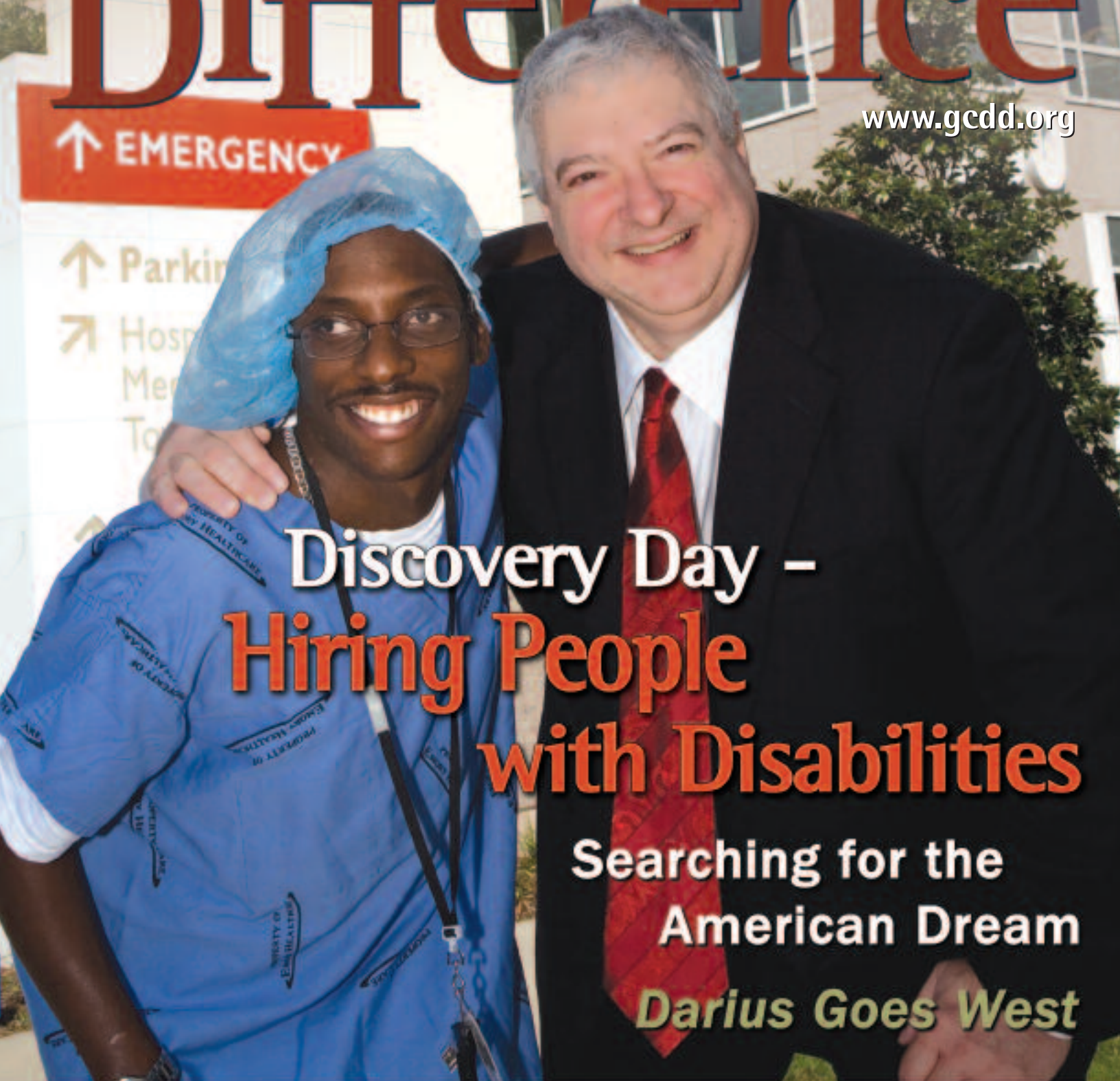


Making a Difference

FALL 2007

www.gcdd.org



Discovery Day - Hiring People with Disabilities

Searching for the
American Dream

Darius Goes West



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“While you can remove architectural barriers, you can’t legislate attitude. There is still a lot to be done to shift people’s thinking.”
- TAMEEKA HUNTER, GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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A quarterly magazine of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities collaborates with Georgia's citizens, public and private advocacy organizations and policymakers to positively influence public policies that enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families.

GCDD provides this through education and advocacy activities, program implementation, funding and public policy analysis and research.

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To Georgia's Disability Community,

The shifting of seasons from summer to fall is a reminder that change is ever eminent. My vision for Georgia is that of change and the drive for continuous improvement. To this effort, I am proud to announce that many promising strides have been made within Georgia's disability community.

One of the most pressing issues facing the disability community is that of jobs and new job opportunities. We, as a community and as a state, recognize that having a meaningful, rewarding job is the very basis of America's free enterprise system. Jobs not only provide an individual with income, but equally, if not more importantly, with a strong sense of purpose and accomplishment. These same principles apply to an even greater extent among the disability community, where a good job contributes to the individual's self-determination, freedom of choice and inclusion in the community.

Georgia is committed to helping people with disabilities go to work. The legislature recently removed a barrier to employment by passing a plan that allows workers earning up to \$699 per month to buy in to Medicaid by paying a premium, much as they would for private health insurance. This will enable individuals with disabilities to seek and maintain competitive employment and salaries without jeopardizing their Medicaid-funded services, such as attendant care.

In addition, the Georgia Department of Human Resources and Department of Labor – Rehabilitation Services participated in the successful Project Search program that has been carving out jobs for people with developmental disabilities for the past three years at some of our state's most prestigious companies and institutions, such as Emory Crawford Long Hospital, SunTrust Banks, Inc., Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and more. This program was recently honored with the 2007 Freedom to Compete Award by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Moreover, at the recent Making a Difference Discovery Day, the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities highlighted further employment success stories to its more than 100 attendees. There, employers learned that employees with disabilities can contribute to the company's bottom line. Attendees also discovered that Employment First Georgia offers resources to employers on hiring people with disabilities and the Emerging Leaders internship program allows employers to give college students with disabilities valuable work experience.

With the many job initiatives and the new Medicaid buy-in program, we all continue to work together to build better job opportunities for Georgians with disabilities.



Sonny Perdue
Sonny Perdue
Governor



New Project Ties GCDD's "Real" Areas Together

For the past five or six years, we have described our Real Areas model throughout *Making a Difference* magazine. It has been heard from the steps of the Capitol in chants of, "Make It Real." The model proclaims that GCDD supports efforts in five Real Areas: Real Careers, Real Homes, Real Learning, Real Influence and Real Supports. However, we have never been able to find that one project that began to tie all the Real Areas together. That was until now.

This past summer, GCDD joined with Credit-Able and the National Disability Institute to kick off the American Dream Project, now known as the Asset Alliance of Georgia Coalition. The Asset Alliance of Georgia was formed to address the barriers that currently keep Georgians with disabilities, their families and caregivers from accessing and maintaining financial assets. We know that over 50% of people with significant disabilities and their families live in poverty and that their disability is one of the factors that keep them from getting a job or purchasing a home. In fact, the poverty rate of individuals with disabilities is three times greater than those without disabilities. Basically, if you do not have money and a way to save, then you cannot buy or rent a home, purchase medical care and other goods and services.

Despite the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), current public policy sends a disturbing message that assistance will only be offered to those who remain at the bottom of the economic ladder. The current government-run systems actually keep people with disabilities in poverty through a reliance on income maintenance programs. If you go to work you can only make so much before you are no longer eligible for Medicaid. We then have to create programs like a Medicaid Buy In so that those who work can have access to those supports provided through Medicaid.



ERIC E. JACOBSON



TOM SEEGMUELLER

"Community organizing explicitly seeks to build the power base of the poor so they can affect and change the public policies and private market forces that create and sustain social and economic inequality."

HENRY ALLEN, HYAMS FOUNDATION

We hope that the Asset Alliance of Georgia will create a positive shift in this paradigm, leaning toward inclusion in the workforce and the community. This effort could then be used by people with disabilities, family members and their advocates to continue strategies that advance self-determination and financial independence. It also means that we in the disability community can join forces with those community organizers who are working for all people in poverty to support and develop strategies such as Individual Development Accounts, microenterprises and earned income tax credit. This should allow all people who live in poverty greater opportunities for income preservation, asset accumulation and financial education. Read more about this effort through out this edition of *Making a Difference* and then keep up with this effort in future editions.

You will also read about the more than 100 people who attended Discovery Day, held at The Home Depot's headquarters and hosted by The Home Depot, Southern Company, Intercontinental Hotels and SunTrust. The purpose was for businesses and employers to understand the many ways that employees with disabilities can help build businesses. It was about creating a diverse employee base, which in turn helps businesses be more productive and make greater profits. It was also about understanding that there are resources and supports to help businesses that are interested in hiring people with disabilities.

We want to hear from you. Let us know what issues are important in your lives. Contact our editor-in-chief Valerie Meadows Suber at 888-275-4233 or via e-mail at vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us.

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Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD

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Make It Real



Letters to the Editor

Letters should include the writer's full name, address, phone number, and may be edited for purpose of clarity and space.

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**GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES**

New Program Associate Has Passion for Advocacy

John Edward Dallas has been a tireless advocate for human rights both professionally and personally, through his work with several nonprofit organizations, as well as in his role as caregiver for his mother for eight years before her death last fall.

"Taking care of my mother afforded me first-hand insight into the private and social challenges that people with disabilities face in our society, and I'll be forever proud I was always there to help my mother, particularly as her advocate. In this role, I made sure my mother received the best possible medical treatment and supplies, and, what's more, that her intrinsic dignity as a human being was always uppermost in the minds of the doctors, nurses, social workers, home attendants and others involved in her care," Dallas said.

Dallas, who joins the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities as its new program associate, will provide support to the advocacy director, the individual and family support director and the public policy director.

With his extensive background in multicultural community organizing, Dallas will also be responsible for building bridges between GCDD and organizations serving metro Atlanta's immigrant communities. His strong advocacy background in affordable housing uniquely positions Dallas to implement Real Homes by creating initiatives that promote visitable, accessible and affordable housing for people with disabilities and their loved ones.

Dallas will administer the Partnership Fund, Organizing Institute and other grants, and handle the planning for Disability Day.

"I regard my work for GCDD as an evolution of the tireless advocacy I performed for my mother – and as a tribute to her. She's no doubt proud that I returned to her hometown to fight for the rights of other people with disabilities as fervently as I did for her in New York City," he said.



