

MAKING a DIFFERENCE

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



**NEWS
FOR YOU:**

SAYING GOODBYE: GCDD Deputy Director Pat Nobbie, PhD

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA: Issues on the Table for 2013

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: Getting People Involved

GCDD
GEORGIA COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

On the Cover:

Pat and Mia Nobbie in front of Mia's house in Athens, GA as they both take on new challenges in 2013.

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



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MAKING a DIFFERENCE

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GCDD's Pat Nobbie Taking on a New "Club"

Saying goodbye to Pat Nobbie as she leaves

GCDD to work on policy on the national level 8

Get Ready for the 2013

Legislative Agenda Session:

Issues on the table for the 2013 legislative session 12

It's Time to Get People Involved in Our Communities:

Insight on the need to promote civic engagement
of all people and engage the disability community 18

Disability Day Preview:

Don't miss rallying on the Capitol Steps. RSVP now! 23

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

GCDD Viewpoint	Expert Update		
2013 – A Year for Change	3	A look into voting experiences of people with disabilities	22
Governor's Article	Mia's Space		
Hope and Enthusiasm for 2013	4	Nothing Will Change	25
News	Real Communities Initiative		
GCDD honored with awards for Real Communities Initiative and children's advocacy	5	GCDD's Real Communities promoting community connections	26
Around GCDD	Straight Talk		
GCDD welcomes new energy and continues expanding with partners	6	My First Voting Experience	28
Perspectives	Calendar		
A look into civic engagement for all	16	29
Resources	Cartoon & Sponsors		
.....	30	31



2013 – A Year for Change

Happy New Year! 2013 has already proven to be a year of change and excitement for the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD). First, we welcome new members recently appointed to GCDD by Governor Deal, and we are excited to have new energy brought into our organization. We also thank those who have rotated off the Council for their service to us, the State and to Georgians with developmental disabilities and their families.

Without their leadership over the last years, GCDD wouldn't have experienced the many accomplishments it has achieved. Second, it is with sadness that we say goodbye to Pat Nobbie, GCDD's Deputy Director for 12 years. We wish her the best of luck in her new role as a Kennedy Fellow working with Congress to address issues important to people with disabilities and their families.

This year brings many economic and policy challenges in both the Georgia General Assembly and the US Congress. In November, millions in Georgia and around the country went to the polls and voted, resulting in about 70 new members to the General Assembly and many new members to the US House of Representatives and Senate. However, for many people with disabilities, participation in the civic act of voting was not that simple. While more polling places are physically accessible, many people with disabilities are still discriminated against and others chose not to participate at all. This must change if we expect policymakers to take our message seriously and see people with disabilities as an important voting bloc. In this issue, we examine the experience those with disabilities had during the recent elections and how in the future we must promote the civic engagement of all people if we expect our voice to be heard.

Also in this edition, we outline how in Georgia, GCDD and other advocacy organizations will be working with legislators during this upcoming session. We will be concentrating on issues such as how to continue addressing the waiting list for those who need publicly-funded supports, how to create more accessible homes and how to make sure that Georgia continues to move in a direction where people with disabilities have real career opportunities, their own home, are educated with their same-age peers, have quality supports and have influence over how they spend their days.

Finally, I invite you to attend the 15th Annual Disability Day at the State Capitol on February 21, 2013. Our theme this year is "What's Your Connection?," focusing not only on the fact that people with disabilities are everywhere, but also about how we are connecting to the communities where we live. This is also the theme of the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy's campaign to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the very successful Disability.gov website with a national photo and video campaign to share how disability touches us all. So please join us for this very important event to show your connection to people with disabilities.

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.


Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD

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

Letters To The Editor.

GCDD **VIEWPOINT**

How to Reach Us

Letters to the Editor

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

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GOVERNOR'S ARTICLE



"Attracting great employers and new employment opportunities to our State brings benefits to everyone."

To Georgia's Disability Community,

The start of each New Year is a great source of hope and enthusiasm for all of us, as we look forward and consider the possibilities of the future. The Capitol is already filled with excitement as Georgia's newly elected state senators and representatives prepare for the 2013 legislative session that opened on Monday, January 14. And of course, I join all of you in looking forward to the 15th Annual Disability Day, where disability issues take center stage on the steps of the Georgia State Capitol.

With the start of a new year and a new legislative session, the reality of Georgia's economy and budget concerns continues to be a challenge, and in all likelihood, will hamper meaningful expansion and improvements in our State's services. As Governor, it is incumbent upon me to manage the resources of the State and to do all that I can to provide appropriate supports, while assuring fairness in the budget decisions that affect so many of Georgia's citizens.

In spite of the anticipated budget difficulties, Georgia is expected to continue its slow growth. We have already started seeing improvements in the economy – particularly in residential construction and rising home prices. Additionally, in the coming year, employment is expected to grow as much as 1.4%, and more importantly, Georgia's economic growth is even expected to outpace the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on the national level.

Those of us involved in Georgia's disability community know that real employment opportunities remain a top priority for our entire State. Fortunately, the State continues to attract investments from

the automotive industry and recently announced new manufacturing investments by Caterpillar and Baxter International.

Attracting great employers and new employment opportunities to our State brings benefits to everyone. My administration continues to focus on the "Employment First" approach for people with disabilities and strives to attract companies that use "people first thinking" and concentrate on people's abilities and the value that they can bring to a company as an individual.

In closing, please know that my administration is looking forward to the upcoming legislative session and encourages each and every one of you to participate in the legislative process. As a community, we must all work together and advocate for a better quality of life for people with disabilities and all Georgians.

I hope you can attend Disability Day at the Capitol on Thursday, February 21 and that my schedule will allow me to join you once again.

Wishing all of you a happy and prosperous New Year!

Nathan Deal, *Governor of Georgia*



GCDD Honored at the 14th Annual Atlanta Branch NAACP

IN THE NEWS

Eric Jacobson, executive director for the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), was honored by the Atlanta Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at the 14th Annual Atlanta NAACP 2012 Jondelle Johnson Freedom Fund Dinner on November 3, for GCDD's its signature concept, the Real Communities Initiative.

"Because the brand of NAACP is so strong, there are many organizations that come to us with opportunities of partnership. We have to be very selective with those organizations. Tonight, this award goes to Mr. Eric Jacobson, the leader of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, for Real Communities," said Rev. Lee C. Franklin, Religious Affairs Liaison, Chairman's Office National NAACP. "We are proud to say we are working to be a part of this real community outreach."

"I accept this award on behalf of the people in Atlanta, Georgia and communities throughout this country who are isolated, segregated and are not recognized for the value, gifts and talents they bring – these are often people labeled as having a developmental disability," Jacobson said.



"Together, we can build places all over this city and State, where the barriers come down and people want to stay and raise their children."

To give the audience a small taste of what the Real Communities Initiative is all about, the presentation of Jacobson's award was preceded by the video, "Getting Real in Georgia," a highlight of GCDD's Real Communities projects. To view the video, visit <http://gcdd.org/news-a-media/videos.html>.

"Together, we can build places all over this city and State, where the barriers come down and people want to stay and raise their children," said Jacobson. "At GCDD we strive to make our Real Communities create bridges, a place where everybody can contribute to the community."

GCDD's Pat Nobbie Honored with a Big Voice for Children Award

On November 9, 2012, GCDD Deputy Director Pat Nobbie, PhD, was honored with a Big Voice for Children Award from the Voices for Georgia's Children for her outstanding efforts in children's advocacy. Since 2007, Voices for Georgia's Children, a nonprofit child policy and advocacy organization that envisions a Georgia where children are safe, healthy, educated, employable and connected to their family and community, has hosted their annual awards ceremony to recognize Georgia's top child advocates.

"I get a lot of kids coming across my desk in crisis and you can't just let that be. You have to figure it out."

Nobbie's advocacy work has helped move 100 children with developmental disabilities out of state facilities and into the community. "I get a lot of kids coming across my desk in crisis and you can't just let that be. You have to figure it out," stated Nobbie on being recognized as a leader in children's advocacy. "Over the years, I have only become more committed to people being more independent and integrated in the community. There is no excuse for treating people with disabilities or any other child as less than."

To hear Pat Nobbie's full comments on children's advocacy, visit <http://georgiavoices.org/latest-news/save-the-date-big-voice-2012>.

GCDD Excited for the Year Ahead

2013 will be a year for change for the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), as they said goodbye to several staff members in 2012. However, GCDD is excited to bring new energy with the New Year.

Governor Deal Makes New Appointments

Governor Nathan Deal renewed one Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities board member and made eight new appointments to the 27-member board, comprised of at least 60% individuals with developmental disabilities and family members. Other members include policymakers that represent various agencies and organizations having a vested interest in persons with developmental disabilities.

Renewed Board Members:

- Tom S. Connelly, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation – Rehabilitation Employment Specialist

New Board Members:

- Josette B. Akhras, Teacher and Advocate for children and adults with disabilities
- Jason M. Bearden, Highland Rivers Health – Chief Executive Officer
- Farah A. Chapes, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Government Affairs Team – Government Affairs Director
- Teresa A. Heard, Easter Seals Southern Georgia – Director of Nursing and Clinical Services

- Deborah C. Hibben, Henry County Public Schools Retiree and Woodland High School – Part-Time
- Geneice McCoy, Real McCoy Brokerage Co. – Owner and Georgia Region 2 Mental Health – Chair
- Evan H. Nodvin, Weinstein Senior Adult Day Center at the Marcus Jewish Community of Atlanta – Assistant/Support Aide
- Mitzi R. Proffitt, Parent to Parent of Georgia – South Georgia Manager

A GCDD Advisory Board Member Recognized in the Community

Kylie Moore, a 24-year-old resident of Roswell, GA and a member of GCDD's advisory board, was recognized for her involvement in the community and has been selected to serve on the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) governing board. Moore will join NYLN, a youth-driven, youth-led organization overseen by young adults with disabilities from around the country, as the nonprofit is embracing new beginnings in 2013 – a new board of directors, a new team of volunteers, a charge of bringing to life a new mission

We lead from experience, and we bring together a wealth of information and diversity through our board members and volunteers. There is no question that they are perfect for the job.

