

# The ABILITY LINK



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## Social Media



**@disabilitylink**

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

Advocating for human rights,  
not special rights



## Transportation

These past several months we helped consumers with Transportation and housing. Even though the MARTA buses for fixed routes were not running, We supported consumers with filling out the MARTA mobility form. We held a transportation workshop through zoom on June 18 focused on transportation, mobility, and different issues related to COVID-19 and the pandemic.

MARTA mobility is designed to assist individual's with disabilities to participate in their community independently through meeting transportation needs. While the driver's are very helpful, the timeliness of these rides still are below expectations.

In June, disABILITY LINK became a participating agency to provide Uber rides to individuals with disabilities for a very brief period during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are able to do this only because of promo codes provided to disABILITY LINK by United Way of Greater Atlanta 2-1-1 (2-1-1), who is partnering with Uber to help distribute rides as part of Uber's commitment to distribute 10MM discounted rides ("10MM Commitment). The purpose of this program is to meet the transportation needs of healthcare workers, seniors, and other people in need. This was especially important for those who have lost affordable transportation with the decrease in MARTA services. Unfortunately some individuals reported that they are still being denied by UBER drivers when they have a service animal. Advocacy and education continues in this area.

## Housing

Affordable and accessible housing continues to be an ongoing issue for people with disabilities. This is one of the reasons individuals end up in nursing homes. disABILITY LINK continues to work with individuals on locating resources, advocating, and providing peer support for accessibility. During the pandemic this has been an even bigger increase of a problem. As we advocate for affordable and accessible housing, we encourage you to reach out to your legislatures on this.

**Article by Shikha Desai**



Picture Description: Black & White Uber logo

Picture Description: United Way Greater Atlanta logo



## Barriers to Voting

When I went to vote on June 9th, I thought I would have an experience similar to previous ones: get in, get my card, sit in front of the machine and cast my vote. I knew there would be a paper aspect that I would have to verify with my phone, since there were no machines to scan the document for people with print related disabilities. What I didn't expect was how grossly unprepared the polling location was.

After all was said and done, I was physically in front of the voting machine for over four hours before I was able to actually get into my ballot independently. Over the more than four hour period I was asked three times if I just wanted someone to read the screen and make selections, I rejected the offer each time. After all, it's my right to cast a vote privately and independently. The salt in the wound for this experience was the fact that the Secretary of State's office lied to me and the disability community multiple times. I attended two demonstrations of the new devices and the accessibility never worked either time. The biggest failure being at Independent Living Day at the Capitol when people with print and physical disabilities were unable to try the machine.

I had been told, multiple times, that the machines would be fully functional come Election Day. That was a lie. In fact, my polling location didn't even have the controller that people with physical and print related disabilities were supposed to use to control the machine. Part of my four hour wait was for one to be sent from downtown. I did make use of my time waiting. I documented my experience, called the Georgia Advocacy Office, began drafting my complaint, called the National Federation of the Blind of Georgia to also log my issues and posted my experience on social media, tagging relevant individuals like the Secretary of State, Atlanta Mayor and news media.

Voting is a right and we cannot allow inaccessibility to exclude us from exercising that right. So, speak up, take up space and don't give in until you are able to perform your civic duty independently.

**Article by Danny Housley**



Picture Description:  
Danny Housley testing  
out a voting machine

## Coping with Coronavirus: Daily Check- In

During this pandemic, disABILITY LINK designed a peer led group for people with disabilities to come together and discuss on how individuals are coping, share experiences, and provide ongoing updates related to COVID-19. The group provides peer support on a variety of issues and discuss how each are reducing stress, anxiety, and advocating for themselves. At times, we have guest speakers. During one group, Katherine Corey Jones, author, provided insight from her book titled, "Hope is Real Mental."

For information on free testing for COVID-19, information can be found online via the applicable Department of Health and; if you find yourself overly stressed over COVID or anything else, please be sure to check out the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration website:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/> for great stress relieving ideas as well as emergency resources.

As a friendly reminder:

1. Wash your hands frequently
2. If possible, keep a mask on when you are out in public and;
3. Practice social distancing!

Stay safe and I can't wait to see you on the zoom call!

Join us from personal computer, cell phone or landlines By calling 1-646-558-8656 or by going to <https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting. Meeting ID is 404-687-8890 and password is 1901

[Zoom Room 1](#) one click link

## Article by Juanita Anderson

Picture Description:  
A multiple people with disabilities image with disABILITY LINK logo on it



## Empowering Our Youth Virtual Class

In March, the pandemic threw us for a loop. Students with disabilities were isolated at home with not a whole lot to do. disABILITY LINK stepped up and began holding youth Held youth transitional virtual classes using Zoom technology. We held two (2) classes from April through the end of May. The first class 10 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. for ages (10 – 13) and second class 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. for ages (14 and up). Student participants were from the Atlanta Metro area, South Georgia as well as the Southeast region. One individual wrote:

“Hello Mr. Garrick and Ms. Gibson, I pray that you guys are staying safe, sanitized, and sane during this pandemic. Mr. Garrick I want to give you praise right now for the inspiration that you provide to our young people with physical, social, and emotional challenges. The Empowering Our Youth virtual classes have been awesome and amazing for me and the youth in our Wraparound program. We really enjoy joining the classes Monday-Thursday as each day it gets better and better. I know because one of my youth that I assisted with getting on each day, now she is getting on the call without my support and waiting on me to join the call.” and ended with “Mr. Garrick you really know how to engage too days youth and encourage them to think outside the box. This class gives the youth something to look forward to and they are learning, having fun, and meeting new people. One of my youth has no friends. During our CFTM she identified some of the youth that she met on the empowerment call. Now that was big for her and her mother was so surprised. I can go on and on about the wonderful things that has happen for the youth that I am working with as a result of The “Empowering Youth” class. Keep up the good work.” The letter ended with “Thanks for all you guys do at disABILITY LINK it is so needed for our youth in this day and time.” This letter was provide by Hope D. Swift with her authorization to share the letter and her name.

**Article by Kim Gibson**

Picture Description:  
disABILITY LINK logo



## Empowering Our Youth

### Locating Employment Avenues through Peer Support Summer Program

The 2020 summer EOY program is off to a great start! Even as COVID-19 has done its part to change what the disABILITY LINK summer program looks like, the program is still striving using a virtual Zoom class. The students are engaging, learning as well as bonding. We have covered a variety of topics ranging from advocating for yourself, social interactions, as well as employment. The students have also developed a short script which can be used by all of them as they attempt to make cold calls to businesses in regards to potential employment. They practice with each other and encourage each other in this process. They have also watched videos which demonstrate that although you may not do things in a typical way you still have value to your community. The students have also begun to call each other engaging in social interaction outside of class. We are at the halfway point for this summer program and look forward to doing so much more.

For more information on joining in contact Garrick Scott at [gscott@disabilitylink.org](mailto:gscott@disabilitylink.org)

**Article by Garrick Scott**



Picture Description: Garrick Scott teaching our EOY Virtual Class in disABILITY LINK conference room

## 2020 AAPD Student Internship Program

The 2020 Student Internship program offered by and through disABILITY LINK is off to a great start despite the global pandemic (COVID-19) and the civil unrest that is currently plaguing our country and abroad. Student interns came into the program ready and eager to learn by and through their participation in the program. Students were early to arrive to first week of orientation and peer support training offered to them by disABILITY LINK. During the orientation, Students learned about the of the AAPD, disability history, and other the independent living movement. Maria Towne, President and CEO of AAPD and Christine Lao, Programs Manager of AAPD joined us virtually to welcome students and share additional information relative to advocacy for and by people with disabilities, and the history behind the internship program. Students appeared deeply engaged in the information being disseminated to them both in-person and virtually.

The first week flew by, and the second week began with each intern beginning their internship with the host sites, four days of the week, then meeting up on Friday to debrief, decompress, receive additional training and be provided with additional support as they needed. The Student interns came in on Friday eager to share the exciting new things they learned, skills development and areas of responsibility given by supervisors. The experiences shared by AAPD interns were awesome. In addition to the supports and sharing, each week holds Peer Certification Training, which will allow each of them to receive a certification upon completion.

Each week follows the same format. In the third week, Interns shared some challenges that they were experiencing as they navigated teleworking, meeting deadlines and expectations of their site supervisors. One student intern shared her difficult experience with making calls to potential donors, a responsibility that she was given by site supervisor. In an effort to do this, a role playing exercise was completed in an effort, to make her more comfortable with task assigned. The AAPD student rose to the occasion mastering the script and gaining the confidence needed to perform the task.

We are excited to continue this adventure through the summer. Stay posted for more blogs and for an article or two from the interns in the next newsletter.

Picture Description:

AAPD logo



**Article by William Thomas**

## **COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges, and Legacy for People Living with Disabilities**

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has unsettled a significant part of our daily lives but its smacks are mostly critical for people living with disabilities, who may be faced with provocations like finding a suitable care that is well adapted to enable adequate social distancing or physically adapting to certain instructions on maintaining hygiene. In addition to the common challenges that accompany this pandemic, there are specific provocations plaguing the lives of people living with disabilities that are worthy of note. The first is communication. For people who have vision, hearing or intellectual disabilities, it can be daunting to get information due to inaccessibility of popular news source which is key to the COVID-19 public health response.

The second challenge has to do with configuring prescribed public health methods such as social distancing and hand washing. For example, regular hand washing may not always be effective for people with certain type of physical disabilities, and public health policies are not designed to include people with disabilities thereby leaving a vacuum in guidance (JHU, 2020). People living with disabilities who make use of personal aids and caregivers also need to be taken into consideration since they cannot take part in social distancing in the same way as others. The third challenge facing people with disabilities is fair access to healthcare services, which is an age-long barrier aggravated by COVID-19. This ranges from getting tested for coronavirus to being seen in an emergency room. For example, people with disabilities who rely on state mobility services will not have access to drive-up testing. Also, the use of personal protective equipment can pose a barrier to communication for people with hearing loss.



