

**25<sup>th</sup> Annual**  
**★ APRIL**

National Conference on Rural Independent Living

**Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living**

**#APRIL2019 #PowerOfRural**

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## A Note from the President



From the President:

Welcome APRIL advocates to the first day of a great future. And it is rural America that is driving that future.

But as we celebrate this week the “Power of Rural,” it is equally important to recognize and embrace the past and the journey many of us have been on for nearly a generation.

This is APRIL’s 25th Annual Conference and I am hopeful you feel the vibe of possibility and the potential for greatness around you from the youth to the seasoned veterans sharing their knowledge and life’s work. APRIL leadership is hopeful you will engage in the numerous opportunities provided to you this week to give your voice to these issues and help shape the future.

Personally, it is a time for deep reflection, and a time to recall all the great times, places, and most importantly all the great APRIL family I have come to love over the years. This is the last time I will address you as APRIL President. It has been an amazing journey to have been witness to the growth and success of APRIL during all these years.

But I reflect on ending my time in APRIL leadership with no sadness, without somber feelings of loss, but rather with a sense of joy in my heart because of the path we have chosen to embrace, support, guide, and encourage a whole new generation of leaders.

The future is bright my friends! Feel it, absorb it, most fundamentally, act on it!



## A Note from the President

Wrap yourself in the theme of this year's conference. Celebrate the amazing youth from across the country, which should be enough to jazz up the passion of any IL advocate.

But, we also have other work to do while we are together. Today in our nation, there remains a nearly inhumane and appalling lack of affordable, accessible, non-toxic housing, and even more appallingly so in rural America. Too many of our brothers and sisters still cannot go where they want to go, when they want to go there. And there remains a persistent and shockingly low rate of participation in the workforce for all people with disabilities. I love you all! Rock on, embrace the challenges and opportunities of the future and feel the "Power of Rural."

Sincerely,

Tim J. Sheehan

*Tim J Sheehan*

## Welcome from the Executive Director



Hello and welcome to APRIL's 25th Annual National Rural Independent Living Conference: The Power of Rural. This year is a celebration of where we've been and where we're going. We also want to take the time to remember and celebrate the lives of the disability rights leaders who left us this year.

We are thrilled that you are here. We have an incredible line-up of speakers and workshops. We want this conference to be informative and invigorating. Take advantage of this opportunity to meet and share ideas with your colleagues from all over the country.

I also want to thank all of our sponsors for making this event possible, but most importantly, thank you for being here and all the things you do in your community to enrich the lives of our brothers and sisters with disabilities.

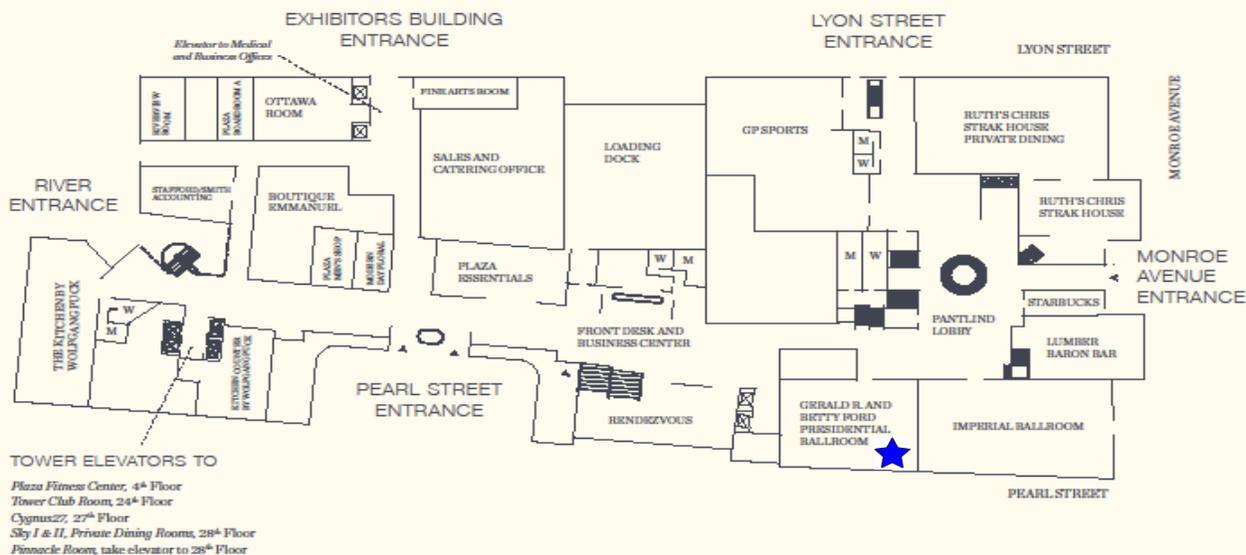


Billy Altom

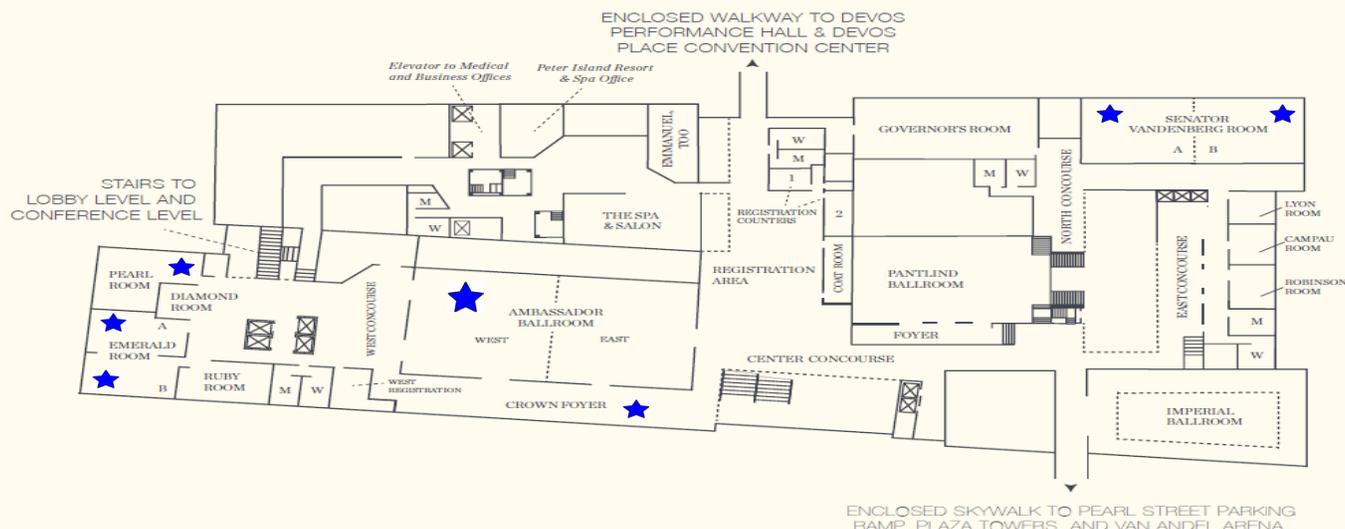
# Conference Area Map

## LOBBY LEVEL

### FIRST FLOOR



### SECOND FLOOR



# Conference Sponsors/Exhibitors

## Sponsors

**CENTENE**  
St Louis, MO

**ANTHEM**  
Indianapolis, IN

**UBER**  
San Francisco, CA

**ARCIL**  
Austin, TX

**ILRU**  
Houston, TX

**Amtrak**  
Washington, DC

**Ability360**  
Phoenix, AZ

**Active Re-entry**  
Price, UT

**Christopher and Dana  
Reeve Foundation**  
Short Hills, NJ

**Great Lakes National  
ADA Center**  
Chicago, IL

**Idaho SILC**  
Boise, ID

## Exhibitors

**Great Lakes National  
ADA Center**  
Chicago, IL

**ILRU**  
Houston, TX

**MiCIL**  
Honolulu, Hawaii

**AgrAbility**  
West Lafayette, IN

**American Access Inc.**  
Bartlett, TN

**Sorenson Interpreting**  
Salt Lake City, UT

**Christopher and Dana  
Reeve Foundation**  
Short Hills, NJ

**Research & Training  
Center Community  
Living (RTC:CL)**  
Lawrence, KS

**Wareologie**  
Livonia, MI

**RTC:Rural University of  
Montana**  
Missoula, MT

**Q90 / CIL Suites**  
Salem, UT

**DisArt Tom Olin  
Photos**

# Youth Agenda



**Friday, October 25th, 2019**  
**9:00 AM-4:00 PM**  
**Reflect, Learn, Act**  
**Gerald Ford (Youth Only)**

<b>8:30-9:00 AM</b>	<b>Registration Breakfast</b>	<b>Center Concourse Gerald Ford</b>
<b>9:00-9:30 AM</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<b>Gerald Ford</b>
<b>9:30-10:30 AM</b>	<b>Reflect: Independent Living &amp; 25 Years of APRIL</b> Youth reflect on 25 years of APRIL conferences, where we came from, and how that affects us today.	
<b>10:30-11:00 AM</b>	<b>Morning Break</b>	<b>Crown Foyer</b>
<b>11:00-12:00 PM</b>	<b>Learn: Building an Advocate's Toolbox</b> Youth learn about advocacy and tools they can use.	
<b>12:00 PM-1:00 PM</b>	<b>Lunch Break (registered Youth only)</b> Buffet lunch provided. Take a stretch!	
<b>1:00-2:30 PM</b>	<b>Act: Taking Action and Making Change</b> For this final session, youth will break into round tables to discuss actions they can take on different disability issues.	
<b>2:30-3:00 PM</b>	<b>Afternoon Break</b>	
<b>3:00-3:30 PM</b>	<b>Act: Taking Action and Making Change Report</b> Report on roundtable discussions and tools used.	
<b>3:30-3:45 PM</b>	<b>Back to Reflect</b>	
<b>3:45-4:00 PM</b>	<b>Wrap Up!</b>	

