**"Fun & Fit: Recreational Opportunities for People with Disabilities”**

**Transcript**

**September 25, 2013**

>> KATHY HATCH: Let's get started.

Hi, everyone. I'm Kathy Hatch and I'd like to welcome everyone.

This IL Conversation is presented by the IL‑Net, a national training and technical assistance program of Independent Living Research Utilization, ILRU, and was organized and facilitated by APRIL. So, we're happy you could join us and are looking forward to a lively discussion.

We have an hour and a half, so we'll start out with an introduction of our speakers. Then they will each discuss "Fun & Fit: Recreational Opportunities for People with Disabilities."

We want to keep this as conversational as possible, and I know questions will come up as we go through this material. So we'll all try to be as courteous as possible, but feel free to ask. We want to hear from you. A little housekeeping before we start. Everybody that's on here has seen that we can have some real issues with a bridge line, and I would like to ask everybody to go ahead and put their phones on mute. Before you do it, don't use the mute button on your telephone. Use \*6. If you use the mute button on your phone and your center happens to have music on hold we will get to hear that. If you would use \*6 we would appreciate it. Also there are a couple print documents up on our web site at [www.april‑rural.org](http://www.aprilrural.org). Also the link to the CART captioning services is on there, so if you would like to watch what we're talking about as the presenters are presenting you can go to that link, click on it, and you can see the conversation as it happens. That also provides us with a transcript afterwards. So that's really very nice to have and you can go to the web site and look at it again if you like. Just wanted to remind people cell phones and speakerphones really cause a lot of distortion on the line. So if you're using either, please try to get to a land line and re‑call in or make sure to mute your phone when not speaking.

Okay, now I'd like to welcome our presenters today. I'll begin by telling you a little about each of them.

John Nousaine is Director and CEO of North Country Independent Living, a consumer‑controlled, independent living center serving people with disability in eight northern Wisconsin counties. John is part of the Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers who created QUILS, Quality Indicators for Independent Living Services, a tool developed in 1995 to measure best practices in CILs and is a qualified QUILS facilitator. John is an experienced APRIL peer mentor and provider of technical assistance, an avid outdoorsman, and has many years' experience with a variety of accessible sports.

Gary Maddox is CEO of Southwest Center for Independent Living in Springfield, Missouri. He has over 25 years of progressively responsible management of service‑related organizations in both the for‑profit and not‑for‑profit sector and has worked for over 18 years in disability and/or independent living programs and services. He has an in‑depth knowledge of systems advocacy, federal and state laws, community relations, drug abuse rehabilitation, and services for "at risk" youth and persons with disabilities. Gary is also a peer mentor and a board member and is chair of the APRIL Training and Technical Assistance Committee.

Lacee Thompson joined the Southwest Center for Independent Living in 2011. Her greatest passion is the outdoors... hunting, fishing, canoeing and camping. And she is part of the planning committee for a "Day at the Range," which helps give persons with disability opportunities to fish, target shoot with firearms and pellet guns, learn archery and participate in many other outdoor activities. In addition, she guides accessible spring turkey hunts and fall deer hunts as part of SWCIL's partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation. Inspired by these events, she is now chairing the planning committee for a "Day at the Lake," which will provide persons with disability the chance to participate in adaptive water sports such as water skiing, tubing, boating, fishing, canoeing, kayaking and so much more.

Since 1995, Monique Stamps has lived with a spinal cord injury at C7‑8 level due to an automobile accident and every day she works to accomplish her dreams despite her disability with a smile on her face. Since 2004, she has worked as a peer advocate at Disability Rights & Resources in Charlotte, North Carolina, working daily with people with disabilities to provide peer mentoring around housing, employment, education, assistive technology, independent living skills and other issues. Monique, "Nikki" to her friends, is currently on a mission to eliminate barriers to healthcare, employment and education for young girls and women with disabilities and to stop the isolation and stereotypes that hinder these women and girls from living independently. Along with her many responsibilities both at work and in the community, Nikki is also a licensed Zumba instructor. She and two other friends are the first in the country to provide accessible Zumba classes.

So, again, they're here today to talk about recreational opportunities. And now I'd like to turn it over to John Nousaine. John?

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: Hello, everybody. Presently in lovely Superior it is 57 degrees, a little bit overcast. I just checked Lake Superior, the largest Lake in the world. We don't have white caps, so that means this evening after work I'm lucky enough to live in a place where I can either go fishing or scuba diving tonight. Depending on the availability of my friends.

So I grew up in northern Minnesota, and I've always been connected to canoe camping and things like that for my whole life. I wasn't necessarily a real athletic person. I was from a small town, and I played high school football, but that was about it. So then when I got injured when I was 24, my athletic endeavors had included playing some softball and a little bit of fishing and deer hunting once a year. But after I got injured I started worrying about ‑‑ well, and motorcycles, too. I've always had a penchant for them. But I didn't worry too much about whether I'd be able to work, because I figured I'd have to work. I really was concerned with being able to enjoy life and play and do the things that I always liked to do and try other things. So my foray into disability rights, I had a friend who had a spinal cord injury, who is a wheelchair athlete, and they started a basketball team in Duluth, and I joined that team and got very interested in adaptive sports at that time. Learned how to ski. I never skied before.

So I guess my thing in saying this is it's not necessarily outdoor endeavors for people with disabilities are not limited to athletes. Getting out and enjoying where you live, I think, is a real, real valuable community integration experience. Like where I live a lot of people complain about the winters, but I revel in it because I like to ski. If I didn't do that, if I didn't have that hobby, living in northern Wisconsin wouldn't make a lot of sense.

So, at any rate, as far as the integration ‑‑ if anybody's got questions or anything, you can just pipe in and ask them.

>> CALLER: I have a question ‑‑

>> KATHY HATCH: She does have a question. Go ahead.

