

Making **a** Difference

SUMMER 2008



Navigator Team Starts Inclusive Camp

Your Vote Matters.

Celebrating Olmstead

www.gcdd.org

In Each Issue

- 29** Calendar
29 Editorial Cartoon
30 Resources

Features

8 Against All Odds

Conference inspires independence in disability community.

12 Election 2008: Your Vote Matters

Learn the difference between the presidential candidates plus innovations in voting technology.

18 Advocates Celebrate Olmstead Anniversary

Self-advocates enjoy their freedom, remember those who are still in institutions.

22 Connections Top Priority for DSP Training

DSP graduates put what they've learned to good use.

24 Clay Navigators Open Camp

Inclusive camp opens despite extreme funding shortage.

Departments

3
GCDD Viewpoint
Search for leaders critical to disability movement.

4
News
Bright from the Start receives disability grant; Child wins prescribed medical services against Georgia medical agency.

5
Around GCDD
Diversity meetings open doors; "Rides for All Georgians" works to provide public transportation; Award winners announced; GCDD's Jacobson gets schooled; PBS offers converter box; Discovery Day moves to a new location.

16
Perspectives
Minorities with disabilities face multiple issues.

26
Expert Update
Technology helps produce better educational outcomes.

27
Straight Talk
Teen discovers his calling in life.

28
Mia's Space
Mia's good friend, Charles Hopkins, retires.

A quarterly magazine of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities collaborates with Georgia's citizens, public and private advocacy organizations and policymakers to positively influence public policies that enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families.

GCDD provides this through education and advocacy activities, program implementation, funding and public policy analysis and research.

GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES

Tom Seegmueller
Chairperson
tms@dhr.state.ga.us

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

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

2 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 26-246
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142
Voice 404-657-2126
Fax 404-657-2132
Toll free 1-888-275-4233
TDD 404-657-2133
www.gcdd.org

Valerie Smith Buxton
Managing Editor
O'Neill Communications, Inc.
val@oneillcommunications.com

O'Neill Communications, Inc.
Design & Layout

Brandon D Hunt • Cartoonist

Martin Andrews • Cover Photography



Search for Leaders Critical to Disability Movement

Many of the articles and items in this issue relate directly to the upcoming elections and our search for leaders. Other items deal directly with those who are already filling leadership roles.

It has often been highlighted that if the disability community spoke with one voice that we would have a major political impact on any issue that we focused upon. Yet, too frequently our efforts are diffused either by discord or disinterest. With all of the other challenges in life, attempting to overcome the hurdles involved with voting accessibility and political involvement are often relegated to the back burner.

When we come together we frequently express our disillusionment with the lack of progress that has been made at the local, state and federal levels. When laws have been enacted that would potentially improve the quality of the lives of citizens with disabilities and their families, they are too often toothless, underfunded or even unfunded. If real change is to be achieved, we must not only speak as one voice but continue to voice and vote our conscience until REAL change occurs.

We must not only speak out with our votes but with our actions. In this issue you will find articles related directly to the voting process as well as comparisons on the positions candidates hold on specific disability issues. You will also find a number of articles relating to individuals and the leadership roles that they have assumed.

It is important that we recognize that not all leaders are elected nor do they necessarily hold a titled office. Many simply lead by example or personally commit to doing what they can do to achieve change. For real and long lasting change to occur, we must have both.

We must acknowledge that this has not been nor will it ever be a short term struggle.

“The ‘System’ can only be as good as we make it and what we demand of it both with our votes and our actions.”

It has taken decades of commitment and leadership to get us where we are today, which is sadly far from where we would like to be. When we come together, it is more and more noticeable that aging advocates and leaders well outnumber the younger faces in the crowd. We need to work diligently to ensure that a new generation is not only committed but prepared to carry this effort forward. The ‘System’ can only be as good as we make it and what we demand of it both with our votes and our actions.

We want to hear from you. Share your thoughts about the future of advocacy and leadership and other articles in this edition of *Making A Difference*. Please send comments to vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us; subject line: Letters-to-the-Editor.



ERIC E. JACOBSON



TOM SEEGMUELLER

Eric E. Jacobson
Eric E. Jacobson
Executive Director, GCDD

Tom Seegmueller
Tom Seegmueller
Chairperson, GCDD



Bright from the Start Receives Disability Grant

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is participating in a new grant, "SpecialQuest Birth-Five: Head Start/Hilton Foundation Training Program." Georgia will create a collaborative state team to participate with nine other state teams to implement a professional development system designed especially for those who teach young children who have disabilities.

Sandy Tradewell, systems coordinator with SpecialQuest Birth-Five, said the program is vital for increasing inclusive opportunities. "The diverse needs of young children with disabilities and their families require support from a variety of service providers representing different disciplines," said Tradewell. "Through collaborative efforts, children and families can benefit from many skills and perspectives, while agencies expand their services, share resources, support families with more accessible services and promote community-wide planning."

"The diverse needs of young children with disabilities and their families require support from a variety of service providers representing different disciplines."

The grant, which builds on 10 previous years of work by the Hilton/Early Head Start Training Program, will provide support through September 2010. Georgia began incorporating the SpecialQuest approach and materials into the state professional development system in May at a national leadership event.

The focus of SpecialQuest is on the inclusion for children with disabilities and their families, especially those from Head Start and early care and education programs that include early intervention, local school districts, early childhood special education and family support.

There is no training of this magnitude in place in Georgia for providers of children with disabilities. The grant will give Bright from the Start and its learning partners the opportunity to work with trainers to ensure centers are more inclusive.

"This grant provides a phenomenal opportunity for us to put in place a comprehensive professional development system for persons who work with birth-to-five children with disabilities," said Justine Strickland, assistant commissioner for child care policy at Bright from the Start. "We want to help produce a highly skilled group of providers who are comfortable and adept when interacting with Georgia's children and their families."

Child Wins Prescribed Services From Georgia Medical Agency

Callie Moore, a 12-year-old girl from Madison County with many complex medical conditions that require nursing care, has won a significant victory in a federal lawsuit against Dr. Rhonda Medows, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), the state's Medicaid agency. On June 9, 2008, U.S. District Court Judge Thomas W. Thrash rejected DCH's claim that it had the discretion to refuse to provide healthcare that had been prescribed by the girl's treating physician.



The Georgia Advocacy Office filed suit on Moore's behalf, to enforce her rights under the Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Services (EPSDT) provisions of the Medicaid Act. DCH approved only 84 of the 94 hours prescribed by her doctor for private duty nursing. The court found that states participating in Medicaid do not have the discretion to deny funding for treatments and services listed in the Act when prescribed by a physician for a Medicaid-eligible child.

The director of legal advocacy at the Georgia Advocacy Office, Joshua Norris, said the ruling has implications for more than 700,000 children in Georgia. "The court is simply making Georgia comply with Congress' intent that all children who are eligible for Medicaid actually receive the services and treatment that will help them be in the best health possible. This decision affirms that treating physicians, and not the state, should make those decisions and that Georgia's Medicaid agency must provide children eligible for Medicaid what the doctors have prescribed for them."

GPB Offers Coupons for Digital TV Converters

On February 18, 2009, television sets that receive signals through antennae will no longer work unless they are hooked up to a digital converter box, cable or satellite TV.

People who do not have cable, satellite or a digital television set by this date must purchase a digital converter box, which costs between \$40 - \$80, to be able to watch TV.

Georgia Public Broadcasting wants people with disabilities who may be living on fixed incomes to know they can receive up to two coupons per household for \$40 off a digital converter box. Visit www.dtv2009.gov or call 888-DTV-2009 (888-388-2009) to apply. For more information, visit www.dtvanswers.com or www.dtv.gov. ●



Letters to the Editor

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

Contact Our Editor and Public Information Director:

Valerie Meadows Suber,
vmsuber@dhr.state.ga.us,
404-657-2122
Fax 404-657-2132

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

Audio or Large Print Versions:

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

Sponsorship:

For sponsorship opportunities contact: Valerie Buxton at 770-578-9765 or val@oneillcommunications.com.

Subscriptions / Back Issues:

Visit us at our Web site: www.gcdd.org or call us: 404-657-2126.

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

GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES

Diversity Meetings Open Doors to Minorities in Atlanta

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) Diversity Outreach Coordinator John Dallas has several multicultural events planned to raise awareness of the agency and what resources are available to people living with disabilities throughout the state.

June 28 kicked off what Dallas says he hopes will be a series of diversity meetings, with Korean families living in the Atlanta area congregating at the Center for Pan Asian Community Services in Doraville. "I just had the idea stemming from another conference I had attended," Dallas confessed. "I never believed it would take off as it has.

"The purpose of these meetings is to give various ethnic groups throughout Atlanta an idea of what resources are available to them in the community," he further explained. "We also want to build a support group between the families." He confirmed that he's been discussing hosting a similar program with the East African community in Atlanta at some point in July or August. According to Dallas, there is much interest in keeping this type of program alive. "It will definitely happen," he said. "The feedback has been positive...everyone is happy that GCDD is getting involved in this way."

"The purpose of these meetings is to give various ethnic groups throughout Atlanta an idea of what resources are available to them in the community."



'Rides for All Georgians' Works to Provide Public Transportation for All

In November and December of 2007, while most were enjoying the holiday season, a small group of dedicated advocates were working on

putting together an application for a transportation grant. They called their group 'Rides for all Georgians,' and were quite a diverse array of people – including representatives from the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Independent Living Council, the Georgia Advocacy Office and the Georgia Department of Transportation – all working together on the grant application. "It really made our application stand out," Kate Gainer, advocacy director for GCDD, said. "Nobody else [who applied] had that kind of representation on their boards."

In January, the 'Rides for all Georgians' group learned that their application had been accepted. They were then required to attend a training seminar in April 2008. The group immediately realized how well

continued on page 6

“We want to get everyone working together for more accessible public transportation options in the future.”

continued from page 5

prepared they were, thanks to their hard work throughout the end of 2007. “During the third day of our training, we had to put together a year-long action plan. We pretty much had already put our plan together before we left!” Gainer laughed. “All we had to do was refine it by what we learned during the first two days of the seminar, and then hand it in!”

Now enforcing the finalized plan, the group is currently holding public forums with the hopes of initiating a grassroots movement throughout Georgia around issues in the state public transportation system. The first meeting was held June 20, 2008, in Decatur, but there are plans for many more in the future. “We want to bring everyone to the table,” Gainer said. “We want to get everyone working together for more accessible public transportation options in the future.”

Award Winners Announced at the Making A Difference Appreciation Ceremony

The Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities held its Making A Difference Annual Appreciation Ceremony on Thursday,

July 17 at The Renaissance Hotel in downtown Atlanta.

