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For live captioning, click the link in the chat.

Virtual Transition Fair

September 15th
Independent Living Supports

Transition Tennessee
Welcome!

• Hosts: Emily Barker and Ben Schwartzman
  • Educational Consultants with Transition TN

• This presentation will be recorded for later access.
  • Please leave your camera off and your audio muted during the presentations.
  • You can type questions in the chat box during the presentation.
  • There will be breakout rooms grouped by specific institution type.
Live Captioning

• Click on arrow by:  

• Click on this:  

• Alternatively, click on the link in the chat.

• Live captioning is instant and will only work in the main Zoom room, not breakout rooms.
Transition TN

• The goal of Transition TN is to improve transition outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.
  • Register at transitiontn.org

• Resources from previous transition fairs are available on our website.

• Tonight, our presenters will be sharing information regarding independent living supports.
Independent Living

• Independence looks different for each one of us.
• True independence encompasses much more than just residential life.
• Independence means living, working, and enjoying life.
  • Relationships with families and friends
  • Work
  • Interests and hobbies
  • Health
  • Money
  • Food
  • Transportation
Schedule for Tonight

• General Overview of Independent Living Supports in Tennessee

• Residential Services Example

• Participant Panel

• Breakout Rooms

• Final Wrap-up
Independent Living in Tennessee
IL Motto

•Nothing About Us Without Us!
Statewide Independent Living Council
The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), is an independent nonprofit governed by people with disabilities. Our goal is to advance advocacy and independence for Tennesseans with disabilities by collaborating with all interested parties. We believe that people with disabilities are the best experts on their needs.
Tennessee Centers for Independent Living

• Centers are not residential facilities
• Centers do not make decisions for anyone
• Centers will not do all the work for an individual

• Centers will provide: advocacy, skills training, peer support, information and referral, transition services – Nursing home to community life and School to life for young adults
Current Center Coverage
Our Place Nashville empowers adults with developmental disabilities by providing homes that are affordable, work that is meaningful, and inclusive communities in which to live.
What is your residential model?

Our model has individuals with and without disabilities living together, alongside each other, in Our Place Nashville communities. We currently have two models, with two more in the pipeline:

1) Friendship Houses – Individuals with development and/or intellectual disabilities (“friends”) living side by side Vanderbilt graduate students, primarily from the Divinity School. We have two Friendship Houses. The first, which opened in 2015, is made up of one apartment building that has four two-bedroom units and four one-bedroom units. There are four friends, six graduate students, one wife, one teenager, one toddler and one newborn.
Divinity Friendship House at Vanderbilt - I
Our second Friendship House, which opened in 2016, accommodates 22 residents: eight friends and twelve students (one of whom is married and has a toddler). They live in two apartment buildings, each with 10 1-BR apartments, facing each other across a courtyard. There is a community building which has a large gathering space (big enough for all residents to share a communal meal, a laundry room and mailboxes. The community is gated.
In addition to our two Friendship Houses, in 2019 we introduced our first Our Place shared living house. It is a large, three story duplex with 10 one-bedroom units on each side, with each side having a shared kitchen/dining area, laundry and back deck. They share a large living room on one side of the house. We begin integrating older adults into this model. This third house has 20 residents: nine friends, four graduate students and seven older adults.
Our second shared living community will open in October 2020 with two ranch-style houses, each accommodating eight. We will have 16 residents: seven friends, seven older adults and two resident directors, probably paraprofessionals from MNPS.
Two more shared living communities are in the pipeline for early 2022, adding 80 more residents to Our Place Nashville’s roster. One will have five modernized Cape Code style houses, each accommodating 10 people, for a total of 15 friends, 25 older adults and 5 others. The second community will have three houses, accommodating 12 friends, 15 older adults and 3 others. Both communities will have separate buildings for large gatherings – communal meals, meetings, parties and offices.
Two more models are in the pipeline.

One model is a three-floor apartment building in downtown Nashville. The third floor is Our Place Nashville’s, while the other two are earmarked for two other non-profit organizations. This floor will be our pilot to accommodate friends with more profound challenges. The plan is to have 14 residents: three more able friends, three less able friends and eight musicians, all of whom are trained as personal assistants. Each resident has a small one-bedroom apartment, and there is a large common area where they all can gather to eat, watch television and practice/rehearse music.

The second model is a community of 12 tiny houses with a mix of friends and neurotypical adults (possibly MNPS paraprofessionals, retired teachers, veterans or refugees).
What other services do you offer related to independent or supported community living?

