PROJECT BRIDGE

JULY 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 August 15.

IN THE NEWS

CDS-DHSS op-ed on health disparities runs in News Journal

CDS’s Eileen Sparling and DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraf discussed in the News Journal July 12 how several health disparities experienced by people with disabilities should be reduced or eliminated once reforms recommended in a CDS-DHSS health equity plan are implemented – and after some changes in department policies are made. The health disparities are documented in The Current Landscape for Disability and Health in Delaware Public Health Assessment Report Summary 2015. The recommended reforms appear in The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities.

Delaware State News features CDS at ADA25 festival

At the celebration marking the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Dover paper caught members of CDS marching in the parade – the first of many activities that day commemorating the signing of the landmark legislation. You can also relive several other highlights from the festival by viewing this UD video, which captures: DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraf applauding “the great work of the Center for Disabilities Studies and the more than
60 organizations who participated in providing the state with a strategic plan that will focus on eliminating disparities in health for people with disabilities"; CDS’s Beth Mineo and Debbie Bain speaking about ADA’s accomplishments; and CDS’s Ben Szmidt providing some of the day’s entertainment. You can also see photos of the festival at CDS’s Facebook page.

PROJECT UPDATES

**Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative adds new service**

In response to increasing demand, DATI has begun offering assistive technology evaluations to people with disabilities. These evaluations assess a consumer’s assistive technology goals and needs and explore a variety of practical AT solutions. An AT specialist will also offer trial use of selected devices that might meet these goals and needs. For more information, contact Joann McCafferty at 302-831-6974 or mccaffer@udel.edu.

**Disabilities Studies minor to expand**

School of Education associate professor Laura Eisenman and Department of English associate professor Stephanie Kerschbaum have received a planning grant from UD’s Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Council to expand the Disabilities Studies minor. Eisenman and Kerschbaum will design and implement new coursework, including an Introduction to Disability Studies course, in an effort to broaden the UD Disabilities Studies minor’s offerings to include the humanities. Additional support for the project is provided by CDS and UD’s School of Education and Department of English.

**New volunteer-based AT initiative starts work**

CDS’s fabricATe initiative that mobilizes people who are interested in creating low-cost assistive technology for children with disabilities held its first meeting on July 21. fabricATe members discussed how they will handle AT requests and how they will distribute the AT that they develop. fabricATe plans to move forward by taking AT requests from current Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration sites.
Students with disabilities get a chance at a college education

Incoming CLSC student Malik Bradford and current CLSC student Melinda Zerbe at UD’s July 15 CLSC orientation.

UD’s Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program, a two-year offering that provides young adults with intellectual disabilities access to a college education, welcomed 10 new students with an orientation on July 15. The students make up the fifth cohort to start the CLSC program since its creation in 2011.

New device offers children support and mobility

The Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) recently purchased the first production model of the LEMUR support system for children. The LEMUR is a single-rail harness system that supports children while allowing them to move freely within the footprint of the device. This allows children 50 lbs. or less to play and interact with others, relatively uninhibited, while still receiving enough support to walk or crawl. The device, manufactured by ENLITEN LLC, is available for loan to physical therapists through the DATI loan library.
STAFF UPDATES

Graduate student departures

Jessica Kradjel will be working in the Christina School District as a school psychologist intern after spending two years with the Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS) project. At CDS, Jessica helped evaluate school PBS systems, facilitate training sessions and administer the Delaware School Climate Survey. She is pursuing an education specialist degree in School Psychology.

After two years with CDS’s ACCESS Project, Anna Rutledge will be a school psychologist intern with the Christina School District. Anna worked with ACCESS Project staff to develop instructional and communication techniques for students with disabilities. She also assisted with various ACCESS activities such as professional development sessions. Anna is working toward an education specialist degree in School Psychology.

Staff and graduate student arrivals

Christopher Haas has joined CDS’s Transition, Education and Employment Model (TEEM) unit as a transition specialist. Christopher will be working with TEEM’s Swank Employment Services to help people with disabilities find competitive jobs in the community. Before arriving at CDS, Christopher worked at Community Integrated Services’ Philadelphia branch, where he helped high school students with disabilities find internships and jobs.

Kristen Fraley has joined CDS’s Communications and Advocacy unit as a graduate assistant. Kristen will work to coordinate events such as Artfest 2015 and various Lunchtime Learning sessions. She will also help create publications such as CDS’s Annual Report and delAware. Kristen is looking forward to getting more involved in the disability community and applying what she’s learning in the classroom to her everyday work. Kristen earned B.A.s in Psychology and International Studies at American University and is pursuing an education specialist degree in School Psychology.
CDS director joins state education task force

CDS director Beth Mineo will serve as the Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens’ appointee to Delaware’s Educational Technology Task Force. The Task Force, created by Senate Concurrent Resolution 22, will examine the current use of educational technology, assistive technology, and instructional materials in Delaware’s public school systems and recommend strategies and goals to improve their use. The Task Force will also provide plans on how to fund, implement and assess these strategies and goals.

