**ROUGHLY EDITED TRANSCRIPT**

**APRIL**

**Peer Support: The Bread and Butter of Independent Living**

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 >> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Hello, folks. We'll get started in just about 10 minutes here. Feel free to take our poll while you're waiting. And we will start soon. I also see some folks introducing themselves in the chat box. That's a great idea! We love to hear who all is here.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Hello, folks. We'll be getting started in just a few moments. There is a poll that we're asking folks to fill out while you're waiting. If you are using the webinar system, feel free to do that. And we'll get started in just a moment.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: All right. Welcome, everyone. We will go ahead and get started here. First of all, I just wanted to say welcome to everyone and thank you again for joining today's conversation on peer support, the bread and butter of IL. This conversation is a partnership with the IL NET, a national training and technical assistance project for CILs and SILCs operated by ILRU in partnership with NCIL, APRIL and Utah state. It's supported by a grant from the U.S. Administration On Community Living. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions, points of views or opinions do not necessarily therefore represent official administration association for community living policy. If you are using a phone line only or a phone line you may press star‑pound to enter you on queue to speak and ask questions or join the conversation. For those of you using the webinar, you may also type your comments or questions in that chat box and we can voice them for you. If you are only participating via computer you can click the little person with the hand raise to do raise your hand and then we can unmute your mic to speak. Please, as always, bear with me as I try to do the best I can with technical, but sometimes technology doesn't always work well.

Today's captions for the call are being provided at the bottom of the webinar platform. If you are not using that webinar platform, we also have those available and you can click the link on that first slide or that link that's provided in the invitation on the APRIL website at www.APRIL‑rural.org under that IL Conversation tab and that will pull up a whole screen of captioning. If you are having any trouble at all participating you can always email me for immediate assistance. That's Mary.olson@MSO.UMT.EDU. At any point, and I can help you the best that I can. Please, as always, remember to evaluate these conversations from the APRIL website under that IL Conversation tab. Your feedback really does only make us stronger and we just appreciate all of you guys participating today.

And now without further ado, the main event. We want to give a very warm welcome to today's hosts Linda Pogue, the disability rights and IL program director and Ken Mitchell, Assistant Director, both from disABILITY LINK in Decatur, Georgia. Thank you so much for agreeing to lead this really important conversation for today's call. I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to these speakers and let them introduce themselves a little and take us on this journey. So with that, Linda, take it away.

>> LINDA POGUE: Hello. Thank you, Mary. Thank you, everyone. I'm looking at my screen, and it's saying that more than 100 people are participating in this. That's amazing! Fantastic! Thank you all very much for your interest in peer support. My name is Linda Pogue, and I am, indeed, the disability rights and Independent Living program director here at disABILITY LINK serving the 12 down‑county Metro Atlanta area in Georgia, and here is Ken.

>> KEN MITCHELL: How are you doing? This is Ken Mitchell and I'm also looking at the screen unfortunately I don't see anything. I'm the Assistant Director here at disABILITY LINK and mostly I'm here to interpret Linda's English to Americanize it, but I'm looking forward to this conversation, and we hope to get a lot of participation.

>> LINDA POGUE: I'm moving the slides. I am not sure that I can talk and move slides at the same time. So there is our contact information should anybody be interested, and we'll return to that at the end of the presentation in case you want to capture it then.

So this is a conversation about peer support, and we called it the bread and butter of Independent Living. And here this slide says the introduction, bread and butter means an everyday or ordinary person or thing. Bread and butter is the basis of a sandwich. We put that together and say, bread and butter, or peer support, is the everyday elements or the basis of Independent Living Centers.

So would you agree with that? If you are somebody who likes to participate by speaking or chatting, please feel free to do that.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Linda, we do have some folks popping in saying "we love that idea, yes, definitely."

>> LINDA POGUE: Well, I have to say this was Ken's idea. He does often think around food elements, so that's how we came up with "bread and butter." That's great. Thank you for listening and paying attention. Appreciate it.

I'm going to move on to the next slide. And here I have nine statements labeled and we call it the rules of disABILITY LINK's peer support groups. In fact, this is the guidance that we offer people who are participating in training for peer support. It's not completely relevant to a webinar, but I bet you get the flavor. It says, number 1, be on time, we have a lot to cover. Number 2, stick to the agenda. Obviously that's the training agenda. But you are encouraged to ask questions. We certainly encourage you to ask questions. Number 3, breaks are built into the agenda, but as you're an adult and you are expected to know what you need to do, when people participate in our training we ask them to do what it is they need to. Number 4, please respect one another at all times. Obviously that's pretty basic in a Center for Independent Living. Number 5, we ask for no interruptions. And number 6, no monopolizing. So, clearly, we want everybody to participate. The group doesn't work if everybody doesn't participate but being cognizant of the fact that everybody needs to have a go. Sometimes that means not saying something you were going to say so somebody else has the opportunity or sometimes it's pushing yourself to say something when you're a little anxious about talking out loud. Number 7, we encourage everybody to fully participate in our training, just as we encourage you to fully participate in this webinar. We certainly do understand if you don't want to participate. We always say in our trainings, we are going to encourage you, so don't be surprised if we say you feel like you can participate in something. And then finally we ask people to remember that all discussion is confidential. Personal information shared by participants stays in the room. Again, relating that back to our training groups, people often share some great stories to help each other understand about living with a disability and peer support, how that fits in. So some of those things make sense in a webinar like this, some of them don't, but, again, we hope it makes you have a flavor of what it is we like to do in our groups.

>> KEN MITCHELL: One of the things that we also encourage is that these are some rules that we kind of come out initially with. But we do encourage people to ‑‑ any other rules that you would like to add to that. Sometimes there's a specific thing you like to add, for instance, I always say, if you would please until I get to know your voices, would you say your name as you raise your hand or are talking, but I'm sure that you guys might have some other rules or suggestions that you like to add, and if you do, this is a good time so we can put it on our list.

>> LINDA POGUE: Somebody is actually included some of their rules in the chat. Maria is saying, these are our ground rules. What is said in here stays here. What is learned here leaves here. Respect. No judging. Open‑minded. Stay positive. Acknowledge frustrations. Take time to process, listen. Seek first to understand before being understood. That's lovely.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Good stuff.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I just wanted to remind folks, we're going to go ahead and open the floor so that it is open for requesting. So, again, you can just press \*# if you want to ‑‑

>> OPERATOR: To request the floor enter \*#.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Take it away.

