

It Takes a Spark

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The former President of Gallaudet University
talks about real and meaningful change

September 2016

I. King Jordan at E3 Conference

“My life’s work is trying to change attitudes.”



Speaking to a packed room at the E3 transition conference in Macon in mid August, I. King Jordan, the first deaf president of Gallaudet University, told the crowd that the revolution for disability rights is far from finished.

Jordan spoke of his role at Gallaudet University, the world's only university with all programs and services designed specifically for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, noting that prior to 1988, all presidents of the school had full hearing despite the fact that the student population was then completely deaf. That year, Gallaudet students, with support from many alumni, faculty, protested the Board of Trustees' appointment of a hearing person to the presidency.

Called Deaf President Now (DPN), the week-long protest was a watershed event in the lives of deaf and hard of hearing people all over the world. At its conclusion, the Board reversed its decision and named Jordan, who was one of three finalists for the position, the eighth president of Gallaudet and the first deaf

president since the institution was established in 1864. Since DPN, Jordan's leadership heightened public awareness of the important educational contributions Gallaudet makes to the nation and the world. He served as an international spokesperson for deaf and hard of hearing people, as well as an advocate for all persons with disabilities. Much sought after as a public speaker, Dr. Jordan continues to challenge the American public to examine their attitudes toward people with disabilities and to open their minds, hearts and workplaces to them.

Dr. Jordan is a native of Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania, a small town near Philadelphia. After graduating from high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served four years. An automobile accident left him profoundly deaf at age 21.

Dr. Jordan earned a B.A. in psychology from Gallaudet in 1970. The following year he earned an M.A., and in 1973 a Ph.D., both in psychology and both from the University of Tennessee.



“We have to work to change people’s attitudes.”

—I. King Jordan

Upon receiving his doctorate, Dr. Jordan joined the faculty of Gallaudet's Department of Psychology. In 1983 he became chair of the department; three years later he was appointed dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

As professor, department chair, dean, and president, Dr. Jordan made numerous scholarly contributions to his field. In addition, he has been a research fellow at Donaldson's School for the Deaf in Edinburgh, Scotland, an exchange scholar at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, and a visiting scholar and lecturer at schools in Paris, Toulouse, and Marseille, France.

Dr. Jordan holds eleven honorary degrees and is the recipient of numerous awards, among them: the Presidential Citizen's Medal, the Washingtonian of the Year Award, the James L. Fisher Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the Larry Stewart Award from the American Psychological Association, and the Distinguished Leadership Award from the National Association for Community Leadership. In 1990, President George Bush appointed Dr. Jordan Vice Chair of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD). In 1993, President Clinton reappointed Dr. Jordan Vice Chair of PCEPD.

On December 31, 2006, Dr. Jordan stepped down as president of the University.

On April 6, 2010 it was announced that President Emeritus I. King Jordan has been appointed by President Barack Obama to serve on the Commission on Presidential Scholars.

Dr Jordan in his own words, speaking at the E3 Conference

I'll tell you a little bit about myself and where I came from because maybe that will apply to

what you do.

I grew up hearing. That is why I sign and talk at the same time. My native language is spoken English. Sign is my second language. And people tell me I sign like a hearing person. So I guess I have a hearing accent. They say I have a hearing accent.

But I became deaf in an accident in Washington, D. C. in 1965, and when I became deaf, I had never met a deaf person before. I had never seen signs or knew anything about deafness. But a friend in the hospital told me about Gallaudet. So I went and visited Gallaudet, and there I not only got an education, but I learned to be a deaf man.

Before I went to Gallaudet, I was a hearing man who couldn't hear. That may sound odd, but all of my family, all of my friends, everyone I knew was hearing. All my life experiences were hearing. Then when I went to Gallaudet, everybody was deaf. I enrolled in 1966, and in 1966 everybody was deaf. Everybody signed. Now, they have special schools for hearing, undergraduates, they have interpreted students. They didn't have anything like that in 1966. It was really the deaf world. So I had total emersion in ASL and the deaf culture. That's how I became a deaf person.

When I finished Gallaudet, I went to the University of Tennessee. When I finished at the University of Tennessee, I went back to Gallaudet, and at Gallaudet I continued to learn more about the deaf culture, about the deaf community, about deaf people. I taught for 15 years. Then I became dean. Then I became president. And I became president during that protest that Bob Green talked about. So that is what led to my becoming an advocate for the rights and abilities of people with disabilities.

