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**NEWS
FOR YOU:**

ASPIRE: BUILDING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: GET INVOLVED IN EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY: WHAT'S AHEAD FOR 2014



On the Cover:

Dave Zilles, GCDD parent advocate, Dawn Alford, GCDD public policy specialist with her canine assistant McAlister and Talley Wells, director of the Disability Integration Project at the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc.

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, a federally funded state agency, works to bring about social and policy changes that promote opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and their families to live, learn, work, play and worship in Georgia communities.



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MAKING a DIFFERENCE

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Help Make Georgia a Better Place in 2014

Happy New Year and welcome to 2014. As we move into the New Year, the members and staff of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) wish the best to you and your family. We hope you will join us this year in trying to make Georgia a better place for people with developmental disabilities, and there will be many opportunities for you to join a growing disability movement. In our last edition, we spoke on what it takes to create a movement and connections between the disability movement and other social justice efforts. In this edition, we focus on how YOU can become more civically engaged and help change what is happening.

In his 2011 article “Everyday Democracy,” Marc Steers wrote, “An everyday democracy is a society in which we continuously forge new, deep and powerful relationships with those with whom we live. It offers a politics in which we discover shared goals even with those with whom we usually disagree.” In other words, if we are not satisfied with the resources and service systems that exist, we must get involved not only in politics but what takes place in our local communities and find the common goals that exist between neighbors. When was the last time you attended a local meeting of the county commission or the chamber of commerce – not to just talk about disability issues but to be a part of the conversation to make your neighborhood or community a better place? Not recently? Maybe it’s time to ask how we can get involved. This is our role as members of society, and when we don’t participate, we give up our right to complain.

In November, Georgia will hold its mid-term elections. Make sure you are registered to vote and that you go to the polls. During the summer campaign season, ask candidates for offices such as the governor, state representatives and senators, federal representatives, mayor, county commission, etc. about what they are willing to do to increase employment for people with disabilities. Ask them what they are willing to do to make sure students with disabilities graduate with a diploma that allows them to attend college? Ask them if they are willing to make sure that representatives from all marginalized people are at the table when policy decisions are made.

You can begin this journey on February 20th at the 16th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol. Join us as we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the *Olmstead* Decision and tell us your story. You can register to vote and join us in telling our elected officials that people with disabilities and their families are important constituents who not only care about “our” issues but in ensuring that all Georgians have an opportunity for a Real Career, Real Home and Real Learning Experiences.

GCDD is here to assist you. Check out our website and join our advocacy network so you can stay informed. We hope you enjoy reading this magazine and we want to hear from you. Let us know your thoughts by writing to our Editor-In-Chief at vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us.

Eric E. Jacobson
Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD

Tell us your thoughts about the magazine or what topics you would like to see addressed by writing to our Editor-In-Chief at vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us, subject line:

Letters To The Editor.

GCDD VIEWPOINT

How to Reach Us

Letters to the Editor

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

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There is a

SEISMIC TRANSFORMATION

happening in Georgia and throughout the US for people with disabilities and for all of our communities.

GUEST ARTICLE



TALLEY WELLS is the director of the Disability Integration Project at Atlanta Legal Aid Society. Wells advocates for housing and supports in the community on behalf of clients with disabilities who are confined in Georgia institutions, nursing homes or at risk of institutionalization of the Supreme Court’s *Olmstead* Decision and ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



Before *Olmstead* ...

By Talley Wells



This year is the 15th anniversary of the *Olmstead* Decision, the US Supreme Court’s landmark ruling that declared people with developmental disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than institutions. The Atlanta Legal Aid Society and Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) have teamed up with many others for a year-long celebration that includes an “I am *Olmstead*” campaign to tell the stories of men and women freed from years in institutions and nursing facilities.

As part of the campaign, I am writing four articles on *Olmstead*: *Before Olmstead*; *The Olmstead Case*; *Since Olmstead* and *The Future of Olmstead*. Over the course of 2014, each article will be featured in the *Making a Difference* magazine and I will reflect on the lessons, promises and the unfinished business of the *Olmstead* Decision.

When the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC) published its “*Hidden Shame*” series in 2007, it exposed shocking incidents of unnecessary deaths and abuse over a five-year period at Georgia’s state hospitals for people with mental illness and developmental disabilities. The larger reality was much more devastating – this five-year span was only a small segment of a timeline of abuse, isolation and neglect that stretched out over more than a century.

Even those who did not experience maltreatment suffered harm. As the United States Supreme Court explained in its 1999 *Olmstead* Decision, unnecessary confinement in institutions is disability discrimination for two reasons; it creates the perception that the men and women in institutions are incapable of being part of the community. It also “severely diminishes

the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement and cultural enrichment.” In short, institutionalization deprives citizens of their most basic rights.

The good news is that the era of institutionalization is ending.

“A major step in this transformation occurred when the Supreme Court declared in *Olmstead* that most individuals with disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than in institutions.”

There is a seismic transformation happening in Georgia and throughout the US for people with disabilities and for all of our communities. The 19th century world of institutions, segregation and hopelessness, which still has vestiges throughout our State and country,

“It would be after over 100 YEARS of institutionalization of people with disabilities that the *Olmstead* litigation would take place.”

is crumbling. While we have not yet arrived, we are moving into a 21st century world of independence, inclusion and opportunity. A major step in this transformation occurred when the Supreme Court declared in *Olmstead* that most individuals with disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than in institutions.

In 2009, the *Today Show* reported that approximately 30,000 graves, most of which are hidden or unmarked, are scattered in the fields of Milledgeville, GA holding the remains of men and women who had been confined at Central State Hospital. Central State was the largest campus of eight hospitals across the State that held people with mental illness and developmental disabilities. In the 1960s, over 12,000 men and women were held at Central State. Today, the most visible marker of these lives lost to neglect and isolation are the numerous shuttered brick buildings languishing on the road to the few buildings that remain active.

Central State opened in 1842 after the Georgia Legislature passed a bill creating a “State Lunatic, Idiot and Epileptic Asylum.” Over time, thousands of men and women were sent to live there. For many, the experience would include confinement, improper care and long or permanent separation from loved ones.

Throughout the 1900s and early 2000s, investigation after investigation found incidents of abuse, maltreatment, overcrowding and unnecessary deaths. According to a history written by Andy Miller, in as early as 1909, investigators found that Central State was a “death trap.” Similar findings would be made in almost every decade that followed. In 1960, Jack Nelson won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting on multiple problems in the State’s mental health hospitals, including doctors experimenting with unapproved drugs and at least 12 of 48 doctors having serious alcohol problems. From 2002 to 2007, the AJC’s “*Hidden Shame*” articles reported that the state hospitals had 115 suspicious deaths.

In addition to isolation and confinement, hundreds of people with disabilities were sterilized at Central State Hospital and at Gracewood Hospital in Augusta, GA. The first sterilizations occurred in Milledgeville in 1938 after a bill allowing such sterilizations was passed by the Georgia Legislature in 1937. When the bill passed, the AJC stated in an editorial that the bill was the “scientific and humanitarian method of checking the increase in insane, feeble-minded, physical, human derelicts.”

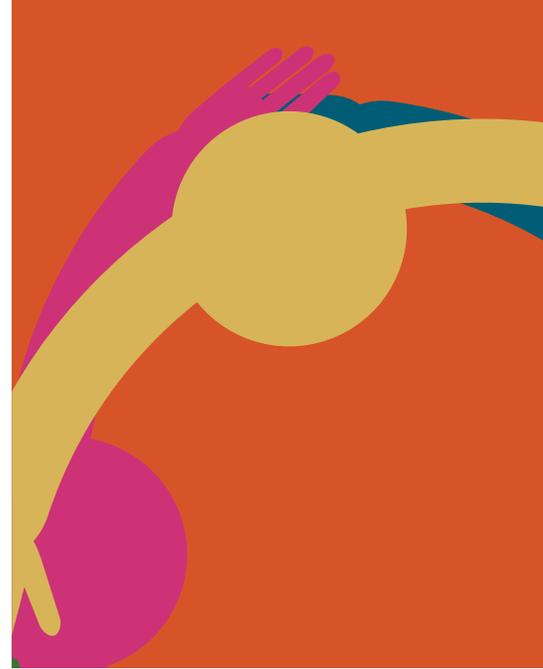
It would be after over 100 years of institutionalization of people with disabilities that the *Olmstead* litigation would take place. The case would become the *Brown v. Board* decision for people with disabilities, guaranteeing for most the right to not be segregated in institutions and the right to live integrated lives in the community.

But *Olmstead* did not take place in a vacuum. Prior to its inception, a number of lawsuits and other actions were brought up on behalf of people in institutions to return them to the community. The State also began closing some institutions for financial reasons.

Families of people with disabilities often opposed the closings because they believed their loved ones were secure and content in the institutions and did not trust what would happen to them after the closings. Also, vehement concerns were raised over the loss of jobs for those who worked in the institutions.

It was in the midst of both this long history of institutionalization and the din of voices concerned about hospital closings that the *Olmstead* litigation would take place. As with *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Olmstead* would not end the discrimination and segregation. But it would begin the era in which we are today of tearing down institutions and slowly building up communities that are integrated and inclusive.

It is taking way too long, but we are on our way.



Families of people with disabilities often **OPPOSED THE CLOSINGS** because they believed their loved ones were secure and content in the institutions and did not trust what would happen to them after the closings.

