**ROUGHLY EDITED TRANSCRIPT**

**APRIL**

**"Silly Old Barriers:**

**SILCs Are For Youth Too"**

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>> Hello again for folks just joining us. We'll be getting started at the top of the hour in about five minutes or so. Will our speakers please go ahead and press star 2 to raise your hand and I'll get your mics live.

Your mic is live. Who do I have with me?

>> ANYA CARRILLO: This is Tasha from the youth advisory committee of Florida.

>> MARY OLSON: I'll go ahead and leave your mic live and you can mute and unmute from home. Okay?

>> Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: Who did I just unmute? Is that you, J.T.?

>> This is Kathy from Dakota Center for Independent Living in Bismarck, North Dakota.

>> MARY OLSON: Oh, hi. Do you have a question?

>> Nope, just here to listen.

>> MARY OLSON: All right. Sorry. I saw your hand was raised. I thought you were one of my speakers. I'll go ahead and mute you again for now. Thanks for joining us.

>> Yep.

>> Hello?

>> MARY OLSON: Hi. Did you have a question?

>> This is Anya.

>> MARY OLSON: Hi, Anya. Thanks for joining us and agreeing to present. I went ahead and made your mic live. You can mute and unmute from home.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Okay. Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON: All right. So we're going to get started in just a couple of moments here for folks who are just joining us. Again, if we have any of our speakers on the line, you can press \*2 and raise your hand and I can make you live. Thanks again, everybody.

>> MARY OLSON: We are at the top of the hour and I have a few more folks who are just calling in. And if you're one of my speakers, please press \*2 to raise your hand so that I can make your mics live. I apologize now. I'm having a little bit of background noise in my office, but I'm going to try to take care of that.

I think, Anya, it might be you, I think your mic might be unmuted right now. Just to know we can hear some ‑‑

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Sorry. Is it still unmuted?

>> MARY OLSON: Yep, I can still hear you.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: How do you mute it? Sorry.

>> MARY OLSON: It is 1:03. I will go ahead and begin some introductions and then we can get started. I'm really excited for all the folks we have on the line with us today. It's going to be a really great conversation.

Thank you everyone for joining us for today's call Silly Old Barriers, SILCS are for youth too!

If you need to access CART for today's call, "Silly Old Barriers: SILCs Are For Youth Too"

If you need to access CART for today's call, please go to the APRIL website at www.april‑rural.org and follow the link on the home page. If you are having trouble accessing it, please email me at mary.olson@mso.umt.edu and I can send you the link.

Today's call will be recorded thanks to Bill Cochran and SKIL, and the audio recording and transcript will be available online at our website under the IL Conversations tab following the call.

During today's conversation, if you would like to add to the topic from your experience or ask questions, please press \*2 on your phone to raise your hand so that I can make your line live. Once your question has been answered, please press \*2 again to lower your hand. When I unmute your line the moderator will state Your Line has been Unmuted. This is your cue to begin asking your question.

Also, please remember to evaluate our conversation on our website following the call under the IL Conversation Tab. Your feedback is important to us, and can only make us stronger as an organization. This IL Conversation is presented by the IL‑NET, which is operated by the Independent Living Research Utilization program in partnership with the NCIL and the 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. Without further ado, I would like to introduce your presenters. I'm still waiting for a couple of you. You can press \*2 and raise your hand and I'll make your mic live. So first we've got

Melissa Ann Santora and Anya Carrillo come to us from Arizona.

Anya Carrillo is a 2014 Graduate of Arizona Youth Leadership Forum (AZYLF) for Students and Transitioning Young Adults Who Have Disabilities, AZYLF Team Leader, and Secretary of AZYLF Alumni Association. Anya, an experienced self‑advocate, works as a Young Adult Advisor for Arizona's Parent Training and Information Center, is a skilled youth peer mentor, and an accomplished trainer, presenter, and planning facilitator. Anya serves on the Arizona State Plan for Independent Living Development Committee, and Arizona State Community of Practice on Transition Core Team.