>> LINDA POGUE: So I'm moving on to the next slide. It says definitions of peer support. These are definitions that we have taken from our peer support training. Peer support is, assist people with disabilities to lead a self‑determined life through support and resources. Peer supporters are people with disability whose have learned life strategies, how to be a self‑advocate, and how to live independently. Peer supporters offer the benefit of their own experiences, passing along encouragement and support needed for others to construct their own advocacy and life strategies to bring about desired goals. Peer support is has been there done that. Peer support is one person with a disability supporting another person with a disability. Peer support is benefiting from the experiences of someone else in a similar situation. Peer support is assisting someone to live their own independent live. And finally on our list here it says ‑‑ oh, I didn't move the ‑‑ I didn't move the slides. Beg your pardon, folks. Finally on our cyst it says peer support is carefully list inning and asking questions to help people with disabilities make our own decisions.

I wonder if there's anybody who wants to add something else in terms of a definition of peer support?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Go ahead and press \*# if you are on the phone or you can type it into your chat box.

>> KEN MITCHELL: This is Ken again, especially if you want to say peer support to me...

>> LINDA POGUE: Do you favor one of these definitions over another one, Ken?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I actually have somebody in the queue. Would you like me to open their line?

>> LINDA POGUE: That would be thrilling.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Go ahead, please.

>> LINDA POGUE: Did we lose them?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Go ahead, please. we might have. I apologize.

>> LINDA POGUE: I'll keep on moving, and then when somebody is ready, that's fine.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Perfect.

>> LINDA POGUE: The next slide is titled "what is peer support?" Again, we have taken this directly from our training curriculum. This is what we think of as peer support. And I deal peer supporter will: Have a purpose and a goal. Assist others in building their own independent lives. Work as a collaborator rather than an overseer. Run on empathy, sympathy. Build circles of support around consumers. Build bridges to people and resources within the community. Involve friends and family. Help people help themselves. Keep all information about their peer confidential.

Of course, we're happy to hear from anybody else. I would like to draw attention to the number of times that "help" appears in this list of ideal peer support. We say we help people to help themselves. I think there's a danger that we can be too helpful sometimes. I think many of us who work in this field are people who want to be helpful and supportive of others, but we always have to remember in peer support it's not about us; it's about our peer. So when we're doing the helping, you need to be helping people to help themselves.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Go ahead, please. Did you have something to add? I wonder if it's my error. I think I have your line open. While we're waiting for that, I do see here, Linda, there are lots coming in down below. "Run on empathy, not sympathy, that's good," Wanda says. And Maria says, "We need to be careful about co‑dependency."

>> LINDA POGUE: Absolutely. Thank you for the response. I like it. I appreciate it.

So on the next slide we have from our training what peer support is not. Peer support is not: a gripe session. About being an "expert." A quick fix ‑ progress takes time.

Being a rescuer or mommy. Professional counseling or therapy. Or a substitute for meaningful social and other support services.

Again, I'd be happy to hear from anybody who has anything to say about what we think peer support is not.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Just a reminder that peer support can be difficult because, like was said earlier, a lot of us in this particular position because we want to, quote, help people, we want to have people do better in their circumstances and where they are. So it's really difficult for us not to ‑‑ not to, quote, help and to support, and one of the discussions we always have in our peer support program is, is there a difference between support and help? That usually comes up in a lot of conversations. And for all those people out there, that's something you might want to think about. Is there a difference between support and help?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I just wanted to add to that. This is Mary again. You know, we've got some great things going on here. David says, "Helps to break that cycle of isolation and building a peer support network." And "Never assume people need help. We need to ask if they want assistance.." Christina adds she thinks we should address what it is and what it is not, not only in the CILs, but also with consumers. And finally, you know, ‑‑ I apologize if I say your names wrong, Kwee says "Peer support is not pushing one's ideals or successful treatment on to another peer." And Maria says peer support is not a time to fix ourselves while we are mentoring.

>> LINDA POGUE: These are great comments. Not to do things for people, but with people. Thank you very much, Leslie. Right. Facilitators need to remember that's what they are doing, facilitating.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: These are all so great. I am thinking I might even pull these out and come up with a peer support is and is not tool from the conversation.

>> LINDA POGUE: Very good. They're coming in so quickly I can't read them before they're up.

So there's a couple questions about getting access to the slides, Mary. Is that something that you can answer, please?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Yes, thank you, Linda. The slides are actual available for download right now on the APRIL website and, again, that's APRIL‑rural.org. I'm going to type it in there. And it's under the IL Conversation tab. And the recording, the entire recording of the webinar, including these wonderful chat comments, will also be up for download immediately following the conversation.

>> LINDA POGUE: Lovely. Thank you for all those comments. I see a couple of people are mentioning about not trying to be a substitute for meaningful social life or other support services. Right. Peer support is something that goes on inside these things and help people build them if that's what they like to do.

>> KEN MITCHELL: I like that.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Would you mind if I asked one of the questions that seems to be coming up? Wanda asks, "Sometimes in these groups they are all our consumers ‑‑ sometimes these groups are all our consumers have where there is interaction. So how do you bring them back to the topic if they rant?"

>> LINDA POGUE: Are we talking about one of us ranting? I can't imagine that. Yes ‑‑ you go ahead first, Ken.

>> KEN MITCHELL: There's a couple of ways. It really depends on the person that's ranting. Me, you have to be a little more direct and probably um people you can be more suggestive. It kind of depends on the person. But one of the things I know we often do in our particular class is that we might say something to the effect, that's a ‑‑ your idea is valid, interesting, or whatever it is, and we have some more ideas about that, and it's almost kind of indirectly shifting the topic to someone else, which will bring us back to the topic. Or even we might bring up the topic itself, wherever we are in. And that relates to getting dinner tonight, how, and that's just redirecting. Linda?

