

MAKING **a** DIFFERENCE

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**NEWS
FOR YOU:**

HONORING GCDD STAFF MEMBER: Dottie Adams

THE OLMSTEAD DECISION: 13th Anniversary

THE FOOD JUSTICE MOVEMENT: Coming to Georgia



On the Cover:

Featuring Johnny Smith at the Forsyth Farmers' Market. Smith is a member of the Mixed Greens, which was developed through the Savannah Forsyth Farmers' Market and works with GCDD through its Real Communities Initiative. Photographer: Robin Nelson

MAKING a DIFFERENCE

A quarterly magazine of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities **VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1**

The mission of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is to collaborate with Georgia citizens, public and private advocacy organizations and policymakers to positively influence public policies that enhance the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and their families. GCDD provides collaboration through information and advocacy activities, program implementation and funding and public policy analysis and research.



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ERIC E. JACOBSON



TOM SEEGMUELLER

We Can All Help Make a Change

The dictionary defines an advocate as “one who pleads the case of another.” Over the years, we have had some great advocates work for the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD). And one, who has taught most of us, is retiring at the end of July. For over 30 years, Dottie Adams’ passion has been to help people with disabilities and their families find and get the services they need and deserve.

She began her life’s career in 1977 as a case manager at the Barrow County Mental Health Center where she conducted assessments, developed individual service plans and advocated for individuals and their families. She remained in that position until 1984 when she became the coordinator of the Clinical Evaluation Team with the Northeast Georgia Community Service Board. Finally in 2002, she joined us at GCDD. The number of individuals and families she has assisted is too large to count. GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson has said numerous times, “If cloning was allowed, I would clone Dottie Adams because she helps individuals and families get what they need.” Her passion and love for people has been her driving force. There is no greater advocate for people with developmental disabilities and their families in Georgia, and we honor her in this *Making a Difference* for her many contributions.

In this issue, we also focus on how food justice and making sure people have healthy, nutritious food is becoming a part of the social justice movement. Three of GCDD’s Real Communities Initiatives are working on how to ensure people have better food, and each one approaches it from a different method – a farmers’ market, a community garden and as part of a church’s effort to feed a neighborhood. The common thread is that each includes efforts to bring people with and without disabilities together to make the community better. We believe that connecting the disability movement with the food justice movement is a win-win strategy. The food justice movement aims to make sure all people have access to local, healthy foods and the disability movement brings about decades-long activism and desire for accessible communities. Together, these two efforts can bring all people together to create communities where everyone can share a vision and communities accessible to all people.

Finally, we want to remind everyone that a very important vote will take place on July 31. Georgians will vote on the Transportation Investment Act (TIA), a 1% transportation sales tax in 12 separate regions throughout the State. GCDD believes supporting the sales tax works toward creating opportunities to make transportation accessible to every Georgian. For over 20 years, transportation has remained the number one issue mentioned in public forums sponsored by GCDD, and now we have a chance to address this concern in every area of the State. We can make sure that mobility management is just as much a part of transportation as roads, bridges and public transit. People with disabilities have rightly argued that without good transportation systems, individuals and families do not have access to jobs. We can help change that on July 31.

We hope you enjoy reading this magazine and we want to hear from you. Let us know what you like or don’t like by writing to vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us.

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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.

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Make Your Voice Heard in the Polls

GUEST ARTICLE



“The regional transportation referendums on the ballot in July will help make transportation available to every Georgian.”

To Georgia’s Disability Community,

Those of you involved in the disability community are amazing advocates for your cause. With 2012 being an election year, I encourage you to take your advocacy to the polls and vote in the statewide primary elections on July 31 and again for the general election on November 6 when we will be voting for the President of the United States and other national, state and local leaders.

The primary election in July should be of particular interest to you because the ballot will include a vote on the T-SPLOST, a 1% sales tax to support transportation in 12 separate regions throughout the State. As the disability community has already come to recognize, transportation is a key element in making real jobs and real opportunities a reality, not only for people with disabilities but for all Georgians across the entire State. This critical vote will impact you and your community, regardless of where you live in Georgia.

If you will remember, just last summer and fall, you were encouraged to participate in roundtable discussions with the 12 Regional Commissions made up of elected officials and asked to provide critical input from the disability community in developing the transportation project lists. Your efforts became the driving force behind including better access to public transit for the disability community, expanding mobility management for statewide usage and adding other transportation opportunities in local areas.

If passed, local governments within each region will receive 25% of the revenues (15% in metro Atlanta) from the sales tax to spend on their own transportation projects on their

previously approved list such as bike lanes, pedestrian bridges, sidewalks or safety and road improvements under the supervision of a Citizens Review Panel for each region that approves the tax. The panel will be responsible for monitoring and assessing the progress of projects on the final investment list and issuing an annual report detailing the progress and keeping the public informed.

The regional transportation referendums on the ballot in July will help make transportation available to every Georgian. You all play a vital role in Georgia’s disability community and this referendum is worthy of your serious consideration.

In addition, the outcome of the national, state and local elections in November are equally important to all of us as Georgians. Again, I encourage you to continue your advocacy efforts by voting and letting your voice be heard in both elections.

As I have said before, it is going to take your continued advocacy, support and cooperation to improve the quality of life for all Georgians in the disability community.

Nathan Deal, *Governor of Georgia*

Stay Connected with GCDD



The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) recently launched new and improved website tools to help you stay better connected. While the look of the website is the same, there are now more opportunities to share your thoughts and help people in the disability community connect, share, learn and interact with each other.

New features on the GCDD website are:

- **The GCDD Online Community**, where people can sign up to join ongoing group discussions based on shared interests on a specific issue or start a new group to focus on a different topic
- **The GCDD Open Forum**, an opportunity for people to participate in conversations on various topics affecting the disability community and get to know other people around the State
- **An enhanced blog section**, where visitors can read, watch and listen to personal stories, perspectives and other current topics in the disability community
- **New access for visitors to sign petitions or declarations**, participate in polls and fill out surveys directly on the GCDD website

GCDD encourages you to test out these new enhancements and comment on what you like or don't like. We want to partner with others to achieve a Georgia where all persons are included in all facets of life, have opportunities to exercise choices over their lives and are encouraged and supported to meet their goals and reach for their dreams.

Our website offers information on everything from housing and employment to education and supports. GCDD also provides funds and grants to individuals and organizations that form ongoing partnerships designed to expand on best practices and affect change. The purpose of the GCDD grants are to expand best practices and contribute to system-wide changes that support the rights of people with developmental disabilities and their full inclusion as community members. You can take advantage of these grant opportunities or receive more information on the funds available by visiting our "Funding" section on our website at www.gccd.org/funding.html.

Don't forget you can also sign up for our mailing lists and advocacy network to receive our publications and email alerts as we work together to create opportunities for people with disabilities in Georgia to become engaged with their communities. Stay informed by receiving access to information about legislation being considered by the Georgia General Assembly and updates on news and events taking place all across Georgia. Sign up at www.gccd.org/join-our-mailing-list.html.

Don't forget you can also sign up for our mailing lists and advocacy network to receive our publications and email alerts as we work together to create opportunities for people with disabilities in Georgia to become engaged with their communities.

Sign up today:

www.gccd.org/join-our-mailing-list.html

After hearing from local citizens at roundtable meetings, each region established potential transportation needs and improvements in October that their voters will vote on July 31.

The 12 different regions are:

- Atlanta
- Central Savannah
- Coastal Georgia
- Georgia Mountains
- Heart of Georgia
- Middle Georgia
- Northeast Georgia
- Northwest Georgia
- River Valley Georgia
- Southern Georgia
- Southwest Georgia
- Three Rivers

To see what region you fall under or to learn more information about the list of transportation projects approved in your region, visit www.dot.state.ga.us/localgovernment/FundingPrograms/transreferendum/Pages/ProjectList.aspx.

Important Votes to Be Cast

IN THE NEWS

After almost two years of debate, the long-awaited Transportation Investment Act (TIA), a 1% transportation sales tax aimed at creating opportunities to make transportation more accessible to all Georgians across the State, will be voted on July 31, 2012. The TIA process, which has been underway since being passed by the 2010 Georgia General Assembly, would generate an estimated \$18.67 billion over a 10-year period for significant investments in Georgia's transportation infrastructure according to the Georgia Department of Transportation.

The TIA divided Georgia into 12 different regions and each was required to form a regional commission with a roundtable of elected officials to develop a list of transportation projects. After hearing from local citizens at roundtable meetings, each region established potential transportation needs and improvements in October that their voters will vote on July 31. This will initiate the 1% funds in each region that will fund the projects on the list and within that region's respective boundaries.

The TIA funds could be a critical piece of legislation for Georgia's disability community. Throughout the process, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) has advocated statewide for more transit options and better access for people with disabilities.