Project SEARCH Continuing to Evolve and Expand

GCDD has an ongoing partnership with Project SEARCH, a unique, business-led school-to-work transition program designed for students with disabilities whose main goal is employment and will benefit from career exploration through the program. Currently, there have been lots of exciting things going on, and in November, the Shaw Industries Project SEARCH site graduated its first group of young adult interns. Aaron Marcelli, the site coordinator, reported he had been pleased with how welcoming Shaw Industries was. "They are working hard to find employment for these capable workers," he said.

Vicki Little, the executive director of Support Services/HR from Effingham Health System recently sent a letter reporting on the success of their new Project SEARCH program. The local Board of Education and school superintendent had visited and were very impressed with the progress made by the student interns. Little also reported that their hospital staff had become personally invested in supporting the interns.

Bartow County Schools has been working to put together a team to implement Project SEARCH in Cartersville beginning in Fall 2013. Susie Rutkowski, co-founder of Project SEARCH, made a presentation to the Cartersville Medical Center administration in early December to seek their participation as a business partner, and the hospital was very enthusiastic. After going through its chain of command, they reported back that they wanted to have a Project SEARCH site at their facility.

Left: Project SEARCH staff and student, at Northeast Georgia Health Systems

Far Right: Project SEARCH student, James Pass, at Northeast Georgia Health Systems

Dottie Adams, statewide coordinator for Project SEARCH in Georgia and retired GCDD director of family and individual supports, was invited to go to the United Kingdom to share her experiences with the program. She met with a group of people in Glasgow, Scotland who are being asked to serve as regional coordinators for Project SEARCH in the UK. Adams explained her roles in helping market Project SEARCH, coordinating technical assistance, organizing training opportunities and quarterly meetings, providing initial information to interested communities and serving as a liaison with partner agencies at the state level. The group enjoyed the map of Georgia that was shared with them, which noted active Project SEARCH sites, those in the planning stages and areas that had expressed an interest. She also had the opportunity to travel to Aberdeen, Scotland where she attended a meeting with a group of people who are making implementation plans to start a new Project SEARCH site at their University.

Lastly, two of our strong supporters of Project SEARCH in Thomasville, Bonnie Seery and Christy Jacobs, are making some changes. Seery retired as special education director of the Thomas County Schools, but has committed to staying involved with Project SEARCH, while Jacobs, the instructor, is moving to Texas. To recognize their commitment to the program, a celebration lunch was held for them in Macon at the last Project SEARCH quarterly meeting.



Kylie Moore



statement, a new vision statement and a new theory of change through the organization's goal and priorities.

"Our members are the core of our organization," shared Jessica Croner, NYLN president from Idaho. "We lead from experience, and we bring together a wealth of information and diversity through our board members and volunteers. There is no question that they are perfect for the job."

Moore, a graduate from Reinhardt University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, is looking forward to joining the governing board and becoming a part of NYLN's new leadership team.

Moore's passion is advocating for individuals with disabilities, and as an avid sports fan, she is actively involved in playing wheelchair sports.

In June 2012, she completed a fellowship for the Georgia Leadership in Education for Neurodevelopment and Related Disabilities Program (GaLEND). Currently, she works for a nonprofit organization called Great Prospects, as a self-advocacy and life skills teacher.

To learn more about NYLN, visit www.nyln.org.



Pat Nobbie

GCDD's Pat Nobbie Taking on a "New Club"

By Pat Nobbie, PhD

Pat Nobbie, PhD, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' (GCDD) deputy director, has been honored with a Joseph P. Kennedy Public Policy Foundation Fellowship and will be leaving GCDD after almost 12 years to work on policy on a national level in Washington, DC. She will serve as staff to a congressional committee.

Like many parents of children with disabilities, Pat Nobbie's life direction and career was shaped by her daughter Mia, who has Down syndrome. After Mia was born in 1984 in the US Virgin Islands (VI), Nobbie quickly realized there would be many challenges and blessings found in raising a child with a disability. At that time, the VI often segregated children with disabilities in different classrooms and separate schools or even kept them out of school, and immediately Nobbie began asking questions. This started her journey in advocacy that would eventually lead to her career working on public policy to support integrated community living at GCDD.

Since 2001, Nobbie has been instrumental to both Georgia's disability community and GCDD. She developed, coordinated and advocated the policy and legislative agenda for GCDD with input from the community, while successfully establishing partnerships with advocates from the aging, mental health and healthcare arenas that effectively align with improving the policies and programs for people with disabilities. She has been responsible for tracking state and federal budgets and legislation that affect people

with disabilities. In addition, she coordinated efforts under the statewide Unlock the Waiting Lists! campaign that has resulted in over 4,000 new services, new family supports, support for special needs foster youth and waivers for individuals with physical disabilities over the past seven years.

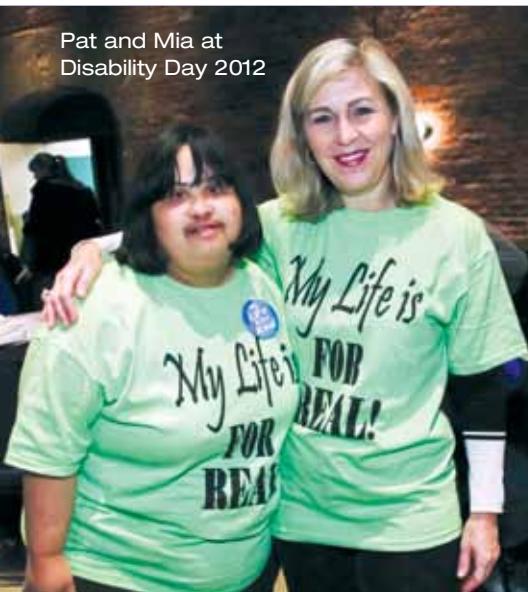
While working to make numerous improvements and advocate for more supports and services for people with disabilities, Nobbie has helped push transition and employment, family support and managed care to the forefront of reform in Georgia's disability community and supports approach.

Though she will be missed at GCDD, Nobbie will continue to pursue her passion for improving the quality of life for people with disabilities on the national level. Below is her personal message as she says goodbye to Georgia:

This was my dream job. When I applied to the PhD program at the University of Georgia in 1996, I stated in my application that my motivation for seeking a degree in public administration was because of

Though she will be missed at GCDD, Nobbie will continue to pursue her passion for improving the quality of life for people with disabilities on the national level.

Pat and Mia at Disability Day 2012



the birth of my daughter Mia. I had been engaged in many public programs and thought surely they could be done better.

A couple of months ago, Voices for Georgia's Children interviewed me for a video, and one of the last questions they asked me was, "What keeps you going? What gets you up every day?" And I responded the same as I did almost 15 years ago. I always think things can be better, and we have to keep working until they are.

So, what would make things better? The "Social Cure."

A very thought-provoking book called, *Join the Club: How Peer Pressure Can Transform the World* by Tina Rosenberg, portrays stories of challenging human conditions around the world where peers were employed to pressure their fellow humans to change their health, political and academic behavior in a positive direction. Her thesis states, "The 'Social Cure' can change behavior by helping people obtain what they most care about ... the respect of their peers." And, it can change communities by working on the most common and deeply felt human need – to belong.

So, how do we find peers to start the conversations and relationships with other peers and use those peer groups to change the social norm to propagate the "Social Cure?"

My motivation for considering the ideas in this book is to answer our burning questions: How do we gather the necessary political capital to "adequately fund" the entire system, from front-line workers to behavioral supports to person-centered planning? How do we change expectations in employment? How do we solve the challenges of integrated residential support? How do we get beyond what I call "the paradigm of 'put?'" such as "They're vulnerable and incompetent, let's

put them in an institution." Or, when that became unfashionable, we said, "That's not right, let's put them in the community." But how? We are forever challenging campuses that are self-contained with horseback rinks, gardens, gates and golf carts, while the community that lives outside the gates thinks, "Oh, this is so nice. How many people with disabilities can we put in there?" It's like they are tchotchkies and proper placement is the important thing.

An important question is, who is the peer group for people with disabilities? Despite best intentions, people with disabilities have been separated from their typical peers due to the nature or perception of their disability or their services and supports. So, how do we find peers to start the conversations and relationships with other peers and use those peer groups to change the social norm to propagate the "Social Cure?"

Tell Stories: The Disability Movement has a long history of storytelling. Rosenberg says the importance of stories is that they introduce into common language and experience the behavior based on the most powerful of human emotions – the longing for connection with one another. Stories can compel us to shift our understanding of the world. I have previously written about how Mary Kissell's story of creating Georgia Options, a grassroots nonprofit organization for her son, changed my whole perspective. I suddenly saw a future where it would be entirely possible for Mia to live in her own place with people who care about and support her, and it wouldn't necessarily have to be me.

When I had just been told Mia couldn't work with children because she would never pass the tech school entrance exam or get the certificate, the story Robyn Berger told me in an elevator once about her daughter Lori working in a day care center gave me hope. Her brief counter-narrative encouraged me not to believe everything I was told.

Both of these stories were shared by peers – other parents, walking the walk. Mia lives



Top Photo (L-R): Pat Nobbie, Eric Jacobson, Rep. Donna Sheldon and Tom Seegmueller

Bottom Photo (L-R): Nancy Vara and Pat Nobbie

SHOW UP. STAND UP. **SPEAK UP.**

"It is their peers that will signal to everyone in the community that this is an individual with a life, and not a tchatche to be "put" somewhere."



