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The ACDD Celebrates Developmental Disability Awareness Month

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Montgomery, AL - March 13, 2017 - March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and the [Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities](#) (ACDD) is partnering with the [Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program](#) (ADAP) and the [University Centers of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities](#) (UCEDD) to help spread awareness about people with disabilities living side by side with those who do not have a disability.

National Developmental Disability Awareness Month is designed to increase understanding of important needs related to developmental disabilities such as housing, transportation, employment, social services and education. Secondly, Developmental Disability Awareness Month is a chance to break down social barriers and encourage inclusive living for individuals with developmental disabilities.

“During this month, we recognize positive contributions people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) make in society every day. It is an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges facing individuals with I/DD and their families. It is also a chance to promote respect, foster understanding and encourage inclusivity. Innovations in technology and healthcare allow individuals with I/DD to live longer and make it easier to integrate into general communities,” said Myra Banks, Executive Director of the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Developmental Disabilities Awareness month was proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan in 1987. The proclamation called upon all Americans to provide support and opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their potential. During this time, the idea that individuals with developmental disabilities could be productive contributors in the workforce was relatively new and preconceptions had to be overcome. With the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, workplace discrimination against individuals with developmental disabilities became a legally punishable offense.

To help raise awareness of DD Awareness Month, there are numerous ways you can get involved in your community.

- Throughout the year, libraries and bookstores set up displays honoring and celebrating a variety of topics. Contact the manager and ask if they would be interested in setting up a display to honor Developmental Disability Awareness Month.
- Contact your child’s school and ask if you can create a bulletin board in a hallway or classroom. Don’t forget to use bright colors and lots of pictures to make it pop!
- Municipal buildings are a great place to create a display table or bulletin board. Even just handing out one poster can make a big impact in building community awareness, and who knows, maybe your mayor or councilman will see it and ask for more information.

- Write a letter to your community leaders such as local legislators, clergy people and business owners are important members of the community. [The Arc of Alabama](#) developed the Hot Tips Guide for Legislative Advocates on Developmental Disabilities which guides you in contacting your community leaders and advocating for rights.
- Help provide employment opportunities. Talk with your employer about the practices for recruiting and hiring people with developmental disabilities. Many employers don't realize just how much an employee with a disability can contribute to the workplace, so help inform them.
- Help us spread the word about Life Side by Side on your social media platforms. Posting positive messages about what your loved one with an intellectual or developmental disability is up to can help eliminate negative stigmas associated with the disability community. Don't forget when tweeting to include popular Hashtags such as [#SpecialNeeds](#), [#DDAwareness](#), or [#Inclusion](#).
- Reach out to local developmental disabilities organizations and inquire about booking a speaker. Building awareness among the people you and your loved one meet can build stronger community ties. Ask your place of worship, workplace or other affiliated organization if they would be interested in hosting a speaker. And, don't forget about schools. There are many organizations in Alabama that offer children-friendly presentations to help educate students about disabilities in a fun and respectful manner.

We encourage you to recognize the importance of this month, take time to learn more about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and reach out to others. Please join us this month in celebrating people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the many contributions they make. Together, we can make a difference in our community and enjoy Life Side by Side!

About Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities

The Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities (ACDD) is a federally-funded program created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act in 1970. ACDD serves to promote and support independence, advocacy, productivity, and inclusion for Alabamians with developmental disabilities. ACDD is dedicated to the vision that all Alabamians, regardless of disability, will live, learn, work and play in inclusive communities. <http://acdd.org>.

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