

Making a Difference Magazine

A Quarterly Magazine of the Georgia Council on
Developmental Disabilities

Real Homes. Real Careers. Real Learning.
Real Influence. Real Support.

Spring 2015

Volume 15, Issue 4

On the Cover: The 17th annual Disability Day at the Capitol took place on March 5, 2015 at Liberty Plaza in Downtown Atlanta.

2015 Legislative Session: Advocacy Days

Georgia Winter Institute: Coming Together

Straight Talk: Twenty Agents for Change

On the back cover: The ADA Legacy Tour is stopping through Georgia in May and June 2015. Come celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA with us!

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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Tell us your thoughts about the magazine or what topics

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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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GCDD VIEWPOINT

Let's Continue the Fight

On a cold and wet March 5th morning, hundreds of people with developmental disabilities, family members and advocates gathered at the Liberty Plaza for the 17th annual Disability Day at the Capitol. While we were cold and wet, our enthusiasm was not dampened. Those in the crowd cheered, sang, clapped and marched as speakers presented news about what is happening in Georgia and what the future might look like.

I would be remiss if I did not thank GCDD members, staff and volunteers for their hard work in putting this effort together. They spent many hours preparing for the rally and organizing exhibits, t-shirt pick up, lunch and other activities at the Freight Depot. Their hard work was appreciated by most. However, several staff members from provider organizations were rude, used inappropriate language and made our jobs difficult.

Disability Day is about showing strength in numbers in the spirit of community. For those who understand this message, we thank you. For those who do not, we hope you reflect on the true meaning of Disability Day before you attend next year.

The theme this year was “Fulfilling the Promise of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)” and celebrating the 25th anniversary of this civil rights legislation for people with disabilities. Much progress has been made and yet we still come up short when it comes to equal rights for people with disabilities. Many are still warehoused in institutions and nursing homes. Many still do not have jobs and many are still isolated in communities with only paid staff as friends. Yet as Governor Nathan Deal commented, we are making progress in getting more students on college campuses. We are working to get children out of nursing homes and the possibilities seem endless.

But we must continue to fight. As US Rep. John Lewis said in his video message to the crowd, “We must continue to get in the way and cause good trouble.” That is our role and must be central to the strategies that we use to continue creating a better place for everyone. We must continue to fight for more funds and Medicaid waivers. GCDD fought successfully with others for passage of medical marijuana legislation to help children and others live normal lives. We must make sure that staff is paid a living wage so that the threat of poverty is removed not only from people with disabilities but all Georgians. This is the kind of trouble we must make and we must get in the way of those who keep us from achieving this effort.

Over the next few months, Atlanta will host several national and international conferences related to disability in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the ADA and the opening of the National Center for Civil and Human

Rights. Let's show the world once more why Atlanta is such a great and welcoming city.

Remember that GCDD is here to assist you. Check out our website and join our social media and advocacy networks so that you can stay informed. We hope you enjoy reading this magazine. Let us know your thoughts and comments about the magazine by writing to Valerie Suber at valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov.

Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD

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IN THE NEWS

SAVE THE DATE!

June 13, 2015, 2 PM

Disability Pride ADA25 Georgia Parade

The ADA25 Georgia Parade route starts at 2:00 PM at the Hyatt Regency on Peachtree Street and proceeds half a mile to Centennial Olympic Park, ending in front of the new National Center for Civil and Human Rights (NCCHR). adaparade@gmail.com

ABLE Account Planning: Six Next Steps in 2015

So how can you plan ahead for you, your child or other family member when ABLE accounts become available later in 2015?

Here's how in six steps:

1. Identify your need for savings.
 2. Identify potential sources for income.
 3. Consider an ABLE account as part of long-term financial goals.
 4. Be aware of some disadvantages to an ABLE account.
 5. Make sure Georgia is moving forward to establish an ABLE account program.
-

6. Start saving now!

For additional information on the ABLE Act and ABLE accounts, please visit the National Disability Institute website: *www.realeconomicimpact.org*

ABLE Act Becomes Law

In December 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act into law marking a significant achievement in disability rights.

The ABLE Act allows people with disabilities to open savings accounts, similar to 529 college savings plans, where they are able to save up to \$100,000 without risking eligibility for Social Security and other government programs. Additionally, individuals can also keep their Medicaid coverage regardless of how much money is accrued in an ABLE account.

Although people with disabilities may be able to start opening ABLE accounts as soon as 2015, each state must put regulations in place to make this offer available.

GCDD will continue to provide updates on the ABLE Act and how it is being implemented in Georgia.

Augusta Girl Chosen to Attend ABLE Act Speech in Washington, DC

T.W. Josey High School homecoming queen Adejah Nesbitt was chosen to visit Washington, DC upon the passage of the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act.

Nesbitt, who is diagnosed with autism, attended a speech given by Vice President Joe Biden to create savings accounts without losing Medicaid and Social

Security benefits. The 17-year-old was chosen from a pool of applicants by the Institute for Educational Leadership.

A leader in her own right, Nesbitt is Richmond County School System's first student with a disability to be chosen for homecoming queen and is a junior varsity cheerleader.

Disability Leaders and Advocates Mourn Warren Lee Hill

After being denied clemency, Warren Lee Hill, 54, was executed at 7 p.m. on Jan. 27 for the murder of a fellow prison inmate. Hill was sentenced to serve life in prison for the 1986 killing of his 18-year-old girlfriend, and in 1991, a jury convicted Hill of murder and sentenced him to death.

Hill's case has sparked debate as his lawyers tried to convince the courts that the defendant was a person with an intellectual disability, and therefore, should not be executed. State law and the 2002 US Supreme Court decision of *Atkins v. Virginia* both prohibit the execution of people with intellectual disabilities.

However, Georgia has the toughest-in-the-nation burden of proof for capital defendants seeking to avoid execution on grounds of intellectual disability.

State court judges found Hill to have an intellectual disability and experts for the State who testified 15 years ago changed their diagnoses due to better scientific understanding leading them to believe Hill had a mild intellectual disability. But, the State argued that Hill failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that he had an intellectual disability.

Hill was granted temporary stays in July 2012, February 2013 and July 2013 so courts would have time to consider challenges filed by Hill's lawyers. State and federal courts rejected his lawyers' filings this time around, and the US Supreme Court declined his request for a stay of execution.

Disability Rights Advocates March in Atlanta MLK Parade

Honoring the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., leaders and advocates of disability rights took to the streets of Downtown Atlanta on Jan. 16 to celebrate and advocate for disability rights and equality for all.

Eleanor Smith was one of the many disability leaders in the community leading the parade. "A lot of people didn't know there was a disability rights movement," said Smith, who founded Concrete Change. "It's a rights issue and a social justice movement, and we wanted to make people

aware of why the passage of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) was so important, and why we continue to advocate today.”

Concrete Change is an international network whose goal is making all new homes visitable, a construction practice so that new homes – for people with and without disabilities – offer features making the home easier for mobility-impaired people to live in and visit.

Along with Smith, over 120 people from various organizations such as disABILITY Link joined in to raise awareness for disability rights. Additionally, planning for an ADA Parade in June 2015 is also underway and continues to seek volunteers.

“The ADA was a significant civil rights movement, and by marching in the parade, we are raising awareness in

the community about the next 25 years of disability rights,” added Smith.

For more information on June’s ADA Parade, email adaparade@gmail.com.

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[AROUND GCDD](#)

Governor Deal Speaks at Disability Day

Welcome to the Georgia State Capitol and our new Liberty Plaza! It’s a privilege to take part once again in Disability Day with all of you. I would like first to thank the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities for sponsoring this event and bringing us all together today.

Twenty-five years ago, then-President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the civil rights of those citizens with disabilities. This legislation established a clear message throughout the nation and in Georgia that discrimination based on disability must end. President Bush remarked upon signing the bill, "Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down." Like those who participated in the Civil Rights movement, many people with disabilities were willing to protest and sacrifice to end the segregation of people with disabilities.

