GCDD.ORG ▪ FALL 2013

MAKING a DIFFERENCE

REAL HOMES. REAL CAREERS. REAL LEARNING. REAL INFLUENCE. REAL SUPPORTS.

SOCIAL JUSTICE: DEFINING •A MOVEMENT•

SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 8.

NEWS FOR YOU:

GCDD
GEORGIA COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

On the Cover:
The Lady Justice balancing the scales of justice, the American Disability Flag and GCDD's Disability Day at the Capitol - aligning symbols of social justice and disability rights.

FALL 2013

MAKING a DIFFERENCE

A quarterly magazine of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2

Social Justice: Defining a Movement

An overview on the emerging social justice movement, focused on intersecting ideas, struggles, beliefs, histories and cultures to create a whole and connected movement for the fight for justice 8

Children's Freedom Initiative: Paving the Path Home

Learn how this initiative has been paving a path home for children with disabilities, plus read two personal stories of young adults transitioning out of facilities and back into the community 18

FEATURES DEPARTMENTS

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.

GCDD
GEORGIA COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director
eejacobson@dhr.state.ga.us

Valerie Meadows Suber
Editor-in-Chief &
Public Information Director
vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us

2 Peachtree Street NW
Suite 26-246
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142
Voice 404.657.2126
Fax 404.657.2132
Toll Free 1.888.275.4233
TDD 404.657.2133
www.gcdd.org

O'Neill Communications

Becca Bauer
becca@oneillcommunications.com

Chantelle Catania
Design & Layout


ERIC E. JACOBSON

Making Connections Across Movements and Building for the Future

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Developmental Disabilities Bill of Rights and Assistance Act (PL 88-164, "The Mental Retardation Construction and Facilities Act of 1963") and the March on Washington. Much progress has taken place since 1963, but there is much more needed. The same can be said for much of American society, and this edition of *Making a Difference* attempts to remember and align the social justice and civil rights movements that have helped shape who we are today as a country.

Over the next year leading to the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we hope to engage our readers in conversations about the legacy of the civil rights movements and where we need to go in the future. We will feature articles about the history of people with disabilities in the social justice movement and what role people might play moving forward. This includes recognizing that persons with disabilities have other characteristics that define who they are and connect them to their neighbors in so many ways. People with disabilities are young, old, African-American, Latino or Asian American. They are male, female, transgender, straight, gay or lesbian. They practice different religions including Christianity, Judaism or Islam; and, they are poor, middle class or affluent. The point is that a person is not just defined by his or her disability and it's time that the disability movement begins working with other movements. We need to ensure our voice is heard in every social justice or rights movement taking place because it makes all of us stronger.

Everyone knows about Atlanta and Georgia's connection with the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and many of the other leaders were from Atlanta and much activity took place in our State. Much of the work of Dr. King is hosted here, and next year the National Center for Civil and Human Rights (NCCHR), opening in downtown Atlanta, will educate the public on the different rights movements nationally and internationally. Doug Shipman, NCCHR executive director, writes about the need to remember our past while building toward a future - one that links the movements of the past with those of the present and the future.

US Representative John Lewis, an icon leader of the 1960s, shares his experience in the civil rights movement and the Supreme Court's decision to overturn much of the Voting Rights Act. He reminds us that we ride on the shoulders of so many people who have come before us and who fought for liberty, equality and justice. And, State Senator Nan Orrock reminds us how the 1963 March on Washington not only changed her life, but the direction of the country.

We have a little over a year to prepare for the ADA's celebration and remind Americans of the role that people with disabilities have played in making this the greatest country.

We hope you enjoy reading this magazine and we want to hear from you. Let us know your thoughts and connections to the civil rights movement by writing to our editor-in-chief vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us.

Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD

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

Letters To The Editor.

GCDD **VIEWPOINT**

How to Reach Us

Letters to the Editor

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

Contact Our Editor and Public Information Director:

Valerie Meadows Suber
vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us
P: 404.657.2122
F: 404.657.2132

or: 2 Peachtree Street, NW
Suite 26-246
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142

Audio or Large Print Versions:

For an audio version of *Making a Difference*, please contact GCDD. A large font version is available for download at gcdd.org.

Subscriptions / Back Issues:

Visit us at our website: www.gcdd.org or call us: 404.657.2126.

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

Magazine Sponsorship:

For sponsorship opportunities contact: Becca Bauer at 678.384.7836 or becca@oneillcommunications.com.

Remembering the 1963 March on Washington

By Nan Orrock

GUEST **ARTICLE**

NAN ORROCK is a Georgia State Senator (D-36). She has been an activist for justice and equality since 1963, served in the legislature since 1986 and is a leader in legislative advocacy for health policies, women's issues, workplace issues, environmental issues, civil liberties and civil rights.

> I knew my family would disapprove, so I told my aunt I was going out on a date. Only later did I realize that I had a date with history and my life would forever be changed by what I saw and learned that day.

This year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. As a 19-year-old college sophomore, I joined the throng of marchers who filled the streets of our nation's capital on that historic day for the largest protest gathering in our history, 250,000 people of all races from across the land! The March was a huge catalyst for change and represented a movement that had been growing in size, strength and determination.

Struggles of African-Americans for freedom, dignity and equality had been waged for centuries, since the institution of American slavery, culminating in a bloody and bitter civil war. The victory of the Montgomery bus boycott led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. paved the way for the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s. The March on Washington demonstrated the resolve of people united across the country to demand equal opportunity and a seat at the table of democracy for every American.

As a young white woman from small-town Virginia below the Mason Dixon line, I had not yet engaged with the news reports of sit-ins and protests against segregation. Ultimately, I joined the March that day at the urging of co-workers at my first-ever desegregated summer job. I knew my family would disapprove, so I told my aunt I was going out on a date. Only later did I realize that I had a date with history and my life would forever be changed by what I saw and learned that day.

I met marchers from Virginia who had faced brutality, jail and death threats simply for attempting to register to vote – in my own state! I realized that I was in the presence of raw courage, courage that led people to risk everything to stand up and right the wrongs of a segregated society, and I resolved that I too should stand up, open my eyes and join the movement for change. Since that day, I have dedicated myself to stand with any who are being denied full and equal opportunity.

That mighty movement inspired new hopes and dreams for social change and helped countless people mobilize to demand equal opportunity. Historic progress has been made by the women's movement, the Indian rights movement, the labor movement, the human rights movement, the LGBT movement and certainly the disability rights movement, just to name a few. Fueled by ordinary people committing themselves to improve their plight, we have seen huge gains in broadening democracy and victories for fairness and justice, such as passage of the Americans for Disabilities Act. The work to "build a more perfect union" is never finished. We know that new energy, new ideas, new generations come forward to continue the work to ensure that we move forward, not backwards, as a nation.

Dr. King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech still stirs our souls. His words remind us that we can build a more perfect democracy and expand the meaning of justice and equality. When we unite as one, believe in our dreams and make our voices heard, we too can change the course of history.

No Place Like Home

By Pat Nobbie, PhD, Mia's Mom

About a month ago, a 29-year-old woman with Down syndrome, who had been put in a series of group homes by her well-meaning parents, prevailed in court and won the right to live in a home of her choice, with roommates she chose. The legal question came down to whether Jenny Hatch was "incapacitated" enough to need a guardian, and if so, should that be her parents or a couple with whom she had developed a relationship on her own, who shared a home with her and had given her a job.

But philosophically, the case is the manifestation of the essential question facing all societies, and all of us, today – do people with disabilities have the full extent of civil rights, the same choices to live where they want, with whom they want and to challenge society's desire to control them? Are we starting with that premise that each individual has the right to make those choices? Or are we starting from somewhere else?

"It's time to CHANGE THE LAW and catch up with the kinds of lives people want now, in neighborhoods, with friends and jobs."

Yes, some people need more support and protection. Those of you that have read Mia's Space over the years will remember that at one point I argued that my two "typical children" were more of a danger to self or others than Mia ever was, and they probably would have benefitted from being confined with structured care. If you read any of the comments on the coverage of Jenny's case, you'll read the skepticism of strangers who just can't believe the abdication of responsibility the judge exhibited by denying her parents the guardianship request that gave them control over her life.

He acknowledged that she needed support, but he was appointing her friends temporary guardianship and he'd revisit it in a year. He took her preferences into account, with the goal of increasing her independence. He recognized, like I did with my kids, that people's needs are relative.

In my time here in DC, I keep trying to drill down. What exactly do we need to change so we can move forward as a society? Here's my answer. We need to change the law. We need to get a bunch of elder and disability advocates together in the same room, and we pretty much agree that if we were starting now, we would never create a program like Medicaid. Three hundred and thirty waivers of the institutional bias in 55 states and territories means there are thousands of interpretations of who gets what and how long you might have to wait for it. It's time to change the law and catch up with the kinds of lives people want now, in neighborhoods, with friends and jobs.

