

# Making a Difference

INTRODUCING

[gcdd.org](http://gcdd.org)

## TEAM SUPREME

Summer  
2019

It's A Bird! It's A Plane! It's Team Supreme – a Whole New Team of Superheroes – Kids with Disabilities!

**GCDD**  
GEORGIA COUNCIL ON  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is driven by its Five Year Plan (2017-2021) goals of education; employment; self-advocacy; Real Communities; and formal and informal supports. The Council, charged with creating systems change for individuals with developmental disabilities and family members, will work through various advocacy and capacity building activities to build a more interdependent, self-sufficient, and integrated and included disability community across Georgia.

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by Hanna Rosenfeld

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Making a Difference magazine is available online at [gcdd.org](http://gcdd.org) in: English, Spanish, Audio and Large Print. Previous Issues are archived on the website as well.

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## LIVING MORE MEANINGFUL LIVES

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the [Olmstead decision](#), which mandated that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) should live in the community and not state-run institutions. This decision began in Georgia when Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson decided they did not want to live in the state hospital and asked to move to the community.

Because of this decision, people across the country have been freed from institutional living and now live more meaningful lives. However, in Georgia, over 200 people still reside in Gracewood State Hospital in Augusta, and thousands more reside in nursing facilities.

While many believe it is time to end Department of Justice oversight of the closure of state institutions, GCDD believes that oversight cannot be completed until everyone is moved out. We believe the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) wants to do the right thing. However, systemic pressures will keep Gracewood open, and those remaining there will live out their lives in isolation and segregation. It is time we end this and make the commitment to move the remaining people from Gracewood back into their communities.

One way we can assure people with I/DD are living in the community is by electing people who are committed to improving the lives of people with I/DD. In this edition of *Making a Difference*, we explore the many activities going on to get people registered to vote.

If you don't like what is happening, register to vote, meet with those running for local, state and national office and then cast your vote. As Justin Dart said, "Vote like your life depends on it, because it does." [Read more about voting in our "Public Policy for the People" feature.](#)

We also cover a new, collaborative community-engagement effort managed by GCDD: Welcoming Community Dialogue groups. Together with Global Ubuntu, GCDD is working to support community dialogues on social issues and/or themes in communities throughout the state of Georgia. The aim of the dialogues is to create space for community members of differing backgrounds, races and abilities to discuss and dream of a society where everyone is treated with dignity and justice.

Creating a welcoming community is a journey that a community can take together; it is not a project and doesn't have to be hard. Conversations can start over coffee or dinner simply by asking how we can create a fair and welcoming community for all. GCDD and Global Ubuntu are working with a group of community builders around the state of Georgia by



Eric E. Jacobson

providing financing, facilitation and mentoring in support of their efforts to assist in the creation of welcoming communities and neighbors. [Read our article to learn more about Welcoming Community Dialogue groups.](#)

**ONE WAY WE CAN ASSURE PEOPLE WITH I/DD ARE LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY IS BY ELECTING PEOPLE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH I/DD.** ”

[Check out GCDD's website and join our advocacy network to stay informed.](#) We hope you enjoy reading this magazine, and we want to hear from you. Let us know your thoughts by writing to Managing Editor, Hillary Hibben, at [hillary.hibben@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:hillary.hibben@gcdd.ga.gov).

*Eric E. Jacobson*

Eric E. Jacobson  
Executive Director, GCDD

# Miracle Field Hits Home Run on Inclusive Baseball Experience

by Tim Orff

In the Valdosta-Lowndes County area, there were few options for the 5,000 kids with disabilities to engage in physical activity. In 2004, after doing research on the issue, current city councilman and former Valdosta State football player Andy Gibbs saw a need and founded the Miracle League of Valdosta (MLV).

With the help of many in the community, Gibbs began the local Miracle League chapter so those with disabilities could play and enjoy baseball with no obstacles. To achieve that, a Miracle Field, which is a two-dimensional, rubberized, accessible baseball field, would have to be built.

Gibb's determination to create that field led to forming a board that included members of the Miracle League and Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPRA). Within six months, they were able to raise over \$1.7 million.

With the VLPRA's help, the money created the Miracle League Complex at Freedom Park, a

14-acre, state-of-the-art complex, which opened in March 2019 and is home to the nation's largest Miracle Field.



When people think of Miracle League of Valdosta, we want them to think about how to include everyone, provide an opportunity to feel special and to say, 'People DO care about me.'

In addition to baseball, this field also includes four 50-meter race lanes for track and has space to play soccer and basketball. "[We]

wanted to give kids all the options they could to play as many sports as possible," said Gibbs, who is also MLV's league director. "It's our goal to always provide a place where [Valdosta's] kids and adults have somewhere to be and [are] welcomed," he added.

During the MLV season, which lasts for six weeks, athletes on each team learn the fundamentals of baseball and are given the same fanfare as Major League Baseball (MLB) players with their own "walk-up" music, name announcement and replica MLB jerseys and hats. Additionally, MLV utilizes a "buddy system," which pairs each player with a peer without disabilities.



Miracle Field in Valdosta, GA



More than just playing a game, Gibbs also believes that MLV is about making new friends, building self-esteem and being treated just like other athletes without disabilities.

“Parents come up to us and say, ‘you don’t understand what this has done for my family’ and we feel blessed being able to take what God has given us to serve others,” Gibbs said.

The first season played on Miracle Field took place from March to April 2019 and included 114 kids and adults with disabilities and over 350 volunteers.

Gibbs attributes the success of the Miracle League Complex to “what happens when a county and city come together to meet the needs of its kids,” and is also proud of how the entire community created a standard of inclusion.

He stated, “When people think of [MLV], we want them to think about how to include everyone,

provide an opportunity to feel special and to say, ‘People DO care about me.’”

Serving Valdosta-Lowndes County and the surrounding area, the Miracle League Complex also includes four additional regulation baseball fields, a wheelchair-accessible pavilion that can hold 180 people, a tiered amphitheater and a fully accessible playground, which are open to all visitors.

The next MLV season kicks off in September and lasts until Halloween, and future plans for the complex include movie nights, a “Parents Night Out,” a kickball league and more.

To sign up for the upcoming Miracle League of Valdosta season and to volunteer, contact Andy Gibbs at [valdostamiracles@yahoo.com](mailto:valdostamiracles@yahoo.com) or 229.563.8877 or visit the [MLV Facebook page](#).

**The Miracle League®** offers opportunities for children with mental and/or physical challenges to play baseball. The organization designs and constructs custom baseball fields that have a rubberized turf to prevent injuries, wheelchair-accessible dugouts and a completely flat surface to eliminate barriers to wheelchair-bound or visually-impaired children. The Miracle League gives more than 200,000 children and young adults with disabilities across the US, Canada, Mexico and Australia the opportunity to enjoy America’s favorite pastime.



# Register! Educate! Vote! Use Your Power! Making the Disability Vote Count

by Hanna Rosenfeld, GCDD Planning & Policy Development Specialist

## Only 65.9% of Georgians are registered to vote.

**Out of the approximately 10.5 million people that call our state home, only about 6.9 million are registered to vote. Which means there are around 3.5 million Georgians going about their daily lives, unregistered to vote. Abysmal if you ask me. While some of the 3.5 million are ineligible to vote due to age, legal status, residency status or past convictions, quite a number are eligible to vote in our state. That means we have a lot of work to do.**

Undoubtedly, voting is the bedrock of our society. While we could debate the merits of requiring voters to pre-register, **the reality is that in order to vote in Georgia, you must be registered to vote.**

Registering to vote is the very first hurdle each of us must face when it comes to voting. There are a variety of reasons people don't end up voting on election day, from lack of childcare to lack of transportation, but don't let registration be the barrier stopping you from voting.



