



# Citizen Advocacy

OF ATLANTA & DEKALB, INC.

## 2023 Annual Report

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

1561 McClendon Ave NE | Atlanta, GA 30307

# Stewarding the Work

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## STAFF

Aaron Lichkay  
Executive Director/  
Coordinator

Ginia Taylor  
Administrative Coordinator



Greetings,

My name is Aaron Lichkay and I am the Executive Director and Lead Coordinator of Citizen Advocacy of Atlanta & DeKalb (CAAD). Over the course of the last year CAAD has strengthened as an organization, brought together a strong board of directors, and begun thinking about how Citizen Advocacy can thrive over the course of the next 50 years.

I have been with CAAD for five years and I have never been more excited for the future of Citizen Advocacy in the Atlanta Area. We are continuing to initiate and support relationship matches that provide protection and advocacy for people experiencing and/or at risk of discrimination because of developmental disability labels. It is our effort of strengthening old and building new community roots that has me the most excited. In FY23 we partnered with both Saint Thomas More Catholic Church and Neighborhood Church to host Witness to Beauty, an exhibit and workshop series highlighting the gifts of our neighbors that may otherwise go unnoticed. These events not only brought new people into the Citizen Advocacy community, but also led to connections to recruit both advocates and proteges.

We look forward to the year ahead as we are increasing our goal to initiate 13 new matches, increase our public events, increase our digital presence, and continue our work to Coordinate Citizens to Cultivate Caring Community.

On behalf of the board and staff I want to thank you for your contribution last year and in the future at whatever level, whether it be with time, energy, or financial support. We greatly appreciate your support!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Lichkay". The signature is written in a cursive style.

# Celebrating Matches

## 7 New Matches Made

Eric and Jeremiah  
Dorothy and Michelle  
Zohra and Claire  
Kloe and Joyce

Kloe and Kathi  
Ted and Jacob  
Kathy and Kelly



### Ted and Jacob

Citizen Advocacy met Ted through our connection with St. Thomas More Catholic Church. Ted and his mom had been trying to find social spaces for Ted in the community and at the church, but had not been very successful. After meeting Ted, it was clear that while most his basic needs were met, he was isolated from nonpaid relationships and could benefit from having a guy friend. Jacob and Ted bonded quickly over their love of sports, first meeting over some food and then attending a Gwinnett Stripers baseball game.

### Kloe and Joyce

Kloe's family had been in transitional housing over the last year, and when Citizen Advocacy first met her she was taking a MARTA bus and walking to get to school each day. The family is now in stable housing and Kloe will be starting middle school in the fall. Joyce is a former music and art teacher who will open new opportunities for Kloe, while also acting as an education advocate in partnership with Kloe's mother to ensure she gets a good education.





## Eric and Jeremiah

Kathi Frankel has been Eric's Citizen Advocate since he was a 9 year old boy. Eric is now an 18 year old man and it became clear to Kathi that Eric does not always need a Jewish Mother by his side as he continues to grow into manhood. She asked CA Coordinator Aaron Lichkay if he could recruit a co-advocate who could relate to Eric as a growing man. Eric not only needed someone who closer to his age but who was energetic and full of ideas and passion just like Eric himself. That same week Aaron met Jeremiah at NeighborFest, hosted by Neighborhood Church. It was clear to Aaron that Jeremiah would be a great fit to introduce to Eric.

For Jeremiah the pleasure of knowing Eric has gone beyond what he ever imagined. It has not only helped him grow as a person, but has brought a new perspective to the tech and community work he does.

"I never had any lived experience in my life with people with a physical disability. It has made me hyperaware when dealing in the tech and startup world, even when they are talking about vulnerable people, they are rarely if ever thinking about disabled people."

"Eric is a born leader, who is ambitious and doesn't take no for an answer. I have had a lot of patience, but Eric has taught me so much more.

You have to keep working even if things aren't working. And he is hilarious."

Over the last year here are some of the things they did together...

