

Self Determination: Providing the Tools for Success

Liz Persaud
Michael Leverett

AGENDA

- Define and Explore Success
- The Importance of Self-Advocacy for the disAbility Community
- Considering Strategies & Solutions to Accomplishing Your Goals
- A Word about Language
- Define and Explore Assistive Technology
- What You can Do!

Why Are We Here Today?

- Master Our Skills!
- Expand Our Knowledge and
- Build Stronger Bridges to Create an amazing, Inclusive and United Classroom and Community!

Tools for Life

Georgia's Federal AT Act Program

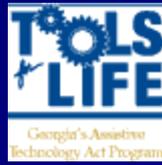
- Georgia Department of Labor / Vocational Rehabilitation
- Developed the Georgia's Plan for AT
 - Designed to Increase Access to and Acquisition of AT
 - Not just knowing about AT, but how to get it
- Serve individuals of all ages & all disabilities in Georgia
 - Over 30,000 thru various activities throughout the year
- TFL Network - Assistive Technology Resource Centers, FODAC, The CFII
- www.gatfl.org - 12,000 unique visitors a month

Tools for Life: Mission

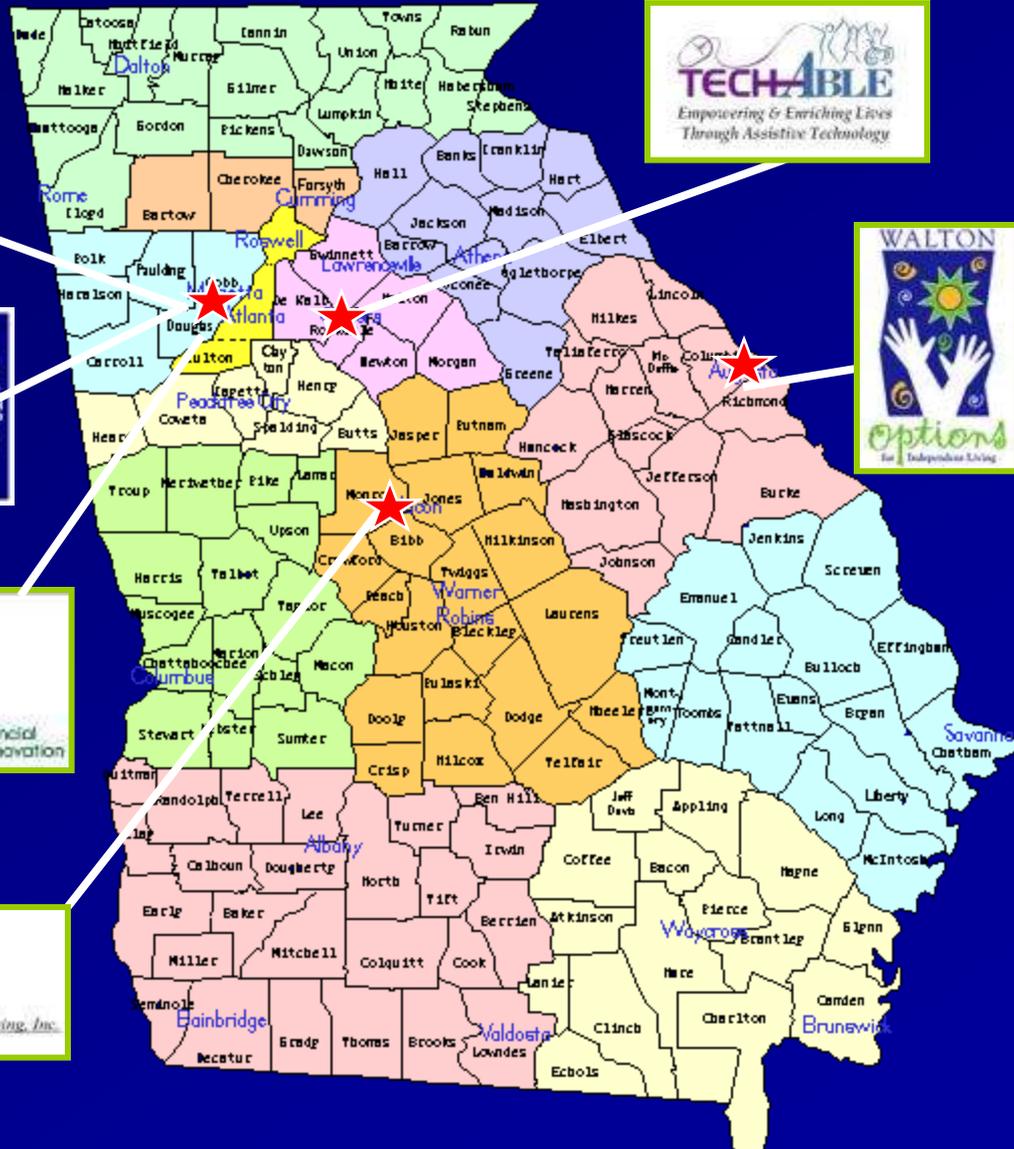


Tools for Life increases access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services for Georgians of all ages and disabilities so they can live, learn, work, and play independently in the communities of their choice.