This year, Georgia will be at the center of the national celebration of the ADA. At the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, there is an exhibit celebrating disability rights. The National ADA Symposium and the international Society for Disability Studies will hold their conferences in Atlanta. And, there will be several

opportunities to see the ADA Legacy Bus during these events.

In Georgia, we are committed to improving facilities managed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and creating opportunities for those with disabilities to return to their respective communities as active citizens. In addition, we strive to make sure that no children under the age of 22 are living in nursing facilities, but rather reside with loving and stable families. We continue to make progress by opening new programs on college campuses, like those at Kennesaw State University, Georgia State University, East Georgia State College and Columbus State University.

Next year, programs will begin at Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Georgia. I am also proud to say that we have made progress toward

increasing the number of work opportunities for people with disabilities throughout our state.

As your exhibit inside the Capitol reads, we must preserve the past by remembering those who fought for your rights. We must also celebrate our present by commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA, and we must continue to educate others about the accomplishments and barriers that still exist for people with disabilities.

With all of this in mind, I was happy to proclaim March as Disability Awareness Month in Georgia and recognize July 26th as the anniversary of the ADA.

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FEATURE

2015 Disability Day Honors the Americans with

Disabilities Act

By Devika Rao

“Each year, I’m inspired by the crowd that gathers for Disability Day at the Capitol, a crowd that’s as diverse as the State they call home,” said Governor Nathan Deal to *Making a Difference*.

“This level of support demonstrates that disabilities affect us all. I hope that all Georgians will take the time to listen to and advocate for all citizens with disabilities in our State.”

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) opened March by hosting the popular 17th annual Disability Day at the Capitol, on March 5th at Liberty Plaza. March is also Disability Awareness Month.

Even with low temperatures and steady rain, the event was met with excitement from advocates, people with disabilities and supporters. To show the power of the collective voice and advocacy, GCDD's Disability Day theme commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by titling this year's event, "Fulfilling the Promise of the ADA."

In front of the crowd, Deal proudly proclaimed that March would officially be Disability Awareness Month and recognized July 26th as the 25th anniversary of the ADA.

"We must preserve the past by remembering those who fought for your rights. We must also celebrate our present by commemorating the 25th anniversary of the ADA, and we must continue to educate others about accomplishments and barriers that still exist for people

with disabilities,” said Governor Deal, who has spoken at Disability Day for the past five years.

The Governor’s proclamation was presented to GCDD at the event that brought together advocates from across the State to promote access, opportunity and meaningful community living for Georgians with disabilities and their families.

A variety of groups brought their enthusiasm to the annual kick-off at the Georgia Freight Depot to raise awareness about the rights and concerns of people with disabilities. At the gathering, attendees made posters advocating for equal opportunities in education and the workplace knowing that the contributions of people with disabilities are important to the community.

GCDD Executive Director Eric E. Jacobson kicked off the event with a rousing speech highlighting the

importance of how the ADA and the civil rights efforts of the 1960s were tied together.

“There wouldn’t be an ADA if Americans had not fought for civil rights in the 1960s. While Dr. [Martin Luther] King and Rosa Parks fought in Montgomery to get a seat on the bus, there are many people here who couldn’t even get on the bus, and especially here in Atlanta where they fought to make sure that people who use wheelchairs could get on the bus,” said Jacobson.

Jacobson also announced GCDD’s continued support for closing all institutions in Georgia, and the Council’s goals for the following year. “Kids and people don’t belong in institutions. They belong in communities with the rest of us. They belong by having a job, going to school, living in their own homes with their own keys to their own doors. They belong as a part of being able to build a church or synagogue or temple or mosque or wherever they want to

pray,” said Jacobson. “They belong in our communities and it’s time that Georgia closed those doors to make sure that nobody ever again is locked up somewhere for no crime at all.”

GCDD will be working over the next year to create a report card on how well Georgia is doing as it relates to employment, community living, students graduating from high school and transitioning into adult life, healthy living and early childhood. The report card will be based on national goals established by Six by ’15.

Six by ’15 is a national campaign celebrating the 40 years of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and 25 years of the ADA. The initiative is building a new future by joining efforts to achieve six national goals in the following areas by the end of 2015:

- Employment

- Community Living
- Education
- Transition
- Healthy Living
- Early Childhood

As this year marks the anniversary of the ADA, it is also an important milestone in the civil rights movement. 2015 celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery march that took place in Alabama in 1965. Tying in the ADA anniversary's message of "Disability Rights are Civil Rights," this year's Disability Day received a special message from a civil rights activist and leader who has paved his own history along the way, and was present on that historic day in Selma.

US Representative John Lewis (D-GA 5th District) sent a message of support to the crowd at Disability Day

remarking on the importance of continuing the fight and causing “good trouble, necessary trouble.”

“None of us, not one of us, not any of us must be left out or left behind. I will continue to stand and fight for what is right and fair and just,” said Lewis in a recorded statement. (*Read his complete statement on page 11 or watch the video at gcdd.org.*)

The event also saw the talents of Joey Stuckey, an award-winning guitarist and vocalist who is blind and advocates for accessible music education for everyone. Stuckey sang “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “Georgia On My Mind,” the official state song of Georgia and “This Little Light of Mine.” Stuckey is also the official music ambassador of Macon, GA.

Reverend Susannah Davis, pastor at Kirkwood United Church of Christ, inspired the crowd by reminding them

although the ADA has brought the community a long way, there is still much to be done.

“ADA was a beginning – a strong and safe way for everyone to be able to attend, to participate, to create, to contribute, to live fully and faithfully, but we’ve still got a long way to go,” she said. “We’ve got more ramps to build, more elevators to purchase, more lifts to put in place, and that’s not all. We need more accessible ways to belong to the workforce and service organizations, to be leaders in government, to blaze the trail for public policy, to shine our light in arts and entertainment, to make a way in whatever it is you dream about, a way for you to be you fully and wholly.”

Disability Day at the Capitol is an opportunity for the disability community and their supporters to connect with each other and their elected officials. This year’s focus on the ADA coincides with GCDD’s mission and legislative

agenda that concentrates on achieving inclusive communities, voting rights and access to education and jobs.

In *Making a Difference's* Winter 2015 issue, GCDD outlined areas such as education, employment and Unlock The Waiting Lists! where they would be advocating for more services and supports during the legislative session.

At the time of this writing, some advocacy successes included the Georgia House of Representatives funding 75 new NOW/ COMP waiver slots and a 50-cent-per-hour increase for personal support services in ICWP Waivers.

Employment First had a big achievement as Georgia House Resolution 642 created the Joint Study Committee on Postsecondary Education and Employment Options for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental

Disabilities. *(For complete coverage on the legislative session, read the Legislative Recap on page 18.)*

Furthermore, continuing advocacy for inclusive post-secondary programs has resulted in the growth of programs across the State. In addition to the program at Kennesaw State University, post-secondary programs are now at Georgia State University, East Georgia State College and Columbus State University.

Frequent Disability Day guest Senator John Albers (R-District 56) brought cheer to the crowd to remind them of the importance of Disability Day.

“You have got our commitment to help you to just give sunshine to this cause,” said Albers. “We have lots of good things happening, and I tell you this every year that if the world saw everything through the lens of somebody with special needs, it would be a better place to live.”

GCDD Chair Mitzi Proffitt called for a recommitment to the ADA in the remaining months of the 25th anniversary celebration. “Across the country people are signing the pledge with the goal of getting 2,500 signatures by July 26th recommitting to the legislation,” said Proffitt.

The goal of the pledge is to reaffirm the principles of equality and inclusion and recommit efforts to reach full ADA compliance. Organizations and faith communities are being encouraged to sign the ADA proclamation.

Closing the rally was Mark Johnson, director of advocacy at the Shepherd Center and chair of The ADA Legacy Project. He organized the crowd as they marched back to the Georgia Freight Depot, and reminded them of the 2003 Free Our People March from Philadelphia to Washington, DC and the historic Selma-to-Montgomery

march.

As the crowd gathered to go back to the Depot, Johnson reminded everyone that, “We need to go forward. Let’s quit saying, and let’s start doing.”

