

ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

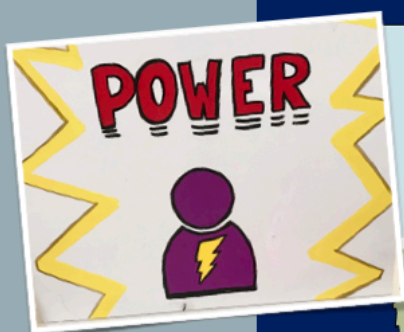


Sangha Unity Network, Inc.

End-of-Year Report, Year 6

February 2023 - January 2024

EXPANDING SELF-ADVOCACY IN GEORGIA



uniting for change

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In our sixth year receiving the Advocates for Change Training by Self-Advocates Grant from the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, Sangha Unity Network continued working to expand self-advocacy across the state. We have been supporting self-advocates to take active roles in their lives and communities as we strengthen Georgia's self-advocacy network - established in 2019 as Uniting for Change (U4C). Self-advocacy leaders are being supported to teach other self-advocates about the importance of "Rising Up and Speaking Out." We continued our commitment to assisting people with disabilities to have a seat at the table - at all the tables - where decisions are made. We also continued our commitment to growing and sustaining Local Self-Advocacy Area Networks.



This report provides an overview of SUN's efforts in 2023 with U4C as this self-advocacy network grew stronger, created local area networks, and enhanced leadership skills and advocacy work.

This past year, we continued holding virtual Leadership Collective Meetings along with hosting and facilitating Community Strong on Monday's. With support from SUN, Uniting for Change presented multiple virtual workshops to teach others about self-advocacy, the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities, what it means to be a citizen, and what self-advocates need to know about the HCBS Settings Rule. SUN actively supported self-advocates in legislative action via letter writing, producing videos, visiting legislators at the State Capitol, hosting guest legislators on Community Strong, and making personal visits to legislators during the summer while they were home. The 4 Local Area Networks across the state are growing and Area Leadership Collectives have emerged from Area Network meetings throughout the year. Throughout 2023 we supported U4C to facilitate 5 Local Area meetings in 4 different locations and had over 500 self-advocates participate throughout the year. While growing the number of actively engaged self-advocates throughout the state, we also continue to grow the number of allies and supporters across the state who are committed to this movement.

In November, the Uniting for Change State Leadership Collective and Area Leadership Collectives came together for a retreat in Macon to prepare to teach, mentor, and facilitate U4C Local Area Networks in 4 locations across Georgia. With continued support from Beth Mount, we gathered to identify state and area priorities and consider possibilities for the "bigger we."

SUN's accomplishments in working to expand self-advocacy in Georgia throughout 2023 were many, as were the accomplishments of self-advocates uniting together. Data from the project year is compiled in this final report to demonstrate our impact on the lives of people with I/DD and their families. We intentionally create our materials using Universal Design for Learning principles and include graphic images, photographs, text, and charts which you will find here.

We also believe in sharing our work so participants and interested stakeholders can examine the overall impact. Our previous end-of-year reports are currently posted on the Uniting for Change website: <https://www.uniting4change.org/our-impact>. These include an overview of the year, workshop participation statistics and outcomes, detailed Community Strong data, publications created, project updates, photographs, graphics, outreach efforts, videos created,

presentations delivered, and number totals of the people impacted based on our grant objectives and performance measures.

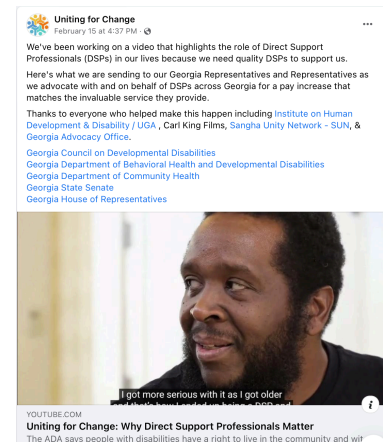
We enthusiastically look forward to supporting the self-advocacy movement to become more sustainable as Uniting for Change continues to rise up and speak out.

Video: Why Direct Support Professionals Matter

Early this year, we worked with Carl King Films and IHDD at the University of Georgia to produce a video we created to address the need for better pay for DSPs in Georgia. During one of our Leadership Retreats, advocates were filmed talking with their DSPs about the role and how vital it is in the lives of people with disabilities. This video was released the day before GCDD's Waivers and Wages Day at the Capitol and has been viewed on Youtube nearly 700 times. The National Alliance on Direct Support Professionals shared this video during their Advocacy Day to an audience of 250. We have also shared it on numerous Community Strong sessions and in U4C Area Network Meetings.

