

BREAKING GROUND

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Expanding Tennessee's Postsecondary Opportunities



TENNESSEE COUNCIL
on developmental disabilities

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Council Welcomes New Public Policy Director



The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities is delighted to welcome Tiffany Mason as our new Director of Public Policy. With an extensive background in public policy, Tiffany brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise about state legislative processes and policy issues to the Council.

"We are fortunate to have found Tiffany just at the time that she was looking for a professional home with a strong mission to positively impact people and communities in Tennessee," said Wanda Willis, Executive Director, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities. "She is already visiting policymakers and becoming acquainted with our partners in the disability community."

Most recently, Tiffany was Governmental Affairs Advisor for Adams & Reese LLP, and prior to that, worked for Smith Johnson & Carr. She has established herself as an accomplished professional with the highest integrity who is a skilled communicator, strategist and coalition builder. Tiffany is well regarded by colleagues and all who have worked with her in the public policy arena.

"Educating others, particularly legislators, on the issues concerning persons with developmental disabilities will become my number one priority as the Council's public policy director," said Tiffany. "The Council is a great organization whose mission ties closely with my own: crafting public policy that will improve someone's life. I'm excited to be part of the team." You can reach Tiffany at tiffany.mason@tn.gov or 615-741-5019.

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Partners in Policymaking™ 20th Class Graduates

BY NED ANDREW SOLOMON • PHOTO BY LYNETTE PORTER

On April 6th, 22 people from across the state – adults with disabilities and family members of persons with disabilities – picked up their diplomas at a graduation ceremony at the Nashville Airport Radisson Hotel. Having successfully completed an intensive multi-month training on disability issues, otherwise known as the Tennessee Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute, these individuals return to their homes stronger and more effective advocates for themselves, their loved ones and the disability community at large.

Over the course of seven weekend sessions, these Partners were trained by a long list of national and local experts in the disability field. They learned about the history of the disability experience; building inclusive classrooms, workplaces and communities; supported and competitive employment; supported and independent living; conducting effective meetings; the state and federal legislative processes; and much more. Throughout the day they filled their notebooks with vital information from the speakers. On breaks, during meals, and well into the evening they had discussions about the speakers' topics, or just conversed about the challenges and successes they've experienced in their lives. They networked, and helped each other problem-solve. They supported each other in the sessions, and at home in between Partners meetings.



In March, they met Partners grads since the program began in Tennessee in 1993, at the annual Partners Reunion Conference. Current class members watched adults with disabilities make the rounds with their Partners friends, and thought about their own young children with disabilities, hoping they would also become competent, networking, advocating adults one day. Adults with disabilities heard young parents talk about their challenges and their joys, and gained insight into what their own parents experienced, as they fought for equal access in a much less welcoming time.

Partners is not easy. It takes a lot of time and energy. There's homework that you have to complete and report on in front of the class. There are 60-, 75- and 90-minute presentations that you have to sit through. You have to sleep in a hotel room, and eat hotel meals that are paid for by the program – wait, that part's not so hard, is it?

At the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities – the sponsor of the Leadership Institute – we so appreciate, and never take for granted the commitment these individuals have made to this program. We are very proud to welcome the following folks into our ever-expanding Partners statewide network:

Logan Black, Knoxville

Serena Blanton, Martin

Brian Brown, Lenoir City

Susan Bryant, Germantown

Jeanne Buckman, Hendersonville

Cathie Buckner, Nashville

Juan Jose Cardona, Nashville

Patrick Gallaher, Murfreesboro

Serina Gilbert, Charlotte

Steven Greiner, Fairview

Sandra Hawkins, Memphis

Leslie Jones, Memphis

Patti Lehigh, Cordova

Jerry McMullin, Nashville

Roxie Nunnally, Cordova

Louise Ohlwein, Collierville

Joy Rogers, Dyersburg

Christine Sartain, Nashville

Beth Simmerman-Fetzer, Nashville

Carol Solomon, Cookeville

Sharon Stolberg, Cleveland

Richard Thompson, Nashville

What is the ADA and *Why Should You Know about It?*

BY STEPHANIE BREWER COOK • PHOTO BY MARY STONAKER



When I provide training on the ADA, I often begin by asking my audience, “What is the ADA?” Not surprisingly, I often get a dull stare but sometimes I’ll get an enthusiastic response of “The American Dental Association!” (I kid you not.) Part of me is slightly flustered by that answer, but the greater part of me is glad to be able to educate and, by the time we’re finished, my hope is always that those who attend (and stayed awake!) have left with an understanding not so much of the “technical” or “legal” side of the ADA, but the “personal” or “practical”. Some advocates might ask why not explain the technical/legal side? My reasoning is this: if you “get” the personal/practical application of the ADA, then learning the legal and technical side is easier. Plus, the ADA applies to all of us personally - whether today or at some future point in our lives.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is not a building code, but rather a piece of federal civil rights legislation signed into law by President George H. W. Bush in 1990. In the U.S., there are approximately 56 million people who have a disability. This number accounts for about 20% of our population and does not include seniors who often experience impairments due to the aging process. When you put the numbers of these two populations together, it can boggle your mind as to how many people may actually benefit from the ADA. Its purpose is to provide equal access for people with disabilities in all aspects of life, and does this by breaking into five “areas” or “divisions” known as titles. Here, I’ll give general information about each title.

Title I deals with all things employment - from the application to hiring, to providing reasonable accommodations, to promoting and firing. Title I requires an employer to give people with disabilities the same chance to get or do a job (for which they are qualified), as applicants or employees without disabilities. Unfortunately, for many years the definition of disability was being narrowed so severely (primarily through U.S. Supreme Court cases), that many people with disabling conditions were no longer considered people with disabilities under the law, and therefore struggled to get the accommodations they may have needed in order to get or keep a job.

Because of that, it became necessary to amend the law to broaden the definition of disability back to what

Congress had originally intended in 1990. What resulted is the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) which became effective in 2008. The focus now is (and rightfully so!) on how to provide a reasonable accommodation to ensure that an employee with a disability is able to do or continue doing his/her job.

