PROJECT BRIDGE

SEPTEMBER 2015

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 October 15.

IN THE NEWS

WDDE and WHYY report on Artfest

Delaware’s NPR and PBS stations ran features in advance of Artfest 2015. You can view the WDDE article here and the WHYY article here. The University of Delaware’s UDaily online news site also ran an Artfest story, which was highlighted in the August 2015 issue of Project Bridge. Artfest 2015, a creative workshop and community celebration hosted by CDS and Art Therapy Express at New Castle County’s Absalom Jones Community Center, attracted more than 100 participants with disabilities, student volunteers, family members and friends. The free, accessible and inclusive event was the largest Artfest yet. You can view a slideshow of Artfest 2015 here.

CLSC has its day in The Sun

The latest issue of Autism Delaware’s Sun newsletter features current Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program student Brandon Brown and CLSC graduate Michael Denny. The October-December 2015 newsletter covers both students’ experiences in the CLSC program and their career goals, while noting several features of the two-year UD program. The CLSC program also is highlighted as an in-state higher
education option for children with autism. You can view this issue of The Sun here.

PROJECT UPDATES

DATI poised to support students with visual impairments

The Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative has entered into a contract with Delaware’s Division for the Visually Impaired to provide assistive technology support for students with visual impairments. Through the contract, DATI’s AT specialists will work collaboratively with education personnel to explore AT solutions and provide training and consultation to maximize effective AT use. For more information, contact Sonja Rathel at rathel@udel.edu.

A deeper look into Medicaid data

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities has extended CDS’s examination of Medicaid data to next June. The project, which started in January, is headed by Health and Wellness unit director Jae Chul Lee and examines leading health concerns and associated costs among Delaware Medicaid enrollees with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Lee hopes that the project’s findings will guide the creation of programs and policies that better address the health needs of people with disabilities. The research team also includes Mary Joan McDuffie from UD’s Center for Community Research and Service.

SPEACS expands services statewide

CDS’s Systematic Processes for Enhancing and Assessing Communication Supports (SPEACS) has opened coaching applications to all Delaware Public Schools. Previously, SPEACS only accepted applications from public special needs schools. SPEACS is a team-based approach that helps students with complex communication needs progress from using pre-symbolic communication, such as crying, to symbolic communication. Each team, consisting of school administrators, educators, therapists, specialists and, when they're available, parents and guardians, receives coaching calls from SPEACS staff every three weeks to help craft communication strategies for the student.
UD students pack Lunchtime Learning session on RSOs

To accommodate overwhelming student enrollment, CDS moved its September Lunchtime Learning session from a reception room at Alison Hall to a large conference room at Perkins Student Center just hours before the event was set to begin. The UD undergraduates heard UD assistant professor Gary Allison moderate a discussion of registered student organization representatives on campus that support the disability community. Four of those 16 RSOs were represented – Best Buddies, Canine Companions for Independence, Special Olympics College and the American Sign Language Club – along with a representative from the Delta Alpha Pi International Honor Society. They discussed why their work is gratifying to them and a service to others. Some spoke of the friendships they’ve formed, while others pointed to the appeal of supporting someone in need.

STAFF UPDATES

An Arrival

Samantha Malamut has joined the Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program as an academic and internship coach. As a coach, Samantha will support CLSC students as they interact with their professors, internship supervisors, co-workers and peers. She says she’s excited to be helping individuals with disabilities at the post-secondary age because it is such an important time in their lives. Samantha graduated from UD in 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in human services and minors in psychology and disabilities studies.

CDS staff member strives for health equity

Health and Wellness unit director Jae Chul Lee has been appointed to serve a 3-year term on the Mid-Atlantic Regional Health Equity Council. This RHEC is one of 10 operating under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities. Each RHEC is made up of leaders from both the public and private sectors who work together to eliminate health disparities.
**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**CDS on Facebook**

If you’re among the growing number of people who like CDS on Facebook, you learned how UD Prof. Prasad Dhurjati is using computer models to investigate a supposed link between gut bacteria and autism; you read about the pope blessing three area children with disabilities during his visit to Philadelphia; and you checked out new federal guidelines that urge states to promote inclusion in preschools.