**Chances are you know one of those 3.5 million Georgians who are not registered to vote. Make a point of asking your friends and family if they are registered.**

With National Disability Voter Registration Week occurring from July 15 to 19, the time to register is

now. Chances are you know one of those 3.5 million Georgians who are not registered to vote. Make a point of asking your friends and family if they are registered to vote. It is so easy to do. All you have to do is visit the Georgia Secretary of State's "[My Voter Page](#)" website.

Even if you think you are registered, it is always a good idea to double check well in advance of election day. In the process of writing this article, I discovered I was no longer registered to vote. Because I had recently moved to a different county, I needed to update my voter registration. Let this be a reminder that anyone, including the person charged with writing an article about voting in Georgia, can forget to change their address. Even if you think you are registered to vote, make a point of double checking that everything is good to go.

Once you are registered, the next crucial step occurs when you actually cast your ballot. For some of us, that can be rather tricky. We might have to ensure we have suitable identification or find accessible transportation to reach our polling location. Sometimes the hurdles to vote can feel overwhelming. It is imperative that we each keep working to ensure each and every eligible voter is registered and casts their ballot on election day.

Casting your ballot is essential. Registering to vote is no good unless you cast your ballot for a candidate. If we want our leaders to pay attention to us, they must know that the disability community is a community of voters. Some of us may not have deep pockets to make large campaign contributions, but we all have the ability to cast a ballot. True, money often means power. However, when we all band together to cast our ballots, we amplify our power and impact.

### GCDD'S PUBLIC POLICY TEAM



DAWN ALFORD, GCDD  
Public Policy Director



HANNA ROSENFELD,  
GCDD Planning and  
Policy Development  
Specialist

While we may not be electing a new US president any time soon, a great number of local elections will be occurring across our state in the coming year. In some ways, local elections are even more important because your ability to impact the result is magnified. Point of fact, the very first election I voted in was decided by only 90 votes. Out of the over 40,000 people that cast their ballots that day, it was 90 people who really made the difference. Some people think that just one vote has no value. They are wrong. Polling and predictions only get you so far. Until the votes roll in, there is no foolproof way to know what the margin of victory or defeat will be. Ninety votes were all it took that day in Cobb County. Will you be the next 90? I sure hope so.

Let us be clear. I don't care who you vote for. The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities does not care who you vote for. We just care that you vote. Disability activist Justin Dart once said, "Vote as if your life depends on it, because it does." As members of the disability community, we should all be acutely aware of the impact government has on our lives. From Medicaid to Social Security, government programs are often a key part of attaining a life well lived in the community. **We have no excuse for failing to vote in every election we are qualified to vote in.** If we don't vote, then we have no control over the decisions our leaders might make and how that might impact our very lives. No candidate or political party has the market cornered on disability issues. In many cases, candidates don't even have a stance on issues important to our community. If we start showing up to vote in

large numbers, you bet your boots candidates will start learning about our community and the issues we care about. And if no candidate speaks your truth, consider running for office yourself – local offices like city council, school board, county commissioner or even the State House are incredibly achievable.

If running for office is something that appeals to you, be sure to check out the National Council on Independent Living's recently archived series of webinars, "[Elevate: Campaign Training for People with Disabilities.](#)"

## What's Happening in Georgia

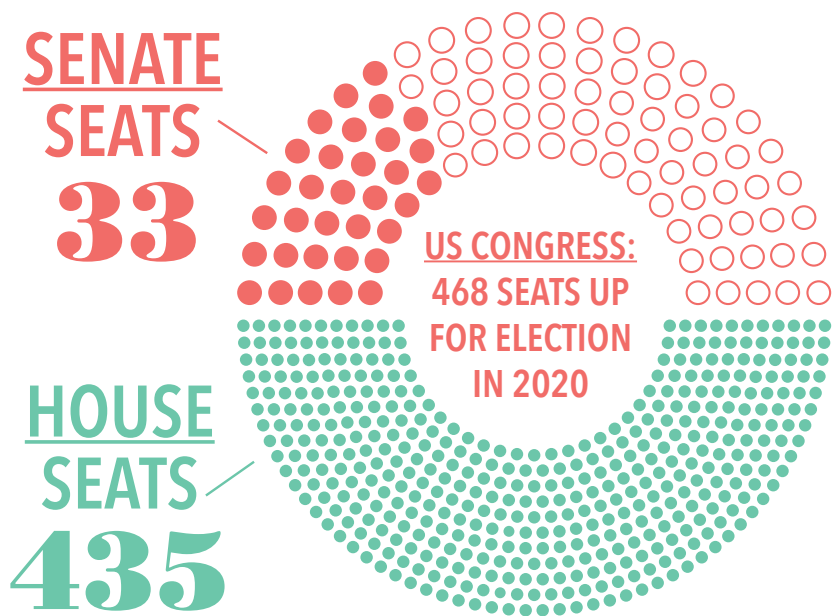
While it's off season, many individuals are announcing their candidacies for the 2020 election from city councils to state legislators to commissioners. Also, the Georgia House of Representatives and Georgia

**CASTING YOUR BALLOT IS ESSENTIAL.  
REGISTERING TO VOTE IS NO GOOD  
UNLESS YOU CAST YOUR  
BALLOT FOR A CANDIDATE.**



State Senate will hold elections, including federal seats for the US Senate and House of Representatives in 2020. [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) provided a latest update on who is seeking office next year, with many more to be added to the ticket.

To know who might be running for your district, city council, school board or other local, state and federal offices, engage with your local newspapers or news stations or resources like [Open States](#) or [Ballotpedia](#).



## Voting System Changes in Georgia

Recently, Governor Kemp signed House Bill 316 into law. Passed by a 101 yea/69 nay in the House and 35 yea/1 nay in the Senate, HB 316 makes changes to Georgia's voter registration and voting system.

Undoubtedly, the most notable change for most voters will be Georgia's new in-person voting machines. While there is still a great deal that must be decided, HB 316 calls for Georgia to adopt new voting machines.

**AS MEMBERS OF THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY, WE SHOULD ALL BE ACUTELY AWARE OF THE IMPACT GOVERNMENT HAS ON OUR LIVES.**



Many of you will be familiar with the electronic touch screen voting machines we have had for the past two decades. HB 316 calls for the adoption of electronic ballot markers, defined as “an electronic device that does not compute or retain votes; may integrate components such as a ballot scanner, printer, touch screen monitor, audio output and a navigational keypad; and uses electronic technology to independently and privately mark a paper ballot at the direction of an elector, interpret ballot selections, communicate such interpretation for elector verification and print an elector verifiable paper ballot.”

To the voter, the most obvious change will be the final step

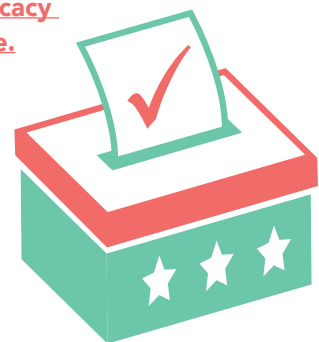
whereby after selecting your vote, you receive a printed receipt. In the past, you simply clicked submit and handed back the electronic card. Still, there is a lot we do not know at this time. Georgia's Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, has issued an RFP (i.e., request for proposals) to solicit applications from six companies to supply Georgia with our new system. Until the company is selected, we won't truly know what our new system will look like.