Melissa Ann Santora is the Director of Administration at Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council, where she coordinates Arizona Youth Leadership Forum (AZYLF) for Students and Transitioning Young Adults Who Have Disabilities, Arizona Youth Engagement Academy, and AZYLF Alumni Association. For more than 25 years, Melissa has served people who have disabilities in a myriad of capacities, and is presently the SILC Representative on the Board of Directors for the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL). Highly regarded for establishing innovative practices and programs in the field of disability, particularly for youth, her career also includes an array of other positions from abuse to poverty. Then we have a group of folks joining us from Florida as well. And so we have Jim baker and we have J.T. Davis, and we Tasha Turner. J.T. Davis is ‑‑ has been a member of the Florida Independent Living Council since 2008. He currently serves as president of the council and is the liaison for the Florida ‑‑ excuse me ‑‑ the Florida Independent Living Council youth advisory committee. He has been involved with advocating for persons with disabilities since 1997, is an active member of the national youth National Youth Leadership Network and was the first accessibility specialist to the Florida division of state parks. Mr. Davis enjoys Florida history and he's also very passionate about disability history. He has been recognized on the Florida Department of Education advisory board for ‑‑ excuse me ‑‑ he is on the board for exceptional students and he has been recognized as a state leader in educational advocacy for persons with disabilities on a national level. We also have Jim baker, and Jim is the Executive Director of the Florida Independent Living Council. Jim has spent several years as an educator and working with a disability organization when a sudden car accident began a life changing journey for him. He had years of headaches, pain, medication, physical therapy and alternative methods of medicine and then had his neck fused at three levels. Looking back Jim says one of the greatest things that happened to him was the doctor hit his spinal cord during that surgery. Getting an understanding of the struggles related to experiencing loss, Jim learned firsthand what it was like to experience his own disability. Jim has a Bachelor of Arts degree in education, bachelor of religious edge case add master's degree in curriculum and instruction. Last but not least I have Tasha Turner with us and she is current president of the YAC, youth advisory counselor. I don't have more information on you right now but I am sure we will ask you a ton of questions and learn a lot more about you. So I guess with that further ado, I'm very excited for this panel of presenters and I'd like to turn it over to you all.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: This is Melissa, and I guess I will go ahead and start. I thought that I would just start by giving a little bit of background of what youth engagement looked like in Arizona when I arrived on the scene in April of 2013. So at that time I asked a lot of questions, you know, what do we do, what is the Center for Independent Living doing and pretty much what was happening was there was some outreach going on to schools and beyond that there wasn't very much happening. So youth weren't being engaged in the centers and there were no youth engaged in the SILCs. When I was in my interview for my position here at SILC, I said, if there's any possible way that I can figure out how to do this, I'm going to get a Youth Leadership Forum running in this state within two years. That was my goal, and apparently they thought it was pretty good because I got the job. So the good news is I was successful in my goal. So the next part of what I wanted to tell you was a little bit about how that came about. So as I mentioned, there was really no ‑‑ not a lot going on here, and so we found ourselves ‑‑ we had a new Executive Director, and myself as the director, and we kind of looked at how things were happening here and kind of what our thoughts were for the future, and we realized that we were able to do some things if we eliminated a position that was useful in the past for previous state plans ‑‑ State Plan for Independent Living, or SPILs, but not so much going forward for us. So we eliminated a position, we freed up some funding, which we then approached our council and said, hey, folks, here's what we would like to run by you, and so it was a pitch for starting a Youth Leadership Forum, and this is the traditional California model. We just Arizona-ized it as how I like to call it. So they were all for it. We had to go through that whole process of amending the SPIL, public hearings and we got approval to do our Youth Leadership Forum on April 30th of 2013, and we completed it on June 22nd of 2013, which meant there was no time to be wasted, and so you know, I look back and I'm like, wow, it really was a Marvel that we pulled this all together with just a couple of people working in the office in such a short period of time. So I'll let you in on a little secret of kind of how you we did that. We utilized our resources well by bringing in a lot of partners. At our initial planning meetings, we had 15 agencies represented. We have no youth voice because youth were not engaged in IL in Arizona. So we reached out to organizations who had youth, like the YMCA and the YMCA brought three or four people with them, and really were ‑‑ were terrific at helping us brainstorm. Special Olympics Arizona also came in, who had a pretty established youth program for Special Olympics, and they brought seven people to our original meeting. We were packed in like sardines but we really, really were happy and grateful to have all of that wonderful brainstorming. So we did have a youth voice from the beginning. It just wasn't youth engaged in Independent Living, per se. So we did a lot of planning. We pulled it all together. We got our applications out. We hooked up with the national association of youth leadership forums, signed a pledge saying we would follow the California model, I called my good friend and mentor June Hermannson from the great state of Montana where I started in Independent Living, and Michael Beers, who if you don't know, I'm sure you've heard something about him, and there was laughter that ensued, I'm positive. I called the two of them. We had some preliminary meetings. I said, hey, can I steal your curriculum. She said you don't have to steal it. It's yours. And we hit the ground running. Our first YLF was fantastic. We had 20 youth from more than half of our counties. Okay, so in Arizona we only have 15 counties, so that isn't ‑‑ doesn't sound as astonishing as maybe it would someplace else but still pretty great for us because most of those counties are rural, and it was really fabulous. It surpassed all expectations. Anya comes from that first class. She is an amazing young woman and we'll give her time to chat in a few minutes but when I quickly realized after this wonderful five‑day adventure was that what were we going to do with them now? I couldn't really make referrals to all of these existing organizations who really didn't do anything with youth and didn't really know even where to begin. So I scratched my head and said, okay, we have to do something ourselves. We have to figure something out. So it took me a little while to come up with that, and we ‑‑ one of the things that Montana's Youth Leadership Forum does is elect a leadership team. They hold elections during the week, and we followed suit and did that, so I grabbed those leaders and a few others that kind of emerged and said, hey, guys, what do you think about an alumni association? Sure, what's an alumni association? They wanted to do it because they love me, but they didn't know really what it was. So we brainstormed about it. We figured out what it would look like for us and it looks pretty traditional and awesome. So we have a pretty thriving alumni association now, and from that lots and lots of things have developed. So my thought was to let Anya tell you a little bit about the alumni association but I'll let you, Mary, decide if that's how we're going to do this and then I'll cull back and talk some more.

>> MARY OLSON: That sounds perfect. Take it away, Anya. Anya, I think your phone might be muted still.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Does it work now?

>> MARY OLSON: It sure does.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Okay. Hi, I'm Anya. I was part of the first Arizona Youth Leadership Forum, and ‑‑ okay. We're talking about the [indiscernible] association. I'm sorry. I serve as an ambassador of AZYLF, and I was an am ‑‑ as an ambassador I have a voice for Arizona youth who have disabilities in Arizona for the development of the SPIL. So I do like councils, committees, tasks, work groups, boards, trainings, conferences and workshops. So I've been through a whole lot of that kind of stuff. I also participated in AZYLF outreach for recruitment and promotional activities. So it was very eye opening for me. Just like seeing everything I could do to help others who have a disability, because before the program I had no idea what to do with my life. I was like, oh, I have a disability. I can't do anything. You know, like, the normal thing people think when they have a disability. Well, I took that to my advantage and turned it around and said, hey, I can do all of these things and be better than what I thought I could be from the beginning. So we developed and implemented strategies to enhance the AZYLF mission through the education, outreaching and fundraising, which is awesome and through that I was also able to become part of the executive committee. So that is where my secretary position comes in, and I do a lot of writing and ‑‑ just a bunch of stuff. So through that we ‑‑ an officer serves for a two‑year term. A maximum of two consecutive terms. So my term is coming up next year, and I can run again only if I get picked, but I know I will, so ‑‑ in addition, the three elected leadership team members from the most recent AZYLF, like Melissa said, we elect three members each year during AZYLF, and they serve on the executive committee with voting privileges, but they do not have like a secretary or treasurer or any of those types of positions yet until the next year when they can start going ‑‑ or start ‑‑ sorry ‑‑ I'm going home right now. When they can run. [ INAUDIBLE ] and have no voting privileges. So this is when ‑‑ this is when like a committee member at large ‑‑ sorry ‑‑ what was I saying in so the community members at large are the ‑‑ I don't know what I'm saying. I'm sorry, I lost track. My brain has been fluctuating all day long.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: Want me to help you with that?

