**ROUGHLY EDITED TRANSCRIPT**

**APRIL**

**CIL‑NET Presents... an IL Conversation**

**Youth It Up!**

**August 18, 2016**

**3:00 p.m. EDT**

**Captioning Provided by:**

**Closed Caption Productions, LLC**

**P.O. 278**

**Lombard, IL 60148**

**www.ccproductions.com**

**Phone: 844‑335‑0911**

**REALTIME CAPTIONING AND/OR CART (COMMUNICATIONS ACCESS REALTIME TRANSLATION) ARE PROVIDED IN ORDER TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY AND MAY NOT BE A TOTALLY VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.**

>> MARY OLSON: Great. It's the top of the hour, and I'll go ahead and start introductions as others connect up.

Thank you again, everybody, for joining us for today's call, which is Youth It Up! Again, if you need access to CART for today's call please go to the APRIL website at www.april‑rural.org and you can follow the CART link on the homepage. Again, if you have any difficulties with the process, you are welcome to email me, Mary . Olson@MSO.UMT.EDU, and I can see that link or help you troubleshoot to the best of my ability.

Today's call will also be recorded thanks to Bill Cochran and SKIL and the audio recording and transcript will be available online on our website underneath the IL Conversations tab following this call. And during today's call at any point if you would like to add to the topic from your experience or you have questions to ask, you can please press star 2 and that raises your hand on the phone, and then I can make your mic live. And then once again, once your question has been answered, if you can press star 2 again to lower your hand, it helps me manage some of the online traffic. So I would appreciate it. Also please remember to evaluate our conversation following the call under the IL Conversations tab. Your feedback is so important to us and can only make us stronger as an organization. This IL Conversation has been brought to you by the [ INAUDIBLE ] which is operated by the Independent Living Research Utilization program in partnership with NCIL and APRIL. Support for this IL Conversation is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living. No official endorsement of the department of Health and Human Services should be inferred.

And without further ado I would like to introduce you to your presenters. Today we have with us June Hermanson, who is the founder and program director for the Montana Youth Leadership Forum and Montana youth transition forum. The past 16 years have been spent on how to build a system. Make the transition from high school to the adult world a smooth process for youth with disabilities and their families. June was born congenitally legally blind and has traveled the path she now makes smooth for young people. During high school years June didn't test well and she and her parents were told by numerous teachers she had no potential. Her parents never accepted. She got our B.A. in social work and her master's in education. June's work in the field of disability services for over 30 years and often states "I believe together we can build a seamless system of support for youth with disabilities that can make transition from high school painless and contributed to the success of young people." We also have with us Kimberly Tissot, and she is director of able South Carolina. Kimberly holds a Bachelor of Science degree in human development and a master's in social work from the University of South Carolina. During Kimberly's time in Boston she completed a leadership program in ‑‑ she has developed several innovative Independent Living programs to reach populations as well as develop an international program to promote disability rights. She is also Governor appointed to the South Carolina Statewide Independent Living Council and appointed by the South Carolina [ INAUDIBLE ] education to the South Carolina advisory council on the education of students with disabilities where she serves as the [ INAUDIBLE ]

We also have Cassie Wick with us and she has been an Independent Living Specialist at the Montana Independent Living project in butte for six‑and‑a‑half years. She has worked closely with Vocational Rehabilitation to match students up with work experiences in their communities. She also has fund raised to [ INAUDIBLE ] usable by all nonprofits in the community. We are so excited today to have these speakers with us and the wealth of knowledge they bring as well as the knowledge that all of you guys on the call bring. So without further ado, I would like to turn it over to our speakers.

>> Who goes first, Mary?

>> MARY OLSON: Is that June?

>> CASSIE WICK: Cassie. Does it matter who begins? Or how do you ‑‑

>> MARY OLSON: No, why don't you go ahead. Is there any way you could put your microphone up closer or phone up closer?

>> CASSIE WICK: Is this better? Can you hear me better?

>> MARY OLSON: That is a little better. Thank you.

>> CASSIE WICK: I'll try to speak slowly and clearly. So like she said, my name is Cassie. I work for Montana Independent Living project in butte, Montana, which is in the Southwest part of the state. This community has about 34,000 people that live in it, and I serve the more rural communities around here.

My journey with working with the program started about a year and a half ago when one of the voc. rehab counselors came to the office and kind of handed me a sheet and said that this was coming but they didn't know what to do with it. And so immediately I lit up because I knew that this could be such a game changer for the students that I was working with.

So the first thing I thought of was I have this young person's group I'm working with and need to ‑‑ the best with the community members that I know the best, and so I really went to work taking those connections and one at a time kind of matching up some of those students with experiences in the community. So the first one I did was a young man I had been working with for a couple of years, and he was just ‑‑ I would recommend him to anyone. So I matched him up through the city government, and he was working with parks and recreation, and as I was doing that I was noticing there was a lot of questions about they have union members and there's some issues around that that we were noticing, and so I was able to work it out, though, that we are the employer of record and we were covering the unemployment insurance and the Worker's Compensation, and so they did end up agreeing to do that work experience with us, and so that was really positive and we haven't done one with the city again because of union issues, but I am, if anyone's familiar with that, I would be happy to talk with them about that.

