

The ABILITY LINK



disABILITY LINK Quarterly Newsletter

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Shown is a group photo of the disABILITY LINK staff stood in front of a mirror for our annual Consumer Appreciation Party

Social Media



@disabilitylink



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

Edited and Designed by Jake Key Social Media Specialist

Atlanta Pride 2023

This year at Atlanta PRIDE, disABILITY LINK's Jake and Christina were on the scene, equipped with our LGBTQIAP+ +disABILITY banner and cool dance moves! Arriving on that crisp October morning to a buzzing crowd was such a joy. Hundreds of people showed up and lined the streets to show their love and support. There was nary a stranger among the dozens of groups who scurried into place with us, laughing and celebrating all the way as we squeezed ourselves in line for the parade.

The City of Atlanta did not disappoint, with a massive showing, both in participating organization and along the streets from Midtown to Piedmont Park. It warmed our hearts every time someone shouted love and support from across the way to one another. The local churches gave out water and snacks to the parade participants, along with messages of gratitude and encouragement. It was so important for this to be shown—For this to be seen! It's imperative for us to experience support from our communities and loved ones. Sometimes, even the faintest memory of a moment where someone looked at you and said "I see you. You're here, and I am so glad you are.", even in its smallest, can impact someone for the better. But it doesn't hurt to go big either. And this year's Atlanta PRIDE did just that.

So while we get ready for next year's celebration, keep the support flowing. Wear your pins. Look out for one another. Be kind whenever possible, and it is always possible.

It did rain a little, for those curious. But what's PRIDE without a few locally sourced rainbows?



Photo Description: Shown is Jake Key and Christina Humphrey holding the LGBTQIAP++ disABILITY banner

**Article by
Christina Humphrey**

Senior Health Fair

Within Stone Mountain, there are several nonprofits offering resources for DeKalb County. The county itself boasts a population of approximately 757,718 people, as per the United States Census. Notably, DeKalb County is home to over 100,000 seniors, according to information available on DeKalbcounty.ga. On November 9, 2023, representatives from disABILITY LINK actively participated in the Senior Health Fair held at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Vendors representing various fields, including Health, Beauty, Insurance, Education, Legal Services, Transportation, and Nonprofit Services, participated in the event. In total, approximately 13 vendors offered their services to the senior citizens in Stone Mountain. Notably, disABILITY LINK played a crucial role by providing free Covid tests. The provision of Covid tests is especially significant at this time, considering that senior citizens are at a higher risk of experiencing more severe symptoms from COVID.

Seniors were also able to get free health screenings at the fair. They were able to have their blood pressure checked, as well as other health checks. There were also very important information about Medicaid and Medicare. There were also individuals with disabilities that attended the event where they received information about disABILITY Link's programs and services.

Staff members were actively engaged in addressing inquiries about our services and connected with individuals expressing an interest in receiving further information about the services we provide. As the colder winter months draw near, there is a notable increase in inquiries from seniors with disabilities seeking information about transportation services.



Photo Description: Shown is William Thomas sitting at the disABILITY LINK table talking to a Black Women about our services.

Article by David Kendrick

Job and Resource Fair

Career fairs for individuals with disabilities, seen and unseen, play a crucial role in promoting inclusivity, equal opportunities, and diversity in the workplace. These events provide a platform for job seekers to connect with employers who value their unique skills and abilities. By breaking down barriers, fostering networking opportunities, and prioritizing accessibility, career fairs empower individuals with disabilities to pursue their professional aspirations with confidence. As society continues to strive for inclusivity, these career fairs serve as an avenue of creating a more equitable and diverse workforce for all.

disABILITY LINK hosted their annual Career and Resource fair on October 20, 2023 at the Decatur Recreational Center located in Downtown Decatur. The event was hybrid with employers and attendees present in-person and via zoom. The employers that were in attendance included: AARP, Advance Auto Parts, A Customer's Point of View, Inc., Bobby Dodd Institute, Brunswick Job Corps Center, Community Friendship, Inc., DeKalb Community Service Board, Disability Awareness Now, EEOC Atlanta District Office, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, Georgia Transplant Foundation, Goodwill of North Georgia, Help the People Programs, Inc., In the Door, James Emmett & Company, Jones PT Physical Therapy & Physical Training, Just Us Opportunities, Kelly Services, Life Behavior Consulting, Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc., Georgia Department of Labor OFCCP, Regions Bank, Showability, Team Georgia Careers, Threshold Community Program, and View Point Health. These employers met with over 70+ participants' in-person, and interacted with participants via zoom. In addition, the career fair also held the opportunity for students with from Decatur High School to interact with employers, discuss internships, and potential future employment.