MARTA Opens a Training Facility for Customers with Disabilities

IN THE NEWS

On November 6, 2013, MARTA held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the official launch of its new Travel Training Facility designed for customers with disabilities to learn how to use the train and fixed bus networks that will offer transit options with greater flexibility and independence. The facility features simulated rail cars, bus stops and Breeze card vending machines to help customers with disabilities practice critical transit-riding skills.

Although MARTA provides curb-to-curb paratransit services, MARTA Mobility, customers must first qualify for the service and then schedule their trips in advance with MARTA. By practicing in the new training facility and learning how to use MARTA's regular rail service schedule and the fixed bus routes, individuals with disabilities will be able to get to their destinations without having to pre-schedule Mobility trips.

The new Travel Training Facility is free, self-paced and based on each customer's individual transit needs. Customers can call 404.848.6020 or 404.848.5193 to arrange an appointment for travel training at the facility or for more information, visit <http://www.itsmarta.com/new-training-facility-with-disabilities.aspx>

Help Support the CRPD

On November 21, 2013 the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee held the second of two hearings supporting ratification for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) treaty, an international disability treaty that was inspired by US leadership in recognizing the rights of people with disabilities.

Heading into the 2014 legislative session, it's important that our Georgia US Senators and US Senate Leaders hear from you! They need to hear from all Americans about how important the CRPD is for people with disabilities around the world. For more information on CRPD or to find contact information for your Georgia senators, visit <http://gcdd.org/blogs/gcdd-blog/2565-crpd-action-alert-call-in-your-support-every-day-this-week.html>.

Heading into the 2014 legislative session, it's important that our Georgia US Senators and US Senate Leaders hear from you!

UPDATE:

In early October 2013, the US Supreme Court declined to consider new evidence on the grounds that there is evidence to prove Hill has an intellectual disability and halt his execution. In Georgia, the law states you must prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" that an individual on death row has an intellectual disability to overturn the death penalty sentence. Although Hill's petition to the Supreme Court was denied, his execution remains on hold while the Georgia Supreme Court considers Hill's challenge to a new state law that keeps secret the identity of the source of the drugs the State uses in executions. Hill has previously received two stays of execution in July 2012 and February 2013. The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) will continue to closely watch Hill's case and provide any updates as they develop.

GCDD Welcomes New Real Communities Projects

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is pleased to announce two new projects have been added into its Real Communities Initiative, a cutting edge initiative to partner with local groups working to build more just communities and purposefully connect people with and without developmental disabilities in collaborative projects.

GCDD's New Real Communities Partners

Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty – The State of Georgia has twice tried to execute Warren Hill, a 52-year-old man with an intellectual disability. Hill faces execution because of Georgia's incredibly high burden of proof for defendants with intellectual disabilities. There was much collaboration from the Anti-death Penalty and the Disability Justice Rights community around Hill's case, and GCDD believes this partnership can be strengthened through its Real Communities Initiative. The vision is to create local alliances and/or coalitions and support community builders in three key communities (Atlanta, Columbus and Dawson) with the development and implementation of local projects to bring people with and without disabilities together to address mass incarceration and the death penalty.

Women on the Rise – Women on the Rise works to create a space where everyone, including the most marginalized, can bring their whole selves, be seen for the gifts

they possess, contribute to the collective and practice being in radically different relationships with one another other than what mainstream society teaches. The goal is to build on the resilience that people and communities have already developed and enhance their capacity to live and work together in deep connection. As a Real Communities Initiative, Women on the Rise will hold monthly transformative leadership development and community-building gatherings to foster relationship-building and identify community needs, strategies and solutions.

GCDD Introduces the Making a Difference Cartoon Gallery

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is proud to introduce its new *Making a Difference* Cartoon Gallery on the GCDD website, which features a collection of the cartoons published in GCDD's *Making a Difference* magazines since 2005. Each cartoon reflects the theme highlighted in each issue and offers light comic relief on some of the most pressing issues in Georgia's disability community.



To view GCDD's collection of cartoons in the gallery, scan the QR code or visit <http://gcdd.org/news-a-media/making-a-difference-cartoon-gallery.html>.

And don't forget to go to page 31 to check out this issue's cartoon.



Kameron Hayes

This process helps me with my communication skills and getting along with my classmates and teachers, which helps me in school and life.

Georgia’s ASPIRING for Educational Success

By Becca Bauer

“No one knows a student better than the student themselves,” says Shannon Williams, a 7th grade special education teacher at Mossy Creek Middle School in Houston County. “So, how can I develop the best education plan without going straight to the source?”

Williams is in her first year of implementing a program using an education approach that engages the student as an active participant in their education decisions and is quickly becoming popular across Georgia schools for students with disabilities.

The Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement (ASPIRE) program is a student-led Individual Education Program (IEP) initiative that builds self-confidence, self-determination and self-advocacy skills, which are essential in preparing students for the educational, career and independent living decisions they will need to make in adulthood.

ASPIRE in Georgia began as a collaboration between the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) in 2010. With funding from a five-year State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities, GaDOE chose to develop the ASPIRE program in Georgia based on many other successful models across the country.

The State wanted to introduce a systematic approach that would not only improve student transition outcomes but also allow students to have a greater voice in the IEP.

Members of the SPDG planning team met with GCDD staff to collaborate on planning and then worked with them as consultants to facilitate training for teachers and administrators in pilot schools.

GCDD provided support by facilitating the implementation of ASPIRE for schools and follow-up consultations for scaling up in their schools or district. Through a grant GCDD funded for Partnerships for Success (PFS), a program using a self-determination curriculum for youth with disabilities to set their own goals, GCDD was able to bring elementary schools into the project and provide teachers information and materials about self-determination.

“We officially piloted ASPIRE in the 2010-11 school year and started with 12 schools, 118 students and 56 teachers and administrators,” says Elise James, project manager for the ASPIRE program. “Since then, we have expanded tremendously and have about 1,400 parents, students, teachers and administrators in over 90 schools in 22 districts.”

And, the Houston County Schools district is implementing ASPIRE district-wide and has created a systematic plan for all students to be active participants in their IEP by 2016.



A student presenting at his meeting

Today, the collaboration has expanded to include the Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) network so that an increase in capacity and sustainability can be achieved statewide. The State is focusing on promoting ASPIRE to school districts by making guidelines and materials on how to implement ASPIRE available online.

“The idea is to make it easy for parents, students, teachers and administrators to understand the process and be able to implement ASPIRE with more flexibility,” says James. “The end goal is to have improved outcomes for students with disabilities who graduate, go to college, technical schools or who become employed. This new approach will offer more schools the opportunity to support student-led IEPs.”

How Does ASPIRE Work?

Formerly, IEPs were just a discussion between teachers, parents and administrators, aimed at addressing a child’s needs and putting together an education plan for that student. Students usually did not come to the meetings until they were in high school or were required to be there by law at the age of majority (18).

“With ASPIRE, the student contributes and helps determine the content of their IEP, which allows them to become more involved and responsible for their education,” notes Cindy Saylor, PFS program coordinator and ASPIRE consultant. “The goal is for the student to be the center of the meeting and for their voice, interests and desires to be heard and reflected in their IEP goals/plan.”

IEP meetings are held at least annually and are attended by the IEP team, which includes the student, teachers, parents and administrator. Because the goal is to individualize the IEP, each student prepares a personal presentation that shares their interests, strengths, challenges and goals in their education and life.

“I start off by introducing myself to everyone at the meeting and share what I think about my school life and family,” says Kameron Hayes, a 7th grader at Mossy Creek Middle School in his third year of leading his own IEP. “I like to share

my voice because people can learn more about me and how to help me succeed in school.”

Based on the meeting, the student contributes content in their own IEP based on guidance from their teachers while participating in ASPIRE. This process increases the student’s ability to problem solve, self-evaluate and develop self-determination and decision-making skills.

“We as adults and teachers try and guess what our kids strengths, weaknesses and goals are, but our perceptions are different from theirs – adults and kids think differently, and this process balances that,” shares Dr. Andy Gentry, principal at Mossy Creek Middle School.



Shannon Williams

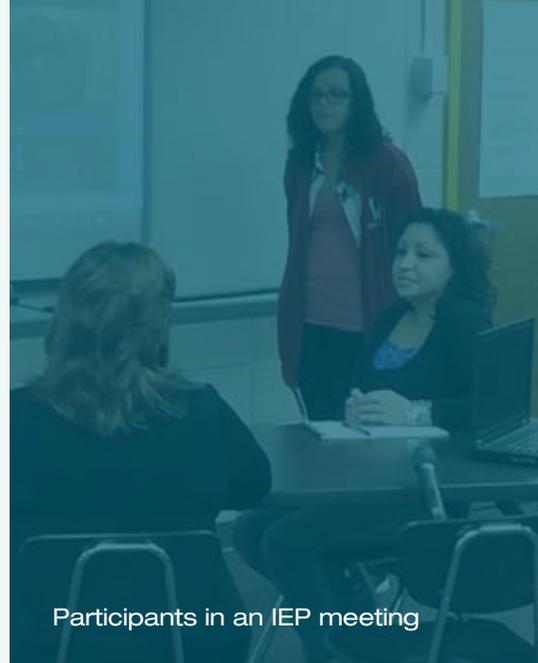
Williams, Hayes’ teacher agrees. “Already in my first year, I have seen my students develop a sense of confidence. It helps when I know my student’s interests and what they

want to accomplish. That allows me to plan a curriculum and make accommodations for them to be successful and focusing on things they are interested in helps them stay motivated.”