John Keys, GCDD's representative in the transportation area, said "Both GCDD and the Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia have consistently sought projects all over Georgia with the following underlying goals for investment:

- Get more transportation options in place in our communities – including more transit
- Provide better access to these transportation options since people can't use transportation options if they can't get to them – via sidewalks and accessibility features (i.e., ramped sidewalks and tactile strips)
- Make information systems available which link all transportation options through a system of mobility management, so people know how to use the transit system we all are trying to build

We also constantly point out that all of these ideas are goals which benefit everyone, not just the disability community, and we emphasize that we seek transportation options that will benefit the total community where we live.”

Georgia’s Primary Election

In addition to deciding the TIA on July 31, 2012, the State of Georgia will hold its general primary election that day. The primary election will narrow the field of candidates for each political party before the presidential general election in November.

The time is now to make your voice heard. For more information on voting guidelines or to locate your polling location, visit www.sos.ga.gov/elections/.

An Introduction to the Administration for Community Living

The US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) announced on April 16, 2012 the creation of a new agency within HHS, the Administration for Community Living (ACL), which aims to increase access to community supports and achieve full community participation for people with disabilities and seniors.

The ACL will combine several existing entities including the Administration on Aging, the Office on Disability and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities into a single agency.

“For too long, too many Americans have faced the impossible choice between moving to an institution or living at home without the long-term services and supports they need,”

stated HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. “The goal of the new Administration for Community Living will be to help people with disabilities and older Americans live productive, satisfying lives.”

According to a statement released by Sebelius, the new agency “will seek to enhance and improve the broad range of supports that individuals may need to live with respect and dignity as full members of their communities. These support needs will go beyond healthcare and include the availability of appropriate housing, employment, education, meaningful relationships and social participation.”

In order to provide general policy coordination and retain the unique programmatic operations specific to the needs of each population, the organization will be structured by the following major components:

- Office of the Administrator
- Administration on Aging (AoA)
- Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD)
- Center for Disability and Aging Policy (CDAP)
- Center for Management and Budget (CMB)

The ACL will be led by Kathy Greenlee, the current Assistant Secretary for Aging, who will serve as the administrator and Henry Claypool, currently the director of the Office on Disability, who will be the principal deputy administrator of the ACL.

Greenlee recently spoke at the National Association of Councils of Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) Technical Assistance Institute in Washington, DC and reported that the ACL was the first new agency in 20 years. She said, “This was our own revolution and our way to be

self-determined. We saw the need to be together.” She also proudly stated that by combining forces, these organizations now have two people at the table of senior leadership and that each component has their own issues and concerns, but there are many commonalities that can be focused on together.

Additionally, the Administration states it will work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service to develop, refine and strengthen policies that promote independent living among all populations, especially those served by Medicaid, and promote home and community-based services.

The ACL states that existing programs under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights, the Older Americans Act and other related programs “will maintain the expertise and resources currently situated in the components coming together under the new organization. The day-to-day management of AoA and ADD programs will remain relatively unchanged, with the current staff retaining their assignments.”

HHS believes establishing a formal entity will bring the infrastructure to ensure consistency and coordination in community living policy across the Federal Government, and the creation of the ACL is the next step following establishment of President Obama’s Community Living Initiative “to ensure the fullest of inclusion of all people in the life of our nation.”

As the organization begins to develop and undergo transformations, GCDD plans to keep this on its watch list and monitor how any changes could affect Georgia’s disability community. To learn more on the Administration for Community Living, visit www.hhs.gov/acl/index.html.



Retiring but not Saying Goodbye

By Dottie Adams

“We may not have had all of the technical skills at the time, but we were willing to do whatever it took to make things work.”



m My career started out by chance some might say. I lived in the small town of Fitzgerald in South Georgia. I was involved in many civic activities including being a Girl Scout leader and a member of the Fitzgerald Junior Woman’s Club. In March of 1977, I was approached by Philip Jay, who ran the Ben Hill County Training Center, an old school building on the outskirts of town where young children, school-aged youth and adults were all grouped together. There were two staff members out on maternity leave and he needed someone to help out temporarily and asked if I would be interested. I didn’t have any experience with people with disabilities, but I was up for the challenge and was assigned a classroom of six school-aged youth.

The PL-94-142, which gave children with disabilities the right to a free, appropriate public education, had been passed in 1975, but the implementation had not filtered to the local level in Georgia yet. I had lots of previous experience with youth through scouting and teaching horseback riding at a summer camp, so I treated these young people as I would any other kids and that seemed to serve us all well. I didn’t have a guidebook or manual to go by. In those days there weren’t very many rules, so we spent our time doing things that made sense. Although I moved away from Fitzgerald six months later, I saw a lot of progress in the kids as they gained confidence in their own abilities and I knew I had found a passion I didn’t know I had inside me.

I moved to North Georgia and was hired to work at the Barrow County Mental Health Center to support people who were moving back into the community from state institutions. The staff was young and enthusiastic. We may not have had all of the technical skills at the time, but we were willing to do whatever it took to make things work. I still remember the first person I helped get out of an institution. He was a man who had autism and moved home to live with his mother. The neighbors were not very welcoming and even held neighborhood meetings on the sidewalk questioning why he was allowed to live there. They would say things like, “He goes out on the porch and smokes cigarettes” and “He walks to the store to take back Coke bottles.” I remember calling John O’Brien, who has been one of my mentors throughout my entire career,

and he advised me to find a way to give this young man a valued role so his neighbors might view him differently. We made sure that if there was a need for someone strong to help out to move branches after a storm or to move the trash can to the street, he might offer to help. It was great advice and a strategy that I often still use.

I spent seven years working at the Mental Health Center and then transferred to the district office that served the 10-county area around Athens. For the next 18 years, I coordinated the Intake and Evaluation (I & E) Team.

My philosophy was that we were there to help people get the supports and services they needed. It was our job to make life easier on people, not more difficult. Some of the supports we used were formal services, but others were natural supports in the community.

For example, if a mom called and asked who she could get to cut her overly active child's hair and we didn't know, we would ask around to other moms or recruit a hairdresser we knew would be willing to try. If a service didn't exist, then we helped develop it and brought in consultants who could help with challenging behaviors or physical concerns. We introduced people to new technologies such as communication systems and adaptive equipment that was on the market. We were

driven by the needs of the people, not by a set of rules. Other I & E teams would wait for the State office to tell them what they should do. Not us. We learned that following the lead of the people in your community was the best approach.

As a result, we were pioneers because we were willing to be creative. We piloted family support in 1985 as a way to prevent the need for out-of-home placement. We started the Early Intervention Services for babies from birth to three in 1989. We collaborated with families to learn more on supported living and then implemented it through the founding of Georgia Options in 1992.

“We learned that following the lead of the people in your community was the best approach.”

We were a part of the Marc Gold Project, which promoted supported employment opportunities in the 1990s. It was a fun time to work in the system. The people who we were supporting were our teachers and taught us what to pay attention to and kept us grounded.

When the I & E teams were moved to the regional offices, I felt that a change might be in order. I had previously worked with the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) on some family support activities, so when the family support coordinator position was open, I applied for the job. I went to work for GCDD in 2002, and it was a good match because there was room for innovation and creativity. The past 10 years here have flown by. I have enjoyed being able to work statewide with many great individuals and families. I have contacts across the State and feel honored to have built these relationships over the years. Family support is such an important concept, not just for families with disabilities but for ALL families.

Working with youth to plan for their future and envision their dreams is so rewarding. Seeing someone have an “aha” moment where they see possibilities to expand is the BEST! Watching a student intern at one of our Project SEARCH sites, a business-led transition program for youth offering career exploration to students with disabilities, go from being a shy, unsure person to becoming a competent, confident employee with a tremendous work ethic is extraordinary. Spending time with families from diverse cultures and helping them see new opportunities they had never even imagined is very engaging. And, seeing the pride someone feels in himself and his hard work is amazing.





In 2008 and 2009, I had two bouts with cancer. It is a life-changing event that makes you re-prioritize your life. At my last appointment with my oncologist, I told him I was retiring at the end of July. He started shaking his head. He knows me well. He said, "You can't retire." I told him I knew that and I planned to return later and work half time. It is hard to retire from who you are. This work is not a job. It's who I am and who I was meant to be. Don't get all worked up thinking I'm out of here. No way! As Arnold Schwarzenegger said, "I'll be back."

Even though Dottie is one of the busiest people I know, her commitment to families is one of her greatest attributes. Regardless of what else is on her plate, she will be there if needed to support or assist a family. She truly believes that when people with disabilities are not participating in their community, it's the community that's "missing out."

There probably isn't a single provider organization in the State that hasn't been impacted by her work, or at least knows her name. Although Dottie makes her opinions and visions for people with disabilities clear wherever she is or whatever she is involved in, providers are not offended by her views and often even solicit her advice and assistance.

Dottie has helped numerous families realize a future they probably would not have without her participation and is valued and appreciated by people all over the country. Her work, advocacy and dedication in the disability community will be truly missed.

LINDA HAZINSKI

I first met Dottie over 20 years ago when I moved to Athens and we both worked at Northeast Georgia Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services. She worked on the Intake and Evaluation interdisciplinary team and I served as director of several service centers. Since both of us worked with people who needed supports and person-centered planning, our work crossed in many ways. In reality, Dottie was a pioneer for person-centered and family support planning. She worked closely with staff to train, teach and make us truly understand what person-centered support meant and how it could change lives.

