Our Mission:
“To advocate and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of life for Floridians with developmental disabilities”

Project VOTE: A partnership to increase voter access

Project VOTE educates people with disabilities, election officials, and other community stakeholders on how to work as a team to overcome barriers to voting. The program was created by Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) as part of its effort to achieve full inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Project VOTE is a nationwide initiative that utilizes partnerships between the Disability Rights Network’s Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) programs and grassroots self-advocacy groups, such as Florida Self-Advocates Network’D (SAND). This year Disability Rights Florida initiated a Project VOTE partnership with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Florida SAND and other grassroots self-advocacy groups.

The goal of the Project VOTE collaboration is to inform people with intellectual and developmental disabilities of their voting rights and to promote voting access in Florida. Disability Rights Florida and the Florida SAND group, Stand Up for Independence, a local grassroots self-advocacy group in the Martin County area, recently hosted a voter education workshop in Jensen Beach, Florida.

The Project VOTE partnership between FDDC, Disability Rights Florida and other grassroots groups will continue throughout the next five year State Plan. Florida SAND has identified membership growth as a main priority. Working at the grassroots level to promote voting access for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is one of many ways Florida SAND will raise interest among, and connect with, potential members. Project VOTE also offers Florida SAND members the opportunity to gain training and public speaking skills as co-trainers with Disability Rights Florida. Those assets, combined with strengthened advocacy skills, will help prepare Florida SAND’s members for leadership positions.
2016 Council Members

Rixys Alfonso - Parent Advocate - Miami Lakes, FL
Pat Archer - Self Advocate - Boca Raton, FL
Amanda Baker - Self Advocate - Panama City, FL
Ronni Bianco - Parent Advocate - Aventura, FL
Richard “Dick” Bradley - Non-Profit Member - Yankeetown, FL
Conney Dahn - Appointed-At-Large, Parent-Advocate - Stuart, FL
Lise Fox, Ph.D - Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, University of South Florida - Tampa, FL
Eddie Hall - Self Advocate - Lakeland, FL
Laurie J. Harlow - Parent Advocate - Tampa, FL
Shevaun Harris - Agency for Health Care Administration - Tallahassee, FL
Sylvia James-Miller - Parent Advocate - Ocala, FL
Kevin Johnson - Local Agency Member - Celebration, FL
Susan Kabot, Ed.D. - Parent Advocate - St. Cloud, FL
John “Jack” Kosik - Parent Advocate - Lakeland, FL
Kathy Leigh - Self Advocate - Starke, FL

Mary Ellen McDonald - Disability Rights Florida - Tallahassee, FL
Aleisa McKinlay - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DOE) - Tallahassee, FL
Thomas (TJ) Moon - Self Advocate - Ocala, FL
Bernadette Moran - Parent Advocate - Jacksonville, FL
Barbara Palmer - Agency for Persons with Disabilities - Tallahassee, FL
Maggie Reilly - All Children’s Hospital - St. Petersburg, FL
Tricia Riccardi - Self Advocate - Kissimmee, FL
Frank Shalett - Self Advocate - N. Lauderdale, FL
Jean Sherman, Ed.D., R.N. - Mailman Center UCEDD University of Miami - Pembroke Pines, FL
Phil Stevens - Parent Advocate - Lithia, FL
Louis Towson, Self Advocate - Marianna, FL
Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D. - Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (DOE) - Tallahassee, FL
Victoria Vangalis Zepp - Parent Advocate - Tallahassee, FL
ELECTION 2016—BALLOTS CAST AND VOTES COUNTED

FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL ELECTIONS

CONGRATULATIONS

Chair: Sue Kabot
Vice-Chair: Amanda Baker
Treasurer: Dick Bradley
At Large: Eddie Hall & Frank Shalett
After 23 years working for the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, 12 of which as the Executive Director, I will be retiring effective January 1, 2017. Working for the Council has been tremendously rewarding, in large part because the Council makes such a positive impact in so many aspects of the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Many of you across the state may not be aware of the Council’s contributions because we do not provide direct services, but instead work behind the scenes to improve how the systems operate so that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be fully integrated and included in the community. Looking back, some of these accomplishments have included strengthening the systems for transitioning students with intellectual and developmental disabilities from schools to post-secondary education and employment; facilitating collaborative efforts that create more integrated competitive employment opportunities; building the knowledge and capacity of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to make choices, be in control, advocate for themselves and others, and take leadership roles; building the knowledge to support and improve inclusion; building the systems to identify disabilities and developmental delays early; and ensuring continued and improved access to services and supports, such as the Home Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver and Part C Early Steps.

