

YES ACADEMY NEWS RELEASE – May 4, 2006

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day 2006 took place in sunny Tallahassee under a sharp clear blue sky, in marked contrast to the torrential downpours that highlighted last year's wet (but very successful!) event.

YES Academy, Inc. joined over 300 people self-advocates groups — including graduates of the Council's Partners in Policymaking Program — to collect information from twenty-one organizations that specialize in services and opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

In addition, participants witnessed the Senate in full session and various committee meetings that featured bills of interest to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Senate Bill 1278 by Senator Stephen Wise and House Bill 1623 by Representative Aaron Bean were both heard in committees. Both bills promote interagency cooperation for transition services for youth with disabilities and passed these committees, putting them one step closer in the legislative process thanks to encouragement from these consumers.

Participants were afforded the chance to meet with their local representatives, as well as with representatives who were influencing bills of interest to individuals with disabilities.

Governor Bush met privately with self-advocates before lunch and self-advocates and their families had a chance to thank the Governor for his unprecedented support of causes important to people with developmental disabilities over the past eight years.

Lt. Governor Toni Jennings held a news conference celebrating employment opportunities for those with disabilities. APD Director Shelly Brantley introduced Florida's Business Leadership Network leaders from Verizon and Comcast who joined those attending by the dolphin statues in Waller Park.

These exemplary business leaders expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with people with developmental disabilities and the chance to offer more opportunities for people who are, in their words, "not disabled, differently abled."