Dottie is extremely intuitive in supporting people to live their dreams and have meaningful lives in the community. She listens with her heart when people express their

DOTTIE ADAMS

Over her career, Dottie has formed both professional and personal lifelong relationships with many of her colleagues. The following comments are just a few of the many people Dottie has impacted over the past 35 years.

JOY EASON HOPKINS

I have known Dottie since about 1984 and I have come to learn that there is only one Dottie and no one can fill her shoes. I have been lucky enough to develop both a professional and personal relationship with her over the years, including the birth of my child and her godson, who is now 18.

Dottie has always had an admiration and appreciation for people who work in direct support roles and worked to create learning opportunities for them. This is an interest and commitment we both share, and it has helped join us to work on numerous projects including statewide conferences, individual futures planning sessions, core gifts workshops, storytelling events and a direct support professional statewide project initiated by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities in 2003.



"Dottie has always had an admiration and appreciation for people who work in direct support roles and worked to create learning opportunities for them."

"It is hard to retire from who you are. This work is not a job. It's who I am and who I was meant to be."

desires, and she is tireless in reaching out to the community and finding opportunities for individuals to realize their dreams.

Later on I became the director of Developmental Disabilities Services at Advantage Behavioral Health Systems and Dottie moved from Athens to work for GCDD, but we kept in touch. For seven years in a row, Dottie came to present on person-centered planning to the students in the Direct Support Professional Certificate Program classes Sally Carter and I taught at Athens Tech. Each year my students rave about her presentation and say she brings clarity to the subject.

“She listens with her heart when people express their desires, and she is tireless in reaching out to the community and finding opportunities for individuals to realize their dreams.”

Dottie has been a great role model and mentor to me. I’ve learned to listen to people and what they are communicating and how important it is to build relationships and opportunities in the community. She is a dear friend and inspires me both professionally and personally.

She gives her time to everyone and goes above and beyond to help individuals achieve their goals and maintain her relationships outside of a professional setting. Her dedication amazes me. She will work all day and then stay up late at night making quilts to raise money for the American Cancer Society and a team she organizes and supports for her own doctor’s relay for life team.

Dottie is an inspiration and has touched so many people’s lives. She will be missed, but I know she is the type of person who always gives her gifts and will be back to help whenever she is needed.

MARY KISSEL

I met Dottie about 24 years ago when I was new in Georgia. While trying to decide whether to move here with our 21-year-old son, who needed extensive services and supports, I was given her name as someone who knew the disability community.

At the time, there was only one provider of residential services for people with disabilities in Athens, and they would not take our son, whom they described as “too disabled.” Although Dottie couldn’t help us get services, she tolerated my numerous phone calls and connected me with other parents who were equally desperate for services.

Dottie invited me to the seminar where I first learned about supported living. Soon I began to attend more seminars, conferences and workshops, until I found myself on a path of becoming a “professional parent” determined to make a meaningful life possible for not only my son, but other people’s children as well. I call Dottie one of my first teachers on this path to new ways of thinking about our son’s life and we soon began to work more closely together. Dottie was instrumental in the founding of Georgia Options.

Since the 70s, Dottie tried to advocate for person-centered services in a system that was not necessarily geared up for it. Through Dottie’s example and the many conversations we had, I began to envision a transformed life for our son. She told me that once you get the “aha” moment, you can never go back to old ways of thinking about services. And she was right.

So how do I describe Dottie? Hardworking up to and past the deadline. She once told me “We can work miracles in 24 hours.” She is knowledgeable, especially about personal futures planning, totally committed to people with disabilities and their families, endlessly patient, loyal to her friends, fearless in doing what is right for people and always optimistic in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Surely, she will be missed. Just as surely, she deserves some rest. Well done, Dottie.



“Through Dottie’s example and the many conversations we had, I began to envision a transformed life for our son. She told me that once you get the “aha” moment, you can never go back to old ways of thinking about services.”





Lois Curtis and President Obama

Olmstead: A Reflection on the 1999 Landmark Supreme Court Decision

By Becca Bauer

Because of two women brave enough to stand up for their rights, the Olmstead case had a profound impact on the disability rights movement, the supports for people with disabilities and tens of thousands of people have been released from unjust and unnecessary institutionalization.

SET OUR
PEOPLE
FREE!

1 It has been nearly 13 years since the United States Supreme Court decided the landmark Olmstead Decision that challenged the unnecessary institutionalization of individuals with disabilities. The Supreme Court held that under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals with developmental disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than institutions.

Although the decision was decided in 1999, the story began long before. Two Georgia citizens, Lois Curtis and the late Elaine Wilson, who both spent the majority of their lives receiving mental support services in state institutions, decided they wanted to get out and make the transition into the community. After clinical assessments by State employees and their treatment teams, both women were determined to be better off receiving treatment in an integrated community-based setting rather than a state-run institution. Nevertheless, both were denied release and filed suit in 1995 for disability services in the community, sparking what began as a local fight for the rights of people with disabilities into a national phenomenon.

The Atlanta Legal Aid Society, led by attorney Sue Jamieson, brought the case to court on behalf of Curtis and Wilson. According to Atlanta Legal Aid, they argued the position that “The State of Georgia could no longer offer disability services to a person with mental or physical disabilities in an institutional setting if an individual could be better served in a community-based setting.”

The case was heard in 1997 in the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Georgia and produced a successful outcome, ruling that the State was under violation of the ADA Act for failing to provide individuals with integrated community services. After the ruling, the State of Georgia appealed to the US Supreme Court, which set off the landmark case, known as *Olmstead v L.C. and E.W.* The case was brought against the late Tommy Olmstead, the Georgia State Commissioner of Human Resources at the time, and created national attention, bringing hundreds of disability advocates to rally in Washington, DC as the case unfolded.

Again the Court upheld the decision that the continued institutionalization of people “Who can handle and benefit from community settings perpetuated unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life” and violated the ADA Act.

Because of two women brave enough to stand up for their rights, the Olmstead case had a profound impact on the disability rights movement, the supports for people

with disabilities and tens of thousands of people have been released from unjust and unnecessary institutionalization.

What's Going on With Georgia's Olmstead Plan Now?

The 1999 Supreme Court ruling prompted that each state must comply with the Olmstead Decision and meet the obligations under the ADA Act and “demonstrate that it had a comprehensive, effectively working plan for placing qualified persons ...” with disabilities “... in less restrictive settings and a waiting list that moved at a reasonable pace.”

As the Olmstead State, Georgia began constructing an Olmstead plan shortly after the Supreme Court's decision; however, Georgia has yet to fully implement a plan 13 years later. Over the years several attempts were made to move Georgia closer to Olmstead compliance, and various plans were drafted, as well as the creation of an Olmstead Planning Committee in 2001.

A draft Olmstead plan was completed in 2010, while Governor Sonny Perdue was in office, at the same time Georgia and the Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreement was completed. The lawsuit charged the State with unlawful segregation of people with developmental disabilities and mental illness in state facilities in violation the ADA Act and the Olmstead Decision. The settlement agreement resulted in Georgia's continued commitment to comply with Olmstead and expanded on the State's previous plans, which include efforts from 2003 and 2008.

Under the agreement, the State had to provide community alternatives to the institutionalization of people with developmental disabilities, in addition to services for those at-risk of institutionalization to prevent future admissions. According to the agreement, over the next five years, Georgia must increase

assertive community treatment, intensive case management, case management, supported housing and supported employment programs to serve 9,000 individuals with mental illness in community settings among other things.

The agreement also increases community crisis response through crisis services centers, crisis stabilization programs, mobile crisis response and crisis apartments. It also creates additional Medicaid waivers to transition individuals with developmental disabilities from state hospitals to community settings and increased crisis, respite, family and housing support services will be available to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Since the agreement, Corinna Magelund, the current Olmstead coordinator and Olmstead planning committee (OPC) chairman, says, “The committee has been working to align the Georgia Olmstead Plan with the 2010 Georgia/DOJ Settlement Agreement and to expand on the 2010 draft plan to ensure it is current with important initiatives ongoing in State agencies and communities.”

“The major changes focus on initiatives that include more resourcing of home and community-based services, including individuals with disabilities in publicly-funded programs in institutional settings, diversion of individuals at risk of institutionalization and housing partnerships that support Olmstead principles,” she says.

Although the OPC recognizes this will be an ongoing effort and that the goals may change or be reevaluated through the process, the committee has identified nine strategic goals to focus on:

- **Olmstead Compliance:** Support the US Supreme Court Decision
- **Transition:** Move individuals who meet Olmstead criteria from institutions to integrated community settings with appropriate supports/services for the individual

“The committee has been working to align the Georgia Olmstead Plan with 2010 Georgia/DOJ Settlement Agreement and to expand on the 2010 draft to ensure it is current with important initiatives ongoing in state agencies and communities.”