Pat Nobbie with Partnerships for Success students at Disability Day 2012

in a home with a family that cares for and supports her in addition to me, and she has taught Sunday school to four-year-olds for 12 years now. Missing those stories, who knows where we would be. Again, Rosenberg relates, “The moment someone triggers in your brain that the dream is possible, so much changes. You start looking at life in a different way.”

We need a peer network for all of our young adults, especially as they prepare to exit school. It is their peers that will signal to everyone in the community that this is an individual with a life, and not a tchotchke to be “put” somewhere.

Market an Identity: Peer pressure works because it communicates an identity as a condition of belonging to a group of like-minded people. Peer groups define us in obvious and subtle ways. In a new world, when people are uncertain how to behave, they look around to see what their peers are doing.

That is why in terms of our community, we have to see people with disabilities out there doing the same stuff as others, such as frequenting the same neighborhood places as other people, because that will become the norm. When people with disabilities are invisible or treated like they are invisible, they are absent from the norm and we miss the lesson.

We are trying to create new “clubs” through initiatives such as Partnerships for Success, post-secondary options in Project SEARCH and GCDD’s Real Communities projects and involve people in creating the new norm. That new and different place is where everyone wants and should belong.

Produce Protagonists: Political space is never granted. It is always conquered. According to Rosenberg, revolutions “fight the fatalism and passivity” that accompany the status quo. This “fight fatalism and passivity” phrase made me think of the Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign. There are 7,500 people on the list. We have 100 waivers proposed for the budget this year.

We got 100 waivers last year. Obviously, this doesn’t meet our needs.

We need more protagonists. Without constituents’ protests, Unlock is about the cause of the waiting list and not about you or the people on the list. We have to make it personal. As House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams says, “Show up. Stand Up. Speak Up.”

Be Visible: The hurdle for mobilizing people can also be that what is being protested is not yet visible. When everyone is at home taking care of their own, they are not visible. When people were in institutions, they weren’t visible. It even became an issue when someone got in with a camera.

"That is why in terms of our community, we have to see people with disabilities out there doing the same stuff as others, such as frequenting the same neighborhood places as other people, because that will become the norm."

This is why we need to tell stories and be present. Without a narrative of situations, citizens see no problem. For example, why is there no widespread movement to have people with disabilities in real jobs in the community? Because there aren’t many people with disabilities in real jobs in the community. It’s not visible yet, so people don’t see it, they can’t point to it and say, “That’s what I want.”

Change the Social Norm: Rosenberg observed that once people know the social norm, they will take steps to abide by it. She calls this “peer proof.” In the Partnerships for Success high schools, the kids with disabilities are in leadership positions; they are tailgating, going to prom, the mall and



I always think things can be better, and we have to keep working until they are.

participating in games and community service; they are helping each other at their Individualized Education Program meetings; they are asking priests to make first communion available to kids whom everyone thought couldn't prepare; they are participating in coming-of-age parties in the Latino community. Everyone was surprised when some of these situations came up. Adults and parents thought they were being considerate by sheltering their kids from a social life they thought was outside of their child's ability, but they simply hadn't asked. The new norm is to ask, and we are discovering that the kids have answers and then expectations.

Rosenberg asks, "Are we too comfortable? In a democracy, the 'Social Cure' must overcome our busyness and our discomfort with participating in public life." America has a cultural history of self-sufficiency AND a tradition of joining. To what degree those foundations remain will be determined by us and our peers. We will not change the employment paradigm, the residential living paradigm or the paradigm of "put" without a peer group that has developed and marketed an identity for competitive employment and integrated living, a visibility in the community and membership.

So again, "Show up. Stand up. Speak up." Write. Tell your story. If you have services, say "Thank you. This is what I can do because I have support." If you need services, say, "This is what I could do if I had support."

Get a pledge. Start a petition. Relay the counter-narratives to each other. Keep high expectations. Bring people in. Be visible.

It only took a few stories for me to think about Mia's life in a different way. You could be that story for someone else. But let's tell the story of living in the community in a typical home, going to work in a real job, having friends of all kinds, practicing a faith with the whole congregation, going to college, falling in love, etc. Let's tell that story. Let's join THAT club.

"The new norm is to ask, and we are discovering that the kids have answers and then expectations."

I have really loved this job. Everyone I came in contact with, who made me laugh or cry, who yelled at me, persuaded me, dragged me into a corner from a meeting to tell me like it was, called me late at night or who showed up for coalition meetings or Disability Day, you have all contributed to who I am today. And, I promise to keep working until things are better.

Top Photo (L-R): Stacey Ramirez and Pat Nobbie

Bottom Photo (L-R):
Mia and Pat



for public policy in GCDD's five-year plan covering FY 2011 to FY 2016 continues to be promoting public policy that supports communities that welcome all people and better serves the interests of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.



Get Ready for the 2013 Legislative Session

By Pat Nobbie, PhD

The phrase, "What a difference a year makes," has never been more meaningful. Since the last session, there have been changes in several levels of leadership in departments that support people with disabilities; we have had continuing challenges with our State budget, a Supreme Court decision was made on the Affordable Care Act and a presidential election was held. In addition, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is going through some changes too. For the first time in 12 years, I will not be the staff support for the legislative efforts of GCDD in the session. There will be a new public policy director carrying the agenda, and I know that individual will be welcomed by our community and will greatly benefit from the relationships that we have built over the years.

As you may recall, for the 2012 session we aligned the legislative agenda-setting process with GCDD's new five-year plan for our federal administration, recognizing that many legislative initiatives are beyond a one-year time frame. Working within a five-year framework gives us flexibility to take things up when it's time.

The strategic goal for public policy in GCDD's five-year plan covering FY 2011 to FY 2016 continues to be promoting public policy that supports communities that welcome all people and better serves the interests of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. In addition, it promotes revisions in the systems that provide services and supports that result in authentic choice, opportunities for self-direction and enhanced capacity for the caregiving efforts of families.

As in the past, we will assign the following priority levels to each of the agenda items:

- **TIER I:** GCDD Initiates, GCDD is the lead agency
- **TIER II:** Another agency is the lead, but GCDD assists
- **TIER III:** GCDD allows use of name, but no action otherwise
- **TIER IV:** GCDD has a neutral position, won't fight or support
- **TIER V:** GCDD opposes, fights against

Additionally, we will continue to organize the public policy activities in the REAL areas that GCDD promotes for integrated life in the community. The following is a summary of the legislative, budget or policy issues that GCDD will be involved in during the legislative session in each of our REAL areas.

Real Supports: Budget

TIER I: Unlock the Waiting Lists! –

Support appropriations to enable people with disabilities to live in the most integrated setting in the community.

For this area, we support the budget items that the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) requested for the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Settlement Agreement, which includes:

- 100 NOW waivers annualized in the FY 2013 amended budget ... \$7,450,534
- and 150 COMP waivers annualized in the FY 2013 amended budget
- 100 NOW waivers in the FY 2014 budget (wait list) \$6,041,578
- and 150 COMP waivers in the FY 2014 Budget (hospital transition)
- Services for 500 new families in state-funded family support \$1,872,000
- Mobile crisis, crisis respite and nursing services \$3,842,222

In addition, GCDD is promoting a small appropriation of \$98,000 for housing vouchers, estimated at \$400 per person per month for 20 individuals who have Medicaid supports but struggle to afford safe, stable and accessible housing. Individuals must use their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks for room and board, and at a \$694 maximum SSI allocation, it is difficult for individuals to afford their “own home,” which is the priority for residential arrangements in the ADA settlement agreement.

Unlock the Waiting Lists! will also work on restoring the proposed cut to the DBHDD budget of \$9,409,552, which meets the Governor’s instructions to reduce the budget by 3%. This cut will affect mental health, substance use disorder and developmental disabilities direct service areas. Our message is the department cannot bear ANY cuts to direct services, when there are 7,500 people still on the waiting list for supports.

In the Department of Community Health (DCH) budget, Unlock the Waiting Lists! is

requesting the following for the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP):

- Fund 100 ICWP waivers for people in the community waiting for support \$1,620,202

Finally, Unlock the Waiting Lists! worked on an agreement with the provider community to support a 5% rate adjustment if the providers advocate for continual movement toward more individualized, integrated and person-centered services based on an individual’s informed choice, as well as transitions away from segregated day and pre-employment services. The overarching message is that the money in the system is not being used for the most effective state-of-the-art services and supports, and there is not enough money in the system overall to meet the needs of Georgia’s citizens with disabilities. The waiting list for people with developmental disabilities was 7,571 at the end of November, with 3,255 of those on the short-term need list.

Real Supports: Legislation

TIER I: Pass State Individual Development Account (IDA) Legislation – This legislation enables eligible individuals to save for assistive technology, accessible vehicles or home modifications that would support them to stay in their homes and work in the community.

“Our message is the department cannot bear ANY cuts to direct services, when there are 7,500 people still on the waiting list for supports.”

Individuals save their earned income in a custodial account in a partner bank, and it is matched by nonprofit or foundation funds. IDA programs are a “small government” solution that encourages economic self-sufficiency, doesn’t use State dollars and fosters job creation and entrepreneurship. We have had majority party sponsorship for this legislation in the past, so we are hopeful

FUND 100 ICWP WAIVERS
FOR PEOPLE IN THE
COMMUNITY
WAITING FOR SUPPORT
\$1,620,202

BUDGET ITEMS

100 NOW WAIVERS
ANNUALIZED IN THE FY 2013
AMENDED BUDGET
\$7,450,534

150 COMP WAIVERS
ANNUALIZED IN THE FY 2013
AMENDED BUDGET

100 NOW WAIVERS
IN THE FY 2014 BUDGET
(WAIT LIST)
\$6,041,578

150 COMP WAIVERS
IN THE FY 2014 BUDGET
(HOSPITAL TRANSITION)

SERVICES FOR
500 NEW FAMILIES IN
STATE-FUNDED FAMILY SUPPORT
\$1,872,000

MOBILE CRISIS, CRISIS
RESPITE & NURSING SERVICES
\$3,842,222

According to the recently released United States Department of Education high school graduation rates report, Georgia's graduation rate is 67%, better than only Nevada and New Mexico.