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Please do.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: So we have executive committee officers, a chair, co‑chair, secretary, treasurer and par men tear 81. They are two‑year terms for a maximum of two consecutive terms and then we have three elected leadership team members from the most recent graduating class. They serve on the executive committee with full voting privileges. But then the leadership team members from previous graduating classes can serve as a member ‑‑ serve as a member at large for up to a year following their graduation, and that will be in a consultation capacity with no voting privileges.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Thank you, Melissa. So we follow the Robert's rules of order and it's kind of hard to stay on track sometimes, but we have an awesome parliamentarian that helps us keep us on track.

Is there anything else, Melissa? Oh, okay, our goals. Right?

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: Yep.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Want me to talk about the goals?

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: I would love it.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Our current goals for this year are to complete two fundraising events. Also along with complete two group service projects, complete five community outreach events, like conference presentations and youth training, complete two community outreach events at schools, like transition, resource fairs, complete five social activities in Maricopa County, which is where Phoenix is, and one social activity in Pima County, which is in Tucson. Or where Tucson is. Complete ‑‑ we also need to complete a formalized membership package of benefits for alumni. So we're going to start a membership package which is going to have a bunch of Goodies and stuff to get them interested in keeping in touch with previous years alumni from Arizona youth leadership, which is really awesome and then we'll implement the [indiscernible] campaign which we will roll out nationwide at the APRIL conference next month. It's going to be exciting. Coordinate the Arizona disability mentoring day, which is also happening next month. And that is when we take youth into work settings and they basically shadow the job ‑‑ like the person who is going to take them on the job who also has a disability so that they know that they can actually do a job and have fun and be able to do what they want to do. That's what we all need to know. And another goal we have is that we'll be able to demonstrate alumni engagement through the development and implementation of Arizona youth leadership 2017. So those are our goals for 2016‑2017, which is very exciting because it's a lot but I think we can get it done because we have a lot of people and it's really nice, and our group has grown a lot. I think that's all. So I'm going to pass it back to Melissa. Go ahead.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: Tonya, you rock.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Thank you, Melissa.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: So this is Melissa again, and I just wanted to say that we had also subsequently two successful youth leadership forums in 2015 and 2016. Last year ‑‑ or this year ‑‑ excuse me, my fiscal year has changed. Forgive me. So just a couple of months ago in June in fact Anya served as our first alumni who served as a team leader for our Youth Leadership Forum. It was really fantastic. And we said 11 alumni serve as staff. So that's 11 of 15 of our staff who are alumni. Really fantastic. Amazing. The more they're involved, the better it is. And so that's just terrific. And I just quickly wanted to tell you about what's happening next for us. We're continuing with Youth Leadership Forum. We're continuing with the alumni association. And when the new state plan rolls out in just a couple of weeks we will be implementing something new which is the Arizona youth engagement academy. That's going to be a real intensive train the trainer model. So the youth will receive training in all sorts of areas such as history of disability and its culture, self‑determination and self‑advocacy, person‑centered is planning and goal setting, leadership for yourself, for your community, and within the movement and those sorts of things they will have a year's long training in this academy, and then they will begin to train other youth. Finally, the other cool thing, and that's ‑‑ I say that like that. It's going to be huge, and the impact here is going to be amazing, and this is how we're building capacity in Arizona, and we're ‑‑ there are no words to describe how incredible this opportunity really is going to be. But the other really cool thing that's going to happen is we will be spinning our youth initiative off into their own nonprofit that will be run by a Board of Directors of youth who have disabilities with elders who have disabilities who serve in an advisory capacity and the sky is the limit once we get to do that. So we're super excited and appreciate the opportunity to share all of this with all of you today.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you, Melissa. I'm so glad that we were able to have you guys on the call because it sounds like you're doing a lot of really coup things. What I think I would like to do now is to hear from the Florida folks, and then open it up for questions across the board, questions and comments and how ‑‑ have a discussion. So without further ado, I would like to introduce Jim, Tasha and J.T.

>> Can you hear me?

>> MARY OLSON: I can.

>> All right. I muted while they were talking. So I was not sure if I was going to get it unmuted again. I'm Jim Baker and Executive Director at the Florida Independent Living Council and I've only been here a little over two months right now. So we're in a transitional stage or phase, but one of the things that really appealed to me ‑‑ appealed to me to come to this position and got me to move to Florida, I was at an APRIL conference and I heard the Florida Independent Living Council, the YAC group, do a presentation there, and I was so impressed with the idea of SILCs taking on youth and having that aspect or component to them that I was watching them, and then when a position opened up in Miami I jumped on it and moved from California to Miami, and then as I was working in Miami, was working with the SILC as they were developing their state plan, volunteered to be on their state plan committee and, of course, youth transition services are so important to all of us right now that I thought, okay, this is a really good opportunity to take the existing YAC and incorporate it into the future. When Florida Independent Living Council decided to start working with youth and develop the YAC, that was prior to WIOA and prior to the changes in requirements to assist with youth transition. And so I have ‑‑ J.T. is going to talk a little bit about the beginning of that, and then I've asked Tasha to talk about her experience with it and what they're working on right now, and we're all at three different locations right now. I'm in Tallahassee in the northern part of the state. J.T. is in Perry, Florida, which is kind of in the ‑‑ he'll tell you more. It's more in the swamp country. And then Tasha is down in the Florida Keys and so we're literally from very north to extreme south and hundreds of miles between. Anyway, JT., do you want to go ahead and ‑‑

>> J.T. DAVIS: Yeah, can you hear me?

>> MARY OLSON: I can.

>> J.T. DAVIS: You can?

>> JIM BAKER: Go ahead.

>> J.T. DAVIS: I wanted to make sure. Hi, you guys, I think I just want to ask Tasha, weren't you at the first youth Senate we had?

>> I believe I was at the second one, 2010.

