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Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living

"The Future of IL: How Do We Get There?"

January 17, 2019

3:00 p.m. EST

Captioning/CART Provided By:

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P.O. BOX 278

LOMBARD, ILLINOIS 60148

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>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: All right. If we're ready to go we'll get started.

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining today's conversation, "The Future of IL: How Do We Get There?" organized by APRIL. This conversation is a partnership with the.

>> EUFPLT: L net and national training and technical assistance project for CILs and SILCs operated by ILRU in partnership with NCIL, APRIL and Utah state.

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For today's conversation, if you are using a phone line, you may press \*# to enter the queue to speak and ask questions or join the conversation. For those using the webinar, you may also type your comments or questions in the chat box and we will voice it for you. If you are only participating via the computer, you can also click that little person with the right hand raised at the top of your screen to raise your hand to have your mic opened to speak. Please note that some people's computers permissions will pop up a box on your screen that says something like "allow adobe to access your microphone." You must okay this to voice with your mic.

Captions for today's call are being provided in the webinar platform. If you are not using the webinar platform, you can also click the link on the first slide here provided on the invitation on the website at APRIL‑rural.org under that IL Conversations tab. If you are having any trouble participating you can email me at any point, Mary.olson@MSO.UMT.EDU to receive immediate assistance. Please as always remember to evaluate this conversation from the APRIL website under the IL Conversations tab. We'll have that evaluation link on the final slide and will pop it in the chat box at the end. Your feedback really does only make us stronger.

So now the main event. I'd like to give you a really warm welcome to today's hosts Tim Harrington, Jeremy Morris and Bill Altom. Jeremy Morris is Executive Director of the Ohio State wide independent living council. He has been in IL for 11 years and before coming to the SILC he worked at two Centers for Independent Living in Ohio.

Tim Harrington moved to Cleveland to join Services for Independent Living as a manager in 1984. He later became the first Executive Director of Ohio SILC. In 1999 he returned to the Ability Center of Greater Toledo where he served as Executive Director.

Bill Altom has 27‑plus years experience in Independent Living. He worked his way through the ranks of IL, eventually becoming a Center director in rural Southeast Arkansas. He became the director of APRIL in 2007 and thinks he can almost see retirement on the horizon. Almost.

Before we get started, I just wanted to give you guys a little bit of information to kind of help guide us through today's call. Today's discussion is going to cover a SILC perspective on building the next generation, a CIL perspective on creating the path for the next leaders, and APRIL's perspective from a national view of building the opportunities for up and comers.

Just a few discussion questions and thoughts for you guys to kind of keep in the back of your minds while we're talking so that we can have a great conversation. The first one: What are we doing about upward mobility for staff? How are we moving staff around so they can understand the different positions? What are we doing to create opportunities for professional development? What are our strategies going to be for the IL movement? And this is kind of a fun one for each of you... think back to your start in IL. Whose shoulders did you stand on or who was your mentor who helped you get your start and really start learning the IL ropes?

With that, I would like to turn it over to Jeremy Morris, who is going to kick us off. Jeremy?

>> JEREMY MORRIS: Good afternoon, everyone. I hope everyone can hear me okay.

As Mary started out, we've had a lot of great leaders in the IL movement, and as part of that we're looking now at there's some people who have helped shape and really start where we're at today, but a lot of those people have either left the movement or will be leaving soon, and it's something that we need to be constantly looking at, because if we aren't looking at it and addressing it now, we're not going to have a very strong future as a movement. So to keep our progress moving forward we need to make sure we're planning and preparing for these types of situations. Part of this from organizations needs to be in their planning and what they're going to do for their succession planning. It also includes identifying and embracing the future leaders of the IL movement, because we need to be welcoming those people into our movement as early as possible so that we can have more people coming in and learning what the IL philosophy is.

If we aren't building up that next generation of people and the next generation of leaders, what future are we really going to have as a movement?

So as we take the time to assess our own organizations, we need to see where can ‑‑ where can we start incorporating these type of people? It may not always be from a staff perspective, because especially when we look at some of the SILCs, there's not a lot of staffing that comes into the SILCs, but when we look at our council members and maybe different people on committees, how can we encourage other people to participate, how can we encourage people to be coming in? So there's a lot of potential for new leaders. Whether or not they end up ever working at a CIL or a SILC, that they can learn and embrace that IL philosophy. They may end up in leadership in other organizations or other groups, and this is going to help our philosophy to spread to other groups and other organizations and find its way into leadership of other areas. That's how we're going to help spread our impact as a movement even farther than we have been. We can't exist if we isolate ourselves. So bringing more people into this movement and bringing more leaders in early on is only going to help us.

So as Mary said, think back to who helped you get into this and who helped you really become who you are in this movement, because that becomes a big component. I look back at how I've gotten to where I am now, and luckily one of our copresenters, Tim Harrington, he really helped me see this from a broader perspective, and he's really helped push a lot of people here to think more of the future and think more of how can we get to a bigger impact. If it wasn't for someone like Tim encouraging me and helping me figure out my place in everything, I would not be where I am today.

So when we look at SILCs specifically, like I said, one of our important things is those council members. We historically here in Ohio have had a hard time bringing younger people on to our council. We're still in the process of trying to figure out how can we really reach out and encourage some of these people to join into what we're doing. We finally have our youngest SILC member that we ever have, a current college senior, and she is bringing a lot more energy into things and she's really one of the most enthusiastic councilmembers we currently have. So we're looking at how can we engage more individuals, and we're working to ‑‑ with other SILCs now to try and see what's working so that we can help bring up some of these future leaders that, again, they may never go into working at a CIL. They may never directly work in IL. But if we teach them the philosophy, if we can really encourage them, they can go out and become a leader somewhere else and then we know that those future programs and services or wherever they end up, that mentality and that philosophy is going to reach into those programs.

