

# ***Making a Difference Magazine***

A Quarterly Magazine of the Georgia Council on  
Developmental Disabilities

Real Homes. Real Careers. Real Learning.  
Real Influence. Real Support.

**Fall 2016**

Volume 17, Issue 2

**On the Cover:** Project SEARCH instructor Loretta Fuller and Project SEARCH intern Cynthia Rodriguez review her daily lesson on building a resume in the training center at TSYS in Columbus, GA. TSYS, a credit card processing company, is the newest Project SEARCH partner in Georgia. *(See story on page 6.)*

**On the back cover:** Get Out and Vote November 8!  
Election Day in Georgia is almost here. Check out the candidates and be an informed voter. The Disability VOTE - Feel the Power! *(See story on page 14.)*

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

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[valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov), subject line: **Letters to the**

**Editor.**

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**GCDD VIEWPOINT**

**Make Your Vote Count**

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Justin Dart once said, “Vote like your life depends on it because it does.” As we move closer to the November election, this quote may be heard more often. This year, the disability vote could be the largest minority bloc in the country. For the first time, disability has been presented front and center at a party convention and one candidate made a major policy speech about disability during the campaign. We have the opportunity to have an impact on the national political landscape, but only if we vote.

In this edition of *Making a Difference*, we hear from supporters of both major party presidential candidates and the issues that concern them as people with disabilities. Throughout the country, publications like *Making a Difference* are seeking a glimpse into the campaigns of Secretary Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. There are many issues that could be impacted in the next four to eight years. Where do each of the candidates stand on employment, housing, education and support services?

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Which of the candidates, if elected president, will continue efforts to close institutions and support people to live and be a part of the community? Will Medicaid and the Medicaid Waiver programs be changed? These are the questions we must be asking and to which we must demand answers. The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) encourages you to ask these questions and demand these answers not only of the presidential candidates, but candidates for every office from the local to national level.

While the election is playing itself out on television every night, there are other things happening here in Georgia. We are preparing for the next General Assembly and exploring how to address a growing waiting list for services and how to make sure that people with disabilities have employment as the first option for services. We want to make sure that no individual, including children are living in institutions or nursing

facilities. In addition, GCDD has begun implementation of its new strategic plan with its focus on education, employment, publicly funded services, Real Communities and self-advocacy.

There are three federal initiatives shaping policy and practice in Georgia. The Home and Community Based Settings Rule requires all states to change priorities for services and supports. It will move the system from sheltered day programs to employment and people living in houses and apartments based on what they want, and having control over the places where they live. In the past few months we have seen the US Department of Justice extend its lawsuit with Georgia to make sure that no one resides in state-run institutions and a new lawsuit that will focus on the 5,000 children who attend school through the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) system. Both of these cases focus on

moving people out of segregated and isolated places and back into Georgia's neighborhoods.

Remember that GCDD is your reliable resource for information. Check out our website and join our advocacy network so that you can stay informed. We hope you enjoy reading this magazine and we want to hear from you. Let us know your thoughts and comments about the magazine by writing our editor, Valerie Meadows Suber at [valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov)

Eric E. Jacobson  
Executive Director, GCDD

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## **IN THE NEWS**

**Local US Department of Justice Files Lawsuit against Georgia**

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The US Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against the State of Georgia over its controversial Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) program citing that it violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The lawsuit alleges that the program unnecessarily segregates students with disabilities in GNETS when they could appropriately be served with their peers in general education settings. The community integration mandate of the ADA and the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* require states to make services available to people with disabilities – including children with behavioral disabilities – in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. The department's complaint seeks declaratory and injunctive relief.

Approximately 4,600 students with disabilities are currently in GNETS. In July 2015, the department issued

an extensive findings letter, notifying Georgia it was violating the ADA by unnecessarily providing services to students with behavior-related disabilities in segregated settings, denying them opportunities for meaningful interaction with their peers without disabilities.

The lawsuit further alleges that as a result of the state's unnecessary segregation, students in GNETS lack equal access to academic and extracurricular opportunities enjoyed by their peers outside the GNETS program.

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities, including state and local governments.

*Source: US Department of Justice*

## **Entrepreneurship Event Highlights Individuals with Disabilities**

The Georgia Consortium for Personal Financial Literacy hosted an event to highlight the growing trend of entrepreneurship in today's economy. The event titled *Micro Enterprise: Invisible Backbone of the US Economy* explored emerging new trends in entrepreneurship, including how individuals with disabilities are a part of this dynamic growth.

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' (GCDD) Executive Director Eric Jacobson introduced Ross Mason, an entrepreneur who has a disability, and has seen success by solving global problems through innovation.

Additionally, Aarti Sahgal, founder of Synergies Works, discussed the impact of supporting entrepreneurship for people with disabilities. Synergies Works is a new incubator and accelerator supporting businesses formed by people with disabilities.

“Entrepreneurship is the backbone of our economy. Self-employed individuals with no paid employees operate three-fourths of US businesses,” said Sahgal. “But people with disabilities are under-represented and Synergies Works is providing choice and equality of opportunity to entrepreneurs with disabilities by providing financial and business resources to build sustainable businesses.”

The event also featured a panel where Sahgal and Peter An, an artist with a disability, along with other business leaders discussed processes, barriers and positive factors in entrepreneurial endeavors.

For more information on the Georgia Consortium for Personal Financial Literacy, visit [www.georgiaconsortium.org](http://www.georgiaconsortium.org)

For more information on Synergies Works, email Aarti Sahgal at [sahgalaarti@gmail.com](mailto:sahgalaarti@gmail.com)



## **#InclusionWorks**

October celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month!

Reflecting the important role disability plays in workforce diversity, this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme is

“#InclusionWorks.” Observed each October, NDEAM celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities and educates the public about the value of a diverse workforce inclusive of their skills and talents.

To commemorate NDEAM, GCDD's Take Your Legislator To Work Day (TYLTWD) is taking place again this year with employees with disabilities working in competitive, integrated employment in their community inviting their elected officials to visit their job sites.

*Source: US Department of Labor*

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## [AROUND GCDD](#)

### **Hanna Rosenfeld joins GCDD**

Hanna Rosenfeld joined the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) as the Planning and Policy Development Specialist this past August. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, Rosenfeld is excited to be returning to her hometown of Atlanta. In her role, Rosenfeld will be working to advance GCDD's policy agenda through coordination of Advocacy Days and Take Your Legislator to Work Day, as well as performing a wide range of policy related research and analysis. She will report to Public Policy Director Dawn Alford. When not in the office, Rosenfeld enjoys playing

her ukulele.

## **Conference Reimagines Opportunities for Georgians with Disabilities**

The first-ever Georgia Evolution Conference: Reimagining Opportunities for Georgians with Disabilities will be held on November 3-4, 2016 at the Wyndham Peachtree Hotel & Conference Center in Peachtree City, GA. The conference will bring together agencies, families, people with disabilities and collaborators to support all people with disabilities in careers and in the community.

The conference is sponsored by GCDD, The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and Georgia Association of People Supporting Employment First.

The goal of the conference is to:

1. Give providers the tools they need to support all people with disabilities in careers and in the community, including follow-up technical assistance;
2. Educate and empower families and individuals with disabilities and engage them as active partners in this time of change; and
3. Build critical partnerships and collaboration between all players in Georgia's disability community.

For more details and registration, visit

<http://bit.ly/GAconference>

### **Save the Dates for GCDD 2017 Advocacy Days!**

GCDD will kick off its 2017 Advocacy Days at the Capitol during the legislative session next winter to let people with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders meet legislators and discuss what is important to them.

The 2017 Advocacy Days will be held on:

- January 18
- February 1
- February 7
- February 23
- February 28
- March 9

Save the dates and stay tuned for more information on the topics each day will cover and how to register for this great advocacy event!

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**FEATURE**

## **Project SEARCH Success in Georgia**

*By Ruksana Hussain*

At the Annual Project SEARCH Conference held in Orlando, FL in August, 183 program sites from 37 states and three countries were recognized for achieving 70-100% employment for their 2015 program graduates. Georgia was an Outcome Award Honoree winning 13 awards, including nine out of 18 sites that were recognized as 100% placement sites. What is it about Georgia sites that garnered such recognition?

“One of the things we did was to host a two-day training on job development for the sites, with an emphasis on helping to make sure they had good strategies for finding jobs for people,” shared Dottie Adams, statewide coordinator for Project SEARCH Georgia.

