Text Only Version for Brailling and website

Breaking Ground Issue #92: 55 Years of the DD Act

The cover has a collage of images of different individuals and groups in various settings. Moving clock-wise from the upper left corner, there is a young woman wearing a Dairy Queen cap and a Dairy Queen t-shirt. She is smiling and standing in front of a building with a Dairy Queen building, apparently happy to be working there. Next photo shows a young man with Down syndrome who smiling and holding a big award plaque in front of him. To the left of him is a smiling Wanda Willis, the executive director of the Council on Developmental Disabilities, and to the right of him is a smiling Lynette Porter, the deputy director of the Council. The third photo shows a young woman with Down syndrome holding up and examining a small piece of medical equipment. She is wearing blue hospital scrubs.

The next photo is a big group photo of the Council staff, Governor-appointed members and representatives from state agencies and the Developmental Disabilities network. Every person is wearing a blue Council t-shirt. The next photo is a young man with Down syndrome holding a sign that reads: 500! Thank you! He has a big smile and is wearing a bright green t-shirt and standing in a yogurt shop called Menchie’s. The last photo on the top row is a picture of a young woman with Down syndrome holding up a t-shirt that reads: Mommy Needs a Mocha. The young woman smiling and is standing in a coffee shop where she works.

Starting on the next line, there is a photo of three young adults in blue hospital scrubs. There is a man in the middle and there are two women on either side of him. They are all smiling, and have hospital identification badges. The next photo shows a young woman and an older man standing next to each other, smiling. Both are standing with walkers. The next photo shows a young man and two young women, all smiling, posing in front of a low file cabinet in an office setting. The next photo shows a young boy with Down syndrome holding a sign that reads: (hashtag) without Medicaid. Friends like me may not be understood without speech therapy. The next photo shows a young woman in an office with an older woman. They are smiling and together they are holding up an envelope with an address printed on it. The next photo shows a woman in a pink blouse. She is smiling and has a conference name tag around her neck. The last photo in this row shows a young man presenting in front of a class. He is wearing a blue t-shirt with a logo. There is a young woman sitting two rows away from him with her back to us, listening to his presentation. She is also wearing the same kind of blue t-shirt.

The next photo is an outdoors photo of two women, one younger and one older, who are both smiling and wearing purple turtle neck shirts. The bottom row has several group photos. The first is of seven young women posing in a kitchen in front of a wall of cabinets. The next photo shows a big group of people with disabilities and representatives from different agencies who appear to be attending an event. The next photo is of an older man smiling. He is seated and wearing a gray cap. The last photo of the cover is of four standing women and a seated man. The women seem to be engaged in a cooking class, because they are all wearing blue aprons with a logo on them.

Across the middle of the collage of photos are the words “55 Years of the DD Act”. Below the photo collage is a large font quote that says “Disability is a natural part of the human experience that does not diminish the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to live independently, to exert control and choice over their own lives, and to fully participate in and contribute to their communities through full integration and inclusion in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of United States society.” Below the quote is the logo for the TN Council on Developmental Disabilities.

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New Council Member Craig W. Lemak

This page also contains three photos that will be described later on in the articles they appear in.

Article One: 55 Years of the DD Act, by Lauren Pearcy, Council Director of Public Policy and Emma Shouse Garton, Council Director of Communications

This article contains several photos. The first is an old black and white news photo from October 24, 1963 of a big room with many men and women formally dressed, and a photographer taking a photo of the event. It is a picture of President John F. Kennedy signing, H. R. 7544, Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963. The second photo is a group shot of 14 individuals, persons with disabilities and representatives from disability agencies who comprise the Supported Decision-Making Work Group. This photo was taken after members of this group provided testimony. The third photo is a group shot of six people, who are Next Steps program students and Next Steps program staff. They are holding a placard that reads “Hashtag, without Medicaid many of the college students that attend Next Steps at Vanderbilt would not be able to afford college.”

This article also contains the logos for the agencies in the TN Developmental Disabilities Network: The TN Council on Developmental Disabilities; Disability Rights TN; the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities; and the University of TN Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities. There is also a graphic in the article that shows the relationship between all of these entities, with overlapping oblong shapes in tan, brown and light green.

The article begins here:

A brief history of the DD Act

State Councils on Developmental Disabilities, including Tennessee’s, are established by a federal law known as the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, commonly referred to as “the DD Act”. This law originated from historic legislation signed in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy. The DD Act was unprecedented at the time, because it drew attention to the lives of citizens who had previously been institutionalized, marginalized and even subjected to sterilization and experimentation. Kennedy’s administration ushered in a new era of focus on citizens with developmental disabilities and specifically called for reducing the number of citizens living in institutional settings.

These actions coincided with a broader civil rights movement in America. Alongside the executive actions of the time, community members and grassroots advocacy groups accelerated the progress of the DD Act and other disability laws throughout the 1960s and ‘70s.

Thanks to the unrelenting work by the disability advocacy community, the DD Act has continued to evolve to reflect the most current research and best practices over time. Remarkably, the same founding principles have remained the same: self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion in all facets of community life for individuals with developmental disabilities. The DD Act’s principles, unparalleled when enacted, are still tested today. State Councils on Developmental Disabilities still look to the DD Act as a guidepost for our work. In everything we do, we look at those principles and ask if our projects and initiatives uphold those values. As the Tennessee Council’s Executive Director, Wanda Willis, often says, “The DD Act is as relevant today as it’s ever been.”

The DD Act’s Strategy for Implementing Change: The Creation of the DD Network Programs

In 1961, President Kennedy convened the first-ever President’s Panel focused on citizens with developmental disabilities. The panel’s findings included the need for more professional expertise about the causes of developmental disabilities, more societal awareness about how to support citizens with developmental disabilities, and enforcement of laws that protect the rights of citizens with developmental disabilities.

To address those findings, the DD Act created a network of programs that could not only implement change, but help address the cultural barriers facing citizens with disabilities. These three programs together are known as the “DD Network”. Like the Act itself, these programs are still necessary today for addressing persistent gaps in our systems and communities to adequately support people with developmental disabilities and their families that existed 55 years ago.

