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 October and November.

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

multimedia

Gov. Markell, students, businesses embrace inclusive jobs in CDS videos

Check out the videos CDS shot on Disability Mentoring Day of Gov. Markell, businesses and students, which can be seen on YouTube. In his video interview with CDS, Gov. Markell said government can help people with disabilities get jobs by preparing young people for the “expectation of a lifetime of work”; being a model employer that businesses can emulate; and by “making businesses understand” that employees with disabilities will benefit them. CDS’s video of employers and students with disabilities showed why inclusive work environments should be the norm, not the exception. The students excelled as they prepared food, helped fix cars and pitched in at a college admissions office. The governor, DHSS Sec. Rita Landgraf and AUCD’s Liz Weintraub applauded the employer-student connections.
CDS addressed inclusion practices in Delaware schools, post-secondary education programs, employment services and domestic violence against people with disabilities and mental illness at the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) Conference in Washington D.C. CDS director Beth Mineo spoke about how people with disabilities and mental illness are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than the general population, and that many service providers aren’t properly equipped to help them. She also discussed workshops developed by CDS, the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Delaware that educate service providers about populations with whom they’re not entirely familiar.

Debby Boyer and Megan Pell of CDS’s School Age Unit noted that academic administrators and teachers are equally important in establishing inclusion practices in the classroom. They based their findings on CDS-led interviews of general and special education teachers and administrators in Delaware schools who are implementing inclusion practices.

Brian Freedman, director of CDS’s transition and employment programs, addressed his findings that many post-secondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities don’t adequately communicate with the student’s families. Brian recommended that these programs foster family engagement and create ways that the families’ voices can be heard and responded to. With Christine Barthold of George Mason University, Brian also recommended that employment service providers use more consistent methods when working with their clients’ challenging behaviors.
CLSC students get personal

The prospect of people with intellectual disabilities attending college drew crowds to the 2014 Delaware Transition Conference in Dover and a CLSC Open House in Newark. Current Career & Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program students were on hand at each event to speak with people about their personal college experiences as well as the wide variety of opportunities available through CLSC, including gaining college credit and learning how to be more independent.

First state tops Text4baby enrollment contest

Delaware won the Small State Category in the 4th Annual Text4baby State Enrollment Contest, a competition to enroll pregnant women and new families in the text message health information service. CDS, Text4baby’s facilitator in the state, coordinated outreach with partner programs such as Child, Inc. and Delaware Physicians Care that provide services to mothers and young children. The state saw a 52 percent increase in new users during the competition. Delaware won the competition for the first time in 2011, the year CDS brought Text4baby to the state.

CDS coordinated product gets national recognition

Delaware was one of three states highlighted at the OCALICON National Autism Leadership Summit on Nov. 18 in Columbus, Ohio for its strategic plan to improve services and supports to individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The plan, the Blueprint for Collective Action, was touted as a national model for its use of “collective impact,” an evidence-based set of principles that supports organizations coming together to solve large-scale social problems. The Blueprint for Collective Action is a product of a two-year CDS effort, coordinated by Annalisa Ekbladh, to bring together stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to improve the lives of individuals with ASD and their families.

ACCESS Project discusses IEP and Common Core in San Antonio

ACCESS Project staff demonstrated ways to improve individualized education plans and general lesson plans at the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) Conference in San Antonio, Texas from Nov. 13 through Nov. 15. Steve Smith and Sarah Celestin discussed how they are using a rubric that helps teachers visualize the changes they can make in individualized education plans to help student perform better. Stephanie DeMayo, Esley Newton and Susan Veenema presented their findings that student
outcomes were best when teachers held their students to a high standard, regardless of their abilities. Judi MacBride and Sarah Celestin addressed their findings that involving parents in the development of an individualized education plan allows the plan to be better focused on the child’s needs.

**STAFF UPDATES**

**A departure**

Jamie Wolfe, disabilities specialist at CDS, will join the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council staff in December as public policy manager. At CDS since 1994, Jamie has educated legislators and policy makers about the lives, needs and rights of people with disabilities. Issues she addressed spanned housing, long-term supports, transportation and health care. Jamie also educated people with disabilities and their families about their rights in person and through Project Bridge’s “Advocacy Corner,” and she informed staff about policy changes at the state and federal levels. Jamie also co-taught UD’s Senior Seminar in Disabilities Studies.