Adams has been with Project SEARCH Georgia since it was established as a statewide initiative nine years ago. Project SEARCH was originally developed at Cincinnati

Children's Hospital Medical Center in 1996, when Erin Riehle, director of Cincinnati Children's Emergency Department, and Susie Rutkowski, then the special education director at Great Oaks Career Campuses, partnered to launch the initiative to commit to hiring individuals with developmental disabilities in the workplace.

Project SEARCH is unique in that it is a business-led, high school-to-work transition program, serving students with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). It takes place entirely at the workplace and the goal for each student participant is competitive employment. This means employment in an integrated setting, working alongside coworkers with and without disabilities, year-round work that is not seasonal employment, 16 hours/week or more and minimum wage or higher.

The success of the nine Georgia sites in securing such employment for their interns resulted in their recognition as 100% placement sites. Adams credits the teamwork displayed by the different parties and the involvement of businesses in the community as the contributing factors to this success. Businesses aren't expected to hire the interns they train, but if they do find a student to be a good match, they can be easily hired as they are already trained for the role, thus saving the business training fees.

Another benefit observed is some of the entry-level jobs see frequent turnover and are hard to keep filled, but interns from Project SEARCH want to work and are willing to do the job. "Our students are motivated because for the first time, they are making money," explains Adams. "The emphasis is on employment and making sure the students don't just go to training for a year for nothing. We have employment rates of about 75% with



people working an average of 25 hours, making an average of \$9.61 which is pretty good!”

The majority of the Project SEARCH sites in Georgia are all medical centers or hospitals but one of its newest members is a credit card service company located in Columbus, GA. Total System Services, commonly referred to as TSYS, provides payment processing, merchant and related payment services to financial and nonfinancial institutions globally.

TSYS Business Liaison Pino Davis said, “There was an unmet need in our community for students in the Muscogee County School District (MCSD) with intellectual disabilities who were aging out of the school system.”

At the same time, MCSD Transition Manager Paula Dukes was relentless in her search for a business to

partner with Project SEARCH. Although initially faced with “no, not right now,” her passion for helping students led her to the new TSYS Senior Executive Vice President & Chief Information Officer Patty Watson, who has a child with a disability.

“Patty was familiar with Project SEARCH from her previous employer. Her past experience coupled with her personal experience changed our answer to an emphatic ‘yes’!” said Davis.

This proved an opportunity for 18-year-old high school graduate Zariah Wheeler from Columbus to intern with TSYS through Project SEARCH. During her training, she learned to work the printer, make copies, identify different file and folder sizes and use a label maker – all skills that she can put to use in her new place of work once hired. “Everyone is helpful and I am enjoying this

experience. I will be here for 10 weeks and get a job after that,” she said confidently.

TSYS’ partnership with Project SEARCH is proof that everyone can work despite disabilities or personal challenges. TSYS team members have welcomed the Project SEARCH interns, many volunteering to serve as mentors. Another benefit of having the interns is how they are changing the way new team members are trained. TSYS has incorporated more visual aids and tasks are broken down into steps. Once more established, TSYS plans to share their successes with other local employers, such as insurance giant Aflac, and to encourage others to participate in the program.

Many other sites are already experiencing the value of partnering with Project SEARCH and flourishing as 100% employment sites. Among them is Cornerstone Medical Center (previously Hutcheson Medical Center) in

Ft. Oglethorpe, GA. Students trained here are employed at Unique Fabrications, ShopRite, Food City and a local daycare. “If not for Project SEARCH, these students would be sitting at home without jobs,” says Beth Hammerstone, Project SEARCH instructor.

One of the success stories is that of 23-year-old Chickamauga, GA resident Rachel Cannon who works at the Walmart in Lafayette, GA as a greeter. “The experience at Project SEARCH was a real eye opener for me because it taught me a lot about what it is like to be out in the workforce and get a paycheck,” said Cannon. “I have been at Walmart almost six months and I love it!”

### **Project SEARCH Sites in Georgia**

- Albany
- Atlanta (3)
- Canton
- Cartersville

- Columbus
- Dalton (3)
- Douglas
- Gainesville
- Moultrie
- Savannah
- Springfield
- Thomasville
- Walker
- Waycross

For more information about Project SEARCH, visit

[www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us)

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## **FEATURE**

### **Why Inclusion Works in Employment**

*By Anne Hardie*

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Kristina Brewster loves college football, as in, really loves college football. “UGA all the way,” said Brewster, throwing her hands in the air as if signaling a touchdown. She also pulls for the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets – when they aren’t playing the Dawgs, of course – and can tell you all about past Heisman Trophy winners, Southeastern Conference champions and just about anything else you’d like to know that involves a football.

Brewster’s appetite for the sport makes her job at the College Football Hall of Fame in Downtown Atlanta a perfect fit. But there’s so much more that comes with the title of “fan ambassador” – sharing her knowledge with guests, having her very own team of coworkers, being held accountable. “They treat me like any normal person,” says Brewster, who is diagnosed with Down syndrome.

There is another thing that Brewster likes about her job. “I like getting paid,” she said. “I like getting paid a lot.”

Across the State, people with disabilities are filling all kinds of jobs and, even more, establishing all kinds of careers. They are employed in big law firms, insurance companies, universities, hospitals and tourist attractions. They are working for mom and pops and some with an entrepreneurial bent are setting up their own businesses. All of these workers are a collective, real-life testament to why inclusion works, which also is the theme of this October's National Employment Disability Awareness Month.

Different factors are driving the increasing number of people with disabilities in the workplace. It's been 26 years since the Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted to protect individuals from discrimination in all areas of life – school, transportation, housing, and yes, the office. Now a new federal law, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), is seeking to dramatically improve the opportunities for a person with a disability

landing a job working alongside a person without a disability – and getting paid the going rate.

## **The Impact of WIOA**

WIOA was signed into law in 2014 to better ensure that many more people get the opportunities and skills they need to excel at what they do best – or competitive integrated employment. The legislation promotes competitive integrated employment, or employment in which people with disabilities work alongside people without disabilities for the same pay.

In September, a committee advising US Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez on how to make these goals a reality issued a report on what should happen next.

Among its recommendations: The US Department of Labor (USDOL) needs to work with federal agencies to develop clear policies that make competitive integrated employment a funding priority for people with significant



disabilities. Another priority is strengthening opportunities for young people with disabilities so they can enter the workplace.

“Transforming the workplace for everyone will require transforming the way our federal and state systems aim to support people with disabilities, and have done so for a very long time,” said Doug Crandell, an employment expert with the University of Georgia’s (UGA) Institute on Human Development and Disability. He also works with the USDOL, advising state agencies and providers.

“What our systems have done in the past is look at labels and based on those, figure out how to program someone’s day,” Crandell said. “I spend most of my time working to get people to understand how they should look at someone’s strengths rather than their weaknesses, then take that information and connect with an employer. When we think in those terms, labels don’t matter.”

Attracting and retaining students with disabilities is something Georgia's colleges are grappling with. Georgia State University recently introduced academic coaching for students with disabilities – about one-third of whom fall on the autism spectrum. “If we can help students manage their disability in the classroom, hopefully that will transfer into the workplace,” said Georgia State's Dean of Students and Associate Vice President of Student Affairs Darryl Holloman.

The bigger goal is to make one of Georgia's most diverse student bodies even more so. “Students with disabilities not only are exposed to others, but others are exposed to their sense of difference,” Holloman said. “Once we can recognize our differences, we can work through those to be able to recognize our similarities.”

## **Current State of Employment**

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At the same time, companies are increasingly deliberate about diversifying their workers. While they want to show that they are good corporate citizens, there is something else at play. Hiring people with disabilities is just good business. “Otherwise businesses wouldn’t be doing it,” said Jennifer Briggs, owner and founder of Briggs & Associates. “A company might start out thinking that they want to hire someone with a disability because it is the right thing to do. Then they begin to see the value that person brings. That is very cool.”

The US Chamber of Commerce and the US Business Leadership Network, a national nonprofit that helps companies use inclusion to leverage business, echoes Briggs’ experiences in a new report. “Successful businesses recognize that incorporating disability in all diversity and inclusion practices positively impacts a company’s bottom line,” the report states. “Corporate

CEOs understand that it's cost effective to recruit and retain the best talent regardless of disability.”

Even as the jobs forecast is rosier for people with disabilities, there is a lot of ground to make up. Labor force statistics estimate that only about 27% of individuals with disabilities ages 16 to 64 are employed, compared with 71% of those without a disability. The disparity is even greater for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). And individuals served by the public mental health system are unemployed at three times the rate of the general population.

