

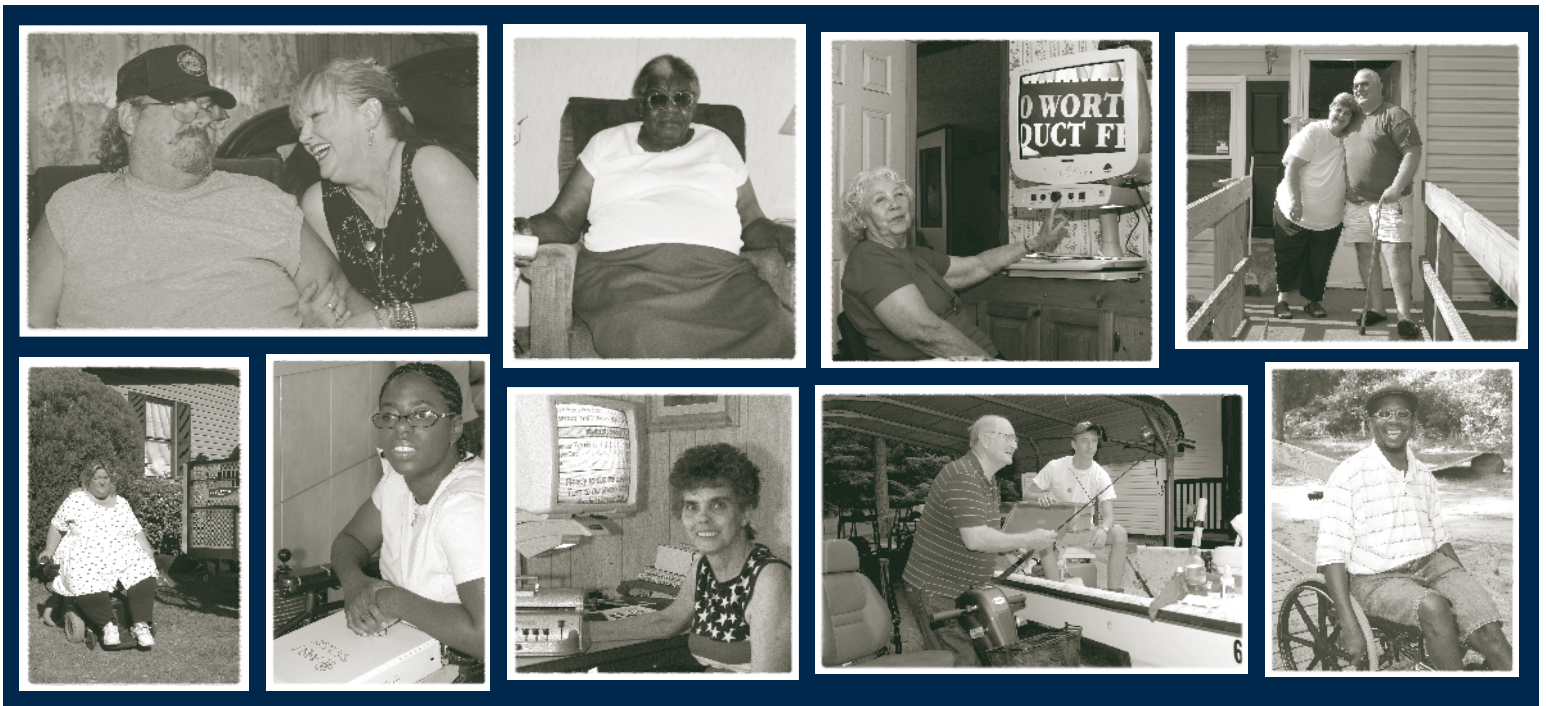
INDEPENDENT LIVING.

IT'S THE FREEDOM TO PURSUE GOALS.

IT'S REMOVING BARRIERS.

IT'S CHANGING LIVES...

CHANGING SOUTHEAST GEORGIA.



ADOPT-A-RAMP PROGRAM



Changing lives, changing Southeast Georgia!

It's what independent living is all about. Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE), Inc. is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization. By removing barriers that prevent full participation in society, we are working toward a time when a disability is “no big deal”; it is simply a different way to navigate the environment.

LIFE changes lives by helping to make independent living a reality for people we know and love.

- By providing four core services: advocacy, peer support, information and referral, and independent living skills training, LIFE helps people with disabilities to be more self-reliant in 11 counties in Southeast Georgia.
- We provide resources for many Georgians to remain in their own homes and communities rather than in nursing homes or institutions.
- We advocate for accessible homes and public places for all people with disabilities.
- LIFE also ensures that important information and services are available to people with hearing, vision and other disabilities.
- LIFE educates the public about our services and the unique needs of people with disabilities, by disseminating information on a variety of issues and advocating for social change – change that enriches the lives of all Georgians.