“Math used to be my favorite subject, but we’ve learned it’s hard for me now,” says Hayes. “Through my IEP we discovered that tutoring after school and just talking it over more than in class helps me do better.”

The student’s participation in ASPIRE doesn’t just help identify solutions to challenges, but they help students work toward future goals and aspirations.

“This process helps me with my communication skills and getting along with my classmates and teachers, which helps me in school and life,” Hayes adds. “I want to be a meteorologist and work in a news station when I grow up. When we talk about my strengths and weaknesses in my meetings, they can help me work on the skills I need for that job.”



Participants in an IEP meeting



Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement

During the 2013-2014 school year, ASPIRE will be offered to schools and districts through GLRS mini-grants. Any schools or districts interested in participating in the ASPIRE program should contact their GLRS.

Find your local center at <http://www.glr.org/regional-centers/>.

We have a

UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

on the world, and we need to have our voices heard.

Enabling Everyday Democracy

By Alison Heinz Stephens

Voting is fundamental to the health of our democracy, yet voter turnout in the United States hovers around 60% during presidential election years and 40% during mid-term elections. Unfortunately, those percentages are even lower among people with disabilities.

Although legislation such as the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the American Association of People with Disabilities' Disability Vote Project aim to make voting inclusive and accessible, there are still undeniable barriers faced by people with disabilities on Election Day. Among these potential obstacles are accessible transportation, technology, obtaining necessary identification and encountering properly trained staff at the polls.

According to an October 2013 National Council on Disability report, titled "Experience of Voters with Disabilities in the 2012 Election Cycle," nearly 40% of survey respondents encountered architectural and physical barriers at registration and polling sites; 45% of respondents reported barriers inside the polling location involving voting machines; and 20% of respondents said they were prevented from exercising a private and independent vote.

US Representative Jim Langevin, (D-RI, 2nd District) said there are even more sobering statistics which stress the importance of generating significant voter turnout among people with disabilities. He estimates just over 20% of taxpayers with disabilities have incomes greater than \$40,000.



Jim Langevin

"With so many Americans with disabilities living in poverty, it is especially important they vote to ensure that safety net programs remain intact and to help

remove obstacles to healthcare, education, transportation and employment," he said.

Make Your Voice Heard

Langevin, who chose a career in public service as a way to give back to the community that supported him when he became paralyzed at the age of 16, said getting people with disabilities into office will dispel stereotypes that continue to serve as barriers to full participation and inclusion.

"We have a unique perspective on the world, and we need to have our voices heard," said Langevin. "Without a strong voter turnout from this population, we run the risk of stalling progress for the inclusion and empowerment of all Americans with disabilities."

Langevin said the progress made by others can lead to complacency, which is dangerous. Everyone has to believe that their unique experience and contributions matter.

“I know firsthand that civic engagement can make a difference,” he said. “We all face challenges in life, and often it is not until we share our experiences with others that they fully understand and appreciate those hurdles. I have had the privilege of educating my colleagues in Congress about my own personal

“We all face challenges in life, and often it is not until we share our experiences with others that they fully understand and appreciate those hurdles.”

experiences living with a disability. But my story is one of many, and the more voices we have in this discussion, the more likely it is that we can make progress in improving the quality of life for people with disabilities to have more opportunities to be full, participating members of our communities.”

According to Langevin, as many as one in five individuals have some type of physical or developmental disability. That represents a huge voting bloc and it is no secret that politicians are more responsive to the demographic groups with the greatest turnout.

More than likely, the elected officials in your hometown know who votes. This makes the participation disparity between voters with disabilities and without disabilities even more concerning. People with disabilities need to be voting in every election. It is essential to guarantee their resources, benefits and accessibility.

Georgia State Representative Rusty Kidd, (I-District 145), uses a wheelchair since a 1999 motorcycle accident left him paralyzed from the chest down. Kidd comes from a

family that has long stressed the importance of public service. Both his father and sister served as elected officials and, following his accident, Kidd missed only two days of the 2000 legislative session.

“The electronic age we live in today gives every elected city official a list of who voted and who did not vote,” said Kidd. “I also have the list.” He noted that he is not able to tell how persons voted, just whether or not they did.

“You have to remember that old saying, ‘If you didn’t vote, you can’t complain,’” said Kidd.

But voter turnout is just one part of the disability community’s needed efforts to foster civic participation. It’s time for more people with disabilities to seek positions of power and run for office.

Engage in the Democratic Process

Eric Jacobson, executive director of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), said the key to getting individuals to engage in political processes is to start early and start at home.



Eric Jacobson

“We want kids in school to understand the way our democracy works,” said Jacobson. “That means they have to get involved in things like student government, clubs and associations at school and take leadership roles.”

Jacobson said there has been recent discussion that public education is moving away from teaching civics classes, which means it is up to the parents to fill that void. He said parents need to look at their own voting practices and level of involvement within the community.

“Take the kids to volunteer day to clean up the park,” he suggests. “Show your kids that your community is important to you and take them to a neighborhood meeting or to



Rusty Kidd

“You have to remember that old saying, ‘If you didn’t vote, you can’t complain’

“Show your kids that your community is important to you and take them to a neighborhood meeting or to the polls with you when you vote. Let them see the processes and long lines and explain to them that

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF BEING AN AMERICAN.



the polls with you when you vote. Let them see the processes and long lines and explain to them that this is an important part of being an American.”

“Once they graduate, it becomes important that people with disabilities are involved in making their communities a better place to live. They need to be registered to vote; they need to ask candidates questions; they need to run for office themselves.”

Understandably, Jacobson adds, students with disabilities will need support to do these things. They will need help from their families and neighbors.

“They need to be at the table and be a part of that,” he said. “That’s what everyday democracy is. And if people with disabilities are invited to participate, they will bring their gifts and contributions.”

Langevin encourages participation for the same reasons. “The success of our democracy is grounded in the participation of the people – people of differing ethnicities, beliefs, experiences and abilities,” he said.

Jacobson encourages parents to research what their school systems offer. There are groups like Partnerships for Success, which teach kids with and without disabilities, leadership skills together. “Even if academics is not their strength, that doesn’t mean that leadership and participation are not,” said Jacobson.

Whatever the organization or cause, the key is to find leadership opportunities for children with disabilities and instill a sense of engagement as the norm.

Take the Lead

A shining example of this early engagement is Kathy Martinez, President Obama’s appointee as assistant secretary of labor for the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). Martinez was born blind. She credits her parents with instilling early in her the expectation that she would work and contribute.

“Instead of shielding me from life’s challenges, they taught me to embrace them,” she said. “I was lucky.”

Her parents fought to have her educated in a mainstream school. A career counselor’s assessment led her to a job operating a punch press in a lock factory.

“As grateful as I was to have a job, I wanted more. I wanted to go to college and learn about the issues I was really passionate about.”

“As grateful as I was to have a job, I wanted more. I wanted to go to college and learn about the issues I was really passionate about,” she said. And although it took 13 years, she earned her degree. And once she found the disability rights movement she decided to explore public service.

“My advice for those thinking about entering public service is to be determined and persistent about setting goals for yourself and getting the support you need to achieve them,” said



Kathy Martinez

Martinez. She also encourages would-be public servants to find a mentor. There are increasing numbers of people with disabilities serving as elected officials.

“I’m pleased to say that the Obama administration has numerous appointees with disabilities,” she said. “Being a presidential appointee leading the Office of Disability Employment Policy is a far cry from working in a lock factory.”

Martinez is particularly encouraged by the diversity represented among these appointees as well.

“Increasingly, the people with disabilities who are civically engaged mirror the diversity of this country,” she said. “We have a long way to go, but I am definitely encouraged.”

Beth English, executive director of Easter Seals Southern Georgia, Inc., and a disability advocate for more than 30 years, believes the key to civic engagement is to start small. It's not necessary to run straight for city hall.

"We need to be using our personal networks to help people get engaged," said English. "Look to your neighbors, your church group, your co-workers and even new acquaintances. I can't tell you how many times I pick up the phone and call someone that I have just met."

English, who worked her way up to the Vienna, Georgia City Council and currently serves as mayor pro-tem, got her own start with the women's group at her church. She notes there are significantly more opportunities for involvement than most people realize.



Beth English

"Find out what your issue is and then find a way to make a contribution," she said. "There are always vacancies and they just don't get filled because someone doesn't step up. You just have to go to your county commission and say, 'I'd like to serve on the Board of Behavioral Disability,' for example. They will need you."

English, who has worked with politicians and served as an elected official for decades, said it is not a lack of concern that keeps these special interest boards from running at capacity.

"The state folks don't have staff," she said. "They are so busy. Government is very complex and they have day jobs and it's a lot on their plate. Unless they have a family member who has a disability, it's hard for them to understand."

She said calling, or even better, appearing in person, to volunteer for an open position is a great way for families to get involved. Not only does it benefit the individual with a disability, but it also helps ensure that resources for them and their families are properly managed and sustained.

"If we can't provide these families with what they need, they will move," said English. "And then you're losing jobs and additional tax dollars."

Act Now

This year Georgians will have the opportunity to vote. Because this is a mid-term election year, 2014's voter turnout numbers are likely to remain around 40%. What voters have though, is an opportunity to have their voice heard. There is still time to get involved, even if that simply means researching the candidates and issues in your hometown.

"Everyone should be asking about where candidates stand on issues important to the disability community such as financial resources to address waiting lists, supporting more people to go to work, and how we can make sure kids get a good education and graduate with a diploma that allows them to get a job or go to college," said Jacobson.