Looking forward, the Council is uniquely positioned and ready to continue to make significant contributions to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities’ progress in achieving meaningful participation in all aspects of community life. The Council has just completed and submitted its new Five (5) Year State Plan for 2017-2021. This plan, which is outlined in this Newsletter, includes a narrowed focus on fewer issues for a more concentrated and comprehensive effort on the long term outcomes that will create the systems changes needed to achieve greater integration and inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the community. However, these systems changes will not be just the work of the Council, it will be the work of the entire developmental disabilities’ community.

It has been an honor to be a part of such critically important work. With the remarkable members and staff at the Council and their new blueprint for the next five years, you will continue to see partnerships and collaborations formed; capacities of individuals, families and communities developed; and systems changed that pave the road for greater inclusion and integration of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in this state.
A BLUEPRINT FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:

FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL’S
NEW 2017-2021 STATE PLAN

From the beginning of the Council’s two year process to develop its 2017-2021 State Plan, every discussion started with highlighting both the shifting to a focus on systems change and individual and family advocacy, and significantly reducing the goals and objectives to focus more effort on fewer goals for greater systems’ impact. This was our New Way of Thinking and our New Way of Work. Our two year process included the compilation and analysis of materials, data, and reports that examined the unmet needs and the adequacy of the current services, supports and systems; extensive public input that included surveys, webinar focus groups and a public forum; and a two-day meeting with over 40 self-advocates, families, providers, state agencies, Council members and other stakeholders where the research, public input and internal assessments were examined, and the top priorities for systems change and individual and family advocacy identified. Using this information, the Council then narrowed its focus from the 12 goals in the current State Plan to five (5) systems change goal areas, in addition to the individual and family advocacy goal. The next year was spent on developing the specific goals, objectives, activities, action steps and outcomes for the State Plan, with public review and comments prior to submission of the final State Plan to the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in August.

The Council’s 2017-2021 State Plan went into effect October 1, 2016. The outcomes we will be working to achieve over these next five (5) years are as follows:

- Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have increased access to safe and affordable transportation.
- Integrated, competitive employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be increased.
- Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will receive quality elementary through post-secondary transition services.
- Florida SAND will become a fully independent organization; trained leaders will be available statewide to engage in advocacy efforts and train others; and self-advocates and family members will become members of diverse leadership coalitions.
- Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be able to independently control their income.
- Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have choices and financial support for safe, affordable and inclusive housing with access to support services.
- Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have access to, and receive services and supports from, a sustainable qualified workforce.

To achieve these goals, there will need to be changes to the systems that support, operate and/or provide these services. When we talk about Systems Change, we are talking about shifting the way an organization or community makes decisions about its policies, programs, allocation of resources and delivery of services and supports. These policies, programs, utilization of resources and delivery of services and supports drive whether an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be able to access the services and supports needed to live fully integrated and included in the community.
While systems change has always been part of the three prong focus of our work (i.e., Advocacy, Building Capacity and Systems Change), it is now THE focus of our work, in addition to facilitating individual and family advocacy to influence systems change. Our work will no longer be just about the training, but what those trained will do as a result of the training. It will not just be about building the capacity of the providers to provide services in a manner that enables full integration, but how that capacity actually changed how the service is provided.