Title II covers state and local government and public transportation. In a nutshell, every state, county or city government must be accessible to people with disabilities. It doesn’t mean that every single facility must be accessible; it means that the government’s programs must be accessible “when viewed in their entirety”. Program access may mean moving a stained glass making class from an inaccessible facility to an accessible facility in order to allow a person with a disability to take the class.

Another example is this: if a city owns 30 recreation centers throughout its jurisdiction, and all 30 were built long before the ADA, the city doesn’t have to go back and make all 30 accessible - it just has to ensure that access is provided to similar centers that are equitably distributed throughout the city, so that all citizens have an opportunity to utilize a recreation center and benefit from the services it provides. Of note, many government facilities would have been affected by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and therefore might have some access features as a result that may or may not be required by the ADA.

Additionally, if a government body has more than 50 employees, the ADA

mandates that there be a designated ADA Coordinator trained and able to answer inquiries, complaints, and to help coordinate the overall compliance of the governmental agency's efforts to be accessible and inclusive.

The ADA also addresses public transportation, which could be a fixed route bus system or a subway train. When a person is unable to ride a fixed route bus because he can't get to a bus stop or, due to his disability, can't access the buses on that route, the ADA requires a complementary paratransit service. Paratransit service is provided by smaller, lift-equipped vehicles within a prescribed area adjacent to a fixed route and, instead of being delivered to an established stop along a route (like with fixed route service) the rider is delivered to the curb of the facility he is visiting, similar to a taxi. Subway terminals must be accessible to people with disabilities, so an elevator may be needed to get people to multiple floors in a subway facility, and detectable warnings must be installed along the platform to ensure that a person who is blind doesn't walk onto the tracks.

Title III entities are those which are privately owned and open to the public, also known as "public accommodations". Consider all the places that you enjoy going and most likely, it's considered a Title III entity, such as a movie theater, restaurant, beauty salon, grocery store, mall, veterinary office, dentist or doctor's office. OK, nobody really enjoys going to the dentist, but you get the point. Since 1990, Title III entities should have been performing "readily achievable barrier removal". Essentially, businesses were supposed to look at the facility in which they are located and see how a person with a disability might park, enter and use the customer service counter, restroom, telephone, etc. If an obstacle to access was found, the business owner's responsibility was to determine how best to reduce or remove the obstacle and provide access to people with disabilities.

Of course, any time a facility is renovated, whether owned by a Title II or Title III entity, the renovations must include increased accessibility and compliance with the ADA, in addition to relevant locally-adopted building codes.

Title IV concerns "effective communication". We all communicate, but a person with a disability may not communicate in the same way as a person who doesn't have a disability. Consider deafness: if you are deaf, you can't talk to a person at the customer service counter the same way as a person who is not deaf. In order to explain why you're returning a product, you may have to point to illustrations on the product's box to indicate what is broken. You may need to exchange written notes back and forth, or if the person speaks slowly and clearly, you may be able to read their lips to determine what is said. If none of these options work to convey the message, a qualified sign language interpreter may be needed.

Now consider having a visual disability: if you are blind or have low vision, you cannot read the printed word in the same way as a person who has no visual issues. In order to read the minutes from a meeting, those minutes may need to be printed in larger font or Brailled or put on a disk. The point is to communicate effectively, and what effective means may be different for all of us.

Title V is the "Miscellaneous" title that explains how to assert your rights as a person with a disability. Title V provides protections to people with disabilities who assert their rights under the ADA via a lawsuit by prohibiting anyone from intimidating, coercing or harassing the person with a disability. It also allows for damages and attorneys' fees.

I know that all this may seem like way too much information, and of course if you don't have a disability right now, you may not think it's relevant. But consider

those around you such as your family, friends and neighbors. If a loved one had a car wreck and sustained a spinal cord injury that paralyzed both legs and made him dependent on a wheelchair for mobility, could he continue doing his current job? Could he still frequent his favorite restaurant or store? Does he live near public transportation or within the paratransit service area in your community in order to have the freedom of mobility afforded him by a personal vehicle? Would he have to change dentists because he can no longer get into the office?

What if your best friend had a heart attack or developed a pulmonary disorder that required her to park close to a building's entrance because she could not walk a long distance? What if you woke up tomorrow unable to move one side of your body? Suppose you get to your 85th birthday and your hips, knees, hands or back aren't as strong or agile as they were while in your 40s, and it takes more effort to do many of the things you used to do effortlessly?

The point is this: all of us are only temporarily able-bodied. (I refer to that as being a "TAB"). You may not have been born with a disability or may not have sustained a disabling injury or illness so far in your lifetime, but if you live long enough, there's an excellent chance that you'll need some form of access provided by the ADA. And that is why the ADA is personal to all of us.

Stephanie Brewer Cook is the ADA Coordinator for the City of Knoxville, the Chair of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and a Partners in Policymaking graduate. Mrs. Cook is a person with a disability and has been an advocate for people with disabilities for over two decades.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Updates from Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Tennessee

BY COURTNEY TAYLOR

It's been four years since the start date of Tennessee's first postsecondary education (PSE) program on a college campus for students with intellectual disabilities, and two years since the second program began. In January of this year, a third program opened its campus to students, and another program will begin at Lipscomb University in January of 2014 after the school was approved for funding in March by the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

While the programs are all at different stages in their development, all are busy contributing to improving the independence of their students through academics, career development and university life. Let's check in with the programs to get a better sense of what's happening.

Next Steps at Vanderbilt

University - Year 4

Next Steps at Vanderbilt students are on campus for their spring semester. The two-year college certificate program has graduated 12 students thus far, 80% of whom are employed in competitive settings. Current students are enrolled in classes, working internships, and meeting and socializing with peer mentors each week.

Students are enrolled in classes that span across the humanities (Filmography and American Pop Music), psychology (Intro to Psychology and American Studies), and environmental sciences



(Oceanography). In addition to these courses, students are participating in seminars on self-awareness, career technology and independent living. Internships at libraries, dining services, administrative offices, and student media reflect the unique interests of the students and meet employment goals they have determined for themselves.

Students also are busy with a number of social, creative and professional activities. They have joined Next Chapter Book Clubs, meeting each week in community settings to read a book together. At weekly Food Forays, students are budgeting, shopping at the grocery store, cooking for one another and enjoying healthy meals. One current student was given his own weekly podcast through *The Hustler*, a campus newspaper. Spring also means basketball season, so you're sure to see many of the students cheering on the Commodores!

