

The ABILITY LINK



disABILITY LINK staff group photo

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@disabilitylink

www.disabilitylink.org

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



Doggie Day 2018

Our annual Doggie Day was held at Decatur First Baptist Church and was a fun and successful event. This marks the 5th year we have held this event focused on the different types of service animals. It provided a wonderful opportunity to bring awareness to the importance of service animals in individual's lives as well as the different types. In addition, we had information on the programs we have at disABILITY LINK.

We had many vendors come out and be a part of this event. There were all types of vendors selling items or sharing information. Portions of sells were giving back to disABILITY LINK to help enhance programs/future programs of disABILITY LINK. We even had silent auction donated by a number of different organizations including Zoo Atlanta, King of Pops, Decatur Healing Arts, Aurora Theater, Alliance Theater, Pogue family, Blaze Sports and many more. All of our supporters are listed on our webpage.

Camp dream came out and provided free doing flavored snow cones. Board members of disABILITY LINK and employees from the Mitsubishi Electric office in Suwanee, GA volunteered selling hotdogs, chips, and drinks. All that was raised from doggie day goes right back into disABILITY LINK to help provide services to people with disabilities in Metro-Atlanta.



**Article by
James Turner**



Photo of Camp Dream booth
at Doggie Day

Photo of Canine Companions for
Independence booth
at Doggie Day

Disability Diversity and Inclusion

The 19th Annual Latino Youth Leadership Conference took place on Saturday, November 10th at the Kennesaw State Marietta Campus. Ken Mitchell and Veronica Apecena presented on disability awareness and inclusion to a group of approximately twenty-five 9th grade Latinx students. We shared general statistics about people with disabilities and how about 15% of Latinx in the United States are people with disabilities. We talked to the students about the importance of people first language and about how we can all see ourselves as agents of change in creating a more inclusive society.

https://thelaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/18_08_THELAA_LYC_Flyer.png

Recycling

Did you know?

- Recycling one ton of office paper can save the energy equivalent of consuming 322 gallons of gasoline.
- Recycling one ton of aluminum cans conserves more than 152 million Btu, the equivalent of 1,024 gallons of gasoline or 21 barrels of oil consumed.
- Recycling just 10 plastic bottles saves enough energy to power a laptop for more than 25 hours.

disABILITY LINK started an office recycling initiative. We have placed recycle bins all around the office and Angela Williams, Katrina Parsons and Travis Evans have joined the Recycling Team. We are doing single-stream which means everything goes in the same bin together. Recyclable items are: aluminum/metal (tins, cans), plastic (soda & water bottles, jugs, tubs, food containers), cardboard, paper, magazines, mail, mixed paper, newspaper, and paperboard (cartons, cereal boxes).

Let's all work on throwing less away in the first place. The old "reduce, reuse, recycle" phrase actually lists those actions in order of effectiveness, and reducing the amount of waste that you produce is key to living a more eco-friendly life. Ditch Styrofoam and single-use plastic containers whenever possible.

Article by Veronica Apecena

Empowering Our Youth

Each month we host two different “EOY” groups. One is held on the second Thursday of each month for young adults between the ages of 14 and 19 and the other one is held on the fourth Thursday of each month for young adults between the ages of 20 and 29. Both are held from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at disABILITY LINK and on occasion in the community. In addition, we host an Independent Living class just for young adults. We usually get together and provide some good old peer support and share some experiences to support others. This quarter we watched a series of movies “Intelligent Lives” which stars three pioneering young American adults with intellectual disabilities – Micah, Naieer, and Naomie – who challenge perceptions of intelligence as they navigate high school, college, and the workforce. Academy Award-winning actor and narrator Chris Cooper contextualizes the lives of these central characters through the emotional personal story of his son Jesse, as the film unpacks the shameful and ongoing track record of intelligence testing in the U.S.

INTELLIGENT LIVES challenges what it means to be intelligent, and points to a future in which people of all abilities can fully participate in higher education, meaningful employment, and intimate relationships.

Parents

Parents are a great part of a student’s lives. What are students without parents? Well they are also making waves in the disability community. disABILITY LINK hosts two groups: “Parents with disABILITIES peer support group” and “Parents with children with disABILITIES peer support group”. The groups focus on providing peer support of transitioning from being the young adult’s decision maker to “letting go” and empowering students to make their own choices (good or bad). In addition, the group addresses other issues of advocacy. They have met and are beginning conversations on advocating to remove an antiquated law in Georgia and 34 other states which allows the state to remove a child from the home of a person with a disability, simply because they have a disability.



