

# MAKING **a** DIFFERENCE

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



## NEWS FOR YOU:

**TRANSITION:** What's After High School

**OLMSTEAD:** Landmark Case Turns 15

**C.A.F.E.:** Community Partnerships Add to Student's Success After High School

**On the Cover:**

Sandra Wilcox and Billy Bradshaw represented The Jessamine Place from Fitzgerald, GA at Disability Day 2014.

# MAKING a DIFFERENCE

A quarterly magazine of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities **VOLUME 14, ISSUE 4**

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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.



Eric E. Jacobson  
Executive Director  
eric.jacobson@gcdd.ga.gov

Valerie Meadows Suber  
Editor-in-Chief &  
Public Information Director  
Valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov

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

### O'Neill Communications

Devika Rao  
devika@oneillcommunications.com

Chantelle Catania  
Design & Layout

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## More Opportunities Means Success

On a bright, sunny February 20, 2,500 people from across the State gathered at the Georgia State Capitol to celebrate Disability Day. It was by far one of the largest and best events, and thank you to all who came. It is you who make it so successful.

The question is, what can we learn from Disability Day at the Capitol? We know that we can bring out the numbers, and we know that we host the largest event during the legislative session. We need to gather and connect better throughout the year, especially with our state officials. In this edition, you can read about the recently concluded legislative session and the victories that we experienced. We have some great legislative champions who stepped up to the plate once again for us. People like Senators Butch Miller and Jack Hill and Representatives Katie Dempsey and Keisha Waites. We need to take the time to thank them for their support and cultivate others.

Governor Deal spoke about the need for more jobs and for children with developmental disabilities to have opportunities to attend college. Both of these are very important issues and suggest that we must do a better job of helping kids transition from high school. This edition of *Making a Difference* focuses on transition, what is currently taking place and what we need to do. The GCDD will be undertaking a yearlong study to determine how we can help improve the transition process. We will need to hear from you and will offer many different ways to have input.

The governor also spoke about Employment First. He asked the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities through its Supported Employment Leadership Network to recommend an Employment First Initiative. States across the nation are recommending employment first undertakings and we have a number of examples to draw upon. However, just getting a policy or law in place does not mean that we have solved the problem. There are many barriers to employment for people with disabilities. We can do our part by talking to businesses in our own communities and finding out their interest in hiring people with disabilities and what keeps them from doing this now.

We have our work cut out for us and it will not be easy. Over the next year, GCDD will be working on the issues of transition and Employment First. When we speak with officials we will be asking them about how Georgia can do a better job of helping students with developmental/intellectual disabilities transition from high school to either post-secondary education or the work force. We need your leadership to make sure that everyone running for political office in November has been asked about these issues and are prepared to be a champion next year. Then maybe we can have 3,000 people at the Capitol and every legislator will be asking to speak.

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. Be sure to share your thoughts with us in writing by emailing our editor-in-chief at [valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov).

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

Tell us your thoughts about the magazine or what topics you would like to see addressed by emailing us at [valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov), subject line:

**Letters To The Editor.**

GCDD VIEWPOINT

## How to Reach Us

### Letters to the Editor

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

### Contact Our Editor and Public Information Director:

Valerie Meadows Suber  
[valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov)  
P: 404.657.2122  
F: 404.657.2132

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

### Audio or Large Print Versions:

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### Magazine Sponsorship:

For sponsorship opportunities contact: Devika Rao at 678.384.7836 or [devika@oneillcommunications.com](mailto:devika@oneillcommunications.com).



## Jewish Disability Awareness Month

The month of February was Jewish Disability Awareness Month and various events around town brought awareness and resources to people with and without disabilities. Throughout the month, the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta hosted events such as Day School and Preschool Inclusion Programs with representatives from Davis Academy, the Epstein School, Greenfield Hebrew Academy, The Schiff Preschool at Temple Emanu-El, and The Weinstein School at the MJCCA.

Other events included GCDD's 16th annual Disability Day, Friendship Circle and Jewish Family and Career Services Tools for Independence Cooking Club, and the 21st annual Larry Bregman, M.D. Educational Conference that featured Eric Jacobson, executive director of GCDD, as a keynote speaker.

## Congress Gives Special Education a \$500 Million Boost

According to the passage of a bipartisan spending bill signed by President Barack Obama in January, federal funding for programs benefiting students with disabilities will rise by roughly \$500 million. The money will allow for 6,000 more special education staff to be added across the country.

# CVS/pharmacy to Offer “Talking” Prescription Labels for Individuals with Vision Impairments

## IN THE NEWS

CVS/pharmacy announced in March 2014 that prescriptions ordered online through cvs.com will now have ScripTalk talking prescription labels. The ScripTalk labels provide a safe and convenient way to access information on prescription labels for individuals who cannot read or see standard print, and the labels are free to CVS.com pharmacy customers who are blind or visually impaired. Customers can obtain a free ScripTalk reader from Envision America that will enable them to listen to the information on the prescription label.

The benefit is a result of collaboration between CVS/pharmacy, the American Foundation for the Blind, American Council of the Blind and California Council of the Blind.

For more information, please visit [www.cvs.com](http://www.cvs.com)

## Special Education Teacher Given Immunity

In February 2014, the case against former special needs teacher Melanie Pickens received a final say from Judge Henry Newkirk. The Fulton County judge granted immunity to the former Fulton County teacher accused of abusing students with disabilities at Hopewell Middle School in Milton, Georgia between 2004-2007.

GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson interviewed with CBS Atlanta on the decision, and stated that it might be a step back for all the progressive work that was done for students with disabilities.

“A coalition worked with the Board of Education and it was the most progressive rules and regulations around seclusion and restraint for students with disabilities passed by the school board,” Jacobson told CBS46. “The judge’s decision may actually take us a step back from where those regulations were. The regulations were put in place to make sure that no child, including those with disabilities, was put into secluded spots or at risk of being harmed.”



Pickens was charged in an 11-count indictment but the judge ruled in favor of a state law that protects Georgia teachers from criminal prosecution who discipline their students as long as their actions were in “good faith.”

## Bregman Conference Encourages Living Life “Without Limits”



The 21st annual Larry Bregman, M.D., Educational Conference was held on February 23 at the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta (Selig Center). Nearly 300 participants, which included adults with developmental disabilities, their families, caregivers and advocates, took part in the educational conference that emphasized topics such as being a part of the community, being a self-advocate and living a healthy lifestyle.

GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson emceed the event and spoke about the importance of life enhancement programs and the value of continuing supports in his keynote remarks and led several breakout workshop sessions along this theme.

## Georgia Winter Institute

The 2014 Georgia Winter Institute was held from January 26-29 in Atlanta and shared ways to make progress in advocacy for people with disabilities. Speakers at the four-day conference covered various topics such as education, homes, well-being, communities and leadership.

Dr. Gregory Blalock from Columbus State University and Anne Ladd from the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership presented subjects that included inclusive higher education and transition for students with disabilities. The conference also highlighted employment issues and speakers such as Marcia Singson who spoke about Project SEARCH, a trailblazing employment partnership that connects people with disabilities with meaningful and fulfilling job options.

The conference also featured keynote speakers Karin Korb and Chris Glaser. Korb is a two-time Paralympian and a 10-time member of the USA World Team. She is passionate about empowering young women with disabilities through all sports as well as her hands-on hospice work, her studies in Pranic healing and living a vegetarian lifestyle.

Glaser is a world-renowned public speaker who has published a dozen best-selling books on spirituality, sexuality, vocation, contemplation, scripture, sacrament, theology, inclusion, marriage and death.

The Georgia Winter Institute is organized by the Center for Leadership and Disability at Georgia State University and co-sponsored with GCDD and other leading advocacy organizations.

President of Jewish Family and Career Services (JFCS) Lynn Redd, GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson and JFCS COO Rick Aranson received guests for the 21st annual Larry Bregman, M.D. Educational Conference in February.

## IN MEMORIAM

**GLEN FRIEDMAN**, self-advocate, People First activist and former GCDD advisory council member, was among several “Fallen Soldiers” who passed away in 2013. Friedman served on the GCDD executive committee from 2008 to 2010. During his long-time membership with People First of Georgia, he held several elected offices, including vice president.



# BEFORE OLMSTEAD THE OLMSTEAD CASE AFTER OLMSTEAD THE FUTURE OF OLMSTEAD

## GUEST ARTICLE

### GUEST ARTICLE

Part two in a series.

## The *Olmstead* Case

By Talley Wells



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



Sue Jamieson with Lois Curtis

This year, we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision. It is the most important civil rights decision for people with disabilities in our country's history.

The reaction was not celebration, however, when the Supreme Court decided to consider *Olmstead*. The Supreme Court decides which cases it will hear and traditionally only considers about 100 out of 7,000 such appeals. Most cases end at the lower appeals court.

"We were paralyzed with fear," said Sue Jamieson, who was the lead attorney in *Olmstead*. "We had won [at the appeals court] and we thought the Supreme Court, when they decided to take the case, might reverse it."

If the case had ended at the lower appeals court, the decision would have only had an impact on the three states governed by that appellate court— Florida, Georgia and Alabama. But when the Supreme Court decided to consider the appeal, the decision would impact the entire country.

*Olmstead* began with just two women – Jamieson and Lois Curtis.

Jamieson was an attorney at the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, and she had dedicated her legal services career to representing men and women with disabilities who were stuck in institutions.