School Age unit advances IEP professional development

ACCESS’s Steve Smith and Delaware Positive Behavior Support project’s Susan Veenema conducted Individual Education Plan (IEP) professional development sessions with the Capital School District on June 29-30 and July 13-14. The pair discussed the writing of data-driven, skills-based IEPs that meet students’ needs and how to promote positive social behaviors through IEPs. Smith and Veenema will continue their IEP professional development with the Capital School District with a session in August, and will follow up with school-based coaching throughout the school year.

SOCIAL MEDIA

CDS on Facebook

If you’re among the growing number of people who like CDS on Facebook, you were able to join a live streaming of a U.S. Department of Labor panel on the ADA featuring Delaware Gov. Jack Markell, former Iowa Senator Tom Harkin and Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez; you learned about the Americans with Disabilities Act exhibition at UD’s Morris Library; and read about the benefits of integrated living from Delawareans with and without disabilities in a News Journal article.

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

CDS on Twitter

In July, followers of CDS on Twitter learned about a new shoe from Nike that combines easy access for people with disabilities with contemporary design; learned that the A.I. duPont Hospital for Children has been named a Paralympic Sports Club by the U.S. Paralympics Committee for providing competitive opportunities for children with disabilities; and read about parenthood from the perspective of a father with a disability.
Apple celebrates the ADA with accessibility apps

Apple has launched a new portion of their App Store that focuses on accessibility. The page features a collection of third-party apps for iOS devices that cover five categories: vision, hearing, physical and motor skills, learning and literacy, and speech. A day after the page launched, Apple CEO Tim Cook tweeted “Accessibility rights are human rights. Celebrating 25yrs of the ADA, we’re humbled to improve lives with our products. #ADA25.” To learn more about accessible apps, visit the Apple 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.

Visit CDS’s new Inclusion blog

Anyone hungering for an insightful discussion of important issues facing the disability community found it in July at the new Inclusion blog of the Center for Disabilities Studies.

David Lynch, a member of the executive committee of CDS’s Community Advisory Council, asked readers not to feel sorry for him because of his muscular dystrophy – or to pity other people with disabilities. We want to be seen "for our ability to overcome our disabilities with courage, grace and dignity,” he wrote.

CDS Associate Director Brian Freedman noted that too few opportunities exist nationally for students with intellectual disabilities to attend college. But he added that can change if Congress reauthorizes the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Freedman oversees UD’s CLSC program, one of the relatively few higher education programs nationally that support students with ID.

Megan Pell, a coach for the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project at UD’s Center for Disabilities Studies,
asked why the perspectives of people with developmental disabilities aren’t being represented in discussion of LGBT issues. “If we accept the notion that ‘Disability is Natural,’ then we have to accept that there are individuals with developmental disabilities who identify with the LGBT community nationally,” she wrote.

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!

EVENTS

**August 4**

**Resources for Helping Your Child at School** – Parent Information Center of Delaware and the Delaware Center for Justice will present a free workshop about resources you can use to help your child at school from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Wilmington Library, 10 East 10th St., in Wilmington. Topics covered will include communication with school staff, engaged families, and discipline concerns. Youth ages 14-26 are invited to attend a special youth leadership session happening at this event. Light snacks will be provided. This event is free, but registration is recommended. For more information and to register, call 302-999-7394.

**August 5**

**Supporting Your Child’s Social Self-Esteem** – The Delaware Department of Education and the Positive Behavior Support Project at the University of Delaware will present strategies to support children’s social skills needs from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Dover Downs, 1131 North DuPont Hwy., in Dover. Topics will include promoting optimistic thinking, responding to teasing and bullying, and flexibility in social situations. RSVP to Sandi Bradford at sandi@udel.edu or 302-831-3355. Please provide your name and e-mail address or phone number.

**August 12**

**Preparing for a Successful School Year** – The Parent Information Center of Delaware will host a workshop where you can create a “tool-kit” that will help support student success from 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Appoquinimink Community Library, 651 North Broad St., in Middletown. This includes building effective advocacy skills, communication tips, and other ways to be engaged in your child’s school experience. For more information and to register, visit the event website.
**August 13 and August 27**

**Art Under the Stars** – Art Therapy Express will present Art Under the Stars, an art therapy activity featuring adaptive technology from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 310 Kiamensi Rd., in Wilmington. Participants with disabilities can participate in 2- and 3-dimensional media (clay, sculpture, watercolor and acrylic painting, drawing, oil pastels, mixed media, wheelchair roller mural painting) as well as expressive arts (music, creative movement, drama). Cost per session is $10 and pre-registration is required. To register, call Carol Dougherty at 302-995-7661. Contact Lisa Bartoli with any questions at arttherapyexpress@gmail.com or 302-584-4068.

**Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.**

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**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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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.