I didn't know anything about deafness when I was younger. Even after I became deaf, I didn't know anything about other disabilities. Why? Why would I know anything about

other disabilities?

Then I became deaf. I became president, and my first year I traveled a lot. In 1988 I traveled all over the country. Once in 1988, I was in Connecticut, and I was in a meeting like this room, about the same size. I was in a meeting and someone came in the door, walked up to me, whispered. The interpreter helped with that conversation. He said I had a very important phone call.

I said: Well, tell him I'll call him back. I'm in the middle of a meeting. I'll call him back. It's Congressman Major Owens. I don't know if you know that name, Congressman Major Owens, he was from New York. And his profession before he entered Congress, he was a librarian. He was a fantastic man. He was African American, a very important Congressman. And I was a new president but not stupid enough to tell him: I'll call you back.

I went and talked to the Congressman. He told me he wanted me to join a group called Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of People with Disabilities.

Now most of you have probably never heard of that group. But in 1988, that was a really important group because that group was charged with fostering the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, and that group was made up of representatives from all the different disability groups.

So my baptism in learning about disabilities was that task force. And the chair of that task force, Justin Dart. Do you know that name? One of the most important disability leaders in American history, Justin Dart. So I got to know him too, and that was very eye-opening for me.

And at the same time they got to know me. So very soon, instead of my having been president of Gallaudet, I really had two jobs. I was the president of Gallaudet, Gallaudet

University, and then I was a spokesperson or an advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

And honestly, more than half of my travel was related to advocacy. People would invite me to California or Oregon or Utah or Texas not to talk about Gallaudet, not to talk about DPN, but to talk about disability rights. And that really helped push the passage of the ADA.

Do you know the name Tom Harkin? He was the Senate sponsor for ADA. Tony Coelho was the House sponsor of ADA. Both of them said on the floor of Congress that DPN was the spark that pushed the passage of the ADA.

Life before and life after ADA, we can't compare. You really —you really can't compare.

Interpreters, captioning, VRS, everything I do, everything I now take for granted and your deaf, hard of hearing clients take for granted didn't exist before the ADA.

I went to the University of Tennessee from 1969 to 1973. Deaf, profoundly deaf, really not a good lip reader either. I had no interpreting, none, not one support service in my class. I invented my own support services. I asked people in class: If I give you carbon paper, your notebook, will you make a copy of your notes for me? And almost always they were happy to do that.

And this is a very interesting thing. That would lead to study groups. So in class, I would ask two or three different people to take notes for me. Then when I go home, I would summarize those three different notes. I always had the best notes in class. But people learned soon that my notes were better than others. So when it was time for exams, we would have study groups and it worked out really well.

But I look back and I think, imagine if I had

real-time captioning in the classroom or an interpreter in the classroom or a real support service. Oh, life would have been easier.

Movies, just now outside, we were talking about movie theaters. In Washington, D.C., I don't know about Georgia or other places, but in Washington, D.C. there are theaters where every showing of every movie is captioned, every single one. You have to use equipment so the—my favorite theater has SONY glasses and you put on the SONY glasses. It has a little computer that puts captions on the glass. It sounds odd, captions on the glass, but they don't seem to be on the glass. They seem to be up on the movie screen. And it's really great because you can move them.

Now if you watch the Olympics on TV, the captions are at the bottom of the TV screen. Because if you look, you can't see. For example, women's gymnastics or diving, they list the scores. You can't see them. They're covered up by the captions. But in the movie I just lift my head and move the captions out. Technology, wow! Life for deaf people is so very, very different.

The other two things I'll talk briefly about technology, one is VRS. You all know video relay service. I'm able to use VCO. So when I make a phone call, the interpreter signs for me, but I speak for myself. And sometimes people who I call don't know that I'm a deaf person.

Once a friend applied to become university president and she was a finalist. So they did telephone interviews with her references. I was one of her references. And I spoke to this history professor at the college and he asked me questions and asked me questions and we had a long hour-and-a-half conversation.

At the end of the conversation he said: Dr. Jordan, do you mind if I ask you a personal question?

I said; no, fine, go ahead.