Those numbers will change only when more employers, families and even people with disabilities adopt the posture that the workplace is a place for everyone. “We’re committed to setting an example for other states in employment for people with disabilities,” said Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) Executive

Director Greg Schmieg. “We believe that everyone who wants to work can do so, and we’re here to help them along the way.

Too many people with disabilities who work are being unfairly paid, government officials and advocates agree. Inadequate compensation not only can have a detrimental effect on someone’s standard of living, it can also affect how they value themselves in an economy where wages and raises and promotions are seen as common measures of job performance.

“Employment matters to people and it matters to our communities,” Briggs said. “Our communities aren’t going to be whole until everyone is participating and valued, and valued at the going rate. It is true that we still have a long way to go. I still say we have come a long way.”

## **Playing to People's Strengths**

Some 630,000 Georgians of working age have a disability, according to GVRA. The agency has set goals of serving 100,000 clients and placing 50,000 in jobs over the next three to five years. To meet those numbers, GVRA will have to add to the partnerships that it already has with many employers, including Kroger, Publix, Lowe's, the Federal Aviation Administration and Sedexo, a food services and facilities management company.

Another close partner of GVRA is The Home Depot. "Having a diverse workforce that includes people with disabilities, many of them veterans, is important to the company," said Beatriz Rodriguez, The Home Depot's director of diversity and inclusion. For one, it upholds the company's core values of respecting all people and caring for its associates. Doing so means focusing on the skills that people bring to the workplace. "It is very important to remove obstacles and to make sure individuals are

measured on what they have to offer, not what their limitations are,” Rodriguez said.

One of those obstacles is that some employees or job applicants are reluctant to ask for accommodations if needed. “It is a matter of pride and perception and peer pressure,” said Rodriguez, who recognizes those traits in her own son, a high schooler who is on the autism spectrum. “It is OK to say, ‘Can you please offer me the tools I need to be successful?’ ” she said.

At The Home Depot, people with disabilities work in the company’s distribution centers, corporate offices and call centers. The company also has employees at 72 stores nationwide through its partnership with Ken’s Krew, a nonprofit that trains and places people with I/DD. “Our associates are the lifeline of our business,” Rodriguez said. “They represent us with our customers and the communities where we do business.”

And do-it-yourselfers coming into a store to buy drywall or lighting fixtures appreciate the company's efforts to be inclusive. "I have heard many success stories from customers recognizing our values and spending with us because of that," Rodriguez added. Her observations are backed up by studies that show that consumers feel more positive about companies that employ people with disabilities.

Like The Home Depot, the Georgia Aquarium has made a concerted effort to add people with disabilities to its payroll for a long time. The popular tourist attraction mirrors the inclusive mindset of Bernie Marcus, co-founder of The Home Depot and driving force behind the aquarium as well as its biggest benefactor. Marcus also founded the Marcus Institute, which offers services to children and adolescents with developmental disabilities. "He wanted to make sure that the aquarium reflected the diversity of Atlanta as well as Georgia and the world,"



said Camille Hannans, the aquarium's vice president of human resources.

People with disabilities work across the aquarium, in guest services and guest programs, education programs and photo services. "From my standpoint, it enhances the hospitality feature of the aquarium when you see someone who is passionate about the mission," Hannans said.

Given that the aquarium attracts some two million guests a year, interacting with such large crowds can be overwhelming for anyone, with or without disabilities. "That has been a challenge," Hannans said. "We have been able to work with career counselors so that they can pinpoint who is going to be comfortable in any role that we might have."

The aquarium recruits through Briggs & Associates, which works with some 800 clients with I/DD and mental

health diagnoses in communities across the State. For the most part, the agency approaches employers and helps them design jobs to fits clients' talents. It also provides job coaches and supplements whatever training is needed. In addition to the aquarium, the employment agency has placed clients throughout Emory Healthcare, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Children's Museum of Atlanta, Toys R Us and Topgolf.

### **Valuable Employees**

As WIOA expands its reach and national programs such as Project SEARCH expand to different locations across the country and Georgia, employers who have hired people with disabilities resonate the same sentiments of success.

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique, one-year, school-to-work program for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

that takes place entirely at the workplace. This innovative, business-led model of school-to-work transition features total workplace immersion, which facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction; career exploration; and hands-on, worksite-based training and support. (*Read more about Project SEARCH on page 6.*)

Hiring people with disabilities is also valuable to the operations a company has to maintain every day and can help reduce turnover rates in entry level or administrative jobs.

“People with disabilities bring time management, attendance and a determination to work,” said Jessica Williams, youth department supervisor at Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Workforce Development. “A lot of the younger generation doesn’t want to do some of what you might consider menial jobs and if something better comes along, they are going to

just move on. We have a lot of people with disabilities who have that drive, that determination to work. They want to be at work and their attitude shows it.”

Tanya Adcock, director of St. Mary’s Highland Hills Senior Living and Community Center in Athens, GA agrees that hiring people with disabilities has helped improve efficiency across the workplace.

“Our employees with disabilities work on tasks that need to be done daily such as helping in the dining room, assisting in the office and more. It’s multi-faceted and helps our frontline staff and overall, our resident care. Those are daily operations that have to be done to help us run our community successfully,” said Adcock.

That is probably what I have seen the most in my oversight with employees who have disabilities. It is the

sense of accomplishment and confidence that it has given them because we give them purpose,” she added.

Additionally, health and wellness giant Walgreens had a desire to have a diverse team that included people with disabilities. It found that with the right mix of training, technology and awareness, the newest generation of distribution centers runs more efficiently and productively than older counterparts. It also determined that 40% of its staff in its new warehouses would be people with disabilities.

“They are full-time employees who receive the same pay, the same benefits, and are also held accountable the same way that any other employee is held,” said Julie Henderson, store manager with Walgreens.

But at the same time, Henderson adds, the employees with disabilities bring a level of expectation to the entire

workforce. “Our employees with disabilities are showing up ready to work, are enthusiastic and they do what is asked of them with a smile on their face,” she said. “For me, it has almost raised the bar for other employees to meet the challenge that these people bring to the workplace. I have never seen people take more care in coming to work.”

### **A New Way of Working**

Briggs & Associates approached the College Football Hall of Fame about designing the job that Brewster has held for almost two years.

Brewster is one of 60 fan ambassadors who work at the 100,000-square-foot playground for college football fans. Brewster helps guests register, navigate the interactive displays and chats with them about what’s going on in college football, which she knows plenty about. She reads the sports pages and gets alerts from ESPN.

She shines at the other tasks and has earned bonuses for her work.

“Kristina adds a very positive energy and attitude,” said Robert Bready, one of her supervisors. “She is always on time. She always makes sure she has something to add during meetings. And she is very in tune with the current college football landscape and helps educate other fellow staff members.”

Brewster is also a big hit with guests. “The job requires somebody with just a general outgoing personality,” Bready said. “She earned her position here based on her ability to naturally entertain, educate and engage our guests. Honestly, Kristina is a high performer without grading on a curve at all.”

There are a few tasks that other ambassadors perform that Brewster is not comfortable with, like working the cash register. And that is a part of the bigger, inclusive story.

“We know that the employees with disabilities may have a dialogue that may be a little bit different, and we may need to get different players to the team if the person with a disability can’t speak for themselves,” said Adcock.

“But, there is still the accountability piece. And that is very important because what we are trying to teach the staff is that they blend into our comm.

unity, but we also need to blend into their world too.”

Brewster has some encouraging words for someone with a disability who may be afraid or discouraged about getting a job. “It makes you feel happy. You get to learn about more things. It makes you want to wake up and go to work,” she said. “Me, I see myself working for a long time.”

## **Working for Inclusion**

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Companies that do business in Georgia are making a concerted effort to diversify their workforce by hiring people with disabilities. Here is just a sampling of some of the ways they are attracting and supporting their employees.

**AMC Theaters:** AMC has created a national program to encourage and facilitate hiring and employing people with disabilities. Through collaboration with the Autism Society, job coaches and vocational rehabilitation agencies, the company has doubled its employment of associates with disabilities.

**Federal Aviation Administration:** The FAA is working with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) to hire people with disabilities in a wide range of jobs, including air traffic control specialists, aviation inspectors and engineers.

**Gwinnett Medical Center:** With more than 6,000 employees, Gwinnett Medical Center is working with the GVRA to hire people with disabilities in jobs in its labs, pharmacy and nursing units.

**Lockheed Martin:** In 2015, Lockheed introduced a new initiative in recognition of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The company solicited its employees to become one of 25 “Able and Allies Ambassadors” designed to raise disability awareness, promote conversations on topics not traditionally addressed in the workplace, and build an inclusive workplace intentionally including Allies – those touched by a disability.

