

* The Exchange



a publication of Disability Resource Group, Inc.

Summer 2007

New Outreach Project



Nancy Duncan receives United Way Opportunity grant to help refugees with disabilities.

Over 125 thousand non-Hispanic immigrants and refugees from developing countries have come to live in metro Atlanta in the past ten years. The refugees have come from countries devastated by famine and/or war. All of them have spent at least two years in a resettlement camp. They have been carefully screened by the United Nations and the U.S. State Department. They have been invited to reside in our country and possess most of the rights of native born Americans.

These refugees often have serious emotional and/or physical disabilities as a result of the conditions in their homeland. They also have the additional complications of not knowing English or American customs. We sat in a refugee assistance office for just one hour last year and were awed at the many hurdles that the newcomers were trying to navigate. Our United Way grant will enable us to assist a few of these brave people to begin their

[Continued On Page 6](#)

Serving People with Disabilities and their Families in Georgia

Disability Resource Group (DRG) has been very busy for the first half of 2007. We have taken over 1500 phone calls and distributed over 4000 pieces of material. We have conducted 21 workshops and trainings at places varying from the Georgia Department of Defense to South Dekalb Senior Connections.

Basic Requirements for Medical Care Providers under the Americans with Disabilities Act

As part of our Breast Cancer Screening for All Project, the DRG has written a guide describing the requirements of medical facilities under the ADA and tips for getting what you need.

An example is:

Medical care providers should help patients with disabilities, such as visual impairments, writing disabilities, or physical disabilities that make it difficult to write, or fill out forms if the patient requests the help. This process should be done in a private place so that other patients do not hear confidential information.

This piece and other materials are available for your own information or for distribution. For a list of available documents, see page 7.

How a Party Could Save Your Life

In 2007, 5000 women in Georgia will be diagnosed with breast cancer. One thousand of these women will die of cancer. If breast cancer is detected and treated before it spreads outside the breast, the cure rate is 98%. The terrible truth is that women with disabilities are much more likely to die of breast cancer than are women without disabilities. The reason is simple: *women with disabilities are far less likely to get breast cancer screening*. Experts agree that all women over the age of forty should get an annual mammogram. Two years ago our staff asked women with disabilities in Atlanta why they did not get health screening. The most common answers were:



“I have to go to so many doctors related to my disability that I don’t want to go to any others.”

“I don’t have the energy to arrange all of the complicated transportation to get there.”

“I don’t like going to medical people because they treat me like a stupid child.”

“I can’t fill out all of the forms.”

“It is too expensive and I don’t have good insurance.”

This year, Disability Resource Group designed a new approach to getting women with disabilities to understand breast health and make the effort to get regular breast cancer screening. The Atlanta affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure provided us with the funding to carry out this new approach. We hired four women with different disabilities to be Breast Health Education Coordinators. Each woman asks other women with disabilities to host a party in her home or at some other convenient location. The party combines educational information about breast cancer and screening, games, an informative film, and time for sharing experiences. The coordinator follows up with each party attendee to help her get her mammogram. The four coordinators compete for bonuses each month to see who can help the most women complete their mammograms. We help the party attendees find transportation, financial help, personal assistants - whatever it takes to help complete her mammogram. So, attending a party where you are persuaded and supported in getting a mammogram can, in fact, save your life.

If you would like to host a party, attend a party, or just get more information about breast cancer screening, call us at 770-451-2340 or check out our website at www.gaada.info. We will be glad to send you free materials in any format. For even more information, check out the Komen website at www.komenatlanta.org.

Emergency Preparedness for All People

Disability Resource Group, with funding from the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, completed the first phase of our Emergency Preparedness Planning for All Project in April with an informational luncheon for people with disabilities in Savannah and Brunswick. We have facilitated three discussion groups in Savannah and Brunswick focusing on steps we all can take to improve the safety of people with disabilities in coastal Georgia in the event of a disaster. Our groups have included people from the disability community, representatives from the Red Cross, GEMA, county emergency planners, staff from the Department of Labor, employees of DFACS, school social workers, and staff from county health departments. The disability groups include: people with visual impairments, members of National Alliance on Mental Illness, ARC representatives, staff from LIFE of Savannah, members of the Brunswick Mayor’s Committee on Disability and representatives from the Office of Deaf Services of the Savannah School of Art and Design.

During our time working with disability organizations and emergency planners, we discovered certain key issues of great concern.

First, the planners are urgently calling on people with special needs to register with their county health department so that they can be considered for evacuation help, but the definition of this “special needs group” is people who need high levels of medical care, such as in a hospital setting. This group does not include people with mental impairments, sensory impairments, or physical disabilities that don’t require medical assistance.

