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FDDC Newsletter



Florida
Developmental
Disabilities
Council, Inc.

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The mission of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. is to advocate and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of life for Floridians with developmental disabilities.

REMEMBER TO VOTE ON NOVEMBER 6



Floridians with disabilities and their families, caregivers and advocates are being urged to have a stronger voice during the 2012 elections through the "Your Vote, Your Voice" campaign. This campaign consists of various education and advocacy tools such as a television public service announcement (PSA) on the ease of registering to vote, a voter registration fact sheet, a voting guide, sample social media posts for advocates to share and a PowerPoint presentation that group leaders can use when encouraging people in their local communities to register to vote. FDDC is urging citizens with disabilities to take advantage of these resources.

Go to www.fddc.org to view and download all the "Your Vote Your Voice" campaign materials.

For more information on voting, go to www.fddc.org or <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/>.

Council Members

Kathy McAllister - Sarasota County - **Chair**
Pat Archer - Palm Beach County
Ronni Bianco - Miami-Dade County
Richard Bradley - Alachua County
Conney Dahn - Martin County
Laurie J. Harlow - Hillsborough County
Cynthia Jackson - Leon County
Sylvia James-Miller - Marion County - **Member-at-Large**
Susan Kabot, Ed.D. - Sarasota County
Shirley Kervin - Department of Elder Affairs - Community and Support Services
Jack Kosik - Polk County
Kathy Leigh - Bradford County
Aleisa McKinlay - Department of Education - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Bernadette Moran - Duval County
Barbara Moss - Broward County
Barbara Palmer - Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Tricia Riccardi - Osceola County
Sara Romine - Polk County
Michael Smith - Escambia County
Casey Stewart - Broward County
Monica Verra-Tirado - Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education & Student Services
Robert Whitney - Disability Rights Florida
David Wood - Duval County
Victoria Zepp - Leon County
Vacant - Department of Health - Children's Medical Services
Vacant - Agency for Health Care Administration - Medicaid Program Development

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Director's Message

I am very excited to report that Governor Rick Scott has announced 11 appointments to the Florida Developmental Disabilities' Council.

Appointed were:

Richard "Dick" Bradley, of Gainesville, Executive Director of the Arc of Alachua County;
Conney C. Dahn, of Stuart, a teacher with the Martin County School District;
Laurie J. Harlow, of Tampa, a registered nurse with Life Path Hospice;
Cynthia "Marcy" Jackson, of Tallahassee, the Chief Financial Officer for the Florida Lottery;
John "Jack" Kosik, of Lakeland, Executive Director of Noah's Ark of Central Florida;
Aleisa C. McKinlay, of Tallahassee, Director of the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
Bernadette Moran, of Jacksonville, the owner of Premiums Promotions Concepts.
Barbara J. Palmer, of Tallahassee, the Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.
Monica C. Verra-Tirado, of Port Richey, the Bureau Chief for the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.
Dr. David L. Wood, of Jacksonville, a professor at the Shands Jacksonville Medical Center.
Victoria V. Zepp, of Tallahassee, the Chief Executive Officer of Zepp Strategic Partners.

Please join me in welcoming our new Council members, and in recognizing the hard work and dedication of the members who are leaving the Council.

*Debra Dowds
Executive Director*

Council Member Named One of Twelve “Hispanic Women of Distinction”



Rixys Alfonso, (center) Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) member from Broward County, is named one of the 2012 Hispanic Women of Distinction. Presenting the award are Robert Bard, (left) President of LATINA Style Magazine and Lori Chevy, (right) Market President for Bank of America.

Rixys Alfonso, a prominent south Florida public relations and fund-raising professional, was one of 12 honorees recognized because they exhibit the American entrepreneurship intertwined with their values and traditions. They represent success in a cross-section of creative disciplines, including communications, medicine, education, government & business development.

“It is a distinct honor to have been recognized from over 70 finalists in the tri-county area of Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties along with a group of pioneer women whose work and commitment to community has paved the way for other Latinas to achieve their goals,” said Rixys, in accepting the award. “The impact these women have on the lives of the Hispanic families they touch through their community investment is immeasurable. It is so essential to give back to your community, not only financially, but also with quality time and resolution. There is always something you can accomplish; giving back is a fundamental part of life.”

Rixys has been active at the local, state and national level advocating for the needs of individuals with disabilities. She is the Director of Corporate Relations for The Dan Marino Foundation, and is a member of the FDDC by gubernatorial appointment. Rixys currently chairs the Council’s Communications Committee, and serves on the Self-Advocacy Leadership Task Force and the Public Policy & Advocacy Committee.

Go Direct Now



Severe weather season is here and with it comes an increased risk of mail delivery disruptions or evacuations that can make it difficult for federal benefit recipients to receive their paper benefit checks. When this happens, people who depend on federal benefit checks for basic necessities can face a very difficult situation.