**Shaw Industries:** Shaw partners with Project SEARCH to offer an internship program for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program takes place at Shaw and provides participants with work

experience and skill set development. All associates in participating Shaw departments are educated on the program and gain understanding of how to focus on skill growth and potential of the participants, not on their limitations. Shaw has hired many graduates of the program.

*Sources: Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency; Lockheed Martin; Shaw Industries; US Business Leadership Network; Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

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**FEATURE**

## **Voting: Now Get Out and Vote!**

On November 8, 2016, millions of Americans will head to the polls to vote for the next President of the United States of America, Vice President and congressional leaders for the US House of Representatives and US Senate.

This election, like all, is important and it is even more important for people with disabilities to head to the polls to make their voices heard.

The following is a guide on voting for people with disabilities from the office of the Georgia Secretary of State along with a list of the candidates hoping to receive your vote this election season.

## **Voting 101**

**Know your polling place.** Find out your polling location through the Secretary of State's My Voter Page at <https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>

**Accessibility: What if I get to my polling location and need assistance?**

If a voter with a disability is unable to sign his or her name; to see or mark the answers on the ballot; use the voting equipment; or cannot enter the voting booth without support, they may bring someone to help them.

A voter with a disability can receive support from any individual EXCEPT his or her employer, a representative of his or her employer or a representative of his or her union, nor a poll officer or poll worker, who is a resident of the precinct where the voter needing support is trying to vote. Voters with disabilities can receive assistance from any other individuals including a mother, father, sister, brother, spouse, friend or child, and each individual

assisting the voter with a disability must record his or her name on the elector's voter certificate.

Additionally, poll officers and workers are provided training regarding the use of voting equipment, procedures and all aspects of state and federal laws applicable to conducting elections.

- For voters with disabilities who do not require support to vote from another individual, but require accommodation in the form of assistive technology, there are accessible touch screen voting equipment options provided at the polls that allow for assistance but give more privacy and independence for voters to select their choices. These options include:
- An audio ballot for those with visual impairment or who are blind, using headphones and a number keypad similar to an automated phone service.

- A magnifying feature is available on every touch screen voting unit in Georgia that allows you to enlarge the print on the ballot.
- Touch screen voting units that allow a voter to vote while sitting in a chair or wheelchair.

### **What do you need to vote?**

Be sure to show up to your polling location prepared to vote. You must bring photo identification. The acceptable forms of photo identification include:

- Georgia driver's license, even if expired
- Any valid state or federal issued photo ID, including a free voter ID card issued by your County Registrar's Office or by the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS)
- Valid US passport
- Valid employee photo ID from any branch, department, agency or entity of the US government,

Georgia or any county, municipality, board, authority or other entity of this state

- Valid US military photo ID
- Valid tribal photo ID

### **What do I do if I do not have qualified identification?**

For many in the disability community, not having qualified identification or a driver's license is often a barrier to the voting process. You can get either a FREE Georgia Identification Card for voting purposes only from the Department of Driver Services or a FREE Georgia Voter Identification Card at your County Registrar's Office.

In order to get a Georgia Voter Identification Card, you will need the following:



- A photo identity document or a non-photo identity document showing your full legal name and date of birth
- Documentation showing your date of birth
- Evidence you are registered to vote in Georgia; and
- Documentation showing your name and the address of your principal residence
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For more information visit, <http://sos.georgia.gov/cgi-bin/countyregistrarsindex.asp> to find your County's Registrar's Office or visit the Georgia Department of Driver Services website at <http://www.dds.ga.gov/drivers/dldata.aspx?con=1749371755&ty=dl>

## **Are there other options besides voting on Election Day?**

In Georgia, there are a couple of ways to submit your vote without ever having to battle the crowds on Election Day.

Any voter can request a mail-in ballot without having to provide a reason. To request a mail-in ballot, visit [http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/Elections/absentee\\_voting\\_in\\_georgia](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/Elections/absentee_voting_in_georgia) and print out the application form.

Mail, fax or take the completed form in person to your local County Board of Registrar's Office. It is important to request your mail-in ballot and return it as soon as possible to ensure it is received by the deadline, which is the close of the polls on the actual Election Day.

If you have a disability and need support to read and/or write your forms, you may get help when filling out your mail-in ballot application and the absentee/advance ballot form you will receive. Any person who assists an individual in his or her vote, must sign an oath that is printed either on the mail-in ballot envelope or on the application for mail-in-ballot, whichever is applicable.

Georgia also offers its citizens the option to vote in person at the polls before the big rush on Election Day.

Early/advance voting is easy and convenient, since it allows you to vote on a day and time that works for you.

## **Important Links from the Office of the Secretary of State:**

- Voters with Disabilities:

[http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/voters\\_with\\_disabilities](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/voters_with_disabilities)

- My Voter Page:

<https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>

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- Georgia Voter ID Requirements:

[http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/georgia\\_voter\\_identification\\_requirements2](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/georgia_voter_identification_requirements2)

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- County Board of Registrars:

[http://elections.sos.ga.gov/Elections/countyregistrars.  
do](http://elections.sos.ga.gov/Elections/countyregistrars.do)

## **External websites such as VoteSmart**

[www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) provide detailed information on candidates and information on their positions on issues that affect the community and nation as a whole.

## **Early Voting Ends November 4**

For start dates and times at your polling place, check with [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov) and be sure to bring an accepted ID.

## **Meet Your Candidates**

This election season brings a prime education moment for all voters, with and without disabilities, and why being educated on local, state and federal representatives and senators is also important to the political process and the issues that matter to you.

Meet the candidates running in this year's presidential and congressional election. This year, a total of 469 seats in the US Congress – 34 Senate seats and all 435 House seats – are up for election on November 8, 2016. In Georgia, voters will elect 14 candidates to serve in the US House, one from each of the state's 14 congressional districts. One seat is also up for election for the US Senate.

## **The President of The United States**

### **Hillary Rodham Clinton (D)**

Hillary Clinton has served as secretary of state, US senator from New York, first lady of the United States, first lady of Arkansas, a practicing lawyer and law professor, and an activist.

For more information, visit Clinton's official campaign site at [www.hillaryclinton.com](http://www.hillaryclinton.com)

## **Donald J. Trump (R)**

Donald John Trump is an American businessman, television personality, author and politician. He is chairman of The Trump Organization, which is the principal holding company for his real estate ventures and other business interests.

For more information, visit Trump's official campaign site at [www.donaldjtrump.com](http://www.donaldjtrump.com)

Read Perspectives on pages 22 and 23 to see why people with disabilities are supporting the presidential candidates.

## **GEORGIA CONGRESSIONAL RACE**

## **US SENATE**

Johnny Isakson (R)\*

Jim Barksdale (D)

## **US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

District 01      Buddy Carter (R)\*

Nathan Russo (W)

District 02      Sanford Bishop (D)\*

Greg Duke (R)

District 03      Drew Ferguson (R)

Angela Pendley (D)

District 04      Hank Johnson (D)\*

Victor Armendariz (R)

District 05 John Lewis (D)\*

Doug Bell (R)

District 06      Tom Price (R)\*

Rodney Stooksbury (D)

District 07      Rob Woodall (R)\*

Rashid Malik (D)

District 08	Austin Scott (R)* James Harris (D)
District 09	Doug Collins (R)*
District 10	Jody B Hice (R)* Leonard Ware (W)
District 11	Barry Loudermilk (R)* Don Wilson (D)
District 12	Richard W Allen (R)* Tricia Carpenter McCracken (D)
District 13	David Scott (D)*
District 14	Tom Graves (R)* Patrick Boggs (W)

## **KEY**

**(D) Democrat**

**(R) Republican**

**(W) Write-in**

**\* Incumbent**



If 18.6 million voters with disabilities show up at the polls, our community will be the largest minority voting bloc in America. And at that point the media and our elected officials could no longer deny the size of our electoral power.

*– Get Out The Vote Strategist Ted Jackson at the 2016 Disability Day at the Capitol in Atlanta*

## **FEATURE**

### **A Vision for 2021: GCDD's Five Year Plan Begins**

*By Devika Rao*

Last fall, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) set out across the State to hear what people with developmental disabilities, families, caregivers and other stakeholders had to say about the

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issues most important to them when it comes to services and supports. Through an online survey and 11 forums held in nine cities throughout the State, GCDD heard from over 1,000 people.

