

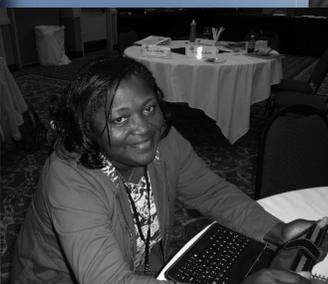
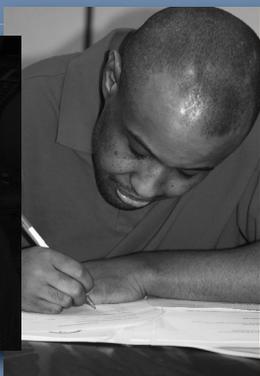
BREAKING GROUND

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Kindling the Fire

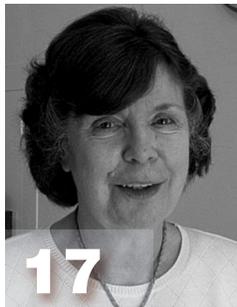


A Partners in Policymaking Graduate Takes Her Training to the Next Level



A PUBLICATION OF
THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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Kindling the Fire

BY REBECCA LEWIS

A year or so ago, I happened upon an email about a program called Partners in Policymaking™ and learned that they were taking applications. I did a little checking on the Partners program and decided to apply. I really liked the idea that it was free. Much to my surprise, and still with no real idea what I was getting into, I was accepted!

At the first class, I was nervous but I put my anxieties aside and took it all in. As the training progressed, I learned about the history of disabilities, many of the laws and policies surrounding disabilities, assistive technology, service agencies and providers in Tennessee, and communicating with legislators, just to name a few.

When I would return home from the weekend session at Partners, I shared information I had learned with friends, family, coworkers, and anyone else who would listen! I would leave the weekend excited and energized, thinking of ways I could incorporate what I had learned into my daily life and into the lives of others. After the training one weekend, I stopped to eat dinner on my way home. I began talking with a couple at another table that had a child with autism, about their rights, programs and services available. Special education services were part of their concerns, and I was able to give them some phone numbers to call and get help with advocacy and training in their area. Each time I shared information, I wanted to share and do more. I knew firsthand the difficulties I had faced as the mother of a child with Asperger's Syndrome and from that, I developed a desire to keep others from having to endure the pain my son and I had experienced. I was more compelled and becoming bolder in my approach to helping others with disabilities.



“I had made new friends and contacts and learned a lot about disability-related issues, but at graduation I knew that it was time for me to make a difference. Knowledge is power.”

Toward the end of Partners, we were challenged to find an area of concern in our community for individuals with disabilities. For me, it was bringing services and programs to my area. There is a larger city nearby where there are many services and programs available, but I knew that for people from my community, there are transportation issues and a lack of knowledge about the programs. With these things in mind, I started considering a community program for my area. It was time to help my community embrace their heritage, while

educating and empowering its people about disabilities.

My graduation from the Partners program came all too soon. I had made new friends and contacts and learned a lot about disability-related issues, but at graduation I knew that it was time for me to make a difference. Knowledge is power. I have been given the power to change lives for the better. I have the power to make my world a better place. I can give others the power to believe in themselves, assert their rights and improve their lives.

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Communication Discrimination

BY MARTHA M. LAFFERTY

Some disabilities affect communication. Easy examples are deafness, blindness and speech disabilities. However, other disabilities such as learning or intellectual disabilities can sometimes affect communication too. While it is common knowledge that people with disabilities often experience discrimination, there is less awareness of communication discrimination. This article explains what communication discrimination is and what you can do about it. This article only discusses communication discrimination directly related to disability. For example, if a person who is blind is being discriminated against because she speaks Spanish, that is not a disability discrimination issue.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires private businesses and government programs to ensure effective communication with people with disabilities. The ADA requires that businesses and government programs communicate with people with disabilities in a way that is as effective as for those without disabilities. The ADA also requires that businesses and government entities provide auxiliary aids and services, such as documents in an alternate format or a sign language interpreter, to ensure effective communication. However, sometimes businesses and government programs are unaware of this or choose not to do it.

People who are deaf or have speech disabilities often use relay services to make phone calls. However, sometimes businesses or government programs refuse to accept relay calls. People with intellectual disabilities sometimes require a simplified language version of a document. However, a business or government provider may refuse to provide that simplified version. People who are deaf often need sign language interpreters for complex communications such as those with a doctor, lawyer, court or government agency. Unfortunately, businesses and government entities sometimes refuse to provide these interpreters.

Generally, people with disabilities have to ask for communication aids/services that they may need. For example, if a person who is blind needs an audio or Braille version of a legal document, he or she should ask for that and not expect an

attorney to automatically provide it. Similarly, a person who is deaf and needs a sign language interpreter for a medical appointment should contact the doctor's office in advance to make that request.

If more than one aid/service will provide effective communication, businesses and government agencies can choose which aid/service to provide. At the same time, the key to whether an aid/service is effective is whether it works for the person with a disability. For example, if a Braille document or an audio document will both result in effective communication for Person X, then a doctor can provide the document in either Braille or audio. That is the case even if Person X prefers audio.

Businesses and government entities can also generally choose the supplier of an aid/service. For example, if agency A and B both provide tactile sign language interpreter services but agency B costs less money, then a court can choose to use agency B to provide services to a person who is deaf-blind. However, there are exceptions for situations where using agency B would not result in effective communication with that individual.

Some types of communications are required to be accessible without a request. For example, public notices should be issued in accessible formats. That means if a public notice is printed in a newspaper, the notice should also be issued in formats accessible to individuals who have vision disabilities. Similarly, television programs should be closed captioned for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Generally, websites should also be accessible. For example, people who use screen readers should be able to access information on a website. In addition, the ADA requires businesses to automatically accept relay calls on the same basis as other calls.

People with disabilities across Tennessee are experiencing barriers to effective communication. To make sure you receive effective communication, it can be helpful to do the following:

1. Plan ahead by thinking about what you may need to communicate with a business or government agency.

2. Ask ahead of time for what you need. Because some businesses/government agencies are not familiar with disability communication issues, it may be helpful to also explain why you need the aid/service you are requesting. For example, it may be helpful for a person who is deaf to explain that he or she needs a sign language interpreter because sign language, not English, is his or her first language.

3. Ask a business or government entity to document in writing any refusal to provide what you need.

4. Contact Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee (DLAC) at 1.800.342.1660 to ask for help with communication barriers. DLAC can educate businesses and government programs about the ADA's requirements and advocate for them to provide necessary auxiliary aids/services. In selected cases, DLAC can provide legal representation to address communication issues impacting large numbers of people with disabilities.



