

# The ABILITY LINK



**Group photo of disABILITY LINK staff**

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## Social Media



@disabilitylink

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

**Advocating for human  
rights, not special rights**

**Edited and Designed by William Daniels, Social Media Specialist**

## RESPECT Institute at disABILITY LINK

disABILITY LINK is pleased to collaborate with the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network ([www.gmhcn.org](http://www.gmhcn.org)) to offer the RESPECT Institute to the disability community in Metro Atlanta. The RESPECT Institute provides skills training and coaching to transform stories of the experience of disability into educational and meaningful presentations. Participants report increased confidence and control while learning the skills to deliver stories to various audiences. Above all else, the RESPECT Institute empowers people by acknowledging, honoring, and valuing personal experiences and insights. Through recognition and acceptance, we claim our sense of self, we can own our personal experiences with pride, and become active allies in promoting the rights of all people with disabilities.

On March 23, 2018, eight more RESPECT Institute graduates joined the 40 or so other graduates of RESPECT Institute held at disABILITY LINK over the past 5 years. The RESPECT Institute's collaboration with disABILITY LINK back in 2013 was the first time the opportunity was offered to the cross-disability community, having originally been developed for the mental health community. disABILITY LINK's RESPECT Institute graduates meet quarterly at disABILITY LINK to continue to provide peer support to one another, particularly around public speaking opportunities. For more information, please contact Linda Pogue at 404-687-8890 x114 or [GreenPogue@disABILITYLINK.org](mailto:GreenPogue@disABILITYLINK.org).

Article by Linda Pogue

Group photo of RESPECT  
Institute Graduates



## **disABILITY LINK/AAPD Summer Internship Program**

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) has hosted a summer internship program since 2002 for college students with disabilities. The program supports the development of the next generation of leaders with disabilities and offers host employers access to a talented, diverse workforce. As part of the expansion of the successful and prestigious program, disABILITY LINK was selected by AAPD to host the first ever summer internship outside of Washington D.C. AAPD hopes to further replicate this model to reach additional states.

The disABILITY LINK/AAPD Summer Internship Program began on May 29th and will run 10 weeks until the graduation on August 3rd. We are fortunate to have the support of excellent host sites (where the interns will be every Monday to Thursday), amazing mentors (successful professionals) to support the interns with career goals and networking, and peer supporters to provide encouragement and share experiences. Interns are offered a variety of training opportunities, beginning with a week of orientation and throughout the process. Activities include peer support training, guest speakers, disability history and rights, career planning, enhancing public speaking, visits to the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site and The Center for Civil and Human Rights, recording interviews at Georgia Radio Reading Service, and introductions to people, organizations and ideas of all kinds.

Thank you to everyone in the disability community, and beyond, who are contributing to this great experience.

Article by Emily Shaw



Group photo of AAPD Interns  
With disABILITY LINK staff  
and AAPD staff Member

## **Independent Care Waiver Program**

When an individual sees the letters ICWP it generally becomes confusing. ICWP or Independent Care Waiver Program is designed to assist consumers in becoming MORE independent or maintaining independence rather than relying on the system, family, or friends to take care of all their needs and wants.

### **ICWP and disABILITY LINK's Veterans Program**

I will be primarily focusing on Veterans in regards to consumers with disabilities. What really constitutes a disability? When driving, walking, shopping, or even when on vacation, not all disabilities can be seen visually. One of the most diverse groups of individuals with unseen disabilities are the veterans who have signed a check to the United States Government that included up to the very cost of our own lives. Serving 24 years in the military, Veteran Advocacy hits very close to home both personally and professionally.

Veterans have been taught to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, both within the Continental United States, and a myriad of countries outside the United States.

According to the World Health Organization:

Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.

# **ICWP**

One of my favorite sayings is: Circumstances or Events Will Disable a Person. It IS Society That Handicaps Individuals.

