

THE Colorado Independent

Spring 2010

Boo Goes to Washington

By Penn Bowden-Street

On Friday January 22nd my guide dog, Boo and I attended the National Federation of the Blind board meeting. I was asked to join 500 other blind members in Washington DC to lobby three new bills. With enthusiasm I said, "Sure, when is it?" "Next week," answered Scott Labarre, the Colorado NFB President. "How much does it cost?" I inquired.

The National Federation of the Blind granted me a scholarship that covered my air fare and hotel. The Estes Park Lion's Club donated the rest of the money so we could go.

The following week I felt like I was back in college cramming for a final exam. Boo sat beside me as my screen reading software read the new legislation aloud to me. I repeated the

information back to Boo for practice. He was a great listener, but gave me little feed back except for an occasional yawn. This was our first time to DC and I was nervous. I absorbed everything the seasoned NFB members taught me.

The three new bills were the Enhancing Pedestrian Safety Act, the Technology Bill of Rights for the Blind, and the Blind Persons Return to Work Act.

The Enhancing Pedestrian Safety Act was



easy to grasp. The bill would mandate the new "Green" quiet cars must make a similar noise to the old combustion engine. Small children, joggers, cyclists, and blind pedestrians are getting hit by these silent cars.

Since this legislation impacted the sighted world I felt we had a good chance to push it through.

The Technology Bill of Rights for the Blind impacts me every day. This bill would mandate that all new technology including home



U.S. Representative Betsy Markey with Penn Bowden-Street and her guide dog Boo.

appliances, office equipment, and kiosks would be accessible to the blind. This legislation requires a lot more discussion and persuasion. I feel the lack of accessibility creates disability in our society, but to create a mandate takes time and determination.



Sen. Al Franken with Penn

The Blind Persons Return to Work Act was the bill I was asked to lobby. This bill will change the current regulations for blind people receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Blind people are the most educated group in the United States, but 70% of blind adults are unemployed or underemployed. This is caused by many factors. Changing the regulations of SSDI is mandatory to bring this astonishing percentile down. I know from personal experience how difficult it is to gain employment as a blind person. The changes to the current SSDI regulations will create an easier transition into full time employment. We are asking to have our wages to be calculated annually instead of monthly since income fluctuates month to month for everyone. This will save the Federal Government

money in administrative fees. The current SSDI regulates that if we make \$1.00 over the Earning Limit we lose 100% of our benefits. We are asking for every \$3.00 we make above the current Earning Limit \$1.00 will be deducted from our SSDI benefits. This will encourage blind people to pursue full time employment and raises. Less than 3% of the total SSDI budget goes to blind people. When this legislation is passed it can be used as a pilot program to help other disabled people return to work.

Boo and I had an amazing time. We met incredible role models, walked the halls of the Congress and the Senate, joked with Al Franken, and conversed with Betsy Markey and other Colorado representatives. We touched the Vietnam Memorial Wall, stood before the Lincoln Memorial, sat next to the Wright Brother's plane, walked around the White House and most of all I believe we had a voice in making a change.

Penn Bowden-Street works with Disabled Resource Services Low-Vision Senior Program in Estes Park. Although her lobbying activities were "off the clock," she was pleased to have the opportunity to network with OIB staff from around the country at NFB's seminars.

This newsletter is published by the Provider Relations Unit of the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and edited by Judy Neal, Independent Living Program Coordinator. The goal is to share information among the ten Colorado Centers for Independent Living, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and DVR staff. The submission of information or articles from all affiliated with these organizations is both encouraged and welcomed. Please e-mail any articles of interest to judy.neal@state.co.us If you have questions, please phone me at (303) 866-4645.



From the Director

By
Nancy Smith

I have been reading all of the information briefs that the SILC has produced for the current legislative session and I appreciate the amount of territory they cover in a very confined space. Having worked with legislators for quite a number of years, I can tell you that they struggle to be informed on all of the bills and ideas placed before them. It's just not possible for them to have all of the knowledge that would be required to make informed decisions in every case.