Several people who have been true leaders in the movement for equal rights and accessible options for people with disabilities are being honored for the work they’ve done and the people they’ve inspired.

LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR: Rep. Mark Butler (R-Carrollton) and Sen. Nan Orrock (D-Atlanta) will be honored for their leadership in the areas of accessible housing, while Sen. Dan Moody (R-Alpharetta) and Rep. Doug Collins (R-Gainesville) will be recognized for their work in Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT.)

C. ANTHONY CUNNINGHAM COUNCIL MEMBER OF THE YEAR: Tameeka Hunter is the recipient of this year’s council member of the year award for her exemplary service to GCDD.

ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR: Eleanor Smith, president of Concrete Change will accept on behalf of Action Group for Visitability, which has supported GCDD-sponsored accessible housing legislation. The Action Group for Visitability is a 15-member coalition of organizations.

EXCELLENCE IN MEDIA: Former CNN anchor Bobbie Battista and *Macon Telegraph* reporter Travis Fain will receive honors for media excellence, for helping to increase public awareness of issues that impact people with disabilities and their communities.

Coverage of the event and more information on those who were honored will appear in the Fall ‘08 edition of *Making a Difference*.

GCDD’s Eric Jacobson Gets Schooled

A familiar face from the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities spent three weeks at Harvard University this summer as part of the Harvard Business School Comprehensive Executive Leadership Program. Eric Jacobson, executive director of GCDD, was one of 64 participants in the program from all over the United States and portions of the world, including representatives from New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, Singapore and Denmark.

“There are elected officials, policemen, firemen and public employees from both local and state government,” Jacobson said about the wide array of representation at the program. “It has provided for a very diverse and candid discussion about a wide variety of issues.”

Those issues, according to Jacobson, involve the role advocates play when there are limited

“The balance between authority and leadership has been the theme for the first week.”





resources and authority to go around. "We are a wonderful model for many of these issues because we have been successful in so many arenas because of our leadership," Jacobson said about GCDD. "The balance between authority and leadership has been the theme for the first week."

While being exuberant about the opportunities that being at Harvard presented, Jacobson was most excited to bring what he has learned back to Atlanta. "I can't wait to get back and begin sharing some of the discussions and tools that I have already experienced," Jacobson said.



The Annual Discovery Day Moves to a New Location

Senior Vice President for Corporate Affairs and Diversity of InterContinental Hotels Group, Roslyn Dickerson, was so impressed

by last year's Discovery Day, and the spirit behind the entire event, that she offered to host this year's annual event at the Crowne Plaza Atlanta Perimeter at Ravinia on October 30.

"We were one of the sponsors last year, and I was fascinated by...the array of agencies that were represented working in and around the disability community," she explained. "I was impressed by that degree of diversity, and the subsequent communities they represented."

Also important to Dickerson was that the InterContinental Hotels Group is based in Atlanta. "We're a hospitality company," she said simply. "It's more than fitting for us to consider hosting this event." Along with having the Crowne Plaza

host, Dickerson will also present some remarks at the event, as will the president of InterContinental Hotels Group, Stevan Porter.

The luxury hotel is conveniently located near several Atlanta attractions, including the Georgia World Congress Center and Perimeter Mall.

"I was impressed by that degree of diversity, and the subsequent communities they represented."

Discovery Day is an annual event where people with disabilities and potential employers come together to explore various customized employment options that will assist both parties to understand each other's needs and goals for employment opportunities. ●

"We were one of the sponsors last year, and I was fascinated by...the array of agencies that were represented working in and around the disability community."

Against All Odds

conference inspires independence in disability community

Trilingual. Nonverbal. Artistic.
A loner. A family man.
Uncontrollable. Dangerous.
All have been labels used to
describe Philip.

Philip's story was shared with the hundreds of attendants gathered at the first Against All Odds conference. Told by keynote speaker Chris Heimerl, Philip's harrowing tale of survival set the tone of determination for the rest of the conference, sponsored by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) held in Athens from June 1 – 3 at the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education.

With over 30 years of experience, mostly serving those with developmental disabilities and mental health issues, Heimerl brought a wealth of knowledge to the conference. Currently serving as a consultant in the Office of Behavioral Support for New Mexico, Heimerl found it difficult to keep up with the time difference in the morning. "It was hard waking up today," he joked with the crowd.

"Once in a while someone comes along who challenges all you know, believe in, and consider possible."

As Heimerl told the audience before truly delving into his presentation, Philip's story was not only obviously difficult to tell, but would be difficult to listen to as well. "If you have a strong reaction, that's OK," he said. At various points throughout the speech, audience members audibly gasped at some of the conditions Heimerl described that Philip experienced while living in institutionalized care.

Philip wasn't present at the conference. "Maybe one day, but he's just not ready for large groups of people," Heimerl said, explaining how Philip just didn't know how to handle all of his emotions just yet. "His eyes are an absolute lens to his emotions," he said to the hushed crowd. "You can see everything going through his mind."

"When we met Philip, we were told he had no family...Imagine the shock they went through, finding out that he was alive and well!"

The description for Heimerl's presentation in the Against All Odds brochure says, "Once in a while someone comes along who challenges all you know, believe in and consider possible. In some instances, they not only rearrange you, but an entire system. Philip is such a man." This is a point that was reiterated by Heimerl again and again throughout the presentation.

Currently, Philip is participating in expressive art therapy. As Heimerl showed pictures of Philip's work to the audience, he said, "Some people might say this is not 'age appropriate,'" pointing out that the artwork was more along the lines of something you might see in an elementary school. "We don't care. He likes it, and that is what matters." Philip also now enjoys spending time with family, after years of not being able to see them.

"When we met Philip, we were told he had no family," Heimerl explained to the audience. "Once we started listening to what he had to say, we realized he was giving us names of family members." They managed to contact Philip's two brothers and twin sister, all of whom had been told that Philip had died when they were younger. "Imagine the shock they



Chris Heimerl shares his expertise with attendees.

***“A community that excludes
even one of its members
is no community at all.”***

Dan Wilkins

went through, finding out that he was alive and well!” Heimerl said. And even though a variety of circumstances had led many to believe that Philip had no relatives, one of the things he says that he enjoys the most is spending time with his family.

While the topic of Heimerl’s address was quite sobering, it was ultimately triumphant. Philip had been written off as a hopeless case so many times. He had been described not as a human being, but with labels that didn’t truly describe him at all. Pushing beyond those walls, along with the love and help of Heimerl and many others, Philip now is out of institutionalized care and living on his own.

Philip’s story is, sadly, not entirely unique. Stories like Philip’s and many others spurred the conference attendants along as they attended the various sessions throughout the rest of the two days.

Overcoming Obstacles to Live Independently

The purpose of the Against All Odds conference was for disability advocates to discuss and explore what the future may hold as Georgia increases investment of public funds in individualized, person-directed support systems. Attendees traveled back and forth between seminars at the conference center offering such discussion topics like ‘Being Self-Directing,’ ‘Customized Employment as a Tool for Change,’ ‘What Happens to Me and My Family When I Graduate?’ and ‘Support Coordination for Self-Direction.’ These sessions were guided by either people who work closely with the disability community, or by people living with disabilities themselves. Some were from right here in Georgia, while others traveled from all over the

United States. Regardless of location, all had one goal in mind: become as self-sufficient as possible.

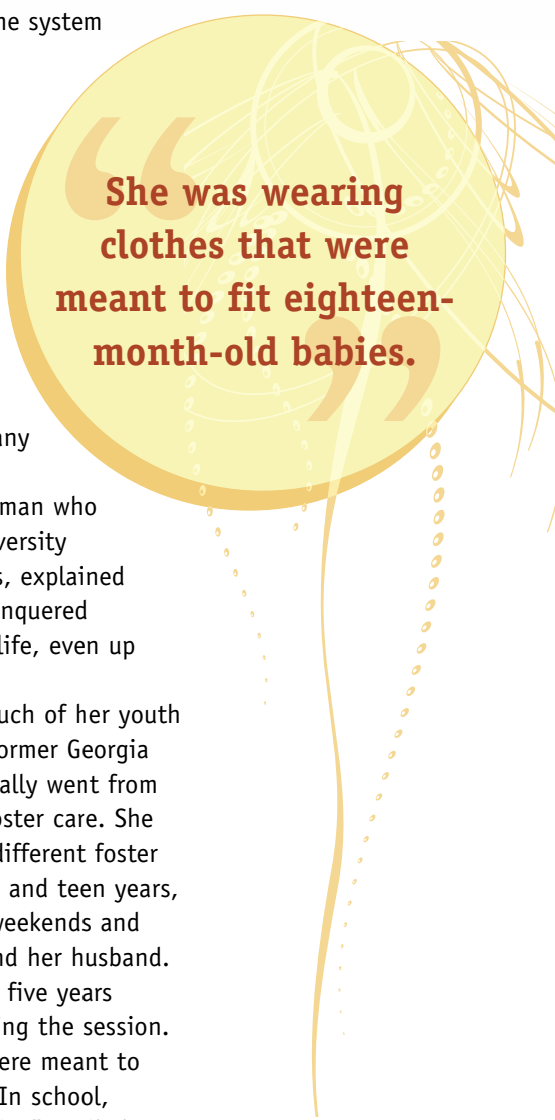
A popular program that took place on Monday was the ‘Being Self-Directing’ program, where Winifred “Denise” Shaw of Atlanta and Brad Jones of Seattle, Wash. shared their experiences of breaking out of the system and living their own lives.

“Once told that her talking would help others, she agreed,” Mary Yoder, executive director of the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities, says about Shaw’s decision to speak at the conference. “Denise has talked a couple of times at small gatherings about citizen advocacy...she wants others to celebrate her many accomplishments with her.”

Shaw, a petite attractive woman who has worked at Georgia State University as a janitor for the past 20 years, explained how she has encountered and conquered obstacles throughout her entire life, even up to this very day.

Spending her infancy and much of her youth in institutionalized care at the former Georgia Retardation Center, Shaw eventually went from one institution into another – foster care. She bounced around between a few different foster homes throughout her childhood and teen years, enjoying stability on the many weekends and holidays she spent with Yoder and her husband.

“I met Denise when she was five years old,” Yoder said to those attending the session. “She was wearing clothes that were meant to fit eighteen-month-old babies.” In school, Shaw was classified as “hyperactive” until she



**“She was wearing
clothes that were
meant to fit eighteen-
month-old babies.”**



“Even after all of that, is living on your own worth what you’ve been through?”

