

74 Disability Day, AAC news, Unlock, Survey and More!

Dearest Advocates:

Below is information regarding the agenda for Disability Day at the Capitol on Wednesday, February 25th, as well as, an article in the AJC newspaper on Governor Perdue maybe turning down dollars from the federal Stimulus package.

For those that utilize Augmentative communication devices, I wanted you to be aware that DynaVox Technologies will be on the NBC Today Show tomorrow. Very exciting news. I know my son has benefitted a lot with developing his language communication even when the words did not come out due to a DynaVox AAC device years ago.

Unlock The Waiting Lists needs your help today. See below for details.

In addition, I was contacted by a college student at Indiana University (It's hard since I went to Purdue University- ha ha) conducting a survey regarding the needs to caregivers taking care of individuals with disabilities. Please take a moment to answer this survey. The only way we are going to get the continued support and funding for services is for others to understand our needs. Education is the key! Get involved!

Additional information on how you can get involved with the GA Autism insurance bills, go here: www.autismvotes.org/georgia

Also is additional information regarding a special needs planning seminar this Wednesday.

On February 28, 2009, there will be a disabilities services expo in Athens. See below for more information or go to my website at www.heidijmoore.com under "Events" for the flyer.

Lots going on. Hope you find this information helpful as always!

"UNITED – WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!"

Sincerely,

Heidi

(Proud Mother to Jacob - 9 yrs old with Down syndrome and Jared - 7 yrs old)

"Help the Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!"

www.heidijmoore.com

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2009 Disability Day at Capitol
Wednesday, February 25, 2009

9:00 a.m. – Freight Depot / Central Avenue & MLK Jr. Drive

- Registration, Pick Up T-Shirts and Lunch Tickets, sign the 2009 Disability Day Banner
and View Exhibits

11:00 a.m. – Rally Capitol Steps / Washington Street side

- Rally on the Capitol Steps to celebrate, advocacy and friendship.
- Welcome and Greeting by: Frank Ski, V103 radio morning show host
- Recognition of Fallen Soldiers: Rabbi Harvey Winokur, Temple Kehillat Chaim
- Legislative Update
- Keynote Speaker – Brad Cohen, Public Educator, Motivational Speaker and Author of *Front of the Class: How Tourette Syndrome Made Me the Teacher I Never Had*
- The Georgia Self-Advocate of Year Award – In Loving Memory of Natalie Norwood Tumlin
- Samuel Mitchell Lifetime Achievement Award
- Legislators will speak as floor activities permit
- Closing Address
- **Olmstead Chant**

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 - Lunch - Freight Depot

- Enjoy lunch catered by Varsity with other advocates, their families, friends, and legislators from across Georgia.
- Afternoon Remark: Eric Jacobson
- Briefing Updates

www.gcdd.org or (888)–ASK-GCDD

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AJC Newspaper Article: Perdue: Ga. might turn down some stimulus funds- Governor says his office is still reviewing the plans

http://www.ajc.com/news/content/metro/stories/2009/02/22/perdue_stimulus_funds.html

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AAC on NBC's Today Show - Featuring the DynaVox EyeMax – Tuesday, February 24

If you have time Tuesday morning, I'd like to invite you to watch the Today Show on NBC. Between 8:00 and 9:00am, there will be a segment on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) featuring the DynaVox EyeMax System.

One of the biggest challenges in assisting those who need help with communication is simply making people aware of the possibilities. The segment on the Today Show features Augie Nieto, Chairman of the ALS division of the MDA and founder of Augie's Quest, who was diagnosed with ALS almost four years ago. Augie will be communicating in the segment with a DynaVox EyeMax System.

In addition, we expect the segment to discuss how various AAC solutions can help people with many different conditions, including autism, stroke, cerebral palsy, and traumatic brain injury. Amy Roman, a noted speech pathologist, discusses how the technology works and how to pursue these solutions.

We are very excited about the opportunity to introduce the concept of AAC and the latest technology in the field to those who are struggling with communication due to ALS or other conditions.