How we provide the supports and services for people to live full, engaged and responsible lives in the community have become unnecessarily complicated. Create one nationwide waiver for institutional or facility-based placement with a standard level of care reflecting extraordinary need and put the rest of the money in the community and start creating the right stuff. It's time to simplify.

"We need to get a bunch of elder and disability advocates together in the same room, and we pretty much agree that if we were starting now, we would never create a program like Medicaid.

MIA'S SPACE

UPDATE:

Warren Hill still has a stay of execution and GCDD will continue to follow Hill's case and provide any updates as they develop.

October Is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

IN THE NEWS

Since 1945, the US Department of Labor has recognized October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month to raise awareness about disability employment and the inclusion of workers with disabilities as contributing members of their communities through meaningful employment. This year's theme is "Because We are EQUAL to the Task," which reflects the reality that people with disabilities have the education, training, experience and desire to be successful in the workplace.

Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy, embodies the reality of this year's theme and urges employers to be open to the opportunity of working with people with disabilities. "I urge all employers to benefit from the skills of workers with disabilities by giving them, including our returning veterans, a chance to show that they, too, are equal to the task," she said.

This October, communities throughout the nation will celebrate the many and varied ways American workers with disabilities contribute through activities including proclamations, public awareness programs and job fairs that enhance awareness, create opportunities or showcase the abilities and talents of workers with disabilities.

ODEP also supports an ongoing Campaign for Disability Employment to promote the positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities. For more information on ODEP's work to support disability employment, visit www.dol.gov/odep/.

The 2014 Georgia Winter Institute

Save the date for the 2014 Georgia Winter Institute on January 26-29, 2014 in Columbus, GA. This year's theme is Community-Builders Person-Centered Planning and will focus on teaching the importance of community-building and understanding everyone's gifts to create strong communities where all populations are involved and active, including people with disabilities.

The event will feature interactive workshops and open discussions centered on topics including homes, inclusive employment, education, community, supports and leadership, which are based off of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' (GCDD) six REAL areas.

"Those tenets from GCDD's REAL areas are important topics to explore, and we chose them to help focus the advocacy needs across Georgia's disability community," said Stacey Ramirez from the Georgia Winter Institute.

Additionally, attendees will hear keynote speeches from Karin Korb and Chris Glaser, advocates who are both known for their versatility and ability to bring all types of people together to strengthen community bonds and connections.

Korb is most known for her wheelchair tennis accolades and is a two-time Paralympian passionate about empowering young women with disabilities through sports. Glaser is a progressive author and minister who has been an activist in the movement for full inclusion of LGBT Christians in the Presbyterian Church.

The 2014 Georgia Winter Institute is sponsored by the Center for Leadership in Disability (CLD), GCDD, the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), the Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD), the Arc of Georgia and Parent to Parent of Georgia.

For more information on the Georgia Winter Institute, visit georgiawinterinstitute.weebly.com.

SAVE THE DATE:
JANUARY 26-29, 2014
COLUMBUS, GA

GCDD Members Attend the NCSL Legislative Summit

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) executive committee members Josette Akhras and Lisa Newbern, as well as GCDD Diversity Coordinator Aarti Sahgal, attended the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Legislative Summit held in Atlanta on August 12-15, 2013.

State legislators and their staff from every state in the US attend the summit as a way to network, and GCDD's members helped work the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities' (NACDD) information table. They were able to connect with Georgia's legislators and their staff and other policymakers from around the country and educate them on the work being done by GCDD.

"It was a great opportunity to connect with legislators from all over about what we are doing at GCDD and share our vision for people with disabilities," said Akhras. "We talked about our signature concept Real Communities and the issues facing people with disabilities such as transportation and acceptance in the community. It's important to help policymakers understand that people with disabilities want to be full members in their communities, and we are mobilizing together to ask for their basic rights to participate and be involved just like everyone else."

For more information on the NCSL Legislative Summit, visit www.ncsl.org/meetings/summit-2013/home.aspx.

Dawn Alford

"As a person who has grown up with a disability myself, I am **very passionate** about advocating on behalf of people with disabilities and understand the importance of ensuring that ALL people, including those who happen to have a disability, have the opportunity to enjoy a full, rich life.

GCDD Welcomes New Planning & Policy Development Specialist

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) welcomes staff member, Dawn Alford, as its planning and policy development specialist.

Alford, a former member of GCDD's Advisory Board, has been working at the NWGA Center for Independent Living for over three years and has been involved in the Georgia Olmstead Advocacy since 2009. With over 10 years of experience in advocating for people with disabilities, she will be a valuable asset to GCDD in promoting public policy for people with developmental disabilities and their families to lead more independent, productive, included and integrated lives in the community.

"I am honored to join the GCDD team," said Alford. "As a person who has grown up with a disability myself, I am very passionate about advocating on behalf of people with disabilities and understand the importance of ensuring that ALL people, including those who happen to have a disability, have the opportunity to enjoy a full, rich life."

In her new role, she will be working with GCDD Public Policy Director D'Arcy Robb to work on moving GCDD's public policy agenda forward. Together, they will create and advocate for conceptually coherent policies for the integration of people with developmental disabilities, their families and those who support them.

Scan below to see a timeline of social justice movements across the decades.

Social Justice: A Movement Defined

By Alison Heinz Stephens

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT is comprised of dozens of overlapping ideas, struggles, sets of beliefs, histories, legacies and cultures.

Twenty-three years ago, the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provided new opportunities and access for millions of people with disabilities. The historic March on Washington, aimed at securing jobs, justice and freedom for all Americans, born out of the initial struggle to dismantle legal discrimination against African-Americans, just celebrated its 50th anniversary. Women have been voting for 93 years. Undeniably, the progress toward equality and civil rights is marked by real and measured accomplishments.

And now, with a younger generation of advocates emerging, a new, re-energized movement is taking shape and putting down roots. Disability rights activists in particular are finding a home within this new movement, as it provides a growing framework for examining the ways disability connects with other issues.

Not content to fight the same fight as their parents, this generation of advocates is saying, "We didn't have to fight to get on the bus. We didn't have to fight to get into the building. But now that we're here, why don't we all sit at the same table?"

The Social Justice Movement

The new movement, commonly referred to as "social justice," is hard to define, but many advocates and organizers are feeling and experiencing it for themselves. The social justice movement is comprised of dozens of overlapping ideas, struggles, sets of beliefs, histories, legacies and cultures. It really boils down to the idea that it's time to fight for whole and connected people, families and communities because in one way or another, we all intersect.

Mark Johnson, director of advocacy at the Shepherd Center, a rehabilitation center in Atlanta, who became paralyzed after a neck injury at the age of 20, has been a passionate self-advocate and leader in the fight for disability rights for over 30 years. He was there when people with disabilities had to demand civil rights that were naturally recognized for their peers without disabilities.

Johnson was instrumental in advocating for accessible buses, campuses, public spaces and housing. He has seen people with disabilities struggle to end segregation in institutions and facilities, and fight to receive quality education, equal housing and job opportunities. And, the list goes on.

As a veteran advocate, Johnson explains the blending of disability rights and the new social justice movement as, "It's very new. Most people, even within the disability community, are not quite using the words 'social justice' yet," he said. "But the next generation is starting to ask questions like, 'What does the next wave of advocacy look like? What do the issues look like and with whom do you do it?'"

Johnson said the trend is not necessarily a new way to advocate but rather the next step in the development of the disability rights movement.


Mark Johnson

"Now we're at this point where young folks are saying it's time to get beyond a 'rights' mentality and get to a 'justice' mentality. There's a big difference and that difference aligns you with other groups," said Johnson. "It's not to say that what we were doing, have been doing, isn't working, but it's time to align ourselves with others who share that same common denominator," he said. "It's interesting that it's happening now with this fantastic historical backdrop."

A Civil Rights Turning Point

A turning point in the movement began in 1995 with the *Olmstead* case in Atlanta. Sue Jamieson, of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society Disability Integration Project, served as lead counsel for the landmark *Olmstead v. L.C.* case, when two women, Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson, were denied the right by the State of Georgia to move out of their institution and live in the community.

As a result, in 1999 the Supreme Court ruled that isolating individuals with disabilities in facilities and institutions without justification is unlawful discrimination and that states are required to eliminate unnecessary segregation and ensure they receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.

The *Olmstead* Decision is frequently compared to another landmark civil rights case: *Brown v. Board of Education (BOE)*. Both cases required integration of individuals who had historically been discriminated against, and the desegregation processes necessitated overcoming firmly entrenched attitudes. Also, in both cases, the work remains unfinished.