>> LINDA POGUE: Yes. So it's possible, isn't it, to use some of the same techniques whether you are talking with one person or a group of people, and that is maybe to think back to the previous slide, is that ideal peer support will have a purpose and a goal. So simply asking people, "So where are we with achieving the goal ‑ whatever that is ‑ can be useful." I think everybody deserves an opportunity to rant from time to time, frankly. But, yes, this is not what peer support ‑‑ it's not just about griping, though many of us sometimes have to get things off our chests if we're going to move forward a little less burdened.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Linda has a phrase that I know when I've been ranting a little too long. It goes like this, "It's been my experience that..." and she'll say whatever the topic is.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you, Ken, for recognizing my skills.

So people have got some ideas. David Nelson has said, "In that goal arena having an agenda, if it's a group meeting, is an important aspect."

So where am I? I will move on to the next part which something we hope you are going to participate. We have a true and false quiz. This is from our training, but I think it could be interesting. Let's see how it goes when we've got 139 people involved.

Number 1, true or false, if a peer is having difficulty with a task, you should immediately help them? True or false? Those of you who are connected with the webinar can actually vote on this. Oh, wow. It went ‑‑ oh, lovely. I am watching the numbers go up and down on the ‑‑ on my screen.

So right at the moment it says something like 93% say false and 7% say true. If a peer is having difficulty with a task, you should immediately help them. Well, this goes back to helping people help themselves aspect of peer support, does it not? Of course, it can sometimes make us feel very satisfied if we can jump in and help somebody and show that we're capable of doing that, but clearly that's not the goal of peer support, is it? It's about having people turn to their own skills and use them. So more often than not we'd say, you're right, it's not about immediately helping.

Now, there are going to be exceptions to this because it's life and life is complicated. There could be times when you do offer to help make something happen, but more often than not peer supporters are not helping people but helping people to help themselves.

>> KEN MITCHELL: And because I'm Ken, I always look for that area where, well, maybe it depends, and it may depend on what you think immediate is. Immediate may be prompt, may be weeks, it may be whatever. Immediately depends. It also depends is help like doing it for them or is, help, hey, giving a suggestion? So I'm going to go help out that 7% that said that it's true. It depends. So it depends on what the task is and how you do help and when immediate is.

>> LINDA POGUE: So in the chat you've got a combination of true and falses, people suggesting ask first, and people suggesting, well, ask the peer what the solution might be.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Awesome.

>> LINDA POGUE: So we ended up with 7.7%, which is five people and 9.2%, which is 52 people. So the larger amount being that it's false.

>> KEN MITCHELL: I have always been on the smaller side always. So I'm so Kay with it.

What about the next question? If a peer has built defenses, one way to help is to tell them to get over it. True or false? 100% false. Now we have a little bit of a difference.

We have one person saying true. Three people saying true. Four people ‑‑ 40 people saying not true. If a peer has built defenses one way to help is to tell them to get over it. So 96%, overwhelming amount, say, yes, that's false. Right. I personally never have responded very well to people telling me to get over whatever it is I'm finding a barrier. But there might be times if I had a long‑term relationship with somebody, I mate say, I've noticed that, and then put in whatever it is, that it is a topic where you're always hesitant or this is something you might be concerned about. So there might be ways of saying you say this thing a lot of times. Isn't it time to move out, without saying it like that? And certainly like that to people I don't have a very strong relationship with.

>> KEN MITCHELL: That voice in the background. I can think of an incident where I had a person who was blind. I was supporting them with their O and M skills. One of the things they would not do, this is a lady, was go out in the rain. And I remember saying ‑‑ she says, what about if I get wet? My answer was, have you ever been wet before? Of course, they said, yes. And later on they confided in me saying that was the most freeing part of their O and M training, that it was okay to get wet. And though I didn't say get over it, I just said, "Have you ever been wet before?" And they said, "Well, yeah." And to this day they continue to thank me for that. Which is weird you would never tell anybody, hey, just get over it.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Christina is wondering if you could clarified for us, when you say peer, is this a co‑worker, a consumer? Who exactly is a peer?

>> KEN MITCHELL: The answer is "yes."

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you for asking that question. I probably should have said this earlier on. Forgive me. The way I typically use phrases when I say peer supporter, I mean the person who has been trained and is providing the peer support service. Sometimes that is to a colleague, a co‑worker. Often it is to a consumer. Sometimes it is to family and friends in the world at large. It's kind of a philosophy of living, peer support, not telling people what to do, encouraging people to take their own paths.

>> KEN MITCHELL: One of the things that we suggested is that a peer and a peer supporter is a person with a disability supporting another person with a disability.

>> LINDA POGUE: So peer supporter is doing the support typically and the peer is the person receiving the peer support services. Ken, can you clarify O and M skills, please?

>> KEN MITCHELL: Sorry. O and M is orientation and mobility. It's usually showing a person who is blind how to navigate, mostly with a white cane.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you for asking the question. And, yes, Christina, Ken is being facetious when he says yes. But it means to people in general we would start with specifically to consumers, because this is a service we offer for Centers for Independent Living, peer support, but we can also provide peer support to other folks who are not necessarily labeled consumers.

So there's another question here on the true and false quiz. It is a peer supporter's job to keep up with the latest information or research about your peer's disability. True or false?

>> LINDA POGUE: Here come in the numbers. I am watching them. This one is a little more evenly matched.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Uh‑oh, I can't pick a side now?

>> LINDA POGUE: It's actually 50‑50. It's erring on the side of false but there are people who think it's true. That's most typical when we have this conversation with other people, not on a webinar, it's a peer supporter's job to keep up with the latest information or research about a peer's disability. Well, I would put it like this, as a peer supporter, you are probably interested in a lot of different things, but you are not specifically responsible for finding out about somebody's particular disability. Surely that's their responsibility if it's relevant. Now, that's not to say that we wouldn't find out some information by asking it, or maybe even using the Internet, about particular labels to see if that can be helpful, but I would say that, yes, it is ‑‑ it's not a peer supporter's job to keep up with the latest information about a particular disability. It is our job, maybe, to keep up with latest information about what's going on in the Independent Living world or what's going on the in the disability rights world, yes. I'm just looking at the screen.

>> KEN MITCHELL: We were just ‑‑ Linda and I were just talking about this a little bit, and one of the things that we were talking about, in order for our consumers, people to make ‑‑ have choices is that they have to know the choices. So to give information is probably a good thing, but to know everything about a particular disability or area is probably impossible. So I would just be able to provide options.

