



Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

Making A Difference

Fall 2008

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By Dennie Hill, Special Projects Manager

Over 70 people turned out for the fourth annual "You Make a Difference" Awards held at the Florida Mall Hotel on June 20, in Orlando, FL.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council presents the awards each year to Florida educators who use true inclusive practices in their classrooms and schools. Educators from 12 schools in Florida received awards.



Pictured are some of the 'You Make a Difference' award winners and the guest speaker, Sandra Osborn.

This year's winners are:

Jennifer Brown and **Tese Willis** from *Colonial Elementary in Fort Myers*; **Fran Herrin** from *Gerald Adams School in Key West*; **Roxanne Coriell** and **Joni Cagle** from *Hunter's Green Elementary in Tampa*; **Cynthia Melendez**, **Vickie Alexiou** and **Arthurene Williams** from *Kings Highway Elementary in Clearwater*; **Deborah Aman** from *Lake Mary Elementary in Lake Mary*,

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Get Out And Vote this November

2008 is an election year. Every seat in the Florida House of Representatives and half the seats in the Florida Senate are up for grabs. And, this year Americans will elect a new President.

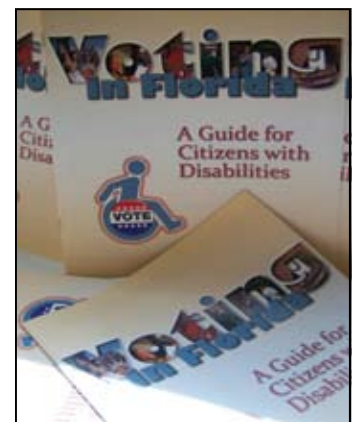
To help Floridians with disabilities understand the voting process, and to encourage all of Florida's citizens to get out and vote, The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities have produced "Voting in Florida—A Guide for Citizens with Disabilities".

This booklet explains why you should vote, how to register to vote, and the many different ways you can vote for the candidates of your choice.

If you would like a copy of the Guide, please call the FDDC toll-free at 1-800-580-7801, Toll-Free TDD at 888-488-8633, or email your request to fddc@fddc.org.

You can also get copies from the Advocacy Center by calling toll free at 1-800-342-0823, TDD Toll Free at 1-800-346-4127, or emailing the Advocacy Center at info@advocacycenter.org.

**Voting is your right,
and your
responsibility.
Cast your vote - make
your voice heard!**



Be Prepared



Do you know what to do before, during and after a hurricane or other disaster? First, don't wait till the last minute—prepare early and prepare for all types of natural disasters.

For more information on developing your own disaster plan, go to the Department of Community Affairs website at

www.floridadisaster.org/disabilities.htm.

To find out the latest weather updates go to www.noaawatch.gov

The United States Department of Homeland Security's *Ready Campaign* has dozens of publications for educating and empowering citizens to prepare for all types of emergencies, especially natural disasters.

You can download these publications at

<http://www.ready.gov/america/index.html>

or get copies by calling 1-800-BE-READY (1-800-237-3239) or 1-800-480-2520.

**Don't wait –
Make your plan
today!**



Director's Message

Hello. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council is reviving its quarterly newsletter. We want this newsletter to be a way for us to communicate with you about all the exciting programs the Council is sponsoring, and as a way for you to

communicate with us about how good a job we're doing, or what you'd like to see us change. In this and future newsletters we will share news, events and stories that impact individuals with disabilities and their families. Guiding us on our mission is our five-year plan that lays out ways for us to improve the lives of persons with developmental disabilities, and help them to live rich and productive lives as vital members of Florida's communities. The Council advocates for individuals with developmental disabilities to have greater control over their lives, and to be included in every part of community life—employment, recreation, housing, and education. We are excited about the many projects we are working on and the potential these projects have for improving the services and supports affecting persons with developmental disabilities. We, of course, are always interested in hearing from you about issues you think we should focus on, and the many ways we can make a difference in your lives. Please feel free to contact me. We want to hear from you! – Debra Dowds, Executive Director

We Want To Know About You

Have you taken a trip, won an award, talked with a lawmaker, gotten a new job, or had your name in your local paper? We want to know.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council is looking for news and photos about people with disabilities, their parents, family members and their friends. We want to showcase your news in our newsletter, our brochures, and on the Council's website.

