

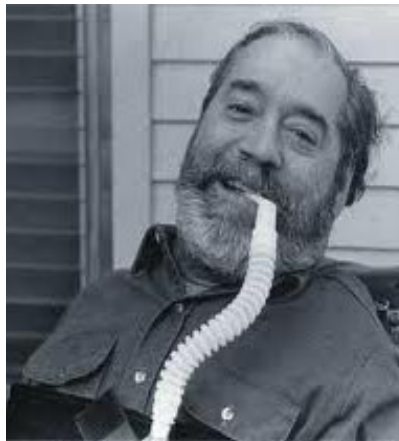


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What is Independent Living Philosophy?

Independent Living (IL) is a philosophy, movement and way of life. IL philosophy raises the individual above the professional and medical services that would attempt to label or diagnose them. IL philosophy asserts that we, as people with disabilities, have the same rights as everyone else and are the experts on our lives. The individual, not the “authorities,” make decisions and take responsibilities for their lives. IL includes everyone, regardless of “diagnosis” or experience with disability.



Above: Ed Roberts, founder of the first CIL in Berkeley, CA and the father of the IL Movement

At disABILITY LINK we embrace IL philosophy and share it with our consumers and the community. IL Philosophy is the foundation that helps people with disabilities live

actively in the community and helps the consumer combat negative attitudes about disability. It is also the basis for the IL Movement (which we discuss in the next issue).

Watch this space in each issue for more information on different aspects of independent living.

The IL Coordinator at disABILITY LINK is Margo Waters, she can be reached at 404-687-8890 ext. 110 or via e-mail: mwaters@disABILITYLINK.org.

Your Voice: What is Independent Living?

*“We are the experts of our lives. Our voices must be heard in the solutions to our lives. We must think and speak for ourselves because it is **our lives**”*

Ken Mitchell

“Having the freedom to fail and learn from one’s failures, just like non-disabled people do.”

Janie Yorker

Tell us your ideas about IL! Send your responses to: dhousley@disabilitylink.org

Peer Run Organizations

An important tenant of the Independent Living philosophy is that people with disabilities are the experts in our own lives – so it naturally follows that people with disabilities are the ones who should be making decisions about our lives. This premise also follows for organizations – we as people with disabilities are the experts and should be making the decisions. There are many organizations that are created *for* people with disabilities, but there are fewer that are run *by* and *for* people with disabilities. In Georgia, the Atlanta area specifically, there are a few organizations that are peer run. We are the experts on our own lives, so why not support organizations that are staffed and organized primarily by our peers? In these peer run organizations you will not encounter negative attitudinal barriers.

Peer-run organizations in GA include: Centers for Independent Living (like disABILITY LINK), there are nine such organizations that service parts Georgia, learn more at: www.SILCGA.org, or call 1-888-288-9780 for the contact information of the Center for Independent Living nearest to you. The National Federation of the Blind has a Georgia and local chapter, they can be found at www.nfbga.org and at 1-866-316-3242, the Georgia Council for the Blind also serves people with visual impairments, for more information contact them at: www.georgiacounciloftheblind.org or 706-549-1020. Local chapters of ADAPT (www.ADAPT.org) and People 1st (www.peoplefirstga.com) share office space inside disABILITY LINK’s Decatur Office. The Brian Injury Peer Visitor Association, which is staffed by volunteers, offers assistance to brain injury survivors. It is based in Alpharetta and can be reached at: 770-330-8416, or on the web at: www.braininjurypeervisitor.org. Finally, the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network and it’s project the Peer Support and Wellness Center offer support and services for mental health. Visit them on the web at: www.gmhcn.org or call: 404-687-9487 (learn more about the Peer Support and Wellness Center in this issue on page 6).

“Peer-run organizations are run by and for people with disabilities”



Peer Support

Peer support, in the disability community, is when one person with a disability supports another. Peer support is a vital part of the foundation of IL philosophy, because it reinforces the fact that we, as individuals with disabilities, are the experts in our own lives. Peer Supporters listen and share experiences, information and strategies to help peers make informed, independent choices. They also discuss ways to navigate attitudes and values that impede personal growth.

Peer support is an alternative to the traditional clinical approach. It is a method for people with disabilities to help one another in meeting our emotional, social and practical needs. The support provided by individuals with similar experiences often leads to better outcomes and quality of life.

Peer support is one of the services that disABILITY LINK offers. Contact Scott Osborne, Peer Support Coordinator at: 404-687-8890 ext. 120 or via e-mail at: [sos-](mailto:sosborne@disABILITYLINK.org)

borne@disABILITYLINK.org.

Peer-run organizations are a great place to find support. Organizations like the National Federation of the Blind and Georgia Council of the Blind (see previous page for contact information) offer various services that offer direct (groups and one on one meetings) and indirect peer support (social outings).

Contact your local peer-run organization for more information on their peer support services.