- Fundraiser and clothing drive at Refuge Coffee
- A "United for Change" Self-Advocacy Training
- Went to the State Capitol to push for Advocacy, met with Senator Kim Jackson
  - Got in the news for that meeting
- Community engagement and in person meetings each Saturday at Refuge Coffee in Clarkston
- AI Art and Advocacy speech at St Thomas More School for "Witness to Beauty"
- AI Art and Book previews on display at UUCA
- Call and Response Speech at Neighborhood Church and AI Art workshop
- World Refugee Day T-Shirt Sales and Parade of Nations generating over \$500 in sales
- Worked together to learn and use AI text tools in Google Docs and Gmail to improve independent communication
- Set up bank account to be used with Eric's fundraising efforts through his Church
- Set up a Youtube Channel for Eric's speeches
- Re-launched AAAG website

# Supporting Advocates

TOTAL NUMBER OF MATCHES SUPPORTED:

58

DEKALB MATCHES:

43

FULTON MATCHES:

15



1

Royce has been continuing to support Ryan in his passion to build a comic book universe. Royce has been able to connect Ryan to experts and resources. Together they are exploring how AI could help turn Ryan's handwritten notes into a reality.

2

Leigh and Janie's second year of their relationship has been less full of crisis. While Janie has had a stable place to live, she still has much to learn and experience as she becomes more independent. Leigh is always there to talk, counsel, and even remind Janie that there are consequences to making decisions. Even though they don't get to see each other as often as they would like, they talk on the phone constantly and continue to grow their loving relationship.

3

Over the last two years CA has been supporting Grover in trying to regain contact with Lois Curtis. It was not until Lois was only given a few weeks to live that Grover and Lois were reunited again. Lois passed away in November, but that has not stopped Grover from advocating for her and her legacy, not just as a disability justice icon, but as Grover puts it, "Lois Curtis Superstar."

# Witness to Beauty

The Witness to Beauty concept was created during Citizen Advocacy’s time as the artist in residence at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta. The inaugural Witness to Beauty took place at Saint Thomas More Catholic Church and included three exhibits featuring art and song lyrics by Lois Curtis, a digital art storytelling piece by Eric Naindouba and Jeremiah Long, and poetry by Zohra Gilani. Along with the exhibits, Citizen Advocacy hosted a series of events exploring the beauty of relationships from our community highlighting how connection and love bring everyone's gifts to the center of community life for us all to benefit. The opening day included an opportunity for parish members to learn and play beep baseball with the Atlanta Chaos. In the middle of the week we hosted a conversation on Inclusion in places of worship, before wrapping up with a storytelling workshop.

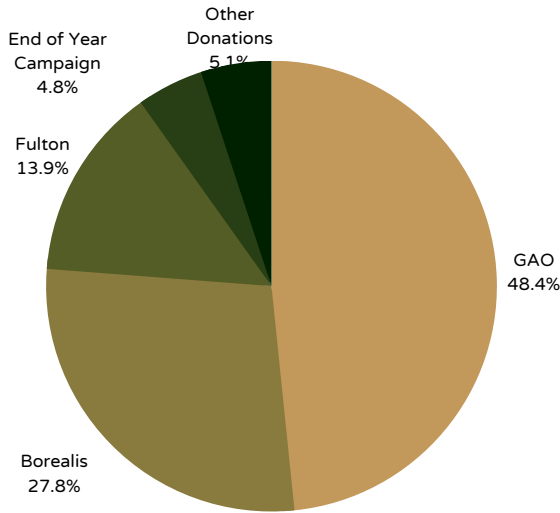
The second Witness to Beauty took place at Neighborhood Church and was titled The Power of Love. Taking place over the week of Valentines Day, The Power of Love exhibit explored the beauty of relationships and love from our community highlighting the gifts, talents, and passions that exist amongst our neighbors. There was artwork by Lois Curtis, poetry by Dorothy Miller, and paintings by Mary Silayillah, all culminated with a world café style storytelling event called Love Thy Neighbor. Love Thy Neighbor included storytellers made up of citizen advocacy relationship matches including Janie and Leigh, Eric and Kathi, and Ryan and Royce.

We look forward to partnering with more community members and organizations looking to cultivate the Caring Community by bringing Witness to Beauty to your local community. If interested in partnering, volunteering, or sponsoring an event, give us a call or email!