This is the time of year when people resolve to do better. Make a New Year's resolution to get involved. If there is a candidate or political party that inspires you, they will have work for you to do.

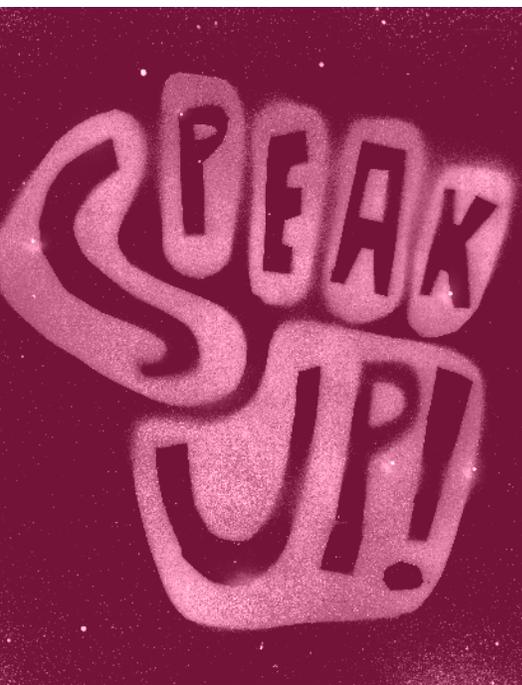
If you are not sure yet where you fall on the political spectrum or if none of the candidates inspire you, run yourself. If that is not an option or you want to just learn more about the political process, there are other areas where volunteers are needed, such as absentee ballot voter registration efforts. But above all, stay engaged, knowledgeable and take action.

Our representatives are guided by what we say when we vote. If we don't vote, we are telling our politicians that we don't care what they do and that is a dangerous thing to say to them.

“Find out what your issue is and then **FIND A WAY** to make a contribution. There are always vacancies and they just don't get filled because someone doesn't step up.”

Unlock the Waiting Lists! is proud to endorse Key Principles for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in their Communities.

(Adapted by Daniel Crimmins from Community Integration for People with Disabilities: Key Principles, Bazelon Center, 2013.)



To see how you can get involved in statewide advocacy and promote these significant principles to ensure true community integration for people with disabilities, go to page 15.

Sharing Your Vision and Advocating that Our Rights Are Heard

By D'Arcy Robb, GCDD Public Policy Director

Community integration is the passion and vision that drives countless disability advocates. And, it leads to a challenge faced by many advocates – how do you effectively share the vision of what a truly integrated community is like?

In the summer of 2013, the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law unveiled a set of consensus principles that reflect the disability community's shared vision of community integration. Dozens of advocacy organizations, including Unlock the Waiting Lists!, are proud to endorse these principles. Below is a summary, created by Unlock and used with permission from Bazelon.

Take these principles and share them with your elected officials. As a community we must take action and make our voice and rights heard.

Principles of Community Integration

Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to live full, self-determined lives. This means they want the chance:

...to be employed

- In regular workplaces – not in settings with only other workers with disabilities
- Earning the same wages as people without disabilities
- With access to supported or customized employment services

...to have a place to call home

- In apartments or houses in a community that they've chosen
- With the opportunity to live in communities that are inclusive of residents with and without disabilities
- With the opportunity for ownership or control of the lease
- Alone or with others that they've chosen – and no one else
- Where they decide who visits and when
- Without the threat of losing that home because they didn't comply with a treatment plan

...to be engaged in their communities with family and friends

- Who understand and appreciate their gifts and contributions
- With access to an array of educational and leisure pursuits
- Able to go to a full range of locations and activities that they've chosen

...to have control over how they spend their time

- With adequate information so that they make informed choices from an array of meaningful options
- With a schedule of daily activities based on their personal priorities, interests and contributions
- Choosing when and what to eat, and what to watch on television

And what individuals with disabilities DON'T want is:

- To be offered sheltered work, day treatment and other segregated programs as the only options
- To be offered group homes, congregate arrangements and multi-unit complexes for people with disabilities as the only options
- To have their daily activities determined by a collective schedule
- To hear that "we've always done it this way"

But, what individuals with disabilities and those who support them in advocacy DO want is:

- To have their legitimate concerns and fears understood and addressed with accurate information
- To continue to learn about the options available to them and what those have meant for others with disabilities
- For government funding to support these principles, rather than the continued "institutional bias" that perpetuates antiquated models of service

Working to Make Positive Changes with the 2014 Legislative Agenda

As many of you reading this article know, the mission of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is to bring about social and policy changes that promote opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and their families to live, learn, work, play and worship in Georgia communities.

We know that Georgians with disabilities want to live full lives in our communities, and they are fully capable of doing so. And we know that if we, the citizens of Georgia, choose to make positive changes to our system, more and more people with disabilities will be working in our communities, living with their families, friends or independently as they so choose, and will be contributing to their communities all across the State. When all of our citizens, including those with disabilities, are able to use their gifts and talents and pursue their dreams, it creates a better Georgia for us all.

“We hope to see you at our annual Disability Day, Georgia’s largest advocacy rally held on the steps of the State Capitol on Thursday, February 20, 2014 this year.”

The big question is, how do we work together to get there? If the description above sounds like the Georgia you want to live in, I encourage you to get involved with our statewide advocacy for our 2014 legislative agenda. You can make appointments with your state representative and state senator and share this article with them. (If you want to keep the magazine for yourself – and I don’t blame you! – go to gcdd.org to print out separate copies of our 2014 legislative agenda

to share with your state representative and state senator. (If you’re not sure who your state representative and senator are, you can find out by going to www.votesmart.org and entering your home address.)

While you’re at gcdd.org, be sure to sign up for our advocacy network. And of course, we hope to see you at our annual Disability Day, Georgia’s largest advocacy rally held on the steps of the State Capitol on Thursday, February 20, 2014 this year.

Getting involved and staying knowledgeable in our political processes is one of the most important things you can do to help make positive system changes for not only your whole community, but also yourself. Read on for information about the centerpieces of GCDD’s advocacy agenda for the 2014 General Assembly ...

Support & Expand Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Inclusive Post-Secondary Education provides opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to access higher education. This education prepares them to live increasingly independent lives and pursue careers of their choice.

Charlie Miller, a first-year student at the Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth at Kennesaw State University (KSU) says, “The best way I can explain inclusive learning is it’s a chance to fully express yourself out from under your mom and dad’s wing, into being a productive person in society.”

Indeed, there are major economic benefits to Inclusive Post-Secondary Education. Individuals with intellectual disabilities who receive post-secondary education are more likely to find paid employment than those who don’t, and their earnings are 73% higher than peers who do not receive post-secondary education.¹

Currently Georgia has one Inclusive Post-secondary Education Program, the Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth at KSU, with three more aiming to open their

When all of our citizens, including those with disabilities, are able to use their gifts and talents and pursue their dreams, it creates

**A BETTER
GEORGIA
FOR US ALL.**

“The best way I can explain inclusive learning is it’s a chance to fully express yourself out from under your mom and dad’s wing, into being a productive person in society.”





doors in the fall of 2014. GCDD’s legislative advocacy will be to ...

- Support and increase funding for Inclusive Post-Secondary Education programs by \$200,000.
- Increase student access to inclusive higher education through scholarship availability.

Support Georgians with Developmental Disabilities Who Want to Work

Supported employment assists Georgians with disabilities to find and keep jobs in their communities. The majority of Georgians with developmental disabilities want to work, but only 14% of individuals with developmental disabilities in our State are currently employed in the community.²

When Georgians with disabilities get the support they need to work, they thrive. GCDD member Evan Nodvin is one example of an individual who is thriving with supported employment—he has been working full-time with senior citizens at the Weinstein Adult Day Center at the Marcus Jewish Community of Atlanta for the past 13 years and recently received a promotion.

“When Georgians with disabilities get the support they need to work, THEY THRIVE.”

And once again, there’s a big economic benefit to supported employment. Not only do Georgians with developmental disabilities want to work, but when they do, it benefits all taxpayers. For every dollar put into supported employment programs in Georgia, taxpayers reap \$1.61 in benefits.³ This session, GCDD will advocate for ...

- Increased funding for supported employment so that more Georgians with developmental disabilities can

go to work in their communities – \$1,960,000 for supported employment in the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) budget will support approximately 250 more Georgians with developmental disabilities to work in their communities.

Offer Georgians with Developmental Disabilities the Opportunity to Live in Homes of Their Own

Currently, Georgia’s developmental disability system will pay for a person to live in someone else’s house but will not support that person to live in a home of his own. The DBHDD has established a highly successful housing voucher program for individuals with severe persistent mental illness, but right now, that option is not available to persons with developmental disabilities. In the 2014 legislative session, GCDD will advocate to ...

- Provide funding to expand DBHDD’s highly successful housing voucher program so it includes individuals with developmental disabilities – \$480,000 will support approximately 100 Georgians to live in their own house or apartment.

Rebalance Georgia’s System from Facilities to the Community: Unlock the Waiting Lists!

As advocates are well aware, virtually all Georgians with disabilities and aging Georgians would rather live in their own homes and communities than go to a nursing facility.

Not only do Georgians want to remain in their communities, there is increasing evidence that supporting people in the community is significantly less expensive than caring for them in a facility. The Money Follows the Person program (MFP) identifies Georgians living in facilities such as nursing homes, who want to live in the community, and helps them move and get support in the

“Not only do Georgians want to remain in their communities, there is increasing evidence that supporting people in the community is **SIGNIFICANTLY LESS EXPENSIVE** than caring for them in a facility.”

community. Over the past five years, Georgia has saved over \$22 million under MFP by moving people out of facility care and into community settings.⁴

In true Unlock the Waiting Lists! style, this year we have a broad ask that focuses on a wide array of needs. More specifically, GCDD will advocate to ...

