



Washington
State
Independent
Living Council

Quarterly Newsletter

11th Edition | March 2021

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

BY KIM CONNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We recently passed the one-year mark of the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As I reflect on all that has transpired and the many ways we have adapted and coped, it is truly amazing. Part of that process is to prioritize our mental health.

Everyone is experiencing a unique combination of compounding stressors, and everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. Dealing with chronic, compound stress impacts our physical and mental health. We shouldn't need to pretend like everything is fine or normal. The pandemic upended our lives and sense of safety. What *is* normal is experiencing a wide range of emotions, such as fear and worry about your health and the health of your loved ones, changes in sleep or eating patterns, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating and forgetfulness, worsening of mental health or chronic health conditions, and so on.

I recently participated in a DVR in-service. It was such a relief to hear that my own personal experiences with depression and anxiety are normal and many people are feeling the same way. The workshop provided historical data on how we handle long-term crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The [CDC](#) has curated an extensive list of helpful information for everything from ways to include self-care in your daily routine to learning how to recognize when you are experiencing a mental health crisis. The CDC has also developed an [ASL video series](#) which discusses COVID related topics, such as managing stress and anxiety.

I'm happy to say that some of the stress relieving techniques have stuck, like- journaling, yoga, and drawing. Other techniques I'm still working on- exercise, staying connected, and exercise! Take care and please remember that if you are feeling bad or suicidal, it is temporary. If you are thinking of a permanent solution please reach out to someone or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.8255.

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CIL SPOTLIGHT

CENTRAL WA DISABILITY RESOURCES

Staff at Central Washington Disability Resources (CWDR) in Ellensburg has gone to great lengths to expand their services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowing that many of their consumers were feeling lonely and isolated, staff organized regular Zoom activities such as a monthly art classes, workout sessions, and music lessons. They used CARES Act funding to purchase art supplies, workout equipment, and instruments. CWDR consumers have also received help to order groceries online and have their groceries delivered to their homes. Two consumers shared their stories of how CWDR services give them hope and help them through these difficult times.

TJ came to CWDR in January 2021 for assistance to find stable housing. Having moved to Ellensburg from New Mexico last August, TJ was searching for disability assistance resources when he was referred to CWDR. He explained, “They helped me with rent through a stimulus package [CARES Act funds] which got me out of a bad situation. I lived in a motorhome and shortly after I got it, the engine blew up, leaving me stranded. Thanks to them I have a roof over my head and I feel safe for the first time in a long time.”

Shawn, 73, lives in Roslyn. A few months ago, she had a stroke which damaged the retinas in her eyes, causing pronounced vision loss. She was referred to CWDR from another local service provider. Shawn said, “Sarah (CWDR staff) brings me groceries from Safeway. [Sarah] asked me to make a list of needed groceries, and she bought and delivered the food, plus paper towels and toilet paper. They paid on my phone and water bills too. With the money saved, I was able to pay off a vet bill and buy firewood to heat my home.”



Central Washington Disability Resources

2021 Quarterly Meeting Schedule

- **Thursday, April 15 from 10:00am—4:00pm: Online via Zoom**

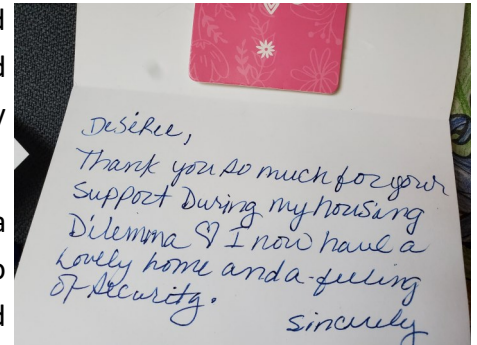
All are welcome to attend. Join the zoom meeting from the [WASILC website](#).