To sign the Americans with Disabilities Act pledge, visit www.adaanniversary.org/pledgeon.

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EXPERT UPDATE

Create Change Together

By Lesa Hope

The mood was somber as we stood in the dark outside the NAACP offices in Columbus, GA. On that cold winter evening on January 27, 2015, nearly 150 advocates for people with disabilities, NAACP leadership and

concerned community members listened as Dorinda Tatum, organizing director of Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty and Community Builder for GCDD's Real Communities Initiative shared the news: all avenues of appeal were denied and Warren Lee Hill was to be executed that evening.

In turn, I addressed the large crowd, which was stunned into silence, save for soft weeping by some. Choking back tears, I shared that I had been one of the "experts" who had evaluated Hill. I had reviewed piles of evaluations and records and after my review, I concluded that Hill was a person with an intellectual disability.

I was not the only person who evaluated Hill. A parade of experts and doctors offered their conclusions to the court, including new statements by three doctors who had examined him in 2000. Subsequent reviews in 2013 used

improved scientific testing methodologies to change their initial reports. In the end, six doctors, including those hired by the prosecution, reviewed the facts of the case and ultimately agreed: Warren Lee Hill was a person with an intellectual disability.

Georgia law and a 2002 US Supreme Court decision of *Atkins v. Virginia*, prohibit the execution of people who have intellectual disabilities. There we were, in 2015, huddling together, candles lit, waiting as Hill's execution was being carried out.

I told the crowd that had Hill been in any other state in the nation, we would likely not be standing here, awaiting word of his death. We would not be here, holding vigil. It comes down to the level of proof required to prove that a person has an intellectual disability.

Georgia has the toughest standard in the nation for proving intellectual disability. It requires capital defendants to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that they are intellectually disabled in order to avoid execution on those grounds.

Hill's lawyers argued Georgia's standard is unconstitutional because mental diagnoses are subject to a degree of uncertainty that is virtually impossible to overcome. How many more experts would have to agree before that burden were achieved?

I am not new to reviewing an individual in a determination of disability process. I wrote one of the first evaluations of L.C. in the *Olmstead* decision. I evaluated people with intellectual disabilities in nursing homes to help them qualify for community-based services. This was not my first evaluation; I know the score.

For over 25 years, I have worked in Georgia supporting people with disabilities when the justice system has become a juggernaut that has run them over. People with disabilities risk exploitation, longer sentences, lack of supports and violence within this system.

Research has shown these poor outcomes tie to people not knowing their rights, not understanding the process, being unwilling to disclose disabilities because it makes them a target in jail/prison. In the justice system, there is a lack of understanding of disability issues by law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, judges and jail staff.

Although there are training efforts to help different sectors of the justice system understand the vulnerability of people with intellectual disabilities, they are woefully unfunded/under-resourced.

After Hill was put to death and in the days following his execution, I found myself driving and having to pull to the side of the road to weep. I am haunted by this singular truth: Even with all the hard work by his legal team, those expert reports and across the board agreement about his intellectual disability ... we had not been able to save Warren Lee Hill.

The night of the vigil I asked people to remember him and that even though the work is hard, there are people counting on us to step up and do the hard work, to change those things that are unjust. When people are alone and caught in a wheel of hard times and injustice, we must be courageous and turn towards them instead of away from them.

We need to join together and ask legislators to change the law, change the burden of proof requirement to be in line with other states. We need to collaborate with other

groups who are interested in criminal justice issues, knowing that we do not need to agree on everything, but that there is common ground where we can create change together.

On January 27, I stood alongside scores of advocates for people with disabilities, with prayers by Reverend Bill Gaventa, being led in song by the leadership of NAACP Columbus Chapter President Tonya Ganza and Past President Edward Dubose. That night, there was an important spark of connection. My heart was heavy, but in that moment, it became a place for us to move forward together.

A Ritual to Read to Each Other

by William Stafford

“If you don’t know the kind of person I am
And I don’t know the kind of person you are
A pattern that others made may prevail in the world

And following the wrong God home we may miss our
star.

For there is many a small betrayal in the mind,
A shrug that lets the fragile sequence break
Sending with shouts the horrible errors of childhood
Storming out to play through the broken dyke.

And as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,
But if one wanders the circus won't find the park,
I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
To know what occurs but not recognize the fact.

And so I appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,
A remote important region in all who talk:
Though we could fool each other, we should consider –
Lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark.

For it is important that awake people be awake,

Or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
The signals we give – yes or no, or maybe –
Should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.”

William Stafford, “A Ritual to Read to Each Other” from
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LESA NITCY HOPE, PhD, LMSW, QDDP has worked for
the past 25 years on supporting people with
disabilities and their families through advocacy,
education, family support and social services
programs. Her areas of interest are looking at the
resilience and many gifts that people with disabilities
possess, even as they are disproportionately impacted
by poverty, isolation, poor educational supports,

victimization and challenging interactions with the justice system. She has worked as an expert witness and evaluator on disability-related issues in a number of criminal and civil cases.

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FEATURE

Georgia Winter Institute Brings Together Disability Community

By Devika Rao

Every January, members of the disability community gather for the Georgia Winter Institute (GWI) to network, rejuvenate and continue working to build inclusive, person-centered communities.

These individuals are connected to the purpose of building inclusive communities, and GWI allows

everyone to come together to learn new strategies, connect with one another and share ideas,” said Daniel Crimmins, executive director of the Center for Leadership in Disability (CLD) at Georgia State University.

The annual event, held in Columbus, GA, covers four strands that are current topics of interest to the disability community. This year, GWI covered Employment, Personal Futures Planning, Inclusive Faith-Based Communities and Community Building. Various speakers such as Reverend Bill Gaventa, Robin Higa and DeAmon Harges presented on employment and community building. *(Read Gaventa and Higa’s Perspectives on pages 22 and 23.)*

The strands are identified from the current state of the disability community. Where is it making progress or where does it need reinforcement are all questions asked when identifying the goals of the retreat.

“A community is a place where we can exchange ideas,” said Eric Jacobson, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) executive director. “At GWI, we get to meet our colleagues and learn how we all can work together to continue building inclusive, integrated communities for all Georgians with disabilities. We take away something every year to strengthen GCDD’s Real Communities initiative.”

The group also models what they are trying to achieve by hosting community luncheons to increase interaction and gain perspectives on inclusion. “Our goal is to build inclusive communities that embrace

people with disabilities,” said Stacey Ramirez, director of individual and family supports at CLD. “At the retreat, we want to create an atmosphere where they can see themselves in the community and these luncheons encourage conversations and generate ideas.”

GWI attendees also met with sad news upon learning of the execution of Warren Lee Hill. Unable to provide the burden of proof for an intellectual disability, Hill was denied a stay of execution. A candlelight vigil was held in his memory. *(See Expert Update on page 12 and Straight Talk on page 28 for more about the vigil.)*

“We think it is very important for us to partner with CLD to provide support to the GWI each year because its goals so closely align with our mission and values,” said GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson. “This

diverse gathering of community-minded individuals with and without disabilities, representatives from state agencies and service providers, form a collective resource that brings together information and activities to foster development of values-based, person-centered practices that encourage inclusive communities.”

At the GWI, GCDD’s Jacobson led a one day preconference workshop designed to assist participants to understand the power of valued social roles in an effort to counter act some of the effects of devaluation of people who have been marginalized and how to create supports to help them have full, inclusive lives.

Georgia Winter Institute is presented by CLD with support from GCDD. The next retreat is scheduled for Jan. 24-27, 2016, Columbus, GA.

GEORGIA WINTER INSTITUTE 2015 STRANDS

Community Building

The benefits of community building make towns greater by creating stronger neighborhoods and more active and involved populations of people with disabilities. These relationships empower and create opportunities for members of communities who are often marginalized and forgotten.

Futures Planning

Person-centered planning is a process that empowers people with and without disabilities to know the possibilities of their goals can become the realities of their future. Using people's gifts and talents puts them in

charge of defining the direction for their lives leading to greater inclusion as valued members of their communities.

