

ANNUAL REPORT . 2005.



REAL JOBS, REAL HOMES, REAL LEARNING, REAL INFLUENCE

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**GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES**

NEW CHAIR URGES COLLABORATION

Early in my professional career someone told me, "If we continue to do what we have always done we will continue to get what we've always gotten."

This seemingly simplistic philosophical nugget has remain lodged in my subconscious for decades and during this period I have been amazed at the number of organizations that became stagnant by their inability to change as the situations surrounding them change.

As this report will indicate, the Georgia Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) cannot be accused of falling into this trap. This past year



GCDD not only continued to look for new approaches to advocacy issues, self-determination, waiver slots and peer support, but also addressed a variety of operational, organizational and staffing issues as well.

The continued growth of Disability Day at the Capitol serves as an indication of our growing numbers. However, I believe that we still have not made those outside the disability community aware of not only our resolve, but of our true strength at the ballot box, as well.

For this to happen, I believe it is now more important than ever that we begin to come together to develop a list of common goals, talking points and sound bytes that serve to reinforce our message and the fact that we are united. When it comes to the issues of advocacy and legislative change, we must not only let our common voice be heard but ensure that our elected representatives know that we

vote our convictions and we vote as a sizable united block. Unfortunately there are those in the legislative community who doubt our true resolve. For them it is one thing to witness our unified presence at the Capitol and another for our unified votes to be counted at the polls.

I believe that we currently have an unprecedented opportunity to achieve this goal. As Anne Frank said, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." A variety of actions that occurred during the past year have indicated what our true potential is when we work in unison.

Personally, the end of this year served as a particular challenge to me as I step forward to assume the chairmanship of GCDD. The changes that have occurred within the Council make it imperative that each Council member and each advocate make a personal commitment to make this collaborative effort a reality.

"I believe that we still have not made those outside the disability community aware of not only our resolve but of our true strength at the ballot box as well."

To paraphrase one of Georgia's greatest philanthropists, Robert Woodruff once said when asked about all that he had achieved behind the scenes as 'Mr. Anonymous', "There are no limits to what we may achieve when we care not who gets the credit."

Tom Seegmueller
Chairperson, GCDD

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GCDD FOCUSES ON INDIVIDUALS

"You cannot hope to build a better world without improving individuals. We all must work for our own improvement, and at the same time share a general sense of responsibility for all humanity."

Marie Curie, *physicist*

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities has worked tirelessly toward supporting individuals while building better communities. We are committed to the belief that people want to be contributing members of their communities and must have access to Real Jobs, Real Homes, Real Learning Experiences and have Real Influence over their own lives. Our role is to create change through public policy, advocacy, public relations and program funding.

While GCDD may focus on creating societal changes, it cannot be successful without first focusing on the individual's needs. Children must go to school and receive a quality education. They must be adults who use their talents and skills in the marketplace and communities. Jobs must be meaningful and pay real wages. Jobs allow individuals to find affordable and safe homes. All this allows an individual to have greater influence over what happens to them on a daily basis.

GCDD continued its efforts to create job opportunities. As convener of the Jobs for All Steering Committee, the initiative and GCDD adopted an Employment First policy statement emphasizing work as the primary option for people with disabilities. Too many children graduate from school and have no opportunity for meaningful work opportunities.

This year marked the end of Project WINS. This effort resulted in hundreds of children receiving the support necessary to be in the same classroom as children without disabilities. While Project WINS ended, its legacy will be felt for many years as the Department of Education uses this model to support inclusion statewide. GCDD has turned its efforts toward impacting the funding formula for special education funding and the process for children

transitioning out of the school system.

GCDD, together with the Georgia Advocacy Office, the Institute on Human Development and Disabilities, People First of Georgia and the Statewide Independent Living Council announced an initiative to move all children out of state and private institutions and make sure they return to loving, supportive families. Passage of House Resolution 633 urged the major state agencies to develop a plan to move more than 140 children to the community. We will continue to monitor the progress of this effort.

GCDD elected Tom Seegmueller as its new

"While GCDD may focus on creating societal changes, it cannot be successful without first focusing on the individual's needs."

chairperson. Tom replaces Lynnette Bragg who served as the chairperson since 1999. Through Lynnette's leadership, GCDD emerged as a leader in supporting efforts to develop self-determination and family support; she also oversaw the expansion of GCDD's role in advocacy and its work with policymakers. She put her heart and soul into GCDD and made sure that people with developmental disabilities and their families have a voice. GCDD is a much better organization and its future is bright because of her presence and leadership.

