

# The ABILITY LINK



Picture description Jacqueline Lopez, Shikha Desai, & Jamilah Shepard sitting at a table in front of disABILITY LINK office

## What's inside

## Social Media

**Youth Virtual Class**  
**AAPD Graduation**  
**Consumer Picnic**



**@disabilitylink**

**Why should we wear a mask**  
**Covid-19 Updates**  
**Voting & Outreach**  
**ADA from 1990-2020**  
**Accessibility.com**  
**Executive Director Message**  
**Zoom**  
**Office Closures**  
**Wish list/Contact us**

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

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



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

## Youth Virtual Class

Although this is our third summer facilitating our “Empowering Young Adults Locating Employment Avenues through Peer Support” (EOY LEAPS) Summer Program, every year is different, simply because there are always new students along with some former students. This year was even more different than before, as this year was the first time the summer program was completely virtual. Even though we were in the midst of a pandemic, there still was a high demand for programs for the students we serve for the summer. This was one of the reasons we made sure that the summer program was offered virtually. The facilitators were William Thomas and Garrick Scott.

The program covered 10 weeks and maintained a high level of attendance and energy. The subjects ranged from the traditional health and transportation discussions to subjects such as using social media to interact and understanding other disabilities.

The students learned a lot. During the program, we had guest speakers discussing various topics including: voting, yoga, and the history of the ADA. During the course of the program, the students joined in other classes that they found on the disABILITY LINK Dates to Remember calendar and even though the summer has ended, they continue to participate.

**Article by Garrick Scott**



Picture Description:  
William Thomas & Garrick Scott with  
face masks on  
sitting down at a table

## 2020 AAPD Graduation

I consider my experience at the 2020 AAPD graduation both a privilege and honor. Although I served as a peer supporter to the student interns, co-facilitator of the weekly Friday debriefing, and informational sessions, I also had the assume privilege of serving as the master of ceremonies (MC) of the graduation program. The graduation ceremony was greatly attended. I estimate that the number of attendees was approximately 70 people who either joined us in-person or via zoom. We had distinguished people in attendance such Danny Housley, Chair of disABILITY LINK Board of Directors, Maria Towne, President and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), and Christine Liao, Programs manager with the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). Our distinguished guests participated in the ceremony by offering words to the interns and audience who were in attendance in-person and virtually.

Additionally, those persons serving as external mentors were in attendance. Mentors in attendance included the following: Angela Pratt, Cheryl-Ann Esmond, Danny Housley, Nicole Golston, Paul McLennan and Stassi Jackson. Each mentor spoke in support of the graduates that they were assigned to work with sharing experiences gained as a result of working with student interns. Peer supporters, James Turner, Ken Mitchell, Miriam DeJesus, Shikha Desai, William Daniels and William Thomas, were given an opportunity to share a few words highlighting their working with student interns during the ten (10) – week period.

The Executive Director presented and made several surprise announcements to graduates for their participation and successful completion. First, she announced that graduates will be able to keep the new laptops that were loaned to them at the beginning of the internship experience to be used as support to them in the fulfilling of work and/or college expectations. Secondly, the Executive Director also announced that the interns would receive an additional stipend for support of completing the program.



## Continued from page 3

As stated earlier about the attendance at the graduation and the surprise announcements made by Executive Director, that, it is in my estimation that those two (2) elements added to the feeling of energy and excitement, anticipation and accomplishment of both graduates and all of those who participated in their success. The program continued with each graduate engaging the audience in their final presentations as a culminating activity in support of their candidacy for their certificate of completion. The graduation concluded with the presentation of certificates of completion to the graduates.

**Article by William Thomas**



Picture Description:  
disABILITY LINK/AAPD Summer  
Internship Program Graduates  
holding their certificate

## Annual Family & Friends Picnic

August 28, 2020 was a little bit different, this year. What I mean by this is we were dealing with the pandemic called COVID-19. Having this picnic, meant incorporating safety and CDC guidance to have the Family & Friend's Picnic. Tables were spread out with sneeze guards placed for protection, food was kept for safety and allowed for social distancing.

The weather was perfect with a cloudy sky but perfect for outdoors. There were tables set up to share COVID-19 information as well as our other programs such as employment, youth, volunteering, health and wellness, and much more. We provided face masks and hand sanitizer. Other COVID-19 related items were distributed as individuals reported a need.

We had games, door prizes, and Karaoke. At first, a few buses and cars showed up, but as the day went on, more and more showed up. In the end close to 100 individuals stopped by to visit and grab a hotdog or two. Food, music, drinks, games, and information added to the fun. Our 50/50 raffle was held and won by Derrick Barnes, one of our staff. Derrick gave his winnings back to support disABILITY LINK.