- **Thursday, July 15: Online via Zoom**
- **October: TBD**

CIL SPOTLIGHT



Centers for Independent Living have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to meet the needs of their consumers, such as Sheela, who began services in September 2020. She was referred to the Center for Independence (CFI) in Lakewood for housing needs. Sheela was living with family and needed her own place that was wheelchair accessible. CFI staff helped her get a voucher with the Tacoma Housing Authority as well as other waitlist opportunities for subsidized housing in the area. She moved into her own apartment in mid-February. She continues to receive food and PPE deliveries. Sheela expressed her gratitude for all the help from CFI by writing Desiree, IL Coordinator, a letter, shown here.



Another consumer named Mary was residing in a Puyallup area assisted living facility that was closing, and she had less than one month to find new housing. CFI staff found her a new placement in one week and helped move all of her belongings.

Based on consumer feedback, CFI staff knew that what was needed most was food assistance and opportunities to socialize to alleviate feelings of isolation. For Thanksgiving last year, staff had an idea to give all their consumers extra support by having groceries delivered. Knowing that many consumers have comorbidities and contracting COVID-19 could potentially be deadly, they arranged for groceries to be delivered so they could avoid going to stores. Many consumers called staff to say thank you. Weekly grocery delivery continues today with each consumer requesting the service receiving one box of perishable food and one of non-perishable food.

Ashley, Administrative Coordinator, planned the annual Holiday party and modified it to adhere to COVID-19 safety guidelines. Staff purchased two gifts for consumers; one gift to keep and one to give away. To reduce contact, they scheduled staggered pick-up times in-between each consumer.

One of the many ways that staff supports their consumers and their community during the pandemic is by using CARES Act funds to purchase backpacks for the homeless population. Backpacks are filled with snacks, toiletries, PPE, etc. Below are pictures of staff preparing several hundred backpacks for distribution from both CFI office locations.



Centers for Independent Living

Alliance of People with disAbilities

Seattle, WA
206.545.7055

Center for Independence

Lakewood, WA
253.582.1253

Central WA Disability Resources

Ellensburg, WA
509.962.9620

Disability Action Center —NW

Moscow, ID
208.883.0523

WASILC stands in solidarity with the Black Community and all Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. We fully support the Black Lives Matter movement and condemn systemic racism, oppression, and injustice. Achieving our mission requires us to educate and advocate for systemic changes for all people with disabilities, which includes the intersectionality of race and disability. We recommit to this vital work and will hold ourselves accountable to become better allies. We know we cannot elevate the disability community without elevating the BIPOC communities we serve.

TELL ME MORE ABOUT INDEPENDENT LIVING!

We promote the Independent Living (IL) Philosophy by empowering communities through advocacy, education, and collaboration. This philosophy emphasizes the idea people with disabilities are the best experts on their own needs, deserving of equal opportunity to decide how they live, work, and take part in their communities. [Learn more.](#)

HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE

There are two ways you can participate with WASILC. You can join a committee or apply to serve on the Council. We are currently recruiting for three open council positions. If you are committed and passionate about the values and mission of WASILC, you can apply [here](#). For more information, you can either visit our [website](#) or contact Kim Conner, Executive Director, at: kimberly.conner@dshs.wa.gov.

ABOUT US

The Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) is an eleven-person, Governor appointed council that ensures Washington State delivers Independent Living (IL) services that are community-based and consumer-controlled for all disabilities. The primary purpose of WASILC is to monitor, review, evaluate, and maintain a State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). For questions about WASILC and its mission please contact Kim Conner, Executive Director, at 360.819.0672 or email: kimberly.conner@dshs.wa.gov

The Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning (CIEP), a program of WASILC, is a statewide disability advisory group that provides technical advice on physical and programmatic accesses and effective communication strategies. Questions about CIEP and its mission can be directed to Jim House, Disability Integration Manager at 360.339.7435 or email: jim.house@dshs.wa.gov.
For general information on upcoming meetings, events, and resources, visit us at: wasilc.org.