



MACON/BIBB CITIZEN
ADVOCACY, INC.

COMMUNITY CURRENTS

SPRING 2010

EXPANDING EACH OTHER'S VIEWS ON LIFE

Joi and Tamika met several years ago. Joi was immediately drawn to Tamika's vibrant personality, her confidence, and her strength and tenacity in the face of past struggles. "I'm rather reserved," says Joi, "so it was wonderful for me to get to know Tamika. She has the ability to win you over in a few minutes!" Together, Tamika and Joi have experienced the tough times and the joyful ones. Although Tamika was excited about the historic 2008 presidential election, the

poll officials initially told her she couldn't vote. Joi's willingness to help her navigate the bureaucracy and register to vote reinforced the importance of her advocacy role. As a result of their efforts, Tamika was proud to cast her vote for the first time!

These youthful Christian women have much in common. They are both independent, vivacious and seek to help others who may be struggling. Tamika has become an important part of Joi's family, going to church together and meeting each other's friends. And when they have money, you will find these two shopaholics in the stores or getting their hair styled!

Being Tamika's citizen advocate has enabled Joi to see life through a new lens.

Through being an advocate, Joi has seen first-hand how people can be stereotyped and devalued. She has also reflected on her own misconceptions about people with disabilities. As she and Tamika have grown closer, Joi has become more passionate about educating people without putting them on the defensive. More than anything, though, Tamika is the one who changes people's views when they get to know her and listen to her. Not only have Joi and Tamika expanded each other's views on life, but they have changed the perspectives of others as well. According to Tamika, "Joi means everything to me. She's had such a positive impact on my life. Now I want to help people in Joi's church and in our community, plus I want to live by myself in the future."

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Joi and Tamika

JUDITH SNOW VISITS MACON.....

Judith Snow is an internationally recognized author, lecturer and organizer for the rights of all people to participate fully as citizens in society. Judith's formal education includes two degrees from York University and she was the founder of the International Association for Inclusive Citizenship.

We were privileged to have Judith spend time with us. She inspired citizen advocates, board members and local citizens at Mercer University. Her message was about living full lives in an inclusive community. Judith offered some things for us to think about:

“How do we learn to view each member of our community as valuable?”

“Can we teach others to view each member of our community as valuable?”

“How can we help the community learn that people who have a disability are people who are filled with capacity – capacity that needs to be found, that needs an opportunity to blossom, develop and grow?”

What a great message to be carried forth...



Katie & Connie Flair, Gabor Podor,
Margaret Chambliss and Judith Snow

Reflections by Connie Flair

Citizen advocacy is in its 32nd year in Macon. My involvement has been for the last eleven years, first as a board member and then for the past 9 years as Coordinator. I think my passion for this good work began when I was a board member and met a 32 year old man who had lived in a nursing home since he was a teenager. I knew this was the wrong place for him to be. In short, his days were meaningless and would cause most people to give up, me included. There was no hope for a better tomorrow. I felt I had the capacity to make some difference in his life. Seeing the injustice done him and others is what has energized me in the work or as some say the art of citizen advocacy.

I've had the rare privilege of matching up someone from our community (a citizen advocate) with a person who lives a very different life from theirs who has a developmental disability and is vulnerable. Asking someone to stand up for and with another because it is the right thing to do is at the core of citizen advocacy. It brings out the best in both people. Citizen advocacy doesn't make the headlines of our newspapers, but it is perhaps the best news in our town!

I retired as Coordinator in June and Katina Clay was hired to lead Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy. She is a woman with great passion, a strong sense of justice and a wonderful work ethic. Please welcome her.

CITIZEN ADVOCACY

A Valued Citizen, unpaid and independent of human services, creates a relationship with a person who has a developmental disability and is at risk of social exclusion.

The citizen advocate represents and responds to that person's interests, and brings the gifts and concerns of the person into circles of ordinary community life.

32ND ANNIVERSARY BENEFIT – SILENT ART AUCTION & CELEBRATION

Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy celebrated their 32nd Anniversary in Macon last September. Over 30 local artists participated. The art included paintings, pottery, tapes-tries and jewelry. Maconites came together at the Douglass Theatre to be part of a powerful movement in our town. The laughter of friends, advocates and protégés filled the room. The evening included a silent art auction and wonderful hors d'oeuvres prepared by the Citizen Advocacy Board Members. Entertainment was provided by Chase Guyton of "American Idol". His mellow voice was a wonderful compliment to a lovely evening.



Chase Guyton & Phillip Elder



ONE VIEW ON CITIZEN ADVOCACY

Our work begins from a very simple question, "Who is the person who lives with a label of disability?" We begin to get to know the person by spending time together, often sharing a meal, asking questions, and learning the person's past, their present, and their hopes for the future. We consider ways that a citizen, through a one-to-one relationship, can become involved. We consider the advantage and learning that both people would have to offer one another. We then visit with and invite a citizen who lives an ordinary busy life to enter into a relationship with the person. Always voluntary, always personal and always with the idea that people, just plain people, have so much to gain from one another.



Pam, Monique & Jayla

Our Lives... Our Stories

Pam and Monique met over twenty years ago when Monique was 5 years old. Monique is now 25. Pam reflects back with a smile on Monique's graduation from high school and is proud to be called "G-mama" by Monique's, daughter, Jayla.

"We started out as advocate and protégé and now we are family."

Pam White-Colbert

Priorities

The priorities of Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy, Inc. in initiating Citizen Advocacy relationships are:

- To protect individuals who have developmental disabilities from and to pursue solutions for incidents of abuse, neglect and social exclusion;
- To advocate on behalf of people for integrated education in their own neighborhoods.
- To advocate on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities to live in the community and to avoid institutionalization;
- To advocate on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities who have other human and legal rights concerns, i.e. financial entitlements, guardianship, child custody, contracts/property.

"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

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Statement of Purpose

Citizen Advocacy is not a service. Rather, it is the invitation for people leading full lives in our town to get to know others who have been excluded. Macon/Bibb Citizen Advocacy, Inc. is supported by people in our community. We are an independent non-profit organization. Citizen Advocacy is a people intensive endeavor—little by little, one person at a time.

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

Nelson Mandela

We’re on the Web!

maconbibbcitizenadvocacy.org

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 November 2008 through March 2010.

INDIVIDUALS

Aurelia Bond Adams	Carl & Connie Flair
Phillip Bean	Christian Flair
David & Rita Becker	Bill & Sandy Flatau
Suzan & Wayne Bennett	Bernard & Diana Fletcher
Al Bond	Barbara Fischer
Phil Bond	Arja Forester
Dr. Rodney & Linda Browne	Larry & Julie Fortney
Katina Clay	Richard & Mary George
Jim Crisp	Marion & Joan Gilbert
Irene Cook	Robert & Elise Gray
Bess & Arnold Cotton	John & Ivey Hall
Ruth Cotton	Charlotte & Tom Hope
Dr. Nannette Crowley	James & Joan Huffman
Bob & Linda Easter	Hetty Jardine
Tom & Thalia Eden	Dorothy Johnson
Edgar & Judy Ennis	Stephen & Anne Johnson

Wardlow & Faye Johnson
A. Joi Jones
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Eleanor Lane
Alan & Lynn Neal
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High Street Unitarian Universalist
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Connie Flair
Lori Johnson
Susan Kaczmarek
Naadur
Jeff Paschke
Marnie Will