

The ABILITY LINK



Angelia White, Shikha Desai , & Katrina Parsons

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Social Media



@disabilitylink

www.disabilitylink.org

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



**disABILITY
LINK**
the center for rights & resources

Edited and Designed by William Daniels Social Media Specialist

Doggie Day

A Paws-itive Celebration for Service Dogs

The Decatur First Baptist Church lawn went to the dogs October 5th as friends, advocates, and owners celebrated the crucial work these service animals perform in support of people with disabilities.

Sponsored by disABILITY LINK, the annual Doggie Days was also created to offer education and awareness of the many physical tasks working dogs provide.

The afternoon event included vendors, hot dogs, a silent auction, pet photo booth, and tables with information related to disABILITY LINK's programs and services. The day culminated with a blessing of the animals by the Kelsey Lewis, the Church's Pastor for youth and families.

In the United States, approximately 500,000 service dogs are helping people, according to statistics provided by the U.S. Dept. of State. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service dogs must be given access to almost everywhere their human handlers go. They make it possible for people with disabilities to live independently and overcome the challenges of day-to-day life.

Some 170 countries have passed Disability Civil Rights laws similar to the ADA, and many have provisions related to service animals.

Although service dogs do provide emotional support by their very nature, that is not their objective. Per the ADA, working animals have been specifically trained to support necessary life tasks or health response functions for their owners. Support animals, solely for emotional support, are not considered service animals under the ADA, but some state or local governments may allow people to take them to public places.

disABILITY LINK would like to thank the following sponsors and those who donated to the silent auction in support of the promotion of choice and full participation in community life for people with disabilities:

Agave Restaurant

Alliance Theatre

Aurora Theatre

Calle Latina

City Dog Market

Farm Hounds / Whole Dog Market

Help for the People

Hollywood Feed

Dekalb Animal Service / Life Line Animal Shelter

Red Lobster

Sandra Lebrun, artist

Article by Lisa Parks



Picture Description:
Georgia State University students
posing with a dog
At Doggie Day



Picture Description:
Miriam Dejesus posing with
volunteers & a small dog, holding a
sign that says
Employment Program
At Doggie Day

Disability Resource and Career Expo

“Working Together to Transform disABILITY to ABILITY”

Previously disABILITY LINK hosted the MENA job fair, but recently developed our own Employment Network Association called disABILITY LINK’s Employment Network Association (DLENA). On October 22, 2019 we held our first but not last, Annual Resource Job Fair hosted at AMS Vans, Inc.

In an effort to make this a success, disABILITY LINK reached out to the community and different resources. We engaged in educating the consumers through our different LEAPS classes and one on one visits for job seeking skills and resume building and editing, interview skills, and after interview skills.

In addition, we held training classes on the “Elevator Speech”. An elevator speech is where you have 30 seconds (the time it take to ride an elevator) to tell someone who you are, what skills you have, and how the job relates to your interests. These are skills you should practice when applying for a job or going to a job fair.

The Resource job fair was a success with attendance around 50 job seekers. We had several employers including but not limited to Just Us Opportunities and Census 2020. Several individuals received on-site job offers. We look forward to next year as we grow to include many more employers and resources.



Article by Michelle Gavin

Picture Description:
Katrina Parsons, Miriam DeJesus
& Shikha Desai standing and
Smiling.

Atlanta Pride Festival

disABILITY LINK participated in the Atlanta Pride Festival for the second year to support and engage the LGBTQIAP+ community.

At disABILITY LINK, we have a group (LGBTQIAP++disABILITY) designed for those at the intersection of LGBTQIAP+ and disability. We focus on public policy discussion and advocacy, inclusive community in Queer spaces, and group social outings. We value the inherent worth of each individual, realizing all deserve dignity and respect. Inclusion of all groups, like the LGBTQIAP+ and disABILITY community, is a human right, not a special right.

Our booth attracted many people interested in our resources for themselves and for other individuals they may know who could benefit from our services. Educating people on our mission of Centers for Independent Living and the freedom of choice was informative for the public.

The Empowering our Youth program gained lots of interest amongst the Pride community. Many were interested in volunteer opportunities and other ways to support disABILITY LINK. Everyone loved seeing the service dog at the booth, which was another educational piece. The American Sign Language class was also popular with several.

Pride remains one of the keystone events allowing us to network and reach out to a broad scope of people throughout metro Atlanta. We always enjoy the progressive energy as well as the opportunity to connect with our community.

