



# NW Independent Living Matters

Newsletter of Independent Living Resources

Spring 2011 · Volume 19, Number 1

## Upcoming ILR Festivities

By Barry Fox-Quamme, ILR Executive Director



We are thrilled to announce that community partner Rebuilding Together: Portland (RT) is working with Safeway on a project to finish sprucing up ILR’s new home. During May and culminating on May 21st, volunteer contractors from RT and volunteer employees from Safeway and KGW TV will provide needed tender loving care for this old building.

- Outside Improvements will include updated landscaping, repair of dry rotted siding, re-glazing and sealing the exterior of windows to increase energy efficiency and painting of the entire exterior of the facility, including base coat and separate trim colors to blend in with the historic buildings in our neighborhood.
- Inside Improvements will focus on painting meeting rooms and stocking up ILR’s kitchen pantry with items for consumer socials and cooking classes during the year.

Safeway has offered to work with its food and floral vendors to supply many needed products. Project materials will be donated to or purchased by the local RT affiliates from long term material and supplies donors. Skilled labor will be supplied by RT Volunteers and contractors as needed.

ILR is seeking artists to work with us to create a mural! Under the windows along Couch St., once this initial phase of the project is complete, we hope to be able to capture some of the faces and spirit of the thousands of volunteers who inspired generations of peer mentors: people with disabilities, serving people with disabilities in Portland for more than 50 years.

Save the Date: Saturday, July 23rd. ILR brings its annual event “A Roll in the Park” into the city with an all-day festival celebrating the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and ILR’s new home! Music, arts & crafts, food and fun will help us celebrate the amazing abilities of the enduring human spirit!

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**Cathy's Corner**

By Cathy Blahut, ILR Services  
 Coordinator and Resources Guru!



Now that spring has finally arrived and with summer soon to follow, you might want some free or low cost ways to celebrate the warm weather. There are many activities for people of all ages and abilities that are inexpensive or free at your local recreational centers and parks. This is a great opportunity to get out and meet new people or enjoy activity by yourself, with family or friends.

If you're near Tualatin Hills, parks and recreation information is <http://www.thprd.org> or call (503) 645-6433. For Portland the website is <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/> or call (503) 823-PLAY (7529). Finally, in the North Clackamas district, <http://ncprd.com> or call (503) 794-8015.

Impact NW has a free recreation program for seniors and people with disabilities. You can call for information at (503) 988-3660 or visit their website: <http://www.impactnw.org/>. Impact NW may also be able to assist with transportation and has a friendly visitors program.

Other events include Portland's Saturday Market which goes from 10-5 and is a fun place to listen to free music and walk around looking at local artists' creations; Pioneer Square also has events running throughout the summer.

Did you know if you qualify for food stamps you are eligible for low cost tickets to events as part of Portland music for all programs? You can find out more about this program here: [http://www.oregonlive.com/performance/index.ssf/2011/01/music\\_for\\_all\\_brings\\_classical.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/performance/index.ssf/2011/01/music_for_all_brings_classical.html) and see the calendar for this program here: [http://www.allclassical.org/cultural\\_events](http://www.allclassical.org/cultural_events).

Also many local farmer's markets now accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP—formerly Food Stamps), including the Portland Farmer's Market. This is a wonderful chance to get outside and buy locally grown food. You can find Portland Farmer's Market locations and times on their website: <http://www.portlandfarmersmarket.org/>

*(Cathy's Corner cont.)*

Summer is also a great time to stay fit or get into better shape! Many Medicare Advantage Plans may provide a gym benefit that is free or low cost. Plans vary, so check before signing up for any memberships and you should always consult with your doctor before beginning any fitness plan. If you have question about your Medicare or need help finding a plan, please call Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance. This is a free program for people who need assistance finding a Medicare plan to fit their needs. In Multnomah County please call the aging and disability services help line at (503) 988-3646 or (800) 722-4134 for the SHIBA volunteer nearest you.

## Portland's Accessible Art Museum

By Patricia Kepler, IL Specialist



Sylvia Lurie from the Portland Art Museum recently contacted the staff of ILR and invited us to experience their accessible museum tour. The guided tour is offered the third Thursday of each month and each month a different genre of art is given the spotlight and Cathy and I were thrilled to attend.

