

75 Advocacy Needed, Disability Day Update, Respite, and More

Dearest Advocates:

As many of you are aware, I have been very vocal against with the use of the r-word during the movie of "Tropic Thunder". Special Olympics is continuing this advocacy effort to remove the r-word from our language and educate others on how hurtful it can be. See below for more information. Please get involved to make a difference in society!

I've also included in this newsletter a press release from the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) from Disability Day, just in case you missed it. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend for the first time in 6 years due to conflict. Thanks to everyone that showed up to show their support during these rough difficult times. We need to continue to advocate making sure families of children and adults with disabilities receive the necessary services and supports they need.

In addition, respite opportunity for families, and last call for Parent to Parent Impact Award nominations.

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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Advocacy Needed: Spread the Word to End the Word 3-31-09 – "R-Word Campaign"

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Cause:

Please see the memo below about "Spread the Word to End the Word 3.31.09" an "r-word" campaign, a youth-inspired, youth-led event. Please share this with your grassroots. In addition to the memo below, you can refer them to these links:

General info on the campaign:

http://www.specialolympics.org/03-31-09_Spread_the_Word.aspx

Toolkit/Resources: http://www.specialolympics.org/stw_resources.aspx

Please share these materials liberally so we can "Spread the Word to End the Word."

TO: Coalition Members and Supporters
FROM: Kirsten Suto Seckler, Special Olympics
DATE: March 6, 2009

SUBJECT: Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign

This past February, we held our 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Boise/Sun Valley, Idaho uniting nearly 2,000 athletes from nearly 100 countries. As part of that event, we gathered 130 young people with and without intellectual disabilities for a week-long activation summit. The motivation of young people to make change in the world for people with intellectual disabilities is inspiring.

On February 9, during the week of activities, Dick Morris used the word "retarded" in a demeaning way on the O'Reilly Factor. The students of the Youth Activation Summit acted swiftly and reached out to FOX and Bill O'Reilly to educate and engage them on this blunder. On February 12, Bill O'Reilly gave an on-air apology.

Young people have found their power and are leading an effort for Special Olympics called Spread the Word to End the Word. Students across the country are planning local events for 3.31.09 to end the use of the R-word and to garner more pledges of support.

Actor and National Down Syndrome Society Ambassador John C. McGinley attended the 2009 World Games and was so impressed with the actions of these young people that he has signed-on to help them further their goal.

We invite you to join us as we Spread the Word to End the Word this month. Help the youth spread the word by mobilizing your constituents to support their efforts. Graphics, tools and resources can be found at www.r-word.org. Your organization and constituents are welcome to use the materials to participate in this nationwide awareness effort to help us accomplish what we set out to do in August 2008 – change the conversation and raise the consciousness of society about the hurtful effects of the R-word.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Kirsten Seckler at kseckler@specialolympics.org or 1-202-715-1147 or Barbara Kornblau @bkornblau@specialolympics.org

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Press Release from GCDD on Disability:

11th Annual Disability Day At The Capitol Draws 2,000 Georgians

***Advocates Rally For Increased Services for People With Disabilities
Poll Results: Georgia Taxpayers Willing to Pay More For Expanded
Services***

ATLANTA, GA (March 5, 2009) – “Hear our voice, Respect our choice!” and “My body, my choice where I want to live” were among signs articulating the sentiment of the 2,000 Georgians gathered at the State Capitol last Wednesday to heighten public awareness and to communicate support to legislators for increased services for people with disabilities. The 11th annual Disability Day was so well-attended that organizers from the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) had to add seating to accommodate the luncheon crowd following the rally.

“Today is pivotal for our state’s progress on behalf of people with disabilities,” GCDD’s Chair Tom Seegmueller said. “Advocates as well as taxpayers have spoken today and our legislators heard our message that we must do more to improve community life for people with disabilities.”

Seegmueller referenced recent poll results which indicate 58% of Georgia taxpayers are willing to accept a tax increase if it would mean greater support for disability issues. Respondents registered even stronger support for the Georgia Legislature to require that homebuilders construct more accessible homes (excluding custom-built homes) for people with disabilities. Results of the poll

were announced at a press conference immediately preceding Disability Day at the Capitol. Complete results may be found at: www.gcdd.org.

Supporters at the rally cheered wildly as Keynote Speaker Brad Cohen shared how he overcame the ridicule and misunderstanding he experienced as a result of his disability, Tourette Syndrome. Cohen, now a Cobb County teacher, is sought after nationally as a motivational speaker and his book, "Front of the Class: How Tourette Syndrome Made Me the Teacher I Never Had," aired as a CBS Hallmark Hall of Fame movie in Dec. 2008.

"I didn't learn math very well, because my teacher made me sit facing the back wall," Cohen told the crowd. "But today I'm a role model. I'm living proof to my students and to all of you that you can dream and become anything you want to be no matter what your disability."