“People told us about the need for work. They told us about the need for school systems that are more responsive. This population of kids coming out of school today is not the same population that came out in previous years. The expectations are higher therefore the systems have to be better in place,” said Eric Jacobson, executive director of GCDD. “And we heard there are too many people on the waiting lists. Those three things drove a lot of what you see in the plan.”

The Council members and staff used that information to create five goals that GCDD will work on over the next five years. They include:

- 1. Education**
- 2. Employment**
- 3. Formal and Informal Supports**
- 4. Real Communities**
- 5. Self-Advocacy**

The goals then laid the framework for the Council's work from 2017-2021 that will address services and supports across the State. Charged with creating systems change for individuals with developmental disabilities and family members through advocacy and capacity building activities, the outcomes for all GCDD efforts aim to ensure that the disability community is more interdependent, has greater economic self-sufficiency, is integrated and included in respective communities, and allows for self-determination.

## **Education**

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As a part of its Five Year Plan, GCDD will focus on education to increase children with disabilities to be fully included in the classrooms and actively involved in their local school community.

One focus will be to reduce the number of African American students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in the state's controversial Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) program.

This goal came from the federal Department of Education that "identified African American males as well as part of this kind of underserved population that is being disproportionately represented. They have collected data from every school district in the country on the number of black males in schools and special education," said Jacobson.

In a 2016 investigation done by *the Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, it was found that 54% of students in Georgia's psychoeducational programs are African American, compared to 37% in all public schools statewide. In half of the 24 [GNETS] programs, black enrollment exceeds 60%. In one, nine of every 10 students are African American.

This objective, like many of those outlined under the new Five Year Plan, will call for collaboration with organizations such as the NAACP, Urban League, My Brothers Keeper and more.

Another objective for education will be to “eliminate the special education certificate and other barriers for students who want to attend post-secondary educational institutions.”

“One of the things that we’ve known for a long time is that the special education certificate has been a barrier once kids leave the elementary and high school system,” states Jacobson.

The certificate is not equivalent to a high school diploma, hence creating barriers to attend university or college programs, get a job or join the military.

“Getting rid of the certificate and making sure every kid gets a high school diploma will allow them to be on college campuses, to be able to access the Hope Scholarship, to not only get credit but actually get a grade in their class,” said Jacobson. “It really opens up the world in terms of what they are allowed to do and what they’re not allowed to do.”

Additionally, the new Five Year Plan will also seek to expand the successful inclusive post-secondary

educational programs that are currently at nine universities and colleges to 15 by 2021.

## **Employment**

Competitive, supported employment has long been a point of advocacy for GCDD. Under its new Five Year Plan, GCDD will strengthen opportunities that result in people having meaningful employment based on unique skills, interests and talents while earning a livable wage with career advancement opportunities.

Under this goal, GCDD hopes to expand the highly successful Project SEARCH program from 18 to 30 sites across the State. (Read more about Project SEARCH on page 6.) Additionally, the goal would also include continued advocacy efforts to make Georgia an Employment First state, meaning that employment would be the first option for people with disabilities.

A significant focus of GCDD's employment goal will also be to educate businesses about the diverse workforce. By educating the human resource managers and other professionals, it would seek to transform from offering isolating, segregated workplaces to offering supported and customized employment.

One of its employment objectives will also be to strengthen financial inclusion and asset development efforts for individuals with I/DD.

“When people go to work and they start earning money, what do they do with it? There needs to be financial literacy around what it means to have money, earn money and what you do with that money,” said Jacobson. “In the case of people with disabilities, how do you make sure you protect your healthcare services, while you're earning a paycheck?”



In May 2016, the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act became law in Georgia and the process to bring ABLE accounts is currently underway. Governor Nathan Deal created the ABLE Board, that will start to work on ABLE accounts being opened in the State of Georgia to help people set aside money to meet disability-related needs.

The financial literacy component of GCDD's Five Year Plan goal intends to help people understand what it means to earn money, and how to protect, save and spend it.

### **Formal and Informal Supports**

Continuing its work and advocacy, GCDD will advocate for public policies that support universal access to quality long-term supports and services that will be integrated into typical formal and informal support systems.

This includes the GCDD's continued work and support of the Children's Freedom Initiative, a statewide policy that aims to move all children living in a nursing facility or private Intermediate Care Facility for the Developmentally Disabled (ICF/DD) into a loving, stable home. This work will continue through the DD Network that includes: GCDD, Georgia Advocacy Office, Center for Leadership and Disability at Georgia State University and the Institute for Human Development and Disability at the University of Georgia.

GCDD will also focus its advocacy on improved wages and skills for direct support professionals, address the waiting list for home and community-based services and support efforts of families and individuals who self-direct services.

## **Real Communities**

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GCDD's award-winning initiative brought together conversations of social and disability justice by connecting communities of people with and without disabilities with a thoughtful, action-based learning approach. This equips community members at the local, grassroots level to work together toward common goals to improve their community using person-centered supports, community-centered connections and persistent and reflective learning.

In the next five years, GCDD will continue to strengthen and support local projects planned and implemented by a network of partners with and without disabilities in hopes to expand it to 10 communities. Currently, there are seven Real Communities.

“I think that we are looking at a variety of potential models and places to go. We're looking the four corners of the State to figure out what communities might be

ready for this kind of work,” added Jacobson. “We’re looking at a variety of different issues or models that might come up from a restorative discipline in the educational systems to how we create increased economic equitability through participatory budgeting and more local democracy activities that would have people more involved in local decisions about taxpayer supported events.”

Possible new sites for Real Communities expansion could include health-focused projects, youth organizing, micro financing and associated efforts such as faith-based programs.

### **Self-Advocacy**

As a part of its framework, all Councils have to include a self-advocacy component in their Five Year Plans as required by the federal agency, Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD).

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Through its successful Advocacy Days – held during the legislative session – to funding the People First Georgia Conference every summer, and continuation of funding grants to help families, self-advocates and advocates attend disability-related conferences, GCDD looks to increase the self-advocacy representation in Georgia.

“Our hope is that more and more people with disabilities will show up for events like Advocacy Days because it’s a lot more impactful and we want them talking to their legislators. From that standpoint, the success of the events that affect systems change should be dependent on the role of people with disabilities in advocating for those changes,” added Jacobson.

## **The Five Year Plan**

In August, the Five Year Plan was submitted to AIDD for approval, and the plan officially kicked off on October 1, 2016. It embraced the idea that addressing complex

problems requires a collective impact approach involving many actors from different sectors committing to a common agenda, a common vision, a common understanding of the problem and agreed upon rules of engagement to make the disability community across Georgia inclusive, integrated and successful.

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## **PERSPECTIVES**

### **Why I'm Voting for Hillary Clinton**

*By Tony Coelho*

As a person with a disability and an original sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I want a President who has the ability and motivation to protect and expand upon that landmark accomplishment. Every

“disability voter” in Georgia has reason to vote for Secretary Hillary Clinton.

As a young adult, my diagnosis with epilepsy took away my ability to get a job, my driver’s license, my health insurance and, ultimately, my dream of becoming a Catholic priest. It is my history with epilepsy that led me to author the ADA, to continue my advocacy for people with disabilities, and to stay engaged in politics. It is the reason I want to elect Hillary Clinton.

I applaud the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities for being intentionally inclusive in its work. I had the opportunity in 2013 to sit amongst many Georgians at the Carter Center where I discussed my experience with epilepsy and its impact on my mental health with the former First Lady Rosalyn Carter. She and the Georgians around her understood how stigma and discrimination prevent millions from seeking and

receiving effective treatment. Secretary Clinton has responded to us with a detailed plan to address the mental health crisis and end the stigma and shame associated with treatment.

Secretary Clinton isn't with us just to get elected, she's been with us all along. Her first job out of law school was knocking on doors to figure out why two million US children were not in school, finding that many children with disabilities and other children with special needs were being excluded from schools. That work helped lead to a federal law guaranteeing access to public school education for children with disabilities. She went on to push for health reforms such as the Children's Health Insurance Program.

While she's with us, her opponent swears to demolish the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and with it, the tremendous advance we have made for people with disabilities by



ending coverage discrimination against individuals with pre-existing conditions. Yet, almost half of the American population between the ages of 55-64 has a pre-existing condition, and 20% of our young adults age 18-24 have one. Secretary Clinton is committed to protecting access to insurance for people with pre-existing conditions, improving support for people with autism, and increasing employment opportunities for all – including us.

Secretary Clinton will work to finally pass the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (or “Disabilities Treaty”). The Disabilities Treaty embodies, at the international level, the ADA principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, accessibility and inclusion. It has strong bipartisan support, yet we are one of three countries not to ratify it.

