

The ABILITY LINK



Youth Celebration Day Group Photo

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www.disabilitylink.org

Advocating for human rights,
not special rights



Doggie Day 2020: Celebrating Service Animals and Community

It was just another day in COVID 2020 gone to the dogs.

But on this sunny, breezy Oct. 10 during disABILITY LINK's annual Doggie Days, it really was a day for the doggos as service animals milled about the Decatur First Baptist Church grounds. Attended by their owners or trainers, masked staff, vendors, and guests, everyone spent a few hours socially distanced, celebrating the powerful impact these service animals make in the lives of people with disabilities.

One of disABILITY LINK's largest yearly gatherings, which also serves as a fundraiser for the center of independent living (CIL), Doggie Days, also highlighted the numerous programs and services the CIL offers its consumers.

Two of the most popular activities that day were the silent auction and 50-50 raffle, which this year raised approximately \$650.00. Silent auction funds raised go directly toward consumer programming.

As one of the numerous outreach events designed to bring greater awareness of the CIL's metro Atlanta 27-county area, disABILITY LINK invited other organizations to share their information and services as well.

Thank you to the following Doggie Days 2020 participants who expressed their commitment to disABILITY LINK's independent living philosophy, sharing their time or information, financial contributions, and in-kind donations:

Enabled Living LLC-Decatur Healing Arts
Chick fil A-Tools 4 Life
Jason's Deli-Napoleon's Gill
Bark Box-WNC Nature Center
Catherine's Auto Repair-Andrea Clay
A Piece of Cake-Mina Richie, LMT
Kim Gibson-Ken Mitchell
Garrick Scott-Linda Pogue
Juanita Anderson

Article by Lisa Parks

Disability Resource and Career Expo

“Working to Transform disABILITY to ABILITY”

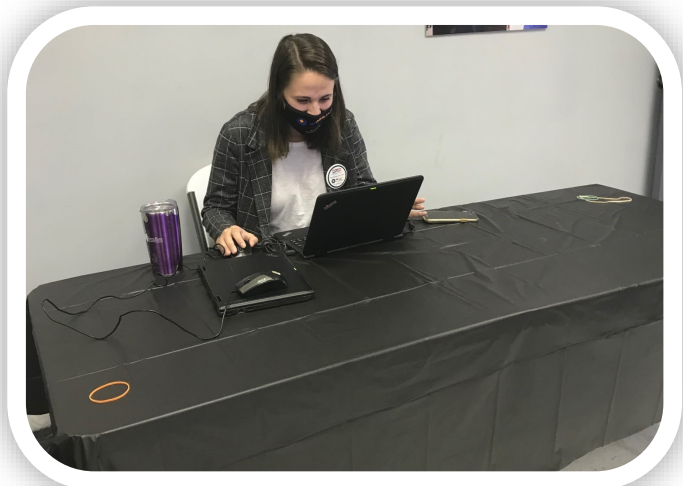
The Disability Resource and Career Expo took place October 30, 2020, held both onsite AMS Vans, Inc. and virtually through Zoom. It was our first time doing this fair virtually. We will continue to advocate, provide peer support, and make everyone aware that people with a disability have a voice.

disABILITY Link put out every resource we could think of to make this a successful job fair. Our COVID-19 Employment Specialist set up breakout rooms for each vendor within our Zoom line so that consumers could talk to each one individually. We educated the consumers by holding one on one sessions for resume edit or review. We provided consumers with knowledge on how to research companies, find out who the hiring managers are, and their emails to make contact with them by sending a cover letter or a thank you note.

In addition, remember the education classes on the “Elevator Speech” where you have 30 seconds (the time it takes to ride an elevator) to tell someone who you are and what do you do. There might be questions asked by an employer like: What type of computer skills do you have? Or, where do you see yourself in 3-5 years, and are there any barriers that might prevent you from getting this job? Do you know how to appropriately set the room up if you are going to a virtual job fair? These are things you need to think and do in advance; whether it’s going to a job fair or applying for a job online, it’s to “BE PREPARED.”

There was a great turnout at the event despite the barrier of Tropical Storm Zeta a couple of days before, which affected some participants who wanted to come. Vendors included Just Us Opportunities, American Medical Resources, Faith Medical, and Emory Autism Center, to name a few. Consumer attendance was up to 25 people. We also had plenty of Personal Protective Equipment on hand for vendors and consumers that came in-person.