So in doing so, it's going to help us shape those future voices and the future of Independent Living. One push for us, I said, you know, we're really trying to figure out what is going to work. So if other people have suggestions and ideas of what's worked and what hasn't, I think that's a great conversation to have today because we want to find what are the best ways to connect people and what are the best ways to bring people in.

I think with the SILCs we have a very unique opportunity because with our make‑up of our councilmembers we can't be predominantly focused on CIL employees and CIL staff. So we're the ones who are really trying to reach out beyond the CILs, trying to find new members, and that is a difficult challenge sometimes because the best people who know IL typically are the ones who end up coming in from the CILs. So how do we reach out beyond that ‑‑ our current existing IL Net work to find new individuals and find people who we can train and teach about what we're doing? And I think it's one thing that as we do start bringing in these new individuals, we're going to be able to help mentor and shape those people as they come through. So having those existing councilmembers who have been pillars in our community, they can really help give that next generation the push so that they can learn and see how things ‑‑ how things used to be, but what the future could present.

So our veteran councilmembers become very important in this because we really need their leadership to help grow those next leaders, but we can't always rely on those voices of the veterans because eventually we need to find the next round of leaders. And if we just continually rely on the current members of our council and the veteran members that have been around for a long time, we're not going to get the new input that we're going to start needing.

So I'll ask now, are there any initial questions on any of this so far?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you, Jeremy. I see a couple of folks are typing in the chat box. You can absolutely type your comments in there or you can press \*# to request the floor. I do have one person in the queue. Let me just check really quick, Jeremy, and see if they have a thought. Hi, did you have a thought or a comment, questions?

I think it maybe might have been an accident.

Does anybody else have any thoughts or comments and questions for Jeremy or examples?

I think a couple of folks are typing, Jeremy, but if you want ‑‑

>> JEREMY MORRIS: While they type, I think that one thing, too, as SILCs when we start looking at where can we find more leaders in this movement, we need to start looking beyond our typical areas that we have focused on. There's a lot of people within other movements and other areas that we could probably find strong leaders with disabilities within other groups and organizations. Again, it helps bring that IL philosophy into the other areas of different activities and different organizations, and, really, that's one of the biggest things that we could do as a movement. The farther out that we can get that message, the stronger we will become.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Absolutely. Speaking of, we've got a few folks here with some thoughts. Why don't that we go to the lines first. Hello, did you have a comment?

>> Hi. Yeah, this is Susie Malloy. I'd like to ‑‑ I'd like to reinforce what you just said, Jeremy. I think it's really important to look to other populations for leadership, and I know that for as long as I've known about Independent Living, which is since '81 or so when I was disabled, there's been a dearth of leadership or even participation by people with a number of disabilities and they feel left out and they've had quite a bit to offer and no acknowledgment within the ADA except in principle, no regulations. I think if we're really doing our jobs we keep fighting for things that are not accepted yet, not just sort of rearranging the furniture, and the kinds of architectural barriers that people face are not all for those with orthopedic disabilities. An awful lot of other ones for people who are chemically sensitive, electrically sensitive aren't even addressed, oh, like ‑‑ people are getting smart meters stuck on their houses all over the country, and I see that as an enormous unaddressed issue that we should be looking at in the disability rights movement, and there are quite a number of other issues like that that are just going unaddressed, and there's leadership there and there's a real willingness to fight if we extend our hands outward and make people feel welcome to do it.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you, Susie. I think that is a great point that we're looking not only at bringing in different ages but maybe even incorporating more disabilities.

All right. Let's go to the next caller. Did you have another comment?

>> Yes. I believe it starts out with support groups. You get your client base and teach them the skills of advocacy and then have them be a participant in the activities and they'll move the work forward for Independent Living. I mean, that's how we've been successful. You teach the self‑advocacy from within and you get your leaders through these individuals that live in your community, and you strike their interest by the ‑‑ by getting their feedback and participating in government, you know, legislation that affects people with disabilities, and I think that's how we build it, and we get our leaders from the support group, get it from within, and it works that way. You get it from your community, from the community that you serve, and then it would be easy to identify those leaders that you've built, and that's how you move your work forward.

>> JEREMY MORRIS: That's a great point, especially for the CILs, finding those people that are coming to your Center and seeing, you know, there's some great potential leadership in a lot of these individuals. How can we help foster that and help them grow those skills.

>> And I think we present them opportunities. I mean, you know, getting individuals to go to NCIL, identifying your leaders and get them to NCIL so that they see the advocacy movement. I had an opportunity to march on Washington when I went to the NCIL conference, and just to see the bigger picture just to see how government works, because that's where it changes, you know. But when you are a part of something, it works. I mean, you've got to be able to bring new people in to NCIL and have them see for themselves what the movement is all about.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. Thank you.

Let's go ‑‑ I just wanted to voice a couple of the thoughts going on in the chat box as well. So, first of all, we have Brian who says, I think a big part of our future is in intersectionality. When we look to recruit members for SILCs from outside the movement who are connected to other social justice movements as leaders. I think that's a great idea. So not just looking within us, but who else is out there.

>> JEREMY MORRIS: I think that's very true. I think there's a lot of great potential out there, and it helps us grow, too, because there's individuals out there with areas of expertise that we may not have, and if we could find people in those other movements, in those other areas that are going to bring greater insight to what we're doing, it's only going to help us in our planning efforts, in our ‑‑ in our growth.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: And Sierra says, I love the valued thought of veterans and how they can make a bigger impact and looking beyond IL, too.

>> JEREMY MORRIS: There is a great value to the people who have ‑‑ who have been around IL for a long time because they offer a level of history that you're not going to find as easily in a history book. There's a lot that has gone on in the disability rights movement that we need ‑‑ we need those veterans to be able to share those stories so that people coming in, they know that history, and it helps us, and I see some of the other conversations coming up, it helps us to be able to spread that history, to let other people know where this movement started and where we have come from and how much progress we've made, but how much more progress still needs to happen.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Absolutely. I think that goes along nicely with Maria's comments here. CILs and SILCs need to require IL history training of all staff and board members. Directors included. New staff are not being trained to know and understand the history. And SILC staff should go through refresher trainings as well.