>> LINDA POGUE: Absolutely, I would agree with the folks on the chat line. Yes, it's not their job, but we could be a better person by knowing some of that information. You know, if we have current information, that can be really useful, but there's not enough time necessarily to keep up with all areas. And sometimes people don't have access, maybe, to the Internet or whatever, so you are going to do a little research for people. That's not an unusual role for a peer supporter.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I do see one comment that Access Living is saying it is important for us to know about communication for disabilities that you are unfamiliar about. And then Bob said, "I think it's a case‑by‑case thing."

>> LINDA POGUE: I would agree with all that, if that doesn't sound too ambiguous of me. There can be no harm in knowing this. I think the emphasis here is that it's not our particular job as a peer supporter in place of the peers themselves. That's the emphasis. Thank you, everybody. I appreciate that.

There's another question if you would like to do it. It is: When a peer supporter has established a relationship with a peer, the supporter's responses are less important. Would you agree with that? When a peer supporter has an established relationship with a peer, the supporter's responses are less important. True or false? Well, we've got 100% false here. The numbers are increasing, but it's remaining 100%. Right, things change when a relationship has some time behind it, but clearly as a peer supporter we are always responsible for providing a very good peer support response to the issues and topics raised by our peers. Absolutely. I wouldn't expect anything else from a great bunch of peer supporters on this call.

>> KEN MITCHELL: I can't take the other side on this one. So I'm going to have to agree with the 100%.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you, everybody.

Here's one last one. Categorizing peers is an effective way to organize the work of peer supporters. True or false? I'm watching the numbers. Heavily on the side of false. A little bit on the side of true. I suppose, to my mind, this is something about labeling people. Does labeling make for effective peer support? Probably not. Right? Probably not.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Maybe, Linda, if we talk a little about categorizing, it might help, as far as, like, putting in people with different disabilities in certain groups is what you are saying?

>> LINDA POGUE: Yes, right. Do we work with everybody with the same kind of label in the same way? No. We're Centers for Independent Living, so we rarely do that. I mean, there's nothing wrong with you taking a group of your work and trying to make sense of it as a peer supporter, but that's not about how we have our relationships. So somebody has pointed out categorizing and labeling is different. Categorizing is not always negative says Reri. Absolutely. There's always room for maneuver with these.

So, labeling, categorizing, I don't think those are very useful when you are in a peer supporter relationship. They might be in organizing your desk space but not in your relationships. Pamela said categorizing can help match a person with a similar disability, but doesn't mean it's labeling. I hear what you are saying that. When it comes to matching people in peer support, often that topic comes up, people should be matched with a similar disability. Maybe that's not been your experience. I would say that sometimes if you want to do a match based on experience or goals, that can be very useful. And sometimes matching is about something to do with something more mundane like geography, like people can actually reach one another, they're in a similar part of time, they have transportation to reach one another.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Sometimes the disability itself is not as important ‑‑ well, often the disability is not as important as the situation. For instance, transportation. Because I happen to be blind, it doesn't mean that my issues with transportation is not the same as someone who uses a wheelchair. We both may have difficulties finding that accessible transportation or that path to travel, so we might both work together or support each other on transportation issues. The actual, let's say, ramp or maybe tactile dots, that part may be somewhat different, but the actual experience of transportation we both can share. We can both provide peer support to each other on accessible transportation.

>> LINDA POGUE: Yes, thanks for the people who are on the chat box. Leah is saying not categorizing but being aware of each needs and match with the best mentor possible and. Reri is agreeing with that. Because people have the same disability doesn't mean they have the same experience as says Abby. Exactly. There are a number of factors you might want to consider. I don't expect it in the Independent Living world, but in other parts of our community, people do match disabilities with each other, do they not?

So we ended up with categorizing, effective way to organize work as being 77.5% false and 22.4% true. Thank you, everybody, for joining in with that. I appreciate it. I really like your comments, too.

I'm moving on to the next slide, if that's okay. This is labeled the who, what, where, when, how and why of peer support. I think of this in my world as Ken's trademark. He's never happy, it seems to me, unless we answer these questions. Who, what, where, where, how and why. So I started with who. All disABILITY LINK staff where Ken and I work and our volunteers are trained peer supporters. We have a three‑day training, and we have quarterly follow‑up meetings for trained peer supporters to support one another. And we would maintain that training is essential for meaningful peer support.

They were I have how? Following the principles of Independent Living and peer support, that is, Independent Living means each of us is the expert in our own lives, and, two, there are already plenty of people who want to tell people with disabilities how to live our lives. So we don't need to train another bunch of people and peer supports that are telling other people what to do. This is kind of the very opposite of that. In a world that likes to tell us what to do, this is a disability community supporting one another.

Let me move on to the next slide.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: This is Mary, Linda. While you are doing that, just a couple of things. I just wanted to remind folks again, you know, if you want us to open up your line, if you press \*# you can get in the queue. And then when I open your line, it will actually tell you your line has been opened, you have the floor, but just to make sure that you have unmuted your personal line at home. So if you are muting and unmuting at home as well, you have to unmute that. And while we're doing that, one quick question. Maria is wondering: "Did you develop the training?"

>> LINDA POGUE: There was a group of us in Georgia who developed this training. We were lucky enough to have the opportunity to glean the very best of peer support ideas and training from all over the state and put it together in this three‑day training. Uh‑huh. I hope that answered the question. Ken and I were part of it but not the only part of it. There were some greater minds than ours.