Under the agreement, the State had to provide community alternatives to the institutionalization of people with developmental disabilities, in addition to services for those at-risk of institutionalization to prevent future admissions.

“The major changes focus on initiatives that include more resourcing of home and community-based services...”

Top Photo:
Josh Norris and GCDD's, Dottie Adams
Bottom Photo:
Renita Bundrage and Bernard Baker

The OPC has been organizing workgroups and focus groups where all are invited to listen to discussions on the Olmstead and share their opinions, so the plan will take in account all those who will be impacted by it.

- **Diversion:** Divert individuals at risk for institutionalization into the most integrated settings with adequate supports for the needs of the individual
- **System Capacity:** Develop providers, support networks, systems and communities to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining person-centered services
- **Resources:** Develop resources to eliminate the unnecessary institutionalization of individuals with disabilities whose needs can be met in the community
- **Evaluation:** Create a structure for reviewing the progress and barriers to implementation of the Olmstead Plan and obtain input from individuals we serve, families, guardians, stakeholders, providers, state agencies, legislators and others involved
- **Sustainment:** Ensure long-term funding and quality of service and support through strategies, policies and procedures that can be sustained over their lifetime in the community. Sustain systems that meet person-centered planning need requirements
- **Policy:** Create and implement policies to support Olmstead compliance
- **Data:** Create data systems that provide accurate, timely information to provide safe and healthy environments, manage resources, develop strategies and evaluate progress

As the plan is being developed, it is receiving input from a diverse group of people including individuals with disabilities, their families, advocates, state agencies and providers. The OPC has been organizing workgroups and focus groups where all are invited to listen to discussions on the Olmstead Plan and share their opinions, so the plan will take into account all those who will be impacted by it.

The plan will then be reviewed by the Olmstead Planning Committee and state agencies. After any recommendations are added and the plan is approved, it will be

presented to the Governor's Office as the recommended Georgia Olmstead Plan. The Governor's Office of Policy and Budget will then review the plan with state agencies for final approval and implementation.

Magelund and the rest of the committee aim to have the plan completed for review by January 2013, but know the task ahead is ambitious and could change. "I am excited about my opportunity to work as Georgia's Olmstead coordinator, and we have just completed many hours of intense workgroup meetings developing our draft Olmstead Plan," she said. "I am proud of our efforts so far. More importantly, this updated plan will assist our State in making a major investment in Olmstead and assisting individuals with disabilities to live in integrated settings in our community."

Long Road Home – Olmstead, It's the Law! Set Our People Free!

Each year, People First of Georgia organizes and hosts a series of Long Road Home events dedicated to honoring the 1999 Olmstead Decision that restored rights to thousands of people with disabilities and recognizes the two women, Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson, who started it all.

Long Road Home celebrations were first started in 2004 by Kate Gainer as the founding chairperson and have honored the Olmstead Decision through marches, rallies and public events to bring public awareness to the importance of the decision, as well as the fact that many people are still waiting to transition from state hospitals and nursing homes and be integrated into the community. For the 13th annual Olmstead anniversary, Long Road Home threw a series of events across Georgia for two weeks, visiting eight different locations. The main Long Road Home celebration was held on June 22 in the Georgia State Capitol featuring several well-known state advocates and displays from artists with disabilities including Lois Curtis.

Cheri Mitchell, former president of People First of Georgia and a driving force behind



SET OUR
PEOPLE
FREE!

spreading Long Road Home nationally, opened the celebration and thanked those in attendance for their support and dedicated her advocacy efforts to her late husband, Samuel Mitchell, a leader in People First and Long Road Home who continually fought for the rights of all people with disabilities.

The MC of the event kept the crowd entertained and in laughter with a “name that speaker” guessing game. Among those who addressed the Long Road Home supporters were Renita Bundrage, current People First of Atlanta president and Vice President of People First of Georgia, Bernard Baker, providing a history of People First and Long Road Home; Edith Shokes from the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network; Jacques Swattford, a 16-year US Army veteran sharing about his disability and Linda Pogue on behalf of Lois Curtis.

Talley Wells, director of the Disability Integration Project at the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, said he is focused on ensuring that Olmstead is implemented. “A lot has been done, but it’s still moving slowly,” Wells said. “Olmstead needs to be as well known in Atlanta as Coca-Cola because it is that important.”

The Director of Legal Advocacy for the Georgia Advocacy Office, Josh Norris, also spoke on the importance of moving people with disabilities into the most integrated setting. Norris was influential in the Department of Justice’s Settlement Agreement and continues to play a key role in its implementation. He remarked that while the process has been slow, there is finally beginning to be progress with Georgia’s Olmstead Plan.

The event also featured an open mic time where more than four people volunteered to share their joy and freedom stories on leaving their facilities and becoming an integrated member of the community.

As the celebration came to an end, Bernard Baker united all of those in attendance into one voice, chanting, “Get us out. Keep me out. Don’t put me in,” made well known by Sam Mitchell, in the State Capitol for all

to hear and leaving a lasting impact. Afterwards, guests were invited to browse the artwork displays of Lois Curtis and Jerome Lawrence.

Where is Lois Curtis Now?

After bravely stepping up to voice her rights and desire to live in a community-integrated setting rather than the state facilities, where she had spent the majority of her life, Lois Curtis has been living independently in Stone Mountain, GA for 18 months. She no longer attends a day program, but she participates in a variety of activities in the community, such as art classes. Lois meets regularly with her Microboard members, which are formalized circles of support.

Linda Pogue, a friend and one of Lois’ Microboard members, speaks on Lois’ opportunity to live independently in the community, “It is the little things Lois shows she enjoys. For instance, she can go into her kitchen and make her own coffee whenever she wants,” she said. “Lois has control of her own kitchen.” Pogue also said Lois enjoys visiting with her neighbors and friends, visiting Stone Mountain Village, going to coffee shops and restaurants and spending time on her patio.

Lois is also becoming a recognized artist and devotes much of her time to her artwork. Lois has participated in several exhibitions and her artwork has been displayed in venues across the country. One of Lois’ greatest memories is returning to Washington, DC 12 years after her landmark case, where she had the honor to meet President Obama in the Oval Office and present him with a gift of one of her original paintings.

Today, Lois travels across Georgia and the US sharing her story and addressing supporters and advocates on the importance of Olmstead. She makes sure people are aware that there are still many people with disabilities stuck in facilities and being deprived of their rights, and she encourages people to stand up for themselves and live their dreams.



“A lot has been done, but it’s still moving slowly. Olmstead needs to be as well known in Atlanta as Coca-Cola because it is that important.”

SET OUR
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FREE!

THE FOOD JUSTICE MOVEMENT has been gaining momentum in Georgia, and the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is becoming active in the movement through several projects within its Real Communities Initiative. The Forsyth Farmers' Market in Savannah is working with GCDD through the Real Communities Initiative to unite the whole community, including those with developmental disabilities, through the farmers' market and access to local, healthy foods. The Forsyth Farmers' Market brings together everyone in the community from local restaurant owners and farmers to customers. The following are perspectives from two people involved in the Forsyth Farmers' Market and who are focused on using local, healthy food to bring together communities and try to eliminate the barriers to accessible food.

PERSPECTIVES



KRISTIN
RUSSELL

Kristin Russell owns the Sentient Bean coffee shop and cafe in Savannah, GA. She grew up on a farm in Kansas and studied environmental policy in college in Minnesota. Russell is a founder of the Forsyth Farmers' Market, involved in the Real Communities project and sits on the Savannah Chatham Food Policy Council.

“It is about rewiring our communities by building relationships using one of the most basic means of communication and commerce.”

Using Food to Rebuild Communities

By Kristin Russell

Ever since I left my family farm, I've been alarmed at the distance, both physically and psychologically, between people and the food we consume. That was my driving force over a decade ago to open a coffee shop and cafe that attempted to source products responsibly. I wanted to encourage people to be more conscious of what they were purchasing.

As the years roll by, I've learned that the real magic for most people isn't as much about the source of the food, as it is about the relationships they forge with me, my staff and other customers. Food just opened the door to thinking differently about each other. Based on this, I consciously try to create an atmosphere where sharing a food experience may transcend all sorts of social barriers.

I've become engaged in more endeavors to support a stronger local food economy, such as the Forsyth Farmers' Market in Savannah, and I try to constantly keep this lesson in mind. Nothing forms our consumption patterns more than personal relationships and most of us don't have enough or deep enough personal relationships in our lives. Supporting a local food scene is about more than local economy, health or the environment, which are all important.

Since food is something everyone needs, spends time thinking about and should have easy access to, it can be a powerful tool to rebuild communities that make better sense for everyone.

Farmers' markets in particular, are a great place to start rewiring our communities using some of our most basic means of commerce and communication. These personal transactions are a pleasant way for people to start thinking differently about their food choices. The growth of farmers' markets and businesses that use local food sources present great opportunities for us to alleviate disparities in access to local, healthy food and help everyone feel closer to what they are eating. If we start to appreciate and even expect to develop a relationship with the people who grow our food, then perhaps we can start building more and deeper relationships with everyone around us.

