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 February 15.

\[\text{IN THE NEWS}\]

CDS alumna receives honors from state

Former CDS disabilities specialist Jamie Wolfe will be inducted into the Hall of Fame of Delaware Women in March. Citing her commitment and skill as an advocate for people with disabilities, the Cape Gazette notes in this article that Wolfe also was a “pioneer in the disability movement at the University of Delaware,” where she taught undergraduate students. Induction ceremonies for Wolfe and three other women will be March 24 at the Dover Downs Conference Center. Visit the Delaware Commission for Women website for more information and to purchase tickets to the event.

Wolfe also received the State Council for Persons with Disabilities’ Lifetime Achievement Award during the 2016 LIFE Conference on Jan. 20.

Jamie Wolfe.
Progress on reducing health disparities in Delaware

On Jan. 22, members of the Health Care Committee of the Governor’s Commission to Build Access to Community-Based Alternatives met with Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Rita Landgraf to discuss progress made on The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities. Since its implementation one year ago, members of the plan’s four workgroups have transitioned from planning and creating awareness of health disparities for people with disabilities to implementation of efforts to change health care practices throughout the state. Key stakeholders have also put an emphasis on aligning the workgroups’ goals with those of other health initiatives, such as oral health and telehealth. The committee also reviewed goals for the new year, including further efforts to change health care practices, increasing the Division of Public Health’s capacity to provide dental care to people with disabilities, and creating an advocacy action network to focus on key issues such as assistive technology and hearing aid coverage.

CDS partnered with DHSS to develop The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities. The Health Care Committee is co-chaired by CDS’s Eileen Sparling and DHSS’s Gerard Gallucci.

CDS units collaborate on communication supports presentation

Members of CDS’s School Age and Assistive Technology units discussed strategies for school-based interventions for students with complex communication needs at the 2016 LIFE Conference in Dover on Jan. 20. Esley Newton and Judi MacBride from the School Age unit and Dan Fendler and Karen Latimer from the Assistive Technology unit gave an overview of the Systematic Processes for Enhancing and Assessing Communication Supports (SPEACS) framework, which CDS has been providing to school teams and parents since 2013. The presenters also discussed strategies for implementing and evaluating team-based interventions aimed at improving students’ communication skills. They were joined by Mark Campano from the Delaware Program for Children with Deaf-Blindness.
CDS’s work with NCI continues in 2016

The Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) is collaborating with CDS for a third consecutive year on the National Core Indicators’ (NCI) Adult Consumer Survey. A team of nine people, including UD undergraduates and one self-advocate, will conduct the survey that assesses services provided to individuals with disabilities throughout the state. Two of the undergraduates are joining the team as UD Human Development and Family Studies 400-hour interns. CDS’s goal is to survey 450 Delawareans with disabilities by June 30.

STAFF UPDATES

Former graduate assistant joins CDS full time

Audrey Rossi has been hired as a project coordinator for CDS’s NCI Project. She will be in charge of hiring and training survey staff as well as overseeing the operation and execution of mail and in-person surveys. Rossi worked as a graduate assistant in both the Communications and Advocacy and Transition, Education and Employment Model (TEEM) units during the 2014-2015 school year and as a part time employee of the TEEM unit in the second half of 2015.

CDS Associate Director Brian Freedman oversees the administration of the NCI Adult Consumer Survey in Delaware.

Audrey Rossi.
Megan Pell takes on new school climate role

Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project member Megan Pell has accepted a position as an instructional coach under the School Climate Transformation Grant: School Climate & Student Success. Megan will provide direct support to schools throughout Delaware to help them implement multi-tiered systems of support aimed at improving school climate and student behavior. She will work closely with both district and school leadership teams to support school-wide programming, provide professional development to educators and conduct needs assessments and evaluations to monitor schools’ progress.

SOCIAL MEDIA

**CDS on Facebook**

If you're among the growing number of people who like CDS on Facebook, you heard that a greater percentage of Delawareans with disabilities vote than do people with disabilities in other states; you learned that federal lawmakers have made it possible for qualified individuals with disabilities to soon open accounts established under the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act in any state, regardless of where they reside; and you read how the proposed CARE Act, which acknowledges a caregiver's role when a loved one is admitted to a medical facility, is being contested in Delaware.