So, where was I? So easily distracted. What is peer support? I think of peer support as a powerful tool for change in individual lives and in the community. For me the message of Independent Living and the method of peer support empowers and enables us in the disability community to live the lives of our own choosing. If you haven't noticed already, I'm a big fan. And then the where and when. So I think peer support is wonderfully flexible tool. It can be used in a wide range of locations and times at the mutual convenience of the peer supporter and peer. Now, obviously we all have some constraints if we are working with or through a Center for Independent Living, but I encourage people to be as flexible and as imaginative as possible with peer support. I put this example here of Donny's story, and in the slide at the end of this with resources on it tells you how to connect with this. So I have a little clip from a DVD that's called "Donny's story." It's called a life of choices, Donny's story. It's one of a series that was created to recognize people moving out of institutions and into the community, in particular, with regards to finding employment. But the clip that we use in the training and then follow‑ups and so on often is a clip of Donnie, who is this young man who has lived in institutions, central state hospital, our largest and oldest institution here in Georgia, he lived there for many years, and his peer supporter is a woman called Darlene who is interacting with Donnie in this story, and it takes place in a park, and there they're strolling along, and then they find a bench to sit on together. Now, obviously this was made for a video, so it was somewhat created, but it points out to us all that we don't have to be in an office and we don't have to have a clipboard and a list and a notebook to provide good peer support. There is Donnie and Darlene in a park chatting away, and then at one point Darlene asks Donnie what his goals are and he has trouble articulating them, and so she asks whether she could offer some ideas, and she used an example of our own goal, and then she talked about some of the similarities that they might have between them. She indeed also lived in an institution for a long time and been afraid to restraint and seclusion and some things like that. And when Donnie heard that, his demeanor changed and he looked to Darlene with much more interest about this whole thing, she has something to offer. Anyway, point to me is that we need to remember that we don't need to have to do peer support in a structured environment. In fact, the less structured it is, it often can lead to much more meaningful conversations, and that's what it's often about.

Then the why, I have written peer support that the antidote to the history of the disability community and the experience of disability. And for me the why of peer support is the most important aspect. I mean, peer support can change lives and attitudes and outcomes for people with disabilities. It puts us as people with disabilities in charge, and it's all about people with disabilities and nothing about people without disabilities, what they do or don't do. It's putting us in the driver's seat, not a passenger seat, and to my mind, if you know why you are doing peer support, the how becomes a lot easier because you have this goal that you're striving for. I wonder if that makes sense to anybody.

I see that Leslie is asking about the three‑day training and at the end of this I have some information if you're interested in talking with us about it. And Katherine is asking do the staff who ‑‑ who doing the peer support have a disability? Yes. Yes. This is primarily about people with disabilities supporting other people with disabilities, using their experience and ideas and ‑‑ well, our experience is best ‑‑ to share with other people so that other people can benefit from what each of us has learned.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Sometimes there may be someone in the class that doesn't have a disability, and though they might not be a peer supporter, it does give some insight, I believe.

>> LINDA POGUE: But primarily, yes, we are talking about people with disabilities who receive some training, this training or other training, about peer support. So that can be effective peer supporters with people who have a disability and are working on goals.

Leah says she likes the analogy of being in the driver's seat, not the passenger. Thank you for recognizing that.

So ‑‑ are there any comments you would like to make about my trying to answer the who, what, when, where, how and why of peer support? As I say, why, I think, is the most important.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Again, I want to try these voice lines again. So if you want to voice you can press \*# and get in the queue and hopefully we'll get that working. Otherwise, you can go ahead and type it in the chat boxes. Go ahead and say Leah is mentioning that they really like that analogy of being in that driver's seat. And Bob says, I'm not disabled, but I have been dealing with this for over 10 years and I've had many meaningful chats and shared things that my clients share with me. And in Missoula they're wondering how do we know peer support is beneficial? How do we know if it works?

>> LINDA POGUE: Well, thank you for all those comments. I just wanted to say about Leah, I have another friend who likes to talk about being the CEO of your own company. That's her way of saying being in the driver's seat. And as regards to what Bob says, yes, of course, in many ways peer support is about treating anybody with respect in conversation, but in particular obviously because we're Centers for Independent Living run by and for people with disabilities. So we primarily are talking about people with disabilities being peer supporters to other people with disabilities.

Good question, how do we know it's beneficial, how do we know it works? Well, there actually has been people more clever than I who have paid attention to how people reach goals with and without peer support. What I would say is that actually we're obliged to provide it. It's one of our core services. So that doesn't mean that it's not beneficial but that we do need to provide it. And that we can ask our consumers how they feel about being provided peer support, see if it works for the people we are supporting.

>> KEN MITCHELL: I know that often we ask, how do we know that's working? So we try to think about what our particular goals are. If I was a person and I tried to achieve a goal, one of the things here, at Centers for Independent Living, we always say that, you know, it's funny when half the people have taken the course, I always kind of mention to them, you've already been a peer supporter. We're just showing you the skills you already have and maybe reinforcing some of the others, because a peer supporter is ‑‑ the way I always describe it, it's like ‑‑ kind of like mentoring but there's no mentor and mentee. The information flows both ways. As in the peer support, you'll find that as you are giving support, you often find that you wind up getting support as well, and that's one of the ways that you know it's actually working, because you're giving and getting at the same time.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: To follow that up, folks are asking, at what point can we ‑‑ excuse me ‑‑ do you recommend a survey? They're wondering.

>> LINDA POGUE: I wish I could say absolutely "yes" or "no." I can't think at this precise moment. I have to make a note and get back to you, as they say.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: DAC, I think that your computer mic should be live if you wanted to go ahead with your question, comment. Or maybe I'm just failing everywhere on the technology stuff. We're all learning together.

Peer support is what I need.

>> KEN MITCHELL: There you go.

>> LINDA POGUE: We have found in similar situations, Mary, that we just move forward and it's worked out. So try that theory.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: And David Nelson asks, "As a disabled vet who works with other disabled vets, they want to share experiences ‑‑ oh, it's the why, the why is sharing those experiences and helping each other with life struggles."

>> LINDA POGUE: Yes, exactly. Exactly. I can't remember, it was one of the comments here, talked about maybe not always having a similar experience. I don't know. I just want to share this with people in case it's useful. So, clearly, I haven't had every experience there is to have, but I've met and talked with a lot of people. So sometimes I don't speak from my own experience. I say, well, I know somebody else who was in a similar situation and they tried something. Maybe that might work for you. So it's possible to bring in a third party or more in terms of experiences. Does that make sense?

And then Jessica here was asking about formal versus informal settings. As they say I'm very keen on people to try some informal settings if possible, but sometimes life is just a bit too tricky. It doesn't work like that. So people do meet up at Centers for Independent Living and have conversations there. That's fine, because obviously Centers for Independent Living are very warm and welcoming situations, but I encourage people to do conversations away from the office if at all possible. If transportation barriers and time barriers and all those things allow for it.