Overview of the DD Network Programs:

State Councils on Developmental Disabilities are charged with assessing the overall disability system in their state (or territory) and working to make improvements on behalf of citizens with developmental disabilities. Councils have considerable flexibility to identify their own projects and collaborate with local stakeholders based on their citizens’ unique needs.

Councils are expected to leverage collaboration to make big, lasting impact with relatively small staff and budgets. Most importantly, Councils are expected to empower individuals with disabilities and their families to exert influence over the disability system; that is, the policies and practices that affect their lives. Accordingly, Council members are individuals with disabilities and family members of people with disabilities, which comprise 60% of membership. The remaining members are representatives of State agencies who oversee disability policy and services. Membership necessitates direct interaction between policymakers and the citizens they impact. Representatives of the other DD Network programs also serve on the Council. In Tennessee, the Council on Developmental Disabilities is an independent office in the executive branch of State government.

Protection and Advocacy (P&A) systems exist to protect the legal and human rights of individuals with developmental disabilities through a mix of legal action and proactive advocacy. They work to inform people of their rights, investigate suspected abuse and neglect and provide free legal representation to people with disabilities. They have broad legal authority to access records, facilities, and individuals when conducting investigations, placing them in a unique position to detect and address abuse. Protection and Advocacy systems also serve individuals with behavioral or mental health diagnoses. In Tennessee, the P & A is Disability Rights Tennessee, a nonprofit legal services organization.

University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) were created to address the significant need for professional expertise in developmental disabilities. Today, UCEDDs offer cross-discipline training, technical assistance, and continuing education to professionals and community members. They conduct cutting-edge research, public policy analysis and broad information dissemination efforts. Many UCEDDs offer direct services to different populations of individuals with disabilities and lead model demonstration projects. In Tennessee, we are fortunate to have two UCEDDs: the Boling Center at the University of Tennessee in Memphis and the Kennedy Center at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

How does the DD Network “work”?

All DD Network programs are expected to be “carried out in a manner consistent with the principles of the DD Act”, which unites the programs as natural partners. In Tennessee, the programs partner extensively, serving on each other’s boards, meeting regularly and working jointly on projects. In fact, the Tennessee DD Network’s level of collaboration is praised as a national model.

A few recent examples of the DD Network’s collaboration in Tennessee:

During the national healthcare debate in 2017 when Congress proposed historic changes to the Medicaid program, the DD Network developed an education strategy to ensure elected officials understood the impact of such changes on citizens with disabilities.

Starting in 2016, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center established a small working group to discuss an emerging best practice in the disability field called “Supported Decision Making”. Since its inception, other DD Network Partners have taken leadership roles as well. Disability Rights Tennessee hosts the workgroup meetings and held the state’s first “grassroots” forum for stakeholders across Tennessee. The Council on Developmental Disabilities has led the agenda development and meeting notes during each workgroup meeting, plus the sponsorship of national expert Jonathan Martinis to inform the workgroup’s efforts.

Nationally, the three programs work closely to influence policy at the federal level. Unlike many other disability organizations, the three DD Network programs exist in the federal government as part of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. This position allows them to maintain close relationships with the other federal programs that impact citizens with disabilities like Medicaid, Vocational Rehabilitation and Special Education. As part of the same bigger system as those programs, the DD Network can be particularly effective at getting information about disability services and relaying feedback from the citizens who utilize those services at the federal level.

Here is an example of how the DD Network is particularly effective at getting information to citizens:

After the federal Home and Community-Based Settings Rule (HCBS Settings Rule) was announced, the national DD Network associations launched a website with information for citizens with disabilities and advocates: https://hcbsadvocacy.org/. The HCBS Settings Rule is an example of a complex and technical rule that was hard for the average citizen to digest, but directly affected many citizens with disabilities, and getting information out to communities was essential. The DD Network was perfectly positioned to assist; in fact, the network’s oversight agency, the Administration on Community Living, was tasked with reviewing states’ plans for compliance with the new rule. Because of this, the DD Network had more insight than virtually any other entity in the country about the rule.

And, here are two examples of how the DD Network gives feedback directly to national policymakers:

First, the DD Network programs in every state have to report regularly to the federal government about the issues affecting citizens with developmental disabilities. The State Councils do this every five years with its “Comprehensive Review and Assessment”, which surveys both private citizens and state agencies that provide disability services.

Additionally, the DD Network programs each have their own associations which engage in policy advocacy in Washington, DC. The directors of those programs regularly author position papers, statements about policy changes and letters directly to policymakers – including Congress – on behalf of citizens with developmental disabilities across the country.

Without the DD Network in federal government, no entity would be dedicated to the perspective of the citizen using disability services. Thanks to the DD Act, people with developmental disabilities have a space inside the federal government for their voices to be prioritized and heard.

The intro to the DD Act makes it very clear:

"Congress finds that disability is a natural part of the human experience that does not diminish the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to live independently, to exert control and choice over their own lives, and to fully participate in and contribute to their communities through full integration and inclusion in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of United States society."

End of article one.

Article Number Two: Career Connections, by Jennifer Eppley

This article has one photo. It shows two women reading a document that both women hold. They are standing at a desk that has a flower arrangement, a document holder and a jar of pencils. The caption reads: Robbie Broom, left, of the American Job Center and Sheliia Williams on the right of Breakthrough Corporation discuss job fairs and job club.

The article begins here:

It all began in 2015 when Kendrise Colebrooke met Robbie Broom at the Knox Area Employment Consortium (KAEC). Kendrise is the Community Employment Coordinator for Breakthrough Corporation (a disability service provider in Knoxville, primarily serving clients with autism), and Robbie is a Career Specialist with the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development, stationed at the American Job Center in Knoxville.

American Job Centers are designed as a “one stop” place for assistance finding a job and they exist in communities across every state. In 2014, the federal law creating American Job Centers, which is called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, was updated to put an even greater emphasis on serving people with disabilities.

Robbie joined KAEC to better serve individuals with disabilities by connecting them to employment services and opportunities. The KAEC mission is to “improve the quality of life and general welfare for people with disabilities as it relates to employment issues”. Robbie let Kendrise know that the American Job Center was the main meeting place in their community for personal job development activities, especially mock interviews and résumé writing. What began as a brief first connection at a local employment consortium meeting blossomed into a relationship with the American Job Center which has increased services and opportunities for Breakthrough participants, and which continues to expand.

