

SUMMER
2004

Making a Difference

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Customized
Employment
Makes
Dreams
Come
True

Keith Woodall
& Troy Aquila

Transition to Work
Stakeholders Hammer
Out Best Practices

Point/Counterpoint
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Summer 2004

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,

It was a real pleasure to see my wife on the cover of the last issue doing what she really loves to do, working with Georgia's children. Mary and I both take to heart the needs of our children and the special needs of children with developmental disabilities (DD).

As you will learn in this edition, Georgia is well focused on jobs, job training and transitioning into the work place and community for Georgia's disability community.

Today, Marriott's reservation center employs 50 people with disabilities and values each one's ability and contribution. In addition, Marriott supports a very successful internship program for young people with disabilities in Georgia. Inclusion in the workplace is becoming a reality, and Marriott stands as an example for other Georgia businesses to follow.

A full range of job preparation and job training opportunities programs are available throughout the state through community rehabilitation centers, Georgia's "One-Stop" Employment Centers and, upon acceptance, the state's technical colleges and universities.

As we move toward individualized employment training and opportunities, we should all be excited as a Customized Employment program is expanded to 11 new sites. This program matches job seekers' interests with the needs of small businesses seeking strategic partnerships, expanded resources and special equipment. The creative solutions and new jobs being created are amazing.

In addition, I am working hard to set policy and budget priorities aimed at assuring that persons with disabilities have appropriate access and choice for community services and placements. I am working to reduce institutional bias, expand access to home and community based services, support the transfer of individuals from institutions into suitable community settings and to build infrastructure and the capacity to provide community supports. All of these efforts are to support our Olmstead plan.

To underscore this commitment to Georgia's Olmstead plan, my FY 2003 and FY 2004 budget called for investment of over \$11 million dollars in state funds for the state's long-term care delivery system. And my FY 05 budget adds \$7 million in state funds. This additional money was provided despite the tough economic times and the hundreds of millions of dollars of cuts the rest of the state experienced. This funding supported:

- 1) Over 700 people with DDs who were on waiting lists are now receiving community services, including 65 children who were transferred from state hospitals to community settings;
- 2) Transitioning 20 individuals with DDs from hospitals to the community (\$1,161,154);
- 3) Placement of 25 children with disabilities in state operated group homes;
- 4) 10 new slots (\$318,035) to the Mental Retardation Waiver Program;
- 5) Increasing the Community Care Services Program by 460 new slots and covering the increased cost of care (\$4,600,000);
- 6) Five additional slots (\$100,000) to the Independent Care Waiver Program;
- 7) Opening of four intensive supervision homes by MHDDAD to serve 40 severely emotionally disturbed adolescents transitioning from state hospitals to the community;
- 8) Providing additional regulatory staff to license and monitor community living arrangements (\$100,000);
- 9) Funding the Community Care Services Program, for older adults desiring to avoid nursing home care, to cover the increased cost of care so that an estimated 13,611 people (11,400 slots) will be served in FY 2004. In addition, funding was added to support the transition of 84 residents from nursing homes to community settings.

The State of Georgia is working hard to make real jobs, real homes, real education and real options available to the disability community. I look forward to our continued partnerships as we work to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Sonny Perdue
Governor





Disability Community Demands Better Jobs

“America works best when all Americans work,” so says U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao. If we look at the application of those words and apply them to those with developmental disabilities, we find that America is in a deep depression.

For the one in five Americans with disabilities, or nearly 50 million people, the unemployment rate is 49 percent for women and 40 percent for men.

In a society where having a job translates into personal productivity, value, worth and integration into a community, employment for those with disabilities is probably more important than for those without disabilities.

With a job that pays a valued wage, a person earns money to purchase goods, services, dignity and confidence. They go to the mall to shop, they are in grocery stores buying milk, bread, meat and vegetables. They rent an apartment or buy a house, go on vacation to the beach or mountains. They pay taxes so that they are able to give back to the community some of what they gain by being employed. Without the means to earn an income, these daily life activities are difficult, if not impossible.

Like residential services where we are taking people out of hospitals and nursing homes and placing them in communities, employment for people with disabilities has evolved, too.

It was once acceptable for people with disabilities to work in sheltered workshops where they put together packages for pennies a day. Disability employment advocates like Mark Gold and others helped change that perception. Now we know that people with disabilities can work almost anywhere performing almost any task.

In the 1970s, with people like Gold, Marian Jay, Philip Jay and Joy Hopkins, Georgia was seen as an innovator in helping people with disabilities go to work. Today, Georgia is once again seen as innovative because of the work of Jennifer Briggs, Wendy Parent, Doug Crandell and Nancy Brooks-Lane.

The common thread here is that they help people get jobs from a strength-based approach. They work to identify an individual’s interests and strengths, and then create jobs and supports that make the employment opportunity successful.



Without the means to earn an income, these daily life activities are difficult, if not impossible.

So, if Michael wants to sell surfer clothes near the beach, or Amy’s dream is to work in a law office, or Stan wants to build houses, these dream, desires, wishes become reality through “customized employment.”

Our society needs to understand and respect an individual’s desire and strengths. Then, work with employers to develop jobs. If employers are not available, it may mean helping the individual with the disability start their own businesses. This shouldn’t be so far-fetched.

Millions of Americans own business or work from their home; why shouldn’t that be the same for people with disabilities? The days of people with disabilities working at the check-out counter at supermarket or home fix-it store should be history and prehistoric thinking.

Our efforts currently underway in Georgia are being translated into new job opportunities for hundreds of people with disabilities. Customized employment is being developed around the state. The U.S. Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy and others are looking to Georgia for the new models for helping people with disabilities find meaning in life through employment.

The Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities endorses and supports customized employment and encourages others to explore the possibilities.

We support the employment themes and goals that have emerged from The Arc of the United States, State-of-the-Art: National Goals Conference.

Simply stated, they suggest:

- Everyone who wants to go to work is supported to get a job.
- National and state policies should not be barriers to people who want to be in community-integrated employment.
- Expand quality competitive employment, customized employment, self-employment or other integrated work alternatives.
- Students are involved in multiple paid integrated work experiences, leaving high school with a job.

This edition of *Making a Difference* is dedicated to understanding the options that exist for people who want to work and to those who are working to “try another way” and helping people with disabilities get real jobs. I invite your comments, please reach me at eejacobson@dhr.state.ga.us or 1-888-275-4233.

Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD



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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It is the policy of *Making A Difference* to publish readers' comments. Contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of GCDD, the editors or state government.

Great Resource

I would like to distribute the Spring 2004 *Making A Difference* to all of the state and field Child And Parent Services consultants for DFCS. It would be an excellent resource for them.

Thanks for the great work that you do!

Carol Hartman, *Policy Consultant
Childcare and Parent Services*

Increased Awareness

The *Making a Difference* magazine has done an increasingly good job of informing Georgians of issues of disability and increasing advocacy and awareness of the issues that affect individuals with disabilities.

We hope to strengthen a relationship between *Making a Difference* magazine and the GCDD, and Georgia's CILs in which we all strive to increase opportunities for Georgians with disabilities.

Rebecca Ramage-Tuttle, *M.S.R.S.
Executive Director
disABILITY LINK*

Impressive Publication for Georgia

I had seen *Making a Difference* before, as a Grant Management Consultant with our state's Real Choice Partnership, and been duly impressed.

I've been asked to explore the possibility of putting something similar together. Only yesterday one of my colleagues, who attended a conference in Atlanta last week, came back raving about "this awesome magazine" she had found in GA - *Making a Difference*, of course!

Like I said, we're huge fans. Congratulations on a fine publication!

Ruben Betancourt,
*Director of
Communications
Florida Developmental
Disabilities Council*

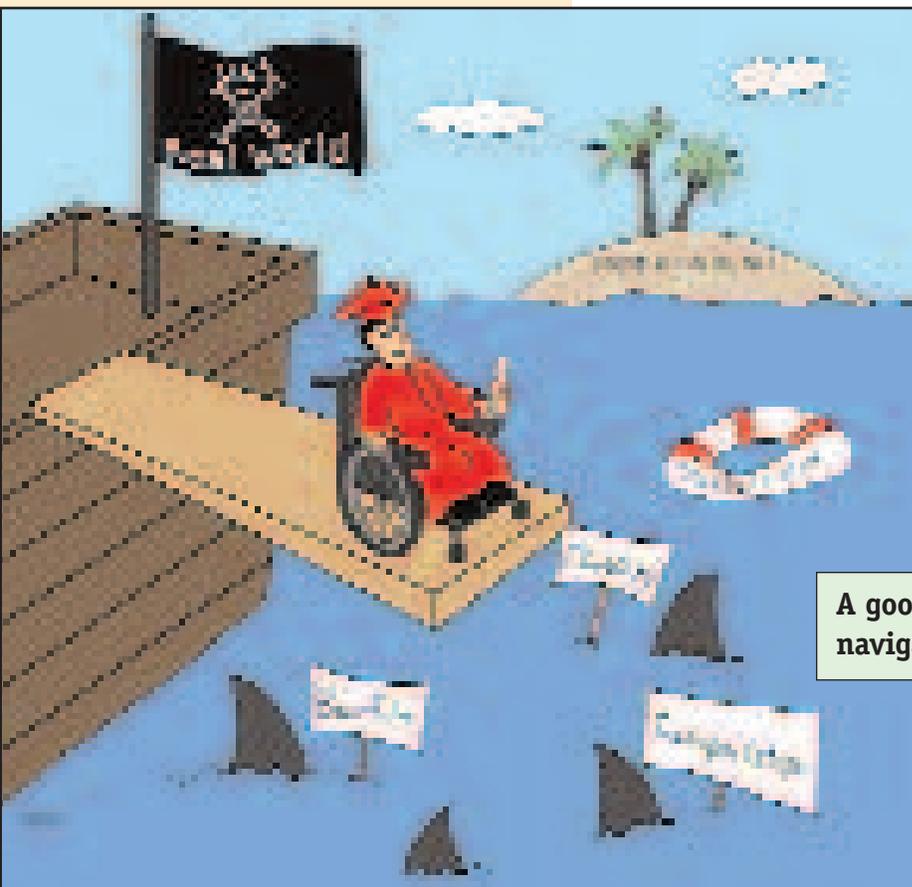


Information Valuable to Allied Organization

As the state director of AARP Georgia, I have been pleased to see how our interests on behalf of Georgians have often intersected with those of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Unlock the Waiting Lists! campaign. The *Making a Difference* Discovery Tour was an eye-opening experience which increased my interest in strengthening ties between our organizations. I think the *Making a Difference* magazine is informative and helpful for keeping up with some of the issues our constituents share.

We hope the Council will continue to publish the magazine and continue the good job of keeping citizens informed.

William F. Brown, *Interim State Director
AARP Georgia*



A good transition plan can help you navigate your way to independence.