Employment/Financial Independence

This strand promotes job carving, career exploration and microenterprises. The gifts and abilities of people in our communities are varied and they often require an entrepreneurial spirit to translate into career possibilities.

Inclusive Faith-Based Communities

For many people with disabilities and their families, faith communities can be a powerful source of natural community support and connection, as well as a doorway to other important outcomes in the areas of relationships, work, community living, recreation and service.

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The Shred Shed: One Man's Path to Self-Employment

By D'Arcy Robb

Like many self-employed business people, Errol Zinkand works out of his home office. He has a basic schedule that he follows each week, but it's flexible enough that he can adjust or reduce his working hours if need be. Zinkand knows each of his clients personally, and business is going so well, he and his family are considering a future expansion.

Zinkand is one of the growing ranks of self-employed business people in the American workforce. He's also one of the growing ranks of self-employed business people with a disability. His business meets a critical need in our data-driven, privacy-sensitive society: document shredding.

He always enjoyed shredding documents, and that enjoyment was loud and clear during his job discovery process. Initially, the plan was for him to take a job within a company that would allow him to focus on shredding.

But, explains Zinkand's job coach Jon Huff of Briggs and Associates, they ran into an obstacle while job developing. Big companies were outsourcing their shredding. Small companies didn't have enough volume to require a permanent staff position.

That challenge, says Zinkand's father Ken, led to an idea: "Wouldn't it be great if we could just let Errol shred and make a business out of it?"

The first step was equipment. Zinkand needed a high-volume shredder to begin. He and his parents found a \$2,000 shredder at the bargain price of \$800. Next, he

needed a workspace. His father Ken, who works in the trade show industry, converted a roomy shed in their backyard into a cozy office space. The final step was connecting with clients, and thanks to Zinkand's relationships in his community and the work he and his job coach had already done while job searching, they were able to build a good-sized client roster.

A variety of small business people, including a number of attorneys, use Zinkand's services. And unsurprisingly, there is always a jump in demand at tax time!

A visit to Zinkand's workplace is a step into the cozy, personalized world he and his support team have created. He and his father keep chickens and grow a medley of mushrooms in the backyard around the small building that Zinkand's mother Carol Rankin has nicknamed their "Shred Shed."

Inside the Shred Shed, art hangs on the walls and lights give off a warm glow as classical music plays in the background. “I’m shredding with Jon,” Zinkand explains cheerfully, as he sorts through a large pile while removing clips. Jon, who is there one day a week to support Zinkand, smiles and says, “The way I see it, he’s the boss.”

Twenty-seven-year-old Zinkand comes across as a relaxed, happy young man who’s confident enough to welcome a stranger into his workspace with nary a disruption. According to his father, Zinkand’s work is what has allowed that confidence to bloom. “Errol did not do well in the day care support system. I think it was unfulfilling.” Ken adds, “He’s happiest when he shreds. It gives him some self-esteem. He moves with confidence.”

In addition to the intrinsic rewards, his business also gives Zinkand an income, allowing him to have his own

financial resources. He enjoys horseback riding, swimming lessons and movies and he is able to pay for all these things using the money he's earned.

For many people, including many with disabilities, self-employment can be more financially rewarding than traditional employment. The national data on people who use Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to find employment shows that the average earnings for people who are self-employed are consistently higher than the wages of people in other employment situations. The average weekly earning for a VR client who is successfully employed is \$365, but that jumps to \$445 when we look at the VR client who is self-employed.¹

That's a powerful statement for the disability community, especially when you consider that everyone eligible to use VR by definition has a disability. Despite the potential lifestyle and financial benefits of self-employment,

historically it has not received much attention as an employment option for people with disabilities. That is changing now with growing attention across the country in concepts like job discovery, customized employment and initiatives like STARTUP, a national project focused on self-employment for people with disabilities.

One reason sometimes given for a lack of interest in self-employment is concern over how an individual or family can juggle finances and remain eligible for disability benefits. An excellent resource to negotiate this is the Social Security Administration's *2015 Red Book: A Summary Guide to Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities Under the Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income Programs*. The Red Book, which is written in plain language, is helpful for all types of employment situations and explains concepts like Property Essential to Self-Support,

or PESS, that allows a person to own property or resources essential to their self-support; and Plan to Achieve Self Support, a plan that allows a person to save for an employment goal.

Today, a growing number of Georgians with disabilities are tapping into their own power and potential through self-employment. These entrepreneurs create art, scan photos, grow vegetables and repair small engines. And those are just a handful of the possibilities.

The beautiful thing about self-employment is its flexible nature and its variety. It's all about matching up a person's talents and gifts with an unmet need. And that match, when made well, is a powerful recipe for fulfillment.

Just ask Zinkand. You can find him in the shed, shredding away.

¹“Self-Employment for People with Disabilities.” Office of Disability Employment Policy, United States Department of Labor. December 15, 2013. Page 6.

The 2015 Red Book: A Summary Guide to Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities Under the Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income Programs is available at ssa.gov/redbook/documents/TheRedBook2015.pdf or request a copy by calling 410.965.2039.

D’ARCY ROBB is the co-coordinator of Employment First Georgia.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

A Recap of the 2015 Legislative Session

By Dawn Alford, GCDD Acting Public Policy Director

As this article goes to print, there are still two legislative days left until the cries of “Sine Die,” the official end of the legislative session. This is the first time in a few years that the final day did not occur before April Fool’s Day. In fact, the 2015 session will end almost two weeks after last year’s session. Although only two days remain, there are still several issues that are unresolved, including the final outcome of the FY 2016 budget.

Please continue reading to learn some highlights of what happened in the 2015 General Assembly and what advocates are working toward. Note that the information is current as of this issue’s print deadline, so please be sure to go to www.gcdd.org and click on “Public Policy” to read the final legislative wrap-up

edition (Issue 8) of GCDD's newsletter Public Policy for the People for the final outcome of the budget and other highlights.

FY 2016 Budget

A quick overview: This is the second year since the recession hit that state agencies were not asked to reduce their budgets. For the fourth year in a row, Georgia's economy has shown modest growth. The total budget for FY 2016 is \$21.8 billion state dollars, and since Georgia operates with a balanced budget approach, any funds that are added in one area must be taken away from somewhere else. Major funding priorities of this budget were education and transportation. Two of the many controversial issues heavily debated were whether or not non-certified, part-time Georgia school employees, such as school bus drivers, can remain eligible for the State Health

Benefit Plan as well as a proposed excise tax (for transportation).

Governor Nathan Deal also added to the state's "Rainy Day" fund because the actual revenue was greater than what had been anticipated. Just as in recent years' budgets, the 2016 budget essentially provides small measures of relief.

GCDD Advocacy Days

The FY 2015 budget was the final year in which the Georgia state budget had a prescribed number of waivers required by the Department of Justice Settlement Agreement, which largely focused on individuals leaving institutional settings. Further, since the Governor did not include any of the Unlock the Waiting Lists! asks that focus on addressing needs of individuals with disabilities needing services in

their communities within his budget recommendations, this made our legislative advocacy, alongside our grassroots advocates, all the more critical. And advocate we did!

GCDD held five separate advocacy days leading up to our annual Disability Day at the Capitol: We Need Waivers; ICWP Raise the Rate Day; Kids Need Real Homes, Not Nursing Homes Day; Employment First Day; and Youth Day. These advocacy days were a huge success!

Almost 200 attendees participated in our advocacy days, and many spoke of being able to find their voice for the first time. Furthermore, legislators learned about issues facing Georgians with disabilities. Keep reading to see the fruits of our labor.

Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign

The Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign focused on a small number of key additions to the budget. One of these key issues was to address the impossibly low Medicaid reimbursement rate of the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP). ICWP, allows young and middle-aged adults with significant physical disabilities or Traumatic Brain Injuries to live in the community instead of nursing facilities. Currently, the state Medicaid reimbursement rate for ICWP Personal Support is between \$11 and \$15 an hour, making it by far the lowest reimbursed Medicaid waiver in Georgia. After a home health agency takes their cut, working caregivers can get as little as \$8 an hour. This low rate makes it almost impossible to find qualified caregivers. Further, it endangers the lives of Georgians who receive ICWP and increases the likelihood that they will suffer abuse at the hands of poor caregivers.