It can be hard to express yourself. It can be hard to understand others. These things can be hard due to disability. There is a law called the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). That law solves problems due to disability. Businesses have to follow that law. Government agencies have to follow that law. A person who is deaf may need a sign language interpreter. A person who is blind may need an electronic document. Some people need simpler words. These are only examples. Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee (DLAC) is helping people with these kinds of problems. DLAC can only help if the problem is due to disability. **You can contact DLAC at 1.800.342.1660. Martha M. Lafferty is managing attorney for the Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee.**

New Council Members Announced

Four new members were appointed by Governor Haslam to the Council on Developmental Disabilities in August of 2012. Please join us in welcoming the following:

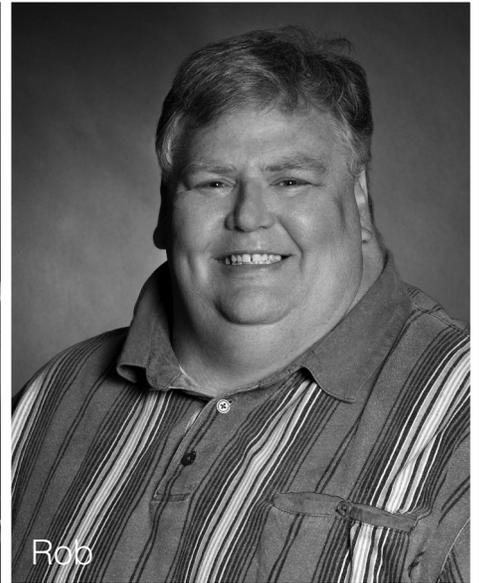
Rick Davis lives in Hixson and works as a Business Specialist at the TVA Sequoyah Nuclear Plant in Soddy Daisy. He is a graduate of Memphis State University and studied Mathematical Sciences. Davis coaches for a Tennessee wheelchair soccer team. He has also served on the Tennessee Statewide Independent Living Council since 2007, the CARTA Board for Accessible Transportation since 1994 and was a recipient of the United Way Courage Award.

Rob Buttrum lives in Cookeville and has had years of experience working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in different capacities, including working in Rehabilitation Services, as an educator, a coordinator of after-school programs, a houseparent, a provider of supports in an alternative school and a tutor. He has a degree in Deaf and Hard of Hearing studies from the University of Tennessee.

Evan Espey lives in Antioch and works at the Technology Access Center in Nashville as the Assistive Technology Outreach Coordinator. Espey is a graduate of Murray State University and studied Human Services and Public Administration. He serves as a volunteer coach for the Music City Thunder, a Nashville wheelchair basketball team. He also serves on the Nashville Mayor's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities and has been involved in local and state politics in a variety of roles, including working as the Field Director for a State Senate campaign, the Manager for a State Representative campaign and Treasurer for a political party in Sumner County.



Rick



Rob



Evan



Rebekah

Rebekah Seiber lives in Crossville and works as a Support Broker at The Arc Tennessee. Seiber has served on the board of directors for the East Tennessee Down Syndrome Awareness Group and as the Executive Director of The Arc Cumberland County between 2006 and

2009. She has a daughter with Down syndrome and has been an advocate for her daughter and other families across Tennessee for many years.

PHOTOS BY DAWN MAJORS

New Council Members Q&A:

- 1) Please tell us what has been your greatest challenge as a person with a disability, or as the family member of a person with a disability.
- 2) Please tell us your greatest success as a person with a disability, or as the family member of a person with a disability.
- 3) What disability-related issues are you most passionate about working on through your role as a Council member?



Rick Davis

- 1) One of my greatest challenges (despite tremendous support from Personal Assistants and friends) is the frustration of not being able to grab the keys and "go" when the feeling hits.
- 2) My greatest success is my spirit of independence. I have a job, own my home, and just last year embarked on the independent trip of a lifetime. Also, I'm blessed to have played a very competitive sport.
- 3) I'm very interested in issues involving independent living and sports, especially sports involving athletes in power chairs.



Rob Buttrum

- 1) My greatest challenge as a person with a disability is the constant need to educate others about my hearing disability, which is profound deafness.
- 2) My success belongs to my family because without their support, patience and understanding, I would not be where I am today. My parents were very involved with my education and made every effort to communicate with me; that, I believe, has made all the difference.
- 3) Advocating for deaf citizens that are not fortunate enough to receive the services that they desperately need, such as having appropriate services while receiving mental health care, medical care, and hospital care.



Evan Espey

- 1) Being viewed as an adult who is capable of making his own decisions. Stores, doctors' offices, and just about anywhere I go, I still seem to find someone who thinks that I have the mind of a child, or that I am incapable of doing things on my own.
- 2) Obtaining two college degrees, and securing full-time employment.
- 3) Ensuring individuals with disabilities have fair access to education, and services in the community. Advocating for the rights of all.



Rebekah Seiber

- 1) Peoples' perceptions, judgments, and stereotyping.
- 2) It has to be seeing my daughter Madison, now 17, communicating her wants and needs and taking an active role to meet them.
- 3) Education, respite for caregivers and employment opportunities for folks with disabilities.



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities office recently moved to a new location in downtown Nashville. Phone numbers and email addresses have not changed.

New address: Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities,
Davy Crockett Tower, 1st Floor
500 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37243

DIDD Seeks Accreditation

A *Breaking Ground* Interview with Laura Doutré

CONDUCTED BY LYNETTE PORTER

The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) has announced that it is seeking to become the first accredited service delivery system for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) in the nation. Department staff and providers will participate in a three-year process of capacity-building, data gathering, and network evaluation before the accreditation is complete in 2015. With this process, the goal is for DIDD to become an international model for service delivery. Recently, Breaking Ground had an opportunity to sit down with Laura Doutré, Director of Accreditation for DIDD, to find out the details of this exciting initiative.

BG: What is your new role in this process?

LD: I am the State Director of Accreditation overseeing the process across the state.

BG: What does it mean to become the first accredited service delivery system in the nation?

LD: Across all state service delivery systems that exist for individuals with ID in the United States, our department is going to be the first one to become accredited through an international accrediting body. There are other departments and service systems that have accreditation, such as corrections and children's services, but for intellectual disabilities there has not been an accreditation given and there has not been an accrediting body that has a process to accredit a state system. DIDD chose to work with the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) and they are working on their process to accredit a state service delivery system as we are working on our process. CQL is a leader in working with human service organizations to continuously define, measure and improve the quality of life for all people. CQL offers consultation, accreditation, training and certification services to organizations and systems, both nationally and internationally.

