

Tools for Life Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

April 4, 2007

Members Attending: Pat Hanus (Tech-Able); Development); Chris Brand (FODAC), Joanne Willis (ReBoot-ATRC), Lu Nations-Miller (GDOE), Anne Warley. *Staff Attending:* Carolyn Phillips, Tom Patterson, Doris Chadwell, Martha Rust, Connie Freier, Liz Persaud. *Members Absent:* Kenny Blanchard, Minna Hong, Laura Overstreet, Curtis Rodgers, Naomi Walker, Starla Steinman. *Guests:* Jan Cribbs (Transition Coordinator, GDOL)

Welcome, Meeting Introduction & Celebrations – Carolyn Phillips

- The Council joined in sending Beth Tumlin our wishes for a speedy recovery
- Alan Goldman is visiting his son
- Gigi weighed her options: attend The Masters Tournament in Augusta or come to the Advisory Council meeting. Needless to say Gigi won't be joining us today!
- Walton Options and Disability Connections were also unable to send representatives

LiveAccess Update

Carolyn Phillips advised the Council that staff is still exploring the full potential of LiveAccess (web-based video conferencing). She wants to keep true to Council's mission of inclusion, and therefore believes that LiveAccess might be a technology that would allow those Council members, or potential Council members, who might have difficulty attend meetings to participate from either than own home or nearby office.

Jan Cribbs Transition

Lu Nations-Miller - DOL

Advisory Council History – Carolyn

Originally the Council held 2-day meetings. After some time, the meetings were consolidated into a one-day meeting. Now, we are trying to have productive, efficient meetings in the course of 3-4 hours, thus reducing time and expense. Ms. Phillips asked that the Council provide feedback on how today's meeting went and if 3-4 hours is sufficient to cover Council business.

Advisory Council is something that Ms. Phillips relies on. She often calls members between meetings to get updates on community issues, transition and school issues, AT and the growing aging population (via Alan Goldman), or checking in concerning the Workforce Investment Act from Starla Steinman with GDOL.

Caroline made special reference to Ann Warley's participation. Ann's presence at meetings (and that of Terry Warley) certainly adds to the energy and focus of Council meetings.

Tools for Life's Three Year State Plan

Year One

- Town Hall Meetings - (Joe – state rehab meetings)
- Conference – positive comments, well-organized, tribute to

- Lu has been invited to participate in next years Workforce Conf. – sign of success

- TFL has been asked to participate in planning Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) 2007 Workforce Conference (WFC). The GDOL team has commented on how much they learned from working with the Tools for Life staff during the joint 2006 Workforce and Touch the Future Conference held in Athens last fall. The planning committee has begun their work much ahead of the previous Workforce Conf. schedule. Prospective dates are Dec. 4, 5, 6, 7, with Dec. 4 being a Youth Day. The Westin will be the host hotel and the Savannah Trade Centers will be the site of the Conference itself. Tools for Life staff have been invited to do Disability 101/Hospitality training. Just as the WF/TTF Conference had a positive impact on Athens--bringing about increased awareness of the disability community and concrete improvements to the accessibility of the city--so do we want to have a similar impact on Savannah.

- SE Regional Institute on Deafness (SERID) – GDOL supports combining the TFL and SERID conferences.
 - Martha Rust has been visiting and researching many possible facilities in which to hold the joint conference. The Hilton in downtown Atlanta is a remarkable story. Martha recalled how she and others visited and talked with hotel staff last year and did some accessibility education along the way. Come to find out that this year there are many more accessible rooms and a heightened sense of accessibility awareness. The hotel staff has been very accommodating. There are sports facilities which will enable us to do accessible sports demos. There is a 40,000 sq. foot exhibit hall, MARTA access, as well as proximity to all of downtown Atlanta.
 - Tomorrow is an open TFF/SERID meeting, Ms. Phillips invited Adv. Council to participate
 - Ms. Phillips asked for support/approval of the joint conference – Lu asked about the dynamics of the Workforce Conference. She hopes that the TFL staff won't be pulled to far away of their own important work.
 - Ms. Phillips recognizes that there are concerns about maintaining both Touch the Future and SERID individual identities, and concern about the Workforce Conferencing overwhelming the joint conference.
 - **Advisory Council makes a recommendation to the GDOL Commissioner that TFL not be combined with the WFC 2008.**

- Carolyn reported on the TFL Team's annual planning meeting. These meetings are characterized by a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere which in turn stimulates creativity, camaraderie, and productivity. In this way, the team is able to approach the year ahead in a "planfull" way.

Town Hall Report – Tom Patterson reiterated some of the highlights of the eight Town Hall meetings which Tools for Life presented around the state last year.

Data Collection – Connie Freier

- Ahead of RSA recommendations
- Additional revisions made
- Connie reported some of the current statistics gathered
- New system is available on-line
 - Measuring outcomes better

Connie and Carolyn indicated that there has been national interest in our data collection instrument. This time of reporting demonstrates our commitment to transparency as all information will be available on-line. Relevant, accurate, and easily verifiable data is helping TFL tell its story to the public, to funding agencies, to other AT programs who might be looking for “best practices.” Our data also empowers the disability community in Georgia to show our state legislators and others how the assistive technology needs of many Georgians are going unmet because of TFL’s inability to effectively serve large portions of the state.