University of Tennessee FUTURE Program - Year 2

The FUTURE Program is growing! Students continue to work toward independence. Life Skills courses have been expanded to include digital literacy, career and life planning and FUTURE life skills. Post-graduation transition planning is in full swing. Internship opportunities also have expanded. Students have the opportunity to work on- and off-campus during internships. New on-campus locations include Tennessee Vols Channel (TVC) and the 90.3 radio station. New off-campus internships include the Ice Bears, WBIR and Children's Hospital.

FUTURE students are hard at work attending courses, internships and campus activities. One student was featured on WBIR for his internship working with the Lady Vols as a team manager. Another student was featured on WBIR and Tennessee Today for his internship with the NFL, where he

assisted with ticket resolutions at the Super Bowl! The student received a lifetime management award for exceeding expectations in the promotion of the “Fans First” philosophy, the NFL On-Location’s highest honor.

**University of Memphis
TigerLIFE - Week 8**

January 17, 2013 marked the first day of class for eight students enrolled in the new TigerLIFE program at The University of Memphis. As a two-year cohort program, TigerLIFE includes a course of study that emphasizes academic development, independent living, vocational skills and job placement.

At this early stage in the program, students are getting familiar with campus, touring offices and learning what services are available to them. They’re taking classes on independent living and vocational skills, and will be integrated into University courses when they return from Spring Break.

Students are also connecting with the greater Memphis community by visiting the Civil Rights Museum and disability agencies like the Memphis Center for Independent Living. For Disability Awareness Month, they worked with a local chapter of The Arc to volunteer at a wheelchair basketball game, gaining employment skills and learning the true spirit of collaboration.

Lipscomb University - IDEAL

The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities has granted two years of funding to Lipscomb University to establish a postsecondary project to serve students with intellectual disabilities in an integrated educational setting. The program will begin accepting students in January 2014.

Advocating and Raising Awareness

Many of these busy students from TigerLIFE, UT FUTURE and Next Steps

at Vanderbilt took time out to visit with legislators during Disability Day on the Hill, voicing their opinions and gaining valuable self-advocacy skills. Current students and graduates also spoke in front of the Senate and House Education Committees, advocating their support of Tennessee Step Up legislation (see sidebar). Presentations at local and national conferences often include students and graduates from these programs who are eager to share about their experiences in college.

Several students were interviewed for the new video I’m “Thinking College, Even with My Disability” developed by the Tennessee Alliance for Postsecondary Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and produced by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. In the video, which can be viewed on the Alliance’s website at www.tnpsealliance.org, students talk about their experiences at college and highlight the need for more postsecondary program opportunities. The video is a free educational resource meant to increase awareness and to raise the expectations of students, families, teachers and guidance counselors of the possibilities of postsecondary education efforts for students with intellectual disabilities.

All three existing PSE programs are accepting applications for the fall semester. Visit program websites for more information.

Next Steps at Vanderbilt (Nashville):
NextSteps.vanderbilt.edu

TigerLIFE (Memphis):
<https://blogs.memphis.edu/tigerlife>

UT FUTURE (Knoxville):
<http://futureut.utk.edu>

STEP UP Scholarship Bill

BY EMMA SHOUSE

The Council and other agency and advocacy partners are delighted to announce that the STEP UP scholarship bill (HB 0021/SB 0036) passed the House and the Senate and funding was approved in the Governor’s budget during April of the 2013 state legislative session.

This bill creates the “Tennessee STEP UP” scholarship program for postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities. Students attending these programs are now eligible to receive lottery scholarship funds much like Tennessee students attending an in-state school are eligible for HOPE scholarships. The bill applies to postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities recognized by the Tennessee Alliance for Postsecondary Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities that “consist of a two-year individualized program of study designed to provide meaningful postsecondary activities, including academic, career development and exploration and independent living skills, on the postsecondary campus”, (HB 0021/SB 0036).

The STEP UP bill will increase financial access to these postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities, and promote greater awareness of the benefits that these programs can have for students with disabilities, as well as for their peers and the larger college campus community. The Council and its partner agencies are extremely grateful for the efforts of students, family members, educators and other advocates for these programs for their work in helping to get this bill passed and funded, by educating their legislators about the importance of these programs to Tennessee students with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Helping High School Youth Get Ready for Life's Next Big Steps

BY NED ANDREW SOLOMON

How prepared was I to leave high school and strike out “on my own”? Not very. And I would hardly call what I did “on my own”, since my parents paid for my undergraduate degree and most of my living expenses, and I drove my Toyota Corolla until it broke down, leaving it to dry rot in front of our rented-with-six-musicians Baltimore row house.

I finally did get a job and my own apartment after leaving college, and mostly supported myself, with a parental safety net that allowed me to still exhibit some irresponsible tendencies. Incurred too much credit card debt? Absolutely. Did some stuff my parents would not have been proud of? More than a few times. Convinced I was going to make a living as a singer songwriter? For too long.

I would venture that my slowness to learn life's hard lessons was not atypical. Not in 1979, and not today. How many young people really know what they're going to do after they leave high school? It's a rarity. And we're talking here about students WITHOUT disabilities. Those with disabilities? Even fewer. And, as administrators and teachers focus in ever more minutely on end of course exams, standardized tests and annual yearly progress data to determine the quality of a young person's education and his teachers, less and less time is spent teaching students “life skills” – and I don't

mean what gets conveyed in those “special rooms” where the students' only role models are those with the same challenges, and who typically only emerge for activities like lunch and gym. Maybe art.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Starting in 2000, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities provided a four-day, summer training program for high school students from across the state, called the Youth Leadership Forum. Each summer, a maximum of 20 students were selected to spend time in a dorm on a college campus, learning leadership and self-advocacy skills from local and national presenters, and the adult counselors who were themselves either persons with disabilities or family members.