John Dallas

"Taking care of my mother afforded me first-hand insight into the private and social challenges that people with disabilities face in our society..."

GCDD Names Advisory Members

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities is pleased to introduce its new advisory members:

JILL ALEXANDER of Fitzgerald is the mother of a 10-year-old who has cerebral palsy. Alexander wants to be sure people with disabilities living in rural South Georgia are well represented at the state level.

"With most services and programs that research and strive to meet the needs of people with disabilities centrally located out of metro Atlanta, it leaves serious gaps of service to our regions. As a parent of a child with multiple disabilities, I see first hand the struggles that living in a rural area present to individuals with disabilities. I have a passion to change the circumstances that face our family as well as thousands of other Georgia families affected by disability," Alexander said.

GCDD Reaches Out to Immigrant Populations

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities hosted a Diversity Summit September 18 to build connections with metro Atlanta-based organizations that serve immigrant communities.

"The summit gave GCDD the opportunity to share its purpose with organizations serving Asian and Latino immigrants, who may be underserved due to language barriers," explained GCDD Program Associate John Edward Dallas.

The summit was the first step in an outreach initiative to increase the ethnic diversity of GCDD members, partnerships, coalitions, scholarship recipients and project funding awardees.

Hosted by GCDD Advocacy Director Kate Gainer and Dallas, the summit sought to lay the foundation for fully inclusive, enduring collaborations between GCDD and other advocacy organizations.

A variety of organizations participated in the summit, including:

- Indonesian Heritage Foundation
- Good Shepherd Services Atlanta
- Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia, Inc.
- Korean American Coalition – Atlanta Chapter
- Ministry With Persons With Disabilities, Catholic Charities
- Center for Pan Asian Community Services
- Raksha, Inc.
- Wheat Mission of Atlanta

"We were very pleased with the response to the summit by the various organizations and hope to continue working with them to assure immigrants with disabilities are aware of the resources available," Gainer said.

Several of the attendees found the summit useful, such as Sister Christine Truong My Hanh, executive director of Good Shepherd Services Atlanta, who said, "Many adults do not know where to get help. I need your suggestions, to get some programs to help many Vietnamese with disabilities."

Tonja Holder, director of development for Raksha, Inc., saw the possibilities of working with GCDD. "I've already spoken with my executive director about doing some recruiting within the South Asian community on the disability issues, so hopefully I'll be able to direct some engaged and energetic people your way," she said.

In addition to presentations from Gainer and Dallas, GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson, Individual and Family Supports Director Dottie Adams and Public Information Director and Editor in Chief of *Making a Difference* Magazine Valerie Meadows Suber provided an overview of the organization.

Ruby Moore, executive of the Georgia Advocacy Office, also presented information to the group.

"We were very pleased with the response to the summit by the various organizations and hope to continue working with them to assure immigrants with disabilities are aware of the resources available."

Perdue Promotes Heck to Policy Director

Hannah Heck has been promoted to policy director, managing research and development of policy initiatives. She replaces Trey Childress, who was appointed to lead the Office of Planning and Budget.



Hannah Heck

"Our work has just begun tackling some of Georgia's toughest challenges," said Gov. Sonny Perdue (R). "My leadership team's experience in consensus building will help us to strengthen our relationships with the Georgia General Assembly, our congressional delegation, state and federal agencies and the public we serve."

"Our work has just begun tackling some of Georgia's toughest challenges."

Since 2004, Heck has served as a policy adviser to Gov. Perdue. Her primary subject matter expertise has been public safety and general government, such as law enforcement, highway safety, corrections and technology. As policy director, Heck will manage the governor's team of policy advisers, overseeing all research and development of new and existing policy initiatives.

Heck has advanced the governor's legislative and policy agenda and advised him on operational, budget and policy direction for the state of Georgia. Under the governor's direction, Heck developed "CSI Georgia," a child internet safety



initiative. She also spearheaded the governor's Wireless Communities Georgia program, providing funding to rural communities to establish wireless broadband networks. Heck graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University in Cambridge, MA with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology.

Checker Cab Adds Accessible Vehicles

Atlantans with disabilities now have a new transportation option. Checker Cab has added three wheelchair accessible vehicles to its fleet of taxis. The fare is the same as a regular taxi. For reservations, call 404.351.1111.

Disability Webzine Launched

BeyondLimits.TV is a breakthrough concept in Internet publishing that combines video stories, print, blogs and Web-based resources that promote the full participation of people with disabilities in the world community. This new Web site incorporates streaming video podcasts and other interactive services to activate, inform and entertain the significant but unrecognized demographic of people with disabilities.

For more information, or to submit or read articles, visit www.beyondlimits.tv or email info@nolimitsmedia.org.



ADAPT Housing Forum Exposes Individual Problems and HUD Inaction

Officials from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) traveled to Chicago September 9 to meet with 500 ADAPT activists, but incited the crowd to anger when they communicated a tired message that hasn't been supported with action promised in May by HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson. Their appearance at the ADAPT National Housing Forum followed two hours of testimony about the lack of affordable, accessible integrated housing articulated by disability rights activists from across the nation.

"We just heard the same old rhetoric, lots of promises, but no action," said Cassie James, ADAPT organizer from Philadelphia who moderated the Housing Forum. "Last May, Sec. Jackson made a number of commitments to us, and he hasn't honored one of them."

In a May meeting in Washington, D.C., ADAPT confronted Jackson about the 58% loss in housing vouchers that the disability community suffered due

to a combination of federal budget cuts and misappropriation of the vouchers by local entities that administer the voucher program.

Jackson promised to report to ADAPT before the September action in Chicago how many of those housing vouchers for people with disabilities he has recovered.

Jackson, who had also promised in May to meet with ADAPT three times a year, failed to show in Chicago, sending Kim Kendrick, assistant secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, and Paula Blunt, deputy assistant secretary for Public and Indian Housing in his place. Neither Kendrick nor Blunt provided the numbers promised by their boss in May.

"The all-talk-and-no-action we heard today is the same thing we experienced with HUD here in Chicago last May," said Darrell Price of Chicago ADAPT. "We had a housing conference where Ms. Kendrick was also present and heard Mike Grice talk about how long he'd been waiting for his landlord to make his kitchen accessible. Ms. Kendrick talked to the landlord, but it's four months later, and the landlord hasn't done a thing. Mike testified at the forum today that he still can't use his kitchen, and once again the HUD folks said they'd look into it, but we aren't holding out any hope on the follow through."

James added, "And we won't listen to any more 'we feel your pain' speeches from HUD and other officials in suits while our brothers and sisters are stuck in nursing homes and other institutions because there is no affordable, accessible housing in their communities. We're done with promises...we want action!" ●



Eleanor Smith, of Atlanta, testifies during the forum.

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Hiring People with Disabilities –

Right Business Decision – Right Overall Decision

“It’s not charity.
It’s just good
business sense.”



Al Blackwelder

“What we have found is they become breadwinners, taxpayers, contributing members in the community, as well as colleagues.”

Business leaders were expecting to hear an encouraging message at the 2007 Making a Difference Discovery Day, but probably not that one. Keynote speaker Al Blackwelder, Chief Operating Officer, Emory Crawford Long Hospital (ECLH), cut right to the bottom line logic of hiring persons with disabilities.

“This has been extremely successful for us; successful in a business sense. We are reducing costs and we have high quality employees,”

Blackwelder said of the Project Search program that was implemented at ECLH three years ago.

Instead of hiring (for example) 10 medical professionals whose job descriptions also require them to perform

tasks such as stocking carts, Blackwelder explained that ECLH might carve those tasks out of existing positions and assign them to a new job position that can be filled by a person who has a developmental disability. The hospital then only has to fund nine medical positions and one entry-level job. But, he added, the cost savings is almost a fringe benefit of the huge success story of Project Search.

“What we have found is they become breadwinners, taxpayers, contributing members in the community, as well as colleagues.”

The seventh annual Making a Difference

Discovery Day was held September 27 at The Home Depot corporate headquarters in Atlanta. Presented by the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), the half-day seminar was moderated by former CNN Anchor Bobbie Battista and was sponsored by The Home Depot, Southern Company, SunTrust Banks, Inc. and InterContinental Hotels Group. The purpose of the annual event is to help corporate executives and human resource managers discover the gifts, talents and skills that people with disabilities can contribute to the workplace.

“We’ve learned first hand of the great rewards and benefits of hiring people with disabilities,” offered Gloria Johnson-Goins, vice president of Inclusion and Diversity, The Home Depot. “Their success is part of our outreach to be inclusive as we grow our family of 355,000 associates in the United States, Canada, Mexico and China. Associates with disabilities have been making a difference since the company was founded in 1978. We’re proud of our associates and very pleased to recognize them.”

The 100+ Discovery Day attendees included a mix of corporate hiring managers, social service agency representatives, employment trainers and persons with disabilities.

“Every year more and more people find out about Discovery Day and want to attend. Our outreach to the business community is starting to pay off,” revealed GCDD Public Information Director Valerie Meadows Suber, who organized the event.

“Myth or fact?”

“Myth or fact?” queried Katherine McCary, vice president, SunTrust Banks, Inc., as she addressed the group. “Hiring employees with disabilities slightly increases workers compensation insurance rates.”

There was a moment of silence, followed by a smattering of responses from the audience.



Katherine McCary

“We’ve learned first hand of the great rewards and benefits of hiring people with disabilities.”

“Myth,” they said.

“Employees with disabilities have the same absentee rate as employees without disabilities.”

“Fact,” more joined in.

As McCary continued with the litany, the audience became more emboldened, and by their responses, they continued to demonstrate their knowledge that employees with disabilities: are able to meet or exceed job expectations; are capable of getting their own transportation to and from work; usually require no special accommodations; and are no more accident-prone than other employees.

McCary also pointed out that, from a marketing perspective, persons with disabilities should not be overlooked.

“In 2006 the annual aggregate spending of people with disabilities in the US was estimated at \$1 trillion; \$3 trillion with friends and family.”

“In 2006 the annual aggregate spending of people with disabilities in the US was estimated at \$1 trillion; \$3 trillion with friends and family. Persons with disabilities represent \$220 billion in discretionary spending. That’s larger than the teen market.”

Discovery Day attendees also learned how they can dip into this virtually untapped job pool. Barbara Height, senior manager of Community Relations, Booz Allen Hamilton, encouraged hiring managers to consider the Emerging Leaders internship and leadership development program for college students with disabilities.

“For students, an internship is a critical first step in career development,” outlined Height.

“They can explore various aspects of their identity, gain new skills and apply their knowledge.”