Understanding the Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network Development in the South

By Cynthia Hayes

“Organic production is the fastest growing segment of the agriculture sector due to large consumer demand, health and environmental concerns and its economic potential.”

PERSPECTIVES

I have spent the last six years working with some of the most astounding, gracious and faith-filled people I have ever known: our farmers. The Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON) started as a small gathering of family farmers who believed they could change the quality of food they grew for their communities.

On July 6, 2006 farmers representing 15 African American farms from Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama gathered in Savannah, GA for an intensive three-day organic certification workshop. The workshop was a collaborative effort spearheaded by myself and Dr. Owusu Bandele, since we both shared a burning passion to increase the number of certified organic African American farmers in the South.

Organic production is the fastest growing segment of the agriculture sector due to large consumer demand, health and environmental concerns and its economic potential. However, there have been several reasons African Americans are not certified organic farmers. Many agricultural professionals in the South don't advocate organic production, and for some farmers the daunting and lengthy 19-page application process was a deterrent.

The first organic training sessions were a component of a regional project involving the Southern Food System Educational Consortium (SOFSEC), which included a number of historically black 1890 Land Grant Universities, and community-based

organizations. The project was initially funded by a grant obtained from the United States Department of Agriculture, the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS) program, and led in the organic component by the Southern University.

The farmers requested an organization that would identify and celebrate their success, and so SAAFON was formed soon after the second training to help address their needs and concerns. With co-ops membership, SAAFON is now 121 farmers strong in six states and the US Virgin Islands.

SAAFON has come a long way since the beginning and is also proudly one of the founders of the Forsyth Farmers' Market in Savannah and often has a booth at the market selling products by SAAFON farmers.

Being a part of the network makes the farmers involved in this project feel they have already taken a giant historic step in improving the economic and environmental sustainability of their farms, while increasing the chance of preserving a vanishing yet important resource ... *our land.*



CYNTHIA HAYES

Cynthia Hayes has worked as a program development consultant for rural community-based organizations for over 30 years. She has worked throughout the US, Caribbean and Central and South America. She is the founder of the Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network, a network of farmers dedicated to using sustainable growing practices, located in Savannah, GA. For more information on SAAFON, visit www.saaфон.org/.





Planting the Seeds of Community-Building Inspires Growth of Food Justice Movement

By Carmel Garvin Hearn



“Food justice represents a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities.”

Have you ever sat on your grandmother’s knee, watching her snap fresh beans that she picked out of her garden, or stopped by a roadside stand and picked out a delicious watermelon for your July 4th picnic? If so, you have enjoyed locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Although Georgia is an agriculture-rich state where farms and roadside produce stands are still a common sight, there are many people who may not have access to fresh, locally grown food. Barriers to access may include physical or developmental disabilities, lack of transportation, poverty or homelessness. To overcome these barriers, a statewide initiative has emerged from a national movement based on the concept of “food justice.”

But what does the food justice movement actually mean? According to Robert Gottlieb & Anupama Joshi, authors of *Food Justice* (MIT Press), “Food advocates may work on several different issue areas, but share the common goal of challenging the injustices that exist throughout the dominant industrial and increasingly globalized food system. Food justice represents a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities.”

The main focus of the movement is that it is not the food that is lacking in society, but the ability to fairly provide access to it for everyone, especially those with social and economic disparities.

The food justice movement has been happening across Georgia for some time, a trend that the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is fully on board with through several projects within its Real Communities Initiative.

GCDD’s Real Communities Initiative goal is to connect people with developmental disabilities and their organizations to other citizens and their associations to act collectively on community issues, while being guided by Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) principles and GCDD values to improve life in communities. The Real Communities Initiative helps build strong bridges to community associations, leaders and alliances that reach outside the boundaries of disability, so that a wider network benefits from the energy and gifts of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

GCDD’s vision for participating in the food justice movement is to achieve healthy living for all Georgians by eliminating barriers that prevent people from having access to local foods. But results are also revealing this initiative is about much more than

connecting people with fresh food. It's about bringing communities together.

Currently three out of the seven GCDD Real Communities Initiative projects across Georgia are promoting community engagement through increased access of healthy, fresh and local food in innovative ways.

In Savannah, a farmers' market was developed three years ago and now attracts hundreds of farmers, backyard gardeners, local restaurant buyers and happy customers from a 60-mile radius every week. A community garden in Macon is allowing people from a transitional neighborhood to come together and share their love for gardening and cooking with each other. And, the largely-immigrant City of Clarkston also recently started a community garden and a farmers' market to connect a diverse population representing many cultures and languages.

Each of these cities teamed up with GCDD through Real Communities to bring the food justice movement to life in interactive ways that reach the whole community, including those with developmental disabilities.

The Savannah Forsyth Farmers' Market

The Forsyth Farmers' Market, a project of Southeastern Green Network, Inc., is a producer-only market in Savannah's large downtown park. The northern end of the 30-acre park lies on the edge of the affluent Landmark Historic District, while the southern tip extends into the Victorian District, an area that declined with urban flight in the 1960s but is beginning to blossom again.

The market opened on the south side of the park in April 2009 and now operates every Saturday year-round. Local farmers offer a variety of freshly picked produce including free range meats, fresh pasta, homemade breads, yogurt, cheese, butter, milk, honey, sauces, baked goods,

condiments, fresh flowers, unique plants, pastured eggs, fresh herbs, herbal teas and locally roasted coffee to enthusiastic crowds of shoppers.

"Produce can be purchased in grocery stores, but it's usually not locally grown," said Teri Schell, Forsyth Farmers' Market Real Communities Community Builder. "All of our vendors must grow, raise or cook all of their own food or products. We do not allow re-selling."

"It's easy bringing children with mobility impairments here. I normally try to buy fresh rather than canned or frozen. It's better for them and they love eating fresh food."

"This is our first time here," said Jessica Alshouse of Bryan County, attending with sons, nine-year-old Eli and six-year-old Emerson, who both have autism and Cerebral palsy. "It's easy bringing children with mobility impairments here. I normally try to buy fresh rather than canned or frozen. It's better for them and they love eating fresh food."

Alshouse's children were soon immersed in the market, planting vegetable seeds at the "Bring it Home" booth, under the instruction of Jonathan Harper. Children are encouraged to return each Saturday to see their seedlings mature and can eventually take them home to start their own backyard gardens. Harper is one of more than 20 community member volunteers, known as the Mixed Greens, which was developed as part of the Real Communities Initiative. As a volunteer, Harper helps the farmers' market's organizers plan welcoming activities and find meaningful roles in the organization for people with and without disabilities.

"I help kids plant beans and okra," said Mixed Greens' member Johnny Smith. "If I can, I come every Saturday. I don't like to eat fresh food but I love the Farmers' Market."

About seven of the group's members have disabilities, which really illustrates the Mixed Greens' broader focus on community-building.

"Despite the fact that fresh, healthy food is not necessarily Johnny's reason for getting involved, he is very involved," explained Schell. "What he enjoys is being around us, being around the community, working with the kids and taking care of the plants. I think those things are just as important as eating healthy."

The Forsyth Farmers' Market
Photo below (left to right):
Johnny Smith, Teri Schell, Haven
Mellor and Paul Rockwell.





Schell added that the Mixed Greens team is always looking for new people to get involved and is inclusive of all who are interested. Right now she needs an American Sign Language interpreter to help communicate with a market customer who has a hearing impairment.

“We just come up with ideas like the ‘Bring it Home’ booth or a kid’s costume party for Earth Day,” explained Paul Rockwell, another member of the Mixed Greens.

The Forsyth Farmers’ Market also offers adult education, including a canning program, and operates under the nonprofit umbrella of the Southeastern Green Network, which also houses the Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON). “When we opened the market, it was intentional that this would be a place where African American farmers could sell their produce,” explained Schell. “What most people don’t realize is that this park used to be closed to African Americans. We intentionally involve people who were once excluded.”

SAAFON involves a network of 121 farmers in six states and the Virgin Islands who grow organically certified or sustainable products. The Savannah-based SAAFON group was one of the founders of the Forsyth Farmers’ Market and regularly operates a booth offering sales of watermelon juice from fruit produced by SAAFON farmers, with proceeds benefiting the organization.

“We are the organization that helps farmers get certification and stay in compliance,” said Cynthia Hayes, SAAFON project coordinator. “We provide any technical assistance they need to stay organic.”

Schell’s vision for the future of the Forsyth Farmers’ Market is that more members of the community will turn out to help. She would also like to expand the educational component and add additional locations.

“I would like to see some satellite markets in Savannah in neighborhoods that don’t have good access to fresh food, and in neighborhoods where people may not have transportation to get here. If you buy a couple of bags of heavy vegetables, and have to walk a mile to the bus stop, it’s a bit much for some folks.”

Another way the Forsyth Market reduces disparities to healthy, local food is by accepting SNAP (United States Department of Agriculture’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly the Food Stamp program) via EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) cards. Plus, through Wholesome Wave of Georgia, FFM is one of 14 Farmers’ Markets across the State that doubles SNAP/ EBT dollars for purchases and makes it easier for lower income community members to access healthier and affordable food.