- Rebalance the system so that more Georgians can get support in the community instead of facilities. Support the full agenda of Unlock the Waiting Lists! in order to support Georgians with disabilities and aging Georgians who wish to live their lives in the community.

For more information on our full Unlock the Waiting Lists! ask and agenda for the 2014 session, see page 18. And remember, to keep up with Unlock, you can always go to www.unlockthewaitinglists.com

Change the Standard to Prove Intellectual Disabilities in Capital Punishment Cases

In 2002, the US Supreme Court said it is wrong to execute a person with intellectual disabilities. But right now in Georgia, it is extremely hard for an individual to prove in court that they have intellectual disabilities. Georgia is the only one of the 50 states that requires a person to prove “beyond a reasonable doubt” that they have intellectual disabilities in order to be exempt from the death penalty. GCDD will advocate to ...

- Change the legal standard of proof for proving intellectual disabilities in O.C.G.A. 17-7-131 to “preponderance of the evidence,” which is the standard used in most other states.

Support Georgians who Care for Their Families: The Family Care Act, HB 290

Many Georgians balance their work lives with caring for their families. The Family Care Act would allow Georgians who have

earned sick leave to use up to five days of that leave to care for sick or injured members of their immediate family. The Family Care Act does NOT add any additional sick days or require employers to provide them; it only allows Georgians to use the sick days they’ve already earned to care for family members. GCDD will ...

- Support House Bill 290, the Family Care Act, sponsored by Representative Katie Dempsey.

So those items are the “meat” of our legislative agenda for 2014! In addition, GCDD is also proud to support ...

- Individual Development Account legislation that would support Georgians with disabilities as they save for an accessible vehicle, communication devices, investments in their own businesses, higher education or home modifications;
- An “Employment First” policy that would make employment in the community the first option for persons with disabilities;
- Changes to Georgia’s high school diploma system that will give more students with disabilities the opportunity to obtain diplomas and access further career and educational opportunities;
- New Home Access legislation that would increase accessibility in all new single family homes;
- Expansion of Medicaid under the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act; and
- A cost-of-living adjustment up to 5% for providers of services and supports to persons with disabilities.

And of course, you never know what surprises the legislative session will bring – all the more reason to sign up for our grassroots advocacy network at gcdd.org!

Georgia is the **ONLY ONE OF THE 50 STATES** that requires a person to prove “beyond a reasonable doubt” that they have intellectual disabilities in order to be exempt from the death penalty.



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1. Migliore, A., Butterworth, J., & Hart, D. (2009). Post-Secondary Education and Employment Outcomes for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities. Think College Fast Facts. No 1. www.thinkcollege.net/publications/fast-facts.
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- 3 Robert E. Cimera (2010) National Cost Efficiency of Supported Employees With Intellectual Disabilities: 2002 to 2007. American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: January 2010, Vol. 115, No. 1, pp. 19-29.
- 4 Georgia Money Follows the Person, Department of Community Health. Sept. 12, 2013.

We believe Georgia

MUST REBALANCE ITS SYSTEM

of long-term supports,
so that fewer dollars are
spent on institutional care
and more dollars are
invested into supports
in the community.



UNLOCK
THE WAITING LISTS!

Unlock the Waiting Lists! Agenda for the 2014 Legislative Session

In addition to the GCDD legislative agenda, we advocate for the Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign. Unlock the Waiting Lists! advocates to reduce and eventually eliminate the waiting lists for home- and community-based support for Georgians with disabilities, so they and their families can live full lives and contribute to Georgia communities and the economy. We believe Georgia must rebalance its system of long-term supports, so that fewer dollars are spent on institutional care and more dollars are invested into supports in the community. Support in the community is overwhelmingly what Georgians with disabilities and their families want, and rebalancing our system will benefit those citizens directly affected and the State of Georgia as a whole. The items on the Unlock agenda are designed to support that vision.

Unlock the Waiting Lists! has a history of broad and passionate support throughout the disability community. Unlock is guided by our steering committee partners: the Georgia Advocacy Office, the Arc of Georgia, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia, People First of Georgia, the Institute on Human Development & Disability at the University of Georgia, the Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University, the Georgia Council on Aging and Parent to Parent of Georgia. We welcome all interested organizations and individuals to participate in Unlock advocacy.

The final agenda of Unlock the Waiting Lists! is based on the proposed budget that the governor presents at the start of the legislative session. Visit www.unlockthewaitinglists.com to see any updates to the agenda or to learn more information on the Unlock campaign.

The 2014 Legislative Session – Anticipated Ask for Unlock:

Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), FY 2015

- Housing vouchers to support 100 people with developmental disabilities who wish to live in their own home or apartment ... \$480,000
- Supported employment funds to assist 250 young people with developmental disabilities find and keep employment in the community ... \$1,960,000

Unlock supports the Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement agreement and greatly appreciates your support for the DOJ funds.

Department of Community Health, FY 2015

- Funding for 100 ICWP waivers to eliminate the current waiting list ... \$1,620,202

Department of Human Services, FY 2015

- Funding to support aging Georgians ... \$10,000 by:
 - Reducing waiting lists for home and community-based services
 - Increasing funds for abuse investigations and protection
 - Strengthening long-term care ombudsman protection
 - Improving access to legal advice
 - Protecting abuse victims by offering temporary placements all across Georgia

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, FY 2015

- Increase funding for Vocational Rehabilitation services that prepare persons with disabilities for competitive employment, so that Georgia may pull down its full 4:1 federal dollar match ... \$26,000,000

Department of Community Affairs, FY 2015

- Increase retrofit dollars for home modifications and necessary code updates to inaccessible properties ... \$300,000

How to Share Your Voice at the Polls and Get Involved

One of the best ways to make positive changes to our system is to get involved and help choose the people we elect to make decisions in our communities. People with disabilities are a powerful voting bloc and it's important to make sure the disability community's interests are heard and represented by our elected officials.

Participating at the polls in the upcoming elections in November 2014 for the House of Representatives, Senate and Governor will be a great opportunity for Georgia's disability community to share its voice.

The following are several tips for voters with disabilities to be prepared.

How do I know if I am eligible to vote?

In order to participate in the voting process in Georgia, you must be a citizen of the United States, a legal resident of Georgia and of the county in which you plan to vote and 18 years of age by Election Day. Additionally, you must have been previously registered or filled out a voter registration application. If you're unsure of your registration status, you can check it through the Secretary of State's website or county voter registration office.

What do you need to vote?

You must bring photo identification to vote. Acceptable forms include:

- A Georgia driver's license, even if expired
- Any valid state or federal issued photo ID, including a free voter ID card issued by your County Registrar's Office or by the Georgia Dept. of Driver Services
- Valid US passport
- Valid employee photo ID from any branch, department, agency or entity of the US government, Georgia or any

county, municipality, board, authority or other entity of this State

- Valid US military photo ID
- Valid tribal photo ID

What do I do if I don't have qualified identification?

You can get a FREE Georgia Identification Card for voting purposes only from the Department of Driver Services or a FREE Georgia Voter Identification Card at your County Registrar's Office. In order to get a Georgia Voter Identification Card, you will need:

- A photo identity document or a non-photo identity document showing your full legal name and date of birth.
- Documentation showing your date of birth.
- Evidence you are registered to vote in Georgia; and
- Documentation showing your name and the address of principal residence

What if I need assistance at my polling location?

There are several options for voters with disabilities who need assistance at their polling location:

- Voters with disabilities can go to the poll locations between 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM, not wait in line and have a poll officer to assist them to the front of the line.
- Voters with disabilities can receive assistance from another individual with some exceptions
- Touch screen voting equipment is available including an audio ballot and magnifying features

Do I have to vote in person?

Any voter can request a mail-in ballot by visiting http://sos.georgia.gov/elections/elections/voter_information/absentee.htm and printing out the application form. Mail, fax or take the form in person to your local County Board of Registrar's Office.



For more detailed information and tips on voting, visit <http://gcdd.org/blogs/gcdd-blog/2567-how-to-share-your-voice-at-the-polls-and-get-involved.html>. And see page 30 for a list of resources on voting.

Finding the True Spirit of Success

By Dr. Jenny McClintic

Through the implementation of ASPIRE (Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement), a student-led Individual Education Plan (IEP) initiative where the student takes an active role in their education decisions, we have found that IEP meetings have instilled a renewed sense of individualization in many of our students in the Houston County school system. The student, seated among the IEP committee, steals the show with their carefully crafted presentations on their perspectives of their strengths, challenges and next steps in both school and life.

After participating in these student-led meetings, parents, teachers, administrators and school psychologists continually describe their experiences with words such as astonishing, dumbfounded or flabbergasted. One cannot help but feel the overwhelming sense of pride and empowerment resulting from such a personalized meeting. So many positive outcomes result from these meetings including more appropriate accommodations to help the student learn better, highly motivated students, more consistent parent attendance and less stressful meetings.

We are currently in our third year of implementation in Houston County schools and will surpass 1,000 ASPIRE students this school year. We are increasing participation each year and will reach full implementation during the 2015-16 school year. As a county, we knew this program was the right thing to do for our students, and I want to recognize our Director of Student Services, Dr. Zabrina Cannady, for her vision and support for approving implementation of ASPIRE in our county.

