Joy A Shabazz Center for Disability Rights held its 2017 Eat Meet and Greet (EMG) disability training workshop. Every year the Center invites people with disabilities in the five-county service area to come together to learn about disability related issues. This year the theme was "Independence through Gainful Employment", a fitting topic since persons with disabilities are not usually given the job opportunities afforded to people without disabilities. Even with laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that ensures equal treatment for the disabled in hiring practices, people with disabilities continue to find it difficult acquiring good full-time positions with benefits.

This EMG workshop offered inspiring speeches by persons with significant disabilities who are currently employed. Marlene Mesot, Dennis Burgess and Aaron Shabazz, four people with significant disabilities spoke about their experiences finding and maintaining employment. Additionally, Pat Davis, a benefits specialist spoke about how Social Security benefits affects people with disabilities who want to work but fear losing their SSI or SSDI if there recently acquired job doesn't work out. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Brooke Hill gave the final speech about the various types of services offered by VR.

As always, there was plenty of good music, door prizes an opportunity to network between participants who are service providers and consumers.

The consumer responses were all positive with some stating that this was the best EMG ever.
Consumer Lynn spoke about finding employment as a person with visual impairment.

Board Member, Claire Stone, (rt.) and others observe as Aaron Shabazz, Ex. Dir., welcomes guests to our 20th Annual Eat, Meet, & Greet.

Aaron and Benita along with Public Awareness Coordinator, Dennis Burgess who spoke about being employed at JAS Center.

Marlene spoke about finding employment as a person with visual impairment even with a Master’s degree and working with JAS Center.

Laura, Assistant Director, along with Pamela, Disability Advocate.

Keynote Speaker, Pat Davis, Benefits Specialist.

Keynote Speaker, Brooke Hill, VR. Rehab. Counselor.

Laura announcing door prizes with Pam & Aaron.
No Pets/Service Animals Allowed

On a nice sunny comfortable day a person with a significant disability, a double amputee, decided to spend part of the day shopping at a local strip mall. While there she notices the In Mode 21 beauty supply store where she can purchase hair supplies. Before she enters the establishment she sees a woman with a service dog who is turned away and a sign on the door that states “no pets/service animals allowed – no exceptions” immediately below that in bold letters it further states “you’ll be asked to leave”. Interesting enough, her astonishment for this blatant disregard for the rights of persons with disabilities to have equal access to this establishment did not end there. When she began to enter the store she was quickly turned away presumably because she was in a wheelchair. She contacted Joy A Shabazz Center for Disability Rights and we immediately took action. Stay tuned for the conclusion of this story.

The point to be made here is that regardless of the Americans with Disabilities Act, The Rehabilitation Act and the myriad of disability rights laws there remain people and institutions that are defiant. They have a us versus them mentality and do not view people with significant disabilities as people first. It’s up to us disability advocates to combat this mentality and make these people comply with the law, whether they comply willingly or unwillingly. All I have to say to these people is “game on”.

The late Jerry Lewis brought joy and laughter to millions of Americans and his unyielding efforts to cure muscular dystrophy is legendary. However, his Labor Day telethon spawned controversy among many of the disability rights activists and his passing should spark a nationwide conversation about the treatment of persons with disabilities. The main objection to the telethon was the portrayal of persons with disabilities as objects of pity and did not focus on the fight for equal rights.

Lewis believed that if you are a wheelchair user then you should stay in your home. He could have made a significant contribution to the disabil-
JAS Center for Disability Rights
Assistive Technology Program

To better serve our consumers Joy A Shabazz Center for Disability Rights has acquired assistive technology items that we want to share with the disability community. Persons with significant disabilities in need of assistive technology (AT) will be allowed to take the equipment out on loan. First they must be evaluated by the AT specialist to determine if we have the right AT item that meet their needs. If the item is what is needed, consumers will be allowed to continue using the item for a limited time while they seek the means to purchase what they require.

In some cases Joy A Shabazz Center may assist in purchasing the item, either paying for it in full or part depending upon the cost of the item and availability of funds. A few of the items we have available are:

- Portable Ramp
- Standard Transfer Board
- Beasley Transfer Board
- Talking Watch for Persons Who Are Blind/Visually Impaired
- Telephone for Persons who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Cane for Persons who are Blind/Visually Impaired
- Utensil Holder
- Handheld Mobility Reacher
- Pocket Go Talk

Assistant director Laura Miller-Washington, who is also the assistive technology (AT) specialist oversees the program. You can contact her at (336) 272-0501 or Laura.shabazzcenter@Gmail.com
SCAT Ridership Notification

Hello SCAT Riders. Beginning Tuesday, September 5, GTA will use new phone technology that will call you 15 minutes ahead of your van’s arrival. It will also be used to notify you of on-time or late arrivals, or to confirm no-shows. This is a separate system from the SCAT Connect system used for general rider, service and meeting notifications. As a rider of SCAT, you will be automatically included in this automated system using the contact numbers on file for you. If you wish to change this number, or to opt out of the calling system, please call SCAT reservations at 336-333-6589. We hope that this new system will make travel on SCAT easier than ever. As always, thank you for writing SCAT.

Deputy Director Receives Recognition

Deputy Director, Benita Williams, received a certificate of recognition for distinguished services to the Greensboro Mayor’s Committee for Persons with Disabilities. Benita has served on the committee for the past four years; two of which she has served as vice-chair. Benita has served on the scholarship committee, fund raising committee, and one of her favorite, assisting with the annual Shopper’s Day event. Most recently, Benita helped train volunteers for a new program called Access Greensboro; a program to showcase restaurants in downtown Greensboro that are creating an ease of access for persons with disabilities. Benita stated, “this is such a great honor, and I am proud to serve alongside this wonderful group. Thank you to the committee and to Mayor Vaughn for this acknowledgement.”

Dennis Burgess on Jerry Lewis

Continued from page 3

ity community by campaigning for accessible transportation, accessible housing and more job opportunities but sadly this did not happen. One may ask, “What is wrong with wanting to find a cure”? Nothing at all but it must be understood that many persons with disabilities are very happy just like they are and find it extremely offensive for the able-bodied community to pity them. While Jerry Lewis may have had the best of intentions, his message perpetuated the stereotype of persons with disabilities as being less fortunate and lacking the ability to be fulfilled.

Universal Design

On a recent vacation, our plans were thwarted because we rented a condo that we were told was accessible, but when we arrived my husband, who is a wheelchair user could not get through the bedroom nor bathroom doors. After a period of frustration, we were told they actually had no accessible condos available and offered us a full refund. While the refund was proper, we would have much rather spent our money and had a good time; hence the bid for universal design.

—Disappointed vacationer
NOT A BAD LIFE

Not a Bad Life, by Earl Dennis Burgess is a true story of a man with significant Cerebral Palsy growing up in a small town in western North Carolina. It also tells about the struggle he encounters with pursuing a college education and his fight to have an independent life. You will learn about how Burgess finally achieved his dreams of independence and employment. The book is available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

Contact Us

Learn more about Joy A Shabazz Center for Disability Rights and the services we provide:

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