Jamieson explains the evolution of *Olmstead* from a disability rights case to the launch of a social justice movement.

"I eventually realized that so many other advocates were viewing this as a fight for civil rights," said Jamieson. "The right of people not to be segregated then began to draw the attention of those who had fought against racial segregation and also people who fought for the rights of the elderly who were confined."

And there the idea was born.

"Those of us who were closeted in the disability rights world began to see that we could see this as part of the broader movement," said Jamieson.

But Jamieson is quick to point out that although the Supreme Court ruling was a huge victory for people with developmental disabilities, it doesn't always play out accordingly in a courtroom.

> "What we still see from judges and public defenders is a tendency to view the individual as 'not quite ready.'"

"What we still see from judges and public defenders is a tendency to view the individual as 'not quite ready,'" she said.

Jamieson acknowledges that within the broader movement of social justice, disability rights is still a very specialized fight because of the funding - or lack thereof - involved.


Sue Jamieson

> The right of people not to be segregated then began to draw the attention of those who had fought against racial segregation and also people who fought for the rights of the elderly who were confined.

"IF WE'RE SO AMAZING, THEN HOW COME WE CAN'T GO TO WORK WHERE YOU GO TO WORK?

"Time after time the explanation for keeping a person in an institution is that there isn't enough money in the program to pay for home care," she said, referencing Medicaid dollars. "But it's a civil right. An absolute right."

But, we can look to *Brown v. Board of BOE* for encouragement that the price tag attached to desegregation can eventually be overcome. In the school desegregation context, the resource requirements were huge. Transportation had to be provided, personnel shifted and in many cases new school buildings had to be constructed and filled with updated teaching materials. But it took years and many more legal battles to make this happen.

> "The DOJ is marching down the same path now for disability rights as they did with racial equality."

Currently the US Department of Justice (DOJ) is busy filing lawsuits around the country in an effort to free people with disabilities from segregated settings.

"The DOJ is marching down the same path now for disability rights as they did with racial equality," said Jamieson, who is optimistic about the future for social justice. "There is a mysterious momentum out there I can't quite put my finger on."

Anticipating Challenges

Patricia Puckett, a seasoned disability advocate and executive director for the Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia (SILC), echoes Jamieson's concern that securing the necessary funding to support full integration and inclusion of people with disabilities remains a stumbling block on the path to success.

"Including people with disabilities has economic implications. Lifts on buses cost money. Interpreters cost money. But what we, as a movement, have not successfully addressed is what is the cost of not including and integrating people?"

Puckett cites a long list of great achievers with disabilities who made great contributions to the world: Beethoven, Steven Hawking and Helen Keller to name a few.

Patricia Puckett

"As a person committed to disability rights, I easily relate to the experiences of people of color, gay people, etc.," said Puckett. "Perhaps framing our work in the broader social justice context might help people see that all devalued groups are striving for equality. I can't say for sure."

Taking a Different Approach

On the other hand, not all disability advocates believe the broader social justice movement will create the change necessary.

Anil Lewis, director of advocacy and policy for the National Federation for the Blind (NFB), disagrees with the notion that disability rights and other civil rights can be fought in one broad movement.

Anil Lewis

"It's not the same discrimination," said Lewis. "They [blacks, gays and transgendered and other disenfranchised groups] experience a real hate from society resulting from ignorance. In the broader context, our discrimination is based on compassion."

Lewis regularly delivers a presentation titled "Loving us to Death" which explores the ways people with disabilities face discrimination.

"Sometimes people with disabilities don't even realize they're being discriminated against," he said.

Lewis, who went blind at age 25 due to a degenerative eye disease, learned to read Braille and walk with a white cane, and went on to earn a master's degree in public policy from Georgia State University.

"Everyone wanted to take care of me and make exceptions for me but that is discrimination," said Lewis. "And then everyone told me I was amazing."

Lewis said he initially bought into the hype and thought maybe he was an amazing person. Then something dawned on him one day. "If we're so amazing, then how come we can't go to work where you go to work? It's hard for the general population to understand," he said.

In order to change that, the disability community must demonstrate that they have a real capacity to work and contribute. Lewis believes the new generation of advocates, whom he refers to as the ADA generation, needs to claim their own place in society because right now they are victims of their own success. So much has already been accomplished within the disability rights movement that the current struggles are not genuinely appreciated.

But how do we make that happen? Lewis urges disability advocates to create a louder voice by seeking public office.

> "It's only by our actions as policymakers that we can truly reflect the needs of those with disabilities. Until we do, we are prohibited from being equal."

"It's only by our actions as policymakers that we can truly reflect the needs of those with disabilities," said Lewis. "Until we do, we are prohibited from being equal."

Lewis believes voters are more than willing to vote for a candidate with a disability.

"Absolutely," he said. "They love us to death!"

Putting policymakers in office who reflect the disability community will be a huge step toward fostering synergy between the disability rights movement and the broader social justice movement.

Connecting the Movements

Mia Mingus, a nationally-recognized disability justice activist in Oakland, CA, is emerging as a leader in advocating for a shift in thinking on how to understand and organize the disability justice movement.

In her article "Changing the Framework: Disability Justice," published by RESIST, a progressive foundation that supports grassroots organizing for social and environmental justice, she offers insight on why she believes the time is right for accepting a broader movement like social justice because advocates are starting to address the fact that people with disabilities have much more complex identities.

"We are not just people with disabilities, but we are also people of color, women, genderqueer and transgender, poor and working class, youth, immigrants, lesbian, gay, bisexual and more," notes Mingus in her article.

For Mingus, her early involvement with the disability rights movement was disappointing because she saw very few leaders who reflected her situation and experience.

"For the most part, disability was being talked about as an isolated, single issue," she comments. "Having been involved with racial justice, queer liberation, reproductive justice and feminist movements most of my life, I have rarely encountered spaces that addressed disability or connected it with other issues."

Mingus believes advocates must now push for a deeper understanding of how ableism, a set of beliefs that favors people without disabilities, affects all movements for justice.

"We are drawing connections between ableism and other systems of oppression

> "We are not just people with disabilities, but we are also people of color, women, genderqueer and transgender, poor and working class, youth, immigrants, lesbian, gay, bisexual and more."

and violent institutions," she said in her piece. "Ableism plays out very differently for wheelchair users, people with hearing impairments or people who have mental, psychiatric and cognitive disabilities. None of these are mutually exclusive and all are complicated by race, class, gender, immigration, sexuality, welfare status, incarceration, age and geographic location."

Mia Mingus

This paints a different picture from what previous disability and civil rights efforts aimed to address. Previously, the fight was focused on getting into the door to challenge the discrimination of people's rights so to speak, but now that the door has begun to open and more people are involved in the conversation, it's time to unite the marginalized groups, remove segregation within advocacy and work together on a broader movement of social justice.

The end goal, according to Mingus, is to work together to be in service of the community, whatever that community may look like.

"We're not at the promised land yet," said Mark Johnson. "But I wouldn't keep doing this if I didn't keep seeing change. The next 25 years should be interesting."

THE NEXT 25 YEARS SHOULD BE INTERESTING.

The Road Ahead is Long, But We Must Strive Forward and Upward

By Talley Wells

Liberty…Justice…Equality…Pursuit of Happiness. These are the civil rights Thomas Jefferson and our Founding Fathers wove into the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. They are the ideals upon which this nation was founded. But, in this 50th anniversary year of the March on Washington, we recognize we have not always lived up to these ideals. Instead, we have continuously had to strive and fight for them. These truths are particularly self-evident for Americans with disabilities.

At the center of the Martin Luther King Museum in Atlanta, there is a road with statues of Americans of all races, nationalities and abilities marching forward and upward. Visitors to the museum can pretend to join the march and experience the path forward and upward.

Self-advocates and other disability advocates know this road well. The road is not an exhibit from the past, although it certainly began in the past, it is a living, rising road. It is a road forward built from the struggles of those breaking free from institutions, those seeking integration in schools, jobs and daily American life and those simply working toward a life with the same opportunities as their fellow Americans.

In 1990, after the struggles and advocacy of so many, this road moved forward and rose higher for people with disabilities with the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This extraordinary Act recognized in stark language the discrimination and isolation experienced by Americans with disabilities. Before setting out the law, the United States Congress made certain findings, including:

- "Disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society, yet many people with physical or mental disabilities have been precluded from doing so because of discrimination."
- "Historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities, and, despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem."
- "The Nation's proper goals regarding individuals with disabilities are to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency."

President George H.W. Bush made this Act the law of the land with his signature on July 26, 1990. From that day forward, the United States Government decreed that no person, employer or entity should discriminate against people with disabilities and that reasonable

accommodations and reasonable modifications should be created so that people with disabilities could be included in all facets of daily life and work.