ASPIRE's success only becomes more evident as we observe our students and see them more highly motivated, eager to conduct their own progress monitoring and continuously reporting to committee members as they are seen throughout school buildings. One principal, after witnessing the positive effects of these IEP's for students with disabilities, is determined to implement student-led conferences school-wide for all of his students.

Students are sharing the news about ASPIRE with their peers, resulting in more student requests for participation. And, it's not just the students who are seeing the positive impacts of this education approach.

Parents who were previously reluctant to have their students involved in ASPIRE are now wishing this would have been implemented earlier. They report great satisfaction in seeing their child communicate effectively with adults and their peers and displaying self-advocacy skills.

Committee members also continue to be surprised at the vast amount of knowledge gained through providing students with this voice in their education plan.

And, teachers explain that this process allows them to gain individualized insight into each student that they would have never had access to previously and results in them being able to provide more personalized guidance. This could be anything from providing the student with something as simple as a book recommendation or as significant as a more appropriate course choice.

Regardless of a student's age or exceptionality, through the ASPIRE program, students are able to meaningfully contribute and give input in their own IEP meetings. To witness the pride of a parent, the confidence in an exceptional student and the true spirit of success, is what it means to participate in the ASPIRE program in Houston County.

PERSPECTIVES



DR. JENNY McCLINTIC serves as a program specialist for the Houston County school system, and is the district liaison for the implementation of the ASPIRE program throughout the county. She received her doctorate in Curriculum Studies from Georgia Southern University. She has served in the field of special education for 21 years. She has one son, Will, who attends high school in the district.

Students are sharing the news about ASPIRE with their peers, resulting in

MORE STUDENT REQUESTS

for participation.

Learn What Your Child Has to Say and Can Do

By Carrie Gleason

I remember when my husband and I attended our first Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting for our son Lakoda. He was 4½-years-old and to say we were naïve to the special education world would be an understatement. We did not have the first clue what IEP stood for, let alone what would happen at the meeting. We soon became aware of how important these annual meetings would be for Lakoda's success at school, considering his autism spectrum diagnosis.

Before one of the meetings, I asked Lakoda if there was anything he wanted me to bring up at the meeting. I was surprised when he exclaimed, "Yes! I don't want to ride the Special Ed bus anymore; I want to ride the same bus as my brother!" He had apparently given this a lot of thought. I remember being somewhat taken aback that Lakoda had such a strong opinion. I remember feeling disappointed at myself, for I had underestimated my son's ability to understand and relay what he wanted/needed in regards to his disability.

A short while ago, I attended a meeting that explained the ASPIRE (Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement) program and how it encourages student participation in the IEP process. I never actually "dreaded" attending an IEP meeting, but I recall actually looking forward to Lakoda's involvement. I knew my son would have plenty to say! I felt it was important that the IEP committee heard in Lakoda's own words what he needed; sometimes hearing it right from the source can have more of an impact.

Lakoda attended the next IEP meeting with a poster board explaining what he likes to do, what he enjoys at school and what experiences present him with challenges. He was smiling throughout the meeting, obviously enjoying sharing his successes and explaining his struggles. Lakoda has attended a couple of other meetings when decisions were being made about having him attend a different school. With his personal input as an integral

part of the discussion, Lakoda seemed less anxious. It allowed him to ask questions we may not have thought to ask, which provided Lakoda more control over the situation.

As a parent in the ASPIRE program, I am impressed with Lakoda's abilities to participate in his meetings. He handles himself well, and he is eloquent and thoughtful in his responses to the committee's questions. Prior to the program I wouldn't have expected these characteristics to be demonstrated by my quick-tempered son. I believe the ASPIRE program will give Lakoda the confidence and tools needed to advocate for himself in the future – whether it is in school or in a job environment.

"As a parent in the ASPIRE program, I am impressed with Lakoda's abilities to participate in his meetings. He handles himself well, and he is eloquent and thoughtful in his responses to the committee's questions."

I would tell other parents to give their child a chance at participating in their IEP meeting to the extent they are able. The pride felt by the student and parent is immeasurable. I think other parents may be, like me, pleasantly surprised and encouraged by what their child has to say and what their child can do.

I knew my son would have plenty to say! I felt it was important that the IEP committee heard in Lakoda's own words what he needed; sometimes hearing it right from the source can have

MORE OF AN IMPACT.

PERSPECTIVES



CARRIE GLEASON is married and has lived in middle Georgia for 11 years. She spent eight years serving her country in the Air Force and currently works as a PK-2 teacher at a local church. She enjoys spending her time with her fraternal twin boys Landen and Lakoda. Carrie also enjoys reading, scrapbooking, camping and going on long bike rides. To read her son Lakoda's perspective on ASPIRE, go to page 28.



16TH ANNUAL DISABILITY DAY AT THE CAPITOL THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2014

JOIN US ON THE CAPITOL STEPS!

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

9 AM – 11 AM

T-Shirt Distribution, Activities
& Exhibits Before the Rally at
the Georgia Freight Depot

11 AM – 12:10 PM

Rally Program on
the Capitol Steps

12:30 PM – 2 PM

Lunch & Exhibits at the
Georgia Freight Depot

* T-shirts and lunch are distributed
on a first come, first served basis.

For more information,
visit gcdd.org or call
1-888-ASK-GCDD

COME
CELEBRATE
COMMUNITY,
ADVOCACY
& FRIENDSHIP!

“We All Have a Story ... What’s Yours?”

FEATURING: *Olmstead* Decision 15th Anniversary Celebration • “I am *Olmstead*” Stories of Freedom • StoryCorps Recordings & Signup Exhibit

That’s the theme for the 16th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol, sponsored by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) to promote access, opportunity and meaningful community living for all Georgians, including people with disabilities and their families. Each year, citizens with and without disabilities gather at the community rally on the steps of the State Capitol to join advocates, meet with state legislators and make their voices heard.

ATTENDEE FORM:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Organization (if applicable): _____

School (if applicable): _____

County (required field): _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Day Time Phone (required field): _____

Email Address: _____

Alternate Contact Name: _____

Alternate Phone: _____

Please Confirm Number of Attendees:

Attendees 10 and under: ____ Confirmed number of attendees

Group Size 11 thru 50 (ONLY): ____ Confirmed number of attendees

Group Size 51 and over (ONLY) ____ Confirmed number of attendees

Please complete by Feb. 10 and mail or fax with attention to Kim Person-Hudson

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
2014 Disability Day Registration
2 Peachtree Street, NW • Atlanta, GA 30303

Fax: 404.657.2132
Call 404.657.2130
to learn more

You can also register online at: <http://bit.ly/1eT5C5s>.

Become a Disability Day Sponsor

It's that time again. Each winter, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities invites people with disabilities, family members, policymakers, business leaders and providers to gather at the Capitol in celebration of community, advocacy and friendship. The success of Disability Day depends on the vital support of sponsors like you! Please let us know of your commitment no later than February 10th, so that you may receive full recognition of your support. Unfortunately, information received after this date does not guarantee your organization's placement on any printed materials. However, we will gladly assist you over the phone to meet this deadline. Please call 404.657.2119.

Yes! My organization will co-sponsor Disability Day 2014 in the amount of:

_____ \$5,000. Full-page ad in *Making a Difference* magazine, logo on banner, name on program and GCDD website, exhibit space.

_____ \$4,000. Half-page ad in *Making a Difference* magazine, logo on banner, name on program and GCDD website, exhibit space.

_____ \$2,500. Quarter-page ad, logo on banner, name on program and GCDD website, exhibit space.

_____ \$1,500. Logo on banner, name on program and GCDD website, exhibit space.

_____ \$600. Logo on banner, name on program and GCDD website.

_____ \$200. Name on program and GCDD website.

Yes, my check is enclosed. (Payable to Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities)

Yes, please invoice me for the amount selected.

Sorry, I am unable to sponsor this year.

Will you or your organization's staff plan on attending this event? Yes ___ No ___

Please provide an estimated count for lunch ___ and/or number of t-shirts ___

(For sponsors \$600 and over, email kaperson@dhr.state.ga.us with the number of t-shirts and sizes you are requesting. GCDD will mail them to your organization.)

[PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY]

Contact Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization Name (Exactly as you want it to appear on event materials):

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please complete form by Feb. 10 and mail or fax with attention Sharon Strandberg

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

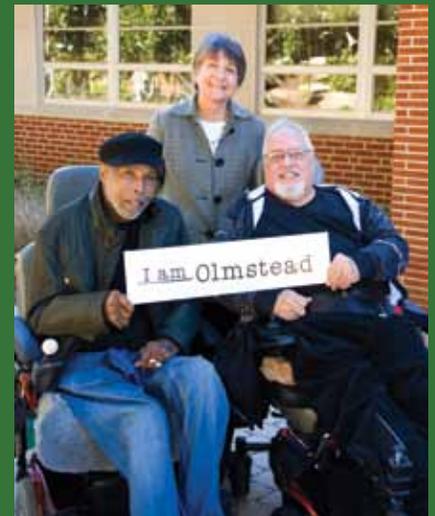
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DISABILITY DAY SPONSORSHIP FORM

"We all have a Story... What's Yours?" So, come rally and share your personal story with us. Plus, GCDD and the Atlanta Legal Aid Society will celebrate the *Olmstead* Decision 15th anniversary with individual "I Am *Olmstead*" stories of freedom, recorded onsite by StoryCorps.



