

# The ABILITY LINK

## What's Inside

- NCIL
- Consumer BBQ
- Doggie Day
- APRIL
- Assistive Tech
- Health & Wellness
- Executive Director
- Video Conferencing
- Office Closures
- Wishlist/Contact Us



Photo of Meg Scalise, Youth Specialist, Indra Paul, ICWP Specialist & Katie Johnson, ICWP Specialist



## Social Media



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



[@disabilitylink](https://www.instagram.com/disabilitylink)



[@disabilitylink](https://twitter.com/disabilitylink)

Website:

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



*Advocating for human rights, not special rights.*

# NCIL Conference

July 24-27, 2017  
Grand Hyatt Washington

## Independent Living can be described in many ways:

- Living in freedom
- Making our own decisions
- Having choices and options
- Full community participation
- Experiencing dignity and respect
- “Nothing about us without us”
- Knowing, “You are not the boss of me!”



All these descriptions are relevant and valid, and reflect the individuality of the members of the independent living community, but they are not the whole picture. People with disabilities are, first and foremost, citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else. Often, this is not yet accepted as a universal truth and in response people with disabilities are working together to proclaim our civil rights and address the infrastructural, institutional and attitudinal barriers that prevent a level playing field.

The independent living community has developed a range of tools to support our goals. One of the most powerful supports is The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), a national cross disability organization run by and for people with disabilities. NCIL advances independent living and the rights of people with disabilities, and “envisions a world in which people with disabilities are valued equally and participate fully”. Each year, NCIL hosts a conference in Washington D.C. The link for the July 2017 conference is <https://www.ncil.org/2017-annual-conference-on-independent-living/>. In addition, each year NCIL publishes a Legislative and Advocacy Priorities Guide. The link to this comprehensive document can be found at <https://www.ncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Policy-Priorities-July-2017.pdf>. Several disABILITY LINK board members, staff members, interns and consumers attended NCIL’s 2017 Annual Conference. This was an extraordinary experience with the theme of *Revolution – A Global Independent Living Movement which* brought leaders from across the world and disability advocates from 19 countries who drafted, delegated, and announced the World Independent Living Network (WIN).

NCIL's annual march, rally, and hill visits are always a highlight of the conference, and this year's events were especially powerful. They perfectly coincided with the Senate's efforts to decimate Medicaid and repeal many of the protections of The Affordable Care Act (ACA). The Rally gave us a well-timed opportunity to get our message out, engage and collaborate with disability advocates from around the country, and get the inside scoop from members of Congress who are fighting these efforts from the inside. Following the rally, some NCIL members headed to the Hill to visit their elected officials and others headed to the Hart Senate Office Building for a joint NCIL-ADAPT action. NCIL and ADAPT members vowed to occupy the atrium of the Hart Building indefinitely if the Senate decided to proceed with their repeal vote. Our voices could be heard throughout the building as we chanted "No Cuts to Medicaid, Save our Liberty!" Sixty-four activists were arrested. As you know, just days later, the vote failed! After the protest, the remaining NCIL members headed to Capitol Hill to meet with their legislators. Every Georgian member of Congress was visited, and nearly every member of Congress' office was visited by NCIL advocates! Members talked to their Senators, Representatives, and their staff about key issues of importance to the Independent Living community.

**Examples of visit topics include:**

- Cost savings when people with disabilities live in the community, rather than in nursing facilities and other institutions.
- The arguments to support Social Security reform to support career building for people with disabilities.
- Reasons for eliminating Medicaid's institutional bias.
- Ways to develop, support and deliver, consumer-controlled, recovery models in mental health services.
- Legislative efforts to improve opportunities for safe, accessible, affordable and integrated housing.
- Recognition that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is now over 25 years old and we should accept no further excuses for lack of full accessibility.
- Other issues that impact the disability community including funding for Independent Living, civil rights, funding for healthcare and long-term services and supports, education, veterans issues, voting rights, accessible technology, crime, women's issues, etc.