Send us your stories and photos. We are looking for photos with a holiday theme such as Thanksgiving, Easter, Hanukah, Christmas, Ramadan, Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, etc. And



don't forget family outings, picnics, vacations, family visits, students in a classroom, people working, athletes, and pictures of you and your pets.

Please submit photos taken within the past six months.

If we use your photo, we will ask you and

everyone in the photo to sign a photo release, which we will mail to you.

So, get busy and tell us what's happening in your life.

If you have questions, please contact Rose Coster, Communications Coordinator, at 1-800-580-7801 or rosec@fddc.org.

Does God Make Garbage? by Johnny Seitz

Why do you study me from a distance and through a glass? Why do you speak about me behind my back? And why do you whisper when you talk about me?

Other parents talk on and on, loudly and proudly, about each new thing that their child does. Why do you whisper and glance around furtively?

Do you fear that someone might think that you created me, not God? That the me that you created will reflect inadequacies in you? That society might reject you because of me?

I once heard that God does not make garbage. Then who made me? Am I a disease that you might catch? Are my idiosyncrasies little germs that might infect you and make those parts that are different in you begin to grow?

Believe it or not, I am a human being too, just like you. My need for love and understanding is just wrapped up in different colored paper.

If looking into your eyes makes me forget all the things I need to say, that doesn't mean I am stupid or in another world or not present. It is just that your eyes are so deep and filled with so many things that they, your eyes, can confuse me.

I can too easily get lost among all the fascinating things I see.

If I don't respond, it is not because I'm too stupid to understand English. It's that words are so slippery at times and the same words can mean so many different things. And other times, I simply can't easily grab onto and use the words that you might understand to say "thank you" or "I love you." But it doesn't mean I have no feelings. I have too many.

I have heard that people only really fear the things that attract them. The tall building draws and repels the man afraid of heights. Could you be drawn to my uniqueness cause it resonates with some unexplored part of you?

The ancients used to metaphorically pile their sins onto the back of a goat, then drive the poor animal out into the desert to die of starvation. Am I the scapegoat that must be driven away to expiate parts of normal people that must never be explored? Do you fear that your membership in society might be revoked if you ever admitted that you might be just a little like me? Maybe my peculiarities are really just reflections of the things in you that you are afraid to look too closely at.

And why are you so embarrassed by my honesty, so ashamed of my uniqueness?

Will too much fascination with one thing diminish you? Might it not open doors of discovery for all mankind (your kind and my kind)?

Forget my little tics and my strange little rituals for just a second and weigh my honesty and my loyalty against artificial facades and hidden meanings.

If God does not make garbage, then who made me? Maybe I am a gift that you just forgot to open.

(Reprinted from "The Communicator", a publication of the Autism National Committee [AutCom]. For more information on AutCom go to www.autcom.org.)

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Antoinette Williams
Carolyn Williams
Latarsha Williams

Making A Difference

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Arlene Bodden, Darbi Jerard and Crystal Hubbartt from *Longleaf Elementary in New Port Richey*; **Anna Phillips** from *Oak Hammock K-8 School in Port St. Lucie*; **Gayle Moscatello** from *Silver Ridge Elementary in Davie*; **Michelle Brown** from *Trafalgar Middle School in Cape Coral*; **Sheree Schulson and Corrie Anderson-Lohr** from *Parkside Elementary School in Coral Springs*; and **Julie Fischer, Lynn Ward, Colleen Sanders, Patrice Bradarich, Carolyn Marzullo, Dawn Gibbens, Gail Ruddy, Laura Slezak, Karen Bowlin, and Kathy Boudreaux** from *Sand Pines School in Wesley Chapel*.

The Council presents these awards to encourage all school personnel in Florida to engage in Universal Education practices. Universal Education, once

referred to as inclusion, is an approach to education that creates learning environments designed for diversity and for making natural education settings accessible to all children, all together, all the time. The council believes that students with disabilities are valued members of the classroom and school community and that teachers should hold high expectations for all students' success in school and in the community.