Diane Prindle, of Briggs and Associates, explained how Project Search, which provides training and jobs for high school students and adults with developmental disabilities, got started and has grown in the Atlanta area.

“Three years ago there was nobody in the program. Today there are 60 individuals in Project Search. We are growing in a fabulous way.”

The Edge is another program that offers assistance to persons with disabilities by offering them resources to start their own businesses.

“Judy Lassiter came to us with a dream to take her homemade baby blankets and quilts to the marketplace,” said Patricia Harris, The Edge’s executive director. “She was born with a developmental disability. We helped her get a coach, get to the marketplace, and she is able to earn a living.”

Employment First Georgia is another resource offering a guide through the maze of the employment market, for both prospective employees and employers.

“We’re not a service providing entity, we are a connecting entity. We’re here as a resource to you employers, for people to work in your environment,” explained Rich O. Toscano.

Discovery Day participants also opened up a discussion about the “hidden” disabilities that are associated with mental illness and brain trauma. While federal law has come a long way to open doors to persons with physical disabilities, there was overwhelming agreement that those with cognitive disabilities are still misunderstood in general, and overwhelmingly overlooked in the job market.

“If they can see it, it exists,” said Glen Smith, referring to his struggles with both health issues and societal misunderstanding since sustaining a brain injury 10 years ago.

Smith, who lost his home construction business after he was injured, was also abandoned by his family, and became homeless. He eventually found healing and motivation, inspired by his children, to get his life back. With help from The Edge program, he was able to start a new business as a home inspector, and is now writing a book on the events of his life over the past decade.



Diane Prindle

“Three years ago there was **nobody** in the program. **Today** there are **sixty individuals** in Project Search. We are growing in a **fabulous** way.”



“When I was a businessman, I thought people with brain injuries were retarded or on drugs,” Smith revealed. Then the unthinkable happened to him. “I was going to take my life, but a friend called and said, ‘What about your kids?’ My love for my kids kept me going.”

“If you have a hidden disability, people want you to prove [you have a disability]. They think you’re lazy. We have the same goals, aspirations and dreams as everybody else. Please keep that in mind when you’re hiring,” said Tameeka Hunter, disability service specialist, Georgia Institute of Technology, who considers herself a “triple-minority,” as an African American woman with cerebral palsy.

One of the meeting attendees, Catherine Corbin, of Middle Georgia Consortium, Inc., attended the event to get ideas for her Warner Robins employment training agency.

“I came here to get the resources I know will help me help students get higher learning, and to take resources back to the community for employers to hire persons with disabilities,” she said. “I must be more prepared to help persons in the community who hire people with disabilities. I was especially impressed with the Project Search program and with the Emerging Leaders initiative. I want to find out more information and take it back to my community.”

While Discovery Day provided a wealth of resources to employment advisers like Corbin, organizers were also hopeful that mainstream hiring managers heard the event’s main message.

“Many studies show people with disabilities have a much longer term of employment, are highly dependable, and are terrific employees.”

“Over the years, I have done a lot of work relative to accommodation with people with disabilities who travel,” said Vicki Gordon, senior vice president, Corporate Affairs America’s Region, InterContinental Hotels Group. “Discovery Day seemed to be something that made sense for our company to be involved with. There’s a real struggle to find talent for our businesses. People with disabilities so often are unemployed or underemployed. Many studies show people with



Eric Jacobson

“Don’t let this opportunity pass you up so you end up where you were yesterday instead of where you need to be tomorrow.”

disabilities have a much longer term of employment, are highly dependable, and are terrific employees.”

Discovery Day revealed one success story after another. COO Blackwelder told of Maurice, an anesthesia technician assistant, who hugs his fellow Anesthesiology Operating Room employees each morning. Wade Stooksbury, Quality Improvement Manager, Star Choices, talked about Robert, who has become more independent since going to work at the local car dealership in Macon.

“He’s a regular, said Stooksbury, describing Robert’s relationships with coworkers and fellow bus passengers. “Like on the television show, *Cheers*, everybody knows [Robert’s] name.”

“I would encourage any employer to take a serious look at hiring someone with disabilities,” said Gordon. “It can have an amazing ripple effect. People who work directly with people with disabilities – it expands their horizons. It helps us all understand more about inclusion and diversity.”

“Either you get it or you don’t,” GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson challenged the Discovery Day participants, quoting one of Dr. Phil McGraw’s life laws. “I hope today you become one of the people who get it. Don’t let this opportunity pass you up so you end up where you were yesterday instead of where you need to be tomorrow.”

Blackwelder perhaps provided the ultimate summarization of the day’s message. “What we started was good business, but it also has benefits, such as a positive esprit de corps. The bottom line is it’s the right business thing to do; it is the overall right thing to do.” ●

Project Search – Working with the Best of the Best

by Carmel G. Hearn

Matching the right person with the right job is what both employers and employees want. But finding that perfect match isn't always possible. Even in the best of situations, an employee may find some aspects of the job unappealing. As a result, he might give minimal attention to that part of his position or may avoid it altogether.

But what if someone took that part of the job away from the employee, and gave it to another employee who would perform it with an exciting attitude, in an exemplary manner? That is exactly what is happening right here in Georgia, as a result of Project Search.

Project Search is a program that provides job matching and training for adults and high school seniors with disabilities. These are not the simple tasks one might expect. They are challenging positions in appealing industry sectors such as healthcare and banking. While the employee may have certain physical or cognitive disabilities, the position is matched to their abilities, and they perform competently, and more often, exceptionally, in the job.

"Project Search breaks through stereotypes. These employees are in there working with the best of the best. It totally levels the playing field," explained Jennifer Briggs, president and CEO of Briggs & Associates. "As you look at it, you get it. You truly see that when each person's talent is called for, it works like music."

"Project Search breaks through stereotypes. These employees are in there working with the best of the best."

Briggs & Associates, an Atlanta-based company that develops "non-traditional" employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities, helped bring Project Search to Georgia (from Cincinnati, Ohio, where it originated) three years ago. Other collaborators included the Fulton County School System, the Georgia Department of Human Resources and the Georgia Department of



Maurice Goodwine has been employed as an Anesthesia Technician Assistant at Emory Crawford Long Hospital in Atlanta for three years.

Labor-Rehabilitation Services. The program was launched at Atlanta's Emory Crawford Long Hospital (ECLH).

"What [Briggs & Associates] wanted was classroom space and access to department managers," revealed Al Blackwelder, ECLH chief operating officer. "They wanted to carve new jobs out of existing job descriptions. The whole idea was to have an arrangement with the school system for high school seniors to go to school at Emory Crawford Long, where they would learn specific job functions in the hospital."

The key, according to Blackwelder, is to identify job functions, such as stocking carts, checking supplies and inventorying equipment that other employees often prioritize low on their list of things to do. The job tasks are then put in a new position and Project Search students receive intensive classroom training. When the students complete training, they are ready to enter the workforce, and are hired at a competitive salary.

"Project Search is not charity. It provided me with a solution to a problem that was cost-neutral or cost less. This was financially advantageous,"

Blackwelder added. "These students are better at these jobs than everybody else. They graduate from high school and have a paying job with benefits. They can do [the job] better and cheaper and faster than the more highly trained people who used to do these jobs."



Project Search training is also available to adults. Maurice Goodwine has been employed at ECLH as an anesthesia technician assistant for the past three years. A 1999 graduate of the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, Goodwine has profound hearing loss, and met the usual obstacles in the job market. He was led to the Project Search program by his career specialist at Briggs & Associates. Now, he loves his job stocking operating room carts, and his family and friends are equally proud of his accomplishments. "They feel it is a great opportunity for me to be gainfully employed and allows me to contribute to the community," said Goodwine.

The program at Emory Crawford Long Hospital was recently recognized by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). On September 26, Blackwelder, along with members of Briggs & Associates and others associated with Project Search, received the EEOC's 2007 Freedom to Compete Award in Washington, DC. The Freedom to Compete initiative is a national outreach, education and coalition-building campaign to emphasize the importance of providing free and unfettered access to employment opportunities for all individuals. Its central theme is that employees and applicants deserve the opportunity to compete on a level playing field and advance in the workplace as far as their talents and abilities will take them, without regard to discriminatory barriers based on race,

color, gender, religion, national origin, age or disability. Emory Crawford Long is one of five organizations this year, and the only one in the Southeast, to win a national award from the EEOC for its program to train and hire high school graduates and adults with developmental disabilities and integrate them into a busy hospital workplace.

"It is quite an honor to receive this national recognition for our Project Search program," said Blackwelder. "This program and its employees have truly enhanced so many departments in the hospital, not only from a productivity standpoint, but also from a morale standpoint."

Emory Crawford Long may have been the first, but is not the only metro-Atlanta area agency in the Project Search program. North Fulton Regional Hospital, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Gwinnett Medical, Piedmont Hospital, SunTrust Bank, Atlanta Medical, Emory University, Wesley Woods and several school systems are also participating in the program. Organizers are now looking to expand the programs into new sectors, including law firms, the insurance industry and more college campuses.

Project Search is also expanding into other parts of the state. The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) has recently launched a five-year plan to take Project Search into at least 10 new areas.

"It's a real win-win situation for everybody," commented Dottie Adams, individual and family supports director for GCDD. "Project Search looks for complex jobs for people. They're somewhat repetitive, but not easy tasks. These people are making \$10-\$17 per hour to do complicated work."

Adams is spearheading GCDD's Project Search Georgia expansion plan. She says the first program may be in place in Hall County as early as 2008. She hopes to start up as many as two programs per year, in both rural and urban areas. In addition to the exemplary job matching Project Search provides, she credits the program with populating a workforce that reflects community demographics.

"When a parent brings a child with a disability to a hospital for treatment, they can see people with disabilities working and it gives them hope for their child's future." Adams explained. "They [Project Search employees] are good ambassadors."

Project Search has enriched the lives of the individuals in the program, yet has had a much broader effect that cannot be ignored. "What Project Search has done is deliver our mission, that anyone who has the desire has the ability to be successful in the workplace," said Briggs. "The community is not whole until all members are valued." ●

"...it is a great opportunity for me to be gainfully employed and allows me to contribute to the community."

StraightTalk

A JOURNEY TO: Homeownership and Independence

By Anthony Fuller

Four years ago this April, I bought my very first house, where I still live. Before that I had lived in an apartment or a group home. Seven years ago, on September 5, 2000, I started my job as a shredder technician. This decision led me to a path that enabled me to purchase my home. I remember it like it was yesterday.

I was born with a hearing impairment and with very little sight. Legally, I am blind. I do not like to be labeled, though. I feel I am very independent. Still, I know the challenges all too well of living in a “hearing” and “seeing” world. The system has not always treated me well. Back in the ‘60s when I was growing up, no one knew what to do with me. I’ve had to work very hard to get to where I am today.

