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Developmental disabilities group honors DeKalb residents

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Two DeKalb residents have been honored for helping improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Last night, All About Developmental Disabilities — an Atlanta-based developmental disabilities support and advocacy organization — hosted its annual Heart of Gold Awards at Emory Conference Center Hotel in Druid Hills.

The event, now in its 15th year, recognized 11 people for their work to provide support, health care and being an advocate for people suffering from developmental disabilities such as autism.

Among the honorees were DeKalb residents Susan Byers and Patricia Nobbie.

“I was touched,” Ms. Byers said about receiving the AADD’s Vital Service Award for her work as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. “I do this because it is what I love to do. Every individual has the right to live a meaningful life and not be locked away.”

Ms. Byers, who works with the Georgia Department of Labor, helps developmentally disabled students in the Atlanta Public School System find jobs and transition from student life to professional life.

“I try to work with their strengths and weaknesses and their connections in the community to find a meaningful job for them,” she said.

Last year, Ms. Byers launched her own firm, Byers, Russell, Spears & Associates, to help developmental disability patients across metro Atlanta find work.

Ms. Nobbie received The Tom Graf Award for her 25 years of service as an advocate for the developmentally disabled.

Ms. Nobbie has worked with several groups and organizations, but currently serves as the deputy director of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities.

“These are two people who have a genuine passion,” said AADD Director of Development Keisha Tennyson. “They are regular people who make an extra special effort to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.”

Co-workers and patients nominate award recipients to AADD.

Ms. Tennyson said there were about 30 nominees this year.

The honorees were selected by a nomination committee convened by AADD.