Especially disturbing is the 30% graduation rate for students with disabilities.

Building the minimum accessibility features into a new home costs on average **\$200 to \$300.**

we can work on this valuable program again this year with our partner, the Center for Financial Independence and Innovation.

TIER II: Support passage of The Family Care Act – This legislation would allow individuals whose jobs provide sick leave to use that leave to care for sick children or aging parents without penalty from their employers. This was favorably reported out of the last session of the House Industrial Relations Committee; we have a committed majority party sponsor, but with the start of a new session, we have to start again with a fresh bill. We will work with the Job Family Coalition, Atlanta 9to5, Co-age and others on this legislation.

Real Homes: Legislation

TIER II: New Home Access Legislation – Increase accessibility in all new single family homes by requiring one zero-step entrance, 32" wide interior doorways and blocking to support grab bars in the bathroom. The need for this legislation has become more prominent with the transition of many individuals from State institutions under the ADA settlement agreement and the transition of individuals from nursing homes under the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program. People needing accessible homes can't find them in the community, and so an enormous amount of money has been spent on renovating residential homes to make them accessible. The Money Follows the Person project spent \$914,184.60 on environmental modifications, an average cost of \$2,804 per person (326 people). This represented 36% of the total cost of billed services to the MFP program from 2009 through May of 2012. Building the minimum accessibility features into a new home costs on average \$200 to \$300. We will continue to actively work on this legislation with Concrete Change and the SOPOS Housing Coalition.

Real Learning: Policy

There is currently no specific legislative item related to the high school diploma issue; however, GCDD has been following the evolution of diploma policy for years and observing the impact of these policies on students with disabilities. Of particular

concern now is the impact on students with marginal learning difficulties, which do not qualify them for special services, but make it more difficult for them to accomplish the standard core curriculum. According to the recently released United States Department of Education high school graduation rates report, Georgia's graduation rate is 67%, better than only Nevada and New Mexico. Especially disturbing is the 30% graduation rate for students with disabilities. GCDD has supported the development of career pathways that provide EVERY student with a progression of courses in one of 16 career interest areas, as well as the institution of an individual graduation plan that should support students to make good decisions about how to complete high school. Every student that participates fully in these options should be able to graduate with a legitimate diploma that is recognized by post-secondary institutions and the military. The goal of GCDD is to "establish policy that enables each high school graduate to earn one diploma that enables them to continue their education, join the military or be eligible to work or train for a job."

The goal of GCDD is to "establish policy that enables each high school graduate to earn one diploma that enables them to continue their education, join the military or be eligible to work or train for a job."

Real Careers: Policy

The goal in this area is to "work with Federal Network Partners, the Department of BHDD, the Department of Labor (DOL) / Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Education to craft and establish an "Employment First" policy for people with disabilities receiving services and make employment the first priority for their funding and support. Employment



PLEASE TAKE TIME TO CALL, WRITE AND VISIT YOUR LEGISLATORS AND LET THEM KNOW WHAT YOU CARE ABOUT!

provides a social network, better health, discretionary income, self-respect and enables people to contribute to their community and the economy. GCDD has participated in Employment First policy development for many years, and with a new Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and the beginning of a State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), we have the collective vision and effort to move forward with this important work.

Real Influence: Policy

I have always said that the role of the policy director at GCDD is to promote conceptually coherent public policy and to prevent bad things from happening. As a result, we constantly keep watch over particularly vulnerable populations such as children, who are medically fragile, and foster children with special needs to ensure they are accessing the necessary services and supports and that regulations and funding limitations are not imposing unnecessary barriers. There are a few issues we will monitor closely as the year progresses, and even though they may not become specific issues during the session, GCDD must be prepared to respond to legislative inquiries and provide information on how decisions affect the populations we are concerned about:

- Continue to advocate for complete implementation of the federal Medicaid Early, Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) mandate covering all children receiving Medicaid under the

age of 21. This will become particularly important as the State considers bringing all of the aged, blind and disabled populations into a coordinated care management arrangement and brings foster children into managed care.

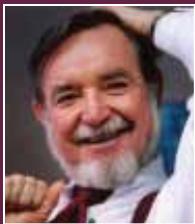
- Advocate for implementation of the Olmstead Plan, now in the Governor's Office. The agencies have had time to review the impact of the proposed plan on their staffing and budgets, and the Governor's Office must now present recommendations on how to move it forward. Advocates have submitted recommendations for a tiered approach – first, implement the objectives that don't require funding, only policy or practice changes; next, implement objectives that can be achieved by moving money from less effective to more effective services and outcomes; and finally, propose new multi-year funding to implement the more substantial objectives.
- Provide guidance and input on legislation or budget items related to managed care for the aged, blind and disabled, foster children and Medicaid redesign. GCDD has been an active member of the task forces organized by DCH to advise and assist on the redesign of Medicaid systems for the aged, blind and disabled and foster children. GCDD also convenes the Coalition to Assure Redesign Effectiveness for Medicaid (CARE-M), which has met regularly to research, review proposals and interview companies interested in providing managed care services to these populations. We have established good communication between the advocates and DCH, and we believe the design proposals are proceeding with a great deal of feedback and participation from all parties. Nevertheless, we need to stay on top of this huge initiative as it goes forward.
- Advocate for statewide expansion of Medicaid under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). With Cover Georgia, the Health Advocates Coalition and Georgians for a Healthy Future, GCDD supports the Medicaid expansion option made available in the ACA. This option provides 100% federal funding for three years and 90% after that, to expand the Medicaid health insurance program to individuals under 138% of poverty in new categories, primarily, single adults without children. Georgia has nearly 2,000,000 uninsured people, but bears the cost of their healthcare when they show up in emergency rooms for care. Keep watching because there will be a great deal of debate on this issue in the coming months.

As usual, the work is never dull, and it is never done! GCDD thanks people with disabilities, families and advocates across the State for their energy and attention to these important issues. Please take time to call, write and visit your legislators and let them know what you care about!

What It Takes to Be a Citizen in a Community

By John McKnight

PERSPECTIVES



JOHN
MCKNIGHT

John McKnight is co-founder of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University and has worked on research on community organizations and neighborhood policy for nearly three decades. Additionally, McKnight has conducted his own research on social service delivery systems, health policy, the inclusion of marginalized people and institutional racism.

"Our nation's founders clearly understood that at its core, our democracy depended on citizens being able to associate and speak freely in their communities."

The center of community is civic life – our relationships and activities in civil society. Civil society is not the world of government or business. It is the other space where people connect around their own purposes and goals and money is not the driving force. It is the space occupied by family, friends, neighbors, clubs, organizations and associations – often called the voluntary sector.

When we talk about the value of being included in community life, it means participating in civil society that we are talking about. Civil society is not only the center of community life, it is also the location of our freedom in a democracy. We know this because in past dictatorships like Nazi Germany or the communist Soviet Union, the dictator's first target to attack was civil society. They eliminated all forms of free associations, and the only groups allowed to function were those controlled by the dictator. And most importantly, no one was free to speak.

Our nation's founders clearly understood that at its core, our democracy depended on citizens being able to associate and speak freely in their communities. This is the reason why the first article in the US Constitution is our Bill of Rights, which guarantees freedom of association and freedom of speech. Both of these rights are the vital center of our democracy and our communities.

Moreover, the founders were primarily concerned with protecting the power of citizens to engage in political speech and political associations in their local community because they believed local people holding power was the foundation of democracy.

This leads us to the electoral process and voting. The political purpose of free association and free speech is to provide citizens the opportunity to advocate, debate and discuss issues of personal and common concern. And from this debate, we trust that an informed electorate emerges and expresses their decisions by voting.

In a democracy, the community is the center of civic life. This "life" depends on using our right to free association and speech. These rights give us the power to act as citizens to influence, debate and perfect our community. And from this power, grows connection, communication, deliberation and decision-making, which comes in many forms including voting.

So what does it take to be a citizen in a community? First, a person needs to be involved in local associations, and even be at the forefront of forming new ones.

Second, a person needs to have opportunities and platforms that ensure their voices are freely expressed and heard.

Third, a person needs to be part of the forums, where issues of both self-interest and common concern are discussed and debated.

Fourth, a person needs the opportunity to participate in the electoral process and of course, to vote. However, it is important to understand that in an effective democracy, voting is the end of a process preceded by participation in an associational activity, which allows us as citizens to contribute our voice, join forums and energize the civic engagement process.

When you take advantage of and engage in these four practices, that is what citizenship means.

Civic Responsibility Begins with Individual Responsibility

By Ross Mason

“Government is not reason; it is not eloquence, it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.”

- George Washington

PERSPECTIVES

As a citizen of the United States and the State of Georgia, our civic responsibility begins with protecting and fulfilling our individual responsibilities. This means being responsible for your own needs, the needs of your family and the communities that surround you – from your church to your local public schools and the county and state you vote in – to the best of your abilities. This basic philosophy strengthens you as an individual and stands as an example for your family, friends and community.

This thinking is in stark contrast to those who find it easier to depend on government. As dependence on the government grows in popularity, more people are accepting a “government handout” lifestyle being supported by fewer and fewer workers. Everything is handed to them, from free college educations to cell phones, and little is expected.

The federal government is taking advantage of this new dependency by interjecting itself into the daily lives of more Americans – making them reliant on government through costly give-a-way programs that cannot be adequately funded, sustained or properly managed.