Maria, I don't want to dump the boat too much, but I think ILRU might be working on something just like this. I'll check in with Darrel Jones and her team and we'll put that up on the website if there's something to be coming.

All right. Let's go back to the lines for a moment. Did you have a thought?

>> My name is Tony. I'm a director for a Center and I love this conversation. I think one of the things that are going around in my head is, where are we being led to? It's certainly knowing our history and where we are is very important, to know where we're going, but in having that clarity will, I think, help to identify those leaders? I certainly like the comments about getting the youth involved. We do youth leadership forums and all these other kind of things trying to really plant the seeds for cultivating leaders and et cetera, but I think that's a fundamental question, too, is what's the vision for the future for IL? We got a history. We know where we are. Where are the hot button issues? Yes, intersectionality and how disability plays a part of it is very important conversation and topical to have. There's other issue areas that are very topical. Here in Florida, how we prepare, respond and recover from disasters are very important. So we might need leaders in that area. So I think identifying the issue areas, and we have our ones that have always been with us, certainly, but certainly those ones that are hot button topical and who has the expertise, the knowledge, the know how, the potential are very important things to, I think, have discussions and clarity on so that we can identify those leaders. So it's more or less a comment.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Yes, almost like a strategic planning meeting for the IL movement.

>> Yes. Because, for my opinion, you know, when movements start, they dovetail into other movements, they become more than what they just started, and I know from my own experience and working with the Independent Living networks, some people are very orthodox in the way that Independent Living was founded and are very rigid in those kind of things. And other people are more innovative and out of the box kind of thinking about how Independent Living is conceptualized and what it means today. I think it would be great to have those conversations because I think when I hear from people that are very traditional in their IL thinking and people that are more progressive in their IL thinking, and I think everybody has a very interesting perspective and a lot of things to share, but ultimately, it's got to galvanize into a vision for the future. What is that vision? Is it a shared vision?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. Does anybody have comments on that before we move forward?

>> Is my mic open?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: You are open, Tim.

>> TIM HARRINGTON: Interesting conversation about sort of galvanizing, you know, what our strategy forward is. I guess my only comment to that would be that there are ‑‑ you know, there are veterans out here that have done this for a long time, and my biggest concern is that as we move forward we get further and further away from the understanding that advocacy is our most important byproduct of IL and as we get more and more creative in finding new funding sources and working with healthcare, et cetera, et cetera, that the bold work of systems in individual advocacy get left behind. It is the unique role that IL has to play in this country, and I'm hopeful that we don't lose that as we bring in the next generation.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. Let's go ahead ‑‑ Brian says: This is especially applicable to organizations going back to bringing in some other folks such as black lives matter, sight for '15 as well as those in the mental health recovery movement who have made inroads and policy ‑‑ in policy but understand the struggle for he self advocacy in their own lives. The future for our movement is widening our own tents. I also think we have to have a larger conversation in the CILs about getting back to the peer voice in our leadership decisions.

And Brooke adds on she agrees with Maria who was saying earlier, we should all get refreshers in history, looking at veterans as mentors to provide support and resources to potential leaders. And I think veterans in this comment is the veterans in the IL movement. So kind of what you're saying, Tim.

>> TIM HARRINGTON: I think it's a real ‑‑ it's a real sticking point for folks that have fought the long fights and knowing that there continues to be fights to be fought and there's danger in being distracted from those fights.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: And, Tim, Maria is agreeing with you. She says CILs need to talk and educate the community about grass roots advocacy and that is the heart of IL and she says ‑‑ she thinks Centers are afraid to teach about ADAPT. SILCs could fund and work with veterans on creating presentations, and, Tim, you're exactly right, we're losing that, that advocacy piece.

Just a couple more comments and then we'll turn it back to you, Tim. Mark also is saying, having himself hired, supervised and trained staff at a CIL, the history of Independent Living is critical. When I came into the CIL I recently retired from ‑‑ I came with a lot of nonprofit and human service experience. I'm also a person with disabilities. It still took me two years to really understand IL and see the world through the windows of IL. After 14 years at a CIL, I have ‑‑ am now part of our state SILC. Not all SILC members really understand that IL from a CIL perspective. I think that's a great point.

Yeah, Brian ‑‑ let me go ahead and turn you on. Brian, go ahead. Brian? Hollander, your mic is open. While we're waiting for Brian, Bethany just wanted to add that I agree this is a huge issue across many states getting new membership and how to tap into that unrepresented area. I believe education is key. In our state we have had issues getting peer groups started. I fought a disability my whole life. I think back, and when I was younger, I didn't want to ‑‑ my identity to be disability. While aging I have a new perspective, the importance of helping others in having a voice.

>> Can you guys hear me?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Yes, I can.

>> I think part of it is also ‑‑ so when you look at the history of the movement, we started out kind of looking for something different than what we're looking for now at some level, because we have ‑‑ I think we need to look at what goals we have accomplished as a movement and what goals we haven't, and also what has changed that we need to accomplish as a movement moving forward. Because I think you're right, I think hits tree is important, but I also think about grass roots advocacy versus, like, sort of a keeping the lights on conversation that we've been having. I think to some degree there is not so much a sort of coalescence around exactly what it is that we're looking for. So, for example, you know, when I go out and I talk about IL to policymakers and disability access to policymakers, I talk a lot about universal design and trying to separate the idea of disability as something for people that are other, you know? I don't know that that has necessarily historically been a part of our conversation when we've done both grassroots and sort of policy‑based advocacy, but I think we've progressed as a movement to where it needs to be part of our conversation moving forward.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Did any of our speakers have a thought on that?

>> TIM HARRINGTON: I guess my response would be that as long as it's consumers within the IL that are providing that type of direction that they get a pass, but if it's not consumers that are driving an agenda away from advocacy and real change on the state level, then that concerns me.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. Angelina James, your mic is open. While we're waiting to get Angelina on, Maria just wanted to say that, I agree with you, Tim.