Likewise, it causes waiver recipients or their family members to miss valuable work time due to caregiver issues.

The House put in a \$.50/hour increase for Personal Support Services for ICWP, and the Senate put in an additional \$.50/ hour for a total increase of \$1/hour with language that the increase must be directed toward the direct support professionals (those working caregivers providing the direct care to individuals with disabilities). We hope that we keep the full \$1 per hour increase in the final budget, but the final outcome is not known as of print time.

Another major issue that Unlock tackled was the enormous waiting list of over 7,500 for the NOW/COMP waivers. If you are a Georgian with significant developmental disabilities, you have three

choices. One is to spend your life in a facility, like a private intermediate care facility or a nursing home, and your second choice is to get a NOW or COMP waiver. These waivers are only available to people whose disabilities are significant enough to qualify for ongoing care in a facility, and provide services and supports that allow people with developmental disabilities to live in real homes in their own communities. Virtually everyone would choose a life with a waiver rather than be stuck in a facility.

But there's a problem – just because you qualify for a waiver doesn't mean that you get one. And that's the third choice ... to hang on as best you can, wait, hope and pray for a waiver. The House put in 75 new NOW/COMP waivers, and the Senate agreed. This agreement lets us be hopeful that these slots will

remain in the final budget, but as stated before, the final outcome is not yet known as of print time.

Below is a summary of these Unlock the Waiting Lists! requests and what happened in the Georgia General Assembly:

Unlock Original ASK for ICWP:	Gradually raise the ICWP Personal Support Services rate to \$20/hr. beginning with a \$3/hr. increase for FY 2016	\$7,975,490
Governor's FY 2016 recommendation:	No new ICWP increase	\$0
House budget version:	\$.50 per hour rate increase for Personal Support Services	\$1,329,428

	covered under the ICWP	
Senate budget version:	\$1.00 per hour rate increase for Personal Support Services covered under the ICWP for Direct Support Professionals	\$2,658,856
Conference committee:	TBD	TBD
Unlock Original ASK for NOW/COMP :	1,000 new NOW/COMP waivers for Georgians most in need	\$16,493,000
Governor's FY 2016 recommendat	No new DD waivers	\$0

ion:		
House budget version:	Increase funds for 75 additional slots for the NOW and COMP waivers	\$1,124,226
Senate budget version:	Senate agreed with House	\$1,124,226
Conference committee:	TBD	TBD

Employment First Policy

The Employment First Advocacy Day had the largest number of attendees of all the advocacy days. We are so excited about the momentum that the Employment First advocacy has gained and have received so many positive comments from legislators.

“Employment First” means that employment should be the first and preferred option for all people, regardless of their disability. Under an Employment First policy, employment in the general workforce at or above minimum wage is the first and preferred option for all working age citizens with disabilities. Not only would it benefit Georgians with disabilities who could realize their goals, but also family members of people with disabilities who would have peace of mind for their loved ones, Georgia employers who would gain excellent employees, and Georgia taxpayers who would gain more taxpaying citizens.

GCDD wishes to thank Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-District 13) for her leadership on Employment First. We thank her and all her co-sponsors for House Resolution 642, which will initiate a study committee on the benefits of an Employment First policy and Post-Secondary

Education options for Georgians with disabilities. HR 642 PASSED and we anticipate a study committee will be appointed sometime after session ends. We are exploring ways for members of the Georgia State Senate to be involved as well.

Inclusive Post-Secondary Employment

On Monday, March 9, the Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Consortium (www.gaipsec.org) along with students and staff from various inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) programs in Georgia gathered at the State Capitol to thank the Georgia General Assembly for its appropriations support in the Georgia state budget over the past two years. Senator Butch Miller (R-District 49) and several co-sponsors introduced

Senate Resolution 276 to commend the Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Consortium for its

work to create opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Georgia who have historically not had access to postsecondary education opportunities.

Legislation

In order to pass, a piece of legislation must have passed both chambers in identical form by midnight on Sine Die. Governor Deal has 40 days to sign or veto bills that were passed. If he does not act on a bill within this time period, the bill becomes law.

Since the 2015 session is the first year of a two-year cycle of the Georgia General Assembly, bills that do not make it this year will still be alive for consideration in 2016.

Haleigh's Hope Act (medical cannabis)/House Bill 1 - PASSED

This legislation sponsored by Rep. Allen Peake (R-District 141) allows the limited use of medical cannabis oil (no more than 5% or possess no more than 20 fluid oz.

of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), an active ingredient) to treat eight disorders: cancer, Crohn's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS), mitochondrial disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, seizure disorders and sickle cell disease.

Before Georgians can begin using CBD oil the state will still have to set up the Low THC Oil Patient Registry.

The

Department of Public Health is charged with establishing procedures, rules and regulations to

assist doctors in making the certifications that a patient has a qualifying condition.

Family Care Act (HB 92 and SB 242)

This legislation would allow individuals whose employers provide sick days the option of using up to five sick days to care for family members. The lobbying efforts for this are led by the Georgia Job Family Collaborative (www.gaworkingfamilies.org). HB 92, sponsored by Rep. Tommy Benton (R-District 31) stalled in the House Industry & Labor Committee. Within days of the end of session, a new bill, SB 242, was dropped by lead sponsor Senator Mike Williams (R-District 27). We will follow this bill closely in the 2016 legislative session to see what happens.

HB 86 – PASSED

This legislation transfers the Division of Aging Services (DAS) from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to the Georgia Adult and Aging Services Agency.

Ava's Law (SB 1 to be attached to HB 429)

It was announced in a press conference within days of the end of session that SB 1, the autism insurance bill known as Ava's Law, sponsored by Senator Charlie Bethel

(R-District 54), would be attached to HB 429 with some modifications. Prior to attaching the autism bill language, HB 429, sponsored by Rep. Ron Stephens (R-District 164), prevents health benefit plans from restricting coverage for prescribed treatment based upon an insured's diagnosis with a terminal condition.

This announcement comes after an agreement was reached between the chairmen of the House and

Senate insurance committees that will allow some children with autism to be covered by insurance. Both chairmen expect that the combined bill will easily pass the Senate, and the modified bill should be accepted by the House.

Many disability advocates are passionate supporters of Ava's Law and the therapies it would cover, but there are some advocates who object to the bill, particularly its inclusion of Applied Behavior Analysis therapy.

While we remain incredibly grateful for the strides we made, we have only begun to scratch the surface of the real work that needs to be done in Georgia to improve the lives of people with disabilities. So please join our advocacy network to see how you can be involved!

GCDD Needs YOU –Join our Advocacy Network TODAY! Go to www.gcdd.org, scroll down to the bottom, and click on the green button “Join our Advocacy Network” and follow the instructions.

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PERSPECTIVES

Blending Communities to Strengthen Opportunities

By Reverend Bill Gaventa

Sometimes, at community-building conferences, there is a workshop on the power of inclusive faith communities.

Sometimes, at inclusive faith community conferences, there is a workshop on creative community building.

When I came to Columbus, GA for the Georgia Winter Institute (GWI), the conference had four major strands

of workshops: community building, inclusive faith communities, employment and person-centered planning.

I learned how each strand was woven through the creative work that people of faith in Georgia are doing and want to do in the future. It included people with disabilities, family members, citizen advocates, professionals, clergy and laity. It was evident that everyone's voice and four overlapping skill sets is the way to weave community.

But, most faith communities don't know about person-centered planning strategies. They often do it, instinctively, as caregivers surround an individual or family and support them in a variety of ways.

The same goes with community building.

Congregations are built around the giving and receiving of personal gifts, but most don't know about how Asset Based Community Development and strategies like Community Cafés could empower their service.

At GWI, we overlapped strands to strengthen opportunities for people with disabilities. Employment is a huge issue in community inclusion, and so are supports within faith communities. We blended one of the inclusive ministry sessions with the employment track, and it was the largest workshop I led.