I read your resume and it says you're a deaf

man. How can you have this phone conversation if you're a deaf man? So I explained VRS to him. But VRS really changed the lives for deaf people because not only can I make telephone calls to hearing people, but I can make VP calls to other deaf people. So I use the same equipment. I can call a deaf person anywhere in the United States. And on my TV, the other deaf person, it's like enhanced SKYPE, better than SKYPE, very clear.

The second thing that's equally important, this, CART, CART, if I remember, computer-assisted real-time captioning. Right? I have a friend who is a deaf man. He is one of the founders of an organization called ALDA. That's the Association of Late Deafened Adults. And he established a company called Caption Access. And Caption Access hires veterans. But instead, they work with a computer until the computer learns their speech and then they listen and repeat. And the computer translates their speech into real-time captioning. I thought: Will it work? It's amazingly accurate. It's really accurate.

So his company—for example, he's located in Chicago, but a college in Arizona has one deaf student. They hire his company who listens on the telephone to a lecture in Arizona, sends the captions to a screen in that college in Arizona almost real-time. There is a little, little bit of delay. Wow, wow. So that's amazing.

I can't speak to VR work with people with disabilities because I don't know enough about it. You know about it. I can speak to the notion that everybody with a disability can have success in a job. Everybody. It doesn't matter the severity of the disability. You can find work that will match that person with the disability.

I can also talk to the fact that the biggest barrier that faces people with disabilities hasn't changed very much. I talk about the marvels of technology, how they have helped my life and the lives of other deaf people and technology has also helped people with other

disabilities as well. But that one barrier is the barrier of attitudes. And I'm probably preaching to the choir here. You know that. But wow. My life's work is trying to change attitudes, trying to change what's in people's minds, and more important, what's in people's hearts. Because people see a person with a physical disability right away. They make judgments. Right away they think less of that person.

People meet me, my disability is not visible, but they meet me and they learn that I'm disabled. Right away they make judgments. Right away they think I'm less than something. Oh, oh, that bothers me! When I fly—I travel a lot. When I fly I always tell my seat mate that I'm a deaf person. I learned to do that because sometimes if I don't tell them I'm a deaf person, then I'm reading, the person talks to me, I don't know that person is talking to me. I'm reading. Or the flight attendant comes, asks me a question. I don't know that person is asking me a question. So I try to make it easy.

90 percent of the time when I do that, people are very friendly, very nice: Oh, thanks for telling me. Thank you. And sometimes they'll tell me that there's an important announcement or something, but 10 percent of the time I tell them that, oh, they—I probably should not say this, but I wanted to slap them.

Really, when I get that attitude I really want to slap them. But I know that the best thing to do is just be nice, friendly, and cooperative, and try to help them learn something about deafness. I'm not an expert on deafness, no. But I'm an expert on being a deaf person because I became deaf in 1965. That's 50—wow, 51 years ago. I am celebrating my 50th deaf birthday.

A new person. So I congratulate you on what you are doing to reach out to young people with disabilities. I serve on a foundation called the Johnson—Johnson Scholarship Foundation. And their mission is to help people with disabilities obtain employment. It's a really great foundation, a really, really great foundation. And one of their programs

works with every state university in the Florida system. There are 12 different universities in Florida. The foundation is located in Florida. That's why they support those 12 state universities. But they work with the disabilities services coordinator on each campus.

And they provide scholarships for the students. They've been doing it for 20 years doing that. And about two years ago we came to understand that the scholarships are not what's important. The scholarships, they enable students to go to college. Probably without the scholarships they couldn't go to college, but what is important is the relationship that they make with the people in the disability rights or disability services office.

The relationship, the mattering, the support, the coaching, the follow-up, well, I thought before I came in this room that that is you, that you're the people who matter to them. You're the people who get to know them. You are the people who help students with disabilities know that they can succeed.

We just published a paper I said we published I don't know if it's published. We submitted a paper about what we do in the Florida system and we talk about secret sauce. We talk about how important the secret sauce is. And that secret sauce is people who care, people who believe in the abilities of people with disabilities.

So you're the secret sauce here, and your job, your role, your life's work is so very important. I am humbled and honored to be invited here to meet with you. 

“I am SO encouraged about the direction the agency is headed and look forward to even more amazing progress as we move forward.”