Second, no plans are being made for the majority of people with disabilities in regard to evacuation and shelters. We have been talking about ways of making sure that there are trained staff people from state agencies in place to assist people with disabilities during emergencies.

Third, people with disabilities don’t always know what to do – they are not paying attention to the media. We are exploring ways that disability organizations can utilize telephone trees to let their constituencies know about emergency situations and help them take appropriate steps. We are all especially concerned for people with certain psychiatric disabilities or spectrum disorders (autism, aspergers) since they are often very isolated and may be extremely reluctant to



[Continued on page 4](#)

Emergency Preparedness (Cont'd)

leave the security of their homes.

Fourth, the planners have assumed that family members or agency staff will assist people with disabilities in disasters. We in the disability community have been pointing out to them that many people with disabilities live very independently. Most have no close ties to any agency. Many have no close ties to their families. We realize that the disability organizations will need to develop volunteers who can man shelters, help coordinate emergency evacuation transportation, etc. Based on stories after Katrina, we know that many people with disabilities rode out the storm in inadequate housing rather than going to a shelter where there was no one to assist them, no sign language interpreter, no willingness to accept service animals, no one who could make a person with a disability feel safe.

In April, the joint committees presented their findings and recommendations to over one hundred people with disabilities and their families. DRG produced and distributed a brochure entitled "Ten Things People With A Disability Should Know And Do To Be Safe In A Disaster" which summarizes the work of the committees and research on disaster planning nationwide. Over sixty organizations participated in the nine month collaboration.

DRG is now a member of a state emergency planning and disability GEMA team. We hope the work we began on the coast will spread throughout the state.

Most importantly, we in the disability community have figured out that we must convince other people with disabilities that, "In an emergency, you cannot count on the government to take care of you." People with disabilities must have at least ten solid, practical plans for dealing with emergencies. People with disabilities must be ready to get out of harm's way early and not wait until everyone is frantic. People with disabilities cannot rely on just one person, a friend, family member, or staff person. People with disabilities need to have many backups. When unexpected emergencies occur, a family member may be out of town. A staff care provider may be across the county and so prevented from getting to you.

For more information about this project or for the emergency brochure, call us at 770 451.2340. Fran Todd, Director of LIFE of Savannah (912-920-2414) is the point person in Savannah. Ronnie Bivins, Manager of the Brunswick Career Center for the Georgia Department of Labor (912-264-7244) is the point person in Brunswick.

Excerpt from “Ten Things People With a Disability Ought to Know and Do to be Safe In A Disaster”

1. MAKE A PLAN FOR WHAT YOU WILL DO IN CASE OF A DISASTER AND MAKE AT LEAST THREE BACKUP PLANS

A. Choose who will help you during a disaster.

Think about whom you can really depend on. Think about how long it might take this person to get from their home or work to you during an emergency situation. Always have at least five different people lined up since one person might be sick or out of town when you need them. Talk to each of the people and decide with them the best way of communicating during an emergency. Many people with disabilities in New Orleans and Biloxi waited too long for a family member or care provider to come and rescue them. It is better for two people to come to help rather than no one.

B. Plan to evacuate early if there is adequate warning.

Get to safety as soon as you can. Take what you need with you. The Red Cross shelters are not designed for people with disabilities. They will probably not have anyone available to assist you in any way. *However, staying at a shelter is much safer than staying at home.*

C. Make plans for different types of emergencies such as tornados, explosions, hurricanes, and severe influenza epidemics. Think about questions such as:

- If my regular helpers are very sick, who will assist me?
- If I am alone, and there is a fire or explosion, what should I do?
- What can I do if my wheelchair, my guide dog, my telephone is no longer functioning?

Write down plans for all these events. Review them regularly and see if you need to make changes.

10. BECOME AN ACTIVE MEMBER IN SOME DISABILITY ADVOCACY GROUP IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Being part of a group of other people with disabilities helps you get to know others with the same concerns and interests that you have. You can feel more confident since you are working together with others on problems that affect you. These advocacy groups can form committees to inform members about various important issues such as emergencies. Advocacy groups can work within a local community to make sure officials are doing everything possible to help you stay safe. If there is no advocacy group in your community, contact one of the organizations in this brochure and we can help you start a group.

New Outreach Program (Cont'd from page 1)

lives as participating members of our community. We are currently trying to help a woman from Africa who lost her hearing in a battle. She, of course, knows neither English nor Sign Language. She has a small daughter and most of all she wants to work and provide a home for herself and her little girl. Another woman from Eastern Europe is blind. She lost her sight when her entire family was killed. She knows no English and, although she wants to learn it, she cannot attend ESL classes because they rely completely on printed materials.