# Pre-conference Agenda



**Friday, October 25th, 2019**  
**9:00 AM-2:45 PM**  
**Achieving Operational Excellence**  
**Through Risk Management**  
**Vandenberg**

<b>8:00-9:00 AM</b>	<b>Registration Breakfast</b>	<b>Center Councourse Vandenberg</b>
<b>9:00-9:15 AM</b>	<b>Welcome, Introductions, and Background</b>	
<b>9:15-10:30 AM</b>	<b>Identifying Areas of Risk</b>	
<b>10:30-10:45AM</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>10:45-11:45 AM</b>	<b>Compliance Risk</b>  Examples of non-allowable costs, of mitigating measures, lobbying	
<b>11:45-12:00 PM</b>	<b>Discuss Lunch Excercise</b>	
<b>12:00-1:30 PM</b>	<b>Working Lunch (Buffet Provided in Vandenberg)</b>	
<b>1:30-1:45 PM</b>	<b>Report out from Lunch Activity</b>	
<b>1:45 PM-2:15 PM</b>	<b>Other Areas of Compliance Risk</b>	
<b>2:15-2:45 PM</b>	<b>Risk of Financial Waste and Fraud</b>	

# Note-Worthy Announcements

## Sensory Free Room

The Ruby Room is available for sensory-breaks or a 'quiet' room as a reasonable accommodation throughout our entire conference.

## Youth Workshops

In order to assist you in choosing which workshops to attend, we have indicated those that were chosen as youth friendly by our youth committee in the session write ups in the program. That doesn't mean youth have to attend these workshops. Please feel free to choose any of our many wonderful workshops that pique your interest.

## Access Seats in the Workshop Rooms

We have reserved space in the first row of each of the workshop rooms for those who may need to sit near the speaker for access. Please feel free to use these seats if you are one of these people, and if you don't need them for access, please try to leave these open for those who do, feeling free to move into them if it seems like they will not all be used.

## Share the Memories

In honor of our 25th Annual Celebration of APRIL Conferences, we have left a blank page in the back of your program for you to share one of your favorite memories. Please feel free to write it out, rip it out, and share with our registration table. We will choose memories to share throughout the weekend.



# Conference Agenda

**Friday, October 25th, 2019**

**3:00-5:00 PM**

**ACL Grantee Meeting**

**Vandenberg**

Come and hear from ACL leadership and program officers about compliance and operations as well as key initiatives. Attendance is free and open to grantees and their staff. Registration required.

**4:30-5:30 PM**

**Youth Engagement Meeting**

**Gerald Ford**

A meeting for youth and young adults who would like to learn more about what APRIL does outside of the conference. How can you get involved with the work we do with youth and the community as a whole...come to listen, learn, and maybe sign-up and join! You will get an overview of APRIL, our Youth Steering Committee, Youth Advocacy Committee, and Online opportunities.

**6:00-7:00 PM**

**APRIL Annual Meeting and Board Elections**

**Ambassador East**

Learn about APRIL's accomplishments in the past year. Voting members may vote in the APRIL Board of Directors Elections.

**7:15-8:00 PM**

**Welcome Reception**

**Ambassador West**

Come join us to meet and greet old friends and make some new ones. Light snacks available. Youth don't forget to stop by the games table at the reception. cash bar

Have a good night! See you at 8:00 AM for continental breakfast and registration

# Conference Agenda

## Saturday, October 26th, 2019

**8:00 AM**

**Registration Opens**

**Crown Foyer**

Conference Registration Open; T-shirts and Raffle Tickets go on Sale!  
Continental Breakfast

**9:00-10:30 AM**

**Welcome and  
Opening Keynote**

**Ambassador Ballroom**

Welcome from: Executive Director, Billy Altom; APRIL Youth Committee Chair, Mels Felton, Michigan SILC Chair Aaron Andres, and Disability Advocates of Kent County

**Local Blessing from James "Bud" Day, Gun Lake Tribes**

**Welcome from Julie Hocker, Commissioner ACL**

Come share our vision for Americans with disabilities to continue to freely pursue all facets of community life alongside people with and without disabilities. Focus will be on the Independent Living programs, administered by the Administration on Community Living. We will talk about the increasingly complex web of systems and networks that CILs are asked to join or are already apart of and look to our collective need to braid and blend resources to continue to accomplish all that is before us. Update on key initiatives of ACL as they relate to and focus on Americans with disabilities; namely, health equality and the dignity of work.

**10:30-11:30 PM**

**Vendor Fair**

**Center Concourse**

Everyone, visit our vendor booths. Youth don't forget to participate in the Vendor Scavenger Hunt. Note that vendors will be open until Sunday at 5:00 PM. Please stop by the Tom Olin photos on display from DisArt.

**11:30 PM-1:00 PM**

**Plated Luncheon  
and Keynote**

**Ambassador Ballroom**



# Conference Agenda

**Creating a Sex Positive Center**  
**Jennie Ostermiller**

**Gerald Ford**

How and why to have a sex positive center. Changing your center’s culture to become a safe, sex positive, space can benefit all consumers, but especially those who have experienced abuse, who identify as LGBTQ+, or want to have a sexual relationship. This interactive training will help participants evaluate their attitudes around sexuality and individuals with disabilities, while learning strategies for helping consumers make informed, brave choices about their sexuality and sexual health. Participants will learn how to influence the culture of their center and serve a more diverse population.

**Tag You’re It: Transitioning Leadership**  
**Joan LaBelle, Peter Pike and Chris Roe**

**Emerald A**

Congratulations! You now are in a position of leadership! Now what? Transitions can be an opportunity for creating a legacy. It can also be a time of incredible stress as change can be difficult for current staff, your SILC or even your new DSE. This session will demonstrate how a CIL, a SILC and a DSE has embraced the challenge and overcome transition obstacles.

**Youth to Youth: Successful Engagement  
 in Strategic Leadership**  
**Melissa Ann Santora, Mica Stewart, Audra Paletta,  
 Michael Lefevor and Whitney Harris**

**Emerald B**

This youth session will feature success stories and strategies used by youth who have disabilities, who serve in a variety of leadership roles for Independent Living organizations. Participants will develop knowledge of the skills and benefits of serving in these critical capacities, while engaging in activities designed to assist them in establishing opportunities to serve in their home communities. Youth.

**3:00-3:30 PM**

**BREAK**

**Crown Foyer**

# Conference Agenda

3:30-5:00 PM

## Concurrent Workshops Block 2

**Is There A Little Red Sports Car in Your Future? With ABLE, There Might Be!** **Vandenberg A**  
**Rene Cummins and Rebecca Williams**

The ABLE Act is the most game-changing policy since the ADA. However, few ABLE Accounts have been opened and much misinformation exists. Using small group activities, we will expose myths and untruths, and attendees will decide what can or cannot be purchased using ABLE funds. Guest appearance by WID Financial Llama. Be prepared to have fun!

**Healthy Community Living and You** **Vandenberg B**  
**Leanne Murrillo, Luke Koppisch, Tannis Hargrove**

Healthy Community Living (HCL) is about all people having opportunities to live well and participate fully in their communities. The program is made of two separate peer-led Independent Living skills workshops: Community Living Skills and Living Well in the Community that were developed with CIL partners across the country. Join two of our experienced IL partners as they lead us through one of the workshops from Community Living Skills. This interactive session will hopefully help you get a feel for the new curriculum as well gain some skills.

**Assistive Technology (AT) for Outdoor Work and Mobility** **Pearl**  
**Paul Jones and Ned Stoller**

People with disabilities should have the freedom to engage in outdoor work and off-road activities, and AT is often a key component to such pursuits. AgrAbility program staff will highlight a variety of tools and technologies that people with disabilities can use in activities such as gardening, lawn care, woodcutting, beekeeping, and traveling over rough terrain. They will address the importance of safety in outdoor work activities. Attendees will learn to access and navigate the Toolbox Assistive Technology Database, a component of the AgrAbility website, which can be used at no cost from any Internet-enabled computer or mobile device. This database has more than 1,500 products to assist someone with a functional limitation in completing outdoor tasks. Participants will gain an expanded view of the types of outdoor activities in which people with disabilities can engage.



# Conference Agenda

**Successful Agency Collaboration      Gerald Ford  
to Enhance Services & Programs in All Communities  
Kristen Conrad, Mimi Kinney, Caitlin Chlosta and  
Renee Cencer**

Disability Network of Northern Michigan (DNNM) is a CIL in Michigan that serves 17 counties. We work with individuals and families to provide services and supports to help them gain access to their communities and resources. DNNM partners with the area ISDs and MRS to provide programs to transition age youth ages 14-26. We utilize our collaboration to provide school year programs. LIFE, which serviced 800 youth during the 2018-2019 school year as well as a growing summer program, Community LIFE, which has grown from its first year in 2017 with 8 students in 1 community to 70 students in 7 communities. Our programming is possible due to our creative programming and partnerships with the local ISDs and MRS. This session will provide information on our partnerships, programs and funding methods to assist others in learning how to establish relationships and begin to offer programs that improve opportunities for those individuals and families impacted by disability.

