

Giving Thanks

Gratitude as a driving force in all
GVRA does

able georgia™

November 2016

“Around here, we don’t look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we’re curious ... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”

~ Walt Disney

Thank You

A letter from Executive Director Sean T. Casey



As you all know, November marks the beginning of the holiday season, a time for family and community, a time for reflection on the past year and a time to take pause and give thanks for the blessings we’ve received. It’s a season forged in generosity, and I believe the spirit of Thanksgiving very much encapsulates what we do day in and day out.

Eleven months ago, if you would’ve told me I’d have the honor of heading an organization like this that does so much good for so many people, I wouldn’t have believed you. It is a privilege that is close to my heart, as I had the fortune four years ago of helping to design an organization capable of functioning outside of the Georgia Department of Labor, and for this privilege, I am tremendously thankful. So too am I thankful for all of you, for the selfless work you do to help Georgians with disabilities achieve the life they so choose. Over the past month, I have enjoyed meeting many of you, and I look forward to getting to know many more of you in the coming weeks and months.

I know many of you have questions for me, and hearing from you is important. I am leaning on your expertise as we advance innovative strategies for excellent customer service. Your comments and input have

already been invaluable in this process, and I look forward to hearing from you moving ahead.

I most sincerely appreciate the warm welcome I have received here. Teamwork will make progress possible as we keep traveling toward the goal of full inclusion, whether it be in the workplace or anywhere else. We are part of a tremendous community, and out of that community will come great things.

In the same spirit that inspired the first Thanksgiving centuries ago so too will we continue to move forward, driven by generosity and caring, meeting the task of helping others with a full heart and an unwavering resolve.

Thank you for all that you do to make what we do possible.

All the best,

Sean T. Casey

Executive Director



The Georgia Evolution Conference



The Georgia Evolution Conference



A unique event that encouraged inclusion for all

The first annual Georgia Evolution Conference took place several weeks ago, drawing nearly 400 provider employees, individuals with disabilities, their family members and state of Georgia employees. By all accounts, the two-day event was a success, stressing on the whole the importance of integrated community employment, both as it exists for individuals with disabilities and as its shaped by those providing services to those individuals.

“It was a really great experience,” said organizer D’arcy Robb. “Not only did attendees learn a lot to take back to their respective communities, but they were able to network and explore further avenues where we can all work together.

And the educational opportunities were as varied as they were helpful. They included a briefing by a national policy expert on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Employment First; a roundtable with providers who have evolved from traditional service models to integrated, innovative employment; talks by national subject matter experts on employment for people with disabilities and discussions with individuals and families who have made a transition from facility-based services to integrated employment.

“We wanted to offer something for everyone,” Robb said. “And while we covered a lot of ground, it all came back to how we can make integrated employment the first informed option for all working-age Georgians, regardless of their disability, and how we truly can support everyone who wishes to work.”

The keynote speaker who kicked off the conference was David Hoff, a National Public Policy Expert at the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. Throughout his career, he has an extensive background in working with public systems and community

agencies to enhance employment outcomes for people with disabilities. A primary focus of his work is on organizational and systems change to improve employment outcomes, with a particular emphasis on public policies and their impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

A large part of accomplishing the mission of integrated employment is teamwork, said GVRA Executive Director Sean Casey. And this conference, he said, will do much to mobilize those efforts.

“GVRA adopted the value that everyone can work. To realize that vision, we have to make sure that everyone has the tools to work,” Casey said.

Cohosted by GVRA, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Georgia Association for Persons in Supported Employment, the conference will be followed by future educational sessions with individuals with disabilities and various stakeholders.

“This is the first collaboration and working conference in Georgia centered around supporting individuals with disabilities in competitive integrated employment,” said organizer Crystal Perry. “We’re excited about the future possibilities.”

The event was sponsored by Easter Seals of East Georgia, the Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports, Goodwill of North Georgia, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Nobis Works.





The First Paycheck



How one client came to succeed

Jameisha Burden is a 22 year old participant in Easter Seals West Georgia's Supported Employment Program. She was referred by GVRA on September 23, 2016.

Jameisha has spent the last four years trying to gain meaningful employment. She participated in several training programs and worked with various employment service providers.

"I almost gave up on working," Jameisha said. "This was my last chance".

Her mother agreed saying, "We have been through all the programs and promised the same thing."

But Jameisha didn't give up, and on October 6, she started working with Supported Employment staff at Easter Seals. Her vocational goal was to work in the food service industry or janitorial work in a childcare setting. While interning at Easter Seals, she learned how to use an industrial dishwasher,

prep food and received overall skills needed to work in a kitchen setting.

Jameisha increased her self-confidence, social and communication skills. Easter Seals staff also educated Jameisha on how to complete job applications and interviewing with employers.

Jameisha applied for a part time job with Easter Seals as a Kitchen Assistant, according to Darla Zacharias in Human Resources.

"Jameisha did great on her interview, and I was really impressed," Darla said. Jameisha was offered the job on November 1.