“Definitely.”

was placed in a Montessori program. Under this teaching method, according to both Shaw and Yoder, she absolutely thrived.

Shaw, living as both an African American and a person with a disability, found that there are certain obstacles in life put in place by ignorant, small-minded people. But only a few years ago, she faced one of her toughest hurdles yet: cancer.

With Shaw breaking down in tears, Yoder gently helped Shaw explain how, in what should have been a mere routine visit to her gynecologist, a lump was discovered in her breast. One mammogram and biopsy later, Shaw found herself diagnosed with breast cancer. “I remember her telling me, ‘Once you live with a disability, cancer is nothing,’” Yoder recalled.

Going through surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment, Shaw was happy to report to those listening that she has been cancer free for four years. The crowd erupted into applause as she wiped away the tears.

Currently, Shaw lives independently in Atlanta, using public transportation to get back and forth between running errands, her job and her home. She explained to the audience how she had been mugged once.

“Even after all of that, is living on your own worth what you’ve been through?” Yoder asked.

“Oh, yes,” Shaw replied. “Definitely.”

Custom Options Between Wage or Self-employment...

Customized community living options were discussed alongside customized employment options. Michael Callahan, owner and president of Marc Gold & Associates in Mississippi, has worked extensively with the Office of Disability Employment Policy. During the seminar, Callahan, along with Norciva Shumpert and Sheila Fesko,

presented various steps toward becoming employed in a position customized to meet a person’s needs and to help them meet the needs of others.

Callahan further explained self-employment as an option for people living with disabilities. “In general, it’s not necessarily a better option – [it’s a better option] only if it meets the individual need.” He went on to describe a woman who he had worked with to help find a job in the hospitality field, particularly in a coffee shop as she loved to serve coffee to family and friends. When no local coffee shop owners were able to offer a customized option for her, they then pursued the idea of her owning a small coffee kiosk.

“It’s only counted against you as earned income when you transfer it to your personal account.”

There are also quite a few options available to people with disabilities who want to start a small business, Callahan explained. “If you start a small business and if you keep your business receipts separate from your personal finances, the Social Security Administration (SSA) does not count the money that’s in your business account.” This means that people living with disabilities who receive Social Security benefits can actually save more money than the current cap, which right now is at \$2,000. “It’s only counted against you as earned income



“In general, it’s not necessarily a better option – [it’s a better option] only if it meets the individual need.”



Advocates Hold Summit Following Conference

Following the Against All Odds conference on Wednesday, June 4, a group of advocates continued to meet in Athens to conduct an advocacy summit. "It was a powerful group of advocates...with a broad range of opinions. Not a soft-spoken person in the group!" GCDD Advocacy Director Kate Gainer said.

The mission of the summit, according to Gainer, was to discuss what the disability movement currently looks like and where they would like it to go in the future. Executive Director of the Statewide Independent Living Council, Pat Puckett, agreed. "It is extremely important for those of us who are very, very busy in the doing of the work every day to stop and pause to take a minute to think about where we come from, what we're doing and where we're going next," Puckett said.

One of the topics discussed was how to bring in new advocates, along with the possible conflicts between parents and their self-advocate children. Both Gainer and Puckett pointed out the very real problem of advocates who are "aging out," so to speak. "We need to get the next generation ready to take advantage of the opportunities waiting for them," Puckett said.

"We need to get the next generation ready to take advantage of the opportunities waiting for them."

Stacy Ramirez, a mother of three including a 13-year-old son with autism, was at the summit as a parent advocate. "My whole focus is about person-centered instead of service-centered," she explained. "I want to be sure my son gets what he needs." Ramirez is currently the director of resources at the Marcus Institute's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

However, an emphasis at the summit was also placed on the need to bring the Medicaid system and the Department of Human Resources together as, according to Gainer, there is a bit of a conflict between them in providing services. "We need to take an honest look at the long term care system in place for people with disabilities," Gainer explained, with Ramirez agreeing.

"There needs to be one program, entity or person that knows what the right hand and left hand are doing," Ramirez said. "There are a lot of things going on, and I think there is some duplication of really good work."

"The most important thing that came out of [the summit] was that we took a moment and thought through what our accomplishments have been and what some of our threats are ... the summit helped us to realize that it's important to stay as a real tight team 'against all odds,'" Puckett said. "It comes full circle." ●

IN FRONT OF TABLE (FRONT TO BACK): Mark Johnson, Valerie Suber, Stacey Ramirez, Glen Friedman, Jay Suber, Eric Jacobson. SITTING BEHIND THE TABLE (FRONT TO BACK): Tracy Rackensperger, Kate Gainer, Pat Puckett, Bernard Baker, B.J. Morris, Cheri Mitchell, Renita Bundrage. STANDING BEHIND TABLE (FRONT TO BACK): John Dallas, Carol Jones, Vici Decker, Terri Travis, John O'Brien

when you transfer it to your personal account," Callahan further elaborated, also cautioning that this is only unique to those who are self-employed and not under wage employment.

Another option available is the SSA's Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS), which is designed for anyone, whether self-employed or under wage employment. Rather than having social security reducing a person's check when that person purchases something that fulfills a support need, a person can submit a PASS plan. If approved, income from Social Security is not deducted. "It's an incentive plan that will help jump start people's willingness to look for employment," Callahan explained.

Those who presented at the conference felt that it was most successful. "I believe conferences that actively include those working in the field, families and individuals with disabilities are more vibrant, interesting and relevant than any others. This was the case. The energy during the sessions and breaks, and the conversations at lunch, were wonderful," Heimerl said. ●

Election 2008

Your Vote Matters!

By Carly Sharec

Rock the vote. Be counted.
Don't vote, can't complain.
Get out the vote. While
all of the preceding slogans are
clever marketing strategies that
are sometimes taken lightly, the
point still remains that exercising
the American right to vote is an
incredibly important act.

And this particular election year is especially important for Americans with disabilities. Several issues that affect people with disabilities have been on the tables of lawmakers and government leaders for quite some time, making voting seem like a frustrating exercise in futility. However, several advocates have been working to bring these issues to the forefront of the minds of both legislators and voters.

ADAPT Takes Over the Republican National Committee Headquarters

One of those advocates is Mark Johnson of ADAPT.

"We've been trying to get the Community Choice Act (CCA) passed for quite some time...the first sponsor was Newt Gingrich!" Johnson began. The CCA is a bill proposing to give Americans living with disabilities a real choice between living in institutional facilities or with community-based attendant services and support. "We have quite a history [on this issue] with both the Republican National Committee (RNC) and the Democratic National Committee (DNC). We've taken over both headquarters before," Johnson continued. "It is NOT a partisan issue."

In April, having Barack Obama's seal of approval for the CCA as well as a letter of support from DNC Chair Howard Dean, the advocates of ADAPT were beginning to wonder more and more about the position republican presidential nominee John McCain had on the CCA, and why he had not signed up as supporter. "With it being an election year, we decided that we needed to bring attention to who's sponsoring it and who's not," Johnson explained.

Thus, on Tuesday, April 29, the perfect storm brewed as members from ADAPT marched into both McCain's senatorial offices and the Republican National Committee's headquarters. "We had our list of demands," Johnson said. "Things like having the RNC call McCain and finding out what their current platform is on this topic.

"There was a lot of energy as we took over the buildings," Johnson continued. "We wanted to make it like a nursing home – just like a nursing home, you can't get out." And so for around nine hours, people at both the RNC headquarters and McCain's office stayed locked in for what proved to be an intense standoff.

"People at McCain's office were arrested," Johnson confirmed. Johnson seemed frustrated that media coverage focused on that one incident. "[The arrests are] not the issue."

After continually demanding to get McCain's response, ADAPT advocates ended the day exhausted and with little to celebrate. "We got nothing, no response." And has McCain been in touch since? "There's

been no follow through on anything," Johnson said. "We've been in touch with McCain's office and

"You have to ask yourself, what does [getting CCA passed] mean to you?"



Several issues
THAT AFFECT PEOPLE
with disabilities
have been on the
TABLES OF LAWMAKERS
and government
leaders for quite
SOME TIME...

Auburn Research Professor Creates Accessible, Secure Voting Booth

George W. Bush has been president for the past eight years, but there is still debate up to this very day as to whether or not he legitimately won the election in 2000. The country wondered who its next president would be until the Democratic presidential candidate, Al Gore, conceded. And that moment in history was just what Auburn University professor Juan Gilbert needed to motivate him to search for a better way to vote. "That election started this whole thing," he said. "We were at a conference, and the people there were being very negative about electronic voting. We took that as a challenge."

What initially began as a way to prove electronic voting could be secure quickly became a mission to provide equal and accessible voting to all. "If you want equal access, everyone should be voting the same way. That's our motto: One machine, one vote," Gilbert said.

This concept led to the development of the Prime III, an accessible voting machine that's been creating a lot of buzz since it first burst onto the scene in 2005. It works by allowing voters to have a choice between casting their ballot via a touch screen or by using headphones that work by utilizing voice activation. For people living with vision or hearing impairments, this allows them to have a choice in which way they feel the most comfortable voting.

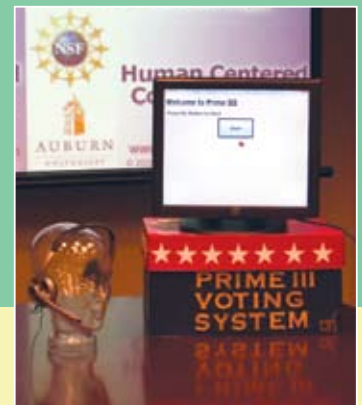
As far as security goes – "We've got that covered," Gilbert said, explaining that though the machine runs from a computer, the information is stored by using a DVD. Once a DVD is burned, there is no way of modifying it. Also, each machine is connected to a video recorder under surveillance. "Your votes are not being recorded this way," Gilbert said, providing assurance. "We can't see the person, we

can't tell the vote. We just record the actual physical [voting] device."

Another feature requires the voter to confirm their vote not once, but twice. Only after the vote has been confirmed twice will the information be stored to be counted in the future.

Don't expect to vote in this machine in the 2008 presidential election, but Gilbert is confident that at least aspects of these machines will start showing up sooner rather than later. "We did this from a research perspective," he said. "All we're saying is 'here's our research, here's what we've created and here's what works'."

For more information about the Prime III, visit www.primevotingsystem.org. ●



"We were at a conference, and the people there were being very negative about electronic voting. We took that as a challenge."

the response has been pretty cold. There has been no contact with the RNC"

Johnson stresses that it is important to remember this is not a partisan issue. "This affects everybody," he says. "You have to ask yourself, what does [getting CCA passed] mean to you? It means choice. It means a level playing field ... we're pushing all members of congress and leadership to get this through."