With the guidance of my job coach, Liz Prioleau, Cobb-Douglas Community Services Board (Cobb CSB) and also a People First advocate, we, together, customized a job just for me. Liz has worked with me for the past seven years and works hard to always advocate for me. The harder I work and the more I can prove that I can do many things, the harder she seems to advocate for me.

Through Cobb CSB, I was able to receive a grant through Project Exceed to purchase a shredder. A Department of Labor grant, Project Exceed helps people with disabilities or substance abuse problems take advantage of customized employment services. They work very closely with CobbWorks, a center that provides job search, development and training services.



Fuller's work helped him save enough money to buy his own home.

I started shredding documents for Cobb CSB and generally worked 20 hours a week, but occasionally worked 40. I have since contracted my services to other businesses such as Bank of America and CobbWorks and am always looking for more business. I also perform shredding services for the church and for my sister, who is a real estate agent. I find it very rewarding being self-employed. Before that I worked at various places such as Kmart, TJ Maxx and as a janitor at South Cobb High School.

After three years of working, saving money and the guidance of many other individuals, I decided to purchase my first home. Through a local program in Marietta, I received first time homebuyer's education

“Owning a home and being self-employed has given me more confidence to do other things, such as setting up my own support systems within the community.”

so that I could understand the benefits of having and maintaining good credit. This program walked me through the process of purchasing a home.

Owning a home and being self-employed has given me more confidence to do other things, such as setting up my own support systems within the community. I take all my bills to Bank of America, where they write out each and every bill for me. I work closely with my doctors to keep track of my medications. These are all things I have set up for myself in order to be more independent. Also, in the next six months, I hope to establish a business plan. I am ready to move forward in my career.

Cobb CSB has not only allowed me to become a productive citizen – on my own terms – but has allowed me to grow as a person. The only other thing that would make me complete is to have a companion to share it all with.

For more information on Anthony's shredding services, please contact Liz Prioleau at 770.337.8317. ●

DARIUS GOES WEST

and Brings "Know About It" Program
to Schools Across the Country



By Nicole Galletta

THE STORY Stemming from friendship, a desire to promote change and awareness and an enthusiasm for life came the film, *Darius Goes West* (DGW).

The project started as an ordinary day consisting of a couple of friends discussing how they should go on a road trip to Los Angeles and visit the popular MTV show, *Pimp My Ride*. The two friends, Logan Smalley and Darius Weems, first met at Camp Reach when Smalley was a volunteer and Weems was just five years old. Weems, like some of the other campers, had Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), a terminal genetic disorder in which an individual is unable to produce dystrophin, a protein necessary for muscle strength and function. Boys are more susceptible to the disease. Despite living with DMD, eventually being confined to a wheelchair and losing his older brother to the same disease, Weems is positive and always full of life.

"Darius, an Athens native, never venturing out of his hometown, had talked about how cool it would be to have his wheelchair 'pimped' like all the cars on the show, *Pimp My Ride*", said Smalley.

Smalley, then an education major at the University of Georgia, and videography buff had recently attended the Cannes Film Festival in France and had seen an independent film made for under \$200, got excited and decided, "This is a once-in-a-lifetime trip, we've got to bring video cameras to capture this." And so the trip began.

THE DOCUMENTARY In the summer of 2005, Weems, Smalley and 10 other college-age friends headed west in a rented, wheelchair-accessible RV, armed with a video camera.

"For Darius, this truly was a trip of a lifetime, never having seen the mountains, the ocean or even crossed a state line," said Smalley, who would become the director of the film.

"The trip inspired me. It inspired me to see and experience more things," said Weems.

The 7,000-mile adventure to get Weems' wheelchair pimped would take three weeks, with plenty of opportunities to test wheelchair accessibility across the country, celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and raise awareness for DMD.

Wheelchair accessibility was surprisingly good in some areas of the country; however, in some areas where full accessibility was expected, it was not found.

"Carlsbad Cavern National Park in New Mexico was 100% accessible for Darius. The St. Louis Arch, however, was not. It had too many steps," said Smalley. "What's ironic is that Carlsbad is thousands of years old and was accessible and the Arch is less than 50 years old."

"On a scale from one to ten, I found accessibility at areas around the country to be a four. When we went to see the Grand Canyon, my friends had to pick me up in my wheelchair some of the way," said Weems.

THE PROGRAM The DGW school program, "Know About It" started to take form after teachers, principals and school officials approached Smalley at numerous film festivals where the film was being shown, inquiring how they could show the film in their schools.

In Cleveland, at the third or fourth festival, high school students from the greater Cleveland area came to view the film and were so inquisitive of Weems' story and how they could help that the Q&A lasted for three hours and had to be shut down. Members of the DGW crew received more than 150 emails after that viewing. In

Santa Barbara, after viewing the film, students from Santa Barbara Middle School chose *Darius Goes West* as their theme for their 60-mile bike ride fundraiser.

"I started thinking, this film could be appealing

"I started thinking, this film could be appealing to schools."



★ Darius ★
Goes West:
The Roll of His Life.
You may or may not
have heard about
this film
but you should certainly
"know about it".



to schools. It would not only allow students to learn something from a variety of subjects, but also promote awareness for DMD," said Smalley. "And with most of the DGW crew being education majors, it wouldn't be too tough of a challenge establishing a curriculum."

Barbara Smalley, Logan Smalley's mom and a big supporter of DGW throughout both the trip and the film festival tour, soon found herself taking a lead role in the "Know About It" program. An education major, but a writer by trade, she now directs the program full time, serving as the point person for schools to ensure teachers and students get the most out of the experience.

"This program is going to be extremely interactive," she said. "There will be an interactive Q&A section where students can go to the Web site and click on the most frequently asked questions and be able to view video of crew members answering the question. We will also have a T-shirt contest where students can send in pictures of themselves in interesting places doing great things wearing a DGW shirt. Any student can become a '13th crew member.'"

"Everyone knows about cancer, they should know about DMD."

"Everyone knows about cancer, they should know about DMD. My friends did something to help me by taking me on this trip. I hope this whole experience teaches kids to be more idealistic," said Weems.

The "Know About It" program, set to launch across the country and in Canada in mid to late October 2007, will be open to public and private schools, big and small. Middle or high school teachers will be able to rent a special edition of the film for \$25 and gain access to an entire curriculum online. Teachers will have a special login to access lesson plans and discussion questions. Students will have access to their own section allowing them to participate in forums with other students to trade reviews, discuss the lessons and learn how they can support Charley's Fund, a foundation that directs money to the researchers who show the most promise

of curing DMD. All DGW profits are donated to Charley's Fund.

"The school section is an empowering tool we can use to gather behind the cause of Charley's Fund. This section offers advice on how to have the best car wash and other fundraising tips, and how to screen the film as an open invitation like a film festival," explained Logan Smalley.

The curriculum applies topics from the film to almost every school subject.

"The middle and high school students have to learn about genetics anyway... the film uses Darius as a live example; it's not something borrowed," he said. "The doctor featured in the film even created the lesson plans for that subject."

For English class, students will learn about symbolism, plot and theme and will be able to discuss how the director and editor use these to move the movie forward. In social studies, students will learn about the disability rights movement and explore tolerance and diversity topics.

Thus far, through word-of-mouth only, 85 public and private schools around the country have signed up for the DGW "Know About It" program. The Smalleys even plan to expand the program in the future to offer it to churches and youth groups.

"My main hopes for 'Know About It' is that students can take valuable lessons from the program and can help raise money for Charley's Fund," said Barbara Smalley. "We will find a cure within a decade, if not sooner. The research is ready to go, there just isn't enough funding yet. All of this is Darius' dream."

Darius Goes West has won over 20 awards from the 25 film festivals and has fulfilled the requirements to be nominated for an Oscar! When asked what the most surprising thing about the project was, Logan Smalley replied, "How amazing the response has been. You're holed up in the editing room hoping it makes a difference, but you never really know. The response was enormous; we never thought it was going to be this big. The trip hasn't really stopped." ●

This program is going to be extremely **interactive.**

CONTACT

Teachers interested in the DGW "Know About It" program may contact Barbara Smalley at knowaboutit@gmail.com or call 706-613-7237. For more information on *Darius Goes West*, visit dariusgoeswest.com.

Tax Credit May Benefit Working Individuals with Disabilities & Their Families

By Richard Keeling, Senior Tax Analyst - Internal Revenue Service Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication (SPEC)



Richard Keeling is a Senior Tax Analyst in the Volunteer & Community Partnership area of the Wage & Investment Division of the IRS. His primary responsibility is working with the "Taxpayers with Disabilities" program. This program strives to provide more widespread access to tax information, free tax preparation and financial literacy and asset building to taxpayers with disabilities.

Many Americans with disabilities may not be aware of the valuable Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that can help lift them out of poverty. Approximately 20 percent of Americans live with some level of disability, and many of these people have first-hand experience with financial hardships. In fact, more than one-third of all adults with disabilities live in households with a total income of \$15,000 or less, while only 12 percent of adults without disabilities are in the same situation, according to a 2004 National Organization on Disability/Harris Poll. To help combat this crisis, the Internal Revenue Service partnered with the National Disability Institute to create the Real Economic Impact Tour. This initiative provides support to people with disabilities and their families through financial literacy programs. These programs educate taxpayers with disabilities about federal tax benefits like the EITC.

Enacted in 1975, the EITC is a credit for people who work, but do not earn high incomes. It has lifted millions of individuals and families above the poverty line. In 2006 alone, approximately 22 million taxpayers received more than \$43 billion as a result of the EITC. The IRS estimates that 20-25 percent of American taxpayers who qualify for the credit do not claim it. Many people may be unaware of the EITC or may not claim it simply because they don't know how to do so. Additionally, some individuals and families, such as those raising children with disabilities, don't realize there are special rules that may help them qualify for the EITC. For example, a qualifying child of any age who has a permanent disability can be claimed for the EITC, provided all other eligibility

"The IRS estimates that 20-25 percent of American taxpayers who qualify for the credit do not claim it."

requirements are met. This is the case even if the qualifying child also receives disability benefits.

There is also free assistance available for people with disabilities who cannot prepare their own tax returns. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help for low-to-moderate-

income taxpayers, which generally includes people who earn less than \$40,000 annually. Community organizations sponsor and train volunteers to prepare basic tax returns in cities across the country. These VITA sites are generally located in convenient locations such as community centers, libraries, schools and shopping malls. VITA volunteers provide taxpayers with the valuable tools and resources needed to learn more about the EITC and eligibility requirements.