“Our mission is to make fresh, regionally grown produce easily accessible to all citizens of Savannah,” added Schell.

The Centenary United Methodist Church in Macon

Beall’s Hill was once a bustling residential district in downtown Macon, and Centenary United Methodist Church was a vital landmark in the flourishing neighborhood. But in the 1950s, residents began to drift to outlying neighborhoods, and by the 1990s, it was known as one of Macon’s most dangerous areas. With dwindling attendance, Centenary faced the real possibility of closing its doors, and it became apparent that neither the neighborhood nor Centenary could survive without making significant changes.

In 2005, church members began a journey of committing themselves to diversity, openness, creativity, risk, patience and prayer to engage the community. These days, hope has been replanted in both the church and the neighborhood.

To learn more about the Forsyth Farmers’ Market, watch a GCDD Real Communities Initiative video project on the market at www.gcdd.org/news-a-media/videos/viewvideo/21/a-gcdd-real-communities-initiative-project.html



“Instead of asking them what we can do for them, we asked them what they could do for their community.”



The Clarkston Community Garden



“With the help of GCDD, we started seeing how our work with Asset-Based Community Development could be more inclusive of persons with developmental disabilities,” said Rev. Stacey Harwell, who serves as Minister of Community Building at Centenary and also as the GCDD Real Communities Community Builder. “We looked at the neighborhood and its assets. Does it have parks? Does somebody have the gift of cooking? Instead of asking them what we can do for them, we asked them what they could do for their community.”

An initial option was to establish a co-op grocery store, but start-up costs were prohibitive and there was already a successful farmers’ market in the downtown area. So, Harwell and a small group of volunteers settled upon the idea of making their community garden accessible for everyone to participate. GCDD provided funding to make the garden all-inclusive and offered finances for wheelchair-height raised beds and organic compost.

“When we formed the garden in 2009, we thought we had included everybody, but with GCDD’s help in raising our awareness, we were able to make accessibility provisions such as adding the wheelchair height beds we would not have thought of,” she explained. “Just because you’re homeless, lower income, have a disability or are otherwise isolated in the community, doesn’t mean you can’t have healthy nutritious food. The community garden is free. Anybody who works in it can get produce.”

Harwell also coordinates a free breakfast offered by the church to the community every Sunday morning. She is working to incorporate the tenets of the food justice movement in that program to benefit local farmers and participants.

“We need to think locally and act globally,” she stated. “We want to buy products that support local farmers and provide nutritious meals. Our standard menu has been grits, eggs, sausage, toast and coffee. But we recently switched to wheat bread and are beginning to offer local foods such as eggs and coffee.”

The City of Clarkston

The City of Clarkston, though small with less than 8,000 residents and boasting only one square mile area, is known for its welcoming attitude and has become one of the most diverse cities in the nation with refugees and immigrants from more than 60 different nationalities who speak 26 different languages.

With so much diversity, GCDD saw a great opportunity to unite people with and without disabilities, as well as international refugees and American-born residents to come together as an inclusive, welcoming community through a Real Communities Initiative. Since hiring a Community Builder in Clarkston in November 2011, a great deal has taken place.

“I wanted to get people engaged and build relationships inside the Clarkston community,” explained Basmat Ahmed, Clarkston’s Real Communities Community Builder. Originally from Sudan, Ahmed moved to Egypt as a child and then immigrated with her family to the US and has lived in Clarkston for the past five years. “For the first six months I met with people – those with and without disabilities – to have fun and build relationships.”



“When we formed the garden in 2009, we thought we had included everybody, but with GCDD’s help in raising our awareness, we were able to make accessibility provisions such as adding the wheelchair height beds we would not have thought of.”



The University of Georgia Offers Healthy Living Classes for Persons with Disabilities

One of every three adults in Georgia is obese. Another 37% are overweight, bringing the combined level of overweight and obesity in adults above 65%. The problem doesn't stop there. One of every three Georgia children is obese or overweight.

The University of Georgia reports that the related health consequences and costs of Georgia's obesity epidemic are equally staggering. Obesity increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers, costing the State an estimated \$2.4 billion annually – the equivalent of \$250 per Georgian each year – in direct healthcare costs and lost productivity from disease, disability and death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What is Georgia doing about obesity? According to the CDC, the State has piloted programs to improve healthy lifestyles at state-run parks and recreation facilities, churches and schools. Programs are underway to teach low income families how to prepare nutritious meals and grant funding is being provided to communities to pilot nutrition and physical activity programs.

But what about persons with physical or developmental disabilities? Is anything being done to help them improve their lifestyles?

“People who are paralyzed are three to four times more likely to become diabetic,” said University of Georgia researcher Kevin McCully, director of the Exercise Vascular Biology Laboratory in the College

of Education's Department of Kinesiology.

This summer UGA has instituted a Healthy Living class for persons with physical disabilities and plans to expand the program to offer a class for persons with developmental disabilities in the fall.

“Our lab started by developing a wellness program for people with physical disabilities and spine injuries,” said Hui-Ju (Zoe) Young, MS, a graduate student in UGA's kinesiology department. “After meeting with persons with developmental disabilities, we decided to plan another type of program for people with developmental disabilities for the fall.”

Young and her research team have been meeting with Mia Nobbie, the daughter of Pat Nobbie, PhD, the GCDD deputy director, and other people with developmental disabilities this summer to get their input in designing the new program.



Through the initiative, Ahmed has helped develop a community garden in Clarkston in conjunction with the Global Growers Network that was planted for the first time in April 2012, on a centrally located plot provided by the county. There are gardeners of 10 different nationalities involved, some with and without disabilities, and each person or family has a small portion of the land to grow his or her own vegetables, flowers, herbs and more.

“Most have a farming background and still want to connect with the land,” Ahmed observed. “They bring their family together, and it reminds them of their home and

culture. Their friends will come and help and spend time around the garden, too.”

Ahmed works closely with GCDD and the Global Growers Network. The Global Growers Network works to create new agricultural opportunities in Georgia for international farmers who were forced to flee their homelands as refugees. The network uses a whole-systems approach to produce good food, train and place farmers and create economic opportunities for local communities in the Decatur-Clarkston-Stone Mountain area.

“Mia is fine with her situation,” explained Nobbie. “She doesn’t see her weight as a problem. I know it’s a problem because it will lead to health issues. Getting her to stay with any program will be a challenge. Mia isn’t going to do anything she does not like doing.”

Nobbie has also been consulting with UGA program coordinators to help them understand how relationships must be built with persons who have developmental disabilities.

“This can’t be an intellectual exercise,” she explained. “You have to go about it in a different way. If you want Mia to engage with you, you have to get to know her in her space.”

Young and her team have determined that the new class will focus on making exercise fun for people with developmental disabilities. It is also expected to provide a learning opportunity for UGA kinesiology students as they

interact with people with disabilities and learn from them about their specific health issues, as well as about the barriers they face.

“The greatest part of the Fun Exercise class is that participants will also be teachers,” said Young. “They will teach the UGA students about what disabilities are – what challenges they have. It will be a two-way education process.”

Young’s main goal with the class is to help people with developmental disabilities lose weight, but she understands that participants need to associate exercise with play in order for the class to be successful.

“They don’t need to understand that they need to lose weight,” she explained. “I am thinking about adding music to the exercise routine or using gymnastic equipment to make it more fun for them.”

There is no cost to participate in either the Healthy Living course

for those with physical disabilities or in the Fun Exercise class for those with developmental disabilities. Both classes will be offered in the fall term, starting in mid-August, and are expected to continue indefinitely. Anyone who begins either program may remain involved as long as they like. New participants are encouraged to join as classes resume each term.

There is no cost to participate in either the Healthy Living course for those with physical disabilities or in the Fun Exercise class for those with developmental disabilities.

For more information, contact Hui-Ju (Zoe) Young (zoey@uga.edu) or Dr. Kevin McCully, (mccully@gua.edu).

One of those opportunities was recently launched in Clarkston with a farmers’ market open every Sunday during the growing season at the Clarkston Community Center.

“Vegetables in stores are not always fresh or organic,” explained Ahmed. “This farmers’ market opens up an opportunity for low income families to get fresh produce and provides a matching program for people with food stamps.”

Although both of these projects are relatively new, Ahmed is working to involve more people from Clarkston’s disability community and already sees positive results from her efforts.

“Our gardeners first thought about growing only,” she remarked. “Now, they’re developing leadership skills. Instead of just growing foods, they’re coming up with ideas for helping people develop social skills.”

“I believe everyone should have a full opportunity to have access to good food. What we have in the Clarkston area is part of food justice,” concluded Ahmed. “We encourage everyone in the community to grow their own food and eat healthy and support gardeners as well. We all can eat healthy and lead better lives together.”

There are gardeners of 10 different nationalities involved, some with and without disabilities, and each person or family has a small portion of the land to grow his or her own vegetables, flowers, herbs and more.



