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Picture of Parker Glick, Kim Gibson, and Vilissa Thompson

THE ABILITY LINK

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disABILITY LINK is an organization led by and for people with disabilities and promotes choice and full participation in community life.



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Advocating for human rights, not special rights.

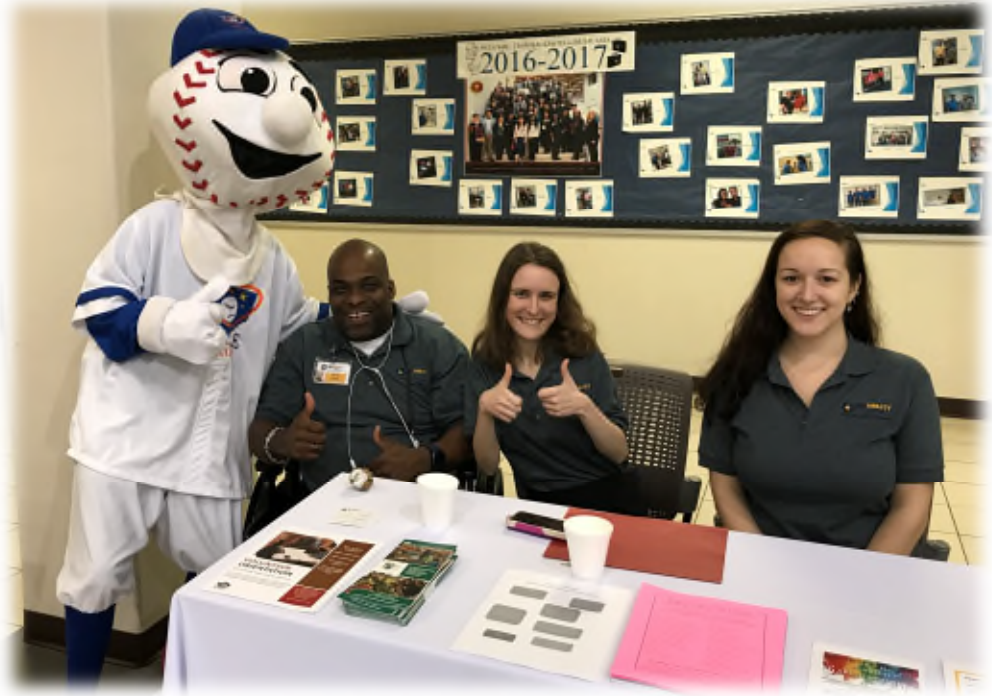
Edited and Designed by

William Daniels, Social Media Apprentice



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On May 13th 2017 Meg Scalise, Katrina Parsons, and myself represented disABILITY LINK at the Newton County Transition Fair. The fair showcased different vendors like Dept. of Labor, Atlanta Technical College, and several others. Our table showcased disABILITY LINK flyers from our different programs including: LGBTQ+disability, volunteering, toastmasters, Independent living classes and how to apply for SNAP benefits. We had the opportunity to talk to many individuals about what we do as an organization including peer support, independent living skills, advocacy, transition and information and referral .



Picture of James Turner, Meg Scalise, and Katrina Parsons

We showcased our volunteer program. We highlighted that volunteering is a way for individuals to come and build their skills of expertise; whether it is filing, computer/data entry, answering the phone, etc. This also gives individuals the opportunity to gain friendships as well as a sense of belonging.

We offer volunteer orientation every third Thursday from 10 am -12 noon. For more information contact James Turner, Volunteer Coordinator.

Empowering Our Youth Group

Meet fellow teens and young adults, age 14-29 within the disability community! Join us in our monthly gatherings to make new friends, learn, engage, advocate, and have fun! *Snacks and drinks are provided*

When:
6:00pm-8:00pm
Second Thursday of every month

Location:
1901 Montreal Road #102
Tucker, GA 30084

Contact:
Meg Scalise, Youth Independent Living Specialist
(404) 687-8890 ext. 126
mscalise@disabilitylink.org

"disABILITY LINK is an organization led by and for people with disabilities and promotes choice and full participation in community life."



