

The ABILITY LINK



disABILITY LINK Quarterly Newsletter

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Picture descriptions:

Shown is a group photo of the disABILITY LINK staff outside of our main office.

Social Media



@disabilitylink



disABILITY
LINK
the center for rights & resources

Edited and Designed by Jake Key, Program and Training Manager

Assistive Technology Resource Fair

At the end of January, disABILITY LINK hosted an exciting and impactful Assistive Technology (AT) Resource Fair from 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM, bringing together consumers, community members, and partner organizations for a day of learning, connection, and empowerment. The event was a huge success, with consumers especially loving the hands-on opportunities to explore assistive technology and experience firsthand how these tools can enhance independence and accessibility in everyday life.

The fair showcased a variety of programs, tools, and resources designed to support individuals with disabilities. Attendees connected with organizations such as Vocal Point, the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC), and Shepherd Center—building meaningful relationships and learning about services that extend beyond the event.

A major highlight was GVRA's SensAbility Showcase, featuring resources for individuals who are Blind, Deaf, and Deaf-Blind. GVRA also provided ASL interpreters, ensuring the event was inclusive and accessible to all. Additional highlights included engaging presentations on employment, independence, and access to assistive technology, along with interactive demonstrations that kept participants engaged throughout the event.

The energy throughout the day was inspiring and truly reflected the power of assistive technology to transform lives. We invite you to continue the conversation by joining our monthly Assistive Technology workshops. For more information, please contact Violet Rock at vrock@disabilitylink.org.



Image Description: A group of people sitting with speakers at the front of the room.

Article by Violet Rock

Community Connections and Quarterly Highlights

The first quarter of the year was filled with meaningful engagement and strong community connections. Our team hosted 25 outreach events across all 18 counties, meeting residents where they are and connecting directly with community members about available services and resources.

Outreach took place in a variety of community settings, including libraries, cafés, technical colleges, community centers, senior living communities, housing authorities, health centers, and local events. These “pop-up” outreach opportunities allowed staff to answer questions, share wellness information, and build relationships while increasing awareness of programs and supports.

Our Thursday workshops continued to provide valuable opportunities for learning and discussion around health and wellness. In January, sessions focused on building healthy habits, including goal setting, stress management, and maintaining accountability. February workshops highlighted heart health, injury prevention, and nutrition, while March focused on self-care, mindfulness, and balancing daily responsibilities.

We also welcomed guest speakers to our Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP) workshops. ICWP supports individuals with disabilities in living safely and independently in their homes and communities. These partnerships allowed us to share information, strengthen connections, and expand opportunities for future outreach.



Image Description: Jake Key, Program and Training Manager sitting behind the outreach table with our logo and information on the front, displayed sign, brochures, and information on the table.

We look forward to continuing this momentum through outreach, workshops, and meaningful community partnerships. For more information on our outreach events and community connections contact Shikha Desai at sdesai@disabilitylink.org.

Article by Shikha Desai

disABILITY LINK's Days of Advocacy "Our Voices, Our Votes"

disABILITY LINK's Days of Advocacy "Our Voices, Our Votes" initiative brought advocacy to life through a series of trainings and advocacy days that empowered participants to turn their experiences into action. What began in January as a small, focused group quickly grew into a powerful, statewide movement.

On January 22, participants gathered for the first training centered on waivers and healthcare—learning not just the issues, but how to speak about them with confidence. A week later, on January 29, that learning turned into action as 22 participants stepped into the Georgia State Capitol for Advocacy Day. For many, it was their first time meeting with legislators. Nerves were high, but so was the sense of purpose.

"It felt good to get my voice out there, or at least attempt at all," one participant shared.

By February, that momentum had only grown. On February 19, disABILITY LINK partnered with the State Independent Living Council (SILC) of Georgia to host a statewide Advocacy Leadership Training, bringing together participants from across Georgia, including multiple Centers for Independent Living. With both in-person and virtual options, the room—and the Zoom—filled with voices ready to learn, connect, and lead.

Speakers and advocates guided participants through key issues like transportation, housing, and employment, while also breaking down how to effectively advocate, write impactful letters, and prepare to engage with legislators. The conversations were real, the learning was hands-on, and the impact was immediate.