At the heart of the CQL process are Personal Outcome Measures (POMs). These are measurement tools that were developed out of focus groups of individuals who use services from around

the world. CQL has been using POMs since 1997. The data is collected and measured through conversations with people receiving supports. Key to POMs is that instead of looking at the quality of how a service is delivered, POMs looks at whether the services and supports are having the desired results that matter to the person.

BG: How will the POMs tie into the system you are creating?

LD: We will use the POM interviews to collect the data that will drive the changes to the system that will become part of our accreditation plan.

BG: Where is DIDD in the timeline?

LD: We are still in the first phase of a three-year timeline. This phase focuses on capacity-building. It is a really intensive phase. There is an accreditation team made up of staff from across the state that involves staff from quality assurance, person-centered practices and the regional offices. This team is becoming certified to do workshops on POMs. We are currently becoming certified to conduct basic assurance reviews.

BG: What is a basic assurance review?

LD: These reviews look at the providers' policies and support systems and compare it to their actual practices. There are 11 factors that we look for to compare the paper to the practice. We conduct POM interviews of individuals receiving services and see if the intended practices match what happens where the "rubber meets the road".

BG: What will the provider involvement be?

LD: It is all voluntary. We are not going to require any provider to become accredited. But because they are part of our service delivery system, they will be a part of the sample used to collect the official data in 2014. We will use this data to develop our accreditation plan. We will pick a sample of about 40 providers and do basic assurance reviews. We will do 420 POM interviews with individuals being served by the providers.

In 2013, we are asking providers to let us come do trainings and workshops about

the process that will be coming the following year. We want to teach them the things that CQL is looking for because I anticipate that these are the things that our system will eventually be expecting. We have had no lack of volunteers. We have a waiting list of providers who want us to do the workshops and basic assurance reviews. This is a large commitment from the providers. We have enough training requests to carry us to the summer.

BG: We are very excited to hear about the self-advocate role in accreditation. What is their involvement?

LD: Self-advocates are a key part of the accreditation team. They have been trained on how to be mentors for people who are receiving services. Self-advocates will facilitate focus groups across the state. The data gathered will also be used to develop the accreditation plan. There are 12 self-advocates who currently receive waiver services, and 12 DIDD staff on the accreditation team.

BG: The Council on Developmental Disabilities and DIDD have partnered for several years on person-centered thinking trainings for DIDD staff and providers across the state. How will the accreditation process intersect with the person-centered thinking initiative?

LD: One of the things that has happened at the Central Office level is that the Person-Centered Practices Unit has been moved under my supervision as a part of the accreditation process. The person-centered thinking tools are the tools we will use to get to the accreditation standards. The CQL standards are the measurement, and the person-centered tools are what we use to get there. What we are seeing is that providers come out of the POM workshops requesting person-centered thinking training, because the providers realize they need the person-centered thinking tools to get to the POM outcomes.

Let me give you an example. One of the POMs is, "do people have friends?" One of the tools in the person-centered thinking toolkit is the relationship map. A great way

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Walgreens Study Confirms the Value of Employees with Disabilities

BY ROBERT B. NICHOLAS, PHD

Walgreens, the nation's largest drugstore chain, has done groundbreaking work in the employment of people with disabilities. In 2003, the company established a goal of having 30% of the employees in its distribution center system be people with disabilities. The company's vision was that employees with and without disabilities would be integrated doing the same jobs for the same pay and benefits while being held to the same standards.

Walgreens started its disability employment initiative at two new high tech distribution centers located in South Carolina and Connecticut that were specifically designed to accommodate employees with disabilities. Walgreens implemented its initiative using employer-driven partnerships with local disability service agencies to access recruitment, training, and job retention supports for employees with disabilities. Of particular note, the company developed an innovative, flexible training curriculum which teaches people with disabilities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the skills for jobs in the distribution centers. This curriculum teaches based on how people learn and at a pace based on each person's individual needs.

The results of the Walgreens distribution center initiative to date have been impressive. As of January 2012, 40% of the employees at the South Carolina and Connecticut distribution centers are people with disabilities and Walgreens exceeded 1000 employees in its distribution center system nationwide. These numbers

indicate that Walgreens perceives hiring people with disabilities as a good business decision. The company has now confirmed that belief statistically in a report released in June 2012 [J. Kaletta, D. Binks, and R. Robinson, "Creating an Inclusive Workplace: Integrating Employees with Disabilities into a Distribution Center Environment," Professional Safety, June 2012]. This report compares the productivity, retention, and safety of employees with disabilities at Walgreens' distribution centers to co-workers with no disclosed disability. The report, which compiled company operational data, contains important findings that significantly add to the body of knowledge on the employment of people with disabilities.

PRODUCTIVITY

The Walgreens distribution center initiative is based on employees with disabilities being held to the same standards and job specifications as employees with no disclosed disability. While reasonable accommodations are made for employees with disabilities, there is no customizing or carving of jobs at the distribution centers. Accordingly, the Walgreens study compared the productivity of employees with disabilities to that of employees with no disclosed disability using the same point of reference. The company defines productivity as output per hour and measures are established for each job title. Operational data on each employee's productivity is routinely collected. The report compiled productivity data on employees

with disabilities and employees with no disclosed disability from 31 locations at three distribution centers. The study found that in 18 locations, the difference in productivity between the two groups was statistically insignificant. In three locations, employees with no disclosed disability were more productive and in 10 locations, employees with a disability were more productive. The study concluded that employees with a disability and employees with no disclosed disability were equally productive.

This finding has important implications for employment service systems for people with disabilities. Many employers, as well as no small number of practitioners in the system, assume that people with disabilities do not have the ability to be as productive as employees with no disclosed disability. This finding refutes that notion and raises new possibilities for jobs that people with disabilities and, in particular, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, are capable of doing. It confirms that with appropriate supports and training, people with disabilities can be as productive as employees without disclosed disabilities. It further confirms the effectiveness of the employer-driven partnerships that Walgreens has formed with local community agencies and the innovative training curriculum it developed to teach people with disabilities the skills required for jobs in the distribution centers.

RETENTION

An important human resource measure for employers is job retention. Replacing employees

who leave is costly, so increasing retention (and conversely lowering turnover) saves employers money. The Walgreens study compared the turnover rates of employees with disabilities to employees with no disclosed disability at four locations over a three-year period. The study found that for all four locations, the three-year average turnover rates were significantly lower for employees with a disability as compared to employees with no disclosed disability. Overall, the turnover rate for employees with disabilities was 48% less than for employees with no disclosed disability. The study concludes that the results support the contention that employees with disabilities have lower turnover rates.