Career fairs offer a valuable networking opportunity for individuals with disabilities. They provide a chance to connect with individuals, share experiences, and build a support network. Additionally, attendees can engage with disability-focused organizations and advocacy groups that can provide guidance and resources for career development. These connections can be instrumental in navigating the job market and accessing further opportunities for growth.

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Job and Resource Fair Cont.

Career Fairs for individuals with disabilities serve as a bridge between job seekers and employers who are actively seeking to diversify their workforce. These events provide a unique opportunity for individuals with disabilities to showcase their skills, talents, and qualifications directly to potential employers. By participating in these fairs, job seekers can bypass traditional barriers and connect with companies that are actively seeking to create equal opportunities for all.

disABILITY LINK extends their gratitude to the Decatur Recreational Center, Chick-Fil-A, and Coca Cola for their donations and support of the Career Fair. We are grateful for the support and participation of all the employers, resource centers, and volunteers that made this career fair a great success.



Photo Description: Shown is the Decatur Rec Center full of booths and inquiring individuals during our 2023 Job Fair

Article by Mimi Palmer

Unlocking Inclusivity on Smart Devices

In an era dominated by technology, our smartphones and tablets have become indispensable tools, connecting us to the world in ways we couldn't have imagined just a few years ago. However, as we revel in the wonders of these devices, it's crucial to recognize that not everyone experiences technology in the same way. Accessibility tools play a pivotal role in ensuring that everyone can harness the full power of their smart devices.

Smartphones and tablets are not one-size-fits-all devices. People with various disabilities use these devices to navigate daily life, communicate with others, and access information. It's so very important that the digital landscape reflects the diversity of its users. By understanding and utilizing accessibility tools, we take a significant step towards creating an inclusive digital environment.

For individuals with mobility challenges or those who prefer hands-free interaction, voice commands are a game-changer. Most smartphones and tablets come equipped with voice recognition technology, allowing users to dictate messages, make calls, and even control other aspects of their device using spoken commands. Embracing this feature enhances efficiency and independence for a broad spectrum of users.

Imagine a world where information is not just visible but also audible. Screen readers, a staple in accessibility tools, convert on-screen text into synthesized speech. This functionality empowers individuals with visual disabilities to engage with apps, websites, and documents. It's not just about reading; it's about fostering independence and autonomy in the digital realm.

For those who may have difficulty reading small text or discerning details on a screen, magnification and display customization features are indispensable. These tools enable users to enlarge text, adjust color contrasts, and modify font styles to suit their preferences. Personalizing the visual experience ensures that the digital world is accessible and comfortable for everyone.

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Unlocking Inclusivity on Smart Devices

The sense of touch is often overlooked in the digital space, but it's a vital aspect of interaction. Haptic feedback, which provides tactile responses to touch gestures, benefits users with visual impairments or those who simply prefer a more tangible connection with their devices. This feature adds a layer of inclusivity by making the touchscreen experience more intuitive and accessible.

As we strive for a more inclusive digital landscape, education and advocacy are key. Familiarizing ourselves with accessibility tools is a responsibility we all share. By spreading awareness and encouraging the adoption of these features, we contribute to a world where technology is a force for inclusivity, breaking down barriers and fostering equal access for all.

In conclusion, the importance of knowing and embracing accessibility tools on our smart devices cannot be overstated. It's not just about making technology usable for some; it's about making it accessible for all. Let's continue towards inclusivity, celebrate diversity, and ensure that the digital revolution leaves no one behind.



Photo Description: Shown is Seth Newton and Shayne Russel using the computer lab

Advocating for Accessible and Affordable Transportation

Navigating through Dekalb, Fulton, and Clayton counties is crucial for everyone, especially individuals with disabilities. Whether it's reaching medical appointments, the grocery store, or work, timely transportation is paramount. Unfortunately, for those with disabilities, this can often be a common challenge.