GCDD has a strong foundation to build on and will continue its efforts to both support individuals while improving the world. We are uniquely positioned through both our staff and members to help improve people's lives, provide leadership to the advocacy community, be a resource to policymakers and the media and operate as an effective and efficient organization. This is the vision that GCDD must continue to promote into the future.

Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD



YEAR IN REVIEW

During 2005, Georgia's Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) worked hard to improve the lives of Georgians with disabilities. Some of the highlights of the year included:

Legislative Successes

Advocates forged relationships with new legislators and leadership in 2005, laying the groundwork for productive work on the multi-year challenges facing the development of adequately funded, quality-driven services.

GCDD focused its advocacy efforts on a few specific items:

- Successfully opposing a fixed expenditure cap for the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP) as a result of joint efforts with the State Independent Living Council, the Shepherd Center and Unlock the Waiting Lists! GCDD and its partners educated Georgia legislators and the

- Supporting an increase in provider rates for services currently reimbursed below the Southeastern average. Community providers of services to Mental Retardation Waiver Program (MRWP) recipients received a 4.5% rate increase.
- Helping defeat a proposed premium on the Katie Beckett (Deeming) Waiver and receiving restored funding.



Above: Self-advocates make their voices heard. Left: Sen. Sam Zamarripa (D-Atlanta) shares the best way to reach legislators.



GCDD Comments on IDEA Changes

governor about the issue, in addition to hosting a press conference. As a result, the cap was removed, and \$1.1 million was added to fund 46 more slots.

- Supporting a request for waiver slots in the Department of Human Resources (DHR) budget. Ultimately, the governor's budget included funding for 925 slots.

GCDD offered its thoughts on the new Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 to Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) John H. Hager in 2005.

GCDD's Executive Director Eric Jacobson recommended:

- Transition planning begin no later than five years prior to a student's anticipated graduation.

- Establishing written regulations that would place the burden of proof on school districts to show inappropriate behavior is not a result of a disability and prohibit authorities from withholding instruction as a form of punishment.
- Parents be made aware they are entitled to "reconsider and require" the attendance of an IEP team member, even if previously excused.

Staff Hired, Promoted

GCDD increased the depth of its staff in 2005, by promoting current employees and hiring new personnel.

- GCDD Public Policy Director Patricia Nobbie, D.P.A., was promoted to deputy director in 2005.
- Danielle Doughman was promoted to advocacy director.
- Valerie Meadows Suber joined the GCDD staff as its public information director and *Making A Difference* magazine editor-in-chief.
- Aimee R. Goodman filled a new project manager position.

- Kim A. Person joined GCDD as executive secretary.



Dr. Stephen Hall talk to some Self-advocates.

GCDD Participates in Search for Director of Office of Developmental Disabilities

Stephen R. Hall, Ph.D., became director of the Office of Developmental Disabilities of the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR), January 1, 2005. Hall joined with 14 years of executive leadership serving people with developmental disabilities.

As DHR continues to expand and enhance community partnerships, advocates served an important role in the selection of the best person to support issues specific to Georgia's disability community. GCDD's Executive Director Eric Jacobson participated in the selection process and stated, "We are excited about Dr. Hall's appointment and look forward to working with him to create a new vision for Georgians with disabilities."

During the year, a number of stories were written featuring disability issues championed by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. Here are a few highlights of 2005 media coverage:

- D-DAY 2005**
Georgia Public Broadcasting - Lawmakers - 20,000 viewers
WABE-NPR Radio Morning Edition - 40,000 listeners

Atlanta Journal-Constitution Captioned Photograph - 600,000 daily

GENERAL MEDIA
Athens - WGAU Radio - Newsmakers - 5,000 listeners

Dublin-Laurens County - The Courier Herald - 11,000 daily
Augusta - Augusta Chronicle - 80,000 daily

Atlanta Jewish Times - 12,000 weekly

MEDIA ROUNDTABLES
(1.) Dublin-Laurens County Chamber of Commerce
(2.) Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

DISCOVERY TOUR MEDIA
Atlanta Journal Constitution - feature article - 600,000 daily

2005 MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Self-advocates, parents and service providers shared their hopes for the future.

STAKEHOLDERS REVEAL HOPES FOR FUTURE

Fourteen advocates met during Disability Day to discuss their vision for a brighter future for people with disabilities. Facilitated by Dottie Adams, family and individual support director for the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), the group touched on topics from birth through old age.

The group hoped that in the future:

- Parents should be made aware of available services as early as possible. A referral system for early intervention programs was suggested.
- Agencies should know about each other, creating a one stop shop for services.