We must judge our leaders by their ability to get beyond politics and make the tough decisions to do what is right for the most vulnerable among us – not mock us. With our

voice and our vote, we can elect leaders who will build on the disability rights movement and protect our access to insurance.

*Tony Coelho is a former Congressman and House Majority Whip. He is a lifelong disability rights advocate and was the principal sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Mr. Coelho is diagnosed with epilepsy.*

For more information, visit Clinton's official campaign site at [www.hillaryclinton.com](http://www.hillaryclinton.com)

## **Why I'm Voting for Donald Trump**

*By Jason Faircloth*

The question that many people will ask over the next month is “who are you voting for?” Some people will tell you and some people won't. But what I know is that this

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election could change American politics for years and years. We have the opportunity to do that.

As a leader in North Carolina's disability community and an entrepreneur, these are the reasons that helped me make the decision to vote for Donald Trump.

First and foremost, I wonder why the Washington elites are not supporting Trump. Is it because they are afraid of the American people or are they really afraid of their inside connections who make and keep them rich?

We need to worry about America and build America First, and that means protecting our jobs, benefits such as Social Security and healthcare – all things that also affect people with disabilities.

Everybody seems to want higher wages. People want college to be free. And the only way this is going to

happen is with higher taxes! We need businesses to stay in this country so America can prosper – it will give more opportunities for people with disabilities to get a job.

Another thing that is important to me is the safety of our country. Does anybody around the world respect us anymore? We need to look at real facts, not TV facts, as we decide who is going to lead this country for the next four years.

This election, we have a chance to turn America around. It's quite clear who I'm voting for, but that's not your vote. Consider what issues are important to you as you head to the polls, and decide which party falls in line with your thoughts. I believe we have been headed down a path that we may never recover from, and I believe Donald Trump is the right candidate. We are still the best country in the world.

*Jason Faircloth is the founder of the US Disabled Golf Association and a member of the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities. He is a person diagnosed with cerebral palsy.*

For more information, visit Trump's official campaign site at [www.donaldjtrump.com](http://www.donaldjtrump.com)

## **EXPERT UPDATE**

### **Time to Get to Work!**

*By Alison Nodvin Barkoff*

When we meet someone new, one of the first things we usually ask is “What do you do?” Our jobs help define who we are, create meaning in our lives and build relationships with co-workers and the broader community. For people with disabilities, having a job is key to real community integration.

In a recent speech, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) member (and my brother) Evan Nodvin described why working is so important to him. Earning a paycheck has allowed him to live independently, go on trips and buy the things he wants. He described his friendships with co-workers – eating lunch together, going out socially after work and even being the best man in a co-worker’s wedding. His job at a local fitness center has given him the chance to get to know people from the broader community. Many people have come to know and love Evan through his job; when he’s in the community, someone always comes up to say hello.

Unfortunately, many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) don’t have the same opportunities as Evan. Less than 25% of people with I/DD nationally receive services to access community jobs,

instead spending their days in sheltered workshops, facility-based day habilitation programs or other often-segregated non-work activities. Fortunately, recent federal policies and initiatives are creating unprecedented opportunities to significantly increase employment for people with disabilities.

First, the federal government has established new rules governing all Medicaid funded Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). These rules apply to all of Georgia's I/DD waivers, (e.g. COMP and NOW). These rules require all community-based settings be integrated in and provide access to the broader community; maximize individuals' independence and choice of daily life activities; ensure the right to privacy and respect; facilitate choice of services and who provides them; and provide opportunities to seek competitive integrated employment. Every person must have a choice of a "nondisability specific" setting, meaning people receiving

day services are offered the opportunity for community employment. Given states' current service capacity, they will need to expand employment supports; revise service definitions and rates to incentivize competitive integrated employment; and work with sheltered workshop and day habilitation providers that are interested in transforming their services.

Georgia is evaluating its system and developing a “transition plan” to come into full compliance with the rule by March 2019. Georgia must seek public input on its plan and amend it in response to that feedback. Whenever the State makes substantive change to the plan, it will require additional public input. Stakeholders should make their voices heard about the importance of employment and the steps Georgia must take to make work a real option for all people with I/DD.



Second, Congress recently passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) establishing competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities as a national priority. The law defines “employment” for people with disabilities as competitive integrated employment (CIE). This means people with disabilities are paid the same wages as people without disabilities, interact and get the same opportunities for career advancement as their coworkers without disabilities. WIOA requires state agencies – including state Medicaid, I/DD, vocational rehabilitation and educational agencies – to enter into cooperative agreements and to develop a plan to prioritize CIE. It also significantly limits the use of sub-minimum wage sheltered workshops as a placement for people with disabilities, particularly for youth transitioning from school. It requires them to be given opportunities to try CIE before placement in a sheltered workshop is permitted and for there to be ongoing engagement and

opportunities for CIE for anyone in sheltered workshops. Georgia, like other states, needs to implement these new requirements.

WIOA also created a federal advisory committee to make recommendations to Congress and the Labor Secretary on strategies to increase opportunities for CIE for people with significant disabilities and on the future of federal law that allows people with disabilities to be paid sub-minimum wage. Ruby Moore, executive director of the Georgia Advocacy Office, and I are privileged to have served on this committee together with other national experts, federal agency representatives, self-advocates, supported employment and sheltered workshop providers and members of the business community. In a Sept. 15, 2016 report to Congress and the Labor Secretary, the committee made recommendations for increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities including: ensuring federal funding to states incentivizing

CIE; engaging the business community in building CIE capacity; increasing engagement of families and employment opportunities for youth transitioning from school; a well-planned phase-out of the law allowing sub-minimum wages; and redesigning a federal procurement program (AbilityOne) to focus on CIE. This report provides an important blueprint of actions Congress, federal agencies and states should take to make the promise of “Employment First” policies a reality.

Enforcement of the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Supreme Court’s decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* is also expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. States violate the ADA and *Olmstead* when segregating people with disabilities and denying them opportunities to live, work and participate in their communities. Historically, *Olmstead* lawsuits have focused on segregation of people in institutions like state hospitals

and nursing facilities. In the last several years, Olmstead enforcement has expanded to target segregated day services. Olmstead lawsuits were recently filed against Oregon and Rhode Island, alleging that people were unnecessarily segregated in sheltered workshops and day habilitation programs instead of being given opportunities for CIE. The settlement agreements resolving these lawsuits require expansion of supported employment services to help people in or at risk of entering sheltered workshops or other segregated day programs, get and maintain competitive integrated employment, with mainstream community activities as a “wraparound” for people not working full-time. As Georgia works to comply with its Olmstead obligations, it too must ensure that its day service system provides people with disabilities opportunities for competitive integrated employment.

Finally, the recently enacted Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act will help address a barrier to employment: the concern of losing Medicaid eligibility due to assets of more than the current \$2,000 limit. The ABLE Act allows individuals with disabilities to create savings accounts to cover qualified expenses not otherwise covered by Medicaid or other health insurance – such as education, housing and transportation – without losing eligibility. Georgia is beginning to implement the ABLE Act.

In sum, the time to get to work is now! Federal policies have created unprecedented opportunities for Georgia to make employment a real option for all people with I/DD. If you ever need someone to explain why working is so critical to integration and inclusion of people with disabilities, just call GCDD member Evan Nodvin.

- For more information on the HCBS settings rule and Georgia’s transition plan, see [www.hcbsadvocacy.org](http://www.hcbsadvocacy.org) or the Georgia Department of Community Health at <http://dch.georgia.gov/hcbs/hcbs-transition-plan>
- For more information on WIOA and the Advisory Committee, see <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/wioa.htm>
- For more info on these lawsuits, see <https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/>
- More information on the ABLE Act, see <http://www.ablenrc.org/>

*Alison Barkoff is the director of advocacy at the Washington, DC office of the Center for Public Representation. She works on policy and litigation related to community integration and inclusion of people with*

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*disabilities, including Olmstead enforcement, Medicaid policy, employment, housing and education. She is member of the federal Advisory Committee for Competitive Integrated Employment of People with Disabilities and helped start and lead an Inclusion Task Force in her home school district.*

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## **MIA'S SPACE**

### **Not Mia's Reality**

*By Pat Nobbie, PhD*

At the HCBS (Home and Community Based Services) Conference in Washington DC in August, one of the keynote speakers was a young woman who stars in the TV series “Born This Way.” Think of it as a reality version of Friends, but the stars all have Down syndrome.

Much like the coffee shop in Friends, they hang out at a place called Leaps and Boundz that appears to be a jazzed up Day Center with cool decor, recreational equipment and popcorn.