Article by Katrina Parsons



Picture Description: Margaux Officer sitting down working on her laptop

Fall Harvest

Navigating disABILITY Link's fall harvest celebration required special attention. The end of October is something that many people typically look forward to, including us. Outside of going to work, many of us have been social distancing, and we recognized a need for some sort of normalcy. We wanted to host an event that was fun and gave our consumers and friends something to look forward to while still compliant with CDC guidelines. It happened that our fall harvest coincided with Halloween, so of course, we couldn't think of a better excuse to eat candy and play dress up! We invited our consumers to a drive-up event. We handed out candy, prizes, goodie bags with small party favors with personal protective equipment, and pamphlets with information about COVID. We had members of different teams at the table available to provide information, take pictures, and many of them were wearing costumes...or they would've been if it wasn't cold that day.

Pre-planning for the event took some dedication. Team Members who wanted the day to be special; decorated the door with removable window paint and leaves, assembled the goodie bags, and acquired the sweets...lots and lots of sweets. We hurried to create a nice flyer and publish social media. Many of us notified our friends or spoke about the Fall Harvest event in our classes or workshops. We shared with our consumers that we would have a contest for best costume as well as a game of "Name that Tune." Consumers were tasked with remembering the song's name played entirely with car horns (The youth departments' idea). As always, our friends did not disappoint. The winners received goodies.

Many of our consumers brought their children to 'trick or treat' with us. Plenty of people showed up in wigs, wings, or animal ears to participate in the costume contest. We even got a visit from a Britney Spears look-a-like; we were honored! Our friends and community members showed up in good spirits and great humor and made the day a success. We answered questions, provided vital information to keep our community safe during the pandemic, and gave out prizes for the best costume. (Everyone won— we loved the spirit). By the end of the Fall Harvest, we had distributed the majority of our goodie bags and personal protective equipment. We got some great laughs and great pictures and had plenty of sugar. Hopefully, post-pandemic, we can do it again even better.

Thanks to all who made the Fall Harvest awesome. Let us know how we can make it even more fun next go around.

Have a safe holiday friends!

Article by Jamilah Shepard

Home Buyers Education: 2020

2020 has been quite a year for not just me, but I am quite sure, for all of us! Despite the setbacks of today's climate, disABILITY LINK proudly continued to serve our consumers! One way we continued with our mission is by continuing with the annual Homebuyers Education Workshop. Yes, it was a little bit different but, I am beyond thrilled to report a success!

disABILITY LINK partnered with Metro Fair Housing to virtually present the ins and outs of purchasing a home-From Opening to yes, closing. Although the material was presented differently this year those, who attended stated that not only did they walk away with the knowledge that they did not have beforehand but a real sense of understanding and excitement for the next chapter in the process.

The workshop, like all of our programming, is a valued tradition to our organization. If you would like to learn more about the Homebuyers Workshop, feel free to contact me at: (404)687-8890 or via email at awilliams@disabilitylink.org

Article by Angela Williams



Picture Description: The Home Buyers workshop class sitting down in disABILITY LINK's activity room



Picture Description: A TV mounted on the wall with participants on zoom

Annual Consumer Party

It's party time, but this time was a little bit different due to COVID-19. We debated how we would make this happen to where we could all have a good time thanking our consumer's volunteers and staff for a great year. In the end, we decided the safest way to include everyone was to go virtual. On December 9, 2020, consumers had the opportunity to come to the office and receive a fabulously prepared meal. All the food was donated and prepared by wonderful people. Before the 9th, consumers had the opportunity to bring an exchange gift, and on the 10th, draw to receive their exchange gift to open during the virtual party. We also had raffle tickets available for the 50/50 drawing, door prizes, and a flat-screen TV. All proceeds went back to disABILITY LINK. The winning tickets were drawn during the virtual party, and those who won the items we're excited!

On December 10, we all gathered on zoom and virtually celebrated and ate our meals together. The purpose of the appreciation party was to honor volunteers, consumers, and the disability community. We celebrated by giving certificates out to our wonderful volunteers and board members. We also celebrated the Volunteer of the year, George Banks, with a beautiful plaque and acknowledgment. Volunteers do make a difference in our organization, and we appreciate every one of them. Volunteer of the year for 2020 was awarded to George Banks.

