



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

The Year in Review

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Our Mission

The mission of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is 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.

Pictured on Cover:

(Photo left) Intern Paloma Mendoza worked at Northeast Georgia Health Systems as part of Project SEARCH, an employment transition program designed for students with disabilities.

(Photo center) GCDD Public Information Director Valerie Meadows Suber, AIDD Commissioner Aaron Bishop, Mark Johnson, director of advocacy for the Shepherd Center; and GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson at the 2015 NACDD Leadership Summit in Atlanta.

(Photo right) Advocate Mathew Harp was recognized for his work in moving children out of institutions at the Children's Freedom Initiative's anniversary celebration in Atlanta in 2015.

Message from the Executive Director

This year we marked the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). There were celebrations throughout the country supporting this important piece of civil rights legislation. People celebrated by attending parades or holding birthday parties. For me, it was a bus ride with The ADA Legacy Tour and a trip to the Highlander Center. Both reminded me of the hard work it takes to make sure that everyone in this nation gets the opportunity to live full and productive lives. People have marched, fought and died so all people regardless of their disability, color of skin, sexual orientation or gender, or religion have the same rights.

For GCDD and me, this was a year to remember the social justice struggles of Georgia and to plan for the future. In this great State, we still allow people to be locked away in institutions and nursing homes for having been born with or acquiring a disability. The Children's Freedom Initiative (CFI) has worked diligently for 10 years to bring children home from state and private facilities. Less than 50 remain in private independent care and nursing facilities, but almost 300 people still remain at Gracewood State Hospital. This was supposed to be the year Georgia closed its institutions. It is also time we end the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) programs in our schools and sheltered workshops.



We will continue to fight until everyone is part of the community.

We will continue to fight to make sure our elected officials provide enough funds for individuals and families to purchase the supports they need to be independent, productive, included and integrated in communities. This means being able to pay direct support staff a living wage and encouraging providers to provide the training and support necessary for quality services.

There must be a common agenda, continuous communication and mutually reinforcing activities amongst those involved for a collective impact. We in the disability community must come together around waiting lists issues and demand better jobs, housing and education for people with disabilities.

2015 was indeed a time for us to recognize and celebrate what we have accomplished in the 25 years since the ADA. It was also a time to reflect on the challenges that lie ahead, and how we must come together as a community to create towns, cities and a State where all people are able to pursue the American dream of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

At GCDD, we look forward to our continued work together.

Eric E. Jacobson

Fulfilling the Promise of the ADA - Disability Day at the Capitol 2015

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) works with legislators and advocacy groups to influence and support public policy to foster positive change in the ways that education, housing, workplace/careers and community living opportunities are made available to persons with developmental disabilities.

In 2015, GCDD honored the landmark passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the legislation that promotes equal rights, access and opportunities for people with disabilities.

At the 17th annual Disability Day at the Capitol, the theme, "Fulfilling the Promise

of the ADA," commemorated the ADA's 25th anniversary. The event was met with excitement from advocates, people with disabilities and supporters across the State.

Civil rights leader, US Congressman John Lewis (D – District 5) recorded a special Disability Day message for GCDD in recognition of the ADA anniversary theme, "Disability Rights are Civil Rights." Congressman Lewis encouraged Disability Day attendees to remain vigilant as part of the broader family of social justice movements.

For the fifth year in a row, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal delivered the Disability Day keynote address. In 2015, he honored the



Advocates, people with disabilities and supporters listened in the rain to speeches at the Disability Day rally.

“

We must also celebrate our present by commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA, and we must continue to educate others about the accomplishments and barriers that still exist for people with disabilities.

— Governor Nathan Deal

”



Enthusiastic advocates gathered in the Freight Depot to make signs for the 2015 Disability Day rally.



Governor Nathan Deal with GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson and Council Chair Mitzi Proffitt.



Civil rights leader, US Congressman John Lewis gave a special video message to the crowd.



ADA and recognized the progress Georgia has made in regards to employment and inclusive post-secondary education.

During the 2015 official legislative session, GCDD introduced a series of Advocacy Days, an initiative designed to provide training and create opportunity for advocates to meet and speak with legislators on issues that are important to the disability community.