The Putting Faith to Work (PFW) pilot project, started by the Collaborative on Faith and Disability, became the key focus of the workshop. The pilot is underway in four states where the University Centers of

Excellence in Developmental Disabilities are working with congregations to help people with disabilities find employment.

The project is based on the capacity of faith communities to develop circles and care initiatives. Faith communities have the opportunity and capacity to transform the lives of many people with disabilities, their families and the community as a whole by helping people find meaningful jobs, assume valued roles, and share their gifts and vocation with others.

Using person-centered planning strategies the vision of PFW focuses on social capital in every congregation, (i.e., the networking power of all of its members) to find jobs that would meet the interests and skills of the people with whom they are working.

Congregations are full of employers and employees who know others in their communities. People get opportunities because of connections, and they often need emotional and spiritual support as they search.

Thus the project is about helping a person with a disability, known to a congregation, get opportunities for jobs and/or other chances to make a contribution to their community.

A manual of strategies and lessons learned will be available in 2016, but we encourage people to develop their own initiatives.

It is important to keep weaving the seamless garment made of a community that includes mind, body and soul, creating opportunities for people with and without disabilities.

REVEREND BILL GAVENTA is the director of the Summer Institute on Theology and Disability. He was a speaker and presenter at the 2015 Georgia Winter Institute.

To learn more about Putting Faith to Work, visit [faithanddisability.org/ projects/pftw/](http://faithanddisability.org/projects/pftw/)

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Community Cafés: Leadership That Grows Relationships and Strengthens Families

By Robin Higa

Growing an inclusive community requires meaningful, ongoing community conversations that welcome diverse

perspectives. These conversations have clear intention, spotlight strengths and weave participants' gifts and talents into the work. Community Cafés are doing just that all over the country. But what makes Community Cafés different from typical meetings?

The Community Café approach is flexible and used in workplaces, organizations, places of worship, child and family centers, parks or community spaces or almost any setting. Conversations are intended to spark leadership to build the relationships needed to strengthen communities and families. These conversations can impact policy, organizational practices and group and individual action. Community residents host conversations related to the essential protective factors needed for optimal child development such as leadership and community partnerships. Appreciative Inquiry, a World Café principle, creates conversations around a protective factor

framework strengthening the spirit, heart and mind of Community Café's work.

When a series of conversations are hosted in the spirit of Appreciative Inquiry, community meetings get away from the typical process of asking how to solve problems and instead begin to assess what is already working well.

Conversation hosts have an opportunity to arrive curious and host a space for learning rather than promoting a preset agenda. Strengthening communities and families is an ongoing process of dreaming, designing, discovering and delivering action based on group wisdom. For example, rather than trying to come up with solutions to prejudice, communities invite diverse perspectives into the room to discuss questions like, "How do I know I belong?"

Community Café hosts frequently use techniques from The World Café model and always keeps in mind

principles for hosting. The World Café organization has published seven principles for hosting that really speak to the heart of inclusive community conversation. Some include ideas such as: provide context; explore questions that matter; create hospitable space; and encourage everyone's contributions. These principles in action may look, feel, smell, taste and sound differently in different neighborhoods but hosts will have thought of how these principles relate to the people coming.

People value their time and keep coming when their efforts result in immediate benefits for themselves, such as making new friends and learning about community resources. People also become inspired to continue to participate when they see their efforts are building a better community for the next generation. The Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy has done just that. This framework facilitates mindfulness on promoting

what works and strengthening families rather than trying to prevent negative behavior or fix what is broken. The five protective factors relate to every human: hope, parenting, health, community and compassion.

The final word about Community Cafés is that they are always hosting in partnership. It is in the growing of loving human relationships that communities and families are strengthened.

For more information:

- *Community Cafés* www.thecommunitycafe.com
- *The World Café* www.theworldcafe.com
- *Center for the Study of Social Policy* www.cssp.org

GUEST ARTICLE

Making a Difference will feature five guest columns by Johnson on the legacy of the ADA and how national and

state groups are commemorating the anniversary. This is the third installment.

A Time to Be Proud

By Mark Johnson

By the time you read this version of my ADA25 series, much will have happened around the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Georgians with disabilities, advocates and supporters will have marched in the MLK Jr. Parade in Downtown Atlanta representing ADA25, and The ADA Legacy Tour will have kicked off in TX. We will have rallied at the 17th annual Disability Day at the Capitol despite the wet, windy and cold weather. Many will have attended

Presence is Power and people would have represented ADA25 at the 50th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery march.

At the same time, the ADA25 Faith and Disability initiative will have kicked off. The Collaborative on Faith and Disability is partnering with the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) and The ADA Legacy Project on this initiative. IDAC is planning a celebrative interfaith service in Washington, DC on July 26, 2015. It has also passed a Pledge to Recommit to Full Implementation of the ADA and is urging its member religious organizations to do the same.

The Georgia legislative session will have ended and hopefully attendants will get a pay raise, more waivers will be available and Georgia will have become a Employment First State.

And finally, your plans for the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act will be firmed up, and The ADA Legacy Project has made it very easy for you to engage in the 25th anniversary. On the website (www.adalegacy.com), you can find resources like:

- A guide on How to Celebrate ADA25
- T-shirts to order
- The ADA Pledge for individuals and groups to recommit to the landmark legislation.

Throughout the celebration, we reminded everyone to preserve, educate and celebrate the law that has allowed people with disabilities to have equal rights and become a part of the community as a whole. We have a lot to be proud of, but we must not forget what we fought for.

During the celebrations, The ADA Legacy Project is seeking a recommitment from the community in regards to the full implementation of the ADA.

Join us in helping get 2,500 signatures on the recommitment of the ADA.

Sign the ADA Pledge, adaanniversary.org/pledgeon

Pledge to Recommit to Full Implementation of the ADA

On July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities. This legislation established a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

On July 26, 2015, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the ADA. The ADA has expanded opportunities for Americans with disabilities by reducing

barriers and changing perceptions, and increasing full participation in community life. However, the full promise of the ADA will only be reached if we remain committed to continue our efforts to fully implement the ADA.

On the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, I will celebrate and recognize the progress that has been made by reaffirming the principles of equality and inclusion and recommitting my efforts to reach full ADA compliance.

NOW THEREFORE, I (name), _____
_____ do hereby reaffirm
that I will continue to work toward full ADA compliance.

You Get Proud by Practicing

by Laura Hershey

If you are not proud
For who you are, for what you say, for how you look;
If every time you stop
To think of yourself, you do not see yourself glowing
With golden light; do not, therefore, give up on
yourself.

You can get proud.

You do not need
A better body, a purer spirit, or a Ph.D.
To be proud.

You do not need
A lot of money, a handsome boyfriend, or a nice car.

You do not need
To be able to walk, or see, or hear,
Or use big, complicated words,
Or do any of those things that you just can't do
To be proud. A caseworker
Cannot make you proud,

Or a doctor.
You only need more practice.
You get proud by practicing.
There are many many ways to get proud.
You can try riding a horse, or skiing on one leg,
Or playing guitar,
And do well or not so well,
And be glad you tried
Either way.
You can show
Something you've made
To someone you respect
And be happy with it no matter
What they say.
You can say
What you think, though you know
Other people do not think the same way, and you can
keep saying it, even if they tell you

You are crazy.
You can add your voice
All night to the voices
Of a hundred and fifty others
In a circle
Around a jailhouse
Where your brothers and sisters are being held
For blocking buses with no lifts,
Or you can be one of the ones
Inside the jailhouse,
Knowing of the circle outside.
You can speak your love
To a friend without fear.
You can find someone who will listen to you
Without judging you or doubting you or being
Afraid of you
And let you hear yourself perhaps
For the very first time.

These are all ways
Of getting proud.
None of them
Are easy, but all of them
Are possible. You can do all of these things,
Or just one of them again and again.
You get proud
By practicing.
Power makes you proud, and power
Comes in many fine forms
Supple and rich as butterfly wings.
It is music
when you practice opening your mouth
And liking what you hear
Because it is the sound of your own
True voice.
It is sunlight
When you practice seeing

Strength and beauty in everyone,
Including yourself.