Independent Living is recognizing that each of us are the experts in our own lives. The Independent Living movement is each of us acting individually and collectively in designing and promoting the solutions to ensure we all live with self-determination, self-respect and equal opportunities.



Photo of disABILITY LINK staff and friends standing outside the Hyatt Hotel getting ready to rally. Included in the picture is our staff including Katie Johnson in the front next to Katrina Marks, behind is Ken Mitchell, Linda Pogue, Board member Kate Seelman. Kim Gibson is in the third row. Staff, board members and others are holding signs for the rally.



Photo of Representatives from NCIL Region IV. Kim Gibson is holding the sign for Georgia.



Photo of William Daniels & Linda Pogue standing in front of Hank Johnson's Office





# Consumer BBQ

CONSUMER BBQ



Photo of Linda Pogue & Ken Mitchell talking to Representative Pat Gardner



Photo of Kim Gibson playing a game with a consumer

The Consumer Picnic was held on August 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, from 11am-2pm. The yearly event allowed an opportunity to get together with our consumers, staff, families, and community. At the event we played games, shared information about our services, networked and socialized. It also provided us with an opportunity to say thank you to our consumers, volunteers and other community members.

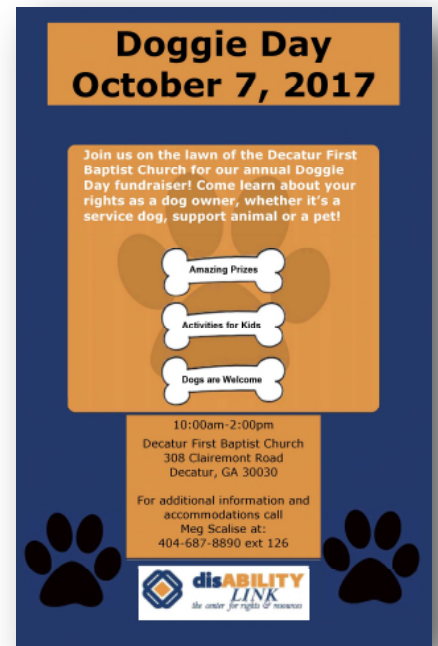
Photo of consumers and friends at the consumer picnic



# Doggie Day

Doggie Day is disABILITY LINK’s annual outreach event, in honor of service dogs, was held downtown Decatur in October. Some of our vendors included Canine Companions, Canine Cellmates, the Georgia Radio Reading Service, 12 Paws Foundation, and Wilde Autumn Apothecary. The silent auction had items from local businesses and also a variety dog gift baskets. During the day, there was a doggie fashion show, kids activities, and a demonstration from the Dekalb County K9 unit.

**This event is held in October of every year.**



Doggie Day Flier



Photo of Katie Johnson & Ken Mitchell holding the Doggie Day banner

## Doggie Day Fashion Show Winners

**1st Place**



**2nd Place**



**3rd Place**



Pictures of Doggie Day Winners



# APRIL

## Day 1



Photo of Meg Scalise at the youth conference



Photo of youth "Building a Community with Limited Money Activity"



Photo of youth doing a "Spider Web Activity" to get to know who we have something in common with

This year was the largest youth conference APRIL has hosted, with around 120 youth who attended. The first day began with ice-breakers and activities were done to show we all have something in common. In addition, the youth played games to demonstrate how access to resources can affect communities. To end, the youth participated in round-table discussions about the intersectionality of disability and other marginalized populations.

## Day 2 Welcoming and Workshops

- Welcome ceremonies began with Billy Altom, APRIL ED and Tim Sheehan, APRIL Board President.
- Lunch Keynote speaker, Sarah Triano, entertained and kept us informed with our rights through her rapping skills to the beat of Bruno Mars perm song.

There were so many workshops available during the conference. Some of them included:

- Accessible Healthcare focused on self-empowerment, reducing barriers and ADA knowledge.
- Social Media focused on safety while on the internet, joys and consequences of posts as well as how to reach further with posts.