Individual responsibility is being replaced by irresponsible demand and consumption of government services. As Benjamin Franklin once observed, “When the people find that they can vote themselves money, that will herald the end of the republic.”

No conservative wants to deny any person in real need the care they might require. Conservatives support vital government programs that help people facing adverse conditions if the program can be sustained and paid for now and in the future, and is focused on solving the problem by creating a long-term solution.

Conservatives advocate for programs that help people become a participating member of society, getting them on their feet if they are down, giving them job skills if they are unemployable and providing resources that open new opportunities.

If government has a solution for every problem we face, all that will emerge is poorly motivated citizens and more reliance on government solutions. We see this particularly in healthcare and social services, heading towards rationing as the central government tries to manage the growing demand for services and limit already strained government resources.

Conservatives value the potential of every individual and seek a society that protects the rights and opportunities of individual citizens. We firmly believe that it is the federal government's role to protect these rights. However, if we want real communities, real jobs and real education, then as individuals, we have to be willing to work to achieve these objectives.

In Georgia's disability community, there is a constant cry for self-determination, real jobs and access to educational opportunities to improve the individual and collective potential of people with disabilities. This is a core value to conservatives and it should be a shared value of the disability community – we believe individual responsibility is the backbone of America today and America's tomorrow.



ROSS
MASON

Ross Mason is the founder of the Healthcare Institution for Neuro-Recovery and Innovation (HIRI) and a venture philanthropist focused on making Georgia a national and global leader in health innovation. Mason also serves as a Senior Fellow at the Georgia Public Policy Foundation and the former chairman of the Georgia Department of Community Health Board among many other accomplishments.



It's Time to Get People Involved in Our Communities

By Becca Bauer



Millions of Americans across the country went to the polls and voted in November's election. Among those expressing their say in our country's future was a group of people who have rarely been effectively engaged in the civic processes that many Americans take for granted – people with developmental disabilities.

While there have been many improvements in protecting the rights of people with disabilities and their access to vote, as a group they are still discriminated against and not taken seriously enough by political leaders or poll workers, who may not be familiar with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) rules and regulations. And unfortunately, some people with disabilities choose not to participate at all.

This must change if people with disabilities expect policymakers to respond to them as an important voting bloc. The fact that people with disabilities are not taken seriously became even more apparent during the presidential campaign when disabilities were hardly mentioned by either political party. The US Senate also failed to ratify the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities Treaty, which based on protections from the ADA, would support the international community's resolution to end discrimination against people with disabilities. The Senate's failure to reach the necessary two-thirds margin to approve the treaty speaks volumes to our policymakers' lack of commitment to people with disabilities and their need for social change.

Developmental Disabilities Councils were created in the early 1970s by Congress to ensure the development of innovative ideas toward promoting the inclusion and integration of people in communities who have been labeled as having developmental disabilities. Among the many safeguards they try to protect is civic engagement for people with developmental disabilities. This means working with individuals, families



The Senate's failure to reach the necessary two-thirds margin to approve the treaty speaks volumes to our policymakers' lack of commitment to people with disabilities and their need for social change.

A SPECIAL THANKS

THANKS TO OUR PARTICIPANTS:

Becky Harker, Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council

Rose Coster, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

Beth Kessler, Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities

Marilyn Sword, Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities

Vicky Davidson, Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities

Valarie Bishop, South Carolina Developmental Disabilities Council

Ann Trudgeon, Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council

Beth Stalvey, North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities

Donna Meltzer, Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council

Roger Webb, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Pat Nobbie, PhD, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

Valerie Meadows Suber, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

John Shaw, Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

Alicia Boehme, Protection & Advocacy, Disability Rights Wisconsin

Katherine Lawson, Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

Curt Decker, National Disability Rights Network

To read the full transcript of the conference call, visit <http://www.gcdd.org/blogs/gcdd-blog/2412-gcdd-gets-election-day-feedback-from-across-the-country.html>

and organizations so that people with developmental disabilities can take part in the public discourse and gain leadership and advocacy skills that will empower them to become more active in the public policy process and join the ranks of frequent voters.

Because it is so important for people with disabilities to be involved in public policy processes that determine their rights and access to services, it is critical for our political leaders to consider them as a group that needs to be heard. The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) hopes to facilitate nationwide conversations with a broad spectrum of people that will promote the goals of civic engagement.

GCDD, in collaboration with the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), hosted a nationwide conference call on December 3, 2012 for all of the Developmental Disabilities Councils and Protection and Advocacy (P&As) organizations to come together and share their ideas about civic engagement for people with disabilities, accessibility issues and post Election Day feedback.

GCDD hopes to facilitate nationwide conversations with a broad spectrum of people that will promote the goals of civic engagement.

Facilitated by Eric Jacobson, GCDD executive director, 15 representatives from Developmental Disabilities Councils and P&As from across the US joined GCDD to share their input for the development of innovative ideas toward promoting the inclusion and integration of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of our communities.

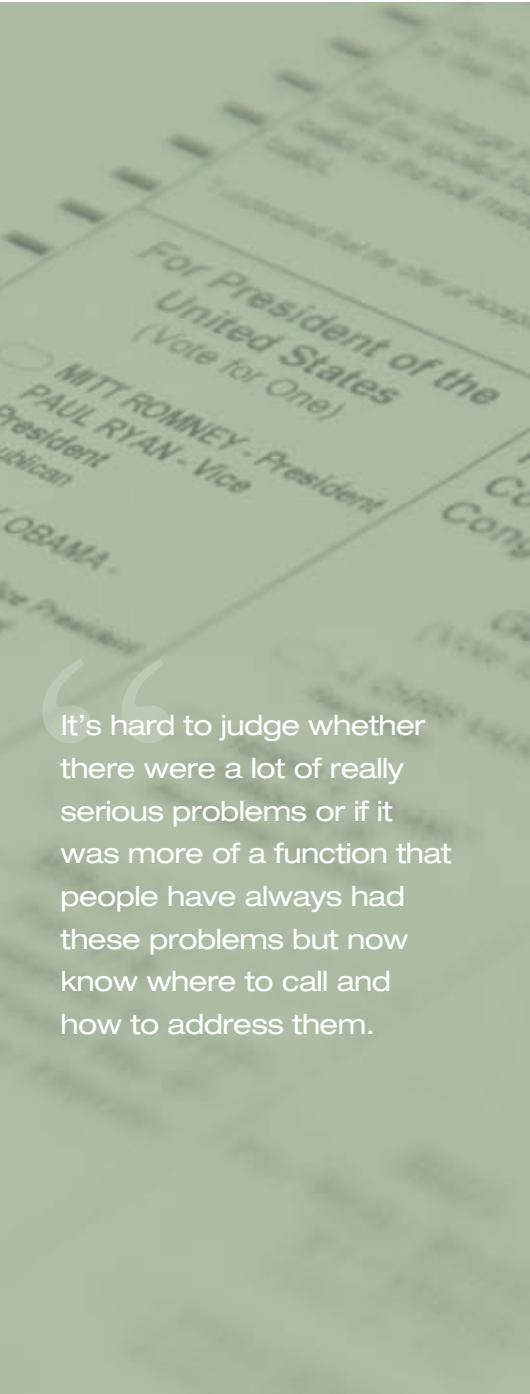
The call featured a presentation from Curt Decker, executive director of the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), on their recent findings about pre and post Election Day, followed by a series of questions on:

- People with disabilities', voting experiences in each state
- How Developmental Disabilities Councils as innovators in the disability community can engage people who have been excluded or marginalized in the civic discourse
- How to encourage voters with disabilities to increase their participation in decision-making or political processes

Decker kicked off the conversation with a brief introduction to the important nature of this work and a small background on how the ability of people to vote independently, privately or even voting at all has been vexing for the disability community for many decades. Funded by the National Council on Disability, along with a few other partners, NDRN tracked what happened on Election Day, so they can use this research to address voting obstacles for people with disabilities in the future. They already have close to 1,000 responses from people with disabilities on a post election survey. In addition, they will be compiling statistics from the Department of Justice (DOJ) and any of the Protection and Advocacy organizations' reported experiences.

"We were very concerned that we were going to have problems, especially given the emotional hyper partisanship of the election, that would possibly be a detriment to people with disabilities, especially people with intellectual disabilities being able to exercise their constitutional right to vote," said Decker. "We didn't want to just find out that things went badly, but we also wanted to try and prevent any problems that we could. We were very nervous about poll workers and poll watchers questioning the competence of people with intellectual disabilities to vote and challenging them, especially if they were easily identifiable or coming from a group home. We really were anxious about what our constituents would think."

NDRN worked closely with the DOJ. The DOJ has an interestingly split jurisdiction where the justice section has the responsibility to enforce accessibility issues and the voting rights section has the responsibility under the



Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to enforce the accessible voting machines process. For the first time in a very long time, NDRN had a joint meeting with both divisions of DOJ to talk about coordinating their efforts.

"Another major issue was the failure of accessible voting machines to work or the failure of poll workers to know how to set them up and operate them."

"The DOJ puts out hundreds of poll observers and attorneys, and we wanted to make sure that if one person was in a voting place to observe, that they would look at both the accessibility of the polling place as well as the operation of the machines. That didn't always happen in the past, and I have to say we had some really good cooperation," said Decker.

"It's hard to judge whether there were a lot of really serious problems or if it was more a function that people have always had these problems but now know where to call and how to address them. So, we will have to filter out the results and the impact of our activity. The good news is we were able to handle a lot of problems and resolve them. Not surprising, one of the top issues was the long lines. They did present a lot of problems for people with disabilities, both with physical and intellectual disabilities. How polling places dealt with this was a mixed bag. Many places were good about providing chairs or allowing people to take a number and be able to rest. But there were a lot of complaints about people who weren't getting accommodations as they stood in those long lines. And that's something I think we need to look at in the future, especially in a national election that everyone is so energized about."