That is why it is so important that all of us play an active role in helping them to be more informed. The series called, "What does it mean to have a disability in Colorado?" is providing the practical and concrete information that members of the General

Assembly or any elected body need to truly represent their constituents. I often hear people wondering why legislators make what they perceive to be uninformed decisions. What we should be asking is what have we done to be sure they have what they need to make good decisions for us?

The SILC is illustrating what it means to be citizens of this state and country. We cannot be passive or we will have to accept whatever decision is made in the name of representative democracy. We have to participate. This series is a good example of how to do that. I extend my congratulations to the SILC for finding positive ways to impact our legislators' level of understanding.



DIVISION of
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

State of Colorado

"Bridging business and ability"

From the ACCIL

By David Bolin

The Association of Colorado Centers for Independent Living (ACCIL) is a membership organization of all ten Colorado Centers for Independent Living. Our goal is to support our network of centers, promote independent living initiatives in Colorado, and work to ensure the financial viability of each of the centers through advocacy. Over the years, the association has successfully obtained financial support from the Colorado Legislature that has increased our ability to provide services throughout the state.

The ACCIL's goals for 2010 are: 1) to protect our funding in this down economy; 2) participate in the development of the State Plan for Independent Living; 3) strengthen the independent living network; 4) promote consumer involvement in local and state advocacy issues and organize consumers to do advocacy in their local communities; 5) advocate to protect Aid to the Needy Disabled funding; and 6) hire a part time contract staff person to assist the association in meeting its goals.

As an association, one of our most important tasks is the input on the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). This plan sets three year goals for the State Independent Living Council, the Designated State



Unit (the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) and the Centers. The plan helps direct where new funding goes and the work that the SILC, DVR and the Centers do to advance independent living in Colorado. Meetings are being held across the state for consumer input into this plan based on the rough goals that have been drafted. The development of this plan is a result of many meetings by a small committee made up of SILC, DVR and center representatives. As you can expect, these meetings can be contentious because all of us have strong opinions about the direction of independent living in the state and we are all assertive individuals representing our constituencies. But all of us have the belief that, with strong consumer input, a plan will be developed that will strengthen independent living services for people with significant disabilities.

As you will see in this newsletter, the ACCIL is looking to contract with a person to assist the association in attaining its organizational goals for this year and in the future. People with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply for this position, as well as paid and unpaid positions with individual centers across the state.



Colorado•SILC

From the SILC

By Linda LaPointe

The SILC's Public Policy Committee has been busy this year. They identified a number of areas they wanted to address with policy issue briefs. These are a snapshot of what is happening in the world of disabilities. Another way to think of an issue brief is as a short statement written by the SILC, based upon what it is like to live independently with a disability in CO.

Issue briefs describe and take a position on important issues in the lives of vulnerable people. The committee has written briefs on such topics as healthcare,

transportation and employment.

These have been made available to the state legislators as they are in session this year to remind them of people in situations which may otherwise be forgotten.

The issue briefs are backed up by demographics, research and data and go through a tough review process by the SILC directors and others before they are published and made available to the public. Other topics are being tackled and will be finished and available before the legislative session is over. The issue briefs can be seen at the SILC website: coloradosilc.org

The next SILC meeting will take place in Denver

Tuesday, May 18 noon- 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 19, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.



Location to be announced

Call 303 866-4645 after May 1 for details

OPLS –

There is a Cure

By Mark Cloer

Have you noticed that other groups seem to have their interests better represented in the political process than the issues you care about? Have you seen the budget of your favorite issue or program cut to a greater extent than that of others; for example, the detrimental cuts to education while the funding of parks and open space seems to be virtually untouched? Then like millions of other Coloradoans you may be suffering from OPLS. OPLS, aka Out of the Political Loop Syndrome, affects hundreds of thousands of people in the State of Colorado. While it is estimated that as many as 2 million citizens in the State of Colorado suffer from OPLS, few have ever had their condition officially diagnosed.

