

The ABILITY LINK



Photo Description: A group employee photo of disABILITY LINK, the front row is seated while the rest stand. In the background is a disABILITY LINK

disABILITY LINK Quarterly Newsletter

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Cover Page Description:

The front page is split into 4 sections. The top section has the employee group photo and title. The left section has a table of contents, and the bottom section has the disABILITY LINK logo, as well our social media handle, with images of the social media apps.

Social Media



@disabilitylink



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

Edited and Designed by Keya Mehta, Social Media Specialist

CompassionCon: Community Outreach

In a heartfelt display of community support, Compassionate Atlanta hosted a transformative Community Outreach Event on 10/27/2024, centered around compassion and the empowerment of individuals through independent living skills. The event, held at Legacy Park, attracted dozens of local residents eager to learn practical skills designed to promote self-sufficiency, confidence, and long-term well-being. disABILITY LINK proudly participated in the event, contributing their expertise in advocating for disability rights and supporting individuals with disabilities in their journey toward independent living. Their involvement brought valuable resources and insights, further enriching the event's mission of empowerment and inclusivity.

Empathy at the Heart of the Event

At the core of the event was the idea that compassion can be a catalyst for change. Volunteer instructors, many of whom are professionals in social work, mental health, and other support fields, shared personal stories and experiences to build trust and foster a deeper connection with participants. The event organizers stressed that the importance of nurturing relationships and offering compassion cannot be underestimated in helping individuals thrive.

"We believe that learning these life skills is about more than just gaining knowledge," said Ms. Allen, a representative from disABILITY LINK. "It's about building a sense of community, compassion, and belonging. We want our participants to leave feeling not only more empowered but also supported and connected to others."

A Day of Learning and Growth

The event was designed to meet the diverse needs of the community. Some sessions were tailored for young adults just beginning to live independently, while others were aimed at older adults or individuals with disabilities who are navigating challenges unique to their circumstances. Attendees had the opportunity to participate in hands-on demonstrations, engage in group dis-

Article by Diane Mckenna

CompassionCon: Community Outreach

Building a Stronger Community Together

The event also served as a reminder of the importance of community-driven efforts to foster resilience and self-sufficiency. Local businesses and organizations generously contributed supplies, volunteers, and refreshments, ensuring that the event was accessible to all. Several local leaders were in attendance to show their support, underscoring the collective effort it takes to build a community where every member can thrive.

Looking Ahead

With the success of this event, the message is clear: compassion and independent living skills are a powerful combination for community empowerment. As participants left with new tools, resources, and a renewed sense of confidence, the Compassionate Atlanta agency solidified its role as a vital support system for those seeking to build better lives with empathy, dignity, and practical skills.

For more information about future community outreach programs or to get involved, visit <https://compassionateatl.org/contact-us/>.



Photo Description: Shown is the CompassionCon logo and states “Powering Welcoming Communities An Initiative of Compassionate Atlanta”

Article by Diane Mckenna

Breast Cancer Awareness

disABILITY LINK hosted a meaningful and impactful Breast Cancer Awareness event to provide support and solidarity for individuals undergoing surgery and those who had survived breast cancer. The program aimed to uplift spirits, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance overall well-being by fostering a strong community support system. The event brought together breast cancer survivors, their families, and friends, creating a sense of unity and hope. With one in eight women diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime, disABILITY LINK took the opportunity to raise awareness among attendees, encouraging them to spread knowledge and support within their own circles.

Throughout the event, participants were provided with valuable resources and information designed to assist those currently diagnosed, offering guidance and encouragement during their recovery journey. A heartfelt moment of remembrance was held as balloons were released in honor of those lost to breast cancer, symbolizing both the struggle and the strength found in the fight against the disease. The gathering was a powerful reminder of the resilience of those affected and the importance of continued support and awareness in the battle against breast cancer.

Article by Juanita Anderson



Photo Description: The picture above is a group of people releasing balloons outside of the office.



Photo Descriptions: Two pictures each showing individuals sitting around tables with pink table clothes.

Consumer Appreciation Party

The Consumer Appreciation Party is a time to recognize and thank our volunteers, staff, board members, and most importantly, our consumers at disABILITY LINK. It's an opportunity to come together, enjoy a meal, and relax. The event features a steal-a-thon, fun activities, and moments to honor individuals for their contributions, including recognizing our consumers for their strength and resilience, especially those actively participating in health and wellness programs.

Without our volunteers, disABILITY LINK wouldn't be where we are today. Volunteers were given certificates for their dedication, and the highlight of the event was the announcement of Brianna Levels as Volunteer of the Year 2024. Brianna's hard work and commitment have made a lasting impact on our community, and it was an honor to celebrate her.

The celebration also included lively music, with a performance by Juanita Anderson, Health and Wellness ILS. Juanita brought energy and excitement to the event, and many of our consumers, actively engaged in health and wellness programs, were excited to take part in the fun, making the celebration even more memorable.



