

# Centers for Independent Living Health and Wellness Program Snapshots

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# Health and Wellness Center

Tricia Creel | Paraquad (St. Louis, MO)

## Background

The mission of the nonprofit CIL Paraquad is to empower people with disabilities to increase their independence through choice and opportunity. Paraquad was founded in St. Louis in 1970 by Max Starkloff. The Health and Wellness program began in 2004 in partnership with the Washington University Program in Occupational Therapy. Paraquad opened a newly renovated \$2.1 million facility to house the growing program January 2017. This facility has a total capacity of more than 500 members. During the first year of operation, the waiting list for admittance was eliminated and membership doubled from about 100 to more than 200. In 2018, the program grew to 319 members. Paraquad expects to sustain steady growth for the next several years. Funding comes from a variety of sources, including grants, donations, and membership fees.

## The Health and Wellness Center



This Paraquad program offers a specialty fitness center with a variety of equipment and services to support the comprehensive exercise needs of people with disabilities and older adults. The Health and Wellness Center is a membership-based program with a standard monthly fee of \$50 per month. To maintain access for all, full and half scholarships are offered based on income. Individualized services are an additional expense. Expert staff include physical and occupational therapists who provide a range of exercise options, from condition-specific plans to general fitness. The professional staff are the key to their unique program model.

The Health and Wellness Center is not a rehabilitation facility, but a consumer-controlled program in which staff support members in identifying and achieving their individual health goals. Group exercise classes, 1:1 training, and education programs are available. Typically, participants exercise 2-3 times per week. People with a variety of neurological disorders, including spinal cord injury and brain injury, Parkinson's, cerebral palsy, and multiple sclerosis are served.

They also serve people with other types of disabilities, including limb loss and low vision.

## Benefits

These services empower people with disabilities to increase their independence. Members of the Health and Wellness Center demonstrate improved strength, endurance, and balance. They also show reduced secondary health conditions, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. As a result, members perform daily tasks more easily, such as transferring to and from a wheelchair or performing self-care. These improvements increase safety and independence.

## Evaluation/Satisfaction data

All members complete an annual assessment with one of their staff to provide outcome measures that will support their individual health goals.

## Current status



The program recently transformed the operating model to better serve people recently discharged from a hospital or rehabilitation center after a major health event. The transformation includes a new focus on providing individualized services to provide condition-specific exercise plans, physical upgrades to the Health and Wellness Center, addition of staff, and purchase of specialized equipment. In the next five years, they envision the Health and Wellness Center as a regional destination for people who want to maximize their recovery after a recent injury or diagnosis, or who are working towards specific fitness goals.

## Challenges

Challenges have been in creating new, sustainable revenue streams as they transition from a small program focused primarily on general exercise to a larger

program that meets a wider range of needs.

## Consumer stories

An individual with an amputation joined the Health and Wellness Center. They were underinsured and received minimal rehabilitation services to learn to walk with their new prosthetic leg. When they joined, they wore a prosthetic leg for limited household ambulation only. During the Annual Assessment, they required assistance for balance while walking. After several 1:1 training sessions focused on strengthening and balance exercises, they were able to establish an effective exercise routine that could be continued on their own and is now ambulating in the community with his prosthetic leg without an assistive device. They continues to be a regular exercise participant with a high level of confidence in their ability to utilize exercise as a tool for living and working successfully with a disability.

**For questions about the Health and Wellness Center, contact Tricia Creel at [tcreel@paraquad.org](mailto:tcreel@paraquad.org) or at 314.289.4200.**

# Pool Pass Program

**Dan Witkowski | Central Washington Disability Resources (Ellensburg, WA)**

## **Background**

The Pool Pass Program, which is part of a larger recreation program, has been in operation for approximately 20 years. Many consumers at Central Washington Disability Resources (CWDR) have limited incomes and do not have access to many recreational options. Winters in Ellensburg, Washington are cold, limiting opportunities for physical activity. Former Executive Director, Von Ellison, worked with the city of Ellensburg to arrange for a number of passes to the city pool to be provided to CWDR consumers who met Federal Poverty Income Bracket Guidelines. The city contributed passes (valued at \$6700 in 2015), gradually increasing that contribution until now providing as many passes as CWDR can use.