Photo of Garrick Scott and Emily Shaw
at a Georgia Transition meeting

Article by Garrick Scott

LEAPS

Employment continues to be a major issue for people with disabilities. We here at disABILITY LINK continue to strive to ensure that individuals with disabilities gain skills to find a career of their choice as well as to match them up if possible with internships and apprenticeships. We continue to host a LEAPS class every Tuesday. Contact our office for more information. The class provides information and skills training on how to prepare to get a job (job readiness), explore career options and management and support after employment. We also are continuing with our coding classes that provide skills in learning opportunities that are useful to obtain employment. In January, we will be conducting Resume Writing 101 for skills on writing a resume.

Did we mention internships? Here at disABILITY LINK we do have opportunities of internships and apprenticeships. We attempt to match individuals up with host employers that match the individual's skills. In addition, we will be hosting our 2nd year of disABILITY LINK/AAPD summer internship program. The deadline to apply is approaching fast. For more information and application visit our webpage at <http://disabilitylink.org/youth/aapd/>

Article by Miriam DeJesus

Photo of the LEAPS class the meets
Every Tuesday



Photo of Garrick Scott engaging and
participating in the LEAPS class



April Conference 2018

Denver, Colorado- As a first time attendee, this IL advocate arrived at the host site not having a clue of what she was in store for...

“Organize, mobilize, resist and, vote”;

4 points identified as, the “Roots of Change” at the April conference, an annual mass convergence of individuals with a likeminded agenda regarding, Independent Living. The conference was packed full opportunities for the attendee who wanted to develop various skillsets as an advocate for individuals with disabilities. Noted opportunities included but were not limited to: Networking & various workshops developed with the Independent Living Philosophy in mind. The attendee could go to whichever workshop they chose to or follow a track geared towards a particular area of interest—and let me tell you- After reviewing the workshop selections, I felt like a kid in a candy store!

By the end of the conference not only did I feel more educated in various areas and more confident in standing up for myself and others but; as a change agent, I was motivated more than ever before. If you have pondered with the idea of attending an APRIL conference, go for it... You will not be disappointed.

Article by Angela Williams



Photo of Angela Williams & James Turner at the April Conference 2018 surrounded by tables of People

disABILITY LINK's Veteran's Peer Support Group

The beginning of the New Year, disABILITY LINK will bring together Veterans from all walks of life, who will provide peer support, and learn about Veteran's issues, rights, and benefits. Together as Veterans and Families, each will share experiences, knowledge, and resources while learning information that may assist with mental and physical disabilities, and creating a circle of support.

Veteran's face Homelessness, Financial Burdens, and Mental Health issues they may not know how to deal with. PTSD, Anxiety, Depression, and Anger are just a few issues. According to a Department of Veteran's Affairs study; each day over 20 Veterans take their own lives. After signing on the dotted line, travelling all over the world, and seeing things that can only be described by a person's worst nightmares, suicide is perhaps the greatest threat to all Veterans.

Once the Holidays are done and over, charitable work with the homeless and sending packages to those deployed tend to cease. The New Year, will bring to many, the sense of duty to a close. But for Veterans, duty is never ending.

If you are a Veteran or a Family member of a Veteran, you are welcome to join in on our Peer Support Group beginning every second Monday of the month. Our first group will be held at disABILITY LINK's office on January 14th at 5:00 pm. Come join us in supporting each other. For more information contact Brian Crump at bcrump@disabilitylink.org.

Article by Brian Crump



ANNUAL CONSUMER APPRECIATION PARTY

Wow! What a fantastic time we had at the Annual Consumer Appreciation Party on December 6th. This time of the year is a time for consumers, family, and friends to come out and have a great time. We had an awesome turn out among our consumers, some new and some old. This party is all about disABILITY LINK being able to show how much we appreciate our consumers, the community and our volunteers.

When I tell you we had food, we had food! You would have thought that you were sitting down to enjoy a big family dinner with the spread that we had. There was turkey, ham, dressing, potato salad, macaroni salad, meatballs, corn, pasta salad, chicken salad, baked beans, green beans, turnip greens, collard greens, crab salad, green salad, cheese, cracker and meat tray and who can forget that mac & cheese that made you think of being at your grandparents home when you were little. Of course we had a variety of drinks and deserts to choose from to go along with that great meal.