—GVRS Board Member Sandy Adams





Growing the Economy Written by Dana Skelton-Sanders

A former client now works for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce

Lauren Gray was determined to make the most of her experience when she first came to GVRA in 2011.

A Marietta native, she was on the verge of beginning her college career at Auburn University. And while she was excited about starting this new chapter in her life, she thought she might need a little help.

Enter GVRA.

With the help of the agency's assistive work technology department, Lauren received the necessary accommodations to navigate the classroom, and there, she excelled.

While in school, she worked at the Office of the President in the special events department, gaining experience in office collaboration and managing events on a tight schedule.

After graduating from Auburn with a Bachelor's degree in marketing, she moved to Atlanta and started her professional career with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

She started at the Chamber as an event marketing intern. She soon realized her passion lay in the marketing side of that position, and she was asked to join the investor relations team as a strategic programs coordinator.

In addition to her full-time work, Lauren also supports the efforts of the Georgia Transportation Alliance.

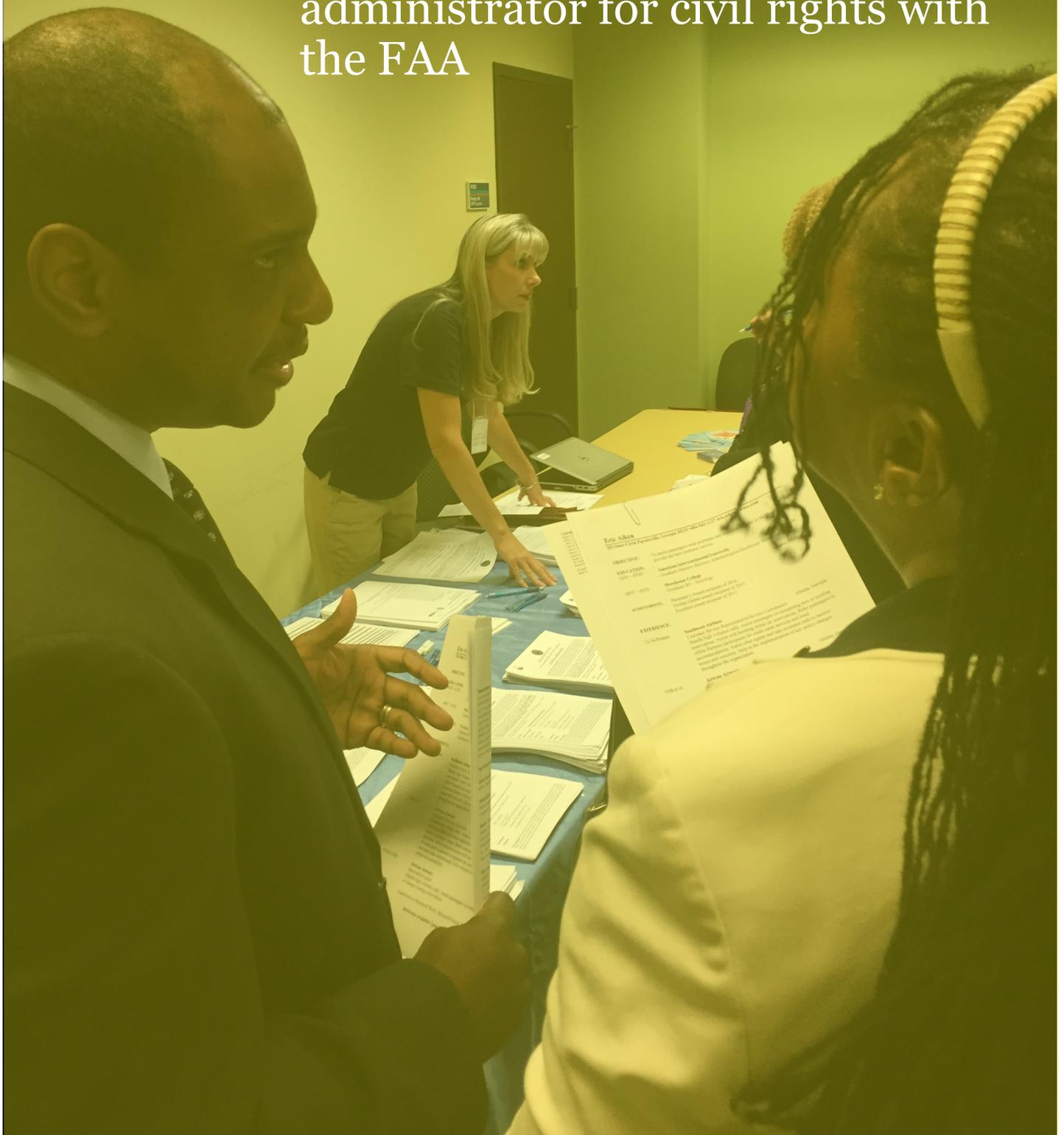
"Lauren has really shown that with the right motivation, anyone can do anything," said her former counselor Dana Skelton Sanders. "She's really a model for self advocacy. We're all so proud of her."