Veterans are no different in this category. After experiencing traumatic events brought on by war or other experiences, a veteran may not have paid the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, yet a part of every veteran has died in some form or other. Loss of limb(s), eyesight, or other physical aspect can be seen on a daily basis. Loss of mental capacity, thought process, or other cognitive process are usually not visually seen. Therefore, Veteran's issues are ones that are very near and dear to my heart. I have personally seen and experienced debilitating anxiety that prevents what can be considered normal daily living. Thus, there are numerous veterans who remain institutionalized due to an inability to function on their own in the community.

With resources and programs such as ICWP, veterans can receive assistance from a source other than military to guide them and teach them how they can function on their own, and that the world IS NOT against them contrary to what they may be thinking. As the Veteran Representative for disABILITY LINK, I will be reaching out to other Veteran's and Veteran programs to assist my Brothers and Sisters in Arms in getting the much needed assistance and Thanks for putting their lives on the line for Our Nation's Freedom.

I would like to encourage volunteers, veterans, corporations, and anyone who just wishes to learn more about Veterans and their unique disabilities to join us here at disABILITY LINK and assist us in making the community aware that not all disabilities are visual and

**FREEDOM IS NOT FREE**

**WE ARE THE LAND OF THE FREE BECAUSE OF THE BRAVE**

Article by Brian H. Crump



## Basics of Computer Coding

Since February, we have had a computer coding class at disABILITY LINK. Using the website, [freecodecamp.org](https://freecodecamp.org), participants have learned basics of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) in order to potentially create smart phone applications and web pages. Our pilot test of this class was called "Basics of Computer Coding" and was on Wednesdays from February 7th to May 2nd. On June 13th, the second term of this class, which is called "HTML Coding" began. This class will continue to use [freecodecamp.com](https://freecodecamp.com), but will get more in depth using HTML. This class is on Wednesdays from 12-1 pm, and anyone with a modest knowledge of basic computer skills is welcome to join. We also plan to incorporate speakers from the community to come in and do presentations for the class on their experiences. We give a huge credit to our consumer, Brittani Smalls, and her fellow member of the Free Code Camp Atlanta community, Mark Noonan, for assisting us in launching and instructing this program.

Article by Katrina Parsons



Photo of Katrina Parsons Teaching the Basics of Computer Coding Class

Photo of Katrina Parsons And Brittani Smalls Getting ready for the coding class



## Employment

The Employment program has been very eventful. A keystone part of the program is the “Locating Employment Avenues through Peer Support” (LEAPS) job readiness class, which happens every Tuesday from 10-11:30 a.m. The class is growing in popularity as we have on average 2 new consumers entering the class per week. The latest topics have included Teamwork, How to Disclose a Disability, and Public Speaking.

Our participants have not only expressed interest in coming to the class for help with the job search, but also to learn how to become better activists for disability rights in the community. In addition to this weekly class, there is also a monthly class every fourth Thursday of the month called “Getting Ready to Work”. There have been about 15 consumers in attendance per class. Topics in this class have included Resumes and Social Security Benefits with Sally Atwell of Benefits Navigator. This class includes multiple hands-on activities to make learning about the job search more enjoyable.

In addition to our classes, the program is in the process of completing several internship and apprenticeship placements. Recent placement sites have included disABILITY Link, Statewide Council

Article by Katrina Parsons



Group photo of the LEAPS class

## Volunteering at disABILITY LINK: A Lifetime Experience



Why does someone volunteer? It can range from gaining experience or showcasing one's skills, building friendships or even gaining a sense of belonging.

Whatever the reason is for someone wanting to volunteer; volunteering is a plus. Here at disABILITY LINK, volunteers are a key element to all that we do. Volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds are welcome to join our team.

We are here to support our volunteers as well as each other. Volunteers have the option to assist the awesome staff of disABILITY LINK. Volunteers are very important, whether it is filing, answering the phone, data entry, making calls, or assisting our consumers.

Volunteers are provided training on a monthly basis and as well as having the option to take other training classes to help enhance their skills. They also have the option to give back in the community. An example of our volunteers giving back to the community included an event where several volunteers held a coat drive to get donations of coats, hats, gloves and other winter gear to keep people warm that can't afford those items. In addition, volunteers of disABILITY LINK did a back to school backpack drive. Donations consisted of backpacks, notebooks, college ruled paper, pens, and other miscellaneous items. These items were donated to Coralwood Elementary School. The students loved the gifts. Another way the Volunteers gave back to the community was by conducting outreach in the month of April as a part of National Volunteer Week. One of our outreach events consisted of us visiting the Benton House Nursing Home where we did many different activities with the residents such as Karaoke. This was a big hit because many the volunteers got to showcase their singing skills.