The study's finding that Walgreens' employees with disabilities have lower turnover rates than employees with no disclosed disability is not, in itself, surprising. A common selling point for jobseekers with disabilities used by many job coaches is lower turnover rates and reduced training costs. However, the study's finding that employees with disabilities had 48% lower turnover rates provides statistical evidence that employees with disabilities have much lower rates. This finding should make hiring employees with a disability even more attractive to employers.

SAFETY

Another important human resource concern for employers is safety. The Walgreens study explores safety from the perspective of costs for Worker's Compensation claims. The

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KINDLING THE FIRE ▶

“The passion had always been there, but it needed to be kindled and developed into a useful skill and tool. That’s what Partners in Policymaking did for me.”

Currently, I am developing a disability-focused community interest group called POSE (Positive Opportunities to Support and Enable). I am working to get the word out to individuals with disabilities in my community that they have choices, opportunities and rights. I am getting involved in local community organizations to bring services to my community. I am also working to increase awareness about the needs of individuals with disabilities.

I currently serve on the county health council. I have helped to develop the first work-based learning program involving local high school students with IEPs (Individualized Education

Programs). I am also working to organize a board for a community non-profit group that will hopefully be able to provide financial assistance for medication costs, assistive technology, and required medical equipment for individuals with disabilities.

The passion had always been there, but it needed to be kindled and developed into a useful skill and tool. That’s what Partners in Policymaking did for me. No matter how small the flame, in the darkness it can be seen for great distances, and it lights even the darkest corners. With the proper care, a spark of excitement can grow into a great fire of hope, support and change! My spark was kindled and fueled by my experiences and training in Partners. Great amounts of information, a positive environment, a genuine and caring atmosphere, and a respect for each individual created the perfect conditions for the growth and development of my fire.

I can’t thank the Council on Developmental Disabilities enough for sponsoring me and continuing the Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute. Thanks to Ned Andrew Solomon (Director of the Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute) for his patience and commitment to the program. Thanks to my Partners classmates for the good times and memories. I hope to see all of you at the next Partners Reunion. Keep the fire going!

REBECCA LEWIS
Disability Rights Advocate/Consultant
2012 Partners in Policymaking Graduate
POSE Founder and Coordinator
Board Member, Unicoi County Health Council

EasyLiving Homes of Tennessee Transitions to Tennessee Housing Development Agency

BY ALICIA CONE, PHD

EasyLiving Homes of Tennessee was established in May 2008 through a grant from the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities. The purpose of this initiative was to implement and then expand a voluntary certification program for visitable homes. Features of a visitable home include:

- Easy access with a step-free entrance
- Easy passage throughout the home, with an exterior doorway that provides a step-free entrance with a 32” minimum clear passage. All interior doorways on the main floor also have a minimum of 32” of clear passageway.
- Easy use because the main floor includes a kitchen, some entertainment area, at least one bedroom, and at least one full bathroom with maneuvering space that allows access to the sink, toilet and shower/tub.

The four-year demonstration project promoted the spread of the visitability concept throughout the home builder community. Over the course of this project, 503 visitable homes were certified by 17 member builders across the state of Tennessee. Perhaps as significantly, over 700 Tennesseans in the building industry received training or education about visitability.

The EasyLiving Homes of Tennessee program has now moved to the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA), which will provide funding to continue the program. Due to trademark concerns, the initiative will now be known as the Flexible Home Concepts (FHC) program. The original vision remains intact. According to THDA, “Flexible Home Concepts (FHC) is a voluntary certification program designed to encourage builders of new homes - whether single family or any multi-family building with up to three living units - to voluntarily implement design features which make a home accessible, visitable and convenient for everyone.”

THDA introduced the new program name and the transition to THDA at the Governor’s Housing Summit in October 2012. New marketing materials that utilize Tennessee-specific testimonials and pictures are now available.

THDA has updated its website to provide information regarding FHC. For more information, visit www.thda.org and look at programs listed under the “Homeownership” tab. The future of this initiative is looking very bright, as the program and concept are now embedded in state processes.

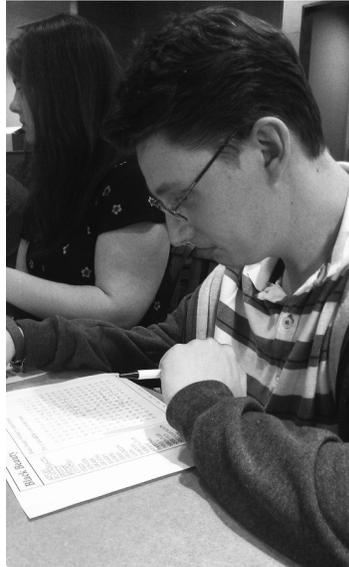
Alicia Cone, PhD is grant program director for the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Spreading the Word: *Reading, Journaling & Social Engagement*

BY MEGAN OWENS AND CYNTHIA CHAMBERS, PHD



THE NEXT CHAPTER BOOK CLUB MODEL SEEKS TO PROMOTE LITERACY DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS IN A BOOK CLUB SETTING.



You enter a coffee shop and join your friends at a table for your book club meeting. This is a familiar place to you. You come here every week at the same time. You feel welcomed by the other group members and feel like you can be yourself in this relaxed atmosphere. While you sign in, you discuss with the others how your week has been: what you did, what was good and what was bad. There is no hesitation here.

Once the discussion dies down and everyone is ready to begin, you open a familiar book, the same one you've been reading for the past several weeks. As a group you discuss what happened during your last reading and then your book club's facilitator asks for a volunteer to read first. Your mind begins to wander. Six months ago, you never would have volunteered to read, much less read first. Since then, you've come to realize that this is a safe place where you're offered a chance to succeed. You volunteer yourself and begin reading as the other group members follow along. You come to a funny line and begin laughing. Someone asks what you're laughing at and the group begins discussing what it would be like to encounter that same situation. You feel free, accomplished, and wanted. Such is the experience of a Next Chapter Book Club participant.

Book clubs consists of five or six members of

varying reading levels who all understand that everyone is welcome and a valued participant. Each club is coordinated by at least one facilitator who assists book club members in designing and running book clubs according to their preferences. Book clubs meet in community settings such as book stores and cafes.

The book club model affords participants a wealth of both internal and external benefits. Book clubs allow individuals to "lead" their own organization by creating a place to call their own, and, within that same setting, by providing opportunities for self-advocacy. Participants choose the books that they read as well as how to structure the group.

