



Independent Life

The Center for Independent Living In Central Florida, Inc. November 2007

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Job Experience Expands Consumer's World

(The name of the consumer in this story has been changed to protect his identity.—editor)

For some CIL consumers the prospect of getting a job is a new and sometimes frightening experience. The world of work can be intimidating and filled with pressure for a person with a disability. Meeting new people and learning new skills, while attempting to make a good impression is difficult. For one CIL consumer, putting aside doubts and getting a job has been an eye-opening experience.

Michael had been a CIL consumer for more than a year and started working with Employment Specialist, Janet Gooding several months ago. He had little actual job experience. He appeared to be curious about work and job positions. Michael asked questions about different jobs in different fields, but for whatever reason, he lacked the true motivation to pursue a determined effort at job seeking. As time went on he learned how to complete job applications on his own and he became more interested in the prospect of working. Eventually Michael came to realize that a job provides a means of support and that to make money he would have to work.

Ms Gooding worked with Michael on

all aspects of the job search; filling out the application, resume writing, how to dress, and how to interview. She explained that job candidates



Michael's place of employment

are expected to dress appropriately for the interview and to come prepared to answer certain questions regarding skills and interests. Ms Gooding explained that employees receive a work schedule with the dates and times they are required to work. She explained the importance of coming to work as scheduled, being on time, and why it's important to call if you are late or can't make it to work.

After a few weeks of working on interview preparation, Michael felt he was ready to apply for a job and Ms.

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ASL Brings Together Parents and Children

Deaf or hard of hearing children face a number of unique challenges as a result of communication barriers. Research indicates that Deaf children nearly always experience language delays or deficits due to their hearing loss.

Some Deaf children are fortunate enough to have parents who teach them American Sign Language (ASL)

at a young age enabling them to begin school with some basic language skills. However,

only 3% of parents of Deaf children are fluent in ASL. As a result, many Deaf children begin school with few if any language skills, placing them at a significant educational disadvantage as they struggle to learn to read and write in English and understand the world around them.

To help open new channels of communication and help Deaf children get a good start in school, CIL conducts ASL instruction for parents, siblings, and other family members of Deaf children.

Classes run concurrent with the school year. The largest class to date

has had 40 participants. There are two sessions in each class, one conducted in English and another in Spanish, followed by 30 minutes of tutoring by Deaf volunteers. Children gather at tables called educational centers and practice counting, telling time, story telling, and reading.

Along with sign language training, topics such as Deaf culture, education, and technology assistance will be covered. The classes are held one night a week in the evening at the CIL offices. The classes are held in the evening to accommodate working parents. Classes

are conducted by CIL Intake Specialist Margarita Ortiz and four Deaf volunteers. Ms. Ortiz brings a wealth of experience to the classes, not only because she has over 13 years experience working with people with disabilities at CIL, but also because she is the mother of three children, two who are Deaf.

This is the continuation of a successful program that has been helping the families of Deaf children for the past three years. Funding for this year's classes come from Disney's Helping Kids Shine Grant Program.



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Independent Living Skills Classes

By Martha Knowles, CIL Transition Specialist

(Martha Knowles teaches independent living skills to the Deaf and hard of hearing through the use of American Sign Language (ASL) and with a variety of oral and written resources.—editor)

We have been busy this year with several different classes! We have two Driver Education classes on Wednesdays, two Reading/Literacy classes on Thursdays, and Budgeting and U.S. Citizenship classes on Fridays – at least 15-20 people are in these classes every week.



The largest class is the Wednesday afternoon Driver Ed class. We help consumers learn the rules of the road and learn about signs, signals, and pavement markings. They get ready to take the Learner permit test – some decide to take the computer test on their own (no interpreter); others take the “oral” test with an interpreter. But we do not teach actual driving in a car – after a consumer has his learner permit it is up to him to find a family member or someone else to help practice driving in a car, and then take the driving test to get his driver license.