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How We Can Become a More Powerful Voting Bloc

An interview with the president of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Mark Perriello, on the importance of Americans with disabilities to engage in the political processes.



MARK PERRIELLO is the president and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), the nation's largest disability rights organization. Perriello, who has had a visual disability since childhood and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), has a proven track record of increasing organizational standing with decision-makers through creative and high-impact grassroots and grasstops programs across the US. As a political strategist, he oversaw highly successful efforts to elect candidates to office at the federal, state and local level. Before joining AAPD, Perriello served as the White House Liaison at the US Department of the Interior.

For more information on AAPD and voting, visit www.aapd.com/what-we-do/voting/

1. How can people with disabilities gain and hold more political power?

Full political participation for Americans with disabilities is a top priority for AAPD. While most states require accessibility standards at the polls, two-thirds report that ensuring accessibility still remains a challenge. Americans with disabilities make up almost 20% of the population, and yet, we have few elected officials who identify as having a disability and have yet to realize the full political power of our community.

First and foremost, we must vote. We already vote in high numbers at 69%, according to the Youth Transitions Collaborative 2013 poll. But we must get to 100%. We must vote in local, state and federal elections. We must vote to make sure elected officials represent our interests. As advocates, we must also eliminate voting barriers, educate all voters about where candidates stand on disability, promote turnout and increase civic engagement. If we do all this, I am confident that our movement will achieve even greater success.

2. What methods or strategies for exercising greater political power would you recommend people with disabilities employ?

Americans with disabilities are grossly underrepresented in elected office. That is why we are very excited to launch a groundbreaking initiative called the Robert J. Dole Leadership Series that will train and provide resources for people with disabilities to run for and win elected office at the local, state and federal level.

AAPD has also been a part of the get-out-the-vote efforts and works on increasing access to polls through our Disability Vote Project, which works to ensure full accessibility to all polling places and voting equipment. We must show our power in numbers by voting and engaging in the electoral process. We must question candidates on their positions on disability issues we all care about such as access to education and healthcare, accessibility, federal benefits programs and much more. I encourage readers to go to our website to find out what they can do as voters.

3. Are there effective social justice movements that people with disabilities can look to as models of success?

While every movement has its own unique set of challenges and history, all movements can learn from one another. Our community cuts across all movements – disabilities exist regardless of who you are or where you

come from – and many of us belong to other social justice movements. I come from the LGBT movement and have seen how that community changed the hearts and minds of mainstream Americans and it galvanized its political and financial resources to affect change. At AAPD, we are working to redefine disability in order to challenge Americans to appreciate the positive aspects of disability. Our new PSA encourages viewers to join with AAPD in breaking down the outdated stereotypes confronting many people with disabilities. I hope readers will take the time to go to our website to see our new PSA entitled “Redefine Disability.”

4. Do you see any trends toward more people with disabilities becoming candidates and holding political office? If so, what are some examples? If not, what are some of the impediments?

Since we have not seen the kind of representation among our elected officials proportional to our large and diverse community, AAPD is working to train people with disabilities to run for higher office through our new Robert J. Dole Leadership Series. We do have courageous champions of highly influential people with disabilities in political office, including Senator John McCain, Representative Tammy Duckworth, Representative Jim Langevin, former Senator Bob Dole and former Representative Tony Coelho.

5. What can average citizens do to become more politically engaged, beyond voting and short of seeking elected office?

There are many small things that we can all do. Stay informed about issues that matter to you. Go to local town meetings to speak up about disability rights in your community. Volunteer to be part of political campaigns. Write an editorial to your newspaper. Write to your elected officials. You can start by staying informed by going to our website and signing up for the AAPD Disability Daily Newsletter and following us on Facebook at DisabilityPowered and @AAPD on Twitter.

6. How can people with disabilities become a more powerful voting bloc?

We already are a very powerful voting bloc: the disability community votes in very high numbers at 69%, according to the Youth Transitions Collaborative 2013 poll. Furthermore, 87% of the community would consider voting against a candidate that does not support the disability community, and 85% are likely to vote for a candidate that supports the community. The problem is that these statistics are not widely known, but if we are more diligent in expressing our opinions in a group, we will gain more political power.

7. How do frequent voting, civic activism and community-building translate into political power?

When people vote and engage in the electoral process, our leaders pay attention. Look at the Tea Party’s influence in the American public discourse today. Their power stems from the simple fact that their members vote, contact elected officials when needed and organize for and against candidates for office. As a 501(c)(3), AAPD does not support or oppose candidates for office, but individuals in our community can learn the positions of candidates and become involved.

8. Next year we will mark the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). How has this legislation impacted levels of political engagement on the part of people with disabilities?

Despite significant gains from the ADA, we still struggle to guarantee that every polling place is accessible. Federal studies indicate that over three-fifths of states have difficulty ensuring accessibility. Nevertheless, everyone in our community must try to vote. If you can’t access your polling place, make sure to tell your story to anyone who will listen. Our stories are our most powerful tool for change.

“Our community cuts across all movements – **DISABILITIES EXIST** regardless of who you are or where you come from – and many of us belong to other social justice movements.”



Introducing the *Forsyth Farmers' Almanac*

The Mixed Greens, a group of Savannah community members that work to create and support interactive, educational and inclusive activities with the Forsyth Farmers' Market as a part of a Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' (GCDD) Real Communities project, presents the *Forsyth Farmers' Almanac*, a collection of intergenerational farm stories.

Inspired by stories of local elder residents and Forsyth Farmers' Market vendors, the Forsyth Farmers' Almanac is a collection of photography and stories from past, present and future farmers on their experiences growing up, growing food.

stories, recipes, growing tips and moments, that the Mixed Greens decided to begin an ongoing almanac and continue the project. For more information on the *Forsyth Farmers' Almanac*, visit <https://www.facebook.com/ForsythFarmersAlmanac>.



The Mixed Greens worked collectively to capture these unique perspectives on food and share them with the community in an art exhibit at the Sentient Bean, a coffee shop in Savannah, GA that uses local food sources, throughout the month of November. Originally intended as a one-time project, the *Forsyth Farmers' Almanac* compiled such a wealth of interesting

Clarkston International Throws a Harvest Festival

The Clarkston International Garden, a project of GCDD's Real Communities and the Global Growers Network, hosted a Friends of 40 Oaks Harvest Festival on October 20, 2013 with support from 15 different community partners to recognize the Clarkston growers and celebrate the end of the fall growing season. Almost 175 attendees joined in the festivities, including garden tours, food and refreshments,

zoo animals, photo shoots, youth contests and games, music, art and more.

"The event was very successful," said Basmat Ahmed, the Real Communities Clarkston International Garden community builder. "We were able to introduce our garden as a welcoming space, invite other growers from Clarkston to exchange experiences and tips and engage with our neighbors."

GCDD Receives Visitors to Learn about Real Communities

This fall, GCDD hosted representatives from Maine and Idaho's DD Councils to come learn about Real Communities. Over a three-day trip, they visited each of GCDD's Real Communities and hope to bring back strategies to apply in their states.

REAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

LIL RED BARN FARM THE STORY OF RED AND NANCY SMITH



Red & Nancy Smith photographed by Tom & Tammy Kenkel

Ron ("Red") and Nancy Smith are relative newcomers to the world of organic farming. Both recent retirees, the extent of their gardening experience was tending

to the small garden in the backyard of their home in Lake County, FL.

As retirement approached, Red and Nancy dreamt of buying a bigger piece of property on which to put down roots. They found the idea of starting a farm both challenging and intriguing. With a spirit of adventure and tons of research, the duo found their spot high atop a hill in Sylvania, GA.

Lil Red Barn Farm has become their labor of love. The venture has afforded them more time together than they ever imagined. Their days start early and end late as they plant, harvest, and brainstorm on how to improve the process. Red explained, "We are taking this week by week together. Every day it's her and I."

Story collected by Tom & Tammy Kenkel



Gut Check

By Pat Nobbie, PhD, Mia's Mom



“For four decades, a gut-level ingredient of democracy – trust in the other fellow – has been quietly draining away.”

This statement is from a story the AP released on the declining levels of trust among Americans. In a recent survey, only a third of respondents said they trusted “most people,” down from 50% in 1972. More disturbing was that younger people expressed more distrust toward people than their older fellow Americans. Levels of trust do tend to increase with age, but according to the article, each generation since the birth of the baby boomers has started adulthood with less trust than the generation before them. And, the level of mistrust among twenty-somethings is unlikely to change over the course of their lives.

The article mentions several possible causes; decline in “social capital,” first documented by Robert Putnam’s “Bowling Alone,” which describes increasing isolation and declining engagement in community-oriented endeavors, a widening gap in economic opportunity, 24-hour news cycles, random violence, the impact of individual technology devices, etc. For whatever reasons, we’re less trusting and political and social scientists are worried.

“Social trust” supports a society where it’s easier to compromise, “where people are willing to work with those who are different from them for the common good.” Trust appears to promote economic growth.

“Distrust, on the other hand, seems to encourage corruption. At the least, it diverts energy to counting change, drawing up 100-page legal contracts and building gated communities,” according to the author.

The implications of this phenomenon had me thinking about the work the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is doing in its Real Communities Initiatives. For Real Communities to succeed, trust needs to be

“If we trust that our political engagement can affect change, are we more likely to vote, join boards, run for office?”

nurtured on several levels – between different groups of citizens in each community, between community leaders and members and between GCDD staff and the community. By creating a foundation of trust, communities of people who had never thought to work together before reach across cultural, linguistic, racial and disability-prescribed boundaries to achieve a common goal. They’re beginning to trust that their mutual work and relationships can result in an outcome bigger than the sum of their individual contributions.