Advocates pushed for more Medicaid waivers, raising the rate for caregivers, inclusive post-secondary education, Employment First, passage of the Family Care Act, moving children out of institutions and changing the legal standard of proof for people with disabilities in death penalty cases.

GCDD Advocacy Days provided a platform for people with disabilities and their supporters to connect with each other and their elected officials about issues. The ADA 25th anniversary commemoration coincided with GCDD's mission and legislative agenda which focused on achieving inclusive communities, voting rights and access to education and jobs.

Commemorating 25 Years of the ADA



Tom Olin and Eric Jacobson get ready for adventure in the cockpit of The ADA Legacy Tour bus.



Gillian Grable of Georgia Microboards and Eleanor Smith of Concrete Change on stage with Claudia Gordon (c).



Tom Olin (l), stands before The ADA Legacy Tour bus with Mark Johnson (c) and Eric Jacobson.



Disability advocates supporting People First, Mike and Marion Curry, took part in the ADA25 Parade.

Commemorating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 25th anniversary, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) joined the nation in celebrating the landmark legislation's milestone through a variety of activities.

The ADA Legacy Tour

As part of The ADA Legacy Tour that traveled around the country, GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson joined Tom Olin, disability photographer and storyteller, for a three-day visit to Knoxville, TN. There, they met with advocates, families and professionals who continue working hard for the disability community.

Honoring the theme of ADA's 25th anniversary, "Disability Rights are Civil Rights," Jacobson, Olin and others visited the Highlander Research and Education Center. Civil rights activist Rosa Parks visited this center before her famous bus ride; as a young man, US Congressman John Lewis organized the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee there; and Olin previously visited the center to discuss equal rights for people with disabilities during the fight for the ADA.

ADA 25
AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT
1990-2015

“

We are all bound together, not by this list of our collective symptoms but by the social and political circumstances that have forged us as a group. We have found one another and found a voice to express not despair at our fate but outrage at our social positioning. Our symptoms, though sometimes painful, scary, unpleasant, or difficult to manage, are nevertheless part of the daily life. They exist and have existed in all communities throughout time. What we rail against are the strategies used to deprive us of rights, opportunity, and the pursuit of pleasure.

— Simi Linton. 1998. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. NY: New York University Press.

”

ADA25 Georgia Legacy Parade

Continuing the celebration, hundreds of self-advocates, people with disabilities, their families and supporters gathered in Downtown Atlanta for the ADA25 Georgia Legacy Parade, starting from Hardy Ivy Park to reach Centennial Olympic Park.

Accompanied by the beats of the Shiloh High School Drum Corps, the parade was led by Claudia Gordon, chief of staff at the US Department of Labor's Office of Contract Compliance; Eleanor Smith, founder of Concrete Change; Leslie Irby-Peoples, Ms. Wheelchair USA 2015; Mark Johnson, director of advocacy at the Shepherd Center; and GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson.



GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson; Claudia Gordon, chief of staff at the US Department of Labor's Office of Contract Compliance; and Mark Johnson, The ADA Legacy Project chair, march in the parade.

Commemorating 25 Years of the ADA



Ms. Wheelchair USA 2015 Leslie Irby-Peoples joined other advocates in Hardy Ivy Park before the parade.



Advocate and People First of GA Treasurer Teresa Coleman proclaimed "Disability Rights ARE Civil Rights."

Disability Pride Day

The Office of City of Atlanta Councilman Kwanzaa Hall declared the day Disability Pride Day in the City of Atlanta. Parade speakers included two disability rights activists: Simi Linton and Claudia Gordon.

Linton read an excerpt from her book *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. Gordon, who also worked in the White House as the Public Engagement Advisor to the Disability Community, gave the keynote speech.

A performance by Full Radius Dance, a professional, physically integrated dance company, closed the festivities of the ADA25 Georgia Legacy Parade.



Advocates gathered in Centennial Olympic Park after the parade to hear speeches and rally for change.

“

I stand on the shoulders of countless disability rights advocates/activists and allies including parents of children with disabilities, who like Helen Keller taught us, believe everyone has something positive to contribute when they are given an opportunity.