We toured an African American Art Exhibit, viewing the works of four different artists. We learned the background of the artists and were given a thorough description and history of each piece, followed by discussion. We talked about possible motivation, what it may have meant to the artist, the people at the time and what we could learn from it today.

My own understanding and appreciation for art was greatly expanded thanks to this tour. One fascinating piece that is currently on loan to the museum is a landscape style painting featuring the face of Oprah Winfrey, commissioned by Oprah herself. The unusual thing about this portrait is that Oprah's hair, lips and eye lids are all covered in textured rhinestones, making them sparkle. Sylvia provided a miniature version for me to feel. Experiencing this piece reminded me that I grew up in a world where art was sketched on a flat surface. The idea of creating something more tactile with items like rhinestones was never a consideration. I was also reminded of someone else I knew who recently created a tactile collage and how impressive her work had been.

Afterwards, Ms. Laurie asked for our feedback. Her hope is that everyone enjoy and benefit from Portland's art museum and she was looking for insight from our community. Among other things, we discussed the possibility of adding some tactile interactive stations for those with visual impairments.

I left the museum feeling inspired and motivated to arrange a recreation outing to the museum to share this experience with others in the near future. I am also hoping to develop a tactile art class for our consumers. This project will take time and I welcome the input from anyone interested in assisting to volunteer in this endeavor. Until then, the museum offers accessible tours the third Thursday of each month and you may contact Sylvia Lurie at the Portland Art Museum for more information. The museum is located at 1219 SW Park Ave in Portland and the phone number is 503-226-2811.

## **LIFT Tips: (and fixed route tips too!)**

By Lina Bensel, Independent Living and Housing Specialist



How many places did you ride the bus, MAX or LIFT to last week? Does your monthly pass get a workout? Did you know that Portland is one of a very few cities in which fares buy the actual price of the ride on some lines? The rides cost about \$2-\$2.50 on fixed routes and the fare for a nondisabled all zones pass is \$2.35. The lines 72, 4, 6, 8 and 75 usually pay for themselves in fares, since so many people ride them.

Your LIFT rides cost much more to provide. Employment tax and other taxes pay most of the LIFT ride cost and the price of the ride to the agency may be \$30-\$70, depending on how far you go and how many people share the ride with you. The price of \$1.85 per LIFT cash fare is a definite bargain.

Many people ask why LIFT fare is not the same as Honored Citizens fare and why you cannot use the Honored Citizen monthly pass on LIFT. After all, aren't all eligible LIFT riders by definition, Honored Citizens? Of course they are!

However, to ride LIFT a person has to have a disability that prevents them from riding or getting to and from the fixed route stops. It costs a lot to provide those LIFT rides; for the passenger the price is actually a little less than the non disabled fixed route price. Having a LIFT monthly pass available makes it possible for LIFT passengers to have the same convenience and savings per ride and provide a similar experience to a fixed route passenger.

Once, LIFT attempted to save money by not having a pass available for LIFT riders and have everyone pay cash fares per trip. Advocates brought up many issues and the pass was retained for LIFT customers. The twenty ride punch cards, which have no expiration date and can be used in a variety of ways, came about then. This has become very popular with LIFT customers and since the cost is closer to a cash fare they are liked by the administration too.

Finally, the Honored Citizen monthly pass is not accepted by LIFT as valid fare because it costs so much less than the LIFT pass. It does not buy even a portion of your ride. Remember that a pass needs to be somewhat cost-effective by buying some rides at the non discounted price. Your LIFT pass pays for about 27 rides at \$1.85 each. Your Honored Citizen pass only would buy 14, or six less than the 20 ride card.

This is a difficult and confusing concept for many riders, but if you want to be heard about this issue you can attend the CAT committee, held on the third Wednesday morning of every month, or contact LIFT customer service at 503-962-8000.

## Rent Well

This is a small class for people who are either looking for housing or trying to learn more about our rights and responsibilities in housing. People with barriers such as eviction or felony history are welcome to come to the class, as well as those with disabilities. Some people come with an attendant who helps them with the reading and writing.