Election Season Heats Up

As election season is fast approaching, don't forget to register to vote no later than October 2, 2004 to ensure your voice is heard. Find out how candidates in your district feel about the issues that are expected to affect the disability community this year:



- Need for increased budget for home and community-based services and compliance with Olmstead decision that requires states to move people from institutions to the community.
- Revising the election code to remove barriers to voting for people with disabilities.
- Ensuring any education reform includes appropriate services for children with disabilities.
- How potential budget cuts affect services and supports for people with disabilities and their families.

Accommodations for Voters with Disabilities

To register to vote, you must first complete a voter registration application. If you need assistance completing the application as a result of a physical disability or illiteracy, you may request assistance. The individual providing assistance must sign the oath provided on the registration form.

Voting at the Polling Place

- The Secretary of State's office is working to ensure that all Georgia polling places are fully accessible and that county poll officers are prepared to address the needs of all voters.

- For information on the accessibility of your polling place, please call your county election superintendent. You may call the Secretary of State's office at 404-656-2871 to obtain the contact information for your county.
- If you will need special accommodations at the polling place on Election Day, contact your county election superintendent to request assistance.
- During the check-in process at the polling place, a voter who is unable to sign his or her name may receive assistance from poll officers to complete any paperwork.
- Polling places in Georgia are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. If you are 75 years of age or older or have a disability and arrive at the polling place between 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., you are not required to wait in line. A voter should inform a poll officer if he or she wishes to take advantage of this.

Voting Assistance

- State-of-the-art touch screen voting units were introduced in Nov. '02.
- These units display a magnified or large-print ballot for voters who are unable to read smaller print.
- An audio ballot is available at each precinct for voters who are visually impaired or blind.
- With the audio ballot, voters are supplied with headphones and a numeric keypad. As voters hear candidates' names and questions, voters respond to prompts by touching the keypad. A poll manager can fully explain these features.
- Voting terminals can be set up for easy access to individuals who are voting from a seated position, such as those who use a wheelchair.
- Georgia law provides that a voter may receive assistance in voting in any primary or election if there is a physical disability which prevents them from being able to see or mark the ballot, operate the voting equipment or enter the voting

compartment or booth. The voter simply takes an oath administered by the poll manager, and the person assisting the voter signs the oath.

Voting Absentee

- A registered voter must meet certain criteria under the law to request an absentee ballot. They must provide one of the following reasons in order to vote absentee: a required absence from his or her precinct on Election Day, the individual is 75 years of age or older, or the individual has a physical disability.
- A voter who has a disability or is illiterate may receive assistance with the absentee ballot application.
- After completing an absentee ballot application, you may mail, fax or present it in person to the voter registration office of the county where you are registered to vote.
- You may receive your absentee ballot in one of three ways:
 1. An absentee ballot can be delivered by mail to your home.
 2. You may vote absentee in person. Each county has at least one absentee ballot precinct, which is generally located at the county voter registration office.
 3. An absentee ballot may be delivered to a voter confined to a hospital on a primary or general election day.

Regardless of how the ballot arrives, a voter with a physical disability may receive assistance in marking his or her ballot. The person assisting the voter must sign the oath that is provided.

- Georgia law provides that any person who knowingly falsifies information in order to vote illegally by absentee ballot, or who illegally gives or receives assistance in voting will be guilty of a misdemeanor.

For additional information, please call the Elections Division at 404-656-2871 or visit the Secretary of State's Web site at www.sos.state.ga.us/elections.



Walker and Skinner Steer DHR, MHDDAD

Beverly (BJ) Walker became commissioner of Georgia's Department of Human Resources (DHR) May 17, 2004. Walker served as director of Community Operations for the Illinois Department of Human Services, and as assistant to Illinois Governor Jim Edgar for Human Services Reform, she managed a reorganization of the state's human services agencies.

A former professor, Walker also served as curriculum developer, editor and consultant for Chicago Public Schools, American Red Cross and the U.S. Army.

One of Walker's first acts was to appoint **Gwen Skinner** as Director of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) June 16.

Skinner, who has more than 20 years of experience in Georgia's child welfare and juvenile justice systems, most recently served as deputy commissioner of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). She has also headed Department of Juvenile Justice's Division of Community Programs.

Look for more information on both of the new directors in future issues.

State Budget and Bill Update

The following state budgets and bills were changed since our last issue:

Department of Human Resources:

Ten slots added for Unlock the Waiting Lists - \$318,035

Department of Community Health:

Orthotics and prosthetics restored fully - \$3,206,108

During the special session, the Georgia Legislature approved an amended version of HB 869, now called HB 1EX, that includes creating a centralized

collection and distribution agent for all specially designated court fees, costs, criminal penalties and bond surcharges, including those designated for the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund. The bill also includes implementing a new funding and fiscal discipline system for the Indigent Defense Advisory Council.

Advocates Protest HUD Policies

Local housing, disability rights and other social justice activists joined with activists across the country May 26 to demand accountability from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for its failure to provide safe, affordable, accessible and integrated housing to seniors, people with disabilities and low income families.

The **Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program** provides housing to more than two million American families. These vouchers are often the only resource available to low-income families.

HUD has abandoned its commitment to the Section 8 program's success in increasing affordable housing through the issuance of PIH 2004-7 (HA), and by proposing budget cuts to the Section 8 program for FY 2005 that will result in lost housing for 250,000 families across the country. This administrative memorandum will have the following devastating impacts:

- The number of Section 8 vouchers available to the very lowest income citizens will be cut.
- Rents will increase for tenants who are allowed to retain Section 8 vouchers.
- The number of homes available under the program will decrease as HUD refuses to honor funding commitments.



Advocates voice their opposition to HUD decisions.

Activists demanded that HUD stop its attack against Section 8, rescind the memo and adequately fund all vouchers as Congress intended.

Governor Emphasizes Freedom to Self-Determination Conference

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue welcomed nearly 300 people from 24 states to the Immersion Learning about Self-Determination Conference April 28.

The governor said self-determination was basically about freedom, a core value for everyone. "In America, the

most fundamental purpose of government is to protect and expand human freedom. . . . For some groups in our society, redeeming that promise has come slowly, and painfully."

While admitting other states were further along in serving the needs of people with disabilities, Perdue was looking forward to learning from them.

"You come with good ideas, best practices and the advantage of experience. And I expect my Georgia team to have their writing pads out and

(continued on page 8)



Gov. Sonny Perdue (R) with Christopher Hunnicutt Jr.

Governor Emphasizes Freedom *(continued from page 7)*

take good notes!" he said.

Co-sponsored by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Center for Self-Determination, the three-day conference focused on teaching people with disabilities how to obtain the freedom to choose where they live; earn income through a job of their choice; and have the access to educational opportunities and appropriate transportation.

Perdue recognized that these basic liberties must be present to give people with disabilities the same options everyone else has. "I have a vision in which people with disabilities are engaged as full participants in all our communities," he said.

"We should seek a system of services that supports independent living and increased quality of life. Our system should provide individuals of all ages – and their families – with the ability to make meaningful, informed choices about the services they receive. Georgia is committed to self-determination for people with disabilities and their families."

Maria Tetto, who sustained a traumatic brain injury in a car accident, and her father, Frank Tetto, drove to the conference from New Jersey. "Georgia is ahead of New Jersey for people with

disabilities," revealed Frank Tetto.

"Freedom can't wait for years. Funding must be found to give people their basic civil rights," he said.

Maria Tetto agreed, saying, "Freedom is the best choice of all."



Frank and Maria Tetto



Eric Jacobson (left) with Governor Sonny Perdue at the Self-Determination Conference in Atlanta.

Jacobson Elected President of National DD Association

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) elected Eric E. Jacobson, executive director of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), as president of the board of directors during its annual meeting in June.

The NACDD provides assistance and support to 55 state and territorial councils in implementing the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and advocates positive system change while promoting the interests of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

"I applaud the NACDD membership for its wise decision," says Lynnette Bragg, GCDD chairperson. "They are learning across the country what we have known for years about Eric. He is a gifted man with wonderful insights and experiences that make him a valued leader and trusted collaborator."

Marcus Institute Develops FAS Intervention Program

The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Center at The Marcus Institute in Atlanta is one of only four U.S. sites to be awarded a grant by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop intervention programs for children with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), partial fetal alcohol syndrome (pFAS) and alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorders (ARND).

The program will focus on helping children become "ready to learn" and mastering the skills necessary for math. It also offers educational workshops for the caregivers.

Eligible children ages 3 - 9 who have a diagnosis of FAS or pFAS, and their families, will be provided medication management, educational interventions and behavioral management training without cost. Any families who are interested in volunteering can call Donna Dent, MS at 404-419-4253 or Kim Stevenson at 404-419-4257.

May South Studies Effects of Vitamin E on Preventing Alzheimer's Disease in People with Down Syndrome

Individuals with Down syndrome who are older than 50 are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than the general population. Alzheimer's symptoms include a decline in memory, thinking, working and self-help skills.

Vitamin E has been shown to slow these symptoms in some people with Alzheimer's, but whether vitamin E will help older people with Down syndrome is unknown.

May South is participating in a study, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) currently taking place around the U.S. and the world, to determine if vitamin E helps prevent Alzheimer's disease in older individuals with Down syndrome. This project is the first large-scale treatment study of Alzheimer's in people with Down syndrome.

For more information about the research project, contact Co-Investigator/Study Coordinator Janice Nodvin at 770-956-8511, extension 207 or jnodvin@mayinstitute.org.



Advocates March to Bring Awareness to Olmstead Decision

By Terri Theisen

More than 100 angry disability advocates, many of whom use wheelchairs, came together June 19 - 22 to protest the fact that over 5,000 of their fellow Georgians have no access to community services – and thus no access to community-based, independent living.

Currently, about 5,500 Georgians with significant disabilities need help to either stay out of institutions or get out of institutions, and some of these people have been waiting for more than 10 years for appropriate services. Georgia is 45th in national rankings in the proportion of state dollars that are allocated to funding for services for people with developmental disabilities.

A coalition of organizations formed The Long Road Home Campaign to draw attention to this situation. The Long Road Home March began June 19, 2004, at the Old State Capitol in Milledgeville, and concluded Tuesday, June 22, with a presentation to Governor Perdue at the current state capitol in Atlanta, and a Freedom Celebration at Atlanta's City Hall.



in Georgia, the state lags behind in assisting Georgians with disabilities in leading full and productive lives.

Leonard Roscoe, a 34-year-old resident of Decatur, is marching to support services for other people with disabilities. He notes, "All people with disabilities want is what everyone

"Independent living is something that many Georgians take for granted, but for Georgians with disabilities, this is not the daily reality of life."