In fact, when she moved to Atlanta from Florida, she moved across the street from a mental health hospital. Even before taking the Georgia bar exam, she would take her

two young children, her dog and wander around the hospital. She would offer to advocate for the people stuck in the hospital.

She began to advocate in the mid-1990s for Lois Curtis, who was confined at Georgia Regional Hospital in Atlanta. Lois had been in and out of Georgia Regional over 20 times. Sue remembers swimming laps at the YMCA struggling with what she was going to do to help Curtis and being very frustrated with not having the right answer.

Together, they decided to use the fairly new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to bring a lawsuit arguing that Curtis had a right to get the supports she needed in the community.

Returning to work, Jamieson conferred with other lawyers at the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, including Charlie Bliss and Steve Caley. Together, they decided to use the fairly new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to bring a lawsuit arguing that Curtis had a right to get the supports she needed

Since the decision came from the United States Supreme Court, the decision applied to thousands of people with disabilities across the country.

in the community. The lawsuit would be modeled on a case called *Helen L* that had been successfully litigated in Pennsylvania.

The case was brought to the federal district court in Atlanta in 1995. The lawyers for Curtis argued that Georgia was discriminating against her under the Americans with Disabilities Act by requiring her to be in an institution. The institution, they argued, was a segregated place because only people with disabilities lived there. Georgia responded that it was not discriminating against her, but was limited in what it could provide by inadequate funding.

While the lawsuit was still in the trial court, Elaine Wilson, who was also confined at Georgia Regional, joined the case. She too requested the chance to return to the community.

Federal District Judge Marvin Shoob ruled in favor of Curtis and Wilson. The State appealed to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals and then to the United States Supreme Court.

At the Supreme Court, 26 states initially signed on to a brief with Georgia in support of the state's position that it should not be required to provide supports in the community. Disability rights advocates pressured these states to change their minds. In the end, only seven states supported Georgia's position.

Curtis, Wilson and their lawyers from Atlanta Legal Aid went to Washington, DC for the oral arguments. The case was argued on their behalf by Michael Gottesman, a veteran Supreme Court advocate. A number of the Atlanta advocates were surprised by how small the courtroom was and how close to the Justices everyone sat. Both sides were peppered with questions during the argument.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg announced the decision of the Court on June 22, 1999. A majority of the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. They, and others with disabilities, had the right to receive supports

in the community rather than in institutions when three conditions were met: (1) the treating medical professionals determined that a community setting was appropriate; (2) the person with a disability did not object to living in the community; and (3) the provision of services in the community was a reasonable accommodation.

The Court observed that when Congress passed the ADA, it declared that the law was "to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities."

The Court decided that institutionalization was a form of discrimination. The Court also said that unnecessary isolation of people with disabilities is discrimination because many people will assume that people who are institutionalized are unable or unworthy of community life. It was also discrimination because "confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement and cultural enrichment."

The decision that Lois and Elaine could live in the community did not apply just to them. Since the decision came from the United States Supreme Court, the decision applied to thousands of people with disabilities across the country. Each had a right to live in the community rather than an institution if the three conditions of *Olmstead* were met.

Atlanta Legal Aid lawyer Charlie Bliss remembers coming to fully appreciate the impact of the case when he saw Wilson a few years after *Olmstead*. She had undergone a remarkable transformation from a tense, stressed woman confined to an institution to a remarkable woman living a full life in the community. The case, he concluded, was about "giving people a chance to live meaningful lives."

At the Supreme Court, 26 states initially signed on to a brief with Georgia in support of the state's position that it should not be required to provide supports in the community.

The institution, they argued, was a segregated place because **ONLY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** lived there.



Access to higher learning offers Georgians with disabilities the opportunity to pursue

# COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT,

which all individuals in our State should be afforded.

## Deal Emphasizes Jobs, Higher Access for Post-Secondary Education for People with Disabilities

By Governor Nathan Deal

It's a privilege to once again take part in Disability Day with all of you, and I want to extend a warm thank you to the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities for sponsoring this event.

My main goal has been to create job opportunities for Georgians, and there's a reason for that. A job serves as the launching point for independence, financial stability and, in many instances, a sense of purpose. My desire for people to have access to these benefits of employment certainly extends to those in our State with disabilities.

But it's not just jobs we're focused on. We long to give Georgians, with or without disabilities, the chance to live in real homes in real communities and to have access to quality learning that leads to meaningful careers.

This is why we have included in our budget new waivers and support services for an additional 500 families through the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD). We have also added 125 new elderly and disabled waiver slots through the Department of Community Health. These waivers provide crucial services and support to those individuals in Georgia who are leaving institutional living to enjoy the benefits of community living.

Yet, true self-sufficiency does start with a job. While the unemployment rate has dropped significantly since I took office, we know that it is still too high for people with disabilities. The majority of high school students with disabilities graduate without work, and end up sitting at home during what should be the most active and productive part of their lives.

To help those with disabilities get the skills needed to find employment, we took an important step last year. We provided funds for post-secondary inclusive education to expand the existing program at Kennesaw State University while also funding a new one in South Georgia's East Georgia State College starting in the fall.

Access to higher learning offers Georgians with disabilities the opportunity to pursue competitive employment, which all individuals in our State should be afforded. As such, we must continue to make sure our education, training and support systems have the policies and resources needed to prepare individuals with disabilities to enter the workforce and become contributing members of society.

To address the barriers to employment confronting people with disabilities, we have a work group in the DBHDD looking into these issues and working on how we can move forward with an Employment First Initiative in Georgia. It is in this way that I hope to see more individuals able to pursue their own path to a job, a career or another form of participation in community life.

This year marks the 15th Anniversary of the US Supreme Court *Olmstead* Decision. Already, we have made great strides in moving more individuals from institutional care to community-based care, and we're not done yet. It is for this reason and for the benefit of Georgians that I am committed to finding ways to make an independent life a more attainable life.



Governor Nathan Deal

# Disability Day 2014: Thousands Gather to Advocate for Meaningful Living

By Devika Rao



On February 20, 2014, in front of nearly 2,500 people, Governor Nathan Deal stood proudly on the Georgia State Capitol steps to announce that the day would be officially proclaimed, “Disability Awareness Day.”

The Governor’s proclamation was presented to the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) at its 16th annual Disability Day rally held at the Capitol to bring together thousands of advocates from across the State to promote access, opportunity and meaningful community living for Georgians with disabilities and their families.

Various groups brought their enthusiasm to the annual kick off at the Georgia Freight Depot to raise awareness about the rights and concerns of persons with disabilities. Gathering at the depot, attendees made posters advocating for equal opportunities in education and the workplace knowing that the contributions of people with disabilities in the community is not only wanted, but also needed.

This day also had an additional, and equally, important tone as it celebrated the 15th anniversary of the US Supreme Court landmark decision upheld in 1999, *Olmstead versus L.C.* The Supreme Court case, which found its roots in Georgia, states that people with disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than institutions or nursing homes.

We All Have a Story...

## WHAT’S YOURS?

Lois Curtis, the surviving plaintiff in the *Olmstead* case joined the Disability Day Rally and celebration. Her story of victory was not only a victory for herself; it is, to this day, a victory for all. To show the power of the collective voice and have people share personal stories of freedom and independence was the objective of GCDD’s Disability Day theme, “We All Have a Story...What’s Yours?”

GCDD Executive Director Eric E. Jacobson kicked off the event with a rousing speech highlighting the many efforts that GCDD is throwing its support behind in the new legislative session. One of the most important policy objectives he drew attention to was that of employment.

“We are talking about people going to work,” he said. “Jobs are the most important thing that any individual can have. A job allows you to have a home. A job allows you to go out and have a good time. Because, it is about having a job, and it makes you a valuable person.”

The statement rang true as Jacobson announced that GCDD would work with the advocacy community to push for passage of legislation to make “employment the first option for all people in the State of Georgia.”

The crowd at Disability Day advocated for Unlock The Waiting Lists! Campaign and to equal opportunities for employment.

Jobs are the most important thing that any individual can have and it makes you a

## VALUABLE PERSON.



Hiring someone with a disability is not only good for business, but it's

**GOOD FOR GEORGIA.**



Today, approximately **70 TO 80 PERCENT** of working-age Americans with disabilities are **UNEMPLOYED**, according to Schmeig.

Eric Jacobson, First Lady Sandra Deal and Governor Nathan Deal stand proudly to declare February 20, 2014 as Disability Awareness Day.



Employment opportunities for people with disabilities is why Josette Akhras from Putnam County was at her fourth Disability Day event. Advocating for her son Riad, Akhras, a GCDD executive committee member, came to the Capitol to stand up for people who, like her son, want to expand their horizons.

“My son is capable,” she said. Her son was working with a close family friend, but otherwise, Riad had no options after he completed high school.

In his address to the crowd, Greg Schmeig, executive director of Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), emphasized the importance of employers hiring persons with disabilities and their valuable contribution to businesses.

As the State continues to grow economically, Schmeig highlighted that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is way too high across both the country and Georgia.

Today, approximately 70 to 80 percent of working-age Americans with disabilities are unemployed, according to Schmeig.

Schmeig noted that Georgia’s economic recovery and growth needs to include employment for citizens with disabilities. “For every one dollar that a state spends on helping a person with a disability get a job, the return for that state is anywhere from three to 16 dollars,” added Schmeig. “Hiring someone with a disability is not only good for business, but it’s good for Georgia.”

Support for more job opportunities also came from inside the Capitol.

