Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Report to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
January 2022

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2021 GOLD Awards & Inclusive Art Contest

The 2021 GOLD Awards and Inclusive Arts Ceremony took place on December 8, 2021 at the Old State Capitol. We were proud to honor the following artists and disability advocates for their work:

2021 GOLD Award Recipients

Distinguished Merit Award	Opportunities Academy	New Orleans
Patsy Barrett Memorial Award	Karen Roy	Baton Rouge
Ken Vince Memorial Award	Cody Reitz	Benton
Educator of the Year Award	Rebecca Reeves	Haughton
Youth of the Year Award	Owen Delatte	Thibodaux
Family of the Year Award	Barthe Family	Arabi
Volunteer of the Year Award	Patricia Ehrle	Metarie
Direct Support Person of Year	Shannon Edmond	Lafayette
Service Animal of the Year Award	Phoebe Trunnell	New Orleans
Elected Official of the Year Award	State Rep. Larry Bagley	Stonewall
Public Servant of the Year Award	Amy Dawson (GOHSEP)	Baton Rouge
Service Provider of the Year	Marilu Major	Baton Rouge
Veteran of the Year	Chad Granger	Slaughter

2021 Inclusive Art Contest Award Recipients

Lynette Fontenot Excellence in Inclusion Award Trinity Williams

Adult Division

First Place- Bonnie Dempster Second Place- Robert Biggs

High School Division

First Place-Trinity Williams Second Place- Anna He

Middle School Division

First Place- Paisley Dempster Second Place- Brooke Hardesly

Third Place- Zoe Mitchell

Honorable Mentions- Tiffany Maddox and Andrew Thibodeaux

K-5th Grade Division

First Place- Randi Keys

You can watch the recording of the 2021 GOLD Awards and Inclusive Arts Ceremony here and gain access to the photos taken that day here.

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Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

As of January 1, 2022, the Statewide Independent Living Council has transitioned out of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs to become an autonomous, non-governmental entity. This is to meet their federal obligations. Jamar Lanier Ennis has assumed the role of Executive Director.

Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA)

The Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs held their quarterly meetings December 13-15, 2021. The committee meetings took place via Zoom and the full council meeting was held in a hybrid format.

During the Education Committee meeting, it was determined that GACDA would follow up with Superintendent Brumley regarding the issues they highlighted in their 2020 letter. It was also decided that a needs assessment would be created and sent to GACDA Committee members, so they can determine what should be addressed first.

Voting Accessibility

GODA Senior Coordinator, Lillian DeJean, was appointed to the Voting Systems Commission (VSC) by Governor Edwards to represent the disability community. The next VSC meetings will take place on January 19th and February 2nd. Additionally, the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs met with the Secretary of State's (SoS) Office in December to discuss the following items:

- Remote Ballot Return: GODA discussed the possibility of implementing a remote ballot return system with SoS, so the disability community can have access to a completely accessibility absentee voting experience.
- Commissioner Training: GODA discussed possible ways to improve poll worker and commissioner training as it pertains to disability etiquette and accessibility barriers/solutions.
- Accessibility Presentations for the VSC: GODA and SoS discussed possible presentations on accessible voting for the January Voting Systems Commission meeting, so the commission members and public can have a broader understanding of some of the barriers the disability community face when voting.

Staff Changes

Jamar Lanier Ennis (former Assistant Director):

Jamar Ennis, J.D. has worked in the Governor's Office for over 16 years, beginning in the summer of 2005. Now that the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is transitioning out of the Governor's Office to achieve autonomy, Jamar will be taking on the role of Executive Director of SILC. He will also continue his law practice at the J. Lanier Ennis Law Firm. Jamar Ennis has been a vital part of our team for many years and he will be missed greatly within our office. But, we are absolutely certain that he will continue to provide great

leadership within the disability community, and we cannot wait to see what he accomplishes in the future.

Dr. Melanie Washington (former SICC Executive Director):
Melanie Washington, Ed.D. is the new Executive Director of the Children's Cabinet within the Office of the Governor. Dr. Washington formally served as the Executive Director of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for EarlySteps in the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs. Dr. Washington has served in this role for almost four years (beginning January 2018). During her time as the SICC Director, she has worked closely with the EarlySteps team, Council members, and stakeholders in advocating for the needs of children and their families. Dr. Washington's leadership and work experience with multiple stakeholder groups and populations will be invaluable to the efforts of the Children's Cabinet.

Alishia Vallien (present SICC Executive Director):
Alishia Vallien, M.Ed. is the Executive Director of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for EarlySteps in the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs. She is a former high school assistant principal. She has worked in the education field for over two decades primarily working in elementary education. Vallien is very involved in the community. She is Vice President of the local branch of National Association of University Women. Vallien has served on the Louisiana Association of Educators Board of Directors and President of the parish chapter. She serves on the Board of the Southwest Louisiana Sickle Cell Association. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and Women United. Vallien has served as a reader, alter server and Catechism teacher at Holy Family Church. Vallien is also the proud mother of Antonio Vallien.

Jordan Brisco (present GODA Assistant Director):
Jordan Brisco, MHA will serve as the Assistant Director of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs. She has served 5 years of practical experience in healthcare administration, with the education and training to manage day-to-day clinical operations with an emphasis on high-quality patient experiences and quality/industry compliance. She earned her bachelor's degree in science from Northwestern State University in 2019 and her master's degree in healthcare administration from Louisiana State University at Shreveport in 2021. She is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc and serves as a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives. She is a dynamic, entrepreneurial healthcare administrator with a proven track record as an ambitious, operationally focused, and results-driven leader. Brisco has demonstrated a great desire to enhance the places in which she works and, most importantly, to serve the people of Louisiana in order to improve their overall quality of life.