While we had to remind individuals to social distance, along with all of our signs of release of liability and reminders, the event was well received. It was a time of getting out safely and coming together as a team for staff, consumers, board members, and the community. Like we always say "teamwork makes the dream work" and "safety first". This was just a great event.

**Article by James Turner**



Picture Description:  
James Turner & Lisa Parks at the Family  
and Friend's picnic



Picture Description: James Turner speaking in a  
microphone with a group of people behind and  
in front of him at our  
Annual Family & Friends Picnic

## WHY SHOULD WE WEAR A FACE MASK?

So many questions concerning wearing face coverings in public places are being asked these days. Notably among them is, "If my chances of contracting COVID-19 are negligible, why should I wear a face mask?" There is no doubt that this is the reason why many people refuse to cover their nose and mouth while in public. Some however, have a medical reason that does not allow them to wear a face mask, so we must also realize that. However, the recommendation by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention is that people should endeavor to wear face coverings in public settings where it is difficult to maintain social distancing (e.g. pharmacies, grocery stores, parks) mostly areas where community-based transmission is high.

The reason for this is that in many viral diseases, an infected person becomes infectious after the incubation period of the virus. The incubation period is the timeframe from exposure to exhibition of symptoms. However, the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread before symptoms appear by coughing, sneezing and speaking at close range. Face coverings that are made of cloth are recommended because they are affordable and accessible. When people opt for cloth face coverings, it helps to preserve surgical masks and N-95 masks for healthcare workers who are responsible for direct care of patients with COVID-19.

The rationale behind the recommendation of face coverings as a strategy for curbing the spread of COVID-19 is that if I wear my face covering to protect you from me, and you wear your face covering to protect me from you, it simply means that we can all significantly decrease our risk of transmitting the virus that causes COVID-19 to one another. This simple act, together with social distancing and regular handwashing or use of hand sanitizer will be crucial in curbing the spread of COVID-19 as we go back to our normal activities.

### Article by Francis Ejezie

#### Picture Description:

James Turner, Catherine Knight, Lee Gavin, & Francis Ejezie sitting around a disABILITY LINK display table with face masks on.





## The COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team

Coronavirus has dramatically changed the way people in our community attain access to healthcare, to food, and to their communities. disABILITY LINK recognizes that people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable both the effects of the disease and to the isolation it has produced. With that in mind, we have, with the support of the CARES Act, created a pandemic response team with programs and workshops designed to support our consumers as COVID-19 persists. Our programs are wide ranging, and include workshops to discuss ways to mitigate COVID-19 transmission risks, identify way to locate resources for financial support, among many others. These workshops are held bi-monthly via Zoom on the second fourth Monday of each month from 2:00 – 3:00 pm. These workshops are for you, and I encourage you to join us, to provide feedback, and to let us know what you would like to see in future sessions.

We know that is very common to feel isolated, as many of us are required to be physically separate from our loved ones and our communities of choice. To help address sense of distance and isolation that so many of us feel, we hold a “COVID-19 Check-in” Monday through Thursday of each week, from 3:00 – 4:00 pm via Zoom. The Check-in is an open-ended opportunity for you to join us and discuss whatever is going on in your daily life, good or bad, and to share techniques for coping with stress and isolation.

Due to the necessities of communicating from a distance, many of us are tasked with using technology in new ways, and in new applications. To address the resulting learning curve that many of us experience, we hold weekly computer classes to help you learn the essential skills needed to navigate our increasingly digital world. Don't worry if you're new to computers and technology—we're here to meet you where you are and support your skill development—even if your current skill level is just switching on the power button. Our class is from 10:00 am – 11:00 am every Wednesday, with a new topic each week. Please join us, and tell us what you'd like to learn.

If you'd like something a bit more advanced, we hold a Website Building workshop after each computer class from 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, each Wednesday. We review various website building and ecommerce platforms, and work together to construct example and template websites based on participant feedback. This could be useful to you if you've always wanted to build a personal or business site of your own, but have perhaps found the process a bit intimidating.

As I noted above, our programs are constantly evolving and improving based on your participation and feedback. Please check out our monthly Dates to Remember for more information on our programs and how to make the most of what we offer

Lastly, as you know, that the core of disABILITY LINK's work is dedicated to the promotion of choice and independence for people with disabilities. Critical to that mission is civic participation, and we encourage you to confirm your voter registration status and to make a plan to vote, by whatever method works for you. Our Team's Voting Specialist, Jamilah Shepard, is here to answer your questions and support you to make your most essential voice heard. Check out Jamilah's section in this very newsletter for additional information.

**Article by Michael Melton**

## **Absentee voting during the COVID Pandemic and Outreach:**

For the last two months, I have been out in the community directly providing information services and delivering personal protective equipment to individuals in various counties. This year has proven to have unique demands in regards to outreach; How do I deliver services while maintaining social distance? What method of outreach is most efficient for delivering services? These questions have no easy or concrete answer. Though with the help of a sneeze guard, masks and hand sanitizer, we're making it happen!