To achieve these systems changes, the Council will be devoting it’s funding to fewer goals and objectives, and targeting virtually all of its time and efforts to achieving these goals and objectives. The activities undertaken will be comprehensive and strategic, including the multiple components needed to achieve the goals, not just the funded contracts. Specifically, the Council has infused its public policy and communication work into the goal activities. With the exception of major emerging issues that will significantly impact individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities or issues for which the Council can provide limited support, the Council’s legislative and public policy work will concentrate on the laws, rules and policies needed to achieve our State Plan goals. The same will hold true for our communication/ public relations/media efforts. Council staff and members will also be identifying and implementing other strategies, such as identifying barriers and facilitating solutions, identifying resources and systems that would support the goal, coordinating with other entities, promoting the goal through representation on other bodies, and providing technical assistance, support and facilitation to connect the different elements toward achieving the goals.

The Council’s Individual and Family Advocacy goals, objectives and activities will be critically important to our success in achieving systems change. These activities are designed to increase the knowledge of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and families of how to take part in the decisions that affect their lives, the lives of others and/or systems. The Council will then be taking the next step to facilitate the participation of these individuals and families in various policy boards, advisory boards, advocacy groups, and governing bodies across the state to assist in influencing the systems changed being achieved with our State Plan.

This work to change systems so that they will adequately support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live, work, play and truly be a part of the communities will not just be the work of the Council. It will require the entire community, agencies and organizations with a focus on intellectual and developmental disabilities, and non-traditional partners. Council members and staff have embraced and are excited about the potential for real systems change that will improve the integration and inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life. We hope you will embrace this potential as well and join us in this journey.

To view the 2017-2021 State Plan, [Click Here](#)

To view a condensed version of our goals and activities, [Click Here](#)
New Faces At The FDDC

WELCOME

Rick Lockenbach

Rick is the new Program Manager for the Council’s education and transition goal. A Florida-licensed attorney, he has worked for twenty years in adult career and technical education for the Florida Department of Education. He has also worked for several non-profits and was President of a non-profit that serves persons with intellectual disabilities. He holds a B.A. from Emory University and a law degree from the University of Florida.

Tracy Commer

Motivated by her own personal struggles living with the challenges of ADHD, Tracy Coomer chose a career path dedicated to helping others. She holds a Masters in Vocational Rehabilitation, with 25 years’ professional experience in the areas of Youth Transition, Vocational Evaluation, Job Placement, Job Coach Training, as well as Supported and Integrated Employment. She is also a proud Parent and Aunt to teenage youth with special needs. It is these professional and personal life experiences Tracy brings to her Program Manager role, providing contract and program management oversight for FDDC’s Employment goal focused initiatives and contracts.

Keyuanah Walker

Keyuanah joined the FDDC in June 2016 as the staff assistant providing administrative support to the five program managers. She has five years of experience working in an office environment including two years as a medical receptionist at a local holistic clinic. She enjoys helping people and spending time with family. Keyuanah is currently working on her B. A. in Business Administration from Ashford University.
The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act

Twenty-five years after the signing into law of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the door has opened to a new pathway toward independence and a better quality of life for millions of individuals with disabilities and for their families.

On December 19, 2014, President Barack Obama signed into law the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. The ABLE Act was first introduced in the 113th Congress by a bipartisan set of Congressional champions. It was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives (404-17) on December 3, 2014. Two weeks later, on December 16, the U.S. Senate voted to pass the ABLE Act as a part of the Tax Extenders package.

The Act amends the Internal Revenue Service code to establish tax-exempt savings accounts—called ABLE Accounts—to assist an individual with a disability, or a family raising a child with a disability in building an account to pay for qualified expenses. Qualified expenses include those related to higher education, housing, transportation, employment, health and wellness, technology and other personal support services. By allowing families and individuals with disabilities to set aside funds for potential future needs, the ABLE Act helps people with disabilities secure a better quality of life.