David Satcher,
MD, PhD



Harry J. Heiman,
MD, MPH

EXPERT UPDATE

David Satcher, MD, PhD

Dr. Satcher was the 16th Surgeon General of the United States and former Assistant Secretary for Health in the Department of Health and Human Services. He also served on the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health. He is the director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine.

Harry J. Heiman, MD, MPH

Dr. Heiman is director of Health Policy at the Satcher Health Leadership Institute and Assistant Professor of Family Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine.

“Both food insecurity and obesity are disproportionately seen in low income and minority communities and correlate strongly with neighborhood environments that have limited access to affordable, healthy and nutritious foods.”

The Context of Health: Building Healthy Communities

Where you live is a powerful predictor of your health and projected lifespan. Public health has long appreciated the importance of the context of health. Many reports, including work from the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health, have stressed the important impact social, economic and physical environments have on both health and health equity. This movement towards understanding and addressing the context of health is particularly important to developing solutions to our nation's challenges related to obesity and access to healthy and nutritious foods.

In response to the obesity epidemic, the importance of a healthy diet and regular physical activity is finally gaining national attention. There is increasing awareness supported by media campaigns like the First Lady's "Let's Move!" and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's "Strong4Life." While these campaigns are intended to promote cultural and behavioral changes that support positive health behaviors, there continues to be inadequate attention to the context in which people make health and lifestyle decisions.

The context in which people make decisions about food choices is critically important. Both food insecurity and obesity are disproportionately seen in low income and minority communities and correlate strongly with neighborhood environments that have limited access to affordable, healthy and nutritious foods. Low income communities often qualify as "food deserts," a designation by the US Department of Agriculture for low income census tracts where a substantial number of residents have poor access to a supermarket or large grocery store. Neighborhoods without access to affordable healthy foods often have an overabundance of fast food choices and limited green space or other safe places to exercise.

Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health leaders have stressed the importance of making "the default choice the healthy choice" and transforming "obesogenic"

environments into health-promoting environments. There is a growing body of evidence to support the importance of making healthy choices more accessible, affordable and attractive while, at the same time, making unhealthy foods less appealing. While it is important for individuals to take personal responsibility and make good health decisions, even these decisions are greatly impacted by the social and economic context in which they are made. For adults, the challenges of changing lifelong habits of eating calorie-dense foods high in sugar and salt and having a sedentary lifestyle are formidable. For children, providing an environment that supports the development of healthy habits can be life-changing.

To advance health in all communities, especially those that are most vulnerable and have the worst health outcomes, will require engaged and visionary leadership and empowered communities. We need more community leaders and advocates who understand that health decisions do not occur in isolation; they occur in the context of the neighborhoods in which people live, learn, work and play. Turning the tide of the current obesity epidemic and improving our nation's health will require all of us to work to ensure that healthy choices are more available and more affordable to all communities; that every child and adult lives in an environment that provides opportunities to make healthy choices and be healthy.



A Case Against Self-Determination

By Pat Nobbie, PhD, Mia's Mom

I had one of those weeks where I wondered what the heck was I thinking when I gave up the "Because I'm the Mom!" rationale for getting my children to do what I wanted them to do. And also, what was I thinking when I gave Mia an iPhone?

On Father's Day, the family she lives with and a bunch of Mia's friends planned to go to a Braves game. She wanted to go have lunch with her father, but he had planned to do a postponed Father's Day dinner with her and her siblings on Thursday night. I thought, "Great, she can go to the game." I spent Saturday with her explaining how her dad couldn't do lunch the next day and everyone was going to the Braves game. She kept saying she didn't want to go, but I knew she'd have fun. They were going to have pizza afterwards, and I didn't want her home all day when she could hang out with a bunch of friends at Turner Field. So I left with that plan in place.

"I spent Saturday with her explaining how her dad couldn't do lunch the next day and everyone was going to the Braves game."

Nine o'clock that night she called to tell me, "I called Dad, and he's picking me up after church for lunch." What? I thought we had it all set? I had my other daughter call her dad too and she said he couldn't do lunch. Again, I tried to explain how this whole day is going to go to Mia, but the next morning she calls me in tears about why can't she go to church, her class will miss her, etc. Finally we work it out with her and she goes off to the game and has a great day.

The next day is Mia's first week of camp. She lives with the camp director, so it makes sense for Laura to drive her, even though Monday is Fabersha's day. Fabersha agreed to pick her up from camp and do her shift afterward. Then I get a text message from Laura expressing concern about Mia getting to camp on time at 8 AM since Fabersha is driving her. I'm thinking, "No, I worked it out with Fabersha, and you are taking her." It turns out Mia called Fabersha and made her own arrangements! A few phone calls and texts later, we have this situation worked out.

On their late Father's Day dinner, dad wanted everyone over by 5 PM, but Mia had bowling and McDonalds on her schedule. Annie finally convinces her to forego McDonalds, but she has to wait until bowling ends at 5:30 to get her.

Of course, the whole time these re-arrangements are going on, I'm in Washington, DC in a conference ballroom – a cell phone black hole. Every time I emerge, I have a series of texts or calls I have to respond to before something else falls apart. The good news is Mia is managing her life. The bad news is Mia is managing her life!

Oh, and the iPhone thing? She learned how to go on Game Center and download games. Her phone bill was \$53.00 over the \$29.99 unlimited data package for iPhones. Do I hear "parental controls" anyone?

The good news
is Mia is managing her life.

The bad news
is Mia is managing her life!

MIA'S SPACE

REAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

GCDD's Real Communities are Creating Positive Opportunities

A Core Gifts Training Retreat

Recently, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) hosted a two-day training session for the community builders of the seven GCDD Real Communities to teach the concept of identifying an individual's core gifts. The training was led by Bruce Anderson from Community Activators in Washington, which specializes in providing innovative training and organizational coaching for helping professionals, educators and community activists. Anderson outlined the process of identifying each person's core gift and how it can bring a sense of strength and value to each individual in the community.

The concept of core gifts is especially beneficial for people who are often marginalized in their community and don't think they have any gifts or have anything to offer to the community. GCDD felt that this training would be a useful tool for each community builder to learn and apply within their own communities to help those with developmental disabilities have a sense of self-worth and participation in the community. After the training, one of GCDD's Real Communities, the Korean Coalition, has already taken steps to share what they learned and introduced the core gifts process to their entire group.

Initiating an Inclusive Youth Consortium

GCDD and the Korean Coalition Real Communities Initiative are in the process of developing an inclusive youth consortium that will focus on bringing together youth-serving programs for kids both with and without disabilities. The idea of forming an inclusive youth consortium stemmed from a GCDD learning journey to Kalamazoo, MI in November 2011, which focused on creating a culture of inclusion for all young people and youth programs. Currently, there are several Korean churches in the metro Atlanta area that have separate youth groups for kids with and without disabilities. GCDD and the Korean Coalition are joining forces to apply the knowledge they learned in Kalamazoo about supporting youth community organizations in embracing inclusion.

The process is already underway, and the first meeting was held in May, where Partnerships for Success, a youth-serving organization, shared their experiences of bringing kids with and without disabilities together. The next meeting took place in June and featured guests from the Arcadia Institute, who hosted the GCDD learning journey in Kalamazoo, and shared their knowledge on the role youth organizations can play in creating a welcoming community for all. Although the youth consortium is still in the initial phases, GCDD and the Korean Coalition are encouraging all who serve youth to come learn and share at the meetings to build a collective culture of inclusion.



At the Milton Living Room Conversation

Better Together's mission is to find ways to make everyone in the community feel more welcomed and involved, particularly people with disabilities because in a true community everyone who lives there should feel at home.



The Detroit Learning Journey

The concept of core gifts is especially beneficial for people who are often marginalized in their community and don't think they have any gifts or have anything to offer to the community.

Embarking on a Learning Journey to Detroit

GCDD and members of the Real Communities projects in Savannah and Clarkston embarked on a learning journey in May to Detroit, MI to reflect on the innovative use of food happening there. Both the Savannah and Clarkston projects are using food as starting points for community building and Detroit has established several new techniques, which the Real Communities projects plan to bring back and integrate into their communities.

The learning journey was led by Caitlin Childs, the organizing director of the GCDD Real Communities Initiative, and the group met with several organizations that were working on a local level to transform their communities and neighborhoods through innovative food techniques. Much like the work being explored in Savannah and Clarkston, the learning journey allowed the group to see how Detroit was using community gardening and urban agriculture as a way to not only give people access to fresh, healthy, local food and create economic opportunities, but also as a starting place for community building and engaging folks who have traditionally been dismissed or marginalized in the community.

Introducing the Youth Roving Listening Project

After attending a GCDD Real Communities learning journey to Indianapolis, IN last October, Centenary United Methodist

Church of Macon is taking what they learned and adapting their own model of a roving listening program, a method of beginning deep, meaningful conversations with people in the community to allow those with and without disabilities to interact with each other. The core idea of the project is to go out in the community to look for and understand each person's gifts, as well make them see themselves as having gifts to share rather than deficits.

The church receives a lot of financial assistance requests, but instead of solely doing direct charity, they believe that initiating this program will be a catalyst for how people in the community can help make change by volunteering their gifts and skills.