Governor Nathan Deal, in a keynote address, spoke of his commitment to employment for all Georgians, including people with disabilities. In order to address the employment barriers for people with disabilities, Deal informed everyone that, “we have a working group in the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities whom I have asked how we can move forward with an Employment First initiative in Georgia.” (*Read the transcript of Governor Deal’s Disability Day speech on page 8.*)

**“we have a working group in the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities whom I have asked how we can move forward with an Employment First initiative in Georgia.”**

According to its website, Employment First Georgia (EFG) is a statewide resource promoting innovative, customized employment practices. Each individual will be supported to pursue his or her own unique path to work, a career, or his or her contribution to participation in community life. EFG provides technical assistance and consultation to individuals and their “team”

RespectAbility USA founder Jennifer Lazlo Mizrahi gave a riveting speech to 2,500 people at Disability Day.

(family, job coach, etc). GCDD is part of a coalition of organizations that support EFG.

Dawn Alford, GCDD’s planning and public policy development specialist, highlighted the progress made for employment during this legislative session. The Georgia House of Representatives had included \$250,000 for 64 people to access supported employment which was increased to \$500,000 by the Senate.

Deal also touched on another important initiative and advocacy movement that is garnering support from GCDD and advocates alike. Post-secondary education made waves in 2013 as Kennesaw State University kicked off its Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth, which is the only program in Georgia that provides a two-year college experience for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

In addition to the program at Kennesaw State University, post-secondary programs are expanding and in fall 2014, a new one will open its doors at East Georgia State College in Swainsboro, GA.

Advocates are also seeking progress on accessibility.

Working closely with advocacy groups, Representative Keisha Waites (D-Dist 60) announced that the groups are teaming up to increase accessibility to electronic textbooks for the visually impaired.



Olmstead plaintiff Lois Curtis with Jennifer Lazlo Mizrahi energized the crowd to advocate for equal opportunities.

## THEY ARE MODELS OF INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS.

The Atlanta Braves, The Home Depot, Publix and many more...

Access to tangible and attainable post-secondary opportunities proves beneficial for future successful access to employment opportunities for all people, with or without disabilities.

That is what disability advocate and leader Jennifer Lazlo Mizrahi brought to Disability Day...to be a voice that inspires engagement and moving forward for equal rights.

Mizrahi launched RespectAbility USA in July 2013 and has broken great ground in her self-advocacy for disability rights. Its mission is to “reshape the attitudes of American society so that people with disabilities can more fully participate in and contribute to society, and empower people with disabilities to achieve as much of the American dream as their abilities and efforts permit.”

The same rights, Mizrahi emphasized, need to be present in pushing for post-secondary and workplace opportunities for people with disabilities. The Emory University alumna noted that local employers such as The Georgia Aquarium have at least 10 employees with disabilities and her own alma mater employs 35 people with disabilities who work in the nursing, anesthesia, administration and other various departments.

“They are models of inclusive employers,” she said as she listed The Atlanta Braves, The Home Depot, Publix and many more who embrace equal opportunity amidst all groups for hiring.

As she spoke about landmark social justice movements and leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. that have shaped social policies in the country, Mizrahi recognized Lois Curtis in the audience and acknowledged the value of Curtis’ activism and *Olmstead* triumph as the crowd responded with a warm round of applause.



Rep. Michelle Henson, Rep. Katie Dempsey and Dawn Alford proudly support Disability Day at the Capitol.

“We all have a story, you’re right. Your personal story is what you **NEED TO SHARE** with each and every person in that building behind you.”



Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Dist. 13) referenced *Olmstead* and encouraged the crowd to tell their story to legislators. “We all have a story, you’re right. Your personal story is what you need to share with each and every person in that building behind you,” she said in reference to the Capitol.

To help document the upcoming 15th anniversary celebration of *Olmstead* and the impact this landmark Supreme Court ruling has had on thousands of individuals living in Georgia and across the nation, NPR’s StoryCorps was onsite to record and collect more “I am *Olmstead*” Stories of Freedom narratives from people who are living full lives in the community rather than institutions.

Among the six storytellers was Andrew Furey, a self-advocate, artist and Eagle Scout from Lula who fought a long, frustrating battle to receive nursing supports in his home. “I didn’t want to be in a nursing home; I wanted the right to stay in my own home.” “I am Andrew Furey and I am *Olmstead*,” he declared. (*Read more about Furey’s experience in Straight Talk on page 28.*)

Mizrahi also brought attention to the current federal legislation in Congress that is close to passage with the need of five more votes, at the time of this writing.

The ABLE Act uses tax cuts to help provide for savings for people with disabilities and

noted US Senator Johnny Isakson’s support behind the legislation. She encouraged people to reach out to the senators to have their voices heard on this bill to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

**“You don’t have disabilities. We do. If we can see life the way you do, the world would be a better place.”**

Like Mizrahi, Jacobson and Deal, many state representatives and senators took the podium to encourage civic engagement by letting the voice of the people be heard.

Representative Alisha Thomas Moore (D-Dist 39) reminded the crowd that, “whether it comes to housing or employment or whatever your issues, it is important that policymakers know the issues that are important to you.”

In addition to post-secondary education and employment rights, the Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign is a cause that is garnering much attention to open more waiver slots for services for people with disabilities.

“This is your State, my State, and we deserve these services,” said Representative Winfred Duke (D-Dist 154).

As legislative leaders such as Senator John Albers (R-Dist 56) and Representative E. Culver “Rusty” Kidd (I-Dist. 145) spoke to the gathered crowd, their message was in the same spirit.



Rep. Jimmy Pruet and Governor Nathan Deal greet and engage with advocates at Disability Day.



# WE ALL HAVE A STORY...WHAT'S YOURS?



“You don’t have disabilities. We do,” said Albers, who is chairman of the State Institutions and Property committee. “If we can see life the way you do, the world would be a better place.”

Kidd reminded the crowd gathered that advocacy doesn’t stop at Disability Day. He emphasized that the fight forges on for equal rights in education and employment, as well as the Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign. “One phone call makes a difference!” Kidd said.

The rally gatherers adjourned to the Georgia Freight Depot for lunch, legislator visits, exhibits and other activities including the Disability Day banner signing, an accessible voting machine demonstration, and a special

listening station set-up presenting the “I Am *Olmstead* – Stories of Freedom,” organized by the Atlanta Legal Aid Society.

During this time, self-advocate Andrew Furey shared his *Olmstead* story of freedom and the Tumlin family presented Ralph “Robbie” Breshears from Augusta the Georgia Outstanding Self-Advocate of the Year Award--In Loving Memory of Natalie Norwood Tumlin. Breshears is a certified work incentives coordinator and after a battle with leukemia, he now advocates and fights for medical gaps in insurance.

With substantial support from Georgia legislators and the community, GCDD’s 16th annual Disability Day at the Capitol proved the old adage of “strength in numbers.”

Hear our voices. Respect our choices.

We are “JUST” PEOPLE.

When many speak with one voice and one message,

## CHANGE IS POSSIBLE.

Without adequate post-school planning, many of these students face long, unproductive days at home and a rapid decline in their

**SENSE OF LIFE SATISFACTION.**

## Transitioning to Success Exploring Options for a Successful Life after High school

By Alison Heinz Stephens



The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a one-year, school-to-work program that

**TAKES PLACE ENTIRELY AT THE WORKPLACE.**

High school graduation is a rite of passage in the life of most American teenagers. It's full of parties, celebrations, goodbyes and uncertainty. Transitioning to work or college after high school, while exciting, can also be an overwhelming experience. This is especially true for students with disabilities and their parents.

The structure, routine and social opportunities afforded for students with disabilities while in high school are essential to their overall well-being. Without adequate post-school planning, many of these students face long, unproductive days at home and a rapid decline in their sense of life satisfaction.

Most students will move seamlessly from high school to either college, technical school or work, but for students with disabilities without the proper information in hand, the options can be limiting.

Employment is a central part of adult life and people often identify themselves by the work they do. What can be done so that a student with a disability can obtain and enjoy a rewarding job experience?

Programs such as Project SEARCH, which is offered in dozens of states across the country, and Project Success here in Georgia, aim to ready students with disabilities for adult life and meaningful job experiences.

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a one-year, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace.

In Bartow County, the Cartersville Medical Center partnered with the school district and Project SEARCH to create an internship

program that allows students with disabilities to experience on-the-job training.

After three weeks of orientation, each intern participates in three, ten-week internships with various departments. A case manager and a job coach are on site to work with the hospital's department managers and provide support to the interns.

Last spring, interested students completed an application, participated in a working interview, and were selected to spend the 2013-2014 school year as interns. The end goal is for all eight interns to be employed by June.



Susan Wright

**“Students can remain in the program until they are 22. If they achieve their goal before that time and we can successfully transition them out, then they can leave early.”**

In some cases, a student might need more time than the one-year program outlined by Project SEARCH. In response to that need, Hall County implemented a separate program, Project Success, to reach those students and provide an alternative path to employment.

Susan Wright, the Hall County School System liaison for Project SEARCH and Project Success, said feedback from the families of their students is very positive.

“Students can remain in the program until they are 22,” said Wright. “If they achieve their goal before that time and we can successfully transition them out, then they can leave early.”

Project Success is housed at the Hall County Lanier Charter Career Academy. The students work there in unpaid internship positions in the facility’s child care center or cafe. They also have partnerships with Walgreen’s, a local hospital and local caterers.

Wright explains that Project Success participants are sometimes aiming for supportive employment, not just competitive employment.

“The more informed the parent is, the better the chance the services will be rendered when needed.”

The program receives frequent visitors from other school districts and requests for information on their program model, but Wright said she cannot say for sure when and where similar programs might be available.