Therefore, each book club has its own personality, defined by the interests of the participants, the rules they outline for meetings, and the procedures for how the book club itself will run (e.g., who will read first, next). Here are a few example rules for some of the book clubs located in the Tri-cities of East Tennessee:

- Follow along with others while reading and stay on the same page as the group.
- No talking about spiders... unless you specify that they are in a cage.
- Wait until the person reading pauses to make a comment.
- If you come to a "not nice" word while

reading, say "beep".

Book clubs provide a number of ways for participants to utilize their leadership skills. Participants may provide support for their fellow members by echo reading with them (i.e., providing the words to the reader while he/she reads the text out loud to the group), assisting them in holding their book, or helping them stay on the correct page with the group. Community involvement creates other opportunities for support. Participants often order refreshments from their book club sites before or after their meetings. It is during this time that volunteers and facilitators are able to help participants advocate for themselves in these natural settings.

As is to be expected from a book club program, participants gain skills from the literacy exposure that they receive on a weekly basis. Participants have begun reading more words, and participating with more confidence as a result of this program. The Next Chapter Book Club is not designed to be a highly instructional method, yet the sheer joy of reading has presented an amazing opportunity for individuals of all reading abilities to kindle the motivation to read more and to share their discoveries with others within as well as outside the book club setting. As a result of these experiences,

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SPREADING THE WORD ▶

participants gain a sense of pride and accomplishment.

As a result of the small group routine meetings provided by the book club setting, participants form lasting friendships. Most of these take root in book club meetings but eventually extend far outside. During book club meetings, discussions usually start with a point from the book and branch off from there. This aspect provides a safe place for participants to voice their fears, disappointing moments and successes, and, in turn, have individuals who understand them listen and respond. No matter what the perceived ability level, all book club members provide support to each other through their help with reading, laughter, friendship or sense of caring.

Recently, developers of the Next Chapter Book Club concept have opened the door to an exciting new opportunity. A similarly motivated writing club - Jot It Down - has been created. The new program was formed as a natural crossover from reading stories to

creating stories. With similar goals as Next Chapter Book Clubs, Jot It Down promotes creativity, imagination and expression. Little emphasis is placed upon instruction and craft.

During meetings, members work individually and collaboratively on writing stories, poems, letters and postcards, MadLibs and blog posts. Tools such as pen and paper, tablets and whiteboards are utilized. To kick off the new initiative and encourage expansion within Tennessee, Dr. Tom Fish of the Nisonger Center of Ohio State University presented both program models in Nashville in early October to current NCBC sites and other interested parties.

The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the current Next Chapter Book Club sites are excited about the possibilities for reaching out with the Next Chapter Book Club/Jot It Down initiatives. We hope to provide new participants with the benefits of these programs and increase the number of clubs not only within our current areas but across the state as well.

For more information on existing clubs or getting a club started in your area, contact the following sites:

*Memphis Center for Independent Living
Susanna Cullen, scullen@mcil.org*

*The Arc Williamson County
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Megan Owens is coordinator of Turning Pages Together. Cynthia Chambers is associate professor at East Tennessee State University.

WALGREENS STUDY ▶

study compared Worker's Compensation costs for employees with a disability to costs for employees with no disclosed disability. The data was extracted from 110 claims over a 32-month period. The study found that costs for medical treatment for employees with disabilities was 67% less than for employees with no disclosed disability. Further, the costs for indemnity/time off were 73% lower for employees with disabilities. Finally, the expense costs for employees with disabilities were 77% less than for employees with no disclosed disability. The study also found that the lost-day average for employees with a disability was 40% less than for employees with no disclosed disability. The study concluded that Worker's Compensation costs incurred by employees with disabilities were significantly lower than for employees with no disclosed disability.

The study's findings regarding Worker's Compensation

costs are significant. The costs for employees with disabilities were much lower than for employees with no disclosed disabilities. Many employers harbor the belief that employees with disabilities will be at greater risk of serious injury in the workplace causing concerns about liability. This study's findings contribute to refuting that concern and removing a significant barrier to employment opportunities for jobseekers with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

Walgreens has implemented a landmark disability employment initiative in its distribution center system. As a result of this initiative, Walgreens now has over 1000 employees with disabilities working in its distribution centers nationwide. The Walgreens study on the performance of employees with disabilities in its distribution centers confirms that this initiative was a good business decision. The study found that employees perform the same jobs just as well as employees with no disclosed disabilities. The study further found that employees with disabilities had

significantly lower turnover rates as well as significantly lower costs per Worker's Compensation case. The findings indicate that Walgreens is getting equal performance from its employees with disabilities and is saving on costs related to employee turnover and Worker's Compensation. These findings by a major national company should be encouraging to other companies to follow Walgreens' lead and recruit employees with disabilities.

The performance of Walgreens employees with disabilities also has significance for disability employment service systems. First, the Walgreens initiative relies on employer-driven partnerships with community service providers to assist in recruitment, training and job retention supports. Additionally it uses an innovative, flexible training curriculum to teach people with disabilities required skills. This study confirms the effectiveness of these partnership and training models.

Second, Walgreens has large numbers of people with disabilities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, successfully performing full-time, skilled jobs in the company's distribution centers. The Walgreens distribution centers are a "show the way" example for practitioners in the system of new possibilities for the employment of people with disabilities. Employers and service practitioners alike need to take note of the findings of this study and collaborate to replicate Walgreens' success.

A copy of the Walgreens study report is available at: www.asse.org/professional_safety/pastissues/057/06/062_071_F1KA_0612.pdf

Robert B. Nicholas, PhD is a Senior Visiting Fellow for Disability Research at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. He is a consultant on employment to the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Next Chapter Book Club Inspires Volunteerism, Collaboration

BY JESSICA HOOVER

Whether the Next Chapter Book Club of Knox County is imitating the “p-b-b-b-b” of a mouse on a motorcycle or “whooo-opping” for *Black Beauty*, *Old Dan*, or *Little Ann*, we bring imaginative perspectives to life together every Friday as a team of readers and storytellers. Made up of members primarily from Knoxville’s Cerebral Palsy Center and facilitated by the East Tennessee Technology Access Center, we have a high success rate of accomplishing what we set out to do each week: read a chapter at the book club.



The book club is certainly about reading, but it is also about reading books as a way to converse. Everyone takes a turn reading a page at a time, which puts everyone’s voices out on the table within the first half hour. Then, the story sharing begins. Using the text as the focus, we try to figure out why characters act the way they do. In the process we examine what motivates us to act the way we do or like what we like. We come to know who in our group is afraid of horses, who likes motorcycles, who loves peanut butter, or who has ordered room service before.

While I get plenty of opportunities to talk about books as a graduate student of English, the book club’s camaraderie makes me a student of teamwork. When I started volunteering as a facilitator for the group in 2011, the members’ patience with one another and equal distribution of leadership and agency provided an immediately refreshing space of inspiration.