To make inclusive education a reality, the community at large must be educated about inclusive education. All teachers, administrators and families must support inclusive education and have the knowledge and supports available to enable them to effectively teach all children, including those with disabilities, and all teachers should be provided access to current research and technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods and supports tailored to each individual's needs.

The benefits of inclusive education are: increasing academic gains for all students; the opportunity for typical peers to serve as models for students with disabilities; the development of natural friendships within the child's community; and the opportunity for students with disabilities to exist in natural proportions within the school community.

For more information about inclusive education practices, visit the Council's website at www.fddc.org.

Project Updates

Special Education Training

By Karen Pelham, Special Projects Manager

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) sponsored a series of four regional workshops during August presented by Peter Wright, Esq., whose law practice is devoted to assisting persons with disabilities and their parents, families or guardians. The workshops are designed to inform parents, families or guardians of their family members' educational rights under the law, and how to advocate on behalf of those family members.

The workshops included topics such as special education law, rights and responsibilities, tests and measurements to measure progress and regression, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and an introduction to tactics and strategies for effective advocacy.

Mr. Wright taught participants to create *S.M.A.R.T.* Individual Education Plans, however the concept can be applied to any aspect of life – how to set goals that are achieved. Goals should be **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic** and **Timely**. Mr. Wright explained that goals are more easily accomplished when they are **Specific**. In setting a specific goal, answer the five "W" questions and "H": *Who, What, When, Where, Why* and *How*. Which goal statement do you believe would result in accomplishing your goal: "Get in shape" or "Join the health club near my office and work out at least 1 hour from 6:00 A.M. to 7:00 A.M. three days a week". To determine if a goal is **Measurable**, ask yourself these questions: How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished? When you identify a goal that is important to you, you begin to find ways to make it **Attainable**, or make it come true. To be **Realistic**, a goal must represent an object that you are both willing and able to work toward. Your goal statement should include a time frame to make it **Timely**. Then you create a sense of urgency. For example, if you want to lose 10 pounds, establish a deadline by which you will lose the weight: "I will lose 10 pounds by Thanksgiving" rather than "I'll get this weight off someday."

Mr. Wright's determination to help children achieve educational goals grew out of his own educational experiences in the 1950s. In second grade, Mr. Wright was diagnosed with learning disabilities including dyslexia, dysgraphia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He was fortunate - his learning problems were identified early. His parents obtained intensive Orton-Gillingham remediation for him by Diana Hanburg King.

Peter and Pam Wright are the founders of Wrightslaw (www.wrightslaw.com), the #1 ranked website about education law, special education law, and special education advocacy (Alexa rankings).

Project Updates

Still Waiting

By Debbie Richards, Program Manager

Today, more than 16,000 individuals are on the Developmental Disabilities Waiting List for Medicaid Waiver services. To determine just what services are needed, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC), contracted with the Florida Office on Disability and Health (FODH) to conduct a telephone survey of 1,000 individuals on the waiting list. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) provided the random sample of contacts, with roughly half being under age 21 and the other half over 21. The primary focus of the survey, conducted during February and March of 2008, was to understand the service needs of those on the list, look at insurance and resources currently available, and find out more about living arrangements and potential risk factors. We found that:

- 85% of the caregivers for individuals on the waiting list are women.
- 65% of families reported an annual income of less than \$15,000 per year.
- Of those on the waiting list under age 21, more people reported receiving school-based services than reported receiving services through all other sources combined.
- The most commonly reported services provided by the schools were speech therapy (74.1%), occupational therapy (61.4%) and transportation (44.7%).
- 20% of respondents reported receiving services through Children's Medical Services (CMS).
- About one-quarter of those individuals on the waiting list (24.6%), receive services through Medicaid.
- Speech therapy was the most common service received through Medicaid (41.4%), followed by occupational therapy (36%).
- Community agencies were the least frequently identified source of services (4.4%), with respite care the service utilized most frequently (50%) through a community agency.
- About one in five individuals under age 21 on the waiting list currently receive no services through any source.

