



UNLOCK  
THE WAITING LIST  
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# 2014 Annual Report

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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*On the cover: Unlock the Waiting Lists! was the cry as advocates rallied before the State Capitol at GCDD Disability Day 2014.*



*Rep. Michelle Henson, Rep. Katie Dempsey and GCDD Public Policy Planning Specialist Dawn Alford connect at Disability Day at the Capitol 2014 in Downtown Atlanta.*



*RespectAbility USA CEO Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi delivered the Disability Day keynote on employment issues and opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.*



*Rep. Winfred Dukes and Rep. Rusty Kidd demonstrate a welcoming spirit and show their support on Disability Day at the Capitol.*



*GCDD Council Member Evan Nodvin and Rep. Jimmy Pruitt stand together to advocate for people with disabilities at the 2014 Disability Day at the Capitol.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Harvard Professor Ronald Heifetz wrote that “leadership is mobilizing people to work on the hardest of challenges.”

This brand of leadership was evident in the work of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) during the past year. In the areas of employment and influence, GCDD worked with advocates statewide to create the necessary change for people with developmental disabilities to be more independent, productive, included and integrated in their community and self-determined in their lives.



GCDD Chair Mitzi Proffitt joins Executive Director Eric Jacobson to kick off the 2014 Disability Day rally.

At the 2014 Disability Day at the Capitol, more than 2,000 people heard Governor Nathan Deal announce the need for an Employment First effort in Georgia. His words were reinforced by Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Director Greg Schmeig and Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi from RespectAbility USA who spoke about employment as a major step toward financial and social independence.

GCDD followed through to organize the Employment First Coalition to mobilize people around the idea that individuals with developmental disabilities want to work as a first option and that there are policy changes needed to make this a reality. Also, progress on the employment front is being made by Project SEARCH, a GCDD sponsored High School internship and employment program. Project SEARCH continues to demonstrate that students and adults with developmental disabilities can get and retain good jobs through partnerships between local communities, schools, businesses, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and GCDD.

**VISION** *The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) envisions a state in which all persons are included in all facets of community life, have choices while exercising control over their lives and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.*

In addition, GCDD Disability Day 2014 featured the “I am *Olmstead*” StoryCorps project during the 15th anniversary celebration of the landmark Supreme Court *Olmstead* decision. This ongoing effort allows people to tell their stories and continues the pressure on the State to close all institutions that have warehoused and segregated people with developmental disabilities.

2013-2014 was an exciting year for GCDD as we focused on a range of social justice and quality of life issues that impact people with disabilities in their communities. We look forward to continuing our work with new and existing partners, within the disability community and beyond, to make this State a better place for everyone.

*Eric E. Jacobson*

## REAL INFLUENCE

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) takes pride in supporting and promoting coherent public policies for integrated life in the community for people with developmental disabilities and the people who support them.

Annually, GCDD organizes advocates during the legislative session held at the Georgia State Capitol. In 2014, it advocated for employment, access to post-secondary education and the Unlock the Waiting



*Olmstead plaintiff, Lois Curtis, greeted the crowd at the 2014 Disability Day. In 2014, GCDD commemorated the 15th anniversary of Olmstead.*

Lists! Campaign. During the legislative session, GCDD held its 16th annual Disability Day at the Capitol that gathered over 2,000 advocates from across the State. The 2014 Disability Day saw support from legislators and included remarks from Governor Nathan Deal, who signed a proclamation declaring it Disability Awareness Day.

*"We All Have A Story ... What's Yours?"* was the theme of the 16th annual



*GCDD's Real Communities Initiative Centenary United Methodist Church congregation in Macon worked to design quilts that display individual gifts and talents and explored how to use them to create inclusive communities.*

Disability Day at the Capitol. The event also commemorated the 15th anniversary of the *Olmstead* decision and welcomed *Olmstead* plaintiff Lois Curtis who was in attendance. In the summer, GCDD also welcomed the National Center for Civil and Human Rights (NCCHR) to Downtown Atlanta. NCCHR includes in-depth displays of global social activism, including disability rights leaders and movements.