During the month of April, the Volunteers of disABILITY LINK made their own volunteer t-shirts to show what disABILITY LINK meant to them. They also took time out to just sit back and chill and have fun while bowling at the Comets Bowling Lane and having a meal at the Golden Corral. As a volunteer we just ask that you be the best that you can be.

Article by James Turner

just ask that you be



## Peer Support Training: Shared Perspective from Trainer and Staff

Peer Support training was held on May 8th through May 10th, 2018. This interactive training was offered to consumers, staff, board members, interns, and apprentices by invitation.

There were 15 participants with various backgrounds and educational levels. They all shared the same passion to help others to reach their highest goal of being self-directed by being empowered to make choice for their own lives. Facilitators, Ken Mitchell, Emily Shaw, and Angela Pratt led the group through a series of guided topics, exercises, and role play with selected scenarios that help to solidify the topics discussed.

Over the three day training, topics discussed included defining peer support, peer support etiquette, person first language, establishing a circle of support, setting boundaries, supporting self-direction, listening and communicating, problem solving skills, and helping people find community services. The tools provided were to prepare and empower peer supporters to assist people with disabilities to lead a self-supported life through support and resources.

Dosrine Jenkins, a newly hired employee of disABILITY LINK, reported that she enjoyed the training immensely and highly recommends the training to anyone and everyone. She stated that the training was engaging, fun, and at times opened the window for self-exploration; especially when individuals shared their stories of situations that they've experienced which lent a sudden relief in knowing that one is not alone and that others share the same concerns. She reported that in short, the training simply provided the tools needed to support individuals, no matter what walk of life, to develop a unique set of skills needed to work with others that may be struggling with similar problems in order to recognize their strengths.

The culmination of this training was exciting as the new peer supporters proudly accepted their certificates acknowledging completion of the Peer Support training offered by disABILITY LINK.



## Advocacy Days at the Capitol

disABILITY LINK helped to educate constituents on legislation and policy issues in preparation of Independent Living Day at the Capitol on February 8th, and the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) Advocacy Days at the Capitol on January 23rd and 31st, February 14th and 28th, and March 15th. Topics included Medicaid, Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), Employment, and Independent Living (IL). Consumers used peer support skills to encourage one another how to get around the Capitol, to know who are their Georgia Representatives and Senators, how to contact them during the legislative session (calling legislators “to the ropes”), sharing stories powerfully and succinctly, and the best ways to follow up, etc. Overall the message to legislators is loud and clear, *“People with disabilities want to live in the community and have the same opportunities and choices as everyone else.”*

In a collaborative effort with GCDD, disABILITY LINK was able to provide stipends to Metro Atlanta advocates and to other Centers for Independent Living (CILs) across Georgia to acknowledge the costs of getting to and from the Capitol, etc., increasing the number of people who could participate in one or more of the Advocacy Days, including many people who had never before met with legislators or been involved in legislative advocacy efforts. While there was a little frustration with the accessibility of the Capitol and legislators who were not available when requested, overall, participants reported increased understanding and confidence in the process of connecting with legislators, and pride in being an active citizen.

Article by Linda Pogue



Consumers and staff visiting legislators at the GA Capitol on cross over day

## Our Information and Referral Process

disABILITY LINK is a great place to get information for people with disabilities. There are so many resources at disABILITY LINK for people with disabilities that many are unaware of; one in particular is our Information and Referral process. If you know someone who needs information or resources to increase or maintain independence or if you need them yourself, call us here at disABILITY LINK and know that we will attempt to provide you with information and resources that will help you in your own life. At disABILITY LINK, we assess the problems and capacity of individuals, then link them to opportunities and the most appropriate services to meet their needs that are available within the community.

