

THE Colorado Independent

May/June 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.

New State Plan Ready

A series of public hearings for the 2008-2010 State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) wrapped up in Grand Junction on May 9. The Center for Independence hosted the fourth, and final, hearing in their gymnasium. Although the gym wasn't filled, the SPIL team fielded some great questions.

Each of the four public hearings had its own personality. The Denver hearing, our metro area kickoff, did not attract a crown, but gave us a chance to refine our presentation. Disabled Resource Services hosted the Fort Collins hearing at the public library. Nearly everyone in attendance participated by either speaking or asking pertinent questions, giving it the flavor of an old-fashioned town hall meeting. In Pueblo, the deaf community led the discussion as Center for Disabilities hosted the event.

All four hearings opened with a PowerPoint overview of the four major goals of the new state plan: creating an infra-

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Faith Gross, representing the SILC, presented an overview of the new SPIL



From the Director

**By
Nancy Smith**

I was in Bethesda most of the last week in April for the spring meeting of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). While there I had an opportunity to meet our latest temporary state liaison from Rehabilitation Services Administration. His name is Steve Zwillinger and he comes to RSA from a section of the Department of Education that deals with strategic planning and data analysis. He played a large role in the unveiling of RSA's new Draft Strategic Performance Plan Goals and Objectives at the CSAVR meeting. We had a pleasant and informative chat and when I returned I was able to send him the hot-off-the-press copy of DVR's 2006 Annual Report. That report includes information about the IL Program and OIB.

One subject I discussed with Steve Zwillinger was General Program and Independent Living State Plans. RSA is very focused on state plans as planning and implementation documents for Vocational Rehabilitation

Programs nationwide. RSA will measure the success of our efforts by how well our results match what we said we would do in the SPIL. So, it is important that the state plan reflects reality and, while reaching for new goals in service, is attainable.

Our state is creating a new and ambitious SPIL. I attended one of the discussions of its content via a conference call and was impressed with the kind of work being contemplated. I was asked if I have objections to the SILC becoming autonomous. I said I did not. I understand other states have been pursuing this course and it is certainly worth investigating. I just encourage the SILC to be sure they are careful when examining what it means to be autonomous. Is that a completely separate status and filing for non-profit incorporation, or is it something else? What are the ramifications of any choice made with regard to budget, staff, and how business is done?

CSAVR had a private screening of a motion picture that will be released in September. It is called "Music Within," and is based on

the life of Richard Pimentel, who many of you may know. I do not know yet in which theaters it will be released. Richard is the man who wrote the manual referred to as "Windmills," and is famous for both his training to large companies on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, as well as what I would call a "guerilla" style of job development for veterans. The film chronicles several important decades in the fight for equality for people with disabilities. The movie is very good and worth seeing when it is released.



State Plan continued

structure to support the SILC, educating public policy makers about disability issues, community organizing, and supporting the statewide network of Centers for Independent Living.

Based on input from the public hearings, the primary goals of the SPIL are supported. Issues raised by the public will help the SILC refine some of the objectives and action plans to target areas of need that were identified. The new SPIL will be presented for vote at the June 15 SILC meeting. The current draft can be viewed at www.cpwd-ilc.org.

Athletic Opportunity

By Steve Hibbard

The Achilles Track Club (<http://achillestrackclub.org>) has come to Denver! Achilles is a running club for people with physical disabilities, and enables those who are visually impaired or who have other disabilities to participate in recreational and/or competitive running. We meet once or twice a week in the Denver metro area. Each participant can run or walk as much or as little as he/she wants and will be matched with a volunteer to guide him/her. Participants can come for a quick jog outside or can begin training for 5 or 10K races or even marathons.

Currently, we meet weekly on Tuesday nights at 6pm at the bus stop on the corner of Downing & Louisiana, the southwest corner of Washington Park.

For more info: Steve Hibbard (303)-941-1304, SWKHibbard@hotmail.com or Susan Wolff (301)-806-4861

DCIL's Satellite Creates Life Possibilities

By Jane Schiele

An unusual partnership is yielding unexpected results for the Disability Center for Independent Living (DCIL). Housing a satellite office at the Aurora Mental health Center (AUMHC) has opened the door to independent living for consumers. Since often individuals with disabilities experience isolation and loneliness, DCIL's positive and lively programs along with energetic peer support have engaged these individuals who may have remained isolated and has challenged them to become leaders. Since the office opened in July 2006, numerous AuMHC therapists and psychiatrists have commented about the positive changes they are observing.

