

Tarheel Footprints in Health Care

Recognizing unusual and often unsung contributions of individual citizens who have made health care for North Carolinians more accessible and of higher quality

Adonis Brown Self Advocate and Independent Living Consultant



Adonis Brown was born without arms. Many would consider this a huge barrier to a “normal” life but this has not stopped him from achieving a full life that has improved the lives of others. As an advocate for his own goals, as a motivational speaker, and as an independent living consultant he has enabled many to accomplish more than they might have thought possible.

“I’ve learned never to give up and not to take negative advice,” Mr. Brown said recently. “If someone says I can’t do something, that makes me want to do it even more.”

Mr. Brown has devoted his life and professional career to helping individuals with disabilities realize their full potential and achieve their personal goals. He is the founder and president of EnVisioned Independent Living, an organization that is dedicated to helping people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities learn adaptive skills for independent living. EnVisioned provides educational and support services such as counseling, mentoring, and advice on workplace issues. They conduct motivational and sensitivity workshops, and provide life skills training to help individuals achieve independent living lifestyles.

Growing up, Mr. Brown was told by occupational therapists that he would always have to rely on someone to help with all the basic daily living activities. “It was not that the therapists did not know what they were doing,” Brown says. “It was and is that my needs are beyond today’s training. They all felt that dressing and bathing and things like that were going to be things that I would always need assistance with.” However, through perseverance and self-determination, Mr. Brown successfully learned how to live life independently. Recently, in a video produced by the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities, Mr. Brown was filmed saying, “The biggest battle is—to me—mindset. People still do not grasp a full understanding that persons with disabilities, no matter what disability, no matter how severe that disability is, they still deserve the right to reach their full potential in life. Whatever their full potential may be—society should try to help them reach it.”



When asked about Mr. Brown, Larry Swabe, assistant director for program management at the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities responded, “Adonis Brown serves as a visible and respected leader in the developmental disabilities arena. Adonis can be found at many of the places where his leadership is put into practice, serving on the board of Disability Rights North Carolina, the gubernatorial appointee to the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities, and selected for participation on the North Carolina Summit on Developmental Disabilities—just to name a few.”

Mr. Brown is currently working on his bachelor’s degree in psychology and is an active member of the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Arc of North Carolina, NC TASH, and the National Council on Independent Living. He also serves on the Durham Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities and was the 2006 recipient of the North Carolina Advocacy Network’s Vision in Action Award.

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