Kennedy Fellow Gets a Lesson in Legislation

Activist and current participant in the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation Professional Public Policy Fellowship Program Paulette Acevedo is also staying in Washington, D.C. during this election season. She says that it's a very dynamic environment.

"As far as it being election season goes, there's been a rush to get as much work accomplished in the early part of the year," Acevedo explained. "Once the August recess hits, things are going to slow down." She goes on to

say that in Washington, when business is slow, it's slow – but when it's fast, it's definitely fast-paced.

Having been there since February of this year, Acevedo has had the opportunity to be involved with some interesting issues that affect people with disabilities. "I'm in more of a learning and shadowing type position," she explained. "Currently, I'm working with Sen. Chris Dodd (D – Conn.), who recently introduced the Disability Savings Act of 2008, so I've had a front-row seat to some of the legislation that's important to the issues affecting people with disabilities."

Additionally, she's excited about the prospect of being able to stay in Washington beyond December 2008. "There's a possibility that I will stay in Washington until July of 2009," she said, which means she could be in Washington for the inauguration of the new president, and senate and house members. "I've been aware of disability issues from a young age because of my younger sister, and this is an exciting opportunity." ●

Presidential Candidates Face Off on Disability Issues

After eight years, President George W. Bush will be stepping down in January 2009 and the United States of America will have a new president...but not before the general election in November '08. Who will you vote for?

Make sure you're informed on the presidential candidates' views on issues affecting Americans with disabilities before entering a voting booth this fall. *Making a Difference* has prepared a brief primer on some of the candidates'

positions on those issues for you to refer to as you make your decision. Regardless of whom you vote for, make sure that you get out and vote.

**YOUR
VOTE
MATTERS**

Democratic Presidential Candidate Obama

After graduating from Columbia University in 1983, Barack Obama moved to Chicago, working with a church-based group that focused on improving poor neighborhoods throughout the city. A 1991 Harvard law graduate, Obama worked as a lawyer before serving for eight years on the Illinois State Senate. In 2004, he was elected to the United States Senate. He currently lives in Chicago with wife Michelle and their two daughters.

OBAMA ON THE ISSUES

1) Education

- Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Support vocational rehabilitation programs
- Support early intervention for children with disabilities
- Improve college opportunities for graduating high school students with disabilities

2) Community-based living programs

- Support the Community Choice Act and direct care workers
- Support the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act

3) Employment opportunities

- Increase executive branch hiring of people with disabilities
- Implement section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires the federal government and its contractors to "take affirmative action to employ, and advance in employment, qualified individuals with disabilities"

- Establish a National Commission on People with Disabilities, Employment and Social Security
- 4) **Ending discrimination**
- Support the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of genetic information by employers and health insurers, and also applies health information privacy regulations to the use and disclosure of genetic information
 - Guarantee health coverage

Additionally, Obama has pledged to sign and have the Senate ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

OBAMA'S VIEWS ON AUTISM RESEARCH EFFORTS IN AMERICA

- Plans to ensure his administration prioritizes Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) research, public awareness and lifelong support services.
- Vows to increase ASD funding to \$1 billion annually by the end of his first term in office, building on the measure he cosponsored in the U.S. Senate that would expand federal funding for lifelong services for people with ASD.
- Plans to fully fund the Combating Autism Act and other federal autism research initiatives.
- Supports special needs education for children with ASD.
- Supports universal screening in children for the entire recommended panel of 29 disorders. Most infants are currently not tested for all disorders, primarily because most parents aren't made aware of the option. ●

For more information, visit www.barackobama.com



Photo courtesy of: BarackObama.com



Photo courtesy of: JohnMcCain.com



Republican Presidential Candidate McCain

Following his attendance at the United States Naval Academy, John McCain began his

22-year career as a naval aviator. While serving in the Vietnam War, McCain experienced severe injuries, which led to his becoming a prisoner of war at many different POW camps, including what is now known as the infamous 'Hanoi Hilton,' from 1967 to 1973. In his autobiographies, McCain noted how his injuries have limited his being able to move freely, including not being able to raise his arms above his shoulders. Following his career in the Navy, McCain was elected to the House of Representatives in 1982 and the United States Senate in 1986. He currently lives in Phoenix with his wife, Cindy.

NOTES OF INTEREST: John McCain worked to advance studies on the health effects of exposure to Agent Orange and to give disability benefits to veterans with cancer and other health problems caused by Agent Orange. (Agent Orange is an herbicide that was used during the Vietnam War. Exposure to Agent Orange has been shown to increase chances of being diagnosed with certain cancers or genetic abnormalities.)

VOTING RECORD:

1) **HR 2831** **04.23.2008**

Equal Pay Bill

- Did not vote for this bill that would invoke cloture on a bill that would designate that unequal payment based on race, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability is a new violation with each payment. 'Invoking cloture'

means being able to limit the discussion and debate on the topic on the Senate floor. Cloture on this particular bill was not invoked by the Senate.

2) **HR 3010** **10.26.2005**

Individuals with Disabilities Education Amendment

- Voted against providing additional funding for part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The vote failed in the Senate.

3) **S 1248, HR 1350** **05.13.2004**

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

- Voted for a bill to make a number of changes to IDEA, including:
 - Expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities.
 - Establish a National Center for Special Education Research.
 - Establish a commission to make appropriate recommendations to Congress and the Secretary on universal design and accessibility of curriculum and instructional materials for use by all children, with a focus on children with disabilities.

This was approved by the Senate.

MCCAIN'S VIEWS ON AUTISM RESEARCH EFFORTS IN AMERICA

- Believes federal research efforts should support broad approaches to understanding the factors that may play a role in the incidence of autism.
- Cosponsored the Combating Autism Act of 2006.
- Plans to work to advance federal research into autism, promote early screenings in children, and identify better treatment options for those living with autism. ●

For more information, visit www.johnmccain.com

While it's highly likely that either McCain or Obama will be our next president, other political parties also have candidates in the running. Here's who else is running in the presidential race (as of press time):

For the Constitution Party: **Chuck Baldwin**

For the Green Party: **Cynthia McKinney, Kent Mesplay, Jesse Johnson and Kat Swift**

For the Libertarian Party: **Bob Barr**

For the Prohibition Party: **Gene Amondson**

For the Socialist Party USA: **Brian Moore**

Running as Independents: **Frank Moore, Alan Keyes and Ralph Nader**

Language, Income Poses a Barrier

By Miguel Humfrey



Miguel Humfrey was born in Albany, NY, but grew up in the north of Spain. His daughter Michelle was born in Georgia.

My daughter, Michelle, was born prematurely and has cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder. She must go to the doctor often.

While I can speak English fluently, my wife only speaks Spanish. There is usually a translator around to help her, but it isn't the same as talking to someone yourself. You can express your feelings better when you can talk to the doctor in the same language – you can express your feelings right away.

I was born in the United States, so we haven't had any trouble getting Social Security Income and Medicaid for Michelle.

We go to her Individualized Education Plan meetings every year. Her teacher and some of the other people at the school speak Spanish. She gets physical and occupational therapy at school. During the summer we keep her at home with us. We want to enjoy time with her, too! Michelle is healthy, but cannot speak or walk. She enjoys eating, especially crab legs.

I know of other Spanish-speaking families whose children are eligible for services that are afraid to apply

for them for fear of immigration authorities. Some are even afraid to fill out paperwork for medication. We don't have that problem, but sometimes we don't get services or know of more things we can do to improve Michelle's life simply because no one has told us.

Another issue we have is that although I am an experienced electrician, I can't get work doing that here because I don't have a license. So I have to take lower paying construction jobs. It's hard to make a living that way, especially because my wife can't work because she is too busy taking care of Michelle. It's getting hard for us, but Michelle is my little Twinkie, and I don't want anyone else taking care of her. ●

"...sometimes we don't get services or know of more things we can do to improve Michelle's life simply because no one has told us."

Woman Triumphs over Rough Childhood

By Marion Jackson



Marion Jackson lives in Fitzgerald in her own home, with support.

I was born and raised in Fitzgerald by my grandparents. They were old, and I was an only child, so I was lonely. We didn't have all the things we needed, but we tried to make do.

The kids at school picked on me. It was hard for me growing up because I didn't have the support I needed.

After my grandparents died, I went to live with cousins, but they couldn't take care of me after I became pregnant, so they found a foster home for me and my son. I lived in two foster homes.

It wasn't like having your own home. You had to ask for things you needed. It was especially hard trying to raise a baby there. Later I got married and moved to New York for 10 years, but my husband took advantage of me because of my disability, and we got divorced.

My son is 28. He has a disability and has had a hard time, too. He is in a program. He's a handful.

Things are better for me now. Ann Searcy was my support person off and on more than 20 years, and I've lived in my own place for 15. I had a job at Jessamine Place, though I don't have one now.

What I've learned from my struggles is that I can help others. I can help those who shouldn't be locked away. I'm active in People First and have been participating in the Long Road Home march the last few years.

I'm also a public speaker. I speak about people with disabilities and try to let families know about services that are available to them. I also want to speak for people who can't speak for themselves who want a real home like I have. ●

Minorities with Disabilities Face Multiple Issues.

Mother, Daughter Face Discrimination

By Mary Yoonsim Chang

I was born with schizophrenia in S. Korea, and I immigrated to the United States in the 1970s. In 1977, I gave birth to my daughter, Ann Youngjin Suh, in Columbus, Ohio. My daughter was born with Down syndrome and a severe heart defect. I experienced a lot of stress and grief after Ann was born because I didn't speak English well. My doctor didn't communicate with me much because he thought I didn't understand any English. I wanted to breastfeed her, but the doctor didn't explain anything to me. Instead, he thoroughly explained everything about breastfeeding to the patient next to me who had also recently given birth. I was able to understand most of what he said to the other patient. Also, my doctor just told me that Ann needed to go to Columbus Children's Hospital for further examination, and I thought he meant that I would never be able to be with her again. Needless to say, I was heartbroken, and I cried a lot. But, fortunately, she only stayed in the hospital for a week. Those were some of the first hardships I faced in America as a minority with a child with special needs.

Throughout the years, my daughter and I have faced discrimination due to language and cultural barriers. Ann attended Early Intervention classes from 18 months to kindergarten. When she was about 4 or 5, there was a garage sale at school, and I noticed there was a Barbie doll and another doll that I thought Ann would love. I didn't have a lot of money with me so I gave the teacher a few dollars to put the two items on hold as I went back home to get money. Shortly

after, I returned to find out that the two items had been sold. Many of the parents were unfair as they hoarded a lot of the good items for themselves. So, while I was away, they persuaded the teachers to sell the items to them. At the time, I wasn't able to provide much for Ann so it would have meant a lot for her to get the two dolls.