>> PARTICIPANT: I'm wondering if you have any notes I can follow because I'm joining late.

>> KATHY HATCH: We're keeping a transcript. There is CART on our web site. So, yes, if you want to go to WWW.APRIL‑rural.org you can watch CART and read it as we go.

>> PARTICIPANT: Can you repeat that, please?

>> KATHY HATCH: Www.april‑rural.org.

>> PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. You can also join a live chat there if you want to.

>> PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

>> KATHY HATCH: You're welcome. Go ahead, John.

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: Sure. Then I became the director here in 1991, and at the director's meeting ‑‑ I mean, people assume that we did a lot of recreational things because the director was a jock, which wasn't really that accurate because we had real strong core services, and the interesting thing about IL is, for me, I see sports and recreation as peer support, especially for guys. You know, I'm one of those guys that would not probably go to a meeting and sit around in a circle and talk about my feelings, but sitting around a campfire after fishing and talking with somebody and the conversation leans to disability‑related stuff ‑‑ by the way, I'm a single AK amputee. Didn't say that earlier. So I really saw sports and recreation as peer support and just another way of getting people with disabilities together and learning from their experiences.

It was an interesting sell to the rest of the IL community because some of the programs had recreational programs but they thought, gosh, we shouldn't be doing this. We should be ‑‑ you know, we should be advocating for access, and we should be doing all these other things, and it is true, you should be doing those things, but part of access to a full life certainly includes sports and recreation. I mean that's what my job is for, is to support my many play habits.

So I always saw IL as ‑‑ or recreation and IL as closely, closely linked, especially because of peer support, and that's what we counted it as.

Now, as far as programming, we had an assistive technology grant, wonderful program, of which I am a huge fan and chair of the NCIL AT subcommittee, and our center in particular, we were the first center to have what's called a bi-ski this side of the Rocky Mountains. A bi-ski is an alpine skiing device where it's a seat situated over two skis, and it can be ‑‑ it can be operated by people with very, very involved disabilities. It really revolutionized the sport of sit skiing. Before that the arroyo ski was the technology. So we got that one. I used it. We had clinics around Wisconsin. We had the funding to do clinics. It was great for getting people involved. It was great for getting the community involved because everybody comes out and sees everybody skiing and they think it's wonderful and it is wonderful. So it has a lot of positive effects.

Plus it's really easy to get staff to want to do it. And I know a lot of you are thinking, if you're managers, but, yeah, I got them to stop all doing that and doing everything else. You bet, you still have to do that. But the bi‑ski led to another group contacting me ‑‑ this is not the first time this has happened. You know what it's like when somebody comes to you and says, oh, you run a disability organization. You should raise a bunch of money. You should have this program. And you should buy this ski equipment. And you should have everybody ski. You know, usually get a couple requests like that monthly if not weekly. Well, I had a volunteer come in and say, well, I'll raise the money, and he did, and he raised 10 grand, and we bought, I think, 3 or 4 bi‑skis, loaned them out to other recreational ski programs, encouraged folks to use them. Duluth has a very vibrant alpine ski program.

>> KATHY HATCH: John, can I stop you for one second. Someone does not have their phone on mute. Everybody who is on the phone, please make sure to use \*6 to mute your phone. We're hearing some background noise and it's kind of overpowering you. So \*6 to mute. Okay?

>> PARTICIPANT: Is this phone on mute? Can you hear this?

>> KATHY HATCH: No, I can hear you.

>> PARTICIPANT: That's probably my phone, then.

>> KATHY HATCH: \*6, yes. There's quite a bit of background noise. Okay. That’s better.

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: You know, an interesting program ‑‑ it evolved into an interesting program, and those particular bi‑skis are now obsolete. There's all kinds of new stuff that's much better.

We did the same thing with the water ski. We had a person that water skied. We would do a water ski clinic twice a year. It got to the point where people would be lined up for this event which included camping and fishing, but water skiing was the marquee event, and it got to the point where there would be people lined up and we’d pull skiers for two straight days. Then it got to be towards the end of it, after about five, six, seven, eight years, other people were buying their own skis, there were other programs developing around, and there would be maybe five or six guys skiing, which was cool. But the deal is it spurred all these other programs. It was kind of like a seed event. Now we do very little recreational programming through our center but many of us are involved with other events. I teach skiing for the local ski program. So we've been able to kind of spread the IL philosophy that way.

So at any rate, I guess the biggest point is that it really can amplify your other programs. If you're looking at an event to get a lot of media coverage, that's one to do. And that it is very much, I see, very much peer support.

And the other thing that's interesting about this is that if you have an interest in something, just go out and do it. Figure out how to do it. If you wait for another program, another organization or other people to kind of develop this program and make it work for you, you could be waiting a long time. And virtually every disability program has been started not by some organization that's involved with that particular sport thinking it's a wonderful idea to have people with disabilities involved with it, but by people with disabilities themselves who either are returning to that sport or want to do it.

For instance, the rigid‑frame wheelchair, which is standard issue now, back in the early '90s and late '80s, when Quickie first came out with those they were prototypes based on athletes' wheelchairs and athletes would develop these rigid‑frame chairs realizing they perform so much better on the basketball court and also so much better on the street. Now, that's the standard. And I remember a time when you couldn't get one if you got your wheelchair through Medicaid, you couldn't get one with a rigid frame, even though that's what you wanted, because the doctors that did the prescribing thought they had to fold up to be able to fit in the car.

So that's an adaptation that's affected a lot of chair users' lives that come straight from sports and recreation and straight from people with disabilities themselves developing the products and the program.

So if there's something you want to do or something you used to do, just go and figure it out. You know? Go and try to figure it out. I know that I'm going to get cut off here soon, so I'm trying to blather and people can ask me questions any time.