"Life Possibilities," a consumer-directed peer group, creates a forum for discussing personal goals and identifying community issues that impact the lives of people with disabilities. With the support, structure, and materials supplied by DCIL staff, this group is confronting their concerns head-on. Recently, the group chose to address problems with service on RTD Route #15. Together, they identified the problems, wrote a petition, invited others to join

them, and are now developing relationships with other community organizations in order to strengthen their position with RTD.

Leaders emerged from the ranks of those who were reluctant to get involved.

Many of these individuals have not been involved in social activism before now. The excitement of a common goal and the encouragement of their peers have motivated them to step up.

Another program started out as a book club and quickly morphed into the "Get Out of the House" club. Recognizing that the book club idea was really about making friends and relieving boredom, "Get Out of the House" refocused on their own choices of projects and activities. They are currently planning an open house to show off their renewed energy and attract some new members.

Other activities have started and there are more to come. It is with the great hope of the DCIL staff that consumers who become involved with the center can start to rekindle the silenced voice inside that said "Yes I Can" and move forward and embrace life more than they and others might have ever imagined. House will be announced soon



Campaign for Independent Living Centers

by Andrea Archer

The DCTAC: Rocky Mountain ADA Center provides informal guidance on the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA Center is funded by the US Dept. of Education. This center is one of 10 centers across the country.

This Center is strongly connected to the Independent Living Centers (ILC) in our 6 state region. This campaign was specifically designed to provide ADA materials and trainings for the Independent Living Centers. The trainings primarily consist of ADA Basics.

The ILC campaign started with a mailing that included:

- "Existing Facility Checklist" CD- ROM
- ADA Information Folder:
 - ADA – Your Employment Rights as an Individual with a Disability
 - Service Animal Poster
 - ADA – Questions and Answers
 - What is the American with Disabilities Act?
 - A Guide for People with Disabilities Seeking Employment
 - A Guide to Disability Rights Law
 - DBTAC Rocky Mountain Newsletter
 - Answers and Resources Referrals Brochure

In this mailing, there was an offer for ADA Basics Training. To date, a majority of the ILCs in Colorado have scheduled ADA Basics trainings.

In February, four posters were sent to the main ILC offices. The posters were:

- **Sign Language Basics** - This colorful poster introduces basic American Sign Language and introductory sign language "signs".
- **Vital Signs Poster** - demonstrates sign language appropriate for the medical environment, as well as the alphabet and numbers 1-10.

- **Good Access is Good Business** - This poster promotes the wisdom that a physically accessible building is good for business.
- **Disability Etiquette Poster** - This poster was designed to help businesses and government agencies train their employees to more easily relate to consumers with disabilities.

The monthly mailing for March included “ADA Guide for Small Business”

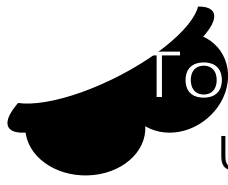
If you are interested in receiving any of these materials listed in this article for free, please call Andrea at 800-949-4232 or email aarcher@mtc.com if you are interested in ADA Basics training or Disability Etiquette training, please notify the ADA Center. To find general ADA Information www.adaportal.org

Up coming events at Rocky Mountain ADA Center:

Navigating the Reasonable Accommodation Labyrinth... This advanced DBTAC: Rocky Mountain ADA Center training is designed for Human Resources professionals, supervisors and managers, and others with responsibilities for providing reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. This session offers an overview of the employment reasonable accommodation-related provisions of the ADA with special attention to best practices for the provision of accommodations. Attendees will leave with resources and tools to make the reasonable accommodation process easier and less stressful! The session is Wednesday, May 30, 2007 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., with lunch included.

Know Your ADA Rights!...This *****NEW***** session geared toward individuals with disabilities and disability service providers will offer basic information about rights and responsibilities under the ADA. Attendees will leave with strategies and resources for effective ADA self-advocacy. Join us Wednesday, June 27, 2007 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., with lunch included.

Both trainings will be at the ADA Center facility in Colorado Springs at 3630 Sinton Road, Suite 103. Cost: \$10 (includes lunch and handouts). Seating is limited, so please reserve your place by e-mail at training@mtc-inc.com, or call 800-949-4232 (V, TTY) and ask for Jana. If auxiliary aids or alternate formats are needed, please let Jana know in advance of the training.



To See or Not to See

Using Sleep Shades to Train Visually Impaired Seniors

While attending the OIB Program Managers' Conference in March, I was fascinated by the debate around the use of sleep shades for training people with visual impairments. I sent an e-mail to our OIB program staff and DVR counselors asking for opinions. Here are their answers:

Duncan Larsen

*Senior Services Coordinator
Colorado Center for the Blind*

I believe that using sleep shades for low vision seniors can be very effective. It is one of the best ways for people to develop confidence. They can also learn skills without depending upon vision which may be unreliable. We use them sometimes in both our home teaching program and our group classes. We've used them on cane travel and during Braille class, for example. We will also work with seniors and the vision they have. For example, we might help a senior label something or get organized with a telephone list in large print. We don't have any hard and fast rules about using sleep shades in our

senior program, it depends upon the individual. And - they would be used after discussing the idea of using sleep shades thoroughly with the person. Sleep shades would more likely be used if a senior was involved in ongoing weekly home teaching or attended our weekly classes at the Center. We would rarely use them if we were only providing a one-time home visit.