Independent living is something that many Georgians take for granted, but for Georgians with disabilities, this is not the daily reality of life. The US Supreme Court affirmed (on June 22, 1999) that states must "allow and aid" those who want to live in the community to do so, by providing community-based services rather than institutionalization. Even though this decision, known as the Olmstead decision, originated from a case



else wants: an opportunity to earn a living, be independent, tax-paying citizens and contribute to the life of our communities in a productive manner."

In 1999, the Olmstead decision affirmed the 'integration mandate' of the Americans with Disabilities Act that requires public agencies to provide services "in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities." The high court upheld that mandate, ruling that Georgia's Department of Human Resources could not segregate Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson in a state psychiatric hospital after the agency's own treatment professionals recommended their transfer to community care.

The lower courts ruled the state violated the ADA's integration mandate and Georgia appealed, claiming the ruling could lead to the closing of all state hospitals and disruption of state funding of services to people with mental disabilities.

However, the women were supported by a number of states, disability organizations and others, including the U.S. solicitor general, who said, "The unjustified segregation of people in institutions, when community placement is appropriate, constitutes a form of discrimination prohibited by Title II [of the ADA]."

For information about the Olmstead decision or Georgia's track record in helping citizens with disabilities live independently, visit www.thelongroadhome.org, call Kate Gainer at 678-313-1215 or see the Winter 2003 issue of *Making a Difference*. ●



Marchers hope their actions will convince the state to release more people from nursing facilities and hospitals.



Joining Forces to Improve the Transition Process

A passion for helping students with disabilities more fully participate in their communities after they have graduated from high school has brought stakeholders together from all over Georgia to improve the state's delivery of transition services and supports.

"Transition doesn't work well in isolation," remarked Education Program Coordinator Nancy O'Hara, of the Georgia Department of Education's Division of Exceptional Students. "Many agencies have a stake in transition, not just education."

"You can't have a good transition program without collaboration."

The Statewide Transition Steering Committee includes members from local schools; the state departments of labor, education and human resources; Americans with Disabilities Act representatives; continuing education experts; service providers; parents; and benefits navigators.

"You can't have a good transition program without collaboration," revealed Rockdale County Transition Coordinator Denise Oravec.

The group identifies barriers to successful transitioning at the state, local and student levels and determines what can be done to remove those barriers and create a smoother transition process. As a result of research, the group has developed a list of "Principles to Guide the Delivery of Transition Services in Georgia"

and has presented these principles across the state to ensure local agencies and suppliers coordinate together to best meet the needs of each student.

"An effective transition process will weave a student's strengths and acquired skills from high school with resources, natural supports and relationships in the community. Significant investments in high school should result in a promising future after school, the same as we would hope for any student," commented

committee member Pat Nobbie, of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, whose daughter is currently in the transition process.

O'Hara pointed out, "Each community is different, and what works in one school district might not work in another. This committee has gathered resources and best practices that we can share with local school districts to help them improve their transition process."

The committee also helps students and families prepare for post-secondary programs and services. "The major change is that students are entitled to school and transition services. Most post-secondary services are provided based on eligibility," explained Workforce Development Coordinator Jan Cribbs of the Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program.

For example, when students with disabilities are in public school, the school identifies and recommends services and supports to help students succeed. But when students go to college or enter the workforce, they must identify or self-disclose any services or supports they need and meet eligibility requirements to receive those services.



Rachel Fisher, upper left, and Rene Ponder, upper right, of Rockdale County High School, help Louise Davidson, upper middle, of Kohl's train students (from left) Danny Henri, Shamika Green and Lindsay Garner.

Principles to Guide the Delivery of Transition Services in Georgia

- 1 Transition must be an interagency process, involving all agencies, systems and individuals in the community who can assist a student with a disability to be successful.
- 2 Transition planning must be student and family driven. Students will become and participate as active self-advocates throughout the transition planning process.
- 3 Transition planning will prepare students for the transition from school to work and beyond by providing information, counseling, support and experiences throughout the process.
- 4 Transition planning strives to develop continuity and stability of services and supports throughout the person's life.
- 5 Transition planning strives to link the person with the community to develop purposeful friendships/relationships with individuals who can serve as natural supports and role models.

“Many agencies have a stake in transition, not just education.”

When students and parents are made aware of this change in the way benefits are awarded, they can plan ahead to ensure services are not interrupted upon completion of high school.

Georgia's VR program now offers school systems the opportunity to participate in a “collaborative agreement” in which systems pay to receive more dedicated services from a VR counselor.

“In this arrangement, counselors can set certain times when they'll be on site. This allows them to be able to attend more IEP meetings and to provide systems more services,” explained Cribbs.

All students receiving special education services and accommodations meet with a VR counselor at least once before leaving school to develop a work plan based on what the student wants and is able to do. “If the student's goals include post-secondary education at college or a technical school, VR can offer some financial assistance,” Cribbs said. In addition, VR brings in assistive work technology specialists to determine if any special accommodations are needed to help students as they enter the workforce.

Needs for job coaching and further training are also assessed and addressed in the work plan.

Cribbs encourages school systems to implement the collaborative agreement program because it allows VR counselors to dedicate more time to schools, participate more in the transition process and interact with students from an earlier age.

Another important consideration during the transition process is that Medicaid and Social Security income can be affected when students turn 18 or enter the workforce. Curtis Rodgers, a project director for the Benefits Navigator program at Shepherd Center, works with the committee.

“Some students and parents are surprised when the Social Security Administration (SSA) performs an Age 18 Redetermination and starts regarding the student as an adult. The SSA looks at students' assets and decides whether they should remain on Social Security or not,” Rodgers said.

The transition process plays a critical role in helping students maintain their benefits. “The school should document how many hours a student

Best Practices in Transitioning

- Transitioning should be addressed as early as when the student enters school.
- All planning should start with the student's goals. Supports should be built around those goals, instead of trying to fit the goals into what supports are available. Transition team members should remember the student's goals may change and they should listen and respect the goals.
- The student should be involved at an early age.
- The transition process should help the student become self determined.
- All agencies, systems and service providers that may assist students with transitioning should be included in the planning. This avoids duplication of services, provides more flexibility and choice and is more likely to produce the student's desired outcome.
- Open communication amongst the agencies helps promote a smooth, collaborative relationship that is focused on the student's needs.



works in their community, how much support they require and if they will need ongoing support services to maintain community involvement,” Rodgers explained.

This documentation can help students show what support services they need. In addition, Social Security and Medicaid take into account related work expenses, such as job coaches, assistive technologies, transportation costs, medication, etc., before determining if any benefits should be reduced based on salary.

According to Rodgers, people with disabilities can earn up to \$21,337 per year and still receive Medicaid coverage. If people make more than that, but can deduct some of their related work expenses, they can get their income to the correct level to keep their health coverage.

The Benefits Navigator counselors help individuals successfully plan their transition to work, while retaining as many Social Security and Medicaid benefits as they need. Rodgers strongly advises students to take advantage of the counselors' free advice during the transition process.

“We can conduct phone counseling or one on one counseling during an IEP meeting to make sure students start off on the right foot when they transition,” he said. “People should contact us whenever they have a change, such as a raise, because benefits planning is different for everyone.”

Social Security benefits advice is free in Georgia. Call 866-772-2726 or visit www.bpaoga.com to find a benefits counselor. ●

Gloria, right, of Gloria's Flowers and Gifts, shows Candis how to retrieve information from the computer to complete her orders.

“The transition process can play a critical role in helping students maintain their benefits...”

Interagency Cooperation Helps School Districts Provide Smoother Transitions

Transitioning from school to “real life” can be a scary proposition, especially if students haven’t had access to the proper training or learned the appropriate skills for the working world.

To ensure their students are equipped to meet the challenges of the work place, Dawson, Hall and Rockdale county school systems have been on the cutting edge of transitioning special education students from school to work.

Transitional Facilitator Sandra Tankersley, who also teaches special education full time, spearheads rural Dawson County’s school-to-work initiative.

“Our program focuses on work-based learning to help students start on the transition continuum,” Tankersley said. Most students spend about half the day at school in functional academics and electives such as technical education classes and the other half in community-based learning classes. The amount of work or school hours can be adjusted to the needs of individual students.

In Hall County, Special Education Coordinator Susan Wright supports teachers and students throughout each transition process, whether it

entails moving from elementary to middle school, or from high school to work or college.

“Transition can’t start in high school; it must start much earlier,” Wright said. “Parents should define where they want to see their child at age 22 in elementary school.”

Denise Oravec, Transition Coordinator for suburban Rockdale County agrees. “While the transition process legally begins at age 14, transitioning is now addressed first on the IEP (Individualized Education Program) form because the whole foundation of the IEP is for the student to meet the goals and objectives to ensure a successful transition outcome,” Oravec said.

When desired outcomes are identified early,

schools and/or other related agencies can recommend the supports, adaptations or other services needed to obtain those outcomes.

Each of the three counties offer similar programs to students upon entering high school. Students begin in ninth grade with about a year of school-based vocational instruction. “We like to do some training at school first so we can get to know the students,” Tankersley explained.

During the year, the students’ skills and career interests are assessed, and some schools offer some in-school job training, such as filing or working in the cafeteria. Functional academics such as reading, writing, math and science are required. If the student is interested in a technical career, Hall County offers classes in cosmetology, graphic arts and other topics. More emphasis is put on general curriculum classes for students who plan to go to college or technical school.

After the school-based instruction is complete, students start community-based vocational instruction, where they receive job-related skills training, such as the importance of being on time and good personal hygiene, from teachers or paraprofessionals at local businesses. Here, students also learn skills particular to the job.

In Dawson County, the next step is an internship.

“Parents should define, in elementary school, where they want to see their child at age 22.”

“After they’ve successfully completed the community-based vocational instruction, we find students an internship specific to what they want to

do,” Tankersley said. During the internship, the students perform the job without having a teacher or paraprofessional there.

“We’ve had several students get hired by the company they worked for during their internship,” she revealed.





Shatara, left, works on secretarial skills with Joanne McKie, a learning support secretary.

Transition Innovations

Dawson County

Collaborative agreement with Vocational Rehabilitation ensures a VR counselor is at the high school two days per week.

Parent advocate arranges informational meetings for parents.

Mental health and drug rehabilitation professionals are included in the interagency council, and students meet with a counselor weekly.

Rockdale County

Full time transition coordinator provides support for students through all transitions: elementary to middle school; middle to high school; high school to post secondary.

Transition coordinator is responsible for all programs and services and provides ongoing training to teachers.

Input from the student, parent and teachers help the transition committee determine the best course of action.

Hall County

Communication between teachers and families before IEP meetings is encouraged to ensure the right supporting agencies will be there to address issues.

Teachers are trained in good transition process.

Good communication practices are developed with parents, from elementary through high school.

Rockdale County also offers an internship program for students with mild mental or intellectual disabilities. "I'm excited about our program," said Oravec. "We'll have an intern coordinator working with students to first facilitate career exploration as a group, then oversee job shadowing in small groups, then finally place students in internships based on their interests."