**Center For American Progress      Emerald A  
Rebecca Cokley**

This conversation will discuss the intersections of disability and reproductive justice within the context of rural independence. We want to hear from participants what are the challenges at these intersections, how can we increase access to information and reproductive healthcare technology in rural America?

**YLF'in it-Peer Mentoring and Advocacy      Emerald B  
Chris Roe, Evan Shockley, Caity Mcmanis,  
Carlos Santos, Leo Santos, Yeva Davis  
and Libby Waechter**

Youth are today's leaders, not tomorrow's. We invite you to hear how youth in one state has taken their Youth Leadership Forum to the next level. Come hear how these youths are shaking things up and creating lasting change. Youth.

**8:00 PM-12:00 PM**

**Ambassador East**

**Dance For Youth and Young at Heart**

# Conference Agenda

## Sunday, October 27th, 2019

**8:00 AM**                      **Registration Opens**                      **Crown Foyer**

Conference Registration Open; T-shirts & Raffle Tickets go on Sale! Continental Breakfast

**9:00-10:00 AM**              **National Updates**                      **Ambassador Ballroom**

Get the latest up-dates from national disability leaders on emergency preparedness, voter registration, housing and transportation issues, plus other topics of importance to rural Americans with disabilities.

**10:00-10:30 AM**              **Break**                      **Crown Foyer**

**10:30 AM-12:00 PM** **Concurrent Workshops Block 3**

**Reasonable Modification to                      Vandenberg A**  
**Transportation Policy and Complaint Process**  
**Kenneth Thompson**

Presentation covers ADA reasonable modification to policy as it applies to public and private transportation. Examples and scenarios will be used to frame what providers should consider to make modification to policy decisions to ensure people with disabilities can get accessible rides. Additionally, the complaint process for transportation providers will cover information elements and tracking, and data.

**Rural Healthcare 101                      Pearl**  
**Merrill Friedman**

This session will focus on health and wellbeing in rural America through leveraging community and faith based organizations to support and engage people with disabilities in the health care process and beyond. Throughout, we will elevate the importance of addressing health drivers such as social determinants of health from a holistic approach. Bring your healthcare questions and more!

# Conference Agenda

**Do You See What I Hear? Effective Communication Through Audio Description** **Vandenberg B**  
**Rene Cummins and Rebecca Williams**

Audio Description [AD] provides access to the visual elements: action, costumes, settings, gestures, facial expressions and other visually engaging images of television/film, museums, theater, graduations, art galleries, parades, tours, and any event where visual elements are an importation component of the activity. AD enables individuals with vision loss the opportunity to experience events more completely by “seeing” what those with vision are viewing. Attendees will gain an understanding of the value of this form of communication from a user of description services. After a brief exploration of the history of ADS in the USA and its importance under the Americans with Disabilities Act, attendees will learn the basics of AD. The rest of the session is up to those sitting in the room. This session is highly interactive and will require attendees to test their skills of observation, editing, language and vocal skills. Folks will work in small groups to describe both static and active situations.

**Voices of Veterans in IL** **Gerald Ford**  
**Jennifer Hale-Gallardo and Luz Semeah**

In this two part workshop, attendees will hear from voices of rural Veterans on their experiences with seeking services and support for IL. Part one of the workshop by Hale-Gallardo will share voices from Veterans with disabilities on their experiences with unmet needs and how CILs have helped them improve their lives, and on what support they still need to achieve their goals of independent living. Part two of the workshop by Semeah will discuss Veteran experiences with the lack of accessible housing in quality neighborhoods, as well as their challenges of reintegrating into society. These Veterans’ voices can provide insights to assist agencies in tailoring services to Veterans to support IL.

**Increasing Your Bottom Line** **Emerald A**  
**Using Fee-for-Service**  
**Sarah Hansen, Ian Engle, Linda Taylor,**  
**Joan LaBelle and Peter J. Pike**

Vocational Rehabilitation has, in most states, a process in place that can increase revenue for CILs by assisting people with disabilities gain a successful career-- one of the top three requests CILs hear. We will demonstrate a proven success model that has brought in over \$100,000 for one CIL in Colorado.

# Conference Agenda

**Keeping Balance: Emerald B**  
**Bringing Youth into the Disability Movement**  
**Mels Felton**

The purpose of this presentation is to emphasize the need for youth involvement at all levels of the disability and IL movement. Attendees will leave the session knowing approaches for bringing youth into the movement as well as retaining them. Youth voices are encouraged to attend. Youth.

**12:00-1:30 PM Lunch On Your Own**

**1:30-2:30 PM Concurrent Workshops Block 4**

**Kaizen Principles: Vandenberg A**  
**Good Change for Your SILC**  
**Kathy Cooper**

Using the Kaizen principles to continuously improve on IL in your state. 10 basic principles of Kaizen and how to use them for your SILC, the SPIL or the IL Network. Attendees will learn a step by step process on how to create change and improvement and how to relate it to their SILC.

**The Paralysis Resource Center (PRC) Vandenberg B**  
**at the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation**  
**Freddy Perez**

The Paralysis Resource Center (PRC) at the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation promotes the health, well-being, and independence of people living with paralysis, spinal cord injury, or mobility impairment as well as their caregivers and families by providing free comprehensive information, resources, peer support and referral services in order to achieve a better quality of life. This presentation will dive into our different programs and services, as well as how we can be an ally at whatever point in your journey around physical disability.

# Conference Agenda

**Hey You Digital Assistants in  
Assistive Technology  
Danny Housley**

**Pearl**

Come explore how digital assistants like Siri, Google Assistant and Alexa can be used to increase independence. This session will cover some of the pros and cons for each device and the topic of security and privacy will be covered. This session will also explore smart home technologies and their interoperability with smart assistants.

**Oh No! It's a Coffee Emergency!  
Laura George**

**Gerald Ford**

Where is my favorite creamer? Can't find the cup! Who is my EMA Director? Who can help my consumer get electrical power? Every day we gather our ingredients, make and enjoy our coffee with little thought, then rely on it to get our day going. Now imagine taking those same steps that are involved pre/during/and post-coffee making and apply that to Inclusive Emergency Design. Learn how to connect with local community partners in such a way that benefits them, your center and the community you serve. Learn about new organizations and projects that are working on addressing some of the challenges that still remain unresolved. Then at the next disaster instead of bitter-tasting problems, because you know who your community players are, that cup of coffee will taste more satisfying.

**Using Rural IL Power to Address the  
Needs of People with Disabilities Living in Poverty  
Rayna Sage, Lillie Greiman and Craig Ravesloot**

**Emerald A**

Poverty limits consumer choice and control and is increasing among rural people with disabilities. This interactive session will explore 1) how poverty affects IL and 2) how community development strategies can address poverty in rural communities. Participants will explore how poverty affects IL, rural resources that CILs can leverage to help address poverty and community development strategies CILs may use to mobilize rural communities to address poverty among people with disabilities living in their community.

# Conference Agenda

**Shades of Disability in Media**  
**Mark Leeper**

**Emerald B**

How the media portrays people with disabilities has changed a lot over the years. Learn how advocacy can make the difference in creating change, and see what changes still need to happen, and what you can do about them. Youth.

**2:30-3:00 PM**

**Break**

**Crown Foyer**

**3:00-4:00 PM**

**Concurrent Workshops Block 5**

**Living IL is not One Size Fits All**  
**Kelsey Shinnick Goddard and Lillie Greiman**

**Vandenberg A**

What does independent living mean to you? How can and do you find the supports you need to live the life you want in the community? Independent Living isn't "one size fits all"! Through interactive activities and discussion this workshop will explore the diversity of perspectives on IL. We will share what we have heard from young adults living in the community and want to open the floor up to you to share your perspective. Help us fine-tune a checklist to assist young adults in the transition to living independently.

**Disability History: The Story of Us**  
**Anaya Robinson and Rosemary McDonnell-Horita**

**Vandenberg B**

Atlantis Community Inc. has been the center of disability history and activism since it's creation over 44 years ago. Today, we reflect on the traditionally untold stories of disability history that affect the movement going forward. This conversation will bring an inter-sectional lens to the disability history that we have inherited from our elders.

**An Intersection not an Interstate:**  
**Breaking the Binary in Disability Studies**  
**Dylan Ashley and Mels Felton**

**Gerald Ford**

On an interstate, smaller pathways merge endlessly into the larger. An intersection consists of differing yet equivalent paths meeting at a crossroads. When we, as a community, expect everyone to conform to one standard, we counteract our own movement. This session draws comparisons between the disability rights and other justice movements to expand our concept of community.

