

The ABILITY LINK



Kim Gibson with disABILITY LINK's Board Members

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Social Media



@disabilitylink

www.disabilitylink.org

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



Edited and Designed by William Daniels, Social Media Specialist

GCDD Advocacy Days at The Capital and disABILITY LINK

disABILITY LINK partnered up with Georgia Council of Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) to provide Team Lead training and Advocacy training for the five different advocacy days at the Capital.

The five advocacy days were held on February 12, February 14, February 22, February 27, and March 5th with a multitude of participants including consumers, staff of both GCDD and disABILITY LINK, community members, supporters from different organizations, parents, family member, etc.

Preparation was essential in making the event so successful. Three trainings were held for individuals to learn how to be a team leader. I attended one of the trainings and a few days later, a staff member from GCDD contacted me to be a team leader. This meant that I, as the team leader, had past training and experience at the capital in order to assist other individuals who are new to advocating at the capital.

Each advocacy days began at 8:30 A.M., where we all met at Central Presbyterian Church. Breakfast was served followed by all participants practicing how to speak with Legislators. After practicing, we walked across the street to the Capital. All the participants had the opportunity to speak with their Senators and Representatives.

Each advocacy day had a different topic. The first topic was for Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) which is a program that increases more employment opportunities for college students. The second topic was the Home & Community Based Services (HCBS) for which we advocated to increase funding and decrease the waiting list for the Medicaid waivers. The third topic was Everybody Out which focused on advocating for all individuals to transition from institutions back in to their community. The fourth advocacy day was Direct Support Professional which advocated for all individuals under the age of 65 to have control and conduct background checks on the care takers. The last advocacy day was on Supported Decision-Making which advocated for all individuals who have a disability to have the decision of being a parent or a guardian.

This event increased my confidence, it helped me to network with new people, and I loved educating our Legislators about all of these topics.

Article By: Shikha Desi

Employment

What is Employment Training here at disABILITY LINK? It's a whole lot of things in a nut shell. We provide resources and guidance to people with disabilities who want to go to work and becoming independent.

We partner with different programs and service agencies to assist individuals who do want to explore career options and employment opportunities. Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation (GVRA) is one of the service agencies that that we Partner with to assist consumers with employment. GVRA's goal is to assist people with disabilities to be fully productive members in the community and achieving independence and successful employment. GVRA also has two programs for consumers that are visual impairments and Georgia Industries for the Blind.

We also are an organization that is an Employment Network with the Social Security Ticket to Work Program. This program offers free and voluntary program that can assist people 18 -64 that receives social Security disability benefits. If you're ready to go back to work and become independent this is one of the programs for you!

The employment program at disABILITY LINK offers many different types of classes to increase your employment skills and take a look at your options. One of the programs is our "Dynamic" job readiness program LEAPS (Locating Employment Avenues with Peer Support). It's a participatory class that provides guidance, resources and support. In addition we provide employment trainings, share job leads and develops skills that will benefit your independence and being successful employed.

Our employment program presents the IL (Independent Living) philosophy; ("It's you choice").

So let's "Bridge the Gap between Employment & People with Disabilities"

Article By: Michelle Gavin



Picture Description: Our Quarterly Employer Education workshop we shared with employers what we do, who we are, who we serve, and how we can partner up to create inclusion and diversity.

Civil Rights Museum Travel Day

On Friday February 15th, a group of staff members and interns learned about MARTA fixed bus routes and train routes. We learned that there are multiple of ways to get to a certain location. We also realized that it is important to be understanding towards using MARTA to come to our office, because some of them have to take multiple of buses and connecting trains in order to reach disABILITY LINK. Before taking paratransit to the Civil Rights Museum, we learned how to fill out the paratransit application. We also learned that it is important to call a day before, and that every ride is four dollars. All of the paratransit buses are accessible, and they will provide door to door service. This means that they will pick you up in front of your door, and they will drop you off at the door of your destination. We gained a better understanding of the time it takes to travel on paratransit because of the extra drop offs and routes taken and the late pick-ups.

The Civil Rights Museum was extremely powerful and inspiring. I am glad that another staff member took the time to audio describe the entire museum to me. Some parts of the museum had audio videos, but most of the museum had pictures and quotes. I am grateful of the past leaders like Martin Luther King and John Lewis who used non-violence and did not give up on what they believed in. In addition, many individuals received discrimination towards their race but they continued fighting, they took risks, and they were motivated to make a difference. Visiting this museum gave me motivation to continue fighting and working hard towards my goals as a social worker.

