

Gardner-Webb University

## Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

---

GWU-Today

---

Spring 4-16-2016

### Campus Civitan Hosts Disability Panel – Students Share Their Stories

Ellen Laws

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gwu-today>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Laws, Ellen, "Campus Civitan Hosts Disability Panel – Students Share Their Stories" (2016). *GWU-Today*. 331.

<https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gwu-today/331>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in GWU-Today by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu).

# Campus Civitan hosts Disability Panel – students share their stories



Speakers from the panel. From left: TJ Wilkerson, Ashley Tinnell and Meg Hibbits. Photo by Madison Weavil

**By: Ellen Laws**

Gardner-Webb's Campus Civitan held its first ever Disability Panel, April 13, at 5:30 p.m. in Tucker Student Center. Overall, the purpose of the Disability Panel was to engage the audience and address the topic about physical and intellectual disabilities, as well as teach people how to speak or interact with someone who has a disability.

Four Gardner-Webb students had the opportunity to share their stories and experiences within the context of disabilities. Those four students were TJ Wilkerson, Ashely Tinnell, Meg Hibbits, Luke Johnson and Katie Huddy.

Wilkerson, sophomore, was diagnosed with Autism in kindergarten. "The thing about Autism for me is that I don't have a high percentage of it, [so] it doesn't affect me [badly]," said Wilkerson. "It just affects my focus and my learning ability."

Growing up, Wilkerson managed to overcome all the aspects of his Autism. "I look at Autism as [something] that God has given me for a specific purpose," he said. "I'm not afraid to admit I have Autism, and I like to talk to

people [about it].”

Ashley Tinnell, sophomore, said, “I have a learning disability [which] makes it really hard for me to understand materials in school.” Like most students with disabilities, Tinnell is a part of the Noel Center – a program which offers several helpful options to make class easier for those with disabilities.

Tinnell typically utilizes employed note-takers to help her in her classes. “The Noel Center has helped me slowly accept that my learning disability is not bad.”

Meg Hibbits, junior, found out she had a learning disability before she started sixth grade. “At first I could not accept that I had a disability, but overtime I began to accept it,” she said. Like many others with disabilities, Meg has come to embrace her disability because it has helped shape her into who she is today. “I hate the word disability because it sounds like you’re not able to do anything, but that’s not true.”

Hibbits’s disability does not have an official name, and she is partially on the Autism spectrum.



**After the disability panel, students had the opportunity to make friendship bracelets of many different colors.**

**Photo by Madison Weavil**

Luke Johnson, junior, also has a disability on the autism spectrum. Due to Johnson’s disability, he has a hard time breaking out of routes. That can sometimes cause Johnson to have panic attacks.

There are many kinds of Cerebral Palsy and senior Katie Huddy has Spastic Diplegia, which affects her lower body. “It is nice to have a group of friends that are willing to help me as much as they do.” Being at Gardner-Webb, Huddy says that the people on campus are more accepting about her disability.

“It’s nice not having people stare at me whenever I am on my scooter,” she said. “Just remember that other people, including myself, with disabilities are just trying to walk through life and

accomplish the same things any normal person would do.”

To see all photos from the event, [click here](#).