

The ABILITY LINK



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@disabilitylink

www.disabilitylink.org

Advocating for human rights,
not special rights



Empowering Our Youth

"It takes a Village"

The statement, "It takes a village," has become such an afterthought for people these days as if it is some joke of sorts. If we are ever to take it seriously, it needs to be now. Students are not being given the opportunities to socialize and engage in meaningful conversations. This is especially true of students with disabilities, perhaps due, in part, to the pandemic, but also they are not being spoken to in any manner of a real conversation. Yes, they are being asked questions such as: "Are you doing well today?" or "Are you having a good day?" These questions and others like these are yes or no questions and not open-ended questions that would allow the student to respond with real thoughts, ideas, or opinions. We then ask them to have a real conversation related to a job interview or with peers they have never met without them having had any practice. And, to add to that, they (students) are separated from others in school, so the only opportunities they get to converse are with other students who do not have a firm grasp on the process. Is this true for all of the students? No, but if we are to help them, we have to approach the process with a plan to help them all. Recently, while engaging a student in the process of having a good conversation, one of the students let it be known they were a big fan of Frank Sinatra. This student is only twenty (20) years old, so "Old Blue Eyes" (Frank Sinatra) is well before their time. The student was then told that if they could sing one of his songs they would be given a prize. The student sang "New York New York" with the vim and vigor of a crooner. This would never have taken place if they had not been presented with the opportunity to share in a meaningful conversation. This allowed the student to feel comfortable enough to share that tidbit of information about themselves. Using this strategy may not work for all, but it won't work for most if we don't try.

Article by Garrick Scott



Picture Description: Angela Williams & her daughter hugging each other smiling in disABILITY LINK's activity room

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US (NAUWU) "6,000 Waiting" Documentary Screening

On the first Thursday of each month, disABILITY LINK hosts a peer support meeting offering information, education, and calls for action regarding issues important to the disability community. We meet in person at the center, as well as providing the meetings on Zoom. Nothing About Us Without Us (NAUWU) is a slogan used to denote that legislators should decide no policy or legislation without the full, direct participation of those group(s) who are affected by it. While our use of the slogan is disability-based, it may also apply to others marginalized from political and structural opportunities due to race and ethnic origin, gender, or socioeconomic status. As the Disability Rights,

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ILS (Independent Living Specialist) advocacy is an exciting part of this work. It involves bringing people across the disability spectrum together to know the issues and take action to create change. By joining coalitions across the disability spectrum in numbers, people speaking up are more likely to be heard, and their needs better understood by decision-makers.

The short documentary, "6,000 Waiting," was produced by GCDD (Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities) and The Storytelling Project. It tells the story of three Georgians' experiences with the (NOW/COMP) Medicaid waiver waiting list, how beneficial living in the community versus an institution, like a nursing home, can be for people with disabilities. It effectively depicts the value of everyone participating in supportive community living rather than being segregated in institutions with no freedom of choice or control over life decisions. The film points out several facts: 1) It costs three times as much to keep people with disabilities in institutions compared to providing supports to live in the community independently, and 2) All Medicaid waivers could be funded with budgetary changes, costing less than \$50 per taxpayer in GA to care for all of those on waiting lists. Since the film's production, there has been an increase to over 8,000 people waiting for funding.

Our NAUWU meeting happily welcomed a representative from The Storytelling Project and Ben Oxley, a main protagonist from the film, for the post-screening discussion, questions, and answers.

If you would like to see the trailer and potentially hold your documentary screening, go to www.6000waiting.com to learn how to sign up.

Article by Nina Colman

The American's with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Olmstead Decision
 The Americans with Disabilities Act is a major civil rights law that guards against discrimination against people with disabilities in public life. It was passed in 1990 as a guide for people with disabilities to have equal participation in public life, such as employment, telecommunications, and public accommodations. Title II of the ADA calls for equity in Public Services provided by State and Local Governments. Nine years later, after many protests and actions (google 'Capitol Crawl'), the most monumental civil rights decision for people with disabilities was won in the U.S. Supreme Court.



Picture Description: President George Bush signing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in a ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House. He was surrounded by Evan Kemp, Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Justin Dart, Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; Rev.

The Olmstead Decision

Each June, we celebrate the 1999 Olmstead Decision, which held that people with disabilities have the right to receive state-funded supports and services in the community, rather than in restrictive, costly institutions; such benefits include: Assistive Technology, durable medical equipment, home modifications, and Personal Care Attendants, to name a few. More information can be found at: https://www.ada.gov/olmstead/olmstead_about.htm



Picture Description: "The Women of Olmstead" by Lois Curtis. Photo by Tracy Coffin.