Dependence on MARTA Mobility presents its own set of difficulties, with scheduling pickups proving to be a cumbersome process. This frustration can dissuade passengers from relying on MARTA Mobility for their transportation needs. While Lyft or Uber are alternatives, they can be expensive, particularly for wheelchair users like yourself. The added cost due to the wheelchair component can make these options financially burdensome, with fees approaching \$50.

In such circumstances, it becomes essential to assert our rights as MARTA Mobility riders. Voicing concerns through complaints is a powerful tool. As individuals with unique needs, filing complaints when the service falls short is an avenue to communicate our experiences to the relevant authorities. By doing so, upper management becomes aware of these issues, prompting corrective action. Remember, you are the advocate for your own needs, and filing complaints is a means to ensure that the system works better for everyone. We are the leaders of our own lives, and persistence in advocating for our rights is key. Never give up on expressing your concerns and seeking improvements in the services that impact your daily life.



Photo Description: Shown is an image of James Turner using a wheelchair lift

Article by James Turner

CORE Vaccine Drive

On October 19, 2023, disABILITY LINK hosted a vaccination clinic at our office in collaboration with Walgreens. Pharmacists from the Walgreens located on Lavista and Oak Grove Road joined us to administer both COVID and Flu vaccines. A total of 46 individuals received vaccinations, with some opting for the updated COVID Moderna shot, others for the flu shot, and some choosing to receive both. The participants comprised consumers, staff members, and friends of disABILITY LINK, including several clients brought by United Cerebral Palsy, to whom we extend our gratitude.

To incentivize early participation, we distributed Walmart gift cards to the first few individuals who received their shots. Additionally, aside from the vaccines, we provided at-home COVID test kits and water bottles to all participants. Despite the inevitable discomfort associated with vaccinations, the overall feedback from participants indicated a positive experience.

Looking ahead, our next vaccination clinic is scheduled for January 9th, from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm, in partnership with CORE (Community Organized Relief Effort) at our office. We emphasize the importance of vaccinations in reducing the severity and spread of diseases.



Photo Description: Shown is 2 smiling CORE workers seated behind their vaccination table

Article by Katrina Parsons

Doggie Day

On September 30th disABILITY LINK hosted our annual Doggie Day with furry friends, vendors, fashion, loads of fun and of course: Information on service animals, support animals the role they play in the lives their owner and your rights as a pet owner.

In a tail-wagging spectacle that captured the hearts of both two-legged and four-legged attendees alike, Doggie Day took center stage on September 30th. The event, which featured a myriad of activities for dogs and their owners, was a resounding success, drawing a large crowd of excited participants.

The venue buzzed with excitement as local and pet-centric vendors set up booths showcasing an array of products, doggy treats, stylish clothing, self-care products and more. Tails wagged enthusiastically as dogs explored the area, sampling tasty treats and sniffing out new friends.

Doggie Day also played host to a silent auction, offering a fantastic array of items generously donated by local businesses, community members and staff. The bidding wars were fierce as participants vied for coveted prizes, with all proceeds going towards the programs offered by disABILITY LINK. The charitable aspect of the event added a heartwarming touch, bringing the community together to support a cause close to many hearts.



Photo Description: Shown is a couple smiling consumers, Juanita Anderson, Marina Fishman, and Angela Williams all accompanied by their dogs for a doggie fashion show.

Cont. on page 11

Doggie Day cont.

One of the highlights of Doggie Day was undoubtedly the dazzling dog fashion show, where canine companions strutted their stuff on a red carpet runway. From adorable costumes to stylish accessories, the fashion-forward pups showcased the latest trends in doggie couture. The event's emcee kept the audience entertained with playful commentary, eliciting laughter and cheers from the delighted onlookers.

To keep the energy high and the tails wagging, a DJ spun a playlist of dog themed tunes throughout the event. The rhythmic beats set the perfect backdrop for the festivities, creating a joyful atmosphere that had both dogs and their owners dancing and celebrating together.

Doggie Day proved to be a bark-tastic success, fostering a sense of community among pet owners and showcasing the boundless joy, assistance and support that our furry friends bring to our lives. As the sun set on this unforgettable September day, attendees left with hearts full of happy memories and tails wagging in anticipation of the next paw-some event.