## **Pool Pass Program**

People with disabilities contact CWDR to apply for a pool pass, which is good for one year. The only qualifying criteria are that the individual has a disability and meets the income guidelines. Qualified individuals work with center staff to develop a goal(s) related to their pool visits. The goals include increasing/maintaining mobility and/or range of motion, pain management, strength building, weight management, developing social skills, increasing social contact and connections, and preparing for competition. Many want to get healthy in order to return to work. The Parks and Recreation facility includes not only a pool but also a hot tub, sauna, lap pool, and workout room. The pass provides access to all of these areas. Program participants range in age from teenagers to people in their 80s, disabilities include cognitive, sensory, physical, and more. CIL staff track and document each person's progress toward their goal in the Consumer Information File.

## **Benefits**

In the beginning, after participants received their pool pass, it was up to them to get to the pool, work on their goals, and report their progress. About ten years ago, CIL staff began taking groups of consumers to the pool and teaching them how to exercise and swim. This has proven to be a very effective way to encourage participants who might not have the confidence to try new activities on their own. The Pool Pass Program also provides valuable opportunities for consumers to interact and build social skills. Consumers have gained confidence, improved fitness, developed healthy habits, and built relationships.

The Recreation Manager has a degree in recreation management and is a double amputee from the knees down. He explains, "When I take off my legs and get in the pool, that gives people confidence to try something new and maybe a little scary. Lots of people don't realize how beneficial swimming can be."

CWDR definitely sees the Pool Pass Program, and the Recreation Program in general, as part of the Core Services of Independent Living Skills and Peer Support. The benefits described above involve identifying options, making choices, setting and achieving goals — all steps to developing an independent lifestyle.

## **Evaluation/Satisfaction Data**

Participants check in with staff at the end of the year to renew their pass application (which most do) and discuss progress toward their goals and set new goals. All CWDR consumers are sent a survey at the end of the year related to all services, not just the Pool Pass program.

Consumer satisfaction surveys were positive about the program, and consumers also reported increased social interactions.

### **Current Status**

As with all CIL programs, the Pool Pass program has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pool was closed for several months earlier in the year. Participants for whom swimming had become a routine and highly anticipated activity were frustrated when staff could not tell them when the pool would be re-opened. Individuals who wanted to apply for a pass while the pool was closed were put on a waiting list to be contacted when it re-opened. The pool did re-open in July 2020 on a limited basis. The sauna and hot tub are still closed. There can only be so many people in the pool at one time, so participants have to make appointments to use the pool. Consumers can no longer go in groups to the pool, but CIL staff do work one-on-one with adults 18 and older. Families of younger participants and those who want to take advantage of the pool on their own have to make appointments. While spectators in general are not allowed in the pool area, care providers are allowed.

The Pool Pass Program has grown and improved over the past decade. The relationship between the city and CWDR has expanded and continues to be positive. A CIL staff member is now the vice-chair of the city Parks and Recreation Board where they bring a disability focus to the department beyond the pool program. The city continues to be supportive of the popular program, and expects it to continue, hopefully, for another 20 years.

### **Challenges/Barriers**

In the early days of the program, the number of visits per pass as well as the number of passes available was limited. That has now changed so that the number of visits per year is unlimited when the pool is operating normally. Also, the city now provides as many passes as CWDR requests.

A few years ago, part of the pool wall collapsed resulting in closure for repairs. Consumers were frustrated during the shut-down. They looked forward to visiting the pool as a reason to get out of the house; as an opportunity to meet with friends; and for the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of exercise. Eventually the repairs were completed and the pool returned to the usual schedule.

Other than those early limitations and infrequent closures, there have not been many challenges or barriers to the program.

### **Consumer stories**

One Pool Pass participant appeared on a weight loss show where they lost well over a hundred pounds. They used the pool pass to help keep their weight from coming back with the goal of getting back to work. They were successful, both in managing their weight and in going back to work.

**For questions about the Pool Pass Program, contact Dan at [dan@mycwdr.org](mailto:dan@mycwdr.org) or at 509-962-9620.**

# Adaptive Sports

**Jordy D. Stringer | Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living (Lancaster, OH)**

## Background

In rural southeastern Ohio, individuals with disabilities in two rural counties have limited access to services and even more restricted opportunities to engage in sports, wellness, or physical exercise. Within these counties, there is limited emphasis on healthy lifestyles or opportunities to gain that information. The Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living (SOCIL) has been strongly committed to expanding opportunities for consumers, as well as other individuals with disabilities in the communities to engage in activities that promote healthy living and benefit their overall health since 2012. SOCIL also recognized the benefits of being part of a team and learning leadership skills. In making this decision to include Adaptive Sports as a critical component of its programming, SOCIL had the full support of the Designated State Entity - Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, and the Administration for Community Living. Both Part B and C funding support the basic components of the Adaptive Sports program, including the cost of equipment, liability insurance, and training to have staff/team leads certified as coaches. During COVID-19 restrictions, CARES Act funds have been used to enhance online programming and webinars to continue the program to the extent it is feasible.