Angelina, are you there?

All right. While we wait for Angelina to get her mic properties set here, I think Jeremy is ready to turn it over to you, Tim.

>> TIM HARRINGTON: Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to be on this. I do have a real concern about how committed we are to developing the next generation of leaders in IL, and, you know, when I was the Executive Director of the SILC many years ago, I remember lamenting as I saw Centers across Ohio replacing executive directors with individuals that, number one, didn't have disabilities and, number two, had no background in IL. I thought that that was ‑‑ that was a tragedy and that it should be something that on a national level authorities needed to put their feet down on how folks get placed at Centers, and I'm one of the old guard that believes that leadership of NAACP [indiscernible] fat white guys like me and the same comes through about IL. So when I was being critical of these decisions across the state, I then went off to run the Ability Center and was struck right in the face with the fact that finding qualified folks with disabilities who wanted to work at Centers was a much more challenging role than I'd ever imagined, and I think even today we don't have as many candidates looking for IL jobs who have disabilities that we need.

As I see how people filled out the ranks, it's clear that we're being flexible in the way that we look at people's qualifications. But at the same time, I think as far as CIL leadership goes there is no better spokesperson for the movement or for a Center than someone that can identify with the mission personally.

So that brings me to the question of how do we replace this generation of leadership? There are programs like AAPD's Congressional interns. There are other smaller programs across the country that work with relatively small groups of advocates. But when you look at 450 Centers across the state ‑‑ or across the country, this is really an issue that needs a broader swath of effort to resolve. Identifying 30 folks in D.C. doesn't deal with our need for leadership replacement in the movement. If in fact we're going to continue to press those issues that most deeply affect folks' ability to live in the community.

So my thought process is that once we do find individuals, what is ‑‑ what are the professional development paths that we can lead them to, especially as you're talking about people moving into program manager positions and up the ladder. What is it that we're doing as a movement to build capacity and to build competence in folks so that they can take on greater responsibility. I think it's a huge issue for our profession. Locally we have started a disability studies program that is not based out of rehab but it's based out of culture and rides right alongside women's gender studies and now we have this disability studies program. That program has generated three full‑time staff for me that come to us with experience and knowledge regarding disability law, regarding disability culture, and at the same time they would do internships here. I think those types of activities are necessary on a broader basis throughout our industry. I also think that the one thing that veterans of this movement have done is give people permission to try and fail and to try again, and I think we do have a responsibility to put people in places that they may not have the self‑worth or the understanding that they can do it, and by helping people move up and out is something that we should really specialize in as a movement.

I guess, in closing, this issue of folks coming up the IL ladder hits home for me in that I've started my succession plan, and in looking for an associate director of an agency with 50 staff, we did a search for an associate director and we had one resume from someone who is already in IL, out of 50 resumes. So the availability of folks in our movement that are interested in stepping into leadership positions, I think, is a concern again to the industry and I think, you know, I'm hoping that our default is not as an IL movement to simply hire the next warm body that's willing to take a seat at the table.

I did offer to Mary Olson a succession plan that we've instituted here at the Ability Center. I think that succession plans in any organization are critical. I think when you add to it the fact that CILs at times have staff that need to come and go based on disability, that understanding how an organization is going to maintain life during the absence of the folks is something that's strategically important. So I have made that available to Mary to make available to people that are on the call today.

Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you, Tim. I wanted to let folks know, I just plopped the link for those ‑‑ that succession plan. It's on the APRIL website under I will L conversations. I plopped that in. It's available for download. Thank you, Tim, for that. I know examples are always good.

I wanted to address a few of the comments that I think might have come in before you started, Tim. And then also throw it out to folks, we're curious what is going on in your Center or SILCs currently to help prepare up and coming staff to help with those professional development skills. What kind of things are going on out there? And you can press \*# to get into the queue or press the little person with the armed raise and I'll open your mic. And while folks are kind of lining up, I just wanted to mention, Angelina James did end up typing in, and she says: I'm a community action coordinator for assist to independence in Tuba City, Arizona. I'm a trainer for the Arizona SILC disability leadership. My work is in Northern Arizona on the Navajo reservation and Hopi reservation, which are very isolated rural communities. It's very challenging. I created a support group to keep the interest alive and all this is still very new for Arizona.

I think that's one of the issues that we're all kind of talking about here, is where do you find the people. Did any of the speakers have any thoughts on Angelina's comment before I move to the next one?

Great. Maria wanted to add ‑‑ she feels Centers still are putting in the wrong people in as EDs. It has to come from the top down with policy.

And Brian's thought is, I do agree with Tim, the driver has to be consumers and that the next generation has to come from the consumer voice. That said, I also think that our movement has progressed from one that was largely a movement of people with physical disabilities to one that encompasses all disabilities, and especially invisible disabilities. I also think that to some degree the difficulty in recruiting people with disabilities into our movement comes from our success in opening up more opportunities for people with disabilities in the general employment market. Remember, less than 30 years ago we had no ADA and within a generation people with mobility disabilities could not even get on a public bus. I think the biggest challenge now is to convey that disability rights are civil rights and not lesser in any way than other civil rights. I think that joining with other social justice movements is key to accomplishing this goal.

Any thoughts on that?

>> TIM HARRINGTON: My only comment would be that I think it is true that because we have opened up many opportunities that there are opportunities to work elsewhere. That's to be celebrated. I mean, one of the kids that I started working with when he was 8 years old, he internshipped here, he loved working here, but he got a job as a manager at Amazon, and if we talk about fulfilling our mission, boy, having people with disabilities spread out in all types of industries working, that's a great outcome.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Bethany adds that, Tim, she says, I love what you just said. In educating about the Independent Living movement, they need to know it is not residential and impacts all areas of life, that individuals with disabilities have to be able to fail or succeed. That is how we will all grow and learn.

I'm going to move over to the phones for a moment so you get a break from my voice. Go ahead, caller.