After that I had some other young people and I became discouraged because I went to the school and there was a young man I was going to work with one‑on‑one to find a match in the school. Said, what are you going to do, find him a job looking out the window? That's all he can do. I was devastated by that. So I was able to work even harder to really find out what some of his passions were, and he loves music, and I matched him up at a record store, and every that experience, his just personality began to shine through. So that was really positive. I have done those kind of things myself with just partnership between me and voc. rehab for about 10 students, but when it got really exciting is when I started to grow a deeper connection with another council I'm a board member, on silver bow developmental disabilities council, they have two employment coaches that work there, and they're both phenomenal, and so we saw a real gateway to get there and get them working to get some more students matched, and so we use every ‑‑ I mean, all of our resources together, and so we started thinking outside the box a lot. We were sending students out to the community colleges to do work on the construction program when they would go out and were building with Habitat for Humanity or we have a carousel being built here. Any project they were doing, we were able to match young people up to go out to those sites and have them be paid to do this work, which has led since then to students now going into that construction program at the school, and then we had one young man, he was working on the carousel project, and the contractors there said, I need someone to lay tile. He hired him outright. He was such a good employee. So the most exciting thing I think now that Montana Independent Living project has started is in Helena, which is home office, which is the state capitol, they started a contract in, I believe, May, a targeted service contract with Vocational Rehabilitation through the program. So what it is, they're calling it green corps, and it was based upon the strengths and passions of our Independent Living Specialists Less in our Helena office. He's a master gardener and he connections to community gardens and farms and they wanted to hone in on his passions and connections to build this agreement with voc. rehab. What they decided to do was do this contract, employ 10 ‑‑ up to 10 young people, I think the goal was 10. Those 10 young people would work up to 10 hours a week and they would be paid $10 an hour, which was the prevailing wage in the area for the kind of work they would be doing. So through this employment opportunity they're connected to the 11 community gardens that are around Helena where they will work on special projects that benefit the garden as a whole. There's a food co‑op they go to where they harvest food, do weeding, do that kind of stuff, that will then be sold at farmers markets or be donated to the food pantry. And then the office is actually located in a ‑‑ [ INAUDIBLE ] and they took those connections with that town center and now those young people are working on sidewalk maintenance, upkeep of flowers, weeding, rejuvenating areas that have been neglected or overlooked, and are now helping to revitalize the area. So they're doing those, and we have a van that we're using to transport them, and they're going to the different locations, and there's ten students but maybe like three or four will go at any given time to the different projects and they're getting to know each other well and working side by side with community members and the impact has been amazing. [ INAUDIBLE ] every Monday they are doing job readiness classes at the job service. So not only are they out getting these work experiences, but now they're getting really comfortable with the staff at the job service, they're getting that job preparation, they're getting an extra level of comfort in every aspect of work. And then we've been doing some self‑determination classes through a partnership with the Aspire grant, which I believe is targeted for students that have SSI, but all of the young people from the workgroup have been coming to those classes, and we've been talking about advocacy and goal setting, and I have only met them a couple of times, but I can just tell every time I'm with them their goals are getting greater, they're speaking more about their passions and what they don't want to do. And so the impact on them has been really exciting. And so we all know the benefit of pre‑at but now this community impact is being just amplified and they're getting these work experiences, people from the work experiences are recognizing their strengths and now they're being invited outside of that to do some work experience after this when school starts again. They're getting more comfortable, their social skills have improved, and so this has all been made possible by a partnership through Vocational Rehabilitation and PRE‑ATS. They partnered to do the service contract. The 10 students do not have to be voc. rehab clients but with the hope they will sign up eventually and it was a two‑part proposal. The first part was they will ‑‑ the contract will cover the employee less, his time and expenses, and then some transportation costs, as not all of the students have transportation, and then the wages of the students. So the prevailing wage, I said, was $10 an hour, which is amazing, and that was determined through the ‑‑ through a temp agency where if they were to hire someone off the street, what would it be to do these jobs.

Then on top of that, we're using that temp agency to be the employer of record. So they're processing the payroll, they're covering the unemployment insurance and the Worker's Comp. All of those costs have been built into this contract. What they've done is set some benchmarks to determine, is it going well, and when they will be paid. And so in exchange Montana Independent Living project must supply a list of names of the students that are participating, and then midway through, which is right around now, MILP has to supply a report how it's going, what are they have doing, what impact has it made, and then at the end, they will be paid for every student that finishes the program based on the contract requirements. So right now [ INAUDIBLE ] so they've hung in there. So at the end, ‑‑ will be reimbursed for this work under this contract. Les our staff member did not need to be a CRP. He is doing part of the contract that he can do it, and then the contract is up in October but it can be renewed for up to five years if they see that it's a successful program. Obviously our hope would be ‑‑ this was a pilot project in our Helena office and we have two other satellite offices and we would like to duplicate that, maybe not exactly the same way, but under the same kind of contract idea. And so now for the future these young people are going back into school and just yesterday we had our last self‑determination class and we were talking about goals and now they're starting to really hone in on some of the other things they want to do. I want to be a graphic designer. I'm really interested in [ INAUDIBLE ] veterinarian. Now we can take those goals, they have that work ‑‑ this work base under them and we can start placing them in other positions around the commune. So working on soft skills as we move forward and keep building toward their goals.

My favorite thing is just really getting all these young people out into the community and making those lifelong connections, especially in these rural communities. Those can be jobs for a very long time when they see what great workers can come out of this. So that's kind of the long and short of that program, and I don't do that, but if any one were to have questions about that, you're welcome to email me or contact me and I can put you ‑‑ [ INAUDIBLE ]

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you, Kathy. I wanted to let folks know that are joining us, if you have a question or you have something that you would like to add, if you can push star 2. What that does is it raises your hand and then I can make your mic live. And then along with that, I apologize for the beeping as folks are arriving. I'm looking into it now to see if I can turn that feature off. Hopefully I can get that figured out. But thank you again, Cassie, and d let's see. We might have one question. We also have a couple more speakers who are also going to be talking.