She is excited about growing the investor benefits programs as well as developing relations with local partners across the state.

In her free time, Lauren volunteers for YoungLife, enjoys traveling and works to perfect her baking skills. 

“It just makes **SENSE** to hire people with disabilities.”

—Mamie Mallory, assistant administrator for civil rights with the FAA



Careers Taking Flight

GVRA recently held a successful hiring blitz with the FAA

The College Park VR office recently played host to a hiring blitz sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration. The event marked the first of its kind between GVRA and the FAA, though both agency and federal officials said it won't be the last.

Keith Washington, the deputy assistant secretary for administration with the FAA, said it was a natural partnership, as it both furthers the FAA's mission of diversifying its workforce but it also provides an easy pipeline through what can be a bureaucratically-marred hiring process.

"A lot of times, when we talk about the hiring process, we talk about how difficult it is in hiring in the federal government," Washington said. "We have to take advantage of these noncompetitive hiring authorities where we can meet a qualified candidate and hire them and make the process that much more simple."

The positions being recruited at the event ranged from air traffic controllers to administrative aides to financial supports. The event comes on the heels of President Obama mandating that the federal government hire 100,000 individuals with a disability by 2018, and the U.S. Department of Transportation is aiming at ensuring that 3 percent of its total workforce is individuals with disabilities in the next two years.

Not only does a diverse workforce match the diversity of the nation as a whole, Washington said, but hiring individuals with disabilities allows both the government and private companies to ensure their workforce needs are met.

"Unfortunately, people with disabilities have

the higher unemployment rates in the country and government should set the example. diversity is key," he said.

Mamie Mallory, Assistant Administrator for Civil Rights with the FAA, echoed this sentiment.

"The question is why not add this population to the workforce. They bring the same skillsets that any demographic brings to the workforce. It's a group that is underrepresented in the workforce due to attitudinal and architectural barriers that still remain," she said. "The US needs to maintain its competitive edge, it just makes sense."

The fact that the FAA could host the event outside of the airport ensured that it was accessible, had ample parking and wasn't shaped by the high security at the world's busiest airport just down the road.

On the whole, said GVRA Metro Quadrant Business Development Manager Michele Mason, it was a great event, one she hopes will be replicated on a regular basis.

After all, she said, with the federal government's goal of increasing the number of individuals with disabilities it hires and GVRA's goal to ensure these individuals are integrated into the workforce, it only makes sense that the two work together.

"My overall hope is that we can connect our clients with targeted disabilities with gainful employment with the FAA. This is the biggest effort, and to date, it seems like it's something that's going to move forward," Mason said. "Our goals match. It's working smarter and not harder, and that's what we're doing here."



Save the Date

Calendar of Events

Don't miss out on these upcoming opportunities!

September

Sept. 21 and 22 — The State Rehabilitation Council will hold its meeting at the Marriott Courtyard Hotel located at 3990 Sheraton Drive, Macon, GA 31210

October

Oct. 7 and 8 — The 72nd annual Business Enterprise Program Training Conference will be held at the Hilton Atlanta NE Hotel located at 5993 Peachtree Industrial Blvd., Atlanta, GA 30092

Oct. 7-9 — The National Federation for the Blind of Georgia Conference will be held at the Savannah S. I95 Gateway Holiday Inn located at 11 Gate Way Boulevard East, Savannah, GA 31419

Oct. 7 and 8 — The Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Training Conference will be held at the Middle Georgia State University Conference Center located at 100 University Pkwy., Macon, GA 31206

November

Nov. 3 and 4 — The Georgia Evolution Conference will be held at the Wyndam Hotel located at 2443 Highway 54 West, Peachtree City, GA 30269

NDEAM is coming ...