By Tuesday afternoon, you will find a page on the DynaVox web site (www.dynavoxtech.com) with a link to the Today Show video and other information that will be of interest to those new to AAC.

Please send this on to any families, SLPs, teachers, or others who may be interested.

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Please make sure you visit <http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/advocate.html> today.

So far, over 1,300 e-mails have been sent to key legislators on the Appropriations Committee. TIME IS CRITICAL. They will meet on TUESDAY to decide if it is ok to cut supports to people with disabilities during such economically bad times.

Your response has been amazing, but this is just not enough! Please take a moment today and respond to our Action Alert! If you have responded - spend a few minutes thinking of a family member, a relative or a friend who would help you with this cause if you asked.

Why do we not have a strong system of supports in the community for people with disabilities and why do we have over 6,900 people waiting today?

WELL, WE HAVE NOT FUNDED THESE SUPPORTS ADEQUATELY.

GEORGIA RANKS:

49th in spending per capita on the HCBS Waiver (moved up in 2004 from 50th)

Over 17,400 people with I/DD living with caregivers over age 62

38th in utilization rate of placements of residents with I/DD in nursing facilities (with those states ranking low having few placements in nursing facilities). We are forced to place people in nursing homes and hospitals when there are no community supports.

Over 650 students leave High School every year needing some level of disability supports

You are sending in e-mails about the FY09 budget today. This budget amends the current year. We are gravely concerned about the impact of the cuts included in this budget. We need to make a stand today.

Tell them that cuts are just not ok for supports to people with disabilities! One of our state's most vulnerable.

WHATS NEXT?

After the House votes on the FY09 budget, they will move quickly to the FY10 budget - which currently funds NO NEW services for the 6,847 people waiting in the community for help. This means there will be no relief for at least the next 18 months for the next in line on our waiting lists.

I believe that it will be insulting if the General Assembly chooses not to use money from the Federal Stimulus intended for Medicaid relief for actually shoring up our disability system by expanding much needed disability community supports!

NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT

Dave Blanchard
Unlock the Waiting List Campaign

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Need help with a Survey regarding the needs to caregivers taking care of individuals with disabilities:

I am a junior majoring in Psychology at Indiana University Kokomo and currently doing an IRB approved research project for credit supervised under Dr. Kathy Holcomb. I was hoping that you or your website can assist in finding participants by possibly posting a link to the online survey on your website or allowing me to send paper versions of the survey to be mailed back at my expense. I need people, who care for a loved one on a regular basis, to fill out an anonymous survey for this research project. Participants need to be non-paid primary caregivers of a person with any special need(s). We feel that the primary caregivers have needs also. Our goal is to evaluate and possibly address those needs.

If you are able to help in this research project, or if you have any questions please reply to this email and let me know. If you prefer the paper surveys, I will email you a short form (less than a page) to fill out so that I can send it on to our Internal Review Board. Posting a link or directing potential participants to the online survey may be done so at any time without filling out the form. If you have any further questions I will be glad to assist. Here is a link to the online version link for your review.

<http://mypage.iu.edu/~kmholcom/caregivers.htm>

Thank you so much for your time.
Darci Wilson

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Bregman Educational Series:

For more information or to register for the conference, contact Brenda Revere at 770.677.9345 or bregman@jfcs-atlanta.org. You may also visit www.bregman.org.

Time 2 Shine

16th Annual Larry Bregman, M.D. Educational Series

The 16th Annual Larry Bregman, M.D., Educational Conference will be held Saturday, Feb. 28, and Sunday, Mar. 1, 2009, at The Selig Center in Atlanta.

This year's conference, "Time 2 Shine," will include three separate tracks for adults with developmental disabilities, their families and their caregivers.

The conference kicks off with a dance Saturday night at the Selig Center, sponsored by the Down Syndrome Association. The event continues on Sunday with a full day of programming and breakout sessions.

The keynote speaker is Reverend Al Mead, a Paralympic gold and silver medalist and 2006 inductee to the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame. He is the Associate Pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Ga. Rev. Mead has served as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the 1996 Paralympic Organizing Committee and as a CBS Sports Commentator for the Games.