Hi, do you have a question?

>> CALLER: Yes, can you hear me?

>> MARY OLSON: I can.

>> CALLER: [ INAUDIBLE ] center for independence and CIL in Lakewood, Washington, and I kind of jumped in a little bit when you guys had already started and I wanted to make sure I heard you guys correctly, when you're talking about that pilot program, is this funding through the PETS program, P‑E‑T‑S, through VR?

>> CASSIE WICK: Yes, the pre‑employment transition services. We've been calming it pre‑ETS.

>> CALLER: Was it hard to get the contract?

>> CASSIE WICK: I think they started the discussions a month or two before they wanted to begin the contract and it took a back and forth conversation to nail down what the contract would look like and now because it was a pilot program now they will know if in the future some things need to be changed or not but because there's so much funding around this program right now it felt like they could ask for a and then be told no on things that maybe were too much. It's kind of like going big and then coming down from there if it didn't seem appropriate.

>> CALLER: Okay. We weren't notified this was coming and I kept asking people in the ‑‑ high up in the DVR office, asking when this contract was going to be available and they said they would let me know and then all of a sudden time passes by and it's already been set up and they've selected people already to do this and we weren't even included or had a chance to be included for this.

>> I think ‑‑ let's ‑‑

>> MARY OLSON: Let's let June and Kimberly talk a little bit. They will talk about how they secured some of the contracts from that point of view, and then absolutely let's come back to your question if it's not answered.

>> CALLER: Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: Yeah.

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: This is Kimberly Tissot. I'm Executive Director of South Carolina. We are a Center and we serve 23 counties which actually makes up half of our state. When I came on board in 2011 we did not have, of course, any youth programs at the time, and that was one of our priorities, that was one of our board priorities, that was one of our staffing priorities, was to start establishing youth because that is our next ‑‑ that is our next generation.

So we started developing programs and really it takes a lot of work to establish relationships, but showing your center's worth is so important, getting your foot into the youth movement and showing that CILs have a very important role to play.

We currently have about 10 different funding sources for 10 different youth programs, ranging from our most popular program, which is called Equip, which is run by Rachel Kaplan, who has done some national presentations on this, but the Equip program is a statewide program, and it works with young adults to build up leadership skills. So a lot of self‑advocacy, a lot of professionalism, but then what we do with these next leaders is we teach them how to go into the school systems and provide that self‑advocacy. So once we train them, they're going out into the community and teaching the Independent Living philosophy and teaching different self‑advocacy skills, soft skills, employment skills, and disability rights, which as we all know is very important because I know as a young person with a disability, when I was growing up, I had no clue about disability rights until I got to high school, and that's ‑‑ that really needs to start early, early on.

We also just recently took on the youth leadership forum, and that is funded by our developmental disabilities council and so this was our first year that we got the opportunity to plan that, and we planned that with our other two centers in our state, and they were very much involved in the staffing just to make sure we're providing ‑‑ promoting that Independent Living philosophy in YLF. We're looking forward to many years of coordinating that program as well.

We also ‑‑ one of the most unique programs that we have for youth is actually we are collaborating very closely with our parent training information center, which is kind of the opposite of CILs, which is an organization ‑‑ organizations that are operated ‑‑ run and operated by parents of children with disabilities. So our philosophy is very, very different and we absolutely had some head‑butting in the very beginning, but now that organization really embraces disability rights and recognizes the importance of that peer‑to‑peer. So they have actually contracted with us to provide all of their youth services. So we're providing that self‑advocacy, soft skills, transitioning from the parents' home into the community more. So we're doing a number of services with that. And then one of our most ‑‑ one of our newest programs will actually be from PETS funding, it's not through our agency, but it is through the commission for the blind which is a VR agency for people who are blind and have low vision, and so we are getting a pretty sizable contract with them to offer all of their youth services as well to all that pre‑employment work, and that was a lot of work in the very beginning of getting our services known to everyone that offers youth programming so that they can see that we are now the lead in our state for youth programs, and so that's very important, especially because we are a Center.

And then we do a lot of collaboration with our South Carolina Department of Education. They actually pay us to go into schools to assist with helping students lead their own IEPs and developing those self‑advocacy and transition goals. And we also do professional development for the department of Ed and teaching ‑‑ teaching teachers disability rights and also teaching teachers how to support their students with self‑advocacy and independence and letting go.

So we're very busy. We have about 18 staff members who are youth on our staff and are associated with the youth programs. We very much strongly believe in the philosophy that youth are better equipped with going into classrooms and working with other youth than anyone else. So we try to keep that philosophy going within our organization. But the youth programs are definitely the heart of Able South Carolina, and we are so excited to see the next generation of disability leaders in our state.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Why don't we go ahead and move to June, if that's all right, and then once we get a feel for a little more about what our speakers' expertise areas are let's open it up for a great conversation after that.

>> JUNE HERMANSON: Okay. This is June Hermanson, and I'm program director for two statewide programs in the state of Montana, one is the Montana youth leadership forum and the other being the Montana youth transitions project.

Our leadership forum just celebrated its 17th year and the transitions project is in its 10th year of existence.

As we talk about the youth funding having been doing this for about the last 20 years on trying to secure funds for youth, it's great to watch the way things have evolved since WIOA in the two years since it was signed.