Somebody is asking about if ‑‑ the differences between peer support one‑on‑one and in a group. I mean, yes, of course, there are some differences in setting a group up. I would say the skills and techniques you use are very similar as a facilitator. You're going to encourage, obviously, everybody to participate as much as they would like to. But you're still going to share information with one another and try to clarify things. I don't know if that's a very good answer.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I do have somebody on the phone lines. Go ahead, please.

>> I would just like to say that I think peer support, for me, is like the backbone of all the other services we provide. We develop a relationship, which develops the trust, so we become better advocates. They trust us more if we do Independent Living skills. I just think it builds the whole basis for the relationship. That's just my thought.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you. That's a great ‑‑ I'm making a note of that. It's a lovely way of describing it, backbone from which everything else happens. Yes, it's difficult to imagine everything else going on in the Center without some good peer support. Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: All right. Thanks to everyone on the phone lines.

>> LINDA POGUE: I'm glad there was somebody that called in. Thank you very much for doing that. I appreciate it. I'm taking that as validation.

I also appreciate all the different chats that are coming in. Sorry, it takes me a while to process what people are asking. Could you read some of those for us, please, Mary?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Absolutely.

There's a bunch of different ones coming in here. One actually specifically, Jessica was wondering, can you speak to formal settings versus informal settings in peer support? For example, just arranging meet‑ups in a park or social settings rather than sitting in a circle in a conference room.

>> KEN MITCHELL: When I think of formal settings, you set up your appointment, you kind of come into the office, you're behind a desk perhaps, and it's more like an interview. And sometimes that will work for different people. And then it can be a formal setting, and I'm just saying, sometimes the atmosphere changes when you say, do you know what, let's go outside. And you go outside, and I don't know if you have a bench or somewhere near and it becomes more of a conversation, and sun of the barriers of this ‑‑ and some of the barriers of this formal setting are broken where it becomes now I'm just chatting with someone, I'm just getting to know my ‑‑ another person, and sometimes that changes the atmosphere or changes the discussion or the flow of the discussion. So I'm not ‑‑ we're not saying that formal settings are bad or anything like that. What we are saying is that it might be good to change it. And there's various degrees of informal settings as well. I don't know if that answered the question.

>> LINDA POGUE: I think when you take things away from an office you are taking away maybe a potential assumption that people are going to get an office‑like response and, of course, we to have offices at Centers for Independent Living, but we're trying to do it in a nontypical human services way, are we not? So I always remember from classes years ago people suggesting that when you're sitting next to each other you have a more equal relationship than when you're sitting opposite each other. So sitting next to one another can be helpful to change it. I call it shaking up the energy about something. That's just my way of talking about it.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. Can you discuss any differences between peer support that's one‑on‑one versus in a group?

>> LINDA POGUE: I tried to do that. I'm not sure I did a good job of it. I would say we are using the same skills but then in the group you have to have the additional skills of facilitation and so on. But it's the same thing. It's about offering ideas, sharing experiences, thinking about possible resources that might be helpful. It's the same process, in my opinion.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great. And then Chanelle adds that at her Center we live it up to our consumers. Winters are very harsh and long, so in the summer we encourage people to meet outside to get the fresh air and sun, but we're fortunate enough to have a pavilion down the hill from our office that's accessible and has plenty of space. And Pamela added to what you were just talking about, Linda, and she said, "One‑on‑one and peer groups need to consider accommodations for people. For example, a person with a disability may not be comfortable in a group setting. So accommodations are important to consider, too."

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you for pointing that out. Very good point.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: And there is a question from Missoula. "Do we offer peer support without putting our own agenda in it?" Good question.

>> LINDA POGUE: I think that's the fundamental thing. Thank you.

>> KEN MITCHELL: That's a difficult one. First of all, whoever said it, I think thank you being aware of that, because we always have our own agenda, even if it's as much as, I've got to finish this interview before my 2:00 appointment. So being, first of all, aware that we have our own stuff and always trying to remember to turn it to the person you are talking to about what is it that they're asking, what is it that they want, and not to solve it for them, but to support them in their own answer, and keep in that mind that it's tough. That's the tough thing about IL, giving support and not telling answers.

>> LINDA POGUE: Don't not people out of the driving seat, remember. I have to confess I always get flattered when people ask me my opinion on something, and so I'm so ready to tell people what my opinion is. It's just below the sir fist. So I need to be really careful about that. That's just about my ego, nothing about the situation for the person I would like to provide peer support for. Sometimes I think of it as a relief having peer support because we're not taking responsible for people. Isn't that great in a world where people are always asking us to take responsibility for things? Responsibility to that peer is to provide good peer support, the best we possibly can, and let go of what that outcome might be. Tricky, obviously. Always easier said than done, peer support. And that's why we have training opportunities and situations like this, so that we can think about how we can keep our own agenda away from good peer support.

Humility, says Stephanie. Good point.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Stephanie also is giving you props for the title. She interpreted "bread and butter" as being one's monetary resource. Some people refer to a reliable sort of income as their bread and butter. I thought if peer support is a bread and butter of a Center that's great. Peer support as special, ongoing connections with individuals and also a source in CIL.

And I'll do a couple more here. Leslie gives an example that they have lessons in grilling hamburgers and hotdogs, going on nature hikes, going to a coffee shop, to job shadow. Yeah, I think that's great.

And then I have a really tough question for you, and I think could take the rest. I don't know. Chanelle and Maria are both kind of asking how do you take this peer group and transition it into an active advocacy army?

>> LINDA POGUE: I love it. That's way too difficult of a question for me. Sorry. Can't do it.

So I think that there's a whole bunch of things going on there. I will not remember to say them all here. But maybe some of this will make sense to you.

You have probably had this experience when people have stepped across the threshold of an Independent Living Center and recognized that things are not, as I like to say, business as usual. That sometimes in itself is enough empowerment for people. And then obviously there's others of us who need more support, and peer support is a way of reaching our personal and community goals. And it's very difficult to be involved in other aspects of the disability community if your basic needs are not being met. And we know that many, many people in our disability community do not yet have their basic needs met. And, in fact, I was on the phone an hour or two ago with a group of people who run peer support groups for actual Lil people who are blind and they are very interested in moving on from peer support to advocacy, like you put it ‑‑ what was the phrase you used? The active advocacy army? And so it's ‑‑ maybe this sounds like a bit of a cop‑out, but it's a bit like some of our other questions, even our quiz. It depends on the situation. Where are people? Are people having those basic needs met? Are they feeling the empowerment and pride of being in a disability community? And then it doesn't take very long to find out where the barriers are, the places where the disability community members are treated in the most tricky way. I always like to think of it as the big five, education, employment, healthcare, housing, transportation. Those are the issues that affect all of us in cross disability community in one way or another. The stories might be different but those are the issues.