The EITC is a refundable credit, which means it not only reduces the amount of taxes someone owes, but also results in a refund for many eligible taxpayers; a refund that can be as high as \$4,000. As a result – for taxpayers who qualify – the EITC can be another step toward financial security and asset development because it puts more money directly in the hands of the people who need it most.

To qualify for the EITC in 2007, workers with no children must have earned income of less than \$12,590. Taxpayers with one child must have earned income of less than \$33,241 to qualify. Finally, those taxpayers with two or more children must have less than \$37,783 in earned income to qualify for the EITC. Each of these limits is \$2,000 higher for married taxpayers filing a joint return.

The EITC does not count as income for determining eligibility for such benefits as Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, federally assisted housing or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. The amount of EITC does not count as a resource in the month received or the next month for Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Care Subsidies, Head Start or Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Nor does it count as a resource for nine months after the month of receipt for SSI and 12 months after the month of receipt for food stamps. Additionally, immigrants who are legally authorized to work may also claim the EITC.

Visit the IRS Web site, IRS.gov, to learn more about the EITC, eligibility, what constitutes earned income and how claiming this valuable credit can help taxpayers with disabilities. For more information on the REI Tour, visit reitour.org. ●

Preserving Income and Accumulating Assets Key to Achieving Independence

Build Assets with IDAs

By Janet M. Jordan, Home Buyer Education Coordinator for the Georgia Housing and Finance Authority's Housing Counseling Program

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are matched savings accounts that reward the consistent monthly savings of low to moderate income families and individuals who are working toward a high return asset such as a first home, post-secondary education or the development or growth of a small business. The purchase of other assets, such as cars, computers and assistive technology, are also options for some IDA programs. The savings incentives are provided through matching funds from public and private sources.

All IDA account holders receive financial management and asset-specific training. Assets and appropriate training provide benefits that income alone cannot provide. IDAs address the wealth gap and bring people who are willing to work and save into the financial mainstream.

More than 10,000 Americans are currently saving in an IDA in at least 250 communities. The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta is a long time supporter of IDA

IDAs have answered the question: "Can poor people save?" with a resounding

YES!

programs and has provided financial and administrative support for more than 500 participants since 1997, including youth and Latino IDA programs. Of the more than 200 successful home buyers who participated in the Homeownership IDA programs, none has experienced foreclosure. Georgia also has IDA programs in Augusta, Brunswick and Savannah.

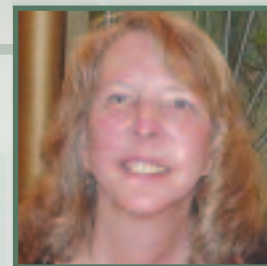
IDAs work! In a multi-state demonstration, more than \$800,000 was saved in more than 2000 IDA accounts and the poorest of the poor saved the most. Those at 50% of poverty or below saved 8% of their income, whereas those at 150% of poverty level saved

2%. IDAs have answered the question: "Can poor people save?" with a resounding YES!

IDA programs can be designed for special needs, such as assistive technology for individuals with disabilities, as long as the matched savings and financial literacy components are included. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs offers technical assistance for planning and implementation to collaborations wishing to start and manage an IDA program. The program design, as well as the savings goal, match ratio and permissible assets, can be tailored to the participants' needs. Purchased assets and the savings match must be planned for so that they can be excluded in the calculation of benefit limits for these special populations. Georgia has introduced legislation to address this problem for state benefit programs, and federal IDA savings matches are not counted as an asset for any federal benefit programs.

World Institute on Disability (WID) is a nonprofit public policy center dedicated to the promotion of independence and full inclusion in society of people with disabilities.

WID's Access to Assets (ATA) program provides training and technical assistance to asset building and disability organizations seeking to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in poverty reduction programs. In addition, ATA provides information and referral services to individuals with disabilities and conducts federal and state policy analysis on related issues. For more information on ATA's work with IDA programs, visit their Web site at www.wid.org. Other resources include the Corporation for Enterprise Development: www.cfed.org, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta: www.unitedwayatlanta.org and Assets for Independence: www.acf.hhs.gov/assetbuilding. ●



Janet M. Jordan is the Home Buyer Education Coordinator for the Georgia Housing and Finance Authority's Housing Counseling Program, administered by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). She is a National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) certified credit counselor, a certified housing counselor and has completed the United Way of America/ Corporation For Enterprise Development (CFED) training in Individual Development Account design and implementation. In addition to managing training and financial support for a statewide network of non-profit agencies to provide home buyer education, Jordan provides training for housing counseling certification and offers technical assistance for collaborations seeking to design IDA programs.

Learn more about IDAs and the EITC in "Searching for the American Dream" on page 22.

GCDD Honors

THOSE WHO *Make a Difference*

Positive contributions to the disability community were celebrated July 26 during the annual Making a Difference Awards Ceremony of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

The festive occasion, hosted by GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson, honored advocates, legislators, media professionals and council members whose work helped improve the lives of Georgians with disabilities and featured a live performance by pianist David Trivett (see sidebar, page 24), as well as a short video that highlighted the activities at this year's Disability Day at the Capitol.

"The Council could not be so successful without some of the individuals we will be recognizing here tonight," Jacobson said. "GCDD finds it important and necessary to acknowledge their commitment and contributions, and we are happy to do so each summer during this event."

GCDD Chair Tom Seegmueller agreed. "As we celebrate and give honor tonight to people and organizations, let us be reminded there is no end to what can be accomplished if individuals, family members, providers, advocates and state agencies work together as equal partners to create change," he said.

LEGISLATIVE AWARDS

GCDD honored both a Georgia state senator and state representative during the ceremony. "Senator Renee Unterman (R-Loganville) has supported the Unlock the Waiting List! campaign and has carried the interests of the community of people with developmental disabilities in her role as vice-chairperson of the Health and Human Services Committee, and on Senate Appropriations. With this legislative advocacy award, we gratefully acknowledge Senator Unterman's support of the Unlock the Waiting List! campaign," explained GCDD Deputy Director Pat Nobbie.

Though Unterman was unable to attend the ceremony, she was touched by the award. "It's very



Dawn Alford, left, praised Rep. Tim Bearden for his work on HB366.

humbling. I know what it's like to be a mother with a child with special needs.

"Disability issues have always been important. I've been a nurse and social worker through my career, and I know what a difficult time people with disabilities have. Unfortunately, in the legislature, all the money is in one pot, so it puts special needs against roads. It's a balancing act," she said.

Rep. Tim Bearden (R-Carrollton) was also recognized for supporting another important disability issue – service animals. H.B. 366 was introduced to provide service animal trainers the same access to public spaces as people with disabilities who employed the dogs, so the animals could be trained properly. GCDD Advisory Council Member Dawn Alford presented the award.

"HB 366 started out as a very simple piece of legislation. Before the final bell on Day 40 of the session, HB 366 had 19 actions taken upon it – it ended up with the Senate and House both insisting on their positions, after which a conference committee was appointed. The bill finally emerged unscathed, approved in the House at 11:43 PM on Day 40, as the piece of legislation it started out to be – equal access for persons training dogs to assist people with disabilities. Rep. Tim Bearden was the primary sponsor of this piece of legislation, and for his patience, faith and tenacity, the Governor's Council on Developmental

“...let us be reminded there is no end to what can be accomplished if individuals, family members, providers, advocates and state agencies work together as equal partners to create change.”

Disabilities recognizes and thanks him for seeing the bill through in its intended form," Alford explained.

Bearden, who was unable to attend the ceremony, was honored to receive the award. "I can't take the credit. People really spoke up and did a lot of hard work to get this bill through. There were a lot of people behind the scenes pushing the envelope in this, like the folks at Southeast Dog Breeders," he said. "It was a very good cause, and something we needed to do in Georgia."

OUTSTANDING MEDIA PROFESSIONALISM AWARDS

This year, the stories of people with disabilities were so well covered that GCDD bestowed three awards for outstanding media professionalism.

GCDD Public Information Director and Editor in Chief of *Making a Difference* magazine Valerie Meadows Suber described the excellence of the journalistic outlets that were recognized. "I had the opportunity to talk with the individuals who will accept tonight's media honors. It struck me that without exception, each had very similar reactions upon hearing news of the award. It was surprise. Surprise because they considered their response to GCDD's media outreach to be a simple matter of good, solid journalism. For them, an award was not the least bit expected. Although, we insist it is well deserved," she explained.

"I look at the stories I write as just doing my job, so it was nice to be honored for doing my job."

The first award was bestowed on Alyssa Abkowitz, for her work with *Creative Loafing*. "I came in contact with Alyssa when she called me one day to get some information on the Katie Beckett Waiver issue. I found her to be smart, interested in asking the right questions, and responsible when reporting the information she collected," said Nobbie, who presented the award.

"I thank the council for this wonderful honor," Abkowitz said. I've always liked to look for the unique

and different stories out there that aren't covered. I look at the stories I write as just doing my job, so it was nice to be honored for doing my job."

The second media outlet to be honored was the *Waycross Journal Herald*. Deirdre O'Brien, president of the ARC of Georgia, explained why the newspaper was receiving the award. "I know enough about the media business to know when breaking news occurs, all other news coverage takes a back seat. But something different happened in Waycross when a devastating brush fire erupted this spring. It would not have been a shift in industry standard to commit all resources to that huge fire," she said.

Despite the fire, the *Waycross Journal Herald* still covered GCDD's media roundtable and public briefing, which helps GCDD connect with families and communities across the state. "We honor the *Waycross Journal Herald* for setting a new standard," O'Brien said.

Myra Thrift, city editor and family page editor for the *Waycross* newspaper accepted the award. "We were flooded. It was a major event, and we have a lot of people here with disabilities. We want to do what's best for the community. That's just part of our job," she explained.

The final media professionalism award was granted to *Georgia Trend* magazine for two articles it published recently.

Jane Grillo, one of the members of GCDD's first Organizing Institute, presented the award. "Since our son Joey was born and diagnosed with cerebral palsy, I have learned how to advocate for important issues through the media. I have witnessed firsthand how important media coverage of the disability community can be.



Georgia Trend, the Waycross Journal Herald and Creative Loafing all included articles on disability this year.



Top Photo: Bruce Lindemann accepts the Cunningham award from Eric Jacobson.

Bottom Photo: Nicole Acevedo

GCDD Awards continued from page 19

"Without a doubt two articles published by Georgia Trend this past year have accomplished a great deal. "True Believers," published in the February issue, by my husband, Jerry Grillo, relates the story of three grassroots advocates. The other story, "Breaking Down the Last Barriers," published in June, written by Michelle Cohen Marill, is a comprehensive look at employment," she said.