Photo Description: Shown is a man in a wheelchair holding a mic while a lady stands next to him smiling



Photo Description: A male sat in a while chair and another male standing smiling looking at a lady who is looking down.

Article by James Turner

Peer Support Training

Peer Support leverages the power of shared experiences to provide encouragement and guidance, helping others develop their own strategies for achieving their goals. This training program, held at the disABILITY LINK office from November 6–8, offered valuable insights to numerous disABILITY LINK employees, consumers, and community members, empowering them to become more effective peer mentors. Peer support is a cornerstone in assisting individuals with disabilities, as simply knowing how to offer genuine support can make a profound difference in their lives.

The training, led by Linda Pogue and Jake Key, covered a range of important topics, such as defining peer support and its significance, the role of peer supports, appropriate language when interacting with individuals with disabilities, the impact of peer support, setting boundaries, and more. The sessions also included interactive workshops with hands-on role-playing exercises, informational videos, impactful poetry, and interactive quizzes.

We are proud that all disABILITY LINK employees are required to undergo this training, as strong peer support can significantly enhance an individual's independence, particularly for those who have experienced isolation. Even prouder, however, is our commitment to enhancing peer support in all aspects of life. disABILITY LINK remains dedicated to prioritizing peer support in our work.



Photo Description: A lady standing in a green coat speaking to multiple people who are seated across a table.



Photo Description: A male and a lady holding a certificate smiling at the camera.

Article by Keya Mehta

Doggie Day 2024

Every year, disABILITY LINK hosts Doggie Day. This is an event where consumers are welcome to come learn more about support and service animals.

In addition, there is a silent auction, plenty of food, a doggie fashion show, music, and more fun for everyone! Of course, this year was no different! Doggie Day, like all of our other events, is open to everyone, but it is, in my opinion, our most kid-friendly event. All of the tables represented a different fictional dog. There were stickers and candy that kids could collect at each table.

It's also worth mentioning that my dog, Bruno, won the doggie fashion show for the second year in a row. Of course, in my eyes, Bruno was always a king, but it's nice to know that everyone else agrees with me. Consumers are encouraged to not only bring their families, but their dogs too! I can't wait for next year's Doggie Day. Everyone is welcome to come and participate, but I warn you, my dog Bruno is hard to beat.



Photo Description: A dog in a robe and a crown standing in the sun.



Photo Description: Two ladies smiling, hunched over the same dog dressed in a robe and crown.

Article by Marina Fishman

Atlanta Pride Roots: A Legacy of Inclusion

As we celebrate Pride, it's important to honor the roots of this movement right here in Atlanta, Georgia. At disABILITY LINK, we are proud to be part of a city that has long been a leader in the fight for equality, where both LGBTQIA+ and disability rights have always been intertwined. Atlanta's Pride celebrations began in 1971, and over the years, they've grown into a powerful reminder of the ongoing fight for justice. People with disabilities, particularly those living with chronic illnesses, have stood side by side with the LGBTQIA+ community, advocating for access to healthcare, equal rights, and social inclusion. Together, we've built a foundation of mutual support and solidarity.

Pride in Atlanta isn't just a celebration—it's a call for inclusion. As we work for a world where everyone can fully participate, it's vital that Pride events are accessible to all. Whether it's wheelchair-friendly routes, ASL interpreters, or sensory accommodations, ensuring accessibility is a commitment to our shared values: equality and respect for every identity. Looking forward, we must continue to advocate for a fully inclusive world. Pride reminds us that true inclusion means everyone—no matter their disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity—has a seat at the table. At disABILITY LINK, we believe our community's voices are essential in pushing for these changes, ensuring Pride is an event for all.

Let's continue marching forward, united in our fight for a world that celebrates and includes everyone.



Photo Description: The disABILITY LINK LGBTQIA++ disABILITY banner set up at our booth during the Atlanta Pride Parade

Article by Jake Key

Job Fair 2024

The Job and Career Fair for individuals with disabilities, held in October, was a remarkable event that demonstrated the community's commitment to inclusivity and opportunity. Organized with the goal of connecting job seekers with supportive employers, the fair attracted 31 vendors and 157 participants, including job seekers, employers, and community organizations. The turnout exceeded expectations, creating an energetic and optimistic atmosphere that fostered meaningful connections and opportunities.

Employers from a wide range of industries participated, offering positions suited to various skill levels and interests. From entry-level roles to professional careers, attendees had access to a broad array of opportunities. Several companies highlighted their commitment to accommodating individuals with disabilities, emphasizing their inclusive workplace practices and support systems. Many job seekers expressed appreciation for the chance to interact directly with potential employers, ask questions, and showcase their skills and aspirations. Additionally, GVRA provided ASL services to ensure accessibility for all attendees. Many participants also received interviews on-site, further enhancing the event's success.

Overall, the Job and Career Fair proved to be a resounding success—not only because of the high turnout but also due to the positive impact it had on participants. Many job seekers left the event feeling encouraged and hopeful, armed with new connections and opportunities to pursue.