>> J.T. DAVIS: Well what happened was we had started having a youth Senate, and we invited youth from all the centers across the State of Florida, and we had training, and they wanted to come up with ways to train future leaders, future advocates, and ‑‑ throughout the State of Florida. And so they come up with this youth Senate and it was during the legislative session, and we would train youth at this conference about speaking to legislators, being advocates, and all that other kind of thing, and I didn't get to go to the first one. I wasn't a part of it then. But I was a part of it when we did the second one, ran the second youth Senate. And we had such a good time. The youth learned a lot. We had some of our youth that came ‑‑ first one, come to the second one, to be mentors, to our new youth attendees, and it was a quite fascinating, just the ‑‑ the outcome of the stuff that went on at our youth Senate. We had people that was not public speakers and all that kind of stuff become public speakers and advocates. While we were still there, we were sitting there talking about the past ones who are doing such a great job, and we have new ones that have great potential but they need more training and more advocacy and more encouragement, and we decided, it was me, the other director, Molly Goslin and another lady with us, we were sitting there talking, and I said, we have the Florida Independent Living Council, but we don't have any youth representative on the board. I was kind of youth representative. I was 20 ‑‑ not really youth‑youth, but 26, 27, I think. I can't remember exactly how old when I first got on the board. But I said, we need to have more youth representative and a youth voice. And we sat there and talked about why don't we come up with a youth advisory committee to the Florida Independent Living Council? And so we decided then we would take out some of the top ones that had potential and ones that were being great advocates and leaders to be the voice of the youth for the State of Florida, and that's how we came up with our first Florida youth leadership ‑‑ our Florida youth advisory committee. And Tasha is one of our first ‑‑ one of the first on the board, I believe. Tasha, do you want to go into more detail about the youth advisory committee?

>> Sure. Yeah, you're right, I was one of the first people that was on the committee. We actually ‑‑ three of our original members remain. The youth advisory committee was primarily formed because they wanted not only to have more youth on the SILC Board but to have more of a perspective from youth with disabilities about what we face in the community and what we go through, what kind of barriers we encounter, what kind of advocacy we find available to us in our individual communities and to be able to put that in the hands of other youth. So one of the things that we have developed over the years, we've not only developed our own application process, our own bylaws, which we did all of that in 2010, 2011, but we've also been developing a peer‑to‑peer training where we go into agencies, if they'd like it, or into schools and train youth with disabilities, get them some history of disability history and sensitivity training of how to handle situations, person‑first language, things like that. We just finished a presentation that we're going to be giving to voc. rehab hopefully soon that primarily consisted of disability history and some sensitivity training and things. It's a presentation primarily for agencies. And we're currently working on one for the age range of pre‑K to 6, is the age range ‑‑

>> J.T. DAVIS: Yes.

>> And we're going to be developing [indiscernible] grades as well ‑‑ we have been working on a lot of disability advocacy and mainly getting the education in schools. We've also been going and talking with the legislature a lot about that and getting that education that's something a mandatory focus, at least for part of the year, so that that history is taught.

>> J.T. DAVIS: So, yeah, we're very excited about what our youth advisory committee is doing, and we're also working on collecting artifacts and preserving the history of the disability moving here in the 78 of Florida and other states, too, but that is one of our projects on our SPIL, I believe, this year, is collecting artifacts and also trying to have another youth Senate in the future in the next three years. Jim?

>> JIM BAKER: Let me ‑‑ I just wanted to share what the mission ‑‑ this mission was developed by the YAC members themselves, and it's part of their bylaws. It says the mission of the YAC shall be to encourage youth to become involved in self‑advocacy, peer mentoring and other activities that will improve the quality of life for youth with disabilities. The youth advisory council inspires to assist in identifying the issues of importance in their generation to convey findings of fact to SILCs and express issues in state and local communities and to develop strategies to solve them. So I ‑‑ you know, our group has some ‑‑ minimum is three members up to nine members. We currently have 10. So I think we're just a little overzealous there. But I wanted to share some of the transition. Now that we have WIOA and some of the requirements with and with our voc. rehab actually having funding set aside to serve youth and our centers working towards serving youth and we have ‑‑ in our state plan we have ‑‑ our new state plan coming up in October, we have a goal on youth transition that is pretty detailed. We have 15 different organizations that operate 17 different centers in the State of Florida, and we have an association of centers and then, of course, we have the SILC, and we're working together with our DVR to try to come up with funding and the infrastructure of how this is going to work. So we're still in the very early stages, but I wanted to share it because I thought maybe some of you in your states may also want to think along these lines. So we're considering ‑‑ because of the age group in the WIOA is different than the age group we started with, which was 15 to 30, we're looking at having 15 members, one from etch a ‑‑ each of the CIL organizations. So expanding the size of our YAC to 15 members ages ‑‑ and you know, we're guessing we're going to go probably from 18 to 26. 18 because there is some liability in working with youth, and we do have them travel. We are looking at two meetings per year, one being similar to the Senate that has been held in the past where it's training and coming to Tallahassee and learning all the aspect of legislation and what is involved in that, learning the roles of development of this youth organization for the future. With the individuals who are participating, we're looking at an application process, and those that may not qualify who are in our current group will be utilized as men mentors for this group. They have been around for a while. They have some good ideas. But we've had a natural attrition of people. Some have moved on, gotten jobs, aged out. We're to a point where some will continue but we will have others that will be coming into the group in this new YAC age. One of the things that we're looking at with them is how to do a stipend pay so that they can actually work in centers that are supporting them to be part of the group, and anywhere from three to six hours a month, not as staff people, but to work alongside staff helping with things like outreach, helping with actually putting the same type of things that we're working on at a statewide level into practice at a local level. We're looking at doing terms because most boards and councils and organizations have term limits. So we want that also ‑‑ them also to experience that, that there would be term limits. And we're considering that the term limits would be the same as what the Florida Independent Living Council is, is a three‑year term that's renewable for a total of six years. That gives more opportunity for additional youth to get involved at the state level. We're also looking at ‑‑ we want them to have commitment from those centers that they're going to support them and assist them to be local leaders and allowing them to be involved in their center, and so far the centers are very excited about this because some of them don't have youth programs or are just getting started with youth programs and they're seeing this could be a real advantage to them. So as we move ‑‑ of course, it's like anything. We hit roadblocks and struggle, but then we figure out a new way around that, and so what it looks like ‑‑ you have to come back next year, I guess, and we'll tell you what it looks like then, but right now we really feel like this youth advisory committee has so much potential Ty‑in with WIOA and tie the state together through the different CILs and using the SILC as the organization that would do that. Looking backwards at some of our members, we have three members who are currently working at Centers for Independent Living, all of them working in youth services. So we feel like we've had some good outcomes with that. And, of course, J.T. is on the SILC and actually serves as our president on the SILC. So we've got four very strong Independent Living ‑‑ I don't want to say graduates, but as a result of this group have learned to become leaders, and I'm just going to brag on Tasha a little bit. I first met Tasha I want to say three or four years ago, and she was so quiet and just wouldn't hardly speak. Then when I hear other people talk about her and say the same thing, it sounds like even before me she was even quieter. And I look at her now running the youth services down in the Keyes as well as helping with the WPA grant there and going from a part‑time employee to a full‑time employee and becoming a statewide leader, becoming a president of the YAC, I think that she's a real good example of what this type of leadership can help develop in somebody. I think the leadership skills are there. We just have to pull them out of the individuals participating. Unfortunately, from a SILC position, we don't have the funds to bring everybody on board for this and we're really trying to develop leadership for the future, and so as they ‑‑ they do hold their own meetings twice a year and then they hold monthly phone calls to go over the project work. We have in Florida what's called ‑‑ we have a sunshine law and it's called the sunshine law, and it's really limiting organizations in how much we're allowed to talk to each other. We have to post our meetings, and two members can't speak to each other without it being considered a meeting and has to be in the public. So our SILC members are not allowed to call each other and discuss anything. They have to go through staff in order to get messages to each other and things like that. So in trying to work around that law to make things function, we were concerned or ‑‑ the group that started the YAC was concerned that this group wouldn't be able to do anything because of the sunshine law, they wouldn't be able to work behind the scenes or have conversations with each other. So it was decided at that point that this would be written into the State Plan for Independent Living as a committee rather than as an actual part of the council itself so that it could be a working group and it's an educational group and that has worked well for us. We have written it into our new state plan as well that ‑‑ so that inner' ‑‑ they're not limited in what their abilities are to speak to each other.