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

**CDS on Twitter**

In January, followers of CDS on Twitter read about a UD’s work on an NIH project that is using robots to revolutionize rehabilitation for kids with disabilities; saw one of Gov. Jack Markell’s weekly messages where he stressed the need to expand employment for Delawareans with disabilities; and learned about the recently approved federal budget that provides more funding for disability housing and special education.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!
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.

Bloggers discuss Smart911, health challenges and films about disabilities

At CDS’s Inclusion blog in January …

Charles Bryant argued that it’s in everyone’s interest to sign up for Smart911, a free service that recently became available in every Delaware county. The personal profiles its users create give first responders information that could be tremendously helpful to them when reacting to emergencies involving people with disabilities, among others. A former police officer, Bryant wrote that Smart911 "only takes a few minutes to enroll and may be the difference between life and death."

David Lynch drew on his own recent health-related challenges to offer readers hope and a way forward with any serious challenges they may be facing. Lynch encouraged readers to “look to the silver lining,” whether their chronic disability is getting worse, whether they’ve lost a job, or whether they’ve lost a loved one. Lynch uses his recent visit to the phlebotomist to show why that’s so.

Beth Mineo asked her audience to join her in Rm. 127 of UD’s Memorial Hall on Thursday nights in January to view and discuss the compelling films in CDS’s Disability Cinema showcase. Mineo had just sat through the first film in the series, Tod Browning’s Freaks, which she wrote “prompts viewers to ponder issues of community, identity and bias in the context of a richly-layered tale of love, camaraderie, betrayal and vengeance.” Since that post, other Disability Cinema films and discussions played to packed houses.

CDS launched its Inclusion blog in June to engage the disability community, the public and policy makers in a provocative discussion of issues with the potential to bring about positive changes in the lives of people with disabilities.

Our bloggers include advocates and experts, people with disabilities and people without disabilities, staff at CDS and writers outside CDS.

Visit the blog at http://blog.cds.udel.edu/. And please don’t just read what’s there, comment!
New walkie-talkie-like app provides accessible messaging

Roger, a new voice messaging app for iPhones, allows users to communicate via a voice recorded message with anyone on their contact list. Originally created to help people speak across borders and time zones, the app also uses its simple, 3-button interface to offer accessible communication to people with motor or visual disabilities. In lieu of typing text messages, users can tap once to record messages and once to listen to replies. Roger is free and available in the App Store.

These Roger screenshots show the app’s accessible layout.

EVENTS

February 3

Family SHADE Networking Breakfast  Representatives from organizations in New Castle County serving children with special healthcare needs, as well as other interested members of the public, are invited to attend Family SHADE’s Networking Breakfast. Each organization that attends will have an opportunity to share information about upcoming activities and new initiatives with the group. Attendees are welcome to bring flyers and brochures to share with others. The breakfast will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Ronald McDonald House, 1901 Rockland Road, in Wilmington. Please contact Annalisa Ekbladh at annalisa@udel.edu with questions.

February 17

Ensuring Effective Communication to Meet ADA Guidelines  Hosted by Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities, this training will offer strategies to optimize effective communication between health professionals and patients with disabilities, including a focus on how to work with individuals with a hearing impairment to enhance the quality of services they receive. Health professionals will be provided with an overview of the ADA, their responsibilities under the law and a summary of enforcement history. They will also receive instruction on how to communicate using auxiliary aids, resources for finding a qualified interpreter, and information on the duties and code of ethics of interpreters. The
event will be held from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Dover Public Library, 35 East Loockerman Street, in Dover. This training is free, but pre-registration is required. Please contact Bhavana Viswanathan at bhavana@udel.edu or 302-831-8374 with questions.

March 16

22nd Inclusion Conference  The gathering will feature keynote speaker Dr. Phillip Strain, who is scheduled to address “Inclusion Myths and Realities: Key Findings, Quality Indicators and Longitudinal Needs for Children.” Please see the conference website for information regarding other workshops available to attendees. The event will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. at Dover Downs Hotel, 1131 North DuPont Highway in Dover. Attendees must register by March 2. The cost is $40 per person or $20 per full-time student. Please register here.

Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.

CONTACT US

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