

MACON BIBB CITIZEN ADVOCACY

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Spring 2021



HOMEOWNERS AT LAST

Gary was born in February 1966 in Greshin, Michigan. He later moved to Macon in 1981 with his mother, Lois. Lois was the only one in Gary's life. Mom worried because Gary sees the good in everyone, he's always complimenting, he's always welcoming, and he never meets a stranger. Because of these gifts, and of having an intellectual disability, Gary has experienced abuse from others and has been taken advantage of. Citizen Advocacy learned of Gary's story and introduced him to Chris.

Chris Riley, a dear friend and a citizen advocate for eleven years, tells a favorite story of how happy it makes him to share a friendship with Gary and his mom, Lois. The advocate experience can be so rewarding and so unique with each person.

Gary and his mom lived together in a place that needed much work to be done before it could be a safe, suitable place to live. Chris tried to help Lois and approached the landlord to address the issues, but the landlord saw no reason to follow through on any of them. Instead, he ultimately raised their rent once again. He just assumed Gary and Lois had no other options, so there was no pressure to fix anything. After much thought, Chris told Lois, "We have to get you into a better place."

Lois agreed, and they began looking right away. It wasn't long before Gary and Lois found the perfect home they could afford with a low-interest mortgage. It was a single-family red brick home, the kind Lois had always dreamed of living in someday. It often happens in citizen advocacy relationships as Chris and Gary have become very close friends -- Chris wanted to help out. Although Chris was not obligated to help financially, he assisted with the down payment without hesitation.

The owner was anxious to sell, therefore negotiated a great price. She also hired a lawyer to draw up a contract that made Gary and Lois comfortable. The deal went through, and they are happily settled in their new home.

"It was the right solution," said Chris. "Lois is the rock of this family, which worries me a little. I want to make sure Gary will always be okay. This is their home, now. No one can ever raise the rent. Their security is always there, and it's a constant source of hope for them."

And hope is something we all need in life.

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

– Coretta Scott King

THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING CONNECTED WHILE PRACTICING SOCIAL DISTANCING

The world was changed last year by the Covid-19 pandemic. It presented disruptions to all aspects of our lives impacting the very essence of our human connectedness. Denying us the simple pleasure of hugging family and friends, eating out, meeting up with networking groups, grocery shopping, going to the movies, and many more. We, in fact, experienced loss, people throughout the United States being hospitalized, the Government extending the closure of public schools, while cities were authorized to stay home with limited movement.

The term “social distancing” impacted the conscious and unconscious way we thought about spending time with people, with one another. Zoom, Skype, Google Duo, Facetime, and GoToMeeting replaced board room meetings and social gatherings as the new normal.

For 40 years, Citizen Advocacy has been a catalyst that empowers citizens to combat the social isolation, social distancing, and separateness experienced every day by people with disabilities in our community. However, now that social distancing, isolation, and separateness are the best ways to keep us all safe,

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

– William Arthur Ward

advocates are getting creative in this new terrain to ensure that some of our most vulnerable citizens are protected and connected.

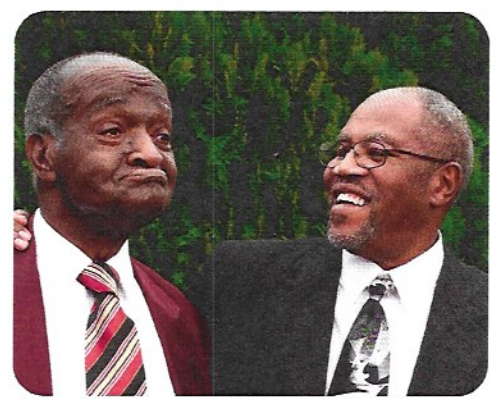
Citizen Advocates thought about “[The Importance of Staying Connected While Social Distancing](#)” and how to offer protection, advocacy, and support to their proteges during this time of seclusion.

Citizen advocates have...

- Visited their protégé who lives in a nursing home “through the window” or the “front glass door” so that their protégé knows they are thinking about them during this time.
- Made a plan with their protégé to make sure they have what they need in case of an emergency, such as grocery shopping and dropping off what is needed on the front porch.
- Sent their proteges cards, letters, and various Amazon packages through the mail.
- Reached out to the services their protégé may depend on-to ensure they are getting the care and service that they need.
- Assumed medical power of attorney on their protégé’s behalf so they will be part of all medical decision-making.
- FaceTime/Zoom with their protégé to stay connected.
- Arranged outdoor walks and front yard visits as another outlet of connection, maintaining 6-feet apart.

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

– Margaret Wheatley



Thanks so much to these donors who donated between January 2019 and March 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

- R. Lars Anderson
- Phillip Bean
- Blue Sky Blue
- Al Bond
- Katina Clay
- Barbara Clowers
- Angie Coggins
- Ruth Cotton
- Judge Verda Colvin
- Marnie & Nannette Crowley
- Lois Daniely
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- Centerhill Baptist Church
- High Street Unitarian Universalist Church
- Lizzie Chapel Baptist Church
- Mt. Vernon Baptist Church
- Swift Creek Baptist Church
- Union Baptist Church

GRANTS/CONTRACTS FOUNDATIONS

- Community Foundation
- The Georgia Advocacy Office
- Macon/Bibb County Commission
- The Griffith Family Foundation
- Peyton Anderson Foundation

MACON/BIBB CITIZEN ADVOCACY, INC

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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.

“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

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 interest’s 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