Moreover, the process by which registered voters are removed from the voter rolls has been updated, likely for the better. While in the past a voter was removed after three years of inactivity, **voters will now be removed after five years of inactivity.** This is significant because there are a great deal of misguided voters in Georgia that only vote in the presidential election. Since presidential elections come around every four years, such voters in the past may have found themselves removed from the voter registration rolls. Of note, inactivity is defined as failing to file an updated voter registration card, failing to file a change of name or address, not signing a petition which is required by law to be verified by the election superintendent or Secretary of State, not signing a voter certificate, failing to apply or vote absentee and failing to confirm a continuation of address notice.

Another key change is the reduction of voting machines per person. Previously, one machine was required for every 200 voters. HB 316 has changed this to **one machine for every 250 voters.** This is significant, as this could lead to longer lines at the polls. Only time will tell if the new machines move people through fast enough to accommodate the reduction of machines.

Additionally, restrictions for closing or changing polling locations have been implemented. Indeed, **within 60 days of a general primary, general election or general election runoff, no changes may be made to a polling location.** In the case of a special primary, special election or special election runoff, HB 316 restricts changes up to 30 days in advance of the election.

**Importantly, the requirement that all polling locations be accessible to voters with disabilities has not changed in any way. Still, we know that there exist polling locations in Georgia that are not accessible. Should any of us encounter a polling location that is not accessible, it is our duty to report that location to your local board of elections, to the Secretary of State's Office and to the Georgia Advocacy Office.**



**HB 316 REQUIRES 1 MACHINE FOR EVERY 250 VOTERS.**

**PREVIOUSLY, ONE MACHINE WAS REQUIRED FOR EVERY 200 VOTERS.**





### PUBLIC POLICY CALENDAR:

- ✓ July 15-19, 2019:  
National Disability Voter Registration Week
- ✓ October 2019: Take Your Legislator to Work Day
- ✓ January 13, 2020:  
First Day of the 2020 Legislative Session
- ✓ 2020 Advocacy Days:  
January 29, February 11, February 20, February 27, March 11

### SPECIAL ELECTION:

#### ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS - SCHOOL BOARD

- ✓ September 17, 2019:  
Election Day
- ✓ October 15, 2019: Runoff

## JULY 15 - 19, 2019 IS NATIONAL DISABILITY VOTER REGISTRATION WEEK

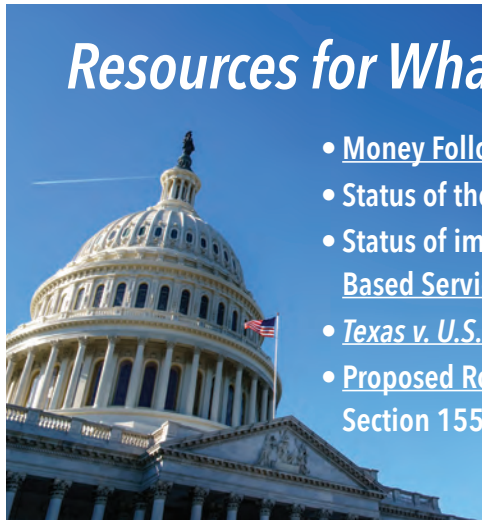
### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO CELEBRATE:

- REGISTER TO VOTE.
- CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION STATUS.
- ASK 10 FRIENDS TO REGISTER TO VOTE.
- MAKE SURE YOUR POLLING LOCATION IS ACCESSIBLE.
- FIND OUT WHO IS RUNNING FOR OFFICE in your district, city council, school board or other local, state and federal positions.
- CONSIDER RUNNING FOR OFFICE.
- CAST YOUR BALLOT ON ELECTION DAY!

Register! Educate! Vote! Use your Power!



MAKE THE DISABILITY VOTE COUNT



## Resources for What's Happening in Washington?

- Money Follows the Person and advocacy around the EMPOWER Care Act
- Status of the proposed Disability Integration Act (DIA)
- Status of implementation in Georgia of the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Settings Rule
- Texas v. U.S. and other attacks on the Affordable Care Act (ACA)
- Proposed Rollback of Nondiscrimination Protections under the ACA's Section 1557

### JOIN THE FIGHT TO PROTECT MEDICAID!



# It's A Bird! It's A Plane! It's Team Supreme!

by Jennifer Bosk  
& Devika Rao  
in collaboration  
with Tim Orff

While Superman is busy fighting for truth and justice and Batman once again faces the Joker, there's a whole new team of superheroes who are taking the universe by storm. Meet Team Supreme, a troupe of kids with disabilities who have superpowers, allowing them to make the world a better place.

Team Supreme includes:

- **Zeek**, 11 years old with autism, who uses his extreme memory and intellect to solve puzzles;
- **Sweet Pea**, 8, Zeek's sister who is diagnosed with sickle cell. Her superpower is her loving and giving heart;
- **Mech**, 12, diagnosed with spina bifida and incredible with his hands, allowing him to build gadgets and code computer systems;
- **Li**, 12, is blind and uses her enhanced senses of hearing and smell that allow her to find people and places; and
- **Thumper**, 7, is deaf, and his superpower allows him to see through sound and have enhanced peripheral vision.

The team is led by **Dr. Jackson**, their adoptive father who utilizes

his super-human brain power despite his debilitating depression. His mission is for greatness delivered through his children.

## The Journey to Team Supreme

Developed and created by Atlanta-based artist and animator, Joshua Leonard, 35, Team Supreme became an answer to a problem in mainstream media. Growing up, every time Leonard saw a superhero in the media, it was the, "same old, big, guy with muscles. I was so tired of them all looking the same," Leonard explains.

So, he set out to create superheroes for his team which included boys and girls with all skin tones and with all types of abilities and disabilities. "I believe we need more representation of people with disabilities in the arts to teach people that different is good. If I

can show them via a creative way of teaching, they'll understand better," Leonard adds, who was trained at the Art Institute of Atlanta in media arts and animation.

And he hopes Team Supreme does just that.

"I want this to reach the masses and teach the masses. The goal is to not only show these specific characters in the light, but also to make a fun, cool type of cartoon that everyone will love," Leonard explains.

He has worked at Home Depot for the past 14 years, and it was there he met a co-worker who has a son on the autism spectrum.

"He is so smart," Leonard says. "He knows the definitions of everything, can talk numbers, sports ... anything." The son became the inspiration for Team Supreme's Zeek.

He dove more deeply into his art to help him cope when his best friend was murdered in 2008. Team Supreme's Dr. Jackson is based on this friend.

*I believe we need more representation of people with disabilities in the arts to teach people that different is good.*

### The Bigger Picture

Some mainstream superheroes are individuals with disabilities: Marvel's Daredevil, attorney Matt Murdock, blinded in a childhood accident, uses his heightened radar sense to fight crime; Hawkeye, who became deaf saving all of New York's superheroes, uses his enhanced marksmanship and intellect as a member of the Avengers; and Professor Charles Xavier, (Professor X), a geneticist who uses a wheelchair and leads the X-Men, just to name a few.

But representation of people with disabilities in the media overall is growing glacially. A March 2019 report by The Ford Foundation called the "[Road Map for Inclusion: Changing The Face of Disability In Media](#)" detailed how few people with disabilities are seen in movies and on TV.

The report cites GLAAD's *Where We Are on TV '18-'19* report that states:

*"Only 2.1% of primetime broadcast TV series regulars – or a total of 16 characters – have disabilities. A recent Annenberg study found that, across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2016, only 2.7% of characters were depicted with a disability, only 2.5% of characters were depicted with a disability over the past 10 years, and nearly half of the films across the top 100 did not include a single character with a disability."*

While progress is slow, there are small positive changes to the media

Follow along on Team Supreme's and Leonard's adventures on his [Leonard Studios website](#) and see these stories evolve.

landscape. A new crop of shows like ABC's "Speechless" (now canceled) or Netflix's "Special" are not only focusing on positive, everyday lives of people with disabilities, but also casting people with disabilities to play the part.