With the March 1, 2013, deadline quickly approaching when the U.S. Treasury will require direct deposit of federal benefit payments, The Go Direct® campaign has developed a new public service announcement along with five additional educational videos and print materials to help assist people with questions. The videos feature actual customer service agents from the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center and answer the following questions:

- Why is the U.S. Treasury requiring electronic federal benefit payments?
- How will I know my money has been deposited?
- How does direct deposit work?
- Are electronic payments safe?
- How does the Direct Express® card work?

To view the videos visit: <http://godirect.org/media/videos/why-requiring-electronic-payments/>

For more information visit: <http://godirect.org/> or call the

Go Direct Helpline

At 1-800-333-1795

Mon. - Fri. 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET

Spotlight On Council Initiatives

Council initiatives focus on programs that address improved health care, inclusive educational programs, employment and community supports. Each month The Council showcases success stories resulting from these Council initiatives.

Promoting Awareness and Acceptance of Disabilities

On September 28, 2012, several elementary schools and a pre-school in Tallahassee received a special delivery – copies of the new *Disability Awareness through Language Arts and Literacy: Resources for Prekindergarten and Elementary School* and a big bag of children's books from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) and partner, Barnes and Noble Booksellers, to complement the guide.



April Katine (right) Program Manager for the FDDC Child Development/Education Task Force, presents Disability Guides and children's books to Astoria Park Elementary School Principal Dr. Marsha Sanders (left), who will be distributing copies of the guide to all the teachers at Astoria Park.



Sue Krauls (left), Principal at W.T. Moore Elementary School in Tallahassee, was excited to her receive her bag of children's books that promote disability awareness from April Katine (right) Program Manager for the FDDC Child Development/Education Task Force.

This guide, which has been distributed state-wide, is part of a process that began almost 10 years ago because of a dream of the Florida Youth Council (FYC) – a group of youth (age 15-17) and emerging leaders (age 18-30) with disabilities or special health care needs who live in Florida. The FYC began this process by lobbying successfully for Senate Bill 856 commonly referred to as The Disability and History Awareness Bill, which sets aside the first two weeks in October as Disability Awareness Weeks. Out of this legislation came the idea for a guide that would help non-disabled students appreciate the differences between them and their classmates with disabilities. *Disability Awareness through Language Arts and Literacy* is that guide.

This guide and the children's books are designed to promote and encourage disability awareness in Florida.

The guides and books have been distributed state wide, not only to elementary schools, but to early education centers and pre-schools.

At one child care center, (right) the teacher shared "I'm Like You, You're Like Me" with her class as soon as the books were delivered.



At a training for Leon County schools' media specialists, FDDC Executive Director Debra Dowds shared information about the history of the "Disability Awareness Guide". Those attending the training were encouraged to introduce the guide and the children's books to teachers at their schools.

The Council hopes that the Disability Awareness Guide will: help all children learn about disabilities; promote positive attitudes toward, and facilitate successful inclusion of, students with disabilities in schools, pre-schools and early education centers; 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. This publication is available for download from the Council website at <http://www.fddc.org/publications> . For more information about this project contact aprilk@fddc.org .

The Fit Club



Members of the Fit Club 'work it out'.

*Submitted by Susan Bykofsky
Gulfstream Goodwill*

In 2009, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, Inc., (GGI) in West Palm Beach, Florida, implemented the Fit Club Health and Wellness Program, through a grant from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council. As we conclude the third year of life-changing services for persons with developmental disabilities through the Fit Club, staff and participants extend a heartfelt thank you to FDDC for recognizing, funding and supporting this effort.

“I feel like I am becoming healthier”

For three (3) years The Fit Club has offered persons with developmental disabilities the opportunity to participate in activities and receive education that promotes healthy living. Through behavior changes and heightened understanding of the importance of making choices that support a healthy lifestyle, participants have experienced increased self-esteem, health awareness, and weight loss in supportive community and facility-based environments.

“As a Support Coordinator I see that it has encouraged the participant to make proactive healthy choices to improve her diet and self-esteem”

Our program was initially modeled after and mentored by Goodwill Industries in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was our goal to develop a replicable program and expand Fit Club into new Goodwill territories. At the conclusion of year two, GGI developed a Program Replication Guide, and in year three mentored and developed a replicated program at Suncoast Goodwill in St Petersburg, Florida. The activities, events, community integration, and educational offerings have touched the lives of over 100 persons with developmental disabilities who previously had limited access to, and understanding of, the concept of healthy living.

“Fit Club has been very helpful because now my daughter is more motivated to do things on her own”

“Participating in the community has helped Jose be more caring about his environment and become more independent”

Through the Advisory Committee; parents, participants, support providers and therapists were engaged and provided guidance for growth of the program. Their involvement enabled the program goals to be supported at home and in the community as well.

“My daughter loves the Fit Club. She looks forward to going and has been exercising more at home because of it. She also has more energy and encourages me (mom) to get fit as well.”

“My son has become more communicative”

In year three, participation in all FIT Club activities yielded exceptional results.