ABLE United Launches New Tax-Free Savings Plans for Individuals with Disabilities

During a Press Conference held July 7, ABLE United launched a new opportunity for Floridians with disabilities to enhance financial support, independence and quality of life. Stemming from the Florida Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, persons with disabilities can now have a tax-free savings and investment account without negatively impacting their government benefits. One feature of the program is that an individual with unique abilities can save with the help of family and friends, since anyone can contribute to the account. A total of $14,000 per year can be contributed to an individual’s ABLE United account. Funds in an ABLE United account are excluded from certain federal means-tested programs, allowing individuals to save up to $100,000 without impacting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and even more without impacting Medicaid. To be eligible to open an ABLE United account, the individual must meet the disability and severity requirements outlined by the Social Security Administration, have experienced the onset of the disability before age 26, and be a Florida resident. There is no cost to open an account, and the monthly account fee is waived until July 1, 2017.

The ABLE Act was championed in the state by Senate President Andy Gardiner, Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto and Representative Ray Rodrigues, and they were joined at the Capitol by Florida families and advocates to officially launch ABLE United. Florida is among the first four states to implement and launch an ABLE program. http://ablenrc.org/state-review/florida

In his opening remarks, State Representative Ray Rodrigues said, “We believe that this plan will allow individuals with disabilities to save for a better life experience.”
The funds in an ABLE account are meant to be used to supplement, but not replace, benefits provided through private insurances, the Medicaid program, the Supplemental Security Income program, the beneficiary’s employment and other sources.

These tax-advantaged savings accounts will help individuals with disabilities save funds to meet their shorter and longer term financial goals aimed at helping them maintain or increase their health, independence and/or quality of life. When funds are withdrawn from an account to pay for qualified disability expenses, income earned by the accounts from investment of the funds will not be taxed. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the funds in the ABLE account, distributed for qualified expenses, will not be taken into consideration when determining the beneficiary’s eligibility for various means tested federally-funded supports, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid.

There are two types of individuals who are eligible for an ABLE account: 1) individuals with a significant disability with the age of onset occurring before the age of 26 and who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and 2) individuals with an onset of disability before age 26 and certified as meeting conditions similar to that required by SSI or SSDI in terms of the severity of their disability. If the ABLE account beneficiary qualifies because of certification, eligibility for an ABLE account cannot be used to secure SSI or Medicaid benefits.

If the beneficiary is receiving SSI, monthly benefits will be suspended when the assets in the ABLE account exceed $100,000. When the assets in the ABLE account drop back below the $100,000 threshold, SSI benefits resume without requiring the beneficiary to reapply for benefits. Although ABLE account beneficiaries may temporarily lose SSI benefits if the account exceeds $100,000, beneficiaries do not lose Medicaid eligibility. It is important to note that upon the death of the beneficiary, the state Medicaid agency may file claim to the remaining funds in the ABLE account for Medicaid related services rendered to the beneficiary beginning at the time that their ABLE account was established. Contributions to an ABLE account can be made by any individual and are not tax deductible, however some states have chosen to offer state income tax deductions for contributions made to an ABLE account. Additionally, income earnings by the account and account withdrawals are not taxable, provided that they are spent on qualified disability related expenses.
Any given ABLE account may only accept up to $14,000 in total contributions in any given tax year. This amount, which reflects the maximum amount under current tax law that individuals can make as a gift to someone else and not pay taxes, may be adjusted periodically for inflation. The total amount over time that can be made to an ABLE account will be subject to the state in which the beneficiary has the account. Many states have set this limit at more than $300,000 per plan. Individuals can contribute cash into the ABLE account. If an individual wants to use a stock, he or she must convert the stock to cash first.

ABLE accounts will be characterized by limited investment direction. Account contributors or designated beneficiaries are limited by the ABLE Act to change their investment choices for an account up to two times per year. Like 529 college savings accounts, the range of investment options available for ABLE accounts will be determined by the states. Each individual and family will need to project possible future needs and costs over time and to assess their risk tolerance for possible future investment strategies to grow their savings.

There are 58 million individuals with disabilities in the United States. It is likely that more than 5 million individuals with disabilities and their families will be eligible to establish ABLE accounts, and more will become eligible each year based on an assessment of significant disability at birth or in early years, as well as a result of acquired disability. Many of these individuals and their families depend on public benefits for income, health care and food and housing assistance. Often, to remain eligible for these public benefits, an individual must document that he or she has no more than $2,000 in cash savings, retirement funds and other items of significant value. For the first time in public policy, individuals and families with disabilities are being encouraged and assisted in saving funds that will help improve their quality of life—without losing their eligibility for SSI, Medicaid and other public benefits. New financial products will need to be developed to meet consumer demand for new savings and investment products.

