PROJECT BRIDGE

FEBRUARY 2014

Project Bridge is the periodic newsletter of the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) within the University of Delaware’s College of Education and Human Development. This issue includes project updates from the past few months and events taking place in February.

Please send news and events for the next issue to Katie Hoffman at khoffman@udel.edu by March 7.

CDS IN THE NEWS

Beth Mineo and Jamie Wolfe speak out on PBS

CDS Director Beth Mineo and CDS Disabilities Specialist Jamie Wolfe were recently interviewed on PBS about the coming reforms to Delaware’s paratransit service. Several of the reforms could prove devastating for people with disabilities who depend on the service for transport to their chosen destinations. The piece aired on First, a program broadcast by local PBS affiliate WHYY, on Jan. 31, and is available for viewing on the WHYY website.

Victor Schaffner joins News Journal board

Victor Schaffner, director of the Communications and Advocacy Unit at CDS, is joining the Community Voices board of the News Journal. As a member of the board, Victor should get the opportunity to write as many as a half dozen op-ed pieces for the newspaper in 2014.

PROJECT UPDATES

CDS Lunchtime Learning: domestic violence, disability and mental illness

On Feb. 28, the First State Equal Access to Safety Collaboration will present findings from its statewide needs assessment, share stories of survivors and provide an overview of the Collaboration’s Strategic Plan.
Delaware needs a trauma-informed approach to care that responds to individuals who are victims of domestic violence – including people with disabilities and people with mental illnesses.

Janet Tillman, Disabilities Project Manager at the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Jane Donovan, Disabilities Project Coordinator at CDS, will present.

The Lunchtime Learning event will be held from noon to 1 p.m. in room 132 at the Center for Disabilities Studies, 461 Wyoming Road, in Newark.

To register – and learn more about how this project will be engaging community agencies to build knowledge and capacity on this important issue – please complete the online registration form. Requested accommodations will be provided. You are welcome to bring a bag lunch; snacks and water will be provided.

DATI open house events

The Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) will host an open house on March 14, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., on March 17, from noon till 7 p.m., and on March 21, from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m. Enjoy hands-on opportunities to explore what the world of early childhood assistive technology looks like in the 21st century! Between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., there also may be an opportunity to visit the Lab Preschool and observe young children using various technologies.

DATI is located at the Center for Disabilities Studies, 461 Wyoming Road, in Newark; Lab Preschool just next door. For more information on the open houses, contact Suzanne Milbourne at 302-831-0848 or Suzanne@udel.edu.

New article on social networks of students with intellectual disabilities from Laura Eisenman, Brian Freedman, Liz Farley-Ripple and Mary Culnane

Laura Eisenman, coordinator of UD’s disabilities studies minor, and Brian Freedman, director of the Transition, Education and Employment Model (TEEM) unit, along with Liz Farley-Ripple, an assistant professor in the School of Education and Mary Culnane, a doctoral student in the School of Public Policy and Administration, recently published an article, “Rethinking social network assessment for students with intellectual disabilities in postsecondary education,” in the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability (JPED). The article describes a new tool for assessing the social networks of persons with disabilities in order to provide an expanded view of how social networks may influence career opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The article, which is in Volume 26, Issue 4 of the publication, will be added in multiple formats to the JPED website in the near future.
Study abroad trip for disabilities studies minor featured in new article

In an article published in The Review of Disabilities Studies (RDS), authors Laura Eisenman, former CDS director Michael Gamel-McCormick, Director of Legislative Affairs for AUCD Kim Musheno, and UD graduates Rachel McCulley, Meghan Moritz and Ashley Curran describe a UD study abroad program that explored disability issues in diverse cultural contexts. The trip, which occurred in 2010, allowed disabilities studies minors an opportunity to learn more about disabilities in Ghana, UAE, Nepal and Thailand. The authors conclude that the study abroad program allowed participating students to develop more critical perspectives on the importance of culture in shaping disability experiences. The complete article is available for download on the RDS web page in Volume 9, Issue 4 of the publication.

CLSC Applications for Fall 2014

CDS’ Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program, a two-year, non-residential postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities, is in the final phase of accepting applications for students interested in enrolling for Fall 2014. If you are interested, please contact Mary Thomas as soon as possible at 302-831-2940 or maryt@udel.edu.

EVENTS

February 26

Let’s Loop Delaware: Informational Community Meeting and Hearing Loop Demonstration, Modern Maturity Center, 1121 Forrest Avenue, Dover, 11 a.m. - 12 noon. Organized by the Hearing Loss Association of Delaware (HLADE), this event offers an opportunity for hearing aid users to test a hearing loop assistive listening system. This system transmits sound from a microphone directly and wirelessly to hearing aids, providing improved clarity for people with hearing loss. Dr. Juliette Sterkens, a nationally known expert and advocate for the Loop America Project, will present on hearing loops and how they can help improve hearing at home, work or anywhere in the community. For more information on this event, contact HLADE at (302) 292-3066 or at hlade@comcast.net.

February 28

CDS Lunchtime Learning, see above.

