This year marked the 40th anniversary of the Center for Independent Living in Central Florida’s establishment in 1976. Since that time we have seen CIL grow and change into the organization it is today. We commemorated this momentous occasion with the inaugural Celebrating Independence, a gala to promote the inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities. The event was held at the Rachel D. Murrah Civic Center in Winter Park on April 14th. Guests helped to raise over $17,000 for people with disabilities in Central Florida.

2015 also saw the rapid growth and success of our StepAhead transition program for young adults with disabilities. We continue to see the High School High Tech program grow, now spanning Bartow and George Jenkins High Schools. Additionally, CIL’s High School High Tech program was recognized as the program of the year by The Able Trust. With the support of CIL staff, volunteers, mentors, and donors the students enrolled in the program are able to explore all the opportunities available to them in their community.

As of this year we have built over a half-mile of accessible ramps through our Foundations to Freedom program. Our DeafVoice program continues to provide critical services to the deaf community to help empower them to lead full, independent lives. And our Aspire to Hire program helped over 40 people with disabilities find employment.

We are eternally grateful for the donors, volunteers, sponsors, foundations, advocates, staff, and board who make possible the mission of breaking down barriers to opportunity and inclusion that people with disabilities experience every day.
CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

Born out of protests towards the inaccessibility of the Berkley, California college campus for people with disabilities, the first Center for Independent Living was founded in 1972. Beverly Chapman took note of this movement and the void in opportunities for people with disabilities in Central Florida. In 1976, the Center for Independent Living in Central Florida was founded. Conceived as an organization devoted solely to solving the independent living challenges and answering the needs of the 42,000 people in Orange County living with disabilities.

CIL's Beverly Chapman Legacy Award honors an individual who creates opportunities for disability inclusion through partnerships, community outreach, and working to advocate for the rights and liberties of people with disabilities. Beverly's many accomplishments impacted countless numbers of people, all gaining the freedom to choose a life of independence.

As Beverly Chapman did throughout the course of her life, the Beverly Chapman Legacy Award is bestowed on an individual who has advocated and worked to create new opportunities for disability inclusion.

The Beverly Chapman Legacy Award

Mr. Dick Batchelor, first recipient of CIL's Beverly Chapman Legacy Award helped found CIL in 1976 and has served as an advocate for all people with disabilities. This work has empowered people with disabilities to strive for full inclusion and a life of independence.

A cofounder of CIL in the 1970's, Mr. Bachelor has spent his life advocating for people with disabilities in both public and private life.

CIL's board and staff are forever grateful for his vision and foresight.
Since she was 29, Sarah lived with diabetes. As she got older, her complications multiplied until she was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and lymphedema. This left her unable to enter or exit her home without significant fear of falling and required her daughter and neighbors to take time away from work to help her. She needed a change in order to stay in her own home.

CIL’s Foundations to Freedom program assessed Sarah’s situation and determined she was a perfect candidate for a ramp. With funds raised by local donors and volunteers from Colorado State University on spring break, CIL’s accessibility team set to work on making Sarah’s home accessible. In a single day Sarah’s ramp was completed and she could exit and enter her house without fear of falling. Her family and neighbors no longer need to worry about her falling, and Sarah is once again able to participate in her community as an independent individual.

“We call it our Bridge to Freedom. We would not be able to easily get in and out of our home without it.”

StepAhead

StepAhead primarily addresses the needs of young adults with disabilities while in school. However, studies have shown, after a student graduates with a “special diploma” there are limited, if any, opportunities available.

Young adults with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 25 are at a high risk of being less prepared than their peers without disabilities, for the responsibilities and challenges they will face once they leave the public school system. Upon graduation, students with disabilities and their families can no longer access the hands-on support received while in school, many families cannot afford the outrageous costs of post-secondary education, and they typically lack the skills needed to independently seek and maintain employment.

“I’m so excited for the future thanks to the Center for Independent Living. I’m eternally grateful for your help.”
Foundations to Freedom

Since she was 29, Sarah lived with diabetes. As she got older, her complications multiplied until she was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and lymphedema. This left her unable to enter or exit her home without significant fear of falling and required her daughter and neighbors to take time away from work to help her. She needed a change in order to stay in her own home. CIL’s Foundations to Freedom program assessed Sarah’s situation and determined she was a perfect candidate for a ramp. With funds raised by local donors and volunteers from Colorado State University on spring break, CIL’s accessibility team set to work on making Sarah’s home accessible. In a single day Sarah’s ramp was completed and she could exit and enter her house without fear of falling. Her family and neighbors no longer need to worry about her falling, and Sarah is once again able to participate in her community as an independent individual.

Aspire to Hire

“Thanks to Aspire to Hire I finally can begin to live my life. I can spend time with my friends and am saving to buy a house.”

Deaf Voice

In 2014, Robert was frustrated. He lived with severe anxiety compounded by Usher Syndrome, an extremely rare genetic disorder that steals a person’s hearing and impairs their vision. Despite this, Robert was an extremely outgoing person. He married a woman from Puerto Rico who was also deaf and envisioned starting a family with her. However, Robert was having trouble finding a job. His Usher’s Syndrome made it difficult to communicate with employers and coworkers, as well as making it impossible for him to drive at night. At home, his wife expected Robert to be the bread winner, creating enormous daily pressure on Robert to succeed in his job search, further adding to his anxiety and outbursts. Day after day, week after week, Robert was told “no” by countless employers. Desperate, scared, and hopeless, Robert came to the Center for Independent Living for help.

Robert’s initial evaluation indicated that his anxiety had led him to have severe anger management issues that had complicated his job search. CIL staff immediately started teaching him behavior modification skills through the Deaf Voice program. Over the course of a year, Robert learned how to effectively manage his anger and channel it in productive ways; Robert was finally ready to look for work.

“CIL is the only organization that has actually helped me. You actually treated me as a human being and not a number.
The Center for Independent Living in Central Florida serves seven counties in the Central Florida area. CIL's service area is home to a population of over 2.8 million people, 348,460 of which have one or more forms of disability. CIL's Winter Park office serves Seminole, Orange, and Osceola, while CIL's Lakeland office serves Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, and Osceola counties. In the 2015 - 2016 fiscal year the Center for Independent Living touched over 1,860 lives, and helped 1,619 people work towards their goals of independence.

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

Together with our communities, advocates, donors, and volunteers, CIL works towards creating truly inclusive and accepting world for people with disabilities.
Volunteers are the most important resource the Center for Independent Living has. The ability of people to work willingly together for the betterment of their community and for the inclusion of people with disabilities is a valuable resource that the Center for Independent Living appreciates to the fullest.

We cannot thank our dedicated volunteers enough for the time and energy they have put in this past year helping us build ramps, translate to our deaf consumers, being a mentor to a young adult with a disability as they transition into adulthood, and volunteering their time and talent during our awareness and fundraising events throughout the year.

Volunteers in 2015-2016 worked a total of 2,852 hours, equivalent to $67,193.
Every person served by CIL has at least one goal they are striving to achieve in order to gain greater independence. In the past year, consumers successfully attained goals, by removing barriers in these significant life areas:

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<td>Employment and vocational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition to community based living</td>
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