

A Disability Resource Group Publication

Highlights in this Issue:

- DRG continues to work to prevent breast cancer among women with disabilities
- Remembering Betsy Wynn, a disability advocate and friend
- New staff, new babies, new grants, new website content!

CAN CLARK HOWARD HELP PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

The answer is Yes.

Disability Resource Group was recently invited to participate in the Summit: Steps to Building Financial Literacy & Independence. Hosted by the Federal Reserve in Atlanta, the event was organized by the Center for Financial Independence and the Georgia Consortium for Personal Financial Literacy and featured Clark Howard, among other notable guest

speakers.

Mr. Howard is a well-known consumer advocate who can be heard on the radio across the country and is featured in many Atlanta media outlets.

He shared many valuable tips at the Summit for avoiding financial pitfalls like identity theft and rip-offs. Since many people with disabilities are on fixed incomes or below poverty level,

Clark's tips were especially valuable.

Did you know...

- Carrying a check-book can increase your risk of identity theft.
- You don't have to provide your social security to medical offices.
- Payday lending and "check-cashing" services charge up to 387% interest rates!

Read all the tips at www.gaada.info

PARTIES ARE STILL SAVING LIVES

Readers may remember a feature from our Summer 2007 newsletter about Breast Cancer Awareness parties hosted by and for women with disabilities. Disability Resource Group instituted this program last year in response to a

chilling statistic: women with disabilities are far more likely to die of Breast Cancer.

Thanks to grants from the Susan G Komen for the Cure Foundation (continues on pg 2)



Katie & Nancy receive DRG's 2008 funds from Komen representatives at a recent



Working to bring about full inclusion of all Georgians with disabilities, in all aspects

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EXCHANGE

PARTIES ARE *STILL* SAVING LIVES (CONTINUED)

and the American Cancer Society, we are continuing to stress the importance of breast health among women with disabilities. We have 6 community coordinators who not only educate women about breast cancer via parties, but also walk through the mammogram and appointment process with them.

Each coordinator will try to arrange 10 parties and as a result, facilitate 180

mammograms this year, just for women with disabilities. At DRG, we want to all we can to encourage our coordinators to reach this important population.

If you are interested in hosting a party or know of a community group who could use this important training, contact us and we'll connect you with one of our community coordinators.



Some funds go toward educational materials, pill boxes with DRG's phone number, and other party

Ever wonder what keeps us busy here at DRG? Here's a small piece. In one month, we talked with:

- *112 people with disabilities and/or their families*
- *24 service providers*
- *4 educators*
- *2 policy makers*
- *1 federal agency*
- *3 employers*
- *16 businesses*
- *7 state agency staff*
- *9 disability organizations*
- *2 attorneys*

Add to that 3 trainings, 3 presentations, and hundreds of handouts distributed.

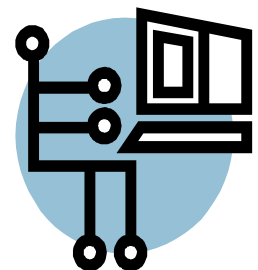
NEWS YOU CAN USE

Affordable, accessible housing can be hard to find. We're thankful for the Georgia Housing Search: georgiahousingsearch.org

Foreclosure is a pressing worry for many, we found this HUD resource to be helpful: www.hud.gov/foreclosure

People with low or fixed incomes have a hard time finding **affordable dental care**. Good Samaritan Health Center offers dental services, find out more goodsamatlanta.org
Or call 404-523-6571

Want to learn more about **Emergency Preparedness, Drug Testing in the Workplace or Immigration & Disability?** The Southeast DBTAC has information on these and other disability issues. Search for TIPS sheets at sedbtac.org
Or, call their Technical Assistance line for more information:
1-800-949-4232



CELEBRATION STORIES

DRG assists hundreds of people every month. We celebrate their successes and are proud of our part. Here are a few of their stories. (real names have been changed)

While talking with people waiting at the Mexican Consulate, one of our Immigrant/Refugee Outreach Coordinators met a young family with a difficult story. The young father, Raymundo, had recently become blind in a construction accident and was released from work. He was heartbroken that he could no longer support his family. Since he had no papers, he did not qual-