Tools for Life Network



- AT Lending Library (try before you buy)
- AT Evaluations & Training (focus on the individual)
- AT Demos – Promote Choice
- Resource and Referral (Assistance)
- AT Funding Assistance (CFII)
- DME Reuse (FODAC)



Your Assistive Technology Resource Center Serving Macon and SW Georgia



170 College Street

Macon, GA 31201-1656

(478) 741-1425

www.disabilityconnections.com

Director: Jerilyn Leverett

Guiding Principles

- We – Collectively – are Brilliant & Can find an Innovative Path and Create Brighter Futures
- We must Think, Live and Act from a place of Abundance – We have enough time, money, resources...
- We Must Focus on Abilities!
- You have the Power to make the Difference!

Guiding Principle

Over 54,000,000 individuals in the United States have disabilities that affect their ability to:

- see,**
- hear,**
- communicate,**
- reason,**
- walk, or**
- perform other basic life functions.**

Guiding Principle

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to -

- (A) live independently;
- (B) enjoy self-determination and make choices;
- (C) benefit from an education;
- (D) pursue meaningful careers; and
- (E) enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society in the United States.

Discovering Personal Genius:

- A plan-full approach that reveals life themes;
- That presents a path of Discovery;
- That begs Investigation;
- That creates Options;
- That breeds Innovation & Success in personal, educational and career development

– Griffin - Hammis

Questions to Consider

- How did You get to this Point?
- Where are You Headed?
 - Got a Map?
- What do You Consider to be Success?
- What is Your Vision for Your Future?
- What is Our Collective Vision for the Future?
- Who is in or needs to be in Your Circle of Support?

Consider this

- My Success relied on:
 - Developing a Vision for My Future
 - Created a List (Vision Board)
 - Personal Goals
 - Strong Relationship with my Family
 - Volunteer
 - Build an accessible garden
 - Nationally recognized speaker
 - Buy a House
 - Educational Goals
 - College / Masters
 - Learn more about Distance Learning
 - Career Goals
 - Help people through technology (Tools for Life)

What is Advocacy?

- **What Is an Advocate?**
- An advocate is a person who argues for a cause, a supporter or defender. One that pleads on another's behalf.
- **The Advocate Performs Several Functions**
 - Supports, helps, assists and aids
 - Speaks and pleads on behalf of others
 - Defends and argues for people or causes
 - Problem solves and finds solutions agreeable to both sides

What is Self-Advocacy?

- Developing self-knowledge is the first step in self-advocacy skills. Learning about one's self involves the identification of learning styles, strengths and weakness, interests, and preferences.
- Self-advocacy refers to an individual's ability to:
 - effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights.
 - It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions. (VanReusen et al., 1994)

What is Self-Advocacy?

- Self-advocacy is not a new concept in disability services. Enabling and empowering students to direct their own lives has been an underpinning of federal legislation for some time.
 - For example, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title 1, Vocational Rehabilitation Program, describes the philosophy of independent living as including consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy, in order to maximize the leadership empowerment, independence, and productivity of persons with disabilities.

Activities to Develop Self-Advocacy Skills

- It is important that self-advocacy be recognized as a critical component of transition if the ultimate goal of transition-independence-is to be achieved.
 - Explaining their own disability
 - Practice disclosing
 - Practice interviewing
 - Assistive Technology Day
 - Learning about Famous people with disabilities
 - Learning about Myths

Famous People with Disabilities

- **Beethoven:** Composer: Was deaf when he composed his 9th symphony.
- **Walt Disney:** had a learning disability.
- **Edison:** Had a learning disability. He couldn't read until he was twelve years old and had a very difficult time writing even when he was older.
- **Albert Einstein:** Mathematician/Physicist: Had a learning disability and did not speak until age 3. He had a very difficult time doing math in school. It was very hard for him to express himself through writing.
- **Goya:** Spanish painter (1746-1828): At age 46, an illness left him deaf. He went on to create the most famous Spanish art of the 19th century.
- **Alexander Graham Bell:** had a learning disability.