Given the unique nature of this election cycle, mistakes made by officials leading to thousands of voter information being lost in Georgia, untimely changes made to the United States Postal Service, and general confusion about how to exercise the right to vote while being compliant with certain guidelines, there's a lot of questions. However, to the best of my ability, I can provide some answers.

### **First things first, check your voter registration.**

You can do this online at the Georgia My Voter Page: <https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>. On this website, you can also update your address. Be advised that doing so may change your polling location.

If you're **voting absentee, get your ballot request in by Friday, October 30, 2020**. If you have not received a request form in the mail by now, you can find the request form on the Georgia Secretary of State Website. (If you type in 'Georgia Secretary of State Absentee ballot' on google, the first link will lead you directly where you need to go). You can either fill out the PDF fillable on a computer or print it out and fill it out manually. However you decide to fill out your absentee ballot request, you can send it back to your county registrars via fax, email, in person, or mail. There is a link on the SOS (Secretary of State) absentee ballot page that will assist you in locating your county registrar.

This election cycle is projected to be a historic event in terms of voter turn-out, with record numbers of people voting absentee for the first time. Given recent changes to USPS, consider getting your ballot requests in early or early voting in person.

**The early voting dates in Georgia begin Monday October 12, 2020 and run through Friday, October 30, 2020.** If you requested an absentee ballot and need to hand it in in-person, you may go to your designated polling place to do so. You will need to tell a poll worker so they can allow you to fill out the necessary affidavit.



## Continued from page 8

The importance of exercising your right to vote cannot be overstated. Close to 50 Million citizens in the nation have a disability, and 16 million of those individuals voted in 2018. There is immense power in the disability communities voice, and with voting as a vehicle, the disability community can make a huge impact! If I can help you in any way, I am here to support you.

**Article by Jamilah Shepard**



Picture Description: Jamilah Shepard sitting down at a disABILITY LINK covered table helping people register to vote and providing information on COVID-19 resources.

**“Vote as if your Life Depended on  
it...Because it Does”**

**(Justin Dart, 1930-2002)**

***Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down,”***  
**George H. W. Bush, July 26, 1990**

**2020 - The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act**


“Three weeks ago we celebrated our nation’s Independence Day. Today we’re here to rejoice in and celebrate another ‘independence day,’ one that is long overdue. With today’s signing of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, every man, woman, and child with a disability can now pass through once-closed doors into a bright new era of equality, independence, and freedom,” President George H. W. Bush – July 26, 1990

Picture below displays on this day in 1990, President George Bush sat next to Justin Dart, Rev. Harold Wilkie, Sandra Parrino, and Evan Kemp as he signed the ADA into Law.



What do you think about the situation of people with disabilities in 2020; 30 years after the signing of the American with Disabilities Act (the ADA)? Are the promises fulfilled? Is everything in your life fully accessible and inclusive? Any problems with employment? (Title I)...public services? (Title II)...public accommodations? (Title III)...telecommunications? (Title IV)...miscellaneous? (Title V). How much has changed in the past 30 years? Do you feel your civil rights are honored?

It is not possible to compress 30 years of the ADA, let alone acknowledge and credit the activism that led to the ADA and anticipate the future in one short newsletter article, but here are some considerations. Since 1990, there have been vast improvements in community participation and independent living for people with disabilities; we are living and working in the community; been elected to Congress; serving in state legislatures; having families; running businesses; starring in TV shows; living our lives...although there are still many people with disabilities who do not have these opportunities. We each have our own experiences, but the numbers tell a story, here are a few examples of the current disparities experienced by the disability community:



According to the U.S. Department of Labor, people with disabilities have an overall unemployment rate of almost 70%, far greater than other “minority” groups – about 20% of people with disabilities are in the labor force, while 67% of people without disabilities are working.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports that while people with disabilities are about 20% of the population, approximately 43% of homeless adults are people with disabilities. In July 2019, the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice notes the disproportionate experience of homelessness by the disability community and connects that to significant issues with employment, health, income and social isolation. People with disabilities are more than 30% of the population experiencing poverty, unsurprising while we experience a high rate of unemployment, sub-minimum wages and the average social security payment being 44% below poverty level.

As per the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), the 20% of Americans who live with a disability are at least 30% of people killed by law enforcement. A recent Washington Post tally found that 25% of people shot and killed by the police had a mental health disability.

The Community Survey (an aspect of the Census Bureau) calculates the number of people with disabilities living in institutional settings (including nursing homes, hospitals, correctional and juvenile facilities) as a proportion of the total number of people with disabilities. In Georgia 5% of residents with disabilities live in institutions, in part demonstrating the Medicaid institutional bias (easier to receive Medicaid support to live in an institution than for living in the community).