Unlike Friends, their parents are also featured in the show, commenting periodically about their experiences as the parents of young people with intellectual disability.

So far in my binge watching of Season One, only a couple of the cast work despite the fact that they are all very articulate and introspective in a way that seems very sophisticated. One young man is working on a rap album. The young woman who spoke at the conference has a line of tie-dye apparel called Megology. They have dating and relationship dilemmas that are reflective of their age, and they appear to be working them out independently. They have various experiences like road trips and social events that seem pretty typical except for ever-present parental



supervision, permission and commentary.

My advocate friends and colleagues have some angst about the show. One of them refers to the series as “inspiration porn.” Ouch! But her point is that it’s staged to elicit both sympathy and admiration, neither of which are reactions appropriately associated with people with disabilities just living their lives. She thinks the parental discussions of their challenges are too gratuitous. Another friend says, unlike the reality show with little people who are co-producers of their series and spin-offs and have content control and share in the profitability, this show is produced ABOUT these families with no such control and profit sharing.

All the stars have Down syndrome and discuss it. It’s hard to tell how staged this is. In my experience, Mia doesn’t talk about herself as a person with Down syndrome and neither do her friends. She just is who she is. There’s also

aura of privilege. One young woman's parents are paying for her to have private dance lessons so she can fulfill her dream of being on Dancing with the Stars.

There are all kinds of reality shows. This cast is at least diverse, representing African American, Hispanic, White and Asian young people with disabilities. People with disabilities are under-represented on TV, but is this the reality we want to show to audiences that may have no context or experience? Is this reality for most of the families trying to raise young people with disabilities?

A&E markets the show saying that these young people are “defying society's expectations.” Maybe the question is, “What are our expectations?” Many columns ago, I shared how the pediatrician who was in the hospital when Mia was born advised me to take her home and treat her like any other child. With that one piece of advice, he set my expectations that she could have a life like anyone

else. Should we not expect that “even” folks with disabilities should work? Plan “parent-free” social lives? If this is where we still are as a country, isn’t this dismaying? Lots of questions here, what do you think?

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## **REAL COMMUNITIES**

### **D.A.S.H. and Peacebuilders Camp Extend Real Communities Partnerships’ Mission**

Two new partners joined the growing network of Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities’ (GCDD) award-winning initiative, Real Communities Partnerships.

Addressing issues such as housing and social justice, D.A.S.H. (Dependable Affordable Sustainable Housing) for LaGrange in LaGrange, GA and the Peacebuilders

Camp at Koinonia Farm (Peacebuilders Camp) in Americus, GA are the newest Real Communities Partnerships expanding GCDD's mission of inclusion and integration of people with developmental disabilities.

D.A.S.H. for LaGrange is located in the Hillside neighborhood of LaGrange – a town almost two hours southwest of Atlanta. Once a thriving mill village, changes in the textile industry and housing demands left a shell of the former community. After decades of disinvestment, Hillside was in need of revitalization. In 2003, D.A.S.H. for LaGrange began purchasing substandard properties owned by absentee landlords. Since 2003, D.A.S.H. has eliminated 132 substandard structures through rehabilitation or demolition and has started the process of reviving the neighborhood.

As a Real Communities partnership, D.A.S.H. will launch the Hillside Roving Listeners program in the

neighborhood. The Roving Listeners program will be designed to maximize input from diverse voices. The team will intentionally work to encourage residents from areas of the neighborhood that have not been active to have a voice in the planning of neighborhood activities and initiatives, and ultimately, in the future of their community.

Continuing its mission of bringing social justice and disability justice under one umbrella, the Peacebuilders Camp is a unique overnight summer camp where youth ages 11-14 spend a week together learning how to work toward peace and justice.

Campers of different races, religions, ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic levels; from rural, suburban and urban neighborhoods; and those with and without disabilities live and work together as a community for a week at

Koinonia Farm, an intentional community with a rich history in social justice activism.

With support from GCDD Real Communities Partnerships, Peacebuilders Camp is able to include more youth with disabilities and to offer more programming that educates and inspires all campers by highlighting the work and heroes of the disability rights movement.

For more information on D.A.S.H. for LaGrange, Peacebuilders Camp at Koinonia Farm or any other GCDD Real Communities Partnerships, visit

[www.gcdd.org/real-communities/real-communities-partnerships.html](http://www.gcdd.org/real-communities/real-communities-partnerships.html)

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## **STRAIGHT TALK**

### **A Sense of Belonging**

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*By Lindsey Kussow*

My name is Lindsey Kussow. I am 23 and live in Rincon, GA, a small town outside Savannah. It is growing with lots of new businesses, and I work at one of the big businesses called Edwards Interiors. And, I want to tell you my story.

In high school, I was in Project SEARCH. Instead of my last year of regular school, I got to do internships that helped me to learn to do new things, and it helped me figure out what I wanted to do.

I met Mandy Brown, who works for Coastal Center for Developmental Services in Savannah. She is my job coach and helped me get an interview at Edwards Interiors. They design and make the interiors of corporate jets. My interview was good and I got hired as an office assistant. That was three years ago.

My desk is in the file room. One of my big duties is using the scanner. I scan all the closed documents and do electronic filing. I also destroy the old purchase order files. When I am done with my work, I feel accomplished. I can't pick just one favorite part of my job because I like everything I do!

Working here has helped me grow. When I first started, I wasn't confident with using the phone. I have increased my phone skills and I have learned to communicate with other people. Now I can even stand up in front of over 500 people, give a speech about my job and accept an award like I did at The Night of Champions.\* My confidence is definitely stronger. I speak up for myself now.

I am more independent away from work, too. I just bought a car – a 2016 Hyundai Elantra – and am learning



new ways to get to work when I have to detour because of accidents or traffic jams. I have also been able to pay my own way to go on three cruises. By having a real job, I am able to do many things I used to only dream about.

It is important for businesses to give people with disabilities a chance. A lot of times, people with disabilities don't think they can do these jobs, but they really can. I have shown my boss that I can do anything if I am given the right tools and a chance.

Everyone needs to have a chance because everyone gets something good out of it. I have made new friends while I have been working here, and it feels like Edwards Interiors is part of my family. I feel like I belong.

\*The Night of Champions is an annual celebration of people with disabilities working in the community and their employers. Sponsored by the Lowcountry Down Syndrome Society in Savannah, the event also asks

employers who have hired people with disabilities to bring other employers they know who haven't.

At the 2015 Night of Champions event, Kussow received the President's Award on behalf of Edwards Interiors.

The company won for continued support of hiring people with disabilities.

*Lindsey Kussow is 23 years old and lives in Rincon, GA. She works at Edwards Interiors as an office assistant. She is pictured above with Rep. Jon Burns who visited her at her job site during last year's inaugural Take Your Legislator to Work Day.*

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## **CALENDAR**

### **October**

October 11

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## Voter Registration Deadline

[www.sos.ga.gov](http://www.sos.ga.gov)

## **October 13 - 14**

GCDD Quarterly Meeting

Atlanta, GA

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

## **October 19**

Georgia Disability History Symposium: Stories of  
Advocacy and Action

Athens, GA

[bit.ly/1QUf8aE](http://bit.ly/1QUf8aE)

## **October 27 - 29**

**The Arc National Conference**

**Orlando, FL**

**<http://convention.thearc.org>**

## **November**

### **November 2 - 4**

National Association for the Dually Diagnosed Annual  
Conference

Niagara Falls, ON, Canada

[www.thenadd.org/33rd](http://www.thenadd.org/33rd)

### **November 3 - 4**

Georgia Evolution Conference

Peachtree City, GA

[www.cvent.com/d/9vqjxy](http://www.cvent.com/d/9vqjxy)

### **November 8**

Election Day - Georgia

[www.sos.ga.gov](http://www.sos.ga.gov)

### **November 9 – 11**

National Association of State Directors of Developmental  
Disabilities Services

2016 Forum & Annual Conference, Alexandria, VA

[www.nasddds.org/conferences](http://www.nasddds.org/conferences)

**Nov 30 – Dec 2**

TASH Annual Conference

St. Louis, MO

<https://2016tashconference.sched.org/info>

**December**

**December 2 – 4**

Abilities Expo

Washington, DC

[www.abilities.com/dcmetro/](http://www.abilities.com/dcmetro/)

**December 4 - 7**

Association of University Centers on Disability Annual

Conference

Washington, DC

[www.aucd.org/conference/](http://www.aucd.org/conference/)

**January 2017**

**January 15 - 16, 2017**

GCDD Quarterly Meeting

Atlanta, GA

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

**January 22 - 25, 2017**

Georgia Winter Institute

Columbus, GA

[www.georgiawinterinstitute.com/](http://www.georgiawinterinstitute.com/)

### **Planning an upcoming event?**

Send your information to [info@gcdd.org](mailto:info@gcdd.org); Subject line: “Community Calendar” by Nov. 15 to be included in the calendar. Visit GCDD’s expanded online community calendar to view additional local events at

[www.gcdd.org/calendar-of-events.html](http://www.gcdd.org/calendar-of-events.html)

## **Calendar Highlight:**

The Disability VOTE – Feel the Power!

