2016 - 2017
Annual Report

Serving the Central Florida Community since 1976
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

This past year, Center for Independent Living in Central Florida, Inc. (CIL) continued its legacy of leadership in empowering people with disabilities in our community.

Foundations to Freedom remains our most requested program. David Weekly Homes selected us as a partner, provided the funding and manpower to build 6 ramps. Additionally, we are very excited to say that we received $375,000 through State of Florida Elder Affairs to provide those all-important home modifications and adaptive equipment.

Youth transition is growing and this year’s Project SEARCH resulted in a 100% employment placement rate. In addition, 20 students participated in our Leadership Camp where they gained real-world work experiences and career exploration skills and High School High Tech completed its 3rd year. We increased job coaching in our Aspire to Hire program which resulted in an increase in employment placements.

We analyzed our information and referral services and realized that individuals’ needs could not be met with just a phone call, so we have expanded it into case management to ensure the clients receive all of the services they truly need.

The halls of CIL were alive with visitors from literally all around the world. On March 9 a select group of up and coming leaders from China came to share ideas and learn how nonprofits in the US serving people with disabilities function. Leadership Winter Park visited CIL as part of their program and we resumed our regularly scheduled agency tours.

Each year, Silent Night, our annual holiday event for the families and their children that are deaf, increases in attendance and receives expanded community support. Individuals in the community donated gifts and area businesses provided all of the food. In addition, and much delight to the children, Chick-fil-A sent its signing cow.

All of this could not have been possible without the support of our donors, volunteers, sponsors, funders, advocates, staff, and Board who all share in our mission of breaking down the barriers to opportunity and inclusion for people with disabilities.

Thank you for believing in us.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Howe
Executive Director

Mellissa Slover-Athey
Board Chair
Fred has been married to his wife Sylvia since 1956 and they were close to celebrating their 60th anniversary. Things were relatively stable in their lives until June of 2016, when Sylvia’s legs gave out from under her and she fell while walking in her home resulting in a hospital stay. She was told her heart was functioning at only 20% of its capacity and needed to have surgery. After the surgery she was required to undergo rehabilitation so that she would be able to walk again. Before discharging her the doctors asked her what accommodations she had that would allow her access she told them the truth - None. Sylvia could not return home. Fred, having had quadruple heart bypass surgery himself, was unable to make the trip to visit his wife, and their anniversary was fast approaching making it even more important for Sylvia to return home.

The steps to Fred and Sylvia’s home now were more than a barrier to simply entering or leaving their home, they prevented her from returning home at all. One of Fred’s sons learned about CIL and contacted us to see if we could help them get a ramp. Fred, having had quadruple heart bypass surgery himself, was unable to make the trip to visit his wife.

On the morning of a brisk Saturday in December, volunteers arrived at their home. CIL staff directed the volunteers how to build the ramp according to the plans that had been donated, and by the end of the day Sylvia could tell her doctors that she now had an accessible accommodation for her home. She was discharged several days after construction on the ramp completed, allowing the couple to spend their 60th anniversary together as they had wanted.
Making a Difference

Every person served by CIL has at least one goal they are striving to achieve in order to gain greater independence. Below are a few highlights of CIL consumers who set goals and successfully achieved them.

4,576 individuals were assisted with obtaining community resources for themselves, family members, or friends in order to live a more independent life.

90% of deaf or hard of hearing clients improved their ability to communicate with others.
Impacting Central Florida

10% increase in the number of CIL clients placed in employment throughout Central Florida.

28% increase in youth successfully completing job preparedness training over last year.

439 clients with accessibility goals obtained adaptive modifications to help them live independently in their homes.
Foundations to Freedom helps provide increased accessibility for people with disabilities. Through customized home modifications, amplified telephones, and support services we are able to improve safety, access, and independence; ensuring people with disabilities return successfully from nursing homes or remain in their homes. Foundations to Freedom leverages relationships and shared resources of various community-based organizations and businesses to help meet this need.

“Our new ramp has made my life so much safer and easier.”

StepAhead Youth Transition Program emboldens youth with disabilities, ages 14 to 25, to awaken their potential for a future of self-sufficiency and untapped abilities. Our program serves those with the greatest need, often unserved or underserved, who typically require lifelong support and are at risk of being excluded from participation in society. Step Ahead focuses on a mix of enrichment activities and classroom training aimed at improving pre-employment skills, social and civic engagement skills, work experience and independent living skills.

“I always felt like I didn’t measure up, I’m very appreciative for all you have done.”
DeafVoice is the only full-service program for people in Central Florida who are deaf and use sign language as their primary language. Its main objectives are to bridge the yawning gap between a hearing world that takes verbal communication for granted and a silent world that perceives and communicates through images, and by providing living skills training. DeafVoice offers a welcoming and supportive environment allowing individuals who are deaf to fulfill their potential. Equipping deaf individuals with the tools necessary to enjoy full inclusion in their community is achieved through specialized training in the areas of driver’s education and use of public transportation; English grammar skills and syntax; citizenship classes for deaf individuals from other countries; tax preparation; self-advocacy skills training; and employment skills

“I’m hearing impaired but I don’t let that stop me from being independent, I want to give other people that same opportunity.”

“CIL has pushed me forward, taught me how to communicate, and lifted me up.”

Aspire to Hire

Aspire to Hire assists candidates to identify and leverage their unique abilities to find and maintain inclusive, competitive, and meaningful employment. Job seekers receive assistance in identifying employment goals, gain job readiness skills, understand ADA rights and responsibilities, explore job search strategies, and provide referrals to needed supports services. Employment specialist actively recruits employers to secure job leads and develop job opportunities for our clients.

After job placement employment specialists provide job coaching and ongoing support to address concerns on the job and ensure the best employment outcomes for both employees and employers.
Case Management

CIL’s Case Management services support our consumers to better find and use resources and services appropriate to their goals. CIL’s case managers work closely with individuals to assess their needs, develop independent living plans, provide information and referrals, research appropriate resources, and coordinate and monitor individual services to ensure positive outcomes.

“To see how many people cared about me, it was amazing.”

CIL Impacted 6,245 lives in 2016-2017

CIL serves 7 counties which include DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Orange, Osceola, Polk, and Seminole. Through the services, programs, and assistance CIL offers, we impacted the lives of over 6,000 individuals with disabilities in Central Florida, 96% of whom are considered low-income.

Each individual has different goals and the Center for Independent Living individualizes each person's Independent Living Plan to meet those goals. Every year, CIL touches the lives of thousands in Central Florida with its message, and significantly impacts the lives of thousands with its actions.

It is truly thanks to the sponsors, donors, volunteers, supporters, and community advocates that we are able to have such a profound impact on so many lives in our community, and work to make our communities more inclusive.
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