



FLORIDA INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL, Inc.

Emergency Preparedness

Volume 1, Issue 5
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By Doug Hall

July Calendar

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Please submit information you would like to contribute to this publication to Molly Gosline at mg@polaris.net

At the request of the Florida Council of the Blind (FCB) and the Division of Blind Services (DBS), I had the opportunity to attend and speak at a Conference on "Emergency Preparedness For Persons With Disabilities". The conference, which was held on January 30th and 31st in Tampa, Florida examined the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and the responses of emergency management staff during the past two hurricane seasons. Which actions were effective and which ones need examination and modification? In addition, conferees discussed the need for planning, both by state and non-profit agencies as well as for individuals. In fact, the need to have a personal plan to react to emergencies was thoroughly discussed on Monday and wouldn't you guess, Tuesday morning at 4 AM, the hotel's guests had to evacuate when its fire alarm went off. Many participants in the conference and the hotel itself discovered that they didn't really have a plan after all. In my own case, I had failed to check on the location of the stairs, so needed help to find them during the evacuation. Other than that, my Seeing Eye Dog, Keaton, and I had little difficulty in going down the stairs and exiting the building other than moving slow enough to keep from tripping over slower moving people. The real problem was for wheelchair users who were forced to remain on upper floors. The elevators were not to be used and the hotel had no plan for getting wheelchair users down the stairs. Thank goodness that there was no fire, just someone burning popcorn. However, it certainly was a superb reminder of just how important it is to be prepared in case of an emergency.

During Tuesday's seminar on sensory impairments, I made a presentation about vision loss and information access. The President of the Florida Association of the Deaf, spoke about the needs of persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. It was clear that both agencies and organizations who work with and represent persons with sensory impairments, must become involved in the planning

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July 11, 2006 10:00 a.m.
Veteran's Training

*Radisson Resort
Orlando-Celebration
2900 Parkway Blvd.
Kissimmee, FL 34747
1-407-396-7000*

July 12-14, 2006
Full Council Meeting

*Radisson Resort
Orlando-Celebration
2900 Parkway Blvd.
Kissimmee, FL 34747
1-407-396-7000*

The agenda can be found at flailc.org under upcoming events.

If you need additional information please

July 31, 2006 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
*FACIL/FILC
Executive Committees Meeting*

*Radisson Resort
Orlando-Celebration
2900 Parkway Blvd.
Kissimmee, FL 34747*

August 1-2, 2006
Planning Committee Meeting

*Radisson Resort
Orlando-Celebration
2900 Parkway Blvd.
Kissimmee, FL 34747*

Florida's Braille and Talking Book Library

The Florida's Braille and Talking Book Library has several titles on cassette and/or in Braille, that may be borrowed by people who are print impaired. That is people who have problems reading due to loss of vision, physical impairment or reading (learning) disability. Staff of CILs may wish to sign up clients who may be eligible for this no-cost service. For more information please contact:

Doug Hall
Volunteer Services Center Specialist
Bureau of Braille and Talking Book Library Services
Toll Free 800.226.6075 Ext. 6040
Tel: 386.239.6000 Ext. 6040
doug.hall@dbf.fldoe.org

Activities initiated/hosted by the Florida Independent Living Council are open to the public. For information about these or any other FILC events please contact the FILC office @ (850)488-5624.

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and coordination of informational/advocacy activities, insuring that materials and communications are in accessible format and that other concerns are dealt with.

Other conference recommendations included:

1. Advisory committees should be formed in each county, to help local emergency management staff plan for disability-related needs. Individuals and organizations must become involved as advisors on such bodies!
2. Persons with disabilities should voluntarily register with their local Emergency Management agency. Then, the person may be called, in the event of an emergency, to see if he/she needs assistance.
3. Just because a person has a disability, it doesn't follow that that individual would automatically go to a special needs shelter. Nor does it even mean that the person must go to any shelter. The individual may wish to stay at home, stay with friends or leave the area entirely. How to prepare for an emergency must be up to the individual!
4. Service animals must be permitted in all shelters. Please remember that the owner/handler of such animal is responsible for its continued good behavior.
5. Presentations were made by Florida's Representative Gail Harrell, who sponsored H-89, and Senator, Stephen Wise, sponsor of S-1058, which would address the needs of persons with disabilities in the planning and management of emergencies and health/public safety.
6. In Washington, Senator, Tom Harkin, (D-IA) introduced SB-2124, "Emergency Preparedness and Response for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2005," to address the needs of persons with disabilities in emergency planning and relief efforts.

In summary, persons with disabilities and their organizations/agencies are strongly encouraged to contact local emergency management entities, to assist with planning for and responding to emergencies, as well as helping with the aftermath of such events. Even more important is the need for each person to develop an action plan for dealing with emergencies.

Acknowledgements

A special acknowledgement goes to Darlene Maynard who has been a Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. board member since December of 2000. Her dedication and advocacy efforts on behalf of persons with disabilities while with the Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. has been tremendous. Her service has been of great value to us all.

"Independence Worth Preserving"

Centers for Independent Living

- Suncoast Center for Independent Living** serving Sarasota and Manatee Counties, (941) 351-9545
- Coalition for Independent Living Options** serving Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, and Palm Beach Counties, (561) 966-4288
- Center for Independent Living of Broward** serving Broward County, (954) 722-6400
- Disability Resource Center** serving Holmes, Jackson, Washington, Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, (850) 769-6890
- Center for Independent Living of the Florida Keys** serving the Florida Keys, (305) 453-3491
- Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida** serving Hamilton, Suwanee, Columbia, Lafayette, Dixie, Gilchrist, Union, Bradford, Alachua, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Citrus, Sumter, and Hernando Counties, (352) 378-7474
- Self Reliance, Inc.** serving Hillsborough County, (813) 375-3965
- Center for Independent Living of South Florida** serving Dade County, (305) 751-8025
- Independent Living Resource Center of Northeast Florida** serving Baker, Nassau, Duval, Clay, and St. Johns Counties, (904) 399-8484
- Center for Independent Living of Southwest Florida** serving Charlotte, Glades, Lee, Hendry, and Collier Counties, (239) 277-1447
- Center for Independent Living of Northwest Florida** serving Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties, (850) 595-5566
- Caring and Sharing Center for Independent Living** serving Pasco and Pinellas Counties, (727) 577-0065
- Ability 1st** serving Gadsden, Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor Counties, (850) 575-9621
- Victory Lane Center for Independent Living** serving Flagler and Volusia Counties, (386) 671-1960
- Space Coast Center for Independent Living** serving Brevard and Indian River Counties, (321) 784-9008
- Center for Independent Living of Central Florida** serving Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, Lake, Seminole, Orange, and Osceola Counties, (407) 623-1070

Please feel free to distribute this letter to any other persons/organizations that may be interested.

It is the mission of the Florida Independent Living Council to assist and advocate for people with disabilities in achieving equal opportunities. Our vision is to foster change via leadership, collaboration and visibility.