This year, the adult track will involve breaking up into smaller groups, using the entire morning to stay focused on the theme. Workshops will cover topics such as communication skills, relationships, health and safety, and finding and keeping a job. The adult afternoon sessions will consist of classes such as dance and jewelry making. The family track will focus on issues including government resources and how to advocate for your child. The caregiver track will provide strategies for influencing behavior positively. Each track addresses quality, in-person-centered care.

The annual Webb Award, named for Webb Spraez, former Director of the Coordinated Network for Developmental Disabilities, will be given to an individual, group or corporation that embodies the spirit of The Larry Bregman, M.D., Educational Series.

For more information or to register for the conference, contact Brenda Revere at 770.677.9345 or bregman@jfcs-atlanta.org. You may also visit www.bregman.org.

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Special Needs Planning Seminar:

Merrill Lynch is partnering with *Exceptional Parent Magazine* to deliver a live online seminar that will explore the financial, legal and social challenges faced by families of children with

disabilities. I thought you might find the content of interest and wanted to share with you the details of this exciting program.

The event will be conducted as an interactive round table discussion. Panelists will include a Merrill Lynch Financial Advisor, a Special Needs Trust attorney and a representative from a third-party disability organization. Attendees can submit questions both prior to and during the broadcast that will be answered live.

Our panel of experts will:

- Explore the team approach to special needs planning
- Discuss the financial challenges facing families of children with disabilities and review the key elements of an effective financial strategy
- Examine how a Special Needs Trust can be used to supplement income and protect quality of life for your child with special needs
- Explain how third-party disability organizations can play a role in the special needs planning process

The details of the event, including how to register are outlined below:

Merrill Lynch and EPLiveOnline Present: An Live Online Seminar on Special Needs Planning

- Wednesday, February 25, 2009, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Visit http://www.epliveonline.org/ep_20090225.html to learn more and register to attend.

Merrill Lynch is proud to underwrite this program and I hope you'll be able to attend. Soon, after the program's completion, it will be available for viewing on www.totalmerrill.com/specialneeds.

Sincerely,

James Weinberg
Financial Advisor

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**“Enhancing Our Abilities” Disabilities Services Expo
Saturday, February 28, 2009.
9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Athens Classic Center.**

Multiple Choices Center for Independent Living, GA NETT Transition Council and the Georgia Council for Exceptional Children are co-sponsoring an Expo entitled “Enhancing our Abilities” for children and adults with disabilities and their families. This expo will be held at the Athens Classic Center in Athens, GA on Saturday, February 28th from 9:00 am.–1:00 p.m. Admission is free.

Featured speakers include Nancy O’Hara, Director, Special Education Services, Georgia Department of Education; Dottie Adams, Family and Individual Supports Director at Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities; Scott Crain, Parent Mentor, Hall County and Amy Roark, Transition Coordinator, Barrow County; Teresa Johnson, Parent Mentor, Walton County and Renee Feldman, Parent Mentor, Clarke County; Karen Adams, Family Educator, Parent to Parent of Georgia; and Bill Holley, Director, Multiple Choices Independent Living Center.

Sessions will cover a range of topics that include Medicaid/Katie Beckett, NOW/COMP Waivers, transition planning, self-determination and independent living, preparing for the future and vital information record-keeping tips.

Over 30 exhibitors will share information on transportation, rehabilitation, recreation, medical equipment and supplies, home modifications, insurance, health care financing, support groups, employment, education and more.

Special activities that day will include “My Picture with Molly;” where children can meet a local companion dog and pose for photos. Volunteers from Hands Across Georgia and local high schools will run a disability simulation exercise. Door prizes will be awarded, as well.

FOR GENERAL INFORMATION: Pam Moore 706-795-0120 ext. 1459 or pmoore@madison.k12.ga.us

FOR TRANSPORTATION CALL:
Bill Holley @ Multiple Choices (706) 549-1020 or email jmt2@bellsouth.net

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