At the time of this writing, CBS Entertainment released news pledging its role to improve disability inclusion in Hollywood, according to [an exclusive report by The Hollywood Reporter](#).

According to the article, the company pledged to "audition actors with disabilities for each new production going forward. CBS will now do so for each of its new projects that gets a series."

The pledge came on the heels of a report by the Ruderman Family Foundation that stated, "55 million Americans (about 20% of the population) have disabilities, but fewer than 2% of television characters do. And of those characters, 95% are played by able-bodied actors."

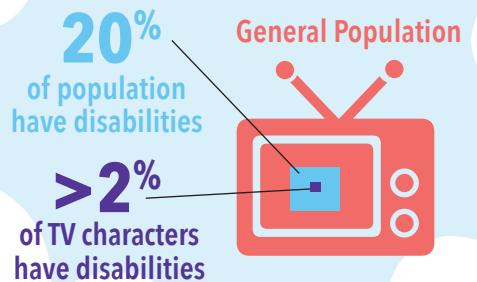
The network became the first studio in the industry to make this pledge to increase representation of people with disabilities on its shows through its audition processes.

### The Power of Gifts

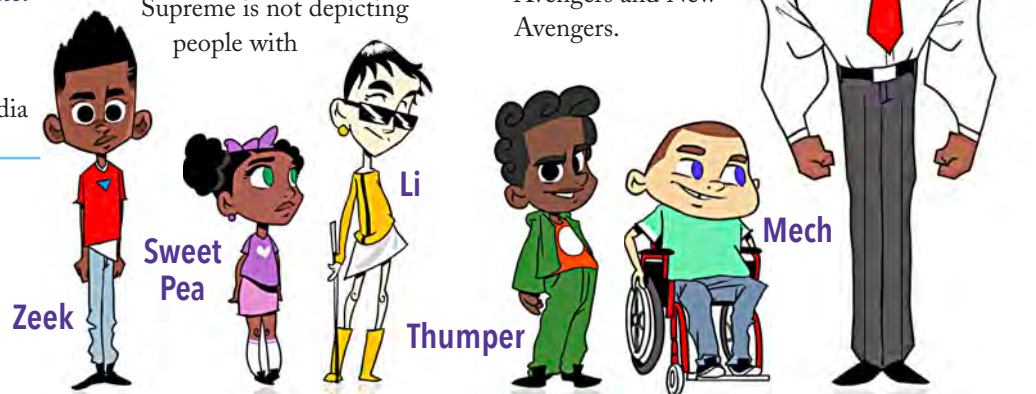
It is important to add that Team Supreme is not depicting people with

disabilities to be superheroes in their everyday life. In other words, it is not pushing the trope or cliché that by doing everyday things like going to work or school, spending time with family and friends is by any means "extraordinary."

### DISABILITY INCLUSION IN MEDIA



Team Supreme adds to the genre about everyday people who live with secret superpowers or talent and gifts to do good in their communities and around the world – like Peter Parker's Spiderman who has the spider-like ability to cast webs and helps to fight crime in New York; or Maya Lopez's Echo, one of the very few deaf superheroes, who uses her talents of photographic reflexes and memory to fight evil alongside Daredevil, the Avengers and New Avengers.



Leonard envisions that Team Supreme will use its collective power and gifts to make the world a better place by fighting bullying and other issues that all people struggle with today, including children with disabilities. The team of superheroes would promote a world of acceptance, inclusion and self-love.

Leonard envisions that Team Supreme will use its collective power and gifts to make the world a better place.

### The Supreme Impact

As Leonard continues to create and draw Team Supreme's superheroes, he consults with other friends and medical professionals about disabilities and medical differences to incorporate into his characters. He did a lot of research to get the information he shares, via the superheroes, correct.

He is also currently developing a grade school curriculum, based on Team Supreme, to help teach

children about diversity and inclusion. Using short, animated films about the pint-sized superheroes, Leonard also hopes to explain the importance of an inclusive community.

He shares his art knowledge and skills by speaking to students pursuing arts education. Most recently, he led a character design workshop for students at Kennesaw State University and taught an animation and character design lesson to students at Cumberland Academy of Georgia: Autism School Atlanta.

"The best part of all of this is the kids' reactions," says Leonard. He shares about a young boy named Jaiden with autism. His mother, Shekira, made him a Team Supreme "Zeek" costume and when Jaiden puts it on, he becomes more outgoing and more confident, even dancing in crowds.

And there are plans for Team Supreme to grow. There are numerous other characters on the team and Leonard intends to add individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual, developmental and medical differences.

His plan is for Team Supreme to hit the big time – possibly Netflix,

I want kids to see themselves in these characters and to believe in themselves.

Disney or another streaming service – within the next two years. Leonard is working with Emmy Award-winning writer, creator and actress Lena Waithe and founder of the Hillman Grad Network, an organization that provides free resources, opportunity and access to emerging artists in the entertainment industry.

With her collaboration, Leonard hopes to create an entire series of animated Team Supreme shows as well as a print comic book series.

His journey has brought him to Team Supreme, and through his experiences, he is focused on what this team of superheroes means to him.

"I'm not doing this for fame or money. Seeing those kids faces is what it's about," adds Leonard.

"I want kids to see themselves in these characters and to believe in themselves."



# Atlanta's Own Caped Crusader

by Jennifer Bosk

**Betsy Goodrich of Lilburn, GA by day. Danger Woman by night.**

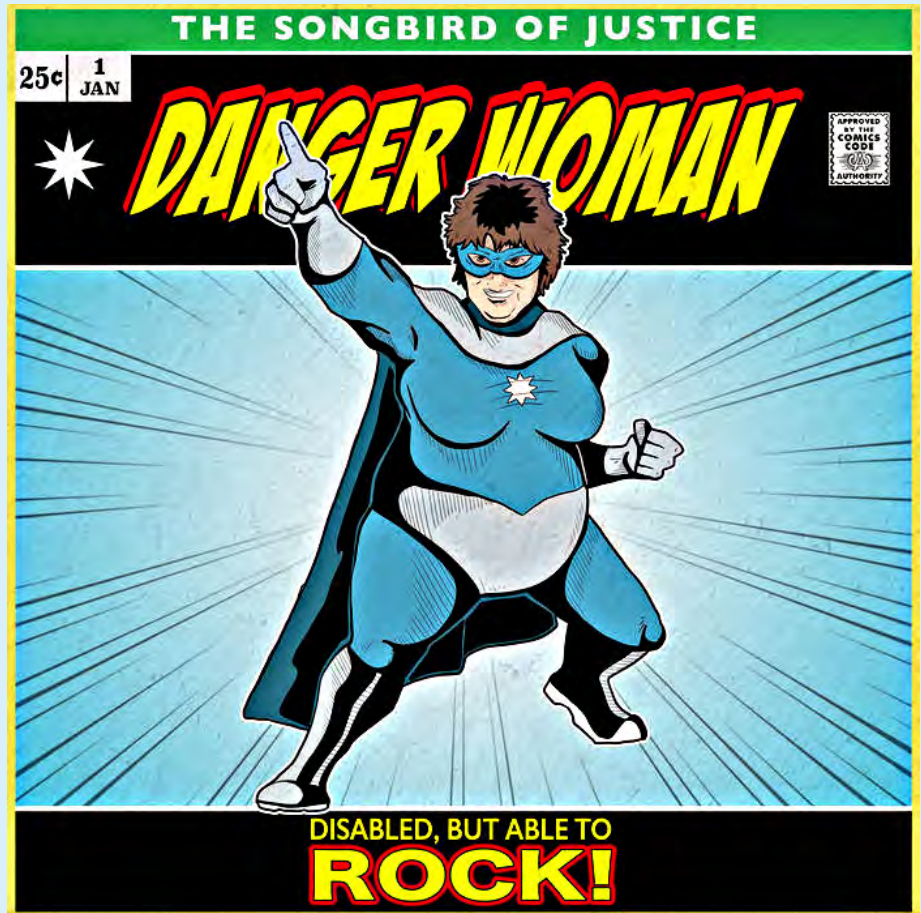
Donning a supersuit, cape, gloves and mask, Goodrich embraces her alter-ego, "Danger Woman," who has become Atlanta's very own superhero fighting for disability civil rights.