Article By: Shikha Desi



Picture Description: Picture of the Center for Civil and Human Rights Museum

MLK Jr. Parade

The Martin Luther King parade was a success, the sun was shining, the voices were loud, and disABILITY LINK was well represented with both staff and consumers. There were chants of “Civil Rights are Disability Rights”, “Our homes, not nursing homes”, and “No justice, no Peace”. The day was full of marches and people serving their community. Whether you believe that Martin Luther King Day is a day off or a day on, I am sure you would agree that we all not only respect the man, but also honor the idea that injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere.

Article By: Ken Mitchell



Picture Description: disABILITY LINK staff & Consumer at the MLK Jr Parade

Volunteer Workshop

My name is James Turner, and I am the Volunteer/Administrative specialist at disABILITY LINK. I started out as a volunteer and it was the best thing that I could of ever done!

As a volunteer, you get to learn the aspects of becoming an awesome volunteer of disABILITY LINK and/or a volunteer in the community. The volunteers not only learn from the consumers we serve but from the staff who provide peer support and mentoring. Most agree, that here at disABILITY LINK, we are a big caring family who supports each other in achieving our goals.

Each month we host a volunteer orientation class. The class has different topics but also includes an element of peer support to discuss different and similar situations, advocating, volunteering and much more.

Volunteers are important in this organization and in many others. Volunteering has helped me grow into the person I am today and I am so excited to pass on what I have learned to others. I cannot say how much disABILITY LINK has provided me in confidence, peer support and in increasing my own independence. I look forward to seeing you at our next workshop!

Article By: James Turner



Picture Description: James Turner & Juanita Anderson at the Georgia State capitol

Empowering our Youth

disABILITY LINK has begun going into the schools to empower our youth. The two inaugural schools are Hillgrove high school and Kennesaw Mountain High School. We work with a combined total of 21 students. The topics that have been covered help students learn skills to transition into adulthood.

The first topic called "What up yo!", discusses and teaches the proper way to greet someone, as well as the proper way to shake hands.

Another topic covered was "I know me"! This is where we discuss personal information about them such as' phone numbers of parents as well as the name of their disability. The ultimate goal is to engage their community as the work towards their independence.

The teaching style uses real life situations to allow the students more opportunities to associate the teachings to reality. The students had a real break through when they began to learn about their own disability. As a way to discuss it with others, and understand things they need to work on in order to become more productive citizens.

Article By: Garrick Scott



Picture Description: Garrick Scott teaching Pre-ETS at one of the High Schools. The students are learning social and personal skills.

Assistive Technology

Did you know that we have a class every Tuesday at disABILITY LINK that covers an array of Assistive Technology? Well, let me tell you about the most recent device presented. It is called the, Theremini. What is that, you asked? It is an electronic musical instrument controlled without physical contact by the thereminist (he person playing the instrument). As the instrument is not activated by physically touching the device, this allows individuals with certain disABILITIES who are instrumentally inclined or have an interest in the creation of music the ability to do so via hand movement and/or placement position. The instrument has a unique and unmistakable sound and I am certain you have heard it before- but like most, thought it was another instrument. Want to give it a try? Come on down to the center—I will have it set up and ready to go for you!

Want to learn more about Assistive Technology and how it can assist you personally? Please do not hesitate to reach out to me-As your local Assistive Technology ILS, it is my pleasure to assist! I can be reached at: (404)687-8890 Ext. 119 or via E-Mail at: awilliams@disabilitylink.org

Article By: Angela Williams

Picture Description: Angela Williams
Playing Theremini



Emergency Preparedness

Emergency Preparedness is planning, organizing, training, and taking corrective action to insure coordination during an emergency, national disaster, or act of terrorism. Here at disABILITY LINK we share information to better prepare individuals with disabilities in emergency planning. Each quarter we host different events focused on emergency planning.

Thomas Paige, the Emergency Management Specialist for DeKalb County, presented at disABILITY LINK this quarter. He discussed having an emergency kit in place, having the right things stored away in case of an emergency such as batteries, flashlights, water, and other essential emergency items as well as the importance of having an evacuation plan laid out. He shared the importance of how individuals should practice (have drills) in order to be prepared and get used to knowing how and where to exit in both their homes and or workplace. The presentation also featured a video on what to do in case of different natural disasters.