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

**CDS on Twitter**

In September, followers of CDS on Twitter discovered how PHARM Dog USA is training service dogs to help farmers with disabilities; learned about the supports that Easter Seals Delaware & Maryland’s Eastern Shore can provide to families of children with disabilities; and saw how models with disabilities made waves at New York Fashion Week.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

**RESOURCES**

**Website gives travel recommendations to people with disabilities**

Brett Heising, a former corporate communications manager and journalist with cerebral palsy, has created a travel website dedicated to travelers with disabilities. The site, similar to Yelp, is called Brettapproved and allows users to search various restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues all over the country to gauge their disability friendliness and accessibility. Recently, the website has developed a unique service that will provide travelers with disabilities booking assistance at hotels catering to the disability community. Brettapproved plans to launch the engine next month. Visit brettapproved.com here.
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 comment on Donald Trump, self-advocacy, Artfest

At CDS’s Inclusion blog, writers recently:

- Hammered presidential candidate Donald Trump for drawing a connection between autism and vaccines. Victor Schaffner, CDS’s director of communications and advocacy, debunked the myth while knocking presidential contestants Rand Paul and Ben Carson, both of them physicians, for not speaking out against Trump’s further declaration that the administration of vaccines ought to be slowed down because of the imagined autism-vaccines connection.

- Championed self-advocacy. Blogger David Lynch, himself a self-advocate and a member of the executive committee of CDS’s Community Advisory Council, demonstrated how self-advocacy can empower individuals with disabilities and lead to positive changes in their lives. He also referred readers to resources – some of them produced or administered by CDS – that offer guidance on how they could become effective self-advocates.

- Suggested what makes Artfest unique. In a post written a few days after the annual CDS-Art Therapy Express event, Victor Schaffner relayed what the event’s participants and volunteers believe makes Artfest unlike any other art festival. It’s not the sensational, accessible art that’s created, but, they said, the personal connections that people with disabilities and student volunteers establish with one another.

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!
Disability Mentoring Day to expand

Delaware’s Disability Mentoring Day is about to host job networking and career discovery sites in all of Delaware’s counties for the first time. On Oct. 21, more than 50 students with disabilities will participate at sites hosted by CDS in Newark, Dover Downs Hotel in Dover and Woodbridge High School in Greenwood. CDS was the sole host for the event’s first six years, with the Delaware Department of Labor’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) helping to identify students. Last year’s event expanded to include students from Glasgow High School and young people with vision loss, with the Delaware Department of Education’s Exceptional Children Resources assisting. New Castle County employers who are interested in hosting a student during Disability Mentoring Day should call CDS’s Brian Freedman (302-831-4688) while employers in Kent and Sussex counties should call DVR’s Jocelyn Langrehr (302-761-8275).

EVENTS

October 15

Lunchtime Learning: Embracing Delaware’s new standards-based IEPs - Join us as we dispel the myths surrounding the introduction in Delaware of standards-based Individualized Education Programs. Susan Veenema of UD’s Center for Disabilities Studies will clarify this new data-driven approach to IEP development for educators. Mila Wells of the Parent Information Center of Delaware will demystify standards-based IEPs for parents. They’ll also discuss new approaches that address behavior concerns in the IEP. The session will take place from noon to 1 p.m. at the Center for Disabilities Studies main building, room 132. Please enroll here.

October 21

Disability Mentoring Day – See above.

October 27

2015 Delaware Community of Practice Transition Conference - 8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m at the Dover Downs Conference Center in Dover. This conference is designed for youth ages 14-21 receiving special education services, their parents and families, and the educators and professionals who serve them. Students from UD’s Career and Life Studies Certificate
program (CLSC) will present with CDS staff an interactive program describing what life is like as a CLSC student. You can register for the conference here.

October 29

2015 Delaware Positive Behavior Support Conference - The Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project will be hosting its annual conference from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the DelTech Terry Campus in the Education Technology Building, Room 727. The conference will feature Dr. George Sugai, co-director of the National Center on PBIS, and attendees will learn how to manage and infuse schoolwide, targeted, and individualized interventions into their Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks. Please register through the Professional Development Management System (PDMS) by Oct. 15.

November 5

Lunchtime Learning: Health Disparities – CDS’s Health and Wellness unit will explain The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities that it released earlier this year. It will also provide updates on its implementation across the state. More information will be available shortly. Early registration is available here.

November 16-18

2015 AUCD Annual Conference - AUCD will host its annual conference at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, DC. The “Growing Leaders, Driving Change” gathering will feature more than 225 concurrent and poster presentations on topics ranging from policy to research to state and community projects. To register please visit the AUCD website here. The deadline to enroll is Oct. 30 and the cost for full conference registration is $490.

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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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.