This class is a lot of work. There are seven sessions which each have reading and writing assignments and there are two major projects, one called “My Action Plan” in which the person makes a short term and long term housing plan and a more intense one called “The Housing Portfolio.”

A portfolio is a collection of papers and a Housing Portfolio is a folder of items a prospective renter wants a landlord to see. This will include ID, a cover letter that may explain reasons the person is having trouble finding housing, a letter from Social Security or one’s employer stating how much money the person earns every month, a budget and references. People with disabilities may also include requests for reasonable accommodation. Other items may be included in Housing Portfolios, as well, depending on the individual circumstances and efforts of the renter.

By the end of the seven weeks, most people are ready to graduate, and each class finds ways of celebrating.

When you register for Rent Well, it is assumed that only one person is registering. If you have a caregiver/assistant or if you are part of a couple, please indicate this before the first appointment. Should you know anyone else wanting to take the Rent Well class, please tell them to register themselves separately.

If you think this might be for you, please call Lina at ILR to put yourself on the wait list for the next class or email her at [lina@ilr.org](mailto:lina@ilr.org).

## New Staff!



Cindy Bobzien is our newest ILR staff member. She took the reins of Office Manager from Sondra Dutra, who she had the pleasure of training under as she transitioned into her new role. As Office Manager/Executive Assistant, Cindy brings 15 years of administrative experience to her new position with ILR. She looks forward to applying these skills and is excited and enthusiastic to be a part of this extraordinary organization.

When asked about her first impressions she said, “When I walked through the doors of ILR for the first time, I looked around and I observed consumers using helpful tools and working with the counselors, and I sensed an overpowering emotion: hope.”

## Your Voice Needs to be Heard!

By May Altman, Associate Director



Several years ago I was president of the New York State Social Work Organization and travelled back and forth from Rochester to Albany for meetings. One of our priorities was to advocate for consumer needs to their State legislators, which meant spending a lot of time there. On one of these trips, our airplane was snowed in, so I wound up taking a train with one of my area's legislators who even carried my suitcase.

I was thrilled to have four hours of uninterrupted time to talk with him about client needs and to advocate for social services. He also gave me some "inside information" on what is important to legislators making decisions. I have since heard the same advice echoed from other legislators and lobbyists.

Legislators give the most weight to true stories and examples of what happens to real people. They want to know the impact of the decisions they make and what is needed for the people in their district. They highly value information told by the person being affected. They have a weighting system: e-mails get the least amount of attention, then mail, phone calls, testimony and rallies, then personal visits carrying the most weight. They love to get to know their constituents even before the issue is on the table, especially if someone had volunteered or helped them before the election.

This year budget cuts are being made on the national, state and local level. It is important that we keep track of what programs and services may be cut and to speak out in a timely way. ILR's advocacy committee is monitoring budgets and legislation and working with coalitions to stay on top of the proposals and to try to impact the outcomes.

So what can you do? Pick one or all of these things:

1. Join our Advocacy Committee. We meet on the first Monday of the month at 1pm.
2. Attend lobby days. There is one happening again on May 10th.
3. Let your IL specialist know if you are willing to testify on a particular topic, e.g. benefit cuts, need for personal care assistants, etc.
4. Sign up for Legislative alerts from Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities (O4AD). If you go on line to O4AD.org you can join their action network and get free alerts sent to your computer. You can also find out who your legislator is and send an e-mail through their website. The e-mail will appear as coming from you directly.
5. Send e-mails, letters (to the state), make phone calls to your legislators. You can find them at [www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr](http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr)
6. Visit your legislator at their local office or at the legislative office.

*(Associate Director's article cont.)*

Our advocacy committee will be glad to help you with tips on how to talk to your legislator and help you find background information on your issue. I look forward to working with you in our quest to ensure vital services for the disabled continue.

## **Resources from the WIN Corner: Student Earned Income Exclusion**

By Jaime Head, Work Incentives Coordinator



Did you know: If you are under age 22 and regularly attending school, SSA does not count up to \$1,640 of gross earned income per month when they calculate your SSI payment amount? It's true! The maximum yearly exclusion is \$6,600. These amounts are for the year 2011 and they are adjusted each year based on the cost-of-living.