We've also had other members go on and do other types of things. We kind of watch people as they get married and have children and things like that. So it's kind of like a family, and we're at 10 members right now, and we're thinking moving into this next generation of YAC members it will be really interesting to see the mentorship from this first group that will be passed on to the second group.

>> J.T. DAVIS: Also, one other famous YAC member probably a lot of you all on the call know is Suki. She originally started off with us, and she went to an APRIL conference with us and met the people from Atlanta, and that's how she ended up getting a job in Atlanta. So we have a lot of success rates, great stories and things that came out from our advisory committee members.

>> MARY OLSON: Great. I just wanted to interrupt real quick to let folks know I would love to start taking line‑ups of folks who have questions or comments or any ‑‑ for any of the speakers. If you press \*2 on your phone, it raises your hand and I can go ahead and start seeing those folks, and I hope ‑‑ I didn't mean to interrupt you. That doesn't mean you have to be done by any means, but I just thought I would let folks know you can \*2 to raise your hand.

>> JIM BAKER: I believe we are finished, so we are ready for questions.

>> MARY OLSON: Awesome. I appreciate it again. I'm so excited we have too strong SILC youth programs that are very different yet have a lot of similarities. So, yeah, let's go ahead and have a conversation. It's folks would like to share about what you and your SILC or your programs are doing, or you have questions for anybody on the line, again, press \*2. That raises your hand. If you're in the CART, you can just type your question out and I will read it.

>> CALLER: My name is Patrick, I'm calling from the Center for Independent Living of south Florida. I've been on the youth advisory committee for the past six years, but I have I've also started out at a youth Senate member since 2008 and I have been very proud working with this group.

>> MARY OLSON: Awesome. Thanks, Patrick, for sharing.

>> CALLER: And now we're now like the new fifth core service at the Center for Independent Living in Miami and right now we have like 12 members but we're still currently working to increase the size of our youth consumers, and right now we just had a successful placement at the [indiscernible] in downtown Miami, and so we had three of our consumers who decided to volunteer and actually ‑‑ [ INAUDIBLE ] help with the public and meet with the members of the art base who are impressed about our youth consumers with disabilities actually how they work and how much they put into their jobs.

>> MARY OLSON: Sounds like you guys are doing some good work.

>> JIM BAKER: This is Jim. I'm happy to hear that, Patrick. Before I left that center, I hurried up and hired Patrick because I didn't want him to get left in the shuffle of things. Very pleased to hear the youth program is going strong and you have good accomplishments. Patrick is one of the individuals of the three that I mentioned working for a center now and having that perspective, watching him take this leadership role on and actually be a staff person I think is just a real sign of accomplishment of what we wanted to accomplish in even forming an organization like YAC.

>> CALLER: Thank you, Jim.

>> MARY OLSON: All right. Any other questions or comments or thoughts? Again, you can press \*2 to join the conversation. I visited with some of the folks before don't feel shy at all. These are knowledgeable speakers. Any of speakers have anything else they would like to add while we're kind of waiting for folks to line up?

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: This is Melissa. I guess I would say that, you know, if you are ‑‑ if you are involved with SILC in some capacity, if you're a staff member, if you're a council member, if you serve on a SILC committee, you know, don't be afraid to say, hey, you know, I was on this call, I heard these couple of SILCs talking about the cool things that they're doing in their state, you know, what are we doing, you know, and what could we be doing? I just would encourage people. You know, often people think, we don't have the money, we don't have the money, but there are things you can do without money. It's not always about having money. And, I'll tell you something, if you build it, they will come, and the money will follow. So I would just encourage people to really don't throw ‑‑ you know, the title of this presentation is talking about barriers, and don't have that preconceived belief be your barrier. You know, really get out there and figure out what your natural collaborations and partnerships are and, you know, try to get ‑‑ [no audio] ‑‑ get youth who have disabilities in on that action.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you, Melissa. I think that is a good point for all on the line. The idea if you build it it will come. I know ‑‑ you know, I had the opportunity of working as a youth mentor for APRIL before I started in the capacity I am now, and I actually got to go out to Florida and work with all of the wonderful YAC folks there and just talk to them about disability history, culture and going into the schools and creating this mentoring program. It sounds like ‑‑ Tasha it sounds ‑‑ they're doing it. I think we can all support each other as well and that's one reason why APRIL was so excited to get these experienced speakers today together, is that we want to support all of you out there in telephone land, and you can always contact myself or our youth coordinators here, and we can connect you with these fine folks. You know, Melissa is actually one of our SILC ‑‑ Melissa and her boss Larry Wanger are SILC mentors. So they could even help possibly mentor you on some of these programs and you can bet I'll be contacting Mr. Baker later.