# Conference Agenda

**Are Rural Veterans Perceived  
As “Far Out” because of Geography?  
Danita Applewhite**

**Pearl**

This presentation offers insight for the IL community when welcoming and working with veterans who have disabilities and live in rural areas. Participants will engage group activities to reflect upon perceptions and realities that are often associated with “disabled veterans,” relative to geographic location, and unaddressed mental and physical disabilities. Focus placed on exploring creative and successful partnership opportunities with businesses, community agencies, faith-based organizations, and the Veterans Administration. Dr. Applewhite shares stories from fellow veterans who have used the euphemism “far out” to describe both their psycho-social and geographic access to resources. She will share her professional and personal experience as a person with a disability, who also served her country, and consults for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Disability is Sexy  
Kevin Corrigan and Elle Livengood**

**Emerald A**

At The Independence Center, we are disabled people building a community where people with all disabilities can thrive. Disability is Sexy prepares participants to engage in open conversations with disabled people in their communities about sex. Disabled people are sexual beings, worthy of love and pleasure. We will debunk societal misconceptions that can prevent us from seeing disabled people as whole, sexual beings while highlighting the real and diverse ways that people with disabilities engage in their sexuality. The workshop explores: accessibility and sex, people with IDD and their sexualities, sexual attraction and people with sensory disabilities, sexual relationships between disabled people and their caregivers, the impact of trauma on people’s experiences with sex and changes in sex after Traumatic Brain Injuries. Participants will leave with an expanded awareness of disabled people and how they can experience sex, new ways to talk about sex with people with diverse disabilities, increased confidence in supporting disabled people in their sexual lives, and strategies for including disabled people in sex education programs.

# Conference Agenda

**Advocacy After the APRIL Conference: Emerald B**  
**How to Get Youth Involved Advocacy in Your Community**  
**Deja Barber**

Are you a youth that wants to know how to be a better advocate once you get back to your community? Do you want to help youth in your area learn how to develop there advocacy skills ? This is the session for you! In this session you will learn the step by step process on how to make great youth advocates. Also you will learn about resources that can be given to the youth that will help in their journey. It will be a session on how to make advocacy fun and interactive! Youth.

**4:15-5:00 PM: Peer Support Time**

This year we wanted to hold a dedicated space and time for those who want to meet others working in the field in their line of work. Come ask questions of your peers, exchange business cards, and get to know one another a little more. With Community, We are stronger!

- Vandenberg A: CIL ED's, AD's and Program Managers
- Vandenberg B: SILCs
- Pearl: Advocacy Directors/Coordinators
- Gerald Ford: IL Specialists (Direct Service)
- Emerald A: Youth Consumers
- Emerald B: Youth Transition Coordinators

**6:30 PM - 9:00 PM**

**Ambassador Ballroom**

**Plated Dinner Awards Banquet & Raffle**

Entertainment, plated dinner, and cash bar. Help us honor our colleauges with our Linda Gonzales Award and Earl Walden Award. Listen as our youth get the final word on their experiences at APRIL. Celebrate and laugh with old friends and new as we build our spirits for the work ahead.  
(Name badges required)

# Conference Agenda

**Monday October 28th, 2019 9:00AM-11:00AM  
 Ambassador Ballroom**

**Plated Breakfast and Sendoff Keynote: Freedom Through Recovery  
 Scott Burlingame**

Independence, Inc. has spent a significant amount of time helping people living with behavioral health issues and addiction get out of and stay out of institutional living, specifically the jail and prison system. Explore how we have used the IL core services to assist people to find their own path to recovery and community living. We will also share how our CIL has been a partner as the state of North Dakota transitioned money away from the criminal justice system to provide community based care coordination, recovery, and peer support. We will share some outcomes and impacts of our work on the community and hope you go away considering how you and your community can be a part of this work.

**Safe Travels and See You Next Year in Orlando, Florida**

**October 9th-12th**

**Don't forget to go home with one of our APRIL T-shirts!**



## A Look Back in Time

**The letter below was shared with us by Mark Leeper from Disability Action Center Northwest and was from 1986 around the original formation of APRIL. We believe the Power of Rural is just as strong today. Thank you for taking a stroll down memory lane with us.**

During April, 1986, a group of independent living program administrators met in Houston under the auspices of the Independent Living Research Utilization Project to compare issues, analyses and problems. It was learned that there were striking commonalities among all of these programs engaged in the active delivery of rural independent living services. As a result, the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) was created.

The roots of the Independent Living Movement are in urban environments. Berkley, Houston, Boston and St. Louis are the places usually associated with the nascence of the movement. However, many disabled people live, and desire to continue living, in rural environments. As a result of Title VII Part B funding, there are, at least, 15 programs nationally, and probably more, currently engaged in delivering consumer-directed rural independent living services. The conditions, circumstances and opportunities disabled people experience in the truly rural environment are strikingly different from those experienced in the city. Services are sparse and archaic, attitudes are based in the charity/medical model, accessible public transportation, and usually, public transportation itself, are nonexistent. There is a marked lack of visible role models for the disabled person striking out towards independence. Most public facilities are not accessible. Choosing between services and/or service providers is a laughable concept--getting any services at all is the critical question. A rurally based severely disabled person is concerned with maintaining outside of a nursing home or public institution. Nuances regarding a program's "purity," charity-based origins, or the percentage of its budget devoted to long term residential services are issues which are patently irrelevant to the severely disabled rural person who wants to remain or become independent in the rural environment.

For rural independent living programs the questions of distance and money are constant and potentially overwhelming. Many of us provide services as



a branch of traditional rehabilitation or medical programs--not because of adherence to their philosophies or attitudes, but because they are willing to absorb, and/or due to their size, can minimize very real costs, such as office space, employee benefits, legal and accounting fees and the multitude of hidden but substantial costs which any organization incurs. Some of us run small group homes for people with mental illness or developmental disabilities. This is partly because of their ability to offset costs, but PRIMARILY because these are severely disabled people who would have no choice but to be institutionalized in these rural states without these programs.

APRIL is a national organization which is composed of consumer run programs which recognize their debt and allegiance to the urban based independent living programs which have served as models and inspirations to everyone in the movement. But, we firmly and unequivocally believe that because a rural lifestyle is a valid option for Americans in general, it must become a valid option for disabled Americans. We emphatically reject the notion that independent living is, by definition, a solely urban option, or that an individual or program can only identify with the national disability rights movement by choosing to locate in an urban environment. We believe that a person can be disabled, independent and rural. Country people have no monopoly or naivete. We therefore resist the naivete about rural environments which threaten and exclude us from the mainstream of the national movement. Therefore, we invite other truly consumer-based organizations in rural areas to inquire of the APRIL charter members listed below about membership in our organization. Eligibility for membership consists of: 1) providing documentation of substantial consumer management and policy-setting in the organization; 2) evidence of a distinct identity separate from a parent or umbrella organization, and 3) the provisions of services in a rural environment. It is our hope to work hand-in-hand with our urban-oriented sister and counterpart organization, NCIL, to continue to promote true independence and personal rights for disabled Americans--whether they choose, personally, to live in either the country or the city.

Margaret Bonds-Wares  
Operation LINK  
Hays, KS

Gene Christian (interim Internal Co-Chair)  
Stepping Stones, Inc.  
Moscow, ID

Devva Kasnitz  
Humboldt Access Project, Inc.  
Eureka, CA

Patti McDonald  
Handicap Reach Out, Inc.  
Chadron, NE

Brian Rogers (Interim External Co-Chair)  
Program for Independent Living  
University of Wisconsin  
Stout Vocational Development Center  
Menomonie, WE

Ron Sandness  
Rural Enterprises  
for Acceptable Living  
Marshall, MN

Linda Tonsing  
New Vistas Independent Living Center  
Santa Fe, NM

Andy Winnegar  
Summit ILC  
Missoula, MT

F. Matt McGill  
Disabled Citizens Alliance  
for Independence Inc.  
Viburnum, MD

Karen Newton  
North Central WV Center  
for Independent Living  
Morgantown, WV

# Celebrate and Honor Our Colleagues

## Linda Gonzales Award

Linda Gonzales was the first Executive Director of APRIL for 20 years, and truly was a visionary when it came to including youth with disabilities as leaders in the rural Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement and more specifically, the APRIL youth movement. We are proud to announce this year's Linda Gonzales Award for outstanding Rural Youth:

### Elisabeth Harkins

Elisabeth graduated high school with honors in 2018 and completed her first year of college. She is a part of Student Government at her college and a campus ambassador. She is a Girl Scout Gold Award Recipient for her project focused on helping children at a shelter for women and children from abusive situations. Elisabeth started a sign language club at her high school and led the meetings teaching basic ASL as well as introducing members to deaf culture. She also lead an ASL workshop for girls at a week long summer camp, called Girls Rock with girls from all over the state of South Carolina.



Elisabeth is a member of an international support group for girls with Scoliosis, called Curvy Girls. About 8 years ago, there wasn't a group anywhere near her so she wrote the head of the organization and asked to start a chapter for the state of South Carolina and became (and still is) the chapter leader. She provides mentoring, peer support and helps spread awareness. Every other summer she attends the International Curvy Girls Conference to get training on advocating, being a group leader, and other things.