Famous People with Disabilities

- **Stephen Hawking:** physicist/mathematician has Lou Gehrig Disease and is in a wheelchair. He needs a computer to speak.
- **Milton:** English Author/poet (1608-1674): He became blind at age 43. He went on to create his most famous epic, Paradise Lost.
- **President Roosevelt:** At age 39, his legs were paralyzed by polio. He became governor of New York state and was elected president four times.
- **Harriett Tubman:** Abolitionist (1830-1913): As a child she was struck by an overseer. The blow fractured her skull and resulted in narcolepsy for the rest of her life. She rescued hundreds of slaves on the underground railroad.
- **Woodrow Wilson:** U.S. President from 1913-1921. Had a learning disability - dyslexia.

You are Among Greatness!

The following list, a small sample of famous people with disabilities, proves the point:

- Ray Charles
- Helen Keller
- Tchaikovsky
- Agatha Christie
- Mel Tillis
- Winston Churchill
- George Lucas
- Leo Tolstoy
- Charles Darwin
- Henri Matisse
- Alexander the Great
- Handel
- Renoir
- Muhammad Ali
- August Rodin
- Hans Christian Anderson
- Steven Hawking
- Charles Dickens
- Toulouse-Lautrec
- Emily Dickenson
- Michelangelo
- Harriet Tubman
- Robert Dole
- John Milton
- Vincent Van Gogh
- Dostoevsky
- Sir Isaac Newton
- Franklin Roosevelt
- Beethoven
- Babe Ruth
- Homer
- Sir Walter Scott
- James Earl Jones
- Leonardo da Vinci
- Albert Einstein
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- George Washington
- George Patton
- Robin Williams
- Woodrow Wilson
- Virginia Woolf
- Goya
- Itzhak Perlman
- Lord Byron
- George Bernard Shaw
- Barbara Jordan
- Julius Caesar
- Robert Louis Stevenson

Excerpted from: "The Inclusive Corporation" by Griff Hogan

Example of Myths About Self-Advocacy Activity

- Myth #1 - It's better to avoid the label "disability" because such labels are ultimately damaging to the student's self-esteem.
- Few would argue that students benefit from being labeled. However, if students have not faced their disability to some degree, they most likely do not know their rights as a person with a disability, or what specific accommodations are tailored to their specific needs.

Myth #1 Practices

- Know how to describe your learning disability, as well as your specific academic strengths and weaknesses to a variety of different audiences.
- Begin to accept the term "disability" as a description of difficulties. Do not let it determine your identity.
- Sample accommodations appropriate to your disability based on information in your diagnostic report. Try out different accommodations and then decide which ones work for you.
- Read about other people with disabilities who are successful.
- Join a support group for students with disabilities on your campus, or start one!
- Seek a balance academically and socially

Example of Myths About Self-Advocacy Activity

- Myth #2 - When students encounter a very difficult academic situation, it's best to let their parents take over.
- While parents had to be strong advocates in many instances, it is the students' responsibility to act on their own behalf. This allows students the opportunity to learn to problem solve, to draw on their own resources of independence and to seek the assistance of support staff, if needed.

Myth #2 Practices

- Parents can join support groups in their area
- Parents cannot be in charge of adult life
- Realize that the most valuable lesson a student can learn as they are on the threshold of adulthood is learning about the consequences of their actions.
- Above all, a student with a disability needs to become comfortable with asking for help from those most able to be effective in meeting their needs

Consider this -

- My Success relied on
 - Knowing Myself
 - Self-Exploration
 - Who Are You?
 - Learning Style
 - What is Your Learning Style?
 - Honestly Exploring –
 - What do I want to Do When I Grow Up?
 - What are my Dreams?

You are Among Greatness!

Business executives who pay great sums for consultants to teach them to “think out of the box” would do well to observe the habitually creative thinkers in their midst – people with disAbilities.

You are Among Greatness!

The necessity of addressing mundane problems with creative solutions has likely prepared many people with disAbilities to be innovative in more complex areas, including the challenges faced by business.

Consider this -

- My Success relied on
 - Failing
 - I learned More from My “Failures” sometimes than my “successes”
 - Give yourself room to fail – and Grow from the experience
 - Evaluate & Evolve!

Success in the affairs of life often serves to hide one's abilities, whereas adversity frequently gives one an opportunity to discover them.

~ Horace

Making the Connection between Our Language and Attitudes...

Consider this -

- My Success relied on
 - Communication about My disAbility
 - Understanding My disAbility
 - Language is Powerful
 - Talking with Roommates, Partners, Professors and Employers about my specific disAbilities
 - And Listening
 - Understanding My Weaknesses
 - Understanding My Strengths

The Power of Language

- **Language is continually evolving**, and that includes language related to people with disabilities. Staying current is important, not to show that you are "politically correct" but to communicate effectively and with respect.