It is dance
when you practice knowing
That what you do
And the way you do it
Is the right way for you
And cannot be called wrong.

All these hold
More power than weapons or money
Or lies.

All these practices bring power, and power
Makes you proud.
You get proud
By practicing.

Remember, you weren't the one
Who made you ashamed,
But you are the one

Who can make you proud.
Just practice,
Practice until you get proud,
and once you are proud,
Keep practicing so you won't forget.
You get proud
By practicing.

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Mark Johnson is the director of advocacy for the Shepherd Center, the top spinal cord & brain injury rehabilitation hospital in the nation. Johnson also serves as the council chair for The ADA Legacy Project.

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MIA'S SPACE

Time Travel

By Pat Nobbie, PhD, Mia's mom

In the past two weeks, both Mia and I have had time warp experiences. Mia's experience was with the US Postal Service. Mia happens to be a person who still sends actual, paper birthday cards ... not through virtual, email or Twitter, but real, live, put-it-in-the-envelope, lick-the-flap and put-a-stamp-on-it birthday cards.

Although she is quite aware that she is mailing the cards, her idea of delivery time is more in keeping with the time it takes to send email. In her mind, the minute you put the birthday card in the mailbox, it instantaneously arrives at its destination. On March 4, my birthday, Mia put the card in the mailbox at 8:00 AM, and at 8:30 AM, she called me to ask me if I got it. She also has a great deal of faith in the postal service for knowing the identity of her relatives.

Here's the envelope of the birthday card she sent to her grandfather – she texted me the picture. And here's what my birthday card envelope looked like (see upper right pictures). The addresses were not really correct according to the style guide, but most of it was there, in the top center of the envelope. The stickers are probably a bit distracting, but both cards arrived, to our great delight.

My time warp experience was a little more serious. I opened The New York Times one day last week, and there was an opinion piece advocating for the return of “Humane Asylums.” After that, I was forwarded articles about the “New Housing Concept” emerging for people with disabilities – a gated community of over 100 two, three and four bedroom apartments contained on a campus surrounded by a secure

perimeter, specifically for people with intellectual disabilities. Despite our advocacy efforts, changes in law, US Supreme Court decisions, Medicaid rules and individuals one-by-one showing us how it's possible to live in the community, we still regress to a "herding instinct" – as one of my colleagues put it. Put everyone together. It's easier to monitor them and keep them safe.

I've written about this before – remember my analogy of the "community of blondes?" As a parent, I understand the potential for a loved one's life situation to spin out of control suddenly. Despite the fact that many people think Mia is "easy" and not like the individuals that cause states, agencies and parents to create or support more structured environments, hardly a week goes by when I don't have a "clutch"

moment when I think that I am going to have to move back home for Mia.

What supports me to support her is her extended community – the family she lives with, her friends, the church, her co-workers and the neighbors. Even after Mia’s dad passed away, several people approached me to make sure I wasn’t considering moving her to DC. Mia has a life – her own life. I have to believe this is possible for just about everyone. I have to believe it is the responsibility of all us who do this work to promote provider development, funding and policy changes – and surround people with the connections necessary to build their capacity in the community. We have invested too much already. We cannot go back in time.

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Real Communities Welcomes New Community

Builders

Purposefully involving people with and without developmental disabilities in collaborative projects is pivotal to the framework of Real Communities. GCDD's signature initiative welcomes its newest community builders who are working to utilize the gifts of everyone and create avenues toward reciprocity, interdependence and social change.

Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty (GFADP)

Dorinda Tatum brings her talents as a community organizer and advocate in the labor, human rights and social justice movements to Real Communities. She currently serves as lead organizer for GFADP. This statewide coalition of organizations and individuals is

working to end the death penalty, build power in communities targeted by the criminal justice system, protect the rights and dignity of those on death row and their families, and reform Georgia's public safety system.

Mixed Greens Community Builders

Three new community builders – Jessica Mathis, Johnny Smith and Barry Helmey – join Teri Schell, executive director of Forsyth Farmers' Market and GCDD community builder, to host monthly meetings, recruit new members, staff the Mixed Greens booth at the Forsyth Farmers' Market and engage in reflective learning in order to support the market's efforts.

The market serves as a building block to develop a more welcoming neighborhood and provide opportunities for connection and contribution for

people with and without disabilities. The core group works together to support the market with smiling faces, interactive projects and learning opportunities.

Jessica Mathis was born and raised in Savannah, GA. Mathis attended Armstrong State University and is currently applying to their graduate level history program. She works at Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE), Inc. as a peer mentor and is starting an educational nonprofit. Mathis has been a part of the Mixed Greens for just under one year.

Johnny Smith has lived in Savannah for most of his adult life, and has been a Mixed Greens member since 2011. He also volunteers at the Forsyth Farmers' Market every Saturday.

Barry Helmey, a Savannah native, has worked primarily in the health and wellness field, most notably at the Deepak Chopra Center in Savannah. He is also a board member for LIFE, Inc. and has been part of the Mixed Greens for more than one year.

Women on the Rise

Marilynn Winn joins Real Communities as the community builder for Women on the Rise. The project is a membership-based organization of women targeted and/or impacted by the criminal “justice” system, and it works to educate, heal and empower one another and our communities to demand justice, dignity and liberation for all. Winn is also the chapter organizer II for 9to5 National Association of Working Women, Atlanta.

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Twenty Agents for Change

By Jessica Mathis

At the Georgia Winter Institute (GWI) held in Columbus, GA earlier this year, I attended sessions on the concepts of community building, the inclusive church environment, and employment and services that really changed my mind and gave me some new ideas to take back to my community.

On the night of Warren Lee Hill's execution, a group of us left from GWI and went to the local NAACP office to participate in a candlelight prayer vigil to remember his life. But, it made me wonder how the concepts of community building, inclusive churches and employment or services could have been used to prevent the tragic loss of Mr. Hill's life.

We say that community building is about making connections with people in your local neighborhood. What if someone from Hill's neighborhood had taken time to get to know him as a person and discover his gifts and talents?

We were praying for and celebrating a life that was known to just a few rather than by a whole community. Will the community in which he lived ever know who Warren Hill was? On that night, I thought about what kind of person this man would be or what he would have gained if someone had taken the time to get to know him.

Maybe they could have encouraged him or seen the potential in his gifts. But because of lack of involvement from his community and society, he will be known to the world only as a person with an intellectual disability who committed a crime and was pushed away, rather than as a person with interests and hope.

What if a church member had come and visited him at his house or in prison? Would he have died this way in vain? Still, the church is our beacon for prayers, peace and reconciliation in this time of mourning.

So, we must ask ourselves, what do community building, employment and inclusive church environments all have to do with how to help people like Warren Hill? During the Introduction to the Roving Listeners class, a lady told our guide, DeAmon Harges, the story of a young man who could make things without using instructions.

She went on to ask, “How do you take this young man and lift him up out of the mud when you have only one person to encourage him?” Harges said to surround that man by 20 positive people in order to help him discover his gifts. If the community had known how to assist Warren Hill by surrounding him with 20 resources, like

20 positive people, we would not be mourning. Instead, we would be celebrating his life full of potential, its greatness and his gifts.

These are the positive outcomes of building community. We should each become one of those 20 resources for an individual to discover their gifts for a more inclusive community

JESSICA MATHIS works at Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE), Inc. as a peer mentor and is starting an educational nonprofit. Mathis is also a community builder for GCDD's Real Communities Initiative.

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CALENDAR

April

April 16 - 17

GCDD Quarterly Meeting

Atlanta, GA

www.gcdd.org

April 20 - 22

National Council for Behavioral Health 2015 Conference

Orlando, FL

<http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/events-and-training/conference/>

April 27 - 28

12th Annual Service Providers Assn. for Developmental Disabilities (SPADD) Keys to Success Conference

Pine Mountain, GA

www.spadd.org

May

May 1 - 4*

Developmental Disabilities Nurses Assn. Conference

www.ddna.org

May 3 - 5

American Network of Community Options &
Resources, 2015 ANCOR Conference: Ignite!