I want to shout out Rhonda White for winning "Volunteer of the Year". Rhonda has been volunteering at disABILITY LINK for 25 years and has seen a lot of changes throughout her time here. Rhonda has worked with a number of groups such as Adapt, People First (where she held the position of secretary) and Respect, where she currently holds the position of secretary and has for the past three years. Rhonda comes in with a positive attitude and a willingness to assist where needed to help make our staff lives a little easier here at disABILITY LINK.

Photo of James Turner giving Rhonda White her volunteer of the year award



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Volunteers and Board Members were recognized with certificates for their service and dedication to disABILITY LINK. Dave Zilles received a lovely plaque for his dedication and commitment as a Board Member and Chair. In addition, Lydia Thomas was given a certificate for achieving her goal in the "Get Fit Program". Throughout the consumer appreciation party we had door prizes, held a 50/50 raffle, had a raffle for a Kindle Fire, and had some beautiful singing by Lee Gavin and Travis Evans. We ended the special day with the famous White Elephant Game. It was some keeps and some steals done (poor Garrick and James) but that is the way the elephant blows! At the end of the day, we had a wonderful time. We would like to thank each and every one of you for attending and we look forward to doing this again next year.



Photo of Juanita Anderson giving Lydia Thomas a getting fit award



Executive Director Message

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors here at disABILITY LINK, Happy New Year! disABILITY LINK accomplished many things in 2018, and I anticipate that 2019 will be even better. During the past year, we developed, supported and conducted a variety of advocacy and disability rights activities to promote equal access and opportunities for people with disabilities. Some of these activities included participating in the annual Atlanta Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade, the "Get out the Vote", campaign, hosting monthly "Nothing About Us Without Us" advocacy trainings, promoting and participating in the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) advocacy days, advocating for accessible transportation and housing, and so many more. This year we partnered with the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) to provide internship opportunities to 2 college students and 1 recent graduate with a disability. The disABILITY LINK/AAPD Summer Internship Program focused on developing the next generation of leaders with disabilities and offered host employers access to a talented and diverse workforce. We also conducted our first 6 week summer pre-transitional, "Empowering our Youth" (EOY), "Locating avenues of employment through peer support" (LEAPS) which focused on different skills needed to transition from high school to adult living. We held many peer support groups including mental health, domestic violence, communication (speechcraft), parents with disabilities, parents with children with disabilities, LGBTQIAP++disABILITY, young adults, BLM and IL group "Us Protecting Us" and many more. In the coming year, we will continue to promote choice and full participation in community life for people with disabilities.

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In 2018, we also held our annual gala which raised some funding that allowed for increased ability to provide services to the community. We continue with our employment program that places individuals with disabilities into paid internships and apprenticeships. We continue as case managers for the Independent Care Waiver Program. We were part of the Disability, Diversity and Intersectionality Project with ILRU (Independent Living Research Utilization) to improved services, programs and outreach for racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse groups. We held coding classes, computer classes, assistive technology classes, sign language classes and so much more. Over the coming year we are excited to continue with the existing programs and events as well as the possibility of adding more into our slate of opportunities.

disABILITY LINK's staff and our Board of Directors are enthusiastic about the New Year, and hope you are too. We invite you to attend or join in on any of our events. In addition, we have many ways that you can support our mission including volunteering, sponsorships, and/or attending our different activities.

It is an honor and pleasure to be the Executive Director of such a wonderful organization. I look forward to seeing each of you at our different events and especially at our Annual Gala in April.

Kim Gibson **Executive Director**

Photo of Kim Gibson & Dave Zilles. Dave received recognition of his contributions as disABILITY LINK Board Member and Chair.



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 Event

Annual Fundraiser

**disABILITY LINK's
Celebration of Disability Diversity in the Arts
Saturday, April 13, 2019
6:00 PM to 10:00 PM**

Courtyard Marriott 130 Clairemont Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030

For more information on this event contact our office at

404-687-8890

We are closed on the following dates:

January 21..... MLK Jr. Day

February 18Presidents Day

April 19Good Friday

May 27Memorial Day

July 4Independence 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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