"Schools should support different learning styles for students, and teachers should be educated about behaviors to expect."

- Circles of support in the community should be linked with agencies.
- Respite care is critical at all ages, and people should be made aware services are available.
- Schools should support different learning styles for students and teachers should be educated about behaviors to expect.

- Parents feel intimidated by the IEP process and training should be available so they can participate as they want.
- A diploma program should be developed so students with disabilities can further their education.
- Transition planning should be started from an early age, and students should be involved in the planning process.
- More resources should be put in place to support people with disabilities to find jobs they really want.
- Lack of transportation, housing and trained support professionals should be addressed.
- Health care providers should be trained to care for patients with developmental disabilities, especially as these patients age.
- Help should be put in place for aging parents of adult children with disabilities.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- Pat Ellis, a parent from Commerce
- Gary Mize, a service provider in Elbert
- Vicki McCletion, of Lutheran Services in Atlanta
- Theresa Christian, a parent from Griffin
- Geneice McCoy, a parent from Augusta
- Mandy Griffin, a parent mentor and former judge from DeKalb County
- George Bell, of People First in Commerce
- Bobby Holcombe, a parent from Carrollton
- Vicki Sumner, a parent from Rincon
- Johnnie Boddie, of the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities in Atlanta
- Dr. Licheng Tian, of Gracewood Hospital in Augusta

ADVOCATES CONNECT WITH LEGISLATORS DURING DISABILITY DAY

More than 1,300 disability advocates gathered for the 7th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol in Atlanta on February 24 to educate legislators on the issues that affect them.

Sponsored by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), advocates cheered the governor's proposed 925 waiver slots and service provider pay increase, but were opposed to spending caps on the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP).

"No caps. No levels on the ICWP," the crowd chanted, along with "Our homes, not nursing homes!"

Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives Glenn Richardson (R-Hiram) said, "We are working through one of the toughest budget crises since the depression, but we look forward to releasing funding to unlock the waiting lists," he said.

The day also included speeches from:

- Dr. Margaret J. Giannini, director of the Office on Disability, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Gov. Sonny Perdue's Policy Director Trey Childress; and,