The current picture

Those initial contacts have developed into a real presence for Breakthrough Corporation at the American Job Center. Breakthrough’s Sheliia Williams connects with many of her participants for job search meetings at the American Job Center. She sees three to four participants each day, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. In addition to providing individualized employment coaching and counseling to participants, she connects them with single-company and multi-employer job fairs held each month at the American Job Center and helps them get assistance in the Center’s Resource Room.

Sheliia also encourages participants to explore the www.Jobs4TN.gov website on the days that they are not working or volunteering. That helps participants to practice checking emails and exploring job opportunities on a regular basis. Through www.Jobs4TN.gov, participants are able to expand their potential employment opportunities and further develop their career exploration skills.

In addition to individual assistance, help in a group format is also available. Breakthrough Job Club has expanded from one to two times per month, and is typically held every other Friday afternoon. The sessions are conducted in a smaller assessment room with limited distractions for a more suitable sensory environment. Parents and staff often attend the Job Clubs with the participants.

Growth for the future

As an added layer of support, Sheliia is planning to attend one of Robbie’s Jobs4TN intensive workshops for social service providers. This two-hour training provides tips and tools for social service providers to assist them in better guiding their participants in career exploration. Instructive guidelines include registering, searching for jobs, using the virtual recruiter, researching labor market information and exploring education and training information and opportunities.

Kendrise believes that the change in environment and exposure to opportunities at the American Job Center is a positive for Breakthrough participants. By coming to the American Job Center, Breakthrough participants are able to see other people looking for employment, too, and thus join others in the overall goal of career exploration, development and attainment.

For more information or resources, please contact:

Knoxville Area Employment Consortium: https://www.kaectn.org/

Breakthrough Corporation, Knoxville: http://breakthroughknoxville.com

American Job Center, Knoxville: http://www.tnccknox.org

American Job Center employment resources and services: www.jobs4TN.gov

End of article two.

Author bio: Jennifer Eppley is the Director of One Stop Operations at the American Job Center in Knoxville. The following individuals also contributed to this article: Robbie Broom (American Job Center), Kendrise Colebrooke (Breakthrough Corporation), Sheliia Williams (Breakthrough Corporation), and Jay Coffman (American Job Center).

Photo description: Robbie Broom (left) of the American Job Center and Sheliia Williams (right) of Breakthrough Corporation discuss job fairs and job club. Photo: by Jennifer Eppley

Article Number Three: Camp EmPower, MePower: An adult learning experience, by Debbie Riffle

This article contains several photos. The first photo is a large group shot of participants and volunteer staff of Camp EmPower, MePower. They are all casually dressed and have big smiles on their faces. Several of the people have their arms around the shoulders of others. The second photo shows two young men sitting on a transit bus. They are both smiling and look like good friends. The third photo is of a young woman with Down syndrome in a bright pink outfit who is painting a beautiful flower with green, yellow and blue paint. She looks like she is having a great time. This appears to be an art studio, and there is a wall of paintings visible in the background. The fourth photo shows two young women sitting at a table with lots of food ingredients on the table. They appear to be making a tray of banana pudding, since there are banana slices, vanilla wafers and a tub of whipped topping. The fifth photo is a very large photo of people outside on a pretty lawn in front of a brick building. The people gathered are young adults with disabilities, Camp volunteer staff and members of a fire department. Everyone is smiling. The last photo is a picture of a fireman and a young man with Down syndrome taking a selfie in front of a firetruck.

The article begins here:

The Down Syndrome Association of West TN (DSAWT) may be a small nonprofit but we pride ourselves in developing programs with a BIG impact for individuals that we serve in West Tennessee. Each year our board meets to discuss new program opportunities that can fill a need in our community. Over the years, we have discussed the growing need of serving our adult population with Down syndrome. After much discussion, planning and researching natural community supports, the DSAWT was excited to introduce Camp EmPower, MePower in 2017. EmPower, MePower is a one-week adult learning experience for individuals with Down syndrome ages 18 and up. The purpose of this program is to empower individuals by teaching independence and self-determination through fun, meaningful experiences such as utilizing public transportation, exploring the community and providing opportunities to develop natural friendships with peers.

One of the biggest challenges for individuals with disabilities in accessing their community is the lack of transportation. Our campers rely solely on transportation by a friend or family member, which is very limiting. Our number one priority for camp was to introduce them to the Jackson Transit Authority, our local public transportation system. We wanted our campers out in the community every day, riding the bus to and from their destinations.

This goal was high for our first year of camp and the planning and logistics were no easy task. The teachers and I soon realized that we had a lot to learn about public transportation ourselves, before we could teach the campers. We had to learn bus routes, rules and expectations, and how to be prepared for unexpected changes. After much preparation, the teachers decided to do a trial run before camp started. While proudly standing on the side of the road waiting for the bus to arrive, they were speechless when it drove right past because they were standing on the wrong side of the road! They broke out into laughter as they realized there was obviously a bit more work to be done.

With additional homework we were finally ready for the first day of camp. Each day we rode the bus to and from our outings. The campers loved learning how to use bus passes and riding the bus, as well as meeting other passengers. They did a great job learning bus rules, which included entering and exiting safely and quickly. Our bus trips were definitely the highlight of every day for not only our campers and volunteers, but also for our friendly JTA bus drivers and other passengers.

Another goal for camp was to provide fun, meaningful opportunities through community outings and recreational and learning activities with guests from our community. Our outings included a painting session at Painting with a Twist, a visit to Casey Jones Village and Train Museum, lunch with friends at the Old Country Store, a guided tour of the hospital, and a morning at the Fire Station for fun and hands-on activities. We also invited guests to camp each afternoon for activities such as yoga, zumba, music with instruments and learning basic banking skills. With our bus rides and outings each morning, preparing and serving lunch and snacks and our guest activities in the afternoon, we made the most of every busy day.