For the last seven years, Elisabeth has requested the Governor of South Carolina to issue a state proclamation declaring June as Scoliosis Awareness Month as well as asking the Mayor of North Augusta to declare June early detection month in a city proclamation for the past six years. Elisabeth recently completed her Peer Support Training and Certification through the local CIL after working there all summer through a VR work experience program. She helped with eye glass distribution at rural senior citizen centers and helped lead fire safety

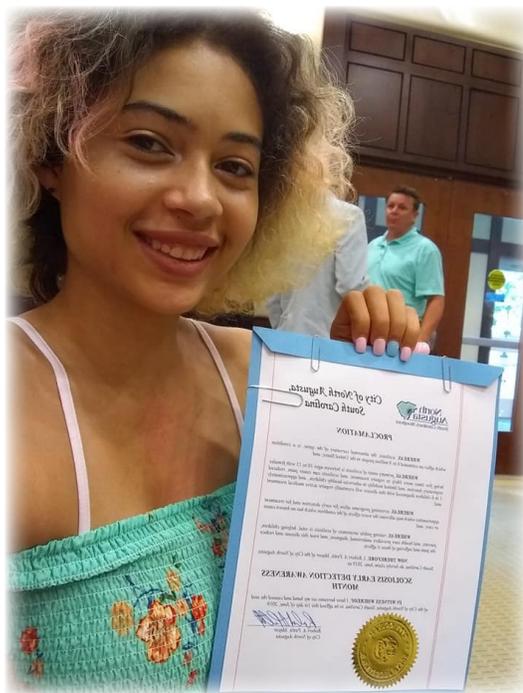
# Celebrate and Honor Our Colleagues

workshops for seniors and those with disabilities in rural areas.

Elisabeth is one of the strong leaders in the local CIL youth group (Be You). She helps to plan and organize the group activities and stays in touch with her group members to remind them of meetings and events. She is a national board member of KASA (Kids as Self Advocates) and recently attended their board meeting and training in Washington, DC. She likes to write poetry and wrote a few poems about inclusion and advocacy, one of which she read at the closing ceremonies of NCIL. She is also a member of the NCIL youth Caucus.

Elisabeth is a strong advocate for herself and others and is constantly looking to learn more and grow more in the independent living movement. She lives the phrase, “Nothing about us, Without us.”

Congratulations Elisabeth! Thank you for all your hard work in rural advocacy.

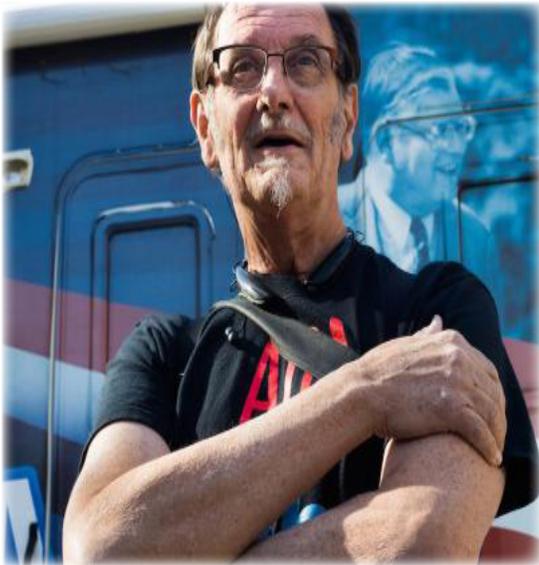


# Celebrate and Honor Our Colleagues

## Earl Walden Award

In the early days of APRIL, Earl was a great friend and supporter of our new organization. As a colleague who worked at ILRU (Independent Living Research Utilization) in Houston, Earl had a heart as big as Texas and a gift for finding resources or solutions to problems. He took APRIL under his wing when we needed an advocate on our side. It is our honor to announce this year's Earl Walden Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Advocacy:

### Tom Olin



Tom Olin is no stranger to the disability rights and independent living movement. Many of you have probably been inspired at some point in your disability career by the historic and breathtaking photographs Tom has taken of our movement throughout the last several decades, some of which have found their place in the Smithsonian, others that have been turned into murals and curated art events. The late disability rights pioneer Justin Dart said in an interview with [enabledonline](#), "Tom Olin is a great, dedicated patriot and photographer of our movement. His contributions will live long after the pyramids of the pharaohs have crumbled to dust." There are also many of us who have had the honor and privilege of being mentored and encouraged to continue

our work in the trenches directly by Tom as well. He has won numerous awards, too many to count, and earned every one of them. We at APRIL also want to recognize Tom for his trip across the country, visiting 48 states, taking many rural roads and re-energizing advocates across the country with his American's with Disabilities Act 25th Anniversary tour "Road to Freedom."

One colleague, Janine Bertram stated, " Tom Olin has contributed an unusual and exceptional collection of photos documenting the history of the cross disability rights movement. He is a brilliant social documentarian and the Olin Collection has been featured in major galleries and key print and online publications too numerous to

## Celebrate and Honor Our Colleagues

mention. Tom is less known for his utter dedication to building and strengthening the grassroots disability movement. Tom's sole concern in work has been building the disability movement and he has done so without taking a paid position in non-profit or government organizations like many of us have. He has tirelessly volunteered his time and his wisdom to build up our youth in the movement and to fight for disability rights, justice, and economic empowerment."

In his own words, in a Disability Visibility Project interview, Tom explains why he does the work of documenting our movement. "It was important to show that we were as strong and as mighty as anyone, if sometimes not even more. I mean, you know, it was important to capture our movement, to capture people in a way that was important for us. I mean, how many times have you been pat on your head, you know, and had someone try to save you so you can walk? It just is way, way beyond. And you have to break that down, replace those images with images of power. I enjoy doing that."

Tom has a way of bringing people together, and finding ways to give our movement that extra edge with his creativity. Whether it was cutting apart the stars on an American flag to reimagine a symbol of freedom for people with disabilities with the ADAPT iconic flag, or coming up with a catchy tagline to capture the moment, Tom was your guy. He truly believes with every fiber in his soul that Civil Rights belong to everyone, and has proved it through his participation in many civil rights movements, not just disability.

The love and the passion he has for bridging together different people from all backgrounds and helping them find their strength and commonalities amazes me. He is always concerned with others and with ensuring that as a movement we continue to move forward together, never shying away from the difficult conversations, but always coming at them from a place of love.

Thank you Tom, for your years in the trenches and for continuing to push us all forward. For those that would like to continue to support the work that Tom does, documenting our movement and building it from the grassroots up, you can purchase a Tom Olin photo or make a contribution by emailing Janine Bertram at: [janinebk@mac.com](mailto:janinebk@mac.com)

## Celebrate and Honor Our Colleagues



**Darrell Lynn Jones** was the founding executive director of one of the first Title VII funded CILs in the country, Rochester (NY) Center for Independent Living. She was also the training director at NCIL. For most of us, we know Darrell as the project director for the IL-NET at ILRU (Independent Living Research Utilization) where she has worked since 2002. Darrell has been a force in the IL movement, a confidant, a training guru, and a friend to many of us.

Although Darrell isn't at the conference this year, we feel that her 'ease' into retirement is one that cannot go unrecognized. She has believed in many of us and our talents in the movement when we might not have believed in ourselves. She has been a true partner and ally to APRIL and our training and technical assistance endeavors throughout the years. Her attention to detail and her vast knowledge of the IL movement has helped many keep their doors open and created opportunities for others to grow beyond belief. Ann McDaniel, ED of WV SILC stated, "I had met Darrell when she worked for NCIL and really got to know her when she started at ILRU. She is a wise and wonderful woman with a great sense of humor. She is someone I turn to for advice and we have a great working relationship. Darrell is an IL leader and an important part of our history – we need to capture more of her knowledge and experience!" Kimberly Tissot, ED ABLE SC said, "Darrel Jones—the lady who truly boosted my confidence in my early days of being an ED! She is the one who instilled my love for teaching others on a national level and was always eager to listen to me when I needed to get on my soapbox. Darrell, thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are truly an incredible woman!"

We are excited for Darrell and as she settles into next adventure. Her longtime colleague, Paula McElwee sums up many of our sentiments, "Darrell, you and I were both much younger when we met in 1980, the first time the directors of the Rehabilitation Act funded Centers got together. Whenever our paths have crossed through the years I have been reminded of how deeply you love Independent Living. Working more closely with you has been a joy. I will miss our conversations, our brainstorming, the sharing and the laughter. May you thoroughly enjoy this next phase of your life. Post pictures so we can continue to share!"

# Celebrate and Honor Our Colleagues

## Tim Sheehan

We want to recognize our outgoing APRIL board President, Tim Sheehan. Tim has been at the helm for the past six years and his service will be greatly missed. His commitment to the Independent Living Philosophy is second to none. Of his many talents, one is his ability to analyze policy and break it down into ordinary language. He has the brains of an attorney, a scientist, a sociologist and the soul of a musician all rolled into one. He has had many accomplishments at APRIL, including leading the charge on the 21st Century Investment for CILS, bringing light to the amount of money CILS need to provide adequate services.

Tim has been a friend, a confidant, an advocate, and a champion of rural issues. Although Tim couldn't make it to this year's conference, we wanted to honor and recognize him as a force in the rural IL community. Tim has been a huge supporter of our youth movement, always lending financial and other support to continue our efforts. His voice of reason and his knowledge of advocacy have been a staple for many of us. Tim is passionate, authentic, and will never leave you guessing about what he really thinks about an issue at hand. We wish Tim the best, and hope we still see him lurking in future APRIL Conferences.