Nevertheless, the ADA was not the final destination on the road forward. While it gave the road a major lift, discrimination, segregation and isolation of people with disabilities continued.

In the 1990s, Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson were Georgia women with disabilities who continued to experience segregation and discrimination. They were living at Georgia Regional Hospital in Atlanta where they previously had been confined over 30 times each. Sue Jamieson, who has dedicated her career at the Atlanta Legal Aid Society to representing individuals with mental health disabilities, began representing Curtis and Wilson. The Atlanta Legal Aid Society filed a lawsuit based on the Americans with Disabilities Act to end their segregation and enable them to live full and independent lives in the community. Their case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

> "In the 50 years since Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. shared his dream and the 23 years since our country passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, the disability rights community can look back and see how far the road has risen."

In June 1999, in its landmark *Olmstead* Decision, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Curtis and Wilson, declaring that Georgia was required to provide them the supports they needed to live in the community. This meant freedom. Neither would ever have to live in an institution again. Wilson, who passed away in 2004, was proud of her independence and Curtis has become a well-known artist. The Supreme Court decision went way beyond Curtis and Wilson, though. It mandated that all states must provide necessary supports in the community rather than in institutions in most instances.

Again, as with the ADA, the *Olmstead* decision was not a final destination. In the 14 years since the *Olmstead* ruling, the road rose higher, but along the way, discrimination, segregation and isolation were encountered at every turn. In 2007, Georgians learned how far we still had to go when the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* exposed horrendous and unnecessary tragedies of men and women with intellectual disabilities and mental illness in our state psychiatric hospitals through its "Hidden Shame" series by Andy Miller and Alan Judd. The series was symbolized by Sarah Crider, a 14-year-old girl with an intellectual and physical disability who died choking on her own vomit at Georgia Regional Hospital.

As a direct result of the Hidden Shame series, the United States Justice Department came to Georgia, investigated the hospitals, filed a lawsuit and ultimately entered into an *Olmstead* settlement in 2010. The settlement requires Georgia to free every person with an intellectual disability and most men and women with mental illness from our state hospitals and provide them the community supports they need.

While unrelated to the Justice Department Settlement, over the last five years, Georgia has used the Money Follows the Person program to enable men and women who thought they would live out their lives in nursing facilities to return to the community.

In the 50 years since Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. shared his dream and the 23 years since our country passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, the disability rights community can look back and see how far the road has risen. Still, even as we celebrate progress, we all know too many people with disabilities who have not experienced the American ideals of liberty, justice, equality and the pursuit of happiness. In a state that today has over 7,000 people with disabilities on Medicaid Waiver waiting lists and thousands more who should be on these lists, the road forward is long and the path is very steep. Still, we must keep striving forward and upward.

"FROM THAT DAY FORWARD,

the United States Government decreed that no person, employer or entity should discriminate against people with disabilities and that reasonable accommodations and reasonable modifications should be created so that people with disabilities could be included in all facets of daily life and work.

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

Building Community Engagement by Opening the Door to Your Neighbor

By Doug Shipman

There are many cherished relationships we hold sacred to us; sometimes they change and other times they grow. One of the more exceptional bonds can be the relationship between neighbors. In fact, many have related the neighbor relationship as being an act of deep love and care. As the State of Georgia diversifies along lines of race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation and physical attributes, the idea that being a neighbor is an expression of love becomes a bit more complex.

How do you love someone you barely know and seemingly lack common ground with? Fifty years ago due to segregation and living patterns, the demographics of specific areas of the American South were very reminiscent of a relatively small, culturally homogeneous community. Neighborhoods were commonly divided by race or economic status. Religious minorities often hid their faith, gay individuals denied their sexuality and those with disabilities were often shunned by families and society. This made getting to know the person next door simple often due to the homogeneity of one neighbor from the next.

Today, these same neighborhoods of the past are experiencing cultural transformations across many lines of identity. As neighborhoods continue to diversify and our communities become culturally more diverse and physically more accessible, it is important to value neighborly love and demonstrate acceptance of the unfamiliar. One of the aspects of the past we may need to reconsider is the power of the visit to a neighbor. Entering a person's home with a sense of understanding and openness may be the surest way into their heart. Ideally, building genuine relationships in a comfortable manner and allowing for the exchange of personal opinions and needs without the fear of being culturally exclusive should be a common personal goal.

> "Each of us, no matter our background or perspective, should commit ourselves to making the first move."

Andrew Young, a politician, diplomat, activist and pastor from Georgia, once said that he never started a diplomatic negotiation before first having a dinner together. Though we may agree with the notion of knocking on our neighbor's door, many of us feel that we lack the relationship or skills to make the first move. So, the question remains how do we start the process of building community with those most unlike us?

One of the more **EXCEPTIONAL BONDS** can be the relationship between neighbors.

First and foremost, we all have to be able to enter their home. Accessibility has a way to go. Second, we have to make a commitment to try and try again. Each of us, no matter our background or perspective, should commit ourselves to making the first move.

A man who arguably is our nation's ultimate neighbor, Mr. Fred Rogers, once stated that "Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now." This quote explicitly expresses the great effort it takes to truly connect with someone, and the feeling of reward two people can achieve when coming together to overcome life's obstacles.

> "Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now."

Each of us more than ever needs to "strive" in order to "accept" others. So often we shrink from knocking and tell ourselves that if our neighbors want to know us, they will come knock on our door. Sadly, the neighborhood remains quiet except for the blaring of our televisions with loud debates about issues of rights and identity.

Understanding how to become a better neighbor in a community should also apply on a larger level. Historically, the best social justice movements have always been made possible by the means of societal transformation. In past peaceful revolutions, those oppressed have not only liberated themselves or improved the environment to meet their needs, but have also liberated oppressors from the mindset, thus leading to reconciliation and a new societal norm.

American examples have included the Suffrage Movement, the Modern Civil Rights Movement for African-American freedom and the Modern Disability Rights Movement. Internationally we see entire societal transformation examples in India, South Africa, Ireland and Eastern Europe. Building relationships can go beyond the individual exchange and can reshape the way society thinks about groups and the future of the community.

Many social justice movements have places of scholarship or museums dedicated to education, but until recently, an institution with a mission across all civil and human rights movements has not existed in the United States. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights, currently under construction on a new facility in downtown Atlanta, is the first institution to embody the totality of rights movements nationally and internationally.

Beyond the exhibitions, media center, event space, educational programs and cultural events, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights will be a new kind of facility where rights movements, lessons and techniques can be presented in the same place, thus giving visitors and scholars a chance to learn from the comparison between movements. The Center will also uniquely present stories of individuals and rights organizations using technology to both inform and inspire. Each visitor to the Center will have the opportunity to build their ability to relate to new neighbors the world over.

As our communities become more diverse and also move further away from direct memories of historical social movements, the twin strategies of direct engagement combined with educational initiatives like the National Center for Civil and Human Rights can help increase the interest and knowledge of rights issues in order for each of us to have a greater empathy and capacity for relationships with wider and wider groups of Georgians.

For more information on NCCHR, visit www.cchrpartnership.org.

> **SO OFTEN WE SHRINK**
> from knocking and tell ourselves that if our neighbors want to know us, they will come knock on our door.

DOUG SHIPMAN is currently serving as the chief executive officer of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights (NCCHR). Shipman was most recently a principal in the Atlanta office of the Boston Consulting Group. He is the founding CEO and has been with the Center since the inception of the project in 2005.

Shipman has guest lectured at several institutions including Bard, Duke, Emory and the Centers for Disease Control. He has been featured in numerous publications and broadcasts including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN* and *TEDxAtlanta*. He has an extensive educational background in issues of race, ethnicity and gender including the history of American minority groups and religion as applied in social movements.

Shipman has a Master of Public Policy (MPP) from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a Master of Theological Studies (MTS) from the Harvard Divinity School and a bachelor's degree with high honors from Emory. He can be found on twitter @dougship.

PERSPECTIVES

What Connecting with Roving Listeners Meant to Us

By Mark and Jill Vanderhoek

JILL AND MARK VANDERHOEK have been married for 12 years and have lived in Central Georgia for nine of those years. They helped found the Beall's Hill Community Garden at Centenary and moved to Beall's Hill in 2011. Mark is director of community relations for River Edge Behavioral Health Center and Jill stays at home with their two daughters, three-year-old Dulcie, one-year-old Cordelia and an old dog named Rubin.

"It was fantastic to know that we shared something with them that they could take with them.

We truly enjoyed our time with the Roving Listeners when a dozen of them came to visit us in June 2012. We quickly sat down in our crowded living room and told them our story. The listeners had lots of questions – where were we from, what did we like to do, how long had we lived in the neighborhood, what we liked about Macon and on and on.