The wheels of program creation can be slow, bogged down by funding issues and the challenges of collaborating with so many different entities: school districts, vocational rehabilitation services and available places of employment. Because of overwhelming resources and processes, parents are encouraged to start early in their child’s school career to plan for a successful transition.

Greg Schmieg, executive director of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), said post-high school transition is receiving more attention both nationally and at the state level.

“I know part of Governor Deal’s plans is to increase the number of work-ready graduates,” said Schmeig. “It is much more difficult to re-engage these students if they go home and sit for a few years after high school.”

GVRA formed a statewide transition steering committee to help identify areas and ways in which transition services can be improved so that high schools can more fully engage these students and better support their goals by helping to identify their strengths and interests and address their weaknesses.

The organization provides resources such as The Georgia Interagency Transition Council (ITC) that brings together a variety of stakeholders who are supporting youth with disabilities so they have a successful life as adults.

Even with all available resources, Schmeig suggests parents begin early to educate themselves about what services are available to their student.

“The more informed the parent is, the better the chance the services will be rendered when needed,” he said. “The best way for [vocational rehab] to get involved with the school is to have the vocational needs identified as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Once it gets on the IEP, it is a mandate that the school must pay attention to.”

Schmeig said a parent cannot be too informed when it comes to the IEP process. Additionally, forging relationships with the school counselor and teachers is essential.

“Most of them are very receptive to this,” he said. “I think all schools want to see all of their students go on to be successful.”

Schmeig is pleased with the results Project SEARCH is generating. “It is a fabulous model because these internships are made to match the students’ interests,” he said. During the last phase of the Project SEARCH internship, vocational rehabilitation services are brought in to assist with job coaches and other support to help with the transition.

“We want them to find competitive employment in a sheltered environment where there is a career path,” said Schmeig.



Lu Nations-Miller, PhD

Parents need to **KNOW THEIR OWN RIGHTS,** not just the student’s rights. When the student turns 18, for example, everything shifts over to students’ rights, not parents’ rights.

GVRA provides many resources for Transition from High School:  
[www.gvra.georgia.gov](http://www.gvra.georgia.gov)



## The Road to College

Employment is not the only post high-school option. Of course many students with disabilities successfully enroll in college and it is important not to downgrade the expectations of these students and their families.

Lu Nations-Miller, PhD, transition specialist for the Georgia Department of Education, said it is vital that parents familiarize themselves with the law if their child plans to enroll in college.

“It is so important for parents to know these things,” said Nations-Miller. “Parents need to know their own rights, not just the student’s rights. When the student turns 18, for example, everything shifts over to students’ rights, not parents’ rights. That is extraordinarily shocking to most parents when their child enters college.”

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) the privacy of student education records is protected. At the post-secondary level, parents have no inherent right to inspect the education records of their sons or daughters. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18.

Generally, schools must have written permission from the student in order to release any information from a student’s education record. Parents who wish to keep a close watch on their student must make sure this consent is filed with the school.

Nations-Miller also suggests parents and students learn the ins and outs of the BRIDGE Act and the IDEA Act.

The BRIDGE (Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia’s Economy) Act, signed into law in 2010, provides middle school and high school students with career counseling and regular advisement to choose a focused plan of study. Under the BRIDGE Act, every 8th grade student is required to create an Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP). The IGP is developed in consultation with parents, students, counselors and teachers.

The IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) Act was passed in 1987 and revised in 2004 with an emphasis on transition. Under IDEA, public schools are required to provide services to students with disabilities to help them transition to post-school activities such as employment, training, college and other aspects of community living.

Nations-Miller explains that a student is legally allowed to remain in high school through the age of 21 and she recommends taking full advantage of the extra time. A student with a developmental disability can benefit from the added experience, maturity and confidence the extra years can provide.

At Kennesaw State University’s (KSU) Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth (ALLSG), Karla Wade sees first hand how extra time in high school can benefit a student.

Wade, a longtime educator who works as a career education fellow at the Academy, suggests that parents and students use the extra time in school to focus on time-management skills and to familiarize themselves with technology and social media.

“A smartphone is a way of life on college campuses these days,” she said of the trend of iPhones and Android devices. “Announcements of classes being cancelled are sometimes made via Twitter or Facebook, for example.”

A student who is not comfortable with these methods of communication when they arrive on campus will have some extra work to do so that they can best interact with their instructors and peers.

KSU’s Academy for Inclusive Learning offers a fully inclusive two-year college experience to students with intellectual or developmental disabilities who do not meet the university requirements for admission as a degree seeking student.

“The students do have a support staff during the day, but after 5 p.m. they must be able to navigate campus on their own.”

Although they are non-degree seeking, the students have the opportunity to participate in courses alongside degree seeking students while also devoting time to social integration, career exploration and training resulting in a Certificate of Social Growth and Development. The certificate shows that they completed the program but does not take the place of a GED.

Self-determination involves many attitudes and abilities including: self-awareness, assertiveness, creativity, pride, problem solving and self-advocacy skills.

For a student to take charge of his or her own life, they must be able to set goals, evaluate options, make choices and then

**WORK TO  
ACHIEVE  
THOSE GOALS.**

Independence is one of the Kennesaw program's ultimate goals. Currently, 17 of the 18 students enrolled at the academy live in a dormitory.

"The students do have a support staff during the day, but after 5 p.m. they must be able to navigate campus on their own," said Wade, who points out that parents need to make it a priority to teach their child how to properly manage their own health, well-being and any medications they may need.

High school students interested in the two-year program at KSU are required to complete an application in order to be considered but they do not have to have a high school diploma. Many students with disabilities receive a special education diploma when they complete high school instead of a standard diploma.

However, a special education diploma is not recognized by the military or most technical colleges or four-year colleges.

The issue of special education diplomas in place of standard diplomas is a contentious issue in Georgia and raises concerns among parents and teachers who worry that students who know they will not earn a diploma will drop out.

Pat Nobbie, PhD, former deputy director for the GCDD, is outspoken about the State of Georgia's current policy of not awarding diplomas to special education students.

"It is a huge barrier," said Nobbie. "You deprive a kid of a diploma and they are unemployable."

Nobbie and Wade both shared a story about a KSU Academy for Inclusive Learning participant who, after completing the two-year program, went back to earn her GED.

"It was so silly," said Nobbie. "Obviously she could have gotten a high school diploma."

Wade suggests that students who are not able to earn a standard diploma but have participated in programs like KSU's Academy for Inclusive Learning take their transcripts with them when they apply for jobs. For example, someone with an interest in working for a childcare facility can show proof that they have that experience.

Wade believes the inclusive learning environment and ability to live independently can provide the program participants with the necessary confidence to earn their GED.

## Partnerships for Success

The boost of confidence that comes from forming relationships and participating in traditional school activities is what led to the creation of Partnerships for Success.

The goals of Partnerships for Success are to create an inclusive club at the high school level that provides opportunities for students to become engaged in their school and community. The students participate in social activities and community service projects and are also allowed to hold leadership roles within the club.

"Everything we do is self-determination-based," said Cindy Saylor, program coordinator at Partnerships for Success. "Through our program, our students are able to develop these self-determination skills and put them into practice."

Self-determination involves many attitudes and abilities including: self-awareness, assertiveness, creativity, pride, problem solving and self-advocacy skills. For a student to take charge of his or her own life, they must be able to set goals, evaluate options, make choices and then work to achieve those goals.

Saylor said well-meaning individuals often have a tendency to "protect" students with disabilities by making all their decisions for them. Also, people sometimes assume that people with disabilities can't think for themselves.

Self-determination skills, along with the communication and leadership skills a student can develop in a Partnerships for Success club, will help them with transition after high school, explained Saylor. And, because the clubs are inclusive, all students who participate come away from the experience more accepting and understanding of their peers.

"We stress to them that these students are their peers," said Saylor. "We tell them they are the same age as you and they deserve the same opportunities as you. Not only are the students changing their mindsets about the abilities of these individuals, but I think the teachers are too."

Saylor is another advocate who fully supports the practice of student-led IEPs. "It is something we have been encouraging for years," she said. "I would love to see people more



accepting of students participating in their IEPs from day one in kindergarten. The students who do start early are so much further along than the students who begin participating in high school."

Scott Crain is a Hall County parent to a son with a developmental disability. Crain's son, Will, began leading his IEP meetings in third grade and is vocal about what he wants to do.

"Will has already told us exactly what he wants to do," said Crain. "He is quite vocal about wanting to take printing classes and then, through Project SEARCH, go to work at the hospital." Project SEARCH interns in Hall County work at the Northeast Georgia Medical Center.

Crain serves as a parent mentor for the Hall County School District. In this role he can help families navigate the transition experience but also offer guidance on Medicaid issues and other available resources.

"What I tell my parents is that you may think you have two or three years to plan, but that is really nothing," said Crain. "For example, if you are applying for Social Security Income, you may be denied. Then what? You have to plan. It can be a tricky road and if you don't know where to go, it can be pretty disastrous.

There are now more than 100 parent mentors in the State of Georgia.

A fulfilling high school experience, meaningful work and social opportunities are well within reach for students with disabilities. It is a big job for parents to prepare themselves and their children for the years of planning they will face, but resources are available. The best way to take advantage of them is to do your homework, ask questions, stand firm, and be patient. The rewards are worth it.

# FUNDING WAS USED TO SUPPORT

education, the Department of Justice settlement agreement, expense growth for Medicaid, PeachCare and the State Health Benefit Plan.