The most common reasons for not receiving services was a lack of APD funding, being unable to afford services, and not being Medicaid eligible.

Working families who have commercial insurance policies (both individual and group) often find the treatments and services needed by individuals with developmental disabilities are excluded.

Medicaid is the largest provider of the types of treatments and services needed by individuals with developmental disabilities.

The services needed most are transportation, behavior analysis, in-home supports, respite care, occupational therapy, speech therapy, assistive technology, and oral health care.

The report raises many questions, including:

- Who serves the children who need services prior to going to school?
- What about services needs outside the school system?
- What about services needed next year or over the next ten years?
- What happens when young adults age out of the public school system or graduate? Where will they go and what will they do?
- What happens are parents and caretakers get older?

By using this report and other solid data, the FDDC will continue to advocate for sound public policy, including additional revenue sources to meet the needs of Florida's citizens who are still waiting.

Farris v/s DCF

By Antionette Williams, Program Manager

The Employment Task Force is working with the Florida Center for Advocacy Research and Education, Inc., in Jacksonville, Florida, to prepare a report on a recent court ruling—*Farris v DCF*. Mr. Farris lost all his SSI benefits when he began earning above what was allowed by the Medicaid Waiver. This project will discuss the implications of the ruling and make recommendations for policy changes, specifically ones that will prevent similar rulings in the future. The project will also address other methods for the removal of disincentives, increasing income protection, and the need for educating and informing individuals with developmental disabilities and those who support them on existing work disincentives and income protection.

Project Updates

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Florida's Self-Advocacy Grassroots Campaign

By Latarsha Williams, Program Manager

The Self-Advocacy Grassroots Campaign is a project designed to increase the self-advocacy skills of Floridians with developmental disabilities. During the first year of the project, the Center on Human Policy at Syracuse University in New York, working with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, established three grassroots groups in Daytona, Pembroke Pines and Gainesville, FL.

The project's second year goal is to continue developing a statewide, independent self-advocacy movement by providing continued support and technical assistance to the initial pilot locations, adding five additional groups from different geographic locations in Florida to the project, and identifying and selecting five additional training locations for year three of the project. At the conclusion of year two, there will be total of eight separate, independent, grassroots self-advocacy groups that are operational in Florida. These groups will be independent and at the same time networked into a statewide organization.

A statewide training and networking meeting will be held in October, 2008 to strengthen connections between local groups and to foster the development of a statewide perspective as the movement grows. The statewide meeting will include the self-advocate leaders and advisors from the eight groups that will have completed the initial training at the end of the second year. The emphasis in this project is on building self-advocacy groups on a grassroots level with a statewide perspective. A unique aspect of this project is that each group will receive funds for start-up expenses. As a result, developing new groups will be able to focus their attention on their group's organizational, training and participation needs versus the distraction of fundraising which can absorb significant time and energy.

Partners In Policymaking

By Cindy Tan, Special Projects Manager

Thirty-one individuals attended the 2008 Partners in Policymaking (PIP) training held in Orlando on June 27-28. Coordinator Debbie Hannifan says the goal of PIP is to train individuals with developmental disabilities and family members to better understand and navigate the disability system and create positive and effective relationships with policymakers.

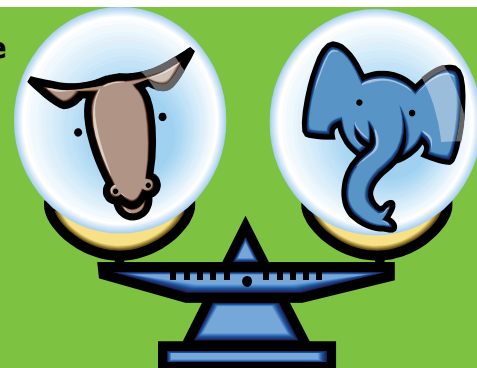
Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

