

# THE CITIZEN ADVOCATE

CHATHAM-SAVANNAH

## Citizen Advocacy

Savannahians helping Savannahians  
for more than 45 years...

Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy is a 46-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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SPRING

2024

## Message from George:

### The 3 I's of Meaningful Membership:

For almost 10 years, I have connected people who would not have had the opportunity to meet on their own. One person would have an intellectual or developmental disability, and the other person would come from the center of our community. One person would be called the protege, and the other would be called the advocate. For years, advocates and proteges have shared learned wisdom from their relationships. They have thought about ways to help develop Meaningful Membership for their protégé.

If you Google the term Meaningful Membership, there will be links and articles that share the benefits of people having membership in their communities, moreover, how much more powerful membership is when it is meaningful. Often, within our community, people with disability labels are placed with other people with disabilities. When they seek membership in non- "special" programs (or programs only for people with disabilities), they are either turned away, treated like children, or used as token members.

Advocates know that when their protege is valued as a member, it enhances the organization, helps build competencies for all involved, and helps Chatham County become the definition of "community." Advocates have used their one-to-one relationships to help their proteges seek out Meaningful Membership. Here are a few learning points they have shared with me.

**Introducer:** Advocates have chosen to be the introducer for their protege. One advocate helped introduce her protege to his neighbors. She took notice of some of the items on the neighbors' porches such as plants, door decorations, etc. She used what she saw to start a conversation, and then she introduced her protege. After a while, the protege and neighbor started conversing without the advocate.



## A Few Stories

**Advocate Linda Wittish** first said yes to getting to know Charlene in 1980. Within 44 years, Linda saw Charlene get married and move from place to place. The two women supported each other through the loss of loved ones, few health scares, and celebrated birthdays and grandchildren together.

Recently, Linda noted that Charlene has been her friend longer than anyone else.

**Advocate Fred Scott-Fields** and Mr. Harmon have known each other for nine years. Fred says that he sees himself as Mr. Harmon's good nephew. The two guys have been fishing together and have always enjoyed spending time with one another. Mr. Harmon has met Fred's frat brothers, and Fred has had conversations with Mr. Harmon's family. As Mr. Harmon approaches his mid-70s, Fred notices that his memory is not what it used to be and is figuring out how to support him best. He met with Mr. Harmon's new group home staff and helped them become aware of some of the things that Mr. Harmon likes and dislikes. He recognizes that Mr. Harmon is moving at a slower pace and is putting thought into the next stage of Mr. Harmon's life.



Fred is letting Mr. Harmon know that no matter what comes next, he is willing to be an ally and someone who will continue to stand with him through the good and bad times.

**Advocate Erika Morrow and Ginger** have known each other for 10 months. The two women have gone to the movies together, eaten pizza, hung out with cool pilots, celebrated Christmas, and Thanksgiving together, and visited parks and fun places throughout town; Ginger has met Erika's husband, and Erika has met Ginger's family. Erika's connection to Ginger has helped her explore new parts of town and she has had the joy of connecting Ginger to people within her personal circle.



The two women have shown that the way to build a relationship is to find shared interests, celebrate together, and get to know each other's family. They have found the beauty in spending time together vs. doing an activity.

**Advocate Wanda Jackson and Penny** first met five months ago. The two women often discuss their favorite recipes, songs, and dance moves. Wanda recently has been helping Penny navigate through mold issues at her apartment complex. Wanda is also concerned about Penny's health and any connection to mold.

Wanda and Penny's relationship is new, but the two women have found commonality in their lives and are working on shared concerns.



## We are growing!!!



We are pleased to welcome Rob Douberly to his new role as Associate Coordinator with Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy.

Robert (Rob) Douberly Jr. is a Chatham/Savannah native. He is a craftsman by trade and has worked at Thunderbolt Marine Inc. He was first introduced to Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy in 2014. He has been an advocate for ten years and was on the Board of Directors for three years.

### **A few words from Rob:**

"In my professional and volunteer roles, I've taken great pride in my work, the people I do it for, the friendships I have built, and the joy of helping, learning, and teaching others.

The key factor that attracts me to the role of Associate Coordinator is the values and principles of Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy. The organization is focused on building a one-to-one relationship between people who do not ordinarily get to meet, and those relationships have given me a glimpse of true community in Chatham County."

-Rob Douberly

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## Oysters on the Bluff 2024

The day was windy, the temperature was below 50 degrees, but there were a lot of oysters. As 2:30 PM approached on Sunday, Feb. 4, the clouds slightly blocked out the sun, as volunteers designed engineering feats to keep the oyster tents from blowing away. The crowd of energetic and enthusiastic oyster eaters began to form a line to start the 2024 Oysters on the Bluff event, our annual fantastic oyster roast. That Sunday, we shared laughs, danced in the rain, and ate chili and hotdogs. It was also the first time we had oyster clusters from Sapelo Island. The oysters were cooked just right, and the flavor was amazing.

Thank you to the Chatham-Savannah community for helping us have a successful event and continuing to support Citizen Advocacy

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