



FLORIDA INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL, Inc.

Want to Know More About the Florida Independent Living Council?

Volume 1, Issue 2
February 2006

March Calendar

March 6, 2006 1—5 p.m.
FILC Staff @ FRC
Training
Tallahassee, FL

March 7, 2006 TBA
Session Starts

March 28, 2006 TBA
Attorney Task Force
Tallahassee, FL

March 29—31 1:30 p.m.
Full Board Meeting
Tallahassee, FL

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.

Serving Voters With Disabilities

How is voting like buying a new pair of shoes? At first glance, it may not seem like there are any similarities. But to a person with a disability...it may be quite apparent. One size does not fit all. Are you aware of what accommodations are made in your community to

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Census 2000 counted a total of 72.3 million families and found that nearly 28.9 percent of them (about 2 in every 7 families) reported having at least one member with a disability. That is 20.9 million families. Disability is a natural part of life. Disabilities occur through birth, accidents, and the aging process. Some disabilities are visible such as individuals with mobility, sight, and hearing losses. Others are invisible such as learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, and serious and persistent mental illnesses.

The mission of the Independent Living Program in the State of Florida is to actively promote a philosophy of independent living, including the philosophy of consumer control, peer-support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy, in order to maximize opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of society.

Improving opportunities for transportation, housing, education, employment, and recreational activities are all top priorities of the Independent Living Program throughout the state. Seventy-five percent of individuals with significant disabilities who indicate a desire and willingness to work are unemployed. Of the 9,563,274 Floridians, it is estimated that 11.9% of those from 21 to 64 years of age (working age) have a disability.

In addition to lack of employment opportunities, potential loss of medical benefits (e.g. Medicaid) often hinders exploration of employment possibilities. Those individuals surviving on Social Security Income (SSI) live far below the national poverty level. Access to safe and affordable housing is almost impossible. The physical and mental limitations resulting from accidents and illnesses are not always the cause a lifetime of hardship; often the greatest hardships are a result of living in a world of poverty and lack of opportunities to become engaged in the fabric of the community.

Often early intervention and peer support make the difference in an individual's ability to refocus their life and become and/or remain
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Independent Living in Action

Gaining Incentive for Transitioning Students Program (GIFTS)

Gainesville- As part of a cooperative partnership between the School Board of Alachua County and The Center for Independent Living of North Central FL (CILNCF), The CILNCF offers The Gaining Incentives for Transitioning Students (GIFTS) Program. This is an instructional program designed by CILNCF to prepare students for their life after high school graduation. The plan includes increasing the awareness of the program participants of what to expect when they leave school and promoting awareness of possibilities for their life plan, which they may not yet have discovered. Students attend Independent Living Skills Development Workshops as well as participate in outings and social events to experience adult social and work-related skills. Students enrolled in the GIFTS Program and who participate in activities at the CILNCF receive school credits towards graduation!! Initial efforts have been successful, and plans are underway to extend the program into the summer months. We also plan to expand this program in the fall in order to reach more students. For more information contact Mathew Motko, Executive Director, at (904) 399-8484.

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"Independence Worth Preserving"

Want to Know More...
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engaged in their community. Centers for Independent Living provide the education, advocacy, peer support and self-help for persons to overcome the obstacles related to their disability and connect with their communities.

Over the last fifty years, development in medical technology has enabled survival of persons who have experienced extreme physical trauma. New medications have allowed those individuals with cognitive impairments leave institutions and live in their communities. Accessible technology has allowed for enhanced communication, self-care, and mobility.

The federal government has acknowledged its role protecting the civil rights of all individuals including those with disabilities. Though federal and state laws have recognized all individuals have basic rights, our society still suffers from the lack of awareness and recognition needed to fulfill true equal opportunities. It is apparent from the unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities that the unrecognized potential of a sizeable minority is still yet to be recognized. As Martin Luther King once said, "It ain't what it should be, it ain't what it's gonna be, but thank God it ain't what it used to be."

Through peer support, community education, and expansion of opportunities, the Council seeks to educate people with disabilities to focus on their talent, potential, and ability to contribute to their communities. Positive, proactive, self-determined persons with disabilities can educate policy makers and the general public on the untapped potential that needs to be recognized for true community inclusion.

Serving Voters with Disabilities, (Continued from page 1)

meet the needs of individuals with sight, hearing, cognitive, or mobility impairments? Has there been any training in your area to assist individuals working at the polls learn how to assist citizens with disabilities in a respectful, helpful manner? Did you know that there is training available in your area? Each Center for Independent Living has an excellent training curriculum available to educate poll workers on the types of accommodations needed by individuals with disabilities. Please, take the time to think about what accommodations and training have been provided in your area. Then, meet with your local Supervisor of Elections and request they contact the local Center for Independent Living to arrange a workshop designed to facilitate a great voting experience for both the individuals living with disabilities and the poll workers who assist them.

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.