The project will take place in the Beall's neighborhood in Macon, GA and will launch on July 2. It will involve five people with disabilities, three youth and two adults, who will go out in the community each day to speak with community members about the personal gifts they can share with the rest of the community. At the end of each day, the roving listeners will return and discuss ideas learned and collect contacts to start a "gift economy" and how members of the community can share their gifts with everyone.

Although the roving listening program is being launched as an intensive one-month project, the church is hoping to keep the project going and continue listening meetings once a month.



Sparking Conversations in Milton

One of GCDD's Real Communities, the Better Together Milton Initiative, met on May 11 at a local community center in Macon, GA to host a neighborhood get-together known as the Milton Living Room Conversation, where local residents meet in an informal setting in their community. The meet-up, which was the first of what they hope will be many, was a success with over 55 people from all over the Milton area in attendance.

Better Together's mission is to find ways to make everyone in the community feel more welcomed and involved, particularly people with disabilities because in a true community everyone who lives there should feel at home. The first living room conversation focused on getting to know your neighbors better and brainstorming ideas to take steps to do this. The GCDD Real Communities project plans to use these all-inclusive conversations as a way to make Milton an even friendlier and more welcoming community and is planning to turn the neighborhood conversations into an ongoing series to bring about positive community changes.



Ken Mitchell

STRAIGHT TALK

Ken Mitchell is an advocacy coordinator with DisabilityLINK and he is also involved with:

- Elderly and Disabled Access Advisory Committee (EDAAC) “Member”
- MARTA’s EDAAC Accessibility Committee “Chairman”
- Concerned Transit Riders for Equal Access (CTREA)
- People 1st of Atlanta Chapter Transportation Committee
- ADAPT of GA Transportation Committee
- GA Council of the Blind and Atlanta “Member”
- National Federation of the Blind, of GA, and of Metro Atlanta
- Transportation Committee Representative
- Rural Human Services Transportation
- HST Advisory Committee
- Disabled American Veteran
- Mobility Manager/Independent Living Coach State of GA and Southeast
- Rep US (a network of NCIL, APRIL, Easter Seals and the FTA)
- GDOT/GDC Technical Coordinating Group

The Best Way to Impact the Future is to Help Create It

By Ken Mitchell

How does transportation affect my life? It seems that is a question everyone asks me, and you would think I would have a decent answer by now.

Recently, my brother, who is two years older than me and with whom I am very close to, asked me why I didn’t visit like I used to. I was guessing he meant before I lost my sight. It did not occur to him that he had moved a mile and a half from the public transit line and no longer was the idea of “dropping” over to say hi so easy. Everything, (and I mean everything) must be planned days in advance.

I am luckier than some because I live within walking distance to a train station. Although proximity makes using transportation options easier for me, it does not necessarily mean they are accessible.

For example, something as simple as pathways often come with barriers for me. They can be broken, cracked or there could even be no designated sidewalk or curb cuts. Just because you have made it to a bus station does not mean you are in the home stretch. You can face broken elevators, low lighting, yellow tape and long waiting times. There is poor signage and too often you may just miss the bus because there was no announcement.

Since I cannot simply move to and from places without detailed planning, where I work, shop or spend my social life is affected by my accessible and available transportation options. Transportation is the number one reason people with disabilities stay at home and would be the number one reason I would

stay at home. It is for this reason I defend the need for more and improved transit. You see, without accessible public transportation, my community contact would be limited to the distance only my feet can take me.

Around the time this article comes out, those of us who care about transportation will have had the opportunity to vote on the Transportation Investment Act (TIA), a 1% sales tax to support transportation improvements in 12 separate regions throughout Georgia.

I wonder if we, the people who use transit, will make sure our voices are heard. How are we supposed to create meaningful relationships and be active participants in the community if we do not have the means to get there? Transportation problems are a statewide issue and not just something the disability community worries about.

After the vote, will we have continue to say to ourselves, “The sidewalks are broken, the buses are late and the trains don’t make announcements?” Whether in rural Georgia or in Atlanta and whether you have a disability or not, transportation is one of the most pressing issues facing Georgia as a whole community.

The best way to impact the future is by helping create it. We hold the power to make our needs heard by going to the polls on July 31 and voting.

July

July 19 - 20

GCDD Quarterly Meeting
Atlanta, GA
404.657.2126

July 19

Making a Difference
Annual Appreciation Ceremony
Westin Atlanta Hotel
Atlanta, GA
404.657.2121

July 19

All About Developmental Disabilities
(AADD) Volunteer Orientation
Decatur, GA
suzie@aadd.org
<http://aadd.org/volunteer-orientation>

July 25

2012 Autism Society National
Conference and Expo
San Diego, CA
www.autism-society.org

August

August 3-5

Abilities Expo
Houston, TX
www.abilitiesexpo.com

September

September 15

Gwinnett County:
Emergency Preparedness
Annadal Village
Suwanee, GA
770.995.3339
getreadygwinnett@gmail.com

September 22

The 28th Annual Georgia Artist
with Disabilities Exhibition
Atlanta, GA
www.georgiaartistwd.org

September 27

Waddie Welcome and the
Beloved Community Presentation
Jepson Center for the Arts,
Neises Auditorium
Savannah, GA
www.savannahcitizenadvocacy.org

September 28 - October 24

Eye-to-Eye – The Making of We
Savannah, GA
www.savannahcitizenadvocacy.org

October

October 7

Down Syndrome Association
of Atlanta Buddy Walk
Centennial Olympic Park
770.262.7021
dhibben@bellsouth.net

October 10-12

GA APSE 2012 Statewide Conference
Georgia APSE; Advancing Employment
UGA Center for Continuing Education
Athens, GA
www.gapsenetwork.com

October 15-16

2012 NACDD Annual Conference
Los Angeles, CA
www.nacdd.org

October 18-19

GCDD Quarterly Meeting
Bainbridge/Thomaston, GA
404.657.2126

2012 CALENDAR

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 September 1 to be included in the fall calendar. For a full list of events, visit: gcdd.org/events-calendar

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHT:

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities presents a new Real People Close-Up, an occasional series of stories from people with developmental disabilities and their families. In this Real People Close-Up, you'll hear from Sarah Tekele, who escaped from a military coup in Ethiopia and arrived at a United States refugee camp in Sudan, speak on her son Abraham who was born with developmental disabilities.



RESOURCES

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

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

State Government

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

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

Department of Community Affairs
www.dca.ga.gov

Georgia Housing Search
www.georgiahousingsearch.org
877.428.8844

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

General Information
www.georgia.gov

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

Around GCDD

GCDD Grant Opportunities
www.gcdd.org/funding.html

GCDD's Mailing List
www.gcdd.org/join-our-mailing-list.html

News

Administration for Community Living
www.hhs.gov/acl/index.html

Election Polling Information
www.sos.ga.gov/elections/

Transportation Investment Act Project Lists
www.dot.state.ga.us/localgovernment/FundingPrograms/transreferendum/Pages/ProjectList.aspx

Olmstead Plan Feature

Department of Justice
www.justice.gov/

Disabilities Services Ombudsman/OPC Committee
www.dso.georgia.gov/

Long Road Home
www.peoplefirstga.org/index.php/long-road-home.html

Lois Curtis
<http://loiscurtisart.com/>

Perspectives

Savannah Forsyth Farmers' Market
<http://forsythfarmersmarket.com/>

The Sentient Bean Coffee Shop
www.facebook.com/sentientbean

Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON)
www.saaфон.org/

Food Justice Feature

Centenary United Methodist Church
<http://centenarymacon.org/>

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/georgia.html

Clarkston Farmers' Market
www.clarkstoncommunitycenter.org/

Food Justice, by Robert Gottlieb & Anupama Joshi
www.foodjusticebook.org/

Savannah Forsyth Farmers' Market
<http://forsythfarmersmarket.com/>

Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON)
www.saaфон.org/

Southeastern Green Network
www.sogreennetwork.org/

University Of Georgia Obesity Initiative
<http://obesity.ovpr.uga.edu/>

US Dept of Agriculture's Food & Nutrition Service – SNAP Benefits
www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm

Wholesome Wave of Georgia
www.wholesomewavegeorgia.org/

Global Growers Network
<http://globalgrowers.net/grow-with-us.html>

Real Communities

Community Activators
www.communityactivators.com/

Straight Talk

disABILITY Link
<http://disabilitylink.org/wordpress/>

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If you are interested in being a sponsor for *Making a Difference* magazine, please call Kim Shapland @ 770.578.9765.

Developmental Disabilities Services Tools for Independence

- Residential: Highly individualized community living and residential supports.
- Tools for Independence WORKS: Training and employing adults with developmental disabilities for meaningful community access or work. Also provides creative resources for businesses and the community. Includes LifeWORKS day program.
- Transition Supports: Life and prevocational skills development.

770.677.9345 | TFI@jfcs-atlanta.org

YourToolsforLiving.org

JF&CS is a proud partner of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta.

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The Clarkston Community Garden