## A Recap of the 2014 Legislative Session

By Dawn Alford, GCDD Planning & Policy Development Specialist



**DAWN ALFORD** is the GCDD Planning and Policy Development Specialist.



Governor Nathan Deal, Dawn Alford and First Lady Sandra Deal at Disability Day.



The Georgia General Assembly cried “Sine die!” ending the 2014 legislative session on March 20. The legislative session has been one of the quickest compared to previous years, ending almost two weeks before April Fool’s Day. Both the Fiscal Year 2014 amended budget and the Fiscal Year 2015 budget passed, along with a relatively small number of bills. Read on for the disability advocates’ highlights of what happened in 2014.

### FY 2015 Budget

**A brief overview:** This is the first year since the recession hit that state agencies were not asked to reduce their budgets. For the third year in a row, Georgia’s economy has shown modest growth allowing for \$900 million in state funds to be added into the budget for 2015, resulting in a total budget of \$20.8 billion state dollars. Funding was used to support education, the Department of Justice settlement agreement, expense growth for Medicaid, PeachCare and the State Health Benefit Plan. The governor was able to keep Georgia’s AAA Bond Rating, and add to the state’s “Rainy Day” fund. Just as in recent years’ budgets, the 2015 budget is essentially one of modest relief.

This year’s Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign focused on advocating for some key community supports to enable Georgians with disabilities to fully participate in their community. Unlock coordinators D’Arcy Robb, who was on maternity leave, Dawn Alford and Dave Zilles want to give our sincerest thanks to the many advocates and legislators who gave us their partnership and support this year. Unlock was successful

at getting 25 slots in the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP) for adults with physical disabilities, which means an additional 25 people can come off the waiting list and receive services. Furthermore, the Community Care Services Program (CCSP) received an additional 100 slots, and the NOW/COMP waiver received 250 additional slots (100 community + 150 institutional).

Unlock was successful at getting 25 slots in the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP) for adults with physical disabilities, which means an additional 25 people can come off the waiting list and receive services.

Furthermore, Unlock joined with other advocates and provider groups to advocate for rate increases for home and community-based services. Developmental disability providers

received a 1.5% increase. CCSP and SOURCE (Source Options Using Resources in a Community Environment) received a 5% Medicaid reimbursement rate increase for Alternative Living Services, Personal Support Services and Case Managers. Unfortunately, ICWP is the only Medicaid waiver that did not receive a rate increase and no housing vouchers were added to the budget to support people with developmental disabilities to live in the community.

Unlock also joined with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) to advocate for more funding as GVRA has been underfunded for many years. There is language in the budget to create a Memorandum of Understanding Agreement between GVRA and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to draw down additional federal funds to be used for Vocational Rehabilitation services.

The Department of Justice settlement-related funding for developmental disabilities is supported in full in the 2015 budget. That funding for 2015 is as follows:

### FY 2015

**Family Supports:** ..... \$8,392,400  
(includes \$1,872,000 increase to serve 500 new families)

**NOW/COMP Waivers:** ..... \$40,339,177  
(includes \$8,526,665 for 250 new waivers)

**Crisis Respite Homes (12) & Mobile Crisis Teams (6):** ... \$11,917,681

**Education of Judges and Law Enforcement:** ..... \$250,000

**DD Total Spending:** ..... \$61,099,258  
(includes \$10,398,665 total increase)

In another piece of exciting news, \$100,000 of new funding was added to the budget for inclusive post-secondary education programs. Inclusive post-secondary education is an opportunity for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to experience the world of higher education alongside their peers, with the goal of preparing students for employment. Currently, the Academy for Inclusive

Learning and Social Growth (AILSG) at Kennesaw State University (KSU) is the only such program in Georgia.

The additional \$100,000 will be used to provide scholarships for qualified students in need and to lay the groundwork for a far more comprehensive system of inclusive post-secondary programs in Georgia. Many organizations and individuals, including Sen. Butch Miller (R-Dist 49), worked hard to advocate for this funding.

**Also exciting to report:** \$390,625 in funds for 50 supported employment slots for people with developmental disabilities were added to the DBHDD budget, which is intended to be used for youth graduating from high school. In short, supported employment assists Georgians with developmental disabilities to find and keep jobs in their communities. Some key values of supported employment include:

- Focuses on an individual's strengths, abilities and interests rather than on their disability
- Occurs in an integrated setting within the community
- Allows individuals to earn competitive wages equal to that of coworkers performing the same or similar jobs
- Provides individuals with the support they need to reach their career goals

For further details on the 2015 and 2014A budgets, please see *Moving Forward* (especially our 2014 legislative wrap-up edition dated March 28, 2014), our newsletter published weekly during the legislative session.

*Moving Forward* is available at [www.gcdd.org/public-policy/moving-forward.html](http://www.gcdd.org/public-policy/moving-forward.html)

### Legislation

In order to pass, a piece of legislation must have passed both chambers in identical form by midnight on Sine Die. Governor Nathan Deal has 40 days, until midnight on April 29, to sign or veto bills that were passed and if he does not act on a bill within this time period, the bill becomes law. Bills that did not pass this year are dead because the 2015 legislative



To see a list of bills that have been **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR**, you can visit <http://gov.georgia.gov/bills-signed/2014>.

### **FAMILY SUPPORTS:**

\$8,392,400  
(includes \$1,872,000 increase to serve 500 new families)

### **NOW/COMP WAIVERS:**

\$40,339,177  
(includes \$8,526,665 for 250 new waivers)

### **CRISIS RESPITE HOMES (12) & MOBILE CRISIS TEAMS (6):**

\$11,917,681

### **EDUCATION OF JUDGES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT:**

\$250,000

### **DD TOTAL SPENDING:**

\$61,099,258  
(includes \$10,398,665 total increase)

session will begin a new two-year-cycle for the Georgia General Assembly. Therefore, a bill that did not pass would have to be reintroduced in the 2015 legislative session.

To see a list of bills that have been signed by the governor, you can visit <http://gov.georgia.gov/bills-signed/2014>.

#### **The Family Care Act - House Bill 290 – DID NOT PASS**

This legislation, sponsored by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Dist 13), would have allowed individuals whose employers provide sick days the option of using up to five days of earned sick leave to care for sick children, aging parents or a spouse without penalty from their employers. The Family Care Act was reported favorably out of the House Human Relations and Aging committee, but did not make it out of the House Rules committee.

As this edition of *Making a Difference* goes to print, the Georgia Job Family Collaborative, the organization leading the legislative efforts on the Family Care Act, has decided to re-introduce the Family Care Act in 2015 and will begin strategizing soon for work that will need to be done prior to the 2015 session.

#### **Autism Insurance Bill (Ava's Law) - Senate Bill 397 – DID NOT PASS**

There were three autism insurance bills (Ava's Law) that were introduced during the 2013 legislative session that remained alive during the 2014 session: the original House bill HB 309 sponsored by Rep. Ben Harbin (R-Dist 122); Senate bill SB 191 sponsored by Senator John Albers (R-Dist 56); and, additional House bill HB 559 which was sponsored by Rep. Chuck Sims (R-Dist 169). None of these bills moved during the 2014 session. However, a new bill, SB 397, was introduced by Sen. Tim Golden (R-Dist 8), which would have mandated that insurance plans cover certain therapies for individuals on the autism spectrum but limited its coverage to children age six and under with a cap of \$35,000 per year. The language of this bill was amended to HB 885 and while its final form passed the Senate, it did not make it through the House to get final approval before Sine Die. Many disability advocates are passionate supporters of

Ava's Law and the therapies it would cover, but there are some advocates who object to the bill, particularly its inclusion of ABA therapy.

#### **Haleigh's Hope Act – House Bill 885 – DID NOT PASS**

This legislation, sponsored by Rep. Allen Peake (R-Dist 141), would have legalized the use of medical cannabis to treat certain seizure disorders in both children and adults. After the Senate added language from SB 397 requiring insurance companies to cover treatment of certain autism therapies, the bill never received a final vote in the House.

#### **Medicaid Expansion – House Bill 990 - PASSED**

Many disability advocates are passionate supporters of Ava's Law and the therapies it would cover, but there are some advocates who object to the bill, particularly its inclusion of ABA therapy.

This legislation, sponsored by Speaker Pro-Tempore Jan Jones (R-Dist 47), prohibits the expansion of Georgia Medicaid eligibility through an increase in the income threshold without prior legislative approval. Previously, the governor could decide to expand eligibility without approval from the General Assembly except as it related to increases in the budget.

#### **Additional Fine for Reckless Driving - HB 870 and HR 1183 – BOTH PASSED**

HB 870 is partnered with HR 1183. HB 870 provides that in all cases involving a conviction for reckless driving, the court is to assess an additional penalty equal to 10 percent of the fine imposed by the court under the reckless driving statute to be directed to the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission (BSITFC). HR 1183 proposes an amendment to the Georgia Constitution to add reckless driving to the list of offenses for which additional fees and penalties can be assessed. If the Governor signs both pieces of legislation, then the ballot in November's general election



## YOU ARE AN ADVOCATE, OR CAN BE ONE!

Get to know your legislators in the off-season and offer yourself as a resource of information. If you aren't sure who your legislators are, you can check by going to [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) and entering your zip code - look for your state representative and your state senator.

will ask voters if they support a 10% surcharge on reckless driving to be designated for the use of the BSITFC. As a referendum and Constitutional amendment, the funds could not be diverted to the General Fund for any other purpose except for the BSITFC. If Georgia voters approve the constitutional amendment, the bill will become effective on January 1, 2015.