Article By: Darnell Johnson and Juanita Anderson



Picture Descriptions:
Thomas Paige leading the discussion on emergency preparedness surrounded by disABILITY LINK staff and consumers

Board Chair Danny Housley

Greetings from the New Board Chair,

Earlier this year, I had the honor of being voted in as the new chair of the board for disABILITY LINK. I have been involved with this organization in literally every aspect: as a consumer, volunteer, board member, staff member and now the board chair. I first became involved with disABILITY LINK in 2008, then I was a consumer, I was involved in the employment program seeking a job and ensuring that my interview skills were ready. As I kept coming back to disABILITY LINK for various events and classes, the importance of centers like this really sank in. Coming to an office and seeing people "like me" who were working to make a difference was a really powerful thing.

Thanks to my work at disABILITY LINK, I got more involved in the disability community than I ever imaged. I became a member of ADAPT and joined the NFB because of the work I was doing at the CIL. All of these helped make me a better and more well rounded advocate. I can even thank disABILITY LINK for steering me into my current job at Tools for Life. Because of the skills and knowledge that I developed I was able to build up my skills and move on support people with disabilities on a statewide and even national level.

Currently, I am the Assistive Technology Acquisition Manger at Tools for Life. I work with individuals to try and find funding solutions to acquire some of the wonderful technologies that are out there. I also manage the Credit-Able program and have supported hundreds of people to get small, low interest loans to better their credit and gain access to valuable services and technologies. In my role as an advocate I am an executive board member of the NFB of GA's Atlanta Chapter, I am on the board of the National Disability Community Development Financial Institution board and I am the co-chair of the Inclusive Lending Workgroup. The work I have done and continue to do wouldn't have been possible with out the support of my colleagues at disABILITY LINK. I hope that you get as much out of your experience at the center as I did. It can truly make a difference.



Executive Director Message

Dear Friends:

Advocacy is on our minds this year! Advocacy in all forms seeks to ensure people have their voice heard on issues that are important to them. This is especially important to people with disabilities who are often left out of the discussions that affect their lives. Advocacy helps individuals defend and safeguard rights, have views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being about their lives.

Here at disABILITY LINK, we support individuals with disabilities on ensuring the rights and interests are protected through peer support and advocacy training. We encourage individuals with disabilities to speak up for yourself, as an expert in your own life, and to take action with or without support when you can or want to. We make sure that anyone who needs support on learning to advocate or assistance in advocating receives it through one on one services, individual and group training, and through experiences.

Recently, we partnered with the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) with their 2019 Advocacy Days. We provided lead training for individuals with disabilities to support others with disabilities during the Advocacy Days. In addition, we hosted many trainings to provide training to prepare individuals to advocate.

Advocacy training is a process of supporting individuals to express their own views and concerns, access information and services, defend and promote individuals rights and responsibilities, and to explore choices and options. Basically, it strives to provide the tools necessary to advocate individually or systemically.



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Advocacy is in many different forms. You can advocate on your own behalf, on other's behalf, individually, in a group, in person, in writing, instructed, and non-instructed and many other avenues. It is important to be educated on the topic, decide what form of advocacy works for you, let your voice be heard through different methods including voting and having "a seat at the table" and speaking up when decisions are being made.

We here at disABILITY LINK believe that YOU are the expert on your own life and while we support you in learning the skills of advocacy, it is your view of what you wish to happen that takes priority.

Justin Dart, a leader of the international disability rights movement and a renowned human activist stated, "Get into empowerment. Get into politics as if your life depended upon it. It does. And the lives of all humans in the 21st Century...become a politician for empowerment in your living room, in your community...vote. Educate others to vote for self and for all. But voting alone won't do it. Winning politics is a 365 day [affair]. Work for the party and the candidates of your choice. Volunteer, advocate, lead, contribute..."

I hope everyone has a great spring. We encourage you to join us in our upcoming Gala as well as all the different events and activities we host at the office.

Sincerely,

Kim Gibson

Picture Description:
Kim Gibson at the 2019 AAPD
Leadership Awards Gala.



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 Note: Our computer lab is open every Monday-Thursday from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm.



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

Normal Business Hours

Mon. – Thurs. 8:30 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 or To order online: <http://squ.re/2TG4LPQ>**

We are closed on the following dates:

May 27 Memorial Day

July 4 Independence Day



Wish List:

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

Youth Support for conferences – please contact staff for information!

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