The ABLE National Resource Center (ANRC) was founded by National Disability Institute (NDI) to provide ABLE stakeholders with consistent, reliable information concerning the benefits of ABLE programs and accounts. The ANRC is a collaborative that brings together the investment, support and resources of some of the country’s most influential disability organizations in an effort to accelerate the design and availability of ABLE accounts nationwide. The ANRC website offers the latest information on ABLE, such as state-by-state program updates, informational videos, archived webinars, published research, policy summaries and frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Visit the ANRC website to learn more about the ABLE Act at: http://ablenrc.org/

NDI has long championed the ABLE Act as a critical strategy to providing a pathway to a better economic future for all people with disabilities. As the nation’s first nonprofit dedicated to improving the financial health and future of all people with disabilities, the organization has extensively documented and called attention to the daily reality and extra expenses associated with living with a disability, and the challenges of navigating the complex web of government rules to maintain public benefits eligibility.
Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, a research environment that fosters visionary thinking and innovation. It all began in 1996, when Erin Riehle was Director of Cincinnati Children's Emergency Department. Erin felt that, because the hospital served individuals with developmental disabilities, it made sense that they should commit to hiring people in this group. She wondered if it would be possible to train people with developmental disabilities to fill some of the high-turnover, entry level positions in her department, which involved complex and systematic tasks such as stocking supply cabinets. As a starting point, Erin presented her ideas to Susie Rutkowski, then the Special Education Director at Great Oaks Career Campuses. Erin and Susie formed an instant partnership and together launched Project SEARCH.

Project SEARCH is a one-year internship program for students with disabilities, in their last year of high school. It is targeted for students whose goal is competitive employment. The program takes place in a healthcare, government or business setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process as well as the acquisition of employability and marketable work skills. Students participate in three unpaid internships to explore a variety of career paths. Student interns work with a team that includes their family, their Project SEARCH instructor, job coach/developer and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to create an employment goal and support the student during this important transition from school to work. The interns begin their day learning employability skills in a training room at the host business. After this hour long class, the interns travel to their internship at the host business where they spend approximately five hours. At the end of the day, the interns return to the training room to reflect on their day, discuss challenges and evaluate progress. The goal of Project SEARCH is competitive employment for each intern utilizing the skills they learned during the program.

Project SEARCH has grown from one original program site to over 400 sites across 46 states and five countries. Currently, Florida has over 20 active Project SEARCH sites. Through a partnership between the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and Project SEARCH/Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, fifteen new Project SEARCH sites will be added for the 2017-18 school year.

Teams wishing to apply may access and submit the Project SEARCH Florida Implementation Application, CLICK HERE.
New Statewide Collaborative By The Florida Lifespan Respite Alliance

The Florida Lifespan Respite Alliance (FLRA) mission is to promote high quality, affordable respite services for family caregivers across all disability types and age groups. Their aim is to build awareness of the need and availability of respite services in Florida. Around the country, as many as 43 million families are providing care for loved ones every day. The short term relief of respite care can combat the stresses that lead to caregiver burnout. We recognize that the benefits of respite care are numerous and valuable.

The Florida Lifespan Respite Alliance aim is to accomplish through collaboration what single individuals or organizations cannot do alone. The FLRA serves as an information clearinghouse that gathers and disseminates pertinent information to its members. The FLRA also creates a forum for discussion while developing a base for planning, education and advocacy in order to maximize the use of resources.

A key aspect of collaboration is the implementation of a Lifespan Respite Advisory Group. This group is made up of diverse members from each area of the state working together to identify gaps in service related to respite care. Additionally, the advisors will work to identify new and underused respite services. The advisors will also play a hands on role in identifying funding sources to sustain the FLRA and expand services. Drawing from experience of professionals, caregivers, care recipients, and other key stakeholders, this advisement group will directly impact the improvement and growth of respite care related services across the state of Florida. The FLRA would like for you to consider joining this group as an Alliance member and/or an advisor. Please visit the newly launched website at www.FLlifespanrespite.com.