Last but not least, our amazing volunteers were some of our greatest assets at camp. We wanted a natural environment that included typical peers and opportunities to make new friends. Our volunteers were in the same age group as our campers. We had close to the same number of volunteers as campers so there were plenty of friends to go around! The volunteers and campers “hung out” together, helped each other, laughed, danced, took selfies, and got to know each other - just like any new friend. By the end of the week, everyone was already dreaming of camp next year and planning to see each other again soon. Several campers and volunteers have even stayed in touch throughout the year. That’s just what friends do! Our volunteers made camp a memorable experience for everyone.

The DSAWT set out with big dreams and goals to make a difference in the lives of adults with Down syndrome by providing opportunities to increase their independence and self-determination skills while building new friendships along the way. We may be a small organization that started with only one week of camp but the outcomes were momentous in the lives of our campers, their families, the volunteers, and individuals that we met throughout the community.

In 2018, the DSAWT is very proud to be extending Camp EmPower, MePower to two weeks. In remembering the quote by Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

A special thank you to the Jackson Center for Independent Living (JCIL), Beth James, and her staff for the gracious offer to use their facility and their encouragement and support.

End of article three.

Author bio: Debbie Riffle is the mother of an adult son with Down syndrome, a Partners grad, a DSAWT board member and a former long-standing Council member from Jackson.

For more information about DSAWT, please email dsawt@att.net or call 731.499.1065.

Article Number Four: Enabling Technology: Modernizing supports for people with disabilities, by Cara Kumari, Director of Communications, TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

There are two photos accompanying this article. The first is a headshot of article author Cara Kumari. She is wearing a black and red outfit with a TN state seal pin on her lapel. The second photo shows a portion of a wall that contains several pieces of technology for the home.

The article begins here:

The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) prides itself on blazing new trails when it comes to providing supports for people with disabilities, whether it’s being the first state to receive Person-Centered Excellence Accreditation from the national Council on Quality and Leadership, becoming a national leader in Employment First, or closing its large, congregate developmental centers in favor of individualized supports in the community. These have been monumental changes in the way the state provides supports for people with disabilities, and they are leading to better outcomes and a higher quality of life. Now, it’s time to take the next step in that journey.

Many of us have already embraced technology, wholeheartedly, in our everyday lives. Many people with disabilities check Facebook on their phones like the rest of us, and enjoy using tablets for news, information, games, videos and taking pictures. However, even though technology is all around us, we have relied on the traditional methods of providing supports to people with disabilities: 24/7 in-person supports. And while that level of support is absolutely essential for some people receiving DIDD services, there are countless others that can be and want to be more independent. That’s where enabling technology comes in.

The term “enabling technology” encompasses many different methods of providing support to people with disabilities in a way that fosters independence. It can be a mobile application that provides step-by-step alerts to a person who wants to use public transportation, to make sure they get to where they want to go. It can be a tablet loaded with individualized prompts to ensure they remember all of their scheduled tasks or appointments while working in the community. It can be a sensor on a bed, stove or door to allow a person to live independently, but alert a “tele-caregiver” if something deviates from the normal routine. All of these scenarios are already playing out in other service-delivery systems in some other states, with very promising results.

This “Technology First” movement is beginning in Tennessee. DIDD has carefully researched the options, the outcomes, the successes and the lessons learned from other states for the past year. Four DIDD providers were selected to begin testing enabling technology in April. Those providers are in the process of talking to the people they support and their families to see if the various enabling technology options may help them achieve their life goals.

As we are having these conversations, we want to emphasize what this move towards technology is, and what it is not. A word we haven’t been using when talking tech is the word “monitor”. Oftentimes people hear “cameras” and think that a person’s every move will be watched or that this is a way to spy on staff. That is not the case. Cameras are one option in the myriad of technology options available to people and their families, and the purpose is to provide assistance only when it is needed, nothing more, nothing less. And it’s also important to stress that this is a choice - no one is being forced to use enabling technology if they don’t want to. While we believe there are hundreds of people in DIDD services who can benefit from this, we also understand there are still hundreds of others who do not want remote supports or aren’t ready to be supported without in-person support staff.

Each person who chooses to test enabling technology will be selecting the type of technology they believe will help them live the lives they envision for themselves. The beauty of this type of support is that it isn’t “one size fits all”, nor is it limited to one type of technology. A person-centered assessment will be the first step in determining what options may lead to a person’s desired outcomes. A detailed and comprehensive technology support plan will be developed and included in a person’s individualized support plan.

We will be evaluating throughout the process whether the person is satisfied with the technology supports they chose, if the outcomes identified by the person are being met by the use of remote supports, and if necessary, what needs to be modified or added to achieve those goals. DIDD has regional tech staff designated to interface with both providers and families to answer questions and address any concerns that might arise. A Technology Advisory Council, which includes representation from the Council on Developmental Disabilities, has been meeting to ensure all stakeholder voices and views are considered as we gear up to start the test project.

This is an exciting time for people supported by DIDD. We are now at the point where we can modernize the way we provide high-quality, person-centered supports. We believe enabling technology is a key component to allowing people to achieve their employment and community living goals, and are excited to start this program and find ways to blaze new trails in offering progressive supports with technology.

End of article four.

Article Number five: Enabling Technology: A parent’s perspective, by Bonnie Micheli, Partners Graduate and Parent Advocate for Nicole Micheli

This article features a lovely, happy photo of author Bonnie with her daughter Nicole and her husband Brian. It is an outdoor shot and all three family members have big smiles on their faces.

The article begins here:

Many states have already brought technology into the day-to-day lives of those with intellectual disabilities as a tool to allow maximum independence yet still have the assistance needed by the supported individuals. Now the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities is bringing technology to providers to create more independence in a safe environment for the people they serve.

Imagine a home with a monitor to remind you to shut off the stove after you’re finished using it. Or a medication dispenser that alerts you when it’s time to take your medications, dispenses the correct pills, and alerts you if you miss a dose. Or sensors that monitor when you get out of bed at night and go to the bathroom – and notice if you are in there longer than normal. Maybe a two-way camera with audio to discuss the weather and clothing choices with a remote-staff member before leaving for work in the morning. These are real examples of how technology can play a role in caring for our supported family members, so they can live a more independent life.

It sounds a lot like how I live each day. I have apps on my phone that can remind me when it’s time to do an activity; my computer allows me to Skype with anyone around the world with a click of a button; and I daily ask Amazon’s Alexa to buy my Prime purchases and Google Home what the weather is, so I know what to wear before I leave the house.