For those of us with mobility impairments, water‑based sports are an incredible, incredible opportunity. I live next to the biggest Lake in the world. I have a tattoo of it on my calf. And it's very much that I've always been drawn to water. When I was in Boy Scouts and able‑bodied as a youngster, I hated hiking. I loved the woods, loved nature, hated hiking, but I would paddle a canoe all day long. The water is an excellent equalizer for those of us particularly with mobility impairments, and snow skiing is basically a water sport, because snow is, you know, water.

A few other things about skiing in particular, **Disabled Sports U.S.A.,** that's your go‑to organization. You can Google it. They have a web site. They might have some programs near you. **Professional Ski Instructors of America** now offers, in some of their areas, the adaptive disciplines. Our vision for disabled skiing was you could go to any ski school in America or hopefully the world and get yourself a ski lesson and that somebody could teach you how to ski. Trying to get the Professional Ski Instructors of America learning progressions to include adaptive skiing and adaptive technologies is something that we've been working on.

Here's another thing a lot of people don't know... this also turns into an advocacy story here. Any of these ski areas that operate on federal land, the U.S. Forest Service requires that they either have an adaptive skiing program or that they work in conjunction with an organization that can offer an adaptive skiing program for them. Now, this doesn't mean it's free skiing for people with disabilities. This means that there is an opportunity for you to learn how to ski and some equipment would be available.

An interesting point was a friend of mine that used to ski here in the Midwest and ran a program, moved out west, and his local hill wasn't very supportive of his efforts to try to develop an adaptive ski program. I gave him the phone number of a contact of mine within the federal Forest Service. One of my heroes, a person with a disability like us, that works for the feds, and they happened to do a site visit because this particular ski area hosted parts of one of the winter Olympics. They actually didn’t do very much in the way of trying to make an adaptive program available after the Olympics, and the feds were not real happy with them. Well, as it turns out, after this guy contacted the feds, who contacted corporate, they turned out to be very helpful and very responsive. So if anybody tells you you can't access a wilderness area or anything else of the kind, give me a call, because we do have advocacy tools backing us up.

>> KATHY HATCH: Great. John, can I put your e‑mail address on the web site so they can contact you if they would like to?

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: Yes.

Another good sport for us folks is scuba. There's a thing in scuba called neutral buoyancy, which means when you counteract the sinking weight with the air that you have in your buoyancy compensator or your lungs, you can be suspended in the water column, and it is like being able to fly. It's a wonderful, wonderful technique, and if you've got propulsion down, if you can kick a fin, or if you can swim with your arms, or we're still working on ways to try to get the technology for a real effective scooter, you can really have a good time under water. When we were in Puerto Rico we had that ‑‑ we had that learn to scuba kind of event. Some of you tried that. So don't be afraid to try that one out. There are some organizations for that too, the **Dive Hearts**, [www.diveheart.org](http://www.diveheart.org). A lot of agencies that certify scuba divers have their own versions of adaptive scuba, open circuit certifications and training programs.

Another thing I know we want to talk about just a little bit before I let my friends take over is the whole camping, hunting and fishing thing. There's a wonderful web site developed by a guy I know here in Wisconsin, and it's called **A Far Cry**. [www.Afarcry.info](http://www.Afarcry.info), and he has a state by state compilation of the different adaptive hunting rules and ‑‑ what do you call them? A list of accommodations that you can get, along with a bunch of different organizations. I never realized how many organizations there are out there dedicated to adaptive outdoor sports like hunting and fishing. So that is an incredible resource. There is, of course, **Wilderness Inquiry** if you're into that whole thing. And I don't know who is next, but I know I've talked for my 20 minutes.

>> KATHY HATCH: You're good. I was just going to ask if there are questions? Anybody have any questions for John? Thank you, John, that was great, a lot of information. Any questions for John?

Okay, if not, then I think we'll move on to Gary Maddox and Lacee Thompson. I think they're going to be presenting kind of together.

>> GARY MADDOX: Good morning.

>> KATHY HATCH: Good morning.

>> GARY MADDOX: I like that \*6 thing. Lacee and I are going to talk about Day At the Range, an outdoor adventure fair, and basically what it is, it's trying to provide an accessible outdoor experience for individuals who have different types ‑‑ all different types of disabilities, you know, in a barrier‑free environment.

So our goal is to provide recreational opportunities and empower them. So I think I just wanted to start out by saying that when you're looking at something like this, we looked ‑‑ well, let me back up. What we're looking at is target shooting, firearms, archery, fishing, and of course, you have to have water for that, and then any type of outdoor crafts that might be of interest to individuals, and then outdoor educational activities and demonstrations.

So I think a couple of the things that you have to think about when you're trying to do something like this that is kind of multi‑faceted is you've got to look at the area that you're in and decide on a location. You know, if you're going to be shooting, you know, you don't want that in the town square or downtown areas or even sometimes the rural areas. You've got to get out away from the main population. Then you've got to talk a little bit about how are you going to market your particular event, both to the consumers that you are wanting to empower and reach out to, but also you're going to have to find a partner. So you're going to have to figure out some sort of marketing strategy that works best for you, and time doesn't permit us to talk about all of those kinds of things, but if it's a center‑sponsored event, you know, it's going to require quite a bit of planning and a budget. Our budget typically for this event is around the $20,000 range, and the Center for Independent Living participates in about $8-10,000 of that. We plan for it about eight or nine months out of the year, and when we do this, we have some specific goals in mind that we want to accomplish.

One of the things that we really like to do is empower our consumers, and I really loved what John said. There's not a whole lot I like about John, I've known him for a long time, but every now and then he comes up with a really great idea or great phrase, and that peer support comment that he made is so true, and thank you for that, John. We will want to stress that even more on the basis of the way you presented that.

But what do you need the money for? Well, there're costs associated with putting on these events, and there's some things we provide to the participants. It's open to the public, all ages, all disabilities. A lot of disability‑related organizations are invited, and, hold your breath, we even invite people from residential care facilities, and they bring their residents out by the busloads, I may add, and family, friends and their attendants can really participate.