Taking turns reading pages aloud as a group and chipping away chapter by chapter each week brings a sense of accomplishment not only in finishing book after book, but in the communal success of sharing - a success that surpasses most professional and corporate group dynamics I’ve encountered.

So what happens in a chapter?

Lisa always has a family story ready to share that helps make what we’re reading relatable to adventures of her own. Keeper of our group’s voice amplifier technology, Carol ensures everyone at the table can hear and follow along.

When obscure words such as “ominous” and “tantalizing” pop up, Vikki creates example sentences to contextualize them. Jason is our master of the compound words, seamlessly incorporating “motorcycle” and “wastebasket” without skipping a beat.

Clarifying for the rest of us where we are, Will tracks where the last reader left off and indicates where the next reader should start. Finally, Rebecca is our faithful closer, who usually wraps up the ends of chapters and leaves us in suspense for next week. Every chapter is inspiring because we share laughs and surprises throughout, and it takes every group member to get us to the end.

Our conversations are vibrant and genuine because of the perspective and originality our members bring to books that already require some complex imagining and re-seeing the world. So far we’ve read classics such as *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*, and we’re currently working on *The Wind in the Willows*. *Black Beauty* was one of the group’s favorites not only because it required imagining the group clogging to book club in a traffic jam of horses and buggies but because it also required us to think from the horse’s perspective. What’s it like to walk around in horseshoes?

That imagining power is what is so often taken for granted at school and work. That exercise of seeing and re-seeing fuels the flexibility of perspective that reinforces the equality of leadership this group eases into so organically. The book club inspires hope in persistence, attentiveness, and creative thinking for an unparalleled sharing dynamic.

As a teacher and student, I’m used to reading chapters - lots of chapters. But the most inspirational chapters I’ve read are the ones I’ve read following along at book club.

Jessica Hoover is a volunteer facilitator for Next Chapter Book Club, Knox County. She is a graduate teaching assistant at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she earned an MA in English.

Universal Design + iPad = *Ultimate Inclusion*

BY SARAH K. MAK • PHOTOS BY JOHN CONIGLIO, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Our primary mission at Signal Centers' Assistive Technology (AT) Center is to help build stable lives through technology. When a person with a disability wants to succeed in school, return to work, or lead a productive life in the community, we can often find, recommend, and/or create technology that will help make this happen.

Many assume that assistive technology is large, expensive and difficult to afford, but that isn't always the case. With a new trend toward universal design, mainstream products are now becoming more accessible to people of all ages with varying abilities. Universal design is a principle that refers to a broad spectrum of ideas of design that are inherently accessible to both people with and without disabilities.

Some of the most prolific examples of universal design are Apple products. Any Apple device, from the tiny iPod Shuffle to the largest Mac desktop computer, is designed with built-in accessibility options to meet a number of different consumer needs. These features come at no additional cost, and no supplemental software is needed. For those living with a disability, this is life-changing. Because of our work in the AT Center with people with disabilities, we are seeing these Apple products becoming increasingly useful for educational tools, due to these universal design features.



One of the most widely used accessibility features in Apple products is Voice Over. This feature is a built-in screen reading option that allows a person to use any of the Apple products without having to read it themselves.

So, what does this mean? First, a person who is blind can take a brand new device out of the box and set it up completely independently because it does not require any additional software. Secondly, that same person can use this screen reader to navigate the device independently for work, school and/or pleasure. What does this mean for a mainstream user? That tiny iPod Shuffle that has no screen also has this feature and can speak the menus out loud. This is a perfect example of universal design.

The rising star in universal design is the iPad. The iPad's benefit is most readily seen in the school system. Who needs pen and paper when students utilize iPads for textbooks, completion of assignments, communication with teachers and other students, homework and word processing on the fly?

What about the student with a disability? The iPad is the ultimate inclusion tool. The student with a disability is no longer placed in a different classroom or seated in the back of the class with a wired computer to do their work. They can complete the same tasks on the same devices the other students are

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using. The only difference might be the utilization of an ear bud while they listen to the voice feedback, enlarged text or assistive touch/switch access.

For students of all abilities, the iPad proves extremely engaging, thereby increasing interest in learning, as they can both create and consume material. They can create books, movies, and slideshows. They can interact with their school textbooks by exploring 3D pictures and listening to the author describe different topics. Students are enjoying these learning environments/techniques and often not thinking about how much they're learning in the process.

Younger children using the iPad are finding a very intuitive experience. Children learn how to navigate by swiping and flicking almost automatically. They can play with any of thousands of educational applications (apps) and learn through play, the way they learn best. Children can read along with books, as they are read aloud to them, practice letter formation, and create words. Each time a child succeeds, they're rewarded by an animated result, which makes them want to do it again and again.

Children with autism are especially drawn to the predictability of the iPad and can benefit, not only from developed apps, but by communication apps and social stories that can be created for them and stored in the form of movies or slideshows.

Recently, with funding from UNUM – a Chattanooga, Tennessee-based insurance company – Signal Centers' AT Center invited teachers from Hamilton County's Exceptional Education Department to participate in three days of training on how to use the iPad specifically with students with disabilities. Apple Distinguished Educator, Luis Perez, came to Chattanooga to work with over 20 lead teachers, supervisors and specialized staff. Mr. Perez, who has a vision loss, led a hands-on workshop showing teachers about every facet of the iPad. Teachers in attendance learned how to navigate the iPad, how to use iMovie

as a teaching tool, how to create books, and how to use this device with non-traditional learners.

John is learning how to sort and add money using the "Amazing Coin" app, free from the iTunes App Store (pictured at the left). While John has vision loss, the screen of the iPad allows him to get close enough to see the object. For any object that he may not be sure about, he can double tap the screen with three fingers to zoom in to a specific area. With the retina display, however, the images are crisp enough that he doesn't require this particular feature often. In addition to this app, John is learning to read phonetically with "Bob Books". He is working on letter formation using "Write Words" and enjoying interactive books like the Berenstain Bears and Dr. Seuss. The added bonus is that John is doing this independently. Due to the intuitive access of the iPad, John typically doesn't need further assistance other than an explanation of what goal he'll be accomplishing in the activities.

Because it is difficult for Landyn to hold a writing instrument, he uses the iPad for learning skills to prepare him for kindergarten. He is able to form his letters, work on letter identification, and increase his counting skills. His favorite app is "Talking T-Rex", which encourages him to talk loudly and clearly so that the T-Rex will repeat everything he says. Landyn has worked with a speech therapist for several years on speech skills and he loves showing off with this app. Having worked on all of these skills on the iPad, Landyn will be attending a mainstream kindergarten this fall.