APRIL conference logo

Photo of Darnell Johnson at a concurrent workshop



Photo of Kim Gibson & Friends





## Day 3 Workshops

### Day 3 provided a great amount of workshops. Some of these workshops included:

- Building Financial Independence and Funding AT: Danny Housley from Tools for Life gave an informative presentation regarding credit repair and Tools For Life services and assistive technology options.
- Disability Integration: How to get Involved In the Emergency World- What is the emergency preparedness plan? As an organization we want consumers, staff, and others to be safe when it comes to an emergency. This presentation explored ways of creating plans such as a book of plans/ resources, training procedures not only for staff, but for consumers.

## The Final Day

- Sunday closed with an Awards Banquet where several members were recognized for their achievements and board service.
- The Youth showed some dance moves and vocal skills when asked to come to the stage. They also shared very touching testimonials of how the APRIL Conference impacted their lives.
- Raffles and prizes were given out to winners!
- The APRIL Conference closed with a very powerful keynote- Disability Solidarity: Nobody's Free Until Everybody's Free presented by Dustin Gibson and Vilissa Thompson. The focus was on disabled people of color facing discrimination, resistance, and ignorance when advocating for diverse representation.

Photo of Kristal Southern holding the Kindle she won



Photo of Meg Scalise & Juanita Anderson at the awards banquet





# Assistive Tech



## Emily's Story

I was born with Spina Bifida, and am paralyzed from the waist down. My earliest memories all involve me being carried around, passed person to person. When I wasn't being passed around, I was crawling around, wearing my knee pads. When I was 3, I had my first "rite of passage." I was put in metal braces which came up to my hips. The process of getting me into my braces was a long one. There were all kinds of locks and snaps involved. However, once I was in my braces and got ahold of my walker, I was off and hopping. I felt I had a lot more control over where I went, when I wanted to go. But all of this hopping around was very tiring, and my braces were very uncomfortable. At 5 years old I received my very first wheelchair. I felt so liberated! It was much easier for me, I was finally free to go fast and twirl around, without getting exhausted. I even designed my wheelchair, I had so much fun doing this, making my chair reflect my personality.

I am telling this story to reflect how assistive technology (AT) can be used as a tool of freedom for people with disabilities. Some will say that I am "confined" to a wheelchair. I do not see it that way. I see my wheelchair as a tool to get around. It is the tool that has removed so many barriers for me.

Assistive technology has come such a long way and is advancing every day. There are so many tools to assist people with disabilities, removing barriers for us all. We use them to navigate, communicate and overall, to enhance our abilities. Please contact me for more information regarding assistive technology and resources. Emily Shaw, Assistive Technology and Deaf Blind Independent Living Specialist, 404-687-8890 ext 119.

Photo of Emily Shaw, Katie Johnson, Indira Paul and James Turner at Halloween



# Health & Wellness

**Derona King of Zilphy's Garden, (<http://www.zilphy.com/>),**

The workshops focused on how to eat well on a budget. Part of the discussion included the tricks and the ways the stores and food manufactures use to persuade us to buy and consume foods that are not healthy for us. In addition, the workshops provided ideas for eating healthy, while eating out. Techniques were taught to make fruits and vegetables safe from the pesticides. Sessions focused on skills that were based upon individual goals and needs. In addition, information was provided on different foods including the fact that sugar is the most addictive thing we can consume, and were also taught about the vitamins and minerals and how they support our body.

**For more information contact  
Travis Evans at [tevens@disabilitylink.org](mailto:tevens@disabilitylink.org)  
or 404 687 8890 ext 115**



Photo of Derona King



Photo of the Living Well with a Disability class

disABILITY LINK participated with The Living Well with a Disability Program with the Rural Institute of Montana to develop the curriculum.



# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

This past year has been an exciting time. The weather, political issues and new legislation focused around people with disabilities all have been on the front line.

Emergencies and disasters can hit quickly and without a warning. It forces individuals to quickly react. It is important for each of us to be prepared for these emergencies by having a plan. Throughout the year we host different events on emergency preparedness. In addition, you can find out more In Georgia the website with the different information can be found at the following address: <https://ada.georgia.gov/emergency-preparedness>.