The caped crusader is a singing heroine who fights for all people, but especially those who have disabilities. Her message empowers people with disabilities who have been wronged or hurt and fights against those who cause the hurt.

On her website, Goodrich identifies Danger Woman as a "real-life singing superheroine (RLSSH), who uses her special powers to right wrongs, give evil a headache and keep Atlanta, Georgia safe from the forces of evil."

Danger Woman debuted in 1992 for two reasons: 1) Goodrich noticed all superheroes had causes, but none supporting people with disabilities; and 2) she also wanted to educate about disability sensitivity (acceptance, awareness and advocacy).

Goodrich herself was diagnosed with autism earlier in her life and



says she works to right the wrongs done to people with disabilities.

Danger Woman, says Goodrich, speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves. She feels Danger Woman's biggest accomplishment has been speaking up for people with disabilities who are wrongly blamed or committed or incarcerated in hopes they will be pardoned.

"I speak for the [people with disabilities] who are prisoners of their conscience, who have been denied justice and are locked up," Goodrich explains.

Goodrich uses her singing to share her message to the public performing at Vinyl at Center Stage and at the annual Dragon Con

held in Atlanta where she draws a standing-room-only crowd. Her next shows are coming up at the end of August.

*Her message empowers people with disabilities who have been wronged or hurt and fights against those who cause the hurt.*

She has an album, "Danger Woman: Disabled, But Able to Rock" as well as several of her songs on her Facebook page, where she has amassed quite a following. She shares her message far and wide, as well as supporting other real-life superheroes fighting for people with disabilities around the country – just like herself.

## **CBS** DISABILITY INCLUSION PLEDGE

We recognize that disability is central to diversity, that the disability community comprises the largest minority in our nation, and that people with disabilities face seclusion from the entertainment industry.

We understand that increasing auditions, no matter the size of the role, is a critical step toward achieving inclusion in the industry.

This studio pledges to increase the number of actors and actresses with disabilities who audition for parts on television and in film.



# What's Happening in Washington?

## Federal Disability Policy Updates

by Alison Barkoff, Director of Advocacy,  
Center for Public Representation

**It's been another busy few months on disability policy in DC. One highlight was going to Capitol Hill with members of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities in April. We advocated on disability employment, community integration and Medicaid. It was a great reminder that sharing our personal stories with members of Congress can make a difference!**

Below are some of the most significant federal policy developments over the last quarter:

### Employment

Disability employment continues to be a hot topic, both in Congress and federal agencies. In April, the House Committee on Education and Labor held a hearing on barriers to employment, including for people with disabilities. The hearing included a focus on the [Transformation to Competitive Employment Act](#), a bipartisan bill that would provide funding to states and providers to expand opportunities for competitive integrated employment (CIE) while phasing out over six years the use of subminimum wages to people with disabilities under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. We expect that the Committee will continue to move the bill forward by doing a “mark-up” later this year. [Read the testimony from the hearing and watch it here.](#)

We continue to monitor the possibility of the Department of Education (DoE) opening for public comment the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations that define CIE. Last fall, the Department gave notice it plans to revisit these regulations, and estimates a public comment process in late 2019. Disability groups continue to advocate that the DoE not open the regulations. If opened for comment, it will be critical for stakeholders to share their employment stories and why CIE is important to them.

### Community Integration

Disability groups continue to advocate for funding for the [Money Follows the Person \(MFP\)](#) program, which has helped more than 90,000 people with disabilities and older adults move out of institutions and into the community. In April, Congress passed a second short-term funding bill to fund MFP through

September. On June 19, the House passed [H.R. 3253](#) – Empowering Beneficiaries, Ensuring Access and Strengthening Accountability Act – to fund MFP through 2023 as part of a broader funding package in the House. We hope that the Senate will also act. Disability advocates will continue to push Congress to pass the bipartisan [EMPOWER Care Act](#). Continue to educate your members of Congress (especially Senators) about the importance of MFP to Georgians with disabilities and the need for long-term funding.

**The attacks on healthcare continue through litigation and regulation by the Administration.**

Disability advocates also continue to push for the passage of the [Disability Integration Act \(DIA\)](#), a bipartisan bill to ensure the full community integration of people with disabilities. The focus has been on gaining support in the House, with a majority of representatives signed on as co-sponsors. Advocates are pushing for a hearing on the bill in the House, an important step before the bill can be brought to a vote. If the DIA passes in the House, it will need to pass the Senate and be signed by the President before becoming law.

### HCBS Settings Rule

States are continuing to implement the [Home and Community Based Services \(HCBS\) Settings Rule](#), a federal rule to ensure that everyone receiving Medicaid-funded HCBS has the full benefits of community living. In March, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued long-awaited [guidance](#) about the “heightened scrutiny” process for evaluating settings presumed to have institutional characteristics, including those that isolate individuals from the broader community.

Georgia, like many other states, is in the process of developing its final statewide transition plan (STP) to fully implement the rule by March 2022. We expect Georgia’s STP to be out for public comment in a few months, and it will be critical for stakeholders to provide input during public comment.

### Healthcare

Healthcare also continues to be a hot topic. Much of the activity of this Congress has centered around expanding access to healthcare, unlike the prior Congress where we fought against bills to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and cut Medicaid. In the last several months, three

“universal healthcare” bills have been introduced: Medicare for All in the House, Medicare for All in the Senate, and Medicare for America in the House.

Disability groups spent months advocating that any universal healthcare bill must include the services important to people with disabilities, including HCBS.

As a testament to the disability community’s strong advocacy, each of these bills includes mandatory HCBS (which would mean no more waitlists) and a community-first presumption, unlike the current structure in Medicaid.

While we do not expect any of these bills to pass this Congress, their inclusion of services for people with disabilities sets an important precedent as the conversation about healthcare moves forward in Congress and the upcoming presidential race.

In contrast, the attacks on healthcare continue through litigation and regulation by the Administration. *Texas v. U.S.*, the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the ACA, continues in the US Court of Appeals. In April, a number of disability organizations, including the Center for Public Representation, filed

a [brief](#) describing the importance of the ACA to people with disabilities. In May, the Department of Justice filed a [brief](#) on behalf of the Administration that for the first time argued that the entire ACA should be struck down, including the protections for people with pre-existing conditions, rather than just the “individual mandate” to have insurance. Oral argument is scheduled for July. We expect a decision late this summer, and then it will likely head to the Supreme Court in the fall. The ACA remains in effect during the [lawsuit](#).

**DISABILITY GROUPS SPENT MONTHS ADVOCATING THAT ANY UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE BILL MUST INCLUDE THE SERVICES IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING HCBS.**



We continue to see regulations from the Administration that would weaken the ACA. Currently, the Administration is seeking comment on the non-discrimination protections of the ACA, known as [Section 1557](#). The proposed rule would roll back healthcare protections for a number of groups, including LGBTQ individuals and people with limited English proficiency. Additional changes could also impact people with disabilities.