Photo Description: Shown is a room stocked full of employer booths and excited individuals stood in line to speak with said booths

Article by Chrissie Lee

Vaccine Drive

This quarter, we successfully hosted three COVID-19 vaccine drives and one flu vaccine drive, events that were especially important for individuals with disabilities who often face challenges accessing healthcare. We are proud to have provided an accessible way for people to receive their vaccinations and stay protected. Vaccines play a vital role in safeguarding our community, and we remain committed to offering these drives in the future to ensure that everyone, particularly those with disabilities, has access to the care they deserve. In addition to our vaccine drives, we have been offering a variety of health and wellness workshops, all designed to be inclusive of individuals with disabilities. Every Thursday, we host our COVID and Health Disparities Conversations, where we engage in meaningful discussions on topics such as healthy eating during the holidays, the impact of working from home on health, and preparing for flu shots. These workshops are tailored to address health disparities and provide everyone in our community—especially individuals with disabilities—a virtual way to participate in discussions that promote well-being and a healthier lifestyle.

During one of our recent workshops, we explored the concept of mindful rest, a topic that's especially relevant during the busy holiday season. Here are some key takeaways from the discussion:

The holidays are filled with excitement but can also bring about stress. With the shopping, cooking, and socializing, it's easy to forget the importance of sleep and relaxation. This year, make mindful rest a priority to help you enjoy the season while staying healthy and energized.

Vaccines are one of our most powerful tools to prevent illness, protect our communities, and save lives. Here's why getting vaccinated is so important:

Why Vaccines Matter: Vaccines help your immune system recognize and fight harmful viruses and bacteria, preventing serious illness. They also help stop the spread of diseases, protect vulnerable populations (like babies, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems), and save lives. From COVID-19 to the flu and childhood diseases, vaccines make a significant impact.

We do not provide medical advice, so for further details, please consult your healthcare provider.

Together, we can build a healthier, safer world for everyone!

Article by Shikha Desai

Executive Director Message

Dear Friends:

I want to take this time to thank each of you for participating in our events and joining us in working towards a more inclusive and accessible society.

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to share some incredible milestones that we have achieved together. We held over 540 events and provided independent living skills training to over 12,000 participants, offering a total of 39,259 services to our community.

Our advocacy efforts included housing, healthcare, transportation, voting, and other critical areas. Our workshops were filled with IL Skills training and peer support focusing on topics such as diabetes prevention, employment (hosting a job fair that supported 5 individuals getting a job on the spot), homebuyers, youth and parent groups, assistive technology, among other important subjects.

In July, we expanded our services to include Butts, Lamar, Meriwether, Pike, Spalding, and Upson counties. This addition to our existing service area of Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dekalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Newton, and Rockdale counties allows us to further the rights of people with disabilities and increase our outreach.

As Justin Dart, Jr., the "Father of the ADA," once said, **"We must undertake a courageous reallocation of our society's resources from paternalism to independence and productivity. We must invest in a continuum of new and strengthened programs to liberate people with disabilities from dependency, and empower them to be equal and productive participants in the mainstream."**

As we enter the new year, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our consumers for their continued trust and engagement, and to our sponsors, donors, and funders for their unwavering support of our mission. Your contributions have been instrumental in helping us achieve these remarkable accomplishments.

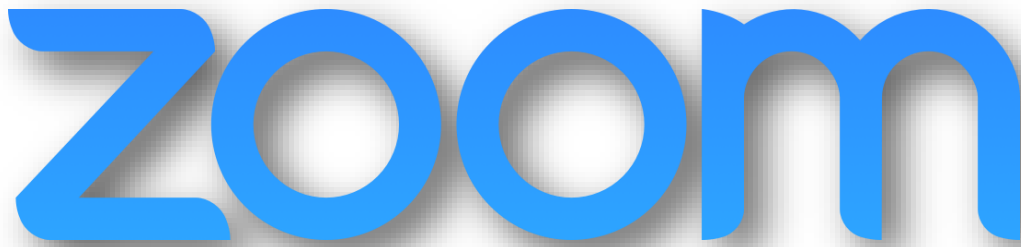
We look forward to another year of growth, advocacy, and empowerment. **We are thrilled to collaborate and make a meaningful impact together. Join us in the new year for our advocacy days, workshops, and many other exciting events.**

Happy New Year!

Warm regards,

Kim Gibson, DSW, LMSW

Executive Director



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, accommodations and accessibility needs 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

Workshops

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

Please note: you do not have to sign up in order to join the meeting. For additional information and accommodations please contact our office.

Holiday and Office Closures

January 15th, 2024 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 19th, 2024 President's Day

Consider donating to our general funding for all our programs

<https://disabilitylink.betterworld.org/donate>

Our Funding comes from different sources including grants, foundations, and fee for service programs.



"Funding provided in part by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Department of Community Development."

Supporters and grants:



Wish List:

- ♦ Laptops
- ♦ Youth Sponsorship/donations for programs and outings

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.

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404-687-8890 Voice

404-381-8117 Video

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