One of the things that we provide is lunch. It's nothing fancy, but it's typically, you know, outdoor burnt hotdogs and burgers, and there's not much better when you're out cooking over an open flame than that. Sunscreen is big because we usually hold this in June, and if it doesn't rain, it's always really hot. And in Missouri, there is every bug known to mankind. So insect repellent is a really popular thing.

Then we try to give out little hats, a bag of mementos and I will say this, and I want to turn it over to Lacee to talk a little bit about it, this is what, the ninth or tenth year we've been doing this, and it seems like it almost grows exponentially every year depending on the weather. If we have good weather, we can expect 15 to 17% turnout over and above the year before. But if it's pouring down rain, then we generally hold steady with our die‑hards.

So I'm going to let Lacee, who is kind of the outdoor girl of Southwest Center for Independent Living, talk a little bit about this. Because she really ram rods this thing and puts it together.

>> KATHY HATCH: Gary, can I ask you a quick question before you go, you mentioned that it costs ‑‑ you mentioned that it costs you around ‑‑ what did you say, $20,000 to do this? And you guys are into it for eight to ten. If you have been doing this for nine years or so, what did it cost you in the beginning to get started, and how many people came that first year, up to what it is now?

>> GARY MADDOX: I think the first year we had about 120 people out there. I don't really have the budget figures going back to that. That was in 2002.

>> KATHY HATCH: Just approximately.

>> GARY MADDOX: 2004. But it was a really limited budget. I'd say probably about half of what it is now. Maybe not even quite that. So we did it on a shoestring budget, and that's why your committee that's planning this thing has to be working all year, because most centers can't ‑‑ well, they just can't write a check for $10,000, and we couldn't either. It's a year‑long fundraising thing for us to come up with the money. As I said, finding the right partners is important, and I know Lacee will talk about ‑‑ a little bit about our partners and how that works, which might facilitate some of the upcoming questions.

>> KATHY HATCH: Thanks.

>> LACEE THOMPSON: Hi, this is Lacee. Talking about some of the different activities that are involved in A Day At the Range, Gary had mentioned the firearms, target shooting, and this is one of the things where our partners definitely play a huge role because as most of us may be aware, ammo can be extremely expensive. Equipment, just the firearms themselves, can be expensive. And we try to utilize as much adaptive technology as possible through the firearms, through the target shooting as well. Of course, we don't have a stock room over here that has a bunch of weapons and assistive technology for the weapons or an ammo stash here at the center.

>> GARY MADDOX: That we can talk about.

>> LACEE THOMPSON: Right, that we can tell you about anyway (laughter). But definitely our partnerships with the Missouri Department of Conservation and some for‑profit entities, such as Bass Pro, help us in getting the equipment and the supplies that we need in order to put this event on. So a lot of partnerships with them as far as providing the assistive technology so that we can let the participants use different types of weapons regardless of their disability to target shoot, to learn to shoot a gun.

We have the sip and puff adaptive piece of technology where you literally sip a small sip of air and it will fire a weapon at a target. So for someone that has little or no use of their fingers and arms, this is a huge thing for them to be able to shoot a gun, more than likely hit the target, hopefully, and take that experience home with them. So very empowering, but, again, those partnerships are crucial to something like this because it's a very expensive sport. Usually hunting and fishing is expensive. John, I'm sure, can attest to that. We all know how much money can go into a sport like this. So these partnerships are crucial.

We also do archery, which, again, we have Paralympics come out and demonstrate shooting a compound bow with merely the use of a piece of technology that allows him to hold it back with his mouth instead of his finger and arms like someone without a disability. We use cross bows as well, which obviously is an accepted form of hunting for people with disabilities. I know here in Missouri you have to have a permit from a doctor in order to use one. So we have those available as well to learn to target shoot for archery. We also have canoeing, different types of outdoor recreation, golfing even. We try to make them fun and form some sort of environment so that regardless of an individual's disability they can at least give it a shot or, you know, see a demonstration or something else in order to feel like they have some more knowledge and can participate in that event.

Fishing is a huge part of the Day at the Range and we're lucky enough that at our location, which we happen to use the Missouri Department of Conservation's shooting range near Springfield, so we are able to provide an accessible location for people even in chairs to get very close to the water's edge. Of course, it's a safe environment, but they can use some adaptive technology as well in order to cast fishing poles, to retrieve, to hold them more securely. Because it can be difficult to reel in a pole. We've recently partnered with an individual who has some really, really cool electronic fishing rods and reels that literally with the one touch of a button will cast the pole and one touch of another button will reel the line back in. So, again, it allows people with very limited mobility to experience fishing when perhaps they have not been able to at this point.

It's also, like Gary said, a great time for individuals in some of the residential care centers around our area to get out and back into fishing. I know we have a number of men who are in these residential homes that come out who literally live for this Day at the Range event because it means they get to get a fishing pole in their hands, they get to go sit by a pond, and more than likely catch a fish, because it's a stocked pond. So just great opportunities to participate in something they did maybe before or maybe it's a brand‑new thing. But some of that equipment, again, can be very expensive. So thankfully our partner in this event has already purchased this equipment and is more than happy to come out and spend the day sharing it with us and the participants of the event.

Crafts: Obviously there are some individuals that maybe can't stand the thought of sitting and holding a fishing pole for an hour and never catching a fish and have no interest in firing a weapon. So we try to also provide some activities not only for their family and friends but for those who just maybe want to enjoy being outside watching other people do things. So we always provide some way for them to make their own crafts. Sometimes those are bird houses made from gourds or milk jugs or even wooden bird houses. We also do turkey wing bone calls. Just something that will link their experience and their activity to the outdoors but doesn't necessarily involve something that maybe they're just not comfortable with.

