The April-May 2013 issue of Project Bridge includes project updates from the past few months and events that will take place in April and May. Please send news and events for the next issue to khoffman@udel.edu by May 6.

PROJECT UPDATES

- The Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year with the theme, “Transforming Communities: Inclusion, Empowerment and Well-being.” For the remainder of 2013, we will commemorate our founding, celebrate the present and build toward the future.

We plan to create a piece of 20th anniversary artwork based on words that our friends and partners share with us. What does CDS mean to you? When you think of CDS, what word or words would you use to describe the Center and the work we do? Please share them with us.

To contribute your words:
- Complete the online form; or
- Send an email with your words to vlncalr@udel.edu; or
- Mail submissions to CDS, 461 Wyoming Road, Newark, DE 19716.

- April is Autism Awareness Month, and the next session in the CDS Lunchtime Learning series will focus on the development of a comprehensive plan for Delaware to improve services for children and adults with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The session, “A Blueprint for Collective Action: The Delaware Strategic Plan for Autism Spectrum Disorder,” will be held on Monday, April 29 from 12 noon to 1 p.m. at the Center for Disabilities Studies. (Please note change from the April 22 date that was announced in the March issue of Project Bridge.)

Annalisa Ekbladh, CDS staff member and program coordinator for the Autism Planning Initiative, will speak about the findings from focus groups and the statewide needs assessment survey, as
well as share preliminary recommendations from the Delaware Strategic Plan for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

CDS provides leadership on the two-year planning grant that is supporting this project. Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, the initiative has focused on gathering information from families and self-advocates and bringing statewide stakeholders together to develop a plan for services for individuals with ASD across the lifespan. The expected long-term outcome of the strategic plan is to assure that all Delawareans with ASD have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to live independent and interdependent lives within the community.

Lunchtime Learning sessions are free, but registration is requested; contact Katie Hoffman at khoffman@udel.edu. Please register by April 22 if you need an accommodation. You are welcome to bring a bag lunch. Water and snacks will be provided. See the event flyer.

- CDS has scheduled a Lunchtime Learning session on Monday, May 13 that will include clips of the documentary, Who Cares about Kelsey. Debby Boyer, CDS School Age unit director and co-director of Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS), will lead a discussion about the information presented in the film and its implications for working with students in Delaware. Who Cares about Kelsey is a project by Dan Habib, who created the documentary, Including Samuel. The film documents the lives of students with emotional/behavioral challenges and shows innovative educational approaches that help these students to succeed, while improving the overall school culture and climate. See the item that follows for more information about the film or visit the Who Cares about Kelsey website.

Please register for this session with Katie Hoffman at khoffman@udel.edu. Contact her by May 6 if you need an accommodation. You are welcome to bring a bag lunch. Water and snacks will be provided. See the event flyer.

- The theme of this year’s DE-PBS annual celebration is Celebrating Secondary Successes with DE-PBS: Lights, Camera, DE-PBS Action! The celebration will begin with a viewing of the award-winning documentary, Who Cares about Kelsey. Participants will have the unique opportunity to ask questions of Kelsey Carroll, the at-risk high school student who is the focus of the film, and her former high school interventionist, Kathy Francoeur. Attendees will then have the choice of two sessions: a panel discussion with DE-PBS educators and students at the secondary level; or an interactive breakout session for students in grades 7 and above, during which the students will outline their dream school. To conclude the celebration, Kathy will discuss ways positive behavior supports and strategies at the Tier 1, 2 and 3 levels can be successfully and systematically implemented at the secondary level.

- The Center for Disabilities Studies now has a Facebook page, which you can find at www.facebook.com/UDelCDS. Please visit it often to learn what’s going on at CDS and in the disability community, and feel free to share it with others. To suggest a post to the CDS Facebook page, please contact Tori Clark at vlnclark@udel.edu.
Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Success (ACCESS) project updates:

Due to an overwhelming response from teachers, the ACCESS project recently extended its English Language Arts (ELA) and Math teacher cohorts to include 16 additional teachers.

ACCESS continues to provide professional development focused on understanding the Science and Social Studies Grade Band Extensions (GBEs). GBEs assist special educators by providing a variety of entry points to the general academic standards. Additionally, the project recently began offering professional development workshops designed specifically for paraeducators, who play an important role in the classroom.