If you are receiving SSI, under age 22, regularly attending school and working or looking for work please contact us for more details about this fantastic work incentive! We'll be able to help assess your specific situation and how you may be able to benefit from the Student Earned Income Exclusion. This is a great way to set aside money to help pay for those school expenses or career goal!



**write around**<sup>™</sup>  
— PORTLAND —

**Thursdays, 2:00pm-4:00pm**

From June 9th to July 28th, 2011

ILR will be hosting a free community writing workshop, with priority given to ILR Consumers. Explore the power of writing and community in a safe, respectful and creative environment.

Pre-registration is required: please call (503) 232- 7411 or email [may@ilr.org](mailto:may@ilr.org) or sign up at the front desk.

Writing journals, pens and light snacks will be provided. Priority registration given to individuals who have not previously participated in a Write Around Portland workshop.

Bus tickets are available for those who qualify.

## Tech Corner

By Dan May, Database Specialist



After settling into our new home over the past months, I am pleased to announce that our Resource Center once again has computers available for training and Consumer use. There are two computers currently available, with plans to add two more.

These two computers have online capabilities as well as the Microsoft Office Suite of programs, so you can use or train on Word, Excel, Power Point or Access. Both Firefox and Internet Explorer are on the machines for purposes of browsing the web. There are also USB ports so you can save the files you create for future use.

The computers also have screen reader software for visually impaired users. JAWS is on one, NVDA on another. ILR has headphones for users who want them and may not have their own, so users don't have to worry about disrupting others nor exposing information they might like kept private but perhaps you would just like to listen to music while you write! That's OK too.

There is a printer connected to these two computers, so if you need to print out something like a resume, that functionality is available as well. We ask that you limit your printing to five pages a week, unless approved by an IL specialist. The staff at reception can assist with signing people on to the computers and will also be happy to register you for a time slot, should you be calling in advance.

ILR is also happy to announce that our Resource Center has a Wi-Fi hotspot! This is a brand new feature for ILR and it allows users to connect to the internet wirelessly, should their machines or devices have that ability. We hope this helps take some of the strain off of what could be a very crowded area at ILR and can provide a way for people who are in our waiting area a way to do things like check email or work on projects before their appointments or LIFT ride arrives.

Consumers can register to use computers through the reception area; they can call in to schedule a time or sign up for a slot of 45 minutes. Computers may not always be available though! Classes and training will have priority over personal use, so be sure to check ahead if you want a specific time slot. If no one is scheduled to use the computer, users may take advantage of a free machine.

Remember though, if you have the ability to use Wi-Fi on your device, that will always be available. No lines, no waiting, you can just use the hotspot from your seat. The reception area will have the password for the hotspot, as well as your IL Specialist, so feel free to ask them for assistance, if you need it.

*(Tech Corner cont.)*

We ask people to remember that we are a business and to behave accordingly while using our machines. Please remember that computer use is at our discretion. You are in a public area and using the computers to view content that is inappropriate creates a disruption for staff and for others wanting to use the machines.

We appreciate your awareness in this matter and are pleased and very excited to bring back the computer lab we once had and to offer a new functionality to the consumers we serve.

## STEPS

By Amy Camp, IL Specialist, STEPS Coordinator



The STEPS program just completed its fourth year at Independent Living Resources, with Amy Camp as the Program Coordinator since November 2010. Prior to Amy, the program was coordinated by Suzanne Huffman, who is now the STEPS Coordinator for the entire state of Oregon. STEPS is a free program that promotes successful working relationships between consumer – employers and homecare workers. STEPS' training is available through workshops, one-on-one trainings, and "Guide-on-the-Side". The training is FREE and includes topics such as how to recruit, interview, hire, manage, and provide a safe environment for homecare workers. A \$25 gift card is available for eligible consumers who participate in STEPS.

**Eligibility** – STEPS is for people who receive services from these state programs:

- Client –Employed Provider ( Medicaid In- Home Services)
- Oregon Project Independence
- State Plan Personal Care
- Spousal play
- Independent Choices Program

**Contact Amy Camp at 503-232-7411 or [amy@ilr.org](mailto:amy@ilr.org) for more information!**



**Portland State Interns:** ILR is pleased to have two Portland State Interns working with us this semester. Margaret McConnell and Rachel Sontag are both working towards their Master's degree in Social Work. Their duties include working with individual consumers, helping run groups and recreation events, and learning about disabilities and services for people with disabilities from our staff and consumers. They are being supervised by our MSW staff, Cathy Blahut and May Altman. Please say "Hi" if you see them.