During the appreciation party, we heard from Vernitia Shannon, as a part of the Respect Institute, and many others as they shared their appreciation for disABILITY LINK and the support provided. Also, the youth department (Garrick Scott and William Thomas) shared a video presentation about the "Empowering our Youth" program.

The appreciation party ended with great success. We appreciate all of you. We hope you have a safe and wonderful holiday season, and we look forward to seeing you next year.

Article by James Turner



Picture Description: Group photo on zoom with some of disABILITY LINK staff & Consumers at our virtual Annual Consumer Party

Covid-19

COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a hot topic as new cases continue to happen. disABILITY LINK has seen the impact of COVID-19 as consumers face eviction, loss of utilities, food, social isolation, and fear of contracting the dreadful virus. disABILITY LINK has supported consumers through finding resources to keep continuing living in the community of their choice, providing personal protective equipment, and sharing information.

Each month we host COVID-19 peer support classes that run Monday through Thursday. This allows individuals to come together and gain information on the latest updates on the Coronavirus, share experiences, receive support, and learn skills to address stress, anxiety, and advocate during this time. In addition, we have COVID-19 workshops with topics such as how telemedicine has affected individuals during the pandemic and how to order food and other supplies online.

Each week we held neighborhood outreach events where we provided information on upcoming workshops, COVID-19 programs, voter registration, community resources, and to connect with our Independent Living Specialists. We also offered free personal protection equipment, including gloves, Facial masks, and hand sanitizer.

The CPRT team welcomed our new supervisor Olivia Figueira. She jumped right in and has quickly developed additional resources while moving along the program rapidly.

disABILITY LINK has taken the safety and health of consumers, staff, and the community to heart. We encourage and ask everyone who enters the office to do self-checks, include taking temperatures. We have barriers and sneeze guards to protect and social distance. Around our office, we have hand sanitizer and disinfectant. Sometimes, we have to remind each other to social distance because it is not something we are used to doing. Services have continued even though most have been virtual. One instance is we held our consumer appreciation party over zoom. Instead of canceling the event, we were able to celebrate in a social distance manner. We were able to continue having a social interaction with staff and with consumers over zoom or on the phone.

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disABILITY LINK has received donations of supplies from different entities. We have many washable face masks on hand, for which we are handing out continually to our community. We continue to accept any donations to keep our services up and running.

These times have taken a toll on many people, so we reach out to the consumers to do checks. We are also continually asking our consumers how COVID-19 has affected their stress by completing the covid survey Monkey link and reminding them to do something fun like watching a movie on Netflix or listen to music.

I also practice activities to help relieve my anxiety. I enjoy using the gym to calm down and to stay positive. At the office, have a safe space where individuals can meditate and continue to exercise when many gyms are closed. I enjoy walking in the gym and the office, and I also sometimes use the elliptical, which is located in our gym.

I love my job, and I love supporting others with their independence. COVID-19 has changed how we do things, but it has not changed the support disABILITY LINK gives to the community.

Article by Shikha Desai



Picture Description: Shikha Desai standing next to a table with plates of food on it

President Elect Joe Biden COVID-19 Plan

With a new President on the horizon of being elected in the United States, it is now more than ever that the people should be aware of the President Elect's plan for the nation and COVID-19. President-Elect Joe Biden has reported his Day-One COVID-19 plan that has been one of the foundations for his election as the public safety of the United States is under duress.

Guidelines that have been implemented by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) such as remaining six feet apart, using a face mask, washing hands properly, and keep cleanly sanitized surfaces, have been the overarching rules that most Americans have abided by. Along the way, there have been discrepancies about what is the right and wrong way to battle this pandemic and keep public safety the priority. President-Elect Joe Biden's plan will encompass those same guidelines but acquire guidance and immediate impacts from his administration. He has presented his plan to regain the trust of the American people and disband the misinformation given by government officials. He will ensure that public health concerns are made by public health officials. President-Elect Biden wants to make COVID-19 testing and healthcare necessary easily accessible, free, and safe. More medical professionals outside of the hospital will be trained on COVID-19 for quicker recognition and response of symptoms. Vaccines and supplies will be treated with the same ease of accessibility to those who require it. The Charge Rule, put in place during the Trump administration will be reversed to allow immigrants access to healthcare for COVID-19 purposes. Access to medical insurance, leave through employers, unemployment benefits, student learning, state funding, and many more areas of direct impact are also included in President-Elect Joe Biden's plan to aid the United States through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Joe Biden believes we must do whatever it takes, spend whatever it takes, to deliver relief for our families and ensure the stability of our economy."