We hope by continuing to share what we do here at disABILITY LINK, we will cultivate and strengthen the bond we already formed in the community as well as encourage individuals to call us for assistance. Our mission: "we are an organization led by and for people with disabilities" Article by Darnell Johnson



Group photo of our administrative assistant staff

## disABILITY LINK's Gala Spectacular

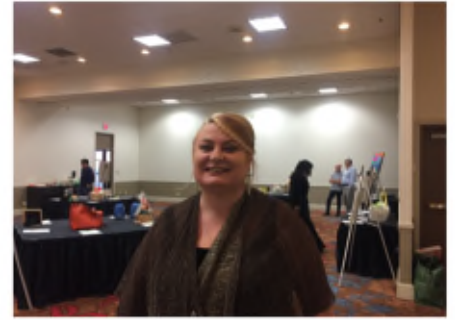
On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018, disABILITY LINK held its Gala Spectacular celebrating 20 years of promoting choices. The event was filled with meeting new people, talking with old friends and thanking those who supported disABILITY LINK to make the gala so successful. The evening started off with networking, bidding on the silent auction and buying raffle tickets, before settling in for the main event of the meal and a great venue of speakers including Lisa Williams who sang a wonderful song, Tunga Ufasaha who provided an inspirational talk, Jasmin Duffey who presented her story through a poem, and Mark Johnson who shared with us the work as an advocate. Dave Zilles, the Board Chairperson led the event along with a wonderful welcoming and introduction. Kim Gibson presented to Mark Johnson an award for a lifetime of advocacy and promoting choices. Ken Mitchell presented the first Annie Margaret Robinson Award in honor of his mother to Valarie Heard for exemplifying the independent living philosophy. For the second or maybe even the third time in a row the winners of the 50/50 was the Teem Family. As the evening wrapped up, Kim Gibson, Executive Director thanked everyone and the DJ struck up the music to end the evening dancing and listening music.

Article by Kim Gibson

Group photo of some of disABILITY LINKS staff and a volunteer at disABILITY LINKS Gala Spectacular



disABILITY LINK is proud to offer a newsletter that highlights our services, programs, past, and present events. This last quarter we had a lot of things going on such as our Annual GALA, our youth event at the Braves game, advocacy days at the Capitol, coding classes and so much more.



We have grown from a handful of programs to a vast amount of programs that focus on diversity, advocacy, health and wellness, employment, peer groups and all things that Independent Living means to individuals. Our main goal is to provide options to individuals with disabilities to maintain or increase their own independence in the community of their choice. We are always open to ideas and suggestions that help meet our goal.

disABILITY LINK is also very excited to have been identified as one of nine Centers for Independent Living (CIL) to be chosen in a research study entitled, Disability, Diversity and Intersectionality project with the Independent Living Research Utilization in collaboration with Public Research and Evaluation Services. The research project included a focus group, key informant interviews, and discussions with CILs. CILs that were nominated and deemed as making progress in serving underserved racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse individuals participated in interviews for the purpose of completing a case study about their work. More information on the project can be found at <http://www.ilru.org/projects/cil-diversity/case-studies> and <http://www.ilru.org/projects/cil-diversity>.

As we move from summer into fall, I want to remind everyone to make sure to "Vote as if your life depended on it, because it does". I encourage you to become involved in your community and life by becoming informed and then voting for what matters to you. We are offering different events throughout the summer that focuses on voting. I hope to see you there.

I hope everyone has a great summer and all of us here at disABILITY LINK look forward to seeing you at the office or at one or more of our event.

**Kim Gibson**

**Executive Director**

# zoom

We are excited to announce that all of our classes held at 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.



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

## Normal Business Hours

Mon. – Thurs. .... 9:00 AM-4:30 PM

Fridays by appointment only

## Upcoming Events

Consumer Picnic August 10 .....11:00am-1:00pm

Doggie Day October 13 .....10:00am-1:00pm

For more information on these events contact our office at

404-687-8890

## We are closed on the following dates:

September 3.....Labor Day

November 12..... Veterans Day



# Wish List:

<u>ITEM</u> .....	<u>QUANTITY</u>
Laptops .....	3
Youth Sponsorships .....	2

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

# Contact Us:

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