When it comes time for Landyn to work on more advanced skills that require more fine motor skills, the iPad can be set for him to use Assistive Touch, where the device will simulate the gestures that involve fingers, so that he can simply select which gesture he wants, then use a swipe or gesture that is comfortable for him. Again, this feature is built into the device. It will be the key for Landyn to access many parts of the academic curriculum he will need in a mainstream classroom. Because this technology is not difficult or foreign to the classroom teacher, there should be little reason for Landyn to be pulled out of his classroom for additional assistance. This will help Landyn assimilate into his class and just be "one of the kids".

The iPad is an exciting piece of technology that is changing education for those with disabilities and non-conventional ways of acquiring knowledge. This intuitive and engaging device can be a gateway for students, like the ones mentioned, to have independence and inclusion in their academic environment.

For more information on how the iPad can be used in classroom, workplace, or community tasks, contact Sarah Mak at 423.629.4174 or sarah_mak@signalcenters.org.

Sarah K. Mak is a certified assistive technology professional (ATP) at Signal Centers' Assistive Technology Center in Chattanooga.

Partners Program Launches 20th Year!

BY NED ANDREW SOLOMON



Jeanne Buckman



Beth Simmerman-Fetzer



Sandra Hawkins



Patrick Gallaher

Believe it or not, this is the 20th anniversary of the Tennessee Partners in Policymaking program! Established in 1993, the program was, and still is, based on curriculum created by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities in 1987. I am enjoying my 12th full year as the program's director.

The new class convened on September 14 at the Nashville Airport Radisson Hotel, and attended sessions on the

history of the disability experience; the history of the Partners program; the Independent Living, Self-Advocacy and Parent Movements; People First Language, and more. In October and November, Partners learned about supported and independent living, best practices in inclusive education and building more inclusive communities, as well as meeting and hearing from several representatives from state entities which provide

services to and resources for Tennesseans with disabilities and their family members.

Upcoming months will feature trainings on customized employment, assistive technology, conducting effective meetings, and the state and federal legislative processes. In addition, the 2013 Partners Annual Reunion Conference will take place on March 1 and 2. That agenda includes keynote speakers, breakout sessions on a variety of topics, and

opportunities for Partners to network with the new class members and their colleagues from earlier training years.

The Council is proud to announce the selected members of its 2012-13 Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute. Like most classes, it is a cross-section of Tennesseans who are living the disability experience.

Please join us in welcoming the following to the Tennessee Partners network:

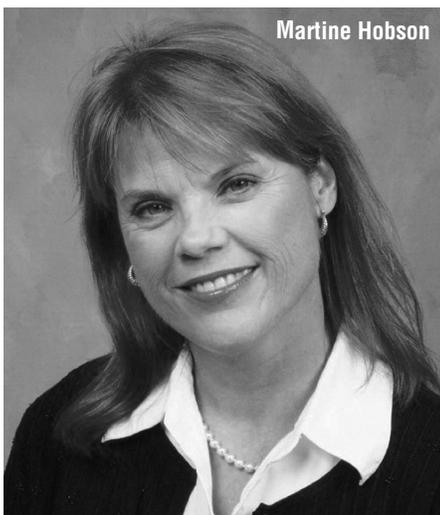
Christina Andrews, Memphis	Jeanne Buckman, Hendersonville	Patrick Gallaher, Murfreesboro	Patti Lehigh, Cordova	Christine Sartain, Nashville
Logan Black, Knoxville	Cathie Buckner, Nashville	Serina Gilbert, Charlotte	Jerry McMullin, Nashville	Beth Simmerman-Fetzer, Nashville
Serena Blanton, Martin	Michelle Caldwell, Smyrna	Steven Greiner, Fairview	Roxie Nunnally, Cordova	Carol Solomon, Cookeville
Brian Brown, Lenoir City	Juan Jose Cardona, Nashville	Sandra Hawkins, Memphis	Louise Ohlwein, Collierville	Sharon Stolberg, Cleveland
Susan Bryant, Germantown	Elise Fuller, Memphis	Leslie Jones, Memphis	Joy Rogers, Dyersburg	Richard Thompson, Nashville

TN Spotlight

The National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee has recently established two new chapters, in Knoxville and in Chattanooga. With more than 50,000 members, the NFB is the largest and most influential membership organization of blind people in the United States. Locally, affiliates and chapters work together to pass legislation, give parents of blind children a collective voice, promote independence, and mentor through positive blind role models.

There are currently five Tennessee chapters, with over 200 members. Besides Knoxville and Chattanooga, there are chapters in Murfreesboro, Nashville and Memphis. There is also an At-Large Chapter which meets monthly by phone conference.

Partners 2008-09 graduate Meghan Burke recently attained her PhD in Special Education at Vanderbilt University. Meghan is currently doing a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago.



Martine Hobson

Partners 2011-12 graduate Martine Hobson was selected as executive director of the Down Syndrome Association of Memphis and the Mid-South. Martine, the

mother of an adult daughter with Down syndrome (who is also a Partners graduate), assumes that position from Partners 09-10 graduate Alyson Edwards.

On December 13, Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) 2000 graduate, Chris Dennis received his Bachelor's degree in digital photography and videography from Nossi College of Art in Nashville. Chris is the son of Partners 2002-03 graduate Kathleen Donaldson.

Partners 2004-05 graduate Kelly Sanders volunteered during the 2012 holiday season giving tours of the Governor's mansion.

Four members of a Middle Tennessee State University debate team participated in an international debate against university students from Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, via Skype. Students Hailey Lawson—who is a 2010 YLF graduate—Dale Sikkema, William Griffen and Tevin Mason took part in the debate. Hailey, a sophomore psychology major, is co-captain of the debate team.



Adrian Walker & Wendy Sokol

The American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) recognized Adrian Walker of SRVS in Memphis as the 2012 Direct Support Professional of the Year for Tennessee.



Harvey Middleton

Harvey Middleton won Volunteer Mid-South's distinguished volunteer award for Board Member of the Year. For 26 years, Harvey has volunteered at SRVS in several capacities including board chairman from 2003—2005.

The Knoxville Area Employment Consortium (KAEC) hosted its annual Disability Employment Awareness Breakfast at the Downtown Hilton Hotel in late October. This year's breakfast was chaired by Tina Jones of DRS Corporate Connections and emceed by WATE TV's Lori Tucker. In addition, Mayor Madeline Rogero attended the event and presented a proclamation publicly recognizing the month of October as Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Recognized at this event was KAEC's Rudy Sullivan Award Winner, Sarah Welton. Each year the Rudy Sullivan Award is given to a person with a disability who has achieved employment success through exceptional motivation and persistence.