Even though I have endured much hardship due to discrimination, many people have helped my daughter and I, too. We moved to Georgia when Ann was 8 years old.

In the past I've had to fight to have Ann placed in the classes that I thought best met her needs, and I've had to endure many consequences of discrimination. But, through it all, I've been able to help Ann get the services she deserves. I've always worked hard to be a proactive and supportive mother for my daughter. We moved to Atlanta in 1993, and Ann earned a certificate from Meadow Creek High School. Since she completed high school, my daughter has been bagging groceries. Earlier this year, she was recognized for her 10 years of service at Publix. ●



Mary Yoonsim Chang and her daughter Ann live in Gwinnett county.

"I've always worked hard to be a proactive and supportive mother for my daughter."

Advocates Celebrate Olmstead Anniversary

Self-advocates from as far away as Fitzgerald and Commerce braved rain and gathered in Atlanta June 21 to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision at the fifth annual Long Road Home event.

The decision stemmed from a case litigated in Georgia and states that people who want to live with support in their community should be able to, if community placement is deemed appropriate by treatment professionals.

While past events have included trips to institutions and the governor's office, this year's event was more of a celebration of how far the state has come.

"All the people we ever visited in institutions during Long Road Home now live in their communities," said

event organizer Cheri Mitchell, who was recently elected president of People First of Georgia.

"We feel passionate about deinstitutionalization. It's cheaper for Medicaid. We don't understand why it's not happening," she continued.

"Today we are here to celebrate the accomplishments of Lois (Curtis) and

Elaine (Wilson)," she said, referring to the original plaintiffs of the Olmstead case.

Event organizer and Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities Advocacy Director Kate Gainer got the festivities under way.

"Advocates, make some noise," she encouraged the crowd.

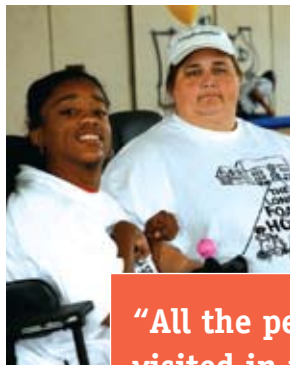
A little rain didn't dampen the spirits of the crowd or prevent the walk, run and wheelchair races in which they participated.

During the races, participants chanted, "Our homes, not nursing homes," and "Get us out. Keep us out. Don't put us in."

Attendee Mark Christensen of Commerce said he made the trip to Atlanta because "it's important for people with disabilities to get into the community.

"I'm really lucky not to be put into an institution, thanks to my mom and dad. I refuse to go to an institution. That's the reason we have this event, so every institution in Georgia is closed. I come to Long Road Home every year because people have rights, like you and me. They have a voice," he explained.

Marion Jackson of Fitzgerald agreed. "People need to be free. They need to live in their own



"All the people we ever visited in institutions during Long Road Home now live in their communities."

"I come to Long Road Home every year because people have rights, like you and me. They have a voice."





"I love it. I do advocacy for people with disabilities and go into the community to help people out."

homes, not locked away like they don't belong," she said.

Sheila Jeffrey knows what it's like to be locked away. After living in hospitals and institutions most of her young life, last July she moved into a real home with a host family and cherishes every minute of her new life.

"I love it. I do advocacy for people with disabilities and go into the community to help people out," Jeffries, a member of People First of Atlanta, said.

Since leaving the institution, Jeffries has been able to have her wisdom teeth removed and has made new friends. She also participates in Atlanta ADAPT functions and attended Disability Day at the Capitol. She currently volunteers at disABILITY LINK.

"I make copies, file and shred papers," she said.

But she makes time for fun, too.

"I like to go to activities and eat slushies. You can't get slushies in the institution," she said.

Jeffries and the other attendees enjoyed a little social time on

the dance floor during the event, thanks to D.J. Bernard Baker, who is also vice president of People First of Georgia.

Dale Williamson of Commerce liked the dancing. "I have two left feet, but I enjoyed it though. I enjoy laughing. It's all fun," he said.

Sue Jamison, the Atlanta Legal Aid attorney who argued the Olmstead case, said, "Lois and Elaine would be happy to see people with disabilities out in the community and happy." Unfortunately, many people with disabilities are still living in institutions and nursing homes instead of with their families and friends.

"Most of these people could be supported in their community," Jamison said.

"Legal Aid is currently representing someone who has the label of mental retardation at Crestview. The state refuses to provide her with community-based services. We've been fighting to get her out since 2006. She's been in an institution for three years," she said.

"Grass roots self-advocacy efforts are the most important part of making sure disability rights are considered important and respected."

Jamison said events like Long Road Home were important to attend in the fight for community living. "Grass roots self-advocacy efforts are the most important part of making sure disability rights are considered important and respected."

SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS:

Atlanta Legal Aid

disABILITY LINK

Georgia Advocacy Office

Georgia Voices That Count

Governors Council on Developmental Disabilities

Marcus Institute's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

Mental Health Consumer Network





“They all came home feeling that this was not the direction they wanted Georgia going in and not a place they wanted their children to end up in or an option for their children ever.”

Some Still Wait for Olmstead Promise

By Valerie Smith Buxton

While the Supreme Court’s Olmstead decision was nine years ago, some people with disabilities, even children, are still living in impersonal institutions.

In April, a group of parents of children with disabilities toured the Central State Hospital in Macon as part of a project for their Partners in Policymaking class.

Rita Young, who manages Partners for the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities, explained the trip.

“Every year we look to deepen the experience. This year we offered that trip as a major project. The participants toured Central State, then came back home and wrote about it to try to get their articles into local newspapers. Nine partners chose this as a major project,” she explained.

“The experience was very sobering. It was the second time I had been there, the first for everyone else. They all came home feeling that this was not the direction they wanted Georgia going in and not a place they wanted their children to end up in or an option for their children ever.

“Central State still has 480 people with developmental disabilities who live there. So many of us felt there were so many other options

for them. It didn’t feel like a real home. It was difficult for the Partners to see a lot of people who had been there for quite a while. It disturbed them,” she said.

While Partners in Policymaking participants regularly hear reports on what living in an institution is like, many of them had never been in an institution.

Lisa Robinson’s son, Marcellious, is 17 and has cerebral palsy.

“I really wanted to get a firsthand look at what living in an institution would be like. I wanted to know for myself, not just hear stories. I wanted to see for myself in case my son or someone I knew had to go into an institution,” she said.

“I really wanted to get firsthand look at what living in an institution would be like. I wanted to know for myself, not just hear stories.”

“What really surprised me was that there were young children still there, and some people who are now teenagers and young adults who’ve been there all their life. We met a boy there who was 16 and had the same name and same level of disability as my son. He had a feeding tube. If something happens to me my son could end up this way, with all his rights taken away, even things he likes to eat. It was disheartening, like someone threw a cup of cold water on me,” she continued.

Other parents were surprised at the dedication of the staff. Julie Beem’s daughter, Libby, is 11 and has a developmental disability and mental illness. Her daughter lived in a foreign institution before Beem adopted her and was traumatized by the experience.

“Because my daughter came from a background of institutions, I was drawn to know what was out there in terms of state care for children who need to be outside their home. I had no perceived notion in my mind that I would ever send her there,” she said. “I didn’t expect to see staff who were so compassionate to the residents. I was expecting to see people who didn’t care so much.”

But despite that, Beem knows she would never want her daughter to live in an institution. “There’s



so much more to life than just having basic needs met. No matter how compassionate the caregivers are, they can't replicate family and friends," she said.

"I know my daughter impacts our family and community in a positive way – the people in our neighborhood and church give me feedback that they get something from a relationship with her. If she was in an institution, that wouldn't happen. Our community and extended family would not have that relationship with her," she said.

And while Beem found the staff to be compassionate, Robinson was horrified at the staff to resident ratio.

"The ratio of staff to people, even on the geriatric side, was seven to one. That's unacceptable. With the level of care these people need, there's no way the ratio should be that high," she said.

"It's hard to lift Marcellious, but given the choice of an institution, I'd do everything I could to keep my son in a loving, caring, nurturing home. But we need more support. We have a waiver, but not total, round-the-clock care," Robinson said.

"If we can get the community at large – people and businesses – to understand that people with disabilities really want to have real lives, and help open their eyes and hearts to embrace them and give them the supports they need, I guarantee we'll see institutions go away," she said.

Beem agreed, but is not encouraged by supports currently in place. "Georgia doesn't have much going for it in terms of access to community-based support," she said.

Because of the trauma her daughter experienced in the foreign institution, she has behavioral problems for which little help exists.

"Families need access to services that come into the home. Many of these children end up in Central State or in the juvenile justice system because of their behaviors. The more support families get, the less likely they'll end up in those places. The earlier the intervention starts, the better," she said.

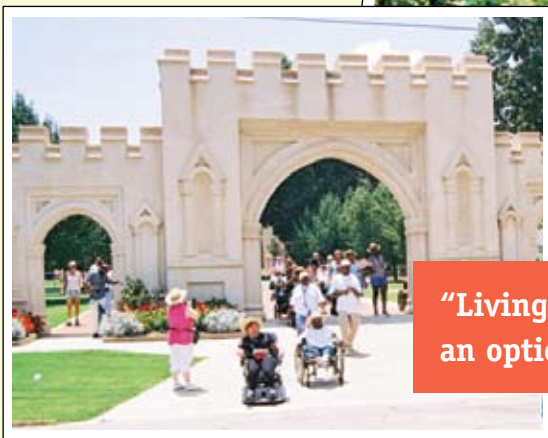
"We need to take a hard look at what services exist in the communities and determine whether they are adequate for families.

"A lot of communities pick up the slack. We get lots of support from church and our informal community. Without them, we would be drowning. People help us with respite, for example, and we've found a lot of people willing to help. Many families work that way," Beem said.

Young said the trip was sobering for the participants and the ride home was very quiet. "One of the participants had nightmares for several days afterward. She didn't understand why a lot of these families didn't have the level of support they needed and felt putting their child in an institution was their only option. That really disturbed her. As parents, our number one fear is what will happen to our kids as we age and when we die. Living in an institution is not an option anyone should have," Young concluded. ●

7:1

The ratio of STAFF TO PEOPLE, even on the geriatric side, was seven to one. That's UNACCEPTABLE.



"Living in an institution is not an option anyone should have."