Diana Martinez

*Outreach Coordinator
Center for Independence*

I felt that wearing the sleep shades while trying to tackle everyday challenges was a very good learning experience. I have different methods of teaching an individual ways of learning Independent Living Skills. Some of the skills I teach are from my own personal experience, blindfolding myself at home and finding different ways of doing things. Of course the benefit to it is I am in my own home environment and I can take the shades off when I choose to. I give the consumer the choice of wearing the sleep shades or

learning the Independent Skills without the shades. I realize a person's eyesight is too precious and sometimes limited on what time they have left before their eyes deteriorate to the degree they are legally blind. Personally I would like to be able to see my last sunrise or sunset the day before I totally lose my sight then to have it taken away six months earlier because of wearing sleep shades 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Debbie Ellis, Counselor II,
*CVRT, COMS, Client Services
Coordinator, PAT Program
Denver Metro Rehab Office*

Here at the Rehabilitation Center we focus on teaching our clients how to maximize the use of their residual vision and use blindfolds prescriptively. The recommendation to use a blindfold would depend on the individual's circumstances. Possible considerations for recommending use of blindfold training would be for an individual with rapidly deteriorating vision, one whose vision is significantly worse in darkened conditions, or the person who is so busy concentrating on using the little bit of vision they have that they are ignoring all the other

sensory cues and clues available to them. With older consumers who are resistant to use of a blindfold, I sometimes have substituted dark glasses for the blindfold or suggested that they just try to keep their eyes closed when attempting a task.

Deb Dunaway
Independent Life Center

I work with low vision seniors at the Independent Life Center in Craig, CO. Most of the people I work with are not totally blind and are unlikely to become totally blind. This might give me a different perspective on the subject.

My reaction to the idea of sleep shades for training is negative. I have learned to trust that gut response. On further reflection, the sleep shades seem invasive. Maybe even disrespectful. I strive to maintain the dignity of my consumers. So much of aging is already humiliating, I don't see the need to increase the effect arbitrarily. Another consideration is the safety aspect. A number of seniors are not as steady on their feet. Even those that seem steady,

might prove otherwise when provided with sleep shades.

There might be a person that would benefit from that training style, but I cannot think of any of my consumers with which I would be tempted to try it.

Evelyn Tileston,

*Executive Director
Independent Life Center*

We can offer sleep shade training if a consumer asks about it; but it is not my preferred teaching style either. People are born built to use their eyes. Not only that, but they will use any bit of eye sight they have for as long as it has any meaning for them. I am a living example.

Pretending to be blind, by artificially constructing that situation, is not the best way to get the long term, constructive results we want.

It is a drama that appeals to sighted people, but not to those of us who really live with visual impairment or blindness every day.

Karen Norton

*OIB Coordinator
Disabled Resource Services*

Sleep shades are an invaluable tool for the training and/or experience of blindness for sighted individuals. For those with low vision or legal blindness, it's like training a partial amputee not to use what is left of a limb. Sleep shades are not worn in everyday life, so why train to do something different than you would do at home?

Debra Johnson

*OIB Skills Trainer
CPWD*

The question of whether or not to use sleep shades for training, I believe should be given to the consumer, however, I believe an institute or training facility should choose the method they feel most valuable. A training center such as CCB should not be asked to compromise their position because someone else believes people should have a choice. The choice should also be an informed choice by the consumer.

I used sleep shades when I was trained, and with the consumers I work with, I see a resistance to use other senses therefore to use sleep shades would greatly benefit their training. We think we can learn

to use the other senses without, but there is a fear. I often practice walking with my eyes closed, but too many times I will cheat a peek. I trained for more than 8 months using sleep shades, and would not have it any other way.

I will never give up the idea that sleep shades are a valuable training tool. Any training facility should not be forced to choose one method when they prefer another.

If you have an idea for the opinion section of the next newsletter, please e-mail your suggestion to judy.neal@state.co.us.

Colorado CIL Websites

www.atlantiscommunity.net

www.cfigj.org

www.cpwd-ilc.org

www.fortnet.org/drs

www.swcidur.org

“Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.”

- Helen Keller

SILC 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 patricia.yeager@unc.edu.