>> This is Cheryl, Executive Director of the statewide Independent Living in Honolulu. I've been listening to the comments and agree with what everybody, and I would like to say for myself, I'm a person with a lifelong disability, and, of course, I think that the directors and like the SILC executive directors, I think the disability perspective as the ED is critical to the SILC for Hawaii. I also think that culturally in Hawaii, which is where I'm at, is ‑‑ people don't speak up. People can be afraid to speak up. And I tell people the same thing about civil rights. If you are committed to the principles of civil rights, whether it's disability, women, you know, race, you just look back to the principles and that can help drive ‑‑ can help drive people forward. But I find people talking about advocacy and doing advocacy are two different things. Example, the community of people who are Deaf here wanted to hold a protest at the capitol a few years back, and one of the leaders in the general community didn't like it because she ‑‑ she was the head of an organization that ‑‑ a state organization that she didn't want that happening at the capitol while she was the head of the organization, the state organization. So somehow it got nixed. I was excited the people who were Deaf really wanted to speak up and say that, you know, equal is different. Equal access. And it's a whole encompassing thing, like everyone has said about Independent Living, and, anyway, I just wanted to add the perspective of ‑‑ it probably is the same perspective everybody else has said, but I think it's important that education of the history and educating our families and educating each other, that's what these conversations help do. Anyway, talking about the benefits of all this. The benefits of Independent Living to everyone. You know, if I can find the button on the elevator myself, or help somebody else find the button, everybody benefits. I just have one more comment. I think that we all have to also recognize that the ADA has really not significantly changes employment outcomes for people with disabilities. To me that all comes back to attitude about the disability somebody has, and when more people with ‑‑ more people are in more jobs as executive directors, as business owners, whatever, then the attitudes about disabilities will change more because people will be seen in all kinds of jobs.

Anyway, I didn't mean to take up so much time, but thank you for listening and aloha.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Aloha. I think your comments are great and definitely not taking too much time.

>> Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Yeah.

>> How do I put myself on mute so you guys don't have to hear me now?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I'll re-mute you. Okay?

>> Okay. Thank you so much.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you.

All right. Brian, Brian Hollander, if you don't mind voicing your comment, your mic is live as well.

>> Okay, I ‑‑ I don't think I had a comment. I think that that was from before ‑‑ hold on. [feedback sound] sorry about that. I think my ‑‑ I actually was dialed in by the phone. Anyway. I think you got my comment earlier. I apologize.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Oh, perfect. Great. Let's go back to the lines.

I opened you up. Go ahead, caller.

>> That would be me, Susie Malloy. I think something ‑‑ something I'd like us to bear in mind in that the comments from people in Northern Arizona are important, I think, and from the different native communities are pretty important, rural areas, and sometimes it feels to me like we've got two different movements going on in that we have some CILs having sort of grown into a corporate model, and there's an awful lot of money coming and going and some pretty substantial grants and things, and then there are others of us in rural areas maybe especially for whom ‑‑ it seems to me like one of the appropriate models for us is a garage band. I mean, what we've got is ourselves and six friends and we get together and figure out who in our community needs to be advocated at or toward, and we know nobody is going to do it but us, so we go and stick our necks out, and there's such different kinds of Independent Living Centers now. Sometimes it's hard for me to reconcile we're all trying to move the same direction because our lives are so incredibly varied.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Anybody have any thoughts on that?

>> I have another one. I'll toss this out, too. Some of the disabilities that we don't serve very well in the Independent Living movement are those which were either not invented yet or not identified during the development of the work that went toward getting the ADA passed. I mean, at that point there was nobody losing access to their apartment complex because of a smart meter getting put on their building, and there weren't kids being driven out of the classroom by having wi‑fi and 5G and so forth. Some of the barriers have moved on without the Independent Living movement seemingly having noticed, and I think we have new barriers that we're facing now, and I would love it if some of our IL comrades could look at that and help pick up slack and see how the Independent Living principles can be applied to these new barriers.

Okay. That's it.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. Thank you, Susie.

I just wanted to comment from the SILC of Kansas kind of talking about training. They're saying, we need to be open to getting training from experts so that we can develop our staff to be better leaders. We need to know how to develop an effective strategic plan, how to market, how to run a business, and we need to be open to have the experts teach us who don't have disabilities, too. It's great if they do, but I have seen an expert come into a conference who did not have a disability and people completely dismissed him. So I think SILC of Kansas is talking about this idea of when we're talking about professionally developing our upcoming staff, what about looking outside of ourselves to get that training. And Maria just wanted to add to that, SILC of Kansas, I have seen that as well. Some individuals without disabilities are valuable ‑‑ are as valuable as people with disabilities. We should not exclude anyone who is willing to educate and fight with us.

What are folks' thoughts on that?

>> JEREMY MORRIS: It's one of those things that as a movement we really need to encompass all of our society if we're ever going to see real change going on, because if we do just focus on the disability community for our conversations and our outreach and we never include other individuals, we are going to live in solitude, and we're going to perpetuate the issues because we need to be reaching out to those people that are not typically touched by Independent Living, because they're going to be ones that we need to have on our side. We need to have them rally with us, and finding ways to bring those individuals into the movement is a crucial part to our future.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. And along with that, Brooke Wilson said, SILC of Kansas, I agree, not just open to presenters who do not have disabilities. Unfortunately, there are also classes of disabilities and hierarchy within the disability communities meaning the attitudes about certain disabilities. Acceptance, inclusion and recognition is for everyone.

Wow, I'm just impressed with all the interesting angles folks are coming at this from.

Just to kind of back up, Lauren said, maybe NCIL and SILC Congress to host an extension of this webinar conversation at their conference this year.

Awesome. Lauren, as a director of training for APRIL, we do plan on continuing this conversation at the APRIL conference for sure, and definitely I think we need to get the other organizations on board and maybe we can do some kind of joint effort.