Connections

Top Priority for DSP Training

Direct support professionals (DSPs) help people with disabilities dress, eat, get to work and doctor appointments and other activities of daily living. But their most important role is to champion the dreams of the people they support.



To help DSPs shift their focus from simply helping with activities of daily living to participating in person-centered planning and care, the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities created the Direct Support Professional Certificate Program, currently available in six technical colleges across the state.

"Students develop a deeper understanding about how to support a person to achieve what they want in their lives. They become facilitators and resource coordinators, less caretakers," explained Rick Strickland, a course instructor at Central Georgia Technical College in Macon.

Marie Brown, an instructor at Griffin Technical College, agreed. "We talk about capacity and person-centered planning as well as choice – the small things we take for granted. This paves the way for students to empower the people they are supporting."

She recalled how a person her students were supporting was interested in photography. "We talked about how we could channel that and build on that. When the person we were supporting went to CVS to have his pictures developed, the students went there and found that relationships were forming between the person and the people who worked in the photography department," she said.

The DSP Certificate Program has had 246 graduates since it began in 2004 and it continues

to grow and expand. It features two, three-month courses, and more than half of the class time is devoted to partnering with a person with a disability to apply the skills they've learned.

The first course consists of 50 hours of class time and 60 hours of practical experience. Students learn: the changing role of support; systematic instruction; the discovery process; individual accomplishments; person-centered thinking, planning and action; community exploration; representation; family support; personal assistance; and, social capital/social networks.

In the second course, the practical experience hours are increased to 90, while classroom hours remain at 50. Students learn: systematic instruction in natural settings; motivation, encouragement and challenging behavior; rights, safeguards, confidentiality and documentation; personal wellness; medications; conduct and expectations; learning organizations and Georgia's services system.

Andy Harrell, chief administrative officer for the Advocacy Resource Center – Macon, has found sending his staff through the course has been beneficial to not only the people the staff supports, but also to the staff themselves.

"We felt like there was a gap at the direct care level, and the only way to bridge the gap was to get them involved in person-centered planning."

"We have 28 graduates and another eight in the program now," Harrell revealed. "We felt like there was a gap at the direct care level, and the only way to bridge the gap was to get them involved in person-centered planning."

Harrell feels the course has helped staff members significantly change their thinking. "They lose the idea of being a nurturer, but think of themselves as serving alongside someone. This is

Talk
to the person
YOU SUPPORT
and find out
who is in
THEIR LIFE,
not just the
people who are
PAID
to be there.



Students develop a deeper understanding about how to support a person to achieve what they want in their lives. They become facilitators and resource coordinators, less caretakers.

a real big difference – supporting people’s choices instead of saying, ‘This is what you need to do.’”

Valerie Hughes, residential director at the Advocacy Resource Center – Macon and one of the first graduates of the program, said, “It promotes different thinking, more person-centered thinking. It helps us build a relationship with the individual we’re supporting.”

And, the class has a positive effect on the students, too. “It was the first time I felt like a real professional. It gives you a sense of empowerment,” she said.

Yosheca Wright, who completed the course at Griffin Technical College, found tools to help her better understand the people she supports and connect them with natural supports in the community. “You need to sit down and find out their social history. Talk to the person you support and find out who is in their life, not just the people who are paid to be there. They might have siblings or a church they belong to. Let these people know where the person is and try to provide more support for them.”

While Wright was in the class, she helped a 36-year-old woman reconnect with her mother.

“I found out she hadn’t seen or heard from her mom in over a year, so I started to look for her. I looked on the Internet, called every name in the phone book with her mom’s last name and wrote letters. About two months later, I got a call from the mom, who really wanted to talk to her daughter. The following weekend, the mother came to visit her,” she said.

Brown, who graduated from the class before she became an instructor, was partnered with Barbara Broome, who enjoyed working with the class.

“Ms. Brown taught me how to set up the computer, hook it up and how to do e-mail.

Now I have my own computer,” Broome said.

“Barbara wanted to be able to use e-mail to communicate with her daughter, who is in a military family,” Brown explained. “She’s now writing a book about her life, things that happened to her when she was growing up.”

Harrell has expanded what his staff is learning in the class to the workplace. “We have developed focus groups through the class. Our employees, other providers and family members meet monthly to plan using person-centered tools. They carry out things they may have started in the class,” he explained.

Strickland, who also serves as the general manager of Star Choices in Macon, has also noticed a positive impact in the workplace. “It gives people more skills to do the job. It also gives them a better understanding of what their job is. And, the people we support have more opportunities to be part of their community. They are heard more.” ●



The Direct Support Professional Certificate Course is offered at the following Georgia schools and may be paid for by the Hope scholarship, for students who are eligible:

Athens Technical College • Central Georgia Technical College • East Central Technical College • Griffin Technical College • Lanier Technical College • Savannah Technical College

Plans are also underway to expand the program into the Southwest Georgia Technical College in Thomasville.



Clay Navigators Open Camp



Eleven-year-old Don Gilbert is one of about 50 youths attending a new summer camp in southwest Georgia. Volunteers with the Clay County Navigator Team organized the grassroots program to give increased opportunities for area children who may be at-risk or have developmental disabilities to retain or improve the skills they learn throughout the school year. Gilbert has autism, and his mother hopes he can improve his communication skills at camp.

"He enjoys being outside, he likes keeping busy," explained Florine Gilbert. "He likes to play ball and jump on the trampoline and swing on the swing. He's very smart. I want him to have a computer. That will help him to communicate with other people."

Shirley Cody leads the Clay County Navigator Team and organized the camp. Armed with a handful of volunteers and meager donations of books, toys and food, Cody opened the doors of an abandoned grocery store that her father once operated, and started the Griffin Outreach Ministry/Clay County Navigator Team Summer Program. Her goal with the camp is to offer a safe, organized environment, along with a mid-day meal and structured activities for area children.

"They are single mothers – a lot of them – with multiple children. They don't have jobs. Most depend on welfare,"

explained Cody. "They have to depend on whatever help they can get. It's a day-to-day struggle."

Cody and the other volunteers provide reading and math instruction, arts and crafts and supervised playtime each day to the children attending the camp.

"As a grandparent, for me it's being able to see them go someplace where they can learn," said Carol Sealey, whose five grandchildren attend the camp. Sealey also volunteers as assistant director. "We have a lot of young kids we try to protect. We're here to help them."

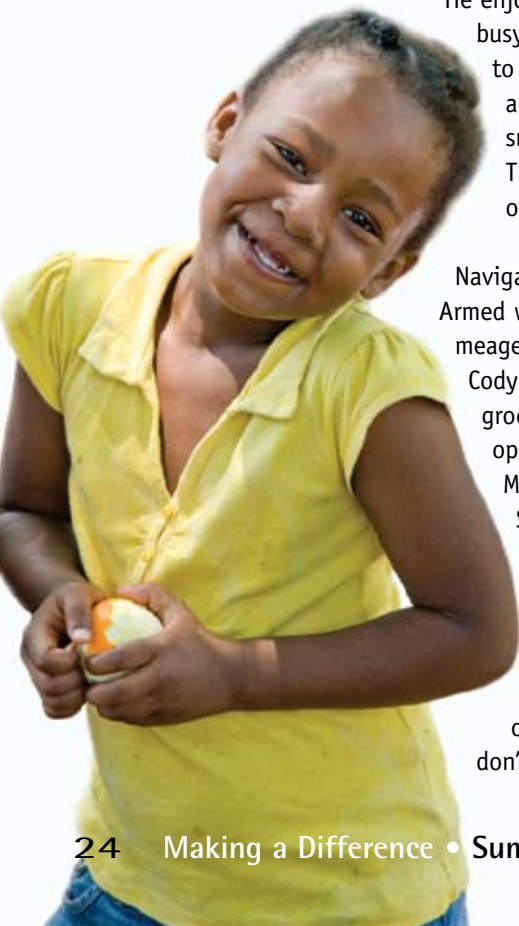
All area children are welcome at the program, which is held daily from 10 AM to 3 PM during the summer break. The children range in age from 4 to 18 years. Some have developmental disabilities, and all are considered at-risk.

"By the end of the camp I feel and hope my kids will learn to respect those around them," said Stacy Smith, whose two children attend the camp. Also a volunteer, Smith observed, "The kids who have disabilities blend in well with the other kids. They carry on conversations. They interact. They help each other."

The camp is located about 70 miles south of Columbus, Georgia, in the small community of Days Crossroad.

"This is a very good idea for the community so the kids can have something to do for the summer," echoed Hartus Richardson, who brings a neighbor's child and also volunteers. "It's a marvelous idea. I just walk around and make sure they know there's an adult here."

Cody, who grew up in Days Crossroad, spent much of her adult life in the Atlanta area. "I married a young man with a disability. He was an advocate until his death for children with disabilities. I have spent all of my life doing this work. I started my first school in Atlanta with 10 children."





When her husband died five years ago, Cody felt the tug of her roots call her home to make life better for the children who live at Days Crossroad. “All of the children are on free lunch,” Cody said. “When they get out in the summer I try to have something available to give them something to eat. They’re used to getting hot breakfast, lunch and a snack at school.”

The only official financial support the camp is receiving is a one-time grant of \$1000 from the Parent Leadership Coalition (PLC). The grant funds are earmarked for basic operating expenses. “This is the second year we’ve been able to offer this grant program,” said Marchia Williams, PLC state coordinator. “Shirley Cody’s summer camp was approved unanimously.”

“The Navigator Team services all children, and especially children with disabilities and especially those at-risk.”

“The Navigator Team services all children, and especially children with disabilities and especially those at-risk,” said Williams. “There are all kinds of reasons a parent needs help. Sometimes it’s temporary, sometimes it’s all life long.”

“We will have a graduation from the summer program on closing day, right before they go back to school,” Cody remarked. “Parents will come and see what the children can do, that they haven’t been sitting around.”

Cody’s hope is that the summer camp will enable the children to return to school with increased math and English skills, as well as better study and social habits. Then, she and the Clay County Navigator Team will continue to seek new opportunities to make a difference in the lives of the children of Days Crossroad. ●

Georgia’s Navigator Teams

The Parent Leadership Coalition (PLC) is a collaboration of 10 statewide agencies, including the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, which provide financial and in-kind support to parents of children with disabilities. The PLC also trains parent leaders across Georgia with organizing and implementing Navigator Teams.

A Navigator Team is a group of parents who have experience in accessing services, along with professionals who want to assist and be a resource to families. The team members are familiar with resources in the community and can help link families in need with those services. They serve at-risk families with children from birth to five years and those of school aged children with special needs, especially those who are unserved or underserved.