Articles by Nina Colman

BACK TO BUSINESS

Tucker Job Fair

The Tucker Job Fair took place May 12, 2021, held at the Stone Ridge Event Center in Stone Mountain, GA. It was very professional and well planned. disABILITY LINK was there with several vendors that participated, and each of us was very involved with the various people looking for just a job or just a career. In the midst of everything going on at the fair, we provided advocacy, peer support and made sure that everyone was aware that people with a disability have a voice. disABILITY LINK staff mixed and mingled to share information on disABILITY LINK and people with disabilities.

disABILITY LINK takes pride in educating and supporting people with disabilities to use their voices to advocate for themselves and being independent. We spoke to a variety of individuals with disabilities who had a lot of questions about the "How do I get a job and are there any tips on what more can I do? We provided education and support on looking for jobs, applying, and what to do after an interview.

Equally important during this time was to provide information on COVID-19 and job seeking. We offered face masks and hand sanitizer for anyone who wanted them. In addition, participants were made aware that we have "in-person" and "virtual" job readiness classes once a week and once a month. The event was successful as we were able to share, advocate, educate, inform, support, and invite to learn more.

For more information on employment and trainings contact us at 404-687-8890.



Article by Michelle Gavin

Picture Description: Michelle Gavin standing in front of a table with a disABILITY LINK cloth on it with flyers on top

Vaccination Clinic

disABILITY LINK takes the health and wellness of our consumers and employees seriously. In an effort to protect everyone, our office held a vaccine drive. On April 20, we had the first vaccine drive for Pfizer. It was held at disABILITY LINK. We had a table outside for check-ins and sign-ups while Walgreens staff were inside providing the vaccinations. We had 60 people signed up who received the vaccine. The second dose and clinic held on May 10 were conducted in the same fashion.

disABILITY LINK was prepared to support consumers with safety, signing up, and social distancing. We had temperature checks, masks, and sanitizers available. We also had snacks and water for those who received the vaccination. After receiving the vaccination, individuals waited 15 minutes before leaving to make sure there were no immediate medical issues.

Walgreens made signing up easy. We have developed a strong relationship with Walgreens and plan on hosting several more clinics. In preparation for the clinic, we called individuals, shared on social media, and provided education on the vaccine. The clinic was held where public transportation was easy to access (our office). In addition, it was easy for staff to get their vaccination if they had not already.

This clinic was just one statement we have as a community:

- We should not have to wait longer than necessary to receive the vaccination.
- It needs to be accessible spaces.
- Transportation is essential in accessing the vaccination.

Article by Shikha Desai



Picture Description:
WalGreens employees
setting up in disABILITY
LINK actively room to give
Vaccine shots to our
consumers

Covid-19

This quarter we continued focusing on Coping with Coronavirus: Daily Check-In. It is held every day Monday to Thursday from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm. This peer-led group provides an opportunity for individuals with disabilities 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, every Tuesday from 10:30 am to 12 pm, we have a neighborhood outreach outside of disABILITY LINK's office to provide information about upcoming workshops, COVID-19 programs, vaccinations, voter registration, SNAP, community resources, and connect with our Independent Living Specialists. In addition, we have continued giving out limited supplies, including gloves, Facial masks, and hand sanitizer. We also host neighborhood outreach every Wednesday from 1 pm to 3 pm at various locations in the communities to provide information to individuals.

In addition, our COVID Team Talk workshops are held every second and fourth Monday of every month. There have been many topics, including managing addictions while staying at home, the difference between the three vaccines, the Stimulus Bill, traveling safe for the holidays, and much more. We recently partnered up with the DCA (Department of Community Affairs) to support individuals in housing applications for those who have late bills for rent and utility due to the impact of COVID-19 and the pandemic in Rockdale, Douglas, Newton, and Fayette.

We continue to move forward with addressing the impact of COVID-19. Recently, Shikha Desai joined as the COVID-19 supervisor. We have hired some students for the summer to help address the impact, assist in applying for support available in the community, and get **people vaccinated!**

Article by Shikha Desai & Jake Key



Picture Description: Amanda French, Shikha Desai & Nina Colman Sitting outside in front of a table with a disABILITY LINK cloth on it with flyers on top

2021 Gala

"Linking Together Through Changing Times" a Social Distance Success!

Social distancing, masks, and even a late-day hailstorm didn't stop the socializing or our largest annual fundraiser in support of people with disabilities choice and quality of life at the Courtyard by Marriott in Decatur, April 24.

Over 120 people enjoyed a plated dinner, silent auction, speakers, awards, dancing and catching up away from a ZOOM screen!

Keynote

We had the great honor of hosting Kelly Buckland as our keynote speaker, immediately preceding his May retirement as successful executive director of the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL).