Those who have more moderate or severe disabilities who may not yet be able to perform at an internship alone receive additional job coaching through Vocational Rehabilitation, or are put in more supportive job environments.

The fourth step of the process is work adjustment or work exit. Students who receive paying jobs after internships may continue to go to school until they graduate, but may no longer need the job training services offered by the high school.

Those who do not leave their internships with jobs enter work adjustment, or related vocational instruction, in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).

Transition leaders from all three counties

feel working with related agencies is really helping their students.

"We teach our students to become self determined and self advocates so they can tell us what their dreams are. Our interagency cooperation provides the support system they need to make their dreams come true," Oravec said.

In Hall County, Wright has found, "With better communication between the school, students and parents, we have been able to ensure the right supporting agencies come to the IEP meetings to address what the student needs."

Tankersley has also been impressed with the work in her county. "The interagency teamwork here is tremendous. It's a really good program. We still have a long way to go, but we're getting there," she said. ●

"We teach our students to become self determined and self advocates so they can tell us what their dreams are."

The Community as the Training Ground

By Jennifer Briggs, Briggs & Associates

Life is not a dress rehearsal for any of us. To continually have to work at something that you may never achieve or care to achieve in order to gain permission to become gainfully employed is how some people have to access the real world. After school, we are invited and expected to join the workforce. Our true work experience comes on the job, while we rely on the skills learned during our school years. There should not be a phase of a proving ground for anyone. If your choice is to work, it should be an option 'as you are.' Our communities are not complete without the participation of all of its members. As adults, valued participation comes through productively sharing your talents in a way that elicits dollars in return. It has been demonstrated that the more people with disabilities participate in their community's

the actual task of finding employment, the way it is normally done, and in the environment in which it is done. With support, they find opportunities, network their own skills, complete applications and interview for jobs that pay competitive wages directly with the employers. When they start a job, they have already connected with their employer's environment and have begun the natural building process within their new work environment. The employer's personnel have also had the opportunity to begin to know and understand the new employee and how they might best support the individual for mutual success.

Experience has shown that the behavior of people with disabilities tends to reflect their environment. With on-the-job training, with a job coach, the individual gets to perform their actual job, working with their co-workers who will be with them on a day-to-day basis. With on-the-job training, co-workers serve as role models to the supported employees who then learn behaviors that are expected of them every day. This is an efficient learning environment that is of particular benefit to individuals who might have difficulty transferring behavior sets and skills learned elsewhere.

There is a myriad of ways to perform any one task. With on-site training, the employer is directly involved, so training can be tailored to their needs. Each employer has the opportunity to ensure the individual is trained to perform the job exactly the way they want it done. For the employee this means fully participating in all of the communications and interactions particular to their specific work setting. Again, they do not have to re-learn skills, methods, terms, processes or policies learned elsewhere.

On-site job training is also a more efficient use of public funding. There is no need for a separate facility. Training takes place in the businesses where the individuals are employed. Furthermore, the employer's staff handles much of the training so the need for on-site specialist trainers is reduced.

For all of the above reasons, community-based job training is a win/win process for all stakeholders – individuals with disabilities, their employers and co-workers. Most importantly, however, it is the beginning of the individual's work experience that lays the groundwork for their development of invaluable supports through their workplace, friendships with fellow workers and confidence in their abilities to successfully participate in their community, more independently, with their fellow community members.

Careers are built by real world work and experience; this is not dress rehearsal for any of us. ●



Jennifer Briggs

is President of Briggs & Associates, a private company founded in 1989 and dedicated solely to the delivery and promotion of supported employment services. The company has served over 700 Georgians with disabilities, enabling them obtain competitive employment and develop their careers.

normal environment, the more both they and the community benefit and blend. An integral part of that environment is work – employment in one's own community.

There is dignity in earning a living. We cannot assume that people with disabilities will be seen as equals if we continue to train and act with a separate but equal mentality. Equality is built by sharing common experience and expectations in the larger community. The structure of Supported Employment (community-based job development and training for people with disabilities) lends itself perfectly to experience this connection to community. Equality is not reached by protecting people from or perpetually training people for the experience of sharing a lunch with a co-worker, rather by allowing them to develop an identity as an individual by working in environments that are socially "normal."

With supported employment the person who wants a job learns the job search process first-hand. They learn





Why Center-Based Training is Important in Georgia

By Annette Bowling, Albany Advocacy Resource Center (Albany ARC)

The question I constantly ask myself is: "If center-based programs are not an option in Georgia, then why are they being funded at the state level?" There must be a definite value in center-based day programs and services for consumers with developmental disabilities. I witness that value in many of the Albany ARC's day programs and services.

The Lions Learning, Rehabilitation and Independent Living Center is an example of Albany ARC's center-based day programs and services that teach consumers transferable skills to better prepare them in their personal lives, as well as for work. Among some of the day services provided there are Independent Living Skills, Literacy and Adult Education Training, Work Adjustment Training, Assistive Computer Technology and Braille Instruction.

Marianne Ellis, Director of Thomas Grady Service Center in Thomasville, Georgia also asserts the value of center-based day programs. This center is a day program that serves 150 people in two counties. Thomas Grady has a facility in each county as well as numerous services in the community. The program provides responsive services in a casual atmosphere. Ellis, who has worked in the DD field for 30 years, said, "Neither facility nor community services should be excluded from consideration—services should take place in the best place for the person. In rural Georgia, sometimes the facility with plenty of varied work and engaging activities is a good anchor for a person's life while connecting him to the community. Our program has lots of varied work options in and out of the facility. The key is flexibility. No one plan is perfect for everyone, and programs should design services around the person and his or her situation. Using a mix of community and/or facility training according to each person's situation works in our community."

There are many other organizations throughout Georgia experiencing consumer success through center-based day programs and services, allowing consumers to live more independent lives. These center-based day programs and services allow a consumer to make friends and develop social roles in the community. That in turn puts the consumer in a position to choose personal goals and plan his or her future in the least restrictive environment. The ultimate goal of course is for the consumer to strive for gainful employment in their community. But that is not always a reality. So the challenge remains to take a good look at the Best Practices for center-based day programs and services being used and to develop Best Practices guidelines that help consumers become more independent and self sufficient.

There are many possibilities within your own communities that can open doors of employment opportunity and remove barriers for consumers without the academic skills to receive a diploma or GED. Albany ARC is currently partnering with Albany Technical College to look beyond traditional educational requirements to develop a certified instruction program that will provide job skills training in areas where consumers can excel, but do not require a diploma or GED.

Thinking out of the box like this can give consumers new options and the flexibility to improve not only their own personal lives, but also help develop work skills to be employed.

People with disabilities can take on a leadership role within their communities through leadership training. Albany ARC's community-based Dougherty Leadership



Annette Bowling

has served as Executive Director of Albany Advocacy Resource Center for 30 years. Under her direction, it has become one of the largest private providers in Georgia, serving individuals with a range of disabilities and supportive needs. The programs are recognized as Georgia's standard of consumer-driven, cost-effective services.

Development Institute (DLDI) integrates people with and without disabilities into the leadership community and empower them to have more influence over their lives. Albany ARC employee Jauron Sneed, a graduate of DLDI, does not let his wheelchair hold him back. He said, "I think that Albany ARC, and other agencies that serve people with disabilities, are very beneficial because they give people with and without disabilities a great opportunity to learn more about each other and benefit from that experience. For me personally, being a graduate of the Dougherty Leadership Class gave me the opportunity to be recognized as someone with great ambition and strong determination to succeed despite having a disability."

Center-based day programs and services provide an environment that enhances a positive self-image of individuals served and preserves their human dignity. It gives them the opportunity to gain skills that are ultimately transferable into the workplace, and other forms of independent living. ●

Job Training Options for Adults

Learning new job skills is easier than ever for adult Georgians with disabilities. A variety of post-school training options are available including community-based rehabilitation training, adaptive technology programs and technical colleges, in addition to the traditional programs offered by Georgia's Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division.

One of the state's community rehabilitation centers is the Tommy Nobis Center in Marietta that offers training for people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

"Tommy Nobis Center trains people with all types of disabilities," Connie Kirk, president and CEO, said.

"We look at their interests and aptitude and try to develop a career plan that incorporates those interests . . ."

"We prepare people for jobs ranging from simple, entry level jobs such as mailing services training, to

certification for the National Collectors Association, and even to advance Microsoft Office technology certification.

"We try to find training that relates to each client's interests. We look at their interests and aptitude and develop a career plan that incorporates those interests into an individualized job training and job opportunities plan," Kirk said.

"A big part of what we do is work adjustment training, where prospective employees are trained in basic work habits, which is very important to those who have never worked before," she said. "Our clients can make their mistakes here, at the center, instead of on the job.

"They have to learn to get along with others, how to get to work, how to use public transportation, and understand absenteeism and tardiness to succeed in the work place."

She also warned that people who are preparing for work must demonstrate appropriate behavior and be drug free.

Like most of Georgia's community rehabilitation centers, the Tommy Nobis Center job training program is typically completed in four to six months, with 60% of that time on site in the community. "That is when the most learning occurs," Kirk revealed.

Anyone seeking advanced training and job skills at Georgia's technical colleges or other certification, diploma or degree programs, have to meet the entrance requirements or pass entrance exams, explained Mary Frances Bernard, Disability Services Coordinator at Chattahoochee Technical College in Marietta.

Generally, a high school diploma or GED, as well as 9th grade level reading and math skills are required for such programs. Georgia's technical colleges offer an assessment process for assistive technologies, preparatory studies and tutoring to help students with disabilities prepare for entrance exams or to help them earn their GED.

Certain admission provisions allow any student, including those with disabilities, to enter the technical college system on a non-diploma basis prior to meeting the entrance requirements. These students can take up to 25 credit hours toward a specific degree prior to acceptance, but must have the prerequisites and corequisites to enter each class.

Once admitted, Bernard explained, students with disabilities are generally provided the same level of support they were provided in public schools. They can go to learning labs and work on Web sites with practice materials, all under the supervision of college teachers. Students are also eligible for financial aid, in-class support staff and adaptive technology.

"Traditional adaptive technology generally includes special computer mice, joy sticks and keyboards," Bernard said.

"Today, it might include speaking into a computer that types the dictation using smart software that is now cheaper and easier to train on. Today's technology creates more choices for our students."

Upon acceptance to a technical college, students with disabilities have access to the same curriculum as



Small class sizes allow teacher Rachel Moscoso to give Mark Bennett some personalized instruction.



any other student. Technical colleges' curriculum is dictated by the Department of Technical and Adult Education to cover specific coursework in a specified amount of time, Bernard said. "Those with intellectual disabilities are challenged by the pace which is much faster than high school special education classes. We want to see people successful and provide accommodations so they can access our training programs – the curricula remain the same for all when seeking a certificate or diploma requiring specific skills.