**For a list of Resources for *What's Happening in Washington?* go to page 9.**

*Please note: information in this article is current as of July 15, 2019.*

**INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT NOW!**

Over [25 national organizations](#), including the [National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities](#) and the [Center for Public Representation](#), recently formed the [Coalition to Advance Competitive Integrated Employment](#). The Coalition’s focus is to make sure that every person with a disability has the chance to work together alongside people without disabilities at fair wages. At the end of May, we launched our new [website](#) featuring articles, videos and information all related to CIE. [Check it out and spread the word!](#)





# Welcoming Community Dialogues

by Jennifer Bosk

“Who’s missing from our table?” is the key question for the implementation and success of the Welcoming Community Dialogues that are part of the Real Communities Partnership initiative the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) and Global Ubuntu are working on together.

“In order to change the current culture, we need a different narrative than what we have right now,” explains Sumaya Karimi, the project organizing director for the Real Communities Partnership. That culture change includes bringing people of all abilities/disabilities, all races and all incomes together; providing transportation, interpreters, childcare and whatever is needed to have an all-inclusive group to dialogue about issues facing their particular communities.

The Athens community dialogue has focused on an anti-discrimination movement and already met about criminal justice reform, creating a task force to work on these issues. In July, the dialogue will concentrate on empowerment for women of all abilities and races and on mental health and racism in school-aged children.

“The communities define what they want to accomplish, study why the issue exists, define its root cause and what needs to be done to create change,” adds Karimi. “Everyone needs to realize that all issues impact everybody including people with disabilities, people of different races and people of different income levels.”

Six community sites began their dialogues last spring and six more are in the process of starting, including the aforementioned Augusta and Athens. In addition, Karimi plans to create a New Neighborhood Network with a focus on affordable and accessible housing, and Clay County will bring together 50-75 youth of all abilities and races for two dialogues on empowerment as well as an empowerment training session. In LaGrange, the community dialogue will discuss how people with disabilities are affected by the prison system

and look at the dignity and justice for homeless families.

On October 24, all 12 of the Welcoming Community Dialogue groups will gather together for the first Welcoming Community Summit to be held at Clarkston Community Center, Clarkston, GA. The groups will share their findings and action steps, along with the impact they have made on their community to date.

In creating these Welcoming Community Dialogues, Karimi says they all share these seven elements:

- **Changing Narratives**
- **Radical Hospitality**
- **Human Rights**
- **Listening, Connecting and Building Relationships**
- **Respect and Empathy**
- **Active Contributors**
- **Shared Power and Decision Making**

“The key in these dialogues is co-existence, justice and fairness,” says Karimi. The community dialogue groups are intentionally made up of people with and without disabilities, representing all income levels and races. Karimi’s goal is to have 20 community sites by the year 2020.

**THE COMMUNITIES DEFINE WHAT THEY WANT TO ACCOMPLISH, STUDY WHY THE ISSUE EXISTS, DEFINE ITS ROOT CAUSE AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO CREATE CHANGE.**



Welcoming Community Dialogues recently began in Augusta with the group choosing to focus on eliminating childhood poverty for all children regardless of disabilities or race. More dialogues will happen in August with topics covering bridges out of poverty and addressing the root causes of poverty.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

# Welcoming Community Summit

**October 24 • 10 AM - 4 PM**

Clarkston Community Center  
3701 College Avenue  
Clarkston, GA



## UPCOMING WELCOMING COMMUNITY DIALOGUES ●●●●●●●●●●

### ARK REFUGE MINISTRIES

August 7, 10 AM - 1 PM

**How People with Developmental Disabilities Affected by Prison Can Play a Role in Reentry Services**

August 15, 4 - 7 PM

**Dignity and Justice for Homeless Families, Veterans and People with Disabilities**

August 23, 10 AM - 1 PM

**How People with Developmental Disabilities Affected by Prison Can Play a Role in Reentry Services**

*All dialogues will take place at 504 E. Depot Street, LaGrange, GA 30241. Lunch or dinner will be served. Contact (706) 845-0335.*

### AUGUSTA PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN

August 8, 9 - 11 AM

**Poverty Simulation and Community Dialogue**

Julian Smith Casino  
2200 Broad Street  
Augusta, GA 30904

August 21, 9 - 11 AM

**Bridges Out of Poverty Community Dialogue**

Thankful Baptist Church  
302 Walker Street  
Augusta, GA 30901

**For more information, visit [Global Ubuntu's website](#) or [GCDD's Real Communities web page](#).**

### CLAY COUNTY HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

July 16, 10 AM

**Youth Empowerment Focus Group (Ages 14-18)**

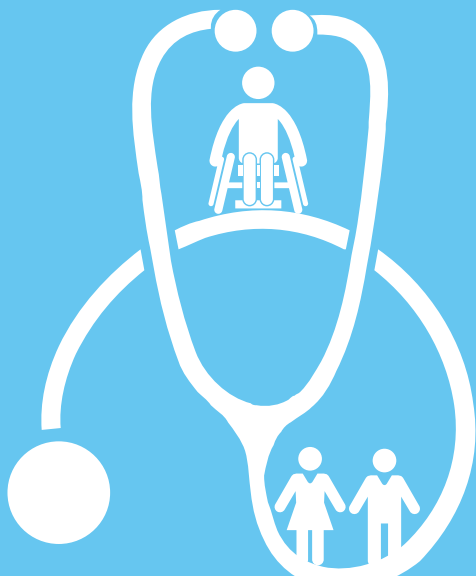
*Text 229-881-2675 or email [claycountyhealth@gmail.com](mailto:claycountyhealth@gmail.com).*



# Medicaid Advocacy Educates and Empowers Georgians with Disabilities

by Jennifer Bosk

*Georgia Voices for Medicaid: Building a Constituency for Medicaid across Georgia is an initiative is funded by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) and implemented by Georgians for a Healthy Future (GHF). In the past year, several Medicaid advocacy training sessions were held across the state, averaging about 25 people per session.*



Alyssa Green, the outreach and education manager at GHF, has overseen these trainings for the past 16 months and says GHF will continue to offer these sessions, “for as long as it takes elected officials to close the Medicaid gap.” The Medicaid gap refers to the gap in insurance coverage for people who are unable to qualify for Medicaid but are not making enough money to purchase their own health insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

**FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MEDICAID IS OFTEN THE REASON THEY CAN CONTINUE TO LIVE AND THRIVE AT HOME.** ”

Two million people in Georgia are covered by Medicaid and of those, 500,000 are people with disabilities and senior citizens. Under the ACA, Medicaid covers those with incomes at or below 138% of poverty (\$17,236 for an individual in 2019). Realizing there was a coverage gap for those just above this poverty line, plans were made for an expansion of Medicaid nationally. But in June 2012, the

US Supreme Court ruled Medicaid expansion is optional for each state.

People in the coverage gap now rely on their state to approve Medicaid expansion to the ACA. The expansion would extend insurance coverage with premium tax credits for insurance through ACA covering people with moderate incomes. Georgia did not approve the Medicaid expansion.