Georgia Trend Editor Susan Percy accepted on behalf of the magazine. "We're absolutely delighted, and frankly it's a very special award. That people thought we hit the mark with the story was very gratifying. One of our top editors, Jerry Grillo, has a child with special needs. He helped open our eyes to the fact there are some areas that don't get enough attention. We're in a good position to cover those areas," she said.

ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Self-advocates often make the most impact on legislators, and this year's Advocate of the Year recipient spent a lot of time at the Capitol on behalf of herself and others with disabilities.

GCDD Governance Committee Chairperson Tameeka Hunter bestowed the award. "Paulette Acevedo represents the next generation of advocates for people with developmental disabilities. She initially became involved in supporting the Unlock the Waiting List! campaign during the 2006 session and proved to be a valuable asset in getting volunteer involvement. She was able to engage fellow GSU students to come to the Capitol to complete surveys with legislators. Paulette recruited 35 volunteers who worked over 265 hours for the Unlock campaign.

"Paulette has an attitude of hard work and enthusiasm, and she has a love for learning. Paulette's dedication to statewide advocacy efforts makes her a very deserving recipient of this award," Hunter said.

Acevedo, who is interning in Washington, D.C., was unable to attend the ceremony, but her sisters, Nicole and Hane Acevedo, accepted the award on her behalf.

CARL ANTHONY CUNNINGHAM AWARD

"Three years ago, GCDD added an award that recognizes one of its own for outstanding contributions during the year. The award is named after Carl Cunningham, who exhibited all the traits of leadership," explained GCDD Executive Director Jacobson.

"Tonight we present the C. Anthony Cunningham Leadership Award to Bruce Lindemann, chair of the Council's finance committee," revealed Chairperson Seegmueller.

Lindemann worked hard this year, devising a way for people to better understand GCDD's financial data; helping the staff develop financial policies; and, supporting the staff and council during the recent audit.

Lindemann, whose daughter has developmental disabilities, was surprised to receive the award. "I did what I was asked to do. That's something I try to do every day - I try to relate to audiences and effectively communicate my message," he said. ●

Living and Working Together: A Profile of Pianist David Trivett

By Valerie Meadows Suber

"Will you please join me in welcoming David Trivett!"

The Governor's Council On Developmental Disabilities' (GCDD) Individual and Family Support Director Dottie Adams introduced the evening's musical interlude to a gathering of about 100 guests at the annual Making A Difference Awards ceremony held at the Atlanta Downtown Renaissance Hotel in July. Warm applause ushered in Atlanta-born pianist David Trivett's masterful performance. His flowing renditions of *Georgia On My Mind* and *Midnight Train To Georgia* aptly punctuated the program's "State of Georgia" theme.

Trivett's repertoire is such that he can change to new musical compositions as quickly as song titles are called out, as well as play whatever he hears. He is all too obliging when asked to provide a sampling of his music, "What would you like me to play?" Do you want to hear *Clowns* or *People Who Need People* or church music like *Amazing Grace*?" he asks.

Trivett, now 51, was a child prodigy. At the age of six, he began to play the piano naturally by ear, which prompted his mom Betty Trivett, a music teacher, to start his formal lessons. In the sixth grade at Dunairé



Betty and David Trivett

Trivett played for a crowd of about 100.

Elementary School in Dekalb County, he provided musical accompaniment during school events. At Lithonia High School, he was the choir's pianist, and the first at the school to win regional competitions in piano.

Struck by his undeniable talent, Trivett's mother coached him on technique, "David was so interested in playing that I encouraged him to do it right. I wanted him to be highly trained and skilled," she explained. It worked. After years of study under a series of devoted pianists, he is a virtuoso with a penchant for performance.

In 1978 Trivett moved to southern Mississippi where he lived for 23 years as he traveled throughout the United States, playing piano for The Miracles, a choir made up of individuals with disabilities. The group performed for audiences at *The Hour of Power*, the *700 Club* and the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, DC. He frequently soloed. Eventually Trivett made his home in New Orleans until he returned to Atlanta two years ago when Hurricane Katrina displaced him. He performs locally at churches and special events.

Asperger's Syndrome (AS) was not commonly understood when Trivett was growing up, so his AS diagnosis came late in life. AS is considered to be a neurobiological "autism-like" disorder marked by significant deficiencies encompassing impairment in social, occupational and communication behaviors often resulting in stereotypes and gross misdiagnosis. A person with AS can be found to also have exceptional skills or talents in a particular area. "David has done well with his music, and it is his one real talent, but had we known earlier about the Asperger's, we could have understood how to teach him to function better in other areas where he still needs supports," Betty Trivett said. In spite of the deft manipulation of his fingers across piano keys, David Trivett has difficulty negotiating a door key into its keyhole. Although quite conversant, long-term friendships with peers remain elusive, and he requires help with activities such as cooking.

What David and Betty Trivett want most is for him to continue to perform and develop and to study under an experienced piano instructor who will work with his considerable music abilities while understanding his



disabilities. He currently waits for a Medicaid waiver, which will allow him to once again live independently while pursuing his goals.

The night in July was GCDD's opportunity to honor the contributions of legislators, media professionals and disability advocates. It was the time for awards, recognition and appreciation. Perhaps inclusion of Trivett's interpretation of the official state song would have particularly pleased another pianist with a disability, the singer who popularized *Georgia On My Mind*, the late Ray Charles. Ever the enthusiast, Trivett's encore was a medley of old standards, theme songs from Broadway hits and other popular favorites, following the ceremony.

The richness of David Trivett's music set the right tone for the occasion; touched a chord in the audience and offered a finale that brought the crowd to its feet in loving approval, eliciting customary yelps, whistles and the added gratitude of a sustained ovation. "Bravo, David!" ●

David was so interested in playing that I encouraged him to do it right. I wanted him to be highly trained and skilled.

Searching for *THE* American Dream

Like other Americans, people with disabilities dream of living in a home of their choice, having a fulfilling career and socializing with friends.

Now achieving the American dream can be a reality for Georgians with disabilities thanks to a new initiative being undertaken by the National Disability Institute, a nonprofit organization that focuses on the advancement of the employment and economic status of Americans with disabilities; and Credit-Able, Georgia's alternative financing program for assistive technology. The program is funded through the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

"If we ADDRESS POVERTY from different points, we can really INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES for people with disabilities to be CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS of their communities."

"From GCDD's perspective, this is THE project we've been searching for that ties all our 'real' areas (real homes, real careers, real learning, real supports and real influence) together. People with disabilities predominantly live in a state of poverty. If we address poverty from different points, we can really increase opportunities for people with disabilities to be contributing members of their communities," explained GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson.

"Asset building helps people with their self-concept and status in the community, improves choices in where they live and the social opportunities they may have. These are all opportunities that make up the American Dream.

You have more control over your life than you would being dependent on the government as your source of major income," explained National Disability Institute Executive Director Michael Morris.

The project, called, "the Asset Alliance of Georgia," has three goals:

1. Develop an agenda focusing on three key public policy areas: income preservation, asset accumulation and financial education.
2. Build the capacity of organizations that are currently helping low income workers advance their economic status to become more inclusive of individuals with disabilities.
3. Provide continuing education for individuals with disabilities around issues related to savings and asset development, while educating financial institutions and Individual Development Account (IDA) providers about the most effective strategies to reach and serve people with disabilities.



The brain child of Morris and Jackie Wilks-Weathers (pictured above), director of Credit-Able, the Asset Alliance of Georgia brings nonprofit, private and governmental agencies together to help people with disabilities develop assets and



rise out of poverty, allowing them to save money to purchase a home, acquire assistive technology, further their education or start their own business.

“There are all these generic organizations that have the ability to help people advance where they are economically, but they’re not working together. We want to build the capacity of these organizations to be more inclusive to people with disabilities,” Wilks-Weathers said. “How can we collectively support people?”

Morris, who helped Florida set up a similar program two years ago, suggested Georgia start with a statewide asset development summit. The first planning committee meeting to arrange the Georgia summit drew more than 35 people from over 20 nonprofit, governmental and private organizations.

He explained the need for a statewide summit on the issue. “People focused on asset building, like financial institutions, governments and community organizations know little about how to reach people with disabilities and help them get out of poverty. People with disabilities, providers and agencies don’t know how to create partnerships to help advance their self-sufficiency,” Morris said.

A summit would bring together these different groups so they could learn about each other and determine how they could work together to better serve the needs of people with disabilities who live in poverty. The group hopes to host the summit next spring or summer.

INCOME PRESERVATION Some assistance efforts are already in the works. John Stubbs, the Atlanta territory manager for Stakeholder Partnerships Education and Communications for the Wage and Investment

Division of the Internal Revenue Service oversees the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program in Georgia. This program offers free tax assistance for people with low to moderate incomes.

VITA sites throughout Georgia are open from January through April, and all of them will help people with disabilities prepare their taxes. However, this year Stubbs hopes to add two sites that specifically serve the disability

community. “People with disabilities have very unique tax needs. One of their concerns is the impact their income could have on their benefits. This is an underserved population my organization is trying to reach,” Stubbs said.

Carter Elliott, manager of the Prosperity Campaign, which is a part of the Atlanta Food Bank, is working with Stubbs to create the two disability sites. “Our first step at the VITA sites is to determine that everyone is receiving the economic supports they’re eligible for. The two biggest supports are the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and food stamps. We have software to help screen people for various benefits,” he explained.

Stubbs describes the EITC as the largest poverty-fighting tool in the U.S., but not everyone knows about the credit or takes advantage of it. The VITA sites would help change that.

U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.) has launched an inquiry into why more Americans are not taking advantage of the EITC. He estimates in his district alone, more than 20,000 residents are eligible for the credit, but don’t apply for it.

“People with disabilities have very unique tax needs. One of their concerns is the impact their income could have on their benefits.”



Steering Committee Participants:

Atlanta Micro Fund • Bobby Dodd Institute • Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Commission • Credit-Able • CU of Georgia • FDIC • Georgia Department of Community Affairs • Georgia Department of Labor/Tools for Life • Georgia Consortium for Personal Financial Literacy • Georgia Office of Developmental Disabilities • Georgia Microenterprise Network • Goodwill of North Georgia • Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities • IRS • IRS/SPEC • National Disability Institute • Partnerships for Success • Prosperity Campaign – Atlanta Community Food Bank • Reynoldstown Revitalization Corp. • Shepherd Center • Statewide Independent Living Council • Social Security • SunTrust Bank • Tommy Nobis Center



“Poor and moderate income families need all the help they can get today. That is why we must make sure that we place every possible tool in the hands of mothers and fathers who are struggling to support their families. I want to do what I can to make a difference in their lives,” Lewis said.

