PROJECT BRIDGE

MARCH 2016

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 April 15.

IN THE NEWS

CDS director co-authors article on communication services

Center for Disabilities Studies Director Beth Mineo, together with fellow members of the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities, authored an article that offers guidance on best practices in assessment and intervention for individuals with severe disabilities and communication needs. The article, which was published in the March 2016 American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, also includes a revised version of the NJC’s Communication Bill of Rights. You can view the abstract of the article here.

PROJECT UPDATES

Inclusion conference features returning and international speakers

More than 600 people at Delaware’s 22nd Annual Inclusion Conference witnessed the return by popular demand of keynote speaker Phil Strain, and got the opportunity to hear from the conference’s first-ever overseas speaker, Michael Clarke. Strain, director of the
Positive Early Learning Experience Center at the University of Colorado Denver, discussed how placing children with disabilities in inclusive settings as early as possible can have long-term positive academic and social impact. Clarke, a faculty member at University College London, presented on functional eye gaze assessment and language intervention for children who use augmentative and alternative communication systems. CDS’s Sonja Rathel coordinated the conference, while CDS staff members and graduate students from the School Age and Assistive Technology units served on the conference’s planning committee and volunteered at the conference. For the complete list of Inclusion Conference sponsors, presentations and workshops, visit the event’s website.

Making health access a priority

Access to health services for people with disabilities was the focus of two Healthy Delawareans With Disabilities project trainings in March. On March 16, Debra Young from EmpowerAbility presented information on accessible health equipment and facility design at a public training in the Dover Public Library. Young identified physical barriers to health services for people with disabilities and the usability of certain medical equipment with respect to those with mobility and sensory issues.

On March 23, HDWD’s Eileen Sparling and Bhavana Viswanathan discussed accessible mammography services with a group of radiation technologists from the Christiana Care Health System. The presentation focused on how to effectively communicate with patients with disabilities and how to accommodate individuals with disabilities during mammography procedures. The training was conducted in collaboration with Katherine Esdale, a radiation technologist from Christiana Care Health System.

Spreading the word about assistive technology

CDS’s Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative met with members of Delaware’s Foster Grandparents program four times in March to discuss how they and their “foster grandchild” can benefit from assistive technology. DATI's Karen Latimer and Dan Fendler explained how the initiative’s AT lending libraries operate, demonstrated how several pieces of AT work and presented tips to help seniors make their homes safer. Foster Grandparents is a national program under Senior Corps that pairs children and youth with community volunteers ages 55 and older, who serve as role models, mentors and friends.
Promoting Positive Behavior Support in Delaware

The Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS) project held two events in February focusing on School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS). The first event, held on Feb. 19, taught public school staff who are new to Positive Behavior Support teams in their schools about the SWPBS framework. DE-PBS staff covered topic areas including how schools can better support positive peer and teacher-student relationships and build a stronger PBS leadership, two focus areas for the DE-PBS Project.

The second event, held on Feb. 23, was a forum for middle and high schools involved with the DE-PBS project as well as schools interested in starting their own PBS teams. DE-PBS staff discussed methods for reinvigorating SWPBS programs in middle and high schools as well as effective group based interventions for students who may need additional support for problem behaviors related to absenteeism and self-discipline. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Study was also discussed to orient schools to trauma-informed instructional and school climate practices.

Currency readers available at DATI

Now is the optimum time to try out a currency reader, which identifies and reads aloud the denomination of any U.S. currency, at any of the three DATI Assistive Technology Resource Centers run by CDS. If you find it useful, you may then be able to acquire one at no cost. The U.S. Department of the Treasury will provide pocket-sized currency readers to individuals who are blind or have low vision. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen or reside legally in the country to receive a free currency reader. If you or someone you know would like to try a currency reader, contact Karen Latimer klatimer@udel.edu or Dan Fendler fendler@udel.edu to schedule a demonstration. For more information about the free Currency Reader Program, visit the Department of the Treasury website.

Matinee at CDS

CDS held a screening of four films offering unique takes on what it means to be someone living with a disability on Feb. 26. CDS staff member and film buff Megan Pell hosted the Lunchtime Learning event, guiding spirited discussion about topics covered in the films, including intimacy, family life and self-perception. To learn more about the films featured at the showcase, visit the event flyer.
A departure

Karen Zalewski left CDS at the end of February after nearly six years as Program Coordinator for the Health and Wellness Unit’s Developmental Screening Public Awareness Campaign. During her tenure, Karen used the “Learn the Signs, Act Early” and “text4baby” programs to lead a statewide public awareness campaign on the importance of early developmental screening for children. She worked closely with state partners and legislators to declare an annual “Early Screening Day” and conduct “Delaware Screens for Success” events throughout Delaware. Karen also made key contributions to the Family SHADE team, including developing a marketing and communications plan that raised awareness about Family SHADE’s services statewide.