We shared our love of Macon, our love of the community and of the Beall's Hill neighborhood. It is a place in transition, and one we hope where everyone will be able to find a place that is best for them. We shared our thoughts about our adopted home with the eager listeners, who sat in rapt attention on our living room rug. We shared our vision for Macon – a place of promise, a place where you could make your own way and a place where you could do the good that needs doing.

"The program left such an impression on us that Jill decided to become further involved and serve as the Roving Connector for the project..."

To make them feel welcome, Jill offered them homemade banana bread, and a few even admitted it was their first time eating it. With that, we realized it might be a good idea if these young people came to our garden. We told them of our passion for gardening and local food and for growing edibles in our flowerbeds. They sampled mint leaves off our plant and smelled the different herbs growing in our garden.

It was fantastic to know that we shared something with them that they could take with them. It was a pleasure to share that with young people, who may have been short on life experience, but were long on curiosity and enthusiasm.

Later, we attended several of the Roving Listeners community dinners at Centenary United Methodist Church, where we shared meals with our neighbors and got to speak with many of the listeners and their families. It was a pleasure to learn where the listeners came from and meet up with neighbors that we had spoken with on the streets, but had not had a full conversation with yet.

The project left such an impression on us that Jill decided to become further involved and serve as the Roving Connector for the project, using her connections in the neighborhood and the community to help plug in to the connections the listeners made within her own network. It is an exciting job because it helps connect neighbors to neighbors, bridges gaps and connects together those with shared interests to make positive changes in the neighborhood. In the end, it will help build a stronger understanding of community.

The whole experience with the Roving Listeners program was positive. We made new connections with the young adults in the program and made new connections with our neighbors and our community. It was an experience we hope will come back through our neighborhood again, after it has made its way around our wonderful city.

My Thoughts on Participating in The Macon Roving Listeners Project

By Khalil Williams

> Each day, we walked up and down the streets in the summer heat and knocked on doors waiting for someone to be listened to.

The Macon Roving Listeners project is an awesome organization supported by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, Centenary United Methodist Church, the Exchange Club of Macon, St. Paul Episcopal Church, the Knight Neighborhood Challenge, a project of the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

This past summer, several leaders trained us on how to listen to our community. Each day, we walked up and down the streets in the summer heat and knocked on doors waiting for someone to be listened to. Some people would sit and talk with us. Some weren't interested and some weren't home. But, we stayed focused on our job – listen to people that were willing to be listened to.

At the end of each day, we would record the things people told us. Then, on a huge sheet of paper, we wrote different occupations, hobbies and interests to see what our neighbors had in common. Finally, we would clean up, head downstairs, eat dinner and head back home. This was a typical day of the Macon Roving Listener project.

> "Most of them told us about their past lives, like family history, past stories, childhood, education, what they are doing in life now, what they like to do and what they want to change about the community. "

The purpose of the project is to get engaged in the community and listen to what people had to say. Most of them told us about their past lives, like family history, past stories, childhood, education, what they are doing in life now, what they like to do and what they want to change about the community.

I remember a lot of people we talked to spoke with us for 30-45 minutes. We got a chance to really dig deep into their lives and learn more about what they think could improve the community. Some popular topics we noticed were crime, racism, stray animals in the neighborhood, better education and restoration of the downtown area. These were the main topics we discussed at our community dinners, held on Mondays.

These dinners were where neighbors, listeners and special guests would eat good food and talk about the topics listed above. Even though sometimes we would disagree on things, we still focused on trying to make our community better. The Macon Roving Listeners project was a great experience for me. It really helped me understand the community and the people in it. It also helped me communicate with people that I did not know.

The main thing I learned is to actually sit down and listen to what other people have to say. As a person, I know this is a good skill because most people only want to hear what they want to hear and nothing more. I would encourage people to join this project. I learned and did a lot with the leaders and the listeners. It's a good way to get kids involved in the community. It's about having fun with the other listeners, going out into the community and listening to stories about people in that neighborhood – stories that may change the perspective you see in people forever.

KHALIL WILLIAMS is an eleventh grader at Southwest High School in Macon, GA. He is a smart young man who enjoys talking to other people and rides his bike everywhere. He also enjoys using and helping others with electronics like computers and cell phones.

The Children's Freedom Initiative – Paving a Path Home Then and Now

By Becca Bauer

"Helping a child move out of an institution or facility where they are isolated from their family, friends and community is one of the most rewarding feelings," said Leyna Palmer, a former advocate at the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO). "When you see it happen, you see that this is the right option and that no child should be denied the opportunity to grow up in their community."

That is why Palmer spent time at the GAO advocating for the Children's Freedom Initiative (CFI), a collaborative effort to ensure that children who live in facilities and institutions are given the chance to live with permanent, loving families in the community setting.

Led by a coalition of advocates including the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), the Institute on Human Development and Disability at the University of Georgia (IHDD), the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), the Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University (CLD), the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and People First of Georgia, the ultimate goal of CFI is to create a Georgia in which all children are brought up in loving homes and no child lives in an institution.

"Children living in institutions miss out on many of the opportunities of living in the community – going to school, birthday parties, belonging to teams and having the chance to participate as a full member of their community," said Eric Jacobson, executive director of GCDD. "No child should be denied those experiences."

Starting in the fall of 2004, with more than 100 Georgia children isolated in state-run institutions and nursing facilities, the Georgia Developmental Disabilities Network (DD Network) partners joined together to create the Children's Freedom Initiative and address transitioning children back into the community. After multiple meetings to designate CFI's purpose, they drafted House Resolution 633, which urged state departments to work together and develop a plan to get children out of institutions and facilities.

The House Resolution was passed by the General Assembly in March 2005 and declared that state departments work together to identify, assess and provide appropriate home and community-based supports to children under the age of 22 who were currently living in state-run facilities and implement a plan to transition them out within five years.

"This resolution created a CFI Oversight Committee, made up of GCDD, GAO and IHDD, state agencies responsible for transitioning and supporting children who

...the ultimate goal of CFI is to create a Georgia in which ALL CHILDREN are brought up in LOVING HOMES and no child lives in an institution.

come out of institutions, individuals with disabilities and family members, to design a plan and help oversee its implementation," Jacobson said.

In 2005, the CFI kicked off the initiative with a summit, "The Children's Freedom Initiative: A Summit for Change," to bring together parents, advocates and policymakers from across Georgia to learn how other states had created support systems for children with disabilities, share insight on what works when transitioning children out of facilities and coordinate a united effort to ensure that children in Georgia no longer grew up in institutions.

Over the next few years, the CFI efforts continued moving forward and transitioning children living in state-run institutions and facilities into community settings, but they also began working with Georgia families whose children were in facilities outside of the State to help them bring their loved ones back home.

> "No child needs to grow up in an isolated institution setting."

Part of CFI's work also includes helping parents understand the options available and connecting them with resources and agencies that can help them with their transition process. In May 2010, GCDD and GAO coordinated a study tour to educate families of children with disabilities on how they could live in the community with appropriate supports. The participants were also given the opportunity to visit the homes of three individuals who had successfully moved out of facilities and back into homes to see how others with disabilities lived in different living arrangements. They got a firsthand look at how children and young adults with disabilities can receive support and care while living in a group home, in the home of a biological parent and in a host home.

"It's very difficult for people who are living in facilities and their families to know how to begin the process getting out of a facility, or in some cases, even to know it's a possibility," said Katie Chandler, a program director at the GAO. "So that's where the advocacy groups supporting CFI come in. We help families understand their options and navigate the system to get their children out of an institution with the supports they need."

As the House Resolution plan ended in 2010, there was no question as to whether the Children's Freedom Initiative was successful. "We have been successful in helping about 50 young people transition out of state-run facilities and have been keeping many more from ever being admitted," said Chandler.

Nevertheless, there is still work to be done. Chandler estimates that there are still hundreds more children in Georgia living in skilled nursing facilities and private institutions.

The CFI continues to advocate for transitioning children out of these facilities and educating families about the resources available, so that young people can remain at home or in the community, even when their home of origin is no longer an option.

As a way to continue advocacy and gain support for policy changes that eliminate barriers for children to live at home in the community, GCDD created the Children's Freedom Initiative Declaration in 2011.

"We believe all Georgia children should be free from institutionalization, and we want to use the Declaration as a tool to show our policymakers that their constituents demand the right to live in the community and thrive with appropriate supports and encouragement," said Jacobson.

Though there is still a long way to go before all Georgia children are transitioned out of segregated institutions and facilities, CFI will continue to safeguard the right that all children should grow up in their communities.

"No child needs to grow up in an isolated institution setting," declared Chandler. "CFI will continue advocating for the end of institutionalization for young people with disabilities until we have a Georgia where no child will live in an institution. Until that happens, we will keep working."