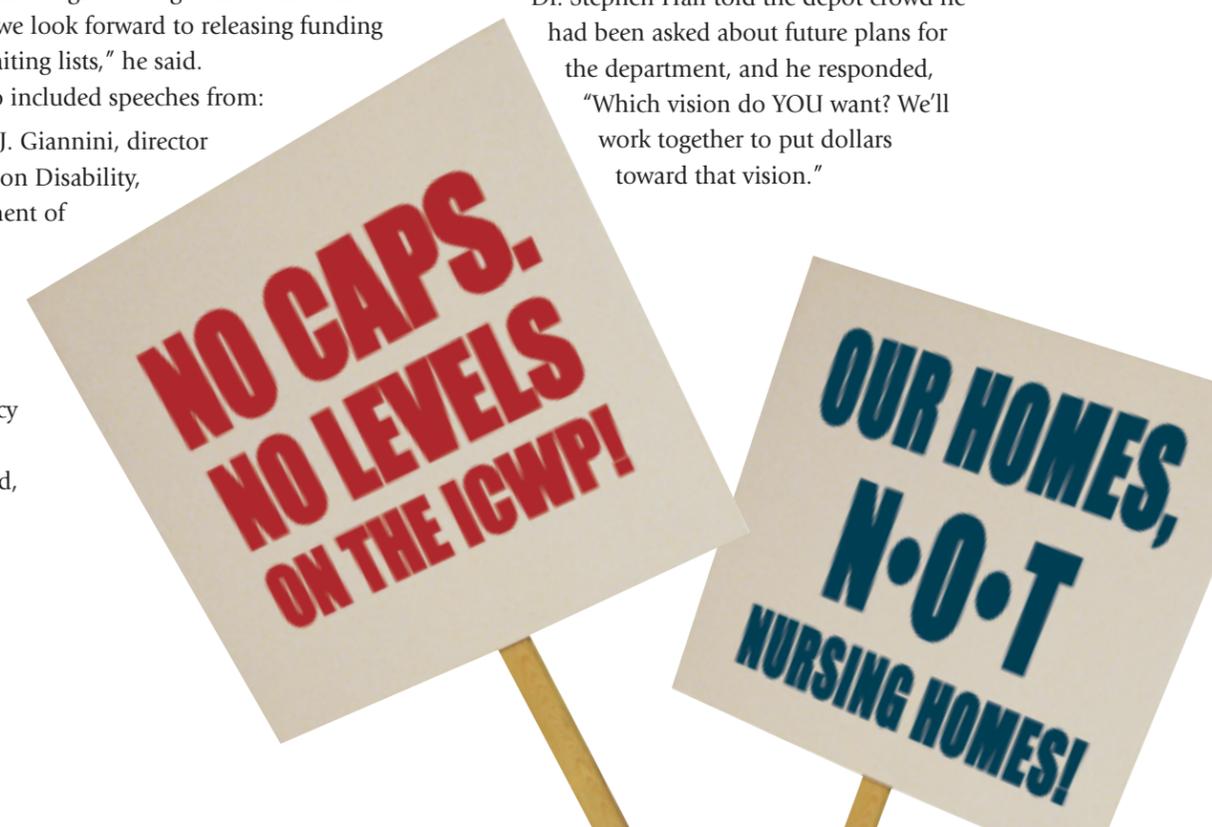


Above: Glenn Richardson (R-Hiram) addresses disability advocates. Right: Sam Mitchell leads a rousing chant.



- Arc of the United States Assistant Executive Director for Membership and Program Services Sue Swenson

After the rally at the Capitol, advocates marched to the Georgia Freight Depot, which was filled to overflowing. New Department of Human Resources Director of the Office of Developmental Disabilities Dr. Stephen Hall told the depot crowd he had been asked about future plans for the department, and he responded, "Which vision do YOU want? We'll work together to put dollars toward that vision."



OUTSTANDING ADVOCATES RECOGNIZED

Georgia's tireless disability advocates helped effect great change in the state this year with the funding of 925 waiver slots and the defeat of a cap on the Independent Care Waiver Program. The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) honored these advocates during its annual award ceremony.



Ashley Rhinehart and Andreena Patton

Legislators of the Year Award

Sen. Sam Zamarippa, (D-Atlanta)

"He has been an outspoken advocate for his sister's needs... He is eloquent because he truly understands the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families," said Dave Blanchard, public policy director for the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities.

Rep. Jeff Brown, (R-LaGrange)

"Rep. Brown met with advocates about budget concerns and worked with providers on compromises over rate increases. He also protected the waiting list slots," Blanchard said.

Media Professional of the Year Award

Tom Corwin, Augusta Chronicle

Valerie Meadows Suber, public information officer for GCDD explained, "Tom Corwin's articles regularly provide accurate analysis and sensitive portrayals that we in the disability community deeply value."

"Without these tireless efforts, we would not have experienced the successes that we have witnessed over the last few years."

Advocate of the Year Award

Kiley Hays, Greg Harry, Edwin McWilliams, Andreena Patton, Samantha Renfro, Ashley Rhinehart, Cindy Saylor

"These seven individuals spoke at the press conference on the ICWP and testified before several committees. They did not just complain about what was being proposed, they also provided ideas for how to address the problem. Without these tireless efforts, we would not have experienced the successes



Lynnette Bragg

that we have witnessed," explained Dottie Adams, director of individual and family support for GCDD.

**C. Anthony Cunningham
Council Member of the Year Award
Lynnette Bragg**

Incoming GCDD Chairperson Tom Seegmueller explained why outgoing Chairperson Lynnette Bragg earned the award. "Since 1999, Lynnette has put her heart and soul into GCDD and to making sure that people with developmental disabilities and their families have a voice and are heard by policymakers."



The art of Lois Curtis is presented to Gloria Johnson-Goins of The Home Depot and Dave Altman of Southern Company by GCDD for their leadership in hiring people with disabilities and for co-hosting the Discovery Tour.

EXECUTIVES DISCOVER PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAN AND WANT TO WORK

During the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities' 2005 Discovery Tour, top executives from large, mid-sized and small companies in Atlanta were invited to learn about the disability community.

"We want a Georgia that employs all its citizens who want to work."

Discovery Tour co-host Gloria Johnson-Goins, vice president of diversity at The Home Depot Corporation, said that corporations should see people with disabilities as people who can be productive employees. "We want a Georgia that employs all its citizens who want to work."

During the tour, participants learned:

■ **People with disabilities want to work.** Kate Gainer, disABILITY LINK advocacy coordinator, said, "I challenge you to provide us with the opportunities to become full, productive Americans."

■ **Recruiting managers don't always know that people with disabilities are an untapped market.** Discovery Tour Co-Host Dave Altman, vice president of corporate communication at the Southern Company, said, "We've got to raise awareness with people in business."