Article by Ava Cotliar



Picture Description: disABILITY LINK's intern Ava Cotliar standing at disability LINK's booth smiling

Empowering Young Adults

Locating Employment Avenues through Peer Support

The month of November was an exciting time for the Empowering Young Adults Locating Employment Avenues through Peer Support Group sometimes called the PRE-ETS group. This month focused on transportation. The young adults began the conversations discussing traveling independently and what that involves. They also discussed the potential to gain their drivers license. Rebecca Day Lewis, who is an occupational therapist at Children Health care of Atlanta, joined in the discussion of obtaining a license. The discussion centered around responsibilities that they have in life and what responsibilities they have in life and less about getting the license. These areas is what will determine if they will be a good driver or not. The discussion involved talking about how a vehicle is a major responsibility. In addition, the emphasize was place on how individuals have to be able to handle smaller responsibilities before they can handle the major and larger responsibilities. All of this gave the young adults an opportunity to be introspective about the prospects of their driving in the future without someone telling them they will never be able to drive.

We continue to go to schools to provide these skills to the young adults. We also host a summer program. To learn more about our different young adult programs contact Garrick Scott at gscott@disabilitylink.org or William Thomas at wthomas@disabilitylink.org.

Article by Garrick Scott



Picture Description: Garrick Scott & William Thomas standing smiling in disABILITY LINK's Office

April Conference

This year (APRIL) Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living Annual Conference was held in Grand Rapids Michigan. I flew in to Michigan on Thursday, October 24th, and flew back home on Monday, October 28th. I received a Youth scholarship through disABILITY LINK and the Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia (SILC) so I was able to attend the youth conference and the general conference. The theme was Reflect, Learn, and Act. The speakers were inspiring and there was a lot of food. One of my favorite break-out session was when the youths told their testimonies. Each expressed how the Youth Leadership Forum changed their life. This conference gave me more confidence to live an independent life.

A couple weeks before the conference I was having difficulty looking for a job, but the individuals that I met and spoke with at the conference motivated me. One of the guest speakers said, "We all get setbacks, but it is important to get back up." On Thursday night, I had dinner with a group of executive directors and I was able to learn more about the functions and regulations of different Center for Independent Livings. I also enjoyed meeting new people as well as celebrating with other staff members from disABILITY LINK who were attending the conference. I also enjoyed the break out session where Alexia and Google were demonstrated in order to make the individual's home more accessible. This was a fun and educational conference. The trip ended in the best place possible; at an ice cream shop.

Article by Shikha Desai



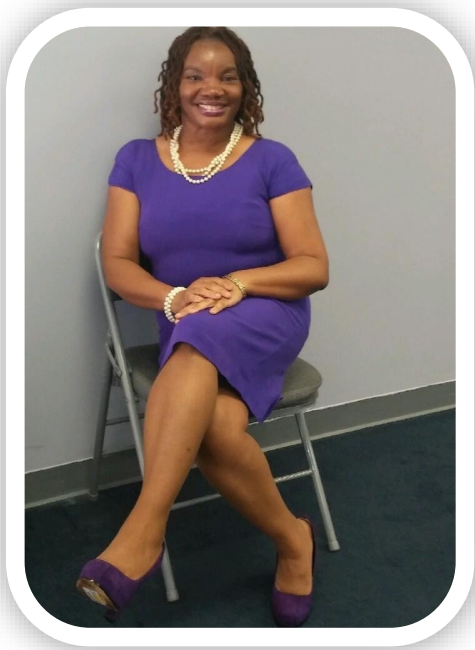
Picture Description: Shikha Desai at the APRIL Youth Conference speaking inside a microphone

Volunteering Program

Volunteering has many different meanings, what does it mean to you? I remember when I started volunteering many years ago, I did not think I would be here talking to you about Volunteering. Why do we volunteer? There are many reasons, but whatever the reason it's up to you as the individual. I never thought volunteering would turn into a job that I love. We all have a passion in life. Mine is assisting the volunteers and consumers of disABILITY LINK. What is your passion? It could be volunteering. Volunteering can open doors for you and you never know who's life you will impact.

This year we celebrate Leisa Williams as the 2019 Volunteer of the Year. This award is given to a volunteer who has gone above and beyond in volunteering. The recipient of the award is voted on by staff, consumers, other volunteers, and the community. Leisa was selected by a close vote, as we have many great volunteers. Leisa has showed a brightness in the office with her willingness to volunteer to do many tasks that help the staff and Consumers. We appreciate all she does and are excited to congratulate her on such an awesome award! Congratulations Leisa and thank you for your volunteerism.

