



**NCCDD Executive Director
Chris Egan**

A Message from Our Executive Director

During the month of November, we are reminded to give thanks. Here at NCCDD, we are incredibly grateful for our Council members and the motivation

for the work we do – the people, families, professionals, caregivers and others who make up North Carolina’s intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) community.

At NCCDD, much progress has been made in this last year for people with I/DD with successes of the programs and initiatives the Council helps fund to the incredible leaders who bring these programs to life. These efforts continue our statewide outreach and connection between those with and without I/DD who continue making this State more inclusive.

Also this month, self-advocate Matt Stafford brought attention to a city fee that required payment for accessible accommodations on private properties in Greensboro. His fight reversed the \$75 charge. It’s great advocacy like this that we are grateful for. Additionally, the disability and business community came together in Charlotte for the NC BLN Fall Conference to learn how we can all work together to bring more people with disabilities into the competitive workforce.

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NCCDD Remembers Michael Mayer

*Our Friend and
NC Disability
Rights Advocate*

Self-Advocate Spotlight: Matt Stafford

Greensboro resident Matt Stafford is on a mission to transform the landscape for people with disabilities in Guilford County. A recent graduate of the Partners in Policymaking Program, Matt has taken his newly formed advocacy skills to the front lines.

His most recent triumph, now known as the Matt Stafford Act, came as a result of his exploration into residential building codes in the Greensboro area. Stafford discovered that the City of Greensboro retained a policy of charging a minimum of \$75 to residents intending to build accessibility features, such as ramps, on residential properties.



Matt Stafford

He vowed to overturn it.

Leaning upon the recognized link between poverty and disability, Stafford presented his case to the Greensboro City Council garnering support from council members such as Tony Wilkinson to amend the statute. After several months of negotiation and bolstering his network,

Stafford addressed the city

council again, convincing members to overturn the statute in an unanimous vote. Under the new act, residents seeking to build ramps on private property are no longer required to pay the fee.

Stafford reflects, “Never assume the system doesn’t work.

Just because you may not be the richest or most well-connected doesn’t mean you can’t get things done.”

Despite the overarching impact of this project for wheelchair users in the Guilford County Area, Stafford is already building on his success as a professional advocate. Now running for the Guilford County District School Board, he has transformed this victory into one of his key platforms. In this new role, Stafford is hoping to draw attention to the discrepancies in education for youth with disabilities and aims, if elected, to address that gap.

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Council Member Spotlight: Kerri Eaker

Navigating the disability and early intervention systems can be a challenge for anyone in our state. This is particularly true for new parents. Kerri Eaker knows this well. As an education outreach coordinator for the Family Support Network, her work is to connect families of people with disabilities to the community and medical resources that will make a significant and positive impact on their quality of life.

For her, this means giving families the tools and education needed to help them find their voice in an environment where listening can be a rarity.



Kerri Eaker

Eaker's own journey with her son took her from being overwhelmed by North Carolina's support system to discovering her own expertise. Her son, Dakota Kirkland, was seven-years-old when he was first diagnosed with Schizo-Affective Disorder. Prior to that, Eaker bounced from doctor to doctor as they proposed various diagnoses that only encapsulated a portion of what her son

was experiencing. It wasn't until a visit to the Park Ridge Hospital that doctors were able to find a diagnosis that worked for Kirkland.

At the time, nearly 20 years ago, there were few resources to support parents find their way through the system. She found that many parents were, like her, putting together what they knew about the system in order to create a patchwork of support for their children.

In her role as education outreach coordinator, Eaker has brought 25-years of personal experience to ensure that other families do not have to go through the same

experience she did. Her emphasis, and much of her work, has been to not only educate parents or individuals with disabilities but also to empower the extended family so that they are better able to support their relative.

Much of this has focused on sibling education and transition. Eaker comments, "the earlier that we can educate siblings and give them the tools that they need to be advocates, the more prepared the family will become. This gives the parents the assurance that their child with a disability will be well-cared for after they are gone."

Eaker suggests that recent NCCDD initiatives on sibling education has been vital in elevating this awareness. Now in its fifth year of offering a transition fair, the Family Support Network has worked to incorporate sibling education into the core of their work by collaborating with the Road to Learning and Earning initiative.

"Throughout it all my motto," Eaker states, "is you can't do at us; you have to do with us."