### **Criminal Penalties for Operating Unlicensed Personal Care Home – House Bill 889 - PASSED**

Sponsored by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Dist 43), this legislation stiffens the penalty for operation of an unlicensed personal care home. With this bill, a first violation changes from a misdemeanor to a felony when it is in conjunction with abuse, neglect or exploitation and is punishable by imprisonment for one to five years.

### **Be an Advocate**

While many issues moved along or gained momentum this session, there is much work left to do. You are an advocate, or can be one! Get to know your legislators in the off-season and offer yourself as a resource of information. If you aren't sure who your legislators are, you can check by going to [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) and entering your zip code - look for your state representative and your state senator. Make an appointment with them in their home district and let them know about the issues that are important to individuals with disabilities and those who care about them. You might consider developing a one-page summary that

shares your story with your photo to take with you on the visit. For more tips on how to write your story, go to [www.unlockthewaitinglists.com](http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com) and click on "Advocating/Stories."

One major ongoing issue is the need for more community-based services for individuals with disabilities. As advocates are well aware, virtually all Georgians with disabilities or those who are aging would much rather live in their own homes and communities than go to a nursing facility. However, waiting lists are long for home and community-based services and we have not yet begun to scratch the surface to address the long waiting lists. We also need increased opportunities and resources to support employment of people with disabilities in the community. These are just a few of the issues that GCDD plans to work on with various partners in the months ahead. We urge you to get involved, be part of the conversation, and stand up to advocate for yourself and your community! Let your voice be heard so that together we can make Georgia a better place for everyone, including those with disabilities.

### **Stay Connected: GCDD Advocacy Resources**

#### **GCDD mailing and email lists:**

[www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org) - scroll down to the bottom and click "Join our Advocacy Network" and follow the instructions.

#### **Unlock the Waiting Lists! advocacy website:**

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



## Decatur Community Conversation

The Frazer Center, located in Atlanta, has spent its lifelong mission providing research-based education, vocational support and therapeutic intervention to children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

As many youth with developmental disabilities complete their secondary education, the options for what will come after high school is on the forefront of many parents' kitchen table discussions. While the Frazer Center hosts a day program, GCDD's Real Communities Initiative (RCI) facilitated a community event to discuss the next steps to support young people, with and without disabilities and their families, to have work, volunteer and educational opportunities after high school.

"Parents were concerned about what happens after high school," said Caitlin Childs, organizing director for RCI. "People want something different, and we want to feed off of the momentum to start making progress."

The Decatur Community Conversation was held on January 21 at the Decatur Recreation Center, providing space for the community to come together to start building conversations about transitioning out of high school. Approximately 15 people participated in



creating a shared vision that leads to all young people having meaningful options to contribute their gifts and talents after high school.

People want something different, and we want to feed off of the momentum to start

# MAKING PROGRESS.

## REAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

### Core Gifts Workshop with ConnectAbility

Fifteen people from all walks of life attended a Core Gifts Workshop conducted by Bruce Anderson and hosted by ConnectAbility on February 15 in Dahlonega. High school students, parents of children with disabilities, and local business owners attended the Core Gifts Workshop to deepen the conversation of discovering gifts.

The Core Gifts Workshop was started by Anderson in the late 1980s in to help struggling youth discover their "core gifts." Through this process, Anderson aims to transform lives so people can feel valuable to today's society.

This was certainly important to spread the message that people with and without disabilities, "bring value to our society and are also equally important contributors," said Jacque Daniel, president of ConnectAbility.

ConnectAbility was founded in 2001 by Daniel from her desire to work with people with disabilities. As the group has built relationships with people with developmental disabilities, the partnership with GCDD aims to help the organization expand its community outreach and develop community-based inclusive programs for people with and without disabilities.



### Threads that Bind

Launched in February, the Tifton Museum of Arts and Heritage opened its "Season of Quilts" exhibit for three months spanning over two venues. Four exhibits used the art of quilting to tell inspiring stories of inclusion and create a world that works for everyone.

Threads that Bind opened on February 16 and displayed original quilts created by the Wiregrass Quilter's Guild. The quilts depicted personal life stories of individuals who had to overcome a challenge to live a meaningful life, such as Ronald Goodman of Fitzgerald. Goodman has a spinal cord injury, and found respite through creating wildlife paintings.

On March 1, Story Quilts by global artist Beth Mount opened to express the "universal desire of people in all cultures to help one another."

Story Quilts was complemented by a storytelling session by local attorneys and preachers, along with the opportunity to tell personal stories with National Public Radio's StoryCorps. Tom Kohler, who co-authored *Waddie Welcome and the Beloved Community* presented the story of the late Waddie Welcome, a man with severe disabilities whose powerful life story rose above divisions of disability, race and income, advocating inclusion and creating new possibilities in an entire community.

# Transition – It's a Trip Are We There Yet?

By Pat Nobbie, PhD, Mia's mom



A few years ago, I gave a keynote talk with this title to a group of educators from the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) region.

I started the slide show with “My Transition to Transition,” in which I spent a little time relating how my work in transition evolved from looking at the world through the lens of Mia's life and possibilities, and then gathering people and resources together to fill in some of the gaps. Along the way I have realized that this journey is never done...we will always be transitioning, and we will always be taking stock and asking, “Are we there yet?”

I'm going to tie the process of transitioning youth from high school to real life to Centers for Medicaid Services' (CMS) final rule for the characteristics of home and community-based settings that was released in January. States will need to assess whether their settings for home and community residential and day services provided under their waivers meet the characteristics of most integrated settings, in turn preventing isolation of individuals with disabilities from the community and other individuals who do not receive these types of services. States will need to craft a transition plan with CMS to move those settings and services to be more characteristically like “real life.”

Now, back to high school. In the presentation mentioned above, I talked about Partnerships for Success, and how the opportunities for friendships and a social life and community participation developed naturally, teaching many of us that assumptions we had made about students with disabilities and programming that we had perpetrated with students' ‘best interests’ in mind had over the years only succeeded in isolating youth from each other. Research demonstrates that a majority of non-disabled high school students are

interested in becoming friends with students with disabilities, but are unsure how. When questioned, students felt as though general education classrooms and high school clubs are the best places for these friendships to occur.

Students won't say, “We need to meet in integrated settings!” Without the benefit of rules and regulations-in spite of them at times-students figured out that the best way for them to get to know each other was to hang out with each other, in places where everyone hangs out.

Adult providers would do well to take a lesson from the youth who are transitioning from these experiences. It turns out employment in the community is another way to hang out where everyone hangs out. Most high school students work in jobs somewhere in their community. Currently, most students with disabilities don't have this essential life experience after high school. But while we've got a good core of students from PFS, and ASPIRE and Project SEARCH who have the “hanging out” part down, let's make the supports available that some kids will need so they can continue to thrive in the communities they've become part of.

Mia didn't necessarily get the benefit of anything we designed at the Council. But somehow she intuitively had the hanging out part down, and I tried not to get in her way. She's living and working in places where everyone else comes and goes. Undoubtedly, there are other transitions in our future, but if she has anything to do with it, the hanging out part won't change.

It turns out employment  
in the community is

## ANOTHER WAY TO HANG OUT

where everyone  
hangs out.

MIA'S SPACE

ARE WE  
THERE  
YET?

# Community Partnerships Lead to Success

By Anne Ladd

What makes the parent mentor position unique is that being a parent is actually a job requirement.

## PERSPECTIVES



**ANNE LADD** serves as the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership's link to the Department of Education. She guides the policies and goals for the entire partnership. Her official title is Family Engagement Specialist, Division for Special Education Services and Supports. Prior to this role, Ladd also served as one of two Gwinnett County Parent Mentors.

Activities like training parents how to meet with the schools and teachers, host transition fairs, and providing

## RESOURCES TO EMPOWER PARENTS

to become leaders in the community help make the mentoring program a success.

Students with disabilities face unique challenges to achieving positive post-school outcomes. Research shows that there is a direct correlation between families engaged in their child's education and higher achievement.

And while, understanding that family engagement is critical for achieving better outcomes, there are additional barriers for families of students with disabilities.

In an attempt to overcome those barriers, the Georgia Department of Education's (GADOE) Division for Special Education Services and Supports developed a family engagement initiative, Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership, to target those particular needs. The group was founded in 2002 when five school districts partnered with the division and hired parent mentors to infuse family engagement into school and district activities.

The mission of Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership became to build effective family, school and community partnerships that lead to greater achievement for students, especially those with disabilities.

What makes the parent mentor position unique is that being a parent is actually a job requirement. More specifically, the men and women who work as parent mentors have a child who presently receives, or in the past has received, special education services through an Individual Education Program (IEP).

Parent mentors are parents of children with disabilities who choose to share their experience as parents, acquired knowledge, strategies and listening skills with other parents of children with disabilities to lead to better student outcomes.

In addition to the day-to-day support and training for families, each parent mentor and their district special education director develop an annual plan to guide family engagement activities during the year.

Activities like training parents how to meet with the schools and teachers, host transition fairs, and providing resources to empower parents to become leaders in the community help make the mentoring program a success.