At this point in the meeting, **Carl McRae, Director of the GDOL’s Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Unit** greeted Advisory Council and welcomed them to the State VR Office. Mr. McRae was excited to share the news that a new Occupational Therapist (OT) had just been hired. He explained some of the difficulties VR encounters in trying to compete with for-profit world when seeking highly qualified employees. Mr. McRae also expressed his support for a joint SERID/TTF Conference.

Pass It On Center/STAR Network

Carolyn Phillips mentioned that three (3) new positions for Pass It On Center and STAR Network have been approved w/ Mr. McRae’s help.

Transition

Liz Persaud reported on the status of the Transition web site she has been working on with Jan Cribbs and Lu Nations-Miller.

Jan - Interagency transition council, independent name, linked to TFL site (have received approval from Labor & DOE) accessible, will include PP on how to start a council, etc. useful Local/regional school sys, VR, community service providers, employers, etc. has interest in students transitioning successfully from HS

- Info sharing, networking
- Staffing transition needs
- Enhancing communication, local relationships, successful transition for students

Ms. Phillips spoke about the importance of transition models where technology really assists people. Five percent (5%) of AT Act funds are required .to be devoted to transition. TFL exceeds this requirement.

Warm Springs Collaboration

TFL is pleased to be exploring ways in which we can work more closely with the [Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation](#) (RWSIR). The Institute has such a remarkable history and has been of service to so many Georgians, TFL would like to see it be on the forefront of offering the latest in assistive technology to its clients. It was agreed that RWSIR needs to do better marketing to internal partners within GDOL, developing plans for new technology, moving folks to real jobs, and moving away from sheltered workshops.

TFL staff have enjoyed several productive meetings, tours, and visits with Greg Schmiege, the new RWSIR Director and key staff at the Institute. The leadership certainly understands the gap that now exists in the assistive technology portion of RWSIR.

Greg Schmieg and staff from RWSIR (which is celebrating its 80th birthday!) recently toured of ReBoot-ATRC and FODAC. TFL is pleased to be associated with these two national models of reuse and act as a facilitator in working with the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation.

Carolyn invited Council members to participate in a May 16 overnight planning meeting concerning RWSIR.

Jan Cribb assured the Council that RWSIR is optimistic, and that great new leadership is intent on keeping the, “Warm Springs spirit moving forward.”

Joe Tedesco said he appreciated Carolyn’s candor in voicing the public’s perception of WS being “behind the times” and raising Independent Living issues with Warm Spring during a Warm Springs meeting. He was also impressed by Greg Schmieg response of “let’s do it.”

Connie expressed hope that we can keep the positive relationship going.

Chris Brand asked if there is ever an appropriate use of sheltered workshops. This prompted a lively discussion of the philosophical approaches to this subject. Clearly, there is an interest in having further discussion on these issues.

Martha – AT Funding Report

- Credit Able Report – Jackie Willks-Weathers
 - Application guide
 - Streamlined process
 - Will soon be up on new website
 - Credit Able has done a review of programs around the state - Individual account, financial literacy, micro-enterprise – none focused on people with disabilities. Jackie thinking that transition councils may help in financial literacy.
 - Lu asked about a teacher guide. Jackie responded that CA developing one.
 - Office of Community Services, Dept. of Ed
 - Tech Able/Credit Able – applied for grant to educate people with disabilities on tax credits and benefits
 - Atlanta Food Bank
 - Task Force know about tax credits for people for disabilities

ATRC Updates

FODAC – connections

ReBoot-ATRC – Joanne, STAR Network Coordinator hired. She said that the work of getting the STAR Network going was challenging, but fun!

STAR Network Retreat – Tools for Independence included. Disability Link NW in Rome has rearranged site to accommodate AT. Some sites have AT, but it needs to be inventoried and older equipment disposed of it.

Conference with Shepard. Help a grandparent program at GSU.

Carolyn pointed out that over 80% of TFL's AT Act funds go to direct services through contracts with the Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRC).

Jan Cribbs mentioned Project SEARCH (Briggs & Assoc.) – SunTrust (Credit Able & Tech-Able have made contact with) will put in touch w/ Joe & Jackie

Reuse Grant Update – Carolyn Phillips

- STAR Regional Meeting in May – 1 position open
- Pass It On Center will hold two meetings in May, National Task Force will meet in Atlanta and RSA funded grantees will meet in Denver in conjunction with the RESNA NATTAP meeting. Two (2) positions open.

Anne said she was impressed with how far we've gotten on the reuse projects.

AT Demo

Liz Persaud demo'd her new computer and the [LOMAK](#)

Martha Rust shared trials of materials she saw in CSUN.

Carolyn said that Mira Shaw, who had presented at the Touch the Future conference last fall will demo [Rolltalk](#) for TFL staff next Monday.

Advisory Council By-laws/Mission

On website – requested that members review, make suggestions
Looking for new members – please nominate members

Role of Advisory Council in advocacy

Sustainability of programs

Next meeting will include an in depth look at advocacy

We will try to use [MeetingWizard](#) to set up the next meeting date.

Adjourn

Lu will be sending out an email about transition manual.