Our Place Nashville provides/coordinates:

• Weekly communal dinners
• Weekly life skills classes
• Weekly book club
• Twice a week gatherings to talk about our goings on with each other
• Saturday night movie
• Weekly journaling session
• Monthly parents' group
• Seasonal parties
• Bi-annual community-wide meetings
• Training activities
• Arts workshops (singing, songwriting, comedy)
Breaking Ground

Hello, my name is Drew Gilmer. My legal name is William Andrews Gilmer, but I've always used the name Drew. I am 49 years old and have lived in Middle Tennessee for most of my life.

The majority of my work career was spent at BMI, or Broadcast Music Incorporated. I truly enjoyed my time with BMI. I temporarily moved to New York City to work in the NY office. I lived in New York for nine years and then returned to Nashville in 2012.

I had only been back for a few weeks when I got in a bad car accident. Although I survived, this incident drastically changed my life. I developed brain trauma from the accident. It doesn't really affect me, but it slowed my processing speed. Thus, I was unable to handle the large number of phone calls received at BMI.

Eventually, I left BMI to pursue a new career. I was hesitant, because I had been with BMI for more than 20 years. Unfortunately, I could not keep a job there with my slow processing speed. It was an uneasy feeling, but I really had no other options.

The first job I obtained was at Publix grocery store. I was familiar with grocery stores from a past job bagging items, so I worked in customer service. I quickly learned that Publix doesn't have a cleaning service. Instead, all the cleaning is performed by the employees, especially in the customer service department. I could handle all my job duties, but the cleaning needs frustrated me. I ended up leaving Publix and got a job at the Downtown YMCA. It was interesting working for the YMCA, because I used to go there with my father. I really enjoyed working for the YMCA, but my brain issue was causing me to be periodically late, and I eventually was fired.

I knew a woman who works for New Visions (a vocational services agency), and she was helping me to locate another job. She mentioned a "farm" for me to explore. I thought about it and decided to check it out. It's called "Cul2vate" and is located in the Crieve Hall area, close to Overton High School.

We visited the site, and I was very impressed. It was a six-month program, and I decided it was a great opportunity. I don't proclaim to be a farmer, but I enjoyed growing supplies for people. I was finally feeling a purpose in my work. It's very gratifying to help people in this manner.

One aspect I truly respected about Cul2vate was that it was faith-based. We had meetings in the morning and discussed lessons from the Bible. This gave me a strong feeling of pride and desire to work harder. I'm still friends with the owners and plan to volunteer in the near future.

I was finally feeling positive about my work career and decided to take a few weeks off before a new job hunt. Most of my experience came from BMI, which is a Performing Rights Organization or PRO. Every country in the world has one PRO. In the U.S., however, there are three. The main two are BMI and ASCAP. I was done with BMI, but I had a desire to work at ASCAP. I eventually got an opportunity to interview with someone at ASCAP. I was extremely excited because this was the one place I had related experience. I was motivated and completely happy at my interview. Fortunately, I was familiar with all the language from my BMI career.

I have really enjoyed my days at ASCAP. It's essentially the same type of business as BMI, so everything is familiar. On top of that, I no longer answer phones, so I'm absolutely satisfied.
Do you provide any other services?

Our Place Nashville guides our residents to job placement programs. When needed, we work with other residents to develop jobs, and have had success in a number of areas, ranging from ASCAP, the YMCA and On the Avenue to volunteer opportunities with the Nashville Human Society and Saddle Up! Until the pandemic, 95% of our resident friends were employed.

We help prepare families for the transition to independent living for their sons and daughters, help them navigate service providers, refer them to resources provided by other non-profits and government agencies, and work to increase awareness of the many gifts our community of friends bring to our city.
What population do you work with?

We primarily serve adults with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities over the age of 21. To date, they have sufficient mastery of independent living skills to live with a modicum of services in a supportive environment. Our residents are on the autism spectrum, have Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, Fragile X, receptive/expressive language disorder, Tourette’s and more. They also are funny, resourceful, kind, hard-working, resilient, present, proud, persistent and over-the-top smart about cars, Disney, video games, genealogy, sports teams (Go Preds!) and the best places in town to grab a burger.

We have had graduate students as supportive community members since 2015 and began integrating older adults into our communities in 2019.
How can people get connected with your program?

For more information, people can:

• Visit our website at www.OurPlaceNashville.org. Scroll to the bottom of our home page where you can ask to join our mailing list.

