

THE Colorado Independent

Sept/Oct 2007

This newsletter is published by the Provider Relations Unit of the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and edited by Judy Neal, Independent Living Program Coordinator. The goal is to share information among the ten Colorado Centers for Independent Living, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and DVR staff. The submission of information or articles from all affiliated with these organizations is both encouraged and welcomed. Please e-mail any articles of interest to judy.neal@state.co.us If you have questions, please phone me at (303) 866-4645.

Durango Hosts SILC

SILC members (l to r) Kristie Braaten, Terrance Turner, Amy Allred, Brent Belisle, and David Foster toured the offices of the SWCI in Durango.



The SILC met in Durango on September 20, finishing a commitment to visit the sites of all ten Colorado centers for independent living during the three year cycle of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

Isabel Viana, executive director of Southwest Center for Independence gave SILC members a tour of the SWCI offices. It was a pleasure to meet her staff and see the work going on at the center.

SWCI has recently completed a capacity-building grant that launched an accessibility survey of the Durango business district. They were pleased to find that many businesses were willing to make necessary changes once they realized that they were not in compliance with the ADA.

The center was preparing for its annual fundraiser "Dance of the Dead," featuring multi-cultural dance performances.

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From the Director

**By
Nancy Smith**

especially important in rural Colorado.

This is the time of year when I tend to finish my state travel schedule before winter sets in. In the last 3 years I have visited all ten Independent Living Centers in Colorado. I have learned a lot from these visits and met a lot of talented people.

What I am wondering about is: how are you doing with the expansion promised when the additional funds were secured from the General Assembly? I know some of you have opened satellite offices. Others are using itinerant staff to reach unserved areas. The need is out there and we hear about it every time we travel in the state.

During the past summer DVR conducted seven Town Hall Meetings for persons with visual impairments or who are blind. While some of the issues presented had to do with employment or transportation, many others had to do with finding the help and resources necessary to stay independent. This seems

I know that several of the centers have received funding from the OIB grant. While these grants are relatively small amounts, I understand that you have been able to do some great work and provide needed service with it. How do we reach out to the people DVR encountered at the Town Hall Meetings?

Perhaps this article will become more of a dialogue. I would be very interested in hearing what all of the centers are doing to expand your reach. In particular, how are rural residents who might be blind or low vision being served? I appreciate your feedback.

For those of you who would like to share your answers and ideas with the **Colorado Independent** audience, as well as with Nancy Smith, please send your response to judy.neal@state.co.us no later than November 15 to be used in the November/December issue.

VOTE!

Going to the Polls Sends a Message

By Faith Gross

Although there are no federal candidate races or statewide issues or candidate races on the November 6 election ballot, nearly every Colorado county is conducting a local election. A substantial majority of counties are conducting their elections by mail ballot. If you plan to vote and your county is a mail election county, you do have the option of voting in person on an accessible voting machine.

Every county clerk and recorder is required to offer accessible voting during a mail election. Typically this is offered only at the office of your clerk and recorder or elections division. These offices are usually located in the county courthouse or other county office buildings. While going to your county clerk's office is not as convenient as voting by mail from home, it is important that voters with visible disabilities be seen voting, whether it is in a local election or every 4 years in a presidential election.

Approximately 15 counties are holding polling place elections.

Every polling place must be fully accessible and provide an accessible voting system. Voters with disabilities must be provided with the opportunity to vote

“All Politics Is Local”

Thomas "Tip" O'Neill,
*former Speaker of the U.S.
House of Representatives*

privately and independently. However, you may still request assistance with voting if you need it because of your disability. It is your choice!

If you have any questions about voting rights of people with disabilities, or where to vote, please contact

Faith Gross, VOTE! Program coordinator at The Legal Center, 303-722-0300, 1-800-288-1376, fgross@thelegalcenter.org



Employers and the ADA: Myths and Facts

By Andrea Archer

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a landmark federal law that protects the rights of people with disabilities by eliminating barriers to their participation in many aspects of living and working in America. In particular, the ADA prohibits covered employers from discriminating against people with disabilities in the full range of employment-related activities, from recruitment to advancement, to pay and benefits.