OPLS Facts:

- Thousand of people are affected by OPLS every day.
- Few people realize the cause of OPLS.
- You may be suffering from OPLS without even knowing it.

10 STEPS for Treating OPLS

1. The first step in treating OPLS is in acknowledging that you may be suffering from it.
2. The next step is to register to vote, if you have not already done so.
3. Study the issues which are important to you. When you better understand what the problems are you can better advocate for yourself and others in your community.
4. Contact your county Clerk and Recorder's Office. They should be able to tell you who your elected officials are and how to contact them.
5. Know who to call. Is it a local issue? Then call your local elected officials. If the problem is a state issue, then call your State Representative and/or State Senator and so on.

The truth is that education is the leading treatment in controlling OPLS. Numerous studies have shown that understanding the political process can help citizens like you enjoy more involvement in the process.

OPLS Symptoms:

Do you experience feelings of being left out of the process or debate? Do you feel that your voice isn't being heard? The truth is that you are not alone. Out of the Political Loop Syndrome (OPLS) is a serious condition that affects thousands of Coloradans each and every day. Now, there's help.

The benefits of treating OPLS include:

- Gaining a better understanding of how things work
- Gaining a voice in the political process
- The assurance of never being left out of the process again

Mark Cloer served as a State Representative in the Colorado House of Representatives for six years and is a regular contributing columnist for various publications, including Life After 50.

6. Don't be scared. You have the right to advocate for what you believe in. As long as you clearly state who you are representing on an issue, you have the right to be heard.
7. Do not claim to represent any person or group for whom you don't have the actual authority to so do, without their consent. Such an action may constitute lobbying, which is regulated by the state.
8. Do not threaten the elected official. They know they work for you, you don't need to remind them.
9. Always be willing to listen to what the elected official has to say. They may be able to offer additional insight to the situation or issue.
10. Be courteous. A wise person once said, "It is easier to attract flies with honey, than with vinegar."



DBTAC Rocky Mountain

ADA CENTER

employer, the resources available, and the nature of the operation”.

In situations where an individual's primary communication occurs

Effective Communication: Title I

By Cindy Powell

ADA Titles I and III require effective communication; whereas, Title II requires equally effective communication. In this newsletter, the focus is Title I, the employment portion of the ADA.

Employers with fifteen or more employees have the obligation to provide accommodations that enable individuals to perform their job effectively, or to benefit from equal employment opportunities. Employees with disabilities must also be provided with equal opportunities to participate in training, to enhance their job performance and opportunities for advancement.

Training opportunities cannot be denied because of the need for reasonable accommodations, unless the accommodations would be an undue hardship. The ADA defines undue hardship as “an action that requires significant difficulty or expense in relation to the size of the

through using American Sign Language (ASL), another form of sign language or an oral interpreter, it may be necessary to provide a qualified interpreter. A qualified interpreter is able to sign to the individual who is Deaf what is being said by the hearing person, and can voice to the hearing person what is being signed by the individual who is Deaf. This communication must be conveyed effectively, accurately and impartially.

The employer is responsible for the cost of providing a qualified interpreter. Employers may seek tax credits and/or assistance with paying for accommodations from entities like state Vocational Rehabilitation Services when appropriate.

When an interpreter is requested by a qualified applicant, an employer should consider providing an interpreter for the application and interview phases of employment. Effective communication during application and interview is essential to a successful interview. The ADA

does not specifically state that an interpreter must be offered as the method of providing effective communication. An employer should consider the length and complexity of the type of communication required.

If communication is complex in nature, such as informing a new or current employee about a health benefits plan or discussing disciplinary actions, it would be in the employee's and employer's best interests to have a qualified interpreter present. In situations where miscommunication can lead to serious consequences, it is imperative that effective communication occur.

However, for daily conversation, effective communication might be provided through alternative methods, such as written notes, e-mail, instant messaging, computer assisted note taking, real time captioning, or a communication device. For individuals who do not read and write English, written messages are not effective accommodation.