All right. Speaking of my youth coordinator, I think I just unmuted your line.

>> Hi. I was just curious, so, I am from North Carolina, I work with APRIL, but I worked with our Youth Leadership Forum for a while now, and I was curious of kind much mixing the two different programs in Arizona and in Florida. I was ‑‑ you talked about how the Arizona SILC kind of formed into the Youth Leadership Forum. Have you guys thought about forming into an advisory committee and, I guess, reversing that ‑‑ Florida, have you guys engaged with your Youth Leadership Forum at all? I'm just trying to figure out how to duplicate some of that ‑‑ those programs that are very youth focused with our Youth Leadership Forum here, which we have great support from our SILC here in North Carolina for our Youth Leadership Forum, but how to grow that into what you guys have done.

>> JIM BAKER: This is Jim. I think that's a great concept. Our Youth Leadership Forum here is run by the ABIL trust and we have done some things in the state with Independent Living and that organization, but it hasn't always been the best relationship, and so we have some relationship building to do with them before we are, I guess, invited in to participate in their YLF program. It's kind of the reason why we are Lee looking at doing this as a separate application process, holding this in Tallahassee. They do things a little different than ‑‑ we want to have more of a focus on legislation and effective leadership rather than just ‑‑ and they tend to have a little bit more focus on Independent Living skills. And so it would be a good marriage on our part, but I think it's going to take some relationship building to make that happen.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: And in Arizona it seems that the natural progression is that we are doing that without having it formalized and needing to be called something other than what it is at this point. I think that when our youth engagement academy graduates begin to graduate, because we're not at that ‑‑ we're just starting that, that it's written into our state plan for independent living that they will be going into centers and other agencies, and they really will be setting themselves up to be the kind of trainers and the youth leadership, that will be the place we go, and I think that when the nonprofit gets up and running we're just going ‑‑ we're already looked at as the experts. These youth are the experts on anything that has to do with youth who have the disabilities in Arizona. We had ‑‑ we have seven engagement between now and the end of November where our alumni are going out and speaking at conferences or doing trainings or ‑‑ you know, an omni walk. They're so engaged and they're already looked at. I don't know that we need to formalize that until we kind of get our legs under us just a little bit more so that we feel like we know what ‑‑ you know, know what the ‑‑ you know, this thing ‑‑ it's like I said, if you build it, they will come, and then, you know, everybody wants a piece of it. They want to pick up a hammer and keep building and expanding with you, and that's really what's happening. So I think we just need to kind of sit with where we are right now and what the plans are that we have right now and see what that morphs into. I think we're all into doing whatever seems to be best to meet the needs of Arizonans who have disabilities.

>> Do I have time to ask one more question?

>> MARY OLSON: Go ahead. As a reminder to folks, if you also have questions or comments to add to the conversation, please press \*2.

>> I guess ‑‑ I think you guys touched on this, but I just was curious, since you guys are both from the SILCs, what is your relationship with your local centers? I think I heard, Jim, you talk a little bit about how you're working with the association there and centers, but how are you really able to get youth ‑‑ I know that's one of your goals in Florida, but how are either one of you, Arizona or Florida, able to get more young people or more programming at the statewide level but then have it trickle down to the center to have each organization support each other.

>> JIM BAKER: I think it is at that point in Florida that we do have that relationship with the centers. A lot of the centers have had youth programs but a lot of them have not had youth programs that. Some of them are just brand‑new and really reaching out for anything or anybody that will help give them some direction. And from our perspective as YAC we have limitation of funding, so we can't keep bringing everybody in in at a statewide level and so we're really looking at how do we take this same concept and get it to the local level? And that's the whole idea of doing the stipends and having the ‑‑ each YAC member in the future go back and do some type of a monthly work with those centers. And then we're not sure yet how it's going to look, but DVR is definitely talking to us about ‑‑ they've got ‑‑ they've got money they have to put into this youth transition and, of course, it has to be geared towards employment, but this is ‑‑ this is something to put on a resume as far as leadership, and so we're still negotiating all that out, and we're not sure if that money will come to SILC or if it will be given directly to the centers and then we just do the training. So we have a ways to go to figure that, but we at least have everybody at the table, and I think that's the key in your state, is just start the conversation and it's not about who controls it or who gets the credit for it. It's about what we're able to do with it. So I would just really encourage you just to start reaching out to people and just start talking.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: And I agree completely with that. You know, it doesn't matter who gets the credit for it as long as it ‑‑ as long as the work that needs to be done gets done so that the needs are being met or partially met at least. In our state they really are looking to our alumni as those leaders, as I mentioned before, and so they're reaching out to us when they have training needs or whatever else, and our alumni are going in, and they're doing those trainings and they really are kind of being that voice, and so it's really wonderful. We have also written into our SPIL that with the youth engagement academy we will be providing the trainings and workshops and seminars and, you know ‑‑ it's going to look different in every community because that center is going to let us know what their need is and how we need to ‑‑ structure our training to meet that need, whether it's a regional conference or whether it's quarterly trainings or whatever it is, that the alumni will be doing, it's structured in the SPIL, and they've all signed off that we're going to be coming to their communities, to their centers and expect their assistance and support in getting it all done. So I think that we kind of came from it in two angles, you know. Let's show ‑‑ let's get the young people out there so people see what our product is, what we have to offer and pretty soon they all want to buy it, which is fantastic, and I believe that will happen in other places as well. And then we put it into the SPIL. So we kind of have to get it done.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you. I have a question/point. For anybody on the line at all, for those folks who are really looking at beginning something for youth, as a SILC, what is the very first step? What would you say would be the very first place to start? I know that's where ‑‑ I think it's easy to have really big ideas and it's difficult to figure out that first ‑‑