“Independent Living is having control over our own life, making our own decisions”

Your Help: Thanks to All Our Volunteers!

The work we do would not be possible without the invaluable help from our dedicated pool of volunteers. We want to thank all of the people that help our organization be excellent. Some of our recent volunteers include:

Sylvia Burks
Stacey Copeland
Brenda Davis
Glen Friedman

Sandra Gistarb
Sheila Jeffrey
Nathalie Matthews
Pat Patterson

Laurie Renfro
Lucy Woodall
William Wright
Paul McLennan

Thank you for all your time and effort!

We would also like to encourage new volunteers to join up and be active in your community. If you are interested in donating your time and energy please contact Susan Hickey at 404-687-8890 ext. 109 or e-mail: shickey@disABILITYLINK.org.

Your Voice: A Testimonial from Willette Foster

“In 2007, when my therapist suggested peer support I Googled it and the only organization I found was Disability Link. I called to get information about Disability Link. I spoke with a staff member, and she invited me to come to the center.

I was a mess; I needed direction in channeling my energy in a positive way. One staff member spent a lot of time with me helping me to come up with attainable goals while another assisted me with finding a job.



Willette speaking at a recent ADAPT action in Washington, DC, September 2010

the years of my previous employment.

To this day when I feel I am losing my direction; I still depend on them for support; I am glad that I have a place to go for support.

I am truly thankful for the staff at disABILITY LINK.”

Send your testimonial to Danny at:

dhousley@disABILITYLINK.org

They encouraged me to use the skills I’d used on various job by inviting me to volunteer for the center to retain the skill I have used over

Being Heard: Finding Your Legislator

Part of being included in a community involves having a voice and being heard. If we are to live independently then we must make ourselves heard. Do you know who your local representative is? Do you know how to find your local lawmaker?

The first step is to know where to go. If you have Internet access go to:

www.votesmart.org or to www.Congress.org, type in your address and the list of representatives will come up. Then all you have to do is send them an e-mail, letter or go to visit them in person. Be sure to make an appointment before showing up. Very few people actually contact their legislator so your voice will have a big impact.

If you do not

have the Internet you can call Project Vote Smart at: 406-859-8683 or 1-888-868-3762 and find your elected officials there. Your local CIL would also help you find this information. Making a relationship with your elected officials and helping them understand the issues that impact people with disabilities is an important role for members of our community.

“Independent Living is: recognizing that we are the experts on our lives”

Take Action: HB 277, the Transportation Investment Act of 2010

Transportation and an accessible community are priorities that people in the disability community take very seriously. It is, therefore, very important that we make these priorities known to our local officials.

HB 277 proposes a 1% sales tax that will be used to fund all modes of transportation for a period of ten years within each of the twelve “tax regions.”

Transportation, in this context, includes roads, bridges, buses, sidewalks, bike paths, among other things. Two priorities being stressed by the disabled community are: 1) Accessible Sidewalks and 2) A centralized mobility management system. The centralized mobility management system would make organizing trips on paratransit easier when going from one transit

system to the next (i.e. going from Marta to CCT or to Gwinnett County Transit).

To support this bill or to suggest areas that need to be addressed, contact your local officials and let them know. (see the previous page on contacting your legislator)

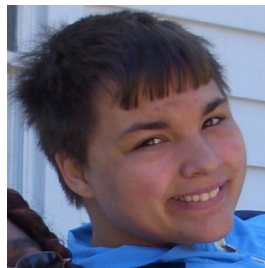


“Independent Living is: being there for your peers.”

Consumer Update: Sheila Jeffrey

“I enjoy my new home and still being independent and I am glad to be turning 26 years old and still living in the community and I enjoy being out of Central State Hospital for four years and having freedom and having friends.”

Sheila recently moved into



an apartment. She is an active member of ADAPT,

People 1st, Long Road Home Campaign and a volunteer at disABILITY LINK. If you want to share an update contact Danny Housley: dhousley@disABILITYLINK.org

disABILITY Lexicon: Peer Supporter

A peer supporter is someone that has received some training but is not considered an “expert.” Peer supporters are there to offer guidance based on their experiences. They do not tell you how to live your life, rather they help their peers make informed, independent choices. They also discuss ways to navigate

attitudes and values that impede personal growth. Peer Supporters help people with disabilities take control of, and responsibility for, their lives. Peer Support is available through peer run organizations, such



Peers support one another

as disABILITY LINK or other Centers for Independent Living. See page 3 of this issue for more information on Peer Support. Watch this space each issue for definitions of important terms and phrases that are related to the IL.

Your Community: The Peer Support and Wellness Center

The Peer Support and Wellness Center is an alternative to the traditional mental health system. The Peer Support and Wellness Center is peer run and offers a safe space for people to share their experiences with peers and peer supporters. In order to participate in events and services you simply need to be eighteen years of age and self-identify as a person who is a consumer of mental health services. They are located two blocks north of the Avondale Marta Station.

