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ALABAMA DISABILITIES ADVOCACY PROGRAM
March 13, 2015

The Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP) is part of the nation's federally-funded protection and advocacy (P&A) system. ADAP provides legal services to Alabamians with disabilities to protect, promote and expand their rights. ADAP's vision is one of a society in which persons with disabilities are valued and exercise self-determination through meaningful choices, and have equality of opportunity. ADAP is part of the [National Disability Rights Network \(NDRN\)](#).

Find us on the Web
www.adap.net

In Memory of Jeff Ridgeway



One of our state's most powerful and energetic self-advocates has passed away.

For those who knew him, Jeff Ridgeway was a zealous advocate, deeply committed to the causes he advocated, and a tireless worker. Alabamians with disabilities will benefit for decades to come because of his work.

Jeff was born in Athens, Alabama, in 1964. Though he was born with a heart defect and other disabilities and "people didn't know what to do with him," he graduated from West Limestone High School ("Home of the Wildcats") in 1983. Even so, his family did not view work as an option and he lived at home for eight years after he graduated.

Jeff and his sister, a teacher, moved to Mobile a year after his mother died. After an unsuccessful search for an adequate day program, Jeff began work at Goodwill. At first, he was identified as a person who "could not succeed in competitive employment." That just made him mad and within two years Goodwill staff determined Jeff was "employable."

Ridgeway said part of his life's work has been to help others see people with disabilities simply as people. "We walk different. We talk different. We use canes and wheelchairs. We use assisted devices, and that's all they see. They forget each one of them is a proud U.S. citizen and so am I," Ridgeway said. "Why are we so willing to discriminate against somebody who happens to be a

little bit different instead of understanding and working with them?"

Jeff applied for a job and was hired at the Azalea Road Bruno's in Mobile in 1995. He ended up working in two Bruno's locations for 15 years. This is just one of many of Jeff's accomplishments in the world of disabilities. Jeff believed until the end of his days that his self-advocacy was not about him, but about all persons with disabilities. As Jeff put it, "everyone should have the chance to live, work, and experience life."

Jeff was awarded the Ricky Wyatt Lifetime Advocacy Award by ADAP at a ceremony held in Madison, Alabama, on July 17, 2015. Presenting the award, James Tucker, ADAP's Executive Director, praised Jeff's self-advocacy efforts, noting that Jeff had advocated for the rights of Alabamians with disabilities for decades. According to Tucker, Jeff's tenacity and unwavering spirit powered his ability to be a strong self-advocate.

In July 2012, Ridgeway spent weeks gathering grassroots support across the state to defeat a zoning effort in Northport that he feared would push persons with disabilities out of the city. The ordinance -- which came as the state was closing the W.D. Partlow Developmental Center in neighboring Tuscaloosa -- sought to limit the number of group homes in Northport. Ridgeway's efforts shone a spotlight on the ordinance which eventually was abandoned.

Jeff spent several years advocating against the use of the "r-word." His advocacy, along with others, led to a respectful language bill that was passed by the Alabama Legislature in 2009. His efforts also led the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation to change its name to the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Jeffrey Wayne Ridgeway, 50, passed way on February 1, 2015. One of his last comments was: "The good Lord can call me home whenever he wants, but until then I've got work to do." Those closest to him know he did the work he was called to until the end of his days.

ADAP wishes to express our condolences to Jeff's family. Jeff was preceded in death by his mother, Pat Ridgeway, and is survived by his father, Fletcher Ridgeway and wife, Carolyn; one brother, Joey Ridgeway and wife, Sharon; two sisters, Dana Moody and husband, Micheal, and Jessica Henson and husband, Trent; three step-brothers; six nieces and three nephews.

Those who wish to make a contribution to the Jeff Ridgeway Award Fund at the University of Alabama may do so by designating the contribution to ADAP in Jeff's name. The Award was established in the last year of Jeff's life to recognize the accomplishments of self-advocates in the state. Jeff was the first recipient of the Award just two months before he passed away.

Bring Back the Asylum?

Disability and Civil Rights Advocates Say "No!" and Push For Better Funding of Community Services as the Solution

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law and a growing list of mental health and disability organizations and advocates are expressing strong opposition to a return to the days when people with mental illness and developmental disabilities were unnecessarily segregated in long-term institutions. The idea has been proposed recently in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* and on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*.