Lois Curtis, the surviving plaintiff in the landmark US Supreme Court Olmstead Decision which paved the way for people with disabilities to leave institutions and live in the community, carried a sign reading "Ten years is long enough." The 2009 Disability Day at the Capitol rally celebrated 10 years since Olmstead, Lois Curtis' judicial system victory that opened doors for several Georgia advocates to be present. Vicky Thompson (Duluth), Harold Reese (Duluth) and Marie Bas (Atlanta) were recognized at the rally as among the advocates who have successfully moved from institutions to live in their communities thanks to the Olmstead Decision. Ms. Curtis, who has launched a career as an Atlanta folk artist, help lead advocates in the Olmstead cheer "Get us out, keep us out, don't put us in."

Hundreds of youth and adults from disability organizations from across Georgia participated, including about 60 people from Maynard Jackson High School in southeast Atlanta, about 30 people from Fayette Community Options in Fayetteville, about 75 from The Jessamine Place in Fitzgerald, about 25 from the Gwinnett Enrichment Center in Gwinnett County, and about 25 from Wesley Glen Ministries in Macon.

"I'm grateful for such an eye-opening experience at this year's Disability Day at the Capitol. They can count on my support every year," said Disability Day Emcee and V-103 radio personality Frank Ski.

Bernard Baker of Atlanta and Virginia Harris of Bainbridge both received awards for their achievement in the field of advocacy and community service, awards bestowed in the names of esteemed "Fallen Soldiers" (those who have passed away).

Rabbi Harvey Winokur, spiritual leader at Atlanta's Temple Kehillat Chaim, honored this year's Fallen Soldiers by reading their names: Harriet McBryde-Johnson (Charleston, SC), Samuel Mitchell (Atlanta, GA), Betsy Wynne (Athens, GA) and Christian Stalworth.

Legislators in attendance at the rally included Jill Chambers (R-Dekalb), Jack Hill (R-Reidsville), Mike Jacobs (R-Dekalb), Sean Jerguson (R-Chamblee), Fran Millar (R-Dekalb), James Mills (R-Hall), Dan Moody (R-Alpharetta), Senator Nan Orrock (D-Fulton) and Allen Peake (R-Macon).

Sponsoring organizations for the 2009 Disability Day at the Capitol are: The ARC of Georgia, The Arc of Walker County, Bobby Dodd Institute, Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund, Briggs and Associates, Capitol Policy, CEPTA, Delmarva Foundation, DeKalb Developmental Disability Council, Down Syndrome Association of Atlanta, Fulton County Disability Office, Georgia Advocacy Office, Georgia Association of Supported Employment, Georgia Building Authority, Georgia Department of Labor – Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Georgia State University Institute on Leadership and Disability, Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, Jewish Family & Career Services, National Multiple Sclerosis Society - Georgia Chapter, Parent to Parent of Georgia, Chick-Fil-A, ResCare, State ADA Coordinator's Office – GSFIC, Southern Company, United Cerebral Palsy.

Among GCDD's list of public policy priorities are the *Unlock the Waiting Lists!* Campaign which calls for funding of community based services for nearly 7,000 persons on waiting lists for vital supports and *Money Follows the Person* (MFP) which seeks to allow people to leave state and private institutions and nursing homes to move into the community with the necessary services.

A Developmental Disability is a severe, chronic mental and/or physical disability that occurs before age 22 and is expected to last a lifetime. It limits a person in three or more of the following life activities: self-care, language, learning, mobility, self-direction, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.

GCDD is a federally-funded state agency charged with creating systems for change for people with developmental disabilities and their families, with a goal to increase independence, inclusion, integration, self-determination and productivity through activities such as public policy research and analysis, project demonstrations, advocacy and public information. Visit www.gcdd.org for more information.

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Respite for Families of Children with Disabilities:

I just wanted to make you aware that registration is up and running for our upcoming Refuel event called March Madness. It will be Saturday, March 21 from 9am-noon, and I wanted to give you a little taste of what will be going on.

During March Madness, we will have several different adaptable sports clinics set up in the building with countless other activities available for your kids, so you can enjoy a morning of rejuvenation! Registration is available at www.johnsonferry.org/children/greenlight.

We hope we'll see you there!

Eden Hutchins
Children's Ministry Associate
Johnson Ferry Baptist Church
(770) 794-2992

"You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And **ALL** of us are the work of Your hand." ~ Isaiah 64:8

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P2P Impact Award Nominations Needed:

Reminder: Parent to Parent of Georgia's Impact Award Nominations are due March 13. Nominations can be completed online at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=xWHm_2bAz7v9jXbchCZjAnmA_3d_3d. For more information or to download a hard copy of the nomination form, please visit www.parenttoparentofga.org.

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