In the Citizenship class, consumers learn about what they need to do to become a Naturalized United States Citizen. They learn what documents they must have and what forms to fill out. We help them complete the forms if necessary. They learn about U.S. History, how our government works, and the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen. In this class I encourage consumers to learn English well enough to be able to take the Citizenship Interview by reading/writing if necessary – at least one consumer was able to do this successfully when the interpreter did not show up even though one had been requested. We practice by both signing (ASL) and writing (English) the Citizenship questions.

Our Reading/Literacy classes vary depending on what the consumers need. In one class they need to learn Driver Education, so they are improving their English while learning the rules of the road. In another class we are using different short stories and studying English grammar via a series of ASL lessons on DVDs. We also have two classes where consumers are working on math skills while also improving their English/literacy skills.

For Budgeting, in addition to using practice check-writing and checkbook balancing, we also have a series of “Money Smart” lessons from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) on compact disc. Again, these lessons are adjusted to meet the consumer’s needs.

And last but not least, we have a few consumers in one-on-one ASL/English classes. These are mostly immigrants who need to learn ASL/English better before they move on to other content like Driver Education or U.S. Citizenship.

In addition to the classes, we still do a lot of Peer Counseling, help with Advocacy, and do Information & Referrals for anyone who needs these services.

Free Phones Come Through Loud and Clear

By Rogue Gallart, CIL Director of Advocacy

The Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI) is a statewide non-profit 501(c) (3) organization that administers the Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program for citizens of Florida who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind and Speech Impaired. FTRI is also responsible for promoting the Florida Relay Service.

The Center for Independent Living in partnership with the FTRI program distributes specialized telephone equipment, at no cost, to permanent residents of Florida who are hard of hearing, Deaf, Deaf-blind or speech impaired.

The specialized telephone equipment and ring signaling devices provided through this program are loaned to all qualified permanent Florida residents for those who need it, at no charge.

Some people may get frustrated with a standard telephone. Now they can improve their communication by using this special equipment. One device CIL gives out is the *VCPH Telephone*. It amplifies the incoming voice up to 40 decibels.

The FTRI staff at CIL is dedicated to education and outreach. Many hours are spent getting out into the community to give presentations, workshops, in-service training and to raise public awareness on this important service and equipment. Exhibits are provided for conferences, tradeshows and health fairs.



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Our FTRI Outreach Specialist Kara Ann Gibson says, “By going out into the community and getting the word out, we can really help those who are in need of our services”. Outreach is such an important component of the FTRI program. Through outreach and education we make contact with those who really need this specialized communication equipment.

You may think of “customer service” as something that only for-profit companies are concerned with. However, CIL is also concerned with customer satisfaction. We call it “consumer care”. Program Associate, Lisa Perez performs our in-house trainings. She works with our consumers to make sure that they receive the most thorough education and service. Ms. Perez receives many compliments from consumers who have been thorough her training. They often say how wonderful it was to have someone take the time to go step-by-step and help them understand the equipment.

To learn more about the FTRI program please contact us at 407-623-1070 or email Lisa Perez at lperez@cilorlando.org.

Rampage! 2007

Rampage! is CIL's signature special event. Held annually, Rampage! brings together volunteers and CIL staff to build wheelchair ramps for those who have difficulty getting in and out of their homes.

CIL thanks the donors, volunteers and staff who help make Rampage! possible.

You can volunteer to help us build ramps. Not sure how to do it? No problem! We'll show you how. If you have construction experience, that's great. You can be a Ramp Captain and show others how it's done.

Only 0.9% of homes currently have a wheelchair ramp. Yet, 29.2% of US families include at least one member with a disability.

For more information call 407-623-1070 and thanks!

Job Experience...

(Continued from page 1)

Gooding agreed. She and Michael talked about applying for a position as a merchandise stocker in the warehouse of Universal Studios. Ms. Gooding accompanied Michael on his interview.