An Exceptional Advocate

Lucy Aponte was born in Ohio but moved to Florida at 9 years old. She now owns Life’s Unlimited Zenith, LLC., a fine arts business selling her art creations. Notwithstanding her disabilities, Lucy has evolved into a creative spirit. Using various techniques and supported by her team, Lucy creates art designs that inspire those who see and purchase them. Lucy has five collections of at least 16 pieces titled; Dare to Dream, Possibilities, Believe in, Enjoy Nature and Prosperity. Viewing a piece of Lucy’s art is inspirational, daring one to dream goals and move beyond personal challenges.

In 2003, Lucy was fortunate to meet David Hammis, who among her greatest friends, assisted in the development of her business idea. He continued to support Lucy’s business and led her to the final accomplishment of creating Life’s Unlimited Zenith. A dream turned into a reality.

Lucy is an exceptional advocate for persons with disabilities and presents, with the use of assistive technology and supports, on various topics like self determination, transition from school to work, Microenterprise and others. She inspires others to follow her family’s motto: To Love, To Learn, To Share and To Serve.

“Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say, to do, to learn, or to dream!” Lucy Aponte
FDDC Impacts Nurse Practitioner Education in Florida

Two years ago, the FDDC completed its Physician Education in Developmental Disabilities program. This program created 12 hours of online curriculum for physicians and led to two Florida medical residency programs and one medical school and nursing school changing their curricula to include a specific focus on the care of adults with developmental disabilities. To create this program, the FDDC partnered with the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry* (AADMD).

Last year, the FDDC and the AADMD teamed up again to create the Nurse Practitioner Education in Developmental Disabilities (NPEDD) program. The NPEDD program built off of the original PEDD platform, but created an eight hour, online training course for nurse practitioners and nurse practitioner students. The webinar series was accredited by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and is free to any Nurse Practitioner who wishes to take it. The NPEDD webinar series can be accessed at: [http://aadmd.org/npedd-webinar-series](http://aadmd.org/npedd-webinar-series).

The program became available to the public on July 15, 2015. To date more than 200 healthcare professionals from Florida (and a nearly equal number from around the U.S. and three other countries) have enrolled in the course, which will be available until July 15, 2017.

This year, the FDDC and AADMD worked with two nurse practitioner schools in the state of Florida (at Florida International University and Nova Southeastern University) to integrate the care of adult patients with developmental disabilities into the schools’ curricula. Between the two schools implementing these changes, 208 nurse practitioner students learned about providing care to adults with developmental disabilities and both programs plan to continue teaching their students about this important topic area.

*A The AADMD is dedicated:

- To assist in reforming the current system of healthcare so that no person with a neurodevelopmental disorder is left without access to quality health services.
- To prepare clinicians to face the unique challenges in caring for people with neurodevelopmental disorders and intellectual disabilities (ND/ID).
- To provide curriculum to newly established ND/ID training programs in professional schools across the nation.
- To increase the body and quality of patient-centered research regarding those with ND/ID and to involve parents and caregivers in this process.
- To create a forum in which healthcare professionals, families and caregivers may exchange experiences and ideas with regard to caring for patients with ND/ID.
- To disseminate specialized information to families in language that is easy to understand.
- To establish alliances between visionary advocacy and healthcare organizations for the primary purpose of achieving better healthcare.
Disability Rights Florida launched its "Access The Vote" campaign during a press conference in Tallahassee on Tuesday, July 27, to encourage Floridians with disabilities to vote in the upcoming elections. The campaign includes a new accessible website which details the voting rights and responsibilities for all Floridians. Whether you need to register to vote, want to learn more about how and when to vote, or are interested in knowing more about your rights as a voter, you can find it at the new website: AccessTheVote.org.