The organizations and individual advocates working on behalf of people with disabilities say the proposal amounts to turning back the clock to regressive and failed policies of the past. They call instead for investment in the community services and supports that have been proven effective.

"We have decades of evidence showing that services such as supported housing, mobile crisis, Assertive Community Treatment and peer supports provide more effective treatment than long-term institutionalization," said Bazelon President and CEO Robert Bernstein. "Locking away people with disabilities for life turned out to be bad policy- both for those institutionalized and for society. Individual care is obliterated in large, long-term institutions, which become rampant with use of restraint and seclusion, overuse of drugs, poor treatment and other abuses."

The Bazelon Center is urging the mental health and disability communities to make **their voices heard** in response to the idea of widespread use of long-term institutionalization of people with mental illness and developmental disabilities. Responses are being shared on the Center's web site [here](#).

Public Comments Sought for the SAIL Waiver Renewal Application

The Alabama Medicaid Agency is seeking public comment on its proposal to renew the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) Waiver. The SAIL Waiver provides Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) to disabled adults and those who have specific medical diagnoses, including but not limited to Quadriplegia, Traumatic Brain Injury, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, and other substantial neurological impairments, severely debilitating diseases or rare genetic diseases. The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services serves as the Operating Agency for the SAIL Waiver.

HCBS Waivers provide an alternative to the comprehensive long-term care services delivered in institutional settings by waiving certain Medicaid provisions and allowing these services to be delivered in community settings. HCBS services are provided to protect the health, safety, and dignity of those individuals who are at risk of institutional care.

The proposed **SAIL Waiver renewal application** changes the program to demonstrate compliance to the new HCB setting requirements and incorporate person-centered planning.

Written comments on the SAIL Waiver renewal application will be received from **March 5, 2015 through April 5, 2015**. Individuals must send their comments to Mattie Jackson, Program Manager via mail to: Alabama Medicaid Agency, Long Term Care Division, P.O. Box 5624, Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5624 or by submission via e-mail to mattie.jackson@medicaid.alabama.gov.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month



March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM).

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) is launching "Side-by-Side" - a social media campaign to highlight community inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in everyday life.

Find out how you can participate in the DDAM **#SideBySide** Campaign. Click here: <http://conta.cc/1DXAU9b>

Art and Mental Health

May is National Mental Health Month and two Alabama groups are sponsoring art events to commemorate it.

Alabama Dept. of Mental Health Consumer Art Exhibition

The Alabama Dept. of Mental Health's 2015 Capitol Showcase Consumer Art Exhibition kicks off on May 1 to celebrate National Mental Health Month. The deadline for entries is March 31. If you are an artist who wishes to participate, please see the Call for Entries which can be found on the Dept.'s [website](#). Contact the Dept. with any questions at 334-353-7538.

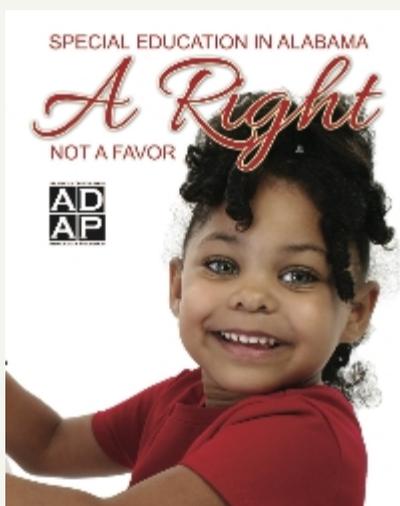
Alabama Youth Move Poster Contest

Alabama Youth Move is sponsoring its annual poster contest to highlight the 2015 theme for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week: "Mental Health Is Fundamental."

The contest is open to youth ages 5-22. Youth should submit original artwork with a mental health awareness theme (bullying, depression, substance abuse, suicide prevention, eating disorders, support services, recovery, etc.). The artwork, which must be done on standard white paper (8X11), is due no later than March 31. The winner will be selected April 1, 2015. For additional information, click [here](#).



Special Education in Alabama: A Right Not a Favor



ADAP's special education parent manual – "Special Education in Alabama: A Right Not a Favor" (RNF) is available to you.

RNF helps families and child advocates understand how to access special education services and ensure that eligible children with disabilities are provided the free, appropriate public education to which they are entitled. The manual is written in lay-friendly terms and is filled with helpful advocacy tips and resources.

Publication of RNF was underwritten by a generous grant from the [Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities](#).

To view the manual on-line, click [here](#). To order copies, click [here](#).



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