DRG wants to play a small role in helping the words on the Statue of Liberty include immigrants and refugees with disabilities.

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

For more information call us or check our website. We have many fliers in seven different languages. We use most of the United Way funds to purchase interpreter/translator services, so we can assist people who do not speak English.



SunTrust has made community involvement an important part of the relationships they have in the communities they serve. As part of their commitment, SunTrust has recently launched the My Cause promotion designed to help raise money for nonprofit organizations just like ours.

From August 6 through October 12, clients who open a new SunTrust Personal or Business Checking account, accept a new SunTrust Visa® Check Card, make any purchase using the card, and complete and submit an online redemption form by November 15, 2007, will be empowered to make a choice: Choose for SunTrust to either donate \$100 to their favorite nonprofit organization (it must be a 501(c)(3) organization as recognized by the IRS) or choose to receive a \$50 gift card to keep for their own cause.

If you plan to open a checking account between August 6 and October 12, 2007, we encourage you to consider becoming eligible for SunTrust's My Cause promotion and request that they donate \$100 in your name to our organization.

Much like the name "My Cause" implies, contributing to a charity is a personal decision. For that reason we are thankful that you would consider us as your cause. We appreciate your continued support.

For more information about My Cause and how to get involved, please call Pam Fordham at 770-551-4136 or email her at Pamela.Fordham@SunTrust.com.

Information Available from Disability Resource Group

We have developed the following information sheets which you may use and copy as you please. If you would like a copy, please email or call us. The information is also available on our website. We have much of the information in Spanish and six other languages.

Facts an Employer Should Know about the Americans with Disabilities Act

Your Rights as an Employee with a Disability

Title III in a Nutshell

Ten Things You Should Know about Your Child's Rights at School

Title II in A Nutshell

Know Your Rights under the ADA

A Guide for Achieving Reasonable Accommodations

Some Thoughts About Inclusion?

What is Self-Determination?

People with Disabilities Can live their Dreams

Emergency Preparedness for All People Brochure

Basic Requirements for Medical Care Providers under the ADA

What You Should Know About Breast Cancer



Erlinda Ramirez, our Hispanic outreach coordinator, and her helper Mirna Orellana distributed over 200 informational flyers about disability rights and opportunities to folks attending Dia de la Mujer Latina health fair on Cinco de Mayo.

The “Fitting In” Factor

**FROM
THE
DIRECTOR**

Last autumn, Disability Resource Group conducted three informal focus groups made up of employers asking about hiring standards. These employers included small business owners, metro county managers, and high level corporate HR people. The standard that everyone agreed on was the need for the applicant to fit in with the office culture. We asked the participants to specifically define “fit in.” “Fitting in” is a subtle distinction that means the applicant is: flexible; in the middle of the road in most aspects – religion, politics, other social issues; similar to the other people in the office or, if not, able to go along with the group; willing to help others in the group; generally pleasant; not a show off but a team player; dresses like everyone else in the office; has the same work ethic as the managers; etc. Qualifications are important according to these employers, but being able to fit in is the most important qualification.

As I listened to the discussions and mulled them over during the following two weeks, I concluded that this “fitting in” qualification is often the thing that keeps people with disabilities from getting jobs for which they are highly qualified. People with disabilities have often been more isolated and less involved in a variety of social settings. We have seldom played on a team and are all too often the recipient of help rather than the helper. Many of us have to be very goal oriented in order to succeed in school or work and so don’t develop many social contacts. For those of us who are visually impaired or have mental impairments, we are at a disadvantage reading facial expressions or body language. By definition people with disabilities are different. It requires imagination and faith in one’s coworkers to envision people with disabilities fitting in. In a thirty minute interview for a job for which one hundred people have applied, the employer may not take time to analyze if his/her employees can assimilate a person with a disability.

So what can be done? I have identified several practical steps that might improve our employment chances. Please write me with your ideas. We will post them on our website.

1.) Employment placement organizations, disability organizations, schools, etc. should make concerted efforts to help everyone with a disability to have a variety of social experiences with non-disabled peers. IEP’s 504 plans, ISP’s transition plans, treatment plans, etc. should include concrete steps and the required supports such as transportation, that help people with disabilities be involved in their communities.

2.) People with disabilities should have volunteer experience in a variety of settings. Support groups and job coaches should help the individual process what goes on in the volunteer setting especially in terms of personal interactions. These volunteer experiences should start in middle school. Everyone has gifts to offer their community and the community is richer for

knowing all its members. I want to be clear here that I am talking about people with all types of disabilities, both developmental and otherwise.