Another part of the "Access The Vote" campaign includes a podcast series that is currently in production and will be available for download very soon. The podcast will serve as an educational tool to reach new audiences in an entertaining way, discussing a range of important topics affecting people with disabilities.

2016 NACDD Conference in Washington DC

Council staff facilitated a presentation at the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities annual conference in Washington, D.C. The topic was “Florida Career and Technical Models for Transitioning Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to Postsecondary Education.” Rachel Rippey from Project Achieve at Florida State College at Jacksonville provided an overview of the state college career and technical education (CTE) state college program she coordinates. Dr. Vivian Vieta from Robert Morgan Educational Center and Technical College discussed the first year of the school district CTE program she coordinates that is based on the Project Achieve model. Rick Lockenbach, FDDC Program Manager, was a co-presenter. FDDC’s new five-year state plan supports the development and enhancement of comprehensive CTE postsecondary programs in Florida’s dual CTE system operated by state colleges and school districts.
Council Member Rixys Alfonso Inspires Air Station Miami

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, the command Air Station Miami, and the Leadership and Diversity Advisory Council presented community activist and media spokeswoman, Rixys Alfonso, who shared her experiences while in Cuba during her emigration to America. She communicated her desire to give back to the community, in part, through the creation of CauseMo Marketing, a firm that drives cause-related initiatives and movement in key markets, and across the U.S. At the conclusion of the presentation, Rixys was presented with the unit coin.

Rixys has also been recognized by the South Florida Sun Sentinel as a recipient of the 2016 Top Workplace Professionals Award. A program that recognizes individuals (professionals under 45) with a commitment to excellence and a dedication to become our future business leaders of South Florida, as well as the companies for whom they work.

Vanda Jenkins Recognized For Ten Years Of Service

The FDDC recently recognized Vanda Jenkins for her ten years of dedication and service to the Council. She was surprised with a gift of appreciation by Debra Dowds during an annual staff meeting held on July 26. The original artwork presented was created by a member artist at Creative Clay Cultural Arts Center in Tampa, Florida who has also composed numerous other original pieces for several of our board members and past presidents. Thank You Vanda!
Spotlight on FDDC Resources

*Disability Awareness through Language Arts and Literature: Resources for Prekindergarten and Elementary School (Updated)* is a resource intended to support educators and families to promote positive attitudes toward, and facilitate successful inclusion of, students with disabilities; increase respect and acceptance of individual differences; increase understanding of disabilities and related social issues; and facilitate the development of literacy and language arts skills through activities about disability awareness. An instructional guide for educators is also available online.

*Florida Postsecondary Education Guide (New)* is a resource that provides in-depth descriptions of postsecondary programs in Florida that serve students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While the guide is primarily targeted to students and their families, it may be useful for educators, agencies and others.

*Employment First Messaging DVD (New)* details the collaborative efforts of nine state agency and organization collaborative efforts to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in Florida. The DVD may be used by anyone seeking to share information with diverse stakeholders on Florida’s Employment First efforts.

*Connections Guide: Tools and Resources for Adult Life (New)* provides information that connects individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to tools and resources that will support their transition into adult life.

*The Florida Rural Routes to Employment Replication Manual (New)* contains best practice information for individuals providing services or desiring to provide services in the areas of customized employment, job development, placement and follow-along supports, including specific strategies to achieve quality employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities residing in rural settings.

*A Home That Fits: Personal Assessment Tool for Housing (New)* is an easy to read guide for Floridians with intellectual and developmental disabilities interested in in learning about the many options of housing in community living situations such as home ownership, rental/leasing and/or assisted living in the community.

*Easing Your Stress – Information for Caregivers of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (Reprint)* is a publication about stress and stress management for caregivers of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

*Stress and What You Can Do About It (Reprint)* is a full color book that takes individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through a colorful, graphically attractive and easy-to-read lesson in the basics of stress and stress management.

*Please note that some products have limited print availability.*
Thank You Debra Dowds!

We love and thank you for everything you have done to make our Council one of the best in the nation. Best wishes as you enter a new adventure in life!

Thank You Task Force & Committee Chairs

For all of your hard work and dedication during 2015-16