*disABILITY LINK is a fragrance-free organization. Please, refrain from wearing strong perfumes, colognes, deodorants, etc. Thank you!



Picture of Meg Scalise

In May, disABILITY LINK held its first, monthly youth group meeting with the new Youth Independent Living Specialist, Meg Scalise. These social events are held the second Thursday of every month. Anyone age 14-29 is invited to attend. This is an opportunity for teens and young adults to meet fellow peers and members of the community. Our first meeting was held at the disABILITY LINK office, and we are planning for future events to be held in the community, such as sporting events or movies. We always welcome new faces and hope to see you at our next meeting!

Why Advocate?

I like this quote, "*Independent Living is the idea that everyone has a future,*" so said Ed Roberts, who is considered the father of the Independent Living Movement and, I would like to add, the way we determine that future is by participation and advocacy. "*Nothing about us without us,*" is a reflection of the Independent Living philosophy, that is, we are the experts in our own lives and we are in the best position to successfully make the decisions in our lives, and the policies and legislation that impact our lives. If we are not active in the decisions in our lives, who will be, what decisions will they make and will those decisions be in our interest...or theirs?

Advocacy is an important part of independent living and the work of Centers for Independent Living with very good reason, the history of people with disabilities has most often been determined by people who are not members of the disability community. This is changing with the development of the cross disability rights movement in recent decades, although it is clear that there is far to go for all members of the disability community to experience our rights and responsibilities, have equal access and participation in communities, and be fully valued as contributing citizens.

Picture of Linda Pogue



What is more, advocacy works! In 2015, The Congressional Management Foundation published their surveys of legislative staff and learned several important factors:

Having a direct interaction with advocates, especially in-person visits, influences lawmakers, more so, if they are "undecided." Influence increases with more than one visit, and consequently relationships, are longer term. Lawmakers want more understanding, that is what personal stories bring (and apparently they don't often receive)....and, practice makes perfect, the more you advocate, the better your advocacy!

There are more than enough issues requiring advocacy right now....Medicaid, the budget, health care reform, public transit, affordable housing, emergency preparedness, elections, voting rights – the disability community needs and deserves to make sure the decision makers hear from us.

I invite you to be active in the independent living movement, come and visit disABILITY LINK and experience all the activities, events, services, programs, and classes provided. I think you will be delighted to find a group of like-minded people, taking care of business and working to make the world more inclusive, more diverse, and more valuing of people with disabilities. You are a vital part of the continually growing disability rights movement. Please contact disABILITY LINK for support, information, ideas and connections regarding advocacy..... *"The best way to predict the future is to help create it!"*.... *"The world is run by those who turn up!"*



disABILITY PRIDE

People with disabilities are often left out of the dating scene. There are ideas that people with disabilities are not sexual. We at disABILITY LINK see dating and sexuality as an independent living skill. Our new program LGBTQIAP++disABILITY hosted a Speed Dating fundraiser on May 19th. There were over 15 attendees, and there was a spaghetti dinner hosted after the event.

LGBTQIAP++disability is a group for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual community and others in the disability community. This group is important because often the disability community does not always support the LGBT+ community and the LGBT+ community does not always support the disability community. This group is a mixture of peer support, social engagement, and political activism. Currently we are raising funds to attend Atlanta Pride to make ourselves more visible in the LGBT+ community. With our Speed Dating event, we were able to raise around half of the cost of attending this Atlanta Pride.

Keep an eye out for more Speed Dating events in the future. If you are interested in coming to our meetings, we meet every third Thursday at 6-8pm in the disABILITY LINK activities room. Food is always provided along with conversations concerning our community. All are welcome to our meetings; we just ask you come with an open mind and heart.