You know, one of the things that we did on the front end is to make sure that we were at the table as a stakeholder. I don't know if you've had the chance to read through WIOA, but each state has its own coordinated state plan through your Department of Labor, and all of the key partners, then, are listed in that. Ironically higher education isn't listed in it as a key partner, but adult basic Ed is. Just some things like that. So being aware of what the law says. So we started out with that understanding of the law knowing the time lines about when the coordinated state plan had to be into the feds and wanting to be and making sure that we were listed as a stakeholder in the state plan. And so we worked with Vocational Rehabilitation to make sure that the youth leadership forum and the youth transitions project were identified as key stakeholders in youth programs.

Then in Montana they ‑‑ last year they had a meeting where all the stakeholders came together for a WIOA statewide meeting, and we were very lucky because we got to make a presentation to all of the stakeholders at that conference.

Next week is the second annual WIOA statewide conference, and we will be present again at that conference. We don't have a speaking role this year, but we do want everybody to know that we consider ourselves a leader and a major stakeholder in the whole concept and planning for youth services, for youth with disabilities.

I do want to clarify that both of our projects that I'm director for fall under North Central Independent Living Services out of Great Falls, Montana, and so we pretty much function independently but we're fiscally attached to the Independent Living center. So everything we do is geared towards Independent Living or has that whole Independent Living flavor.

So what we've tried to do is once we made sure everybody knew we were here and existed, so we spent two years talking to anybody that will listen to, then we have taken some of the plans, we all have strategic plans and visions and missions, and so we took some of those and tried to start to build some of our fantasies that we'd had in the past. For instance, the youth leadership forum, we are going to expand that through a contract for pre‑employment transition services for a step 2. So we will do our basic leadership forum and then next summer those youth will receive ‑‑ as they go through the forum they receive one year of follow‑along services and then they will go through my life step 2, which will be a program that is a step up where they do volunteer work, job shadowing, health management, financial integrity classes, those types of things in the step 2 program.

One of the other things our VR agency wanted us to think about was taking the youth leadership forum out to a rural, taking it to a flavor in rural Montana because we're so vast, and so we will be doing that on a quarterly basis. We will be going to some very rural communities and doing an abbreviated version of our youth leadership forum. So our youth leadership program will be extending to two more components, both of which will be part of the new ‑‑ well, actually we signed a contract on July 1. And so Vocational Rehabilitation, they, of course, have some numbers for us that they want us to achieve both in that step 2 and in those rural communities, but they're very achievable numbers. And we took some of their ideas through long conversations and partnership with them. So we took some of their ideas and put them into place.

In the youth transitions project, that project is comprised of parents, professionals and youth with disabilities, and we always talk about the three‑legged stool for a successful transition, and those three components are what we consider the three legs of the stool. We have an annual conference, we have a website we have regional groups that meet on a quarterly basis, and so what we wanted to do in that project is we will be extending two components there, and we started one of those, and one of them is family transition plan training. I just got back from one of the trainings yesterday, and what we do is we bring families together where we do how families can help with self‑determination in the home, and then we facilitate discussion between the youth and the family about transition goals and about defining their disability and just some of those self‑awareness issues as well as disability acceptance in the history and culture of disability. So that family training, we had ‑‑ our contract for the transitions project is on a federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30th, but because VR wanted to see that family training started as soon as possible, they did give us an amended contract that started on May 1st to get these summer family trainings off the ground. So our new contract then will ‑‑ we will continue with the family trainings and just even in these first two months of this effort we've got like four requests to go out and do the family training.

And then the final component that we're going to be adding to the transitions project is the student‑led IEPs, and so that's something that we strongly believe in just along the lines of self‑determination, and so ‑‑ but again, as we developed all of the ideas, getting it into the contracts with the various projects and components and making sure you can agree on the numbers you need to meet is significant. One of the things that I don't know if folks have read through the 900‑plus pages of the regulations, but there's things in there that we started a number of our efforts when the law was first passed with the anticipation knowing that the regs wouldn't be come ‑‑ would be coming out and it would be changing some of the ideas that we had. So, for instance, pre‑employment transition services student was perceived to be that student that was only in high school, but from the interpretations of the regs, at least that we've discussed in this state, is the ‑‑ if that youth graduated in May but is registered to go to some kind of training program that begins, let's say, in August, that student would still be eligible for those PRE‑ETS services. But breaking that all down in regard to how that ‑‑ how the regs affect the implementation that's taking place in your state I think is key. So if you haven't had the opportunity to sit down and talk to your ‑‑ the VR administration, I would encourage you to do so, at least that's how I felt. And then they kept us abreast of the changes and their interpretation of those integrations. So I think that because we're only, what, six weeks into the regulations, I think that we're probably going to continue to see some changes there, but I guess what I would ‑‑ and those people that know me, Mary knows me, and I kind of live in a fantasy world, but I think we're at the point where if you know your state's allotment for those pre‑employment transition services and how much money needs to be allotted, I encourage you to think about your mission and your vision and what your fantasy might be in regard to expanding services or improving services for youth. I think it's a wonderful time to be reach some of those dreams. So I guess with that I'll just be quiet, Mary.

>> MARY OLSON: Oh, no! Well, I think this is such a great start, and I knew that we had a rock star presenters, but I'm always impressed with how much more you all know than I even knew.

So with that, if you can press 2 on your phone you can ask any question, comment, join the conversation, and I do actually have one already. And if you have a question for a specific presenter, please just let us know that. Or if it's just in general, let us know that as well.

All right. Did you have a question?

>> CALLER: Hello?

>> MARY OLSON: Hi.

>> CALLER: I'm sorry. I just had a question for any of the presenters. As far as the transition when you go into the schools or do [ INAUDIBLE ] what curriculum are you using?