• Like us on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/OurPlaceNashville.

• Contact our Executive Director, Carolyn Naifeh, at Carolyn.Naifeh@OurPlaceNashville.org or 615-651-0060.

• Ask to be placed on our waiting list.
How is your program funded?

Our Place Nashville has succeeded because we have the most amazing partners and because we operate on a shoestring.

Since being founded five years ago, we have received two Barnes Housing Trust Fund grants from the city totaling $3M; these funds were earmarked exclusively for bricks and mortar.

Our funding also comes in the form of foundation grants, in-kind donations, fundraising events and individual donations. Our largest grant, outside of the Barnes Fund, was for $107,000. Our largest individual donor has given us $62,000 over the past three years. Our average individual donations are $25, $50 or $100, some recurring monthly. Our legal and public relations/marketing needs are met on a pro bono basis.
Do you have any recommendations for people wanting to replicate your services in their cities?

Partner, partner, partner. Our Place Nashville would not exist without partners, primary among them are the non-profit organizations that provide affordable housing. We do not duplicate the services of other disability groups; we partner with them so we can each stretch our dollars. We now are building relationships with groups focusing on aging. We partner with schools/universities; medical/long-term supports and services groups; city and state leaders; state agencies; employers; faith-based organizations.

If you choose to create a non-profit organizations, secure STRONG Board members who are not shy about fundraising and who can provide you with strategic planning, constructive advice, and introductions to other people who can move your mission forward.
What skills can families/students work on in middle school and high school to prepare for independent living?

Our Place Nashville uses an inventory of transition skills that accurately evaluate individuals according to their current skill level. This will help determine what they will need to work on to gain sufficient mastery of the skills needed to live independently with success.

If you would like a copy of this list, email Carolyn.Naifeh@OurPlaceNashville.org and she will send you a pdf.
Participant Panel

We will hear from young adults that are currently living independently.
Participant Panel

What is your name, and what kind of housing do you live in?
Participant Panel

How long have you been living on your own or with a roommate?
Participant Panel

How long have you been living in your current housing?
Participant Panel

How did you find your housing?
Participant Panel

Do you manage your own healthcare, or does someone help you?
Participant Panel

How do you prepare your food?
Participant Panel

What types of transportation do you use to get around your community?
Participant Panel

How did you know when you were ready to live on your own/with a roommate?
Participant Panel

What’s your favorite part of living on your own?
Participant Panel

Who helps you?
Participant Panel

Do you have any challenges living alone? How have you overcome them?
Participant Panel

What advice would you give to people who want to live on their own? What should they do now to prepare?
Breakout Rooms

• You selected a breakout room during registration.

• If there is an issue with getting into your breakout room, Emily Barker will help.

• Once we start the breakout rooms, you will need to click the invitation to join your room.

• We will record the breakout rooms and save the chat.
TN Disability Pathfinder

Services Database
Search for disability and community services from more than 3,400 statewide agencies based on keyword service categories and counties/regions

Contact
Contact staff for assistance via phone, email, or an online request form
- Phone: (800) 640-4636
- Email: tnp Pathfinder@vumc.org
- Website: www.disabilitypathfinder.org
Final Remarks

• Thank you for joining us!

• Upcoming Transition Fair
  • October 13, 5:30-7:00pm CDT - College Application Supports
  • For more information or to register, check out transitiontn.org/transition-tuesdays-virtual-transition-fair/
Contact Information

- Statewide Independent Living Council of Tennessee
  - Sandi Klink, sandi@mcil.org

- Our Place Nashville
  - Carolyn Naifeh, carolyn.naifeh@ourplacenashville.org

- The Jackson Center for Independent Living
  - Beth James, information@jcil.tn.org

- The Memphis Center for Independent Living
  - Christina Clift, christina@mcil.org
  - Tim Wheat, tim@mcil.org

- The TARP Center for Independent Living
  - Desiree Heckard, info@tarp1.org

- Empower Tennessee
  - Brandon Brown, info@empowertn.org

- The disABILITY Resource Center
  - Mike Scripa, mscripa@drctn.org

- Brother’s Keeper
  - Cecile Huddleston, info@BrothersKeeperTN.org

- Transition TN
  - Emily Barker, emily.j.barker@vanderbilt.edu
  - Ben Schwartzman, ben.schwartzman@vanderbilt.edu

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  - Sandi Klink, sandi@mcil.org

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