The foundation for the ADA is America's promise of equal access to opportunity for all citizens.

Being inclusive of people with disabilities—in recruitment, retention, promotion, and in providing an accessible environment—gives businesses a competitive edge. Below are some of the common myths about how the ADA affects employers and research and facts that negate them.

Myth: The ADA forces employers to hire unqualified individuals with disabilities.

Fact: Applicants who are unqualified for a job cannot claim discrimination under the ADA. Under the ADA, to be protected from discrimination in hiring, an individual with a disability must be qualified, which means he or she must meet all requirements for a job and be able to perform its essential functions with or without reasonable accommodations.

Myth: When there are several qualified applicants for a job and one has a disability, the ADA requires the employer to hire that person.

Fact: An employer is always free to hire the applicant of its choosing as long as the decision is not based on disability. If two people apply for a data entry position for which both speed and accuracy are required, the employer may hire the person with the higher speed and level of accuracy, because he or she is the most qualified.

Myth: The ADA gives job applicants with disabilities advantages over job applicants without disabilities.

Fact: The ADA does not give hiring preference to persons with disabilities.

Myth: Under the ADA, employers must give people with disabilities special privileges, known as accommodations.

Fact: Reasonable accommodations are intended to ensure that qualified individuals with disabilities have rights in employment equal—not superior—to those of individuals without disabilities. A reasonable accommodation is a modification to a job, work environment or the way work is performed that allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform the essential functions of the job, and enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace.

Myth: Providing accommodations for people with disabilities is expensive.

Fact: The majority of workers with disabilities do not need accommodations to perform their jobs, and for those who do, the cost is usually minimal. According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a service from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, two-thirds of accommodations cost less than \$500, with many costing

nothing at all. Moreover, tax incentives are available to help employers cover the costs of accommodations, as well as modifications required to make their businesses accessible to persons with disabilities.

Resources to Assist Employers

A number of resources are available to assist employers in understanding their responsibilities under the ADA:

[Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#)

1-800-526-7234 (V/TTY)

JAN is a free, confidential service from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) that provides individualized accommodation solutions and technical assistance on the ADA. Among the areas that JAN can address are:

- Accommodation options and low-cost solutions
- Hiring, retaining and promoting qualified employees with disabilities
- Employer responsibilities under the ADA
- Reducing workers’ compensation and other insurance costs
- Addressing accessibility issues

[Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#)

1-800-669-4000 (V); 1-800-669-6820 (TTY)

The EEOC enforces the ADA's employment provisions. The section of its Web site titled "Disability Discrimination" provides access to numerous publications, including several specifically designed to answer employer questions and concerns.

[U.S. Department of Justice \(DOJ\) ADA Home Page](#)

The ADA Home Page includes many excellent resources for employers. The "ADA Business Connection" section of the site includes business briefs and tax incentive information.

[Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers \(DBTACs\)](#)

1-800-949-4232 (V/TTY)

Ten regional Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs), which are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, provide ADA information, training and technical assistance across the nation.

The entire U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet can be viewed at:

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/ada.htm>

Contributed by Andrea Archer –
Information Specialist
DBTAC: Rocky Mountain ADA
Center
800-949-4232
aarcher@mtc-inc.com

The SILC would like to extend a special thank you to Pat Going of DBTAC: Rocky Mountain ADA Center. Pat brings the SILC a wealth of posters, pamphlets, and paraphernalia to keep us mindful of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Contact the ADA Center at 800-949-4232 for all the ADA information you could ever hope to have!



SILC

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The event also featured a silent auction that included artwork created by consumers in the SWCI art classes.

It has been important for SILC members to visit centers. Every CIL reflects the character of its community. Not all of them have a large staff and giant offices. In

fact, most don't. Most CILs operate on a shoestring budget, and staff wear enough hats to make their heads sore. First hand visits to the centers have helped SILC members understand the realities of the business of independent living. Our centers need our support.



Assistive Technology Loan Bank Planning Expansion

By Lorrie Harkness

On November 6, a task force will be meeting to strategically plan for expansion of the AT Loan Bank to the adult population. ILC consumers would benefit from such an accomplishment, and the AT Coalition would like to invite representatives from the centers to attend.