The ACCESS project partnered with the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education in its workshop, Including Students with Intensive Support Needs, at the Inclusion Conference in March. The workshop helped participants identify practical steps to include students with intensive support needs in general education classrooms.

Congratulations to Terri Hancharick, research associate in the Health and Wellness unit, for receiving the second annual Jefferson Award from Newark High School (NHS). This award is given to alumni of NHS for outstanding service in the community by the Jefferson Award Youth Initiators, a student organization that provides volunteer opportunities and holds fundraising events. Terri was nominated by NHS student Julia Murphy, daughter of CDS’s Annalisa Ekbladh. Julia presented Terri with the award in a ceremony on March 21. Terri commented that the Jefferson Award Youth Initiators are an “amazing group of students who have spent much of their time volunteering in the community and set an example for the rest of the school.”

Congratulations to Rochelle Brittingham and family, who welcomed Magdalen Marie Santella on February 20. Rochelle is a doctoral candidate who has worked on the Emergency Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities (EPID) project at CDS for close to two years.

CDS welcomes new staff and students:

Kara Magane is working with Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities as a project specialist until the end of June. Kara is a 2012 graduate of the University of Delaware who majored in sociology, with a concentration in health services, and minored in public health.

Rita Tso is a senior human service major at UD who is interning with the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative for the spring semester.

Alyssa Fiume is a UD senior human services major and disabilities studies minor who is serving as an intern during spring semester with the Career and Life Skills Certificate (CLSC) program.

CDS shares the community’s loss at the death of CAC member Don Moore. Although Don joined the Community Advisory Council less than a year ago, his contributions were significant. We will miss his great personality, strong convictions and leadership skills.
Community Connectors benefits UD student coach as well as adult members

- Community Connectors is a program for adults (18 and older) with disabilities who learn leadership skills through social, fundraising and service events. The group is part of TEEM (Transition, Education and Employment Model) at CDS. As with other TEEM programs, a person-centered approach is used to support members of Community Connectors to fully participate in their communities.

Grace Wesley, a junior University of Delaware student majoring in early elementary education with a concentration in special education, is the head coach for Community Connectors. She became involved with Connectors after enrolling in the course, Mentoring Students with Disabilities (see the March article in this year’s annual report for more information about this course). After connecting with Debbie Bain, Connectors leader since 2007, Grace knew she wanted to be a coach with the group.

The Connectors recently organized a fundraiser at Klondike Kate’s, went to Longwood Gardens and attended local theater performances. In April, members will serve as ambassadors at the Christina School District’s Transition to Adult Life Fair.

Participation in these and other activities helps the young adults develop important skills, Grace reflects. “I’ve seen students learn really great life skills like how to be flexible, how to communicate ideas, how to network and socialize. Even if they’re not the leader of a particular event, they learn important skills like working together.”

Her involvement in Community Connectors has inspired Grace to realize new friendships with the adults involved in the program. “Through prior experiences, I mainly got to work with students with disabilities as a job, but through Community Connectors, I’ve gotten to know people with disabilities on a personal, individual level. It’s given me a greater perspective about the variety of people with disabilities and what their wants and needs are.”

Grace’s role as head coach has also inspired her to expand her professional interests. “I used to think I wanted to work solely with younger students with disabilities,” she said, “but now, I’m realizing that I sincerely enjoy working with older students as well.”

If you are interested in becoming involved with Community Connectors, contact Debbie Bain at dbain@udel.edu or 302-831-7552.

EVENTS

Also visit the CDS website calendar at http://www.udel.edu/cds/index_calendar.html.

- April 15–16. “Shared Work, Shared Vision” Delaware Community of Practice Transition/Self-Determination Conference, Sheraton Dover Hotel, 8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. The conference is for
students aged 14–21 receiving special education services, their parents, educators and professionals. Registration closed April 1. If you have questions, contact Valencia Harper at vharper@doe.k12.de.us or 302-735-4210.

- **April 17. Autism and Other Communicative Disorders in Urgent Care Settings**, Cheer Center, 20520 Sandhill Road, Georgetown, 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Autism Delaware, the Sussex Consortium and SusPAC present this free half-day seminar that will review autism spectrum disorders and discuss how to understand and communicate with individuals diagnosed with communication disorders and utilize communication tools. The seminar will also discuss how to recognize and work with people diagnosed with autism in urgent care settings. Limited seats are available for this event. Register by contacting Autism Delaware at 302-644-3410 or dafnecarnright@delautism.org.