>> KEN MITCHELL: I like the question, and that will be our next seminar. But one of the things that I was thinking about, people I have provided some peer support to, that I get my own little kind of satisfaction from is that when their advocacy is realized. It may not be that army where everyone is changing the Disability Integration Act or something like that, but it may be as small as, do you know what, I can talk to my parents about this. Or, I can now ‑‑ one of the things I remember was a gentleman who happened to be blind told me that he was able to go out to his mailbox. For me, I didn't think that was a big deal, because I went to my mailbox every day. But for him it was a liberating experience to be able to go to his mailbox and get his own mail. So the advocating army could be just that. It can be giving person support to open their front door and step out.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: What a great answer. Thank you. Let's go ahead to the phone.

>> Hi, this is Susie Malloy. Several factors come to my mind regarding peers is what we're talking about when we refer to peer counseling actually more truly is it ex-peer counseling? The reasons I think that is that if we were really peers, one of us would not have a job; we would both be in similar socioeconomic circumstances, if we're meeting about issues that have to do with our medications or some other kind of specific issue that has to do with our disability, then I don't think that's the same as being a peer in the way that we usually think of it in Independent Living.

For example, if I'm a peer counselor for an Independent Living Center, I can get fired. I can get promoted. And then what's happened to that peer relationship that I thought I had? I'm gone. Or the other person is gone. Those of us who are peer counselors don't reveal company secrets like, my Executive Director is a rat, or who is dating whom on the staff, or things like that. It's just not done. We need to have professional behavior and expectations of ourselves and our colleagues, but that isn't what real peers would do, and sometimes some agencies are more strict about this than other agencies, but one of the ILCs I worked for had me keep track of the timing ‑‑ the length of time of the discussion in 15‑minute increments. And it felt to me like that the agency would have liked it better if I had more 15‑minute increments with more different people so that my staff would look better, and that bothered me. That doesn't feel like something a real peer would do. As long as I'm keeping track of our conversation and you're not, then I'm really acting in an ex‑peer current counselor position, I think. Also, if I'm the peer at the agency, my job is a coveted position, because both I am probably getting a paycheck and I am the stamina, flexibility and social skills to have a job, and that's not necessarily peer‑like. And if I'm the peer who a peer counselor has been chosen or set up for me, who is getting chosen? Like, what is it about the other person who is ostensibly my peer that made us seem like we'd have something to talk about? I don't know how to trust evaluation from another person, and those are things I've noticed or been thinking about during our discussion. Thank you very much.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you for thinking about that. Those are all valid points, are they not, that those of us who work at Centers for Independent Living do have some privilege. You're quite right. But not all peer support that goes on at Centers for Independent Living is with staff. Different Centers do it in different ways, of course. You're right. Ken, you had something you wanted to say.

>> KEN MITCHELL: I was just listening to your statements, and I found a couple different things. One, like Linda said, here at disABILITY LINK all of our staff are trained for peer support. Many of our volunteers are trained as peer supporters. And then one of the things about this particular webinar Linda and I thought as we were preparing it, we would say, the best way to do this, we thought, is actually doing it as if we were peer supporters, and we have found, if you noticed during the conversation, that is exactly ‑‑ it's worked exactly like that. We have given out some information, but in turn, you have given us some information, and that's exactly what peer support it. We've given you some options. Hopefully you'll make some choices. And, of course, then, we'll be responsible for the choices we make. That's what peer support does. We provide options to our peers. They will make some choices, and they will be responsible for the choices that they make. So, in essence, you know, you guys are peer supporters and we're supporting guys and you guys are supporting us. We're lucky for that. And according to Mary, this will be archived so we can go back and find out all the answers you have given because we haven't been able to remember all of them. So I thank you guys.

>> LINDA POGUE: And I think another answer to this is that's why we need to have training and conversations, because there inherently some trickiness about providing peer support from an organization to a peer that's not an organization. Obviously there is an imbalance right there. So that's why you work on these things. We attempt to improve on them, improve on our skills all the time. It's part of our obligation, I think, if we're going to take on that peer support role to receive training and work on our skills to be the best we can be,, because, frankly, what else do we have? We have each other in the peer community, and we're not all the same and we don't have the same experiences that, but we've all experienced barriers. That's the point.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Again, going back to the beginning of the seminar, we had some particular ground rules and you were talking about the internal news that's in your organization that we don't share. It's not like peer saw ‑‑ peer support is not a gripe session. I think that's one of the criteria. About anything. It's supporting the peer, and that's what we're obligated to do.

>> LINDA POGUE: So thank you for all of. Thank you again. There's lots of comments. I'm not sure I can keep up with them. Somebody else asked, do you have to have a disability to be a peer supporter in a Center for Independent Living? Well, technically, yes, but obviously there are some of us who work in Centers who do not identify as having a disability. We can provide support. I'm not sure it's peer support in the same way.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Wonderful. Reri says at the core of being a good peer supporter is an admission of not being a know it all and a willingness of peer supporters of getting what they need from anyone that can help them, especially when expertise is needed in areas like gaining employment.

And Stephanie has another one of those questions, Ken and Linda, I feel like this could take a whole another webinar. What about peer support for folks who say they want to effect change in their lives but their behaviors over time do not seem to support that. Then she caveats she might not have worded that quite right but wanted to ask it.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Not trying to seem like a know it all because I know so little, my mom used to tell me what I do not know could make a whole new world. That's a lot of stuff. Anyway, so, remember, it's that ‑‑ as a peer supporter, you're giving options. You're giving choices. You're giving information. And for people to make choices. And even though I might say I want to change the world, and my choices may not seem like that's happening, again, that's my choice, and I have to be responsible for those choices, not the peer supporter that's responsible for those choices. And so if there doesn't seem like their actions are moving, sometimes it's okay. You keep providing choices. You keep providing options. And, remember, they are the ones that are the experts of their lives, not necessarily us. There may be things that we would think they could or might want to do, but they are responsible for their own decisions.