And talking about our adaptive hunts. Again, this is another area where the partnerships play a huge role, not just for equipment, but for location. Like Gary mentioned, you don't want to be shooting a weapon in a residential or populated area, so, again, the Missouri Department of Conservation allows us to use their conservation land for the adaptive hunts. So the Southwest Center for Independent Living has purchased 12 fiberglass trailers that serve as hunting blinds, and we actually have a ramp so someone in a chair doesn't have to leave their chair. They can move directly into the hunting blind or trailer and then we can transport them to the location and they can hunt right there all day or as long as they wish, and then we pick it up and bring it right back. So for something that someone in a chair, could be a huge barrier for getting out into the woods for the first time or maybe again, and with these adaptive hunting blinds, it's made our hunting extremely accessible for people with physical impairments.

Again, we try to use the adaptive technology, the different pieces of equipment that can fit onto a firearm to allow someone to be able to fire the weapon. Maybe allow them to see a little bit better with a better screen attached to the weapon. All sorts of really cool but, again, expensive devices that luckily we have partners in the area that don't mind hooking up with us for the day and sharing that equipment with different individuals.

We also have other costs that Gary talked about that we get donations for. A lot of in‑kind donations for the Day at the Range. Like I mentioned, we're lucky enough to get some donations from Bass Pro that helped out. We have lots of area grocers that help us with some of the food donations, not just money. Of course, money is always great, but we try to utilize as many of our vendors and local area businesses and organizations to get not just the check in order to go purchase something but those in‑kind donations. Bottled water is a huge one ‑‑ it helps so much with the expense of things. So those are always things that we're looking for and requesting and giving people the opportunity to give. And we're lucky enough to get a great response from our community in that regard.

Do you want to add anything?

>> GARY MADDOX: No. I will say that our partners are really important, and that's why I kind of started out with that. You've got to find partners in your community because Centers for Independent Living ‑‑ first of all, we are not experts in outdoor activities. A lot of our folks here at the Center have lots of different soft skills not related to their job, and as the CEO here, it's my responsibility to figure out what are those soft skills and how the Center can use them to provide different types of activities and things for our consumers. So that our consumers have life‑changing experiences as a result of those.

Whether it's the four‑core services or you incorporate some methodology of peer support, as John alluded to, around building camaraderie and learning new skills, gaining confidence and things like that. So I just want to stress that this is an opportunity for individuals who have all different types of disabilities to tap into something that maybe they never even knew existed, and, you know, there's a lot of judgment going on in our world today and not a lot of opportunities, and so when you provide the judgment ‑‑ or provide the opportunities, those things that you judged the individuals on, especially around skills and abilities, that really goes away.

Let me give you a great example of a person who was pretty self‑confident who inspired a whole bunch of our other consumers, and that was Miss Wheelchair Missouri. You know, not exactly the girly‑girly type that you would think was going to be Miss Wheelchair Missouri. This girl could shoot! She just blew a lot of clay pigeons out of the sky in front of a lot of young women and men in wheelchairs, and you can't believe the responses that we've gotten from different types of things like that from returnees. They come back and they've told somebody, "Hey, look what I got to do." And I might add this area is fully accessible. Even at the shooting range, individuals with mobility impairments can get downrange and get to their own targets. So I'll close it at that. Probably got about five minutes left maybe. Or maybe not.

>> KATHY HATCH: No, we're good. We go until 4:30. So we're good.

Anybody have questions? of Gary or Lacee?

>> PARTICIPANT: I have a question.

>> KATHY HATCH: Go ahead.

>> PARTICIPANT: So all these ‑‑ my name is LEAH Ross. I'm from the UP in Michigan, Upper Peninsula of Michigan. You do these activities once. You only do them one time. So they have to wait a full year before they can do that activity again. Is that correct?

>> GARY MADDOX: Well actually the Day at the Range an outdoor adventure fair is once a year, but we also have the spring turkey hunt and the other fall deer hunt that kind of grew out of this. But this is just one recreational activity that our consumers are involved in. This is a specific event. But we also have kind of a support group or social club, and they do all kinds of other outdoor activities and indoor activities all year long.

>> PARTICIPANT: So ‑‑ because my job at the CIL in the UP, we cover all of the UP, and what I do is something similar to that, but we don't just do peer support. It's more of trying to get them to have a healthier lifestyle and become more social. So do you guys do activities like cooking arts and crafts or anything along those lines? Because I'm just hearing about the hunting, which is very impressive that you guys do.

>> GARY MADDOX: Oh, yeah, we do all of those other things, too, you know, and it's just today we're talking about this particular type of outdoor recreational event that we hold. But, yes, we have cooking classes here in the Center for Independent Living, and it's really cruel and unusual when they have cooking class because they typically start about 10:00 in the morning and they start cooking stuff like Mexican burritos, and then it gets into the heating and vent system and we're not invited to the meal.

>> GARY MADDOX: We do too many independent living skills classes to mention.

>> LACEE THOMPSON: Just to add to that, to tie it to Day at the Range, we have many, many volunteers help us with this event. So it's a one‑day event even though technically we do the hunt. This past year we had around a thousand participants. So as you can imagine, that takes a lot of volunteers to handle the load as well. We had over 200 volunteers. And actually, one of our volunteers that heads up the crafts at the Day at the Range is a consumer, also now a board member, who has been crucial in the crafts section of this event because she also is the one who coordinates the sewing club and craft club here at the Center which meets once a month as well.

>> KATHY HATCH: We had a question from somebody in the audience here from on our CART. Has there been a date set for next year?

>> LACEE THOMPSON: Yes, it is always Saturday the day before Father's Day in June.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay.

>> PARTICIPANT: This is John Nousaine again. A quick answer to the person from the UP. By the way, I'm a Finlander from northern Minnesota. So I speak fluent UP as well. And I am familiar with the UP. We also have youth groups and they have various recreation components, too, like you were talking about cooking and socialization stuff and being in the community.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. Any other questions for Lacee and Gary?