>> MARY OLSON: I apologize. Your phone is breaking up a little bit, but the question was for any of the presenters, and it was if you're going into a school in teaching programs what kind of curriculum are you using, is that correct?

>> CALLER: [ INAUDIBLE ] with the transition programs or the ‑‑ I noticed she was talking about the family training. Yes, what curriculums are they using?

>> JUNE HERMANSON: This is June. The curriculum we're using in the transition project here is curriculum that we've developed, pulled together from a variety of resources, and that goes for our family training, our self‑ ‑‑ student‑led IEPs, and then we also have a soft skills training that we've gone out to the schools with. Again, we've pulled together a variety of resources. The Project Coordinator for the transitions project is a special ed teacher and she loves putting together curriculum. What we have done with our soft skills training, it's in two different fashions. One is for the students, and then we also do a soft skills training for the professionals so that we can make sure that once we leave the area that the professionals have the skills and the materials for the soft skills training, and our soft skills training, for instance, is up on our website. So anyone can access it.

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: And we've pretty much done the same thing. We've created our own curriculum by using a number of different curriculums, but putting the IL philosophy within ‑‑ instilling it within all of our curricula that we use. We also pull in resources as needed. We do have an attorney on our staff, and we work very closely with protection and advocacy. For one of our transition programs we do with families to discourage guardianship, we pull in legal stuff, legal curriculum, that was developed with P&A and one of our staff members. And then we ‑‑ then it's ‑‑ one size doesn't fit all, too. We have really had ‑‑ we've learned this, is we've had to really modify our curriculum quite a bit, depending on what classroom that we go into in the schools and also depending on our ‑‑ even our one‑on‑one transition supports that we provide. It's very ‑‑ we have found that it's very difficult to use a set curriculum, that we're always having to modify our curriculum and adjusting it based on whatever the school needs or whatever that individual is needing.

>> CALLER: Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: Are there other questions or comments ‑‑ let's see. Can you guys tell I'm learning how this works as we go?

All right, did you have a question or comment?

>> CALLER: Hello?

>> MARY OLSON: Hi.

>> CALLER: High maim is Mary Beth and I'm an Independent Living Specialist focusing on youth transition at liberty resources in Philadelphia. I would like to ask any or all of the speakers, you're talking about so much parent involvement. I have a lot of difficulty with that. You know, I schedule the meetings. I do it around their schedule. How do you get such passionate parent involvement for the youth with disabilities? I would like for the parents to be working with the youth as a collaboration, and I have a hard time with that sometimes. The youth are getting it and making the transitions, but it would be so much stronger with the parents' support. Can you advise on that a little bit?

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: This is Kimberly. We're actually doing a session at APRIL with a parent run organization that's coming. Parents are very difficult. We went into this knowing that parents are one of the barriers to transition because they're normally wanting to coddle their children. Being able to reach the parents, what we have noticed is also the way we can reach the youth. And having that honest conversation. As centers I think those conversations can go a lot better with parents with saying, hey, we're individuals with disabilities, and this is ‑‑ this is how we see your interaction with your child. Your child has a lot more potential, blah, blah, blah, but we've had to have those really hard conversations. We call them circle meetings with parents and saying we're working with the individual, but when the individual is ready to transition, you've got to be there supporting them. You've got to be empowering. And then really teaching that enabling versus empowering, what that means, showing successes of other young adults with disabilities who have successfully transitioned, showing parents that it's okay to be concerned, but they've got to learn how to let go, and it's an ongoing difficulty that our organization has, but just being really nice, very honest, and sometimes giving that parent that really nice, honest feedback how enabling can very much be detrimental to the transition of their youth.

>> CALLER: I do follow all of them rules. Would you suggest contacting individual students' parents rather than trying to do it in a group meeting? Inviting them to the school or liberty resources ‑‑ like rather than inviting them here, maybe call or reach out to parents personally?

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: And we've done it a number of ways. We've done it in group environments and also sat down at circle meetings. But we never ‑‑ we go into schools and do a lot of IEP advocacy, too, and what we're up front with is we're not advocating for the parent and we're not going to actually advocate for the youth. We're going to teach the young adult how to advocate during their IEP meetings. But the parent wants is not what we will advocate for because that's not who we work for.

>> CALLER: Of course, and I know that.

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: And to answer your question, what we do is we've seen it individually with each family works a lot better because sometimes when a lot of parents get into the same room it can become an interesting ‑‑ almost turns into somewhat of a pity party. I don't know if you've seen that.

>> JUNE HERMANSON: This is June from Montana. In our statewide conference we have a section we called parent to parent, and it was only parents allowed in the room, and one of the things we started that out with was, let's talk about the guilt, grieving, the things that come with an initial diagnosis that only parents can share. And then ‑‑ and that really took off and built. Now, the family training we're doing right now is that we're doing that, we're separating the youth from the parents and talking about the grieving process, while the youth do some work on defining their disability, and then we bring them back together, but we have subcontracted with our parent organization, and so once those families make it through the training, the parent organizations has developed mentor training, and so those mentors that are ‑‑ that are administering the training will do all the follow‑up with the families once they go home, and at least we have found if you have follow‑up after somebody goes home because you can't think of all the issues to talk about when you're in the meeting, you think of them at 3:00 in the morning, you know, so that's at least ‑‑ like I say, we're just starting this out, but that's how we have it built at this point. Half of the raining the youth and parents are separated, half of the training they're together, and then when they walk out of the room they have the mentoring networks that will assist them in the day‑to‑day activities if they come up ‑‑ they come up against.

>> CALLER: Thank you. I'll try some of these tips.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Thank you for the question.