*Governor Nathan Deal proclaimed February 20, 2014 as Disability Awareness Day at GCDD's Disability Day at the Capitol.*

# HUMAN RIGHTS

## LEARN MORE



*GCDD welcomed the National Center for Civil and Human Rights to Downtown Atlanta. The center has been inclusive of disability rights within its offering of national and international exhibits.*



*Georgia Institute of Technology's AMAC Accessibility office works on assistive technology solutions for people with disabilities. With assistive technology, people with disabilities are able to participate in the workplace.*



*Edgar Victoria learned various skills at the Cartersville Medical Center through his time in Project SEARCH.*



*Bricio Marban works as a shipping loader after training at Rehabilitation Industries of Northeast Georgia.*



*Professional dance troupe, Full Radius, employs dancers with and without disabilities.*



*Cassidy Bradford from Project SEARCH is a full-time employee at Shaw Industries in Dalton, GA.*

## REAL CAREERS

The priority of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) for Real Careers is to continue promoting a vision where people with significant developmental disabilities can work by replicating best practices such as “customized employment.”

During this fiscal year, GCDD focused on the alarming unemployment rate of people with disabilities, which is currently between 70 to 80%. GCDD advocated for employment throughout the legislative session, and also by funding and supporting various projects to reduce this unacceptable number.

Through its advocacy and grassroots efforts, GCDD succeeded in getting over \$390,000 for 50 supported employment slots for people with developmental disabilities in the 2014 legislative session.

In addition, GCDD spearheaded the Employment First Initiative which promotes employment as the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities. GCDD is also the primary sponsor of Employment First Georgia, a statewide resource promoting innovative, customized employment practices for people with disabilities.

Advocating for life after high school for young adults with disabilities has been a priority for GCDD. Supporting programs such as Project SEARCH, GCDD assists community partners to ready students with disabilities for adult life and meaningful job experiences.

## REAL HOMES

To live in and contribute to communities of their choice, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) believes that people with developmental disabilities deserve decent, safe and affordable housing as well as access to the necessary supports and services.

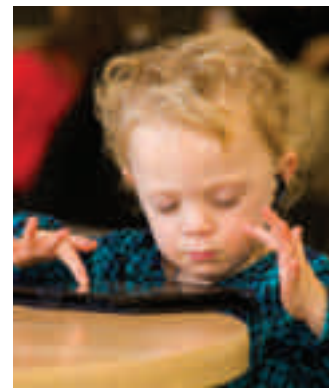
In 2014, the disability community celebrated the 15th anniversary of the *Olmstead* decision, the landmark US Supreme Court case that found unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

*Olmstead* plaintiff, Lois Curtis, was present at the 16th annual Disability Day at the Capitol, which is held during the legislative session. Through advocacy, GCDD's public policy team succeeded in having the Georgia General Assembly add more Medicaid waivers to allow individuals to move from facilities and institutions to a community of their choice – the basis of the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision.

GCDD also commemorated the anniversary with a *Making a Difference* magazine guest column series on *Olmstead* by Talley Wells, the director of the Disability Integration Project at Atlanta Legal Aid Society. As one of the founding members of the Children's Freedom Initiative, GCDD continued to work with a coalition of advocates that rallied behind the initiative that ensures children are given the chance to live with permanent, loving families in a community setting rather than institutions or facilities.



*Olmstead* activists came together to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the landmark US Supreme Court decision last year.



Including advocacy for children, GCDD joined the Children's Freedom Initiative coalition to allow children to live in loving homes in integrated communities.





*Undeniably, the progress toward equality and civil rights is marked by real and measured accomplishments.*

• ACCESSIBILITY • ADVOCACY •  
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES  
ACT • BELOVED COMMUNITY  
• CIVIL RIGHTS • COLLECTIVE  
ACTION • COMMUNITY •  
DISABILITY RIGHTS • ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT • EDUCATION  
• EMPATHY • EMPLOYMENT •  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY • FAMILY  
• FRIENDSHIP • GRASSROOTS •  
HUMAN RIGHTS • INCLUSION •  
INTERDEPENDENCE • LOVE  
• OLMSTEAD • REAL CAREERS •  
REAL COMMUNITIES • REAL  
HOMES • REAL INFLUENCE  
• REAL LEARNING • REAL  
SUPPORTS • SOCIAL JUSTICE  
• VOTING RIGHTS •

*(Photo on reverse) Lady Justice balancing the scales of justice, the American disability flag and GCDD's Disability Day at the Capitol – aligning symbols of social justice and disability rights.*





*Attendees signed the petition at the 2014 Disability Day at the Capitol.*



*Advocates from partner organizations rallied for more services and supports.*



*Talley Wells and Olmstead activists gathered together to mark the anniversary of the law.*