Arlington, VA

www.ancor.org/

May 10 - 13*

National ADA Symposium

ADA National Network

www.adasymposium.org/

May 13 - 15

ADA Legacy Bus Tour Stop

Johnson City & Nashville, TN

<http://www.adalegacy.com/ada25/ada-legacy-tour>

May 18 - 19

Center on Disability Studies Pacific Rim International
Conference on Disability & Diversity, Honolulu, HI

www.pacrim.hawaii.edu/

May 26 - 29*

Summer Institute on Theology & Disability

www.bethesdaoinstitute.org/Summer-Institute-Theology-Disability

May 30 - 31

Sibling Leadership Network 2015 National Conference
Louisville, KY

siblingleadership.org/

June

June 1 - 4

National Disability Rights Network Annual Conference

Indianapolis, IN

www.ndrn.org/

June 1 - 4

American Association on Intellectual & Developmental
Disabilities Conference, Louisville, KY

aaid.org/education/annualconference

June 10*

Society for Disability Studies and GCDD Annual
Pre-Conference

www.disstudies.org

June 10 - 12

National Association of State Directors of Developmental
Disabilities Services, 2015 Directors Forum & Mid-Year
Conference, Denver, CO,

www.nasdds.org/

June 10 - 13*

Society for Disability Studies Annual Conference

www.disstudies.org

June 13

ADA25 Georgia Parade, Atlanta

adaparade@gmail.com

June 16

TASH Capitol Hill Day

Washington, DC

tash.org/conferences-events/

June 23 - 25

Assn. of People Supporting Employment First National
Conference, Philadelphia, PA

www.apse.org/conferencetraining/2015conference/

June 27

Institute on Disability Advocate NH Annual Advocacy
Conference, Concord, NH

bit.ly/1wY6d3s

July

July 15

ADA Legal Issues Webinar Series

“The Most Important Cases since the ADA was passed”

ada-audio.org/Webinar/ADALegal/Schedule/

July 16 - 17

GCDD Quarterly Meeting

Atlanta, GA

www.gcdd.org

July 21 - 23

National Association of Councils on Developmental
Disabilities Annual Conference

Reno, NV

www.nacdd.org

July 27

National Disability Leadership Alliance ADA 25th
Anniversary

Washington, DC

bit.ly/1xvHbsn

July 27 - 30

National Council on Independent Living 2015 Annual
Conference

Washington, DC

www.ncil.org/

*More information available on page 5, In The News

Planning an upcoming event?

Send your information to GCDD Public Information
Associate and Social Media Coordinator Jhai James

jhai.james@gcdd.ga.gov; Subject line: “Community Calendar” by June 15 to be included in the calendar. Visit GCDD’s expanded online community calendar to view additional local events at www.gcdd.org/calendar.

Calendar Highlight:

Disability Pride ADA25 Georgia Parade

June 13, 2015, 2:00 PM

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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

Around GCDD

Office of the Governor

www.gov.georgia.gov

In The News

Save the Date for the ADA25 Georgia Parade

adaparade@gmail.com

ABLE (Achieving a Better Life) Act

www.congress.gov/bill/113thcongress/house-bill/647

Developmental Disabilities Nurses Association Conference

www.ddna.org

The National ADA Symposium

www.adasymposium.org

2015 Summer Institute on Theology and Disability

www.bethesdaoinstitute.org

Society of Disability Studies

www.disstudies.org

Creating Change Together

Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty

www.gfadp.org

A Ritual to Read to Each Other *by William Stafford*

www.graywolfpress.org

Georgia Winter Institute Brings Together Disability

Community Leaders

Georgia Winter Institute

georgiawinterinstitute.weebly.com

2015 Disability Day Honors Americans with Disabilities Act

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

www.gcdd.org

Six by '15

www.sixbyfifteen.org

ADA Legacy Project

www.adalegacy.com

Americans with Disabilities Act Pledge

www.adaanniversary.org/pledgeon

A Recap of the 2015 Legislative Session

Public Policy for the People

gcdd.org/public-policy/public-policyfor-the-people.html

Georgia General Assembly

www.legis.ga.gov

List of Bills signed into law

gov.georgia.gov/bills-signed/2015

Georgia Employment First Coalition

D'Arcy Robb, darcy.t.robb@gmail.com

GCDD Advocacy Network

gcdd.org/public-policy.html

The Shred Shed: One Man's Path to Employment

2015 Red Book: A Summary Guide to Employment

Supports for Persons with Disabilities Under the

Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income Programs

www.ssa.gov/read/documents/TheRedBook2015.pdf

A Time to Be Proud

ADA Legacy Tour

www.adalegacy.com

Americans with Disabilities Act Pledge

www.adaanniversary.org/pledgeon

Interfaith Initiative

www.faithanddisability.org

You Get Proud by Practicing *by Laura Hershey*

www.laurahershey.com

Perspectives

Putting Faith to Work

faithanddisability.org/projects/pftw

Community Cafés

www.thecommunitycafe.com

The World Café

www.theworldcafe.com

Center for the Study of Social Policy

www.cssp.org

Real Communities

Women on the Rise

www.rjactioncenter.org

Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty

www.gfadp.org

Mixed Greens - Forsyth Farmers Market

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Cartoon and Ads

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Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/georgiacouncil

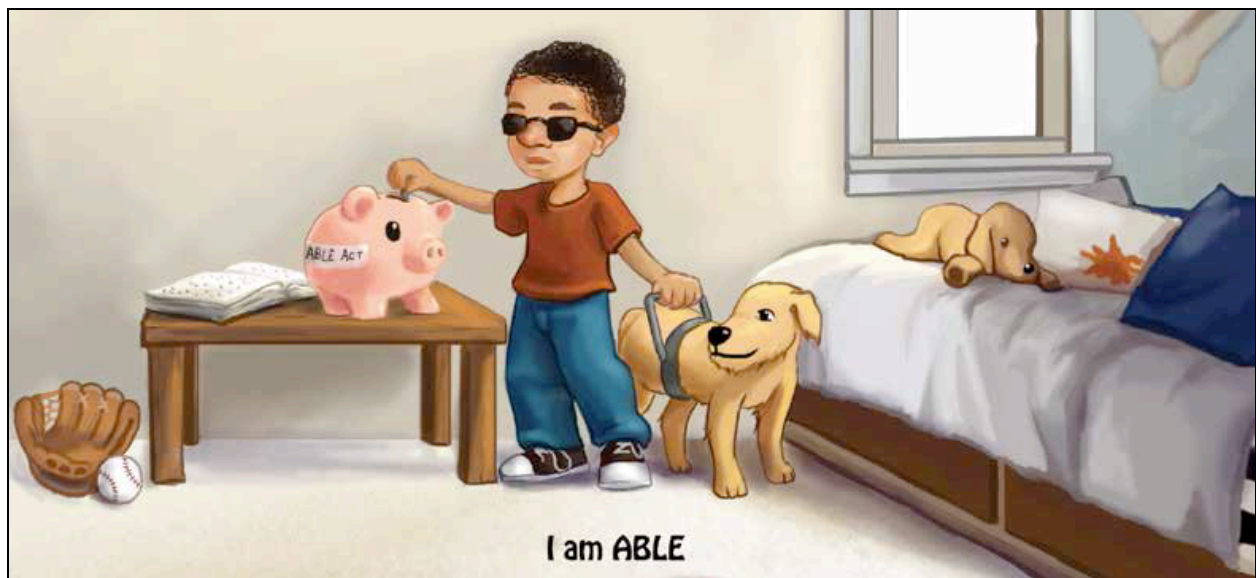
We want to hear from you!

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

Cartoon

Caption: I am ABLE

Description: Young boy with seeing eye dog puts money into a piggy bank marked ABLE Act. The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act allows people with disabilities to open savings accounts, similar to 529 college savings plans, where they are able to save up to \$100,000 without risking eligibility for Social Security and other government programs.



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