Raymundo and Hakim have found a friend as well as a sense of usefulness and possibility.

ify for rehabilitation services. We connected Raymundo with Hakim, a well-educated former English teacher from Ethiopia. The two men now meet every week and Raymundo is now learning Braille,

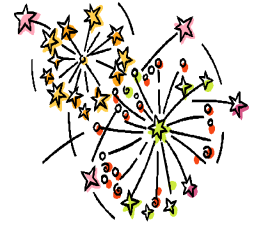
adaptation skills, and to speak English. Both have found a friend as well as a sense of usefulness and possibility.

A very bright, articulate young woman called in tears asking if we could help her with the professors and administration in her graduate program. We counseled Susan on her ADA rights to classroom accommodations and helped her figure out exactly what accommodations she needed. We talked with school administrators, helping them to understand her particular disability and to realize that the ADA requires that accommodations be appropriate for each individual student. Overarching rules on the part of the University are not in keeping with the ADA. Professors and the administration finally understood that each student should be evaluated on an individual basis. Susan's abilities in the eyes of her colleagues, as well as her grades, went up significantly as a result.

Debbie is an older

worker who was recently injured on the job. She had a desk job and her doctor had released her to return to work even though she was still using a wheelchair. When she called, she was confused as to why the manager of her firm refused to allow her to come back and was pushing her to take disability. We helped Debbie formulate a letter to the head of the firm's human resource department explaining her wish to continue working and her certainty that she could successfully perform her duties. The HR officials overrode the manager, required him to get ADA training, and assisted Debbie to come back to full time work.

One of our Komen Coordinators heard Kiara's story during a recent Breast Health Party. Kiara had never considered her need for a mammogram or a self breast exam. She figured that surely God wouldn't give her breast cancer on top of Multiple Sclerosis. She lamented about how much time she spends



going to doctors about her MS complications, so she never thought about any other physical problems. Because of the education and support she received at the Breast Health Party, Kiara now has an appointment for her first clinical breast examination. Her thinking is very common among the disability community and is exactly the reason why we are persevering with the Komen Breast Health Project. Her decision to consider and take action in all areas of her health may save her life.



A group of Komen Coordinators receive training on how to educate women about

FROM THE DIRECTOR: HELPING HORTON HEAR THE WHO'S

Horton Hears a Who has always been one of my favorite books. The story of the little people and their efforts to be heard so they would not be dropped into boiling water has a powerful message for people with disabilities right now in this election year.

DRG has been selected to participate in a research project led by the Burton Blatt Institute of Syracuse University. We will evaluate two Georgia cities for accessibility and the opportunity for community participation by people with disabilities (PWD's). As we recruit our team, we've struggled to reach a diverse group of individuals that represents all disabilities, backgrounds and

walks of life.

We need to know what everyone with a disability needs to make their lives more fulfilling. However, the hurdles are

Everyone is important and all of us must make a sound, a sound of "we are here, we

many. Only a small percentage of the disability population identify themselves as such. Few attend workshops, focus groups, or ever fill out surveys for vitally important needs assessments.

When disability organizations apply for funds to continue or improve their services, they must formulate a needs assessment in which they outline how many PWD's are in their service area and what that population's needs are.

In DRG's effort last year to increase dialog between PWD's and emergency planners, the repeated theme was, "How do we find all the people who need help in disasters? How do we get information to everyone about steps they can take to keep safe?"

The census bureau found that 49 million Americans identified themselves as having a disability. However, I speak with many ordinary people who tell me they don't have a disability and then proceed to describe their diabetes, hearing loss, or short term memory problems.

Most Americans just think of disabilities as mobility impairments that require use of a wheelchair, blindness, deafness, and perhaps autism. These disabilities are all low-incidence and make up only a tiny part of the total number of people with disabilities. If we are to make Horton, the elephant in Washington or Atlanta, or even in our county seat,

hear our voices, we must figure out how to find, count, and hear ALL of us.