## Adaptive Sports

The Adaptive Sports program offers a wide array of sports activities that are supported by a full-time trained staff member. Those participating in these sports activities include community members (often from police and fire departments and local schools), SOCIL consumers, and other individuals with disabilities in the community. The philosophy of this program is that all means all. Fit Friday activities typically include core exercises for strength and flexibility and were conducted in-person. Due to COVID-19, FIT Friday participants now have an in-person, socially distanced meeting to be oriented to the program. The weekly sessions that follow are conducted virtually.



In adapted basketball, participants with and without disabilities pair up and all use wheelchairs. For those without disabilities, this immersion experience is highly beneficial. Players without disabilities have dramatically changed their perceptions about the capacity and abilities of people with disabilities. And basketball is not the only sport. With appropriate adaptations, athletes can participate in the Hoops Madness Tournament, boccia, the Jack Attack Tournament, football, pickleball, track and field, tennis, biking, goal ball, disco golf, and cornhole. With both team and individual

sports available, consumers have an array of choices that would meet their interests.

Another innovative aspect of SOCIL's Adaptive Sports program is that there are some components designed specifically for veterans, many of whom have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). SOCIL ensures that the activities occur in a safe, quiet, calm, socially distanced space. A SOCIL staff member who is also a veteran is there for support. Disc golf

(throwing a disc toward a basket instead of hitting a ball toward a tee) is a favorite for this group. All activities take place in spaces that are accessible for the veterans using adaptive equipment.

## Benefits

There are multiple benefits for the consumers who participate in the Adaptive Sports program. These include increases in self-esteem resulting from being part of a team and the strength of teamwork. Team connections often result in friendships. These experiences bolster self-confidence and enhance an individual's advocacy skills. On a long-term basis, the interaction between individuals with disabilities and peers without disabilities, and getting into the community are also significant benefits. Having someone to coach and support the consumer provides an additional level of benefit and opportunity for growth. The emphasis on behaviors that contribute to health and wellness are embedded in the sports activities, which are offered both individually and for groups. These result in a better understanding of nutrition, hygiene, and weight control. Given the relatively small footprint of SOCIL, the impact of the Adaptive Sports program has resulted in increased visibility in the community, and more interaction between individuals with disabilities and people without disabilities.

Adaptive Sports activities continue to the maximum extent possible. During the pandemic, some of the activities have been further adapted and provided virtually. However, most of the team activities cannot be implemented, given the current social distancing requirements. SOCIL is committed to supporting consumers in meeting their health and wellness goals. SOCIL also strictly adheres to all of the guidelines and recommendations from the CDC, the state, and the Better Business Bureau with the aim of getting back to the full scope of adaptive activities as soon as possible.

## Barriers

In addition to COVID-19, one of the major constraints to the implementation and expansion of the program is having the space to conduct activities. Funding for a larger building, with a gym, or acquiring more property to create sports fields is not possible right now. To address this barrier, SOCIL has collaboratively reached out to other local entities that have buildings/sites that would more fully accommodate the Adaptive Sports program. Fortunately, another nonprofit had the facilities and space and has been willing to allow SOCIL to use them. This partnership has been highly beneficial. However, transportation remains another challenge. With limited public transportation options readily available, and many consumers who do not have access to cars, staff work with the consumer to identify family, neighbors, or friends who may be willing to transport them. In some cases, when possible, SOCIL partners with local transportation providers to ensure that athletes can independently travel to practices and tournaments. They have found that this also helps to promote self-reliance.



## Consumer Stories

One of SOCIL's consumers is a young child who uses a wheelchair. Their family wanted them to gain self-confidence and felt that sports would help. The consumer was discouraged from always being told what they couldn't do it and being left out of and not included in sports activities with peers. After participating in the Adaptive Sports program for the past 4 years, they have become much more outgoing, confident, and able to advocate for themselves.