This is 2018. We embrace new technology every day to make our lives easier and our days fuller. The introduction of technology as a tool that providers and those supported can choose to add into their daily plan is long overdue. I dream of the day that my daughter’s provider will be able to set up her home, so she can use her communication device to control her surroundings independently.by Bonnie Michelli

End of article five.

Article number six: Partners 2017-18 Class Graduates, by Ned Andrew Solomon, Council Editor-in-Chief of Breaking Ground

This article contains numerous photos of Partners participants in groups, with members of their families, and touring the Nashville Capitol building. The photos represent a very geographically and culturally diverse group. The first is a group shot of 12 of the graduating Partners. The second photo is of graduating Partner Carla Gipson with her sister, Partners graduate Tara Tate. The next photo is of graduating Partner Jonathan McGee with his Partners graduate mom, Kathy McGee. The next photo is of the 2017-18 Partners class on tour at the Capitol. They are seen in a large hall with several paintings of previous TN governors hanging on the wall. The next photo is of graduating Partner Deborah Todd with her husband and three daughters. The next photo is of graduating Partner Zavion Williams with several adult members of his family. The next photo is of graduating Partner Chrystal Murphy with her husband Mike. The next photo is of graduating Partner Zennia Nesmith with her husband Allen. The next photo is of graduating Partner Cheron Evans and her mom, Mary. The next photo is of Partners at the Capitol, in a large library with a dramatic and ornate circular staircase leading to an upper level. The next photo is of graduating Partners Carla Bourdeau with several of her friends from work at the TN Housing and Development Association. The next photo is of graduating Partner Angelica Allsup with Partners Director Ned Andrew Solomon. Both are standing with walkers. The next photo is a large group photo of the graduating Partners class at the Old Supreme Court Chambers at the Capitol. The next photo is of graduating Partners Erika Engler and her mom, Brenda. The last photo is of graduating Partner Kristie Clemmons with her husband and son.

The article begins here:

On April 14, 28 individuals graduated from the 2017-18 Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute. It was the most geographically diverse class ever, with nine participants from West, Tennessee, nine from Middle and ten from East, some traveling from typically underrepresented cities and towns like Ooltewah, Lakeland, Paris, Maryville, Tullahoma, Munford, Charlotte and Hixson.

While other states have struggled to keep their Partners programs funded or alive with interest, the Tennessee program has continued to grow, thanks to the ongoing support of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the positive word of mouth of those who have completed the intensive seven-weekend training, with informative and thought-provoking sessions taught by local and national experts in the disability field.

This class is on fire. Before the end of the program, these Partners were establishing relationships with their policymakers and contacting them about legislation they were passionate about; brain-storming about and initiating programs that enhanced social and recreational opportunities, expanded employment and transportation options; and promoted more inclusive and welcoming environments for people with disabilities. Without exception, they moved beyond the personal issues that brought them to Partners, and explored ways to make systems and society more accessible to people of all disabilities and challenging life experiences.

I am so proud to welcome the following Tennesseans into the Partners graduate network:

Angelica Allsup, Cordova

Carla Bourdeau, Murfreesboro

Emily Bowlan, Arlington

Sheila Carson, Hendersonville

Kristie Clemmons, Jackson

Roddey Coe, Ooltewah

Jennifer Coleman, Paris

Clarisse Durnell, Nashville

Erika Engler, Nashville

Cheron Evans, Collierville

Terri Fought, Lakeland

Tatum Bryan Fowler, Knoxville

Carla Gipson, Memphis

Gloria Huber, Cleveland

Larry Huber, Cleveland

Sadiatou Jallow, Knoxville

Jean-Marie Lawrence, Chattanooga

Jonathan McGee, Maryville

Chrystal Murphy, Chattanooga

Zennia Nesmith, Chattanooga

Tracy Qua, Tullahoma

Bill Radtke, Munford

Christy Ray, Madison

Robin Rogers, Old Hickory

Sara Scott, Hixson

Brenda Stroud, Charlotte

Deborah Todd, Knoxville

Zavion Williams, Memphis

For those interested in applying to Partners, applications are available all year long. Please contact me at 615.532.6556 or ned.solomon@tn.gov, or apply on-line at https://www.tn.gov/cdd/training-and-news/leadership-training-and-development/partners-in-policymaking.html.

End of article six.

Article number seven: What Independent Living Is (and is not), by Paul A. Choquette, MA, Programs Director, Empower TN

This article contains one photo. It is a headshot of article author Paul Choquette. He is a middle-aged man with very closely-cropped hair.

The article begins here:

When people ask me about my new job at Empower TN, the Center for Independent Living in Middle Tennessee, they almost always say, “is it a nice place to live?” And I say, “well, it’s an office with a lot of desks and phones and computers and not very cozy”. All kidding aside, Independent Living can mean a lot of things, depending on the context in which it is being used. It can be a thing… it can be a place… it can be an attitude… it can be a service that you get from a provider agency, but at its core it all boils down to one thing: not letting a disability or difference in how we live our life prevent us from making our own life choices.

When I came to Empower TN last month I completed a professional and personal journey that began way back when I was four years old in Rhode Island. I was in a car accident that left me paralyzed from the waist down and reliant on using a wheelchair to get around for the rest of my life. That journey took me through elementary, middle and high school and on to college where I got my Bachelor’s degree.

I started working in the field of disability services back in 1993 at a Center for Independent Living in Rhode Island, where I discovered that I could use my own personal experience as a person with a disability to help others who were experiencing what I had experienced in my own life. After a while I decided that I wanted to help even more people on an even larger scale so I got my Master’s degree and worked at a rehabilitation hospital and then for Medicaid in Rhode Island where I could help design whole programs to provide services to those people who needed help and support to achieve their goals. That eventually lead me here to Tennessee where I worked for TennCare, helping to transform how things are done so that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to achieve whatever life goals they may have.

I came to realize that while Medicaid and the services they provide are important to promote and maintain independence, there is more to the picture, so I came back to my personal and professional roots by accepting a position as programs director at Empower TN, one of six federally funded and designated Centers for Independent Living (or CILs) in Tennessee.