(joebiden.com/covid-plan/)

Inauguration of Joe Biden is scheduled for January 20, 2021

For further information on President Elect Joe Biden and his plan, please visit:

<https://joebiden.com/covid-plan/>

May everyone remain safe and healthy through the New Year! Wear a mask, stay six feet apart, wash your hands, and stay inside whenever possible.

Article by Olivia Figueira

Lights! Camera! Action!

That might as well had been the words stated to the "EOY" students who participated in the disABILITY LINK, "Youth Appreciation Movie Night," as they gathered to watch "Rise of the Guardians," a movie about some of our favorite childhood characters and how they help young people maintain their innocence. The event was hosted at two (2) theaters. One of the theaters was the AMC Theater 15 on Cobb Pkwy, Atlanta, GA, and the other Madison Yard 8 Theater on Memorial Drive, Atlanta, GA. There were a total of 27 students in attendance. Students were representing six (6) different counties participating in the event. We hope to continue this event each year through donations from the community.

Article Garrick Scott & William Thomas



Picture Description: William Thomas with a parent & students at our Youth Appreciation Movie Night at AMC Theaters

disABILITY LINK leadership and staff would like to extend our sincere gratitude to two of our most recent supporters. It is through generous gifts like these that our center of independent continues to support people with disabilities independent living goals.

Faith Center Inc., \$1000

"Our focus is on our community, so we are working hard to create a church that anybody will love to attend, not just a church for church people."

www.faithcenter.org

(678) 615-7745

4600 N. Royal Atlanta Dr., Atlanta, Ga. 30084

Best for Less Computer Consulting

Our continued gratitude to owner Roy Wagner and his team for their continued financial and in-kind support. Best for Less offers comprehensive computer network solutions including remote work establishment and associated technical training, repairs and upgrades for small business and non-profit organizations.

<http://www.bestforless.net/>

(404) 248-0901

To learn how more about the benefits of single, annual, event or sustainer donation opportunities, contact Lisa Parks at lparks@disabilitylink.org



Picture Description: Kim Gibson & Ken Mitchell With The Faith Center holding a check and waving

Executive Director Message

Dear Family and Friends,

What a year 2020 has been. All of you have been part of a tremendous amount of changes, challenges, and accomplishments this past year. Thank you for all your efforts and participation. Here are just a few of the highlights of 2020:

- We provided Employment services to over 1200 individuals with disabilities
- We continued to hold youth empowerment groups that have led to over 60 youth with disabilities graduate from our programs
- We held our third year of collaboration with AAPD and had six interns successfully complete the disABILITY LINK/AAPD summer internship program
- We provide over 12,000 individual services to people with disabilities
- We addressed and continue to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for people with disabilities while providing workshops, services, and other programming through audio and video conferencing as well as in-person when able
- We encouraged and assisted more than 300 people with disabilities in registering to vote, checking their ballots, and figuring out how to turn in their ballots either by mail or in-person

We could not have met all those accomplishments without our partnerships, such as CLD, GCDD, REV UP the VOTE GA, SILC of GA, AMS Vans, GAO, Faith Medical Services, Schwartz Rollins, AAPD, GSU, Tools for Life, and so many more.

And none of this would have been possible without our incredibly dedicated staff, volunteers, and board members who helped us overcome numerous challenges throughout the year.

It certainly has been a year full of challenges-none of them small-National Voting and Elections, a global pandemic, social and civil unrest throughout the nation. Georgia is still in the midst of an election. I cannot stress enough how important it is to vote. Make sure you have your voice heard. There are so many groups to join in to help get the disability vote out, including REV UP GA, REV UP Voting Coalitions, Disability Action for America, Georgia Disability Vote Partnership, and The New Georgia Project, and many more.

See our dates to remember for links to all of those groups.

I am excited about 2021-hard to believe we are weeks away from it. While some challenges have passed, COVID-19 is still a serious threat to health and safety. We are open to the public at this time but strongly encourage you to set an appointment, whether in person or through audio and video conferencing.

Finally, I wish everyone a safe and Happy New Year! We look forward to seeing you in person or on Zoom for our many wonderful 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.



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



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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404-687-8890 Voice

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