**For questions about Adaptive Sports, contact Jordy D. Stringer at [jssocil@gmail.com](mailto:jssocil@gmail.com) or at 740-689-1494.**



# New Options HIV/AIDS Program

## Ana Acton | FREED Center for Independent Living (Grass Valley, CA)

### Background

FREED has served individuals with HIV/AIDS with independent living services since inception. FREED partners with the Nevada County Public Health Department to provide Hepatitis C navigation to treatment and assist with their HIV/AIDS Case Management Program. In partnership with Sierra Nevada Memorial hospital, FREED provides Care Transition Intervention and Patient Navigation services for individuals being discharged from the hospital. FREED provides a variety of peer delivered person-centered services to promote independent living for people with disabilities and individuals with chronic health conditions including HIV/AIDS, and older adults.

FREED's New Options HIV/AIDS Program started in 2018 when FREED was asked to become the fiscal agent for the program by Nevada County Public Health. The program is funded through The Cares Foundation – <http://www.thecaresfoundation.org/>.

FREED had already developed a Hepatitis C Navigation Program with Nevada County Public Health that allowed Public Health to expand their free HIV/AIDS testing to include Hepatitis C testing and refer people with a preliminary positive test to FREED's Care Transition Coach.

### New Options HIV/AIDS Program

This program fills gaps in supportive services to keep people living with HIV/AIDS in care such as substance abuse treatment, transportation, patient navigation, case management, and/or housing assistance. FREED provides consumer driven services that are based on the individual's goals, values, culture, desires, and strengths.

FREED provides services based on a social empowerment model on aging and disability. A person-centered case management model is responsive to the individual's needs, goals, and values. The individual with HIV/AIDS and staff work together in partnership to develop goals and action plans based on the individual's values, experiences, culture, and knowledge.

Financial assistance is provided based on unmet needs identified by FREED, Nevada County Public Health, and ADRC partners in the areas of non-medical transportation, food, housing, psychosocial and mental health, and pet care. FREED provides warm hand-offs to Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) partner organizations to assist with navigation across organizations and funding silos.

FREED also provides IL core services to individuals with HIV/AIDS. Services include service coordination for housing assistance, independent living skills training, enhanced information and assistance, assistive technology, peer support, individual and systems advocacy, personal assistance referrals and information, benefits counseling, financial assistance, and transition services from skilled nursing facilities back to the community and from the hospital to home. In addition, during COVID-19, FREED developed programs to access food and nutrition and to address the digital divide, which is the uneven distribution in access or use of information and communication technologies based on demographics, for people with disabilities including those living with HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the financial assistance provided through the Care Foundation, other services provided include person-centered planning, housing, independent living skills, assistive technology, home modifications, and peer mentoring.

## **Benefits**

Benefits of the program include improved access to services, community living, activities of daily living, and over-all improved quality of life as determined by the individual. Individuals living with HIV/AIDS receive one or more of the following services: transportation, housing, financial assistance for medical expenses, financial assistance for basic life necessities, mental healthcare, psychosocial support, and/or service/companion animal support. Individuals living with HIV/AIDS receive support when transitioning from hospital to home including medication self-management, identification of red flags, connection to primary and specialty care, and development of a personal health record.

## **Challenges**

One of their visions has been to develop a HIV/AIDS peer support group. They were not able to develop a peer support group prior to COVID-19. They are currently having a difficult time finding a peer leader willing to facilitate the group.

## **Evaluation/ Satisfaction Data**

The number of goals set and met by individuals living with HIV/AIDS and the number of individuals who receive financial assistance are tracked for the Options Program. Individuals also have the opportunity to complete a satisfaction survey and assess if the services improved access to the community, activities of daily living, and quality of life. In 2019, FREED served 37 individuals with HIV/AIDS and their family members.

## **Current Status**

They compete annually for Cares Foundation funding. An application has been submitted for 2021. The program is still operating with new policies and procedures to ensure safety during COVID-19, such as remote services, PPE, and safety protocols for in-person services.

## **Consumer Stories**

FREED Housing Program and Homeless Coordinated Entry Team partnered with Nevada County Public Health and Nevada County Housing, to provide emergency housing for a consumer who is HIV positive and homeless. The consumer was frightened and at high risk. In the process FREED assisted in connecting them to health and mental health services.

A consumer who is new to our county was referred by Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital through their Care Transition Program. FREED was able to connect with the individual and enroll them in the Options Program and Nevada County Public Health HIV programs. Through these programs as well as CTI and Patient Navigation, they were provided with information and support to connect with other community resources. Because of the COVID-19 shut down, they are unable to work as planned and was at-risk of losing their housing. FREED Options Program and Nevada County Public Health are working together to provide short term housing support and reduce the consumer's risk.