Students who have disabilities but are not in special education often have less experience in the community than students who have at least participated in community based education. My first volunteer job was during the summer before my junior year in college. I found my first paying job during the summer before my senior year. A wonderful creative educator hired me, a blind college student with no real work experience, to teach reading to ten sighted fourth graders who were significantly behind in language arts. I, of course, had no job coach or any job support. I paid my nine year old sister to help me translate the materials into Braille and help me with visual aids. The job lasted only eight weeks but it was great for my self-confidence and my resume.

3.) Before we apply for a job or go to an interview, we must do research on the culture of the company or organization to which we are applying. Asking questions of someone who already works for the employer could be helpful - questions like, "What are the general dress standards? Do people stay a long time in each job or move around a lot? Do people eat lunch together or bring their lunch? Are most of the people single, married, older, etc.? Is there a serious atmosphere or lots of conversation? What level of education have most of the people achieved? What are the main topics of conversation in the break room - football, grandkids, mortgage rates, etc.?" The answers to these types of questions may help the applicant know how to present himself/herself so that the fit seems more likely.

4.) I think almost everyone with a disability needs some support person on any new job for about a month. This may cut down on the high rate of job failure among people with disabilities. The support person can help the new employee set up his/her work station to accommodate the particular disability. The support person can also observe office politics, complicated cliques and alliances in the work place, and help strategize on the means of fitting in better.

There are many groups who are not open to people with any differences. Most of us have run into our fair share of people who just wanted to avoid us. Books such as How to Win Friends and Influence People and Seven Habits of Highly Effective People that help you learn to get along with a variety of people may help. Support groups of people with and without disabilities are vital in that they help us figure out if our difficulties are a result of our disability or the inflexibility of others.

If you are still confused about the "fitting in" thing, this true story may illustrate the problem best. M is a very bright woman in her thirties. She has advanced degrees and ten years of experience in her field. She is working in a disability organization in which the majority of employees are not disabled. She is witty, friendly, and very hard working. She has been very successful in her job for the past two years. Each day she goes out for lunch alone, or eats at her desk. She is never invited out by fellow employees. In the

Fitting In (Cont'd)

break room, she is often ignored and left out of the conversations. She is certain that her manager is working very hard to find a reason to fire her. The manager's only real complaint is that M just does not "fit in." So far, no one has been able to help M figure out how to turn the situation around. M is worried, lonely, angry, and feels very helpless. She has no clue as to why she does not "fit in."

Until all of the players in the disability employment arena address the "fitting in" factor, I don't believe that we will successfully budge that 70% unemployment rate among people with disabilities.

Our Corporate Sponsors



Fulton County
Office of Disability
Affairs



Georgia
Department
Of Labor



Our Board Members

Exchange Board of Directors:

Ron Aversa, (Chairman of Personnel)- UPS Corporate Office

Allen Brown - Bridges Program - Marriott Foundation

Rod Clark - Retired Executive, GTE/Verizon

Christy Davis - UPS

Ben Foster, (Chairman of Finance)- Corporate Sun Trust Bank, Inc

Sharon Hemphill - National Boys/Girls Clubs

Yolanda Hallas, (Chairman of Board)- AARP Georgia,

Bill Holley - Multiple Choices Independent Living Center

Tameeka Hunter, (Chairman of Strategic Planning) - GA Tech, Disability Student Services

Tom Riddick - Corporate Bellsouth

Priyanka Sinha - Raksha, Inc.

Joanne Weaver - Center for the Visually Impaired

Disability Resource Group
4164 Admiral Drive
Chamblee, GA 30341

Phone: (770) 451-2340
Fax: (770) 451-9725
Email: nduncan@bellsouth.net
Website: www.gaada.info



MISSION STATEMENT

*Bringing about full inclusion of
all people with disabilities into
all aspects of life in Georgia.*

Postage
Goes
Here

Disability Resource Group, Inc.

Application for Membership– Individual Membership Fee: \$ 25.00– Corporate Fee: \$100.
The minimum contribution enables you to receive reduced fees for workshops, newsletters, and Americans with Disabilities Act updates. For more information regarding the benefits of membership, please call us at 770-451-2340. Scholarships available.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Company/Organization: _____

Company/Phone/Fax: _____

Make checks payable to: Georgia ADA Exchange, Inc.
Mail to: Nancy Duncan, Executive Director
4164 Admiral Drive, Chamblee, GA 30341
Phone: 770-451-2340