>> JIM BAKER: I'm waiting on Melissa. I think Melissa is waiting on me.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: That's so funny. Well, I guess I can go is. In my opinion it's taking an inventory on what you already have, what is your baseline, what's already working, you know, what partnerships do you have, what's missing in your community. I mean, SILCs do needs assessments. We can see what's missing in our communities, and you know, approach partners on, hey, you know ‑‑ I don't think it has to be a formal thing. It can be a conversation. You can invite people to your office or, hey, we're going to put on a cup of coffee, come on ore and let's just talk ‑‑ on over and let's just talk about what was missing. I think for me, filling the need was the reason I was so bent on making sure that this happened because I saw this huge wide‑open space of need, and I just started talking to people, and that's really how it started. It started in conversation. I mean, let's hope that it's starting for someone today in this IL Conversation.

>> JIM BAKER: And I would say, again, probably start talking to some youth and asking them what their perspectives are and try to get a baseline of where they see themselves and, you know, it's been a long time since I have been a youth, but I do still kind of think young sometimes, but you know, it's that concept of being afraid to speak up, afraid to ask questions, or afraid to show your ignorance that a lot of times youth will just sit back and let things happen for them, and I think if we are all really open to learning from them and listening to them, we'll hear what their questions are and what their needs are and I think that would also ‑‑ I would say that that would be a really good starting point. We like to say that we know what they need, but we only think we know what they need. We might ‑‑ we might have a portion of that that, but I think to hear from them directly is ‑‑ and so ‑‑ I would say reach out to your centers, those that have youth programs and those that don't, or just have a few youth, and see if you can arrange even a conference call and just say, hey, can we talk to some of your youth, we have some questions ‑‑ or send out a questionnaire and ask them for their ideas.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: I was also going to throw in that I think obviously I neglected to say but it's always in my heart, ask the youth, and I agree completely with that, but if you don't know where they are and you don't know ‑‑ and you don't have access to partners, your centers aren't working with youth, you can borrow ours. Give me a call, send me an email. We can do a teleconference and I can get a bunch of them on the phone and you can ask themselves questions ‑‑ them questions. It won't particularly your county in Alabama, but, you know, it still is a youth perspective. So please know if you haven't reached out of your state for support, there are people all over here who are willing to support you, and I would just put in another plug for APRIL, too. If you don't know what to do and it concerns youth, give Sierra or Mary or Jilly or any of them a call. They'll have ideas for you. I can assure you of that.

>> MARY OLSON: Thanks, Melissa. Yes, you're absolutely right. We always have ideas. I'm sorry, I just ‑‑ I just had one more question, because folks ‑‑ you know, you don't have to be scared, you can raise your hands, it's \*2, like I said, these guys are so knowledgeable, but I'll just ask the question that I know that I've heard from other SILCs. So, you said that you'd start with asking a youth what they want. Do you guys have questions or questionnaires that you have used in the past? Are there specific questions that you would ask that seem to garner the most valuable information?

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: Well, in Arizona we do ‑‑ in our Youth Leadership Forum we do ‑‑ on our wrap‑up day, our last day, we do kind of a needs assessment. I was trying to look here and see if I could pull it up real quick so I could give you some great examples, but I'm not sure I can multi‑task that well. But, you know, we do ask general questions just about where they are in their home communities, what their needs are in their home communities, and ask about accessibility. We ask a lot of questions about what they're worried about, what their concerns are, you know. We do ask a lot of those questions. Then when we're doing our SPIL development, we have youth who serve on our SPIL development committee, Anya was one of them, and we're asking all those general questions, and we also have a youth focused public forum and try to get information from youth there and then..

>> JIM BAKER: For us, since it's been going for a while, a lot of sit youth talking to youth, but in the beginning, I mean, we have an application process people go through, and some of the questions we ask on that are, tell us about any activities or employment that you or ‑‑ that you are or have been involved in in your school or your community. Tell us why you're interested in joining this committee. Then asking about their qualities, talents or abilities and things they would like to bring and share with others. We talk to them about whether they have a disability or what type of disability they have, if they have a family member with a disability, what things they have seen as far as advocating for them, what their experiences with that are, and then we also talk to them about advocacy in school and asking them what have they done, when have they had to advocate for themselves. We ask them if they've been involved in any other groups that are doing anything with disability advocacy or services and then we ‑‑ and wean we just say, do you ever anything else you want to tell us about yourselves. Those are the types of questions. I doubt we'll change that application with our new group that much, but those are the types of things that we need. I think it will become easier from a state perspective for us to find youth ‑‑ I think we're going to have more of a problem of selecting which youth get to participate once the centers are really participating and hearing Patrick talk about how south Florida has got 12 really involved youth there considering that a year ago there was no program for youth there, and so that's ‑‑ that's a big step. 12 is a start. It's ‑‑ especially having that foundation of ‑‑ and I know that Tasha has got a strong youth program in the Keys, and I'm sure all over the country in your states, there are things going on with youth, and connecting with those other organizations or centers that have started something, I remember many years ago in the State of Washington when we first had a mandate to do something with youth, we had a hard time ‑‑ we were supposed to just go find ‑‑ we weren't ‑‑ we were supposed to not reach out to special education. We were supposed to reach out to the schools, but ‑‑ just kids with 504 plans. We learned in that special education is a 504 plan, or is part of that, and so we had to do a lot of adapting, and I think the key is once you reach those first few, they will talk, and they know how to get out there and find the others.

>> CALLER: This is Sierra. Can I ask a question?

>> MARY OLSON: You just did. Do you want to ask another one?