The last year focused on voting and prospective legislation that affects each individual. At disABILITY LINK, we encourage you to become involved in your own community and therefore I would like to provide you, again, with a few suggestions on how to remain active politically in your community.

## 1. **Start with your own paperwork**

Make sure that you are registered, know where your polling place is located, who your Senators, Mayors, City Councilmen, Representatives, and other local appointed officials are. The easiest way to do that is go to your county board of elections website to find details.

## 2. **Get involved in the process**

Observe what is going on locally and nationally. Research to make sure that you are reading facts and not opinions, or even just plain old propaganda. If you are able to then go, attend meetings that are held by your local legislatures, community organizations and other venues to continue to be informed.

## 3. **Look at the local**

Make sure you show up for local issues when it comes to voting. Remember it is often easier to ask questions locally and find someone willing to address your issues than higher up in the political food chain. Make sure that you listen to what is going on, take time to read and research different initiatives. Remember not to take someone's word but actually read and research and form your own opinion.

#### 4. **Consider becoming a leader**

Think of running for even a small, local position. To become part of the system you don't necessarily need to hold an office, but becoming part of different work groups, becoming active in advocacy with different organizations and help identify and set policy.

#### 5. **Provide others with a chance to get involved**

Encourage friends and others around you to get involved, vote and talk about issues. Let others express and value each other's opinions. Remember that you may not always agree.

#### 6. **Start now**

Although the Presidential Election is over, there is still other elections coming up, new policies being presented, and advocacy that may need to be done. Don't wait for the next presidential election to become involved. Contact your local representatives and appointed officials and ask questions. Remember that voting for local and State is as important as the Presidential Election.

As we continue to move forward in the New Year, I want to invite you to the many events here at disABILITY LINK. We have multiple events focused on promoting choice and full participation in community life. This year our Annual Gala Spectacular event will be held on April 28, 2017. You can contact any of our staff for more information for sponsorships or ticket purchases.

Thank you all for being part of the disability community and the support you provide. We look forward to seeing each of you in the New Year!

Sincerely,

Kim Gibson

Photo of Kim Gibson



# zoom

We are excited to announce that all of our classes held by disABILITY LINK are available through video conferencing. To participate outside of disABILITY LINK office join in from your computer, cell phone or landline phones. Webcams are not required but can be used for participation.

Join from a PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, or Android: <https://zoom.us/j/4046878890>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +16465588656,4046878890#

Or Telephone:

US: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 404 687 8890

Or by going to <https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting. Meeting ID is 404-687-8890. Please note: All video conferencing is recorded. You can join in without signing up.

For additional information and accommodations please contact our office.



Photos of Meg Scalise and Jeremy Brogdon trying out the Jody at Tech Tuesday with Mike Martenson from Visual Enhancements



# Please review the following list of dates for office hours, annual events, and office closings.

## Normal Business Hours

Mon. – Thurs. .... 9:00am-4:30pm

Fridays by appointment only

## disABILITY LINK’s Gala Spectacular

### 20 years of Promoting Choices

April 28 ..... 6:00pm-10:00pm

Courtyard Marriott

130 Clairemont Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030

For more information call us at 404 687 8890

**Join us to march for disability rights at MLK Jr. Day: Monday, January 15**

for more information contact Linda Pogue at 404-687-8890 ext. 114

## We are closed on the following dates:

January 15.....MLK Jr. Day

February 19 .....Presidents Day

March 30 .....Good Friday

May 28.....Memorial Day

July 4.....Independence Day

## Wish List:

| <u>ITEM</u> .....        | <u>QUANTITY</u> |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Laptops .....            | 3               |
| Yoga Mats .....          | 15              |
| Youth Sponsorships ..... | 2               |

**Youth Support for conferences — please contact staff for information!**

## Contact Us:

1901 Montreal Rd. Suite 102 Tucker, Ga 30088

**404-687-8890 Voice**

**404-381-8117 Video**

**404-687-8298 Fax**



**/disabilitylink**



**@disabilitylink**



**www.disabilitylink.org**



**@disabilitylink**