They hope for a future wherein people with disabilities would enjoy equal access and full participation in all aspects of mainstream society; wherein we would lead independent lives, make informed choices and enjoy self-determination; wherein disability rights would be recognized as a civil right and not a matter of charity.

Their hopes laid the foundation for the ADA. Then, their action and sacrifices led to its drafting and passage. Things didn't just get better for the disability community. People had to act to make it better.

– Claudia Gordon

”



Scan the QR code at left to watch GCDD's captioned, descriptive video celebrating the ADA's 25th Anniversary.



Simi Linton read an excerpt from her book to advocates encouraging them to claim their disability.



Disability rights advocate Claudia Gordon inspired the crowd with her keynote address.



Professional, physically integrated dance company Full Radius performed for attendees.



University of Georgia's Institute on Human Development and Disability proudly participated in the parade.



Children's Freedom Initiative 10th Anniversary

In its continued effort to promote inclusive and integrated communities for people with developmental disabilities, which includes children, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) has been a collaborative partner of the Children's Freedom Initiative (CFI) since its founding in 2005.

CFI, a coalition of advocates dedicated to creating a Georgia in which no child resides in a facility, celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Atlanta Community Food Bank and also presented the current status of the remaining 41 children in private institutions or skilled nursing facilities.

The event featured a panel with key state agency leaders who discussed moving the remaining 41 children into the community through legislative means; a keynote address by Sharon Lewis, principal deputy administrator of the Administration for Community Living and senior advisor to the Health and Human Services Secretary on Disability Policy; and Nancy Rosenau, executive director of EveryChild, Inc. located in Austin, TX, who spoke about Texas' work to bring 955 children out of nursing homes and currently have 318 left to move into the community.

Recognized Advocates:

Seated (l to r): Mathew Harp and Callie Moore. Standing (l to r) Brenda Parker, Zenobia Willis, Pam Walley, Karl Lehman, Sally Carter, Jim Schnupp, Greg Schnupp, Bobbie Davidson, Former Rep. Judy Manning, Katie Chandler, Dottie Adams. Not present: Beth English, Pat Nobbie, Joe Shapiro and Gwen Skinner.

“

Georgia has every opportunity to become a zero state with no children living in institutional facilities.

—Sharon Lewis

”

CFI's 10th anniversary celebration also recognized the following advocates for their work in moving children out of facilities and into inclusive communities.

- **Sally Carter and Bobbie Davidson**, transition specialists, GA Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- **Beth English**, executive director of Easter Seals Southern Georgia
- **Mathew Harp**, self-advocate and **Zenobia Willis**, host home provider
- **Karl Lehman**, president and CEO of Childkind, Inc.
- Former State Rep. **Judy Manning** (R – District 32)
- **Pat Nobbie, PhD**, program specialist at the Administration for Community Living
- **Brenda Parker**, host home provider
- **Greg, Jeannette and Jim Schnupp**, hosts, CFI Study Tour Group
- **Joe Shapiro**, investigation correspondent for National Public Radio
- **Gwen Skinner**, GA Dept. of Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases
- **Pam Walley and Callie Moore**, family advocates and activists



Take Your Legislator to Work Day

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) has continued to make advocating for competitive employment for people with disabilities an important piece of its mission for an inclusive Georgia.

GCDD supported the State's first-ever Take Your Legislator to Work Day (TYLTWD), hosted by Employment First Georgia (EFG) as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October 2015. The initiative was an exercise to bring together legislators with people with developmental disabilities and employers who are supporting this effort in their districts.

The goal of TYLTWD is to ask employees with disabilities to invite their legislators to visit their workplace to demonstrate first-hand the power of community-integrated employment for people with disabilities by showcasing their skills and talents in a work environment.

The legislative response was overwhelmingly positive. EFG scheduled over 40 legislators to visit their constituents with disabilities at work.

“
I liked the fact that I got to show [the legislators] that people with disabilities can work just like anybody else and shouldn't be sheltered. It's important that they know we can do the same things other people can do and we can live independent lives.

*– Adrianna Becerra,
Project SEARCH intern*

”



Quron Dixon greeted Sen. Donzella James at his place of employment, Restaurant Associates.