■ **Project SEARCH, a program at Emory Crawford Long Hospital has resulted in successful employment for a number of people with developmental disabilities.** "One thing I didn't ask for, we've gotten: an increase in quality," noted Chief Operating Officer Albert Blackwelder.

■ **Assistive technology (AT) can make working possible for people with disabilities.** Many companies see AT as a financial barrier, but in many cases, AT can be as simple as a piece of plywood to prop up a piece of equipment.

"Assistive technology plays a vital role in helping people with disabilities, their families and their employers," Altman said.

ReBoot - Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) in Tucker, Ga., offers a "try before you buy" option so people don't make costly investments in the wrong technology.

■ **Stereotypes and attitudes affect people with disabilities in the workplace.** Before becoming an attorney for the Georgia Advocacy Office, Crystal Beelner, who has dwarfism, was able to land initial interviews, but once people saw her, she wasn't called back for a second interview. "That's why it's so important to cross attitudinal barriers," she said.

■ **East Lake Commons, a visitable community in Decatur, has simple features that allow people in wheelchairs to be able to visit, including no-step entrances, wider doorways and bathrooms with room for wheelchairs.**



Crystal Beelner had many interviews before an employer saw beyond her disability and hired her.



Participating in the Long Road Home March II in June, Victoria Leverett confirms that children with disabilities make valuable contributions when they live and thrive in their communities instead of institutions.

ADVOCATES WORK TO FREE CHILDREN

When disability advocates at the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO) discovered 141 children under the age of 22 were still living in state-run institutions, intermediate care facilities, nursing homes and a private facility, they knew something had to be done.

"The GAO knew of some children and had asked the state of Georgia for a list of children in state-run facilities," explained Patricia Nobbie, D.P.A., deputy director of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD). Once the GAO received the list, it joined with its federal partners, GCDD and the Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD).

The federal partners, along with People First and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) lobbied for a resolution in the Georgia House of Representatives in 2005.

The Children's Initiative Resolution (House Resolution 633) urges the Department of Human Resources (DHR), the Department of Community Health (DCH), the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to present the General Assembly with a plan to provide home and

community-based supports to children under the age of 22 who are living in state-run facilities and to implement the plan within five years. It also calls for the Speaker of the House to appoint an oversight committee to help develop the plan that includes people with disabilities, members of the legislature and members from GAO, GCDD and IHDD.

Rep. Judy Manning (R-Marietta), chair of the Children and Youth Committee, brought the resolution to the House. "Children don't need institutions. The committee will take the lead to offer the state departments solutions to solve problems and get kids out of institutions and back into their communities."

GAO is gathering information on the children. "Essentially, their stories are: 'When I needed help – either with physical or emotional support – there was no place to go. That's when I was advised to place her into an institution.' No one is asking the parents what supports they need to keep their children home," explained GAO Project Director Gillian Grable.

SILC Executive Director Pat Puckett stressed how important being in the community is. "We strongly believe people with disabilities should be integrated into society and included in the world around them. It is especially important to start young because everybody gets used to them and understands that's how it should be."

"We have to close the back door so more kids don't go into institutions and nursing homes."

GAO, GCDD and IHDD also help fund the initiative. "We expect the planning process to cost about \$100,000," Nobbie said. The organizations already hosted a summit on the topic in August.

"We have to close the back door so more kids don't go into institutions and nursing homes," Nobbie said.

PEER SUPPORT PROJECT FOSTERS INDEPENDENCE

After her accident, Cheryl Laurendeau was afraid to leave her home because she didn't feel comfortable with her wheelchair.

"I was scared when I first became disabled," she revealed.

"Someone has to show people with disabilities they can be independent, and that should be someone who is independent..."

But all that changed when she turned to a peer supporter. "My first peer supporter invited me to an Independent Living Center. I was afraid because I'd have to ride MARTA, but it was easy. Nobody could have told me that except someone who'd been through it," she said.

Since that first breakthrough, Laurendeau, a member of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) has been dedicated to helping other people with disabilities become more independent, and is now a facilitator for a new program, organized by GCDD, that helps train peer supporters, the Georgia Peer Support Project.

"Our goals for the project are to strengthen peer support; make it available to more people; and, help peer support be recognized as a skill that can be paid for by Medicaid," explained Linda Pogue, of disABILITY Link, who provides administrative support and coordination to the project.

The formal curriculum was facilitated by Linda Kendall Fields, who had worked with Georgia's Department of Community Health developing aging and disability services and policies, but the bulk of the training curriculum was developed by people with disabilities.