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Independent Living and Black Lives Matter is a diverse group of people and organizations working for justice – the group meets monthly at disABILITY LINK and is facilitated by Paul McLennan, previously a member of the Board of Directors at disABILITY LINK, and Ken Mitchell, Assistant Director, KMitchell@disABILITYLINK.org

ATLANTA COALITION ORGANIZES AGAINST POLICE KILLINGS

Last October, a diverse range of disability rights, community, and labor activists began meeting to take on the issue of state violence that has been directed at members of the disability community, in particular. Reports say that up to half of the people who die at the hands of the police have some form of disability. We began holding monthly meetings at disABILITY LINK.

We felt compelled to get organized because of the police shooting of Anthony Hill, an African-American Air Force Veteran, which took place on March 9, 2015 in DeKalb County. Anthony Hill was living with PTSD and bipolar disorder and was naked and unarmed at the time of the incident. Black Lives Matter and other activist groups got involved in this case to demand justice. In January 2016, a DeKalb Co. grand jury indicted officer Robert Olsen on two counts of felony murder and one count of aggravated assault. The case is expected to go to trial sometime this year.

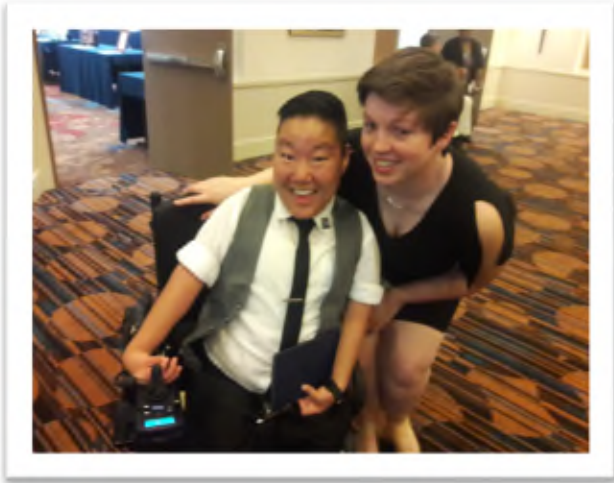
This issue is important because we must do whatever is necessary to prevent any more of these deaths. The lives of people with disabilities are undervalued and often feared. Police are trained to use their power to control and their quick reactions too often lead to fatal outcomes. When you combine racial bias, you too often have a perfect storm.

Our coalition is working to promote more meaningful, useful, ongoing, and updated peer-led training to the police. Officer Wilson had received the 40 hours of Crisis Intervention Training provided by the state of Georgia but it was obviously not sufficient to prevent the death of Anthony Hill. This training needs to be well prepared and delivered in a way where it will be best received. We need to integrate this training into the overall culture and development of police officers not just as a burden or add-on to their regular duties. In addition, we want to set up a better system of triage where 911 operators dispatch mental health responders in certain situations instead of the police.

As a group, we bring many strengths to the table. We have a rich diversity in our backgrounds and experience. We are united by our determination to prevent the tragedy of Anthony Hill's death from happening again and we are inspired by the work of his partner, Bridget Anderson, who is guiding us. We face barriers which include the attitudes of people in law enforcement and the community, the lack of funding resources for mental health support, and trying to change systems that have operated for too long in dysfunctional and oppressive ways. We are learning as we are doing this work and we remain united in our commitment to ensure that people living with disabilities have the human right to live our lives to the fullest.

Written by Paul McLennan

Thanks to all the donors who made our 4th Annual Fundraiser a success
Pictures of staff and Friends



Picture of Parker Glick & Katie Johnson



Picture of Renee Shakir & Danny Housley



Picture of Indira Paul & Mubashshir Abduljaami



Picture of Katrina Parsons & Rhonda White

Thanks to our sponsors of Connecting the Past & Present to Ensure Our Future



"You Dream, We Deliver"

In appreciation of Lois Curtis...
advocate, artist and friend



Shepherd Center

Dave Zilles & Family



Support provided by Kate Seelman
in appreciation of the leadership
and staff of disABILITY LINK



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Picture of Kim Gibson



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

I would like to take this opportunity and thank everyone who donated, supported, participated and/or attended our annual fundraising event in April. It was an awesome experience and wonderful night of terrific speakers talking about the past, present and what needs to be done to ensure our future.