*2014 marked the 15th anniversary of the Olmstead decision, the landmark US Supreme Court case that declared people with disabilities have the right to choose to live in the community. At the 2014 Disability Day at the Capitol, StoryCorps recorded "I am Olmstead" stories documenting transition from institutions and facilities into communities.*

# 2014 BUDGET - EXPENDITURES

PERIOD COVERED THIS REPORT:  
OCTOBER 1, 2013 -  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

## EXPENDITURES..... EXPENDED

### COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

Real Council..... \$506,106  
Total Council Administration... \$437,975

### PRIORITY AREAS

Real Communities .....\$658,381  
Public Awareness.....\$436,337  
Public Policy .....\$366,732  
Self Advocacy.....\$149,165  
Transition .....\$584,304  
Publicly Funded System .....\$264,330

**Total Funds .....\$2,965,355**



*GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson (left) stands before the crowd with Governor Nathan Deal and wife Sandra at the 2014 Disability Day at the Capitol, GCDD's annual advocacy event.*



*Andrew Furey speaks to reporters at the 2014 Disability Day at the Capitol.*

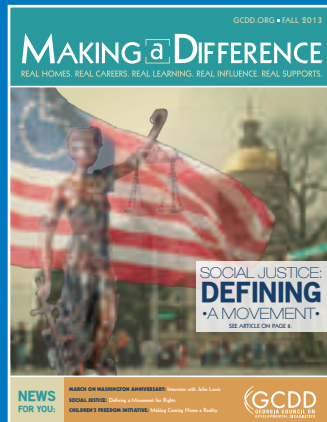


*Attendees advocate for employment, additional waivers, post-secondary education and more at Disability Day.*

Lois Curtis, one of the plaintiffs of the *Olmstead v. L.C.*, declares proudly "I am Olmstead."



Covers of Making a Difference magazine published during the time period of the annual report (right).



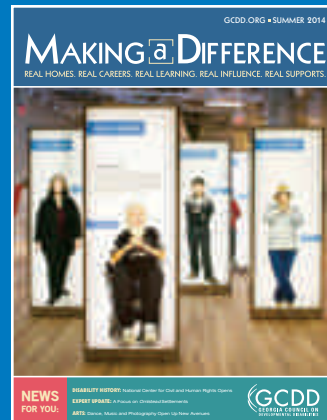
Making a Difference Fall 2013



Making a Difference Spring 2014



Making a Difference Winter 2014



Making a Difference Summer 2014

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Mitzi R. Proffitt**, *Parent Advocate, Brooklet*

**Thomas Connelly**, *Self Advocate, Albany*

**Josette Akhras**, *Parent Advocate, Eatonton*

**Geneice McCoy**, *Parent Advocate, Augusta*

**Lisa Newbern**, *Parent Advocate/Advisory Member, Atlanta*



*GCDD Council Members (Row 1, l to r) Ruby Moore, Colleen Pirkle, Tom Connelly, Teresa Brenner, Kylie Moore, (Row 2, l to r) Teresa Johnson, Josette Akhras, Evan Nodvin, Teresa Ann Heard, Geneice McCoy, Mitzi Proffitt, Jason Bearden, GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson, (Row 3, l to r) Lisa Newbern, Deborah Hibben, Farah Chapes and Daniel Crimmins, (not pictured) Esma Campbell and Dr. Zolinda Stoneman.*



