



Statewide Independent Living Council

For Immediate Release

Contact: Peter Kriff, Executive Director / vtsilcpeter@gmail.com / 802.233.4908

Include! is an online k-12 curriculum promoting inclusion in schools.

SILC introduces an educational tool for Vermont schools to use *free of charge*.

(South Burlington): The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) has introduced an online curriculum that promotes inclusion and one which is intended for the entire school community. Include! (IncludeVT.org) is an online curriculum that was developed by the SILC with the help of teachers, family members, and individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the program is to bring disability pride to students with and without disabilities. Include! materials are available free to interested schools. Schools and educators can use Include! as a separate curriculum; but many choose specific lesson plans and materials that they incorporate into their anti-bias and diversity activities.

The curriculum was developed by the SILC with the goal of inspiring students of all ages to promote the principles of equality, dignity and respect for all in their classrooms, homes and communities.

The Include! Curriculum:

- Complies with Vermont Learning Standards;
- Includes ready to use lesson plans for elementary, middle and high school classes;
- Is easily integrated into different grade levels and subject areas;
- Provides additional resources and activities to enhance classroom experiences;
- Links disability awareness work to other diversity and anti-bias education;
- Encourages student, parent and community involvement in school-based disability awareness activities;
- Explores disability as a social experience similar to other multicultural, women's rights, and civil rights movements in America.

“We regularly find that students want to talk about disability issues and (Include!) creates a safe environment in which they can ask questions and get good answers. They also develop a clear sense of

the civil rights movement for people with disabilities. We have seen real improvement and sensitivity in our students' interactions with people with disabilities.”

-- *Stuart Strothman, 6/7/8 Language Arts, Guilford Central School, Guilford*

This 2nd Edition (formerly entitled PRIDE) was principally authored by Deborah Lisi-Baker, a longtime advocate for disability rights and former Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living. Under direction from the SILC education committee, Deborah and her team integrated over 180 pictures and illustrations into four distinct units of learning, each with applications and activities for all ages. The four Learning Units are entitled *Identity and Belonging*, *Disability and Awareness*, *Civil Rights and Social Change* and *Exploring Disability Experience through Literature*.

Interested schools are urged to contact SILC Executive Director Peter Kriff at vtsilcpeter@gmail.com for information on how to get started with Include!.

About the SILC

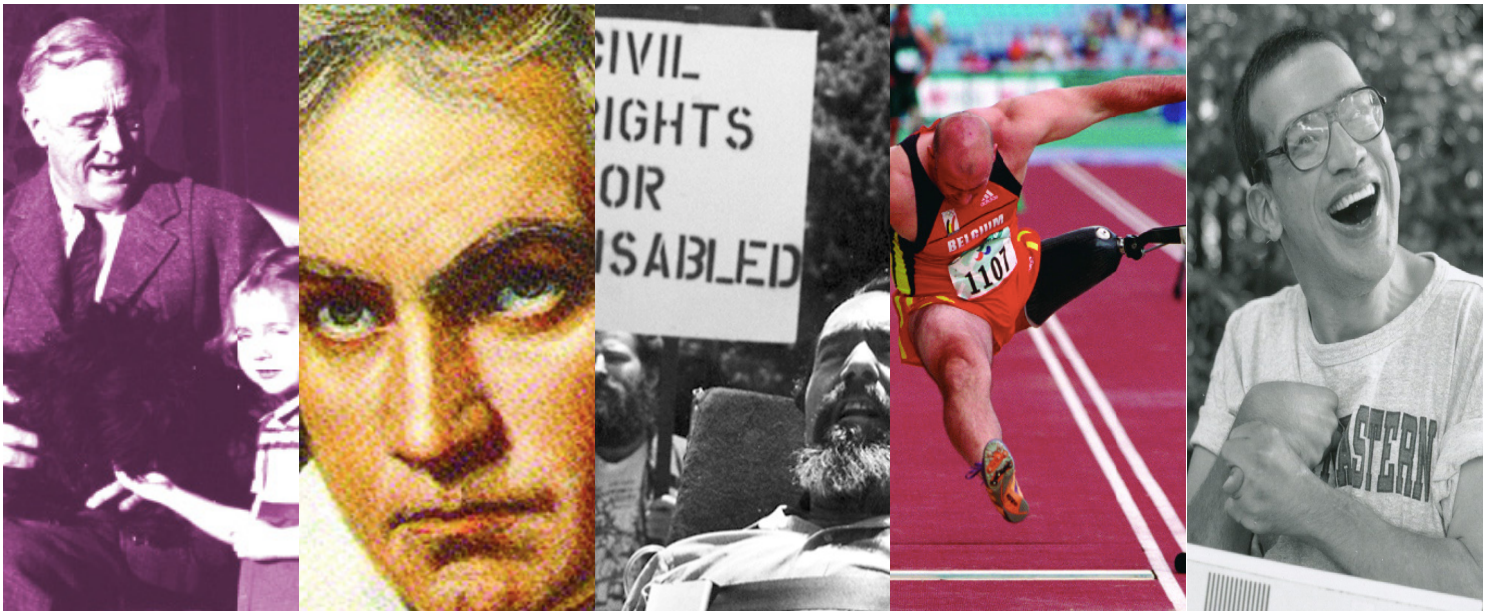
The mission of the SILC is that the Vermont Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) exists to enhance the equality with which people with disabilities enjoy, participate in and contribute to the lives of their communities, family and friends.