[Watch here!](#) Uniting for Change: Why Direct Support Professionals Matter

The ADA says people with disabilities have a right to live in the community and without the work of Direct Support Professionals, that right cannot be realized. Listen as advocates from across Georgia explain the role these dedicated professionals play in their lives. As you consider the importance of access to services, please remember Direct Support Professionals open pathways to community life, employment opportunities, meaningful relationships, quality health care, and true inclusion everyday. These high quality professionals who support our neighbors with disabilities need to be paid a living wage that matches the invaluable service they provide.



Video: U4C Civic Action

Carl King Films attended our U4C Leadership Retreat and set up a recording studio in the hotel to be able to interview and capture advocates and supporters talking about Uniting for Change. In January 2024, he produced a clip about Civic Action that we will be sharing on all our platforms and with legislators.

[Watch here!](#) Uniting for Change Civic Action

Uniting for Change advocates talk about voting, civic action, and advocacy. We are "uniting Georgians and influencing change by speaking up and taking control of our lives."



Advocacy Efforts

Letter to Legislators

On February 15, 2023, we sent a letter to Georgia's 178 legislators and the Senate Study Committee inviting them to watch a short video we created that highlights the role of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Self-advocates rely on quality DSPs who help folks have access to the good things in life, like employment opportunities, meaningful relationships, quality health care, and true belonging in our communities. U4C created the video to advocate with and on behalf of DSPs across Georgia for a pay increase that matches the invaluable service they provide.

Visiting our State Capitol, February 16, 2023

On February 16, members of Uniting for Change gathered at the Georgia Dome for the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities' Waivers & Wages Advocacy Day to advocate for more HCBS Waivers and livable wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Carmine Vara created Uniting for Change buttons to give to self-advocates. Some Uniting for Change members were able to have one-on-one meetings with their legislators to share their stories about how they want to live on their own, but have limited options due to a lack of transportation. Supporters and allies also illustrated the very real impact that the DSP workforce crisis has on how quality services are provided.

Additionally, U4C Leadership Collective Member, Marian Jackson, was invited to share her story at a press conference held by Senators Sally Harrell and John Albers following GCDD's Advocacy Day. She spoke about the importance of DSPs and the role they play in supporting people with disabilities to truly belong in their communities. Senator Harrell announced the creation of the new Innovation Commission for Georgians and the next steps to take to increase access to waivers and higher wages for Georgians with disabilities and their DSPs.

Letter to Governor Kemp, June 28, 2023

UFC, with support from SUN, sent a letter to Governor Kemp asking to move the rate study process forward so that our DSPs can have a pay increase stating, "One of our Leadership Collective members who grew up in Georgia's institutions finally moved out of Central State Hospital in 2007. For 16 years, she has used waiver services and relies on quality DSP support to be involved in her community. She is currently employed at Burger King in Union City and wants everyone to know that her hourly wage at Burger King is higher than what her DSPs earn per hour. When our provider agencies cannot hire DSPs or the DSPs we have quit because they are not paid a living wage, we are more at risk for being further isolated, having our lives disrupted, and/or getting sick or hurt. Our DSPs have the same right to a living wage as other professionals, like teachers."



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June 28, 2023

The Honorable Brian Kemp
Governor of Georgia
Georgia State Capital
Atlanta, Ga. 30334

CC: Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones
Speaker Jon Burns
Chair Matt Hatchett
Chair Blake Tillery
Chair Katie Dempsey
Chair Ben Watson
Director Kelly Farr
Center for Leadership in Disability, GSU
Georgia Advocacy Office, Inc.
Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
Institute on Human Development & Disability, UGA
Sangha Unity Network, Inc.
SPADD
Unlock 2.0

Dear Governor Kemp,

Uniting for Change is a grassroots statewide advocacy network led by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Georgia. Our mission is to *unite Georgians and influence change by speaking up and taking control of our lives.*

Uniting for Change includes self-advocates, supporters, and allies from across the state and across job and economic levels. We envision a community where all people belong and are heard - a place where people are involved, make their own choices and are seen and treated as equal and true to their destiny. Together, as constituents, we are committed to advocating, organizing, showing up, and being heard.

Self-advocates and supporters with Uniting for Change were deeply disappointed that the rate study language was "disregarded" in the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) FY 24 budget. Because of this, the rate study recommendations can not be approved by the Department of Community Health (DCH) and Centers for Medicaid/Medicare Services (CMS). One of the recommendations we desperately need approved and implemented is raising the pay of the people who support us directly.

We want to make sure you understand that as self-advocates, we depend on our Direct Support Professionals (DSP) to help us in any number of daily tasks so that we can be employed, get to medical appointments, be present and participate in our communities,

Area Networks: Growing Self-Advocacy in 4 Areas across Georgia

We held 4 meetings in each of the 4 Local Area Networks in 2023 in February, April, July, and September. Our fifth and final meeting in December was only held once as it was designed to bring all areas together on zoom to celebrate the year and prepare for 2024. Meeting attendance varied depending on zoom, in-person, and area location.

This chart details attendance in each area at each meeting, broken out by role.

Uniting for Change Local Area's Meeting Attendance by Role and Area						
Meeting Date	Role	Meeting Attendance				Totals by Role per Meeting
		North GA Area	Metro ATL Area	Middle GA Area	South GA Area	
February 2023 In-person	Self-Advocates	36	42	42	23	143 self-advocates in February
	Family Members	7	6	6	7	26 family members in February
	Other	16	14	14	14	58 others in February
	Feb. Total:	59	62	62	44	227 total people in February
April 2023 on Zoom	Self-Advocates	11	4	13	30	58 self-advocates in April
	Family Members	0	0	4	1	5 family members in April
	Other	22	8	22	18	70 others in April
	April Total:	33	12	39	49	133 total in April
July 2023 In-person	Self-Advocates	62	12	41	17	132 self-advocates in July
	Family Members	2	3	4	6	15 family members in July
	Other	28	10	20	13	71 others in July
	July Total:	92	25	65	36	218 total in July
September 2023 on Zoom	Self-Advocates	56	44	48	17	165 self-advocates in September
	Family Members	1	0	0	0	1 family members in September
	Other	16	14	8	15	53 others in September
	Sept. Total:	73	58	56	32	219 total in September
December 2023 ALL Areas on Zoom	Self-Advocates	18				18 self-advocates in December
	Family Members	5				5 family members in December
	Other	22				22 others in December
	Dec. Total:	45				45 total in December
Total from all 2023 Area Network Meetings		516 self-advocates at area meetings in 2023				
		52 family members at Area Meetings in 2023				
		274 othes at Area Meetings in 2023				

February 2023 Area Network Meetings In-Person

In February, Uniting for Change hosted the next round of Area Network Meetings in Metro Atlanta, Dublin, Flowery Branch, Ocilla, and Douglasville. We had 227 participants attend with 143 self-advocates, 26 family members, and 58 others.

During these in-person meetings, we developed mutual agreements for each area that we will use in all future gatherings. After a quick recap of the self-advocacy movement, we reviewed what it means to be in a network and the roles and expectations of U4C self-advocates, family members, and supporters and allies. We then discussed person centeredness - making your own choices and being recognized for your capacity as a decision maker. Presenters also reminded folks about the importance of knowing your rights in order to be an effective self-advocate. We encouraged folks to keep sharing our website and invited everyone to participate in our weekly Community Strong meetings. During the presentation, U4C reminded folks to fill out the technology survey for the GA Technology for All Project and the two Employment and Transportation needs assessments for IHDD.

Focus Areas

April 2023 Area Network Meetings on Zoom

In April, Uniting for Change hosted the next round of Area Network Meetings over Zoom. We held separate Zoom meetings for each area with the U4C Leadership Collective members teaching and facilitating. We had 133 participants attend with 58 self-advocates, 5 family members, and 70 others.



The session included information about the HCBS Settings Rule and how important it is for people to have the resources they need to be independent, know their rights, and have choice and control over their lives. Participants learned about the Five Valued Accomplishments by John and Connie O'Brien and we distributed a handout to help folks think about what more is possible in their communities. We also discussed what it means to be a good leader and shared some helpful tips like being flexible, how to work with others, the importance of asking for help, and how to follow through on our commitments. Self-advocates also spent time thinking about the areas they might be interested in focusing on in their local chapters.

July 2023 Area Network Meetings In-Person

Self-Advocacy Area Network meetings were held throughout the state in July in Clarkesville, Dublin, Dalton, Tifton, and Johns Creek. We had 218 participants attend with 132 self-advocates, 15 family members, and 71 others.

We offered both zoom along with in-person participation to make these meetings hybrid. We talked about presuming competence and reviewed some helpful tips for speaking up for yourself. Presenters reviewed the self-advocacy handbook and the 3 workgroups of Uniting for Change: Education, Outreach, and Impact & Engagement. Our meetings focused on the Impact and Engagement Workgroup and breakout sessions were held to brainstorm and identify some next steps for each area to focus on. Some ideas included a focus on introducing Uniting for Change to their local government officials, Chamber of Commerce, and state elected officials. We also encouraged self-advocates and their allies and supporters to schedule summer visits with their elected officials.

September 2023 Area Network Meetings on Zoom

U4C Self-Advocacy Area Network Meetings were held on Zoom throughout September 2023. 219 total participants attended the September meetings, including 165 self-advocates, 1 family member, and 53 others.

During our September meetings, we discussed the importance of developing communication skills - not only how we can use our voice but also how to be good listeners to others. The majority of these meetings focused on strengthening the Impact and Engagement workgroup and how to build relationships with elected officials. U4C Leadership Member, Derek Heard, provided graphics to help illustrate ways self-advocates can contact their legislators. We talked about folks writing emails, making phone calls, sending letters, and scheduling in person visits. We showed John McCarty's letter to the Governor and other policymakers as an example. We also showed participants how to look up their elected officials on Plural Policy (formerly Open [states.org](https://www.states.org)). Finally, we talked about our upcoming virtual HCBS Workshop and encouraged participants to register and shared details of our final 2023 meeting taking place on Zoom in December. After the meetings, we sent out a follow up email to participants including links to the slides and handouts, our website, and the U4C Area Network Google Drive.



December 2023 All-Area Network Meeting on Zoom



In December, we held one U4C Self-Advocacy Area Network Meeting for all areas held on Zoom with 53 total participants, including 18 self-advocates, 5 family members, and 30 others.

In December we introduced our Area Network Leadership Collective members. We also talked about what it means to be a self-advocate and what it means to be an advocate for others. We discussed how we will grow Uniting for Change at the state level and in our local areas. Participants shared their personal advocacy goals for 2024 and brainstormed ways of engaging with legislators and local officials.

Workshops, Presentations, Speaking Engagements

SPADD Annual Conference in Augusta

U4C hosted an exhibit table at the annual SPADD Conference to share U4C news with providers around the state to hopefully increase our reach and get more self-advocates involved. Marian and Sandra spoke to nearly 100 people representing 25 providers around the state.



Georgia Gathering “This is Me... See Me, Hear Me, Join Me”



U4C was present at the 13th annual Georgia Gathering in September, 2023 held at Unicoi Lodge in Helen. Self-advocates, providers, families, and volunteers come together each year to share stories, fellowship, and build skills. We had a table for folks to learn more about our advocacy efforts and get involved with Local Self-advocacy Area Networks. We also participated in the gallery walk where we shared information and provided materials needed to make vision boards to a group of 30 folks.

GAPSE Conference

On September 27, 2023 Laura Owen from Athens and LJ Young from Riverdale presented at the Georgia Association of Providers Supporting Employment state conference in Athens. Laura and LJ are both part of the Leadership Collective of Uniting for Change. They spoke to participants about self-advocacy, the history of Uniting for Change, and ideas about how self-advocates want and need to be supported in looking for the job of their dreams... not someone else's. Audience participants included providers, representatives from DBHDD, and the Georgia Advocacy Office.



SPADD Annual Membership Meeting



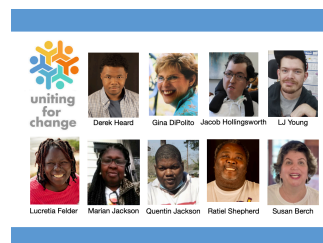
On October 25, 2023 Quentin Jackson, U4C Leadership Collective member from Tifton, presented at the SPADD annual membership meeting in Macon. He talked about Uniting for Change and the history of self-advocacy in Georgia. His presentation provided participants with information to better understand Uniting for Change, where this movement is headed, how to support self-advocates, and the hopes of what more is possible in service provision.

Georgia Association of Community Service Boards Leadership Conference

On October 31, 2023 self-advocates LJ Young from Riverdale and Fonda Davis from Albany spoke at the Georgia Association of Community Service Boards Annual Leadership Conference “Facing Forward...Embracing the Possibilities” in Gainesville, Georgia. They gave a presentation representing Uniting for Change on the “Power of Self-Advocacy.” There were 7 different CSB organizations who participated in this session. The conversation helped move the expectations of the HCBS Settings Rule forward and provided a perspective on what person-centered service provision should look like.

My Voice, My Life: The HCBS Settings Rule & Self-Advocacy Workshops

During October, members of the Uniting for Change State Leadership Collective presented 2 workshops for self-advocates via ZOOM. These workshops were designed to provide self-advocates across Georgia information on what the HCBS Settings Rule expectations are and why it is important for all self-advocates to become familiar with them.



We had a total of 92 participants, with 39 self-advocates and 53 other professionals. Uniting for Change will be offering this workshop again in 2024.

In these workshops, we talked about the importance of creating your own vision for your life - where you want to live, relationships you want to build, having real choices and more control, and other key elements of having a typical life in the community. The visioning piece was followed by a review of what the Settings Rule is, why it was created, and the key elements of the rule. We introduced the 5 valued accomplishments and experiences as a foundation for thinking about what more is possible in supporting self-advocates to have full access in the community. We ended with a conversation about how self-advocates should be part of the person-centered planning process and continue to speak up for what’s important to them.



Outreach Efforts

This year, SUN continued supporting self-advocates to write articles for GCDD's *Making a Difference* quarterly magazine that are featured in the Advocate's Corner.

We increased our email list of stakeholders to include more providers, support coordinators, family members, and school system representation. Additionally, we worked with our advocacy partners to help us disseminate updates and news through their list serves and social media platforms and worked with the service provider association to continue sharing U4C events with their provider membership and DBHDD stakeholders in SPADD News & Notes e-newsletters.

We created and disseminated 3 newsletters during this grant cycle sharing details and news from Uniting for Change. You can read each newsletter here:

March 2023



August 2023



January 2024



Website & Social Media

In 2023, Uniting for Change continued building our online presence with the ongoing development of our website: www.uniting4change.org. This year we focused on developing our U4C Area Network information page that includes a map of cities we've reached. The U4C Area Network page also includes information about the focus areas of each Local Area and a link to our Area Network Resources Google Drive, which has slides, handouts, graphics, and more from each Area Meeting. We also redesigned our resource pages with additional helpful advocacy tools and handouts for self-advocates and their supporters. We continue to explore ways to make our website better for self-advocates and their supporters to use as an advocacy resource. In 2023, we had 1,110 unique visitors on our website with 94% new and 6% returning users. Additionally, we had nearly 2,450 website sessions - up 38% from the previous year.

We also continued developing our online presence through our social media platforms - Facebook (www.facebook.com/unitingforchangeGeorgia) and Instagram (www.instagram.com/Unitingforchangegeorgia) by posting U4C events, workshops, advocacy opportunities, Community Strong, and more. As of January 2024 we have 233 followers on Instagram and 511 followers on Facebook. We will continue to explore different ways of utilizing social media to make Uniting for Change visible to Georgia.

Community Strong



In 2023, we continued hosting Community Strong on Monday's - a weekly ZOOM gathering led by self-advocates for self-advocates. Each week, we have a different host and honored guest. We check in with each other, have discussion about the theme of the week, watch short videos, have fun, learn together, and make connections. For every show, we send out an announcement through our email and social media channels introducing the next week's host and guest.

34	Total # Community Strong Shoes
1112	Total participants in grant year (2/1/23 - 1/31/24)
707	Total Self-Advocates throughout year
66	Unduplicated Count of Self-Advocates Participating
42	Total Family Members throughout Year
25	Unduplicated Count of Family Members Participating
349	Total Allies/Supporters throughout year
104	Unduplicated Count of Allies/Supporters Participating

We had some amazing Community Strong gatherings in 2023 with incredible hosts and guests. This year's guests included Hamida Jinnah and Alexandria Hamilton (IHDD), Dom Kelly (New Disabled South), filmmaker Carl King, Rep. Leesa Hagan, Rep. Viktor Anderson, Alexia Kemerling (AAPD), and many more. We also hosted Ashleigh Caseman, Lori Campbell, and Ron Wakefield with DBHDD. At the End of Year Community Strong Celebration, we created and shared a slideshow recapping some of the major highlights from U4C in 2023 and asked self-advocates who they would like to invite on Community Strong in 2024. We are excited to continue hosting Community Strong and reaching new self-advocates in 2024.

THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL GUEST: DOM KELLY
 WITH YOUR HOST: DEREK HEARD
 THE WORD OF THE WEEK IS... **CREATIVE**

I AM THE FOUNDER OF NEW DISABLED SOUTH
 ADVOCATING FOR DISABILITY RIGHTS AT A REGIONAL LEVEL
 WE NEED MORE WAIVERS & LIVABLE WAGES FOR DSPs!
 THE STATE ALREADY HAS THE MONEY.
 FIGHTING OLD STORIES & LABELS
 CREATING POLICY CHANGE
 YOU NEED TO TELL YOUR STORY BEFORE OTHERS DO IT FOR YOU!
 OUR STORIES DESERVE TO BE TOLD!

HOWEVER YOU CHOOSE TO TELL YOUR STORY, KEEP TELLING IT UNTIL PEOPLE LISTEN!
 IMPACT ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
 *3% OF THE SURPLUS FUNDS
 *HOW CAN WE CHANGE IT?
 *WHAT ACTUAL YEAR'S COMMUNITIES SAFE
 *HOW WE CAN PROVE IT

NDS IS ALSO DOING SOME RESEARCH ON THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL GUEST: BRITTANY CURRY
 WITH YOUR HOST: DEREK HEARD
 THE WORD OF THE WEEK IS... **RAINBOW**

I USE ART TO HELP BRING PEOPLE'S IDEAS TO LIFE!
 I-N-C-L-U-S-I-O-N
 WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD FOR ALL
 MAKES THE WORLD MORE VIBRANT & COLORFUL
 DON'T WANT TO BE ASKED!
 SHARE YOUR GIFTS...
 *IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS
 *SHARE THEM OFTEN
 *SHARE THEM IN PUBLIC

FAVORITE COLORS: BLUE, RED, ORANGE, RAINBOW, TIE DYE

THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL GUEST: REP. LEE SA HAGAN
 WITH YOUR HOST: SANDRA WILCOX
 THE WORD OF THE WEEK IS... **DIGNITY**

I RAN FOR OFFICE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR MY TOWN.
 AS A FIRST TIME LEGISLATOR.
 MADE SURE THE KEY PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP ADDRESS THESE ISSUES
 HOUSING
 EMPLOYMENT
 TRANSPORTATION
 BEING COURTEOUS & COURAGEOUS
 LISTENING TO OTHERS
 BEING TREATED WITH RESPECT & TREATING OTHERS WITH RESPECT
 YOUR VOICE MAKES A REAL IMPACT!

The following chart shows details of each week with the date, name of host, name of guest, word of the week, total attendees, number of self-advocates, family members, and allies/supporters as well as an unduplicated count of each.

COMMUNITY STRONG

Date	Host	Guest	Word	Total Attendees	#Self-Advocates	# NEW Self-Advocates	# Family Members	# NEW Family Members	#Allies (Others)	# NEW Allies (Others)
2/6/23	Gina DiPolito	Russ Lanier	Joy	36	21	21	3	3	13	13
2/13/23	Sheila Jeffrey	Kimberly Jones, SC	Love	28	19	5	3	2	6	4
2/27/23	Carmine Vara	Hamida Jinnah, IHDD	Transportation, Employment	30	25	6	1	0	4	2
3/6/23	Derek Heard	Dom Kelly, New Disabled South	Creative	41	23	1	6	4	12	4
3/13/23	Quentin Jackson	Carl King, Videographer	Power of Storytelling	35	23	1	1	0	10	2
3/27/23	Darien Todd	Ellen Lopez	Healthcare	37	23	3	0	0	11	8
4/10/23	Dana Lloyd	Derek Heard, Darien Todd, Angad Sahgal & Leslie Thornton	Youth DECIDE	32	22	3	2	2	8	1
4/17/23	Quentin Jackson	Sunil Jayanna	Technology	27	20	1	0	0	7	0
4/24/23	Marilyn Freeman	Kassey Chastain	Understanding	24	19	1	0	0	5	1
5/1/23	Derek Heard	Brittany Curry, Inky Brittany	Rainbow	19	11	1	0	0	8	1
5/8/23	LJ Young	Belinda Harris, Rocket Science	Employment	37	25	3	1	1	11	2
5/22/23	Ratiel Shepherd	Angel Stewart	Leader	36	19	1	1	1	16	3
6/5/23	Carlos Lanzas	Roberto Estrada	Faith	29	20	1	0	0	9	3
6/12/23	Sandra Wilcox	Leesa Hagan	Dignity	28	17	0	1	1	10	4
6/26/23	Derek Heard	Alexia Kemerling, AAPD	Election	33	20	0	3	2	10	3
7/10/23	Susan Berch	Jackie McNair, Parent	Gifted	44	23	5	2	1	19	10
7/17/23	Catherine Brenneman	Donna Hobby	Friendship	30	20	0	0	0	10	2
7/31/23	LJ Young	Sandra Wilcox and Rita Young	Coalition	36	22	0	3	1	11	0
8/14/23	Listening Session	Naomi Williams, GCDD	Emergency Preparedness	31	21	0	1	0	9	1
8/21/23	Lucretia Felder	Lori Campbell, DBHDD	Dignity of Risk	41	23	1	0	0	18	9
8/28/23	Ratiel Shepherd	Ashleigh Caseman, DBHDD	Policy	28	18	0	2	2	8	1
9/11/23	Sandra Wilcox	Ron Wakefield, DHBDD	Future	38	15	0	1	0	22	8
9/18/23	Billy Cannon & Thomas Fewell	Rep. Victor Anderson	Impact	29	17	0	0	0	12	2
10/2/23	LJ Young	Devika Rao, 23 East Group	Media	30	22	2	0	0	8	2
10/16/23	Quentin Jackson	Sunil Jayanna	Geek Bro Show	19	15	1	0	0	4	0
10/23/23	Susan Berch	Gillian Grable, IHDD	Fidelity	42	22	2	3	3	17	9
11/13/23	Grace Sherman, Zoe Bostic, Joe Grillo, Darien Todd, Derek Heard, Elisha McKenzie		Youth Decide GA & SDM	44	30	1	1		11	2
11/27/23	Matthew Ladd	Stacey Ramirez	Adventure	34	24	0	2	2	6	0
12/4/23	Ratiel Shepherd	Deidre Lawton, Creative Consulting	Volunteering	29	12	0	0	0	17	1
12/11/23	Carmine Vara	Ronnie Roberts, Stone Mt. Park	Belonging	32	23	1	0	0	9	2
12/18/23	Laura Owen	All	End of Year Celebration	30	21	2	2	0	7	0
1/8/24	Eric Naindoubu	Charlie Miller, GCDD	Legislative Advocacy	38	26	1	2	0	10	1
1/22/24	Jason Cook	Debbie Conway, DSP Council	Support	31	20	1	1	0	3	3
1/29/24	Sheila Jeffrey	LJ Young	Independence	34	26	1	0	0	8	0
Totals				1,112.00	707	66	42	25	349	104