Universal Studios provided an interpreter for the interview. Michael was dressed for success and answered the interview questions with ease. The interview went well. However the position Michael wanted, merchandise stocker, was not available at that time. An offer of restaurant server's assistant was extended.

A bit disappointed, Michael was hesitant about taking the job. Ms. Gooding explained the importance of taking an entry-level job. She said that getting your foot in the door is an important first step toward getting another more desirable position within the company. In early August Michael accepted the server's assistant position.

Michael has been on the job for three months now. He still wants to work his way up and get that warehouse job. Through his hard work and preparation by the CIL Employment Department, Michael is gaining valuable work experience everyday. It's experience that may lead to success throughout life.

For more information on CIL's Employment Services please call Deputy Director of Programs, Craig Pickens at 407-623-1070 or email cpickens@cilorlando.org.

ASL Classes

(Continued from page 2)

When parents, siblings, grandparents, and other caretakers of a Deaf child learn ASL, family supports become strengthened. By learning ASL the family can provide high levels of love and support. Positive family communication becomes a reality when the family learns ASL. By learning ASL, family members communicate a message to their child that few children who are Deaf have the opportunity to understand; it is alright to be Deaf and he/she can do and can be anything that his/her heart desires.



Margarita Ortiz at 407-623-1070, TDD- 407-623-1185, or by email at: mortiz@cilorlando.org.

Deaf Resource Fair

CIL's third annual *Deaf Resource Fair* is coming up Thursday November 15, 2007 from 5:00 to 7:00pm. Exhibitors from a variety of agencies, businesses and churches will gather in CIL's main conference room to answer questions, display products and talk about the unique challenges facing those in the Deaf community.

2006's event was a hit and this year promises to be even better. Last year over twelve companies that serve the Deaf community attended and represented a broad spectrum of interests like mortgage companies, technical schools, and churches. Approximately 40 people browsed the displays, talked and gathered information.

If you want more information, please contact Martha Knowles at 407-623-1070 or email mknowles@cilorlando.org

CIL Provides American Sign Language Interpreters

For more than 15 years, CIL has provided a vital communication link between deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and hearing individuals by providing interpreters fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). CIL covers diverse interpreting settings such as legal, mental health, employment, social and medical services.

CIL's dependability is what sets us apart from other organizations. All interpreters are state or nationally certified by the Florida Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (FRID) or the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Sign language interpreters can be scheduled during business hours for assignments 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Since our 2 year relationship with CIL's Interpreting Services, we have experienced prompt, courteous, and excellent service. We will continue to use them and will recommend them to others." -Rose Quintana, Family Practice Associates

Follow these helpful guidelines to request a sign language interpreter.

- Make your appointment at least 2 weeks ahead of time.
- After you agree to an appointment day and time, tell the doctor or business you will need a sign language interpreter. Don't wait till a few days before your appointment. If you wait till the last minute, most interpreters will not be available.
- If your appointment is with a new doctor try to make your appointment 3 to 4 weeks in advance. Doctors and businesses that have never had Deaf patients or clients often need extra time to understand the ADA, and how to get an interpreter.
- Give an "Interpreting Services" brochure (provided by CIL) to the person making your appointment. Ask them to call CIL as soon as possible in order to make sure an interpreter is available.
- Do not try to call "Interpreting Services" yourself. Why? If you called CIL to get an interpreter, YOU would have to pay for it. If the doctor or business calls to get an interpreter, THEY pay for it.
- Understand that 'Interpreting Services' is a fee-for-service department. This means we cannot advocate for you; it would be illegal and a conflict of interest.
- If the doctor or business refuses to provide an interpreter, who is the best person to advocate for you? You are. If you do not know how, contact CIL at 407.623.1070.

If you experience a medical emergency, don't wait. Go to the hospital emergency room. Once you arrive at the emergency room request an interpreter. Be persistent. Keep asking until an interpreter is provided.

For more information on Interpreting Services at CIL call Dan Ryan at 407-623-1070 or email dryan@cilorlando.org.

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