Article by James Turner



Picture Description: Leisa Williams sitting in a chair smiling



Picture Description: A picture of Leisa Williams volunteer of the year award

Home Buyer Workshop

In November, we hosted a Home Buyer Workshop. The workshop took each participant through the Home Buying Process. This was an eight hour workshop that included lending agents, insurance agents, home inspectors, realtor, and a person telling how to correct their credit in the right way. The topics covered included:

- Learning about scams that are out there.
- Obtaining a realtor
- Seeing how much home you can afford
- How much money you need to buy a home
- What insurance are necessary when buying a home
- Inspection process
- Home improvements

The participants received a certificate to go towards buying a home for a deduction on the cost, and it lasts for a year.

We try to hold this workshop on a continual basis, so if you missed it this time, make sure to join in next time we hold it. For more information contact Angela Williams at awilliams@disabilitylink.org.

Article by Travis Evans



Picture Description: Picture of the Home Buyer Workshop class in disABILITY LINK's activity room

Peer Support Training

When I entered the activity room on December 3, 2019, I was greeted with a very excited, pleasant and wholehearted “welcome”! The facilitator of the workshop introduced herself as Linda Pogue. Before I could introduce myself she said to me, “you must be William”. I was quite impressed! Internally, I said to myself “wow” a facilitator who has done her due diligence in preparation for the workshop/training in the review of the profile of her audience of participant’s who would be in attendance. As other workshop participant’s entered the room, Linda greeted everyone with the same enthusiasm, respect and strong welcome to the workshop that would last for the next three (3) days.

The workshop sessions were exciting, engaging and well planned. **Day 1:** We started with a warm welcome and introduction of all participant’s who were representing themselves and/or various entities. We learned about “What peer support is?”, “Why peer support is important?”, “What knowledge and skills do I need to become a peer supporter?” And, the importance of listening and communicating. On **Day 2:** We continued to learn and practice our listening and communication skills through the use of role-playing. I found this to be quite engaging, self-revelatory and informative about the individuality that we may bring as peer supporters through the sharing of our experiences to those individuals that we support enhancing a person’s self-efficacy and self-determination. **Day 3:** We continued in our learning about helping to foster individual self-determination, supporting people in the community and in their finding work and developing relationships. We also learned about and concluded our training by discussing the importance about setting boundaries as a peer supporter, knowing when and how to ask for help as peer supporters helping one another.

During our training individuals and I felt comfortable sharing emotion-filled experiences and gave testimonials that were relative to the topics discussed during our daily sessions. I found the group activities that we were engaged in support of workshop objectives to be invigorating, thought provoking and inspiring. I feel that I have been a superb introduction to peer support and what it entails. I look forward to putting-into-practice the skills, tools and role-playing strategies gained as a result of peer support training.

I would recommend the peer support training to all educational and social services professionals. I believe the skills, tools and hands-on role playing strategies to be critical in our engaging and supporting people who we may come into contact with during our day-to-day living and in the delivery of services that we provide through our respective agencies, government or non-government entities.

Article by William Thomas



Picture Description: Group photo of William Thomas & the peer support class

The Home Usability Project (HUP) and Out and About (OAA) Research study

disABILITY LINK is participating in as a partner with the Research and Training Center on Promoting Interventions for Community Living phase 2 project. The Home Usability Project (HUP) and Out and About (OAA) research study training revolves around how people participate in their daily life activities, both inside the home and within the community.

Would you like to actively participate in the Home Usability and Out and About project?

As a participant you will receive \$25 for all study related surveys you complete (you can receive between \$75-100 over a span of 9-14 months).

To be a participant you must:

- Be a disABILITY LINK consumer
- Be 18+ years of age
- Have a physical disability (co-occurring disabilities okay)
- Not live in a group home or nursing home
- Not have a legal guardian
- Live in the disABILITY LINK service area

If you are interested contact:

Margo Waters

Disability Rights and Housing Independent Living Lead Specialist

404-687-8890 Ext. 119

OR:

Angela Williams

Assistive Technology, Deaf-Blind and Independent Living Program

Supervisor

404-687-8890 x117

We look forward to hearing from you!

Article by Margo Waters

It's Almost Tax Time, Let's Be Prepared

The 2020 tax filing season is almost upon us once again. There are many deductions and credits available to taxpayers. First, let's discuss the difference in a deduction and a credit. A tax deduction lowers your taxable income and thus reduces your tax liability. A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in your actual tax bill. Here are some common credits and deductions to consider:

American Opportunity credit

Who can claim it: Students or their parents can claim the credit on their taxes for a maximum of four years. The American Opportunity credit is specifically for college students.