"If your child is able to compete in high school," Bernard urged parents, "Take advantage of summer school, drill on science and prepare for the exit exam. Having a regular high school diploma is so important to someone with a disability because it provides access to post secondary schools and even opens up the HOPE scholarship," she concluded.

In Atlanta, the School of Adaptive Computer Training (SACT), operated by the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation, provides computer training and job skills for students with disabilities.

"SACT introduced completely adaptive information technology (IT) training to Georgia and was the metro area's first computer training school focused on matching a student's abilities with the right assistive technology," Patrick T. Jonas, president and CEO of the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation, said.

The curriculum and courses at SACT include the Computer Support Analyst Curriculum, which provides training in Microsoft Office, Windows 2000, keyboarding and Help Desk/customer services which are expected to satisfy the greatest employment needs in Atlanta.

"Some of the curriculum may be modified, but it focuses on teaching basic Microsoft Office skills to our students," Jonas explained. "We have to give them the job skills to get in the door."

He continued, "We are bridging the digital divide for people with disabilities by delivering students with skill sets – Microsoft credentials – in four to six months."

The SACT facility is a completely adaptive classroom that uses state-of-the-art, adjustable workstations and assistive software and computer devices to allow people with disabilities to gain the skills needed in today's highly competitive job market.

As part of their services, the school evaluates each student's need for assistive technology. From there, the training and adaptive technology are all provided at no

cost to the student under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education and the federal Department of Labor.

Since its inception, the Atlanta program has graduated 76 people; 43 of them sought employment and were placed in jobs with an average wage of \$10.63 per hour.

"In Georgia, we work well with the local workforce development board and Vocational Rehabilitation services of the Georgia Department of Labor,"

Jonas said. "Vocational Rehabilitation helps with the job searches and job placement of our graduates."

While the school is a segregated training facility which is not necessarily considered "best practices" today, the administration believes, "Four to six months in a segregated training program, working together with their peers to develop job skills and overcome the challenges they all face having disabilities all works together to set the stage for a lifetime of inclusion in the workplace."

Jonas concluded by saying, "We believe that with the right technology and training, the playing field can be leveled, and many of the people with disabilities can compete in today's job market." ●

" We have to give them the job skills to get in the door."

Best Practices in Training

- Identify the individual's strengths and capabilities, don't focus on limitations.
- Individualize job training and career planning based on aptitude and interest of the individual.
- Arrange for/provide adaptive technologies such as joy sticks, keyboards and computer mouses.
- Consider job customization strategies and be willing to create new job titles, responsibilities and descriptions that take best advantage of individual talents.
- Accommodate special needs of each individual as appropriate with extended lunch hours, time for doctor's appointments, etc.
- Include trainees with disabilities in the typical employee and job training program.
- When recruiting – look for opportunities to offer individuals with disabilities jobs.
- Work with the state Vocational Rehabilitation Department who can help the trainee and the hiring company overcome obstacles and help assure success.

Customized Employment

Makes Dreams Come True

By Valerie Smith Buxton

Customized employment is a successful new process that helps people with disabilities find satisfying careers based on their interests and abilities.

The Cobb-Douglas Community Service Board is leading Georgia and the whole nation in the implementation of customized employment, which the U.S. government defines as “individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both.”

Two and a half years ago, the Cobb-Douglas CSB received a U.S. Department of Labor grant that allowed it to begin implementing a customized employment program. Since then, the CSB has helped 145 people with disabilities who live in

Cobb and Douglas counties find employment. The program has been so successful, it will now be rolled out at 11 other locations throughout the state, including Dekalb and Fulton counties, Rome, Atlanta, Athens, Macon, Augusta, Thomson and Valdosta.

Custom employment expert Cary Griffin of Griffin-Hammis Associates in Florence, Montana helped the CSB set up the program.

“There’s a national trend of more people than ever entering sheltered workshops. We have to stop that,” Griffin said. “If a person follows the typical plan of starting off in special education, then getting training in a day program and then a

sheltered workshop, he will be 73 years old before he’s ready for a job!”

Griffin suggests service providers “get off Main Street” and try to find jobs that are not at large companies. “Big companies tend to have strict job descriptions, and it’s hard to customize jobs in that environment.”

Another feature of customized employment is that service providers spend more time learning about the job seeker and negotiating with potential employers before a job is offered,

increasing the chances the job seeker will be successful in the position. “It may cost more initially, but it will be less expensive than placing a person in 16 bad jobs,” he explained.

According to the Federal Register, customized employment “may include employment developed through job carving, self-employment or entrepreneurial initiatives or other job development strategies that result in job responsibilities being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of individuals with a disability.”

For some people, working traditional jobs is not an option. One man, who has severe physical and cognitive disabilities, started his own business

“Big companies tend to have strict job descriptions, and it’s hard to customize jobs in that environment.”



Laura McClure's (above left) dream was to work in a bakery.

Through resource ownership, Brian Smith (right) has a job doing what he loves - working with animals.





Ronnie Smith's towel sterilizing business is doing so well, he's planning to hire an employee.

with the help of Griffin, members of the Rural Institute at the University of Montana, his family and others.

"This man only has movement in one hand, but he loves to paint. We started a business where he paints the backgrounds of canvases. Artists then buy the prepared canvases from him," Griffin said.

While some people are concerned starting a business may isolate people with disabilities, Griffin says the opposite is true. "If you own your own business, you'll have customers and suppliers and interact more in the community. Plus, just because a business is home-based, doesn't necessarily mean the person will work only at home."

Self-employment also allows people with disabilities to take time off when needed for medical reasons and to accumulate savings.

"People who are on SSI can only have \$2,000 maximum in a savings account," Griffin said. "If they own their own business, they can put money in the business account and save up to purchase a car or home."

Griffin, who has been helping implement customized employment in 10 areas across the country said, "Georgia is the doing the best."

Doug Crandell and Nancy Brooks-Lane are spearheading the program in Cobb-Douglas, and will help train service providers in customized employment. "Customized employment has been

(continued on page 20)

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

McClure's espresso machine helps her earn extra income.

Each of these outcomes starts with the provider spending a significant amount of time getting to know the job seeker, at several locations within his or her community.

Job Carving: With input from the job seeker and the potential employer, providers design a customized job that meets the needs of both parties. According to customized employment expert Cary Griffin, "Emphasis is focused on the contribution of the individual in a worksite and not upon the tasks they cannot perform or do not enjoy."

Resource Ownership: The provider matches the job seeker with an appropriate employer. As an added incentive to employment, the job seeker will bring a resource (i.e. equipment, computer, etc.) that would help the employer increase business. The job seeker maintains ownership of the resource, even if the job ends.

Business Within A Business: The job seeker starts a business that complements an existing business. Operating a business within an existing business will give the job seeker a ready-made client base and will also help the existing business by providing a desired product or service to customers or the business itself. Also, natural support systems may emerge between the job seeker and employees of the existing business.

Microenterprise Development: After thorough research into the passions and abilities of the job seeker, the provider identifies a small business opportunity for the job seeker. With the help of the Small Business Administration, or similar organization, the provider and job seeker prepare a business plan and determine funding sources.

Customized Employment

(continued from page 19)

successful because it is based on people's passions and strengths, not their weaknesses," explained Brooks-Lane.

The needs of each individual are taken under consideration, and a plan is developed by a team that may include representatives from the state's Career One-Stop centers, Vocational Rehabilitation Division, community service boards, family members

Once people with disabilities visit the One-Stop, their support teams would be assembled to ensure they are employed in an environment uniquely suited to their talents, passions and abilities.

and other service providers.

"One of the team members would be appointed the disability navigator, who helps the team

move forward to achieve the employment outcome," Crandell said. Under this model, one team member might locate funding, while another might arrange for transportation and still another might provide job coaching.

Members of the team spend time with clients in a variety of community settings to determine what their interests are and what they enjoy. "We are trying to find a career path for our clients, instead of a job. We hope to improve their quality of life," Brooks-Lane said.

Once the team determines the interests of the clients, they begin to look for potential employment opportunities that fit the client's interests. If such a job does not currently exist, other options are explored, such as carving out a job at an existing company, investigating

resource ownership or starting a new business.

While people with disabilities still enter Georgia's labor system through a variety of channels, the customized employment program is trying to streamline the process and avoid duplication of effort between the many agencies



Job carving and resource ownership has helped Tari George become a secretarial manager.

that provide job or supported employment services to people with disabilities.

Ideally, people with disabilities would join fellow job seekers without disabilities by beginning their search at a One-Stop. Once people with disabilities visit the One-Stop, their support teams would be assembled to ensure they are employed in an environment uniquely suited to their talents, passions and abilities.

The Cobb-Douglas CSB used grant money to help fund resource and business ownership for its clients, but Brooks-Lane feels other potential financial resources exist, as well, especially if duplicated or unnecessary services are being streamlined. Potential sources of funding include family investment, Individual Training Accounts, money from Vocational Rehabilitation or Social Security funds, such as Plans for Achieving Self Support or other funds identified by the job seeker's team.

"This program is based on a person's strengths. We could free up funds by eliminating deficit-based assessments," she suggested.

Brooks-Lane and Crandell propose that funds that are currently going straight to providers be put in Individual Training Accounts instead, where job seekers and their teams choose how to best spend the money, from funding adaptations to starting a business.

Griffin concurs and suggests families also consider starting a savings account to help their children with disabilities start a business, similar to a college fund they might have for their children without disabilities. "Starting a fund for a child to own his own business raises the family's expectations for that child and helps that child achieve more."

Finding funding for customized employment is important to continuing the program. "Customized employment helps people with disabilities gain equity in their lives and follow their dreams," Griffin said. ●



Eric Marshall's team helped him start "Erik's Hip Hop Shop", based on his interest in urban fashion.



Resource Ownership and Job Carving Give Man Job of His Dreams

A chance trip to Home Depot with one of his customized employment team members led to the job of Keith Woodall's dreams. Woodall, 33, had recently been laid off from his job as a dishwasher and was passing time at NewDirection, a day center for people with developmental disabilities in Douglasville.

"We were picking up wood at Home Depot for our woodworking class, and Keith saw some construction workers picking up supplies, and he said, 'I would like to do that kind of work – a man's work,'" recounted Wanda Standridge, who leads Woodall's customized employment team as the disability navigator.

"NewDirection had just moved from a warehouse to a new business park," explained Nancy Brooks-Lane of the Cobb-Douglas Community Service Board, who also serves on Woodall's team. "Wanda contacted the construction company that built their new building and asked them if they would consider Keith for a job."

While working with that company, Woodall, who has Down syndrome, met Troy Aquila. When Aquila decided to start his own construction company, Troy Aquila Construction, he hired Woodall.

As an added incentive to Woodall's employment, his customized employment team used \$10,000 from a U.S.