**Blake Bossert reflects on Junior Partners in Policy Making®**

CDS’s Blake Bossert joined a panel of fellow Junior Partners in Policymaking graduates to discuss how the program has impacted their lives at the 2014 Delaware Transition Conference in Dover. Blake said the program “helped me find my voice as a self-advocate. I now know I have to speak up to get something I want or need.” The panelists also detailed the leadership/advocacy roles they and other alumni have assumed since participating in the program.
**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**CDS on Facebook**

If you’re among the growing numbers of people who like CDS on Facebook, you heard in November about AUCD Executive Director Andy Imparato’s visit to CDS, at which he discussed building a new legislative agenda after the election; you read about how Gov. Jack Markell’s employment policy for people with disabilities inspired Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker to follow his lead; you saw how UD’s GoBabyGo Café is using body-weight harness systems to employ people with limited mobility; and you got word of CDS’s latest Lunchtime Learning, which explained why Disabilities Studies attracts more students than any other minor at UD.

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

**CDS on Twitter**

In November, followers of CDS on Twitter heard about KSI Industries Inc. honoring the perfect attendance records of more than 100 employees; they saw how Hasbro is teaming up with The Autism Project to offer toys and tools to families and professionals; and they learned about a nearby film festival showcasing movies about people with disabilities.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

**RESOURCES**

**Software company makes phone for people with disabilities**

Sesame Enable has developed an entirely hands-free smartphone called the Sesame Phone. Designed by people with disabilities for people with disabilities, the Sesame Phone responds to voice commands and uses a front-facing camera to detect facial movements to do everything from turning on and off to surfing the web. Sesame Enable expects the first phones to be available in March 2015. Visit the Sesame Enable website to find out more about the Sesame Phone.
This section is dedicated to informing you about advocacy efforts and new or pending legislation or policies that relate to individuals with disabilities.

Access for All

U.S. Senate committees on finance and banking, housing and urban affairs are currently reviewing bills collectively known as the Access for All agenda. Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, the upper chamber’s soon-to-be retired leader on disabilities issues, introduced the legislation.

The Universal Home Design Act would require certain Universal Design features for single family homes and townhouses that are built or purchased with federal financial assistance. The features include accessible entrances, interior doors and environmental controls; at least one accessible indoor room and bathroom; and accessible kitchen space.

The Transportation for All Act would prohibit discrimination by taxi companies and drivers, create an accessible taxi board at the Department of Transportation and authorize competitions to create affordable, accessible taxi and passenger-care designs. The Exercise and Fitness for All Act would encourage exercise and fitness service providers to provide accessible exercise and fitness equipment, such as treadmills and stationary bikes.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Dec. 3 was named the International Day of Persons with Disabilities by the United Nations (UN) in 1992 to promote an understanding of disability issues and the gains of integrating people with disabilities into every aspect of life. Starting Dec. 2, the UN’s New York headquarters will host two days of panels and events discussing topics such as accessible technology and work environments, mental health, emergency response and preparedness, and education. Visit the UN website for more information.

The United States International Council on Disabilities will also be holding a gala on Dec. 2 at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington D.C. to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The gala will honor global disability rights champions Gerard Quinn and Sen. Tom Harkin. For more information and to register, visit the USICD website.

EVENTS

December 2

United States International Council on Disabilities Gala – See Advocacy Corner.
December 3

International Day of Persons with Disabilities – See Advocacy Corner.

December 5

Special Olympics Reindeer Run and Romp - The Special Olympics Reindeer Run is a competitive, timed 5k run around Newark and the University of Delaware campus. All proceeds go to Special Olympics Delaware. The Reindeer Family Romp/fun walk is another way for non-runners and families to support the same cause. For more information, visit the Run’s website.

December 6

Autism Delaware Holiday Party – Autism Delaware will be hosting a Holiday Party at the Old Paths Church of Christ in Georgetown from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. All families affected by ASD are welcome. Click here for more information.

December 13

Mighty Mike Basketball Camp – The Bounce out the Stigma program will be hosting a free basketball camp for girls and boys ages 8 – 20 in New Castle. The camp is designed for kids with autism, attention deficit disorder ADD /ADHD, epilepsy, slow motor skills, athletic anxieties, social unease, juvenile diabetes, learning disabilities, self esteem issues, adjustment and emotional difficulties. Visit the program’s website for more information.

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.

Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.

CONTACT US

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Core funding for the Center for Disabilities Studies originates from Grant # 90DD0688-03-00 from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD). AIDD is part of the Administration for Community Living, a branch within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.