**For questions about the New Options HIV/AIDS program, contact Ana Acton at [Ana@FREED.org](mailto:Ana@FREED.org) or at 530-477-3333.**

# OSCIL-YMCA Connection

## Cynthia Smith | Ocean State Center for Independent Living (Warwick, RI)

### Background

Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL) received feedback from a number of consumers about how isolated they felt. Participating in recreational and social activities required disposable income which they did not have, so their opportunities to meet people and get out in the community were severely limited. OSCIL staff began to look for safe, healthy, accessible options for addressing this need. Greater Providence YMCA offered access to five locations in Rhode Island and one just across the state line in Massachusetts. Already working to make their programs accessible, the YMCA could provide access to exercise equipment, a pool, chair yoga and other classes, and a Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) Bike, which can be used by individuals with little or no voluntary leg movement.



Together, OSCIL and Greater Providence YMCA developed a program to provide 12-month YMCA memberships for up to 15 OSCIL consumers per year at no cost, making it possible for those individuals to work on independent living goals related to fitness, general health and wellness, and connecting with others in the community.

### OSCIL-YMCA Connection

OSCIL-YMCA Connection is open to people with significant disabilities age 16 and older who meet financial eligibility guidelines. Participants learn about the program through their involvement with the CIL or through friends participating in the program. Physical therapists and other medical providers are enthusiastic about referring people to the program because they know that discharge

often means the end of physical activity.

The Independent Living (IL) Coordinator who directs the OSCIL-YMCA Connection program, Cynthia Smith, contacts each applicant to discuss any barriers that might prevent them from fully participating and attending twice weekly. For example, if an individual is scheduled for surgery, the IL Coordinator would defer that application until after the surgery, so that the participant would not lose months of membership during recovery. When other barriers such as transportation or mobility issues are identified, the IL Coordinator works with the individual to find a solution, so they can move forward on achieving their goals. Often, people who come to OSCIL for the YMCA Connection find that the center can help them with other needs, such as assistive technology or home modifications. They may find that they are interested in support groups, classes, or other programs offered by the center of which they were unaware.

### Benefits

For individuals without the regular schedule of school or work, the OSCIL-YMCA Connection provides routine and structure. Participants have developed friendships with other members at various YMCA classes including chair yoga, Zumba, and water aerobics. They interact with YMCA staff and other members, with and without disabilities. Smith states, "Our consumers begin to feel a part of a community; they are re-engaging with society, which is impactful."

The program has also served as an outreach strategy, bringing in consumers who might not otherwise have contacted OSCIL.

### **Evaluation/Satisfaction Data**

Smith maintains regular contact with participants in the OSCIL-YMCA Connection, documenting progress toward their goals. Each participant swipes their membership card every time they enter the YMCA, which provides a record of attendance. Consumers have expressed their satisfaction with the program through surveys and thank you notes.

### **Current Status**

The program is running and enrolling new participants, after a brief hiatus during the COVID-19 shut down. “Naturally, we are all working under different circumstances, but consumers have returned to the YMCA and are following protocols. Some however, due to fragile health, have decided to delay a return to the YMCA,” says Smith.

### **Consumer Stories**

A consumer with MS contacted OSCIL for information on the OSCIL-YMCA Connection after being referred by a rehabilitation center, where he would soon be discharged. The consumer’s primary goal was to regularly use the FES Bike, which sends electrical currents to stimulate nerves that connect the spinal cord to the muscles involved in such activities as posture, balance, transferring, and reaching. The consumer states, “I just wanted to get stronger with my body, specifically my legs. While I was going to the YMCA, I saw my legs having more strength.”

The consumer and their spouse drive about an hour each way three times per week for a 60-minute FES Bike time slot. They track their progress and performance with the FES Bike’s computer program, and their access to the community has tripled. The individual reached a milestone as the first consumer to reach the 12-month membership mark! Due to his commitment and desire to continue using the FES Bike, OSCIL has granted an extension of the consumer’s YMCA membership, which would not be possible otherwise.

**For questions about OSCIL-YMCA Connection, contact Linda Hughes, 401-738-1013 Ext 13 or [info@oscil.org](mailto:info@oscil.org).**

# POWER Program

**Marty Dombrowski | Center for Independent Living of South Central PA (Altoona, PA)**

## Background

The CIL of South Central PA (CILSCPA) and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) received grant funding through the Paralysis Resource Center (supported by the Administration for Community Living). The program focus is to enhance the quality of life for those living through the day-to-day challenges of disability with physical exercise, as well as educational opportunities in a social recreational environment. With CILSCPA's commitment to provide supports to enhance the health and well-being of people with disabilities, this program clearly supported their overall vision and mission.