November 8

Election Day GA

[www.sos.ga.gov](http://www.sos.ga.gov)

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## **RESOURCES**

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

### **Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities**

(GCDD) [www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org) 404.657.2126 or 888.275.4233

(ASK.GCDD)

### **State Government**

Georgia Senate & House of Representatives

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[www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us)

Georgia Governor's Office

[www.gov.state.ga.us](http://www.gov.state.ga.us)

404.656.1776

Department of Community Affairs

[www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov)

Georgia Housing Search

[www.georgiahousingsearch.org](http://www.georgiahousingsearch.org)

877.428.8844

Department of Labor

[www.dol.state.ga.us](http://www.dol.state.ga.us)

General Information

[www.georgia.gov](http://www.georgia.gov)



Georgia Lieutenant Governor's Office

[www.ltgov.georgia.gov](http://www.ltgov.georgia.gov)

404.656.5030

## **In The News**

Entrepreneurship Event Highlights

Individuals with Disabilities

- Georgia Consortium for Personal  
Financial Literacy

[www.georgiaconsortium.org](http://www.georgiaconsortium.org)

- Synergies Works  
Aarti Sahgal,  
sahgalaartu@gmail.com

Local US Department of Justice Files

Lawsuit Against Georgia

<https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/>

## **Around GCDD**

Conference Reimagines Opportunities for Georgians with Disabilities

<http://bit.ly/GAconference>

## **Project Search Success in Georgia**

Project Search

[www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us)

## **Why Inclusion Works in Employment**

Briggs & Associates

[www.briggsassociates.org](http://www.briggsassociates.org)

College Football Hall of Fame

<http://www.cfbhall.com/careers/>

Georgia Aquarium

[www.georgiaaquarium.org](http://www.georgiaaquarium.org)

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

<http://gvra.georgia.gov/>

Ken's Krew

[www.kenskrew.org](http://www.kenskrew.org)

Project Search

[www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us)

The Home Depot

<http://thd.co/2ddFXLq>

Walgreens

<http://bit.ly/2dxqAgb>

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

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[www.dol.gov/odep/topics/wioa.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/wioa.htm)

## **Voting: Get Out and Vote!**

Georgia Secretary of State: My Voter Page

[www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do)

County Board of Registrars

[elections.sos.ga.gov/Elections/countyregistrars.do](http://elections.sos.ga.gov/Elections/countyregistrars.do)

Georgia Department of Driver Services

[dds.ga.gov/drivers/dldata.aspx?con=1749371755&ty=dl](http://dds.ga.gov/drivers/dldata.aspx?con=1749371755&ty=dl)

Voters with Disabilities

[www.sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/voters\\_with\\_disabilities](http://www.sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/voters_with_disabilities)

Georgia Voter ID Requirements:

[www.sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/georgia\\_voter identi](http://www.sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/georgia_voter_identi)

[fication requirements2](#)

VoteSmart

[www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

Request an Absentee Ballot

[http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/Elections/absentee\\_voting\\_in  
georgia](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/Elections/absentee_voting_in_georgia)

**Voting: Meet Your Candidates**

Hillary Clinton

[www.hillaryclinton.com](http://www.hillaryclinton.com)

Donald J. Trump

[www.donaldjtrump.com](http://www.donaldjtrump.com)

**Georgia Congressional Races**

Project VoteSmart

[www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

## **US Senate**

Johnny Isakson: [www.isakson.senate.gov](http://www.isakson.senate.gov)

Jim Barksdale: [www.jimbarksdale.com](http://www.jimbarksdale.com)

## **District 1**

Buddy Carter: [www.buddycarter.house.gov](http://www.buddycarter.house.gov)

Nathan Russo: [www.acongressforthepeople.com](http://www.acongressforthepeople.com)

## **District 2**

Sanford Bishop: [www.bishop.house.gov](http://www.bishop.house.gov)

Greg Duke: [www.votegregduke.com](http://www.votegregduke.com)

## **District 3**

Drew Ferguson: [www.fergusonforgeorgia.com](http://www.fergusonforgeorgia.com)

Angela Pendley: [www.apendley4house.com](http://www.apendley4house.com)

## District 4

Hank Johnson: [www.hankjohnson.house.gov](http://www.hankjohnson.house.gov)

Victor Armendariz: [www.victorforcongress2016.com](http://www.victorforcongress2016.com)

## District 5

John Lewis: [www.johnlewis.house.gov](http://www.johnlewis.house.gov)

Doug Bell: [www.bellforuscongress.com](http://www.bellforuscongress.com)

## District 6

Tom Price: [www.tomprice.house.gov](http://www.tomprice.house.gov)

Rodney Stooksbury: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

## District 7

Rob Woodall: [www.woodall.house.gov](http://www.woodall.house.gov)

Rashid Malik: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

## District 8

Austin Scott: [www.austinscott.house.gov](http://www.austinscott.house.gov)

James Harris: [www.jamesharrisforcongress.com](http://www.jamesharrisforcongress.com)

## District 9

Doug Collins: [www.dougcollins.house.gov](http://www.dougcollins.house.gov)

## District 10

Jody B Hice: [www.hice.house.gov](http://www.hice.house.gov)

Leonard Ware: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

## District 11

Barry Loudermilk:

[www.loudermilkforcongress.com](http://www.loudermilkforcongress.com)

Don Wilson: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

## District 12

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Richard W. Allen: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

Tricia Carpenter McCracken:

[www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

District 13

David Scott: [www.davidscott.house.gov](http://www.davidscott.house.gov)

District 14

Tom Graves: [www.tomgraves.house.gov](http://www.tomgraves.house.gov)

Patrick Boggs: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

## **A Vision for 2021: GCDD's Five Year Plan Begins**

Five Year Plan

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

## **Perspectives\***

Why I'm Voting for Hillary Clinton

[www.hillaryclinton.com](http://www.hillaryclinton.com)

## Why I'm Voting for Donald Trump

[www.donaldjtrump.com](http://www.donaldjtrump.com)

*\*Tony Coelho was contacted through the Hillary Clinton for America Campaign. Jason Faircloth was contacted through Making a Difference editorial outreach. GCDD requested articles from both major party presidential campaigns. The Hillary for America Campaign responded. The Donald J. Trump for President Campaign did not respond. Opinions expressed are solely of the contributors and do not express the views or opinions of GCDD.*

## Expert Update

Home and Community Based Settings Rule/Georgia Transition Plan

[www.hcbsadvocacy.org](http://www.hcbsadvocacy.org)

Georgia Department of Community Health

<http://dch.georgia.gov/hcbs/hcbs-transition-plan>

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

[www.dol.gov/odep/topics/wioa.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/wioa.htm)

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Department of Justice lawsuits

<https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/>

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act

[www.ablenrc.org](http://www.ablenrc.org)

## **Mia's Space**

A&E: Born This Way

[www.aetv.com/shows/born-this-way](http://www.aetv.com/shows/born-this-way)

## **Real Communities**

D.A.S.H. for LaGrange

[www.gcdd.org/real-communities/current-partners/dash-for-lagrange.html](http://www.gcdd.org/real-communities/current-partners/dash-for-lagrange.html)

Peacebuilders Camp at Koinonia Farm

[www.gcdd.org/real-communities/current-partners/peacebuilders-camp-at-koinonia-farms.html](http://www.gcdd.org/real-communities/current-partners/peacebuilders-camp-at-koinonia-farms.html)

## **Straight Talk**

Project Search

[www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us)

## **Stay connected!**

Like us on Facebook at

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

Follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/georgiacouncil](http://www.twitter.com/georgiacouncil)

We want to hear from you!

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

## **Back Cover:**

**Get Out and Vote! November 8**

The Disability VOTE – Feel the Power!

Tag us on Facebook or tweet to us with #VoteDisability!

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

[www.twitter.com/georgiacouncil](http://www.twitter.com/georgiacouncil)

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