Freedman presents at Partners in Policymaking

CDS Associate Director Brian Freedman spoke in March about the transition process from high school to adulthood for young adults with disabilities at a Partners in Policymaking training session in Dover. Freedman, who leads the Center’s Transition, Education and Employment Model (TEEM) unit, discussed the importance of identifying early a student’s interests and career goals and federal and state regulations that specify when transition planning should begin in schools. Freedman also identified several helpful initiatives and services in Delaware, including Division of Vocational Rehabilitation-funded programs that aid high school students with disabilities in pursuing career goals and college experiences during high school.
ADVOCACY CORNER

David Lynch 1967-2016

CDS and the disability community mourn the passing of David Lynch, who died on March 23. A self-advocate, first vice chair of the executive committee of CDS’s Community Advisory Council and a gifted contributor to the Center’s Inclusion blog, David wrote compellingly and memorably about dignity, strength and spirit. He encouraged people with disabilities to seize opportunities, and showed them how to overcome obstacles.

He enriched all who knew him.

You can read David’s blog posts, comment on them, and share them, here.

SOCIAL MEDIA

CDS on Facebook

If you’re among the growing number of people who like CDS on Facebook, you saw UD students pledge to stop using the “R-word” on Spread the Word to End the Word day; you learned that UD’s graduate physical therapy program has been ranked number one in the nation by US. News and World Report; and you heard about CDS alumna Jamie Wolfe being inducted into the Hall of Fame of Delaware Women.

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

CDS on Twitter

In February, followers of CDS on Twitter learned about a new state Senate bill that, if passed, would provide property tax breaks for veterans with disabilities; saw that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities grew by nearly two percentage points in February; and heard about a new website from the ABLE National Resource Center that provides information.
about ABLE accounts and how they can benefit people with disabilities.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

RESOURCES

Emergency response tool available throughout Delaware

Smart911 is a free service that lets first responders know any details one would want them to know before an emergency happens – from the layout of a home and how many people live there to special instructions regarding a family member’s disability or chronic health condition. The information in a Smart911 profile is stored on a secure server and can only be seen by emergency responders if 9-1-1 is called. The service is now available in all of Delaware’s counties. On March 22, CDS hosted a Lunchtime Learning session on Smart911 in which representatives from New Castle County, Delaware’s Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and CDS explained how the service works and the added value it provides to people with disabilities and their families. To learn more about Smart911 and to create a free profile, visit the Smart911 website.

Toolkit assists in realizing diversity goals

The Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit, a website recently released by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), provides concrete objectives, strategies, and resources to help organizations achieve their goals related to diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural and linguistic competence. The toolkit consists of five themes – infrastructure, personnel and trainees, core functions, performance measurement, and funding – each of which is broken down into 14 objectives with accompanying strategies and resources. Though the toolkit was originally designed for use by federal funders, national organizations and university-based centers, the strategies and resources included inside could also serve to benefit other organizations looking to develop their own goals for diversity. You can visit the toolkit here.

At CDS’s Lunchtime Learning session on Smart911, presenter and former police officer Charles Bryant told the audience how Smart911 can be especially helpful to first responders during an emergency.
April 6

**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 colleagues at the breakfast. The breakfast will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at UD’s STAR Campus, 550 S. College Ave., in Newark. Please contact Annalisa Ekbladh at annalisa@udel.edu with questions.

April 7

**fabricATe Solutions in Minutes with Therese Willkomm**  Therese Willkomm, director of New Hampshire’s State Assistive Technology Program, will show you how to create cheap assistive technology solutions for children in a matter of minutes. Solutions include non-toxic manipulatives, adapted art and music instruments, hands-free holding devices, switches, mounts and more. This event will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Townsend Hall Commons, 531 S. College Ave., in Newark. Registration is required. For more information and to register, visit the event flyer.

April 14

**Lydia Brown Lecture**  Lydia Brown will be the featured speaker during the presentation of the Mary Custis Straughn Excellence in Higher Education Disability Advocacy Award. The award will recognize a member of the University community whose advocacy, leadership, research, teaching, or service promotes access and excellence for people with disabilities in higher education, and contributes to the creation of a University culture that engages and embraces disability within its vision for diversity. Brown is a disability rights advocate, law student and chairperson of the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council. The event will take place from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the Rodney Room of Perkins Student Center, 325 Academy St., in Newark.
April 20

Disabilities 101: Strategies for Being Welcoming and Accommodating  Hosted by Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities, this training aims to enhance health professionals’ understanding of how to be welcoming, accessible, and accommodating when working with people with disabilities. The training will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Center for Disabilities Studies, 461 Wyoming Rd., in Newark. Sign-in will begin at 8 a.m. There is no fee to participate, but pre-registration is required here. Please contact Bhavana Viswanathan at bhavana@udel.edu or 302-831-8374 with questions.

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.

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