Department of Labor grant to purchase a piece of earth moving equipment, a Bobcat, his employer could use. The plan was for Woodall to rent the Bobcat to other construction companies when his company wasn't using it, helping him earn extra money.

"We found out if Keith rented the Bobcat out, it would have a negative consequence on his benefits because it would be unearned income," team member Doug Crandell of the Cobb-Douglas Community Service Board said. "So now, Troy rents it out for him and pays Keith a bonus for it."

The customized employment team negotiated the terms of Woodall's employment with Aquila, who agreed to pay for the insurance and maintenance on



Woodall loves operating his Bobcat.

the Bobcat and to train Woodall to use it, though his main responsibility is to help get sewer pipes to the right location. "Troy is a wonderful natural support for Keith," Brooks-Lane said.

Woodall enjoys his job. "My dad does the same thing as me and Troy," he said. "I like working with Troy." Woodall works up to 20 hours a week, and Aquila drives him to and from the construction site. The two have developed a friendship beyond typical employer-employee as a result of working together.

"Hiring Keith was the greatest thing I've ever done. I didn't know I'd get so close to him," Aquila said. While the Bobcat is a nice addition to his company, Woodall's contributions are far more important to Aquila. "Keith will work for me forever, even if he didn't have the Bobcat." ●



Keith Woodall (center) has found success with the support of his customized employment team: Troy Aquila, Wanda Standridge, and Nancy Brooks-Lane.

Marriott Sees Beyond Disabilities

By Valerie Smith Buxton

While some companies in Georgia have a written policy to ensure people with disabilities are part of the employee mix, Marriott Southeast Regional Worldwide Reservations in Sandy Springs has taken that philosophy to the next level, with nearly 25% of its employees having disabilities.

The center, a division of Marriott International, currently has 210 employees, including 50 with disabilities that range from cerebral palsy to muscular dystrophy to vision and hearing impairments.

"It's the Marriott family's personal philosophy that everyone has something to offer," explained Director of Human Resources David Barwick. "We're just doing what's right – treating people as individuals."

This philosophy is seen across the different Marriott divisions. Corie Heery has a visual impairment and uses a cane because of nerve damage she sustained as a result of a severe case of shingles as a child.

After graduating from the University of Georgia with the assistance of Georgia's Vocational Rehabilitation Division, Heery moved to the Atlanta area and was referred to a job at the Waverly Hotel by the Department of Labor.

"It was a job as a buffet attendant," she reminisced. Because the job was physically demanding, the Waverly, a Marriott property, could not hire her for the position, but the human resources department went the extra mile and contacted the reservation center to determine if they had a job that would be better suited to Heery's skills.

The reservation center hired Heery, and with

help from Vocational Rehabilitation, provided an adapted computer monitor that she can use.

The reservation center, which generated about \$425 million in revenue last year, works to provide accommodations when necessary to support employees.

"My grandfather's philosophy was that if we take good care of our

people, they'll take good care of our customers, and the customers will come back," revealed Sr. Vice President of Culture and Special Events Steve Marriott, who has a visual impairment. "We give them the tools they need so they can go to work. My computer has the ability to read documents to me so I can receive email and work."

Some accommodations are even simpler, such as those Marriott has made for Cynthia Sibly, who has muscular dystrophy and is one of the center's top sellers. When she visits Marriott properties to learn more about them, the company provides a wheelchair. She also makes use of accommodations on a more daily basis.

"I have aplasia in my throat, so it takes me longer to swallow. Marriott has extended my lunch time and has been very flexible with my schedule to accommodate trips to the doctor," she said.

"All we did for one man who uses a wheelchair in the Atlanta reservation center is raise his desk," Marriott said.

Marriott's corporate culture goes beyond written policies and is embraced by the people who work there, as Michael Blanton found out.

Blanton uses a wheelchair as a result of an injury he had in high school. He tried several other jobs for a few months before he came to the reservation center.

"I was let go from one job because some people felt uncomfortable with me, and I couldn't reach the files," he said. Blanton didn't find attitudes like that at Marriott.

During the five years he's been with the company, Blanton has had to have two surgeries,

"It's the Marriott family's philosophy that everyone has something to offer..."



Blanton has worked in several Marriott divisions.

Bridges Program Illustrates Marriott's Commitment to Community

Marriott International realizes the value in hiring people with disabilities, and so does the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities, founded in 1989. The foundation's "Bridges . . . from school to work" program helps young people with disabilities find meaningful employment in their own communities.

"We saw untapped resources and unfair treatment of people with disabilities, and we wanted to correct that," revealed Steve Marriott, who serves on the foundation board and has a visual impairment.

The Bridges program, which has placed more than 7,300 people in jobs at over 1,500 employers nationwide, came to the Atlanta area in 1995 and brings school systems and employers together to help students become competitively employed.

The program serves students in Atlanta Public Schools and Dekalb County Schools as well as several schools in South Fulton and South Cobb counties. About one-third of the students served have developmental disabilities. People with learning, physical or psychological disabilities are also served through the program. Students are referred to the program through their school or Georgia's Vocational Rehabilitation Division.

Instead of specific job skills, the Bridges program focuses on interpersonal skills, job readiness training, placement and retention, explained Allen Brown, who heads the Atlanta Bridges program. "Based on their talents, skills and abilities, we match students with a job then monitor them for 18 - 24 months," he said.

Program workers, known as Employer Representatives (ER) are at each school at least twice per week to conduct mock interviews, give tips on how to dress for an interview and to teach other life skills. Local companies also participate by giving seminars and talking about careers.

ERs also transport students to interviews and provide follow up support to students and employers to ensure the

professional relationship develops smoothly. "It's a long-term relationship," Brown said.

The program has worked well in Atlanta, with 744

students being placed in jobs at well-respected companies such as Marriott, UPS, Aramark, Sodexo, Sunrise Assisted Living, Finish Line, Pep Boys, NAPA Auto Parts, Georgia World Congress Center, Philips Arena and others.

"Based on their talents, skills and abilities, we match students with a job then monitor them . . ."



Employees with and without disabilities work side by side at Marriott. Heery, right, uses adaptive technology to perform her job.



requiring him to be away from his job for four months. "General managers from Atlanta and around the country donated some of their paid time off to me so I could recuperate with pay. I don't know any other company that would do that."

Marriott is also involved in Georgia's wider disability community through a variety of programs. "Marriott participates in a shadow day where students with disabilities spend time learning about different jobs. They also give talks about interviewing skills. They're supportive of all our endeavors," revealed Bess Garrett, Marriott's account representative from Vocational Rehabilitation.

"It's our corporate culture to integrate people with disabilities whenever possible," explained Kaye Dengel, Marriott's Vice President of Reservations, North American Operations. "If an individual has the passion to take care of our guests, we'll take care of that employee. We've had great success with our Spirit to Serve philosophy."

Barwick, who routinely recruits people with disabilities explains, "As an employer, we need the right people in place to succeed. It doesn't matter if the person has a disability. I look for people with the talent for caring." ●

Special Olympics Georgia

Hosts Unified Teams

Photos by Joseph Schlicht

Unified teams bring together athletes with and without disabilities, who are of similar age and skill level.

Athletes on unified soccer teams bond on and off the field, while individual competitions such as swimming, are open to Special Olympics athletes only.

Special Olympics Georgia has always given athletes with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to play competitive sports. Over the past five years, the organization has

been innovating and now hosts unified competitions of teams consisting of athletes of similar age and skill levels with and without disabilities.

"Unified teams have really started growing in popularity in the last two years," said Senior Sports Manager Kelli Britt.

"We have more than 100 unified teams across the state," Britt said. Additionally, unified teams compete in all of the Special Olympics team sports, such as basketball, soccer, tennis and volleyball.

Jim Hamm of Atlanta coaches both traditional and unified tennis teams. "Unified teams allow athletes to participate at a higher level because they better understand the game and what they're supposed to be doing," he said.

Denise Kettles, a unified team partner and mother of Kelly Kettles, a Special Olympic athlete, agrees. "When they're playing by themselves, they get

down for making a mistake. The unified partner encourages them. Kelly is getting to be quite a good tennis player."

The program helps further integrate the Special Olympics athletes into their communities. "I can't say who gets more out of the program –

the athletes or the unified partners," Britt said.

"It really instills goodwill with the unified partners," Hamm said. "Most want to continue on the team because it enriches their lives."

Britt says the unified teams bring competition up to a higher level.

"In some cases, it's better for more skilled athletes to participate on a unified team," she said. Many lower level athletes increase their skills when they participate on unified teams.

But Britt feels the traditional Special Olympics teams and skills competitions are important because athletes with disabilities are playing 100 percent of the time. "It's still great to

see traditional teams play with their own skills and no assistance from unified partners," Britt said.

"Traditional athletes still get interaction with unified partners off the playing field," she said.

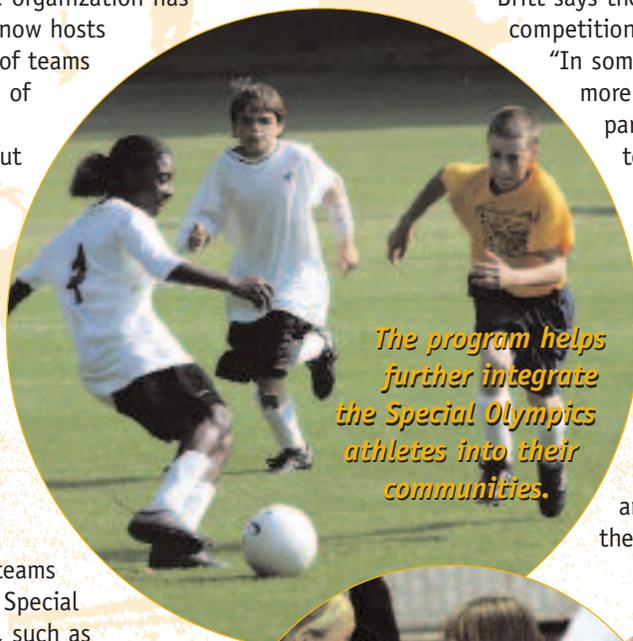
Because of the popularity of the unified team sports program, Special Olympics

Georgia is moving to include more unified teams.

"It's a great way to get people involved in Special Olympics," Britt said.

Unified teams exist at the local levels all over the state. Some teams may play more than one sport. "They may play volleyball in the summer and softball in the fall," Britt said.

For more information about Special Olympics, please visit www.specialolympicsga.org or call (770) 414-9390. ●



The program helps further integrate the Special Olympics athletes into their communities.





By Jane A. Zanca



Georgia Tackles Disability Community's Aging Issues

By Dave Blanchard, Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities

The Leftover People

My son, Jesse, recently turned 35, and there was much to celebrate. After languishing in a nursing facility for three years, he has moved to a lovely private home, where he is clean, well-fed and busy with activities he enjoys. He's talking again, interested in life and dancing; it's been a banner year.