>>

>> CALLER: Well, I think I've used my quota for the third question. I just am curious, so APRIL right now, I hope everybody has seen it go out, we have sent out a survey to all the SILCs across the country and in territories to ask what kind of involvement are people seeing in their SILCs, on their councils, on YAC or leadership forums, ex officio organizations, all sorts of questions about youth involvement in SILCs. So I hope everybody is getting that and responding and sending it back. Some of the responses we're getting we're seeing that some people did not write youth into their SPIL going forward, starting on October. So I guess, what is some of your advice, if there's not specific youth pieces inside of the SPIL that they've written, what kind of advice do you give them to still engage youth if it's not specifically written in already?

>> JIM BAKER: This is Jim. It's a really good question, because I ‑‑ when we got this fifth core service I was kind of scratching my head thinking also not a core service, that's a targeted population. Both youth transitioning as well as nursing home transition. It still involves housing and transportation and employment and medical services and advocacy and all of those other things that we do for everybody else. So there's nothing ‑‑ anything that's targeted in our state plans toward any population can be targeted towards youth adds well.

>> I couldn't agree with that any more, Jim. And I guess I would say, you know, when you're recruiting for committees and council recruitment and stuff, reach out to organizations where there are youth. Send information through the Department of Education and voc. rehab and, you know, the parent training and information centers, which if you're a SILC and you're doing anything youth related and you're not hooked up with your Parent Training and Information Center, I would really encourage that you do that. All of the states that I have had the blessing of working in this field, they have always been a fantastic partner, and that is every bit as true in Arizona. So reach out to those folks and try to recruit. I mean, you can get the youth voice in by reaching out for it. I think there are a lot of youth who want to do something and no one has reached out to them and they don't know where to go. And I think, get out of the way. You know, a lot of times we're our own ‑‑ we're the barrier. You know, we've got to create space for youth to come in and feel comfortable. We've got to give them opportunities to really use that voice. I don't want any of our 63 alumni to feel like they're a token in anything. They really need to be valued, and so I think you can creatively ‑‑ if that's the desire you have, you can creatively make space for them, and I think that would go so very far.

>> That's really awesome. Jim, I just Tweeted your quote of youth are not a service, they're a population. So that's awesome. I agree with ‑‑ I think that ‑‑ Melissa, what you were saying is get out of the way sometimes. I think that's often a hard thing to do and hard to wrap your mind around a population that maybe you haven't been a part of for a while. Thank you, guys, that's really helpful, I think for a lot of people.

>> MARY OLSON: I feel like we just got ‑‑ we just got some nuggets that I'm going to hold on to, and luckily, guess what, everybody on the call today, you can share this with your council members and with your Center for Independent Living, and the audio and the transcript will be up on our website following the call today.

So we're getting real close to the end of our time, and I'll give one more opportunity for folks if you want to press \*2 and raise your hand, ask a question, or type anything in the box you can at this point. But while we're waiting I want to say again I really appreciate our speakers, all of you, taking the time out to be with us today. I think this is such an important topic not only because I have a passion for youth, but I have a newfound passion for SILCs, and I think that SILCs have power and opportunities in order to do a lot more than we are doing, and especially with all of the new roles and regulations that are coming out, SILCs now can do more. We have opportunities to do resource development. We can do advocacy type work. We can do a lot better partnerships with our CILs. And so this is, I think, a prime ‑‑ and we have some great examples in Florida and in Arizona, and I'm sure they would be more than happy to work with any of you. You can contact me, again, Mary Olson, and I can get you guys in touch, or maybe it might be right for you to apply for one of our SILC mentoring opportunities. Again, one more time, Sierra wanted me to plug we would really appreciate it if all the folks on the line today would fill out our SILC needs assessment survey, and what that does is it helps APRIL figure out what kind of training do you need and how can we support you all in getting youth engaged. And with that, I guess ‑‑ do our speakers, anybody on the line, have any last thoughts or wisdom or nuggets you want to impart?

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: I would love to hear a wisdom nugget as you called it. I'm going to Tweet that out, from Tasha and Anya.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: This is Anya. I think I can go. Can you hear me?

>> MARY OLSON: Yes.

>> ANYA CARRILLO: Awesome. I feel like the Arizona part of the Youth Leadership Forum, it helps me ‑‑ it helped me more than I think it ‑‑ I was thinking. I was thinking this is a good summer getaway, escape the heat. Not really, because I was in Tucson, and it's way different from Phoenix. But escape the heat, get out, just do something, but once I left, I was like, wow, I learned a lot, and I can use this towards my life, and I can actually do something and not think I'm just going to be a lazy person who sits on the couch all the time now, and I feel very thankful to Melissa and to everyone who helped put together Arizona Youth Leadership Forum, because without it, I don't think I would be a teacher. I don't think I would be speaking at conferences. I don't think I would be able to do that. I'm pursuing dreams that I never thought would come true. Thank you.

>> MELISSA ANN SANTORA: You go, girl.

>> This is Tasha. I was thinking, too, when we did the youth Senate that I was a part of, the thing that was really an impact for me was to know I had the support of the disability community because I never had it before. So that's a really big thing when you are able to get youth together in a room that can identify maybe they don't have the same disability but they all have something that they've had to deal with getting accommodations or having to fight for themselves or having to ‑‑ have trouble getting into a building or things like that. It's a very unique experience for anybody that most of the population doesn't experience and doesn't ‑‑ so that was a big thing for me to walk into a room full of people that I didn't really have to explain myself. So that's really big. If you can get youth to feel comfortable in a setting like that and just whatever they're comfortable with, this is ‑‑ not an open room, but an open environment where they can say things they want to say and are comfortable saying it and ‑‑.

>> MARY OLSON: Well, again, thank you, everybody, for joining us today, and thank you for the young folks for taking time out. I know that teleconference calls are not necessarily like super cool awesome. It's not Google Hangs, but we appreciate you joining us today and sharing all the information that you have as well. And that's pretty much all that we have for folks, and we're at the top of our time here. Again, feel free to contact us any time and we can get you connected with some of these folks on the call, or with some other folks we know, and please don't forget to evaluate this call and all of our calls on the APRIL website and the audio and transcript will be available there as well. So thank you, everybody, for joining us today, and thank you to all of our speakers. Have a great ‑‑ a great end of your week.