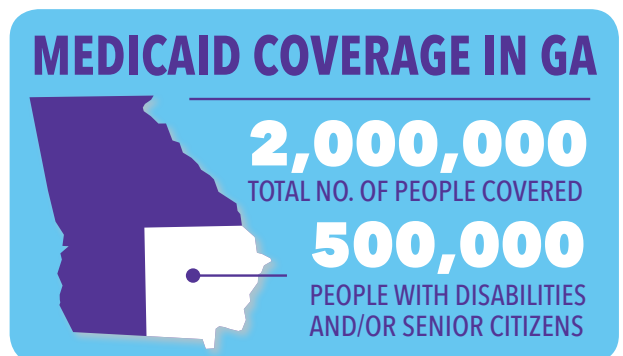
Currently, 240,000 people in this state fall in the gap where their income is above current Medicaid eligibility, but below the lower limit for ACA premium tax credits. Of those, about 60,000 are people with disabilities and senior citizens.

“What came out of the whole national conversation on the ACA and the impact on Medicaid, as well as during the legislative debates on the subject, was a conversation here in Georgia on how to help people prepare to reach out to both their state and federal legislators and advocate for Medicaid expansion,” explains Eric Jacobson, executive director of GCDD. “We chose to fund this initiative because we wanted to make sure people understood and recognized Medicaid

as a core funding component so people with disabilities can have meaningful lives.”

**In some states, Medicaid helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs by covering job development and job placement services.**

For people with disabilities, Medicaid is often the reason they can continue to live and thrive at home. They rely on Medicaid’s home and community-based services (HCBS) that include personal and caregiver services, as well as equipment needs like wheelchairs and lifts. In some states, Medicaid helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs by covering job development





and job placement services. For children with disabilities, Medicaid offers physical and speech therapy services as well as other educational assistance in schools.

calls on current health policies, bills to watch and expected impacts, an opportunity to ask questions and more.

plus information on demographics and numbers of people impacted – along with the latest information on the coverage gap.

## MEDICAID COVERAGE GAP

Receive No Coverage in GA

**240,000**  
TOTAL GEORGIANS IN GAP

**60,000**  
ARE PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES  
& SENIORS

Receive  
Medicaid  
Coverage

Receive  
Insurance  
Subsidies

The GHF Medicaid training initiative involves organizing sessions in various communities that are hosted at churches, nonprofit organizations or libraries. “We have an interactive presentation about what the Medicaid program is, why it is important and demographics on Medicaid coverage,” Green says.

Then, GHF teaches about the Medicaid coverage gap, how to contact and talk to legislators and how to provide information on what the organization is doing. In addition to the community trainings, GHF offers an action network that includes monthly

On why GCDD formed this partnership with the healthcare advocacy organization, Jacobson explains, “GHF reaches both people with disabilities and the general community. We needed an inclusive approach, we needed to be a part of each other’s message.”

Jacobson hopes that people who go through the training gain a better understanding of Medicaid. “The important part of it is to keep people with disabilities living in their community,” he says.

This Medicaid training initiative is an essential part of GCDD’s Five-Year Plan. “We have a whole goal around how to change public policy to improve lives and create an integral approach to helping people,” says Jacobson.

Green shares that GHF has other tools to help individuals maintain their advocacy efforts including consumer videos and materials on Medicaid, handouts on how to have conversations with legislators,

Earlier this year, advocates and GHF participated in Cover Georgia Day, an advocacy day that included talking to legislators at the statehouse, sharing coverage gap stories and urging legislators to, “put insurance cards in the pockets of hard-working Georgians.”

According to Green, fixing the Medicaid coverage gap makes for a healthier people, healthier community and a healthier Georgia.

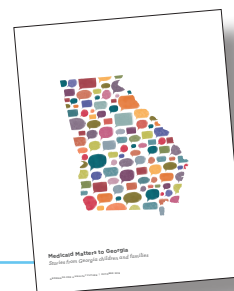


**GEORGIANS FOR A  
HEALTHY FUTURE**

THE VOICE FOR GEORGIA HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS

For more on this initiative and training sessions, visit [Georgians for a Healthy Future](#) or the [Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities](#).

For information on a variety of issues, [check out GHF’s resource library](#).



The library also features a book full of personal stories from Georgians about the impact of Medicaid on their lives.

# Queen Bee

by Moira Bucciarelli

Chanda Davis starts off shy, then she gradually opens up. Her sister and mother laugh because the Chanda they know won't stop talking.



**The shy Chanda tells us quietly that she is 48 years old and has Down syndrome, that she has one brother and three sisters. She likes to play softball, bowl and sing.**

Chanda lives at home with her mother, Florasee, and her father, Herbert. She is close to her brother and three sisters. Her sister Wanda interrupts to state for the record that Chanda is the queen bee of the family. She gives and receives lots of love. The love and connections in her family are a big part of her happiness and success.

**BUT WHILE MONEY CAN'T BUY YOU LOVE, IT CAN BUY YOU QUALITY CARE AND ENRICHMENT.**



But while money can't buy you love, it can buy you quality care and enrichment. In 2016, the Davis family applied for the Medicaid-funded New Options Waiver (NOW). After multiple go-rounds of submitting and resubmitting the complex

paperwork, they received the funds for seven hours of caregiving assistance per week. Florasee thinks the state should simplify the application and explain to applicants how the caregiver hours are determined. Chanda's waiver allows them to hire a caregiver for only seven hours a week, which for her mother, is not enough.

Once they finally got all the paperwork right, the waiver was approved quickly. Chanda went through several caregivers until they found the perfect match in Connie, a family friend and neighbor. Connie puts in more than seven hours with Chanda, which she doesn't get paid for. She shows us a notebook that carefully preserves memories of their trips and times together – to the zoo, the state fair, the library. Her mom says, "I'm just so happy that Chanda is able to be out in the community, instead of being at home. I take her to her softball games or bowling games, but those hours with Connie really give her the extra enrichment she needs."

Before she had the waiver, Chanda received services from a private agency, Star Choices, paid for by the state. In her mother's view, the agency initially delivered excellent care. But when employees complained of the low pay, the

more motivated staff left, and the agency hired people who weren't reliable or had too many problems of their own. Instead of using that time for much-needed enrichment, the agency caregivers might take Chanda to do their shopping along with their own children. Or they might cancel at the last minute and leave Chanda without transportation to her volunteer job.

One good thing did come of that partnership – Star Choices found her a volunteer job at a



Chanda shows off her vegetable garden.

**SHE STANDS PROUDLY AND CONFIDENTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF HER GARDEN, TELLING US THE NAMES OF EACH TYPE OF PLANT.**



local daycare center. Since age 22, when she graduated from public high school, Chanda has worked in the daycare. She loves the work and is good at it.

As a parent of an adult child with Down syndrome, Florasee would like for legislators to improve transportation services. She also would like more transparency about the process and how the hours and funds are determined. She knows that Chanda could benefit from having more than seven hours of support and enrichment each week.

Connie brings out a book about vegetables that she and Chanda got from the library. Suddenly extroverted Chanda says, "Let's go!" and leads us through the kitchen and out to the backyard, where she and her father tend a neat and healthy vegetable patch. She



**As a parent of an adult child with Down syndrome, Florasee would like for legislators to improve transportation services. She also would like more transparency about the process.**

stands proudly and confidently in the middle of her garden, telling us the names of each type of plant: tomatoes, squash, beans and peppers. This is her place, where she too is strong and rooted and cared for with love and attention.

This feature is a part of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) Storytelling Project. The goal is to collect 75 stories representing the experience of individuals living with a developmental disability in Georgia. These stories, accompanied by 6-12 representative photographs, will be instrumental in the efforts of GCDD to advocate for Georgians living with disabilities.  
Photographer: Haylee Fucini-Lenkey

**GCDD  
Storytelling  
Project**

## Why We're Not the Same

*I cannot change the way I am,  
I never really try,  
God made me different and  
unique, I never ask him why.*

*If I appear peculiar,  
There's nothing I can do,  
You must accept me as I am,  
As I've accepted you.*

*God made a casting of each life,  
Then threw the mold away,  
Each child is different from the  
rest, unlike as night from day.*

*So often we will criticize,  
The things that others do,  
But, do you know, they do not  
think, the same as me and you.*

*So God in all his wisdom,  
Who knows us all by name,  
He didn't want us to be bored,  
That's why we're not the same.*

*- Author Unknown*





# Improving Student Outcomes

by Zephine Smith-Dixon, Ed.D.