By Cindy Tan, Special Projects Manager

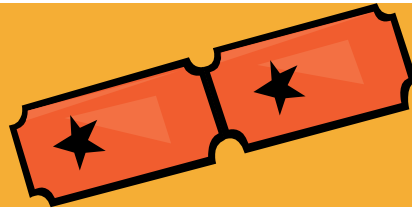
The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) at Florida Atlantic University is sponsoring a pre-conference day focusing on adult issues on January 16, 2009, in West Palm Beach. The pre-conference day will focus on issues facing adults with autism and related disabilities. The pre-conference also provides a forum for state agency representatives and community providers who work with adults with autism and other developmental disabilities to address issues in accessing community supports and develop workable solutions. The pre-conference will provide an opportunity for participants to learn new strategies and ideas related to living, working and learning as adults in communities. A focus throughout the day will be developing positive solutions to address gaps in the current system; and creating linkages between individuals, families, and support providers. (For more information on the conference contact Dr. Jack Scott at 561-251-4104 or Drjacksott@comcast.net.)

This year, Florida's General Election is November 4, 2008. To vote in the General Election, you must register by October 6, 2008. If you cannot make it to the polls on election day, you may request an absentee ballot or arrange for early voting.

For more information, contact your local supervisor of elections listed on the Florida Division of Elections website at <http://election.dos.fl.state.us> or call the Florida Voter Assistance Hotline, Toll Free: 1-866-308-6739, TDD Toll Free: 1-800-955-8771.



Your Ticket To Work



The Social Security Administration (SSA) has issued new regulations that significantly improve the Ticket to Work (TTW) Program.

TTW provides an opportunity to SSA beneficiaries to receive services that can help them work and earn income above the amount received from SSA. These changes expand the choices available to Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities who want to enter or re-enter the workforce.

Features include: increased supports, a better payment plan, and incentives for partnering with State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies. Service providers and employers can benefit from these new regulations to become Employment Networks and start incorporating the "Ticket" into their business practices.

Improvements for Beneficiaries:

- Eligibility has been expanded to all adult beneficiaries ages 18 - 64. Prior to this certain beneficiaries were not eligible prior to completion of their first Continuing Disability Review because medical improvement was expected to occur.
- Phase 1 Milestones are based on part-time work and increases in self-sufficiency permit beneficiaries to receive a mix of benefit payments and earnings, recognizing that the road to self-sufficiency is often an incremental process.
- Phase 2 Milestones are based on gross earnings of Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) encourage the use of SSA and other work incentives.
- Several improvements have been made to the "timely progress" requirements.

Improvements for Employment Networks:

- Employment Networks earn Milestones earlier in the process, more often, and at a higher rate.
- Some Milestones are available based on part-time work.
- Payments for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries are approximately the same.
- SSA can now pay a state Vocational Rehabilitation agency and an Employer Network for providing sequential services to the same beneficiary when Vocational Rehabilitation serves the beneficiary under Cost Reimbursement and the beneficiary subsequently assigns his benefit to the Employer Network for job retention or ongoing support services.

Social Security officials hope that these improvements will encourage more organizations to become Employment Networks, promote more partnerships and coordination of all services available to beneficiaries on the state, local and federal levels. For more information on "Ticket to Work", go to www.yourtickettowork.com.

FDDC Board Member Named Teacher of the Year

Dr. Amber Luke, a member of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC), was recognized by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Sunset Chapter #296 of Sarasota County on May 20th, 2008, as the Teacher of the Year. She has been teaching and advocating for students with disabilities for over 10 years and currently teaches at Glenallen Elementary School in North Port, Florida.

Dr. Luke's enthusiasm for education is evidenced by the joy and pride she expresses when speaking about her students. Appointed to the FDDC by Governor Charlie Crist in 2007, Dr. Luke contributes her insight as a person with a disability, as well as a teacher of students with disabilities.

In addition to recognizing Sarasota County teachers and staff for their support of students with disabilities, the Sunset Chapter of CEC also provides grants to local Exceptional Student Education teachers and awards scholarships for summer camp to Sarasota County students.



The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council co-sponsors many conferences throughout the year. On this page are scenes from the Family Café 2008, one of the conferences supported by the Council.



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This publication is sponsored by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. The Council accomplishes its mission by supporting innovative initiatives that demonstrate new approaches to enhance the independence, productivity, inclusion and self-determination of individuals with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life.