Additionally, Assistive Technology Partners wants very much to have a greater partnership with the ILCs AT Partners invites you to go to the AT Funding Sources, a free online data bank of all of the funding available to people in Colorado to purchase assistive technology. For more information about AT Funding Sources: <http://www.uchsc.edu/atp/ATFunding.html>

There are also free monthly Learning Labs that can benefit centers. **The Learning Labs are FREE. However, because of space limitations, YOU MUST REGISTER to attend!!**

Denver: For more details or to attend the open lab please call (303) 315-0602

or email Shelly at shelly.begolke@uchsc.edu.

Grand Junction: For more details or to attend the open lab please call (970) 248-0876 or email denice.roberts@uchsc.edu.

We are committed to accommodating the needs of our participants with disabilities. Please request accommodations in writing at least 72 hours in advance of the Learning Lab. In **Denver**, submit requests by fax to 303-837-1208 or e-mail at shelly.begolke@uchsc.edu. In **Grand Junction**, contact Denice at denice.roberts@uchsc.edu or fax 970-248-0877 for accommodations.

Colorado CIL Websites

www.atlantiscommunity.net

www.cfigj.org

www.cpwd-ilc.org

www.fortnet.org/drs

www.swcidur.org

Statewide Independent Living Council

Members Needed

The SILC is seeking new members to create a more diverse council. Ideally, new candidates will have a disability, be part of a racial or ethnic minority, **not** work at a CIL, and be a resident of a mountain community, the Western Slope, or the Eastern Plains. Candidates should have knowledge of the independent living movement, and be able to devote time to committee membership and the bi-monthly SILC meeting schedule. In the coming year, the SILC will be working on public policy issues and community organizing. If you know anyone who may be interested, please get in touch with judy.neal@state.co.us for application information.

November Meeting

The regular meeting of the SILC will be held on Thursday, November 15 at the Denver

Stapleton Radisson Hotel, 3333 Quebec in Denver. Public comment is welcome between 1:00 and 1:30 p.m. Sign language interpreters will be available during the public comment segment.

2008 SILC Meeting Schedule

January 17
Colorado Springs

March 20
Denver

May 15
Ft. Collins

June 12
Craig (tentative)

Colorado Centers for Independent Living

**Atlantis
Community, Inc.**
201 South Cherokee
Denver, CO 80223
(303) 733-9324
Tim Thornton
Executive Director

**Center for
Disabilities**
1304 Berkley
Avenue
Pueblo, CO 81004
(719) 546-1271
Also
1016 West Ave., #6
Alamosa, CO 81101
(719) 589-2224
Dr. Larry Williams,
Executive Director

**Center for
Independence**
740 Gunnison
Grand Junction, CO
81501
(970) 241-0315
1-800-613-2271
Also
17 North 6th St.
Montrose, CO 81401
Linda Taylor,
Executive Director

**Center for
People
With Disabilities**
1675 Range St.

Boulder, CO 80301
(303) 442-8662
Also
615 North Main
Longmont, CO
80501
(303) 772--3250
David Bolin,
Executive Director

**Colorado Springs
Independence
Center**
21 East Las Animas
Colorado Springs,
80903
(719) 471-8181
Vicki Skoog,
Executive Director

**Connections for
Independent
Living**
1024 9th Ave., Suite E
Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 352-8682
Beth Danielson,
Executive Director

**Disability Center
for Independent
Living**
4821 East 38th Ave.
Denver, CO 80209
(303) 320-1345
Also
1646 Elmira

Aurora, CO 80010
(303) 617-2497
Carol Reynolds,
Executive Director

**Disabled
Resource
Services**
424 Pine Street,
Suite 101
Ft Collins, CO 80524
(970) 482-2700
Also
640 East
Eisenhower Blvd.
Loveland, CO 80537
(970) 667-0816
Nancy Jackson,
Executive Director

**Independent life
Center**
483 Yampa Ave
P.O. Box 612
Craig, CO 81626
(970) 826-0833
Evelyn Tileston,
Executive Director

**Southwest
Center for
independence**
835 East Second
Avenue
Durango, CO 81301
(970) 259-1672
Isabel Viana,
Executive Director