**Josette Akhras**, Parent  
Advocate, Eatonton

**Jason Bearden**, Local Nonprofit/  
Provider, Canton

**Teresa Brenner**, Self Advocate/  
Advisory Member, Bryon

**Esma Campbell**, Parent  
Advocate/Advisory  
Member, Savannah

**Farah Chapes**, Local Nonprofit/  
Provider, Atlanta

**Thomas Connelly**, Self  
Advocate, Albany

**Daniel Crimmins**, Center  
for Leadership in  
Disability – Georgia State  
University, Atlanta

**Deborah Gay**, Georgia  
Department of  
Education, Atlanta

**Dorothy Harris**, Self Advocate/  
Advisory Member, Fitzgerald

**Teresa Ann Heard**, Local  
Nonprofit/Provider, Albany

**Deborah C. Hibben**, Parent  
Advocate, McDonough

**Teresa Johnson**, Parent  
Advocate/Advisory  
Member, Monroe

**Geneice McCoy**, Parent  
Advocate, Augusta

**Kylie Moore**, Self Advocate/  
Advisory Member, Roswell

**Ruby Moore**, Georgia  
Advocacy Office, Decatur

**Lisa Newbern**, Parent Advocate/  
Advisory Member, Atlanta

**Evan H. Nodvin**, Self  
Advocate, Atlanta

**Colleen Pirkle**, Local  
Nonprofit/Advisory  
Member, Gainesville

**Mitzi R. Proffitt**, Parent  
Advocate, Brooklet

**Dr. Zolinda Stoneman**, Institute  
of Human Development  
& Disability – University  
of Georgia, Athens



**Mitzi R. Proffitt**,  
Council Chair



**Eric Jacobson**,  
Executive Director

## GCDD STAFF

**Dottie Adams**, Individual and Family  
Supports Director

**Dawn Alford**, Public Policy Planning  
Specialist

**Gary Childers**, Chief Financial Officer

**Caitlin Childs**, Organizing Director,  
Real Communities Initiative

**Eric Foss**, Front Receptionist

**Eric Jacobson**, Executive Director

**Jhai James**, Public Information  
Associate/Social Media Coordinator

**Cheri Pace**, Organizing Coordinator,  
Real Communities Initiative

**Kim Person-Hudson**, Executive  
Assistant/Meeting Planner

**D'Arcy Robb**, Public Policy Director

**Sharon Strandberg**, Grants Manager

**Valerie Meadows Suber**,  
Public Information Director  
and Making a Difference  
Magazine Editor-in-Chief

## FUNDED AND SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES - FY 2014



Student members of Partnerships for Success participate in social activities and community service projects to develop self-determination skills.

- **16th Annual GCDD Disability Day at the Capitol, Theme: "We All Have A Story ... What's Yours?"**
- **2013 Annual Report**
- **ASPIRE – Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement**
- **CARE-M Georgians for a Healthy Future**
- **Conference Sponsorships**
- **Employment First Georgia Initiative**
- **Georgia Microboards Association**
- **GCDD Social Media:**
  - *Capitol Impact* Database/List Serve & Advocacy Network
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - YouTube
- **GCDD Website:**
  - Blogs
  - Events Calendar
  - Funding Opportunities
  - *Making a Difference* Magazine online
  - *Making a Difference* Cartoon Gallery
  - *Moving Forward* Legislative Newsletter online
  - News & Media
  - Photo Gallery
  - Public Policy
  - Real Communities
  - Resources
- ***Making A Difference* Magazine print**
- ***Moving Forward* Legislative Newsletter print**
- **Partnership Funds**
- **Partnerships for Success:**
  - Barrow County
  - Bartow County
  - Bryan County
  - Cobb County
  - Colquitt County
  - City of Decatur
  - Douglas County
  - Hall County
  - Thomas County
  - Walton County
  - White County
  - Whitfield County
- **People First Georgia**
- **Post-Secondary Programs:**
  - Columbus State University
  - East Georgia State College and Univ.
  - Inclusive Post-Secondary Consortium
  - Kennesaw State Univ. Academy for Inclusive Education and Social Growth
- **Project SEARCH:**
  - Albany
  - Atlanta (3)
  - Cartersville
  - Dalton (2)
  - Douglas
  - Gainesville
  - Moultrie
  - Savannah (2)
  - Springfield
  - Thomasville
  - Waycross
- **Real Communities Initiatives:**
  - Clarkston Global Growers
  - Centenary UMC, Macon
  - Forsyth Farmers' Market, Savannah
  - Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty
  - Korean Coalition
  - Women on the Rise
- **Youth Summit**
- **SOPOS Housing Coalition**
- **Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign**



## COMMISSIONERS

**Commissioner Frank Berry,**  
*Georgia Department  
of Behavioral Health &  
Developmental Disabilities*

**Commissioner David Cook,**  
*Georgia Department of  
Community Health*

**Commissioner Gretchen Corbin,**  
*Department of Community Affairs*

**Commissioner Peggy Fitzgerald,**  
*Georgia Department  
of Public Health*

**Commissioner Clyde L. Reese, III Esq.,**  
*Georgia Department  
of Human Services*

**Commissioner Greg Schmeig,**  
*Georgia Vocational  
Rehabilitation Agency*

*Photo: The American disability flag is waved proudly by Carol Jones over the crowd of advocates at the 2014 Disability Day at the Capitol.*



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