

NIAGARA CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

ANNUAL REPORT
2010-2011



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About Us

The Niagara Centre for Independent Living is Niagara's only cross-disability organization. Consumer-run and Consumer-driven, we support any person with any disability, through a wide range of programs and services in all areas of Niagara.

As a fully accredited member of Independent Living Canada, NCIL is one of 28 centres which exist to promote the full participation of persons with disabilities as citizens. We are proud to meet community needs through innovative programs, successful community partnerships and effective public education.

Mission

To help persons with disabilities throughout Niagara achieve their independent living goals.

Vision

Full and equal citizenship for all persons with disabilities.

NIAGARA CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

***2010-2011 Report from James Davis,
Board Chair, and Maureen O'Neill,
Executive Director***

It seems hard to believe that we have been in our new location for a whole year now! This has proven to be a much more welcoming place for consumers—amazing what a few windows and a little sunlight can do. We have worked out most of the quirks of all the “systems” we are now responsible for—alarms, phones, computers, furnaces, air conditioning, etc. Many staff have had to take on new and additional responsibilities “around the building” and we thank them sincerely for their sense of humor, their flexibility and newly discovered skills in building maintenance and repair.



2010 – 2011 CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - CONTINUED

One of the key challenges over the past year for both staff and the board has been a major shift in the designation of funding for a number of our core programs. The major funder for Advocacy, Peer and Youth has for many years been the Ministry of Community and Social Services. In the past this funding has flowed through Niagara Training and Employment Agency and we were able to use it to provide supports and services to persons with any disability. We now have our own contract with the Ministry; however, the funding can only be used to support persons with developmental disabilities. This has necessitated some real soul searching and some fundamental changes in how the programs, particularly Advocacy, operate. In the past year, new referrals to the core programs (for persons with Developmental Disabilities) began to flow through Contact Niagara and beginning in July 2011 through the new application entity DSO Hamilton/Niagara. Along with our contract comes training, customer service, policy development, reporting and other requirements that are quite daunting. This means we will need to ensure that we are meeting targets in terms of providing specific services to these consumers and comply with all relevant legislation and requirements associated with this funding. It has been, and will continue to be a struggle to ensure we have the resources to continue to serve all persons with disabilities who come to us for assistance through the Advocacy, Peer and Youth programs.

As you know Employment Ontario transformed the way it delivers services across the province back in August 2010. All Employment Ontario service providers now deliver the full range of EO programs. This meant the closure of a number of services across the province. Planning for how Employment Ontario services for persons with disabilities will ultimately be structured is still an ongoing process. We were pleased that Work Link was invited to

20010 – 2011 CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - CONTINUED

engage in a new contract with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and

Universities for the current fiscal year (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012), and we are able to continue to deliver effective employment services to persons with disabilities across Niagara who is over 18 and seeking competitive employment or self employment. Work Link staff in the past year met with over consumers and consumers were successful in securing competitive employment. The program is busy and exceeding targets and we are eagerly awaiting news of an announcement of plans beyond April 1 2012.

In the current climate partnerships have become essential in making limited resources go further and in developing new initiatives. We have partnered with many community groups in delivering our programs, but would like to highlight a few new partnerships. We were privileged to be the beneficiary in the fall of 2011 of the Day of Caring. The Day of Caring is a partnership between United Way of St. Catharines and District, community organizations such as NCIL and employee groups. On November 26 a group of over 30 volunteers from Algoma Central spent a day patching, spackling, priming and painting our resource centre, board room and offices at our new location. McNamara and Reynolds generously donated paint for the day. Our many thanks go to Nancy Di Pasquale (Director of Community Investment and Communications) at the United Way and Karen Watt (Vice President of Human Resources) and Greg Wright (President and CEO) and Judy Savoia of Algoma who coordinated everything and made it happen.

2010 – 2011 CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - CONTINUED

In conjunction with the following community partners: Brock Penguins, Brock University – Recreation and Leisure Department, Niagara Sports Commission, Pelham Panthers, City of Welland, Ontario Wheelchair Sports, Hotel Dieu Shaver Hospital, Niagara Falls Sports Foundation and Parasport Ontario, Niagara Accessible Sport was launched. Niagara Accessible Sport aims to be the “go to” location if you are interested in accessible sports - whether on a recreational or competitive level. Please check out their website by googling “Niagara Accessible Sport.”

For a number of years NCIL has been interested in exploring the possibility of developing a Social Enterprise. However, we lacked the resources – both time and expertise-to move forward with this. A Social Enterprise is a business with double bottom line-generating revenue and creating training opportunities and jobs for consumers. We were fortunate in the past year as well to partner with Leadership Niagara to move this project forward. We worked with a dynamic team of “*up and coming*” community leaders who put in countless hours researching and developing a comprehensive business plan for a possible social enterprise - an eco friendly cleaning service. The members of our Leadership Niagara team were: Sara Palmieri (Centre for the Arts, Brock University), Justin Kelly (Niagara Health System), Ben Cecil (Niagara College), Ashley Hoath (Literacy Link Niagara) and Denise Papiez (Niagara Region). We are grateful to them for their hard work and and the professional caliber of the business plan they produced.

2010 – 2011 CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - CONTINUED

Food Box program. The Good Food Box program provides consumers with fresh produce at a reasonable price. As one of the sites in St. Catharines, this has been a great way to offer consumers access to fresh local food and to connect with our new neighborhood, as increasing numbers of local residents take advantage of the program and get to know us at the centre.