## POWER Program



The People, Opportunities, Wellness, Education and Resources (POWER) Program was the new initiative created. Existing CILSCPA consumers and community members with paralysis were encouraged to participate and the program grew as word spread. Physician's offices were contacted to expand awareness, which also increased participation. When new people were interested in the POWER program, they found out about CILSCPA and what they had to offer. New consumers, impressed with the services, told their family and friends.

To develop a high-quality program, CILSCPA needed an accessible gym. Fortunately, they share the building with an accessible gym with adaptive equipment. A grant-funded physical therapist (PT) ensures that workout exercises are completed appropriately. Both physical and emotional health are considered. These activities may be included in the participant's independent living plan (ILP) as a requested service.

The POWER Program has several interrelated components: first, bi-monthly three-hour long physical exercise sessions are conducted with individuals and their caregivers. Each participant attending an accessible workout session receives coaching from the PT. The PT also has people pair up for some experiences. Participants found out that they had more in common than they thought. After each session, individuals are assigned homework or take-home challenges, such as walking regularly or doing weight lifting with items that can be found in the home.

The second component is healthy nutrition with an emphasis on the connection between health and nutrition. After the workouts, participants return to the CIL for a nutritious lunch. The nutrition part of the meal is important. The menu is determined by the participants who suggest types of food. For instance, one week the menu might be based on a single item such as zucchini, which some people had never tried. Food challenges are also part of the program. People share recipes and ideas to include more nutritious food items in their diets.

The third component is education. Different people from the community are invited to talk about resources, including libraries, transportation services, housing options, voting, gardening, interior decorating, etc. This program provides an opportunity for people to leave their homes, learn about resources, become healthier, and make connections with others.

Due to the immediate success of the POWER Program, the gym owner offered to expand the hours that the gym would be available for participants, and the physical therapist also agreed to offer additional hours.

## Benefits

Some reported that this was the first time that they have been in a gym because they didn't think individuals who use a wheelchair could access equipment or because they didn't look like the people in the advertisements. Other primary benefits are increased connection with other humans, a sense of belonging, and improvement in people's overall physical and mental health and well-being. Participants reported that the program gave them something to look forward to each week.

Participants also became aware of factors that contribute to one's health and well-being. They were able to access tools and resources in the community, which is really important. Some didn't know how to ride the bus, get a library card, or that polling places have to be accessible so that they could vote in person if they choose.



## Evaluation/Satisfaction Data

CILSCPA anticipated an increase in attendance; improvements on health screenings, perception about general health, quality of life, and exercise; and participant satisfaction. They also expect to see reduced stress levels. On a survey conducted before the program began, people rated themselves as not being strong, healthy, knowledgeable or aware. Preliminary data indicated significant gains in knowledge, feelings of being healthy, increased self-confidence, and knowing where to turn to find information.

## Current Status

Given the COVID-19 restrictions, the POWER Program was suspended. The CIL reimagined how to keep connections and activities occurring with many consumers experiencing mental health issues due to isolation. During COVID-19, the CIL is conducting wellness checks with a weekly phone call to keep people connected, interested, and healthy. Multiple Zoom calls each week also connect consumers to a variety of topics using what was already planned for the community resource presentations. These include educational opportunities, as well as games and fun activities. Recently, participants enjoyed joining Jeopardy and Hangman competitions.

## Challenges

The primary challenge is twofold: keeping the participants connected and supported until face-to-face activities resume; and finding sustainable sources of funding to continue the POWER Program and expand it. Given the COVID-19 restrictions, and limited activities, the CIL hopes to continue the program beyond the December 2020 end date. CILSCPA is committed to identify additional funding to ensure that the POWER program becomes a permanent CIL service.

## Consumer Stories

One consumer asked for help with making a plan since the written plan was an important commitment. This person had never been in a gym and felt very challenged when it came to physical exercise. CILSCPA assisted in developing a plan and even provided a tracker for counting steps. Currently, the consumer completes their target steps every day. They are committed to living a healthier lifestyle and has even put themselves on a better sleep schedule.

**For questions about the POWER Program, contact Marty Dombrowski at [mdombrowski@cilscpa.org](mailto:mdombrowski@cilscpa.org) or 814- 949-1905.**