"There's not much published for peer support training," Kendall Fields said. "So the curriculum committee brought the experiences they had in peer supporting at their Independent Living Centers.

The training sessions are three days long, with the first day focused on providing background information on peer support and defining why it is important.

Training sessions help participants build a network of other peer supporters with whom they can share information and experiences.

According to Laurendeau, "Someone has to show people with disabilities they can be independent, and that should be someone who is independent... we had to find more innovative ways to do things, and we can share that," she said.



Peer supporter Samuel Mitchell (r) shares the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center with fellow advocates.

Peer support can be accessed through the majority of Georgia's Independent Living Centers, and most supporters are volunteers. Project organizers hope this increased professionalism will lead to paid peer supporter positions, funded eventually by Medicaid.

"Peer supporters are going to be an essential part of self determination. They have a background in finding resources and can help individuals do what they want to do," Laurendeau said.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

Advocates Want Jobs, Not Programs

Imagine a place where people with disabilities who can work, must work. Where day habilitation programs are no longer an option, and the use of employment and day program funds for working age adults are used to establish employment supports.

This scenario is more than a daydream. For the people of Washington State, it will become reality July 1, 2006. And the disability community in Georgia is watching the process carefully.

David Mank, director of the Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University, helped Washington create this new policy that hits on several key issues:

Mank has advice for states like Georgia that want to move toward a similar model. "As long as the state pays a service provider the same amount of money to put

someone in a segregated workshop as they do for supported employment, it won't change. The state has to say 'we value the outcome of employment more than we value segregating people,'" he said.

Georgia is taking the first step toward implementing similar employment policies. "The 'Employment First' initiative says that for adults

with developmental disabilities, the primary choice should be employment," Mank said.

Disability advocates from the Governor's Council on Developmental

"The state has to say 'we value the outcome of employment more than we value segregating people'."

Disabilities, the Georgia Advocacy Office and the Institute on Human Development and Disability are discussing how to improve employment options for Georgians with disabilities.

"First, they need to concentrate on getting jobs to everyone who wants one. Then they have to make it worth the money - service providers would get less money for segregated settings than for finding jobs," Mank said.

Mank has high hopes for the success of a better employment policy. "The leadership is organized in the state of Georgia, and there's a core of excitement there," he said.



Pam Fordham runs an artist management company, in addition to her job at SunTrust.



Cylanda NeSmith-Mahari, left, shares her love of making children's clothing with employee Takeiya Bell, right.

- People with disabilities, including significant cognitive or physical disabilities, must be employed or engaged in activities clearly intended to end in employment.
- Only people with serious continuous health care issues or those who are dangerous to themselves or others are exempt.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

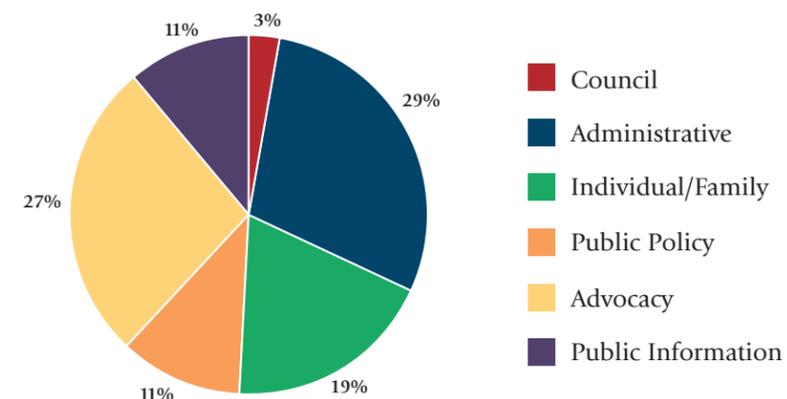
DD GRANT

FY 2005 BUDGET - EXPENDITURES

Period Covered October 1, 2004 - September 30, 2005

EXPENDITURES	BUDGETED	EXPENDED	BALANCE
ADMINISTRATION			
Council	\$81,000	\$55,757	\$25,243
Administrative	\$922,894	\$901,899	\$20,995
Total Administration	\$1,003,894	\$957,656	\$46,238
PRIORITY			
Individual/Family	\$577,332	\$384,452	\$192,880
Public Policy	\$346,999	\$335,445	\$11,554
Advocacy	\$835,347	\$637,512	\$197,835
Public Information	\$350,166	\$348,301	\$1,865
Total Priority	\$2,109,844	\$1,705,710	\$404,134
Total EXPENDITURES	\$3,113,738	\$2,663,366	\$450,372
Reserves*	\$25,000		\$25,000
Total Funds Budget	\$3,138,738	\$2,663,366	\$475,372

*Funds set aside for unforeseen circumstances.