I believe that a sense of personal power and self-determination in the political arena as expressed through voting is also impacted by the development of trust in a community. If we trust that our political engagement can affect change, are we more likely to vote, join boards, run for office?

On a personal level, I know trust is related to safety for Mia, and all the people like her who we are trying to support in community. We’ve always said the best hedge against abuse and neglect are the friends and neighbors who know you and the places you frequent where you will be missed. For me, Mia’s many social circles are my eyes and ears while I’m in DC. All the ways we can engage young people through employment, membership, peer support and encouraging them to vote, are the ways we build our safety net for a more trusting society. The fate of social trust is in each of our hands.

For whatever reasons,
WE’RE LESS TRUSTING

and political and social scientists are worried.

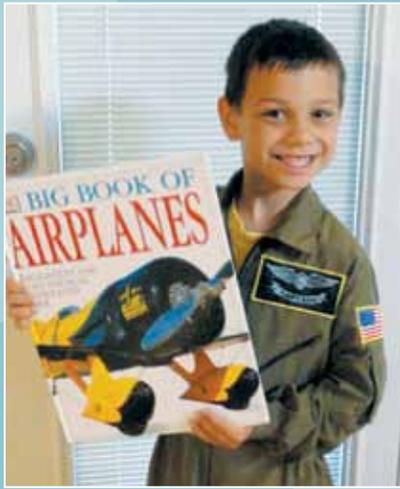
MIA'S SPACE

“SOCIAL TRUST” SUPPORTS A SOCIETY WHERE IT’S EASIER TO COMPROMISE, “WHERE PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO WORK WITH THOSE WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEM FOR THE COMMON GOOD.”

I think it is important for me to talk during the IEP meetings because then the adults can understand

WHAT IS HARD FOR ME.

STRAIGHT TALK



LAKODA GLEASON

is 7½-years-old and attends Elam Elementary at the Elberta Center. Gleason is in his 2nd year of participating in an ASPIRE (Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement) student-led IEP. To read his mother's perspective on the program, go to page 20.

I felt proud sharing my strengths with my teacher and my family. Sharing my challenges made me feel good because it helps them to understand me better.

How I ASPIRE to Be Better

By Lakoda Gleason

My name is Lakoda Skye Gleason and I am 7½-years-old. I have a twin brother named Landen. I collect Pokemon cards, Hot Wheel cars and airplanes. I like the food my mom cooks; especially hamburger helper, chicken quesadillas and tacos. I play Upwards Basketball and I'm on the Robins Youth Bowling League. When I grow up I want to be a fighter pilot. I love World War II aircraft! My favorite color is green and I like to read non-fiction books. I have two kittens named Oscoda and Tybee.

I attended my first Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting when I was in the first grade. I participated in the meeting by making a poster board with my teacher. The poster had what I enjoy doing, what I like about school and what is frustrating for me at school. I felt proud sharing my strengths with my teacher and my family. Sharing my challenges made me feel good because it helps them to understand me better. I still have the poster board that I made even though I'm in the second grade now!

At first, it was a little scary seeing all the grown-ups sitting around the table but everyone was nice and asked me questions – then it was easy because I felt like I was talking with friends. They would smile at me and that made me feel better. When I first got to the meeting they asked if I knew everyone at the table and if I didn't, they told me their names. My mom and dad were there and I sat on my dad's lap. After that, I got to talk about my poster and then they would ask me questions. They even talked about airplanes with me!

Sometimes my speech therapist and occupational therapist are there and

they talk about what sounds I've been working on and how I practice my writing at occupational therapy.

I think it is important for me to talk during the IEP meetings because then the adults can understand what is hard for me. Then we can brainstorm ways to make it better. If I didn't talk during the meetings they wouldn't know how I feel inside.

I feel like I've changed about 50% since participating in the meetings. I am confident and I don't get upset as much which is one of my goals. A goal is something you want to achieve; sometimes it takes a lot of work to achieve a goal. In the last meeting I told them that I hope to learn my times tables this year.

When I grow up I want to be a fighter pilot. I want to fly an F-16 Fighting Falcon or I want to fly an X1-14 Pusher which is an experimental plane. Then I want to fly a civilian airliner. I am going to join the Air Force. If there was another student that wanted to talk during their IEP meetings I would tell them to not be afraid, talk a lot and be good.

December

December 16

Disability Day at the Capitol
Registration Begins
Sign up at www.gcdd.org

January

January 14

Easter Seals East Georgia
Champions for Children ...
A Day at the Capitol
Atlanta, GA
www.ga-ea.easterseals.com

January 16-17

GCDD Quarterly Meeting
Atlanta, GA
404.657.2126
www.gcdd.org

January 29-February 1

Assistive Technology Industry Association
(ATIA) Annual Conference
Orlando, FL
www.atia.org



February

February 20

16th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol
Atlanta, GA
www.gcdd.org

February 28 – March 2

Abilities Expo
Los Angeles, CA
www.abilitiesexpo.com

March

March 5-6

Embracing Ability: Making It
Happen Conference
Vancouver, BC
www.abilitiesinmind.ca

March 13-15

National Association of
Disability Representatives
2014 Conference
Washington, DC
www.nadr.org

March 14-16

Abilities Expo
Atlanta, GA
www.abilitiesexpo.com

March 17-22

29th Annual International Technology and
Persons with Disabilities Conference (CSUN)
San Diego, CA
818.677.2578



April

April 7-9

2014 Disability Policy Seminar
Washington, DC
www.disabilitypolicyseminar.org

April 9 – 12

Council for Exceptional Children 2014
Convention Expo
Philadelphia, PA
www.cec.sped.org

April 17-18

GCDD Quarterly Council Meeting
Atlanta, GA
404.657.2126



2014 CALENDAR

Planning an upcoming event?

Send your information to Kim Person-Hudson, GCDD Executive Assistant at kaperson@dhr.state.ga.us; Subject line: "Community Calendar" by February 1, 2014 to be included in the spring calendar. Visit the GCDD website at gcdd.org/events-calendar to view our expanded online community calendar with additional local and national events.

"We All Have a Story ... What's Yours?"

FEATURING: *Olmstead* Decision 15th Anniversary
Celebration • "I am *Olmstead*" Stories of Freedom
• StoryCorps Recordings & Signup Exhibit

HIGHLIGHT:

16th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol February 20, 2013

See pages 22-23 for additional details
and registration form.

RESOURCES

For additional information about the articles and issues in this edition of *Making a Difference* magazine, consult the following resources.

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)
www.gcdd.org
404.657.2126 or
888.275.4233 (ASK.GCDD)

State Government

Georgia Senate & House of Representatives
www.legis.state.ga.us

Georgia Governor's Office
www.gov.state.ga.us
404.656.1776

Department of Community Affairs
www.dca.ga.gov

Georgia Housing Search
www.georgiahousingsearch.org
877.428.8844

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

General Information
www.georgia.gov

Georgia Lieutenant Governor's Office
www.ltgov.georgia.gov
404.656.5030

News

MARTA Travel Training Facility
www.itsmarta.com/new-training-facility-with-disabilities.aspx

Around GCDD

Making a Difference Cartoon Gallery
www.gcdd.org/news-a-media/making-a-difference-cartoon-gallery.html

ASPIRE

ASPIRE Initiative - Georgia State Personnel Development Grant
www.gaspdg.org/aspire

Georgia Department of Education
www.gadoe.org

Georgia Learning Resources System Mini-Grants
www.glsr.org/regional-centers

Partnerships for Success
www.partnershipsforsuccess.com

Enabling Everyday Democracy

2013 National Council on Disability Experience of Voters with Disabilities in the 2012 Election Cycle Report
www.ncd.gov/publications/2013/10242013

Easter Seals Southern Georgia, Inc
www.southerngeorgia.easterseals.com

Rusty Kidd – Georgia State Representative
<http://www.house.ga.gov/Representatives/en-US/member.aspx?Member=742&Session=23>

Jim Langevin – US Representative
<https://langevin.house.gov/contact-me>

Kathy Martinez - Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Office of Disability Employment Policy
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/AssistantSecretary.htm>

Voting

County Board of Registrars Offices
www.sos.georgia.gov/cgi-bin/countyregistrarsindex.asp

Georgia Absentee Ballot Application
www.sos.georgia.gov/elections/elections/voter_information/absentee.htm#sthash.20014shi.dpuf

Georgia Department of Driver Services
www.dds.ga.gov/drivers/dldata.spx?con=1749371755&ty=dl

Georgia Secretary of State My Voter Page
www.mvp.sos.state.ga.us

Expert Update

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)
www.aapd.com/what-we-do/voting

AAPD Disability Vote Project
www.aapd.com/what-we-do/voting/disability-vote-project.html

AAPD PSA “Redefine Disability”
www.aapd.com/redefinedisability.html

AAPD Facebook
www.facebook.com/DisabilityPowered

AAPD Twitter
twitter.com/AAPD

Real Communities

Forsyth Farmers' Almanac
www.facebook.com/ForsythFarmersAlmanac

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GCDD Online Community
or GCDD Forum



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MAKING a DIFFERENCE

A quarterly magazine of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 3

WINTER 2014



DISABILITY DAY 2014 FEBRUARY 20



“We All Have a Story ... What’s Yours?”

Fill out the form inside on page 22 or register online at gcdd.org before February 10, 2014.