To our disappointment, in 2011, we received very few applications for this training opportunity. Instead of providing the costly program for a greatly reduced number of participants, we decided to try a different “tack”. We knew that it was a struggle for many families in the farther reaches of the state to bring their children to Middle Tennessee for four days (requiring two long round-trips), and surmised that this was at least part of the problem with our small applicant pool. So we set out to devise a training program that we could take to different parts of the

state, and one without a residential component, which would significantly simplify the pre-program arrangements, permission forms, large deposits, need for an extensive volunteer crew, etc. We designed an educational but interactive program that could be “delivered” during one school day.

Working with Steve Sparks and Gayle Feltner at the Division of Special Populations in the Tennessee Department of Education, I presented this portable “youth readiness training” concept to 200 special education supervisors, and the idea was well-received. Next - again with assistance from the Division - we sent out a survey, electronically, to special education teachers and supervisors. The responses were plentiful, and illuminating.

REALITY CHECK

In our questionnaire we asked, “what do students need to know when exiting high school?”, or “in what ways are students least prepared for life after high school?” Time and again, it was noted that students with disabilities exiting high school needed to know how to:



- Use public transportation
- Advocate for themselves
- Realistically prepare for the demands of college and living independently
- Fill out a job application/create a résumé
- Open a checking account/balance a checkbook
- Budget/manage finances
- Interview for a job
- Retain a job
- Register to vote, and vote
- Find out information about services, supports, and programs that might help them
- Research post-secondary education and training options
- Access assistive technology that could help in college or in the workplace or at home
- Shop for groceries
- Get organized
- Take care of themselves (personal hygiene)

THINKING ABOUT THE NEXT STEP IS THE FIRST STEP

Of course, a one-day program cannot solve every issue, and it certainly cannot adequately prepare a student for attending college, living independently or jumpstarting a career. The more realistic goal is to get students at least thinking about what they'll do after the very structured high school day is behind them, for good. The program's goal is that after high school these students don't wind up doing nothing but sitting on a couch all day with a TV or game system remote in their hand; so their parents aren't desperately calling around for services that should have been in place or at least signed up for before age 18, or 22.

The training day is really one extended "conversation". After an initial icebreaker and a round of introductions, we talk about the importance of self-advocacy: why you need to speak up for yourself, why it's so hard to do at first, and how you go about learning how to do it. Next we talk about those tasks in the home that seem to magically happen, like clothes getting washed, dried, folded and put in drawers; lunches getting packed and meals arriving at the dinner table fully prepared. We discuss setting alarms for the morning, making grocery lists, opening a bank account, and even the potential consequences of not showering or changing clothes for a succession of days. The students identify which of these they do independently, with some help, or in some cases, not at all.

Next up, each student has to fill in the blank: "I consider myself a 'responsible person' because I...", and since we're practicing "speaking up", they have to respond from the front of the room.

After a pizza lunch, we launch into a segment on the resources that are out there that might be able to help them when they head out on the path to adulthood like Vocational Rehabilitation, the Social Security Administration, STEP (Support and Training for Exceptional Parents), Tennessee's Career Centers and Technology Centers, The Arc Tennessee's Transition Project and college offices of disability services.

Lastly, we start developing a kind of one-page "résumé", as the students list their skills and positive attributes; the tasks they need support doing; those things that are important to them, and important for them; and the things that make a good, or bad day. Every conversation ties back to the central issue of what they're going to do when they've exited high school, or when their mom, dad or big brother or sister are no longer doing most of their daily life tasks for them.

It's rare for a student to say they want to live at home for the rest of their lives. But it's also rare to find a student who fully understands what's needed to take that first step.

By the end of the 2012-13 fiscal year, the Council will have done training days for over 100 students at five different schools in Fayette, Shelby and Claiborne Counties – many students who might not have ever had the opportunity to travel to Middle Tennessee for the Youth Leadership Forum. Our hope is that we'll be able to do more in 2013-14, and continue to collaborate with the Division of Special Populations to reach as many exiting high school students transitioning to adulthood as possible.

The *2013* Partners in Policymaking



Reunion Conference: Four Things I Learned

**BY BETH HOPKINS
PHOTO BY
JOHN THIELMAN**

On the first weekend of March, Partners in Policymaking graduates from across the state gathered in Nashville for the 19th Annual Reunion Conference. I was delighted to see my former classmates and to meet new friends. Everyone is doing great things in their communities.

Hand-picked from numerous memorable sessions, meetings, and group discussions, here are four things I learned over the weekend that showcase some of the highlights of the conference, and the spirit behind it.

1) Positivity is Powerful

In the opening keynote, Bruce Boguski highlighted many powerful points with his lecture about thinking positively, and the ability of such an outlook to change outcomes and reach goals. For me, the take-away idea from his lecture was simple, yet vital: Discount negativity and affirm instead. Rather than saying “I can’t” or “No” to ourselves, we can say, “I will” and begin to figure out how. For self-advocates and family members of people with disabilities who may be used to hearing “No, you can’t”, it was great to have a reminder of how important it is to visualize ourselves in terms of strengths and abilities.

2) Everyone Has a Story

As a person with a disability, a big part of my life is adapting: learning a pattern that works, and sticking to it, in order to navigate the world with more certainty and independence. While there is value in that, too many days of my own routine in a row without new people or experiences to shake things up can leave me feeling a bit stagnant, complacent or even bored. I become so “zeroed in” on my own experience, that I become less aware of others around me.

Because the people in Partners are so varied, their experiences and lessons learned run the gamut. I am unmarried, and have no children, but I met many parents and spouses whose lives offered stories of challenges and accomplishments that I have yet to reach in my own life.

Along with varied lifestyles, different experiences of disability lend themselves to building better empathy and understanding. A self-advocate with autism, for example, might have a different perspective on the same issue, and therefore, a new approach to solving the problem.

3) The Value of a “Safe Place” to Talk

One session raised a lot of eyebrows when reading over the program: an open discussion on disability, sexuality and relationships. The room was full of parents wanting advice about how to talk to their children, adult children struggling to communicate with their parents, and people with disabilities of all kinds struggling with how to understand their self-image, or to talk about it with their partner. Once the panel was finished, it was quiet for a few moments. We were all a bit hesitant about the “open” part of the discussion.

But from the first person forward, everyone in the room became more and more willing to share, reflect, comfort and empathize with one another. The dialogue on those topics continued long after the session ended, as myself and others had found a whole group of listeners, who were eager to help and accept one another.