Michael says while working for a CIL it was the SILC that gave me an opportunity to grow by paying for me to attend my first national conference. With the expectation I would start a youth program when I came back to the CIL. From there the SILC gave me more opportunities to grow and to apply the knowledge I learned.

That's great to hear. I think that's a great way to kind of help build that professional development piece, is national conferences.

Bethany says, in Maine we are a rural state and, of course, transportation is still an issue. We have implemented for our monthly meetings that we have two physical locations that sign in using Zoom videoconference wing. Individuals can use Zoom remotely from their home. We also have an audio conference line for those without internet access. I've had lifelong disability, worked at a CIL, was a consumer using CIL services and recently became ED of SILC. I am passionate about sparking new interest.

I think that's a great idea. We have all been talking about these rural natures of our states. That's a great way to kind of work around that.

Before I move back to the lines for a little bit, did the speakers have any comments on the chat comments I just voiced?

>> TIM HARRINGTON: I think the idea that obviously there's need for a longer, more in‑depth discussion on these issues is a good place to start.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Yeah, I agree. Let's keep it going.

Let's go back to the phone lines. Go ahead, please.

>> I would concur. This is Tony from Florida, Center for Independent Living. I would concur with nearly all the comments made, but especially to continue the conversation, and I think some of the comments are alluding to what I was bringing up before, is where are we going? Is it a shared vision? I'm hearing people say that we may have different types of versions of that vision. So this is an important conversation to have so that we can all be on the same page, and one of the things that I find interesting about this conversation is, as a leader who is always looking to get better at leading, I look to a lot of different people who train on leading, and certainly the mainstream people that are well‑known for training on leading. Across the board they seem to train on one thing that I don't see a lot of in leadership trainings that I have seen in IL, but it's the first thing you start with who are you? What are your values? What is important to you? Where do you need to grow? If you expect to lead others, do you have the self‑awareness and self‑discipline, the mindset, the growth mindset that's needed to be a leader? And these certain values and core principles certainly ‑‑ certainly Covey started here in his 7 habits of highly successful people seemed to be part of the leadership training we sometimes kind of miss. The leadership training seems to be very traditional nuts and bolts of the leadership, a lot of text, whatnot. I think we can peel a page from the playbook of very famous people that teach about leadership and entrepreneurship like Tony Robbins and others that really hone in on the essence of who are you and how do you fit in and what are your values and how does that fit into IL. We could tailor it for that that that I think it would be a very engaging way of trying to find those leaders and to maybe perhaps look at training in that kind of a sense, and I'm sure others have done these kind of trainings before, and if they have, has it been useful. I just throw that out there as something to chew on perhaps for future conversations.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Wonderful.

>> I'm going to add into that, too, I think that's great, in defining leadership. I think too many times folks are not sure what leadership is. Is the leader is the one who is the mouthpiece that's always speaking or is it the quiet ones that is doing things that people are following as well. I think we have to hammer out what do we mean by leadership? Because it takes a lot of different forms.

>> I agree, and certainly we probably all have heard of servant leadership, and is that something we want to be cultivating. So I guess like in doing this, identifying of a shared vision, who are our leaders, and how do we teach leading? It's just intuitive we all think we know what leadership is. I don't think we ever stop learning what it's all about being a leader. That's an endeavor that will always go on and we can always get better at. I think like going into the essence of that would be very important.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Awesome. Thank you. I think these are great food for thought, and I for one am excited to pull together some information from these transcripts to inform future conversations.

Just to add to that, Angelina James wanted to add that one of the toughest challenges that she finds is recruitment. Recruiting people with disabilities is easy ‑‑ is easy to find, but very hard for disabled person to make a commitment to leadership, which is one reason why follow‑up is so important to include in something like a support group.

And Marsha adds to be that she thinks a lot of this can come back to radicalizing and better operationalizing our standards and indicators, not just documenting 51%, but showing how we create growth and leadership opportunities. Not just self‑advocacy, but teaching people to be engaged in systems advocacy. Outreach targeted towards building the next generation of leadership.

I think that's a great idea. I would ‑‑ I, for one, would love to know how folks are really creating growth and leadership opportunities.

Just ‑‑ this is just a side comment that Brooke wanted to let folks know that they've had these kinds of conversations at SILC Congress before and they will continue this conversation at SILC Congress. So it sounds like they're on board as well.

Let's go to the phone line again. Did you have a comment?

>> Hi, yes. So this is Brian Hollander. One of the things that I think is important is giving people in individual CILs who are sort of the rank and file ‑‑ I mean, we as leaders, we tend to have a lot of opportunities to talk to each other. There are monthly national calls. I know in my state there are monthly state calls. There's regular opportunities for us to sort of interface with each other, but the line staff, they don't really so much get those kind of opportunities. So one of the things that we're doing here is encouraging our staff to reach out to their counterparts at other Centers and talk about what they are doing and talk about some of the challenges that they're having and some of the opportunities and successes that they've had so that they can both kind of get ideas and exchange ideas and learn from each other and sort of reduce that feeling of isolation that people can get when they're working this this field, because I think that often ‑‑ like, so, for example, our Center, we have a huge service area, so it's ‑‑ it's not like you are ‑‑ you know, just drive a few miles and you're at another Center. So I think that often people who work in this field, they tend to feel a little bit isolated in what they do, and so getting people, the opportunity to talk to people gives them a little bit of an idea of the bigger picture of us as a movement, as well as, you know, the ability to, again, reduce that feeling of isolation.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you. That's a great comment.

Going back, Bethany just wanted to also add that she agrees, people without disabilities are just as important as people with disabilities. Who knows, maybe that person becomes disabled in the future.

And, yeah, we always say I think disability doesn't discriminate. I don't know if everybody says that, but my Center used to say that.

Julie says, ADAPT allows people with disabilities leadership opportunities. CILs train. But then the opportunities are not opened as well. The goals are different internally. One wants to provide leadership training. The other wants workers to pass and spread the torches. CIL consumers surprised what they see ADAPT members jump in and do. So where are CILs' leaders going? Where are ADAPT's leaders going? Does anybody have any thoughts on that?