Sara Caldwell

“LIFE worked with Credit Able to help Mom get the van and lift she needed... That help has been paid forward, helping me to lead a normal life as well.”



Savannah Simmons

“I love my lift chair... If I did not have it, I would have to be in a wheelchair or something to get me up and down.”



June Graham

“With the CCTV, I can read my bills, my prescriptions, recipes, magazines, newspapers... It's opened up a whole new world for me.”



Gene Clark

“Now that I have a ramp, I can get out with my son-in-law and take the grandchildren fishing... That is the key to happiness, to be mobile.”

17 Travis Street Savannah, GA 31406

Introduction to Independent Living

Most Americans take for granted their choices regarding living arrangements, employment, transportation, social and recreational activities, and other aspects of everyday life. For many Americans with disabilities, however, barriers in their communities remove or severely limit their choices. These barriers include a lack of ramped entrances, a lack of sign language interpreters or captioning, or a lack of Braille or taped copies of printed materials. Such circumstances can lead to a life of dependency, low personal satisfaction, and limited participation as a citizen.

This need not occur! Millions of Americans with disabilities live independently. They fulfill all kinds of roles in their communities, from employers to marriage partners, from students to politicians and taxpayers – an unlimited list. They have successfully circumvented a myriad of barriers. Independent living means having authority and responsibility over one's life. Independent living has to do with self-determination. It's about choice. It is having the freedom to succeed or fail and to learn from one's failures, just as people without disabilities do.

Adaptive Equipment and Home Modification Program

LIFE, Inc. makes it possible for people to live independently, by helping people with disabilities integrate themselves into the mainstream world. This is why a talking blood pressure monitor for someone with a visual disability, or a ramp for someone who uses a wheelchair is critical. People with disabilities who cannot afford adaptive equipment or a home modification are limited in education, employment, health services, and social opportunities. Although LIFE receives funding from several sources to support this program, the need far exceeds the available resources.

Home modifications and adaptive equipment have significant benefits:

- Decreased dependence on others for activities of daily living;
- Increased safety for people with disabilities;
- Enhanced independence enabling one to fully participate in his or her community.



Jessica Mathis

My name is Jessica Marie Mathis. I started volunteering for LIFE when I was a senior in high school. Now I am a History major at Armstrong Atlantic State University.

I was born with cerebral palsy and began using a wheelchair as a result of surgery I had when I was younger. When I first came to the LIFE Center, I had very little knowledge about the world of people with disabilities, even though I was a part of that community. Coming to LIFE helped me to realize that I was not the only person with a disability who was dealing with the day to day social and societal struggles that face people with disabilities.



While working for LIFE as a volunteer, I learned about different types of disabilities, and the resources and services that are available. This was most important because many people with disabilities are unsure about the services that are available within the community. LIFE is important because it is an outlet through which people can receive adequate services and community outreach.

The most important thing that LIFE has taught me was not to look at my disability as something shameful, but to use it to educate and inform people about what life is like as a person with a disability, and furthermore, to use my disability to help break down barriers and attitudes about people with disabilities. **LIFE helped me to realize that I need to use my disability to help society see that being disabled is not a bad thing, but a part of the human condition.**



William “Jerry” Futch

I am from Tattnall County and I have lived here all my life. I worked for Tattnall County Road Department for 15 years as a heavy equipment operator. In 1993, I injured my back on the job and had back surgery that never healed properly. I dragged my right leg after surgery. They put me through a battery of tests and discovered that I had Multiple Sclerosis (MS). My marriage crumbled and I was a single parent raising my two sons. I lived alone for several years until I met my second wife in 1999.

My health declined and I needed a power chair for mobility. I was not able to do anything without assistance. I couldn't bathe, so my wife gave me sponge baths. In the summer, she would take me outside where the water could run down onto the ground and hosed me down with the garden hose. It was then that I decided I needed to do something to take care of my own hygiene.

If it were not for LIFE's help, my wife, Jessica, would still be hosing me down with the garden hose. LIFE has helped me to maintain my own hygiene since the installation of the roll-in shower.

Now I want to modify my kitchen so I can cook again. My wife admits she is not a cook, and looks forward to me being back in the kitchen.

Adaptive Equipment

The addition of one simple adaptive device into someone's life can have a profound impact.