>> LINDA POGUE: Our satisfaction or happiness is not reliant on the outcome of our peer's actions. Our responsibility is to be that best peer supporter that we can be. Just like we said we're not experts. We don't know everything about everything. We sometimes have to go and find out information. If it's about a particular need. But we provide information and experiences and encouragement and support, and then it is up to our peers. That's Independent Living. It's tricky to live with.

I am sure I have missed some questions. Is there something we should be addressing.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Linda, we are getting close to the end. Why don't you move forward. I'll let you wrap up and use the last five minutes.

>> LINDA POGUE: I'm seeing the time. Having such a good time. So I'm actually going to ‑‑ did I pass by the ‑‑ we're going to conclusions. I went past the scenario that we might have had. We'll do that some other time if you invite us.

So here we are in our conclusions. Just saying some of the things that perhaps you already tried to say. We're not experts in peer support, just in how we undertake the peer support at disABILITY LINK and what we have learned in conversation with others such as yourselves. And this is an IL Conversation, not everything in the world there is to know about peer support. We've got many people ‑‑ more than 120 people in this conversation. There's way more experience than we had time to bisect for this. What I would say, that quality peer support does require training, it does require follow‑up practice, support, time and energy. It's not just something that happens. Again, we'll say that peer support is mutually beneficial. Both the peer supporter and the peer learn from the experience, which is one of the lovely things about it. And then finally, we want to acknowledge that there is not just one way to undertake peer support. It can happen in many, many different forms, many different forms. And so I have a couple of slides of resources in case any of this is interesting to you, how to contact us, how to find that movie with the clip about Donnie's story and then some of the great stuff that's available through NCIL and through ILRU, obviously some really wonderful stuff. I'd expect people to enjoy any of those things if they wanted more attention, or probably you've already had plenty of experience with it.

I'll just keep moving and leave it on our contact information there at the end, if you want to take a note of that it would be lovely. You can obviously get the information from the ‑‑ from APRIL, the recording and the downloaded slides if any of this information is interesting to you.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Excellent. Just a couple more things here from the chat. Bob ‑‑ they say sometimes those who would provide peer support do make the wrong choices but even as a peer supporter we cannot take responsibility for their choices whether consumer or colleague.

Alexander kind of doubles it and says that's one of the most important pieces of IL to me, is the freedom to make those choices, wherever that outcome leads. And I'll just add as Mary, that's one of my favorite ‑‑ I think IL philosophy terms and it's dignity of risk, for sure.

>> LINDA POGUE: Because of those things that's why I think these conversations are important, that we can remind each other and support each other that we are not responsible for the outcome of our peers' decisions. We're responsible for doing the best job we can in terms of peer support, offering those choices and options and encouragement and resources and the opportunity for people to make their own choices and outcomes.

>> KEN MITCHELL: This is ‑‑ I appreciate the fact that we have over 130 different individuals or groups that are participating in this peer support session, because, like I said earlier, this is peer support for us, and I hope it's peer support for you as well, the exchanging of ideas, and getting some new ones and confirming some old ones. So thank you.

>> LINDA POGUE: Yes, I really appreciate the support and encouragement from some of these comments. Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I just wanted to add, again, this is Mary, just the wonderful amount of support going on in the chat box. I skipped over a few of the questions because we had participants within the chat box answering them, and ‑‑

>> KEN MITCHELL: Awesome!

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: I know. I'm just so impressed, and I want to let folks know again that we will have this available as it was recorded. You can look through the chats and everything, and it will be on our website. If you give me like half an hour it will be there. I did pop that in the chat box. It's APRIL‑rural.org. It will be on the ‑‑ under the IL Conversations tab. And I just wanted to say, our folks typing in, thank you so much to Linda and Ken agreeing to lead this conversation. I feel like I learned so much as well. And don't be surprised if APRIL decides to take some of these beautiful nuggets happening in the chat box and on the transcript and we might come out with an FAQ or some tools. I just feel like this was too good just to leave here. And we ‑‑ and, again, we do have just a couple minutes left, and so if anybody has those last‑minute questions or comments, you can type them in or press \*# and we'll open up your phone for us. And if not, thank you all for always hanging in there with us, and please don't forget to evaluate the conversation. You can ‑‑ on this slide you can actually click it, I think right from your computer, and go to the eval. This is how fantastic technology is these days.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you for being able to work this great technology, Mary and Sierra. Fantastic you can do it. Makes us sound good, doesn't it?

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Thank you all again, and I guess I'm just ‑‑ I don't see any questions. Oh, there are two folks on the phone lines, if you don't mind just one more. One or two more. We'll go ahead to them.

>> Hello. This is April Meredith at Empower Tennessee in Middle Tennessee and I just wanted to add that I think that peer support and being a peer is not just about addressing the barriers in people's lives but also providing opportunities to celebrate the triumphs that people have in a related, shared life experience type of way, and also that even if we're not in the exact same stage in our journey as an individual with a disability, we can still be a peer. We all have our own paces and ways and styles of addressing life, the good and the bad, but that doesn't mean that we're not a peer. It just means that we may be on a different part of our journey in that experience.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you. That's two really good points. Appreciate it. We must do some more celebrating of our triumphs. Appreciate that.

>> Athens, Georgia. I wanted to say thank you. I really enjoyed the refresher.

>> LINDA POGUE: Nice to speak to you again. It's been a while since we have been in the same room.

>> Yes, quite a while.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you. Thank you for saying those nice things. Thank you for doing good peer support. Thank you for everybody who is interested in talking about peer support. Really appreciate it.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Great.

>> LINDA POGUE: This is what makes us Centers for Independent Living, that we provide this very important service that people cannot find many other places. Thank you.

>> MARY OLSON‑WILLARD: Wonderful. And that's all the comments we have in the phone lines. And so, everybody, thank you again for joining us on this conversation and to Linda and Ken, a giant hug from Montana. We really appreciate you guys leading this, and don't forget to keep checking out for other upcoming trainings.

>> LINDA POGUE: Thank you for the honor and the privilege. Really has been. Thanks, everybody. You're the best.

>> KEN MITCHELL: Thanks, you guys. Bye‑bye.