Highlights include:

70 people walked almost 2000 miles

31 people lost 209 pounds at Weight Watchers

70% of Fit Club participants attended Night and Weekend Activities

190 Personal Training Sessions were held

96 Yoga Classes were attended

94 Health and Nutrition Classes were taught

93 visits to the YMCA were attended

Consumer and Stakeholder Satisfaction Scores Exceeded Expectations

“It was helpful to lose weight and be active”

“Fit Club makes me more social”

“Helps keep me in shape, especially with Weight Watchers”

The Fit Club has become an integral part of the Transitions Program for adults with developmental disabilities at GGI. All four Transitions locations incorporate Fit Club activities into the fabric of the program. The future of the Fit Club holds many exciting prospects for continuing this vital transformation in thought and action. Further replication sites, the addition of more involvement from natural supports, and continued participant input will drive the program in years to come. On behalf of everyone associated with the FIT Club we extend gratitude to the Council for putting your faith in our vision and supporting this exceptional experience for us all.

First Choice – Employment



Self-advocates from Pyramid Studios, Tallahassee, and staff from the EmployMe1st project discuss employment issues during a focus group meeting.

Should Florida have a system of employment programs where integrated competitive employment is the first option available for individuals with developmental disabilities? The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council believes it should, and the Council has partnered with The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) in Massachusetts and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Agencies to make that happen, through an **EmployMe 1st** initiative.

EmployMe1st means that employment is the first option considered for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, instead of day programs or sheltered workshops. To help Florida move toward employment as a first option, ICI has produced a report that compares key elements of employment first initiatives in states similar to Florida, including the variables that contributed to their success and the barriers they faced; an analysis of Florida's laws, policies and funding streams; interviews with key stakeholders; and forums across Florida.

ICI has conducted focus groups in Ft. Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Orlando, Pensacola, Sarasota, and Tallahassee for self-advocates, families, caregivers and providers to learn the challenges and successes of the state's supported employment program. From these data a plan will be developed for how Florida's services and systems can support and facilitate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities get jobs in integrated, competitive settings.

ICI is now sorting and analyzing this information to develop an Employment First Implementation Plan for Florida. Please contact sheilag@fddc.org to learn more about **EmployMe 1st**.

Building a Better Economic Future for People with Disabilities

Having a disability should not require an individual or family to live in poverty. Receiving public benefits should not discourage employment. Yet many Americans with disabilities who receive public benefits feel trapped by the maze of rules and requirements, shying away from work for fear of losing their much needed benefits as they pursue greater financial stability.

National Disability Institute, the first national non-profit dedicated exclusively to building a better economic future for all people with disabilities, aims to make things a little easier. For more than 10 years, National Disability Institute team members have hosted dozens of in-person state benefits trainings across the country to help people with disabilities navigate their local benefits maze.

And now, for the first time, that important information is available to all Florida residents. With support from the Florida Development Disabilities Council, National Disability Institute created *The Changing Face of Benefits*, a downloadable benefits training workbook to help make sense of Florida's benefits rules and resources.



The Changing Face of Benefits was created for families of persons with disabilities, disability service providers and self-advocates. In *The Changing Face of Benefits* you will learn about the impact of earnings on public benefits and incentives to work; opportunities available in Florida to increase income and assets through financial stability programs; and how to make informed decisions about employment, earning and investment.

The Changing Face of Benefits is divided into eight Modules - Meet the Players; Being an Advocate; Developing an Initial Application; SSDI and Medicare; Earning Wages and SSDI: More Incentives to Work; SSI and Medicaid; Earning Wages While Receiving SSI and Medicaid; Pathways to Advance Economic Self-Sufficiency for Persons with Disabilities in Florida; and a Glossary of Terms.

The Changing Face of Benefits is available to download as a PDF. National Disability Institute is currently developing an online e-course on *The Changing Face of Benefits* that will offer CEUs to those who successfully complete the course. Visit www.realeconomicimpact.org/FL-benefits for more information.

Self-Advocates on the Move



The "Self-Advocates of East Volusia", one of 12 local grassroots groups that make up the Florida Self-Advocates Network'D (FLSAND), learn how to become stronger advocates during their monthly meetings.

Florida Self-Advocates Network'D (FLSAND) and Local Grassroots Groups –

Twelve sustainable, local, self-advocacy groups are functioning in different locations throughout Florida. Most of the groups meet monthly, and try to stay active in local, state and national events. The groups hold fund-raising events, and the Hobe Sound members raised enough to support their members' attendance at the Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) National Conference. Florida SAND's future goals include: working on plans for a December state-wide meeting which will have members from each local group apply for and become members of cross-disability and/or culturally diverse leadership coalitions or work settings; collaborate with local organizations to recruit individuals with developmental disabilities for membership in Florida SAND; become more self-determined; become stronger advocates and participate in community governments, businesses and other organizations; and have a voice at the decision-making tables of their communities. For more information about this project contact dennieh@fddc.org.

To learn more about the Council, including information on free publications, go to www.fddc.org, or visit our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/TheFDDC>