The Federal Rehabilitation Act requires each state to maintain a Statewide Independent Living Council to monitor programs that help disabled people live with independence and dignity in their own homes (as opposed to nursing homes or other institutions). In Vermont, as in the other states, the 17 voting members (number of voting members varies by state) are appointed by the Governor and the majority of them must be persons with significant disabilities. Collectively, they must represent all regions of the state as well as a broad spectrum of disabilities. The executive director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living is a voting member of the SILC; the directors of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired are non-voting (“ex-officio”) members.

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Pride, Respect and Inclusion

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A FREE RESOURCE FOR ALL!

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www.IncludeVT.org

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Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)



Civil Rights and Social Change

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SILC History and Structure

What is the SILC?

The Vermont Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is a not-for-profit, non-governmental, consumer controlled organization. The council is composed of 21 appointees from around the state – a majority of whom have disabilities – representing diverse cultures and needs in the state. The SILC is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the 3-year Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The Council is jointly responsible for the SPIL with its state plan partners – The Vermont State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI).

Legal Basis:

Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILC's), established under Title VII of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, are gubernatorially appointed councils which coordinate the functions related to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the SPIL. The VT SILC provides support and technical assistance to the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) – a statewide, a community-based organization directed by and for people with disabilities.

Council meetings are held quarterly and are open to the public. For more information, call us at 802-233-4908, or email us at vtsilcpeter@gmail.com.



History:

In addition to diligently fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, the VT SILC has engaged in national networking – for example, by actively participating in national conferences and forums.

Indeed the VT SILC has successfully proposed amendments at the annual SILC Congress on such relevant topics



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as adequate health care for persons with disabilities and eliminating barriers to employment. The VT SILC has also been a national leader among SILC's in disability education of youths by its creation of the PRIDE curriculum – a recognized paradigm. Recently, the VT SILC has lent its expertise to strengthening disabled parking laws Statewide and to advising upon methods to heighten work incentives within State programs.

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Advantages of Programs/Services Which Support Independent Living

1. Sufficient funding of programs/services which support IL prevents **GREATER** long-term expenditures – for example, by reducing incidence of **MUCH** more costly institutionalization.
2. By encouraging self-sufficiency, economic, as well as social, productivity is increased. Such productivity serves as an economic stimulus as more people are employed, pay more in taxes and enhance their portion of consumer spending.
3. Self-sufficiency and the resulting self-dignity within a stable community-based setting, lessens incidents of delinquent behavior – resulting in less expenditures within the Corrections System and law enforcement, generally.
4. By receiving appropriate and timely in-home care, **MORE** costly services – such as emergency room visits, housing crisis interventions, etc., would be avoided!
5. In summary, IL programs/services, when used appropriately, are a **COST-EFFECTIVE** means of supporting social and economic goals.



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