

## ***The South Fulton Neighbor Newspaper***

### **Residents honored at Heart of Gold Awards event**

By LaTria Garnigan

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Photo: From left, Linda Wilson, Betty Dent, Janice Watson and Dave Blanchard are seen after the 15th annual All About Developmental Disabilities Heart of Gold Awards. Ms. Watson received the Outstanding Individual Achievement Award.

Last Tuesday the All About Developmental Disabilities (AADD) organization held its Heart of Gold Awards in Atlanta. The ceremony was held to honor those Georgians whose achievements (related to developmental disabilities) are consistent with the AADD mission and vision.

Two south Fulton residents were honored at the event. Letha Whitehead-Winfrey received the Tommy Nobis Employment Award and Janice Watson earned the Outstanding Individual Achievement Award.

Ms. Winfrey, who works at Fort McPherson through the Worktec program, said she felt proud in getting the award. She has been employed there for nine years and is a positive role model for a variety of job related and living skills. Ms. Watson, dealing with multiple disabilities, also works with budgeting, running a household and participating in an advocacy group.

“It’s been a longstanding award ceremony that really is a celebration for the community,” said Dave Blanchard, executive director. “Letha and Janice are two of the ladies we got to know through the work we do in supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities to find and keep employment.”

This was the 15th annual event for the organization, which began 50 years ago with parents of children with developmental disabilities who were looking for support for their own children. This year they honored 11 recipients.

“We’re a nonprofit that has committed to being on the forefront of advocating for the creation of new and innovative kinds of services one of which began in 1969 —our Georgia Family Support,” said Blanchard.

One of the most important aspects of the organization is that it enables individuals and families who are touched with an intellectual or developmental disability to thrive in the community with employment and resources.

“Employment is such a critical part of the way we give back to the community,” said Blanchard. “People with disabilities want to give back as we do, and they want to work.”