Photo Description: Shown is a very small puppy in a stroller in front of Felicia Banks

Long COVID and How to Fight It

I'm Shikha Desai, a member of the Community Health team. Each month, I coordinate with CORE and Walgreens to organize vaccine and flu drives. Additionally, our team hosts the COVID and Health Disparities Conversations every Thursday, a peer-led group discussing various health-related topics. In these sessions, we cover staying healthy during the holidays, navigating Long COVID, and maintaining a healthy diet while traveling. We recently featured a guest speaker in November who provided insights into Long COVID.

Long COVID manifests when individuals experience symptoms persisting for weeks, months, or even years after recovering from COVID-19. Some may initially recover, only to have symptoms return or new ones develop within a few months.

Every Wednesday from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM, we engage in neighborhood outreach, distributing flyers and COVID tests within the community. Our strong partnerships with CORE and Walgreens have been invaluable, enhancing our ability to serve the community effectively.

Collaboratively, our team created bags containing three COVID kits for individuals to take home after receiving vaccines and flu shots. We were fortunate to have CORE as guest speakers during our COVID and Health Disparities Conversations workshop, where they shared valuable information about various vaccines and boosters. Their presence extended to our consumer appreciation party, where they provided insights into different vaccines.

Our commitment to community health is strengthened by these partnerships and ongoing initiatives. I hope you will join us in the new year to learn more!



Picture Description: Shown is Katrina Parsons, Shikha Desai and Christina Humphrey smiling behind a table filled with white bags filled with COVID tests

Article by Shikha Desai

Executive Director Message

Dear Friends:

As we near the end of another year, the contemplation of the 2023 journey brings forth a blend of challenges and accomplishments. Similar to 2022, we faced obstacles that demanded resilience, but amidst those, we also celebrated numerous achievements. Peering into the horizon of 2024, I envision a landscape brimming with opportunities for growth, advocacy, and the fostering of peer support.

Whether you have been a longstanding member of disABILITY LINK or joined us this year, I extend my heartfelt thanks for your involvement. Your contribution is invaluable to our community.

A special acknowledgment goes to our dedicated staff, whose tireless efforts have shaped our success. Without your commitment, we would not be where we are today. I express my sincere gratitude for the significant role each of you plays in disABILITY LINK. The recognition of the Disability Inclusion Ally award bestowed upon us by the National Diversity Council and the Disability Inclusion Leadership Award presented to me fills me with pride and appreciation. I extend my thanks to our exceptional Board of Directors, whose unwavering support and oversight contribute to our financial health. Your time and financial contributions are truly cherished.

Our gratitude extends to our funders, with special thanks to the CareSource Foundation for supporting our employment programs and annual GALA, the Fulton County Community Services Board for enhancing our youth programs, and Amerigroup for aiding our newly established Diabetes Prevention Program and home modifications for two individuals.

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Executive Director Message cont.

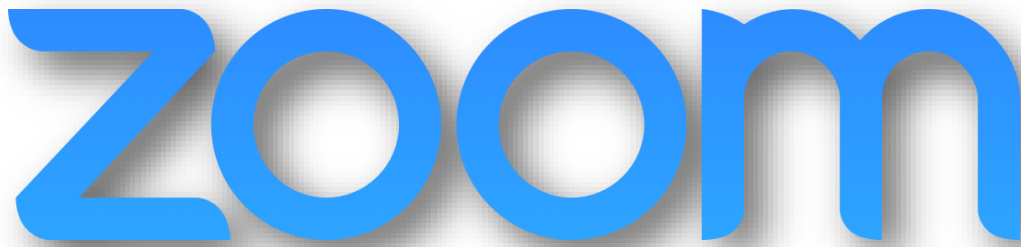
Additionally, I thank Individual donors and sponsorships also play a vital role in enriching our programming.

As we leap into the new year, our agenda includes advocacy days, vaccination clinics, and a myriad of workshops. April marks not only our Annual GALA but also 26 years of disABILITY LINK. I eagerly anticipate seeing each of you there.

Thank you once again for being part of our journey in 2023. We look forward to even greater success together in 2024! Wishing you and your families a safe, healthy, and joyous holiday season.

All my best,

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 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

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

Holiday and Office Closures

January 15th, 2024 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 19th, 2024 President's Day

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

Reminder to join us for our Annual GALA on April 20th, 2024. Contact our office for more information.

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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