Well ‑‑

>> To some degree I think ‑‑ I think it was Mary that mentioned this before. I think to some degree, and I don't think this is wholesale, but in some cases I think that ADAPT and CILs are going in an opposite direction. I think CILs are a little bit gun‑shy about some of the activist role that we have and that ADAPT takes, even though we owe them a huge debt. But I think that CILs try to think also more about ‑‑ sometimes I think CILs get cooperated by just keeping the lights on, so to speak, and so they become gun‑shy about ADAPT and sort of keep ADAPT at arm's length. And I think that that is part of a larger conversation that has to be had, which is how do we ensure that CILs and ADAPT come together a little bit more. Because ADAPT has been very effective with some of the work that they're doing, but I do think that CILs, especially CILs that have relationships with policymakers and receive money from public entities and certain large grant organizations tend to be a little bit afraid to get too deeply identified with ADAPT. I don't know ‑‑ am I ‑‑ does anybody else have any thoughts on that? Because I ‑‑ that's just my own perception. And I do think that we can do both.

>> Maria added to that and she said that she thinks CILs are afraid of ADAPT tactics. We need to learn to work together. You can do both. Great conversations. Wow.

Let's go ahead and move a couple more comments and then we'll let Billy kind of wrap us up. I'm excited to say that we have not had a dull moment today. It's been a great call.

Go ahead, please.

>> Hi, this is Mike from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, IndependenceFirst. I just want to make a comment about that we don't underestimate outreaching to the youth because our future really does exist with the youth and I think efforts to increase public awareness, some of the things that our Center has done has gone out to grade schools and do activities on simulated disability, having kids pick up coins with mitt tens, writing your name while looking in a mirror. Just activities to demonstrate to an able‑bodied person what a disability is like. Maybe using a wheelchair. Activities like. As well as just increasing public awareness.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you.

Did you have a comment?

>> Yes, I just wanted ‑‑ the youth comment that was just made, absolutely. And I wanted as a director, who began teaming up with ADAPT after hurricane Michael to advocate for the needs of people with disabilities that were dislocated, it wasn't that we were afraid to collaborate with ADAPT. I think we need to be careful of our words. It's not that we have fear collaborating with ADAPT but the tactics they were using would have put us in jeopardy of the contracts we sign, and we potentially could lose funding if we don't understand where the line is between add advocacy and lobbying. And to share social platforms to get the word out about things, they were wanting to articulate messages that were really bombastic against our government and how ineffective it is, and here we have contracts with the government, and we sign these things saying we're not going to lobby, and that line is very blurry, and I really want to work with ADAPT because, in my heart of hearts, I'm pretty much lock in step with their philosophy. I wish I could have their tactics. It's hard not to be bombastic with the egregiousness going on out there, but we're in a position where we need to be measured, we need to be leaders, we can't always be ‑‑ I can't be in a position where I'm hyperreactive, and I think that we both have roles to play. It's like a ven diagram. We have a mutual interest and goals but we also have our unique skill sets. So ADAPT can do things we can't do and we can do things they can't do and we need to capitalize on that. I think there is synergy to be had. We just need to have more open discussions about it and be willing to move that along. And if that's more of our vision and ties back to the discussion of the future, great, let's make that happen. I'm a collaborator. But we have to respect each other's roles and responsibilities as well.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you. All right. Just one more thought. When we were talking about ways to have these conversations, Maria just said, five years ago we had a grass roots advocacy conference in Ohio that brought individuals from all the Centers together, and that was a way that we could have the conversation. She also adds that we need to understand the lines between lobbying and advocating. We can have this relationship and we can learn from others who do.

Wow, I'm just ‑‑ I'm loving of the conversation that's happening.

Brian says, I think that the current speaker is making a great point, however, there is a larger philosophical conversation to be had. I tend to be more a pragmatic advocate, but there are those in the movement that belief we should not take funds that restrict our abilities to be radical advocates. I don't personally agree with this point of view but we do need to have this conversation.

Wow. I for one agree, and I know my boss is getting ready to do his part, and we'll ask Billy if he thinks APRIL can help continue these conversations. Billy, do you want tic to it away?

>> BILL ALTOM: Absolutely. Thank you, Mary. This is the fun part about going last. Almost everybody has hit almost everything in my notes. So thank you all for doing my presentation for me.

What I really want to start out with talking about how we as a national movement can support young leaders, and first off I want to give all the credit to Linda Gonzalez, who was my predecessor, the founding Executive Director of APRIL, and her vision of having young people involved in Independent Living. I believe we're the first national Independent Living organization to create youth board seats for having young people on the board. We hear it all the time, if you're not at the table you're on the menu. So when we're going to be out there championing having young people involved, what a better way to have them involved than on our Board of Directors. We're also the first national Independent Living organization to have youth conferences. Our youth conferences have grown over the years. We've had as many as 120 young people at our conference, and these are also planned by the young people, and if you have never had the opportunity to come to an APRIL conference and experience what we have in the rural community, you have missed an absolute treat. One of the things that had been mentioned earlier was the working with different types of groups and intersectionality and, trust me, come to a ‑‑ oh, my God, I just said trust me. I sounded like the president. That's terrible of me. But believe me whenever I tell you if you come to an APRIL conference you're going to see intersectionality at its finest in our youth group. It is something to behold. It makes me have faith in America every time I'm around those young men and women. So whenever we also ‑‑ we're looking at having young people and putting together a conference, doing all these types of activities, we need to have somebody on staff that was a youth. So we went out and secured funding and have hired a youth coordinator, Sierra Royster, many of you know Sierra, she fantastic. In fact, Mary Olson‑Willard also came up through our youth movement in APRIL and probably one of our best known APRIL youth alumni is ‑‑ for many of you, I'm an old guy, so I use the Dick Clark reference, and if you don't know who Dick Clark was, he was a gentleman who spun records for a living, had TV shows, did the New Year's Eve ball drop and never seemed to age a day in his life. He looked the same in the '50s and the same he did when he passed away. And Michael beers looks younger today than whenever I first met him. It aggravates me to no end that happens for him.