“It’s important that children be included in their community and parents have a choice,” explained Marchia Williams, PLC state coordinator.

The PLC was formed in 2002. Currently, there are 37 Navigator Teams that represent 47 counties. However, the goal is to establish teams in all 159 Georgia counties by 2011. 5,200 individuals were directly served by the Navigator Teams last year, which was the first full year of the program.

Williams says each county has different needs, which are identified by the Navigator Team. The teams can apply for grants of up to \$1000 to cover operational expenses of applicable programs. The Jasper County Navigator Team helped a child receive a hearing evaluation and acceptance into a cochlear implant program. The Floyd County team organized the donation of 300 prom dresses and formal wear so at-risk youth and those with disabilities could attend their school prom. This year, the maximum grant was given to the newly formed team in Clay County, which, according to Williams, is “in need of everything.”

To see if there is a Navigator Team in your area, go to www.parenttoparentofga.org and click on “Roadmap to Services” then on the “Navigating Services” hot air balloon. If you would like to establish or get involved with a Navigator Team, contact PLC State Coordinator Marchia Williams at 1.800.229.2038 or marchia@parenttoparentofga.org. ●

The team members are familiar with resources in the community and can help link families in need with those services.

Technology Helps Produce Better Educational Outcomes

By: Cheryl Mitchell

Cheryl Mitchell is a special education teacher at Westside High School in Macon, Ga.

There comes a time in our lives when we examine our purpose on earth, asking ourselves, “What does our life mean to others?”

My questioning came on the island of Guam, as I interviewed a student with disabilities who was being abused in a youth detention facility. My investigation led to a governor’s task force raid and exposure of corruption on the island. Left in the wake, however, were special needs children abandoned by their parents for no reason other than their disabilities. And in that facility they were the forgotten youth.

I was a reporter for *Pacific Daily News*, a paper owned by Gannett, a publisher with interests in *USA Today*, television and the Internet. I interviewed people all over the world; Imelda Marcos, Dick Cheney, Chris Everett, Whitney Houston to name a few. But nothing compared to staring into the lonely eyes of a child locked in a desolate empty cell with nothing but concrete walls. In that moment I swore I would make a difference to children if I could.

I went back to school and got my master’s degree in special education and my specialist degree in educational technology. I have been teaching for five years.

What I have found is today’s youth excel with technology. Through the use of iPods, I have learned to teach reading, math and career exploration. Students make PowerPoints to enhance their communication skills and digital portfolios to express future plans and past accomplishments. My students are the only special needs students in the state of Georgia who have competed in local, district and statewide computer fairs and taken first and second place awards in all competitions. And though many have opposed me along the way and say that special needs students can’t master such technology – they can and do each day.

According to Marc Prensky, author of “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,” today’s students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors. These differences go far further and deeper than most educators realize.

Prensky concludes that today’s students are “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. Those of us who were not born into the digital world are referred to as digital immigrants.

“Different kinds of experiences lead to different brain structures,” says Dr. Bruce D. Berry of Baylor College of Medicine. “It is very likely that our students’ brains have physically changed – and are different from ours – as a result of how they grew up. Certainly their thinking patterns have changed.”

Research shows that effective secondary-level instruction of adolescents with high-incidence disabilities is more difficult than teaching such students at the elementary level. One reason is that as students with high-incidence disabilities grow older, the gap between what is expected of them and what they achieve becomes greater through middle school and high school. It is not uncommon therefore, for secondary-level teachers to encounter students with high-incidence disabilities whose academic achievement capabilities are far below what is expected in higher grade levels.

In light of the discrepancy between what secondary-level students with high-incidence disabilities should achieve and what they do achieve, instruction at the secondary level must be efficient so that students can catch up. However, they will have little chance of catching up if teachers do not deliver effective instruction. At the same time, students are dropping out of school at an alarming rate.

My answer to better educational possibilities is teachers need to teach using more technology in the classroom. A recent study I conducted showed that my students’ learning and retention abilities increased by 50% when iPods were introduced in the classroom. This is only one facet of computer technology. The possibilities are endless from my perspective. Thanks to computers and the Internet, we now think very differently about the basic organization of life.

So in answering the question I began with in examining the purpose of my life, I have chosen to try and make a difference through the use of technology in the classroom one student at a time – for I see technology and the internet as our future learning tool and the future of our world. ●

“...though many have opposed me along the way and say that special needs students can’t master such technology – they can and do each day.”

Technology Resources for Parents, Students and Teachers

- www.teen.seconddlife.com • www.actden.com/pp • www.teach-nology.com
- www.teachingtoday.glencoe.com/tip • www.wrightslaw.com •
- www.sitesforteachers.com • www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling
- www.free-grant-kit.com/autism.htm • www.pacer.org/parent/index.asp •
- www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/learning/lr2port.htm

StraightTalk

I've Found My Peanut

By: Brandon McKeen

My mom took me horseback riding (Equine Therapy) when I was four and I liked it. I was not talking at that time because I had autism. I've been riding horses for a long time, and I make friends with them. My horse, Annie, is my best friend. Horses don't make me explain myself over and over again. They just understand me. Annie and I have been friends for about six years. We met at Good Shepard, where I used to ride. She is my friend because she is nice to me and she likes me. I show her how much I love her by taking good care of her.

With great support and hard work from my local school system in Meriwether County Ga., I finished high school with a Tech Prep and College Prep Diploma from Manchester High at age 16. I have been accepted and will start Auburn University in the fall of 2008, where I will pursue a degree in Agriculture Business with a minor in Equine Studies. While in high school I was able to be dually enrolled in Griffin Technical College taking classes in Equine Studies. I have completed: Basic Horse Care, Stable Management Assistant Instructor I, Assistant Instructor II and Horse Show Preparation certificates. I am currently taking Carriage Driving and will have completed this course in time to leave for the fall classes at Auburn. I also have a regular schedule that includes two eventing shows a month and one Hunter Jumper show a month. I also take three lessons a week at Big Bear Farms in Pine Mountain under the instruction of Leigh Ellen Roberts. On top of that I take one lesson a week at Pegasus Riding School in Milner, GA under the instruction of Linda Abrams. I had the opportunity to be trained by two international riding experts: Lucinda Green, a two-time Olympian from England and Matt Ryan, from the Australian National Team.

Through the help of vocational rehabilitation, I have been able to receive the tools and equipment to achieve my goals at Griffin Tech's classes in Equine Studies. My job work site is at Enoch Ministries working in barn six caring for boarded horses and in charge of the barn area. Also, with the skills that I have learned I am now able to do some volunteer work at Cole Farms owned by Dr. William Cole and Miss Dian. I love working with their horses and there is a lot to do...everything from picking stalls and caring for newborn foals.

Some of my goals seemed like big dreams, but now I do them every day: completing horse classes, and having the ability to bring my horses home and start the long and hard road of beginning my own business. I have a great plan to teach riding lessons and help others train their horses. This has been no easy task, but with the help from my counselor, Terry Bounds LPC, of Valley Counseling Services, Columbus Ga., my community aides Jessica Scott and Margie McCoy from Southern Resources Consultants, Inc., and the help, love and support from close family, friends and God, I can now see it all happening and am ever so grateful.

My pastor gave a sermon last year about finding your peanut; his father was a peanut farmer in South Georgia and wanted him to farm peanuts, too. But my Pastor didn't want to farm peanuts because unlike his dad, he wasn't good at it.

He was good at helping others and loved the Bible, so he felt that he would be good at being a pastor. What he meant when he said, "find your peanut" was find what it is you are good at and like to do and do that. That's what I did and that's what everyone else should do, too. ●



"Some of my goals seemed like big dreams, but now I do them every day: completing horse classes, and having the ability to bring my horses home and start the long and hard road of beginning my own business."





Mia's Good Friend, Charles Hopkins, Retires

By Patricia Nobbie, Ph.D., Mia's Mom

Charles Hopkins retired as deputy director of the Office of Developmental Disabilities in March. Mia and I wrote him a card saying, "I didn't hang out with you as much as I wanted, OR as much as I should have. You knew what was important, and the rest of us need to be reminded of that fairly often." Gwen Skinner alluded to this at Charles' reception at the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Disease. She said Charles taught her that it was about the people, not funding or the administration. Between the two of them, they began handling this caseload of people needing assistance. She learned from Charles about this work one person at a time, which is how it should be done.

Mia met Charles at Lynnette and Randi Bragg's house in Springfield. There were tons of people and food, and suddenly I noticed Charles and Mia sitting at a picnic table under an awning having an animated conversation. A few weeks later, I was in the elevator with Charles at Two

"You knew what was important, and the rest of us need to be reminded of that fairly often."

Peachtree, and he said, "You know Pat, if you ever need to leave Mia for a weekend, let me know, we would love to have her over, she is really neat." It's hard for me to explain how that offer made me feel. First, that someone offered, I didn't have to ask. Second, that someone wanted her over, not just because I needed help or because she did, but because she was neat. Third, because it was Charles, and he had a reputation for being pretty neat himself. The added bonus? He's married to Joy.

A blessing landed in my lap that day. Mia has spent several weekends at the Hopkins' house and she has started a Trivial Pursuit competition. She and Charles both have CPAP machines, so he supports her with that. I get some down time, knowing that she is cared for, valued and enjoyed.

Here's what I ponder. During Charles' retirement party at Manuel's, many stories were told. The room was full of people who had worked with folks with developmental disabilities for decades. Joy had a slide show of people Charles had worked with and for, pictures of thinkers and doers in living rooms and kitchens dreaming up supported employment and person-centered planning and systematic instruction, interspersed with photos of on-the-fringe retreats and vacations with the iconoclasts of our field.