Local organizations such as ARC's, NFB chapters, neighborhood parent support groups,

etc. must work harder to at least identify possible members in their communities. We must all help one another proclaim our membership in the disability community.

PWD's are the largest minority group in America but many of us don't want to claim this status. There is a role for all people with disabilities in our struggle for full inclusion. Some may march, some may simply reach out to others with disabilities and encourage them to be counted. Everyone can fill out a survey, when asked that explains their needs. Everyone can study the issues that matter to them in order to vote with greater understanding. Everyone is important and all of us must make a sound, a sound of "we are here, we have things to say."



NEWSBRIEFS: ADA RESTORATION UPDATE

In May at the National ADA Symposium Andy Imperato, executive director of the American Association of People with Disabilities, presented a seminar on ADA Restoration . Here are some issues he touched on.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was intended to give freedom and equality for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, since 1999, the courts have dramatically scaled back the ADA definition of disability to where it bears little resemblance to the robust civil rights law that Congress passed and President George H.W. Bush signed in 1990. To remedy this, congress has proposed several attempts at restoring this act. Most recently in 2007, Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner and now Majority Leader Steny Hoyer introduced the ADA Restoration Act of 2007 (the companion bill, was introduced in the Senate on the same day by Sens. Tom Harkin and Arlen Specter).

The ADA was meant to be just like

other civil rights laws that address employment discrimination. However, as a result of many court rulings, people with disabilities must now “prove” their disability. For example, the courts ruled recently that an employee with a developmental disability functioned fine on the job, so he did not qualify as a person with a disability under the ADA. Likewise, people with cognitive disabilities, epilepsy or diabetes may all be determined as non-disabled by the **mitigating factor** of their medications.

Proponents of restoration argue that the narrowing **definition of disability** leaves many unprotected. The proposed restoration provides examples of “major life activities” in its definitions section to help set the record straight. In addition, the proposed deal language rejects the Supreme Court cases which have created the confusion.

In order to pass, all laws require a lot of compromise. Because of this, disability community leaders from organizations like the AAPD,

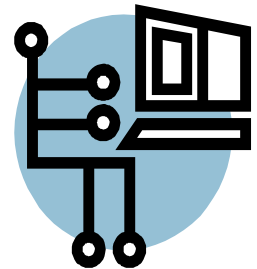
the NCIL, the Bazelon Center, and the Epilepsy Foundation have convened with business organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and the US Business Leadership Network. The goal of both sides has been to craft language that could be mutually defended through the legislative process so the bill will be more likely to pass.

Advocates hope to have the legislation passed by this Congress and signed by President Bush before October. This is a constantly evolving process that will doubtless have a more updates to come. Keep informed at www.aapd-dc.org/

**Join
online**

Not a DRG Member Yet?

Membership is inexpensive and easy, and gets you access to training, newsletters, and more! Our suggested membership fee is \$40 for individuals and \$100 for companies or organizations. Scholarships are available. To join, visit www.gaada.info



Up to the Minute...

“Disability advocates and business leaders are close to reaching a proposed deal to recommend language to Congress that would resolve their conflicts over the ADA Restoration Act.”

*-From
adarestoration.blogspot.com*

EXCHANGE

In Memoriam

*Some of you may remember former ADA advocate **Betsy Wynne**. She has passed from this earth and we miss her already. I was struck by Betsy's commitment and sincerity thirteen years ago when we first met at a training I was conducting for the Institute on Human Development and Disability in Athens. I have never known anyone more dedicated to learning the meaning of the ADA than Betsy.*

She became the ADA Specialist at IHDD and two years later began doing ADA presentations for groups of young people with disabilities and for university classes. Betsy and I went to several ADA conferences together. Her cerebral palsy made doing simple everyday tasks extremely difficult, but she never complained or took the easy way out. She was proud of her independence, her own apartment, her interesting job, and her assist dog. Betsy and I conducted several ADA workshops together. She was always prepared and careful to make sure the participants grasped the material we were presenting. Betsy believed in self-determination. She was very dedicated to Georgia Options and its mission to provide support for people with developmental disabilities to live independently in their own homes. She served on Georgia Options' Board of Directors and was a strong spokesperson for their work. Last year when her cancer got worse and she became increasingly weak, Betsy had to



NEW @ DRG

STAFF NEWS:

We have added several new part-time staff, including **Katie Weaver, our new Assistant Director**. Katie comes to DRG with experience in communications and marketing for both for-profit and non-profits. She also speaks Spanish and has a special concern for developmental disabilities since her nephew has Autism.