Being employed will open more doors for Jameisha and has helped her to accomplish her goal of employment.

"I can meet people and make my own money," Jameisha said I feel good about having a job".

In Memoriam

Remembering two GVRA employees



Two GVRA employees recently passed away. Please keep their families in your thoughts.



Carlton Wayne Brooks, 55, of Sharpsburg, passed away November 1. He was born in Sparta, Georgia to Dr. O. Wayne and Ruth Brooks, on May 24, 1961. Carlton grew up in Riverdale, Georgia.

Carlton graduated from North Clayton High School. He went on to Mercer University and to the University of Kentucky, where he received his Master's degree in Counseling.

Carlton created the brain injury program and was director over the dorms in Warm Springs, Georgia. He was a certified Rehabilitation Counselor. He was working at the Newnan office when he passed away.

Carlton is survived by his wife, Michelle Brooks; children, Stacy Brooks, Andi Brooks, and Marcus Brooks, all of Sharpsburg; mother, Ruth Mowell Brooks of Fayetteville; brother, Anthony and Melanie Brooks of Fayetteville; nephew, Zac and Meg Brooks; niece, Danielle Brooks; mother-in-law, Venetta Carter of Newnan; sister-in-law, Teresa Hettermann of Newnan, and Charlene and Tommy Stevens of Hapeville; and several cousins. He is preceded in death by his father, Dr. O. Wayne Brooks.

Bobby Lee Seymour, 71, of Warm Springs, died Tuesday, November 1 at West Georgia Medical Center in LaGrange.

Bobby was born June 17, 1945 in Ocilla, GA the son of Robert James Seymour and Nora Lee Tucker Seymour.

He attended Georgia Southern and the University of Tennessee but ultimately earned both his undergraduate and Master's Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling from Troy State.

He moved to Warm Springs in 1971 to take a position with First American Bank and soon after joined the staff at the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation. Bobby retired from the institute as a Medical Rehabilitation Counselor after 30 years of service.

He was also a very active member of Trinity United Methodist Church, the Meriwether County Rotary Club and the Manchester Lions Club. During his retirement, he was most



passionate about attending the activities of his grandchildren of whom he was very proud.

He also enjoyed being a partner in the family soap business the past 16 years.

Mr. Seymour is survived by his wife of 50 years, Linda Seymour of Warm Springs; his sons, Shane Seymour of Gainesville, GA, Shad Seymour and his wife, Kim of Thomaston; five grandchildren, Harper, Mitchell, Courson, Adyson and Grayson.



“A focus of this organization is ... We want to make sure you have the skill sets to climb as high as you want. If you want to be a VP of marketing or a partner at a law firm, you can do it.” ~ Executive Director Sean Casey

Save the Date

Calendar of Events

Don't miss out on these upcoming opportunities!

December

Georgia Association for Positive Behavioral Support Conference

Nov. 30—Dec. 1

Infinite Energy Center

Duluth, GA 30097

Georgia Assistive Technology in Education (GATE) 2016 Seminar

Friday, December 9

8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Georgia Tech Student Center

Exhibit Hall in 3rd Floor Grand Ballroom

Atlanta, GA 30313

GVRS Board Meeting

December 14

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

200 Piedmont Ave. SE

Atlanta, GA 30334

Roosevelt Warm Springs Graduation

December 15

1 p.m.

6135 Roosevelt Highway

Warm Springs, GA 31830

January

Georgia Winter Institute 2017

Jan. 22-25

Columbus Convention and Trade Center

Columbus, GA 31901



For three days in October, GVRA staff and production crews from Broadcast Solutions, a videography firm, were on hand at Roosevelt Warm Springs to film several short promotional videos.

The purpose of these videos is twofold. Not only will they provide a virtual tour of the RWS campus, but they'll also shed light on the various vocational programs and certifications available there.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for us to

showcase what some people call a ‘best kept secret,’” said GVRA Marketing and Communications Manager Robin Folsom. “There’s so much good work being done here, and it’s important to get the word out.”

The videos are currently being edited, but keep an eye out for them in late 2016 or early 2017.

In the meantime, check the GVRA website and Facebook pages for audio of some of those interviews.

Disability Etiquette



With last month being National Disability Employment Awareness Month, it's important to remember the kind of etiquette one should have when interacting with a person with a disability. While most of us take these tips for granted, they serve as good guidelines and should be shared with those who perhaps don't have regular contact with the disability community.

General Behavior

A wheelchair, cane, or any other assistive device used to help a person with a disability is considered part of their personal space and should never be leaned on, picked up, or touched.

When in doubt about offering assistance to a person with a disability, ask "may I help you with that?" If they need help, they will accept it. If they do not, do not take offense. Maybe they are learning a new technique for completing a task, or maybe they just want to see if they can do it. *Never* just help without asking.