I ponder from where this camaraderie will emerge in our generation of professionals. Those of us in the trenches now don't hang out like this. I often feel like we are not inventing anymore, only responding to the latest threat to Medicaid funding or services or organizational structure. I'm looking at the slides, longing to hang out, to make sure that the history and wisdom gets passed on to us, lest we lose not only the knowledge but also the how and especially the why. At GCDD, we have many projects related to growing the next generation of advocates – interns we've exposed and sent on, Partners, Voices, Organizing Institute. But it's all in contracts, budgets, deliverables. We don't just get together, seasoned and new, wise and naïve, experienced and hopeful, to be mentored, or to lead on tickle, or re-direct. I am missing the deep current of creativity and joy that I sensed in Charles' slide show. So here's what I propose. Let's get together and have fun. Let's create. Because there's still so much to do. ●



JULY

July 16 - 20

**Training Institutes:
Developing Local Systems
of Care for Children &
Adolescents with Men-
tal Health Needs & Their
Families**

Nashville, TN
Gaylord Opryland Resort & Con-
vention Center
202-687-5000
Fax: 202-687-1954
Institutes2008@aol.com

July 17-18

**Governor's Council on
Developmental Disabili-
ties Quarterly Meeting &
Awards Ceremony**

Atlanta, GA
404-657-2126
888-275-4233
www.gcdd.org

AUGUST

August 13

**Georgia Aging & Disability
Resource Connection
2008 Regional Training
Conference**

Marietta, GA
Contact Lauren Burby at
burby613@earthlink.net

August 20

**Georgia Aging & Disability
Resource Connection
2008 Regional Training
Conference**

Morrow, GA
Contact Lauren Burby at
burby613@earthlink.net

SEPTEMBER

September 7 - 10

**Community Options'
3rd Annual I-Matter
Conference**

Nashville, TN
609-951-9900
Lisa_Smith@comop.org
www.transitionschooltowork.org

OCTOBER

October 2

**Fourth Annual Georgia
Disability Employment
Awareness Month Job Fair**

Sponsored by: State Personnel
Administration, Department
of Labor, State Financing and
Investment Commission, ADA
Coordinator's Office and Tools
for Life.
Atlanta, GA

404-651-6302 (State Personnel
Administration; 404-657-7313
(ADA Coordinator's Office);
404-638-0389
www.gatfl.org or
www.ada.georgia.gov



OPENING MINDS. CHANGING HEARTS.

October 3 - 4

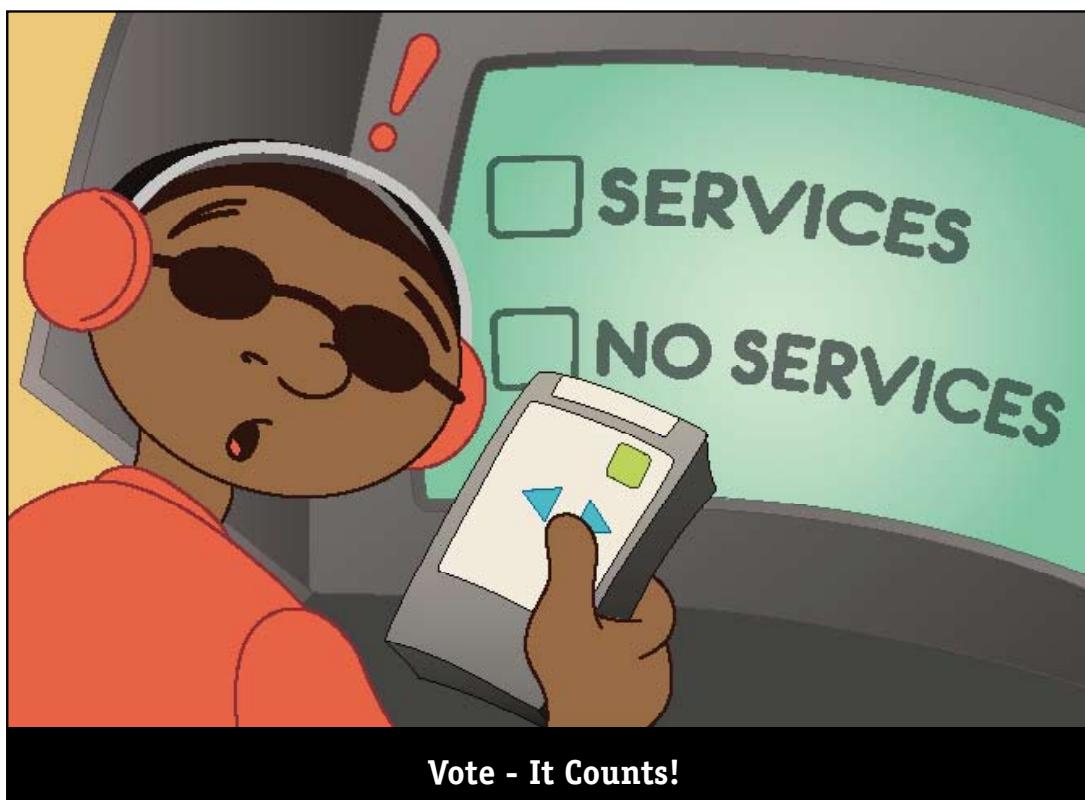
**Book Fair on the Square
Sponsored by the
Cobb & Douglas Counties
Community Services Board**

This fun event will feature
several authors of books
about people with and without
disabilities, including Keynote
Speaker Roy Richard Grinker,
author of *Unstrange Minds:
Unmapping the World of Autism*
and Rachel Simon, author of *Rid-
ing the Bus with My Sister*. Book
readings, signings, musical per-
formances and a fun children's
area are planned.
Marietta, GA
770-429-5000
www.bookfaironthesquare.com

October 30

Discovery Day

Employees will learn how
employees with disabilities
can positively affect their
bottom lines.
Atlanta, GA
404-657-2126
888-275-4233
www.gcdd.org



Vote - It Counts!



pg. 8



pg. 12



pg. 18



pg. 22

Below, please find further resources of information related to the articles in this edition of *Making a Difference* magazine.

Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)
www.gcdd.org
 404-657-2126 or
 888-275-4233 (ASK-GCDD)

State Government

Department of Community Affairs
Georgia Housing Search
www.georgiahousingsearch.org
 877-428-8844

Department of Community Health
www.dch.state.ga.us/
 404-656-4507

Department of Human Resources
www.dhr.georgia.gov
 404-656-4937

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

General Information
www.georgia.gov

Georgia General Assembly
www.legis.state.ga.us/

Georgia House of Representatives
www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2003_04/house/index.htm

Georgia Senate
www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2003_04/senate/index.htm

Georgia Governor's Office
www.gov.state.ga.us/
 404-656-1776

Georgia Lieutenant Governor's Office
www.ltgov.georgia.gov/02/ltgov/home/0,2214,2199618,00.html
 404-656-5030

Voting

Barack Obama's Website
www.BarackObama.com

John McCain's Website
www.JohnMcCain.com

American Association of People with Disabilities' 2008 Presidential Election Action Center
www.aapd.com/News/election/peac2008.php

ADAPT
www.adapt.org

Information on Juan Gilbert's Prime III
www.primevotingsystem.org

Against All Odds

For information on customized employment, the Office of Disability Employment Policy
 866-633-7365

Social Security Administration
www.ssa.gov

Around GCDD

InterContinental Hotels and Resorts
www.ichotelsgroup.com

Harvard Business School's Comprehensive Leadership Program
www.exed.hbs.edu/category/clpcomparison.html

Direct Support Professional

Technical College System of Georgia
www.tcsg.edu
 404-679-5832

Long Road Home

Atlanta Legal Aid
www.atlantalegalaid.org
 404-524-5811

disABILITY LINK
www.disabilitylink.org
 404-687-8890 Voice
 404-687-9175 TTY

Georgia Advocacy Office
www.thegao.org
 404-885-1234
 800-537-2329

Georgia Voices That Count
www.disabilitylink.org
 404-687-8890 Voice
 404-687-9175 TTY

Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
www.gcdd.org
 404-657-2126
 888-275-4233 (ASK-GCDD)

Marcus Institute's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
www.marcus.org
 404-419-4000

Mental Health Consumer Network
www.gmhcn.org
 800-715-4225

Partners in Policymaking
www.aadd.org
 404-881-9777 ext 220

People First of Atlanta
 404-687-8890 ext 101

People First of Georgia
 678-755-6015

Parent Navigator Teams

Navigator Teams
www.parenttoparentofga.org
marchia@parenttoparent-ofga.org

Clay County Navigator Team
marchia@parenttoparent-ofga.org
 800-229-2038





Children

with **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Offering integrated, comprehensive, family-centered services for:

- children with special needs and
- their families

A child with special needs (from birth to age 21) can be referred to a Public Health Program that serves these children by calling:

- the Children 1st Coordinator at your local health department at 800-822-2539
- Parent to Parent of Georgia at 800-229-2038 or in Atlanta at 770-451-5484



Division of Public Health
Family Health Branch
Office of Children with Special Needs
www.dhr.state.ga.us

Babies Can't Wait Program

Who?

- Birth to age three
- With disability or developmental delay

What?

- Provides evaluation, assessment, and service coordination at no charge
- Offers early intervention services, based on an Individualized Family Service Plan, using sliding fee scale

Children's Medical Services Program

Who?

- Birth to age 21
- With chronic medical condition and family income eligibility

What?

- Coordinates/provides specialty medical evaluations/treatment

High Risk Infant Follow-Up Program

Who?

- Birth to age one
- With medical conditions requiring intensive follow-up services from Public Health

What?

- Provides direct follow-up services (i.e., in-home nursing assessment and parent training)

JF&CS Division of Disabilities

- Residential - Highly individualized, community support with all ADL skills
- Supported Employment - Individualized supports to find & maintain competitive employment
- Day Program - Creative alternative to supported employment
- Transition Program - Life Skills Development

For information call 770.677.9379 or email
DisabilitiesServices@jfcs-atlanta.org
www.YourToolsForLiving.org

Jewish Family & Career Services is a proud partner of the
 Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and of the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta





CHILDREN'S SPECIAL SERVICES, LLC

770-394-9791 • www.childrens-services.com

"Complete developmental occupational therapy for children - toddlers through teens."

The key to finding the right rental, right now, right where you want to live in Georgia!



GEORGIAHOUSINGSEARCH.ORG

• FREE to search • FREE to list • Thousands of listings • Special Needs resources

1-877-428-8844
 Toll Free • Habla Español
www.GeorgiaHousingSearch.org






Thanks to OUR SPONSORS for their Support.

If you are interested in being a sponsor for Making a Difference magazine, please call Valerie Buxton @ 770-578-9765.

Summer Fun for Everyone!

The Clay County Navigator Team put together an **inclusive day camp** for children in rural **Days Crossroad**. Children with and without disabilities enjoy **arts & crafts** and games as well as some **reading and math support**, all on an extremely limited budget and with the help of volunteers. Navigator Teams are comprised of **parent volunteers** who have experience accessing services for their children and can pass along this **valuable information** to other parents.

For more information on the camp, or to find a Navigator Team in your area, go to www.parenttoparentofga.org and click on "Roadmap to Services" then on the "Navigating Services" hot air balloon. If you would like to establish or get involved with a Navigator Team, contact Parent Leadership Coalition State Coordinator Marchia Williams at 1-800-229-2038 or marchia@parenttoparentofga.org.



2008
Days Crossroad,
GEORGIA



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

Address Service Requested