>> PARTICIPANT: I have a question. My name is Melissa. I'm an OT, I work at Paraquad in St. Louis. I missed the first part. I got on late. But I heard a lot of the different types of recreation activities. Do you guys do anything as far as exercise? Here at Paraquad we have an accessible gym universally designed for our participants. I wondered if you have any experience with that?

>> KATHY HATCH: Can I answer that? It kind of takes us into our next speaker.

>> GARY MADDOX: No, you can't answer that. Let me answer it.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. As soon as you answer we'll move on to Nikki because she will talk to us about some exercise.

>> GARY MADDOX: To our friends at Paraquad, no. We are dripping with envy, though. We have been up to your Center for Independent Living. We've looked at that. We have a 17,000 square foot building in the next phase of our expansion plan and part of that space could probably be utilized for that. And we're looking for funding. So send names.

>> PARTICIPANT: We're looking for our own funding. Actually we're getting ready to expand ourselves. Our program has taken off over the last several years. We're looking for funding ourselves to get a new center for the gym.

>> GARY MADDOX: Congratulations on it. I tell you, those of you who get a chance to be in St. Louis, you really need to swing by the center and check it out. It's awesome.

>> KATHY HATCH: Great. Okay. Well that being said, then I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Monique Stamps. Nikki?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: Hi, everybody. Can you hear me?

>> KATHY HATCH: Yes. Go ahead.

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: Okay. I am the advocate here at the Center for Independent Living in Charlotte, North Carolina, disability rights & resources, and I also am the program director for Women Embracing Abilities Now -- Charlotte, which is a support group, networking program and health care advocacy, healthcare, fitness, wellness advocacy program for women with disabilities. I got started with that because of my own experience as a woman with a disability having children and not having ‑‑ it was a horrible experience -- getting OB/GYN care and so I reached out to other women with disabilities to find out their experiences and started the support group to advocate for equal access to breast health and OB/GYN services and also wellness and fitness services.

After I had my children, I gained about 40, 45 pounds, and couldn't find a way to get the weight off and get back to my size and everything and find a fun way to work out.

I didn't want it to be a horrible like, “oh, God, I’ve got to go to the gym!” experience. So I joined the Y, and it was not very accessible. Physically, yeah, from the parking lot to the door it's accessible. But because of my limited dexterity and balance issues and all that, trying to use the weights was difficult, and having to wait on somebody to come and help me put the stuff together.

So I tried a group fitness class. Zumba was the new thing going on, so I decided to give it a try. Fell in love with it. It's a Latin‑inspired group fitness dance program, and I just fell in love with it. I just modified the moves as best I could. I just started moving and found myself starting to losing weight without even thinking about it and would just go two or three times a week and dance, and it was just ‑‑ I just fell in love. And so I talked with one of the nurses at a Carolina Medical Center, which is our main hospital here, who was interested in the women's support group and offered to do a Zumba‑thon, which is a three‑hour nonstop dance fitness party for the support group to raise funds. At the Zumba‑thon so many instructors said, “Why don't you get your license?” I hadn't thought about that. I wasn't sure how the process would work or if the Zumba corporation would ‑‑ how would they react to ‑‑ how would they facilitate training someone with a disability to become a licensed instructor. So I started doing research and found out there were two other instructors with disabilities who both of them use wheelchairs that are licensed instructors.

So a long story short, I just went on and got my basic and Zumba Gold license which is for seniors or people who are beginners or you know people with disabilities, and also I got my license in Zumba Tonic or Zumba Kids. So I teach all age ranges or level of disability. So it's a fun party is what it is. I found that not only myself but my students have increased confidence, self‑esteem, strength, endurance, energy, you know, building their core. I really can't even describe it ‑‑ the benefits of just dancing and following choreography in group fitness, which I think is lacking in the disability community. It's group fitness.

I also have interest in doing adaptive yoga but unfortunately I don't have the funds to get to Minneapolis to meet the pioneer in adaptive yoga. But that's one of the things I want to bring to my center and the Carolinas is access to group fitness, showing people with disabilities that they can participate in group fitness because I know when you see the Zumba commercials and the materials, the marketing materials, even Pilates, all the group things, you see these glamorous itty bitty tiny people, and you never see people with disabilities on their marketing materials, but we're out here and we're doing it. The two young ladies are Jo Ann Fluke, actually a ballroom dancer and a licensed instructor and Corina Gutierrez. Jo Ann is from Kansas and Corina is from Texas. She taught at the Miss Wheelchair America pageant to expose these ladies and others to fitness and just hearing stories on how dancing has improved their health and changed their lives. I teach here at the Therapeutic Recreation Department. I teach every Thursday. It's been amazing the feedback that I get. I also get invited to do a lot of disability awareness or women's health events, these wonderful, wonderful Zumba‑thons and things like that to just get it out there, keep cranking it, to get it out to the community, because I also do adaptive sports. I kayak, water ski, but Zumba helped build my endurance to prepare for that because we only do it like, you know, seasonal, and maybe once a month. So the in between times the Zumba has helped me ‑‑ when it's time to go kayaking, I'm ready to go. My arms are all pumped up and strong. It's helped out in so many ways.

I'm trying to think of what else to add. I just really want to expand group fitness, and there's also yoga, but I'm also going to look at getting licensed in [indiscernible] which is really for people with cognitive disabilities and the rhythm, beating drums and adding fitness variations to it. So it's just lots of things out there that people with disabilities can do in the group fitness world. It's just a slow progression, but it's happening.