"It opened my eyes," one participant reflected. "I've struggled to feel like I fit in or that my voice mattered. But being here, hearing others, and learning how to advocate—it made me feel connected and empowered."

That energy carried directly into February 26, when participants returned to the Capitol for another Advocacy Day. This time, they walked in more confident, more prepared, and ready to be heard. Letters were shared, stories were told, and connections were made—not just with legislators, but with each other. One disABILITY LINK employee even had the opportunity to meet their representative and capture the moment with a photo—an exciting and memorable experience that highlighted the personal impact of advocacy.

Continued on page 5

disABILITY LINK's Days of Advocacy "Our Voices, Our Votes" **Continued**

Across all four days—two trainings and two advocacy events—participants didn't just learn about advocacy; they lived it. They found their voices, supported one another, and saw firsthand the impact of speaking up on issues that affect their daily lives.

These events showed that advocacy is more than a moment—it's a movement. And when people come together, locally and statewide, those voices become impossible to ignore.

To learn more about future advocacy opportunities or how to get involved, reach out to Einisia Jones at ejones@disabilitylink.org.



Image Description: Ken Mitchel sitting next to his representative on a bench at the Capitol, talking to his Representative.



Image Description: Ester DuRante, Assistant Director with SILC Georgia and Megan Johnson, Employment and Career ILS discussing the planned Enable Work program at the training event.



Image Description: A group of people facing the podium at the Our Voices, Our Vote Training with speaker Einisia Jones, disABILITY Rights ILS.

Article by Einisia Jones

Peer Support Training: Connection, Understanding, and Growth

disABILITY LINK's Peer Support Training, led by Linda Pogue and Einisia Jones, brought people together for more than just learning—it created a space for connection, understanding, and shared growth. Grounded in real-life experiences, participants explored what it truly means to support one another while navigating systems, employment, and life transitions.

The training encouraged participants to go beyond awareness, focusing on actively creating spaces where people have both access and agency. Through guided discussions and interactive exercises, attendees learned how peer support can be a powerful tool for empowerment, not just encouragement.

One participant, shared her reflection:

"Inclusion cannot stop at acknowledging barriers. The real question is whether we are creating environments where people have both access and agency—access to information, opportunities, and pathways to obtain and maintain employment. Peer support plays a key role in helping people maintain their sense of agency while navigating complex systems."

Her words echoed the experience of many attendees: peer support is more than a role—it's a relationship built on trust, shared experience, and mutual respect. By the end of the session, it was clear that effective peer support is about walking alongside others, ensuring they feel heard, valued, and empowered every step of the way.

To learn more about future peer support trainings or to get involved, contact Einisia Jones at ejones@disabilitylink.org



Image Description: Shown is Einisia Jones posing with Cameron Smith while she holds her new Peer Support Training certification.

Article by Einisia Jones

Building Confidence, One Skill at a Time: Empowering Over 133 Youth

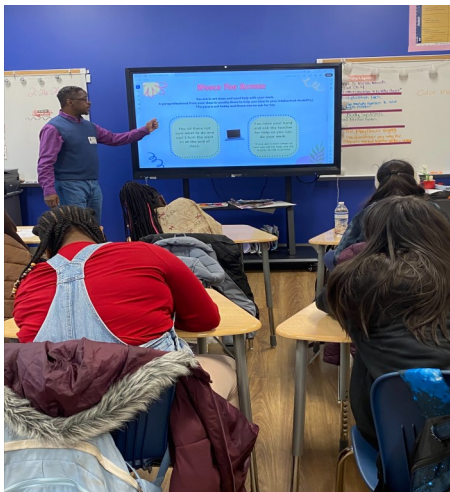
On any given Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, classrooms across Fulton and Gwinnett Counties come alive in a different way. Laughter, conversation, and confidence grow as more than 133 youth with disabilities participate in Empowering Our Youth, Pathways to Partnership, and EOY Pathways to Success programs. These sessions go beyond instruction—they help young people see what's possible for themselves.

Led by Independent Living Specialists William Thomas, Jameson Listerman, and Antorius Merritt, classes are held in local schools and focus on real-life skills through interactive, engaging activities. Once a month, students also gather at the disABILITY Link office for peer support groups, where connections deepen and shared experiences take center stage.