"Another major issue was the failure of accessible voting machines to work or the failure of poll workers to know how to set them up and operate them. There is an interesting paradox that we have an older

population of poll workers who have to work with very sophisticated technology and that doesn't always work. We had a fair number of complaints about machines that did not work. Then we had the day-to-day, ad hoc accessibility problems where someone drove a truck in front of the accessible ramp or the accessible entrance was locked and no one opened it up."

In addition, Decker echoed what many advocates in the disability community are pushing for, the need to make it clear that people with disabilities are a critical voting bloc. "I do think we do have a serious issue in the disability community that the politicians don't see us as a voting bloc, and therefore aren't addressing a lot of the issues that we care about in their campaigns. Not only is it a constitutional right to vote, but it is also a political problem in making sure that we are convincing people this is a constituency they need to appeal to, work with and address their campaigns and positions to disability issues. It is a multi-level approach and hopefully we will continue doing that and the Protection & Advocacy organizations and Developmental Disabilities Councils work together to learn from what this experience was and build on our vehicles that we have already put in place."

After Decker concluded, he turned it over to Jacobson who proposed several questions to the group to find out about voting feedback, accessibility and civic engagement on a state-by-state basis. The following are a few short examples of the comments:

Q • Did you receive any phone calls or any information about accessibility issues or problems with people trying to get to the polling places and being able to vote?

Becky Harker, Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council:

"In Iowa, about a month before the election, we learned that some county officers had purchased a piece of equipment that was not

It's hard to judge whether there were a lot of really serious problems or if it was more of a function that people have always had these problems but now know where to call and how to address them.

accessible to people who were blind. Iowa has been using the AutoMARK voting machine pretty exclusively. We have done training on those throughout the State, but some counties chose to purchase this other piece of equipment, which we had evaluated and at the time we evaluated it, was accessible for people who were blind. But, in the final manufacturer, some of those pieces were left off. So, we did meet with those people and we did make alternate arrangements for them."

Q Were there any states that did anything educating people with disabilities about the voting process?

John Shaw, Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities:

"We actually worked with the government accountability boards and created a booklet on voting, the Voting in Wisconsin Handbook for Individuals with Disabilities. You talked a little bit about the voter bloc, and we have been working for several years now to develop a voter bloc. Currently we have about 18,000 individuals on our voter bloc list. We are hoping to increase that substantially in the next couple of years so we can build a stronger voice."

Q I want to talk about the voter bloc in terms of how we get people involved in the process. What are the kinds of things you do as a state, especially during the legislative session, to keep citizens with disabilities engaged in the legislative process?

Marilyn Sword, Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities:

"About three or four years ago, we used some very draconian cuts in Medicaid services to implement a massive Medicaid matters action across the state with rallies simultaneously

in 15 towns across Idaho, as well as at the Capitol. We got about 17,000 people involved and their names were on petitions presented to the legislators about the cuts, and it did make a difference. We also have a disability advocacy day at the capitol, like many Councils do. And, for the third year we have been doing disability advocacy workshops in four areas around the state on Saturdays in November and December, where people can come at no cost. It's all day and people present on Medicaid, managed care or the legislative process, and now we have focused the afternoons on communicating with your legislators and how to tell your own story."

"Currently we have about 18,000 individuals on our voter bloc list. We are hoping to increase that substantially in the next couple of years so we can build a stronger voice."

There were problems identified and several issues that still need to be addressed, but the conference call was an excellent first step to collaboration in strengthening civic engagement and the public policy processes for people with disabilities.

"We all have to realize that this is not a problem that gets solved and then goes away. It's an ongoing conversation. Polling places change; poll workers change all of the time; political parties change," Decker said. "This is something I think should be high up on everyone's agenda for the future because this is always going to be a challenge."



Not only is it a constitutional right to vote, but it is also a political problem in making sure that we are convincing people this is a constituency they need to appeal to, work with and address their campaigns and positions to disability issues.

To read the full conference call comments and conversation, visit www.gcdd.org/blogs/gcdd-blog/2412-gcdd-gets-election-day-feedback-from-across-the-country.html

Voting Experiences of Voters with Disabilities in Georgia & Missouri

EXPERT UPDATE



Jon Sanford, is the director of the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA) and an associate

professor of Industrial Design in the College of Architecture at Georgia Tech. Additionally, he is a research architect at the Rehab R&D Center at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. Sanford has been actively involved in research and development related to the accessibility and usability of products, technologies and environments for the past 25 years and was one of the authors of the *Principles of Universal Design*.

I got to do it myself ... I didn't need somebody to read to me and tell them what I wanted. It was liberating to be able to do it myself.

On Election Day, staff from Georgia Tech's Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA) accompanied 18 individuals with disabilities to the polls in Atlanta and St. Louis to learn about their voting experiences. Voting in person was extremely important to them. Afterwards, many commented that voting in person made them feel they were a part of the voting process, while doing absentee balloting "you lose the feeling that you're casting your ballot" and they were "afraid something could get lost ... and it's too important."

Overall, voting experiences were clearly affected by polling site accessibility, room layout, accessibility of voting equipment and poll worker attitudes.

Polling site accessibility: Many noted crowded parking at both the polling site and on public streets. Both vision and mobility impaired individuals complained about getting from parking lots to the polling site due to distance, signage, lack of curb cuts or stairs that were difficult to climb. And once inside, some complained about the poor signage, especially vision impaired voters.

Room layout: Privacy, noise levels and segregation of accessible voting machines were key concerns. The absence of places to sit to prevent fatigue was particularly noticeable. The close positioning of the accessible machines to other voting machines created a lack of privacy, particularly the lower height of the accessible machines, which could permit someone standing to look down and see the screen.

Voting Equipment Accessibility: Voters were adamant about using the machines, however, numerous problems with voting machines were noted, especially the audio information provided for blind voters and the placement of the machines on a table for seated voters.

The audio was a major facilitator when it functioned well. One voter commented, "I got to do it myself ... I didn't need somebody to read to me and tell them what I wanted. It was liberating to be able to do it myself." But when there were difficulties starting the audio, sound quality was poor or instructions were confusing or incomplete, voters became frustrated and had to have the ballot read to them, resulting in a lack of privacy.

While voters with mobility aids didn't need machines providing audio, the standard touch screen machines were too high to reach. Although the accessible machines were located on a table at the right height, they often had insufficient legroom, which prevented voters from getting close enough to reach the machine.

Poll Workers: Poll workers can make or break a voter's experience. However, many poll workers were ignorant about people with disabilities, including knowing they had a right to vote. Poll workers often offered either no help when it was needed or too much help when it wasn't needed. More concerning, too many poll workers were unprepared to set up accessible voting equipment or provide instructions on how to use it, leaving voters with disabilities either on their own or in the case of two individuals, having to use absentee ballots.



15TH ANNUAL DISABILITY DAY AT THE CAPITOL THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2013

THEME: "What's Your Connection?"

That's the theme for the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' (GCDD) 15th Annual Disability Day, the annual rally on the steps of the State Capitol to promote access, opportunity and meaningful community living for Georgians with disabilities and their families. Each year, advocates from across the State, elected officials, State legislators and Georgia citizens with and without disabilities gather in celebration of community, advocacy, friendship and achievement.

ATTENDEE FORM:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Organization (if applicable): _____

School (if applicable): _____

County (required field): _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Day Time Phone (required field): _____

Email Address: _____

Alternate Contact Name: _____

Alternate Phone: _____

Please Confirm Number of Attendees:

Attendees 10 and under: _____ Confirmed number of attendees

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

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

Please complete form by Feb. 11 and mail or fax with attention to Dee Spearman:

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
2013 Disability Day Registration
2 Peachtree Street, NW • Atlanta, GA 30303

Fax: 404.657.2132
Call 404.657.2121 to learn more
about sponsorship opportunities.

You can also register online at: www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E_ID=500045&RegType=ATT

JOIN US ON THE
CAPITOL STEPS!

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

9 AM – 11 AM

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

11 AM – 12:10 PM

Rally Program on the Capitol Steps

12:30 PM – 2 PM

Lunch & Exhibits at the Georgia Freight Depot

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

For more information,
visit gcdd.org or call
1.888.ASK.GCDD

COME RALLY
WITH US AND
LET US KNOW
WHAT'S YOUR
CONNECTION
TO A DISABILITY!

DISABILITY DAY SPONSORSHIP FORM

“What’s Your Connection?” is also the US Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy’s (ODEP) national campaign that emphasizes a disability as a universal link that each of us have in common and encourages inclusion in all aspects of life. ODEP recently launched “What’s Your Connection?” to invite people nationwide to participate in the campaign by submitting a captioned photograph or video that answers the question “What’s your connection to disability?”

Join us at Disability Day to find out how to participate in “What’s Your Connection?” or visit <http://s.dol.gov/XJ> for more information.

Sponsors, please send your company’s logo in a jpeg format to dyspearman@dhr.state.ga.us – SUBJECT: DDay Logo.

It's that time again! Each winter, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities invites people with disabilities, family members, policymakers, business leaders, and providers to come together at the Capitol in celebration of community, advocacy and friendship. The success of Disability Day depends on the vital support of sponsors like you! Please let us know of your commitment no later than February 11th so that you will receive full recognition. Unfortunately, information received after this date does not guarantee your organization's placement on any printed material. However, we will gladly assist you over the phone; please call 404.657.2121.

Yes! My organization will co-sponsor Disability Day 2013 in the amount of:

- \$5,000. Full-page ad in *Making a Difference* magazine, Logo on banner, Name on program and GCDD website, Exhibit space.
- \$4,000. Half-page ad in *Making a Difference* magazine, Logo on banner, Name on program and GCDD website, Exhibit space.
- \$2,500. Quarter-page ad, logo on banner, Name on program and GCDD website, Exhibit space.
- \$1,500. Logo on banner, Name on program and GCDD website, Exhibit space.
- \$600. Logo on banner, Name on program and GCDD website.
- \$200. Name on program and website.