Moving into the fall of 2011, we now have a new contract in place to provide individual assistance and information sessions about the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) as part of an Outreach Initiative through Independent Living Canada (funded through the Office of Disability Issues, Human Resources and Skill Development Canada). A recent study by BMO has found that only 1 in 10 Canadians with a disability, or those with a family member with a disability, are knowledgeable about the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) and its benefits with nearly half never having heard of it. If you would like more information about the RDSP and its benefits, please call Kellie Kirkwood at 905 684-7111 x225 or drop into the centre any Monday or Tuesday morning and chat with Sara Mclean. We encourage everyone to find out how they can access free government grants and bonds this program provides.

2010 – 2011 CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - CONTINUED

In the past year there have been a number of significant changes at our national umbrella organization, Independent Living Canada. As you know long time National Director Traci Walters retired in winter of 2010 and was replaced by Louise Bergeron, who spoke at our AGM this time last year. Louise moved on from IL Canada in the spring of last year and Steve Carroll, who worked as a National Program director at IL Canada (then the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres or CAILC) in the late 90's has come on board as Interim National Director. James Davis joined the board of IL Canada in the fall of 2010 for a two year term. We are both looking forward to attending the Annual General Meeting in Ottawa in a few weeks and to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Independent Living in Canada and engaging with representative from the other 27 centres across the country to plan for the future of our national network.

We are grateful for all the financial support we received this year: Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Human resources and Skill Development Canada, Independent Living Canada, Centre for Independent Living in Toronto, the United Way of St. Catharines and District, the United Way of Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie, the United Way of Niagara South and our individual donors.

In closing, we would particularly like to thank the many people who are key in making things happen here at the centre: our Board of Directors who oversees the operation and keeps on course, the staff who so ably deliver all our programs and services and routinely go above and beyond all our expectations and our very dedicated volunteers who generously contribute their time and expertise to NCIL.

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Volunteers

Volunteers are integral to the day to day operations of the centre. Whether staffing reception, writing for the newsletter, or serving on the Board or Committees, every volunteer has an impact on the success of the centre.

Bonnie Przbycinski Memorial Award: Roger Stroop

In recognition of outstanding volunteerism, this award is presented from time to time, to an individual whose commitment to the centre as a volunteer goes well beyond expectations and makes a real impact on the daily operations of the centre.

This year we are pleased to present this award to Roger Stroop.

Roger began volunteering with NCIL in 2010. With a background and training in journalism, Roger had an interest in assisting us with our newsletter. We have always found it a struggle to produce a newsletter each quarter that provides interesting and timely information for our members. Roger began writing a few articles and in a rather short time has taken on full responsibility for the publication. He has mastered writing in “plain language”, new software and the art of keeping us on track to get the newsletter out on deadline. We are incredibly pleased with the new look and the information that the newsletter provides to our members—and it would not have happened without Roger. We thank you sincerely for your dedication, patience and persistence—you have made a real impact!

Our Programs and Services

Information and Referral

The information and referral program is a key component of each Independent Living Centre. Information is power, and the more we know, the better and more informed choices we make. This service provides information on services, products and programs available to persons with disabilities. This program is consumer based; meaning that information this program uses and gives out comes from people with disabilities themselves.

Individual Advocacy

The provision of individual assistance and opportunities for skill development is often necessary to help persons with disabilities to remove barriers. The kinds of needs vary from individual to individual. Support to learn to manage, co-ordinate and negotiate with a wide range of community resources is critical in making independent living a reality. People with disabilities must frequently struggle to attain the services and support to which they are rightfully entitled. Some of the issues addressed by this program include housing, income supports, employment, education, human rights, accessibility, transportation and abuse intervention.

Peer Support

Peer Outreach is the program through which people with disabilities get together to support one another and share experiences. This program facilitates the development of informal networks of consumers. The experiences of our members hold vast amounts of knowledge, resources and solutions that others can benefit from. Encouragement from peers builds skills, knowledge and leadership to face new challenges.

Direct Funding - Self-Managed Attendant Services

Funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, through the Centre for Independent Living In Toronto (CILT), this program allows persons with physical disabilities to hire, train and manage their own attendant care.

Work Link

This program provides individual employment counseling to any person with a disability in Niagara. Assisting consumers on an individualized basis, Work Link Case Managers can help to: job search; make decisions about disclosing a disability to an employer; apply for training or wage subsidies; access personality, career and diagnostic assessments; write resumes and cover letters; prepare for job interviews; and make career and employment decisions.

2010-2011

NCIL Staff

Maureen O'Neill - Executive Director
Donna Kirkpatrick - Administrative Support
Kellie Kirkwood - Peer/Youth Coordinator & Membership
Bev Chavers - Individual Disability Support & Advocacy Consultant
Anne Marie Covello-Baxter - Self-Managed Attendant Services
Direct Funding, Volunteer Resources
Jeff Smith - Program Manager, Work Link
Mary Jane Waszynski - Case Manager/Job Developer, Work Link
Linda Rupp - Case Manager/Job Developer, Work Link
Doug Gallaway - Case Manager, Work Link
Joanne Green - Case Manager, Work Link



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Ian Greaves, Vice Chair
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