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COMMUNITY CURRENTS

Spring 2022

AN EVENING WITH CITIZEN ADVOCACY



On March 24, 2022, the Macon Bibb Citizen Advocacy Board hosted a community event at the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame. Special guest, Mayor Lester Miller, joined more than 70 friends of Citizen Advocacy at the event catered by GROW. Those in attendance listened to the heartfelt struggles experienced by citizens with disabilities and learned how, with strong advocacy and support, our community members experiencing disabilities can engage in a full life.

Through a trusted network, Citizen Advocacy asks, one individual at a time, for advocates to walk alongside another. For some advocates, it may be a temporary relationship; for others, like Judge Pamela White-Colbert (left), it becomes a lifelong commitment.



According to Dr. Kendra Russell, Board Chair, "To be able to host such a wonderful event, post-pandemic, was great and it revealed how important the work is to the community."

Mayor Miller (right) ended the program with his own personal story of triumph and his connection with a protégé. The community was charged to get involved and assist where they can.



"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

— Coretta Scott King

THE HEART OF CITIZEN ADVOCACY: GARY'S GIFT TO ME

After twelve years of friendship, I laid to rest my dearest friend, Gary. He had recovered from Covid, but he was in and out of the hospital with a serious infection and wounds that would not heal. His last days were spent at home with us. I was thankful to be there for Gary and his mother Lois every step of the way. As I sit here reflecting on our friendship, many things come to mind. His smile. Oh, how I am going to miss his smile. To see him smile, he lit up the room. He was a unique person with one of the most joyful spirits of compassion for others. He became someone special in my life, yet he showed me how much he appreciated me. Small moments were big moments to Gary. I would show up every week, and without fail, Gary would announce loudly "Yeah! Chris is here!" I truly mattered to Gary, and boy I hope Gary knew how much he mattered to me.

I was asked by Citizen Advocacy in 2010 to be a friend to Gary and to provide protection and advocacy when needed. His mother who is the bedrock of the family and sole protector wanted more allies in his life. Gary's good heart saw good, even when it was bad. He had not experienced a lot of kindness from others and has even experienced abuse because of having a disability. Over the years I proved my worthiness with building bonds of trust and solidarity with both Gary and Lois.

Gary knew he was cared for and deeply loved. When asked to use one word to describe my relationship with Gary, it was hard to do because there are so many words. But if I had to narrow it down to one, it would be the word "Hope". Having someone there to care because of who you are, you see the world with a glimmer of hope. To identify with another person's situation, you break down walls and barriers inside of you seeing what other people deal with in this world. Gary taught me more about love. He was training and preparing me for something greater. A gift.

Gary's gift to me is his family. Gary was all about family. Our deepest conversations were about family and God. He had unwavering faith. The last time I looked him in the eyes, he was tired, but he trusts me. We had a connection that was a real connection of I get you and you get me too. I knew what Gary wanted me to do. So, since his passing, I go over to his home every Thursday with my guitar for bible study and sing songs with his niece and nephew and to be there for his mom Lois. I'm doing what Gary would want me to do.

I thank Gary for the gift he's given me, I am going to carry out his wishes of family and God. Citizen advocacy is unique, making opportunities for relationships with people meeting one another who would not have met otherwise. That's beautiful.

Board Member Spotlight: Mr. Antwain Deal



Antwain Deal grew up in Macon, GA and graduated from Westside High School. While in high school he was captain of the bowling team, and even won a state championship. After high school he worked for the City of Macon's AmeriCorps program while attending college at Macon State. AmeriCorps is where his love for community truly grew. Antwain was able to spend his time in underserved areas around Macon and make a difference in young peoples' lives.

In 2017, he earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Middle Georgia State University. During his time in college, Antwain was active around Campus. In 2016, he won 1st place in a statewide IIA Internal Audit Competition and was a founding member of Middle Georgia's State University Accounting Association. He also served as Treasure of Internal Audit Association and President of a student organization called B.O.L.D (Brothers of Leadership and Distinction). In addition, he worked as a tutor for Middle Georgia's State University School of Business. After college, Antwain worked for a publicly sold company in the Railcar industry for three years as an accounting controller and internal audit lead. Nowadays, his passions are still focused on community and mentorship, and he believes that MBCA is the best way to make an impact on our communities' quality of life .

NOTES FROM THE CITIZEN ADVOCACY PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Antonio
Lewis-Ross

Community must be at the center of our lives; it is where we will find love and compassion. For over 40 years, Macon Bibb Citizen Advocacy has invited us to discover a deeper meaning of what a loving and compassionate community looks like. It is a blessing to move into this Program Coordinator role and to serve as a conduit for facilitating deep, meaningful relationships between advocates and protégés.

Thanks, Everyone, Who Donated January 2021-December 2021

We especially want to thank you for your on-going support during this time of hopefulness. We could not continue to do this work without the support of grassroots donors and the citizens of Macon who help us meet great people in our community and invite them to become involved in citizen advocacy. We are thankful that you are invested in building a community where all are welcomed in Macon.

INDIVIDUALS

Al Bond
Phillip Bean
James Caldwell
Katina Clay
Barbara Clowers
Ruth Cotton
Judge Verda Colvin
Marnie & Nannette Crowley
Brittany Curry
Lois Daniely
Patricia Donnelly
Charles & Carol Dunn
Bob & Linda Easter
Edgar & Judy Ennis
Donna & Randy Eversole
Laurence Fennelly
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Judge Pam White-Colbert

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The Georgia Advocacy Office

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Commission

“When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves.”

– William Arthur Ward

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

AN INVITATION TO ACTION

Citizen Advocacy is an opportunity to stand by, for and with another person, taking action to ensure a better life and an enrichment of opportunity for a person who may, because they have a disability, have been subject to isolation and segregation, rejection and abuse, poverty and injustice.

Donate online at:

maconbibbcitizenadvocacy.org

or by mail to:

Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy
613 Cherry Street
Macon, Georgia 31201

We welcome and depend on your support!

HOW DOES CITIZEN ADVOCACY WORK?

A valued citizen, who is unpaid and independent of the human service system, is invited by citizen advocacy coordinators into a relationship with a person who is living with a disability and is vulnerable to abuse, neglect, or social isolation. With the coordinator's support, the citizen advocate learns to understand, respond to, and represent that person's interests, as if they were the advocate's own, thus bringing the person's gifts and concerns into the circles of ordinary community life. Friendship, social support, and social change can all emerge from these intentional relationships.

By supporting these ongoing, potentially life-long, relationships, citizen advocacy fosters a community where all people's gift's and talents can be shared and celebrated.

“I have yet to encounter a safety net of laws, rules, regulations, and policies that was any stronger than a single, concerned and engaged person, standing shoulder to shoulder with a person, navigating the daily challenges of life in the community.”

– Clarence Sundram