



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

The Year in Review

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Our Mission

The mission of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is to bring about social and policy changes that promote opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and their families to live, learn, work, play and worship in Georgia communities.

Pictured on Cover:

(Photo left) Intern Paloma Mendoza worked at Northeast Georgia Health Systems as part of Project SEARCH, an employment transition program designed for students with disabilities.

(Photo center) GCDD Public Information Director Valerie Meadows Suber, AIDD Commissioner Aaron Bishop, Mark Johnson, director of advocacy for the Shepherd Center; and GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson at the 2015 NACDD Leadership Summit in Atlanta.

(Photo right) Advocate Mathew Harp was recognized for his work in moving children out of institutions at the Children's Freedom Initiative's anniversary celebration in Atlanta in 2015.

Message from the Executive Director



This year we marked the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). There were celebrations throughout the country supporting this important piece of civil rights legislation. People celebrated by attending parades or holding birthday parties. For me, it was a bus ride with The ADA Legacy Tour and a trip to the Highlander Center. Both reminded me of the hard work it takes to make sure that everyone in this nation gets the opportunity to live full and productive lives. People have marched, fought and died so all people regardless of their disability, color of skin, sexual orientation or gender, or religion have the same rights.

For GCDD and me, this was a year to remember the social justice struggles of Georgia and to plan for the future. In this great State, we still allow people to be locked away in institutions and nursing homes for having been born with or acquiring a disability. The Children's Freedom Initiative (CFI) has worked diligently for 10 years to bring children home from state and private facilities. Less than 50 remain in private independent care and nursing facilities, but almost 300 people still remain at Gracewood State Hospital. This was supposed to be the year Georgia closed its institutions. It is also time we end the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) programs in our schools and sheltered workshops.

We will continue to fight until everyone is part of the community.

We will continue to fight to make sure our elected officials provide enough funds for individuals and families to purchase the supports they need to be independent, productive, included and integrated in communities. This means being able to pay direct support staff a living wage and encouraging providers to provide the training and support necessary for quality services.

There must be a common agenda, continuous communication and mutually reinforcing activities amongst those involved for a collective impact. We in the disability community must come together around waiting lists issues and demand better jobs, housing and education for people with disabilities.

2015 was indeed a time for us to recognize and celebrate what we have accomplished in the 25 years since the ADA. It was also a time to reflect on the challenges that lie ahead, and how we must come together as a community to create towns, cities and a State where all people are able to pursue the American dream of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

At GCDD, we look forward to our continued work together.

Eric E. Jacobson

Fulfilling the Promise of the ADA - Disability Day at the Capitol 2015

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) works with legislators and advocacy groups to influence and support public policy to foster positive change in the ways that education, housing, workplace/careers and community living opportunities are made available to persons with developmental disabilities.

In 2015, GCDD honored the landmark passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the legislation that promotes equal rights, access and opportunities for people with disabilities.

At the 17th annual Disability Day at the Capitol, the theme, "Fulfilling the Promise

of the ADA," commemorated the ADA's 25th anniversary. The event was met with excitement from advocates, people with disabilities and supporters across the State.

Civil rights leader, US Congressman John Lewis (D – District 5) recorded a special Disability Day message for GCDD in recognition of the ADA anniversary theme, "Disability Rights are Civil Rights." Congressman Lewis encouraged Disability Day attendees to remain vigilant as part of the broader family of social justice movements.

For the fifth year in a row, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal delivered the Disability Day keynote address. In 2015, he honored the

“

None of us, not one of us, not any of us must be left out or left behind. I will continue to stand and fight for what is right and fair and just.

– Congressman John Lewis

”

Advocates, people with disabilities and supporters listened in the rain to speeches at the Disability Day rally.

“

We must also celebrate our present by commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA, and we must continue to educate others about the accomplishments and barriers that still exist for people with disabilities.

– Governor Nathan Deal

”

ADA and recognized the progress Georgia has made in regards to employment and inclusive post-secondary education.

During the 2015 official legislative session, GCDD introduced a series of Advocacy Days, an initiative designed to provide training and create opportunity for advocates to meet and speak with legislators on issues that are important to the disability community.

Advocates pushed for more Medicaid waivers, raising the rate for caregivers, inclusive post-secondary education, Employment First, passage of the Family Care Act, moving children out of institutions and changing the legal standard of proof for people with disabilities in death penalty cases.

GCDD Advocacy Days provided a platform for people with disabilities and their supporters to connect with each other and their elected officials about issues. The ADA 25th anniversary commemoration coincided with GCDD's mission and legislative agenda which focused on achieving inclusive communities, voting rights and access to education and jobs.



Enthusiastic advocates gathered in the Freight Depot to make signs for the 2015 Disability Day rally.



Governor Nathan Deal with GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson and Council Chair Mitzi Proffitt.



Civil rights leader, US Congressman John Lewis gave a special video message to the crowd.



Sen. Gail Davenport (I) met with advocates and GCDD Organizing Director, Caitlin Childs at the Capitol.

Commemorating 25 Years of the ADA



Tom Olin and Eric Jacobson get ready for adventure in the cockpit of The ADA Legacy Tour bus.


Commemorating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 25th anniversary, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) joined the nation in celebrating the landmark legislation's milestone through a variety of activities.

The ADA Legacy Tour


As part of The ADA Legacy Tour that traveled around the country, GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson joined Tom Olin, disability photographer and storyteller, for a three-day visit to Knoxville, TN. There, they met with advocates, families and professionals who continue working hard for the disability community.

Honoring the theme of ADA's 25th anniversary, "Disability Rights are Civil Rights," Jacobson, Olin and others visited the Highlander Research and Education Center. Civil rights activist Rosa Parks visited this center before her famous bus ride; as a young man, US Congressman John Lewis organized the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee there; and Olin previously visited the center to discuss equal rights for people with disabilities during the fight for the ADA.


ADA **25** **1990-2015**
AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT



Gillian Grable of Georgia Microboards and Eleanor Smith of Concrete Change on the stage with Claudia Gordon (c).



Tom Olin (l), stands before The ADA Legacy Tour bus with Mark Johnson (c) and Eric Jacobson.



Disability advocates supporting People First, Mike and Marion Curry, took part in the ADA25 Parade.

“

We are all bound together, not by this list of our collective symptoms but by the social and political circumstances that have forged us as a group. We have found one another and found a voice to express not despair at our fate but outrage at our social positioning. Our symptoms, though sometimes painful, scary, unpleasant, or difficult to manage, are nevertheless part of the daily life. They exist and have existed in all communities throughout time. What we rail against are the strategies used to deprive us of rights, opportunity, and the pursuit of pleasure.

– Simi Linton. 1998. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. NY: New York University Press.

”

ADA25 Georgia Legacy Parade

Continuing the celebration, hundreds of self-advocates, people with disabilities, their families and supporters gathered in Downtown Atlanta for the ADA25 Georgia Legacy Parade, starting from Hardy Ivy Park to reach Centennial Olympic Park.

Accompanied by the beats of the Shiloh High School Drum Corps, the parade was led by Claudia Gordon, chief of staff at the US Department of Labor’s Office of Contract Compliance; Eleanor Smith, founder of Concrete Change; Leslie Irby-Peoples, Ms. Wheelchair USA 2015; Mark Johnson, director of advocacy at the Shepherd Center; and GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson.



GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson; Claudia Gordon, chief of staff at the US Department of Labor’s Office of Contract Compliance; and Mark Johnson, The ADA Legacy Project chair, march in the parade.

Commemorating 25 Years of the ADA



Ms. Wheelchair USA 2015 Leslie Irby-Peoples joined other advocates in Hardy Ivy Park before the parade.

Disability Pride Day

The Office of City of Atlanta Councilman Kwanzaa Hall declared the day Disability Pride Day in the City of Atlanta. Parade speakers included two disability rights activists: Simi Linton and Claudia Gordon.

Linton read an excerpt from her book *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. Gordon, who also worked in the White House as the Public Engagement Advisor to the Disability Community, gave the keynote speech.

A performance by Full Radius Dance, a professional, physically integrated dance company, closed the festivities of the ADA25 Georgia Legacy Parade.



Advocate and People First of GA Treasurer Teresa Coleman proclaimed "Disability Rights ARE Civil Rights."



Advocates gathered in Centennial Olympic Park after the parade to hear speeches and rally for change.

“

I stand on the shoulders of countless disability rights advocates/activists and allies including parents of children with disabilities, who like Helen Keller taught us, believe everyone has something positive to contribute when they are given an opportunity.

They hope for a future wherein people with disabilities would enjoy equal access and full participation in all aspects of mainstream society; wherein we would lead independent lives, make informed choices and enjoy self-determination; wherein disability rights would be recognized as a civil right and not a matter of charity.

Their hopes laid the foundation for the ADA. Then, their action and sacrifices led to its drafting and passage. Things didn't just get better for the disability community. People had to act to make it better.

– Claudia Gordon

”



Scan the QR code at left to watch GCDD's captioned, descriptive video celebrating the ADA's 25th Anniversary.



Simi Linton read an excerpt from her book to advocates encouraging them to claim their disability.



Disability rights advocate Claudia Gordon inspired the crowd with her keynote address.



Professional, physically integrated dance company Full Radius performed for attendees.



University of Georgia's Institute on Human Development and Disability proudly participated in the parade.



Children's Freedom Initiative 10th Anniversary

In its continued effort to promote inclusive and integrated communities for people with developmental disabilities, which includes children, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) has been a collaborative partner of the Children's Freedom Initiative (CFI) since its founding in 2005.

CFI, a coalition of advocates dedicated to creating a Georgia in which no child resides in a facility, celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Atlanta Community Food Bank and also presented the current status of the remaining 41 children in private institutions or skilled nursing facilities.

The event featured a panel with key state agency leaders who discussed moving the remaining 41 children into the community through legislative means; a keynote address by Sharon Lewis, principal deputy administrator of the Administration for Community Living and senior advisor to the Health and Human Services Secretary on Disability Policy; and Nancy Rosenau, executive director of EveryChild, Inc. located in Austin, TX, who spoke about Texas' work to bring 955 children out of nursing homes and currently have 318 left to move into the community.

Recognized Advocates:

Seated (l to r): Mathew Harp and Callie Moore. Standing (l to r) Brenda Parker, Zenobia Willis, Pam Walley, Karl Lehman, Sally Carter, Jim Schnupp, Greg Schnupp, Bobbie Davidson, Former Rep. Judy Manning, Katie Chandler, Dottie Adams. Not present: Beth English, Pat Nobbie, Joe Shapiro and Gwen Skinner.

“

Georgia has every opportunity to become a zero state with no children living in institutional facilities.

– Sharon Lewis

”

CFI's 10th anniversary celebration also recognized the following advocates for their work in moving children out of facilities and into inclusive communities.

- **Sally Carter** and **Bobbie Davidson**, transition specialists, GA Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- **Beth English**, executive director of Easter Seals Southern Georgia
- **Mathew Harp**, self-advocate and **Zenobia Willis**, host home provider
- **Karl Lehman**, president and CEO of Childkind, Inc.
- Former State Rep. **Judy Manning** (R – District 32)
- **Pat Nobbie, PhD**, program specialist at the Administration for Community Living
- **Brenda Parker**, host home provider
- **Greg, Jeannette** and **Jim Schnupp**, hosts, CFI Study Tour Group
- **Joe Shapiro**, investigation correspondent for National Public Radio
- **Gwen Skinner**, GA Dept. of Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases
- **Pam Walley** and **Callie Moore**, family advocates and activists



Take Your Legislator to Work Day

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) has continued to make advocating for competitive employment for people with disabilities an important piece of its mission for an inclusive Georgia.

GCDD supported the State's first-ever Take Your Legislator to Work Day (TYLTWD), hosted by Employment First Georgia (EFG) as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October 2015. The initiative was an exercise to bring together legislators with people with developmental disabilities and employers who are supporting this effort in their districts.

The goal of TYLTWD is to ask employees with disabilities to invite their legislators to visit their workplace to demonstrate first-hand the power of community-integrated employment for people with disabilities by showcasing their skills and talents in a work environment.

The legislative response was overwhelmingly positive. EFG scheduled over 40 legislators to visit their constituents with disabilities at work.

“

I liked the fact that I got to show [the legislators] that people with disabilities can work just like anybody else and shouldn't be sheltered. It's important that they know we can do the same things other people can do and we can live independent lives.

– Adrianna Becerra,
Project SEARCH intern

”



Quron Dixon greeted Sen. Donzella James at his place of employment, Restaurant Associates.



To see a current list of all the Take Your Legislator to Work Day Visits, visit www.gcdd.org/take-your-legislator-to-work-day



Rep. Bob Bryant (c) visited BJ Clark and Michael Burris on the job in Chatham County.



Rep. Jon Burns visited Lindsey Kussow, who works at Edwards Interiors Aerospace in Springfield.

Public Forums for New Five Year Plan



Attendees share their stories with GCDD executive assistant Kim Person (r) at the Atlanta public forum in September 2015.



GCDD's Dottie Adams writes down barriers to people with disabilities that came up as topics of concern throughout the State.

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) set out across the State to listen to what changes people with disabilities, their families, caregivers and other advocates wanted to see over the next five years in regards to disability services and supports.

GCDD hosted 11 forums in nine Georgia cities during August and September to gather public input. Over **225 self-advocates** with developmental disabilities, family members and friends representing over **63 communities** shared their thoughts and concerns regarding the services and supports available to them.

Over **400 online surveys** were received from community members identifying the needs and gaps in services available to people with developmental disabilities.

GCDD engaged various local communities on topics of interest by conducting two-hour public forums in the following cities: Dalton, Gainesville, Stockbridge, Macon, Albany, Columbus, Atlanta, Athens, Savannah, Augusta and Atlanta (Spanish).

Stockbridge, Macon, Albany, Columbus, Atlanta, Athens, Savannah, Augusta and Atlanta (Spanish).

Ten out of 11 forums cited lack of employment and accessible/affordable housing as barriers to full participation.



In accordance with the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, GCDD – and all national developmental disability councils – is required to develop and implement a Five Year State Plan that is based on extensive community input and focuses on several areas of significance, including employment, education and early intervention services, housing, transportation, self-determination and advocacy, health, recreation, community-based services and supports, and other activities.

Council Members & GCDD Staff



Council Members

- Josette Akhras**,
Parent Advocate, Eatonton
- Jason Bearden**, *Local Nonprofit/
Provider, Canton*
- Thomas Connelly**, *Vice-Chair
& Self-Advocate, Albany*
- Daniel Crimmins**, *Center for
Leadership in Disability – Georgia
State University, Atlanta*
- Pam Hunter Dempsey**, *Parent
Advocate/Advisory Member*
- Deborah Gay**, *Georgia Department
of Education, Atlanta*
- Teresa Ann Heard**, *Local
Nonprofit/Provider, Albany*
- Deborah C. Hibben**,
Parent Advocate, McDonough
- Geneice McCoy**,
Parent Advocate, Augusta
- Ruby Moore**, *Georgia Advocacy
Office, Decatur*
- Eren Kyle Niederhoffer**,
Self-Advocate, Atlanta
- Evan H. Nodvin**,
Self-Advocate, Atlanta

- Mitzi R. Proffitt**, *Chair &
Parent Advocate, Brooklet*
- Marcia Singson**, *Parent
Advocate, Winder*
- Dr. Zolinda Stoneman**, *Institute of
Human Development & Disability
– University of Georgia, Athens*
- Rickie Jodie Wren**,
Parent Advocate, Villa Rica

State Agency Partners

- Commissioner Frank Berry**,
*Georgia Department
of Behavioral Health &
Developmental Disabilities*
- Commissioner Robyn A.
Crittenden**, *Georgia Department
of Human Services*
- Commissioner Brenda
Fitzgerald, MD**, *Georgia
Department of Public Health*
- Commissioner Camila Knowles**,
*Georgia Department of
Community Affairs*
- Commissioner Clyde L. Reese,
III Esq.**, *Georgia Department
of Community Health*

- Executive Director Greg
Schmeig**, *Georgia Vocational
Rehabilitation Agency*

GCDD Staff

- Dottie Adams**, *Individual and
Family Supports Director*
- Dawn Alford**, *Public Policy Director*
- Gary Childers**, *Chief Financial Officer*
- Caitlin Childs**, *Organizing Director,
Real Communities Initiative*
- Lisa Eaves**, *Grants &
Contracts Manager*
- Eric Foss**, *Front Receptionist*
- Eric Jacobson**, *Executive Director*
- Jhai James**, *Public Information Assoc./
Social Media Coordinator*
- Gabrielle Melnick**, *Real Communities
Initiative Organizing Assistant*
- Nick Perry**, *Public Policy Planning
Specialist & Sibling Coordinator*
- Kim Person-Hudson**, *Executive
Assistant/Meeting Planner*
- Valerie Meadows Suber**,
*Public Information Director
& Making a Difference
Magazine Editor-in-Chief*



GCDD Council Members (seated, l to r) Lynn Walker, Ruby Moore, Eren Kyle Niederhoffer, Evan Nodvin, Kate Brady, Tom Connelly, (standing, l to r) Dr. Zolinda Stoneman, Deborah Hibben, Darlene Meader, Rickie Jodie Wren, Trace Haythorn, Geneice McCoy, Mitzi Proffitt, Pam Hunter Dempsey, Marcia Singson, Teresa Ann Heard, Brenda Liz Muñoz, Debbie Reagin, (not pictured) Josette Akhras, Jason Bearden, Daniel Crimmins, Deborah Gay.

Funded and Supported Activities - FY2015

- 17th Annual GCDD Disability Day at the Capitol – Theme, “Fulfilling the Promise of the ADA”
- ASPIRE – Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement
- CARE-M Georgians for a Healthy Future
- Children’s Freedom Initiative 10th Anniversary
- Conference Sponsorships
- Employment First Georgia Initiative
- Georgia Microboards Association
- GCDD Social Media
 - Capitol Impact, Database/List Serve & Advocacy Network
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - YouTube
- GCDD Website
 - Blogs
 - Events Calendar
 - Funding Opportunities

- Making a Difference Magazine online
- Making a Difference Cartoon Gallery
- Public Policy for the People Legislative Newsletter online
- News & Media
- Photo Gallery
- Public Policy
- Real Communities
- Resources
- Making A Difference Magazine print
- Partnership Funds
- Partnerships for Success
 - Barrow County
 - Bartow County
 - Bryan County
 - Cherokee County
 - City of Decatur
 - Cobb County
 - Colquitt County
 - Douglas County
 - Hall County
 - Thomas County
 - Walton County
 - White County
 - Whitfield County
- People First Georgia
- Post-Secondary Programs
 - Guidance and Opportunities for Academic and Leadership Success (GOALS) Program at Columbus State Univ.
 - Creating Higher Education Opportunities to Increase College Experiences (CHOICE) Program at East GA State College and Univ.
- Expanding Career, Education and Leadership Opportunities (EXCEL) at GA Institute of Technology
- Kennesaw State Univ. Academy for Inclusive Education and Social Growth
- Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Consortium
- Project SEARCH
 - Albany
 - Atlanta (3)
 - Canton
 - Cartersville
 - Dalton (3)
 - Douglas
 - Gainesville
 - Moultrie
 - Savannah
 - Springfield
 - Thomasville
 - Walker
 - Waycross
- Real Communities Initiatives
 - Global Growers
 - Centenary UMC, Macon
 - Forsyth Farmers’ Market, Savannah
 - Georgians For Alternatives to the Death Penalty
 - Women on the Rise
- SOPOS Housing Coalition
- Unlock the Waiting Lists! Campaign



GCDD supports inclusive post-secondary education programs such as the one at Kennesaw State.



The Global Growers is a Real Communities initiative supported by GCDD.

2015 Budget - Expenditures

PERIOD COVERED THIS REPORT: OCTOBER 1, 2014 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2015



PROGRAMS EXPENDITURES

COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

- Real Council \$543,855
- Total Council Administration \$543,855

PRIORITY AREAS

- Real Communities \$599,109
- Public Awareness \$504,922
- Public Policy \$383,086
- Self-Advocacy \$144,837
- Transition \$481,023
- Publicly Funded System \$199,830

Total Funds \$3,400,517



Our Vision

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) envisions a state in which all persons are included in all facets of community life, have choices while exercising control over their lives and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

Pictured on Back Cover:

(Photo left) Mixed Greens, a GCDD Real Communities initiative, creates a more welcoming community that offers connections and contributions for people with and without disabilities.

(Photo center) Shaw Industries employee Brett Wable participated in GCDD's Take Your Legislator to Work Day, an initiative created to demonstrate the power of community-integrated employment.

(Photo right) Sen. Butch Miller visited with youth advocates in the halls of the State Capitol during one of the GCDD Advocacy Days.

*We must hold on to
our dreams and keep
pushing, keep speaking
up, keep speaking out,
and find a way to get in
the way. Get in good trouble,
necessary trouble.*

– Congressman John Lewis

*GCDD 17th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol
March 5, 2015 – Atlanta*

GCDD
GEORGIA COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
gcdd.org



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