The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) works with others to improve the quality of life for Georgians with disabilities. Here are projects GCDD funded last year leveraging state, federal and local dollars.

- Partnership Funds * Scholarships for Training Events
- Family Support * Parent Leadership Coalition and Navigator Teams
- Childcare Taskforce
- Children's Freedom Initiative
- Making a Difference Magazine
- Partners in Policymaking
- Grassroots Advocacy Grants
- Workforce Development
- Direct Support Alliance
- Early Childhood Systems Change Grant
- Self-Determination
- Unlock the Waiting Lists Campaign
- Peer Support
- Aging and Disability Coalition
- Legislative Session 2006
- Federal Issues Coalition
- Governor's Commission for a New Georgia
- Strategic Planning
- Individual and Family Technical Assistance and Outreach
- Hall County High School: Creating One Community
- Creating One Community (PNS)
- * For ongoing evaluations of 2004 Grant
- Georgia Voices that Count
- Special Education Finance Committee
- Innovative Proposals
- Easy Living Home
- Housing Partner Coalition
- Transition Steering Committee
- Jobs for All: Customized Employment Grant From USDOL
- Making A Difference Discovery Day Tour



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

STAFF

Eric Jacobson, Executive Director, works closely with state lawmakers, executives, policymakers, advocates, staff and GCDD members in directing policy and systems change to benefit Georgians with developmental disabilities. Jacobson serves as the president of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities. eejacobson@dhr.state.ga.us

Patricia Nobbie, D.P.A., Deputy Director, works closely with state lawmakers, policymakers, disability advocates, individuals and collaborators in shaping systems change to improve the lives of Georgians with disabilities. pnobbie@dhr.state.ga.us

Dottie Adams, Director of Individual & Family Support, helps develop statewide programs and assisted in pioneering family support, early intervention and person-centered planning. dxadams@dhr.state.ga.us

Gary Childers, Fiscal Officer, tracks all expenses and revenues for GCDD and staff and maintains the Web site, in addition to servicing GCDD's computers. gochilders@dhr.state.ga.us

Danielle Doughman, Advocacy Director, supports the development and implementation of leadership, education and advocacy initiatives that lead to increased quality of life for people with disabilities. ddoughman@dhr.state.ga.us

Eric Foss, Administrative Assistant, is GCDD's receptionist and manages databases and mail services. esfoss@dhr.state.ga.us

Aimee R. Goodman, Project Manager, works with GCDD members, providers and staff on grant and contract management, evaluation and reporting.

Kim A. Person, Executive Secretary, provides administrative support to GCDD members and the executive director. She also plans GCDD meetings. kaperson@dhr.state.ga.us

Valerie Meadows Suber, Public Information Director, develops the annual Discovery Tour and serves as editor-in-chief of Making a Difference magazine. She helps foster media, community and business relations in support of Georgians with disabilities. vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us

Incoming 2006 Council Members (from top left): Chris Hunnicutt, Denny Spear, Vallorie Butler, Tom Seegmueller, Janet Hill, Karen Boyer, Scott Crain, David Cowan (from bottom left): Gillian Grable, Millie Powell, Tom Connelly, Lynnette Bragg, Dr. Licheng Tian, Geneice McCoy.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

EXECUTIVE TEAM



LYNNETTE WELLS BRAGG
Council Chairperson

Bragg is a registered nurse in disease and health care management. Now in her sixth year as chair, she has more than 30 years of experience in hospital and community health. Bragg, a Tifton native, manages B&B Care Services, a company that provides individual and family supports in the home environment.



VALLORIE D. BUTLER, Vice-Chairperson

Butler is a registered nurse in the neonatal intensive care unit of Wellstar Kennestone Hospital. Butler's 12-year-old daughter, Alexis, has cerebral palsy. She and her family live in Acworth, Ga. She works as a parent educator for the Babies Can't Wait Program in Cobb and Douglas counties. In addition, she facilitates support groups for families in the Cobb and Douglas county areas.



HEIDI FERNANDEZ
Advocacy & Information Chair

A care provider and homemaker who lives in Woodstock, Ga., Fernandez' son, Andrew, has autism. She was the GCDD's 2001 Advocate of the Year and has received the 2000 Autism Society of Greater Georgia "Special Recognition Award for Legislation Efforts on Behalf of People with Autism."