Jesse has Down syndrome (DS), and his life expectancy at the time he was born was 32 years, but new treatments and better health care have created a generation of people with DS who are living much longer. Their aging has been a revelation, and we now know that DS is all about rapid aging.

In his early 20s, his abilities peaked. He held a position in a workshop, and was able to make his meals, do his own laundry, wake himself in the morning and arrange his social activities. But by age 28, his hair was almost completely gray, his skin was wrinkling, his stamina had drained and he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Its impact is every bit as devastating for him and his family as it would be for anyone, stripping away his ability to work, enjoy his friends and complete simple tasks like bathing or fixing a snack.

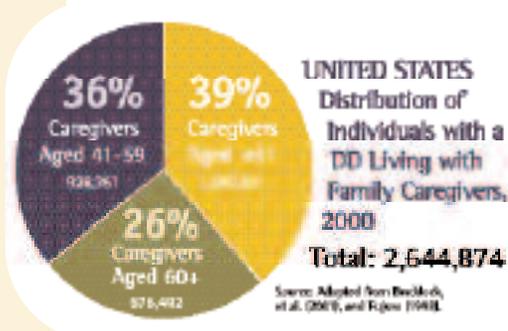
Alzheimer's disease is an overwhelming challenge for any family. Eventually, Jesse needed 24-hour care. Where does a single parent go for help with a 35-year-old man with developmental disabilities and Alzheimer's?

Currently, no services are in place for aging people with DD. Agencies serving people with DD are unknowledgeable about Alzheimer's disease and most caregivers for the aging do not know how to work with DD. After 18 months on nursing home waiting lists, one facility finally accepted Jesse. There he experienced isolation, neglect, skin infections, hunger, untreated pain, filth and depression. Unaccustomed to dealing with a family member with more than three decades of experience in tough advocacy, the nursing home soon resented my attempts to improve his care.

Mine is the dilemma of many aging parents. My health is failing. Because all I earned went into raising my children and caring for Jesse, I have virtually no retirement. I have done the paperwork, the legwork, the sweat work, the worry work, and even the paying. Still, there is no permanent solution, and the main reason for this is that Georgia does not yet have a commitment to people like Jesse, or to the people who care for him. We are the "leftover" people. Funds that are doled out for such programs are in large measure the leftovers after all the other "critical needs" are met.

I never imagined that aging would bring both of us down. Holding him as an infant, a toddler, a high school graduate and finally as a man with Alzheimer's, I kept believing that our society – our legislators – would recognize the needs and provide for people like Jesse, so I would not have to continue begging and blazing trails. Not so I could have an easier life or pass off a responsibility, but so I could work to support my family. I never dreamed I would have to pass the torch before this problem was solved, but I can't hold it up any longer. ●

The life expectancy of people with developmental disabilities (DD) has increased dramatically, from only 19 in the 1930s to 66 in the 1990s, causing both celebration and concern. This phenomenon mirrors what is happening to society as a whole. With the elderly population expected to double by 2030 to 71 million, aging issues must be addressed. With more than 50 million Americans with disabilities nationwide, Georgia will face a challenge to support aging caregivers and persons with DD.



Since 2000, the DeKalb Developmental Disabilities Council (DDDC), the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities (AADD), the Area Agency on Aging of the Atlanta Regional Commission and other core agencies have worked together to identify the issues that affect aging people with disabilities. As a

result, the two organizations formed the Aging and Developmental Disabilities Coalition (ADDC) that includes members from both the DD and aging communities. ADDC educates the public about aging and disability issues by maintaining a library of information and hosting seminars about the subject.

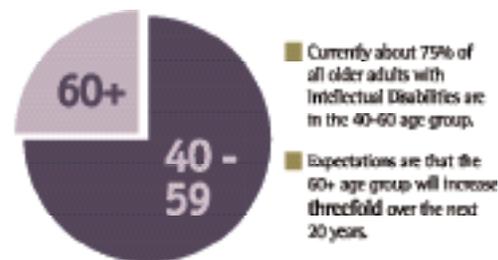
Some of the issues this coalition addresses include:

- **Planning for appropriate care as parents/caregivers age.**
- **Studying the onset, sometimes earlier than the average population, of secondary conditions in older adults with DD.**
- **Preparing aging and disability service providers to support aging people with DD.**
- **Building a partnership between the aging and developmental disability networks.**

As both the aging and developmental disability networks are serving more families, a partnership between these two areas is even more important. The benefits of collaboration include the sharing of resources and communications among caseworkers.

In 2004, the Georgia General Assembly passed Senate Resolution 822, or Aging for All, that created a Senate study committee to examine the scope of these issues and create a plan to meet these needs of families and their caregivers. This research is ongoing, and results are expected later this year.

Older Population – Adults w/ID



To have your stories heard by Aging for All and the GA Legislature, visit www.agingforall.com or contact Dave Blanchard at 404-881-9777, ext. 215. ●



Art by Jerome Lawrence.

StraightTalk

Community Support Helps Artist Move into Own Home



Jerome Lawrence

“I felt worthy, like I was somebody - when I sold those paintings,”

Jerome Lawrence was doing well in his art classes during his senior year at Georgia State University in 1982. Gradually, though, his grades started to drop and he stopped turning in his assignments. Soon, he was spending more time walking the streets of Atlanta than working on his art.

His sister took him to the hospital, where doctors said he was fine. Soon, he was unable to leave his room. After a second trip to the hospital, where he was placed into a locked ward, Lawrence was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia.

His disability made finding a job difficult. “I had been working successfully at a T-shirt printing factory, then got fired for poor performance. After that, I couldn’t get a job. I started walking the streets to look for cans to recycle to earn money for medicine and only earned \$3. So I had to file for Social Security benefits,” Lawrence said.

The first 15 years after his diagnosis, Lawrence’s medication worked sporadically, and he lived with his mother. He took art classes from his former professor Joseph Perrin and slowly got his skills back, but he was languishing.

“I started going to a drop in center in Decatur to socialize. I learned to play chess there. I also learned about the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network (GMHCN) there,” Lawrence said.

Through GMHCN and its workshops, Lawrence learned a lot about his illness, from proven medicines to preparing for the times his illness comes to the foreground. He began to gain better control over his life and well being.

Soon, Lawrence began taking art classes at the Episcopal Church

of the Holy Comforter and sold some of his paintings, including one to Bishop Neal Alexander.

“I felt worthy – like I was somebody – when I sold those paintings,” Lawrence said.

In 2002, Lawrence applied for a Habitat for Humanity home and became the first person in Georgia to receive a home through Habitat’s “A Partnership to Open Doors” program that provides homes for people with mental illness. Former First

Lady Rosalynn Carter, CNN anchorwoman Daryn Kagan and Bishop Alexander attended the groundbreaking.

In lieu of a down payment on his home, Lawrence had to help build a home for someone else, what Habitat calls “sweat equity.” Lawrence enjoyed the experience. “It was great fun, and the exercise did me good.” However, due to his commitments to Habitat for Humanity, Lawrence passed up some opportunities to sell his paintings at art shows and began to be troubled about how he would pay for his new home.

“I knew art sales wouldn’t be enough,” he said. Fortunately, GMHCN offered him a job as office manager. Plus, he began teaching art classes at Holy Comforter. With those two steady jobs and occasional art sales, Lawrence had enough to pay for his home.

Lawrence continues to thrive in his new home. Since moving in, he’s kept in touch with Mrs. Carter, and was a guest panelist on “The Arts and Self Expression in Mental Health,” one of a series of Conversations at the Carter Center, where he also met former President Jimmy Carter.

Ongoing support from a psychiatrist and a therapist, as well as medication provided by the DeKalb Community Service Board, help Lawrence keep his illness under control. “I pay my bills and try and keep track of everything, something I couldn’t do before consistently taking my medicine,” he said.

In addition, the Social Security Administration recently approved his Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS) proposal that will allow Lawrence the opportunity to grow his art business, and he has a one-man show coming up at VSA Arts of Georgia June 22 - August 20 at the Healey Building in Atlanta.

With his new home and upcoming shows, Lawrence’s goals for the future are simple. He wants to make new friends and stay in touch with the growing list of friends he’s made over the years through his art, mental illness organizations and his community.

“I often feel the need to share, to express my thoughts and emotions, hoping that others along with me may gain insight and joy in the expression,” Lawrence said. ●



Lawrence uses fingerpainting to create his masterpieces.



AUGUST

Advocating for Special Needs Children in the School System

Sponsored by: PEPPAC
770-577-7771

August 8-10 NASDDDS 2004 Reinventing Quality Conference

Philadelphia, PA
703-683-4202

SEPTEMBER

September 18 Autism Resource and Information Fair

Hosted by Sharing Our Autism Resources, Inc., an affiliate of Unlocking Autism
Rome, Georgia
Email: CLMAtkins@aol.com
706-236-9572

September 21-24 Summit 2005: Many Voices, One Vision

Washington, DC
Sponsored by: Alliance for Full Participation
Carol Walsh at 301-706-6252

OCTOBER

October 7-10 Arc of Georgia Conference 2004 ONE COMMUNITY FOR ALL

Peachtree City, GA
404-634-5512
www.arcga.org

Send in your organization's events to val@oneillcommunications.com to be added to the GCDD calendar!

October 14
2004 National Rehabilitation Association Annual Training Conference & Exhibit Showcase
Philadelphia, PA
888-258-4295
www.nationalrehab.organization/website/events/index.html

October 14-15
Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities & Quarterly Council Meeting
Columbus, GA
404-657-2126
www.gcdd.org

October 15-17
2004 State Fall Games Special Olympics Georgia
Gainesville, GA
770-414-9390
www.specialolympicsga.org

October 20-22
Child Welfare League of America Summit "Is the System Working? Creating the Will, Wisdom and Ways to Meet the Needs of America's Children"
Hilton Head, SC
800-638-2952
www.cwia.org

October 27-29
PUFF Conference Touch the Future/ Transition Conference & Expo 2004
Augusta, GA
800-497-8665
866-373-7778 Toll-Free TDD
404-486-6333 Atlanta Metro TDD
www.gatfl.org

October 28
State Interagency Coordinating Council
Athens, GA
404-657-2726

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

October 27-29 PUFF Conference Touch the Future/Transition Conference & Expo 2004

Augusta, GA • 800-497-8665, 866-373-7778 Toll-Free TDD
404-486-6333 Atlanta Metro TDD • www.gatfl.org

Learn the latest about assistive technology for living, learning, working and playing for people with disabilities. The conference includes informative workshops, round table discussions and hands-on displays.

October 7-10 Arc of Georgia Conference 2004 ONE COMMUNITY FOR ALL

Peachtree City, GA • 404-634-5512 • www.arcga.org

It will be a full weekend of seminars, programs, workshops, and meetings on intervention and implementation. The conference will include a social event and trade shows throughout the weekend.

