

INTRODUCING, THE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING GULF COAST!

11 September, 2013

Dear Chairman Caldwell and members of the delegation;

It is a fact that unless you, a friend, or someone in your family has a life changing disability, you probably have never heard of the Center's for Independent Living, even though there are over five hundred nationwide. Ever since our founder, Ed Roberts, created the concept of people with disabilities sharing their personal knowledge and experiences with others with disabilities, which inspired the creation of the first Center in San Francisco over forty-five years ago, the successes of the CIL's have become legendary in the national disability community.

For almost two decades, the Center for Independent Living here in Lee county has nurtured those with every type of physical and mental challenge across our five county service area, igniting desperately needed services such as, personal and systems advocacy, Peer Counseling, independent living skills training, and Community Outreach, and made them available to anyone with a disability at no cost.

Our job at CIL Gulf Coast is to make sure the people with disabilities of Southwest Florida have the skills and services they need to live a full and independent life, and can, to the best of their abilities, accomplish their personal goals.

As a person with a life changing disability myself, I know the pitfalls and successes of those of us who are living independently with a disability, and how to improve our "quality of life". The team we have put together, as the core of our current staff, combine decades of experience with new ideas and concepts, and are dedicated to the independent living philosophy.

We will continue to focus on services such as job placement and training for those who need them, encouraging our consumers to advocate for their own independence, promoting consumer social events out in the community, and working to build new partnerships with the other disability service agencies in Southwest Florida. We will reach out to consumers of every age, and with every type of physical and mental challenge, always leading by example, and striving to destroy the remnants of the old fears and stigmas that kept people with disabilities from being all that they might be in the past, and most importantly, accomplishing this through education and respect.

Please contact me directly if you need help or advice on any disability issue, and I look forward to personally meeting you all, and hopefully, partnering with you on d

Faithfully submitted,

Michael E. Pierce: ADA Advocate & Independent Living specialist

Center for Independent Living/Gulf Coast

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