>> KATHY HATCH: Got a question, Nikki. Someone is wondering if there is a web site that people could go to learn more about Zumba and the accessible dancing? Other activities?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: Sure. If you go to ‑‑ I go to our personal Zumba web site, because right now Zumba is actually in the process of developing a program specifically for people with disabilities aside from the Zumba Gold. So ‑‑ let me get the web site up. Bear with me here. I'll get it.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. While she's looking for that, I will tell you guys that if anyone is coming to the APRIL conference at the end of this month, Nikki is going to be teaching a Zumba class for us in one of our workshops. So really looking forward to that. Yeah, very fun!

>> PARTICIPANT: You said APRIL. This is Harvey Ross. It's in April? We're in October ‑‑

>> KATHY HATCH: But yes, it's APRIL in October. APRIL stands for the Association for Programs for Rural Independent Living. So it's the APRIL Conference in October. We're going to be in Tulsa, Oklahoma this year. If you go to our web site you'll see information about it if you're interested in coming.

>> PARTICIPANT: Okay.

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: My ‑‑

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: From my friend from Independence First tell Lee I said to send you. My name is John Nousaine. I was the guy who did your QUILS review last year.

>> PARTICIPANT: I will definitely tell him that.

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: My Zumba web site is moniquestamps@Zumba.com. The official program has not been launched yet so I won't have that information until it's finalized but, you know, to read about all ‑‑ just Google Corina Gutierrez, Google Jo Ann and lots of stuff is going to pop up.

>> KATHY HATCH: Is it Corina with a K or C?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: C‑O‑R‑I‑N‑A.

>> PARTICIPANT: What is the web site I would go to again? This is Harvey Ross.

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: It's Moniquestamps@zumba.com.

>> PARTICIPANT: I was referring to the one for the conference.

>> KATHY HATCH: That's okay. That's [www.april‑rural.org](http://www.aprilrural.org) . You'll see conference information on there.

>> PARTICIPANT: Okay.

>> KATHY HATCH: Monique are you good or do you have more to say?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: If you go to YouTube, Corina has lots of videos. I'm just a babe. I just got my license in March. But they have been licensed for about two years. So they have taken time to upload videos on YouTube so you can see some of the modifications that Corina has done. Really awesome, really cute. Just go to YouTube and type in Corina Gutierrez or Angel on a Mission and you can see some of the Miss Wheelchair pageant and some of the things she's done at the Abilities Expo.

>> KATHY HATCH: Great.

Any other questions? Anything you'd like to ask any of our presenters?

>> PARTICIPANT: I guess I would. This is Harvey, Independent First, I guess a question I would like to ask, I'm a C6‑7 quadriplegic due to a gunshot wound some years back, and I go to a gym that I've been going to for like 11, 13 years and I work out there, and I also work out at home and I play wheelchair rugby, but I was also thinking about a couple of the trainers at the gym about getting my license to be an active trainer. I was wondering, because I wanted to do some stuff here where we can get people with disabilities to get together and do exercises to stay in shape, lose weight, et cetera. I know there are some classes they were telling me you can take online. Does anybody have any information on where you can go without having to go to school to get the certificate to be a personal trainer?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: I don't know of any online. I know that there is ‑‑ usually a personal trainer has to get APA certified, which is ‑‑

>> KATHY HATCH: What was that? APA?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: AFAA.

>> KATHY HATCH: A, F as in Frank ‑‑ there you go.

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: AFAA certification. I don't do acronyms. I really don't. But let me see if I can find it right quick. It's American Fitness Association or something like that. But in order to be a trainer or to teach any type of fitness you have to get AFAA. I don't know of any online training. Because I'm actually going to go do that myself. It's **Aerobics and Fitness Association of America**. That's it.

>> PARTICIPANT: Okay. I'll look into that.

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: This is John, and I want to respond ‑‑ I know everybody talks about the expense involved with all of this and we're talking about a group of us who 80% of us live below the poverty level, and that's one of the reasons that ‑‑ especially with things that have expensive equipment involved like skiing, a mono-ski or bi‑ski you probably have to have three grand to get your own. That's why a lot of people end up in programs and skiing through programs and cheap rental things.

But an idea I had was, for instance, if you want to go someplace, say you want to go to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Gosh, you got to fly someplace, you got to travel there, you got to use an outfitter to get all your equipment, you got to buy all the food and you got to stay in hotels, and it adds up really quick. However, most of us have done things like camping and fishing and hunting because we have a friend or a relative somewhere, and you go there, and they have the equipment, or you've got your dad's old shotgun, or whatever it might be.

So one of the ideas I had, I called it Adventure Exchange, and what we did was a group of us, a group of about five to six of us went to Bellingham, Washington, and Doug Mackey from the local **Disabled Sports U.S.A**. chapter, they had kayaks and put together a kayak trip in the ocean. Basically it was whatever the expenses were. They already had the equipment. They were going over, I think, Labor Day weekend or whatever it was, and we just came along and paid for our food and slept on people's floors and couches. It was a real affordable way to do it. Well, the idea was they were going to come back to Minnesota the next year and do a Boundary Waters trip and we would be the sponsors where I would arrange, I would scrap up some camping gear and some canoes and stuff like that. It ended up that they never did make the trip back, and the idea kind of fell apart.

But, you know, that's still, I think, especially for those of us with disability barriers, you know, that, say, if you wanted to come on a charter fishing trip in Lake Superior, that's five, six hundred bucks right there without staying in the hotel and all that, but if you know somebody with a boat, then you're basically paying gas, and if you know somebody else with the same disability or disability barriers, you might have a couch to stay on that is in a house with a ramp and has a bathroom you can use. You might be able to have some of those cool electric fishing reels like Lacee was talking about already on the boat. So I think that's really the future for us. For instance, if I wanted to go hunting in Kansas, I would get a hold of my friend ‑‑ I'm gapping on his name now. Help me out. Brian ‑‑

>> KATHY HATCH: Brian Atwell

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: Oh, gosh, he's on our board. I'm old so I'm having a silver moment. But I would get a hold of Brian, sleep on his floor, sleep on his couch and go with him. I know the same thing if somebody wants to go diving Lake Superior shipwrecks, or my friends from Sail if you are coming over from the twin ports. That's an idea we could grab onto and maybe try to make it work in other ways. So there you go. That's just a little commercial food for thought.