Inside the classroom, learning is hands-on and practical. Students practice interviewing, communication, and problem-solving while building confidence in their abilities. One student shared, "I didn't think I was good at talking to people, but now I feel like I could actually go into a job interview and be ready." For many, the biggest impact is connection. As one participant shared during a peer group, "Being here makes me feel like I'm not the only one."

Through these programs, students are not just learning skills—they're building confidence, supporting one another, and discovering their independence. With the support of staff, families, and educators, they are gaining the tools to set goals and plan for their futures.

Because independence isn't just about doing things on your own—it's about believing you can. And for over 133 youth, that belief is growing every single week.



This summer, disABILITY LINK continues the journey with Empowering Young Adults Locating Employment Avenues through Peer Support, a summer program for youth ages 10–14 and 15–22.

Program Dates:

Ages 15–22: June 1–28 & July 6–30
(Monday–Thursday, 10:00 AM–2:00 PM)

Ages 10–14: June 1–28 & July 6–30
(Monday & Thursday, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM)

For more information or to register, contact William Thomas at Wthomas@disabilitylink.org.

Article by Antorius Merritt

Image Description: Shown is William Thomas walking through a lesson in the school system.

Health Eating Cook-Off

Our Health, Wellness and Resource ILS, Juanita Anderson, recently hosted an engaging and delicious installment of our Healthy Lifestyles Workshop with the topic of: The Healthy Eating Cook-Off. This interactive event brought consumers together to celebrate nutrition, creativity, and community in a fun and supportive environment.

Participants were invited to prepare and submit homemade dishes that reflected healthy eating principles. We were excited to receive eight unique submissions, each showcasing different flavors, cultural influences, and approaches to nutritious cooking.

A panel of three taste testers carefully evaluated each dish based on:

Overall taste
Creativity
Presentation

The cook-off created a welcoming space for consumers to share their skills, try new foods, and learn from one another. Beyond the friendly competition, the event highlighted the importance of making healthy eating both accessible and enjoyable.

Workshops like this are a key part of our mission to promote independent living through wellness, education, and community engagement. By combining hands-on learning with social connection, we continue to support individuals in building sustainable, healthy lifestyles.

We look forward to hosting more events that empower our consumers to explore new skills, connect with peers, and have fun along the way. For more information, please reach out to **Jake Key** at jkey@disabilitylink.org.



Image description: Shown is Wanda Atkins, Sheryl Hales, Belinda Hodge, and Dipu Thakor sitting behind their dish submissions.

Article by Jake Key

A word from Consumers

Healthy Lifestyles' Healthy Eating Cookoff

My husband passed in December and I have been depressed. Today, I asked for the strength to make a dish that everyone would enjoy. The event blew my expectations out of the water. To see the smiles on everyone's faces, to see the reactions on everyone's faces after trying my dish was a genuine human experience that I had been missing. The twinkle in someone's eye that goes beyond the muscles flexing in your face. My peripheral neuropathy makes it difficult for me to attend events like this, but this event really made my year. Thank you to disABILITY LINK for hosting an event that reminds me of what I have been missing. I wish that events like this could be held every day in the community.

-Wanda Atkins

A Step Toward Independence

A few months ago, I reached out to disABILITY LINK for help through the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program because I wanted to transition out of a nursing home and back into the community. I knew I was ready for more independence, but I was having trouble getting approved for services through the waiver program, and the process felt overwhelming.

There were delays because the waiver assessment couldn't be scheduled, and I wasn't sure how to move things forward. My Independent Living Specialist (ILS) supported me along the way, encouraging me to speak up and advocate for myself. With that support, I was able to ask my nursing home social worker to connect with the waiver program, and eventually, my assessment was scheduled and completed.

That step meant everything to me—it brought me closer to being able to live independently again. I'm truly grateful for the continued follow-up and support I received throughout the process.

-Story from Consumer

Annual Networking Mixer

Get ready for an afternoon filled with inspiration and energy as disABILITY LINK—the center for rights and resources—hosts our highly anticipated 2026 ANNUAL EVENT! This year, we are taking the excitement to a whole new level at the stunning Distillery of Modern Art, a unique and vibrant venue located at 2197 Irwindale Drive in Chamblee, GA. We invite you to join us for this special occasion to Celebrate, Connect, and Contribute to a future where everyone has the tools and support they need to succeed.