These plans are based on the Georgia DOE's Strategic Plan goals and indicators from the Georgia

State Performance Plan (SPP), which is submitted to the United States Office of Special Education Programs each year. The mentors select an indicator which addresses a need in their district. Once the parent mentors develop their goals, they work to develop initiatives to meet the goals and improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Currently, 65% of the parent mentor plans focus on the indicators relating to graduation and career readiness (reducing dropout rate and increasing graduation rate) and improving outcomes in transitioning from school to adult life. This past year, parent mentors have been involved in supporting student-led IEPs to increase self-determination skills of students; facilitating futures planning including person centered planning and MAPs, helping students and families identify the steps to reaching their goals; developing Circles of Adults Focusing on Education (C.A.F.E.) to bring communities, parents and school together to discuss shared concerns; and, leading Transition Learning Groups, an opportunity for families to identify their role in supporting their child's transition from school to adult life.

Today, the partnership boasts nearly 100 mentors working in 90 school districts in Georgia who have found great success in bringing families, communities and schools together to build effective partnerships leading to better outcomes and ultimately prepare Georgia students for a full life after school.



For more information about the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership and the work being done by parent mentors around the State please visit [www.parentmentors.org](http://www.parentmentors.org).

# Wayne County C.A.F.E. (Circle of Adults Focusing on Education)

By April Lee

Preparing students for life is a job requiring the full collaboration of partners who share an interest in the success of every student. Community and family engagement is just as necessary to student success as having certified teachers with rigorous material in the classroom.

Wayne County High School, a participant in the GraduateFIRST initiative of Georgia Department of Education's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), started its C.A.F.E. (Circle of Adults Focusing on Education) in 2010 bringing together essential partners for meaningful conversations centered on concerns requiring collaborative action for positive student outcomes.

The school's principal, Dr. Jay Brinson, wanted to address concerns that were impacting graduation and dropout rates. With a diverse group of adults that included parents of students with disabilities or other risk factors, former dropouts, business owners, retired teachers, school administrators and more, we identified gaps and strategies for improving understanding regarding school attendance, the role of the community and addressing specific areas impacting students' paths toward graduation.

As a Parent Mentor in Wayne County, part of the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership (GPMP), I partner in many local and state projects and initiatives where ensuring student success is our primary goal, especially for students receiving special education services and supports.

One such project was the county-wide Transition Fair. In a rural area, there are not as many resources as we would like for our students, but we created an event where businesses and community providers could engage students, show them what's available in the community and what a preferred career might look like with appropriate supports. To further our impact, our C.A.F.E. Team developed a tool that outlined and summarized graduation and dropout information for our community. Our graduation rate rose 4.5% last year due to several in-school proactive and preventative measures such as standard-based classrooms, study skills/support classes and credit recovery sessions. Before C.A.F.E., the high school had no regular opportunities for parents or community members to be part of solving school-related graduation and dropout issues.

In supporting identified students with disabilities and those at-risk for not graduating on time, they are more likely to see success if they build positive relationships with caring adults.

Through C.A.F.E. meetings and targeted activities, students are invited to participate, share their views and take part in student-led discussions where collaboration from all partners is required for optimum success. This step has taken our family-school-community team to a new level of commitment and action because we can verify the need of a student or student group and include them in our action planning. By knowing the student's perspective and prioritizing their concerns, our team's actions are more focused and meaningful.

In 2013, the team co-sponsored Wayne County High School's first Youth in Community Summit (YIC Summit). The student-led summit was supported by C.A.F.E. members who acted as mentors, trained at-risk students as leaders, and during the summit, assisted as table facilitators while students discussed issues like bullying, homelessness, setting goals and the current economy as influences in decisions about school and life after school.

The C.A.F.E. model has allowed Wayne County to establish a shared vision so that student outcomes are at the base of collaborative decisions and actions.

We have taken students who don't have any idea of what they want to do after high school, and been able to provide assistance and give them direction for successful futures. Our community expects all students to graduate and by engaging all partners in dialogue and action we are building a community environment to support that expectation.

**For more information on C.A.F.E.s and to download the C.A.F.E. Implementation Guide, go to the SPDG website at [www.gaspedg.org](http://www.gaspedg.org).**

In supporting identified students with disabilities and those at-risk for not graduating on time, they are **MORE LIKELY TO SEE SUCCESS** if they build positive relationships with caring adults.

## PERSPECTIVES



**APRIL LEE** is a Parent Mentor at Wayne County Schools.

**Our Vision: We Are Wayne County – A united community building excitement through action, supporting all students' journey to graduation and beyond.**

# Inclusive Post-secondary Education for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: An Exciting Time of Change for Georgia

By Gregory Blalock

EXPERT UPDATE

Over the last 40 years, we have seen tremendous gains in opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In the K-12 education system, federal and state laws mandate schools provide an appropriate education to students in the least restrictive environment.

Although a lot of work remains to assure social justice for those with developmental disabilities, it's important to note how past progress continues to open new doors for such individuals.

## Access to Higher Education

We are seeing a new generation of young adults with disabilities who have the skills and motivation to benefit from higher education. Although it may have been unthinkable just a couple of decades ago, today there are many students with disabilities who are succeeding on major college campuses throughout the country. This is due, in no small part, to the recognition that those students have the potential to become working, tax-paying and civically engaged citizens if given the opportunity to further develop their academic and personal selves through education.

As a result of this recognition, over the last decade there has been a great expansion of opportunities in higher education for persons with developmental disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities.

The first of these programs emerged in the 1970s, yet there were relatively few and exclusive of typical college programs. Today, there are over 200 programs at major college and universities throughout the country that actively support the engagement of students with disabilities on campus.

Many of these target inclusive opportunities for coursework, student life and career development. Although multiple reasons exist for the relatively

recent increase in the existence of such programs, among the more salient are the following three:

- 1) Post-secondary education provides a valuable educational avenue for many individuals with intellectual disabilities who traditionally have had no educational options beyond high school. University campuses provide fertile ground for those seeking to develop a broader understanding of what it means to be an independent, actively engaged adult within the community.
- 2) Just as the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities into the K-12 general education classroom provides important social and academic benefits to all students, such inclusion on college campuses provides the opportunity to extend diversity to all college students. Because many of today's college students will be tomorrow's employers, those who graduate from universities that ground them in a better understanding of diversity in the real world will be in a much better position to compete in a global market.
- 3) The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 explicitly provides support for individuals with disabilities who are seeking post-secondary education opportunities at qualifying institutions of higher education. This means, among other things, that such students are now eligible for federal financial aid including Pell Grants and student loans to cover the cost of higher education. Given that individuals with disabilities come from disproportionately lower income backgrounds, this is an important support.



### DR. GREGORY BLALOCK

is an associate professor of Special Education at Columbus State University where he directs the Gifted Education Endorsement and the Education Specialist in Special Education graduate programs. He is currently heading the development of the COUGARS program, an inclusive post-secondary education program for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

This last point represents the federal government's overt recognition that higher education should be an option for a greater diversity of citizens as we continue to focus on assuring a globally competitive workforce within our nation. It is, after all, higher education that continues to have a profound effect on the innovation and employability of our communities.

Statistics show the unemployment rate for college graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher is half that of their peers with no post-secondary education. In June 2012, unemployment rate of those with only a high school education was 8.4%; it was only 7.5% for those who had completed at least two years of college (United States Department of Labor, 2012). Thus, a college education has an important effect on the employability of an individual today.

The unemployment rate for people with intellectual disabilities is particularly problematic. One need not look far to realize how much more difficult it is for individuals with intellectual disabilities to find stable, competitive employment within their community. Although this challenge requires a multi-dimensional solution, one important solution is to expand access to college for people with intellectual disabilities.

Just as with typical adults, college access for adults with intellectual disabilities not only provides valuable career-related knowledge and skills, but it also provides authentic, multi-dimensional social relationships crucial to widening one's circle of support and connections within the community. In this way, college attendance can make a profound difference in the employment outcomes for youth with intellectual disabilities.

Unfortunately, in many states there are few colleges that offer the opportunity for attendance to people with intellectual disability. For example, to date, out of the University System of Georgia's 31 four-year institutions, only one, Kennesaw State University, provides an avenue for people with intellectual disabilities to meaningfully participate as a student. KSU's innovative two-year program, has matriculated talented students who have travelled back and forth from home to school, up to two-to-three hours each way, to attend classes. Just as their students have dedicated themselves to overcoming great obstacles to obtaining a higher education, KSU has dedicated itself to seeing that such students can sit in their classrooms and learn alongside other university students.

## Higher Education Expands in Georgia

The expansion of inclusive post-secondary educational opportunities for Georgians with developmental disability is growing. Through the tireless efforts of many people at the national, state and local levels, the foundation exists on which other public and private universities are able to develop their own programs to meet the needs of thousands of motivated and talented Georgians who are currently unable to access post-secondary education.

The Georgia Inclusive Post-secondary Education Consortium, (GAIPSEC), supported by Georgia State University's Center for Leadership in Disability, is instrumental in working with stakeholders throughout the state to collaboratively address the dearth of post-secondary options for people with developmental disability.

The impact of GAIPSEC's work is evidenced by the fact that within the last few years, inclusive higher education programs for individuals with developmental disabilities are being developed on several campuses throughout Georgia.

At the university level, developing such programs is a daunting task. Developing a new program at an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) is so much more than recognizing the need. Every IHE has a multilevel process for developing and gaining approval for new programs that ensures such programs are both rigorous and founded upon sound academic principles. University program development requires the adherence to standards set by a university's governing board (i.e., a Board of Regents), the state legislature, and accrediting agencies--all of which are in place to assure that every program provides an effective education and operates efficiently in a manner that is conducive to sustainability in the long-term.

This process requires the commitment of university administration, and that of the faculty and staff who are instrumental in supporting each student's university experience from application to college life to graduation to career life. This way, students are assured that university programs provide a high level of academic and personal enrichment to support their educational and career goals.