A doorbell with flashing lights and a TTY telephone are simple, yet reassuring and functional tools for a person who is deaf.

A Braille & Speak machine is a small device with a Braille keyboard that “speaks” the information entered making it possible for people who are visually impaired to record information and replay it at a later date. This note-taking machine allows visually impaired people to compete in the world of business, or take notes in a classroom or civic setting.

For people with mobility problems, bathroom equipment is essential for independence. A raised toilet seat and safety frame makes it possible to get on and off the toilet without assistance. A handheld shower and bath bench make it possible to bathe safely and independently.

Door & Phone Signal Lights	\$125
Braille Notetaker	\$1,200
Raised Toilet Seat/Safety Frame	\$225
Tub/Shower Bench	\$125
Handheld Shower	\$20

These are a few basic and essential items that allow people with disabilities to independently manage life's daily routines. Quite often, the high cost of adaptive equipment makes it prohibitive; most health insurance policies cover only “medically necessary” items – things that deal with health but not necessarily independence.

Home Modifications

A person who relies on a wheelchair for mobility faces getting in and out of their home safely and independently. Home modifications, in addition to building permanent ramps for wheelchair use, often include widening interior doors, changing thresholds, lowering kitchen cabinets, revamping a bathroom (raised toilet seat, accessible sink, roll-in shower) and other essential but expensive alterations. To make funds go further, we recruit volunteer labor whenever possible and we solicit in-kind donations from lumber and hardware companies. And we request that the customer contribute an amount that is reasonable based on the circumstances.

Permanent Wheelchair Ramp	\$850 - \$2,500
Widen Doorways, Fix Thresholds	\$2,000
Complete Bathroom Renovation	\$5,000

Waiting Lists

LIFE, Inc. maintains a list of applicants for these services. People are served as funds are available, which means that some people wait for a long time, sometimes a year or more! Many people are literally locked in their houses needing a ramp, and unable to perform daily tasks due to a lack of proper adaptive equipment.

Disability Statistics

- Over 54 million (1 in 5) Americans live with disabilities. This ratio translates to approximately 1.5 million Georgians with disabilities. We estimate that 850,000 have disabilities that substantially interfere with their ability to independently manage daily living.
- Only three of ten adults with disabilities (age 18 to 64) are employed as compared to eight of ten adults without disabilities.
- More than 78% of working-age adults with disabilities can and want to work.
- People with disabilities are much more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities. 29% of people with disabilities have a household income of less than \$15,000 compared with 10% of people without disabilities.
- Eight of ten people with disabilities graduate from high school today as compared to nine of ten people without disabilities. As for higher education, one of ten people with disabilities graduates as compared with two of ten of their non-disabled counterparts.
- Health care is postponed by people with disabilities at more than twice the rate of those without disabilities. Since education, employment and income are inextricably linked it is not surprising that health care is put off because they cannot afford it.
- People with disabilities are less likely to socialize with family or friends, visit restaurants, attend cultural events or go shopping than their non-disabled counterparts.

*Excerpts of Data from a Harris Poll of 2000
Conducted for the National Council on Disability*



Joy Domeny

My parents had seven girls. Six of us have Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). Our generation started the trend. I have three children and two of them have RP, a boy and girl. My sister has 11 kids and eight of them have RP. And eight of their children have RP.

Everything has to be enlarged in order for me to see it. I do my own bills, my own house work and my own yard. **If I have to read something, I use my Merlin CCTV that LIFE helped me purchase. It sure helps me out.** I used to guess about how to do things because I could not see the directions. Now when I buy cleaning products for the kitchen, I don't have to guess about the directions. I can read recipes and books, and I use it when I sew to take the threads out.

I want to do things myself and stay independent as long as I can. As long as I can do things myself, I am content. I trim my trees and prune my shrubs. I plant lots of flowers and shrubs. Thank God for LIFE because you do a lot to help people who need it. I feel blessed through LIFE and the help you gave me.





Pernell Watson

My name is Pernell Watson and I am from Darien, Georgia. I lived in Darien all my life except when I was in the service. I was in the service for four years and in the National Guard after I got out of the service. In 1987, I was robbed at gun point. A guy came up and started shooting into my car. I was shot in the neck and became paraplegic. There were a lot of things I could not do, so I went to Warm Springs for Rehabilitation to regain my independence. Before I had a ramp, I had to be picked up and carried in and out. But **when I got the ramp, it was a big relief. Now I don't have to wait for someone to come home to get out.** I go shopping in Brunswick because the stores are cheaper there, and to Savannah for doctor appointments. The ramp made a big difference.