The Peer Support and Wellness Center of-



The Peer Support and Wellness Center is located 2 blocks north of Avondale Station

fers wellness activities seven days a week from 10am-6pm. Part of their wellness activities include trauma-informed peer support. They take a non-clinical, non-judgmental approach to

mental health.

Consumers can also take advantage of respite beds (free of charge after a proactive interview is conducted) as well as the warm line, which provides “peer support over the phone.”

For more information about this organization and the specific activities and services they offer contact them at: 404-371-1414 or e-mail: wellnesscenter@gmhcn.org or on the web: www.gmhcn.org/wellnesscenter/

“Independent Living is radical self acceptance!”

ADAPT

Few organizations fight quite as hard as ADAPT for the freedom of people with disabilities to live independently. ADAPT advocates the use of direct non-violent action and even civil disobedience in order to affect change. Their slogan is “FREE OUR PEOPLE” because their primary goal is to ensure that people are not forced to live in nursing homes and institutions. They are on the front line fighting to ensure that the

Olmstead ruling and ADA are being respected and followed. There are local chapters scattered throughout, our local chapter meets at disABILITY LINK on the fourth Friday of each month at disABILITY LINK from 1:00-3:00. You can also find them on Twitter at: www.twitter.com/nationalADAPT.

National ADAPT will be having an action in DC from April 30th-May 5th.

For more information on Atlanta ADAPT contact Bernard Baker at: at 404-431-3670 or on the web at: www.adapt.org



Donating

The work of disABILITY LINK is funded by grants and donations. We welcome donations of furniture, household goods and medical equipment—often required to assist people with disabilities moving out of nursing facilities and other institutions set up their own home. We accept financial donations—used to support the work of disABILITY

LINK. All donations are tax deductible.



If you have any items you wish to donate, please contact Kevin Stephens at: 404 -687-8990 ext. 113 or

by e-mail: kstephens@disABILITYLINK.org.

We are grateful for the work of volunteers who undertake crucial roles in the work of disABILITY LINK. Please contact us if you are interested in making donations or volunteering we are always happy to hear from you. See page 3 for more information on volunteering.

“Independent Living is having the right to pursue a course of action.”

Recurring Monthly Events/Meetings

First Saturday of each month: Metro Chapter of NFB Meeting. East Atlanta Library. Noon-2:30

Second Saturday of each month: Concerned Transit Riders for Equal Access (CTREA). Shepherd Center (Classroom C, 6th floor of the Marcus Building). 10am-noon

Second Saturday of each month: Decatur Chapter of NFB meeting. Decatur Recreation Center. Noon-2:00

Third Saturday of each month: Cobb Chapter NFB meeting. Locations vary. For

more information contact Vashaun Jones at: officeofthepresident@ccecnfb.org

Third Thursday of each month: People First of Atlanta chapter meeting. The Georgia Advocacy Office. 10:00am-12

Third Thursday of each month: “Welcome Home” meeting. The Georgia Advocacy Office. 12:30pm-2:00.

Third Friday of each month: Georgia Council of the Blind. Locations vary. Contact Diane Healy, President, at: 770-935-4082 or e-mail:

ldhealy@negia.net

Fourth Friday of each month:

Atlanta ADAPT meeting. disABILITY LINK. 1:00pm-3:00.

For a more detailed list of monthly events join the “Dates to Remember” mailing list. Contact Linda Pogue at disABILITY LINK: greenpogue@disabilitylink.org

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Decatur, GA 30030

Find us on the web:

www.disABILITYLINK.org

Twitter:
[Twitter.com/disabilitylink](https://twitter.com/disabilitylink)

Facebook:
[Facebook.com/disABILITYLINK](https://www.facebook.com/disABILITYLINK)

E-mail:
info@disABILITYLINK.org



Phone: 404-687-8890

Fax: 404-687-8298

People with disabilities have the right to be independent, make decisions for themselves, have access to their community and to achieve goals in life like any other individual. disABILITY LINK is committed to promoting the rights of ALL people with disabilities.

Your Social Media Update

Social media is an excellent way to keep in touch with your favorite non-profit organization, celebrity or tv show. There are many options out there and



disABILITY LINK is taking advantage of a

few of them. Check out our new **Twitter** account (www.twitter.com/disabilitylink) for event reminders, important breaking news and tips for IL. You can also find us on **Facebook** at www.facebook.com/disabilitylink, there you'll find pictures and links to videos of events that we attend. Important posts will also appear there. You can see what our advocacy coordinator Ken Mitchell has to say on his blog on **Tumblr**:

www.livefreeproject.tumblr.com. Watch for updates in the future for videos and other media from events that we attend. Our website will also be getting an update in the near future. Find us on the web at: www.disabilitylink.org