For more information about the Family Support Network visit: www.fsnn.org

For more information about the Road to Learning and Earning initiative visit: www.rtle.org/family.html

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Charlotte Motor Speedway Hosts 2015 NCBLN Annual Conference

Over 70 people gathered at the Speedway Club at Charlotte Motor Speedway in Concord, NC in October for the 2015 annual fall conference of the North Carolina Business Leaders Network (NCBLN). Focused on the theme “My Disability Is One Part of Who I Am,” attendees heard presentations on how people with disabilities are being hired, mentored and assimilated into businesses across the State.

One of the highlights of the day was a panel discussing “The Challenges Facing People with Disabilities Who Are Looking for a Career.” Panelists included NCCDD member Adonis Brown, Advocations’ Brandon Matthews and Jack Claiborne with Cypress Gardens. Ron Reeve, chair of the NCCDD and NCBLN board member, moderated the panel.



Additional sessions included:

- “Inclusion: Bringing Employees with Disabilities Completely into the Company Workforce” by Katherine Morefield, Employee Relations Manager with Great Wolf Lodge
- “Bringing Technology into the Workplace to Release the Productive Talents of People with Disabilities” with Tammy Pereboom of the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program, who also demonstrated various technologies throughout the day during breaks and lunch.
- “Affinity Programs: How to Succeed” with Amanda Paugh and Tori Benitez, Enterprise Support Services, EY (formerly Ernst & Young)
- “Mentoring Programs Unlock the Talent You’re Looking For” by Donna Taylor, Total Loss Central-Supervisor and MetLife DiverseAbilities Charlotte Chair and Adriana Tolomeo, both with MetLife, moderated by Steve Labour, President and CEO of workABILITY 360, Inc.



- “Developing Apprenticeships for Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Hear What Canteen/Compass Group is Doing with Business ACTS” by Scott Denhard, Regional Vice President of Canteen/Compass Group, with an introduction by Patricia K. Keul, CEO and Founder, Business ACTS.
- “Employer of the Year: Duke Energy” LaTonya King, Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Duke Energy
- “How Businesses Can Benefit from Working with their Local MCO” by Brad Owen with Smoky Mountain LME/MCO with an introduction by Patricia K. Keul, CEO and Founder, Business ACTS

Duke Energy was recognized as “Employer of the Year” at the conference. The award was presented to LaTonya King, Director of diversity and inclusion, who then gave attendees a recap of all the programs and initiatives Duke Energy has in employing people with disabilities.

“It was a great event to reach out to the business community and show them how to diversify their workforce by hiring more people with disabilities, and also recognize those who are trailblazers on this front,” said Chris Egan, NCCDD executive director. “We look forward to continuing our work with the North Carolina business community to increase competitive employment for people with disabilities.”





NCCDD to Seek Public Comment on Five Year Plan

NCCDD will invite the public to provide comments on the draft of the Five Year Plan's goals and objectives in December 2015. The Council will evaluate all public comments at its quarterly meeting in February 2016. If substantial revisions are needed, the goals and objectives will be revised and a second 45-day public comment period will be open to the community. The Five Year Plan must be submitted to Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) for approval by August 15, 2016. The new Five Year Plan will take effect on October 1, 2016. Stay tuned for more details!



Listen. Gather. Act.

A Message from Our Executive Director *(continued from front page)*

At NCCDD's annual meeting, we hosted the Hefner and Riddle Awards Reception to honor and thank two great leaders – Becky Garland Hopper, who received the Jack B. Hefner Memorial Award and Mike Mayer, who received the Helen C. "Holly" Riddle Distinguished Service Award. Their work has made such an impact in our State.

Sadly, our community lost Mike Mayer on Nov. 16 after his battle with cancer, but we as his colleagues, friends and family will always be thankful for the energy, enthusiasm and passion Mike brought to his work for disability rights. His presence and charisma will be truly missed, but as a community we will always be thankful.

Matt Stafford *(continued from front page)*

"Through promoting policies to hire and retain people with disabilities within the Guilford County Department of Education, an environment of greater understanding and compassion can be built."

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Stafford completed his Bachelors in Journalism from Cleveland State and seeks to leverage his communication skills to further his causes. When not advocating for people with disabilities, he works for the Carpet Cleaners of Central Carolina and also serves as a writer for Bridge II Sports, an adaptive sporting program for people with disabilities.



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