March 11

ACCESS Project Parent Event: “Can Your Son or Daughter Have an Inclusive Adult Life? Most Certainly Yes!” Dover Downs Conference Center, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. Ann Turnbull will share her family story. Her son, Jay, had an adult life characterized by competitive employment, a home of his own and many friends and connections. There is no cost to attend this event, but registration is required by emailing deaccessproject@udel.edu.

March 12

Inclusion Conference, Dover Downs Conference Center, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. The conference is designed for educators, parents, policymakers and service providers who are interested in promoting inclusion for all from birth to age 21. For more information on this year’s event,
including registration information, visit the Inclusion Conference website. This conference is likely to reach capacity attendance well before the conference date, so register now to ensure your participation.

**March 14**

DATI Open House, see above.

**March 17**

DATI Open House, see above.

**March 18**

2014 School Collaborative Conference: “Creating Connections: Healthy Schools, Successful Students”, The Outlook at the Duncan Center, 500 W Loockerman Street, Dover, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Attendees of this conference will gain knowledge on developing healthy connections for students in Delaware schools. Topics include healthy eating, physical activity and asthma, as well as overviews of evidence-based programs being used in Delaware schools. CDS’ Debby Boyer will present on Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS). More information, including registration details, is available on the event website.

**March 21**

DATI Open House, see above.

**March 31**

Delaware Community of Practice 2014 Transition Conference, Dover Downs Conference Center, 8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. The conference, hosted by the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative, is for youth ages 14-21 receiving special education services, as well as parents, educators and professionals. Session topics will include employment, post-secondary education and independent living. For more information on this year’s event, contact Dale Matusevich at dale.matusevich@doe.k12.de.us. Registration can be completed using the online registration form.

Visit the CDS calendar for more information about upcoming events.

**RESOURCES**

Window-Eyes screen reader now available at no cost

Window-Eyes is a screen reader that enables people who are blind, visually impaired or with a print disability to have full access to PCs. The program makes the computer accessible via speech and/or Braille. Previously this software was available for purchase, but thanks to GW Micro and Microsoft, it is now available at no cost. Eligible customers, using Microsoft Office 2010 or higher, can download a full version of Window-Eyes at www.WindowEyesForOffice.com. The website provides download instructions as well as additional details about this offer.
ELDERinfo offers Medicare information sessions throughout Delaware

ELDERinfo, the Delaware State Health Insurance Assistance Program, hosts this free program, which will shine a light on Medicare. New and future beneficiaries can learn about Medicare benefits, supplemental insurance policies, Medicare Advantage plans and prescription drug coverage. For more information, visit the [event website](#). Seating is limited, and registration is required; to register for a session, call 1-800-336-9500.

- March 10, Hockessin Library, 1023 Valley Road, Hockessin, 10:15 a.m. - 12 noon
- March 12, Georgetown Community Center, 20520 Sand Hill Road, Georgetown, 10 a.m. - 12 noon
- March 18, Rockland Place, 1519 Rockland Road, Wilmington, 10 a.m. - 12 noon
- March 20, Dover Public Library, Meeting Room A, 35 E Loockerman Street, Dover, 10 a.m. - 12 noon
- March 24, Newark Senior Center, 200 White Chapel Road, Newark, 10 a.m. - 12 noon

New forum for families affected by cerebral palsy

A new blog has launched to provide the latest news and research on cerebral palsy. [CP Family Forum of Delaware](#) shares information on legislation changes and local resources, and serves as a place for families to share stories, ask questions and get advice from each other. The website, managed by former CDS staff member Terri Hancharick, also has an accompanying [Facebook page](#).

**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.

Unionizing attendants for people with disabilities

Representatives from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) recently met with various state officials, stakeholder groups and self-advocates to discuss the possibility of
legislation in Delaware that would unionize attendants who are currently hired, trained and supervised by individuals with disabilities. Currently, those individuals have the option of hiring family members as well as friends and other qualified persons. In other states where unionizing attendants is required, individuals who employ attendants have had their ability to direct their own care compromised. In those states, the only way attendants get hired is through an agency model. An individual with a disability or a family member choose an attendant off a registry that is developed by agency personnel. In order to qualify for the registry, the attendant must meet agency guidelines, not guidelines set by the individual needing the attendant's services. Another issue is the training of the attendant. In states where the attendants have been unionized, training is not done according to the unique needs of the person with a disability. In Delaware, the unique needs of the individual currently prevail. Funding for services could also be at risk. In Delaware, attendants’ services are funded through state and federal dollars. But services could be cut in the wake of union demands for raises. SEIU representatives wish to have further conversations with self-advocates and stakeholder groups. At this point, legislation has not been introduced.

**Rep. Melanie Smith honored at LIFE Conference**

Delaware's disability community recently recognized Rep. Melanie George Smith for her work on behalf of people with disabilities, honoring her as legislator of the year at this year's LIFE Conference. Ms. Smith has successfully advocated for funding to help people who are moving out of nursing homes obtain housing vouchers. The vouchers provide rental assistance for those on limited income so they can live in the community of their choice. She has also introduced a bill this year that requires doctors and hospital staff to provide information to parents of children diagnosed with Down syndrome about medical tools and support groups. It has gained support from legislators and advocates.

**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. You'll also find CDS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/UDelCDS.

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