It reminded me of something I tell my friends when they’re worried about sharing sensitive or difficult information. Don’t

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder
A free, statewide clearinghouse
of disability-related resources and
multilingual phone helpline

Toll-free: (1-800) 640-4636

Local: (615) 322-8529

Multilingual: (615) 875-5083

E-mail: TNPathfinder@vanderbilt.edu

Web: www.familypathfinder.org

www.caminoseguro.org (Español)

PARTNERS IN POLICY ▶

worry, I say, this is a safe place. The Partners Reunion is indeed a safe place for self-advocates and family members to talk about the parts of life that might not be so happy, triumphant or inspirational. Having a truly open forum for dialogue - not just in one session, but throughout the weekend - left me feeling more edified and confident in the new things I was learning.

4) **Obstacles = Opportunities**

A great complement to Mr. Boguski's opening session on having a positive and affirmative attitude, John Robinson - a self-advocate and founder of the Internet mentoring community OurAbility - gave the closing keynote to the conference. Mr. Robinson shared with graduates about how the obstacles he faced as a person with congenital amputation (born without arms or legs) have taught him to view obstacles as opportunities. From driving a car to marriage and children, Mr. Robinson answered questions of graduates and helped us understand how viewing our challenges through a different lens can make it easier to face and overcome them. When confronted with a problem that seems impossible, something as simple as asking myself, "What can I learn about myself or others as a result of this situation, and how can I use my skills, my resources, or my network of support to change it for the better?"

Whether on the dance floor, at the dinner table, or in a session, the graduates at the Reunion had a great time of learning, change and growth. May we carry forward what we learned 'til we meet again next year.

Beth Hopkins works for The Arc Tennessee and with Tennessee Allies in Self-Advocacy (TASA). She is a graduate of the 2010-2011 Partners in Policymaking class.



Do you write short stories, creative essays or poetry?
Do you paint, sculpt, draw or take photographs?

If so, we'd love to see your work for possible publication. Breaking Ground magazine invites you to contribute to our Annual Arts Issue, 2013. We will consider fiction, creative essays and poetry up to 1,000 words, photos and all other forms of artwork.

Content is devoted to work by or about persons with disabilities.

We will give published contributors a prominent by-line, a biographical note and copies of the printed magazine. Please include your full name, complete contact information, and a one- to two- sentence bio with your submission.

Please limit submissions to three (3) per person.

Send your submissions, electronically, to:

Ned Andrew Solomon
Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities
Davy Crockett Tower, First Floor
500 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

Questions? Please call 615.532.6556 or send an email to ned.solomon@tn.gov

The Disability Employment Initiative Grant and Integrated Resource Teams

SUSIE BOURQUE, SUZY PRUITT AND EMMA SHOUSE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY

In October 2011, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development was awarded a three-year grant for the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) project. The project is to improve education, training and employment opportunities and outcomes for adults with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits. The grant supports extensive collaboration across multiple workforce and disability service systems in each state, including vocational rehabilitation, mental health, intellectual/developmental disability agencies, centers for independent living, business leadership networks and other community and nonprofit organizations.

The Disability Employment Initiative project in Tennessee has six primary objectives:

- 1) Each participating **Workforce Investment Board** (WIB) will have a **Disability Resource Coordinator** who is a staff member recruited or designated for the position;
- 2) Each WIB will participate in or apply for enrollment in the Employment Network¹;
- 3) Each WIB will establish **Integrated Resource Teams** (IRTs) to enable and advance the blending of funds and collaboration with local and state partners to deliver the

necessary education and job training experiences needed by the participants;

- 4) Each WIB will develop an aggressive, customized employment effort to identify and match participants to employers in the community;
- 5) Each WIB will develop and maintain asset development strategies to expand opportunities to increase self-direction in services for participants with disabilities; and,
- 6) Each WIB will develop strategies to enhance and strengthen partnerships and collaborations to produce more effective and efficient services across multiple systems.

Objective number three is the development of the Integrated Resource Team. The IRT connects community and partner agencies and Career Center programs that serve the needs of the individual job seeker with a disability. This team will enhance cross-agency collaboration and communication to strategize how each partner can leverage resources and services to better serve the individual.

The Disability Resource Coordinator will contact multiple agency partners to collaborate, identify and address the service needs of a person with a disability. Each Coordinator will take the following steps in organizing the Integrated

Resource Team:

- They will contact relevant service providers, the jobseeker and any other relevant parties, like family members or friends, to set up a meeting to discuss an employment goal and plan.
- These partners will outline concerns and solutions; they will also develop effective strategies to resolve issues of unemployment. The role of the Disability Resource Coordinator is to negotiate a multi-partnered employment plan and help develop agreements concerning employment goals, lines of communication, and the sequence of services.
- The Disability Resource Coordinator will ensure that these services are also linked and, as a team, determine which partner services are necessary for the plan, when the services will begin and when they will end. All services will be linked in an effort to eliminate any gaps in service.

IRT Success Stories

Suzy Pruitt, a Disability Resource Coordinator at the Tennessee Career Center in Spring Hill, provided these two recent success stories resulting from using the IRT model to facilitate collaboration among multiple partners and the jobseeker in finding and maintaining successful employment for the individual with a disability.

¹ An Employment Network is an entity that contracts with the Social Security Administration to either provide or coordinate the delivery of the necessary services to Social Security disability beneficiaries.

“Recently, we had an Integrated Resource Team meeting which also served as an IEP meeting in a local school. The customer is an 18-year-old student who is deaf. Attending this meeting was the student, her interpreter, the Disability Resource Coordinator, her Jobs for Tennessee Graduates (JTG) instructor, her mother, the school counselor, the high school principal, the Director of Special Education for our district, her Government teacher, her Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor and other stakeholders.

“This young woman is interested in a career in the field of information technology or other computer data-related field. When she first entered the JTG class, she shared a career goal of “stocking shelves at a local store”. Her JTG instructor discovered that she had a gift in the area of data entry and all things technological. She was referred to the DEI program when she turned 18. On a trip to a leadership conference in Washington D.C., the local Workforce Investment Area director made it possible for her to tour Gallaudet University, a four-year liberal arts college for the deaf and hard of hearing. This trip seemed to open up new possibilities for this individual. Knowing that it would take a team effort to make it possible for her to attend, the IRT meeting provided the perfect setting for many different groups to come together to make this possible.