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

Mark Twain

What is Value-Laden Language?

- What you say and write may enhance the dignity of people with disabilities or inadvertently reflect stereotypes and negative attitudes.

Some words and phrases don't recognize the broad range of capabilities of people with disabilities. People with disabilities don't need or want to be pitied, nor should they be deemed "courageous" or "special" as they accomplish daily activities or work.

Value-Laden Language

- **Promotes**
 - **Distance**
 - **Stereotypes**
 - **Pigeon-holes**

- **Reduces sense of:**
 - **Self-worth**
 - **Power**
 - **Self-direction**

Value-Laden Language Promotes Distance

- We vs. They
- Good vs. Bad
- Strong vs. Weak
- High vs. Low (expectation)
- Sick vs. Well
- Superior vs. Inferior

Value-Laden Language Promotes Distance

- Abnormal
- Afflicted
- Burdened
- Defect
- Deformity
- Maimed
- Palsied
- Spastic
- Stricken with
- Sufferer
- Victim
- Invalid

Value-Laden Language

What does the word
"Handicapped"
mean?

Value-Laden Language

- "Handicapped" is an archaic term (it's no longer used in any federal legislation) that evokes negative images of pity, fear, and more.
- A legendary origin of the "H-word" refers to a person with a disability begging with his "cap in his hand."

Making the Connection...



A change in Language and Attitude can
change everything!



Considering
Assistive
Technology:

What Works
for the
Individual

Assistive Technology Matching: A Team Approach

- ✓ The Person with the disAbility
- ✓ Circle of Support – Family of Choice
- ✓ Case Managers
- ✓ Technologist
- ✓ Occupational Therapist
- ✓ Speech & Language Pathologist
- ✓ Physical Therapist
- ✓ Engineer

Consider this -

- My Success relied on
 - Building win-win relationships
 - Establishing an ever growing solid circle of support
 - Receiving and providing support
 - Diversify your Circle of Friends and Acquaintances
 - It sometimes is “Who you know”
 - BALANCE - Social Life, Studies and Professional

Staying off the FAST Track!

- ✓ Frustration
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ Tension

Assistive Technology & Self-Advocacy

- Current support for assistive technology also arises from a growing understanding of its positive effects. Greater independence and relief from anxiety are benefits for people with disabilities who use tools to free them from the drudgery imposed by their disability:
 - "Sometimes a simple handheld spelling checker relieves more anxiety than hours of therapy"
- Other writers have noted a heightened sense of self-esteem in students with disabilities who gain competency with technology, a reduction of reliance on others and a move toward independence, and a regaining of a sense of control leading to vocational success.

AT & Self-Advocacy are Working!

- In 1999, 12.8% of full-time college freshmen reported having some form of disability, compared with 2.6% in 1978.
- The passage of Section 504 "E" of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandated accessibility to postsecondary education for students with disabilities and required postsecondary institutions to provide "auxiliary aids," such as taped texts, to students with disabilities.
- P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 101-406 mandated special education programs and services for elementary and secondary students with disabilities; as a result, more of these students are completing high school and view attending college, with the assistance of support services, as the next logical and viable step.

Why Assistive Technology?

- For a person without a disability, technology makes things easier....
- For a person with a disability, technology makes things possible.



Examples of AT

Consider this -

- My Success relied on
 - Assistive Technology!!
 - Try before you buy – Explore!
 - Training
 - Think across environments –
 - Laptop, Kindle, iPod, iPad, Smartphone
 - Organization – Learn Your Style
 - Evaluations – Hot Button
 - Working from No/Old/Incorrect info
 - Don't trust everything you read & hear
 - Fight for AT Evaluation/Assessment
 - Be the primary person speaking for your needs at your IEP



“Technology gives people the opportunity to move about in their environment, communicate, and be more independent, which allows people to see us as more of an equal as opposed to someone they have to take care of.”

~ Judith Heumann

Discovering Your Personal Genius

- Get to Know Yourself
- Plan for Your Success
- Begin with the End in Mind
- Communicate
- Listen
- When things get off track - Evaluate and Evolve
- Explore & Use Assistive Technology
- Celebrate Successes!
- Continue to Grow and Discover your Personal Genius!

If a person does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.

- Henry David Thoreau

Questions?

Contact

Liz Persaud
Tools for Life
Liz@gatfl.org

Michael Leverett
Disability Connections
LaneMLL@aol.com

DISCLAIMER

Tools for Life is a result of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended in 2004. It is a program of the Georgia Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation Program, funded by grant #H224C030009 of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Department of Education. The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.