>> I was just going to say that I think there's no magic answer to this and that we're all kind of struggling with figuring out the best way to reach the parents. The ones that always show up always come when you advertise parent groups or other things. And so it's trying to find those other ones that aren't coming to the table, and I think you're right, some of that is that one‑on‑one outreach, and what I've done is I had someone I really felt passionate and really was going to be a good candidate for the pre‑employment transition services, and her dad just wasn't going to go to any meeting, help her get signed up or anything. And so I went to the house, and so we were able to really get down to why it was important and talk about that, and so I think the more we can get that one‑on‑one stuff started, hopefully the parents will start to communicate with each other about, hey, did you know that so and so is getting paid to do this, and here is the benefit of working with the Independent Living center. But getting that started, I think, is a challenge.

>> We've learned that parents ‑‑ it's all out of nothing but love as they're trying to protect their young adults, and they're scared, a ‑‑ you know, just ‑‑ you know, filling them up with successes and making it a very positive atmosphere, but being truthful with them. I think that is something that has really worked for us. I mean, we've been able to change parents' perceptions if they were getting ready to get guardianship of their young adult, and we were able to change their perception of that and ‑‑ they ended up making the decision to stop getting that guardianship because they see so much more potential in their young adult. Giving resources. There's just so much parent who have that fear, they're just missing all these resources that is really surrounding them that they have never been connected to.

>> CALLER: Thank you for all the suggestions. >> MARY OLSON: Awesome. So go ahead ‑‑ I just unmuted another caller. You can get.

>> CALLER: Yes, my name is Lou Ann Collier, an IL coordinator with SKIL in Pittsburgh. I am very active with disability mentoring days. I will be holding my 10th event here in Pittsburgh in November and then have started another one several counties away where we work with the high school students with disabilities on soft skills and tours of businesses and some mentoring. Do any of the three of you DMD to help jump start or to help be introduced to any of the students?

>> JUNE HERMANSON: This is June. In Montana we used to do disability mentoring day in conjunction with AAPD, and what we did then, it evolved into ongoing. We've built in ‑‑ instead of just doing the mentoring days for one day of the year, we went ahead and we do that year‑round now. We have regional groups, and part of the work that those regional facilitators do is do a mentoring day job shadowing, but we do it year‑round.

>> CALLER: Okay.

>> JUNE HERMANSON: But disability mentoring day was definitely a springboard and a model that we used.

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: This is Kimberly. South Carolina has a disability mentoring day but it is operated by VR usually, and we go, but it has not necessarily connected us with the number of youth that we wanted to. What we've noticed is how we've been able to recruit more youth is reaching out to the schools and then the parent‑run organizations, just with connecting with parents who want services for their youth. When you make relationships with teachers, I mean, that just really opens the door.

>> CALLER: It really helps a lot. My DMD committee here is made up of ‑‑ I have three different teachers, one who has been with me the entire 10 years, and then we have VR, Kansas works, community members from the community, but it has helped us with that. So I just wasn't sure ‑‑ like she said previously if you guys used that as a springboard or if you used it at all. I appreciate your answers. Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Well, we've got hands all over the place. I hope you guys aren't ‑‑ got some water to wet your whistles.

All right. Go ahead with our next question.

Hi. Did you have a question?

All right. We will move on.

>> CALLER: Hello.

>> MARY OLSON: Hi.

>> CALLER: Can you hear me?

>> MARY OLSON: I can.

>> CALLER: Okay. My name is Pamela. I'm a youth transition specialist here with Reach of Dallas, and I had a question listening in to some of the experiences that the other CILs are having with the youth. My question is, the examples of access to WIOA through VR funding. Is that the PETS that was mentioned earlier and through the parent ‑‑ the parent information center? Is that some of the funding sources?

>> The PETS funding would come from the VRs, Vocational Rehabilitation. And there's a number of categories that they ‑‑ number of services that are offered under PETS. But the parent training is actual Lil a federal grant that is ‑‑ your state most definitely has, if you're a training information center, that is a separate grant that is from the U.S. Department of education, and it has a new piece to it, which I think has thrown a lot of the parent training information centers off because they now are required to offer services, direct services, to youth around self‑advocacy and job exploration and all of that as well.

>> CALLER: Okay.

>> JUNE HERMANSON: This is June. And what we did is VR did contract with us for doing the family transition plan training, and then we ‑‑ we actually subcontract with our parent organization to do the mentoring and follow‑up. So we receive the funds through voc. rehab and then we subcontract with our parent agency.

>> CALLER: Okay. Are there any other funding sources, I guess, that are out there that we might be able to tap into or ‑‑

>> I would suggest ‑‑ I would suggest your ed councils, and they are probably reaching out to your Department of Education and really getting that relationship going with the special education department. They can help connect you with districts and all of that in your area. And schools, they come with some funding. So if you really make that relationship and sell your services and, you know, start asking ‑‑ talking about establishing a contract with them, that could be a position or two for your center to be able to offer those services.

>> CALLER: Thank you so much.

>> MARY OLSON: Great! So I'm going to scoot along here. Go ahead, please, with your question. Hi, did you have a question?

How about you, did you have a question?

>> CALLER: Yes. I was wondering if someone can explain [ INAUDIBLE ] establishing those relationships to establish those contracts with VR for the PETS or with the Department of Education.

>> MARY OLSON: Go ahead.

>> CALLER: Hello?