## About Our Welcome & Closing Keynotes



**Julie Hocker** joined ACL as the Commissioner of the Administration on Disabilities on October 1, 2018. Hocker brings to the role extensive experience in operational process improvement, risk management, and effectiveness assessment. Ms. Hocker joins ACL from the Charles Koch Foundation, where she served as a senior manager. In that role, she led several key initiatives to improve the foundation's operations, including development of an integrated technology and data solution for fundraising, grantmaking and expenditures; redesigning process to improve investment tracking and enable better analysis of effectiveness; and creation and implementation of risk-management processes. Previously, she served in a variety of roles with The Vanguard Group and as an analyst for the Administration for Children and

Families. In addition, she has been a senior policy fellow for the Center for Human Dignity at the American Conservative Union Foundation since 2015. Ms. Hocker earned an undergraduate degree in economics and political science from St. Mary's College of Maryland and Master of Business Administration from the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



**Scott Burlingame** is the Executive Director of Independence Inc., a Resource Center for Independent Living in Minot, ND. Scott has developed a system of service delivery that encourages community participation, leadership development, and empowerment to create systems change. Scott was awarded the Earl Walden Award by APRIL in 2015. He has also been on the APRIL board of Directors in various roles, including the Advocacy Chair and Future Track Committee leader.

## About Our Luncheon Keynotes



**Mark Leeper** is the Executive Director at Disability Action Center NW. His extensive experience has been accessed from businesses all over, and he directs personal advocacy to make a difference. He has been the Chair of the WA SILC, and been in various leadership positions in the IL world for years.



**Michael Beers** is the Youth Coordinator at Summit Independent Living Center in Missoula, MT. Mike has sat on the Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees, several terms on the APRIL board as a youth and then as a member at large, and has held various positions on various boards and councils throughout the country since he was old enough to do so. Mike helped start the APRIL youth conference and the APRIL youth mentoring program



Liz Sherwin joined the staff of the Illinois-Iowa Center for Independent Living (IICIL) in 1988 and the Executive Director in 1998. The center serves people with disabilities in western Illinois and eastern Iowa. She is the president of the Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and a facilitator for the Iowa State Association for Independent Living (ISAIL) and a board member of the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL). She is past president of Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) and past president of the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Springfield, Illinois.

She is past-president of her local NAACP branch and a commissioner on the Bi-State Regional Planning Commission representing her metropolitan area. She is a trainer with IL-NET National Training and Technical Assistance Center at ILRU on their Disability, Diversity and Intersectionality Project. She is one of April's first "peer mentors" and continues to serve in that capacity.

## About Our Presenters

**Melissa Ann “Mellie” Santora** is the Director of Innovation at Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council and the Founding Executive Director of Diverse Ability Incorporated, where she coordinates Arizona Youth Leadership Forum, Arizona Youth Engagement Academy, and their Alumni Association. For nearly 30 years, Mellie has served people who have disabilities in a variety of capacities, and is highly regarded for pioneering projects, programs, and practices that promote access, inclusion, equity, and engagement, particularly for youth. Having acquired the first of her disabilities as a young adult, Mellie actively embraces those she has more recently acquired, and strives for excellence in all that she endeavors to be and do. Mellie is delighted that some of the Arizona Youth Leaders will be presenting at the APRIL Conference this year!

**Danita Applewhite**, PhD, CRC (aka Dr. “Apple”) is Chair of the AZ SILC. She is the Founder of White Apple Institute, a Talk Show Host, Army Veteran, Retired Psychology Professor and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, and Author. She also serves as Vice Chair of the AZ State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and is a Lifetime Member of DAV and PVA.

**Dylan Ashley** is an individual and community advocate located in Seattle, Washington. As a former Youth Transition

Specialist at the Utah Independent Living Center, they taught over 300 students across the Salt Lake Valley. They currently serve as the Board Treasurer for the Lavender Rights Project as well as the Social Media Chair for APRIL’s YSC.

**Deja Barber** I am a 25 year old youth advocate, I am an executive member of the NCSILC. Also I was on this year’s Youth Steering Committee at the APRIL youth conference as the Vice Chair. I am currently going to graduate school to obtain my Masters in School Counseling. My goal is to help youth become better advocates!

**Julie Bosma**, Executive Director, started at RAMP in 1992 and has been an active part of the development and implementation of all of the school curriculums.

**Renee Cencer** is a Certified Employment Support Professional that services transition age students in a partnership with MRS and Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District. She is a voting member of APSE’s employment professional support certification council responsible for all essential decisions related to the development, administration, and ongoing maintenance of the CESP™ certification program. Renee resides in Traverse City with her husband and is the mom to three grown children as well as grandma to one granddaughter.



## About Our Presenters

**Caitlin Chlosta** has been a youth transition specialist with Disability Network Northern Michigan for 3 years. She is completing her Master's degree in Recreation Therapy through Indiana University and enjoys implementing hands on experiential learning in the classroom. Caitlin lives in Traverse City with her husband and dog and enjoys taking part in all outdoor activities that Northern Michigan has to offer. She believes the key to successful youth programming is open communication and collaboration between all invested parties.

**Rebecca Cokley** is the founder of the Disability Justice Initiative at the Center for American Progress. She has spent her career working to improve education, access, and advocacy on key issues facing the disability community.

**Kristen Conrad** L.M.S.W, is the Transition Manager at Disability Network Northern Michigan. She has worked with transition age youth for 15 years. She facilitates groups during the school year and summer for students. She trains, oversees staff and works with agency partners to develop new programs in DNNM's 17 counties.

**Kathy Cooper** is the ED for the SILC of Kansas. She has a long history of IL and advocacy in KS and some of her previous positions include; Coordinator for Capacity Building Initiative for KS Rehab Services, the

Director of HCBS at Coalition for Independence, and the Legislative Advocate at Resource Center for Independent Living.

**Kevin Corrigan** is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and Saint Louis University School of Medicine. He completed his pediatric residency training at the University of Louisville. He practiced pediatrics in Colorado Springs for eight years, prior to acquiring a brain injury. Most recently, he has 7 years of experience working at the Independence Center in Colorado Springs as a peer support specialist and TBI support group leader.

**Rene Cummins** is a researcher with the SE ADA Center. Rene has been a CIL Director & SILC member, and currently is a member of APRIL and NCIL. For 15 plus years, Rene has been a trainer for the SE ADA Center, and has provided training on the ADA & other disability rights laws.

**Yeva Davis** was adopted from Ukraine when she was 2. She has a learning disability and Tourette's. She moved to CO in 2015 and found a good school with an accommodating learning style. She was worried about how to find a job and make it on her own in the future. Her mom found out about YLF and told Yeva

## About Our Presenters

what it was about. She was excited and nervous because she didn't know what it was. Once she tried it she fell in love with it. She was an Alumni in 2018, now she is a counselor and still representing YLF around the nation.

**Ian Engle** Prior to taking his current position at NWCCI in August 2013, Ian was ED at the Center for People with Disabilities (the ILC based in Boulder) and before that he was Executive Director for the SouthWest Center for Independence with a main office in Durango. Ian sustained a spinal cord injury in a 40-foot fall from a tree on October 1, 1994. He was hired as an advocate with Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, defending and enforcing the rights of people with disabilities. This work focused on investigating abuse and neglect in nursing homes as well as state and private institutions. Ian quickly developed a life-long passion for working with people to have more freedom and control over our own lives through exercising our right to choose and direct community-based services. Ian began delivering speeches and facilitating workshops on the conference circuit for human rights and social justice non-profit organizations, with a focus on nursing home transition and person-centered planning. Ian gained experience handling administrative duties, managing organizational budgets, facilitating dialogue-based interactive learning in participatory workshops, and organizing

people to effectively address systemic issues in order to affect public policy. He enjoys connecting people with resources to further independence for many who are capable of doing more, in the larger community, for themselves and each other. Ian benefits from his companion, Montezuma, whose commitment to service makes him an outstanding proponent of Independent Living.

**Mels Felton** (they/them pronouns) is an Independent Living Advocate for the Disability Action Center. Located in the Inland Northwest, their work concentrates on youth transition and radical advocacy.

**Laura George's** journey into being an Emergency Management Disability Liaison began almost 13 years ago, as a result, an unexpected triple left turn. Since that time she has made it her mission to promote positive inclusive community collaboration, education, and communication on the topic of emergency design. Currently, she is an Inclusive Community Director for No Town Left Behind, support person for the Miracle Collaboration League, Public Relations for Storm Trooper Network and sits on a variety of committees including the National Council of Independent Living-Emergency Preparedness since 2009.

## About Our Presenters

She has authored a workbook called, “Emergency Preparedness Plan,” which speaks for you when no one else is available to speak for you when you or no one else can. She is also published in Exceptional Parent Magazine, an educator, presenter, two-time caregiver, and mom.

**Lillie Greiman** has worked for RTC: Rural since 2012. She received her MA in Geography from the University of Montana and her research interests include housing, community participation, community development and large dataset analysis. She is invested in working with community partners to help find and develop the tools they need to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Born and raised in Montana she enjoys exploring Montana’s backroads, small towns and rural landscapes.

**Sara Grivetti** PhDc, MA, CRC, CEO of Disability Network/Michigan, has nearly 20 years of experience working with CILs. One of her primary projects is serving as the CIL lead for Michigan’s No Wrong Door efforts, including NFT and Options Counseling.

**Jennifer “Jai” Hale-Gallardo**, PhD, is a Health Science Specialist and a medical anthropologist at the Office of Rural Health Resource Center in Gainesville, FL. Her research focuses on the social, cultural and

environmental determinants of health for rural Veterans and how the VA can better meet their long-term independent living needs.