THE POWER OF Creative Action

Uniting for Change Leadership Retreat November 2023

The Power of Creative Action Retreat welcomed 80 self-advocates with their supporters and allies together for the first State and Area Network Leadership Collective Retreat. We met in Macon from November 2 - 4, spending 2 nights and having 6 meals together to continue our leadership growth, self-advocacy sustainability, and opportunities for the collective to build its creative action and power.



Self-advocacy leaders from the North Georgia area, Metro Atlanta area, Middle Georgia area, and South Georgia area were selected to attend based on their commitment to participate in Area Network meetings throughout the year and on weekly Community Strong sessions.

The Power of Creative Action provided a space for reconnecting with folks we have not seen in a while and connecting with new folks who we welcomed into newly formed Area Network Leadership Collectives. We focused the retreat on Power of Creative Action so that we could collectively create forward movement - the action that is required as we move to the next steps of growing the self-advocacy movement in Georgia!

Beth Mount helped the group think about our intention and commitment to this journey by recognizing our higher purpose and our gifts. We created our visual supports to identify and align the good, the not so good, and the future possibilities as we are always working towards “What more is possible?” framework.

We spent time in Area Network groups identifying what is needed for deep change to occur. We came back together to let go of our uncertainties and not knowing and we identified our resources to confront conditions that hurt people and keep folks from the living their life of meaning. Area networks also identified unique concerns and issues to discuss during their Area Network meetings in 2024.

POSITIVE CHANGES

As a self-advocate, what are positive ways you've changed or your life has changed?

What are some GOOD THINGS that have happened since being part of Uniting for Change?

Are there SOME POSITIVE CHANGES with how you are supported?

POSITIVE CHANGES around person-centeredness?

MORE FREEDOM & INDEPENDENCE

MAKING MY OWN CHOICES

- * WHERE I WORK
- * WHERE I LIVE
- * HOW I SPEND MY TIME & WHO I SPEND IT WITH
- * HOW I SPEND MY MONEY

MORE COMMUNITY PRESENCE & PARTICIPATION

- > SERVING ON BOARDS & ADVISORY GROUPS
- > MAKING NEW FRIENDS & MEETING NEW PEOPLE
- > VOLUNTEERING & GETTING MORE INVOLVED

HAVING MORE CONFIDENCE TO...

CONTRIBUTE MY GIFTS

POSITIVE CHANGES

HAVING GOOD SUPPORTERS

- * WHO RESPECT OUR VOICES & CHOICES
- * HELP US LEARN NEW SKILLS

DO MORE ON MY OWN

SPEAK UP & COMMUNICATE BETTER WITH OTHERS

WE BELIEVE IN YOU!

I'M KINDA NERVOUS, BUT I WANT TO TRY...

SANGHA UNITY NETWORK, INC.

THE SYSTEM

WAITING FOR SERVICES THAT...

- * DON'T ALWAYS MEET OUR NEEDS
- * DON'T RESPECT HCBS

TRANSPORTATION

HOUSING

MARRIAGE PENALTY

HEALTHCARE

MONEY

JOB S

LACK OF ACCESS & CONTROL

CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

NEGATIVITY

SELF-DOUBT

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

...CAN I REALLY DO THIS? WHAT IF THEY'RE RIGHT A I'LL NEVER BE READY...

*** WHEN WE'RE TREATED LIKE WE'RE INCAPABLE**

- * FINDING COURAGE
- * ASKING FOR HELP
- * CHILDHOOD TRAUMAS
- * NOT OPEN TO CHANGE

SANGHA UNITY NETWORK, INC.

CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

What is hard about strengthening Uniting for Change and our self-advocacy work in Georgia?

What gets in the way of self-advocates having autonomy and opportunities to create the life you want?

Think about your Area Network and identify the challenges and barriers that you face in speaking up and being heard.

What are some challenges or barriers that prevent self-advocates from getting access to better supports and services?

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

What can we improve or grow in our area?

How do we get supports for self-advocates aligned with the Five Valued Accomplishments?

What emerging ideas will positively impact citizens and our our area communities?

What are new strategies, patterns, or contributions we can make together?



WHAT DO WE WANT TO MAKE VISIBLE?

What energy will you bring as a change agent and a leader in Uniting for Change?

What contributions do we each bring?

What are the opportunities available to grow and sustain self-advocacy with U4C?

How can we support each other on our path?



Area Networks also discussed these focus areas to prioritize in 2024:



NORTH GA AREA

- Help anyone needing a tablet, cell phone get one and set up an email
- Ask all folks we support if they are registered to vote and support it if needed
- Continue to educate community about Uniting for Change
- Continue to recruit new self advocate to be actively involved
- Continue to talk to local community leaders about issues
- Continue to be actively involved in how providers provide services
- Become more involved with community events



METRO ATL AREA

- Recruit (3) three new self advocates
- Focus on advocating for DSP's wage increases
- Work on ways to increasing Employment opportunities
- Podcast (YouTube) open discuss about DSP wages and employment
- Attend a festival to introduce and bring forth awareness about Uniting for Change



MIDDLE GA AREA

- Host a zoom conversation with Christine from GVRA and Sharon from DBHDD about getting support for employment.
- Host a zoom conversation with Greg from VIA about creating on demand accessible transportation in Bulloch, Bibb and Houston Counties.
- Meet with City Council
- Meet with supporter staff about believing and valuing self-advocates independence
- Present to the Bulloch County and Bibb County Rotary Clubs
- Present to local high school class about Self Advocacy Skills 101, connect with Parent Mentors



SOUTH GA AREA

- Continue to advocate for DSP wage increases.
- Continue to increase educating local and state government officials about self advocacy.
- Continue to educate the community about self advocacy and Uniting for Change.

Project Impact: Grant Objectives and Performance Measures

Through these outcomes, it is evident that SUN is helping to grow the state self-advocacy network and increase sustainability of Uniting for Change by supporting the growth and visibility of the 4 Self-advocacy Area Networks. SUN will continue supporting the Uniting for Change State Leadership Collective to work with, teach, and mentor self-advocates to make sure more of their voices are heard, and educate more community members about self-advocacy. The impact of this work will be measured by the increased number of active local self-advocates in each of these communities and their advocacy efforts. Voices of self-advocates in Georgia will be better heard through this education and relationship-building, ultimately impacting Georgians with disabilities to have more autonomy, valued social roles, and opportunities for contribution.

OBJECTIVE 1: SUN will support the Uniting for Change Leadership Collective to increase their leadership, advocacy, communication skills, and the visibility of the network as they impact more self-advocates, family members, and other individuals throughout Georgia.			
OBJECTIVE 2: SUN will provide structure and support to Uniting for Change Local Self-Advocacy Area Networks, as we increase growth and sustainability throughout the State of Georgia.			
OBJECTIVE 3: SUN will demonstrate the impact of Advocates for Change project in Georgia through collecting, analyzing, and reporting quantitative and qualitative data.			
DD Suite Category	Performance Measure	Target	Total Reached
IFA 1.1	The number of people with developmental disabilities who participated in Council supported activities designed to increase their knowledge of how to take part in decisions that affect their lives, the lives of others, and/or systems.	200	519
IFA 1.2	The number of family members who participated in Council supported activities designed to increase their knowledge of how to take part in decisions that affect the family, the lives of others, and/or systems.	50	124
IFA 1.3	The number of 'other individuals' who participated in Council supported in activities designed to increase their knowledge.	250	492
Total people reached:			1,135.00
DD Suite Category	Performance Measure	Target	Total Responses
IFA.2.1A	After participation in Council supported activities, the number of people with developmental disabilities who responded to follow up inquiries about increasing their advocacy.	55	244
IFA 2.1B	Of the total in IFA 2.1B, the number of PWDD who responded that they are 'better able to say what they want, etc.'	50	236
IFA.2.3IND	Of the total in IFA 2.1B, the number of PWDD who responded that they are 'better able to say what they want, etc.'	50	242
IFA 2.4 IND	Of the total in IFA 2.1B, the number of PWDD who responded that they are 'participating now in advocacy activities'.	50	243
IFA.2.5IND	Of the total in IFA 2.1B, the number of PWDD who responded that they are 'participating on cross disability coalitions, boards, and/or serving in leadership positions'.	20	178
IFA.3.1A	The number of people with developmental disabilities who completed the satisfaction question on the participant surveys.	55	243
IFA.3.1B	The number of people with developmental disabilities satisfied with a project activity.	50	207

We greatly appreciate the ongoing support from the following organizations who continue to support the expansion of self-advocacy in Georgia:



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