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

Yes, please invoice me for the amount selected.

Sorry, I am unable to sponsor this year.

Will you or your organization's staff plan on attending this event? Yes No
Please provide an estimated count for Lunch and/or number of T-shirts
(As a sponsor, you will be contacted in January for t-shirt sizes)

[PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY]

Contact Name: _____ Title: _____

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

Address: _____

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

Email: _____

Please complete form by Feb. 11 and mail or fax with attention to Dee Spearman:

GCDD, 2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 26-246, Atlanta, GA, 30303

Fax: 404.657.2132

Please call 404.657.2121 to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

WHAT'S YOUR CONNECTION?



Nothing will Change...

By Pat Nobbie, PhD, Mia's Mom

Nothing will change in your life, except that you won't see me every weekend. This was my main point in explaining to Mia what it will be like when I move to Washington, DC for my new job. And, it's true! Mia already has a pretty busy life, and soon she starts a new job, which will keep her even busier. She'll be working in the surgical nursing unit at St. Mary's Hospital as office support to the nurses.

Mia has been through training, health screenings and thanks to creative thinking by Briggs, her stamina has been built up over the past months by walking nearly every morning with Alex. She has scrubs, white shoes and a badge. She is even riding paratransit regularly now! Needless to say she is pretty excited.

Mia has always been a stickler with schedules. This can get frustrating, but on the whole, it is enormously helpful. As long as you get it on her calendar, she's on it. And, she reminds everyone what's up. In fact, she'll just come right out and say, "I'm a genius on the calendar." So she'll work every day Monday to Friday, four hours a day. After work on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, she'll go to the UGA Ramsey Center for her "Healthy Living Class." On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she'll go swim at the Y with her team, the Piranhas. On Saturday she does her wash and grocery shops with Laura or Joe and on Sunday she goes to church. She has other things as well, social events with her friends, dinner and a movie, fundraising events for her favorite camp, the Big Hearts Pageant, etc.

Even now when I want to go visit, I have to get on her calendar and it's too bad for me if I interfere with something that's already on her schedule. Some weekends, it's a real negotiation! And every night, without fail, she calls at 8:05 PM or soon after. From afar, we'll do face time and that way we can see each other when we talk.

So I told her, everything that you already do will be exactly the same. The only thing that will be different is that you won't have to fit me in on the weekend! I think she's going to be OK. She'll probably be great. And the reason I say that is over the years, during lots of different types of transitions, she's always risen to or surpassed my expectations. I should probably be more concerned about myself.

"... the people in her life, paid and unpaid, are wonderful and will manage fine. Her siblings, her dad and many friends are around. She gathers people to her, and she gives a whole lot in return."

Seeing her, getting her hugs, checking on her clothes, household supplies, doctor's appointments, arranging transportation or putting around her apartment is something I've done habitually. I know I don't have to ... the people in her life, paid and unpaid, are wonderful and will manage fine. Her siblings, her dad and many friends are around. She gathers people to her, and she gives a whole lot in return.

This will be a growing year for both of us! Keep us in your thoughts!

The only thing that will be different is that you won't have to fit me in on the weekend! I think she's going to be OK. SHE'LL PROBABLY BE GREAT.

MIA'S SPACE



Gwinnett Gives TimeBank Throws a Launch Party

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' (GCDD) Real Communities project, the Gwinnett Gives TimeBank hosted a launch party on November 3, 2012 to introduce their project in the community. TimeBanking is an international movement that promotes equality and builds caring community economies through the inclusive and reciprocal exchange of time and talent.

Detrice Jupiter, the Gwinnett Gives Real Communities Community Builder, said the turnout was promising with around 25 - 30 people in the community attending the launch party.

"I was pleased with the participation among our community members," added Jupiter. "But of course we always want to keep expanding and get more people involved."

"I want to get people actively involved and engaged in sharing their gifts and exchanging time, and our launch party was a great first step."

"My main goal is to see the project grow and be successful," shared Jupiter. "I want to do more than get people signed up. I want to get people actively involved and engaged in sharing their gifts and exchanging time, and our launch party was a great first step."

The City of Milton Better Together Graduates from the Real Communities Initiative

GCDD's Real Communities project, the City of Milton's Better Together, is graduating from the Real Communities Initiative and is ready to sustain itself with the assistance of the city and the residents of Milton. Since 2009, GCDD has been working with the City of Milton and Better Together as a part of Real Communities to ensure Milton is truly welcoming to all who live there and to provide opportunities for citizen engagement and involvement in the community.

As Milton Better Together becomes independent, they completed their video project, which shares how they actively engage in projects that bring together all types of community members, create avenues for inclusion and promote making a welcoming community for all. Eric Jacobson, GCDD executive director, values their past partnership and says this video is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of Better Together and allows other communities

**REAL
COMMUNITIES
INITIATIVE**

"As Milton Better Together becomes independent, they completed their video project, which shares how they actively engage in projects that bring together all types of community members, create avenues for inclusion and promote making a welcoming community for all."

Those community members who attended had the unique opportunity to learn more about the project, as well as interact and meet other members of their community. Kids and teens got to know each other through fun craft activities such as making bracelets, while the adults played ice breaker games that allowed everyone to learn something new about their neighbor and the gifts and talents each can contribute to the overall community.

to learn from their efforts. To view the City of Milton's Better Together video project, visit www.gcdd.org/news-a-media/videos/viewvideo/25/gcdd-better-together-in-milton-georgia-a-real-communities-initiative-project.html.

Creating Welcoming Communities Through Connections

Creating welcoming communities is all about staying connected, so what better way to promote community inclusion than collaboration between all of the Developmental Disabilities Councils?

In collaboration with the National Association of Councils for Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), GCDD hosted an opportunity in November for all of the Councils to join together and create a national partnership. The main goal was to discuss ways to promote welcoming communities to all through ideas from Asset-Based Community Development and GCDD's Real Communities Initiative.

Forty people representing 22 states and Developmental Disabilities Councils around the country attended the day-and-a-half meeting in Chicago to think about how to integrate these innovative initiatives into their state and learn from each other about new opportunities.

"This was a great first step toward building a national alliance between all of the Developmental Disabilities Councils," said Jacobson. "We can all benefit from staying connected and maintaining an open dialogue on creating positive changes for all communities."

John McKnight, co-founder of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute, presented an overview to the group on their initiative, which focuses on using local assets as the primary building blocks to support sustainable community development and people's gifts and interests. ABCD draws upon the supporting functions of local formal and informal associations in the community such as support groups, book clubs and church groups, to strengthen the community and connect all local residents together.

"We can all benefit from **STAYING CONNECTED** and maintaining an **OPEN DIALOGUE** on creating positive changes for all communities."

Rosita De LaRosa, a local resident in the community shared her own community-building project in the Logan's Square neighborhood of Chicago that fits into the principles of GCDD's Real Communities Initiative and ABCD. For more than 10 years, she has been dedicated to connecting people with disabilities to local associations and groups in their community so they can get out of their homes or facilities and actively engage with their neighbors.

Attendees also got to hear first-hand accounts on community-building methods from Bruce Anderson, director of Community Activators. Anderson has a project in Vashon Island, WA that started out focused solely on connecting people with disabilities to the community, but has evolved into a community-wide effort to make a more welcoming community for everyone.

As a facilitator, GCDD also shared on its Real Communities Initiative and debuted its video "Getting Real in Georgia," an overview explaining what each of GCDD's Real Communities projects are all about.

"I think people are interested in the Real Communities Initiative because there are such a wide range of projects that can allow people to be creative in promoting welcoming communities, while connecting them with their neighbors," said Jacobson.

Currently, there are seven or eight other Developmental Disabilities Councils that are ready and interested in moving forward with their own projects similar to the Real Communities Initiative and the ABCD principles. GCDD plans on continuing this open dialogue with its fellow Developmental Disabilities Councils and will help guide others in getting their own initiatives started. The best way to support more welcoming communities is to facilitate connections in the community for not only people with disabilities, but for everyone.

I think people are interested in REAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVES because there are such a wide range of projects that can allow people to be creative in promoting welcoming communities, while connecting them with their neighbors.



Developmental Disabilities Councils' Representatives at the Chicago meeting.



Want to learn more about what GCDD is doing? Visit <http://gcdd.org/news-a-media/videos.html> or find us on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/georgiaddcouncil

This time was
different because
I was going to cast
MY OWN BALLOT!

STRAIGHT TALK



Jenna Quigley

has a business with her best friend, Donna Williams. They make greeting cards and sell them at conferences and online. She loves to sing, dance and perform. She has been in two productions with the Habima Theatre: *Happy Days* and *Guys and Dolls*. This year she will also be in a production of *Grease*. Someday she hopes to get a dance and music scholarship so she can be on stage and sing and perform in front of a big audience and have a solo.

To check out Jenna's business, visit www.justforyoucardart.com and become a friend on Facebook: Justforyoucardart!

My First Voting Experience

By Jenna Quigley

This year was my first time voting – and it was in the presidential election. Let me tell you a little about myself. I am Jenna Quigley. I am 19-years-old and a senior at Tucker High School and I want to tell you about my voting experience. At school, on Channel One News, I listened to the news broadcasters talk about the presidential election. They talked about both candidates and how they felt about things that matter to them and our country. I also watched the debates with my dad.

This was not my first time at the polls. I have gone with my parents a lot of times over the years when they voted. This time was different because I was going to cast my own ballot! In order to prepare for this, my mother went online to the Secretary of State's Office website and printed off DeKalb County's sample ballot so I could practice. I filled it out at home, so I could bring it with me in case I got too nervous when it was time to vote for real.