Sharon Chung will also be joining our team as a community coordinator for our Immigrant / Refugee Outreach program. Sharon is well-connected in the Korean community in Atlanta and will be a valuable resource as we reach out to Asians with disabilities.

DRG has also added several new Breast Health Education Coor-

dinators with a variety of experiences and spheres of influence. We are glad they will extend our reach into the disability community

New Baby!! Many of you know and remember **Kathryn Kovarik** who has served with Disability Resource Group in various capacities. She and her husband Tom just welcomed a new baby girl

on April 27th!

PROJECTS:

DRG was selected as a pilot participant in a research project, funded by Syracuse University. We have gathered a team of people to investigate and report on the ease of community participation for people with disabilities in 2 Georgia municipalities.

NEED A GOOD READ?

We have added a new feature to our website that I hope you will find fun and helpful. Our **bookstore** offers a number of books on disability and employment issues and on the disability experience. I have read all the books in the store and I found them well written, inspirational, (in a non-cheesy way) and informative.

We will be adding books each month to the list. All of the books can be purchased on our website and will be mailed to you from Amazon.com. Amazon

will give DRG a small percent of the sale. All of the books listed are also available from the Georgia Library for Accessible Services.

Here are two of the books on the list that you might like to check out :

The Question of David is a very powerful account of two bright successful people with cerebral palsy and their experience in the adoption process and their struggles to be good parents. They solve problems such as how

to lift a baby while your arm flaps wildly and how to manage attendants so that they assist you rather than taking over the parent role. The book is honest, funny, and will make you mad at the bureaucrats and medical personnel. It is a true first hand account of parenting with a twist.



Queer Crips is a very intense collection of essays and poems by gay men with disabilities. It is the

most honest book I have ever read on the wide variety of feelings that go with disability.

The writing is painfully revealing and so powerful that you feel as though you know the writers personally. There are graphic sexual descriptions and language that might be offensive to some, so approach with caution. Nevertheless, the book is an excellent anthology of thoughts and feelings from a segment of the disability community that we often exclude or just ignore. - Nancy

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Sara Takele is a native of Ethiopia. She came to the United States as a refugee and is now a U.S. Citizen. She and Nancy met in 1994 when they participated together in Partners in Policymaking.

Her heart is incredibly compassionate toward people with disabilities and their families, not the least of

which because Sara's 18 year old son has Autism.

Because of her journey with Abraham's disability, Sara has learned much about the "system" and what family's need most to care for people with disabilities.

In her culture, and many others, people with disabilities can be shunned from their

communities. Seeing this in action has made Sara even more passionate about serving those members of the immigrant and refugee community with disabilities or with disabled family members.

We are so pleased to have Sara as one of our Immigrant/Refugee Outreach Coordinators.

DISABILITY RESOURCE GROUP

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**Providing Disability Information
to Georgians for Over 14 Years**

DRG on the WEB

Did you know that our website is FULL of valuable, accessible information? If you can't find something, call us and we'll try to make it available or tell you where to find it.

Follow the **Newsletter** link on the homepage to view this letter in text-only or PDF form. And remember, you can make **membership payments** and contributions online!

gaada.info or

disabilityresourcegroup.org

Breaking News!!!

*Fulton County Office of Human Services has awarded a grant to Disability Link and Disability Resource Group to provide educational outreach and case management services to **immigrants and refugees with disabilities** living in Fulton County, of which, according to the Atlanta Regional Commission, there are over 25,000. This means an expansion of DRG's current program and services, as well as dedicated staff. For*

