planning for disasters. People who refuse to evacuate may find it is the last mistake they ever make. Better safe than sorry!

Get Ready....Check it Out

Governor Bush signed HB 0047 into law on Thursday, 4/27/06. From 6/1—6/12, there will be no tax levied on items needed for hurricane preparation. This includes everything from batteries, first aid kits, generators, portable lights and radios to plywood and hardware to secure it.

Educating the Media

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position to begin the process of controlling the news agenda on disability topics. This agenda represents a multicultural discourse that is needed to break down the barriers of the journalistic marketplace of ideas. Don't wait for journalists to come to you. Go out and pitch a serious story idea to initiate the process of *controlling the news agenda*. Collectively we can create hard hitting news and reframe it as the new face of diversity which is breaking down the barriers to build an all inclusive society.

- Contributed by Rose Lee Archer, MS., FILC Board of Directors

"Independence Worth Preserving"

Centers for Independent Living

- Suncoast Center for Independent Living** serving Sarasota and Manatee Counties, (941) 351-9545
- Coalition for Independent Living Options** serving Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, and Palm Beach Counties, (561) 966-4288
- Center for Independent Living of Broward** serving Broward County, (954) 722-6400
- Disability Resource Center** serving Holmes, Jackson, Washington, Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, (850) 769-6890
- Center for Independent Living of the Florida Keys** serving the Florida Keys, (305) 453-3491
- Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida** serving Hamilton, Suwanee, Columbia, Lafayette, Dixie, Gilchrist, Union, Bradford, Alachua, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Citrus, Sumter, and Hernando Counties, (352) 378-7474
- Self Reliance, Inc.** serving Hillsborough County, (813) 375-3965
- Center for Independent Living of South Florida** serving Dade County, (305) 751-8025
- Independent Living Resource Center of Northeast Florida** serving Baker, Nassau, Duval, Clay, and St. Johns Counties, (904) 399-8484
- Center for Independent Living of Southwest Florida** serving Charlotte, Glades, Lee, Hendry, and Collier Counties, (239) 277-1447
- Center for Independent Living of Northwest Florida** serving Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties, (850) 595-5566
- Caring and Sharing Center for Independent Living** serving Pasco and Pinellas Counties, (727) 577-0065
- Ability 1st** serving Gadsden, Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor Counties, (850) 575-9621
- Victory Lane Center for Independent Living** serving Flagler and Volusia Counties, (386) 671-1960
- Space Coast Center for Independent Living** serving Brevard and Indian River Counties, (321) 784-9008
- Center for Independent Living of Central Florida** serving Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, Lake, Seminole, Orange, and Osceola Counties, (407) 623-1070

Please feel free to distribute this letter to any other persons/organizations that may be interested.

It is the mission of the Florida Independent Living Council to assist and advocate for people with disabilities in achieving equal opportunities. Our vision is to foster change via leadership, collaboration and visibility.