**Whitney Harris** holds a Bachelor of Applied Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics from St. Petersburg College in 2012. After the completion of her residency in Denver, CO, she became a Certified Prosthetist by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics, and Pedorthics. Learning that her passion was in disability advocacy and not patient care, Whitney switched career paths and returned to Florida to work in the non-profit industry for three years before joining the team at the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology as Comptroller. Whitney fills her time with multiple volunteer roles. She currently sits as Youth Member on the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living’s Board of Directors, Secretary for the Association of Youth Leadership Forums, Public Member Director of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, a long-time volunteer at Florida’s YLF and council member for the Florida SILC. She is currently attending the University of Central Florida to obtain her Masters in Nonprofit Management.

## About Our Presenters

**Tannis Hargrove** has worked at the RTC: Rural since 2012. She has a B.S. in Sociology from Montana State University and an M.S. in Health Promotion from the University of Montana. In her free time she enjoys walks with her dog, being outdoors and riding her bike.

### **Jaime Harrell**

**Danny Housley** is the Assistive Technology Acquisition Manager with Tools for Life, Georgia's AT Act Program overseeing Credit-Able, Georgia's Alternative Financing Program. He finds funding solutions and resources for people with disabilities to increase or maintain their independence. Danny is also the board chair for disABILITY LINK in Atlanta.

**Paul Jones** is the manager of the National AgrAbility Project, a USDA-funded program for agricultural workers with disabilities administered through the Breaking New Ground Resource Center at Purdue University. He has been with Purdue's Agricultural Safety and Health Program since 1998 and began managing the National AgrAbility Project in 2008.

**Mimi Kinney** is the Transition Coordinator at Traverse Bay Area ISD. Wesley Cross and Ruthy Ransom are counselors at MRS who work with transition age youth. Renee Cencer is an employment specialist who contracts with MRS to provide services for transition age youth. All members contribute to the successful partnership between the agencies.

**Luke Koppisch** has more than 20 years of experience in the disabilities field before joining the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) in 2009 as Transition Coordinator. In 2012, he became ACI's Deputy Director, overseeing independent living planning, information and referral services, as well as housing, transition and employment readiness programs. Luke was also employed for 7.5 years at the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities, where he co-facilitated the Monday Morning Project, a statewide advocacy effort. He has a Bachelor's of Arts degree in political science and a Master's of Arts degree in Education, both from Seton Hall University.

**Autumn Kubatzke** County Manager Started at RAMP in 2013 and currently oversees the direct services in her county as well as assists with the Youth Curriculum and programs for outreach and logistics.

## About Our Presenters

**Joan LaBelle** is the Executive Director of Disabled Resource Services (DRS), one of nine Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Colorado. Joan has lived with her disability since the age of five. She has more than 35 years (both as a youth and an adult) within the disability movement. In addition, she is the current Colorado SILC Chair.

**Elle Livengood** holds her Master's Degree in Deaf Education and has taught in both Residential Deaf Schools and Mainstream programs across the country. As a teacher, activist and community advocate, Elle works to educate people about disability awareness, intersectionality, healthcare access and assistance animal rights and responsibilities.

**Michael Lefevor** is currently the Interim Executive Director for the Utah Statewide Independent Living Council (USILC). Prior to joining the staff at USILC, he worked at a CIL as a Community Integration and Youth Coordinator and served as a Council member. Michael has worked in the independent living field for 9 years and in the disability community for 14 years. He holds a degree in Nonprofit Management and loves working with youth. In 2013, he was one of the founders of the NINJA (New Ideas to Network Junior Advocates) Youth Leadership Conference, Utah's version of a YLF.

He is married to a beautiful wife and has 2 wonderful children. He loves the outdoors, requires cookies at every function and lives by the moto "Life is too Boring to be Boring."

**Joseph L. Lugo** serves within the Center for Innovation & Partnership within U.S. Administration for Community Living. He is currently serving as the Acting Director for the Office of Network Advancement. Joseph joined AoA in 2006 and has served as the Team Lead for multiple initiatives including Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), No Wrong Door System, Person Centered Counseling Training Program and Veteran Directed Care Program. Prior to joining ACL, Joseph served in the Division of Planning, Research & Development at the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA). During his tenure at IDoA, he led the roll-out of Illinois' ADRC initiative, Illinois' implementation of the National Family Caregiver Support Program and served as Bureau Chief over the aged/disabled Medicaid Waiver program. His experience prior to this time was as a budget analyst for the Office of Management and Budget under the Executive Office of the Governor. He received a Master's Degree in Gerontology in 2002 and a Graduate Certificate in Public Management Practices in 1997 both from the University of Illinois at Springfield.

## About Our Presenters

**Rosemary McDonnell-Horita** is a fierce, determined disability advocate, and an educator. She is a queer, disabled, Asian American woman raised in Southern California. Through her advocacy work, she is constantly re-imagining the world around her to include disabled youth, queer/trans communities, and inserting the voices of youth of color. Currently, Rosemary is the Youth Transitions Coordinator at Atlantis Community, one of the first Independent Living Centers in the country. She strongly believes in honoring those who came before her and leading the way for future generations to continue to lead and make change in this world.

**Paula McElwee** directed Link, Inc., in 1979 based in Hays, Kansas, one of the first ten centers funded through the Rehabilitation Act. She worked in the disability field in Kansas for 25 years, and was appointed by two governors to serve three terms on the Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas. In 2000 McElwee relocated to Fresno, California, where she serves on the board of Resources for Independence of the Central Valley, a long-standing California Center. Since 2006 she has also served as interim ED for four CILs in California, assisting the boards to transition to their next executive director. Since October, 2012, McElwee has worked with Independent Living Resource Utilization (ILRU) based in Houston, TX as the Technical Assistance Coordinator through its IL-NET, CIL-NET

and SILC-NET programs. For access to the on-line technical assistance resources go to [www.ilru.org](http://www.ilru.org) McElwee can be reached by phone at 559-250-3082 or by email at [paulamcelwee.ilru@gmail.com](mailto:paulamcelwee.ilru@gmail.com). And be sure to subscribe to her TA blog at [ilnet-ta.org](http://ilnet-ta.org).

**Caity Mcmanis** joined the Independent Living movement after her health problems arose at nineteen. When presented with the opportunity to become a part of the Youth Leadership Forum, the event sparked her passion and drive for IL and youth transition. She has since worked with the Colorado Youth Leadership Forum as staff and Division of VR in her rural town as a job coach.

**Leanne Murillo** is the Socialization through Recreation Coordinator and Empowering Youth in Transition Coordinator at ABILITY360 for the past 19 years. She got her Bachelor's degree in Therapeutic Recreation from ASU in 2000 and Bachelor's in Business Management and Sociology from Ashland University in 1992. Leanne is a Certified Recreational Therapeutic Specialist for the past 19 years working with individuals with any type of disability. The purpose of the RT process is to improve or maintain physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual functioning to facilitate full participation in life. Leanne has lived in AZ the past 24 years enjoying all the sunshine provided during the summer and winter!



## About Our Presenters

**Alice Nichols**, Curriculum Services Manager, has been with RAMP since 2017 and has fully rewritten the iBelong curriculum to better inform elementary students regarding 8 different disabilities. She also rewrote the Ignite curriculum to better prepare middle schoolers to participate in their IEP meetings and transition to high school.

**Jennie Ostermiller** is a youth coordinator at Options for Independence in Logan, Utah. Jennie teaches people with ID/DD comprehensive sexual education across Utah through a collaboration with our local sexual assault crisis center. Jennie is passionate about Independent Living, education, abuse prevention and sexual self-advocacy.

**Audra Paletta** is a 2014 graduate of Arizona Youth Leadership Forum (AZYLF) and a 2018 graduate of Arizona Youth Engagement Academy. Elected the Inaugural Chair of the Arizona Youth Leadership Initiatives (AZYLI) Alumni Association, Audra now works as the Peer-Based Training Coordinator for Diverse Ability Incorporated and serves on the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council. Audra is a college student, and the proud mommy of a terrific two-year-old daughter.

**Freddy Perez** serves as the Community Outreach Associate for the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, bridging relationships with individuals, families, caregivers, and medical professionals who

have a connection with spinal cord injury or any type of mobility impairment. He works to inform diverse communities by developing new ways to raise awareness of the Paralysis Resource Center – a free, comprehensive, national source of informational support for people living with paralysis and their caregivers. Freddy holds a Bachelor of Science in Health Services Administration with a focus on Health and Equity from Drexel University and has previously served as a Health Educator in New York City.

**Peter J. Pike**, Colorado Office of Independent Living Services, has 30 years' experience assisting people with disabilities navigating federal disability programs, public assistance programs, and obtaining competitive employment. His personal experience with disability has provided a perspective that drives his motivation to improve services for people with disabilities and advocate for equality.

**Dr. Craig Ravesloot** is a Clinical Psychologist and Research Professor of Psychology at the University of Montana where he has been directing rural disability, health and community living research for the Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities for over 30 years.

## About Our Presenters

**Anaya Robinson** is a Latinx queer trans man, born and raised in West Michigan, who now calls Denver home. He is currently the Associate Director of Atlantis Community, Inc. and has been working in disability advocacy with a system focus for nearly 7 years. He has 6 years of non-profit management experience and believes that collectively working from an intersectional anti-oppressive lens is the only way to fully dismantle systems of privilege and power and achieve true equity and justice.

**Chris Roe** is past Chair and current Treasurer of the Colorado Statewide Independent Living Council. He has worked on housing and services for persons with disabilities for over 45 years. His work includes providing training and technical assistance for local, state and national organizations, and submitting grant applications that have brought over \$20 million in affordable housing for persons with disabilities to Colorado annually.