The TN Justice Center (TJC) has received numerous commendations in this past year. TJC was given the Access to Care Award established by the Baptist Healing Trust as part of the Center for Nonprofit Management's Salute to Excellence. TJC

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SPOTLIGHT ▶

was also honored with the Making a Difference Award by Tennessee Voices for Children.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Davidson County honored TJC Executive Director Gordon Bonnyman with the Advocacy Award. He was also given the No Bull Award from Tennesseans for Fair Taxation.



(R) Anthony Sledge & Josue Rodriguez.

Partners 2008-09 graduate Anthony Sledge, Housing Coordinator/Home Modifications Specialist at the Memphis Center for Independent Living, was presented a certificate from the Great Plains ADA Center and the University of Missouri certifying him as an ADA Coordinator. Anthony is the first in Memphis to receive this certification.

The Special Education Advocacy Center of Tennessee (SEAC) recently hired current Partners participant, Christine Sartain, as Co-Director for Organization & Policy, joining Erin Richardson, Co-Director for Advocacy. Erin created SEAC in 2011 with Wendy Tucker, originally to provide both legal and non-legal education advocacy services to families and students. SEAC's new focus is on policy advocacy and parent organization around special education issues.

Christine is the mother of a three-year-old who has Down syndrome. She worked as a political organizer with the Tennessee Disability Coalition in 2010, currently serves on the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's Community Advisory Council and Public Policy Committee, and is an active member of the Disability Coalition on Education.

Partners 2011-12 graduate and current Council member Cynthia Chambers, PhD, was given the Diane Holtsclaw 2012 Advocate of the Year Award from Core Services of Northeast Tennessee. Core Services is an adult service agency in the TriCities, and has collaborated with Cynthia on the Turning Pages Together book club program.

YLF 2004 graduate John T. Farley spent a week in Washington, D.C. at the National Down Syndrome Congress Conference, meeting with Tennessee Congressmen to encourage their support of disability-related legislation. This past July, John was selected as the National Down Syndrome Congress's representative, and will serve in that position for three years. John is the son of Partners 1995-96 graduate Brenda Farley.

Joseph Woodson, Legislative Coordinator at the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury has received the national 2012 Impact Award in recognition of his authorship of the first comprehensive Tennessee autism report. These awards are presented by the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society (NLPEs) to public organizations that have released a report documenting public policy impact within their respective states.

Next Steps at Vanderbilt graduate Rachel Pearson of Nashville received the Self-Determination Award from The Arc Tennessee during the 10th Annual Tennessee Disability MegaConference Awards Banquet and Dance. Rachel took classes at the TN Technology Center, joined the Vanderbilt Catholic Choir, volunteered multiple times to be a presenter at statewide conferences, and has served as a mentor to other students in the program.

DIDD SEEKS ACCREDITATION ▶

to answer the question is to sit down with a person and do a relationship map to help categorize the relationships a person has. For example, do all of the relationships a person have fall in the "paid staff" category? The relationship map will help answer the question. Another POM is, "are people connected to natural supports?" The relationship map can help look at family connections and help determine if the person has the frequency of contact they desire with family members.

Also, if you do a POM interview and you find that out of the 21 outcomes there are only four present, the person-centered thinking tools can be used to develop action steps to get to the other outcomes that aren't present.

BG: Do the POMs look at employment goals?

LD: Yes. One of the outcome measures is, "people choose where they work". This question goes much deeper than our system has gone when it comes to work. This measure will look for evidence that the person has had experience in the array of jobs in their community that everyone else has access to. Have they had experience, exposure and education about those jobs? The POMs will dig much deeper about a person's employment desires. POMs define employment as real jobs with minimum wage or better.

BG: Is there anything else about this you would like our readership to know about the process that DIDD is going through?

LD: Yes. I get a lot of questions about why DIDD is seeking accreditation. There are a number of reasons. But the number one reason is so that the people we support can have the life they choose to have. Our Commissioner is committed to providing the best services that DIDD can provide, and he sees accreditation as a way of getting there. It is a great way to standardize our processes across the state and to raise the bar for our service delivery system. It is about choice. It is about making sure that people that want jobs find jobs and that people can live where they want to live. That is what it's all about.

Lynette Porter is deputy director for the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

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To apply, visit www.tn.gov/cdd or contact the Director of the Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute, Ned Andrew Solomon, at 615.532.6556 or ned.solomon@tn.gov.

All applications must be postmarked by April 30, 2013

In Memoriam: Ruth J. Roberts, EdD



Dr. Ruth Roberts, the Boling Center Training Coordinator for the last nine years, passed away on July 12, 2012 after a year-long fight with cancer.

Ruth joined the Boling Center on February 24, 2003, presided over marked growth in the Center's training program, and was a leader on many local and statewide community service boards. Ruth dedicated herself to developing, producing, and annually improving a top-notch interdisciplinary training program. She initiated the Family Mentorship Program at the Boling Center and was one of the lead authors in the AUCD publication "Promising Practices in Family Mentorship: A Guidebook for MCHB -LEND Training Programs". This guidebook is a current resource to LEND programs across the nation.

Anyone who knew Ruth learned very quickly that her passion was the importance of siblings in the life of people with disabilities. Ruth brought her special perspective as the sibling of a person with a disability to Boling Center programs but also to research efforts highlighting the role of siblings. The sibling perspective is sometimes lost when we think of families and disability. Ruth served on the planning committee for the annual Tennessee Adult Brothers and Sisters (TABS) conferences. She was a sibling representative to the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's Community Advisory Council.

**BY DR. FRED PALMER
AND ELIZABETH BISHOP**

**UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
BOLING CENTER FOR
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES**

Ruth was an advocate, for herself as a sibling, her sister, and all people with disabilities. She gently but persistently reminded us all about the importance of seeing disability across the lifespan, a reminder sometimes needed for those with a pediatric background.

Her love was The Arc Tennessee, the advocacy organization devoted to serving those in the state with disabilities and their families. Ruth served on the Executive Board for The Arc from 2006-2010 and was President of the Board from 2008-2010. During that time, Ruth was recognized for her advocacy and volunteer efforts by receiving the Janet Clark Memorial Award which is given to an outstanding volunteer who has worked statewide. She was especially proud of her work with the Human Rights Committee of West Tennessee which allowed her to advocate for individuals and their enriched lives in the community.

Her friends and colleagues will miss Ruth and her special insights. Her commitment to quality training, always drawing on the essential input from people with disabilities and their families, will remain with all of us.



Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities

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