Right now, there is a lot going on in the political arena. It is very important for each of us to take time out and educate ourselves in what is happening locally and nationally on changes that may affect you in one way or another. The proposed budgets are out and may affect how Medicaid is funded, how Centers for Independent Living are funded, how other programs are funded. Major cuts are being proposed that may affect individual's lives.

The impact you can make on any and all bills, funding or changes, revolve around voting and then getting involved in the process. It is important to register to vote, know where your polling place is, and make sure that you know who your Senators, Mayors, City Councilmen, Representatives and local appointed officials are and then get involved in the process by observing, researching and attending meetings to gain facts. Finally, make your voice heard by advocating for or against different items by contacting your representatives and letting them know what you support or don't support and why.

Advocacy plays a great part into each of our lives. Here at disABILITY LINK, we offer different opportunities to learn about what is going on locally and nationally that may impact the lives of people with disabilities by providing facts and letting peers get together to discuss. We provide ways to advocate whether you want to support or not support different items.

As we continue to move forward, I invite each of you to participate in all of our events that focus on promoting choice and full participating in community life.

Thank you all for continuing to be a part of the disability community and for the support you provide.

Sincerely,

Kim Gibson



Picture of Newly elected officers and Board Members of disABILITY LINK

Front Row: Kevin Stringfellow ,
Bill Nabors, & Vernitia Shannon

Back Row: Kim Gibson, Rosemary
Graham, Bridgette Suttle ,Tracey
Stokes, Dave Zilles, Kate Seelman &
Robbie Huff



Margo Waters

“I am a hardworking, tax paying, and contributing member of my community and this would not be possible without the Medicaid waivers of SOURCE and ICWP - without ICWP I could not live and work independently!”

Picture of Margo Waters

- diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1996
- in 2005 received Medicaid waiver SOURCE (Service Options Using Resources in a Community Environment - <https://dch.georgia.gov/service-options-using-resources-community-environment-source>)
- able to return to work part-time in 2005
- in 2007 received Medicaid waiver ICWP (Independent Care Waiver Program - https://dch.georgia.gov/sites/dch.georgia.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/49/47/75995826IndependentCareWaiverProgram_FY12.pdf)
- employed full time since 2012
- employed in a management position since 2016
- active member of my local community
- active family member - mother, grandmother, aunt, etc.



Congratulations to Margo Waters on her retirement. WE WILL MISS YOU!

Letter from Margo Waters

On September 8, 2017 I'll be leaving my desk for the last time. I will be moving to Las Vegas, Nevada where I will explore Independent Living using the skills I have acquired from the Independent Living philosophy practices this organization, disABILITY LINK promotes. Independent Living is my life!!!

I leave with many fond memories of my time with disABILITY LINK and most of them involve you, a wonderful group of peers. I will miss you all so much, but never fear you haven't seen or heard the last of me! Give me a few months and you know the ropes- setting goals, taking steps and after revamping my resume I will pursue a future again using the knowledge I have gained through this great organization, disABILITY LINK.

So count on a call from me time to time. You all are always welcome to contact and visit me too!

I will truly miss everyone!



Picture of Margo Waters,
Juanita Anderson,
Naheede Brooks, & Renee Shakir



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Please review the following list of dates for office hours, annual events, and holidays when the office will be closed:

Normal Business Hours

Mon. – Thurs..... 9:00 AM-4:30 PM

Fridays by appointment only

Join Us for Doggie Day

October 710:00 AM-2:00 PM

Decatur First Baptist Church
308 Clairemont Road Decatur, GA 30030

Holidays & Closed

November 11 Veterans Day

November 23-24 Thanksgiving Day

December 20 – January 2 Holiday Break

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. Tucker, Ga 30088 Suite 102

404-687-8890 Voice

404-381-8112 Video

404-687-8298 Fax



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