October 20-22 Child Welfare League of America Summit "Is the System Working? Creating the Will, Wisdom and Ways to Meet the Needs of America's Children"

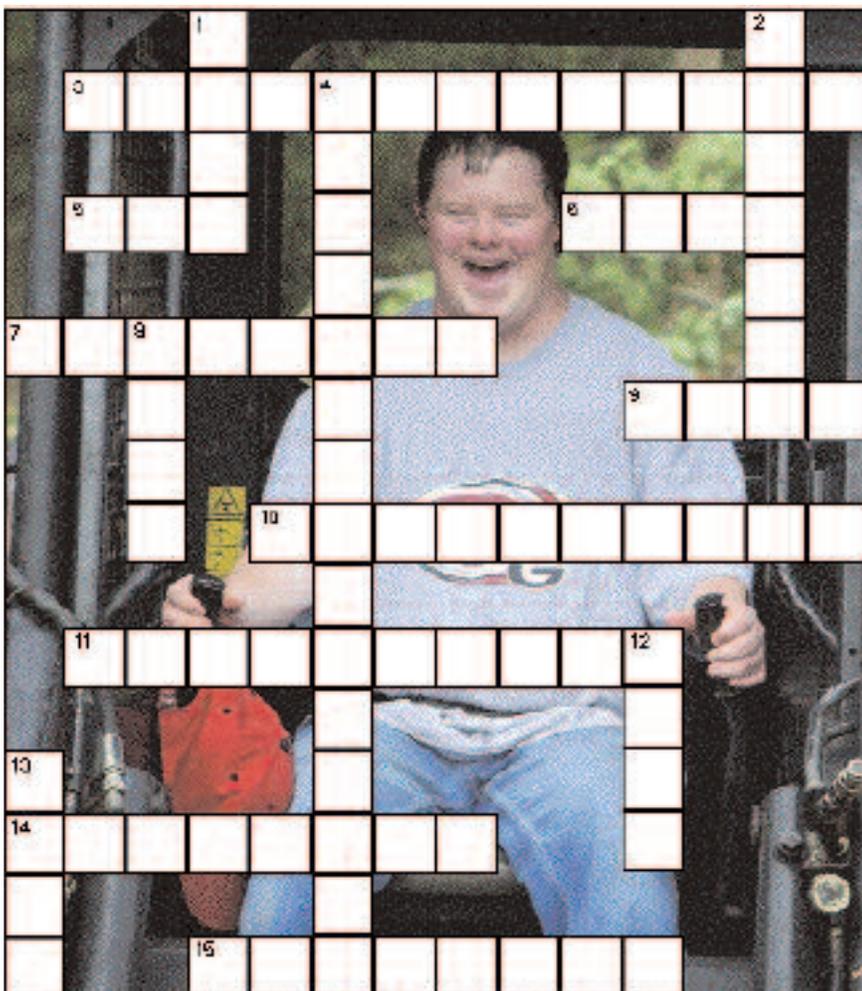
Hilton Head, SC • 800-638-2952 • www.cwia.org

Leaders in the welfare field will be seeking and examining ways to improve the system as members and attendees are inspired to take this challenge to meet the needs of the children.



Attendees enjoy a break at the Immersion Learning about Self-Determination Conference held in Atlanta on April 28.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Have fun testing your knowledge of MAD magazine! Enter to win tickets to Six Flags, WhiteWater or American Adventures. To enter, mail or fax in your answers by August 15. Congratulations to our last issue's winner - Ms. Gianne Wuerl, Jewish Family & Career Services, Dunwoody, GA!

ACROSS

- 3) Going from school to "real life."
- 5) Aging for _____.
- 6) Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation.
- 7) Transition _____ strives to develop continuity and stability of services and supports throughout the person's life.
- 9) Dekalb Developmental Disabilities Council.
- 10) Customizing a job that benefits the needs of both parties.
- 11) Community rehabilitation center in Marietta, GA.
- 14) _____ technologies: Special computer mouses, joy sticks, and keyboards.
- 15) _____ ownership.

DOWN

- 1) County in which teachers are trained in good transition practices.
- 2) Sports team with athletes of similar age and skill level with and without disabilities.
- 4) Gives athletes with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to play competitive sports.
- 8) Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities.
- 12) _____-employment allows people with disabilities to take time off when needed for medical reasons and to accumulate savings.
- 13) Acronym for School of Adaptive Computer Training.

Answers will be on the Web site, www.gccd.org, after August 15, 2004.

Young Advocate Remembered for His Spirit

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities regrets to announce the death of Catherine Stefanavage's son, Ryan Mahin. Mahin, 16, died at home March 31 from complications from a mitochondrial disorder.

Mitochondrial disorders, or myopathies, are caused when mitochondria, which are structures found in each cell that produce energy, are damaged. Onset usually begins before age 20 and is marked by exercise intolerance or muscle weakness, and symptoms may include heart rhythm problems or failure, dementia, movement disorders, stroke-like episodes, deafness, blindness, limited mobility of the eyes and seizures.

Mahin and Stefanavage were well known in the disability community, attending conferences, participating in ADAPT (American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today) events and representing disability issues at the Capitol.

Mahin's passions included music and gourmet cooking, and one of his dreams was realized in February when the Children's Make a Wish Foundation arranged for him to attend a taping of the Emeril Live show in New York, where he met Emeril Lagasse. The show is scheduled to air in July.

Mahin will be best remembered for his uniquely gentle and loving spirit.

In lieu of flowers, Stefanavage has suggested that donations be made to Hope House Children's Respite Center, 7225 Lester Rd., Union City, GA 30291.



Answers to Puzzle from Spring 2004 Issue

Georgia Woman Advocates for Independence

By Katie Bishop

A growing number of people with disabilities are gaining independence by leaving nursing facilities and moving back into the community to live on their own.

The Georgia Voices That Count (GVTC) Program teaches people with disabilities how to advocate for their right to live where they want. The Olmstead Decision was made by the Supreme Court in 1999 and allows people with disabilities the right to live on their own, if able to, while still receiving Medicaid. Since this program and decision have been enacted, more and more people are finding their voice and strength to move out of nursing facilities and into the community.

Annette Dotson has recently made the move towards independence. After completing GVTC, Dotson began to advocate for her rights as defined by the Olmstead Decision. Both her parents and Normalee Asheber, the transition leader for disABILITY LINK, campaigned and supported her decision to leave the nursing home.

After living in a nursing facility for more than 30 years, Dotson, a 44-year old woman with cerebral palsy, felt empowered to do something different. While the home provided immediate care and therapy, her integrity and independence were violated when her belongings were stolen, destroyed or thrown in the garbage. All too often, Dotson would find her clothes on the floor and other residents gossiping behind her back. When her photo albums holding pictures of her childhood, family and newspaper clippings were thrown away, Dotson and her family realized it was time for a change.

Dotson's mother, Mabel Dotson, says, "One of the most common misperceptions by people is that someone with a disability is crazy. They aren't crazy." Mabel Dotson has always wanted her daughter to be given the same respect as others, despite her disability. The nursing home, however, restricted Annette and discriminated against her based on her disability. Mabel Dotson sums up her daughter's experience at the

nursing facility and says, "They were just awful to her."

While Annette Dotson enjoys her self-sufficiency and is improving daily, she is still somewhat limited. To help with the household duties and driving, she has an older companion who lives with her.

Since having moved into her own home, Annette Dotson's life has brightened. Asheber says, "Her whole attitude has changed; she is much happier and has a more positive, confident way about her." Not only does moving out of the nursing home put a smile on her face, it also saves the government a significant amount of money through reduced Medicaid bills that are not being paid to the facility.

Being outside of the nursing home also allows Annette Dotson to take part in the leisure activities that she has always enjoyed. "She loves to go bowling, or to watch a basketball game and work on the computer," says Mabel Dotson. Asheber says that she regularly attends the meetings at the GVTC and encourages the others to progress with their dreams to live in the community.

Annette Dotson still receives therapy to loosen her muscles a few times a week, and her mother visits her every Sunday and sometimes other days throughout the week. The lifestyle change has moved her into a more positive environment and has been an excellent experience. She is happy, independent and quickly learning and gaining new abilities every day! ●

"Her whole attitude has changed; she is much happier and has a more positive, confident way about her."



Annette Dotson surrounded by her family (top), service providers (middle) and her mom.



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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

www.gcdd.org
404-657-2126 or
888-275-4233 (ASK-GCDD)

State Government

Department of Human Resources

<http://dhr.georgia.gov>
404-656-4937

Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases

<http://www2.state.ga.us/departments/dhr/mhmrsa/index.html>
404-657-2252

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



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Georgia Lieutenant Governor's Office

www.ltgov.georgia.gov/02/ltgov/home/0,2214,2199618,00.html
404-656-5030

Voting Georgia Secretary of State's Office, Elections Division

www.sos.state.ga.us/elections
404-656-2871

Aging Issues

Aging and Developmental Disabilities Coalition

www.agingforall.com
404-881-9777 extension 215

American Association of Retired Persons

<http://www.aarp.org>
866-295-7281 (Georgia Chapter)



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Customized Employment

Griffin Hammis Associates

www.griffinhammis.com

Cobb and Douglas Community Service Boards

www.cobbcsb.com
770-429-5000



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Finding Employment in Georgia

Georgia One-Stop and Career Centers

www.g1careernet.com
Career Centers Phone:
404-232-3540

Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities

<http://marriottfoundation.org>
404-523-6335
404-523-7108 TTY

US One-Stop Information

www.careeronestop.org
877-US-2JOBS

Vocational Rehabilitation

www.vocrehabga.com
404-486-6331
404-486-6333 TTY
866-489-0001 Toll Free
866-373-7778 Toll Free TTY

Olmstead Decision

Georgia Voices That Count

<http://www.disabilitylink.org/docs/voices/voices.html>

Long Road Home March

www.longroadhome.org
404-687-8890

US Office for Civil Rights

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/mis.htm>
202-619-0257
877-696-6775 Toll Free

Freedom Clearinghouse

<http://www.freedomclearinghouse.org/know/olmstead.htm>



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Training

Chattahoochee Technical College

<http://www.chat-tec.com>
770-528-4529

Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education

www.dtae.org
404-679-1600

School of Adaptive Computer Training

<http://www.cprf.org/training.asp>
404-827-9577

Vocational Rehabilitation

www.vocrehabga.com
404-486-6331
404-486-6333 TTY
866-489-0001 Toll Free
866-373-7778 Toll Free TTY

Transition

Benefits Navigator

www.bpaoga.com
866-772-2726



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Unified Sports

Special Olympics

www.specialolympicsga.org
770-414-9390

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www.albanyarc.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.dhs.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)

For more information, contact Parent-to-Parent at 770-451-5484 or 1-800-822-2539.
www.health.state.ga.us/programs/specialneeds



Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 8-210
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142
404-657-2126, www.gcdd.org

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