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

It's that time of year again. October marks the annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a time to celebrate disability employment but also to engage and educate outside partners and organizations. NDEAM as it exists now was first declared in 1988 by the United States Congress, and this year marks the 18th iteration of it. The month is an extension of National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week originally observed during the first week of October beginning in 1962.

NDEAM's ultimate roots go back even further. In 1945, Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and

contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. Upon its establishment in 2001, the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) assumed responsibility for NDEAM and has worked to expand its reach and scope ever since.

This year's theme, "#InclusionWorks," focuses on the need for inclusive environments for individuals with disabilities. Developed with input from a range of organizations with which ODEP partners, the use of a hashtag is intended to spur people to engage in discussion on social media about the many ways "inclusion works."

We'll have much more on NDEAM in next month's newsletter. Stay tuned.

Inclusion Works for Opportunity

Inclusion Works for Business

National Disability Employment Awareness Month
#InclusionWorks

Inclusion Works for Innovation


OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
dol.gov/odep

Leadership is Learned

Rehab Engineer Scott Barr was once a DLDI graduate

Written by Communications Specialist Tom Connelly

June 23 marked the 25th Dougherty Leadership Development Institute graduation ceremony. The event was a memorable experience. DLDI is an innovative program that integrates individuals with disabilities and members of the nondisabled population into the leadership community.

This program empowers the participants to possess a greater degree of influence over their lives. DLDI is the brainchild of Annette Bowling, former longtime executive director of the Albany ARC and longtime advocate for persons with disabilities. It is the first leadership program of its kind in the state and possibly in the nation.

A number of DLDI graduates with disabilities have also graduated from Leadership Albany. This latter program is purposed with identifying and developing leaders in the Albany area and exposing them to issues and difficulties facing the disability community. Its goal is that they will utilize these leadership skills and become more involved in the community.

A graduate of both of these programs who GVRA staff may know is Scott Barr. A rehabilitation engineer for Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Mr. Barr oversees home and vehicle modifications for clients, and has used his training in both the leadership programs to give back to the community.

He evaluates clients' residence accessibility and designs modifications to make the space accessible to the individual user.

He then solicits quotes from qualified contractors and oversees implementation of changes. Mr. Barr also works with certified

driver rehabilitation specialists and with vehicle modification providers to enable clients to obtain personal transportation solutions.

In addition, he works on complex computer access issues and programming. Mr. Barr's area of responsibility is the southern third of the state; it stretches from Fort Gaines in the west to just below Augusta in the east, to the Florida state line in the south.

Previous to working for GVRA, Mr. Barr was employed by Georgia Tech, again as a rehabilitation engineer. In this capacity, he provided assistive technology evaluations, recommendations, implementation and training in Southwest Georgia.

Prior to moving from Michigan to Georgia, Mr. Barr's involvement with disability came as a result of his sustaining a spinal cord injury from a downhill snow skiing accident between his second and third year of college. He was majoring in, at the time, electrical engineering. The injury resulted in quadriplegia, as all four of his limbs have impaired or no function.

Despite this, Mr. Barr, after receiving 11 months of physical and occupational therapy at the University of Michigan Medical Center, continued his education.

He obtained his bachelor's degree at Wright State University, majoring in biomedical engineering.

Later, Mr. Barr received a Masters degree in rehabilitation engineering, also from WSU.

Mr. Barr graduated from DLDI in 2002 and Leadership Albany in 2004.

The opposite of bravery is not cowardice but conformity

—Robert Anthony

About this publication

It's your newsletter, and we want to hear from you.

Written by Communications Coordinator John Boan

As always, thank you for taking the time to read this month's GVRA newsletter. A lot of behind the scenes work goes into putting this publication together every month, and I want to take this opportunity to specially thank everyone who contributed to this publication.

We're working to expand the scope of the newsletter every month, and we're working with our design and printing professionals to ensure that this newsletter begins to feel a little bit more like a magazine and less something you'd find in a government agency's lobby.

Like the agency as a whole, we're committed to being bigger and better with each passing

day, and that's where you come in.

Whether you're a client, an employee or one of our valued partners, you need to remember: this is your publication.

Have something you'd like to see included? Know of a particularly resonate success story? Please let me know.

As always, my office door is always open (I'm in a cubicle).

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