- **April 24. Social Skills for Home**, Delaware Biotechnology Institute, Room 102, Delaware Technology Park, 115 Innovation Way, Newark, DE 19711, 6 to 8 p.m. Delaware Positive Behavior Support and the Delaware Department of Education are sponsoring this workshop for parents/caregivers and educators. It teaches them how to improve social skills of children, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder, using the Social Thinking® approach. This approach is based upon the work of Michelle Garcia Winner. Visit the [Social Thinking® website](#) to learn more about this approach. Please register for the workshop by April 17 by contacting Debby Boyer at 302-831-3503 or by completing the [registration form](#).

- **April 26. Easter Seals Caregiver & Respite Conference**, Easter Seals Conference Center, 61 Corporate Circle, New Castle, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The theme is “Rise Above the Challenges of Caregiving.” [John Schall](#), CEO of the National Family Caregiver Alliance, will deliver the keynote address and there will be a full day of interactive presentations designed to help family caregivers. The conference will be broadcast to the Easter Seals Georgetown location. Additional information and a registration form are available on the [Easter Seals website](#). Contact Erin Warren at ewarren@esdel.org or 302-221-2087 for more information.

- **April 29. CDS Lunchtime Learning**, “A Blueprint for Collective Action: The Delaware Strategic Plan for Autism Spectrum Disorder,” 12 noon to 1 p.m. See the [Project Updates](#) section for more information.

- **May 1-2. 2013 Delaware Victims’ Rights Task Force 22nd Annual Victims’ Tribute**, 6:30 p.m. As part of National Crime Victims’ Rights week, Marilyn Van Derbur will be the featured speaker at two events. Marilyn is an author, advocate and child sexual abuse survivor, as well as a former Miss America. Her book, “[Miss America By Day](#),” won the prestigious Writer’s Digest award for [Most Inspirational Book](#). Marilyn will speak on May 1 at the Sheraton Dover Hotel and on May 2 at Cape Henlopen High School, Lewes. These events are free and open to the public. More information is available on the [event website](#).

- **May 3. Families in Crisis Conference (FICC)**, Ellendale Fire Hall, Rt. 16, Ellendale, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The FICC brings together individuals who are concerned with improving the quality of social service delivery in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. The theme is “It Takes a Village.” The featured speaker
for the conference is Rita Landgraf, Secretary of Delaware Health and Social Services. For more information or to register for the conference, contact FICConference@yahoo.com or 302-628-4896.

- **May 13. CDS Lunchtime Learning, “Who Cares about Kelsey” Film Screening and Discussion,” 12 noon to 1 p.m.** See the [Project Updates](#) section for more information.

- **May 19. 10th Annual Buddy Walk, UD Athletic Complex, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** This one-mile walk is conducted by the Down Syndrome Association (DSA) to promote the understanding, inclusion and acceptance of people with Down syndrome. More than 2,000 people are expected to participate by walking, volunteering or collecting donations in the name of their Buddy or Team. Following the walk are free activities and entertainment for toddlers to teenagers. CDS will have an information table at the event. Visit the [DSA website](#) for further information about the event.

## RESOURCES

- The Delaware Youth Leadership Initiative (DYLI) is a new group focusing on helping people with disabilities and special health care needs (ages 14-30) to become great leaders and self-advocates. DYLI is a state chapter of the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN). DYLI is currently working on holding a statewide Youth Leadership Forum. If you are interested in getting involved with DYLI, contact Staci Forrest at delawareyli@gmail.com. Visit the [NYLN website](#) to learn more about NYLN.

## ADVOCACY CORNER

This section is dedicated to informing you about advocacy efforts and new or pending legislation or policies that relate to individuals with disabilities. If you would like to suggest information to share in upcoming editions of Project Bridge, contact khoffman@udel.edu.

- Governor Jack Markell was a lead witness at a hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee chaired by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA). The topic was "State Leadership and Innovation in Disability Employment." As the current chair of the National Governors Association (NGA), Governor Markell has made employment for people with disabilities his major initiative.

## CONTACT US

The University of Delaware’s Center for Disabilities Studies is located at 461 Wyoming Road, Newark, Delaware, 19716. Please call us at 302-831-6974 or 302-831-4689 (TDD), send an email to ud-cds@udel.edu or visit our website at www.udel.edu/cds.
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