As such, the development of higher education programs for individuals with disabilities can be particularly challenging. There still exists little experience on campuses with establishing the relatively few, but key, supports that must be in place in order to make such programs successful. For example, most four-year institutions' general admission standards require a regular high school diploma. The fact that most potential

students with disabilities have earned an alternate high school diploma means that a university's admissions system must be slightly altered to allow otherwise qualified applicants who earned an alternate high school diploma to matriculate as regular college students within the inclusive post-secondary program. For many universities, such changes are difficult to make without clear precedent.

Fortunately, there are a growing number of universities who are doing just that. That is building flexibility into their systems to allow a greater diversity of students on campus.

## Building Diversity

Because of outdated stereotypes and unfamiliarity with the social construction known as intellectual disability, few university personnel understand how successful many individuals with disabilities can be with university coursework. Yet, over the last decade there is an emerging literature that shows how students who have disabilities can benefit from, as well as contribute to, both college classes and the university campus. An increasing number of university faculty members are vocal proponents of students with disabilities being on college campuses and how such students positively affect the level of discourse both inside and outside the classroom.

The GAIPSEC has been instrumental in pulling universities and community agencies together to increase the higher education opportunities for all people.

At Columbus State University (CSU), faculty and administration are working to establish an inclusive post-secondary program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Dubbed the COUGARS program (Comprehensive Opportunities to Provide University Guidance, Academics and Relationships), it seeks to provide qualified adults with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to attend college and complete a rigorous university program alongside typical university students.

The development of a post-secondary program for those with intellectual disabilities directly addresses CSU's mission to prepare students through academics and community engagement. Although this program is still in development, it's important to note that it is one of several around the State working to open its doors in the near future.

While we continue working to expand educational opportunities to children within our K-12 buildings, we are seeing a new generation of high school graduates with developmental disabilities push open the doors of opportunity to the hallowed halls of higher education.

# Understanding Equal Opportunity for People with Disabilities

By Andrew Furey

Businesses, government, advocates and the entire community need to recognize that people with disabilities to have the right for an equal opportunity to go to college, get a job or just live independently. I have muscular dystrophy and I've had to fight my own battles to achieve these goals.

For someone with a disability, obtaining a post-secondary education can be quite difficult. The process can have many obstacles, many of them seemingly insurmountable.

One of the biggest things that can get in their way is making use of Vocational Rehab and navigating the services that they provide. I have had many problems with this agency and continue to do so. Vocational Rehab is supposed to provide things like home health aides, help with obtaining room and board, and even help paying your tuition. Though, in my experience, it's very difficult to get them to provide all of these things.

Another major obstacle in the way of going to college is the school itself. The schools do not understand the daily challenges students with disabilities go through to even go there. They are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations, but it is up to the school determine what they consider to be reasonable. Some schools like Georgia Tech don't really provide that many accommodations, but others like the University of North Georgia go above and beyond to make sure every student has the same opportunity.

Schools and government agencies need to understand the obstacles to obtaining a higher education people with disabilities face in order to provide better services and accommodations.

Even though there are laws against discriminating against people with disabilities in the workplace, some employers may not realize the full potential of an employee with disabilities. Employers and businesses need to understand that with some accommodations, a person with disabilities is as able as an employee without disabilities.

But, even with a job, people with disabilities have to remain below the poverty level in order

to get government assistance with healthcare. They cannot get the same benefits from an insurance company or afford it and this forces dependence on the government for the rest their lives. In order to continue receiving help from the government, they are limited on how much money they can earn which keeps them living at or near the poverty level.

People with disabilities should be allowed to work as much as they are able without fearing the loss of adequate healthcare.

Living independently can be difficult or just about impossible. If they are like myself and have a severe physical disability, then there are few options available. We have some degree of independence, but to live completely independent from family members and government assistance through programs like Independent Care Waiver Program is unlikely. The staggering cost of paying for one's personal assistants and healthcare means this goal is unrealistic. It is more likely that they will have partial independence combined with support from other sources.

There are many groups and organizations currently working to educate the entire community about equality for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and encourage them to support legislation that creates or maintains support systems that allow people with disabilities to live independently and have a chance at the same opportunities like everyone else.

It is my hope that one day people with disabilities will live more independently, have better access to higher education, and work in more accessible workplaces. What I really want is an equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to the community.

Schools and government agencies need to

## UNDERSTAND THE OBSTACLES

to obtaining a higher education people with disabilities face in order to provide better services and accommodations.

## STRAIGHT TALK



**ANDREW FUREY** is an artist and Eagle Scout from Lula, Georgia. After turning 21, he fought a long and frustrating battle to receive nursing supports in his home. Furey also told his story to NPR's StoryCorps on Disability Day.

Employers and businesses need to understand that with some accommodations, a person with disabilities is as able as an employee without disabilities.

## April

### April 17-18

GCDD Quarterly Meeting  
Atlanta, GA  
[www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org)

### April 28-29

12th annual SPADD Conference  
(Service Providers Association for  
Developmental Disabilities)  
Atlanta, GA  
[www.spadd.org](http://www.spadd.org)

## May

### May 2-4

Abilities Expo  
NY Metro  
[www.abilitiesexpo.com](http://www.abilitiesexpo.com)

### May 14-18

International Autism Research Conference  
Atlanta, GA  
[www.autism-insar.org](http://www.autism-insar.org)

### May 27- 30

Transition Leadership Academy  
University of Georgia: J.W. Fanning  
Institute for Leadership Development  
Athens, GA  
[www.fanning.uga.edu](http://www.fanning.uga.edu)

## June

### June 3-6

IDEAS Conference  
Georgia Department of Education -  
Special Education Services and Supports  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
[www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)

### June 11

American Disabilities Act (ADA)  
in Higher Education  
Cornell University's Employment  
and Disability Institute  
Online webinar  
[www.edi.cornell.edu](http://www.edi.cornell.edu)

### June 23-26

138th American Association on  
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities  
(AAIDD) Conference  
Orlando, FL  
[www.aaid.org](http://www.aaid.org)

### June 27-29

Abilities Expo  
Chicago, IL  
[www.abilitiesexpo.com](http://www.abilitiesexpo.com)

## July

### July 1-3

25th Annual Association of People  
Supporting Employment First (APSE)  
National Conference  
Long Beach, CA  
[www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org)

### July 6-13

Georgia Lions Camp for the Blind  
Young Adults Camp: 18-31 years  
Waycross, GA  
[www.glcb.org](http://www.glcb.org)

### July 7-10

2014 National Association of Councils  
on Developmental Disabilities  
(NACDD) Conference  
Washington, DC  
[www.nacdd.org](http://www.nacdd.org)

### July 14-19

2014 Association on Higher Education  
and Disability (AHEAD) Conference  
Sacramento, CA  
[www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org)

### July 17-18

GCDD Quarterly Meeting  
Atlanta, GA  
[www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org)

# 2014 CALENDAR

## Planning an upcoming event?

Send your information to Valerie Suber Meadows, Public Information Director and Editor-in-Chief at [valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:valerie.suber@gcdd.ga.gov); Subject line: "Community Calendar" by May 20th to be included in the summer calendar. Visit the GCDD website at [gcdd.org/events-calendar](http://gcdd.org/events-calendar) to view our expanded online community calendar with additional local and national events.

## HIGHLIGHT:

Summer is almost here! Check out GCDD's calendar online and in *Making a Difference* for various resources for activities and conferences for Summer 2014.



# RESOURCES

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

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

## State Government

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

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

**Department of Community Affairs**  
www.dca.ga.gov

**Georgia Housing Search**  
www.georgiahousingsearch.org  
877.428.8844

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

**General Information**  
www.georgia.gov

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

## Perspectives

**Georgia Department of Education**  
www.gadoe.org

**Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership**  
www.parentmentors.org

**Wayne County School System**  
www.wayne.k12.ga.us

## Around GCDD

**21st annual Larry Bregman, M.D. Educational Conference**  
www.yourtoolsforliving.org/services/dd/bregman

**Georgia Winter Institute**  
www.georgiawinterinstitute.weebly.com

## News

**CVS/Pharmacy to Offer "Talking" Prescription Labels for Individuals with Vision Impairments Through Online Pharmacy**  
llegal.com/2014/03/cvs-prescription-press/

**Special Education Teacher Given Immunity**  
www.cbsatlanta.com

**Congress Gives Special Education a \$500 Million Boost**  
www.disabilityscoop.com

**Jewish Disability Awareness Month**  
www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=260153

## Transitioning to Success

**Project SEARCH**  
www.projectsearch.us

**Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency**  
www.gvra.georgia.gov

**Kennesaw State University Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth (AILSG)**  
www.kennesaw.edu/chhs

**Georgia Department of Education**  
www.gadoe.gov

**Partnerships for Success**  
www.partnershipsforsuccess.com

**Hall County School District**  
www.hallco.org

## Real Communities

**Threads that Bind**  
www.tiftonmuseum.org/a-season-of-quilts.html

**Decatur Community Conversation**  
www.gcdd.org

**Core Gifts Workshop with ConnectAbility**  
www.connectabilityinc.org

## Expert Update

**Columbus State University**  
www.columbusstate.edu

**Department of Labor**  
www.dol.gov

## Legislative Update

www.gcdd.org/public-policy/moving-forward.html

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

## Developmental Disabilities Services Tools for Independence

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

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2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 26-246  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142  
404-657-2126, [www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org)  
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DISABILITY DAY **2014**

TURN TO PAGE 9 TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE.