



Why Vote?

Are you one of those who think that your one vote doesn't count; that whatever you do doesn't really make a difference? In the world of Disability Issues, your one vote is so important. Someone once told me that disability issues are just not that important to the majority of people, and that's why we don't get that much funding. But, if we pool all our "one votes" then we can impact the system in a positive, or negative, way. We can become informed on the candidates and vote for those who are sympathetic to disability issues and vote out those who have not, or will not, support our causes.

Most people think that the politicians are inaccessible and don't bother to call and talk to them or attend community meetings, or even follow their voting records online, but all politicians are the same as we are. They are our neighbors, our colleagues and our kids' friends' parents. AND, they need us more than we need them. Without our vote, they won't be elected. So, develop your strategy for this coming year.

1. Identify the elected officials from your area. Go to www.vote-smart.org and put in your zip code. Print out the page from your area and put it on your refrigerator. Read it and KNOW your elected officials. The ones that most impact us are our state senators and representatives.
2. Call them (there are only 2 main ones) and tell them about your child's disability and how important disability issues (Unlock the Waiting List & Others) are to you and your family.
3. Tell them you are a voter in his/her district.
4. If you feel the politician is sympathetic, or would be, then make a donation to his/her campaign. Offer to post a sign in your yard or introduce them to your friends and neighbors in the area.
5. Review their voting record and see how they voted on issues that you care about.

6. Follow them and be sure and let them know when you appreciate a particular vote, or bill.
7. Vote for them, attend their community meetings, send them mail, photos of your child. When they can put a personal face on an issue, it becomes more meaningful to them.

Take Action-Advocacy Questions and Answers

How can I take action on legislation? (1) Form a relationship with your representatives and senators by calling, emailing, faxing, and scheduling meetings to tell them about how their decisions on the budget and laws affect the quality of life for you and your family. (2) Visit GCDD's website for additional resources like fact sheets to utilize in your advocacy efforts: www.gcdd.org/public-policy (3) Visit www.unlockthewaitinglists.com and click on Action Center.

How can I contact my state representative or senator? Every member has an email address. However, the most effective way to communicate is by letter or phone. Legislators prefer to hear from their own constituents and may not pay attention to mass emails or form letters from people outside their districts. Information about legislators is also available in the "White Book," available at www.legis.state.ga.us, click on "Picture Book" or obtain them from the House or Senate Clerks' Offices in the capitol.

How did my legislators vote? Voting Records are online by bill number, not by legislator. This may take up to five days following the actual vote. Go to www.legis.state.ga.us then click on House or Senate, then click on House Votes or Senate Votes for a complete roll call on how each person voted on a certain bill. Printed copies may be obtained from the Clerk of the House 404/656-5015 or the secretary of the Senate 404/656-5040. A complete record of votes on every bill is available for a fee.

And, always remember, your vote counts.



AROUND THE COMMUNITY

Batter Up!

The Special Needs Baseball Season is looming large. If you are between the ages of 5-22 and have a developmental disability, then you can play. The season begins March 6, 2010 at Harrison Park. You can watch or you can play. To get a registration package, please email or call Claudia.challenger@sandyplainsbaseball.com or 770/367-2375.

Refuel Respite Care Program

Refuel is a respite care program at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church designed for children who have special needs and their siblings, grade K-5. Cost is \$5.00 per child with a \$20 maximum per family, for a night of rejuvenation for you and quality care for your children.

The next Refuel respite evening is Friday, February 12, 2010, from 6pm-9pm. The theme is Valentine's night, and it's going to be fun!!!

Please contact: Eden Hutchins, Children's Ministry Associate at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church. 770/794-2992 or e-mail: www.johnsonferry.org/children/greenlight

Summer Vacation?

'wanna go on a summer vacation but it's not handicap accessible? Maybe your child would like to do his own thing while you go off mountain climbing? Now you can!

Right in the Community Respite Program is offering a week long opportunity this summer. We'll be planning a weeklong recreation and respite camp where we'll go on fieldtrips, play video games, go to the movies, on outings, bowling and much more. What's the catch? We only have room for 4 participants at a time. Call Ms. Marlow at 770/427-8401 to talk about it.

Spring Fling

Cobb County Parks and Recreation's annual Spring Dance will be held on the evening of April 23, 2010 from 6:30-10:00, at the Marlow House. Participants must be pre-registered. Please contact Ann Bonds at 770/819-3223 for more information.

Circle of Friends Respite Program



The Lutheran Church of the Resurrection sponsors a wonderful fellowship program for adults with Developmental Disabilities. It's called Circle of Friends and it's really THE place to be. Meeting quarterly in the fellowship hall of the Church, Circle of Friends

offers a place for people to interact and have fun. There are lots of programs and events, snacks and games, and opportunities to make new friends. The program is coordinated by a group of church volunteers led by Barbara and Jim Kirk. For more information, call 770/421-9194.



March on the Capitol for Disability Issues:

On February 16, 2010, Unlock the Waiting Lists will have an advocacy day at the Capitol. Unlock the Waiting Lists advocates for the budget to include more funds for Medicaid Waivers. For more information, please visit the [website www.aadd.org](http://www.aadd.org). You can also contact Dave Blanchard or Rita Young at 404/881-9777.

Disability Day at the Capitol

– a day for all people with disabilities to be seen and heard by their Georgia legislators is Disability Day at the Capital. This event will be held on February 25, 2010, and is organized by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities. For more information, please visit the [website www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org) or call 404/657-2126.

Sensory Friendly Movies

Have you ever taken your special needs child to the movies and been asked to leave because he's overly excited and becomes so stimulated that he needs to run around the theater? Or shouts out at the villain? Or spills popcorn? Or rocks incessantly?

You're not alone.

A group of families of children with Autism facing these issues talked to AMC Theaters and asked them to think about their special needs children and adults and make some special concessions:

- Like turning down the sound about half-way
- keeping the lights in the theater a little higher
- and disregarding the silence is golden rule

That's all it took for a lot of kids to be more behaved in the theater. Once AMC got on board with the new plan, they developed a new Sensory Friendly Program. The program provides a special opportunity for families to enjoy their favorite films in a safe and accepting environment. The auditoriums dedicated to the program have their lights up, the sound turned down and audience members are invited to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing!

Now, the Sensory Friendly Film program is in 44 different markets offered at 80 different theatres (soon to be 85, and counting). All of this happened within the course of just over a year. Why? Because it was recognized that, as a company and as individuals in our own communities, there was the ability to offer these unique guests the opportunity to experience the magic of the silver screen in *their* own way. What some people might find unacceptable behavior, is not only acceptable but perfectly natural to these guests!

For more information, go to:

<http://www.amcentertainment.com> and in the upper right hand corner click in the SEARCH AMC BOX AND TYPE IN Sensory Friendly Films then CLICK GO.

In Atlanta, there are 3 Sensory Friendly Theaters: DISCOVER MILLS 18, PHIPPS PLAZA 18, SOUTH-LAKE PAVILION 24.



Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; Proposed Budget for FY 2011

This will be the first full year budget for the new department of BHDD. The Department faces several challenges. The US Department of Justice investigation into the state hospitals and resulting settlement agreement is still in force, and the Department has proposed significant funding to address services in the hospitals. DOJ may recommend more attention be given to the community. As a result of a US Office of Civil Rights Olmstead Complaint, the Department is under a Voluntary Compliance Agreement to create and implement a new Olmstead Plan. The Department is still committed to the Money Follows Person initiative as well.

At this point, we only know what the Department proposed to the Governor's Office for funding of new services. We await the Governor's budget address to hear what he will propose to the legislature for support.

Proposed: 1500 NOW / COMP waivers, including 150 comprehensive waivers to transition individuals from the State Hospitals under the Money Follows person Initiative: \$20,596,290

Waiting List for Home & Community Based Services (HCBS / DD) as of November: Short Term 2807; Long Term 1796

Department of Community Health; FY 2011; Proposed: 100 ICWP waiver slots under MFP initiative: \$1,199,652
ICWP Waiting List (176 slots): \$1,829.854

Waiting List for ICWP as of November-189

Department of Human Services; FY 2011

(Division of Aging Services): No adds to the budget for Division of Aging Services.

Community Care Services Program (CCSP) Waiting List: Medicaid:1935; Non-Medicaid: 20,195

Developmental Dentistry

We receive many calls each month requesting information on area dentists who will treat patients with Developmental Disabilities. Although there are some dentists out there who will treat specific patients, we are only aware of one dentist who specializes in treating DD patients. That is Deidre Rondeno, D. D. S. with the DDD Foundation.

The DDD Foundation, Inc. is committed to promoting and maintaining good oral health for patients with developmental disabilities. Founded as a non-profit organization in 1999, the Foundation supports a dental clinic that solely treats patients having developmental disabilities. The clinic opened in May 2002 and it is the only clinic of its kind in the Atlanta metro area. With a dedicated team of professionals trained in serving patients with special needs, the clinic serves patients with developmental disabilities including autism, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis. The DDD Foundation's primary goal is to provide excellent and accessible dental care for a population that often faces enormous barriers to affordable care.

For more information, you can view their web page at www.dddfoundation.org, or contact them at The DDD Foundation, Inc, Dentistry for the Developmentally Disabled, 52 Executive Park South, Suite 5203, Atlanta, GA 30329, 404/942-0086 Phone.

If you know of other such resources, we'd love to hear from you. Call us at 770-427-8401 to let us know about special service providers.



Right in the Community **Connections**

A Newsletter for Members and
Friends of Right in the Community

615 Roswell Street NE, Suite 150
Marietta, GA 30060-2147

Editor
Jerrie V. Paschal

for more information
on our programs and
services, please call
770-427-8401