"One of the workers even rang a pretend bell – saying, "Ding, Ding, Ding, first time voter" and pointed to me! I felt great. Everyone cheered for me as I left the building."

On the day we went to vote, I was excited and nervous. I brought my State ID and my completed “draft ballot” with me. My dad had already voted early, so I went to vote with my mom. We decided to do early voting hoping we would avoid a very long

wait, but we still had to wait in line with a lot of other people. The poll workers gave us some paperwork to fill out while we were in line and I could fill it out by myself because I practiced almost every day at school.

After we filled out the paperwork and showed the poll worker our IDs, they checked us in. One of the workers asked me if it was my first time voting. I told her it was. She let me vote in a booth right next to my mom in case I had any questions, but I didn't.

After I voted, I put on my “I'm a Georgia Voter” sticker! Then when we were leaving, the poll worker made sure there was a big announcement to everyone still waiting in line that I was a first time voter. One of the workers even rang a pretend bell – saying, “Ding, Ding, Ding, first time voter” and pointed to me! I felt great. Everyone cheered for me as I left the building.

I will definitely vote again!

I VOTED!

January 2013

January 17

Blind Coalition Legislative Day
at the Capitol
Blindangel@joimail.com

January 17-18

GCDD Quarterly Meeting
Atlanta, GA
404.657.2126

January 25

Georgia Budget & Policy Institute (GBPI)
2013 Policy Conference
The Future of Georgia:
Educational and Workforce
Atlanta, GA
www.gbpi.org

January 26

Waycross Regional Resource Fair
Waycross, GA
912.287.2306
jjames@ware.k12.ga.us

January 29

Pike County Transition Resource Fair
Zebulon, GA
770.567.8770
foustL@pike.k12.ga.us

January 30 – February 2

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

February

February 8-10

Abilities Expo
Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, GA
Free Admission
www.abilitiesexpo.com

February 21

15th Annual Disability Day
at the Capitol
Atlanta, GA
www.gcdd.org

February 22-23

2013 Annual Conference –
Georgia Council for Exceptional
Children (CEC)
Macon, GA
478.254.3530
www.gacec.org

March

March 2-3

The 20th Annual Larry Bregman, MD,
Educational Conference
Atlanta, GA
The Selig Center
www.yourtoolsforliving.org

March 15-17

Abilities Expo
Los Angeles, CA
Free Admission
www.abilitiesexpo.com

April

April 18-19

GCDD Quarterly Meeting
TBD
404.657.2126

April 15-17

The Disability Policy Seminar
Washington, DC
www.thearc.org

April 25-27

United Cerebral Palsy
2013 UCP Annual Conference
San Diego, CA
www.ucp.org

2013 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 March 1
to be included in the spring calendar. For a full list of events, visit: gcdd.org/events-calendar



CALENDAR HIGHLIGHT:

15th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol

February 21, 2013

See pages 23 – 24 for additional details and registration form.

RESOURCES

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

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

State Government

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

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

Department of Community Affairs
www.dca.ga.gov

Georgia Housing Search
www.georgiahousingsearch.org
877.428.8844

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

General Information
www.georgia.gov

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

Around GCDD

National Youth Leadership Network
www.nylan.org

Project SEARCH
www.projectsearch.us

News

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Atlanta Branch
www.naacpatlanta.org

Voices for Georgia's Children
<http://georgiavoices.org>

Voting Feedback Feature

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD)
www.nacdd.org/site/home.aspx

National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
www.napas.org

Perspectives

Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD)
www.abcdinstitute.org

Healthcare Institution for Neuro-Recovery (HIRI)
www.hiri.org

Expert Update

Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA)
www.catea.gatech.edu

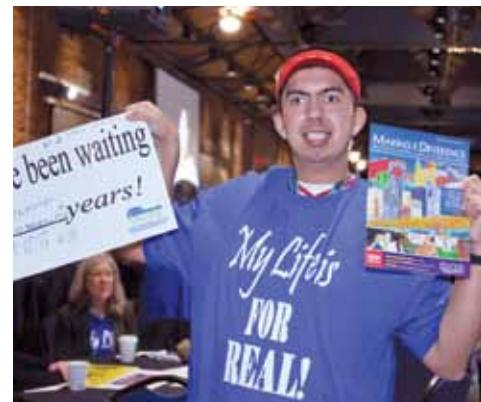
Straight Talk

Jenna Quigley's Card Business
www.justforyoucardart.com

Real Communities

Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD)
www.abcdinstitute.org

Community Activators
www.communityactivators.com



Thanks to OUR SPONSORS for their Support.

If you are interested in being a sponsor for *Making a Difference* magazine, please call Kim Shapland @ 678.384.7837.

Developmental Disabilities Services Tools for Independence

- Residential: Highly individualized community living supports with all ADL skills.
- 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.

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YourToolsforLiving.org

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

Jewish Family & Career Services
JF&CS
Your Tools for Living

Stay Connected with GCDD Online!

Share your thoughts, learn
and interact with others in
the disability community ...

Visit our website @
GCDD.org to join our



GCDD Online
Community

or



GCDD Forum



Like us on
Facebook @

[facebook.com/georgiaddcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/georgiaddcouncil)



Follow us on
Twitter @

twitter.com/georgiacouncil

We want to hear from you!



JOIN US FOR:
15th Annual Disability Day
at the Capitol
FEBRUARY 21, 2013

See pages 23 – 24 for
additional details and
registration form.



The 20th Annual Larry Bregman, M.D., Educational Conference

Keep It moving

Dance: Saturday, Mar. 2, 2013 | 7:30 pm
Conference: Sunday, Mar. 3, 2013 | Registration at 8:30 am
at The Selig Center | Atlanta, GA 30309

For more information: Contact Brenda at 770.677.9345,
bregman@jfcs-atlanta.org or visit www.bregman.org.

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Georgia Department on Developmental Disabilities
Dove Syndrome Association of Atlanta

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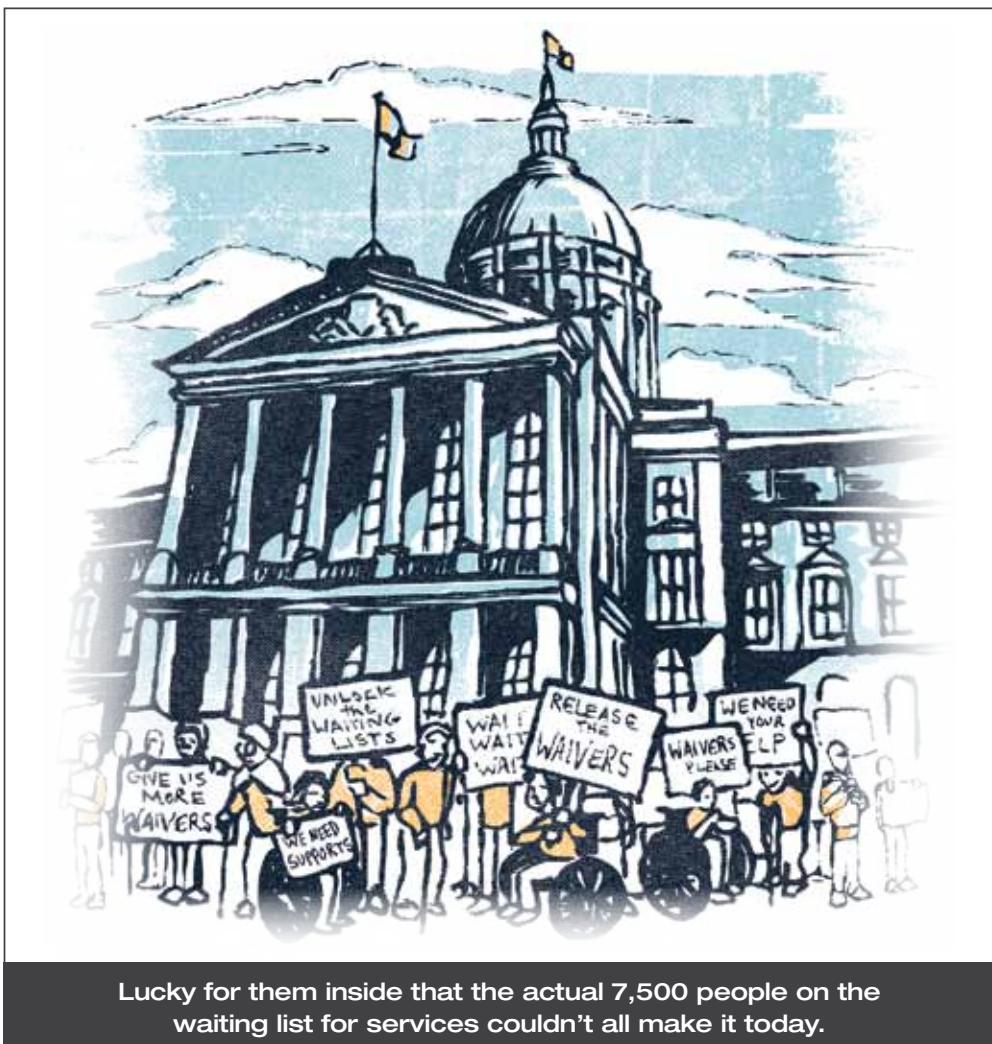
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- FREE to list
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1-877-428-8844
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www.GeorgiaHousingSearch.org





Lucky for them inside that the actual 7,500 people on the waiting list for services couldn't all make it today.



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

Address Service Requested

MAKING a DIFFERENCE

A quarterly magazine of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 3

WINTER 2013



Due to the tremendous success and continued growth of Disability Day, we have made changes to the registration process and will not have a registration table or a "check-in" process. Please fill out the Attendee Form on page 23, so we can gather an approximate number of attendees.

You can also RSVP online at gcdd.org before February 11, 2013.