Here’s where a little history might be helpful. During the process of closing big institutions for persons with disabilities in the 1960s, some people with significant disabilities were released from nursing homes and other institutional settings, enabling many, for the very first time, to live free and independent lives. This created the birth of a community, a culture and a movement.

This movement came about at the same time other major civil rights movements were taking place. Leaders of the disability community realized that their basic human rights and freedoms might have to be advocated and even fought for too. Although attitudes and services have improved greatly, much remains to be advocated for.

So what is a CIL and what does a CIL do? Well first of all, it is NOT a place to live (that’s an assisted living center). A CIL is an organization run and staffed by people with disabilities. In fact, in order to maintain its federal funding and designation, a CIL is required to have more than half of its board of directors and half of its program staff be made up of people with disabilities. Why is that important, you may ask? Well, who knows what a person with a disability is dealing with better than another person with a disability? Learning from other peers with disabilities is a powerful and lasting way of acquiring new information and promoting independence.

The primary role of CILS is to provide five core independent living services, which are; Independent Living Skills Training, Advocacy, Peer Support, Information and Referral, and Transition Assistance, which involves working with individuals who are entering or re-entering the community from an institutional setting, as well as high school students transitioning to adulthood. At Empower TN we also provide additional services to help people with disabilities manage their Social Security disability benefits while returning to work through the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program, and assist them in preparing for and finding a job through our Employment Network program.

One of the most important things that anyone needs to know about Empower TN and CILs in general is that we don’t do things FOR you, we do things WITH you. That means we partner up with you to find out what your goals are and what we can do to help you reach them. We help you figure out what needs to be done to reach your goals and will work with you through the entire process doing as much (or as little) as you need. But don’t expect us to do it all - that’s what makes us different. You see, as people with disabilities ourselves, we understand how valuable and rewarding doing things for ourselves can be. There is no better feeling in the world than to set a goal for yourself, work hard at it and then accomplish it. That’s what independent living is all about.

So if you want to increase your independence in any way - like learning how to use technology to access a computer or iPad if you are blind; knowing how to plan meals, shop and cook your own food; finding affordable accessible housing; or just connecting with a peer who has the same things happening in their life as you do so you can bounce ideas off of each other, CILs like Empower TN are the place to go.

For more information about Empower TN check out our website www.empowertn.org. If you live outside of the metro Nashville area and you want to find the CIL closest to you, visit the Statewide Independent Living Council’s website at [www.silctn.org/centers](http://www.silctn.org/centers).

End of article seven.

Article number eight: Partners 2018 Annual Reunion Conference, by Ned Andrew Solomon, Director of Partners, Council on Developmental Disabilities

This article contains three photos from the Partners 2018 Annual Reunion Conference. The first is a shot of a large meeting room with many tables filled with conference attendees. The second photo is of a table full of attendees in a breakout session meeting room. The last photo is of a panel of presenters. In this case, the panelists are discussing the new Employment and Community First CHOICES program.

The article begins here:

It was a beautiful March weekend, as more than 130 folks gathered at the Franklin Cool Springs Marriott for the 2018 Partners Annual Reunion Conference. With the 2017-18 Partners class (see Partners graduation article in this issue) serving as “hosts” for this event, attendees listened to a keynote by Derrick Dufresne about believing in yourself and not taking “no” for an answer; breakout sessions by Derrick (making a difference) and Partners grads, Jen Vogus (photography as a communication tool) and Brandi Brown (successful employment at UPS); a legislative overview and update by the Council’s Director of Public Policy, Lauren Pearcy and Executive Director Wanda Willis; a panel discussion on the Employment and Community First CHOICES (ECF) program; and an inspiring closing keynote about disability pride by Erica Powell.

We were also lucky to have Karen Mevis, Partners grad and Information & Referral Coordinator at Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, who conducted one-on-one scheduled meetings with individuals who sought help finding needed services and resources.

There was ample time for networking with new friends and old, and even dancing to a DJ, which brought people of all ages and abilities out on the floor.

The 2019 Annual Reunion Conference will take place March 15 & 16 at the Franklin Cool Spring Marriott. If you are a graduate, please save that date! If you are not a Partner yet, then get with the program! But don’t just take my word for it – read what the Reunion attendees had to say:

“There are times as a disabled person I am home making phone calls and writing letters and it feel like I am the only one doing anything. Then I come to Partners and it feels like a family reunion. I’m reminded I’m not alone.”

“I always look forward to the Reunion as a means to reconnect with fellow self-advocates and recharge my advocacy batteries.”

“I had become very frustrated with my own community and lack of progress on disability access, services, rights. This Reunion has been very motivational and I feel a renewed sense of purpose and energy. I am more motivated now to go back home and get back to work.”

End of article number eight.

Article number nine: Martin McGrath: An independent living story, by Deana Claiborne, Executive Director, United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee

This article contains two photos. The first shows an older gentleman, Martin McGrath, seated in his wheelchair in his home. He is wearing a blue pullover sweater and is in front of his bedroom dresser. The second photo is a large group shot with Martin and many members of the UCP board of directors. The caption reads: Martin McGrath with Mr. and Mrs. William Millard Choate and members of the Board of Directors of United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee. Left to right front to back: Shirley Shea, Erik Milam, Mr. and Mrs. Choate, Martin McGrath seated, Billy Carter, Sherry West, Errol Elshtain, 2nd row, Peter Harmon, Joe Haase, Ken Roth, Wick Ruehling, Jim Catalano, Mike Francisco, Claudia Weber, Andrew Eckstein and Randy Brown.

The article begins here:

At the March 22, 2018 meeting of the Board of Directors of United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee (UCP), long time UCP volunteer Martin McGrath was presented with a genuine surprise. On that day, in front of Martin’s extended family members who had gathered at the UCP office for a celebratory luncheon, the Board of Directors established “The Martin McGrath Fund,” a perpetual endowment, named in Martin’s honor. The fund was created through a $200,000 contribution from William Millard Choate of Atlanta, Georgia through the Choate Family Fund at the Community Foundation for Atlanta.

Martin has known Millard Choate since childhood. “He is connected to my family by marriage, and even though Millard is not my blood relative, that’s how we think of each other,” said Martin.