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: This is Kimberly with Able. What we have done with ‑‑ I guess first came Department of Education. What we did is we started attending the state advisory councils for the edge of students with disabilities and ‑‑ education of students with disabilities, and started to talk about ‑‑ when they talk about, do you have any public announcements, start advertising your youth programs, talking about what you're doing to start up a program or what you're doing to ‑‑ what you're doing within your youth programs. That's really how we got connected. We also reached out to a lot of schools, and each school district is very different, and just establishing that rapport. It takes a lot of work to get into schools, because some schools require you to have an MOU with them, but really don't give up until you're being able to provide these services to the youth. That was the first funding stream that came in. And then we really worked very, very well with our DD could you be sill, and they provide a number of ‑‑ DD council and they provide a number of our CIL funding for the youth programs, and then with the PETS funding, this is actually a contract that is new, and this is with the South Carolina Commission for the Blind and what we will be doing is going out to the schools and providing pre‑employment services, teaching them their soft skills for employment, just employment rights, just a number of things, but that relationship actually ‑‑ I had a note in box one day and it says, Kimberly I need you to call me about this RFP. It was from one of the directors at the South Carolina commission for the blind. Because of our youth reputation, they wanted us to provide the services for some of the services, and then we got them connected with the other centers in our state as well. So we all contracts going in with the commission for the blind for PETS funding now. It takes a lot work but once you get recognized, you get recognized, I think.

>> JUNE HERMANSON: This is June. I would really encourage folks to locate your state plan through your Department of Labor and see who all the partners are, and then get yourself introduced to all of those stakeholders, and I bet they're having some statewide meetings, planning sessions or whatever, and if you can be at the table or on the email list or whatever, I think that that's huge. Like I say, knowing those state plans and what your state has written into them as goals I think helps you be able, then, to give some of your thoughts and request for funding to coincide with those goals.

>> I echo that, June. We had an interesting time with getting put into the WIOA state plan, but being at that table, because that's ‑‑ that's going to everyone that's connected with WIOAs and if you're mentioned or at that table or at those meetings they're going to reach out to you.

>> Every year they have ‑‑ [ INAUDIBLE ] seminar ‑‑ all the different.

>> MARY OLSON: Is that Cassie?

>> CASSIE WICK: No, that wasn't me.

>> MARY OLSON: Sorry. Awesome.

Did you have anything to add since I was ‑‑

>> CASSIE WICK: No. I mean ‑‑ I echo what these ladies said, and for us I think a lot of it was just really for the pre‑employment transition dollars, really getting in there and having those connections and then asking the questions and getting ‑‑ whoever can answer them, this money is out there, how can we put it into use Independent Living as written into it as one of the goals, and so finding out how do we make this happen? Here's some money and how can we develop these contracts so we're using it to benefit these ‑‑

>> MARY OLSON: Great. All right. Well, does anybody else have any questions or success stories or comments they would like to share? You can press star 2 in order to raise your hands.

Let me ‑‑ all right, go ahead, please.

>> CALLER: Hi. One of the speakers mentioned posting curriculum on their website. Which website was that?

>> JUNE HERMANSON: That's the Montana youth transitions all spelled out Dot org and what we have posted there is our soft skills curriculum, and it is updated on a regular basis. Montana youth transitions.org.

>> CALLER: Great. Thank you so much. Anyone else have any curriculum posted?

>> MARY OLSON: And another option, too, is that we always have mentors ‑‑ actually one of Kimberly's staff is a mentor, and we have several other mentors across the country that through the APRIL peer mentoring program. So if you want to learn more about that you can contact myself afterwards or you can contact Sierra from power website.

I think ‑‑ I apologize. I'm having a hard time with the traffic. People need to lower their hands when they're done. That would be great.

I'm going to have to mute everybody again and start ‑‑ sorry.

Okay. Go ahead with your question, please. Do you have a question? Hi, please go ahead with your question.

>> CALLER: This is Donna Rasmussen, I'm the youth and vocational supervisor at the Lake county Center for Independent Living in Illinois. I just want to share that we have found that there's some really good activities and the curriculum is meaty for ‑‑ it's through the Department of Labor, the skills to pay the bills, in the office of disability.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Thank you for sharing.

>>

>> CALLER: The website is dollar.gov and you can type in "skills to pay the bills" and look for the Department of Labors skills to pay the bills link, and you can request them to send you a binder. It's a bound ‑‑ a spiral bound book. It's really nice with a bunch of activities and you can get a CD and a DVD with it, too. So just FYI.

>> MARY OLSON: Great!

Hi, did you have a question?

>> CALLER: I just wanted to comment on the skills to pay the bills. I have used that many times in my transition sessions with the young adults, and it is very helpful. They send you as many as you want and if you need more, you just write back to them and they send you more. I just wanted to offer that up and encourage it.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you. I'd never heard that. So that's great.

>> CALLER: That's all. Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: Yes.

Hi, did you have a question?

>> CALLER: Hello?

>> MARY OLSON: Hi.

>> CALLER: Is this Mary?

>> MARY OLSON: It is.

>> Mary, this is Serana. How are you?

>> MARY OLSON: Good. How are you?

>> CALLER: I don't know what I can contribute to this conversation because it sounds like folks are doing a lot of really cool things and finding resources ‑‑ financial resources to do more, which is something that I'm definitely going to be looking into. We do have ‑‑ we did take part in the mentoring program that APRIL provided, Mary and Mike Beers came down and did a training for us, and even provided us with their curriculum, which we took and massaged it to where it would flow for us, and we call it our hands‑on education resource option and enrichment skills, which we call our HEROS program, and we do go into the schools and work with the transition classes. We do all the things that have already been talked about, the history, culture, accepting your own disability, and all those things that kids are not going to get from just their regular curriculum. We have had some graduation ‑‑ graduations from the program, and the kids seem to be really excited about getting to be recognized as members who participated in the program, and then we continue to work with those students even after they graduate from our program and try and direct them to our center for any additional IL skills training. It's been really ‑‑ and the relationship that we've built with the school ‑‑ the schools ‑‑ with the teachers has been very key in helping us get that accomplished. So that's what we do here in Arkansas.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Thanks. I always love an impromptu shout out.