“...we must make sure that we place every possible tool in the hands of mothers and fathers who are struggling to support their families.”

In tax year 2007, low income families could qualify for between \$428 and \$4716 in EITC, depending on income and number of children, lowering their federal tax liability, which could possibly result in a tax refund.

Another way to help preserve income for working Georgians with disabilities is through benefits navigation, which helps people with disabilities understand the impact working can potentially have on their government benefits.

Curtis Rogers is the co-director of the Benefits Navigator program in Georgia. “When a person gets SSI (Supplemental Security Income), Medicaid or assistance through waiver programs, they can only have \$2000 in their checking or savings account. To meet that financial requirement for assistance makes it hard to save for a home, car or anything an average person without a disability would save for,” he explained.

“I help people with disabilities understand the rules and give them accurate information about what they can and can't have in terms of resources so they can make informed decisions

how to proceed with work," he said.

One improvement in this area is the Medicaid Buy In program that was passed by the Georgia legislature this year, according to Rogers. This program would allow working people with disabilities who make more than the allowed cap of \$2000 to pay a small premium to Medicaid and be able to keep their Medicaid services.

Rogers sees his organization fitting well with the Asset Alliance of Georgia. "There are a lot of rules that can keep a person stuck in one place for a long time, if you don't know how to use the rules. I would like to see people with disabilities use the system to move forward, instead of the system holding them in one spot," he said.

ASSET ACCUMULATION Individual Development Account (IDA) providers are already established throughout the country to help people rise out of poverty. IDAs allow people to save for three purposes: to buy a home, start a business or continue their education. Every dollar a person saves is matched by federal and private dollars. Georgia has nine organizations throughout the state that administer IDA accounts, which match up to a ratio of 5:1, depending on what the people are saving for and where they live.

During his work in Florida, Morris negotiated with IDA providers to set aside some funds for people with disabilities who are working and would qualify, and he hopes to continue that work in Georgia. "It's another incentive for people to work but also to save and build assets," he said.

"It's another incentive for people to work but also to save and build assets."

Elliott suggested linking the VITA sites with the IDA providers, so taxpayers with disabilities who are receiving a tax refund could put it immediately into an IDA account.

People with disabilities who are interested in starting their own business immediately can turn to Georgia's Microenterprise Network for business loans and information. Grace Fricks is the president and CEO of Appalachian Community

Enterprises, a loan program for microenterprises in north Georgia.

"A microenterprise is defined as a business with five or fewer employees that can generally start up for \$35,000 or less," Fricks said.

Fricks has loaned money to a number of people with disabilities to help them launch their businesses. Some just want a little extra money, while others have defined business plans and want to build wealth.

"We've got a gentleman on SSDI (Social Security Disability Income) who wants to keep his income at a certain level. He borrows from us to buy items wholesale, then sells the items at a flea market. He pays us back the loan; the rest is income to him. Then he'll reborrow from us. He's been our customer for three years," she said. While this customer has an informal business, Appalachian Community Enterprises also funds more formal new businesses, such as a cleaning business a woman in Toccoa started with the help of her service provider and a souvenir shop two women opened in Helen.

Fricks' organization offers business planning courses through North Georgia College and State University twice a year and can refer their customers to other small business development centers for support.

She also suggests people with disabilities who wish to start their own business start with their state Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor. "If people want to work for themselves, they can apply for what's called a self-employment plan. They then work with a VR counselor who helps them determine whether self-employment is appropriate for them and hook them up with a provider to help them create a



“So much of why people with disabilities have been unable to get market rate loans is their history of not having ANY credit.”

business plan,” she said. In some cases, VR may even help fund the business start up.

People with disabilities can also build assets through loan guarantees from Credit-Able. Funded through the Georgia Department of Labor’s Tools for Life program, Credit-Able helps negotiate and guarantee loans for people with disabilities to acquire assistive technology devices, as well as to pay for home and vehicle modifications.

Joy Kniskern, assistive technology service director at the Department of Labor, said, “Assistive technology helps people become more included in their communities, education, jobs and leisure activities.”

Kniskern’s department is tasked with helping Georgians acquire assistive devices through alternative financing programs, such as Credit-Able. The department funds Credit-Able through a federal grant and matching funds from public and private sources.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION People who currently participate in IDA programs often must complete financial education courses as part of the process. The Georgia Microenterprise Network also offers financial classes.

One of the goals of the Asset Alliance of Georgia is to connect people with disabilities to additional financial education opportunities.

A potential way to do that would be to offer information and registration for financial classes at the VITA sites.

Pat Puckett, executive director of the Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia attended the first planning meeting.

“There are eight centers for independent living across the state. They could get involved with the financial literacy training for sure. We certainly can help with access to folks

who need assistance and who are interested in developing their assets and self-employment, she said.

“So much of why people with disabilities have been unable to get market rate loans is their history of not having ANY credit,” she said. Financial literacy programs would let people know how to establish credit in order to qualify for loans, as well as learn how to budget and save money.

Wilks-Weathers said the project is considering rolling out the FDIC’s Money Smart programs. “We want to provide free financial literacy courses. Everyone benefits from ongoing financial education,” she said.

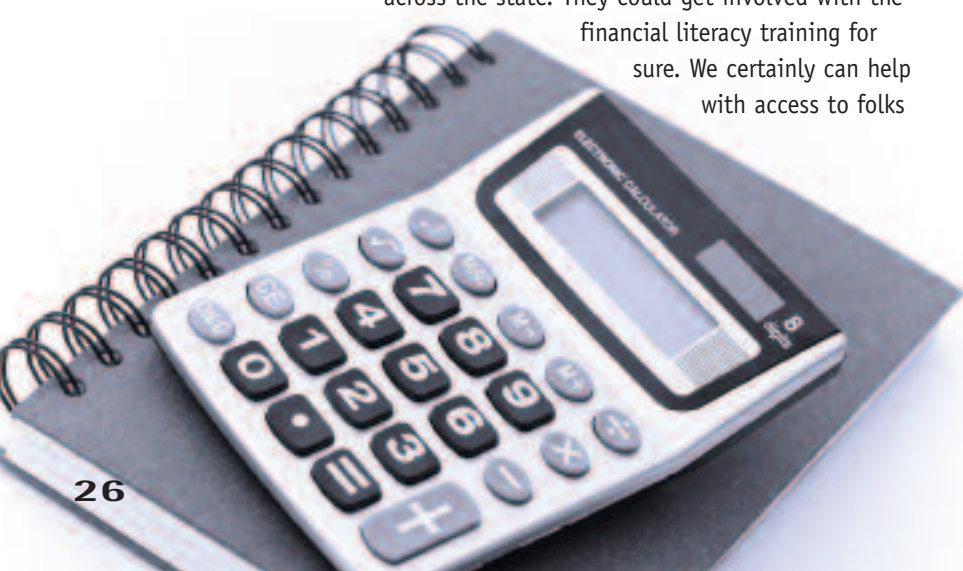
LOOKING AHEAD Morris and Wilks-Weathers have identified a number of organizations within Georgia that help people with low incomes build assets, but noted the organizations are not currently working in conjunction with each other. They hope to educate these organizations on how they can better reach people with disabilities, who are three times more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities.

Additionally, the project hopes to produce an “Asset Development Tool Kit” that community groups, state agencies and nonprofits can use to help people with disabilities and their families rise out of poverty.

Ultimately, project organizers want to improve the economic status of people with disabilities through increased use of work incentives and asset building strategies and improved knowledge about budget and credit management.

The organizations involved in the steering committee are hopeful that their efforts will have a positive impact on the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. This is the first time many of the organizations have worked together.

GCDD’s Eric Jacobson said, “There’s an incredible excitement and energy surrounding this project. Bringing in new players and folks we haven’t worked with in the past is very exciting to us.” For more information about the project, contact Jackie Wilks-Weathers of Credit-Able at 770.922.6790. ●





Around GCDD continued from page 5

RILEY BUCKMASTER of Thomaston does not receive services in the community at this time. "I'm 32 years old and I'm living in a nursing home because I didn't know about and have access to services. I'm concerned about how people are treated in institutions and how hard it is to get services in the community. I want out and want to help others get out," Buckmaster, who has cerebral palsy, said.

Buckmaster hopes his participation on GCDD will make accessing services easier for people with disabilities, and he has some definite ideas on how to do that. "I think applications should be shorter and easier to understand," he said.

Vice President of People First of Georgia **GLEN FRIEDMAN** of Stone Mountain hopes his participation on GCDD will bring the two organizations closer together. "I think that GCDD and People First could both learn from one another," he said.

Friedman lived in a West Georgia institution from the 1950s to the 1970s and wants to help others with developmental disabilities avoid that experience. "I want people with disabilities to be able to live independently in the community, with the supports and services they need, and I do not want people with disabilities to live in institutions or nursing homes. I think it is important to help people with disabilities by supporting self-advocacy," he said.

Partners in Policymaking graduate **DAVID GLASS** of Atlanta has a young daughter who has Down syndrome, and he wants to assure her future is bright. "Old attitudes and authority are the greatest barriers facing individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities need to feel they have a compelling future and the ability to



David Glass and his daughter

"Old attitudes and authority are the greatest barriers facing individuals with disabilities."

capitalize on opportunities for enhancing their own personal and professional growth, as well as the opportunity for residential, employment and recreational experiences in life," he said.

"To change perceptions and conventional thinking, I think a new message should be focused on and delivered to a cross-section of non-disability groups and interests in the community and couched in a way that does not empower the view of individuals with disabilities as deficient, unable, needy, a drain on resources, etc."

As a father of a son with Down syndrome, **NICK HARRIS** of Fayette has been active in the disability community, developing programs to help parents better understand the special education system and recreational opportunities for children with disabilities.

Harris wanted to join GCDD for a specific reason. "I want to be part of Georgia's team to facilitate the achievement of people with disabilities' maximum, individual potential for independence, productivity and integration with the community in which they live," he said.

Emergency physician **MADELEINE PONDER** of Tyrone received a crash course on disability when her child was diagnosed with significant developmental delays. "Through training programs... I have learned an enormous amount of information on the issues that affect the disability community. I have identified several issues that I wish to focus on

"I am very interested in helping advance the concerns and issues of the disability community..."



Madeleine Ponder

more, including early identification and intervention, developing a more user-friendly system to aid families with disabilities, providing a framework for families to network within a community, assisting people with disabilities with inclusion issues and community outreach," she said.