Treat adults in a manner befitting adults, regardless of their disability. Call a person by his or her first name only when extending familiarity to all others present. Do not patronize people with disabilities by patting them on the head or hand, or by talking to them in baby talk. Reserve this sign of affection for children and pets.

Conversation

Speak directly to a person with a disability, rather than through a companion who may be along.

Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later" or "Got to be running along," that seem to relate to the person's disability.

To get the attention of a person who has a

hearing impairment, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and in a normal tone to establish if the person can read your lips. Not all people with hearing impairments can read lips. Those who do will rely on your facial expressions and other body language to help in understanding. Show consideration by facing the light source and keeping your hands and food away from your mouth when speaking. Shouting won't help the person understand you, but you might ask if pen and paper would help.

When talking to a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, place yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level to spare both of you a stiff neck. Grab a chair and sit with that person while you talk. Standing over someone in a wheelchair or of short stature causes you both to feel uncomfortable, as well as unnecessary back and neck pain.

When greeting someone with a significant loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. Say, for example, "On my right is John Miller." When conversing in a group, remember to say the name of the person to whom you are speaking to give a vocal cue. Speak in a normal tone of voice, indicate when you move from one place to another, and let it be known when the conversation is at an end.

Give whole, unhurried attention when you're talking to a person who has difficulty speaking. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. Be patient rather than try to speak for the person or fill in the gaps. When necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, or a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having trouble doing so. Repeat what you understood. The person's reaction will clue you in on whether you understood correctly. Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat the parts

you did not understand.

Common Courtesies

Offer assistance to a person with a disability if you feel like it, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help, and listen to any instructions the person may want to give to best help you both.

When giving directions to a person in a wheelchair, walking on crutches, or someone who uses a cane, please consider distance, weather conditions, and physical obstacles such as stairs, curbs, and steep hills.

Use specifics such as “go left a hundred feet” or “go right two yards” when directing a person with a visual impairment.

Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to get things done or said. Let the person set the pace in walking or talking.

When planning events involving people with disabilities consider their needs ahead of time. If an insurmountable barrier exists, let them know about it prior to the event.

Portrayal

Never use the word “handicapped.” Like many terms that refer to minorities, the word itself is not the problem, but the negativity that has been attached to it. At the least it denotes a problem or a burden. At worst it denotes incapability. Also, a parking space, an entrance, or a restroom may be “accessible,” but should not be called “handicapped.”

Place the person *before* the disability out of respect for their individual uniqueness and worth. Use “person with a disability” or “my friend who uses a wheelchair” rather than “disabled person” or “disabled individual.”

Because a person is not a condition, avoid referring to an individual by the condition he or she has, such as “post-polio,” a “cerebral palsy” or an “epileptic.” Say, instead, a person who...“has/had polio,” “has cerebral palsy,” or “has spina bifida,” etc.

When writing about people with disabilities,

choose words that carry positive, non-judgmental connotations. Avoid words such as the following:

Victim — Instead use “person who has/person who experienced/person with...”

Cripple/Crippled/The Crippled — Instead use “person with a disability/individual with a disability caused by or as a result of...”

Afflicted By/Afflicted With — Instead use “has (such and such) disability.”

Invalid — This word literally means “not valid.” Instead use “person who has a disability...”

Wheelchair Bound — Instead, “the person uses a wheelchair.”

Unfortunate, Pitiful, Poor, Deaf And Dumb, Crip, Deformed, Blind As A Bat and any other words or clichés that are judgmental or stereotyping — There are *no* replacements for these.

Remember to depict the typical achiever, as well as the newsworthy achiever. Emphasize the uniqueness and worth of all individuals rather than the differences. Avoid using “normal” unless referring to statistical norms or averages, but not as a label for a person with a disability. The word “typical” is more widely accepted. What is normal anyway?

The truth is that we all have abilities and disabilities, and it’s important to recognize that. These are the things that make us all unique, the things that make us individuals, the things that make us ourselves.

Remember, not everyone is as familiar with these tips, and when you encounter someone is behaving badly, use the opportunity to educate him or her about the proper disability etiquette. Many people don’t realize they’re saying or doing anything wrong and will gladly take notice and change their behavior in the future.

A portrait of Katie Womick, a woman with long, wavy, reddish-brown hair and blue eyes, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a red lace top. The background is a soft-focus green and yellow bokeh.

A New Addition

Katie Womick has been named by the Governor's Office as the new Deputy Director of External Affairs. Previously she served as the Policy and Legislative Affairs Coordinator in Gov. Deal's office, In that role, Womick managed the day to day operations of the Policy and Legislative Affairs team. She also served as the liaison for the Georgia Children's Cabinet, working with the First Lady and state agency leaders to identify state strategic priorities in child welfare and juvenile justice issues and develop initiatives in response. Prior to joining the policy team, she worked in the Governor's Scheduling and Constituent Services Offices, as well as for Emory University. Womick graduated from Emory University where she studied political science and predictive health. A native of Roswell, she currently resides in Atlanta.

Honor lies in honest toil.

—Grover Cleveland

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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