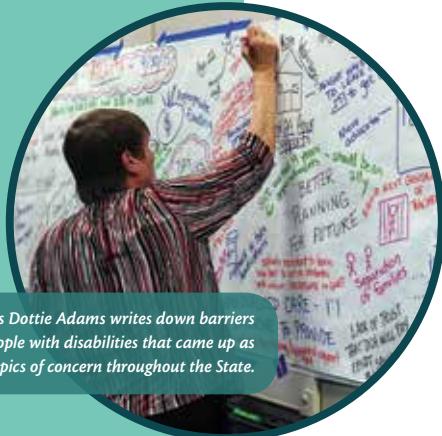


Rep. Bob Bryant (c) visited BJ Clark and Michael Burris on the job in Chatham County.



Rep. Jon Burns visited Lindsey Kussoy, who works at Edwards Interiors Aerospace in Springfield.

Public Forums for New Five Year Plan



GCDD's Dottie Adams writes down barriers to people with disabilities that came up as topics of concern throughout the State.



Council Members & GCDD Staff



Council Members

Josette Akhras,

Parent Advocate, Eatonton

Jason Bearden, Local Nonprofit/Provider, Canton

Thomas Connelly, Vice-Chair & Self-Advocate, Albany

Daniel Crimmins, Center for Leadership in Disability – Georgia State University, Atlanta

Pam Hunter Dempsey, Parent Advocate/Advisory Member

Deborah Gay, Georgia Department of Education, Atlanta

Teresa Ann Heard, Local Nonprofit/Provider, Albany

Deborah C. Hibben, Parent Advocate, McDonough

Geneice McCoy, Parent Advocate, Augusta

Ruby Moore, Georgia Advocacy Office, Decatur

Eren Kyle Niederhoffer, Self-Advocate, Atlanta

Evan H. Nodvin, Self-Advocate, Atlanta

Mitzi R. Proffitt, Chair & Parent Advocate, Brooklet

Marcia Singson, Parent Advocate, Winder

Dr. Zolinda Stoneman, Institute of Human Development & Disability – University of Georgia, Athens

Rickie Jodie Wren, Parent Advocate, Villa Rica

State Agency Partners

Commissioner Frank Berry,

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

Commissioner Robyn A.

Crittenden, Georgia Department of Human Services

Commissioner Brenda

Fitzgerald, MD, Georgia Department of Public Health

Commissioner Camila Knowles,

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Commissioner Clyde L. Reese,

III Esq., Georgia Department of Community Health

Executive Director Greg Schmeig

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

GCDD Staff

Dottie Adams, Individual and Family Supports Director

Dawn Alford, Public Policy Director

Gary Childers, Chief Financial Officer

Caitlin Childs, Organizing Director, Real Communities Initiative

Lisa Eaves, Grants & Contracts Manager

Eric Foss, Front Receptionist

Eric Jacobson, Executive Director

Jhai James, Public Information Assoc./ Social Media Coordinator

Gabrielle Melnick, Real Communities Initiative Organizing Assistant

Nick Perry, Public Policy Planning Specialist & Sibling Coordinator

Kim Person-Hudson, Executive Assistant/Meeting Planner

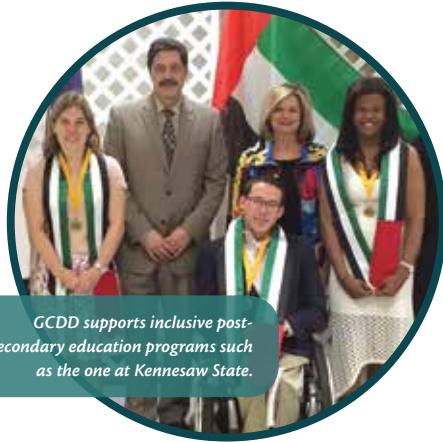
Valerie Meadows Suber, Public Information Director & Making a Difference Magazine Editor-in-Chief



GCDD Council Members (seated, l to r) Lynn Walker, Ruby Moore, Eren Kyle Niederhoffer, Evan Nodvin, Kate Brady, Tom Connelly, (standing, l to r) Dr. Zolinda Stoneman, Deborah Hibben, Darlene Meader, Rickie Jodie Wren, Trace Haythorn, Geneice McCoy, Mitzi Proffitt, Pam Hunter Dempsey, Marcia Singson, Teresa Ann Heard, Brenda Liz Muñoz, Debbie Reagin, (not pictured) Josette Akhras, Jason Bearden, Daniel Crimmins, Deborah Gay.

