

Disabilities Day Columbus 2008

May 15, 2008 Columbus, GA - The Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities hosted Disabilities Day Columbus 2008 at the Government Center this morning, Thursday, May 15. Mayor Jim Wetherington joined Mayor's Committee Chairman, Mitzi Oxford, in welcoming people with disabilities, their caregivers and agencies who offer special programs for the disabled community.

The event was held as a celebration of outstanding achievements of some of the 50,000 people with disabilities in Columbus and to recognize companies and individuals who strive to raise awareness to make the community more accessible. Leslie Ostrander, a local disability advocate, author and former Ms. Wheelchair Georgia served as guest speaker and related who she overcame the challenges faced with being in a wheelchair to become a successful business woman.

Awards included:

Youth Award-Scott Sieg. A young man who has competed in almost every Special Olympics sport venue and a Gold and Bronze medal award winner from the World Games.

Employer of the Year-Goodwill of the Southern Rivers which has provided training and job placement to thousands of people facing employment barriers, including those with disabilities. Goodwill not only builds people and families but benefits the community including a \$35 million dollar impact on the local economy in 2007.

Person of the Year-Jodi Hood. A CSU student who is deaf and mentors other deaf students, children and adults throughout the community.

Outstanding Volunteer Service-Lisa Jenkins. Overcoming her own challenges in raising a son with autism, formed the Muscogee County Autism Support Group and the Autism Hope Center to provide support for people with autistic family members.

Exceptional Service Awards:

Carl Dekker- coach of the Muscogee Lions adapted sports program

George Gatewood/Gatewood Prosthetics-involved with the Love-a-Child program, which supplies prosthetics for underprivileged children and provides exceptional service to prosthetic patients.

Columbus Library for Accessible Services- a program that offers accessible services for all types of disabilities in the 12 counties served through the Chattahoochee Valley Regional Library System.

Dr. Jack Hughston Humanitarian Award-Jane Nichols, President and CEO Goodwill. This award is not presented every year and criteria includes someone who has made a significant impact on our community and is a positive role model through exemplary leadership. Nichols was deemed by the Mayor's Committee Executive Advisory Board to possess the skills that have led to the success and growth of Goodwill including leadership, compassion, tireless dedication and extraordinary vision.

Thanks for helping us recognize these folks who so richly deserve time in the spotlight!