CHERYL LAURENDEAU
Program Funding & Implementation
Committee Chair

Laurendeau has used a wheelchair since 1988 due to complications from polio. Since her primary school days, Laurendeau has been an advocate for diversity and people with disabilities. The mother of two adult children and an Atlanta resident, she currently works with the Self-Advocacy Network, Public Housing Advocacy for Disability and Diversity, and People First of Atlanta, which she helped launch.



TOM SEEGMUELLER
Public Policy Committee Chair

Seegmueller is a field representative for the Georgia Immunization Program. His son, Tyler, has autism. Steering public policy initiatives and GCDD activities, he represents the GCDD nationally at institutes and conferences providing important insight and direction in disability advocacy.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Gail Bottoms, a self-advocate, is married to Johnny, and has a son, David, who was diagnosed in third grade with a learning disability.

David Cowan, a self-advocate, is a coordinator for the Georgia Interpreting Services Network. He has had a hearing impairment since birth.

Regina "Reggie" Heinrich is a parent advocate. Heinrich's son, Jeffrey, has autism and a heart condition.

Chris Hunnicutt is a former insurance and investment professional who is now a stay-at-home dad. His son, Christopher, was born with Down syndrome.

Tameeka L. Hunter, a self-advocate, is ADAPT's coordinator for Georgia Institute of Technology. Hunter was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at 18 months.

Julia (Julie) M. Lee, Ph.D. is a professor of Special Education at Valdosta State University. Lee helps train professionals to serve infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school age students with disabilities and their families. She is the parent of a son with disabilities.

Jane Massey is a community initiatives coordinator, Housing Finance Division, Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Massey has a younger brother with a developmental disability.

Lenora Maynard is a self-advocate at the City Club of Macon. She has cerebral palsy.

Darlene M. Meador, Ph. D., directs the Office of Collaborative Planning, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases, Georgia Department of Human Resources.

Ruby Moore is executive director of the Georgia Advocacy Office.

Norma Jean Morgan is director of Aging and Community Services in Georgia Medicaid. She lives in Clio, Ga. and is responsible for long-term care services, including MRWP and CHSS home and community-based services.

Phil Pickens is director of the Division for Exceptional Students, Department of Education.

Millicent P. Powell is membership associate/educator at Zoo Atlanta. Powell's daughter, Sagirah, is legally blind and has mild cerebral palsy and a hearing impairment.

Zolinda Stoneman, Ph. D., directs the Institute of Human Development and Disability. Stoneman has spent the past 26 years working in various areas of the disability community.

Michael L. Thurmond, J.D., is the commissioner, Georgia Department of Labor. Thurmond is the former director of Rehabilitation Services, which provides services to Georgians with disabilities.

Dr. Licheng Tian, M.D., Ph.D., born in China, is a physician and medical director, Center for Community Health at University Hospital in Augusta. He also serves in part-time positions as physician/officer of the day at Georgia Regional Hospital and Veterans Affairs Medical Center, both in Augusta. Tian's son, Evan, was diagnosed with autism at age 4.





GRASS ROOTS ADVOCACY BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS

Advocacy for many began long before Georgia's legislative session opened in January; it began during the election process as the political parties approached their respective primaries.

Heidi Fernandez is the chairperson of the Advocacy and Information Committee of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) and the mother of Andrew, who has autism. She collaborated with 13 organizations to sponsor a political forum in Cobb County.

"We were able to bring families and legislators together – and for some families, it was the first time they ever met a legislator," Fernandez said. "It was

the beginning of building relationships that will continue throughout the legislative session, and it was a great opportunity to educate legislators."

Twelve candidates participated in the forum, which attracted over 100 people, as well as two unopposed legislators who attended to learn more.

"Collaborate with other organizations and individuals in the community; work on getting the word out to as many organizations as you can."

"Give yourself enough planning time," Fernandez advises those considering hosting a political forum. "Collaborate with other organizations and individuals in the community; work on getting the word out to as many organizations as you can."

Generally, the debate is not whether a candidate will support programs that help people with disabilities, but where disability funding issues fall as a matter of budget priorities. Activists have to assure their disability questions are well thought out, and that candidates are measured on their commitment to the disability priorities.

Steve "Thunder" Tumlin, (R-Marietta) participated in the Cobb forum. "Without that meeting, I would probably never have brought myself up to date on these issues.

"My awareness quadrupled, and I was impressed that not only advocates were there but people with special needs were there, too," Tumlin said.

GCDD developed a 23-page *Guide to Hosting Forums* to help people put a successful forum together. The strategy paid off, allowing the disability community to connect with other organizations and legislators across the state.