



**Program Name: Operation Independence**

**Organization Name: Walton Options for Independent Living**

Walton Options is a non-residential, non-medical, consumer controlled Center for Independent Living. Over 80% of the Walton Options' employees and Board of Directors are persons with disabilities. Their mission is to empower persons of all ages regardless of disability by promoting personal choice, independence, community inclusion and competitive employment. Walton Options operates a program known as Operation Independence, which provides assistive technology and home modification services in order to make the home of a person with a disability accessible and safe for the individual. This allows the person to be able to live at home and be active in their community rather than in an institution or rely heavily on others for assistance.

In the past year, Walton Options directly served 531 persons with disabilities in the CSRA, helping them live their lives independently within our community. Of these consumers, 266 were age 65 or older. 393 consumers were minorities, and 395 were women. Their ability to serve these typically underserved populations as well as success in rural counties (over 25% of our consumers reside outside of urban Richmond county) shows their commitment to bringing together all persons with disabilities with their respective communities.

Walton Options has a number of success stories related to technology because of collaborative programs with the CSRA Area Agency on Aging, Georgia Statewide Independent Living Council, Georgia Tools for Life program, Department of Community Affairs who provide funds for the purchase and training of assistive devices. In addition, contributions of funds as well as labor and materials have come from local churches, the AARP, Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Foundation and Jefferson Energy Foundation.

A large number of the consumers accessing the program are seniors in jeopardy of nursing home placement without modifications or assistive devices that will help them remain in their home. One senior that obtained bathtub rails, a tub bench and a handheld shower sprayer summed it up well when she said that "the bathroom equipment has made me feel safer, and now I can bathe myself independently."

In the 12 years the program has been in operation, over 1,500 seniors have received Assistive Technology, durable medical equipment or home modification services (such as the installation of a ramp or bath grab bars) that makes them able to live their lives independently in their own home, as opposed to an institution. In addition to the equipment services provided, Walton

Options also offers peer support, Independent Living Skills classes and assistance to persons needing advocacy or to navigate systems in order to achieve their independent living goals.

Walton Options is proud of the work that is done through Operation Independence, and believes that continued collaboration with local agencies, volunteer groups and continued support from the CSRA AAA will only strengthen their ability to provide options for seniors that allow them their independence and their feeling of freedom.

For more information, contact **Tiffany Johnston** at 706-724-6262 or by email at [tjohnston@waltonoptions.org](mailto:tjohnston@waltonoptions.org) The website is [www.waltonoptions.org](http://www.waltonoptions.org)