# Sustaining Our Work

Total Income: \$179,549.35



Citizen Advocacy in Atlanta started in 1977 under the **Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO)**. The GAO continues to support Citizen Advocacy financially and through training and technical assistance. [www.thegao.org](http://www.thegao.org)



**Borealis Philanthropy's Disability Inclusion Fund** has been a key partner for the last two years. They support organizational development and capacity building, while creating a community of Disability Justice organizations across the country. [www.borealisphilanthropy.org](http://www.borealisphilanthropy.org)

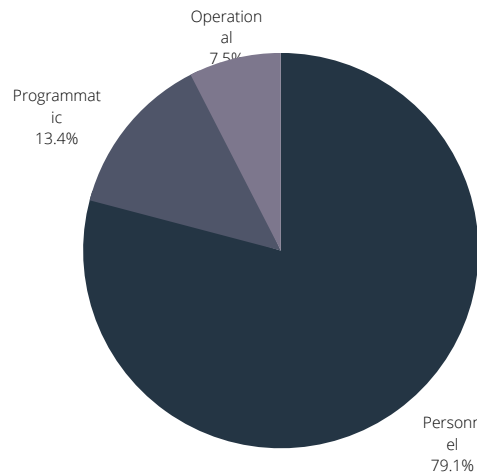


**Fulton County Community Service Program** grants funds to CA to support matchmaking and community education to Fulton County residents. CA has received grants from Fulton County for the last two years. <https://fultoncountyga.gov/>



Individual donors and families represent the heart of CAAD. Without the support of individuals in our community CAAD would not be able to succeed in making matches and Cultivating Caring Community.

Total Expenses:  
\$152,142.48



RENEW YOUR SUPPORT TODAY AT  
[www.citizenadvocacyatlantadekalb.org](http://www.citizenadvocacyatlantadekalb.org)

# THANK YOU FUNDERS

## Community Partners



### Change Makers

Anonymous, Don Bender, Woody Hall, Leslie Klemperer, Knights of Columbus, Miriam Mathura, Jack Schmeltz, Dennis Stage, Schaefer Lyndon Self-Storage

### Connectors

Bill & Carol Adams, Bill & Haqqa Bolling, Zac Bradley, Andy Gonczi, Rita Haggerty, McManaman Family, Pilkenton Family, Russell Spornberger, Amalia B Stephens, Betty Thompson Trust, Anne Tucker, Bill & Donna Woolf, Julie Young, North Quabbin CA

### Allies & Supporters

Mary Helen Bush  
Blythe Family  
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Dee Ann Dozier  
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Bo Gaiason  
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Sue Heslup  
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Carole Kirschner

Kathryn Lawler  
Aaron Lichkay  
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Sylvie Motz  
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Kirsten Wehner  
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Jean Woodall



# Cultivating Caring Community

“Only by multiplying our circles of care – in the first instance, by expanding our notion of kinship will we achieve the psychic infrastructures necessary to build a caring society that has universal care as its ideal.” (The Care Manifesto, 33)

A caring community is one where all members have a respected place, diversity is expected and celebrated, and individuals assist each other with work and/or activities when appropriate. Citizen Advocacy works to cultivate a caring community in Atlanta through the strategic action of initiating and supporting one-to-one relationship matches centered around people with developmental disabilities. The Citizen Advocacy Office brings together an intentionally diverse group of core members and supporters to locate people vulnerable from disability discrimination, get to know their life story and circumstances, and find a suitable advocate from the local community.

Citizen Advocacy primarily focuses on cultivating a caring community through individual action and mutual support, but we also recognize our work benefits the community at large. Through modeling a diversity of mutual support relationships centered on disability, Citizen Advocacy cultivates a stronger and inclusive community in the Atlanta. Relationships initiated by the Citizen Advocacy Office work to not just model interdependent relationships, but also introduce family, friends, and associates to the lives of people who have been typically excluded from the common good of community. This directly impacts the community of Metro Atlanta, by introducing the concept of cultivating caring community by fostering mutual support relationships. Citizen Advocacy is just one way of cultivating a caring community and we look to build a network of solidarity partners that believe in a community based on taking care of our fellow citizens.

Start your journey on cultivating the caring community by contacting us today!

# Get Involved

- Participate in Community Events
- Become a Monthly Donor
- Become an Advocate
- Join the Board
- Join an Event Planning Team
- Volunteer your Gifts and Talents

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