LIFE has also helped me tremendously through the rural transportation voucher program. It was stressful to have to pay people to take me everywhere I needed to go. Gas is high and I am on a fixed income. But I still have to pay to live and the government only gives you so much. LIFE has helped my finances tremendously.

How can you help? Adopt-A-Ramp!

Your donations of money and time can change lives, one at a time. The average cost of a wheelchair ramp is \$1,500 (the cost ranges from \$850-\$2,500) and can often be built in a single day. A CCTV will allow someone with extremely low vision to read countless pieces of mail, books, newspapers, and more, for years to come. The relief of being able to take a shower without assistance is priceless.

By adopting one ramp or assistive technology each year, you improve someone's chances of becoming an active participant in the community, of becoming employed, of simply achieving some level of independence. The relative cost is small, compared to the benefit to the people of Southeast Georgia.

Because LIFE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, your donation may be tax-deductible. Your accounting professional can advise you on this. The satisfaction you gain from helping someone become more self-reliant is invaluable. Not only will you make new friends, you may gain new employees and new customers, as well. Funds may be designated for a specific county, or for general use.

Your organization may want to do more than simply provide funds. If you and your employees/members want hands-on involvement, help is always welcome. Call LIFE for more information on volunteering.

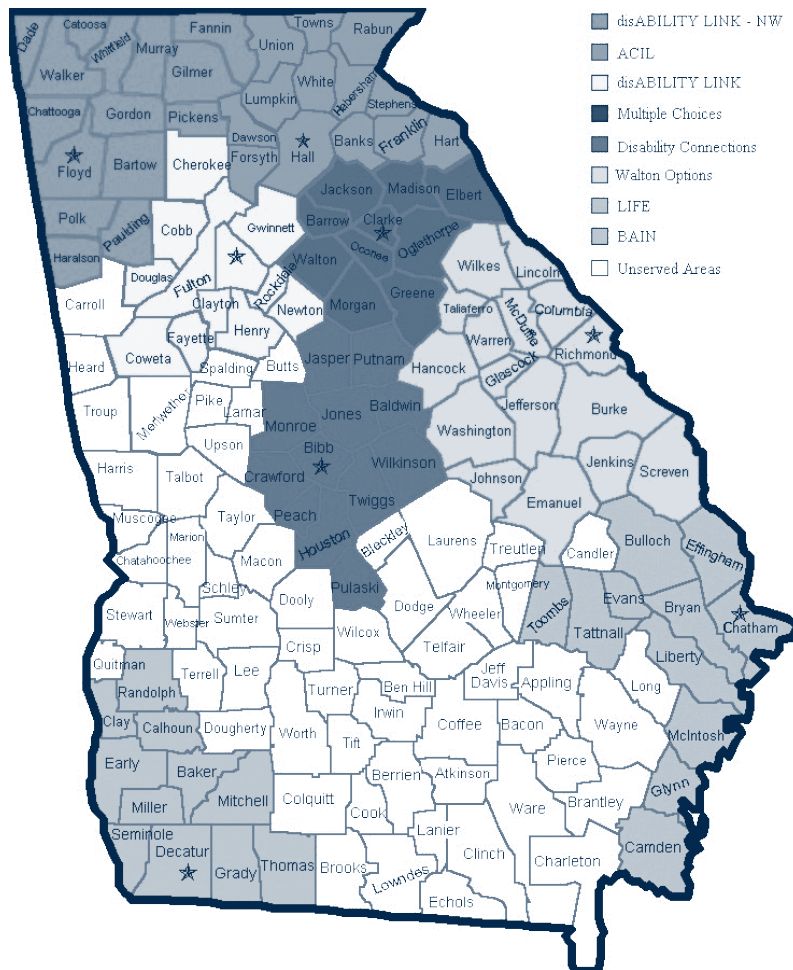
Your organization can choose the donation amount you are comfortable with, but here are some ideas to help you in your decision making:

- \$270 - will buy a talking watch or clock for someone who is blind
- \$850 - will pay for materials for one 12-foot ramp
- \$1,000 - will purchase hand controls to allow someone to drive who uses a wheelchair
- \$1,800 - will purchase a CCTV/Video magnifier a visually impaired person
- \$2,000 - will widen doorways and create accessible threshold in one home
- \$5,000 - will renovate an existing bathroom with a raised toilet, accessible sink and roll-in shower



Joseph Gramiak

“The ramp has made a big difference in my life. I can get up and down, and in and out real well whereas before I could not.”



Georgia Centers for Independent Living Service Areas

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