

COMMUNITY CURRENTS

Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy
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Summer 2005



Just like any normal Friday night, I was out with some friends, cheering on our Mercer Bears' basketball team. As I surveyed my surroundings, images of black and orange, popcorn and spirit balloons captured my senses. The sounds of whistles, cheers, and good times circulated in the air. As I scanned the crowd, I saw several young children, beaming with excitement, thriving with the thrill of being out, experiencing new and diverse events in life, and most of all, being involved and included in a community event. As my eyes explored, one particular couple captured my attention: they were sitting right on the edge of the balcony. And sitting on her lap, with those safe, loving arms wrapped tightly around, I saw the thrill, the understanding, the sense of belonging. These were my thoughts after coincidentally witnessing the relationship between Citizen Advocate, Hope Wood and Alicia.



Hope and Alicia
Photograph by Jerry Bass

A few weeks later, Hope and I shared breakfast where she told me all about this special person in her life. Hope could talk for hours about Alicia and her family, her smile never fading. Her words and her expressions only begin to communicate this connection they have found - to each other and to the world. To Hope, Citizen Advocacy provides "an opportunity for a relationship that expands your perception of the world." She laughs about how she finds herself looking for and collecting coupons to Chuck-E-Cheese. "It's like I can see the world through the eyes of a child again," she says. Oh, how we all long to see this place from those innocent eyes again - what a wonderful world!

Hope is not the only one whose perception is expanded. Through Hope, Alicia will have the chance to feel loved and accepted as the wonderful person she is. Hope has already experienced some of the pressures of society with Alicia. Because Hope and Alicia share life together, Alicia will hopefully one day realize that love and justice do exist in spite of some societal obstacles. Through new experiences with Hope, Alicia will develop a sense of curiosity and exploration and will have her world broadened. Hope proudly tells me of how charming and cute Alicia was as a flower girl in her wedding. "She doesn't know a single stranger," Hope says with a grin, after telling me about how much Hope's family fell in love with Alicia (and vice versa).

Hope expresses that Citizen Advocacy is a way she can give back to the community - one life at a time. It is through Alicia that she can also help the next generation of society. I feel privileged and blessed to stand witness to such a testimony, knowing that, not only does this relationship expand the vision of the worlds that Alicia and Hope know, it expands the entire world around them.

*Story by Beth Fulton
Mercer Student*

A Community Organization

The mission of Macon/ Bibb Citizen Advocacy, Inc. is to promote the protection of, and advocacy for, people with developmental disabilities.

Citizen Advocacy happens when a valued citizen, unpaid and independent of human services, creates a relationship with a person with a disability at risk of social exclusion; the citizen advocate chooses one or several of many ways to understand, respond to and represent that person's interests as if they were the advocate's own.

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Thank You

Citizen Advocacy is a community-strengthening endeavor that depends on the support of local citizens. All investments directly benefit the Macon/Bibb County community. Our thanks to these folks who have invested from July 1, 2003 thru June 30, 2005.

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- Jenny Zimmerman

Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Citizen Advocacy is a people-intensive endeavor--little by little, one person at a time.

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"Community is about the common life that is lived in such a way that the unique creativity of each person is a contribution to the other."

John McKnight author of "The Careless Society"