“The goal of this meeting was to divvy up the responsibilities of the “to-do” list to ensure she is on target for fall admittance to this university.

1. The team decided that the student needed to retake the ACT so that she would meet the entrance criteria. Her interpreter tutored her and by the next IRT meeting, she had retaken the test and raised her scores sufficiently.

2. The student needed to apply for appropriate scholarships. The school counselor and her Government teacher took the list of scholarships that Gallaudet recommended and agreed to help her apply for all appropriate scholarships.
3. The DRC contacted Gallaudet to request an admissions counselor be assigned to help our team.
4. The JTG instructor arranged for the student to participate in a job-shadowing experience.
5. The Workforce Investment Board and Vocational Rehabilitation staff are working together to arrange all possible funding that is available.
6. The school principal will contact the local newspaper to make the story accessible to the public so that while maintaining the family’s privacy, private funds can be solicited to make up the difference in the almost \$20,000 yearly tuition and what can be accessed by agency funding.
7. Gallaudet has a career center and advertises that every student will do an internship prior to their graduation. The DRC and the VR counselor will work with the career center to ensure that this student is job-ready at the completion of her degree.

“Another success story occurred in one of our very rural counties a few months back. A young woman who had a disability and had been laid off from her factory job came into the Career Center for help. She had always done factory work but had a dream of being a pediatric nurse. An IRT met to help her with possibilities. Because

this county is a long distance from our main office, we chose to use Skype to bring in our youth/school expert for her expertise. The other members of this team consisted of the Workforce Investment Area Career Advisor, a Workforce Investment Area Business Services Representative, the DRC, the customer and her best friend. She was encouraged to explore training options but to also job shadow and look at career possibilities that did not require any additional training. The Career Advisor helped her set up a job-shadowing experience with a local health care facility. This was an adult facility and the customer was happy with the experience. At that point she decided to include health care with adults into the possibilities for work.

“Soon, a part-time caregiver job came along and the Career Advisor helped her to apply for this position. She was hired and began working part-time in the adult care position. Soon the factory from which she had been laid off called her back full-time. She liked her part-time job so well that she has chosen and has been successful in working both jobs for the past several months. Her team will follow her for at least a year and help her to maintain employment and advise her in changes of employment. If she decides to pursue a full-time career in caregiving or if she decides to return to school for additional training, the IRT can assist her with finding funding for school.”

To find out more about the DEI grant, contact Susie Bourque at susie.bourque@tn.gov. To find out more about Integrated Resource Teams in your area, contact your local Tennessee Career Center.

DIDD Waiver Renewals

A Breaking Ground Q & A with Jeanine C. Miller, PhD Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

PHOTO BY REGINA F. NEWKIRK



Breaking Ground recently asked Dr. Jeanine C. Miller, PhD of DIDD to help explain the sometimes confusing topic of waivers and renewals of waivers in Tennessee. Her responses are below.

BG: What do waivers provide for people with disabilities, and why do they have to be renewed?

JM: In Tennessee, there are three (3) home- and community-based services (HCBS) waivers. The HCBS waivers are funded by Medicaid and operated by the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD). HCBS waivers benefit people with disabilities by making long-term services and supports available in the community. This means that people with disabilities can obtain the assistance they need to live and work in the community instead of in an institution. Services available through the HCBS waivers include but are not limited to: Behavior Services, Day Services, Personal Assistance and Respite. In order to continue to receive Medicaid funding for the HCBS waivers, the State must follow Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services

(CMS) guidelines. Within these guidelines, DIDD is required to submit each HCBS waiver to CMS for renewal; usually every five (5) years.

THE RECENT SELF-DETERMINATION WAIVER RENEWAL

BG: What are the most important changes that have been made to the Self-Determination waiver since it has been renewed by Medicaid?

JM: The Department is excited about changes that were made to the Self-Determination waiver since it was renewed by Medicaid. Some of these changes include creating a new Day Service named In-home Day Services; creating a new residential service named Semi-Independent Living Services; and allowing Day Services to include retirement activities, such as participating in community/public events and hobbies.

BG: Did any of the changes to the Self-Determination waiver affect the services provided through the larger Statewide Medicaid waiver?

JM: Yes. The definition of Day Services is identical across all waivers. Therefore, the changes to Day Services that are described above apply to the Statewide waiver. But the new service named Semi-Independent Living Services did not affect the Statewide Medicaid waiver because it is unique to the Self-Determination waiver.

BG: What changes can current recipients of Self-Determination waiver services expect to see in how their services are provided or what services are available?

JM: People who are currently supported through the Self-Determination waiver should not see any changes in how their services are

delivered. However, because new services are available, they have more service options to choose from.

THE UPCOMING STATEWIDE WAIVER RENEWAL

BG: We know the renewal of the Statewide DIDD Medicaid waiver will happen in 2014. Has the Department started work on this process yet?

JM: Yes. There is a lot of work that must be accomplished before a Medicaid waiver can be submitted to CMS for renewal. The Department has begun planning for the project, such as roles and responsibilities and timelines.

BG: Will stakeholders have the opportunity to review the proposal before the Department submits the waiver renewal to CMS and contribute feedback? If so, when and how will this happen?

JM: Stakeholders will have the opportunity to review and contribute feedback. The exact details for when and how this will happen have not been decided yet.

BG: Will the waivers be changing in any way to promote the importance of employment for people with disabilities? If so, please explain.

JM: The Department intends to promote employment by including requirements in the Provider Manual. These requirements will go into effect before the waivers are renewed. In addition, Tennessee is an Employment First! state, which means that DIDD will require that Supported Employment be considered as the first option for each individual who enrolls in a Day Service, and for anyone over the age of 15 who enrolls in Day or Personal Assistance Services.

A Tale of Turning Pages

BY MAGNUS ALLEN • PHOTO BY CINDY CHAMBERS

I'm writing to share my experiences at the Turning Pages Together Book Club. On the first day, I was unsure of how this club would go. It was not like a normal book club. In a normal book club, you take the book home, read it, and talk about the book at the next meeting. In this book club, we all read together. The first book was *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. I already had my own copy of the book, so I brought that with me. I had already read that book, but I enjoyed reading it again.