>> KATHY HATCH: That's great.

Anything else, things that people would like to add or thoughts for the closing up here or ‑‑

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: I got one more thing here we didn't touch on, and that's risk management. We all know that as people with disabilities people think we're in danger of being hurt or that it's riskier for us to partake in the activities than for the average bear. We are really the canaries in the coal mine when it comes to acceptance of risk. And as we know, it's really ‑‑ there's not that much more risk for anybody else, and even if there is, if you're willing to accept that risk, this is America, and that's what our freedom is all about.

I do some pretty adventurous things. I'm a technical scuba diver, and I'm not an extreme skier, but, you know ‑‑ I do some real challenging whitewater canoeing and stuff like that. When I'm signing up for a trip, even though I have the certification, for instance, with scuba, where you would have to have experience in cold water and at depths, I don't tell them I'm a person with a disability until I show up on the boat. You know what I mean? And then when I do, they might scratch their heads a little bit, but after the dive, they all want to go diving with me again.

That's just one of the inherent things about risk and adventure sports that we as people disabilities have to challenge those mores and challenge those people who don't think that simply because we're people with disabilities that we should not have the right of everyone else to accept risk.

So ra‑ra, it’s IL, baby, accept risk and don't let anybody tell you you can't.

>> KATHY HATCH: Good for you, John! Go ahead, Gary.

>> GARY MADDOX: Just real quickly, I just want to tell those who might still be on the phone and missed that political speech of John's that we can be reached here at the center, [www.swcil.org](http://www.swcil.org), and if people have any particular questions, they can just shoot us an e‑mail and we'll put them in touch with Lacee or the appropriate staff and be happy to help them out.

>> KATHY HATCH: Thanks. Appreciate that.

>> JOHN NOUSAINE: And I am John, john@northcountryil.org .

>> KATHY HATCH: How about if I put up everybody's e‑mail addresses on the web site along with the IL Conversation and people can pick you up that way. Will that work?

>> GARY MADDOX: That's great.

>> KATHY HATCH: We'll make sure that happens. I'll get those to Bill this afternoon. Okay. Anybody else have any questions? We're closing down on our hour and a half here.

>> PARTICIPANT: Can you hear me?

>> KATHY HATCH: Hang on. We have two ‑‑ hang on a second. We've got two folks at once. The lady who said can you hear me, you go first and then I'll let the other lady say something.

>> PARTICIPANT: I'm Lois and I'm with Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living, and I can totally hear ‑‑ was it John or Harvey?

>> KATHY HATCH: John.

>> PARTICIPANT: Was it John? He was talking about the ‑‑ the one that just got through talking about not giving up ‑‑

>> KATHY HATCH: Taking risk? That was John Nousaine.

>> PARTICIPANT: John, yes. Because recreation is what I do with my consumers, but I have a lot of females, a few, one or two, males, and I was kind of wanting to hear more about opportunities as far as, you know, maybe ‑‑ I really liked having the capabilities of going out and doing new things and I think that my group is probably more targeted to the social network more so than hunting or fishing, and I was really interested in different things for crafts, and I just found it very interesting. But I know that the recreation part is very important.

>> KATHY HATCH: Maybe you could get in touch with Lacee after the call and talk more about those crafts and things.

>> PARTICIPANT: That would be great. What was Lacee's ‑‑

>> KATHY HATCH: I'll put it up on our web site and then you'll be able to pick it up from there. Okay?

>> PARTICIPANT: Very good. If I could get any new info on things to do, it would be greatly appreciated.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. Great. Thank you.

There was someone else who had a question?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: It was Nikki. I just wanted to say, to piggyback off what she just said with the women's support group that I do. We do spa days, things like that, to incorporate wellness and socialization. We also do soul collages and things like that to get them together and do something that's relaxing and aromatherapy and all types of things like that, we do.

>> PARTICIPANT: Now, do you go to spas or do you make things yourself?

>> MONIQUE STAMPS: We go to a place called the **Respite** and they have massage therapists. They'll come to us, but we typically like to go to their facility because it's more calming and relaxing. Very accommodating. We have students from the local college to help with transfers and things like that if need be. But they're very accessible and very good. So those are the things we do, in addition to the group fitness, because group fitness is good for peer support and socialization as well. But getting together with collages and spa days and things like are beneficial to socialize and relax as well.

>> PARTICIPANT: Of course, they are. Thank you.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. Well, we're coming up to our closing hour here, so I think I'll just go ahead and ‑‑ first of all, thank the presenters. Thank you so much. All four of you. For being with us today. This was great. Lots of good information. And I hope that it was helpful to lots of people. And thank you folks who listened in today. We appreciate you being here, too. Thanks to our CART folks for doing the transcript for today and the folks at SKIL in Kansas for recording our call. Those two things will be on our web site within the few days and you can see them there. There're also a few documents up there that would probably be of interest to people if you want to go check those out. Just go to [www.april‑rural.org](http://www.aprilrural.org) . If you have any other questions or anything, you can also reach me at kathatch@charter.net . So

This IL Conversation is presented by the IL‑Net, which is operated by the Independent Living Research Utilization program at TIRR Memorial Hermann in partnership with NCIL and APRIL. Support for the presentation was provided by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. No official endorsement of the Department of Education should be inferred.

So, again, thanks, everybody. I really appreciate you being here. And this is our last IL Conversation for this fiscal year, so do please ‑‑ you know, watch for announcements and join us next year for hopefully some more interesting topics. We hope to see you and hear from you then. Thanks, everybody. Bye‑bye.