Buckland graduated from Boise State University with a B.A. in Social Work and 1988 Summa Cum Laude from Drake University with a Masters in Rehabilitation Counselling. He has been honored with numerous state and national awards in recent years, including the University of Idaho President's Medallion, the United Vision for Idaho Lifetime Achievement Award, the Hewlett-Packard Distinguished Achievement in Human Rights Award, and induction into the National Spinal Cord Injury Hall of Fame.

Buckland has testified before Congress several times on universal health care, Fair Housing, and appropriations for centers for independent living. He has been closely involved with the direct-service and systemic change aspects of the Independent Living movement.

Anne M. Robertson Award

This year our "Anne M. Robertson" award was presented to Shaye Kilby in gratitude for her tireless advocacy for and commitment to the disability community.

This award is dear to disABILITY LINK for its naming taken from the mother of former assistant director Ken Mitchell, who retired in June this year.

Catalyst Award

The disABILITY LINK Catalyst Award, presented to a community supporter and partner for their engagement and investment in the disABILITY LINK mission of supporting quality of life and choice for people with disabilities was presented to The Faith Center of Atlanta. Led by Pastor Vincent and Lady Felicia Campbell, the Faith Center has a great passion for outreach. It impacts the community each year through in-kind, financial, and volunteer support. We truly appreciate their selection of disABILITY LINK among its recipients.

Community Partners and Support

It takes our entire community to make a lasting impact toward equity, access, and inclusion for people with disabilities, and we are thankful to those who purchased and donated tickets or sponsored a consumer's attendance. These funds go directly toward the continuation of our programs. Together we continue to support a multitude of programs, goal setting, and peer support for our 12-county service area, as well as making new friends, connections, and colleagues for life!

2021 Sponsors

A special thanks to the following sponsors for 2021. We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's event! To learn more about the disABILITY LINK gala visit, <http://disabilitylink.org/2022-gala/>

Champion

Linda Pogue
Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia, Inc.-SILC
Empire

Leader

Katherine Seelman
Ken Mitchell
Dave Zilles
Senator Nan Orrock
Faith Medical Services
Kim Gibson

Advocate

ASK Investment Group / JA Kelly
Comfort Keepers, Greg Johnson
Dr. Maria Johnson
Arden's Garden
USA Health Plans
SHOWAbility, Myrna Clayton

Pioneer

Brown's Barber Shop
Latoya Lawrence
Stacey Ramirez
Megan Williams
Dr. Sharon Mathis
Elizabeth Dye
Harry Colman
Paula Connor
Allen & Dorothy Griffin
Kevin StringFellow
Bharti Desai
Kostic Healthcare

Article by Lisa Parks



Picture Description:
Latoya Lawrence &
Jacqueline Lopez standing
with mask on their face at
our Annual GALA



Picture Description:
Lisa Parks & her husband
sitting in our silent auction
room in front of a table at
our Annual GALA

Executive Director Message

Dear Family and Friends,

I hope you, your family, and all of your loved ones are doing well. Over the last year, we have experienced a unique time in history. While it has been a time filled with feelings of uncertainty, it has also demonstrated what is possible when we come together as a community.

On April 24th, 2021, we got together for our annual Gala with the theme of "Linking Together Through Changing Times." Kelly Buckland, the outgoing Executive Director of the National Council of Independent Living (NCIL), delivered a powerful message of how essential it is to link together as a community to move forward. We are stronger and more powerful together as we face the obstacles and challenges ahead of us. Advocating, engaging, connecting, communicating, and educating are essential.

As the pandemic seems to be dying down, it is not over. Continue to take protective measures in your daily life, including getting vaccinated if possible, following the CDC guidelines for wearing masks, social distancing, and washing your hands. For more information on the benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>.

Thank you so much for your continued support. We look forward to providing ongoing services for individuals with disabilities and advocating for disability and social justice. Take care and support each other and remember to take care of yourself.

Sincerely,

Kim Gibson



Picture Description:
Leisa Williams & Kim
Gibson standing with
mask on at our Annual
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://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
Fridays by appointment only

Upcoming Events

June 26-World of Coca-Cola” tour
July 16-Annual Family & Friends Picnic
August 8-Braves Fundraiser

For more information about these events contact our office at
404-687-8890

Holiday and Office Closures

February 15th- President’s Day
May 31st- Memorial Day
July 5th- Independence Day
Sept. 6th- Labor Day
Sept. 26th through October 1st- Office paperwork catch-up
Nov. 2nd – Election Day
Nov. 11th – Veteran’s Day
Nov. 25-26th – Fall Break
December 20th through Jan. 2nd- Winter Break

disABILITY LINK is now an application site for SNAP (Federal Nutrition Assistance program). If you would like to learn more about SNAP, to be screened for eligibility, or to apply for food stamp benefits. Please contact our office at 404-687-8890 or visit our office.



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



@disABILITY LINK

www.disabilitylink.org