**Dr. Rayna Sage** is a Rural Sociologist who earned her PhD from Washington State University. Rayna studies disability, gender, and economic inequality, focusing on ways to enhance the vitality of rural labor markets and community support systems. She also has 10 years' experience teaching courses in Rural Sociology and Sociology of the Family.

**Carlos Santos** has been an advocate for disability rights and received his B.A. in Political Science from Adams State University while also studying Spanish. He has been involved in various non-profits and for the last 3 years he has been involved with the Colorado Statewide Independent Living Council in planning the Colorado Youth Leadership forum beginning in 2018.

**Leo Santos** was diagnosed with Gout at 16 years of age and was able to manage it well until 24 years of age. Then, due to complications related to this aggressive form of gout, Leo had to have his foot amputated. Since that time, he has learned to live with a prosthetic and advocate for himself. Leo first became involved with Advocacy and Independent Living as a participant in the first Colorado Youth Leadership Forum. Since, he has continued to, as an alumnus of the forum, attend events, help organize the second year forum, recruit new delegates, and worked as staff at the 2019 YLF. Leo has enjoyed meeting new people and making new friends which have been his goals since beginning his work as an advocate. One of his goals is to begin to walk again even if for a short period of time and his interests are all things outdoors. Leo just completed his first hike since his amputation with a company called No Barriers at Arapahoe Basin on August 24th. The hike was over 12,000 feet.

## About Our Presenters

**Kelsey Shinnick Goddard** (MA, University of Kansas, 2017) is a doctoral student in the Department of Applied Behavioral Science and a Research Project Coordinator for the Research and Training Center on Promoting Interventions for Community Living (RTC/PICL) at The University of Kansas, USA. Her research interests include independent living, health promotion and policy, and community participation for people with disabilities. In pursuit of her work as a scholar advocate, she has presented research findings to the United States Access Board in Washington, DC, and has served as a committee member on the Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns in Topeka, KS. She identifies as a person with a disability herself and strives to bring awareness to disability concerns through the intersection of research, policy, and advocacy.

**Evan Shockley** started having seizures the day after his 15th birthday. By the time he was 17 he lost his license because of his seizures. A few years later he was homeless for 3 years before he found his local CIL. As an Alumni of YLF, he is now a sought after presenter on disability advocacy around the state and nationally. Evan also serves on the local Housing Authority Board of Directors.

**Mica Stewart** is a 2014 graduate of Arizona Youth Leadership Forum (AZYLF) and a 2017 graduate of Arizona Youth Engagement Academy. Elected to the AZYLF Leadership Team, and then as Co-Chair of the Arizona

Youth Leadership Initiatives (AZYLI) Alumni Association, he now works as its Logistics Coordinator. Mica serves as the Secretary of the Diverse Ability Incorporated Board of Directors, and is a full-time student at Arizona State University where he studies Computer Information Systems.

**Dr. Corinna Stiles** has held professional positions in the disability community since graduating law school in 2000. She started her career as the Advocacy Director at the Idaho Protection and Advocacy Agency from 2001-2012. In 2012, she moved to the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Education to work as a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist. Dr. Stiles moved to the Administration for Community Living in 2014 and is currently the Acting Director of the Office of Independent Living Programs. Since earning her PhD in May 2018 from the University of Idaho after defending her dissertation *Second Life: Virtual World Case Studies Exploring Self-Determination of Adults with Developmental Disability*, she likes to hit the open road and experience all that local communities have to offer. She has just over 50,000 miles on her 2016 Harley Softail Deluxe and has ridden through 36 states.

## About Our Presenters

**Ned Stoller** is a certified ATP, the agricultural engineer for Easterseals Michigan AgrAbility, and the developer of DisabilityWorkConsulting.com. Ned's mission is to improve the quality of life for farmers and skilled-trades workers by finding assistive technology and methods that minimize physical pain, improve safety, and enable productivity.

**Linda Taylor** has been the ED at the Center for Independence in Western CO for the past 15 years. The Center has grown from a rented space in a defunct Union Carbide building in 2006 to a 21,000+ square foot facility that will be wholly paid off by January 2020. Our Center houses 7 other non-profits that share the common space and collaborate on services. In addition, CFI Has opened two satellite offices. This last year CFI had 889 unduplicated consumers receiving 10,055 services. Rents, Interest, Fee arrangements with the Social Security Administration, DVR, and DEAF Interpreting all totaled grossed \$254,817.77. Prior to that Linda worked for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Community Hospital, Disabled Ski Program at Powderhorn Ski Area and Vail, CO Mountain College, and CO Workforce Center in Steamboat Springs. Originally from Kansas City, Linda has found her permanent home on the rivers and mountains of Western CO.

**Kenneth Thompson** provides technical assistance, and training on accessible transportation, the ADA, and

service planning. His over 30 years' experience working in disability services includes managing a transportation system. Ken holds a Master's in Public Affairs from Hood College. He has completed the ADA Coordinator's Training Certification Program.

**Kimberly Tissot** proudly serves as the Executive Director of Able SC where she guides the staff in applying the philosophy of independent living to real situations. Kimberly believes in the value of individualized and community-based empowerment as she wants people to recognize their full potential. Under Kimberly's leadership, Able SC has experienced years of growth, success and has become a nationally recognized Center for Independent Living. Kimberly's road to disability rights began at an early age, after having her leg amputated from a rare childhood cancer, Alveolar rhabdomyosarcoma. Kimberly began deciding her style of mobility, becoming the first soccer player with a disability in her town, and speaking up anytime she was treated differently. Kimberly has over 20 years of experience advocating for disability inclusion on a local, state and federal level, and also internationally! Kimberly holds a Bachelor of Science degree in human development from Boston University, Wheelock College of Education and a Master of Social Work from the University of South Carolina.

## About Our Presenters

**Libby Waechter** Diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at birth, Liberty knew as a little girl that she wanted to be part of something great and sought to teach others about the disabled community. She wanted to be a voice for people who can't speak up for themselves, like her twin brother James. He was also born with CP but a stroke at four weeks old led to his needs being more significant than hers. She joined the "Spread The Word To End The Word" campaign where she brought awareness to how hurtful it can be when somebody uses the "R Word" as a form of slang. Over the years, she has been going to different schools and sharing her experiences with staff all across the board. She gave them advice on how to make their school a more inclusive and accessible environment. She got accepted onto the "Girls Leadership Council" (GLC) where she learned tools to help advocate for young girls and women on being treated equally in the workforce as well as academically. While attending she was given the tools and advice for starting her own foundation inspiring girls with disabilities, and also got the honor of meeting the former first lady Michelle Obama. She was Miss Teen CO (2017) where she got to volunteer for different organizations around the state of CO. Summer (2019) she got accepted into the "YLF," where she learned how to advocate for her disability needs and went to the Atlantis center of Denver CO to learn about the disability movement and history.

**Rebecca Williams** has been employed as the lead Information Specialist since 2011 for the Southeast ADA Center. She provides technical assistance to callers throughout the southeast on the ADA. She has presented dozens of workshops and trainings to a wide variety of audiences both locally and nationally. She has been an audio describer since 2004.

**Luz Semeah**, PhD, is an Associated Health Fellow within the Health Services Research and Development Service at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (NF/SG VHS), Gainesville, FL. She holds a Ph.D in Housing and a Master of Public Administration from the Center for Public Administration and Policy, both degrees from Virginia Polytechnic. Before coming to NF/SG VHS, she completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Florida, which was funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR).

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Our researchers are partnering with centers for independent living and their consumers to increase community living and participation.



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**Living Well in the Community (LWC)** is for people to set goals for overall quality of life and wellbeing.



## To get started:

- Visit the HCL or RTC: Rural vendor table
- Talk to someone with an **“Ask me about HCL”** button
- Visit [healthycommunityliving.com](http://healthycommunityliving.com)



The Reeve Foundation Paralysis Resource Center provides much-needed information, programs, emotional support and customized assistance to individuals living with paralysis, along with their caregivers, families and medical professionals.

## Paralysis Resource Center

### **FREE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

- Information Specialists • Community Education • Quality of Life Grants
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The ADA National Network provides information, guidance, and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act to individuals, businesses, and employers at the local, state, and national levels.



The ADA National Network is funded through NIDILRR, a center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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## Many Thanks

We are grateful to all the wonderful workshop presenters for sharing your information and lessons learned with the conference.

Thank you so much to our on the ground Michigan organizing team, especially Laura St. Louis, Community Organizer at Disability Advocates of Kent County for sitting on all our conference committee calls and helping us plan from a far.

Thank you to ILRU team to putting on another wonderful Preconference this year for us!

We appreciate the many months of hard work that our Youth Steering Committee puts in every year to put on a spectacular event for our youth. Especially our Chair, Mels Felton.

A special thanks to the Gun Lake Tribes for blessing our event on this very special anniversary year.

We appreciate all our sponsors, volunteers and vendors from the bottom of our hearts. We can not make this happen without you!

Thank you to our Board Members for all their volunteer hours and support through this process.

And to all of our attendees. Thank you for choosing APRIL. YOU are the reason we put so many months of work into our program to make it the best it can be.



The Power of Rural  
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# Notes



25th Annual National Rural Independent Living Conference  
Grand Rapids, MI October 25th-28th, 2019

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