So while people with disabilities are 20% of the population, we are only 2% of the people you see on the screen (and then mostly played by actors without disabilities). This recent New York Times article, about actors with disabilities, illustrates the multi-dimensional way people with disabilities can be included or excluded from mainstream life - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/25/t-magazine/actors-disability-theater-film-tv.html>.

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) briefly reviews the history of the disability community since the Second World War as a part of their celebration of the ADA - <https://www.aapd.com/ada30/>. Many would say, “We’ve come a long way, things are better,” and we could also say, “What’s taking so long?”



## Continued from page 11

Retired Senator Tom Harkin, the lead sponsor in the U.S. Senate for the ADA, states the intentions of the ADA are full participation, equal opportunity, independent living and economic self-sufficiency – he says that good progress has been made in the first three goals in the past thirty years, but not in economic self-sufficiency....and the disability community cannot be fully included without it.

If we want to ensure the disability community keeps and extends our civil rights, if we want to improve community inclusion and independent living opportunities (addressing disproportionate unemployment, institutionalization, homelessness, poverty, etc.), we need to vote for legislators who take these issues as seriously as we do ourselves. It is of concern that people with disabilities are less likely to register to vote and even less likely to vote than people without disabilities – this is a disparity we can address as an individual and on a community scale!

Do you know everything you want to about the ADA? You can find all kinds of information on the web – take a look for yourself, maybe start with <https://www.ada.gov/> - or at the Regional ADA Technical Advice Center <https://www.adasoutheast.org/> - reviewing these sites could take you a long time...but answer a wide range of questions in the process – knowledge is a powerful tool. Another interesting resource is The New York Times supplement, “The ADA at 30: Beyond the Law’s Promise” - <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/disability-ADA-30-anniversary.html>.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA is worthy of acknowledgement - one fun way to learn a little about the ADA, celebrate the achievements of access and inclusion through comedy, dance and art is the ADA 30 Lead On Celebration at <https://www.facebook.com/109566040826495/videos/297716028239677/> - enjoy!

## Article by Linda Pogue

Picture Description: At Former United States Representative, John Lewis’s, office on the 25th Anniversary of the ADA Linda Pogue, Michael Melton, Kim Gibson, John Lewis, and Margo Waters. United States Representative John Lewis passed away on July 17, 2020 .



## **Accessibility.com**

disABILITY LINK has been selected to be part of Accessibility.com

They're mission is to create objective and trustworthy information and resources to become a catalyst for equal access to the physical and digital worlds.

<https://www.facebook.com/accessibilitycom>

<https://twitter.com/accessibility00>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/accessibilitycom/>

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrFA3adPs6UfKyOjYwRv1\\_Q?  
view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrFA3adPs6UfKyOjYwRv1_Q?view_as=subscriber)



Picture Description:  
Accessibility.com Logo

## Executive Director Message

As the summer is coming to a close, I think about how significantly our lives have changed over the last six months. COVID-19, increased visibility of social injustices, increased unemployment rates, increased disparities of health care because of disability, small businesses in turmoil, elections and voting, working from home, social distancing, and the list goes on.

Through it all disABILITY LINK continued to remain open to consumers. Although, our physical offices were closed through the end of July for drop-ins, we continued to support individuals through audio and video conferencing, face to face appointments, and targeted outreach. We responded to the pandemic by creating a COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team that addresses different impact areas related to COVID-19. In addition, we continued to host our regular workshops, events, and provide outreach and information on our services, COVID-19, employment, youth transition, peer support, personal protection equipment, and much more.

The last few months have been really hard. We lost great Civil Rights leaders John Lewis and Cordy Vivian and disability rights activist Stacey Milbern. In addition, we have lost family members and co-workers to COVID-19. It is important to remember to follow the CDC guidelines established for protection and safety of all. That is why our offices have taken extra precaution and request visitors to self-access symptoms and check their temperature. We ask that if you are sick or have been sick, that you stay home and give yourself time to heal while preventing exposure to others.

As the next few months contain a lot of unknowns, disABILITY LINK continues to focus on what is known. We continue to address issues to disability rights, equal rights, and inclusion. As Martin Luther King Jr. is quoted "No one is free until everyone is free". We encourage you to participate in our peer led groups addressing social injustices. It is equally known that this year we have a Presidential Election in November as well as elections for other legislative seats. Have you registered to vote? If you need an absentee ballot, have you submitted the request? If you need help with registration or have questions in lines with voting, give us a call and we can point you in the right directions. It is important for you to gain knowledge of who is up for election, learn about the policies the individuals pose, and then make an informed decision and vote. As Justin Dart, who is considered the father of the American with Disabilities Act said "Vote as if your Life Depended on it...Because it Does".

I hope everyone has a great end of the summer and remains safe! We look forward to seeing you at our different events.

**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://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  
by appointment only

## 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:

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