According to Choate, “Martin McGrath has been a pivotal influence in my life. He is a man of compassion and intelligence, and I admire his positive outlook on life. I appreciate his commitment to do all he has done for UCP. This gift is in the form of a challenge for the community to raise another $100,000 so the annual distributions from the endowment can make a positive difference for United Cerebral Palsy and the people that Martin cares about so deeply.”

When Martin was born in 1950, children with severe cerebral palsy were routinely institutionalized. At 68 years old, Martin doesn’t hesitate when he explains why he was never placed in an institution, “I was blessed with a good family. We are caring and loving.”

Martin’s recognition of his family’s love did not shield him from the stark realities of life for people with disabilities growing up in the 1950s and 60s. His mother died when he was only 14 years old. “After that, there was never a time when I didn’t worry about where I was going to live,” he said. “It has always been on my mind.”

After his mother died, Martin shared time between his dad’s and his maternal grandparents’ home. By the time Martin was 23, his dad had also passed away. “My grandparents and my uncles told me not to worry, that I would be cared for,” recalled Martin. “But that couldn’t stop me from worrying.”

Martin grew up in Nashville. He attended Calvert School, where he was placed in special education classes. After graduation in June 1971, Martin was presented with a unique opportunity: he and four other young adults with disabilities were invited to participate in a five-day experiment sponsored by George Peabody College for Teachers (now a part of Vanderbilt University). “Looking back,” he said, “this five-day excursion led me to the discovery of the most wonderful phrase in our English language, ‘being independent.’”

The young adults were provided with a house, but that was it; no way to get up the steps; no one to cook or clean. The group started by figuring out how to acquire lumber and they built a wheelchair ramp. Once they were safely inside, they collaborated on cooking, cleaning and all the other things necessary to run a home. They fell down (literally) and got back up and started all over again. The group planned their own daily activities, shopping for groceries and even a trout fishing venture. Most importantly, they talked, and talked – sometimes staying up until 2:00 in the morning. “For the first time in my life, I really felt in command of things,” said Martin.

These five days led Martin to take on one of the biggest challenges of his life. He became determined to enroll at George Peabody College. This was no small feat, as his high school diploma was a special education degree. He had to convince the Dean of Admission and the Chairman of the Special Education Department that he was capable of performing college-level work. He had to find funding for tuition, and he needed personal assistants to make it possible for him to live in a dormitory and attend classes.

What Martin learned was that he was ready for college, but college was not ready for him. In 1972, there was no Americans with Disabilities Act mandating public accommodations. There were architectural barriers all over campus. He couldn’t even access the library for essential classwork because there were no ramps. His special education coursework had left gaps in his academic preparation, so Martin had to work hard to catch up. Despite this, Martin thrived in his classes, and he discovered to his great delight that he could compete academically with his non-disabled peers.

The higher education barrier he ultimately could not overcome was the need for quality personal assistance. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) had agreed to pay students to assist Martin with activities of daily living. Unfortunately, the students were not always reliable in meeting Martin’s needs, sometimes because they had their own activities far from Martin in other areas of the campus; often because they stayed out late and simply failed to show up.

“For the first time in my life, I began to realize that the values of friendship do not always hold things together!” Martin said. “Throughout my life, I had things done for me either out of love or friendship and I did not have to worry about a price tag. My parents had tried to get this same point across to me when I was young, emphasizing that although I might have difficulty in doing things for myself, there would not always be someone around to help.”

Due to barriers outside his control, Martin had to leave Peabody before he attained his degree. Despite this, he credits his college experience as one of the most satisfying times in his life. “During my two years at Peabody, I developed and discovered a lot of self-help skills I did not know I had,” he said. “In fact, I am more proud of this than I am of my other accomplishments.”

Martin returned to live with his grandparents. He didn’t let his higher education experience go to waste. In 1978, Martin published a book, “Give Us the Knife, Carving a Lifestyle”. By then, Martin had connected with Jackie Page, another adult in the Nashville area who was advocating for independent living options for people with disabilities. They reached out to other people with disabilities, locally and across the nation who were coming to similar conclusions about the need for a disability civil rights movement. In 1990, the combined efforts of Martin, Jackie, and countless other advocates across the country led to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the nation’s first comprehensive civil rights law for people with disabilities.

Martin credits former Nashville Mayor Richard Fulton as being one of the greatest influences in his life. Mayor Fulton was one of the founders of United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee. Martin served on the Board of UCP, and in 2005, Martin became the President of the Board of Directors, the first President of the UCP board to have a significant lifelong disability.

During his time on the Board of Directors, Martin worked with families at UCP to develop the Durable Medical Equipment Exchange Program, through which thousands of people with all types of disabilities receive essential equipment for independence, mobility and safety. He also worked with UCP to develop the agency’s Wheelchair Ramp program, which has, to date, constructed over 2,600 wheelchair ramps on to the homes of people with disabilities throughout Tennessee. In 2006, Martin received Nashville’s highest award for volunteerism, the Mary Catherine Strobel Award, for his leadership and public policy advocacy with UCP.

After Martin’s grandparents passed away, he lived with his uncles. Subsequently, each of his uncles passed away, one by one. With nowhere else to go, Martin was faced with the very real possibility of having to move into a nursing home. With unfailing persistence, a lot of faith and prayers and characteristic inventiveness, Martin and his extended family members worked out an independent living arrangement through the Tennessee Choices Program. Martin now lives in a private home in northwest Nashville with a roommate.

For more information about UCP and the Martin McGrath Fund, go tohttp://www.ucpmidtn.org.

End of article nine.

Article number ten: Remembering Council Member and Partners Graduate Douglass Hall

This article contains two photos. One is a sweet close-up photo of Douglass Hall. He is a middle-aged man with a beard and mustache and a bald head. He is wearing a striped Polo shirt. The second is a close-up photo of Douglass with his good friend, Partners graduate Karen West on a bus. Both are smiling and obviously enjoying each other’s company.

The article begins here:

The Council mourns the loss of dedicated Council member and advocate Douglass Hall of Memphis, who passed away in January 2018 at the age of 62. Douglass served as the Memphis Delta Development District representative on the Council since being appointed by Governor Bill Haslam in 2015. He was also a graduate of our 2014-15 Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute and often spoke about what a life-changing experience the Partners program was for him.

