



Using Your Voice As an Advocate by Dorothy Boothe

Over more than a decade and a half, I have watched and experienced the struggles of many families of individuals with disabilities as they have sought to obtain what was needed for their affected family members. I saw difficulties in obtaining a free and appropriate education, suitable healthcare (including insurance coverage), participation in and acceptance in their local communities, and the plethora of supports needed throughout the lifespan, especially during the transition to adulthood. In order to help change the reality of families with individuals with disabilities, I applied to and was accepted into the 2013 Partners in Policymaking class offered by All About Developmental Disabilities. That class opened the door to the journey of using my voice in legislative advocacy.



Dorothy, her son Luke and Claire Dees

Parent to Parent of Georgia (P2P) offered me training and hands-on assistance as I sought to bring needed change to Georgia's disability community through interaction with our legislators. Webinars and classes about legislative advocacy led by P2P leaders, such as Claire Dees, helped prepare me to be able to confidently interact with legislators about important disability-related policy issues. In addition, P2P staff accompanied me and my son at the Capitol to assist us in talking with our Senator and other legislators.

On February 24, my son served in the Georgia Senate as a page sponsored by our Senator Bill Cowser, and I joined disability advocates, including those from P2P, in asking our legislators to vote for the ABLE



Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, Luke and Sen. Bill Cowser

(Achieving a Better Life Experience) Act. My son was able to observe and serve the Georgia legislature in session, an experience which he proudly shares about with others as he shows them his page button. At the same time, I was helping others new to the advocacy journey to interact with their legislators. For my son and I, this was another step on the journey of using our voices as advocates for the disability community. We anticipate sharing our story with legislators in new and ongoing ways as we seek to improve the lives of Georgians living with disabilities. Won't you consider how you can use your voice as an advocate? P2P will help prepare you and will join you on the journey!