PROJECT BRIDGE

DECEMBER 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 updates from the past few months and a look forward to upcoming events.

Please send news and items for the next issue to Ben Szmidt at bszmidt@udel.edu by January 15.

YEAR IN REVIEW

2013-2014 Annual Report & 2015 Calendar is available & in the mail

CDS’s new annual report and calendar features scenes from Artfest on its covers and includes stories on assistive technology, UD’s Disability Minor, the new CMS rule, expanded accessibility, health disparities and emergency preparedness, among several others. If you’re not on CDS’s mailing list and wish to receive the annual report and calendar, please click here. In January, CDS will release a digital version of the annual report. And, for the first time, that version will showcase additional information, including videos, slideshows, newspaper stories, a radio broadcast, research studies and PowerPoint presentations.
IN THE NEWS

News Journal’s CMS story features Beth Mineo

CDS’s director addressed the new CMS rule in a Dec. 1 News Journal story, noting how more community living is on the way for people with disabilities. "People have been held back from being able to make choices about where they live and where they work," she said. But the new rule from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services – and shifts in funding caused by the new rule – "will open up doors to new kinds of choices that people have never had before." Beth added that the new rule “reflects what a growing body of research has shown – that people with disabilities thrive in community settings and should have much more opportunity to determine their own course in life. Things people were saying 10 years ago are beginning to show up in policy," Beth said. "The work in self-determination is now embedded in the CMS rule."

Read the News Journal story here.

Newsday asks Brian Freedman about jobs

In a Dec. 5 Newsday story, CDS’s director of transition and employment programs punched a hole in the myth that hiring people with disabilities creates a financial burden for companies. To the contrary: the resources people with disabilities “need to be successful in their jobs are either no-cost or low-cost," he said.

Read the Newsday story, and the perspective Brian added to it, here.
**MULTIMEDIA**

**Artfest video features people with disabilities, UD students**

Creativity, friendship and fun shine through in this video, which the Center for Disabilities Studies shot at this year’s Artfest, the annual creative workshop and community celebration that CDS hosts with Art Therapy Express. To watch the just-released video, visit the [University of Delaware’s YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YouTubeVideoID).

A creative moment captured on CDS’s Artfest video.

**PROJECT UPDATES**

**Assistive technology demonstration**

CDS’s Suzanne Milbourne, Dan Fendler and Karen Latimer led Bayada clinicians and the families they serve in a Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration on Dec. 5 at the Center’s offices in Newark. The clinicians and family members learned how to choose developmental and educational toys for children from birth to age five, and how to use switches to make everyday activities more accessible. Members of UD’s GoBabyGo! team also presented on how assistive technology can help children explore their world independently.

Dan Fendler at the December forum.

**DE-PBS leads state-wide workshop**

The Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project hosted a statewide workshop in Dover on Dec. 9, in which more than 80 people from 34 Delaware schools participated. The professionals who attended shared ways that schools can support the development of self-
discipline, such as incorporating responsible decision-making scenarios in lesson plans. And, they explored when problem behaviors ought to be dealt with by school administrators or managed in the classroom. The DE-PBS Project, a collaborative undertaking among the Delaware Department of Education, CDS and Delaware Public Schools, works to develop positive learning environments and prevent problem behaviors.

**CDS collaboration receives ACE Award**

A collaborative project that aims to develop a way to include more students with disabilities in the Youth Tobacco Survey has received a 2014-2015 ACE Research Award. Current youth health risk behavior surveys sample fewer than 50 percent of students with special needs in public middle and high schools. The project, which is being co-directed by Eileen Sparling, is a collaboration between CDS, the Center for Drug and Health Studies and the State of Delaware’s Division of Public Health. Investigators hope their project will provide them with data so they can develop effective preventive measures for teens with disabilities. ACE Awards are given by ACCEL, a collaborative research network that includes the University of Delaware, Christiana Care Health System, Nemours, and the Medical University of South Carolina.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**CDS on Facebook**

If you’re among the growing numbers of people who like CDS on Facebook, you learned that CDS’s Suzanne Milbourne will discuss Access to Assistive Technology for Young Children at next month’s LIFE Conference in Dover, and that Michael Gamel-McCormick, AUCD’s associate executive director for policy, will tackle Federal Disability Policy in Transition in his keynote address; you read about an effort to make Delaware’s state parks more accessible to people who use wheelchairs; and you heard how the U.S. Senate’s outgoing champion on disability rights urged his colleagues in his farewell address to do far more for the disability community.

If you haven’t yet liked CDS on Facebook, what’s keeping you? Connect with us now!
CDS on Twitter

In December, followers of CDS on Twitter heard about how the National Institute of Health is funding robotics projects that help people with disabilities; they learned how the Federal Communications Commission’s new Disability Advisory Committee will provide input on making media more accessible; and they learned about events that will be hosted for people with disabilities in the new year.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

RESOURCES

Comcast makes surfing channels more accessible

Comcast has created a “voice-enable television user interface,” which allows users to find programming with voice commands. The interface also features a “talking guide,” which reads aloud information, including program titles and network names. These new features are part of Comcast’s effort to make their services more accessible to people with disabilities. Comcast plans to add more “voice-enable features” in the future, including expanded search functions. For more information about the new interface, visit the Comcast website.

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.

Congress passes ABLE Act

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act passed the House of Representatives and Senate in December with overwhelming bi-partisan support. The Act would allow people with disabilities and their families to have the option of creating tax-sheltered savings accounts to help pay for long-term care. Also, the savings would not disqualify beneficiaries from receiving federal disability benefits, which typically go to people with assets of less than $2,000. President Obama is expected to sign the Act into law soon. For more on the ABLE Act, read this article from AUCD.

EVENTS

January 6

Parent Respite Meet & Greet - Delaware Family Voices will host a networking opportunity for families with children who have special healthcare needs to learn how to participate in their respite group. For more information, visit the DFV website.
January 15

2015 LIFE Conference – The 2015 LIFE Conference will be held at the Dover Downs Conference Center in Dover from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Speakers will address federal and state policy, how to work with policy makers, developing and accessing assistive technology for children, and community accessibility. For more information and to register, visit the LIFE Conference website.

January 27

Webinar: Using technology to support college students with ID – Presented by the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, the webinar will share what the Council and others are learning about technology tools that can support college students with intellectual disabilities – including tablets, smart phones, apps and other software. To register, visit the webinar’s website.

January 31 – February 1

Polar Bear Plunge Weekend Festival – Special Olympics Delaware will host a weekend of events that support Special Olympics. Events include a 5k run, chili contest, ice sculpting contest and the signature Polar Bear Plunge. For more information, visit the festival’s website.

Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.

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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