

ACDD

Advocate

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Mobile is given the gift of art—

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

as artists showcase abilities

ALABAMA COUNCIL FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Keynote Speaker



Sheri Melander-Smith

In the opening session, Sheri Melander-Smith related the compelling personal narrative that led her from having a serious mobility impairment as a child, to being selected personally by Eileen Ford to be part of her famous modeling agency in New York. Melander-Smith lived a fairy tale existence, including traveling to fashion shoots in exotic locations and even dating a prince in Switzerland. She also landed a role – playing a fashion model, no less -- on the television soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful*. As her career sky rocketed, Melander-Smith stayed true to her Midwestern values and chose to use these opportunities to see the world instead of leading the decadent life often associated with high fashion. She traveled to dozens of countries and met many famous people. At the height of her career she was called back to Minnesota because her father was very ill. He died soon after her return and Melander-Smith almost immediately suffered a spinal cord aneurysm and I decided to live my life to the fullest. I couldn’t change my legs but I could change life around me. We cannot control everything that happens to us, only what we do with it. I am happy and content to be involved in the disability community and to be raising my son. I have learned that happiness does not come from circumstances, but from who you are.”

Sheri Melander-Smith concluded with a favorite quotation: “Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan ‘Press On’ has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.”