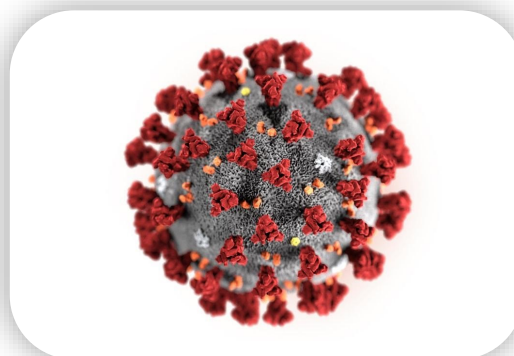
## Continued from page 8

Furthermore, the distribution of medical resources is a problem. There is growing concern that medical resource distribution including ventilators may be prejudiced against people with disabilities and complaints have been filed in many states against these conservative policies (Campbell, Gilyard, Sinclair, Sternberg, & Kailes, 2009). This problem reflects a cardinal misconception that people living with disabilities are incapable of having a high quality of life and consequently, their lives may be compromised. Despite these challenges, we can still hope for a bright future. There are ample opportunities to amend how people with disabilities are included in this trying time. COVID-19 has brought this conversation to the table and the legacy should be a relentless attention on disability disparities and persistent attempts to solve the problem of disability inequity.

## References

- Campbell, V. A., Gilyard, J. A., Sinclair, L., Sternberg, T., & Kailes, J. I. (2009). Preparing for and responding to pandemic influenza: Implications for people with disabilities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99, S294-S300, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.162677>
- John Hopkins University (2020). COVID-19 poses unique challenges for people with disabilities. Retrieved from <https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/04/23/how-covid-19-affects-people-with-disabilities/>

Picture Description:  
Coronavirus image



**Article by Francis Ejezie**

## **disABILITY LINK congratulates Danny Housley on the Champion of the Credit Builder's Alliance Award**

disABILITY LINK Board Chair Danny Housley receives the Champion of the Credit Builder's Alliance Award for his work with the Credit-Able program and building credit and capacity for people with disabilities in Georgia. His work with making the Credit Builder's Alliance a more accessible and inclusive place was also a contributing factor to receiving this national award.



Picture Description: Danny Housley Smiling

## Executive Director Message

Dear Family and Friends:

I hope that everyone is staying safe. We certainly have missed you at our offices. disABILITY LINK began the process of opening our physical office beginning on 5-26-2020 in stages. After careful monitoring, we have adjusted dates to re-open fully. We ask that you call ahead to ensure our offices are open. We will continue to provide updates through our social media sites.

Although our physical offices are closed, we are still available to provide our services. We are still holding virtual contacts through zoom technology, Microsoft Teams, telephone, and emails.

We are addressing COVID-19 in several different ways. disABILITY LINK has received dedicated funding to assist those consumers or potential consumers who currently are facing issues due to the pandemic. We can assist in areas of assistive technology, returning to the community, and other related services such as food security, shopping, rent, and other items of necessity due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we have a dedicated COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team (CPRT). Please contact us for more information.

As an organization that is run by and for people with disabilities and advocates for full inclusion of all, the disparities of the pandemic, compounded by recent tragic events, remind us that there is a long way to go in working toward a more just and inclusive society for all. disABILITY LINK has never been silent against discrimination and inequality towards anyone, and to that end, we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in continuing to work for peace, justice, accessibility, and inclusion. Will you join us? We have several peer led groups that provide guidance, training, and develop action plans to address the different issues.

Please continue to stay safe during this time and we look forward to seeing you in the future.

**Kim Gibson**  
**Executive Director**

Picture Description:  
disABILITY LINK logo



# 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://us02web.zoom.us/j/4046878890?pwd=dm9WTjA5aTBmMldscVplVTBqUzFSZz09>

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 and password is 1901. Please note: All video conferencing is recorded. You can join in without signing up.

For additional information and accommodations please contact our office.

Picture Description:  
Zoom logo



# 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

## We will be closed on the following dates:

Monday , September 7 2020-Labor Day

## Workshops

Join us through audio and/or video conferencing for all our workshops

Join us  
From personal computer, cell phone or landlines  
By calling 1-646-558-8656 or by going to  
<https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting.  
Meeting ID is  
404-687-8890 & password is 1901



Picture Description:  
disABILITY LINK logo

## Wish List:

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

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

## Contact Us:

1901 Montreal Rd. Suite 102 Tucker, Ga 30084

**404-687-8890 Voice**

**404-381-8117 Video**

**404-687-8298 Fax**



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