After finishing that book, the whole book club celebrated by going to a bowling alley. I got to choose the next book because I was the newest member. I chose the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Along the way, I made some friends. After finishing *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, we started to read the sequel, *Charlie and the Great Glass*

Elevator. We are currently reading that book this week.

We also have an activity where we work together to write a story, sentence by sentence. Each one is better than the last. There was a story about trick-or-treaters in a space hotel. My friend Annie really enjoyed that story. There was also a story about a dog who got gas from eating a banana. His owner, the scientist, created an antacid for dogs after the gas issue. I thought it was neat when the dog ate the banana because dogs don't eat bananas.

After we finished reading, we saw a movie together before starting on the next book. I preferred seeing the movie because it was fun to watch and we had popcorn.



I enjoy the books we read at book club, especially when we make funny remarks about them. With all I've explained, I think Turning Pages Together is a fun book club, and I can't wait for what happens next.

Magnus Allen is a 13-year-old writer, actor, comedian, singer and a multitude of other talent-related descriptors who has Asperger's Syndrome. Magnus is also a member of the Next Chapter Book Club in Johnson City called Turning Pages Together, which meets at Barnes & Noble.

A Jot-It-Down Story

Mr. Wonka and his gang put costumes on and no one recognized them. Charlie was dressed up as an astronaut and Mr. Wonka dressed as a catfish. The gentlemen at NASA in Houston, Texas, USA were very curious about where the costumed people came from. Showler the astronaut took off to find out. He phoned the president to ask if there

was a secret Halloween party that he wasn't aware of. Grandpa Joe and Charlie looked at the Catfish and said, "Trick or Treat." Mr. Wonka threw his hands in the air and shouted, "We have no buckets!" Charlie responded by taking his helmet off to collect the treats. For some reason, Wonka found toothpaste in his share.

Written by Johnson City Book Club members Allison Boone, Lars Carter, Magnus Allen, Garrison Presnell, Daniel Curtain, Annie Frykholm and Megan Owens

Tennessee Allies in Self-Advocacy:

Promoting self-advocacy throughout the state

BY MEGAN HART

Whether one is making an everyday decision as to what to wear, seeking services, applying for a job or supporting a legislative bill, self-advocacy - exercising the right individuals have to communicate for themselves - is an important part of every person's life. For individuals with disabilities, however, it can often be more difficult to develop self-advocacy skills while relying on the support of others to meet some of their needs.

In 2011-2012, the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) recognized the need to promote and strengthen self-advocacy efforts on a state and national level. As a first step in the process, AIDD funded self-advocacy summits for self-advocates and partners to gather information about self-advocacy activities and policies in each of the 56 U.S. states and territories. The goals of the summits were to assess what is currently happening in the states in self-advocacy, plan steps to improve current efforts at the state level, make recommendations for actions at the national level, and develop policy recommendations for a more effective and long-lasting self-advocacy movement across the country.

Representatives from Tennessee attended the Southeast "Allies in Self-Advocacy" Summit where they discussed the current status of self-advocacy efforts, including challenges and accomplishments, and developed goals for strengthening the efforts. Although Tennessee self-advocacy efforts have been successful in closing institutions and moving residents into community living settings, as well as implementing person-centered training, challenges such as recruiting individuals to become involved in self-advocacy efforts and a lack of collaboration among organizations still exist.

Since the Summit, an expanded group of individuals with disabilities and agency representatives has continued to explore ways to increase access to the tools, resources and support individuals with disabilities want and need to become self-advocates. As a result, the group established a statewide initiative called Tennessee Allies in Self-Advocacy (TASA).

Over the past couple of years, TASA has explored ways to build upon the goals identified at the Summit, which include creating



Self-Advocacy Resource Center(s), developing a strong network of self-advocates and organizations working together, and seeing self-advocacy lead to community involvement and employment. When considering creating Self-Advocacy Resource Center(s), TASA determined that it would be beneficial for individuals with disabilities and those who support them to have a place to access information, trainings and peer support needed to become self-advocates for themselves and the larger disability community.

Unfortunately, there is currently not enough funding available to pursue the goal of creating the Self-Advocacy Resource Center(s) at this time, so TASA has been considering other ways to promote self-advocacy. As a means for addressing the second goal of developing a strong network of self-advocates and organizations, TASA has spent a considerable amount of time educating others about its efforts, seeking input from individuals with disabilities and encouraging more involvement.

TASA has given numerous presentations at various conferences and meetings to make more people aware of its goals and purpose. At each TASA presentation, individuals have had an opportunity to provide their feedback about what they think TASA can do to support individuals with disabilities in becoming self-advocates.

In addition, TASA continues to seek the input of individuals with disabilities through a statewide survey. Individuals can access the survey online at <https://redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=5bAqvK> or call Lori Israel at The Arc Tennessee to take the survey by phone (1-800-835-7077 or 615-248-5878).

TASA has also encouraged more individuals with disabilities to become involved. After all, who better to promote self-advocacy than self-advocates? Through education and awareness, TASA hopes that a strong network of self-advocates and organizations dedicated to strengthening self-advocacy will develop into a larger, more cohesive movement across the state.

As a means for sharing information about self-advocacy, TASA has created a website (<http://tnselfadvocacy.org>). The website continues to be a work in progress, but it currently explains more about TASA, connects people to state and national self-advocacy websites, and has a calendar of self-advocacy related events happening throughout the state. For anyone interested in becoming involved in TASA, you can sign up for its email listserv through the website and “like” Tennessee Allies in Self-Advocacy on Facebook.

Promoting self-advocacy is the key to empowering more individuals with disabilities to speak up for themselves and others, accomplish their goals and fulfill their dreams, which is why TASA is dedicated to increasing these efforts. In order to be successful, however, it requires collaboration among individuals with disabilities and organizations, which is why TASA needs the support and involvement of others. Based on the ongoing input and commitment it receives, TASA will continue to create better access to information and support individuals with disabilities who want and need to become self-advocates.

