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On January 31 at the Isle of Hope Marina, 400 people from all walks and wheels of life joined us to eat oysters and keep the "social" in "social change" and to support the idea of citizen advocacy. We thank everyone who made this event successful ... and we invite you to join us next year.

People with developmental disabilities have a moral claim on the responsibilities and benefits of citizenship that far too often goes unredeemed.

— John O'Brien & Beth Mount

Save the Date

Help us keep the "social" in "social change" and mark your calendar for our

Annual Covered Dish Supper & Celebration

Tuesday, May 10 • 5:30-8:30 p.m.
The Savannah Station, 601 Cohen Street

5:30-6:30 appetizers and music by SOAP on the patio
6:30-7:30 the biggest and best covered dish supper in Chatham County
7:30-8:30 home grown good news: stories from citizen advocates

Bring a big covered dish to share or a bottle of wine if you like
(or \$5 at the door – but a big covered dish is the way to go!)



Donate online at:
savannahcitizenadvocacy.org
or by mail to
Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy
517 E. Congress St.
Savannah, GA 31401
We welcome and depend
on your support!

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CHATHAM-SAVANNAH
Citizen Advocacy

Savannahians helping Savannahians
for more than 35 years...

Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy is a 37-year-old community-based non-profit organization that recruits, matches and offers support to over 100 local citizens in voluntary citizen advocacy relationships.

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What Do Oysters and Social Change Have To Do With One Another?

by Tom Kohler, Coordinator

Good question! Let me tell you a short story that will give us the answer.

Many years ago citizen advocate Neel Foster said: **"Remember, you have to keep the social in social change!"** as she was describing how she and her protege were going to the movies later in the week. They had been working through some tough issues together -- issues that I had been helping Neel think about. I was taken back a bit with the "going to the movies" comment, as I felt as if time and energy would be better spent working on getting the pressing issue resolved. That's when Neel said: **"Remember, you have to keep the social in social change..."**

This mirrors the wisdom of Mr. W.W. Law, the dean of Savannah's civil rights movement, when I asked him, **"What scares you the most these days?"** and without batting an eye he said: **"People are so busy going to meetings that they don't have time to visit."** Quite a statement from Mr. Law, given the world he lived in and helped change.

So, what do oysters and social change have to do with one another? It depends on who you eat them with.



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What I Have Learned...

By New Associate Coordinator George Washington Seaborough

Community is often overlooked, as we look toward "service land." Oftentimes when people think about ways to help someone, they look for a government program or facility instead of looking at creative ways to involve our community to help a friend, neighbor, cousin or former student. If we realize that we are more alike than different, it would be easier for us to figure out how to help one another.

The people you are looking for are right around the corner. When we look for capable help, we often search the internet, look toward Atlanta or outside of Georgia. We forget that within our Chatham County community we have people who are willing to give advice, provide a service or give their time

and energy to help another person. **Chatham County is a loving community full of good people waiting to be asked to help one another.** For the last year I have witnessed citizens saying "yes" to the idea of entering into a citizen advocacy relationship with another person. I have seen several people slowly getting to know each other, people happily sticking up for others and ready to take on the bureaucratic system. This is possible because a citizen advocacy coordinator was willing to invite a citizen to consider being an advocate.

If you keep asking what is possible then you are always seeking the possibilities. Asking may have been the biggest skill

I learned this year -- how to ask, what to ask, and more importantly, to always ask what is possible. By asking what is possible, it slowly opens the door to unlimited possibility. Keep offering invitations for people to get involved with one another!

Thank you to our 2016 Oysters on the Bluff Sponsors:
Isle of Hope Marina
Queensborough National Bank
Jon and Kimberly Pannell
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Mia Madison Properties
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Grace Community Kitchen
Roger Wood Foods
The Pie Guy: Jamal Barrow
Connellis - Patrick Connell and Ben Ellis
United Distributors
Gonzalez Knife Company

Thanks to the following folks who contributed items for our silent auction: Huey's on the River, Allyanna's Pizza, Gonzalez Knife Company, Savannah Power Yoga, Kristin Mulzer Pottery, Johnny Harris Restaurant, Brooks Brothers, Ruth's Chris Steakhouse, Houlihans, Atlanta Bread Company, Excellent Nanny Service, Tom Kohler – painting by Leonard Miller, NTG Enterprises – McDonalds.

We would like to thank several key volunteers who made this event so successful: Billy Robinson, Mike Robinson, Brian Hussey, Amy and Lee Hughes, Jon Pannell, Quentin Marlin, Pat Lyons, Moncello Stewart, Don Callahan, Laura Hyatt, Michelle Karner, Stephanie Burgess, Preston Hodges, Rob O'Brien, Erv Tate, Billy Behrens, Mike English, Rob Crider, Kristin Mulzer, Rick Jackson, Malcolm Mackenzie, Student Volunteers from Benedictine Military School: Harrison Hughes, Bailey Clark, Tripp Geriner, Logan Von Waldner, Ben Winders, Gage Blackston and Mills Thompson.

How Does Citizen Advocacy Work?

A well-connected citizen, who is unpaid and independent of the human services system, is invited into relationship with a person who is at risk of social exclusion due to prejudice toward people who have a developmental disability.

With the coordinators' support, the citizen advocate learns to **understand, respond to** and **represent** that person's interests as if they were the advocate's own, striving to bring 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 and potentially life-long relationships, citizen advocacy fosters a community where all people's gifts and talents can be shared and celebrated.

Some citizen advocacy stories...

One of the things we encourage and honor in citizen advocacy is the idea of **long-lasting relationships.** Here are several stories of citizen advocacy relationships that honor this idea of long-lasting relationships.

Linda Wittish and Charlene Wilson were first introduced to one another in March 1980. Charlene was hoping to meet someone she could trust to help her with some personal and practical matters that her blindness made difficult. Who could have imagined that over a 36-year period these two women would become the best of friends, sharing in all of the ups and downs that more than three decades of life bring to each of us?

Dicky Stone and Robert Cohen were first introduced in March 2007. Since meeting, these men have become close friends with a steady stream of phone calls and texts back and forth throughout each week. They meet up to share a meal a couple of times a month, using that time to talk about the mundane and well as the sacred in each other's lives.

Another idea we encourage and honor in citizen advocacy is the **idea of people working together to create a better life for one another.** Here are two citizen advocacy relationship stories about people working together to create a better life.

Kathy Banks has been helping **Yolanda Baker** make sure that her children get as good an education as possible. This has meant attending a series of planning meetings together at local public schools, as well as locating a tutoring service and finding funding for reading tutors. As Kathy says: *"Now is the time for the children to catch up, before they get too far behind and give up on school."*

Blake Ellis is a self-professed "technology guy." He's also a business owner, a husband and a father. Along with that, he and a man named **Ricardo Pinckney** have found some interesting ways to spend time together. Ricardo is a "map guy" with a photographic memory for maps. He's also a huge fan of a map company based in Jacksonville. He and Blake drive down together from time to time to visit the map company. It takes the better part of a day and there's a lot of time and conversation in the car, which has helped these two men get to know and trust one another. It's a blend of time, conversation, curiosity, confusion and caffeine that has helped Ricardo find a part-time job, a growing group of people who know him around town and a reputation as one of the CAT bus system's most loyal customers.

The well-connected are more likely to be hired, housed, healthy and happy.

— Robert Putnam