## Program Updates!

By Sarah Gerth, IL Specialist



### Crossroads Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group

The Crossroads Group offers support to individuals living with traumatic brain injury. We have a program presentation for one hour and during the second hour people share their progress in recovery from brain injury. The program content is decided upon by the group. Future presentations will be:

1. May 13<sup>th</sup>, Mark Laughlin from Vocational Rehabilitation, presentation on services for adults with TBI.
2. May 27<sup>th</sup>, Maggie Johnson, music therapy intern from Marylhurst College, in association with Earthtones, will be giving a presentation on music therapy.

Crossroads meets the second and fourth Friday of the month from 1-3pm. Please contact Sarah Gerth at 503-232-7411 x325 or [sarah@ilr.org](mailto:sarah@ilr.org) if you are interested in joining our group.

### Ongoing events

#### Healthy Lifestyles workshop:

The Healthy Lifestyles workshop is coming up June 1, 2 and 3rd. This is a free, three day workshop that helps people with disabilities learn about healthy and nutrition based on individual values and beliefs. There will be an opportunity to learn adaptive nia and yoga and a massage offered for participants. Six months of follow up support groups will follow to help with your individual goals. There is some paperwork to fill out the first day of the class but assistance to complete it will be provided if needed. Please contact Cathy at 503-232-7411 or [cathy@ilr.org](mailto:cathy@ilr.org) to register.

#### Monday Knitting Circle:

The Monday morning knitting circle is in full swing! We've been enjoying lessons led by Sean Ray and Rachel Sontag. Aside from boxes of beautiful and brightly colored yarns, we have been chatting and laughing and snacking on popcorn. Everyone is at a different skill level but it does not matter! Beginners and advanced knitters are welcome and our fun and friendly group is still open if anyone else would like to join. Please bring your own knitting needles. The class meets every Monday from 10am-11:30am and will run through the end of April. Please contact Rachel at 503 232-7411 ext 330 if you would like to join!

## ILR's Upcoming Recreation Events

By Patricia Kepler, IL Specialist & ILR's Recreation Maven!



### **Friday May 13-ILR Movie Night**

Join us for an evening of movies on the ILR big screen. Bring \$5 for pizza. Evening begins at 5 pm. Please schedule return Lift rides for 8:30.

### **Thursday, June 2-Rose Festival Fun Center**

ILR will once again take a group to the Rose Festival fun center. Come be with the crowds, enjoy the booths, the music and the ships. This is tentatively planned as an evening event, leaving ILR at 5:30 pm. Date and time of event may change due to weather, so please check with Patricia.

### **Thursday June 16-Portland Art Museum Accessible tour.**

Join us on a guided tour of the Portland Art Museum. Details and exact times to come.

### **Thursday July 7- It's summer, let's go swimming!**

Big Surf! at the North Clackamas Aquatic Park is a wonderful time to experience all there is to do at the park! The park does not allow outside food, so bring money for snacks. Plan on leaving ILR at 12:30 and returning by 4:30.

### **Saturday, July 23-"A Roll in the Park" Moves to the Neighborhood!**

We'll have more details on this soon, so get excited!

### **Wednesday, August 31-ILR Summer Picnic**

Stay tuned for email and Facebook updates as we finalize plans for the 2011 summer picnic. We welcome your ideas of accessible locations for this event.

### **Monday, September 26-Seattle Mariners Baseball!**

The Seattle Mariners have stepped up and filled our need for a day at the ball park. Contact Patricia for information about tickets.

Do you have recreation ideas? Please contact Patricia. (503) 232-7411 ext: 312 or by email [patricia@ilr.org](mailto:patricia@ilr.org).



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## **ILR Summer Picnic**

**August, 31st 2011**

**Details to be announced soon!**

**Saturday, July 23rd**

**A Roll In The Park!**

**Contact Cindy Bobzien to volunteer  
[cindyb@ilr](mailto:cindyb@ilr) or (503) 232-7411**