Current TASA Members:

Gina Brady
Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee

Portia Carnahan
Self-Advocate

Suzanne Colsey
Self-Advocate & Freedom Co-Op

Shalita Earls
Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

Kasondra Farmer
Self-Advocate

Patrick Gallaher
Center for Independent Living of Middle TN

Phil Garner
Buffalo River Services

Crystal Godwin
UT Center for Literacy, Employment & Education

Carrie Guiden
The Arc Tennessee

Megan Hart
Self-Advocate & Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Beth Hopkins
Self-Advocate & The Arc Tennessee

Melvin Jackson
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Jean Marie Lawrence
Self-Advocate

Lori Mabry
Self-Advocate

Elise McMillan
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Edward Nesbitt
Self-Advocate

Fred Palmer
UT Boling Center

Doria Panvini
Family Member & Advocate

Lisa Primm
Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee

Carol Rabideau
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Jeness Roth
UT Boling Center

Sharon Stolberg
Self-Advocate & Educator

Wanda Willis
Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities

TN Spotlight



Bruce Bentley, Partners 05-06 Partners grad and long-time former employee at the **Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities** recently received his accounting degree from **Tennessee State University**.



Alecia Talbott is the new executive director for the **Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee**. Alecia, as a parent of a child with Down syndrome, has had many opportunities to support, empower and advocate for those with Down syndrome and other intellectual or developmental disabilities, including organizing a community group, consulting on articles, public speaking, fundraising and volunteering.



The **Tennessee Association of Blind Athletes** (TNABA) creates an opportunity for blind and visually impaired athletes to participate in adapted competitions, sports and recreation. Established by Partners 10-11 grad, **Ricky Jones**, TNABA has many activities for adults and youth, featuring a new junior program for kids 12 and under. Athletic pursuits include swimming, cycling, gymnastics, track and field, goalball and many others. Recreational opportunities such as camping, hiking, aerobics and yoga are available as well. To find out more, visit www.tnaba.org.

A new video, *I'm Thinking College, Even with My Disability*, showcases students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in a postsecondary education program in Tennessee. Students discuss their experiences at college and highlight the need for additional programs on other campuses. The video was developed by the **Tennessee Alliance for Postsecondary Opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities** and was produced by the **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center**. It can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YTUA3IAOrs.



Staff of the **Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders** (TRIAD) are assuming new leadership roles. **Pablo Juarez, MEd, BCBA**, has been named administrative director of TRIAD Professional Development and Training. **LaTamara Garrett, BA**, has been named the program coordinator for Early Childhood Training. **Whitney Loring, PsyD**, is now program coordinator of Families First. TRIAD is a Vanderbilt Kennedy Center program dedicated to improving assessment and treatment services for children with autism spectrum disorders and their families while advancing knowledge and training.



The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center received a **Special Hope Foundation Grant** to create an electronic toolkit to help primary care physicians better serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This toolkit will be an adaptation of Canada's *Tools for the*

Primary Care of People with Developmental Disabilities. It will be developed in collaboration with the **University of Tennessee Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities** and the **Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**. **Janet Shouse** serves as the project coordinator.



The **National Down Syndrome Society** (NDSS) recognized Partners 04-05 grad **Jawanda Barnett Mast**, now of Olathe, Kansas, with the **NDSS DS-Ambassador of the Year Champion of Change Award**. NDSS DS-Ambassadors are volunteer advocates committed to taking part in the democratic process and serving as liaisons between NDSS and their Congressional delegations to raise awareness, educate and advocate for public policy solutions that benefit the Down syndrome community at the federal level.

Jawanda has been an advocate for people with Down syndrome and other disabilities since her daughter, Rachel, was born with Down syndrome 13 years ago. In addition to her current position as NDSS DS-Ambassador in Kansas, she is a former executive director of the **Down Syndrome Association of Memphis and the Mid-South**.

In Memoriam: Floyd Stewart

Life can change in an instant – and take you down a whole new path. That’s what happened to Floyd Stewart. When he attended Pearl High in Nashville, became an electrician, married and had six children he thought life was rocking along. Then came the accident, and a spinal cord injury. The paralysis, the anger, the depression and life in a nursing home. And then came the resolve – to use this as a chance to do different, to be different. And Floyd Stewart did just that.

Always resourceful, Floyd devised a way to leave the nursing home regularly to study at MTSU. In 1989 he received his B.S. in Psychology. After graduation, Floyd, like many individuals with disabilities, was unemployed. Because of a lack of home- and community-based services, Floyd was still in a nursing home, carrying out family life through visits. He wasn’t willing to settle for this life circumstance.

Floyd continued to change his own life in ways that have helped thousands of Tennesseans with disabilities to change their lives as well. He began to volunteer at the Technology Access Center of Middle Tennessee. Next he became an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer and served as the local chapter development director for People First of Tennessee. During this time, he was able to move out of the nursing home to an apartment. Less than two years later, when the Center for Independent Living opened in Nashville, he was hired as an independent living advocate. Partnering with Habitat for Humanity and the Boy Scouts, an accessible home became a dream come true. For more than 16 years Floyd worked at the Center and in the community.

When Floyd’s health forced his retirement from the Center for Independent Living, he had already founded a non-profit community housing development agency – Accessible Builders Consortium. With partner David Williams, Floyd could do his part from his bed at home. He said, “Just because you don’t have a lot of money doesn’t mean you can’t have a quality home.”

On every step of his journey, Floyd focused on how to use his voice, his energy and his skills to make life better for others with disabilities, not just himself. He accomplished this by serving on boards and committees, speaking, lobbying, protesting and supporting others to do the same.

Since his death on April 11, friends and colleagues have comforted themselves with memories and stories. These are the things we know for certain. Floyd viewed every day as an opportunity. He saw possibility, and he acted on it. Floyd was fearless. He would go anywhere, talk to anyone. He would patiently and courageously take on any task if it would help others. Floyd was kind and wise. With all the challenges he faced, and in all of the hard work he did, none of us ever heard Floyd speak a single word in anger. He always spoke truth to power, worked tirelessly to change the status quo, and did it with strength and kindness.

Floyd Stewart was passionate about removing barriers to independence not only for himself, but for others with disabilities. He was an amazing man who is dearly missed.



**BY CAROL WESTLAKE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TENNESSEE DISABILITY COALITION**

**PHOTO BY TENNESSEE DISABILITY
COALITION STAFF**

Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities

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