Council Partners in Policymaking Director Ned Andrew Solomon shared: “Douglass graduated with the 2014-15 Partners class. He was beloved by his classmates, and, although he was not a man of many words, he could always be counted on to say something incredibly insightful that would perfectly frame a point of discussion. He was always looking out for others, supporting others with disabilities despite his own health and sight limitations. His intelligence, humor and kindness will be missed.”

Douglass spent the major part of his scholastic and professional careers in the information technology field after completing extensive IT training at Southwest Tennessee Community College. He worked as a network and information specialist for Goodwill Homes Head Start, Family Services of the Mid-South and the Childcare Resource and Referral Center. He was an entrepreneur who established two businesses: Byte Size Networking Services and the Memphis Technology LunchBox.

An expert in the use of technology, Douglass had a passion for helping people with disabilities, especially the blind, find those “tools” that would help them succeed. He was also a regular fixture at his local public library where he assisted blind people in accessing the library’s resources and services.

Council Executive Director Wanda Willis shared: “Doug’s loss will be felt by all who knew and loved him, and to know him was to love him. He had an uncommon ability to make you feel relaxed and warm, as if you were the most important person in the room. Doug inspired me more than he’ll ever know.”

End of article number ten.

Announcement about the 2018 Tennessee Disability MegaConference: The Council on Developmental Disabilities is proud to have been a primary sponsor of this annual statewide cross-disability conference since 2003. This year’s conference will take place May 24 & 25 at the Nashville Airport Marriott 600 Marriott Drive in Nashville.

There are four photos in this announcement. Two are of people posing behind their conference exhibit booths. The next is a photo of a large group of people dancing on a dance floor at the conference. The last photo is of two women posing with their arms around each other, smiling. In the background you can see many other conference attendees in the hallway.

Conference highlights include:

Nationally-renowned speakers, Joe MacBeth (National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals) and Jonathan Martinis (Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities & Supported Decision Making Expert)

Informative and educational sessions

Interactive workshops and discussions

Thursday evening entertainment

Exhibits of disability products and services and self-advocate entrepreneur goods

Continuing education credits

To register or to find out more information, visit www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org or call 615.248.5878

Announcement about Breaking Ground #2 Art Exhibit at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center: The Council is very proud and pleased to announce that we will be collaborating once again with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center on Breaking Ground II at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. This is an exhibit of original work and reproductions of art and writings by and about Tennesseans with disabilities that are featured in our annual arts issue of Breaking Ground magazine. The works will be displayed through September 2018 at 110 Magnolia Circle, Nashville, TN 37203. Map and directions are available at https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/vkc/contact/. For further information, please contact Laurie Fleming at 615.936.8852 or laurie.fleming@vumc.org. The 2018 Arts issue featuring these works is available on the Council’s website at tn.gov/cdd.

The announcement contains five images of artwork from the Breaking Ground arts issue. The first is the cover image, a lovely, colorful abstract painting of a tree in autumn. The second is a gorgeous, haunting photograph of a bare tree in the evening against the background of a cloudy sky. The third image is of a beautiful and very colorful ceramic plate, that looks like a pinwheel. The fourth is a painted still life of a bowl of cracked eggs, surrounded by egg shells and salt and pepper shakers. The last is a lovely rustic photo of an old post office in a stand of trees.

Article number eleven: New Council Member Craig W. Lemak

This article contains a close-up photo of Craig Lemak, suiting in a room with a couch and a photograph of a city scape on the wall behind him. He is a middle-aged man with glasses, a beard and mustache and shortly cropped hair.

The brief article begins here:

Craig Lemak represents the East Tennessee Development District. Craig is Chief Operations Officer with Knoxville Center of the Deaf, which serves 20 surrounding counties by providing sign language interpreting, information, referrals, advocacy, and job placement services. He graduated with a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling with Deaf and Hard of Hearing focus from University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Craig has a hearing loss and been involved in the deafness-related field since 1997. He has served on the Mayor’s City of Knoxville’s Council on Disabilities Issues (CODI) since 2012.

End of article eleven.

Back cover of magazine: Council Membership and Staff Listing

Council Chairpersons:

Tecia Puckett Pryor, Chair

Serina Gilbert, Vice Chair

Council Members:

Amy Allen, Milan

Jody Cheek, Johnson City

Roddey Coe, Ooltewah

Jennifer Coleman, Paris

Ryan Durham, Lawrenceburg

Evan Espey, Antioch

Tatum Fowler, Knoxville

Dawn Fry, Cookeville

Lesley Guilaran, Jackson

Clancey Hopper, Antioch

Lisa Johnson, Greeneville

Jean-Marie Lawrence, Chattanooga

Craig Lemak, Knoxville

William Lovell, Hohenwald

Steven Sheegog, Memphis

Gina Summer, Jackson

Karen West, Gallatin

Martez Williams, Nashville

State Agency Representatives:

Commissioner Debra Payne, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Commissioner Candice McQueen, Department of Education

Assistant Commissioner Cherrell Campbell-Street, Department of Human Services,

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Commissioner Marie Williams, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Deputy Commissioner Michael D. Warren, M.D., Population Health, Department of Health

Assistant Commissioner Patti Killingsworth, Bureau of TennCare

Executive Director Linda O’Neal, Commission on Children and Youth

Executive Director Ralph Perry, Tennessee Housing Development Agency

Executive Director Jim Shulman, Commission on Aging and Disability

University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

Elise McMillan, J.D., Co-Director, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence

in Developmental Disabilities

Bruce L. Keisling, Ph.D., Associate Director, Boling Center for

Developmental Disabilities

Protection and Advocacy:

Lisa Primm, Executive Director, Disability Rights Tennessee

Local non-governmental agency:

Sarah Kassas, Bilingual Information and Referral Coordinator, Tennessee Disability

Pathfinder

Council Staff:

Wanda Willis, Executive Director

Lynette Porter, Deputy Director

JoEllen Fowler, Administrative Assistant

Mildred Sparkman, Administrative Secretary

Alicia Cone, Director of Grant Program

Lauren Pearcy, Director of Public Policy

Emma Shouse Garton, Director of Communications

Ned Andrew Solomon, Director of Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute