Linea Johnson is a national speaker, mental health advocate, and author who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at the age of 19. While receiving mental health services, she noticed the disparities in treatment and this stemmed her desire to “provide a voice for people who did not have a voice.” As a result, she began advocating mental health for others. Linea first began her speaking engagements with her mother at conferences, then proceeded to larger mental health organizations, and her advocacy efforts grew from there. She and her mother founded LineaCinda & Associates, a business that engages in mental health advocacy, public speaking, and workshops about mental health disabilities. Linea has been successful in her advocacy work and has been speaking for about eight years now. She explains that advocacy is a very individualized process which could involve finding the right treatment team, advocating for medications, and/or sharing stories. A major component in Linea’s advocacy work has been sharing her individual account with mental illness. Linea states, “I really believe in the power of the personal story.” Describing her unique experience has helped others find the right path for their mental health and helped young adults be better advocates for themselves. Linea and her mother co-authored a book, Perfect Chaos, which has also been instrumental in her journey. In retrospect, writing the book changed Linea’s perspective on herself. She expresses that the best thing about her journey with advocacy is when it is making a difference in the lives of others and hearing of other stories; this has been very healing with her recovery. Linea asserts incorporating transition for youth and young adults require teaching self-determination and self-advocacy, as “both are really key.”

She earned her bachelor’s degree from Seattle University and is currently pursuing an Executive Master of Healthcare Leadership degree at Brown University. Linea’s ultimate goal involves working in disability policy.

“Self-determination and advocacy skills are paramount to recovery. Finding one’s ‘voice’ is critical.”
Celebrating 25 years of transition in Alabama with one of our own, former Auburn University football athlete, Trovon Reed. Trovon is a 2014 graduate of Auburn University’s College of Education, Rehabilitation Services and Disability Studies undergraduate program. We are proud to celebrate his continued success of earning the opportunity to become a professional football athlete starting with the Seattle Seahawks and more recently signing with the St. Louis Rams. Trovon is a former Auburn Tigers defensive back.

Our staff knew that Trovon would be a great fit for the conference after reading about his tenacious attitude on the football field. During a conversation with one of his coaches, Trovon explained, “If you've got that much confidence in me, then I can't let you down!” After reaching out to Trovon through social media about participating in the 2015 Alabama Transition Conference, he responded, “I’m in Vegas right now, training for the NFL; I should be back in town, I wouldn’t mind doing that at all. Thank you again for the opportunity!”

During the opening ceremony of the 25th Alabama Transition Conference, alongside other Auburn “greats”, Trovon led the Auburn Creed and ended it by adding, “We believe in transition and support it.” He also engaged with the Opelika Bulldawg Pride cheerleaders, all students with disabilities from Opelika High School, as they chanted the Auburn Tigers fight song.

Trovon was eager to participate. He brought alongside him current Auburn University football athletes, Deon Mix and Melvin Ray. In support of transition in Alabama, former Auburn University football athlete, Dr. Johnny Green (featured on the next page), Lauren Jones who is Miss Auburn 2015 (featured on the last page), a former Auburn University cheerleader, student within the College of Education and current special educator, Anna Bandy, as well as former Auburn University Tigerette, student, and current special educator, Anna Page Minor were among the Auburn “greats” who participated as well. The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute salutes Trovon Reed as he continues to soar to new heights.

“…collaborating and creating with the student body an experience for people with disabilities to participate and thrive in…”

—Excerpted from Lauren’s platform
Dr. Johnny R. Green, Sr. is the director of the Auburn University Veterans Resource Center where service is provided to veteran students and military dependents to help transition them to the Auburn community and civilian life. He believes there is a gap with “renormalizing” military veterans, hence his passion for working with veterans. Dr. Green asserts that approximately 80% of military veterans do not discuss transition when leaving the military because they are anxious to return home. Veterans are typically not honest about adjustment/transition challenges because of the fear of remaining an additional 30 days or more for further assessment. Therefore, when veterans return to civilian life with these concerns not addressed in the military, transitioning to civilian life further exacerbates their challenges.

Dr. Green indicated that his greatest accomplishment is attaining his doctorate degree from Auburn University. When he was a student athlete during his undergraduate studies, he did not think he belonged at Auburn University. Others also expressed similar sentiments to Dr. Green due to his academic probationary status. Through encouragement and support from his wife, he was able to not only complete his undergraduate degree successfully but also pursue several graduate degrees. Being hooded for his doctorate in the presence of some that did not believe in him was a phenomenal experience, because Dr. Green avidly postulates, “nothing was impossible to me because I believed.”

Dr. Green became involved with the Center because he overheard someone suggesting the need to put services in place for veteran students and it struck an interest in him. When he worked as the Dean of Students, he was always helping people and making an impact in the lives of students. Dr. Green says, “veterans have served our country and they deserve the services they need to be successful when trying to achieve normalcy.” Dr. Green credits many people at Auburn University for helping him establish the Center on campus since November 2010.

The Center provides an array of services for veteran students and dependents such as, veteran education benefits, career development services, mental health services, academic support, Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) mentoring program, and transitional assistance services, to name a few. The Center also advocates for campus accommodations for veterans or dependents with disabilities, such as wheelchair accessibility.

Dr. Green hopes to continue expanding services offered at the Center and solicits assistance from other departments at Auburn University because the Center’s resources are limited. He hopes to receive support from the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute (ATLI) and counseling programs at the university through partnerships. These partnerships will further aid the Center with assessments, referrals, and training students and staff to better understand transition. He anticipates that Auburn University will see an increase in the veteran population because of the Choice Act and new Alabama laws with veteran benefits that provide in-state tuition. He also emphasizes that the Fort Benning Army Base in Columbus, Georgia is nearby and the veteran population is growing in Auburn, Alabama. There are at least 400,000 veterans in Alabama, with 10,000 veterans living in Lee County, Alabama. There are approximately 850 veterans and dependents at Auburn University. Everyone visiting the Center must swipe their student identification card which helps with the accountability of veterans and dependents accessing services. However, he expresses that not all veterans at the University are accounted for. From January to March of 2015, Dr. Green indicates that the Center received a total of over 830 visits with roughly 254 of them being guests.

Dr. Green conveys attending the 2015 Alabama Transition Conference was a “positive experience” and provided many resources and opportunities for networking. He expressed that ATLI had the right people. Dr. Green expresses appreciation for the work ATLI’s staff are doing for transition in Alabama. He looks forward to further partnerships with the Institute.

“Veteran students—the Center is here for you.”
MISS AUBURN, 2015 BELIEVES IN TRANSITION AND SUPPORTS IT...
LAUREN JONES, JUNIOR – Public Relations
Auburn University | College of Liberal Arts

Story by Brooke Joplin

Every year since 1935, the Auburn University Student Government Association hosts an election to determine who will be the next Miss Auburn. This year, Lauren Jones was elected Miss Auburn (2015-2016) and her platform focuses on bringing changes to the Auburn community. One of her main goals is transforming Auburn University into a thriving environment for students with disabilities. As a child, Lauren was born with a cleft lip, so she went to school at the Bell Center where she experienced firsthand how the inclusion of individuals with disabilities had a positive impact on peoples’ lives. She also grew up in a household where multiple members of her family were living with a disability. Therefore, she was able to see firsthand how individuals with disabilities were treated within the community. She realized that when a community made inclusion a central component, it made a positive impact on everyone’s lives. It also gave individuals with a disability a chance to share their experiences with those living without a disability. Lauren encouraged students at Auburn University to reach out to the community and volunteer some of their time to an organization. Miracle League is one of Lauren’s favorite organizations that she supports. Lauren herself is a social advocate and this year she attended the 25th Alabama Transition Conference hosted by the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute (ATLI). She eagerly accepted an invitation to participate during the opening session of the conference this March, by reciting alongside other Auburn “greats” the Auburn Creed stanza, *I believe in the human touch, which cultivates sympathy with my fellow men and mutual helpfulness and brings happiness for all.* One of her favorite duties as Miss Auburn is going to different events like the Alabama Transition Conference to learn more about different cultures and their unique perspectives on life. She hopes that her platform will help bring more attention to the area of disability services. ATLI salutes Lauren!

“Most of the people who have made a positive impact on my life have a disability.”

~Building Brighter Futures~

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2016 ALABAMA TRANSITION CONFERENCE
March 7th & 8th | Updates, visit auburn.edu/atli

OCTOBER

Disability Awareness Month
20 – 21: Alabama Assistive Technology Expo & Conference
27 – 30: Alabama Disability Conference
4 – 7: Council of Administrators of Special Education Conference

NOVEMBER

2: State Interagency Transition Team Meeting
5 – 7: 2015 Division of Career Development and Transition International Conference

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 “Resources”).

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