State Director, Special Education Services and Supports

At the Georgia Department of Education, the Division for Special Education Services and Supports provides necessary infrastructure and supports for leaders, teachers and families to meet the whole-child needs of each student to improve student outcomes and school climates, resulting in an increased quality of life and a workforce-ready future.

## BY THE NUMBERS

How many students with disabilities are there in GA?

# 219,112

How many students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are there in GA?

# 16,678

### INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES:

(7.6% have an eligibility category of Mild, Moderate, Severe or Profound Intellectual Disability)

# 25,460

### DEVELOPMENT DISABILITIES:

(11.6% have an eligibility category of Significant Development Delay)

SOURCE: FY19, Ages 3-21, Federal Child Count (October 2018)

At a high level, the department has been at work to collaborate and assess how to enhance and support evidence-based practices that result in success for students with disabilities and their families. We want to see what is going well and what needs improvement across personnel in Georgia.

One of the ways the Division is accomplishing this is through incorporating high-leverage practices with the Council on Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR-GA Project, a partnership between Georgia and the CEEDAR (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform) Center, bringing together General Education, Special Education and Educational Leadership.

The CEEDAR/Georgia partnership leverages the power of existing initiatives to address goals in teacher and leader preparation reform, certification and educator preparation evaluation.

The Department, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, educator preparation programs and local education agencies are working together to develop teachers and leaders who can improve Georgia's future by graduating ALL students

who are ready to learn, ready to live and ready to lead.

In June 2018, we launched the P-20 collaborative in Macon, GA that brought together local school districts and two colleges and universities. The critical emphasis of the collaborative was to bring a consistent language in our work from evidence-based practices while maintaining high expectations and meeting the students where they are.

**THE OVERALL GOAL IS TO INCREASE TOOLS FOR TEACHERS, AND BUILD A JOINT PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN LEADERS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS.** ”

It also allows us to reexamine our role as a state and bring necessary structures that impact the whole outcome for the student positively so that they are ready for careers after school. The overall goal is to increase tools for teachers, and build a joint partnership between leaders, teachers and parents.

What is also exciting is that Georgia is partnering with the



Council of Chief State School Officers for the Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership Initiative. It will support Georgia to develop and implement a plan to promote inclusive leadership.

When we talk about inclusion here, it's not just about the classroom.

As a whole, there are greater opportunities in general education, but sometimes not all needs are met in general education – and, it may not necessarily be the best for that student. Inclusion is about that empowered relationship between the parent, leader and teacher that helps alleviate barriers and develop a strong education experience for the student.

And in that relationship, parents have to own this opportunity. We hear all the time: “I know my child differently.” I encourage parents to be empowered to share what the child is like at home so educators can understand the whole child.

This school year, the Division will also offer a Facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP) that supports parents and

educators to build productive outcomes and have continuation in their child's education plan.

Additionally, parents can tap into the [Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership](#) network that is available across 100 school districts in Georgia. The mentors are parents of students with disabilities who are supporting parents navigating the system.

Also, 86 Local Education Agencies (LEA) will have parent mentors next school year. Local education agency is a commonly used acronym for a school district, an entity which operates local public primary and secondary schools in the United States.

As a state, we are committed to effective collaboration across agencies and school-home partnerships to support local school districts in their efforts to provide special education and related services for students with disabilities. We believe that all students must have an equitable opportunity for school completion and successful postsecondary outcomes.

## RESOURCES:

### FOR TEACHERS:

- [CEEDAR-Georgia Webinars and Resources for High-Leverage Practices](#)
- [Download more information on high-leverage practices.](#)
- [Link to Professional Learning Resources](#)

### FOR PARENTS:

#### Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership

- [Find a Parent Mentor in your area](#)
- [GA Department of Education: Special Education Services and Supports](#)
- [Parent Information Fact Sheets](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Georgia IEP](#)



#### Dr. Zephine Smith-Dixon

has a longstanding history in improving achievement for schools in South Carolina and Georgia. She received the following accolades: Tri-County Special Educator of the Year,

Vance-Providence Elementary Teacher of the Year and Orangeburg Consolidated School District Three Alternate District Teacher of the Year. In April 2018, Columbia College presented her with the Wil Lou Gray Outstanding Educator Award.

Dr. Smith-Dixon relocated to join the Georgia Department of Education and is the State Director for Special Education. She serves as a board member on the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. She believes that every student can succeed with the appropriate tools necessary to run the race.





# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## — JULY

July 23, 12 – 1 PM  
**BE YOU Peer Support Group Monthly Meet-up**

Walton Options For Independent Living  
Augusta, GA

[Find more information online](#)

July 24, 12 – 1 PM  
**STABLE Accounts and Special Needs Trust Webinar**

[Sign up for webinar](#)

July 25, 10 – 11 AM  
**Meet Your Neighbor Sensory Storytime** – ConnectAbility  
Dahlonega, GA

[Find more information online](#)

July 27, 8 AM – 2 PM  
**17th ADA Memorial Run, honoring the 29th Anniversary of the ADA**

Gainesville Square  
Gainesville, GA

[Find more information online](#)

July 30, 7 – 9 PM  
**Book & Movie: Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe** – ConnectAbility  
Location TBD

[Find more information online](#)

## — AUGUST

August 7, 10 AM – 1 PM  
**Welcoming Community Dialogue** – LaGrange, GA

[See page 17 for info](#)

August 8, 4 – 7 PM  
**Open Studio for All**  
Colquitt County Arts Center  
Moultrie, GA

[Register FREE online](#)

August 8, 9 – 11 AM  
**Welcoming Community Dialogue** – Augusta, GA

[See page 17 for info](#)

August 8-9  
**Olmstead at Twenty: The Past and Future of Community Integration** – Atlanta, GA

[Find more information online](#)

August 15, 4 – 7 PM  
**Welcoming Community Dialogue** – LaGrange, GA

[See page 17 for info](#)

August 21, 9 – 11 AM  
**Welcoming Community Dialogue** – Augusta, GA

[See page 17 for info](#)

August 22, 6 – 8 PM  
**Bike Meet Up**

Recycle Macon  
Macon, GA

[Find more information online](#)

August 23, 10 AM – 1 PM  
**Welcoming Community Dialogue** – LaGrange, GA

[See page 17 for info](#)

August 24, 10 AM – 12 PM  
**Free Open Studio for All**  
Colquitt County Arts Center  
Moultrie, GA

[Register FREE online](#)

August 29 & 30  
**Georgia Stable Outreach Event**  
*Save the Date!*



## — SEPTEMBER

September 18, 12 – 1 PM  
**Advocacy 101 Webinar**  
[Sign up for webinar](#)

## — OCTOBER

October 17-18  
**GCDD Quarterly Meeting Atlanta, GA**

[Find more information online](#)

October 24, 10 AM – 4 PM  
**Welcoming Community Summit** – Clarkston, GA  
[See page 17 for info](#)

To find out about more events across the state, [visit GCDD's Calendar of Events.](#)

## Olmstead at Twenty: The Past and Future of Community Integration



**Georgia State University College of Law**

August 8-9, Atlanta, GA

[Find more information online](#)