> We have been successful in helping about **50 YOUNG PEOPLE** transition out of state-run facilities and have been keeping many more from ever being admitted.

COMING SOON IN THE GCDD WEBSITE VIDEO LIBRARY:
The CFI sponsored documentary, "Not Home," tells the story of several children who returned to the community to live in real homes after spending time residing in nursing homes.

TURN THE PAGE for two personal stories on young people who transitioned back into the community from facilities with the help of CFI.

Navigating the Path Back Home

Top Photo: Stacia Jones and her son Sean Person.
Middle Photo: Sean Person with his brothers.
Bottom Photo: Sean Person with friends from high school.

Sean Person loved to be outside, play basketball, skateboard and hang out with friends. But after a life-altering incident about two years ago, Sean's world was turned upside down. While playing basketball, Sean was shot in the spine and was paralyzed from the neck down.

After months of being hospitalized at the Shepherd Center, he moved back home with his mom Stacia Jones. Unfortunately, not long after, they were forced to move due to a housing situation that was out of their hands. Stacia had no option but to put Sean in a facility until she found a new place.

Based on recommendations, Sean went to live at Heritage Healthcare, but it was an hour ride for his mom, friends and family and it made frequent visits difficult. Sean's move was sudden and took away everything he was familiar with, but he reflects on his time at Heritage with a positive outlook. "I took it as an opportunity to meet new people, have new experiences and practice my motor skills," he says. "But after awhile, it was hard not being close to my friends and family."

One of the new people Sean met at Heritage was Leyna Palmer, a disability advocate from the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), who worked helping children living in facilities and institutions move out and find loving, permanent homes in the community. Palmer and Sean quickly became friends, and she started working with both Sean and his mom to get him back home.

"Sean and his family already knew that there were more options out there other than facilities," Palmer remembers. "There was no doubt whether it was possible for him to live at home – he already did that. What they really needed help with was navigating the system."

> "There was no doubt whether it was possible for him to live at home – he already did that. What they really needed help with was navigating the system.

Though Jones was very active in the process, Palmer was able to help her understand the process, monitor the progress and move everything forward as quickly as possible.

"I had some knowledge of the process, but it's not helpful when you don't have the right connections," Stacia said. "Leyna helped me talk to the right people and guided me on what I needed to do. She was great, and was always there when I needed help." It took eight months of navigating the system, but Jones was able to find a new house and bring Sean home. "As a mother, it was a weight off my shoulders having him back," she says.

Sean was also excited to come home. On his first night back they had a movie marathon night and ordered his favorite food, pizza.

"At home, I am able to interact more with my friends and family," Sean says. "I have more control and freedom over the things I do."

Now, Sean spends time with friends, sketches, writes and plans on finishing school and getting his GED.

"Sometimes it gets overwhelming," Jones says. "But we have an open communication and we work together to make sure he gets to achieve all of the things he wants to do."

Finding Your Way to Freedom

June Askew

Like most kids leaving high school, June Askew was ready to move out of her parent's house and explore her independence. Unfortunately, moving out did not give her the freedom she was hoping for.

June, now 24-years-old, was diagnosed with spastic quadriplegia cerebral palsy as a result of a premature birth injury and requires around-the-clock care and supports. When she was ready to be out on her own, her parents Kim and Jerry Askew were worried, but also wanted to give her the opportunity to experience what she wanted. The only option they knew about was moving June to a nursing facility.

June moved into the Warner Robins Rehabilitation Center when she was 20-years-old. At first this seemed like a great solution, but eventually June got tired of being stuck in one room and not having control over anything in her life.

That's when Leyna Palmer, a disability advocate from the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), learned about June's living situation. Part of GAO's mission is to end institutionalization and they have a special focus on the Children's Freedom Initiative and helping children move out of facilities and institutions into the community.

"The first time I met June, it was clear she did not want to be in the nursing facility anymore," Palmer remembers. "She kept saying, 'I made a bad choice.'"

After their discussions, Palmer contacted June's parents about her moving into a group home.

"We were very resistant at first," her mother says. "Our hearts were in the right place, but we were terrified of her going into a group home because we'd heard horror stories and worried about her care. Luckily Leyna was persistent."

Palmer was instrumental in helping June's parents understand it was possible for her to live in the community with the supports and arrangements she needed. "First I wanted to help June find her voice to say to her parents, 'I don't want to be here. I want to have more control over my life and be in the community,'" says Palmer.

Next, Palmer brought in a provider agency to meet with June's parents and let them address all of their questions and concerns. "That was the tipping point," Palmer remembers. "It gave them one-on-one contact and allowed them to have concrete examples of what June's day would look like."

Right before June turned 23, she moved into her new home, which is close to her parents so her family can easily visit, where she has two roommates. As for June, "I was very excited to move into my new home," she says. "I like to have people to hang out with and talk to."

"We love her living there now," adds her mother. "The freedom has helped her learn to make good decisions and it is great to see her joy in having her own house, room and space. She loves being with her roommates. They are like three peas in a pod. She is happy and we are happy and assured she is safe and cared for."

> "First I wanted to help June find her voice to say to her parents, 'I don't want to be here. I want to have more control over my life and be in the community.'

EXPERT **UPDATE**

Our World Today: 50 Years After the March on Washington

An interview with civil rights leader, Congressman John Lewis

Congressman John Lewis

> "We wanted to build "The Beloved Community," what we called a society based on simple justice that values the dignity and the worth of every human being.

Q 1. Do you feel the civil rights movement enabled the nation to evolve to the higher moral ground originally envisioned by organizers of the 1963 March on Washington?

I do believe that the civil rights movement did influence the nation to move to a much higher moral ground as envisioned by those who organized the March on Washington 50 years ago. Historians have called our movement the civil rights movement, but we were seeking more than rights. We wanted to build "The Beloved Community," what we called a society based on simple justice that values the dignity and worth of every human being. We are not there yet, but we are much closer today than we would have been without the movement.

Q 2. Why does the March still resonate and inspire so many people, and would you say more voices are being heard today as a result?

The March on Washington still resonates and inspires so many people because it was based on truth, justice and fairness, and because its most visible leader, Martin Luther King Jr., emerged as the moral leader of America.

There are many more voices being heard today because the spirit of the March on Washington lives on in the lives of many, many people, especially young people who were not even a dream or even born 50 years ago.

Q 3. How significant was the inclusion of speakers representing women, persons with disabilities, Latinos, LGBTs and other groups during this year's commemoration activities?

It was so pleasing, right and necessary 50 years later for the speakers to be all-inclusive – men, women, black, white, Latinos, Asian American, Native American, gay, straight and those with and without disabilities were represented. The speakers represented the best of America. Their diversity demonstrates

the power of the movement to usher in a new vision of America that is all-inclusive and much more tolerant than ever before.

4. How might historically marginalized populations such as people with disabilities join forces with other social movements to make progress?

It is my belief that if people with disabilities are going to succeed and continue to make progress, they must become a part of this growing movement that represents everybody, where no one is left out or left behind, whether they have disabilities or not. The movement to create change in America must look like America. People must co-align across organizational lines and come together around the principle that we are one people, one family – the human family. We are one house, the American house – the world house.

5. What does your passion for voting rights stem from and why is voting so important?

My passion for voting rights comes from the sense that we all have a right to participate in the democratic process. The vote governs everything we do from the cradle to the grave. People have a right to participate in the decisions that affect where they live, the water they drink and the air they breathe. Voting is the most powerful, non-violent tool or instrument that we have in a democratic society, and we have to use it. We have to fight for it. We have to speak up for it and speak out for it.

That's why people are trying to keep us from voting, and now they are trying to take the right to vote away from us. People struggled, suffered and died in this country – people that I knew – trying to gain unfettered access to the ballot box.

6. How would the Voter Empowerment Act you introduced protect voting rights now that the Supreme Court has struck down sections of the Voting Rights Act?

The Voter Empowerment Act that we introduced in the last Congress must be reintroduced. It could be changed with an additional provision to fix what the Supreme Court struck down in the Voting Rights Act.

> "The right to vote, the right to participate in the democratic process should be so simple that no one would be denied or threatened with the denial of the right to participate in the democratic process."

7. Are you concerned about voter suppression and how voter ID laws might present barriers for groups such as people with disabilities?

I am deeply concerned about the proposed changes in the process, the road blocks and the stumping blocks. The voter ID requirement could affect people with disabilities and those without disabilities. The right to vote, the right to participate in the democratic process should be so simple that no one would be denied or threatened with the denial of the right to participate in the democratic process. Every citizen, those that are challenged, those without challenges should have free, fair access to the ballot box.

> People must co-align across organizational lines and come together around the principle that we are one people, one family – the human family.

> "People have a right to participate in the decisions that affect where they live, the water they drink and the air they breathe."