"I am very interested in helping advance the concerns and issues of the disability community to improve not only the life of my daughter, but the lives of all Georgians with disabilities." ●



Glen Friedman

"I think it is important to help people with disabilities by supporting self-advocacy."



Mia Gets Some Sleep

By Patricia Nobbie, Ph.D., Mia's Mom

In the last column, I related how I believed Mia had sleep apnea, and we needed to do something about it to interrupt the sleeping-on-the-job-gaining-more-weight-having-more-trouble-sleeping-at-night-cycle. I asked for suggestions at the end of the article, and I got so many phone calls, e-mails and even snail mail, lending emotional support, suggestions on how to get Mia to the gym, Weight Watchers, nutrition class etc...it was so heartwarming to know that the greater community not only reads the magazine, but takes such an interest in our quest for better health. Thank you everyone!

So, we did in fact have the sleep study, which Mia reluctantly participated in. She had to be talked out of the car by the sleep study technician, who was wonderful and patient. We got her all wired up, (took a Polaroid of her with all the sensors on, which she'll show you if you ask her), lights off at 11 PM, and we were off. Between midnight and 5 AM, we were woken up 4 times by the sleep study staff because Mia's oxygen levels had dropped so low. Without even reading the data, which they knew would confirm it, Mia was given a diagnosis of severe sleep apnea.

About a month later, we went back to get fitted for a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine mask. And then we scheduled another night at the sleep center, this time with the breathing machine. She doesn't like the mask much either, but the technician was kind and supportive, and we were put to bed for the night. She slept all night. She even had REM sleep

according to the data. We were woken up at 6 AM, sent home, and we went back to bed. I got up to get someone to work, and all of a sudden, at 7:30 AM, Mia showed up in the kitchen, showered,



"I have no idea what we are going to do now, I haven't seen you before noon in a year!"

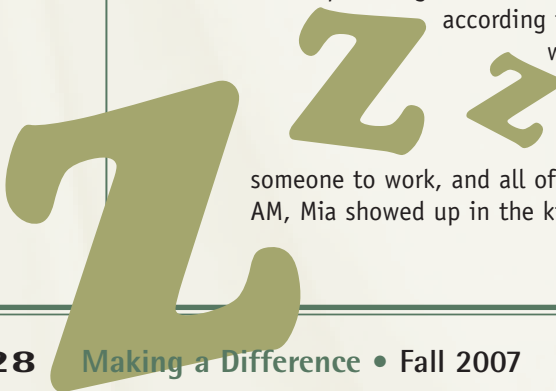
After an uncomfortable night, Mia was diagnosed with severe sleep apnea.

dressed, ready to go, asking me, "What are we going to do now?"

I just looked at her thinking, "I have no idea what we are going to do now, I haven't seen you before noon in a year!" But there she was ready to go, so we went and did something. She didn't nap the entire day until just before dinner. Sleep really works!

So now we have a machine, and it is a struggle at home with me to get her to use it, but we're getting there. The other night she took it off during the night, which I discovered at 4:30 AM when I got up to check on her. She woke up, asking me if I was mad at her. I told her yes, I was mad, but I just went back to bed. It had been my second night in a row of waking up every couple hours to make sure she still had the mask on, and I was tired. But when I got up at 6 AM to get ready for work, I heard the machine from down the hall. When I looked in, there she was sound asleep in the mask, machine going. She had put it back on herself! Amazing to me since I hadn't yet shown her how to activate the CPAP! So I am hoping that when she starts to feel better on a regular basis, she will really take ownership of the machine, and it will be her best friend, like so many of the people who contacted me said.

She joined the gym. And she has a job interview on Thursday! Wish her luck! Things are looking up! ●





OCTOBER

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October 24-26
Employment for All - Together
GAPSE: The Network on Employment
 Ramada Plaza Hotel
 Macon, GA

October 24-27
National Association for the Dually Diagnosed Annual Conference
 Atlanta Renaissance Hotel
 Atlanta, Georgia
www.thenadd.org

October 25-26
Georgia Independent Living Network Meeting
 Voice: 770-270-6860
 Toll Free: 888-288-9780
 TTY: Use GA Relay, 711
www.silcga.org

October 27
Fun Run and Roll Fall Festival
 Sponsored by Atlanta ADAPT
 Decatur Recreation Center
 12 PM • Decatur, GA
 678-479-0687
sbmitchell50@bellsouth.net

October 27
FOCUS Day at ZooAtlanta
www.focus-ga.org

October 29
Town Hall Meeting: School Transition to Adult Supports
 Decatur, GA
www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/dekalb.pdf

NOVEMBER

November 5
Town Hall Meeting: School Transition to Adult Supports
 Savannah, GA
 912-272-2774

November 29
Town Hall Meeting: School Transition to Adult Supports
 Lawrenceville, GA
 770-736-1783

DECEMBER

December 3
Town Hall Meeting: School Transition to Adult Supports
 Macon GA
 478-765-8716

December 7-8
World of Possibilities Expo: disABILITIES, Healthy Aging and Independent Living
 Richmond, VA
 410-549-5707
mona@caringcommunities.org
expo.caringcommunities.org

December 12
Department of Human Resources Board Meeting
www.dhr.georgia.gov

December 13
Department of Community Health Board Meeting
www.dch.georgia.gov

JANUARY

January 7
Town Hall Meeting: School Transition to Adult Supports
 Athens, GA
 706-788-3428

January 8
Town Hall Meeting: School Transition to Adult Supports
 North Fulton, GA
 770-998-1703

January 14-15
Georgia Independent Living Network Meeting
 Atlanta, GA
 Voice: 770-270-6860
 Toll Free: 888-288-9780
 TTY: Use GA Relay, 711
www.silcga.org



KAI WORRIES THAT HE'LL LOSE HIS ATTENDANT CARE IF HE MAKES TOO MUCH MONEY.



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Below, please find further resources of information related to the articles in this edition of *Making a Difference* magazine.

Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)
www.gcdd.org
404-657-2126 or
888-275-4233 (ASK-GCDD)

State Government

Department of Community Affairs
Georgia Housing Search
www.georgiahousingsearch.org
877-428-8844

Department of Labor
www.dol.state.ga.us

General Information
www.georgia.gov

Georgia General Assembly
www.legis.state.ga.us/

Georgia House of Representatives
www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2003_04/house/index.htm

Georgia Senate
www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2003_04/senate/index.htm

Georgia Governor's Office
www.gov.state.ga.us/
404-656-1776

Georgia Lieutenant Governor's Office
www.ltgov.georgia.gov/02/ltgov/home/0,2214,2199618,00.html
404-656-5030

American Dream Project

Credit-Able
www.credit-able.org
770-922-6790

National Disability Institute
www.ndi-inc.org
202-296-2040

IRS Tax Assistance
www.irs.gov

Benefits Navigation Assistance
404-350-7598

Statewide Independent Living Council
www.silcga.org

Making A Difference Discovery Day

Project Search
In metro-Atlanta -
Briggs & Associates
www.briggsandassociates.org
770-993-4559

In Georgia -
Dottie Adams at GCDD
dxadams@dhr.state.ga.us
404-657-2126

The Edge Connection
www.theedgeconnection.com

Employment First Georgia
www.EmploymentFirstGeorgia.org

Job Accommodation Network
www.jan.wvu.edu

Emerging Leaders Program
www.emerging-leaders.com

National Business and Disability Council
Lana Smart, Emerging Leaders Program Director
www.nbdc.com

Darius Goes West

Logan Smalley
Director of DGW
Cell: 706-255-0034

Darius Weems
Cell: 706-254-7572

Barbara Smalley
Logan's mom and the point person for "Learn About it" school program
Home: 706-613-7237
Cell: 706-255-9301
bssmalley@aol.com

Mark Johnson
Director of Advocacy Shepherd Center
404-350-7480
Mark_Johnson@shepherd.org
Mark is interviewed in the film.

Jenny Manders
Disability Studies Coordinator
Institute on Human Development and Disability (UGA)
706-542-2418
Straight Talk

Liz Prioleau
770-337-8317
laprioleau@cobbcsb.com

Anthony Fuller
678-945-7735
2099 Mulkey Road SW
Marietta, GA 30008

JF&CS Division of Disabilities

- Residential - Highly individualized, community support with all ADL skills
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- Day Program - Creative alternative to supported employment
- Transition Program - Life Skills Development

For information call 770.677.9379 or email
DisabilitiesServices@jfcs-atlanta.org
www.YourToolsForLiving.org

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Children

with **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Offering integrated, comprehensive, family-centered services for:

- children with special needs and
- their families

A child with special needs (from birth to age 21) can be referred to a Public Health Program that serves these children by calling:

- the Children 1st Coordinator at your local health department at 800-822-2539
- Parent to Parent of Georgia at 800-229-2038 or in Atlanta at 770-451-5484

Division of Public Health
Family Health Branch
Office of Children with Special Needs
www.dhr.state.ga.us

Babies Can't Wait Program

Who?

- Birth to age three
- With disability or developmental delay

What?

- Provides evaluation, assessment, and service coordination at no charge
- Offers early intervention services, based on an Individualized Family Service Plan, using sliding fee scale

Children's Medical Services Program

Who?

- Birth to age 21
- With chronic medical condition and family income eligibility

What?

- Coordinates/provides specialty medical evaluations/treatment

High Risk Infant Follow-Up Program

Who?

- Birth to age one
- With medical conditions requiring intensive follow-up services from Public Health

What?

- Provides direct follow-up services (i.e., in-home nursing assessment and parent training)

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If you are interested in being a sponsor for Making a Difference magazine, please call Valerie Buxton @ 770-578-9765

thanks

hanks



“My dream for my son Tyler is that once he graduates from high school, he will have a **“Real Career,”** an opportunity to be a **productive**, tax paying member of his community. Part of that dream is that there will be businesses that **recognize his talents** and do not close the door on that **employment opportunity** just because he has a disability.”

- TOM SEEGMUELLER, GCDD CHAIR

“Interesting and insightful agenda.”

- MATTHEW BOBAR, SOUTHERN COMPANY

“The information shared today – specifically tools available to employers – was very helpful.”

- SLOANE EVANS, SOUTHERN COMPANY

“I really enjoyed the Discovery Day, learned a lot and made good contacts.”

- TERESA EGGLESTON, PROGRAM MANAGER - DOL/BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

“All speakers were informative and useful. My first time at the meeting and everything was powerful.”

- DOUGLAS BLAKNEY, COMPLAINT SYSTEM COORDINATOR - GA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

2007 Discovery Day



Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 26-246
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142
404-657-2126, www.gcdd.org

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