Joshua is currently a student in his second semester at Auburn University-Montgomery (AUM), majoring in exercise management. He recently graduated from Opelika High School, where he played soccer, football, and basketball. His high school curriculum consisted of general education classes with classroom accommodations. Joshua spoke positively regarding the special education services he received in high school. He said that with the help of special education teachers, his Individualized Education Program (IEP), the support of his family, and his own hard work; he was able to achieve a standard Alabama High School Diploma.

Joshua indicated that one of the best parts about high school was his local YAiT (Youth and Young Adults in Transition) group. Being a member of YAiT “…helped me advocate for myself, get to know people, and helped me prepare for college.” Joshua was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome and is passionate about advocating for other young people with disabilities. His message to those currently in high school is “work hard and focus on the present”. He encourages young people to use the services that are available to them to aide the transition toward their path of success.

Joshua says that his future plans include working at the YMCA and being a successful role model for people with Asperger’s and other disabilities. Joshua Heard is a shining example of what it means to be a peer advocate and role model. Specifically, he says that it is important that people with disabilities “stay together, care for each other, stand up for ourselves, and stand up for each other.” He has recently been using social media, such as the Autism Shines Facebook page, to tell his story and increase awareness for people with autism spectrum disorders. He has also started his own social networking pages to advocate and encourage awareness for Asperger’s/Autism. You may follow him on twitter @JoshuaAspergers and be on the lookout for his new YouTube channel. Way to go Joshua, from the staff at the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute!
As students and staff returned to Auburn after the holiday season, the offices of the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute are once again abuzz with project activity. With many different projects going on simultaneously, the environment can – at times – seem somewhat chaotic. The truth is that underneath the surface there exists a carefully choreographed dance (e.g., transition) for which many partners (e.g., transition stakeholders) play important roles. At any point in the week, a graduate assistant may fill the role of researcher, educator, or instructor. Sometimes, multiple roles are filled within a single day!

This point in a semester tends to lend itself to the analogy of setting off on a great adventure. Flexible deadlines and checkpoints for progress are established; project managers meet with their support staff. As we each set out on our various ‘adventures’ we may encounter roadblocks which will no doubt cause us to gather together as a group in order to collaborate and find the best solution to the current problem, as we look toward the future. I bet this process sounds similar to the process of transition itself, right?

As always, we have a full semester planned here at Auburn Transition Leadership Institute. We continue to serve as a location for Community-based Instruction for students from Auburn High School. The 23rd Alabama Transition Conference will be held March 4-5, 2013. Many training opportunities lie ahead via Training in Transition (TNT) modules, webinars, and onsite workshops. Continue to stay up-to-date by visiting our website at auburn.edu/atli.
For someone who grew up in the small northeastern town of Hartwell, Georgia, Mike Hubbard, Alabama’s Speaker of the House, has certainly had an interesting journey. He would have never dreamed that one day he would be serving in the legislature as Alabama’s Speaker of the House, as well as a leader in the Alabama transition movement to help youth with disabilities be more successful in their adult lives.

Speaker Hubbard stayed close to home and attended the University of Georgia, where he graduated in 1983 with a degree in radio and television. As a student, he took the opportunity to direct a Heisman campaign for his college roommate, All-American Terry Hoague, as well as working on Hershel Walker’s campaign. After graduating, he moved to the Plains to begin a career at the Auburn Athletic Department. Here, he was able to contribute his efforts and be a part of Bo Jackson’s Heisman campaign in 1990. Also, in 1990, Hubbard left Auburn University to head up Auburn’s radio and television sports network. In 1994, Hubbard formed his own company, Auburn Network, Inc., to handle Auburn’s multi-media rights and built the network into one of the nation’s most respected collegiate sports networks. His understanding of the power of broadcast communication began at an early age, expanding and improving into his adult life.

As a young businessman, Speaker Hubbard wanted to get involved in public service, but did not know when or where to begin. He met with U.S. Representative Bob Riley—who would later become the 52nd governor of the state of Alabama—and became involved with his campaign for Congress. Riley encouraged Hubbard to get involved with politics, and told him he should run for the legislature. To Hubbard’s surprise, he was elected on his first attempt at office and began serving in the 1998 legislature. From 2004-2010, he served as House Minority Leader, becoming Speaker in 2010—the first Republican Speaker of the House in 136 years. The Speaker of the House is third in the line of succession to the governor, and is in charge of making sure the flow of legislation runs smoothly. His media/radio background has undoubtedly helped him become the influential leader that he is today. What inspires Speaker Hubbard most about the work that he does is being able to make positive changes in the state of Alabama. He indicated that the most difficult part of his job is the fact that you can never make everyone happy. When dealing with the bureaucracy of government, he knows all too well that not everyone will be pleased with the decisions made. But, as he says, “Being a leader means making good leadership choices.”

Speaker Hubbard has certainly played an important role in the transition movement in Alabama. He first became aware of transition in Alabama through the Education Ways and Means Committee. “I was on the Education Ways and Means Committee and Government Affairs when it came to my attention that Auburn University was impressed with the fledging transition institute, and I was convinced that ATLI should be funded.” Speaker Hubbard played a huge role in the establishment of the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute by securing an appropriation for its budget. This has made possible the hiring of full-time coordinators who oversee programs, grant proposals, and contracts.

Speaker Hubbard says he feels the future of transition for youth with disabilities is in good hands. ATLI wishes to thank him for his role in securing services for Alabama’s young people and their families, who now have the resources leading to greater self-sufficiency.

“Td just like to state that, I don’t claim to be the expert, and that’s why we have Dr. Rabren and students like you all (Addie and Courtney)...I believe that Transition is in good hands.”

“My overall goal for students with disabilities is to support programs that promote students to have the opportunity to work...If everyone is granted the opportunity to work, it’s better for all....I’m very proud of what ATLI has done.”

—Interview conducted by ATLI Graduate Assistant
Addie Littrell with ATLI Instruction Coordinator Courtney Dotson
CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
by Serey Bright

Sadi Fox, Auburn Transition Leadership Graduate Assistant, recently conducted a presentation on conflict resolution for students with disabilities at Auburn High School. Ms. Fox facilitated lectures in two high school classrooms, focusing on conflict resolution, appropriate behaviors when dealing with conflict, and behavior management. Ms. Fox presented the students with healthy examples of conflict resolution including: developing the capacity to recognize and respond to things that matter to others, defining respectful reactions, being able to forgive and forget, letting go of anger, compromise, and facing conflict when feeling angry or hurt by someone’s behavior. After the lecture, Auburn High School students’ with disabilities shared stories about experiencing conflict with family and friends; remembering how they handled it in the past and then learning, and practicing, more effective ways to deal with conflict in future interactions. The students then gave each other advice on how they would handle conflict in other students’ stories, allowing students to experience empathy while thinking about improved conflict resolution.

Ms. Fox ended her classroom sessions with an experiential activity, exploring how quickly conflict and rumors can spread. One student left the classroom with Ms. Fox and she told them a made up story. Then another student was called out of the classroom and that student heard the story from the first student. The process continued until the last student in class heard the story and told the whole group the story he or she heard. By the time the last student told the story aloud, it was much more dramatic and complex than the original story. This exercise illustrates how rumors and untruths can develop and create conflict and bullying among students.

Ms. Fox’s presentation offered an opportunity for the students to understand their role in creating and dealing with conflict in effective ways, teaching them to monitor their own behavior while showing respect for others.

~Building Brighter Futures~

UPCOMING EVENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER

MARCH
Transition Awareness Month in Alabama
4 & 5 – Alabama Transition Conference XXIII
11 - 15 – Spring Break at Auburn University

APRIL
15 – State Interagency Transition Team Meeting
26 – Auburn University Spring Semester classes end

MAY
4 & 5 – Auburn University Commencement
6 - 9 – 7th Annual National Capacity Building Institute
16 – Auburn University Summer Semester classes begin
23 - Auburn High School Commencement
24 - Opelika High School Commencement

NEWSLETTER NOTES
Do you have an interesting personal story to share about the transition process? Our newsletter staff would like to hear from you! Call 334-844-5927. Archived issues of ATLI Directions are saved at auburn.edu/atli (click on “Publications”).