When training or conferences are required or offered by an employer, the employer may have the obligation to arrange for providing a qualified interpreter as a reasonable accommodation. If an employer contracts with an outside agency for training, the employer should make

advance arrangements with the training entity to determine who will provide the qualified interpreter.

In some circumstances an employer and a training entity will both have an obligation to pay for the cost of an accommodation. For example, a vocational school may be considered a Title III entity, or place of public accommodation; thus, having Title III obligations to provide effective communication. Title II equally effective communication requirements will be presented in the next newsletter.

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) - Rocky Mountain ADA Center is one of ten regional "one-stop" comprehensive Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) resource centers. Located in Colorado Springs, DBTAC - Rocky Mountain ADA Center serves a six state region: Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

DBTAC - Rocky Mountain ADA Center provides

- *technical assistance,*
- *education and training,*
- *public awareness,*
- *materials dissemination, and*
- *information and referral*

to employers, businesses, state and local government agencies, disability and rehabilitation programs, people with disabilities, architects, code officials, schools and many other entities with rights and responsibilities under the ADA.



Cindy Powell

For informal ADA guidance, information or materials, please contact DBTAC Rocky Mountain ADA Center at (800) 949-4232 between 8 am to 5 pm weekdays. 3630 Sinton Road, #103, Colorado Springs, CO 80907; www.adainformation.org

Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Register now for the
ADA Symposium
Denver, Colorado
June 21-23, 2010

For more information:

<http://www.adasymposium.org>

ACCIL Seeks Coordinator

Association Coordinator Job Description

DEFINITION: Under the direction of the executive committee of the Association of Colorado Centers for Independent Living (ACCIL), the Coordinator communicates the vision, mission and goals of the ACCIL to legislators and public policy makers as well as other organizations. Promotes full participation of Independent Living Centers in the activities of the ACCIL. Ensures effective flow of communication between all members; and facilitates the achievement of annual goals.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Facilitates communication throughout the organization.
- Monitors advocacy and legislative issues for the organization and communicates these internally and with other statewide stakeholders.
- Provides staff and administrative support to ACCIL.
- Facilitates progress towards achieving committee and other work plan goals and objectives.
- Assists in the planning and facilitating of statewide meetings of the ACCIL.
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QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:

The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skills and ability desired. Reasonable Accommodations will be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of the position.

EDUCATION AND/OR EXPERIENCE:

Bachelor degree required; prefer experience in disability or management-related field and experience with a board-governed non-profit disability organization. Commitment to the empowerment of Independent Living Centers and persons with disabilities.

OTHER SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

- Ability to communicate in written and oral modes. Ability to facilitate communication between and among the membership as well as the various groups that make up the state-wide disability community.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality.
- Expected to work effectively with CIL Directors and others.
- Knowledge of the concepts/philosophy of Independent Living and consumer empowerment. Knowledge of disability legislation on the state and federal level.
- Ability to arrange necessary transportation must be maintained throughout employment.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

No physical demands are anticipated. Reasonable accommodations will be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of the position.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:

Personal experience with disabilities

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

The Coordinator will be an independent contractor. Will work in the Denver area, in close proximity to the Capitol, perhaps within an Independent Living Center. Moderate to high amount of travel: local, regional and statewide.

COMPENSATION:

The position is part-time. Because the Coordinator is an independent contractor, no benefits are provided. The amount of the contract is \$14,000 annually.

Effective March 31, 2010

Please send letter of interest and resume to:

david@csicindliving.org
David Bolin
President, Association of Colorado
Centers for Independent Living

WINE FEST XXVIII

A 28 Year Tradition

By Marj Grell

Wine Fest is Northern Colorado's oldest, largest and finest wine tasting event! According to the Wine Industry, it is among the largest and best-received wine tasting events in Colorado and has the reputation as one of the best-organized and executed wine tastings in the state. In its 28th year, Wine Fest XXVIII will be held on Friday, April 23rd from 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm at the Hilton Fort Collins, 425 West Prospect Road in Fort Collins, Colorado. Over 500 domestic and imported wines from 150 wineries will be poured along with beers from local breweries. A wide array of fresh food will be provided by local businesses to pair with your favorite wine. Festivities also include a silent auction of rare and fine wines, artwork by local artists, jewelry, dining certificates and a variety of merchandise and services. Wine Fest is Disabled Resource Services' annual fundraising event with proceeds providing a wide range of services to people with disabilities. Tickets are \$50 each and are available at several outlets in Northern Colorado. For more information call (970) 482-2700 or visit the website at www.fortnet.org/winefest.