But through APRIL we have created a number of great leaders across the country. One of the other things that we've talked about that had been mentioned is reaching out to other organizations and other groups, veterans organizations, other types of groups. Sierra, we've got her working with Agribility and what we're trying to do is infiltrate those young people with disabilities who are farming or have parents who are farmers. Sierra had the opportunity to go to the national FFA conference just a matter of months ago and just a small little gathering, I believe she said there were probably 75,000 young men and women there. So an opportunity ‑‑ she didn't get to speak to every single person there, but to at least get the Independent Living word out in front of as many folks as possible. I'm kind of like the analogy of the guy who is walking down the beach and he finds the starfish and he's throwing one by one back in there. Somebody said what are you doing? I'm saving a starfish. But there's thousands. What difference are you making? Well, I'm making a difference to that one. So I'm a guy ‑‑ if we can change as many as we can, yay. But a lot of times it's changing them one at a time. You can really make an impact on somebody's life.

I just want to hit on a couple of the things that we mentioned earlier. One of the things for me is that not everyone has to work at a Center for Independent Living to be a successful advocate for Independent Living. In fact, as we've moved along 30 years ‑‑ almost 30 years past the ADA, that's what we want, is folks to be working in the general population. So for us to not allow folks that are outside our four walls of a Center for Independent Living to be advocates is kind of odd to me. I want everyone ‑‑ I don't care where you're at, if you're advocating for what I believe in, let's do it.

One of the things that I love, too, is the ‑‑ talking about Independent Living history and philosophy. I want to see it at a conference every year. Why do you want to do that at the conference every year? I like to use the analogy, too, of, well did you go to church last Sunday? And if they say, yeah, I go, what did you talk about? You probably talked about the Lord. What did you talk about the Sunday before that? We probably talked about the Lord. What about the Sunday before that? We need to talk about our history and philosophy to reinforce our beliefs. To me that's kind of what it is to me, it is my religion. People get on to me, my, gosh, were you a preacher in another life? I'm a preacher now. I believe in the Independent Living floss tea and I believe people should live in the setting of their choice, work where they want to work, marry who they want to marry. All the things that make America great, I want to see that happen.

Some of the other things I want to touch on as we're rapidly running out of time is defining youth. We have to figure out what youth really means. One of the things that I like to argue about is when think of youth, do I mean that youth in the chronological age? Or do I mean youth in how long I had my disability? I acquired my disability. So I was 22 years old when I acquired my disability. So I look at it as I started over at that point. I had no idea about disability rights. That was totally foreign to me. It was another language. So having to learn all those things. So we have to bring folks up to speed and that, again, comes back to where we have to be continually talking about IL history and philosophy because too many times I look out at a conference and I see so many new faces. And I hope that they're learning from each of us how to be successful advocates, but sometimes we need help and we need to look back and have folks help us out in teaching Independent Living history and philosophy. And there's so many different ways to be an advocate. As I mentioned early why you are about being a leader. What does being a leader mean? A lot of times I question my own leadership ability. I think we all have those moments of doubt when we really need our peers to lean upon and share our fears and things and have folks that can help build us up that. We mentioned the hierarchy of disability. There is also the hierarchy of age. I can't listen to that young person. What do they know? Well, I look at it from this way, I value young people, mostly because I'm technologically not very savvy. I need those young people to do that. Ant at the same token, whenever people have asked me, you know, you're a leader, why should I be a leader? I look at it from this perspective of as long as I'm driving the car you have to listen to the muse I can want to listen to. If you want to change the radio station you have to drive. We need to teach folks how to drive, allow them to take the horns. And also we have that urban versus rural issue that will always rear its ugly head and that comes back again to advocacy styles. There's a whole different ball game whenever it comes to being an advocate in rural America versus being an advocate in urban America. I'm rapidly running out of time for you, Mary, so I am going to cut it off there and say that, stay tuned, I think this has been a fabulous, fabulous conversation. I know we will be doing it again at the APRIL conference. In fact we just started a brand‑new committee, too, on leadership. It's called our youth leadership committee, and one of the goals of that is to create national attainable and sustainable leadership opportunities for young men and women. So stay tuned for more to come. Mary, I could go on for another 30 minutes but I'm going to give it back to you..

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thanks, Billy. That's ‑‑ I always feel bad. I always cut Billy short, leave him for the end. But I just wanted to add to what he said, if you're interested in joining that youth leadership committee or finding out information, you can reach out to myself or Billy and we'll get you contacted.

A lot of the conversation today was kind of talking about how do we help grow that next group, provide that professional development. We have started a committee at APRIL. It's called the careers in IL committee. I'm going to plop Scott Burling game's name in the email chat box. If you want to join that conversation on how we can develop the next leaders ‑‑ last year we piloted at our conference in IL track where we gave people a certificate at the end if they attended those specific sessions on IL history and philosophy, on financial management, all that good stuff. So if you're interested in being a part of that conversation, I'll shoot his email in the box here. And then we do have the link on the PowerPoint for the evaluation as well as for that example succession plan Tim gave us, which we also appreciate. We also want to say thank you again to Billy and Jeremy and Tim for leading this conversation, but a special thank you to all of you in the audience who I think really just made this a great start. I know for one that at APRIL we're committed to continuing this conversation. Look for opportunities at the conference. We're going to be having a peer sharing session during one of the workshop blocks. So rather than training sessions, we're just going to give you all an empty room designated for different folks, you know, youth, staff, program staff, EDs to kind of sit in a room together and have those powerful peer conversations. So please feel free to reach out if you're interested in any of that.

A special thanks to the IL NET for supporting this call. And I guess just look forward to more conversations like this. So thank you, everybody, again, for hanging in there with us, and we'll talk to you soon.