Photo Credit: a katz / Shutterstock.com

Above: People from all over gathered to the nation's capital to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the watershed 1963 march on August, 28 2013 in Washington, DC.

"We have witnessed a non-violent revolution in America because of the civil rights movement – a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas.

8. Do you feel America has made progress in the response to the call for "jobs, justice and freedom" that was the theme of the original March on Washington?

There have been changes. And I've said in the past to anyone who believes we have not made progress should come and walk in my shoes. America is a different country than the one I grew up in. We are a better people and a better nation today than we were 50 years ago. We have witnessed a non-violent revolution in America because of the civil rights movement – a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas.

9. What steps can the disability community take to attain fair access to a good education and jobs?

Members of the disability community must speak up, speak out and become part of the ongoing movement for civil rights and human rights to receive all of the benefits of the larger society. Members of the disability community must be bold and courageous, and they must organize the unorganized, mobilize those that need to mobilized, participate in the political process and say to the political leaders and officials, "this is what we want and this is what we expect to receive."

10. What do you consider to be today's most pressing civil rights and social justice issues?

Today I think one of the most pressing issues is to see that every person in America receives the best possible education. I also believe we all should receive quality healthcare. It should be affordable and accessible. We need to be freed of violence against our citizens and also violence in and against our communities, especially toward people with disabilities, the elderly and our children. Everybody who is able and wants to work should be able to find meaningful employment as a source of income, so people can live freely and independently.

11. What are your thoughts about the prospects for today's young people to make their mark on history in realizing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s beloved community?

I think young people today are more free to go out and do what they can to lead the country and lead society to a better place and a higher ground. Young people must not and cannot stand on the sidelines. They must get out there. They must be engaged. They must work in the arena of change in order to make a difference.

JOHN LEWIS

Often called "one of the most courageous persons the civil rights movement ever produced," John Lewis has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties and building what he calls "The Beloved Community" in America. His dedication to the highest ethical standards and moral principles has won him the admiration of many of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the United States Congress.

As a young boy growing up in a segregated Alabama, he was inspired by the activism surrounding the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the words of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which he heard on radio broadcasts. In those pivotal moments, he made a decision to become a part of the civil rights movement. Ever since then, he has remained at the vanguard of progressive social movements and the human rights struggle in the United States. By 1963, Lewis was a nationally recognized leader and was dubbed one of "The Big Six" leaders of the civil rights movement. At the age of 23, he was an architect of and a keynote speaker at the historic March on Washington in August 1963.

Lewis also went on to become a pivotal leader in voting rights and became the director of the Voter Education Project (VEP). Under his leadership, the VEP transformed the nation's political climate by adding nearly four million minorities to the voter rolls.

He was elected to Congress in November 1986 and has served as US Representative of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District since then. He is Senior Chief Deputy Whip for the Democratic Party in leadership in the House, a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, a member of its Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support and Ranking Member of its Subcommittee on Oversight.

Lewis, the only person still alive who was a speaker listed on the official event program in 1963, commemorated the 50th anniversary of the March and delivered a speech honoring the progress made but the work that still needs to be achieved.

Photo Credit:
Eduardo Ramirez Sanchez
Shutterstock.com

DID YOU **KNOW?**

THE 1963 MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM ...

- Was the largest demonstration ever held in the nation's capital to date with approximately 250,000 attendees
- Used more than 2,000 buses, 21 chartered trains and 10 chartered airlines to transport people attending the March
- Was the first televised political rally in American history, with extensive television coverage nationally and internationally
- Occurred in the same year that marked the centennial anniversary of the official signing of the Emancipation Proclamation
- Had support from President John F. Kennedy, who didn't attend but watched it on TV
- Aimed to establish a $2/hr minimum wage, full desegregation of the nation's schools and create measures to ensure fair and decent housing among its many objectives
- Had nearly 4,000 volunteer fire marshals present who were trained in the discipline of nonviolent mediation by event organizer Bayard Rustin
- Featured Daisy Bates, Little Rock Nine organizer and Arkansas newspaper publisher, as the only woman to actually address the crowd
- Included support from nearly 60,000 white participants, labor union members and multi-ethnic minorities who joined African-Americans and religious leaders to create the historic movement

Real Communities – Focusing on A Different Approach

By Caitlin Childs, organizing director of the Real Communities Initiative and Cheri Pace, organizing coordinator of the Real Communities Initiative

> We want to figure out how to create the conditions necessary for people to be together across a variety of identity lines to make us stronger and more unified at both the individual and community level and make lasting changes in our communities and lives.

RACISM

SEXISM

HETEROSEXISM

Real Communities was launched in 2009 to explore how to connect people with and without developmental disabilities to address a variety of issues of common concern in their communities. We support people concerned about issues of social justice at the local, grassroots level to work together toward common goals to improve their community using person-centered supports, collective action and persistent and reflective learning.

We seek to support communities who welcome and utilize the gifts of everyone – especially those who have been historically marginalized – and create avenues toward reciprocity, interdependence and social change. We want to figure out how to create the conditions necessary for people to be together across a variety of identity lines to make us stronger and more unified at both the individual and community level and make lasting changes in our communities and lives.

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality is a vital part of how we approach the work of Real Communities. It's a theory that looks at the ways folks who experience oppression are impacted by many factors that are compounded when one lives at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. Intersectionality seeks to name and examine how these various categories in which people exist (race, gender, disability, class, sexual identity, gender identity, immigration status, etc.) impact people in multiple complex and simultaneous ways.

When using this lens to look at our work as disability activists, advocates and organizers, we not only build the base of allies in disability work, but also acknowledge that there are plenty of people with disabilities living at the intersections of these multiple marginalized identities.

Intersectionality in Action

Using an intersectional approach in Real Communities means forging relationships between new individuals and groups that appear to share very little in common, taking time to connect to issues that the whole community cares about and bringing people from the margins to the center. It means going outside of disability-specific agendas, language and systems to create spaces where everyone is welcome and where casting people into categories is actively avoided because we know people are more complex than that.

For example, the organizers of Savannah's Forsyth Farmers' Market are committed to food justice, making healthy, fresh food accessible to everyone. They have taken steps toward greater food access by addressing affordability and matching Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps) benefits for community members experiencing poverty. The market's director, Teri Schell, partnered with the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) in an effort to intentionally engage the participation of people who are often left out – including people with disabilities.

This partnership has expanded our ideas of what access means in food justice, across race, class and disability. Deep friendships have evolved and a core group of community members, the Mixed Greens, was formed. Group members share responsibility for devising and carrying out community-building projects at the market and in the community. It's not a disability program; however, people with and without disabilities hold real leadership roles and contribute toward the goal of making Savannah more welcoming.

Intersectionality also plays out in other Real Communities initiatives. For the Korean Coalition, people with developmental disabilities and their families are also first generation immigrants to the United States, where the service delivery systems are quite different.

The Clarkston International Garden not only unites people with and without disabilities through a community garden, but also refugees from various countries. The gardeners speak many different languages or have diverse methods of communication, but they have found creative ways of communicating and contributing.

Finally, the Youth Roving Listeners program, created from a partnership between GCDD and Centenary United Methodist Church, brings together young people with and without disabilities to discover the gifts of their neighbors, creating space for deep listening and connecting across generations, abilities, races and socioeconomic classes. For their first community dinner this summer, the youth facilitated conversations on issues that neighbors expressed as concerns, such as education, economic development, gentrification and racism – issues that also affect people with developmental disabilities. Naming, connecting and utilizing the gifts of everyone in the neighborhood has the potential to foster true inclusion.

Looking Forward

As Real Communities expands, we see many opportunities to broaden the types of social justice issues being addressed through our partnerships. For instance, the prison system, issues of mass incarceration and re-integration of folks coming out of prisons are incredibly pressing social justice issues in Georgia and are of great concern to many of the communities we spend time with. We see many connections between issues of concern in the disability community and for the folks addressing criminalization and incarceration.

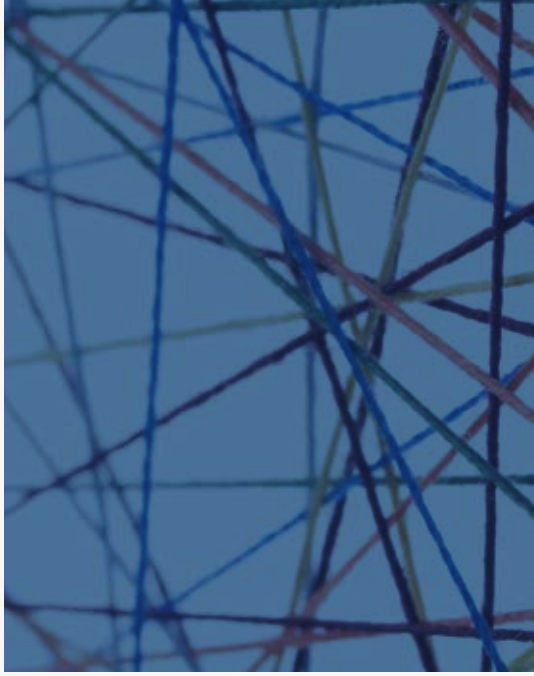
We know the death penalty and prison sentences in general are more often handed down to people of color (specifically black men), people with less financial resources to hire defense attorneys and many of us know all too well that people with disabilities are also disproportionally impacted by these issues in their lives.