You Can Do Anything

an event for seniors with low vision, their families, their friends, and the community

Thursday, May 6
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

The Mature Adult Center
3295 W, 72nd Ave.,
Westminster, CO 80030

Vendor and Resource Fair Educational Speakers Panel Discussion

*Free to the public
Free lunch if you RSVP by April 29*

Learn how to keep doing what you want to do regardless of vision loss. Learn about community resources that provide support. Get your "hands-on" the latest adaptive equipment. At the end of the day, you'll know for sure that

You 'Can Do Anything!

Presented by the Seniors with Low Vision Program of the Center for People with Disabilities in Boulder.

For more information, to RSVP, or to register as a vendor, contact:

Steve Johnson 303 442-8662, X 115
steve@cpwd.org

TASH 2010 Call for Proposals

**Due May 1, 2010
5:00 p.m. EDT**

Topic Areas

Inclusive Education
Community Living
Employment
Human Rights
People of Color
Cross-topic Areas

Who Should Submit?

Professors, Researchers
Educators, Early Interventionists,
Adult Service Providers, Advocates,
Self-advocates, Legal/Public Policy,
Parents/Family Members

For details go to:

<http://tash.org/2010tash>

SAVE THE DATE

TASH 35TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**December 8-11, 2010
Denver, Colorado**

**“Enhancing Difference. . .
It’s Time”**

ACBCO Event

By Jan Ward

The Western Slope Chapter of The American Council of the Blind of Colorado will be hosting their State Convention in Glenwood Springs. The Convention will be held on April 16 and 17th in the elegant and historical Hotel Colorado.

This two day event will host speakers and vendors, culminating with a banquet. Guest Speaker will be ACB’s national president, Mitch Pomeranski.

Guest Speakers will include Nancy Smith from DVR, Linda Taylor from CFI, Peter Lane from the VA, Denice Roberts from AT, Dr. Diaba Reeves Denver Retina Specialist, Dr. J Ryan Zwelling local Low Vision Doctor and Bob Askey, former Longmont Mayor and narrator for the Talking Book Library.

The Western Slope Chapter is eager to show off our wonderful city. Our Mayor, Bruce Christiansen, will be welcoming The American Council of the Blind of Colorado on Friday morning.

As Chair of the Convention and of the Chapter I am looking forward to extending a warm welcome to all attendees.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



ADA Symposium
Denver, Colorado
June 21-23, 2010

For more information:

<http://www.adasymposium.org>



TELETRAININGS

July 21, 2010

[**PASS the Money: Navigating PASS Plans**](#)

Presented by Tyler Paris, CBIST

August 12, 2010

[**Everything you ever wanted to know about service animals but were afraid to ask**](#)

Presented by Cristi Harris of the Rocky Mountain DBTAC November 10, 2010

[Customer Service](#)

Presented by Nancy Freeman, CBIST

For more information

<http://ctat-training.com/>



[NEXT LEARNING LAB](#)

Overview of Guide Software for People with Visual Impairments

Presented by:

[*Denice Roberts, MEd*](#)

Thursday, May 13th

For more details or to REGISTER for the learning lab please call:

Colorado Springs: (719)380-6229 or email Heather Lyons at heather.lyons@ucdenver.edu

Denver: (303)315-0602 or email Shelly Elfner at shelly.elfner@ucdenver.edu

Grand Junction: (970)248-0876 or email Denice Roberts at denice.roberts@ucdenver.edu