Funded and Supported Activities - FY2015

- 17th Annual GCDD Disability Day at the Capitol – Theme, “Fulfilling the Promise of the ADA”
- ASPIRE – Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement
- CARE-M Georgians for a Healthy Future
- Children’s Freedom Initiative 10th Anniversary
- Conference Sponsorships
- Employment First Georgia Initiative
- Georgia Microboards Association
- GCDD Social Media
 - *Capitol Impact*, Database/List
 - *Serve & Advocacy Network*
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - YouTube
- GCDD Website
 - Blogs
 - Events Calendar
 - Funding Opportunities
- *Making A Difference* Magazine print
- Partnership Funds
- Partnerships for Success
 - Barrow County
 - Bartow County
 - Bryan County
 - Cherokee County
 - City of Decatur
 - Cobb County
 - Colquitt County
 - Douglas County
 - Hall County
 - Thomas County
 - Walton County
 - White County
 - Whitfield County
- People First Georgia
- Post-Secondary Programs
 - Guidance and Opportunities for Academic and Leadership Success (GOALS) Program at Columbus State Univ.
 - Creating Higher Education Opportunities to Increase College Experiences (CHOICE) Program
- *Making a Difference* Magazine online
- *Making a Difference* Cartoon Gallery
- *Public Policy for the People* Legislative Newsletter online
- News & Media
- Photo Gallery
- Public Policy
- Real Communities
- Resources
- at East GA State College and Univ.
- Expanding Career, Education and Leadership Opportunities (EXCEL) at GA Institute of Technology
- Kennesaw State Univ. Academy for Inclusive Education and Social Growth
- Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Consortium
- Project SEARCH
 - Albany
 - Atlanta (3)
 - Canton
 - Cartersville
 - Dalton (3)
 - Douglas
 - Gainesville
 - Moultrie
 - Savannah
 - Springfield
 - Thomasville
 - Walker
 - Waycross
- Real Communities Initiatives
 - Global Growers
 - Centenary UMC, Macon
 - Forsyth Farmers’ Market, Savannah
 - Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty
 - Women on the Rise
- SOPOS Housing Coalition
- Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign



GCDD supports inclusive post-secondary education programs such as the one at Kennesaw State.



The Global Growers is a Real Communities initiative supported by GCDD.

2015 Budget - Expenditures

PERIOD COVERED THIS REPORT: OCTOBER 1, 2014 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2015



PROGRAMS EXPENDITURES

COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

● Real Council	\$543,855
● Total Council Administration	\$543,855

PRIORITY AREAS

● Real Communities	\$599,109
● Public Awareness	\$504,922
● Public Policy	\$383,086
● Self-Advocacy	\$144,837
● Transition	\$481,023
● Publicly Funded System.....	\$199,830

Total Funds \$3,400,517



Our Vision

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) envisions a state in which all persons are included in all facets of community life, have choices while exercising control over their lives and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

Pictured on Back Cover:

(Photo left) Mixed Greens, a GCDD Real Communities initiative, creates a more welcoming community that offers connections and contributions for people with and without disabilities.

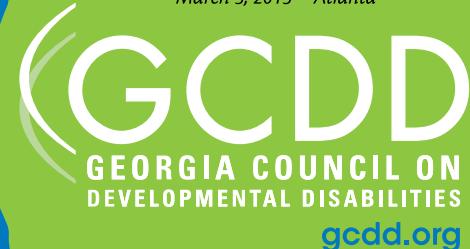
(Photo center) Shaw Industries employee Brett Wable participated in GCDD's Take Your Legislator to Work Day, an initiative created to demonstrate the power of community-integrated employment.

(Photo right) Sen. Butch Miller visited with youth advocates in the halls of the State Capitol during one of the GCDD Advocacy Days.

*We must hold on to
our dreams and keep
pushing, keep speaking
up, keep speaking out,
and find a way to get in
the way. Get in good trouble,
necessary trouble.*

– Congressman John Lewis

GCDD 17th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol
March 5, 2015 – Atlanta



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