"As Real Communities expands, we see many opportunities to broaden the types of social justice issues being addressed through our partnerships."

As the disability community grapples with how to successfully support folks to move out of institutions and segregated services and into typical community spaces, people working to address the rapidly growing prison system are grappling with the same problem in welcoming folks back to the community from prison – an institution that is parallel to the institutions that segregate and isolate people with disabilities. Like people with disabilities, people with criminal records face incredible barriers to housing, employment and education and are often seen as having nothing to offer.

How do we successfully engage others beyond disability in our work? How do we build true collaborations and the respect, trust and friendships necessary to change how we deal with people and situations that challenge us? If we truly believe in inclusion and the idea that there are no throw-away people, where do we need to challenge ourselves to work with folks we may have never thought of as allies? How do we move beyond advocacy and reforming services and toward building communities we want to live in now?

There are no easy answers, but these are the questions we struggle with as we do the work of Real Communities. We are confident that by continuing to engage a larger number of people in these conversations and holding these difficult questions, we can truly create healthy, welcoming, inclusive communities where all Georgians have opportunities to thrive.



ABLEISM

CLASSISM

COLONIALISM

"Naming, connecting and utilizing the gifts of everyone in the neighborhood has the potential to foster true inclusion.

About **92%** of the American public view companies that hire people with disabilities more favorably than those that don't, and **87%** would prefer to give their business to companies that hire people with disabilities.

STRAIGHT **TALK**

FRED J. MAAHS, JR. serves as the director of National Community Partnerships, vice president of the Comcast Foundation and chair of the board of directors for the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). Throughout his career, Maahs has worked for some of the country's largest Fortune 100 and 500 companies and has been an active disability advocate including serving on three panels at the White House regarding issues that impact the lives of people with disabilities.

YOU'RE HIRED!

Access to Education and Jobs: Hiring Someone With a Disability

By Fred J. Maahs, Jr.

Each October since 1945, America has highlighted the need for employers to hire people with disabilities during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), and this year focuses on the idea that people with disabilities who have the same education, work experience and drive are equally qualified to fill a job as people who don't have a disability.

A little more than 33 years ago, just before starting my first year at college, I broke my neck in a diving accident, which left me paralyzed from the chest down. After seven months of intense physical therapy and being told the college I had planned to attend was not wheelchair accessible, I remember thinking to myself, "What about college and a job?" In the 1980s, I didn't know about wheelchair accessible college campuses and knew even less about people with disabilities in the workplace.

You didn't see people like me out and about – living their lives in spite of their disability. Back then, most people with disabilities were kept at home and were referred to as "shut ins." But, I was not about to let that happen to me. I found a local college that worked with me. I helped adapt the campus to be wheelchair accessible, and I was the first chair-user to attend and graduate.

During my first year, I found a job with a bank that had just moved to Delaware. I was hired because of my desire to succeed and my strong work ethic that I attribute to working for my father as a young man. I wanted to be known for what I could do, not for what I could not do.

It's estimated that about 20% of the US population has some type of disability and that more than 14% of people with disabilities are unemployed. However, statistics also show that employee turnover is less with employees who have a disability. About 92% of the American public view companies that hire people with disabilities more favorably than those that don't, and 87% would prefer to give their business to companies that hire people with disabilities. This gives us all something to think about.

That is why I believe it is important to share with the public the many ways people with disabilities can be successfully employed. At Comcast, we celebrate NDEAM and support the employment of people with disabilities in a variety of ways. We host a panel discussion that includes employees with and without disabilities, plus experts on disability-related issues and broadcast it companywide. The forum is always well received, and I think it goes a long way to dispel the myths surrounding the employment of people with disabilities. We will also conduct a two-day Accessibility Summit which will showcase our accessible products and services for people with disabilities.

I think our efforts here at Comcast and NBCUniversal underscore how important it is for businesses to take an active role in supporting the disability community, from offering employment opportunities to creating products and services that empower people with disabilities to be successful in the workforce.

2013-14 CALENDAR

October

October 23
Persons with Disabilities Career Networking Event
Washington, DC
www.careers.state.gov/DIS1013

October 23-25
National Association of Dual Diagnosis (NADD) 30th Annual Conference & Exhibit Show
National Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities
Baltimore, MD
lchristie@thenadd.org

October 24-25
GCDD Quarterly Meeting
Atlanta, GA
404.657.2126

October 28-30
2013 Diversity and Inclusion Conference & Expo
San Francisco, CA
800.283.7476
www.conference.shrm.org

November

November 13-15
2013 NASDDDS Annual Conference
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
Alexandria, VA
www.nasddds.org

November 16-17
Inclusive Higher Education: Moving From Good Ideas to Great Outcomes
Washington, DC
www.aucd/conference

November 17-20
AUCD Annual Conference
Association of University Center on Disabilities
Promoting Inclusion in an Increasingly Diverse World
Washington, DC
www.aucd.org

November 22-24
Ability Expo
San Jose, CA
www.abilitiesexpo.org

December

December 11-14
2013 TASH Conference
Chicago, IL
www.tash.org

December 16
Registration Begins Today
Visit www.gcdd.org to Sign-up for Disability Day at the Capitol

January

January 17-18
GCDD Quarterly Meeting
Atlanta, GA
404.657.2126

January 26-29
Georgia Winter Institute
Columbus, GA
www.georgiawinterinstitute.weebly.com

January 29 – February 1
2014 ATiA Conference
Assistive Technology Industry Association
Orlando, FL
www.ATiA.org

SAVE THE DATE:

16th Annual Disability Day on Thursday, February 20, 2014. Join the rally on the steps of the State Capitol!

Planning an upcoming event?

Send your information to Dee Spearman, GCDD Public Information Assistant at dyspearman@dhr.state.ga.us; Subject line: "Community Calendar" by November 1 to be included in the winter calendar. Visit the GCDD website at gcdd.org/events-calendar to view our expanded online community calendar with additional local and national events.

HIGHLIGHT:

In honor of the 15th anniversary of the landmark *Olmstead* case, each quarter throughout 2014, GCDD will be offering a series of guest columns by Talley Wells, director of the Disability Integration Project at Atlanta Legal Aid Society, reflecting on the lessons, promises and the unfinished business of the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* Decision.

RESOURCES

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

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

State Government

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

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

Department of Community Affairs
www.dca.ga.gov

Georgia Housing Search
www.georgiahousingsearch.org
877.428.8844

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

General Information
www.georgia.gov

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

News

Georgia Winter Institute
www.georgiawinterinstitute.weebly.com

National Disability Employment Awareness Month
www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam

US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy Disability Employment Resources
www.dol.gov/odep

Around GCDD

The National Conference of State Legislatures Legislative Summit
www.ncsl.org/meetings/summit-2013/home.aspx

Social Justice

Atlanta Legal Aid Society
www.atlantalegalaid.org/departments.htm

Changing the Framework: Disability Justice
www.leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-framework-disability-justice

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights
www.cchrpartnership.org/index.html

The National Federation for the Blind
www.nfb.org

The Olmstead Decision
www.ada.gov/olmstead/olmstead_about.htm

The Shepherd Center
www.shepherd.org

The Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia
www.silcga.org

Perspectives

Real Communities Roving Listeners Project
www.gcdd.org/real-communities.html

Children's Freedom Initiative

The Children's Freedom Declaration
www.gcdd.org/cfi-declaration/petitions/declarations/cfi-declaration.html

The Children's Freedom Initiative
www.georgiacfi.org

The Georgia Advocacy Office
www.thegao.org

Straight Talk

The American Association of People with Disabilities
www.aapd.com

Comcast Corporation
www.corporate.comcast.com

Thanks to OUR SPONSORS for their Support!

If you are interested in being a sponsor for *Making a Difference* magazine, please call Becca Bauer @ 678.384.7836.

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 26-246
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142
404-657-2126, www.gcdd.org

Address Service Requested

MAKING a DIFFERENCE

A quarterly magazine of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2

FALL 2013

Sue Jamieson from Atlanta Legal Aid Society and Lois Curtis, *Olmstead* plaintiff, posing with the liberty bell.

Visit www.gcdd.org to see a timeline of social justice movements across the decades.