>> CALLER: Well, if it hadn't been for you guys, we wouldn't have been able to start it. So...

>> MARY OLSON: Well thanks.

All right. We're getting close. We have a couple more hands raised. Did you have a question or a comment?

>> CALLER: Hello?

>> MARY OLSON: Hi.

>> CALLER: My name is Tito. I work for the resource Center for Independent Living in Utica, New York and I wanted to talk quickly about our youth leadership program we have here. It's been in existence for many years, and we have been blessed to have some of the participants that we have, and a few of them have gone on to become advocates who go all over the country advocating. I also like the idea of the skills to pay the bills, and I am going to look into that. I'm also ‑‑ one of our programs here at our CIL is called the main street youth program, and it is working with at‑risk youth who are OPWDD, office of people with developmental disabilities eligible. I was wondering if anybody had any input on that as far as funding sources to assist with that program?

>> JUNE HERMANSON: This is June, and I'm not familiar with that.

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: I'm not either. It sounds interesting.

>> MARY OLSON: If anybody else on the line has an answer for Tito, you can press star 2.

>> CALLER: I know that currently we're using family support services funding for that program, but we're looking to expand it to ‑‑ beyond just youth that are office of people with developmental disabilities eligible. So I was just wondering if anybody else had any ideas on that. But ‑‑ most of the stuff that we're doing is with teaching life skills, with teaching employment skills, helping people become more independent or self‑sufficient. So I just wanted to share that. Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Thank you for sharing. Hopefully we can get some thoughts from the audience for you.

All right. Did you have a question? Oh, hi. Did you have a question for us?

>> CALLER: Hello?

>> MARY OLSON: Hello. Go ahead, please.

>> CALLER: Hello?

>> MARY OLSON: Hello? Sorry, I'm not pressing star 2. I don't know what's happening. It's unmuting the phone on its. Your hand was raised. That's why I unmuted you.

>> CALLER: Sorry.

>> MARY OLSON: That was operational error. Let me fix that and move along.

Did you have a question?

Sorry, folks. I'm looking for this trying to mute you again. Again, if you have questions, please press star 2 to raise your hand. It does prompt me to unmute you if you raise your hand.

Did you have a question?

>> CALLER: No, I don't.

>> MARY OLSON: Okay. Sorry, guys.

>> CALLER: This was Tito. No, no more questions from me.

>> MARY OLSON: Okay. Great. We might be closing out. Let's see if ‑‑ if folks have any more questions, please feel free to just press star 2, and that will prompt me to unmute your phone line. Also, if you're in the captioning room, you can just type in your questions and I can voice those for you. And I think ‑‑ while we're getting ready to wrap up here and looking for any more questions, do our presenters have any last final words of wisdom to folks as they're trudging on this youth transition voyage?

All wisdomed out. Can folks still hear me?

>> Yes, Mary, we can hear you.

>> MARY OLSON: Okay. Great.

Do you guys have any last words before we begin to close out?

>> CASSIE WICK: This is Cassie. I think the most impactful thing is taking the community connections I have and creating an atmosphere that's welcoming on both ends. It benefits everyone when young people are getting jobs out in the community. So youth who you know and [ INAUDIBLE ] and voc. rehab so that they can be part of this program and as this program in Helena is going, some of those students aren't even signed up with voc. rehab. So if you can get those contracts under way, that can be a good gate sway into voc. rehab services as well.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Anything else from June or Kimberly.

>> JUNE HERMANSON: This is June. Thank you for letting us do this today and share. It's just ‑‑ for me it's an exciting time, it's a time of opportunity, and opportunity is knocking, you know. I'm not sure what everybody's state budget is for of the PRE‑ETS, bull find out that what budget is and follow your dreams for the youth that you serve.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. Kimberly, anything else?

>> KIMBERLY TISSOT: Yeah, you know, this is a really exciting time for centers, especially, because we have the power to really show and ‑‑ show what we are capable of with getting our future generation ready for life. So, you know, establish a plan, don't give up on it, and make sure that you're letting everyone know what you're doing so that your programs get recognized.

>> I just really enjoyed this conversation again and I appreciate everybody being with us. We do have time for another question, if anybody has one. You can press star 2. And while I'm waiting for that, I just want to encourage folks again, if you can please go to our website and evaluate the conversation. I know that we always have a lot of room for improvement, and we really appreciate that feedback.

All right. Did you have a thought, comment or question to close us out? Hello?

>> CALLER: Thanks so much.

>> MARY OLSON: Did you have any comments or questions? Hmm... I apologize, you guys. I'll still learning how to use this wonky system of raising hands and not and I am seeing folks raising their hands. I'm not quite sure ‑‑ do you have a question?

Well, if you do have questions, you can always send them to me and I'll check in with our speakers and see if they would be willing to have their contact information up on our website. Again, you can always ask them questions as well. One of the things APRIL does is we help provide TA to folks. So any way we can be helpful we try to be. I'll give it one last try to see if those folks ‑‑ I just unmuted folks, if you have any last questions or last thoughts.

Well, again, thank you, everybody, for joining us, and you can look for the transcript on our website. I appreciate you all being here today.