This event is a powerful testament to our core belief: that just because we may lack certain things in life, it doesn't mean we don't have the ability to reach our life purpose and do what our hearts desire. We are coming together to honor that drive, resilience, and passion within each member of our community. Whether you are a long-time supporter or new to our mission, this gathering is the perfect opportunity to meet like-minded advocates, share your own story, and see firsthand the incredible impact of our collective efforts. The atmosphere promises to be electric as we celebrate the heart and soul of what makes our community so strong.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 25, 2026, and plan to be with us from 3 pm to 5 pm. It is going to be a high-energy two hours of networking, joy, and community building in a beautiful, artistic setting. If you are looking for a more significant way to get involved and show your support, we also have several SPONSORSHIP OPTIONS AVAILABLE to help you or your business stand out as a champion for disability rights. This is more than just a fundraiser; it is a moment to stand together and recognize that our desires and goals are within reach.

Tickets are on sale now, and you can take advantage of our special early bird prices right through the day of the event, April 25, 2026. **Tickets for Individuals is \$55, while consumer tickets are available for \$40. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.** You can secure your spot today by visiting the event page at <http://disabilitylink.betterworld.org/events/annual-event-2026>. When checking out, please note that while a processing fee applies to ticket purchases, you can uncheck the optional donation box for the Better-World platform if you wish for your contributions to go elsewhere.

For more information or to ask any questions, feel free to reach out to us at (404) 687-8890, email csingleton@disabilitylink.org, or visit our website at www.disabilitylink.org. We cannot wait to see you there!

Article by Cinque Singleton

Executive Director Message

Dear Friends and Family,

I'm truly looking forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming network mixer—it's always a great time to reconnect, meet new faces, and strengthen the relationships that make our community so special.

As we come together, I also want to give a quick reminder about the importance of voting. Making your voice heard truly matters, and it's one of the ways we can all help shape a more inclusive future.

I'm reminded of the words of Judy Heumann: "Change never happens at the pace we think it should. It happens over time, and it happens because people stand up and demand it." That spirit is reflected in the work we continue to do together every day.

We're also excited about everything coming up this summer! From our Youth Summer Program, to a fun day at the Braves game, and our Family and Friends Cookout, we're looking forward to creating meaningful and enjoyable experiences for everyone involved.

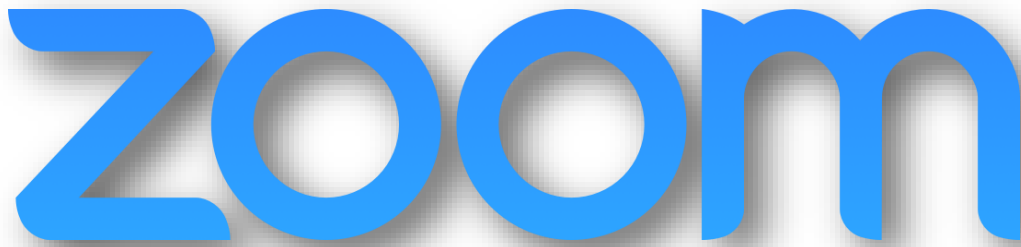
We hope you'll continue to stay engaged by attending our workshops and supporting our programs. Your involvement truly makes a difference, and we appreciate all the ways you show up for our community.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us—I can't wait to see you soon!

Warmly,

Kim Gibson, DSW, LMSW
Executive Director

Written by Kim Gibson



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

May 25, 2026: Memorial Day

June 19, 2026: Juneteenth

June 29th through July 3rd: Summer Break

September 24th through September 30th: Office closed for Staff Development and administration



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:

P2P project: <https://gvs.georgia.gov/pathways-partnerships-grant-project>

Wish List

We are continually trying to address needs of consumers and rely on contributions. Some needs include: ***Gym equipment (bike) *Laptops *Meeting Supplies *Youth conference sponsorship *Silent auction donations *art supplies *and much more**

Consider donating to our general funding for all our programs:

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

***Please note that BetterWorld offers an option to donate towards their platform, which does not go to disABILITY LINK. This is separate from the processing fee. If you do not wish to contribute to the BetterWorld platform, make sure to uncheck the donation box. However, if you are purchasing a ticket or registering for an event, the processing fee will apply.**

Contact Us:

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404-687-8890 Voice

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@disABILITY LINK

www.disabilitylink.org



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