How it works: You can lower your tax bill by up to \$2,500 if you paid that much in undergraduate education expenses last year. The American opportunity tax credit lets you claim all of the first \$2,000 you spent on tuition, books, equipment and school fees — but not living expenses or transportation — plus 25% of the next \$2,000, for a total of \$2,500.

Lifetime Learning credit

Who can claim it: This credit applies to undergraduate, graduate and non-degree or vocational students, and there's no limit on the number of years you can claim it. So it's ideal for graduate students or anyone taking classes to develop new skills.

How it works: You can claim 20% of the first \$10,000 you paid toward tuition and fees for a maximum of \$2,000. While you cannot deduct living expenses or transportation, you can claim books or supplies needed for coursework.

Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC or EITC) is a refundable tax credit for low- and moderate-income workers. The amount depends on income and number of children. People without kids can qualify. If you didn't claim the earned income credit when you filed your taxes in the last three years but you think you qualified for it, the IRS encourages you to let it know so you can get that money back.

Property Tax Deduction

You may deduct up to \$10,000 (\$5,000 if married filing separately) for a combination of property taxes and state and local income taxes. You might be able to deduct property and real estate taxes you pay on other property. You cannot, however, claim deductions for water and sewer services, homeowners association assessments, or taxes you have not yet paid. Also, check the registration paperwork on your car or other movable assets. You might be paying taxes on those, too, and a portion is likely deductible.

Mortgage Interest Deduction

In general you can deduct the mortgage interest you paid during the tax year for your primary home or a second home.

The important thing to remember is good recordkeeping goes a long way when it is time to prepare for the upcoming tax year. Gathering your records now may save you time and efforts as the tax deadline gets closer. As always, your accountant or tax preparer can best assist you in lowering your taxes or maximizing your return.

Information source:

<https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/taxes/tax-deductions-tax-breaks/>

Article by Felicia Banks





disABILITY LINK is participating in GAgives, the state's biggest annual giving campaign.

If you can afford a donation of any size, it will be put to great use supporting independent living for people with disabilities!

This fundraising link will be live until December 31.

<https://www.gagives.org/story/Js40g>



Executive Director Message

**"Disability is not a brave struggle or 'courage in the face of adversity.
' Disability is an art. It's an ingenious way to live." - Neil Marcus**

This quote is just one of many that come to mind when I think about disABILITY LINK and our mission. This quote also challenges individuals on the way they think or view people with disabilities. To a great majority of the population, people with disabilities are seen as objects of pity. In addition, people with disabilities are thought as of having to be taking care of, protected, managed, and held to a lower standard.

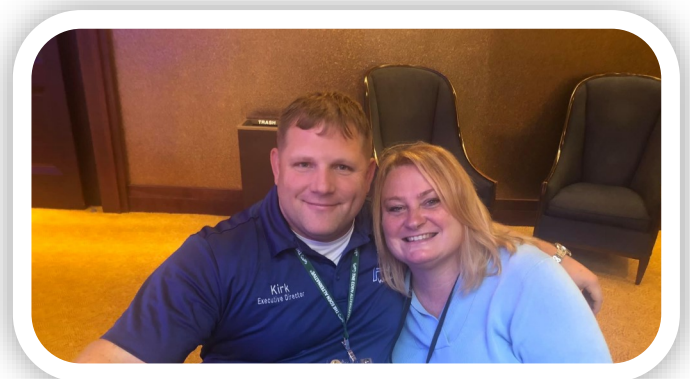
These views are not only dangerous but also insulting. These views take away basic civil rights of people with disabilities to live in the community of their choice with or without supports, be the experts in their own lives, make their own decisions, find equal employment opportunities, and so much more. When we view people with disabilities with pity, we are focusing on what they are unable to do and not on what they can and are doing.

I want to challenge each of you to stop feeling sorry for people with disabilities. Focus on the person and their abilities. I encourage you to stop by our office and learn about the different opportunities to maintain or increase independence in the lives of people with disabilities for you, your family member, employees, community or simply because you want to learn. We have so many great things happening in our 12 counties. Join us in volunteering, learning, sponsorships, and much more.

I hope everyone has a great end of the year and a fresh New Year!

Kim Gibson

Picture Description: Kim Gibson and Kirk Holcombe sitting together smiling at a vendor table at The 25th Annual APRIL Conference



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 2:00 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 Events

April 18-(Saturday) disABILITY LINK’s
Celebrating 30 years of the ADA!
1990-2020
6:00 pm-10:00 pm
For more information contact our office at
404-687-8890

To purchase tickets visit
<https://squareup.com/store/disability-action-center-of-ga-GALA2020/>

We will be closed on the following dates:

December 20th through January 1st 2020
February 17 Presidents 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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